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Divine Comedy as an American Civil War Epic

Abstract

This essay argues that nineteenth-century Americans interpreted Dante's *Divine Comedy* in terms of national and transnational discourses of federalism and republican nationalism, which helped introduce Dante to the United States and boosted the popularity and circulation of his works there. By the late 1840s, Dante—representing an Italy struggling to become an independent nation—was a useful, authoritative voice in political debates over national expansion and states' rights. His role expanded as these debates intensified. During the Civil War, Dante became an important discursive connection between republicanism, the new Italian nation-state, and the struggle to re-unify the American nation—a connection exemplified by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's translation of the *Comedy*.

Keywords

Dante, Divine Comedy, Civil War

Disciplines

English Language and Literature | United States History

The *Divine Comedy* as an American
Civil War Epic

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For what else did we rush into civil war? What else did our white banners seek? To what other end were our swords and lances reddened, unless that those who had mutilated the civil laws in foolhardy enjoyment should submit their necks to the yoke of righteous legislation, and be compelled to maintain the peace of the country?
—Dante, “Letter to Niccolò da Prato”¹

Dejected by the opening battles of the Civil War, in early 1861 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow recorded in his diary that he could find no solace or refuge in any poem, play, or novel. “When the times have such a gunpowder flavor,” Longfellow wrote, “all literature loses its taste. Newspapers are the only reading.”² Yet not all literature for Longfellow was tasteless during the war, for soon after this moment of dejection he turned to Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. That winter Longfellow read aloud the *Purgatorio* to his children and, by the spring of 1862, he began translating *Paradiso* 25. This became the first canto Longfellow translated in his major wartime literary project, a full English-language translation of the *Comedy*, the first by an American. Between 1862 and 1863 Longfellow completed this translation, then wrote copious endnotes for several years while publishing snippets of his work in advance in the *Atlantic Monthly*, before issuing the full translation in 1867. To complete this immense project, Longfellow had help. He was aided by a group of relevant Boston literati (now known as the “Dante Club”), some of the most well-known and powerful names in

American letters at the time, including James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., James T. Fields, and William Dean Howells.

Longfellow and his Dante Club's wartime interest in Dante raises the question of why exactly the *Comedy* was meaningful for them during the most significant and terrible event of their lifetimes, a question not yet addressed in literary scholarship. And, in fact, their interest wasn't unique. During the 1860s in the United States, the number of translations of Dante's works and books about Dante increased considerably over previous decades. Thomas W. Parsons published his translation of the first seventeen cantos of the *Inferno* in 1865, then published a complete *Inferno* translation in 1867. Charles Eliot Norton published his limited-edition pamphlet *On the Original Portraits of Dante* in 1865 and a translation of the *Vita Nuova* in 1867. In 1863, the German immigrant Frederick Leypoldt, seizing on the international acclaim heaped on the French artist Gustave Doré's recent illustrations of the *Inferno*, produced a portfolio edition of the Doré *Inferno* illustrations in Philadelphia.³ Walt Whitman, meanwhile, looked at Doré's illustrations shortly before his first visit to a Union camp and hospital in December 1862, and he probably read the *Inferno* multiple times that year.⁴

This rather pervasive American cultural interest in Dante in the 1860s did not spring up suddenly but instead had its roots in antebellum discourses on the nature of federalism, the identity of the American nation, and the proper restrictions and extensions of states' rights. Decades before the war, the *Divine Comedy* and Dante's biography had been interpreted as texts directly dealing with the sociopolitical problems caused by autonomous local governments and commenting on the proper role of empires in national and world affairs. Moreover, Dante was well known as a political poet—or better, as the political poet of “Italy” and as a supporter and prophet of nineteenth-century nationalism. As Dennis Berthold has argued, for many American and British readers, particularly Whigs and liberals, reading Dante's *Comedy* became “synonymous with supporting the Risorgimento,” or the Italian revolutionaries who fought for an independent, secular, unified Italian state.⁵ Even many readers in the southern United States, some of whom rejected this particular interpretation of the *Comedy*, were quick to view Dante as a poet who supported their view of states' rights. Dante's sociopolitical relevance internationally helped lead to a rapidly growing cultural appreciation of him in the United States, and aesthetic judgments of his literary value ascended in tandem with this political relevance. While Dante was almost completely unknown in the United

States at the beginning of the nineteenth century, by the late 1840s many Americans agreed that he was in the ranks of Homer and Shakespeare as one of the greatest poets in world history.

Latent in antebellum American interpretations of the *Comedy* were themes that would prove much more significant during the Civil War. As most readers then knew, Dante was a soldier and political exile, a participant in the medieval Florentine feud between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. Viewed by a number of Americans as a dispute that pitted local autonomy against federal unity, the Guelph-Ghibelline conflict was made an important historical analogy for the war between the Confederacy and the Union. As Herman Melville asked in the last paragraph of his 1866 supplemental essay to *Battle-Pieces*, hoping that his readers would answer in the negative, “Were the Unionists and Secessionists but as Guelphs and Ghibellines?”⁶ For Melville, the centuries-long feud between Guelphs and Ghibellines was the kind of long-term, regional hostility—about which Dante repeatedly warns readers in the *Comedy*—that must be avoided in the postwar United States.

The narrative arc of the *Divine Comedy* also seemed analogous to the progression of the Civil War. Union supporters such as Longfellow and the Dante Club were especially interested in reading Dante’s cosmic journey as an allegory of the divided, then united nation. Though it’s an apparently odd reading, their point was that the *Comedy* features Dante’s cosmic journey from a fractured society to a unified cosmic realm, from the isolated sinners of the *Inferno* to the united celestial rose of the saints in the final cantos of *Paradiso*. For many unionists, this narrative arc was especially potent for its (supposed) promotion of the moral necessity of national unity and western imperialism, and for its condemnation of political traitors and rebels. Famously, the *Inferno* ends at the bottom of hell, with Dante’s encounter with Satan, who is eating Judas, Brutus, and Cassius. As Longfellow puts it in his 1867 translation, these three men—the worst of all of hell’s condemned—were “traitors to their lords and benefactors,” in that they betrayed and rebelled against their just rulers (i.e., Jesus Christ and Julius Caesar). By contrast, Dante’s journey ends with a vision of God, the ruler of the “most just and merciful of empires,” a literary depiction of a powerful unitary executive who justly overcomes all political rebellions and unifies the cosmos.⁷ As the Dante scholars Charles Till Davis and Joan M. Ferrante have argued, Dante’s ideal ruler, a sort of global monarch for whom Dante apparently argues in his political treatise *De Monarchia*, subdues all rebellious factions with political power imbued with just,

benevolent morality.⁸ For Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and other Union supporters, Dante's imperial-spiritual God in the *Divine Comedy* resembled the kind of morally righteous executive/president that they believed was needed to halt southern secession, end slavery, and restore peaceful unity to the nation.

