'Parole appiastricciate': The Question of Recitation in the Tasso-Ariosto Polemic

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Abstract

The article explores issues of reading and recitation in the literary polemic surrounding Torquato Tasso's epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581). This controversy emerged as the result of competing claims regarding the identification of the modern vernacular heir to the epic works of Antiquity, with two separate camps arguing for either Tasso's poem or Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (1532). Writing against Tasso was the Florentine Academy of the Crusca, who claimed that Tasso's poem was difficult to understand during recitation due to seemingly nonsensical phrases which they termed *parole appiastricciate*, 'mashed-up words'. Through an analysis of the discourse surrounding these words, the essay investigates competing manners of reciting poetry as they are described by both the Crusca and Tasso's supporters. It argues that the Crusca employed, and vehemently defended, a particular manner of recitation derived primarily from the poem's meter; by contrast, Tasso's supporters emphasized attention to the phonetic texture of the verse produced by the interrelationship of individual sounds. By comparing these different positions and investigating the structure of the *parole appiastricciate* themselves, the article suggests that Tasso's poem, and the controverssry surrounding its form and structure, offer an important perspective on changing literary tastes in late sixteenth-century Italy.

Keywords: Epic Poetry, Meter, Recitation, Sixteenth Century, Tasso-Ariosto Polemic

> Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you,
> trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth it, as many of your
> players do, I had as lief the town crier spoke my lines.
> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3.2.1-4

1. *Introduction*

In February 1585, the newly founded Accademia della Crusca of Florence, intent on purifying the Tuscan language, published a lengthy screed against the epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581), emphatically condemning the

work and maligning its author, Torquato Tasso.[1] Censuring the text for its use of unnatural words and overwrought syntax, the academicians declared that the *Liberata*'s language was often so deformed as to prevent understanding the sense of the poem:

[il poema] non ha né belle parole, né bei modi di dire … e sono l'une, e gli altri, ol-tre ogni natural modo di favellare, e con legatura tanto distorta, aspra, sforzata, e spiacevole, che udendole recitare ad altrui, rade volte s'intende, e ci bisogna prende-re il libro in mano, e leggerle da per noi: essendo elle tali, che non basta il suono, e la voce: ma per comprenderle bisogna veder la scrittura: e qualche volta non è assai. (Salviati 1588, 230-231)[2]

Tasso, the Crusca claimed, had strayed so far from a natural – and presumably more purely Florentine – form of poetic expression, that one could no longer rely on the traditional manner of enjoying poetry, namely its recitation before a group of people.

The Crusca's remark offers a useful starting point for considering the immediate impact of a work, already notorious for its difficulty, and, by extension, valuable insight into the various, sometimes conflicting, ways of responding to poetry in late sixteenth-century Italy.[3] Due to the harsh reception of Tasso's poem by the Florentine academy, such a comment also helps us begin to map the various socio-cultural positions of Tasso's early readers, who were often in conflict with one another for extra-artistic reasons.[4] The Crusca's criticisms of the sound of Tasso's poem immediately

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[1] For a discussion of the early years of the Crusca, see Parodi 1983.

[2] '[the poem] has neither beautiful words, nor beautiful figures of speech … and both are beyond any natural manner of speaking. They are bound together in such a distorted, harsh, forced, and unpleasant way that, upon hearing these words recited by someone else, rarely does one understand them, and it is necessary to take the book in hand and read the words on our own. These words are such, that sound and voice are not enough, and to understand them you must see the writing. Sometimes even that is not enough'. The Crusca's principal works are gathered together in their last major contribution, *Lo 'Nfarinato secondo* (Salviati 1588). I will cite from this edition unless otherwise noted. All translations of works not available in English are mine.

[3] The 'artificiality' of Tasso's poem has long been a subject of scholarship. For discussions of 'artificiosità', 'gravità', and other related aesthetic categories, see Ferroni and Quondam 1973; Raimondi 1980; Baldassarri 1983; Afribo 2001.

[4] Regional and political tensions are evident throughout the polemic, most noticeably in the anti-Florentine remarks made by various interlocutors, including by Tasso himself. For an account of the 'municipal-regional' component of the polemic, see Godard 2003; for a discussion of Tasso's rejection of the Florentines' claimed linguistic authority, see Di Sacco 1997. Of particular interest was also the so-called 'precedence controversy' between the d'Este and Medici families, which had emerged in 1541 between Cosimo I de' Medici and Ercole II d'Este over who would have precedence in the procession in Lucca honoring Charles V and Paul III. The issue of rank continued under the ducal reigns of both Francesco I de' Medici and Alfonso II d'Este, until an alliance of sorts was formed by the marriage

suggest certain expectations, perhaps entirely Florentine, concerning a so-called natural poetic language that allows for ease of comprehension. In their account, listeners were not expected to follow along with the written text, and the need to consult the book seems to have entirely exasperated the group.

Such exasperation implies a tension between poetry as written and poetry as spoken in early modern letters. This is not to say, however, that the poem's written form and its oral execution were clearly defined, discrete modes of consumption and experience. On the contrary, as the Crusca's comment implies, and as further analysis will show, the written text and its recitation often sat in uneasy relation to each other, due largely to the particular literary tastes and expectations of the academicians. This relation is perhaps best understood with reference to a perennial issue found in metrical studies, namely the ambiguous connection between a written text and the multiplicity of its possible metrical executions, whether read aloud or mentally.[5] In terms of meter, the text – as encountered on the page by a reader or performer – often presents moments of interpretative uncertainty. A line offers a range of possible metrical interpretations out of which a single reading must be chosen when the line is 'performed', a choice determined largely by the reader's own tastes and customs.[6]

As we shall see, the Crusca's account of their unpleasant experience listening to Tasso's poem emerged from their particular approach to poetic prosody. Our focus then is on the Crusca's manner of recitation as it is brought to light through a reconstruction of their ideas about meter. Since the Crusca's statements generated a vehement response from other writers supporting Tasso's poem, we can also compare different readings of those same lines. By studying this opposition, we can get at the matter of metrics, prosody, and recitation as they were practiced at the time of the publication of the *Liberata*. This controversy thus provides a window not only into the possible manners of recitation of Tasso's poem, but also – and perhaps more importantly – the diverse and often conflicting values and interests of its first readers.

2. *The Crusca's Criticism of Tasso*

The Crusca's critique of Tasso's use of poetic language was in reality a response to an earlier dialogue written by the Capuan canon Camillo

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between Cesare d'Este and Virginia de' Medici in 1586. See Santi 1897, Williams 1993, Plaisance 2004, and Quint 2005.

[5] For discussion of the complex relationship between abstract models and concrete realization in meter, see Menichetti 1993, 55-60; Praloran and Soldani 2003, 3-12.

[6] Menichetti notes the variety of possible executions of a text due to the reader's own idiosyncrasies and cultural context: 'The execution … is also affected by conventions, poetics, fashions' (1993, 58).

Pellegrino (1527-1603), entitled *Il Carrafa, o vero dell'epica poesia* (1584).[7] In this work, Pellegrino set out to define the correct elements of epic poetry, largely following an Aristotelian paradigm, as well as identifying the modern vernacular equivalent of Virgil and Homer.[8] He ultimately chose Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* as the foremost example of vernacular epic over Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, which had remained at the summit of vernacular poetry since the publication of its third edition in 1532.[9] The Crusca, incensed at Pellegrino's preference for Tasso and his attack on Ariosto, published a *Difesa dell'Orlando furioso* (Salviati 1584), which turned out to be less a defense and more a full-scale assault on Pellegrino, Tasso, and his work. These two documents, the *Carrafa* and the *Difesa*, immediately sparked controversy across Italy throughout the 1580s, with *letterati* of various cities publishing works in favor of either Tasso or Ariosto. In this same period, Pellegrino and the Crusca continued their own heated debate, consisting of numerous letters and several published dialogues.

The main focus of this exchange was the proper definition of epic poetry according to Aristotle and other classical authorities. Much ink was spilled debating the appropriate structure of epic narrative, including the length of the plot, the importance of a historical basis, and the types of digressions permitted. The focus of these treatises lay primarily on arguing the finer details of Aristotelian theory. On occasion, however, descriptions of experiencing the poem would emerge. In such instances, problems of establishing iron-clad rules for poetic composition gave way to accounts of aesthetic evaluation: literary theory ceded to matters of taste and sensibility. Virtually all of these moments dealt with the use of language, a topic hardly touched upon by Aristotle, and whose prescriptions would have regardless offered little help for the specific problems of the Italian vernacular still in development.[10]

The Crusca's concerns largely involved Tasso's use of so-called 'artificial' language, an issue which had already been under debate by the time of their response to Pellegrino. In April 1582, less than a year after the *Liberata*'s first full publication, Giovan Battista Deti, one of the co-founders of the Accademia della Crusca, wrote a letter to Filippo Magnanimi describing

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[7] This dialogue originally appeared at the end of an anthology of lyric poetry from three Capuan poets, including Pellegrino; see Dell'Uva 1584. For more on the regional tensions between Florence and Naples, see Cardillo 2008.

