LECTURA DANTIS APUD GONDOLAM

On October 1st, 1620, in his ancestral home in the old section of the city, Johannes Francisci Gondola, or as he was known in his Ragusan dialect, Divo Franov Gundulic (1589-1638), a young patrician in the very old and venerable city of Dubrovnik (in Latin and Italian Ragusa), on the east Adriatic coast, wrote of his "conversion".[1] In a preface to his *King David's Penitential Psalms (Pjesni pokorne kralja Davida)* , a translation of seven Penitential Psalms, Gundulic called all of his previous works "children of darkness", which he as "a Christian poet" (*krstjanin spjevalac*) was now rejecting. Regarding all his previous works as vain and frivolous, he characterized his new work as "the rays of light" stemming "from the beginning of true knowledge, the fear of God".[2] Gundulic's preface thus literally prefaced a new stage in his poetic career, one dominated by a combination of the Counter-Reformation religious sensibilities, and his own heightened sense of being a Slav and belonging to wide-spread Slavdom.[3]

The City of Dubrovnik, known in the Slavic world as "the Slavic Athens" for its abundance of men of letters writing in all three languages, Croatian, Italian, and Latin, had already possessed by the time Gundulic wrote his preface a very distinguished and more-than-a century long tradition of Petrarchan poetry, from Andrija Zlatar's early lyrics at the turn of the 16th century to Dominko Ranjina's (*Domenicus Ragnina*) polished anti-Petrarchan sonnets.[4] The theme of this poetic tradition which dominated the Ragusan cultural theme for over a century was *love*. In his early career as a poet Divo Gundulic too followed in the footsteps of this well-trodden tradition: he also wrote pastoral plays, full of Petrarchan lyrical sentiments. Then, on October 1st, 1620, he put an end to this period of his literary life, and, though not

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[1]On Gundulic *see* Zdenko Zlatar, *Our Kingdom Come: The Counter-Reformation, the Republic of Dubrovnik, and the Liberation of the Balkan Slavs* (East European Monographs #342, Columbia University Press, New York, 1992), Ch. 12.

[2]Djuro Körbler, ed., *Djela Giva Fran Gundulica* (3rd ed., the so-called Academy Edition, published by the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts) (Zagreb, 1938), *Stari pisci hrvatski* IX; the quotation is from the "Dedication" (*Posveta*), *Pjesni pokorne kralja Davida*, 330. All subsequent quotations from Gundulic's works are from the Academy Edition. All translations from Croatian into English are mine.

[3] For the transition from the Late Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation in Dubrovnik *see* my book in n. 1. Also Z. Zlatar, "From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation: The Dubrovnik of Divo Gundulic" in *The Festschrift to Professor Edward C. Thaden* (forthcoming).

[4] *See* Josip Torbarina, *Italian Influence on the Poets of the Ragusan Republic* (London, 1931).

everybody followed in his footsteps, no one could write in quite the same way afterwards.[5]

In the same preface Gundulic announced his intention of translating Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (*JERUSALEM SLOBOGHIEN*), i.e. *Jerusalem Delivered*, into Croatian for the benefit "of all our Slavic people" (*svemu nasemu slovinskomu narodu*) and to dedicate it to the King of Poland (*KRAGLIA POGLIACKOGA*), i.e. Sigismund III (1589-1632). Though scholars have come across a translation of the first two cantos of Tasso's epic, it is highly dubious whether they are the work of Gundulic.[6] Thus, it is most likely that Gundulic never carried out his intention. That does not mean, however, that in another sense he did not fulfil his promise of becoming a "Christian poet". For he left when he died in 1638, not yet fifty years of age, an unfinished epic entitled *Osman*, which was consciously modelled on Tasso's great work. Thus Gundulic in effect wrote his own counterpart to the Italian poet's epic, and chose to model it on the latter. That much is agreed upon by all literary critics, ancient and modern.

Gundulic's *Osman*, like Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* is a curious hybrid of fact and fancy, an epic in twenty cantos, of which the 12th and the 13th (or according to another reading, the 14th and the 15th) have been missing ever since Gundulic's death. *Osman's* lack of these two cantos has provoked a sense of mystery that still hovers over Ragusan literary studies: were they written by Gundulic, found after his death, seized by Dubrovnik's ever-watchful government, judged to be too critical of that Ottoman Empire which was the protector of the Ragusan Republic, destroyed, and the rest of the manuscript prevented from ever being published? Or did Gundulic leave his epic unfinished, waiting to solve all the various entanglements later, unknowing that he would succumb to a bout of a 17th-century equivalent of an influenza? We shall never know for sure, but there is no question that, incomplete and unpolished as in places it may be, Gundulic's *Osman* was immediately accorded the pride of honor in all of Ragusan literature, and Gundulic proclaimed as "by far the first (or foremost) of Illyrian poets" (*Illyricae Camenae facile princeps*).[7]

Even allowing for some Baroque hyperbole (to which Gundulic himself in his epic fell somewhat of a victim), there is no question that *Osman* filled a space which until that time had been left empty in Ragusan literature: it provided for an epic. Gundulic's *Osman*,

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[5] The importance of 1620 as the turning point in Gundulic's literary career is discussed in Z. Zlatar, *The Slavic Epic: Gundulic's Osman* (forthcoming).

[6] I. Batistic, "Je li Gundulic preveo dva pjevanja Oslobodjenog Jeruzolima?" in *Program c.k. velike drz. gimnazije u Dubrovniku za skolsku godinu 1913/14* (Dubrovnik, 1914), 3-23; M. Resetar, "Akademijina izdanja Gundulicevih djela"*Rad Jugoslavenske Akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* (henceforth abbreviated as *Rad*) 272 (1942), 67-92.

[7] The only monograph on Gundulic's *Osman* which does justice to the complexity of the text and the various problems associated with Gundulic's epic is by Alfred Jensen, *Gundulic und sein Osman : Eine südslavische Litteraturstudie* (Göteborg, 1900), published in only 300 copies and extremely rare.

however, was to be hailed in the subsequent centuries by many men and letters and some scholars as being *the Slavic epic.* Strictly speaking, this could be disputed: there were quite a few other epics written by various Slavic poets, especially in Poland, and on the very same theme Gundulic chose for his own.[8] Yet, Gundulic not only wrote a work which was better and more widely known than the rest, but which chose to proclaim as its theme *the role of the Slavs* in history, and thus to render his epic *quintessentially Slavic.*

The theme of Gundulic's *Osman* is, *stricto sensu,* the deposition and death of Sultan Osman II in 1622. According to Gundulic and many contemporary Christian pamphleteers of the time, this misfortune that befell the young Ottoman ruler was the result of his defeat at Hoczym, a fortress in Podolia, by the Polish troops led by the Polish Crown Prince Wladyslaw (later Wladyslaw IV, King of Poland-Lithuania, 1632-1648). This event was hailed by Wladyslaw's panegyrists and Polish propagandists as a great victory of Christendom over Islam. In fact, it was a draw: neither the Poles nor the Turks could win decisively (*Poloni vinci, Turcae vincere non poterant.*) Wladyslaw himself was just a nominal commander-in-chief, fell sick on the first day of battle, and spent most of his time in bed. So much for the facts of history.[9]

None of this prevented either the Polish entourage around the Crown Prince nor Gundulic from hailing the latter as the "victor of Hoczym" and the future liberator of the South Slavs from the Turkish yoke. While many Poles and the majority of their nobility (*szlachta*) were reluctant to get bogged down in the fastnesses of the Balkans, Wladyslaw himself entertained plans for the liberation of the Balkan Slavs both after the battle and after he became King in 1632. It should be pointed out that Wladyslaw had certain unique qualifications for such a champion of Slavic liberation in the eyes of both Gundulic and his Polish contemporaries: in addition to being the heir to the throne of the second largest state in Europe (Poland-Lithuania, or the Commonwealth [*Rzechpospolita*]), he had been elected Tsar of Muscovite Russia, the largest state on the periphery of Europe (though not, according to the Polish view at the time, *in* Europe), in 1610. This was nullified when the Russian patriotic movement led by Minin and Pozharskii chased the Poles from the Kremlin and put a new dynasty, that of the Romanovs, over Russia. But Wladyslaw did not renounce his claim to the Russian throne until 1633, and it is highly unlikely that Gundulic ever heard of this act of renunciation.[10]Thus to Gundulic,

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[8] This theme has been explored by T. Eeekman, "The War of Chotin in Literature: A Comparison of Some Poets about the Polish-Turkish War of 1621 in Slavic Literatures, and an Inquiry into the Problem of the Consciousness of Slavic Solidarity in these Poems" in *Dutch Contributions to the Fourth International Congress of Slavicists* (Moscow, September 1958)(The Hague, 1958), 41-82.

[9] The role of the Poles and of Wladyslaw in Gundulic's *Osman* was investigated in detail by Stjepan Musulin, "Poljaci u Gundulicevu Osmanu" *Rad* 281 (1950), 101-207.

[10] Roman F. Brandt, *Istoriko-literaturn'ii razbor poem'i Ivana Gundulicha Osman* (Kiev, 1879); Viacheslav K. Zaitsev, "Istoricheskaia osnova i ideinoe soderzhanie poem'i I. Gundulicha Osman" *Literatura slavianskikh noarodov* II (1957), 120-143.

Wladyslaw was the ruler of all the East Slavs (Russians, White Russians, and Ukrainians) and of the majority of the West Slavs (Poles). If he fulfilled his dream of chasing the Turks out of the Balkans he would thus add the South Slavs (Serbs, Bulgarians, Macedonians, and Croats in Bosnia and Hercegovina) and become truly a ruler over the great majority of all the Slavs. It was this glittering prospect of having a Polish Prince as the future Pan-Slav ruler that appealed to Gundulic most of all in the figure of Wladyslaw.

Gundulic was determined to have Wladyslaw as a hero in his epic as well, and this created quite a few problems for him: first of all, as I already indicated, Wladyslaw was no hero personally, and only by counting on his Ragusan countrymen and many other Slavs not being familiar with the truth could our poet glorify the Polish Prince as the victor of Hoczym.[11] Secondly, and more importantly, Wladyslaw turned out to be a rather lethargic ruler who let the noble opposition to his plans get the better of him;[12] and thirdly, and most importantly, having another protagonist in an epic entitled after Sultan Osman meant that *Osman* was seen by many critics then and later as a *fractured* epic: an epic with two protagonists, Osman and Vladislav (Gundulic's version of Wladyslaw), and thus as far as its composition is concerned, a *flawed* work. What the critics overlooked (some intentionally) was that Gundulic modelled his epic in this, as in other matters, on Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

Tasso's epic too boasts of two supreme protagonists: Goffredo and Rinaldo. It is true that they are both on the same, Christian, side, and that Tasso did not give Islam a supreme Champion. But the effect was much the same: there are interminable delays simply because Goffredo does not carry out his function, and it is left to Rinaldo to bring the senior champion back to his senses. Tasso was aware of this problem, but he chose to have two supreme champions simply because he could not combine satisfactorily in any other way the requisities of the *romance* and the *epic*. Gundulic too combines the elements of romance and epic in his work, and his Vladislav does have certain elements of romance—as does Osman. But unlike Tasso Gundulic's epic dealt with only recently deceased, such as Osman himself, or with still-living persons (as in the case of Wladyslaw who ruled until 1648, i.e. ten years after Gundulic's death). It is thus clear that in this, as in some other cases, Gundulic chose *not to follow Tasso* when writing his own epic.

The presence of two heroes rather than one in *Osman* Gundulic announced in the beginning of the first canto:

> O, yee pure and gentle maidens,
> Living on a mount, famed and holy,
> Who sing to all the poets

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[11] O. Makowej, "Beiträge zu den Quellen des Gundulic'schen *Osman*" *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 26 (1904), 71-100.

[12] S. Kobierzycki, *Historia Vladislai Poloniae et Sueciae Principis ad excessum Sigismundi Poloniae et Sueciae regis* (Gdansk, 1655) contains much information but it is rather uncritical; *see* A. Sliwinski, *Krol Wladyslaw IV* (Warsaw, 1925).

Beloved poems through your gentle power —

Now sing to me as well
How unmerciful knights
Put to death a young Eastern Emperor
In his own Constantinople.

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O, thee, Vladislav,
Glorious son of the glorious Polish King,
Thy glory filling the vastness of this world:

Bring thy attention to these poems,
Turn the majesty of thy brow to them,
In which I aim to describe
Thy incomparable exploits.

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My trumpet will broadcast to the world
Thy glory, ever-increasing,
Thou go on making higher exploits,
And I shall not stop singing of them. [13]

In addition to giving rise to rumors in 18th-century Ragusan antiquarian studies that Gundulic wrote not one but two epics,[14] which were turned into a full-fledged theory by a leading 19th-century scholar of Gundulic's *Osman,* Armin Pavic (who argued that cantos I, XV-XX are an epic called after Osman *The Osmaniad [Osmanijada],* and cantos II-XIII are the other epic named after Vladislav *The Vladislaviad [Vladislavijada]),*[15]the presence of two protagonists in *Osman* testifies, in my opinion, better than anything else to Gundulic's indebtedness to Tasso's precepts on what an epic is all about found in his *Discourses on the Heroic Poem (Discorsi del Poema Heroico),* published in 1594, a year before Tasso died. As Irene Samuel pointed out, Tasso wrote his *Discourses on the Heroic Poem* in order to justify his having written *Jerusalem Delivered* —and then revised it into *Jerusalem Conquered (Gerusalemme Conquistata).*[16] But his work on the two versions of his epic generated as much theory as the Aristotelian precepts he championed that moulded the very structure of his works.

In his *Discourses on the Heroic Poem,* Tasso offered an explanation of why he had chosen as the topic for his epic the First

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[13]D. Gundulic, *Osman,* I, 29-36, 57-64, 69-72 (henceforth abbreviated as *Osman,* followed by the Roman numeral for the canto, and the Arabic for lines). All translations from Crotian are mine [Copyright by Zdenko Zlatar, 1989, 1993; all rights reserved].

[14]Stjepan Krasic, ed., Seraphinus Cerva, *Bibliotheca Ragusina* , Vol. II/ III (Zagreb, 1977), 231.

[15]Armin Pavic, "O kompoziciji Gunduliceva Osmana" *Rad* 32 (1875), 104-150; A. Pavic, "Gundulicev Vladislav" *Rad* 55 (1881), 1-115.

