

Ambrogio Spinola

between Genoa, Flanders, and Spain



Silvia Mostaccio, Bernardo J. García García, and Luca Lo Basso (eds)

LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

AVISOS DE FLANDES 20

AMBROGIO SPINOLA
BETWEEN GENOA, FLANDERS, AND SPAIN

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Series Editor: Werner Thomas

Ambrogio Spinola between Genoa, Flanders, and Spain

Edited by
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This volume is a result of the Excellence R+D Project *COMHIS. Shaping the Spanish Habsburg Monarchy: Political Culture and Dynastic Practices in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (HAR2016-76241-P), granted by the Spanish Ministry of the Economy, Industry and Competitiveness and the ERDF, and assigned to the University of Alcalá (UAH); and also the R+D Project *POLEMHIS. Political Communication, Information Management and Memory in the conflicts of the Spanish Monarchy (1548-1725)* (PID2020-112765GB-I00), granted by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and the ERDF, and assigned to the Complutense University in Madrid (UCM).



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Minderbroedersstraat 4, B-3000 Leuven (Belgium)

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ISBN 978 94 6270 342 1
e-ISBN 978 94 6166 472 3
<https://doi.org/10.11116/9789461664723>
D/2022/1869/48
NUR: 685

Cover design: Friedemann bvba

Cover illustration: Portrait of the Marquis Ambrogio Spinola, by Peter Paul Rubens, c. 1625-27 (Prague, National Gallery of Prague, Czech Republic).



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Ambrogio Spinola: The Threads of a Multiple Past*

*Silvia Mostaccio,
Bernardo J. García García,
Luca Lo Basso*

When some time ago, between Genoa, Madrid and Brussels, we started to reflect on the interest that a collective volume around Ambrogio Spinola would have, we wanted at the same time to deal with the unequivocal reading that was made of him – especially the one that predominates most by presenting him as an exceptional soldier – and advancing a methodological proposal aimed at providing a kind of collective biography based on disciplinary competences and different and complementary historiographical sensitivities. We see this diversity in Ambrogio's various roles: as a Genoese, belonging to one of the most illustrious families of the urban oligarchy formed on the basis of financial, commercial and military activities; as the general of the Army of Flanders and prominent member of the government and the archducal court in Brussels; as a grandee of Spain, 1st marquis of Los Balbases, and member of the Council of State in Madrid. Ambrogio offered the ideal pretext to outline the trajectory of those polycentric families that characterized Spanish Europe and, more generally, modern Iberian empires.¹ A good pretext, moreover, to

* Translated by Beatriz Álvarez García.

¹ Manuel Herrero Sánchez, 'Republican Monarchies, Patrimonial Republics. The Catholic Monarchy and the Mercantile Republics of Genoa and the United Provinces', in *Polycentric Monarchies. How did Early Modern Spain and Portugal Achieve and Maintain a Global Hegemony?*, ed. by Pedro Cardim, Tamar Herzog, José Javier Ruiz Ibáñez and Gaetano Sabatini (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2012), pp. 181–96; see also the Research Project *Res Publica Monarquica. La Monarquía hispánica, una estructura imperial policén-*

highlight the constitutive elements of the exceptional career of a member of the hegemonic elites – financially, military and politically – though without losing sight of the social and cultural interest that goes beyond his personal career. Following the traces that Ambrogio himself and others left throughout the Spanish Europe seemed to us a good exercise to weave the threads of a story at the crossroads of microhistory and sociocultural history.²

In the present era, the study of early modernity has taken a global turn, and the game of scales of historical analysis has imposed itself as a necessity. Contextualising individual trajectories now constitutes a fundamental element,³ with a historiography that distrusts the essentialisms and the univocal readings of the phenomena and actors of the past. Instead, it places particular emphasis on interactions, influences, and the multiple identities of which each individual is necessarily a bearer – without forgetting the more or less tangible boundaries between social classes, genders and cultures. It is in this context in which the biographical genre attains a renewed position within current historiography.