[8] For a general analysis of the polemic, including a description of Pellegrino's work, see Weinberg 1963, 991-1073; Gigante and Sberlati 2003. For a description of the academic context in Florence, see Plaisance 2004.

[9] A discussion of the near universal acclaim for Ariosto's poem, hailed as a 'modern classic' soon after its first publication, can be found in Javitch 1991; see also Sberlati 2001, 31-87.

[10] For a recent description of the *questione della lingua*, together with an extensive bibliography, see Alfano, Gigante, and Russo 2016.

recent literary discussions on the language of the poem. Deti states that there are 'alcuni' ('some') in Florence who are of the opinion that the *Liberata*, though 'molto bello' ('beautiful'), contains language which is 'troppo bello' ('too beautiful') because it is 'troppo limato' ('overwrought'). Because of such excessively refined verse, readers have difficulty comprehending it. As Deti claims, 'è necessario per intenderlo stare non manco attento leggendolo, che si stia alle scritture d'Aristotile; la qual cosa in un libro siffatto, che si legge per piacere o per divertimento, non par che sia gran fatto lodevole' (Solerti 1895, 186).[11]

Regarding the language ('locuzione'), Deti further writes that, though the poem contains words which are often elevated and heroic, 'non è di quella proprietà, né di quella purità fiorentina che è quella dell'Ariosto, ed anche ci ha delle cose che a noi paion barbarismi' (186).[12] Deti's criteria of linguistic approval thus depend explicitly on standards of Florentine purity. Issues of 'propriety', exemplified by Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, contrast with certain 'barbaric' constructions found in Tasso's poem.[13] Such ideals for a stable and rigid vernacular would come to animate the later critical activity of the Academy of the Crusca, in particular their condemnation of Tasso's deviations from accepted usage.[14]

It is worth noting that Pellegrino himself, in his own treatise praising the *Liberata*, admits that the poetic language of the poem often presents difficulties in comprehension, due mainly to Tasso's use of a certain *brevitas*:

usando il Tasso modi di dir poetici lontani in tutto del parlar dell'uso comune, molte volte, la sua sentenza non è così chiara come altri vorrebbe, e studiando egli sempre in ciò d'esser breve e significante nelle voci, non è maraviglia se alle volte oscuro ne diviene. (Salviati 1588, 230-34)[15]

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[11] 'To understand the poem, it is necessary to be no less attentive in reading it than in the writings of Aristotle. In a book such as this, which should be read for pleasure or entertainment, this does not seem particularly praiseworthy'.

[12] 'it does not possess that propriety, nor that Florentine purity, which is found in Ariosto, and even in that work some things strike us as barbarisms'.

[13] See Martillotto 2014, especially 41-43. For a broader discussion of censure of Tasso's lack of linguistic purity, see Martillotto 2007.

[14] Salviati had made remarks, even prior to debating the *Liberata*, on the need for poetry to be easy to pronounce. In a letter to Giovanni de' Bardi (28 September, 1582), Salviati writes that he prefers the *Orlando furioso* to 'poesie difficili, dure, sforzate, e che non si possono né pronunciar con agevolezza né imparare a mente' ('those difficult, hard, and overwrought poems that you can neither pronounce easily nor memorize') cited in Plaisance 2004, 122. For more on Salviati's views on Ariosto, see Brown 1971.

[15] 'Since Tasso uses poetic modes of speech entirely distant from common linguistic usage, many times his meaning is not as clear as some would like. And since he always strives to be concise and meaningful with his words, it is not surprising that sometimes he becomes obscure'.

In Pellegrino's view, Tasso deliberately seeks a form of language as far from common use as possible in order to achieve a level of magnificence and *gravitas*.[16] The Crusca, by contrast, attribute the difficulty and incomprehensibility of the poem not to an intentionally laconic style, but rather to Tasso's overall artistic failure to respect the poetic norms established by the vernacular canon. In their view, Tasso does not intentionally create a new poetic language, but simply lacks the skill to write beautiful, proper diction, resulting in a language that is 'distorta, aspra, sforzata, e spiacevole' (Salviati 1588, 230).[17]

After complaining of the difficulty of understanding the poem when recited, the Crusca also offer examples of a listener's confusion due to the peculiar construction of the lines. In their view, Tasso's arrangement of words often leads to unintelligible and ridiculous sounds:

tra l'altre cose buona parte delle parole paiono appiastricciate insieme, e due o tre di loro ci sembrano spesso una sola, di niuno o di lontanissimo sentimento da ciò, che s'aspettava dalla continuazion del concetto; sì che spesso muove a riso, come alcuni di questi suoni, che si sentono ne' versi suoi: checcanuto, ordegni, tendindi, mantremante, impastacani, vibrei, rischiognoto, crinchincima, tombeccuna, comprotton, incultavene, alfiancazzo, a imitazione di quel chazzolino di suo padre: *Poi più che Neron'empio, e ch'Azzolino.* (231)[18]

This list of 'mashed' words clearly belongs to a larger rhetorical strategy to ridicule Tasso's poem as much as possible. Nevertheless, closer analysis of these *parole appiastricciate* reveals a certain degree of consistency in the Crusca's reading of the poem, not only in the oral articulation of the words and their transcription, but also in the comprehensiveness of the list, which spans virtually the entire poem. Through the recontextualization of these apparent nonsense words in the poem, it becomes clear that the Crusca were relying consistently on a particular mode of recitation that would effectively produce such sounds.

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[16] The stylistic ideal of *gravitas* is found everywhere in Tasso's discussions of the grand style. For a discussion of early modern theories of style, see Grosser 1992. For an extended discussion of *gravitas* in the sixteenth century, see Afribo 2001.

[17] 'distorted, harsh, forced, and unpleasant'.

[18] 'among other things, a good number of his words appear mashed together. Two or three words often seem to be a single one, with their meaning either unconnected or very distant from what you were expecting from the sequence of thought. Often this moves one to laughter, such as some of these sounds heard in his verses: *checcanuto, ordegni, tendindi, mantremante, impastacani, vibrei, rischiognoto, crinchincima, tombeccuna, comprotton, incultavene, alfiancazzo*, in imitation of his father's *chazzolino*: *Poi più che Neron'empio, e ch'Azzolino*'. The allusion is to Bernardo Tasso's *Amadigi*.

The original verse for each of these words, arranged in chronological order, reads as follows:[19]

checcanuto	Ad un'huom, **che canuto** havea da canto	(II 43, 6)
ordegni	O' degno sol, cui d'ubidire **hor degni**	(II 62, 1)
tendindi	Impon, che sian le **tende indi** munite	(III 66, 1)
mantremante	Nè più governa il fren la **man tremante**	(VII 1, 3)
incultavene	Misto, e di boscareccie **inculte avene**	(VII 6, 3)
impastacani	Ch'**in pasto a' cani** le sue membri i neghi	(VII 54, 8)
vibrei	**Vibra ei**, presa nel mezo, una zagaglia	(IX 82, 5)
rischiognoto	E tacito, e guardingo al **rischio ignoto**	(XIII 33, 2)
crinchincima	E 'l **crin, ch'in cima** al capo havea raccolto	(XV 61, 1)
tombeccuna	A l'essequie, a i natali ha **tomba, e cuna**	(XVII 20, 8)
comprotton	Genero il **compra Otton** con larga dote	(XVII 76, 4)
alfiancazzo	C'hor l'è **al fianco Azzo** quinto, hor la seconda	(XVII 79, 2)

The Crusca's combination of entire phrases into single nonsense words occurs as a result of several reading strategies. Some words are simply joined together without any further alterations to the original text, such as *ordegni*, *mantremante,* and *crinchincima* (ignoring for now the punctuation for this phrase). The word *checcanuto* also emerges largely due to this strategy, but with an apparent, subtle modification to its pronunciation, namely the syntactic gemination of the 'C' of *canuto*.[20] The Crusca's inclusion of a lengthened 'C' immediately suggests their intention to appear faithful in transcribing a specific and concrete recitation of Tasso's poem.

Most of the words mentioned by the Crusca, however, are formed primarily as a result of their elimination of vowels, specifically those found at word boundaries: *tendindi*, *incultavene*, *impastacani*, *vibrei*, *rischiognoto*, *tombeccuna*, *comprotton*, and *alfiancazzo*. In these cases, the Crusca employ elision, a prosodic figure whereby word-final vowels are suppressed when

[19] It is impossible to identify the exact edition used by these early readers, given the complex history of the early printed editions of the poem, of which there were already fifteen by 1584. For a description of printed editions of Tasso, see Carpanè 1998. Of the various early editions consulted, I have decided to use the text of the 1581 Febo Bonnà edition: *Gierusalemme liberata, poema heroico del Sig. Torquato Tasso.* There are two reasons for this, based largely on the text as cited in the polemic. First, for 'tombeccuna', both Tasso's supporters and the Crusca read 'ha tomba, e cuna' and not 'ha tomba, ha cuna', as it appears in the Ingegneri edition from 1581. In contrast, both Bonnà and later Francesco Osanna (1584) read this line as 'tomba, e cuna'. Second, Tasso's supporters refer 'alfiancazzo' to the verse 'C'hor l'è al fianco Azzo Quinto, hor la seconda'. The Osanna edition reads 'C'hor l'è al fianco Azzo il Quinto', while Bonnà had eliminated the definite article before 'Quinto'. Based on these admittedly shaky criteria, references to Tasso's poem will come from the Bonnà edition.

