



# حَوْلِيَّاتُ كَلِيَّةِ الْآدَابِ

تصدر عن كلية الآداب - جامعة الكويت

د. رشيد محمود الصبّاغ

قسم اللغة الانجليزية وآدابها - جامعة الكويت

الْأَخْرُويَّاتُ الْإِسْلَامِيَّةُ  
فِي

الْكُومِيْدِيَا الْإِلَهِيَّةِ

الرسالة الحادية والعشرون

١٩٨٤م - ١٤٠٤هـ

الحوالية الخامسة



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#### نعم الرسالة

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# حَوَالِيَاتُ كَلِيَّةِ الْآدَابِ

تصدر عن كلية الآداب - جامعة الكويت

دورية علمية منتظمة تتضمن مجموعة  
من الرسائل التي تعالج بأصكاله  
موضوعات وقضايا، ومشكلات  
علمية في مجالات الأدب والفلسفة  
والتاريخ والاجتماع والجغرافيا وعلم  
النفس وتمثل معينا علميا للثقفين العرب.

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الحوالية الخامسة - الرسالة الحادية والعشرون

١٩٨٤ - ١٤٠٤



الرسالة الحادية والعشرون

الْأَخْرُؤِيَّاتُ الْإِسْلَامِيَّةُ  
فِي  
الْكُؤْمِيْدِيَا الْإِلْهِيَّةِ

د. شَيْخُ مُحَمَّدُ الصَّبَّاحُ  
قِسْمُ اللُّغَةِ الْإِنْجَلِيْزِيَّةِ وَآدَابِهَا - جَامِعَةُ الْكُؤَيْتِ

حوليات كلية الاداب - الحولية الخامسة ١٩٨٤ - ١٤٠٤

### المؤلف :

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- مدرسة بقسم اللغة الانجليزية وآدابها  
بجامعة الكويت.
- دكتوراه في الأدب المقارن جامعة ييل  
١٩٧٧ — الولايات المتحدة الامريكية.
- عميدة مركز اللغات: جامعة الكويت.

### من انتاجها العلمي :

- شخصية النبي محمد في الكوميديا الالهية  
لدانتى اليجيرى (بحث منشور في مجلة  
جامعة ييل للدراسات الايطالية، المجلد  
الاول العدد رقم ٢، الربيع، ٧٧).
- التصورات الاوروبية للاسلام في العصور  
الوسطى وتأثيرها لدانتى اليجيرى.  
(بحث منشور في مجلة عالم الفكر).
- الدولة بين الارادة والقدر: (قراءة جديدة  
لماكيافيلي).

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الْإِخْرَاقَاتِ الْإِسْلَامِيَّةِ  
فِي  
الْكُومِيْدِيَا الْإِلَهِيَّةِ

لـ . (دانتى اليجيرى)

ملخص

لدى التطرق الى مادة البحث الوارد تحت العنوان السابق، تحاول مؤلفة البحث ايضاح مدى الصلة والارتباط بين (الكوميديا الالهية) لدانتى وبين ماورد في النصوص الاسلامية خاصا باسراء النبي «محمد» صلى الله عليه وسلم ومعراجه، وخاصة ما نصت عليه صورة (الاسراء): بالآية الاولى منها، وما أشارت اليه سورة (النجم) بالآيات: (من ٦ — ١٨).... ومن هذا المنطلق ترسم (صاحبة البحث) الخطوط المتوازية بين الكوميديا الالهية وبين التفسير الوارد باللغة اللاتينية لحادثة اسراء النبي (محمد) عليه الصلاة والسلام ومعراجه، والمعنون: «كتاب اسراء محمد» الذي كشف عنه النقاب حديثا العالم الايطالى: «انريكو تشيروللى».. وبهذا تثبت هذه الدراسة المتأنية العميقة، خطوط التأثير المباشر، والعلاقة الواضحة، بين النص اللاتينى وبين الكوميديا الالهية، من خلال البرهنة على أوجه التشابه، واطهار العناصر المشتركة في كلا العملين.. وخاصة في مجال علم الكونيات..

وبما أن النص الوارد في اللغة اللاتينية والفرنسية القديمة (لكتاب اسراء محمد) قد تمتع باتساع التداول والانتشار خلال العصور الوسطى على أوسع نطاق، فإن هذا مما يؤكد انه كان في متناول (دانتى) وأنه اطلع عليه ونقل عنه.

ومن خلال التحليل العلمي الموثق لطبيعة هذا النص، وتفصيل عناصره تسعى مؤلفة الدراسة الى اثبات تأثير النصوص الاسلامية التي عنيت بأحوال الدار الآخرة، على ظهور الكوميديا الالهية لدانتى ان لم تكن أصلا لها، وباحثا حقيقيا له على تأليفها...

## FOOTNOTES

1. Of Mecca.
2. Of Jerusalem.

The verse in the Arabic reads:

سُبْحَنَ الَّذِي أَمَرَ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا الَّذِي بَرَكَا حَوْلُهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِّنْ  
ءَابَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ .

3. Alfonso X, "The Wise" --- "El Sabio", 1221-1284.
4. On the influence of the "Liber Scalae" on the "Dittamondo" of Fazio degli Uberti, there follows this example:

"Ancor afferma lor tra gli altri mali  
Che in Paradiso son molti gi ardini,  
Pieni de' ben del mondo e spiritali.

E che di latte, di mele e di vini  
Vi corron fiumi e chiare fontanelle;  
E fior per tutto; e canti dolci e fini;

Donne con ricche vesti accorte e belle;  
E giovinetti di gent ili aspetti  
Con vergognose e vezzose donzelle,

E tutte queste cose a lor dilette  
Dice che usar potranno cosi come  
Nel mondo fanno; e saran lor soggetti.

Ancor nel libro suo che "Scala" ha nome,  
Dove l'ordine pon del mangiar loro,  
Divisa e scrive quivi d'ogni pome".

(Libro V, Canto XII, 82-96)

5. "and he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." (Genesis XXVIII, 12)
6. "A fiery stream issued and came forth before him." (Daniel VII, 10)  
  
"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."  
(Revelations XXII, 1).

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It is very akin to the fire of which Dante speaks effusively in canto XXVII of the "Purgatorio":

"..... Più non si va, se pria non morde, anime sante, il foco.....

guardando il foco e imaginando forte umani corpi già veduti accesi.....

Credi per certo che se dentro all'alvo di questa fiamma stessi ben mille anni.....

Poi dentro al foco innanzi mi si mise sì com fui dentro, in un bogliente vetro gittato mi sarei per rinfrescarmi, tant' era ivi lo 'ncendio senza metro." (Purg. XXVII, 10-50)

There is a very close correspondence in the collocation of the two scenes. The expressive power is intense in both narratives. In both cases the vision is amplified by details, and is expanded by similes and metaphors.

But what is most striking is the parallelism of the two representations which, in the complex of the narratives, are placed in an analogous symmetry. The difference lies in the registration of the elements of the "Liber Scalae" into a typically Christian concept, in the absorption of the said elements into the Christian faith, and in their transformation into a new poetic theme.

Finally, it belongs to Dante's greatness that, in his whole work, he brought the imagination and intellect of many traditions, whether remote or close, into one field and laboured with all the resources available to him to reconcile them, thus giving expression to a unique voice of original poetry.

who traverse the seven stages of which the Azirat is composed, will enter the realm of celestial beatitude. Those, on the other hand, who fail to cross it, fall into the flaming infernal abyss and are thus exposed to eternal grief and torture:

“Quod si fecerint transibunt; sin autem, in ignem inferni cadent perpetuo cruciandi.” (LXXVI, 193)

The text entailed in the passage of the bridge represents the qualifying examination, the necessary condition in order to attain the celestial joys of Paradise.

Similarly in the “Commedia”, in order to secure entry into the Terrestrial Paradise, Dante must undergo the severe test of the burning flames, which constitutes the central theme of canto XXVII of “Purgatory”. Standing outside the flames, the angel of chastity sings of the beatitude of the pure in heart, (“Beati mundo corde”) (Matt. V. 8), and aware of the demanding condition which is either to pass through the fire or to recoil for ever, he encourages the pilgrim to cross the flames:

“..... Più non si va, se pria non morde, anime sante, il foco: intrate in esso, ed al cantar di là non siate sorde”. (Purg. XXVII, 10-12)

“On the other side of the fire, the guardian angel of Eden sings: “Venite, benedicti Patris mei” (I. 58), which are the words that Christ, in the Day of Universal Judgement, will address to his followers, as is written in the New Testament. (Matt. XXV, 34)

In the “Liber Scalae”, it is written that the Lord, in the Day of Universal Judgment, will say to those who have passed the trial of the bridge: “Venite..... accipite Paradisum istum..... quia Paradisum hunc..... ego feci pro vobis”. (XXXVI, 91) This is similar in spirit to the manner in which the guardian angel in the “Purgatorio” speaks.