[16] Torquato Tasso, *Discourses on the Heroic Poem,* translated with notes by Mariella Cavalchini and Irene Samuel (Oxford, 1973), xiii.

Crusade in general, and the conquest of Jerusalem in particular. He then added his view of the superiority of the so-called "Christian" epic over others: "The most excellent (epic) poem belongs exclusively to the most excellent form of government. This is monarchy, but monarchy cannot be best governed under a false religion. The true religion is then necessary to the best monarchy; and where there is a false piety and a false worship of God there can be no perfection in prince or principality."[17] It is true that Tasso's view may at first be taken to apply to Antiquity, with its "false" gods and goddesses from the Christian point of view. Even more appropriate, however, is Tasso's view of Islam as a "false" religion. At the very end of his *Gerusalemme Liberata* Tasso cursed "Mahomet", i.e. Muhammad, as the false prophet.

At the very end of Canto XX of his *Osman* Gundulic followed Tasso in indicting Muhammad:

> But I can see the fall is near
> Of thy accursed laws and teachings;
> For it is the intent of Divine Power
> To remove the Devil's doctrine. [18]

He finished his epic by describing Osman's defeat at Hoczym as the beginning of Muhammad's own fall:

> But all of thy (Muhammad's) glory was vanquished,
> For thousands upon thousands
> Of thy own followers
> Were seen fleeing before Vladislav. [19]

For Gundulic as for Tasso Islam was the religion of the Devil: it was the instrument of the latter to wage war against Christendom, and thus the centuries-old contest between Christian Europe and the Muslim Near East was seen in apocalyptic terms, symbolizing the primordial conflict between God's forces led by Archangel Michael, and the infernal hordes by Satan.[20] On this point Gundulic again followed Tasso: the latter placed the all-important Council of Hell in Canto IV of his *Gerusalemme Liberata;* Gundulic depicted the infernal council in Canto XIII (or XV, depending on where the two missing cantos are to be inserted). In his speech Gundulic's Lucifer makes a clear connection between himself and Islam:

> A multitude of kingdoms and of islands,
> Truly a better portion of the world
> Regards and honors Mahomet

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[17] Ibid., 37

[18] *Osman* XX, 429-432.

[19] *Osman* XX, 493-496.

[20] I have developed this theme in Z. Zlatar, "Archangel Michael and the Dragon: Slavic Apocrypha, Bogomilism, and Dualist Cosmology in the Medieval Balkans" in *Encyclopaedia Moderna* (a journal of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts) 38/2 (Zagreb, 1992), 252-272.

As their prophet and holy man.

But if, as stronger and bigger
Than the rest of Turkish kingdoms,
Osman's empire falls to pieces,
Mahomet's Law will perish.

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Can we suffer this to happen,
Can we suffer the Christians to trample,
To destroy, and to subjugate
All that is ours on the surface of the earth? [21]

It should be pointed out that, whether he knew it as such or not, Gundulic stood the oldest charge by Islam against Christianity on its head: Muhammad and his followers refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, accusing him of associating himself with God Who is One, and thus of supreme blasphemy (though Muslims venerated Jesus as one of the great prophets sent by God); Gundulic accuses Muhammad of setting himself up as God on Earth, i.e. of supreme Arrogance:

Human Arrogance is such,
And is so debased,
That it sets mortal Man
As equal to God.

See, o accursed Mahomet... [22]

Gundulic proceeds to assign to Muhammad the creation of a fatalistic religion: Fate is everything, and Freedom of Will is denied:

Thou put everything under Fate,
And took away Freedom of the Will... [23]

So that no one, as thou didst say,
Can escape his own fate... [24]

The theme of Fate, though central in Gundulic's eyes to Islam in general, and the Ottoman Empire in particular, also provides the bridge to the central motif of the entire epic: the Wheel of Fortune. Gundulic starts his epic with the following magnificent verses:

Ah, what are thou boasting of,
O vain human arrogance?
The more thou spreadest thy wings,
The lower wilt thou fall!

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[21]*Osman* XIII, 201-208, 213-216.
[22]*Osman* XX, 373-381.
[23]*Osman* XX, 383-384.
[24]*Osman* XX, 387-388.

Eternal and without end
There is no thing under the sun,
And the highest mountain peaks
Are the likeliest targets of thunderbolts.

Without Divine help from Heaven
The state of the World is rendered unstable:
Mighty and powerful empires
Are torn apart by themselves.

The Wheel of Fortune circling around
Does not stop in its revolutions:
What was up, is turned down,
And who was down, is lifted up.

Sometimes the crown hangs over the sword,
Sometimes the sword comes down on the crown,
Sometimes a slave is lifted over an empire,
And he who was an emperor, becomes a slave.

Happiness comes out of misfortunes,
The crown is gained through bloodshed,
And those who are feared by many
Themselves are in fear of the many.

From treacheries and ambushes
The Emperor's head is shielded,
But in an instant an event can happen
For which no one is sufficiently wise. [25]

The final stanzas in Canto XX restate the Wheel of Fortune as the fundamental archetype of the epic as a whole:

Ah, thus Fortune spins around
Its own Wheel! The Emperor,
Under whose feet multitudes
Of Peoples are subjected —

The Emperor, whose single word
Is the Law to the entire East,
Who stood on high in the middle
Of gaudy and gay palaces;

Whose wishes, whose plans
Found the world too narrow,
His own servants now hem him in,
And he is trampled underfoot by his own slave. [26]

The mutability of all things under the sun, the perishability of all created structures, the impermanence of all human edifices, deeply

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[25] *Osman* I, 1-28.
[26] *Osman* XX, 77-88.

imbue Gundulic's view of the world, and in a truly Counter-Reformation fashion, point out the moral:

> O learn from this, ye arrogant men,
> Who live this life without fear,
> That nothing is so strong
> That cannot fall in an instant. [27]

The rise and fall of empires is governed by the Wheel of Fortune: thus while the Ottoman Empire is, according to Gundulic, destined to fall in the near future, having completed its course from Osman I (1300-1326) to Osman II, i.e. come full circle (according to the prevalent prophecies which put the end of Islam one thousand years after the beginning of the Islamic calendar, *Anno Haggirae,* in 622 A.D.), the Slavs in general, and the South Slavs in particular will see their fortunes restored to the top of the wheel. Thus the rise of Slavdom and the fall of Islam complement each other, are mutually related, and are Providentially ordained.[28]

Gundulic's *Osman* includes three great reflections on the states and peoples of Eastern and Southeastern Europe: on the Ottoman Empire, on Poland, and on the Balkan Slavs. Of the three it is the last that held the key to Gundulic's view of Slavdom as a whole. It is found in Canto VIII, strategically placed at the point where Osman's emissary on the way to Poland stops in Smederevo, the capital of the last Serbian state or "despotate". In 1439 its ruler or despot, Djuradj Brankovic, was deprived of his state by Sultan Murad II. In 1441 the despot came to Dubrovnik and spent four months in the city. This sojourn of one of the last independent princes of the South Slavs is used by Gundulic to serve as the central motif of Old Man Ljubdrag's plaintive summary of the sorry state of the Balkan Slavs. Ljubdrag, old and blind, is made to be despot Brankovic's descendant. It is at this point that Gundulic reachest the highest point in his use of the antithesis as the most effective stylistic device:[29]he contrasts very poignantly the extreme wretchedness of the South Slavs as a result of the demise of their medieval states with the independence, wealth, and culture of his own beloved Dubrovnik. The height of prosperity, and the depth of misfortune could not be greater.

It is at this emotionally highest peak in his entire epic that for the first and only time Divo Franov Gundulic paraphrases Dante's famous words:

> ...Nessun maggior dolore
> che ricordarsi del tempo felice

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[27]*Osman* XX, 93-96.

[28] The Wheel of Fortune and other related themes are explored in depth in my *The Slavic Epic: Gundulic's Osman* (forthcoming).

[29]On Gundulic's style *see* Vsevolod Setschkareff, *Die Dichtungen Gundulic's und ihr poetischer Stil* (Bonn, 1952); J. Pogonowski, *Kompozycja i styl Osmana I.F. Gundulicia* (Lublin, 1955, 1958)

ne la miseria...[30]

...There is no greater sorrow
than thinking back upon a happy time
in misery...[31]

These lines come from Canto V of the *Inferno* where Dante led by Virgil come across a pair entwined in eternity as they were united in love on this earth: Paolo and Francesca. Dante probably knew Paolo personally during the latter's stay in Florence prior to his and Francesca's murder by her enraged husband. Dante felt greater pity for the two lovers than he did for any other inhabitants of Hell. This is demonstrated by the fact that *for the first and only time* Dante the Pilgrim (though not Dante the Poet) was overcome by grief, lost his consciousness, and "fell as a dead body falls" (*e caddi come corpo morto cade*). Dante thus showed unmistakably that this episode was one of highest significance.

It has been treated as such by all modern critics: apart from its emotional appeal, it reveals to us layers of intertextuality that underlie every great work. Semiotically, it is built on the apparent imitation of Provençal poetry;[32] symbolically, it centers on the antithesis between AMOR and ROMA (which is, of course, AMOR spelt backwards).[33]It thus goes to the heart of Dante's conception of poetry, of history, and of the life-force that animates his universe: "the love that moves the sun and the other stars"(*l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*). For Dante the two concepts of Love and Rome were intricately related: Divine Love decided that its incarnation, Jesus Christ, would come onto the earth during the universal reign (for Dante) of Rome. In Dante's eyes Rome, by conquering the whole "civilized" world prepared the ground for the coming of the Son of God. Dante also believed that human history was providentially ordained, and he subscribed to the widely-held notion of the "four kingdoms", namely, that the history of human civilization has passed through four universal empires, of which the fourth and final was held to be Roman. Thus the Roman Empire, in its current form in the time of Dante, i.e. as the Holy Roman Empire, was to last until Christ's second coming to this earth and the establishment

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[30]All subsequent citations of the Italian text are according to *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. A Verse Translation by Allen Mandelbaum* (the so-called *California Dante*)(The University of California Press, Berkeley, 1980), Vol. I: *Inferno*, 46 (even pages contain the Italian original, odd Mandelbaum's translation).

[31]All quotations of the English translations are by Mark Musa, *Dante: The Divine Comedy*, Vol. I: Inferno, Vol. II: Purgatory, Vol. III: Paradise (Penguin Books, 1984, 1985, 1986). They are abbreviated as follows: INF[ERNO], PUR[GATORY], PAR[ADISO], followed by the canto number in Roman numerals and the verse in Arabic numbers, e.g. INF V, 121-123. They are used by permission.

[32]Domenico Vittorini, "Francesca da Rimini and the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*" in his *High Points in the History of Italian Literature* (New York, 1958), 68-81

[33]Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *The Transfiguration of History at the Center of Dante's Paradise* (Princeton, 1986), 26.

of his rule for a millennium (the so-called "fifth monarchy").[34]Thus, Love is that force which moves not just the entire universe, but the course of human history as well.[35]

Dante introduced the Paolo and Francesca episode in his *Inferno* in order to teach a reader (and himself as a Pilgrim) a lesson in the dangers of unbridled love, specifically, carnal love. Thus it is placed at the point in Hell where those adulterers and carnal sinners are buffetted by tempestuous winds in order to suggest their straying away from the control of human reason. Dante addresses the couple that in Hell as on Earth were inseparable, but it is only Francesca that speaks. She does so after having been spoken to by Dante. She then offers a short description of her background which, according to Poggioli, amounts to saying, "I am Ravenna".[36] Only then does she proceed to tell Dante what happened to her and her eternal companion. The words she uses are among the finest and most memorable in the whole *Divine Comedy*:

"Amor, ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende,
prese costui della bella persona
che mi fu tolta; e' l modo ancor m'offende.

Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona,
mi prese del costui piacer sí forte,
che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona.

Amor condusse noi ad una morte:
Caina attende chi a vita ci spense."[37]

Love that kindles quick in the gentle heart,
seized this one for the beauty of my body,
torn from me. (How it happened still offends me!)

Love, that excuses no one loved from loving,
seized me so strongly with delight in him
that, as you see, he never leaves my side.

Love led us straight to sudden death together.
Caina awaits the one who quenched our lives. [38]

The particular strength of each tercet derives from the opening word, *Amor*, which dominates the whole scene. What is also clear is that the triple repetition of *Amor* is intentional: Dante thereby suggests

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[34]Charles T. Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome* (Oxford, 1957)

[35]Kenelm Foster, "Dante's Idea of Love" in Thomas G. Bergin, ed., *From Time to Eternity: Essays on Dante's Divine Comedy* (New Haven, 1967), 65-101.

[36]Renato Poggioli, "Tragedy or Romance? A Reading of the Paolo and Francesca Episode in Dante's *Inferno" PMLA (Publications of the Modern Language Association of America)* 72 (June, 1957), 313-358.

[37]INF V, 100-107

[38]INF V, 100-107.

that he is referring not just to any love, but to the god of Love. This god of Love, or *Eros* , is the very antithesis of that "Love that moves the Sun and the other stars". As Cambon points out, the absolute power of Love is indicated not just vertically, by placing the word at the beginning of each succeeding tercet, but at its horizontal axis as well: *Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona...* Again, there is a triple use of words connected with Love: *amor, amato, amar.* The intersection of the vertical and horizontal axes at this point indicates unmistakably that Dante relates the Paolo and Francesca episode to the cosmological grid of his universe.[39] Cambon's observation that "eternity as untranscended Eros, *as ceaseless repetition,* in the whirlwind of unenlightened passion..."[40] is absolutely correct (my emphasis). What distinguishes this sinful love, Eros, from Divine Love is its destructive nature. It is a corruption, deviation, or lack of that Perfect Love that results in such perverted love.