[20] For a discussion of these phonotactic phenomena in the Italian language, see Marotto 2011.

they precede vowels in subsequent words.[21] The most extreme cases appear to be *impastacani* and *tombeccuna*, in which syntactical units with multiple elements ('in pasto a' cani' and 'tomba, e cuna') are reduced to a single word. These examples also present further phonotactical adjustments, not only the consonant gemination in *tombeccuna*, but also the nasal assimilation found in *impastacani*, which appears to represent a natural shift in pronunciation from 'N' to 'M' that occurs even today in Italian and many other languages.[22] Attention to such minute phonosyntactic details reinforces the overall rhetorical strategy of ridiculing Tasso's poem by implying that their method of execution follows natural speaking patterns. By faithfully recording this 'natural' pronunciation, the Crusca further emphasize an ordinary manner of enunciation that would seem at odds with Tasso's supposedly overwrought verse.[23]

Yet, as is clear with examples such as *crinchincima* and *tombeccuna,* such a 'natural' mode of recitation also contends with other possible executions of these lines. In these instances, written elements – specifically letters and punctuation – are passed over by the Crusca, in favor of a seemingly fluid 'superword' containing only one accent and allowing for no pauses. There is thus a clear tension between the Crusca's spoken language and the written text of the poem. This approach, at least as argued by the Crusca, offers an immediate response to Pellegrino's claim that Tasso's language is far from 'common use'. These *parole appiastricciate* suggest that, by deviating so far from normal usage, Tasso's manner of writing has strayed into absurdity. By situating themselves on the side of the *uso comune*, the Crusca are thus able to develop a scathing rhetorical strategy to dismiss the *Liberata*.

Despite the obvious polemical nature of their attack on Tasso's use of language, it seems unlikely that the Crusca would have invented this list of *parole appiastricciate* from nothing. The consistency of the elision, and the fact that the words span the entirety of the poem, indicate that the Crusca may well have been reading in a specific way before taking up the task of censuring the poem. An analysis of the metrical schemes that emerge in these

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[21] The only exception to the regular pattern of elision is *rischiognoto*, where the final vowel of *rischio* remains, most likely due to the semiconsonantal nature of *-io*.

[22] The shift from the alveolar nasal of 'IN' to the bilabial dental of 'IM' follows a common phonotactic constraint whereby a nasal assimilates to the place of articulation of the following consonant, in this case the labial 'P' of 'pasto'. For an overview of consonantal assimilation, see Brucale 2010.

[23] It seems reasonable to hypothesize that the Crusca's emphasis on a natural mode of recitation aligns with the linguistic program set out by Lionardo Salviati in his *Degli avvertimenti della lingua sopra 'l Decamerone*, printed in two volumes in 1584 and 1586. There Salviati elevates the language spoken by educated Florentines as the standard by which to judge all literary production. For an overview of the structure and themes of Salviati's *Avvertimenti*, see Gargiulo 2009. For more on Salviati in an academic context, see Godard 2003.

mashed-up words will reveal a particular mode of reading lines of poetry that emphasizes regular accentuation at the expense of both the sense of the line and its graphical representation. Yet, before analyzing further the Crusca's model of metrical execution, let us look first at the responses of Tasso and his supporters to these *parole appiastricciate*.

3. *Responses to the Crusca*

In addition to Pellegrino, at least three other writers responded directly to the Crusca's complaints of unintelligible words in the *Liberata*: Giulio Ottonelli, Orazio Lombardelli, and Malatesta Porta. Coming from different socio-cultural contexts, their positions and arguments diverge in various ways. Despite the different form and character of their responses, they are all unified in their rejection of the Crusca's method of reciting Tasso's poem. Above all, they emphasize the need to attend to the structure of the written text, as opposed to relying on some predetermined metrical scheme. In their view, the Crusca deliberately exaggerate their manner of recitation and fail to respect the text as presented on the page. More specifically, they all argue against elision in the execution of the verse in favor of distinctly articulating individual sounds.

After the Crusca published their *Difesa* and after a lengthy epistolary exchange, Pellegrino composed his own response, *Replica di Camillo Pellegrino alla Risposta degli Accademici della Crusca* (1585).[24] Much like the Crusca's text, Pellegrino responds to each individual objection in turn. Regarding the *parole appiastricciate*, Pellegrino does not defend Tasso so much as criticize the Crusca's manner of reading. His emphasis falls on the Crusca's deliberate attempts to combine letters, that is 'a studio': 'appiastricciandosi a studio, hor vien loro aggiunta, et hora via tolta una lettera, per farle sentir di mal suono' (Salviati 1588, 232).[25]

In his view, the ugly sound that emerges – that is, the words as recorded by the Crusca – only emerge with the improper reading of the letters of a line. Instead, Pellegrino writes, the Crusca should employ a more accurate method:

distaccate [le voci] l'una dall'altra, e proferite con pausa, niuno mal suono renderanno. Massimamente in quelle giaciture del verso, dove è libero di ciò fare, o dove è loda, che nelle giaciture, ove di necessità si collide, di rado sarà avvenuto al Tasso di far che la pronuntia congiungendo le dittioni sortisca mal suono: anzi vi sono delle parole, che chiamano appiastricciate, che dolcissime suonano. Ma per dio che

[24] Many letters on Tasso's poem, including exchanges between Pellegrino and the Crusca, can be found in Solerti 1895, 211-254.

[25] 'these words were studiously mashed together – here a letter is added, here a letter is taken away – in order to make them sound ugly'.

trasformationi mostruose delle voci del Tasso, da figliuoli di gratia, in figliuoli d'i-
ra? (Salviati 1588, 232)[26]

While the Crusca combined various words into a single phrase, Pellegrino
wants them separated in the pronunciation through the use of a pause. He
also identifies certain positions ('giaciture') in the verse where words can be
combined ('si collide'). In contrast to the Crusca's absolute rejection of such
collisions, Pellegrino claims that they result in a 'most sweet' sound. At stake,
then, is not simply the clear articulation of sounds but the underlying aesthetic
preferences for engaging in such practices in the first place.

In Pellegrino's view, these words were so ordered not by chance, but
because Tasso intended to produce a specific phonetic texture which would
enliven the verse and depict the subject matter more vividly: 'in *man tremante*,
non si vede la cacofonia, e le liquide lettere mettono innanzi a gli occhi il
tremar della mano?' (Salviati 1588, 232).[27] This statement is perhaps the
most emblematic of the divergent sensibilities between Pellegrino and the
Crusca. Whereas the Crusca censure Tasso's language for using a vocabulary
replete with supposedly ugly words both harsh and dissonant, Pellegrino
appears to celebrate Tasso's technique for using these same qualities.[28] For
Pellegrino, *cacofonia* becomes, perhaps counter-intuitively, a term of praise.
Such cacophony does not arise, however, from the combination of words but
from their distinct articulation in the recitation of the text.[29]

A similar, though much more caustic, critique of the Crusca's apparently
deliberate manner of misreading Tasso's lines can be found in the writings of

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[26] 'if one word is separated from another, and uttered with a pause, then they will not
produce an ugly sound, especially in those positions in the verse, where it is possible, or
where it is praiseworthy, to do so. In those positions where it is necessary to combine words,
rarely does Tasso join together two sounds whose pronunciation ends up sounding ugly. On
the contrary, there are words, which the academicians call 'mashed up', which sound most
sweet. But, by God, what are these monstrous transformations of Tasso's words that make
children of rage from children of grace?'

[27] 'with *man tremante*, do you not see how the cacophony and liquid letters place the
trembling hand before your eyes?'

[28] Tasso himself, in his *Discorsi dell'arte poetica* of the early 1560s, praises the production
of a certain stylistic harshness ('asprezza'): 'S'accresce la magnificenza con l'asprezza, la
quale nasce da concorso di vocali, da rompimenti di versi, da pienezza di consonanti nelle
rime, dallo accrescere il numero nel fine del verso, o con parole sensibili per vigore d'accenti
o per pienezza di consonanti' (1964, 45; 'Magnificence is increased with harshness, which
arises from the combination of vowels, from the breaking of verses, from the fullness of
consonants in the rhyme words, [and] from increasing the rhythm at the end of the line
with distinctly felt words, either through the force of accents or the fullness of consonants').
An overview of the early modern theoretical discussion of epic 'harshness' can be found in
Ramos 1992, in particular 243-282.