The motif of the fire, which is the necessary condition for the entry of the Blessed into Paradise, is developed with abundant detail, with plastic imagery and verbal eloquence, and with similes that are of a singular expressive force:

“Flamma quidem exiens de inferno ita magna quod ipsa tantum ascendit, super capita illorum, qui per pontem transeunt, quantum posset homo ire in LXX milibus annorum. Sunt enim, tam a dextris quam a sinistris, flamme alie tali modo quod transeuntes vadunt velut si per medium alicujus igne vie irent. Et cum ipsi, sursum aut ante vel retrò sive a dextris aut a sinistris, respiciunt nichil vident aliud quam flammam et ignem, qui tam fortiter ardet quod a nemine dici posset.” (LXXVII, 195)

underline the ineffable limpidity, remarks that the purest of earthly waters would seem murky and impure in comparison, so in the above-mentioned passage from the "Liber Scalae", the two adjectives "belles et cleres"/"pulciores et clariores" are accompanied by the clarifying statement "que nul cueor d'home penser poust"/"quam cogitare cor hominis possit ullum". This is a recurrent notion common both to the "Commedia" and the "Liber Scalae". The lucidity of the streams is indescribable, and here there is a perfect conceptual analogy. As Lethe takes away the memory of sin and Eunoe restores the recollection of virtuous deeds --- with which acts the process of purification is completed --- so in the "Liber Scalae" the Blessed, on entering Paradise, must necessarily drink of the purifying water and subsequently bathe in it, praying meanwhile for the ability to become worthy of Sanctifying Grace. (XXXVIII, 96)

In addition to the analogies that have thus far been traced between the dantesque "foresta" of the Terrestrial Paradise and the Islamic Garden of Delight, and the two rivers Lethe and Eunoe and the two springs in the Moslem paradise wherein the Blessed are purified, there remains another vital element that integrates, co-ordinates and determines the precise relationship between the two texts, not only with respect to their external structure but also, and above all, concerning their conception. It is this element that enables one to define more clearly those aspects that are most common to the two narratives, for it reveals the correspondence in the general framework, in the location of the episodes in the general scheme and in the close affinity in the descriptive development.

In the "Liber Scalae", the Lord says to the Blessed:

"Venite amici mei, transite viriliter "Azirat halmuzakin..... Et accipite Paradisum istum et inter vos dividite, prout meruerit quisque vestrum; quia Paradisum hunc et domos et arbores et alia cuncta, que ibi intus sunt, ego feci pro vobis et ad opus vestrum; et hec omnia plena sunt gracia et gloria mea que est perdurabilis sine fine." (XXXVI, 91)

The bridge As-sirat al-Mustaqim (= The Path of Righteousness, of Koran, Surat al-Hamd), qualified the Blessed for entry into Paradise. In fact it is mentioned in the text that:

"Azirat est pons quidam, quem Deus fecit ad probandum illos qui bene credunt in legem tuam et similiter qui non credunt. Pons autem iste in alto supra infernum situs existens". (LXXVI, 192)

Created by God, it rises above the flame of Hell and it represents the test that souls must undergo to determine their eternal destiny. Those

“Da questa parte con virtù discende che toglie altrui memoria del peccato; dall'altra d'ogni ben fatto la rende.

Quinci Letè; così dall'altro lato Eunoè si chiama; e non adopra se quinci e quindi pria non è gustato: a tutti altri sapori esto è di sopra.” (ibidem, 127-133)

The relationship in the succession of motifs and the symbolical connections is clearly in evidence. In the Islamic Garden of Delight, there are two streams that flow at the bottom of a large tree. From one of them the Blessed drink and cleanse themselves so thoroughly that no trace of their sin remains; in the other, they bathe and pray, and thereby acquire the Grace of God. The poetic imagery blends with the symbolism:

“Nam in introitu viridarii hujus ex parte majori est quedam arbor ita magna quod nullus dicere hoc valeret. Et ad pedes hujus arboris manant duo fontes pulciores et clariores quam cogitare cor hominis possit ullum. Illi vero, qui in Paradisum intrant, veniunt ad unum istorum fontium et bibunt ex eo. Et cum biberint, confestim mundificantur de omnibus que comederant, ita quod non remanet inde quicquam. Et post hoc vadunt ad alium fontem et se balneant in eodem, et post balneaciones faciunt oraciones suas. Et gracia Dei super eos descendit. Hiis autem peractis in Paradisum redeunt. Et cum veniunt ad portam, dicit eis hostiarius: “Estis mundificati?” At ipsi respondent: “Utique.” Et statim ipse aperit portam eis et intrant.” (XXXVIII, 96)

Free from every human stain, the Blessed return to Paradise and having reached the gate, the guardian angel asks them if the ritual of their purification has been performed. When they answer in the affirmative the gates are laid open and they enter.

The two dantesque rivers originate from a spring that is made eternal and is directly operated by God:

“Tutte l'acque che son di qua più monde parrieno avere in sé mistura alcuna verso di quella, che nulla nasconde.” (Purg. XXVIII, 28-30)

Although it is “bruna bruna”, on account of the thick foliage overhanging it, the water is nonetheless so limpid that all the others in the world in comparison would appear cloudy and impure. In the “Liber Scalae”, the qualifying adjectives used to define the purity of the two springs, clearly reveal an analogy with Dante's description. They are in the Old French “les plus belles et les plus cleres” and, in the Latin translation “pulciores et clariores”. And just as Dante, in order to

In the forest of the Terrestrial Paradise, amongst the gently trembling foliage, the birds do not cease:

"..... d'operare ogni lor arte; ma con piena letizia l'ore prime, cantando, ricevieno intra le foglie, che tenevan bordone alle sue rime." (Purg. XXVIII, 15-18)

In their singing they display all their skills as they joyfully welcome the gentle morning breeze. The rustling of the foliage and the singing of the birds are vital notes in that state of perfect nature. Sound and smell intermingle with the rustle of the leaves as the wind passes through them. Likewise, the garden of the Moslem paradise is gladdened --- a vital expression --- by the sweet voices of the ladies who sit beneath the trees and sing such sweet melodies that are beyond the human mind to describe. The imaginative vision in both cases, therefore, becomes the modulation of the song and is assimilated into its melodic wave. It is like Dante's sweet melody, running through the shining air:

"e una melodia dolce correva per l'aere luminoso....." (Purg. XXIX, 22-23)

Thus the two descriptions proceed in a parallel direction: first the vision of the composite --- forest, trees, varied and blossoming vegetation --- condensed in its substantial elements; then the details that overflow with inherent motifs, each one connected to another and combined to animate the scene --- the perfume emanating from the forest, the melodious singing, the forms and colours which, harmonising together, create a wave of bustling vitality in that state of perfect nature.

At the end of the survey of the paradisiac scenery in the "Liber Scalae", there is the description of two bright springs which, by their holy water, beautify and rejuvenate the Blessed who bathe in them and take of their water. These two streams are closely related to the two rivulets in Dante's "Purgatorio", Lethe and Eunoe which contain Divine Virtue and restore to the sinner the virgin purity of his soul. Both Lethe and Eunoe issue from one source, which is of divine and not natural origin, the waters being constantly and supernaturally replenished. The waters of Lethe take away from man the memory of sin; those of Eunoe have the power of restoring to him the recollection of virtuous deeds. It is not sufficient merely to dip into them one must immerse oneself and taste their water in order for them to put their salutary effect to work:

"ed ecco più andar mi tolse un rio, che 'nver sinistra con sue picciole onde piegava l'erba che 'n sua ripa uscìo." (Purg. XXVIII, 25-27)

"Est autem Genet hanaym tantum dicere quantum: viridarium perfecte habundans deliciis omnibus, quas possit cor hominis cogitare..... fontes qui manant ibidem aque et vini de cunctis maneriebus colorum et saporum, qui possent per aliquem hominem cogitari. Sunt etiam ibi cantus dulces et mirabiles domicellarum, que sedent sub arboribus que sunt ibi, omnes de lapidibus preciosis. Et fructus ipsarum similiter, qui dulciores sunt et saporosiores etiam quam ulla res. Ibi quoque sunt instrumentorum soni, qui tam dulces sunt ad audiendum tamque delectabiles quod hoc nullum cor hominis cogitare valeret. Nam et infra hoc viridarium erant duo alia viridaria...." (XXXVI, 90)

The description of this garden, "viridarium perfecte habundans deliciis omnibus", is comparable to the "divina foresta spessa e viva", Dante's forest of trees and foliage in canto XXVIII of "Purgatorio". The trees are so numerous and of such varied species that they baffle the human imagination. The perfumes that they exhale are described as "les plus beaux que home puisse conter"/"et etiam melius redolentes quam ulla res que possit ab homine cogitari". Similarly Dante reveals, with the rapid suggestive powers of his lines, the verdant forest whose cosmic serenity arouses in him an emotion of endless wonder; and the visual and plastic representation is followed by the auditive quality of the depiction, produced by the sweet music of the "augelletti" which, with the gentle harmony of their songs, convey the scenic beauty of that enclosed world.

