MARY ALEXANDRA WATT

THE CRUCIFORM *COMMEDIA*:
AN ICONOGRAPHIC APPROACH

It is probably trite to note that in the *Commedia* Dante tells two stories, his own and that of Everyman. It is likely equally unnecessary to suggest that how these two stories interact, that is; how Dante ensures that his particular story and "Everyman's" story are reconciled, is a function of narrative structure. However, while it is frequently noted that, at points, the two stories intersect,¹ I am unaware of any comprehensive attempt to plot out, pictorially or visually, the underlying narrative structure which effects this intersection. However, when we do just that, when we illustrate visually the pilgrim's *narrative*² progress, a surprisingly simple, yet remarkably elegant, substructure emerges. Transforming the *Commedia's* narrative structure into a pictorial representation reveals a cruciform image produced by two trajectories that intersect to form the ultimate icon of redemption. In this way, Dante creates a mental image in accordance with the conventions of medieval iconography and the medieval art of memory.³

This mental image gradually emerges if we step outside of the *Commedia's* literal narrative and consider the work from a new perspective. When one visualizes the *shape* of the story which Dante tells, the "big picture" as it were, the *Commedia* takes on, if not an entirely new look, then one which is somewhat different from the impression engendered by traditional analysis. To effect this transformation from a literal narrative whose episodes we can, at times, visualize, to a mental image of the *shape* of the entire story, requires that we consider the *cammin di nostra vita* (*Inf.* 1, 1) as a horizontal linear progression. Mentally visualizing the road in this way is consistent with Dante's own view, expressed in *Paradiso* 30, that earthly time is linear as opposed to the circularity of eternity.⁴ This linear horizontal progression, I term the "universal journey." This journey is still Dante's story for Dante shares the universal experience of life, a passage through time and space from one point to another, with all men. In this journey he is not alone. However, in the middle of this road ("*Nel mezzo del cammin*" *Inf.* 1, i) there is an interruption. Dante halts his horizontal progression and begins to move vertically. Dante's descent into *Inferno*, therefore, deviates from the collec-

tive⁵ and initiates his own distinctive journey.⁶ This vertical movement is what I term the “particular journey.” The vertical nature of the particular journey is characterized by the ever-present ascent and descent pattern of the protagonist and the secondary characters.⁷ By locating the “up/down” paradigm, his particular story, within the journey of “our life,” Dante is able to tell his own story in such a way as to ensure that it retains a universal significance. This structure is set out in a more visual manner in Figure 1.

The horizontal line depicted in Figure 1. represents the universal journey. The vertical line represents the particular journey. The arrow pointing downwards represents Dante’s descent into the *Inferno*. Within this first portion of the journey, Dante’s encounters are marked by a lack of vision, by sterility and by futility, most notably in Farinata’s inability to see the present,⁸ Brunetto Latini’s self-enforced sterility,⁹ and Francesca’s hopeless wish that God might yet be a friend to her and to her suffering Paolo.¹⁰

To move away from this downward thrust, the pilgrim, Dante, must turn around and face the other way if he is to ascend to heaven, complete the cruciform and achieve redemption. At the bottom of *Inferno* then, he turns around¹¹ and starts an ascent towards the summit of Mount Purgatory. This takes him back up to the line that represents the universal journey. While the culmination of the purgatorial voyage in the verdant and lush Earthly Paradise contrasts the fertility of this route with that of the road to the pit of Hell, it is also one of the those points in the *Commedia* where critics frequently note an overlapping of the universal, or “exemplum,” with Dante’s own story.¹² When we consider the pilgrim’s journey from the perspective of the cruciform configuration, we understand why such overlap occurs. This is the point where Dante’s particular journey rejoins the universal from which he diverted at the outset of *Inferno*.

Moreover, the cruciform configuration reveals that the first two portions of Dante’s trek, the downward journey of *Inferno* and the ascendant voyage of *Purgatorio*, both of which take place below the horizontal line, are parallels of each other. Figure 1. is constructed in such a way that the precision of this parallelism is demonstrated visually. Starting at the point where Dante finds himself lost in the “selva oscura” (*Inf.* 1, 2) and reading from left to right towards the nadir of *Inferno*, so that the reader follows Dante’s journey to the pit of hell, we see that Dante starts this journey with the image of perilous water left behind.¹³ After making his way steadily downwards, the trip takes a 180-degree turn, so that while the reader continues to read from left to right, the rose window now lies to the right of the reader’s field of vision. An image of the stars heralds the commencement of this new leg of the trip.¹⁴

Like the initial downward plunge, this second leg of the journey starts with an image of dangerous water left behind¹⁵ and its completion, or at least the commencement of yet another leg, is heralded by an image of the stars.¹⁶ That these two legs of Dante's journey are so similar begs the question - in what way are they different? Textual clues lead to the conclusion evident in Figure 1.; that is, the first distinction between the two journeys is deictic. The first portion was directed away from heaven, depicted as the rose window in Figure 1., whereas the second leg is headed straight for it.

The corollary to the deictic distinction is also evident in the pictorial representation of Figure 1. which reveals that the first portion of the journey is truncated and is not part of a longer trajectory, as we see the purgatorial journey is. Unlike the self-contained downward thrust of the trip through Hell, the upward trek through Purgatory continues above the horizontal line. While all movement, action and discourse below the horizontal line can be characterized as earthly and temporal, only the trajectory that leads to the centre of *Inferno* can be said to be *earthbound*. The upward trajectory of *Purgatorio* contains a potential for ascent that its counterpoint does not. The distinction between the two journeys, therefore, is two-fold: the distinction between damnation and the chance for purgation lies both in direction and scope.¹⁷

The voyage away from God, the earthbound journey, is frequently associated with the loss of a Golden Age and yearning for past happiness, looking back rather than forward, being turned around and looking the wrong way. This mood of "paradise lost" permeates the *Inferno*. From Francesca's lament that there is nothing sadder in times of unhappiness than to remember happiness,¹⁸ to the Old Man of Crete's tears for the corruption of society (*Inf.* 15), the denizen of *Inferno* invariably looks back rather than forward and, therefore, is similarly associated with being turned around and looking the wrong way. This imagery, which recalls the tragic fate of Lot's wife, or equally the pagan Orpheus, is firmly rooted in and reflects the essence of condemnation; it allows for no hope of redemption and thus renders looking forward pointless.

The tone changes considerably when Dante starts the arduous journey up through *Purgatorio*. We see the distinction first in the water imagery that opens the canticle. While it recalls the similar language that launched the infernal journey, the water imagery of *Purgatorio* 2 looks forward to "better waters" rather than dwelling on those from which the pilgrim has barely escaped. Throughout the purgatorial journey we will see other subtle instances of this deictic distinction. In *Purgatorio* 2, for example, upon the

approach of the ship of souls, Dante looks first to Virgil for an explanation and then turns again to look at the ship only to find its brightness and mass magnified.¹⁹ Clearly, in Purgatory Virgil will not provide the only source of enlightenment as he did in Hell. Here in Purgatory, gazing back at the masters of the past for explanation is not sufficient. Here, enlightenment comes from other objects on which Dante will set his gaze and, more importantly, from looking forward rather than back. Thus, in *Purgatorio* 15, Virgil explains to Dante that if he were to turn his longings for material goods *upwards*, that is, towards God, that he would never experience the fear of losing them.²⁰ And again, as Dante is about to enter the wall of fire, yet hesitates in fear, Virgil comforts him and advises the frightened pilgrim to *turn* with full assurance.²¹ The reorientation is completed in *Purgatorio* 30 when Beatrice's voice finally turns Dante around to look at her instead of back to see where Virgil has gone.²²

Accordingly, the ascent to *Paradiso* is marked continually with references to looking up in order to move ever upwards. The most obvious indicator of this intentional verticality comes in *Paradiso* 22 where Dante finds himself directly above the earth in the sphere of the fixed stars.²³ The point is reinforced in *Paradiso* 27 where Beatrice has Dante look down to see how far he has come.²⁴ Since they are directly above the point from whence Dante has come, we see that vertical movement, not the passage of time, marks progression in the journey recorded in the *Commedia*.