The following pages probably cannot be defined as a true biography of Ambrogio Spinola. There are still too many aspects and moments that remain unexplored. We would rather evoke the genre of *mémoire*; a *mémoire sui generis* because it is posthumous and made by different authors, but it is built following what Joyce Carol Oates advanced a few years ago in the epilogue of her memoir *The Lost Landscape*. For the American writer, “our lives are enormous waves breaking on the shore, retreating and leaving only a few scattered things behind for us to contemplate”.⁴ In the process of remembering and writing the history of what happened, there is a risk of trying to reconstruct a picture that is too homogeneous; “a coherent emotional aura” is a mirage because life is not a fictional tale; it is not coherent but rather presents a juxtaposition of irreducible situations and

trica de repúblicas urbanas (REXPUBLICA, PGC2018-095224-B-100), directed by M. Herrero Sánchez.

² Carlo Ginzburg, *Il filo e le tracce. Vero, falso, finto* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2018) (1st ed. in 2006).

³ *Jeux d'échelles: La micro-analyse à l'expérience*, ed. by Jacques Revel (Paris: Gallimard, 1996); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Préface à l'édition française', in *Comment être un étranger. Goa-Ispahan-Venise, XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: Alma éditeur, 2013), pp. 11–9; Giuseppe Marcocci, 'Gli intrecci della storia. La modernità globale di Sanjay Subrahmanyam', in Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Mondi connessi. La storia oltre l'eurocentrismo (secoli XVI–XVIII)* (Roma: Carocci, 2014), pp. 9–21.

⁴ Joyce Carol Oates, *The Lost Landscape. A Writer's Coming of Age* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2015), p. 620.

events. However, it seems more interesting to try to start from the “few things” that are left on the shore when the waves have already retreated and reconstruct, from these disparate objects, the threads of a multiple past. Each of them will tell a piece of the life and the protagonist – just like the men and women who interacted with him – will be narrated through multiple traces, points of view and relationships. With this perspective, as Oates also points out, the synecdoche – the part for the whole – is not just a rhetorical device that should be used to stage one’s own past or that of others from the few remnants available. It becomes, first and foremost, a way of proceeding, one that historians can also appropriate to highlight the unique traces of the past, aware that individuals with diverse backgrounds and interests bring complementary elements into the narrative. In this way, those “few things” multiply themselves and the story is enriched.

Historiography has never devoted itself with great passion and continuity to the biographies of the eminent Genoese figures of the Spanish Golden Age, apart from a few rare cases. Ambrogio Spinola himself, undoubtedly one of the most important Genoese patricians in the service of the Spanish Monarchy, has received little attention. Even today only the flattering biography of Filippo Casoni is available in Italian, which, however, dates to the seventeenth century.⁵ At present, the main reference to the historical life of the 1st marquis of Los Balbases is still the unsurpassed biography in Spanish by Rodríguez Villa, dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century – even considering the more recent synthesis, focused on the strictly military aspects, published by Benavides in 2018, which, to a larger extent, takes up the traditional approach of Retortillo Atienza.⁶

If studies on Spinola remain few, outdated, and inadequate, as they do not include the huge amount of documents preserved in the Italian and European archives, the historiography about Genoa and on other eminent Genoese patricians also continues to be relatively poor. Witness, for instance, the fact that even to the ‘Pater Patriae’, Andrea Doria, only one synthesising biography has been dedicated in Italian, published by

⁵ Filippo Casoni, *Vita del marchese Ambrogio Spinola l’espugnator delle piazze* (Genova: Antonio Casamara, 1691).

⁶ Antonio Rodríguez Villa, *Ambrosio Spínola primer marqués de Los Balbases* (Madrid: Real Academia de Historia, 1905); José Ignacio Benavides, *Spinola, capitán general de los tercios. Da Ostende a Casal* (Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2018); Asunción Retortillo Atienza, *Ambrosio Spínola, de Génova a Ostende (1569–1604)* (Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa, 2017).