Still, it is the obverse of that universal force that "moves" (move) the entire universe. The just-mentioned "ceaseless repetition" can only refer to the circular motion of the Wheel which symbolizes for Dante, as for his medieval contemporaries, Divine Love, i.e. God Himself. Dante opens his *Paradiso* with the words: *"La gloria di Colui che tutto move"*. He ends this canticle and the entire *Divine Comedy* by a supernatural, mystical vision of God as the ceaseless repetition of the Wheel:

All'alta fantasia qui mancó possa;
ma già volgeva il mio disio, e 'l velle,
sì come rota ch'igualmente è mossa,

l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.[41]

At this point power failed high fantasy,
but, like a wheel in perfect balance turning,
I felt my will and my desire impelled

by the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.[42]

In a brilliant article John Freccero has argued that Dante's final vision is that of a wheel, not of a circle, and that this difference is important.[43] Starting from Bruno Nardi's view [44]that Dante's concept of

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[39]Glauco Cambon, "Francesca and the Tactics of Language" in his *Dante's Craft: Studies in Language and Style* (Minneapolis, 1969), 46-66, originally published in a slightly different form in *Modern Language Quarterly* 22/1 (March, 1961); Cambon's analysis of this section is on pp. 57-58.
[40]Ibid., 51.
[41]*California Dante,* Vol. III: *Paradiso* (Berkeley, 1984), 302.
[42]PAR XXXXIII, 142-145.
[43]John Freccero, "The Final Image: *Paradiso* XXXIII, 144" in John Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion,* ed. with an Introduction by Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge, Mass, 1986), 245-257, first published in *MLN* 79 (1964), 14-27.
[44]Bruno Nardi, *Nel mondo di Dante* (Rome, 1944), 339ff.

the wheel was derived from Pseudo-Dionysius (the Areopagite), Freccero deepened it by arguing that "the point Nardi failed to make is that the passage from the Areopagite describes not only circulation, but forward motion as well: a circle turns endlessly in the abstract and describes a single simple motion, and is for that very reason the traditional symbol of perfection or eternity. But when a wheel turns, it goes somewhere. So Dionysius mentions "perfect rotation",...but at the same time he adds that the wheels "advance...straight ahead, in a straight line, on the straight way." Thus, the product of angelic rotation is a forward motion. A wheel is moved by its center, as is the circle of the mystics; simultaneously, however, the wheel moves forward as well as around. Like the movement of the pilgrim, the motion of the wheel itself is uniform (*igualemente mossa*) and yet logically twofold."[45]

The notion that the universe is governed by a circular motion which nevertheless is not stationary, but forward is, of course, a very old one. It is summed up in the Zodiac. A very fine example of the early representation of the Zodiac is the so-called Dendera Zodiac, though it represents the Ptolemaic rather than the earlier Egyptian art.[46] In its center is the sun, and this representation of the universe would have been very much known to Dante for it is found on the pavement of the Baptistry in Florence. Dante would have literally walked over it.[47]

What is the connection between Dante's representation of "the Love that moves the sun and the other stars" as a wheel, and Paolo and Francesca's sin? It stems from Dante's appropriation of Augustine's famous dictum that "the wicked walk in a *circle* not because their life is to recur by means of these circles..., but because the path in which their false doctrine now runs is circuitous".[48]What Augustine had in mind was Virgil's view of the connection between the fall of Troy and the rise of Rome which, in Augustine's opinion, represents a circular view of history. The circular or cyclical view of history finds its literary counterpart in *romance* and it is precisely a romance that gave rise to Paolo and Francesca's sin:

Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse:
quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante.[49]

Our Galehot was that book and he who wrote it.
That day we read no further.[50]

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[45]Freccero, op. cit., 249; the passage in question is from Pseudo-Dionysius, *De caelesti hierarchia* XV, 9.
[46]For the story of its discovery *see* Leslie Greener, *The Discovery of Egypt* (New York, 1966), ch. 14: "Extraction of a Zodiac", 129-139 and its photograph following p. 184.
[47]It is reproduced on p. 230 of J. Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion.*
[48]St. Augustine, *The City of God* (Penguin), XIII, 13.
[49]*California Dante,* Vol. I: Inferno, 46.
[50]INF V, 137-138.

The romance in question is *Lancelot du Lac*. It is appropriately a *French romance* (Francesca means French).[51]It has to be emphasized that Paolo and Francesca read a *romance* i.e. a *prose* work, while her address to Dante is couched in an *imitation* of the *dolce stil nuovo* poetry which has taken in many a commentator unawares. For while she imitates the Provençal poetry of the Troubadours, she subverts its meaning: "Francesca's speech...echoes enough of the poetry of the *dolce stil nuovo* to sound like a copy of it, but the suggestion of similarity immediately establishes that she is nothing like the ladies of that style ...Although enough of her speech echoes literary tradition, it is not by any means the poetry of Arnaut Daniel, Guinizelli, or Dante himself in *La vita nuova*...Although her language sounds like an imitation, she appropriates only enough of the *dolce stil* to enunciate a difference and departure from it."[52]

Francesca ends her speech to Dante with the words: "That day we read no further." As commentators have pointed out, this is a direct paraphrase of Augustine's phrase in his *Confessions*: "*Nec ultra legere volui*"[53](No longer did I wish to read.) Augustine stopped reading at *Romans* 13.12-13: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly in the day, not in revelry and drunknenness, *not in lewdness and lust*, not in strife and envy." (my emphasis) Dante thus indicates through the parody of Augustine's words in Francesca's speech that the lady is not all that meets the eye: and by letting Paolo remain speechless throughout[54]and giving Francesca the power of discourse he indicated that he saw her as guilty of adultery, for it was she who was married to Paolo's brother. Yet, Dante also inverts the *periloso passo* by having Paolo kiss Francesca, and not the other way around as in *Lancelot du Lac*:

Quanto leggemmo il disiato riso
esser baciato da cotanto amante,
questi, che mai da me non fia diviso

la bocca mi baciò tutto tremante."[55]

It was when we read about those longed-for lips
now being kissed by such a famous lover,
that this one (who shall never leave my side)

then kissed my mouth, and trembled as he did.[56]

[51]R. Poggioli, op. cit., 350.
[52]Jesse M. Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages: Language Theory, Mythology, and Fiction* (Ithaca, 1985), 150-151
[53]Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, 12 (trans. by R.S. Pine-Coffin)(Penguin, 1961), 178.
[54]Poggioli, op. cit., 354-355
[55]*California Dante*, Vol. I, 46.
[56]INF V, 133-136.

She also reveals a sense of possessiveness in the emphasized line "that this one (who shall never leave my side)" where, as Poggioli argues, "pride mingles with despair".[57] Poggioli's interpretation sees Francesca as a human being, and not a cardboard character from the romances: and love and adultery are revealed as the stuff she is made of.

Thus, we must conclude with Poggioli that, "despite the Provençal mannerisms of her speech, (we have no) right to deduce that Francesca's manner of speaking is an echo of the diction of the Troubadours".[58]It is, however, a distinct echo of another great love affair, that between Dido and Aeneas. Dante's guide through Hell, Virgil, is specifically invoked by Francesca in the famous tercet that ends with: *"e ciò sa 'l tuo dottore"* (as well your teacher knows).[59] This reference to Virgil right after contrasting present wretchedness of her situation with the past happiness suggests that Dante regarded Virgil's episode as a counter-point to his reading of *The Aeneid.* He does it because he subscribes to Augustine's distinction between "enjoying" a text "for its own sake" and "using" its literal sense in order to understand spiritual truth. In *On Christian Doctrine,* Augustine identified literal with carnal understanding: "For at the outset you must be very careful lest you take figurative expression literally. What the Apostle says pertains to this problem: 'For the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth.' That is, when that which is said figurately is taken as though it were literal, it is understood carnally. Nor can anything more appropriately be called the death of the soul."[60]

In his *Confessions* Augustine distinguished between two kinds of love, spiritual and carnal:

> Our rest is our place. Love lifts us up to it...A body tends to go of its own weight to its own place, not necessarily downward toward the bottom, but to its own place. Fire tends to rise upward; a stone falls downward. Things are moved by their own weights and they go toward their proper places...My weight is my love; wherever I am carried, it is my love that carries me there. By your gift we are set on fire and are carried upward...We are red hot with your fire, your good fire and we go; for we are going upward toward the peace of Jerusalem.[61]

As Mazzotta points out, "the sinner's random motion is an apt counterpoint to the erratic impulses of the flesh, the aimlessness of their love, and a mockery of *the perfect circle of God's love.*"[62] (my emphasis) Augustine made it quite clear in his *Confessions* that he regarded Virgil's story of Dido and Aeneas as impious and morally dangerous:

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[57]Poggioli, op. cit., 338.

[58]Ibid., 349.

[59]INF V, 123.

[60]St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine,* trans. by D.W. Robertson, Jr. (New York, 1958), 83-84, quoted by Gellrich, op. cit., 152-153, ft. 36.

[61]St. Augustine, *Confessions,* XIII, 8, quoted by Giuseppe Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in the Divine Comedy* (Princeton, 1979), 164, ft. 31.

[62]Mazzotta, op. cit., 165.

> For by means of these rudiments I acquired and still retain the power to read what I find written and to write what I want to write myself; they are undoubtedly better, because more reliable, than those other studies in which I was forced to learn all about the wanderings of a man called Aeneas, while quite oblivious of my own wanderings, and to weep for the death of Dido, because she killed herself for love, while all the time I could bear with dry eyes, O God my life, that fact that I myself, poor wretch, was, among these things, dying far away from you. What indeed can be more pitiful than a wretch with no pity for himself, weeping at the death of Dido, which was caused by love for Aeneas, and not weeping at his own death, *caused by lack of love for you*, God...? You I did not love. Against you I committed fornication...But this was not what I wept for; I wept for dead Dido "who by the sword pursued a way extreme"...For obviously I would rather forget about the wandrings of Aenas and everything of that sort than how to write and read...I sinned, therefore, in my boyhood when I showed greater affection for these empty studies than for the others that were most useful; or it would be truer to say, I loved the former and I hated the latter...What really delighted me were spectacles of vanity —the wooden horse full of armed men, the burning of Troy and "there the very shade of dead Creüsa".[63]

Augustine's reading of Virgil is thus similar to Dante's reading of Francesca's reading of "Galeotto": it is an *erotic* experience. If it is an *erotic* experience, why does Dante privilege it in *The Divine Comedy* ? For it should be remembered that for no one else does Dante show such pity, and *identify as a Pilgrim as with Francesca.*[64]

Because Dante himself "strayed from the true path" during his youth: his early *rime* established him as a poet of what he would later see as lust and lewdness. Vittorini points out that "a fundamentally different Dante from the lover in the *Vita Nuova* appears in the *Rime Pietrose* in which he sings of his violent passion for a woman to whom he refers as Pietra. Guido Calvalcanti, in one of his sonnets, with tenderness and concern, grieves over the manner in which his dear friend, Dante, wastes his youth."[65]Like Augustine he rejected the earlier experience as sinful, as he indicated in the beginning of the *Vita Nuova*: "...And since to dwell on passions and deeds of such extreme youthfulness seems *a sort of language worthy of fable,* I shall leave this aside..."[66]"*A sort of language worthy of fable,*" this is exactly what Francesca's is: a language of *fable* i.e. of *romance.*

Yet, though as Dante the Poet he condemned Francesca following Augustine, he could not resist having pity on Francesca as Dante the Pilgrim, i.e. as Everyman. As a man who had yielded to temptation of carnal love in his youth Dante consciously *imitated* Virgil.

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[63]St. Augustine, *Confessions,* I, 13, quoted by Mazzotta, op. cit., 167-168, ft. 36.

[64]*See* G. Baldo Curato, *Il canto di Francesca e i suoi interpreti* (Cremona, 1963); Paget Toynbee, "Dante and the Lancelot Romance"in *Dante Studies and Researches* (London, 1902), 1-37; Gianfranco Contini, "Dante come personaggio-poeta della *Commedia*"in *Varianti e altra linguistica* (Turin, 1970), 343-348.

[65]Vittorini, op. cit., 72.

[66]Dante, *Vita Nuova,* II quoted by Vittorini, op. cit., 72. The best translation is by Mark Musa, *Dante's Vita Nuova: A Translation and an Essay* (new ed.) (Bloomington, 1973). The quoted passage is on p. 4.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that his famous saying, *Nessun maggior dolore / che ricordarsi del tempo felice / ne la miseria...* is a direct paraphrase of Virgil's *...infandum, regina iubes renovare dolorem* in the *Aeneid*.[67]This is specifically pointed out by Francesca when she poignantly adds: *e ciò sa 'l tuo dottore*. Dante's teacher or *dottore* is Virgil: the same Virgil whom Dante called *tu duca, tu segnore, e tu maestro*. [68]

Vittorini has argued that for Dante "love was...spiritual affinity between gentle persons and, as such, it was sung by all the songsters of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*. It is the same with Francesca da Rimini as with Beatrice. Dante saw in her the lover, he gave her his own feelings, and only a luminous, gentle lady stood before him. This shows that in the *Commedia* there remained the same attitude toward love as had been expressed in the *Vita Nuova*, the marvelous book which grew under the influence of the ideals of the *Dolce Stil Nuovo*."[69]This view has been criticized by Glauco Cambon:

> ...Vittorini's interpretation of this canto as a *dolce stil nuovo* achievement, to be viewed entirely in the light of the *Vita Nuova*, and his definition of the murdered heroine of love as a sister of Beatrice, need careful reexamination...To begin with, when Vittorini links Francesca with Beatrice, he implies only an affinity, based on the atmosphere of gentleness created by Dante's sympathy, by expressions like "Amor, ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende" ("Love, that is quick to seize a gentle heart") or "ch'amor di nostra vita dipartille"("for love made them part with this our life), and by the very insistence of the word "love".[70]

Instead, Cambon has suggested the oppositional parallelism of Paolo-Francesca and Dante-Beatrice corresponds to Francesca-*Lancelot du Lac* vs. Dante-Virgil. This means that Francesca's reading of *Lancelot du Lac* parallels Dante's reading of Virgil's *Aeneid*. How can this be explained? Jesse M. Gellrich's idea that Dante did not follow either Plato's or Aristotle's theory of *imitation* is of central importance here. While Plato's idea of imitation suggested a faithful copying of nature, and Aristotle's notion that art follows nature share the centrality of the *product* rather than of the *process*, Gellrich's view is that Dante thinks that poetry imitates not *what* nature makes,[71]but *as* nature makes. This is found in the following stanzas:

> ...natura lo suo corso prende
>
> da divino intelleto e da sua arte;

[67]Virgil, *The Aeneid*, II, 3. *See* Enzo Esposito, "Dante traduttore di Virgilio" *L'Italia che scrive* 48 (1965), 335-336.
[68]Barbara Nolan, "Dante's Vergil, the Liberal Arts, and the Ascent to God" in J. Stephen Russell, ed., *Allegoresis: The Craft of Allegory in Medieval Literature* (New York, 1988), 30-32.
[69]Vittorini, op. cit., 73.
[70]Cambon, op. cit., 54-55.
[71]Gellrich, op. cit., 145.