It is important to remember, however, that the cruciform pattern is not used merely to plot out the spiritual significance of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise, much of which would have been understood by Dante's readers in any event. Rather, one must remember the duality it encompasses. While the cruciform certainly charts Everyman's story, it uses events from Dante's particular life to do so. Or put another way, the narrative framework created by the cruciform allows Dante to tell his own stories; his love story, the story of his development as a writer and the story of his political travails, in such a way that they take on universal significance. But there is still another function to the cruciform configuration. In addition to providing a narrative framework, the cruciform provides Dante with an interpretive or exegetical framework within which he can reconcile, evaluate and catalogue the events and evolution that comprise these stories. Within this multi-faceted framework, Dante can expose which of his thoughts, actions and sentiments were misdirected, which were correctly directed and, therefore, failed to reach their full potential and finally, which were destined for divinity. The cruciform matrix provides a common denominator, a format suitable for each of

three seemingly disparate stories. As he carefully lays the events of each story upon the cross, Dante effects an overlapping and superimposition of the significance of each story and thereby proposes each as a *figura* of the others. For example, in the context of the love story, Dante uses the cruciform framework to situate each of the stages of his own experience of love. In the first part of the journey, in the *Inferno*, love is most often associated with *eros*, carnal love, love of the creation, not of the creator. Thus, we see Francesca, Semiramis and other examples of the sin of carnal love eternally damned. Similarly, in the first part of the journey, love is most often portrayed as illicit, sexual and conducive to jealousy, dissatisfaction and death and is often associated with courtly love and “fole amor.”²⁵ Above all, it remains forever earthbound and narrow in scope. Within this context, we understand why the episode in which Beatrice descends into Limbo to speak to Virgil is painted in *stilnovistic* tones²⁶ that recall the early love poetry of Dante and his contemporaries.

In *Purgatorio*, love is more closely associated with a classical, epic type of love, therefore associating the purgatorial journey with the *Convivio* and its increasing preoccupation with Virgil. For example, just as Dante is beginning to sense Beatrice’s approach, he says, “conosco i segni dell’antica fiamma.” (*Purg.* 30, 48) The words are taken almost verbatim from Virgil’s *Aeneid* and, in the *Commedia*, are cited at the moment in which Virgil disappears, signaling that even epic love cannot reach heaven.²⁷ However, Virgilian love is, nonetheless, distinguished from the epic lust of Ulysses that is forever relegated to the earthbound category. Aeneas, in the *Commedia*, is always characterized as *pre-Christian* as opposed to pagan or *non-Christian*. Virgil’s treatment of love suggests a precursor to the tenets of Christian love, just as the Rome which Aeneas would found was a precursor to Christian Rome and in the same way that Aeneas’s descent into the underworld was a precursor to Christ’s descent. Ulysses, however, could not resist the very human temptation to seek forbidden knowledge and traveled away from the confines of divine ordination and was thrust forever into the realm of the earthbound with no possibility of ascent. Unlike Ulysses, Aeneas turned his back on the folly of erotic love and earthly pleasure and proceeded in the right direction.

Purgatorio also reflects the *Convivio*’s dalliance with intellectual love; love of knowledge, or philosophy, and Dante’s attempt to find a love distinct from the carnal, characterized in his own canon by the erotic love of the *Vita nuova*. Nonetheless, it is only Christian love, the kind professed in the *Commedia* itself, that will take the lover above the horizontal line and into the realm of the celestial. Thus, in *Paradiso* we set yet another version of

love; one which is familial, almost communal and the embodiment of knowledge at the same time. Here Beatrice calls Dante "frate" and Dante paints Beatrice as the giver of maternal love.²⁸

The cruciform configuration is also used in a similar manner to chart Dante's intellectual progression, specifically that of his development as a writer. I have focused my examination on what I consider to be Dante's three autobiographical works, the *Vita nuova*, the *Convivio* and the *Divina Commedia*, but it may well be that we can locate many of his other works within the great interpretive matrix that Dante creates with the cruciform. The poetry of courtly love first pervades the *Inferno* with Beatrice's and Virgil's exchange in *Inferno* 2 referred to above. Beatrice woos Virgil with her courtly style. She includes him in her vogue by calling him "cortese" (*Inf.* 2, 58) and then reveals that she is moved by love. "Amor mi mosse," (*Inf.* 2, 72) she says and Virgil, in turn, calls her "donna." (*Inf.* 2, 76) The poetry raises its head again in *Inferno* 5, not just in Francesca's words but in her choice of reading material.²⁹ The presence of Brunetto Latini and his *Tresor*³⁰ makes it clear where Dante feels many of his literary contemporaries and near contemporaries are destined. The recuperative efforts of the *Convivio*³¹ and Dante's attempts to go beyond erotically motivated writing are on the right track but nonetheless fall short and are ultimately likened, in terms of usefulness, to the erotically charged literature represented by the *Vita Nuova*. Thus Beatrice's rebuke recalls elements of both the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio* and makes it clear that both literary pursuits and the "loves" they celebrate are essentially earthly and can go no further than Earthly Paradise. It is not surprising then that, in addition to the familiar echoes of the *Vita Nuova*,³² we should also hear echoes of the *Convivio* throughout both the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*.³³ It will only be with the writing of the *Commedia* and the love it exalts, that Dante will escape the bounds of earthly and temporal confines. Only the truly new kind of writing - new in Augustinian terms, as opposed to the illusory newness of the *dolce stil nuovo* - only the *Commedia* can take Dante to heaven, or in writer's terms, *auctoritas*.³⁴

