

Abbreviations

The English translation of the text of the *Divina Commedia* is from: Alighieri, Dante, *Divina Commedia, Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso*, trans. and ed. By Robin Kirkpatrick, London: Penguin, 2006.

Conv.: Alighieri, Dante, *Convivio*, ed. by Piero Cudini, Milano: Garzanti, 2005.

De civ. Dei: Saint Augustine, "The City of God against the Pagans", trans. by William M. Green, Cambridge MA, 1972.

De conf.: Saint Augustine, *St Augustine's Confessions*, trans. By William Watts, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970.

De cons.: Boethius, *The Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by H.F. Stuart and E.K. Rand, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1962.

Robert M., Durling, *Inferno: Alighieri, Dante, The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri Vol.I: Inferno* ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Robert M., Durling, *Paradiso: Alighieri, Dante, The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri Vol.III: Paradiso*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Robert M., Durling, *Purgatorio: Alighieri, Dante, The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri Vol.II: Purgatorio*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

The Bible I refer to is *The Vulgate Bible*, trans. by Douay-Rheims, London: Harvard University press, 2010.

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Abstract

My doctoral research analyses different aspects of temporality in the *Divina Commedia* of Dante Alighieri and it traces interactions between the levels of temporality, perpetuity and eternity. These relationships ought to have generated far more critical discussion than they have done thus far, concerning what Dante actually means by time, perpetuity and eternity. Overall, the scholarship on the general representation of time in the *Divina Commedia* is remarkably fragmentary and has yet to be synthesized into a comprehensive account. Thus, my research connects the three *cantiche*, Dante's sources, the variety of different uses and representations of the figures of time within the poem, the poem's astronomical figurations, and its scriptural and historical temporal perspectives. My project focuses on the main models and the taxonomies Dante engages with – these are the Augustinian, the Boethian and the Platonic. The research shows that the reiterations and transformations of these models are represented through figures, motions, rhythms and linguistic devices. Mostly, Dante presents us with hybrid figures, which have a sort of 'patchwork' nature. They might display biblical and classical features at the same time, revealing in this mixture the original voice of the author as poet and as *compiler*. My research indicates how Dante combines selected elements from different traditions in his attempt to provide the most comprehensive illustration of his conceptions, which themselves are hybrid and syncretic.

Introduction

In canto XXVII of the *Paradiso*, Dante's celestial guide Beatrice explains the outermost sphere of the heavens, the *primum mobile*, as the source of all temporality by means of a natural analogy:

Non suo moto per altro distinto,
ma li altri son misurati da questo,
sì come diece da mezzo e da quinto,
e come il tempo tegna in cotal testo
le sue radici e ne li altri le fronde
omai a te può esser manifesto.

(Its motion is not gauged by other marks./ All other marks are measured out from this- / as ten is factored by its half and fifth./ So now it will clear to you how Time/ takes root within the humus of this bowl,/and shows its fronds in every other part. *Pd.*, XXVII.115-20)

Through this analogy and the double-meaning of *testo*, time is made manifest as a text to be read and understood, which has its roots in eternity. This study seeks to understand that text by examining Dante's figures of time, and the complex relationships between time, perpetuity and eternity in the *Commedia*. Indeed, these relationships ought to have been generating far more critical discussion than they have done thus far, concerning what Dante actually means by time and eternity. How is time represented in the Pilgrim's journey into the hereafter? And how is eternity represented legibly in that journey? How are characters' perceptions, words, and thoughts out of time, beyond human temporality? Dante's answers to these questions are fundamental to a full understanding of the *Commedia*. Dante's challenge is to trace the steps of a human journey which must develop through time, in a dimension where time does not exist anymore. In fact, the Pilgrim discovers along his path that temporality can be better understood by being outside of it, from the perspective of eternity.

This study will show that Dante uses all of his skills both as a poet and as a philosopher to provide answers to the above questions. He systematizes his encyclopaedic philosophical and theological knowledge to frame complex definitions and theories of temporalities in the plural. These systems are discussed and demonstrated by several characters in the *Commedia* – by Virgilio, Beatrice, saints, philosophers, the blessed, the angels and sinners, amongst others.¹ The Pilgrim's function in this regard is to ask questions that trigger detailed explanations, and the reality of time and eternity is thereby progressively revealed, according to the intellectual methodology of Scholasticism, as it is applied to patristic, Platonic, and neo-platonic conceptions.

Dante overlays these conceptions and explanations with figures and symbols which complete them in metaphorical and evocative ways; in this way Dante the philosopher or theologian is harmonized with Dante the poet.² These figures include biblical or mythological monsters, statues, even animals which convey how temporality and eternity influence the perceptions of characters, and how characters perceive time and eternity. Mostly, Dante presents us with hybrid figures, either his own or reworked by him from his sources, which have a sort of 'patchwork' nature. They might display biblical and classical features at the same time, revealing in this mixture the original voice of the author as poet and as *compiler*. Dante combines selected elements from different intellectual, literary and scriptural traditions in his attempt to provide the most comprehensive and exact illustration of his conceptions, conceptions which themselves are hybrid and syncretic. For example, he allows the classical river Lethe to flow through the biblical Eden, then he surrounds Eden on one side with Augustine's purgatorial fire, and on the other side with the Platonic heavenly harmony of the spheres. He borrows and coordinates multiple images and theories and eventually reconfigures them with different purposes or properties – the originality of the Dantean voice dwells in its extreme synthesis of what individually seems different. He makes

¹ The theories of the sinners are of course erroneous. Part of Dante's achievement is to use his characters to set up divergent conceptions of time against one another by way of enacting debate.

² These two conceptions of Dante have been the subject of considerable critical debate. See for example Patrick Boyde, *Dante Philomythes and Philosopher: Man in the Cosmos*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, and Teodolinda Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

classical symbols fulfil Christian criteria and he expresses Christian views through classical images and discourses. This is the kind of intellectual creativity which shapes the figures of time in the *Commedia*, and which can be seen as dialectically moving against the strictly logical scholastic discourse that is pursued in particular in the *Paradiso*. Nevertheless both paths seem to lead to the same places, to the same descriptions of temporality and eternity, thereby completing and enriching each other. It is one of the key purposes of this study to unstitch Dante's figures of time in order to show how he created poetry from the fusion of the intellectual traditions that were available to him.

Alongside these figures, Dante represents the duration, extension or concentration of time through motion, both astronomical and human. Astronomical motions have different purposes in the Dantean cosmos: they measure the unfolding of time and they connect, through their influences, God's will and earthly life. Moreover, they also articulate the concentration of time as their circulations can express emanation from one intense point where time has been dissolved within a single eternal present or a centripetal pressure towards it. The first creative action of God produced astronomical motion. As Augustine describes in his commentary on the Book of Genesis, they were born with the division of light and darkness and as soon as they started to move time came into existence.³ These astronomical motions, then, mark the beginning of temporality, as well as measurement and design. Throughout the *Commedia* these movements are approached in three different ways: they are imagined and only distantly perceived by Virgilio in the *Inferno*; they are described repeatedly in the *Purgatorio* from the familiar perspective of earthly life; and they are passed through, experienced and seen from above in the *Paradiso*.⁴

Their influence is also seen in the movements of human bodies in the poem, which often operate according to astronomical patterns. The infernal sinners and monsters mimic the circulation of the sun, but these motions do not generate life or constructive self-knowledge. The shades in the *Purgatorio* progress in a spiral,

³ St Augustine, *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis, the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. by Edmund Hill, New York: New City Press, 2002.

⁴ The name Virgilio is used to refer to the character in Dante's poem, whilst Vergil will be used to signify the Latin author.

increasing their velocity and the lightness of their movements as they approach the top of the purgatorial mountain. They stop at night and they walk only in the daylight, for the purification must have a rhythm connected to astronomical motions. The blessed are able not only to express the heavenly harmony but also to participate in it through their singing and dancing. They are part of the harmony and they can dance as the stars can.⁵ On the one hand, the philosophical discourses of the *Commedia* and the symbolism of a number of its central figures must be analysed to explore how time and eternity are defined and represented within the poem and, on the other, movements and their rhythms reveal how the cosmos and humans within it are affected by these dimensions.

I will show how the author designs two kinds of eternity as well as two kinds of temporality: there is infernal eternity, heavenly eternity, earthly temporality and purgatorial temporality. All of these dimensions involve different movements, rhythms, perceptions, figures, purposes and intentions, synthesizing the different philosophical traditions of western Christendom. The complexity and the variety of the topic can explain the way I will engage with the scholarship.

In fact, in the next section I will briefly describe what Dantean scholarship has been undertaken in this field and which critics have been more relevant to my research and with whom I have been in conversation. Few scholars have analysed structures of temporality and eternity in the poem and those who have, have focused only on specific cantos or specific areas, such as astronomy or history or movements. A notable example is Charles Singleton's analysis of the representation of biblical history in the sacred procession of the *Purgatorio*. I have already detailed how the definitions of temporality and eternity and their effects are designed across many levels by Dante, so their analysis cannot be complete if the focus is too narrow on one of them. Individual temporal features or details only possess their meaning fully if the reader can conceive of the entire schema of temporality and eternity that shapes the poem – it is a temporal hermeneutic circle whereby part informs whole and whole informs part. As such, tracing that topic throughout the entire *Commedia* will permit a deep understanding of the plural connections between temporality and eternity and how they evolve along the narrative of the three *cantiche*.

⁵ Each *cantica*, as is well known, ends with the word *stelle*.

For these reasons my engagement with the existing scholarship will consist in part of the collection and coordination of many very different kinds of conversation, which often do not seem at once to have a lot in common and between which a logical connection and narrative is not immediately readily identifiable. My thesis brings these discrete studies together by constructing a complete description of how and why temporality and eternity are represented and perceived in the different *cantiche* and in relation to different philosophical backgrounds. The only previous study which has aimed at doing this kind of work is *La problematica del tempo nella 'Divina Commedia'* by Franco Masciandaro, of which I say more below. Thus, I will remain in conversation with Masciandaro throughout, in order to investigate in more detail and through careful textual analysis what is sometimes only generally suggested in his book. Other than this conversation, the rest of my engagement with the academic discourse will appear partial and circumscribed, because I will deal with what one might call 'critical fragments'. They are fragments not due to a lack of precision and care: they are fragments from the point of view of my thesis which aims to design connections, differences, analogies and progressions throughout the entire *Commedia*, rather than a specific focus on particular, isolated, passages.

In the third section of my introduction, I will illustrate the philosophical frame concerning time and eternity which underpins Dante's *Commedia* and the poem's models of time. These models are multiple because the topic is approached in multiple ways both by Dante and in the philosophical discourses that addresses it. I will describe the different theories presented by the Dante's *auctores*, the similarities and distinctions between them and in the commentaries upon them. My analysis will lead me to focus particularly on three sources of influence: Boethius, Augustine and Plato's *Timaeus*. I will illustrate in more detail the reasons for this focus in the following sections and within the chapters of the thesis itself; however, it may be said here that they are the best models to help the reader to fully comprehend the roles of temporality and eternity in the three stages of the Pilgrim's journey to salvation.

The thesis is structured in three chapters, each focused on one single *Cantica* analysed in relation to a single central model of time. My analysis begins with the *Purgatorio*, in relation to Augustine's treatment of time and eternity. I move, then, to

the *Paradiso*, read from a Platonic perspective. And, finally, I turn to the *Inferno* and Boethius' account of perpetuity and eternity. I do not, of course, follow the *cantiche* in the order in which they are presented in Dante's poem; this is because I wish, first, to clarify the nature of the temporality that affects the purgatorial sinners, before moving to an analysis of eternity or, to be more precise, of the *eternities* presented within the poem: the heavenly and the infernal. In this way I will follow a different kind of path: overcoming temporality we can reach two different kinds of eternal dimension, both similar and opposed, in hell and paradise.

The Scholarly Tradition

The scholarly tradition of writing on Dante and on the *Divina Commedia* specifically is vast and, despite the complaint of the venerable Benedetto Croce, continues to grow. Croce famously grumbled about the 'via che non è via (sebbene, anzi, appunto perchè larghissima) delle congetture delle quali l'una distrugge l'altra e nessuna persuade se non forse chi l'ha escogitata e si è lasciato avvincere dalle proprie escogitazioni e le ha poi rafforzate con l'amor proprio'.⁶

In this thesis, I will stay in conversation principally with three groups of critics: a first group which investigates directly the representation and understanding of time within the *Commedia*; a second which discusses specific figures of time, astronomical circulations, movements or models of history; and a third which analyses the relations between Dante and the key Dantean sources I will take into account, Augustine, Boethius and Plato's *Timaeus*. Of course, these groups often intersect and the boundaries between them are not always sharply clear. Thus, for example, analysing the Dantean representation of history necessarily also involves critical work on the influence connection of Augustine and Orosius on Dante, as we can see in the important work of Charles Davis.⁷

Overall, the scholarship on the general representation of time in the *Divina Commedia* is remarkably fragmentary and has yet to be synthesized into an account, which connects the three *cantiche*, Dante's sources, the variety of different uses and representations of the figures of time within the poem, the poem's astronomical

⁶ Benedetto Croce, *La poesia di Dante*, Bari: la Terza, 1921, p.15.

⁷ Davis, Charles, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.

figurations and scriptural and historical temporal perspectives. In order to produce such an account I will need to bring together the work of a number of different critics, as each critic has tended to develop relatively narrow arguments, on one singular aspect of the topic, often focusing on even just a single *canto* in isolation. A comprehensive analysis provides insights that cannot be reached when any single aspect of the topic is considered on its own. As Auerbach underlines in his essay, 'Figura', Dante builds the meaning of his poetry over the course of the unfolding *Commedia*, so, the reader will fail to understand the deepest meaning of an event or a character in, for example, the *Inferno*, if she will not read it in relation to its place within the totality of the *Commedia*.⁸ The encyclopaedic ambition of the poem and its harmonizing of different philosophies and points of view can only be appreciated by pursuing unity within the variety. In the following paragraphs, then, I will gather and summarize the most important of these critical 'fragments' and organize them within those three different groups, in order to show how they may contribute to an overarching account of the representation of time within the *Commedia*.

The only attempt to describe the presentation of time across all of the *Commedia* is that of Franco Masciandaro. His analysis follows the narrative order of the *Commedia* itself, moving from the *Inferno*, to the *Purgatorio* and finally to the *Paradiso*. The structure of this approach reflects Masciandaro's argument that there is a kind of evolution from the type of temporal perception in the *Inferno* up to that of the *Paradiso*. For Masciandaro, in the *Inferno*, there is a persistent denying of the present moment, which he suggests entails the fundamental errors of the sinners, while, in the *Purgatorio*, the souls are aware again of their present and look forwards to their future salvation. Thus, in the second Cantica there is a positive application of temporality. And, then, in the last Cantica the Pilgrim is finally able to go beyond temporality, to enjoy the eternal present.⁹ What Masciandaro does not offer is a careful close reading of the poem in order to provide additional references to his arguments. This is the only general account that has been done on the overall perception of time of the *Comedy*. The rest of the scholarship focuses on specific passages or specific topics, which are time related.

⁸ Erich, Auerbach, *Studi su Dante* Milano: Feltrinelli editore, 2007.

⁹ Franco Masciandaro, *La percezione del tempo nella Divina Commedia*, Ravenna: Editore Longo, 1976.

Charles Davis, for instance, has engaged with the *Commedia* as a whole, but only on a single specific aspect of temporality: the representation of history.¹⁰ He investigates both Dante's own presentation of history and the influences on Dante of Augustine, Orosius and Vergil. Davis distinguishes Dante's and Augustine's visions of history on the basis of their different views on the role of Rome and the Roman Empire in relation to Christianity. This distinction is specifically political in its focus and I will show that nevertheless Augustine provides one of Dante's central models of time.

Charles Singleton has analysed the final cantos of the *Purgatorio*, where the Pilgrim witnesses the sacred procession. He argues that the procession is nothing but the essence of temporality itself unfolded and finally understood at the very heart of the *Commedia*. Time, then, is the unfolding of a symbolic, typological history, with Christ at the centre, shaped according to the biblical narrative.¹¹ Singleton underlines the role of the biblical narrative as the principle model of time as temporality is quintessentially represented in the procession. If Masciandaro has built his conclusions about temporality on an overview of the *Commedia*, Singleton and Davis have identified specific textual points and figures in the narrative which cast light on the meaning of temporality and history within the poem as a whole, though they do not consider eternity.

Other scholars have been even more specific in their focus and, instead of identifying key moments across several cantos, they focus their analyses only on a single canto. Amilcare Iannucci, for example, engages with the nostalgia and the neverending waiting of the noble souls in Limbo.¹² A number of others discuss Dante's representation of history through the interpretation of certain figures of time or figures of history. Giuseppe Mazzotta has offered the most important interpretation of the infernal 'Veglio di Creta'; he argues that this is an apocalyptic

¹⁰ First in Charles Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957, and then in the collection of essays, *Dante's Italy and Other Essays*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984.

¹¹ Singleton, S. Charles, *Dante's Commedia: Elements of Structure*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954.

¹² Amilcare Iannucci, 'Limbo, the Emptiness of Time', *Studi Danteschi* vol. 72, 1979-1980, pp.69-128

figure of time restored by Cato of the *Purgatorio*.¹³ However, I will show in my thesis that the infernal and apocalyptic representations of time must be interpreted from a wider perspective to be fully understood; the Old Man of Crete is the representation of the perception of those living in a sinful and lost dimension, which is corrected and redressed in the *Purgatorio*, not, though, by a specific character or figure, but by a wider use of time for a spiritual transformation. Peter Dronke and James Dean argue that Dante's apocalyptic idea of history can be seen in the infernal figure of the Giant Nimrod,¹⁴ which has more often been analysed for its kind of speech.¹⁵ I will take into account these figures of history; however, my wider focus will show that the representation of human history and temporality in general is not limited to one or two isolated figures within the *Commedia*. They are pieces of a much more complex design, which places the ultimate purpose of temporality in relation to eternity. In fact, I will turn to another infernal figure, which crystalizes these interactions and the working of God's will in time: the Wheel of Fortune. Robin Kirkpatrick has underlined the challenge that Fortune's Wheel presents: it paradoxically presents mutability and uncontrollable accidents as an expression of divine order.¹⁶ This means that temporality within the *Commedia* cannot be considered by itself but must be analysed in relation to the representation of eternity.

The topic of temporality has also been addressed by scholars who have analysed the motions of Dante's characters and, above all, astronomical motions in the *Commedia*. The focus on these motions affords insights concerning rhythm, velocity and direction: the study of these aspects illuminates how temporality is experienced, developed and perceived by the characters encountered by the Pilgrim. For these reasons I will also carefully investigate movements in my thesis too. In the

¹³ Mazzotta, Giuseppe, *Dante, Poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in the Divine Comedy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

¹⁴ Peter Dronke, *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; James M. Dean, *The World grown Old in Later Medieval Literature*, Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1997, p.184.

¹⁵ See for instance: Robert Hollander, 'Two notes on Dante', *Italianist*, Vol.34, (2014), pp.103-117, (p.104), and Domenico Guerri "'Papé Satàn, Papé Satàn Aleppe" (*Inferno* VII,1)' *Giornale dantesco* vol. 12, 1909, pp.138-42.

¹⁶ Robin Kirkpatrick, *Dante's 'Inferno': Difficulty and Dead Poetry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p.111. See also: Dennis Looney, "Inferno VII" in *Lectura Dantis Virginiana*, 1990, pp. 82-92.

Paradiso the motions of the stars have attracted the most attention, in part because the blessed and the angels mimic them and everything follows their harmony, as described so compellingly by John Freccero.¹⁷ He concentrates on canto X of the *Paradiso*, focusing on the circularity within that canto: the circular movement of the Sun and of the dancing of the blessed. He connects those circular movements to a specifically Platonic design of the astronomy of Heaven, which is not limited to *Paradiso* X.¹⁸ Thus, Freccero's work underpins my analysis both of the astronomical description of the *Paradiso* and of the connection between Dante and Plato's *Timaeus*. The idea of a Platonic *Paradiso* had already been claimed by earlier scholars, such as Egidio Guidobaldi, in *Dante europeo, il Paradiso come universo di luce*, and Etienne Gilson, in *Dante et la philosophie*, but not in such a detailed way.¹⁹

Another group of critics have focused on the figure of Geryon in Hell and on its spiral flight, as it has been viewed as an infernal parody of the heavenly sun.²⁰ Dennis Costa and Glauco Cambon argue more widely that all of the infernal motions convey misunderstanding or the inability to evolve and grow, thereby mimicking the astronomical motions.²¹ In fact, the astronomical movements in the *Purgatorio* and

¹⁷ John Freccero, 'Paradiso X: The Dance of the Stars' *Dante Studies*, 86, 1968, pp. 85-111.

¹⁸ For general modes and models of diffusion of the Platonism during the Middle Age, see: Tullio Gregory, 'Platonismo medievale: Studi e ricerche' *Studi Storici* 26-7, Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1958.

¹⁹ Egidio Guidobaldi, *Dante europeo. Vol.2, il Paradiso come universo di luce* (la lezione platonico-bonaventuriana), Florence: Olschki, 1966 ; Etienne Gilson, *Dante et la philosophie*, Paris: Vrin, 1939.

²⁰ Vincent Foster Hooper provides important insights about historical birth and development of the figure of Geryon as a creature of fraude (Vincent Foster Hooper, 'Geryon and the Knotted Cord', *Modern Languages Notes*, Vol. 15, Nov. 1936, pp. 445-449), as well as John Block Friedman who connects the apocalyptic Franciscan spiritual eschatology tradition to the Aeneid to define it (John Block Friedman, 'Antichrist and the Iconography of Dante's Geryon', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 35, 1972, pp.108-192).

²¹ Moreover, Glauco Cambon analyses the rhythm of the sounds and languages of Geryon's flight in order to underline how Dante manages to convey the typical heaviness and pressure of low Hell even in case of flight (Glauco Cambon 'Examples of Movement in the *Divine Comedy*: an Experiment in Reading' *Italica* 40, 1963, pp.108-31). Richard Kay, *Dante 's Swift and Strong: Essays in 'Inferno' XV*. Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1978. Dennis Costa argues that the misunderstanding of sinners is mostly expressed by their movements which are somehow stuck in time, where actually time does not exist anymore. (Dennis Costa, *The Speed of Fright: Temporal Dramas in Dante' Inferno' Kronoscope*, 2, 2002, pp. 185-198.

Paradiso have generally been read by Dante scholars as indicating balance, harmony and heavenly perfection.²² Charles Singleton has described in detail the specific and inverted astronomy of the southern hemisphere in the *Purgatorio*, while Alison Cornish gives a wider perspective on both the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* in *Reading Dante's Stars*.²³ In the *Purgatorio*, the scholarly discussion of motions is linked with the analysis of the representations of music, rhythm and liturgy.²⁴ These were the historical means used by the monastic community to harmonize life on Earth with celestial patterns, thereby purifying that life. The scholarly tradition which adopts an historical perspective on the *Purgatorio* is well-established due to, on the one hand, the nature of the *Purgatorio* itself, where the characters tend to live a life that bears greater similarity to the earthly one which they left behind and, on the other, due to the influential studies of scholars such as Jacques Le Goff, whose work I will examine in my first chapter.²⁵ To summarize, all of these studies examine (i) a series of movements which represent detachment in Hell, such as Geryon's spiral, or (ii) harmony, transformation and finally perfection, according to the astronomical design of the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*. This critical mass means that the scholarship is quite accurate on these topics, however there is a lacuna between these studies and those which focus upon the perception of time and the representation of eternity, a lacuna which my thesis addresses.

The scholarship which engages with heavenly circularity takes identifies neoplatonic theories of cosmology as being amongst the most important models for Dante. For instance, Rocco Murari, Angelo Gualtieri and Peter Dronke deal with the specific similarities between the Wheel of Fortune in Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae* and the image of that wheel adopted by Dante in the *Inferno*.²⁶

²² For a general account about astronomical structures in the three *cantiche*, see Corrado Gizzi, 'L'astronomia nel poema sacro' 2 vols, 1974, Loffredo, Naples.

²³ Charles Singleton, 'Stars over Eden', *Annual Report of Dante Society*, 75, 1975, pp. 1-18; Alison Cornish, *Reading Dante's Stars*, New Haven, Yale UP, 2000.

²⁴ Kathi-Mejer- Baer, 'Music in Dante's Divina Commedia', *Aspects Medieval and Renaissance Music*, 1967; Ronald L. Martinez, "L'amoroso canto": Liturgy and Vernacular Lyric in Dante's 'Purgatorio', *Dante Studies*, 127, 2009, pp.93-127.

²⁵ Jacques Le Goff, 'The Birth of Purgatory', trans. By Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, 1984; Jacques le Goff, *Merchant's Time and Church's Time in the Late Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1980.

²⁶ Peter Dronke, 'Boethius, Alanus and Dante', *Romanische Forschungen*, 78, H.1 1966, pp.119-125; Rocco Murari, *Dante e Boezio*, Bologna: Zanichelli, 1905; Angelo Gualtieri,

Nevertheless, John Freccero is still the most important scholar in terms of demonstrating the platonic design of the *Paradiso*, based on Chalcidius' partial translation and commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*.²⁷ Tullio Gregory, who worked on the models of diffusion of Platonism during the Middle Ages, is a key scholar in the analysis of the ideas of temporality delivered by Boethius in *De consolazione*. He focuses in particular on Boethius's description of Fortune's Wheel.²⁸ Howard Rollin Patch adds further specific insights concerning the historical development of the idea of Fortune as it can be traced through Proclus, Plotinus, Dionysius and Boethius.²⁹ In addition to these critics, the scholars who analyse the representation of light also interact with the Platonic reading of the *Comedy*, for instance Simon Gilson and Amelia Carolina Sparavigna.³⁰

As for the criticism regarding Augustine and his perception of time, which is one of the most important topics in my first chapter, I will stay in conversation mainly with Eugene Vance, who carefully analyses the design of language in the Augustinian works in order to create awareness and measurements of time.³¹ However, I will also engage with Ronald Suter, who discusses the conceptions of time and motion both in Boethius's *De consolazione* and Augustine's *De civitate Dei*.³²

To conclude, my thesis engages with and collates different types of academic analysis of models of time as they are configured in both Dante and his sources. Some of them are quite narrow and focused on a close reading of specific passages,

'Lady Philosophy in Boethius and Dante' *Comparative Literature*, Vol.23, Spring, 1971, pp. 141-150.

²⁷ Freccero, John, *Dante the Poetics of Conversion*, London: Harvard University Press, 1986.

²⁸ Tullio Gregory, *Platonismo medievale*, Roma: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1958; Pierre Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques en occident*, Paris: de Boccard, 1943.

²⁹ Howard Rollin Patch, *The Goddess Fortune in Mediaeval Literature*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927.

³⁰ Simon Gilson, *Medieval Optics and Theories of Light in the Works of Dante*, Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2000. Furthermore see: Amelia Carolina Sparavigna, 'Physics and Optics in Dante's *Divine Comedy*', *Mechanics, Materials Science and Engineering*, Vol. 3, 2016pp. 119-123; Bruce Eastwood, *Astronomy and Optics from Pliny to Descartes: texts, Diagrams and Conceptual Structures*. London: Variorum, Vol2, 1989, pp.37-45.

³¹ Eugene Vance, *Language as Temporality: Marvellous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.

³² 'Ronald Suter, 'Augustine on Time with Some Criticism from Wittgenstein', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, Vol.16, 1962, pp378-394.

for instance Gianfranco Contini on the *Paradiso*,³³ whilst others discuss the overall influence of one particular source on Dante. One of my key purposes is to bring together the insights of these different scholarly traditions, which enlighten the representation and perception of time and eternity from multiple critical points of view. However, a secondary purpose is to show that no one critical perspective is sufficient to a complete understanding of the plenitude of Dante's conceptions of time as we encounter it in the *Commedia*. So, for example, an analysis of astronomical movements or of the representation of biblical time in Eden, cannot really unfold the complexity of temporality and eternity by themselves. They must speak to one another. My model for this approach is found in Dante himself. Just as the two dimensions of the *Commedia*, the temporal and the eternal, define each other through their interactions, in the same way I will aim to situate and expand existing, discrete critical approaches by way of interacting with them and enabling them to interact with each other.

Dante's Models of Time

In order to understand how temporality and eternity are represented in the *Divina Commedia*, we must first introduce the conceptual framework within which Dante wrote. Clarifying the variety of Dante's models of time will, on the one hand, reveal the original contribution of the *Commedia* itself and, on the other, introduce the inherited language and images used by Dante to explore the nature of temporality and eternity. In this map of models, I will focus principally on the Scholastic *auctores* Dante himself cites as his models in the 'philosophical workshop' of the *Commedia*, the *Convivio*. These are not, of course, the only influences on Dante; they are, though, the most important and offer crucial points of reference for understanding Dante's approach.

³³ Gianfranco Contini, 'Un esempio di poesia dantesca (il canto XXVIII del *Paradiso*)', *LDS*, 1968, pp. 1001-26. His examination is strictly linguistic and philological, without any considerations for issues about time. Nevertheless, any close readings of the same passage must engage with his analysis.

I will first present the explicit definitions of temporality and eternity provided within the material with which Dante engages in the *Convivio*. Dante himself, for instance, offers a clear definition of time in the *Convivio*, in which he engages with the Bible and Aristotle. Thus, I aim to illustrate how the *auctores* characterized the nature of temporality and eternity. I will, then, the discussions in the *auctores* which address the possibility and the importance of overcoming temporality to reach the eternal dimension. How and why do we, as humans, move from one dimension to another? What does this movement imply? How do temporality and eternity intersect and interact? These questions will be central to my analysis, as this movement is, of course, the one that the Pilgrim himself completes: he undergoes an important spiritual transformation by moving from one temporal dimension to another. I will show that Dante's sources provide different models for this sort of movement. For instance, Augustine tells how his quest for the Divine ended in the fields of memory, where the extension of past, present and future vanishes. Boethius offers a mythological figure of the interaction between that which is wished and planned in a dimension beyond time and that which happens in time: Fortune's Wheel. And, Plato's *Timaeus* indicates in the heavenly harmony and astronomical motions a connection between what is never ending and what will perish. Finally, I will explore different theories about Creation, from the Bible to Pseudo Dionysius, and the implications these have for understanding the origins of temporality from within eternity.

Philosophical Models: Definitions of Temporality and Eternity.

Dante provides his own definition of temporality in the *Convivio*. The passage is so important to an understanding of temporality in the *Commedia* that it is best to quote it in full:

Appresso, quando dico: *E poi che tempo mi par d'aspettare*, dico, sì come detto è, questo che trattare intendo. E qui non è da trapassare con piede secco ciò che si dice in 'tempo aspettare', imperò che potentissima cagione è de la mia mossa; ma da vedere come è come ragionevolmente quel tempo in

tutte le nostre operazioni si dee attendere, e massimamente nel parlare. Lo tempo, secondo che dice Aristotele nel quarto de la Fisica, è 'numero di movimento secondo prima e poi; e 'numero di movimento celestiale', lo quale dispone le cose di qua giù diversamente a ricevere in sè alcuna informazione. Chè altrimenti è disposta la terra nel principio de la primavera a ricevere in sè la informazione de l'erbe e de li fiori, e altrimenti lo verno; e altrimenti è disposta una stagione a ricevere lo seme che un'altra; e così la nostra mente in quanto ella è fondata sopra complessione del corpo, che a seguitare la circolazione del cielo altrimenti è disposto un tempo e altrimenti è disposto un altro. Per che le parole, che sono quasi seme d'operazione, si devono molto discretamente sostenere e lasciare, perchè bene siano ricevute e fruttifere vegnano, sì perchè de la loro parte non sia difetto di sterilitade. E però lo tempo è da provvedere, sì per colui che parla come per colui che dee udire: chè se 'l parladore è mal disposto, più volte sono le sue parole dannose; e se l'uditore è mal disposto, mal sono quelle ricevute che buone che siano. E però Salomone dice ne lo Ecclesiaste: 'Tempo è da parlare, tempo è da tacere'. Per che io sentendo in me turbata disposizione, per la cagione che detta è nel precedente capitolo, a parlare d'Amore parve a me che fosse d'aspettare tempo, lo quale seco porta lo fine d'ogni desiderio, e appresenta, quasi come donatore a coloro cui non increbbe aspettare.

(Next when I say: And since it seems a time for waiting, I specify, as has been said, my intended subject. Here we must not try to skip over with dry foot what is meant by "time for waiting," since that is the strongest reason for my change of mind, but rather to consider how reasonable it is that we should await the proper moment in all our undertakings, and most of all in speaking. Time, as Aristotle says in the fourth book of the *Physics*, is "number of motion with respect to before and after," and "number of celestial movement" is that which disposes things here below to receive the informing powers diversely. For at the beginning of spring the earth is disposed to receive in one manner the power that informs the grasses and the flowers, and in another manner in winter; and one season is disposed to receive the seed differently from another; and likewise our mind, insofar as it is related to the composition of the body which is disposed to respond to the circling of the heavens differently at different times. This is why great discretion must be shown in using or in avoiding the use of words--which are, as it were, the seed of our

activity--so that they may be well received and fruitful in effect, so as to avoid any defect of sterility on their part. The right moment must therefore be predetermined, both for the one who speaks as well as the one who must listen; because if the speaker is ill disposed his words are often harmful, and if the hearer is ill disposed even good words will be poorly received. And therefore Solomon says in the book of *Ecclesiastes* that "There is a time to speak and a time to keep silence." Consequently feeling that I was too unsettled in disposition to speak of love, for the reason stated in the preceding chapter, it seemed to me right to await the moment that would bring with itself the goal of every desire and make a present of itself, like a benefactor, to those who are not made impatient by waiting. *Conv.* IV ii, 5-10)³⁴

Here, Dante specifies that two different Aristotelian aspects have to be considered within time itself: one is time as it unfolds and develops through extension (we might call this the 'quantitative' aspect of time – 'numero di movimento secondo prima e poi'); the other is the quality of a specific point in time (we might call this the qualitative aspect of time – 'numero di movimento celestiale'). As this latter aspect constitutes a point – that is, a moment in the temporal flow – it has no extension according to the criteria of earlier and later. Nevertheless, it holds its own specific purpose and it has the power of facilitating specific circumstances. Thus, the circulation of heavenly bodies both measures temporal extension and develops a particular quality of purpose for each moment within that extension. Dante refers first to the *Physics* of Aristotle when he claims that temporality in the dimension of extension is defined 'secondo prima e poi'.³⁵ The development of this aspect of time is possible only according to the flow through past, present and future. Then he focuses on the other aspect of time as a specific moment that facilitates certain circumstances in a certain way. For this qualitative temporality Solomon and *Ecclesiastes* are the main authorities to which Dante refers: 'Tempo è da parlare e tempo è da tacere'.³⁶ Here we should emphasize first the state of being silent as one of receptiveness, open to influence from without or above. At the same time, Dante

³⁴ Alighieri, Dante, *Convivio*, ed. by Piero Cudini, Milano: Garzanti, 2005, IV, ii, 5-10.

³⁵ Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. by Robin Waterfield, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, Book VIII.

³⁶ Cf. *Ecclesiastes* 3:7.

suggests a rhythm of moments of silence and moments of speaking (both of which are receptive and responsive in their own ways). Development in time, then, is a combination of reception of heavenly 'informazioni' and extended motions through past, present and future, in which those 'informazioni' develop and grow on Earth. We shall see that motions, words and silence structure the experience of temporality in the *Commedia* in many different ways – human and astronomical motions, circular motions, dancing, poetry, singing. They can measure, occupy or transform the temporal experience of the souls and they create specific rhythms. In my analysis of the perception of time in the *Commedia* I will focus on how motions and rhythms function in the different *Cantiche* and which aspect of temporality they convey.

Furthermore, the quotation from Solomon anticipates the *Commedia's* important distinction between the active and contemplative lives: they are two paths, with different purposes and different rhythms. These two paths are symbolically recalled in the *Commedia* at the close of the *Purgatorio* first in the two biblical figures, of Leah and Rachel, and then in Eden in Matelda and Beatrice. Leah and Matelda represent the active life, which develops within the unfolding of time; Rachel and Beatrice symbolize the contemplative life, which does not need extension to develop but rather intensity. Contemplation develops according to the quality of time, and to the intensity of the experience rather than the quantity of it.

Augustine summarizes the biblical story of Rachel and Leah in his *Contra Faustum* (22.52): Leah is Jacob's first wife and spends her life carrying out laborious works, while Rachel, the second wife, is said to be beautiful as she represents a life lived in faith and contemplation.³⁷ Dante bases his last dream in the *Purgatorio* on

³⁷ 'I believe that Jacob's two wives who were free (not slaves, like his concubines) refer to the New Law, under which we are called to freedom, and that it is significant that they are two. For two lives are preached to us in the Church: one temporal, in which we labor; one eternal, in which we delight in the contemplation of God. The former is declared by the Lord's passion, the latter by his Resurrection [...] Thus the living of this mortal human life, in which we live by faith, doing many laborious works though uncertain whether they will be beneficial to those we wish to help, that is Leah, Jacob's first wife, and that is why she is said to have weak eyes, for the cogitations of mortals are timid and our provisions are uncertain. But the hope of the eternal contemplation of God, with the certain and delectable knowledge of Truth, that is Rachel, and that is why she is said to be beautiful and of goodly features [...] For in the just training of a man the performing of what is just comes before the pleasure of understanding what is true.'

this biblical episode and the reader can easily recognize in the historical or figural economy of the poem that Matelda is Leah and Beatrice is Rachel. The active life has noble and important functions within human society, but the rhythm of the contemplative life is that which connects directly to the Divine.

In the analysis of temporality in the *Convivio*, Dante does not discuss the dimension of eternity directly; the focus is only on temporality itself and its features. Nevertheless, the description of the qualitative aspect of temporality naturally opens up questions regarding what is beyond temporality. For instance: who or what is it that coordinates the circulation of planets and stars in order to send certain influences to Earth rather than other ones? From where do the 'informazioni' received in any particular moment come? And why?

It is Plato, whom for Dante first delivers a clear definition of temporality in relation to eternity in the *Timaeus*. Time, for Plato, is an image of eternity, which was created at the same instant as the heavenly bodies. The unfolding of time through past, present and future has no meaning in relation to the eternal nature, which is unchangeable.³⁸ Plato insists that motions, measurements, transformations and changes have meaning only in temporality, while the eternal nature knows only the unchangeable present moment. If Dante, then, aims to develop a narrative in

Sant'Agostino, '*Contra Faustum Manichaeum*' Opere di Sant'Agostino. Maurina edition. Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 2004, 22.52.

³⁸ 'Wherefore he [the Maker and Father of this universe] made an image of eternity which is time, having a uniform motion according to number, parted into months and days and years, and also having greater divisions of past, present, and future. These all apply to becoming in time, and have no meaning in relation to the eternal nature, which ever and never was or will be; for the unchangeable is never older or younger, and when we say that he 'was' or 'will be', we are mistaken, for these words are applicable only to becoming, and not to true being; and equally wrong are we in saying that what has become IS become, and that the non-existent IS non-existent... These are the forms of time which imitate eternity and move in a circle measured by number. Thus was time made in the image of eternal nature; and it was created together with the heavens, in order that if they were dissolved, it might perish with them'. Furthermore, Plato specifies that time is created at the same instant of the heavenly bodies' creation: 'And God lighted a fire in the second orbit from the earth which is called the sun, to give light over the whole heaven, and to teach intelligent beings that knowledge of number which is derived from the revolution of the same. Thus arose day and night, which are the period of the most intelligent nature; a month is created by the revolution of the moon, a year by that of the sun. Other periods of wonderful length and complexity are not observed by men in general; there is moreover a cycle or perfect year at the completion of which they all meet and coincide[...] To this end the stars came into being, that the created heaven might imitate the eternal nature.' See Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. by Donald J. Zeyl (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), 37d-38a.

eternity, how might this work within an unchanging present moment? We will have to return to this crucial question.

Aquinas, another important source for Dante, of course, analyses the eternity of God in Quaestio X of Book I of the *Summa Theologica*. In answers IV and V to this question, he characterizes the differences between temporality and eternity, explaining the essential nature of both. Like Plato, he explores the features of these two dimensions together, addressing the relations between them. He states that their main difference is not having a beginning and an end, but that 'eternity is a measure of a permanent being; while time is the measure of movement'.³⁹ In this same article, he disagrees with Aristotle about the nature of the unchangeable present in eternity. He claims that the *now* in time is not 'the same in the whole of time' but it keeps the same subject, alternating in aspect, whereas 'eternity remains the same according to both subject and aspect'.⁴⁰ Thus, according to Aquinas the unchangeable eternal present is different from the present in-between past and future, which we can perceive in time: the temporal present can still change in aspect, while eternity never changes in aspect nor in subject. On the other side Aquinas shares Boethius' definition of eternity, which is 'aeternitas est interminabilis vitae simul et perfecta possessio'.⁴¹

³⁹ 'It is manifest that time and eternity are not the same. Some have founded this difference on the fact that eternity has neither beginning nor an end whereas time has a beginning and an end. This, however, makes a merely accidental, and not an absolute difference, because, granted that time always was and always will be, according to the idea of those who think the movement of the heavens goes on for ever, there would not yet remain a difference between eternity and time, as Boethius says (De Cons. V), arising from the fact that eternity is simultaneously whole; which cannot be applied to time: for eternity is a measure of a permanent being; while time is the measure of movement.' Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. by Thomas Gilby (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), I, Q. X, a.4.

⁴⁰ Further, according to the Philosopher (Physics iv), the now of time remains the same in the whole of time. But the nature of eternity seems to be that it is the same indivisible thing in the whole space of time [...] I answer that the now of time is the same as regards its subject in the whole course of time, but it differs in aspect; for inasmuch as time corresponds to movement, its now corresponds to what is moveable; and the thing movable has the same one subject in all time, but differs in aspect as being here and there; and such alternation is movement. Likewise the flow of the now as alternating in aspect, is time. But eternity remains the same according to both subject and aspect; and hence eternity is not the same as the now of time (S.T. I, Q. X, a.4).

⁴¹ Deus semper est. Non [...] est in Deo aliqua successio, sed eius esse totum simul [...] [Deus] proprie est aeternus. Illud enim proprie est aeternum quod semper est, et eius esse est totum simul; secundum quod Boetius dicit, quod *aeternitas est interminabilis vitae simul et perfecta possessio*. (Aquinas, *Compendium Theologiae* I, 7-8.)

Now, I would like to analyse Boethius' definition of eternity, which is able to summarize the theses of both Plato and Aquinas in more detail, for several reasons. First, he is a philosophical and spiritual authority not only for Dante, but for Aquinas as well, especially on the topic of temporality.⁴² Second, Dante borrows Boethius' figure of Fortune and Fortune's wheel in order to represent the providential plan unfurling in time in *Inferno* VII. Third, Boethius engages these topics of temporality and eternity in both poetry and prose, creating a specific poetic vocabulary which will influence Dante too, as I will show. Fourth, Dante himself claims to be inspired by Boethius (and Augustine) in the *Convivio*:

Veramente, al principale intendimento tornando, dico, come è toccata sopra, per necessarie cagioni lo parlare di sè è conceduto: e intra l'altre necessarie cagioni due sono più manifeste. L'una è quando senza ragionare di sè grande infamia o pericolo non si può cessare; e allora si concede, per la ragione che de li due sentieri prendere lo men reo è quasi prendere un buono. E questa necessitate mosse Boezio di se medesimo parlare, acciò che sotto pretesto di consolazione escussasse la perpetuale infamia del suo essilio, mostrando quello essere ingiusto, poi che altro escusatore non si levava. L'altra è quando, per ragionare di sè, grandissima utilidade ne segue altrui per via di dottrina; e questa ragione mosse Agustino ne le sue Confessioni a parlare di sè, chè per lo processo de la sua vita, lo quale fu di non buono in buono, e di buono in migliore, e di migliore in ottimo, ne diede essempla e dottrina, la quale per sì vero testimonio ricevere non si potea.

To return to the main topic, however, I say that (as touched on above) speaking about oneself is allowed in cases of necessity, and among the several cases of necessity two are very evident. One is when great infamy or danger cannot be avoided except by talking about oneself; then it is permissible, for the reason that to take the less evil of two paths is almost the same as taking a good one. This necessity moved Boethius to speak of himself, so that under the pretext of consolation he might defend himself against the perpetual infamy of his exile, by showing it to be unjust, since no other apologist came forward. The other arises when by speaking of oneself very great benefit comes to another by way of instruction; and this reason moved Augustine to speak of himself in his

⁴² *Ibidem*.

Confessions, because by the progress of his life, which proceeded from bad to good, good to better, and better to best, he gave us an example and instruction which could not be provided by any other testimony so true as this. Consequently, if each of these reasons may serve as my excuse, the bread made from my wheat is sufficiently cleansed of its first impurity. A fear of infamy moves me, and a desire to give instruction moves me, which in truth others are unable to give. (*Convivio* I, ii, 12-15).

So, how exactly does Boethius describe eternity? First of all, he is very specific in his definition of the meaning of 'being simultaneously whole'. The most important feature of what is eternal is not the absence of an end and a beginning but it is actually the fact that nothing flows from one point to another point – all the space of an existence is comprehended and embraced.⁴³ Boethius conveys categories of time and eternity in spatial terms. In the case of temporality, things flow through space, from one point to another point, and in the case of eternity, things are in a position where they can be embraced and comprehended for ever and they can comprehend their everlasting existence all at once: 'Quod igitur interminabilis vitae plenitudinem totam partier comprehendit ac possidet, cui neque future quicquam absit nec praeteriti fluxerit, id aeternum esse iure perhibetur idque necesse est et sui compos praesens sibi sempre assistere et infinitatem mobilis temporis habere praesentem.'⁴⁴ This means that being in time or in eternity is basically a matter of different perspectives on reality: entities in time

⁴³ Quid sit igitur aeternitas, consideremus; haec enim nobis naturam partier divinam scientiam patefacit. Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio, quod est collatione temporalium clarius liquet. Nam quicquid vivit in tempore, id praesens a praeteritis in futura procedit nihilque est in tempore consitutum, quod totum vitae suae spatium partier possit amplecti, crastino nondum apprehendit, hesternum vero iam perdidit; in hodierna quoque vita non amplius vivitis quam in illo mobile transitorioque momento. Quod igitur temporis patitur condicionem, licet illud, sicuti de mundo censuit Aristoteles, nec coeperit umquam esse nec desinat vitaeque eius cum temporis infinitate tendatur, nondum tamen tale est ut aeternum esse iure credatur. Non enim totum simul infinitae licet vitae spatium comprehendit atque complectitur, sed future nondum, transacta iam non habet. Quod igitur interminabilis vitae plenitudinem totam partier comprehendit ac possidet, cui neque future quicquam absit nec praeteriti fluxerit, id aeternum esse iure perhibetur idque necesse est et sui compos praesens sibi sempre assistere et infinitatem mobilis temporis habere praesentem[...] Aliud est enim per interminabilem duci vitam, quod mundo Plato tribuit, aliud interminabilis vitae totam partier complexum esse praesentiam, quod divinae mentis proprium esse manifestum est. (*De cons. V. 6, iii- x*).

⁴⁴ *De cons. V. 6, viii*

can see and perceive one thing, one point first, before progressing to the next point, while entities in eternity can embrace with all their being the whole reality, every moment and every point. Nevertheless, Boethius agrees with Plato that temporality imitates eternity.⁴⁵ Here, we can see how two verbs convey the degenerating condition of temporality compared with eternity: 'deficit' and 'decrescit'. Nevertheless, they are still similar, as one is the moving image of the other. To summarize on this point, the intense present moment of eternity is defined as quite different from the normal present moment experienced in time by all of Dante's sources, except Aristotle. In fact, Aquinas who disagrees with Aristotle, synthesizes and embraces the definitions of eternity from Boethius and Plato.

As for Aristotle, he is obviously an important *auctoritas* in the Dantean conceptual framework, as he represents the 'ground' on which the 'building' of Scholastic philosophy has been developed. For instance, we can see that the theory of God as an unmoved mover embraced in the *Commedia* comes from the *Metaphysics* and also from the *Metaphysics* Dante borrows the description of the circling spheres around one intense point (*Pd.* XXVIII 16- 21), one of the most important figures of time in the *Paradiso*. In addition to this, the *Physics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* are important texts especially in the *Purgatorio*: in fact, in the second Book of the *Physics* there is the theory about love, good and desire delivered by Virgil in *Purg.* XVII, and the purgatorial sins follow the categories of the *Ethics* which involves measurements, excesses, deficiencies.⁴⁶ However, as Dante disagrees with Aristotle about the important definition of eternity, I am not going to consider him a major milestone in Dante's map of models of time.

In addition to Aristotle, I would like to list the other sources which Dante refers to in the *Convivio* and in the *Commedia* itself, which could be considered Dante's models, but I have not taken them into account in the specific field of the representation and perception of time. First of all, Albertus Magnus and Thomas

⁴⁵ 'Hunc enim vitae immobilis praesentarium statum infinitus ille temporalium rerum motus imitator, cumque eum effingere atque aequare non possit, ex immobilitate deficit in motum, ex simplicitate praesentiae decrescit in infinitam futuri ac praeteriti quantitatem [...]' (*De cons.* V. 6, xii).

⁴⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Trans. and ed. by Terence Irwin, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Trans. and Ed. C.D.C. Reeve, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2017. Aristotle, *Physics*, Ed. and Trans. By Robin Waterfield, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Dante takes into account in his categorizations of sins and vices Cicero as well in the *De officiis* and *De amicitia*.

Aquinas, who commented, digested, interpreted and systematized the whole of Aristotle's works. Albertus Magnus was deeply interested in astrology and astronomy and in this field we can identify the greatest influence he had on Dante's works. However, he rejected the idea of the 'music of the spheres', which is a key feature in Dante's design of temporality and eternity: movements of astronomical bodies, he supposed, are incapable of generating any kinds of sounds.⁴⁷ As for Thomas Aquinas, I will take him into account not as a model himself, but more as a map of the Dantean models. In fact, he systematized and commented on what the Bible, Boethius, Augustine, Aristotle, Pseudo-Dionysus and Plato claim about time and eternity. He underlines what their ideas have in common or on which topic they may disagree. So, Dante's reception of these works and, generally speaking, the understanding of these ideas by the intellectual class of the time, must be intertwined with Aquinas' thoughts. Furthermore, in the *Convivio* Dante quotes 'Il libro dell'aggregazione delle stelle' by Alfragrano,⁴⁸ as he was considered a great *auctoritas* in the astronomical field of studies. However, this does not make him a proper model of time, as he enlightened the mechanics and the physics of the planets' motions without engaging in the measurement of time, nor in the definition of eternity. For instance, Ovid provides important classical mythological stories like Phaeton's fall or the Gorgons, and he is clearly claimed as a model in *Inferno* XXV.⁴⁹ In addition to this, Ovid is, along with Vergil, the most important source for the classical Golden Age, which Dante obviously considers in certain figures of time, such as the Old Man of Crete. However, even though he contributes to certain imagery of the *Commedia*, Ovid does not really offer a proper model of temporality, nor a definition of it.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ See: Albertus Magnus, *Opera omnia*, Ed. by Auguste Borgnet, 38 vols. Paris: Vivés, 1890.

⁴⁸ *Convivio*, II, VI-134.

⁴⁹ Actually in this passage, Dante declares as models (which have been overcome) both Lucan and Ovid: 'Taccia Lucano omai, là dov'è tocca/del misero Sabello e di Nasidio,/ e attenda a udir quel ch'or si scocca. / Taccia di Cadmo e d'Aretusa Ovidio, /che se quello in serpente e quella in fonte / converte poetando, io non lo 'nvidio, (*Inf.* XXV, 94-99).

⁵⁰ The connections between Dante and Ovid in these Cantos have been already carefully analysed by the Scholarship. Hollander suggests that the three main transformations of the thieves in *Inf.* XXIV-XXV parody the Resurrection of the flesh, the Incarnation of Christ, and the fashioning of humankind from the slime of the earth. (Robert, Hollander, 'Dante's Georgic (*Inf.* XXIV, 1-21)', *Dante Studies*, Vol.102, 1984, pp.111-21.). Durling claims that the Cantos XXIV and XXV of Hell, where Dantes refers to Ovid could be

Vergil should be a very obvious source of reference, however he does not really provide a complete conceptual framework of time for Dante to engage with. Vergil is much more a poetical voice than a philosophical idea in Dante's works. Nevertheless, Charles Davis has demonstrated how much Dante embraces the Vergilian idea of Rome, as a city with a salvific and divine role in the history of humanity. However, I think that this idea, as well as the ideas of Orosius, influence more the political perspective which Dante expresses in the *De Monarchia* than the perception of time and eternity in the *Comedy*.⁵¹ Brunetto Latini, likewise, is another obvious point of reference for Dante, especially for the topic of memory.⁵² In fact, the narrative framework of the *Tesoretto* has many common features with the plot of the *Commedia*. Brunetto indicates memory as one of the main skills which should be mastered by a wise man, but it is not described as a connection to the world of the Divine. I argue instead that the perspective of Augustine on the amazing properties of memory in a quest for the Divine is much more exhaustive and useful for an analysis of the *Commedia*.⁵³

Another famous literary work on the influences of Fortune upon Earth was the *Elegia sulla fortuna* by Arrigo Settimello.⁵⁴ This work was extremely famous in Dante's time and surely both the author and the readers of the *Commedia* bear it in mind. Nevertheless, the connection with Fortune's Wheel in Boethius is so convincing and strong among Dante's figures of time that it makes more sense to refer to Boethius on that topic. Finally, the main and most obvious model for Dante

relevant for the topic of time 'Since sexual generation, for Augustine (*City of God* 15.16) as for Aristotle (*On the generation of animals* 731b25-732a12) is nature's best attempt to render its work immortal [...] it might be concluded that the sexual imagery of the *bolgia* parodies both metempsychosis and sexual generation [...] insofar as they are failed attempts at escaping the destructive effects of time.' (*The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri Vol.I: Inferno* ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, p.568). I do agree with Durling's thesis, however I think that this link is not strong enough to overall consider Ovid a model of time of the entire *Comedy*.

⁵¹ See: Orosius Paulus, *The Seven Books against the Pagans*, Trans. by Roy J. Deferrari, Washington: Catholic University of America press, 1964. Davis, Charles, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.

⁵² Brunetto Latini, *Il tesoretto*, In vol. 2 of *Poeti del duecento*, ed. by Gianfranco Contini, Milan: Ricciardi, 1960.

⁵³ I believe that even from the analysis of the beginning of the Dante's *Vita Nuova*, it is clear that Dante tends to consider memory as a personal mean of self awareness and self knowledge, much more than an encyclopedic archive which any wise men should bring with him.

⁵⁴

should be the Bible. I would argue that the most important passage of the Bible which influences Dante's representation of time in the *Commedia* is the opening chapters of *Genesis*: the narration of the Creation. In fact, during my research I have noticed how the narration of the creation even in different traditions always involves particular attention to the dynamic between time and eternity. This attention can be found in Christian discussions of the Creation as well as in classical discussions, with both traditions informing Dante. For instance, *Genesis* and its commentaries are quite specific on this topic, as I will show later, just as Plato's *Timaeus* focuses on the definitions of time and eternity as a natural consequence of the Creation, as does Pseudo-Dionysus. In fact, as the Creation describes the birth of time out of eternity, the topic says or implies a great deal about both of these dimensions in any philosophical tradition. I found very enlightening in my analysis Augustine's commentary on *Genesis* as a framework for certain specific passages of the *Commedia*,⁵⁵ and this is one of the several reasons which lead me to adopt an Augustinian reading of the *Commedia*. In fact, Dante reads *Genesis* through an Augustinian lens and this makes the Augustinian perspective even stronger in the design of time as we encounter it in the *Purgatorio*. To conclude this point, there are several important *auctoritates* who will not appear in my analysis. I chose to focus only on those Dantean sources which can drive my reading to a full understanding of the topic more than to a general description of the influences Dante received. In other words, certain *auctoritates* Dante read, but others directly shaped his vision of temporality and eternity.

Models of a Journey: from Temporality to Eternity.

So, if eternity is *interminabilis vitae simul et perfecta possessio*, how can a living human being approach it? In fact, as Dante tells the story of emancipation from temporality towards eternity pursued by a still living human being, I would like to consider which kind of philosophical sources he could have taken into account. So, have human beings any opportunities to be part of an eternal dimension or is this the privilege of God alone? And if are there any chances to enjoy eternal

⁵⁵ I am referring to the last Cantos of the Purgatory which take place in the actual location of the biblical Creation.

understanding of the Divine, how can that be? I argue that the spiritual research described in details in Books X and XI of *De Confessiones*, where Augustine seeks God first via the Creation, then via himself, is an important example for Dante of a connection with the Divine found through a deep understanding of temporality and eternity. That long journey of Augustine is concluded in his memory: he discovers that God and happiness can be found only there, not in a specific and individual memory, but in a collective one.

Book XI of the *Confessions* is centred on a detailed description of temporality and eternity and how these dimensions interact with each other. But before that, in Book X, Augustine speaks about memory. This faculty has a crucial role not only in the perception of temporality and eternity; in fact Augustine illustrates how it represents a proper path to God. In Book X Augustine asks himself “where is God?”. God is not in Creation, however He created everything that exists. We can see that God cannot be found in what moves in the flow from an earlier moment to a later one. Thus, Augustine first focuses on the soul, as the only mean in the entire Creation through which God can be known, then he tries to undertake a journey that enables the soul to transcend to a higher and wider space, where God *might* be present: the memory.⁵⁶ The description made by Augustine of the faculty of memory shows its ability to connect the whole creation in a more complete way than the simple perceptions of senses. It is not a simple storage of data, even though gathering data, numbers, sensations is the first stage of proper thought as the root of the word shows: ‘cogo’ means ‘to gather’ and ‘cogito’ means ‘to think’. In the Augustinian perspective, human memory shares two important features with eternity. One is the possibility of having a wider perspective upon time, making multiple connections between moments beyond the mere passage from past to present and to future. The other feature is memory conceived of as being a place of happiness or, at least, where a remembering of true happiness can be found, due to the collective memory of life in Eden.

