Tapestries for a Cardinal-Nephew: A Roman Set Illustrating Tasso’s Gerusalemme Liberata

EDITH A. STANDEN
Consultant, Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

When Pietro Ottoboni became Pope Alexander VIII in October 1689, he was nearly eighty years old; he is reported to have said, “Let us make all possible speed, for the eleventh hour has struck.” He did, indeed, die on February 1, 1691, but during his brief reign he had been able to do much for his relatives. Among these was his great-nephew Pietro, born in 1667, whom he made a cardinal in 1689. The dignity was supported, of course, by such sources of substantial revenue as could be assigned to a layman, for the young Ottoboni did not become a priest until 1724. He may well be called the last of the Cardinal-Nephews, for a bull of June 22, 1692, put an end to papal nepotism for ever.2

The most important title the new cardinal assumed was that of vice-chancellor of the Papal State, an appointment for life. The Palazzo della Cancelleria therefore became his principal residence; until his death in 1740 it was, according to an authority on the period, “the centre of the most enlightened and extravagant patronage in Rome.”3 Here Ottoboni accumulated his paintings by old and modern masters, his sculptures, classical gems, clocks, jewels, and musical instruments; here he installed two theatres and entertained lavishly, for he was, as a contemporary wrote, “amatore di musica, poesia e di allegrezze.”4 Arcangelo Corelli and Alessandro Scarlatti benefited from his patronage and Filippo Juvarra produced scenery for his theatres. A portrait by Francesco Trevisani, one of his favorite painters, in the Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, England (Figure 1), shows the young cardinal in a surplice made mostly of fine Venetian needlepoint lace, placing his hand on an elaborately carved desk;5 a golden bell and a silver

2. Ibid., pp. 637, 638.
5. Frank R. D. Federko, Francesco Trevisani (Washington, 1977) pp. 21, 73, no. F.5, pl. 100. The author believes the portrait was painted between 1700 and 1705; this dating is supported by the style of the lace, which is not the sculptural 17th-century gros-point de Venise, but has a lighter quality, typical of early 18th-century lace.

© The Metropolitan Museum of Art 1982
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM JOURNAL 16
inkstand are beside him; the Ottoboni arms—an eagle with two crowned heads standing on a banded globe—an appear on the back of a chair behind him, as a three-dimensional carving.

It is these arms, shown in the upper corners of four tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum, that have led to the identification of one of the very few sets with secular subjects woven in Rome in the eighteenth century.7 The set is listed in the inventory made soon after the cardinal’s death in 1740; we thus know that it consisted of at least seventeen pieces, all 14½ to 15 palmi high, of which ten can now be identified.8

The tapestries were hung in five rooms of the Cancelleria. In the first room was a single wide piece:

Un pezzo d’arazzo tessuto in altezza di p.mi quattordici e mezzo e di lunghezza p.mi ventisei e mezzo rapp. e diverse figure in piedi boscareccie e padiglioni ad uso militare, con suo freggio che lo circonda essendoci in un
cantone la seg.te iscrizione: NOUZON 1735 con titolo sopra il medesimo: La bella Armida di sua forma altera e de’ doni del sesso e dell’étade, festoni a uso de fiori e figure che tengono sopra la testa una palla sbarrata con l’aquila sopra.

It was appraised at 500.45 scudi.

This tapestry (Figure 2) was last sold at Sotheby’s, London, on April 29, 1960, no. 105, when it was bought by the London dealer C. John.9 It is 10½ feet high and 21 feet wide. The inscription is from canto 4, stanza 27, of Tasso’s Gerusalemme Liberata; this is part of the account of how Armida, the beautiful niece of the pagan wizard, Prince Idrastes of Damascus, prepared to go alone to the Crusaders’ camp to cause as much trouble as she could. The name “Nouzon” must be that of a weaver and will be discussed later.

In the next room were three tapestries, one wide and two narrow. One of the latter is described in the inventory:

uno rapp. e delle figure in piedi con freggio a turno di vasi di fiori con figure che sostengono una palla sbarrata con aquile di due teste sopra, con l’iscrizione seguente nel mezzo del fileto al freggio da capo: Io l’immagine tolso. Io son colei che tu ricerchi, e me punir tu dei, d’altezza p.mi quattordici e ¾ e largo p.mi quattordici con iscrizione a piedi del freggio: P. Ferloni f. Romae anno D. 1739.

