# Vertical Readings in Dante's *Comedy*

## Volume 1

Edited by
George Corbett and
Heather Webb

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# Vertical Readings in Dante's *Comedy*

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# Acknowledgements

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The project has benefited from broad collaboration from the outset. Each public lecture was preceded by a video-conferenced workshop between the Universities of Cambridge, Leeds and Notre Dame on one of the three cantos in the vertical reading, and the first volume grows out of this three-way collaboration, with eight of the twelve contributors then based at one of the three institutions.

There are many people who have helped us during the different stages of the project. We are deeply grateful to you all and we regret that, in these brief acknowledgements, we can only thank some of you by name. Apart from the contributors to this volume, we would like to thank Pierpaolo Antonello, Theodore J. Cachey, Ambrogio Camozzi Pistoja, Elizabeth Corbett, Mary Corbett, Robert Gordon, Ronald Haynes, Anne Leone, Helena Phillips-Robins, Federica Pich, Katherine Powlesland and Nan Taplin. Finally, we would like to extend our especial thanks to Simon Gilson for his support, advice and encouragement on this project from its inception.

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This volume commemorates the 750th anniversary of Dante's birth. We would like to dedicate the volume to the memory of Robert M. Durling who died while we were preparing it for publication. With Ronald Martinez, Bob Durling pioneered the 'vertical reading' approach to the poem in the 'Inter cantica' sections of their edition of *Purgatorio*. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the series and had planned to give a lecture in its first year, but was prevented due to illness. A great scholar, he will be sorely missed.

# Editions Followed and Abbreviations

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## A. Dante

Unless otherwise stated, the editions of Dante's works may be found in: *Le Opere di Dante*, ed. by F. Brambilla Ageno, G. Contini, D. De Robertis, G. Gorni, F. Mazzoni, R. Migliorini Fissi, P. V. Mengaldo, G. Petrocchi, E. Pistelli, P. Shaw, and rev. by D. De Robertis and G. Breschi (Florence: Polistampa, 2012).

### A.1. Vernacular works

| | |
|---|---|
| *Inf.* | *Inferno* |
| *Purg.* | *Purgatorio* |
| *Par.* | *Paradiso* |
| *Conv.* | *Convivio* |
| *VN.* | *Vita nova* |
| *Rime.* | *Rime* |

### A.3. Latin works

| | |
|---|---|
| *DVE.* | *De vulgari eloquentia* |
| *Mon.* | *Monarchia* |
| *Questio.* | *Questio de aqua et terra* |
| *Epist.* | *Epistole* |
| *Ecl.* | *Egloge* |

## E. English Translations

Unless otherwise stated, the translations of Dante are adapted from these readily available and literally translated English editions:

### E.1. Vernacular works

*The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling; introduction and notes by Ronald L. Martinez and Robert M. Durling, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996-2011).

*The Banquet*, trans. with introduction and notes by Christopher Ryan (Saratoga, CA: Amma Libri, 1989).

*La Vita Nuova*, trans. by Mark Musa (Bloomington, IN and London: Indiana University Press, 1962).

*Dante's Lyric Poetry*, trans. by Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

### E.2. Latin works

*De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. and trans. by Steven Botterill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

*Monarchy*, ed. and trans. by Prue Shaw. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

*The Letters of Dante*, trans. by Paget J. Toynbee, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966); for the political epistles, however, *Dante Alighieri: Four Political Letters*, trans. by Claire Honess (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2007).

*Dante and Giovanni del Virgilio*, trans. by Philip H. Wicksteed and Edmund G. Gardner (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1970).

In most instances, the translation [in square brackets] follows the original passage. Where the sense of the original passage is clear from the main text, the original passage (in parentheses) follows the paraphrase. Discussion is always with regard to the passage in the original.

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# Introduction

## *George Corbett and Heather Webb*

*Vertical Readings in Dante's 'Comedy'* has its origin in a series of thirty-three public lectures held in Trinity College, the University of Cambridge (2012-2016).[1] Each vertical reading analyses three same-numbered cantos from the three canticles: *Inferno* i, *Purgatorio* i and *Paradiso* i; *Inferno* ii, *Purgatorio* ii and *Paradiso* ii; etc. At a narrative level, each reading considers in parallel the three paths – through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise – in the one journey. Although scholars had suggested that there were correspondences between same-numbered cantos that begged to be explored, this approach had never been pursued in a systematic fashion across the poem. Our series was, therefore, an experiment with a clear aim: to see what would happen when we asked scholars to read all the same-numbered canto sets of the poem vertically. This collection – to be issued in three volumes – thus offers an unprecedented repertoire of vertical readings for the whole poem. As each scholar develops his or her own approach, a great variety of different modes of vertical reading and, indeed, of reading the poem in general emerge.

In bringing together an international team of scholars to provide readings of all hundred cantos of the *Comedy*, the three volumes contribute to the long and interpretatively rich *Lectura Dantis* tradition in a complementary and divergent way. In breaking out of the canto-by-canto format, the

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[1] The title of our lecture series alludes to *Cambridge Readings in Dante's Comedy*, ed. by Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), a published selection of seventy-two *Lecturae Dantis* held during the *Lectura Dantis Cantabrigiensis* (1970-1981). In making the lectures freely viewable online (at https://sms.cam.ac.uk/collection/1366579), we were inspired by the pioneering *Lectura Dantis Andreapolitana*, which will become the first complete *Lectura Dantis* of its kind held in the UK. See http://lecturadantisandreapolitana.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk

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readings offer new modes of approaching Dante's poem in its entirety.[2] The traditional format has led to readings of immeasurable value in the last seven hundred years and will continue to hold a, perhaps *the*, central place in public lectures on Dante. At the same time, there are limitations to the canto-by-canto format which, given its prominence (also through the commentary tradition), can skew our interpretations, or impressions, of Dante's poem as a whole. By inviting the scholar to read each canto in isolation, the traditional format may inhibit an interpretation of longer narrative sequences across cantos (which we might think of as a horizontal mode of reading). Furthermore, the format restricts the reader's scope to explore the numerous thematic and structural correspondences between the canto in question and cantos in other canticles. A vertical reading invites us to keep the three canticles continually in dialogue with each other.

There is, of course, nothing new about pointing out correspondences between specific same-numbered cantos. It has become customary, for example, to refer to the 'political 666': the vertical political argument which develops from the civic politics of Florence in *Inferno* vi, through the regional political perspective of the Italian peninsula in *Purgatorio* vi, and on to the imperial and global dimension in *Paradiso* vi.[3] There are, as well, existing studies of the Sevens, Tens, Elevens, Fifteens, Sixteens, Twenty-fives, Twenty-sixes and Twenty-sevens.[4] As far as we are aware, however, the only attempt to follow this vertical reading through a whole canticle is to be found in the 'Inter cantica' notes in the Durling and Martinez edition of *Purgatorio* (2003).[5] The notes provide for each canto of *Purgatorio* a detailed discussion of allusions to its correspondingly numbered canto in *Inferno*, as well as to other cantos in *Inferno* that are linked thematically if not numerically. In his introduction to the *Paradiso* volume (2011), Durling notes that 'such references, now involving two *cantiche*, become particularly dense and frequent'.[6] But the editors do not explore these references at length. Rather, they refer to the 'Inter Cantica' notes in the *Purgatorio* volume as a 'possible model for the exploration of the self-referentiality of the *Comedy*'.[7] These correspondences are, as the editors' work on *Purgatorio* demonstrates, 'extremely illuminating'.[8] The time seemed ripe, therefore, to follow up on this initiative and to provide a forum – between 2012-2016 – to explore these correspondences in a systematic fashion across all the canticles.

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[2] As T. S. Eliot argues in a seminal essay, tradition should not consist simply in 'following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes' (*Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. by Frank Kermode (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), p. 38). Eliot also gives an eloquent, albeit indirect, defence of the traditional *Lectura* to his predominantly English-speaking public. He writes that we can get as much out of just one of Dante's hundred cantos as 'from the reading of a whole single play of Shakespeare' ('Dante', in *Selected Prose*, pp. 205-30 (p. 211)).

[3] See, for example, Guy P. Raffa, *POLITICAL 666*, in his *The Complete Danteworlds: A Reader's Guide to the Divine Comedy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 245-46.

[4] For some examples, see, on the Sixes, Camillo Massi, 'A proposito dei sesti canti della *Commedia*', *L'Alighieri* 7 (1996), 91-94; on the Sixes and Sevens, see Brenda Deen Schildgen, *Divine Providence: A History* (London: Continuum, 2012), particularly chapter five; on the Tens, see George Corbett, 'The Vertical Axis: *Inferno* x, *Purgatorio* x, and *Paradiso* x', in *Dante and Epicurus: A Dualistic Vision of Secular and Spiritual Fulfilment* (Oxford: Legenda and MHRA, 2013), pp. 80-85; Simon Gilson, 'Divine and Natural Artistry in the Commedia', in *Art and Nature in Dante: Literary and Theological Essays*, ed. by Daragh O'Connell and Jennifer Petrie (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), pp. 153-86; on the Elevens, see Victoria Kirkham, 'Eleven is for Evil: Measured Trespass in Dante's *Commedia*', *Allegorica* 10 (1989), 27-50; on the Fifteens and Sixteens, see Richard Kay, 'Parallel Cantos in Dante's *Commedia*', *Res publica litterarum* 15 (1992), 109-13; Simon A. Gilson, '*Inferno* xvi', in *Lectura dantis Andreapolitana*, ed. by Claudia Rossignoli and Robert Wilson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, forthcoming); on the Twenty-fives, Twenty-sixes

But are we lining up the right cantos for a vertical reading? Richard Kay argues for an alternative mode of vertical reading. He considers *Inferno* i to be a prologue, and therefore aligns *Inferno* ii, *Purgatorio* i and *Paradiso* i; *Inferno* iii, *Purgatorio* ii and *Paradiso* ii; and so forth.[9] Kay's method yields interesting results, and it also raises a broader question about whether we should be lining up single cantos at all, instead of larger groups of cantos. This possibility is partly suggested by the Durling and Martinez 'Inter cantica' readings which analyse correspondences both between same-numbered cantos and between the broader episodes of which they are a part. In his essay 'Autoesegesi dantesca: la tecnica dell' "episodio"

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and Twenty-sevens, see Heather Webb, 'Paradiso 25: Hope', *California Lectura Dantis: Paradiso*, ed. by Allen Mandelbaum, Anthony Oldcorn, and Charles Ross (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, forthcoming); Franco Fido, 'Writing Like God – or Better? Symmetries in Dante's 26th and 27th Cantos of the *Commedia*', *Italica* 53 (1986), 250-64; William Franke, *Dante and the Sense of Transgression: 'The Trespass of the Sign'* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 153-86. For a cumulative online index of vertical readings, see http://www.openbookpublishers.com/wiki/index.php?title=Open_Bibliography_of_Vertical_Readings_of_Dante%27s_%27%27Divina_Commedia%27%27.

[5] *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling, introduction and notes by Ronald L. Martinez and Robert M. Durling, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996-2011), II, *Purgatorio*.

[6] Durling, *Preface*, in III, *Paradiso*, p. v.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] See 'Parallel Cantos in Dante's Commedia', in Richard Kay, *Dante's Enigmas* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), XV, pp. 109-13. See also Paul Shaw, 'A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*', *Stanford Italian Studies* 7:1/2 (1987), 67-76.

parallelo', Amilcare Iannucci emphasises the parallels between episodes that seem consciously connected in the poet's self-exegesis, but that do not necessarily correspond to cantos of the same number. This notion of the 'parallel episode', Iannucci points out, has a crucial point of reference for Dante in Biblical exegesis.[10]

The *Vertical Readings* series has raised, and played with, these tensions in the text. Indeed, many readings push the limits of the numerically vertical cantos to explore larger architectural or thematic patterns that extend between the canticles. Our focus on same-numbered cantos, in other words, has been generative of readings that flow both within and far beyond this restriction. Simone Marchesi and Manuele Gragnolati address this issue in their readings of, respectively, the Fifteens and the Sixteens.[11] They explicitly question the degree to which a single canto, or three same-numbered cantos, may be read in isolation from the cantos that precede and follow it. In this volume, Paola Nasti suggests that the poem 'requires horizontal, vertical and, more often, diagonal, back-and-forth movements from its readers'. As with the traditional *Lectura Dantis* format, we see the pressure of the 'horizontal' dimension stretching out beyond the narrative unit of a single canto, a tendency which arguably becomes ever more pronounced through the poem as a whole. And it is interesting that two recent, and ongoing, *Lectura Dantis* series have sought ways to incorporate these wider narrative episodes: *Esperimenti danteschi* chose to work on 'horizontal' groupings of cantos; the *Lectura Dantis Andreapolitana* has highlighted this same 'horizontal dimension' by presenting four lectures on four successive cantos over the course of a morning and afternoon.[12]

What, then, is the most effective terminology for our own mode of reading three same-numbered cantos together? The term 'vertical reading' is used by Richard Shoaf in his discussion of the Thirties (1983), by Victoria Kirkham in her essay 'Eleven is for Evil: Measured Trespass in Dante's *Commedia*' (1989) and by Christopher Kleinhenz in his essay

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[10] See Amilcare A. Iannucci, 'Autoesegesi dantesca: la tecnica dell' "episodio" parallelo', *Lettere Italiane* 33:1 (1981), 305-28. See also Kay, 'Parallel Cantos'.

[11] See Simone Marchesi, 'Fatherlands: Inferno xv, Purgatorio xv, Paradiso xv', https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1711867; and Manuele Gragnolati, 'Politics of Desire: Inferno xvi, Purgatorio xvi, Paradiso xvi', https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1749200 The published versions of these lectures will be available in *Vertical Readings of Dante's Comedy* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, forthcoming), vol. 2.

[12] *Esperimenti danteschi* (published by Marietti in 2008, 2009, 2010) based at the Università degli Studi in Milan; *Lectura Dantis Andreapolitana*, http://lecturadantisandreapolitana.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk

'On Dante and the Visual Arts' (2003).[13] But, arguably, 'parallel' readings might have worked just as well. In this volume, Zygmunt Barański points out that Dante normally encourages us to look backwards, whereas the term 'vertical' might suggest a forcing of readerly attention upwards. Simon Gilson, who likewise highlights Charles Singleton's 'The Vistas in Retrospect', contextualises vertical reading within the much wider, and venerable, tradition of 'reading Dante with Dante'.

The very choice of term raises, in this way, thought-provoking questions about how we automatically or self-consciously construct spatial maps of Dante's text. 'Vertical reading', in this sense, might make us imagine the three canticles of the *Comedy* inscribed one above the other in bands so that we could literally read either horizontally (each canto in turn) or vertically (upwards from *Inferno* to *Paradiso*, and downwards from *Paradiso* to *Inferno*).[14] As Christopher Kleinhenz argues, this kind of parallel structure may have come to Dante 'forcefully from his looking, since the time he was a small boy, and ever with love, upon the mosaics in the cupola of the Florentine Baptistery'.[15] In the 'great artistic program of the Baptistery', five zones of the eight-sided cupula contain 'fifteen episodes in four separate "storylines", and these are arranged so that they can be read both horizontally (that is, in their individual chronology) *and* vertically (in their typological and allegorical relations, whereby the meaning of one enhances and explicates that of another)'.[16] It is not difficult to imagine how Dante might have created in the *Comedy* 'a parallel structure, by which the poem may be read not only horizontally or linearly (that is, each canticle in itself), but also vertically (each canticle holding up foil-mirrors to the others)'.[17]As Kleinhenz suggests, the pervasive use by medieval artists of vertical parallels between Scriptural (and indeed Classical and mythological) events and personages through different visual media, from mosaics and frescoes to the architecture and sculptures of churches and cathedrals, simply highlights a familiar medieval exegetical practice. Our preference for the term 'vertical reading' derives in part, then, from this allusive analogy with the arrangement of horizontal and vertical story-bands in the Florentine Baptistery.

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[13] See Richard Shoaf, *Dante, Chaucer and the Currency of the Word: Money, Images and Reference in Late Medieval Poetry* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1983), esp. part one; Kirkham, 'Eleven is for Evil', 27-50; Christopher Kleinhenz, 'On Dante and the Visual Arts', in *Dante for the New Millennium* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), pp. 274-92.

[14] There are, of course, readily available A3 prints of the poem which illustrate this.

[15] Kleinhenz, p. 282.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

'Vertical reading' is not, however, the only contentious term. Unsurprisingly, this interpretative exercise has tested scholarly vocabulary, leading to the coining of new terms, such as Marchesi's neologism 'conumerary' for 'same-numbered', or to interesting analogies, such as Vittorio Montemaggi's analogy of the vertical musical chord. It has been one of the pleasures of the project that even its title and its terminology have led to profound reflection on the fundamental construction and nature of Dante's poem. As Barański suggests, one of the most rewarding aspects of this mode of interpretation may be that it gives us 'highly alluring glimpses into how Dante may have woven the fabric of the *Commedia*'.

This leads to the thorny question which circled our project from its inception: did Dante intend his poem to be read in this way? Although we did not want to evade this question entirely, we were keen to put it on hold or, at least, to keep it open. This cycle is an experiment. No one has ever read the whole poem 'vertically', and our cycle is just a first attempt. We were thus cautious of reaching a conclusion either way prematurely. Moreover, although the cycle should enable any scholar to reach a more informed opinion on the matter, its primary goal is not to establish once and for all whether or not such vertical correspondences were intended by their author (even were this possible to discern definitively). The question of intentionality does matter but, for us, what matters much more is the interpretative fertility of vertical reading: this is what makes applying it to the whole poem, and discovering many different approaches within the method, so important. What is striking, on this front, is how some of the most experienced Dante scholars in our series, who have studied the poem continuously for their whole careers, have informed us that, in preparing their vertical reading, they discovered not only many intriguing correspondences between the three cantos under consideration but, also, new readings of each canto which, without this vertical perspective, they might well have continued to miss.

But even if the question of intentionality is of secondary importance to our series, it inevitably underlines, implicitly or explicitly, all of our speakers' contributions. In exploring correspondences between conumerary cantos, the scholar cannot but wonder whether Dante established them on purpose. In individual readings, therefore, the question tends to be: did Dante intend *this* set of three cantos to be read vertically? While there is significant scholarly consensus that Dante must have intended the Sixes to be read in parallel, it does not, of course, follow that he had such a plan for every canto set. It is immediately apparent that the correspondences and parallels are more marked, although not necessarily more important, in some sets of cantos than in others. In no case so far have there been no connections at all. But, again, this does not imply authorial intention. As John Marenbon suggested in the spoken version of his lecture, any Dante scholar worth his or her salt could happily connect *any* three cantos of the poem in some way![18]

With regard to intentionality, what emerges from the series thus far, then, are attempts to distinguish different kinds of correspondences and to gauge whether certain kinds are more likely to suggest authorial intentionality than others. In this volume, Gilson emphasises that a 'thematizing reading', however interpretatively productive, is unlikely to give clear indications of intentionality because of 'the poem's capacity for retrospection at multiple points outside the vertical line'. His own reading of the Sevens explores, by contrast, 'precise verbal echoing, image patterns, situational parallels and [...] prominent intertexts'. Barański warns against the danger of the 'vertical reading' prioritising the obvious. In his reading of the Nines, he gives less weight to clear narrative similarities (points of 'entry'; three prominent reader addresses; parallel themes) and more to the formal, but less evident, similarities (rhymes and rhyme words). As he points out, medieval vernacular poets used shared rhymes and rhyme words as a sophisticated technique to suggest 'affinities between texts'. K P Clarke's reading of the Tens accepts this invitation. Although he notes several levels of thematic correspondence, he focuses precisely on the use of one distinctive rhyme set (*parte: parte: arte*) which is repeated in exactly the same order across the Tens. Paola Nasti's reading of the Elevens explicitly probes authorial intention, and she presents a catalogue of different kinds of correspondence.

The issue of intentionality raises a further interrelated question: if Dante did have vertical correspondences in mind, did he have these in mind from the first canto of *Inferno* or did he begin working them in later on in the poem? And this, in turn, raises a still broader question about Dante's compositional procedure: to what extent did Dante have a plan of the whole poem at its inception, with particular characters or themes assigned to particular canto sets? To what extent did he develop its structure as he went along? Our responses to these subsidiary questions might, in turn, suggest different starting points for our vertical readings. If we were to believe that Dante began to think more extensively about correspondences within his poem as it went on, then it might be more logical to perform a vertical reading by beginning with the canto from *Paradiso*, then *Purgatorio*, then *Inferno*. Conversely, if we believed that Dante planned the correspondences in advance, it would be equally logical to start with *Inferno*. This volume illustrates the full range of approaches. Marenbon starts with the problem of the virtuous pagan posed in *Inferno* iv; he then sees what a 'vertical perspective' brings to the issues it raises. Somewhat to his surprise, he finds that the vertical reading of Limbo in *Purgatorio* iv and *Paradiso* iv yields new perspectives on the passages and on the question as a whole. Brenda Deen Schildgen, inversely, starts from a series of important themes crystallised in *Paradiso* viii, and this provides a retrospective vista in which to consider *Purgatorio* viii and *Inferno* viii. Claire Honess, taking the *via media*, starts her reading of the Sixes in the precise middle, the central *terzina* of *Purgatorio* vi, and this becomes the central axis for her reading of *Paradiso* vi and *Inferno* vi. As these readings show, 'vertical' does not necessarily imply movement 'upwards' and, as Gilson highlights, Dante's poem more often than not asks us to move 'di qua, di là, di sù, di giù'.

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[18] See John Marenbon, 'Cambridge Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy: The Fours', https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1459230

In opening the series with a dual vertical reading of the Ones, we aim to illustrate that vertical readings are not exhaustive, and that for any set of three same-numbered cantos there is a range of possible hermeneutic stances.[19] George Corbett's reading, 'Pagan Dawn of a Christian Vision', interrogates the presence of pagans and classical philosophy at the opening of each canticle, from Virgil's self-presentation, to Cato's mystifying presence, to Beatrice's philosophical discourse on the order of the world. Heather Webb's reading, 'Orientation', explores the discussions of spatial orientation in the Ones, from the light behind the hill in *Inferno* i, to the stars of *Purgatorio* i, to the expanse of light to be entered into in *Paradiso* i. Thus, the two readings separately explore distinct but not unrelated threads.

For the Twos, Matthew Treherne's 'Reading Time, Text and the World' examines moments of transition, including the evocation of Beatrice's commission to Virgil, Casella's song and Beatrice's explanation of moon spots, that are figured in each of the cantos. Treherne argues that each instance contains hermeneutic surprises or problems that can only be resolved by horizontal investigation, in this case by reading through the subsequent cantos. There is, then, an interplay between the horizontal and vertical axes, in which the vertical reveals an emphasis on considerations of temporality and particularly the possibility of reading time through Christ. The Twos, Treherne suggests, show how the text distinguishes between different kinds of readers, offering different modes of engaging with the text, including, most importantly, an Incarnational mode.

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[19] Giuseppe Ledda kindly invited us to publish the text of our dual vertical reading of the Ones after the public lecture. For this earlier version, see George Corbett and Heather Webb, 'Three Paths in One Journey: A Vertical Reading of *Inf.* I, *Purg.* I, *Par.* I', *L'Alighieri* 41 (2013), 63-81.

Vittorio Montemaggi's 'The Bliss and Abyss of Freedom: Hope, Personhood and Particularity' focuses on the re-orientation of expectation that is caused by a consideration of freedom in these three cantos. He emphasises key moments in the text such as the inscription on the gates of Hell, the appearance of penitent souls in Ante-Purgatory who are likened to sheep (the group from which Manfred emerges) and the meeting with Piccarda in *Paradiso*. Freedom is continually redefined in this analysis, coming to signify fully only when it is understood through the dynamics of community. The essay ends with a link to Giuseppe Verdi's *Ave Maria*, an example of musical verticality, in which four voices find meaning in their interaction with one another.

John Marenbon's 'Virtuous Pagans, Hopeless Desire and Unjust Justice' structures a consideration of the Fours around Dante's treatment of the virtuous pagans in Limbo – a real *crux* of the poem as a whole. He examines Dante's divergences from medieval theologies of Limbo, and the various theological modes of dealing with the salvation or damnation of virtuous pagans. Dante's own position appears inconsistent unless, Marenbon argues, we understand the clear demarcation of the spheres of reason and faith which Dante inherited from a school of thinking he labels, with some qualification, Latin Averroism. With regard to *Purgatorio* iv, Marenbon contrasts Belacqua and Virgil and also draws on *Purgatorio* iii to provide a retrospective analysis of the Limbo dwellers. He argues that *Paradiso* iv reveals that Dante held an intellectualist understanding of the will (again a sign of his propensity for Averroist positions) and that the 'unjust justice' reflects precisely the two separate spheres, of earthly and heavenly values, operable in the poem.

Robin Kirkpatrick's 'Massacre, *Miserere* and Martyrdom' works through the Fives by beginning, for the first time in this volume, with *Paradiso* rather than *Inferno*. He claims that *Paradiso* v is one of the most 'humane' cantos of the poem, presenting Beatrice's discourse on vows not as harsh, but as offering up a fullness of freedom. From there, Kirkpatrick moves to *Inferno* v and the slippery quality of Francesca's much-celebrated language. *Purgatorio* v, from this vantage point, provides a striking contrast in terms of style and content, a contrast that is all the more evident given the obvious textual parallels, such as murdered wives and violent storms. It is outside of *Inferno* v that embodiment is shown to be truly powerful, in Buonconte's final salvific gesture and Beatrice's luminous smile.

Claire Honess's chapter on the Sixes, 'Divided City, Slavish Italy, Universal Empire', provides a new view of verticality by emphasising the circular. It is the first vertical reading in this volume to begin in the middle canticle, rather than in *Inferno* or *Paradiso*. It begins, furthermore, at the centre of canto vi of *Purgatorio*, using that halfway point to reflect on cantos vi of the other two realms. Moving from the invective against Italy that is placed there, Honess examines Dante's political thought as it is articulated across the *Comedy* and beyond. The three main protagonists of her analysis are Sordello, Ciacco and Justinian, but she works seamlessly from these three to the presence of that protagonist who always hovers at the edge of Dante's text, Henry VII. Ultimately, she argues, Henry's death led to a realignment of Dante's political ideal upwards – to the heavenly city where all the souls will only what God wills for them.

Simon Gilson's 'The Wheeling Sevens' begins with a review of the history of practices of reading parallel cantos and other forms of 'reading Dante with Dante', and a discussion of what such readings might offer. He argues that we should ultimately place any vertical reading within a broader reading that is fully attentive to textual cues that might send us in multiple directions. His analysis of the Sevens puts this approach into practice, looking within the cantos numbered vii, but also outside them to other intercantical references. Gilson investigates several formal links, including the invented languages that open *Inferno* vii and *Paradiso* vii. This leads to a discussion of thematic links, from reflection upon language to circular movement to fortune, providence and angels.

Brenda Deen Schildgen's '*Civitas* and Love: Looking Backward from *Paradiso* viii' sets the Eights within a triptych vertical reading of the Sevens, Eights and Nines of each canticle, emphasising their structural enjambment. The focus on Carlo Martello (as an ideal monarch) – including his discourse on citizenship, genealogy and divine order – provides a retrospective vista from which to view the concerns of *Purgatorio* viii and *Inferno* viii. Schildgen draws parallels between the meeting with Carlo Martello and the meetings in *Inferno,* with Filippo Argenti, and in *Purgatorio,* with Nino Visconti and Corrado Malaspina. In her vertical reading of the three cantos, she reveals how the opposition in the Heaven of Venus between two kinds of love ('folle amore' and 'l'amor che il ciel governa') is, in its social dimension, a contrast between the immoderate desires of individuals who shatter the common good and the love which binds citizens together.

In 'Without any Violence', Zygmunt Barański offers, first, a series of cautions about vertical readings and, second, a vertical reading that uncovers an unexpected insight that, without the vertical approach, might not have come to light. Barański focuses on the theme of violence that stretches across the Nines, arguing that each of the cantos repeatedly refers to acts of violence. But, he suggests, the poet exercises extreme restraint in his depiction of violence, in stark contrast to his contemporaries and his sources. Dante's description of the crucifixion, his mention of Can Grande's slaughter of the Paduan Guelphs and his allusion to the barbaric story of Procne and Philomela are all examples of moments when the poet chooses to avoid extended or graphic portrayals of violence. Such discretion is, for Barański, evidence of a strand of Christian pacifism in Dante's thought.

K P Clarke's 'Humility and the (P)arts of Art' begins with a discussion of verticality in the *Comedy* in terms of manuscript layout in single or double columns, with emphasis thus placed on the line endings and the *terza rima* that carries the poem upwards and onwards. The reading focuses on the rhyme *parte: parte: arte* that appears in each of the Tens, arguing that the vertical is expressed not only thematically but also technically. The *parte: parte: arte* rhyme thus transports us from the partisan politicking of *Inferno* x, to the navigation of terrain and text necessary in *Purgatorio* x, to the divine art of *Paradiso* x.

Paola Nasti's 'The Art of Teaching and the Nature of Love' examines the practice of philosophical teaching as it appears in the Elevens. Each of the Elevens treats the relationship between human arts and the Bible, one fallible and the other the ultimate source of truth. She argues that a vertical reading reveals a rationale for Dante's rhetorical choices across the cantos. Each of the cantos exhibits the various writing genres used for commentary and, more broadly, for pedagogical purposes. In the final analysis, the movement across all three cantos, culminating in Thomas Aquinas's preacherly, or Biblical, account of the life of Saint Francis, places emphasis on charity as that which should properly form the core of all human activities.

# 1.i. Pagan Dawn of a Christian Vision[1]

## *George Corbett*

Each of the three opening cantos of the *Comedy* begins with an attempted journey that ends in failure. In *Inferno* i, Dante gazes up at the sun's rays which light up the mountain he then attempts to climb; impeded by the three beasts, he returns to the wood from whence he came, where the sun is silent. In *Purgatorio* i, the predawn rise of the planet Venus ('lo bel pianeto') inspires Dante who, leaving the cruel sea behind him, aims to climb the mountain of Purgatory; interrogated by Cato, Dante is sent back to the seashore where he is washed and girded with a rush by Virgil. In *Paradiso* i, Dante attempts to fix his eyes on the sun; he has to give up, however, after a short while. On an allegorical reading of the poem, the sun primarily represents God and movement upwards represents movement towards God.[2] These three attempts and failures are, therefore, three attempts and failures to journey towards God.

What is striking, then, is that on each of these three occasions when Dante initially fails in his journey to God, he is helped not – as we might expect in a Christian poem depicting the three realms of the Christian afterlife – by an angel, a saint or a passage of Scripture but, rather, by a pagan or by distinctively classical philosophy. The pagan poet-philosopher Virgil comes to Dante's rescue in the dark wood in *Inferno* i and undertakes

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[1] The video of this lecture is available at the Cambridge Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy website, https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1366614

[2] The symbolic function of the sun to signify God was, of course, a commonplace of the medieval imagination. In the *Convivio* (III. xii. 6-7), Dante highlights the distinction between the corporeal sun and the spiritual sun (God) to illustrate the literal and spiritual ways of reading his philosophical poems.

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to be his guide through Hell. Even more surprisingly, in the opening of *Purgatorio*, Dante is instructed by Virgil to kneel before Cato of Utica – a pagan Roman who committed suicide and yet acts as the guardian of Mount Purgatory's shores. And in *Paradiso* i when Dante, unable to continue gazing at the sun, fixes his eyes on Beatrice, she responds with a discourse on the order of the world which, like the many references to God in the canto, would have been as acceptable to the pagan philosopher Aristotle as to a medieval Christian theologian. Why Dante's emphasis on pagans at the beginning of a Christian poem about the three regions of the Christian afterlife: Hell, Purgatory and Paradise? Why Dante's recourse to natural ethics and natural philosophy when the poem is ostensibly about a Christian's journey to God?

Let us consider in more detail the appeal to the pagan at the beginning of each canticle in turn:

> Mentre ch'i' rovinava in basso loco,
> dinanzi a li occhi mi si fu offerto
> chi per lungo silenzio parea fioco.
> Quando vidi costui nel gran diserto,
> '*Miserere* di me', gridai a lui,
> 'qual che tu sii, od ombra od omo certo!' (*Inf.*, i. 61-66)

> [While I was falling down into a low place, before my eyes one had offered himself to me who through long silence seemed hoarse. When I saw him in the great wilderness, '*Miserere* – on me', I cried to him, 'whatever you may be, whether shade or true man!']

In the penultimate canto of the *Comedy*, Dante refers to King David, the author of the Psalms, as '[il] cantor che per doglia / del fallo disse "*Miserere mei*"' [the singer who, grieving at his sin, said '*Miserere mei*'] (*Par.*, xxxii. 11-12). Like King David, Dante is a sinner turned singer. And the first words of Dante-character in the poem – in a strange conflation of vulgate Latin ('*Miserere*') and vernacular Italian ('di me') – echo the opening of King David's penitential psalm. And yet, peculiarly, Dante-character's addressee is not God but, rather, he 'who through long silence seemed hoarse' (l. 63). This circumlocution is puzzling because it does not seem possible that a person, although silent, may appear hoarse. A traditional interpretation is that the, as yet unidentified, interlocutor initially represents the voice of reason.[3] Reason – the divine, God-given, part in man – is silent in a soul immersed in the wood and valley of sin. Even when the voice of reason returns, it is inevitably weak and may only gather strength and clarity as the soul struggles against the pull of sin. Dante-character does appeal, in this way, to his reason at this stage in the narrative.

Why a pagan? Well, first of all, the choice of a pagan guide enables Dante to represent, if only at an allegorical level, human reason. Dante was convinced that man could pursue the natural good, and be directed away from evil, through the correct use of his reason. When, in *Inferno* xi, Dante-character asks Virgil about the ordering of evil in Hell, Virgil refers primarily – not to Scripture – but to natural philosophy and directly cites Aristotle's *Ethics*, his *Physics* and, arguably, his *Metaphysics* within just twenty lines.[4] By choosing a pagan as his guide through Hell, Dante makes a polemical point about reason: that reason is sufficient (without Christian revelation) to provide a theoretical basis – natural law – for the ordering of good and evil in the temporal sphere. Virgil does not simply, however, represent reason or human wisdom. If Dante had only wanted to allegorise philosophy, he could have chosen – even more appropriately – Aristotle, whom he considered the maximum authority in philosophy: ''l maestro di color che sanno' (*Inf.*, iv. 131). We must not simply ask, therefore, 'Why a pagan guide?' but 'why *specifically* the pagan Virgil?'.

Dante establishes from Virgil's very first words in the poem that he is, first and foremost, a human soul who literally exists in the afterlife, although temporarily deprived of his body (until the Final Judgement):

> Rispuosemi: 'Non omo, omo già fui,
> e li parenti miei furon lombardi,
> mantoani per patrïa ambedui.
> Nacqui *sub Iulio*, ancor che fosse tardi,
> e vissi a Roma sotto 'l buono Augusto
> nel tempo de li dèi falsi e bugiardi.

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[3] See, for example, Michele Barbi, gloss to *Inf.*, i. 63 'fioco', in *La Divina Commedia*, ed. by Michele Barbi (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1946).

[4] *Inf.*, xi. 80: 'la tua Etica'; xi. 101: 'la tua Fisica'; xi. 97: 'Filosofia'. Giovanni Busnelli argues that the reference to philosophy must refer specifically to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and not to Aristotelian philosophy in general (see Giovanni Busnelli, *L'Etica Nicomachea e l'ordinamento morale dell'Inferno di Dante* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1907), p. 128).

> Poeta fui, e cantai di quel giusto
> figliuol d'Anchise che venne di Troia,
> poi che 'l superbo Ilïón fu combusto'. (*Inf.*, i. 67-75)

> [He replied: 'Not a man, I was formerly a man, and my parents were Lombards, Mantuans both by birth. I was born *sub Iulio*, though it was late, and I lived in Rome under the good Augustus in the time of the false and lying gods. I was a poet, and I sang of that just son of Anchises who came from Troy, when proud Ilion was destroyed by fire'.]

Temporally, Dante massages the historical facts in order to make Virgil's life span the birth-pangs of Imperial Rome from Caesar ('*sub Iulio*') to his nephew Augustus (''l buono Augusto'). Geographically, Virgil locates his life in Rome ('vissi a Roma'). Vocationally, Virgil identifies himself as the poet of Roman Empire ('cantai di quel giusto / figliuol d'Anchise'). Why *specifically* the pagan Virgil? Because Virgil lived in Rome at the time of Augustus, and because Dante treats Virgil's *Aeneid* as if it were the divinely revealed text of Imperial power. When, in the *Convivio*, Dante argues that the Roman Empire was established by Divine Providence rather than by brute force, he defends this heterodox view with the authority of Virgil's *Aeneid*: 'A costoro – cioè alli Romani – né termine di cose né di tempo pongo; a loro hoe dato imperio sanza fine' [To them – that is to the Romans – I set neither boundary in space or time: to them I have given power without end] (*Conv.*, IV. iv. 11).[5] Notably, Dante does not write that Virgil speaks in the person of Jupiter but simply in the person of God ('in persona di Dio parlando' (*Conv.*, IV. iv. 11)). Dante thus gives quasi-scriptural authority to Virgil's text and, bolstered by it, he affirms that God gave divine jurisdiction to the Roman Empire.

How, then, does this emphasis on Virgil, as poet of Imperial Rome, connect with the sense of Virgil, as embodiment of human wisdom? Dante believed that the pagan Aristotle had set out – for all time – the necessary theory for human flourishing (ethics) and for Justice (natural law).[6] However he also realised that such theory is impotent without political power. As he argues in the *Convivio*, imperial power without philosophy is dangerous while philosophy without political power is weak (*Conv.*, IV. vi. 17). Dante considered, then, that the Roman Empire was ordained by God to implement natural law and to establish universal peace and justice.[7] Dante's choice of Virgil as guide, therefore, arguably forms part of a wider polemic in his own time – against apologists for Papal temporal power – that a restoration of the Holy Roman Empire was necessary for the effective governance of the political sphere.

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[5] Virgil, *Aen.*, I. 278-79: 'His ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono: / imperium sine fine dedi'.

[6] As Dante exclaims in the opening of his work of political theory, *Monarchia*, what would be the point of attempting to describe the nature of human happiness when this has already been done, and superlatively so, by Aristotle: 'qui ab Aristotile felicitatem ostensam reostendere conaretur' (*Mon.*, I. i. 4).

Dante's belief in the dignity of human nature, and his political dualism, may also serve to explain his strange choice of Cato of Utica as the custodian of Purgatory's shores in *Purgatorio* i. Dante-character, facing south, initially sees four stars which represent allegorically the four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude (*Purg.*, i. 22-27). Turning to face north, he then sees these lights brilliantly reflected in the, as yet unidentified, pagan Cato (*Purg.*, i. 28-39). Why a pagan? Well, again first of all, a pagan – without access to the theological virtues (faith, hope and charity) or the graces conferred by baptism and the Christian sacraments – may allegorically represent (in a way a Christian could not) the perfection of natural virtue. But why *specifically* the Roman pagan Cato and why *here* in Purgatory? Why is Cato not in Dante's special region of Limbo reserved for the virtuous pagans? Why is he not, even more appropriately, in the circle of violence allocated to the suicides? St Augustine specifically condemned Cato's suicide and, more generally, he condemned the vanity of pagan virtue.[8] In stark contrast to this theological precedent, Dante re-interprets Cato's suicide as sacrifice and leaves no doubt about Cato's future glory at the resurrection of the body. Virgil addresses Cato:

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[7] In the opening of *Convivio* IV, for example, Dante defends both the political authority of the Holy Roman Emperor (*Conv.*, IV. iv-v) and the ethical authority of the philosopher (*Conv.*, IV. vi).

[8] For Augustine's specific condemnation of Cato's suicide see, for example, *De civitate Dei* I. 22-24 (23). For a fuller discussion of the theological problem of Cato's suicide, see John A. Scott, 'Cato, A Pagan Suicide in Purgatory', in *Dante's Political Purgatory* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), pp. 69-84. For a more general survey, see Alexander Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, 2 vols, II, *The Curse on Self-Murder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For Augustine's critique of pagan virtue, see, for example, *Contra Iulianum*, IV. 3. 21. For a fuller discussion, see Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. by L.E.M. Lynch (London: Victor Gollancz, 1961). Gilson comments that, for Augustine, human nature 'is only the historical remains of a divine order corrupted by sin' (p. 239). Pagan virtues are contaminated and not 'true virtues' since they are not correctly ordered towards God.

> 'Or ti piaccia gradir la sua venuta:
> libertà va cercando, ch'è sì cara,
> come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta.
> Tu 'l sai, ché non ti fu per lei amara
> in Utica la morte, ove lasciasti
> la vesta ch'al gran dì sarà sì chiara'. (*Purg.*, i. 70-75)[9]
>
> ['Now may it please you to favour his coming: he seeks freedom, which is so precious, as one knows who rejects life for her sake. You know it; for to you, because of her, death was not bitter in Utica, when you left the raiment that will be so bright on the great day'.]

Why does Dante adopt this apparently heretical position ('quae videtur sapere haeresim')?[10] Why this choice, and exaltation, of the pagan Roman Cato?

Most straightforwardly, Dante's representation of Cato of Utica follows Roman classical sources with scant regard for, or reference to, subsequent Christian critique. For Cicero and Seneca, Cato is the quintessential model and pattern of virtue.[11] Eulogised by Lucan, Cato serves as the custodian of the Elysian fields in Virgil's *Aeneid*.[12] Despite scepticism in the Church fathers, this view persists in the medieval reception of Cato. It is epitomised by the pedagogical text mis-attributed during the medieval period to Cato of Utica amongst others, the *Disticha Catonis*. Dante's own eulogy of Cato serves, however, an urgent ethical and political purpose. Cato comes to signify the secular perfection of human nobility which Dante, in his dualistic ethical theory, distinguishes from man's eternal Christian beatitude.

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[9] See also *Mon.*, II. v. 15: 'illud inenarrabile sacrifitium severissimi libertatis tutoris Marci Catonis'; and Lucan, *Phars.*, II, 302-03: 'tuumque / Nomen, Libertas, et inanem prosequar umbram'.

[10] See Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg.*, i. 28-33, *Dartmouth Dante Project* (http://dante.dartmouth.edu/): 'Et quia hic videtur error satis enormis, rogo te, lector, ut vires animi parum colligas ad considerandum quid poeta noster intendat sub ista mirabili nova fictione, quae videtur sapere haeresim; nimis enim videtur absurdum quod ponat Catonem custodem purgatorii, quem debuisset ponere in inferno, tum quia fuit paganus infidelis, tum quia interfecit se ipsum; unde debebat melius reponi inter violentos contra se ipsos'.

[11] See, for example, Cicero, *De fin.*, IV. xvi. 44-45: '"Optime," inquam: "quid enim mihi potest esse optatius quam cum Catone, omnium virtutum auctore, de virtutibus disputare?"' See also Seneca, *Epist.*, I. xi. 8-10: 'Aliquis vir bonus nobis eligendus est ac semper ante oculos habendus, ut sic tanquam illo spectante vivamus et omnia tamquam illo vidente faciamus. [...] Elige itaque Catonem'.

[12] Lucan, *Phars.*, II. 389-90: 'Iustitiae cultor, rigidi servator honesti, / In comune bonus'; IX. 554-57: 'Nam cui crediderim superos arcana daturos / Dicturosque magis quam sancto vera Catoni? / Certe vita tibi semper directa supernas / Ad leges, sequerisque deum'. See also Virgil, *Aen.*, VIII. 666-70: 'hinc procul addit / Tartareas etiam sedes, alta ostia Ditis, / et scelerum poenas, et te, Catilina, minaci / pendentem scopulo Furiarumque ora trementem, / secretosque pios, his dantem iura Catonem'.

Dante's most extensive treatment of nobility is the fourth book of the *Convivio*. Refuting a contemporary definition of nobility as residing in ancient wealth and pleasing manners, Dante defines nobility philosophically as the perfect fulfilment of a being's nature. Following Aristotle, Dante argues that each living thing, from a flower to a horse, has a certain natural perfection. This, he affirms, is its nobility. Human nobility – *virtus vera nobilitas* – is the perfection of man's rational nature: virtue (practical activity in accordance with reason) and knowledge (the contemplative use of reason) (*Conv.*, I. i. 1; IV. xvi. 5).[13] Dante emphasises that the pagan Roman Cato of Utica exemplifies this human nobility:[14]

> 'Nel nome di cui [Cato] è bello terminare ciò che delli segni de la nobilitade ragionare si convenia, però che in lui essa nobilitade tutti li dimostra per tutte etadi.' (*Conv.*, IV. xxviii. 19).
>
> [The mention of his name is a happy note on which to end the required discussion of the signs of nobility, since in him nobility displays all these throughout every stage of life.]

Just as Seneca advises the reader of his epistles to elect Cato as his ethical model so, in *Purgatorio* i, Dante-character genuflects in deferential silence before Cato, who is described as worthy of more reverence than ever a son owed his father (ll. 31-33).[15]

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[13] See Kenelm Foster, *The Two Dantes, and Other Studies* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1977), p. 242: 'the whole business of man's achieving "perfection" in this world, as a being endowed with reason and nevertheless mortal (whose optimum state would be at once physical, moral and intellectual, in short a full flowering of natural "virtue") is presented as something to be carried out by means entirely intrinsic to human nature itself'.

[14] Speaking in the person of the elder Cato (*Conv.*, IV. xxi. 9), Dante concludes that, were the corporeal conditions ideally disposed to receive the incorruptible seed of human nobility, another 'incarnate God' would be born (*Conv.*, IV. xxi. 10). Cato of Utica, he implies, most closely incarnates this ideal and is thereby most worthy to represent God: 'E quale uomo terreno più degno fu di signficare Dio che Catone? Certo nullo' (*Conv.*, IV. xxviii, 15). The implication of Dante's allegorical interpretation of Cato and Marzia to represent God and the noble soul is that an individual soul which marries itself (in imitation) to the figure of Cato brings to perfect fruition the divine seed of human nobility implanted by God.

[15] See Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg.*, i. 28-33: 'Dantes ingressurus viam virtutis moralis sequitur consilium Senecae, et eligit Catonem rigidum'. Benvenuto endearingly adds: 'sicut ego elegi ipsum Dantem'.

