Morton Bloomfield's systematic inquiry into the historical evolution of the concept of the Seven Deadly Sins in English poetry from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, including Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, has opened up the prospect of profitable investigation of the subject in other literatures. In this light the *Orlando Furioso*, which served as a model for Spenser, has never been fully examined and thus invites consideration. The advantage of looking at the *Orlando Furioso* from this point of view is that it permits an unprejudiced reading, from a new perspective, which may result in a fresh insight into Ariosto's poem. The question, which presents intriguing possibilities, may in one way be approached by Siegfried Wenzel's assertion that the "simplest function" of the Seven Deadly Sins "beyond merely enriching the doctrinal content of a poem, would be to give it structure and form". This observation should perhaps be qualified in the case of the *Orlando Furioso* where the importance of the doctrinal element is clearly insignificant. The following pages will not attempt to deal with the subject in its entirety but will focus on one aspect only, in particular on avarice and sloth, sins which Ariosto has himself associated with the clergy and the monastic orders in accordance with a tradition which has its origin in Medieval religious handbooks and early Renaissance writings. This study, which will make some use of analogues not sources, is predicated on the universally accepted premise that the poem is not an allegory, or a classical epic, designed with a moral purpose, as was maintained in 1549 in *La Sposizione di M. Simon Fornari da Reggio sopra l'Orlando Furioso di M. Ludovico Ariosto* (Firenze: Torrentino), but a work in which Ariosto's benevolent attitude towards his fellow man manifests itself with good natured, often mischievous humour, and generous infusions of irony.

Before proceeding further, however, it would be useful to bear in mind throughout the ensuing discussion that for Ariosto poetry is superior to history and that in his opinion only an ignorant person would hold the contrary to be true. Ariosto prefers to incorporate his theory in a concrete example rather than theorize, as Spenser does later in *The Faerie Queene* in his celebrated letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, who is reminded that "the Methode of a Poet historical is not such as of an Historiographer" and that the poet "re-coursing to the thinges forepast, and divining of things to come, maketh a pleasing Analysis of all". Towards the end of the *Orlando Furioso*, long after it has become clear that the poet's imagination is bound by no rule, Ariosto answers the charge that he has no respect for facts. Ariosto at this point (Canto XLII, 20-22) has just told the story of a combat between three of the stoutest Christian warriors, including Orlando, and three worthy pagan opponents, including Agramante, the African king. Ariosto has also related that the fight took place in an open space on an island in the Mediterranean but an objection was raised that the site of the battle was so mountainous and rough that it was impossible to find a level place large enough to serve as the scene of the battle described. This was maintained in Canto XLII by Federico Fulgoso, commander of the Genoese fleet, who, having fought against the pirates infesting the Ligurian coast, knew these waters well, and objected that the terrain of the island of Lipadusa (Lampedusa), which he had seen with his own eyes, was an unlikely site for an equestrian battle. Cardinal Fulgoso, or Fregoso, who may have heard Ariosto read his poem in Rome in 1510, and one of the interlocutors in Pietro

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Bembo's *Prose* of 1525, was therefore implying that Ariosto's story was not true or verisimilar and that the poet was a liar. In reply to this accusation, allegedly based on fact, Ariosto calmly explains that just after Cardinal Federico visited the island, an earthquake dislodged a huge rock, which fell upon the mountain flattening it and creating a square which then became a suitable arena for the famous battle scene, recorded by Fragonard in a drawing called *The Battle on the Island of Lipadusa.*

Ariosto thus prefers to counter fact with poetic invention rather than with another fact, in this way avoiding a direct confrontation on the issue and outwitting his opponent on terms of his own choosing. In the three octaves which succinctly sum up his poetic theory, Ariosto uses only three words belonging to the technical language of literary criticism, *istoria, vera* and *verisimile,* if the word liar, bugiardo, be excluded. Swiftly dismissing the cardinal's charge, Ariosto slyly returns to his story, how nearing its conclusion. It is worthy of note that Ariosto raises the ancient problem of history versus poetry only towards the end of his poem rather than at the beginning, perhaps assuming his readers would accept the first forty-two of the forty-six cantos of the poem as ample and convincing demonstration of his theory of poetics.

The way was in a certain manner prepared early in the poem, in Canto VII, 1-2, where Ariosto notes that the ignorant *vulgo* believes only in what it can touch or feel, sceptical of all else, and is unlikely to give credence to his tale, but rather call him a liar, bugiardo. Ippolito, his patron, who is enlightened, will not consider it a lie, menzogna.