Reading, then, the American discourses on Dante and the *Comedy* in the mid-nineteenth century helps us understand the deep connections Americans forged between their own nation and Italy, and between the unlikely pair of medieval Catholicism and American Protestantism. The transatlantic link they made between Italian nationalism and American civil war—with Dante as an intermediary voice—reaffirmed and reshaped unionist visions of empire-building and national destiny.⁹ For during the war and through Reconstruction, Dante, figured as a political poet, affirmed northern civic patriotism for the kind of federally unified nation fought for by the Union army. He also provided (according to some of his interpreters) a potent cosmological vision of the benevolent imperial nation, one modeled on the Roman Empire and the imagined paradise of Heaven. This imperial model supposedly concurred with the ideal political justice of republican nationalism, the major ideal of the Union and its leadership, and with the national unification of Italy in 1860–61, which was a powerful contemporary example of the inevitable victory and progressive benefits of this ideal. Receptions of Dante and interpretations of his work in the United States combined aesthetics, religion, and politics to polemicize for key ideological positions (northern and southern) in national debates on federalism and states' rights. In this sense, both Dante and the idea of "Italy" were enlisted in and were important participants in the political discourses of the American Civil War.

Dante the Unionist, Dante the Confederate

In the early part of the nineteenth century, antebellum Americans viewed the *Divine Comedy* as a work of Italian patriotism and as a proclamation of the greatness of Italian culture. As the epic poem of Italy, the *Comedy* demonstrated that Dante was the great national poet of Italy, the kind of model poet whom would-be great American poets could emulate. The *New-York Mirror* pronounced in March 1831 that "no man ever exercised so great, so honourable, and so extensive a literary influence as Dante," adding that Dante's readers learned from his poetry to "cast off sectional jealousies, and glory in the name of the common country which he loved, forgave, and lamented."¹⁰ This nation-

alistic interpretation corresponded with what K. P. Van Anglen calls the New England “clerical model of literary authority,” a posture assumed by many literati in their Dante criticism. As Van Anglen argues, such critics acted in the manner of preachers who “us[ed] their pens didactically to garner the affectionate and voluntary submission of their fellow citizens by enabling [them] to progress religiously, culturally, politically, and morally to the point where they would realize the wisdom of obeying their superiors in virtue, knowledge, and breeding.”¹¹ To antebellum New England critics such as William H. Prescott, George Ticknor, and George Washington Greene, Dante was a genius who reshaped Italy by providing himself as a model of moral and cultural greatness, a model that would lead his Italian readers to greater wisdom and civic responsibility. One American commenter claimed in 1833 that Dante’s poetry responded to the “corruption” of his day with a “poetic genius” that “illustrate[d]” great moral lessons, including lessons on the injustice of political factions.¹² In short, Dante’s moral righteousness and literary excellence went hand in hand with his national greatness.

Part of Dante’s usefulness to antebellum New England critics was his concern for the meaning and trajectory of world history, especially of the place and importance of the Roman Empire in it. In the interpretations offered by these critics, the *Divine Comedy* spoke to the theory of the *translatio imperii*, which promised the eventual transfer of world empire westward to the United States. Such a transfer was no cause for rejoicing; to many American critics, the rise of a United States empire assured the inevitable moral and cultural degeneracy that would accompany the rise and fall of empire, of which the Roman Empire was a chief example (Van Anglen 161). Supposedly speaking at the nadir of Italian history, during the medieval age of barbarism still in the wake of the Roman Empire’s collapse, Dante castigated the “tumultuous anarchy” of his age—as the *New-York Mirror* article put it—while prophetically championing the rise of nineteenth-century liberal-democratic values.

Such northern critical views were actually the focus of southern criticism and satire, a fact that highlights the political split between common northern and southern political interpretations of Dante’s *Comedy* and his biography. In an 1842 review of Mary Shelley’s *Lives of Eminent Scientific and Literary Men of Italy*, which appeared in the *Southern Quarterly Review*, the anonymous reviewer characterizes Dante as a proper gentleman, unlike his modern New England critics.¹³ Dante, the reviewer claims, was a supreme scholar, not only adept in

the “learning of the day” but also able to debate the dons at the universities in Paris and Oxford. Such a model gentleman contrasts sharply with modern New England intellectuals, who, “because ‘they feel the god within them’—because they devote their minds to intellectual culture,—consider themselves privileged to neglect all the graces of manner, all gentlemanly refinement.” The writer’s charge is that his presumed New England opponents (especially transcendentalists) are not “chivalrous” and that they “violate all the conventional forms of society,” something that Dante would certainly oppose (“Review” 529).

The harshest criticism and funniest satire of New England Dante scholars came from *Memoirs of a Nullifier*, a farce published anonymously in 1832.¹⁴ As a politicized picaresque narrative about the Nullification Crisis of 1832, *Memoirs* champions South Carolina’s constitutional right to nullify federal laws while employing the *Divine Comedy* in its cause. *Memoirs’* narrator, for instance, travels down into hell, the entrance of which is located in Kentucky, the home state of then-senator and compromise-broker Henry Clay. In hell, the narrator encounters the “ghost of a Yankee pedlar [*sic*]” who attempts to sell the narrator some of his worthless junk. After Charon ferries the narrator and the peddler across Styx, Charon acts as hell’s “custom house officer,” leveling such a massive tariff on the peddler’s goods that the peddler is forced to abandon all of them. At this point the narrator comments, “I doubt not but that the separation of him and his peddling [*sic*] cart was infinitely more painful than that which had previously occurred between his soul and his body” (39). Here, of course, the joke inverts the Yankee peddler’s supposed usual position as a beneficiary of high tariffs on southern products, especially cotton. Later, when the peddler is judged and sentenced to his proper place in hell, Minos the demon judge says that he is “really getting entirely out of patience with New-England, for it gives me more trouble than all the rest of the world put together” (*Memoirs* 43).