This tapestry is one of four bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum by Mrs. William Coles in memory of her son, William F. Coles, in 1891 (Figure 3).10

6. “Nel 1° d’oro all’aquila bicпитe di nero, coronate del campo nelle due teste; nel 2° trinciato d’aquarello e di verde da una banda d’argento.” The Emperor Rudolf II granted the imperial double-headed eagle to the Ottoboni family in 1588 (Armando Schiavo, Il Palazzo della Cancelleria [Rome, 1964] p. 100, n. 4).

7. The identification of the arms was made by the late Anthony Clark.

8. The Roman palmo was 22.3 cm., or 8¾ in. A transcription of the pertinent entries in the inventory was kindly sent to me by Olivier Michel.

9. Previously sold at Christie’s, July 14, 1885, no. 3202, from the Christopher Bennett Denison collection, and July 17, 1952, no. 233. C. John has no record of its present location. The appearance of many of these tapestries in the Hamilton Palace sale of 1882 will be discussed later.

10. See also Figures 9, 12, and 13. The tapestries are mentioned in Museum handbooks of 1894 and 1895. This piece is illustrated in George Leland Hunter, Tapestries, Their Origin, History and Renaissance (New York, 1912) pl. 777b.

Thanks to the name of the weaver—P. Ferloni F. Romae a.d. MDCCXXXIX—given at the foot of this piece, it has always been known that the tapestries were woven at the San Michele manufactory in Rome under the direction of Pietro Ferloni. The inscription here reads: C 2 / S 2 / 10 L’IMAGINE TOLSI. 10 / SON COLEI / CHE TV RICERCHI, E ME PVNIR / TV DEI. It is from canto 2, stanza 21, of the poem and is the Christian Sophronia’s defiant speech to Aladin, king of Jerusalem. This monarch, hearing of the approach of the Crusaders, orders a statue of the Virgin to be removed from a church and placed in a mosque. When it then disappears, he decides to massacre all the Christians of the city, but the maiden Sophronia admits to having taken it and asks that she alone be punished. The tapestry is 12 feet 4 inches high and 10½ feet wide.

Aladin wears a turban like that of a Turkish sultan and the headdress and wide sleeves of several of his men-at-arms show them to be janissaries. The imposing figure on the right is presumably Ismeno, a renegade sorcerer, who had advised the king to transfer the statue to the mosque.

The large tapestry in the same room is described as:

altro rapp. e battaglie con figure in piedi coll’istesso freggio simile dell’istessa altezza e di lunghezza di p.mi venti sei con intitolazione nel mezzo del freggio di sopra nella cartella: E le chiome dorate dal vento sparse, giovane donna in mezzo il campo apparse, con altra annot. e nel fine di d° arazzo su la mano dritta sopra il freggio che dice: Nouzon 1735.

This tapestry was last sold at Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, June 24, 1977, no. 79, as property from an eastern museum (Figure 4). It measures 11½ feet by 19 feet 7 inches and shows the moment described in canto 3, stanza 21, when the warrior-maiden...

11. The Turkish character of the costumes was noted by Heinrich Göbel, Wandteppiche: II. Die romanischen Länder (Leipzig, 1928) 1, p. 425. The janissary’s headdress remained unchanged until 1876. A 17-century example is in the Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe (Der Türkenlouis, exh. cat. [1955] no. 400, pl. 45). Depictions of janissaries and a sultan contemporaneous with the tapestries are found in the works of J. B. Vanmoor, 1671–1737 (Remmet van Luttervelt, De "Turke" Schildereijen van J. B. Vanmoor en zijn School [Istanbul, 1958] pls. 4–9, 10).

Sophronia’s Defiance, Italian (Roman), 1739. Wool and silk tapestry, 12 ft. 4 in. × 10 ft. 6 in. (3.76 × 3.20 m.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Elizabeth U. Coles, in memory of her Deceased Son William F. Coles, 1891, 92.1.16
4. Clorinda and Tancred in Combat, Italian (Roman), 1735.
Wool and silk tapestry, 11 ft. 6 in. × 19 ft. 7 in. (3.51 × 5.97 m.). Location unknown (photo: Sotheby Parke Bernet)
5. Camillo Cungi after Bernardo Castello, Sophronia and Olindo Rescued by Clorinda, 1617. Engraving. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Prints and Photographs, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 48.53.2

Clorinda, who had come from Persia to help Aladin, has had her helmet struck off by Tancred's spear. Another Crusader raises his sword, but Tancred, who has seen her golden hair and fallen in love with her, rushes up to protect her. Clorinda's fallen helmet lies on the ground beside the hind legs of her horse. Jerusalem, with archers shooting from its battlements, is seen in the background.