Thus, poetry and history, reality and illusion, Ippolito, Renaissance patron, and Ruggiero, his mythical ancestor, co-exist side by side on equal terms in the world of the *Orlando Furioso.* Ruggiero, the young hero of the poem, is destined to become the head of a long line of illustrious men and women, culminating in the House of Este, but before this is possible, he must prove himself by overcoming a series of obstacles. Canto VI presents one stage in the spiritual development of Ruggiero and justifies the allegorical framework of its conception, Alcina representing lust; Logistilla, reason, assisted by the four cardinal virtues later (X, 52). Ruggiero, a victim of *lussuria* and enslaved by sloth (VII, 53), as a first step is obliged to overcome vice (VI, 60), then to defend himself against evil instincts, all of them introduced in the shape of monstrous creatures, half man, half animal, mounted on steeds, donkeys or oxen, repulsive and grotesque disfigurations. The vices they represent are not specified, but since they appear as deformations of men with bestial features, it may not have occurred to Ariosto that further definition was necessary and that they would not be interpreted as a sufficiently clear allusion to deviation from virtue, hence from beauty. Virtue and beauty are often synonymous in the *Orlando Furioso.* It will be remembered that once Alcina's falseness is discovered, her beauty disappears and she stands revealed in all her ugliness. Ruggiero fights against the vices alone, refusing to use his enchanted shield which blinds when uncovered, preferring to rely upon his own virtue, instead of fraud. Vice, then, cannot defeat Ruggiero, but beauty, in the persons of two fair young ladies, Beltà, and Leggiadria, disarms him (VI, 69). The implication is clear that Ruggiero has the force of character to conquer vice but cannot resist beauty, and beauty leads him on the path to Alcina's garden, to lust and sloth. In the *Roman de la Rose, Oiseuse,* Idleness, doorkeeper of the garden, a kind of earthly paradise, carries the mirror and comb of lechery to suggest that sloth is the first step towards lust. In *Piers Plowman,* sloth keeps company with lust and is both a physical and spiritual affliction.

The Ruggiero - Alcina episode inspired Fragonard, the eighteenth century French artist, to record one of its most significant moments in the drawing, *Ruggiero perceives the true...*
ugliness of Alcina, raising a problem which can be dealt with only in passing here but which merits some attention. Lessing in the eighteenth century refused to concede that Ariosto was a painter when he described the beauty of Alcina, charging that his stanzas were full of excessive descriptive detail, from which no distinct image could possibly emerge, and that therefore, he exceeded the bounds of the poet’s art. In his book, Ut Pictura Poesis, The Humanistic Theory of Painting, Rensselaer W. Lee has discussed this matter in connection with the Renaissance habit of equating the talents of the poet with those of the painter pointing out that if Ariosto was guilty of an artistic transgression in Lessing’s eyes, this was not the case for Ludovico Dolce, who, in his Diálogo della pittura in the sixteenth century enthusiastically characterized Ariosto as a painter of high merit. It might be added that Dolce could speak not only as an art critic but as an experienced editor having brought out, among others, an annotated edition of Ariosto’s poem. The history of the illustrated editions of the Orlando Furioso demonstrates that it was regarded as a rich mine of subject matter by artists, among them the Bolognese painters Annibale Carracci and Guido Reni, late sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries; G.B. Tiepolo, who painted the frescoes on the Orlando theme in Vicenza in 1737; Rubens in the Low Countries (1577 - 1640); and Poussin in France in the seventeenth century. The more than 137 drawings by Fragonard, considered by Philip Hofer in his article, “Illustrated Editions of the Orlando Furioso,” in the book just cited (pp. 27 - 40) to be the greatest in a long line of interpreters of Ariosto, lend added proof to the poet’s appeal for the artist.

Just before Ruggiero enters Alcina’s garden of sensual delight, an earthly paradise, inspired by Poliziano’s Kingdom of Venus, the young knight has to confront Erifilla, the symbol of avarice. Ariosto’s description of Erifilla neglects no detail necessary for a lucid picture of this figure, gigantic in stature, with long teeth and a poisonous bite, and with sharp finger nails, giving her a bear-like claw (VI, 78). She is mounted on a wolf, not as lean as Dante’s in the Inferno (I, 49-54), but very heavy and taller than an ox. She wears vestments of a sand colour, symbolic of avarice. Her helmet and shield bear the figure of a swollen poisonous toad (VII, 4-5), often associated with avarice in the iconography of the sin. Whether this carefully produced verbal picture was ever translated into an actual representation has not come to my notice, but there can be little doubt that Ariosto had a clear portrait in mind. In the encounter between Ruggiero and Erifilla, the latter is unhorsed but on the advice of his guides, Belìa and Leggiadria, who together proceed to lead him to Alcina’s enchanted garden (VII, 7) the knight punishes her no further. It is evident from this episode that the author’s hero, Ruggiero, cannot in any way be moved by the sin of avarice, which has not the slightest hold on him, although being vulnerable to beauty, he is an easy victim of lust.