After pausing for a Dantesque description of hell’s topography, *Memoirs’* narrator stops at a place where demons are roasting and eating sinners, a scene akin to Satan’s consumption of the traitors in *Inferno* 34. Here the tortured sinners are New England political figures, whose bodies, after they are eaten, re-form only to be eaten again, as in the punishment of the schismatics in *Inferno* 28. While this scene sounds serious, it is meant to be hilarious. The narrator sees one of the sinners, a “member of Congress from Rhode Island,”¹⁵ who complains about the rate at which he is roasted: “He was incessantly scolding the

cooks, either for turning the spit too fast, or too slow, or for letting it remain still. Nothing could please him" (49). Next, hell is invaded by an army of men, their leader riding a large cow and dressed "in a shining suit of new broadcloth." This invasion force consists entirely of Yankees, who desire to take over hell, to instill the principles of "Political Economy" and to enact the same high tariff laws in hell that they did in the United States. A great battle nearly ensues between the devils and the invading Yankee army, but before that can occur, the roasting Rhode Island senator begins to make a speech, which defuses the conflict by making everyone run for his life: "At the awful sounds of his voice, the whole multitude . . . scattered in universal dismay" (54). Here the narrator runs back out of hell, exiting not like the courageous Dante, who traveled all the way through the realm of hopelessness, but fleeing back through the upper regions of hell because of the speech of a New England politician.

These Dantean intertexts in *Memoirs*, deployed for comedic effect, were also serious attempts to combat the supposed cultural hegemony of New England with a display of southern learnedness. *Memoirs* satirizes Massachusetts senator Daniel Webster, a fictionalized version of whom gives a mock-speech in *Memoirs* about the glories of his region's cultural institutions. In the speech, Webster boasts that one of these institutions, the Ivy League university, has mastered the use of all romance languages, including Dante's Italian. As Webster claims, New England scholars have actually "restored the true Tuscano-Roman speech, which had latterly begun to degenerate," a boast that makes Americans greater masters of Dante's medieval Italian vernacular than Italians themselves (81). Here the "restoration" of "Tuscano-Roman" refers not to a translation project, which did not exist at the time in the United States, but to the extensive commentary given to Dante by New England literary journals since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and also to the Dante classes taught at Harvard by George Ticknor. The aim of *Memoirs of a Nullifier* is then, at once, cultural and political one-upmanship; it enlists Dante interpretation in the battle for southern culture and South Carolinian nullification. The evident rift between North and South highlighted in *Memoirs* proved popular twenty-eight years after its release, when the book was reprinted by a New York publisher in 1860, just before South Carolina really seceded from the United States.¹⁶

Such regional divisions in Dante interpretation were evident up until and throughout the war. Many southern critics, attempting to support

the Confederacy as a new nation-state, claimed that Dante was not a partisan in the Guelph-Ghibelline struggle but that he transcended this struggle and instead wrote as a national patriot. By contrast, Union supporters were quick to use Dante as a poet who inveighed against traitors and rebels; for them, Dante wrote as a Ghibelline against the papacy and the Guelphs' fight for local, political sovereignty. On the southern side was W. Gordon McCabe, a twenty-one-year-old artillery captain in the Army of Northern Virginia. Writing from "Howitzer Camp" for the *Southern Literary Messenger* in late 1862, McCabe reviewed five French books on Dante, evidently available to him in camp. In his review McCabe insists that Dante was not a "mere partisan" who simply changed his factional allegiance from Guelph to Ghibelline, as some Dante interpreters have claimed. Instead, Dante was above all else a "CHRISTIAN and an ITALIAN." Using a quotation from a *Foreign Quarterly Review* article, McCabe shows his readers that the "idea of national greatness is the leading thought in all that Dante thought or wrote."¹⁷

Part of McCabe's insistence on his interpretation of Dante as a good Christian and patriot was a rhetorical need to inspire patriotic feelings of Confederate nationalism in wartime readers of the *Southern Literary Messenger*. McCabe argues that Dante is a model of perseverance and longsuffering, for Dante was caught up in a partisan struggle between Guelphs and Ghibellines that ended in a miserable, life-long exile. The cause of this exile was a "raging" "party spirit" in Florence, yet Dante's poetry remained above the petty fray (140). Dante's exile was a time of impoverishment, but the results, McCabe emphasizes, were worth the struggles:

When we reflect about [Dante's] exile, how full of sorrow it all seems! Maybe at one time he stood at a crossing and stretched forth his hands for charity! Good God! think of it, Dante Alighieri a beggar!

And yet was it not all for the best? Can anything good really come save through tribulation? Had it not been thus, would we have had the grandest poem, the divinest work in all modern literature? (143–44)

For McCabe, Dante was an exemplary patriot whose political struggles resembled Confederate sacrifices during wartime. Just as Confederates suffered greatly for their cause, so too did Dante suffer horribly

for his, McCabe suggests. Yet the results of these kinds of struggles should be inspirational: in Dante's case, the production of a world-classic epic poem. As Dante promises at the end of *Paradiso*, McCabe points out, those who endure will be "purified" by their "great trials" and therefore will be "rendered fit" to stand righteously before the face of God (149).

Importantly for McCabe, Dante was a member of an aristocratic family and the scion of a knight. Yet this fact was downplayed by northern critics, including Vincenzo Botta, whose 1865 book *Dante as Philosopher, Patriot, and Poet* characterizes Dante as an ardent, would-be unionist and the world's first democratic nationalist. Botta himself almost perfectly represents the matrix of issues that connected Dante, Italian politics, and the American Civil War; as a former member of the parliament of Sardinia-Piedmont and a supporter of the Risorgimento, Botta then immigrated to the United States and by the 1860s was a professor of Italian literature and language at New York University. In *Dante as Philosopher, Patriot, and Poet*, Botta argues that Dante in the *Comedy* rejected his aristocratic heritage and that he promoted the idea of modern, democratic nation-states. Dante, Botta claims, asserts in his poetry that there is "no nobility but that of genius and virtue" and that "the people" must be the only interpreters of law.¹⁸

Further, according to Botta, Dante's biographical development from Guelph to Ghibelline demonstrates that he would have supported the Union cause. A native Guelph, Dante sided with his own party early in life, which championed local rule and the papacy. On the other hand, Botta argues, the Ghibellines favored a "stronger government" and were the "exponents of national rights," devoted to the cause of Italian unification (9–10). As Dante grew in learning, he renounced his Guelph affiliations and became a passionate Ghibelline and "the first Italian," holding fast to the "idea of national unity, which . . . he never ceased to consider as the corner-stone of the future greatness of Italy." But he did not confine his vision to Italy's unity. Rather, he saw that the idea of national unity would bless the entire world: "he conceived a plan of general organization, which, while it would place his country in an exalted position, would also secure the permanent peace of the world, and result in the general progress of mankind" (54). Botta counters traditional interpretations of Dante's political treatise *De Monarchia* by asserting that Dante's ideal political institution was in fact not a monarchy: Dante actually believed in the "concentration of social power into an individual or collective authority, which should exercise the common sovereignty

for the good of the people." Dante's political objective, then, was "essentially liberal and democratic" (58).