Thus, in *Paradiso* 4 Beatrice actually surpasses the philosophers featured in the *Convivio* for she can see the truths that they could not.³⁵ In this portion of the journey, wisdom is shared and expanded beyond the confines of Dante's descent into the *Inferno*. The depiction of Beatrice as a philosopher fulfills the project first attempted within the *Convivio*: the reconciliation of sexual love with the love of philosophy.³⁶ Here on the higher plane, love and knowledge become one and Beatrice becomes both. Beatrice's trans-

formation into wisdom was foreshadowed as early as *Purgatorio* 30, 11, where her arrival was heralded with words taken from the *Song of Solomon*, "Veni de Libano, sponsa mea, veni di Libano, veni" and in which, according to the Catholic interpretation, the bride is the wisdom of God. (*La Divina Commedia* 1955, 735) Moreover, the way Beatrice is dressed in *Purgatorio* 30, 31-33, ("sopra candido vel cinta d'uliva/donna m'apparve, sotto verde manto vestita/ di color di fiamma viva.")³⁷ also evokes theological wisdom. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Virgil disappears at this point,³⁸ not just because he belongs to the earthly but so that Dante can distinguish between pre-Christian and Christian wisdom. As Beatrice speaks the words of wisdom, we see that her words often echo Dante's earlier statements in other works. For example, when she explains that it is not just the natural influence of the heavens which affect one's destiny, but that each seed is directed to a determined end,³⁹ Beatrice recalls what Dante suggested in *Convivio* IV, xxi, 7: "E però che... la disposizione del cielo puote essere buona, migliore e ottima la quale si varia per le costellazioni che continuamente si trasmutano, incontra che de l'umano seme e di queste vertudi più pur [e men pura] anima si produce." By assigning the role of teacher to Beatrice who is continually "provando e riprovando," (*Par.* 3, 3) Dante is able to attribute an expertise and a divine authority to his own knowledge without creating an appearance of being proud. Similarly, in *Paradiso* 29,⁴⁰ Dante recalls *Convivio* III, vi, 4-5 in which he earlier described angelic vision.⁴¹ Within the context of this new truth, Dante is able to absorb and reinterpret his earlier works, while, at the same time, reclassifying them. By extracting certain of his ideas and placing them within the interpretive matrix, Dante is able to suggest the relative merits of much of his earlier thinking. Unprepared to dispose of the entirety of his pre-*Commedia* work, Dante uses the revision, the new perspective of the *Paradiso* to correct the reader's vision. The salvation Dante accords the numerous ideas which appeared first in his early work and then again in the *Paradiso*, reveals a redeemable quality to much of Dante's thought but also underlines the necessity of divine enlightenment to revealing its previously hidden fundamental truth. Without such enlightenment, notwithstanding the potential of the *Convivio*'s thought, its ideas will remain within the purview of the earthly and cannot lift the pilgrim above the horizontal line. Accordingly, while the limitations of reason left questions unanswered in the *Purgatorio*,⁴² in *Paradiso* these limitations are revealed as owing to the quality of reason, not to reason itself. Thus in *Paradiso* 2, Beatrice distinguishes between earthly and enlightened reason,⁴³ using the latter to "correct" Dante's moon theory. In *Paradiso* 7, 10-

12, "Io dubitava, e dicea 'Dille, dille!'/ fra me: 'dille' dicea, a la mia donna/ che mi disseta con le dolci stille," serves the same purpose with respect to the *Vita nuova* and, indeed, with respect to Dante's adherence to the *dolce stil nuovo*. This explicit echo suggests that the "sweet" and "new" style of praise is appropriate only when it is directed towards the creator of the object of love and not towards the object of love alone.

In this portion of the matrix, Dante's wisdom emerges from, and surpasses the very individual circumstances that engendered it and, at the same time, coloured it. Its potential is fulfilled as Dante's thinking is first revised and then expanded beyond the confines of the literary attempts below the horizontal line. The fusion of the object of erotic love and the prey of Dante's intellectual pursuit creates a product that is greater than the sum of its parts. In combining two elements Dante has enhanced the meaning of both, so that the plot of his love story is revealed as a *figura* of his intellectual story and both become exegetical tools for interpreting the third narrative thread, his political story.⁴⁴

The cruciform is essential to Dante's self-interpretation of his political activities and the concomitant evolution in his political thought as characterized in his early and intense involvement in the civic affairs of Florence.⁴⁵ Thus, the descent into Hell can be said to represent the blind, shortsighted focus of local politics embodied by the Florence of Dante's time. Although the *Inferno* is clearly removed geographically from the world of the living, it is clear that it is not completely detached from it either. Just as the bodies of the damned have been transformed by Dante's strategy of *contrapasso*, so here the physical city of Florence, while transformed, is still recognizable. Though its baptistery and churches are gone and in their places are graveyards and woods of suicides, its gates and walls remain as a reminder of the city's power to exclude and shut out. The pilgrim and the reader are aware almost from the start of the descent that Dante's first destination is associated, at least in some way, with Florence. Throughout the *Inferno* we encounter Florentines; Ciaccio in *Inferno* 6, Florence's spendthrifts and misers in the fourth circle and, of course, Filippo Argenti in *Inferno* 8.⁴⁶

But perhaps the character who most represents the downward myopic focus of Florence is Farinata degli Uberti. (*Inferno* 10) Farinata epitomizes Dante's vision of Florence as a political Hell. Certainly not the only character to provide political commentary, Farinata is the anthropomorphosis of the essence of Florence and its sins. While other characters tell of statues to the gods of war, expanding city limits and increasing rivalry amidst a growing population,⁴⁷ it is in Farinata that these are all fused into a single char-

acteristic, shortsighted pride. Farinata's epicureanism is revealed as merely one element of a greater caustic feature. The pride of Florence is what has made it blind to the destruction and trauma it has wrought but it is also symptomatic of its myopic view of the world. This myopia is the quintessence of political thought that concentrates on the city-state and local concerns. Farinata's apparent oblivion to his surroundings and his inability to see the present exclaims this loud and clear and prefigures the fate of those who similarly limit their vision.

In his encounter with Farinata, Dante, to a certain extent, shares this pride. Dante, the pilgrim, smugly tells Farinata of the ultimate defeat of the Ghibellines, thus taking part in the political tit-for-tat that has become the bane of Florence. How do we explain this? The answer lies in remembering that Dante was a Florentine. After his exile he did not simply wash his hands and bid the city good riddance. Rather, Dante spent much of his time early in his exile trying to regain entry to Florence and consorting with other exiles. Notwithstanding the bitterness he bore Florence, Dante still wished to return there. In the depths of the *Inferno*, Dante is still mired in his Florentinism. He has not yet turned his back on Florence and looked for a new direction. Dante, the author, has drawn Dante, the pilgrim, as the figural representation of his own political behaviour. It is for this reason then that Dante enters into the debate with Farinata. The issue of who will ultimately hold the reigns of power in Florence is the essence of the local and earthbound character of Dante's early political thought. It reflects Dante's early activities within the city-state and reflects the prevailing Florentine opinion that Florence was subject to no power but its own. Dante's discussion with Farinata and where he locates the conversation reveals the value Dante now assigns to such debates. Dante's descent into Hell, therefore, figures not only his exile but the early steps in his own political journey. And both lead downwards as the literal narrative takes the pilgrim ever closer to the nadir of Hell and the murder of a Roman Emperor.⁴⁸ The message is relatively simple to glean; preoccupation with the city-state results in betrayal of the Empire as Dante himself sets out in his sixth epistle.⁴⁹ More importantly, while the juxtaposition of this crime with Judas's betrayal of Christ alerts us to another layer of meaning, it also reveals Dante's cataloguing project. Both crimes are assigned the same value, characteristics and implications. The preoccupation with the city-state, its resulting ignorance and ultimate betrayal of the empire shares meaning and effect with the betrayal of Christ: betrayal of the empire is the political equivalent of the betrayal of the son of God. Both constitute a laying to waste not only of a divine gift,

but of a means of salvation.