The third tapestry in this room was almost square:

altro di simile altezza e di larghezza p.mi tredici avantage con freggio consimile ed impressa sud a rapp.e simil.te molte figure in piedi, con iscrizione nella cartella in mezzo al freggio seg.te cioè: Alcun non sia di voi, che in questo duro ufficio oltra seguire abbia baldanza.

This tapestry has not been identified. The quotation is from canto 2, stanza 45, and gives the words spoken by Clorinda to the executioners who are about to burn Sophronia and her lover Olindo at the stake. The same scene was illustrated in a Genoese edition of the poem, published by G. Pavoni in 1617 (Figure 5).

The three tapestries in this room were appraised at 1012.05 scudi. If the wide piece, like the first tapestry described, was valued at 500.45 scudi, the other two would have been worth 255.80 each.

There were four tapestries in a room described as “ove è situato il p.mo baldachino.” All had “figure diverse in piedi con loro fregio rapp.te frutti e fiori con figure ne cantoni, quale anno sopra le spalle una palla sbarrata con aquila di due [teste] . . . con altra iscrizione a pie della cimase di d.i quattro arazzi: P. Ferloni f. Romae A.D. 1738 e 1737” and a valuation of 394.90 scudi each. All four were 14½ palmi high. The inscribed quotations are given for each piece. The first has: “Tratto al tumulto il pio Goffredo intanto vede fero spettacolo improviso.” It is 17½ palmi wide and has not been identified, but, as the quotation comes from canto 5, stanza 32, it must show Godfrey finding the body of Gernando, killed by Rinaldo. The second tapestry, also not identified, has: “Va dal rago alle nozze, ed è gia spojo fatto di reo non pur d'amante amato.” It is 17 palmi wide. The quotation is from canto 2, stanza 53, so the tapestry illustrates the happy ending of the Sophronia and Olindo episode; the king has pardoned them, and Sophronia, previously reluctant, has agreed to marry Olindo.

The third tapestry listed as in this room is 20½ palmi wide and is now in the embassy of the German Federal Republic to the Vatican (Figure 6).18 The inventory gives the inscription as “Subito il nome di ciascun si scrisse, e in picciol urna posti e scossi foro”; this is from canto 5, stanza 73. The Crusaders, directed by Godfrey, draw lots to decide which ten

18. Mariapia Vecchi, Ambasciate estere a Roma (Milan, 1971) p. 313, seen on the wall of a staircase in the embassy of the German Federal Republic in Rome. This tapestry and its companion (Figure 11) have been moved to the embassy to the Vatican. I am indebted to Dr. Eva Stahn for this information. No recent photography has been possible of either piece. Both are illustrated in the Répertoire des biens spoliés en France durant la guerre 1939–1945, deuxième supplément aux tomes II, III, et IV: Objets d'art, published by the Commandement en Chef français en Allemagne (n.p., n.d.) p. 38, nos. 632, 633 (described as from the Mobilier National).
knights will go with Armida to recover the heritage that she says has been stolen from her. Armida, in exotic costume, stands on the right beside Godfrey, as a knight draws his lot from the urn; the Crusaders wear approximations of Roman armor.

The fourth tapestry in this room has not been identified. It is 18 palmi wide and inscribed: “Si che le vie si sgombra e solo ad onta di mille difensor Gernando affronta.” This is from canto 5, stanza 29, which describes how Gernando, having insulted Rinaldo, of whom he is jealous, fights him and is killed.

“La stanza contigua più grande ove sta il secondo baldachino” had no less than six tapestries, only one of them narrow. All are 15 palmi high:

tutti rapp. ti figure diverse in piedi con il loro freggio rapp. e figure quali sopra alle spalle sostengono una palla con sbarra e aquila con due teste sopra, con vaso di fiori sotto e nel freggio di sotto rapp. te frutti.

One piece is 23½ palmi wide and is inscribed, according to the inventory: “Questo finto dolore molti eligge lagrime vere e i cor più duri spetra.” This tapestry is

in the San Francisco Opera House (Figure 7). In the same location is another piece from the same room in the Cancellaria, 20 palmi wide, inscribed, according to the inventory: “Ch’essi un di loro scelgono a sua voglia che succeda al magnanimo Dudone” (Figure 8).14 The year MDCCXXXVI is visible on the first and the inventory states that the second has a border inscription reading: “P. Ferloni Rom. F. in O. A. A.D. 1732.” This is the earliest date found on the tapestries.