A paragon of virtue, uncorrupted by avarice (XXVI, 1), like the illustrious women of ancient times she resembles, Bradamante, predestined to be Ruggiero’s wife, like him covets neither wealth nor empire. Having thus introduced the subject of avarice at the beginning of Canto XXVI, Ariosto then presents a related vice, cupidity, sometimes considered a cardinal sin, as Bloomfield points out (p. 54). Engraved on one of the four fountains built by Merlin in France is the story of a beast, referred to as a corrupting monster (46), cupidity. Portrayed as a beast with the body of a fox, the ears of an ass, the head and teeth of a wolf, a lion’s claws, lean and hungry, it spares no one, high or low, No respecter of rank, cupidity inflicts injury on kings, princes and their peers but is especially destructive in the Roman court among cardinals and popes (32), Ariosto is careful to note.

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In The Faerie Queene, in Book I, Canto IV, in the colourful pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins, for which Samuel C. Chew has suggested a number of analogues from literature and the arts of design, the figure of Avarice, fourth in the parade, appears wearing tredd-bare cote and cobbled shoes, who in order to fill his coffers with money:

Ne scarce good morsell all his life did taste.

Avarice is presented as one who has led a wretched life:

Most wretched wight, whom nothing might suffise;
Whose greedy lust did lacke in greatest store;
Whose need had end, but no end covetise;
Whose welth was want, whose plenty made him pore;
Who had enough, yett wished ever more.

In Spenser's procession, Avarice is riding on a "Camell loaden all with gold" (stanza 27) while Ariosto's figure is mounted on a beast that had issued from Hell, almost at the time of the creation of the universe. Details differ but in the conception of the sin there is a similarity of spirit.

Cupidity, as Ariosto predicts, will be the cause of havoc and no locality will be spared its depredations (XXVI, 42). Especially active among the prelates of the church, it can be checked and conquered by only magnamity, such as that of Francis I of France. In the fourteenth-century The Ladder of Perfection, Walter Hilton defines covetousness as a "love of worldly things" which can best be combatted by "poverty of spirit". He elaborates: "Covetousness is destroyed in the soul by the working of Divine Love, for it stirs the soul to such an ardent desire for good and heavenly riches that it holds all earthly riches as worthless" (p. 219). Aristotle had long ago affirmed that the mean between prodigality and avarice was liberality, and following him, Ariosto names Francis I as the leading champion of his time in combatting cupidity in political and social life. The French sovereign is not alone, however, for he is supported by three young rulers, who are also cited for this distinction: Maximilian of Austria, the Emperor Charles V, and Henry VIII of England. Ariosto then presents a long list of contemporary figures who were active in the fight against the corroding vice of cupidity. For Ariosto, then, cupidity, while not numbered among the seven deadly sins, is an equally destructive vice.

According to Brunetto Latini cupidity derives from sloth. In Il Tesoretto, Brunetto explains that when a man through indolence cannot provide for his own needs, he immediately sharpens his wits to make up for the lack with a covetous eye on the possessions of his neighbour:

De neghienza m'avisa
che nasce covitisa.

(lines 2743-44)

On the other hand, wealth leads to avarice:

Ma colui c'ha divizia,
si cade in avarizia.

(lines 2753-54)

Cupidity and avarice for Dante's mentor are separate but closely related vices, opposite
sides of the same coin. The case of Dante is not much different. Adopting the lines *auri sacra fames* directly from Virgil’s *Aeneid* (III, 56-57), Dante defines avarice as “sacra fame / De l’oro,” in *Purgatorio* XXII, 39-40,17 where these words are spoken by Statius, for whom they represented a turning point, a reformation of his way of life. Dante’s definition of avarice includes cupidity, and avarice and its opposite, prodigality, are sins which follow Aristotle’s arrangement of vices in pairs of extremes, illustrated in *Inferno* VII, 58-59:

mal dare e mal tener lo mondo pulcro
Ha tolto l’oro ...

Ariosto’s conception of avarice and cupidity is remarkably similar to Dante’s.

Turning for purposes of comparison to Spanish literature, we find that for Juan Ruiz, the Arcipreste de Ilita, cupidity and avarice are two separate and distinct deadly sins.18 In the *Libro de Buen Amor*, about the mid-fourteenth century, the Spanish prelate devotes one section to *cobdicia* and another to *avaricia* (246-51). Juan Ruiz considers cupidity to be the source of all other sins:

Detodos los pecados es raíz la cobdicia
(218).