Why specifically the pagan Cato? Because Cato embodies, for Dante, human nobility. Why this emphasis at the beginning of Ante-Purgatory? Because, I would argue, Cato's presence at the shore of Mount Purgatory differentiates the perfection of this secular ethical goal from the very different goal – the recovery of Eden and the state of grace – represented by the ascent of Mount Purgatory.[16] The four stars reflected in Cato in *Purgatorio* i (the perfection of the four cardinal virtues) are contradistinguished, indeed, by the three stars (allegorically representing the three theological virtues) which rise in their place, and are seen by Dante-character in the last canto of Ante-Purgatory (*Purg.*, viii. 85-93). The startling presence of Cato thus throws into relief two distinct ethical goals: the first, a secular nobility achievable in this life through reason and the natural virtues (a goal attainable by pagans); the second, an eternal beatitude achievable only through grace and the revealed truth of Christ (and, thereby, seemingly unattainable by pagans).[17]

In the very first line of the *Paradiso* – 'La gloria di colui che tutto move' – Dante re-affirms the power of man's reason and, in this case, the power of reason to know God. God is not directly named in the first canto of *Paradiso*; rather, He is referred to by a series of philosophical definitions:

*Par.*, i. 1: 'colui che tutto move' [he who moves all things]

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[16] This dualistic interpretation disputes two major, and still influential, strands in Dante scholarship. The first argues that in the *Comedy* there is no trace of the dualistic doctrine of two final ends developed in the *Convivio* and crystallised in the *Monarchia* (*Mon.*, III. xvi. 7-9). This interpretative position became prominent in the second half of the twentieth century, and was powerfully advocated by, amongst others, Bruno Nardi, Étienne Gilson and Kenelm Foster. The second trend reads the *Comedy* as informed by the dualism of the prose works, but identifies the secular goal as equivalent to the Earthly Paradise in the *Purgatorio*. An influential development of this position is John. A. Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*. Like proponents of the second view, I strongly concur that the *Comedy* is underpinned by Dante's dualistic theory. Nonetheless, I argue that the Limbo of the virtuous pagans rather than the summit of Mount Purgatory represents the 'beatitudo huius vitae' delineated in the *Monarchia*. I sustain that Dante uses the historical figure of the virtuous pagan to represent figuratively secular human flourishing (man's earthly nobility) in a poem which nevertheless depicts literally the afterlife. For a full presentation of, and series of arguments for, my own dualistic reading of the *Comedy*, see George Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus: A Dualistic Vision of Secular and Spiritual Fulfilment* (Oxford: Legenda and MHRA, 2013).

[17] For John Marenbon, Dante's treatment of Virgil in the *Comedy* epitomises what he calls the 'problem of Paganism'. See John Marenbon, *Pagans and Philosophers: The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibniz* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015). Marenbon situates Dante's particular approach to this problem (pp. 188-213) within an analysis covering the period from c. 200 to c. 1700 (labelled, by Marenbon, the 'Long Middle Ages').

> *Par.*, i. 62: 'quei che puote' [he who is able]
>
> *Par.*, i. 106-07: 'l'etterno valore, il qual è fine / al quale è fatta la toccata norma' [the eternal Worth, the end to which is created the order [of the universe] just touched upon]
>
> *Par.*, i. 111: '[il] principio loro' [their [the different natures'] principle]

Why this emphasis on classical definitions of God at the beginning of *Paradiso*? Dante's commentary on the opening of *Paradiso* i, in his epistle to Can Grande, draws explicitly on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *De causis*.[18] It gives a lengthy exposition of three philosophical arguments for God summed up by these definitions. Dante's first argument leads to the definition of God as the first cause of existence; his second to God as the first cause of all particular essences; and his third – a version of the argument from movement or change – to God as the unmoved first mover.[19]

In Beatrice's speech in *Paradiso* i (ll. 103-41), Dante translates these scholastic and technical arguments into the language of love. Change – the movement from potency to act – is understood as a form of love: everything which is subject to change, from inanimate rocks to animate plants and animals (including humans as rational animals), is in potency to some goal which, because of that being's particular essence, it desires. The principle – ultimate cause of a being's essence – and the goal – which that being, because of its essence, desires – are ordained by God. For this reason God is also defined, in *Paradiso* i, as 'amor ch 'l ciel governi' [love who governs the heavens] (l. 74), and – in the last line of the whole poem – as 'l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle' [the love that moves the sun and the other stars] (*Par.*, xxxiii. 145).[20] God is the ultimate cause of every being's essence; and, in potency, each being is, because of its particular essence, directed towards – it desires or loves – its perfection, the actualisation of this potency.

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[18] The authenticity of the epistle (or sections of the epistle) to Can Grande is, of course, disputed. Cecchini argues that the evidence balances in favour of authenticity (see *Epistola a Cangrande*, ed. by Enzo Cecchini (Florence: Giunti, 1995), pp. viii-xxv) as does Robert Hollander in his important study, *Dante's Epistle to Cangrande* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 1-101. My own view tends towards the authenticity of the whole epistle.

[19] For the argument from existence, see *Epistola a Cangrande*, xx. 54-57; for the argument from essence, see Ibid., xxi. 58-59; for the argument from movement, see Ibid., xxvi. 71-72.

[20] Dante's apostrophe renders Boethius' 'O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas', the poem which opens the central book of the *Consolatio Philosophiae*. A brief, but useful, gloss on the poem is found in Durling and Martinez, III, *Paradiso*, pp. 686-94.

Beatrice's long discourse on the order of the universe (*Par.*, i. 103-26), thus, finally responds to Dante-character's key doubt in the canto: how can he, a bodily human being, rise up to Paradise? Beatrice explains that although the essence of a particular thing is directed infallibly to its goal (like an arrow to its target), the matter in which each form is instantiated may, as imperfectly disposed, imperfectly receive the form (as the form of a sphere is imperfectly carved by a sculptor). In the case of man, who has free will, he may be directed away from the fulfilment of his true nature because of false secondary goods (ll. 127-32). At the beginning of *Inferno* i, Dante-character fails to climb the mountain because he is impeded by the three beasts; in *Purgatorio* i, Dante-character searches for freedom from impediment ('libertà va cercando' (l. 71)) which Cato – at the natural level – embodies. But, with his human nature set free, Beatrice explains, in *Paradiso* i, that it is now as natural for him to rise up to God as for a river to descend from a mountain's top to its base. And it would be as unnatural for him not to rise up as for a living fire to be motionless:

> 'Non dei più ammirar, se bene stimo,
> lo tuo salir, se non come d'un rivo
> se d'alto monte scende giuso ad imo.
> Maraviglia sarebbe in te se, privo
> d'impedimento, giù ti fossi assiso,
> com' a terra quïete in foco vivo.' (*Par.*, i. 136-41).

> ['You should not wonder at your ascent, if I judge well, otherwise than at a stream when from a high mountain it descends to the base. It would be a marvel in you if, free from impediment, you had remained below, as if, on earth, living fire should be motionless.']

Dante emphasises thereby that the essential form of man *naturally* directs him, when unimpeded by sin and ignorance, to God as to his principle (origin) and end (goal). Dante-character's first words of the canticle, like their counterparts in *Inferno* i, conflate Italian and Latin: 'Già contento, *requïevi*' [already contented, I rested] (*Par.*, i. 97). Prefaced by the latinism 'a quïetarmi' (l. 86), this language cannot but evoke the opening of Augustine's *Confessions*: 'inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te' [my soul is restless until it rests in you]. Only on the enjoyment of the good of the intellect, God, does the human will, reaching its goal, ultimately find peace.

Why Dante's emphasis on the pagan and on classical philosophy at the beginning of *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*? A vertical reading of the three opening cantos has suggested a number of possible reasons. Through the pagan, Dante instantiates the natural potential of man. This supports his dualistic thesis that man has a secular goal of earthly nobility autonomous from his spiritual goal of eternal beatitude. Through the special prominence Dante gives to the Roman pagans Virgil and Cato (in *Inferno* i and *Purgatorio* i), Dante underlines his imperial argument. Just as the Roman Imperium of Augustus prepared for the advent of Christianity, so, Dante argues, a restoration of the Holy Roman Empire in his own time would enable the Christian Church to exercise more effectively its spiritual power. Liberated from its avaricious assumption of ever-greater temporal power, the Church could fulfil its true mission of leading men to their eternal salvation. Moreover, Dante sees pagan civilisation as a whole as preparing for Christianity. The philosophical definitions of God, and the discourse on the natural order of the universe, in *Paradiso* i may also be understood, in this way, as preparation for revelation: *preambula fidei*. Indeed, although Dante-character discovers a pagan, Virgil, in the dark wood of *Inferno* i, Virgil is being directed – unbeknown to Dante-character at this stage of the narrative – by Beatrice. In like manner, Dante, in the first canto of each canticle, draws upon the heights of pagan moral virtue, philosophy and poetry not simply as an end-in-itself (as for some later humanist scholars) but as the starting point – the dawn – of his Christian vision.

# 1.ii. Orientation[1]

## *Heather Webb*

A structuring concept that runs through the Ones is orientation. If we take orientation to mean the determination of the relative position of something or someone, we may note that each of these cantos stages a problem in the process of such determination. How does the pilgrim determine his position or locate his path? What point of reference does he choose? How does he relate to that point of reference? Finally, how do I, as reader, relate to the particularity and the universality of the pilgrim as he seeks to orient himself at the threshold of three realms that are, by definition, foreign lands to us?

By examining these issues of orientation, we may discover a powerful means of exploring the relations and distinctions between the three canticles. These are, of course, distinctions not only between the realms the canticles reveal but also between states of being in place.

Let us begin with the very first lines:

> Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
> mi ritrovai per una selva oscura
> che la diritta via era smarrita. (*Inf.*, i. 1-3)[2]

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[1] The video of this lecture is available at the Cambridge Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy website, https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1366614
As this text was prepared as a public lecture for a general audience, I have not brought an extended critical apparatus to bear on the reading. In the pages that follow, I have signaled in footnotes only a few critical works that were particularly helpful in my preparation of the reading.

[2] All citations from the *Comedy* are from Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, *Commedia*, 3 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1991, 1994, 1997). Her introductions and notes offer excellent summaries of, as well as contributions to, the critical debates in each of these canti. On the first canto of the *Inferno*, readings that I have found particularly useful are: Giorgio Petrocchi, 'Il proemio del poema', in his *Itinerari danteschi* (Bari: Adriatica, 1969), pp.

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> [In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to myself in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost.]

'In the middle of the journey of our life' is a temporal indicator – the protagonist is thirty-five years old and is referencing the Scriptural expectation of a seventy-year life span – but the imagery of a pathway suggests a spatial coordinate as well – he is halfway along his life's trajectory. The poet's exile means that his life's path is a literal one of peregrination, while it is, at the same time, the path of return to God. Even if we understand the 'cammin di nostra vita' in strictly spiritual terms, there is no mistaking the fact that Dante will painstakingly map the twists and turns that his path will take from here onto very specific coordinates in the known world and at its margins.

We readers are, at the same time, somewhat disoriented by the way that the first line meets the second: 'Nel mezzo del cammin di *nostra* vita / *mi* ritrovai'. Which path are we on? Is this the path that all mankind takes through life? Or is this the single, individual, non-repeatable life of Dante Alighieri, Florentine, born in 1265? Is this timeline, this landscape, entirely symbolic, and therefore pertinent to (if removed from) all of us in its abstraction or is it historically located in the year 1300? Are we reading autobiography or theology?

As we move swiftly through a series of depictions of spatial orientation in these three opening *canti*, we will see that in each of the three, moments of particular opacity, moments that have led to huge critical discussion and that have continued to perplex readers, hinge on the ways in which the specificity of place and the inscription of individual bodies into space push our understanding of the poem either toward historical specificities or transcendent theological truths.

'Mi *ritrovai*', the poet tells us, 'per una selva oscura'. What does it mean to *find oneself* in this case? He has, in this moment, recognized that he is in a dark wood and can no longer see the straight path. But he does not tell us how long he has been there without noticing – he himself does not know, as he points out. He has no idea how or where he entered. He has become conscious of his disorientation only now. It is only now that he

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257-75; John Freccero, 'The Prologue Scene', in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 1-28; Freccero, 'The Firm Foot on a Journey Without a Guide', in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, pp. 29-54; Guglielmo Gorni, 'Canto I', in *Lectura Dantis Turicensis: Inferno*, ed. by Georges Güntert and Michelangelo Picone (Florence: Franco Cesati, 2000), pp. 27-38.

looks around himself and sees where he is – already in the midst of the unknown. He has entered a wild, undomesticated space in which he can discern no point of reference.

It takes considerable self-enclosure, significant abstraction from the world around us, to stumble so far into the darkness that we can no longer see where we entered or locate any recognizable point. But this, in fact, is the condition of the sinners that are deepest in the *Inferno*, figured elegantly in their *contrapasso*. Encased in ice, they have no means of exchange or relation with anything or anyone outside themselves. They have not understood that their place in the world must be a relative position. If we bear in mind this notion of the extremity of sin, the urgent focus on orientation in these three opening *canti* becomes comprehensible. In each, the pilgrim has become sharply conscious of the ways in which he enters the realms that he enters and of the signs that mark the paths that he takes.

When the pilgrim comes to stand at the foot of a hill and sees the sun just above and behind it, alluded to as the 'pianeta che mena dritto altrui per ogne calle' [the planet that leads us straight on every path] (*Inf.*, i. 17-18), it would seem that he has found in that light his point of orientation, his guide, his way out of the darkness. But when he begins his climb, he is almost immediately driven back 'dove 'l sol tace' [where the sun is silent] (*Inf.*, i. 61) by the three beasts that block his way. It is at this moment of darkness and disorientation that the pilgrim meets Virgil. And Virgil is such a comforting presence also because his opening speech lists a series of concrete, recognizable places, moving from the relatively local to the broader geography of the trajectory of Aeneas' voyage and Rome's founding:

> li parenti miei furon Lombardi,
> mantoani per patrïa ambedui.
> […]
> vissi a Roma
> […]
> cantai di quel giusto
> figliuol d'Anchise che venne di Troia. (*Inf.*, i. 68-69, 71, 73-74)
>
> [my parents were Lombards, Mantuans both by birth. […] I lived in Rome […] I sang of that just son of Anchises who came from Troy.]

The second major intersection of the poem (after that *noi*/*mi* of the first lines) is this moment in which a largely symbolic and eternal landscape that is described without any defining features (the wood, the hill) meets with the highly specific, grounded and geographically and historically embedded Lombardy, Mantua, Rome, Troy.

This is the challenge set to the reader: thinking history and human venture within the eternal, the individual within the collective, the local within the providential. And it is precisely in these moments that the most difficult hermeneutic problems of the poem appear. The first of the three I will discuss here is Virgil's prophecy of the 'greyhound':

> Questi non ciberà terra né peltro,
> ma sapïenza, amore e virtute,
> e sua nazion sarà tra feltro e feltro. (*Inf.*, i. 103-105)
>
> [He will feed on neither earth nor pelf, but on wisdom, love, and power, and his birth will be between felt and felt.]

There have been myriad interpretations of 'between felt and felt', including Dante's own astrological sign, the two mendicant orders, an election technique, or to indicate geographical location: Feltre and Montefeltro. On a more general level, what exactly is the prophecy meant to indicate? A specific, known political leader who will unite the peninsula or the secular redeemer of End Times who will make way for the Second Coming of Christ? Having it both ways is tricky. If we focus on the theological resonance of the poem's condemnation of sin and social ills, we may gloss over the 'felt' problem. If we allow the little towns of Feltre and Montefeltro to delimit Dante's notion of the secular redeemer, we commit the poem to history, to a particular moment; we pin Dante's hopes to the person of Can Grande della Scala, for example. A person who, as far as we can tell, did not restore order and prepare the way for the Second Coming.

Leaving this mysterious prophecy dangling, Virgil then suggests a new system of orientation for the pilgrim:

> Ond' io per lo tuo me' penso e discerno
> che tu mi segui, e io sarò tua guida,
> e trarrotti di qui per loco etterno. (*Inf.*, i. 112-114)
>
> [Thus for your good I think and judge that you shall follow me, and I shall be your guide, and I will lead you from here through an eternal place.]

In other words, the pilgrim must orient himself in relation to Virgil, not in relation to geographical or universal coordinates. He must not follow the sun, but must follow his own personal guide. This pilgrimage will go from history into eternity, but will do so by means of the vehicle of a still-living mortal body. And there will be a return into history for that body. So from Dante’s individual location of disorientation to salvation, he will be led by a guide that is of particular relevance to him personally (as even the source of his poetic *style*), but also one who is a narrator of Italy’s providential history, of the finding, as well as the founding, of Italy.

And so the pilgrim does follow Virgil throughout Hell, often blindly, through that dark realm with increasing misery and claustrophobia as the only index of place apart from the reassuring presence of his guide to give structure to what the pilgrim and reader so viscerally experience. We are told, at the end of *Inferno*, that the pair emerge to see the stars again, but the description only arrives at the beginning of *Purgatorio*, where the delight in perceiving external references of orientation is palpable, and glorious:

> Dolce color d’orïental zaffiro,
> che s’accoglieva nel sereno aspetto
> del mezzo, puro infino al primo giro,
> a li occhi miei ricominciò diletto,
> tosto ch’io usci’ fuor de l’aura morta
> che m’avea contristati li occhi e ‘l petto. (*Purg.*, i. 13-18)[3]
>
> [The sweet color of eastern sapphire, gathering in the cloudless aspect of the air, pure to the first circle, began to delight my eyes again, as soon as I came forth from the dead air that had weighed my eyes and breast with sorrow.]

‘Dolce color d’*orïental* zaffiro’: this is also the incredible pleasure of being, in some way, home, or at least above ground once again with a set of references that are recognizable (that is East!). What follows is a deliriously joyful list of astronomical coordinates, a flourish of knowledge that shows the pilgrim back in relation with the heavenly bodies. With his feet upon the earth, he knows something of his utterly new place due to his view of the heavens:

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[3] Readings of *Purgatorio* i that I found particularly useful are: Johannes Bartuschat, ‘Canto I’, in *Lectura Dantis Turicensis: Purgatorio*, ed. by Georges Güntert and Michelangelo Picone (Florence: Franco Cesati, 2001), pp. 13-28; Antonio Illiano, *Sulle sponde del Prepurgatorio: Poesia e arte narrativa nel preludio all’ascesa (Purg. I-III 66)* (Florence: Cadmo, 1997). On the connections between *Purgatorio* i and *Inferno* i, see the ‘Inter cantica’ section in the notes to canto 1 in *Purgatorio*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling, introduction and notes by Ronald L. Martinez and Robert M. Durling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 33; Anna Pegoretti, ‘Dalla “piaggia” del prologo al “lito diserto” della seconda cantica’, in her *Dal “lito diserto” al giardino: La costruzione del paesaggio nel Purgatorio di Dante* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2007), pp. 52-53.

> Lo bel pianeto che d'amar conforta
> faceva tutto rider l'orïente,
> velando i Pesci ch'erano in sua scorta.
> I' mi volsi a man destra, e puosi mente
> a l'altro polo, e vidi quattro stelle
> non viste mai fuor ch'a la prima gente. (*Purg.*, i. 19-24)
>
> [The lovely planet that strengthens us to love was causing all the East to laugh, veiling the Fish, which were her escort. I turned to the right and considered the other pole, and I saw four stars never seen except by the first people.]

Dante does not need Virgil to tell him where he is now – he has seen it for himself. And this is the new mode of *Purgatorio*. The pilgrim has no further need to blindly follow Virgil; he is encouraged to look around himself and develop his own relational geographies, his own sets of coordinates, beginning with the heavens, but also within the landscapes, and the human landscapes of *Purgatorio*. His journey will be directed by his recognition of friends and countrymen, who will serve to point the way upward, but also toward new understandings of vice and virtue. In *Inferno*, where there was only sin, and no good to follow, the pilgrim was utterly dependent on his guide. Finding your way is a constant choosing of the good, as we come to understand in *Purgatorio*, and this option only at long last opens here.

The assumption behind Cato's question reveals this Purgatorial difference:

> Chi v'ha guidati, o che vi fu lucerna,
> uscendo fuor de la profonda notte
> che sempre nera fa la valle inferna? (*Purg.*, i. 43-45)
>
> [Who has guided you, or what has been your lantern, coming forth from the deep night that makes the valley of Hell forever black?]

In other words, the darkness of Hell, symbolising the totalising blockage of the sinners enclosed within themselves and enclosed there, is such that it is impossible to navigate out of that place. Without a point of light, without stars or sun, there is no way to find one's own way out of Hell. Only the right guide can save you.

In *Purgatorio*, we find instead an alignment between astronomical and moral points of orientation, as becomes immediately clear when the pilgrim sees Cato:

> vidi presso di me un veglio solo,
> […]
> Li raggi de le quattro luci sante
> fregiavan sì la sua faccia di lume,
> ch'i' 'l vedea come 'l sol fosse davante. (*Purg.*, i. 31, 37-39)

> [I saw close by me a solitary old man, […] The rays of the four holy lights so adorned his face with brightness that I saw him as if the sun had been before him.]

This is, in fact, the second of this vertical series of hermeneutical challenges. To some degree, the way in which we resolve the challenge at the entrance of each realm functions as a kind of test for us as readers. Our resolution will in some way determine our reading of the entire canticle to follow. And each canticle of the *Comedy* must be read in a different key, employing different tools. There has been much ink spilled over the problem of the 'reality' of these four stars. Yes, they stand for the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, but the dense context of reference to Venus, to Pisces, etc., indicate that Dante wishes us to understand them also as literal stars, also as natural phenomena. They are points of orientation in a part of the world as yet unknown to us and they point directly to Cato, a historical person whose concrete life is taken here, in this place, as emblematic of moral virtue. His presence as momentary guide – and there will be many of these in *Purgatorio*, while there was only Virgil in *Inferno* – is a perfect alignment of celestial, moral and human reference. Cato's presence is another immense challenge to the reader. What do we do with the life of the historical Cato, a pagan, a republican, a suicide?[4] How do we understand the place of that historical specificity in the text?

We might begin by noting that *Purgatorio* is of the earth, but its points of orientation are, as we see in the example of the stars that Dante notes, partly recognizable and partly entirely new. We may use some of our earthly coordinates to navigate here, but some should be left behind as we look toward, other, new, markers of place and of identity. The poet stages a little *faux pas* on Virgil's part that helps the reader process the challenge of orientation posed by the intersection of our knowledge of the historical Cato and the beplumed guardian even as it gives us a sense of the new coordinates, the new horizons, of this realm. Virgil refers back to Cato's suicide at Utica, giving the name of the place in an assertion of and recollection of historical geographies, and appeals for help in the name of Marcia, Cato's wife, who now inhabits Limbo. Cato's chilly rebuke redraws geographical boundaries and sets new points of reference:

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[4] Erich Auerbach notes that Cato's 'figural role as the guardian of earthly political freedom is fulfilled in the role he plays at the foot of the Mount of Purgatory as the guardian of the eternal freedom of the elect'. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by Willard Ropes Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 196.

> 'Marzïa piacque tanto a li occhi miei
> mentre ch'i' fu' di là', diss' elli allora,
> 'che quante grazie volse da me, fei.
> Or che di là dal mal fiume dimora,
> più muover non mi può, per quella legge
> che fatta fu quando me n'usci' fora'. (*Purg.*, i. 85-90)
>
> ['Marcia so pleased my eyes when I was back there', he said then, 'that whatever kindness she wished from me, I did. Now that she dwells beyond the evil river, she can move me no longer, according to the law that was made when I came forth from there'.]

Cato does not respond to Virgil's evocation of Utica; such places are no longer relevant to him. The only coordinate that matters is the boundary line of the 'mal fiume', dividing the saved from the damned. Now that Marcia is beyond that line, she can do no more to move him. She is certainly not forgotten, but she, as well as other aspects of Cato's personal history, has been re-framed by a broader vision with added, and more compelling, points of reference.

For the pilgrim, the re-orientation needed here constitutes something of a return. As in the first canto of *Inferno,* Dante must retrace his steps, going back down before he can ascend the mountain. Cato tells them:

> lo sol vi mosterrà, che surge omai,
> prendere il monte a più lieve salita. (*Purg.*, i. 107-108)
>
> [the sun will show you, for it is rising now, where to take the mountain by an easier ascent.]

In other words, as he begins again, the pilgrim must follow the lead of the sun. With Virgil at his side, rather than leading him, he will once again take up the challenge that defeated him in the first canto of *Inferno*. He will ascend a mountain (not just a hill this time – though it is clear that the poet means for us to make connections between the *colle* of *Inferno* i and the *monte* of *Purgatorio* i), taking the sun as a guide.

In *Paradiso*, the issue of orientation is again utterly different.[5] We are no longer on earth, there is no more landscape, and, as in Hell, we are in an eternal space. If it is difficult to navigate Hell because of the absence of celestial markers, difficult to navigate earth and *Purgatorio* because of things that impede our adherence to our clearly marked path, such as forests, beasts, tiredness, the need for sleep, etc., it would be a challenge to navigate *Paradiso* because of the sheer proximity of the sun and the stars. In *Purgatorio*, the coordinates of place are also the all-important coordinates of time. The sun, stars, recognizable constellations and planets, all join in a choreography that maps the pilgrim's progress through space and time. But it is distance from these heavenly bodies that constitutes their relative meaning. To be in *Paradiso* is to be immersed in the simultaneity and blinding light of the heavenly spheres, in the place where all of historical time is seen as one indivisible moment. Fortunately, there is no need to 'navigate' in *Paradiso*, and we must first of all relinquish our sense of needing to find our *own* way in order to understand what it means to enter into this realm. But how does the individual, historical human fit at all, or even just *be* in his or her place, in a realm without coordinates?

The third of those particular challenges to the reader in terms of conceptualizing the relationship between body and place occurs here:

> Surge ai mortali per diverse foci
> la lucerna del mondo; ma da quella
> che quattro cerchi giugne con tre croci,
> con miglior corso e con migliore stella
> esce congiunta, e la mondana cera
> più a suo modo tempera e suggella. (*Par.*, i. 37-42).
>
> [The lantern of the world rises to mortals through divers outlets, but from the one that joins four circles with three crosses it comes forth with better course and joined to better stars, and it tempers and seals the waxy world more to its manner.]

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[5] Two readings that I found particularly helpful on *Paradiso* i are: Sara Sturm, 'Credibility in the *Commedia*: *Paradiso* I', *Dante Studies* 87 (1969), 139-45; Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi's 'Note integrative' at the end of *Paradiso* I, pp. 39-41.

How are we to understand the place that Dante designates as four circles joined with three crosses? There has been considerable debate upon this point. What does seem clear is that in this detailed description of the sun's point of entrance, there is a very specific reference to a certain point in time that references both the Creation and the Resurrection. At this locus of astronomical circles and crosses, the poet stages an intersection between the pilgrim's voyage that takes place in time, in Easter week of 1300, and the eternal realm into which he enters. The pilgrim rises to *Paradiso* in the time of Christ's Resurrection, or when Christ's historical being is transformed into eternal being, and also in the time in which Creation was thought to occur, or when the eternal made space for historical time. In a parallel way, the historical individual that is Dante Alighieri enters into the eternal space that is *Paradiso*, with his body. Or at least that is how I understand it; because this is the second fold of the interpretive crux that we run up against at the opening of *Paradiso*. So first: Can those four celestial circles be joined with three crosses or is this merely an allegorical vision of the four cardinal virtues meeting the three theological virtues? It depends on mappings and understandings of ecliptics, equinoxes, etc. But this problem as to whether Dante can be referencing real astronomical phenomena and whether he is doing so accurately, or even intends to do so accurately, is paired with a major theological issue. The second fold: Does Dante really mean for us to believe that he ascends to *Paradiso* in body? Echoing Paul, he says:

> S'i' era sol di me quel che creasti
> novellamente, amor che 'l ciel governi,
> tu 'l sai, che col tuo lume mi levasti. (*Par.*, i. 73-75)
>
> [If I was solely that part of me which you created last, O Love who govern the heavens, you know, for you raised me up with your light.]

It is precisely the pilgrim's confusion that follows soon after these lines that suggests that he is, in fact, there in body. Once again, as in the first canto of *Inferno*, he is entirely disoriented, as his human senses perceive something beyond their purview. A human body that depends on orientation to understand its place has entered into the coordinates of orientation themselves:

> parvemi tanto allor del cielo acceso
> de la fiamma del sol, che pioggia o fiume
> lago non fece alcun tanto disteso. (*Par.*, i. 79-81)

> [so much of the sky seemed to be on fire with the flame of the sun then, that rain or river never made so extended a lake.]

The sun, that reappears in each of these first cantos as a point of orientation, is here present as an immense expanse to be entered into. It is no longer a question of turning the body towards or away from some distant point, but rather of allowing that body to be naturally subsumed by that point that reveals itself to be encompassing. This, on a microcosmic level, is a preparation for the appearance of God as point in *Paradiso*, but as a point that is, ultimately, the generative circumference of all creation.[6] Beatrice explains to him:

> Tu non se' in terra, sì come tu credi;
> ma folgore, fuggendo il proprio sito,
> non corse come tu ch'ad esso riedi. (*Par*., i. 91-93)

> [You are not on earth as you believe, but lightning, fleeing its proper place, never sped so fast as you, going back to yours.]

The pilgrim's confusion of place is such that he has not recognized that he is no longer on earth, but this time, his disorientation is unproblematic. His movement here needs no guide. But he continues to need to orient himself and this, for the reader, is a great mercy. It is the particularity of the pilgrim, his human, corporeal historicity, that provides us with an in, with a mode of navigating Paradise.

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[6] On the nature of the point, see Christian Moevs, 'Il punto che mi vinse', in *Dante's 'Commedia': Theology as Poetry*, ed. by Vittorio Montemaggi and Matthew Treherne (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

# 2. Reading Time, Text and the World[1]

## *Matthew Treherne*

In carrying out what now feels like the very firmly established critical habit of reading Dante 'vertically', but which was, at the time this reading was first presented in lecture form, a particularly fresh, innovative and intellectually risky enterprise, it is striking how the rationale for vertical reading modulates from canto to canto in the *Commedia*, rather like a lengthy progression of chords played on the guitar – so that as readings delve vertically into the poem, so too the practice gains forward momentum across the *Commedia* as a whole. The sharpest spurs to read vertically come, perhaps, in those cantos where textual echoes across the *cantiche* are so insistent that one suspects that many readers would seek out resonances and draw comparative readings even without any numerical structure or correspondence for encouragement: we might think, for instance, of the opening lines of cantos vii of *Inferno* and of *Paradiso*, both of which open with startling utterances of very different types. The recollection of Plutus's rude interruption, '*Papé Satan, papé Satàn aleppe!*' (*Inf.*, vii. 1), in Justinian's multilingual acclamation, '*Osanna, sanctus Deus sabaòth / superillustrans claritate tua / felices ignes horum malacòth!*' (*Par.*, vii. 1-3), for instance, is so clear that we are invited to dance across the text, interpreting such echoes. This is, of course, an unusually marked example; but we might usefully see it as setting an interpretive habit to be applied even in those cantos where the cues to read vertically across *cantiche* are more subtle.

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[1] The video of this lecture is available at the Cambridge Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy website, https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1367369

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In the case of the Twos, the practice of 'vertical reading' is signalled rather differently. The cantos are not marked by multiple textual echoes in the way that other cantos are; the practice of reading vertically is not, then, insisted upon. Rather, the cantos offer a rich sense of *why* reading vertically might be important. Across the three cantos, concerns emerge about how we read, listen, think and learn in time, 'per tempo' (*Par.*, ii. 11). And, fittingly, these concerns are an expression of a need for a certain kind of verticality – a need to set the reader's linear ('horizontal', we might say) progression across the text alongside other ways of reading. The cantos help articulate a version of the very idea of vertical reading.

It is not my intention to argue that this rationale for vertical reading implies that vertical reading should supersede other forms of reading. The cantos, after all, also insist upon the forward progression of the text. Novelty and surprise are all features of these cantos. Each of them, indeed, marks a moment of transition. *Inferno* ii is infused with the pilgrim's fears and doubts concerning the journey he is about to undertake, and includes an explanation of the rationale for the entire journey in the form of Virgil's account of being called to guide the pilgrim following Beatrice's intervention. *Purgatorio* ii describes the opening dawn and the arrival of a boat full of souls (including the pilgrim's friend, Casella, who will sing a canzone written by Dante); this requires rapid adjustment on the part of the reader and of the pilgrim himself to the new, surprising context of Purgatory. And *Paradiso* ii marks the transition into the Heaven of the Moon with a warning to many of Dante's readers to turn back in order to avoid being lost; the mystery of the pilgrim's (possibly) physical ascent to this Heaven leads to a sudden shift of tone, content and style in Beatrice's complex account of the spots on the moon; Beatrice's own dense, challenging, highly intellectual speech confounds expectations set by the earlier, highly *stilnovistic* presentation of her in *Inferno* ii. As well as describing moments of transition, the cantos are marked by features which are puzzling to the first-time reader. Take, for instance, Virgil's description of himself as 'tra color che son sospesi' [among those who are suspended] (*Inf.*, ii. 52) at the time when Beatrice appeared to him. This aside makes little sense at this point in the text, given that we do not yet know how Dante has re-imagined the notion of Limbo to include the 'virtuous pagans'. While the question of Virgil's status in the afterlife will be resolved, at least partly, in *Inferno* iv, the confusion is itself part of the point here, and the bewildering nature of this moment in the text depends upon it being read as a point in a linear progression. Similarly, the pilgrim's and Virgil's arrival on Mount Purgatory provokes surprise and questions concerning the nature of Purgatory itself. We are only beginning to recognise the position of Purgatory in the southern hemisphere, for instance, from the brief allusions to the constellations visible to the pilgrim. Furthermore, the fact that the souls are singing a psalm, as they arrive at the shore of Mount Purgatory on the boat, would have startled late medieval readers, used to the idea that while the souls of Purgatory require prayers on the part of the living on earth, they themselves do not pray.[2] And, of course, the difficulty of *Paradiso* ii is compounded by the shock of Dante's opening warning to his readers that those many readers, 'in piccioletta barca' [in little barks] (*Par*., ii. 1), should turn around and not follow further into the third *cantica*. Disorientation and defamiliarisation are, in short, hallmarks of these moments in the *Commedia*. All of this, then, should remind us as we proceed that the 'horizontal' movement through the text should not be discarded in any attempts to read vertically: rather, the two should be seen as engaging in productive dialogue.

Nowhere is this dialogue between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' clearer than in the way in which the passage of time is announced as a theme in the openings of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* ii, with their respective descriptions of dusk and dawn. This is an opportune prompt to consider questions of reading vertically, and of how such a reading might relate to more linear dynamics in the text, because in one respect the passage of time, and Dante's emphasis on it here, emphasises forward motion. Dante's own account of time in the *Convivio*, as a 'numero di movimento, secondo prima e poi' [succession of movement involving before and after] (*Conv*., IV. ii), defines time as an ordering of events. However, the two opening descriptions of the time of day in these two cantos, and the strong relationship between them, suggest that the experience of time, and the shaping and consideration of time, are much richer than that. Let us consider the two passages together:

> Lo giorno se n'andava, e l'aere bruno
> toglieva li animai che sono in terra
> da le fatiche loro; e io sol uno

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[2] Aquinas, *STh*, II-II, q. 83, a. 11, ad. 3: 'illi qui sunt in Purgatorio [...] non sunt in statu orandi, sed magis ut oretur pro eis'. References to Aquinas are to the Leonine edition available online via the *Corpus Thomisticum*, http://www.corpusthomisticum.org

> m'apparecchiava a sostener la guerra
> sì del cammino e sì de la pietate,
> che ritrarrà la mente che non erra. (*Inf.*, ii. 1-6)
>
> [The day was departing, and the darkened air was releasing all living creatures on the earth from their toils; and I alone prepared myself to undergo the war both of the journey and of pity, which memory, unerring, will depict.]

> Già era 'l sole a l'orizzonte giunto
> lo cui meridian cerchio coverchia
> Ierusalèm col suo più alto punto,
> e la notte, che opposita a lui cerchia,
> uscia di Gange fuor con le Bilance,
> che le caggio di man quando soverchia,
> sì che le bianche e le vermiglie guance,
> là dov'i'era, de la bella Aurora
> per troppa etate divenivan rance. (*Purg.*, ii. 1-9)
>
> [Already the sun had reached that horizon whose meridian circle covers Jerusalem with its highest point, and Night, circling opposite him, was coming forth from Ganges with the Scales, which fall from her hands when she predominates, so that the white and rose cheeks of lovely Aurora, there were I was, were becoming orange with advancing age.]

The first thing we might notice is that in each case the forward motion of time is presented – a new night beginning, an old day departing; a new day beginning, an old night departing – but also, crucially, other factors test and reframe that forward motion, casting time in a different light. In *Inferno* ii, the end of the day is presented in the context of a certain regular, repeated experience of time – *usually* at this time of day, people are starting to rest, but I, Dante the pilgrim, am having to break that norm in order to prepare for this journey. The familiarity of the daily regularity, as a new moment of dusk settles into the expected patterns of rest and sleep, sets the onward journey into sharp relief. It is this contrast between the experience of time as repeated cycle and the newness of the pilgrim's experience that gives the passage such poignancy. At this stage of the poem, this relationship between different experiences of time is expressed as tension. But in *Purgatorio* ii, that tension becomes more meaningful, for here the description of the opening of the day is framed, as so many of the mentions of the time of day will be in the second *cantica*, by complex descriptions of the relative position of the sun at Jerusalem. The position of Purgatory at the antipodes of Jerusalem is one of the most surprising features of the opening of the second *cantica*, and an idea which emerges largely through the description of the time (although it is also signalled by the stars visible to the pilgrim – 'I' mi volsi a man destra e puosi mente / a l'altro polo, e vidi quattro stelle / non viste mai fuor ch'a la prima gente' [I turned to the right and considered the other pole, and I saw four stars never seen except by the first people] (*Purg*., i. 22-23)). In order to signal the start of a new day on Mount Purgatory, Dante also signals the *end* of a day in Jerusalem. So, as in the opening of *Inferno* ii, the progressive passage of time with the dawn of a new day (and this is the first new day we have witnessed since Dante emerged from the darkness of Hell) is set against a quite different sense of time, with a single moment in time described in such a way that it references both the beginning and the end of a day. It is often said that Purgatory is the realm of the afterlife most properly 'in time'; but this opening description of the passage of time suggests that the perspective of Jerusalem is crucial to how time will be seen and understood. This will become more explicit still at the very end of the ascent of Mount Purgatory, when Dante describes the end of a day in these terms:

> Sì come quando i primi raggi vibra
> là dove il suo Fattor lo sangue sparse,
> cadendo Ibero sotto l'alta Lira
> e l'onde in Gange da nona riarse:
> sì stava il sole, onde 'l giorno sen giva,
> come l'angel di Dio lieto ci apparse. (*Purg*., xxvii. 1-6)
>
> [As when it strikes its first vibrating rays where once its own Creator shed His blood (the river Ebro falling under Libra's height, while Ganges' waves are scorched by noon-time heat), at that degree the sun now stood. So day was leaving when, in joy, God's angel showed.]

In other words: it is nightfall. In Jerusalem, it is dawn; at the summit of Mount Purgatory (at the antipodes of Jerusalem), it is dusk. Dante ties this linear moment in time to the crucifixion: he describes the time of day in relation to that place where the Creator's blood was spilled. But here, Dante goes still further. At the very moment of telling us the time of day, he is also describing the time of day in three other places: at Jerusalem, where it is daybreak; at the river Ebro, where it is the middle of the night ('sotto l'alta Libra'); and at the Ganges, where it is mid-day ('da nona riarse'). This choice of reference points is surely not casual, and deepens the association of the description with Christ: for the Ganges and the Ebro are respectively at 90° East and 90° West of the axis running from Mount Purgatory to Jerusalem. These geographical reference points thus establish a cruciform shape. But it is not only a *spatial* image: it is also the clearest indication, thus far in the *Commedia*, of Christ as possessing a particular temporality, as mediating between time and eternity, as *kairotic*. The figure of the Cross not only embraces all of earthly space – the Ebro and the Ganges representing for Dante the Westerly and Easterly limits of the earth – but also all of human time. At this moment in *Purgatorio*, Dante's poetry presents the linear passage of a day, from midnight to dawn to noon to dusk, as holding together in one instant the image of the Cross. Christ, as Gregory the Great puts it in the *Moralia in Job*, encloses in himself all of the succession of time ('intra seipsum temporum discursus claudit').[3] Gregory continues by explaining that the Word, in taking human form, entered into human time and, in this act of assuming the conditions of temporality, spread the light of eternity onto human beings:

> Ortus uero humanitatis eius, quia et coepit, et desiit, et ante et post habere a tempore accepit. Sed quia, dum ipse umbras nostrae temporalitatis suscepit, lumen nobis suae aeternitatis infudit, recte per hunc ortum quem creator sibi in tempore condidit locum suum sine tempore aurora cognouit.
>
> [But since the birth of his humanity has a beginning and an end, it also holds a beginning and an end in time. And in taking on the shadows of our temporal condition, he spreads on us the light of his eternity; it is therefore rightly said that after this birth in which the creator gave himself in time, the dawn which was outside of time takes place.][4]

This passage has many resonances with the opening of *Purgatorio* xxvii, which describes the creator of light's crucifixion in terms of a dawn breaking at the moment of darkness. Dante is describing a moment in time and space transfigured into all time and all of the earth, clearly anticipating the understanding of God which will emerge in the *Paradiso* as 'là 've s'appunta ogne *ubi* e ogne *quando*' [there where every 'when' and 'where' attains its point] (*Par.*, xxix. 12).

The descriptions of the passage of time in Purgatory in relation to the time in Jerusalem, then, are highly suggestive of the perspective of Christ, which is, of course, going to be central to Dante's idea of Purgatory. We are, for instance, about to encounter Manfredi in *Purgatorio* iii, who will introduce himself through his wounds (109-11); furthermore, the suffering of the souls of Purgatory will be explicitly linked to the suffering of Christ in *Purgatorio* xxiii, when Forese Donati will explain that the suffering – really no suffering at all – of the souls is motivated by the same desire as that which filled Christ on the cross (*Purg*., xxiii. 70-75). But here in *Purgatorio* ii, we are given a strong sense of reading time through Christ; it is a way of reading time which deepens and develops the idea we had at the opening of *Inferno* ii, where a linear movement through time seemed to exist in tension with a sense of time as a repeated cycle, where a moment can be both new and contain other moments within itself. We might see a further suggestion of this idea in the account of Beatrice descending into Hell in *Inferno* ii, entering Limbo as Christ did when he reached back into time to save the Hebrew patriarchs.

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[3] *Moralia in Job*, XXIX, 2 (Patrologia Latina 76, 0478B).

[4] Ibid., XXIX, 2.

It is worth emphasising that this reading of time in the light of Christ is in turn a way of reading text itself. This is indicated perhaps most strongly in the account in *Purgatorio* ii of the arrival of the boat filled with souls on the shore of Mount Purgatory:

> Da poppa stava il celestial nocchiero,
> tal che parea beato per descripto;
> e più di cento spiriti entro sediero.
> *'In exitu Israel de Aegypto'*:
> cantavan tutti insieme ad una voce
> con quanto di quel salmo è poscia scripto.
> Poi fece il segno lor di santa croce,
> ond'ei si gittar tutti in su la piaggia:
> ed el sen gì, come venne, veloce. (*Purg*., ii. 43-51)

> [At the stern stood the angelic pilot, who seemed to have blessedness inscribed on him; and more than a hundred spirits were sitting within. '*In exitu Israel de Aegypto*', they were singing all together with one voice, with as much of that psalm as is written thereafter. Then he made the sign to them of the holy cross; at which they all threw themselves on the beach; and he went away as quickly as he had come.]

This is a passage which is in many ways paradigmatic of the *Commedia* as a whole, with the departure from sin to redemption figured in the crossing of the Red Sea in Psalm 113. The Epistle to Can Grande expresses the multi-layered reading of the Psalm in terms which connect it directly to the interpretation of the *Commedia* itself:

> Ad evidentiam itaque dicendorum sciendum est quod istius operis non est simplex sensus, ymo dici potest polysemos, hoc est plurium sensuum; nam primus sensus est qui habetur per litteram, alius est qui habetur per significata per litteram. Et primus dicitur litteralis, secundus vero allegoricus sive moralis sive anagogicus. Qui modus tractandi, ut melius pateat, potest considerari in hiis versibus: 'In exitu Israel de Egipto, domus Iacob de populo barbaro, facta est Iudea sanctificatio eius, Israel potestas eius'. Nam si ad litteram solam inspiciamus, significatur nobis exitus filiorum Israel de Egipto, tempore Moysis; si ad allegoriam, nobis significatur nostra redemptio facta per Christum; si ad moralem sensum, significatur nobis conversio anime de luctu et miseria peccati ad statum gratie; si ad anagogicum, significatur exitus anime sancte ab huius corruptionis servitute ad eterne glorie libertatem. (*Epistle* XIII)
>
> [One must know that the sense of this work is not simple, rather it can be called polysemous, having several senses; for the first sense is what is conveyed by the letter, another is what is conveyed by the things signified by the letter. And the first is called literal, the second either allegorical or moral or anagogical. This mode of treatment can be made clear by considering it in these verses: 'When Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a barbarous people.' For if we look to the letter alone, the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses is signified to us; if to the allegory, our redemption wrought by Christ is signified to us; if to the moral sense, the conversion of the soul from the grief and wretchedness of sin to the state of grace is signified to us; if to the anagogical, the passage of the holy soul from the servitude of this corruption to the freedom of eternal glory.]

Regardless of the authorship of the Epistle, the connection between the reading of the Psalm, the reading of life in the light of the Psalm and the reading of Dante's text is borne out in *Purgatorio* ii itself.[5] For the typological key to the Psalm, in the text, might be the sign of the cross made by the angel at the conclusion of the Psalm, drawing together the readings of the Psalm as about a particular moment in the history of the Hebrews, as about the liberation of the individual souls themselves and as about the liberation of humanity brought about by Christ. The Psalm itself – which we are expected to imagine all the way through, as Dante makes clear – offers a model for reading, then, whereby a historical moment, read in the light of the sign of the Cross, is not simply an instant which passes from the present into the past, but itself is given presence. Here, indeed, that presence is enacted in the performance of the psalm, with the static, written text ('quanto di quel salmo è poscia scripto') voiced in time through song and gesture. Coming at a point in the text where time is foregrounded and where the nature of time in relation to Christ is also highlighted through the opening lines of the canto, the presence of the Psalm suggests a model of reading which disrupts any straightforward linearity of time.

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[5] For summaries of the debate on the authorship, see for instance Robert Hollander, *Dante's Epistle to Cangrande* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1993), or Luca Azzetta, 'Le chiose alla *Commedia* di Andrea Lancia, L'*Epistola a Can Grande* e altre questioni dantesche', *L'Alighieri* 21 (2003), 5-76.

