



Jerusalem Delivered

Torquato Tasso

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The poem tells of the initial disunity and setbacks of the Christians and their ultimate success. The most famous sequences include the following:

Sofronia (in English: Sophronia), a Christian maiden of Jerusalem, accuses herself of a crime in order to avert a general massacre of the Christians by the Muslim king. In an attempt to save her, her lover Olindo accuses himself in turn, and each lover pleads with the authorities in order to save the other.

Clorinda, a warrior-maiden, joins the Muslims, but the Christian knight Tancredi (in English: Tancred) falls in love with her. During a night battle in which she sets the Christian siege tower on fire, she is mistakenly killed by her lover, but she converts to Christianity before dying. The character of Clorinda is inspired in part by Virgil's Camilla and by Bradamante in Ariosto; the circumstances of her birth (a Caucasian girl born to African parents) are modeled on the lead character (Chariclea) from the ancient Greek novel by Heliodorus of Emesa.

Erminia discovers the wounded Tancred, by Guercino, 1619 (Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome). Another maiden of the region, the Princess Erminia (or "Hermine") of Antioch, also falls in love with Tancredi and betrays her people to help him, but she grows jealous when she learns that Tancredi loves Clorinda. She returns to the Muslims, then steals Clorinda's armor and joins a group of shepherds.

The witch Armida (modeled on Circe in Homer and the witch Alcina in Ariosto's epic) enters the Christian camp asking for their aid; her seductions divide the knights against each other and a group leaves with her, only to be transformed into animals by her magic.

Armida tries to kill the greatest Christian knight Rinaldo (his name appears in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (III, 30); he is the son of Bertoldo and was the reputed founder of the house of Este) but she falls in love with him instead and takes him away to a magical island where he becomes infatuated with her caresses and grows idle. Two Christian knights seek out the hidden fortress, brave the dangers that guard it and, by giving Rinaldo a mirror of diamond, force him to see himself in his effeminated and amorous state and to return to the war, leaving Armida heartbroken. Armida grieves at this loss and desires death, but being a sorceress, she cannot die. (This sequence echoes a similar storyline in Ariosto: the witch Alcina ensnares the knight Ruggiero, but the spell is broken by a magic ring that the good sorceress Melissa brings him; earlier antecedents include Circe's attempt to keep Odysseus on her island, and Morgan le Fay taking Ogier the Dane off to a faraway island).

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