Gabriella Airal di in 2015. Indeed, it too has been compiled to a larger extent on the basis of the historians of the Doria in the sixteenth century, such as Cappelloni and Sigonio, the pages dedicated to the great admiral by Grendi in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (republished in the monograph dedicated to the Republic of Genoa in 1987), as well as studies on the Dorian period by Arturo Pacini.⁷ To these few texts we must undoubtedly add the recent synthesis in French published by the Corsican scholar Antoine-Marie Graziani in 2008.⁸ If the life of the great Andrea would undoubtedly deserve new studies and new historiographical approaches – even if the sources about the period are indeed scarce – his military and political heir Gian Andrea has instead recently received greater attention, especially with regard to the artistic commissions. His life was well elucidated in the rich biography published in 2018 by Laura Stagno, which takes into account both the fine biographical essay by Rodolfo Savelli and the autobiography edited by Vilma Borghesi in 1997, as well as the more recent studies by Manuel Lomas and Bastien Carpentier published in the last decade.⁹ Particularly in the last two cases, the approach of these studies is especially focused on the naval history of the contractors in the service of the Spanish monarchy, following the model outlined in Lo Basso's 2011 study on the duke of Tursi during the Franco-Spanish war that began in 1635.¹⁰

⁷ Lorenzo Cappelloni, *Vita del Principe Andrea Doria descritta da M. Lorenzo Cappelloni con un compendio della medesima vita* (Venezia: Gabriele Giolito de' Ferrari, 1568); Carlo Sigonio, *Della vita et fatti di Andrea Doria Principe di Melfi* (Genova: Bartoli, 1586); Edoardo Grendi, 'Andrea Doria, uomo del Rinascimento', in Edoardo Grendi, *La Repubblica aristocratica dei genovesi. Politica, carità e commercio fra Cinque e Seicento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1987), pp. 139–72; Gabriella Airal di, *Andrea Doria* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2015); Arturo Pacini, *La Genova di Andrea Doria nell'Impero di Carlo V* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1999).

⁸ Antoine-Marie Graziani, *Andrea Doria. Un prince de la Renaissance* (Paris: Tallandier, 2008).

⁹ Laura Stagno, *Giovanni Andrea Doria (1540–1606). Immagini, committenze artistiche, rapporti politici e culturali tra Genova e la Spagna* (Genova: Genova University Press, 2018); Rodolfo Savelli, '«Honore et robba»: sulla vita di Giovanni Andrea Doria', in *La Berio*, XXIX, 1 (1989), pp. 3–41; *Vita del Principe Giovanni Andrea Doria scritta da lui medesimo incompleta*, ed. by Vilma Borghesi (Genova: Compagnia dei Librai, 1997); Manuel Lomas, *Governing the Galleys: Jurisdiction, Justice, and Trade in the Squadrons of the Hispanic Monarchy (Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries)* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2019); Bastien Carpentier, *L'économie politique de la guerre: Giovanni Andrea Doria, la République de Gênes et la monarchie hispanique (1560–1606)*, PhD thesis, Université du Littoral Côte d'Opale, 2017.

¹⁰ Luca Lo Basso, 'Una difficile esistenza. Il duca di Tursi, gli asientos di galee e la squadra di Genova tra guerra navale, finanza e intrighi politici (1635–1643)', in *Génova*

Another fruitful field of research, though still too limited from a quantitative point of view, is that related to biographies of great financiers. In recent years, such studies can be counted on one hand, if one considers not only the fundamental biography of Ottavio Centurione written by Carmen Sanz Ayán in 2015, but also those of Gio. Tomaso Invrea by Andrea Zanini in 2001, Paolo Gerolamo Pallavicini by Claudio Marsilio in 2005, and Battista Serra by Yasmina Ben Yessef Garfia in 2013.¹¹ Besides the businessmen, it is worth mentioning in this brief and non-exhaustive review three studies on important figures of the Spinola branch of the great Ambrogio: the recent study by Emiliano Beri on his brother Federico (2022); the one by Fernando Quiles García on his son Agostino, archbishop of Seville (2011); and the one by Manuel Herrero Sánchez and Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio on his nephew Paolo Spinola Doria, 3rd marquis of Los Balbases (2011), the latter with the aim of studying the biography of a foreigner in the service of the Spanish monarchy.¹²