In the passage in question from the "Liber Scalae", the descriptive development is analogous: first there are the trees which in their vast numbers and species. ("et tam diversarum manerierum quod nullus est dicere illud posset..... Sunt enim pulciores quam rubini vel smaragdi seu aliqui lapides preciosi,") (XXXIV, 85), extend before Muhammad's enraptured eyes and attract his attention. These trees subsequently become the subject of a colourful poetic description. In the adjectives "spessa" and "viva" that define the density and rustling spatial quality of Dante's forest, it is easy to collocate the elements of the Moslem paradise which is, more-over, filled with sensual charm and seduction. But as an expression of perfect nature, Dante's vision transcends the imaginative description of the source and asserts itself in a new poetic utterance.

In Dante's portrayal of the forest, the visual is also succeeded by the olfactory representation. Hence, the trees that exhale their scent "melius redolentes quam ulla res que possit ab homine cogitari", can be connected with Dante's expression, condensed in the adjective "auliva", which by itself is a poetically concise term.

similarly beautiful and attractive, and as Gabriel explains, she represents the vanities of the world.....

“iste mundus, qui deliciis omnibus plenus extat..... Sed quia dedignatus reliquisti eam nec sibi respondere curasti, tu magis sine peccato eris quam fuerint omnes alii prophete hactenus, vel qui in posterum subsequuntur.”

Since he has shown himself above the the alluring call of the woman, Muhammad is rendered sinless; indeed, he is, as Gabriel puts it, more impeccable than all the other prophets before him or to come.

Leaving aside the natural irreducible differences in the development of the two passages in question, and apart from the obvious difference in tone and style, there exists however a clear analogy between them both in the general schematic outline and in the component material, and in their moral purpose and allegorical significance.

The two representations run, therefore, along the same lines; the difference in substance is due to the individual artistic expression of the two authors.

The motif of the three voices and of their allegory, presented in the very first chapters of the “Liber Scalae”, in strange coincidence with the representation of the three beasts in the first canto of the “Commedia”, can moreover be considered as one of those elements of Islamic eschatological literature which had been matured in Dante’s mind. By reviving and transforming the basic text, the poet achieves his singular originality of expression.

In tracing the analogies between the “Commedia” and the “Liber Scalae”, one cannot disregard the clear and significant affinity between “la divina foresta spessa e viva” of the terrestrial Paradise (Purg. XXVIII) and the representation of the Garden of Delight in the paradise of the “Liber Scalae” (XXXVI - XXXVIII); an affinity found not only in concept but also in the plot and in its development. Indeed, the two narratives, notwithstanding the unmistakably different variations in emphases, develop in an identical manner. Departing from the general description of the ambience and branching out into an equally varied succession of images, both passages close with the depiction of two rivers (Iethe and Eunoe in the “Purgatorio”) and the two springs..... “duo fontes pulciores et clariores quam cogitare cor hominis possit ullum” in the “Liber Scalae” (XXXVIII, 96); both of which veil the same symbolical meaning.

The garden of Delight contains flowery meadows where, along the banks of the rivers, rise the pavilions of the “domicelle amoresissime” of paradise:

offensive and proceeds in a more determined manner. The liberty with which the Prophet is endowed right from the outset of his journey is, for Dante, the subject of arduous experience and tension.

Taken as a dramatic device, the motif of the three voices that are heard almost as if they were flying through the air, seems to be taken up again by Dante in Canto XIII of the "Purgatorio", in the circle of the envious:

"e verso noi volar furon sentiti, non però visti, spiriti parlando alla mensa d'amor cortesi inviti.

La prima voce che passò volando 'Vinum non habent' altamente disse, e dietro a noi l'andò reiterando; e prima che del tutto non si udisse per allungarsi, un'altra 'l' sono Oreste' passò gridando, e anco non s'affisse.

'Oh!' diss'io 'padre, che voci son queste?' E com'io domandai, ecco la terza dicendo: 'Amate da cui male aveste.' " (25-36)

In the "Liber Scalae", we find the description: "quamdam aliam vocem que me bis vocavit vocibus altis dicens". The expression "vocibus altis dicens" is evoked almost ad litteram in Dante's words "altamente disse", although of course, in the entire context of the "Purgatorio" and indeed of the "Commedia", the power of reconstruction vastly transcends the limits of the essential text and becomes unexcelled in its perfection and originality.

Returning to a previous discussion, the woman, beautiful "quam unquam viderim temporibus vitae meae, que cunctorem qui cogitari, possint vestibis induta colorum..... "who with her soft voice and gentle gestures, tries to detain the prophet Muhammad, is analogous to the "femmina balba" who appears in Dante's dream. (Purg. XIX, 7-10) Dante's siren is described as "balba", "guercia", "sovra i piè distorta", with "mani monche", thus representing the false earthly pleasures that are the object of disproportionate love on the part of humans who, in their desire for them, ascribe to them a value that is not their worth. It is on account of the poet's gaze that the woman acquires a superlative beauty and attractiveness. It is not to be excluded that this allegorical figure in Dante's "Purgatorio" has, as Buti observes, a more direct and immediate precedent in the third book of "De Consolatione Philosophiae" of Boethius:

"Igitur te pulchrum videri non tua natura, sed oculorum spectantium reddit infirmitas." (Prose 8)

In the "Liber Scalae", the woman who calls out to Muhammad is

the Prophet the wonders of the after-life, but he also like Virgil leads "dentro alle segrete cose". (Inf. III, 21) Gabriel expounds therefore on the allegorical significance of the three voices. The first of these, explains the angel, is the doctrine of the jews; the second, the doctrine of the Christians; the third is that of the world with all its false allurements and captivations:

"Scias vero quod vox illa que primo te vocavit erat lex Judeorum; et si respondisses ei, omnes tue gentes Judie facte fuissent. . . . Scias vocem illam fuisse Christianorum legem, cui si respondisses gentes tue omnes adhesissent fidei christiane . . . . Scias quod domina illa cunctis sic induta coloribus est mundus iste, qui deliciis omnibus plenus extat. Et quia expectavisti eam, scias vere quod gentes tue plus solaciorum plusque deliciarum habebunt quam omnes alie gentes, que unquam in preterito fuerint vel sint etiam in futuro. Sed quia dedignatus reliquisti eam nec sibi respondere curasti, tu magis sine peccato eris quam fuerint omnes alii prophete hactenus, vel qui in posterum subsequuntur." (III, 8)

Similarly, Dante is about to embark upon his journey along the "verace via" (Inf. I, 12) and the "cammin santo" (Purg. XX, 142), when his passage is intercepted by three beasts: a leopard, a lion and a wolf. It is not my intention to list here all the various interpretations of the symbolic meaning of the three beasts that have been put forward by Dantists and numerous scholars. However, the most accredited interpretation and the one that adheres closest to the Islamic text, points out in the three beasts "le tre disposizion che 'l ciel (i.e. God, for he is never named in the "Inferno") non vuole." (XI, 81).

Hence, the beasts embody the three malign natures that are contracted in the pursuit of sinful life, the synthesis of all the vice that sets itself against the amendment of the sinner. Incontinence, pride and fraud are the allegorical meanings usually attached to the three beasts that drive Dante back to "là dove 'l sole tace" (Inf. I, 60); by making him fall "in basso loco", they remove from his mind "la speranza dell' altezza." It is then left to Virgil, symbol of human reason, to liberate him from the dark wood of sin, and later to Beatrice to guide him to that enlightenment which faith offers in the face of the "acqua perigliosa e guata" (Inf. I, 24) of sinful existence.

The three beasts then, like the three voices in the "Liber Scalae", represent the obstacles that interpose the conquest of truth. Before them, Dante allows himself to be overcome; he is so dominated by fear at the deserted slope that his cautious footsteps are taken "sí che il piè fermo sempre era il piú basso". On the other hand, Muhammad, on hearing the voices that call out to him, almost seems to take the

These, then, are the three captivating voices which try to decoy the Prophet Muhammad at the outset of his journey to the presence of God. But the Messenger and Prophet of God pays no heed to them; nor does he even turn around to see from which direction they came. Earnest and resolute, he proceeds along his predestined path. The first voice calls out only: "Ha, Machomete!", and then vanishes. After a long interval, the second is heard. It calls out twice to him, inviting him to stop: "Ha, Machomete, expecta me"; and the Prophet Muhammad, having already discarded all earthly care, pays no attention but proceeds on his journey, beside the angelic guide, toward the supreme throne of God. The third voice is more persistent and more determined to stop the Prophet Muhammad on his way to the mosque. But here also, Muhammad rejects the temptations of the world and the flesh. The third voice is presented as that of a woman of superlative beauty clad in a multicoloured raiment who calls out three times to the prophet, trying thereby to turn him away from the path of rectitude and to seduce him with the charm of her voice and the fascination of her appearance. Seen from a physical and allegorical standpoint, she resembles the siren in Dante's dream, who invites him to earthly pleasures by her song:

"Io son ..... io son dolce serena, che i marinari in mezzo mar  
dismago; tanto son di piacere a sentir piena!" (Purg. XIX, 19-21)

Muhammad is able to resist the alluring dangers of false pleasures which, as Dante observes, "nulla promission rendono intera" (Purg. XXX, 132), and he rejects the last invitation "Ha, Machomete, aliquantulum me expecta" and proceeds on his way, though pausing momentarily to look at the woman. The fascination of life and the promise of earthly pleasure delay the Prophet Muhammad for an instant; but his captivation is only momentary. For just at the moment when the woman is approaching him and is about to address him again, he proudly releases himself from the invitation to earthly joys, as symbolised by the woman, and continues his journey.