For Botta, Dante's protonationalist dreams contrast sharply with archaic, oppressive institutions. In Dante's day, the oppressive institution was the Roman Catholic Church, which is comparable (for Botta) to the most oppressive of modern institutions, the southern aristocracy. The medieval church and southern aristocrats are similar because they both warred against progress and national unity, and they did so because they wanted to retain power; the church in Dante's day, for example, was "antagonistic" to national unity because such unity would "put an end to [the Church's] supremacy." As Botta claims,

Hence, it has ever been the policy of the popes to foment local prejudices and ambitions, to promote discord among the republics, to discourage all progress, to ally themselves with the more ignorant and superstitious classes, and to invite foreign intervention as the only means through which they could consolidate and preserve their power. These two sources of discord [state sovereignty and the Church], which have distracted Italy for so many centuries, and prevented her organization, find their parallel to-day in these United States, whose national existence is threatened by the same pernicious doctrine of States' Rights, and by the Slave-Power, which, in its assertion of the dominion of man over man, and in the social results which it produces, is so akin to the papal institutions. (5-6)

Botta here strongly combines anti-Catholicism with the Union's purpose for war against the Confederacy, enlisting Dante in the Union's cause and thus defining the word "patriot" in the book's title according to unionist goals. In contrast to these institutions, Botta notes that they stand in the way of the "progress of nations," depicted in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, which results in "union, peace, and civilization," the chief characteristics of heavenly bliss (154).

Botta is also quick to point out that traitors to their country receive the worst punishments in Dante's *Inferno*. This fact—and the general use of the *Inferno*'s punishments to describe the American political scene—was popular with many readers and critics. In a July 4, 1859, speech, George Sumner (brother of Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner) compared compromisers in the North with the "indifferent angels" from *Inferno* 3, angels who refused to choose sides when Lucifer re-

volted against God and who were subsequently punished by having to follow an endlessly moving “banner” just outside hell’s gates (*Inferno* 3.52-69). For Sumner, these northern “conservatives”—because they compromised with southern politicians—were supporting the causes of “barbarism” and “liberticide,” “backing down before every presumptuous aggression . . . until they fall among the lost ones whom Dante has described.”¹⁹ Similarly, in 1863, a western New York minister told his congregation that the appropriate punishment for southern “traitors” would be for a free African American to be elected as a senator from a southern state, which would be a worse punishment for southerners than any depicted in Dante’s *Inferno*.²⁰

Like Botta, northern critics during the war tended to think that Dante wrote the *Divine Comedy* as a Ghibelline, and in doing so he prophesized that Italy would one day be united by a powerful political figure. This prophecy—notoriously vague and heavily debated in Dante studies—occurs initially in *Inferno* 1 when Virgil declares that a “Greyhound” shall unite “low Italy” and rule by wisdom, virtue, and love. Longfellow argues in the endnotes to his translation that this “Greyhound” was Dante’s friend, the Ghibelline lord of Verona, Can Grande della Scala (*Inferno* 223). Such firm interpretations necessarily characterized the *Comedy* as a political text in support of Ghibelline—and, by historical analogy, Union—causes. Yet some thought the “Greyhound” a modern figure, the best candidate being Giuseppe Garibaldi. After all, Garibaldi helped form the new nation of Italy in 1861 just before the first shots of the Civil War were fired at Fort Sumter. Some Americans linked the Risorgimento’s revolutionary efforts with the Union cause; Abraham Lincoln even offered Garibaldi a “Major-General’s commission” in the Union Army in the summer of 1861.²¹ Italy in 1861, particularly for Union supporters, appeared to be an excellent example of the triumph of the movement for national unity. Thus, as the *Christian Examiner* proclaimed in 1862, “With prophetic foresight, [Dante] was the first to announce that doctrine which has sunk so deep in the hearts of Italians, the doctrine of the unity of Italy . . . The clouds which have so long darkened the sky, once resplendent with the gorgeous sunrise of the Renaissance, are fast breaking away. Garibaldi fulfills the dream of Dante.”²² Dante’s dream of the Greyhound wasn’t simply meant for Italy, however, but also for the United States. The *Albion* in 1861, reprinting an article from a British magazine, claimed that the Greyhound must possess the “capacity for commanding” armies that defied the greatest of odds, a description that supposedly fit the American image of

Garibaldi perfectly and concurred with Lincoln's attempt to hire him as a Union general.²³ Northern critics thus projected their desires for a great national leader and for the successful reunification of the American nation onto Dante's biography and the *Divine Comedy*, a projection that highly impacted the release and relevance of Longfellow's 1867 translation of the *Comedy*.

Longfellow Chooses an Epic

Given that the *Divine Comedy* was a highly political text for antebellum and wartime Americans, a text enmeshed in transatlantic discourses promoting Italian nationalism and the justness of national union, Longfellow's 1867 translation was an indirect political statement about the Civil War itself. Yet Longfellow scholars have characterized his translation project as one far removed from cultural and political concerns. In the view of the biographer Newton Arvin, Longfellow translated the *Comedy* merely as a personal escape from grief over the 1861 death of his wife Fanny, while Longfellow's most recent biographer, Charles Calhoun, argues that the translation was prompted primarily by the existence of the Dante Club.²⁴ However, Longfellow was often focused as much in his poetry on affairs of the public square as he was on entertaining readers at the fireside. Much of his antebellum poetry—including *Poems on Slavery* (1842) and the *Song of Hiawatha* (1855)—contains significant cultural and political content, if not explicit statements about contemporary politics (e.g., "The Building of the Ship," "Paul Revere's Ride"). Certainly in private Longfellow held definite, passionate political opinions. Of Lincoln's election on November 7, 1860, Longfellow rejoiced in his diary that it was "a great victory; one can hardly overrate its importance. It is the redemption of the country" (Longfellow 408). He watched the progress of the Civil War, rooting for the advance of the Union's armies, hoping on April 2, 1862, for "Great battles, and great victories for Freedom."²⁵ This announced desire for "great victories" occurred in the same week in which he began his translation project, a project that throughout the war continued to coincide with important war-related events. On March 14, 1863, the same day that Longfellow began translating the *Inferno*, Longfellow's son Charles enlisted in the Union army, much to Longfellow's dismay.