e se tu ben la tua Fisica note,
tu troverai, non dopo molte carte,

che l'arte vostra quella, quanto pote,
segue, come 'l maestro fa il discente...[72]

(INF XI, 99-104)

...how Nature takes her course from the Divine

Intellect, from its artistic workmanship;
and if you have your *Physics* well in mind
you will find, not many pages from the start,

how your art too, as best it can, imitates
Nature, *the way an apprentice does his master...* [73] (my emphasis)

Gellrich comments that "instead of reflecting an object in the mirror, the passage suggests a poetics of *producing* meaning as teacher does and the student does after him".[74] And he quotes in the footnote that Wolfgang Iser's formulation of the structure of fictive discourse is "an organization of signifiers which do not designate a signified object, but instead designate *instructions* for the production of the signified".[75] It follows that Dante's poetics in the *Commedia* is not that of faithful *imitation*, but of *interpretation, i.e. allegoresis.*

To come back to Francesca: Poggioli seems to have the better of the argument when he claims that "one of the oustanding critical hypotheses, the one maintaining that Francesca speaks according to the tenets of the *dolce stil nuovo* is completely wrong".[76] He goes on to contrast Guinizelli's and Dante's notion of love, spiritual and noble, with Francesca's, carnal and gentle-born. His explanation of why Guinizelli and Dante have a different conception, in my opinion, goes too far and must be taken with some reservation:

One must not forget that the notary Guinicelli, and that Dante, who was officially a member of the medical guild, were respectively citizens of Bologna and Florence, of two free communes, of two democratic commonwealths. Their very conception of love, despite its aristocratic origins, reflects already the cultural awareness of the new burghers' class. The " sweet new style' reacts against the feudal ideology of the Troubadours and their disciples, who believed literally in the doctrine of courtly love, and considered it a privilege of the highly placed and the well-born. But Francesca was the member of a family that tried to reduce the city of Ravenna into its own fief, and the pride of her birth and station induces her to prefer the Provençal view.[77]

[72]*California Dante*, Vol. I: Inferno, 98.
[73]INF XI, 99-104.
[74]Gellrich, op. cit., 146.
[75]Ibid., 146, ft. 18 quoting W. Iser, "The Reality of Fiction: A Functionalist Approach to Literature" *NLH* 7 (1975), 18.
[76]Poggioli, op. cit., 347
[77]Ibid., 348-349.

If, as the above commentators have suggested, Francesca subverts the meaning and language of the *dolce stil nuovo,* Dante interprets Virgil's Dido and Aeneas episode similarly to Augustine's reading of the *Aeneid* : "Vergil's implication seems to be that Carthage will fall like Troy because of the lust on which it is founded"[78] Augustine saw Virgil's epic for what it is: a glorification of Rome. For Augustine, Rome was the *terrestrial city (civitas terrena)* par excellence, based on lust, and opposed to the City of God:

> Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord...In the one, the princes and the nations it subdues are ruled by the love of ruling; in the other, the princes and subjects serve one another in love...[79]

Thus, though Augustine rejected the polarity between Carthage and Rome as universal models of human history, he did preserve the dualist dichotomy between the City of God and the terrestrial city. Though he posited the latter in terms of the duality between Babylon and Jerusalem, there is no question that for Augustine the former was finally represented by Rome. Thus, Roman history is not the end of all history, for Augustine. That is not, however, how Dante sees it.

Dante does not see the absolute irreconcilability between the City of God, i.e. Heavenly Jerusalem, and the terrestrial city represented by Rome. He did not have to transcend the implacable duality of Manichaeism that Augustine succumbed to as a young man, and fought hard to eradicate from his thinking as a convert to orthodoxy. Dante reconciles the two by regarding the history of Rome as providentially ordained to set the stage for the drama of Redemption. Accordingly, Roman history for Dante is the highest stage of human history, and *one that will last until the second coming of Jesus Christ.* That is the reason why in his *De Monarchia* (*On Monarchy*) Dante saw the Roman Emperor as *complementary* to the pope in being a political (rather than a religious) vicar of Christ on this earth. The Roman Emperor is thus an indispensable prerequisite for providing the right conditions for the coming of Christ, i.e., for uniting the whole civilized world, *oikumene,* in Dante's view under the Roman rule, and thus facilitating its future conversion to Christianity. The Roman Emperor is also, according to Dante, incorruptible for as a universal monarch he has no need to covet more. And cupidity for Dante was a universal sin; it is also a sin which is the biggest foe of all justice: *"Ad evidentiam primi notandum quod iustitie maxime contrariatur cupiditas".*[80]

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[78]Mazzotta, op. cit., 170.

[79]St. Augustine, *The City of God,* XIV, 28. As Mazzotta, op. cit., 171, points out in ft. 39 the Book I of Augustine's *City of God* "starts with a pointed recall of the Vergilian story of the fall of Troy recounted by Aeneas to Dido."

[80]Dante, *De Monarchia,* ed. by P.G. Ricci (Milan, 1965), I, xi, 11.

In Dante's opinion all politics is hopelessly entangled with cupidity: even states and empires rise and fall due to the *unequal* distribution of goods in this world. Over this ceaseless rise and fall of peoples and states reigns the Fortune represented by her Wheel. Dante presents a telling image of the Fortune (*Fortuna*) in Canto VII of the *Inferno* where Virgil instructs his pupil thus:

> ...You see, my son, the short-lived mockery
> of all the wealth that is in Fortune's keep,
> over which the human race is bickering;
>
> ***
>
> "Master, now tell me what this Fortune is
> you touched upon before. What is she like
> who would hold all worldly wealth within her fists?"
>
> And he to me, "O foolish race of man,
> how overwhelming is your ignorance!
> Now listen while I tell you what she means:
>
> that One, whose wisdom knows infinity,
> made all the heavens and gave each one a guide,
> and each sphere shining shines on all the others,
>
> so light is spread with equal distribution:
> for worldly splendors He decreed the same
> and ordained a guide and general ministress
>
> who would at her discretion shift the world's
> vain wealth from nation to nation, house to house,
> with no chance of interference from mankind;
>
> *so while one nation rules, another falls,*
> *according to whatever she decrees*
> (her sentence hidden like a snake in grass).
>
> Your knowledge has no influence on her;
> for she foresees, she judges, and she rules
> her kingdom as the other gods do theirs.
>
> Her changing changes never take a rest;
> necessity keeps her in constant motion,
> *as men come and go to take their turn with her.*
>
> ***
>
> But she is blest and in her bliss hears nothing;
> with all God's joyful first-created creatures
> she turns her spheres and, blest, turns it with joy..."[81](INF VII, 61-63, 67-90, 94-96)

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[81]INF VII, 61-63, 67-90, 94-96.

Dante repeats the image of the Wheel of Fortune in *Inferno* XV: "...let the Fortune turn her wheel, spinning it / as she pleases..."[82]It is thus clear that while Dante shares the conventional view of the Fortune as a distributor of all goods, he also sees her as a governess of all worldly affairs, affecting the rise and fall of states by the spinning of her wheel. In *Inferno* II, Dante states that everything that happens on this earth is under the sway of Fortune.[83]Dante has thus a profoundly pessimistic view of all politics.

As Marjorie Reeves points out, "in this respect we could say that he took the Augustinian view of this world. But Augustine carried this pessimistic view to the point of denying that there could ever be a state of real justice in human society. The more there is to be had, the more men will contend for it. The State, in the political sense, is only a human compromise permitted by God...You will recall Augustine's well-known pronouncement that the State is at bottom nothing but a robber band writ large...No state of justice is possible on earth and therefore no realization of human potentiality. This is the point at which Dante parts company from Augustine...Dante, then, had a vision of the future within history which remained optimistic to the end."[84] It should be pointed out, moreover, that Dante had a prophetic view of history, and, unlike Augustine, believed that great events would be happening before the Second Coming of Christ. Only thus can his allusions to the *Veltro* (the Hound) and the *"cinquecento diece e cinque"*, i.e. DXV (which according to all commentators must be rearranged to read DVX = DUX, i.e. the Leader) be understood.[85]

Dante's son, Pietro, in one of the earliest commentaries on his father's great work, identified the *Veltro* with a Roman Emperor who would reign over the whole world like the first one, Augustus.[86]In the later versions this identification was carried further by stating that the *Veltro* and the DVX are identical. Pietro suggested that his father might have had in mind the Christian Emperor (*Rex Christianorum*) prophesied by "Methodius".[87] This "Methodius" turns out to be the so-called Pseudo-Methodius. Paul Alexander devoted a number of studies to this Pseudo-Methodius, a Syriac apocalypse, later found in Byzantine and Latin versions.[88]Thus, Dante seems to have known of the legend of the Last World Emperor.

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[82]INF XV, 95-96.

[83]INF II, 77-78: "...all worldly things contained / within the sphere that makes the smallest round", i.e. the earth.

[84]Marjorie Reeves, "Dante and the Prophetic View of History" in Cecil Grayson, ed., *The World of Dante: Essays on Dante and his Times* (Oxford, 1980), 45 citing in ft. 8 B. Nardi, "Dante Profeta" in his *Dante e la cultura medievale* (Bari, 1942), 263-264, 269-272.

[85]The best short introduction is by M. Reeves, op. cit., 44-60.

[86]K. Morawski, "Le Mythe de l'Empereur chez Dante" *Révue des études italiennes* 12 (1965), 280-301

[87]*See* C.T. Davis, "Dante's Vision of History" *Dante Studies* 93 (1975), 155.

[88]P. Alexander, "Medieval Apocalypses as Historical Sources" *American Historical Review* 73 (1968), 997-1018; id., "Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works and

What was the role of this Last Roman Emperor? Since its roots went back to seventh-century Syria, just conquered by the Arabs, it should come as no surprise that its anonymous writer saw war against the Infidels" as the primary purpose of this Last Roman Emperor who was to defeat and chase away the Muslims. The later versions, put together in Sicily, gave it an anti-Saracen character. Finally, in the Byzantine versions the Arabs first, then finally the Turks are identified as the enemies. The Last Roman Emperor thus became identified as a great savior of Christendom from its traditional and perennial foes, the Muslims, first as the Arabs, then Saracens, and finally Turks.[89]

This is a very important point, and we shall come back to it shortly. What is of great significance is Dante's prophetic view of history which *goes against Augustine's anti-millennarian view of human history*. Augustine's firm opposition to political eschatology can be traced back to his resentment of Manichaen belief in various saviors. It is also based on his notion that there can be no conjoining of two kinds of love.

That is precisely where Dante differs from Augustine. Dante shows that not only was Rome providentially ordained for the salvation of mankind, but that its founder, Aeneas, was motivated by a different kind of love in his later life from the one he showed to Dido. Basing his view on the Neo-Platonic commentary on the *Aeneid* by Fulgentius, Dante interpreted Virgil's epic as an *allegory* of the four ages of Man: Adolescence, Youth, Maturity, and Old Age. Dante sets this notion out in the fourth book of his *Convivio*:

> And Virgil, our greatest poet, tells us how Aeneas was thus restrained in that part of the *Aeneid* which represents this age...And how he felt the curb, when, having received from Dido so much pleasure..., and taking such delight with her, he departed from her, that he might follow the virtuous, praiseworthy, and fruitful way, as is written in the fourth of the Aeneid![90]

Thus, as Mazzotta points out, Dante distinguishes between the lust on which Babylon and Carthage were built, and love on which Rome

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Motifs: The Legend of the Last World Emperor""*Medievalia et Humanistica*, ns. 2 (1971), 47-68; id., *The Oracle of Baalbek* (Dumbarton Oaks, 1967).

[89]Paul J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley, 1985), 13-60: "Sackur showed that Pseudo-Methodius had relied heavily on Syriac work, the *Cave of Treasures*, composed in Mesopotamia in the sixth century...But Sackur was also aware of Pseudo-Methodius' interest in Babylonia and that his knowledge of Babylonian history and legend was derived from Iranian traditions...Kmosko...demonstrated that the author had lived in Mesopotamia during the last years or decades of Sassanid rule, and he pointed to many Iranian features in Pseudo-Methodius' work.""The works cited are: Ernst Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen* (Halle, 1989; reprint Turin, 1963); Michael Kmosko, "Das Rätsel des Pseudo-Methodius"*Byzantion* VI (1931), 273-296; E.A.W. Budge, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* (London, 1927).

[90]Dante, *Convivio* G. Busnelli & G. Vandelli, eds. (2nd ed. by A.E. Quaglio)(Florence, 1964), IV, xxvi, 8-9.

was founded.[91] In Canto VI of *Paradiso,* Dante identifies Carthage with "the Arabs": "It brought low all that Arabian pride / that followed Hannibal across the Alps..."[92] More importantly, this canto gives a long history of *the Eagle,* i.e. of the history of the Roman and later Holy Roman Empire. Thus, *the Eagle* as the symbol of Rome is set against Carthage, now identified with the Arabs. Even at this point Dante has Virgil in mind: the above verses echo clearly the famous lines *"parcere subiectis, debellare superbos"*,[93] but they are not read through Augustinian's eyes as a Roman mockery of the City of God.

At this point it is worth quoting Mazzotta's conclusion to his chapter on "Vergil and Augustine" to see how Dante follows and yet differs from both Virgil and Augustine:

> I have argued, on the one hand, that Dante reads the *Aeneid* through Augustine and the neoplatonic commentaries and that by his elaborate interpretive effort the *Aeneid* emerges as the authoritative text of history, the text of the desire that lies under the signs of history. On the other hand, I have examined instances where the authority of the *Aeneid* is challenged and disrupted and its sense radically altered. In either case, the act of reading emerges as the fundamental metaphor upon which Dante's view of history depends. It is an act that can lead Francesca to fall into the trap of narcissistic literal identification with Guinevere and lust and violence: to take the metaphors of the text literally...is to die. At the same time, reading is also the experience by which the reader resists the seductive authority of the text by doing violence and interpreting the letter. More generally, it implies that history is a book that has to be interpreted: to read the book of history, like reading the *Aeneid* is to enter an imaginary domain where its sense is asserted and, at the same time, suspended.[94]

We are now in a position to see how Dante's reading of Virgil parallels Francesca's reading of *Lancelot du Lac,* for both exhibit a *subversion* of Augustine's reading of the *Aeneid.* This has been brought out fully by Gellrich:

> The invitation to recall the *Aeneid* comes in Francesca's remark "e ciò sa 'l tuo dottore" ("and this your teacher knows"; line 123)...A few lines later her comment opening the story of reading, "Noi leggiavamo un gioroo" ("we read one day"; line 127), balances her closing line, "quel giorno piú non vi leggemmo avante" ("that day we read no farther in it"; line 138), and both recall, as has been observed, a line from Augustine's *Confessions*, "nec ultra legere volui" ("no longer did I wish to read"). Augustine stops reading, he tells us, at Rom. 13.12-13 as the text converts him from wantonness to the love of God. Were Francesca's story a penitential confession, we might justify her desire to echo the words of the most famous conversion in Christian history. But since she is reminiscing about her fornication, her discourse keeps the recollection of Augustine in the background, silences it. Similarly, her description of reading parallels at a number of points Augustine's reading of the*Aeneid*...But whereas Augustine repudiates himself for indulging in the *Aeneid* for its own sake, for his "adulterous" reading, Dante's text makes no such confessions. The echoes of

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[91]Mazzotta, op. cit., 173-179.
[92]PAR VI, 49-50.
[93]Mazzotta, op. cit., 182.
[94]Ibid., 191.