The significance of the three voices is made clear by the proud and disdainful attitude of the Prophet who, indifferent to them and protected by his firm faith, pays no heed and proceeds resolutely on the righteous path. They are respectively the calls of deceit, temptation and seduction which lead one stray from the redemptive path. A little later in the text, these allegorical meanings become the subject of an explanatory discourse on the path of the angel Gabriel who, in the "Liber Scalae", performs the function of guide and teacher to Muhammad as Virgil and Beatrice are to Dante in the "Commedia". And just as Virgil, entreated by the poet, clarifies, illustrates and so dissipates Dante's doubts, so the Archangel Gabriel not only reveals to

supradicta, nunquam propter illa videre obmisi quin semper celum viderem illud, ubi Dei cathedra est, de nua locutus sum vobis." (XXV, 61)

Similar to Dante's vision, the Prophet Muhammad does not cease, amidst such a great multitude of intervening objects, to behold the highest heaven, wherein the Throne of God is contained.

The beginning of the account of the Prophet Muhammad's journey contains certain elements that are closely analogous to the first canto of the "Commedia"..... the introduction to the entire poem.

On an occasion of intense contemplative absorption there appears to the Prophet Muhammad, "filius Abdillehe, oriundus de Arabia, de civitate Meche, generis nobilis Arabum quod dicitur Korayxis" (I, 3), a great vision of paradise. The archangel Gabriel appears before him and tells him to wrap his head and his body in a white tunic and to mount the beast "al-Buraq", "quae habebat faciem hominis et ejus crines erant de perlis, toppetus autem de smaragdo, cauda quidem de rubino, oculi vero clariores sole ..... Nam omnis ipsius color erat purissime claritatis." (II, 5) The messenger and Prophet of God thus mounts the richly-ornate beast and, accompanied by the archangel, he proceeds towards the mosque at Jerusalem: "Et ibat eciam directe usque ad templum Jerosolimitanum." (II, 6) But just as he is happily proceeding from Mecca to Jerusalem, listening attentively to the marvelous things that the angel reveals to him, his passage is interrupted by three voices that attempt to detain him and to prevent the progress of his predestined journey:

"Et dum similiter iremus et ego novis per Gabrielem sic relatis intenderem, ecce audivi vocem quamdam, que semel tantummodo me valde dulciter vocavit et dicit: 'Ha, Machomete!' Ego autem nunquam respicere curavi versus partes illas unde vox venerat; ymo sine ullo responso tenui viam meam. Et cum ultra per aliquid magnum spatium processissem, audivi quamdam aliam vocem, que me bis vocavit vocibus altis dicens: 'Ha, Machomete, expecta me'. Ego quidem non respondi nec versus partes unde vox illa manaverat curavi respicere, sed ultra ivi, prosequens iter meum. Post modum vero me per temporis longi spacium sic eunte, ecce vidi quamdam dominam pulcriorem quam unquam viderim temporibus vite mee, que cunctorum qui cogitari possint vestibis induta colorum, me tribus vicibus valde dulciter clamans dixit: 'Ha, Machomete, aliquantulum me expecta!' Ego quidem expectavi eam, et cum appropinquasset ac vellet mihi loqui, reliqui eam velut dedignatus non modicum; et sum ultra profectus." (III, 7)

what is most striking in its similarity to Dante's joyful stream of light, is the bustling movement and the harmonious whole. The appearance, disappearance and re-appearance of the aerial dance and the variety of movement which, in the vision of the Prophet, is expressed by the gerunds "eundo ac veniendo", closely resembles the "entrano ed escono" (l. 77) of Dante's description.

Dante's angels issue forth from the river, symbol of Divine Grace, embodying beatitude and charity which they then dispense upon the souls of the Blessed. In the "Liber Scalae", the angels are presented as "stantes super pedes suos erecti"; but clearly, the result of their motion, "eundo ac veniendo in multis manieribus", is the fluttering of their raiments as they spread their wings, like those described by Dante:

"Quando scendean nel fior di banco in banco progevan della pace e dell'ardore ch'elli acquistavan ventilando il fianco." (Par. XXXI, 16-18)

In his rapture, Dante dwells upon the details of the spectacle. The visual sense by which the poet is dominated, is transformed into a feeling a joy:

"Né l'interporsi tra 'l disopra e 'l fiore di tanta moltitudine volante impediva la vista e lo splendore;

ché la luce divina è penetrante per l'universo secondo ch'è degno, sí che nulla le puote essere ostante." (Par. XXXI, 19-24)

The "moltitudine volante" which animates the incorporeity of the eternal heavens prevents Dante neither from seeing the Elect, nor the permanent splendour of the divine stream of light. The poet gives an example of what his visual faculty had become, after having mystically taken of the divine light. His eyesight empowered and "transhumanised", he perceives what the human eye could never capture because, either the angelic "moltitudine volante" is visible and hence the Blessed are not, or the Blessed are visible through the angelic band and, this being the case, the latter in turn becomes indiscernible.

What is certain is that Dante wishes here to aver that the human mind is incapable of conceiving such a spectacle. This is a recurrent motif in the "Liber Scalae", where it is often repeated that the aspects of the paradisiac vision transcend description and presentation in that they would baffle the senses. Dante's comprehensive vision is shared also by the prophet Muhammad:

"Et quomodocumque angelos flumina et alia respexerim

encompasses the luminous dimensions of the paradisiac vision, and he is able to sustain the intense brightness of the river which no mortal eye can behold without the risk of blindness.

In the final canto of the "Paradiso", in his discourse on the eternal light that emanates from God, Dante warns that no mortal should believe it possible to see it with any clarity:

"indi all'eterno lume si drizzaro, nel qual non si dee creder che  
s'invii per creatura l'occhio tanto chiaro." (Par. XXXIII, 43-45)

And in Canto XXVIII of the "Paradiso", he states explicitly:

"un punto vidi che raggiava lume acuto sì, che 'l viso ch'elli affoca  
chiuder conviensi per lo forte acume." (16-18)

The human eye must therefore remain closed in the presence of the Divine Light because it cannot sustain its acumen. Similarly, in the "Liber Scalae", Muhammad, in his contemplation of the pure and luminous river, considers, like Dante, the insufficiency of human sight to endure the brilliance of the paradisiac light; (XXIV, 59) should the mortal do so unaided, he would lose his visual faculty. This notion recurs in "Paradiso" XXX:

"Come subito lampo che discetti li spiriti visivi, sì che priva  
dall'atto l'occhio di più forti obietti, così mi circunfulse luce viva; e  
lasciommi fasciato di tal velo del suo fulgor, che nulla  
m'appariva". (46-51)

The angels, depicted as living sparks, that proceed from Dante's paradisiac stream in order to set themselves in flowers are not, in their general description, dis-similar to those which, out of the river of inexpressible brightness, appear before the Prophet Muhammad and sing praises to their lord:

"Di tal fiumana uscian faville vive, e d'ogni parte si mettien ne'  
fiori, quasi rubin che oro circunscrive.

Poi, come inebriate dalli odori, riprofondavan sé nel miro gurge; e  
s'una intrava, un'altra n'uscía fori." (Par. XXX, 64-69)

"et hoc flumen totum est plenum angelis qui, stantes super pedes  
suos erecti, in multis manieribus eundo ac veniendo continue  
Deum laudant." (XXV, 61)

Inasmuch as Dante's stream is populated by angels, a "moltitudine volante", which issues forth as living sparks and like a swarm of bees "che s'infiora", so the analogy with the river contemplated by Muhammad is made valid. Not only is it also populated by angels, but

description of this river, whose source and outlet is invisible to the mortal eye, (like the golden ladder in the sphere of Saturn, which extends upward "tanto, che nol seguiva la mia luce", Par. XXI, 30), provided Dante with the basis of a broader, more complex poetic discourse.

"E vidi lume in forma di rivera fluvido di fulgore, intra due rive dipinte di mirabil primavera.

Di tal fiumana uscían faville vive, e d'ogni parte si mettíen ne' fiori, quasi rubin che oro circunscrive.

Poi, come inebriate dalli odori, riprofondavan sé nel moro gurge; e s'una intrava, un'altra n'uscía fori." (Par. XXX, 61-69)

For the analogous study of the two above-cited passages from the "Liber Scalae" and the "Paradiso", one must pause at the words "lume", "rivera", "fluvido", "fulgore" with which Dante describes this inexhaustible river of light that flows down from the Empyrean. Whilst it should not be excluded that such a notion could have been inspired by Biblical sources<sup>6</sup>, it is nevertheless not improbable that Dante derived the idea from the "Liber Scalae" where there is the description of a river surrounded by nine bands of angels, the source and outlet of which is not clearly discernible, and whose water is "clara", "alba", "tam.... resplendens quod nullus eam respicere audeat." There is, moreover, in the succession of the three adjectives "alba", "clara" and "resplendens", a gradual intensification of the description that is akin to the crescendo of light in the "Paradiso". As much as this is a river of water it is, by virtue of the three adjectives that qualify it, rendered equally into a river of light, similar in representation and definition to the dantesque river:

"E vidi lume in forma di rivera fluvido di fulgore, intra due rive dipinte di mirabil primavera."