The moment of the boat's arrival on the shore of Mount Purgatory, moreover, forms a bridge in our vertical reading to *Paradiso* ii and its address to the reader.

> O voi che siete in piccioletta barca,
> desiderosi d'ascoltar, seguiti
> dietro al mio legno che cantando varca,
> tornate a riveder li vostri liti:
> non vi mettete in pelago, ché forse,
> perdendo me, rimarreste smarriti.
> …
> Voialtri pochi che drizzaste il collo
> per tempo al pan de li angeli, del quale
> vivesi qui ma non sen vien satollo,
>
> metter potete ben per l'alto sale
> vostro navigio, servando mio solco
> dinanzi a l'acqua che ritorna equale. (*Par.*, ii. 1-15)
>
> [O you who in little barks, desirous of listening, have followed after my ship that sails onward singing: turn back to see your shores again, do not put out on the deep sea, for perhaps, losing me, you would be lost... You other few, who stretched out your necks early on for the bread of the angels, which one lives on here though never sated by it: you can well set your course over the salt deep, staying within my wake before the water returns level again.]

While many of Dante's readers will be lost, others will be able to follow. It might be tempting to think of the distinction drawn here as that between educated and non-educated audiences, or between readers of varying intellectual powers; and, indeed, the intellectual challenge of the *cantica* which follows supports such a reading. However, a comparative, vertical reading across the Twos of each *cantica* of the *Commedia* draws out a somewhat different emphasis. The respective openings of *Inferno* ii and *Purgatorio* ii suggest a deepening understanding of the nature of time in Christ. At stake, here as well, is the ability of those readers to reach 'per tempo' (in time, by time, through time) the Eucharistic bread of angels.

The vertical reading across *cantiche* can offer still further insights into the distinction being made between types of readers because *Purgatorio* ii has already staged different modes of engaging with text. As we have seen, the arrival of the souls in Purgatory on their boat offers a mode of engaging with the Psalm, bringing it into a present moment by voicing it and interpreting it Christologically through the gesture of the angel. As is widely recognised, this performance of the Psalm contrasts with the other performed text in the canto, Casella's singing of Dante's 'Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona'. This, the first example of the pilgrim meeting a saved friend in the afterlife, is a moment filled with great tenderness; and Dante uses the encounter to establish firmly that the souls in Purgatory are still able to remember their past lives very clearly, the pilgrim asking:

> 'Se nuova legge non ti toglie
> memoria o uso a l'amoroso canto
> che mi solea quetar tutte mie doglie,
> di ciò ti piaccia consolare alquanto
> l'anima mia, che, con la sua persona
> venendo qui, è affannata tanto!' (*Purg*., ii. 106-11)

> [If a new law has not taken from you the memory or habit of the amorous singing that used to quiet all my desires, let it please you to console my soul a little in that way, for, coming here with its body, it is so wearied!]

Casella's performance offers an immediate, affirmative answer to the question of whether the souls' past lives – in the form of memory or habit – can be recalled in the present of Purgatory, thus highlighting once again the ways in which past and present moments are brought into relationship with each other. The recollection of the song itself has a powerful effect on those who hear it. Casella sings:

> sì dolcemente,
> che la dolcezza ancor dentro mi suona.
> Lo mio maestro e io e quella gente
> ch'eran con lui parevan sì contenti,
> come a nessun toccasse altro la mente. (*Purg*., ii. 113-17)

> [so sweetly that the sweetness still sounds within me. My master and I and those people that were with him seemed as contented as if nothing else touched anyone's mind.]

The absorption of the listeners in the music is interrupted, however, by Cato:

> Noi eravam tutti fissi e attenti
> a le sue note; ed ecco il veglio onesto
> gridando: 'Che è ciò, spiriti lenti?
> qual negligenza, quale stare è questo?
> Correte al monte a spogliarvi lo scoglio
> ch'esser non lascia a voi Dio manifesto'. (*Purg*., ii. 118-23)
>
> [We were all fixed and attentive to his notes; and here was the venerable old man, crying: 'What is this, laggard spirits? What negligence, what standing still is this? Run to the mountain to shed the slough that keeps God from being manifest to you'.]

We might read this passage in relation to the opening of *Paradiso* ii: there, those readers, in their little boat, described as wishing merely to listen, are warned that they will end up lost; the souls here in Purgatory also wish merely to listen, and need to be restored to their path. The parallel reading across *Paradiso* ii and *Purgatorio* ii suggests, then, that Casella's song is in some respects a dangerous distraction, in need of interruption.[6] Read in this way, what is wrong with Casella's song? Part of the problem might be the way it sets memory in the present moment, as something which is entirely absorbing, so that 'a nessun toccasse altro la mente' [nothing else touched anyone's mind] (l. 117); and as something which is an end-point for all desire, so that 'mi solea quetar tutte mie voglie' [it used to quiet all my desires] (l. 108). The relationship between the historical moment and the present is, in other words, not a dynamic one, and certainly not one which is conceived in relation to providential history, as the singing of Psalm 113 so clearly was. We should note too, that Casella's singing of a *canzone* written by Dante himself highlights the question of the pilgrim's relationship to his own history – in particular to his own intellectual and poetic past, a topic which has formed the basis for much of the scholarly debate on this episode.[7] To overstate the case slightly, we might see this as a failed vertical reading, where a past text is brought into the present in order to *remove* the consciousness of the present moment.

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[6] On Casella, see for instance Robert Durling, 'The Meeting With Casella', Durling and Martinez, *Purgatorio*, pp. 593-94. John Freccero, 'Casella's Song', *Dante Studies* 91 (1973), 73-80.

[7] On the question of whether the episode marks some sort of rejection of Dante's former philosophical and poetic practices, see for example Freccero, 'Casella's Song'; Ignazio Baldelli, 'Linguistica e interpretazione: l'amore di Catone, di Casella, di Carlo Martello e le canzoni del *Convivio* II e III', in *Miscellanea di studi linguistici in onore di Walter Belardi* (Rome: Il Calamo, 1994), II, 535-55; John A. Scott, 'The Unfinished *Convivio* as a Pathway to the *Comedy*', *Dante Studies* 113 (1995), 31-56.

Reading Casella's song in relation to *Paradiso* ii, then, helps highlight the contrast being made between salvific engagement with text, such as that carried out by the 'pochi che drizzaste il collo / per tempo al pan de li angeli' [few, who stretched out your necks early on for the bread of angels] (*Par.*, ii. 10-11), and other forms of reading. That said, we would be shortchanging Dante's text if we saw Casella's song as purely negative. After all, Casella's musical response to the pilgrim's request to sing, provided he still has the ability and the memory, tells us three crucial things. First, it shows that the souls of Purgatory *can* remember their past lives, and thus sets up the notion, essential to Dante's highly original conception of Purgatory, that being in Purgatory involves reflection on one's past life in order to bring about inner change. Second, it emphasises the ability to sing, and – alongside the singing of the Psalm earlier in the canto – it firmly establishes the idea that Purgatory will be a place of song, in contrast not only to Hell, but also to existing notions of Purgatory, as we have seen. Finally, the personal connection between Dante the pilgrim and his friend, as well as the tenderness of the communal experience, reflects an important characteristic of the second *cantica* as a whole. The critique of Casella's song which is implied in the vertical comparison I have drawn with the opening of *Paradiso* ii must not, then, be oversimplified: the vertical reading draws out certain emphases, but in dialogue with the linear reading.

And yet the contrast between Casella's song and the singing of the Psalm, read in light of the distinction established in *Paradiso* ii between types of reader, does develop the idea of 'vertical' understandings of time, of the various ways in which time might be experienced and framed. The different types of engagement with text in *Purgatorio* ii and *Paradiso* ii develop notions which are also present in *Inferno* ii, where the nature of speech in relation to Dante the pilgrim's salvation is alluded to. Virgil reports that Beatrice had instructed him to find the pilgrim 'con la tua parola ornata / e con ciò c'ha mestieri al suo campare' [with your ornamented speech and whatever else is needed for his escape] (*Inf.*, ii. 67-68). Eloquent speech, then, can help draw the pilgrim from his Dark Wood. But in itself, speech is not enough. Beatrice also suggests two characteristics for salvation: a deep desire and an active response to love. Virgil shows his deep desire to understand how Beatrice has been able to descend into Hell (she responds 'da che tu vuo' saver cotanto a dentro' [since you wish to know so deeply] (*Inf.*, ii. 85-87)); Beatrice's own speech is grounded in a response to love ('Amor mi mosse, che mi fa parlare' [Love has moved me and makes me speak] (*Inf.*, ii. 72)). Beatrice's description of herself as moved by love prefigures the very last line of the *Commedia*, which describes the love which moves the sun and the other stars ('l'amor che move il sole e le altre stelle' (*Par.*, xxxiii. 145)). Beatrice, herself, 'fatta da Dio' [made by God] (*Inf.*, ii. 91), is a manifestation of this principle of love – more particularly, her speech is a manifestation of the principle: love moves her and makes her speak. Beatrice answers Virgil's desire to fully understand her presence in Limbo by explaining its principle, and by taking him directly to the foundation of her being.

The question of how ornate speech might relate to salvation is thus contained already in *Inferno* ii, and will be drawn out in *Purgatorio* ii and *Paradiso* ii. It also points towards a further, related question about the processes and models of learning, which is developed throughout these three cantos. Virgil's reported dialogue with Beatrice already hints at this, with Beatrice responding to Virgil's deep desire to know. And, indeed, one of the central preoccupations of *Inferno* ii is the question of why the pilgrim himself needs to go on this journey. It is in this canto that he insists that he is neither Aeneas, nor St Paul (l. 32); in doing so, he not only offers precedents, setting his text in dialogue with those earlier journeys and establishing one Classical and one Christian model for his text; he also figures his own *lack* of qualifications for the journey as one of the essential conditions for his journey to take place.

Virgil, in *Purgatorio* ii, suggests that the pilgrim's lack of obvious credentials is also the condition of all the souls in Purgatory. As Virgil and Dante are approached by those souls and asked for guidance towards the mountain, Virgil responds: 'voi credete / forse che siamo esperti d'esto loco; / ma noi siam peregrin come voi siete' [you believe perhaps that we know this place; but we are strangers here, as you are] (*Purg.*, ii. 61-63). These lines offer an account of the way in which learning will take place in Purgatory: not from a position of authority, but rather from a condition in which limited knowledge and lack of expertise are the starting points. Virgil's sense of himself as a 'peregrin' – the word suggests both the notion of a traveller in a strange place, and the notion of a pilgrim – captures an idea which runs across these three cantos: that disorientation is central to the spiritual and intellectual growth which the *Commedia* aims to describe and foster.

Dante creates this feeling of bewilderment in his reader as well. In *Inferno* ii, while we have been given some information about the basic itinerary of Dante's journey (at *Inf.*, i. 112-20), we are still coming to terms with a number of shocks: the fact that Virgil is Dante's guide; that Beatrice descends into Hell to redeem Dante; that Virgil describes himself as among those who are 'sospesi' (l. 52). The reader's condition in *Purgatorio* ii is also unsettled, with the situation of Purgatory at the antipodes of Jerusalem a surprise, the nature of Antepurgatory still unclear and the presence of liturgical performance entirely unexpected in the context of established views of Purgatory. And *Paradiso* ii foregrounds the conditions in which learning can take place through its complex discussion of the nature of the spots on the moon.

The distinction at the opening of *Paradiso* ii, between those readers who Dante suggests can follow him into the third *cantica* and those who cannot, is not a distinction relating to intellectual ability, but is rather associated with a particular habit of thought. Those readers who, in their time-bound, earthly lives, are able to reach for the bread of angels are the readers who will not be merely transfixed by the desire to hear the sound of Dante's words, but will somehow look beyond them. The Eucharistic image of the bread of angels is not casual here. Indeed, the latter stages of Purgatory-proper had been marked by a concentration of Eucharistic references: Statius's use of the resurrected Christ's words when breaking the bread at Emmaus ('O frati miei, Dio vi dea pace' [O my brothers, God give you peace] (*Purg.*, xxi. 13)); the allusion to the Wedding at Cana ('Più pensava Maria onde/fosser le nozze orrevoli e intere / ch'a la sua bocca, ch'or per voi risponde' [Mary thought more about how the wedding could be made honourable and complete than about her mouth, which now answers for you] (*Purg.*, xxii. 142-44); and the inverted image of the Eucharistic pelican potentially implied by the reference to Mary of Jerusalem ('Ecco / la gente che perdé Ierusalemme, / quando Maria nel figlio diè di becco' [Behold the people who lost Jerusalem, when Mary put her beak into her son] (*Purg.*, xxiii. 28-30)).[8] This concentration of Eucharistic imagery comes in the cantos which describe the terraces of Purgatory where the souls are learning to correct avarice, prodigality and gluttony. These souls were excessively attached to that which, as Virgil puts it, 'non fa l'uom felice; / non è felicità, non è la buona / essenza, d'ogne ben frutto e radice' [does not make one happy; is not happiness, is not the good Essence, fruit and root of all goodness] (*Purg.*, xvii. 133-35). The Eucharistic imagery in the upper Terraces of Purgatory, then, contrasts with such attachment. This contrast is perhaps best emblematized in Forese Donati's account of the purgation of the souls on the Terrace of Gluttony: the souls' suffering is better described as solace than as pain ('Io dico pena, e dovria dir sollazzo') because 'quella voglia a li alberi ci mena / che menò Cristo lieto a dire '*Elì*', / quando ne liberò con la sua vena' [that desire leads us to the trees that led Christ to say '*Elì*' gladly, when he freed us with the blood of his veins] (*Purg.*, xxiii. 72-75). The desire for that which is the root of all that exists, 'la buona / essenza, d'ogne ben frutto e radice', is one that leads the souls to look beyond their immediate, material, possessive desires to the Eucharistic blood of Christ. We can see, then, an analogy between the very process of purgation – figured here as a process of learning to look beyond immediate goods to the divine creative principle on which those, and all, goods depend – and the habit of thought which those readers who are able to follow Dante into *Paradiso* have cultivated, reaching for the Eucharistic bread of angels rather than fixing on that which is immediate.

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[8] For more detail on the Eucharistic imagery in these cantos, see Matthew Treherne, 'Liturgical Personhood: Creation, Penitence and Praise in the *Commedia*', in *Dante's 'Commedia': Theology as Poetry*, ed. by Vittorio Montemaggi and Matthew Treherne (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2010), pp. 131-60.

The idea that reading *Paradiso* requires a willingness to look beyond that which is material informs the whole of *Paradiso* ii. The pilgrim's movement into the Heaven of the Moon is, in itself, a spur for that process:

> Giunto mi vidi ove mirabil cosa
> mi torse il viso a sè, e però quella
> cui non potea mia cura essere ascosa,
> volta ver' me, sì lieta come bella:
> 'Drizza la mente in Dio grata', mi disse,
> 'che n'ha congiunti con la prima stella'. (*Par.*, ii. 25-30)

> [I saw I had reached a place where marvellous things drew my sight, and therefore she from whom my care could not be hidden, turning toward me, joyous as she was beautiful: 'Direct your mind to God in gratitude', she told me, 'who has conjoined us with the first star'.]

The pilgrim's experience of the miraculous ascent to the Heaven of the Moon, then, is channelled by Beatrice into a reflection on the God who has made that ascent possible: the narrated event is an immediate spur to reflection on the divine principle underlying it. That notion is deepened even further as Dante raises the question of whether he ascended to the Heaven of the Moon in his body, associating the mystery of his physical body's reception in the Heaven of the Moon with the mystery of the union of God and man in Christ:

> S'io era corpo – e qui non si concepe
> com'una dimensione altra patio,
> ch'esser convien se corpo in corpo repe –
> accender ne dovria più il disio
> di veder quella essenza in che si vede
> come nostra natura e Dio s'unìo.
> Lì si vedrà ciò che tenem per fede,
> non dimostrato, ma fia per sé noto
> a guisa del ver primo che l'uom crede. (*Par.*, ii. 37-42)

> [If I was a body – and down here it cannot be conceived how one dimension could accept another, as must occur, if body coincide with body – it should kindle within us more desire to see that Essence where is seen how our nature and God became one. There we shall see that which we hold by faith, and not by demonstration, but it will be self-evident, like the first truth one believes.]

Here, Dante does not explain the mechanics of his journey into the Heaven of the Moon – he does not even tell us for certain that it happened at all; instead, he explains that our desire to understand that which is incomprehensible should increase our desire to see Christ. For an encounter with truth, not held through faith, not demonstrated intellectually, but known in itself, 'per sé', will be possible when a person is united with God in Christ. The mysterious, miraculous event which is described is not to be interpreted or understood in its own right, but directs us to the Incarnation. The distinction between types of readers at the opening of *Paradiso* ii is thus reinforced: that which is put before the reader, as an event, is not to be interpreted merely for its own sake, as those readers who are simply desirous of listening (*Par.*, ii. 2) might do. Rather, it is to be seen as encouraging readers in their longing for the mystery of the Incarnation, as those who stretch out their necks early on for the bread of angels (*Par.*, ii. 10-11) would do.

This rich and dynamic interplay between reason, faith and the longing for direct knowledge of God introduces one of the most difficult and, to many readers, frustrating passages in Dante's *Commedia*: Beatrice's extended discussion of why there are spots on the moon. This is the point at which we realise that Dante's warning to his readers that they risk ending up lost is not an empty warning. There is not space here to consider the intricacies of the argument, and the passage has been discussed in rich detail elsewhere.[9] However, in the context of this vertical reading, a number of important features emerge – indeed, we might see in them a paradigm for reading and learning, which develops the ideas we have seen emerge across each of the cantos under consideration here. The importance of the account is not to be found in the intrinsic importance of moonspots as opposed to any other phenomenon in the created world, but rather in the intellectual and spiritual action that the phenomenon demands and provokes. In the context of this discussion in *Paradiso* ii, that action begins, straightforwardly enough, with Beatrice dismissing the superstitious belief mentioned by the pilgrim, according to which the moonspots are caused by the presence of Cain on the moon, who has been banished there following his murder of Abel (ll. 49-51). However, rather than simply set out what is really the case, Beatrice asks him to present his own view: namely, that the moon is made of differentiated matter, dense and rare ('ciò che n'appar qua sù diverso / credo che fanno i corpi rari e densi' (ll. 59-60)). Beatrice then partially dismantles this purely material explanation by reference to a further physical phenomenon: the fact that, in an eclipse, light does not pass through the moon ('fora manifesto / ne l'eclissi del sol, per trasparere / lo lume come in altro raro ingesto' (ll. 79-81)). Then, a further possible physical explanation is discussed: that if there is dense matter underlying even the patches of rare matter on the moon ('s'elli è che questo raro non trapassi' (l. 85)), blocking the light, the pilgrim is probably imagining that the dark spots on the moon are those spots where the light reflected by the moon is hitting the dense matter further back ('el si dimostra tetro / ivi lo raggio più che in altre parti / per esser lì refratto più a retro' (ll. 91-93)).

So far, the potential explanations, and the arguments which Beatrice has deployed to unpick them, have all responded to physical phenomena. At this point, Beatrice offers what appears to be the most concrete empirical evidence to show the limitations of Dante's thinking: a replicable experiment, described in some detail.

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[9] See for instance, Christian Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's "Comedy"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 111-19; Manlio Pastore Stocchi, 'Dante e la luna', *Lettere italiane* 33 (1981), 153-74.

> Tre specchi prenderai, e i due rimovi
> da te d'un modo, e l'altro più rimosso
> tr'ambo li primi li occhi tuoi ritrovi.
> Rivolto ad essi, fa che dopo il dosso
> ti stea un lume che i tre specchi accenda
> e torni a te da tutti ripercosso.
> Ben che nel quanto tanto non si stenda
> la vista più lontana, lì vedrai
> come convien ch'igualmente risplenda. (*Par.*, ii. 97-105)
>
> [Take three mirrors, and place two of them at the same distance from you, and let your eyes find the third more distant and between the first two. Facing toward them, have a light from behind you shine on the three mirrors and return to you reflected from all three. Even though the more distant image is not as extended in size, you will see that it is equally bright there.]

The experiment, as Beatrice describes it, demonstrates that the light does not grow dimmer as it travels over space, and therefore disproves the explanation of the moonspots that depends on light being reflected from a greater distance. Instead, Beatrice explains, the entire order of the universe is intended to produce variety in being. God's power and intelligence are one and indivisible, but the universe radiates those powers into all things (ll. 127-41).

Beatrice's instruction to the pilgrim to try out this experiment makes use of empirical evidence in order to demonstrate the limitations of his physical explanation for the moonspots. In this respect, it is a very similar move to the one she makes in pointing the pilgrim to his experience of witnessing eclipses at lines 79-81. However, the experiment itself – as readers have pointed out – is intrinsically problematic.[10] For in placing a mirror in front of oneself, two mirrors to the side, and a light behind, one ends up seeing not the reflected light, but oneself, blocking the light. For the experiment to work, then, one has to somehow be transparent to the light; one already needs to be, in other words, in the very condition which the pilgrim assumes as he enters the Heaven of the Moon, accepted just as light is accepted by water, 'com'acqua recepe raggio di luce permanendo unita' (ll. 35-36).

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[10] For the fullest discussion of the limitations of the mirror experiment, see John Kleiner, *Mismapping the Underworld: Daring and Error in Dante's 'Comedy'* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 100-07; Moevs, *Metaphysics*, pp. 117-19 draws out the Christological implications.

This idea is as easy to understand as fixing up a few mirrors and a lamp in a dark room; it is as hard to understand as the Incarnation itself. And it is no accident, surely, that this mirror – pushing us to the very limit of where sensory experience and experimentation can take us – situates us, once again, in a cross. Indeed, in order to understand the limits of what we can grasp empirically, it is necessary to be located within the cross.

The moonspots experiment encapsulates, in this way, what has emerged across these three cantos. It shows how the mystery of the still-living pilgrim's journey through the afterlife connects with issues of interpretation and reading practice. In *Inferno* ii, the pilgrim insists that he is not worthy of his predecessors on this journey through the afterlife: he is no Paul, no Aeneas. In *Purgatorio* ii, Casella attempts, and fails, to embrace the pilgrim's physical body. And in *Paradiso* ii, the mystery of the pilgrim's physical ascent into the Heaven of the Moon is described as being as inaccessible to human comprehension as the Incarnation itself. The mirror experiment shows that the limitations of empirical experience can be demonstrated, and indeed shows the value of questioning and testing those limitations; but it also shows that in order to grasp the kinds of learning that are taking place on this journey, a particular Christ-like perspective needs to be adopted. That perspective is, I have suggested, evident throughout these three cantos; *Paradiso* ii extends that perspective from interpreting time, and events in time, to interpreting the created world itself.

What these three cantos have to offer the present project, then, is a rich rationale for vertical reading. As we have seen, the strong engagement with notions of time which open *Inferno* ii and *Purgatorio* ii suggests a progressively deeper understanding of the ways in which the linear passage of time is placed in dialogue with an understanding of time in the light of the Incarnation. That understanding in turn reflects upon the practice of reading and engaging with text, as modelled in the performance of Psalm 113, framed by the sign of the cross; but this practice extends to the interpretation of the created world. Individual events and phenomena are to be appreciated in the light of an Incarnational perspective. The contrast between modes of reading and interpreting which fail to do so (the seductions of Casella's song; those readers in their little boat whom Dante advises to turn around; the naïve, purely material accounts of the spots on the moon) and those which succeed in doing so (Beatrice's account of her own grounding in God in *Inferno* ii; the performance of the Psalm; those few readers who have reached for the bread of angels; the wise account of the spots on the moon) can be seen, through this vertical approach, to inform these three cantos in powerful ways, and to provide a crucial grounding for reading the *Commedia* as a whole.

# 3. The Bliss and Abyss of Freedom: Hope, Personhood and Particularity[1]

### *Vittorio Montemaggi*

The first image that came to mind when I started to work on the lecture on which this chapter is based was that of a handstand: in Italian, *fare la verticale* (literally: 'perform the vertical') means to perform a handstand. While I did not attempt to deliver the lecture in this position, I ask you to imagine that it was, in fact, delivered in that way – for the image will be able to communicate to you more successfully than anything else a few crucial aspects of what is at stake in undertaking this vertical reading of *Inferno* iii, *Purgatorio* iii and *Paradiso* iii. I suspect that the request to imagine a handstand may generate a mix of surprise, excitement and suspense. These, I think, are very appropriate states of being for engaging in a vertical reading of the *Commedia*. For the format proposes something that is much needed yet also novel and striking: this new mode of systematically journeying through Dante's text opens up genuinely fresh and fruitful perspectives on the *Commedia*. It generates, furthermore, suspense. As surprising and exciting as the journey we are undertaking may be, we are yet to discover where exactly it will lead, or how our relationship with the *Commedia* will be transformed by the adventure.

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[1] The video of this lecture is available at the Cambridge Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy website, https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1368483
The present text is very close in form to the lecture on which it is based. In preparing the lecture, I had the privilege of attending the first two vertical readings, and my experience of writing the lecture was inextricably tied to the conversations surrounding those, for which I am especially grateful to George Corbett, Matthew Treherne and Heather Webb.

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The image of the handstand, moreover, compellingly raises the question of verticality itself. This is very appropriate for discussing the Threes. As we shall see, these are cantos that, especially if read in the light of *Paradiso* iii, invite us to think about verticality and its theological implications. More generally, the image of the handstand directly suggests that the vertical reading we are embarking upon is about the subversion of expectation. All three cantos, in one way or another, foreground the need for expectations and assumptions to be modified to permit progress on the journey towards God. This is true both of the pilgrim Dante himself, and of what the text demands of us as readers. In fact, in this reading, I shall intentionally blur the distinction between the two.

I am conscious of the possible limitations that such forms of interpretation may have. I wish to proceed in this way, however, to convey all the more immediately the sense of journeying and transformation that is a fundamental aspect of Dante's project, and thereby also a sense of active journeying on our part as we progress on the vertical reading project. I am not suggesting we need necessarily adopt the particular theological framework presented to us by Dante as the form our own transformation can take. But I do think we are missing a vital aspect of Dante's text if we do not give ourselves opportunities to engage with a constructive sense of the transformative impact it might have on our aesthetic, intellectual, ethical, theological and even spiritual sensibilities. In this vein, my reading will end with a link to a short piece of music that was written almost seven centuries after the *Commedia* (and that bears only an indirect connection to Dante's text), but that beautifully embodies, I believe, some of the ideas I will be engaging with. I hope that this musical accompaniment to the present reading will sharpen our sense that journeying vertically through Dante's *Commedia* is not simply a detached cerebral venture but a fully embodied one.

Before embarking on my reading of the Threes, allow me to express gratitude for work whose influence pervades the present essay. I am grateful to Heather Webb, for ongoing and illuminating conversation on the importance of posture and of the interplay between individual and communal in Dante's narrative;[2] and to George Corbett for illuminating and ongoing conversation on Dante's understanding of salvation and on the relationship between reading the *Commedia* and listening to music, especially music that is *not* directly connected to Dante's poem.[3] I am also grateful to Robin Kirkpatrick, whose translation of the *Commedia* will accompany us on the present reading, and whose commentary on the poem offers the deepest available reflection on the theological dynamics of Dante's understanding of freedom.[4] It is, indeed, from Kirkpatrick that I first learned to appreciate just how transformative Dante's understanding of freedom can be.

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[2] See also http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/events/25032 and Heather Webb, 'Postures of Penitence in Dante's *Purgatorio*', *Dante Studies* 131 (2013), 219-236.

As clearly suggested by my title, freedom is the overarching theme I have chosen for my vertical reading of the Threes. It is in and through the question of freedom that verticality and the re-orientation of expectation emerge as subjects in our cantos. What this means, as we shall see, is that these cantos focus on personhood, particularity and hope. Indeed, if we take our cantos in their narrative order, we immediately find a rather stark statement concerning hope and what appears to be the ultimate lack of freedom.

> Per me si va ne la città dolente,
> per me si va ne l'etterno dolore,
> per me si va tra la perduta gente.
> Giustizia mosse il mio alto fattore;
> fecemi la divina podestate,
> la somma sapïenza e 'l primo amore.
> Dinanzi a me non fuor cose create
> se non etterne, e io etterna duro.
> Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate. (*Inf.*, iii. 1-9)
>
> [Through me you go to the grief-wracked city.
> Through me to everlasting pain you go.
> Through me you go and pass among lost souls.
> Justice inspired my exalted Creator.
> I am a creature of the Holiest Power,
> of Wisdom in the Highest and of Primal Love.
> Nothing till I was made was made, only
> eternal beings. And I endure eternally.
> Surrender as you enter every hope you have.]

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[3] See also George Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus: A Dualistic Vision of Secular and Spiritual Fulfilment* (Oxford: Legenda, 2013).

[4] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. and comm. Robin Kirkpatrick, 3 vols (London: Penguin, 2006-2007).

Entering Hell, we are told, coincides with the abandonment of hope.[5] This would seem to make sense, especially as it might be seen to conform to assumptions we might have of Hell as the place that, by definition, is without freedom. There is no hope because there is no freedom. To be in Hell, in this view, is to be deprived of freedom as a result of our shortcomings: the ultimate imposition of divine authority on the recalcitrant human self, the self which in its freedom decides not to follow the divine Word.

If these are the expectations we are bringing with us upon entering Dante's Hell, however, we need to be ready to revise them. This is already suggested by the fact that we are told that Hell is the creation not only of justice, power and wisdom, but also of love. This, as Denys Turner has recently pointed out in one of the sharpest and most compelling analyses available of the theology of *Inferno*, reveals the condition of Hell to be an unfolding of, rather than an imposition on, the freedom of its inhabitants. As Turner puts it:

> [Dante's Hell] is a place where sinners, by choice, inhabit their sins and live their lives structured by sin's distorted perceptions of love. That love they have to reject, as being an invasion of some imagined personal space, independent of God, as a violation of their personal freedom and autonomy. But this self-deceived self-affirmation shows up in the refusal of the damned to accept that there can be any narrative other than their own, for they deny that there is, after all, any *divina commedia*. The damned all have their own stories to tell, and *Inferno* tells them. Each of them, from Francesca da Rimini to Ugolino, know that those stories which they each tell of their fates recount not just why they were sent there to hell in the first place – that is, their specific sin – but also why they are held there without term in a condition of sinfulness, for the grip of hell on them is but the grip with which they hold onto their stories, without which they cannot imagine for themselves an identity or reality. They need their stories, stories of their own telling, and they need the misrepresentations that those stories tell. Hell is but the condition consequent upon their ultimate refusal to abandon that need. Hell, then, is the condition not of those who have sinned, for many who have sinned more grievously than Francesca and Paolo are not in hell but in a place of Redemption in purgatory. Hell is the condition of those who do not repent of their stories, who refuse the offer of their revision by the divine love, and insist on living by means of the story that sin tells, the story of the attempt to achieve a self-made significance independently of the story of the divine love.[6]

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[5] It is important to note that 'lasciate' in *Inf.*, iii. 9 can be read both as imperative and indicative.

[6] Denys Turner, *Julian of Norwich, Theologian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 92.

Hell, in this view, is not the antithesis of freedom but the result of confusing freedom with choice,[7] and of the pursuit of freedom as autonomy, a pursuit of freedom that through individualistic self-centredness entraps the self in its own limitation – a limitation necessarily deriving from the self's not being self-sufficient but radically dependent on divine love as the very substance of its being.[8] As we shall see, it is this very limitation that in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* will be presented as the genuine foundation of freedom and identity.

But let us reflect on *Inferno* iii a little while longer. Immediately after entering the gates of Hell – which we should note are open, unlike the ones that later will have to be opened for Dante and Virgil by a divine messenger[9] – Dante meets the first group of human beings on his journey. Indeed the third canto of each *cantica* is the canto in which Dante meets the first group of human beings already inhabiting the realm of the afterlife he is visiting. In *Inferno* iii, Dante first becomes aware of the group's presence through horrific and cacophonous sounds – an aural aspect of Dante's text that we should keep in mind as we proceed, given that *Paradiso* iii, the last canto on our vertical journey, ends in song. Of the infernal cacophony, Dante tells us:

> Quivi sospiri, pianti e alti guai
> risonavan per l'aere sanza stelle,
> per ch'io al cominciar ne lagrimai.
> Diverse lingue, orribili favelle,
> parole di dolore, accenti d'ira,
> voci alte e fioche, e suon di man con elle
> facevano un tumulto, il qual s'aggira
> sempre in quell' aura sanza tempo tinta,
> come la rena quando turbo spira. (*Inf.*, iii. 22-30)
>
> [Sighing, sobbing, moans and plaintive wailing
> all echoed here through air where no star shone,
> and I, as this began, began to weep.
> Discordant tongues, harsh accents of horror,
> tormented words, the twang of rage, strident
> voices, the sound as well, of smacking hands,

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[7] See also David Burrell, *Faith and Freedom: An Interfaith Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

[8] See also *Par.*, xxix, 13-18.

[9] *Inf.*, viii-ix.

together these all stirred a storm that swirled
for ever in the darkened air where no time was,
as sand swept up in breathing spires of wind.]

On hearing this noise, Dante questions Virgil as to its source. Dante calls Virgil 'maestro' – emphasizing his role as guiding teacher. Indeed, each of the four times that Dante directly addresses Virgil in this canto he begins in the same way: 'Maestro'. This emphasis on the pilgrim's need for guidance is important for our vertical reading because in our other cantos too we will see Dante being challenged to grow through having to negotiate different modes of perception and different ways of relating to those offering him guidance. Virgil responds to Dante's question by explaining to him that the noise is produced by the indifferent, the crowd of those who failed to make any mark on the world or on their own selves, those who are in effect without identity. They frantically and purposelessly follow a blank banner and have no proper place either in Heaven or Hell. As Virgil says, they are envious of every other otherworldly condition and, ultimately, are not worthy of our consideration:

Questi non hanno speranza di morte,
e la lor cieca vita e' tanto bassa
che 'nvidiosi son d'ogne altra sorte
Fama di loro il mondo esser non lassa;
misericordia e giustizia li sdegna:
non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa. (*Inf.*, iii. 46-51)

[These have no hope that death will ever come.
And so degraded is the life they lead
all look with envy on all other fates.
The world allows no glory to their name.
Mercy and Justice alike despise them.
Let us not speak of them. Look, then pass on.]

In fact, Dante does recognize some of them, most famously 'colui che fece per viltade il gran rifiuto'. Much has been written about how we might identify who this person actually is, the two most likely contenders being Pontius Pilate and Pope Celestine V. The most important thing about Dante's way of telling us he identified someone, however, is that this identification amounts to no identification at all. It amounts, simply, to a general definition of the *ignavi*, those who refuse to make anything of themselves, those who reject the divine gift of free will and the possibility of individual identity.

As they move forward on their journey, Dante and Virgil next see those who do not fall into the rather numerous group of the indifferent. This is a privileged moment for reflecting on the theological dynamics of *Inferno*. For what we are told about this second group that we meet in *Inferno* iii applies also to all those we will meet later in Hell. And what is most significant about this description in light of this essay's theme is that these human beings move towards their infernal abode of their own accord. They might be swearing and cursing God or the day they were born, as Dante tells us they do, and some of them might be proceeding more slowly than required, but they all move forward spurred by divine justice acting within them in such a way as to turn their fear into desire. As Virgil says,

> quelli che muoion ne l'ira di Dio
> tutti convengon qui d'ogne paese;
> e pronti sono a trapassar lo rio,
> ché la divina giustizia li sprona,
> sì che la tema si volve in disio. (*Inf.*, iii. 121-126)
>
> [[All those…] who perish in the wrath of God,
> meet on this shore, wherever they were born.
> And they are eager to be shipped across.
> Justice of God so spurs them all ahead
> that fear in them becomes that sharp desire.]

We might be tempted here to think that the divine justice Dante is referring to is some external force acting upon them, but this would run counter to the rather more subtle psychological picture Dante is presenting. Yes, we are told that the infernal guardian Charon violently shepherds the damned and reminds them of what we had seen written on the gates of Hell – of the need to abandon hope. But the divine justice which Virgil points out to Dante as the primary motivating force of the newly damned comes from within; it is a form of self-knowledge whereby the damned seem to recognize the appropriateness of their current journey, its faithfulness to the life they chose for themselves, preferring their story to love's story. Indeed, none of the sinners we meet in *Inferno* is actually found protesting against the divine justice of their present predicament. Many blame other human beings for their fate, others are either directly or indirectly defiant towards God, but on close scrutiny none of the sinners are presented as actually deeming their predicament unjust.

One way of reading the journey through Hell, then, is as a journey towards self-knowledge, an ever-deeper plunge into the justice of the condemnation of the darker possibilities inherent in our being, those aspects of our selves that are expressions of our isolating presumption to be self-sufficient and to live at the expense of others and of God.

From this perspective, the next thing to note about *Inferno* iii is the first use in the *Commedia* of a formula that will become familiar. In challenging Charon to let them pass, Virgil says,

> […] Caron, non ti crucciare
> vuolsi così colà dove si puote
> ciò che si vuole, e più non dimandare. (*Inf.*, iii. 94-96)
>
> [Charon […] don't torment yourself.
> For this is willed where all is possible
> that is willed there. And so demand no more.]

Once again, we would seem to be presented with an instance of the imposition of God's will over something external to it. And, once again, the picture is nonetheless more complicated than this. First of all, the reference is not to God but to the Empyrean, the transcendent 'place' of perfect freedom where will coincides with power, and power – as we will see in *Paradiso* iii – coincides with love. We have here a first way in which our cantos raise the question of verticality itself. Dante's journey, like Hell itself, depends on love and, therefore, on the Empyrean – which is nothing other than the perfect unfolding of love on which the universe depends. It follows, then, that his journey depends on its own point of arrival, on that to which Dante's vertical journey through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise is leading. Its end is its beginning. Whilst instinctively we might feel that the primary thrust of Dante's journey is from and through earth to Heaven, its even more fundamental thrust is from Heaven to earth. Without divine love there would be no journey. What we have here, in other words, is a narrative analogue to the mystery of creation. Any movement towards God is only possible as a manifestation of the love by which God brings into existence and sustains all that is and all that can move towards God.

With all this in mind, let us turn to *Purgatorio* iii. Virgil's words to Cato in *Purgatorio* i have reminded the reader that Dante's journey is, indeed, a journey towards freedom.[10] As *Purgatorio* iii makes clear, however, Dante now needs to negotiate anew what this might mean; he needs to learn anew how to travel in his new surroundings. This is not, initially, an easy thing to do. Dante is terrified at seeing only one shadow on the ground before him and thinks he has been abandoned by Virgil. This leads Virgil to explain that while not united with their earthly flesh, otherworldly souls do nonetheless inform and enliven an aerial body that allows the human person to continue to exist even between death and the Resurrection. How this is possible is a mystery, Virgil says, as mysterious as that of the Trinity. But, Virgil specifies, this is a mystery that human beings can enter into through the Incarnation, or, as Virgil puts it, through the fact that Mary gave birth:

> Ora, se innanzi a me nulla s'aombra,
> non ti maravigliar più che d'i cieli
> che l'uno a l'altro raggio non ingombra.
> A sofferir tormenti, caldi e geli
> simili corpi la Virtù dispone
> che, come fa, non vol ch'a noi si sveli.
> Matto è chi spera che nostra ragione
> possa trascorrer la infinita via
> che tiene una sustanza in tre persone.
> State contenti, umana gente, al quia;
> ché, se potuto aveste veder tutto,
> mestier non era parturir Maria. (*Purg.*, iii. 28-39)
>
> [If nothing now is shadowed at my feet,
> don't wonder any more than when the rays
> the heavens project don't block each other out.
> To suffer torments both of heat and chill,
> the Utmost Power gives bodies, fit for that,
> not wishing how it does to be revealed.
> It's madness if we hope that rational minds
> should ever follow to its end the road
> that one true being in three persons takes.
> Content yourselves with *quia*, human kind.
> Had you been able to see everything,
> Mary need not have laboured to give birth.]

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[10] *Purg.*, i. 70-72.

The fact that Dante the poet simply has Virgil refer to Mary's giving birth while not referring to the name of her child is significant, for it could be seen to suggest that the mystery of the Incarnation is not only vital for human beings as relating specifically to the historical Jesus but also as relating to every individual human person, whose way to divinization, according to Dante, lies precisely in becoming Christ-like.

At stake in Virgil's words to Dante about the embodiedness of otherworldly souls is also his own role as guide. After the lines just quoted, Virgil further reminds Dante that the mysteries he is speaking of transcend human reason, and this reminds us that, especially now that we are in Purgatory, a realm that is new even for Virgil himself, Virgil is not the perfect guide. This is not in itself a problem for the progress of our protagonists. It does, however, require a different mode of journeying, one that is more collaborative, communal. This in turn raises the question of whether there might be something in the journey for Virgil too, whether he too will learn something and whether that might somehow affect his relationship with the divine. Analysis of this question clearly transcends the confines of our present reading.[11] It is nonetheless important to raise it here, because it can enhance our sense of just how significant the question of authority is as explored from the opening of *Purgatorio* iii.

In *Purgatorio* iii, the dynamics of the journey change first of all between Dante and Virgil themselves. Indeed, it is on Dante's initiative that the two begin to move in the right direction after Virgil remains silent upon ending his speech concerning the limitation of human reason. Addressing Virgil once again as 'maestro', Dante encourages him to look up and ahead, where a group of penitents can be seen coming towards them. This new encounter in turn broadens and deepens communal possibilities.

But not without initial hesitation. On first seeing Dante and Virgil, the penitent souls – those who have died under excommunication – huddle up against the mountain rock, and it is only upon Virgil's formal request for directions that they begin cautiously to approach, an action that is described with some of the most beautiful poetry of the *Commedia*:

> Come le pecorelle escon del chiuso
> a una, a due, a tre, e l'altre stanno
> timidette, atterrando l'occhio e 'l muso,

---

[11] This is one of the main questions I explore in *Divinity Realized in Human Encounter: Reading Dante's 'Commedia' As Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

> e ciò che fa la prima, e l'altre fanno,
> addossandosi a lei, s'ella s'arresta,
> semplici e quete, e lo 'mperché non sanno:
> sì vid' io muovere a venir la testa
> di quella mandria fortunata allotta,
> pudica in faccia e ne l'andare onesta. (*Purg*., iii. 79-87)
>
> [As silly sheep come edging from their fold,
> one, two and three, the rest all standing there
> timidly turning earthwards eyes and snouts,
> to do exactly what the first one does,
> huddling against her if she hesitates,
> quiet and meek, not knowing why they do,
> so, too, I now saw moving out to me
> the forward markers of that happy flock,
> modest in look and dignified in walk.]

But then once again they hesitate. Just as Dante was taken aback at not seeing Virgil's shadow next to his, so the penitent are taken aback at seeing Dante in his mortal body. Virgil attempts to reassure them by pointing out, first, that yes, they should believe that this is a mortal body they see before them and, second, that Dante is here in Purgatory with his mortal body because his journey is guided by heavenly virtue:

> Sanza vostra domanda io vi confesso
> che questo è corpo uman che voi vedete;
> per che 'l lume del sole in terra è fesso.
> Non vi maravigliate, ma credete
> che non sanza virtù che dal ciel vegna
> cerchi di soverchiar questa parete. (*Purg.,* iii. 94-99)
>
> [You need not ask. I freely will confess
> that what you see are truly human limbs.
> That's why the sunlight on the earth is split.
> Don't wonder at the sight but just believe
> that, not without some virtue from the skies,
> does he attempt to overcome this wall.]

These words once again foreground the double verticality of Dante's journey – a journey of the earthly heavenwards that is only possible because of the prior journey earthwards of the heavenly. This time, however, the foregrounding of this double verticality resonates with significant Christological overtones. Virgil's words equate recognition of Dante's physical presence in Purgatory to a confession of faith which, coupled with the reference to heavenly virtue descending to earth, cannot but bring to mind, implicitly but strongly, the incarnation of the divine itself.

Even after this, the canto continues to resonate Christologically. In response to Virgil's request, the penitents point Dante and Virgil in the right direction for beginning their ascent of the mountain. Then, one of the penitents seeks Dante's recognition, and when Dante tells him he is unable to recognize him, his response is like Christ's before Thomas: Manfred simply points to the wound on his chest:

> Quand' io mi fui umilmente disdetto
> d'averlo visto mai, el disse: "Or vedi";
> e mostrommi una piaga a sommo 'l petto.
> Poi sorridendo disse: "Io son Manfredi […]. (*Purg*., iii. 109-12)
>
> [In all humility, I then denied
> that I, till then, had seen him. 'Look!' he said,
> and pointed out a wound high on his chest.
> Then, smiling: 'I am Manfred', he declared […]]

At the same time that we begin to see the journey towards God taking on a more communal aspect, therefore, we are also invited to reflect on human identity and particularity in Christic terms. Instead of the abdication of self or the assertion of self that we found in *Inferno* iii, we find the beginning of the construction of self in, through or as Christ (or love). The story of Christ is the story of divine love made flesh; and it is as part of this story, according to Dante, that any individual story might properly be told. As part of love's story even the worst of sinners can hope to be at one with God, even beyond what Manfred refers to as the shortsightedness of the institutional Church.[12]

> Orribil furon li peccati miei;
> ma la Bontà infinita ha sì gran braccia
> che prende ciò che si rivolge a lei.
> […]
> Per lor maledizion sì non si perde
> che non possa tornar, l'etterno amore,
> mentre che la speranza ha fior del verde. (*Purg*., iii. 121-23, 133-35)

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[12] *Purg*., iii. 126

> [My sins and crimes were horrible to hear.
> God, though, unendingly is good. His arms
> enfold and grasp all those who turn to him.
> […]
> No one, while hope shows any hint of green,
> is lost beyond return to love eternal
> merely because the Church has voiced its curse.]

The journey ahead is still long, however. And what we have here in *Purgatorio* iii is clearly an imperfect and ironic Christ-likeness. Yet the communal and Christological dimension of *Purgatorio* iii sets the stage for a different kind of journey than that of *Inferno*. In Purgatory, to move towards God is to recognize one's limitations as the foundation for interpersonal encounter, and to recognize that one's identity is not self-sufficient but rather the embodied and ever different particularization of a love we all share as the ground of our being.

In this respect, it is important to note that the canto ends with a further broadening out of community: we are told that it is possible for the penitents in Purgatory to make progress not only by their own efforts but also through the prayers of human beings who are still on the other side of death.[13] This exchange of love creates a communal continuum between this world, the other world and God which enriches the double verticality spoken of earlier. Our journey towards God is possible not only on account of its dependence on God but also because of what we can do for each other, on this side of death, on the other side of death and in our relationships between the two.