> the past do not disturb the suface of Francesca's discourse, and this effect is entirely in keeping with the poet's larger purpose. *He is not imitating Augustine or Virgil, but interpreting them for the particular purposes of his poem.*[95](my emphasis)

Why Dante both does and does not follow Augustine is ultimately deeper: Augustine preserved the dichotomy between the City of God and the *civitas terrena* while Dante subscribed to a different view. It seems to me that Vittorini is right when he argues that Dante was a Neo-Platonist.[96] If that is indeed the case, then he shared with the Neo-Platonists the idea of the *analogy* of the celestial world with the terrestrial world. In his book on the aesthetic ideas in Dante, J.F. Took detected this fundamental trait perceptively:

> Yet it is precisely here, in the association of values properly realizable *in both the created and in the uncreated orders of being* (my emphasis) that we detect a movement away from the allegorical towards the analogical. For allegory is simply a matter of metaphor; this is how it had always been conceived, as extended metaphor, and metaphor, strictly speaking, involves a logically improper use of the language...It cannot be said to save the *rationes* of that of which it is predicated. But analogy, in that it respects throughout the primary significance of the terms predicated, is logically unexceptionable. Indeed, not only is it unexceptionable, but it furnishes the means of legitimate intellectual advance with respect to a transcendent order of reality.[97]

Took's argument that "to proceed in this way is to proceed, not allegorically, but analogically, by way, not of imaginative substitution, but of intrinsic comparison"[98] is in my opinion a correct reading of Dante's poetics. What it enables Dante to do is to bridge the gap between "what the poem is" and "what the poem says", i.e. between form and substance, and thus to create a poem which supersedes the earlier dichotomy between the "allegory of poets" based on rhetoric, and the "allegory of theologians" based on revelation. Took puts this problem thus:

> The aesthetic advantages of analogy as a means of poetic discourse may be stated in terms of the old problem of form and substance. Allegory...tends to place between them an artificial order of meaning, thus weakening and even destroying the value of the former as the intelligible principle of the latter. Analogy, by contrast, ensures and reinforces the spiritual function of form. For just as the image, or minor analogate, initiates an act of understanding in respect of the truth which lies beyond, so also the elements of form whereby the image is summoned and celebrated confirm its secure possession and enjoyment. Their power is carried over from the one to the other, *they guarantee the intelligibility of a twofold order of reality.*[99](my emphasis)

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[95]Gellrich, op. cit., 153-154.

[96]Vittorini, op. cit., 74.

[97]J.F. Took, *'L'Etterno Piacer': Aesthetic Ideas in Dante* (Oxford, 1984), 80.

[98]Ibid., 81.

[99]Ibid., 82.

Where did Dante derive this idea of analogy as a means for apprehending a twofold order of reality? From Pseudo-Dionysius (the Areopagite). The most succinct formulation of the two orders of reality, heavenly and terrestrial, being analogous and thus inter-related is found in Dionysius's letter to "John the theologian, apostle and evangelist, an exile on the island of Patmos", spurious and apocryphal as Dionysius himself was. Nevertheless Dante accepted it as genuine like all the medieval men. The crucial phrase is: "The visible is truly the plain image of the invisible..."[100]In his *Celestial Hierarchy,* Pseudo-Dionysius is at pains to explain that even though matter and celestial stuff are made differently, they partake of the common element: "So, then, forms, even those drawn from the lowliest matter, can be used, not unfittingly, with regard to heavenly beings. Matter, after all, owes its subsistence to absolute beauty and keep, throughout its earthly ranks, some echo of intelligible beauty. Using matter, one may be lifted up *to the immaterial archetypes.*"[101](my emphasis).

Being a Neo-Platonist himself, Pseudo-Dionysius makes it quite clear that it is the participation of celestial and terrestrial beings in Divine Beauty that provides the fundamental analogy for apprehending the twofold order of reality. Since these two levels of reality consist of unequal participation in Beauty, and within each level every being participates in it to a lesser or greater degree, this inequality gives rise to the notion of *hierarchy*:

> In my opinion a hierarchy is a sacred order, a state of understanding and an activity approximating as closely as possible to the divine. And it is uplifted to the imitation of God in proportion to the enlightenments divinely given to it. The beauty of God...is completely uncontaminated by dissimilarity. It reaches out to grant every being, according to merit, a share of light...The goal of hierarchy, then, is to enable beings to be as like as possible to God and to be at one with him. A hierarchy has God as its leader of all understanding and action...A hierarchy bears in itself the mark of God. Hierarchy causes its members to be images of God in all respects, to be clear and spotless mirrors reflecting the glow of primordial light and indeed of God himself.[102]

Pseudo-Dionysius makes it quite explicit that even though the two orders of reality, and beings inside each, are *formally dissimilar,* this fact does not prevent them from being *analogical*: "There is nothing ridiculous about representing heavenly beings with similarities which are dissimilar and incongruous."[103]The participation of all beings in "the One, the Good, the Beautiful" is, of course, a quintessentially Platonic, and even more, Neo-Platonic idea. In *The Divine Names* (*De divinis nominibus*), Pseudo-Dionysius teaches that "the Beautiful is therefore the same as the God, for everything looks to the Beautiful and

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[100] "Letter Ten To John the Theologian Apostle and Evangelist, an Exile on the Island of Patmos" in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works,* trans., by Colm Luibheid (New York, 1987), 289.

[101] "The Celestial Hierarchy" in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works,* 151-152.

[102] Ibid., 153-154.

[103] Ibid., 153.

the Good as the cause of being, and there is nothing in the world without a share of the Beautiful and the Good...Hence, the interrelationship of all things in accordance with capacity. Hence, the harmony and the *love* which are formed between them but which do not obliterate identity. Hence, *the innate togetherness of everything*."[104] (my emphasis)

This innate togetherness of everything is held together by Love as the glue that holds everything together; but Love also is what makes all celestial beings (including human souls which are immortal) move. Pseudo-Dionysius explains how the latter move:

> The divine intelligences are said to move as follows. First they move *in a circle* while they are at one with those illuminations which, without beginning and without end, emerge from the Good and the Beautiful. Then they move in a straight line when, out of Providence, they come to offer unerring guidance to all those below them. Finally they move in a spiral, for even while they are providing for those beneath them they continue to remain what they are and they turn unceasingly around the Beautiful and the Good from which all identity comes.[105] (my emphasis)

There can be no question that Dante was profoundly influenced by these notions found in Pseudo-Dionysius's works. And that it was why he included him in the inner circle of souls found in Canto X of the *Paradiso*. Besides he used Pseudo-Dionysius's hierarchy of angels, divided into nine orders, in Canto XXVIII of the same *cantica*. Both the angels and the souls of the inner and outer circle move in a *circular* fashion. And Dante called the lowest rung of the highest order of angels, the so-called Thrones, "loves".[106]

It is at this point that John Freccero's fine study of *Paradiso* X is of particular relevance to this study. As I already mentioned, the souls of the outer and inner circle, made up of philosophers and mystics, i.e. those distinguished by wisdom (the inner circle) and by love (outer circle), move in a circular motion. Each circle is, moreover, made up of *twelve* souls. Freccero's main argument is that the circular movement of the circles is analogous to the movement of the stars around the sun in the Zodiac. He then quotes the famous tercets that I placed as a motto for this study:

> Leva dunque, lettore, a l'alte rote
> meco la vista, dritto a quella parte
> dove l'un moto e l'altro si percuote;
>
> e lì comincia a vagheggiar ne l'arte
> di quel maestro che dentro a sé l'ama,
> tanto che mai da le l'occhio non parte.[107]
>
> (PAR X, 7-12)

[104] "The Divine Names" in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 77.
[105] Ibid., 78.
[106] See Musa's comment on p. 338 to PAR XXVIII, 103-105.
[107] *California Dante*, Vol. III: Paradiso (New York, 1986), 84.

Look up now, Reader, with me to the spheres;
look straight to that point of the lofty wheels
where the one motion and the other cross,

and there begin to revel in the work
of that great Artist who so loves His art,
Hiz gaze is fixed on it perpetually.[108]

Freccero's main point is that the dance of the souls is in fact zodiacal, and he traces this theme back to Antiquity.[109] While there are many earlier suggestions, the origin of the Christian tradition of the zodiacal dance goes back to the Apocrypha. In the so-called *Acts of John,* which is clearly of Gnostic origin,[110] Pseudo-John recounts how Jesus Christ called together his apostles, formed a circle around him, and then ordered them to sing and dance. At the end of their song are found the following lines: "An Ogdoad is singing with us! Amen. /[111] The Twelfth number is dancing above. Amen. / And the Whole that can dance. Amen..." In my opinion Freccero is quite right in maintaining that without a reference to the Zodiac these lines appear incomprehensible.[112] The "Ogdoad" stands for number eight in Gnostic terminology, referring to the eight celestial spheres. "The Whole that can dance" refers to the universe, and the "twelfth number dancing above" is the Zodiac, representing twelve constellations. At this point let us recall that the so-called Dendera Zodiac, represented on the cover of this book, though carved with Egyptian figures on the ceiling of the temple of Osiris, "depicts the constellations of the zodiac according to Greek, rather than Egyptian, understanding of them. Every modern star sign can be found on its inner circle."[113] It is thus quite likely that since this temple was built in Greco-Roman times its depiction of the Zodiac is associated with Gnosis whose birthplace was, after all, Egypt. Be that as it may, Greener points out its beauty and significance:

Savants of the early 19th century were stirred to emotional controversy by the Dendera Zodiac. Some saw it as an astronomical document showing by the order of its signs the great antiquity of the edifice from which it had been taken. Others saw it correctly as an astrological monument of a late period. In fact the planisphere of Dendera dates from the end of the Ptolemaic or even the Roman period; and we can draw no conclusion whatsoever from it that the Egyptians were different from other

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[108] PAR X, 7-12.

[109] John Freccero, "The Dance of the Stars: *Paradiso* X" in J. Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), 221-244, first published in *Dante Studies* 86 (1968), 85-111.

[110] Willis Barnstone, ed., *The Other Bible: Jewish Pseudepigrapha, Christian Apocrypha, Gnostic Scriptures, Kabbalah, Dead Sea Scrolls* (San Francisco, 1984), 413-425.

[111] Theodore Zahn, *Acta Joannis* (Erlangen, 1880), 220, trans. by B. Pick, *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul, Peter, John, Andrew and Thomas* (Chicago, 1909), 181.

[112] Freccero, "The Dance of the Stars", 228-229.

[113] Christine Hobson, *The World of the Pharaohs: A Complete Guide to Ancient Egypt* (New York, 1987), 140.

> ancient people of the East who believed that the sun turned around the Earth inside a circular Zodiac in twelve parts comprised of the twelve constellations that the sun appeared to cross in a year. This notion is represented on the Dendera Zodiac in a quite literal way. The circular zone —the sky —is supported by the four cardinal points —the standing women —and four pairs of kneeling genii with heads of hawks. Around the circumference march the thirty-six genii of the thirty-six decades of the year; for the Egyptian year of 360 days was divided into ten-day periods. Within these are the twelve signs of the Zodiac to which are added symbols of the fixed planets and a number of stars and constellations. *The whole appears to be a map of celestial Egypt, which the Egyptians conceived to be in certain respects a replica of terrestrial Egypt with the same nome divisions.* There were more nomes, or provinces, than the twelve Zodiac signs, so they were augmented by the planet and star symbols.[114](my emphasis)

The emphasized sentence makes me believe that what we have in the Dendera Zodiac is precisely the analogy between the celestial and terrestrial worlds, either of Platonic/Neo-Platonic or of Gnostic origin, or most likely of both. Yet, it seems to me that there is a much more profound connection between the dance of the souls represented by the Zodiac, and Dante's prophetic view of history.

As Marjorie Reeves points out, in *Paradiso* XXVII Beatrice rails against Greed and then offers a prophetic statement:

> My words should not surprise you when you think
> there is no one on earth to govern you
> and so the human family goes astray.
>
> Before all January is unwintered —
> because of every hundred years' odd day
> which men neglect —these lofty spheres shall shine
>
> a light that brings the long-awaited storm
> to whirl the fleet about from prow to stern,
> and set it sailing a straight course.[115]
>
> Then from the blossom shall good fruit come forth. (PAR XXVII, 139-148)

In his essay, "The Invocations of the *Commedia*", Robert Hollander asks the following question: "How many discussions of *veltro* and 515" (=DVX) "make even the vaguest reference to the final and similar prophecy in the poem, the *fortuna* of *Paradiso* XXVII, 145?"[116] In my opinion Dante gave a clear sign that he was indeed referring to the same prophecy a few tercets earlier when, talking of the highest heaven, the ninth, the *Primum Mobile*, Beatrice uses the phrase "as ten is product of the two and five" (PAR XXVII, 117). If, as all commentators agree, "515" has to be transposed to read "DVX"[117](i.e.

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[114]Leslie Greener, *The Discovery of Egypt* (New York, 1966), 138.
[115]PAR XXVII, 139-148.
[116]Robert Hollander, "The Invocations of the *Commedia*" in R. Hollander, *Studies in Dante* (Ravenna, 1980), 31, ft. 1., first published in *Yearbook of Italian Studies* 1973-1975 (Fiesole, 1976).
[117]Musa's comment on p. 364 on PUR XXXIII, 43

dux, a leader), then its numerical value is: "D", i.e. "5" for "500", "V", i.e. "5" for "5", and "X", i.e. "10" for "10", for a total of "5510"(DVX). Though it makes no sense as a Roman numerical system, treating it as simply a coded word, it yields: "5" + "5" = "10" or, as Dante has Beatrice say, "as ten is product of the two and five, i.e. 5 x 2 = 10."