A further indication of how to approach eternity can be found in the *Timaeus*. Human beings can harmonize themselves with the Divine through time’s

⁵⁶ Transibo ergo et istam naturae meae , gradibus ascendens ad eum, qui fecit me, et venio in campos et lata praetoria memoriae , ubi sunt thesauri innumerabilium imaginum de cuiuscemodi rebus sensis invectarum. (*De conf. X*)

measurements of the astronomical circulations and by listening to the heavenly harmony through intellection if not directly, whilst on earth.⁵⁷ From late antiquity the *Timaeus* was the only one of Plato's dialogues to circulate at all widely in the Latin West via the incomplete translation and commentary by Calcidius. However, Boethius accepts and disseminates the Platonic idea of a mathematically based harmony of the spheres, of the elements, and of the seasons as ideal form of music. In fact, according to Plato, the measurement of temporal flow is not only a rhythm, but a proper harmony. This harmony is imitated by the harmony of the soul and body in human beings and, at the lowest level by instrumental music (*Institutio musica* 1.2-5). For Boethius: 'Est enim consonantia dissimilium inter se vocum in unum redacta concordia'.⁵⁸ Dante's idea regarding the meaning of music in his heavens came down to him from Boethius' *Institutio musica*, the standard medieval textbook for music as a liberal art. As such, Dante and Plato share, through Boethius, the idea of the music of the spheres, which was rejected by Aristotle and most Scholastics.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ [...] I will now speak of the higher purpose of God in giving us eyes. Sight is the source of the greatest benefits to us; for if our eyes had never seen the sun, stars, and heavens, the words which we have spoken would not have been uttered. The sight of them and their revolution has given us the knowledge of number and time, the power of enquiry, and philosophy, which is the great blessing of human life; not to speak of the lesser benefits which even the vulgar can appreciate. God gave us the faculty of sight that we might behold the order in our own erring minds. To the like end the gifts of speech and hearing were bestowed upon us; not for the sake of irrational pleasure, but in order that we might harmonize the courses of the soul by sympathy with the harmony of sound, and cure ourselves of our irregular and graceless ways. (*Timaeus* 32D).

⁵⁸ *Institutio musica* 1.3.

⁵⁹ Plato claims that in the *Republic*, inside the myth of Er, the greek warrior who explored the realm of death and came back to life:

'The first and outermost whorl are narrower, in the following proportions – the sixth is next to the first in size, the fourth next to the sixth; then come the eighth; the seventh is the fifth, the fifth is sixth, the third is seventh, last and eighth comes the second. The largest (or fixed stars) is spangled, and the seventh (or sun) is brightest; the eighth (or moon) coloured by the reflected light of the seventh; the second and fifth (Saturn and Mercury) are in colour like one other, and yellower than the preceding; the third (Venus) has the whitest light; the fourth (Mars) is reddish, the sixth (Jupiter) is the whiteness second. Now the whole spindle has the same motion; but, as the whole revolves in one direction, the seven inner circles move slowly in the other, and of these the swiftest is the eighth; next in swiftness are the seventh, sixth, and fifth, which move together; third in swiftness appeared to move according the law of this reversed motion the fourth; the third appeared fourth and the second fifth. The spindle turns on the knees of Necessity; and on the upper surface of each circle is a siren, who goes round with them, hymning a single tone or note. The eight together form one harmony; and round about, at equal intervals, there is another band, three in number, each sitting

To conclude on this point, temporality can be overcome in two main ways: a backwards journey into memory, according to Augustine, and through the vibration of the heavenly harmony, according to Plato and Boethius.

Models of Creation: the Birth of Temporality.

Was time created out of nothing or did it emanate from a propulsive centre? Answering this question about the birth of temporality could partially define the nature of temporality itself. In fact, if it emanated from one point, it could be somehow reabsorbed into it. Whereas, if it is made out of nothing, it will end, disappearing into nothing. Dante constantly moves from one position to another, in his attempt to reconcile them. So, even the ideas about creation of temporality convey a specific framework for the representation of temporality itself. We have seen that Dante quotes *Ecclesiastes* in his definition of time. However, the most relevant biblical book for an analysis of Dante's perception of time in the *Commedia* is *Genesis*, for a number of reasons. First of all, *Genesis* is overall the most important biblical book for the *Commedia* per se. In fact, numerous cantos are set in Eden and it is in Eden where biblical history is unfolded through the sacred procession. Moreover, Adam, as a symbol of pure humanity directly created by God, occupies one of the most important positions at the end of the *Paradiso*. Third, *Genesis* tells the story of why and how temporality was created out of eternity and it displays and explains features of both categories.

Augustine mainly comments upon *Genesis* in two specific works: *Genesis ad litteram* (reiterated in *De civitate Dei*, Book 12) and *De Confessiones* (Book XI). Actually, all of the last three books of *De confessiones* are dedicated to a wider discussion of *Genesis* and the Creation. Aquinas discusses it mainly in his 'Treatise

upon her throne who are clothed in white robes and have chaplets upon their heads, Lachesis and Cloto ad Atropos, who accompany who accompany with their voices the harmony of the sirens – Lachesis singing of the past, Clotho of the present, Atropos of the future; Clotho from time to time assisting with a touch of her right hand the revolution of the outer circle of the whorl or spindle, and Atropos with her left hand touching and guiding the inner ones, and Lachesis laying of either in turn, first with one hand and then with the other. (*The Republic* 10. 614- 617).

on the Work of the Six Days', in the *Summa Theologica*. In addition to this, the topic of the creation of the world has been discussed by a number of Dante's other sources: the *Timaeus*, the Virgilian IV Eclogue and the *Divine Names* of the Pseudo-Dionysius. Except for the Eclogue of Virgil, the other sources are strictly interrelated and both Aquinas and Augustine try to combine the neoplatonic emanationist theories about the Creation and the creationist perspective of the Bible.⁶⁰ In fact, even though Pseudo-Dionysius' theories are definitely emanationist, Aquinas remains influenced by him – indeed, Aquinas cites Pseudo Dionysius in the *ST* 1600 times. The scholastic philosopher seems to agree with the author of the *Divine Names* about the form of the procession of creatures from God. So, what exactly is the emanationist theory of Pseudo-Dionysius? In the *Divine Names* he delivers a detailed explanation, according to which reality is continuously created and shaped following the Providential will, due to the kind of motions of divine intelligences.⁶¹

⁶⁰ 'Uno degli elementi propri della dottrina cristiana, fortemente radicata sulla parola biblica, a partire dai primi secoli della sua elaborazione, è la credenza che il mondo sia stato creato per un atto volontario di un Dio trascendente e onnipotente. Questa tesi, che, rimanendo dominante attraverserà il medioevo, e rappresenta a tutt'oggi la posizione ufficiale della Chiesa, è estranea alle dottrine filosofiche greche dell'antichità classica. Platone ed Aristotele, i due filosofi pagani che sotto questo riguardo influenzeranno maggiormente l'età medievale, non hanno elaborato una dottrina creazionista, sebbene nel corso dell'età medievale il mito del demiurgo esposto nel Timeo platonico sia stato solitamente inteso in tal senso. Già Agostino, infatti, sosteneva che Platone ed i platonici avevano avuto "le più sane opinioni circa Dio creatore del cielo e della terra".' Luca Bianchi, *L'errore di Aristotele: la polemica contro l'eternità del mondo nel XIII secolo*, Firenze: La Nuova Italia 1984, p. 55.

⁶¹ There is rest for everything and movement for everything, and these come from that which, transcending rest and movement, establishes each being according to an appropriate principle and gives each the movement suitable to it. 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. The soul has movement. First it moves in a circle, that is, it turns within itself and away from what is outside and there is an inner concentration of its intellectual powers. A sort of fixed revolution causes it to return from the multiplicity of externals, to gather in upon itself and then, in this undispersed condition, to join those who are themselves in a powerful union. From there the revolution brings the soul to the Beautiful and the Good, which is beyond all things, is one and the same, and has neither beginning nor end. But whenever the soul receives, in accordance with its capacities, the enlightenment of divine knowledge and does so not by way of the mind nor in some mode arising out of its identity, but rather through discursive reasoning, in mixed and changeable activities, then it moves in a spiral fashion. And its movement is

The issue of a divinity which is able to continuously emanate and influence reality is in contrast with the idea, shared by Aquinas and Aristotle, of an unmoved mover and with the biblical representation of God creating the world *ex nihilo*.⁶² Here, we can see that Aquinas synthesizes the thoughts of the Pseudo-Dionysius, Augustine and Plato about motions in eternity:

It seems that God is not altogether immutable. For a whatever moves itself is in some way mutable. But as Augustine says (*Gen. ad lit. viii.20*), *The Creator Spirit moves Himself neither by time, nor by place*. Therefore God is in some way mutable[...]. Augustine there speaks in a similar way to Plato, who said that the first mover moves Himself; calling every operation a movement, even as the acts of understanding, and willing, and loving are called movements. Therefore because God understands and loves Himself, not, however, as movement and change belong to a thing existing in potentiality, as we now speak of change and movement. [...] And so in the same way, inasmuch as the similitude of the divine wisdom proceeds in degrees from the highest things, which participate more fully of its likeness, to the lowest things, which participate of it in a lesser there is said to be a kind of procession and movement of the divine wisdom of things; as when we say that the sun proceeds to the earth, inasmuch as the ray of light touches the earth. In this way Dionysius (*Cael. Hier.*) expounds the matter, that every

in a straight line when, instead of circling in upon its own intelligent unity (for this is the circular), it proceeds to the things around it, and is uplifted from external things, as from certain variegated and pluralized symbols, to the simple and united contemplations. The Good and Beautiful is the cause of these three movements, as also of the movements in the realm of what is perceived, and of the prior remaining, standing and foundation of each one. This is what preserves them. This is their goal, itself transcending all rest and all motion. It is the source, the origin, the preserver, the goal, and the objective of rest and motion. The being and the life of the mind and of the soul derive from it[...] To put the matter briefly, all being drives from, exists in, and is returned towards the Beautiful and the Good. All things look to it. All things are moved by it. All things are preserved by it. (*Divine Names* 704D- 705D).

⁶² 'Therefore whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.' (ST 1 q.2 art.3)

procession of the divine manifestation comes to us from the movement of the Father of light.' (*ST1* q.9a.1)

Aquinas can fit these different ideas together due to the quoted thought of Augustine from the *Genesis ad litteram*: 'The Creator Spirit moves Himself neither by time, nor by place.' Thus, there are motions in eternity, however they do not function as movements developed and measured in an extended quantity of time – they are beyond time. This latter point will be particularly relevant for Dante in the *Paradiso*, as he there must tell a story set in eternity. How can he represent a progression of events in a dimension where the motions are beyond space and time? I will show that in the *Paradiso* Dante will convey the major part of his story through the Heavens which are still *in* time, however he will describe motions of eternal entities or characters in the Heavens beyond. These movements and changes are represented according to the astronomical pattern of the *Timaeus* and the *Divine Names*. The divine intelligences of the *Commedia* move and influence the sublunar world as described by Pseudo-Dionysus and Plato. So, Dante builds on these Platonic astronomical movements, which are the first of the Creation. In addition to this, he represents heavenly communications and certain kinds of motions similarly to the motion of light studied by Pseudo-Dionysus.⁶³ Pseudo-Dionysus identifies two conditions of light: a light which measures day and night (*lumen*) and an unshaped light which marked only the first three days of the Creation (*lux*). I argue that this shift from one kind of light to another one is adopted by Dante and used in the *Paradiso* in order to convey or to define what is eternal or what is perpetual.

The problem of the measurement of the first three days at the beginning of time is considered by Augustine also in his analysis of *Genesis*. In fact, Augustine investigates the real nature of the six days of the Creation, wondering how they

⁶³ [...] And what of the sun's rays? Light comes from the Good, and light is an image of this archetypal Good. Thus the Good is also praised by the name 'Light', just an archetype is revealed in its image. The goodness of the transcendent God reaches from highest and most perfect forms of being to the very lowest. [...] Everything looks to it for measure, eternity, number, order. It is the power which embraces the universe. It is the Cause of the universe and its end[...]

Light too is the measure and the enumerator of the hours, of the days, and indeed of all the time we have. It was this light, then unshaped, which, according to the divine Moses, marked the first three days at the beginning of time. (*Divine Names*,700A)

could be measured before the existence of heavenly bodies.⁶⁴ Finally, he claims that the extension of time that seems to be occupied by the Creation is actually a development of knowledge and perception and not an unfolded flow of time.⁶⁵ Then, the light of the beginning of time is a kind of unshaped entity which contains the principles of Good and Evil. It then was given a shape, it was separated by darkness and it became the means of measuring extended temporality. Thus, in the Augustinian perspective, temporality itself involved a previous fall into evil of a few angelic entities which engendered the existence of darkness. Without that fall, we could not have the alternation of day and night. If that light is represented by the divine intelligences, it actually works quite similarly to Pseudo-Dionysus' light. In fact, in the *Divine Names*, light's rays represent the means whereby the goodness of God reaches His creatures..

I will start my analysis with a close reading of the *Purgatorio*, which is the only one of the *Commedia's* realms that exists in time. Its analysis will define temporality itself and the functions it has as part of the Pilgrim's journey of salvation. Furthermore, as Augustine describes the emancipation from temporality as necessary in order to embrace eternity (*De conf.*, X-XI), I will read the *Purgatorio* according to an Augustinian perspective. Then, I will move to the analysis of the *Paradiso*, the properly eternal realm beyond space and time. In this *cantica*, even though Dante maintains clearly creationist views, he embraces emanationist visions, especially regarding light and motion in order to represent a narrative development where the extension of past, present and future does not exist anymore.

Finally, I will move to the *Inferno*, which is the malign and erroneous form of eternity. Its analysis will show that it is actually quite far from the *auctoritates'* definitions of eternity. As Boethius was the most precise in his definition of eternity as *interminabilis vitae simul et perfecta possessio*, I will take his ideas into account primarily in order to demonstrate that the Dantean *Inferno* is actually a parody of this 'perfecta possessio'. The *Inferno* is a complete loss of understanding, comprehension or development, where both eternity and temporality are denied.

⁶⁴ *De conf.* XIII. XXXVI

⁶⁵ *De Civ. Dei* XI.XXX

Introduction

This thesis begins *in medias res*, with the *Purgatorio* rather than the *Inferno*. As noted in the general introduction to this study, my analysis of the perception of time in the *Commedia* does not follow the narrative order of Dante's *cantiche*, as my criteria are not the same as those which motivate the Pilgrim's journey. The Pilgrim moves from a condition of loss and sin, to recovery, and finally to beatitude as part of his spiritual development. An analysis of temporal and atemporal modes in the *Commedia*, on the other hand, ought to begin with the middle *cantica*, as the *Purgatorio* functions by means of measured or quantified temporality, from which we can differentiate and understand the perpetuity of the *Inferno* and the eternity of the *Paradiso*. It has the most familiar temporal mode and so offers a point from which we can proceed to explore temporal modes that are unfamiliar.

However, this is not to say that purgatorial temporality is identical with earthly temporality, even as it engages with it, as I will show. In the *Purgatorio* temporality is experienced and perceived on many different levels and all of them are positive, purifying and empowering for the souls undergoing purgation. The middle realm's astronomical measurements of time, its increasing velocity of motions, its music and its songs are expressions of a temporality designed to enable spiritual development and transformation. Indeed it is the purgatorial souls' consciousness of the sins which they committed during their earthly lives that confirms to them – and to the Pilgrim – the difference between the temporality they experience in purgatory, and the temporality they left behind on earth. The temporality that they left behind might be termed errant, in the sense of moving in the wrong direction, which is seen through the kinds of prophecies that the purgatorial sinners deliver, again as will be shown below. Ultimately the path through the *Purgatorio* leads to the overcoming of temporality and to its final dissolution, brought about by specific rituals and processes.

By beginning with the *Purgatorio's* depiction of a realm that is characterized by temporality, one runs the risk of reading it against two other realms, Hell and

Paradise, which both partake of eternity. However, this is not the case. I will show that Hell is not really eternal, but perpetual – according to the Boethian taxonomy – which means that it has more in common with temporality. Paradoxically, in Hell loss is caused by the hopeless condition of sin ('LASCIASTE OGNE SPERANZA, VOI CH'INTRATE', Surrender as you enter every hope you have, *Inf.* III.9) which conveys a denial of temporality. These two characteristics – likeness to and denial of temporality – exist in dialectical relationship with one another in the *Inferno*, rather than one negating the other. By a denial of temporality is meant the empty occupation of time with motions, words and sequences, which does not involve any development – for example the Sisyphean futility of the punishment of the avaricious in canto VII. In order to understand this denial it is necessary to know first what constitutes a positive or productive temporality, which the *Purgatorio* illustrates. By following the mutually informing analyses of purgatorial temporality and infernal perpetuity with an analysis of paradisaic eternity, which is the authentic and comprehensive eternity, it becomes clear that Hell denies not only temporality but eternity also, even whilst mimicking both. As such, it is necessary to begin here with an account of purgatorial temporality, as the first stage in achieving a full understanding of Dantean eternity. In order to discuss Dante's representation of purgatorial temporality, however, it is necessary to return to its origins, because the origins of purgatory can be found in a new conception of time.

The Origins of Purgatory

Belief in purgatory, its structure and origin, is a much more recent phenomenon than belief in hell and heaven. Jacques Le Goff has written the complex story of the formation of the idea that Luther called 'the third place'.⁶⁶ That 'third place' became the location for fierce confessionalized disputes between Protestants and Catholics in the sixteenth century. According to Le Goff, Purgatory has its roots in Judaeo-Christian antiquity and emerges with the flowering of medieval civilization in the

⁶⁶ Jacques Le Goff, 'The Birth of Purgatory', trans. By Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, 1984, p.4.

second half of the twelfth century. So, what exactly was purgatory, when it installed itself in the mind of western Christendom? Le Goff answers:

Briefly, it was an intermediary other world in which some of the dead were subjected to a trial that could be shortened by the prayers, by the spiritual aid, of the living.⁶⁷

Le Goff's purpose in *The Birth of Purgatory* is to show the crucial role of purgatory in persuading people to accept the new western Christian society of the twelfth century, which was the result of two-and-a-half centuries of prodigious growth, and specifically the new formulations of time that developed with that society. In fact, the established concept of purgatory is partially linked on one side to the invention of the mechanical clock, which will progressively tend to overwhelm the use of the canonical hours. On the other side, it is connected to the flourishing and new born Italian middle class who needed the thought of an earthly and temporal 'third place'.⁶⁸ As such, analysing the perception of time in Dante's *Purgatorio* requires understanding of ideas regarding time and, consequently, space, that developed during what used to be termed the twelfth-century renaissance.

So, what are the most important features of Purgatory in terms of time? First, I would like initially to describe how the purgatorial temporality works in the *Commedia* – how it is measured and perceived and how it functions – in order to better understand analogies with and differences from the kinds of temporality in the other two *cantiche* and to underline what Dante inherited from the long tradition which created the 'third place', as described by Le Goff. Then, I will consider the Le Goff's arguments that indicate Saint Augustine as the main 'father of the Purgatory'.⁶⁹

I will show in the next section that Le Goff justifies the claim of Augustine was the father of Purgatory with three fundamental pieces of evidence. First of all, Augustine is the first biblical exegete to distinguish between proper crimes and minor sins which deserve and need shorter durations of punishments. This entails a

⁶⁷*Ibidem*.

⁶⁸ Jacques Le Goff, 'The Birth of Purgatory', trans. By Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, 1984, p.12.

⁶⁹ Jacques Le Goff, 'The Birth of Purgatory', trans. By Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, 1984, p.18.

moral and hierarchical categorization of sins, which leads to a specific use of temporality. Secondly, he specifies a distinct beginning and end for this place of the time-bound purgation of sins: this means that temporality again significantly shapes and defines the nature of purgatory. Then, he argues that the durations of individual purgations may change depending on the prayers of the living.

Then, building on Le Goff's arguments that identify Augustine as the 'father of the Purgatory', I will particularly draw attention to the fact that Augustine underlines the crucial importance of temporality in the 'third place', as it is the only eschatological realm which will itself end and where there are specific and measured durations for those souls' experiences. Le Goff does not specifically connect Saint Augustine to Dante's Purgatory; I will then show that the general Augustinian idea of temporality is the proper model of temporality for the *Purgatorio*. Where Le Goff has demonstrated the general importance of Augustinian thought in the birth of Purgatory in Western Christendom, I will illustrate how the overall idea of temporality presented by Augustine frames the presentation of temporality in Dante's *Purgatorio*.

What, then, is the Augustinian model of time exactly? What are the main ideas which underpin the *Purgatorio*'s temporality? I will show that Augustine develops three main representations of temporality, which influence Dante's purgatorial structure. First, Augustine exemplifies the extension of past, present and future through language and poetry. He claims that, when we say a psalm aloud, there is movement of time from the future, represented by the expectation of what we mean to say, to the past, that is what we have just said which is now part of our memory. Secondly, Augustine explains the duration of the creation in *Genesis* in terms of an arithmetical harmony of measurements of time. Thirdly, he suggests that God has to be found via a journey back to the 'principium', that is to the beginning of time, when humans experienced the full happiness, rather than being only 'in spe beati'.

How do these ideas influence the operation of time in the *Purgatorio*? I will demonstrate that the Augustinian model of time in Dante's *Purgatorio* supports and confirms that the purgatorial temporality of the *Commedia* has two precise features. It has a purifying and transformative power over human soul and so that it may

properly purify, it has a specific direction: that is a retrograde journey in time, back to the cosmological Beginning.

I will illustrate how temporality in Dante's *Purgatorio* is a positive dimension where the cycles of days and nights and the astronomical motions and the human linguistic expression of harmony as singing and poetry contribute to the process of meditation on sins and their purification. Moreover, in the following chapter, I will indicate how the participation of the blessed in the Divine is in part conveyed through harmony; there, however, it is a different degree of harmony. The harmony that operates in Purgatory is a quantifiable and measurable progression of steps, words, sounds, colours and thoughts. This kind of progressive harmony leads from one point to another, which is in itself distinct. The heavenly harmony, on the other hand, represents a dense and intense concentration in one single point.

So, if the purgatorial temporality must progress towards something in order to activate the spiritual transformation, where is it progressing to? What is its direction? I argue that the path to the top of the Mount Purgatory is a backwards path in time, it is a progression towards the origin of humanity and temporality. At this point, the Pilgrim is requested to undo things, instead of doing something else, and to forget, instead of collecting memories. The fulfilment and the celebration of this purification will be at the end of the Pilgrim's path, that means at the Beginning of time: in the garden of Eden. This interpretation of the purgatorial purification as a journey backward in time is supported by the Augustinian model of time and by clear evidences in the text of Dante's *Purgatorio* itself: for instance, the astronomical and geographical setting of the *Purgatorio*, the reflection on sin as misaddressing natural love, and the kind of prophecies delivered in the *cantica*.

The Time of the *Purgatorio*

How is the Purgatory represented in terms of time? Which analogies and differences has it compared with the other two eschatological realms? First of all, the Purgatory is a place which had a beginning and will have an end: it is temporary. This implies that time is carefully measured, as each punishments must have a proportional duration to the duration of sinners' lives or to sinners' type of sins. Thus, all the souls in the *Purgatorio* can measure time and know how long they will dwell in each

terrace. For instance, in Canto III, Manfredi tells to the Pilgrim how many years a soul who was excommunicated by the Catholic Church must wait in the *Antipurgatorio*:

Vero è che quale in contumacia more
di Santa Chiesa, ancor ch'al fin si penta
star li conven da questa ripa in fore
per ognun tempo ch'elli è stato, trenta.

(It is, however, true that those who die,/ although repentant, in contempt of Church,/ are bound to stay outside this mountain wall/ some thirty times the span of years that they/ presumed to stand apart *Purg. III*, 136-138)

In addition to this, still in the *Antipurgatorio*, Belacqua is precisely aware about the duration of his punishment:

Prima convien che tanto il ciel m'aggiri
di fuor da essa, quanto fece in vita,
per ch'io 'ndugiai al fine i buon sospiri

(The heavens must circle first around me here/ the length of time they did around my life/ (since I delayed good sighs until my end) *Purg.IV*, 130-132)

And, in the same way, the purgatorial sinners know how much time they have spent in any terrace, as Statius shows:

E io, che son giaciuto a questa doglia
cinquecent'anni e più, pur mo senti
libera volontà di miglior soglia:
però sentisti il tremoto e li pii
spiriti per lo monte render lode
a quel Segnor, che tosto su li 'nvii

(And I, who've lain five hundred years and more/ in that same pain, have only felt just now/the freedom of the better way ahead./ That's why you felt and heard those

tremors here,/ and spirits round the mountain rendering praise, / so God, our Lord,
might send them higher soon. *Purg.* Canto XXI, 67-72)

The time markers engaged in these measurements are the same that are normally used by living human beings on Earth: years, months, days, astronomical motions, human lives' durations. So, the awareness of the temporal flow and its measurements are not known only by God, but in the realm of the 'temporal foco', each soul knows how long her punishments will be and why: rules, conditions and durations of the tortures are shared by everybody. In addition to this, Dante provides to the sinners the knowledge of future on Earth and the awareness about the plan of God in the hereafter.⁷⁰ In fact, they are able to deliver prophecies and to give advice to the Pilgrim. So, how is this carefully measured temporality conveyed and expressed? Time in Dante's *Purgatorio* is represented by motions, rhythm, astronomical movements, figures of human history, biblical narrative and liturgy. The rhythm is conveyed by the alternation of day and night, which forces the sinners to move in a specific way, progressing or resting, and by the importance given to singing and poetry since the very beginning of the *cantica*.⁷¹ All these representations enfold and enact the purifying extension from past, to present and future. Thus, we can identify an exaltation of temporality in its most noble aspects: it is a rhythm, an alternation of motions which involve spiritual transformation. This transformation leads to a progression and a transformation towards Eden: in fact, the Pilgrim starts his journey from a certain point in time and the path of meditation on sins and purification leads him through rhythms, alternations of day and night, motions, music and prayers to a point which is in the past, or, to be more precise, it is the beginning of time: the Creation. I believe that the most healing aspect of the purgatorial time is its direction: temporality moves towards the Beginning, according to an Augustinian model of time. Thus, as Augustine's ideas are so fundamental in my evidences, in the following section I will first describe how and why Augustine has been considered by Le Goff the main 'father' of Purgatory.⁷²

⁷⁰ See: John A. Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, Philadelphia: 1996, p.189.

⁷¹ *Purg.* II, 45.

⁷² I will briefly summarize what it is said about the role of 'father' of the Purgatory of St Augustine in *The Birth of Purgatory*, however for a general introduction about

Augustine, Father of Purgatory

In 'The birth of Purgatory' Le Goff claims that, even though the idea of Purgatory was finally established in the XII century, Purgatory's structure actually has its roots in the late antiquity: it took centuries to reach the final degree of precision which will peak in the Dantean narrative. Le Goff indicates St. Augustine as the main 'father' of the Purgatory in the late antiquity: he states that in the *Enchiridion*, the *City of God* and the *Confessions* there is a particular exegesis of the Holy Scriptures which will lead to imagine an intermediary place between Hell and Heaven: a 'third place' with careful time measurements. What are the Augustinian elements from which the idea of Purgatory has developed? Which of these elements do still shape the dantean Purgatory? First of all, I would like to illustrate in more details the role of 'father' of the Purgatory given to St. Augustine.

According to Le Goff, Augustine defines a certain kind of vocabulary and a certain use of time, which are the bases of the birth of Purgatory. That means that the particular ideas of Augustine about temporality and the way of speaking about them influenced the structure of purgatory since an early stage. First, Augustine identifies a distinction between proper crimes and minor sins that causes a differentiation between eternal punishment and a temporary one: so he establishes for the first time a correspondence between a moral hierarchy and time measurements. Secondly, he emphasizes the presence and the function of fire in the process of purgation and purification. Thirdly, he is not specific about collocating this temporal fire in a space, but he is very clinical about the temporal collocation: this temporal purifying fire is in between the individual bodily death and the collective Last Judgement. Fourthly, he stresses the possibility to help dead people through the prayers in this process of purification: so, he establishes in this way a kind of rational law of quantities and durations. Book XXI of the *City of God* is devoted to the question of punishment in Hell: talking of this Book, Le Goff claims:

Augustine and his works see: Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo, a Biography*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967.

In chapter XIII, Augustine attacks those who believe that all punishments in this world and the next are merely purgatorial, that is, for the purpose of purification and therefore temporary. Once again he invokes the distinction between eternal punishments and purgatorial, or temporary punishments do exist.⁷³

In my opinion, Book XXI.XXVI of the *City of God* is crucial in this kind of analysis even for another reason: here Augustine states clearly that the purgatorial fire will work in the interval of time between bodily death and resurrection, while in the *Enchiridion* he argues that men will be tried by the fire only on the Judgment Day. This change in his ideas will be fundamental in the theological assessment of the third realm:

Post istius sane corporis mortem, donec ad illum veniatur qui post resurrectionem corporum futurus est damnationis et remunerationis ultimus dies, si hoc temporis intervallo spiritus defunctorum eius modi ignem dicuntur perpeti, quem non sentiant illi qui non habuerunt tales mores et amores in huius consumatur (...). Potest quippe ad istam tribulationem pertinere etiam mors ipsa carnis quae primi peccati perpetratione concepta est, et secundum cuiusque aedificium tempus quod eam sequitur ab unoquoque sentiatur.

(After the death of this body, and before that day comes which will be the final day of condemnation and reward after the resurrection, it may be said that in this interval of time there are spirits of the dead who endure a fire, a fire of a sort that is not experienced by those who in their earthly lives did not so live and love that their 'wood and hay and stubble' must be consumed. That fire may be experienced by the others who take buildings of this sort with them. They may encounter this fire of passing affliction, which consumes whatever is worldly though not worthy of damnation, either there alone, after death, or both here and there, or they may encounter here in order to escape it there. I do not oppose this view, for perhaps it is true. In fact, even bodily death itself, which came upon man from the perpetration of

⁷³ Jacques Le Goff, 'The Birth of Purgatory', trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, 1984, p.75.

the first sin, may belong to that tribulation, so that each man's experience after death will depend upon the nature of his building. *De civ. XXI.XXVI*)⁷⁴

To be more precise, 'hoc temporis intervallo' embraces even the bodily death itself that will burn all the earthly goods which the soul loved during his own earthly life. To conclude on this point, the very accurate exegesis made by Augustine shows that there are crimes and minor sins with different eschatological destinies, as God will offer different kinds of fire to be tried after the bodily death: a temporal fire that saves and eternal one of damnation. The temporal fire is collocated in a specific 'temporis intervallo' beginning with the end of earthly life and ending on the day of Last Judgement.

In addition to this, Augustine accepts and structures the beliefs of the efficacy of prayers for the dead, that will be a crucial feature of the proper Purgatory in the thirteenth century and the main object of disagreement between Protestants and Catholics. In fact, in the complaining for the death of the mother Monica in *The Confessions*, Book IX. XIII, he claims:

Scio misericorditer operatam et ex corde dimisisse debita debitoribus suis: dimitte illi et tu debita sua, si qua etiam contraxit per tot annos post aquam salutis. Dimitte, domini, dimitte, obsecro, ne intres cum ea in iudicium.

(I know that she hath from her very heart forgiven those that trespassed against her: do thou also forgive her trespasses; whatever she hath drawn upon herself in so many years, since her cleansing by the water of Baptism, forgive her Lord, forgive her, I beseech thee; enter not into judgement with her. *De conf. IX. XIII*)⁷⁵

In *Enchiridon* , chapter 109 and 110, Augustine gives his fullest account of his concept of four types of men and the correlating suffrages: the entirely good who have no need of suffrages, the neither entirely good and neither entirely wicked who need suffrages and prayers, the almost entirely bad could benefit from prayers and

⁷⁴ Saint Augustine, "The City of God against the Pagans", trans. by William M. Green, Cambridge MA, 1972.

⁷⁵ *St Augustine's Confessions*, Trans. By William Watts, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970.

hope in a more tolerable damnation and the absolutely bad who are lost and cannot benefit from suffrages in any way. So, as the purgatorial fire, the prayers for the dead and the suffrages do not work in the same way for all the sinners, as explained by this careful progression from good to bad and a categorization of the corresponding effect of the suffrages. To conclude on this point, the history of Purgatory starts in the late antiquity with the Augustinian exegesis of the Holy Scriptures: we can see how Augustine distinguishes precise and detailed categories of moral, spiritual conditions, corresponding to specific durations. Le Goff himself concludes his long analysis talking about rational subtlety as one of the main feature of Purgatory itself and of people who create it:

Yet there will always, I hope, be a place in man's dreams for subtlety, justice, accuracy, and measure in every sense of the word, for reason (O reasonable Purgatory!) and hope.⁷⁶

Then, Augustine in a first instance agrees with Saint Paul and he describes the fire of the Last Judgement as a sort of 'selective fire': it can burn certain things but not other things, depending on the earthly works of the souls. Then, in the *City of Gods*, Augustine carries this distinction into a temporal discourse: the fire can be eternal or temporal on the basis of the seriousness of the sins. This turning into a temporal dimension causes two main changes: one is the collocation of the purgatorial fire in between death and the last Judgement. As the Last Judgement will be the end of time, there cannot be any temporal punishments without time. The second change is that the prayers of living people can affect the duration of the punishments.

Nos vero etiam in hac quidem mortali vita esse quasdam poenas purgatorias confitemur, non quibus affliguntur quorum vita vel non inde fit melior vel potius inde fit peior, sed illis sunt purgatoriae qui eis coerciti corriguntur. Ceterae omnes poenae, sive temporariae sive sempiternae, sicut unusquisque divina providentia tractandus est, inferentur vel pro peccatis sive praeteris sive in quibus adhuc vivi tulle

⁷⁶ Jacques Le Goff, 'The Birth of Purgatory', trans. By Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, 1984, p.61.

plectitur, vel pro exercendis declarandisque virtutibus per homines et angelos seu bonos seu malos. (...) Sed temporaris poenas alii in hac vita tantum, alii post mortem, alii et nunc et tunc.

(We indeed admit that even in this mortal life there are cleansing penalties – not such afflictions as fail to improve the character, or even make it worse, but penalties cleansing for those who are restrained and corrected by them. All other penalties, whether temporal or eternal, according as divine providence must deal with each man, are sometimes inflicted for sins, whether these are past sins or sins in which man is still living, and sometimes are inflicted to exercise and exhibit a man's virtues, through the agency of men or angels, good or bad [...] But temporary penalties are suffered by some in this life only, by others only after death, by others both now and then, yet still before that stern and final judgement. *De civ. XXI. XIII*)

In this passage of the *City of God*, Augustine underlines the function of purification that sufferances and punishments have: the adjective itself 'purgatorias' means 'purifier' and the purifying punishments make sinners 'coherciti corringuntur'. The decision of how many purifier punishments have to be allocated and when, is providential, however Augustine identifies penalties already in the earthly life, after death and before the Last Judgement and eternal punishments: 'sive temporariae sive sempiternae', 'Sed temporaris poenas alii in hac vitam tantum, alii post mortem'. In this perspective earthly life and after life are stages of a long process of re-education and meditation aimed by sufferance. In the following passage of the *Comedy*, the Pilgrim has arrived at the end of his purgatorial journey, on the top of the mountain of the Purgatory. It is quite clear that the re-education that he has been living has a very similar structure to the purification described by Augustine.

Come la scala tutta sotto noi
Fu corsa e fummo in su 'l grado superno,
in me ficcò Virgilio li occhi suoi,
e disse: "Il temporal foco e l'eterno
veduto hai, figlio; e se' venuto in parte
dov'io per me più oltre non discerno.
Tratto t'ho qui con ingegno e con arte;
lo tuo piacer omai prendi per duce;

fuor se' de l'erte vie, fuor se' de l'arte.

Vedi lo sol che 'n fronte ti riluce;
vedi l'erbette, i fiori e li arbuscelli
che qui la terra sol da sé produce.

(Below us now, the stair had run its course,/ and we were on the highest of the steps./ Then, firmly, Virgil fixed his eyes on me,/ saying: 'The temporal and the eternal fires/ you've seen, my son, and now you're in a place / where I, through my own powers, can tell no more./ I've drawn you here by skill and searching mind. /Now take what pleases you to be your guide./ You're beyond the steeps, beyond all straits. *Purg. XXVII* , 124-135)

It is Virgilio who is speaking and these are actually his last words before disappearing: we can easily recognize Augustine's vocabulary: 'ceterae omnes poenae sive temporariae, sive sempiternae', 'il temporal foco e l'eterno veduto hai figlio'. Furthermore, Virgilio speaks about 'stairs' that have been walked up by the Pilgrim and it is an image representing correction and purification: 'coherciti corriguntur'. Thus, the Augustinian vocabulary which has structured and designed the belief of the purgatory since the beginning is still present in Dante's *Purgatorio*. Actually, Dante does not mention the word 'punishments' in this passage, as Augustine does (poenas), but he uses and repeats the word 'fire' (foco). This idea of the fire in the hereafter is a very ancient belief according to Le Goff and Augustine himself investigates that. In the *City of God* he identifies two different kinds of fire: one which torments forever and one which purges and saves:

Vide in apostolic verbis hominem aedificantem super fundamentum aurum, argentum, lapides pretiosos: Qui sine uxore est, inquit, cogitate quae sunt Dei, quo modo placeat Deo. Vide alium aedificantem ligna, fenum, stipulam: Qui autem matrimonio iunctus est, inquit, cogitate sunt mundi, quo modo placeat uxori. Uniuscuiusque opus manifestabitur, dies enim declarabit (dies utique tribulationis), quoniam in igni, inquit, revelabitur. Eandem tribulationem ignem vocat, sicut alibi legitur: vasa figuli probat fornax et homines iustos temptation tribulationis. Et uniuscuiusque opus quale sit ignis probabit. Si cuius opus permanserit.....(*De civ.*VII, 21-27)

Here Augustine uses the fire as a metaphor of the process of purification and the metaphor of the different materials represent the works of men: both these metaphors are from Saint Paul. The passages of Holy Scriptures that Augustine takes into account in order to describe how the purgatorial fire works are one letter of Saint Paul (1 Cor. 3.13) and the story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31). In the first Epistle to the Corinthians, Saint Paul says that there will be one day when Christ will appear like a fire. That fire will enlighten the works of men. Some very good works will stay through the fire and some others less good works will be destroyed. However, even though a man's work can be destroyed by the fire, he himself can be saved, but as a man who has experienced the fire. What does that mean? According to Augustine in the *Enchiridon*, at the moment of death, the fire will try every man's works that were built during life on Earth, of what kind they are: who has built his works on Christ shall receive a reward, who built his works on temporal or worldly things, will see everything be burned, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.⁷⁷ In the *City of God* Augustine turns to the distinction between two kinds of fire, one which torments for ever, one which purges and saves. These two fires correspond to two different kinds of sins: there men who have committed serious crimes and men who have committed minor sins, typified by an excessive attachment to otherwise legitimate earthly goods.

Thus, the purgatorial fire cannot be seen as a mere manifestation of God's justice and revenge, it has the important function of purifying and strengthening the 'materials' which are burnt. In the Dantean purgatory the Pilgrim lives the experience of fire himself: 'Poi dentro al foco innanzi mi si mise/ Sì come fui dentro, in un bogliente vetro/ gittato mi sarei per rinfrescarmi,/ tant'era ivi lo 'ncendio senza metro' (Ahead of me, he went to meet the fire/And, once within, I could have flung myself - / the heat that fire produced was measureless-/ for coolness, in a vat of boiling glass. *Purg.* XXVII, 46, 48-50), and after this passage, Virgil declares that the Pilgrim is free and renewed.

To conclude, Augustine indicates few important aspects which will constitute the dantean *Purgatorio* and some key words which help Dante to define and fix

⁷⁷ St Augustine, *Seventeen Short Treatises of St Augustine*, Trans. By John Henry Parker, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968, p.98.

fundamental ideas connected to a specific usage of temporality in order to be purified from sins, for instance the idea of the 'temporal foco'. As the Augustinian influence is particularly specific on the *Purgatorio* in terms of temporality, I will analyse in more details how Augustine represents and thinks temporality, that means I will indicate what kind of model of time he describes.

The Augustinian Discourse on Temporality.

In this section I would like to describe Augustine's theories about temporality, its nature and its creation.⁷⁸ I have already discussed the important role which Augustine had in the birth of the belief into a 'third place', due to his biblical exegesis. Moreover, these interpretations given to specific biblical passages reveal his ideas about temporality and eternity which are very important in the structure of purgatory, but even more in the time of the *Purgatorio*. I will show that Augustine conveys temporality as an interior motion from future towards past and he describes the human memory not only as a storage of data, images or words but as a very creative dimension where the mind not only collect facts but gives interpretations and judgements: from memory's perspective temporality does not appear as it normally does. Thus, Augustine has a double influence on the second

⁷⁸ About Augustine and his studies on temporality one of the most important pieces of work is: Eugene Vance, *Language as Temporality: Marvellous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989. Furthermore, Denis O'Brien gives a chronological account of the evolution of the idea of time from Plotinus to Augustine: 'Plotinus has explained time as a product of his third hypostasis, universal soul. Time is the life of soul, when soul has separated itself from the simple contemplation of eternity. To Augustine this account of the production of time would have seem to impair God's creative prerogative. Augustine therefore explains time as a distention of the human soul, without attributing to the soul any notion of creativity' Denis O'Brien, 'Two Readings of St Augustine', *New Blackfriar*, Vol. 50 (1969), pp. 642-648; then Ronald Suter focuses on temporality and motions in St Augustine: 'Augustine says, for example, that 'times are made by alteration of things' and 'without the variety of motions there are no times, and no variety where there is no figure'. It follows for Augustine that there could be no time before there was some creatures possessing some form and changeableness.' Ronald Suter, 'Augustine on Time with Some Criticism from Wittgenstein', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, Vol.16, 1962, pp378-394. See: Herman Hausher, 'St. Augustine's Conception of Time', *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 46, 1937, pp.503-511; Robert Jordan, 'Time and Contingency in St Augustine', *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 8, 1955, pp. 394-417; ⁷⁸ Isaac Miller, 'St Augustine, the Narrative Self, and the Invention of Fiction', *Qui Parle*, Vol. 8 (1995), pp. 54-82.

cantica: he is 'the father of purgatory' as I told in the previous section, and he frames a model of temporality which Dante engages with, so that the Pilgrim will see God in heaven. So in this section, I would like to show in more details the Augustinian model of time in four main points, as it will help the comprehension of the transformative power of time along the Pilgrim's purgatorial path.

First of all, Augustine defines the human memory as the place where human soul can encounter God. So, in order to fulfil this divine encounter, human souls should move backwards in time, that means towards their origin and beginning, and wander in the 'fields of memory'. Secondly, as for happiness, Augustine claims that this feeling is not possible in time, but happiness will be accessible when humans will be out of time, after their death. That means that living human are only in '*spe beati*'. Thirdly, Augustine argues that if we know what happiness actually is, without any real experience of it, that means that we must remember it from the past. Thus, in order to encounter real happiness again, men should '*redire ab errore*' towards the 'principium'. Fourthly, the interpretations given by Augustine about the Book of the Genesis on the Creation and on the creation of angels could enlighten the functions of temporality in the *Purgatorio*. Thus, I will focus on Book X of *The Confessions*, in order to describe the means Augustine suggests to reach memory and happiness. Then, I will take into account *De conf.* Book XIII and *De civ. Dei* XI, for his interpretation of *Genesis*.

The Book XI of the *Confessions* is centred on a detailed description of temporality and eternity and how these dimensions interact with each other. But before that, in Book X, Augustine speaks about memory: this ability has a great importance not only in the perception of temporality and eternity, but it represents a proper path to God. In Book X Augustine starts to display the reasons of his own confession: he would like to really know himself, mirroring into God who already knows him perfectly:⁷⁹ so, knowledge of himself is actually a contemplation of the Divine. Then, Augustine claims his unconditional love for God: '*Non dubia, sed certa conscientia, domine, amo te. (De conf. X.VI)*'. And he asks: '*Quid autem amo, cum te amo? (De conf. X.VI)*' But what I am loving, when I am loving you? This question

⁷⁹ Et tibi quidem, domine, cuius oculis nuda est abyssus humanae conscientiae, quid occultum esset in me, etiam nollem confiteri tibi? Te enim mihi absconderem, non me tibi. (*De conf. X.II*)

leads the author to the exploration of temporality. He first investigates the creation looking for the Divine he loves: on earth, in the sky, in the sea, in the other creatures. Then, he looks at himself as a part of creation and identifies two parts: body and soul. Where is God? God is not there, however He created all that. Sometimes humans recognize God in the wrong places and this means directing love to the wrong object: the creator is much more important than the creation and loving the creation means becoming slaves unable to judge.⁸⁰ It is clear that the body has a lower nature than soul and it cannot pursue a path to the Divine. Thus, Augustine focuses on the soul, as the only means in the all Creation through which it is possible to reach God: 'per ipsam animam meam ascendam ad illum (*De conf.* X.VII)'. Augustine tries to undertake a journey that transcends the soul itself into an higher and wider space, where God might be present. In this way, in chapter VIII he finds his memory:

Transibo ergo et istam naturae meae , gradibus ascendens ad eum, qui fecit me, et venio in campos et lata praetoria memoriae , ubi sunt thesauri innumerabilium imaginum de cuiuscemodi rebus sensus invectarum

(I will soar therefore beyond this faculty of my nature, still rising by degrees unto him who hath made both me and that nature. And I come to see these fields and spacious palaces of my memory, where the treasures of innumerable forms brought into it from these things that have been perceived by the senses to hoarded up. *De conf.* X.VIII).

The description made by Augustine of the faculty of memory shows its ability of connecting the whole creation in a more complex and comprehensive way than the simple perceptions of senses. I would like to draw the attention to the fact that the path to the memory is upwards (*gradibus ascendens*), like the journey to the top of the Mount Purgatory.

⁸⁰ Animalia pusilla et magna vident eam (speciem) , sed interrogare nequeunt. Non enim praeposita est in eis nuntiantibus sensibus iudex ratio. Homines autem possunt interrogare, ut invisibilia dei per ea, quae facta sunt, intellect conspiciant, sed amore subduntur eis et subditi iudicare non possunt. (*De conf.* X.VI)

Intus haec ago, in aula ingenti memoriae meae. Ibi enim mihi caelum et terra et mare praesto sunt cum omnibus, quae in eis sentire potui, praeter illa, quae oblitus sum. Ibi mihi et ipse occurro meque recolo, quid, quando et ubi egerim quoque modo, cum agerem, affectus fuerim. Ibi sunt omnia, quae sive experta a me sive credita memini. Ex eadem copia etiam similitudines rerum vel expertarum vel ex eis, quas expertus sum, creditarum alias atque alias et ipse contexo praeteritis atque ex his etiam futuras actiones et eventa et spes, et haec Omnia rursus quasi praesentia meditor. 'faciam hoc et illud' dico apud me in ipso ingenti sinu animi mei pleno tot et tantarum rerum imaginibus, et hoc aut illud sequitur [...]: dico apud me ista et, cum dico, praesto sunt imagines omnium quae dico ex eodem thesauro memoriae, nec omnino aliquid eorum dicerem, si defuissent.

(All this do I within, in that huge court of my memory. For there have I in a readiness the heaven, the earth, the sea, and whatever I could perceive in them, besides those, which I have forgotten. There also meet I with myself; I recall myself, what, where or when I have done a thing; and I was affected when I did it. There be all whatever I remember, either upon mine own experience or on others' credit. Out of the same store do I myself combine fresh and fresh likelihoods of things, which I have experienced, or believed upon experience: and by these do I infer actions to come, events and hopes: and upon all these do I meditate as if they are now present. I will do this or that (say I to myself in that great receipt of my soul, stored with images of things so many and so great), and this or that follows[...]. Thus talk I to myself: which when I speak of, the images of all the things that I do speak of are present, all out of the same treasury of my memory; nor I talk of any of these things, were the images wanting. *De conf.* X.VIII)

So, the memory is not a simple storage of data, even though gathering data, numbers, sensations is the first stage of a proper thinking as the root of word shows: 'cogo' means 'to gather' and 'cogito' means 'to think'.

Finally, that long journey to God is concluded into memory. At this point Augustine states that searching God means looking for happiness: '*gaudium de veritate*' (*beatitudine consiste nell'acquisizione piena della verità, Conv. III. XI. 14*). However, how does a human being know what happiness is? None can experience true happiness during earthly life, as real happiness is eternal and not temporal, otherwise the thought of the end of happiness will be already sadness. Living human beings in temporality can only be '*spe beati*', that means that they can just hope to be

happy in the hereafter. Thus, why do they know what happiness is, if they have never experienced it? Augustine argues that happiness is in our memory as well as God is in our memory (*Habitas certe in ea (memoria) , quoniam tui memini, ex quo te te didici, et in ea te invenio, cum recordor te. De conf. X.XX*), as we felt that feeling in the Garden of Eden:

Qui tamen etiam ipsi nisi aliquo modo haberent eam, non ita vellent beati esse: quod eos velle certissimum est. nescio quomodo noverunt eam ideoque habenteam in nescio qua notitia, de qua satago, utrum in memoria sit, quia, si ibi est, iam beati fuimus aliquando, utrum sigillatim omnes, an in illo homine, qui primus peccavit, in quo et omnes mortui sumus et de quo omnes cum miseria nati sumus [...] Quod non fieret, nisi res ipsa, cuius hoc nomen est (beatae vitae) eorum memoria teneretur.

(which very same men for all this, had they it not in some sort or other, would not so desire to be happy; which that they do desire, is most certain. Somehow they come to know it, and therefore have they it in some sort of knowledge; concerning which, in much doubt I am, wheter it be in the memory or no: for if it be, then have we sometimes been blessed heretofore; whatever severally, or as in that man who first sinned, and in whom we are all dead, and from whom being descended, we are all born with misery[...] but this I demand, whether this blessed life be in the memory? *De conf. X. XX*).

To conclude, according to the Book X, a confession is an upward path to the knowledge of the author himself and this knowledge leads to the contemplation of God (*'cognoscam te', 'cognitor meus', 'cognoscam', 'sicut et cognitus sum'*), that means finding a state of happiness. This journey starts from the exploration and appreciation of the material world, the Creation, and it finishes in the amazing world of memory, where the dimension of knowledge is not anymore spatial, but temporal. The directions of this exploration are to the high in a Platonic sense (*'Transibo ergo et istam naturae meae, gradibus ascendens ad eum'*) and backwards (*'redimus ab errore, cognoscendo utique redimus; ut autem cognoscamus , docet nos, quia principium est et loquitur nobis.'*) in a temporal sense.

After this analysis that points to temporality as a mean to reach and understand the divine, in Book XI, Augustine explains how temporality is structured and what

eternity is exactly. His study of temporality starts from the beginning of cosmos that is even the beginning of the Holy Scriptures: the first line of the *Genesis*. The creation begins through the word of God: '*ergo dixisti et facta sunt atque in verbo tuo fecisti ea*'. At this point Augustine analyses what kind of word could be this creative and divine word:

Vocas itaque nos ad intellegendum verbum, deum apud te deum, quod sempiternae dicitur et eo sempiternae dicuntur Omnia. Neque enim finitur, quod dicebatur, et dicitur aliud, ut possint dici Omnia, sed simul ac sempiternae Omnia: alioquin iam tempus et mutatio et non vera aeternitas nec vera immortalitas. [...] nec tamen simul et sempiterna fiunt Omnia, quae dicendo facis.

(Thou callest us therefore to understand the Word, who is God, with thee God: which Word is spoken unto everlasting, and in it are all things spoken unto everlasting. For that which as spoken was not spoken successively, one thing spoken ended that the next might be spoken: but all at once and unto everlasting. Otherwise there should be time and alternation; and no true eternity, no true immortality[...] and yet you are not all things made together, or everlasting which so thou makest by saying. *De conf.* XI.VII)

So the word of God says everything at the same time and forever, while the creation which this word had caused will develop from one moment to another in the extension of temporality:⁸¹ one side there is the omni comprehensive intensity of the word of God, and on the other side there is the extension of Creation provoked by the divine word. This divine word is the beginning and the journey of each man is meant to come back to this true word, as in the beginning there is already all the knowledge which human beings need.

Quis porro nos docet nisi stabilis veritas? Quia et per creaturam mutabilem cum admonemur, ad veritatem stabilem ducimur, ubi vere discimus, cum stamus et audimus eum et gaudio gaudemus propter vocem sponsi, reddentes nos, unde sumus. Et ideo

⁸¹ Herman Hausheer analyses this Augustinian idea in his article: 'Between God and the creature is the same difference as between a consciousness in which all the notes of a melody are simultaneously present and a consciousness which perceives them only in succession.' Herman Hausher, 'St. Augustine's Conception of Time', *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 46, 1937, pp.503-511, p. 504.

principium, quia, nisi maneret, cum erraremus, non esset quo rediremus. Cum autem rediremus ab errore, cognoscendo utique redimus; ut autem cognoscamus, docet nos, quia principium est et loquitur nobis.

(And who now teaches us but the unalterable Truth? Seeing that when we receive any admonishment through a mutable creature, we are but led along unto that unalterable Truth, where we learn truly, while we stand and hear him, rejoicing greatly because of the bridegroom's voice; and return ourselves back to that from whence we are derived. Which is therefore the Beginning, because unless it should remain firm, there should not be, when we erred, whither to return. Now when we return from error, it is by knowing, verily, that we do return: and that we may know, he teaches us; because he is the Beginning and spaketh unto us. *De conf. XI.VIII*)

In this last passage there are two categories of words: one consists on words of stability and the other one is the category of error. '*Stabilis veritas*', '*veritatem stabilem*', '*maneret*' are words linked to happiness, while '*creaturam mutabilem*', '*erraremus*', '*errore*' are the words of sins and change. The connection between the world of sin and the world of happiness is that we, as human beings are sinning now, and we should try to come back to a pure and sinless happiness: '*rediremus ab errore*'. The repetition of the verb '*re-dire*' underlines the action of going back: it means that salvation is reached through a backwards movement. Moreover, Augustine claims that God Himself can be found in this going back, '*quia principium est*'. In Book XI.XXX of *The Confessions* Augustine invites Christian people to look in a specific direction in order to find God:

Extendantur etiam in ea, quae ante sunt, et intellegant te ante Omnia tempora aeternum creatorem omnium temporum neque ulla tempora tibi esse coaeterna nec ullam creaturam, etiamsi est aliqua supra tempora.

(Let them stretch forth rather towards those things which are before; and understand thee the eternal Creator of all times, to have been before all times; and that no times be co-eternal with thee: no, nor any other creature even if there be any creature before all times. *De conf. XI.XXX*)

God is defined first *'ae, quae ante sunt'* , then *'ante omnia tempora aeternum creatorem omnium temporum'*. The adverb *'ante'* can mean a physical position of an object that is 'in front of' something else or a temporal position of something that is earlier than something else. So, it has different meanings depending on the context, space or time. Thus, the position of God, defined as *'ae, quae ante sunt'*, is *'supra tempora'*, that means that it is becoming quite complex to actually place Him and find Him for the sinners in order to be saved. God is out of time and at the beginning of time, when he started to create the universe (principium): this place/time is in the human memory as an ancestral experience before birth, however it could be even *'ante'*, that means in front of the subject.

In addition to these insights, in the *City of God*, Augustine analyses two points that are not mentioned in this Book of *The Confessions*: the temporal duration of seven days mentioned in the *Genesis* regarding the Creation and the creation of angels. As for the temporal duration of six days of the Creation, Augustine claims that the Scriptures can be misleading (*De civ. XI.XXX*). In fact, God created everything at the same time, as he does not need the progression of temporality: *'...materiam quidem de omnino nihilo, mundi autem speciem de informi materia, simul tamen utrumque fecisti, ut materiam forma nulla morae intercapedine sequeretur'* (*De Conf. XIII.XXXIII*). Saying that the creation took six days indicates the perfection of the Creation according to an arithmetical pattern: in fact the number six is the sum of each of his divisors: three, two, one. The number seven is perfect as well for different reasons and it indicates the divine rest. Augustine argues that it was not meant as a normal and human rest, as God does not need any rest and does not feel any efforts, in *The Confessions XIII.XXXVI* :

Dies autem septimus sine vespera est nec habet occasum, quia sanctificasti eum ad permansionem sempiternam, ut id, quod tibi post opera tua bona valde, quamvis ea quietus feceris, requievisti septimo die, hoc prae loquatur . Nobis vox libri tui, quod et nos post opera nostra ideo bona valde, quia tu nobis ea donasti, sabbato vitae aeternae requiescamus in te.

(But the seventh day is without any evening, nor hath it any setting: even because thou hast sanctified it to an everlasting continuance; that that thyself didst after thy

works which were Very good, Rest, namely, the Seventh day, (although even those works thou createdst without breaking thy rest) the same may the voice of thy book speak beforehand unto us; namely, that we also after our works (which are therefore Very good, because thou hast given them to us) may Rest in thee in the Sabbath of life everlasting. *De conf.* XIII.XXXVI)

To conclude, Augustine believes that the temporal duration of the creation given by the Bible does not mean temporality as human beings understand it: it rather shows an arithmetical design of perfection. According to Augustine, the Creation of the *Genesis* in the Bible engages temporality in a symbolic way, as the progression of days represents the perfect harmony of Creation. To conclude, the perfection and the harmony underpinned by the symbolical temporality of the creation can be identified in the harmony of the purgatorial temporality: the precision of durations and temporal measurements signify the perfection of a different kind of creation, the renew eternal life of the souls. This sort of temporality will lead to the eternal rest of the seventh day, next to God.