The quotations on these two tapestries come from canto 4, stanza 77, and canto 5, stanza 2, and refer to episodes of Armida’s incursion into the Crusaders’ camp. Telling Godfrey that her wicked uncle has deprived her of her heritage, the city of Damascus, she asks for help; Godfrey refuses, but she wins the tears and sympathy of his brother and other knights. The first tapestry shows the weeping Armida in Godfrey’s tent; he must be the central figure in the group of three on the right with his hand on his breast, expressing regret, while the warriors on the left are visibly impressed. In the second San Francisco tapestry, Godfrey, standing in the center, tells the followers of the slain Dudone to choose another leader, who will then select ten knights to accompany Armida and fight for her. Dudone’s tomb, surmounted by a trophy of arms and bearing an inscription beginning QUI GIACE DUDON . . . , stands in the background.

A third tapestry from the six once in the “larger room with the second baldachino” is now in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 9). The inscription reads: C 3 / s 3 / ECCO DA MILLE VOCI / VINITAMENTE / GIERVSALLEMME SALVTAR / SI SENTE, which, except for the

7. Armida in Godfrey’s Tent, Italian (Roman), 1736. Wool and silk tapestry. San Francisco, Opera House (photo: J. Medley)

14. Both pieces in San Francisco were in the Archduke Leopold Salvator sale, Anderson Gallery, New York, Feb. 4–5, 1927, nos. 282, 283. They were given to the Opera House by A. Livingston Dump.
reference to canto 3, stanza 3, is accurately transcribed in the inventory. One of the widest pieces in the set, it is 12 feet 5 inches high and 19½ feet wide, 24 palmi in the inventory. The Crusaders, having come within sight of their goal, dismount and kneel. In stanza 7 of canto 3, the commander is described as taking off his helmet, which in the tapestry lies on the ground beside him. The standards and banners of the Crusaders are topped by crosses, but are otherwise derived from classical Rome, like the armor. The round building rising above the walls of Jerusalem in the background is presumably the Temple. The same scene was used to illustrate this canto in the 1617 Genoese edition of the poem (Figure 10); the foremost kneeling Crusaders and Jerusalem in the distance are sufficiently like the tapestry to suggest that the designer of the latter knew this print.

A fourth tapestry from this room is in the German Embassy to the Vatican (Figure 11). The inventory gives its width as 22½ palmi and its inscription as: "Si che Guglielmo et Guelfo i più sublimi chiamar Goffredo per lor duce i primi." This is from stanza 32 of the first canto. The Crusaders, assembled at Tortosa, are exhorted by Peter the Hermit, who is in the center, pointing to heaven and to the seated Godfrey of Bouillon. The latter is chosen by acclamation as the leader of the Crusade.

The remaining two tapestries in this room have not been identified. One is 16½ palmi wide and has lines from canto 2, stanza 7: "E sforzo i sacerdoti e irriverente il casto similacro indi rapio." It must show the sorcerer Ismeno removing the statue of the Virgin from the church in Jerusalem. The other, 13 palmi wide (a narrow panel) is inscribed: "Ne furia eguale a quella, ond' al' assetto quingi Tancred e quindi Argante venne," from canto 6, stanza 40, which describes the single combat between the crusader Tancred and the pagan Argante.

9. The Crusaders Reach Jerusalem, Italian (Roman), 1734 or 1735. Wool and silk tapestry, 12 ft. 5 in. × 19 ft. 6 in. (3.79 × 5.94 m.) The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Elizabeth U. Coles, in memory of her Deceased Son William F. Coles, 1891, 92.1.17


All six tapestries in this room, according to the inventory, had inscriptions giving the name of the weaver and the date. These are transcribed at the end of the entry, but not in the order in which the tapestries themselves are listed. The section reads:

The dates 1732 and 1736 must refer to the San Francisco tapestries, but the Metropolitan Museum piece has lost its outer guard border, making it impossible to say which of the weaver's inscriptions it originally bore.

The last room in the Cancelleria with tapestries of this set is listed in the inventory as "ultima stanza che corrisponde al Pellegrino"; the via Pellegrino runs along one side of the palace. Here was:

Un arazzo simile all' descritti della camera grande contigua del 2° baldacchino alto p.mi 14½ scarsi, largo diecinove scarsi con iscrizione in mezzo al freggio di sopra nel cartellone che contiene ciò che segue: Ma li salute Erminia e dolce mente gl'affida e gl'occhi scopre e i bei crin d'oro, con altra iscrizione a piedi in un angolo della cimase: P. Ferloni Romae f. in O. A. A.D. 1733.