More fruitful and important has been the contribution of historiography regarding the biographies of certain Genoese families, among which Grendi's study on the Balbi, the Serra, as well as the more recent contributions on the Durazzo, Spinola, Cattaneo della Volta, and others remain fundamental. These studies, apart from Grendi's, are more concerned

y la monarquía hispánica (1528–1713), ed. by M. Herrero Sánchez, Y. R. Ben Yessef Garfia, C. Bitossi, D. Puncuh (Genoa: Società Ligure di Storia Patria, 2011), Vol. 2, pp. 819–46.

¹¹ Carmen Sanz Ayán, *Un banquero en el Siglo de Oro. Octavio Centurión, el financiero de los Austrias* (Madrid: La Esfera de Los Libros, 2015); Andrea Zanini, 'Gio. Tomaso Invrea, un finanziere genovese nella Napoli del Seicento', in *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, CXV/II (2001), pp. 49–104; Claudio Marsilio, 'Nel XVII secolo dei Genovesi. La Corrispondenza commerciale di Paolo Gerolamo Pallavicini nel triennio 1636–1638', in *Storia Economica*, VIII/1 (2005), pp. 101–19; Yasmina R. Ben Yessef Garfia, 'Bautista Serra, un agente génoves en la corte de Felipe III: lo particular y lo público en la ngociación política', in *Hispania*, LXXIII/245 (2013), pp. 647–72.

¹² Emiliano Beri, 'L'ammiraglio e il generale. Federico e Ambrogio Spinola da Genova alle Fiandre', in *Dal Mediterraneo alla Manica. Contributi alla storia navale dell'età moderna*, ed. by Emiliano Beri (Rome: Società italiana di Storia militare-Nadir Media, 2022), pp. 107–33; Fernando Quiles García, 'El arzobispo Agustín Spínola, promotor de las artes sevillanas del barroco (1645–1649)', in *Génova y la monarquía hispánica (1528–1713)*, ed. by M. Herrero Sánchez, Y. R. Ben Yessef Garfia, C. Bitossi, D. Puncuh (Genoa: Società Ligure di Storia Patria, 2011), Vol. 2, pp. 731–52; Manuel Herrero Sánchez and Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño, 'La aristocracia genovesa al servicio de la Monarquía Católica: el caso del III marqués de Los Balbases (1630–1699)', in *Génova y la monarquía hispánica (1528–1713)*, ed. by M. Herrero Sánchez, Y. R. Ben Yessef Garfia, C. Bitossi, D. Puncuh (Genoa: Società Ligure di Storia Patria, 2011), Vol. 1, pp. 331–65.

with historical, artistic, and architectural aspects than with an analysis of their contribution to political and economic history in the European and world context.¹³

This book is organized into three parts that we consider indispensable in this collective *mémoire* on Ambrogio Spinola. The first part deals with the family context of Ambrogio's life: the Spinola of San Luca between Genoa and Spain's European possessions. From a gender perspective, particular attention is paid to Ambrogio's sisters and brotherhood, and to the interests and feelings he shared with his mother and his wife. In the second part, Ambrogio is presented by way of the various relational networks that were his own and that overlapped each other, such that they constituted an integral part of his choices and actions. Here the multiplicity of points of view prevailed from the beginning: not only was his family of origin characterized by the polycentrism typical of the Italian philo-Habsburg elites of the time – namely, Genoa, of course, as well as Milan, Naples, Madrid, and the Low Countries were among Ambrogio's references from his childhood – but also his qualities as a businessman, soldier, and politician led him to embody – often simultaneously – the characteristics of a general, courtier, diplomatic representative, or member of the administration of the Spanish crown. That crown never managed to repay sufficiently the exorbitant debts contracted with Ambrogio but, according to normal practices, rewarded him instead by integrating Spinola and his children into the Spanish hegemonic system. The third part of the volume, dedicated to the 'fame' built by various historical actors around Ambrogio, is paradoxically the part of the book that focuses much more on the character's military dimension. This was the perspective that fascinated most of his contemporaries, and which Ambrogio himself and his entourage knew how to render valuable. It is in this part, therefore, that his career emerges from those early years of war in the Low Countries. In the logic of *mémoire* described above, it is by juxtaposing the "few things" that remain of a glorious past – as told in the news, in the laudatory writings, in the theater plays, and in the images – that the multiple identities surrounding the Genoese businessman