As for the angels, Augustine is concerned about the moment of their creation, about the moment of their fall and about what they actually know and feel in their perpetual condition. Augustine states that the angels were created as a part of the light that God made exist in the first day of the Creation (*De civ.* XI.X). Then, some of them fell and became darkness. At this point God divided the light from the darkness. All that is not clearly given by the Bible. However, Augustine argues that it is our responsibility to correctly read the story of the angelic life. The angels were created with time and they live in temporality, affected by the progression from a moment to another one. However, they will never die. This special temporal condition, which Boethius define 'perpetuity' as I will explain better in the following chapters, affects even their way of being: they experience a kind of happiness and wisdom that is not possible to human beings. Augustine describes an escalation of possible happiness' from men to God. In fact, the individual and personal experience of temporality and eternity which any beings can achieve means a particular state of mind and a particular spiritual condition:⁸² for instance, before Adam's fall, the

⁸² Quae cum ita sint, nullo modo quidem secundum spatium aliquod temporis prius errant spiritus illi tenebrae quos angelos dicimus; sed simul ut facti sunt,

potential happiness was greater and deeper for human beings, than the contemporary ones.⁸³ To conclude on this point, the Creation was the moment when God allows time to exist. Different creatures and entities have different ways of perceiving it: the angels, the first man, the contemporary living humans. They all have different awareness and different perceptions. Nevertheless, the Augustinian interpretation of *Genesis* demonstrates that temporality may involve harmony at each of these levels and the most perfect of those harmonies is God's Creation through an arithmetical design.

So how is the Augustinian temporality a specific model of time for Dante's *Purgatorio*? I will demonstrate that there are specific aspects of this model which shape the temporality of the *Purgatorio*: the spiritual transformative power of time and the direction of time. In the next section, I will illustrate how the Augustinian motion of temporality into humans' consciousness has been involved by Dante as well, in order to activate the purification of sins. I will demonstrate that rhythms and harmonies which are experiences by the sinners are used to operate a spiritual transformation. Then I will focus on the specific aspect of the direction of time as the most transformative and empowering.

lux facti sunt ; non tamen tantum ita creati ut quoquo modo essent et quoquo modo viverent ; sed etiam inluminati, ut sapienter beateque viverent. (De civ.XI.XI); Quis enim primos illos homines in paradise negare audeat beatos fuisse ante peccatum, quamvis sua beatitudo quam diuturna vel utrum aeterna incertos esset, (...), cum hodie non impudenter beatos vocemus quos videmus iuste ac pie cum spe future immortalitatis hanc vitam dicere (...). (*De civ.XI.XII*)

⁸³ This 'hierarchical' way of perceiving time and eternity according to an ontological scale has been studied by Jacques Le Goff, who recognizes a reflection of this in the Medieval French society too: 'Il repère aussi des façons différentes de concevoir et d'exprimer le rapport passé/ présent selon les classes sociales : le temps des philosophes , des théologiens et des poètes oscille entre la fascination du passé et l'élan vers le salut future (...), le temps du chevalier est un temps de la vitesse mais qui tourne facilement en ronde, confondant les temps, le temps du paysan est un temps de la régularité et de la patience, d'un passé dans lequel on cherche à maintenir le présent, le temps du bourgeois étant bien entendu celui qui distingue de plus présent/ passé/ future et qui s'oriente plus délibérément vers le future.' Jacques Le Goff , *Histoire et mémoire*, Gallimard, Paris, 1986, pp38-39.

Transformative Forms of Temporality: Harmonies and Poetry.

In the *Purgatorio*, the souls are able to sing, while in the *Inferno* sometimes they could not even properly speak and communicate. Their singing is often linked to the measurement of time and the canonical hours. Ronald L. Martinez has already analysed the importance of liturgy and of the celebration of the canonical hours in the *Purgatorio*. In fact, in the realm of the 'temporal foco' the reader is surprised since the beginning of the *Cantica* by the new capacity of the souls of singing and celebrating the liturgy, whereas the infernal sinners were only able to scream, weep, complain or, sometimes, hardly talk. These new skills of the purgatorial souls represent a new structure and frame in this new realm, as Ronald L. Martinez claims:

Liturgical adaptation permeates the *cantica*: Dante adapts or invokes a range of liturgical elements (psalms, hymns, canticles, antiphons, the canon of the Mass) and presents a wide variety of forms of singing, analogous to the variety in the official liturgy;⁸⁴

In this section I would like to underline how singing, liturgy and poetry are important instruments for souls' purification. All these ways of expressing rhythm and harmony develop in temporality and shape temporality too. As they allow temporality to be a proper transformative and empowering spiritual process, we can say that temporality is the essential path to purge sins. The performances of singing and poetries establish harmonies, rhythms, velocities and, according to St Augustine, they convey an internal transformation from future into past inside the soul. In fact, Augustine claims the non-existence of temporality per se, but time is actually a process or a transformation existing only in the soul, '*anima*'. And this is what purgatorial souls are supposed to do: they need a transformation and a

⁸⁴ See: Ronald L. Martinez, '*L'amoroso canto*': *Liturgy and Vernacular Lyric in Dante's 'Purgatorio'*, *Dante Studies*, John Hopkins University Press, pp.93-127; John C. Barnes, 'Vestiges of the Liturgy in Dante's Verse', In Barnes / Cuilleainain 1995: 231-69.

purification *'in anima'*. So, on one side the purgatorial path aims to overcome temporality, but on the other side the temporality itself is an important element with very positive effects, celebrated in the *Purgatorio*.

In the XIII century the art of singing was both a way to measure the time of the daily activities of the whole community through the liturgy and a mean used in the monastic communities of the western Christendom to train monks. The canonical hours were indicated and celebrated through continuous rituals and the monks were pushed to sing almost all day and night despite the natural need of sleeping and food.⁸⁵ In fact, music and singing were used as tools to synchronise with the angels, overwhelming human imperfections. In the second *Cantica* the practice of singing can be seen at any stages, from the beginning to the end, however there is a difference between the singing in the *Anti Purgatorio* and the proper *Purgatorio*. In the *Anti Purgatorio* the first group of souls that the Pilgrim encounters are singing: 'In exitu Israel de Aegypto. (Purg. II, 46)'; they sing during their trip on the boat to the purgatorial shore. Then, Casella and the other sinners sing again after their dialogue with the pilgrim, one of the song written by Dante in the *Convivio*: 'Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona'/ cominciò elli allor s' dolcemente, / che la dolcezza ancor dentro mi suona. ('Love that speaks reasons in my mind to me...'/ So he began, and in a tone so sweet / the sweetness, even now, sounds my heart. *Purg.* II, 113-115)'. However, they are reproached by Cato, who claims that they are too slow and they are wasting their time: 'ed ecco il veglio onesto/ gridando: " che è ciò , spiriti lenti? That stern old man: 'What's this? Malingering souls?' *Purg.*II,119-120)'. Then the Pilgrim meets the late repentant souls who sing the 'Miserere' (*Purg.*V, 22-24) and in the Valletta the kings are singing as well the 'Salve Regina' (*Purg.*VI, 82-84). While the lazy sinners and the excommunicated who dwell still in the *Anti Purgatorio*, do not sing. Furthermore, the motions' velocity of sinners' movements in the *Anti Purgatorio* is confused as well: some of them move slowly or just sit, some other are fast: 'che movieno i piè ver noi,/e non pareva, sì venian lente. (*Purg.*III, 59-60)'; 'e fuggir ver' la costa,/ com'om che va ,nè sa dove riesca; / nè la nostra partita

⁸⁵ Kathi-Mejer- Baer, 'Music in Dante's *Divina Commedia*', *Aspects Medieval and Renaissance Music*, 1967. Dante discusses the canonical hours in *Convivio* 3.6.2-3 and 4.23.14. For the life of medieval communities according to the canonical hours and the use of singing in the monasterys see Jacques le Goff , *Merchant's Time and Church's Time in the Late Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1980).

fu men tosta (and flee towards the cliff/ as people do, not knowing where they'll end./ Our own departure wasn't much less swift. *Purg.* II, 131-133)'. Thus, these are souls still looking for harmony and not yet synchronised with the purgatorial liturgical temporality; in fact, they are actually just waiting for their entrance in the *Purgatorio*, where the proper meditation and the purification will take place. On the other side, in the *Purgatorio* all the souls sing or pray mostly simultaneously and they move accordingly with increasing velocity. As the singing is developed in a more harmonious and rational pattern, the velocity and the pressure of Purgatory follows the same structure as Belacqua in the *Anti Purgatorio* has first explained:

Questa montagna è tale,
 che sempre al cominciar di sotto è grave;
 e quant'om più va sù , e men fa male.
 Però, quand'ella ti parrà soave tanto
 che sù andar ti fia leggero
 com'a seconda giù andar per nave,
 allor sarai al fin d'esto sentiero;

(This mountain is by nature such/ that, down below, the start is always hard, / yet hurts far less the more one rises up/ And so when you will find the going smooth,/ floating as lightly upwards in ascent / as boats the travel down a flowing stream,/ you'll then have reached the end of this rough path. *Purg.* IV, 88-96).

In addition to this synchronised use of liturgy and singing, the Cantica of the *Purgatorio* is the Cantica of the celebration of poetry.⁸⁶ I claim that this celebration

⁸⁶ The most crucial purgatorial personalities are poets: first of all Virgilio, who is celebrated by both Sordello and Statius, who are two poets as well. In Canto VI the first description of Sordello is a clear celebration of the poet himself: 'Venimmo a lei: o anima lombarda,/ come ti stavi altera e disdegnosa/ e nel mover de li occhi onesta e tarda! / Ella non ci dicea alcuna cosa,/ ma lasciavane gir, solo sguardando/ a guise di leon quando si posa. (*Purg.* VI, 61-63)'. In this description Sordello could recall Farinata or the other superb infernal sinner due to the adjectives : 'altera' and 'disdegnosa', however the following couple of adjectives readdress the description in a positive way : 'onesta e tarda'. Finally, the final simile with a lion confers to the poet a noble and brave aspect. Then Sordello glorify Virgilio: 'O gloria di Latin, disse, per cui/ mostrò cià che potea la lingua nostra,/ o pregio eterno del loco ond'io fui,/ qual merito o qual grazia mi ti mostra? (*Purg.* VII, 16-19)'. Sordello underlines the power of language that finds in the

underlines the importance of the Augustinian model of time. In fact, Augustine establishes an important connection between poetry and extension of time in Book XI of *De Confessiones*.⁸⁷ Here, Augustine indicates the motion of time as lines of a

poetry the maximum of its possibilities of expression, and then he uses the word 'eterno' to define the fame of Virgil: the link between 'lingua nostra' and 'pregio eterno' is particularly striking. In Canto XXI the Pilgrim meets Statius who will be a guide for all the path to Eden, and he still stays even after the disappearing of Virgilio. When he first comes into view, he looks like a *figura Christi*: 'Ed ecco, sì come ne scrive Luca/ che Cristo apparve a' due ch'erano in via,/giù surto fuor de la supulcral buca,/ci apparve un'ombra, e dietro di noi venia/dal piè guardando la turba che giace. (Purg. XXI, 7-11)'. The impression that Statius is a figure of Christ is reinforced by the earthquake. Moreover, in the terrace VI, the Pilgrim meets Bonagiunta. This character, another poet, delivers a prophecy, the only one positive prophecy of the whole *Cantica* about a nice lady who will support Dante in Lucca. Then he recognizes the Pilgrim as a poet and he mentions one of Dante's poetry *Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore*. The Pilgrim and Bonagiunta discuss about the *Dolce Stil Novo*: 'Io veggio bene come le vostre penne/ di retro al dittator se vanno strette/che de le nostre certo non avvenne; (Purg. XXIV, 58-60)'. In addition to this encounter, Dante personaggio meets Guido Guinizzelli in the Terrace VII. Moreover, the poetic experiences of the author himself open the second *Cantica* recalling one of the songs written by Dante in the *Convivio* (Canto II) and close it by the celebration of Beatrice as she has been celebrated in the *Vita Nuova* and the meeting with Matelda in Eden strongly recalls to the bucolic poetic tradition.

⁸⁷ For St Augustine and time see: Isaac Miller, 'St Augustine, the Narrative Self, and the Invention of Fiction', *Qui Parle*, Vol. 8 (1995), pp. 54-82) Miller argues that Augustine gives to the temporality linguistic properties: he claims that Augustine does not think time in visual terms like Plotinus, but in narrative term. Peter Manchester, 'The Temporality of Trinity in Augustine' *Temporality and Trinity*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2015. Eugene Vance has already analysed the link between words and temporality, in Augustine, especially the biblical word: Eugene Vance, 'Confessions and the Poetics of the Law', *MLN*, Vol. 93, N-4, 1978, pp. 618-634; Eugene Vance, 'Language as Temporality' *marvellous Signals: poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989; Marcia L. Colish, *The Mirror of Language: a Study in the medieval Theory of Knowledge*, Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983. In addition to this, Jacques Le Goff indicates the strong link between memory, temporality on one side and poetry on the other side since the antiquity: he analyses the Greek mythologic character of Mnemosine, the memory, who was the mother of the nine Muses, generated after nine nights with Jupiter: 'La poésie identifiée à la mémoire fait de celle-ci un savoir et même une sagesse, une *Sophia*. Le poète prend place parmi les maîtres de vérité et aux origines de la poétique grecque la parole poétique est une inscription vivante qui s'inscrit dans la mémoire comme dans le marbre. (...) Mnémósyne en révélant au poète les secrets du passé l'introduit aux mystères de l'au-delà. (...) Elle est l'antidote de l'Oubli. Dans l'enfer orphique le mort doit éviter la source d'oubli, ne pas boire au Lethé, mais au contraire s'abreuver à la fontaine de

poem moving from the expectations of them in the human soul to the memory of them, once they have been pronounced aloud. Thus, the powerful possibility of a spiritual transformation can be realized by the temporal flow, through poetry. In the chapter XXVIII of the Book XI Augustine wonders how is possible to measure time when it does not seem to increase or decrease or even exist:

Sed quomodo minuitur aut consumitur futurum, quod nondum est, aut quomodo crescit praeteritum, quod iam non est [...]?

(But how comes that future, which as yet is not, to be diminished or wasted away? *De conf. XI. XXVIII*)

Then Augustine claims that the future is actually in the waiting of it and the past is actually in the memory of it:

Non igitur longum tempus futurum, quod non est, sed longum futurum longa expectatione future est, neque longum praeteritum tempus, quod non est, sed longum praeteritum longa memoria preteriti est.

(The future therefore is not a long time, for it is not: but the long future time is merely a long expectation of the future. Nor is the time past a long time, for it is not; but a long past time is merely a long memory of the past time. *De conf. XI. XXVIII*)

In this passage Augustine denies future's and past's real existences: in fact, only expectation and memory do exist. That means that temporality is not an entity *per se* but it is merely an internal human action and perception of its own action. To explain this idea Augustine indicates poetry as an example:

Dicturus sum canticum, quod novi: antequam incipiam, in totum expectatio mea tenditur, cum autem coepero, quantum ex illa in praeteritum decerpsero, tenditur et memoria mea, atque distenditur vita huius actionis meae in memoriam propter quod dixi et in expectationem propter quod dicturus sum: praesens tamen adest attentio

Mémoire , qui est une source d'immortalité.' (Jacques Le Goff , *Histoire et mémoire*, Paris: Gallimard, 1986, p.125).

mea, per quam traicitur quod erat futurum, ut fiat praeteritum. Quod quanto magis agitur et agitur, tanto breviata expectatione prolongatur memoria, donec tota expectation consumatur, cum tota illa actio finita transierit in memoriam.

(I am about to repeat a psalm that I know. Before I begin, my expectation alone reaches itself over the whole: but so soon as I shall have once begun, how much so ever of it I shall have once begun, how much so ever of it I shall take off into the past, over so much my memory so far as concerns that part which I have repeated already, and into my expectation too, in respect of what I am about to repeat now; but all this while is my marking faculty present at hand, through which, that which was future, is conveyed over, that it may become past: which how much the more the expectation being shortened, is the memory enlarged; till the whole expectation be at length vanished quite away, when namely, that whole action being ended shall be absolutely passed into memory. *De conf.* XI. XXVIII)

Here, Augustine describes the present as attention and the focus which push the words into memory from expectation: the words are transformed from expected entities into elements of our memory. This transformation is underlined by the chiasmus 'quanto magis agitur et agitur tanto breviata expectatione'. Performing a poetry reading increases the quantity of memory and decrease the expectation. Thus, according to Augustine, what we call temporality is the interaction between our attention, memory and expectation. The 'canticum' has always been there in the expectation: through our internal dialogue, it 'agitur' from one part of ourselves to another. That means that temporality exists and can be measured in the soul and it is an inner dimension: in te, anime meus, tempora metior. (*De con.* XI.XXVII).

To conclude, I think that the use of the liturgy and the action of singing first convey and express a major degree of harmony which was not possible in the *Inferno*, which develop a transformation of the soul, as it was meant to be in the medieval monastic communities. Moreover, from an Augustinian perspective, temporality is explained by poetry and by the passage of words from the world of the 'expectatio' into the world of 'memoria'. That means that performing a reading, or other sequences of words, for instance a liturgy, implies an internal transformation operated by the attention from expectation into memory: this transformation is what is normally called time. Augustine claims that 'anima' is the

place of time. So I argue that the *Purgatorio* is more than a mere temporary hereafter, with a beginning and an end, from an Augustinian perspective we can claim that it is a place where the soul is purified and transformed through temporality. Temporality is a very important element of the purification in any of its aspects and manifestations: through rhythm, velocity of motions, liturgy, rhythm, singing and poetry. It is an inner important instrument, which aims to go beyond temporality itself, in the eternity.

So, I have already demonstrated that temporality is not only a positive element in the purgatorial purification, but the structure of the purification itself, now I would like to draw the attention to the Augustinian argument on the direction of time: Augustine claims that the words of the 'canticum' during a performance move from the expectation, the future, to the memory, the past. I argue that among all the aspects of time, its direction is very important and it is not been carefully explored yet by the Scholarship. In fact, the recent Scholarship generally engages with the idea of a dantean Purgatory as the kingdom of temporality and history, foreign to the eternal world. John A. Scott claims that the summit of Dante's Purgatory represents not spiritual beatitude but rather earthly happiness: 'the Earthly Paradise is indeed to be found there, situated above the Purgatory proper, and it is Virgil, the Aristotelianized poet of imperial Rome, who guides Dante there [...] the very same Earthly Paradise, which for Dante reflected the happiness attainable through Justice and the teachings of philosophy.' Like Scott, Singleton argues that Dante-character on reaching the summit of Mount Purgatory attains only 'the rule of reason over the lower parts of the soul, on which Aristotle and Plato spoke'.⁸⁸ In addition to this, the authoritative commentaries of Bosco Reggio and Chiavacci Leonardi sustain that the secular goal of the Dante's *De Monarchia* are equal with the summit of the Earthly Paradise.⁸⁹ That means that numerous scholars identified the purgatorial path as the journey to an earthly and political fulfilment of men's destiny, while the *Paradiso* is the proper journey to God, according to the structure of the double goals of the *De Monarchia*. Thus, features and purposes of the *Purgatorio* seem to be strictly temporal. However, George

⁸⁸ Charles S. Singleton, *Journey to Beatrice*, Cambridge, ma: 1958, p.65.

⁸⁹ Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia, Purgatorio*, a cura di U- Bosco e G. Reggio, Firenze: Le Monnier Scuola, 1981. Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, a cura di Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, Milano: Mondadori, 1992.

Corbett answers to that tradition with his reading of the *Purgatorio* as a theological path, which leads ‘towards God and to the *beatitudo vitae aeternae*’.⁹⁰ Furthermore, some other scholars, like Fergusson in *Dante’s Drama of Mind*, underline the importance of temporality in the Purgatory but under the aspects of velocity and rhythm of sinners’ motions.⁹¹

In the next sections, I will focus only on one aspect of temporality: its direction. It has already been told that time has been used in the *Purgatorio* under many forms and aspects and that all of them are transformative. However, this has already been displayed by the Dantean Scholarship as I pointed out. I think that what was not considered with enough care and what deserves here great attention as an original and new reading is related to the direction of time. Thus, in the following sections I will focus on this aspect and I will demonstrate that purgatorial temporality develops in an inverted direction, according to the Augustinian model of ‘redire ab errore’. I will show that the collective history as well as the personal story of the individual is not retold along the path of the *Purgatorio*. Even though, Dante refers to and enacts the ritual of the confession, actually the purgatorial path is more than a confession or a chronological narrative which moves from sin to salvation: I will show that the Pilgrim actually moves backwards in time and this backwards direction involves the undoing of one individual’s life, much more than the narrative of it, due to the progression from the future to the beginning of time. So, I will focus only on specific passages of the *Purgatorio* which engage with the aspect of direction and specifically of the direction of time. I will indicate how the Dantean *Purgatorio* could describe temporality as a motion from a corrupted future towards a pure and edenic memory.

In the very next section, I will analyse the explanation about love and sin delivered by Virgil in the *Purgatorio* Canto XVII, as, here, at the heart of the *Cantica* and of the overall *Comedy*, the issue of direction is fundamental.

⁹⁰ George Corbett, ‘The Christian Ethics of Dante’s Purgatory’, *Medium Aevum*, 2014, pp267-88.

⁹¹ The journey is in two main parts, Cantos X-XVI, in which the Pilgrim toils upward slowly, by muscular and moral effort, understanding little; and Cantos XV-XVIII, when he ascends more easily as his understanding and freedom increase together. (Fergusson, Francis, *Dante’s Drama of the Mind*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1953, p.53).

The Direction of Sin

In the *Purgatorio* everyone move towards specific destinations and purposes: for instance, the wayfarers pursue their progression through the meditations on sins, their singing, rituals and motions. They can fulfil their purification only according to specific directions in space and in time. All these actions are designed in space and time, so that they have rhythms and measurements in order to fulfil their purpose of purification.

I will show that the importance of the aspect of the direction of time throughout that process and progression is supported by the reflection on love and sin in the *Purgatorio* Canto XVII. In fact, here, the sin is conveyed as love addressed to the wrong object, consequently it must be corrected through readdressing its direction. I will demonstrate that this representation of sin and love is one of the main evidence of a temporal retrograde path in the *Purgatorio*. The sinners are invited to readdress love, will and thoughts as well as motions and time, as this readdressing on one side will undo their life and their sins and on the other side it will harmonize them according to the divine will, in a new eternal life. So, as in the *Purgatorio* everything must be readdressed towards a new direction, temporality is readdressed as well.

Thus, I would like to analyse canto XVII, where Virgil delivers his explanation of sin as addressing love in a disordered way or turning it to evil, in more details, so that I can enlighten how and why the aspect of direction is crucial throughout the entire *cantica*, strongly affecting the issue of the direction of time.⁹² It is not by chance that this important topic of love, desire and sin is in the central Canto of the

⁹² The Scholarship has generally analysed the dantean topic of love on the basis of the investigations on the *Vita Nuova*, and one of the most important is: Charles Singleton, *An Essay on the Vita Nuova*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press: 1977). However, on the topic of love, direction, and time see: Margherita De Bonfils Temper, 'Amore e le Visioni nella 'Vita Nuova'', *Dante Studies*, 1977, pp. 19-34 and Barbara Nolan, 'Vita Nova': Dante's Book of Revelation', *Dante Studies*, 1970, pp. 51-77. Particularly, Barbara Nolan's insights indicate the effects of memory in the construction of the love for Beatrice.

Commedia, which Robert M. Durling and Ronald Martinez describe as 'the central principle of all things as well as the central problem of human life'.⁹³

This Canto opens up with an image of an emerging sun from mist: it is nearly the sunset and the Pilgrim is in the horizon of night and day. This situation on the border prepares the reader to the discussion about choices and responsibility. In addition to this, in the *Inferno*, the Canto XVII is the Canto of Geryon that has been described by Durling as an infernal image and representation of the sun due to its circulations. Now, in the *Purgatorio* the Pilgrim can spot the real sun, but still not clearly: especially, here, in the *Purgatorio* XVII the sunset conveys an ambiguous situation where both the light and the dark are not able to prevail. The Pilgrim enquires about the vice purged on this terrace and receives a direct answer (lines 85-87): Virgil's definition of sloth as a deficiency of love has introduced the key term; this leads naturally into Virgil's long exposition.⁹⁴ In addition to this introduction to the explanation on love and sin, we can identify one of the typical Virgil's exhortations to the Pilgrim which suggests few elements of the exposition too:

Questo è divino spirto, che ne la
via da ir sù ne drizza senza prego,
e col suo lume sé medesimo cela [...]
Or accordiamo a tanto invito il piede;
Procacciam di salir pria che s'abbui,
ché poi non si poria, se 'l dì non riede.

(This spirit is divine. Before we've asked/ it indicates the way to go above, and hides itself within the light it gives./ It treats us as we like to treat ourselves/ For those

⁹³ *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Purgatorio*, Ed. And Trans. by Robert M. Durling, New York: Oxford University Press, p.287. See also Singleton: 'Thus Love, as the central concern and argument is seen to in from both God's world and the poet's world, where at the centre of both- and this we shall hardly view as an accident.' (Charles Singleton, *An Essay on the Vita Nuova*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press: 1977p.1)

⁹⁴ Aquinas defines sloth (acedia) as 'a kind of sadness whereby one becomes sluggish in spiritual exercises because they weary body'. (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. by Thomas Gilby, New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1967, 1a q.63 a.2 ad. 2).

who see a need yet wait for prayers/ ill-willingly stand ready to refuse. *Purg.* XVII, 54-63)

The movement of the wayfarers are described in term of direction and rhythm through the use of the following verbs: 'ir sù', 'drizza', 'salir' are verbs which describe upwards motion and 'accordiamo' recalls the idea of harmony and rhythm. Furthermore, these motions must be done by the end of the day: 'pria che s'abbui'. The language used in this passage introduces and reinforces the design of a purification which must fulfil and respect temporal deadlines, durations, limits in both space and time and, obviously, directions. Moreover, the precision of the description of wayfarers' movements unveils the reflection on the direction and on the velocity of love which Virgil will display in lines 91-99. Furthermore, in that kind of context, the light is not completely visible as the sunset is approaching or it is too intense to be tolerated (*Purg.* XVII, 57-59), so that it expresses the struggle about finding the right direction.

Virgil's account implies a tree-diagram by which the genus in question is subdivided into species: Virgil first asserts the love of Creator and creatures alike; he then divides the love of creatures into natural and elective loves; error is possible only among the latter, as instinctual loves are not liable to praise and blame, and thus only among creatures capable of rational choice, which means humans.⁹⁵ Elective love is unerring when it aims at the final end, God, or when it gauges desire for secondary goods. It may err in two ways: when it turns to evil or when approaches defectively or excessively. The first one type of erring is the worst and most dangerous, while the excess or lack of intensity represent a minor sin: so, even in the most evil action the first cause has been the desire of love.⁹⁶

The description of sin as an issue of direction is Augustinian as well. In the *De civitate Dei*, Augustine involves the problem of directions explaining sinful action,

⁹⁵ About most recent scholarship on the topic of desire see: Lino Pertile, *la punta del disio. Semantica del desiderio nella 'Commedia'*, Fiesole: Cadmo, 2005, Elena Lombardi, Manuele Gagnolati, *Amor che move. Linguaggio del corpo e forma del desiderio in Dante, Pasolini e Morante*, (Milan: il Saggiatore, 2013). See also essays in the volume *Desire in Dante and the Middle Ages*, ed. by Manuele Gagnolati, Tristan Kay, Elena Lombardi and Francesca Southerden, Oxford:Legenda 2012.

⁹⁶ See: *ST* 1a 2ae q.41 a.2: 'All passions of the soul derive from one principle, that is to say from love' and q.46: 'Love then is the first root of all the passions'.

however he is more focused on the 'voluntas' of men than on love. Nevertheless, both of those forces, the dantean 'amore' and the Augustinian 'voluntas' are energies absolutely positive and essential for any human beings, but if they fail in focusing on the right purposes, they can lead to evil:

Interest autem qualis sit voluntas hominis, quia si perverse est, perversos habebit hos motus, si autem recta est, non solum inculpabiles verum etiam laudabiles erunt. Voluntas est quipped in omnibus, immo omnes nihil aliud quam voluntates sunt. (...) Quapropter homo qui secundum Deum, non secundum hominem vivit oportet ut sit amator boni, unde fit consequens ut malum oderit. Et quoniam nemo natura, sed quisquis malo est vitium malus est, perfectum odium debet malis qui secundum Deum vivit,(...).

Moreover, the character of a man's will makes a difference. For if it is wrong, these emotions will be wrong; but if it is right, they will be not only not blameworthy but even praiseworthy. The will is indeed involved in them all, or rather, they are no more than acts of will. (...) Therefore, the man who lives not according to man is bound to be a lover of the good, and the consequence is that he hates evil. Moreover, since no one is evil by nature but whosoever is evil is so because of some defect, (...). (*De civ. XIV.VI*)

In this Augustine's passage the key word is: 'voluntas' that it is once translated as 'character' but I actually find 'will' more correct. The will moves on ('motus'), 'perverse' or 'recta', that means it can move to the misleading direction or towards the right destination. Thus, the matter of moral choices and sins analysed by Aquinas and Augustine in term of the right direction to address love, desire or will. The same idea is developed by Virgil in his speech to the Pilgrim in Canto XVII of Purgatory:

"Nè creator nè creatura mai,"
cominciò el, "figliuol, fu senza amore,
o natural o d'animo; e tu 'l sai.
Lo natural è sempre senza errore,
ma l'altro puote errar per malo obietto
o per troppo o per poco di vigore.

Mentre ch'elli è nel primo ben diretto,
e nè secondi sè stesso misura,
esser non può cagion di mal diletto;

(Neither creator nor created thing/ was ever, dearest son, without' (he starts) / 'the love of mind or nature. You know that./ The natural love can never go astray./ The other, though, may err when wrongly aimed,/ or else through too much vigour or the lack./ Where mind- love sets itself on primal good/ and keeps, in secondaries, a due control, it cannot be the cause of false delight. *Purg.* XVII, 91-99)

Virgil states that nature is perfect and full of love, however men can sin due to a 'malo obietto', a wrong object they are attracted by. If love is 'ben diretto', that means if it is going in the direction of good and God, it would not be possible to sin anymore. Dante calls God 'primo', the first and everything else is called 'secondi', the second: he states that human love is correctly addressed to the 'primo', however it becomes a sinful love when it is directed to 'secondi'. On the other hand, Augustine uses a different way to express these ideas: the will that goes to God is defined: 'secundum Deum' and the evil will is called: 'secundum hominem'. Dante claims the same but instead he involves two ordinal pronouns: 'primo' and 'secondo'. Thus, we can see that the objects of human love are located by Dante on a time line through these metaphors: God is 'primo', as he exists first and creation is 'secondo' as it came afterwards its creator. Therefore, the Augustinian idea of sin as a will moving to the wrong direction is underlined in Virgil's speech and transformed towards the idea of a temporal direction where the human will has to move. To conclude on this point, Dante adopts the belief that at the basis of a sinful choice there is a direction which is 'perverse' instead of 'recta'. I argue that Dante's use of language tends to represent these ideas under a temporal and spatial perspective, due to the ordinal pronouns 'primo' and 'secondo'. When human beings are sinful they move to the 'secondo' rather than to the 'primo'. So, purification means walking backwards: from the 'secondo' to the 'primo'.

In addition to this point, I would like to draw the attention to the verbs of rising and falling used for the visions in line 25, 34, 43, 47, 52, 56, 62 of this Canto: 'piovve', 'surse', 'cadde giuso', 'monta', 'grava', 'sù ne drizza', 'salir'. This alternation

of motions towards opposite direction underlines the content of Virgil's explanation about love addressed to the 'malo obietto'. Furthermore we can identify a repetition of the verb 'volgere' which signifies the actual change of focus and direction: 'mi volgea', 'volgemmo', 'volgi', 'volger' (lines 46, 65, 89, 107).

To conclude, the explanation delivered by Virgil on love and sin, points to the direction to which human beings should address their love. Sin is represented like will which follows the wrong direction or has a disordered way of proceeding. This idea is supported and underlined by the type of verbs of rising and falling engaged in the Canto. Consequently, purifying sins means readdressing attention, will and love. Both the content and the kind of language of this explanation reinforce the concept that the liberation from sins can be pursued focusing on the aspect of direction. This idea has its roots in the Augustinian ideas: in fact Augustine in the *De civitate Dei* represents sins as will addressed 'perverse', which is an adverb derived from the verb 'perverto': to address something towards another direction. Thus, I claim that the focus on direction and the Augustinian background of this reflection supports the idea of a temporality that must be readdressed too. In fact, the need of a change in the direction of human attention and will in order to obtain the liberation from sins, is evidence that a change in the temporal perception must be done too. In the next section I will describe the new geography of the *Purgatorio* compared with Hell and the shift made by the Pilgrim to gain access to it: I will show how they are evidences of the new readdressing of time too.

Geographical and Astronomical Inversion.

As soon as the Pilgrim arrives in the *Purgatorio* the first great new vision consists of the sky and the stars.⁹⁷ They are ones of the most important elements of the new geography and landscape: in fact, in almost each there is a description of the

⁹⁷ For a general account about astronomical structures in the three Canticas, see: Corrado Gizzi, 'L'astronomia nel poema sacro' 2 vols, 1974, Loffredo, Naples. Gizzi underlines the platonic frame of the *Paradiso*, too. One of the last and important work on the astronomy in the *Commedia* is from Alison Cornish, *Reading Dante's Stars*, New Haven, Yale UP, 2000. Alison Cornish claims that Dante's astronomy is actually ethical inasmuch as it demands a personal application and interpretation: according to Alison Cornish the constellations are invitations to virtue.

astronomical landscape and they measure the duration of the Pilgrim's path and of sinners' punishments. In addition to this, the new particular path of the sun and the location of the stars indicate that the Pilgrim has changed hemisphere and that he is moving in an inverted spatial and temporal dimension. That means that in the *Purgatorio* not only the direction of love must be readdressed but even elements in nature and heaven move according to an inverted pattern. So, if the stars which measure time move in the opposite direction compared with the stars of the northern hemisphere, is the direction of temporality opposite too? Is the Pilgrim moving towards the future or towards the past?

First of all, I would like to answer analysing the Pilgrim's kind of access to the purgatorial second realm, at the end of the *Inferno*. In fact, he says to find himself suddenly 'sottosopra', as we can read in the following passage:

Ov'è la ghiaccia? e questi com'è fitto
sì sottosopra? e come, in sì poc'ora,
da sera a mane ha fatto il sol tragitto?
[...] quand'io mi volsi, tu passati 'l punto
al qual si traggono d'ogne parte i pesi.
E se' or sotto l'emisperio giunto
ch'è contraposto a quel che la gran secca
coverchia, e sotto 'l cui colmo consunto
fu l'uomo che nacque senza pecca;

(Where is the ice? And why is that one there/ fixed upside down? How is it that the sun/progressed so rapidly from evening on to day? [...] But once I turned, you crossed, with me, the point/ to which from every part all weight drags down./So you stand here beneath the hemisphere/ that now is covered wholly with dry land, under the highest point at which there died/ the one man sinless in his birth and life.
Inf. XXXIV 103-5; 110-15)

In this final moment of the *Inferno*, the Pilgrim feels confused and he is not able to locate himself. The Pilgrim's questions first recall an inverted situation in spatial term, like 'sottosopra', then he wonders about the temporal asset measured by the sun's circulation. Virgilio explains that they have just overcome the cosmos' turning

point and they accessed at this reversal world, where the sun has an opposite direction than usual: they have crossed the midcosmos, the centre of the Planet Earth. Virgilio argues that the Pilgrim is now under the zenith opposite to that Jerusalem, under which Christ was crucified. In fact, Jerusalem was thought the centre of the hemisphere of land.⁹⁸ Thus, the shift in hemisphere implies a change in their temporal position too. At *Inf.* XXXIV.68 it was evening, about 6 P.M., Jerusalem time. Now, since the wayfarers are in the opposite hemisphere, it is morning, and the sun has reached the point in the sky corresponding to about 8.30 A.M.⁹⁹ Then Virgilio tells that there was once land in what now is the hemisphere of water (line 113), but that at Satan's approach it fled to the other hemisphere, entirely covering the other hemisphere with dry land. So even from a geographical perspective, the sin, Satan, has changed the geography towards the wrong direction. Now the Pilgrim is readdressing himself to the southern hemisphere where even time has been inverted: 'qui è da man, quando di là è sera;/e questi, che ne fè scala col pelo,/fitto è ancora sì come prim'era.' (It's morning here. It's evening over there./ The thing that made a ladder of his hair/ is still as fixed as he has always been. *Inf.* XXXIV, 118-20). I think that these three lines perfectly describe the temporal and geographical perspective of Pilgrim's situation: there are 'qui' and 'là', which are geographical opposite paces, the two hemispheres. They are both in time as they see mornings 'man' or evenings 'sera'. Their temporality is reversed, as time flows in two opposite directions. In the middle of this circulation of temporality and at the centre of these two spaces affected by time, there is a never ending and fixed reality: Satan: 'fitto è ancora sì, come prim'era'. However, Satan has been a 'scala' for them, that means that he has been a way towards an inverted world: the southern hemisphere: 'che ne fè scala col pelo'.

Furthermore, the first Canto of the Purgatory recalls the beginning of the *Inferno*, as Durling has carefully analysed:¹⁰⁰ that means that it is a new beginning

⁹⁸ *The Vulgate Bible*, trans. by Douay-Rheims, London: Harvard University press, 2010, Ezek. 5.5: 'I have set her in the midst of the nations'

⁹⁹ 'la via è lunga e 'l cammino è malvagio,/ e già il sole a mezza terza riede.' (*Inf.*XXXIV, 95-896). This is the last indication of time delivered by Virgilio in this Cantica and it is part of the numerous esortations to be faster made by Virgilio.

¹⁰⁰ 'In *Inferno* I, we have: A. upward gaze: the mountain lit by the rising sun (16-18); B. the Pilgrim turns back to gaze at the (metaphorical) sea (22-27); C. he begins to climb buti s blocked (28-54) and D. driven back down the slope (55-60); E. he sees Virgil and

but towards a different destination. In fact, in the *Purgatorio* the progression of the Pilgrim's path will be upwards, with the blessing of a ritual of rebirth,¹⁰¹ while in Hell will be downwards after the deathly dangers represented by three beasts.

So, how is the new inverted geographical and temporal situation conveyed in *Purgatorio* I? First of all, the Pilgrim is able to look at the sky and at the stars again:

I' mi volsi a man destra e puosi mente
a l'altro polo, e vidi quattro stelle
non viste mai fuor ch'a la prima gente.
goder pareva il ciel di lor fiammelle.

(I turned now to the right. I set my mind/up on the southern pole, and saw four stars/ that none – save Adam and Eve- ever saw./The heavens, it seemed, rejoiced in these four gleams. *Purg.* I, 22-5)

In this passage, the Pilgrim is observing the new astronomical landscape for the first time.¹⁰² There is an invented constellation, invisible to all save Adam and Eve in the Earthly Paradise and thus very close to the pole. It will be identified in Canto XXIX and XXXI as representing the four cardinal virtues, justice, temperance, prudence, and fortitude. The first topic which the Pilgrim engages with as soon as he emerges from the earth is the astronomical description of the new situation: now the Pilgrim can see again: 'lo bel pianeta', 'i Pesci', 'quattro stelle' and 'l'Carro' which is almost disappearing. This vision fulfils and connects to the description in the last lines of the previous Cantica:

appeals to him (61-90); F. Virgil prescribes the journey to the other world (91-120); G. Virgil explains his damnation (121-29); H. the descent into Hell begins (136). In a different order and with vastly different significance, these elements recur in *Purgatorio* I: I(cf.A). upward gaze (no sing of the mountain, but full expanse of sky); II. The view is blocked (cf. C) by Cato, another classical figure, III: to whom Virgil appeals (cf. E), IV referring to Cato's salvation (cf. G); V Cato prescribes their path (cf. F); VI. As the Pilgrim and Virgil descend to the shore he sees the trembling of the sea (cf. D,H).' (Robert M. Durling, *Purgatorio*, p.33).

¹⁰¹ 'oh meraviglia! Ché qual elli scelse/l'umile pianta, cotal si rinacque/ subitamente là inde l'avelse. (*Purg.* I, 134-6).

¹⁰² For a detailed account of the geography and astronomy of the southern hemisphere see: Charles Singleton, 'Stars over Eden', *Annual Report of Dante Society*, 1957, pp. 1-18. On the controversy over the physical existence of the Earthly Paradise see: Ernst Schlee, 'Die Ikonographie der Paradiesesflüsse' *Studien über Christliche Denkmaler*, N.F.24; Leipzig Dieterich, 1937.

Lo duca e io per quel cammino ascoso
intrammo a ritornar nel chiaro mondo;
e senza cura aver d'alcun riposo
salimmo su, el primo e io secondo,
tanto ch'io vidi de le cose belle
che porta 'l ciel, per un pertugio tondo.
E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.

(So now we entered on that hidden path,/ my lord and I, to move once more
towards / a shining world. We did not care the rest. / We climbed, he going first and
I behind,/ until through some small aperture I saw/ the lovely things the skies above
us bear./ Now we came out, and once saw the stars. *Inf.* XXXIV, 133-39)

'Riveder le stelle' seems to be the purpose of the 'cammino ascoso' and at the beginning of the *Purgatorio* Canto I, in fact, after the invocation to the Muses, Dante first of all describes them. How this new and old vision of the sky at the beginning of the *Purgatorio* is engaged in the retrograde journey in time? I would like to point at two verbs of the last passage of the *Inferno*: 'ritornar' and 'riveder'. They recall a retrograde journey in space, suggesting the idea of coming back to a place where the characters have already been and to see things which have already been seen by them. In addition to this, the direction of their movements looks changed as well: they are not descending anymore like as did in their infernal path. They are now ascending: 'salimmo su'. Moreover, the order of this ascending is specified too, as Virgilio is first and the Pilgrim is second: 'el primo e io secondo', that means that what is on the top is first and what is underneath is second. So, first of all the crossing of the midcosmos involves the change of the direction of the journey, from a descending direction to an ascending one. Secondly, it conveys a numerical progression of the path, where the first corresponds to the top and the second to a lower position. Thirdly, the verbs 'ri-tornare' and 'ri-vedere' suggest that the Pilgrim is not really discovering anything new, but he is coming back.

The implication of this shift and the astronomical condition of the new hemisphere are clarified along the path, as we can see in the following passage of Canto IV:

Come ciò sia, se 'l vuoi poter pensare,
dentro raccolto, imagina Sion
con questo monte in su la terra stare
s', ch'amendue hanno un solo orizzon
e diversi emisperi; onde la strada
che mal non seppe carreggiar Feton,
vedrai come a costui convien che vada
da l'un, quando a colui da l'altro fianco,
se lo 'ntelletto tuo ben chiaro bada.

(And if you need to get your mind round that/ imagine Zion – harvest that within- /
and how that mountain stands upon the globe/ so that, though set in different
hemispheres,/ the same horizon bounds that Mount and this./ From which you'll see
(if you think clearly now)/ the road where Phaeton had no skill to drive/ was bound
to travel north of the mid-line,/ and south, conversely, of Jerusalem. *Purg. IV, 67-75*)

Canto IV has been defined by Durling 'a small globe traversed by the motion of the sun'.¹⁰³ In fact, the sun is mentioned as risen high in the sky in lines 15-16, then it is mentioned other seven times as it reaches the meridian (noon) and then it breaks the line of horizon at the moment of sunset in Purgatory (*Purg. VIII, 1-6*). In this context Virgilio delivers an astronomical and geographical account about the position of Mount Purgatory: it is in the southern hemisphere and the path of the sun follows the opposite direction compared with the direction which the sun follows from Jerusalem's point of view. Sion is a mountain opposite to the Mount Purgatory: according to Virgilio they have the same horizon, but different directions. Durling claims that Dante draws on the metaphorical horizon in *De Mon. 3.16.3-6*¹⁰⁴ to account for the two distinct goals of human striving: since the embodied human soul is on the horizon of the eternal and the temporal, it is fitting that it has two goals, justice in this life and beatitude in the next, a *vita activa* and a *vita speculativa*. That means that according to Durling's view the double mountains with one horizon

¹⁰³ Robert M. Durling, *Purgatorio*, p.75.

¹⁰⁴ Dante Alighieri, *De Monarchia*, ed. by Federico Sanguineti, Milano: Garzanti, 2011.
See: Bruno Nardi, *Saggi e note di critica dantesca*. Milan: Ricciardi, 1966 and Robert M. Durling, p.74

lead to the distinction of active and contemplative life and this is even demonstrated by the encounter with Belacqua, who recalls that contrast.

However, building on Durling's thesis, I think that the metaphorical horizon which divides the two hemispheres should rather be read as the same beginning for two different paths leading to two different directions. In fact, I argue that the two mountains point to two different directions, one is correct and one is sinful, due to the reference to the myth of Phaeton.¹⁰⁵ In his article *Phaeton's Fall and Dante's Ascent*, Kevin Brownlee carefully illustrates all the references made to this myth in the *Comedy*. The first one is in the *Inferno* XVII, 106-113 when the Pilgrim is descending on Geryon: Brownlee argues that 'Inferno XVII may thus be seen to present Dante as a 'corrected' Phaeton: the 'pagan' descent to death is transformed into a Christian ascent to eternal life.'¹⁰⁶ Then, the next reference to Phaeton is in *Purgatorio* IV, in the passage which I have just quoted and then in *Purgatorio* XXIX, in the Earthly Paradise:

Non che Roma di carro così bello
rallegrasse Affricano, o vero Augusto,
ma quel del Sol saria pover con ello;
quell del Sol che, sviando, fu combusto
per l'orazion de la Terra devota,
quando fu Giove arcanamente giusto.

¹⁰⁵ The myth of Phaeton appears in *Met.* 1.747-2.332. According to Ovid, Phaeton requests as proof of his divine origin that his father Helios allow him to drive the chariot of the sun for one day. Losing control of the horses, Phaeton veers from the right track and bums both the heavens, leaving the Milky Way as a scorch mark (Dante mentions the Milky Way in *Convivio* 2.14) and the earth, making the Sahara Desert, until felled by a lightning bolt from Jove.

¹⁰⁶ Kevin Brownlee, 'Phaeton's Fall and Dante's Ascent', *Dante Studies*, 1984, pp. 134-144, p. 135. Brownlee analyses the reference to Phaeton in *Inferno* XVII in details: 'the descent on Geryon's back is intended to be seen as a miniature inversion of the entire episode of Phaeton's fall is further suggested by the following correspondences: first Dante's looking down in *Inf.* XVII, 121-23, recalls Phaeton's looking down in *Met.* II, 178-183. Second Dante's view of the *fuochi* (v.122) below him seems to recall Phaeton's view of the earth in flames (*Met.* II, 227-228). Finally, Geryon's safe landing on dry land (v.133) evokes by contrast the final stage of Phaeton's descent- his 'crash landing into the river Eridan (*Met.* II, 323-324).'

(Not only did not Rome cheer Scipio/ with such fine chariots (or Caesar, even!) / the sun itself beside that would look poor-/the sun itself beside that would look poor -/ the sun that burned to nothing when it strayed/ (here Jove for his dark reasons once proved just)/ in answer to the prayers of pious earth. *Purg.* XXIX, 115-120)

Here Brownlee identifies two moments of the ovidian myth which are recalled by Dante: the description of Apollo's chariot just before Phaeton begins his journey and the destruction of the chariot which marks Phaeton's death. Furthermore, Brownlee stresses the fact that while Phaeton's *currus* became the instrument of his destruction because he entered and attempted to drive it without a guide, the *carro* of *Purgatorio* XXIX is not going to be entered and driven by Dante: rather it is to bring him his new guide. In addition to these references to the myth stressed by Brownlee, I would like to draw the attention to the reference in *Paradiso* XVII:

Qual venne a Climenè, per accertarsi
Di ciò che avea incontro a sé udito,
Quei ch'ancor fa li padre ai figli scarsi;
Tal ero io, e tal era sentito
E da Beatrice e da la santa lampa
Che pria per me avea mutato sito.

(As Phaeton once, approaching Clymene/ to know for sure that news about himself/ which still makes fathers chary of their sons,/ so was I, too – and so was understood/ by Beatrice and that holy lamp/ which had, because of me first left its place. *Par.* XVII, 1-6)

Here, Brownlee indicates again a strong 'large-scale inversion of the Ovidian narrative': 'While Phaeton (*Met.* I, 755-761) came to his female ancestor, his mother Clymene, to ask about his past, Dante is about to question his male ancestor Cacciaguida (repeatedly referred to as a father) about his future.'¹⁰⁷ Building on Brownlee's textual analysis, I would like to focus on the fact that in the *Inferno* XVII there is a reference to the end of Phaeton's journey, that means to his fall, while in the *Paradiso* XVII Ovid's narrative is recalled too, but from the beginning: that shows

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 137.

an inverted pattern based on the narrative of the Ovidian myth, where the tragic end appears first and the beginning appears at the end, in the *Paradiso*. Furthermore, in the middle of this reversal narration of references there is the *Purgatorio* XVII where in Virgil's exposition there is the contrast between what is addressed to 'mal obietto' and what is 'al primo ben diretto', as I have indicated in a previous section of this chapter. Thus, the myth of Phaeton, meant as a reversal Pilgrim's journey to God, is the frame of Virgil's explanation of love and sin in *Purgatorio* XVII. Phaeton appears in *Inferno* XVII and *Paradiso* XVII with an inverted pattern of references, which underlines the issue of the direction of love, space and time, in the quest of the Divine. In the middle of it, at the centre of the *Commedia* itself, Virgilio delivers the explanation of what can cause sin and detachment from God: addressing towards wrong objects. Thus, I argue that the two mountains, Sion and Purgatory, which 'hanno un solo orizzon e diversi emisperi' in *Purgatorio* IV actually recall two journeys with the same destination: however, one misunderstands direction in space and time, while the other one actually reaches the truthful destination and fulfils its purpose, as it is addressed to the right direction.

To conclude, in the *Purgatorio* there are geographical, astronomical and mythological elements which suggest and recall a retrograde and inverted journey: this reversion is mainly conveyed in spatial term, however it involves an inversion which affects the measurement of the temporal flow and the astronomical reading. To be more precise, the passage through the midcosmos at the end of the *Inferno* and the access to an inverted hemisphere, where the stars appear according to an inverted order and where the Sun follow an inverted path, convey a shift in term of space, time and direction. Furthermore, the use made by the author of the references to the Ovidian Phaeton reinforces this idea even from a symbolic and mythological point of view.

In the next section I will show how the kind of prophecies delivered in the *Purgatorio* convey a certain type of future as sinful and apocalyptic, while, actually, the wayfarers are approaching the eternal salvation. This duplex perspective on future events underlines the two directions of temporality among which human beings are asked to chose: one is historical and apocalyptic and one is inverted: the latter is the purifying retrograde temporality of the *Purgatorio*.

Prophecies: 'ne lo stato primaio non si rinselva'

The prophecies of the *Purgatorio* describe an earthly future of sin and pain. They underline the contrast between the future of the wayfarers towards the Eden garden and the future of living people in history towards sin and loss. Thus, through prophecies, the *Purgatorio* indicates a double direction to the future: one is salvific and one is apocalyptic. Thus, this double direction of time recalls the two inverted hemispheres, I described in the last section. Again there are two horizons in space and time: I will demonstrate how they are conveyed by prophecies as well as by the geographical inversion. I will focus on two prophecies in more details: they are delivered in the *Purgatorio* Canto XIV and in the *Purgatorio* Canto XX.

I think that they are particularly meaningful, especially in relation to the same Cantos of the *Inferno*: Cantos XIV and XX. In fact, in both the prophecies of the *Purgatorio* and the same Cantos of the *Inferno*, Dante conveys in different ways a certain kind of apocalyptic future. First, in the *Inferno* XIV, Dante represents one of the most important infernal figures of time, the Old Man of Crete, which, as I will analyse in more details in the next chapter, displays an apocalyptic progression to the future and in the *Inferno* Canto XX, Dante describes the punishments undertaken by the soothsayers, who looked towards the future in a misleading way and with evil perspective and purposes. Then, the prophecies of *Purgatorio* XIV and XX describe an apocalyptic future, which irremediably degenerate to the worst, losing for ever the 'stato primaio'. I think that the correspondences between *Inf.* XIV, XX and *Purg.* XIV, XX underline and stress the misleading direction which temporality can have. In the *Inferno* the consequences of this evil future are real and present, while in the *Purgatorio* they are prophecies: stories told to the Pilgrim or among the sinners. Nevertheless they demonstrate that the progression towards the future is nothing but sinful. The sinners in the *Purgatorio* are moving quite far from the moment of these prophecies. In fact they are approaching an opposite kind of future: the cosmological Beginning, the 'stato primaio' of human race, in Eden. That means that the apocalypse indicated by the Old man of Crete still exists and can be observed by the souls of the Mount Purgatory, however the wayfarers are moving towards an opposite point in time. They are following an inverted direction in time addressed to

the past, where there instead of the apocalypse, they will see their own rebirth into salvation.

The topic of prophecies and divination in the *Comedy* have recently been analysed by scholars as Guglielmo Gorni, Alison Cornish and Simon A. Gilson and, if once the scholarship agreed that Dante merely condemns divination, they have been able to better describe the controversial situation of Dante. In fact, Dante places in Hell the foretellers. However, he allows other characters to deliver prophecies and to have prophetic dreams, in a quite controversial way.¹⁰⁸ On one side, William Franke indicates the prophecies of the *Inferno* as the deconstruction of the prophetic voice itself and the demonstration of the failure of human understanding. On the other side, the prophecies in the *Paradiso* are able to announce and embrace the approaching of Pilgrim's salvation in different ways, as delivered by souls who somehow participate in the divine perception of time.¹⁰⁹ To summarize, the prophetic voice in the *Inferno* is definitely negative and evil and the prophetic voice in the *Paradiso* is a manifestation of the divine knowledge, as the souls can perceive time looking at God.

Thus, I would like to draw the attention to the prophecies of the *Purgatorio*, as they are rather unique in the *Comedy* due to their existence in temporality and their development in the extension of past, present and future, as everything in the Purgatory is in time. Furthermore, they reinforce and clarify the idea of a double direction of time: one towards a certain negative kind of future and one which is backwards, heading to an edenic and happy beginning.

So, how are the purgatorial prophecies structured? How do they convey or suggest a temporality, which move according to a retrograde direction?

¹⁰⁸ See: Guglielmo Gorni, 'Le arti divinatorie' in his *Lettera nome numero: L'ordine delle cose in Dante*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), pp.155-174, especially p.159: 'Il rifiuto [sc. of magic], però, non esclude affatto una certa competenza dell'autore in questo settore'. Then see: Alison Cornish, 'I miti biblici. La sapienza di salomone e le arti magiche' in *Dante: Mito e Poesia*, ed. Michelangelo Picone, Firenze: Franco Cesati, 1999, pp.391-403. Maurilio Adriani, *Arti magiche nel Rinascimento a Firenze*, Firenze: Bonechi, 1980, pp. 19-22; Giuliano Bonfante, 'Dante e la magia', *Aevum*, Vol.65,1991, p.313, Simon A. Gilson, 'Medieval Magical Lore and Dante's *Commedia*: Divination and Demonic Agency' *Dante Studies*, 2001, pp. 27-66. For attempts to define magic and prophecy in the Middle Ages, see Bert Hanson, 'Science and Magic', in *Science in the Middle Ages*, ed. David C. Lindberg Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1978.

¹⁰⁹ See: William Franke, 'Paradoxical Prophecy: 'Dante's Strategy of Self -Subversion in the *Inferno*', *Italica*, Vol. 90. 2013, pp. 343- 364; Colin Hardie, 'Cacciaguida's prophecy in 'Paradiso 17', *Traditio*, Vol.17,1963, pp. 267-294.

In Canto XIV the Pilgrim and Virgilio are in the second terrace, among the sinners punished for their envy. Uniquely in the poem, the canto begins with a dialogue between unidentified spirits, who are not named until lines 81 and 87 and who do not address the wayfarers. One of them is Guido del Duca, a Ghibelline from Romagna, who was judge in Faenza (1195) and Rimini (1199), and lived both in Bertinoro and Ravenna. The other one is the Guelph Rinieri from Calboli who participated in partisan struggles in Romagna in the mid-thirteenth century: he was *podestà* in various cities between 1247 and 1292. Guido del Duca predicts the future in which Fulcieri da Calboli, the nephew of his interlocutor imposes a tyrannical regime on Florence. By delivering this prophecy Dante uses the usual escamotage: in fact, Fulcieri da Calboli is *podestà* in Florence in 1303 and the events told in the poem are set in 1300. The prophecy is expressed through quite violent images, for instance: ‘tutti li sgomenta’; ‘Vende la carne loro essendo viva’; ‘li ancide come fiera belva’ ; ‘Sanguinoso esce’. Here Fulcieri da Calboli is a ‘lupo’: the use of this kind of metaphor, that means an animal fiercely fighting with other ones, and this animal recall the very first prophecy of the *Comedy*, the one of the Veltro:

Molti son li animali a cui s’ammoglia,
 e più saranno ancora, infin che ‘l veltro
 verrà, che la farà morir con doglia.
 Questi non ciberà terra nè peltro,
 ma sapienza , amore e virtute,
 e sua nazion sarà tra feltro e feltro.

(She couples, a mate to many creatures,/ and will so with more, till at last there comes / the hunting hound that deals her death and pain./ He will not feed on dross or cash or gelt,/ but thrive in wisdom, virtue and pure love./ Born he shall be between the felt and felt. *Inf. I, 100-05*)¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ The best discussion on this prophecy is from Charles T. Davis, ‘Veltro’, *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, 5: 908-12, 1976; however innumerable explanations have been offered of this prophecy. There are two main groups of interpretation: the greyhound refers to the Second Coming of Christ or to an ecclesiastical figure prefiguring it; or the greyhound refers to a secular ruler, who would also prefigure a Second Coming.