[29] For an extensive discussion of this emergent structure of feeling, often labeled
'Mannerism', see Quondam 1975, in particular 25-61.

Giulio Ottonelli (1550-1620). Born in the Modenese town of Fanano, Ottonelli was a magistrate, courtier for the d'Este family, and frequent antagonist to the Crusca.[30] He composed several works on the use of the vernacular, including a treatise in 1586 on the proper usage of titles for addressing popes, emperors, and princes.[31] At the end of this particular work, he appended his contribution to the Tasso-Ariosto dispute, a brief work entitled *Difese della Gerusalemme liberata*. This text follows the same format of a composite dialogue as found in the Pellegrino-Crusca exchange. Though he deals exclusively with the Crusca's complaints regarding the language of the *Liberata,* his tone and manner of argumentation are far less temperate than Pellegrino's.

In a much more aggressive response to the Crusca's claims of unintelligible writing in the *Liberata*, Ottonelli moves from general mockery of the academicians as unlettered pedants to the more specific charge that they are purposefully mispronouncing the language and distorting the written word:

dove sono queste parole e questi parlari con legatura tanto distorta, aspra, sforzata, e spiacevole, che per comprenderli neanche basta veder con gli occhi la scrittura? Ai litterati e giudiciosi basta per intendere il Tasso, e gli altri buon poeti, udir solamente recitare i versi loro; ma a quei, che non hanno lettere, né giudicio … non basta né udirgli, né leggerli più volte. (Salviati 1586, 122)[32]

Despite the exaggerated rhetoric, Ottonelli makes an interesting point about the relationship between written and spoken texts. In his view, there should not exist such a vast divide between the printed page and the manner of recitation. He attributes the appearance of nonsense words to a more general inability to pronounce words correctly, ultimately contrasting the Crusca's *parole appiastricciate* with the rules for proper enunciation found in contemporary treatises on etiquette and behavior: 'E questi tali son quegli,

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[30] The primary biography of Ottonelli remains Tiraboschi 1783, 365-400. For a brief description of Ottonelli's linguistic ideas see Diffley 1993.

[31] Ottonelli's 1586 work on epithets is entitled *Discorso del S.ᵒʳ Giulio Ottonelli sopra l'abvso del dire Sva Santità, Sva Maestà, Sva Altezza, Senza nominare il Papa, l'Imperatore, il Principe. Con le difese della Gierusalemme Liberata del Signor Torq. Tasso dall'oppositioni degli Accademici della Crusca*. This work appears to participate in the 'precedence controversy' between the d'Este and Medici dynasties, in favor of the former's claims to aristocratic nobility against the merely mercantile interests of the latter.

[32] 'Where are these words and these ways of speaking bound together in such a distorted, harsh, forced, and unpleasant way that, to understand them, it is not even enough to see the writing with your own eyes? For literate and judicious men to understand Tasso and other good poets, it is enough only to hear their verses recited. For those who have neither letters nor judgment … neither hearing nor reading the poets multiple times will suffice'. Citations of Ottonelli's work come from the response written by Lionardo Salviati under the guise of 'Carlo Fioretti' (Salviati 1586), which follows the same structure of alternating 'dialogue' between two texts.

che contro a gl'insegnamenti di Monsignor della Casa nel suo Galateo, inghiottendo le lettere, le sillabe, e le parole appiccate, e (come dice anche egli) impiastricciate insieme l'una con l'altra' (123).[33] Ottonelli thus associates the Crusca's style of recitation with the defective speech patterns enumerated by one of their fellow countrymen, Giovanni Della Casa. The rhetorical purpose of this reference seems clear: if the Crusca wish to establish themselves as a normative cultural force, they should avoid infringing on the customs established by their own previous Florentine authorities.

Ottonelli also claims that this linguistic *impiastricciamento* could just as easily be reproduced in reading canonical authors. He offers several examples taken from Petrarch and Dante, such as 'fera cuna' (*RVF* 174), 'man manca' (*RVF* 286), 'man, che trema' (*Par.* 13), and 'man mozza' (*Inf.* 28).[34] Ottonelli's list appears to miss the principal feature of the Crusca's *parole appiastricciate*, namely the elision of vowels. Instead, he simply provides examples of phrases with the words 'man' and 'cuna'. Ottonelli's general point is that the Crusca are deliberately contorting a normal manner of reading lines of poetry in order to condemn Tasso. In this case, 'normal' refers not to any daily spoken language, but rather the ways in which one customarily reads the established authors of the vernacular canon. In fact, in Ottonelli's view, even unlettered and unintelligent readers would correctly read the words of Tasso's poem, 'non confuse insieme, ma distinte, come deono esser lette'[35]. He points specifically to their misreading of 'Al fianco Azzo,' which he claims is clearly written with two vowels. Written correctly – that is, with both vowels –, Tasso's line is not as offensive as the Crusca claim. But if the text had been written with an apostrophe at the end of *fianco*, would not be appropriate ('non sarebbe stato da comportare'; Salviati 1586, 125).

In general, Ottonelli's comments are much less subtle than they are openly polemical against the Crusca as Florentines, a fact which he believes should render them more knowledgable about the vernacular. He comments wryly:

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[33] 'These are men who, against the teachings of Monsignor della Casa in his *Galateo*, swallow letters, syllables, and neighboring words, thereby (as he also says) smashing together the one with the other'. Ottonelli apparently has in mind the section of Della Casa's *Galateo* dealing with proper pronunciation: 'se tu proferirai le lettere e le sillabe con una convenevole dolcezza, non a guisa di maestro, che insegni leggere e compitare a fanciulli, né anco le masticherai, *né inghiottiraile appicate et impiastricciate insieme l'una con l'altra*; se tu arai dunque a memoria questi et altri sì fatti ammaestramenti, il tuo favellare sarà volentieri e con piacere ascoltato dalle persone' (Della Casa 1990, 38; emphasis added; 'if you pronounce letters and syllables with an appropriate sweetness, not like some schoolmaster teaching children how to read and spell; and if you do not chew them, *nor swallow them stuck and smashed together*; and if you keep in mind these and other teachings, your speech will be willingly and enjoyably heard by other people').

[34] Ottonelli's list of *parole appiastricciate* can be found in Salviati 1586, 124.

[35] 'not mixed together, but distinct, as they should be read'.

se essi non sanno la lingua loro natia niente meglio de' forestieri, co' quali dovrebbo-
no pure haver vantaggio grandissimo, considerisi di gratia, quanto meglio possono
sapere le cose di retorica e di poetica; le quali non dalle madri, o dalle balie, o dal
popolo s'apparano, ma fa mestiere diligentemente cercarle ne' buoni scrittori. (129)[36]

The main force of Ottonelli's argument thus lies in the implied irregularity of
the Crusca's manner of recitation, which should depend on their familiarity
with the literary language and customs developed in their very region. They
misread and mispronounce the words in their bid for provincial superiority. No
wonder then that the Crusca, and in particular their *de facto* leader Lionardo
Salviati, would respond with equal vehemence, as we shall see shortly.

A more sophisticated response appears in the *Discorso intorno a'
contrasti, che si fanno sopra la Gerusalemme Liberata* (1586), written by Orazio
Lombardelli (1545-1608).[37] Born in Siena, where he spent the majority of his
life, Lombardelli would ultimately become a major authority on the Italian
language, in particular its orthography.[38] His views were much more moderate
than the Crusca's crusade for rigid linguistic purity, and he was particularly
interested in the *Liberata*, which he saw as the first true epic poem in the
vernacular.[39] His *Discorso* is valuable in that it accurately and dispassionately
summarizes the main issues of the polemic up to that point before undertaking
a sustained defense of Tasso's poem.[40]

Much like Pellegrino, Lombardelli finds that the Crusca are guilty of
manipulating the letters and syllables of the poem in a way that conflicts with
the written word. In his view, this approach to modifying the text according to
one's peculiar tastes runs the risk of mutilating even the most canonical poets:

gli scritti nobili de' moderni si debbon legger con certa equità e riverenza, come si
leggon quelli, che da gli antichi furono scritti felicemente … se altrimenti faremo,
cioè confondendo le parti, sottraggendo o aggiugnendo lettere e sillabe, come che
anco togliendo via o chiamando a forza gli accenti, non saranno sicuri né i Danti,

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[36] 'if these men do not know their own native language better than foreigners, against
whom they should have the greatest advantage, then consider how much better they know
matters of rhetoric and poetics. These are things which are not learned from mothers,
wetnurses, or the people, but they must be diligently sought in good writers'.

[37] For a discussion of Lombardelli in the polemic, see Sberlati 2001, 229-236.

[38] For Lombardelli's biography, see De Gregorio 2005.