It is through such a communal perspective that, for Dante, individual human beings can find perfect freedom. Freedom is thus seen not as a neutral capacity for choice possessed by the individual that exists prior to any choice in particular, whether it be the choice of goodness or of evil. Freedom is seen, rather, as the capacity to orient one's being, communally, towards goodness. Such a capacity is not prior to choice but coincides with the choice of goodness. Failure to orient our being towards goodness is thus not a bad exercise of freedom, but a failure to be as free as we could be: a failure to partake in that transcendent reality in which what one wills perfectly coincides with what one can do.

To reflect further on Dante's understanding of such transcendent reality, let us turn now to *Paradiso* iii, in which the kind of communal dynamics which begin to be traced in *Purgatorio* iii are explicitly defined as the essence of Paradise. The canto, once again, begins with a mistake on Dante's part that foregrounds his need to learn anew how to travel in his new surroundings. Dante sees a number of faint human figures and deems them a reflection, so as soon as he recognizes that they are ready to speak to him he turns round, thinking that in this way he will see them face to face. He sees nothing, however, so turns in amazement to Beatrice, who has now replaced Virgil as Dante's guide. Beatrice smiles at what she calls Dante's still unsure footing in truth, benevolently referring to Dante's mistake as childish. She then urges Dante to speak to the blessed and, like Virgil had done to the penitents of *Purgatorio* iii, uses words that equate interpersonal encounter with a profession of faith:[14]

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[13] *Purg.*, iii. 142-45

> 'Non ti meravigliar perch'io sorrida',
> mi disse, 'appresso il tuo pueril coto,
> poi sopra 'l vero ancor lo piè non fida,
> ma te rivolve, come suole, a vòto:
> vere sustanze son ciò che tu vedi,
> qui rilegate per manco di voto.
> Però parla con esse e odi e credi;
> ché la verace luce che lo appaga
> da sé non lascia lor torcer li piedi.' (*Par*., iii.25-33)
>
> ['You baby!' she said, 'Don't worry or wonder,
> to see me smile at all these ponderings.
> Those feet are not yet steady on the ground of truth.
> Your mind, from habit, turns round to a void.
> And yet those beings that you see are true,
> bound here below for vows they disavowed.
> So speak to them. And hear and trust their words.
> The light of truth that feeds them with its peace
> will never let their feet be turned awry.']

What happens next deepens some of the perspectives opened up in *Purgatorio* iii. The rest of *Paradiso* iii is taken up by Dante's conversation with Piccarda, sister of one of Dante's dearest friends, Forese Donati, whom Dante had met in *Purgatorio* xxiii.[15] Piccarda, like all the blessed Dante sees in the Heaven of the Moon, appears to him there, on the lowest rung of Dante's cosmic journey towards the Empyrean, because she failed to be faithful to the vows she had made in life. This prompts Dante's apparently sensible question:

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[14] Compare *Purg*., iii. 97 with *Par*., iii. 25 and iii. 31

[15] In *Purg*., xxiii. 70-75, Forese voices the central character of the penitents' conforming in Purgatory to the will and being of Christ. On the figure of Piccarda and her relationship with Forese, see also my 'In Unknowability as Love: The Theology of Dante's *Commedia*',

> Ma dimmi: voi che siete qui felici,
> disiderate voi più alto loco
> per più vedere e per più farvi amici? (*Par*., iii. 64-66)
>
> [But tell me this: you are so happy here,
> have you no wish to gain some higher grade,
> to see and be as friends to God still more?]

To which Piccarda responds with words which are among the better known and loved of the *Commedia*:

> Frate, la nostra volontà quïeta
> virtù di carità, che fa volerne
> sol quel ch'avemo, e d'altro non ci asseta.
> Se disïassimo esser più superne,
> foran discordi li nostri disiri
> dal voler di colui che qui ne cerne;
> che vedrai non capere in questi giri,
> s'essere in carità è qui necesse,
> e se la sua natura ben rimiri.
> Anzi è formale ad esto beato esse
> tenersi dentro a la divina voglia,
> per ch'una fansi nostre voglie stesse;
> sì che, come noi sem di soglia in soglia
> per questo regno, a tutto il regno piace
> com' a lo re che 'n suo voler ne 'nvoglia.
> E 'n la sua volontade è nostra pace:
> ell' è quel mare al qual tutto si move
> ciò ch'ella crïa o che natura face. (*Par*., iii. 70-87)
>
> [Dear brother, we in will are brought to rest
> by power of caritas that makes us will
> no more than what we have, nor thirst for more.

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in *Dante's 'Commedia': Theology as Poetry*, ed. by Vittorio Montemaggi and Matthew Treherne (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), and '"E 'n la sua volontade è nostra pace": Peace, Justice and the Trinity in Dante's *Commedia*', in *War and Peace in Dante*, ed. by John C. Barnes (Dublin: Four Courts Press, for the UCD Foundation for Italian Studies, 2015).

> Were our desire to be more highly placed,
> all our desires would then be out of tune
> with His, who knows and wills where we should be.
> Yet discord in these spheres cannot occur –
> as you, if you reflect on this, will see –
> since charity is a priori here.
> In formal terms, our being in beatitude
> entails in-holding to the will of God,
> our own wills thus made one with the divine.
> In us, therefore, there is, throughout this realm,
> a placing, rung to rung, delighting all
> – our king as well in-willing us in will.
> In His volition is the peace we have.
> That is the sea to which all being moves,
> be it what that creates or Nature blends.]

The answer Piccarda gives to Dante's question concerning the hierarchical verticality of Heaven is that the blessed are perfectly happy (literally so!) in seeing just as much as is granted them to see by God, and that this is necessarily the case because the essence of heavenly being is charity; 'carità' means the love by which the will of each blessed is perfectly at one with that of God and that of all the other blessed. With great poetic skill and philosophical precision – note, for instance, the rhyme on 'necesse' and 'esse' – Dante thus beautifully articulates the dependence of human being on divine love.

Piccarda explains that to be in perfect peace is not only to see God but also to be at one with the will of God, in whom everything that is has its being. This means that to be in perfect peace is to be in charity, at one in love both with God and with all the other blessed. The hierarchical verticality that baffles the pilgrim is only baffling if due consideration is not given to the fact that to be in Heaven is to be in charity and in conformity to the will of God, one because of the other. This implies – as the pilgrim finds out for himself at the end of his journey – that to see God is to be at one with the love which God is.

In other words, the pilgrim's doubt comes from an error in theological perspective – as a result of which proper attention is not given to the fact that, as the love which is the ground of all existence, God is not simply that to which all that exists moves (ll. 86 and 87). God is also that in which human existence can find its most perfect expression no matter 'where' one abides in relation to God (ll. 79-81 and 85). God is not some-thing there for human beings to see. God is that truth in seeing by which human beings recognize themselves as expressions of the love that grounds their being.

We should also remember that, like the rest of the blessed Dante will meet on his journey across the heavenly spheres towards the Empyrean, Piccarda does not abide in the Heaven in which she appears to Dante but in the Empyrean itself, beyond space and time. She might well be amongst those blessed who are 'furthest' away from God, but she is so in a realm in which distance has no spatial or temporal substance and in which perfection is ubiquitous. This is not specified as such in *Paradiso* iii (it will only be spelled out in *Paradiso* iv),[16] but it is already implied in Piccarda's words and in Dante's response to them:

> Chiaro mi fu allor come ogne dove
> in cielo è paradiso, *etsi* la grazia
> del sommo ben d'un modo non vi piove. (*Par.*, iii. 88-90)
>
> [Now it was clear. I saw that everywhere
> in Paradise there's Heaven, though grace may rain
> in varied measure from the Highest Good.]

The significance of Piccarda's words for our purposes lies in the way in which they allow us to continue reflecting on the question of divine will and of its relationship to the human journeying towards God. What Piccarda is saying is that the essence of Heaven is nothing other than the divine will, or love. There is ultimately no truth or reality outside of this. It is in this truth that human freedom and personhood are situated. The will in which all of the blessed are at one, then, is also the will guiding Dante's journey which Virgil refers to in both *Inferno* iii and *Purgatorio* iii. It is a will in which individual human willing is perfected, not undermined. There is no competition here. God is not another being whose will human beings have to follow at the expense of their own; the divine will is what human beings can recognize themselves to be when they express the love which is (in) them.

Such divine potential can be fulfilled even in the light of severe shortcomings. We have seen that Dante thought this was possible for Manfred, and later on, in the cantos of the Heaven of Venus, we will be told that in Heaven sin is remembered not as sin but as part of the particular trajectory that brought the individual to God.[17] Indeed, before entering Heaven, Dante tells us that human beings are immersed in the two rivers of the Earthly Paradise, one which erases the memory of sin as sin, the other which enhances the memory of goodness as goodness. From this perspective, the stories told in the second half of *Paradiso* iii about the lives of Piccarda and the Empress Constance are meant to be read not simply as records of failure but as examples of the way in which human failure is ultimately not an impediment on the journey towards divinization but an integral part of what makes us the particular human beings that we are and that can, on the basis of our particular identity, be divinized.[18]

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[16] *Par.*, iv. 37-48.

The reference to the story of the Empress Constance, Manfred's grandmother, also serves to enhance the sense of vertical relationship between *Purgatorio* iii and *Paradiso* iii. Through the family tie a sense both of community and of historical particularity is emphasized and contextualized in the deeper picture of the stories of Manfred's and Constance's relationship with God.[19] To phrase all in this in terms of the question of verticality, what we see in Dante's encounter with Piccarda is that notions of verticality as hierarchy ultimately dissolve in our relationship with God: there is only the blissful and harmonious communal interplay of individual particularities.

Which brings us to music. It is with music that Dante's encounter with Piccarda ends. After speaking with Dante, Piccarda starts signing an *Ave Maria*, and in singing she disappears from Dante's sight. It is of course extremely appropriate that it should be with an *Ave Maria* that the episode ends. For it is a prayer celebrating that particular exercise of human freedom – Mary's 'yes' to the Incarnation – on which, according to Dante and as evidenced also in *Purgatorio* iii, the whole of salvation history turns.

> Così parlommi, e poi cominciò '*Ave,*
> *Maria*' cantando, e cantnado vanìo
> come per acqua cupa cosa grave. (*Par.*, iii.121-23)
>
> [Those were her words to me. But then '*Ave*
> *Maria*' began, singing. And, singing,
> she went from sight, as weight sinks deep in water.]

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[17] *Par.*, ix. 103-08.

[18] *Par.*, iii. 97-120.

[19] This, together with the reference to Mary's motherhood in *Purg.*, iii provides a marked contrast to *Inf.*, iii. 103-05.

Departing slightly from Dante's text, we might also say that music – beautifully conveyed in the self-consciously rhythmic enjambment across 121-22 – is appropriate for this reading because it gives us fruitful tools for engaging non-verbally with the question of verticality. Take for instance something as simple as a C major chord. Played sequentially, the three notes might give us a strong sense of vertical directionality, but when the three notes are played together, the sense of vertical directionality dissolves through the harmonious fusion of the particularity of the three individual notes. Perhaps a chord captures something of the essence of Piccarda's speech about the confluence of wills and particularity.

The musical chord could also help us think about the new practice of vertical reading that we are involved in. To what extent can three cantos read vertically across *cantiche* resonate with each other? More broadly, to what extent can the three *cantiche* themselves be seen to resonate with each other? What kind of harmony, if any, ultimately unites *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*?

Leaving these as open questions, I would like to conclude by suggesting that you listen to a piece of music that was constantly on my mind while preparing this essay and the lecture on which it is based. Written at the end of the nineteenth century, it is not a piece, or a kind of music, Dante could have had in mind when writing the *Commedia*. Neither is it a piece directly inspired by it. Its composer did write a choral version of the prayer to the Virgin of *Paradiso* xxxiii, which is often performed together with the piece that I would like us to share, itself an *Ave Maria*, the prayer sung by Piccarda on departing from Dante. But these, to my knowledge, are as direct as the links get between the music and Dante's text.

The piece I would like us to share is the *Ave Maria* by Giuseppe Verdi, collected as one of his *Quattro pezzi sacri* (the others being a *Te Deum*, a *Stabat Mater* and the *Laudi alla Vergine Maria*, based on *Paradiso* xxxiii).[20] It is a striking piece that, in fruitful ways, invites us to think about questions of freedom, particularity, harmony and verticality. Verdi conceived of this *Ave Maria* as an 'enigmatic scale harmonized for unaccompanied mixed choir of four voices'. Composed after the *Requiem*, it is a beautiful example of the composer's mature style, and an expression of his renewed interest in the setting of religious texts. The piece was written in 1889 in response to the publication by music professor Aldo Crescentini in 1888 of an enigmatic scale, composed of unusual and strange intervals, which he challenged composers to harmonize.

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[20] A recording of the piece can be found at the end of the video of the lecture on which the present essay is based. See http://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1368483

Verdi's response to the challenge is a piece divided into four sections, in each of which the enigmatic scale and the words *Ave Maria* are sung (first ascending then descending) by a different voice part – respectively, bass, alto, tenor and soprano. Each section, while contributing to a sophisticated overall unity, has its own distinctive character: four very different miniatures that share a splendid, subtle attention to the intimate interaction between the four voices.

Why might it be relevant to refer to this piece here? First there is the challenge: Verdi did not compose the piece entirely on his own initiative – it is his way of responding to material already in existence. Then there is the double verticality, spontaneously integral in the nature of a musical scale that is played both ascending and descending. Then there is the fact that this natural kind of verticality is made strange by the enigmatic intervals of the scale. To enjoy the piece we need to be ready for our expectation to be undermined as to what a scale is or should be. Then there is the fact that this verticality, at once natural and strange, is taken as the basis for four very different musical moments, each distinctive in its own right yet acquiring its full meaning in interaction with the others; just as throughout the piece each of the four voices finds its meaning in interacting with the other three. Finally, there is the fact that in, through and beyond all of these things, which we might or might not pick up on when listening to the piece, there is the singular beauty of the piece as a whole, our experience of which transcends our appreciation of any individual aspect of it.

I am not suggesting that Verdi's *Ave Maria* provides us with a direct analogue to the reading of Dante's poem I have proposed. I do feel, however, that it can resonate, and help enhance our engagement with, some of the central questions we have explored: questions that deal with difference in identity and identity in difference, with vertical movements and vertical movements made strange, and with the bearing all this might have on our understanding of texts such as the *Ave Maria* and the *Commedia*, which as suggested above invite us to consider love and freedom as the essence of our existence. Moreover, we can see the challenge posed by the enigmatic scale as a parallel to the invitation for us to take this vertical journey through the *Commedia*: a challenge to which each reading will respond differently, in the generation of a harmony we will be discovering, communally, over the next few years – with surprise, excitement and suspense.

# 4. Virtuous Pagans, Hopeless Desire and Unjust Justice[1]

## *John Marenbon*

Canto iv of *Inferno* contains probably the most famous passage in all medieval writing about the virtuous pagans and their fate in the afterlife. Perhaps because of its very celebrity, many readers do not realize just how unusual is Dante's approach – unusual not because of his extreme respect and admiration for these heroes and heroines, poets and philosophers, but because of the severity with which they are treated. In the first part of this chapter, I shall explain and justify this judgement – with which few Dante scholars will agree – by comparing Dante's theological stance on the issue with the positions more common in his time. Outside the context of vertical readings, it is unlikely that anyone would associate either canto iv of *Purgatorio*, concerned principally with the sluggish Belacqua, nor canto iv of *Paradiso*, responding to the questions raised by Piccarda and her speech, with this theme. It turns out, however, that the vertical method yields unexpected results. Both cantos contain passages drawing them into the discourse on hopeless desire and unjust justice, which runs through the *Commedia* in counterpoint to the optimistic theology it offers its Christian readers. The second and third parts of this chapter will concentrate on these points, which link together the three cantos, leaving aside many other important themes and passages in *Purgatorio* iv and *Paradiso* iv.[2]

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[1] The video of this lecture is available at the Cambridge Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy website, https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1459230

[2] More rounded accounts of these cantos are given, for *Purgatorio* iv, by Sergio Romagnoli, 'Il canto IV del Purgatorio', in *Letture dantesche* (Florence: Sansoni, 1964), pp. 749-46; Umberto Bosco, *Dante vicino. Contributi e letture* (Caltanisetta and Rome: Sciascia, 1966),

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## *Inferno* iv

In a passage close to the beginning of *Inferno* iv, Virgil explains about the Limbo of Hell, which he and Dante have now reached, and the souls who are consigned to it:

> Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare,
> non avea pianto mai che di sospiri
> che l'aura etterna facevan tremare;
> ciò avvenia di duol sanza martìri,
> ch'avean le turbe, ch'eran molte e grandi,
> d'infanti e di femmine e di viri.
> Lo buon maestro a me: 'Tu non dimandi
> che spiriti son questi che tu vedi?
> Or vo' che sappi, innanzi che più andi,
> ch'ei non peccaro; e s'elli hanno mercedi,
> non basta, perché non ebber battesmo,
> ch'è porta de la fede che tu credi;
> e s' e' furon dinanzi al cristianesmo,
> non adorâr debitamente a Dio:
> e di questi cotai son io medesmo.
> Per tai difetti, non per altro rio,
> semo perduti, e sol di tanto offesi
> che sanza speme vivemo in disio'. (*Inf.*, iv. 25-42)

> [Here, as I could hear, the only lamentation was of sighs, with which the air forever trembled. It came from the grief without tortures of the large, numerous crowd, of babies, women and men. The good master said to me: 'Do you not ask what spirits are these which you see. I want you to know, before you go further, that they did not sin, and if they did good works,[3] it is not enough, because they did not have baptism, which is

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pp. 122-34; Giorgio Petrocchi, 'Il canto IV del "Purgatorio"', *Nuove letture dantesche* 3 (1969), 291-309; Aldo Vallone, 'Il canto IV del "Purgatorio"' in Casa di Dante in Roma, *Purgatorio. Letture degli anni 1976-'79* (Rome: Bonacci, 1981), pp. 79-99; for *Paradiso* iv by Giuseppe Albini 'Il canto IV del Paradiso', in *Letture dantesche* (Florence: Sansoni, 1964), pp. 1399-1417; Guido di Pino, 'Canto IV' in *Lectura Dantis Scaligera. Paradiso* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1971), pp. 95-120; Sofia Vanni Rovighi, 'Il canto IV del *Paradiso* visto da uno studioso della filosofia medievale', *Studi danteschi* 48 (1971), 67-82; Giorgio Varanini, 'Il canto IV del "Paradiso"', *Nuove letture dantesche* 5 (1972), 317-39. I also discuss Dante's views on the wisdom, virtue and salvation of pagans in *Pagans and Philosophers: The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibniz* (Oxford and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 189-210. There (pp. 194-99) I include a full treatment of the cases, not discussed here, of Trajan, Ripheus, Cato and Statius – exceptional pagans who are not in Hell (or the Limbo of Hell).

[3] 'Mercede' means 'reward', 'payment' (from the Latin *merces*), but is used twice in the *Commedia* (substituting effect for cause) to mean that for which reward is given: here (in the plural) and at *Par.*, xxi. 52 and xxviii. 112. In this sense, the word is usually

> the gate of the faith which you believe. And if they were before the time of Christianity, they did not worship God duly. And of these I am one myself. For such deficiencies and for no other fault we are lost, and we are punished in just this way: that we live in desire without hope'.][4]

Although they are not the only inhabitants of Limbo, Virgil concentrates in this canto on the souls of those who, like himself, had lived as virtuous pagans, such as his fellow great poets of antiquity, Homer, Horace, Ovid and Lucan (ll. 88–90); heroes and heroines from ancient history (ll. 121-28); the ancient philosophers, Aristotle, Plato, Socrates and others (ll. 130-43), and also two philosophers and one military leader from the world of Islam (Avicenna, Averroes and Saladin) (ll. 143-44, 129). In the passage quoted, Virgil explains why these souls are damned and what punishment they receive (ll. 34-38). They have not committed sins ('ei non peccaro' (l. 34); 'per tai difetti, non per altro rio' (l. 40)) – that is to say, mortal sins – and indeed they have done good works (l. 34). But that is not enough to save them, because either they lived after the coming of Christianity and were not baptized (ll. 35-36), or they lived before the coming of Christianity, but they failed to 'adorar debitamente a Dio' (ll. 37-38). The reason given for why the post-Christians, though virtuous, are not saved is straightforward. With the coming of Christianity, baptism was imposed as a universal sacrament necessary to cleanse humans of original sin, and the virtuous pagans who lived in Christian times lack it. But most of the virtuous pagans listed by Dante, including Virgil himself, lived before Christ, when there was no requirement for baptism. The pre-Christians, we are told, failed to worship God duly. What Virgil means becomes clearer from the extra detail he adds in *Purgatorio* vii about why he and those like him were damned. There he explains that he is in Limbo and

> quivi sto io con quei che le tre sante
> virtù non si vestiro, e sanza vizio
> conobber l'altre e seguîr tutte quante. (*Purg.*, vii. 34-36)
>
> [Here I stand with those whom the three holy virtues [faith, hope and charity] did not clothe, and without vice knew the other virtues and followed all of them.]

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translated – following the glosses in the early commentators – as 'merit', and this rendering is good, so long as 'merit' is not taken here in its strictly theological sense, as what makes for salvation, since these virtuous pagans were not on the path to salvation at all. For that reason, I translate as here, following Boccaccio's gloss to the phrase: 'e s'egli hanno mercedi, cioè se essi adoperarono alcun bene il quale meritasse guiderdone'.

[4] All translations are my own.

Not worshipping God duly, it seems, means lacking faith, and so also the other two theological virtues of hope and charity, which require faith. Faith would be understood to be faith in Christ – something which was indeed possible before Christ, since the Old Testament prophets and patriarchs were considered to have had faith in Christ, as expressed in various passages in the Old Testament that were taken as prophecies of the New.[5]

Virgil and his fellows are therefore damned, but Limbo (literally 'the margin') seems not to be like Hell proper. At the beginning of the passage quoted, Virgil makes the point which he will repeat almost word for word in *Purgatorio* vii: he and the others do not suffer quasi-physical punishments (*martìri* (l. 28)); the air is not filled with the groans ('guai' (l. 30)), but merely the sighs of those who must desire without hope (*Inf.*, iv. 42). And the setting in which the great poets, philosophers and heroes themselves are presented – a fresh green meadow modelled on Virgil's Elysian fields – appears anything but infernal.[6]

Most readers today are surprised that Dante has to exclude from Heaven the guide he so reveres and portrays as so virtuous. But they will probably put down his decision, and perhaps the other features of his account, to the demands of medieval Christian doctrine. Yet, from the wider perspective of how other medieval thinkers, theologians especially, deal with virtuous pagans and their fate after death, everything in Dante's description appears very strange. There are three ways, in particular, in which Dante departs from the usual ways of thinking: (1) by placing the virtuous pagans in Limbo; (2) by ignoring a common line of thought which would have allowed him, had he wished, to put Virgil and his fellows into Heaven; (3) by insisting both that Virgil and the other pagans he discusses are *completely* virtuous and yet that they are damned. I shall explain each of these points in turn.

(1) It was an innovation of thirteenth-century theology, generally accepted by Dante's time, to identify a *limbus* or margin of Hell.[7] But its two usual sorts of inhabitants were certainly not virtuous pagans. One of these groups is that alluded to, very briefly, by Virgil where he mentions 'infanti'

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[5] See also *Par.*, xxxii. 24, where those in Heaven 'che credettero in Cristo venturo' [who believed in Christ who was yet to come] are pointed out.

[6] *Inf.*, iv. 111: 'giugnemmo in prato di fresca verdura' [we came to a fresh, green meadow]; see also Virgil, *Aeneid* vi: 'deuenere locos laetos et amoena uirecta' [they came to joyful places, green and pleasant].

[7] On the development of the idea of Limbo, see Attilio Carpin, *Il limbo nella teologia medievale*, Sacra Doctrina 51 (Bologna: edizioni studio domenicano, 2006).

(*Inf.*, iv. 30). It was to the *limbo infantium* that unbaptized babies, who died before they could commit any sins, were usually consigned. Dante comments on them a little more fully in *Purgatorio*, when Virgil says that he is there (in Limbo) 'coi pargoli innocenti / dai denti morsi de la morte avante / che fosser da l'umana colpa essenti' [with the innocent young children bitten by death's teeth before they were absolved from human sin] (*Purg.*, vii. 31-33). Augustine had argued that such children, stained as they are by Original Sin, cannot escape eternal torment, although he conceded that their punishment would be 'very mild' (*Enchiridion* xxiii. 93). From Abelard onwards, theologians abandoned the idea that the infants received any sort of physical punishment: they were merely deprived of the beatific vision.[8] From the time of Alexander of Hales (d. 1245), these souls were usually placed in Limbo. Limbo's other customary set of inhabitants in scholastic theology is mentioned a little later in this canto (*Inf.*, iv. 49-63) when Dante asks Virgil whether anyone has ever left Limbo and gone to blessedness in Heaven. Virgil tells the story of the Harrowing of Hell which, although never completely established as Church doctrine, was accepted by most medieval thinkers. After his crucifixion, when Christ went down to Hell, he freed and raised to Heaven the souls of the Old Testament patriarchs, prophets and those of many of their people, which had been waiting in Limbo without punishment for the salvation they deserved but which could not take place until after Christ's sacrifice.

Dante's decision to add a third class of souls, those of the virtuous pagans, to the inhabitants of Limbo was not just entirely unprecedented but so much against theological orthodoxy that it drew protests, even from some of the early commentators on the *Commedia*, such as Guido da Pisa (1327-28) and Francesco da Buti (1385-95).[9] Indeed, no less an authority than Augustine had explicitly ruled out the idea of 'some place between damnation and the Kingdom of Heaven' for 'the Reguluses and Fabiuses, the Scipios and Camilluses and their like' – the (supposedly) most virtuous of Romans.[10] Moreover – perhaps not surprisingly – Dante's position seems to have had no independent followers, although in his commentary Boccaccio did try to defend it (not without modifications).[11] And, while Dante certainly took the idea of damnation without tortures from the accepted doctrine about the state of the souls of the unbaptized babies in Limbo, he added an extra element, the idea of desire without hope. Exactly what this involves will be discussed below, but it certainly differentiates the state of Virgil and the others from that traditionally accorded to souls in Limbo.

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[8] See also below, p. XX, on punishment (or its lack) in Limbo.

[9] Da Buti, in *Commento*, ed. by Crescentino Giannini (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858), I, p. 120, writes that 'the author is in disagreement with the Holy Church, which places no one in this place save the infants. The author can be excused because he is speaking poetically'; see also Giorgio Padoan, 'Il Limbo dantesco', in his *Il pio Enea, l'empia Ulisse. Tradizione classica e intendimento medievale in Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 1977), pp. 103-24 (pp. 105-15).

[10] *Contra Iulianum* IV.3.26. This passage has been cited by Padoan, *Il pio Enea*, pp. 106-07 and George Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus: A Dualistic Vision of Secular and Spiritual Fulfilment* (Oxford: Legenda, 2013), p. 124.

(2) It would be easy to understand why, against all authority, Dante invented a place in Hell where his admired ancient poets, philosophers and heroes could live in dignity without pain, with, as described later in the canto, their slow, serious mien, full of authority and their sweet voices (*Inf.*, iv. 112-14), if the theology of his time had given him no alternative otherwise but to put them into Hell proper. But there were three strategies, followed by theologians in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which Dante could have used, any of which would have allowed him to put at least the pre-Christian virtuous pagans – most of those he mentions, including Virgil himself – into Heaven.[12]

The doctrinal barrier to the salvation of just pagans was that they lacked faith: as St Paul says (Hebrews xi, 6), 'Without faith it is impossible to please God'. Faith was taken to be faith in Christ. But how could those before the coming of Christ have had such faith? Each of the three strategies answered this question in a different way.

The first available strategy was provided by the idea of implicit faith. It was Hugh of St Victor in the mid-twelfth century who first formulated clearly the idea of implicit faith (though he did not use the term). Hugh was thinking especially about the ordinary Jewish people in Old Testament times. It was widely accepted that their prophets and some of their leaders had prophetic knowledge of the coming of Christ. It was enough, Hugh argued, for the ordinary people to accept the beliefs of their leaders, without knowing about them, for them too to count as having the faith needed for salvation.[13] In his *Sentences* (c. 1155), which became the standard theology textbook in the medieval universities, Peter the Lombard adopted Hugh's idea (*Sentences*, III, d. 25) and its broad lines were followed by most of the later theologians in their *Sentence* commentaries. In itself, this theory did not offer a way of saving the virtuous pagans of the Greco-Roman world, such as the philosophers, since they could not be said to have followed or believed in the Old Testament prophets, and indeed some of those who followed the theory of implicit faith – Bonaventure (Commentary on *Sentences* III, d. 25, a. 1, q. 2), for instance, and Matthew of Aquasparta (*Quaestiones disputatae* 3, 14 and ad 14) – made a point of saying that the ancient philosophers had been damned.

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[11] In the sixteenth century, a few theologians, such as Baptistus of Mantua and Trithemius, would suggest some intermediate state between heavenly bliss and punishment in Hell for the invincibly ignorant pagans recently discovered in America and other remote places. Claude Seyssel (in his *De divina providentia*, 1543, Treatise 2, art. 3) advocated this solution to the post-mortem fate of virtuous pagans more generally and explicitly linked it to the state of unbaptized babies: cf. Louis Capéran, *Le problème du salut des infidèles. Essai historique*, revised edn (Toulouse: Grand séminaire, 1934), pp. 220-25 and Marenbon, *Pagans*, pp. 286-87. But none of them actually placed the virtuous pagans in Limbo, nor did they refer to Dante.

[12] Padoan (*Il pio Enea*, pp. 106-11) is aware of the ways in which thirteenth and fourteenth-century theologians could spare virtuous pagans from Hell, but he places (to my mind undue) emphasis on the Augustinian heritage.

Aquinas, however, extended the doctrine of implicit faith so as to provide a way of showing that Gentiles wise in worldly wisdom – that is to say, the philosophers – might have been saved:

> The Gentiles were not placed as instructors of the divine faith, and so, however wise they may have been in worldly wisdom, they should be counted among the *minores*, and so it was enough for them to have faith about the Redeemer implicitly, either in the faith of the prophets, or in divine providence itself. (*De veritate*, q. 14, a. 11, ad 5).

Although the first of these suggestions, that the philosophers might have accepted on trust the faith of the (Jewish) prophets sounds fantastical, Aquinas's longer explanation in his commentary on the *Sentences* (III, d. 25, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 2, 3 and ad 3) makes his meaning clear: the philosophers simply put their faith in whoever knows the ways of God better than they, and these people were in fact the Jewish prophets. In the fourteenth century, implicit faith tended to be regarded less as faith in another and more as simply indistinct faith – a change which would make it easier to think of the ancient philosophers and poets, who were often considered to have been monotheists, as having implicit faith.[14]

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[13] *On the Sacraments* 2. 6–7; *Patrologia Latina* 176, 335A–41A. For a full discussion of the origins and development of the doctrine of implicit faith, see Marenbon, *Pagans*, pp. 168-72.

[14] The change is especially evident in the popular mid-fourteenth-century Biblical commentator, Nicholas of Lyra: see glosses to Hebrews xi, 6 and Acts x, 35 in *Bibliorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria … cum postilla Nicolai Lyrani …* (Venice: Junta, 1603), cols 922, 1105.

Aquinas continues the quotation above by adding that 'it is however probable that the mystery of our redemption was revealed many generations before the coming of Christ to the Gentiles, as the Sibylline prophecies show'. The idea, popular in the sixteenth century (when it was called the 'Ancient Theology'), that before the Incarnation Christian prophecies were well known to peoples other than the Jews, has patristic roots and was taken up particularly by Abelard, Roger Bacon, and, in the generation after Dante, Robert Holcot and Thomas Bradwardine. The Ancient Theology provided a second possible strategy, because it could be used as a way of arguing that some of the virtuous pagans might not have been pagans at all, but really had faith.[15]

The third possible strategy was the notion of special inspiration, which provided a way for even pagans who lived after Christ to be saved. The idea, which goes back to Abelard and appears in Aquinas and most of the major thirteenth-century theologians, is that if a pagan were to follow natural law as well as possible, God would not let him or her die without the faith needed for salvation, which would be provided either by a special messenger (the case of Paul sent to Cornelius was often cited) or by internal inspiration.[16] No one thought that special inspiration was widespread, but the authors of the *Summa Fratris Alexandri* in the mid-thirteenth century did indeed use this strategy (III, inq. 3, q. 2, tit. 3, pars 2) to explain how the good pagan philosophers were saved: 'a revelation was made to them, either through Scripture, which the Jews had, or through prophecy or through internal inspiration, as was the case for Job and his friends'.

(3) Dante follows none of these strategies, and his third main departure from usual ways of thinking involves the rejection of the very principle which underlies salvation through special inspiration. Theologians resorted to this rather unlikely idea because they were convinced that, were it ever the case that someone invincibly ignorant of Christianity had acted entirely well in terms of natural law, God would not let him be damned. Dante picks exactly the sort of example his contemporaries used to argue this point when, in *Paradiso* xix, he talks of a man 'on the banks of the Indus, and there

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[15] See D. P., Walker, *The Ancient Theology* (London: Duckworth, 1972) for a presentation mainly of the theory in the sixteenth century, and Marenbon, *Pagans*, pp. 76, 130-31, 157, for its medieval versions and pp. 241-43 for its early modern versions.

[16] For a more detailed account of the special inspiration theory, see Marenbon, *Pagans*, pp. 172-76.

is nobody there who speaks or teaches or writes about Christ; and all his volitions and acts are good, so far as human reason sees – he is without sin in his life or speech' (ll. 70-75). Dante-character puts the question usually asked by the theologians: 'He dies unbaptized and without faith: where is this justice that condemns him? Where is his guilt if he does not believe?' (ll. 76-78). But, instead of the expected explanation of how God will save the faultless Indian, the authoritative reply is a rebuke against presumption in attempting to judge such things. Dante willingly embraces, in the figure of Virgil himself, the contradiction which the theologians of his time sought to resolve: that a person can be entirely good (in natural terms) and yet be damned.

The strangeness of Dante's position is not that he consigns the great pagan poets and philosophers to damnation. In the two centuries before him, opinion seems to have been evenly divided about whether these figures were in Heaven or not. But those who held that they were in Hell took their inspiration from Augustine, who consigned most ancient pagans to eternal damnation, arguing that although they might appear virtuous, they were not really virtuous at all. Augustine did not merely say that they lacked the infused theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. He contended that the moral virtues – wisdom, justice, temperance and courage – require charity. Without charity, which presupposes faith, these qualities will not be directed to the right end and so will be *false* virtues, not true ones. Dante, however, insists that pagans like Virgil, who are damned, are none the less truly virtuous. The only virtues they lack are the theological ones, which they could not acquire from their own efforts, since they are infused directly by God.[17] Whereas Augustine's position may seem harsh, extreme and even inhuman, it is consistent; Dante's seems, by contrast, senseless.

These puzzles about the virtuous but damned pagans in the *Commedia* can, however, be explained, on the hypothesis, borne out by many other passages in the *Commedia*, that Dante was very strongly influenced by that group of medieval thinkers, usually arts masters, who drew very tight boundaries round the sphere of reason, on the hand, and the sphere of faith on the other. The position is sometimes known as '(Latin) Averroism' and I shall use this term here for convenience (noting that the views it labels stand in a very indirect and oblique relationship to those of Averroes himself).[18] The Averroists believe, as Dante sets out so starkly at the end of the *Monarchia* (III. xvi. 7-9), that humans have two different ends, earthly happiness and heavenly happiness, and that we

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[17] Many interpreters of Dante have, however, insisted – although the text denies it – that Virgil is guilty of some fault, at least of omission. See e.g. Kenelm Foster, *The Two Dantes* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 249-52 and C. O'Connell Baur, *Dante's Hermeneutics of Salvation* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 172-244, where there is also a very full survey of the different approaches which have been taken to Virgil and his damnation.

> must reach these two kinds of happiness through different means, just as different conclusions must be reached through different middle terms. For we come to the first through the teachings of philosophy, so long as we follow them acting in accord with the moral and intellectual virtues; whereas we attain the second through spiritual teachings which transcend human reason, so long as we follow them acting in accord with the theological virtues, i.e. faith, hope and charity. These ends and the means to attain them have been shown to us on the one hand by human reason, which has been entirely made known to us by the philosophers, and on the other hand by the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets and sacred writers, through Jesus Christ the son of God, coeternal with him, and through his disciples, has revealed to us the supernatural truth which is necessary for us …

Many Dante scholars will allow that Dante followed this Averroist line of thought to some extent, but not in the *Commedia*. They have noticed something important, but misunderstood it. Averroism separates the spheres of reason and faith, of – in practice – the arts masters in the universities with their Aristotelian curriculum and the university theologians. As arts masters, the concern of the Averroists was with safeguarding the independence of that sphere. Dante, though, neither a master of Arts nor of theology, moved between both spheres. In the *Commedia*, he is very much an Averroist, but one working within the sphere of theology. From this point of view, it is only to be expected that, within the sphere guided by human reason towards natural happiness, some pagan philosophers should have been entirely virtuous and wise, and yet that they certainly should not have been saved, since they do not have the supernatural end in their sights at all. The two ends, though complementary, are – as Dante affirms so explicitly – distinct.

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[18] In 'Latin Averroism', in *Islamic Crosspollinations. Interactions in the Medieval Middle East*, ed. by Anna Akasoy, James E. Montgomery and Peter E. Porman (Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007), pp. 135-47, I suggest why the label, although rejected by most specialists today, can be useful. In *Paganism*, however, I prefer to identify a broader group of thinkers who distinguished sharply between the spheres of faith and reason, to which the Averroists themselves belong.

## *Purgatorio* iv

*Purgatorio* iv seems, at first sight, to have nothing to do with the problems raised in *Inferno* iv. It is set around Dante's encounter with Belacqua, a Florentine lute-maker who, according to an early commentary (Anonimo Fiorentino, c. 1400), 'was the laziest man there ever was – it was said that he came into his workshop in the morning and sat himself there and never got up except to eat and sleep'.[19] Belacqua's laziness extended to his spiritual life too: only at the last moment of his life did he repent for his sins. As a result, he must wait a lifetime even before he can enter Purgatory (ll. 130-32). None the less, Belacqua is on the path to salvation. Although much of Christian moral thinking concerns the development of virtuous habits of action through a lifetime, Church doctrine now and in the Middle Ages insists that what determines whether someone is damned or saved is his or her state at the moment of death. A person who dies in a state of charity will be saved, however badly he or she has lived. Dante remarkably combines the outward figure of physical laziness with what it inwardly represents, the spiritual laziness of late repentance, in the life-story of a single character, Belacqua, whose hyper-sedentary life ends with late repentance. The previous canto also deals with late repentance, through the very different example of Manfred, a more admirable figure than Belacqua, but stained by 'horrible sins' and excommunicated by the Church, who at the moment of death turned 'lamenting, to him who willingly gives pardon' (*Purg*., iii. 120). These two examples emphasize the sheer undeservedness of salvation: a moment of repentance cancels a lifetime of inaction or rebelliousness. In this way, Belacqua's fate does link with that of Virgil and his fellows, who will never reach Heaven despite their lives of virtue. And Dante strengthens the link through a verbal echo between these two Fours. Belacqua explains his late repentance by saying that he 'delayed good sighs until the end' [io indugiai al fine i buon sospiri] (l. 132). These 'buon sospiri', the sighs of regret for sins committed, recall and contrast ironically with the 'sospiri' which make the air of Limbo tremble, the sighs of despair from those who are for ever excluded from the beatific vision. The question of salvation and desert will be taken up again in *Paradiso* iv.

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[19] Anonimo Fiorentino, gloss to *Purg*., iv. 123-26. The gloss continues with an anecdote in which Belacqua deliberately misuses Aristotle's comment that 'the soul becomes wise by sitting and through being quiet' to justify his laziness – presenting himself self-consciously, and wittily, as the antitype to a philosopher. I am grateful to George Corbett for alerting me to this point, and cf. his *Dante and Epicurus*, p. 165.

The closest link between *Purgatorio* iv and the virtuous pagans is to be found, however, outside the main subject of the canto, in an incidental passage near the beginning, which, as will become clear, acts as a sort of hook, catching various other lines. Dante and Virgil have to squeeze through a tiny opening and then ascend by an impossibly steep path:

> Vassi in Sanleo e discendesi in Noli,
> montasi sù in Bismantova e 'n Cacume
> con esso i pie'; ma qui convien ch'om voli;
> dico con l'ale snelle e con le piume
> del gran disio, di retro a quel condotto
> che speranza mi dava e facea lume. (*Purg.*, iv. 25-30)

> [One can go up to San Leo or down to Noli, climb up to Bismantova and Cacume with feet alone, but here a person needs to fly – I mean with the speedy wings and feathers of great desire, behind and led on by he who gave me hope and gave me light.]

The collocation of 'disio' and 'speranza' echoes the phrase used to describe the punishment for those in Limbo. The souls are free from torture, but they must live 'sanza speme in disio', in desire but with no hope of fulfilling it. The reference back to *Inferno* iv is therefore an ironic one. Virgil is condemned to live in desire without hope, yet it is he who gives hope to Dante, whose 'gran disio' will be satisfied. The irony is underlined by the following lines, where Virgil is at his most fatherly and tender, and is further strengthened by the description of Virgil as a giver of light, leading someone who, unlike him, can hope and will find fulfilment, since that description looks forward to the image which Statius will use in *Purgatorio* xxii to describe Virgil and the way in which, through reading his fourth *Eclogue*, he was brought towards Christendom:

> Facesti come quei che va di notte,
> che porta il lume dietro e sé non giova,
> ma dopo sé fa le persone dotte. (*Purg.*, xxii. 67-68)

> [You did as one who goes by night and carries the light behind him and does not benefit from it himself, but shows the way to those who come after him.]

The hook passage is itself the continuation of a passage from the previous canto, which is interrupted by the encounter with Manfred. There Virgil is searching for a place 'where someone can climb who has no wings' (possa salir chi va sanz'ala) (*Purg*., iii. 54), whilst in the hook passage, not finding any such ascent, he and Dante go up a path so steep that it requires wings, albeit metaphorical ones. The preceding lines, spoken by Virgil to him, are Dante's fullest explanation of what he means by desire without hope and why it is the virtuous pagans' condition.

> 'Matto è chi spera che nostra ragione
> possa trascorrer la infinita via
> che tiene una sostanza in tre persone.
> State contenti, umana gente, al *quia* ;
> ché, se potuto aveste veder tutto,
> mestier non era parturir Maria ;
> e disïar vedeste sanza frutto
> tai che sarebbe lor disio quetato,
> ch'etternalmente è dato lor per lutto:
> io dico d'Aristotile e di Plato
> e di molt' altri'; e qui chinò la fronte,
> e più non disse, e rimase turbato. (*Purg*., iii. 34-45)
>
> ['Anyone is a fool who hopes that our reason can traverse the infinite path taken by one substance in three persons. Remain content, human race, with the fact that it is so [as opposed to why it is], for, had you been able to see everything, there would have been no need for Mary to have given birth; and you have seen those desire fruitlessly who would [had it been possible] have fulfilled their desire, which is given to them eternally as a punishment: I mean Aristotle and Plato and many others', and here he bowed his head, and said no more, and remained disturbed.]

As explained above, Dante took the idea of the punishment given to the virtuous pagans from the condition which theologians usually attributed to the souls of the unbaptized infants with whom, in the *Commedia*, they share Limbo. But there is an important difference. Most theologians agreed that the infants' souls are aware of their loss of the beatific vision, but stressed that they do not suffer as a result.[20] To the objection that the infants will necessarily be sad, because their natural desire for paradise will be frustrated, Bonaventure replied in his *Sentences* commentary (III, d. 33, a. 3, q. 2, ad 2) that sadness does not follow unfulfilled desires except for those who consider they have been inadequately repaid. For the infants, 'their state is sufficient for them, and they do not raise their eyes to the riches that they cannot have'. Aquinas (*De malo*, q. 5, a. 3) suggests rather that the infants know naturally they are made for happiness, but they do not know what could be known only supernaturally, that this happiness is the beatific vision, and so they do not feel sadness at being deprived of it.[21]

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[20] See Carpin, *Limbo*, pp. 75-157 for a careful presentation and summary of the views of the followers of Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, Bonaventure and Aquinas. Mazzoni ('Saggio' di un nuovo comment alla "Commedia", Il Canto IV del "Inferno"', *Studi danteschi* 42 (1965), 29-206 [pp. 92-93]) tries to link Dante's presentation of the punishments of Limbo closely to Bonaventure's, ignoring the very striking difference from his and other theologians' accounts; see the justified criticisms in Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus*, p. 143, n. 16.

Dante, by contrast, insists through the very formulation 'sanza speme … in disio' that the virtuous pagans, though free from 'tortures' (quasi-physical punishment) are made to suffer mentally through despair. In the passage just quoted, he brings out more clearly than earlier that this hope without desire is a *contrapasso*. The very desire for knowledge which motivated Plato and Aristotle is turned into a punishment. To the reader today, there may seem to be a big jump between desire for knowledge and desire for heavenly bliss, but not for the medieval Christian theologians. For them, beatitude in Heaven was not some sort of great, but unspecified state of bliss: it consisted in the perfection of the intellect through seeing God and knowing all things in him. Plato, Aristotle and the others are doomed to spend eternity spurred on by the very desire for the truth which dominated their mortal lives. Since Dante took the unusual view that the desires of humans on earth are proportioned to what they can achieve naturally, he would have thought that during their lives on earth they could have fulfilled those desires through their success in discovering natural knowledge.[22] God punishes them in Limbo by giving them, supernaturally, a desire for what goes beyond their natural powers, the total knowledge provided by the beatific vision which they know they will never be granted. That is the reason for their state of despair, so deep, according to Boccaccio that, if the spirits were mortal, they would kill themselves rather than endure it.[23]

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[21] Earlier, Aquinas found a different way of explaining why the infants did not suffer because of the loss: see Commentary on *Sentences*, III, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2.

[22] *Conv.*, III. xv. 8-10. See also Marenbon, *Pagans*, p. 202.

[23] See *Espozioni* (*Inferno* IV) II. 13-14 in Boccaccio, *Tutte le opera VI: Esposizioni sopra la comedia di Dante*, ed. by Giorgio Padoan (Verona: Mondadori, 1965), pp. 266-67.