Even though, this prophecy is not expressed as cruelly as the one in the *Purgatorio*, the images recalled are the same: wolves, animals, woods and fierce fighting. In a comparison between the two predictions, we can recognize how it is predicted on one side a rebirth of justice in the case of the prophecy of the veltro, and on the other side an apocalypse, where nothing will live anymore: 'ne lo stato primaio non si rinselva' (it won't rebranch and reach its primal state *Purg. XIV, 66*). That suggests that there are two futures on the horizon, or, to be more precise, there two temporal horizons: one is salvific and one is apocalyptic. The latter one is defined as something which will never be again as it was once 'ne lo stato primaio non si rinselva'. Whereas, in the prophecy of Veltro, finally knowledge, love and virtue will come back. I claim that *Purg. XIV, 66* describes a condition of whom is irremediably lost, in an inverted Eden. In fact, the real Eden is both the very first state of humanity, 'lo stato primaio', and a place that continuously 'si rinselva', where nature is renewed for ever. Thus, Florence as it is described by Fulcieri da Calboli is the denial of Eden, while what the wayfarers are reaching is the Eden, that means 'lo stato primaio che si rinselva'. The prophecy describes a future completely opposite to the temporal and spatial destination of the wayfarers.

As for the prophecy in *Purg. XX*, it is delivered in the fifth terrace where the sin of avarice is punished. The Canto begins with an apostrophe to the She-wolf, recalling a symbolic animal already related to the prophecy in the *Inferno* Canto I and in the *Purgatorio* canto XIV. Hugh Capet is the character who delivers the quite long prophecy of this Canto. He and his father Hugh the Great were dukes of France and counts of Paris and Orléans, however in French dynastic history, the link of the Capetians to the Carolingians was contested. Hugh Capet foretells the entry to Italy in 1301 of Charles of Valois, the brother of Philip the Fair and the following events in Florence in 1302; he intended to recover Sicily for the Angevins. Charles conspired with Pope Boniface VIII to favour the Florentine Black. This prophecy is still political like the previous one, however its rhetorical verbosity is quite intense and it is the longest prophecy of the *Cantica* (16 lines). The anaphora of the verb 'veggio', which is used only once in the prophecy of canto XIV, makes Hugh's discourse exalted and allegorical. Furthermore, the apocalyptic tone is reinforced by the invocation of God's revenge (O Segnor mio, quando sarò io lieto/ a veder la vendetta che , nascosa/ fa dolce l'ira tua nel tuo secreto? My Lord and God! When shall I see in

joy/ that just revenge that, hidden to our view/ makes anger in your secret counsels sweet? *Purg.* XX, 94-96). *Inferno* XX mirrors this apocalyptic tone: in fact, the soothsayers' bodies are horribly twisted (*travolto*, *Inf.* XX, 11-12; *si travolse*, *Inf.* XX, 17, *sì torta*, *Inf.* XX, 23) and their *contrappasso* shows the sinful attitude of looking towards the evil direction of time. So, the future indicated by the *Purgatorio's* prophecies can be bodily represented by the horrible deformation in *Inf.* XX: focusing on the inverted direction and misunderstanding temporality can only lead to suffering and pain.

To conclude, the apocalyptic prophecies delivered in the *Purgatorio* reinforce the idea that temporality could be developed in two different directions: one towards the apocalypse and one towards the Eden, back in time and the final salvation. Even though the wayfarers show awareness about the apocalypse, which could expect anybody will be misled in temporality, through their prophetic visions, they are recovering from sins and walking to the beginning of time, that means to Eden. In the next section I will illustrate that the earthly paradise is one of the most obvious evidence in Dante's *Purgatorio* of a retrograde purgatorial temporality.

Earthly Paradise.

The last and most important evidence of a retrograde journey in time is that the destination of the purging path is represented by the beginning of several levels of temporality: Eden. I have not indicated this point yet in my analysis, as it is an obvious evidence by itself of a journey towards the beginning of time and it does not need a detailed explanation for obvious reasons. Nevertheless, I will briefly indicate the main elements in Eden, which clearly support my thesis of a backward journey in time.

First, it is the beginning of human history according to the Bible and it can be seen as the Golden Age according to the classical sources.¹¹¹ Furthermore, it is the

¹¹¹ Vergil, *IV Eclogue*. 1-17 and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I.89-150. 'Dante's *Purgatorio* is first of all the artistic product of a myth maker who, with selective skills, weaves together Christian, pagan, mohametan and folkloric traditions...', Helmut Hatzfed, 'The

beginning of the individual human life, as it represents the birth and the early childhood of each human, according to the analysis of Durling.¹¹² In addition to this, it recalls a renewed beginning of the *Comedy* itself: after the process of purification and the path backward in time to the origin, the dark wood has been transformed into a heavenly garden.¹¹³ Charles Singleton, who has already analysed in detail the features and functions of the Earthly Paradise and the spiritual achievements of the Pilgrim in that place,¹¹⁴ claims that in first instance Dante obtains a human justice and then he is ready for a proper state of grace only after crossing the river Lethe, when he loses all his memories and he is made a new Adam. Building on Singleton's thesis, I do agree that the Lethe's forgetfulness is the turning point of Pilgrim spiritual liberation. Furthermore, another evidence is that the purging path has been a retrograde journey in time: in fact, the forgetfulness means absence of memories and past, as the past has already been gone through by the wayfarers. In addition to this, even though Eden is the final destination of the purgation, I will show that it still displays numerous references which stress the direction of motions and focus in spatial and temporal terms. There are still signs which indicate that the Pilgrim's path has been a readdressing of love, will, and time and they underline that

Art of Dante's *Purgatorio*', *Studies in Philology*, No.1,1952, pp.25-47, p.26. Giuseppe Mazzotta says: 'it's also a representation of what in classical literature is called a *locus amoenus*. You may recall adumbrations of this phenomenon from Limbo. A lovely spot outside of the world of history where relaxation can take place, Dante also combines it with a biblical *hortus*, or enclosed garden, as found in the Song of Songs, for instance, or, more obviously, the Garden of Eden.', Giuseppe Mazzotta, 'Purgatorio 27-33' *Reading Dante*, Yale University Press, 2014.

¹¹² 'The term *selva* strengthens the association with the Dark Wood of the Inferno I, as well as the Platonic use of the term to refer to the world of matter: the pilgrim's entry into the forest is a figure of the soul's entry into the material world, strongly suggested by his inability to see whence he entered, an allusion to the new-born soul's forgetfulness of its heavenly origin(...) but here in non-fallen mode.' Robert M. Durling, *Purgatorio*, p.489.

¹¹³ Bleeth's comparison of the landscapes is justly famous: "[...]the first aim of Dante, in his landscape imagery [in the Earthly Paradise], is to show evidence of this perfect liberty, and of the purity and sinlessness of the new nature, converting pathless ways into happy ones. So that all those fences and formalisms which had been needed for him in imperfection, are removed in this paradise; and even the pathlessness and thicket of sin led to the fettered and fearful order of the eternal punishment, so the fencelessness and thicket of the free virtue lead to the loving and constellated order of eternal happiness.", Kenneth A. Bleeth, 'Narrator and Landscape in the 'Commedia': An Approach to Dante's Earthly Paradise', *Dante Studies*, No. 88, 1970, pp. 31-49. p. 31.

¹¹⁴ See: Charles Singleton, *Journey to Beatrice*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958; Charles Singleton, *Dante's 'Commedia': Elements of Structure*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954.

directions and chronological orders have been very important so that the Pilgrim could be purified.

First of all, the Canto XXVIII starts and ends with indication about direction: 'Vago già di cercar dentro e dintorno' (*Purg.* XXVIII, 1) and 'e poi a la bella donna torna' il viso' (*Purg.* XXVIII, 148). Second, Dante indicates carefully to which direction the Pilgrim is looking and to which the wind is blowing:

Un'aura dolce, senza mutamento
avere in sé, mi feria per la fronte
non di più colpo che soave vento,
per cui le fronde tremolando pronte
tutte quante piegavano a la parte
u' la prim'ombra gitta il santo monte

(A gentle breeze, unchanging in itself,/struck on my forehead, yet with no more force/ than would the smoothest of our changing winds/ To this the branches, trembling in response, / yielded, all bending to the place at which/ the sacred mountain casts its earlier shade *Purg.* XXVIII, 7-11).

The Pilgrim is facing east, the breeze comes from there and bends the branches towards the west and toward the Pilgrim. After few lines there is another similar indication:

ed ecco più andar mi tolse un rio
che 'nversinistra con sue picciole onde
piegava l'erba che 'n sua ripa uscio.

(Look there! A brook held back my onward pace./ Its course was leftward, and its little waves/ swayed all the grass that rose along its bank *Purg.* XXVIII, 25-27).

The river is heading towards north, back to where the Pilgrim came from: it is Lethe and it will clean away the Pilgrim's memories, somehow bringing them to where they belong to: the northern hemisphere. In between these two indications of

direction which allow the reader to realize towards where the river Lethe is going, there is line 24: 'non poteve rivedere ond'io m'intrassi' that recalls the biblical topic of the forbidden backward glance of Lot's wife. In addition to this reference, this motif refers back *Purg.* IX. 131-32: 'Intrate; ma facciovì accorti/ che di fuor torna chi 'n dietro si guata'. I would like to draw the attention on the insistence of Dante in Canto IX on the two keys, one golden and one silvery, held by the Angel who unlocks the gate: they creates a connection with the two rivers Lethe and Eunoè, which definitely unlock the Pilgrim's wrong perception of time. In both this process of readdressing and renewing the author stresses the importance of not looking back, that means that the journey which allows this spiritual transformation can only be in one direction. Then, the importance of the chronological order in the process of purification is underlined by Matelda:

Quinci Letè, così da l'altro lato
Eunoè si chiama, e non adopra
se quince e quindi pria non è gustato:

(Its name is Lethe here, Eunoè there/ Until a taste is had on either side,/ the influence it has won't take effect *Purg.* XXVIII, 130-2).

The Lethe is a river form of the classical tradition which Vergil already describes in the *Aeneid* Book VI, on the other side, Eunoè is an original invention of Dante. The attention to the directions can be identified in Canto XXIX as well:

Non eran cento tra ' suoi passi e ' miei,
quando le ripe igualmente dier volta,
per modo ch'a levante mi rendei.
Nè ancor fu così nostra via molta,
quando la donna tutta a me si torse,

(Before a hundred steps had gone (to count/ both hers and mine) the banks on either side/ curved equally, so I was facing east. / Nor did our path continue so for long, / until the lady turned direct to me, *Purg.* XXIX, 10-13).

So now the river Lethe is suddenly moving from east to west. This change of direction recalls the turning point in the midcosmos after the encounter with Satan: the spiritual transformations are represented by sudden change in spatial and temporal terms. At that particular point Dante is invited to watch and listen to the sacred procession. Charles Singleton noted that this parade of the biblical books, from Genesis to Apocalypse, represents the sweep of created time in the form of a liturgical pageant.¹¹⁵ In addition to this interpretation, John Freccero claims that this series of books should represent linear time according to Augustine's comparison of created time to a verse of a hymn, only fully intelligible when it ends¹¹⁶ Furthermore Robert M. Durling argues: 'The thirteenth century Golden legend states that Christ comes to free humankind from time: a gesture well suited to Eden, which stands above Ante- Purgatory, where the obligation was to restore time for time (*Purg.* XXIII, 84) and above Purgatory itself, where time is spent purging sins (*Purg.* XVIII, 103; *Purg.* XXIV, 91).'¹¹⁷ Building on these ideas, I think that the sacred procession is the last beneficial aspect of temporality, that means the progression of the overall biblical narrative and truth, in order to obtain the complete Pilgrim's purification, before losing his memory in the river Lethe and being born again. The bath into Lethe is the real exit from temporality and entrance into eternity: in fact, only at that moment the Pilgrim truly encounters the Gryphon. However, I would like to underline that the purging path has not merely aimed to a liberation from time rather to an usage of temporality for purification and spiritual renewal. The exit from temporality has been one of the consequence of that renewal, as stressed by the last lines of the *cantica*:

Io ritornai da la santissima onda
rifatto sì come piante novelle
rinovellate di novella fronda,
puro e disposto a salire a le stelle

¹¹⁵ Charles Singleton, *Dante's Commedia: Elements of Structure*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1954.

¹¹⁶ John Freccero, 'The Eternal Image of the Father', *The Poetry of Allusion: Virgil and Ovid in Dante's Comedy*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff and Jeffrey Schnapp, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

¹¹⁷ Robert M. Durling, *Purgatorio*, p. 623.

(I came back from that holiest of waves/ remade, refreshed as any new tree is,/ renewed, refreshed with foliage anew,/ pure and prepared to rise towards the stars. *Purg XXXIII, 142-45*).

The alliteration of the prefixes ri-/re- linked to the repetitions of the adjective 'novello' shows that only a retrograde journey in time allowed a Pilgrim's new spiritual condition.

Conclusion

In the last section I have indicated the sacred procession as an overall vision that the Pilgrim is able to have of the biblical narrative, which is meant to be the human history in his totality. The ability to embrace the entire historical narrative is a first step towards the kind of the perception that the Soul could have in the eternity of the *Paradiso*. This vision has not been a sudden event: it has been a long process of readdressing will and love and a long walk towards the Beginning. As well as the liberation from memories has not been limited to the immersion in the river Lethe: it has been a path backwards in time, which progressively established the possibility to finally wash them away. Now the Pilgrim is ready to fly into Heaven and to perceive as only souls in eternity can perceive space and time. However, as the liberation from past and future has been obtained through a long process, in the same way an omni comprehensive perception of temporality and eternity will be possible only with a strong intellectual action of comprehension and understanding of the earthly and divine reality. In fact, the exit from an extended temporality does not immediately mean a sure, complete, eternal and intense possession of past, present and future. The Pilgrim has accomplished his purpose at the end of the first *Cantica* of: 'uscimmo a riveder le stelle'. He has seen the stars and measured their circulations, now, purified and renewed, he has a new purpose: 'salire a le stelle', that means that he is going to be part of them and their circling dancing. In the next chapter I will analyse how the Pilgrim can harmonize himself according to the heavenly motions until the point to be synthetized in that harmony to the final vision of God.

Paradiso: An All-Comprehensive Point

Introduction

In the last chapter I indicated that the purgatorial path of the Pilgrim led him to the cosmological Beginning, where temporality began, in the realm of eternity. Moreover, I demonstrated that the re-education of the Pilgrim and his meditation on sin could occur only in a temporal extension. I have also shown how this spiritual development is pursued into an extended span of time and space by readdressing time in a backwards direction.

Now, in the *Paradiso* the scenario is completely different. Once Beatrice and the Pilgrim have flown away to the Moon, the reader might expect that they have finally left temporality to be in eternity. However, they are not there yet. In fact, the Pilgrim must first pursue a path through the planets, which are perpetual, according to the explanations of Boethius in the *De consolazione Philosophiae*.¹¹⁸ The blessed approach him in the dimension of perpetuity, even though they actually dwell in the eternal white rose, which will be discussed below.¹¹⁹ This means that the Pilgrim himself explores first the perpetual reality of the planetary spheres, which started and measures temporality, then, at the end of this exploration, he is integrated into the comprehensive and intense eternity of the divine's contemplation. The path through perpetuity is a necessary path of intellectual understanding: only when the Pilgrim has comprehended the temporal reality from the right perspective he can share the blessed's beatitude.

This chapter will show how Dante conveys on the one side, the Pilgrim's progressive integration into eternity and, on the other side, how the author represents eternity itself. I will demonstrate how in the *Paradiso*, the complexity of motions and harmonies increases dramatically as Dante progressively is able to see and comprehend a central emanating point in the cosmos. In fact, the journey

¹¹⁸Boethius, *The Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by H.F. Stuart and E.K. Rand, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1962, III.9.

¹¹⁹ *Pd XXXI, 1-12, The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, Paradiso, vol.III*, ed. by Robert M. Durling, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

through the perpetual planets challenges the Pilgrim's and the reader's intellectual abilities, due to Dante's sophisticated theological and philosophical discussions. This complexity is conveyed in terms of rhythm as well. Thus, the dancing and the circular motions of the blessed are added to their music and singing, mirroring the planets, which affect and govern earthly temporality. In the *Purgatorio* the rhythm and the harmony presented were much simpler: all the wayfarers are not able to dance, they sing and progress to the top of the mount, following the alternation of day and night. This alternation, which measures the unfolding of time, is no so crucial in the *Paradiso*, where the Pilgrim rather moves according to the never ending pattern of the planets. So, the approach to eternity is conveyed by an increasing complexity of motions and harmonies.

So, how is the eternity actually represented? I will demonstrate that Dante conveys it as the 'Principium', the Beginning. I will show that eternity in the Empyrean, where the Divine Mind dwells, is actually an all-comprehensive point - a singularity - where the temporal extension has progressively disappeared: in fact, the Beginning will be actually be revealed as a point of infinite intensity, a principle of concentration, where space and time do not exist anymore, but collapse into eternal density. I will indicate how Dante articulates the descriptions and the representations of this Point on several levels, for instance, historical, biblical, ritual, astronomical, symbolic and narrative, all them converging at the same concentration. Furthermore, I will indicate how Dante gradually tends to shift this Beginning into a central spatial position, in terms of astronomical, historical, biblical, narrative and linguistic representation. I will show that the beginning of Creation and temporality is set at the heart of the Creation itself. The Beginning is not no longer out of the flow of time and at the top of it, like in the *Purgatorio* mountain: its position is a central point from which human history, the astronomical cosmos and the poetic narrative itself are emanated and to which any entities naturally return when they have fulfilled their existence.

This chapter also considers the models of time which underpin Dante's representation of eternity. How does Dante stay in conversation with them? We know that Aquinas values the Aristotelian views delivered in the *Physics* about

temporality; however, as for eternity, he looks to Boethius.¹²⁰ Thus, in order to answer to the questions ‘What is eternity like? Are we able to perfectly comprehend it?’ Boethius in the *De consolazione* argues:

Quid sit igitur aeternitas, consideremus; haec enim nobis naturam partier divinam scientiam patefacit. Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio, quod est collatione temporalium clarius liquet. Nam quicquid vivit in tempore, id praesens a praeteritis in futura procedit nihilque est in tempore consitutu, quod totum vitae suae spatium partier possit amplecti, crastino nondum apprehendit, hesternum vero iam perdidit; in hodierna quoque vita non amplius vivitis quam in illo mobile transitorioque momento. Quod igitur temporis patitur condicionem, licet illud, sicuti de mundo censuit Aristoteles, nec coeperit umquam esse nec desinat vitaeque eius cum temporis infinitate tendatur, nondum tamen tale est ut aeternum esse iure credatur. Non enim totum simul infinitae licet vitae spatium comprehendit atque complectitur, sed future nondum, transcta iam non habet. Quod igitur interminabilis vitae plenitudinem totam partier comprehendit ac possidet, cui neque future quicquam absit nec praeteriti fluxerit, id aeternum esse iure perhibetur idque necesse est et sui campos praesens sibi sempre assistere et infinitatem mobilis temporis habere praesentem[...] Aliud est enim per interminabilem duci vitam, quod mundo Plato tribuit, aliud interminabilis vitae totam partier complexum esse praesentiam, quod divinae mentis proprium esse manifestum est.

¹²⁰ ‘It is manifest that time and eternity are not the same. Some have founded this difference on the fact that eternity has neither beginning nor a end; whereas time has a beginning and a end. This, however, makes a merely accidental, and not an absolute difference; because, granted that time always was and always will be, according to the idea of those who think the movement of the heavens goes on for ever, there would not yet remain a difference between eternity and time, as Boethius says (*De Cons. V*), arising from the fact that eternity is simultaneously whole; which cannot be applied to time: for eternity is a measure of a permanent being; while time is the measure of movement [...]Further, according to the Philosopher (*Physics iv*), the now of time remains the same in the whole of time. But the nature of eternity seems to be that it is the same indivisible thing in the whole space of time [...] I answer that the now of time is the same as regards its subject in the whole course of time, but it differs in aspect; for inasmuch as time corresponds to movement, its now corresponds to what is moveable; and the thing movable has the same one subject in all time, but differs in aspect as being here and there; and such alternation is movement. Likewise the flow of the now as alternating in aspect, is time. But eternity remains the same according to both subject and aspect; and hence eternity is not the same as the now of time.’ (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. by Thomas Gilby, New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1967, I, Q. X, a.4)

So let us consider the nature of eternity, for this will make clear to us both the nature of God and his manner of knowing. Eternity, then, is the complete, simultaneous and perfect possession of everlasting life; this will be clear from a comparison with creatures that exist in time. Whatever lives in time exists in the present and progresses from the past to the future, and there is nothing set in time which can embrace simultaneously the whole extent of its life: it is in the position of not yet possessing tomorrow when it is already lost yesterday. In this life of today you do not live more fully than in that fleeting and transitory moment. Whatever, therefore, suffers the condition of being in time, even though it never had any beginning, never has any ending and its life extends into the infinity of time, as Aristotle thought was the case of the world, it is still not such that it may properly be considered eternal. Its life may be infinitely long, but it does not embrace and comprehend its whole extent simultaneously. It still lacks the future, while already having lost the past. So that that which embraces and possesses simultaneously the whole of fullness of everlasting life, which lacks nothing of the future and has lost nothing of the past, that is what may properly be said to be eternal [...]

For it is one to progress like the world in Plato's theory through everlasting life, and another thing to have embraced the whole of everlasting life in one simultaneous present. (*De cons.* V. 6, iii- x).

In this passage, Boethius is more specific than Aquinas about the meaning of 'being simultaneously whole'. The most important feature of what is eternal is not the absence of an end and a beginning, but it is actually the fact that nothing flows from one point to another point - all the space of an existence is comprehended and embraced. We can see how Boethius conceives categories of time and eternity in spatial terms, as for temporality, events and entities flow through space, from one point to another point, and as for eternity, they are in a position where they can be embraced and comprehended for ever and they can comprehend their everlasting existence all at once: 'Quod igitur interminabilis vitae plenitudinem totam partier comprehendit ac possidet, cui neque future quicquam absit nec praeteriti fluxerit, id aeternum esse iure perhibetur idque necesse est et sui compos praesens sibi sempre assidere et infinitatem mobilis temporis habere praesentem.' (*De consolatione Philosophiae* V. 6, viii). Being in time or in eternity is basically a matter of different perspectives on reality: entities in time can see and perceive one thing,

one point first, before progressing to the next point, while entities in eternity can embrace with all their being the whole of reality, every moment and every point. Furthermore, Boethius agrees with Plato that temporality imitates eternity:

Hunc enim vitae immobilis praesentarium statum infinitus ille temporalium rerum motus imitator, cumque eum effingere atque aequere non possit, ex immobilitate deficit in motum, ex simplicitate praesentiae decrescit in infinitam futuri ac praeteriti quantitatem [...]

The infinite changing of things in time is an attempt to imitate this state of the presence of unchanging life, but since it cannot portray or equal that state it falls from sameness into change, from the immediacy of presence into the infinite extent of past and future. (*De cons. V. 6, xii*)

Here, we can see how two verbs convey the degenerating condition of temporality compared with eternity: 'deficit' and 'decrescit'. Nevertheless, they are still similar, as one is the image of the other one. So, to conclude on this point, Boethius describes in detail the condition of eternal entities and Aquinas relies on Boethius' thoughts. In his analysis, Boethius refers to Plato's *Timaeus*: in fact, he readdresses erroneous interpretations of the Platonic ideas and he adds much more detailed explanations. Finally, Boethius concludes his analysis in the same way as Plato does, the temporality attempts to imitate eternity, the motion occurred in time are an image of the perfect stillness of what is in eternity. Thus, when the Pilgrim moves into the eternal realms, *Inferno* and the *Paradiso*, we should have in mind what Boethius claims about eternity in order to identify which kind of dialogue Dante engages with his sources.

Another important Dantean model of time is the Bible, especially *Genesis*, for several reasons. First of all, the Creation, which is also the central topic in Plato's *Timaeus*, carefully traces the passage from a unique, peaceful and everlasting eternity to the birth of different dimensions: temporality and space. Secondly, Augustine analyses *Genesis* in more than one of his works¹²¹ and from that text he

¹²¹ Saint Augustine, *Genesis ad litteram*, New York: Paulist Press, 1982; Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. by Henry Bettenson, London: Penguin, 2003
Augustine.

finds evidences for his exploration and theories about the connections between temporality and eternity. I have already shown in my previous chapter that Augustine's commentary on *Genesis* tried to answer questions like 'why did God create the universe in six days? And why are not they mentioned in *Genesis*? What does this duration mean? When did God create the angels? And why are not they mentioned in the *Genesis*?' Answering to all those questions as well, Aquinas engages with the meaning and functions of light displayed in the *Divine Names* of Pseudo Dionysus, reinforcing a Platonic view of Creation and cosmology.¹²²In this chapter, I will show how Dante addresses all these problems in the third Cantica and how he defines his original view on eternity and the creation of temporality, building on Platonic ideas and patterns.

¹²² Aquinas stays in conversation with Plato and he often agrees with him, regarding a few important ideas as it is shown by the following passage: 'Plato held the existence of separate ideas of all things, and that individuals were denominated by them as participating in the separate ideas; [...]Although this opinion appears to be unreasonable in affirming separate ideas of natural things as subsisting themselves- as Aristotle argues in many ways- still, it is absolutely true that there is first some thing which is essentially being and essentially good, which we call God[...]'(Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. by Thomas Gilby, New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1967, 1 q.6 a.4). In addition to this, Aquinas is quite influenced by another Neoplatonic: Pseudo-Dionysus. He, in fact, cited Pseudo Dionysus in the *ST* 1600 times. Aquinas seems to agree with the author of the *Divine Names* about the form of the procession of creatures from God: that means that the domenic thinker comprehends both the positions of biblical creationists and neoplatonic emanationists, in a quite complex way. In the following passage from the *Divine Names*, Pseudo-Dionysus delivers a detailed explanations of emanationist theory, according which reality is continuously created and shaped following the Providential will, due to the kind of motions of divine intelligences (Dionysus The Aereopagite, *Divine Names*, Fintry: Shrine of Wisdom, 1957, 704D- 705D). Here, we can see that Aquinas takes into the account and displays the thoughts of the Pseudo Dionysus, Augustine and Plato about motions in eternity:

It seems that God is not altogether immutable. For a whatever moves itself is in some way mutable. But as Augustine says (gen. ad lit. viii.20), *The Creator Spirit moves Himself neither by time, nor by place*. Therefore God is in some way mutable[...].Augustine there speaks in a similar way to Plato, who said that the first mover moves Himself; calling every operation a movement, even as the acts of understanding, and willing, and loving are called movements. Therefore because God understands and loves Himself, not, however, as movement and change belong to a thing existing in potentiality, as we now speak of change and movement. [...]And so in the same way, inasmuch as the similitude of the divine wisdom proceeds in degrees from the highest things, which participate more fully of its likeness, to the lowest things, which participate of it in a lesser there is said to be a kind of procession and movement of the divine wisdom of things; as when we say that the sun proceeds to the earth, inasmuch as the ray of light touches the earth. In this way Dionysius (Cael. Hier.) expounds the matter, that every procession of the divine manifestation comes to us from the movement of the Father of light.' (*ST*1 q.9a.1)

Some critics have already dealt with the issue of the Creation in the *Comedy* and questioned it engages with ideas of temporality and eternity: John Freccero in his analysis of *Paradiso X*¹²³ demonstrates its deep Platonic nature, Charles Singleton in his investigation on the sacred procession in Eden,¹²⁴ Patrick Boyde¹²⁵ and Giuseppe Mazzotta¹²⁶ in their insights into *Paradiso XXIX*. They all identify important elements on which I will build my thesis. For instance, Freccero indicates the circular motion of the stars and the blessed as a Platonic image of eternity, Singleton recognizes the biblical centrality of Christ in history and in the poem; Boyde and Mazzotta indicate in the image of the 'point' in Canto XXIX a figure of time and plenitude. My purpose is to demonstrate that from a wider perspective all these elements are synthesized and reinforced in a much greater all comprehensive unity. There is a central singularity in history and in the astronomical space which generates and attracts circularity - I will indicate that it is the eternal Beginning and the everlasting Creation of language, biblical history, the astronomical universe, and the narrative of the *Commedia* itself.

So, first of all, I would like to describe how Dante represent the space of Heaven. It is an astronomical space where entities are in motion according to the creative power of the Divine. This is a fundamental aspect of the Beginning: when the motions of the stars began, temporality began as well and it is measured by them. Then, I will show how the astronomical description of Heaven conveys a central emanating singularity. Furthermore, I will consider which is the perspective on human history. Is the Creation of Eden still the beginning of it? Is there a connection between history, the time of humanity and the time of the poem itself? In addition to this, I will analyse how Dante visualizes temporality, eternity and history through figures. I will demonstrate that those figures are not only 'visual', but they involve specific sounds, languages and literary devices which reinforce their deepest meanings. In fact, the linguistic aspect is progressively integrated in a pattern of a greater unity. Finally I will focus on light, as it is the frame which allows the

¹²³ John Freccero, 'Paradiso X: The Dance of the Stars' *Dante Studies*, 86: 85-111, 1968.

¹²⁴ Charles S. Singleton, 'Dante's *Commedia*: Elements of Structure' London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1977.

¹²⁵ Patrick Boyde, *Dante Phylomythes and Philosopher, Man in the Cosmos*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981.

¹²⁶ Giuseppe Mazzotta 'Cosmology and the Kiss of Creation (*Paradiso 27-29*), *Dante Studies*, N. 123 (2005), pp. 1-21.

dissolution of boundaries: in fact, the heavenly *lumen* removes boundaries between souls and souls, between subject and object, between thought and word, between creator and creation and between the text and its content.

Neo-platonic Designs and Models.

Freccero has already demonstrated that the representation of the divine reality in the *Paradiso* is essentially Platonic and how extensive was Dante's knowledge of the *Timaeus* tradition.¹²⁷ His ideas dominate much scholarship, both English and Italian.¹²⁸ What, however, are the implications of that Platonic structure in terms of representations of time in the *Paradiso*? In this section, I would like to describe the astronomical motions which are conveyed in the *Paradiso* in order to show how they convey a Neo-platonic representation of time and eternity. In order to be as clear as possible, I will first identify which Platonic elements are more relevant for this kind of reading in the *Paradiso*.

First of all, Plato defines temporality as an image of eternity, which has motions according to numbers, divisions and whose nature and destiny are closely related to the heavenly spheres:

¹²⁷ 'From the earliest days of Christianity, the platonic emblem of Demiurge's creative act, the letter 'chi' corresponding to the intersection of celestial movement that Dante asks his reader to contemplate, was associated with the emblem of Christ and his redemptive act: the cross.' John Freccero, 'Paradiso X: The Dance of the Stars' *Dante Studies*, 86: 85-111, 1968.

¹²⁸ For a general account about astronomical structures in the three Canticas, see: Corrado Gizzi, 'L'astronomia nel poema sacro' 2 vols, 1974, Loffredo, Naples. Gizzi underlines the platonic frame of the *Paradiso*, too. One of the last and important work on the astronomy in the *Commedia* is from Alison Cornish, *Reading Dante's Stars*, New Haven, Yale UP, 2000. Alison Cornish claims that Dante's astronomy is actually ethical inasmuch as it demands a personal application and interpretation: according to Alison Cornish the constellations are invitations to virtue. The idea of a Platonic Paradise was already been claimed by other older scholars than Freccero even though in not a such detailed way, for instance by Guidobaldi, in Egidio Guidobaldi, *Dante europeo*. Vol.2, *il Paradiso come universo di luce* (la lezione platonico-bonaventuriana), Florence: Olschki, 1966 and by Gilson in Etienne Gilson, *Dante et la philosophie*, Paris: Vrin, 1939. For modes and models of diffusion of the Platonism during the Middle Age, see: Tullio Gregory, 'Platonismo medievale: Studi e ricerche' *Studi Storici* 26-7 Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1958.

Wherefore he made an image of eternity which is time, having a uniform motion according to number, parted into months and days and years, and also having greater divisions of past, present, and future [...] Thus was time made in the image of eternal nature; and it was created together with the heavens, in order that if they were dissolved, it might perish with them.¹²⁹
(*Timaeus* 37d-38a)

We can see that if temporality was born and will die with the heavenly spheres and if its multiple divisions to months, days and years can be recognized and measured through the spheres' circular motions, the temporality and the heavens are fundamentally connected.¹³⁰ Thus, a journey into the heavenly spheres is a discovery of the origin and end of time, which finally implodes into the eternal Empyrean. In addition to this point, Dante and Plato share the idea of the music of spheres departing from Aristotle and most scholastics. Plato does not mention that music in the *Timaeus*, but in *The Republic*.¹³¹ And even though from late antiquity

¹²⁹ Plato, *Plato Latinus*. Vol 4, *Timaeus a Calcido translatus commentarioque instructus*. Ed. P. J. Jensen and J. H. Waszink. London: Warburg Institute: 1962. Calcidius wrote his *Commentary* to the dialogue in the late fourth century AD to elucidate his Latin translation of *Timaeus* 17a-35c. It is the earliest Latin exposition of Plato's dialogue. Based on Greek sources but aimed at a Latin speaking audience, the Middle Platonic text stands at the beginning of the Latin Platonic commentary tradition. (Anna Somfai, 'Calcidius' "Commentary" on Plato's "Timaeus" and its Place in the Commentary Tradition: the Concept of Analogia in Text and Diagrams', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*. Supplement, vol. 83, PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE AND EXEGESIS IN GREEK, ARABIC AND LATIN COMMENTARIES: VOLUME ONE (2004), pp. 203-220).

¹³⁰ Aquinas agrees with Plato about the fact that the celestial motions which measure time would cease at the Last Judgement (CG 4.97), (See: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, Trans. by Charles J. O'Neil, London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975).

¹³¹ 'The spindle turns on the knees of Necessity; and on the upper surface of each circle is a siren, who goes round with them, hymning a single tone or note. The eight together form one harmony; and round about, at equal intervals, there is another band, three in number, each sitting upon her throne who are clothed in white robes and have chaplets upon their heads, Lachesis and Clotho and Atropos, who accompany with their voices the harmony of the sirens – Lachesis singing of the past, Clotho of the present, Atropos of the future; Clotho from time to time assisting with a touch of her right hand the revolution of the outer circle of whorl or spindle, and Atropos with her left hand touching and guiding the inner ones, and Lachesis laying of either in turn, first with one hand and then with the

the *Timaeus* was the only one of Plato's dialogues to circulate at all widely in the Latin West in the incomplete translation and commentary by Calcidius, Boethius accepts and spreads that Platonic idea.¹³² Moreover, the tradition established by Plato claims that the heavenly harmony is imitated by the harmony of soul and body in human being and, at the lowest level by instrumental music.¹³³ Humans can reach a higher spiritual development through an imitation of the most perfect of all motions, which is the regular circulation of the stars. Thus, Freccero has indicated in *Paradiso X* how careful is Dante to imitate the heavenly motions in the description of the blessed dancing.¹³⁴ Furthermore, I argue that there is another reason for which the *Paradiso* must not be read in any way but Platonic, in terms of the representation of time. That reason dwells again in the discussion about movements. I have demonstrated that anything occurring in the heavenly spheres must be in temporality, as heavens' circular motions are the origin and the end of time. The blessed appear to the Pilgrim in the spheres, even though they dwell actually in the eternal Empyrean. I would argue that the fact that the blessed approach the Pilgrim out of their eternal dwelling is actually necessary in order to build a narrative of Pilgrim's journey in Heaven for important reasons. First, Dante needs the blessed to be active and moving characters, he needs their movements and their speeches, while in eternity everything is condensed in an intense contemplation, without extension. This means that the narration and the development of a journey can not actually exist in a type of eternity as the one described by Boethius in *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (*De cons.* V. 6, xii). Boethius

other', (Plato, *The Republic*, Vol. X, Ed. By G.P. Goold, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975, 10. 614- 617).

From this passage is clear how in the Platonic universe the singing and the harmony of the spheres are necessary in the division between past, present and future: the flow of perception through these three stages exists only according a precise rhythm and harmony.

¹³² Dante's idea regarding the meaning of music in his heavens came down to him from Boethius' *Institutio musica*, the standard medieval textbook for music as a liberal art.

¹³³ Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, Trans. by Calvin M. Bower, Ed. by Claude V. Palisca, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, 1.2-5.

¹³⁴ Freccero states that the circular dance of the stars-souls recalls from one side the 'chorea stellarum' used in the *Timaeus*' translation by Calcidius, creating a platonic scenario of imagination. And from the other side this dance represents both the journey of the sun along the zodiac and the dance of the apostles around Christ.

agrees with Plato that temporality is an imitation of eternity, but it is a degenerated imitation and motions are part of this degeneration. In fact, on one side there is the eternal condition described as 'vitae immobilis praesentarium statum infinitus' and on the other side 'temporalium rerum motus imitator'. One element is imitating another one and that imitation is actually a corruption of the previous perfect condition: 'ex immobilitate deficit in motum'. Thus, what is in eternity must only look like the unmoved mover described by Aristotle and by Aquinas:¹³⁵ the first cause, which can create and influence, but without moving. However, Aquinas himself recognizes that some philosophers, Augustine first of all, admit motions in eternity, which are of a different nature than motions in time as they are beyond both space and time.¹³⁶ Thus, this is one the greatest challenges faced by Dante, the literary creation of that kind of movement: narrative actions beyond space and time. I will show in the following paragraphs that he realizes and describes those actions according to the motions of planet and stars, or according to the motion of light as explained by Pseudo Dionysius in the *Divine Names*.¹³⁷

And what of the sun's rays? Light comes from the Good, and light is an image of this archetypal Good. Thus the Good is also praised by the name 'Light', just as an archetype is revealed in its image. The goodness of the transcendent God reaches from the highest and most perfect forms of being to the very lowest. [...](*Divine Names*, 700A)

¹³⁵ See: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, 12.7; Aquinas, *ST* 1a q. 2 a. / 3q.9. a.

¹³⁶ Aquinas, *ST* IX a.1; Augustine *Gen. ad lit.* viii.20 (See: Ernesto Bonaiuti and Giorgio La Piana, 'The Genesis of Saint Augustine's Idea of Original Sin', *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol.10, April 1917, pp159-175.)

¹³⁷ Pseudo Dionysius, an unknown fifth-sixth century neoplatonic theologian whose works, of enormous influence throughout the Middle Ages (see: Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius : A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) were attributed to the Dionysius the Aereopagite, converted by Saint Paul (Acts 17.22-34): he was supposed to have been the first bishop of Paris and to have carried his severed head down from the Mount of Martyris (that is, Montmartre) to his burial place. Dante probably read the *Divine Names* with Aquinas' commentary (Aquinas, *In librum beati Dionysii de divinis nominibus expostio*, Turin: Ceslaus Pera, Marietti, 1950) and Aquinas himself cited Pseudo Dionysus in the *ST* 1600 times.

Here, Light is proclaimed as the image of the archetype of God and God is called Light, as the archetype is often revealed by its image.¹³⁸ God is told to move from the highest to the very lowest: His goodness reaches each element of the Creation.¹³⁹ This scenario allows for many more narrative possibilities compared with the Aristotelian unmoved mover, therefore Dante frames many communications, motions and influences between his characters according to this model, empowering the Platonic structure of the third Cantic. To conclude, on one hand the essence of temporal motions in Dante's *Paradiso* are the circular movements of the spheres - they affect earthly temporality with their circulations and their music. They measure and coordinate temporality and temporality began and will end with them. Furthermore, the intellectual understanding of reality must follow their heavenly patterns and rhythm. On the other hand, the characters who inhabit Heaven, Mary and Jesus Christ included, move and communicate beyond time and space, and the model chosen by Dante for those types of actions is the light of Pseudo-Dionysius.

This chapter will underline these Neo-platonic features of the *Paradiso* showing that a Platonic reading of certain key Cantos clearly demonstrate the general tension around a central intense point, displayed by Dante at several levels of the *Paradiso*. The motions described in the third Cantic reach a high degree of complexity, the astronomical ones first of all, and their intersections and circularity lead to a concentration of all into a central crossing point, from which everything was originated and in which past, present, and future are concentrated in one full present moment, as it is described by Boethius. Building on Freccero's argument, I will focus on Canto X as well, however I will not be concerned only about circularity like him, but about intersections and the centrality of those intersections.¹⁴⁰ In fact, I

¹³⁸ Dante himself thought the sun as God in Dante Alighieri, *Convivio*, Milano: Garzanti Editore, 1980, 3.12

¹³⁹ Another important reading of Dante about light is the *Liber de causis* (cited in *Conv.* 3.7.2) with Aquinas' commentary: *In librum de causis exposition*, Turin: Ceslaus Pera, Marietti, 1955. (See: Didier Ottaviani, *La philosophie de la lumière chez Dante: Du Convivio a la Divine Comédie*. Paris: Champion, 2004. Ottaviani underlines as well the importance of the light as a metaphor for the heavenly communications)

¹⁴⁰ Alison Cornish has already recognized the importance of each Canto tenth in each Cantic: 'each tenth canto of the three parts of the *Divina Commedia* marks the passage over a threshold into a new realm' Alison Cornish, 'Sons and Lovers:

argue that the plural circularities of motions in this Canto are actually consequences of the attraction activated by a central point, where everything exists meets. This is evident from the numerous images and references displayed in the Canto as I will explain. In addition to this, the number of the Canto itself, X, clearly recalls the *Timaeus'* astronomical intersection point.¹⁴¹ Moreover, Freccero underlines the centrality of Beatrice in this dance, as a demonstration of her as *figura Christi*. However, I argue that the centrality of the Pilgrim in the dance, as the author and as the Everyman of the first line of the *Inferno*, is much more meaningful, as I will demonstrate.

Astronomical Motions: a Neo-platonic Reading.

First, what does Dante's universe look like? Why does it present a Platonic design? The Empyrean is the Divine Mind where Being is indistinct: it is a state of unity and perfection. Inside the Empyrean there is the 'Primo Mobile':¹⁴² a very swift-moving heaven that contains all the properties and the essences of the Empyrean, which are in motion, ready to be divided. Then, in the Heaven of the fixed stars each essence is separated from the others and it is sent to its specific Heaven (Love to Venus, Justice to Jupiter etc), from where it will be sent into the sublunar world, through the Heavens' circular motions and according to the Divine Intelligences' wisdom. Thus, the Empyrean is the specific place where eternity dwells. The sublunar world is the realm of temporality where creatures are generated, they grow and develop until their ends.¹⁴³ This means that there is a continuous process of descending generation and distinction of an indistinct potential Being. This descending process of potentiality is the main interconnection between the eternal mind of God and the world of temporal creatures: 'di su prendono e di sotto fanno' (*Pd* II, 122-123) - it

Guido in *Paradise'*, *Comparative Literature Issue Supplement: Special Issue in Honor of John Freccero: Fifty Years with Dante and the Italian Literature*. Vol. 124, 2002, pp.51-69.

¹⁴¹ "The entire compound was divided by him length ways into two parts, which he united at the centre like the letter X' (*Timaeus* 36 B-C)

¹⁴² It is described even in *Convivio* II, xiv, 15: it is the fastest sphere due to its desire to be joined to the unmoving Empyrean.

¹⁴³ Except human soul which is everlasting.

shapes the sense and the development of temporality and eternity itself.¹⁴⁴ The heavens are the means to realize the plan of Providence into the cycle of earthly life.¹⁴⁵ In Canto VIII, Carlo Martello explains that way of descending through the metaphor of a bow and a arrow:

Lo ben che tutto il regno che tu scandi
volge e contenta, fa esser virtute
sua provedenza in questi corpi grandi .
E' non pur le nature provedute
sono in la mente ch'è da sé perfetta,
ma esse insieme con la lor salute:
per che quantunque quest'arco saetta
disposto cade a proveduto fine ,
sì come cosa in suo segno diretta.
Se ciò non fosse, il ciel che tu cammine
producerebbe sì li suoi effetti,
che non sarebbero arti ma ruine;
e ciò esser non può, se li 'ntelletti
che muovon queste stelle non son manchi,
e manco il primo, che non li ha perfetti

(The Good, which turns the whole domain you climb/ and brings it joy, forms from its providence/ the power that works in all these cosmic limbs./Nor is the way things are alone foreseen/ within that mind, which of itself is whole,/ but equally how each thing best may thrive./ And so, whatever bolt this bow may shoot/ will arc down, shaped towards an end foreseen,/as things do when directed to their mark./ Were this not so, the spheres you journey through/ would bring all their effects about in ways/ that count as chaos, nota s skill or art./ And that can't be – unless the angel-mind/ that move these stars were failing in their acts -/ the first as well, for not perfecting them. *Pd. VIII, 97-111*).

¹⁴⁴ See: Thomas Litt, *Les corps cèleste dans l'univers de saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Leuven: Publications Universitaires, 1963.

¹⁴⁵ *De civ. Dei* 12.20-24: Augustine clarifies the functions of Providence, as the will of God, and the functions of planets' influences.

Here, there is an initial reference to the circular motion of the heavenly bodies (volge), as a part of the process of the creation and then the focus is on another kind of movement represented through the metaphor of a bow and arrow. The bow is the power of the heavens, wielded by God, the imagined archer, and the arrow is a specific influence of the heavens on the sublunar world. In the middle of this description Carlo Martello insists on the capacity of the Divine to embrace all that: creation, heavens, creatures and creatures' salvations.

I would like to underline that the metaphor of bow and arrow, which represents a very straight and intentional motion has already been delivered by Dante in the following passage, Canto I of the *Paradiso*. Here, Beatrice is representing through the same metaphor their flight from the Earthly Paradise, however the direction is not descending anymore, but ascending:

e ora l', come a sito decreto,
cen porta la virtù di quella corda
che ciò che scocca drizza in segno lieto.

(It bears us now to our appointed place-/ that bowstring with its power to aim aright/
whatever it lets to fly to happy targets. *Pd.* I,124-126)

Still in the same Canto, Beatrice adds that they are not the only creatures that naturally tend to the 'principio loro' (line 111), but everything naturally moves towards God. However each creature has its own different attitude and velocity in this upwards motion. So, the interactions between God and the creation develop according to the different velocities of the heavenly circular motion, and according to the different velocities as well of this double tension. That means that there is a tension in the descending virtues to the sublunar world and an ascending tendency in the creatures to their 'principium'.

Creata fu la materia ch'elli hanno
creata fu la virtù informante
in queste stelle che 'ntorno a lor vanno.
L'anima d'ogne bruto e de le piante
di complexion potenziata tira

lo raggio e 'l moto de le luci sante.

(Matter, which they possess, was thus 'created' / 'created', too, the power informing them, / descending from the stars that circle around. / as mere 'completed' possibility, / the very souls of beasts and growing things / draw light and motion from the sacred stars. *Pd.* VII, 135 -138).

Here, it is explained how the essence and the matter of everything has been generated due to the Heavens' motions and how they are developed by these motions too. So, the 'stelle che 'ntorno a lor vanno' are the most creative and powerful emanation of the Divine point; furthermore the Point increases the tension between the sublunar world and the higher spheres, generating both circular and straight tensions and motions. I would argue that all this astronomical pattern of movements is mirrored by the disposition of the souls in the Empyrean and by the Empyrean itself:

In forma dunque di candida rosa
mi si mostrava la milizia santa
che nel suo sangue Cristo fece sposa;
ma l'altra, che volando vede e canta
la Gloria di colui che la 'nnamora
e la bontà che la fece cotanta,
sì come schiera d'ape che s'infiora
una fiata e una si ritorna
là dove suo laboro s'insapora,
nel gran fior discendeva che s'addorna
di tante foglie, e quindi risaliva
là dove 'l suo amor sempre soggiorna.

(In form, then, as a rose, pure, brilliant, white, / there stood before me now the sacred ranks / that Christ, by His own blood, has made His bride. / The other force that, flying, sees and sings / the glory that so stirs their love of Him- / the goodness, too, that makes them all they are - / came down, as might a swarm of bees that first / en-flower themselves, returning, afterwards, / to where their efforts are made sweet to taste. /

They search the utmost depths of that great flower,/ with all its many petals. Then they rise/ once more to where their love will always dwell. *Pd XXXI, 1-12*)

Here, the blessed are in a circle around God and the angels move up and down (discendeva... e quindi risaliva). We can recognize the two qualities of the astronomical motions: the circular motions of heavens and the descending - ascending motions of the essences of the creation. They all are bounded here in a kind of compact union stressed by another reference to the marriage between Christ and the church (line 3) and the marriage in nature: impollination, operated by the bees, used as metaphor to describe the angels.

However, the sublunar world does not only display only temporal elements, we can find perpetual entities even here, first of all the human soul. Why is it perpetual? In Canto VII Beatrice clarifies this point:

ma vostra vita sanza mezzo spira
la somma beninanza e la innamora
di sé sì che poi sempre la disira.

(But your life – through no second cause- is breathed / by Highest Goodness which then brings that life/ to love such good and always long for it. *Pd. VII, 142-144*)

What is directly created by God without the intercession of the heavens has seen the Divine and desires to come back to Him. Thus, what it is created directly by God cannot die, due to this desire.

To conclude, this desire can be seen as the engine of the descending journey of essences from the Empyrean to the Earth and the engine of the ascending path of the human soul to God as well.¹⁴⁶ It is a kind of specular energy from God, to creation and from creation to God that allows the existence of temporality, and so the motions which may occur only in temporality. On one side love is the power that

¹⁴⁶ 'Dante's Paradise, then, is hardly the kingdom of quiet and immobility we might have expected; indeed, it is a perennial motion, desire and ardour, hunger and thirst' Lino Pertile, 'A Desire of Paradise and a Paradise of Desire: Dante and Mysticism', *Dante: Contemporary Perspective*, Ed. by Amilcare Iannucci, Toronto: Toronto University press, 1997, p.150. For a wider insight on desire in the whole *Commedia*: Franco Ferruccio, *Il poema del desiderio: poetica e passione in Dante*. Milan: Leonardo, 1990.

allows a temporary extension of time throughout eternity, a brief division of perception between past, present and future. On the other side love still recalls few perpetual entities, the human soul first of all, to come back, to be part again of the density of the beginning point, where any divisions dissolve.¹⁴⁷

Canto X: an Astronomical Intersection.

The first Canto where Dante starts to suggest a representation of eternity as a synthesis of the entire complexity of the astronomical motions is *Paradiso X*. In fact, the movements activated by Love, which signifies the descending creation, the ascending tendency of creatures and the circulation of the heavens are all synthesized in Canto X, the Canto of the Sun. In this Canto the Pilgrim arrives at the Sun and this is an important transition in the whole *Commedia* as I will show how the focus slightly moves from a point upwards in space, like in the purgatorial trajectory, to a centre of astronomical intersection. From the first lines of its poem we can identify the emphasis of the two movements: the straight one, up and down, and the circular one.

Guardando nel suo Figlio con l'Amore
che l'uno e l'altro eternalmente spira,
lo primo e ineffabile Valore
quanto per mente e per loco si gira
con tant' ordine fè [...]

¹⁴⁷ The goodness of the Creator and Love as energy which motivates creation is largely shared by Dante's sources. It is indicated by Boethius in *O qui perpetua* 4-6, by Plato in the *Timaeus* (Why did the Creator make the world? ...He was good, and therefore not jealous, and being free from jealousy he desired that all things should be like himself. (*Timaeus*, 29 E) and by Aquinas in *ST1* q.20 art. 2, who quotes Pseudo-Dionysius too: 'I answer that, God loves all existing things. For all existing things, in so far as they exist, are good, since the existence of a thing is itself a good; and likewise, whatever perfection it possesses. Now it has been shown above that God's will is the cause of all things. It must needs be, therefore, that a thing has existence, or any kind of good, only in as much as it is willed by God. [...] Hence, since to love anything is nothing else than to will good to that thing, it is manifest that God loves everything that exists. [...] Hence Dionysius says: *On behalf of the truth we must make bold to say even this, that He Himself, the cause of all things, by His abounding love and goodness, is placed outside Himself by His providence for all existing things.*'

(Looking within his Son through that same Love/ that Each breathes out eternally
with Each,/ the first and three fold Worth, beyond all words,/ formed all that spins
through intellect or space *Pd X*, 1-4)

The Love between the Son and the Father creates a straight correspondence generating circularity in space and in the human mind. In fact, the intellectual comprehension proceeds following a circular path around a centre, the knowledge, as Dante himself states in the *Convivio*.¹⁴⁸ Then the reader is invited in a specular way to enact the same straight look up to the Heaven, where the celestial bodies are moving circularly:

Leva dunque, lettore, a l'alte rote
meco la vista, dritto a quella parte
dove l'un moto e l'altro si percuote;

(Lift up your eyes, then, reader, and, along with / me, look to those wheels,
directed to that part / where motions – yearly and diurnal – clash. *Pd X*, 7-9)

Here, the kinds of motions described are even more complicated, as it is specified that they have opposite directions. So, the focus is no longer upon a backward direction, as during the Pilgrim's purgatorial path, but both, backward and forward are comprehended in a bigger picture.

To be more precise, the author points to the intersection of the celestial equator and the ecliptic. The critical importance of the exact angle of the ecliptic (23°27') had also been recognized since antiquity:¹⁴⁹ the dimensions and climates of the five zones (two artic, two temperate, one tropical) are its direct result. Aristotle had recognized that all life on earth depended on it, but had supposed that

¹⁴⁸ 'Dico che per cielo io intendo la scienza e per cieli le scienze , per tre similitudini che li cieli hanno con le scienze massimamente' *Convivio* II, xiii, 2.

¹⁴⁹ For instance: Aristotle *De gen. et corr.* 2.10 [336b] (Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle*, Ed. By H.H. Joachim: http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/gener_corr.html) and Alfragano (al-Faragani) *Il Libro dell'aggregazione delle stelle* (*Dante, Conv., II, VI-134*) secondo il codice Mediceo-Laurenziano pl.29-Cod.9 contemporaneo a Dante, Città Castello: Ed. Romeo Campani, 1910.

the seasons depended on the sun's coming closer as it rose in the sky when north of the equator. The celestial equator follows a east to west direction and the ecliptic turns from west to east. Furthermore their conjunction and their opposite direction facilitate the signs of the zodiac, essential for plants and animals. In fact, without the changes in the aspect of the planets, their power could not be fully exerted, and the numerous possibilities for variety in living things could not be fulfilled. So again our attention is drawn to a single point, the conjunction, that can guarantee plenitude, because it occupies a central position, where different directions and motions and essences are comprehended. The following lines underline how the central position of this point is crucial for its creative power:

Che se la strada lor non fosse torta,
Molta virtù nel ciel sarebbe in vano,
E quasi ogni potenza qua giù morta;

(And were the path it takes not twisted so, then many astral virtues would be wasted,/and almost potential, down here, dead *Pd X 16-18*)

'La strada torta' recalls Virgilio's explanation of sin in the *Purgatorio*, according to which the sinners' fault is in addressing their love to the 'malo obietto', to the wrong object and in the wrong direction. That means that human souls should follow a specific path in order to fulfil the universe's plenitude. If they sin, immediately the creative powers are turned into destructive ones. Moreover, the perfection of the position of this point of astronomical conjunction allows not only existences in time, but the possibility to measure it too:

E sa dal dritto più o men lontano
fosse 'l partire, assai sarebbe manco
e giù e sù de l'ordine mondano.

(And were the distance any more or less/ from that straight course, then much- above and here -/ so ordered in the world would be a void. *Pd. X 19-21*)

I would like to draw the attention to a verb used by Dante 'dirama', a kind of tree metaphor, in order to describe the paths of this chiasmic midpoint:

Vedi come da indi si dirama
l'oblico cerchio che i pianeti porta

(Look! Where those orbits meet, there branches off/ the slanting circles that the planets ride *Pd X 13-14*)

As for the connection with the *Timaeus*, 'dirama' is not just a branching metaphor, but it suggests the image of the letter X, or number X, the chiasmus which is the number of the Canto, that recalls this following passage of the Platonic work:

The entire compound was divided by him length ways into two parts, which he united at the centre like the letter X, and bent into an inner and outer circle or sphere, cutting one another again at a point over against the point at which they cross. (*Timaeus 36B-C*)

In this passage Plato explains the creation of heavenly bodies. The action of creation is division and in this case division into two parts, two lengths. The Pilgrim is performing a specular action that is not division into parts but understanding and integration into their intersection. Then Plato underlines the precious importance of the angle between the ecliptic and the equator, as Dante did. Dante does not describe the equatorial and the ecliptic in the same terms of 'inner and outer circle', however this image recurs in the dancing of the blessed souls of the Solar Sphere. In fact, the souls of the Sun are organized in two concentric circles, with opposite directions:

a rotar cominciò la santa mola;
e nel suo giro tutta non si volse
prima ch'un'altra di cerchio la chiuse

(the holy grinding stone began to wheel./ Nor had it gone a whole rotation through/ before a second circle closed around *Pd. XII 3-5*)

In other words the souls themselves are parts of the astronomic landscape that is mapped according to a Platonic structure. The blessed have been integrated in the astronomical essence and the souls' dancing, which was absent into the *Purgatorio*, is a demonstration of this higher harmonic integration. So the complexity and the variety of the levels of motions will lead the Pilgrim to the Divine point where all motions are both dissolved and concentrated. I would like to draw the attention to the fact that in the representation of the dance of the blessed, both the Pilgrim and Beatrice are in the centre of the two concentric circles. Freccero has indicated the centrality of Beatrice as a sign of her truth as *figura Christi*. I would like to add to Freccero's thesis that the centrality of the Pilgrim is as important as Beatrice's: not only the figure of Christ occupies the centre of a cosmological intersection, but even the author, the Pilgrim, the Everyman and the narrative point of view. I argue that this central presence intensifies the density and the creative power of the centre, which has been described only from an astronomical perspective along the Canto, suggesting other levels of meaning

To conclude, the Pilgrim has left the world of temporality in Eden and now he is flying to eternity. This flight involves a progressive approach to the indistinct, far from the clear distinctions of the *Purgatorio* operated by the senses in the temporal extension. This gradual process towards indistinction, involves the harmony of different motions, voices, directions and velocities: all of those tend to concentrate into a central fundamental and intense point. The journey in the *Purgatorio* was about meditation and purification and it has a clear direction: upwards in spatial terms and backwards in time. Conversely, the journey in the *Paradiso* engages with different directions and rhythms. In *Convivio* II, Dante claims that the sciences and the planets have similar motions and directions:¹⁵⁰ they all turn around a centre and this circular motions represents the process of human understanding. That means that during this process of synthesis into the centre, the Pilgrim is engaged into a path of understanding too. So, throughout the *cantica*, the movement of

¹⁵⁰ 'La prima similitudine si è la rivoluzione de l'uno e de l'altro intorno a uno suo immobile. Chè ciascuno cielo mobile si volge intorno al suo centro, lo quale, quanto per lo suo movimento, non si muove; e così ciascuna scienza si muove intorno al suo subietto, lo quale essa non muove, però che nulla scienza dimostra lo proprio subietto, ma suppone quello.' *Conv.* II, xiii, 3-4.

creation is progressively represented from a descending one, to an emanation from a centre into a larger circumference, which moves around it. This emanation can be measured in term of space and time, as well as Plato claims in the *Timaeus*,¹⁵¹ but the centre itself cannot. In the next paragraph I will analyse where and how the idea of a cosmological Beginning is relocated in a central position from a spatial point of view and what that implies in terms of time. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that this centrality explains why the *Comedy* itself begins in *medias res*.