The ascent through Purgatory attempts to remedy the political myopia of the *Inferno* and in this sense, it also resituates the *Convivio*. While many of the thoughts expressed in the *Convivio* will ultimately be revealed as earthly, its recuperative efforts, especially in terms of Dante's view on the issue of Empire, are shown to have been right-minded even if they fell somewhat short of the views expressed in the *Commedia*.⁵⁰ Whereas, in Book IV of the *Convivio*, Dante has turned his mind to assessing the purposes and benefits of the Empire, he does not go so far as to suggest it as an *iter* to salvation. The Empire of the *Convivio* remains firmly rooted in the earthly. That is, while Dante recognizes a divine quality to the establishment of Rome,⁵¹ he suggests a limitation to its powers that is also divinely ordained.⁵² While recognizing a certain divinity in the inception of the Empire, the *Convivio* is not able to make the more explicit connection between the Empire and salvation that the *Commedia* does. Moreover, the more Dante's focus shifts to Virgil and the *Aeneid* in Book IV of the *Convivio*, the more Dante fuses his vision of Rome to a vision of Empire that, like its chronicler, Virgil, is ultimately limited to the earthly. As long as he continues to look backwards to Rome's founding, Dante cannot look forward to where the Empire leads. It is no wonder then that Dante left the *Convivio* unfinished; it could go only so far. The cruciform pattern, again, figures this limitation but reveals that Dante was on the right track. In order to get to Heaven, one must first get to Rome, or as Dante represents it, the garden of Earthly Paradise. Just as Florence was figured as Hell, in the *Commedia*, Rome, through a series of allusions, is figured as the garden of Earthly Paradise.⁵³ Since Dante also depicts Heavenly Paradise as a garden, this depiction also forges a figural affinity between Rome and Heaven. The connection between Rome and Heaven is made explicit in *Purgatorio* 32 with the reference to "that Rome" where Christ is a Roman.⁵⁴ Thus we move from a city that tries to stand alone (Florence) to a city whose fame comes from being a component (albeit a ruling one) in a greater structure. If preoccupation with the city as a city-state will take us down to the core of Hell, preoccupation with the city as a smaller component in a larger entity, that is, as the cornerstone of an Empire, can help us get back up to the point from which we started. If the city provides the road to Hell, then the Empire provides the ticket to Heaven.

Therefore, the restoration of Rome as the earthly empire is not an end in and of itself. It is part of a greater conquest that will bring about the heavenly kingdom, which in the *Paradiso*, is associated with Jerusalem. In the *Commedia* then, the road to Rome and the road to Jerusalem lie along the

same trajectory. The journey to one is a step in the journey to the next, just as the purgatorial journey of Figure 1. is contained within the larger trajectory leading to Jerusalem.⁵⁵ Therefore, the language of *Purgatorio* recalls pilgrimages to both cities, first with the song of the new arrivals, "In exitu Israel de Aegypto" (*Purg.* 2, 46) and then with the reminder that "Tiber's water" is the source of the journey to Purgatory.⁵⁶ The potentiality of the journey to Rome is consistent, therefore, with the potentiality of the second leg of Dante's journey. Being a smaller part of a greater trajectory, the journey to Rome is not plagued by the sterility and stunted potential of the road to Hell. In *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, as in the *Inferno*, Dante continues to meet Florentines but now they bear differing associations. Cacciaguida, in contrast to Farinata, is not tied to the Florence that Dante associates with Hell. He recalls Florence's glorious past and, like Dante, laments the city's fall into licentiousness. However, rather than continue stubbornly to attach significance to the differences which have resulted in petty local turf wars, Cacciaguida tells of his death on a crusade, on his way to Jerusalem to fight a greater battle.⁵⁷ Cacciaguida's fight is one in which all Christendom is united against a common enemy. It is not local in nature. It is not an exclusively Florentine issue. This echoes Dante's sentiment with respect to the papal wars⁵⁸ in contrast to his view of the Crusades and marks a clearly expanded significance to Jerusalem beyond its physical existence.

Cacciaguida's episode does more than illustrate Dante's political evolution. Structurally, the episode creates an immediate backward glance to the other Florentine who predicted Dante's exile, Farinata. Cacciaguida, like Farinata, is able to recite the destinies and inheritance of Florence's leading families. Cacciaguida's perspective, however, is broader than Farinata's and contains an interpretive function as he deduces that it was pride that brought about the downfall of many of these once great clans. Cacciaguida follows his remarks about the pride of families⁵⁹ with one about the pride of Florence⁶⁰ demonstrating, again, how closely Dante links the city with its citizens and how close a resemblance he sees between civic and familial pride. The two episodes help interpret each other in that, similarities in the episodes highlight the contrasts. Thus, we see that Florentines are not inevitably damned but rather, that it is a question of perspective or focus and direction that determines their fate. Florentines and presumably, Florence, can be saved if they look beyond themselves, just as lovers can be saved if they look beyond the object of their love. The episodes, therefore, also reinforce the narrative structure of the *Commedia* in their conformity to the parallel, or perhaps, more accurately, opposing trajectories of the cruciform narrative in

which the journey below the horizontal line is the antithesis of the journey above the horizontal line.

Thus we see that the cruciform structure provides an exegetical tool through which Dante can make sense of otherwise apparently disconnected aspects of his life. But there is another aspect to the cruciform which such an examination involves; that is, its role in the mnemonic function of the *Commedia*. Francis Yates notes that some have interpreted the *Commedia* as following the mnemonic principles of the time.⁶¹ Indeed we know that Brunetto Latini, Dante's tutor, was among those involved in translating portions of *Ad Herrenium* (Yates 88 n. 21) so it is not unlikely that Dante would have been aware of the prevailing memory conventions and their classical origins. However, the mnemonic approach to the *Commedia* has tended, thus far, to look at the images that Dante creates with the literal text, for example, the circles of Hell, the spheres of the planets etc. It does not consider the possibility of an underlying intertextual mnemonic image that engenders the *Commedia*'s uniquely deictic narrative structure and the resultant exegetical matrix. Given Dante's proclivity to polysemy, it appears quite plausible that he would not limit the inclusion of a mnemonic function to a single layer of meaning. I believe that there is good evidence on which to conclude that Dante has included within the text of the *Commedia* an additional mnemonic layer intended to conform to the then current conventions of the art of memory. It would appear quite plausible and, I would submit, highly probable that Dante intended that the reader extract, from within the text, a "mental cathedral," a building that was not only a common edifice in medieval memory exercises but a building that, in the Middle Ages, was most often laid out on a cruciform pattern.

Within the cathedral, the nave can lead outside or to the altar, depending upon the direction in which one walks. Similarly, the transept and the rood screen create a barrier between the congregation, the ordinary earthly lives and the sanctuary in which the initiates and the clergy are situated. Finally, the rose window at the end of the church rising beyond the altar represents the eastern light source, illumination for the Church. It has been suggested that the source for Dante's celestial rose may have been the rose windows found in the medieval churches.⁶² Indeed, this theory is highly tenable, especially if one is prepared to go even further and suggest that the source for the entire layout of the intertextual structure was the church in which such windows were found and that Dante's use of the image was intended to make the mind picture even more explicit.

