A Woman Reads the *Aeneid*: Echoes of Vergil in Lucrezia Marinelli’s Epic *L’Enrico*

Prolific Venetian writer and polemicist Lucrezia Marinelli was one of the most educated women of her day. In 1635 she published what some historians consider her masterpiece, *L'Enrico, overo Bisanzio acquistato* (*Henry, or Byzantium gained*), an epic poem in the style of Tasso and Ariosto. In one episode of this epic, Marinelli describes the ill-fated love between Lucillo and Clelia. When Veniero goes to Cyprus to find allies for his war against Constantinople, Lucillo, the ambitious prince of the island decides to go with him despite his wife’s desire and ominous premonitions. Lucillo and his crew, victims of a terrible storm, die at sea but Lucillo’s ghost visits his wife to let her know about his sad destiny. As the dead body of the prince reaches the shore, Clelia, hugging it, falls dead and the two are buried together. Although the most important ancient referent of this story is that of Ceyx and Alcyon retold by Ovid at *Metamorphoses* 11*.*410ff., the *Aeneid* is also an important subtext for our author. Vergil is clearly recalled by Marinelli in many different moments: in her apostrophe to the short-sighted Lucillo (echoing Vergil’s narrator’s apostrophe to the ignorant mind of men, *Aen*. 10.501), and to *fama* (*Aen*. 4.188), in the description of the storm (recasting the storm of *Aeneid* 1.81-123), in Clelia’s desire to keep Lucillo at home in the name of their union (recalling Dido at *Aen*. 4.316-19) and in her illusional hearing of Lucillo’s voice (recalling Dido’s behavior at 4.460-63). Some of her laments remind us of Euryalus’ mother’s grief for her dead son (*Aen*. 9.481-502). The apparition of Lucillo’s ghost recalls that of Hector to Aeneas at *Aen*. 2.268-97. In this paper I will analyze some of these episodes highlighting Marinelli’s deep dialogue with Vergil’s masterpiece innovatively employed to criticize war enterprises.

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