In Medias Res: Christ

In the last section, I demonstrated how the power of a comprehensive centre is conveyed in an astronomical way and according to a Platonic reading in Dante's *Paradiso*. In fact, the Heavens and the Sun which are progressively represented collapsing into a centre where those divisions and measurements disappear in a dense concentration. Then, I have concluded underlining the centrality of the Pilgrim and Beatrice in the circular dance of blessed. That centrality shows other levels of meaning concentrated in that centre, which I would like to explore in this section. Thus, I will show that the centrality described in Canto X is not only specifically astronomical, but it involves other levels, for instance the time of narration as well as biblical time.

First of all, I would like to draw the attention to Singleton's statements about the biblical time as represented in the last Cantos of the *Purgatorio*:

This is, literally, Holy Scripture coming in time. And now that it is all there before us[...] This now is Scripture in that kind of timeless dimension in which it stands as it is spread in this life before the eyes of every faithful Christian[...] And now time is unfolded, time is come to halt, time is immobilized, with all eyes on the centre, and something, someone expected there [...] We expect Beatrice. But all the while

¹⁵¹ 'And God lighted a fire in the second orbit from earth, which is called the sun, to give light over the whole heaven, and to teach intelligent beings that knowledge of number which is derived from the revolution of the same.'
(*Timaeus* 38 D)

everything, the pattern of the whole, the image of time immobilized and expectant at its centre, all seems to call for Christ.¹⁵²

Singleton argues that the tension of the entire sacred procession is directed toward the centre of the procession itself.¹⁵³ This mirrors the astronomical representation described in the Canto of the Sun reinforcing the relocation of a Divine Beginning into the centre of the cosmos, instead of on the top of the Mount Purgatory. I completely agree with Singleton. However, building on his statements, I will demonstrate that the tension of a Christological centre dominates the poem, from the arrival into Eden until the end, in many other ways and levels. In fact, the figure of Christ at the centre of the sacred procession leads to the astronomical intersection I have just analysed in the last paragraph and both those images, one Biblical and one Platonic, actually complete each other defining the complex structure of temporality delivered in the *Commedia*. Thus, Christ is not only the spatial centre of time represented in the procession, but He is actually the Beginning from which temporality develops, according to a circular pattern which mirrors the Platonic idea of cosmos. So, the Beginning explored in the *Paradiso* is not the same kind of Creation glanced in the second Cantica. In fact, only when the Pilgrim's understanding is developed enough, it becomes clearer that the 'Principium' is the heart of cosmos from which the reality is emanated, re-created and re-generated, according to circular impulses. So, where is that centrality of Christ conveyed in Heaven? I will show that Christ is the propulsive centre of human history in Cantos VI and VII. Furthermore, He is the centre, which unifies the white rose, in canto XXXII, and He is the central circle of the last powerful vision in Canto XXXIII. Thus, I will demonstrate that, Christ who fulfils both human and divine natures, embodies as well past and future, and the 'before' and the 'later' categories. I claim that in the *Paradiso* there is a development of the idea of Beginning which leads to Christ in the centre as a figure which synthetizes time in an eternal regenerating present. As

¹⁵² Charles S. Singleton, 'Dante's *Commedia*: Elements of Structure', London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1977, pp. 49-50.

¹⁵³ Peter Armour disagrees about this interpretation. Instead he argues that the Gryphon is not Christ, but it represents the earthly human happiness. (See: Peter Armour, *History of the World: A Study of the Earthly Paradise (Purgatorio Cantos XXIX-XXXIII)* Oxford: Clarendon, 1989). Nevertheless, the vast majority of the critics, first of all Auerbach, firmly believe that the Gryphon represents Christ.

such, this kind of Beginning moves from a biblical perspective to a Platonic emanationist idea. Moreover, the story of the Bible is not the ultimate model of Dante's framework of time, as Singleton says, but the biblical word is actually re-structured along the third Cantica to mirror the astronomical motions, as a model of the interrelations between eternity, perpetuity and temporality. To conclude, the 'Principium' is actually Christ and He is omnipresent in space and in time and beyond space and time. In fact, He appears in Hell through the cracks caused by the earthquake, He appears in Purgatory as the Gryphon and He shows completely himself in Heaven. He is an eternal and all-comprehensive present momentum. And his inclusivity is spatially represented as the propulsive central point of the cosmos, accordingly.

In addition to this centrality of Christ, the central position of the Pilgrim, the author and the Everyman is indicated in Canto X, too. I argue that this is a fundamental stage of the progressive integration of everything into the central 'Principium', which will culminate in the last vision where the Pilgrim will see in Christ the human 'effigie'. In fact, during the edenic sacred procession, the Pilgrim is an external audience: he has no role in that. However, in *Paradiso X* he is with Beatrice at the centre of the 'dance of the stars'. What does this involvement mean in terms of time and perception? I have already indicated that the central position of the Pilgrim during the dance of the blessed in Canto X (Par. X, 77) recalls Christ in the Pseudo-John quoted by Freccero.¹⁵⁴ However, what are the implications of the centrality of both Christ and the Pilgrim? How is that developed and conveyed throughout the poem?

¹⁵⁴ Freccero states that the circular dance around a Savior are quite common since antiquity and that has been integrated into the Christian tradition: 'The origins of the theme of what I shall call the 'zodiacal dance' of wisemen are doubtless lost in antiquity and are at any rate not immediately relevant. For our purposes, the earliest and best text I am able to offer is gnostic in origin, was known to St. Augustine, and was transmitted in the apocryphal Acts of John. On close inspection, it seems to reveal many elements present in the Dantesque scene. After recounting several incidents of his discipleship, the pseudo-John tells us that the Savior one day called the Savior one day called the apostles together and commanded them to form a ring around him and to sing and dance.' (John, Freccero *Dante the Poetics of Conversion*, London: Harvard University Press, 1986, p.229).

In order to answer these questions, first I would like to analyse a few representations of history throughout the poem and how they relate to Christ. That analysis will help me to show how the presence of Christ can reestablish the perception and the representation of human history in the third *cantica*. Is Christ still represented as Singleton describes Him in the sacred procession, which means: 'the pattern of the whole, the image of time immobilized'? Furthermore, I will demonstrate that the narration of the Pilgrim's journey towards salvation recalls the pattern of an emanating centre too. The Pilgrim's story, the history of humanity and the narrative of the *Commedia* concentrate and overlap in one central point: the story of Christ. On the Dantean representation of Christ in the *Paradiso*, Mazzotta says: 'Dante does preserve his rationality and his sense of separation from some kind of cosmological absolute',¹⁵⁵ however, I will demonstrate that, even though Dante does not use the language of ineffability and does not engage with the mystical perception of time,¹⁵⁶ but always keeps a complex poetic and rational construction, in that construction in particular, there is a careful way to be integrated into the cosmos and overcome any separations.

Christ and Rome: Propulsive Centres of Human History.

Paradiso's Cantos VI and VII describe and structure human history and its duration, purposes and errors, according to the intercantica pattern which dedicates Canto VI of each *Cantica* to historical and political concerns. I argue that, in the *Paradiso* the narration and the representation of the story of the Empire focus on the birth and death of Christ as its centre and pivotal point. In fact, in these Cantos, on one side, the narrative of human history before Christ is seen as a preparation for the birth and death of Christ. On the other side, the historical facts after Christ are

¹⁵⁵ Giuseppe Mazzotta 'Paradiso 1-2', *Reading Dante*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

¹⁵⁶ Manuela Colombo identifies differences and analogies between Dante's mysticism and the tradition. She underlines a more rational approach without denying a proper mysticism: 'Concetti già presenti nei testi mistici dei secoli precedenti e basati su alcuni *topoi* scritturali come: 'Quam magna multitudo dulcedinis tuae, Domine, quam abscondisti timentibus te' Ps. 30,20, 'Si tamen gustatis quoniam dulcis est dominus' 1 Pt. 2-3 [...] sono metafora di una conoscenza affettiva piuttosto che razionale.' Manuela Colombo, *Dai mistici a Dante: il linguaggio dell'ineffabilità*, Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1987, p.77.

represented as events meant to safeguard and disseminate the Word of God. This means that Christ is not only a central point in history, but He gives meaning and significance to what occurred earlier and to what will happen after him. Thus, Christ has a central emanating energy in the heavenly representations of human history. The frame of the historical events taken into account is the Roman Empire: its foundation, its development and its fall, with Christ's life at its heart. Thus, all the meanings of human history are set in the centre, in Christ, with two halves of history addressed to it - they mirror the structure of the Bible, divided into Old and New Testament, as Singleton underlines, but I argue that Christ and Rome result more as the centre of a proper circular motion, as I will show later.

In *Paradiso* VI, Justinian introduces himself as a part of the universal story of the Roman Empire. The very beginning of this story starts with the description of two opposite motions, towards one direction and then to the opposite one, recalling the descending and ascending impulses of creatures:

Poscia che Costantin l'aquila volse
 contr'al corso del ciel, ch'ella seguio
 dietro a l'antico che Lavinia tolse,

'Since Constantine first turned the Eagle's flight/ against the path, east-west, that
 heaven's course takes,/(once followed by the Patriarch who chose, as wife,/ Lavinia)
 (*Pd* VI, 1-3)

The verb 'volse' and these two opposite motions suggest an image of circularity and again the reference to the 'corso del ciel' connects immediately the image to the kind of astronomical circularity we have just analysed in the previous section. Furthermore the unnaturalness of that 'volse' is justified by the mention of moving against the Sun. Thus, the story of Rome begins with an iteration of images and ideas, both astronomical and Platonic, which Dante will better develop in Canto X, as I have shown. But why is that circulation unnatural? In light of *Pd.* XX, 55-60 and *De Mon.* 2.11.8,¹⁵⁷ it is clear that Dante condemned not only Constantine's 'Donation'

¹⁵⁷ Dante Alighieri, *De Monarchia*, trans. By Federico Sanguineti, Milano: garzanti, 1999.

(see *Inf.* XIX, 115-17), but also his deserting the West (*De Mon.* 3.10.8-9). In that kind of negative judgement there is the opposition between a previous wise action and an unnatural and foolish decision which follows: so on one side there is Aeneas, 'l'antico', on the other side the guilty Constantine. Furthermore, after setting himself in history,¹⁵⁸ Justinian delivers an account of Roman Monarchy and Empire. The main aim of this long speech ('Pd VI is unique in the *Commedia* in consisting entirely of words of a single uninterrupted speaker')¹⁵⁹ is demonstrating how Providence has set Rome and the Empire in order to create the best conditions to allow the Redemption, described as a 'gloria di far vendetta' (Pd. VI, 90), to happen and then to the Word to spread. This idea has already been expressed and explained in other Dante's works, first of all the *De Monarchia*, then the *Epistole*.¹⁶⁰ Actually, Dante's earliest expression of this view is in *Conv.*4.5. However, its fullest expression is in *De Monarchia*, Book 2.¹⁶¹ Dante's views owe much to Paulus Orosius's *History against*

¹⁵⁸ Dante's main source about Justinian's life is Latini's *Trésor*: Justinian was the last emperor to make a determined effort to reestablish the power of the Empire in Italy, North Africa and Spain. His brilliant generals Belisarius (mentioned here in the Justinian's speech) and Narses were partly successful; the exarchate of Ravenna and the southern Adriatic coast remained under Byzantine control for several centuries. Dante's choice of Justinian as the principal spokesman for imperial institutions is motivated partly by the contemporary importance of the revival of Roman Law. Latini claims that Justinian was a Monophysite and then he was converted to Catholicism. This fact derives from Paulus Diaconus' account of Justinian reign's (*Historia romana* 16.11-17-9), however it is false.

¹⁵⁹ Robert M. Durling, *Paradiso*, p.131.

¹⁶⁰ 'Sacrosanctum ovile, Romam, cui post tot triumphorum pompas, et verbo et opere Christus orbis confirmavit imperium, quam etiam ille petrus, et Paulus gentium praedicator, in Apostolicam sedem aspergine proprii sanguinis consecrarunt.' *Epist.* VIII.xi. 'Dico igitur ad questionem quod romanus populus de iure, non usurpando, Monarchie officium, quod 'Imperium' dicitur, sibi super mortales omnes ascivit.' (Dante, *De Mon.*, p.48).

¹⁶¹ Durling indicates a strong relation between the *Paradiso* and *De Monarchia* due to two main reasons: the date of composition of both works and the self citations of the author: 'The exact date of composition and immediate context of *Monarchia* remain difficult to determine exactly, although it was possibly written as late as 1318 in order to buttress the role of Can Grande della Scala as imperial vicar after his excommunication by Pope John XXII a few years previously. The close relation of *Monarchia* to the *Paradiso*, and the strongest evidence for the late dating of the treatise, is found at *Mon.* 1.12.6, where Dante, affirming that the power to act freely is God's greatest gift to mankind, adds: 'as I have already said in *Paradiso* of the *Comedy*' [sicut in *Paradiso Comedie iam dixi*].' (Robert M. Durling, *Paradiso*, p.702). Moreover Durling adds: 'Dante's *Monarchia* and *Comedy* present unique distinctly medieval view of Roman history as an integral

the Pagans, but Orosius's purpose was to prove that the state of human affairs was far better in Christian time than previously. For Orosius the peace under Augustus was a unique, temporary providential preparation for the coming of Christ.¹⁶² Thus, Dante's elevating of the Romans to the status of the best people, chosen by God, is foreign to Orosius.¹⁶³ In the following passage, Davis has beautifully summarized what Rome signifies throughout the whole Dantesque work:

Dante's idea of Rome is based on the belief that God has called the Eternal City to a unique eminence, choosing her to be mistress of the world and head of the Church, capital of both the Roman and the Christian peoples, at once symbol of the ancient earthly brotherhood and the future communion in Paradise.¹⁶⁴

We can see from this passage that Rome has already been seen in Dante's works as kind of a point of a maximum density and concentration, located at the centre of the Empire: in fact, it absorbs in itself different religious beliefs and different cultures: the Church and the Empire, the past and the future. In Rome's name there was an 'earthly brotherhood' and there will be 'a future communion in Paradise'.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, my purpose, here, is not to discuss the sense and the origin of Dante's idea of Rome, but it is indicating it as represented according to a circular Platonic structure and with an emanating creative centre at this point of the heavenly journey. In fact, even if the idea of Rome is structured in this way, that demonstrates

par of God's providential plans, a view based on very few historical sources – Vergil's *Aeneid*, a fragment of Livy's history of Rome, Orosius- taken as literally factual, and treating the crucifixion of Christ as a central turning point followed by a new, transfigured kind of time.' *Ibidem*, p.142.

¹⁶³ See: Paget Toynbee 'Dante's Obligation to Orosius' *Romania*, Vol. 24, 1895, pp.385-98, 1895. And Charles Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.

¹⁶⁴ See: Davis, Charles, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.

¹⁶⁵ This paragraph does not aim to give a bibliography of the enormous topic of Dante's own idea of Rome. Furthermore, Davis already gave a very good account of that. For the main sources which influence Dante about this topic he focuses on: Orosius, Livy, Vergil, and five contemporaries: Benzo D'Alessandria, Giovanni Mansionarius, Remigio de' Girolami, Brunetto Latini, Giovanni Villani. Moreover, he stresses the clear antithesis with Augustine. In addition to this, Dante's fascination for the Eternal City fits perfectly in the general ideas about it, elaborated throughout the whole Middle Age. For additional information see: Arturo Graf, *Roma nella memoria e nelle immaginazioni del medio evo*, Torino: Einaudi, 1923.

that Dantean temporality tends to integrate its biblical and virgilian representations into a Platonic astronomical design.

After the historical turning point of the 'gloria di far vendetta', Justinian tells about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Empire of Charles Magnus, then he steps into the contemporary disputes between Guelfi and Ghibellini. In that account the reader can perceive how the tension of both the moments, earlier and later the Divine revenge, moves towards the centre - the death and resurrection of Christ. That tension is stressed by the chiasmus of line 83, which introduces the Redemption into the history of the Empire: 'fatto avea prima e poi era fatturo'. Progressing from the centre towards the two directions of the chiasmus we can see that the first and the last word is the verb 'to make', but in the past and in the future tense, then there are the auxiliaries 'to have' and 'to be', then the two adverbs 'earlier' and 'later'. In the middle of this line and chiasmus the conjunction 'e', (and) activates the union of this two different sides of history and cosmos, which are specular and opposite at the same time. Thus, the representation of history, here, is embodied in the deep nature of the text as well, mirroring through the chiasmus the astronomical 'X' of the *Timaeus*.

Then, Canto VII is dedicated to the description of the turning point of the Redemption, following the double tension designed by the description of the Roman Empire of the previous canto. That central point, that means the birth and death of Christ, implies the union and concentration of multiple diversities:

Fin ch'al verbo di Dio discender piacque
u' la natur, che dal suo fattore
s'era allungata, unì a sè in persona
con l'atto sol del suo eterno amore.

(Until it pleased the Logos to descend/ to where our nature, long abandoning/ its maker, was made one, as *person*, with Him, / by action solely of eternal love. *Pd.* VII 30-33)

So, first of all, here the Redemption is described as the union of both the natures, human and divine. Moreover, we can see the union of two different attitudes forgiveness and justice of God. In fact, only one of them would not be enough:

Dunque a Dio covenia con le vie sue
riparar l'omo a sua vita intera,
dico con l'una ,o ver con amendue.

(So this was right: that God by His own means/ should bring us back to fullness in our
lives, / by one way or – I'd say – by both at once. *Pd.* VII 103-5)

Furthermore, I would argue that the intensity of this dense central point in history has already been prepared and introduced through an important episode in the *Purgatorio*, which reinforces it. In fact, the opposition between an 'earlier stage' and a 'later stage' which tend towards a centre can already be glanced and recognized in Canto VI of the *Purgatorio* too (the equivalent Canto in the political triptyque) but in a less theoretical way: "dicendo: 'O Mantoano, io son Sordello/ de la tua terra!' e l'un l'altro abbracciava." (*Pg.* VI, 74-76). It is the embrace of Virgilio and Sordello¹⁶⁶, two poets, one of a pre-Christian period who cannot take part to the salvation and one of a later period who is walking towards Heaven. I argue that in this human exchange of affection and manifestation of brotherhood¹⁶⁷ we can see the same tension towards a centre interposed between two periods: one before Christ, represented by Virgilio and one after Christ, represented by Sordello. In fact, what in Heaven is represented through complex symbols or intellectual speculations in the *Purgatorio* is often an ordinary human feeling or event. However, the narrative account about the contemporary Italian political situation which starts from this encounter in Canto VI of the *Purgatorio*, is foreign to a kind of circular structure. Instead it follows the apocalyptic pattern of the 'Old Man of Crete', a model of history without centre and cycles, as I will analyse in the following

¹⁶⁶ Sordello was born near Mantua, in Goito. He was famous as troubadour writing love poems (cansos), political satires (sirventes) and poetic debates (tensos) in Provençal. He was involved in scandal by abducting Cunizza da Romano (see *Pd.* IX. 31-33), the wife of Riccardo di San Bonifazio, the ruler of Verona. Then Sordello escaped to Provence. (See: Marco Boni, 'Sordello', *ED* Vol.5, 1970, pp.328-33, 1970; Ronald L. Martinez 'Troubadours and Italy', *Handbook of Troubadours*, edited by F.R. P. Akehurst and Judith H. Davis, 279-94, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.)

¹⁶⁷ Filippa Modesto does not speak about this encounter in particular but she describes the complex idea of friendship from the *Convivio* to the *Commedia* as a 'deficiens' image of God's love. (Filippa Modesto, *Dante's Idea of Friendship: the Transformation of a Classical Concept*, Toronto: Toronto University Press: 2015.)

chapter.¹⁶⁸ This means that a previous era like classical Athens is described as morally better than a later one, like the contemporary Italy (*Pg VI*, 75-151). Nevertheless, even though the emphasis remains focused on an ideal past counterposed to an apocalyptic present and future, I would argue that this embrace prepares the reader for the idea of Christ as a centre in between two periods. They are conveyed in Canto VI of the *Paradiso*, where the idea of a golden age and a fallen one is overcome in the perfect shape of a circle and its centre. That perfect union is a human embrace of love and affection in Purgatory, whereas the heavenly Redemption will be an eternal union made by both love and justice.

To conclude on this point, we can see that Dante situates his idea of Rome in an astronomical Platonic frame where the dense centre is Rome from a geographical perspective, and Christ from a historical one. These points are the emanating centres of human history and they are the turning points from which reality is created and renewed. Thus, I believe that biblical history is not the ultimate model of time for Dante, as Singleton says, but the biblical word, unfolded in the sacred procession, is actually re-structured along the third Cantic to mirror the astronomical motions, which have a central emanating singularity: Christ. Thus, each Canto VI of the poem, which is focused on the author's historical and political views, developing from an apocalyptic model of history in Hell, to a biblical one in the *Purgatorio*, is finally represented according to an astronomical and Platonic design in Heaven.

Nel Mezzo del Cammin...

So, is there a connection between the time of historical narration and the time of the *Commedia's* narration itself, a relation between the Pilgrim and Christ in terms of temporality? If yes, how does this connection locate author and reader in those representations of history? If Christ is the turning point of salvation in history, what

¹⁶⁸ James M. Dean describes this kind of model of history and its popularity between 1260 and 1400 in Italy, France and England: 'French, Italian and especially English writers resurrected this venerable (yet still powerful) biblical and patristic doctrine and gave it new meaning : [...] a nostalgia for ancient biblical and early Christian times [...]. (James M. Dean: *The World Grown Old in Later Medieval Literature*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, p. I.).

is the turning point in the *Commedia*? Furthermore, if the author and the Pilgrim are at the centre in the dance of stars in Canto X, are they able to be integrated in the cosmological 'Principium' even from an historical perspective?

I argue that the turning point of the poem's narration is the incipit itself: 'Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita'. In fact, that is a beginning in *medias res*, that means at the centre, from which not only the Pilgrim wakes up and starts his journey to salvation, but the reader as well is called to pursue that path by the possessive adjective 'nostra'. This is the centre from which the narrative of the Pilgrim's journey is emanated. And this is the major turning point when the Pilgrim find himself in the dark wood. Furthermore, the *Commedia*'s first line is the densest indication of time with meaning in the whole poem.¹⁶⁹ In fact, we can see how different levels of temporality converge: biographical, biblical, clerical and narrative and all these levels increase the intensity of that incipit, synthetizing many temporal dimensions. Similarly, Christ, the propulsive centre of time and cosmic space, synthetizes human and divine, fulfils the Old and the New Testament and unifies classical and medieval history. First of all, *Comedy*'s incipit underpins a measurement of historical time. Dante was born in 1265 thus, as he is in the middle of his life, we understand that Dante was 35 years old and the story takes place in 1300. 1300 was an important date, as the pope Bonifacio VIII declared the Jubilee in that year,¹⁷⁰ this means that all sins should be forgiven to pilgrims. Thus, it is an

¹⁶⁹ Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi concludes about that first line: 'L'inizio del poema, in forma semplice e piana, è un'indicazione di tempo. La visione dell' al di là si presenta come un fatto storicamente datato che si svolge nel tempo. [...]ma tale tempo storico è fin dall'inizio proiettato sullo sfondo dell'eternità, dal preciso ricordo biblico presente in questo primo verso.' (Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, *La divina commedia, Inferno*, Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1991, p.6).

¹⁷⁰ Boniface VIII was born Benedetto Caetani, of a noble family, at Anagni, in 1235. He rose in the Church and he was made cardinal in 1281. After the resignation of Celestine V in 1293 he was elected pope at Naples in 1294. He died in Rome, 1303. His papacy was filled with conflict and particularly bitter was his struggle with Philip IV of France over the right to tax the French clergy. With the famous bulls *Clericis laicos* (1296) and *Unam sanctam* (1302), Boniface affirmed the supremacy of the papacy over secular rulers. With an audacious stroke, Dante has Boniface's sins summerized and his damnation predicted by another pope in Inf. XIX 52-57. Dante thought Boniface very corrupt, guilty of having bribed his way to the papacy and of engineering the Black Guelf coup in Florence in 1301 that led to Dante's exile. In addition to this Bonifacio's claims to supremacy over the emperor was refuted by Dante (*De Monarchia* III). The

historical year closely related to the time of God. This kind of indirect information allows the author to give two temporal indications in only one verse: a key historical date and the age of Dante personaggio. That means an historical and a biographical indication of time. Moreover, this first verse is a biblical quote: “Ego dixit: in dimidio dierum meorum vadam ad portas inferi” (Is 38, 10).¹⁷¹ Thus there is even a reference to biblical time. I would like to draw attention to the fact that this moment, in biographical, historical, biblical and narrative time, is defined as a ‘punto’ in the following lines:

Io non so ben ridir com’i’ v’intraï,
tant’era pien di sonno a quel punto
che la verace via abbandonai.

(I do not know, I cannot rightly say,/ how first I came to be here – so full of sleep/ that moment, abandoning the true way. *Inf.* I, 10- 12).

Here, ‘punto’ refers to the first moment of the narration, the ‘mezzo del cammin di nostra vita’. That ‘punto’ is not a point in space along the Pilgrim’s path, but in time and it is the point of the beginning. The rhymes linked with ‘punto’ are quite meaningful: we can see in them the main features of the cosmological ‘Principium’. In fact we can read in lines 13 and 15 of *Inf.* I: ‘giunto’ and ‘compunto’.¹⁷² The first rhyme informs us that this point is not only a beginning, but it can be seen even as a destination of the journey (giunto). Furthermore, ‘compunto’ suggests great intensity: the concentration and the density of the centre from which reality

Jubilee increased donations to the Church and so it increased the corruption of the Papacy as well. Simonelli Maria conveys Dante’s perspective on Bonifacio’s papacy and his Jubilee in her article about the parody of the Catholic Church in Canto XIX: “‘O Simon Mago’”, *Modern Language Notes* Vol. 80, 1966, pp. 92-99. For a general account about on Jubilee’s effects on the *Commedia* see: Church D. Dickinson, ‘Dante, Boniface VIII and the Jubilee’; Paolo Acquaviva, *Dante and the Church: Literary and Historical Essays* edited by Jennifer Petrie, Dublin: Four Court Press, 2007, pp11-24.

¹⁷¹ This biblical quotation is mentioned by Dante in the *Convivio* 4.23.

¹⁷² ‘Ma poi ch’i’ fui al piè d’un colle giunto,/ là dove terminava quella valle/che m’avea di paura il cor compunto’ (*Inf.* I,13-15)

emanated. In addition to this 'compunto' contains the Latin prefix 'cum' which suggests comprehension and union. Thus, the word 'punto' integrates the ideas of beginning, a beginning in medias res, and end of the journey, and the rhymes linked to it convey its all-comprehensive density.

To conclude, I have shown how the biblical representation of unfolded sequences of events in history with Christ at the centre progressively acquires a circular astronomical shape, which culminates in *Paradiso* Canto X. An important stage in that redefinition and transformation is the historical accounts delivered in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* VI, which create different kinds of tension toward a meaningful central turning point. Moreover, the centrality of the Pilgrim in the dance of *Paradiso* X connects the story of the cosmos and the history of humanity to the narrative of the poem: the beginning in medias res of the *Comedy* is itself a central, dense, emanating 'punto' of the narration.¹⁷³ Thus, the Platonic astronomical structure of temporality can be recognized in the final historical account and in the temporality of the narrative. Starting from the importance of the word 'punto', I would like to analyse in the next section other figures and images that Dante employs to visualize this concept.

Figures of Time

I have shown the several levels of meanings underpinned by the word 'punto' of Inf. I,11. Now, I would like to explore in this section that the 'punto' is not only a multi-layered idea, but it is used as a powerful image as well. In fact, I will demonstrate in this and in the following sections that there are images and figures which provide additional visual representations of heavenly plenitude and the centrality of the eternal and all-comprehensive beginning, which lead progressively to the last 'figure' of the *Commedia*: the vision of God.

These can be cosmological figures like the 'punto' (*Pd.* XXVIII 16- 21) or the 'candida rosa', or they can be claimed figures of time, for instance the 'mechanical clock' and the 'tree'. I will show that both kinds of images reinforce the idea of an

¹⁷³ I would like to draw the attention on Masciandaro's analysis of *Commedia's* incipit in Giovanni Masciandaro, *Dante as Dramatist*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991. In fact, he argues that the path of the Pilgrim away from the *selva oscura* is a reformulation of the Adam's path from Eden.

initial singularity where everything is contained and from which everything is emanated, reflecting and visually synthesizing what has already been expressed at other levels.

Dante conveying his ideas through symbolic images or allegories or figures has already been discussed by many scholars.¹⁷⁴ Generally speaking, the most recent scholarship mainly support the thesis that Dante creates images in the *Commedia* following the fourfold exegesis applied to the biblical text. That means that the nature of figures in the *Commedia* must be read according to a biblical language rather than a philosophical one, as Baranski claims in *Dante e i segni*. I agree that this theory is true of the *Commedia* as a whole, however I will demonstrate that this idea can be developed regarding symbols and figures of time. In fact, I will show that they involve rotation and circularity around an emanating point, recalling a clear Platonic design. The most important scholar who has focused on specific types of

¹⁷⁴ Dante himself identifies four kinds of approaches to the interpretation of a literary text in *Convivio* II.1 and in the *Epistola a Cangrande*, which could be taken into account when analysing images and symbolic figures. The first is “letterale” that means the surface of the communication and what the letters clearly communicate at a first instance. The second is the “allegorico” that means what kind of truth is hidden under the cover of a beautiful fable. The third is the “morale”: the useful teaching that is told to the readers. The fourth and the last one is the “anagogico” that means the spiritual meaning contained in the literary text. The famous idea of ‘figura’ expressed by Auerbach (see: Erich Auerbach, ‘Figurative Texts Illustrating Certain Passages in Dante’s *Commedia*’, *Speculum* Vol.21, 1946, pp. 474-89) is one of the most important interpretation given to the symbolic figures designed by Dante in the *Commedia*. Then, following the Auerbach’s thesis of a progressive auto prophecy which fulfils each figures in the *Commedia*, the vast majority of the scholarship which deals with that topic agrees that Dante creates his figures and allegories in a quite biblical way. First of all, Hollander analyses the allegories in the *Commedia* focusing on the techniques of the fourfold exegesis (see: De gen. ad litt. II,5: Augustine explains that the four senses of the Bible are given as *historia*, *allegoria*, *analogia*, *aetiologia*), thus he shares Singleton’s idea that ‘Dante wrote in imitation of God’s way of writing’ (Robert Hollander, *Allegory in Dante’s Commedia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, p.23). Then Richard Lansing takes into account the images expressed in similes (See: Lansing Richard H., *From image to Idea: A Study of the Simile in Dante’s Commedia*, Ravenna, Italy: Longo, 1977). Here, Richard Lansing examines the morphology and the context of the similes. The most recent scholar who deals with the topic of *Commedia*’s symbols, metaphors and similes is Zygmunt Baranski in *Dante e i segni* where he reinforces the thesis that Dante is closer to exegetical symbolic tradition than to the philosophical. In addition to this, see: Picone Michelangelo, ‘Miti, metafore e similitudini del paradise: un esempio di lettura’, *Studi Danteschi* Vol.61, 1989, pp.193-217.)

figures of time, or, to be more precise, on Dante's figures of history, is Giuseppe Mazzotta in *Dante, Poet of the Desert*. Mazzotta's analysis starts from Rome as both Eden and anti-Eden in its representation. Rome's fall is visualized by the figure of the *Veglio di Creta* (*Inferno* XIV) and its restoration by the character of Cato (*Purgatorio* I). The examination of the two *veglio(s)* is a strong discussion about how history has been redeemed and purified in the *Commedia* as well as the Pilgrim. Furthermore, there are critical essays which indicate the importance of figures of density and concentration in Heaven, but without engaging any discussions on temporality and eternity. One of these is from Marguerite Mills Chiarenza who claims:

When the universe is transcended, what was separate becomes unified just as all the pages when bound become the book. Dante does not represent the vision of always greater things ending in a thing greater still but the vision of all things transcended by the vision of their unity.¹⁷⁵

That means that this absolute unity cannot totally be represented in a biblical way. In fact the biblical narrative is structured according to strict hierarchical categories and distinctions, where, for instance, older members of a family are more powerful than younger ones, and where each individual is defined by her genealogy. Thus, Holy Scripture develops an extended narrative from the Creation, the beginning, to the Apocalypse, the end of time: these are distinct points with sequences of events in between. This kind of structure cannot convey a unity, where an omniscient and central beginning emanates reality. In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate that the *Veglio di Creta* in the *Inferno* as well as the sacred procession in the *Purgatorio* are figures of time and history redressed and synthesized by the figures of the *Paradiso*. I will show that these latter can synthesize all those factors because they are figures which involve rotation and circularity around an emanating point. Moreover, I argue that even specific figures of time in the *Paradiso* are expressed and described according to the same Platonic pattern. These visually summarize and support what I have already demonstrated in the previous sections:

¹⁷⁵ Marguerite Mills Chiarenza, 'Imageless Vision and Dante's *Paradiso*', *Dante Studies*, Vol.90, The John Hopkins University Press, 1972, p.79

biblical, narrative, historical and cosmological time develop from a central dense beginning point into an extended categorization of past, present, future. So, building on Chiarenza's thesis, I argue that Dante conveys figures of cosmological unity in a Platonic way and design and that particular design allows him to underline the concept of an intense emanating point. That means that even the extended biblical narrative is now, in the *Paradiso*, one single level of meaning amongst those Platonic figures.

The Pilgrim's journey towards unity is a sort of opposite impulse compared with the creative one. The creation has been described in the *Timaeus* through a progressive expansion, division and an increasing complexity. Whilst in the *Commedia* Dante pursues a cosmological reunion where gradually everything is concentrated again in the 'Principium', in the centre of cosmos and history. I will show that this kind of path is conveyed by several Platonic figures of unity.

I will analyse the image of the point described in *Pd.* XXVIII, the image of the mechanical clock in *Pd.*X, the figure of the 'candida rosa', the figure of the 'tree' and the final image of God in *Pd.* XXXIII. I will focus not only on what they visually represent but even on the sounds and the literary devices the author engages to describe those figures. In fact, as we have seen in the incipit of the poem, it is important considering different levels of communication in order to underline the reiteration of the same message: eternity is expressed by density and concentration.

First, in canto XXVIII the Pilgrim is able to actually see a point:¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Contini focuses on that Canto in his famous: Gianfranco Contini, 'Un esempio di poesia dantesca (il canto XXVIII del *Paradiso*)', Vol. 11, *LDS*, 1968, pp. 1001-26. His examination is strictly linguistic and philological, without any considerations for issues about time. On the other side, Giuseppe Mazzotta, in his article about Cantos 27-28 and 29, concludes his long analysis about the deep nature of the 'punto' comparing the point with a kiss: 'He (Dante) stands closer to Alan Lille's image of the *osculum* sealing the marriage of matter and form. The joining of pure form (angels without matter) and pure matter (matter without spirit), conveyed by Dante in the line *forma e materia congiunte e purette*' (*Par.* 29, 22) enacts the physical erotic theme of the School of Chartres. Retrospectively, in the light of this erotic vision of creation as fertile process, we can grasp the sense of the astronomical simile and the oblique reference to the 'punto' to which Francesca is suspended between the reading of her love-book the kiss she exchanges with her lover at the beginning of paradise 29. Physics and Metaphysics, science and myth, time and eternity, cosmos and private passion, are provisionally joined together as in a kiss.' (See: Giuseppe Mazzotta 'Cosmology and the Kiss of Creation (*Paradiso* 27-29), *Dante Studies*, Vol. 123,2005, pp. 1-21).

un punto vidi che raggiava lume
acuto sì, che 'l viso che 'elli affoca
chiuder conviensi per lo forte acume;
e quale stella par quinci più poca,
parrebbe luna, locata con esso
come stella con stella si colloca

(a single point I saw, that shot out rays/ so sharp the eye on which it fixes fire/ is bound to close against that needle-strength./Even the star that, seen from here, seems least/ would seem, when set behind that point (as star/ is set by star) a moon in magnitude. *Pd XXVIII 16- 21*).

Here, Dante and Beatrice are in the Primum Mobile, and the Pilgrim has a vision mirrored by Beatrice's eyes (like *Purgatorio's* gryphon) of the nine orders of angels, the heavenly Intelligences that govern the spheres in their relation to the point, which of course represents God.¹⁷⁷ It is a point of light of great intensity, as explained in the astronomical metaphor: the point represents infinite intensity as opposed to relative extension or distension.¹⁷⁸ In the *Convivio* Dante argues : 'lo punto per la sua indivisibilitade è immensurabile' (*Conv. II xii 27*).¹⁷⁹ This idea recalls as well the description made by Augustine of the present time:¹⁸⁰ something that cannot be divided and measured, a point in time, as God who is always present and simultaneous. The point's description is then followed by the elaborate

¹⁷⁷ *Conv. 2.3. 8-9* Dante explains why the Primum Mobile is the fastest sphere , due to its desire to be joined to the unmoving empyrean. In *Conv. 2.3.6* Dante corrects Aristotle's misconception about eighth and ninth spheres. Nardi explains how Dante develops this idea about the cosmological structure, partially in contrast with Aristotle: Bruno Nardi, 'La dottrina dell'Empireo nella sua genesi storica e nel pensiero dantesco', *Saggi di filosofia dantesca*, Florence: Nuova Italia, 1967.

¹⁷⁸ Aristotle *Metaphysics 12.7*: Dante borrows this sentence for the description of the circling spheres around the Point, BUT he transforms the 'principle' in point.

¹⁷⁹ About tis definition of 'point' delivered in the *Convivio* Giuseppe Mazzotta says: ' The spiritual universe organized around a 'punto', a term which the *Convivio*, citing Euclid's *Elements*, explains as a 'geometric principle'. The understanding of 'punto' as a center resonates with the endless debates carried out by atomists, Scholastics, and logicians of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (such as Nicholas of Autrecourt, St Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Durandus de Sancto Porciano, and William of Ockham). (See: Giuseppe Mazzotta 'Cosmology and the Kiss of Creation (*Paradiso 27-29*), *Dante Studies*, N. 123 (2005), pp. 1-21, p.10).

¹⁸⁰ *De Confessiones 11.29-31*

introductions of each circle one by one.¹⁸¹ Thus, we can see in the figure of the point and its spheres the representation of the Creation itself, that means an imitation in temporal sequence of the instantaneous but hierarchical radiation of creation, from a central intense beginning point. The creative impulse contemplates the expansion of categories, divisions and complexity from a dimension where they were all one.¹⁸² The Pilgrim's journey follows an opposite path: in fact, he aims to be readmitted into the 'Principium', overcoming divisions and separations. Beatrice concludes that experience in the Primum Mobile synthetizing that: 'Da quel punto/depende il cielo e tutta la natura.' (*Pd* XXVIII, 41-42). We eventually could claim the same for the 'punto' in *Inf.* I,11: to that point belongs everything we will be told in the poem about earth and heaven. It is a point in both space and time, where the two dimensions are integrated and dissolved in an amazing intensity. Why is this figure here, in the Primum Mobile? What does this location really mean? As Emilio Pasquini argues, the Scholarship still has not a clear idea about it.¹⁸³ I think that this figure is visualized here, as the Primum Mobile is the 'testo' where the roots of temporality dwells: that means that the location of this figure shows its clear temporal significance which must be taken into account.¹⁸⁴ James T. Chiampi does not really link the 'Point' to the perception of time, but to a new and modern image

¹⁸¹ Distante intorno al punto un cerchio d'igne

Si girava sì ratto, ch'avria vinto

Quel moto che più tosto il mondo cigne;

e questo era d'un altro circumcinto,

e quel dal terzo, e 'l terzo poi dal quarto,

dal quinto il quarto, e poi dal sesto il quinto. (*Pd* XXVIII, 25-30)

¹⁸² It explicitly picks up St Thomas Aquinas' definition of eternity as an eternal instant (nunc stans) (*S.T.* I, art. 2, ad prim., resp.) as well as the definition of indivisible unity in Aristotle's *Physics*.

¹⁸³ On this argument Emilio Pasquino writes in his edition of *La Divina Commedia: Paradiso*, Milan: Garzanti, 1988 p.56: 'Il verso è stato molto discusso [...] Ma più imbarazza il fatto che Dante afferma a chiare lettere nella terzina la presenza costante di quanto gli appare nel Primo Mobile, cioè di Dio insieme alle gerarchie angeliche. Poiché questo cielo non è la sede degli angeli, né si può ritenere che Dio scenda con essi incontro a Dante, si è cercato di appianare le difficoltà interpretando il giro come la linea di confine del Primo Mobile che consentirebbe per la sua trasparenza la visione dell'Empireo del punto di fuoco contornato dai nove cerchi rotanti, ma è ipotesi di ripiego, immotivata che non risolve la questione tuttora aperta.'

¹⁸⁴ I will explain better this point in the figure of the 'tree' throughout the following sections.

of God.¹⁸⁵ What can be measured and pondered can only be the emanation of this point. For instance, the Heavens themselves can be counted and measured, and they have a velocity too. Boyde seems to be the only scholar who identifies the importance of that image in terms of time and eternity. In fact, in his analysis of the opening of canto XXIX, 1- 12, he claims that the astronomical description of both, moon and sun just before displaying the bright cosmological 'Point' demonstrates that the 'Point' is actually the moment of Creation, when time began.¹⁸⁶ Giuseppe Mazzotta agrees that the *Paradiso* is shaped according Neo-platonic ideas, furthermore he claims that the image of eternal love picked up from the Neo-Platonic theory of love opens up into new loves and into a cosmic sexual embrace, represented by the 'point' of Canto 28. However he describes that figure as a representation of plenitude, more than of time and eternity.¹⁸⁷

To conclude about this figure, the Divine, which is the 'Principium', is set at the centre as a dense, all-comprehensive both emanating and including point where space, time, eternity and the time of the narration itself are all synthesized in the cosmological Beginning. The word 'point' reinforces its powerful meaning due to this image: it is a narrative point, an astronomical point, it is a cosmological unity, it is, as said by Chiampi, an *imago Dei*. Thus, the idea of point comes back just a few instants earlier than the Pilgrim's vision of God and it does in term of time:¹⁸⁸

Un punto solo m'è maggior letargo
che venticinque secoli a la 'mpresa
che fè Nettuno ammirar l'ombra di Argo.

¹⁸⁵ 'The otherness of a geometrical point is actually the future of a reformed *imago Dei*' James T. Chiampi, *Dante's Paradiso from Number to Mysteryum*, *Dante Studies*, No.110 (1992), The John Hopkins University Press, p270.

¹⁸⁶ 'Dante chooses both sun and moon because they are the 'two great lights' made by God 'to divide the day from the night', and to be 'for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years' – in short to measure time. He shows them I conjunction with Aries ad Libra because this is where they were placed in the firmament at the moment of creation, when these *cose belle* were set in motion and time began.' Patrick Boyde, *Dante Phylomythes and Philosopher, Man in the Cosmos*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981, p.240.

¹⁸⁷ Giuseppe Mazzotta 'Cosmology and the Kiss of Creation (Paradiso 27-29)', *Dante Studies*, N. 123 (2005), pp. 1-21.

¹⁸⁸ Andrew Hui analyses this simile in order to investigate the real meaning underpinned by the word 'Ombra' here, and in the rest of the *Commedia*. Andrew Hui, 'Dante's Book of Shadow: Ombra in the *Divine Comedy*' *Dante's Studies*, Vol.134, 2016, pp. 195-224.

(One single point in trauma is far more,/ for me, than those millennia since sail/made Neptune marvel under Argos-shade. *Pd.* XXXIII, 94-96)

According to Bosco Reggio, the meaning of these lines is still not clear to the scholarship,¹⁸⁹ however the comparison between the 'punto' and the 'venticinque secoli' shows to the reader that the author is talking about temporal duration, and the character is experiencing a supernatural kind of duration during the vision. In the next section, I would like to examine other figures of time which repeat and reinforce the meaning all comprehensive point of Canto XXVIII.

The 'Candida Rosa'

I argue that in the arrangement of souls in the 'merciful empire' (*Pd* XXXII, 117) of the rose¹⁹⁰ we can identify the same pattern of a cosmological and spiritual Beginning set in the centre (Durling claims that: 'their arrangement derives from the major phases of salvation history').¹⁹¹

[...] e come da mattina
la parte oriental de l'orizzonte
soverchia quella dove 'l sol declina,
così, quasi di valle andando a monte
con li occhi, vidi parte ne lo stremo
vincer di lume tutta l'altra fronte. [...]
e a quel mezzo, con le penne sparte,
vid'io più di mille angeli festanti

¹⁸⁹ Robert M. Durling, *Paradiso*, p.550.

¹⁹⁰ The scholarship has normally focused about the similarities between the 'candida rosa' and the metaphorical meanings of the rose in the Roman de la Rose by Guillaume de Lorris. (See: Giuseppe C. Di Scipio 'The Hebrew Women in Dante's Symbolic Rose', *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, No. 101,1983, pp. 111-121; Aldo S. Bernardo 'Sex and Salvation in the Middle Ages: From the Romance of the Rose to the Divine Comedy' *Italica*, Vol. 67, 1990, pp. 305-318, Barbara Seward, 'Dante's Mystic Rose', *Studies in Philology* Vol. 52,1955, pp. 515-523)

¹⁹¹Robert M. Durling, *Paradiso*, p. 646

(And, as when morning dawns,/ the orient horizon in new light/ defeats the part in which the sun goes down,/ so too, as though my eyes were travelling / from valley up to mountain peak, I saw/ the rim outdo, in brightness, every other part [...] And, in the central band, their wings outspread,/ I saw, in thousands, angels – feasting, dancing- in blaze and chosen deed all differing. *Pd XXXI*, 118-131)

Here, the Virgin Mary occupies the highest circle (*remoto*), at the centre of a triumph of angel: ‘*quel mezzo*’. She can be seen as a representation of the Beginning for numerous reasons. First of all, she is the mother of Christ, so in her body began the development of the most important moment in the earthly and heavenly history. Secondly, in this passage, the vision of her is described like the rising sun in the morning, so she recalls the astronomical beginning of the day. Moreover, the simile between the direction of the Pilgrim’s look and the path from a valley to a mountain recalls the beginning of the *Commedia* itself: ‘*ma poi ch’i’ fui al piè d’un colle giunto, là dove terminava quella valle*’ (*Inf. I*, 13-14), linking Mary to the very first moment of the narrative of Pilgrim’s journey.¹⁹² Thus, the Virgin Mary synthesizes the biological, historical, astronomical and even narrative aspect of the Beginning.¹⁹³ Furthermore, in the careful arrangement of the souls of the ‘merciful empire’, she is central and circles of angels move around her, reproducing the same image of Canto XXVIII where God is a point at the centre of circling heavens. Bernard¹⁹⁴ explains that the rose is divided vertically: on one side there are those who believed in Christ already come and on the other side those who believed in Christ yet to come. That means that the organization of the souls in the rose has the same tension around its

¹⁹² John Freccero has analysed in details the meanings of Pilgrim’s steps up to that hill in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*. Ed. by Rachel Jacoff. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

¹⁹³ According to Durling (Robert M. Durling, *Paradiso*, p. 617) the choice of representing the celestial court as a rose reflects devotion to the Virgin Mary (in the liturgy she is the ‘rose without thorn’) but also the Roman de la Rose, in which red rose signifies the femal sexual object of the dreamer. I do not aim to explore the cult of Virgin Mary in Dante, but I focus on her place in that specific figure of time. Nevertheless for her importance and value in the XIII century’s spirituality see: Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996; Jean Dom. Leclercq, ‘Dévotion et théologie mariales dans le monachisme bénédictin’ *Maria: Etudes sur la Sainte Vierge*, ed. Hubert du Manoir, Vol. 2, pp.547-78, Paris: Beauchesne, 1952; Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of Virgin Mary*, New York: Knopf, 1976.

¹⁹⁴ See: Steven Botteril, *Dante and the Mystical tradition: Bernard of Clairvaux in the Commedia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994

centre, where the two groups of the blessed face each other, as the two hemispheres.
¹⁹⁵ Numbers on the two sides are nearly the same, but some seats remain unfilled among those who believed in Christ already come, that means that temporality is not extinguished yet and some time remains before the Last Judgement.

In the same line where Mary appears, there is another personification of the Beginning, Eve: the mother of human race, the first woman, the first sinner: 'La piaga che Maria richiuse e unse,/ quella ch'è tanto bella da' suoi piedi/ è colei che l'aperse e che la punse (The gash that Mary healed and soothed with oil/ was opened first, and then made worse, by her/ who sits, so beautiful, at Mary's feet. *Pd* XXXII, 3-6). These lines introduce Eve as a kind of mirroring image of the Virgin. The connection between the two women is 'la piaga', the wound of humanity. Mary healed it and closed it, whereas Eve caused it and opened it.¹⁹⁶ They have performed opposite actions in relation to the same reality. Eve lived in the Eden garden, the very beginning of history according to the biblical conception of time and Mary lived at the turning point of human history, when Christ was conceived and descended to Earth. Thus, here, the author set in the same central point of the rose the synthesis of what was meant to be the Beginning of temporality in a Purgatorial perspective, Eve and Eden, and what this Beginning has become in the renewed heavenly point of view - the birth of Christ.

¹⁹⁵ The idea of two halves contained in the rose immediately recalls the *Symposium* of Plato, which Dante knew through Pseudo-Dionysius (*Convivio* 2 gives a terminus post quem for Dante's reading of the Pseudo Dionysius; Dante must have read him in north eastern Italy). In this dialogue Aristophanes tells one of the myths of love: once the human beings were round, much more stronger and wiser. Then Jupiter cut them in two halves and from that moment human beings were busy desiring their other half, coming together, and entwining in mutual embrace. So their desire to pursue the lost unity again is called love. In the *Paradiso* the nuptial metaphor is dominant: the ritual of marriage is the only to be displayed in different contexts, in order to repeat at different levels the idea of confluence in one single point. The reference to the *Cantiche* in Canto X, XI and XII are quite powerful and the love between the bride and the groom stresses the perfect conjunction of the ecliptic and the equatorial. Similarly we can say that in Canto XXXII the temporal categories of 'before' and 'later' are perfectly combined into the round white rose, as the two halves of the ancient human beings of the platonic myth. Furthermore, according to Dante the desire is the engine of the circular heavenly spheres' motions: 'Noi ci volgiam coi principi celesti/ d'un giro e d'un girare e d'una sete, (Pd. VIII, 34-35)'. Thus, the spheres move due to their desire of approaching their centre, God. So, similarly the concentration of time towards one point can be activated by love too, love for Christ.

¹⁹⁶ 'Human nature was wounded by the sin of Eve and healed by the son of Mary: *illa percussit, ista sanavit* is found in several sermons attributed to Augustine' (Robert M. Durling, *Paradiso*, p.648)

In addition to this, in the *candida rosa*, blessed human beings are not the only members of the merciful empire, as we can read in the following passage:

ma l'altra, che volando vede e canta
la Gloria di colui che la 'nnamora
e la Bontà che la fece cotanta,
sì come schiera d'ape che s'infiora
una fiata e una si ritorna
là dove suo laboro s'insapora,
nel gran fior discendeva che s'addorna
di tante foglie, e quindi risaliva.

(The other force that, flying, sees and sings/ the glory that so stirs their love of Him-/ the goodness, too, that makes them all they are -/ came down, as might a swarm of bees that first / en-flower themselves, returning afterwards, to where their efforts are made sweet to taste. / They search the outmost depths of that great flower, / with all its many petals. Then they rise/once more to where their love will always dwell. *Pd. XXXI, 4-11*)

Here, the angels of the Empyrean imitate the bond between the angelic movers and the spheres: the 'descending' and the 'rising' of lines 10-11 mimic the procession and return that organizes the cosmos and frame the interconnections between eternity and temporality.¹⁹⁷ Thus, two kinds of motions are present in the rose: the circularity of the flower where the blessed are contemplating and the descending/ascending motion of the angels who actively spread the divine love.¹⁹⁸

That double direction, the circular one and the straight one, involve two different kinds of rhythm: the contemplative and the active. Dante has already taken into account these two aspects of temporality in his definition of time delivered in

¹⁹⁷ The scholarship has pointed out that the angels' activity resembling the industry of bees strongly recalls Vergil in the Aeneid: first when he compares the building of Carthage to a hive (*Aen. I.430-34*) and then when he looks at the souls in the Elysium as swarming bees in a field (*Aen. VI. 706-9*).

¹⁹⁸ Richard H. Lansing analyses the connection between the motion of a certain angel and the tone, which he is singing with: angelic work in the Empyrean is perfectly designed in order to represent a divine harmony, as it was thought by Plato too. (See: Richard H. Lansing, *From Image to Idea: A Study of the Simile in Dante's Commedia*, Ravenna: Longo, 1977).

Convivio IV ii, 5-10, which I have analysed in my Introduction.¹⁹⁹ Here, Dante specifies that two different aspects have to be considered inside time itself: one is the unfolded time which develops through extension and the other one is the quality of a specific point in time. In fact, a point, that means a moment in the flow, has not any extension according the criteria of a progression from an earlier moment to a later one. Nevertheless, it brings its own and specific purpose and it has the power of facilitating specific circumstances. Thus, we can see that the circulation of heavenly bodies measure extended temporality from one side and develop a particular quality of purpose for each moment from the other side. Dante refers to the *Physics* of Aristotle first: temporality in the dimension of extension is defined ‘secondo prima e poi’ that means that the development of this aspect of time is possible only according the flow through past, present and future. Then he focuses on the other kind of time as a specific moment created in order to facilitate certain circumstances in a certain way. As for this qualitative temporality Solomon and *Ecclesiastes* are the main authority Dante refers to: ‘Tempo è da parlare e tempo è da tacere’.²⁰⁰ There are two ways of developing in time: one is the qualitative moment in which the earthly world is supposed to receive heavenly ‘informazioni’, and one is an extended motion through past, present and future in order to let that ‘informazione’ develop and grow on Earth. In addition to this, we can see that , according to Dante, Aristotle speaks in terms of ‘numero di movimento’, and Salomon in terms of ‘parlare, tacere’. That means that temporality can be defined by motions and their measurements and by the alternations between words and silence. Both these ideas, the number of motions and the alternation between words and silence, creates a rhythm, a complex dancing and music which allows the world to exist and develop.²⁰¹

To conclude on this figure, the *candida rosa* is one of the last figures of the *Paradiso* and synthesizes in many ways rhythms, directions, patterns and motions which have defined temporality and eternity throughout the *Cantica*. I will show in the next section that in an earlier stage of the *Paradiso* there are other figures of

¹⁹⁹ (*Convivio* IV ii, 5-10), see my introduction.

²⁰⁰ For the importance of Solomon in the *Commedia* see: Paola Nasti, *Favole d'amore e 'saver profondo': la tradizione salomonica in Dante*. Ravenna: Angelo Longo Editore, 2007.

²⁰¹ Augustine analyses that, regarding the biblical story of Rachel and Leah and the contemplative and active way of spending time (Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 22.52).

time which represent specifically one motion and one rhythm, instead of integrating everything like the *candida rosa* does: they are specific figures of time, viewed and observed from the perspective of eternity.

The 'Clock and the Tree'

The vision of the 'point' in the Primum Mobile and then of the white rose conveys very clear figures about increasing central concentration. We have seen that the reader is progressively able to visualize this in more details: in Canto X there is the intersection of the ecliptic and the equator, in Canto XVIII there is a proper point of light surrounded by the circling spheres, in Canto XXXI there is an amphitheatre, shaped as a rose, where the audience ecstatically contemplate the centre. These are not specific figures of time, even though temporality and eternity are clearly involved: in fact, they embrace the totality of Being, temporality and eternity included. In this section, I will examine very specific figure of time. I will show that they still indicate the same dense and central point as a result of cosmological motions, both the circular and the straight, that means that they are designed too according to a Platonic pattern.