But what statements could a translation of the *Comedy* make about the Civil War, so much of it depending on Dante's original text? As it turns out, the hundreds of pages of commentary in Longfellow's three-volume 1867 edition push readers toward definitive interpretations that

at once engage the *Comedy* in contemporary national and international political discourses on the justice of nationalism. Longfellow supports the contentious claim that the *Comedy* is pro-Ghibelline, a favored claim of so-called neo-Ghibelline interpreters in England and Italy who also supported the Risorgimento.²⁶ Longfellow frames *Inferno* 1, the prologue to Dante's journey through hell, as an allegory of Dante's political exile from Florence and of his condemnation of the Guelphs (*Inferno* 221–22).²⁷ The three beasts that Dante encounters in *Inferno* 1 represent the moral vices of a divided Italy ravaged by factions and civil war, factions that would oppose the kind of unifying political peace that Dante (as Longfellow points out repeatedly) argues for in the rest of the *Comedy*. Thus Dante describes his cosmic journey in *Inferno* 2 as a “war” through which he must “sustain” himself—or as Beatrice reiterates in *Paradiso* 25, this journey is a “warfare to be completed” (*Inferno* 2.4; *Paradiso* 25.1–9, 57). This potent description of the pilgrim's journey as a “war” highlights the stakes for American readers in the 1860s, in which the individual pilgrim must transcend and overcome war, proceeding ever onward to the united imperial realm of heaven. Dante contrasts his own position as a cosmic pilgrim with his depiction of a poet of social schism and civil war, Bertran de Born. A poet forever stuck in hell, Bertran in *Inferno* 28 carries his severed head around as a “lamp,” which symbolizes the social divisions in the “body politic” that he attempted to foment during his life. This depiction of Bertran implicates the role of poetry and discourse (“war-songs,” as Longfellow calls them in his endnotes) in the incitement of civil war and the destruction of political union; for Bertran, as Longfellow shows in his endnotes, tried to split England by inciting the son of King Henry II to rebel against his father (*Inferno* 319–20).

The narrative arc of the *Comedy* also proved potent for many Americans in the 1860s, for Dante the pilgrim must journey through a region of faction and division (*Inferno*), to a region of purification (*Purgatorio*), to one of everlasting bliss in a supremely moral and perfect political community (*Paradiso*). This journey is also at once theological and political, a powerful combination for Civil War-era America; the *Comedy* blends Christian doctrines with political prophecies while describing Dante's personal sanctification and God's cosmic triumph over many of Dante's political enemies. *Paradiso* especially proved to be a fitting end to an epic promoted during and after the war. Its detailed descriptions of heaven fit with the postwar culture's demand for such descriptions. As Phillip Shaw Paludan has pointed out, very few

contemporary books on heaven, books that describe or discuss it in detail, existed prior to the Civil War. Yet after the war, such books exploded onto the marketplace; between 1865 and 1875, ninety-four books about heaven were published, many of which, like *Paradiso*, described heaven in great detail.²⁸ This sudden interest in reading about heaven occurred for a number of reasons, including the need for assurance about the eternal fate of the massive numbers of war dead and the hope for an eternally peaceful life beyond the grave.

Dante's heaven is, more specifically, the ultimate benevolent, medieval empire, an antiquated political model that nevertheless interested American readers. As the critic Joan M. Ferrante argues, the *Divine Comedy* generally agrees with the political views that Dante expressed in his tract *De Monarchia*. In the *Monarchia*, Dante argues for a global monarchy, headed by a single imperial monarch, which unites all human political institutions, since "mankind most closely resembles God when it is a unity." This monarchy would establish universal peace and promote morality.²⁹ Dante justifies the right of the medieval Holy Roman Empire to claim this universal monarchical power by attempting to prove that Rome was perpetually granted this power by God. Thus city-states and kingdoms should not exist wholly autonomously. Factions and civil wars between smaller political units in Dante's day, as he claims, "make it apparent that the well-being of the world requires that there be a monarchy or empire" to promote universal peace (*Monarchia* 1.5.10). For Ferrante, the *Comedy* reiterates the *Monarchia*'s position on empire and thus is a "polemic" that is fundamentally political.³⁰ Hell is a depiction of a "corrupt society . . . without order and justice," Purgatory is a "society in transition," and Heaven is an empire ruled by one hegemon (God) that exemplifies the "ideal society" (Ferrante 42). Significantly, God as cosmic emperor is the ideal monarch in the *Comedy*, the moral model for all would-be just rulers. Yet God for Dante is not analogous merely to a ruler on a throne who issues commands, something that for Botta is crucial to distinguishing Dante from Homer and Milton. As Botta puts it, the genius of the *Comedy* is that the all-powerful God, a divine spirit empowering the whole of material creation, suffuses the poem itself; God's moral perfection and justice are evident throughout the entire poem, demonstrating the inseparable link between spirituality, morality, and politics (Botta 131–32).

Though nearly all nineteenth-century Americans would have denounced monarchy as a political system, the *Comedy*'s championing of a morally just empire that unites and brings peace to all localities was

somewhat attractive to Longfellow and other Union supporters in the 1860s. James Russell Lowell, friend of Longfellow and participant in his Dante Club, lamented in his 1861 essay "*E Pluribus Unum*" that slavery had kept the United States from becoming the kind of major empire dreamt of in the *Monarchia*:

A single empire embracing the whole world, and controlling, without extinguishing, local organizations and nationalities, has been not only the dream of conquerors, but the ideal of speculative philanthropists. Our own dominion is of such extent and power, that it may, so far as this continent is concerned, be looked upon as something like an approach to the realization of such an ideal.³¹

Lowell further blames the secession of the southern states—which caused the unlawful, immoral disunity of the nation—on weak federal leadership; he labels James Buchanan an imbecilic "Executive" and a suspect in the "complicity in a treasonable plot against the very life of the nation" (Lowell 45–48). The United States is not a "congeries of medieval Italian republics"—an obvious reference to Dante's historical context—but a nation that must forcefully coerce its wayward elements to honor the "constituted and acknowledged authority" of the central government (48, 68). For Lowell, Lincoln was the opposite of Buchanan, one who excellently fulfilled his moral duties as chief executive and whom "History" will consider the "most prudent of statesman and the most successful of rulers" (184). Similarly, Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1862 supported the government's use of the "absolute powers of a Dictator" to rectify the moral confusion caused by Confederate secession and to restore civilization proper back to the nation (which included the immediate emancipation of slaves). In his essay "American Civilization," Emerson articulated a common idea about morality as the lynchpin of civilization, combining nationalism and moral virtue to argue for the need for a powerful, active, and virtuous chief executive to defeat the "semi-civilized" American South.³² Both Lowell and Emerson agreed to an extent with Dante's *Monarchia*, then, about the moral and civil role of a "monarch," literally a single ruler over all who exercised power—if necessary, violent power—in the name of peace and unity, a role that supposedly could be assumed by a US president during a national emergency (as Lincoln argued).