While the foregoing provides a mere starting point in assessing the extent

to which an intertextual structure informs the exegetical structure and mnemonic functions of the *Commedia*, it nonetheless suggests an aspect to the *Commedia* consistent with what is eminently evident on the textual level. Considering the *Commedia* in this way; that is, considering that it creates a cruciform shape that the reader is intended to visualize mentally, furnishes the *Commedia* with another dimension and a fullness that was otherwise lacking. The cruciform pattern creates an internal interpretive and cataloguing device through which Dante can ascribe meaning and value not only to his own events but to those of world history and explain why the same act may not always draw the same consequences. The end to which a particular act is directed, the focus or intent of the sinner, the direction in which one travels or looks will determine whether one will find oneself on the way out of the Christian fellowship or on the way to communion at the altar. The direction determines whether the traveler's back will be turned away from the celestial rose or whether the pilgrim can walk towards it, to be blinded not by the lack of light but by its abundance. At the same time, the cruciform provides a mental picture of the most fundamental Christian symbol. With the creation of a poem which makes the sign of the cross, Dante leaves no doubt as to the poem's significance or its divine authority. The *Commedia* is not only about redemption, it is the means by which Dante himself is redeemed.

State University of New York at Buffalo

NOTES

¹ The point at which most critics note an intersection of "Everyman's" story, or as I term it, the "universal," with Dante's own, or again, as I term it, the "particular," is when Beatrice appears to Dante at the pinnacle of Mount Purgatory. Natalino Sapegno, for example, sees Beatrice and Dante as real creatures tied to "una cronaca di esperienze intellettuali e affettive personalissime." (*La Divina Commedia* 1955, 736) At the same time, he suggests that they are "figure di una realtà soprasensibile, partecipi di un'arcanica vicenda, investite di un peso esemplare." He characterizes theirs as a story of an earthly love which is suddenly transferred to the plane of a universal and extratemporal lesson. (*La Divina Commedia* 1955, 736) Theodolinda Barolini notes the *Commedia*'s "intersecting of the universal with the singular" which she says is "never more on display than in these cantos, where the Pilgrim's encounter with Beatrice and personal confession are literally enfolded by universal history." (158) I will discuss below why I believe such intersection is especially acute at this point.

² I emphasize the word *narrative* to distinguish my efforts from those efforts of those who have attempted to chart the physical or literal journey of the pilgrim by composing great charts of the various places of hell, purgatory and heaven. For an in-depth treatment

of the many efforts at mapping Dante's three realms see Kleiner, John. *Mismapping the Underworld. Daring and Error in Dante's 'Comedy'*. Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1994.

³ For a definitive treatment with respect to the art of mnemonics in the Middle Ages see Yates, Frances. *The Art of Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966. Yates discusses, at length, the evolution of mnemonic practices in the Middle Ages; from the adaptation of the methods ensconced in the classical Latin works, to the visual application of such techniques in the works of medieval artists. Yates focuses on the technique in which memories are stored and recalled through the creation of a mental picture of a physical location - often a cathedral or a palace - into which mental images of the ideas sought to be remembered are placed.

⁴ Dante presents a river of light, a horizontal flow which is transformed in his eyes, into a circular shape, once he has drunk from it ("e sí come di lei bevve la gronda/ de le palpebre mie, cosí mi parve/ di sua lunghezza divenuta tonda." *Par.* 30, 88-90) thereby opposing the linearity of mortal vision with the circularity of the eternal.

⁵ Dante makes it clear that the road he travels, the life he has been given, is one shared by all, for he calls it "our life." ("Nel mezzo del cammin di **nostra** vita" *Inf.* 1, i; emphasis mine.)

⁶ Again, Dante's choice of voice, the switch from the first person plural to the first person singular, signals a shift in action, a change in focus from the collective to the individual. ("**mi** ritro**vai** per una selva oscura" *Inf.* 1, 2; emphasis mine.)

⁷ Amilcare Iannucci has noted, for example, the overwhelming presence of a vertical pattern, specifically that of descent, in Beatrice's role. (*Forma ed evento nella Divina Commedia* 65)

⁸ "Quando s'appressano o son, tutto è vano/ nostro intelletto; e s'altri non ci apporta,/ nulla sapem di vostro stato umano." (*Inf.* 10, 103-105) That this blindness is intended to synecdochically represent Florentine blindness in general is made clear when, several *canti* later, Brunetto Latini recalls Farinata and the proverbial Florentine blindness in the same warning to Dante. In *Inferno* 15, 67, Brunetto recalls an adage which calls Florentines blind ("Vecchia fama nel mondo li chiama orbi") and then in line 94 recalls Farinata through an allusion to his prophecy of Dante's exile. ("Non è nuova a li orecchi miei tal arra") Natalino Sapegno provides possible origins of the proverb whose origin is by no means certain. (*La Divina Commedia* 1985, 175)

⁹ Brunetto Latini is placed in *Inferno* 15 in the third "girone" or round, of the seventh circle, amongst those violent against nature, specifically, the sodomites whose sexual practices would not result in reproduction.

¹⁰ Francesca's awareness of the futility of the desire is revealed in her use of the subjunctive: "se fosse amico il re de l'universo,/ noi pregheremmo lui de la tua pace." (*Inf.* 5, 91-92)

¹¹ The descent out of hell is marked by an initially confusing passage in which Virgil and Dante climb along Lucifer's matted coat in a downwards direction. ("appigliò sé a le vellute coste:/ di vello in vello giù discese poscia/ tra 'l folto pelo e le gelate croste" *Inf.* 34, 73-75) Virgil turns (and Dante follows) where the monster's thigh meets his haunch and starts climbing again, in a direction that Dante thinks will bring them back towards Hell. Somewhat confused (as he clearly guessed the reader might be) Dante asks for an explanation ("a trarmi d'erro un poco mi favella:/ ov'è la ghiaccia? e questi com'è fitto/ sí sottosopra? e come, in sí poc'ora,/ da sera a mane ha fatto il sol tragitto?" *Inf.* 34, 102-105) and Virgil explains to Dante that they turned at the centre point of gravity. ("ov'io mi presi/ al pel del vermo reo che 'l mondo fora./ Di là fosti cotanto quant'io scesi/ quand'io mi volsi, tu passasti 'l punto/ al qual si traggon d'ogne parte i pesi." *Inf.* 34, 107-110) The confusion that might arise from an initial reading is easily allayed when one imagines Virgil and Dante descending into a sphere, feet first, as if going down a set of stairs. At

the centre of the sphere, they turn upside-down and start an ascent to the other side of the sphere, to the point opposite the initial departure point.

¹² See note 1 above.