The author of *La Celestina*, late fifteenth century, links the two sins together in the person of the scheming go-between Celestina, moved by both covetousness and avarice.19 It is worth noting that the deadly sins are interrelated by the author of the *tragicomedía*, all arising from the sin of pride. Other precedents in medieval Spanish literature regarding covetousness and avarice are not lacking, as Dorothy Clotelle Clarke points out in her specialized study of *La Celestina*. In the early fourteenth century *Vida de San Ildefonso*, in which the conventional list of the seven sins is accepted, all evil is seen as deriving from *luxuria* and *cobdicia* (p. 38), while the anonymous *Revelacion de un Hermitanno* of 1382 separates avarice from covetousness (p. 47). Pero López de Ayala’s *Rimado de palacio*, late fourteenth century, considers covetousness and avarice both as the root of all evil, and pride as the principal sin (p. 50). In the late fifteenth century *Proceso entre la Sobervia y la Mesura*, Ruy Páez de Ribera views the sins of *cobdicia* and *avaricia* as separate and distinct (p. 53) while Juan de Mena in the mid-fifteenth century *Coplas contra los pecados mortales* makes companions of covetousness and avarice (p. 35).

Similarly, in the *Roman de la Rose*, the images of *avarice* and *covoiis* sit side by side at the entrance to the garden, the symbol of the courtly life. Guillaume de Lorris characterizes *covoiis* as:20

C’est cele qui fait l’autrui prendre
Rober, tolir e bareter,
E bescochier e mesconter.

Shabbily dressed in a tattered robe, the figure of *Avarice* tightly clutches a purse in her hand (II. 197-233). On the other hand, in the late fourteenth century *Piers Plowman*, avarice and covetousness are synonymous and related to lying, guile, deception and theft.21

Two frequently consulted Italian authors, Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, in his *Trattato dell’arte della pittura, scoltura, et architettura* of 1585;22 and Cesare Ripa, in his *Della novissima iconologia* of 1625,23 identify *avarizia* with *cupidigia*; for Lomazzo, “L’avaritia,
ch’altro non è che una cupidigia d’hauer molto”, and for Ripa, “Avaritia è immoderata cupidigia, e sete di hauere, la quale genera nell’auaro crudeltà, inganno, discordanza, ingrati-tudine, tradimento, & lo toglie in tutto dalla Giustizia, Carità, Fede, Pietà; & da ogn’altra virtù morale, & Christiana”.

In the Orlando Furioso avarice is the root of all sin, according to Lidia, who accuses her father, a king, of it before Astolfo on his visit to Hell where she has been confined to suffer for her ingratitude towards an unselfish lover. Her father was unimpressed by the young man’s virtue, for Alceste was poor:

\[
e' \text{l padre mio troppo al guadagno dato,} \\
e' \text{all’avarizia, d’ogni vizio scuola,} \\
tanto apprezza costumi, o virtù ammira, \\
quanto l’asino fa il suon de la lira. \\
(XXXIV, 20)
\]

As an author dependent upon a capricious patron, with little appreciation for creative work, Ariosto could well agree with Lidia that avarice was the source of all vice. If he did indeed, he would not be original but would simply be following a tradition for in the New Testament, 1 Timothy VI, 10, gave avarice that honour, considering it to be the cause of ruin and perdition. Among the theologians of the fifteenth century following the apostle, Antoninus of Florence (died 1459), in his Summa Theologica, as Roger Bacon earlier, put avarice at the head of the list of the sins. For Gregory the Great, pride was the most deadly of all the sins while avarice occupied second place. Bloomfield argues that Gregory and the early Middle Ages did not emphasize avarice as the first sin because “society possessed little absolute wealth and what there was consisted largely of land”.24 By the early sixteenth century this situation had obviously changed in Italy where trade and commerce had created a new society.

When he speaks out against avarice in Canto XXXV of the Orlando Furioso, St. John literally assumes the function of Ariosto’s spokesman as he guides Astolfo on his important mission to the moon. Ariosto and St. John the Evangelist share a common interest which binds them as no other can: they are both professional writers. The Evangelist proclaims his allegiance to the trade declaring:

\[
\text{Gli scrittori amo, e fo il debito} \\
\text{ch’al vostro mondo fui scrittore anch’io.} \\
(XXXV, 38)
\]

The author of the Gospel of St. John justly takes pride in his reputation which can never be taken away from him, since he has received his reward directly from Christ, the subject of his great opus:

\[
\text{E sopra tutti gli altri io feci acquisto} \\
\text{che non me puó levar tempo né morte:} \\
\text{e ben convenne al mio lodato Cristo} \\
\text{rendermi guidardon di sí gran sorte.} \\
(XXXV, 29)
\]

Almost one third of Canto XXXV, from the beginning, is devoted to the serious themes of ingegno, immortality, study, and the importance of the writer’s role in life. St. John’s
warning to princes, endorsed by Ariosto, and his attack against their avarice therefore carry special force:

Oh bene accorti principi e discreti,  
che seguite di Cesare l'esempio,  
e gli scrittor vi fate amici, donde  
non avete a temer di Lete l'onde!  