It was valued at 358.15 scudi.15

This tapestry is in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 12) and is 11 feet 11 inches high and 15 feet wide. It has lost its outer guard border, so that the weaver's name and the date are now missing. The inscription reads: C 7 / S 7 / MA GLI SALVTA ERMINIA, / E DOLCE- MENTE / GL AFFIDA, E GL'OCHI SCPRE / E I BEI CRIN D'ORO. These lines are from canto 7, stanza 7. The tapestry illustrates one of the most frequently pictured episodes in the poem, Erminia greeting the

11. Godfrey Chosen to Lead the Crusade, Italian (Roman), 1734 or 1735. Wool and silk tapestry. Vatican City, Embassy of the German Federal Republic (photo: courtesy R. W. Lee)

15. Olszewski compares the total of 5,227.65 scudi at which the Gerusalemme tapestries were appraised to the more than 8,000 scudi Ottoboni paid for the tomb of his great-uncle in St. Peter's ("Tapestry Collection," p. 108).
shepherd and his family. The pagan maiden, hopelessly in love with Tancred, has left Jerusalem wearing Clorinda’s armor. She comes to a remote valley near the Jordan, where she meets an old shepherd weaving a basket, his three small sons playing beside him. They are frightened by her warlike appearance, but she takes off her borrowed helmet to reveal her golden hair, which reassures them. The designer has


12. Erminia and the Shepherd, Italian (Roman), 1733. Wool and silk tapestry, 11 ft. 11 in. × 15 ft. (3.63 × 4.57 m.) The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Elizabeth U. Coles, in memory of her Deceased Son William F. Coles, 1891, 92.1.15

13. Aladin Hears of the Crusaders’ Approach, Italian (Roman), 1740 (?) Wool and silk tapestry, 12 ft. 2 in. × 11 ft. 6 in. (3.71 × 3.51 m.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Elizabeth U. Coles, in memory of her Deceased Son William F. Coles, 1891, 92.1.14
followed the text closely. The pastoral character of the story may have appealed to Ottoboni, who was a prominent member of the famous and still existing Accademia degli Arcadi, under the name of Crateto Pradelini. The academy consisted of literary men (and even some women), musicians, architects, painters, and their patrons, who took the names of Arcadian shepherds.17

Another document dates from two years after the cardinal’s death and is an addition to the 1740 inventory. One entry reads: “Due pezzi d’arazzi della istoria del Tasso esistenti in mano del Sig.r Pietro Ferloni.”18 The fourth piece in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 13) is presumably one of these two tapestries.


18. Information kindly provided by M. Olivier Michel. The source is given by Olszewski, “Tapestry Collection,” n. 38.
Its inscription reads: C 1 / S 82 / MA IL VECCHIO RE NE GIA / VICIN PERIGL / VOLGE NEL DVBIO COR FERI / CONSIGLI. In stanza 82 of the first canto, Aladin, king of Jerusalem, is informed that the Crusaders’ army is at hand; the savage plan that he contemplates is the massacre of the Christians. As in Figure 3, he is shown as a Turkish sultan and some of his attendants are janissaries.

It is clear that the tapestries were hung in the Cancelleria without thought for their narrative continuity. All the scenes are from the first seven cantos of the poem. From the first canto comes an event near the beginning of the action, the choice of Godfrey of Bouillon as leader of the Crusade (Figure 11). Five pieces then illustrate an episode related in this and the following canto, the story of Sophronia and Olindo. Aladin, king of Jerusalem, hears of the approaching Crusaders (Figure 13); he orders a statue of the Virgin to be taken from a church to a mosque, whence it is surreptitiously removed by Sophronia. The king threatens to kill all the Christians, but Sophronia confesses (Figure 3); he condemns her to the stake and when Olindo, who loves her, takes the blame upon himself, orders him to be burned with her. The couple are rescued at the last minute by Clorinda and are married.

Clorinda rescuing the two Christians is one of the most frequently illustrated events in the poem. An instance not previously recorded is a Flemish tapestry sold at the American-Anderson Galleries, New York, January 14, 1933, no. 622 (Figure 14); this must have been woven not long after the first complete publication of the poem in 1581.

From the third canto come two isolated scenes, the Crusaders’ first sight of Jerusalem (Figure 9) and Clorinda meeting Tancred in battle (Figure 4). Six tapestries then recount the first part of the story of the enchantress Armida, but are not followed by others relating the far more famous sequel to these events, her love affair with Rinaldo; perhaps the cardinal did not consider the story suitable for an ecclesiastical palace, though this hardly seems consistent with what we know of his character. Armida is seen preparing for her visit to the Crusaders’ camp (Figure 2) and pleading her cause there (Figure 7). Dudone, leader of the group called the Adventurers, is slain and another chief is chosen for the ten knights who are to help her (Figure 8). Godfrey finds Gernando’s body and orders lots to be cast for the privilege of becoming Armida’s escort (Figure 6).