## *Paradiso* iv

*Paradiso* iv begins with a philosophical digression which helps to confirm the very intellectual affinities which, I have argued, offer an explanation for the paradox enunciated in wholly virtuous pagans punished eternally:

> Intra due cibi, distanti e moventi
> d'un modo, prima si morria di fame,
> che liber'omo l'un recasse ai denti ... (*Par.*, iv. 1-3)
>
> [A free man will die of hunger before he sinks his teeth into one of two foods, which are equally distant from him and equally attractive to him ...]

Dante's tone here is, admittedly, light and self-mocking. He is depicting his own irresolution, in not knowing which of two questions to put first, and he goes on to compare himself to a lamb, caught between two wolves about to devour it, and a hound unable to decide which of two deer to chase. None the less, as Bruno Nardi pointed out over seventy years ago, Dante is putting forward here a view about free will, found elsewhere in the *Commedia* and also in the *Monarchia*, of a highly distinctive, intellectualist kind.[24] For Dante, humans will freely when they will in accord with reason and are not influenced by the passions. That is the point of the reference in this passage to 'a free man' [*liber'omo*]. Someone ruled by his passions would not starve in the situation Dante describes, since on some whim he could choose one of the foods. But suppose the unfortunate man is willing freely – that is to say, reasonably: then, indeed, he cannot act, because the will, acting freely, chooses what to do according to what seems to it best, and in this example there is no reason for preferring to eat the one than the other, and so the will cannot choose either this one, or that.

This intellectualist understanding of the will was popular among the Averroists, including Siger of Brabant in the 1260s-70s and John of Jandun, a contemporary of Dante's. By contrast, many theologians, especially the Franciscans, had a very different, voluntarist view, according to which the freedom of the will lies in its power to make whatever choice it pleases.

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[24] Bruno Nardi, 'Il libero arbitrio e l'asino di Buridano', in *Nel mondo di Dante* (Rome: edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1944), pp. 287-303 (see pp. 301-02 for the passage from *Par.*, iv); cf. *Mon.*, I. xii. 1-5.

On their view, in exact opposition to Dante's example, the man's freedom of will would mean that he could immediately choose either of the foods (and were one of them preferable and in easier reach, he would still be free to choose the other). Nardi argues that Aquinas should be grouped with the voluntarists – a view which fits nicely with his wider scepticism about Dante's Thomism. When Aquinas considers exactly the same problem case as Dante (*Summa Theologiae* IaIIe, q, 13, a.6, 3 and ad 3), he argues that there is nothing to stop the man from considering some feature other than the ones through which they are equally attractive and so finding a way in which one of the foods is preferable, so that he chooses to eat it. For Nardi, this response shows Aquinas's voluntarism, since the will, he claims, is moving the reason to find another consideration.[25] Yet the same passage has been used to illustrate Aquinas's intellectualism, since it follows the central intellectualist principle that the will can only choose what the reason finds most choice-worthy.[26] Aquinas's position on this question resists a neat categorization, and the doctrinal affiliations of the period are more complex than Nardi allowed.[27] Still, the point remains that Dante, unlike Aquinas, is so sternly intellectualist that there is no way of saving the man in his example from starvation.

The two equally pressing questions which keep Dante tongue-tied have both been raised by Piccarda in her speech in the previous canto. Piccarda had been a nun who, against her will, was seized from the 'sweet cloister' by 'men more used to evil than good' (*Purg.*, iii. 106-07) and has been placed among the lowest in Heaven because her vows were neglected (*Purg.*, iii. 55-57). One of her companions is Constance, heiress to the Norman Kingdom of Sicily, who had also, according to legend, been forcibly taken away from her convent. Seeing Piccarda's soul where he is, in the lowest sphere of Heaven, Dante imagines (ll. 22-24) that saved souls must be allotted to different spheres, which would bear out the view put forward by Plato in the *Timaeus*, but rejected by all as contrary to Christian doctrine, that souls return to their own stars. Beatrice explains (ll. 28-63) that, in reality, Piccarda's soul is in the same circle of Heaven as all the souls of the blessed. It was manifested in a lower sphere as a way of showing that it is less exalted, because Dante-character, as a human, needs to grasp intellectual things through his senses. Beatrice compares the way in which Scripture uses corporeal images to make spiritual things more intelligible to its readers. She also allows the possibility that Plato too, in the *Timaeus*, might not intend his writing to be taken literally, and that he is, rather, making a point about the influence of the stars on people. This idea raises an important aspect of Christian attitudes to pagan philosophers, not otherwise considered in the three Fours. How are their texts to be understood? *Purgatorio* xxii, which I discussed earlier, brought up the idea that a text written by a pagan, Virgil's fourth eclogue, could have a Christian meaning which the author himself did not understand. Here, rather, the idea is that a pagan text which, read literally, would have to be rejected, may have been intended to convey a non-literal scientific meaning which is acceptable to Christians – exactly the attitude to problematic passages in Plato found in William of Conches's commentary to the *Timaeus*, written in the twelfth century, but copied throughout the Middle Ages.[28]

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[25] 'Il libero arbitrio', pp. 300-01.

[26] See Jeffrey Hause, 'Aquinas and the Voluntarists', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 6 (1997), pp. 167-82, at p. 180.

[27] There is an excellent, balanced survey in Tobias Hoffmann, 'Intellectualism and Voluntarism', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. by Robert Pasnau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014 revised edn), pp. 414-27; Vanni Rovighi ('Il canto IV', pp. 69-71) also considers that Nardi may be exaggerating Dante's differences from Aquinas here. For an attack on Nardi's interpretation of Dante on the will, see Christopher Ryan's unpublished Cambridge PhD dissertation, *The Theme of Free Will in Dante's Minor Works, with Particular Reference to Aspects of the Cultural Background*. I am grateful to Open Book Publishers' anonymous reviewer for this reference.

The other problem which was puzzling Dante leads back to the question of the will raised in the initial digressions:

> … 'Se'l buon voler dura
> la vïolenza altrui per qual ragione
> di meritar mi sceme la misura?' (*Par.*, iv. 19-21)
>
> ['If good will lasts, how does someone else's violence diminish the quantity of my merit?']

Piccarda would, had she not been seized from it, very willingly have spent her life in the convent, and so earned greater merit and a higher place in Heaven: her downgrading because of a turn of events she did nothing to cause or welcome seems unjust. Beatrice comments:

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[28] See Marenbon, *Pagans*, pp. 95-97, for William's approach to exegesis. It is very possible that Dante knew William of Conches's commentary to Boethius: see Luca Lombardo, *Boezio in Dante. La Consolatio philosophiae nello scrittoio del poeta* (Venice: Ca'Foscari, 2013) (Filologie medievali e moderne 4 ; Serie occidentale 3), p. 148. (I owe this reference to my anonymous reviewer.)

> Parere ingiusta la nostra giustizia
> ne li occhi d'i mortali, è argomento
> di fede e non d'eretica nequizia. (*Par.*, iv. 67-69)
>
> [see below for translation]

From the earliest commentators onwards there has been disagreement about the sense of the second half of this *terzina*, and especially about the meaning of 'argomento'.[29] The most persuasive interpretation takes 'argomento' to mean the outward sign for a truth, and the passage to mean: 'That our justice (divine justice) appears unjust in the eyes of mortals is a sign which leads people to the faith, not to heretical wickedness'. Beatrice continues immediately, however, by saying that the case in question is not one of these. Here God's justice can be explained to a mortal like Dante. Beatrice tells Dante (ll. 73-90) that women such as Piccarda and Constanza could have gone back to their convents. It would, of course, have been immensely difficult and dangerous, but this is what they would have done had their will remained 'entire'. Beatrice goes on (ll. 91-114) to explain how it can be true in such a case that, as Piccarda says, Constanza 'kept her love for the veil' (l'affezion del vel Costanza tenne) (l. 98). Constance did, indeed, in one sense will to remain a nun: this is the good which, all things being equal, she willed. But all things were not equal. Fear of a harm greater than the good she desired – perhaps death if she defied her family – made her will choose not to flee back to the nunnery. Completely in line with Dante's intellectualistic understanding of volition, Beatrice (l. 109-11) sees Costanza reasoning that, although staying in the convent is a choice-worthy good absolutely, under the circumstances returning there would bring more harm than remaining out of it. Of course, her reasoning is mistaken: she should have realized that her greatest good was to try to go back to the convent, whatever she suffered as a result, in which case this is what she would actually have chosen to do.

Except for the Averroist affiliations of this intellectualism, there might seem to be little in this canto to link with the virtuous pagans of *Inferno* iv. But, in fact, the theme is here. When Beatrice gives two examples (ll. 83-84) of people who kept their wills 'entire' under the most difficult circumstances, to contrast with Piccarda and Costanza, she chooses the Christian saint, Lawrence, martyred on a griddle, and carefully pairs him with a pagan Roman, Mucius Scaevola, who thrust his own right hand into the flames when he failed to kill the enemy king, Porsenna. Pagans, Dante believed, were capable not just of genuine and complete virtue, as in the case of Virgil, but of heroic feats of virtue, such as this. Yet, for all that, they are damned. Whereas the justice of God's judgement in the cases of Piccarda and Costanza is apparent after a little careful thought, Beatrice's striking oxymoron of God's unjust justice wraps up the threads of argument about virtuous pagans and their fate stretching out from the description of Limbo two *cantiche* previously. God's justice to a Virgil or a Scaevola will indeed seem unjust. The apparent injustice, however, is a sign which leads to faith, since it shows how there are two separate spheres, of earthly and heavenly values, and that the heavenly ones are not comprehensible from within the other, earthly sphere. Only by faith are they accessible; and as Dante says explicitly in the *Monarchia* (II.7.5), unless it is aided by faith, the damnation of virtuous and invincibly ignorant pagans is something which 'human reason through itself cannot see'.

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[29] I have followed the solution proposed in the comment on *Par.*, iv. 67 in G. A. Scartazzini, *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri riveduta nel testo e commentata da G. A. Scartazzini* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 2nd revised edn 1900). Scartazzini also gives a thorough account of the various other interpretations which have been advanced.

# 5. Massacre, *Miserere* and Martyrdom[1]

## *Robin Kirkpatrick*

My rather lurid title may already have been an occasion for some arching of the brow. If you were to consult Google rankings you would quickly find that the second most frequently cited verse in the *Commedia* is this line from the first of this trio of Fives, *Inferno* v: 'Amor che a nullo amato amar perdona' [Love, who no loved one pardons love's requite],[2] prized, at least out of context, for its apparently romantic charm. Yet, responding to the demands of vertical reading, one quickly encounters a set of far from romantic considerations. *Purgatorio* v is a canto which, having depicted scenes of death in battle and a mafioso assassination, concludes with the elegiac words of a wife murdered by her husband. Worse still, if we ascend from *Inferno* v – which beyond question has always been the most popular canto in the whole *Commedia* – we arrive at *Paradiso* v, which may well qualify as the canto best avoided, depicting as it does a Beatrice who insists on arguing about the fine-print details of contract law. But, worst of all, I intend to concentrate precisely on *Paradiso* v.

Indeed, I want to raise the stakes still higher. So I shall be sorry if in the end I have not convinced you that *Paradiso* v is one of the most thoroughly humane cantos that Dante ever wrote. I might add, as a practical recommendation, that a student with whom I discussed this canto at great length a couple of years ago has now gone to Harvard Law School and persuaded the hard-headed Dean to supervise her dissertation on Dante's conception of justice and mercy. Also, with no apology, I want to pay a

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[1] The video of this lecture is available at the Cambridge Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy website, https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1459503

[2] The translations in this essay are my own.

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http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0066.06

good deal of attention to *Purgatorio* v. This is a canto that T. S. Eliot cites in *The Waste Land*. Likewise, the poet Robert Lowell wrote two versions of its central episode. So there is surely some living poetry here as well.

But all of this is to imply, conversely, that *Inferno* v – so often applauded for its delicacy of dramatic voice and subtlety of psychology – might itself be seen, in the vertical perspective, as a manifestation of dead poetry – of cliché and preconception. Is this canto Dante's version of *Strictly Come Dancing*, with the lovers Paolo and Francesca tangoing on the wuthering heights of adulterous passion? Well, no. I do not mean precisely that. But I do mean that the over-popularity of this canto – and indeed of *Inferno* at large – is something of a cultural disaster and certainly a profound distortion of the best that Dante has to offer. From Boccaccio's first reading of the canto in 1373, Paolo and Francesca – she being the sole speaker from line 88 onward – have been seen as heroic exemplars of a doomed and illicit love that persisted, even in the face of murder and of Hell itself. Tchaikovsky wrote a swooningly violent fantasia on this liebestod. Rodin did several sculptures of the episode – most famously 'The Kiss'.

Yet to see what is going wrong here, one has only to stop murmuring for a moment 'Amor che a nullo amato amar perdona' and ask what the words here really mean. For the shocking truth is that these lines, read closely, amount to a stalker's charter: Love dictates that no one who is the object of another person's love (or obsession) can ever be allowed to resist the claims that love projects upon her, him or it. So, abandoning our lyrical absorption in favour of the fine-print – the nuance of the words – we see that Francesca here does not say she loves Paolo but rather that some supra-personal force of love, 'Amor', possesses her. The loved object – Francesca – willingly represents herself as an object; an unnamed past participle (amato) to be read in a passive application; the verb 'pardon' is torn from any context that might invoke the mercy of God (*Miserere*!) to be spoken here with a sentimental simper. And in the alliterative pattern amato/amar, the infinitive amare jags ambiguously close to the word amaro: 'bitter'.

The depth, then, of Dante's meaning lies as much in the syntax of these lines as in its dulcet alliterations. And syntax – which Chomskyans might say is as natural a part of our human apparatus as instinct is – emerges as the enemy of unthinking cliché. So, alliterative as my own title is, it is really meant as some sort of organizational guide to patterns of thought, theology and truly human interest that emerge in all three of Dante's canto fives. Violence is an issue in all three, and so is a consideration of how we can free ourselves from violence. The action of the human will is brought into consideration and viewed in relation to the mayhem we can precipitate by violent action and equally by passive self-abandonment. Please remember here that the will in Dante's understanding is an intellectual agent: it is not merely an obscure urge but (as Aquinas would also insist) an intellectual appetite, involving our discernment of those goals, patterns and purposes which will allow us to be fully human. The will, of course, may fail and, failing, reveals (*Miserere* again!) our need for compassion. Our perception of ultimate principles may lead us to acts of martyrdom – of bodily self-sacrifice.

But wait: what about the body in all of this? My claim is that *Paradiso* v is a distinctly humane canto. And we can hardly be human without our physical bodies. Dante would surely agree with this. He is not a dualist and never thinks of the body as a merely mulish impediment to the big idea. But how is this conviction registered in these cantos? Francesca may at first glance appear to be its best representative. But I shall hope to show that *Purgatorio* v is a better point of reference and that *Paradiso* v – in its exquisite poetry – brings fully into view the intertwining shimmer of will, rationality and physical responsiveness that makes us fully human.

So let me start with *Paradiso* – and with its philosophy rather than its poetry (though, of course, in the end poetry is far more important than philosophy). This canto is the final movement in an intellectual symphony that began in *Paradiso* iii, with those considerations of free will and freedom that arose in the case of Piccarda Donati. We are still in the sphere of the Moon and the final phase of the canto will describe Dante's ascent from the Moon to Mercury, where souls tinged with ambition introduce questions concerning Law, Governance and, ultimately, the Justice of God as displayed in the Atonement. (Vertical reading is a fine device – but one should not lose sight of the plod or dance that Dante pursues, horizontally, from one canto to the next.)

So in canto iv, Beatrice has insisted that Piccarda, though forced against her will to leave her chosen nunnery and to agree to a political marriage, did not resist to the ultimate extent of her powers. She therefore collaborated in her own violation, be it only to a minimal degree. She did not, in short, embrace martyrdom – as some might have done in such a case – and is still aware, while taken up to Heaven, of her own inconstancy of purpose. The question in canto five is whether vows such as those Piccarda took are absolutely binding or whether they might – in the solicitor's phrase – be varied in some particulars.

At first sight, the answers that Beatrice offers might seem to be firmly authoritarian – and this, also at first glance, could well appear to be Botticelli's impression too for, in his drawing, Beatrice bears down imperiously on a distinctly smaller Dante. But Beatrice's argument deserves a second glance (as does Botticelli's illustration). So at lines 45 to 47, Beatrice insists that a vow once made can never be cancelled. The fact that a vow has been made – its very existence – must always remain, as an entry, so to speak, recorded in the book of life. Now this insistence is parallel in its implications to the argument in canto iv which recalls that, in matters of the will, some of us at least have proved capable of martyrdom. And this connection is made explicit at lines 29 and 44 where a vow is spoken of as an act of sacrifice. Yet it is here surely – at a second glance – that one begins to discern the profound humanity that displays itself in the canto. For Beatrice's words are fundamentally an affirmation of human dignity. On this account, human beings are heroically and clear-sightedly capable of entering into a contract with God, and thus to be bound, as to an equal, by our words of consent. In establishing this position, Beatrice prepares for canto vii of the *Paradiso* where, through the Incarnation and Atonement, human nature, in the person of Christ, is accorded the right to make reparation for its own original sin. Even in canto v, at line 123, Dante is told to trust the souls in Mercury – the ambitious rulers and jurists – as though they were Gods.

Yet there is also a gentler side to Beatrice's humanity here, revealed on closer, syntactical analysis of the fine print. So at lines 64 to 75, it is emphasised that there is, after all, no need for us to make vows (and it is stupid to do so) unless, in proper self-knowledge, we are certain we can keep them. This is where the overly-heroic Agamemnon and Jephta went wrong, superstitiously seeking military success from the Gods by vows which led them to sacrifice their own daughters (this not being, generally, a humane thing to do). But even supposing that we do get into such a fix, there are still escape clauses. Granted that the fact of a vow must stand, the exact terms in which it is fulfilled can be subject to lawful negotiation. The covenant established in the Old Testament offers precedents for such negotiation. And now (in lines 76 to 78) the Scriptures and the Church are authorised to apply a calculus – or legal-eagle syntax – to guide us to a sensible substitution.

With this we are already a long way away, lexically, from Francesca's cooing 'Amor che nullo amato amar …'. And in ethical terms a new understanding is beginning to emerge of what our possession of free will implies. Free will is the ground of our human nobility and also of the violence we can suffer or perpetrate. Yet a vow, properly understood, is the very paradigm of intelligent choice. If we fulfil it, we are gods. If we choose not to make a vow, we do so in full understanding of our fragile mortality. And even supposing we do act in foolish haste, then we can still choose to engage in further discussion. Nor is this all. For the whole of this sometimes pernickety argument is conducted in the context of the radiantly liberating hymn to freedom that Beatrice utters at lines 19 to 24.

These lines mark an absolutely crucial moment in the development of Dante's thinking about freedom. In his illuminating account of *Paradiso* iii, Vittorio Montemaggi made clear how inadequate it is to think in the case of Piccarda of freedom as simply a matter of choice between alternatives. That would be merely a supermarket view, of freedom as a choice between two brands of baked beans. (Vittorio put it far more elegantly than that.) We are rather to look for a form of freedom that leads into the very source and surge of life. And that is what Beatrice now lays before us. Freedom is to be understood as the freedom experienced in the wholly unconstrained giving and receiving of gifts. Free will is itself a gift that God has given us. This gift, moreover, is an expression of the original and ever-continuing act of creation – note the gerund 'creando'; and God's 'generosity' is conceived here in terms not of arbitrary patronage but rather as 'larghezza', the opening up of a largeness or space in which our lives may be fully realised.

Now, none of this implies that the Baked Bean model of choice is unimportant in Dante's view. The cantos which stand, numerically, at the very centre of the *Commedia* – *Purgatorio* xvi to xviii – are throughout concerned with the ways in which our choices can be regulated so as to make our particular choices properly consistent with the ultimate source of good. To fail in that regard is to fall into Francesca's sort of sin. To succeed is to achieve that utter self-possession of an ethical self that Virgil recognises in Dante himself at the summit of the Purgatorial mountain. But to speak of 'gift' is to speak, rather, of dis-possession, of a self-abandonment which also makes possible, paradoxically, a new and unexpected endowment. Thus the paradox is that in making a vow (lines 25 to 30), we freely give back to the source of our freedom that freedom we have freely been given – and bind ourselves by doing so to the 'creando' that is the origin and end of our existence.

The realm that we are now entering is a realm of theology rather than of ethical or philosophical argumentation. And the space that theology opens up is one in which argument is concerned less with confirming propositions than with the pleasures of performance. The point of theological argument is to define and also enrich those words that lead us to participate in other lives – or, indeed, in life itself. This space is one that admits of entrancing paradox and, as will be seen, of poetry. And the air that breathes in this region is the air of faith, not merely faith in dogma but faith in persons (such as Beatrice) along with the hope that we shall share in the gift of their unfolding possibilities. In a word, this space is one in which 'Amor' is seen to move the sun and the other stars and *Paradiso* v is one of the first steps that Dante takes towards that realisation.

We shall see more of this when we return to the poetry – and especially the poetic rhythms of canto v. But we need to be cautious here lest by invoking too easily 'The love that moves the sun and other stars' we fall into the kind of chick-lit cliché of which, so far, I have suggested Francesca is guilty. Words need to be syntactically enriched and focused; and love needs to be lived with, not merely spoken. And in fact the process of theological discrimination exemplified in *Paradiso* v can be traced back, in however oblique and remote a way, to the other two cantos under consideration.

So back we go for a while, vertically down to *Inferno*, though not, I hope, to conduct any witch-hunt against Francesca or to contrast her too unfavourably with Beatrice. Rather, I want to argue that *Inferno* v is the beginning of a critique of the culture that Dante himself inhabited and equally an exercise in self-criticism, directed at some of his own most central preoccupations.

The culture from which Dante's poetry emerges is a love-culture – exhibiting at times its own tendency to Tchaikovskian *sturm und drang*. Most of the poems written in the vernacular tradition and most of Dante's own early poems had been love poems. And the *Commedia*, in the end, is also a love-poem. Yet to see how, ultimately, love in all its aspects might be consistent with the love – and life – of God, it is necessary to overcome at the outset the commonplace – the glamorously melancholic cliché – which proposes that love is a destructive or fatal attraction. At the dark heart of many of Dante's contemporaries – even of his closest associate, Guido Cavalcanti – lay the truly dreadful pun amore/ad mortem, love leads to death. This is reflected in Francesca's words at lines 100 to 108: 'Amor condusse noi ad una morte' [Love drew us onwards to consuming death]. And we have already suggested how her 'amare' collapses into 'amaro' – 'bitterness'.

Now Dante himself in his earliest work, the *Vita nuova*, had already begun to resist any such conclusion. It is there that he writes: 'Amor e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa' [Love and the noble heart are one thing], attempting to establish an absolute identity between love and ethical prowess; love is a noble virtue and virtue displays itself in love. So what is happening when in *Inferno* v he allows himself to write, on Francesca's behalf, the verse at line 100: 'Amor che al cor gentil ratto s'apprende' [Love, who so fast brings flame to generous hearts]? The diction and phonetic patternings of the two lines seem almost indistinguishable. Yet on closer analysis the meaning of the two lines are diametrically distinct. The *Inferno* line proposes not an identity but an aggressive opposition, in which Love, as an impersonal and numinous force, takes possession of the ethical heart and brings it to instantaneous destruction. It would be easy to blame Francesca at this point for failing to display the lexical intelligence that Beatrice exhibits whenever she utters. Yet that is hardly fair. After all, Dante himself wrote the line. And this, I suggest, can be taken to imply that he knew as well as T. S. Eliot did that words, even his own most well-defined words, can 'slip, slide, perish / Decay with imprecision'. Setting out to write a narrative poem, all but unprecedented in the vernacular verse-tradition, Dante confronts a kind of imaginative schizophrenia which will lead him, in dramatising alien voices, to employ his own best words against his own best interests.

'Love', then, as everybody knows, is a slippery word. But Dante, knowing this, has also built into his poem a principle that, at least until Beatrice arrives, can help to resist such slippage. And the name of that principle is Virgil, who has already established himself in the poem not only as the model for Dante's unprecedented foray into the epic mode but is also from the first a paragon of linguistic precision. This principle bears upon one particular word which is as much a leitmotif in *Inferno* v as is the word 'amore', this word being *pietà* – pity or compassion – which appears in one form or another at three crucial moments in the canto. The notion of compassion will eventually prove to be of great importance in Dante's thinking. Indeed, one of the characters in *Purgatorio* v is named La Pia and the canto in which she appears introduces in its first notes the *Miserere* – 'have pity or mercy on us O Lord' – which I have alluded to in my title. But in slippery *Inferno* v, Francesca demonstrates how easily this word, too, can decay into a tear-jerk (ll. 91-3). And one remedy for any such slippage is to recall that, on an etymological analysis, the Italian *pietà* is directly derived from the Latin *pietas*, which is the central term in Virgil's own ethical lexicon. In the *Aeneid*, *pietas*, so far from implying a kittenish cultivation of private sentiment, denotes public duty, an unwavering commitment such as Aeneas displays to the well-being of the state and to Justice. In choosing Virgil as his guide, Dante had explicitly devoted himself to the virtue of political justice, which he took to be embodied in the Roman Empire. Yet justice is already seen here to involve something of that discriminating attention to words that Beatrice displays. And on further examination of etymology, *lex* – law – would appear to have been connected as early as its Sanskrit origins with *leggere* – to read. Law is that which is publically legible. In *Inferno* v, *pietà* as well as *amore* are blurred to the point of un-readability.

So Love and Pity require much further attention if they are to take their rightful place in the Book of Divine Devotion. But then so too does 'Justice', at least as justice appears in *Inferno*. Just look at how the canto begins. Drawing directly on *Aeneid* vi, Dante here at lines 4-6 introduces the figure of Minos, judge of the underworld. But in Virgil's text, Minos is a solemn and awe-inspiring adjudicator. And so he might be in the *Commedia* – if only Dante had not endowed him with that ridiculous tail, which Minos here twirls to indicate the number of the circle to which the damned are to descend. No sooner has Dante embarked on his ethical epic than he finds himself criticising, even ridiculing, the principle of mechanical justice on which the plan of *Inferno*, at least, so largely depends.

There is evidence here of a schizophrenic tension – and no time now to extend that diagnosis over the whole of the first part of the *Commedia*. But in *Inferno* v there is one third and final symptom to be noted. And that is a certain discomfort over the very competence of literature itself. It has become a commonplace of Dante criticism that Francesca is a very bad reader of literature – a direct ancestor of Flaubert's Madame Bovary. So at lines 127 to 138 we find her attributing her downfall to her reading of French Romances. Engrossed in the story of Lancelot and Guinevere, Paolo and Francesca are stirred to imitate the guilty kiss of those archetypal lovers, disregarding the fatal consequences that followed, in King Arthur's court, from that stolen moment. Eyes flutter and flicker above the pages. Trembling, a mouth is kissed, though is it really a kiss? Is it really as bodily there as Rodin's version might suggest? And even Dante, himself a reader of the Romances and author of the present version, swoons to the point of death in sympathetic sentiment.

Fiction, no less than love, can prove to be narcotic. And, in fiction, justice, too, may degenerate into grotesque, Minoan absurdity. So where we do we go from here? Well, obviously to Purgatory. And then we shall, I hope, discover in the wonderfully imaginative second realm the beginnings of a freedom from all those ills that in *Inferno* infect the language both of love and justice. We shall also, I hope, find there a conception of the body – hitherto lacking from my argument – which allows our physical frame a far more significant role in human existence than might appear from the literary vapours of Francesca's fragmented eroticism.

Now there are at least two points of immediate connection between *Inferno* v and *Purgatorio* v. Like Francesca, La Pia – the figure who appears in the final moments of *Purgatorio* v – was murdered by her husband, thus suffering the violent death that deprives all of the characters in this canto of the time they needed to perform a formal act of expiation. Then, too, both cantos depict scenes of violent storm: Francesca's punishment is to be driven unendingly on the hurricane of the 'bufera infernal'; the central section of *Purgatorio* v describes how the body of the warrior Buonconte is assailed after death by a tempest brewed up by the Devil himself, no less.

But similarities such as these serve above all to emphasise how significantly different the two cantos are, in style and implication. Consider the voice that Dante attributes to La Pia, and in particular the line that attracted T. S. Eliot's attention: 'Siena mi fe; disfecemi Maremma' [Siena made me, unmade by Maremma] (134). There is nothing here of Francesca's deliquescent languor. Yes, as in 'Amor che a nullo amato amar perdona', there are notable alliterations on 'm'. But these are held back from melting murmuration by the strong repetition in 'mi fe: disfecemi': she was born in Siena and died in the miasmic regions of Maremma. But 'fare' – 'to make' and 'to unmake' – rejects pathos in favour of a clear, diamond-hard insistence on the brevity and fragility of her created existence. And then there is that incisive mid-line caesura, which brings about balance but, simultaneously, introduces a silence which itself speaks eloquently of La Pia's brutal end and also of prayers that are still to be uttered. We have here a remote anticipation of Piccarda – whose story is still being told in *Paradiso* v, where a voice fades into the elegiac singing of the *Ave Maria* – but only after delivering some of the most intelligently clear-sighted lines that Dante ever wrote.

From this point on, a sub-theme in this reading will be that of wounds, in a literal and in a metaphorical sense, signifying interruptions, surprising shifts of direction and corresponding metrical or syntactical articulations. But the rationale for this attempt emerges most clearly from the storm-episode that runs from lines 103 to 129. The tempest depicted here is not – as it was in *Inferno* v – an infernal punishment. The natural elements now are stirred by a demonic power to battle, in the end ineffectually, against the physical body of a soldier who has just died of his wounds, having dragged himself with his last breath away from the field of conflict. Here Dante constructs a narrative fiction in which the human protagonist, in a wholly unexpected moment of conversion, leaps over the gaps between life, death and eternal salvation. Sub-textually, too, the episode represents a conversion on Dante's own part, with important implications regarding his conception of Justice, Mercy and the freedom from sin which may come to those who sing *Miserere*.

The protagonist here is the Ghibelline general Buonconte da Montefeltro. More than that, he was the leader of the Arezzo cavalry in the Battle of Campaldino on June 11th, 1289. In that battle Dante, aged a mere 24, fought on the opposing side in the army of the Florentine Guelfs commanded by Corso Donati. Thus to admit Buonconte to his fictional Purgatory argues a degree of magnanimity on Dante's part. This, at the very least, is the sign of a change in Dante's political inclinations. Though the Guelphs were victorious at Campaldino, the party was soon to split into factions in which Dante, veering now towards a Ghibelline-ish position, would find himself in bitter enmity with his own erstwhile commander, Corso. But there is more at stake here than a merely political conversion. In envisaging Buonconte's salvation, Dante makes nonsense of the old gibe that the poet vindictively assigns his enemies to Hell. And going further still, there is evidence here that Dante is now freeing himself from that crudely judgemental conception of the after-life that, I suggested earlier, revealed its limitations in the absurd figure of Minos. For in an exceptionally explicit example of his own 'verticality', Dante in *Purgatorio* v contrives an exact parallel to an episode in *Inferno* xxvii where the judgement of Minos was seen to be un-bendable. Moreover, canto xxvii depicts the fate of Buonconte's father Guido da Montefeltro, who had once been applauded by Dante (some would say satirically) as the noblest exemplar of how we should lead our human lives. Guido – and Dante, too, in the *Convivio* – plainly got it wrong.[3]

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[3] 'Certainly Sir Lancelot did not want to enter port under full sail, nor did our most noble fellow Italian Guido of Montefeltro. These noble people did indeed lower the sails of their worldly activities; in their advanced age, they dedicated themselves to a religious life and put aside all worldly delight and activity' (*Conv.*, IV. xxviii).

So that when Guido presents himself to Minos he is told that the papal pardon he thought he had secured was not valid, and devils drag him to the depths of Hell. In *Purgatorio* v, in exact, even comic, contrast, Buonconte is claimed by the angels at line 104. He arrives with no papal free pass in his hand. His salvation defies all logic. Yet, as Dante imagines it, he gets there all the same. And if he does, it is because Dante, in the construction of his fiction, has begun to explore a new conception of mercy and freedom.

The story began at lines 88 to 90. And from the first it is more like a prayer or act of devotion than any piece of political or military polemic. Buonconte's wife does not pray for him – such negligence is not uncommon in *Purgatorio* – nor does anyone else. But Dante is interested enough to invent almost a hagiography on his behalf. Why, Dante asks, was Buonconte never seen again after his defeat at Campaldino? It might be supposed that he had defected. But not at all. Rather, he presented himself to a conflict more ferocious than any earthly battle could be. The answer that Dante devises for Buonconte involves the celebration of a fortitude that defeats all manner of satanic power – and, indeed, of logicality. Mortally wounded, Buonconte had summoned up his last remaining energies to crawl two miles away from the field of battle. And his last dying act (ll. 97-102) was is to utter the word 'Maria' – no sentimental piety but a final mustering of his physical powers – and to cross his arms over his chest, falling as he does so into a tributary of the river Arno. It is only after summoning the most destructive forces of tempest and hydrodynamic violence that Satan is able to loosen the grip that Buonconte's corpse exerts over its own sanctity; and even then Satan is defeated. Where, in the case of Buonconte's father, the devil had been able to claim a logical victory over an unrepentant sinner, he is now totalled flummoxed, taken aback at the illogicality of allowing a sinner into salvation, without any papal blessing and solely on the strength of a single repenting tear, a *lagrimetta*.

The storm, then, is Satan's act of vengeance on Buonconte's spiritual success. But the crucial factor is the place accorded to Buonconte's body in all this drama. Out of the massacre of Campaldino there comes, in the moment of its hero's *Miserere*, something akin to martyrdom. Buonconte's final and spontaneous 'Maria' is, in its own way, a vow of fidelity, an act of will far closer to Piccarda's self-giving determination than to Francesca's descent into literary oblivion. But the specific contribution that this episode can offer is a celebration of heroic vulnerability. *In articulo mortis*, the muscles of the wounded lock in the form of a cross. And though, reaching the Arno, Buonconte's grip is eventually released, this is not before his actions have inscribed an utterly new meaning on the physical universe. Throughout, the fifth canto has evoked landscapes where flux, vapours and fogs are in the ascendancy. La Pia dies in the malarial Maremma. Jacopo del Cassero (ll. 73-84) tells of how he took a wrong turning in the swamp around Padua and, stuck in the mire and reeds, was murdered by his pursuers: his life-blood pours out to form a lake in which his humanity is wholly absorbed into the brackish ooze. But this already contrasts with the single, distinct and purposeful line of red that Buonconte draws behind him – 'sanguinando 'l piano' [a line of blood behind me on the plain] (99) – on the way to his final encounter. And with the crossing of his arms the fragile human body spells out a significance which can only be described as liturgical. Physical nature, as in the liturgy, now means something – something that links it to the creator and redeemer of that physical nature. And water itself becomes more than a disastrous flood. Buonconte's watery fate is also the sign of his baptismal redemption.

So body does matter, in ways that the lustful might never have imagined. But this significance has already been registered in the long sequence (ll. 1-27) that opens *Purgatorio* v, describing Dante's own movement from one region of Purgatory to another. The landscape he is traversing is the magically realistic landscape of Mount Purgatory where natural features are at every point endowed with liturgical significance. But the magic here is that Dante casts a shadow and therefore must still possess a body and – amazing even in his own eyes – must himself at line 9 ('pur me, pur me' [me – yes, me!]) be an object of wonder. As the penitents in a group approach him they are singing the *Miserere*. But then at the sight of Dante's shadow their devotions are – violently, marvellously, comically – shattered at line 27 into a 'lungo e rauco' [long, hoarse]: 'Ohhhhh!' And this rude interruption marks the announcement of an ultimate mystery. Yes, it is obviously right, liturgically, that all penitents should sing, repeatedly, the *Miserere*, which means here the whole of the penitential psalm number 51. But Dante's bodily presence in *Purgatorio* announces to them the ultimate reality of the human condition, which is that, finally, we shall reside not in some merely spiritual nirvana but rather in the resurrected body. Violating all logic, even beyond the sequential logic of liturgical devotion, we shall be returned at the Day of Judgement to our specifically physical identities. And there is more still. The *Miserere* is sung at Mass as part of the *Agnus Dei* immediately before the sacrament of Eucharistic communion. But through a willing participation in the act of communion we participate in both the violence that Christ, sacrificially, endured for us and also in the creative unity that our faithful participation in the Body of Christ is now making sure. Violent death is here replaced by the violence of grace, by the wholly unaccountable gift (or, in Greek, 'eucharist') that a Creator, in creating, holds out to all of his creatures. It is the shock of Dante's bodily presence in Purgatory that announces all this. And perhaps the most marvellous – and poetic thing of all – is that announcement is made not in a flash of epiphanic light but rather through the shadow cast by a mortal, still vulnerable, indeed rather silly, human body. Grace operates as much in shadowed fragility as it does in the eye of the storm, and draws those who know it together in unknown communion.

To speak about grace is to speak – as a matter of faith, not logic – of gifts, of divine largesse, of the circulation of giving and receiving on which life depends, and also, I think, to speak of poetry. So, happily, we are about to return to *Paradiso*. But before we do there are one or two links of my own – certain gaps, violent segues and penitential points – that I need first to identify.

For instance, I have said nothing of how important the discussion of gift-giving has become in recent philosophy. The question, as Derrida might put it, is whether there can be any such thing as a gift freely given without expectation of return. In the *Convivio*, Dante argues that his use of vernacular Italian in that work is itself a true gift to his reader.[4] In *Paradiso* ii, he allows the reader freely to choose whether or not they will read *Paradiso*, as though there were no necessity to do so. Might not those readers who do freely choose to continue with the text be thought of as accepting a gift – or even as taking a vow of fidelity to its author?

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[4] In *Conv.*, I. viii, Dante argues that, in writing this work in the vernacular, he is giving a gift to his reader. In defining a gift, one of the several considerations is as follows: 'in all of its acts a virtue must be joyful not sad, so if a gift lacks in being given and received, it does not manifest perfect or whole-hearted' virtue. This joy derives entirely from the quality termed usefulness, which remains with the giver in making the gift and passes into the recipient in his receiving the gift. The giver, therefore, must have the foresight to ensure that on his side there remains the usefulness constituted by goodness, which is the highest form of usefulness … If the giver acts in this way both people will be joyful and the liberality will be the more whole-hearted. The chapter concludes: 'The third feature in which whole-hearted liberality can be recognised is that the person give the gift without waiting for a request; for giving done in response to a request is, from one perspective, not virtue but trade, since the recipient pays a price even though the donor makes no sale. So we find Seneca saying that nothing "is more dearly bought than what is paid for with our entreaties"'.

But here I would bring in a third passage to speak with these two passages of Dante's; it is from an essay, largely concerned with Resurrection, by the theologian John Milbank:

> If we truly value the other, we must value him in his specificity and therefore my presence before the other is ineradicable from a situation which is paradigmatic for the ethical. Of course, one's celebration of such an encounter may require one in certain circumstances to sacrifice oneself, even unto death, and one can go further to say that in a fallen world the only path to the recovery of mutual giving will always pass through an element of apparently 'unredeemed' sacrifice and apparently sheerly unilateral gift. But the point is that the gesture is not in itself the Good and indeed I have argued, is not good at all outside the hope of a redemptive return of the self […]. To speak of such a return is not at all, however, to surrender to the lure of contract, because it is not the case that actual, self-present life is a mode of self-possession. […]
>
> The fuller more abundant life is a return of life always afresh, always differently. Hence what distinguishes gift from contract is not the absolute freedom and non-binding character of the gift (this is our Western counterpart to the reduction of exchange to contract, which remains entirely uncriticized by Derrida […]) but rather the surprisingness and unpredictability of the gift and counter-gift, or their character in space as asymmetrical reciprocity and their character in time as non-identical repetition.[5]

And all I would note for the moment is his emphasis, contra Derrida, on the specific 'surprisingness' and 'unpredictability' of theological gifts. And the supreme gift is resurrection, which gives ourselves back to ourselves wholly and in wholly unfamiliar form. The mode of that restoration will be one of non-identical repetition, freeing our *Misereres* from a merely penitential sequence and surprising us into a communal contemplation of entirely new possibilities.

Whatever such theorisings might produce, however, the reality of the Resurrection and the 'new life' – the *vita nuova* – that it offers is borne in upon Dante by his real and particular love of Beatrice. He himself insists, in *Purgatorio* xxx to xxxii and in *Paradiso* xxxi, upon the profound historicity of Beatrice's life and influence. And, in regard to imagination and intellect, every canto of the *Paradiso* needs to be read, on Dante's insistence, as a confession of her significance to him. Beatrice died young – violently, one might say. The very core of Dante's Christian faith and, likewise, of his faith in Beatrice is that, in death, she lives in non-identical repetition, which is to say, she lives anew.

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[5] See John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 155-56.

So from her first appearance in the poem, and throughout the final cantica, every argument and every piece of theology that Dante produces is illuminated, in being offered to Beatrice, by an understanding of grace – of life freely given and generously received. And this understanding has direct implications concerning the part that the Body plays in *Paradiso* at large – so often so badly misrepresented as a piece of bloodless theology – and also for the ways in which we might analyse the details of structure and language in *Paradiso* v.

Theology: I suggested that the purpose of theological argumentation was to define and equally enrich the terms by which we live in the realm of faith, hope and charity. But in regard to *Paradiso* this suggestion may lead one to ask which is more important, Beatrice's discourse or the radiant poetry that accompanies her response to Dante's questions. Put another way, are the smiles that almost invariably accompany her words merely a sugaring of some bitter theological pill, concerning, say, the making of vows? Or could it be that the point of her theology is to release the smile and all the vitality of words that Dante summons up in his description of Beatrice's laughter?

I would argue for the second of these alternatives. And in doing so I draw attention also to the way in which a canto such as *Paradiso* v is punctuated by a series of interruptions, silences – or gaps or fissures – that allow laughter to be released from a merely argumentative syntax. For example, note in canto iv the undulating stream of energy that flows from the contemplation of truth. (The Italian 'rio' – stream – is very close to 'riso' – laughter.) And this canto notably concludes with a line that mirrors precisely – and exactly contrasts with – the mortal swoon that ends *Inferno* v: Dante, eyes closed, almost loses all strength:

> Beatrice mi guardò con li occhi pieni
> di faville d'amor così divini,
> che, vinta, mia virtute diè le reni,
> e quasi mi perdei con li occhi chini. (ll. 139-142)
>
> [Now Beatrice looked at me with eyes all full
> of sparks of speaking love, and so divine
> that, overwhelmed, I turned my back on her
> and, eyes bowed down, I almost lost myself.]

Then the silent gap between cantos. And then the return of elemental energy, this time as flashing fire not water:

> S'io ti fiammeggio nel caldo d'amore
> di là dal modo che 'n terra si vede,
> sì che del viso tuo vinco il valore,
> non ti maravigliar. (ll. 1-4)
>
> [If I flame out in warmth of love to you
> beyond all measure that is seen on earth,
> and so defeat the prowess of your eyes,
> don't wonder why.]

Or else take the concluding section of canto v (from line 85). Dante here begins a narrative modulation, describing his ascent to the Heaven of Mercury and this pause in argumentation is filled with the happiness of Beatrice culminating in laughter that emanates from the Heaven of Mercury itself.

Now I defy anyone to say that a 'smile' is not a physical, even an erotic, phenomenon. Of course, a contrast at once suggests itself between the Beatrician smile and the 'bocca tutto tremante' [trembling to my open mouth] that seals Francesca's fate. And, of course, to modern cultural tastes, the Francesca-frisson is bound to seem the sexier. If this were *The X Factor*, the conventionalised writhings and squirmings of *Inferno* v would undoubtedly go through. But a smile is not only physical but also a spontaneous, indeed psychosomatic, expression of total attention. For evidence, think of those smiles that are illustrated on every next page of the *Kama Sutra*. Or, if you would rather not, then please do read *Dante's 'Commedia': Theology as Poetry*, edited by Vittorio Montemaggi and Matthew Treherne, which collects together papers on the significance of smiles, presented at a conference at Robinson College in 2003 by some of the world's most eminent theologians. At this point, too, Botticelli might be of assistance. The striking thing here is not really the supervisorial dominance that Beatrice exerts, but the way in which she sweeps Dante into the dynamic rhythm of her dance. The 'ondeggiar' and 'fiammeggiar' of Dante's text is perfectly realised in the billows of Beatrice's robe. And it is easy with this illustration in mind to see here the action of an undulation and a vitality of rhythm which rises in complete contrast to the chaos of

Francesca's 'bufera infernal' or, indeed, of the storm that assails Buonconte's body. Please don't forget that in anticipation of divine laughter *Purgatorio* v contains both the comic defeat of a huffy Satan and the comic interruption of the *Miserere*. Now, in *Paradiso*, Dante imagines, theologically, the very rhythm of Creation – a rhythm in which, lexically and phonetically, his own verses participate.

The most overwhelming and refulgent example of Beatrice's laughter occurs in *Paradiso* xxiii. And there Dante expends all his poetic energies in saying how he cannot speak of her smile. This is in the fullest sense a 'hilarious' interruption, a delirious silence. But the pauses that scan *Paradiso* v point forward to this great example. They also distinguish the canto structurally from the two other Fives. The Francesca-episode was a monologue, scarcely interrupted by the two male figures, Paolo being a shadowy mute and Dante rather too inclined to swoon. *Purgatorio* v presents three contrasted voices that establish no connection with each other – though the author in prayer, or the careful reader, may well construct a connection on their behalf. The Paradise-pause, however, reveals a source of coherence located either in human attention or in the contemplation of an ultimately mysterious energy.

The moments I am speaking of occur, in my reckoning, around lines 16, 37, 85-91 and 109. Some of these serve – in a way that I have been describing as syntactical – to accentuate points of legal definition. Indeed lines 73-75 and 82-84 clearly enunciate that syntactic principle when Christians are advised to be slow and measured in considering their vows, so as not to flutter on the breeze or gambol about like idiotic lambs. But these are also moments when attention can fall on Beatrice's resurrected presence, continuing beneath the silence to harmonise our necessarily fragmented arguments. On this point the crucial lines are 16 and 17. Beginning this canto – significantly, this song – Beatrice 'sings' her intervention and in that respect is to be differentiated from all human beings in the temporal world where language must be 'broken' – 'si spezza' – into grammatical sequences. Human language, if it is not to be merely an 'amato amar' confusion, depends upon its breaks, its word-divisions and punctuation marks. But the language of resurrection has no need of such sequential markers. It is at one with eternity and participates instantaneously in the song of truth. However, since Dante is still writing in a temporal language, this song can only be registered in silence. So at lines 88-90:

> Lo suo tacere e 'l trasmutar sembiante
> puoser silenzio al mio cupido ingegno,
> che già nuove questioni avea davante.
>
> [Her saying nothing now and changing look
> imposed a silence on my avid mind,
> which had already new demands ahead.]