(XXXV, 22)

According to St. John, the poet has the unique mission of rescuing a man's fame from oblivion, a fate to be feared more than death. Princes, signori avari (XXXV, 23), should thus guard against forcing their authors to beg and should not, by exalting vice and punishing virtue, banish the arts. The point of the lesson here is that the written word has the power to make or unmake a man as Homer and Virgil once amply proved (XXXV, 35-36) and as Alfieri in the eighteenth century re-affirmed. Ariosto's attitude toward avarice is also a highly individual one, related directly to the avari principi (XXXIV, 77), whom he associates with the Estes. Through St. John it was possible for Ariosto to assail a vice which affected him deeply and caused him personal hardship; he could more easily attack through an intermediary and behind a shield rather than in his own vulnerable name. Interpreted in this light the dedication of the Orlando Furioso (I, 3) may be read as mild criticism of his patron Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, "generosa Eraclea prole," the wealthy protector of a poor servant, who can repay his patron only with words and ink, his sole possessions.

Ariosto returns to the subject of avarice three cantos from the end of the poem to deal with the sin more fully. It is a matter of record that Ariosto often composed the exordium after drafting the narrative matter of the canto and was thus enabled to devote whatever time and thought were necessary for the introduction to the canto, usually an elaborate discussion of a topic of major concern to the author. Avarice thus becomes the subject of an extended discourse in Canto XLIII where Ariosto notes that the sin takes root in base souls, not a surprising fact, he observes, but a cause for regret that it sometimes corrupts great men and virtuous women. This preamble serves as the fitting background introduction to a kind of exemplary novella, the story of a husband who tests his wife's fidelity by offering her, in the guise of a former admirer, precious jewels, emeralds, rubies and diamonds, in return for her love. The picture of the wife at the moment of yielding to temptation, seized as she is by cupidity, is vivid:

... il veder fiammeggiar poi, come fuoco,  
le belle gemme, il duro cor fe' molle:  

(XLIII, 38)

The wife falls into her husband's trap and she, angered by this deception, leaves him for her former lover. Rinaldo, who is listening to this story, expresses no surprise, for gold, he remarks, understandably exercises an irresistible fascination:

Se d'avarizia la tua donna vinta  
a voler fede romperti fu indutta,  
non t'am mirar: né prima ella né quinta  
fu de le donne prese in si gran lotta.  

(XLIII, 48)
This tale is immediately followed by a similar one in which the power of avarice is illustrated with a twofold example, revolving around a wealthy judge, Anselmo, continually haunted by the thought that his wife, Argia, would be unfaithful to him, as had once been predicted by an astrologer. Adonio, the third figure in the triangle, a Manuan nobleman, had fallen in love with Argia and had spent an entire fortune in wooing her to no avail; the episode is reminiscent of Boccaccio's Federigo degli Alberighi in the Fifth Day, novella 9 of the Decameron. The story of Adonio is essentially original despite the various sources Pio Rajna cites, Ovid and Boiardo among them, used for incidental details in the tale.26 The tale becomes involved, but to tell it simply, Adonio returns seven years later with a fortune at his command and when he lavishes wealth on her, Argia cannot resist and yields less to his protestations of love than to his wealth. Avarice conquers her despite the fact that her husband had showered his wife with riches so that she would be indifferent to temptation. Adonio's prodigality and Argia's avarice conquer fidelity to her husband. But this is only one side of the story. Anselmo, in court a judge, outside, a mortal man, demonstrates that he is as guilty as his wife of the same fault when he finds irresistible the offer of a fine palace by a homosexual Ethiopian hunchback in exchange for the surrender of his body. Argia, witness to the proposal, suddenly emerges from her hiding place to surprise her accuser. There is nothing but for husband and wife to forgive each other, both equally guilty of avarice.

Sloth is the sixth in Ariosto's list of the Seven Deadly Sins, appearing as Inerzia, in Canto XIV, and soon after as the allegorical personifications, Ozio and Pigrizia. Ariosto presents these figures as gross physical presences:

In questo albergo il grave Sonno giace;
  l'Ozio da un canto corpulento e grasso,
  da l'altro la Pigrizia in terra siede,
  che non può andare, e mal reggersi in piede.