¹³ Edoardo Grendi, *I Balbi. Una famiglia genovese fra Spagna e Impero* (Torino: Einaudi, 1997); Angela Valenti Durazzo, *I Durazzo. Da schiavi a dogi della Repubblica di Genova* (Roccafranca: La Compagnia della Stampa Massetti Rodella Editori, 2004); Emilio Podestà, Silvana Musella and Francesco Augurio, *I Serra* (Torino: Testo & Immagine, 1999); *Palazzo Doria Spinola: architettura e arredi di una dimora aristocratica genovese: da un inventario del 1727*, ed. by Roberto Santamaria (Recco: Le Mani, 2011); *I Cattaneo Della Volta. Vicende e protagonisti di una millenaria famiglia genovese*, ed. by Elena Chiavari Cattaneo Della Volta and Andrea Lercari (Genoa: Sagep, 2017).

can readily be analyzed. In them we see the military hero of the Flanders' war who fascinated Europe at the beginning of the seventeenth century; the Catholic soldier fighting heresy or the knightly enemy whom even the rebels against Spain acknowledged to be worthy of respect; finally, the foreigner who became a grandee of Spain. To be sure, the view that others offer of our life, and the partial re-readings that they make of it, are also part of each person's biography.

It is no coincidence that the volume opens with a contribution by Blythe Alice Raviola, which shows the possibilities provided by biographical reconstruction to articulate the events and the narrative interpretation made by contemporaries. After being highly educated thanks to his far-sighted mother Polissena Grimaldi, moving continuously between the Low Countries and Spain, Ambrogio Spinola inevitably interwove important ties with the Italian diaspora settled at the Spanish court. This is the case, for example, of Giovanni Botero, who was sent to the court of Philip III by Charles Emmanuel I as tutor of the children of the duke of Savoy. Over the course of three years, he had the opportunity to talk with Spinola during his winter stays in Spain, until he formed around him the portrait of Alessandro Farnese's true heir, which appears in Part V of his *Relazioni universali* (1611). In those same years, Botero writes to the princes and noblemen of northern Italy about the veneration that Ambrogio had been able to bring about among his soldiers; the biographer also tells of the positions in which Ambrogio managed to place his children both in Spain and in Milan, revealing a network of "relations", perhaps not universal, but certainly extensive within Spanish Europe.

Emiliano Beri's essay allows us to understand the crucial importance of another type of relationship: those of the nuclear family and, more specifically, those between the two male brothers, heirs to the immense fortune of their grandparents. Ambrogio and Federico Spinola were a couple of years apart, and Beri shows the impact of the legacies that the sons of Filippo Spinola and Polissena Grimaldi acquired: an alliance that was built around money and the political-military skills of the two brothers, determined to create an alternative to the excessive power of the Doria family not only among Genoese elites but also as *asentistas* (bankers) for the Spanish crown in financing war on land and sea in Europe. The relations between the two Spinola siblings allow us to see the links between the first- and second-born son with a perspective not based on rivalry but rather on complementarity. If Ambrogio organizes and obtains resources from Genoa, Federico uses his own freedom of movement to travel constantly between the Superba, Flanders, and

Madrid, as well as to conduct negotiations, thus playing a relevant role for both him and his brother. After gaining experience in an effective privateering war against coastal settlements and Dutch and English ships, Federico obtained for himself and Ambrogio the command of a naval squadron and of land forces, respectively, in the Low Countries, in exchange for loans and investments which in 1603 would exceed one million *escudos*. Only his unexpected death, when both were engaged in the siege of Ostend, will destroy the synergy existing between the two Spinola brothers.