The silence registered here denotes neither a lack nor a frustrated impediment. Rather, it reverberates to the chant of rhythmic and rhyming desire, the forward impetus 'davante' – meaning 'forward' – echoing Beatrice's 'sembiante' – countenance. Moreover, at lines 109-111 this chant is one that Dante invites – or even teases – his reader to join in enjoying:

> Pensa, lettor, se quel che qui s'inizia
> non procedesse, come tu avresti
> di più savere angosciosa carizia.
>
> [Readers, just think if what we've now begun
> did not go on, what torment it would be
> to hunger, wanting further information.]

There's a lovely rhyme here on 'inizia-carizia'. And this teasing is surely very different from the tease that Francesca's reading of romance alluringly exerts upon her – and us. Dante's rhymes are now a bait for intelligent desire.

A bait? Yes, sure enough, there are fish to be baited here. For the souls in Mercury coming towards us at lines 100 to 102 are compared to fish in a pool, desiring the food of companionship from Dante, as he arrives in their Heaven. Sub-textually, there are, of course, Eucharistic implications here. The Mass is a sharing of ourselves with ourselves, and the resurrected Christ breakfasted on fish by the shores of Galilee (John 21). But above all there is here an evocation of those calm undulations that run through, and are revealed by, the natural world. The souls in Mercury, unlike the penitents in *Purgatorio* v, do not need to be shocked into seeing how glorious humanity can be, even in Dante's physical, if trans-humanised form. One might also note here the poetic device by which Dante introduces his mercurial fish. It is a simile: Dante's favoured figure of speech. And, in saying 'like' or 'compare', similes admit a difference – or a gap – between two phenomena yet proceed across that silence to trust that there is a significant connection. *Paradiso* is throughout, as here, full with references to the natural world.

And there is no need now to strive against that world, as Buonconte did in the storm. All such details can be seen, along with Dante's bodily arrival, as part of the rhythm – or gift – of creation, 'creando'.

But how, finally, is the reader – whom Dante addresses at lines 109 to 111 – to share in all these undulations? How should we keep our vow to continue? Well, less, in the end, through legal-eagle caution than through a clear and sharp awareness of the patterns underlying Dante's poetic rhythms. One might already see the play of alliterations at lines 2 and 3: vede, viso, vinco il valore:

> S'io ti fiammeggio nel caldo d'amore
> di là dal modo che 'n terra si vede,
> sì che del viso tuo vinco il valore,
> non ti maravigliar. (ll. 1-4)

And then at lines 8 and 9, there is a crescendo of illumination, turning into fire, as though focused through a lens, as the light of truth, seen at last by the human intellect, burns in simple and unchanging love: 'sola e sempre amor accende' [will kindle – only, always – love].[6] In lines 19-27, the crucial discussion of gift and freedom renders argument as aria:

> Lo maggior don che Dio per sua larghezza
> fesse creando, e a la sua bontate
> più conformato, e quel ch'e' più apprezza,
> fu de la volontà la libertate;
> di che le creature intelligenti,
> e tutte e sole, fuoro e son dotate.
> Or ti parrà, se tu quinci argomenti,
> l'alto valor del voto, s'è sì fatto
> che Dio consenta quando tu consenti;
>
> [The greatest gift that God, in spacious deed,
> made, all-creating – and most nearly formed
> to His liberality, most prized by Him –
> was liberty in actions of the will,
> with which all creatures of intelligence –
> and they alone – both were and are endowed.

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[6] 'ne l'intelletto tuo l'etterna luce, / che, vista, sola e sempre amore accende' (ll. 8-9) [in your own mind / the mirrored splendour of eternal light / which seen will kindle – only, always – love.]

Now there'll appear, if you pursue this thought,
the value and nobility of vows,
when framed so God's consent consents with yours.]

Subordinate clauses, sustained for a whole *terzina*, triumphantly hit their main clause after an emphatic enjambment with the firm and sustained vibrato of 'volontà / libertate'. And following from that, the word 'consent' (at line 27) means far more than it might in the phrase 'the age of consent'. Lingering on Dante's repetition of the word, one recalls that in Italian the word may also express 'hearing', 'sensing' and 'feeling' together in complete human harmony. Then, in lines 100-8, that dangerously unstable word love: 'amore' is held and celebrated by appearing rhymed with the unambiguously positive 'splendori/amori':

Come 'n peschiera ch'è tranquilla e pura
traggonsi i pesci a ciò che vien di fori
per modo che lo stimin lor pastura,
sì vid'io ben più di mille splendori
trarsi ver' noi, e in ciascun s'udia:
"Ecco chi crescerà li nostri amori".
E sì come ciascuno a noi venìa,
vedeasi l'ombra piena di letizia
nel folgór chiaro che di lei uscia.

[Compare: in fish pools that are still and clear,
the fish are drawn – as though they guess at food –
to anything that comes there from outside.
So now I saw a thousand splendours plus
drawing towards us. And in each was heard:
'Look there! He'll make our many loves grow more.'
And then, as each came near to us, each shade
was seen – within the flash of clarity
that came from each – full of pure happiness.]

And finally, for sheer poetry, how can one paraphrase the paradox or oxymoron at lines 106 to 108 which sees the flash of pure happiness proceeding from a shadow, from an 'ombra' – save perhaps by emphasising that in *Purgatorio* v, Dante's shadow itself had brought miraculous light to the penitents?

But to end, I will just draw attention to the last third of the canto which is both a conclusion and also a beginning, expanding over the gaps between cantos iv and v. Now the single figure who swims towards Dante out of the fish-pond over the mercurial, hence over-ambitious souls, will prove to be the Emperor Justinian. And Justinian's great achievement was to codify Roman Law so successfully that the code remains, after fifteen hundred years, a pillar in many a legal system, at least in Europe. But note that Justinian is said at *Paradiso* vi (lines 13 to 18) to have begun his work on the Code only when he came to understand the true nature of the Incarnation. In other words, only when he came in faith to recognise that Christ is both truly God and also truly man did he realise that human dignity deserved to be articulated and preserved through a coherent and legible set of human statutes. But the Incarnation is also the beginning of that history which, sustained by the Eucharist, will at the Last Judgement be fulfilled in our Resurrection. So while Justinian does indeed assert the importance of legal precision, he also prepares for a greater justice – what Dante will call a 'living justice', 'viva giustizia' – the justice of God 'creando'. Living justice has nothing to do with Minos, and precious little to do with fine print. It has everything to do with mercy and generosity.

Mercy, however, is better sung than analysed. So let us end there. The spirit of Justinian comes enclosed in light in lines 125 to 139, 'chiusa chiusa', but this enclosure is no prison; rather, it is a pulsating light, registered phonetically in the repetition. And pointing across the canto division, the last line, the song, also pulsates in repetition: 'canto canta' [canto sings]. Theologians need to sing and dance, so too perhaps do lawyers and literary critics. But so, above all, should readers of *Paradiso*.

# 6. Divided City, Slavish Italy, Universal Empire[1]

## *Claire E. Honess*

## *In medias res*

It is an oft-repeated commonplace that Dante's *Commedia* starts *in medias res*: '[n]el mezzo del cammin di nostra vita' [[i]n the middle of the journey of our life]. This 'vertical' reading of the poem's sixth cantos will emulate this technique, by taking as its starting-point the exclamation which marks the precise centre of the central canto of the three under consideration: 'Ahi serva Italia…' [Ah, slavish Italy…].[2] This outburst opens a unique window onto the cantos here under discussion, not only for the way in which it seems to encompass, in its anger, frustration and despair, the poet's vision of a world gone drastically astray, but also and more importantly for the voice in which it is pronounced, which distinguishes it both from the text that surrounds it and from the narrative of the other cantos under consideration in this chapter, giving it a peculiar breadth of significance.

Wandering on the lower slopes of Mount Purgatory, Dante's pilgrim and Virgil have encountered a lone soul, Sordello, who has ignored their request for directions and has instead questioned them about their

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[1] The video of this lecture is available at the Cambridge Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy website, https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1460178
I should like to thank George Corbett and Heather Webb for having invited me to take part in this exciting and innovative project. The lecture on which the present chapter is based took place in Cambridge on 28 February 2013.

[2] Dante's invective against Italy opens in line 76 of the 152 that make up *Purgatorio* vi.

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provenance. No sooner does Virgil name his home-town, 'Mantua' (*Purg.*, vi. 72), than the soul leaps to his feet and embraces him, exclaiming 'O Mantoano, io son Sordello / de la tua terra' [O Mantuan, I am Sordello from your city] (*Purg.*, vi. 74-75), and it is at this point that the invective beginning 'Ahi serva Italia' breaks into the narrative of Dante's story with the same sudden and unexpected burst of energy as that which propels Sordello out of his solitude and into the arms of Virgil.

The way in which this invective breaks into and cuts across Dante's narrative is clearly reflected in the fact that the embrace which occasions it is still ongoing and being reiterated in the opening lines of the following canto.[3] The second half of *Purgatorio* vi constitutes, in fact, a 'freeze-frame' moment; time here stands still and restarts only with the transition to the next canto. These lines, then, do not form part of the story of Dante-character's journey through Purgatory, but run parallel with it, like a marginal gloss, not only on the embrace of the two Mantuans, but on the whole journey, seen in relation to the world that its protagonist has left behind.

With this insight in mind, the present chapter will consider the ways in which a consideration of Dante's invective against Italy may open up his reader's understanding not only of the passage's immediate context in *Purgatorio* vi, but also of the corresponding cantos of *Inferno* and *Paradiso*. Taking the invective as the fulcrum around which the themes of the three cantos turn and turn about, my chapter will yield a reading which is not so much vertical as circular: an appropriate enough metaphor, then, as we shall see, for Dante's political thought and its expression in these cantos, in the *Commedia* as a whole, and beyond.

## *Serva Italia*

'Ahi, serva Italia': to the reader newly-emerged from the pages of the *Inferno*, this invective is surprising not only for the way in which it breaks into the narrative of the poem, but also for its very scope and scale. During the course of the *Inferno* contemporary Italy has been criticised on many occasions, but always – as it is in *Inferno* vi – at the level of the individual city-state, whether the degenerate Florence evoked by Ciacco, but also by Farinata, Brunetto, and others, the corrupt Lucca, the treacherous Pisa, the foolish Siena, or the wicked Genoa. Here, however, the object of the attack is the whole war-torn Italian peninsula. This should not, of course, be taken to mean that Dante conceives of the Italian peninsula as a single political entity. However he may have been read during the Risorgimento,[4] it is clear that, for the poet, 'Italy' is a geographical reality, but not a political one. In the *De vulgari eloquentia*, this leads him to the view that the illustrious vernacular is 'homeless', and must therefore be created, drawing on the many and varied languages of the peninsula.[5] In *Purgatorio* vi, Dante's argument is a political, rather than a linguistic, one; but in an analogous way the term 'serva Italia', as it is used here, becomes a collective noun, referring to a geographically contiguous set of communes, republics and kingdoms, united only by their egregious lack of unity.

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[3] See *Purgatorio* vii. 1-3.

The dividedness of contemporary Italy is evoked in the invective through the striking image of citizens of the same city literally at one another's throats: 'l'un l'altro si rode / di quei ch'un muro e una fossa serra' [of those whom one wall and one moat lock in, each gnaws at the other!] (*Purg.*, vi. 83-84), a turn of phrase which cannot but evoke Ugolino and Ruggieri, two citizens of the same earthly city, locked together eternally at the very bottom of the City of Dis, the former gnawing on the brains of the latter.[6] Even more significantly for this 'vertical' reading, the image also recalls the way in which, in the parallel canto of *Inferno*, Dante's own city of Florence is described as a 'città partita' – a divided city (*Inf.*, vi. 61) – against the backdrop of the triple-jawed chewing and slavering of Cerberus, like a dog which 'abbaiando agogna / e si raqueta poi che 'l pasto morde' [baying hungers and is silent once he bites his food] (*Inf.*, vi. 28-29). The sin of gluttony is not, of course, specifically a political one; and yet the parallel between the glutton's disordered relationship with food and the disordered political situation of contemporary Florence is made clear in Ciacco's comparison of the city to an overfilled stomach: 'piena / d'invidia sì che già trabocca il sacco' [so full of envy that the sack overflows] (*Inf.*, vi. 49-50).

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[4] See Charles T. Davis, 'Dante and Italian Nationalism', in *A Dante Symposium*, ed. by William De Sua and Gino Rizzo (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), pp. 199-213.

[5] See *De vulgari eloquentia* I. xviii. 2-3. All references to this work are to the edition by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, in Dante Alighieri, *Opere minori*, 2 vols (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1979-88), II, 1-237.

[6] The same verb, *rodere* [to gnaw], is used in both passages. Compare *Inferno* xxxiii. 8.

This image strongly recalls the way in which Dante had described the political order – and its inevitable tendency to descend into corruption – in *Convivio* IV. iv,[7] where human acquisitiveness is shown to bring discord and conflict into the world, and thereby to impede the achievement of the Aristotelian ideal of human communities as a means to the realisation of human happiness:

> la umana civilitade […] a uno fine è ordinato, cioè a vita felice; a la quale nullo per sé è sufficiente a venire sanza l'aiutorio d'alcuno […]. E però dice lo Filosofo che l'uomo naturalmente è compagnevole animale. […] Onde, con ciò sia cosa che l'animo umano in terminata possessione di terra non si queti, ma sempre desideri gloria d'acquistare, sì come per esperienza vedemo, discordie e guerre conviene surgere […]; e così s'impedisce la felicitade. (*Conv.*, iv. iv. 1-3)
>
> [society […] is directed to one end, a life of happiness. No individual is capable of attaining this by himself, without the help of others […]. Hence the Philosopher's dictum that man is by nature a social animal. […] Since the human psyche cannot be content with possessing a limited amount of land, but, as experience tells us, always desires the glory of making further acquisitions, quarrels and wars inevitably spring up […]. The result is that it is impossible to attain happiness.]

This darker conception of the human political order owes more to St Augustine than to Aristotle, taking up the Augustinian view of post-lapsarian humanity as being inevitably characterised by *cupiditas* (not just greed for possessions, but any kind of immoderate desire or ambition) and by the lust for power and desire for domination over others or *libido dominandi*. For Augustine, this desire to dominate others has its roots in the sin of pride, which lies at the basis of the sin of Lucifer and that of Adam and Eve, a perverted reflection of God ('superbia perverse imitator Deum');[8] it is the desire to work for the good of the individual at the expense of the common good of the many, and in this it strikes at the heart of all that is 'naturally political' in human nature. For Augustine, then, political structures do not develop in order to help support the common human search for happiness, the *Convivio*'s 'vita felice', but only in order to uphold an uneasy truce between warring parties and to keep conflict and anarchy at bay.[9]

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[7] All references to the *Convivio* are to the edition by Cesare Vasoli and Domenico De Robertis, in *Opere minori*, i. ii.

[8] St Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, in *Patrologia cursus completus: Series latina*, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Migne, 1844-64), xli, 13-804; English translation by Henry Bettenson, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984); xix. 12. See also Herbert A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St Augustine* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 49.

The echoes of this negative view of human political nature in *Convivio* IV. iv. 3 are evident; but a similar pessimism also seems to emerge in the pilgrim's exchange with Ciacco in *Inferno* vi. *Cupiditas* and the *libido dominandi* (even if they are not given those precise names) also reign in contemporary Florence, according to Ciacco, who explains that 'superbia, invidia e avarizia sono / le tre faville c'hanno i cuori accesi' [pride, envy and greed are the three sparks that have set hearts ablaze] (*Inf.*, vi. 74-75). As we have seen in Augustine, it is pride which is the foundation of the human desire to dominate others, while greed and envy lie at the root of that human inability to be content with what we have – that fundamental *cupiditas* – which Dante describes in the *Convivio* and which afflicts not only the Florence described by Ciacco, but also the whole of that 'serva Italia' addressed in the invective of *Purgatorio* vi, and beyond.

## *Sola soletta*

If the effect of the besetting political sins of pride, envy and avarice is to undermine the communal spirit and to set the good of the individual over and above the good of the community, then Dante's depiction of the character of Sordello in *Purgatorio* vi comes to take on a particular significance in its political context. Almost uniquely in the *Commedia*, Sordello is 'un'anima […] / sola soletta' [a soul […] all alone] (*Purg.*, vi. 58-59); that is, he appears not to be associated with any group or community of fellow-souls. Critics have variously attempted to associate Sordello both with the souls who died a violent death (described in canto v) and with the negligent rulers (to whom Sordello himself will introduce us in canto vii),[10] but the Mantuan cannot plausibly be assimilated with the Princes in the Valley, since he was certainly not a ruler, nor even a politician,[11] and nor do we possess any information to suggest that he may have died a violent death.[12] We are left, then, to draw the conclusion that Sordello really *is* that most unusual thing in Dante's text: a soul in the singular, one with no crowd behind him.

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[9] See *The Political Writings of St Augustine*, ed. by Henry Paolucci (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery, 1962), p. xvi.

[10] See, for the former point of view, Cecil M. Bowra, 'Dante and Sordello', *Comparative Literature* 5 (1953), 1-15 (pp. 3-4); for the latter, Thomas G. Bergin, 'Dante's Provençal Gallery', in *A Diversity of Dante* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969), pp. 87-111 (p. 105).

[11] On Sordello's life, see Cesare De Lollis, *Vita e poesie di Sordello di Goito* (Bologna: Forni, 1896), pp. 1-67.

All the more surprising, then, is the rapturous welcome that this lonely and somewhat stand-offish ('altera e disdegnosa' [proud and disdainful] (*Purg*., vi. 62)) soul gives to Virgil, without knowing his identity, but 'sol per lo dolce suon de la sua terra' [merely for the sweet sound of his city] (*Purg*., vi. 80).[13] His sudden breaking out of his self-absorption as he rises up to embrace Virgil, however, is anticipated in *Inferno* vi at the moment when Ciacco recognises the passing pilgrim. Here Ciacco leaves the customary position of the sinners in this circle, face-down in the stinking mud, in order to greet the pilgrim, suddenly sitting up and crying out in recognition, as Sordello does when he hears the name of his home town:

> […] a seder si levò, ratto
> ch'ella ci vide passarsi davante.
>     'O tu che se' per questo 'nferno tratto',
> mi disse, 'riconoscimi, se sai:
> tu fosti, prima ch'io disfatto, fatto.' (*Inf*., vi. 37-42)
>
> [[he] raised himself to sit as soon as he saw us passing before him. 'O you who are led through this Hell', he said to me, 'recognize me if you can: you were made before I was unmade.']

But whereas Virgil enthusiastically returns the embrace of this unknown Mantuan, Dante's pilgrim keeps Ciacco somewhat at arm's length, failing to recognise him, either as a fellow-citizen or as an individual ('non par ch'i' ti vedessi mai' [it does not seem I have ever seen you] (*Inf*., vi. 45)), almost as if to protect himself from the taint of those sins which pit Florentine against Florentine to create the antithesis of community.

No such qualms restrain the souls in Purgatory, who – not only in this canto, but throughout the *cantica* – embrace and support one another, praying, singing and working together towards salvation. This general rule, though, only renders Sordello's solitude all the more problematic and casts his embrace of Virgil in a slightly different light. We have seen that

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[12] There is nothing to suggest this in the two extant Provençal *vidas* of Sordello, and there is, significantly, no other information contained in Dante's presentation of Sordello that cannot be gleaned either from his poems or from the *vidas*. The *vidas* can be found in De Lollis, *Vita e poesie*, pp. 147-48.

[13] Virgil's identity is not revealed until *Purgatorio* vii. 7.

Sordello is, unusually, a soul without a community. It is also significant that, like Dante himself, Sordello was an exile. However, unlike Dante, who identifies himself in his letters as 'Florentinus, et exul inmeritus' [a Florentine undeservedly in exile],[14] Sordello's exile is self-imposed: a consequence of his less-than-courtly habit of seducing the wives and sisters of his hosts and patrons, which forces him to keep moving for his own safety. And where Dante continues, even in exile, to define himself as a 'Florentine', albeit an untypical one,[15] Sordello's rejection of his city is absolute, for the *De vulgari eloquentia* also tells us that Sordello, in his flight from Mantua, abandoned not only the city but also the local language in favour of his adoptive vernacular of Occitan: 'non solum in poetando sed quomodocunque loquendo patrium vulgare deseruit' [[he] abandoned the vernacular of his home town not only when writing poetry but on every other occasion] (*DVE*., I. xi. 2).[16]

In life, then, Sordello was far from being an example of perfect Mantuan citizenship, and there is, therefore, a significant disconnect between the earthly Sordello and the Sordello who, in Ante-Purgatory, has become 'an emblem of political unity'.[17] Seen from this perspective, there appears to be a 'purgatorial' element to Sordello's embrace of Virgil. If the purpose of Purgatory is to right those wrongs committed on earth, washing away the stain of earthly sins, then the enthusiastic welcome that Sordello extends to Virgil, at the mere sound of his city's name, almost reads like an act of penance, an attempted reversal of his earthly abandonment of Mantua.[18] Even though, in Sordello's case, the insatiable 'gloria d'acquistare' which had afflicted him had been more about sexual encounters than land or other possessions, his life nonetheless illustrates that same lesson with which Dante presents us in the *Convivio*, where human weakness undermines community and makes of every individual an 'anima sola soletta'.

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[14] See, for example, the *incipits* of letters v, vi, and vii. All references to Dante's letters are to the edition edited by Arsenio Frugoni and Giorgio Brugnoli, in *Opere minori*, ii, 505-643.

[15] In the famous designation of the letter to Can Grande, he is 'florentinus natione non moribus' [a Florentine by birth, not by behaviour] (*Epist*., xiii. 1).

[16] On Sordello's rejection of Mantuan, see my 'Dante and Political Poetry in the Vernacular', in *Dante and his Literary Precursors: Twelve Essays*, ed. by John C. Barnes and Jennifer Petrie (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), pp. 117-51 (pp. 120-22); Zygmunt G. Barański, '"Sordellus … qui … patrium vulgare deseruit": A Note on *De vulgari eloquentia* i. xv, sections 2-6', in *The Cultural Heritage of the Italian Renaissance: Essays in Honour of T. G. Griffith*, ed. by Clive E. J. Griffiths and Robert Hastings (Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), pp. 19-45; John A. Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), pp. 114-19.

[17] Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante's Poets: Textuality and Truth in the 'Comedy'* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 163.

[18] Sordello, fails to recognise that all the souls in Purgatory are citizens of one true city, the city of God (*Purg*., xiii. 94-96). His patriotism has been defined as 'partisan' (Stewart Farnell, *The Political Ideas of the 'Divine Comedy': An Introduction* (Lanham, New York and London: University Press of America, 1985), p. 57) and even as 'campanilistic' (Zygmunt G. Barański, '*Purgatorio* vi', in *Dante's 'Divine Comedy': Introductory Readings, ii. Purgatorio*, ed. by Tibor Wlassics (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1993), pp. 80-97 (p. 90).

## *Uno prencipe*

The *Convivio* does not, however, draw the Augustinian conclusion towards which it appears to be moving in IV. iv. 3, that, given the sinful nature of humanity, political states are little better than bands of robbers.[19] Rather, it proposes a solution to the discord that *cupiditas* and the *libido dominandi* inevitably bring, which is diametrically opposed to Augustine's fundamental distrust of the political order within the City of Man. According to Dante's treatise, the only possible remedy for the destructive power of the 'gloria d'acquistare' is to place all possessions and all power in the hands of a single individual – 'uno prencipe' – who is immune to *cupiditas*, since he could not possibly want more than what he already has, and is thus able to hold all the smaller political entities under him – kingdoms and cities and factions and families – in the peace and harmony that will allow them to fulfil their Aristotelian longing for 'la vita felice'.[20]

That no such prince exists to bring happiness to the Italy of 1300 should be evident from the opening lines of the invective of *Purgatorio* vi, where, as we have seen, the political peace which the *Convivio* imagines being achieved under the rule of a universal emperor is shown to be entirely lacking. But in case the absence of peace were not proof enough of Italy's failure to realise Dante's political blueprint, the poet goes on to state explicitly that Italy lacks the guidance that could, and should, be provided by such a ruler; that, to use the invective's metaphor, Italy's horse is riderless and out-of-control. And this is all the more shameful, in the poet's eyes, because the horse is already, as it were, fully tacked-up and waiting to be set on the right path towards political harmony: 'Che val perché ti racconciasse il freno / Iustiniano, se la sella è vota?' [What does it profit that Justinian fitted you with the bridle, if the saddle is empty?] (*Purg.*, vi. 88-89). And these lines also establish a strong connection between the invective and the sixth canto of *Paradiso*, where the protagonist and sole speaker is the same

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[19] *De civitate Dei*, iv. 4.

[20] See *Convivio* IV. iv. 4.

Justinian named here. In the Heaven of Mercury, Justinian glosses Dante's statement that he had been responsible for putting the bit and bridle onto the Italian horse, when he introduces himself, explaining that 'd'entro le leggi trassi il troppo e 'l vano' [[I] cast out the excess and the useless from within the laws] (*Par.*, vi. 12).[21]

Justinian may have carried out this important work of revision and simplification, but the central lament of *Purgatorio*'s invective makes it clear that its impact has been severely limited by the dearth of political leaders capable of ensuring its application. The narrow horizons and paltry ambitions of the so-called Emperor of 1300 are indicated by the poet in his scathing reference to Albert of Hapsburg as 'Alberto tedesco' [German Albert] (*Purg.*, vi. 97), an epithet which needs to be read in the context of the rationale for the very concept of empire outlined in *Convivio* IV. iv. 4.[22] The Empire can only fulfil the role for which it was ordained if it is truly universal and absolute, for only then can it overcome the power of *cupiditas*. Albert's 'Germanness' is evidence, then, of his signal failure to grasp the importance of his role's purpose, not only for his own people, but for all people, everywhere; and it is no coincidence that Dante accuses both Albert and his father Rudolph of 'cupidigia' (*Purg.*, vi. 104), for their narrowness of focus can only be a product of their *cupiditas* – their self-interest – and the very opposite of the disinterested world-rule which the earlier work envisions.

Which is not to say, of course, that Albert and Rudolph are unique among emperors in not having embodied the kind of universal remit that the *Convivio* posits as essential for world peace. Not even the great Justinian, in fact, had ruled over such an Empire, as the opening lines of *Paradiso* vi make clear:

> Poscia che Constantin l'aquila volse
> contr'al corso del ciel, ch'ella seguio
> dietro a l'antico che Lavinia tolse,
> cento e cent'anni e più l'uccel di Dio
> ne lo stremo d'Europa si ritenne,
> vicino a' monti de' quai prima uscìo,

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[21] Emperor from 527-565 CE, Justinian's greatest achievement was his codification of Roman law, which gave the Middle Ages a legal framework that was relevant and workable in its new Christian context. See John Moorhead, *Justinian* (London and New York: Longman, 1994).

[22] This is also the view outlined in Book i of the *Monarchia*. All references to this work are to the edition by Bruno Nardi in *Opere minori*, ii, 239-503.

> e sotto l'ombra de le sacre penne  
> governò 'l mondo lì di mano in mano,  
> e, sì cangiando, in su la mia pervenne. (*Par.*, vi. 1-9)
>
> [After Constantine turned the eagle back against the course of the heavens, which it had followed with that ancient one who took Lavinia, twice a hundred years and more God's bird remained at the edge of Europe, near the mountains from which it first came forth, and under the shadow of its sacred wings it governed the world there from hand to hand, and, transferred thus, it came to rest on mine.]

Justinian had ruled the Empire not from what, for Dante, was its rightful place and divinely-predestined seat in Rome,[23] but from Constantinople, where the Empire's capital had been transferred in 330 CE by Constantine, who, significantly, is portrayed here as having moved it in the 'wrong' direction, against the movement of the sun from East to West, and against that in which Aeneas had originally travelled from Troy to Rome in order first to found the city. For all the character's talk of having governed 'il mondo' [the world], then, and without undermining his exceptional importance and influence, Dante immediately makes it clear that Justinian had ruled from a far-flung corner of the Empire, rather than from its rightful centre in Rome. Yet while his Empire may not have been perfect, in stark contrast to the parochial ambitions of 'German Albert', Justinian strove to make it so, battling to reconquer the lands in the Western half of the Empire recently lost to the Ostrogoths.

## *Due soli*

The reference to Constantine in the very first line of *Paradiso* vi cannot but remind the reader of Dante's impassioned invective against the Donation of Constantine in *Inferno* xix:

> Ahi, Constantin, di quanto mal fu matre,  
> non la tua conversion, ma quella dote  
> che da te prese il primo ricco patre! (*Inf.*, xix. 115-17)
>
> [Ah, Constantine, not your conversion, but that dowry which the first rich father took from you, has been the mother of so much evil!]

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[23] This is the question debated in the second book of the *Monarchia* and is also the conclusion arrived at in *Convivio* IV. v: 'spezial nascimento e spezial processo, da Dio pensato e ordinato, fosse quello de la santa cittade' [the birth and growth of the holy city were unique, according to God's plan and providence] (*Conv.*, IV. v. 20).

With the Papacy's acquisition of wealth and power, as we have seen, inevitably comes the desire for more wealth and more power – the corrupting influence of *cupiditas* and the *libido dominandi* – tainting the Church with the same political ills that afflict the secular world. This much is clear in the invective of *Purgatorio* vi where the Church is portrayed as defying the will of God by occupying what should be the rightful seat of the emperor, while the horse of Italy runs amok:

> Ahi gente che dovresti esser devota
> e lasciar seder Cesare in la sella,
> se bene intendi ciò che Dio ti nota,
> guarda come esta fiera è fatta fella
> per non esser corretta da li sproni,
> poi che ponesti mano a la predella. (*Purg.*, vi. 91-96)
>
> [Ah, people who should be devoted and permit Caesar to sit in the saddle, if you attend to God's words to you, see how this beast has become davage, not being governed by the spurs, ever since you seized the reins.]

By referring to these churchmen as those who ought to be devout (but, it is implied, are not), Dante underlines the deleterious effects of religious interference in secular affairs and introduces a new element into the political dynamic traced by the invective. At the root of the parlous political condition of contemporary Italy lies not merely a power vacuum, but a misappropriation of power by an institution whose focus should have been entirely elsewhere: in Augustinian terms, on the City of God, rather than the City of Man.

Dante will reinforce this point just ten cantos further on in *Purgatorio*, when he has Marco Lombardo present the Church and the Empire as Rome's two suns – two lights of equal brilliance but entirely separate remits – in direct opposition to the view which made the latter dependent for its authority on the former, as the moon depends for its light on the light of the sun.[24] The polemical stance which the poet here takes against the views of the contemporary Papacy, most famously expressed in Boniface VIII's Bull, 'Unam Sanctam',[25] will later be elaborated in much greater detail in the *Monarchia*,[26] whose third book carefully refutes, point by point, each of the arguments used by the Papacy to justify its supremacy in the temporal realm. And, even more strikingly, the conclusion of the later work again echoes in both imagery and intent *Purgatorio* vi's invective. Human beings have two goals – happiness in this life and happiness in the next –, and require two guides in order to attain these – the Emperor in the case of the former and the Pope in the case of the latter – for 'humana cupiditas postergaret nisi homines, tanquam equi, sua bestialitate vagantes "in camo et freno" compescerentur in via' [human greed would cast these ends and means aside if men, like horses, prompted to wander by their animal natures, were not held in check 'with bit and bridle' on their journey] (*Mon.*, III. xv. 9).[27] Here, too, it is the Augustinian vice of *cupiditas* that needs to be held in check by the bit and bridle of secular and religious guidance, lest it cause humanity to stray from the 'diritta via'.

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[24] *Purgatorio* xvi. 106-08, and compare *Monarchia* III. iv. 2-3.

[25] 'Unam Sanctam' asserts categorically, and on biblical authority, that 'temporalem auctoritatem spirituali subjici potestati' [the temporal authority is to be subject to the spiritual authority]. Latin text and English translation by Ronald L. Conte are cited from http://www.catholicplanet.com/TSM/Unam-Sanctam-index.htm

If, as I have suggested,[28] the *Monarchia* was written at approximately the same time as *Paradiso*, it is perhaps unsurprising that Justinian too should draw attention to the way in which Church and Empire can work together for the good of both a single individual and a whole community. Justinian tells the pilgrim that he had originally been a follower of the monophysite heresy, which denied the dual nature of Christ ('una natura in Cristo, non piùe / credea' [I believed there was one nature in Christ, no more] (*Par.*, vi. 14-15)),[29] and that it was only once his thinking had been corrected by the 'sommo pastore' [highest shepherd], Pope Agapetus ɪ, that he was able to set to work on the great legal project that would be the new bridle on the horse of state. This account, however, is not entirely historically accurate, for Agapetus is known to have visited Constantinople only in 536 CE, some seven years after Justinian's reordering of Roman law was promulgated. Dante appears to play with chronology here in order to show how the Emperor submits to the authority of the Pope in matters of faith alone; Justinian, that is, accepts Agapetus' direction on the attainment of happiness in the next life, as a necessary prerequisite for his own project – a project in which Agapetus plays no further part – to provide guidance for his subjects on their journey towards the happiness of this life.

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[26] The issue of the date of composition of the *Monarchia* is a complex one. Suffice to say here that I take as genuine the reference to *Paradiso* v in *Monarchia* I. xii. 6, and would thus date the work to close to the end of Dante's life. For a summary of the debate, see Shaw, 'Introduction', in *Monarchy*, pp. xiii-xli (pp. xxxviii-xli), and, for an alternative view, Alberto Casadei, 'Sicut in Paradiso *Comedie* iam dixi', *Studi Danteschi* 76 (2011), 179-97.

[27] In Shaw's translation, this appears as chapter xvi.

[28] See note 27, above.

[29] See John Chapman, 'Monophysites and Monophysitism', in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 10 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911); http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10489b.htm

It is significant, too, that it is not only Agapetus who is presented here as doing God's work; for – talking of his project to revise the laws – Justinian states very clearly that 'a Dio per grazia piacque di spirarmi / l'alto lavoro' [it pleased God, in his grace, to inspire me to the high work] (*Par*., vi. 23-24). The two goals of human life are not, then, one 'merely' human, the other divine, but are *both*, as the *Monarchia* says, ordained by divine providence;[30] and this example of perfect collaboration between Church and Empire shows up all the more sharply the failure of those Churchmen described in *Purgatorio*'s invective, who muddle the two ways and lead the whole of Italy astray. Their failure to recognise the dual ends of human life in the political order is as misguided as was Justinian's failure to recognise the dual nature of Christ, and their refusal to be guided, in temporal matters, by the authority of the emperor is in stark contrast to the way in which Justinian allows himself to be guided to true faith by Agapetus.

## *Plenitudo temporis*

Dante's conviction that both Pope and Emperor have a divinely-ordained mission to fulfil on earth also emerges very clearly from Justinian's account of the history of Rome which takes up much of *Paradiso* vi. Indeed, it seems to be precisely in order to make this point that Justinian tells this story, even though its details are well-known, certainly to Dante-character and to Dante's first readers, as is signalled by the way in which Justinian keeps repeating 'as you know' ('Tu sai […] E sai […] Sai' (*Par*., vi. 37, 40, 43)).

The story of Rome is told here as the story of the eagle, Rome's sign and standard, as it moves from place to place (from East to West and then back from West to East) and from one individual or group to another, from the city's earliest history to the time of writing. But this eagle is precisely a 'sacrosanto segno' [sacrosanct emblem] (*Par*., vi. 32), and Justinian's is not so much a lesson in history as in salvation history, for this story is not merely a chronological account of a sequence of historical events, but builds to (and falls away from) a climactic moment, the moment when providential and temporal plans come together, when the divine Christ becomes also human.

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[30] 'Duos igitur fines providentia illa inenarrabilis homini proposuit intendendos: beatitudinem scilicet huius vite […] et beatitudinem vite ecterne' [Ineffable providence has thus set before us two goals to aim at: i.e. happiness in this life […] and happiness in the eternal life] (*Mon.*, III. xv [xvi]. 7).

Thus, the passing of the imperial emblem from the hands of the city's founders to the early kings, and on to the heroes of the Republican period is all presented as mere preparation for the time when it would reach the hands of the emperors, under whom, finally (and uniquely), the world would attain perfect peace – a peace willed both by God ('’l ciel') and by Rome:

> Poi, presso al tempo che tutto ’l ciel volle
> redur lo mondo a suo modo sereno,
> Cesare per voler di Roma il tolle. […]
> Con costui [Augustus] corse infino al lito rubro
> con costui puose il mondo in tanta pace
> che fu serrato a Giano il suo delubro. (*Par.*, vi. 55-57, 79-81)
>
> [Then, near to the time when all the heavens wished to reduce the world to their own serene measure, Caesar took it by the will of Rome. […] With him [Augustus] it coursed as far as the Red shore, with him it brought such peace to the world that Janus' temple was barred up.]

The word 'pace' [peace] at the end of line 80, marks the climax, not only of this canto, but of history itself, for – although Justinian does not make this explicit here – it is the peace achieved by Augustus which creates the conditions necessary for the birth of Christ, as Dante explains in the *Monarchia*:

> [N]on inveniemus nisi sub divo Augusto monarcha, existente Monarchia perfecta, mundum undique fuisse quietum. Et quod tunc humanum genus fuerit felix in pacis universalis tranquillitate hoc ystoriographi omnes […] dignatus est; et […] Paulus 'plenitudinem temporis' statum illum felicissimum appellavit. (*Mon.* i. xvi. 1-2)
>
> [[W]e shall not find that there ever was peace throughout the world except under the immortal Augustus, when a perfect monarchy existed. That mankind was then happy in the calm of universal peace is attested by all historians […] and […] Paul called that most happy state 'the fullness of time'.]

The universal peace achieved under Augustus in the *plenitudo temporis* clearly opposes that universal lack of peace exemplified in contemporary

Italy in the parallel passage of *Purgatorio* vi; but Dante also makes clear, through Justinian's account, that this is a unique occurrence – that there never has been universal peace in all the world under a perfect world monarch except at this moment under Augustus. Everything that happens before this moment is just a preparation for it, and all that happens after it is a mere historical falling-away.

Moreover, Dante does not stop here, for Christ's mission on earth necessitated not only his birth, but also his death. For this reason, although, as an earthly emperor, Tiberius was a much less obviously positive character than Augustus, Dante gives him particular prominence here for his role in effecting the Crucifixion, through which sins are forgiven and the way to Heaven, closed by the Fall, is reopened:

> Ma ciò che 'l segno che parlar mi face
> fatto avea prima e poi era fatturo
> per lo regno mortal ch'a lui soggiace,
> diventa poi in apparenza poco e scuro,
> se in mano al terzo Cesare si mira
> con occhio chiaro e con affetto puro:
> ché la viva Giustizia che mi spira
> li concedette, in mano a quel ch'i' dico,
> gloria di far vendetta a la sua ira. (*Par.*, vi. 82-90)

> [But what the emblem that makes me speak had done earlier, and was to do later for the mortal realm that is subject to it, seems little and obscure if it is watched in the hand of third Caesar [Tiberius] with clear eye and pure affect: for the living Justice that inspires me granted it, in the hands of the one of whom I speak, the glory of taking vengeance for his anger.]

Dante's praise of Tiberius may seem hyperbolic, but, seen *sub specie aeternitatis*, the importance of the judgement which he passes on Christ can scarcely be overstated;[31] for if Christ is to take upon himself the sins of the whole world, then he must be punished 'justly', that is, by a legally constituted authority – one with authority over that whole world whose sins are being punished. Where the *Convivio* had given a more pragmatic reason for the Empire to be universal in the here-and-now – that is, in order to eliminate *cupiditas* –, *Paradiso* vi presents a more theological justification for the universal nature of Empire, at least at its inception – that is, in order that the birth and death of Christ in that human form which Justinian had initially denied, but whose necessity he here enthusiastically embraces, carry out its ordained function in salvation history.[32]

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[31] 'The qualifications of Tiberius for inclusion here are uniquely theological' (Robert Hollander and Albert Rossi, 'Dante's Republican Treasury', *Dante Studies* 104 (1986), 59-82 (p. 62)).

Returning to *Purgatorio*, then, it is a sign of Dante's increasing lack of hope for any possible solution to the crisis of Italy's corruption that, in his despair, even the effectiveness of the Crucifixion comes to be called into question. With a typically bold syncretist flourish, Dante turns to Christ directly, addressing him as the Roman god, Jupiter, and asking: 'O sommo Giove / che fosti in terra per noi crucifisso, / son li giusti occhi tuoi rivolti altrove?' [O highest Jove, who were crucified on earth for us, are your just eyes turned elsewhere?] (*Purg.*, vi. 118-20). Has God, who so loved the world that he sent his own son to be crucified for its sake, Dante asks, now abandoned it entirely? This is surely a rhetorical question, and one to which the poet provides the answer in the next lines, reminding his readers of their human limitations: those same limitations, indeed, which make it so difficult for them to live in peace with one another, especially when proper guidance and leadership is lacking.

> O è preparazion che ne l'abisso
> del tuo consiglio fai per alcun bene
> in tutto de l'accorger nostro scisso? (*Purg.*, vi. 121-23)
>
> [Or is it a preparation that in the abyss of your counsel you are making, for some good utterly severed from our perception?]

Christ's victory over death and sin cannot have been in vain; rather, the divine purpose behind Italy's political difficulties must simply be incomprehensible to those immediately caught up in it. Perhaps, indeed, the poet consoles himself, God has a remedy for Italy's slavishness already in hand.

## *Divus et Augustus et Cesar*

In 1300, the fictional date of the pilgrim's journey through the afterlife, no such potential solution immediately presents itself. 'German Albert' is clearly no Augustus, and the poet here appears to hold out no greater hope for whoever may succeed him, wishing vindictive justice on the whole dynasty:

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[32] See also *Monarchia* II. xi. 5.

> giusto giudicio da le stelle caggia
> sovra 'l tuo sangue, e sia novo e aperto,
> tal che 'l tuo successor temenza n'aggia! (*Purg*., vi. 100-02)
>
> [may just judgment fall from the stars onto your blood, and let it be strange and public, so that your successor may fear it!]

But nothing could be further from the way in which Dante had come to feel about Albert's successor by the time that he was completing *Purgatorio*.[33] This much is evidenced by the series of impassioned letters which Dante composed at this time on themes which echo those of the cantos under consideration in the present chapter: Florence and Italy, Church and Empire.

The letters numbered v, vi, and vii in most editions of Dante's works were written between Autumn 1310 and the end of April 1311, and all relate directly to the Italian campaign of the successor of 'German Albert', Henry VII, Duke of Luxembourg. Henry had been chosen as Emperor-elect in November 1308 and crowned by the Archbishop of Cologne in January 1309. Only a coronation in Rome, however, could confirm his imperial authority, and so, in Autumn 1310, he set out for Italy, crossing the Alps on 23 October. At this time, Dante wrote to the princes and peoples of Italy, announcing Henry's arrival in Italy with undisguised joy and hope. This hope was to be short-lived, however. After an enthusiastic reception in Milan, Henry failed to proceed swiftly to a coronation in Rome, and by the spring of 1311, when Dante wrote his letters addressed to the Florentines and to Henry himself, his journey had stalled in the face of strong opposition from Florence and her allies and of delaying tactics on the part of Pope Clement v. Henry died of malaria in 1313, without ever having conquered Florence or established his Empire in Rome.[34] These letters express, with almost painful intensity, Dante's hopes for a restoration of the great Roman Empire of the past in the figure of Henry, who is consistently portrayed as a political saviour, who will bring an end to the wars and factionalism which plague the Italian peninsula, and against which Dante inveighs so vehemently in *Purgatorio* vi, and bring about a peace which will be like that only previously achieved under Augustus.

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[33] It is not possible to date the writing of the *Purgatorio* with any certainty, but it seems likely that *Purgatorio* vi was written earlier than 1311, and that Henry's Italian campaign corresponds roughly with the composition of the second half of the *cantica*.

[34] See William M. Bowsky, *Henry VII in Italy: The Conflict of Empire and City-State, 1310-1313* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1960).

Here, then, far from imagining a Christ who turns his face away from an Italy in turmoil, Dante envisions an imperial Messiah, a bringer of peace, as can be seen from just one example,[35] taken from the opening paragraphs of the first of these missives:

> 'Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile' quo signa surgunt consolationis et pacis. […] Saturabuntur omnes qui esuriunt et sitiunt iustitiam in lumine radiorum eius, et confundentur qui diligunt iniquitatem a facie coruscantis. Arrexit namque aures misericordes Leo fortis de tribu Iuda; atque […] Moysen alium suscitavit, qui de gravaminibus Egiptiorum populum suum eripiet, ad terram lacte ac melle manantem perducens. Letare iam nunc miseranda Ytalia […] quia sponsus tuus, mundi solatium et gloria plebis tue, clementissimus Henricus, divus et Augustus et Cesar, ad nuptias properat. (*Epist*., v. 1-2)
>
> ['Now is the favourable time', when signs of solace and of peace are emerging. […] All those who hunger and thirst for justice will then be satisfied in the light of his radiance, while those who love injustice will be confounded by his dazzling face. For the great Lion of the tribe of Judah has pricked up his merciful ears, and […] has called up a new Moses, who will deliver his people from their Egyptian oppression and lead them to a land flowing with milk and honey. Now is the time for you to rejoice, Italy […], because your bridegroom, the world's comforter and glory of your people, that most merciful Henry, holy Augustus and Caesar, is hurrying to his wedding.]

Here, the biblical references in support of Henry's messianic status come thick and fast. Dante announces the 'favourable time', as Paul had done in his second letter to the church at Corinth, immediately associating Henry's mission in Italy with that of Christ and his first followers on earth;[36] there are echoes of both the Beatitudes and the *Nunc dimittis*;[37] Henry is a second Moses, who will transform Italy into a new Promised Land; he is the Lion of Judah,[38] and the bridegroom of the Song of Songs;[39] Henry is, in short, both a new Augustus and a second Christ.

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[35] For a brief survey of the many Christological references in these letters, see my '"Ritornerò poeta…": Florence, Exile, and Hope', in *'Se mai continga…': Exile, Politics, and Theology in Dante*, ed. by Claire E. Honess and Matthew Treherne (Ravenna: Longo, 2013), pp. 85-103 (pp. 94-98).

[36] The reference is to ii Corinthians 6.2, which in turn cites Isaiah 49.8. Both passages express the certainty of God's imminent intervention to restore order to human affairs.