[39] In a letter to Maurizio Cataneo (28 September, 1581), one of the earliest responses to
the *Liberata*, Lombardelli writes, 'Confesserò, che l'opera del sig. Tasso non è per ognuno;
che è quello, per lo che io vie più la stimo: non si vedendo (che io sappia) fin oggi nella nostra
lingua poema eroico, il quale un ben letterato voglia legger più di una volta' (Rosini 1828b,
302: 'I will confess that Tasso's work is not for everyone, and this is the reason for which
I most esteem it, since, as far as I know, in our language, up to now, there has not been a
heroic poem that a well-lettered man would want to read more than once').

[40] For a summary of Lombardelli's work, see Weinberg 1963, 1025-1029.

né i Petrarchi, né i Boccacci. Che, per esempio, s'io trovo *in pasto ai cani*, *tomba e cuna*, e leggo *impastacani*, e *tombeccuna* … questo è un modo da corromper tutto il parlare. (1586, 122-123)[41]

Echoing Ottonelli's position, Lombardelli sees the Crusca treating Tasso's poem differently than they would their own revered authors. Without a coherent method, he claims, the Crusca jeopardize the entire Tuscan literary project. To prove this point, he presents a list of ugly sounds deliberately sought out ('a studio') in Petrarch's poetry, specifically *RVF* 353 and 366. He thus offers his own 'voci appiastricciate': *checcantando* ('che cantando'), *vernallato* ('verno a lato'), *gravosaffanni* ('gravosi affanni'), *di solvestita* ('di sol vestita'), *spingaddir* ('spinge a dir'), *pregotinchina* ('prego t'inchina'), *belnumeruna* ('bel numero una'), *partintera* ('parte intera'), *vennassalvarne* ('venne a salvarne'), *drizzabbuonfine* ('drizzi a buon fine').[42] These words offer examples much more in keeping with the Crusca's reading strategies than the ones found in Ottonelli's attempted list of 'mashed-up' words. Apart from eliding a large number of vowels, Lombardelli is also much more attentive to elements of 'spoken' language, such as reduplicated consonants (*che**cc**antando*, *venna**ss**alvarne*).

Yet Lombardelli does find that certain 'vocaboli impropri' are to be found in the poem; however, they can all be salvaged through either careful recitation or slight emendations to the text.[43] Most important, in his view, is the simple fact that language is always changing: 'la lingua è viva, ed in corso; e si dee giornalmente illustrare' (1586, 124).[44] In his view, the Crusca rely on a debilitating view of language in general which would prevent further development of literary techniques. In other words, Tasso's poem – and more specifically elements such as clashing vowels – represents an expansion of the expressive possibilities of the vernacular. This conception of the evolution of language situates Lombardelli squarely against the linguistic ideology of the Crusca, who see their task as not only preserving a specifically Florentine usage, but one limited by the literary authorities of the Trecento, namely Petrarch and Boccaccio.

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[41] 'The noble writings of the moderns must be read with a certain equity and reverence, much like we read those writings composed so felicitously by the ancients … If we do otherwise – that is, by confusing the parts, by removing or adding letters and syllables, or by taking away or emphasizing the accents – neither the Dantes, nor the Petrarchs, nor the Boccaccios will be safe. For example, if I find *in pasto ai cani* and *tomba e cuna* and read them as *impastacani* and *tombeccuna* … this is a way to corrupt all language'.

[42] His *parole appiastricciate* can be found in Lombardelli 1586, 123.

[43] Lombardelli writes, 'De' vocaboli impropri vi ho trovati in tutto da dieci; e tutti con particolari, o ragioni, o scuse riceverebber difesa' (1586, 124; 'Concerning improper words, I have found ten of them in all, and all of them could be defended with specific justifications').

[44] 'Language is alive and in flux, and it must be ennobled daily'.

While the previous three responses all appeared in 1586, several years later a fourth writer, Malatesta Porta (1561-1629), also took issue with the Crusca's *parole appiastricciate*. Unlike the others, Porta offered a radically different approach. Civic administrator, intellectual, and lifelong resident of Rimini, Porta composed several dialogues on diverse literary subjects, including one dedicated to an analysis of the *Liberata*, entitled *Il Rossi* (1589).[45] In this work, a lengthy rebuttal of the extensive criticisms made against Tasso's poem, Porta emphasizes the innovative style of the work. Rather than engage in bitter polemic with the Crusca or refute their pedantic minutiae, Porta is much more interested in defending Tasso through an exploration of the efficacy and vividness of his poetic language.

Earlier defenders of Tasso, such as Pellegrino and Ottonelli, mention only in passing the effect of Tasso's grand style. These earlier responses depend largely on a theoretical discourse that seeks to correct misreadings and misunderstandings according to the correct interpretation of authorities such as Aristotle. Though he does engage in more theoretical questions, Porta focuses extensively on the effects of the *Liberata*'s linguistic, specifically acoustic, features and their effect on the reader's experience of the work.

As just one example, Porta praises the expressive force of the verse 'Così vien sospiroso, e così porta' (I, 49, 3: 'thus he goes sighing, and thus he carries'), one of the many lines maligned by the Crusca as possessing a 'suono dispiacevole' (Rosini 1828a, 200; 'an unpleasant sound'). According to Porta, this particular line, offering the first description of Tancredi in the poem, contains an abundance of the vowel 'O' in order to contribute more effectively to evoking the image of a lovesick knight:

in leggendosi, o recitandosi questo verso … egli mi è avviso di veder l'innamorato Tancredi col capo chino, e con gli occhi in terra fissi mandar fuori ad ora ad ora cocenti sospiri dal più profondo petto, che quasi me ancora a sospirare invogliano: e giungendo alla voce *sospiroso*, cotale mi è forza pronunciarla, come sogliono que' loro sospiri i musici o per arte, o per ripigliare alquanto di spirito. (Rosini 1828a, 219)[46]

For Porta, the verse's assonance is most effective when uttered with attention to the relationship between sound and subject matter. The vividness of the image leads almost automatically ('è forza') to a corresponding manner of

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[45] For an introduction to Porta and his participation in the Tasso-Ariosto polemic, see Apollonio 2007.

[46] 'while reading or reciting this verse, … it seemed that I could see the lovesick Tancredi with his head bowed, eyes fixed on the ground, repeatedly letting out deep sighs from his breast, all of which almost makes me want to sigh myself. And arriving at the word *sospiroso*, it is necessary for me to pronounce it like those sighs made by musicians, either done artfully or for recovering their breath'.

reading, which Porta further associates with the mannerisms of musicians, whose sighs punctuate and intensify their own performances.

Porta thus offers a manner of recitation diametrically opposed to that of the Crusca. The academicians recite according to some model imposed on the text, which we will further explore below. In contrast, Porta champions an approach derived entirely from his individual response to the poetic word. As such, the reader's sensitivity to the shifting quality of the text affects, perhaps even determines, the style of performance. Such a nuanced view of the potential sympathy between reader and text appears to be the first full-blooded alternative to the Crusca's approach, as opposed to the previous authors who simply reject the *parole appiastricciate* without detailing their own style of reading. Yet Porta does not present his manner of recitation as some innocuous second choice. Instead, he directly challenges the Crusca's approach to reading the written word, suggesting that these different practices do not sit in peaceful co-existence.

Porta's main arguments echo those already seen in the earlier three writers, namely that the Crusca unnecessarily disfigure the written text. Regarding the *parole appiastricciate*, he limits his critique to an analysis of one example, the word *lordodio*, a crude deformation of the phrase 'lor d'odio' in order to produce the sound 'lordo' ('filthy'). This word does not appear in the original list, though it is mentioned elsewhere by the Crusca.[47] Criticizing their pronunciation, Porta takes issue with the apparent disregard for the written phrase:

se non si appiastriccia a prova, non si legge talmente, che ne risulti cotale appia-stricciamento: perciocché la voce *lor* è separata così dal segno del secondo caso *di*, scritto senza lo apostrofo distesamente, come è regola migliore di ortografia e di poesia, che non se ne può far nascere, meno che troppo stiratamente, la voce *lord*; e parimente la voce *odio* cotale disgiunta, che non senza grande appiastricciamento si può trarne *lordodio*: anzi mi pare, che a forza si faccia ritegno nella *lor*. Così ne-gli altri versi, togliendosi via lettere a ciascuno, si appiastricciano le voci a pruova. (Rosini 1828a, 219)[48]

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[47] Earlier in their critique, the Crusca provide a list of 'versi bassi' found in Tasso's poem, adding: 'Dove c'è anche per giunta alla derrata il *lordodio*: benché di questi suoni, oltre ad ogni altro, sia tutto ripien quel poema' (Salviati 2588, 89; 'On top of that, there is also the phrase *lordodio*, though the whole poem is full of these sounds more than any other').

[48] 'if one does not combine words deliberately, one will not read in such a manner that produces such combinations, since the word *lor*, separated from the second word *di*, is written entirely without an apostrophe, as is the best rule in orthography and poetry. In this way it is not possible, unless reading overly quickly, to produce the word *lord*. Likewise, the word *odio* has such separation, that not without a great mashing together can one produce *lordodio*. On the contrary, it seems to me that one should necessarily pause with the word *lor*. Similarly, in the other verses, if one takes away letters, the words are deliberately mashed together'.