(XIV, 93)

The angel Michael has after considerable effort found the figure of Silence in Arabia in a cave, situated in a pleasant valley, shaded by two hills, covered with ancient pines and huge beech trees, a natural setting existing only in Ariosto's fantasy.27 It will be recalled that the help of Silence is needed to accompany the Christian reinforcements through pagan territory in or near the besieged city of Paris. Ariosto's association of Sleep with Sloth in a desert environment is in keeping with a traditional one which goes back to the early Fathers of the Church, to the time of Evagrius (born in 346), considered to be the creator of Christian mysticism, and of his disciple Cassian (born 355-365) of Bethlehem, whose definition of Sloth, acedia, is well known. According to Evagrius, the celebrated preacher of Constantinople, acedia is a temptation peculiar to desert monks and gives rise to other vices, two of them being otiositas and somnolentia.28 As Wenzel points out, Cassian equates the two terms, somno otii vel acediae (p. 38). In Ariosto's portrayal of the vice, corpulence is the one outstanding characteristic of Ozio and similarly of Pigrizia, who cannot walk or support the weight of his body. Ariosto's mention of the feet is not without purpose, for as Wenzel has noted, "The connection of acedia with the feet is quite widespread in the iconography of the vice".29

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, Lomazzo in his famous treatise on painting, maintained that painting and poetry were closely related, almost identical in nature even,
differing only in method and manner of expression; having studied the changes produced in the body by passion, he has pertinent remarks in this connection. Devoting a few sentences to the effect on the body of what he terms tardità, the equivalent of sloth, Lomazzo has this to say:

"La tardità fà l'huomo pigro, & lento in ogni attione, & sono gl'atti suoi, posarsi, muover le braccia, & tutto il resto delle membra tardamente, non allargare, ne muouere gran fatto le gambe, & postosi in uno stato fermaruisi buon pezzo, si come fanno gli smemorati, facchini, & i villani."

It is clear that Lomazzo was well aware of the debilitating effect of sloth on the arms, as well as on the legs. For Cesare Ripa, in his book, cited earlier, on iconology,

"Accidia, secondo S. Giouanni Damasceno 1.2 è una tristitia, che aggravà la mente, che non permette, che si facci opera buona." (p. 6)

Accidia, which deprives men of their capacity to act and makes them otiosi, e pigri (7), is sometimes depicted as a woman reclining on the ground near an ass to demonstrate how far removed her thoughts are from sacred and religious matters.

Ariosto stresses the physical elements rather than the spiritual which are merely implied in Canto XIV, 93. In Wenzel’s study of sloth it is pointed out that the drowsiness of the subject suggests a loss of taste for spiritual things. But Ariosto’s conception of sloth in this instance is more an affliction of the body than of the soul, unlike Petrarch’s interpretation of acedia, a spiritual malady, harmful to the spirit. Ariosto’s term olio is more similar to Petrarch’s accidia and must not in any manner be interpreted as equivalent to otio, which for the author of De otio religioso, written in 1347, concerns positive creative activity. 31

In The Faerie Queene, in the pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins, sluggisb Idlenesse, mounted on a slouthfull Asse, rides first in the parade. Knowing that this was a sin to which monks were particularly vulnerable, Spenser has Idlenesse: 32

\[
\text{Arayd in habit blacke, and amis thin,} \\
\text{Like to an holy Monck, the service to begin} \\
\text{adding that it was:} \\
\text{Still drownd in Sleepe} \\
\text{and} \\
\text{Scarse could he once uphold his heavie hedd.}
\]

The figure is portrayed with its traditional characteristics, including, as in Ariosto’s conception, lustlesse limbs.

In Petrarch’s canzone Spirto gentil (Canzoniere LIII), the poet depicts the abject political state of Italy, insensitive to internal suffering and strife, Vecchia, oziosa e lenta (line 12), overcome by her pigro sonno, deaf to her people’s cries of woe. Her only salvation is in the gentle spirit, Italy’s only hope against vice. In the second book of the Secretum, St. Augustine succeeds in isolating the source of Petrarch’s affliction, accidia, called aegritudo by the ancients (i.e. Cicero), equivalent to animi tristitia. Petrarch’s concept of the sin is
close to the medieval view, as Wenzel has noted: "In the complex history of the vice, Petrarch's concept of acedia as tristitia, therefore, follows a component that is at once ancient and dominant." (p. 159) For Dante the tristi, the sullen, bearing in their hearts a sluggish smoke, accidioso fumo (Inf. VII, 121-23) are condemned to the black mire of Hell. For Petrarch acedia is understood as "grief rather than as indolence or neglect of spiritual duties," as Wenzel explains (p. 159). Petrarch used the term accidia because it was used in "fourteenth century Scholastic and popular teaching and meant grief," Wenzel continues (p. 161). Petrarch's interpretation of a traditional concept is intensely subjective, designed to define a deep personal feeling. Ariosto's treatment of the vice is like Petrarch's, highly individual.