The fight between Tancred and Argantes was chosen from canto 6, and from canto 7 comes another frequently pictured episode, the meeting of Erminia and the shepherd family (Figure 12). This tapestry has an early date, 1733, whereas one of the first scenes in the story, Sophronia’s defiance (Figure 3), has the latest, 1739; the order of weaving, therefore, was not determined by the sequence of the episodes in the poem. Apparently visitors to the tapestry rooms in the Cancelleria were expected to know the


20. The story has often been used for tapestries, such as the frequently woven Paris series of twelve scenes after Simon Vouet. A set of ten of these is in the De Waters Art Gallery, Flint, Michigan (The Viola E. Bray Renaissance Gallery [Flint, 1961]).
Liberata well enough to be able to identify the scenes with no difficulty.

Cardinal Ottoboni showed his interest in Tasso at an early age when he redecorated the Cancelleria. The architect-decorator Domenico Paradisi submitted bills for “arazzi finti . . . con paese” in 1691 and in 1693 for “pitture dell’arazzi di figure dell’apartamento fatti per servitio dell’ E.mo Sig.re Cardinale Ottoboni.” A payment of 750 scudi is said to be “per haver dipinti tutti li arazzi di tutte le stanze in tela con l’istorie del Tasso con fregi ornavi di fiori e statue inscrizioni sopraporti.” Paradisi was the only artist paid for these imitation tapestries on cloth, but in 1693 the Mercurio errante described the paintings as “diverse istorie del Tasso dipinte dal Paradisi, Ricciolini, e Borgognone,” that is, by Paradisi, Michelangelo Ricciolini the figure-painter, and Francesco Borgognone the landscapist.

The inventory lists many “arazzi finiti” and rooms covered with “tela dipinta a guazzo,” but not those showing scenes from Tasso. Perhaps they had been replaced by the tapestries, which apparently were copied from them. This is known from a statement in the Mercurio errante of 1739 that “presentamente Sua Eminenza fa ritarre [the paintings] in arazzi.” The borders as well as the central scenes of the tapestries were presumably copied from the paintings, which are described as “con fregi ornavi di fiore e statue.” The statues on the tapestries which support the Ottoboni arms are different on each piece, as are the masks in the horizontal borders. The latter, however, are found on another San Michele set, that with scenes from Genesis after the ceiling paintings of the Vatican Logge (often called “Raphael’s Bible”); the three known pieces of this set are dated 1733 and 1734, which means that they were being made at the same time as the Tasso set. The inscription on the Creation of Eve (Figure 15) reads: RAPH.URB. IN.VATIC. . . . P. FERLONI. F. ROMAE. IN. HOSP. AP. A.D. MDCCXXXIV. Whether Ferloni took motifs from the Ottoboni paintings and used them on other tapestries, or whether he added details from tapestry borders to the design of the Gerusalemme Liberata set cannot be determined.

The cardinal thus seems to have removed his “arazzi finiti” of the Gerusalemme Liberata, which were probably by now in poor condition as “painted cloths” quickly become, and replaced them with real tapestries of the same designs. It is hard to understand why he should have done this, though of course once tapestries had been decided upon, it would have been cheaper to make them from existing designs. New wall paintings would probably have been cheaper still. Economy, however, can never have been a consideration with the cardinal; even when in his last years he was doyen of the Sacred College, he was described as “sans mœurs, sans crédit, débauché, ruiné, amateur

23. Ibid., pp. 335–337.
24. Ibid., p. 295. The Michels reproduce (fig. 6) the Metropolitan Museum tapestry Erminia and the Shepherd (Figure 12).
26. They were evidently easily moved, since the Diario di Roma for Aug. 29, 1706, records that in the church of the Misericordia “si fece solenne musica, con apparare il prosimo cortile e cimiterio di arazzi finti del cardinale Ottoboni, nel quali si rappresento rari fatti di Goffredo secondo la narrazione del Tasso” (Olszewski, “Tapestry Collection,” p. 106, n. 20).

15. The Creation of Eve, Italian (Roman), 1734. Wool and silk tapestry. Location unknown (photo: Sotheby’s)
des arts, grand musicien." 27 Whatever the reason, his magnificent commission for so large a set of tapestries (six or eight would have been more usual) must have been welcomed at the San Michele manufactory.