The river that Dante perceives, like the one witnessed by the Prophet Muhammad, flows between two banks which are formed of the glorified bodies of the Elect. What first appears to Dante to be in the shape of a river, becomes circular:

"sí, soprastando al lume intorno intorno, vidi specchiarsi in piú di mille soglie quanto di noi lá su fatto ha ritorno." (Par. XXX, 112-114)

The eyesight of the poet, strengthened by the light of Divine Grace, is not overpowered by the vastness of the spectacle and succeeds in grasping the immensity of the marvellous vision both in the qualitative and the quantitative aspects. In a similar fashion, Muhammad's gaze

In essa gerarcia son l'altre dee: prima Dominazioni, e poi Virtudi;  
l'ordine terzo di Podestadi èe.

Poscia ne' due penultimi tripudi Principati e Arcangeli si girano;  
l'ultimo è tutto d'Angelici ludi.

Questi ordini di su tutti s'ammirano, e di giù vincon sí, che verso  
Dio tutti tirati sono, e tutti tirano.' " (Par. XXVIII, 94-129)

we learn that the angelic chorus in Dante's "Paradiso", chanting hosannas to God and extolling Him who is the Fixed Point which holds them in their sempiternal "ubi", are forever stationed in their positions..... i.e. "verso Dio". Later, in Canto XXIX, Dante describes them as:

"Queste sustanze, poi che fur gioconde della faccia di Dio, non  
volser viso da essa, da cui nulla si nasconde". (76-78)

Similarly, in his description of the Cherubins, the author of the "Liber Scalae" underlines the fact that, after their creation, the angels "sunt ita obediens Deo quod..... nullus eorum volvit caput suum ad respiciendum socium; sed omnes semper tenent versus terram capita inclinata per timore quem habet de ipso." (XXIII, 58)

The angels that are submissive and dedicated to God's will are described as fixed, immobile and attentive, with their heads humbly howed as a sign of reverence and awe. The angels that Dante depicts gaze fixedly upon God, their Creator; those that Muhammad contemplates are seen in a posture of reverence and of absolute immobility. This portrayal of the angels, notwithstanding the fact that the motif diverges in its development, is analogous in both texts. And just as Dante presents the nine choirs of angels, so the author of the "Liber Scalae" speaks of "novem angelorum acies" which, moreover, are concentrically arranged. Indeed, "cingunt se inter se, ita quod acies intrat in aciem." In addition, the nine angelic choirs that are subject to Muhammad's minute and curious observation are similar to those that arouse a more profound emotion in Dante..... the feeling of the infinite and the ineffable, where human thought strays and the power of communication is lost. The nine angelic choirs in the "Liber Scalae" are placed amidst the seventy thousand bands of other angels in order to convey the sense of the infinite and the inexpressible.

Between the seventy thousand bands of angels and the "novem angelorum acies" there runs a river "cujus principium nemo novit nec eciam finem, nisi solus Deus qui fecit ipsum. Est enim aqua illa ita alba et tam clara et resplendens quod nullus eam respicere audeat, ne visum timens respiciendo amittat." (XXIV, 59) It is possible that the

"Ed ecco intorno, di chiarezza pari, nascere un lustro sopra quel che v'era, per guisa d'orizzonte che rischiari." (Par. XIV, 67-69)

The heaven of Jupiter surpasses that of Mars in brightness, and it is in turn excelled by that of Saturn. The eighth heaven of the Fixed Stars is the one nearest the Empyrean which includes within itself all the other spheres and is the primal source of light and love:

"..... 'Noi siamo uscite fore del maggior corpo al ciel ch'è pura luce: luce intellettuale, piena d'amore; amor di vero ben, pien di letizia; letizia che trascende ogni dolzore' " (Par. XXX, 38-42)

Another feature common to both the Islamic paradise of the "Liber Scalae" and Dante's "Paradiso" is the sense of joy running throughout the heavens which is expressed in music and in singing. The analogy is most apparent in the description of the chanting angels who sing praises to their Creator:

"Nam inter istas LXX milia acierum erant alie novem angelorum acies (una ante aliam, quarum quelibet erat nonagies tam grandior quam aliqua aliarum. Angeli vero istarum novem acierum) nullum habentes spacium inter capita et humores eorundem ita sibi similes in omnibus quod nulla est differencia inter eos..... Et laudentes Deum exaltabant fortiter voces suas." (XXIII, 58)

"..... et vidi quod ille novem angelorum acies, de quo locutus sum vobis, cingunt se inter se, ita quod acies intrat in aciem..... Et inter easdem acies currit quoddam flumen aque, cujus principium nemo novit nec eciam finem, nisi solus Deus qui fecit ipsum." (XXIV, 59)

Comparing these statements with:

"Io sentiva osannar di coro in coro al punto fisso che li tiene alli ubi, e terrà sempre, ne' quai sempre foro.

E quella che vedea i pensier dubi nella mia mente, disse: 'I cerchi primi t'hanno mostrato Serafi e Cherubi.

Quelli altri amor che dintorno li vonno, si chiaman Troni del divino aspetto, per che 'l primo ternaro terminonno.

L'altro ternaro, che cosí germoglia in questa primavera sempiterna che notturno Ariete non dispoglia, perpetualmente "Osanna" sberna con tre melode, che suonano in tree ordini di letizia onde s'interna.

Hence we perceive the element of differentiation which is also evident in the paradisiac construction of the "Liber Scalae". Here, the Islamic heavens are arranged upward according to the relative quality of the component material. They range from the iron of the first heaven to the topaz of the eighth. In the vast paradisiac panorama, they appear in all their gradations before Muhammad's enraptured eyes. The eight Islamic heavens are composed respectively of iron, bronze, silver, gold, pearls, emeralds, rubies and topaz, and as the value gradually increases so the spheres are rendered brighter. In this crescendo of brilliance, it is not difficult to trace an analogy with the "Paradiso", where Dante's ascent from one sphere to another is evidenced by the greater intensity of light. Furthermore, Dante's "Paradiso" is similarly presented as a realm of light, as a matter that appears matterless, composed of limpid air and light.

As mentioned earlier, Dante's awareness of having ascended from one to a higher sphere is expressed only by the more radiant countenance of Beatrice and by the greater density of light. In his passage through the nine heavens, he is conscious of this great crescendo of light that commences from the moonspots that render opaque that heaven which is farthest from God and terminates at the Divine Source of light which dazzles the eyes and the senses. Similarly, Muhammad, in his journey through the heavens, starts from the one which is most opaque and traverses the successive heavens until he reaches the ineffable brilliance of the highest. In both cases, the nearer one approaches the Divinity, the more diffuse and intense does the light become so that, in the end, it dissolves in the overwhelming brilliance of the Divine Light. But whereas Dante's "Paradiso" is the canticle of pure light, the Islamic paradise is a symphony of luminous colours, reflections and gems.

In the "Paradiso" the motif of light is introduced in the first heaven of the Moon in muffled tenuous tones, almost as if Dante were depicting soft moonbeams. In the second heaven, that of Mercury, it becomes more vivid. Inasmuch as happiness manifests itself by light, the brightness of a soul grows with the increase of joy. Hence light acquires greater concreteness and intensity:

"Quivi la donna mia vid'io sí lieta, come nel lume di quel ciel si mise, che piú lucente se ne fe' 'l pianeta.

E sa la stella si cambiò e rise, qual mi fec'io che pur da mia natura trasmutabile son per tutte guise!" (Par. V, 94-99)

From the heaven of Mercury, the crescendo of light can be traced through the heaven of Venus (cf Par. VIII, 13-21), to that of the Sun (cf Par. X, 76-81), and subsequently to Mars where the brightness of the light is diffuse and equal in every part of the sphere:

whereby Dante, by dint of Virgil's words, is secured entry into Purgatory.

The outline of the Islamic paradise as depicted in the "Liber Scalae" reveals, in its general structure, a close schematic analogy with Dante's "Paradiso". The heavens are eight, just as in Dante's plan, if one is to exclude the Crystalline Heaven, the ninth in Dante's conception of the Universe and the Empyrean, the abode of the Deity:

"La natura del mondo, che quieta il mezzo e tutto l'altro intorno move, quinci comincia come de sua meta.

E questo cielo non ha altro dove che la mente divina, in che s'accende l'amor che il volge e la virtù ch'ei piove.

Luce ed amor d'un cerchio lui comprende, sì come questo gli 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 diece da mezzo e da quinto." (Par. XXVII, 106-117)

Every sphere except the ninth is surrounded by another sphere. But the Crystalline Heaven, inasmuch as it is the outermost sphere of the material universe, is surrounded only by the world of the Spirit, the Heaven of Light and Love, the Empyrean which is the abode of the Divine Intelligence.

Each of the heavens of the Islamic Paradise, as represented in the "Liber Scalae", has its own denomination and characteristic features. The first heaven is Heden (Eden); the second: Dar al-galal (Abode of Glory); the third: Dar as-salâm (Abode of Peace); the fifth: Gannat al-huld (Paradise of Eternity); the sixth: Gannat an-nâim (Paradise of Delight) (XXXIV, 83). In each of these heavens the paradisiac imagery is in strict correspondence to the various appellations.