If this is indeed the case, then *Paradiso* XXVII contains the third and final explanation of Dante's prophetic view of history. The verses quoted above have occasioned a lot of controversy, but have not, in my opinion, been satisfactorily explained so far. What we have said so far should help us to see them in a novel light. While Reeves points out that critics have seen the verse "then from the blossom good fruit shall come forth" as a reference to Joachim of Fiore, the image of the ship poops being turned around is still puzzling.[118] We can suggest a solution by looking at where this prophecy takes place: at the end of Canto XXVII right before Canto XXVIII which presents all the nine spheres of heaven in the Empyrean. Freccero has already argued that the dance of the stars in the Zodiac "is a foreshadowing of the movement of the blessed souls in the Empyrean".[119] Moreover, he says that "the manifestation of the number twelve would thus compress universal history—the span of history represented by the "spiriti sapienti", the hours and the years into the eternal now of the "dance" in the Empyrean of which this is a foreshadowing."[120] If this is indeed the case, it means that the prophetic image of the ships turning their poops around must refer to the same Redeemer already announced as the *veltro* and "515". This time, however, it is his *vehicle* for salvation that I think is being offered.

According to the Manichaean belief, Jesus as the third redeemer set up a mechanism consisting of the sun and the moon and the "wheel" for the liberation of the souls.[121] According to Puech, "the vast cosmic machine revolves, and unremittingly the gigantic *wheel with its twelve buckets*, built by Jesus for the redemption of souls, draws forth the luminous souls of the dead and forms them into a pillar of light, whose mystical cargo is borne *on the ships of the sun and moon* to the glittering paradise of its origin."[122] (my emphasis) C.G. Jung, in his *Psychology and Alchemy*, identifies specifically this vehicle with the Zodiac: "In the Manichean system the saviour constructs a cosmic wheel with twelve buckets—the zodiac—for the raising of souls...Ripley says that the wheel must be turned by the four seasons and the four quarters...The wheel turns into the wheel of the sun rolling round the heavens, and so becomes identical with the sun-god or -hero who

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[118] M. Reeves, "Dante and the Prophetic View of History", 45.

[119] Freccero, "The Dance of the Stars", 233.

[120] Ibid., 232.

[121] The fundamental study is still by Henri-Charles Puech, "The Concept of Redemption in Manichaeism" in Joseph Campbell, ed., *The Mystic Vision: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks* , Bollingen Series XXX/6 (Princeton, 1968), 247-314.

[122] Ibid., 281-282 citing in ft. 101 F. Cumont, "La roue à puiser les ames du manichéisme" *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* LXXII (1915), 384-88 and H.J. Polotsky, *Abriss des manischäischen Systems* (Stuttgart, 1934), Vol. VI supplementary to Pauly-Wissowa *Real-Encyclopädie*, col. 255, ll. 27-67.

submits to arduous labours and to the passion of self-cremation, like Herakles, or the captivity and dismemberment at the hands of the evil principle, like Osiris."[123] We can now see why the Dendera Zodiac was placed in the temple dedicated to Osiris.

I am not suggesting that Dante was a crypto-Manichaean or that he subscribed to this notion of redemption consciously. Nevertheless it seems to me that there are grounds for suggesting that the Manichaean cosmic wheel for the redemption of the souls, with its attendant ships of the sun and the moon, could have been picked up by Dante at the time when the unorthodox ideas of the Italian Patarenes were still circulating in Northern and Central Italy.[124] In my opinion only this wheel and its ships will do justice to the quoted passage at the end of *Paradiso* XXVII.

Toward the end of this same canto there is a tercet that has remained obdurate to most critical commentaries:

> thus, the white skin of innocence turns black
> at first exposure to the tempting daughter
> of him who brings the morn and leaves the night.[125]

According to the Manichaeans, the Third Envoy (who is not necessarily Jesus) *appeared naked in the sun as a Virgin of Light*— a figure borrowed from Gnosticism—as a male to the female archons, and as a female to the male archons who govern the world for the Prince of Darkness. The archons were aroused, the males ejaculated, and their seed fell to the earth where it grows into vegetation, "while the female demons, *nauseated by the turning of the zodiac to which they are bound, give birth to abortions, who fall to earth and eat the blossoms from the trees...*"[126](my emphasis) It seems to me that Dante is combining the elements of the legend, e.g. the appearance of the Third Envoy in the sun as naked to the female archons. Musa comments that "him who brings the morn and leaves the night" must be the sun, but he identifies "the tempting daughter" with Circe, daughter of the sun (*solis filia*), but he adds that in this context Circe represents the worldly goods and "temptation to search after them",[127] i.e. Greed. This makes sense since Hollander, let us recall, has referred to the *fortuna,* i.e. Fortune of *Paradiso* XXVII, 145. The implications are clear: by accepting the above explanation, it becomes clear that what Dante has in mind is a universal Redeemer in the guise of the Last Roman Emperor who, according to Pseudo-Methodius, will defeat the Infidels (Arabs, Saracens, Turks), liberate Jerusalem, and, according to some versions,

[123] C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* (2nd ed., London, 1968), 380-381, published as Vol. 12 of *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung.*

[124] For Patarene beliefs there is plenty of evidence in I. von Döllinger, ed., *Dokumente zur Geschichte der Valdesier und Katharer,* Vol. II of his *Beiträge zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters* (Munich, 1890)

[125] PAR XXVII, 136-138.

[126] Puech, op. cit., 276.

[127] Musa's comment on p. 328 to PAR XXVII, 136-138

offer himself to God, i.e. sacrifice himself on the altar of the liberated temple in Jerusalem. The Last Roman Emperor, i.e. the *veltro,* "515" and the Redeemer of *Paradiso* XXVII will thus lay low the Arabs, identified by Dante with Carthage and lust, and inaugurate the final stage of history. He will put an end to the rule of Fortune. Mazzotta is absolutely correct when he claims that

> For Dante...Fortune is deceptive only for those who abide in the darkling world of the Fall: in the instability of the fallen world, the more one attempts to hold on to the goods of Fortune, the more one plunges down to the bottom of the wheel. Fortune can be conquered by the exercise of poverty: by giving up the very material elements that she controls, and acknowledging its inherent providentiality. In this sense, *the wheel of Fortune is a basic metaphor in Dante's vision of history, for it discloses the order that lies under the confusions and impermanence of temporal life.*[128](my emphasis)

We are now, finally, in a position to go back to Gundulic and try to relate Dante's "reading" of history to the former's *Osman*. We already noted the Wheel of Fortune as the central archetype of Gundulic's *Osman*. What we still need to do is relate this universal reign of Fortune to Gundulic's view of history. I have already pointed out that Gundulic paraphrased Dante only once: in Canto VIII.[129]This canto, accordingly, must hold the key to Gundulic's view of history, if my "reading" of Gundulic through Dante is to make sense. The first thing to point out about Canto VIII is that it starts with a very abstract reflection on Beauty couched in very Neo-Platonic terms.[130]Where did Gundulic pick up these Neo-Platonic ideas? From a fellow Ragusan, a relative, and a famous writer of Neo-Platonic works: Nicolaus Gozze (Nikola Gucetic (1549-1610)) whose dialogues on Love and Beauty (*Dialogo d'Amore, Dialogo della Belezza*)[131]were published in Venice in 1581. It is almost inconceivable that Gundulic, who was growing up during Gozze's later years, and who was related to the famous writer, would not have heard of or read his works.

The opening reflection on Beauty is dominated by two ideas found in Gozze's dialogues: that the One and the World are inter-related, and that God Who Is One is Light in essence. The bond between the One and his Creation is Love. This initial section is followed by a glorification of Prince Wladyslaw's betrothed, Austrian Princess, Cecilia Renata.[132]We know from other sources that Wladyslaw IV married the Austrian Princess in August of 1637. It has thus been concluded by

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[128]Mazzotta, op. cit., 323-324.

[129]D. Gundulic, *Osman*, VIII, 427-428: "Spomenjivat nevoljnomu / mucno je prednje cestitosti..."

[130]*Osman*, VIII, 1-28.

[131]Drazen Budisa, "Humanism in Croatia" in Albert Rabil, Jr., ed., *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms and Legacy*, Vol. II; *Humanism Beyond Italy* (Philadelphia, 1988), 273-274; V. Vratovic, "Hrvatski latinizam u kontekstu hrvatske i evropske knjizevnosti" in A. Flaker & K. Pranjic, eds., *Hrvatska knjizevnost u evropskom kontekstu* (Zagreb, 1978), 137-151.

[132]*Osman*, VIII, 29-72.

commentators that Gundulic wrote this section, and probably this canto, in the second half of 1637, i.e. shortly before his death in December of 1638.[133] This canto can be surmised to encapsulate the views that Gundulic held at the very end of his life.

Canto VIII's main action takes place in Smederevo, the capital of the last Serbian state, the so-called *despotate,* which fell to the Turks in 1459, i.e. six years after Mehmed the Conqueror's (1451-1481) capture of Constantinople, and only four years before the Turkish conquest of the Bosnian kingdom in 1463. The canto's action is largely fictional, but it is used by Gundulic to pass a judgment on these momentous events. It should be explained that the main tragic protagonist of Gundulic's epic, Sultan Osman II (1617-1622), in Gundulic's version of course, decided in an earlier canto not to follow the age-old custom of indulging in the pleasures of the harem—and thus yielding to *lust* —but to look for a noble-born wife. He accordingly dispatched Kazlar-Agha (i.e. Kizlar-Agha), the head of the black eunuchs in charge of his harem, to fetch suitable candidates. Kazlar-Agha comes to Smederevo, finds the old man Ljubdrag and his beautiful daughter, Suncanica. *Suncanica* means in Croatian "a daughter of the sun". Suncanica has decided not to marry, but her father tries to change her mind by arranging for a "party" of local youths.[134]

This party is used by Gundulic to glorify the idyllic, pastoral tradition of the South Slavs, a sort of the South Slavic Arcadia. He has a young shepherd, Radmilo, offer a paean to beauty and youthfulness on the theme of *carpe diem.*[135]His song, echoed by other shepherds and shepherdesses who join him, is a glorification of Love as *Eros,* and is followed by a *circular* dance or *kolo.* It is followed by the four plaintive songs, the so-called *bugarstice* or *bugarkinje,* which can mean etymologically either "Bulgarian" songs, i.e. derived from Bulgaria, or "plaintive" (from *bugariti*). The first song is about *herceg* (i.e. Duke, from German *herzog*) Stjepan, i.e. Herceg Stjepan Vukcic Kosaca (1435-1466), after whose title of "Duke of St. Sava", *herceg Svetog Save,* his possession became known as "Herceg's land" or *Hercegovina.* This song has not been preserved in oral tradition, but from Gundulic's verses it deals with Herceg Stjepan's defeat by the Turks, his son's acceptance of Islam, and the old herceg's exile. The second *bugarstica* deals with "Janko, a Hungarian *vojvoda*" (i.e. Duke), in reality Janos Hunyadi, born in Sibinj (Nagyszeben) and known in South Slavic epic songs as "Sibinjanin Janko". He led many campaigns against the Turks, e.g. in 1438-1439 when he became Duke of Turnu Severin, in 1443-1444 when he accompanied Wladyslaw IV on his Balkan campaign which ended in a disaster at Varna, in 1448 when he was defeated on the Field of Blackbirds (Kosovo), and finally in 1456 when he came to the aid of the Hungarian garrison of Belgrade, besieged by Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror. He died in Zemun, across from Belgrade, of plague in 1456.

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[133]Thus Miroslav Pantic in his edition of Divo Gundulic, *Osman* (Belgrade, 1967), 118.

[134]*Osman* VIII, 73-257.

[135]*Osman* VIII, 265-295.

The third plaintive song is devoted to Hunyadi's Balkan campaign of 1448 which included a Christian victory over the Turks on the South Morava river. The fourth *bugarkinja,* as Gundulic expressly calls it, deals with King Matthias Corvin (1457-1490), Janos Hunyadi's son, whose reign represents the golden age of late medieval Hungary.[136] In these four songs Gundulic often imitates the characteristic style of South Slavic epic poetry.

Kazlar Aga's arrival interrupts the party, but the head of the black eunuchs, eager to find out more about Suncanica's background, induces her old father, Ljubdrag, to recount his own story.[137] It is Ljubdrag's story that starts with Gundulic's paraphrase of Dante's verse from Francesca's speech. In Francesca's episode Dante, a Pilgrim, turns to Francesca with these words:

> "...Francesca, the torment that you suffer
> brings painful tears of pity to my eyes.
>
> But tell me, in that time of your sweet sighing
> how, and by what signs, did love allow you
> to recognize your dubious desires?"
>
> And she to me: "There is no greater pain
> than to remember, in our present grief,
> past happiness..."[138]

Let us now see how Cambon comments on this passage: "This way the elicited answer will conclude the interview on the note of love—another tribute of Dante to the conjured victim, in the form of a symbolic reaffirmation of love in the face of death. He has carefully chosen his question. He wants to know how the fateful love was mutually revealed: namely, the turning point of the two interlocked lives, marking the climax of happiness and the beginning of doom."[139]

Gundulic too, follows Dante in posing his question carefully. Kazlar Aga asks Ljubdrag:

> "...Your ancestors, who were they?
> Tell me freely, with no constraint:
> Were they lording it over others,
> And who chased them out of power?"[140]

Indeed, this is the key question: Gundulic is here tackling the most difficult, yet fundamental aspect of South Slavic history, namely, the reasons for their collapse in the face of the Turkish penetrations of the Balkans.[141] For Gundulic, like his countrymen, knew what happened in

[136] *Osman* VIII, 300-345.
[137] *Osman* VIII, 427-592.
[138] INF V, 116-123.
[139] Cambon, op. cit., 49.
[140] *Osman* VIII, 421-424; as earlier all translations are mine.
[141] On the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans *see* J ohn V.A. Fine, Jr., *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*

the late 14th and 15th centuries: the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans. Like Dante, Gundulic has already reaffirmed life in the face of death by having the "party" and Radmilo's paean to Eros. It is unfortunate that Gundulic did not include a short summary of the four *bugarstice* in Canto VIII; he merely alluded to them. It is nevertheless clear that, like Dante, Gundulic is overwhelmed by grief as he contemplates the sad state of his fellow Slavs in the Balkans under the Ottoman yoke. Like Dante he wants to know the root cause of this misery.