As with Tasso's earlier supporters, Porta expresses amazement that the Crusca appear to be deliberately removing letters from words. He refers specifically to the orthography, which must be taken into consideration in order to produce the proper execution of the verse. Moreover, precisely because *lor* (shortened for *loro*) is written without an apostrophe, as it normally is in poetic diction, the word should remain separated from the following phrase. In fact, Porta believes that there should be a moment of pause ('ritegno') on the first word in order to articulate appropriately the line.

Regarding the *parole appiastricciate* themselves, Porta limits his response to one particular instance, the potentially offensive sounds of 'al fianco Azzo' and Bernardo Tasso's 'che Azzolino':

non saranno di così spiacevole suono, se non si accorciano in essi a bello studio le voci; perciocché nel primo si legge la voce *fianco*, interamente scritta; nel secondo la *che* ultima, intera altresì leggiamo: le quali voci non accorciate per sottilizzamento, non porgono altrui cagione di biasimare que' versi ov'elle sono, anzi rinchiudono arte maggiore che non sarebbono, come se accorciate fossero senza cotale spiacevolezza di suono. (Rosini 1828a, 220)[49]

He thus continues to berate the Crusca for a continued, purposeful distortion of the text, relying on a specific vocabulary to characterize their claimed manner of reading: 'a pruova', 'a studio', 'per sottilizzamento'. He contrasts this intentional mishandling of the verses with the poet's own greater art ('arte maggiore'): whereas the Crusca remove vowels and shorten words according to their pernicious design, Tasso makes use of those letters quite intentionally in order to produce a certain aesthetic effect. Indeed, for Porta, the use of contiguous vowels produces a certain 'wondrous amplification' of the poetry.[50]

[49] 'these words would not be of such an unpleasant sound if they were not shortened so deliberately. Indeed, in the first verse, one should read the word *fianco* as it is written in its entirety. In the second verse, one also reads the last *che* in its entirety. If such words are not shortened through subtlety, there will be no reason to censure the verses; on the contrary, they contain greater art now, than if they were shortened and lacked such an unpleasantness of sound'. It is worth noting that earlier printings of Bernardo Tasso's *Amadigi* contain the reading 'Poi più che Neron empio, e ch'Azzolino' (B. Tasso 1581, 30). Porta actually inserts vowels which are not originally in the printed editions.

[50] Regarding the 'clashing vowels' present in 'al fianco Azzo', Porta writes: 'Brevemente adunque io dico, che se si accorciava la *che* … egli venìa a farsi men grande: il che non accade, intera scrivendosi, come fu da quel valentuomo; perciocché insieme coll'altre voci … aggiunge un certo aggrandimento maraviglioso, cagionato dall'ammontarsi le lettere in esso' (Rosini 1828a, 220; 'I shall briefly tell you therefore that if you were to shorten the *che* ... the verse would be less grand, which does not happen when written in its entirety, as was done by this fine man. Thus, together with the other words … it adds a certain wondrous amplification caused by the accumulation of letters in the verse').

Porta's discussion thus shifts from the Crusca's errors of reading to the expressive virtues of 'clashing vowels' ('concorso delle vocali'). In his view, the presence of contiguous vowels elevates the style of a poem and should be employed by any poet seeking a 'fullness of sound' ('pienezza di suono').[51] He emphasizes the effect of 'greatness' achieved through such a sound, noting that it should obviously be avoided if the poet wishes to evoke a sense of 'sweetness': 'Dove poi si volesse attendere alla dolcezza dell'orazione, anziché alla grandezza, io loderei bensì, che tale concorso ed ammontamento di vocali si fuggisse' (223).[52] In other words, this figure should be used only when required by the subject matter and the intended effect on the reader or listener. Porta's emphasis on stylistic decorum further contrasts with the Crusca's indiscriminate truncation of vowels and words, which does not seem to take into account the variety of tones, registers, and inflections of the *Liberata*.

Taken together, these responses to the Crusca focus on several themes. First, the Crusca's approach is everywhere characterized as deliberate ('a studio'), rather than following a more natural or customary manner, becoming therefore injurious to the text itself. Second, in the view of Tasso's supporters, any reading of a line of poetry must involve attending to the written word, which already offers a first-level interpretation for the manner of recitation. Corollary to this principle is Porta's insistence on keeping in mind the sense of the verse, including its affective content, which should further determine the style of reading. These positions all suggest that the Crusca may be acting in bad faith regarding their approach to Tasso's text, and that their creation of mashed-up words is wholly arbitrary and manufactured for the purpose of belittling Tasso and his work. When we turn to look at the Crusca's responses to these remarks, they clearly stand by their earlier claims. More than that, they continue to insist on the naturalness of their pronunciation, namely by appealing to the authority of metrical scansion.

4. *The Crusca and Scansion*

The Crusca, primarily through the pen of Lionardo Salviati (1540-1589), responded in various ways to the criticisms levied against them. In response to Ottonelli's caustic *Discorso*, Salviati responded in a likewise pungent manner, adopting the pseudonym Carlo Fioretti to allow him more freedom

[51] On 'fullness of sound' Porta writes, 'se molte [lettere] ve ne sieno, producono la pienezza del suono, di donde si cagiona la grandezza del verso' (Rosini 1828a, 223: 'If there are many [letters], they produce that fullness of sound that is the cause of greatness in the verse'). This discussion mirrors Tasso's own theory of epic style as outlined in his *Discorsi dell'arte poetica*, first printed in 1587; see note 28. Apollonio 2007 notes several close similarities between Tasso and Porta; however, the author focuses primarily on general statements about Aristotelian poetics. A more sustained analysis of Porta's stylistic ideology is warranted.

[52] 'Wherever one aims at sweetness of speech, rather than greatness, I would prefer that such a sequence and accumulation of vowels be avoided'.

as a polemicist. His *Considerazioni* (1586), like much of the other documents in the controversy, addressed each of his opponent's points in turn, although most of 'Fioretti's' remarks seldom move beyond the level of invective.[53] Despite the paucity of substantive comments, we do occasionally find traces of the Crusca's reading practices through Salviati's rejection of Ottonelli's suggestions of the proper way to 'mandar fuori i versi' (Salviati 1586, 125; 'pronounce the verses').

In opposition to Ottonelli's earlier claim that one should read words clearly, Salviati-Fioretti retorts that the Crusca read in the only manner available, that is, naturally. When Ottonelli criticizes the pronunciation of the word 'tombeccuna', emphasizing that the written text must be respected, Salviati replies, 'Dovendosi legger distesamente, e secondo il natural flusso del verso, non ne può uscire altro suono' (124).[54] Against Ottonelli's recommendation for the 'distinct' articulation of invididual sounds, Salviati argues for the uninterrupted, fluid reading of the verse. It appears that, in Salviati's view, the overemphasis of separate sounds leads to a disruption of the larger unit of rhythm, namely the line as a whole. Unfortunately, Salviati does not elaborate further on the nature of this rhythm, nor address Ottonelli's complaint that the Crusca ignore the written text and the presence of punctuation.[55]

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[53] Salviati often insults Ottonelli directly: 'Dite il vero per vostra fede: di questi diciotto mesi, che voi avete consumati in impastando il vostro discorso, contr'agli Accademici della Crusca, quante settimane siete voi stato ad assottigliarvi su le facezie del Gonnella, del Barlacchi, e del Carafulla, per arricchirvi di questa arguzia? Ma per tutto ciò conveniva anche pensarvi più' (Salviati 1586, 76-77; 'By your faith, tell us the truth: out of these eighteen months spent kneading your discourse against the Academicians of the Crusca, how many weeks did you spend sharpening your wits with the jokes of Gonnella, Barlacchi, and Carafulla to come up with this brilliance? For all that work, perhaps you should have spent more time thiking about it').

[54] 'Since one must read continuously, and according to the natural flow of the verse, no other sound can emerge'.

[55] Tasso, responding to the Crusca in his *Apologia* (1585), echoes the arguments made by his various supporters, 'Non era necessario congiungerle [i.e. le parole] in quella guisa, e confonder la scrittura' (Salviati 1585, 95; 'It was not necessary to join [the words] in this manner and mix up the writing'). Apart from this, Tasso does not respond to the Crusca's *parole appiastricciate*. Salviati, in response, writes, 'All'orecchie d'assai persone forse non era necessario, ma farle sentire a voi, al qual dite, che non dispiacciano, non si poteva mancar di farlo' (96; 'For the ears of most people perhaps it was not necessary, but to make you hear these words, which you say are not unpleasant, it couldn't be avoided'). Salviati passes again over issues of writing, further suggesting that the Crusca's manner of recitation is widely acceptable (i.e. by 'many people'). For more on the exchange between Tasso and Salviati, see Godard 2003. Tasso's own conceptions of elision, vowel collision, and synalepha are important to a more general discussion of literary sensibilities, but they are outside the scope of this article. For Tasso's theories of epic style, see Grosser 1992 and Vitale 2007.