Dante's heavens of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn correspond generally to the Islamic heavens of Glory, Peace, Refuge, Eternity and Delight. And just as the "Paradiso" is the canticle of light, so we discover that the Moslem heavens are also filled with varying gradations of light. They are populated by angels who are compared to the whiteness of snow and the brightness of pearls. It is these angels who, by the brilliance of their raiments and the lucidity of their wings, span and illumine the celestial spheres.

Similarly the radiance of Dante's heavenly bodies is due not only to the angels but also to the bright light of the Blessed who deign to reveal themselves in the various heavens, the gradation of light being relative to the sphere in which they appear.

m'aiuta condurlo a vederti e a udirti. Or ti piaccia gradir la sua  
venuta: libertà va cercando, ch'è sì cara, come sa chi per lei vita  
rifiuta".  
(Purg. I, 85-72)

Dante is seeking liberty from a sinner's soul and embarks upon  
the journey of the after-life, called and illumined by Divine Grace,  
in order to pave the way for his moral redemption. Dante and  
Muhammad feel charged with a grave prophetic mission: both  
are called in order to show men the path to celestial happiness by  
means of a laborious ascent that leads to oral redemption and  
spiritual perfection.

Before the angel seased on the threshold of purgatory, Virgil  
corroborates the concept previously expressed to Cato:

"..... da me non venni; donna scese del ciel, per lui priegh della  
mia compagnia costui sovvenni".  
(Purg. I, 52-54)

"Donna del ciel, di queste cose accorta", rispuose il mio maestro  
a lui "pur dianzi ne disse: 'Andate là: quivi è la porta.' " (Purg. IX,  
88-90)

The lady is St. Lucy, symbol of illuminating Grace, who, "dianzi  
nell'alba che procede al giorno", (Purg. IX, 52) wakes Dante who is  
sleeping in the narrow valley in order to speed him on his way. It is  
Lucy who, urged by the Virgin Mary, had already betaken herself to  
Beatrice entreating her to succour the man who had loved her in her  
earthly life and who was now about to drown in "la fiumana ove 'l mar  
non ha vanto". (Inf. II, 108)

Just as Cato who, on learning the object of Dante's journey from  
Virgil, consents to the entry of the pilgrim to the seven realms charged  
to his custody, and just as the guardian angel who to Virgil's  
explanation:

"Donna del ciel, di queste cose accorta, ..... pur dianzi ne  
disse: 'Andate là: quivi è la porta' ",

replies: "Ed ella i passi vostri in bene avanzi", and promptly adds:  
"venite dunque a' nostri gradi innanzi", so the guardian angel of the  
first Islamic heaven, on hearing Gabriel's justification which  
emphasises the divine decree of the Prophet Muhammad's journey to  
the after-life, permits "sigillum prophetarum omnium" to enter into his  
realm so that he may find the light that guides all men to their salvation.  
Hence, all of a sudden, the gate is miraculously opened: "mox nobis  
porte aperte sunt et intravimus" (XII, 25), resembling the manner

he opens the gate with the two keys, the golden key of divine authority for pardon and the silver key of understanding for the guiding of the penitent and for loosing the knot, the entanglement of sin.

There is no such wealth of description and allegory in the "Liber Scalae". There is however a similarity in the manner in which both Muhammad and Dante are received. On noticing the two aliens, the angel of the "Purgatorio" addresses them with the terse interrogation:

" 'Dite costinci: che volete voi?' cominciò elli a dire: 'ov'è la scorta?' ". (Purg. IX, 85-86)

Similarly, in the "Liber Scalae", the guardian angel of the first sphere of paradise asks Gabriel:

"Gabriel, quid vis et quis tecum est?"

The two inherent questions are "Che volete voi/Quid vis" and "Ov'è la scorta". In both cases the first question is identical: "Che volete/Quid vis". The second enquiry is justified by the fact that the angel has noticed that the two visitors are not even among the temporary denizens of purgatory and thinks, therefore, that they must be accompanied by some higher authority. Hence the reciprocal severity in the terse enquiries of both the guardian angel of "Purgatorio" and the Islamic angel who, though recognising Gabriel, asks him to explain the presence of his companion.

Moreover, in the second question, "Quis tecum est?", one could trace a further analogy with the enquiry with which Cato addresses the two poets:

"Chi siete voi che contro al cieco fiume fuggita avete la pregione eterna?" (Purg. I, 40-41)

As Virgil's to Cato, Gabriel's response fully justifies the presence of his companion:

"Mecum est Machometus, prophetarum sigillum omnium et cunctorem dominus nunciorum et volumus ibi intus intrare" (XII, 25)

Virgil's response to Cato is curiously similar in Spirit:

"Questi non vide mai l'ultima sera; ma per la sua follia le fu sí presso, che molto poco tempo a volger era. Sí com'io dissi, fui mandato ad esso per lui campare; e non li era altra via che questa per la quale i' mi son messo. Mostrata ho lui tutta la gente ria; e ora intendo mostrar quelli spirti che purgan sé sotto la tua balía. Com'io l'ho tratto, saría lungo a dirti; dell'alto scende virtù che

cloud not only as "lucida" and "pulita", but also as "spessa" and "solida".

The guardian angel at the gate of Paradise in the "Liber Scalae" is similar to the "cortese portinaio" of Dante's "Purgatory":

"Gabriel venit ad unam portarum ut intraret. Venit ad nos quidam angelus ita magnus quod ipse in longitudine sua habebat spacium itineris hominis per mille annos et tantumdem in altitudine quidem sua. Vidimus.... Tunc vero Gabriel venit ad unam portarum ut intraret. Et cum vellet hoc Facere quidam angelus dixit ei: 'Gabriel quid vis et quis tecum est?' " (XII, 25)

First, the presence of the Islamic and dantesque guardian angels on the threshold of paradise and purgatory respectively is a feature common to the "Liber Scalae" and the "Commedia". The countenance of Dante's "portier" is so bright that it is beyond the poet's mortal power to behold:

"vidil seder sovra 'l grado soprano, tal nella faccia ch'io non lo sofferesi". (Purg. IX, 80-81)

In his hand, the angel holds a naked sword:

"che rifletteva i raggi sì ver noi ch'io drizzava spesso il viso invano". (Purg. IX, 83-84).

Similarly, the angel entrusted with the guardianship of the first realm of paradise in the "Liber Scalae" is, on account of his unsurpassable beauty and exceeding radiance, equally indescribable. His beauty is that of all the other angels which, "valde bene ac ditissime perornati", populate that sphere of paradise.

Both authors have certain imaginative traits in common. These common elements are to be found in their representation of the gate and of the guardian angel seated upon its threshold. Where they diverge is in the description of the guardian angel himself. In the "Commedia", the description has a greater wealth of detail and is more colourful and concrete than in the "Liber Scalae". The guardian angel of the "Purgatorio", seated upon the uppermost step of the gate, is presented as a "pietra di diamante", symbolising the unshakable foundation of the authority of the Church. The colour of his raiment is grey, "di cenere o terra che secca i cavi" (l. 115), differing thus from the pure whiteness of the angel pilot (Purg. II), and from any other angel so far encountered in the "Commedia". With the point of his sword he inscribes upon the penitent's brow the seven Ps, symbols of the seven deadly sins, which are removed one by one as Dante passes through the circles where traces of these sins are purged away. Subsequently,

the divine mysteries to the pilgrim, ascend to the first heaven of the moon which receives them in the way that water, though remaining undivided, can receive a ray of light:

"Per entro sé l'eterna margarita ne ricevette, com'acqua recepe raggio di luce permanendo unita". (Par. II, 34-36)

It is similar to this manner that Muhammad and Gabriel arrive at the first heaven, "quod dicitur celum lune". Their paradisiac itinerary is unknown; we are told only that "Profecti sumus and primum celum". The Prophet is attracted upward by the flight of the angel Gabriel in the same way that Dante, having drunk of the water of Eunoe (Purg. XXXIII), begins unwittingly to ascend, gazing only upward at Beatrice:

"Beatrice in suso, e io in lei guardava; e forse in tanto in quanto un quadrel posa e vola e dalla noce si dischiara, giunto mi vidi ove mirabil cosa mi torse il viso a sé...." (Par. II, 22-26)

Both descriptions imply the meteoric speed of the ascent. On reaching the lowest heaven, Dante is immediately struck by the magnetic quality of the sphere:

"giunto mi vidi ove mirbil cosa mi torse il viso a sé.....".

It is only after Beatrice's elucidation that Dante's fears and indecision are dissipated, and that the earlier vague impression of the pilgrim acquires greater concreteness:

"Parev'a me che nube ne coprisse lucida, spessa, solida e pulita, quasi adamante che lo sol ferisse". (Par. II, 31-33).