To be sure, no one had visions of the restoration of a medieval version of the Holy Roman Empire in the 1860s. Yet Longfellow and Lowell

projected Union objectives for the war onto their interpretation of Dante's fourteenth-century vision of the Holy Roman Empire's unification of Italy. The *Comedy* offered a theological-political vision for such unification. The poem's inseparable connection between theology and politics concurred with the theological qualities bestowed on the northern ideal of the political unity of the United States. This idea of Union, as Gary Gallagher points out, had a "transcendent, mystical quality as the object of . . . patriotic devotion and civic religion."³³ During the war, "civic religion" welded the revealed Christian religion with ardent patriotism. As Harry Stout observes, patriotism to the national cause—whether Union or Confederate—was during the war "sacralized to the point that it enjoyed coequal or even superior status to conventional denominational faiths."³⁴ Most Americans viewed the war as the work of a Divine Providence that controlled all events and outcomes and that would, eventually, fulfill the prophecy of the Book of Revelation by inaugurating a peaceful, global millennium. For some northerners, this millennial vision could be fulfilled through the Union army's victory. Stout argues that the welding of religious faith and political ideology likely prolonged the war, giving soldiers and citizens alike deep reasons to continue fighting for the causes in which they believed. The war even created believers out of nonbelievers. Both chief executives of the two warring nations relied heavily on religious rhetoric, on the notion of providence, and on the declaration of days of prayer, fasting, and thanksgiving to motivate their respective citizens. Jefferson Davis was baptized into the Episcopal Church in 1862, gaining a "reputation as a man of God" during the war, though he had not articulated much faith prior to the war. Lincoln, long a religious skeptic, came to a "mature contemplation of providence" in the 1860s, viewing himself as an instrument of God, whose ways were ultimately mysterious.³⁵ As the presidents of their respective nations, Lincoln and Davis personally exemplified the fusion of faith and political ideology during the Civil War.

Longfellow viewed Dante as a Christian poet who understood the need for this kind of fusion, albeit one who supported a unionist version of it. Generally ignoring the Roman Catholic elements of the *Comedy*—and even implicitly characterizing it as a proto-Protestant poem by frequently comparing it to *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Paradise Lost*³⁶—Longfellow's endnotes to his translation argue that Dante supported the cause of a powerful executive who should and would crush a disruptive rebellion and unify a divided nation. His advanced publication in January 1864 of three cantos of the *Comedy*, *Paradiso* 23–25,

helped promote this cause during the war. In these cantos, published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Dante has ascended beyond the planets and into the heaven of the fixed stars, where he witnesses “Christ’s triumphal march” and is examined by Saint Peter and Saint James on the topics of faith and hope, just prior to his final vision of God.³⁷

The publication of such hopeful cantos from the *Comedy* coincided with a relatively hopeful winter for the North. That summer, the Army of the Potomac had beaten back Lee’s invasion of Pennsylvania, and Grant’s army had cut the Confederacy in two at Vicksburg. On October 3, Lincoln announced the first annual Thanksgiving Day celebration scheduled for November, an announcement that looked forward to the reconciliation of the states. “The year that is drawing toward its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies,” the first sentence of the proclamation reads, blithely ignoring the deaths of tens of thousands of soldiers that year. “Peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict . . . [These things] are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.” Lincoln concluded his proclamation by asking all citizens to pray that the “Almighty Hand” would restore the Union to the “full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union.”³⁸ Corresponding with this proclamation were contemporary sermons and periodical articles, which in the late months of 1863 preached the blessings of Union. In general, the themes of union and unity dominated civil discourse. According to Stout, 1863 was the year when “political preaching in the North and South had virtually completed the apotheosis of ‘patriotism’ into a full-blown civil religion” (248). Stout further notes that northerners believed that the abiding nature of the discourse of Union, which had lasted for almost three years by that point, was proof that social and political divisions “would end with the war’s end” (272). Thanksgiving sermons in the North generally avoided a discussion about the war itself, instead focusing on the coming restoration of the country, due solely to God’s providential hand (273). Implicit in this discourse, as it had been since the beginning of the war, was the notion that Providence took the side of the Union army.

Longfellow therefore appropriately chose the *Divine Comedy*’s cantos on faith and hope for January 1864. The last of these three cantos, *Paradiso* 25, reminds readers that Dante’s journey is a “warfare”

soon to be completed. Dante in *Paradiso* 25 wishes that he will be allowed to return home from exile, to Florence, to be the righteous enemy to the “wolves that war upon” his native city (*Paradiso* 25.6). Dante, here in this discussion of his earthly home city, compares his cosmic journey to the Exodus. He has traveled from Egypt to Jerusalem, that is from hell to heaven, and is worthy of such a journey because “no child” in the “Church Militant” possesses “greater hope” than he. These multiple metaphors, particularly powerful and freshly relevant when placed into a Civil War context, link emancipation from slavery—the journey from Egypt to Jerusalem represents both soteriological and bodily deliverance from forced, perpetual servitude—with the expectation and hope that a militant institution will inevitably triumph over all factions and unify the cosmos.

The three cantos combine war imagery with triumphant exhibitions of the conquest of universal peace. In *Paradiso* 23, the saints of heaven perform a display of ultimate military victory that indirectly described the (hoped-for) future end to the Civil War. Beatrice tells Dante to “Behold the hosts / of Christ’s triumphal march, and all the fruit / Harvested by the rolling of these spheres!” (*Paradiso* 23.19-21). Dante sees Jesus and Mary, displayed as a Sun and a Rose, and Peter, who “triumpheth . . . in his victory,” beneath the “exalted” Jesus and his mother (155). Longfellow’s endnote on the phrase “Christ’s triumphal march,” in his 1867 translation, points out that this is specifically an apocalyptic, millennial image comparable to the Book of Revelation 19.11–15 in which Jesus sits on a white horse and “in righteousness . . . doth judge and make war.” Following him are the “armies which [are] in heaven . . . upon white horses” (350). Yet such militarism is mixed with feminine beauty in *Paradiso* 23. Dante witnesses for the first time Beatrice’s smile, an event so spectacular that he says he cannot adequately describe it, and one so entrancing that it distracts him from other sights. When Beatrice tells Dante to turn his eyes to the “garden fair,” he views Mary as a rose and the host of saints as lilies. Longfellow renders the hosts of heaven first as a “meadow of flowers,” a pastoral image, but next as “troops of splendor,” returning to a military metaphor (23.79-84). It is as if, for Longfellow in *Paradiso* 23, natural and feminine beauty color and soften the grisly consequences of military victory, turning it into an ideal celebrated by the divine in the holiest and most glorious place possible.