¹³ "E come quei che con lena affannata/ uscito fuor del pelago a la riva/ si volge a l'acqua perigliosa e guata,/ cosí l'animo mio, ch'ancor fuggiva,/ si volse a retro a rimir lo passo/ che non lasciò già mai persona viva." (*Inf.* 1, 22-27)

¹⁴ "salimmo sù, el primo e io secondo,/ tanto ch'ì vidi de le cose belle/ che porta 'l ciel, per un pertugio tondo;/ e quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle." (*Inf.* 34, 136-139)

¹⁵ "Per correr miglior acque alza le vele/ omai la navicella del mio ingegno,/ che lascia dietro a sé sì crudele;" (*Purg.* 1, 1-3)

¹⁶ "Io ritornai da la santissima onda/ rifatto sí come pinate novelle/ rinovellate di novella fronda,/ puro e disposto a salire a le stelle." (*Purg.* 33, 142-145)

¹⁷ The importance of looking in the right direction is omnipresent in the *Commedia*. Lina Bolzoni ("Costruire immagini" 64-65) notes the multitude of examples in which the "guardar fisso" figures in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. Nowhere is its importance, however, made more clear than in *Paradiso* 31 where St. Bernard tells the pilgrim, "Figliuol di grazia, quest-esser giocondo"/ cominciò elli "non ti sarà noto,/ tenendo li occhi pur qua giù al fondo:/ ma guarda i cerchi infino al piú remoto/ tanto che veggi seder la regina/ cui questo regno è suddito e devoto." (112-117)

¹⁸ "Nessun maggior dolore/ che ricordarsi del tempo felice/ ne la miseria." (*Inf.* 5, 121-123)

¹⁹ "Dal qual com'io un poco ebbi ritratto/ l'occhio per domandar lo duca mio,/ rividi piú lucente e maggior fatto." (*Purg.* 2, 19-21)

²⁰ "ma se l'amor de la spera suprema/ torcesse in suso il desiderio vostro,/ non vi sarebbe al petto quella tema;" (*Purg.* 15, 52-54)

²¹ "Pon giù omai, pon giù ogni temenza:/ volgiti in qua e vieni: entra sicuro!" (*Purg.* 27, 31-32)

²² "quando mi volsi al suon del nome mio,/ che di necessità qui si registra,/ vidi la donna che pria m'apparìo/ velata sotto l'angelica festa,/ drizzar li occhi ver me di qua dal rio." (*Purg.* 30, 61-65)

²³ "Col viso ritornai per tutte quante/ le sette spere, e vidi questo globo/ tal, ch'io sorrisi del suo vil sembiante;" (*Par.* 22, 132-135)

²⁴ "Onde la donna, che mi vide assolto de l'attendere in sù, mi disse: "Adima il viso, e guarda come tu se' volto." (*Par.* 27, 76-78)

²⁵ For a broader examination of the notion of 'fole amor' in the *Inferno*, and in particular, in *Inferno* 5, see Iannucci, Amilcare A. "Forbidden Love: Metaphor and History (*Inferno* 5)."

²⁶ In *Inferno* 2, 76 Virgil calls Beatrice "donna di virtù..." which Sapegno notes, recalls *Vita nuova* 10, 2 where Beatrice is described as "distruggitrice di tutti i vizi e regina delle virtù." (*La Divina Commedia* 1985 24) In particular, when Beatrice tells Virgil she will speak kindly of him to her Lord ("Quando sarò dinanzi al signor mio,/ di te loderò sovente a lui." *Inf.* 2, 73-74), we are reminded of the hope of recompense for one's adoration central to the doctrine of courtly love.

²⁷ "agnosco veteris vestigia flammae..." *Aen.* IV, 23

²⁸ Beatrice ceased to be the object of sexual love as early as *Purgatorio* 33, 23 where she referred to Dante as "frate." Indeed, by *Paradiso* 7 she is calling him "frate" (58, 130) with increasing frequency. In keeping with this familial nature of love, Dante has also been painting Beatrice as the giver of maternal love. In *Purgatorio* 33, Dante describes Beatrice in terms which describe her as the essence of motherly love, Mary. ("E Beatrice, sospirosa e pia,/ ascoltava sí fatta, che poco/ piú a la croce si cambiò Maria." 4-6) She is similarly characterized in *Paradiso* 1, 100: "Ond'ella, appreso d'un sospiro. li occhi driz-

zò ver'me con quel sembiante/ che madre fa sovra figlia deliro." In *Paradiso* 22, 2-6 Dante turns to Beatrice "come parvol che ricorre/ sempre colà dove più si confida" and Beatrice is described "come madre che socorre/ subito al figlio palido e anelo/ con la sua voce, che 'l suol ben disporre." When, in *Paradiso* 23, Beatrice cedes to Mary, it is a simple task to transfer the language of mother and child used to describe the relationship between Beatrice and Dante, to describe the relationship between Mary and Dante; "E come fantolin che 'nver la mamma/ tende le braccia, poi che 'l latte prese,/ per l'animo che 'nfin di fuor s'infiamma." (121)

The contrast between the erotic love of the *Inferno* and that of the *Paradiso* is also implied in Dante's description of Mary in *Paradiso* 23, 73: "Quivi è la rosa in che 'l verbo divino/ carne si fece." Mary is metaphorically a rose but, as Amicare Iannucci points out, she is associated with a white rose as opposed to the red rose of earthly courtly love. "However, Dante's 'candida rosa' also, obviously, stands for divine love in contrast (and the cultural reference is certainly willed) to the red rose of the *Roman de la rose*, a symbol of earthly love." ("Paradiso XXXI" 473)

²⁹ Francesca tells Dante that she and Paolo were led to adultery while reading "di Lancialoto." (*Inf.* 5, 128) Natalino Sapegno notes that the reference is likely to the story of *Lancelot du Lac*, a French romance, known to Dante either in its original or in one of the many translations. (*La Divina Commedia* 1985, 65 n. 128) The romance is rooted firmly in the French tradition of courtly love. As Urban Holmes points out, the great prose "Lancelot" of the Thirteenth Century Vulgate Cycle mentioned in *Inferno* V was adapted from Chrétien de Troyes's *Chevalier de la Charette* or *Lancelot*. Chrétien de Troyes undertook the work at the request of Marie de Champagne whose court like that of her mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, was famous and lively circles of courtly love literature. (37-38)

³⁰ In *Inferno* 15, Brunetto Latini, placed amongst the violent against nature, in his parting words to Dante, says to remember his *Livre dou Tresor*, through which Brunetto will live on. ("sieti raccomandato il mio Tesoro, nel quale io vivo ancora, e più non chiegio." 119-120.) While Brunetto implies that his writing will take the place of an eternal soul, the fact remains that Brunetto himself in placed in Hell. Writing cannot replace the emptiness of a soul nor can it bring redemption. Indeed, it is only through its inclusion in the Christian work of Dante that the *Tresoir* has gained a species of literary redemption or, at least, literary longevity.

³¹ "E se nella presente opera, la quale è *Convito* nominata e vo' che sia, più virilmente si trattasse che nella *Vita Nuova*, non intendo però a quella in parte alcuna derogare, ma maggiormente giovare per questa quella; veggendo siccome ragionevolmente quella ferida e passionata, questa temperata e virile essere conviene." (*Conv.* I, i)