It should be quite clear to the reader now why Gundulic chose on purpose to start Ljubdrag's story by paraphrasing Dante: he could find no greater expression of *difference* between "then" and "now" in all of literature available to him (either in Italian or in Latin) than these memorable words. Since Ljubdrag's speech is Gundulic's counterpart to Francesca's in Dante, we would expect the same attitude toward his style that Dante employs: a parody of the South Slavic equivalent of the *dolce stil nuovo* i.e. the style of the oral epic tradition of the Balkan Slavs. And, indeed, as he has already done it in the *bugarstice,* Gundulic consciously imitates this style, but now he narrates the story in detail. It starts with Prince Lazar of Serbia (whom Gundulic consistently but inaccurately calls *despot*) who was defeated by the Turks on the Field of the Blackbirds (Kosovo) in 1389. Prince Lazar gave two of his daughters to the notable magnates, Milos Kobilic (later in epic poetry, Obilic) and Vuk Brankovic. The latter was married to Mara whose son was George Brankovic, the *despot* of Serbia, already discussed. His daughter Mara was forced to join the harem of Sultan Murad II in 1433. The Turks invaded the Serbian *despotate* in 1438 and in 1439 took Smederevo, its capital. George Brankovic was forced to send his two sons, Gregory and Stephen, to the Ottoman court. There they were accused of harboring treasonous relations with their father, and, according to Gundulic's account (but not according to historical sources), with their sister Mara's consent, were both blinded. Trying to organize an anti-Turkish coalition, including Hungary, George Brankovic came to Dubrovnik in 1441, more as a fugitive from his own conquered land than as a visiting head of state. In Dubrovnik he was feted as the latter. This provoked Murad's wrath, and the Republic of Dubrovnik, which had recently become an Ottoman tributary state in 1439, was threatened with commercial reprisals, and even the loss of its tributary relationship which could have led to the Ottoman siege and capture of the city. Dubrovnik, however, stood firm, and did not expel its guest, or apologize to the sultan. In subsequent centuries, including Gundulic's own, this became a favorite story told by Ragusan statesmen and diplomats how the tiny Republic withstood enormous pressure by its

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(Ann Arbor, 1987); Halil Inalçik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600* (New York, 1973).

protector in order to uphold its right to grant (what amounted to) an asylum, and thus not to violate its oath of hospitality.[142]

Most of Ljubdrag's story consists of three parts: the first is the narrative of what happened, summarized above;[143] the second is Gregory's mournful complaint about his and his brother's sad fate which rendered them incapable of being supportive of their parents in their old age;[144] and the third is Gundulic's magnificent paean to his own Dubrovnik, placed in Ljubdrag's mouth.[145]The first part gives the reasons for the sad state of the South Slavs outside of Dubrovnik, the second bemoans this state, and the third glorifies the only free and prosperous oasis of Slavdom in the Balkans, Dubrovnik.

At first sight one gets the impression that Gundulic chose a rather less significant detail from the long saga of bloodshed, treachery, and deceit that surrounded the collapse of medieval Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia, and Hercegovina in the face of the Ottoman menace. Yet, though the detail might have been less telling than his retelling of the battle of Kosovo, Gundulic chose it because it enabled him to bring together a number of disparate things. First of all, it enabled him to use the *despot's* stay in Dubrovnik to glorify his native city. Second, it connected Sultan Murad with Osman, and third, and most importantly, it gave Gundulic an opportunity to pass his judgment on what, in his opinion, stood behind the Slavic defeats: the loss of unity. Thus he used Mara's presumed "treachery", i.e. her siding with her husband against her father and two brothers, to bring out the central aspect of the 15th-century Balkans, namely that the Ottoman conquest of the area was greatly facilitated by the native forces which collaborated with the Turks against their own Slavic "brethren". Gundulic mentioned in his *Osman* the greatest hero of South Slavic oral epic songs, Marko Kraljevic (Prince Marko) who was, after all, a Turkish vassal.[146] Thus, in Gundulic's eyes the South Slavs lost their lands, their freedom, and their military glory *because they were not united against the Turks.* The loss of unity which enabled the Turks to attack one area after another piecemeal, to drive a wedge among the princes, and to use native forces against the Balkan states, stemmed from *a deeper cause.*

The loss of unity among the Balkan Slavs was due to their having forgotten that they were all members of the same Slavic race, that they were all "brethren", that they were all "one". Gundulic grew up in a city which was proud of being not just the only free port in the Balkans—not subject to the "outside" rule of either the Venetians or the Turks—but of being hailed as *the Slavic Athens.* It boasted an array of poets, scholars, humanists, playwrights, men of letters and men of science

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[142]For the Turco-Ragusan relationship *see* I. Bozic, *Dubrovnik i Turska u XIV i XV veku* (Belgrade, 1952).

[143]*Osman* VIII, 441-472.

[144]*Osman* VIII, 473-532.

[145]*Osman* VIII, 433-584.

[146]*See* Anne Pennington & Peter Levi, trans., *Marko the Prince: Serbo-Croat Heroic Songs* (London, 1984); Tatyana Popovic, *Prince Marko: The Hero of South Slavic Epic* (Syracuse, 1988); Svetozar Koljevic, *The Epic in the Making* (Oxford, 1980).

who related this small city on the eastern Adriatic seaboard to wider Slavdom. They consistently extolled the Slavic nature of Dubrovnik, and they provided a lot of material for what has been called Ragusan Slavism.[147] This Ragusan Slavism was a form of Pan-Slavism which started from the premise that all the Slavs belong to the same people, that their languages are nothing but dialects of the same Slavic language, and that, as they had once been "one" in pre-history and early history, so they should all come together again. They never tired of repeating that the Slavs had been glorious when they stood together, when they were "one", and that they fell from their glory, many losing their independence when they allowed foreigners, i.e. non-Slavs, mostly Germans, but also Turks, to sow sedition among them, to use them against each other, and finally to subjugate and rule them. The prerequisite for the future glory of the Slavs, and for liberating the Balkan Slavs from the Ottoman yoke was the recovery of that primordial unity.

The Dubrovnik of Divo Gundulic's time (1589-1638) sincerely and passionately believed in the possibility of the recovery of Slavic unity. During his adolescence a new book appeared which became the Bible of Ragusan Pan-Slavism, Mauro Orbini's *Il regno degli Slavi* (*Kingdom of the Slavs,* published in Pesaro in 1601.[148]It was not a history of the Slavs, but an attempt to demonstrate that the Slavs included so many peoples under various different names (modern critics have derided this notion as "Slavs all and every where"), that most of the glorious deeds in late Antiquity and early Middle Ages were made by the Slavs, and then it proceeded to narrate the history of what it called "The Kingdom of the Slavs", a mythical construct embodying the South Slavic state presented in the anonymous *Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea.* The so-called "Priest of Dioclea"[149](a later extrapolation from a preface) called this state a *Regnum Sclavorum,* i.e. the Kingdom of the Slavs, and Orbini, who translated into Italian, and included verbatim the entire chronicle, took this term for the title of his own work. In the last, and for modern historians, the most valuable part of his work, Orbini proceeded to give a narrative account of the histories of medieval Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia, and Hercegovina, and how and why they fell to the Turks.[150]Again and again Mauro Orbini hammered into his late Renaissance readers that the main cause for the Slavic demise in the Balkans was treachery and deceit occasioned by the loss of unity. It is almost inconceivable that Gundulic did not know of or read Orbini's Kingdom of the Slavs.

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[147]See my *Our Kingdom Come* passim; and my *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent: The Republic of Dubrovnik and the Origins of the Eastern Question* , East European Monographs 348 (Columbia University Press, New York, 1992).

[148]*See* Chapter X of my *Our Kingdom Come*: "Mauro Orbini and His *Kingdom of the Slavs"*

[149]Ferdo Sisic, ed., *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina* (Zagreb/Belgrade, 1928); this is the so-called *Academy Edition* ; V. Mosin, ed., *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina* (Zagreb, 1949); S. Mijuskovic, *Letopis popa Dukljanina* (Titograd, 1967).

[150]*See* Mavro Urbin, *Kraljevstvo Slovena* (Belgrade, 1968), trans. by Zdravko Sundrica, Introduction b y Miroslav Pantic.

Written in a fashionable, albeit stilted Italian, Orbini's book enjoyed a real vogue both in Italy and on the eastern Adriatic seaboard where the language of commerce, and in case of Dalmatia, of government, was Italian.

Orbini's work was written in Italian, researched in one of the best as well as the most celebrated libraries in all of Renaissance Italy, that of the Duke of Urbino (immortalized in Castiglione's *Il corteggiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*), and published in Pesaro with the active financial support (in effect a subsidy) of a fellow Ragusan.[151] It sought to acquaint the Renaissance world not just with Slavdom (Orbini constantly complained in the Introduction that the Slavs were virtually unknown in the West, even their very name having been corrupted by the Venetians into *Schiavoni*, a pejorative term redolent of their subject status, i.e. close to *schiavi*, i.e. the slaves), but with the role of Dubrovnik in the Slavic world. One reason that Orbini gave constantly for Dubrovnik's escape of the Ottoman yoke was that it had "faith". This has to be interpreted in a double sense: that it stayed loyal to the Catholic religion of its ancestors whereas other Slavs in the Balkans became "schismatics", i.e. became Orthodox, and that it continued to believe in Slavic unity when others lost this knowledge of and faith in Slavdom centuries ago. Dubrovnik was *the Slavic Athens* not just because its commercial prosperity and political independence guaranteed its cultural superiority, and thus enabled it to produce a pleiad of men of letters.[152] What distinguished the latter was their devotion to the cause of Slavic letters: in Dubrovnik works were *written* in the Slavic vernacular earlier than in the hinterland of the Balkans where the Old Church Slavonic language continued to rule almost undisputed until well into the 18th century.

The loss of unity among the Balkan Slavs, though it stemmed from their loss of *knowledge* of their primordial Slavic unity, manifested itself in the *perversions of brotherly love.* Not knowing that they were brothers they fought each other, killed each other, and betrayed each other to the outside powers. *They thus actively brought upon themselves their own loss of lands and power, to the greater glory of the Turks.* It is indicative of this approach that Orbini chose to consider the most powerful of these late medieval states of the Balkan Slavs, Stephen Dushan's Serbia, when his son and successor, Stephen Urosh, was deprived of his rightful inheritance as the sole ruler, and when "the four barons of Serbia" (*i quattro baroni di Servia*), as Orbini called them, usurped his power and divided his lands. Again it was the loss of unity which led to the subsequent defeats at the hands of the Turks. This loss of unity was manifested in a perversion of *love*, in this case of that fealty "naturally" owed by a vassal to his lord.

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[151] *See* my *Our Kingdom Come,* Chapter IV.

[152] Marin Franicevic, *Povijest hrvatske renesansne knjizevnosti* (Zagreb, 1983); Mihovil Kombol, *Povijest hrvatske knjizevnosti do preporoda* (2nd ed., Zagreb, 1961); Antun Barac, *A History of Yugoslav Literature*, trans. by Petar Mijuskovic (Slavica, n.s., n.d.).

It can accordingly be surmised that Gundulic used Ljubdrag's story both literally and figurately, i.e. that the story has a polysemous meaning. Literally it is a story of how George Brankovic's offspring came to a sorry end, and how his state gradually fell to the Turks. But allegorically, it can be taken in a number of ways: in a historical sense as the story of the decline and fall of medieval Balkan states; in a moral sense, as a lesson in the loss of unity manifested in the perversion of *love*; and anagogically, as the loss of Slavic primordial unity. All four senses are intertwined, and all enter into Gundulic's judgment.

That this is indeed how Gundulic is reading the late medieval history of the Balkan Slavs can be deduced from the antithesis which governs this canto: his paean of his own native city. After the tragedy of the Balkan Slavs had been presented, Gundulic goes on to offer an alternative: his Dubrovnik. He starts by having George Brankovic say to his wife:

Since we lost all our treasure
That one can have in this world,
Let us try not to become slaves
In our old age to Turkish power!

My faithful companion, come with me,
Let us go to glorious Dubrovnik,
Where, in freedom, they keep their word
To their guest, without fail![153]

What is at issue here is more than simply Dubrovnik keeping its word, i.e. honoring its pledge of safe conduct to the *despot*. Gundulic is quite as aware as all his Slavic readers that "keeping one's faith" to guests is the highest expression of Slavic hospitality, and this in turn is seen as the greatest virtue among the Slavs. To break this "faith" is thus seen in Gundulic's eyes as a symbolic way of betraying *Slavdom*. Thus Dubrovnik's belief in the Slavic "principle" is tested here. For Dubrovnik to go back on its word would be to betray the Slavs *at their worst moment of history, when they most needed reassurance, and when only this city was in a position to offer a safe haven.*

Gundulic is inordinately proud of the fact that even though Sultan Murad put a lot of pressure on its small tributary state to surrender the *despot* to him, the city-state of Dubrovnik refused:

But Dubrovnik, which in peace
Earned its crown of Freeedom,
Neither by bribe, nor by threat
Could be induced to break its word;

So that the haughty sultan himself
In wonder uttered a cry:
"For keeping thy word inviolate,

[153]*Osman* VIII, 537-540.

Thou shalt live for ever, o Dubrovnik!"[154]

And thus it really happened!
Dubrovnik still stands free
With its old crown, its promise kept,
Between the Lion and the Dragon.

Ah, may thou live in peace and freedom,
As thou hast until these days,
O Dubrovnik, o white city,
Glorious to the world, pleasing to Heaven!

A greater part of the Hungarian Kingdom,
And the whole kingdom of Bosnia,
And the land that Herceg ruled over,
Have been subjugated by Ottoman power.

In the mouth of the fierce Dragon,
And under the claws of the wild Lion,
Surrounding thee from both sides
Still is found the state of the Slavs.