The intensity and effectiveness of fraternal ties also occupy a central place in the contribution of Silvia Mostaccio, devoted to Ambrogio's correspondence with his sisters, his wife, and his mother during the almost thirty years he spent mainly in the Low Countries. Letter by letter, she draws the portrait of a family aware of its own financial prestige – to be protected even when the Spanish crown did not pay – united in the defense of collective honour and effective in the creation of transgenerational socioeconomic strategies. The analysis of various *Vite* of Ambrogio and other members of his family, written for celebratory and/or devotional purposes, allows us to identify the basic elements of the behavioral models that create a coherent whole, whose purpose is to sustain the power of the group: from the breezy use given to the dowries of the wives, to which they had to respond with generous detachment (the wife of Ambrogio Spinola, Giovanna Baciadonne, is a clear example of this model) to the re-elaboration of the humanist ideal of the *pater familias*, responsible for the destinies of his own children and nephews, an ideal that Ambrogio perfectly embodies.

In the second part of the book, the perspective widens beyond family frontiers. If Emiliano Beri has shown the teamwork with which the two brothers were able to gain a place of their own in the economic-military enterprise of the war, then the essay of Alicia Esteban Estríngana looks at the same period (1598–1605) to demonstrate how these initiatives were accompanied by many other changes and, in particular, by the difficult balance in relations between Philip III and Archduke Albert, who had become, since 1598, together with the Infanta Isabella, the formally independent sovereign of the Spanish Netherlands. Following the dispatches of the Council of State in Valladolid, along with the correspondence exchanged between the archdukes and the Spanish monarch, Esteban Estríngana recounts fundamental aspects of the construction of the fragile archduke's power around the struggle between him and the Council of State over Spinola's role as captain general of the Army of Flanders – a

role which Albert claimed to be indispensable in the performance of his duties as sovereign prince. Yet Esteban Estríngana moreover presents new documentation that led Albert to confer upon Ambrogio Spinola the title of *maestro de campo general*, keeping to himself only a nominal general command. In both Valladolid and Brussels, Ambrogio was able to capitalize on his victory in the siege of Ostend – for which Albert gave him all the credit – and on his willingness to finance the costly military campaign planned for 1605, thus manifesting a clear vision of what an effective military command should look like: if Albert's limited war authority had so far resulted in a dispersed and ineffective military command, Ambrogio demanded to assume general command – both military and financially – but with a formula that would allow Archduke Albert to safeguard his honour.

The alliance between Archduke Albert and Ambrogio, supported by the Infanta Isabella, was therefore a fundamental aspect of the latter's brilliant career in the Low Countries. Such an alliance was built not only by war and warfare but also at the court, where Ambrogio was able to create his own space. It is precisely to this courtly experience of Spinola at the archdukes' court that Dries Raeymaekers' essay is devoted, recalling that it was a long-term process that would culminate in the appointment of the marquis as *mayordomo mayor* (high steward). While Mostaccio points out that 1621 was the year in which Agostino Spinola was consecrated cardinal and his sister Polissena was made maid of honour to Queen Isabella of Bourbon in Madrid, Raeymaekers explains how, that same year, Ambrogio became *mayordomo mayor* at the court of Brussels. This position – the highest in the court hierarchy – was conferred to him in the last months of Archduke Albert's illness and allowed Spinola to play a leading role alongside the Infanta Isabella, until his return to Italy a decade later. The diplomatic and courtly nature of Spinola's experience is presented here as complementary to the military dimension of those same years, namely, as a prominent exponent of the so-called Peace Party with the United Provinces. In that capacity, the marquis knew how to become indispensable at court, gaining the trust of the archdukes and the strategic friendship of leading figures such as Peter Paul Rubens and the nuncio Guido Bentivoglio.