[37] See Matthew 5.6; Luke 2.32.

Dante is here making utterly exceptional claims for Henry. And the more he exalts Henry in this way, the more severely he appears to judge those who – out of petty self-interest – would resist his divinely-willed arrival on Italian soil. The language that Dante uses in the letter to the Florentines, for example, follows very closely that of the invective of *Purgatorio* vi:

> solio augustali vacante, totus orbis exorbitat, quod nauclerus et remiges in navicula Petri dormitant, et quod Ytalia misera, sola, privatis arbitriis derelicta omnique publico moderamine destituta, quanta ventorum fluentorumve concussione feratura verba non caperent. (*Epist.*, vi. 1)
>
> [When the throne of Augustus is vacant, the whole world goes awry, the captain and the oarsmen of the ship of St Peter fall asleep, and wretched Italy, left alone, at the mercy of private decisions and devoid of any public control, is so battered and buffeted by gales and floods that words cannot describe it.]

Not only does the imagery of the storm-tossed ship here echo the reference to Italy as a 'nave sanza nocchiere in gran tempesta' [ship without a pilot in a great storm] (*Purg.*, vi. 77), but the same adjective 'misera' [wretched] (*Purg.*, vi. 85) is used in both passages, and in both cases the impact of the lack of imperial direction is far reaching: not a single part of Italy enjoys peace, just as the whole world is seen to go awry without its Emperor.

In these letters, as in the three cantos presently under consideration, however, the poet's strongest rebukes are reserved for Florence, which is described in the letter to Henry – in a passage of invective that surpasses, for sheer bile, anything in the *Commedia* – through a series of images which evoke the city's cunning, violence and moral turpitude, piling one image on top of another in a relentless verbal onslaught:

> Hec est vipera versa in viscera genetricis; hec est languida pecus gregem domini sui sua contagione commaculans; hec Myrrha scelestis et impia […]; hec Amata illa impatiens […]. Vere matrem viperea feritate dilaniare

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[38] This term is used throughout the Bible (from Genesis 49.9 to Revelation 5.5) to designate the Messiah.

[39] Biblical exegesis traditionally associated the Bridegroom of the Song of Songs with Christ and the Bride with the Church. See E. Ann Matter, *'The Voice of My Beloved': The Song of Songs in Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

> contendit dum contra Romam cornua rebellionis exacuit […]. Vere fumos, evaporante sanie, vitiantes exhalat […]. (*Epist.*, vii. 7)
>
> [She is the viper who turns against the vitals of her own mother; she is the sick sheep which infects her master's flock with her disease; she is Myrrha, wicked and ungodly […]; she is the wrathful Amata […]. With all the ferocity of a viper she strives to tear her mother to pieces, as she sharpens the horns of her rebellion against Rome. […] She gives off fetid fumes, dripping with gore […].]

This passage, with its accumulation of animal images, recalls Dante's description of the monstrous Cerberus in *Inferno* vi, ruling over a circle of sinners reduced by their greed to all that is most primitive and bestial in human nature, and of the pig-like glutton,[40] Ciacco. In *Purgatorio* too the image of the wild beast recurs when the horse that Justinian had once tamed is seen to have become fierce and cruel, untamed and wild, as it rampages, riderless and out of control; while in *Paradiso* Justinian warns the Florentine Guelphs that to try to appropriate the imperial ensign for themselves risks reprisals from 'li artigli / ch'a più alto leon trasser lo vello' [the claws that flayed a greater lion] (*Par.*, vi. 107-08).

## *Vedova e sola*

Moreover, just as in the letter Florence is compared to wicked women – the incestuous Myrrha,[41] and Amata,[42] who in the *Aeneid* resists the divinely ordained foundation of Rome by opposing the marriage of Aeneas and Lavinia – so too in *Purgatorio* vi both Italy and Florence are described through female parallels: Italy is 'non donna di province, ma bordello' [not a ruler of provinces, but a whore] (*Purg.*, vi. 78), and Florence, in her restlessness – the restlessness of relentless *cupiditas* –, is like a sick crone, tossing and turning, unable to get comfortable on her bed; that is, never satisfied with what she has, but seeking more power, more land, greater independence, and ever greater wealth, at the prompting of that 'gloria d'acquistare' described in the *Convivio*:

> E se ben ti ricordi e vedi lume,
> vedrai te somigliante a quella inferma
> che non può trovar posa in su le piume,

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[40] Ciacco's name means 'hog'.

[41] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* x. 298-518; and compare *Inferno* xxx. 37-39.

[42] *Aeneid* vii. 341-72 and xii. 593-603; and compare *Purgatorio* xvii. 35-39.

> ma con dar volta suo dolore scherma. (*Purg*., vi. 148-151)

> [And if you take stock of yourself and can see the light, you will see that you resemble that sick woman who cannot find rest on her mattress, but shields her pain by tossing and turning.]

Likewise, Rome is described in female terms in the invective as 'vedova e sola' [widowed and alone] crying out for the emperor who has abandoned her, in a phrase which recalls the opening verse of the Book of Lamentations: 'Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo! Facta est quasi vidua domina gentium!' [How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! how is the mistress of the Gentiles become as a widow!]. Rome – the city which *should* be the heart and the head of the Empire, as it had been under Augustus – is portrayed as a second Jerusalem, but a Jerusalem which is not a Promised Land, but like the city of Lamentations, a Jerusalem in ruins with its Temple destroyed.[43]

Here too the tone echoes that of Dante's letters, for this same passage from the Book of Lamentations is quoted directly by Dante at the beginning of the letter which he wrote in 1314 following the death of Pope Clement v, and addressed to the Italian cardinals in conclave at Carpentras,[44] where he claims Clement's death, following close on the death of Henry in the previous year, has left Rome destitute and widowed, deprived of both the Church (which has been in 'exile' in Avignon since 1309) and the Empire. And the passage also evokes a letter now lost to us (or perhaps entirely fictional): that which Dante claims to have written to the 'principi de la terra' to mark the death of Beatrice.[45] Through the simple but emblematic phrase, 'vedova e sola', then, Dante is able here to set up a complex series of cross references which look both forwards and backwards in time. The

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[43] On the presence of the Lamentations and other biblical passages regarding the destruction of Jerusalem in Dante's works, see Ronald Martinez, 'Dante's Jeremiads: The Fall of Jerusalem and the Burden of the New Pharisees, the Capetians and Florence', in *Dante for the New Millennium*, ed. by Teodolinda Barolini and H. Wayne Storey (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), pp. 301-19.

[44] Letter xi in modern editions.

[45] '[S]crissi a li principi de la terra alquanto de la sua [di Firenze] condizione, pigliando quello cominciamento di Geremia profeta che dice: *Quomodo sedet sola civitas*' [I […] wrote to the princes of the land describing its [Florence's] condition, taking my opening words from the prophet Jeremiah where he says: *Quomodo sedet sola civitas*] (*Vita Nuova*, xxx. 1). References to this work are taken from the edition by Domenico De Robertis, in *Opere minori*, ii. i, 1-247. The translation is by Mark Musa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). There is no evidence, beyond this statement in the *Vita Nuova* itself, that this letter was actually written.

Rome of 1300 (the time of the journey through Purgatory) is widowed and alone because her Emperor – 'German Albert' – ignores and abandons her. But this Rome of 1300 also looks forward to the Rome of the second decade of the fourteenth century (the time of writing of *Paradiso*), which has waited so long for its 'Cesare' to arrive – in the form now of Henry, rather than Albert – only for him to prove ineffectual in standing up to the Papacy and unable to conquer Florence, and for his imperial mission to be cut short by his death only fourteen months after his eventual coronation in Rome; it has, in the meantime, also lost the Papacy. And both these widowed Romes look back to the widowed city of Florence, deprived not of her political guides, but of her guide to Heaven: Beatrice.

## *Dolce armonia*

And it is to Heaven, appropriately enough, that we must turn by way of a conclusion. In the introduction to this reading, I suggested that the 'Ahi serva Italia' passage in *Purgatorio* vi could be read as a gloss on the relationship between Dante-pilgrim's otherworldly journey and the poet's political journey through the 'selva oscura' [dark wood] of our life on earth. It is clear that the pessimism of the invective is anticipated in *Inferno* vi – though with a much narrower focus – by Ciacco's account of the wickedness of Florence, a city where even the noblest and best citizens are consigned to deepest Hell:

> 'Farinata e 'l Tegghiaio, che fuor sì degni,
> Iacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo e 'l Mosca,
> e li altri ch'a ben far puoser li 'ngegni,
> dimmi ove sono e fa ch'io li conosca;
> ché gran disio mi stringe di savere
> se 'l ciel li addolcia o lo 'nferno li attosca.'
> E quelli: 'Ei sono tra l'anime più nere;
> diverse colpe giù li grava al fondo.' (*Inf.*, vi. 79-86)
>
> [Farinata and Tegghiaio, who were so worthy, Iacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo and Mosca, and the others who turned their wits to doing well, tell me where they are and cause me to know them; for great desire urges me to understand if Heaven sweetens or Hell poisons them.' And he: 'They are among the blacker souls; various sins weigh them toward the bottom.']

As Dante's protagonist proceeds on his journey through the afterlife his focus widens and his understanding deepens, just as, in the political world outside the text, events move on, and the historical Dante breaks away from the White Guelphs exiled with him in 1301 and begins to embrace – in his behaviour and in his writing – the concept of that 'parte per [se] stesso' [party unto [him]self] (*Par.*, xvii. 69) that his ancestor, Cacciaguida will tell him to form when they meet in the Heaven of Mars. Henry succeeds Albert, and Dante embraces the aims of his Italian campaign with an enthusiasm that puts Sordello's patriotic fervour in *Purgatorio* vi to shame. Until, that is, Henry fails, leaving Rome widowed once more, and the prophetic tone of Dante's letters ringing like so much empty rhetoric.

It is my contention that, in the wake of Henry's death, Dante dramatically reassesses his conception of the political order, and specifically his belief in the possibility of the establishment of a universal Roman Empire on earth. How, if his letters are taken at face value, could it be otherwise? In *Paradiso*, then – and most notably in Justinian's thoroughly providential, Christ-centred, account of Roman history – we are presented, I believe, with a story with a beginning (Aeneas's flight from Troy), a middle (the Incarnation and Crucifixion: the providential moments on which the whole story hangs), and an end: Dante's here-and-now, a time when no new Emperor could make of 'serva Italia' a land of milk and honey, and no new Messiah could bring about Italy's (political) redemption. Just as I believe that the *Monarchia* is not a practical political manual, a blueprint for world domination, but a utopian meditation on what might have been, and a reflection on what – between 1310 and 1313 – had gone so badly wrong,[46] so too, it seems to me, in *Paradiso* vi we find a description of that perfect Empire of which Dante dreams, but devoid of any sense that it can now ever be reconstructed on earth. It is in this sense that the pessimism of the invective against Italy of *Purgatorio* vi, notwithstanding the fact that a good portion of the pilgrim's otherworldly – and the poet's worldly – journey remains to be undertaken when it is pronounced, comes ultimately to stand as Dante's definitive statement on human political affairs.

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[46] See my '"Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile": Henry vii and Dante's Ideal of Peace', *The Italianist* 33 (2013), 484-504 (pp. 496-97). Cassell notes that the *Monarchia* is 'a text disincarnate' (Anthony K. Cassell, '*Monarchia*', in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Richard Lansing (New York: Garland, 2000), pp. 616-23 (p. 617)), while Shaw affirms that there is nothing implausible about the suggestion 'that Dante would compose a treatise demonstrating the need for an emperor when his hopes in practical terms of ever seeing this come about in his own lifetime had been definitively dashed' (Shaw, 'Introduction', p. xl).

And yet it must not be forgotten that in the three cantos which this chapter explores – as in the *Commedia* as a whole – the poet traces a trajectory 'di Fiorenza in popol giusto e sano' [from Florence to a people just and whole] (*Par.*, xxxi. 39). If 'Ahi serva Italia' is the fulcrum about which these cantos turn, this does not mean that a more conventionally 'vertical' reading is impossible. Indeed, on one level a vertical reading is what the *Commedia* insists upon, as it strains ever upwards towards that 'vera città' of which the souls in Purgatory are already citizens.[47] And this is important, because, while I believe that Henry's death occasioned in Dante a deep political pessimism with regard to the here-and-now, this does not necessarily mean that he gave up altogether on the notion of community, but only that he shifted his 'political' ideal upwards, heavenwards, to that realm where all the souls want only what God wills for them, not only accepting, but actively rejoicing in his justice and his rule, and where, therefore, *cupiditas* and the *libido dominandi* are replaced, as Justinian explains, by the sweet harmony of the perfect community:

> Quindi addolcisce la viva Giustizia
> in noi l'affetto sì che non si puote
> torcer già mai ad alcuna nequizia.
> Diverse voci fanno dolci note:
> così diversi scanni in nostra vita
> rendon dolce armonia tra queste rote. (*Par.*, vi. 121-26)

> [Thus the living Justice sweetens our love so that it can never be turned aside to any iniquity. Different voices make sweet notes: thus different thrones in this our life produce a sweet harmony among these wheels.]

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[47] *Purgatorio* xiii. 95; and compare *Paradiso* xxx. 130.

# 7. The Wheeling Sevens[1]

## *Simon A. Gilson*

Vertical reading might, at one level, be seen as a reaction to the *Lectura Dantis*, the formalized, often institutionalized, reading of a single canto that began with Boccaccio and continues to this day. For Dante's early readers, and probably for at least the first two centuries after his death, the *Lectura* was a means not simply of explaining the poem but of making Dante authoritative in relation to classical authors, treating major theoretical debates, defining his and one's own literary and intellectual status, and, in Florence at least, celebrating civic identity. As we reach the seven-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the poet's birth, the *Lectura Dantis* remains extremely popular in Italy, and is practiced in North America and the United Kingdom. It is, amongst other things, a good teaching device, offers an excellent opportunity for engaging with a broader non-academic public, and is also a good way to hear the poem read out loud.[2] Concentration on a single canto is far from being wrong-headed. The canto is a remarkably

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[1] The video of this lecture is available at the Cambridge Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy website, https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1521936
I wish to thank George Corbett and Heather Webb for their kind invitation to give the lecture on which this essay is based and for their assistance in preparing the essay for publication. I am also grateful to Zyg Barański for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

[2] On the history of the *Lectura Dantis*, see Aldo Vallone *s.v.*, 'Lectura Dantis', in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, 6 vols (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1970-76), III, 606-09. Important current or recent collections or cycles of readings include: *Lectura Dantis Turicensis*, *Lectura Dantis Andreapolitana*, *Lectura Dantis Bononiensis*, *Lectura Dantis Californiana*. Important earlier collections include: *Lectura Dantis Newberryana*, *Lectura Dantis Cantabrigiensis*, *Lectura Dantis Virginiana*, *Lectura Dantis Neopolitana*. An interesting format is the grouping of three cantos in *Esperimenti danteschi* (published by Marietti in 2008, 2009, 2010) based at the Università degli Studi in Milan.

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innovative Dantean invention; and, as a narrative unit that is both open and closed, it constitutes a fundamental building bloc in the poem. In Dante's hands, it is wonderfully flexible and varied, both thematically and stylistically; and it is vital to the narrative drive, memorability and performability of the poem. But if we are looking for more profound analysis, richer contextualization, a stronger sense of what the poem's messages and strategies are, and perhaps also for close critical reading, then, the *Lectura Dantis* has often had its limitations, especially given that over time the tradition has acquired a degree of in-built conservatism, a tendency towards self-referentiality, as Dantists have looked back to earlier efforts of fellow Dantists.[3]

Of course, there has long been a basic recognition that we must go beyond the canto, an awareness that it needs to be fitted into broader patterns, including broader blocs of cantos, and a perception that some cantos are more 'pivotal' than others in acting as 'lodestones' engaging the reader to reflect on what the poem is revealing.[4] The main way that readers, past and present, have tended to break down what one might call the constricted hermeneutical possibilities of reading a single canto is through a technique known as reading 'Dante with Dante' or 'leggere Dante con Dante'. Such techniques again begin with Dante's very first readers, and in some periods form a central part of critical vocabulary and method. In the sixteenth century, for example, it became almost an exegetical axiom that an author is best explained by his other works, that each author is his own best interpreter.[5] Vertical reading might be seen as a peculiarly privileged form of reading Dante with Dante, for it is well known that some patterns of verticality across numerically corresponding cantos from each *cantica* are emphatically marked out so that they amount to powerful structuring principles. The best-known example in Dante studies is the way in which the Sixes deal with political matters, but critical attention has also been paid to the Tens, where we see the development of interrelated concerns with nature, artistry and fame; the Fifteens and Sixteens that probe the significance of Dante's exile and the relationships between politics and language; and the Twenty-fives and Twenty-sixes that are concerned with the body, language and poetry.[6] Although no one has yet made a systematic effort to engage in vertical readings across the entire poem, this does not mean that we are working entirely in a vacuum. Several critical essays, some dating back to the 1980s, have used the term 'vertical reading', in particular Victoria Kirkham's treatment of the eleventh cantos and sections of a monograph by Richard Shoaf that deals extensively with the relationships between the Thirties.[7] Perhaps the best-known earlier contribution is, however, an essay on the so-called technique of the parallel episode, 'la tecnica degli episodi paralleli', by Amilcare Iannucci.[8] Here, Iannucci draws attention to the way that Dante criticizes himself, that is, how Dante provides his own self-exegesis within the body of the poem, by consciously aligning episodes that have precise parallels (though this does not always mean aligning parallel cantos). Iannucci's essay is also important because it draws attention to antecedents for Dante, in particular the function of the parallel passage in Biblical exegesis. Of considerable value, too, is the innovative use of endnotes under the rubric of 'Inter cantica' (though the correspondences are again far from being exclusively focused on parallel cantos) provided by Ronald Martinez and Robert Durling in the commentary to their edition of *Purgatorio*.[9]

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[3] On the canto, see esp. Zygmunt G. Barański, 'The Poetics of Meter: *Terza rima*, "canto", "canzon", "cantica"', in *Dante Now: Current Trends in Dante Studies*, ed. by Theodore J. Cachey Jr. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), pp. 3-41; Teodolinda Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 21-47, 257-66.

[4] For these terms, see Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Structural Retrospection in Dante's *Comedy*: The Case of *Purgatorio* xxvii', *Italian Studies* 41 (1986), 1-23; Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, p. 89. The late Peter Armour used to tell his own colourfully imagined anecdote of Dante standing up at the Cangrande court to recite his poem: in this version, the courtiers would look at one another and mutter words to the effect that 'No, not *Paradiso* VII (one of the most theologically dense in the entire poem); why can't we have the swooning Paolo and the seductive Francesca again'.

[5] See Giovan Battista Gelli, *Letture edite e inedite sopra la Commedia di Dante*, ed. by Carlo Negroni, 2 vols (Florence: Bocca, 1887), i, 86: '[…] non si potere espor meglio uno scrittore, che con le parole sue medesime'.

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[6] For these examples, see, on the Sixes, Camillo Massi, 'A proposito dei sesti canti della *Commedia*', *L'Alighieri* 7 (1996), 91-94; on the Tens, Simon Gilson, 'Divine and Natural Artistry in the *Commedia*', in *Art and Nature in Dante: Literary and Theological Essays*, ed. by Daragh O'Connell and Jennifer Petrie (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), pp. 153-86; *The Divine Comedy. Volume 2. Purgatory*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling with additional notes by Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 171-72; on the Fifteens and Sixteens, Richard Kay, 'Parallel Cantos in Dante's *Commedia*', *Res publica litterarum* 15 (1992), 109-13; Simon A. Gilson, '*Inferno* xvi', in *Lectura Dantis Andreapolitana*, ed. by Claudia Rossignoli and Robert Wilson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, forthcoming); on the Twenty-fives and Twenty-sixes, Franco Fido, 'Writing Like God – or Better? Symmetries in Dante's 26th and 27th Cantos of the *Commedia*', *Italica* 53 (1986), 250-64; Kevin Brownlee, 'Why the Angels speak Italian: Dante as Vernacular *Poeta* in *Paradiso* xxv', *Poetics Today* 5:3 (1984), 597-610. See also, on the Twenty-sevens, Roberto Antonelli, 'Come e perché Dante ha scritto la *Divina Commedia*', *Critica del testo* 14 (2011), 1-21; and the following note for the Elevens and the Thirties.

[7] See Victoria Kirkham, 'Eleven is for Evil: Measured Trespass in Dante's *Commedia*', *Allegorica* 10 (1989), 27-50; Richard Shoaf, *Dante, Chaucer and the Currency of the Word: Money, Images and Reference in late Medieval Poetry* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1983), esp. part one. See also Paul Shaw, 'A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*', *Stanford Italian Studies* 7:1/2 (1987), 67-76.

[8] See Amilcare A. Iannucci, 'Autoesegesi dantesca: la tecnica dell'"episodio" parallelo', *Lettere Italiane* 33:1 (1981), 305-28. See also Kay, 'Parallel Cantos'.

As this overview has begun to suggest, then, the main value of vertical reading can be related to, and subsumed within, more general features of the poem's textuality, in particular its macro-structure, its concern with form and the fashioning of its meta-textual structure. As regards the macro-structure, our ability to discern patterns – and this applies to certain parallel or numerically corresponding cantos – is a product of the Dantean preoccupation with order, symmetry and balance in all that he does. To use a celebrated, if in part flawed, analogy, we might think about the way the poem has often been compared to a great Gothic cathedral in which all parts cohere in concord, and in which all particularities and facets form part of an intricate system of correspondences that are subordinated to a grand design.[10] Of course, this is a preoccupation to be found throughout Dante's production, and most especially in the *Vita nova*, the *Convivio* and the *De vulgari eloquentia*.[11] But in the *Commedia* such ordering takes on a remarkable intensity and prominence in a poem to which 'mano e cielo', 'heaven and earth' (*Par*., xxv. 2), have contributed, and which provides a comic synthesis of the two 'volumi', the book of creation and that of the Bible. Every student of the poem is, for example, familiar with the regimentation of the Threes: three *cantiche*, thirty-three cantos (although of course for *Inferno* the presence of a prologue and its numerical 'deformity' raises interesting questions about where the vertical line might be placed),[12] three subsections of each *cantica*, the three guides, the three visions upon which each *cantica* ends. One thinks also of such equally well-known features as the ending of each of the *cantiche* on 'stelle', and the predilection for numerical correspondences of various kinds throughout the poem, the most prominent and powerful of which are found in the central cantos of *Purgatorio*.[13] There is, of course, a well-known Biblical underpinning here, the Book of Wisdom 11.26: 'Sed omnia mensura et ordo et pondere disposuisti' [God ordered all things in measure, weight and number], and Dante may well have been particularly sensitive and susceptible to a sort of neo-Pythagorean, Christianizing aesthetic of numbers. Number is very much a matter of poetry, too: in the *De vulgari eloquentia* (II. iv. 2) Dante defines poetry in relation to rhetoric and music, and, for Dante, music reflects the order governing the entire universe, an order which should regulate human nature. In this respect, it is notable that, in late ancient and medieval culture, seven is a very important number indeed, one which evokes strong associations with creation and perfection. In his *De doctrina Christiana* – a work well known to Dante – Augustine refers to the power of numbers and draws particular attention to the number seven as associated with life, the body and creatureliness.[14] And an early fifth-century Platonizing commentator of Cicero and Virgil, Macrobius, whose commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* was also known to Dante, viewed the number seven as key to the universe and as the regulator of the entire fabric of the human body.[15] Though we need to be careful with a theme such as the human body, which is so pervasive in the poem, it may well not be a coincidence, given the Augustinian and Macrobian antecedents, that creation and the human body are major concerns in our group of cantos, and especially in *Purgatorio* vii and *Paradiso* vii.

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[9] See Durling and Martinez, *The Divine Commedy: Purgatory*, esp. pp. 25 and 33, who refer to 'Inter cantica' as 'system of recall of the earlier *cantiche*, often in the form of parallels between similarly numbered cantos, sometimes even between similarly numbered lines' (p. 33).

[10] It may well be better to use analogies borrowed from other fields. Osip Mandelstam, who commented gnomically that 'future commentary on Dante belongs to the natural sciences', observed in particular how it is 'unthinkable that one might encompass with the eye or visually imagine to oneself this shape of thirteen thousand facets with its monstrous exactitude'. For Mandelstaum, 'European Dante criticism […] has nailed him to the landscape of Hell. […] No one has yet approached it with a geologist's hammer, in order to ascertain the crystalline structure of the rock, in order to see the particles of other minerals in it, to study its smoky colour, its garish patterning, to judge it as a mineral crystal which has been subjected to the most varied series of accidents', in Osip Mandelstam, *Osip Mandelstam: Selected Essays*, trans. by Sidney Monas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), quotations at pp. 16, 14 and 23 (from 'Conversation on Dante', translated by Clarence Brown and Robert Hughes).

[11] On the cultivation of symmetries in the ordering of earlier works, see John A. Scott, *Understanding Dante* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), pp. 22-23 (*Vita nova*), pp. 140-41 (*Convivio*), p. 148 (*Monarchia*); Larry Peterman, 'Reading the *Convivio*', *Dante Studies* 103 (1985), 125-38 (p. 134).

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[12] Kay is alert to this point; see 'Parallel Cantos'.

[13] On the centres of *Purgatorio*, see Charles S. Singleton, 'The Poet's Number at the Centre', *Modern Language Notes* 80 (1965), 1-10; Arianna Punzi, 'Centro e centri nella *Commedia*', *Anticomoderno* 4 (1999), 73-89; Corrado Bologna, '*Purgatorio* XVII (Al centro del viaggio, il Vuoto)', *Studi danteschi* 69 (2004), 1-22.

[14] Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, lib. ii, c. 16, § 25, in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 34, col. 48, where discussion of number symbolism in Scripture includes the number seven: 'septenarius autem numerus creaturam indicat propter vitam et corpus' [the number seven indicates the creature on account of life and the body].

[15] See Macrobius, *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis, Comm. in Somn. Scip.*, lib. i, c. 6, §§ 45-82, ed. by J. Willis (Leipzig: Teubner, 1963), pp. 26-34, who refers to the significance of the number seven in relation to the world soul (§§ 45-46), seven spheres (§ 47), moon (§ 48), pregnancy (§ 62) and human life (§§ 67-75). See also Cristoforo Landino, *Inf.*, iv. 97-108 *ad loc.*, in *Comento sopra la Comedia*, ed. by Paolo Procaccioli, 4 vols (Rome: Salerno, 2001), i, 425: 'Imperòché secondo e philosophi questo è perfetto numero (sc. seven). Ma prolixo sarebbe riferire tutte le argomentationi con le quali questo pruovano e pyctagorei et e platonici'.

As regards questions of form and metatextuality, of a piece with Dante's love for and imposition of symmetry, is the remarkable craftsmanship of the poem, the incredible attention to the word that means he often marks out correspondences for reader based on systems of intratextual echoes. Such techniques involve not only words but also linguistic formulae, rhyme words and series of rhymes, images and motifs, and they can take place within and across cantos, and within and across *cantiche* in ways that invite us to go back to the earlier usage.[16] To give just a few well-known examples, one thinks of words such as 'amore', 'follia', 'punto', 'legno', 'poeta', where all successive uses of these words bear on one another, as do textually prominent turns of phrase like 'come altrui piacque' (*Inf.*, xxvi. 141 and *Purg.*, i. 133); or rhyme series like 'amore–ardore–valore', or, to keep with the Sevens, the rhyme series of 'labbia–abbia–rabbia'.[17] Similar formal patterning based on recurrence is found with select motifs or select individual figures – one thinks of the references to Ulysses in each *cantica*, or to Ovidian figures such as Jason, Narcissus, and Phaethon, or to Biblical figures such as Paul and David, or even to pagan philosophers such as Aristotle and Averroës. Such intricate play of symmetries is strictly related to the poem's extraordinary artistry, and the way that Dante constantly invites the reader to return, to go back and reflect on what has come, to compare and cross-reference, to revisit. Of course, Dante does this most notably with a number of addresses to his reader which are *in nuce* meta-literary stagings of the poem's overall approach to its readership. Equally significant are those passages when the protagonist himself, late in his journey, is twice told to look back on his journey so far (to 'rimirare in giù' and 'adimare il viso' [look back down and lower your gaze] [*Par.*, xxii. 128; xxvii. 77-78]). His backward glance is almost a trope for how to read the poem in retrospect, and we should recall here a celebrated essay now some fifty years old that picks up on the role of the reader's retrospective vision, and how meaning is only fully seized at the end of poem. The essay is, of course, Charles Singleton's 'The Vistas in Retrospect' with its central thesis that patterns are 'revealed in retrospect […] down the unfolding line of the journey' and its illustration of this by means of a single word 'ruina', whose successive appearances connect it with the earthquake at Christ's death, illustrating that moment with progressive clarity.[18] Even more valuable and critically alert than Singleton is a study by Zygmunt Barański on 'structural retrospection' which is concerned with a pivotal canto: *Purgatorio* xxvii. Here, Barański shows the need to look back before the end of the poem, and how Dante's reader is constantly called on to do this by precise textual and situational echoes: the essay shows, too, how inter-canto echoing is part of Dante's mastery in the poem. What is more, Barański gives some tantalizing suggestions about ways in which medieval rhetoric and the medieval sermon utilize techniques related to verbal reminiscence such as *dispositio*, *ordo*, *repetitio*, *correspondentia* within a framework of backward-looking reference.[19] Further work needs to be done on these and related techniques in medieval art, biblical exegesis and the medieval art of memory so as to allow us to historicize and understand better other kinds of vertical reading practiced in Dante's culture.

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[16] On the role of the rhyme series, see Roberto Antonelli, 'Tempo testuale e tempo rimico. Costruzione del testo e critica nella poesia rimata', *Critica del testo* 1.1 (1998), 177-201; Arianna Punzi, *Rimario della 'Commedia' di Dante Alighieri* (Rome: Bagatto, 2001), pp. 13-52; Zygmunt G. Barański, '"Per similitudine di abito scientifico": Dante, Cavalcanti and the Sources of Medieval "Philosophical" Poetry', in *Science and Literature in Italian Culture*, ed. by Pierpaolo Antonello and Simon Gilson (Oxford: Legenda, 2004), pp. 14-52.

[17] On these two rhyme sets, see respectively Lloyd Howard, *Virgil the Blind Guide: Making the Way through the 'Divine Comedy'* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2010), pp. 23-26, 36-40; Mira Mocan, 'Ulisse, Arnaut e Riccardo di San Vittore: convergenze figurali e richiami lessicali nella *Commedia*', *Lettere italiane* 57:2 (2005), 173-208.

The discussion so far has been attentive to the need to place vertical reading within broader frameworks, and it is worth noting that all the contributions mentioned to date (Singleton, Barański, Iannucci, Durling and Martinez, as well as some other recent work on retrospection and related critical themes) are rarely concerned with vertical reading as such.[20] The very features of the poem that make vertical reading potentially productive also mean that we cannot restrict our reading to the numerically corresponding cantos alone but need to extend constantly the net of correspondences to all areas of the poem. Our reading of the *Commedia* needs to be as alert to the various points at which Dante's text sends us back and to the fact that the ideal reader's memory needs to be as agile as is Dante's gaze in the poem. To adapt a line from the poem, one might say that our reading needs to move 'di qua, di là, di sù, di giù' [here, there, down, up (*Inf.*, v. 43)]: to oscillate, to weave back and forth.

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[18] Charles S. Singleton, 'The Vistas in Retrospect', *Modern Language Notes* 81:1 (1966), 55-80.

[19] Barański, 'Structural Retrospection in Dante's *Comedy*'.

[20] In addition to note 16, see also Lloyd Howard, *Formulas of Repetition in Dante's 'Commedia': Signposted Journeys across Textual Space* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2001); Paolo Cherchi and Selene Sarteschi, 'Il cielo del Sole: Per una lettura della *Commedia* a "lunghe campate"', *Critica del testo* 14:2 (2011), 311-31, and Antonelli, 'Come e perché'. Antonelli's study is important for the stress it places on the importance of networks of correspondences linked to the art of memory.

After this preamble on the value and limitations of the critical practice of vertical reading, let us begin to look more closely at the Sevens. The approach adopted will put into practice the points made above, and thus we will first cast outside the vertical line of the Sevens to indicate some of the *intercantica* echoes that are most relevant. We will then pay more exclusive attention to the Sevens in large part by thematizing and grouping shared concerns, as well as by probing more precise formal *intercantica* correspondences and echoes between our three cantos. Some brief 'rubrics' may be helpful in focusing our enquiry. *Inferno* vii opens with a bestial, demonic infernal guardian, Pluto, shouting out incomprehensible words; after Virgil silences the monster, Dante-character espies but does not recognize the damned in the fourth circle of Hell; these souls are the avaricious and prodigal, who circle around one another. There follows a lengthy disquisition by Virgil on Fortune. We then reach a new circle, the fourth one, that of the wrathful and sullen, who are shown fully immersed in the river Styx, gurgling up bubbles of air under the water. *Purgatorio* vii opens with a sequence suspended and carried over from the previous canto, as we are presented with the meeting between the thirteenth-century Mantuan troubadour Sordello and Virgil – Virgil is, of course, still accompanying Dante. The meeting allows Dante to discuss Virgil's status and the inability to move upwards in Purgatory after dark; in the second half of the canto we encounter a valley of astonishing natural beauty and the eight earthly rulers or princes that inhabit it. *Paradiso* vii opens with a hymn of praise to God from a speaker who has dominated the previous canto, the Emperor Justinian, and then almost the entirety of the canto is taken up with a lengthy 'theological' discourse – a full 130 lines – by Beatrice on creation, original sin, the punishment of humankind, the Incarnation and Atonement.

If we are to remain alert to the call to retrospection set up in the reader's own memory, then we will need to take account of a remarkable number and range of intercanto echoes. Pluto's nonsense language in the opening line of *Inferno* vii is strongly recalled in the Giant Nimrod's gibberish in *Inferno* xxxi. 66, and his lack of clarity has a counterpoint in the lucidity of Arnaut Daniel's Occitan in *Purgatorio* xxvi. Pluto's swollen, impotent rage can be related to that of the Theban Capaneus in *Inferno* xiv (here we find the same rhyme-set 'rabbia – labbia – abbia', applied in lines 65-69).[21] The outcry against avarice that targets the 'maladetto lupo' in *Inferno* vii. 8 sends us back to the she-wolf in *Inferno* i. 94-102 and is modulated further in the terrace of avarice and prodigality in *Purgatorio* xx. 10, where the 'lupa' is named again. The tendency to connect avarice with the clergy (all the sinners of avarice and prodigality in *Inferno* vii are tonsured [ll. 38-39, 46-48]) is emphasized monumentally and memorably in *Inferno* xix, in *Purgatorio* xix, and then again in *Paradiso*, especially ix. 127-42 and xxviii. 55, where the pursuit of lucre is linked to the ravenous, rapacious wolves that are the leaders of the Church. Virgil's discussion of 'Fortuna' needs to be situated in relation to *Purgatorio* xx, where, in lines 13-15, the rotation of the heavens is mentioned in the context of a plea for the deity to put an end to the rapacious dominion of the she-wolf we have already mentioned. But the Virgilian discourse should also be positioned in relation to *Inferno* xv. 95-96 and *Paradiso* xvi. 82-84, lines in which Fortune is explicitly associated with heavenly motion. And of course Virgil's unusual presentation of Fortune in *Inferno* vii as an angelic minister of God's providential design, one which operates as a special motive force in the heavens to cause the change of fortunes on Earth, should be located against the discussion of angelic operations in the cosmos in relation to divine order and providence in the opening lines of *Paradiso* i, as well as to Beatrice's first doctrinal discourse in this canto and in cantos ii, viii, ix and xxviii.

As for *Purgatorio* vii, the canto is – as many critics have noted – strongly bound up with the previous one (in the second *cantica* the political material flows into the following canto in a way that does not happen in Hell). However, the discussion of Virgil's plight also sends us back to his status as unwitting rebel in *Inferno* i, and his place in Limbo in *Inferno* iv. Martinez and Michelangelo Picone have noted how the description of the Valley in which eight Princes are encountered establishes a series of recalls – shadow, sighs, isolated place, limitations of human action without faith – that take us back to Limbo.[22] The intense natural beauty of the valley is outdone by the supernatural beauty of the engravings on the first terrace of Purgatory. The pairing of former enemies amongst the princes in the second half of the canto gains further light from the more epistemological perspective of former 'intellectual' enemies harmoniously reconciled in the Heaven of the Sun (*Par.*, x-xiv). And the celebrated apostrophe to human probity rarely being an inherited virtue is re-examined at greater length in relation to human talents and their providential distribution in *Paradiso* viii.

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[21] See note 16.

[22] See Martinez, *The Divine Commedy: Purgatorio*, pp. 124-25; Michelangelo Picone, '*Purgatorio* vii', in *Lectura Dantis Turicensis: Purgatorio*, ed. by Georges Güntert and Michelangelo Picone (Florence: Cesati, 2001), esp. pp. 97-98. The recall is already found in part in Benvenuto da Imola; see *Comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam*, ed. by J. P. Lacaita, 5 vols (Florence: Barbèra, 1887), III, 204 (*Purg.*, vii. 73-81 *ad loc.*). I am grateful to George Corbett for this reference.

As regards *Paradiso* vii, one notes again the very close interconnections with the previous canto; indeed Beatrice's extended discourse on resurrection is nominally at least a response to terminology used in the previous canto. *Paradiso* vii with its attention to the heavens, questions of order and metaphysics, and theological discussion of sin, atonement, redemption and resurrection needs to be related to all the earlier disquisitions by Beatrice in *Paradiso*. The role of divine providence is progressively refined both in the following two cantos and in *Paradiso* xix. 22-36. As for other kinds of situational parallels, thematic correspondences, and echoing of specific motifs and words that are notable in *Paradiso* vii, one might offer the following: the idea that Beatrice's smile would make one happy in fire (*Par.*, vii. 17-18) is a strategic recall of *Purgatorio* xxvii. 46-54 (but also of the *Vita nova* and the *canzone* 'Lo doloroso amor che mi conduce') and *Inferno* i. 119; the idea of 'freno', or rein on human will, can be related to *Purgatorio* vi. 88; the idea of distinction between creation and generation is first adumbrated in *Purgatorio* xxv. 37-78; the metaphor of divine power imprinting itself on the wax of celestial matter (recalled twice in the canto) is developed earlier in *Paradiso* i. 40-42 and later in cantos viii. 127-29 and xiii. 67-75; the words 'follia' and 'cortesia', paired in rhyme, need unpacking against other usages of the terms in the poem; the image of the divine creation of the human soul enamoured with its maker (*Par.*, vii. 143-44) sends us back again to such passages as *Purgatorio* xvi. 85-90 and xxv. 70-72; the closing argumentation regarding the resurrection of the body should send us scurrying away to all the other passages that deal with such teachings and themes across the poem; and the grandiloquent lines on divine goodness shining in all things but with different reflections (*Par.*, vii. 74-75, 81) can be related to the theme of varied intensity and reception of light in the early cantos of *Paradiso* (*Par.*, i. 1-3; ii passim, esp. 142-48; v. 7-12).

If, however, we restrict ourselves only to the laboratory of verticality, and test out the thematic overlaps amongst the Sevens then one might identify the following as regards shared thematic or imagistic fields: (i) questions related to the nature of language and the human voice; (ii) motifs related to imagery of dance, and especially of wheeling or going up and down; (iii) parallels that turn on the progressive refinement of perspective involving questions of fortune and providence, of heavenly power and human will, the interrelationships between justice, sin, and suffering, and treatment of the human body in each of the three cantos. As far as formal parallels are concerned, there are three main areas: (i) the invented language with which both *Inferno* vii and *Paradiso* vii open; (ii) correspondences or partial ones in rhyme series; and (iii) marked repetition of several key words such as 'colpa', 'pene', 'giustizia', 'seme', 'vendetta'.

Let us begin with the most suggestive formal parallelism offered up by a partial vertical reading, that is, the one provided by the respective openings of *Inferno* vii and *Paradiso* vii:

> '*Pape Satàn, pape Satàn aleppe!*'
> cominciò Pluto con la voce chioccia;
> e quel savio gentil, che tutto seppe,
> disse per confortarmi: 'Non ti noccia
> la tua paura; ché, poder ch'elli abbia,
> non ci torrà lo scender questa roccia. (*Inf.*, vii. 1-6)

> ['*Pape Satàn, pape Satàn aleppe!*', began Plutus with his clucking voice; and that noble sage, who knew all things, said, to strengthen me: 'Let not your fear harm you; for whatever power he may have shall not prevent us from going down this cliff.']

> '*Osanna, sanctus Deus sabaòth,*
> *Superillustrans claritate tua*
> *Felices ignes horum malacòth!*'
> così, volgendosi a la nota sua
> fu viso a me cantare essa sustanza
> sopra la qual doppio lume s'addua;
> ed essa a l'altre mossero a sua danza. (*Par.*, vii, 1-7)

> ['*Osanna, sanctus Deus sabaòth, superillustrans claritate tua felices ignes horum malacòth!*' Thus, revolving to his notes, this substance seemed to me to sing, on whom double light is twinned, and he and the others moved in their dance.]

Although the parallelism between the passages has received relatively little comment, one could not wish for a better example of the suggestiveness and potency of vertical reading, or at least of partial vertical reading. We have two examples of invented language that are balanced symmetrically at the opening of the respective cantos. What is more, in each canto the invented language elicits a wider response to that vocal utterance. The audible but unintelligible utterance shrieked out by Pluto, '*Pape Satàn, pape Satàn aleppe!*' in a 'voce chioccia' [clucking voice] (line 2) has deceived many commentators and critics who have attempted to trace the words to Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, French or English, various Italian dialects such as Modenese and Genoese, and even to Maltese dialect. The words do not make sense. What Dante is doing here is inventing artificial, nonsense language from a bricolage of pseudo-words and phonemes from other languages (including Latin and Hebrew) in what is, as Robert Hollander has shown, a parodic inversion of the five words of clear speech called for by St Paul in I Corinthians 14:19, a passage concerned with the over-reliance of the faithful on speaking in tongues.[23] Pluto's words bear directly upon the theme of language and its failure, both in the segment of the poem that extends from *Inferno* iii to ix (where in iii, v and vi, Virgil had reaffirmed the preordained nature of Dante's journey in clashes with other demons), and, more narrowly, within canto vii itself, where Virgil's words are juxtaposed with the impotent garbling of the demonic guardian. The opposition between linguistic efficacy and garrulous verbal utterance is foregrounded throughout the canto: first by the encounter with Pluto, then by the doctrinal disquisition in the middle of the canto (ll. 70-99), and finally at the end of canto itself which also involves, like Pluto's pseudo-words, failed speech, as the souls submerged in the slime of the Stygian marsh gurgle audible, but unintelligible, bubbles of sound from beneath its muddy depths. Still broader and fundamental implications inform the connections between language and ethics, in particular the way that moral and spiritual failings are reflected not only in deviant applications of language, but also in distortions of vocal utterance: this is a major theme of Hell, of course, but it is especially prominent within *Inferno* vii, with the barking of souls in line 43 and the lack of 'parola integra' in line 126.[24]

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[23] See Robert Hollander, *Dante and Paul's Five Words with Understanding* (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992). For further discussion of the opening line(s) and bibliography, see Simon A. Gilson, '"Pape Satan, pape Satan aleppe!" (*Inferno* 7:1) in Dante's commentators, 1322-1570', in *Nonsense and Other Senses: Regulated Absurdity in Literature*, ed. by Elisabetta Tarantino (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009), pp. 25-54.

The extent of the deviance, the lack of clarity and the ethical failings do not emerge fully, however, until we compare oppositionally, and through vertical reading, Pluto's utterance with the equally mixed and invented language which Dante strategically places at the opening of *Paradiso* vii. Here, the words are those of the Emperor Justinian in his hymn of praise to the deity, and – as in *Inferno* vii. 1 – Dante uses Latin and Hebrew words, most of which are found in the Vulgate Bible ('Osanna', 'sabaòth', 'malacòth').[25] The opening of *Paradiso* vii is more inventive at the phonetic and lexical level: the rare *superillustrans* is a Latin neologism coined on the basis of pseudo-Dionysian concepts and related terminology. More important still, though, is the way the conscious alignment of two examples of invented language in parallel cantos encourages us to compare and to take account of the profound oppositional tension between both openings. Unlike Pluto's animalesque phonemes, Justinian's mellifluous hymn of praise to God (with its Biblical and liturgical echoes) has both morphology and syntax. Justinian's words refocus our attention on how Pluto's vocal utterance lacks any semantically organizing structures, and this in turn helps us to appreciate more clearly the context of that earlier encounter, the nature of the speaker and the utterance itself, an utterance that may contain some of the physical attributes of speech but cannot be articulated into a meaningful sequence.[26]

The oppositional nature of the two passages viewed along the vertical axis informs too the narrative sequences that then follow:

> Poi si rivolse a quella 'nfiata labbia,
> E disse: 'Taci, maladetto lupo! [...]

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[24] On the degradation of language in the canto, see (in addition to Pluto) *Inf.*, vii. 26: 'grand' urli'; 'gridando' [great cries; crying] (ll. 26, 30); 'gridandosi anche loro ontoso metro' [shouting at each other their shameful meter] (l. 33); 'Assai la voce loro chiaro l'abbaia' [Very clearly do their voices bay it out] (l. 43); 'che sotto l'acqua è gente che sospira / e fanno pullular quest'acqua al summo' [that under the water are people who are sighing, / making the water bubble at the surface] (ll. 118-19); 'Quest'inno si gorgoliano ne la strozza / che dir nol posson con parola integra' [This hymn / they gurgle in their throats, for they cannot fully / form the words] (ll. 125-26).

[25] On 'malacòth', see Jerome's preface to Vulgate; for the Hebrew words 'Hosanna' and 'saboath', see Matt. 21:9 and 1; James 5:4.

[26] See esp. Steven Botterill, 'Dante's Poetics of the Sacred Word', *Philosophy and Literature* 20:1 (1996), 54-62.

> quali dal vento le gonfiate vele
> caggiono avvolte, poi che l'alber fiacca,
> tal cadde a terra la fiera crudele. (*Inf.*, vii. 7-8, 13-15)
>
> [Then he turned back to that swollen face and said: 'Silence, cursed wolf! […] As when sails swollen by the wind fall tangled, when the mast gives way: so did that cruel beast fall to earth.]