The saints whom Dante encounters in these cantos represent militaristic endeavors, especially given Longfellow’s particular translation

decisions. In *Paradiso* 24, Saint Peter (symbolizing the authority of universal victory) quizzes Dante on the essence of faith, while in *Paradiso* 25, Saint James (figured as a kind of warrior in Longfellow's notes) questions Dante on hope. Both figures help Longfellow's translation connect the Civil War to Christian theology, reaffirming civil religion's role in promoting military triumph. When Dante is examined by Saint Peter in canto 24, he describes himself as a baccalaureate who "arms himself" with arguments (46–51). In contemporary context, the choice of the word "arms" signifies weaponry, indirectly referencing Paul's letter to the Ephesians in which Paul describes the Christian believer's battle preparation for spiritual warfare, which includes the use of the "shield of faith" against the "fiery darts of the wicked."³⁹ Significantly, then, *Paradiso* 24 emerges from canto 23's description of the heavenly host as the "Church Militant" and a celebration of Christ as triumphant conqueror. Also, both figures, Peter and James, are called "Barons" who represent the authoritative office of God as Emperor. James in particular, for Longfellow, is a militaristic figure. Not only is James killed "by the sword" of the tyrant Herod in the Book of Acts 12.2 but Longfellow inserted in the endnotes to his 1867 translation a lengthy Spanish legend from Anna Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art* (1848). The legend reveals that James, or "Saint Jago," became the patron saint of Spain and that he descended from heaven and "commanded the [Spanish] armies against the Moors," leading the Spanish to military victory and turning the military order of Saint Jago into the "greatest and richest" order in Spain (*Paradiso* 355). As a figure of war, James offers not simply a generic kind of hope but the specific hope that wars will end and all vicious enemies will be defeated.

In Longfellow's translation of *Paradiso* 25, the idea of hope is attached to military victory and God's role is one of commander-in-chief. Dante tells James that the definition of hope is the expectation of future glory, an answer Dante says he learned from King David's psalms. It is chiefly Psalm 9 that Dante has in mind, as he quotes its verse 10: "*Sperent in te . . . those who know thy name.*" This particular psalm calls upon the Lord to reign, rule, and judge righteously, in acknowledgment that an ongoing war has yet to be won. In this psalm, David particularly chastises his enemies for backing the wrong cause in war: "O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end; and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them. But the Lord shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment." Dante calls David the "chief singer" unto the "chief captain," who is God. Longfellow's

choice of the phrase “chief captain” for God is unique among all English-language *Divine Comedy* translators in the nineteenth century. Dante’s phrase is “sommio duce,” which various modern translators have rendered as “Sovereign Guide,” “Ultimate Majesty,” or simply “God.” The early nineteenth-century British translator Henry Francis Cary rendered the phrase as “the Supreme,” while his contemporary John Dayman employed “noblest king.” Among these translations, only Longfellow’s “chief captain” strongly connotes militarism while practically failing to acknowledge Dante’s original connotation in the phrase of a transcendent, all-powerful God. Longfellow’s “captain” is a leader of soldiers, the head of the Ship of State, and the one who leads the “Church Militant.”

Longfellow’s translation of the final cantos of *Paradiso*, in which Dante encounters God, would wait until 1867 for their publication. These cantos, though, do fulfill the promise of hope that Longfellow offered readers of the *Atlantic* in January 1864. Dante’s final vision is a complex glimpse of God, the ruler of, as *Paradiso* 32 puts it, the “most just and merciful of empires” (32.117). With his journey complete, Dante finds that a powerful eternal “Love” is “turning” his “desire and will,” just as this Love directs and gives motion to the “sun and the other stars” (33.143). The final lines of *Paradiso* reaffirm orthodox Christian doctrines of the Trinity and of God’s sovereign providence over nature. A lifelong Unitarian, Longfellow eschewed his doctrinal quibbles with Trinitarianism to present Dante’s vision faithfully, just as the religiously unorthodox Walt Whitman embraced trinitarian imagery just after the war to elegize Lincoln in “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” (1865). Reflexively, Dante speaks of his inability to communicate such a vision of God, while asking the great “Light Supreme” to help him remember the vision properly so that “more of thy victory shall be conceived!” (33.67). Part of this victory is eschatological—God has triumphed over all enemies in heaven and earth—but it is also emancipatory. As Dante says to the Virgin Mary in *Paradiso* 31, “Thou from a slave hast brought me unto freedom” (85). Such lines, in 1867, memorialize the success of the abolitionist movement and the release of all slaves upon the Union’s victory, a dream of Longfellow’s since at least his *Poems on Slavery* (1842).

Presented to America in 1867, Longfellow’s translation of the *Divine Comedy* championed the triumph of the Union, which was predestined to victory by God’s providence and which promised a new era of peace and freedom. His translation also offers an intriguing literary vi-

sion for the future of American politics. In choosing a medieval epic that celebrates an ancient empire, Longfellow suggests that a kind of historically based federalism, imperial in vision and scope, will reinforce and strengthen American unity. This translation choice thus offers both moral and political reasons for the nation's transition from democratic republic to benevolent empire, an empire modeled after the *Paradiso's* kingdom of heaven. Longfellow's translation suggests that the *Comedy's* vision of benevolent, universal empire was a model for what the northern states fought for during the war, and for what the Union of the States might be after Appomattox. With God reigning in heaven, the consolidated American federal state should resemble the cosmic empire—not just in power and scale but in its outpouring of mercy and grace and its establishment of moral order in its jurisdictions and territories. For Longfellow, Dante offered a vision of just imperialism apropos for the North's military mission during the war and for the reunification of the nation at the beginning of Reconstruction. The *Comedy* thus proved to be, for many Americans, an appropriate and fitting epic of the Civil War.

Notes

1. Dante Alighieri, *A Translation of Dante's Eleven Letters*, trans. Charles Sterrett Latham, ed. George Rice Carpenter (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1891), 3.

2. Samuel Longfellow, *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, with Extracts from His Journals and Correspondence*, vol. 2 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1891), 416. Hereafter Longfellow.

3. See *Dante Album: Inferno* (Philadelphia: F. Leypoldt, 1863). A review of Leypoldt's book in the 1863 *Saturday Evening Post* praises the ghostliness of the illustrations. Dore's illustrations, the review says, "suggest no possibilities of heaven" and "give more fully the idea of infinite depths of descent." See "Gustave Dore's Dante," *Saturday Evening Post*, January 7, 1863, 3.