Dante displays two specific figures of time in the *Paradiso*: the clock in Canto X and the tree in Canto XXVIII. How do they specifically convey temporality? Do they still indicate that temporality tends to collapse in one eternal and central point, as the cosmological figures did? I will demonstrate that if we analyse in more details the sounds and the literary devices used to describe those figures, we can easily recognize that through the linguistic aspect of the text the author is still able to suggest the ideas of the two astronomical and cosmological motions involved in the Platonic pattern: rotation and the straight ascent/descent. The sounds and the invention of specific neologisms represent these kinds of astronomical movements, which we have been describing in the last sections, aiming to convey a single dense point. Thus, the figures of the *Commedia* reinforce the same ideas both through visual and musical inputs.²⁰²

²⁰² The specific and careful filological investigations have been done by the Italian Scholarship, especially see: Gianfranco Contini, *Un'idea di Dante* Torino: Einaudi, 1984,

Regarding the tree, it is first used as an element of a metaphor in Canto XVIII, as we can see in the following passage:

El cominciò: “ In questa quinta soglia
de l’albero che vive de la cima
e frutta sempre e mai non perde foglia,
spiriti son beati,

(‘In this, the fifth espalier of that tree/ that thrives’ so he began, ‘from summit down,/ bears constant fruit and never loses leaf,/ are spirits of the blessed *Pd.* XVIII, 28-30)

Here, the *Paradiso* itself is compared to a tree or, to be more precise, the tree can be generally seen as an image of eternity and eternal creative power. However, the way in which the tree’s image will be employed in Canto XXVIII, ten Cantos later, is slightly different as we can see in the following lines: ²⁰³

la natura del mondo, che quieta
il mezzo e tutto l’altro intorno move,
quinci comincia come da sua meta;
e questo ciel non altro dove
che la mente divina in che s’accende
l’amor che ‘l volge e la virtù ch’ei piove.
Luce e amor d’un cerchio lui comprende,
sì come questo li altri; e quel precinto
colui che ‘l cinge solamente intende.
Non è suo moto per altro distinto,
ma li altri son mensurati da questo ,
sì come dice da mezzo e da quinto;
e come il tempo tegna in cotal testo
le sue radici e ne li altri le fronde
omai a te può esser manifesto.

and Emilio Pasquini, *Dante e le figure del vero: la fabbrica della commedia*, Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2001.

²⁰³ The scholarship generally recognizes in this figure of the tree ‘the sempiternal springtime in which the nine angelic orders perpetually sprout and blossom as a brief anticipation of the celestial rose of Cantos 30-33’ (Robert M. Durling, *Paradiso*, p. 575).

(‘The order in the natural spheres that stills/ the central point and moves, round that, all else/ here sets its confine and begins its rule./ This primal sphere has no ‘where’ other than/ the mind of God. The love that makes it turn / is kindled there, so, too, the powers it rains./ Brightness and love contain it in one ring/ as this in turn, contains the spheres below./ And only he who binds it knows he bond. Its motion is not gauged by other marks./ All other marks are measured put from this-/ as ten is factored by its half and fifth. / So now it will be clear to you how Time/ takes root within the humus of this bowl,/ and shows its fronds in every other part. *Pd. XXVII 106-20*)

In this last passage, the Pilgrim and Beatrice are in the Primum Mobile. Beatrice is explaining the nature of this special Heaven: here, there is the sparkle that makes the Divine Love activate the two main astronomical motions: circular and straight. Giuseppe Mazzotta argues about that passage:

Even time begins here. Dante sees there is a sort of tree of time growing from part of eternity. He does not understand time in a linear way, with a beginning and an end, nor as a wheel, like the wheel of becoming, a Platonic idea of time, where all things are contained. Dante thinks of time instead as a tree, the roots of which are in the pot of eternity while its foliage reaches into our own world. We are in the shadow of the tree of time. We only see leaves that will fall, allowing for our idea of passage and dispersion of time.²⁰⁴

Building on Giuseppe Mazzotta’s thesis, I claim that Dante has actually seen time both in a linear way (for instance, the linear span of time with a beginning and an end, as the biblical history, in the sacred procession of in Eden), and as a wheel where all things are contained, in the circle of Sun in *Paradiso X* and in many others ways which are finally synthesized in the eternal density. In fact, the tree is one of the several figures of time delivered in the *Commedia*, and not the only one. There are different visualizations, narrations, and theories about temporality which coexist, complete each other and which will finally be concentrated in the same central emanating point. In fact, the language displayed in the description of the figure of the tree suggests us other important features. First of all, there is the

²⁰⁴ Giuseppe Mazzotta, ‘Paradiso 27-29’ *Reading Dante*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

alliteration of the sound 'v': l'amor che volge e la virtù che piove, which underlines and connects the motions, both circling and descending. Furthermore, the alliteration of sounds 'm/n': 'comprende, precinto, cinge' draws the attention to the density of an all-comprehensive point. Then Beatrice explains the main activities of that sphere:²⁰⁵ 'luce e amor d'un cerchio lui comprende' which means that it is embraced by love and light; 'ma li altri son misurati da questo', that means that it measures the motions of the other spheres, finally 'tempo tegna in cotal testo' that means that it contains temporality's roots. However, 'testo' could be a word which indicates the poem itself, or generally the written words. If we look in more details we can see in the text of the *Commedia* the same progression from indistinct love and light, to measurements, and finally to proper temporality displayed in the tree and pointed to by Beatrice. In fact, we might recognize the progression of the main topics of the three Canticas from *Paradiso* (indistinct love and light) *Purgatorio* (rational measurements of time and space) and *Inferno* (negative and chaotic temporality/ human history). Furthermore, the tree's root are in the Primum Mobile and the branches are in the successive heavens. This is temporality. I claim that this jump from an arithmetical to a horticultural metaphor is connected to the verb 'dirama' of Canto X used to describe the astronomical intersection of the ecliptic and the equator. That means that the representation of temporality as a tree is not in contrast with the Platonic comprehensive wheel, rather connected to it.²⁰⁶

And it is exactly in *Paradiso* Canto X where there is the other figure of time: one of the earliest references to the mechanical clock.²⁰⁷ I would like to examine that

²⁰⁵ It is interesting noting that all these activities are expressed in a passive way and the sphere itself is never active. That means that is an object in God's will more than a subject

²⁰⁶ Vedi come da indi si dirama/ l'oblico cerchio che i pianeti porta,/ per sodisfare al mondo che li chiama (*Pd.* X, 13-15).

²⁰⁷ There is surprisingly a big gap in the dantean studies about this reference, despite the great attention received by *Paradiso* Canto X. The most meaningful articles about it are by Christian Moevs ('Miracouls Syllogisms: Clocks, faith and Reason in *Paradiso* 10 and 24' *Dante Studies* Vol.117, 1999, pp. 59-84) and by Franca Ageno ('Strumenti per la misurazione del tempo nei paragoni della terza cantica' *Studi Danteschi*, Vol.54, 1982, pp.113-120). Generally speaking about the coexistence of the mechanical clock and the canonical hours, the paper of Jaques Le Goff is very important: 'Au moyen age: temps de l'église et temps du marchand' *Annales*, Vol. 15, 1960, pp. 416-33. Here Le Goff argues that a fundamental conflict arose late in the Middle Ages between the theological understanding of time and eternity and the time constraints of merchants and other clock watchers of emergent mercantilism.

passage in order to arrive to a better understanding of the figures of time in the third Cantic and how they convey a progressive integration of temporality and eternity in a central dense point.

Indi, come orologio che ne chiami
ne l'ora che la sposa di Dio surge
a mattinar lo sposo perché l'ami,
che l'una parte e l'altra tira e urge,
tin tin sonando con sì dolce nota,
che 'l ben disposto spirto d'amor turge
così vid'io la gloriosa rota
muoversi e render voce a voce in tempra
e in dolcezza ch'esser non po' nota
se non colà dove gioir s'insempra

(And now, like clocks that call us at the hour/ in which the Bride of God will leave her bed/ to win the Bridegroom's love with morning song,/ where, working, one part drives , the other draws – its 'ting-ting' sounding with so sweet a note/ that now the spirit, well and ready, swells – so in its glory I beheld that wheel/ go moving round and answer, voice to voice,/ tuned to a sweetness that cannot be known, / except up there where joy in-evers all. *Pd X 137-48*)

Before a more detailed analysis of that reference, I would like to draw the attention to the fact that these are the last lines of the previously examined Canto X, the Canto of the Sun. This setting underlines how each figure appears at a specific moment of the narrative and in an accurate precise place of the dantean cosmos. In Canto X the author carefully describes the circularity of astronomical motions, their emanating intersections and how earthly life is shaped and measured by them as well as the blessed who vibrate and dance according the heavenly harmony. Thus, by delivering this last image Dante aims to synthesize those kind of harmonic movements in one powerful vision.

In the two lines: 'ne l'ora che la sposa di Dio surge/ a mattinar lo sposo perchè l'ami' there is a reference to both ecclesiastic time and to the biblical time. As

for the ecclesiastic reference, the moment described is the first song sung by the monks in the morning: the 'mattutino'. This particular song can on one side reinforce the visualization of a renewed beginning, on the other side recalls the measurement of temporality, as it was conceived by the Church: the canonical hours.²⁰⁸ As for the biblical reference, these lines recall the *Canticle* of the Bible.²⁰⁹ This biblical reference opens up a new dimension which is the liturgical one, as mentioning the *Canticle* means mentioning the ritual of wedding as well, which underlines the idea of the union of diversity and of synthesis.²¹⁰ Furthermore, I would like to focus on the rhyme in the three verbs 'surge, urge, turge'. The first action is made by God, the second conveys the movements of the mechanical wheels, the third talks about the loving response of the human spirit to those actions. Thus, we can see a chain of consequences from God to humans, because those rhymes recreate the descending creative power of God. The second sequence of rhymes is 'nota, rota, nota'. They clearly recall the circular motion of the spheres. Furthermore, I would like to draw attention to the fact that these two sequences of rhymes are framed by a bigger simile, which compares the mechanical wheel to the blessed: their rotation to the blessed dancing, the *tin tin* to their singing. Thus, through the use of several literary devices there is an attempt to synthesize a variety of different temporal levels, measurements of time, vibrations and harmonies in one single moment (ne l'ora), and again in one single intense point. So, there is a shift from a quantitative temporality which has a measurable extension, to a qualitative temporality which is not measurable anymore due to its density and concentration. The direct result of that dense synthesis is the dantean neologism of the last line: 's'insempra' (lasting forever). This means that the overlapping of canonical, biblical,

²⁰⁸ About canonical hours and their history see: *The Use and the Abuse of Time in Christian History*, Ed. By R.N. Swanson, Oxford: Boydell Press, 2002.

²⁰⁹ On the most recent studies about *Canticle* as a frame for the topic of desire in the *Paradiso* see: Lino Pertile, *La punta del desio. Semantica del desiderio nella Commedia*, Fiesole: Cadmo, 2005; Giuseppe Mazzotta, 'Cosmology and the Kiss of Creation (Paradiso 27-29)', *Dante Studies*, N. 123 (2005), pp. 1-21; Patrick Boyde, *Dante Phylomythes and Philosopher, Man in the Cosmos*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981.

²¹⁰ Ronald L. Martinez wrote more than one essay about the function of liturgy in Dante's work. While in the *Purgatorio* liturgy is carefully developed, for instance from the baptism to the confession, in the *Paradiso* the insistence on the ritual of marriage is striking. (See: Ronald L. Martinez, 'The Poetic of Advent Liturgies: Dante's *Vita nova* and *Purgatorio*' In Picone/Cachey/Mesirca 2044, 271-304, 'Places and Times of the Liturgy from Dante to Petrarch' In Baranski/Cachey 2009, 320-70.)

liturgical, mechanical, musical time is all contained in eternity. So as the Pilgrim is penetrating into this eternal and dense point, we, as readers, progress from one level to another in order to find ourselves dissolved into eternity as well.

Linguistic Representations of Dense Singularity.

We have just seen, from the close reading of few figures' descriptions, how Dante uses literary devices and sounds in order to strengthen the meaning which the figure underpins. So, which are the particular linguistic representations that Dante engages with? In which way do sounds and literary devices convey the central and dense singularity of cosmos? I will show that the author especially employs neologisms and hysteron proteron so that the reader can better understand and perceive the representation of eternity.

The structure of the hysteron proteron itself is relevant and very meaningful in terms of temporality, as it refers to the last element of a sequence as its first and viceversa. Through my analysis I will show that the use of the hysteron proteron made by Dante in the *Paradiso* reinforces the idea of density and concentration of temporality in an eternal present point. In fact, more than a proper exchange between end and beginning, it rather conveys the dissolution of those end and beginning. In addition to this, I will demonstrate that Dantean neologisms are created and shaped in order to complete the hysteron proteron's functions: they represent a progressive integration of the narrator and the reader into that dissolution. Furthermore, I think that identifying those kind of linguistic representations not only demonstrates how the literary devices reinforce what the author is expressing through his images, but they actually realize the proper unity signified by the figures of time themselves. In fact, the concept of a central and emanating singularity must involve several levels of communication: the narrative and the form of the narrative.

First of all, the last word of the description of the mechanical clock is a dantean neologism: 's'insempra': so, how do dantean neologisms convey an

emanating and including singular point?²¹¹ Contini argues that most of Dante's coniages involve the combination of Latin prefixes (*dis-* , *im-* , *in-* , *trans-*) or the reflexive suffix *-si* with otherwise common lexical choices. A brief list of those neologisms reveals patterns of inflection and building-block constructions: *transumanare* (I.70); *incielare* (III.97); *indiarsi* (IV.28); *insemprarsi* (X. 148); *infuturarsi* (XVII.98); *imparadisare* (XXIX.3); *infiorarsi* (XXXIII.72); *inzaffirarsi* (XXIII.102); *immegliarsi* (XXX. 87).²¹² Building on Contini's thesis, I claim that his list of neologisms show an important majority of prefixes *in-/im-* which involve the action or the idea of going inside something or to be integrated into something. This 'direction' of the coniages typical of the *Paradiso* reinforces the visualization of a point which includes more than emanates. Analysing it in more details in the following passage, we can see how the neologisms shape the nature of the central singularity around which the cosmos is developed:

²¹¹ The depth of the bibliography on the Dantesque neologisms, ranging from the Renaissance author Pietro Bembo and Torquato Tasso to the Romantic literary historian Francesco De Sanctis and leading dantisti of the present suggests its centrality to the overall significance of the *Commedia*, especially of the *Paradiso*. Broadly speaking the critical enquiry mainly covers three areas. First, the neologism is seen as a mean to speak of the unspeakable, the inaffable. In fact Dante often reminds that "Trasumanar significar per verba/ non si poria (*Pd.* I, 70-71). Joan Ferrante and Steven Botteril (See: Steven Botteril, 'Dante's Poetic of the Sacred Word' *Philosophy and Literature* Vol.20, 1996, pp.154-2) indicate the invention of new word as a necessary part of a journey which involve the overcoming of boundaries beyond space and time: 'Dante conveys the essence of his vision by stretching his medium to its limits, by using words that do not exist, images that contradict each other, by distorting sequential and logical order, and by ignoring the boundaries of separate languages.' Joan Ferrante ' Words and Images in the *Paradiso*: Reflections on the Divine' *Dante, Petrarca, Boccaccio: Studies in the Italian Trecento in Honor of Charles S. Singleton*. Ed. Aldo S. Bernardo and Anthony L. Pellegrini. Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1983, pp. 114-32. Second, Zygmunt Baranski and Joseph Luzzi seek to establish a connection between the dantean linguistic inventions and the discourse on human and linguistic generation in Adam's speech in *Paradiso* XXVI on one side and to the Horace's *Ars poetica* on the other side (See: John Luzzi, 'As a leaf on a Branch...? Dante's Neologisms', *PMLA*, Vol.125, March 2010, pp. 322-336; Zygmunt G. Baranski, 'Three Notes on Dante and Horace', *Current Trends in Dante Studies*, Ed. Claire E. Honess. *Spec. issue of Reading Medieval Studies* Vol.27, 2001, pp.5-38.). A third area is about the fact that Dante's neologisms are less original than commonly thought, since some philologists as Ghino Ghinassi, Francesco Maggini, Ernesto Giacomo Parodi, and Nocolò Tommaseo have revealed the preexistence of some Dante's coniages. However Gianfranco Contini claims that the mode in which Dante employs his near-invented words is actually original (See: Ghino Ghinassi 'Neologismo', in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, Firenze: Treccani, 1970). I will build my thesis on Contini's analysis, as what is relevant in my research is where and how Dante uses his new linguistic creation.

²¹² See: Gianfranco Contini, *Un'idea di Dante*, Torino: Einaudi, 2001.

Quella viva luce che sì mea
Dal suo lucente, che non si disuna
Da lui nè da l'amore ch'a lor s'intrea,
Per sua bontate il suo raggiare aduna,
Quasi specchiato, in nove sussitenze,
etternalmente rimanendosi una.

(For Living Light, which, from the Fount of Light,/ cascades in ways that do not disunite it,/ from Him or from the Love en-three-ing them,/ in generosity collects its rays,/ as mirrored in nine ranks of life anew,/ itself eternally remaining One. *Pd.* XIII, 55-58)

Here, in a few verses, the author arrives to describe the unity of the trinity on one side and Divine love and wisdom spread by the spheres but still one, on the other side. This kind of singularity is both inclusive and emanating. Two important neologisms are used in this description: *disuna* and *intrea*. *Intrea* has been created with the prefix *in-* conveying inclusion, whereas *disuna* has the prefix *di-* which involves detachment of one element from the whole. Thus, I argue that the alternation of these two kinds of prefixes convey emanation as well as inclusion, even though *disuna* is actually denied ('non si disuna'). In addition to this, the rhyme where the coniage *disuna* is involved, that means '*disuna- aduna- una*' , stresses the intense unity repeating '*una*' inside each word. Mirroring that process of union, there is the action of 'intrearsi': the unity can become multiple, as it contains every kind of molteplicity: it is an emanating singularity.

Another literary device which has been identified by the scholarship as very important in the third Cantica is the hysteron-proteron.²¹³ Why are there many

²¹³ Durling claims that 'It is no accident that the rhetorical figure of hysteron proteron (naming the last before the first) is so important in the *Paradiso*: indeed, the entire *Commedia*, viewed in this light, can be seen as an enormous instance of hysteron proteron: the last thing we reach is the origin of all' (Robert M. Durling, *Paradiso*, p.757). Conversely, I argue that the path of the *Commedia* and its narrative is much more complex than that. I will show in this section that it conveys the path of the Pilgrim in the *Paradiso* as an all-comprehensive Beginning, where the Pilgrim himself will be progressively included. So, the rethorical figure of the hysteron proteron is not a figure for representing the exchange between end and beginning in this context, rather it shows the dissolving of references and measurements in temporality.

hysteron proterons in the *Paradiso*? What are their functions? Do they appear when the author engages with temporality or eternity? I will start to answer by analysing the passage where, in Canto VII, Beatrice summarizes the entire historical narrative delivered by Justinian (*Pd.VI*) in a few lines:

Nè tra l'ultima notte e 'l primo die
sì alto o sì magnifico processo,
o per l'una o per l'altra, fu o fie.

(Between the last great night and first of days/ there's never been nor shall be,
either way,/ a process soaring so magnificent. *Pd. VII* 112-14)

This hysteron proteron presents the last night of temporality before the first day of the creation echoing the sequence of nights and days of Genesis (1.5, 1.8, 1.13 etc.). That inversion of chronological order is connected with the leading eagle of the Roman Empire which follows an opposite direction of Aeneas, creating a kind of circling path around the Mediterranean, with Rome at the centre.²¹⁴ Thus, the device of the hysteron proteron can be seen as fulfilling the previous historical account where the birth of Christ was set at the centre as an emanating turning point. In fact, as the eagle of the Roman Empire has circled in the wrong direction, the chronological order of the creation of time is inverted: in fact what really matters is the centre and not the direction of the circular motion around it. Motions, their ends or beginnings, their directions are all absorbed in a central point, Christ, as Boethius claims in the following passage of *The Consolation of Philosophy*: "Tu cernere finis, principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus, idem."²¹⁵ This idea is mirrored by the structure of the three lines themselves which address the attention to the 'magnifico processo', Christ, around who the future (*fie; l'ultima notte*) and the past (*fu; il primo die*) are circling, inverted, emanated and attracted.

²¹⁴ Poscia che Costantin l'aquila volse
contr'al corso del ciel, ch'ella seguio
dietro a l'antico che Lavinia tolse, (*Pd VI*, 1-3).

I have already analysed these lines and the motions which they underpin in a previous section.

²¹⁵ *De cons.* 3, IX: 'And you, alone and same, are their beginning, driver, leader, pathway, end.'

Furthermore, even in the ultimate figure of salvation history, the white rose, the author displays a meaningful hysteron proteron: 'La piaga che Maria richiuse e unse,/ quella ch'è tanto bella da' suoi piedi/ è colei che l'aperse e che la punse' (Pd XXXII, 3-6). Here the actions of both Mary and Eve are temporally inverted: in fact we would expect that first Mary 'unse' and then 'richiuse' the human wound, as well as Eve first 'punse' and then 'aperse'. This double hysteron proteron refers to each woman, Mary and Eve, and underlines their opposition and similarity at the same time. In fact, they have performed opposite actions in relation at the same reality. Eve lived in the Eden garden, which is the very beginning of history according to the biblical conception of time, and Mary lived at the turning point of human history: when Christ was conceived and descended on Earth. Thus, here, the author set in the same central point of the rose the synthesis of what was meant to be the Beginning of temporality in a Purgatorial perspective (Eve and Eden) and what this Beginning has become in the renewed heavenly point of view: the birth of Christ. The strong boundary between the two figures of women and the kinds of beginning they represent and the two uses of hysteron proteron is reinforced from a musical and rhythmic point of view by the rhyme: 'unse'- 'punse' and by the several alliterations of the sounds 'u', 's' which occur throughout lines 3 and 6. To conclude on this point, the hysteron proteron appears in key descriptions or figures of time or in important historical accounts. It reinforces, from a linguistic point of view, the concentration of time into a dense eternal singularity.

The linguistic level is importantly engaged at the end of the poem as well, during the final vision of God. I will show how here that vision is conveyed even by sounds and alliterations, and how, on the other side, the language with its sounds and repetitions is shaped by that vision too.

Quella circolazion che sì concetta
 Pareva in te come lume riflesso
 Da li occhi miei alquanto circunspetta,
 mi parve pinta de la nostra effigie:
 per che il mio viso in lei tutto era messo.

(An inter- circulation, thus conceived,/ appears in you like mirrored brilliancy./But when a while my eyes had looked this round,/ deep in itself, it seemed- as painted

now, / in those same hues – to show our human form./At which , my sight was set entirely there. *Pd.* XXXIII, 127-132)²¹⁶

Here, first of all, Christ appears as a circle (circulazion), and He is the central one, in the middle of the other two: the Father and the Holy Spirit. Thus, the concept of Christ as cosmological centre and union is underlined even inside the representation of the Trinity. The Latinism 'circunspetta' derived from the latin 'circumspicere', involves not only the idea of seeing but the action of encircling and looking at the same time. Then, in line 132, the 'viso', the gaze of the Pilgrim 'is put into the image' (in lei tutto era messo). Thus, there is a reciprocal encircling where the image and the image's observer tend to be reunited. This reunion is underlined by the possessive adjective: 'nostra' at line 131. In fact, in between the lines of these reciprocal embraces, 132 and 130, appears the image of human body: 'la nostra effigie'. That means that this final image refers to the observed vision, Christ, to the observer, the Pilgrim, and to the reader, as the flesh is the quality which Christ has in common with the entire humanity. The possessive adjective 'nostra' creates a strong union between Christ and humanity, between the narrator and the readers, between the object and the subject: they are now all elements of the infinite intensity of the Principium. Moreover 'nostra' conveys a reunion between the end and the beginning of the *Commedia* itself, whose incipit is 'Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita'. The rhymes 'conchetta', 'circunspetta', and 'riflesso', 'messo' musically frame the progressive inclusion lived by the Pilgrim into Christ: first the Pilgrim has intellectually understood Him (conchetta), then he has been able to completely embrace Him (circunspetta). Moreover, he has first seen Christ reflected into Beatrice's eyes (riflesso), then he is ready to look into Him (messo).

To conclude, Dante represents the union between the Pilgrim and God, between the beginning and the end, between all the elements of the Trinity, between the Old and the New Testament, between present, past and future and between space and time at all levels of communication: on a linguistic, visual, philosophical, biblical and narrative. He makes the reader visualize this dense unity through figures of time, then he wants the reader to rationally understand and see it in

²¹⁶ This figure has already be analysed from a theological perspective in a study by Peter Dronke: 'The Conclusion of Dante's *Commedia*' *Italian Studies* Vol.49,1994, pp. 21-39.

nature, for instance through his careful account of astronomical motions. Furthermore, Dante involves the narrative of the poem itself, through its *incipit* in *medias res* and its language, creating sequences and repetitions of sounds, alliterations, prefixes and suffixes. The more the reader progresses towards that cosmological beginning the more everything is absorbed in it, revealing a double nature: emanating and absorbing.

Conclusion

'Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio' (*De cons.* V, 6). We have seen that Dante develops this Boethian definition throughout his narrative of the Pilgrim's approaching the Divine. If the intense cosmological Beginning displays great intensity, Dante shows to the reader the expanded journey into that dense and central singularity, he examines each part of that 'simul et perfecta possessio', as he wants the reader to intellectually understand that intensity. He contemplates the astronomical intersections, the biblical digressions, the mechanical clock and the canonical hours, the beginning and the end of the Roman Empire circling around the Mediterranean Sea and the Pilgrim's salvation narrative. All those dimensions of temporality move, as they are 'forms of time which imitate eternity' (*Timaeus* 38a). And according to Dante they all circle around a centre they are attracted by: Christ. Motions and light shape their participation in the Divine, helping the reader to be aware of the continuities and the interconnections between their unity and multiplicity.

So, how can eternity exist in Hell without Christ? I will address these questions in the next chapter.

Inferno: The Paradox of Sin

Introduction

I demonstrated in my last chapter how Dante conveys plenitude and unity by comprehending temporality, perpetuity and eternity on the one hand, and past, present and future on the other, throughout the Pilgrim's heavenly journey. In fact, the author displays sequences, patterns, motions and specific similes to represent this eternal concentrated unity. So, if eternity means cosmological unity, how can there be unity in Hell, where sinners chose to keep a spiritual distance from God, losing any chances of being reunited with the divine love? We can assume that Hell does not accommodate the eternity designed according to Platonic philosophy, due to its own essence. Indeed, in this chapter I will demonstrate that infernal eternity is, in fact, represented as a parody. It mimics both heavenly eternity and temporality, but it also denies them, lacking the benefits of the positive effects of those dimensions. For this reason my analysis in the following sections should be seen as a development of the previous chapter: I have identified in how many ways Dante conveys plenitude and centrality in a Platonic way and I will indicate now how the same patterns, symbols and images are inverted, transformed and deformed in the realm of damnation. I argue that the *Inferno* develops basically as a denial not only of heaven but of earthly existence as well. This means that in the *Inferno* not only is eternity not possible, but both dimensions disappear, or to be more precise, they have been losing their essences.

In the *Commedia* the absurd and grotesque misperceptions, misuses and misrepresentations of past, present, future, memory and history structure the supposed eternity and the supposedly earthly temporality. In fact, as those misperceptions have led human beings to sin during their earthly existence, still they frame their damnation and punishments in the hereafter. Thus, I will show through particular characters, figures and representations that in the *Inferno* there is no temporality and there is no proper eternity, instead there is a complex dimension which inverts and confuses both of them.

First of all, the representation of Satan and his location in the mid-cosmos is a clear parody of heavenly plenitude. The description of Satan as a parody of Christ

was common in Dante's time especially in the figurative arts.²¹⁷ Dante himself clearly suggests this parody in the first line of *Inferno* Canto XXXIV: '*Vexilla regis prodeunt inferni*', and, for instance, Hell's geographical structure with Satan at the centre of the infernal circles mirrors the representation of the cosmological Point surrounded by the circling heavens in *Paradiso* Canto XXVIII, 16-21. Secondly, the existing scholarship has already underlined certain paradoxes in the *Inferno*.²¹⁸ However, the problem of the overall interrelation and representation of time and eternity has not been addressed. The investigation of paradox and misperception is important not only in a study of the perception and representation of time and eternity in the *Commedia*, but in order to understand better the Dantean ideas of sin, justice and punishment. I will show how Dante designs the misperception of earthly temporality and the wrong use of it as the causes of sin itself, which leads to the loss of eternal unity with the cosmos and God. When human beings lack understanding and the correct perception of reality, the universe they are living in is transformed into a place where there meaning is lost and consequently there is spiritual and physical suffering: Hell. Thus, the way temporality and eternity in Hell are represented and perceived by sinners is at the basis of a deep moral and ethical problem about sin and its punishment. Particularly, I will draw attention to Medusa on the walls of Dis as an allegory of forgetfulness, and to the sinners just beyond the walls who did not believe in a future hereafter. The inability to comprehend correctly earthly temporality and denying an eternal dimension involve sinful misperceptions: for instance faith in the wrong eternity: fame. Furthermore, Farinata explains to the Pilgrim the way sinners remember and perceive in time;

²¹⁷ John Block Friedman describes numerous Anglo-French Apocalypse representations of the thirteenth century displaying the Antichrist performing the miracle of making tree roots bloom, parodying Christ's withering of the fig tree leaves. See John Block Friedman, 'Antichrist and the Iconography of Dante's Geryon', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 35 (1972), pp.108-192.

²¹⁸ See: Joan M. Ferrante, 'Hell as a Mirror Image of Paradise', and Christopher Kleinhez, 'Iconographic Parody in *Inferno* XXI', *Dante's Inferno*, Edit. by Mark Musa, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995; Ambrogio Camozzi, 'Il Veglio di Creta alla luce di Matelda: una lettura comparativa di *Inferno* XIV e *Purgatorio* XXVII', *The Italianist*, Vol.29, 2009, pp.3-49; Erich Peterson, 'Ovid and parody in Dante's "Inferno"', *Annali d'Italinistica*, Vol.25, Literature, Religion, and the Sacred, 2007, pp. 203-216; Amilcare Iannucci, 'Limbo, the Emptiness of Time', *Studi Danteschi* Vol.72, 1979-1980, pp..69-128).

they invert normal human perceptions and lose any contact with the present, reinforcing the absurdity of their condition. Indeed, infernal sinners lack awareness of past, present and future, and this disability is mirrored by the confused type of eternity they are in. In addition to this, even life cycles of birth, and death are misused and misperceived: a soul is born into Hell through a separation from her body and will die a second time through reunion with it, at the Last Judgement. Heavenly eternity and purgatorial temporality are mimicked in the *Inferno*, conveying absurdity, which means a lack of logic and understanding and confusion. For instance, I will show that the Old Man of Crete in *Inferno* XIV is a *figura historiae*, which prefigures Mount Purgatory, however it leads to apocalypse instead to salvation. It is an inverted figure of *Purgatorio* which is not climbed by the wayfarers, rather rivers of blood descend through its body. Moreover, the vestiges of Christ are in Hell too, but the signs of his passage, the landslides of the earthquake, do not convey unity like in the *Paradiso* but ruptures and separation, echoing the cracks on the *Veglio's* body.

I will also focus on the circling motions in the *Inferno*, which are so crucial in conveying heavenly eternity through parody. However, here they invert the wisdom and the detachment from material goods underpinned by the circularity in *Paradiso* X. In fact, the other figure of history displayed in Hell, the Wheel of Fortune, appears alongside the description of the punishments of avaricious sinners. If circular motions are a way of conveying unity in the *Paradiso*, in the *Inferno* they mostly represent disconnection as one of the most important infernal features. The sinners are disconnected from themselves, from any kind of understanding and comprehension, from temporality and from eternity. In fact, through a Sysiphean circularity the avaricious are punished by mimicking the circularity of the Fortune's Wheel – the logic of this mimesis is not grasped by human beings and its action opens up many questions of a moral nature.

In this point Dante shows a strong connection with *De consolazione Philosophiae* of Boethius for several reasons. First of all, Dante read about the Wheel of Fortune in the Boethian treatise.²¹⁹ As I will explain in the following sections, Boethius did not invent the figure himself, but he fixed its main features which were

²¹⁹ Boethius, *The Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by H.F. Stuart and E.K. Rand, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1962

maintained by medieval scholars and poets. Second, Fortune is at the heart of the Boethian investigation of morality, justice and history. I will demonstrate that this kind of investigation is at the basis of the *Inferno* also. In particular the issue of how it could be that God let his sons and daughters fall apart into misunderstanding and suffering. Also why did the infernal shades choose this path of detachment and sin? And how, if the universe tends to infinite plenitude and concentration, can the sinful disconnection of Satan and his realm exist in the cosmos? Fortune's Wheel represents how the action of God in history can be completely misunderstood or, at least, not considered correctly and good as it is and how in that misunderstanding human life loses its beauty and meaning, becoming an absurd nightmare. That figure of history shows that sinful attachments to earthly goods develop when men cannot recognize and accept the divine interventions in their lives, as I will show in this chapter. Somehow they do not allow eternity to be part of their existence, and by denying that unity between temporality and eternity they are thrown into a maze of painful punishments. Certain scholars, such as Durling, Martinez and Dronke, underline the importance of Boethius in the third *cantica*, especially the poem 'O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas', which is placed at the climax of Book III of the *Consolatio*.²²⁰ I agree that 'O qui perpetua' was widely studied as a summary of some of the central ideas of Plato's *Timaeus*, presented in a Christianized Neoplatonic version particularly congenial to medieval thinkers. However, before that climax, Boethius describes his character's struggle to understand his particular situation *hic et nunc*. At that moment Fortune's Wheel appears as a *monstruum*. I will show that this moment of the *Consolatio* is a model for Dante in the *Inferno* – sinners are blocked at that stage, they are not able to transcend or escape their particular points of view and dispositions, and blocked in their singularity they are lost, detached, disconnected and meaningless.

²²⁰ Robert M. Durling, and Ronald L. Martinez *Time and the Crystal: Studies in Dante's Rime petrose*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990; Peter Dronke 'The Conclusion of Dante's *Commedia*', *Italian Studies*, Vol.49, 1994: pp.21-39.

Inscribing Eternity: Hell Gate and the Boethian Model of Time

The inscription upon the gates of Hell is particularly unique in the *Commedia* for several reasons.²²¹ In fact, in none of the other kingdoms of the hereafter do we find such a sudden and firm declaration illustrating the characteristics of its realm. Even the examples of sins and virtues found at the beginning and at the end of each purgatorial terrace display a different and more intuitive means of communication, and are never so analytical about temporal and spatial coordinates. Mostly the Pilgrim (and the reader) understands and perceives the places he is passing by, through his senses or through the dialogues with his guides or the other souls. Hell's inscription, however, synthetically but precisely indicates what the Pilgrim is going to discover before he actually does:

“PER ME SI VA NE LA CITTA’ DOLENTE,
PER ME SI VA NE L’ETTERNO DOLORE,
PER ME SI VA TRA LA PERDUTA GENTE.
GIUSTIZIA MOSSE IL MIO ALTO FATTORE;
FECEMI LA DIVINA PODESTATE,
LA SOMMA SAPIENZA E ‘L PRIMO AMORE.
DINANZI A ME NON FUOR COSE CREATE
SE NON ETTERNE, E IO ETTERNA DURO.

²²¹ John Freccero claims that reader finds himself reading the inscription in the same way the Pilgrim does: ‘For the first and only time in this poem, perhaps in any poem, we directly share the protagonist’s experience.’ See John Freccero, *Dante: the Poetics of Conversion*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986, p.99. Freccero delivers one of the most famous analysis of that inscription: he claims that the clear imitation of the reality developed in the inscription is a hostile and critical imitation because it takes place in hell. Chiavacci Leonardi claims that: ‘Tutta l’ultima terzina esprime in fondo una sola idea – la perennità senza scampo della pena- come la prima l’intensità del dolore.’ (Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, *La Divina Commedia, Inferno*, Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1991, p.79.) Chiavacci Leonardi’s idea that the main purpose of the inscription is communicating the ‘perennità’ is shared by most of the recent scholarship: for instance, Umberto Bosco, *Dante vicino: contributi e letture*, Rome: Sciascia, 1967, Camporesi Piero, *La casa dell’eternità*, Milan: Garzanti, 1985, Anthony K. Cassel, *Dante’s Fearful Art of Justice*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984, Mark Musa, *Advent at the Gates: Dante’s “Comedy”*, Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1974.

LASCIATE OGNE SPERANZA, VOI CH'INTRATE.”

(“Through me you go to the grief-wracked city./ Through me to the everlasting pain you go./Through me you go and pass among lost souls. /Justice inspired my exalted Creator./ I am a creature of the Holiest Power,/ of Wisdom in the Highest and of Primal Love./ Nothing till I was made, only/ eternal beings. And I endure eternally./ Surrender as you enter every hope you have.” *Inf.* III, 1-10)

It is a clear declaration about *Inferno's* time, space, creation and population. However, I will show that, despite this clarity, actually the kingdom of evil expresses its distance from the Divine through misunderstanding and misperception, especially in terms of time and space. Thus, the inscription is a first step into the absurdity of infernal existence and figures, as verbal statements are not reflected by any evidence and there is a disconnection between words and facts, and between intentions and actions.²²²

First of all, the inscription recalls epigraphs that could be found on the gates of numerous medieval cities and churches.²²³ Who is speaking here? Is it the *Inferno*

²²² The Scholarship has already shown the important element of paradoxes addressed to disorient the reader in Dante's *Inferno* from different perspectives: for instance, Robin Kirkpatrick talking about the Fortune's wheel ('From the standpoint of popular philosophy it will already be apparent how challenging Dante's conception of fortune is. In a word, he has taken the notion of mutability which apparently emphasises all the ills and uncontrollable accidents that bear upon human life, and presented mutability itself as a principle not of disorder but of design. The philosophical spirit is required to countenance a paradox', Robin Kirkpatrick, *Dante's 'Inferno': Difficulty and Dead Poetry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p.111), or Franco Masciandaro dealing with sinners' motions ('L'eternità infernale è chiusa a ogni divenire e a ogni possibilità di attuazione dell'essere in esso sempre presente,' Franco Masciandaro, *La problematica del tempo nella 'Divina Commedia'*, Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1976, p.73) and John Freccero who claims: 'the disorder of the soul is represented in the '*Divine Comedy*' by the soul's disorientation'(John Freccero, *Dante: Poetics of Conversion*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986, p. 182) . My purpose is to focus on how the infernal paradox is specifically represented in term of time and eternity.

²²³ Julian Gardener carefully analysed the development from the design of the roman triumphal arches to the symbolic pattern of medieval city gates. Furthermore, he underlines how the statuary and the paintings at the city gates normally has: 'many nuances of protection, intimidation or defiance'(Julian Gardener, 'An Introduction to the Iconography of the Medieval Italian City Gate' *Dumbarton Oaks*, Vol.41, 1987, p. 202). According to Gardener, city gates have the double functions to be god-guarded with

itself? Or the voice of the Maker?²²⁴ For instance, in the analogy between the human body and the structure of the *Inferno* identified by Durling, this inscription is the speaking Hellmouth.²²⁵ However, I argue that the speaking voice is God, the Maker, rather than the *Inferno* itself, for one main reason. In medieval art the artist usually writes on his work a few words as a signature, pretending to be the work itself, however actually the artist signs. And in this case the artist is the Divine. So, what is the word of God in Hell? What does he state about that realm? He displays, at the entrance, a model of time and a model of space, which design the *Inferno*. The model of space is the Italian medieval city as I will show in more detail in the following sections and I will demonstrate that the model of time recalls in particular the Beothian model.

Eternity is the primary idea which dominates the inscription: the word “eterno” is repeated three times in nine lines and in the last line it is stressed due to its central position in a literary chiasmus: “create se non etterne, e io eterna duro”. Along the frame of that repetition, it is specified that the *Inferno* actually had a beginning – it was created by God, due to his will to make justice, after the creation of the universe, the heavens and the angels. This means that there was a moment when the *Inferno* did not exist and a precise moment for its creation. Furthermore, it will exist forever, it is and it will be eternal. After Hell’s entrance the author continues to stress the idea of eternity throughout the early cantos: in Canto III, other expressions underline the nature of infernal eternity: ‘aere senza stelle’ (air where no star shone) *Inf.*III, 23, ‘sempre in quell’aura senza tempo tinta’ (darkened

apotropaic purpose (this justifies numerous crosses or the Virgin’s images appearing especially at the gates of Rome) and to show the justice which will be found in the city (for instance with paintings of executions). Furthermore, he points out that the most ancient gate’s iconography tends to remain unchanged, even when walls are rebuilt and renewed, due to their spiritual and magical values. (See: F. Frigerio, ‘Antiche porte di città italiane e romane’ *Rivista archeologica dell’antica provincia e diocesi di Como*, 1935, pp.108-110.)

²²⁴ Eugenio Donato argues that it is actually a funerary inscription. (Eugenio Donato, ‘The Mnemonics of History’, *Yale Italian Studies*, Vol.I, 1977 pp.4-11).

²²⁵ “From the perspective of Canto XI it becomes possible to identify an important emerging pattern: Hell has a structure analogous to that of the human body. The pilgrim and Virgil begin their descent through hell at what corresponds to the head (the traditional entrance is, after all, Hellmouth, which “speaks” in its inscription)” (Robert M.Durling, *Inferno*, p.701).

air where no time was) *Inf.* III, 29, ‘tenebre etterne’ (eternal shadow) *Inf.* III, line 87. Then in canto IV we find ‘infiniti guai’ (endless miseries) *Inf.* III, 9, ‘aura etterna’ (“eternal air”) *Inf.* III, 27. Moreover, Dante specifies the eternity of punishments: ‘nulla speranza li conforta mai, non che di posa, ma di minor pena’ (‘Here is no hope of any comfort ever,/ neither of respite nor of lesser pain’, *Inf.* V, 44-45); ‘Io sono al terzo cerchio, de la piovra/ etterna, maledetta, fredda e greve;/ regola e qualità mai non l’è nova.’ (‘I am in Circle Three. And rain falls there, endlessly, chill, accursed and heavy/ its rate and composition never new’, *Inf.* VI, 7-9). Indeed, we can acknowledge that there is a strong insistency about stating a condition of eternity especially in an early moment of the narrative. Why does the author keep repeating the eternal condition of the infernal sinners? I will demonstrate that this need to assert eternity derives from the fact that actually afterlife in Hell does not look and does not feel eternal at all. Furthermore, that authorial insistence reinforces the absurdity and the misconception which dominate the *Inferno*, instead of clarifying how eternity is structured.

As for the spatial dimension, the inscription is clear as well: Hell is a city. So we can identify again the same misleading precision even regarding the space.²²⁶ In fact, the device itself of a gate inscription physically defines the infernal reality as

²²⁶ The discussion about space in the *Inferno* made by John Kleiner (John Kleiner, ‘Mismatching the Underworld’ *Dante Studies* 107, 1989, pp.131-144) traces in the scholarship two possible paths: one is about general shapes of space, especially the labyrinth. Rebecca S. Beal focuses on Ovid’s myth of labyrinth and examines the characters of Minos and the minotaur in Ovid and in the *Commedia*. Indeed, she claims that the medieval representations of Ovid’s labyrinth consists of a series of concentric circles like the structure of Dantean Hell. (See: Rebecca S. Beal, ‘Dante in the Labyrinth’ *Mediaevalia* XIII, 1989, pp227-245; Penelope Reed Doob, *The idea of the Labyrinth from Classical Antiquity Through the Middle Ages*, Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1990.). The other one deals with the geo-physical aspect of Hell, in fact ‘If a characteristic feature of epic literature from Gilgamesh to Homer to Virgil to Melville is authority in geographical matters, the need to ground the poem in the geo-physical reality of this worlds was perhaps greatest for Dante, who was engaged in representation to his readers no less than the three realms of the otherworld.’, (Theodore J. Cachey Jr., ‘Cartographic Dante’ *Italica*, Vo. 87, Autumn 2010, p.331). The numerous studies on Italian municipality representation as a characteristic feature of infernal space can be considered in this last critical group. (Cathrine Keen, *Dante and the City*, Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2003).

being modelled on the medieval city.²²⁷ However, the Pilgrim will encounter wild landscapes as deserts or frozen lakes, or rocky mountains inside it. So even though the general space of Hell does not look like a city, there are few elements of medieval municipality. For instance, in Limbo there is a castle, then Dis is a real city, protected by an insurmountable gate and towers. Nevertheless, in addition to these elements in the actual landscape, there are numerous similes and comparisons in the language which employ civic images. For example, the giant Antaeus in *Inf.* XXXI, 136 is compared to Garisenda tower in Bologna: 'Qual pare a riguardare la Carisenda' (Just as Garisenda tower, when viewed/ beneath its leaning side, appears to fall, *Inf.* XXXI, 136). Moreover, many of the *Inferno's* sinners relate the recent histories of the major Italian cities, creating a sort of narrative geography of the peninsula.²²⁸ Thus, we can conclude that the image of the Italian medieval city is strongly connected to sins and damnation – the medieval municipality looks like a condition of spiritual degradation. In fact, I will show in one of the following sections how a particular parody of temporality in the *Inferno* is connected to the municipal cities, through the images of towers and static bodies, condemning them.

²²⁷ 'Dante presents Hell as the greedy, self-centered city-state which serves its own needs at the expense of its neighbours, ignoring the common good, and therefore ultimately self-destructive.' (Joan M. Ferrante, *Dante's Inferno*, : Indiana University Press, 1995, p.368). In this article Joan Ferrante identifies Hell as Florence, Heaven as the imperial Rome and the Purgatorio as a church.

²²⁸ Taking into account only Italian cities mentioned in the *Inferno* (the author mentions even French or Greek or Spanish or African cities in this Cantica), they are: Arbia, Arezzo, Asciano, Bari, Bologna, Brescia, Caprona, Casalodi, Cattolica, Cervia, Chiusi, Corneto Tarquinia, Faenza, Fano, Fiesole, Firenze, Focara, Forlì, Gaeta, Gardingo, Gaville, Governolo, Imola, Lucca, Luni, Mantova, Medicina, Montaperti, Panestrina, Peschiera del Garda, Pisa, Pistoia, Prato, Ravenna, Roma, S. Benedetto dell'Alpe, Sant'Andrea di Codiverna, Siena, Senigallia, Trento, Vercelli, Verona, Verrucchio. In fact, as Cathrine Keen claims: 'Earthly cities provide Dante with constant analogies for hell, drawing on both the biblical narrative of the destruction of Babel, Sodom and Jerusalem and the classical myths of the downfall of Troy or Thebes.' (See: Catherine Keen, *Dante and the City*, Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2003, p. 129. And Anthony J. de Vito, 'Dante's Attitude toward the Italian Cities in "The Divine Comedy"', *Studies In Philology*, Vol. 48, Jan. 1951, pp.1-14).

Finally, it is stated that the reason for the existence of that eternal damned city is the Divine need of justice.²²⁹ The problem of justice involves the problem of cosmological order and understanding which in Hell will remain an open question, due to the disconnection created by sin: how can sin exist in a world created by God? Why would God want to punish his creatures? Boethius attempts to answer those problems in the *De consolazione Philosophiae*, as he identifies in the figure of Fortune's Wheel, on one side, human history's struggle as a history of sins and on the other side, the eternal perfection of God's will and of Divine Providence. Thus, Boethius' work shows that questions of morality and justice are linked to a particular idea of history and its interactions with the Divine. So, I argue that the *Inferno's* inscription recalls a Boethian model of time for two main reasons. First, the use of the present tense referring to future (*io eterna duro*) and reference to the past (Hell's creation) recall the Platonic and Augustinian models of eternity, which I have analysed in the previous chapters, according to which an eternal entity is able to possess and comprehend past, present and future *in toto*. Second, the declaration of a supreme need for justice links the inscription to a Boethian model of time, where understanding divine justice is at the base of a detailed investigation and exploration of eternity in philosophical term. At the heart of the *De consolazione* there is the urgency to justify inequality, unfairness, and undeserved tragedies in human society and that urgency will lead the author to investigate what can be called temporal and what eternal and why eternity allows that kind of image of itself to exist.

So, what is exactly the model of time described by Boethius in the *De consolazione Philosophiae*?²³⁰ Is it consistently different from the Platonic one which

²²⁹ Robin Kirkpatrick particularly stresses about the theme of the inscription that: 'These lines speak of a 'High Maker' who, possessing the attributes of a 'person', is known to be Justice, Power, Wisdom and Love. In all these aspects, God expresses himself in particular acts of judgement upon his creatures; and these judgements- as far as Dante can rationally conceive them- are represented in the plan of punishments and moral logic that underlies the geography of the cantica [...]. Robin Kirkpatrick, 'Dante. The Divine Comedy' Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 55.

²³⁰ Tullio Gregory and Pierre Courcelle indicate the most important interpretations of Boethius' theory on temporality along the commentaries of *De consolazione*. They both underline that the idea of Fortune's mutability is not original with Boethius but it was probably born in the Occident with Proclus' *De Providentia et Fato*. (Tullio Gregory, *Platonismo medievale*, Roma: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1958; Pierre

frames the heavenly plenitude? If yes, how does it convey a different quality of eternity compared with the everlasting Platonic unity of Heaven?

In Book V of *De consolazione*, Boethius identifies three categories of time in order to explain the coexistence of man's free will and God's Providence.²³¹ First, he indicates 'aeternitas' as 'interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio'²³² (a perfect possession altogether of an endless life). The second category is 'quod temporis patitur condicionem'²³³ (whatsoever suffereth the condition of time), this condition always moves from a lost past to an unknown future. This category includes mortal beings and immortal elements like the universe itself. In fact, both always lose their past and move towards a mysterious future. However, the universe is called "perpetuum [...] sicuti de mundo censuit Aristoteles, nec coeperit umquam esse nec desinavitaque eius cum temporis infinitate tendatur, nondum tamen tale est ut aeternum esse iure credatur ("perpetual [...] as Aristotle thought of the world, it never began nor were ever to end, and its life did endure with infinite time, yet it is not such that it ought to be called everlasting"). Boethius argues that God can see the

Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques en occident*, Paris: de Boccard, 1943). Howard Rollin Patch gives even more specific insights about the development of the idea of Fortune through Proclus, Plotinus, Dionysius and Boethius (Howard Rollin Patch, 'Fate in Boethius and the Neoplatonists', *Speculum*, Vol. 4, Jan., 1929, pp. 62-72; Howard Rollin Patch, *The Goddess Fortune in Mediaeval Literature*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), however, Charles M. Radding indicates Boethius as the one who really crystallized the figure of Fortune's wheel in the medieval thinking. (Charles M. Radding, 'Fortune and her Wheel: the Meaning of a Medieval Symbol', *Mediaevistik*, 1992, Vol.5, pp.127-138.) There are studies about the relation between Boethius and Dante, but mostly focused on the *De Consolatione* and the *Convivio*, due to their similar kind of purpose. The most important of them are: Rocco Murari, *Dante e Boezio*, Bologna: Zanichelli, 1905 and Margherita De Bonfils Templer, "La donna gentile" del "Convivio" e il boeziano mito d'Orfeo' *Dante Studies*, Vol. 101, 1983, pp.123-144; Angelo Gualtieri, 'Lady Philosophy in Boethius and Dante' *Comparative Literature*, Vol.23, Spring, 1971, pp. 141-150. As for the connection between the *Commedia* and Boethius' model of time, Peter Dronke identifies the importance of in Boethius' definition of eternity in order to create a model for the dantean 'letargo' (*Pd.* XXXIII, 94-96), (Peter Dronke, 'Boethius, Alanus and Dante', *Romanische Forschungen*, 78, 1966, pp. 119-125.

²³¹ Recent studies of Michael Chase show interesting similarities between Boethius' idea of eternity and the block-time perspective in contemporary philosophy of time, as implied by the mathematical physics of Einstein and Minkowski: Michael Chase, 'Time and eternity from Plotinus and Boethius to Einstein' *Scholar: Ancient Philosophy & the Classical Tradition*, Vol. 8, 2014, p.67-110.

²³² *De Consolatione philosophiae*, Book V, prosa VI.

²³³ *Ibid.*

future as in his eternal condition he can embrace past, present and future at the same time, however this does not affect the free will of human beings. Furthermore, Boethius argues that: “nihilque est in tempore constitutum quod totum vitae suae spatium pariter possit amplecti” (“there is nothing placed in time which can embrace all the space of its life at once”).²³⁴ Indeed, Boethius claims that only beings in time need to perceive temporality through the categories of past, present, and future, the reality out of time is an indivisible present moment.

Thus, we can see that the three Boethian categories of time are comprehended and embraced by the inscription of Hell’s Gate:

DINANZI A ME NON FUOR COSE CREATE
SE NON ETTERNE, E IO ETTERNA DURO.

However, before reaching this degree of distinction, the previous books of the treatise are focused on the difficulty of finding proper collocations of these three modalities in the same universe. In fact in Book II, Lady Philosophy claims:

Si penitus aegritudinis tuae causas habitumque cognovi, fortunae prioris affectu desiderioque tabescis; ea tantum animi tui, sicuti tu tibi fingis, mutata pervertit. Intellego multiformes illius prodigis fucos et eo usque cum his, quos eludere nititur, blandissima familiaritatem, dum intollerabili dolore confundat quos insperata reliquerit.

(If I have thoroughly ascertained the character and causes of thy sickness, thou art pining with regretful longing for thy former fortune. It is the change, as thou deemest, of this fortune that hath so wrought upon thy mind. Well do I understand that Siren's manifold wiles, the fatal charm of the friendship she pretends for her victims, so long as she is scheming to entrap them—how she unexpectedly abandons them and leaves them overwhelmed with insupportable grief. *De Cons.* II,1)

Here, Fortune is described as a horrible monster which causes ‘intollerabili dolore’, through its ‘multiformes prodigii’. It affects human lives through its changeable and unpredictable decisions; it is multiple, with many forms. Thus, this figure conveys

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

disconnection from Unity and negative multiplicity. We can see in that *monstruum* the infernal variation of the cosmological singularity or the White Rose of the *Paradiso*, where historical and universal variety are synthesized in an harmonic plenitude. I argue that, even though the definition of time and eternity are clear and in line with the Platonic ideas, actually the harmony and the coexistence between them is still problematic in Boethius. Why is history such an inconsistent image of eternity?

Hi semper eius mores sunt, ista natura. Servavit circa te propriam potius in ipsa sui mutabilitate constantiam; talis erat, cum blandiebatur, cum tibi falsae illecebris felicitatis alluderet. Deprehendisti caeca numinis ambiguous vultus.²³⁵

(Thou deemest Fortune to have changed towards thee; thou mistakest. Such ever were her ways, ever such her nature. Rather in her very mutability hath she preserved towards thee her true constancy. Such was she when she loaded thee with caresses, when she deluded thee with the allurements of a false happiness. Thou hast found out how changeful is the face of the blind goddess. *De cons.* II,1)

So, Fortune displays an everlasting and constant feature, which connects it to the divine eternal realm. It is an illusion, it is false, and its falsity never changes.²³⁶ That negative connection between history and eternity frames the perceptions of both time and eternity in Hell. The temporality perceived by the sinners is false as is the eternity – they are both parodies of what they were supposed to be. In order to address these points in more detail, in the next section I would like to demonstrate how sinners perceive not a real earthly temporality, but a parody of it.

²³⁵ *Ibidem*, 10-11.

²³⁶ Here, Boethius mentions the common *topos* of *consolatio* normally linked to fortune's changes in the classic tradition: for instance, Seneca *ad Marc.* 12, I: 'oportet te non de eo quod detractum est queri, sed de eo gratias agere quod contigit' and *Tranq. an.* II,2: 'quandoque autem reddere iubebitur non queretur cum fortuna, sed dicet 'gratias ago pro eo quod possedi habuique'.

'Io eterna duro': Ruptures in the *Inferno's* Eternity

As we have seen, according to Boethius' model of time, what is in eternity should embrace past, present and future at the same time ("a perfect possession altogether of an endless life").²³⁷ The inscription upon the Hell Gate partially reflects this model, however I will demonstrate that actually the *Inferno's* representations of temporality do not always follow this initial definition. There are ruptures and contradictions in infernal eternity, which comprehend a misperceived and empty temporality, as I will show in this section. Furthermore, the ruptures in what is supposed to be dense unity are mirrored by the deep cracks in the *Inferno's* landscape, connected with the passage of Christ.

Aquinas supports already the thesis that in Hell there is not a proper eternity: 'In Inferno non est vera eternitas, sed magis tempus'(ST.Ia, 10,3). Thus Masciandaro argues on the basis of Aquinas' statement that:

'L'eternità infernale può essere infatti definita come pura temporalità, come tempo diluito, che, a differenza del tempo che ha un'autentica durata "ordinata" a un fine e a una fine (come la durata sempre virtualmente presente nella vita terrena, e come quella del Purgatorio), è perpetuo, appartiene all'*aeuum*, dimensione 'intermedia' tra il tempo e l'eternità.²³⁸

Building on Masciandaro's argument, I propose that infernal temporality is much more complex than a sort of 'middle way' in between time and eternity. It is, instead, a complex, chaotic and parodical version of both, that means a process of misperceptions and misunderstandings activated by sin.

First of all, why is temporality in Hell a parody of earthly time? Dante claims that in Hell there is no hope, 'nulla speranza li conforta mai' (*Inf.* V, 44), reiterating Hell's inscription: 'LASCiate OGNI SPERANZA, VOI CH'INTRATE' (*Inf.* III, 10). However, even those statements are contradictory if compared with the sinners' state of mind. In fact, the infernal shades perceive and declare a temporal progression towards a goal, which means that they are waiting for something: the

²³⁷ *De Consolatione philosophiae*, Book V, prosa VI.

²³⁸ Franco Masciandaro, *La problematica del tempo nella Divina Commedia*, (Ravenna: Editore Longo, 1976), p.96.