The approach that the Crusca use becomes clearer in their second response to Pellegrino, the *'Nfarinato secondo* (Salviati 1588).[56] Replying to the claim that the written word requires a corresponding shift in utterance, the Crusca admit that one could, in fact, be more generous toward Tasso's text:

Tra le voci appiastricciate, che si notarono, ve n'ha alcune, che perché si scrivano diversamente, rendono pur sempre quel suono stesso, che dicono gli Accademici: conciosiacosa che tanto riesca nella pronunzia *che canuto* quanto *checcanuto*, *or degni*, quanto *ordegni* … e tutti gli altri di questa fatta. Qualch'un'altra con la scrittura, per lo contrario, e con le pose ch'ammette il verso, è capace di medicina; potendosi scrivere, e pronunziare *rischio ignoto*, *Tomba, e cuna*, e s'altre v'ha di cotali. (Salviati 1588, 233)[57]

From this response emerges the recurrent tension between writing and pronunciation. The Crusca's first claim is that their mode of reading necessarily produces certain sounds, regardless of the written text (e.g. *checcanuto*, *ordegni*). They further acknowledge that, despite earlier complaints, one could both write *and* pronounce certain phrases in the same manner ('rischio ignoto', 'tomba, e cuna'). Yet they also qualify this second type of 'medicine' by limiting such instances to certain positions within the line, where certain pauses ('pose') are permitted by the verse itself. From this discussion of the 'verso' as the structure which determines not only placement but pronunciation, it becomes clear that the Crusca have not been indiscriminately eliding vowels and combining words. Instead, their manner of recitation insists on giving priority to the construction of the line as a rhythmical unit.

Yet the Crusca also claim that there do exist two general tendencies in recitation: on the one hand, a leisurely and slow approach, and on the other, an unimpeded reading of the entire line:

Di queste ultime [i.e. 'rischio ignoto', 'tomba, e cuna'] dice la Crusca, che il non ispesso uso può tollerarsi, ma nel fermo, e quasi continuo qual sembra loro in Torquato Tasso, estimano che i versi, non solo mandandogli fuor con lentezza, e agiatamente, ma esprimendogli a tutto corso, e secondo il natural flusso, che gli misura, e come dicono i Latini scandendogli, debbano esser privi di cotai suoni. (Salviati 1588, 233-234)[58]

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[56] A description of the *'Nfarinato secondo*, and its relationship to Pellegrino's earlier arguments, can be found in Weinberg 1963, 1039-1042.

[57] 'Among the mashed-up words that were noted, there are some that – even if written differently – would still produce the same sound that the Academicians claim. Indeed, the pronunciation of *che canuto* would still be *checcanuto*, *or degni* would be *ordegni* … and all the others of this type. By contrast, some of the other words can be cured through writing and with the pauses allowed by the verse. One could both write and pronounce: *rischio ignoto*; *tomba, e cuna*; and other similar words'.

[58] 'Regarding such words [e.g. 'rischio ignoto', 'tomba, e cuna'], the Crusca believe that occasional use is tolerable; however, concerning the constant and continuous use that seems

This contrast suggests that the former, slower manner corresponds to the positions argued by Tasso's various supporters, whereby the reader carefully articulates the written in order to distinguish individual sounds. The Crusca do recognize this as one possible way of uttering a verse. However, they clearly favor the second, 'natural' manner, which approaches each line of poetry as a unit meant to be read in its entirety ('a tutto corso'). This emphasis on an uninterrupted flow echoes Salviati's earlier response to Ottonelli, where he argues for reading 'distesamente' ('continuously'), rather than focusing on individual words as distinct ('distinte'). Although they concede the possibility of reading differently, they nevertheless claim that the sound of clashing vowels should still be avoided altogether. In their view, even if one were to read as Tasso's supporters claim to do, the aesthetically unpleasing vowel sequences ought to be avoided as a general rule.

More importantly, the Crusca claim that the second method of recitation is the truly 'natural' manner. While in the response to Ottonelli the notion of natural flow ('natural flusso') was left unexplored, here the Crusca legitimize the 'naturalness' of their approach by appealing to the authority of scansion. They establish further the authority of this argument by referring to the classical, specifically Latin, origin of this approach, which allows one to derive the 'measure' of each verse.[59] As a result of this repeated emphasis on the prosody of the entire line, together with their appeal to scansion, we can begin to reconsider the Crusca's list of mashed-up words. Indeed, once we view their vowel elision as a specifically metrical issue, we can attempt to reconstruct the Crusca's application of scansion as it reveals itself through the *parole appiastricciate*.

In order to recover the model used as the basis for the Crusca's recitation, we can apply the principles of modern Italian scansion, itself derived from the general efforts to standardize meter in the sixteenth century.[60] Scansion, in its most general sense, is the mapping of stressed syllables in a line of poetry in order to identify its metrical structure and describe its rhythm.[61] The

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to them to be in Torquato Tasso, they believe that verses should lack such sounds, not only when the verses are pronounced slowly and leisurely, but also when expressed in their entirety, according to the natural flow that determines their measure, that is – as they say in Latin – when following scansion'.

[59] The Crusca's emphasis on a regular way of reading the line, including respecting certain 'giaciture' and 'pose', follows near contemporary metrical discussions, such as the treatises of Trissino and Ruscelli. A history of debates over scansion is outside the scope of this study, but for an overview of various treatises in the Cinquecento, see Abramov-van Rijk 2009, 171-236.

[60] For an analysis of the metrical tendencies in sixteenth-century Italy, see Bausi and Martelli 1993, in particular 147-175.

[61] Menichetti defines scansion with reference to the activity of the reader: 'it can be defined as the more or less conscious attempt to capture, in the blink of an eye, the way

basic metrical category of a line of Italian poetry derives from the number of syllables and the position of the final accent, also known as the *ictus*. For example, the hendecasyllable, the most common and flexible of Italian lines, has a necessary *ictus* on the tenth syllable. The position of other accents on the preceding, semantically significant words (that is, not words such as definite articles or conjunctions) further determines the type of hendecasyllable under consideration. The metrical structure thus derives from available grammatical accents, rather than imposing an *a priori* stucture onto a line. This approach is further complicated by the fact that contiguous vowels are almost always counted towards the same metrical syllable, even if they are ultimately separated in pronunciation. As such, multiple vowels within, and across, words are reduced to a single syllable in scansion. This metrical figure, if it involves contiguous vowels across word boundaries, is called synalepha.[62] It is distinct from elision, which instead subtracts vowels from the line, effectively eliminating them from both scansion and recitation.

Since scansion necessarily takes into account the placement of syllabic stress in a line, we can make use of the *parole appiastricciate* and their suppressed syllabic accents in order to reconstruct a model of the Crusca's approach to reciting the *Liberata*. By contrasting such a model with a modern scanning of the same lines, we place into sharper relief their particular reading practice. As a first example, let us take the original line for *tombeccuna,* noting all of the available syllabic positions (while also reducing vowels according to synalepha):

   1 2 3   4   5 6 7 8   9 10 11
   A l'es**se**quie, a i na**ta**li ha **tom**ba, e **cu**na.

By mapping the accents of semantically significant words within these available syllables, this line presents metrical stress on syllabic positions 3-6-8-10.[63] The final *ictus*, here on syllable 10 (**cu**na), identifies this as a hendecasyllable. Other features, namely the presence of an available accent on syllable 6 (na**ta**li) and the lack of stress on syllable 4, categorize the line as an *endecasillabo a maiore*. Secondary accents on 3 (es**se**quie) and 8 (**tom**ba) further distinguishes the line as one of the common sub-categories of the *maiore* group, named according to the internal syllabic positions, in this case 3-6-8.

in which each line is constructed regarding its essential metrical features … In order to be correct, the scanning of a traditional line implies … at a minimum, an instinctual knowledge of "models" ' (1993, 56-57).

[62] While synalepha refers to the contraction of vowels across words, the related figure of syneresis indicates a similar vocalic reduction within individual words. For the purposes of our study, syneresis is less important for understanding the Crusca's approach to recitation, although it doubtless plays a role.

[63] For a discussion of the different metrical typologies in the *Liberata*, see Grosser 2014.

It is important to note that, in modern practice, the syllabic reduction produced through synalepha exists in theory and not at the level of concrete realization.[64] As a result, the recitation of this line could potentially read a total of fifteen syllables, depending on the speed with which contiguous vowels are uttered. It is in this regard that the Crusca's practice differs from a modern approach. In their reading of this line, the previously theoretical synalepha translates into an effective elision of the vowels. Thus, *tombeccuna* emerges as their reading of the end of the line.