Returning to Canto XXXV of the Orlando Furioso, cited earlier in connection with avarice, Astolfo learns from St. John that men guilty of sloth are forgotten by posterity, their names obliterated by oblivion, oblio. These include courtiers, inerti e vili (21), a phrase Ariosto uses again later for emphasis in reverse order vili e inerti (27). Immortality is reserved for the few enlightened poets who have triumphed over time, a kind of Petrarchan Trionfo della fama, as Leo has pointed out: 33 oblivion, for the majority of men who exalted vice above virtue (23). Immortality is the true life, oblivion a second death for Ariosto:

    cosigli uomini degni da' poeti
    son tolti da l'oblio, più che morte empio.

(XXXV, 22)

Sublime honours await the poets worthy of the name as well as the few scholars, gli studiosi pochi (30). The association of inertia with oblivion is not a fortuitous allusion but appears designed to remind the reader that glory cannot be achieved without effort as is openly implied in the exordium of Canto XXXVII. While the first octave of that canto refers particularly to women, Ariosto's principle that success cannot be achieved senza industria and without labouring day and night is applicable to the entire poem. If lunga cura (XXXVII) is indispensable to glory, Ruggiero's lunga inerzia, which immobilized him under Alcina's influence, and the ozio lungo d'uomini ignoranti (XXXIV, 75), which Ariosto discovered on the moon diminish a man's worth. The references to the sin of sloth are made with pointed and specific purpose by Ariosto. In Purgatorio (XVIII, 133-38), Ariosto had before him two vivid illustrations of the corrosive nature of accidia, which in one case was responsible for destroying the faith of the Hebrews, who thus failed to reach the river Jordan, and in another the desire of the Trojans, who preferred to stay behind in Sicily rather than follow Aeneas in his long journey to mainland Italy, giving themselves up instead to a life without glory, sanza gloria. For Dante glory is never the reward of the lukewarm, the unconcerned, the negligent but is reserved only for the zealous; for Mary, the mother of her Lord, representing the Church; and for Caesar, the founder of Rome, representing the Empire.

Precedents in Spanish literature offer interesting points of reference. A fourteenth-century moral work, and one of the oldest and most popular Spanish catechisms, Pedro de Varagües's Tractado de la doctrina, warns of the dangers of agidia. 34 His conception of the sin is much akin to Ayala's in the Rimado de palacio, where sloth, defined as octioso estar, produces lassitude, which destroys all desire to do good, faser buenas obras or bien faser. 35 In La Celestina, sloth appears to have been almost as obnoxious to the author as covetous-

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ness and avarice. As Dorothy Clarke explains, “Sloth appears most dramatically in the tragicomedy in the form of Calisto’s (the hero’s) prodigality, offspring of sloth and a measure of Calisto’s lust.” In Ariosto’s view Ruggiero’s lust and sloth take a firm hold of the hero in a similarly traditional fashion.

From beginning to end, save for the necessary introduction to each canto, the *Orlando Furioso* tells the story of man’s accomplishments and exploits on earth, without interruption. The *Orlando Furioso* pays tribute to man’s energy and celebrates his innate capacity to create his own destiny. Its heroes, Astolfo and Orlando, on the Christian side, their adversaries, Rodomonte and Ruggiero (later converted) on the other, are constantly in action, almost never resting in one place but in tireless pursuit of their goals. A good match for their male counterparts, the heroines of the poem possess boundless energy of mind and body: Angelica and Bradamante, Isabella and Olimpia, vigorous, full of initiative, inventive, never passive. Ariosto’s personifications of Sloth as figures sated with sleep, lacking the energy to stand on their feet, depict the vice humorously and with great visual force. Ariosto’s use of the terms *inerzia*, *pigrizia*, and *azio* shows a justifiable preference for Italian rather than Latin terminology, which the poet eschews—understandably for an author who prided himself on his knowledge of the vernacular, in his eyes equal to its more illustrious ancestor. If one considers the value to the framework of the *Orlando Furioso* of all episodes involving ethical behaviour and references to good and evil, the fundamental importance of Ariosto’s concept of ethics to the poem’s structure is readily appreciated.

Ariosto’s treatment of avarice and sloth, part of the larger theme of the Seven Deadly Sins, is not only an essential feature of the poem, enriching it substantially, but as a subject it provides the *Orlando Furioso* with deep roots into the very centre of man’s frailties, a constant reality, not ignored by a poet who understood as few did that the imagination is capable of encompassing heaven and earth in one embrace.37

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**Notes**

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8 Fragonard, p. 21.