³² In *Purgatorio* 29 Dante describes the holy procession coming towards him as "sì com'elli eran cadelabri apprese/ e ne le voci del cantare 'osanna'" (49-50) reminding the reader of the ending of the *Vita Nuova*. As Robert Hollander notes, in *Purgatorio* 30 Beatrice's angelic choir seems to pick up where it left off in the *Vita Nuova*. (55) Natalino Sapegno also points out that the arrival of Beatrice in *Purgatorio* 30, 28-33 recalls the imagery used to describe her in the *Vita Nuova* 23, 7, 25; "e paremi vedere moltitudine d'angeli li quali tornassero in suso ed aveano dinanzi da loro una nebulletta bianchissima. A me pareva che questi angeli cantassero gloriosamente, e le parole del loro canto mi pareva udire che facessero queste: *Osanna in excelsis*; e altro non mi pareva udire." (*La Divina Commedia* 1955 737) The closer Beatrice comes to the pilgrim, the further back in time the reader is transported, so that when we finally see her clothing in lines 23 to 33, as Sapegno says, we can't help but be reminded of the "vestito rosso 'sanguigno' e il bianco" already worn by Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova*. (*La Divina Commedia* 1955 736, 737) But we continue to slide back in time so that in the same canto ("Prima ch'io fuor di puerizia fosse," *Purg.* 30, 42) we are brought back precisely to that moment in the *Vita nuova*

when Dante first met Beatrice. ("Ella era in questa vita già stata tanto, che ne lo suo tempo lo cielo stellato era mosso verso la parte d'oriente de lo dodici parte l'una d'un grado, si che quasi del principio del suo anno nono apparve a me, ed io la vidi, quasi de la fine del mio nono." *Vita nuova* 2, 2) Most importantly, the direct use of the words "vita nova" draws the reader's attention back to the earlier work. ("questi fu tal ne la sua vita nova/ virtualmente, ch'ogne abito destro/ fatto averebbe in lui mirabil prova." *Purg.* 30, 115-117) Eventually, Beatrice's reference to Dante's wavering fidelity ("Alcun tempo il sostennai col mio volto:/ mostrando li occhi giovanetti a lui,/ meco il menava in dritta parte volto" *Purg.* 30, 120) not only recalls the *Vita nuova* but also reminds us of the struggle to which Dante refers in *Convivio* II, ii. ("Ma perocchè non subitamente nasce amore e fassi grande e viene perfetto, ma vuole alcuno tempo e nutrimento di pensieri contrarii che lo impediscano, convenne, prima che questo nuovo amore fosse, molta battaglia intra 'l pensiero del suo nutrimento e quello che gli era contrario, il quale per quella gloriosa Beatrice tenea ancora la rocca della mia mente.") The reference effectively draws an affinity between the two works and thereby exposes their mutual weaknesses.

³³ Not only does the "via smarrita" in *Inferno* I locate the work thematically but it echoes language used throughout the *Convivio*. (*Convivio* IV, i, 9 "proposi di gridare a la gente che per mal cammino andavano, acciò che per diritto calle si dirizzassero;" IV, xii, 19 "lo buono camminatore giugne a termine e a posa; lo erroneo mai non l'aggiugne;" IV, xvi, 10 "E per lo cammino dritto è da vedere;" IV, xxii, 6 "così questi umani appetiti per diversi calli dal principio se ne vanno, e uno solo calle è quello che noi mena a la nostra pace;" IV, xxiv, 12 "che entra ne la selva erronea di questa vita, non saprebbe tenere lo buono cammino;" IV, xxviii, 2 "l'altra si è, che ella benedice lo cammino che ha fatto.") Furthermore, the image of "selva oscura" which so marks *Inferno* I cannot help but recall *Convivio* IV, xxiv, 12 and "la selva erronea di questa vita" and with it Dante's pre-*Commedia* attempt to redeem those who had lost their way, philosophically and politically.

³⁴ For Dante, as well as for his contemporaries, there was a distinction between a mere writer and an author or an *auctor*. The latter carried with it the stamp of historicity and was more closely associated with the modern English term "authority." Dante's definitive statement on the issue of *auctoritas*, that an *autore* is one who is not only to be believed but obeyed (*Convivio* IV, vi, 5 "E così 'autore,' quinci derivato, si prende per ogni persona degna d'essere creduta e obedita."), is clear evidence of the esteem in which he held such status.

³⁵ Charles Singleton suggests that Dante's portrayal of Beatrice reflects Thomist thought in that her divine knowledge not only contains philosophy but perfects and, therefore, transcends it. (134) Amilcare Iannucci has also noted that Beatrice in *Paradiso* 4 often echoes St. Thomas. (*Forma ed evento nella Divina Commedia* 87) Theodolinda Barolini suggests that Beatrice, at times, is also the spokesperson for St. Augustine. (102)

³⁶ Bruno Nardi sees the pursuit of knowledge in the *Convivio* as one which is expressed in philosophical terms. In the *Commedia*, however, he considers that the reconciliation takes the form more of that expressed by Gilson in his writings on Saint Bernard and courtly love.

³⁷ Natalino Sapegno (*La Divina Commedia* 1955, 737) cites Landino who notes, "i colori del velo, del manto, della veste alludono alla fede, alla speranza, alla carità: le quali tre virtù sono solo della Teologia, e per questo sono detto teologiche." The olive wreath may signify "la pace, la quale è nell'animo quando si è adornato da fede; e la vittoria imperò che niuna cosa li è poi dura a credere o intendere e operare; e la sapienza imperò che l'ulivo è consecrato a Pallade [cfr. il V. 68], che è la dia de la sapienza, la quale è corona de la santa teologia."

³⁸ *Purgatorio* 30, 49, according to Natalino Sapegno, is used to denote that moral phi-

losophy cedes to the supernatural and to the divine, as a more noble science and one that is worthy of her. (*La Divina Commedia* 1955, 738)

³⁹ "Non pur per ovra delle rote magna/ che drizzan ciascun seme ad alcune fine/ secondo che le stelle son compagne" (*Par.* 30, 109-111)

⁴⁰ "Queste sustanze, poi che fur gioconde/ de la faccia di Dio, non volser viso/ da essa, da cui nulla si nasconde:/ però non hanno vedere interciso/da nono obietto, e però non bisogna/ rememorar per concetto diviso." (*Par.* 29, 76-81)

⁴¹ "Poi quando dico: Ogni Intelletto di là su la mira, commendo lei. non avendo rispetto ad altra cosa. E dico che le intelligenze del cielo la mirano, e che la gente di qua giù gentile pensano di costei, quando più hanno di quello che loro diletta. E qui è da sapere che ciascuno Intelletto di sopra, secondo ch'è scritto nel libro de la cagioni, conosce quello che è sopra sé e quello che è sotto sé. Conosce adunque Iddio sì come sua cagione, conosce quello che è sotto sé sì come suo effetto, e però che Dio è universalissima cagione di tutte le cose, conoscendo lui, tutte le cose conosce in sé, secondo lo modo de la Intelligenza. Per che tutte le Intelligenze conoscono la forma umana, in quanto ella è per intenzione regolata ne la divina mente; e massimamente conoscono quella le intelligenze motrici, però che sono specialissime cagioni di quella perfettissima, tutto quanto esser puote, sì come loro regola ed essempla."

⁴² "Quanto ragion qui vede/ dir ti poss'io; da indi in là t'aspetta/ pur a Beatrice, ch'opra di fede." (*Purg.* 18, 46-48)

⁴³ "Ella sorrise alquanto, e poi "S'elli erra/ l'oppinion" mi disse "de' mortali/ dove chiave di senso non diserra,/ certo non ti dovrien punger le strali/ d'ammirazione omai, poi dietro ai sensi/ vedi che la ragione ha corti l'ali." (*Par.* 2, 52-57)

⁴⁴ Amilcare Iannucci has identified three separate plot lines contained within the *Commedia*: the story of Dante's love for Beatrice, the story of Dante's political vicissitudes and the story of Dante's development as a writer. (*"Paradiso XXXI"* 470)

⁴⁵ See Piattoli, R. *Codice diplomatico dantesco*. Florence, 1950. for reproductions of the numerous documents which attest to Dante's involvement in Florentine civic affairs. See also Petrocchi, Giorgio. *Biografia. Attività politica e letterarie*. Vol. 6 of *Enciclopedia Dantesca*. Rome, 1978. 1-53 for a more detailed study of Dante's early political life, ambitions and philosophy.