The last two essays of the second part of the volume focus on the final, tragic years of Ambrogio Spinola's life. At the end of August 1629, the marquis of Los Balbases officially assumed the post of governor general of Milan. In the preceding weeks in Madrid, Spinola, as a member of the Council of State, had openly expressed his preferences for a peaceful

resolution of the war in the Low Countries, and this choice – shared by the majority of the council – had provoked the hostility of the count-duke of Olivares, who managed to distance Spinola from the court of Madrid by entrusting him with an impossible task: the government of Milan and the conclusion of the Second War of Succession of Mantua and Monferrato. Davide Maffi's contribution aims to understand the context of the famous siege of Casale that will bring about the ruin of Ambrogio. Its factors included a serious economic and political crisis that will provoke open hostility towards the Spanish governors of a city, Milan, in the midst of recession and unable to sustain any longer the military effort that was required; a reduced army that would have required an enormous investment; contradictory orders issued by Philip IV, who seemed unaware of the absurdity of the requests addressed to Spinola; not to mention a count-duke well aware that he was not honouring the financial commitments confronting Ambrogio, determined to go all the way to the end. The letters addressed by Ambrogio to the sovereign, which are discussed in the second part of this chapter, perfectly illustrate this situation, which Luca Lo Basso next examines from a broader perspective. Lo Basso thus reviews an impressive mass of first-hand documentation patiently collected in many notarial, diplomatic, and military archives. It is impossible to fully understand the complex plot of intrigues in which Ambrogio was immersed. Having left Brussels for a routine mission to Madrid, Ambrogio will not set foot there again and will instead be forced to risk his reputation in a war and siege – that of Casale – which he did not desire, and which he considered dangerous for the future of Italy, for the crown, and for himself. This last Italian venture was for Ambrogio primarily a political and, secondly, a military failure. As a severe failure, it contrasts with the prestige he had previously been able to forge, confirmed not only by the many missions that will be discussed in the third part of this volume, but also by the paintings and precious objects that his son Filippo inherited from his father, which Lo Basso presents as pieces of a material history made up of recognitions, diplomatic-military relations, and friendship. The sudden and irremediable fall of Ambrogio speaks volumes about the fragility of an Italian at the court of Madrid. For even though his sons and daughter were immediately considered Spanish, the 1st marquis of Los Balbases paid dearly for his career as a foreigner who had reached the highest military, political, and courtier positions in Spain.

Nina Lamal and Paul Arblaster open the third part of the volume by analysing how news and print media produced in various cities in Italy and the Southern Netherlands helped to spread the fame of the victorious Genoese general between the two most famous sieges of Ostend (1601–1604) and Breda (1624–1625). The loss of Sluis and the use that his enemies made of it in the media tarnished Ambrogio Spinola's first great success in Ostend, but this initial setback in the war for opinion would not be repeated again. The Frisian campaigns of 1605 and 1606 brought about a major change in this regard, partly because the printer Abraham Verhoeven obtained in Antwerp a license to publish a series of reports narrating Spinola's brilliant victories and continued this work until the Genoese hero's death. In 1620, at the same time the Army of Flanders occupied the Palatinate, Verhoeven published a series of numbered *gazettes* devoted to this campaign. By 1625, Spinola's military reputation was already well known in Europe and his image had been spread not only through the war news, but also through numerous prints. These praised his ability to sustain, pay, and discipline his troops, winning their esteem and the admiration of his adversaries with gestures of courtesy and generosity, as well as with his ingenuity, readiness, and determination, along with admirable tactical and organizational skills. Even the satires and criticisms of enemies helped to enlarge his presence and make him a regular character in the emerging journalism of the time and in the public sphere all over Europe.