Similarly, Muhammad's first impression on arriving at the lowest heaven, is equally brief and generic. His attention is immediately caught by the quality of the heaven, "quod totum erat ferreum". But just as Dante, after Beatrice's clarification, passes from the concise definition of the whole, ("giunto mi vidi.....'il viso a sé"), to a more detailed description, ("Parev'a me..... che lo sol ferisse"), so in the "Liber Scalae", the succinct representation of the composite is followed by a more elaborate and specific definition of the components:

"et habebat tantum in spisso vel spissi solidate quantum posset homo in V<sup>o</sup> annis". (XII, 25)

One may further extend this analogy to state that in both cases, the successive specific quality of the representation denotes the progression from a region of unlikeness to a region of likeness. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the expression in the Latin text "in spisso vel spissi solidate", is echoed in the tercet which describes the

tema e la consapevolezza dell'insufficienza ad esprimerla con umane parole";:

"Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio che'l parlar mostra, ch'a tal vista cede, e cede la memoria a tanto oltraggio. Qual è colui che somniando vede, che dopo il sogno la passione impressa rimane, e l'altro alla mente non riede, cotal son io, ché quasi tutta cessa mia visione, ed ancor mi distilla nel core il dolce, che nacque da esa". (Par. XXXIII, 55-63).

"Cosí la mente mia, tutta sospesa, mirava fissa, immobile e attenta, e sempre di mirar faciesi accesa". (ibidem, 97-99)

Between the "Liber Scalae" and the "Divina Commedia" there is a further analogy in the manner in which the protagonists are transported from one sphere to another. For example, in the "Liber Scalae" we are simply told:

"Et ultra profecti sumus quousque ad primum celum et hoc dicitur celum lune". (XI, 24)

There is neither mention nor description of the intermediate journey from the point when Muhammad and Gabriel take leave of the guardian angel of hell and the time of their arrival in the first heaven of the moon. We are simply presented with the 'fait accompli'. This dramatic device recurs frequently in the "Commedia". Dante's passage from one round to another (Inf. V-VI), or from one terrace to another (Purg. IX, XIX, XXVII), occurs without his knowledge. The transition takes place either during a swoon or in dreams. In the "Paradiso", Dante's arrival at a higher sphere is indicated only by the greater diffusion of light in that sphere, and consequently, by the increasing "bellezza" of Beatrice's semblance. Hence the dialectic between Beatrice and her surroundings:

"Quivi la donna mia vid'io sí lieta, come nel lume di quel ciel sí mise, che piú lucente se ne fe' 'l pianeta". (Par. V, 94-96)

Often he employs an arrow simile to express the rapidity of the transition:

"E ora lí, come a sito decreto, cen porta la virtù di quella corda che ciò che scocca drizza in segno lieto". (Par. I, 124-6).

"E sí come saetta che nel segno percuote pria che sia la corda queta, cosí corremmo nel secondo regno". (Par. V, 91-93)

The immediacy of the arrival is reminiscent of the aforementioned passage of the "Liber Scalae". It is as if carried by their instinct that Dante and Beatrice, the former free from any impediment of sin, the latter beatified and charged with the duty of guiding and expounding

to the heaven of Saturn (Par. XXI), and which stretches so far upward that "nol seguiva la mia luce", resembles the biblical ladder that appears in the vision of Jacob;<sup>5</sup> and yet, at the same time, it is closely related to the ladder "que durabat a primo celo usque and terram ubi stabam", whose "claritas tanta erat quod vix poterat respicere homo ipsam" (VI, 14), upon which the title of the Islamic text is based.

The dantesque perspective of the heavenly spheres, encompassed by the Empyrean, the abode of the Divinity who, though motionless, is the Origin of the wheeling of the lower heavens, is far more elaborately portrayed than that of the "Liber Scalae". Dante speaks of that heaven

"ch'è pien d'amore a più ampio si spazia". (Purg. XXVI, 63).

It is

"..... il ciel sempre quieto nel qual si volge quel c'ha maggior fretta". (Par 1, 122-3)

Nevertheless, what is common to both the "Paradiso" and the "Liber Scalae" is the authors' depiction of the highest heaven as a river of light, although in Dante's case, it later assumes the appearance of a vast white Rose, in which are the seats of the Blessed.

(Par. XXX, 97-XXXII, 84)

Moreover, Dante's experience of the Beatific Vision is identical to that of Muhammad, whose triumphant passage through paradise reaches its culmination in the vision of the Divine Essence. At the spectacle of the Throne of God, upheld by a host of angels, the Prophet's eyes are dazzled by the splendour that transcends the visual and descriptive power of any mortal:

"Erat enim cathedra illa tante claritatis quod nullus dicere hoc valeret". (XX, 52)

And when the Divine Hand is placed upon his shoulder, he experiences not only the mystifying ecstasy of the Divine Presence, but discovers also that utter silence and immobility by which God, the Object of all desire, is surrounded:

"Et tunc inter ipsum et me non erat aliquis angelus neque homo aut quicquam aliud, nisi solum ipse et ego eiam recto situ". (XLIX, 124).

In a similar fashion Dante, in the dramatic tension of the closing lines of the "Commedia", lays great emphasis on the theme of his struggle and partial triumph. Here, as Sapegno observes, "la nota eroica fondamentale à resa vibrante dalla continua presenza di un'altra malinconia lirica, si determina nel contrasto fra la maestà superba del

cameli erant omnes cathenati cathenis aureis circa colla eorum et ipsorum facies candelis assimilabantur ardentibus. Pili quoque ipsorum erant ad modum serici, rubei cum viderim longo tempore jam transacto. Erant etiam natura mansueti propria et ita bene docti quam in nullo castigari egebantur. Nec ullus etiam labor quem ipsi sustinerent in aliquo gravabat eosdem. Nam et hii cameli, post retro dorsa equitancium, omnes enim erant auro et argento, perlis et aliis preciosis lapidibus cunctarum manierum etiam onerati." (XL. 102)

"Et quando angeli qui super camelos equitabant venerunt ad locum ubi erant illi superdictis recitationibus et fabulis intendebant exoneraverunt eos, et ex parte Dei donaverunt illis, qui ibi erant, cuncta gaudeola que attulerant, et ipsos etiam salutarunt dicentes eis postmodum: 'Ascendite supra camelos istos et ite ad Dominum, quia ipse vult videre vos, et quod ipsum videatis et vult loqui vobis et quod loquamini et vos ei. Ostendet ipse quidem vobis plus pietatis et honoris quam ipse ostenderit usque modo'. Et confestim quilibet eorum cepit equitare super camelum suum; et ibant omnes unus iuxta alium tali manerie insimul ordinati et stricte conjuncti quod cameli sic ibant equaliter quod nullus ipsorum mittebat caput ante alium neque genu". (XL. 103).

"Vidi 'n sul braccio destro esser rivolto lo glorioso essercito, e tornarsi col sole e con le sette fiamme al volto. Come sotto li scudi per salvarsi volgesi schiera, e sé gira col segno, prima che possa tutta in sé mutarsi; quella milizia del celeste regno che precedeva, tutta trapassone pria che piegasse il carro il primo legno". (Purg. XXXII, 16-24).

The analogy is further accentuated by the appearance of a tree in both the Moslem and dantesque pageants. In the Islamic text it is the tree "que arabico eloquio nominatur "Thube", quod interpretatur: arbor delectationis et gaudii." This tree is described as "de principalioribus et pulcrioribus paradisi. Sub hac namque arbore sedent et adunantur omnes illi de paradiso". Similarly it is around the tree of Law, the tree of lofty stature the crest of which:

"..... che tanto si dilata piú quanto piú è su, fora dali 'Indi ne' boschi lor per bellezza ammirata."

(Purg. XXXII, 40-42)

that Dante's pageant of the Church Militant assembles.

As mentioned earlier, it is in the paradisiac imagery that we find the closest resemblance between the "Liber Scalae" and the "Divina Commedia". For example, the ladder which Dante sees in his ascent

quam pluribus que sunt ibi"--- LXXVII; "Machometus vidit peccatores in inferno diversa tormentorum genera sustinere"---- LXXIX).

Together with the Minotaur and the Centaurs, the Harpies that Dante encounters in the second circle of the "Inferno" (Cantos XII-XIII) resemble, in their brite human form, the beasts "quibus nomen est 'catas' " of the Islamic hell. The similarity between the two rounds becomes pronounced as one discerns the element of poison in both descriptions:

"Non era ancor di là Nesso arrivato, quando noi ci mettemmo per un bosco che da nessun sentiero era segnato. Non frondi verde, ma di color fosco; non rami schietti, ma nodosi e 'nvolti; non pomi v'eran, ma stecchi con toscio". (Inf. XIII, 1-6).

"Sunt enim nichilominus omnes circumdate quam sit obscurius noctis alicujus tenebris que magis obscure sunt quando nimium est obscura. Nam quelibet earum bestiarum habet in se venenum ita fortissimum quod satis urit durius quam inferni faciat ignis mgnus". (Liber Scalae, LVI, 141).