This enterprise was set up in 1710 by Pope Clement XI, in part, at least, to train orphans in handicrafts, such as tapestry weaving, painting, carving, and *pietra-dura* work. 28 An Englishwoman, Lady Pomfret, described a visit to the manufactory in May 1741:

About noon today I went, as appointed, to the Signora Cenci, who carried me to see the working of the tapestry, which is done in a different manner from what I have ever seen, the tent being set edgewise. I stood on the right side, and saw the figures as they grew. The workman is on the other side, and the picture he works from behind him. The tapestry is of several prices; but the best is very dear, if one can call so fine a thing dear at any price; it being brought to that perfection, that, in a head of St. Matthew, copying from Guido, I could find no difference between the spirit of the painting and that of the silk. The colours are here as good as those in France; but the designs are much better and more justly executed. The master has an apartment and nine crowns a month from the charity of St. Michael. This is so noble an institution that I cannot forbear giving you a particular account of it. . . . A hundred and eighty boys are taken in at ten years old, and maintained till one or two and twenty: they are taught all sorts of trades, for which purpose the best masters from every country are obtained, and amongst these are the tapestry-workers before mentioned. 29

When Lady Pomfret speaks of seeing "the tent," or finished fabric, "set edgewise," she is describing the usual way of weaving a tapestry that is wider than it is high. Her statement that the weaver had his cartoon behind him shows that the looms were upright ones. If the imitation tapestries, as seems probable, were taken from the Cancelleria to the manufactory, they would not have been cut into strips as would have been necessary if they had been reproduced on horizontal looms.

San Michele tapestries were acquired by popes and private individuals and a number have been identified. Most of these were woven under the directorship (from 1717 to 1770) of Pietro Ferloni, whose name is frequently inscribed on them. The full name of the manufactory was the Ospizio Apostolico de’ Poveri Fanciulli di San Michele a Ripa, accounting for the "in O. A.," "In Osp. o Ap.," and "In Hosp. Ap." of the inscriptions on the tapestries.

The name found on two of the tapestries dated 1735 (Figures 2 and 4) is harder to account for. In the 1740 inventory it is given as "Nouzon," but when the tapestries (whose present whereabouts are unknown) have appeared in auction sales, it has sometimes been read as "Nouzou." A Gobelins weaver, Louis Nouzon, made *haute-lisse* (upright loom) tapestry upholstery for Héron de Villefosse in 1739–40, and the name Nouzon is found on a Gobelins tapestry sofa-back in the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon. 30 The letters "n" and "u" are easily confused; possibly the two Ottoboni tapestries were both made by Nouzon, the Gobelins weaver, or by some member of his family. San Michele had originally been managed by a Frenchman, Jean Simonet, and even in the 1730s French weavers were employed there; a visitor at this time wrote: "Very good tapestry is made here, several workmen from the *Gobelins at Paris* having been invited hither by great encouragements." 31 A Nouzon could have been one of them.

But another explanation is possible. Francesco Valesio in his *Diario di Roma* for October 4, 1735, wrote that Cardinal Ottoboni had given the French ambassador "una cantata con sottuno rinfresco e spiegò alcuni arazzi nuovi, uno tessuto in Fiandra, altro in Francia ed altro in Roma a S. Michele a Ripa ed è stato giudicato quello di Ripa essere il migliore." 32 It is unfortunate that Valesio gives no details of the cardinal's explanation of his tapestries, but, as they were new in 1735 and at least one of them had been made

29. Correspondence Between Frances, Countess of Hartford (Afterwards Duchess of Somerset) and Henrietta Louisa, Countess of Pomfret, Between the Years 1738 and 1741 (London, 1805) III, pp. 113–115.
32. John George Keysler, *Travels through Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, Switzerland, Italy, and Lorraine* (London, 1757) II, p. 130. Keysler was in Rome before 1740 and describes Cardinal Ottoboni (p. 228) as "of a very liberal disposition and a strong propensity to pleasure."
at San Michele, it seems highly probable that they were pieces of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* set. It would certainly have been most unusual for pieces of a set to have been made in different places, but possibly Ottoboni, having been told by Ferloni how long it would take his workshop to weave all the tapestries he wanted, decided to send some of the "arazzi finti" to Paris and Brussels; there is a kind of magnificence about this extravagant proceeding that seems quite in keeping with what we know of Ottoboni’s character.