The structure of *tombeccuna* implies another element of the Crusca's pronunciation which does not normally exist in modern scansion, namely the minimization – possibly full suppression – of the accent on syllable 8. Today we would characterize *tomba* as possessing a secondary accent, perhaps leading to a diminished weight in the line's execution, though not to its complete suppression. In the Crusca's rendition, however, *tomba* is fully elided into both the following conjunctive *e* and the final *cuna*. The reason for this appears to be quite simply that the principal *ictus* of the line, contained in *cuna*, has a dramatic effect on the preceding words. By thus prioritizing *cuna*, the Crusca all but erase the rhythmic and phonetic potential of the secondary accents of the preceding words.

We can thus conclude our analysis by returning to the *parole appiastricciate*, viewing them not as arbitrary instances of elision, but rather as consistent elements of their metrical reading of a line. To understand better the tendencies in their prosody, we can also loosely group the *parole appiastricciate* according to the position of the 'suppressed' syllable in the line. In the following list, modern scansion is noted with the diminished syllable in square brackets:

tombeccuna	A l'essequie, a i natali ha **tomba, e cuna**	3 – 6 – [8]
incultavene	Misto, e di boscareccie **inculte avene**	1 – 6 – [8]
rischiognoto	E tacito, e guardingo al **rischio ignoto**	2 – 6 – [8]
tendindi	Impon, che sian le **tende indi** munite	2 – 4 – [6] – 7
comprotton	Genero il **compra Otton** con larga dote	1 – [4] – 6 – 8
alfiancazzo	C'hor l'è **al fianco Azzo** quinto, hor la seconda	2 – [3] – 4 – 6
impastacani	Ch'**in pasto a' cani** le sue membri i neghi	[2] – 4 – 8
vibrei	**Vibra ei**, presa nel mezo, una zagaglia	[1] – 2 – 3 – 6

The Crusca's elided syllables seem to appear in any position across the span of the entire hendecasyllable, although a small majority (3) appear at the end of the line. In these cases, syllable 8 – despite belonging to semantically significant words ('tomba', 'inculte', 'rischio') – is absorbed into the final word containing the final *ictus*. Two other examples suggest that the Crusca may observe a bipartite division of the line, an aspect of scansion which typically

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[64] An overview of these issues can be found in Menichetti 1993, 51-66.

exists at the theoretical level, rather than in practice.[65] For instance, the words *comprotton* and *impastacani* sit clearly at the boundary of a first hemistich. Much like the elision of line-final syllables, these significant words ('compra'; 'pasto') are absorbed into a principal *ictus* ('Ott**on**'; '**ca**ni').

In the remaining examples, the *parole appiastricciate* result from the simplification of rhythmic complexity, wherein multiple contiguous stressed syllables undergo a peculiar shift in accentuation. With *tendindi,* a line with the accents on 2-4-6-7 is simplified to 2-4-7, a more common sub-category of *endecasillabo a minore* that avoids adjacent stressed syllables. There are also two lines with three possibly adjacent accents, a problematic metrical phenomenon that continues to frustrate metrical scholars today.[66] As a result, with *alfiancazzo*, a line with a potential metrical scheme of 2-3-4-6 becomes 2-4-6. Likewise, with *vibrei*, the Crusca simplify a line of 1-2-3-6 into 2-3-6.

Lastly, there are four *parole appiastricciate* which occur not because of elision but simply due to pronouncing the words in rapid succession. In some cases, the absorbed words are not semantically significant enough for accentuation within the line, noted by an asterisk.

ordegni	O' degno sol, cui d'ubidire **hor degni**	**2** – 4 – 8 - [*9]
mantremante	Nè più governa il fren la **man tremante**	4 – 6 – [8] – 10
checcanuto	Ad un'huom, **che canuto** havea da canto	3 – [*4] – 6 – 8 – 10
crinchincima	E 'l **crin, ch'in cima** al capo havea raccolto	[2] – 4 – 6 – 8 – 10

None of these words undergo the same elision as the previous group, and their 'appiastricciamento' seems to result more from an infelicitous linguistic construction than any deliberate mishandling of the verse on the part of the Crusca. The 'absorbed' syllables, especially *hor* and *che*, have much less semantic weight than the earlier examples. As a result, it is less surprising that they would be easily joined with following words in the execution of the line. Nevertheless, it is still clear that, as with the previous elided examples, the weight of the *ictus* exerts a palpable influence on the preceding syllables. *Crinchincima*, in particular, suggests that, in their reading of the line, the Crusca emphasized the stress on 'cima', rather than the potential pause suggested by both the syntax and punctuation following 'crin'. Given the

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[65] Current opinions on bipartite lines are divided, especially with regards to the existence of the caesura. In the sixteenth century, several theorists and writers acknowledge the existence of the caesura, even suggesting that it be respected in pronunciation. For a theoretical discussion, see Menichetti 1993; for historical examples, see Abramov-van Rijk 2009.

[66] J. Grosser, in the introduction to his study of the meter of the *Liberata*, emphasizes that the only *a priori* principle of his method of scansion is the 'regola dei tre *ictus*'. He also admits that the *Liberata* presents numerous moments of ambiguity, where one must decide the best way to de-accentuate words in order to avoid scanning three contiguous accents. (2014, 6-24).

position of both *checcanuto* and *crinchincima* at the end of potential hemistichs, these words confirm the pattern noticed in the previous examples, namely the influence of the *ictus* on the execution of the line.

The Crusca's emphasis on reading 'distesamente' and 'a tutto corso' thus corresponds to a specific practice, rather than simply serving as a rhetorical strategy to refute Tasso's supporters. While the latter argue for the expressive value of individual sounds and letters, the Crusca insist on the absolute priority of the metrical *ictus* in the execution of the line. This specifically metrical emphasis necessarily diminishes other elements of the line, such as the subtle interplay of more local sounds, as well as the meaning of the words themselves. As a result, the Crusca's claim to be using a 'natural' approach raises further questions. In their transcriptions of the *parole appiastricciate*, they attempt to demonstrate the naturalness of their reading through attention to phonetic modifications which mirror more quotidian patterns of speech. Yet they also appeal to the authority of scansion, a theoretical mapping of the accentuation of a line that does not correlate with 'normal' spoken language. The 'naturalness' of their manner of recitation may thus not refer to common, spoken usage, but rather more generally to Florentine customs surrounding the reading of poems in *ottava rima*. Given the ubiquity of public performances of poems in *ottava rima* in late sixteenth-century Italy, it is not difficult to imagine the existence of a manner of reading that emphasized the uninterrupted execution of verse.[67]

The Crusca, by their very nature as an incipient cultural institution, represent an attempt to consolidate a vernacular literary language in keeping with a kind of archaic purism. Moreover, they were attempting to establish a cultural hegemony rooted in the authority of Florence and Florentine customs.[68] Any claims for 'naturalness' are therefore thoroughly normative and regionally specific in character. In contrast, we find *letterati* from Naples, Siena, Fanano, and Rimini, resisting the Crusca and their ambitions to become the final authorities on vernacular letters. As such, the *Liberata* offers a site of contention, where opposing camps argue over the control and correct method of writing and experiencing poetry. This opposition allows us to trace the emergence of various structures of feeling of late sixteenth-century poets and their audiences.[69] This particular exchange concerning

[67] *Ottava rima* appeared in a larger number of different types of public performance, from recitations of chivalric romance to the news. Daily exposure to *ottava rima* was thus unavoidable. For recent studies related to the performance of this metrical scheme, see Degl'Innocenti 2008; Rospocher and Salzberg 2012; Goethals 2016; McIlvenna 2017.

[68] As Di Sacco notes, 'The Crusca's purism, by refusing the expression "lingua toscana" and defending the municipal peculiarities of the "volgar fiorentino" (as Salviati defines it), ended up limiting itself to a miserly and provincial usage with no future' (1997, 122).

[69] Much has been made of the radical changes in poetic practice in the late sixteenth century relative to the broader cultural movements of 'Mannerism' and 'Baroque'. See

parole appiastricciate reveals certain reading strategies, together with their attendant sensibilities and modes of consumption. On the one hand, the Crusca emphasize the recitation of a poem before a group of listeners, while on the other, defenders of the *Liberata*, such as Malatesta Porta, focus on their own personal experience.[70] Tasso's poem becomes a pretext for debating the relationship between the abstract level of scansion and the execution of poetry, an issue that remains open and troublesome even today.

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Ferroni and Quondam 1973; Quondam 1975; Baldassarri 1983. It is again worth pointing out that the Crusca's complaints about Tasso's style in a sense confirm his own declared stylistic program, in particular his emphasis on harshness (see note 28).

[70] Di Sacco comments, 'The controversy quickly left the level of language to move to other areas of critical reflection, thereby revealing its true face, which involved a different idea of culture and aesthetic sensibility' (1997, 124). Di Sacco's analysis of such aesthetic sensibilities focuses almost largely on Aristotelian categories, such as unity of action, verisimilitude, the role of history, and so forth. It is our hope to have shifted attention in a different, though complementary, direction by emphasizing the ways in which the interlocutors of the polemic might have consumed and enjoyed poetry.

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