In both the "Commedia" and the "Liber Scalae", Satan, as the culmination of all vice, is presented at the botoom of the abyss at the end of the infernal journey. Here, he is depicted as a powerless monster of gigantic proportions, and is described in both cases as the ruler of the dark abysmal world:

"Lo 'mperador del doloroso regno da mezzo il petto uscía fuor della ghiaccia; e piú con un gigante io mi convegno, chei giganti non fan con le sue braccia: vede oggimai quant'esser dee quel tutto ch'a cosí fatta parte si confaccia." (Inf. XXXIV, 28-33)

"Sciatis enim quod in hac terra est sedes et habitacio dyaboli ac regnum ipsius. Ibi namque sunt ejus exercitus atque gentes. Verumptamen ipse nichilominus ligatus existit.... Et sic ipse hac terra septima est ligatus. Est autem ita magnus quod, in loco in quo est, attingit ipse cum capite suo terram istam in qua sumus; et, cum suis duobus cornibus, que habet, penetrat supra eam". (LX, 149)

In the "Liber Scalae", the description of the Blessed who proceed toward the Throne of God, accompanied by the angelic caravan, is closely analogous to Dante's pageant of the Church Militant in Purgatorio XXXII. In both cases the procession maintains a stately order, and its place and movement are described with military precision:

"Ecce respexi et vidi venire quamdam societatem angelorum maximam, qui omnes super camelos equites veniebant. Hii enim

Brunetto latini's mission to Spain in 1260, as has been done by Asin palacios, he can nevertheless be considered (as Carlo Alfonso Nallino suggests) as the most probable vehicle of transmission of Eastern culture to medieval Italy. Moreover, because of his personal acquaintance with Dante, one could conjecture that he was the means whereby Dante gained direct knowledge of the "Liber Scalae".

The wide diffusion of the book outside Spain is witnessed by three manuscripts of the same text ---- in Brittany, Avignon and Anglo-Normandy. Furthermore, from Fazio degli Uberti, who had direct knowledge of the "Liber Scalae", using it as a model and referring to it explicitly in his "Dittamondo" 4 (composed 1350-1360), one may deduce the existence and wide circulation of the text in Italy, and its influence upon medieval Italian literature.

It is therefore probable that, on the basis of the cultural relations that existed between the western and the Islamic world in the Middle Ages, Dante either directly or indirectly gained access to the "Liber Scalae".

Inasmuch as the "Liber Scalae Machometi" is concerned mainly with the ascent of Muhammad to the Divine Presence, the descriptions of paradisiac scenes greatly out-number those of hell, for his visit there is incidental, performed merely in obeisance to the command of God, as conveyed by the archangel Gabriel:

"Scias, Machomete, quod Dominus noster tantum te diligit quam ipse vult ut ostendam tibi figuras cunctarum gentium, que nunc vivunt et que de hoc seculo etiam transierunt. Vult enim similiter quod videas quomodo infernus factus est et que res ibi intus sunt. Et post hoc etiam penas et tormenta que in eodem sustinent infideles et sicut ea videris ita populo tuo dices et ostendes ut sciant qui sunt ituri et qui non ad inferni supplicia ex eisdem. Et nichilominus vult etiam quod dicas populo tuo ut faciant prout eis preceperis faciendum". LIII, 134.

What infernal detail exists, however, contains elements that are closely analogous to those found in Dante's "Inferno". In both cases we have the representation of a dark abysmal world filled with the groans of the lost people; a realm of fire and ice and strange meteors, rendered more horrible by the presence of frightful figures, irate and ferocious guardians and wrathful demons. In the "Liber Scalae", the ocean and flames upon which thousands of flaming biers form the burning city resembles Dante's glaring City of Dis. The livid light and the lugubrious sky that enclose the souls enfeebled by torture are features common to both Dante's and the Islamic hells. (cf "Infernum atque portas et alia existencia plura ibi"---- LXXI; "In quem modum sunt pene divise inferni"--- LXXII; "DE fluminibus ignis et aliis rebus

For the purposes of this paper, I have chosen to leave aside those versions cited by Asin Palacios, and have decided to base my study on the "Liber Scalae Machometi", that version of the account which has been brought to light by Enrico Cerulli. Underlying my decision are three essential considerations. The first stems from the fact that Asin Palacios' work not only was a break-through for the thesis of Islamic eschatological influence upon the "Divine Comedy", but also because his exhaustive comparative study and the critique that has followed it hardly leave room for further discussion. The second consideration is this: whereas Asin Palacios cites portions of individual versions which he divides into cycles, in the "Liber Scalae" we have an entire account of one version of the ascent of the Prophet. This, in my opinion, would serve as a more appropriate model for a comparative study with the "Commedia", for it is very improbable that Dante had known the multiple versions of the account in all its ramification. Lastly, the very entity of the text in Old French as well as in Latin renders it, in my opinion, the one most likely to have been known to Dante.

The question now arises of how Dante could have had access to the "Liber Scalae Machometi". Enrico Cerulli deals extensively with this subject, but for the sake of adding my own comments, I shall outline briefly the historical background of the text, indicating the means whereby it became known to Western medieval culture and how Dante could have gained access to it.

The "Liber Scalae" was translated from the original Arabic into Castilian by a certain Abraham whose translation was subsequently rendered into Latin and Old French by Bonaventura da Siena. Relatively little is known of the first translator. From the inscription "Abraham Judeus physicus, domini Alfonsi", he has been identified as a Jewish physician who was active at the Castilian court during the reign of Alfonso X<sup>3</sup>. Still less is known of Bonaventura da Siena. Almost certainly Sienese by birth, he was probably one of the exiled Tuscans living in Spain during the period when both the Florentine Guelfs and the Ghibellines of Pisa and Siena looked toward Alfonso X, elected emperor in 1257, to intervene in the affairs of Italy. There is an important passage in Villani that describes the state of affairs of that period. In *Cronaca* 1, vi, ch. 59, he writes:

"Alfonso di Spagna, accioch' egli colle sue forze venisse ad abbattere la superbia e signoria di Manfredi; per la qual cagione i guelfi di Firenze gli mandarono ambasciadori per sommuoverlo del passare, promettendogli grande aiuto acciocchè favorasse parte guelfa. E l'ambasciatdore fu Ser Brunetto Latini, uomo di grande senno e autoritade."

The passage is significant. Without over-stressing the importance of

## ISLAMIC ESCHATOLOGY IN THE DIVINA COMMEDIA

In order to establish traces of Islamic eschatological tradition in Dante's "Divina Commedia", and to determine their precise relationship with respect to the "Poema sacro", one has immediate recourse to a certain verse in the Koran and subsequently, to the manifold versions of the interpretations that it prompted. The verse in question is the first of Sura XVII:

"Glory be to Him who made His servant go by night from the Sacred Temple<sup>1</sup> to the farther Temple<sup>2</sup> whose surroundings We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs. He alone hears all and observes all."

This is the basic reference in the Koran to the journey that the Prophet Muhammad, summoned by God and accompanied by the archangel Gabriel, made to the celestial spheres. Taking their point of departure from this brief Koranic allusion, the early Moslems amplified the essential text with detailed accounts of the heavenly ascent, describing the delights and personages that the Prophet encountered in heaven, his visit to hell and the horror witnessed by him of the torments that unbelievers underwent, plus a variety of incidental events.

Soon the interpretations of the Prophet's ascent with its multiple versions, all germinating from the same Koranic allusion, was to be assimilated into the general corpus of "hadiths" or traditions of the Prophet.

The principal problem confronting one endeavouring to trace Islamic eschatological tradition in the "Divine Comedy" is one of selection----- i.e. which of the innumerable versions of the account should one choose as the basis for a comparative study with the "Commedia"? Or should one, following the example of Asin Palacios, engage in the parallel study of more than one of these versions, and find analogies between each of these and the "Commedia"?



# Islamic Eschatology in the Divina Commedia

Dr. Rasha Al-Sabah

In writing the above-entitled study, the author attempts to indicate topographical parallels between Dante's **Divine Comedy** and certain Islamic sources. Taking the Prophet Muhammad's miraculous journey to the presence of God - as mentioned in Surat Al-Isra in the holy Quran - as its point of departure, this study attempts to delineate certain parallels between Dante's **Divine Comedy** and a Latin interpretation of the Prophet's ascent entitled "Liber Scalae Machometi", or "The Book of Muhammad's ascent", which has recently been brought to light by the Italian Scholar Enrico Cerulli. In doing so, the study undertakes to establish direct lines of influence between the text of the Latin interpretation and Dante's **Comedy**, by pointing out similarities and identical factors present in both works, particularly on the sphere of cosmology.

The fact that the text of the anonymous "Book of Muhammad's ascent" is in both Latin and old French strengthens the claim that it enjoyed wide circulation in the Middle Ages and that it was, in fact, available to and was read by Dante. By the studied analysis of the nature and details of this text, the author seeks to establish firm proof of the influence of Islamic eschatology upon Dante's **Divine Comedy**.

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## **PUBLICATIONS**

- \* "Inferno XXVIII: The Figure of Muhammad," Yale Italian Studies, Vol. 1, NO. 2, Spring 1977.
- \* "The European image of Islam in the Middle Ages and its influence on the Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri," Alam Al-Fikr. Vol. 11, No. 3, Oct.-Dec. 1980, pp. 85-100.
- \* The state between will and fate: a new reading of machiavelli.

TWENTY—FIRST MONOGRAPH

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