Thy neighbors are all slaves,
Heavy yoke rules over them all,
Only thy realm is sitting
On the throne of Liberty.[155]

These magnificent verses, the best ever penned to the glory of Dubrovnik, contain Gundulic's whole political philosophy, so to speak. This political view is couched, however, in apocalyptic terms. Note the use of the word "Dragon" (*drakun*, from the Italian *dracone*, and *Zmaj* in Croatian) to symbolize the Ottoman Empire. It should be pointed out that the mythological beast, Dragon, was not the symbol of the Ottoman Empire as it was of the Chinese. Gundulic had something else in mind when he used it. On the other hand, the Lion *was* the symbol of the Venetian Republic, i.e. the winged Lion of St. Mark holding an opening book with an inscription: *Pax tibi, Marce, Evangelista meus.*[156] Thus Gundulic was entirely justified in using the Lion to designate the *Venetian* possessions on both sides of the Ragusan Republic, i.e. in Dalmatia and in the Bay of Kotor (*Bocche di Cattaro*) and the so-called Venetian Albania.

The use of the Dragon can only be applied to the Ottoman Empire if one sees it in apocalyptic terms: in the Book of the Apocalypse the Dragon appears in Chapter XII:

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven:

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[154]*Osman* VIII, 557-564.

[155]*Osman* VIII, 565-584.

[156]*See* W. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of the Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of Counter-Reformation* (Berkeley, 1968), frontispiece.

> beyond, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his head. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought. But they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and and night, has been cast down..." Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place...

Throughout his *Osman* Gundulic uses the term "Dragon" to refer either to the Ottoman Empire as above or to Osman himself. He usually adds to it the epithet "fiery" (*Zmaj ognjeni*) or "fierce" (*ljuti Zmaj*). In Canto IX Osman is called "the fierce, Eastern Dragon "(*Istocnoga ljuta Zmaja*), while the next reference in the same canto is to "a fiery, fierce dragon" (*ognjeni zmaj goruci*).[157] There is thus no doubt that Gundulic uses apocalyptic terms when referring both to the Ottoman Empire and to Osman in person. To Gundulic the Turks and their ruler symbolized the Gates of Hell, i.e. Gehennah, the open gaping mouth of Satan's kingdom. This identification of the Ottoman Empire and its ruler with Satan and his Kingdom of Hell is made specific in the crucial Canto XIII where the council of Hell, modelled on Tasso's episode in Canto VIII of *Jerusalem Delivered*, makes this inference clear:

> The victory of Polish arms
> Over Emperor Osman
> Is at our, not his expense —
> We are the ones who lost![158]

In the same Canto XIII Lucifer recalls his rebellion against God and his primordial fight with Archangel Michael, the commander-in-chief (*arhistrategos*) of God's forces:

> The Eternal One Who's never
> Ceased to torment us
> Ordered Michael to attack us
> With his angels.[159]

[157] This is examined in detail in my forthcoming *The Slavic Epic: Gundulic's Osman*. Examples in *Osman* III, 183-184, VIII, 577, IX, 51, 556

[158] *Osman* XIII, 117-120.

[159] *Osman* XIII, 149-152.

To make it very explicit Gundulic placed at the foot of Lucifer a seven-headed serpent (*od sedam glava zmija*).[160] This is clearly an apocalyptic figure and was closely associated with the final tribulation. As Marjorie Reeves points out, "the most popular figure in the Joachimist series was that of the Dragon with Seven Heads".[161] In his famous *Liber figurarum* the figure of the Dragon with Seven Heads looks more like a serpent than a winged dragon.[162] Finally, in the same Canto, Gundulic depicted Satan with the wings "of the dragon attached to his shoulders" (*zmijska krila o plecu*).[163]

The Polish Prince, Wladyslaw (or in Gundulic's spelling Vladislav) is consistently called "the White Eagle".[164]This is appropriate as the white eagle is the Polish coat-of-arms. Since, however, the Eagle is also seen as the symbol of the Sun, it acquires great mystical significance when placed on the fields of two colors: red and white.[165]Red and white with the eagle is, of course, the national flag of Poland. Gundulic thus regards Vladislav in truly apocalyptic terms as in the following famous stanza:

Suddenly there flew from the north
The Polish Eagle towards the Danube,
And spread his white feathers
Attacking the Eastern fierce Dragon.[166]

Above all, Vladislav is seen by Gundulic as *the Redeemer of the South Slavs*. Gundulic regarded Vladislav's "victory" at Hoczym in 1621 as a prelude to the Polish campaign in the Balkans which would defeat the Turks, liberate the Balkan Slavs, and set up a new Kingdom of the Slavs. The following stanza makes this clear:

To Stefan Nemanjic thou art
The Regent of the Imperial Crown,
As soon as Serbian, Rascian and Bulgarian lands
Are left under thy control.[167]

Serbian, Rascian and Bulgarian lands! Here we have a list of medieval states of the South Slavs (Rascia or Old Serbia being the oldest Serbian state). Since to Gundulic the Nemanjic dynasty of medieval Serbia attained the height of glory, to become the "Regent of the Imperial Crown" (*namjesnik si krune carske*) was to become in effect a

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[160] *Osman* XIII, 81-84.
[161] M. Reeves, "The Development of Apocalyptic Thought: Medieval Attitudes"in C.A. Patrides & Joseph Wittreich, eds. *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature: Patterns, Antecedents and Repercussions* (Manchester, 1984), 53.
[162] *See* the illustration from the cover of Edward K. Burger, ed., *Joachim of Fiore: Enchiridion super Apocalypsim* (Toronto, 1986).
[163] *Osman* XIII, 90: "...trepte zmajska krila o plecu..."
[164] Examples in *Osman* I, 100, X, 100, XVIII, 148.
[165] J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (2nd ed., London, 1971), 91-93.
[166] *Osman* X, 97-100.
[167] *Osman* X, 181-184.

ruler of these lands. It should be made clear that Vladislav was uniquely qualified to be *the ruler of all the Slavs*, West, East, and South. As a Polish Prince, he was the heir to the throne of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth which during his lifetime (1595-1648) contained Polish, White Russian, and Ukrainian lands; in 1610 the Moscow boyars elected him Tsar of Muscovy, i.e. Russia, but due to his father's machinations and the Russian patriotic resistance to the Polish occupation of the Kremlin, this came to nothing. Thus Wladyslaw stood to inherit or to rule more Slavic lands than anybody before or since.[168] In *Osman* Gundulic indicated that he knew of Wladyslaw's claim to Muscovy:

> The Muscovite Principality bowed
> Its head low beneath thy feet...[169]

He exhorted Wladyslaw's father, King Sigismund III (1589-1632) to send his son to reclaim his throne:

> Send the same Vladislav
> With the army into that region
> (To conquer) the rest of the states
> Which do not yet give you obeisance.[170]

The result, in Gundulic's vision, would be a gigantic Slavic kingdom stretching "from the sea of Hvalin", i.e. the Caspian Sea, "to the German Sea", i.e. the Baltic Sea.[171]

In 1632 Wladyslaw was elected King of Poland *unanimously*, an unprecedented event. His coming to the Polish throne gave rise to all sorts of wild expectations. In 1633 he sent a mission to the Pope, led by Jerzy Ossolinski, to gain papal support for his anti-Turkish plans. The mission stated that "as many peoples as inhabit the North of Europe, encompassing a broad stretch of territory from the Carpathians to the Caspian Sea, from the Icy Ocean to the Black Sea...all these peoples either belong to His Majesty through dynastic rights or regard him as their Lord through the right of conquest..."[172]

The ruler of such a vast Slavic realm was necessary for liberating the South Slavs from their Turkish yoke, for Gundulic never thought that the Balkan Slavs could liberate themselves. The loss of unity could only be undone, as far as the Balkans were concerned, from the outside, by a "big brother", only for Gundulic this big brother to the South Slavs was Polish, not Russian. Thus Wladyslaw was seen as the Redeemer of the South Slavs. The real Wladyslaw, however, became entangled in

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[168] O. Makowej, "Beitrage zur den Quellen des Giundulic'schen 'Osman'" *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 26 (1904), 87-94 on Wladyslaw. Also B.N. Floria, *Russko-polskie otnosheniia i baltiiskii vopros v kontse XVI -nachala XVII v.* (Moscow, 1973).
[169] *Osman* III, 176-177.
[170] *Osman* XI, 781-784.
[171] *Osman* XI, 787-788.
[172] Quoted by A. Sliwinski, *Krol Wladyslaw IV* (Warsaw, 1925), 106.

Polish political schemes, was opposed by the Polish Diet or *Sejm* on the question of his anti-Turkish plans, and the latter came to nothing.

Gundulic, however, died in 1638, ten years before Wladyslaw IV's rule came to an end in 1648. He believed in Wladyslaw and saw him as the Last Roman Emperor, if the disputed last stanza is genuine:

> For the Holy Church of St. Sophia,
> In which the Turkish dog now strolls,
> Will be Christian again,
> As it had been of old.[173]

This stanza, which ends Gundulic's *Osman* in quite a few manuscripts, casts Wladyslaw in a truly eschatological role of the Destroyer of the Infidels, and the Restorer of Constantinople to the Christian rule (though to the Slavic, not Greek rule). The City of the Tsar (*Carigrad, Tsargrad*) thus becomes the capital of this Pan-Slavic empire, this Kingdom of the Slavs, which, after the liberation of the South Slavs, would unite West, East, and South Slavs.

What made Gundulic certain that Wladyslaw and the Slavs would prevail over the Ottoman Empire led by Sultan Osman II? There were a number of prophecies circulating around all over Christian Europe concerning the demise of the Ottoman Empire when it reached the end of its first millennium.[174] Since the Muslim calendar reckons the years from Muhammad's flight to Medina as *anno Hagirae*, i.e. from 622 A.D., these prophecies foretold the end of the empire in the year 1622. Of course, they were wrong as the Ottomans, like other Muslims, used lunar years, not solar, and thus the end of the millennium fell in 1592, not 1622. The Turks themselves were much perturbed and concerned with these prophecies. The above erroneous dating of 1622 is the main reason why Gundulic chose to believe that *the beginning of the end of the Ottoman Empire dated from Osman II's fall from power in that year.*

Moreover, as I indicated earlier, Gundulic shared with Dante a belief in the universal reign of Fortune. He regarded the Wheel of Fortune as God's instrument for both raising and lowering of the empires. The theme of the Wheel of Fortune is placed strategically both at the beginning and at the end of Gundulic's *Osman*. Gundulic thus saw the lowering of the Ottoman Empire and the raising of the Kingdom of the (United) Slavs as concurrent events—and as complementary. Thus the Ottoman Empire was to be brought low by the very people, the Slavs, on whose ruin in the Balkans it had built its greatness. The turn of the Wheel of Fortune was thus complete.

Now we can see why Gundulic chose to "read" Dante at the strategic place in his *Osman*, and why he shared with the author of *The Divine Comedy* a belief in the Wheel of Fortune "as the basic metaphor" of his vision of history. Gundulic shared something else with Dante: like Dante he never saw the fulfilment of his vision of

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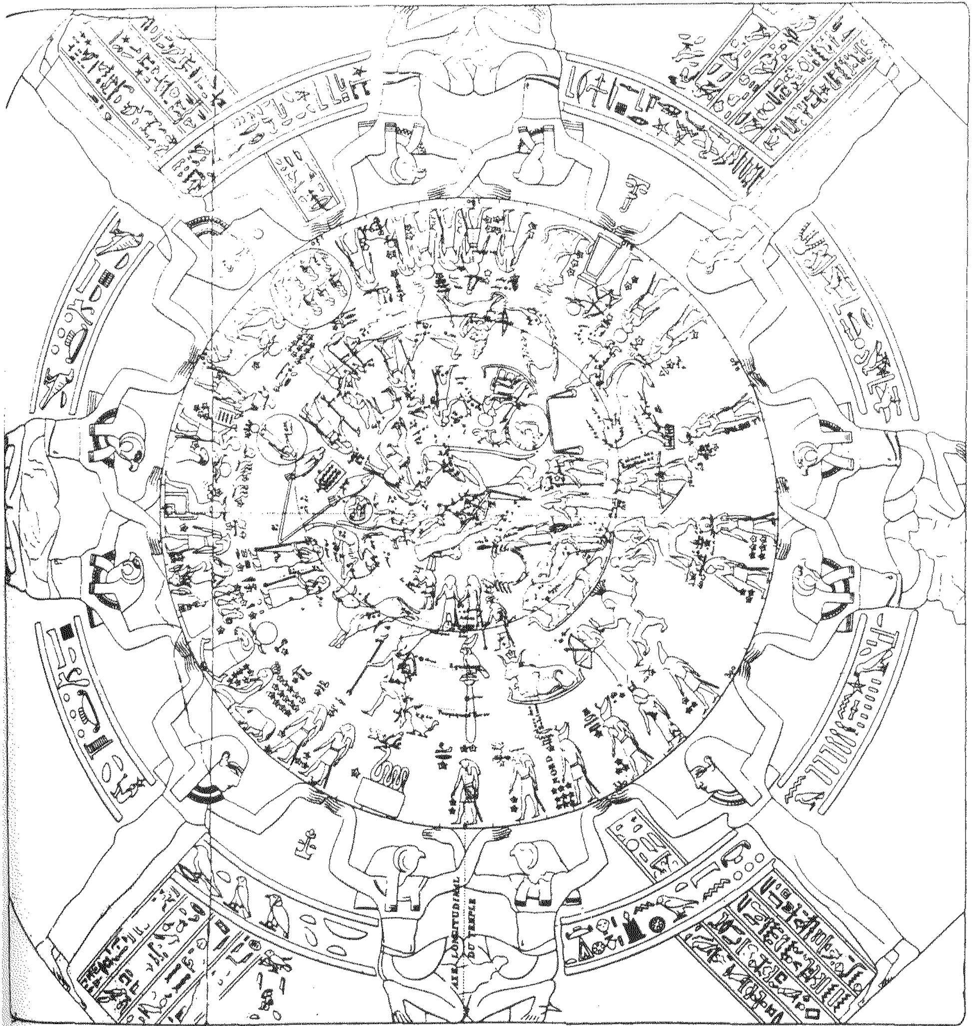
[173] Dj. Körbler, ed., *Djela Giva Frana Gundulica* ,562.

[174] *See* Kenneth M. Setton, *Western Hostility to Islam and Prophecies of Turkish Doom* (Philadelphia, 1992).

history. Dante was to die in Ravenna, an exile from his beloved Florence, still under pain of death if he returned unpardoned. Gundulic was to die of one of those unnamed and innumerable diseases that carried away so many members of his patrician estate, both male and female, and reduced the once flourishing patriciate to a declining group. When Divo Franov Gundulic was carried to his grave in December of 1638 with all the pomp that the Baroque age could muster, what died with him was not just another member of Dubrovnik...s ruling class, but a vision of the coming of that kingdom—the Kingdom of the Slavs--which never came.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