⁴⁶ Joan Ferrante offers an extensive examination of the similarities between medieval Florence and the City of Dis, enumerating the "several hints within the *Comedy*" that Dante equates Florence with Hell. (67) Amilcare Iannucci has also noticed this connection, pointing out that, in his opinion, "The Florentine suicide at the end of the canto (*Inf.* 13, 130-151) represents figuratively the whole city." (*"Paradiso XXXI"* 478) Perhaps the meaning of Hell in the *Commedia* was best expressed by Alan Charity who saw the issue in terms of Erich Auerbach's theory of *figura* and fulfilment and concluded that Hell is fulfilled in Florence. (245)

⁴⁷ In *Paradiso* 16, Cacciaguida tells Dante of the Florence "of old," referring to the initial walls of the original Roman encampment which marked the first borders of the city; the small but pure Florentine population and the mutilated statue of Mars which once stood at the head of the Ponte Vecchio.

⁴⁸ "Quell'anima là sù c'ha maggior pena/ disse 'l maestro, "è Giuda Scarioth,/ che 'l capo ha dentro e fuor le gambe mena./ De li altri due c'hanno il capo di sotto,/ quel che pende dal nero ceffo è Bruto:/ vedi come si storce, e non fa motto;/ e l'altro è Cassio che par sí membruto." (*Inf.* 34, 61-69)

⁴⁹ Written March 31, 1311 to the Florentines: "Quid fatua tali opinione submota, tamquam alteri Babylonii, pium deserentes imperium nova regna tentatis, ut alia sit florentina civitas, alia sit romana?" ("Wherefore, then, stirring up so vain a thought as this, do ye, a second race of Babylonians, desert the compassionate empire and seek to estab-

lish new kingdoms, making the civic life of Florence one, and that of Rome another?" Epistle VI, 2. Trans. Milano 653, 651)

⁵⁰ Notwithstanding the somewhat "loftier" tone of the *Convivio*, especially when compared with the *Vita Nuova*, it is nonetheless mostly concerned with "earthly" matters. For example, *Convivio* I, ii deals extensively with the debate as to the merits of the vernacular whereas in *Paradiso*, we see that, ultimately, spoken language is of little use in explaining the divine mysteries. Though Dante enjoins God to grant him the power to speak of the marvels he saw ("O isplendor di Dio, per cu'io vidi l'alto triunfo del regno verace, dammi virtù a dir com'io il vidi!" *Par.* 30, 97- 99) such entreaties are ultimately unanswered for earthly language is inadequate for the task of describing divine truth. ("Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio/ che 'l parlar mostra, ch'a tal vista cede,/ e cede la memoria a tanto oltraggio." *Par.* 33, 55-57.)

Similarly, in the *Convivio* II, iii, Dante discusses the placement of the celestial spheres and the inhabitants of heaven yet in the *Paradiso*, the placement of the blessed is revealed to be little more than a representation for the benefit of those without divine vision. ("Qui si mostraro, non perché sortita/ sia questa spera lor, ma per far segno/ de la spiritual c'ha men salita. Così parlar conviensi al vostro ingegno,/ però che solo da sensato apprende ciò che fa poscia d'intelletto degno. Per questo la Scrittura condescende a vostra facultate, e piedi e mano attribuisce a Dio, e altro intende;" *Par.* 4, 37-45.)

⁵¹ "E che ciò sia, per due apertissime ragioni veder si può, le quali mostrano quella città essere imperadrice, e da Dio avere speziali nascimento, e da Dio avere spezial processo." (*Conv.* IV, iv)

⁵² "Ma siccome ciascuna arte e ufficio umano dallo imperiale è a certi termini limitato: così questo imperio da Dio a certi termini è finito." (*Conv.* IV, ix)

⁵³ "che 'l giardin de lo 'mpero sia deserto." (*Purg.* 6, 105)

⁵⁴ "qui sarai tu poco tempo silvano;/ e sarai meco senza fine cive/ di quella Roma onde Cristo è romano." (*Purg.* 32, 100-102)

⁵⁵ This is not a connection made only by Dante. The connection between earthly and spiritual pilgrimage was so strong in the Middle Ages, according to Debra Birch, that for ordinary men and women "travelling to the earthly Jerusalem seemed little different to travelling to the heavenly one and pilgrimage came to be popularly regarded as a way of achieving salvation and getting to heaven." (2) Rome enjoyed equal popularity as a pilgrimage site and accordingly, the connection between Rome and Jerusalem was informed by the connection made between Jerusalem and heaven. That earthly places such as cities could not only share meaning with each other and with their spiritual allegorical counterparts was typical of medieval thought patterns. As Sabine MacCormack points out, in mediaeval thought "the symbol and the prototype were regarded as equal, or at least part of the same reality." (7)

⁵⁶ "dove l'acqua del Tevero s'insala." (*Purg.* 2, 101)

⁵⁷ "Poi seguitai lo 'mperador Currado;/ ed el mi cinse de la sua milizia;/ tanto per bene ovar li venni in grado. Dietro li andai incontro a la nequizia/ di quella legge il cui il popolo usurpa;/ per colpa d'i pastor, vostra giustizia. Quivì fu' io da quella gente turpa/ disvillupato dal mondo fallace;/ lo cui amor molt'anime deturpa;/ e venni dal martiro a questa pace." (*Par.* 15, 142-148)

⁵⁸ "Lo principe d'i novi Farisei, avendo guerra presso a Laterano, e non con Saracin né con Giudei, ché ciascun suo nimico era Cristiano, e nessun era stato a vincer Acrin né mercatante in terra di Soldano." (*Inf.* 27, 85-90)

⁵⁹ "Oh quali io vidi quei che son disfatti/ per lor superbia!" (*Par.* 16, 109-110)

⁶⁰ "e le palle de l'oro/ fiorian Fiorenza in tutt'i suoi gran fatti." (*Par.* 16, 110-111)

⁶¹ "Gradually the idea began to form that the Middle Ages might think of figures of virtues and vices as memory images, formed according to the classical rules, or the divi-

sions of Dante's Hell as memory places." (xii) "That Dante's *Inferno* could be regarded as a kind of memory system for memorizing Hell and its punishments with striking images on orders of places will come as a great shock. It would take a whole book to work out the implications of such an approach to Dante's poem. It is by no means a crude approach, nor an impossible one. If one thinks of the poem as based on orders of places in which the spheres of Hell are the spheres of Heaven in reverse, it begins to appear as a summa of similitudes and exempla, ranged in order and set out upon the universe." (96)

⁶² Amilcare Iannucci notes that "no single source can account for Dante's representation of paradise as a rose" but, based in part on Giuseppe Di Scipio's position, Iannucci theorizes that it "may have been suggested to him by the lofty rose windows of medieval cathedrals or the roselike depictions of heaven in early Italian art." ("Paradiso XXXI" 472) See also Di Scipio, Giuseppe C. *The Symbolic Rose in Dante's Paradiso*. Ravenna: Longo, 1984.

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