Last Judgement.²³⁹ The awareness of this event does not create a real hope like human beings experience during their earthly life or even a real fear of it, however it develops a sense of waiting which represents a neat rupture in the expected total possession of past, present, and future of eternity. Thus, there is no hope or fear in relation to the future, as we would expect according to earthly temporality, but there is the awareness of a future change. The Last Judgement is, in fact, both an end and a new beginning for the *Inferno's* sinners. The Last Judgement does not represent a rupture in the *Paradiso's* unity as it is comprehended in the same dense emanating central point. Thus, the blessed in the *candida rosa* appear with their earthly bodies – the end of time has not happened yet, however it is there, in the perfect and omni-comprehensive unity of heavenly eternity.²⁴⁰ On the other side, the birth into Hell of the infernal sinners occurs through a separation of body and soul, which means death on Earth. Then, the ultimate spiritual death in the *Inferno* is the reunion of the body with the soul, which looks like birth on Earth. Thus, the span of eternity lived by the sinners in between these two events is a parody of earthly existence, where the sinners were born through death and die through birth. Indeed, the processes, passages and perceptions of the infernal eternal life mimic the earthly ones in a distorted way. As the sinners have already undergone divine judgement and are eternally condemned, the end of time basically means for them the reconnection with their earthly body, as Chiavacci Leonardi argues: 'Il riferimento al Giudizio, che già osservammo essere una costante dell'oltremondo dantesco, riporta

²³⁹ The main references to the Last Judgement made by the infernal sinners are: 'Più non si desta/ di qua dal suon de l'angelica tromba, quando verrà la nimica podesta:/ ciascun rivedrà la trista tomba/ ripiglierà sua carne e sua figura,/ udirà quel ch'in eterno rimbomba' (*Inf.* VI, 95-99); 'Questi resurgeranno del sepulcro (*Inf.* VII,56); 'tutti saran serrate/ quando di Iosafat qui torneranno/ coi corpi che là su hanno lasciati' (*Inf.* X, 10-12); 'Come l'altre verrem per le nostre spoglie, ma non però ch'alcun sen rivesta, chè non è giusto aver ciò ch'om si toglie. Qui le trascineremo, e per la mesta selva sarannoi nostri corpi appesi' (*Inf.* XIII, 103-7). The last powerful image which recalls the Last Judgement in Hell is in *Inf.* XXXIV, 6: 'par di lungi un molin che 'l vento gira': the dimly perceived waving of Satan wings seems like the turning sails of a windmill. On one hand, Dante's word 'dificio' strengthens the connection with the giants, first perceived like towers. On the other hand, the mill is an image of the harvest, traditionally associated with the Last Judgement. Indeed, we can see that there are few differences about the destiny of the sinners after the Last Judgement, however all of them are concerned about it and aware that it will be at some point in the future.

sempre in primo piano il corpo, ora sepolto, ma che dovrà risorgere, quasi anticipando quella realtà nella fantasia, e già rendendo in qualche modo corporea, per riflesso, la realtà di ombre che ora ci sta davanti.²⁴¹ This reconnection opens up certain questions concerning the sinners' conditions as shades first and their future condition as the damned reunited with their bodies, within the overall meaning and the importance of the human body in the *Inferno*. In Canto XXV of the Purgatory Statius explains what is the nature of the shade in the afterlife in details and how it is formed after the bodily death: this process is specular to the development of a foetus during pregnancy.²⁴² In fact, first God gives the intellectual soul to a foetus: 'lo

²⁴¹ Anna Chiavacci Leonardi, *Dante Alighieri, la Divina Commedia, Inferno*, Milano: Oscar Mondadori, 1991, p.307. According to Charles T. Davis and Robert Hollander analysis, the Last Judgement in the Divine Comedy is connected to the prophecy of Veltro: they claim that Dante believes in a last temporal leader (the Veltro) who will bring an ultimate Golden Age in human history before the end of time. 'The Veltro is supposed to be a temporal leader, one on the order of the great Augustus who will prefigure in his ability to bring justice to human affairs, the Second Coming'. (Robert, Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969, p.90; Charles T. Davis, *Dante's Italy and Other Essays*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984.) However, my concern is more about the change that the Last judgement will activate Hell's perception of time, than about its political meaning.

²⁴² There is a complicated debate among the Scholastics about embryology to reconcile with Aristotle's theories their Christian belief in the immortality of the soul and of the direct creation of each human soul by God. Following the very difficult passage of *De generatione animalium* 2.3, (Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*. Trans. Arthur Platt. eBooks@Adelaide 2007 <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/generation/complete.html>), most Scholastics adopted the theory that the active principle in the development of the foetus was the father's seed, the mother supplying only the matter, identified with the menstrual blood. For instance, Albert the Great claims in *De natura et origine animae* that the matter in general has *inchoatio formae*, a Augustine's version of *rationes seminales* (seminal principles) which are predispositions to form, or incipient forms; he does not see matter as merely formless. On the other hand, Dante does not refer to any formal principle in the mother's blood, and in the Paradiso XXIX, 24-36 seems to exclude *rationes seminales* entirely. Aquinas saw the foetus as exercising the powers of nutrition and eventually of motion in the womb, but, because of his conviction that forms as such are unchanging, he held that the father's semen, acting on the mother's blood, fashioned the body and soul of the foetus as far as the animal stage and then evaporated.; in this process a large number of intermediated forms (souls) succeeded each other in the foetus, each destroyed as the next came into being, until God infused the rational soul, entirely replacing the last animal soul fashioned by semen. (CG 2.89.6-22, ST1a q.118). Nardi points Dante's rejection of Aquinas' doctrine of succession of forms (Bruno Nardi, *Dante e la cultura medievale. Nuovi saggi di filosofia dantesca*, Bari: Ed. Paolo Mazzatinta,

motor primo a lui si volge lieto/ sopra tant'arte di natura, e spira/ spirit novo di vertù repleto' ('the Primal Cause of Motion turns in joy/ to see so much of nature's art, and breathes/ new breath of spirit filled with power within', *Purg. XXV,70-73*). Then, during death, the intellectual soul leaves its human qualities and acquires more power, which means that the soul can create an "air body", the shade, around it:

la virtù formative raggia intorno
così e quanto ne le membra vive.
(....) così l'aere vicin quivi si mette
e in quella forma ch'è in lui suggella
virtualmente l'alma che ristette,

(the power that forms it radiates around/ in size and shape as in its living limbs [...]
So when the soul has reached this point of rest/ the air around it gathers in the
form/ that virtual powers of soul impress on it. *Purg. XXV, 89-96*).

A parody of that sacred incarnation can be seen in the words of Alberigo, in Tolomea, who tells that the path into *Inferno* for Tolomea's sinners, the traitors of guests, is quite unique:

"Cotal vantaggio ha questa Tolomea,
che spesse volte l'anima ci cada
innanzi ch'Atropos mossa le dea.
E perchè tu più volentier mi rade
le 'nvetriate lagrime dal volto,

1990). But Durling claims that Dante is quite far from taking over Albert's theory in every respect (Robert M. Durling, *Purgatorio*, p. 615). Brunelli argues that Dante's theory is quite similar to Aquinas's description of the conception of Christ: 'As in the usual procession of generation, the seed of the man draws into its own substance the matter supplied by the mother: so that same matter, in the generation of Christ, the Divine Word assumed to be unified with himself' (CG, 4,45). Indeed, we can see that Dante's poetics constantly models itself on the Incarnation (see: Ronald L. Martinez 'The Pilgrim's Answer to Bonagiunta and the Poetics of the Spirit' *Stanford Italian Review*, Vol. 4, 1983, pp. 37-63; Jeremy Cogan, *The Design in the Wax. The Structure of the 'Divina Commedia' and its Significance*. Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1999.)

sappie che, tosto che l'anima trade
come fec'io, il corpo suo l'è tolto
da un demonio, che poscia il governa
mentre che 'l tempo suo tutto sia volto.
Ella ruina in sì fatta cisterna;
e forse pare ancor lo corpo suso
de l'ombra che qua dietro mi verna.”

(“There is, in Ptolomea, this advantage,/ that souls will frequently come falling down/
before Fate Atropos has granted them discharge./ I very willingly will tell you more,/
but only scrape this tear-glaze from my face./ The instant any soul commits, like me,/
some act of treachery, a demon takes/ possession of that body- form and rules/ it deeds
until its time is done. Swirling/ the soul runs downwards to this sink. And so/ the body
of that shade behind – a-twitter / all this winter through – still seems up there, perhaps.
Inf. XIII, 124-135)

That means that the soul suddenly fell off in Tolomea before passing away, in fact Alberigo did not mention the encounter with Minos, he rather said that the soul ‘ruina’. So as the earthly birth engages with the action of breathing, the infernal birth engages with the action of falling. The soul and the body of Alberigo were instantly separated and lost: the soul fell down in Hell and his body was taken by a demon: the birth to earthly existence is made possible through the holy union of body and soul and the birth into the *Inferno* consists of a sudden and painful separation of them. In fact, Alberigo does not know whether his body is living or what it is doing: he is completely disconnected from it. On the other side, the Infernal death, the Last Judgement, represents a general rupture in the eternal flow of the *Inferno*. Virgilio mentions it for the first time following the dialogue with Ciaccio:

Più non si desta
di qua dal suon de l'angelica tromba,
quando verrà la nimica podesta:
ciascun rivedrà la trista tomba
ripiglierà sua carne e sua figura,
udirà quel ch'in eterno rimbomba.

(My leader now addressed me: 'He'll not stir/ until the trumpets of the angels sound,/at which his enemy, True Power, will come./Then each will see once more his own sad tomb,/and each, once more, assume its flesh and figure,/ each hear the rumbling thunder roll for ever. *Inf.* VI, 94-99).

Still in the same Canto, lines 34-36, the author gives additional information about the physical state of the infernal sinners: 'Noi passavam su per l'ombra che adona/ la greve pioggia, e ponavam le piante/ sopra lor vanità che par persona.' (Over such shadows, flat in that hard rain,/ we travelled onwards still. Our tread now fell/ on voided nothings only seeming men. *Inf.* VI, 34-36). So they are represented as indicated by Statius in *Purgatorio* XXV: their real body will be assigned them again during the Last Judgement, when the infernal eternity will be interrupted by the sound of an angel's trumpet. Pier delle Vigne tells that the bodies of suicide victims will be hung on the trees where their souls are incarcerated. So, the Last Judgement will be more than a rupture in the *Inferno's* eternal punishments, it will be a fulfilment of it, activated by an element considered sacred by Dante: the body.²⁴³

²⁴³ The sacredness of the human body in the Catholic tradition is based, first of all, on Genesis (1. 27-28): So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them: "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on earth. The human body was designed by God in order to fulfil his holy wish to have a great human population on Earth. Durling displays the greater analysis among the critics in order to examine in details meanings and qualities of human body throughout Hell. He underlines an emerging pattern where hell has a structure analogous to that of the human body. He indicates, for instance, the traditional gate entrance as the mouth which 'speaks' in its inscription, then the Limbo is associated with memory that means the rear ventricle of the brain. Furthermore the sin of Paolo and Francesca is linked to the eyes and the forehead, gluttony is the sin of gullet, and Dis is the human breast. First of all Dante was influenced by the idea of the body politic which originates from Plato and permeates political thinking in Christian times as well. Second, Dante was aware about the Saint Paul belief of a 'mystical body' (I Cor. 12.12-27; Eph. 5.29-30) according which Christ is the head and the believers the members, joined together by love. Third, there is the traditional Platonic allegory of the underworld, that goes back to Servius' commentary on the *Aeneid*, Macrobius's *Commentarii on the Dream of Scipio* (1.10.9-12): '...our body themselves, enclosed in which our souls suffer a prison ugly in its darkness, horrible with its filth and blood. This they have called the tomb of the soul, the pit of Dis, the underworld,..' in addition to this previous tradition, Durling indicates that Dante describes the devils with a grotesque disorder of body parts, then he associates

Building up Aquinas's statement: 'Anima autem, cum sit pars humanae naturae, non habet naturalem, perfectionem nisi secundum quod est corpori unita.'²⁴⁴ Dante's way of representing the reunion between body and soul will display a dramatic increase of sinners' sorrow and pain. Thus, as the traumatic separation between body and soul inverts the earthly birth, the reconnection between them in the Last Judgement is an inverted earthly death.

Secondly, there is another event, which is set in the past of the *Inferno's* history, and which interrupts the proper unity and plenitude of eternity: it is the earthquake, which marks a unique event in infernal history: the passage of Christ through Hell.²⁴⁵ Conversely to the Last Judgement, which is anticipated, the earthquake is a point that can be recalled. The means of recalling it is a properly earthly kind of temporal perception, not a total possession of past, present and future. There is a clear distinction between the moment of the narration and the past event; moreover, often this event has been misunderstood or even forgotten, which constitutes a significant rupture in the omni-comprehension of the Boethian

sins with malfunctioning of parts of the body. Durling argues that in the *Inferno* there is not a simple identification of the body itself with evil, however sins lead to a distortion of the soul and of the body as well. (See: Robert M. Durling, 'Farinata and the Body of Christ', *Stanford and Italian Review*, Vol. 2, 1981, pp.1-34; Robert M. Durling, 'Deceit and Digestion in the Belly of Hell', *Allegory and Representation: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, 1979-80, edited by Stephen J. Greenblatt, 61-93, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980; Denise Heilbronn 'Master Adam and the Fat-Bellied Lute' *Dante Studies* Vol.96, 1983, pp.36-65, Patricia L. MacKinnon *The Analogy of the Body Politic in Saint Augustine, Dante, Petrarch, and Ariosto*, Ph.D. diss., University of California at Santa Cruz, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1989.) Even more recent studies have focused on the value given by Dante to the human body, for instance David Ruzicka claims: 'And this is because it is predicated throughout on the notion that the body constitutes the indispensable outer manifestation of the soul, an idea that can be seen as absolutely central to Dante's anthropology. (...) In Dante's conception the body does not so much enclose the soul as render it visible. It is the necessary outward projection without which the interior life of the soul could have no meaning.' David Ruzicka, 'Uno Lume apparente di fuori secondo sta dentro': the expressive body in Dante's *Commedia*, *Italianist*, Vol.34, 2014, pp. 1-22, (p.3).

²⁴⁴ ST. I, q.90, a.4.

²⁴⁵ According to the *Gospel of Matthew* the earthquake occurred twice: it happened when Christ died and after his resurrection when an angel appeared to the women. Whereas, according to the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, there was an eclipse of the sun between the sixth and ninth hours (12-3 pm) when Christ died and the earthquake occurred only when the angel declared the resurrection of Christ.

model of eternity. In fact, in *Inferno* XII, Virgilio tries to explain to the Pilgrim why the rocks they are walking on have collapsed. He, as a pagan shade from Limbo, cannot indicate the true reason. However, the medieval Christian reader can easily understand the connection to the death and resurrection of Christ, mentioned in Matthew 27: 51 (“terra mota est, et petrae scissae sunt”).²⁴⁶ In Canto IV, Virgilio tells Dante that Christ had entered Hell after his death and had saved some shades of Limbo, for instance Adam, Abel and Moses. Virgilio is not able to indicate the exact moment of this event; rather he vaguely remembers that “io era nuovo in questo stato” (“I was still new in this condition”, *Inf.* IV, 52).²⁴⁷ As in Canto XXII, Virgilio’s misperception of Christ’s death and its point in history is related to damnation’s limitations. However, there is a character in the *Inferno* who surprisingly shows a greater degree of awareness of these events – the demon, Malacoda. In fact, he uses the earthquake as a time marker, offering the most precise indication of time delivered in the whole *Divina Commedia*:

ier, più oltre cinqu’ore che quest’otta
mille dugento con sessanta sei
anni compìe che qui la via fu rotta.

(Just yesterday, (five hours ahead from now),/ a thousand years, two centuries and sixty-six/ from when the path was cut had then elapsed” *Inf.* XXI, 112-14).

²⁴⁶ About this earthquake Durling claims that Christ was supposed to have descended into the underworld, violently breaking down its outer gate against the opposition of the devils, and to have led to Heaven in triumph the souls of all those who had believed the prophecies of his future coming. This theme became one the most widely represented in the Middle Ages, in poems, mosaics, sculptures, paintings, and plays. The Byzantine *anastasis*, the earliest type of pictorial representation of the triumphant Christ, showed him trampling the shattered gates of Hell (and underneath them, Satan) while taking by the hand Adam at the head of a line of Old testament figures (Robert M. Durling, *Inferno*, p. 134). Amilcare Iannucci takes it into analysis of temporality in Limbo. He underlines that the concept of event in Hell derives from the figural criticism of Erich Auerbach, and any events would relate every events to the central events in human history, the coming of Christ. (Amilcare Iannucci, ‘Limbo, the Emptiness of Time’, *Studi Danteschi* 72, 1979-1980, pp.69-128).

²⁴⁷ Vergil was born on the 15th October 70 BC, in Andes (next to Mantova) and he died on the 21st September 19 BC, in Brindisi.

According to Masciandaro, the time of this event delivered by Malacoda shows an important temporal connection between the life of Christ (his death and resurrection) and the Pilgrim's life (his "almost death" and his spiritual resurrection).²⁴⁸ Building on Masciandaro's thesis, I have already demonstrated how Dante often connects the Pilgrim's narrative path to the path of Christ's life through a pattern of temporal indications, for instance through the first indication of time in the *Commedia*, which is the very first line: 'Nel mezzo del cammin'. Furthermore, I would argue that time-marking is here used critically to reinforce the paradoxical nature of temporality and eternity in the *Inferno*. Malacoda is a very comic character and the language and the arithmetical precision he uses are grotesque in this setting. In addition to this, the 'via rotta' does not represent any improvements or real changes for the creatures now in Hell, but actually is an additional difficulty for the Pilgrim's itinerary.²⁴⁹ And this characterizes the inversion of the consequences which Christ brought into human history: his birth and death saved men and women and opened the door to beatitude. However, in Hell, Christ has created a 'broken way', ruptures which impede the journey to salvation. Thus, I claim that the earthquake is a clear element of the infernal inverted parody. Christ is not the central comprehensive point in the cosmos, nor the access to salvation, but is represented through ruptures and cracks in the landscape. That means that if He normally unifies, in Hell He divides. Moreover, the unique infernal earthquake recalls the more usual purgatorial earthquakes, which mark the accomplished purification of individual souls:

Certo non si scotea sì forte Delo,
 Pria che Latona in lei facesse il nido
 A partorir li due occhi del cielo.
 Poi cominciò da tutte parti un grido

²⁴⁸ Franco Masciandaro, *La problematica del tempo nella Divina Commedia*, Ravenna: Editore Longo, 1976, p.96.

²⁴⁹ Giuseppe Baglivi and Garrett McCutchan have already analysed the comicity of the character of Malacoda and its language: 'It is a stroke of 'providential irony [...] that the devil spells out that origin by numerical computation as he strives to make the poets deviate from the 'way' he says they cannot take, the 'way' which instead proves to be their sole means of escape.'"Dante, Christ, and the Fallen Bridges' *Italica*, Vol. 54, No. 2, Dante- Petrarca (Summer, 1977), pp. 250-262, p.255.

Tal che il maestro in ver di me si feo,
Dicendo: "Non dubbiar, mentr'io ti guido".

(Delos itself did not so fiercely shake/ before Latona made a nest of it/ to bring to birth
the two eyes of the sky./ On every side there then began this cry/(my teacher turned
around to me to say, 'When I'm your guide, you need not be afraid') *Purg.* XXII, 130-135)

About this earthquake, Francis Fergusson claims: 'He (the Pilgrim) does not know (what he will discover in the next Canto) that the shaking of the Mountain and the Hymn mark the raising of Statius, his first Christian guide, from his long repentance. He does not know that all the people he meets here are figures of the risen Christ.'²⁵⁰ Building on Fergusson's reading of the *Purgatorio*, we can see that signs of the risen Christ are in Hell too, however they are misunderstood even by the most noble infernal souls, like Virgilio, or they are merely used as complicated time marks by devils or they are impediments for the progression of the Pilgrim along his path. To summarize, they divide, complicate, interrupt, however they are still able to connect the Pilgrim's life path to the risen Christ, as stated by Masciandaro and Fergusson. This means that even in the infernal lack of understanding and confusion, Pilgrim's journey is still able to aim at the Divine. To conclude on this point, the image of Christ glimpsed through the infernal earthquake is a parody of both the purgatorial Christ of resurrection and the cosmological Christ of Heaven.

Finally, I will demonstrate that the perceptions of temporality in the *Inferno* parody and invert the usual earthly perceptions. Farinata in *Inferno X* explains to the Pilgrim how infernal shades see and perceive the three categories of present, past and future:²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ Francis Fergusson, *Dante's Drama of the Mind: A Modern reading of the Purgatorio*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.113.

²⁵¹ Canto X is one of the most studied cantos in the *Commedia*: the critical literature tends to focus on the psychological complexities of the Pilgrim's encounter with the ghost of his *primo amico's* father, Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti, or on the linguistic misunderstandings that transpires during the dialogue. The most important critics of that tradition are Auerbach ('Farinata and Cavalcante' *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. W. Trask, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), De Sanctis ('Il Farinata di Dante' in *Nuova Antologia*, 1869, p.43, 'Farinata' in *De Sanctis on Dante*, ed and trans. J. Rossi and A. Galpin, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957, pp. 53-86) and Benedetto Croce (Benedetto Croce, *La poesia di Dante*, Bari:

Mi dimandò: “Chi fur li maggiori tuoi?”

[...]

poi disse: “Fieramente fuoro avversi

a me e ai miei primi e a mia parte,

sì che per due fiata li dispersi.”

“S’ei fur cacciati, ei tornar d’ogne parte”,

rispuos’io lui, “l’una l’altra fiata;

ma i vostri non appreser ben quell’arte”.

[...]

“ Se elli han quell’arte” disse “male appresa,

ciò mi tormenta più che questo letto.

Ma non cinquanta volte fia riaccesa

La faccia de la donna che qui regge,

Che tu saprai quanto quell’arte pesa.

E se tu mai nel dolce mondo regge,

Dimmi: perchè quel popolo è sì empio

Incontr’a’ miei in ciascuna sua legge?”

[...]

El par che voi veggiate, se ben odo,

Dinanzi uel che ‘l tempo seco adduce,

E nel presente tenete altro modo.”

Laterza, 1952). Other important essays investigate the historical and philosophical background which underpins that encounter: Michele Barbi, ‘Il canto di Farinata’, *Studi danteschi* 8, 1924, pp. 87-109; Bruno Nardi, ‘L’averroismo del ‘primo amico’ di Dante’ *Studi danteschi* 25, 1940, pp. 43-79, Guido Mazzoni, ‘Il disdegno di Guido (Inf. X, 62-63),’ in *Almae luces, malae cruces: Studi danteschi* Bologna: Zanichelli, 1941, pp. 213-219; Antonino Pagliaro, ‘Il disdegno di Guido’ in *Saggi di critica semantica*, Messina-Florence: D’Anna, 1953, pp.355-79; Mario Casella ‘Il canto X dell’Inferno’ *Studi danteschi*, 33, 1955, pp. 35-42, Charles Singleton, ‘InfernoX: Guido’s Disdain,’ *MLN* 77, 1962, pp. 49-65; Arsenio Frugoni, ‘Il canto X dell’Inferno’ in *Nuove letture dantesche*, Florence: le Monnier, 1968, pp. 261-83; Anthony K. Cassel, ‘Dante’s Farinata and the Image of Arca’, *Yale Italian Studies* 1, 1977, pp. 335- 70; John Freccero, ‘Ironia e mimesi: il disdegno di Guido’, in *Dante e la Bibbia*, ed. G. Barblan, Florence: Olschki, 1988, pp. 41-54; and Robert M. Durling, ‘Canto X: Farinata and Cavalcante’ in *Lectura Dantis: Inferno*, ed. A. Mandelbaum, A. Oldcorn, and C. Ross, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, pp. 136-49, and Robert M. Durling, ‘Farinata and the Body of Christ’, *Stanford and Italian Review*, 2, 1981, pp. 1-34.

“Noi veggiam, come quei ch’ha mala luce,
 le cose” ,disse, “che ne son lontano;
 cotanto ancor ne splende il sommo duce.
 Quando s’appressano o son, tutto è vano
 Nostro intelletto; e s’altri non ci apporta,
 Nulla sapem di vostro stato umano.
 Però comprender puoi che tutta morta
 Fia nostra conoscenza da quell punto
 Che del futuro fia chiusa la porta.”

(‘Who were your forebears?’/[...] And then: ‘ In fierce hostility, they stood against myself, my ancestors, my cause./And so, on two occasions, they were scattered wide.’/ ‘Scattered’ I answered ‘so they may have been,/ but all came back from all sides, then and now. And your men truly never learned that art.’ [...] ‘If he went on ‘they learnt that art so ill,/ that is more torment than this bed of pain./ And yet no more than fifty times that face ((the moon’s, who is our sovereign here) will shine,/ till you shall learn how heavy that art weighs./ [...] You see, it seems (to judge from what I hear)/far in advance what time will bring to pass/ but otherwise in terms of preset things.’ / ‘We see like those who suffer from ill light./ We are’ he said ‘aware of distant things./Thus far He shines in us, the Lord on high./ But when a thing draws near to us,, our minds/ go blank. So if no other does brings us news,/ then nothing of your human state is known to us./ You will from this be able to deduce/ that all our knowledge will be wholly dead/ when all the doors of the future time will be closed.
 (*Inf. X*, 42-108)

This crucial dialogue between the Pilgrim and Farinata starts with a question about the past. Farinata has already recognized Dante as a citizen of Florence due to his language, now he is asking about the Pilgrim’s ancestors’ identity. Then, the Pilgrim and Farinata carry on their conversation discussing Florence’s most recent history (the episodes they are talking about occurred in 1251 and 1266.)²⁵² These past years constitute the moment in which Farinata has been psychologically and spiritually arrested and will remain so eternally. In fact, like him, each infernal

²⁵² In January 1251 the Guelfi came back to Florence, after the death of Federico II and his *podestà*, Riniero di Montemerlo; In 1266, the Guelfi arrived to Florence, after the death of Manfredi di Svevia in Benevento and the Ghibellini were definitely won.

sinner has had a special moment or event that is crucial for her afterlife and where her mind and soul will be imprisoned, re-enacting the same sinful situations forever. Farinata's spiritual prison is built on civic disputes in Florence. Masciandaro argues that the Evil in Hell is the denial of the present moment and he indicates the present as the unique possibility of blending eternity and time.²⁵³ According to his analysis, salvation is now, is in the '*kairos*', in the present propitious moment. This means that, as Farinata cannot see anything beyond these particular moments and he is not able to perceive the divine bigger picture *hic et nunc*, he has lost any chance of salvation.

If in the conversation present and past collapsed into each other due to Farinata's sinful obsessions, the future is recalled too with a prophecy of Dante's exile, which is one of the most known and studied of the entire *Commedia*. Farinata indicates Dante's exile through the use of the moon as a time marker: ²⁵⁴ this shows that he is able to orient himself in the historical time line. Nevertheless, even though the prophecy has shown a superior knowledge of temporal events compared with living human beings, suddenly Farinata shows an unexpected lack of temporal awareness, when enquiring about the current conditions of his persecuted family. So, how do infernal shade perceive time and history? The prophecy of Farinata is not the first which the Pilgrim has received: Virgil has already expressed the prophecy

²⁵³ Escludendo dalla vita umana e, in particolare, dalla lotta politica, ogni preoccupazione d'ordine metafisico, si ha necessariamente una riduzione nell'attività morale, che è essenzialmente presenzialità all'Altro. E' quest'aspetto della tragica passion politica di Farinata che Dante ha voluto mettere in special rilievo, rappresentandolo come figura austera e sdegnosa e completamente indifferente al dramma di Cavalcante e al dramma cristiano della salvezza in cui è *ora*, in questo autentico presente che è dimensione propria dell'aldilà, impegnato il pellegrino Dante. ("There is a reduction of the moral activity – which essentially means being present to the Other- when preoccupations about metaphysics are excluded from the human life and from the political conflict. Dante underlines especially this aspect of Farinata's tragic passion for politics and he represents him as a haughty and austere figure. Moreover, Farinata is represented emotionless to the tragedy of Cavalcante and to the Christian tragedy of salvation in which Dante-pilgrim finds himself *now*, in this authentic present which is the proper dimension of the afterlife.") Franco Masciandaro, *La problematica del tempo nella 'Divina Commedia'*, Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1976, 18.

²⁵⁴ Even though the moon is used as a time marker, it is still a symbol of chaos and indistinction and this justifies the obscure and inverse vision of time shown by Farinata.

of “Veltro” in Canto I, Caronte has already predicted to the Pilgrim what kind of journey Dante character will face in Canto III, Francesca in Canto V could foretell the destiny of her killer and finally Ciaccio predicted the main events about the conflict between Guelfi and Ghibellini. So the Pilgrim (and the reader with him) has already realized that the future is not as obscure to the shades and to the demons as it is for human beings. Building up on Masciandaro’s thesis, I argue that the subverted Boethian eternity grants the shades a foresight that is limited as that eternity in Hell is limited by the Last Judgement. The capacity of seeing time for shades in the *Inferno* is specular to human beings in time: God enlightens what is happening far from them in the time line, past or future, and what is close to them is paradoxically obscure, as it is indicated by the ignorance of Cavalcanti about his son’s life.²⁵⁵ Thus, the inability of being fully aware of the present moment is not the only a lack in the infernal sinners’ perceptions. It is a complex parody of the entire infernal system of temporal perceptions, time marking, temporal passages and transformations. These paradoxical misperceptions present a temporal dimension, which lacks of all the positive effects proper of the unfolding of time. In fact, the infernal temporality does not lead to any developments, neither understanding, neither purification, nor even any enriching encounters with others, human or divine. That kind of meaningless and empty temporality will be even worse after the Last Judgement as it is explained by Farinata: ‘tutta morta / fia nostra conoscenza da quel punto/ che del futuro fia chiusa la porta.’ In this case ‘the door’ can be seen both as a material and spiritual. The material one will be closed on Farinata’s tomb and it will prevent him from proudly standing in the same attitude which Dante describes. The spiritual one will be second death represented by the Last Judgement: the end of time and the reunion between body and soul. These events will fulfil and complete the infernal lack of awareness and the shades will lose any abilities of comprehension of past, present and future. Any parts of time will not be embraced or possessed by the infernal shades. Any knowledge of time will be reduced and disappear, as much as the knowledge of time in Boethius’ eternity is total and all- comprehensive.

²⁵⁵ *Inf.* X,58-60 : “ (..)Se per questo cieco/ carcere vai per altezza d’ingegno,/ mio figlio ov’è? E perché non è teco?”

To conclude, in the *Inferno* Dante displays a multi-layered parody of earthly temporality. As well as temporality was comprehended in the dense totality of the *Paradiso* and totally possessed, earthly time is part of the infernal dimension too, but in an opposite way. It is a collapsed and chaotic temporal span of eternity where, for instance, obsessed and confused sinners are able to deliver prophecies, but unaware of their *hic et nunc*. And that misperception is the first stage of a complete and eternal ignorance in which they are going to fall at the end of time. So, if the *Inferno* Dante subverts and distorts the positive and normal earthly time, how does he exactly represent eternity? What kind of eternity is shared by the Empyrean blessed and by evil sinners and how? In the next sections I will focus on the infernal circular motions as they are important parodies and antithetical figures of the representations of eternal plenitude and concentration in the *Paradiso*.

Circularity

I have demonstrated in the previous chapter how circular motions convey density, concentration and plenitude in the proper eternity of the *Paradiso*, mostly according to a Platonic pattern. On one side, they allow and measure life on Earth, on the other side they convey the centripetal eternal unity of cosmos. I will show that circularity frames the *Inferno*, too. However, it does it according to a grotesque parody of the dance of the stars and the blessed. Thus, in the *Inferno* there are not only temporal misperceptions and inverted life cycle processes, but even eternity has been re-created according to wrong and chaotic principles.²⁵⁶ I would like to show that the same elements, which in the *Paradiso* express and represent eternal and plenitude principles, are in the *Inferno* too, but conveying a parody of the heavenly concentration and comprehension. First of all, I would like to focus on infernal circular motions. The sinners and other infernal characters dance the same 'dance of stars', which can only be grotesque in the realm of darkness. For instance, Virgilio and the Pilgrim progress according to a circular path down to the bottom of Hell,

²⁵⁶ Dennis Costa argues that the misunderstanding of sinners is mostly expressed by their movements which are somehow stuck in time, where actually time does not exist anymore. (Dennis Costa, *The Speed of Fright: Temporal Dramas in Dante's Inferno* *Kronoscope*, Vol.2, 2002, pp. 185-198).

which is structured in circles itself. Second, sinners themselves often move circularly too. They not seldom show a kind of disconnection between their thoughts and their bodily movements: they are spiritually occupied by their sins and obsessions and, at the same time, they move, constantly repeating certain actions, simply occupying space and spans of time. These movements give a specific rhythm to the *Inferno*: they create sequences, durations, patterns and interruptions. Those movements do not lead to any evolution or do not hold any purpose, as underlined by Masciandaro.²⁵⁷ Rather, they express separation and disconnection, inverting what they convey in the *Paradiso*, that means unity and concentration. The circularity enacted by the shades is an absurd disconnection from first the shades' selves, as the sinners enact gestures or motions which do not match with their intentions, then from a natural desire of having a purpose or a destination, in fact they are motions without any meaning. Thus, as in the *Purgatorio* each action involves an important intention shared by the souls, for instance to be purified or reaching the top of Mount Purgatory, and as in the *Paradiso* figures and movements fulfil the desire of being a cosmological unity, the circular motions in the *Inferno* invert all those properties: they involve disconnection, separation and nonsense. I

²⁵⁷ 'Le due espressioni "aere senza stelle" e "l'aura senza tempo tinta" denotano oltre all'assenza perenne della luce (quella diurna, solare e quella della stelle), l'assenza perenne del movimento celestiale, e dunque l'assenza dell'influsso che tale movimento esercita sulle cose e sulla vita umana, predisponendole a ricevere la forma dell'essere (informazione). L'eternità infernale è chiusa a ogni divenire e a ogni possibilità di attuazione dell'essere in esso sempre presente. E se vi è movimento, questo è un movimento che non implica un divenire, una successione in vista di un fine: è un movimento circolare ed uniforme, sempre uguale a se stesso. L'eternità infernale può essere infatti definita come pura temporalità, come tempo diluito, che, a differenza del tempo che ha un'autentica durata "ordinata" a un fine e a una fine (come la durata sempre virtualmente presente nella vita terrena, e come quella del Purgatorio), è perpetuo, appartiene all'*aevum*, dimensione 'intermedia' tra il tempo e l'eternità. Esso ha un inizio, ma non ha una fine, come è scritto sulla porta dell'*Inferno* (III,7-8).' As we can see, Masciandaro underlines in infernal movements the parody of an earthly or purgatorial temporality, however I demonstrate the parody is double and it takes into account the heavenly eternity as well. Franco Masciandaro, *La problematica del tempo nella Divina Commedia*, Ravenna: Editore Longo, 1976, p.73.

will show how the infernal motions tend to follow two main models: the first model presents different forms of circularity and the second is based on speed and rhythm and duration, as I will explain later in more detail.

In the seventh and eighth circles, motions and movements are important parts of the punishment themselves. In the second *girone* of the seventh circle opposite rhythms coexist: on one side, in the poisoned wood suicide victims are fixed into plants and lacerated by the ugly Harpies and by the prodigals. On the other side, the prodigal sinners are running without any pauses in an eternal chase: 'ed ecco due da la sinistra costa,/ nudi e graffiati, fuggendo sì forte' ("And look there, on the left-hand side, there came,/at speed, two fleeing, naked, scratched t bits' *Inf.* XIII, 115-116); 'Quel dinanzi: "Or accorri, accorri morte!"' (One was ahead: 'Quick, quick! Come death! Come now!' *Inf.* XIII, 118). Then, in the seventh circle, *girone*, Dante presents three different rhythms to discern three sins that are punished there: 'Supin giacea in terra alcuna gente, alcuna si sedea tutta raccolta, e altra andava continuamente.' (Some of these folk lay supine on the ground,/and some sat huddling, tight about themselves/ other again strode endlessly around. *Inf.* XIV, 22-24). Finally, the sodomites are the sinners punished by an eternal race under the fired evil rain of the third *girone*. The Pilgrim meets four eminent sodomites: first of all Brunetto Latini in Canto XV, then in Canto XVI, Guido Guerra, Tegghiaio Aldobrandi and Jacopo Rusticucci. For these sinners pausing is impossible: in fact, when the Pilgrim invites his master Brunetto to sit with them, Brunetto is not able to stop, as he explains: "qual di questa greggia/ s'arresta punto, giace poi cent'anni/ sanz'arrostarsi quando 'l foco il feggia." (if any in this herd/ should ever pause, he lies a hundred of years⁷ powerless to fan these searing fires away *Inf.* XV, 37-39).²⁵⁸ Thus, Brunetto invites Dante to walk with him: "Però va oltre: 'I ti verrò a' panni; poi raggiugnerò la mia masnada" (And so move on. I'll follow at your coat tails 7 then catch up later with that entourage, which as it goes bewails eternal loss *Inf.* XV, 40-41). Nevertheless, as Dante esteems his master Brunetto, he does not force him to

²⁵⁸ Richard Kay, *Dante 's Swift and Strong: Essays in 'Inferno' XV*. Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1978, Joseph Pequigney, "Sodomy in Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*" *Representations* Vol. 36, 1991, pp. 22-42, André Pézard, *Dante sous la pluie de feu*, Paris: Vrin, 1950, Cesare Segre, 'Il canto XV dell'Inferno', in *Lettura Dantis neapolitana: Inferno*, 1986, pp. 259-68.

pursue a humiliating motion, and the author concludes the Canto with an image of victory where the running of Brunetto looks like the running of a winner:

Poi si rivolse , e parve di coloro
che corrono a Verona il drappo verde
per la campagna ; e parve di costoro
quelli che vince , non colui che perde.

(Around he swung. To me he seemed like one/ who, in the fields around Verona,
runs/ for that fine prize, a length of green festoon./ He seemed to be the one that
wins, not loses. *Inf.* XV 121-124).

Then, in Canto XVI, the next three sodomites must move in a quite inhuman way: in fact, they make a wheel of themselves, in order to be able to speak with Dante while he is standing. They walk in circle and they consequentially turn their heads in a circle, in order to keep looking at their interlocutor: “fenno una rota di sè tutti e tre” (and, turning, formed among themselves a wheel. *Inf.* XVI,21). Here, at this circular motion is added the circular motion of their heads, reinforcing the unnatural and meaningless circularity of other infernal motions: “così rotando, ciascuno il visaggio/ drizzava a me, sì che ‘n contraro il collo/ faceva ai piè continuo viaggio.” (As they wheeled around, each fixed/ their glances hard on me. And so their necks/ turned counter always the track they trod. *Inf.* XVI, 25-27). The double circularity of both the head and the whole body, here, creates a similar image to the one of the foretellers bodies in Canto XX:

Mirabilmente apparve esser travolto
Ciascun tra ‘l mento e ‘l principio del casso,
Chè da le reni era tornado ‘l volto,
E in dietro venir li convenia,
Perchè ‘l veder dinanzi era lor tolto.

(Then, as my gaze sank lower down these forms,/each was revealed (the wonder
of it all!) / twisted around between the chin and thorax./ The face of each looked

down towards its coccyx./ And each, deprived of vision to the front,/ came, as it must, reversed along its way. *Inf.* XX, 11-15)

In both cases, circularity means distortion and disconnection: the sodomites had an inverted relation with sexuality and biological reproduction while the foretellers had it in relation to their way of perceiving temporality.

I think that these movements point to the idea of circularity as a parody of both natural and astronomical cycles. In fact, they mimic the circular processes which regulate life: for instance, seasons, planetary transits, animals and plants generation.²⁵⁹ All those are, here, transformed in punishments. They are failed attempts at escaping the destructive effects of time, instead of positive progressions towards a physical and spiritual development.²⁶⁰ The culmination of all these purposeless and disconnected circular motions is represented in the *Inferno* by the parody of the Sun, as it is represented in one of the most important cantos of the *Paradiso*: this is Geryon, in *Inferno* XVII.²⁶¹ In fact, that 'fiera che 'l mondo appuzza'

²⁵⁹ In Canto XXV of *Inferno* Dante tells the metamorphosis of the thieves and in Canto XXV of the *Purgatorio* Statius explains the embodiment on Earth and the creation of shades in the afterlife. It is interesting that on the 25th March it is celebrated the Annunciation and the conception of Jesus and, after 9 months, there is the birth of Jesus, on the 25th December.

²⁶⁰ An additional connection between metamorphosis and failed attempts to reach eternity without God's help can be seen in *Inf.* XX 40-45 about the diviner Tiresia: "Vedi Tiresia, che mutò sembante/ quando di maschio femmina divenne,/ cangiandosi le membra tutte quante;/ e prima, poi, ribatter li convenne/ li due serpenti avvolti, con la verga,/ che riavesse le maschili penne."

²⁶¹ Vincent Foster Hooper provides important insights about historical birth and development of the figure of Geryon as a creature of fraud (Vincent Foster Hooper, 'Geryon and the Knotted Cord', *Modern Languages Notes*, Vol. 15, Nov. 1936, pp. 445-449), as well as John Block Friedman who connects the apocalyptic Franciscan spiritual eschatology tradition to the Aeneid to define it (John Block Friedman, 'Antichrist and the Iconography of Dante's Geryon', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 35, 1972, pp.108-192). However, scholarship on that specific figure mainly focuses on interrelations between Geryon and Phaeton myth (Philip Damon, 'Geryon, Cacciaguida and the Y of Pythagora' *Dante Studies*, Vol. 85, 1987, pp. 15-32, and by Kevin Brownlee,

mimics what the 'spiriti sapienti' do in the heaven of Sun. Indeed, Geryon's spiral flight is a parody of the blessed 'dance of stars' as well as the fraud, which Geryon represents, could be the negative side, or the specular image of 'sapienti's superior knowledge, as demonstrated by the following lines.²⁶²

Leva dunque, lettore, a l'alte rote
meco la vista [...]

(Lift up your eyes, then, reader, and, along with/ me, look at those wheels, [...] *Pd.* X, 7-8)

discende lasso onde si muove isnello,
per cento rote, [...]

(Then sinks down wearily to where it left so fast./ A hundred turns [...] *Inf.* XVII, 130-131).

In the first passage the 'rote' are circling upwards and the reader, as the Pilgrim himself, is invited to elevate towards them in order to be comprehended by the cosmological unity. Conversely, in the *Inferno*, Geryon's 'rote' describe a descending movement. These circular symmetrical motions have symmetrical purposes: Sun's circling is populated by wise men knowledge, while Geryon's descending circles point to the entrance into the realm of fraud, that means the evil will of denying truth and knowledge.

'Phaeton's Fall and Dante's Ascent' *Dante's Studies*, Vol.102, 1984, pp. 135-144).

Moreover, Glauco Cambon analyses the rhythm of the sounds and languages of Geryon's flight in order to underline how Dante manages to convey the typical heaviness and pressure of low Hell even in case of flight (Glauco Cambon 'Examples of Movement in the *Divine Comedy*: an Experiment in Reading' *Italica* vol. 40, 1963, pp. 108-31).

²⁶² James C. Nohrneberg claims the same type of connection: "That is to say, it is a short step, topologically speaking from Arachne's web as malebolge to Ariadne's crown as the heaven of the sun (*Par.* XIII, 14-15): from a subterreanean maze of fraud to a cosmic dance of intellect." James C. Nohrneberg, 'The Descent of Geryon: The Moral System of *Inferno* XVI-XXXI', *Dante Studies*, No. 114, 1996, pp. 129-187.

In the next section, I will present and explore one of the most important infernal figures of time, which can be seen as a model of all the circular motions in the *Inferno*: the Wheel of Fortune. This figure is presented by Virgilio, in Canto VII, where avaricious and prodigals are punished by rolling enormous weights along a circular path. I will show that the parody of *Paradiso* X is pursued in *Inferno* VII too, as the circularity which should involve knowledge and understanding, in the *Inferno* leads instead to the absurd and never fulfilled desire of earthly wealth. In fact, if in the *Paradiso* the circularity of the heaven of Sun is the triumph of knowledge, wisdom followed by the absolute celebration of poverty, throughout *Inferno* VII and XVII that circularity is parodied by the 'dance' of the avaricious and Geryon.

Fortune's Wheel

According to a familiar pattern, Canto VII starts with the meeting between the Pilgrim and a monster at the entrance of the circle, in this case Pluto.²⁶³ It pronounces an obscure speech like the Giant Nimrod will do in Canto XXXI: its words are not comprehensible and foreshadow the topic of ignorance and blindness that will be treated later.²⁶⁴ In fact, the author faces a main topic at this point which is the motion of sinners as an expression of the ignorance of men. First, the author describes the circular movements of the avaricious sinners who roll stones without any reasons. Then, Virgilio explains to the Pilgrim who those shades exactly are:

²⁶³ Dennis Looney, "Inferno VII" in *Lectura Dantis Virginiana*, vol.6, 1990, pp.82-92.

²⁶⁴ Robert Hollander shows these infernal words as a parodic inversion of the clear speech of Saint Paul (I Cor. 14:18-19): "I argued that these and Nimrod's similarly non-sensical five words (*Inf.* XXXI,67) are parodic inversions of the five words of clear speech called for by St Paul, apparently concerned with the over-reliance of the faithful on their capacity for speaking in tongues." The similarity between the non-sensical words of Pluto and the speech of Nimrod reinforces the idea that Nimrod and the Giants are the wrong and false empires and negative historical figures, like Pluto, as it is the classical god of wealth, is the false happiness. Hollander Robert, "Two notes on Dante", *Italianist*, Vol.34, 2014, pp.103-117, (p.104). See: Domenico Guerri 'papé Satàn, Papé Satàn aleppe' (*Inferno* VII,1) *Giornale dantesco* Vol.12, 1909, pp.138-42.

Tutti quanti fuor guerci
sì de la mente in la vita primaia,
(...)
la sconoscente vita che i fe' sozzi,
ad ogne conoscenza or li fa bruni.

(‘Without exception, all of these’ he said,/ ‘when first they lived, had such strabismic mind’ *Inf.* VII, 40-42), (‘The mindless lives that made them all so foul/ darken them now against all acts of mind *Inf.* VII, 53-54).

In their description the lack of knowledge is evidently crucial. They were unable to perceive the reality and they had no real knowledge about it. They could not see the true good in the spiritual world and they worked blindly for false values: money, lands, material benefits. Similarly, now they are moving in a circle, without anything to achieve. Here, the circling motion is the motion of people who do not have any knowledge about where they should go and why, so they blindly repeat the same movements and words eternally.

Through the meaningless speech of Pluto and the absurd motions of the avaricious, *Inferno* VII addresses to an additional aspect of the lack of knowledge: the human desire of mutable richness and honours. And at the hart of this canto the author presents an important figure of infernal time: the Wheel of Fortune. The domain of richness and honours, which dwells in the sublunar world controlled by the moon, is commonly associated with Fortune’s wheel’: ‘chè tutto l’oro che è sotto la luna/ e che già fu, di quest’anime stanche/ non potrebbe farne posare una’ (For all the gold that lies beneath the moon - / or all that ever did lie there- would bring/ no respite to these worn-out souls, not one. *Inf.* VII, 64-66). The sublunar sphere is introduced as the homeland of material goods, gold and avidity, elements that are influenced and affected by the swift of the Wheel of Fortune. The Pilgrim does not really see this figure, but it is described by Virgilio. In fact, the Latin poet complains about the deep ignorance of men that often look at Fortune without understanding the essential reasons beyond its movements. As the heavenly spheres are governed by angels, so wordly splendors are governed by Fortune. However, Fortune is not an angel, she is a ‘ministra e duce’. As shown by the nouns which define her, she is from

the classical world and belief. Dante and, before him, Boethius introduced her into a Christian perspective:

Colui lo cui saver tutto trascende,
fece li cieli e diè lor chi conduce
sì, ch'ogne parte ad ogne parte splende,
distribuendo igualmente la luce.
Similmente a li splendor mondani
ordinò general ministra e duce
che permutasse a tempo li ben vani

("He who transcends in wisdom all that is/ wrought every sphere and gave to each a guide,/ so every part shines out to every part/ always in equal distribution of light./ So, too, above the splendours of the world,/ He set a sovereign ordained to move - in permutations at the proper time/ - vain goods from tribe to tribe , from blood to blood/in ways from which no human wisdom hides. *Inf.*VII, 73-79)

The analogy between the angels and Fortune implies a mimicking connection between *Paradiso* and *Inferno*. Looking in more detail at the quoted passage, we can see that if in the *Paradiso* there are heavens ('cieli'), angels ('chi conduce'), light ('luce') and fair sharing ('distribuendo igualmente'), in the *Inferno* there are ('splendor mondani'), ('ministra e duce') , temporal changing ('permutasse a tempo') and ('ben vani'). I would like to focus on the infernal action of 'permutasse a tempo' in contrast with the heavenly actions of 'distribuendo igualmente la luce'. The equal distribution addresses to a universal unity, where each singular identity is part of the abundance of the universe. Conversely the action of 'permutare a tempo' of the figure of the Fortune's Wheel involves disconnection and separation. Apparently, the movement of Fortune's Wheel is as providential and circular as all the other heavenly spheres: there is no discontinuity between an apparent chance and divine order. However, according to Virgilio, human beings cannot understand the providential project that Fortune is implementing, due to their ignorance and blindness. Fortune's obscure domination of history has already been glimpsed in Canto V in the tragedy of Francesca and in Canto VI, in the civic disturbances in

Florence told by Ciaccio.²⁶⁵ Now the author is showing the whole cosmic order where even tragedies have their rightful places and this order is expressed by a circular motion. The movement of the Fortune's Wheel is described in the following way:

Similmente a li splendour mondani
ordinò general ministra e duce
che permutasse a tempo li ben vani
di gente in gente e d'uno in altro sangue,
oltre la difension di senni umani;
per ch'una gente impera e l'altra langue,
seguendo lo giudicio di costei,
che è occulto come in erba l'angue.
Vostro saver non ha contasto a lei:
questa provvede, giudica e persegue
suo regno come il loro li altri dei.
Le sue permutazion non hanno triegue:
necessità la fa esser veloce;
sì spesso vien chi vicenda consegue.

(So, too, above the splendours of the world,/ He set a sovereign minister, ordained to move -/ in permutations at proper time-/ vain goods from tribe to tribe, from blood to blood / in way from which no human wisdom hides./ And this why, where one race rules supreme, another faints and languishes: they all pursue /her judgements, secret as a snake in grass. Your powers of mind cannot contend with her. / She, looking forwards, will pronounce her law,/ advancing, as do other gods, her own domain./ her permutations never come to rest./ It is necessity that makes her quick, / so thick they come by turns to meet their fate. *Inf.* VII, 77-99)

Fortune's Wheel is more than a contact point between eternity and history: it expresses the Divine will within human history. However, this will is sadly misunderstood like Robin Kirkpatrick says:

From the standpoint of popular philosophy it will already be apparent how challenging Dante's conception of fortune is. In a word, he has taken the notion of

²⁶⁵ *Inf.* V 106; *Inf.* VI 62-63.

mutability which apparently emphasises all the ills and uncontrollable accidents that bear upon human life, and presented mutability itself as a principle not of disorder but of design. The philosophical spirit is required to countenance a paradox, seeing intelligence and purpose where the 'creature sciocche' will see only danger and confusion.²⁶⁶

This Dantean conception – which also owes something to St Paul (1Cor.13:12) - displayed by Kirkpatrick, recalls the difficulty of Boethius personaggio to justify his imprisonment in the *De consolazione* (*De consolatione Philosophiae*, I. IV.10). In fact, the disconnection and the distance between the perfection of the divine will compared with the problematic violent injustice of history is at the heart of the Boethian thought. The entire work of *De consolation* can be seen as an attempt of reconciling those dimensions: the eternity and its failed image in history. The fact that Dante borrows the Boethian figure of Fortune indicates that the same problematic contrast is addressed in the *Inferno* as well: in the paradox of the *Inferno*, the will of God, which dominates everywhere with justice as stated by the Hell's gate, cannot be grasped. Thus, Fortune is not evil itself in both Dantean and Boethian cosmos, she only mirrors sinners' ignorance:

Postremus adversum fortunam dolor incanduit conquestusque non aequa meritis praemia pensari. In extreme Musae saevientis, uti quae caelum terras quoque pax regeret, vota posuisti. Sed quoniam plurimus tibi affectum tumultus incubuit diversumque te dolor, ira, maeror distrahunt, uti nunc mentis es, nondum te validiora remedia contingunt.²⁶⁷

("and lastly, thy sorrow raged against fortune, and thou complainedst that deserts were not equally rewarded. In the end of thy bitter verse, thou desiredst that the earth might be governed by that peace which heaven enjoyeth. But because thou art turmoiled with the multitude of affections, grief and anger drawing thee to divers parts, in the plight thou art now, the more forcible remedies be applied unto thee;")

²⁶⁶ Robin Kirkpatrick, *Dante's 'Inferno': Difficulty and Dead Poetry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p.111.

²⁶⁷ *De cons.*I,V.

This passage describes a condition of exile from the Truth and from God, which is shared by the infernal sinners too. It prevents them from perceiving and understanding the right direction and meaning of history and its connection and inclusion into an eternal plan. In fact, Boethius character sees an order in nature, but he is not able to see it even in human events. Lady Philosophy herself addresses to this lack of understanding with the verb “incubuit” (“to apply pressure”). This action recalls the increasing pressure of the lower Hell, which peaks at the centre of Earth on Satan’s body. Then it is added that “dolor, ira, maeror distrahunt”: the Latin verb “distraho” has in this context the meaning of drawing away, however it could be used even to mean “to alienate” or “to distract”. Indeed, the infernal sinners alienated from the true knowledge, move around a point of extreme pressure, which is oppressed by an immense weight, instead of being included into an harmonic cosmological unity. Conversely in *Paradiso X*, the circling of the Sun is not only wanted and structured by the divine will as the one of the Fortune’s wheel, but the Sun’s circular journey is even perceived, appreciated and understood by the Pilgrim and by the blessed. That correct perception allows the blessed to dance and celebrate it with a joy caused by that perfect centripetal unity, as I have already analysed in the previous chapter. As The contrast between the heavenly circling and the infernal one is underlined at the beginning of *Paradiso XI*:

O insensate cura dei mortali,
quanto son difettivi silogismi
quei che ti fanno in basso batter l’ali!
Chi dietro a iura, e chi ad amforismi
sen giva, e chi seguendo sacerdozio
e chi regnar per forza o per sofismi,
e chi rubare e chi civil negozio,
chi nel diletto de a carne involto
s’affaticava, e chi si dava a l’ozio,
quando, da tutte queste cose sciolto,
con Beatrice m’era suso in Cielo
cotanto gloriosamente accolto.

(Those idiotic striving of the human mind!/ How flawed their arguments ad logic are,/ driving our wings to flap in downward flight./ Some follow Law. Some drift (great tomes in hand)/ to Medicine, others train in priestly craft./ Some rule by force, as other do by tricks./ Some choose to steal, some trade in politics/ some toil, engrossed in pleasures of the flesh, and others concentrate their minds on ease,/ while I, released from all that sort of thing,/ was gathered up on high with Beatrice/ in glorious triumph to the heavenly spheres. *Pd. XI, 1-12*).

At the beginning of this passage, the author summarizes the different types of misunderstanding and misperceptions which can affect human beings. They all are meaningless, 'insensate': the rhyme 'silogismi', 'amforismi', 'sofismi' addresses to the typical paradox of the infernal sinners. In the *Inferno* the sinners cannot achieve any knowledge or understanding, because they live in the confusion caused by illusions and mistakes. In the *Inferno* what looks real is false, what should unifies, divides, what looks good is evil. In fact, the real comprehension of heavenly circulation does not lead to the absurd attempt to keep money, power and material stability. I claim that the extreme exaltation of poverty in the biography of Saint Francis in *Paradiso XI*, just after the Canto of the Sun, completes and fulfils the lesson which Dante offers in *Inferno* Canto VII. A truly wise and knowledgeable man does not even question the functioning of the Wheel of Fortune, because it is completely irrelevant for him. The achievement of the material richness administrated by the Wheel of Fortune does not matter to one who is nourished by a rich spiritual life. Avaricious lack of this richness entails wrong preoccupations with the circular motions of Fortune's Wheel. This perspective is essentially Boethian. In fact, Lady Philosophy first demonstrates that the desire of materials good is due to a misunderstanding which can affect human beings and it causes nothing but sadness and unhappiness, then she claims that fame is nothing compared with eternity.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁸ Quid autem tanto fortunae strepitu desideratis? Fugare, credo, indigentiam copia quaeritis. Atqui hoc vobis in contrarium cedit: pluribus quippe amminuculis opus est, ad tuendam pretiosae suppellectilis varietatem verumque illud est permultis eos indigere qui permulta possideant, contraque minimum, qui abundantiam suam naturae necessitate, non ambitus superfluitate metiantur. (*De cons. II p. 150*)

Finally, at the end of *Inferno* VII, we can identify a last reference to another ‘rupture’ in the *Inferno*’s eternity: Virgilio reminds the Pilgrim that they have an important achievement at the end of their journey, encouraging him to be quick and delivering surprisingly the first astronomical indication since they descended into Hell. That means that Virgilio has an inner eye that is able to perceive the movements of stars and spheres outside of Hell and furthermore he is aware that his mission must be solved as fast as possible.²⁶⁹ This virgilian perception indicates another type of rupture in temporal perception in the *Inferno*. In the *Purgatorio* the Pilgrim was affected by the unfolding of time similarly to the other wayfarers: in fact, he engaged with time in order to fulfil his spiritual purification. In the *Paradiso*, the Pilgrim is gradually educated to arrive to contemplate God as the blessed do. However, in the *Inferno* the Pilgrim’s perceptions are different from the other sinners, as well as Virgilio’s are. In fact the Pilgrim and Virgilio never join the sinners in their ‘paradoxical dance’. The path of the Pilgrim down to Satan is circular as many sinners’ motions, but it presents a different quality. Furthermore, Virgilio is able to perceive astronomical motions out of the infernal darkness and to be fully aware of the unfolding of earthly extension of time.