There are indications that this may be the true reason for the appearance of "Nouzon" or "Nouzou" on the two tapestries. Ferloni was so consistent in putting his name on all his productions that it is hard to believe he would have allowed an assistant to be so presumptuous as to replace it with his own. Another possible clue is that some of the "arazzi finti" were missing in 1756, when an inventory was made of the furnishings of the palace of the cardinal’s great-nephew in Fiano; only eleven "pezzi di tela" with "istorie" of Tasso were listed.34 Could the others have been sent to be copied abroad? They would certainly not have come back to Italy.

Ottoboni’s heiress, his niece Maria Francesca Boncompagni Ottoboni, had to remove his collections from

34. Information from Professor Olszewski, who cites the document as Ottob. Arch., col. 86, fasc. 14, in the Lateran Library.

the Cancelleria before the new vice-chancellor moved in; the great library was sold by auction on November 10, 1745. Some of the Gerusalemme Liberata tapestries may have been bought later by the tenth duke of Hamilton (1767–1852), who spent several years in Italy acquiring works of art. They were seen at Hamilton Palace in Scotland in 1850 by the German scholar Dr. Waagen, who mentions them as “hangings representing scenes from Tasso” in the new state-rooms (Figure 16); he adds, “their value, as works of art, are [sic] subordinate.”

When the multitudinous and immensely valuable contents of Hamilton Palace were sold in 1882, eight pieces of the set were included and are identifiable in the catalogue. They appeared on the fifteenth day of the sale as nos. 1914–1916, 1918, 1919, and 1922–1924. Lot nos. 1914 and 1922 are described as oblong pieces of tapestry (no. 1914 is called “Gobelins”), each with “a subject from Tasso’s Jerusalem Delivered’ in border, with caryatid figures, masks, flowers, and fruits.” Added to no. 1914 is the information: “by Nouzou—in carved gilt frame—12 ft. by 20 ft. 10 in. Signed, and dated 1735”; and to no. 1922: “in carved and gilt frame. Signed Nouzou and dated 1735—12 ft. by 21 ft. 6 in.” Both were bought by D. Sheratt. These must be the two tapestries known from their appearances in auction sales (Figures 2 and 4), the only pieces that bear the Nouzon/Nouzou name.

The other Hamilton Palace tapestries are less easy to identify, as only dimensions are given and no two persons’ measurements of a tapestry are exactly the same. Some are described as in carved and gilt frames, as seen in Figure 16, which probably covered part of the fabric. Two (nos. 1923 and 1924) were square and were bought by Duveen; one of them could have been Figure 13, but some of the unidentified pieces in the Ottoboni inventory are square or nearly so. Others (nos. 1916 and 1919) were uprights, bought by H. E. Kidson; one was probably Figure 3. There were two more wide pieces, no. 1915, which was probably Figure 12, and no. 1918, which corresponds closely to Figure 9. In an early photograph (Figure 16), Erminia and the Shepherd (Figure 12) is seen on one wall of a sitting room; the other tapestry visible is Clorinda and Tancred in Combat (Figure 4).

It is unlikely that the Tasso series was ever woven again, but it may well be that the missing tapestries from the Hamilton sale and even those known only from the description in the Ottoboni inventory will one day come to light, perhaps in places equally as diverse as an embassy in Italy and an opera house in California. Even in its fragmentary state, the set is spectacular evidence of the splendor of an extinct species, the Cardinal-Nephew, as represented by its last and certainly not least magnificent example, Pietro Ottoboni.


36. They do not appear in the 1825 inventory of Hamilton Palace, but were probably among the “Pieces of fine large Tapestry Work for all the Rooms” listed between 1835 and 1840. In an 1876 inventory, they are described as in the Tapestry Rooms, three in the Sitting Room (Figure 16), two in the Bed Room, and three in the Dressing Room. They are called “Large Pieces of Splendid Italian Tapestry as fitted into the Panels, Subject from Tasso’s Jerusalem delivered.” Extracts from the Hamilton Palace inventories were kindly given me by Mr. Ronald Freyberger.


38. The Hamilton Palace inventories show that six overdoors, listed in the sale catalogue as “panels with vases of flowers of the same,” were Aubusson tapestries made to order. In Mar. 1842, they appear as “10 Newly made pieces of D. [Tapestry Work] for Panels over the doors” and in 1876 as “Square Pieces of Aubusson Tapestry fixed in Panels over Door heads.”

39. Ferrari, Arazzi italiani, p. 25, mentions episodes from the Gerusalemme Liberata woven at the San Michele manufactory between 1791 and 1798, but does not cite any examples of these tapestries.