12 Samuel C. Chew. *The Pilgrimage of Life*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 106, points out that Avarice is described or depicted in a variety of ways "since there was no generally accepted animal convention." Among those often associated with the Sin is the toad. See also Adolf Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Medieval Art: From Early Christian Times to the Thirteenth Century*. (London: The Warburg Institute, 1939), p. 58. "Snakes and toads (Is. LXVI, 24: Eccl, X, 13) also served in a general way to torment sinners, the avaricious man for instance, as shown in an illustration of hell in the Beatus Apocalypse from San Domingo de Silos, completed 1109." In his edition of the *Orlando Furioso*, Giuliano Innamorati (Ariosto, *Opere*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1967), commenting on XXVI, 31, writes: "è l'immagine della cupidigia descritta con chiara ispirazione dantesca, sul modello della lupa (cfr. *Inf.* I, 49 ss.) e di Gerione (cfr. *Inf.* XVII, 1 ss.), ma costruita in modo da rappresentare anche i vizi principali che vanno uniti o che derivano dalla cupidigia; così *ha orecchie d'asino* (v. 3) per indicare l'ignoranza, *testa di lupo ... asciutta* (vv. 3-4) per la voracità insaziabile, *branche ... leon* (v. 5) per la violenza e crudeltà, *l'altro ... volpe* (vv. 5-6) per l'astuzia malvagia." See also Andrea Alciato, *Diverse imprese accomodate a diverse moralità*, con versi che i loro significati dichiarano insieme con molte altre nella lingua Italiana non più tradotte. (In Lioni, appresso Gulielmo Rovilio, 1576), pp. 83, 88, which contains five woodcuts of *Avaritia*, representing five different aspects of the sin.

13 Ed. stanzas 27-29.
14 *The Pilgrimage of Life*, pp. 106-09.

16 *Poegetti del Duecento. Il Tesoretto. Il Fiore. L'Intelligenza*, a cura di Giuseppe Petronio. (Torino: UTET, 1967), lines 2683-84. The Jesuit Ignazio Maria Vittorelli (1677-1756), inspired by the fight between the vices and the virtues, placed avarice second to pride in his list of the Seven Deadly Sins in *I' vizi capitali combat-tuti, e vinti dalle virtù loro contrarie*, published in Ferrara by Giuseppe Barbieri in 1728. For the orator Vittorelli who discoursed in the cathedral of Ferrara on the subject during the Lenten period of that year avarice would embrace cupidity and could be vanquished by liberality. *Accidia*, on the other hand, is the last on his list of sins.


20 Le Roman de la Rose, lines 180-82.
21 Langland, pp. 105-08.
22 (Milano: Per Paolo Gottardo Pontio), Bk. II, Chap. 9, p. 129.
24 Bloomfield, p. 75.
25 Santorre Debenedetti in his I frammenti autografi dell'Orlando Furioso (Torino: Chiantore, 1937) has proved (XXIII, XXXI) that the exordia were not composed at the same time as the cantos to which they belong. He cites the example of the Marganorre episode: “Nel fasc V (p. 73) abbiamo tutto il Canto Marganorre, salvo che manca il proemio, ed il fascículo non è affatto lacunoso; manca semplicemente perché non era stato scritto.” Ariosto produced it later. Dates cannot therefore be assigned to episodes or cantos. See also Gianfranco Contini, “Come lavorava l'Ariosto,” in Esercizi di lettura (Firenze: Felice Le Monnier, 1947), pp. 308-21; and Enrico Carrara, “Marganorre,” Annali della R. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Serie II, IX (1940): 1-20; 155-82.
27 Rajna, p. 245 cites Statius Thēbaid X, 84-94 as the source of the scene between Ozio, Pigrizia, Oblio and Silenzio but admits that it is a “ricreazione dei modelli; non già una copia, o un accozzamento.” Rajna does not mention the Seven Deadly Sins. It is interesting that Ariosto could not help substituting Arabia for Ethiopia as the location of his grove, an unlikely place. Fragonard chooses as the subject of one of his drawings (Plate 108), the scene of “St. Michael discovering Silence at the Gates of the House of Sleep” (Fragonard, Drawings from Ariosto). Cf. also Giuseppe Fumagalli’s article, “Paesaggi ariostei,” in L'Ottava D'Oro: La vita e l'opera di Ludovico Ariosto (Milano: Mondadori, 1933), p. 514.
30 Lomazzo (Bk. II, chap. 9, p. 129) is an ardent admirer of Ariosto, to whom he refers often in his observations on poetry and painting.
32 Ed. Hales, Bk. I, Canto IV, 1820.
34 Clarke, p. 45.