4. Whitman's copy of the *Inferno* has the date "July. 1862" [sic] in it. His "1862" notebook, which contains drafts of poems and newspaper articles as well as observations he made while at Falmouth camp in Virginia, also contains a page of notes on Dante, a page with the date "September 1862" commemorating his first viewing of Dore's illustrations of the *Inferno*. See Peter Van Egmond, "Bryn Mawr College Library Holdings of Whitman Books," *Walt Whitman Review* 20, no. 2 (1974): 41–42; and Whitman, *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, vol. 2, *Washington, Collected Writings of Walt Whitman*, ed. Edward F. Grier (New York: New York University Press, 1984).

5. Dennis Berthold, *American Risorgimento: Herman Melville and the Cultural Politics of Italy* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009), 77.

6. Herman Melville, "Supplement," *Published Poems: The Writings of Herman Melville*, vol. 11 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 187–88.

7. See *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 3 vols. (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1867), 3:215. All references to the *Divine Comedy* in this essay point to this three-volume edition. I refer to each of the three volumes as *Inferno* (volume 1), *Purgatorio* (volume 2), and *Paradiso* (volume 3). Longfellow continued revising the translation throughout his lifetime, and so different editions published after 1867 may have textual variations, especially in the endnotes.

8. See the discussion of Ferrante's interpretation of *De Monarchia* later in this essay, as well as Charles Till Davis, *Dante's Italy, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984); and Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).

9. As Edmund Wilson argues in *Patriotic Gore*, the ideology of Union during the war prepared the way for empire in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. See especially his "Introduction" in Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War*, rev. ed. (New York: Norton, 1994), ix–xxxii.
10. "Italian Literature," *New-York Mirror: A Weekly Gazette of Literature and the Fine Arts*, (March 26, 1831): 300.
11. K. P. Van Anglen, "Before Longfellow: Dante and the Polarization of New England," *Dante Studies* 119 (2001): 158.
12. "Art. X—Dante," *North American Review* 37 (October 1833): 506, 514.
13. "Review of *Lives of Eminent Scientific and Literary Men of Italy*," *Southern Quarterly Review* 1 (April 1842): 527–53. Hereafter "Review."
14. *Memoirs of a Nullifier* (Columbia, SC: Telescope Office, 1832), 110. Hereafter *Memoirs*. Internet copies of this book are attributed to "Algernon Sidney Johnston," an undocumented attribution. Nineteenth-century American readers, however, did not know who the author was. Trade publications and book announcements in periodicals list the author of *Memoirs* as "anonymous." See, for example, "Misconceptions of the New England Character," *North American Review* 44 (1837): 242–45.
15. This is the now-unknown Rhode Island representative Tristram Burges, called "Tristram Burgess" in the preface to *Memoirs of a Nullifier*.
16. See *Memoirs of a Nullifier* (New York: James A. Noyes, 1860). This edition includes a "historical sketch of nullification in 1832–33."
17. W. Gordon McCabe, "Dante," *Southern Literary Messenger* (February/March 1862): 136–48. Hereafter McCabe.
18. Vincenzo Botta, *Dante as Philosopher, Patriot, and Poet* (New York: Charles Scribner and Co., 1865), 59. Hereafter Botta.
19. George Sumner, "An Oration Delivered Before the Municipal Authorities of the City of Boston, July 4, 1859" (Boston: Geo. C. Rand and Avery), 63.
20. "The Battle is Not Yours, But God's," *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal* 37 (September 16, 1863): 1.
21. Denis Mack Smith, ed., *Garibaldi* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 69–70.
22. "History and Biography," *Christian Examiner* 73, no. 3 (November 1862): 463.
23. "Garibaldi Foretold by Dante," *The Albion, a Journal of News, Politics, and Literature* (June 22, 1861): 292.
24. Arvin argues that translating the *Comedy* was a "therapeutic task" for Longfellow, while Calhoun counters this claim by arguing that Longfellow had a ready-made social group nearby that enabled the translation. Only Christoph Irmscher, in just one short paragraph, has suggested that Longfellow's translation of the *Comedy* during the early 1860s and the war itself were more than a mere coincidence. See Arvin, *Longfellow: His Life and Work* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), 140; Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 231; and Irmscher, *Longfellow Redux* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 259–60.
25. Longfellow, 3:5.
26. For more on the connection between the "neo-Ghibelline" interpretation of the *Comedy* and Italian nationalism, see Charles Till Davis, "Dante and Italian Nationalism," *A Dante Symposium in Commemoration of the 700th Anniversary of the Poet's Birth (1265–1965)*, ed. William de Sua and Gino Rizzo (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 199–213; and Edoardo Crisafulli, *The Vision of Dante: Cary's Translation of the Divine Comedy* (Market Harborough, England: Troubador Publishing, 2003).
27. See Longfellow's translation, 1:7 and 3:165.
28. Phillip Shaw Paludan, "Religion and the American Civil War," in *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 31.
29. See Dante, *Monarchy*, ed. Prue Shaw (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 1.8.3. Hereafter *Monarchia*.
30. Joan M. Ferrante, *The Political Vision of the Divine Comedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 39–40. Hereafter Ferrante.
31. James Russell Lowell, *Political Essays* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1896), 66. Hereafter Lowell.
32. The essay was first delivered as a speech at the Smithsonian Institution in January 1862, and Lincoln may have been in attendance. Indeed he was probably its target audience. See Emerson, "American Civilization," *Atlantic Monthly* 9 (April 1862): 502–11.

33. Gary Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 47.

34. Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the American Civil War* (New York: Viking, 2006), xviii. Stout also claims on page 254 that, by August 1863, the war "had created and consecrated two American civil religions, mortally opposed, but both Christian and both 'American.'"

35. George C. Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 188–89.

36. Longfellow often compares the *Comedy* to these Protestant poems in his endnotes, even calling *Pilgrim's Progress* "a kind of Divine Comedy in prose" (*Inferno* 221). Many nineteenth-century Americans ignored Dante's Catholicism in the *Comedy* for various reasons, one of which was that Dante was seen as a proto-Protestant. As well, many focused instead on doctrinal similarities between their theology and Dante's and on Dante's condemnation of the Catholic clerisy. See, for example, Kathleen Verduin, "Dante's *Inferno*, Jonathan Edwards, and New England Calvinism," *Dante Studies* 123 (2005): 133–61.

37. Longfellow, "Three Cantos of Dante's 'Paradiso,'" *Atlantic Monthly* 13 (January 1864): 47–55.

38. See "Proclamation of Thanksgiving," *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 6 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 496–97.

39. Ephesians 6.16. The entire passage, verses 10–17, is relevant since Paul uses offensive and defensive weapons as metaphors for spiritual battle.