Considering the myth built around Ambrogio Spinola as a brilliant general of the Spanish monarchy, Enrico Zucchi studies the treatment of his heroic wanderings and the elaboration of his character in the Baroque poetry in Italy, Spain, and the Southern Netherlands, paying particular attention to contemporary Genoese literature. In contrast with this image of a supranational hero, a Catholic champion of Christianity, and a defender of the Spanish Empire (appearing, for example, in the work of Lope de Vega), Ligurian poets such as Ansaldo Cebà underline Spinola's patriotic origins and 'Genoeseness', promoting the values of the Republic through his achievements. And although Ambrogio became, as grandee of Spain, one of the *eminenti*, thus breaking the old equality of status attributed to the main Genoese lineages, he retained in the later centuries his position as a very illustrious member in the pantheon of Genoa's heroes.

The image of Spinola in numerous portraits and depictions of the most relevant battles that he performed throughout his brilliant military career create a complex and effective iconographic strategy, both during

Ambrogio's life and after his death. It included masterpieces of extraordinary artistic quality by painters such as Rubens, Van Dyck, and Velázquez, which have of course been extensively studied. Laura Stagno's essay focuses instead on a more specific and less well-known set of objects. These are works commissioned by a small circle of close relatives of Ambrogio (his brother-in-law, sister, nephew, and children) in Genoa and for the church of Rosano in his fief of Castelnoceto. She analyzes the cycle of frescoes that decorated Villa Spinola di San Pietro (1623–1624), with the main battles and sieges conceived as an example and exaltation of the heroic virtues of Ambrogio; the silver reliefs that adorned a cabinet; the lost decoration of a gallery created for Palazzo Doria Spinola, of which there are only a few references in historical photographs and other written testimonies; and, finally, the large allegorical canvas on Spinola's tomb in the church of Rosano, depicting him as a knight defending the Catholic faith against heresy. This significant production of images of Ambrogio in the Genoese region continued to be promoted in later centuries, demonstrating the esteem held for one of the most famous and prominent among the dynasties of the ancient Genoese nobility.

At the end of this volume, an essay by Bernardo J. García García allows us to follow the parable described by Ambrogio Spinola from his arrival in the Low Countries under the walls of Ostend (1603) to become a grandee of Spain, a distinction received in 1621. It is a parable of facts and characters, certainly, but also one of objects and representations. Several works in this volume have shown the importance of prints: images intended for a wider circulation than paintings and frescoes. Using images and objects scattered in various museums of the old Spanish possessions in Europe, Bernardo García examines the rhetoric that underlies these demonstrations and in which Ambrogio himself was recognized: that of the *miles Christi*, who, as an embodiment of Saint George and the heroic knights of the First Crusade, would have reconquered the lands of the Low Countries convulsed by the disobedience of heretics. Protector of Genoa, of the Netherlands, and of the cavalry, and often represented at the moment of defeating the hydra of heresy on the back of his horse, Saint George synthesizes the epic chivalry and the devout ideal. It is not surprising, then, to find it in the decorations of a magnificent parade gorget and harness, made by skilled Lombard craftsmen to celebrate his role in the end of the siege of Ostend. Ambrogio may have worn it at one of the many equestrian ballets or at a tournament held in the Grand Place of Brussels, on the occasion of the recent peace with England. Or perhaps it was conceived as a gift for the Spanish monarch.

Most of the contributions of this volume were presented and discussed at the *Ambrogio Spinola entre Gênes, Flandres et Espagne. Réseaux et récits, guerre et finances (1569–1639)*, held at the UCLouvain (Louvain-la-Neuve), between 3-5 April 2019, coinciding with the 450th anniversary of the birth of this famous character. We would like to thank all the scholars who took part in that meeting for their contributions and the enriching experience of those days. That fruitful interaction has served to conceive this book, which we are delivering to the press in a year, 2021, that also marks the 400th anniversary of the awarding of the title ‘marquis of Los Balbases’ and Ambrogio’s accession to the *Grandeza* of Spain. He had achieved the highest recognition of his career. We would also like to express our thanks to Yasmina R. Ben Yesséf Garfia, Yves Junot, and Benoît Maréchaux for their careful and constructive reviews of the manuscript. We are glad to offer the reader this innovative approach to many aspects of his biography in a collective, interdisciplinary, and highly complementary effort that will undoubtedly stimulate further research and yield new results.