To conclude, we have identified many paradoxical disconnections in the infernal eternity. One is between the eternity declared, in first instance, on Hell’s inscription and the inability of sinners to possess past, present and future, as stated by Farinata. Another kind of ruptures is represented by the different capacities of perceptions of time displayed by the sinners, by Malacoda and by Virgilio. Furthermore, there are ruptures through the landscape, as marks of the misperceived rising of Christ. Then, we addressed the absurd disconnection

‘Vos invero immortalitatem vobis propagare videmini, cum futuri famam temporis cogitatis. Quod si ad eternitatis infinita spatia pertractes, quid habes quod de nominis tui diuturnitate laeteris?’ (*De cons.* II p.164)

²⁶⁹ “or discendiamo omai a maggior pieta/ già ogne stella cade che saliva / quand’io mi mossi, e ‘l troppo star si vieta” (*Inf.* VII, 97-99). In addition, we can see Virgilio’s invitations to be faster in the *Inferno* in: III,15; IV 22; VII,99; X,115; X 112, XIII, 79-80; XV,140; XVII, 140; XX,124-129; XXIX, 10-12, 23-24; XXX 131-132; XXXI, 79; XXXII, 82-84; XXXIII, 68-69; XXXIV 94-96.

between sinners' feeling and thoughts on one side and their actions and motions on the other side. Mostly these are expressed by circular motions, which parody the ones of the Sun and the wise blessed in *Paradiso* X. Circularity in Hell has different qualities: it represents a parody of natural cycles and reproduction. It signifies the blind attempt to achieve material good and condemned efforts to escape time, fragility and mortality. It leads into a Point of extreme pressure and weight: Satan. The model of this type of Sisyphean motion is a crucial infernal figure of time: the Fortune's Wheel, 'ministra e duce' according to a divine will which is impossible to understand.

The Old Man of Crete and Satan: the Evil History of Human Kind

The syncretic myth of The Old Man of Crete is recounted by Virgilio in the third girone of the seventh circle. Virgilio tells this myth just after the meeting with Capaneo.²⁷⁰ That figure of time presents a 'patchwork' nature even more than the Wheel of Fortune. In fact the Old Man of Crete engages with the classical myth of the Golden Age and the biblical dream of Nebuchadnezzar.²⁷¹ As for the myth of an initial

²⁷⁰ During this encounter Capaneo pronounced a long sentence about Mongibello mountain, Zeus and Vulcano (*Inf.* XIV, ll 52-53), which partially prepares a scenario of an increasing pressure in an underground environment. Moreover, the references to the city of Thebes and the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrha. (John A. Scott, 'Capaneus and the Old Man of Crete' *Lectura Dantis: Inferno*, Berkeley: University of California, 1998, (xii, pp. 185-96).

²⁷¹ The main study about this figure has been written by Giuseppe Mazzotta in *Dante: Poet of the Desert*. Mazzotta argues that the Veglio represents a damned human history, which will be redeemed by the figure of another Veglio: Cato in the *Purgatorio* I. This idea dominates the debate about the 'Veglio'. Dennis Costa answers to this thesis that according to Dante the redemption of history can be caused even by the narrative to the history itself, due to the immense power of language. So, the Old Man of Crete can be seen as a figurative narration of a damned human history, (Dennis Costa, 'Desert-Manna; Waiting Upon History and Waiting Upon Meaning in Dante', *MLN*, Vol. 97, *Italian Issue*, Jan. 1982, pp.162-170). Moreover, Ambrogio Camozzi sees the redemption of the Old Man Crete not in Cato, but in Matelda (*Purg.* XXVII), (See: Ambrogio Camozzi, 'Il Veglio di Creta alla luce di Matelda: una lettura comparativa di Inferno XIV e

Golden Age of humanity the main sources available to Dante are the *Eclogues* of Vergil and the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid.²⁷² Dante assumed that these ancient poets dreamt about the Earthly Paradise of the Bible and he makes a clear reference to Ovid in *Purgatorio* XXVIII, 138-147:

Quelli ch'anticamente poetaro
l'età dell'oro ed il suo stato felice,
forse in Parnaso esto loco sognaro.
Qui fu innocente l'umana radice;
qui primavera sempre e ogne frutto;
nettare è questo di che ciascun dice.

("Those who, in times long gone, composed those poems/ that sang the Age of Gold and all its joys /thought, maybe here's Parnassus when they dreamed./ Here, once, the root of men was innocent./ Here there is always spring and every fruit./ And that's the nectar they all speak about. *Purg.* XXVIII, 138-47)

The Ovidian description of the Golden Age and the Vergilian one presents few differences. Ovid is quite detailed and he focused on the amazing natural environment of the Golden Age and the social life of human beings in it, while Vergil addressed to the birth of a child who will bring a new golden race of human beings: this is the so-called "Messianic Eclogue" (*De Monarchia* I. 11-16). Vergil argues that there will be the return of a new Golden Age. Dante suggests, in the *De Monarchia*, along with many other medieval thinkers, that this was a prediction of the first coming of Christ. Moreover, still in the IV Eclogue, Vergil mentions the ancient myth of King Saturn, King of the population of the old Golden Age, while Ovid described the same primordial and happy society as anarchist, without any proper government. It is clear that Vergil's views better meet the political ideas expressed

Purgatorio XXVII', *the Italianist*, 2009, pp.3-49). Whereas, Jean Dean identifies the morphological connections through Hell's geography between the Old Man of Crete and Satan (in the tears and in the infernal rivers that end up in Cocytus Lake where Satan is grounded) in order to design the apocalyptic representation of history displayed by Dante.

²⁷² Vergil, IV *Eclogue*. 1-17 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I.89-150.

by Dante in the *De Monarchia*, and its Christian perspective. The account presented by Virgilio in *Inferno* XIV (94-104) has a lot in common with the “Messianic Eclogue”: the image of the Virgin (Rhea), the birth of a special child (Jove) and the reference to King Saturn and Crete:²⁷³

In mezzo al mar siede un paese guasto,
Diss’elli allor, che s’appella Creta,
Sotto ‘l cui rege fu già ‘l mondo casto.
Una montagna v’è che già fu lieta
d’acqua e di fronde, che si chiamò Ida;

²⁷³ There is a cluster of classical myths surrounding the island of Crete, traditionally thought to be the centre of the Mediterranean: Minos, Pasiphae, the Minotaur, Daedalus. Furthermore, in the *Aeneid*, Trojans are told to “seek out your ancient mother” they at first understand the reference to be Crete; when they settle there, however, a plague attacks them and the vegetation (Book 3.121-142):

Fama volat pulsum regnis cecidisse paternis
Idomeneia ducem, desertaque litora Cretae,
hoste vacare domos sedesque adstare relictas.
Linquimus Ortygiae portus pelagoque volamus,
Bacchatamque iugis Naxon viridemque Donydam,
olearon niveamque Paron sparsasque per aequor
Cycladas, et crebris legimus freta concita terris.
Nauticus exoritur vario certamine clamor;
hortantur socii, ‘Cretam proavosque petamus’.
Prosequitur surgens a puppi ventus euntis
et tandem antiquis Curetum adlabimur oris.
Ergo avidus muros optatae molior Urbis
Pergameamque voco, et laetam cognomine gentem
hortor amare focosarcemque attollere tectis.
Iamque fere sicco subductae litore puppes;
conubiis arviisque novis operata iuventus;
iure domosque dabam: subito cumtabida membris,
corrupto caeli tractu, miserandque venit
arboribusque satisque lues et letifer annus.
Linquebant dulcis animas aut aegra trahebant
corpora; tum sterilis exurere Sirius agros;
arebant herbae et victum seges aegra negabat. (*Aeneid*, 3.121-

142)

or è diserta come cosa vieta.
Rea la scelse già per cuna fida
del suo figliuolo. E per celarlo meglio
quando piangea e vi faceva far le grida.

(‘Mid-sea’ he said ‘there lies a land now waste./ To us, this land is known as Crete,
where once/ when Saturn ruled as king, the world was chaste./ A mountain stands
there, Idaeus its name./ This, once, rejoiced in streams and leafy fronds,/ but now
stands abandoned like forbidden ground./Once Rhea –seeking for a sanctuary - /
chose hee to lay her boy child, Jove. And then/ to hide his wailings, called for dance
and din. Inf. XIV, 94-102)

About this passage Dean argues:

Virgil’s narration, then, offers a specifically pagan viewpoint of the earliest moments of human history. Virgil speaks of Rhea, Jove, and the Curetes rather than of Eve, Cain, and the antediluvian race because he inherited a classical rather than a Judeo Christian understanding of history. (...) Still, the story of Jove’s infancy has a certain historical value, suggesting both the classical golden age and the loss of that golden (...). But as I have tried to emphasize, Virgil has his own voice, his own integrity, in the Old Man passage; he speaks in character rather than as an allegorical or semi allegorical figure.²⁷⁴

So, as James M. Dean states, Dante allows Virgilio to give ultimate explanations to the Pilgrim about key moments of human history: the earthquake in *Inf.* XII (31-45) and the Golden Age in *Inf.* XIV. The limitations of these explanations were easily understood by the medieval intellectuals: the thinkers of the classical world were wise, however their comprehension was only partial. However, building up on Dean’s thesis, I argue that the infernal understanding must always be incomplete or confused, due to the nature of the *Inferno* itself. To be more precise, the story told by Virgilio is not only a pagan point of view, but it follows the pattern of the usual misperceptions of the infernal sinners. It presents truthful elements, however they

²⁷⁴ James M. Dean, *The World grown Old in Later Medieval Literature*, Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1997, p.184.

are misunderstood or put in the wrong order or place. In fact, the existence of a Golden Age is a biblical truth, and, for instance Dante knows that Pliny the Elder gives archeological evidences of a statue in Crete's underground.²⁷⁵ However, in the *Inferno*, these elements convey an apocalyptic and tragic history instead of a history of salvation as it actually is, or at last it could be. I will demonstrate that the Old Man of Crete is a representation of misperceptions and paradoxes, which parodies the representation of history of both the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*.

First of all, in the *Aeneid* Vergil describes Crete in the *Aeneid* as a desert island, abandoned by its inhabitants: the Trojans misunderstand the oracle and they see in Crete's desolation the space and the possibility to build there a new community (*Aeneid*, Book 3.121-142). They look at Crete as the land of their ancestors ('On to Crete and tour forefathers!'), so their journey can be seen as a journey back into their past. The Trojans assume that it is back to a golden past, however it is offered them an apocalyptic land where they find "pestilence", "death", "wasting" and "ruin". Thus, already in the Vergilian poem, Crete is a place of ambiguity between past and future, between the Golden Age and the Apocalypse. It is the land of the beginning of the human history, that means Saturn's realm, and the land of the final end: this overlapping of beginning and end parodies the omnicomprehensive eternity of the *Paradiso*. Secondly, the same ambiguity seems to

²⁷⁵ 'In his highly influential *Natural History* Pliny the Elder reports that a giant of forty-six cubits (sixty-nine feet) was unearthed on Crete when an earthquake caused a fissure in a mountain ("rupto monte"). Some believed that Orion, others that Otus, had been found. Pliny mentions this find in the context of a famous passage on the diminishing stature of humans over time: "But it is almost a matter of observation that with the entire human race the stature on the whole is becoming smaller daily, and that few men are taller than their fathers, as the conflagration that is the crisis towards which the age is now verging is exhausting the fertility of the semen." Augustine cites this claim to scientific observation when, for his own purposes, he speaks of Giants before the Flood. (...) From midrashic commentary came the idea that Adam when he was first created filled all the world but that when he sinned he was reduced in size, though he remained a giant by later standards.' James M. Dean, *The World grown Old in Later Medieval Literature*, Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1997, p.185

affect the physical aspect of the *veglio* himself, according to the *Inferno's* commentary of Giovanni Boccaccio:

Thus he (Dante) says that this statue which he describes was of a man great and old; and he wishes to show by these two adjectives, in the first case, the greatness of time elapsed from the creation of the world to our own time, which is six thousands five hundred years, and in the second case, the weakness and approaching end of this time, since old men have lost much of their vigor on account of their blood, which in them is thin and cool.²⁷⁶

However, Boccaccio does not consider the adjective *dritto* which is used by Dante to describe this statue too (“Dentro dal monte sta dritto un gran veglio: *Inf.* XIV, 103). ‘Erect’ is a key adjective that connects this figure to towers, cities and Giants and to a whole history of a sinful civilization. In fact, the relation between the colossal statue and the major cities of the western world is well established: the Old Man of Crete looks to Rome and he has behind him Egypt. Thirdly, the description of the materials which the statue is made of, starts from the golden head to the “l destro piede è terra cotta’ (*Inf.* XIV, 110). Then, the Old Man of Crete displays distinct individual ages in a chronological sequence with a progression from upward to downward which inverts the path of the Pilgrim up to the Mount Purgatory and the progressive re conquest of the primordial human condition of the Golden Age. The *Ottimo Commento* explains that whereas pagan poets find four ages at the beginning of the world, Christians understand six: Creation to Flood, Flood to Abraham, Abraham to Saul, Saul to the Babylonian captivity, the Captivity to Christ, and Christ to the end of the world.²⁷⁷ But then the author argues that only five ages are represented in the Old Man of Crete: Creation to Flood, Flood to Isaac, Isaac to Saul, Saul to the Incarnation and Christ to the end of the world. A history of redemption and salvation appears here inverted as an apocalyptic one, which ruins to the most miserable end.

²⁷⁶ Giovanni Boccaccio, *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia*, a cura di G. Padoan, Milano: Mondadori, 1994, p.658.

²⁷⁷ Dante agrees with that view in *Conv.* II.14.13.

The source of those statue's materials is biblical, that is the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2.31-35); in fact the king dreamt a statue made exactly with gold, silver, brass and with the feet part of iron, part of clay:

Thou, o king, sawest and behold there was as it were a great statue: this statue, which was great and high, tall of stature, stood before thee, and the look thereof was terrible. The head of this statue was of fine gold, but the breast and the arms of silver, and the belly and thighs of brass: and the legs of iron, the feet part on iron and part of clay. Thus thou sawest, till a stone was cut out of a mountain without hands: and it struck the statue upon the feet thereof (...) and broke them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of a summer's threshing floor, and they were carried away by the wind: and there was no place found for them but the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

The end of the biblical statue recalls the Dantean character of Satan who is a 'great mountain' as well, but in the lake Cocytus, in the middle of Earth, and who once has been hit by God. Moreover, they both, the Old Man of Crete and Satan, continuously drop tears, and they affect the geography and the existence of Hell: Satan created the Hell itself with his falling and he keeps Cocytus frozen through his wings motions and the Old Man of Crete causes the infernal rivers.²⁷⁸ I claim that these connections

²⁷⁸ About geographical and physical connections, Dean underlines:

'When the "tears" (of the Old Man of Crete) find their way to hell, they assume a different identity as the infernal rivers. On Crete and in Virgil's story the tears express nostalgia from the golden past of a now ruined body: the image, not the reality, of a *gran*, yet pathetic, old man fixed on Rome, as water courses from the body like blood from a wounded human. In Hell the tears has a different meaning. (...)The tears metamorphose once when they move to underground; they transmogrify again when they change from water to ice. The nature of weeping and tears changes from the upper to the lower world, where they continue to alter through the four waterways: Acheron, or joylessness, by which the souls of the damned pass over into Hell; Styx, or sadness, which rings the city of Dis in the circle of anger; Phlegethon, or burning, which quenches the fire flakes hat descend upon the proud and violent; and Cocytus, or sorrow which hems Satan round and provides something like a floor to the vast funnel of Hell.' (James

convey the figure of history of the Old man of Crete differently from the other infernal figure of time, the Fortune's Wheel. In fact, the Fortune's Wheel was not evil itself, but it was misunderstood due to sinners' ignorance. However, the Old Man of Crete, which is so similar to Satan itself, represents and symbolizes a whole history of sins; it is a map of the progressive evil of humanity and its fall.²⁷⁹ The souls in the *Purgatorio* recover only by progressing up from the clay foot to the golden head of a transformed *Veglio*. However, in the *Inferno* nobody walks up this statue/mountain: only blood falls down from it, affecting the landscape of Hell. The sinful lives of the infernal sinners cannot be recovered anymore.

In addition to this, the Old Man of Crete displays another way of subverting and mimicking the eternity presented in the *Paradiso*. That parody is conveyed by the cracks in the statue's body, an original feature invented by Dante which did not exist in the biblical source:

“Ciascuna parte, fuor che l'oro, è rotta
d'una fessura che lagrime goccia
le quali, accolte, foran quella grotto.
Lor corso in questa valle si diroccia;
fanno Acheronte, Stige e Flegetonta;
poi sen van giù per questa stretta doccia,
infin là dove più non si dismonta,
fanno Cocito;”

(And every part that is not gold is cracked./ Tears through this single fissure drizzle down,/ then, mingling, penetrate the cavern wall./ Their rocky cascades in this deep hallow./ They form Acheron, Styx, and Phlegethon./ These then disgorge themselves through this tight race/ until, 8 since there is no way further on)/ they all collect as Cocytus. *Inf.* XIV,112-18).

M. Dean, *The World grown Old in Later Medieval Literature*, Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1997, pp192-193).

²⁷⁹ Antonina Harbus has already addressed an ethical interpretation of the biblical statue in: Antonia Harbus, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams in the Old English Daniel', *English Studies*, Vol.75, 1994, pp. 489-508.

We can then notice a clear similarity between the cracks of the *Veglio* and the ones in the landscape caused by Hell's earthquake:

Qual è quella ruina che nel fianco
di qua da Trento l'Adice percosse,
o per terremoto o per sostegno manco,
che da cima del monte , onde si mosse,
al piano è sì la roccia discoscisa
ch'alcuna via darebbe a chi sù fosse:
cotal di quell burrito era la scesa;
e'n su la punta de la rotta lacca
l'infamia di Creti era distesa

(Compare: an avalanche in Adige/southwards of Trent, once struck the mountain flank,/ triggered perhaps by landslide or earthquake;/ and boulders from the summit shifted down/ in steps and stages to the valley floor,/ to offer those up there a downward route./ Likewise the path we trod down this ravine./ And on the angle where the incline broke,/ there lay stretched out the infamy of Crete, *Inf.* XII, 4-12)

This similarity is even reinforced by the coming into view of the Minotaur at the end of canto XII, in the Malebolge, which, in fact, is called 'the infamy of Crete'. As in the *Inferno* earthquake's landslides unveil the Minotaur, according to Pliny the Elder, an earthquake occurred in Crete and it unveiled an enormous statue: the supposed to be Old Man of Crete. In the Heaven the coming of Christ is the central point around which history and cosmos circle and expand, always contemplating and tending to that centre. This centrality is mimicked by the position of Crete: 'In mezzo al mare siede un paese guasto' (*Inf.* XIV, 94),²⁸⁰ and the Old Man of Crete itself actually indicates an expansion and a progression from a golden point, which is an isolated moment of happiness instead of an eternal concentrate wholeness. The expansion from that age means detachment from the centre, which cannot even be a centre

²⁸⁰ Ambrogio Camozzi analyses the importance of that centrality in the geography of the northern hemisphere according to the medieval believes in Ambrogio Camozzi, 'Il Veglio di Creta alla luce di Matelda: una lettura comparativa di Inferno XIV e Purgatorio XXVII', *the Italianist*, 2009, pp.3-49.

anymore, but a lost starting point of an apocalyptic path of sin. The cracks witness the passage of Christ through that kind of experience of time and history: they are only momentaneous passages instead of an omni-comprehensive presence as Christ eternally is in a proper heavenly eternity.

Furthermore, this *figura historiae* points to the static and arrogant sinners of the *Inferno*: its attitude is the same as that of Farinata and Capaneo and it is a sort of Earthly Giant, specular to the infernal ones. They all sin due to excessive pride as the last static sinner: Satan. Like Farinata's and the Giants', Satan's breast is emphasized too: "da mezzo 'l petto uscia fuor de la ghiaccia" (*Inf.* XXXIV, v.29). He is wedged in the middle of earth, he is unable to move or to speak and he does not seem conscious of himself: he looks like a "maciulla." The actions that he automatically does are crying, moving his wings and chewing Jude, Brutus and Cassius:

Lo 'mperador del doloroso regno
da mezzo 'l petto uscia fuor de la ghiaccia;
e più con un gigante io mi convegno
che i giganti non fan con le sue braccia:
vedi oggi mai quant'esser dee quel tutto
ch'a così fatta parte si confaccia.
S'el fu sì bel com'elli è ora brutto,
e contra 'l suo fattore alzò le ciglia,
ben dee da lui procedure ogni lutto.
(...)
Con sei occhi piangea, e per tre menti
gocciava 'l pianto e sanguinosa bava.
Da ogni bocca dirompea coi denti
un peccatore, a guisa di maciulla,
sì che tre ne faceva così dolenti.

(The emperor of all these realms of gloom/ stuck from the ice at the mid-point on his breast./ And I am more a giant (to compare)/than any giant measured to his arm./ So now you see how huge the whole must be,/ when viewed in fit proportion to that limb./ If, once, he was as lovely as now vile, / when first he raised his brow against his maker,/ then truly grief must all proceed from him /[...] He wept from all six eyes. And down each chin,/ both tears and bloody slobber slowly ran./ In every mouth he

mangled with his teeth/ (as flax combs do) a single sinning soul,/ but brought this agony to three at once. *Inf. XXXIV*, 28-36; 53-57)

In the next session I will investigate the misperceptions of the sinners who follow the Old Man of Crete as a model of motion. Like the statue, they do not move and they are blocked: this attitude conveys an erroneous duration, which will never fulfil sinners' desire of being eternal. I will show that they are mostly sinners full of pride.

Towers, cities, bodies

At the beginning of the *Inferno*, there is an alternation of different velocities and rhythm in sinners' attitudes, then in the lower *Inferno* pressure and weight increase. From the Limbo to the city of Dis, we can identify an alternation of rhythms in sinners' attitudes: velocities of their movements convey different length of durations. This alternation of rhythms establishes an increasing disconnection from harmony, love and comprehension,²⁸¹ which leads to a heavier pressure and

²⁸¹ In Limbo, the souls walk and speak slowly, so the shades here spend their eternity in a completely different way: "volsersi a me con salutevol cenno,/ e 'l mio maestro sorrise di tanto;/così andammo infino alla lumera" (*Inf. IV* 98-99, 103). In Canto V the lustfuls are moved by a terrible storm everywhere, again without any pause: "La bufera infernal, che mai non resta, mena li spirit con la sua rapina;/voltando e percotendo li molesta" (*Inf. V*, 31-33). All those have different velocities, however are still motions. Conversely, in Canto VI, the gluttons are completely static and are lying prone on the ground: "Elle giacean per terra tutte quante" (*Inf. VI*, 37). This is the first time in *Inferno* that the shades are unable to move and significantly it is the first time as well that Dante specifies that they are shades without bodies: "Noi passavam su per l'ombre che adona/ la greve pioggia, e ponavam le piante/ sopra lor vanità che par persona." (*Inf. VI*, 34-36). Ciaccio can sit down for a while in order to enter into a dialogue with the pilgrim, however suddenly he quickly reverses to his static condition of stagnation following that

immobility in the lower Hell and finally to Satan immobilized in the mid-cosmos. Thus, it is logical to recognize in this pattern a parody of the Heavens circling at different velocities around the cosmological Point in the *Paradiso*. I have already analysed in previous sections how part of infernal sinners mimic the Platonic circling motions of the heavenly blessed, enacting a failed attempt to be integrated into the divine cosmos. Thus, those motions cannot avoid being absurd, as they simply occupy the emptiness of the infernal perpetuity, conveying anything else but the motions themselves. The figure of time of the Fortune's wheel follows this pattern of sisiphean absurdity, and its circling cannot be fully comprehended, or oftentimes even accepted by men: in fact, human beings are affected from it, but they are not fulfilled or empowered by it, as, for instance, they are by the solar circulation or by any other heavenly motions. Thus, the sinners, for instance avaricious or sodomites, who occupy infernal time moving similarly to the Fortune's Wheel, express in this way their misperceptions of life-cycles and changes.

In addition to this, there is another part of sinners who imitate the other figure of infernal time, the Old Man of Crete. The *Veglio*'s attitude is mimicked first of all by Satan, as I have underlined in the previous section. Moreover, it is recalled by other sinners who proudly display the same immobility: they deny changes, in order to avoid to recognize their limits and their vulnerability. First of all, I will analyse the main of those sinners and how they imitate the *Veglio*. Then I will identify a relation between their static bodies and the images of cities as a misled history, which does lose connection with the divine project it is part of. I argue that the similarity between the statue and certain kind of sinners describes that human history is conveyed by earthly cities of sins, which, instead of recognizing their role as part of a divine project, expect to be eternal and glorious like the heavenly city. Thus, the historical development of cities and empires puts itself in competition with God, rather than being part of His plan. This absurd competition will lead to an apocalyptic end, as indicated by the *Veglio* and his bleeding.

dialogue: "guardommi un poco e poi chino la testa/ cadde con essa al par de li altri ciechi." (*Inf.* VI, 92-93).

First of all, what are the connections between cities, sinners and the Old Man of Crete in the *Inferno*?²⁸² I think that the first reference can be found approaching the infernal city of Dis, through the images of towers. In fact, 'la città dolente' is announced twice through those images: "venimmo al piè di una torre al da sezzo" ("we reached, in fine, the bottom of a tower *Inf.* VII, 130) and "Io dico, seguitando, ch'assai prima/ noi fossimo al piè de l'alta torre," ("And I say (continuing) that, long before/ we reached the bottom of that lofty tower *Inf.* VIII, 1-2). In those indications the author specifies twice that the characters are closed to the 'piè', to the foot of the tower, connecting the images with the corrupted feet of *Veglio's* statue. In Canto XXXI, there are other towers: in this case they are taller, more dangerous, evil and alive: they are 'li orribili giganti': "torreggiavan di mezza la persona/ li orribili giganti" ("stood,, towering, here to half their bodies height/the dreadful giants *Inf.* XXXI, 43-44). Their being towers is conveyed by the verb 'torreggiavano' and by the double similes: " però che, come su la cerchia tonda/ Montereccion di torri si corona,/così la proda che 'l pozzo circonda/ torreggiavan" (For, as above its circling curtain wall,/Montereccione boasts a crown of towers,/ so too above the bank of that rings the well *Inf.* XXXI, 40-42) and " Qual pare a riguardar la Carisenda/ sotto 'l chinaro, quando un nuvole vada/ sovr'essa s', ched ella incontro penda:/ tal parve Anteo a me" (Just as the Garisenda tower, when viewed / beneath its leaning side, appears to fall/if any floating cloud should pass behind *Inf.* XXXI; 136-139).²⁸³

²⁸² James M. Dean has already analysed the connection between sins, cities, giants and towers is evident in the biblical Judeo-Christian tradition. (James M. Dean, *The World grown Old in Later Medieval Literature*, Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1997, p.3).

²⁸³ According to Peter Dronke, the image of towers in Giants' figures is reinforced by the misperception of the Pilgrim: 'Here in *Inferno* it is Dante's illusion of a dark city ringed with towers that is gradually dispelled. The towers – like the gold trees in Purgatory and the gold flowers in Paradise – are alive. Yet there the seemingly inanimate that reveals itself alive is not awe-inspiring but frightening. (...) Yet even then the force of his first, delusory image lingers with him (the Pilgrim): he still perceives the giants as if they were towers, and the towers that circle Montereccione, the citadel near Siena, come to his mind.' (Peter Dronke, *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp.35-36).

Furthermore, it is not only Giants' physical aspect which defines them towers, but their biblical stories as well, as the Giant Nimrod built the tower of Babel. To be more precise the giants are six: Nimrod, Ephialtes, Antaeus, Briareus, Typhon and Tityos, however the Pilgrim sees only the first three who refer to distinct episodes of gigantomachy. Nimrod's attempt to scale heaven with the tower of Babel, the attack of the Giants against Mount Olympus in Macedonia, and the fight between Hercules and Antaeus in North Africa.²⁸⁴ So, each Giant is linked to one empire of pride and arrogance: Babylon, the Macedonian Greece of Alexander the Great, and Carthage. So, they were the 'wrong directions' of history, considering that the providential plan wanted Rome to be the most powerful empire.²⁸⁵ I would like to indicate another sinner who is not described as a proper tower, however his attitude and his position suggest a similar impression: Farinata: "ed el s'ergera col petto e con la fronte/ come se avesse l'inferno a gran dispetto" ("while he, brow raised, was thrusting out his chest,/ as though he held all Hell in high disdain Inf. X, 35-36). So, I claim that the towering aspect of certain sinners creates a trajectory of sinful empires and Florence itself as the most evil city. They are the wrong directions of history, the lost parts of temporality which did not recognize themselves as a part of the eternity, but a another possibility out of it and better than it. This rupture caused the falling: falling of statues, towers, cities, empires, falling of Satan itself.

Why do cities and empires fail to play their right role in history? Why do they fall into the sin of pride? I think that Dante shows us that the problem is again the misperception of time. I will demonstrate that the character of Medusa, who in fact appears on the walls of Dis, offers an important clue about sinful cities and perception of time.²⁸⁶ The encounter with this character is underpinned by a special

²⁸⁴ Robert M. Durling, *Inferno*, p. 577.

²⁸⁵ Orosius indicates a completely different view on these empires: he argues that those four kingdoms were born in the four different cardinal points and preeminent in different ages (Orosius, Paulus, *The Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, Trans. Roy J. Deferrari, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1964, 2.1.3-6). Thus, there are not wrong directions of history and Rome loses the centrality in the Mediterranean emphasised by Dante especially in the *Paradiso* Canto VI (..).

²⁸⁶ Florence Russo claims that Medusa is the symbol of the all-consuming earthly concerns in Hell. This interpretation connects the figure to most of the infernal sinners,

meaning as the author himself points out.²⁸⁷ Medusa and the 'Erine' are on Dis' walls, next, again, to a tower: 'ver' l'alta torre a la cima rovente, / dove in un punto furon dritte ratto/ tre furie infernal di sangue tinte/(*Inf. X*, 35-38).'

Scholarship has tried to interpretate that figure in different ways, however I agree with the explanation of the *Ottimo Commento* for several reasons.

Per Medusa prendiamo la dimenticanza, alla quale Perseo, cioè l'uomo savio, taglia la testa, quando con la tenace memoria sempre intende. Morta la dimenticanza nasce il Pegaso, lo quale secondo Fulgenzio, è interpretato fama eterna, il quale si dice alato, però che la memoria tutte le cose visibili e invisibili col veloce pensiero cerca, però che di sapienza nasce fama. (...) Onde non senza cagione le Furie chiamano Medusa, cioè dimenticanza, che impedisca a Dante d'entrare alla cognizione delle scienze d'Inferno, cioè della viltà delle cose mundane più note a noi, acciò che più non possa salire alla notizia delle men note, cioè delle cose celestiali, ma quello che ha veduto dimentichi.²⁸⁸

("We consider Medusa forgetfulness. Perseus, the wise man, cuts off her head, as he always is able to understand with his strong memory. When the forgetfulness dies, Pegasus is born and according to Fulgentius, it represents the eternal fame, in fact it has wings and it can find anything visible or invisible through its memory and in this way, fame is from wisdom. (...) So Furies call Medusa, that means forgetfulness, for this reason: she will prevent Dante to know about the infernal sciences, that means about earthly things that we know. In this way, Dante will not be able to understand the less notorious things, the heavenly things and he will forget that which he has seen.")

Building on Florence Russo's thesis, I will demonstrate that Medusa is more a representation of misperceptions which lead to sin. (Florence Russo, "Cupiditas" the Medusean heresy of Farinata', *Italica*, Vol.89, Winter 2012, p. 456, (pp 442-463).

²⁸⁷ 'O voi ch'avete li 'ntelletti sani,/ mirate la dottrina che s'asconde/ sotto 'l velame de li versi strani. (*Inf. IX*, 61-63).

²⁸⁸ 'L'Ottimo Commento della *Divina Commedia*, testo inedito di un contemporaneo di Dante, citato dagli Accademici della Crusca, *Inferno*', Pisa: Capurro Editore, 1827, pp154-155.

First of all, if the character of Medusa is seen as an allegory of the forgetfulness, it anticipates and completes what is going to happen inside the walls of Dis. In fact, first Farinata will explain the type of perception of time the infernal sinners have during the conversation with the Pilgrim. They were said to have no knowledge of the present. Second, the *eretici* themselves display a monstrous misperception of the future as they could not see beyond death and they could not believe in an existence after it. Thus, the figure of Medusa completes the description of sinners' knowledge: they do not perceive the present *momentum*, they do not see any future and, as Medusa announces, they are forgetful about the past too. That means that the inability of acknowledging the eternity, affects the capacity of correctly live in temporality too. The fact that Medusa's gaze could petrify, links a physical attitudes of immobility to a state of forgetfulness.²⁸⁹ Thus, I argue that Farinata and the Giants are medusean characters affected by the inability of seeing in time or even speaking properly who configure a mimetic trajectory moving from cities, to empires, to the Old Man of Crete and finally to Satan itself.

To conclude, Dante's representations of sinners' misunderstandings about time is a complex net of references between allegories from the classical tradition like Medusa, motions and rhythms of the sinners, images of towers and figures of history. All these elements create the infernal paradox of people unable to live into the circularity of seasons, planetary journeys and cycles of life. Their sisiphean misperceptions coexist with the even worse inability of acknowledging past, present and future, petrified in an unreal idea of reality. In fact, denying eternity means denying time as well, for them. The infernal figures of time, the Fortune's wheel and the Old Man of Crete, mirror and fulfil this paradoxical condition, which is established through different disharmonic velocities and durations of which they are models. The representation of the 'candida rosa' in the *Paradiso* XXX and XXXI can be seen as a correction and re-representation of these sinful towering cities. It is described both as a kingdom (*regno verace*) and as a garden ('vola con gli occhi a questo giardino' *Pd.* XXXI, 97-98) developed at the both sides of a river of light ('E

²⁸⁹ "This vision of a hard, resistant corporality is everywhere in *Inferno*". See David Ruzicka, 'Uno Lume apparente di fuori secondo sta dentro': the expressive body in Dante's *Commedia*,' *Italianist*, Vol.34, 2014, pp.1-22 (p.6).

vidi lume in forma di rivera/ fulvido di fulgore, intra due rive *Pd.* XXX 61-62). This 'regno verace' is enormous in both directions, wide and high, however the Pilgrim is able to comprehend it totally: 'La vista mia ne l'ampio e ne l'altezza non si smarriva, ma tutto prendeva' (*Pd.* XXXI, 118-9). That means that the heavenly city is not stuck into walls and it is not blocked into a towering shape: it is enormous and open, circular, wide and high, it can be at the same time a garden, a city and a theatre.

Conclusion

I have identified how the parody of temporality and eternity is articulated in the perpetuity of the *Inferno*, conveying the absurdity of a not- temporality and a not-eternity. The paradoxes, the forgetfulness, the lack of understanding, the sisiphean circularity and the towering blocks analysed, are all expressions of the infernal perpetuity. This recalls one of the first line of the *Commedia*: 'mi ritrovai per una selva oscura/ che la diritta via era smarrita' (*Inf.* I, 2-3), which symbolizes a condition of sin, misunderstanding, bewilderment and loss. That condition is explicated in more detail by Dante himself in the *Convivio* (IV, xii, 16-17):

Onde vedemo li parvuli desiderare massimamente un pomo; e poi, più procedendo, desiderare un augellino; e poi, più oltre, desiderare bel vestimento; e poi lo cavallo; e poi una donna; e poi ricchezza non grande, e poi grande, e poi più. E questo incontra perchè in nulla di queste cose truova quella che va cercando, e credala trovare più oltre. Per che vedere si può che l'uno desiderabile sta dinanzi all'altro a li occhi de la nostra anima per modo quasi piramidale, che 'l minimo li cuopre prima tutti, ed è quasi punta de l'ultim desiderabile che è Dio[...] Veramente così questo cammino si perde per errore come le strade de la terra [...]così ne la vita umana sono diversi cammini de li quali uno è veracissimo e un altro è fallacissimo, e certi meno fallaci e certi meno veraci.

(Thus we see little children setting their desire first of all on an apple, and then growing older desiring to possess a little bird, and then still later desiring to possess fine clothes, then a horse, and then a woman, and then modest wealth, then greater

riches, and then still more. This comes about because in none of these things does one find what one is searching after, but hopes to find it further on. [...] We may, however, lose this path through error, just as we may the roads of the earth. [...]so in human life there are different paths, among which only one is the truest way and another the falsest, and some less true and some less false. *Conv.* IV, xii, 16-17)

From a philosophical point of view, this idea of addressing love to the wrong object is Augustinian, as told in the first chapter. However, Dante originally develops it in a narrative and figurative representation throughout the *Inferno*. In the *Inferno* Dante carefully tells the stories encountered along many paths: the ‘fallacissimi’, the ‘meno fallaci’ and the ‘meno veraci’: all of them are failed attempts to reach the only true Good. The sinners end to find the opposite of which they are looking for: they find nothingness, when searching fullness, starvation rather than satisfaction, poverty rather than richness, sufferance rather than happiness. The initial purpose of their desire was right, however they perceive and understand reality in the wrong way, first of all time, increasing their confusion and bewilderment. I have demonstrated that in the *Paradiso* temporality is not detached from eternity, but it is comprehended in the eternal beginning point; the *Inferno*, as a parody of the *Paradiso*, keeps those dimensions united too. However, they lose their true essences in the *Inferno*, in the absurd denial of themselves. It is a negative unity of ‘fallaci cammini’ where the ‘diritta via era smarrita’: instead of an eternal union with God, they found an eternal and paradoxical bewilderment and loss.

Furthermore, I have shown in the previous chapter that the beginning in *media res* of the *Commedia* reinforces the Platonic design of the *Paradiso*: an emanating and central *Principium*. I argue that in the *Inferno* as well there is this reinforcing link to the narrative beginning of the poem. In fact, in the first lines the Pilgrim is lost in a ‘selva oscura’ and his condition of forgetfulness and bewilderment is typical of the infernal sinners. Thus, as the poem’s *incipit* links the Pilgrim, Christ and the reader due to the indication of time (‘Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita’), we can identify a link between the Pilgrim, the reader and Satan at the same point, as the main character shows to be lost and overwhelmed by sins. So, it is all contained in that emanating starting point, engaging with the infinite numbers of ‘cammini’ that the Pilgrim and the reader could undertake. In the *incipit*

there are many temporal levels referring to the present moment, as well as many future developments: 'così ne la vita umana sono diversi cammini de li quali uno è veracissimo e un altro è fallacissimo, e certi meno fallaci e certi meno veraci'.

Conclusion

A New Path Towards Light

During my analysis, I have noticed that more than often the representations of temporality, perpetuity and eternity in the *Commedia* were reflected and reinforced by the Dantean representation of light.²⁹⁰ In this section I will present an introductory analysis on the representation of light in the *Commedia*, underlining the similarities with the representations of temporality. I think that this can be a new research path of the Dantean poem triggered by my thesis and I would like to conclude my research enhancing new possibilities of investigation.

First, I would like to show a different use of light made by the author between the second and the third Cantica. In the *Purgatorio* the light is an important mean which allows distinctions, categories, clear perceptions of the physical reality. It is essential in order to identify day and night and therefore being able to measure time. However, in the *Paradiso* the light Dante engages with has different functions and features. On one side, it is too strong for the human senses and on other side it is a recurring metaphor of deep union between different entities, representing a cosmological unity. That means that the heavenly light is a medium, which eliminates the distance between the perceiving subject and the perceived object, according to the Platonic model of 'tactile visualization'.²⁹¹ Furthermore, light's powerful metaphors of union and elimination of boundaries are essential in the definition of time and eternity in the *Paradiso*, as it is demonstrated by the important speech of Aquinas in *Paradiso* XIII. Here Aquinas presents and structures the creation, that means the relation between the creator and creatures and

²⁹⁰ In order to have a better understanding about Dante's knowledge about optics the most complete and recent study is by Simon Gilson, *Medieval Optics and Theories of Light in the Works of Dante*, Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2000. Furthermore see: Amelia Carolina Sparavigna, 'Physics and Optics in Dante's *Divine Comedy*', *Mechanics, Materials Science and Engineering*, Vol. 3, 2016 pp.134-140; Bruce Eastwood, *Astronomy and Optics from Pliny to Descartes: texts, Diagrams and Conceptual Structures*. London: Variorum, 1989.

²⁹¹ See, Barbara Sattler, "Space in Ancient Times: From the Presocratics to Aristotle", in: "Space", Oxford Philosophical Concepts, ed. Andrew Janiak, Oxford, 2017.; "A time for learning and for counting – Egyptians, Greeks and empirical processes in Plato's *Timaeus*", in: "One Book, the Whole Universe: Plato's *Timaeus* Today", Proceedings of the Conference "Plato's *Timaeus* Today" at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, September 13-16, 2007, Las Vegas: Parmenides Press 2010, pp. 249-266

between what is eternal and what is temporal, in terms of light. So, even at the linguistic level, in the *Paradiso* light is used as a metaphor, which unites, according a Platonic point of view.

At Dante's time the most common theories about the nature of light were basically three: Aristotelian, Augustinian and Platonic.²⁹² I argue that the light Dante engages with follows the Augustinian distinction between *lux* and *lumen*.²⁹³ In fact,

²⁹² According to Simon Gilson (Simon Gilson, *Medieval Optics and Theories of Light in the Works of Dante*, Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2000) the theories about light which Dante relies on are basically three. First of all, Plato's *Timaeus* had included the idea of a corporal light which exists as both an external and internal fiery substance. The key source for this extramissive model is paragraph 45b of the *Timaeus*:

The eyes were the first organs to be fashioned by the gods to conduct light. [...] They contrived that such fire as was not for burning but for providing a gentle light should become a body, proper to each day. Now the pure fire inside us, cousin to that fire, they made to flow through the eyes. [...] Now whenever daylight surrounds the visual stream, like makes contact with like and coalesces with it to make up a single homogeneous body aligned with the direction of the eyes.

The idea of a 'visual stream' which 'flows through the eyes' and which 'makes contact' with the daylight and an external body describe a quite tactile model of visual perception. This kind of model indicates light as instrument which can connect the soul, the object and the divine creativity. Due to this kind of timean influence, Augustine as well indicates an interior and an exterior kinds of light which allow visual perception. In addition to this Platonic distinction, the bishop of Hippo identifies another type of light: the human ability of reason, which is described as an experience of a divine provision of light. That light distinguished humanity from beasts. However, Aristotle rejected the extramissive model and he elaborated a new theory where colour, not light was the primary material of visual perception (*De anima* II. 418b and *The Parva Naturalia; De sensu et sensibili*, III. 3438 a-b). To conclude, light was considered an incorporeal medium through which images or objects or colours are delivered to the eye: in that *scenario* the Platonic model is subject orientated, whereas the Aristotelian one is object orientated. For a general perspective of Studies on light in the medieval time see: Michael J. Huxtable, 'The Relationship of Light and Colour in Medieval Thought and Imagination', *On Light*, Ed. by K.P. Clarke & S. Baccianti, The Society for the Study of medieval languages and Literature, Oxford, 2014.

²⁹³ Pseudo Dionysus identifies two conditions of light: a light which measures day and night and an unshaped light which marked only the first three days of the Creation: 'Light too is the measure and the enumerator of the hours, of the days, and indeed of all the time we have. It was this light, then unshaped, which, according to the divine Moses, marked the first three days at the beginning of time.' (*On the Divine Names*, 700A). The problem of the measurement of the first three days at the beginning of time is considered by Augustine too in his analysis of the Genesis. In fact, Augustine investigates the real nature of the six days of the Creation, wondering how they could be measured before the existence of heavenly bodies. Finally, he claims that the extension of time that seems to be occupied by the Creation is actually a development of knowledge and perception and not an unfolded flow of time. The Scriptures can be misleading (*De civ. Dei* XI.XXX). In fact, God created everything at the same time, as he does not need the

the light in the *Purgatorio* operates as a *lumen*, which derives from the heavenly bodies, whereas the light in the *Paradiso* is *lux*, God's primary light. Thus, Pilgrim's senses are engaged differently with *lumen* and *lux*, as they unveil different dimensions of reality.

So, how does Dante speak about light in the *Purgatorio*? What are its functions? In the second Cantica, the use of light is instrumental to show something else, reflecting an Aristotelian model, as we can see from the very beginning in Canto I.²⁹⁴ The references to light in *Purg.* I aim at realistic temporal and geographical indications: the first (*Purg.* I, 19-21) describes the dawn and displays the appearance in the sky of the Pisces constellation, the second (*Purg.* I, 107-108) underlines again that it is the dawn and illuminates the path up to the Mount Purgatory, the third (*Purg.* I, 115-117) repeats the same indication of time and shows the condition of the sea around the Mount. Thus, the rising light is showing a new joyful reality after the evil darkness of the *Inferno*. The new presence of light linked to temporal or physical indications demonstrates that the focus is on the

progression of temporality: (*De conf.* XIII.XXXIII) '...materiam quidem de omnino nihilo, mundi autem speciem de informi materia, simul tamen utrumque fecisti, ut materiam forma nulla morae intercapedine sequeretur.' Saying that the creation took six days indicates the perfection of the creation in an arithmetical way: in fact the number six is the sum of each of its divisors: three, two, one. The number seven is perfect as well for different reasons and it indicates the divine rest. Augustine argues that it has not been meant as a normal and human rest, as God does not need any rest and does not feel any efforts, in the Book XIII of *The Confessions*, chapter XXXVI :

Dies autem septimus sine vespera est nec habet occasum, quia sanctificasti eum ad permansionem sempiternam, ut id, quod tibi post opera tua bona valde, quamvis ea quietus feceris, requievisti septimo die, hoc prae loquatur. Nobis vox libri tui, quod et nos post opera nostra ideo bona valde, quia tu nobis ea donasti, sabbato vitae aeternae requiescamus in te.

To conclude, Augustine believes that the temporal duration of the creation given by the Bible does not mean temporality at all: it shows an arithmetical perfection and harmony that mirrors the life itself of the all creatures.

²⁹⁴ *Purg.* I, 19-21; *Purg.* I, 107-108; *Purg.* I, 115-117. The first canto of the *Purgatorio* has been examined by numerous scholars: For instance, Masciandaro analyses the link between ritual and myth which is developed at the beginning of the second Cantica (Giovanni Masciandaro, *Dante as Dramatist*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.), furthermore a lot of critics have focused on Canto I, first of all Erich Auerbach ('Typological Symbolism in Medieval Literature' *American Critical Essays in the Divine Comedy*, London: University of London Press, 1967, p.104) and Giuseppe Mazzotta (*Dante poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in the Divine Comedy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). However, there is not an analysis about light's functions.

objects which are enlightened and on the exterior reality. Thus, here, light is a medium through which the Pilgrim and the reader can observe, measure and organize what is outside themselves. The implications of this Aristotelian usage of light is that the clue of liberation from sin seems to dwell outside the sinners themselves: for instance, it is in the examples of virtues or punished sins perceived at the beginning and at the end of each terrace. The sinners must visualize or hear those examples in order to be re-educated to virtues. On the Mount Purgatory the light arises a greater awareness and autonomy of judgement in the Pilgrim. Details, colours, shapes, planets, stars are visible again and they show a perfect harmony which links everything together.²⁹⁵ These physical references and their accessibility through senses are fundamental features of Pilgrim's salvation journey: thus, during the night he must stop, otherwise he would be lost (Vedi? Sola questa riga/ non varcheresti dopo 'l sol partito:/ non però ch'altra cosa desse briga/ che la notturna tenebra, ad ir suso ;/ quella con non poder la voglia intriga./ Ben si poria con lei tornar in giuso / e passeggiar la costa intorno errando/ mentre che l'orizzonte il dì tien chiuso. [...] There! You see that line?/ You could not cross it once the sun was down. / Not, though, because there is anything to bar/ your going up save shadows of the night./It's that which knots the will in powerlessness./We could, of course, descend and walk below/ and, while the far horizons keep day shut,/ wander and take a turn around the coast. *Purg.* VII, 43-61).

To conclude on this point, the purgatorial light is a *lumen* which reveals the creation and the temporality, as a positive and vital element of an extended and expanded creation. Temporality here is an object observed and measured, like space, by the characters and by the readers. Furthermore, the nature itself of the purgatorial punishments rely on careful time measurements. The clear distinction between the subject who perceives and measures and the object causes a rational and coherent distinction between past, present and future in temporality. In the *Inferno* this distinction was still significant, however it was misperceived by the

²⁹⁵ In the *Purgatorio* we can identify careful colours descriptions as the following:

Oro e argento fine, cocco e biacca,
 Indaco, legno lucido e sereno,
 Fresco smeraldo in l'ora che si fiacca,
 Da l'erba e da li fior, dentr'a quel seno *Purg.* VII, 72-75.

sinner, as Farinata explains in Canto X.²⁹⁶ This perspective is deeply changed in the *Paradiso*, where the light will appear much more as a *lux* and much more focused on the subject than on the object.

So, what kind of light is the heavenly one? The senses, the sight first of all, have been important instruments of purification from the purgatorial sins, however their unsatisfactory ability for a heavenly path is underlined in the *Paradiso* since the beginning (*Pd.* II, 56-57). Nonetheless, light is still a very fundamental element in the *Paradiso*. Here, it has a different purpose and nature. It is too strong for human eyes and rather illuminates human intellect and soul. I argue that as the light has been a useful instrument in order to be able to measure space and especially time, it is now essential to achieve the integration in the cosmological Beginning which I have analysed in the second chapter. In this new heavenly perspective, the senses must not be used to perceive external objects or creatures, as just the act of perceiving creates a kind of barrier between the subject and the object. The *Paradiso's* light is a medium which eliminates the distance between the perceiving subject and the perceived object, according to a Platonic model of 'tactile visualization'. I will demonstrate how Dante represents the heavenly light according to the Platonic model and I will show usages and significances of that model throughout the *Cantica*. Then, I will analyse Aquinas' speech in Canto XIII, where the concepts of time, temporal duration and eternity are expressed and justified through light, *lux*.²⁹⁷ So, I will demonstrate how light frames not only the union between creator and creatures and between subject and object, but even the narrative development of the poem through its metaphor.

In the following passage of the *Paradiso*, we can see that the strong connection between the Divine and the blessed is told in terms of light:

²⁹⁶ "El par che voi veggiate, se ben odo
Dinanzi quell che 'l tempo seco adduce,
E nel presente tenete altro modo."
"Noi veggiam come quei ch'ha mala luce,
le cose", che ne sono lontano:
cotanto ancor ne splende il sommo duce.
Quando s'appressano o son, tutto è vano. (*Inf.* X, 97-103).

²⁹⁷ About the relation which Dante establishes with Aquinas in that Canto and in that specific speech see: Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, 'Closure in Paradise: Dante Outsings Aquinas', *Italian Issue*, Vol.115 (Jan. 2000), pp.1-12.

luce divina sopra me s'appunta,
penetrando per questa in ch'io m'inventro,
la cui virtù, col mio veder congiunta,
mi leva sopra me tanto, ch'i' veggio
la somma essenza de la quale è munta.
Quinci vien l'allegrezza ond'io fiammeggio;
per ch'a la vista mia, quant'ella è chiara,
la chiarità de la fiamma pareggio

(Divine light drives its point upon me her./ And, penetrating that in which I'm
wombed,/ its virtue, joined with my own powers of sight, lifts me so high above myself,
I see/ on high the essence where that light is milked./ Hence comes the brightening joy
in which I flame./ Equal to what I see in clarity/ is this clear flame that I myself display.
Pd. XXI; 83-90)

So, light, *lux* (not anymore *lumen* anymore), penetrates blessed soul and let it
perceive what the Divine Mind can perceive. The idea of a tactile union between God
and the blessed pursued by the light is conveyed by the verb 'penetrando' and
'congiunta' and by the dantean neologism 'invetro'. Then, the ability to read other
person's thoughts is not only represented by light as well, but even by a deep union
between the Divine Mind and Pilgrim's mind:

Io veggio ben sì come già resplende
ne l'intelletto tuo eterna luce,
che, vista, sola e sempre amore accende

(Already I see well in your own mind/ the mirrored splendour of eternal light/ which
seen with kindle – only, always - love. *Pd.V, 7-9*)

Lux creates a contact due to the Platonic 'visual stream', which allows a deep
communication. This is actually a proper union and penetration into each other,
where senses are not anymore involved in the same way. In addition to this
evidence, light has been used with the purpose of eliminating divisions even
between physical entities like Pilgrim's body and Moon:

Per entro se l'eterna margarita
ne ricevette, com'acqua recepe
raggio di luce permanendo unita.

(Into itself the eternal margarite/ took us as water will receive a ray / of light,
remaining, even so, all alone. *Pd.II*, 34-35)

Here the Pilgrim is entering into the Moon and he declares that he is not sure to have his earthly body or not, by the way the union between himself, spirit or body, and the planet is represented in term of light: a mutual penetration without ruptures. The absence of ruptures is clearly in antithesis with the infernal ruptures of the Old Man of Crete and of the ones caused by Hell's earthquake.

Furthermore, I claim that the importance of a Platonic model of light peaks in the visual frame of Aquinas' speech in *Paradiso XIII*, which we have already taken into in order to examine the Dantean neologisms. Now, we should re analyse it in term of light, due to the density of levels of meaning:

Or apri li occhi a quel ch'io ti rispondo,
e vedrai il tuo credere e 'l mio dire
nel vero farsi come centro in tondo.
Ciò che non muore e ciò che non può morire
Non è se non splendor di quell'idea
che partorisce, amando, il nostro Sire;
chè quella viva luce che sì mea
dal suo lucente, che non si disuna
da lui né da l'amor ch'a lor s'intrea,
per sua bontade il suo raggiar aduna
quasi specchiato, in nove sussistenze,
etternalmente rimanendosi una.
Quindi discende a l'ultime potenze
giù d'atto in atto, tanto divenendo,
che più non fa che brevi contingenze;
e queste contingenze essere intendo
le cose generate, che produce
con seme e senza seme il ciel movendo.

(Now clear your eyes to what my answer is./ Then what you think and what I say, agree,/ you'll find, in truth, as circles round one point. / Those things that cannot die and those that can are nothing save the splendours of the One/ idea that, loving, brought our Lord to birth./For Living Light, which, from the Fount of Light, cascades in ways that do not disunite it,/ from Him and from the Love en-three-ing them, / in generosity collects its rays,/ as mirrored in nine ranks of life anew,/ itself eternally remaining One. *Pd.* XIII, 49-66)

Here, Aquinas explains creation in terms of light and specifically creation of the three categories identified by Boethius: eternity, perpetuity and time. In the eternity there is the 'splendor' of creator's idea and love. That 'splendor' does not 'disuna' and does 'intrea' (they are Dante's neologisms). This condition is the eternity of Trinity. Then, due to His love, the light is reflected into the nine spheres. The optical reflection is another scientific phenomenon used by the author to represent multiplicity in an eternal unity. Then, this light descends and the descent transforms it: what exists at that level is only 'brevi contingenze', the divine light in the sublunar world has lost so much of its power that anything it can generate will die briefly.

Aquinas synthesises in terms of light topics which have already been faced previously in the *Cantica*: the creation throughout the heavenly spheres (*Pd.* II, 121-123), the different durations and qualities of creatures (*Pd.* VII, 124-128), the different attitudes of men (*Pd.* VIII) and the different qualities of wisdom in men (*Pd.* XIII).²⁹⁸ To summarize, Aquinas claims that the reality is one with God, and all the differences between individuals are due to how much of the divine light they have been able to keep and reflect. That means that there is only one light shining everywhere, but with different intensities, which involves different durations in time, different dwellings in space and different qualities and functions. Light metaphors not only reunifies each aspect of the cosmos in Aquinas' speech, but

²⁹⁸ See: Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle 'Closure in Paradise Dante outsings Aquinas' *Italian Issue, Italian Issues*, Vol.115 (Jan. 2000), pp. 125-137.

integrates previous topics of discussion in one articulated explanation.²⁹⁹ That means that light functions as a connection even from a narrative point of view, as it connects different topics in one single speech and, from a linguistic point of view, we can see that the metaphor itself is a strong connection or an identification between two entities which share one or more features.³⁰⁰ These metaphors are used to represent a status where the same element can exist in different places (optical reflexion) or different elements can exist in exactly the same place (penetration). These light metaphors contribute to describe to the reader a new world where space and time work differently. The space, for example, is structured according to different principle: the Pilgrim 'enters' into each planet in a mysterious way, described again in terms of light (*Pd.II*, 34-35). Then, the blessed dwell in the Empyrean but they appear in other planets only for pedagogical reasons and their double presences are represented again in term of light. The fact that they can dwell in different places at the same time, address temporality in a different way, too. In fact the model of light's penetration and reflection pushes boundaries between places, moments, individuals and reaches out a new spiritual unity beyond this categories. Building on Durling's thesis who claims that the emphasis on optics and mirrors stresses the Platonic-augustinian interpretation of mirrors as metaphors for the various approaches to God,³⁰¹ I argue that more than a model of a gradual approach to God through higher causality, heavenly light is a metaphor of new structure of space and time where boundaries disappear.

²⁹⁹ S. Finazzi, 'La metafora scientifica e la rappresentazione della corporeitas luminosa' in *Metafora* ed. by Ariani, pp.167-92. Here Finazzi investigate light as a metaphor to represent not a discourse about time but the body of the blessed.

³⁰⁰Irma Brandeis claims that in Heaven even metaphors dissolve the opposition between the two entities of their equation. And this union again is eventually represented in term of light. Thus, light is an author's instrument to show coexistence in the same point and dissolution of boundaries even in the language itself: 'Such images, indeed, lightly and happily contradict the logic of intellect in a way Dante, I think, would never tolerated in the first two canticles, which are reason's realm [...]Nothing like this is to be found in the *Inferno* or in the *Purgatorio*, where a certain exactitude of reference is the norm and where generally both terms (subject and object) of metaphors are drawn from realms of man's daily experience. Here one might say that both terms are figurative; [...]. One might perhaps venture upon suspicion that in this equation of two 'figurative' entities we have actually passed beyond metaphor and emerged on its far side in a new simple equivalence, within a world where all light is spiritual.' (Irma Brandeis, *Metaphor in 'The Divine Comedy'*, *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 8, (Winter 1956), p.555)

³⁰¹ Robert M. Durling, *Paradiso*, pp. 873-4.

To conclude, I have shown to how many research paths my investigation on the representations of time, perpetuity and eternity; in fact, light seems to work similarly and according to the same models: the Platonic, Augustinian and Boethian. This also can demonstrate that, even after seven centuries, the *Commedia* can still give many answers to the contemporary reader as well as many new questions.

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