> Io dubitava e dicea 'Dille, dille!'
> fra me, 'dille' dicea 'a la mia donna
> che mi diseta con le dolci stille'. […]
> Poco sofferse me cotal Beatrice
> e cominciò, raggiandomi d'un riso
> tal, che nel foco faria l'uom felice. (*Par.*, vii, 10-13, 16-18)
>
> [I was in doubt, saying, 'Tell her, tell her!' within myself, 'tell her', I was saying, 'tell my lady, who slakes my thirst with her sweet distillings.' […] Beatrice suffered me so but a little while, and she began, shining on me with a smile that would make one happy in the fire.]

Here we should contrast Beatrice's luminosity and ethereal smile with the gross physicality of Pluto's swollen 'labbia', the sweetness of her drops of wisdom (sweetness is of course a key element of poetry) with the 'voce chioccia' of the *monstrum*. And one notes, too, the attention Dante pays to the syllables of Beatrice's name and their power over him – causing him to pass out – and its contrast with the inability of syllables to mean anything in Pluto's utterance and their lack of 'poder' [power].[27]

A further oppositional element between the opening sequences of the first and the third *cantica* is found in the motif of dance. Dante's bitter presentation of the 'enforced' semi-circular dancing of avaricious and prodigal souls in *Inferno* vii. 24 forms a sharp contrast with the harmonious 'danza' of souls marked up in *Paradiso* vii. 7 (as we have noted, this is a motif that begins here and extends out into *Paradiso*, especially the Heaven of the Sun). The dance motif is, in fact, part of a broader – and more significant – set of patterned concerns with circling and wheeling across the Sevens which are explicitly highlighted with the reference to Fortune's wheel in *Inferno* vii (l. 96: 'volve sua spera' [turns her sphere]), and the semi-circular movements around one another of the avaricious and prodigal.[28] The idea of Fortune as providential wheeling is recast in a later passage on wheeling movement in *Purgatorio* vii. Here, we learn that, with nightfall on the Mountain, it is impossible to ascend without divine grace ('ir suso'), even though one can 'tornare in giuso':

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[27] There is a conscious revocation here of style features and thematic patterning in the *Vita nova*: 'dille' and the emphasis on Beatrice's name and dreaming. See also the *canzone* 'Lo doloroso amor', in particular ll. 8-9, 14-15, 27-28: 'foco / che mi ha tratto di gioco [...] "Per quella moro c'ha nome Beatrice". / Quel dolce nome, che mi fa il cor agro [...] dolce viso / a che niente pare lo paradiso' [that fire which has drawn me away from happiness […] 'Through her I die, whose name is Beatrice'. That sweet name which embitters my heart […] the sweet face to which Paradise seems nothing in comparison], translation from *Dante's Lyric Poetry*, trans. by Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967).

> ché la notturna tenebra, ad ir suso;
> quella col nonpoder la voglia intriga.
> Ben si poria con lei tornare in giuso
> e passeggiar la costa intorno errando,
> mentre che l'orizzonte il dì tien chiuso. (*Purg*., vii. 56-60)
>
> [[…] the darkness of night, which shackles the will with inability. One could of course descend and walk wandering along the shore, while the horizon holds the day closed up.]

The final parallel canto, *Paradiso* vii, develops the idea of circularity not only through the dance of the blessed but also in theological and metaphysical terms, by showing that man could not obtain satisfaction for original sin through acts of humility because his disobedience had led him to prideful overreaching, to 'ir suso':

> Non potea l'uomo ne' termini suoi
> mai sodisfar, per non potere ir giuso
> con umilitate obedïendo poi,
> quanto disobediendo intese ir suso; […]
> per far l'uom sufficiente a rilevarsi. (*Par*., vii. 97-100, 116)
>
> [man could not, within his limits, ever atone, since he could not descend with obedient humility afterwards as far as in his disobedience he earlier intended to rise up; […] in order to make mankind sufficient to raise itself up.]

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[28] Note also the stars which circle around created matter (l. 138), and the 'moto de le luci santi' [the motion of the holy lights] (l. 141).

Thus, we see how, across both *Purgatorio* vii and *Paradiso* vii, motion up and down is governed by divine liberality and how this works in relation to human will and power: 'giuso', 'suso' and 'chiuso' form an identical rhyme series that binds together the two cantos, refining the relationship between Fortune, humankind, grace and divine liberality.

The third set of thematic parallels again concerns progressive refinement of levels of understanding through enlargement of perspective. The words 'giustizia' and 'pena' that we first meet in the poet's apostrophe to divine judgement in *Inferno* vii. 19-21, though sidestepped by Virgil in his repeated insistence on his non-culpability in *Purgatorio* vii, receive fuller explanation in the light of the divine justice of the Redemption and its more global explanation of justice, sin and punishment. Similar strategies may govern the use of human will across all cantos, and also allusions to the resurrection of the body (*Inf.*, vii. 55-57; *Par.*, vii. passim, but esp. 142-48). It is perhaps tempting to examine the varying treatment of the body across all the Sevens, especially given the associations carried by the number itself. Bodily parts certainly provide a remarkably rich set of lexical items in all three cantos. *Paradiso* vii, for example, closes by arguing that the divinely created nature of the 'umana carne' [human flesh] (l. 147) of the 'uom che non nacque' [the man who was not born] (l. 26), that is, Adam's body, demonstrates the doctrine of resurrection; the gallery of princes presented in *Purgatorio* vii is strongly physiognomic; and, though unrecognizable, the bodily parts of the avaricious and the prodigal and the 'accidiosi' are repeatedly named in degrading and violent contexts in *Inferno* vii.[29] One risk in such an enterprise is that we might end up privileging echoes that are not necessarily patterned or significant but rather simply what happens in lengthy, highly fashioned literary works, especially when major themes are considered, as is the case here.[30]

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[29] On bodily parts in *Inferno* vii, see lines 7 ('labbia' [face]), 27 ('poppa' [chests]), 47 ('capo' [heads]), 57 ('pugno chiuso […] crin mozzi' [closed fists […] hair cut short]), 69 ('branche' [clutches]), 112 ('mano' [hands]), 113 ('con la testa e col petto e coi piedi' [with head and breast and feet]), 114 ('denti' [teeth]), 125 ('strozza' [throats]). On the pronounced physiognomical interest in *Purgatorio* vii, see Christoper Kleinhenz, 'A Nose for Art (*Purgatorio* vii): Notes on Dante's Iconographical Sense', *Italica* 52 (1975), 372-79.

[30] On the dangers of vertical reading drawing attention to the obvious, see the discussion in Zygmunt G. Barański, '"Without any Violence"', in this volume, and 'Reading the *Commedia*'s IXs "Vertically": From Addresses to the Reader to *crucesignati* and the *Ecloga Theoduli*', *L'Alighieri* 42 (2014), 5-36. It might be interesting to work comparatively here, reflecting for heuristic purposes on the ways that episodes connect with other episodes in such works as Boccaccio's *Decameron* (though here the symmetrical patterning and cult of number are in part Dantean concerns), but perhaps also works such as *Don Quixote*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

Let us conclude with some further commentary on the treatment of Fortune, providence and angels across the Sevens. It is well known that Virgil's lecture is built on Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*: the lament, the explanation of a providential power, the imperscrutability, the speed of moments, the way Fortune is cursed by men, the emptiness of things assigned to Fortune, the image of the wheel, the idea of Fortune as ruler – all these are Boethian elements. Perhaps the most un-Boethian feature of the discourse is the way Dante conceives Fortune as forming part of the cosmological order, as a separate, divinely willed angelic mover controlling the distribution of goods in the sublunar world. Cosmological and angelological emphases are picked up, and refined, in both the later Sevens, above all in *Paradiso* vii, where the creation of the angelic hierarchies is presented more broadly as part of the providential order, and the angels are seen to control all processes in the sublunar realm. The wealth of Boethian references in *Inferno* vii (in particular the echoes of *Consolation* II. i. 60-62; II. ii. 1-14; IV. vi), is well known, but it is interesting that the parallel cantos also contain prominent Boethian reminiscences. In *Purgatorio* vii. 121-23, human virtue is attributed not to parental intervention but to divine origin: 'Rade volte resurge per li rami / l'umana probitate; e questo vole / quei che la dà, perché da lui si chiama' [Seldom does human probity rise up through the / branches, and this is willed by him who gives it, / that it may be attributed to him]. It seems likely that these lines contain an echo of *Cons*., III, m. 6. 7-8.[31] And in Beatrice's discourse in *Paradiso* vii, especially lines 64-66 ('La bontà divina che da sé sperne / ogne livore, ardendo in sé, sfavilla / sì che dispiega le bellezze etterne' [God's goodness, which spurns all envy, / aflame within itself, flashes forth unfolding the / eternal beauties]), one finds a markedly Christianized reworking of the celebrated Boethian hymn from Book III, metre 9, one which, as Luca Lombardo has recently shown, bears the traces of William of Conches' own Christianizing exegesis.[32] The three Boethian citations are quite well known but a vertical reading of them suggests the possibility that they might form part of a conscious system of recalls in which Dante recasts the Boethian echoes so that they become ever more Christianizing and Platonizing. With such a perspective in mind, we might view the citations as moving us from Virgil's at times theologically suspect discourse, where Fortune 'persegue / suo regno come il loro gli altri dei' [carries out her rule as the other gods do theirs] and 'necessità la fa esser veloce' [necessity makes her swift] (*Inf.*, vii. 86-7 and 89), to Beatrice's presentation of how the divine goodness lovingly and freely irradiates all things, unfolding the eternal beauties of the heavens.[33]

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[31] *Consolation of Philosophy*, III. vi. 13-18: 'Quid genus est proavos strepitis? Si primordia vestra / Auctoremque deum spectes, nullus degener exstat / Ni vitiis peiora fovens proprium desertat ortum' [why boast of your stock since none is counted base, if you consider God the author of your race, other than he who with foul vice deserts his own birth].

[32] *Consolation of Philosophy*, III. ix. 5-7: '[…] verum insita summi / forma boni livore carens, tu cuncta spero / ducis ab exemplo, pulchrum pulcherrimus ipse' [the indwelling form of the highest good free from envy: You drive all things from the eternal example: most beautiful]. But for Conches' mediation, see Luca Lombardo, *Boezio in Dante. La 'Consolatio Philosophiae' nello scrittoio del poeta* (Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2014), p. 226, with reference to William of Conches, *Glosae super Boethium*, ed. by Lodi Nauta (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), p. 160: 'Divina bonitas merito dicitur forma boni, quia ab eo omne bonum

The observations provided above help to indicate the potential of vertical reading for illuminating and reconsidering connections – above all in precise verbal echoing, image patterns, situational parallels and perhaps even prominent intertexts – between sets of numerically corresponding cantos. In line with our opening reflections, we have nonetheless seen how circumspection needs to be exercised in the claims that might be made for vertical reading. The Sevens offer some rich and interesting material at the level of verbal, situational and imagistic patterning, but we have seen that any such correspondences are often found only in two of the three cantos. We have noted, too, some of the dangers of a thematizing reading of groups of three cantos: such thematization needs to take account of the poem's capacity for retrospection at multiple points outside the vertical line that might intersect three cantos with the same number.

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formatum est et habet esse' [Divine goodness is rightly called the form of the good, for from it every good is formed and has its being].

[33] In this respect, it may be worth recalling that some critics regard Virgil's perspective in *Purgatorio* vii as indicating his limitation; see Margherita Frankel, 'La similitudine della zara (*Purg.*, vi. 1-12) e il rapporto fra Dante e Virgilio nell'Antipurgatorio', in *Studi americani su Dante*, ed. by Gian Carlo Alessio and Robert Hollander (Milan: F. Angeli, 1989), pp. 113-44. On the Boethian echoes and their development between *Inferno* vii and *Paradiso* vii, see Giuseppe Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in the Divine Comedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 319-28 (p. 326).

# 8. *Civitas* and Love: Looking Backward from *Paradiso* viii[1]

*Brenda Deen Schildgen*

> 'Qui sarai tu poco tempo silvano
> e sarai meco sanza fine cive
> di quella Roma onde Cristo e romano'. (*Purg.*, xxxii. 100-03)[2]
>
> ['Here shall you be short time a forester, and you shall be with me forever a citizen of that Rome whereof Christ is Roman'.]

> 'sarebbe il peggio
> per l'omo in terra, se non fosse cive?' (*Par.*, viii. 115-16)
>
> ['Would it be worse for man on earth if he were not a citizen?']

## Introduction

In assuming the role of *scriba dei,*[3] Dante makes the *Commedia* a progressive revelation[4] of his understanding of divine providence as he comes closer to the 'truth' of the universe and the unfolding of eternal love ('suo etterno amore' (*Par.*, vii. 33)). Beatrice's explanation in *Paradiso* vii of how divine love, a love that renews the world, inspired the Incarnation radically alters the terms by which humans might understand the destiny of history and

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[1] The video of this lecture is available at the Cambridge Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy website, https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1522404

[2] All citations and translations from the *Commedia* are from *The Divine Comedy*, trans. and commentary by Charles S. Singleton. Bollingen Series 80 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970-76).

[3] G. R. Sarolli, 'Dante, *Scriba Dei*', *Convivium* 4-6 (1963), 385-422, 513-44, and 641-71.

[4] See Christian Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 5; also central is Giuseppe Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979); also close to my reading is Silvio Pasquazi, *All'Eterno dal Tempo: Studi Danteschi* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1985, 1st edn 1966).

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their purpose in it. This motif of love continues into *Paradiso* viii, the first canto in the Heaven of Venus, appears in *Purgatorio* viii and flickers in *Inferno* viii. Thus, there is symmetry among these cantos, in the vertical reading of the poem, but there is also a narrative or conceptual progression.[5] The pilgrim's increasing knowledge and understanding alongside the poet's self-revelation constitutes the hermeneutical principle for exploring these three cantos as interrelated.

Focusing on the eighth cantos of the *Commedia*, this essay begins with *Paradiso* viii and retrospectively connects its concerns, persons and intellectual inquiries to those of *Purgatorio* viii and *Inferno* viii.[6] *Paradiso* viii occupies itself with the core issues of the poem and highlights the poem's ideological unity as it probes the source of human corruption and love[7] and the connection of these to *civitas*, that is, to citizenship, membership in a community and the freedom of citizens.[8] As such, it offers a stark contrast with the civil rancor that enters the poem vehemently in *Inferno* viii, although the ideals of friendship featured in *Purgatorio* vii and viii hint at the benefits of civic amity that *Paradiso* viii celebrates. But before delving into the heart of this discussion, let me briefly review how these cantos parallel one another and how they differ.

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[5] I am grateful to Giuseppe Mazzotta for this formulation.

[6] Monica Keane, PhD in Comparative Literature, UC Davis (2014) tracked down the endless single canto discussions and produced the bibliography for this project, for which I am deeply grateful. Here I will just note those works that I cite directly in the order in which they appear in this article: Ettore Paratore, 'Il canto VIII del *Paradiso*', *L'Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca* 26:2 (1985), 33-52; E. Ragni, 'Il canto VIII del *Paradiso*', in *Lectura Dantis Metelliana, I primi undici canti del Paradiso*, ed. by A. Mellone (Rome: Bulzoni, 1992), pp. 155-75; Rachel Jacoff, 'The Post-Palinodic Smile: *Paradiso* VIII and IX', *Dante Studies* 98 (1980), 111-22; Emilio Bigi, 'Moralità e retorica nel canto VIII dell' *Inferno*', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 154 (1977), 346-67; Vincenzo Cioffari, 'Lectura Dantis: *Paradiso* VIII', *Dante Studies* 90 (1972), 93-108; H. A. Mason, 'Filthy Rage v. Righteous Indignation—Canto VIII', *The Cambridge Quarterly* 17:2 (1988), 141-55; Georges Güntert, 'Canto VIII', *Purgatorio, Lectura Dantis Turicensis*, ed. by Georges Güntert and Michelangelo Picone (Florence: Franco Cesati, 2001), pp. 109-20; Giovanni Pischedda, 'Motivi provinciali nel canto VIII dell' *Inferno*', in *Dante e la tematica medioevale* (Aquila: Japadre, 1967), pp. 35-40; Lloyd Howard, 'The blindness of Virgil in *Inferno* 8-9, *Purgatorio* 15-16, and *Purgatorio* 22-23', in *Virgil the Blind Guide: Marking the Way through the Divine Comedy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); Giuseppe Acciani, 'L'ingresso di Dante nella città di Dite', *L'Alighieri* 19 (1978), 45-58; Victor Castellani, 'Vergilius Ultor: Revenge and Pagan Morality in the *Inferno*', *Lectura Dantis* 9 (1991), 3-10; Peter Hawkins, 'Virgilio cita le Scritture', in *Dante e la Bibbia*, Atti del Convegno internazionale promosso da 'Bibbia', ed. by Giovanni Barblan (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1986), pp. 351-59; André Pézard, *Il Canto VIII del 'Paradiso'* (Bologna: L. Cappelli, 1953); Giovanni Fallani and Alighieri Dante *Il Canto VIII Del Paradiso* (Turin: Società editrice internazionale, 1964); Ettore Paratore, 'Il canto VIII del *Paradiso*', *L'Alighieri: Rassegna Bibliografica Dantesca* 26:2 (1985), 33-52; Giovanni Fallani, 'Il canto VIII del *Purgatorio*', *Nuove letture dantesche* IV (Florence: Le Monnier, 1970), 19-33; Edward Peters, 'Human Diversity and Civil Society in *Paradiso* VIII', *Dante Studies* 109 (1991): 51-70; Sonia Gentili, 'L'Arco di Cupido e la freccia di Aristotele' in *Esperimenti Danteschi Paradiso 2010*, ed. by Tommaso Montorfano (Genoa and Milan: Marietti, 1820, 2010), pp. 87-112; Michelangelo Picone, 'Canto VIII', in *Paradiso*, ed. by Georges Güntert and Michelangelo Picone (Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 2002), pp. 119-32; Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, 'The Wrath of Dante', *Speculum* 13 (1938), 183-93; Daniel J. Donno, 'Dante's Argenti: Episode and Function', *Speculum* 40 (1965), 611-25; Umberto Bosco, *Il canto VIII dell' Inferno* (Rome: Signorelli, 1951); Ettore Romagnoli, 'Il canto VIII dell' *Inferno*', in *Letture dantesche*, ed. by Giovanni Getto (Florence: Sansoni, 1955), pp. 133-50; Marino Szombathely, *Il canto VIII dell'Inferno* (Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1959).

## Structural and Rhetorical Parallels

The ninth cantos have been considered thresholds to the 'domains proper' of the respective canticles of the *Commedia*. Certainly, *Inferno* ix dramatizes the entrance to Dis, that is, Hell proper, and *Purgatory* ix, the entrance to Purgatory.[9] We have gates to cities here and someone has to open them (*Inf.*, viii. 15; *Inf.*, ix. 88-90; *Purg.*, ix. 73-129). But the eighth cantos, so carefully and tightly linked by themes, events, politics and philosophical issues with both the seventh and the ninth cantos, might well be considered the first phases of these thresholds. In fact, the threshold to Dis does indeed occur in *Inferno* viii, when Virgil and Dante are barred from entering, as 'Chiuser le porte que' nostri avversari' [These our adversaries shut the gates] (*Inf.*, viii. 115). *Purgatorio* viii, on the other hand, opens with a magnificent six-line simile, expressing nostalgia and likening the time of day to the sailor yearning for home and to the pilgrim who hears the bells of his town from afar as they mourn the passing of the day. The simile informs us that the first day in Purgatory is reaching nightfall, and thereby anticipates the first dream of the poem (in the following canto) in which the pilgrim will be transported to the gates of Purgatory. In *Paradiso* viii, rising into the third Heaven is so natural for Dante that he would not even notice the transition but for the fact that Beatrice's increasing beauty causes him to realize that he has entered the Heaven of Venus (*Par.*, viii. 13-15).

Structurally and rhetorically, cantos seven, eight and nine are linked by a form of enjambment: the beginning flows from the previous canto and the end into the following canto. For example, *Inferno* viii has the enigmatic opening, 'Io dico seguitando' [I say continuing] (*Inf.*, viii. 1), that led Boccaccio to the theory that Dante had written the first seven cantos before his exile from Florence and was now returning to the poem. When the Fallen Angels rebuff Virgil at the end of *Inferno* viii, the canto does not conclude but continues into *Inferno* ix, where Virgil turns back towards the pilgrim.[10] *Purgatorio* vii ends with Sordello's long speech describing all the residents of the Valley of Princes; *Purgatorio* viii tells us the time (dusk), 'Era già l'ora' [It was now the hour] (*Purg.*, viii. 1), and ends with Currado's prophecy of Dante's exile; while *Purgatorio* ix begins by telling us that in Purgatory it was nearly three hours after sunset (*Purg.*, ix. 7-9). This kind of rhetorical enjambment is not apparent between *Paradiso* vii and viii, although the theme of *Paradiso* vii, 'divine love', most definitely continues. Enjambment does, however, make *Paradiso* viii run into ix, which continues the exchange between Carlo Martello and the pilgrim (*Par.*, ix. 1-9). These three cantos in *Paradiso* thereby form a triptych that deals specifically with love, free will and divine providence.

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[7] This is the central argument of Paratore, 'Il Canto VIII del *Paradiso*', 33-52.

[8] As Ragni writes of *Paradiso* viii, 'è coerentissimo, stringente in ogni sua articolazione, e altrettanto stringentemente e coerentemente si collega, ancora una volta, con l'intero poema' [it is most coherent, linked in every articulation, and equally it connects deeply and coherently, once more, with the entire poem] (Ragni, 'Il canto VIII del *Paradiso*', 175).

[9] Jacoff, 'The Post-Palinodic Smile: *Paradiso* VIII and IX', 119.

In terms of dramaturgy, the Sevens are essentially static. The question and answer of philosophical discourse dominate in *Inferno* vii, despite its howling voices. In *Paradiso* vii, Beatrice alone speaks for most of the canto. The Garden of Repose in *Purgatorio* vii is an unchanging *locus amoenus* for princes rather than for philosophers and poets (with the exception of Sordello, Dante and Virgil, of course). The Eights, on the other hand, are replete with action and movement. *Inferno* viii features Phlegias's boat running swiftly through the air like an arrow (*Inf.*, viii. 13-15); his angry shouting (*Inf.*, viii.18, 81); Filippo Argenti rancorously trying to pull Dante into the muddy waters with him (*Inf.*, viii. 40); Virgil and Dante both expressing rage against Filippo (*Inf.*, viii. 37-39, 41-42); the other sinners attacking Filippo (*Inf.*, viii. 61); the jeering Fallen Angels scorning Dante and sending him on his way (*Inf.*, viii. 82-93); and the dramatic moment of crisis before the closed gates of Dis in which the pilgrim loses trust in his guide's reliability, 'io rimango in forse, / che sì e no nel capo mi tenciona' [I remain in doubt, as yes and no contend within my head] (*Inf.*, viii. 110-11). The canto ends with the devils slamming the city gates in Virgil's face, while Virgil 'rase / d'ogne baldanza' [shorn of all boldness] (*Inf.*, viii. 118-19) awaits divine intervention.[11] This canto, on the threshold of the city of disorder that is Hell, stresses the rancour that rules a failed and corrupt society, however efficiently such a society achieves its ends. *Purgatorio* viii has a similar range of action. The canto first observes a praying spirit, who sings the *Te lucis ante* and is joined by all the other souls (*Purg.*, viii. 8-18), and then follows the group of five (Virgil, Dante, Sordello, Nino and Currado) as they watch two angels descend from Heaven to guard the valley (*Purg.*, viii. 25-39); the pilgrim's subsequent exchanges with Judge Nino (*Purg.*, viii. 53-81) and Currado Malaspina (*Purg.*, viii. 109-39) are interrupted by a liturgical drama, or 'sacred representation'.[12] *Paradiso* viii is less theatrical than its parallel cantos in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. Nonetheless, it brings together Beatrice's increasing beauty; the glittering, dancing, singing lights (*Par.*, viii. 19-30); the joyful singing of Hosanna; and the generous greeting spoken by Carlo Martello for everyone, 'Tutti sem presti' (*Par.*, viii. 32). Carlo's exchange with Dante expresses a copious emotional range from loving recognition, to nostalgia and regret, to an indictment of his family, and finally to philosophical discourse. As Benedetto Croce noted, together these details make the canto one of the most dramatic in the entire canticle.[13]

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[10] For Boccaccio's idea that the *Commedia* had its beginnings in Florence, see Marcello Ciccuto, 'Minima boccacciana sulla forma della *Comedia*', *Textual Cultures* 1 (2006): 137-42; see also Giorgio Padoan, *Il lungo cammino del 'poema sacro': Studi Danteschi* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1993). For Boccaccio's use of "Io dico seguitando" to build a literary history of the poem's composition, see Martin Eisner, *Boccaccio and the Invention of Italian Literature: Dante, Petrarch, Cavalcanti, and the Authority of the Vernacular* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 48; for the observation about enjambment between *Inf.*, vii, viii, and ix, see Bigi, 'Moralità'.

## Thematic Parallels

Now to explore the themes of these cantos vertically. First, all three deal with contemporary historical persons and events, and with some aspect of Dante's personal, local and, dare I say, provincial Florentine history. *Inferno* viii presents Filippo Argenti, 'il fiorentino spirito bizzarro' [the irascible Florentine spirit] (*Inf.*, viii. 62), a Florentine of the Adimari family condemned by Cacciaguida (*Par.*, xvi. 115-20), who allegedly benefited from Dante's exile.[14] *Purgatorio* viii brings Florentines together with fellow Tuscans and pan-European figures. Guelphs and Ghibellines find companionship with the appearance of Nino Visconti (*Purg.*, viii. 53) and Conrad Malaspina (*Purg.*, viii. 65). Nino was a staunch member of the Guelph party, even supporting the Florentine Guelphs against his Ghibelline-ruled city of Pisa. He was the grandson of Count Ugolino (*Inf.*, xxxiii. 13), who had betrayed Nino in his struggle for power in Pisa. Conrad, according to Boccaccio (*Decameron* 2.6), was a Ghibelline whose family would help Dante in exile.[15]

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[11] On the issue of static versus dramatic, *Inf.*, vii versus *Inf.*, viii, see Mason, 'Filthy Rage', 141-55.

[12] See Güntert, 'Canto VIII', in *Purgatorio*, pp. 109-20.

[13] Benedetto Croce, *La Poesia di Dante* (Bari: Laterza, 1921), p. 137, where he writes of Carlo Martello, 'la malinconia di una magnifica e benefica regalità, spezzata prima che ottenuta' (the melancholy of a magnificent and charitable majesty, broken before obtained), and places him alongside Piccarda, Romeo, Cunizza and St. Bernard as one of the few lively figures in *Paradiso*.

Finally, Carlo Martello (1271-1295), the central figure of *Paradiso* viii (though he is not named), was in Florence in 1294 for a visit which, according to G. Villani, lasted twenty days and in which 'gli fu fatto grande onore' [he was treated with great honor].[16] During this time, we are led to believe, he and Dante met (*Par.*, viii. 31, 37). Carlo Martello was married to Clemence of Hungary (*Par.*, ix. 1-2), daughter of Emperor Rudolf I, whom Sordello names among the negligent rulers (*Purg.*, vii. 94). There are close links between this branch of the Angevin dynasty and Florence's history. The oldest son of Maria of Hungary and Charles II, the Angevin king whose rule Sordello claims Apulia and Provence lamented (*Purg.*, vii. 126), Carlo was crowned king of Hungary in 1292. He was heir to Provence and to the kingdom of Naples that, until the Sicilian Vespers in 1282, had extended to Sicily. Sicily had been lost due to his grandfather Charles I of Anjou (d. 1285), a Guelf who is also among the negligent rulers named by Sordello (*Purg.*, vii. 113, 125). Charles I had defeated Manfred, become king of Sicily and Naples and, as Imperial Vicar in Italy, was Podestà of Florence for twelve years, creating a set of alliances that united most of the Italian peninsula.[17] Sordello says of his son, Charles II, the father of Carlo Martello, 'Tant'è del seme suo minor la pianta' [as much is the plant inferior to its seed] (*Purg.*, vii. 127). Thus, Dante presents a genealogy of kings that goes from the modestly good (Carlo I) to the bad (Carlo II) to the potentially ideal (Carlo Martello).[18]

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[14] Pischedda, 'Motivi provinciali nel canto VIII dell' *Inferno*', in *Dante e la tematica medioevale*, pp. 35-40; see also Bigi, 'Moralità', 346-67.

[15] See notes to Singleton, *Purgatorio*, pp. 172-73.

[16] Giovanni Villani, *Cronica* (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1969), VIII, 13; for Dante and Carlo Martello, see Vincenzo Mazzei, *Dante e i suoi amici nella Divina Commedia* (Milan: Editrice nuovi autori, 1987), pp. 125-38.

[17] For details on this history, see Raoul Manselli, 'Carlo Martello', in *Enciclopedia dantesca* I (Rome: Istituto dell' Enciclopedia Italiana, 1996), pp. 841-43; John A. Scott, 'The Sordello Episode: *Purgatorio* VI-VIII', in *Dante's Political Purgatory* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), pp. 5, 96-127; Cioffari, 'Lectura Dantis: *Paradiso* VIII', 98-99.

Connected to this issue of local and pan-European history is a concern, both implicit and explicit in all three cantos, with civic life, politics and friendships. The bellicose atmosphere of *Inferno* viii vividly displays civil strife, one of the consequences of the rage punished in the muddy waters of the Styx. Virgil and Sordello's demonstration of civic amity across thirteen hundred years (celebrated in *Purg.*, vi. 70-75, 79-81 and *Purg.*, vii. 1-21) foreshadows the friendly encounters of *Purgatorio* viii and contrasts with the diatribe against Italy in *Purgatorio* vi. With Virgil and Sordello keeping company for the three cantos (vi-viii), we see fraternal love and solicitude, virtues that can unite citizens;[19] in *Purgatorio* viii, we witness contemporary examples of civic friendship: Dante, Nino Visconti (*Purg.*, viii. 53-54) and Conrad Malaspina. Carlo Martello's much commented-on greeting to Dante in *Paradiso* viii, as the first of a wave of joyous souls to follow, provides spirited evidence of civil society: 'Tutti sem presti / al tuo piacer, perché di noi ti gioi' [We are all ready at your pleasure, that you may have joy of us] (*Par.*, viii. 32-33). His greeting contrasts radically with the slammed doors of *Inferno* viii. Partially because of the attention paid to public figures of Florence's recent history, all three cantos also raise the question of kinship, and whether and why virtue does or does not run in families. This leads to a doubt, a 'dubbio', that Dante implicitly raises throughout the poem: how is it that good parents can bear bad children or bad parents good children? Carlo Martello, with his own genealogy a demonstration of this unpredictable pattern, addresses the question.

One final aspect that all three cantos share is the significant presence of angels. Dante, following Gregory the Great's 'functional approach' to angels, assigns them a 'structural role', in which they aid, accompany, guard, guide or teach the souls.[20] In *Inferno* viii, the Fallen Angels become the first to halt the progress of Dante and Virgil's journey forward. Virgil – who stuns all the figures from his own epic pagan past: Charon (*Inf.*, iii. 91-129), Minos (*Inf.*, v. 7-24), Cerberus (*Inf.*, vi. 22-33), Plutus (*Inf.*, vii. 1-8) and even Phlegias (*Inf.*, viii. 16-24) – proves impotent against the Fallen Angels (*Inf.*,

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[18] For these lineages, see Scott, 'The Sordello Episode', pp. 96-127.

[19] See Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 127.

[20] Susanna Barsella, *In the Light of Angels: Angelology and Cosmology in Dante's Divina Commedia* (Florence: Leo. S. Olschi Editore, 2010), p. 34

viii. 82-93) and is stopped at the gates of Hell. Many commentators have addressed Virgil's inadequacy here on the spiritual journey.[21] Opening the gates requires an act of grace in the form of an angel (*Inf.*, viii. 128-30).[22] For Dante-pilgrim at this point, there is no possible return except in a recidivist spiral backward, for the pilgrim must descend to the depths. The Fallen Angels, the first intelligences to create discord in the universe, are corrupt guardians over the disordered city of Dis. They constitute a threat not just to the pilgrim's advance forward, but hover as essences of civic envy, enmity and cosmic rupture. By contrast, in *Purgatorio* viii, two angels, coloured green like the environment as the sign of hope and carrying blunt swords, appear at nighttime to safeguard the princely penitents, who are singing the *Te lucis ante terminum* (*Purg.*, viii. 13), a prayer that asks the creator to protect them at night. Addressing the reader, Dante reminds us to sharpen our eyes, although it should be easy to see beyond the veil (*Purg.*, viii. 18-20). The angels' presence proves necessary when a counter-masque or sacred representation of the events that first brought rupture to the world in Eden threatens the peaceful environment: 'una biscia, / forse qual diede ad Eva il cibo amaro, / Tra l'erba e' fior venìa la mala striscia' [a snake, perhaps such as gave Eve the bitter food. Through the grass and the flowers came the evil streak] (*Purg.*, viii. 98-100). The angels chase ''l nostro avversaro' away, the masque or sacred representation constituting a performance of the prayer and a vivid demonstration of the power of the theological virtue of hope.[23]

In *Paradiso* viii, the souls, Carlo Martello tells us, circle with a cluster of angels. Where in the *Convivio* (II. v. 13), Dante affirms that the angelic order of Thrones moves the Heaven of Venus, here – in Dante's depiction of the Heaven of Venus itself – the heavenly Principalities (the 'principi celesti' (*Par.*, viii. 34) assume this role.[24] As the Heaven of Rhetoric (*Conv.*, II. xiii. 13-14), Venus is associated with political order, just as the Principalities are in the order of angels. That Dante changes the angels who move the Heaven of Venus from his earlier work reinforces the political theme of

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[21] Castellani, 'Vergilius Ultor: Revenge and Pagan Morality in the *Inferno*', 3-10; Hawkins, 'Virgilio cita le Scritture', pp. 351-59; Howard, 'The blindness of Virgil in *Inferno* 8-9, *Purgatorio* 15-16, and *Purgatorio* 22-23'.

[22] Acciani, 'L'ingresso di Dante nella città di Dite', 51; see also Hawkins, 'Virgilio cita le Scritture', in *Dante e la Bibbia*, pp. 43-45.

[23] Güntert, 'Canto VIII', 110.

[24] Dante Alighieri, *Il Convivio*, ed. by G. Busnelli and G. Vandelli, 2 vols (Florence: Felice le Monnier, 1954).

*Paradiso* viii, which is here also connected to the issue of inclinations.[25] Let us take a look at what Pseudo-Dionysus, whom Thomas Aquinas follows in this matter in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (III. 80),[26] writes of this order of angels in the *Celestial Hierarchy*:

> It remains now to contemplate that final rank in the hierarchy of angels, I mean the godlike principalities, archangels, and angels... The term 'heavenly principalities' refers to those who possess a godlike and princely hegemony, with a sacred order most suited to princely powers, the ability to be returned completely toward the principle which is above all principles and to lead others to him like a prince, the power to receive to the full the mark of the Principle of principles, and by their harmonious exercise of princely powers, to make manifest this transcendent principle of all order. (*Celestial Hierarchy*, IX. 257B)[27]

Thomas Aquinas specifically states that this third angelic order, the Principalities, commands human hierarchies because in 'human affairs there is a common good which is, in fact, the good of the state or a people. It falls to this order of angels to instruct leaders among men'.[28] Not counting Henry VII, whose presence in Heaven is promised in *Paradiso* xxxi, Carlo Martello is the only ruler of Dante's life-time whom the poet includes in *Paradiso*. Speaking as 'noi', in other words, as a community, Carlo informs Dante-pilgrim immediately that he travels with these celestial Principalities. Dante-poet thereby makes Carlo Martello a *figura* of the ideal ruler, a prince most suited to the 'harmonious exercise of princely powers'.

## *Paradiso* viii: A Retrospective Vista on *Purgatorio* viii and *Inferno* viii

With these broad structural and thematic parallels in mind, let us now turn again to *Paradiso* viii. It opens with a twelve-line description and history of 'la bella Ciprigna', 'il terzo epiciclo', the goddess-named planet that was honoured by 'le genti antiche ne l'antico errore' [the ancient people in their ancient error] (ll. 2, 3, 6). This exordium introduces the dichotomy that structures Charles Martel's speech: love that destroys versus love that creates civic unity and order. It addresses the ancient error that assumes 'folle amore' is caused by Venus and her blind son, and it provides a retrospective lens through which to re-read *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* viii:

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[25] See Barsella, *In the Light of Angels*, pp. 115-17.

[26] Thomas Aquinas, *Providence*, in *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith: Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans., intro. and notes by Vernon J. Bourke (New York: Doubleday, 1956), pp. 264-72.

[27] Pseudo-Dionysius, 'Celestial Hierarchy', in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibhéid, with intro. by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclerq and Karlfried Froehlich (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 143-91 (p. 170). See Diego Sbacchi, *La Presenza di Dionigi Areopagita nel Paradiso di Dante* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2006), for Dante's use of Dionysius the Areopagite in *Paradiso*.

[28] Thomas Aquinas, *Providence*, in *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*, p. 271; see also Paratore, '*Paradiso* VIII', 51-53.

> Solea creder lo mondo in suo periclo
> che la bella Ciprigna il folle amore
> raggiasse, volta nel terzo epiciclo;
> per che non pur a lei faceano onore
> di sacrificio e di votivo grido
> le genti antiche ne l'antico errore;
> ma Dïone onoravano e Cupido,
> quella per madre sua, questo per figlio,
> e dicean ch'el sedette in grembo a Dido;
> e da costei ond' io principio piglio
> pigliavano il vocabol de la stella
> che' l sol vagheggia or da coppa or da ciglio. (*Par*., viii. 1-12).
>
> [The world was wont to believe, to its peril, that the fair Cyprian, wheeling in the third epicycle, rayed down mad love; wherefore the ancient people in their ancient error not only to her did honor with sacrifice and votive cry, but they honored Dione and Cupid, the one as mother, the other as her son, and they told that he had sat in Dido's lap; and from her with whom I take my start they took the name of the star which the sun woos, now behind her, now before.]

Initially, one might think these lines are merely meant to introduce the Heaven of Venus, the star that the Sun, or the source of love, woos; in fact, what Dante achieves here is an indictment of certain beliefs that he associates with the pagan world. While adopting Latinisms ('periclo') and echoes of ancient poetry (Ovid. *Metam*., x. 270 and Virgil *Aen*., i. 685, 718 for la 'bella Ciprigna', or Cupid on the lap of Dido) to characterize 'le genti antiche', he rhymes 'Dido' with 'Cupido' and 'grido' to highlight the error both in the Virgilian narrative of the mad love of Dido and in the perilous belief that humans have no freedom.

Dante-pilgrim had also raised the issue of the role of stars as suggested by Plato's *Timaeus* in *Paradiso* iv,[29] only to be roundly chastised by Beatrice, who showed him the defects in both Platonic and Averroistic thinking on this point.[30] In *Paradiso* viii, the problem of the influence of the stars appears again; as G. Fallani notes, 'the theme of the planets and their influence on human affairs constitutes the argument that disciplines the discussion'.[31] Dante here detaches the planet Venus from its ancient lore, and in so doing reminds us of Virgil's limitations, made evident in *Inferno* viii when the Fallen Angels bar his passage. Similarly in *Purgatorio* viii, it is not Virgil who can protect the pilgrim at night, but the angels who guard the valley, and in the following canto (*Purgatorio* ix), it is Lucy, not Virgil, who lifts the pilgrim to Purgatory proper. In these instances, we have Christian grace and free will pitted against ancient fatalism, a redeemed Venus triumphant over the Venus of disorderly desire. By putting all his verbs in the past tense, except 'piglio' [I take], which Dante contrasts with 'pigliavano' [they took], the poet condemns the ancient error. But he takes Venus' name to contrast this dangerous, pagan view of love as 'folle amore' [mad desire] (*Par.*, viii. 2) with the life-giving love that rules the heavens ('l'amor che 'ciel governi') (*Par.*, i. 74) and that moves the sun and the other stars ('l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle') (*Par.*, xxxiii. 145).[32]

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[29] See Pézard, *Il Canto VIII del Paradiso*, 4.

This introduces a critical concern of the Heaven of Venus which has already been discussed as the reason for the Incarnation in *Paradiso* vii and explored in both *Paradiso* viii and ix. *Paradiso* viii addresses, that is, the natural order of the universe, the nature of human diversity, providence and the love between Creator and creatures as the motor that moves the universe. This love binds citizens together in contrast to the immoderate desires of individuals who shatter the common good.[33]

As the 'lumi divini' [divine lights] (*Par.*, viii. 25) approach in a polyphonic luminescent splash of unity, one of them ('solo') welcomes Dante. He informs him that they all travel with the Principalities, addressing him with the first line of the first canzone of the *Convivio*:

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[30] See Brenda Deen Schildgen, 'Philosophers, Theologians, and the Islamic Legacy: *Inferno* 4 versus *Paradiso* 4', *Dante Studies* 125 (2007), 113-32.

[31] 'il tema dei pianeti e della loro influenza sulle vicende dell'uomo costituisce la trama che disciplina il racconto'. See Giovanni Fallani and Alighieri Dante, *Il Canto VIII Del Paradiso*, 5; see also Paratore, 'Il canto VIII del *Paradiso*', 33-52.

[32] See Ragni, 'Il Canto VIII of *Paradiso*', 159-62; Cioffari, 'Lectura Dantis: *Paradiso* VIII', 94-97.

[33] See Peters, 'Human Diversity and Civil Society', esp. 59-68; also Gentili, 'L'arco di Cupido e la freccia di Aristotele', 87.

> Noi ci volgiam coi principi celesti
> D'un giro e d'un girare e d'una sete,
> Ai quali tu del mondo già dicesti:
> *'Voi che' ntendendo il terzo ciel movete.'* (*Par.*, viii. 34-37)
>
> [With one circle, with one circling and with one thirst we revolve with the celestial Princes to whom you in the world once did say, 'You move the third heaven by intellection.']

Two separate palinodes of Dante's earlier work occur here. First, as pointed out above, in the *Convivio,* he attributed the movement of Venus to the Thrones, whereas here it is attributed to the Principalities.[34] Second, in this canzone Dante had stated that Venus, 'il terzo ciel', was responsible for the state in which he found himself: 'El ciel che segue lo vostro valore /… mi tragge ne lo stato ov' io mi trovo' [The heaven that follows your power ... drags me into the state where I am] (*Convivio,* II. Canzone Prima. 4, 6). However, the speaker in *Paradiso* viii, Carlo Martello, while quoting from Dante's poem, specifically declares that humans, and not the stars, are in charge of human affairs. Furthermore, as the third and final instance of Dante's self-citation in the *Commedia* (*Purg.*, ii. 112; *Purg.*, xxiv. 51), the quotation serves as a palinodic reference to some of the false assumptions of the *Convivio*.[35] All three citations of Dante's own lyric poetry concern love and divine truth, and this third citation introduces the Venus that Dante adopts in Carlo Martello's discourse. This is not the Venus of selfish love, the sensual love or cupidity that had destroyed Dido and Francesca, but the Venus, as Carlo Martello puts it, of 'mio amor più oltre che le fronde' [my love more than the leaves] (*Par.*, viii. 57). This love creates unity and harmony with the power to receive to the full the mark of the Principle of principles, and by their harmonious exercise of princely powers, to make manifest this transcendent principle of all order.

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[34] Jacoff writes: 'When Charles says that Dante's poem had been addressed to the Principalities as the angelic intelligences of the sphere of Venus, he is correcting Dante's claim in the *Convivio* that the Thrones were the appropriate angelic intelligences of their sphere. This correction is so understated that none of the early commentators even remark it. Dante's revision of his position on the angelic hierarchy is dealt with more directly in *Paradiso* 28 when he specifically privileges the scheme of the Pseudo-Dionysius over that of Gregory. In *Paradiso* 8 the correction calls no attention to itself, but once we see it we can attend to the larger ways in which Dante is palinodic toward the *Convivio* in this episode' (Jacoff, 'The Post-Palinodic Smile: *Paradiso* VIII and IX', *Dante Studies*, 114).

[35] See Jacoff, 'The Post-Palinodic Smile', 111-22; Picone, 'Canto VIII', pp. 122-23.

Carlo Martello's segment of the canto (*Par.*, viii. 31-148) can be divided into two sections that include a 'corollario' (l. 138). In the first part (ll. 31-84), the Angevin prince introduces himself by recalling his meeting with Dante and his official role as bearer of the crown: 'di quella terra che 'l Danubia riga / poi che le ripe tedesche abbandona' [that land which the Danube waters after it has left its German banks] (ll. 65-67). The second part (ll. 85-138) responds to Dante's question about the stars and the limits of their influence on human behaviour with a specific corollary about how human freedom is contravened by human force (ll. 139-48).[36]

The exchange with Carlo Martello parallels those with Filippo Argenti in *Inferno* and with Nino Visconti and Corrado Malaspina in *Purgatorio*. As pointed out above, all three figures are associated with recent Florentine politics and with the historic Dante. Filippo is an example of unregulated and unjustified rage, an emotion matched by Dante's and Virgil's angry responses to him, on which scholars have spilled much ink.[37] For my part, I find little purpose in discussing whether Dante-pilgrim's rage is justified or not. Collapsing the difference between pilgrim and poet, *Inferno* in its economy follows the *lex talionis* so common to Hebrew Scriptures. Dante, the poet, has clearly adopted the role of prophet and judge who reveal heinous wrongdoing and show how divine rage results in just punishment. More important perhaps for our vertical reading is the way in which Filippo embodies the individual rage that creates civic disorder, a rage so potent that it would symbolically draw everything into its stagnant waters, including Dante and Virgil. The only hint of the love that binds in *Inferno* viii is when Virgil displays his approbation of Dante,

> Lo collo poi con le braccia mi cinse
> basciommi 'l volto e disse: 'Alma sdegnosa,
> benedetta colei che 'n te s'incinse!' (*Inf.*, viii. 43-45)
>
> [Then he put his arms about my neck, kissed my face, and said 'Indignant soul, blessed is she who bore you!']

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[36] Picone, 'Canto 8', p. 120.

[37] See, for example, Bigi, Borgese, Castellani, Donno, Bosco, Romagnoli, Szombathely, and Sapegno.

If Dante-poet confined himself to historical veracity, Virgil could not know that he was citing Luke 11. 27, 'benedetta colei che 'n te s'incinse', spoken by a woman in a crowd to Jesus, who then corrects her, saying 'beati qui audiunt verbum Dei et custodiunt' [Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it] (Luke 11. 28). Hawkins argues that the misappropriated citation itself demonstrates Virgil's limitations,[38] which may be true, but the quotation, alongside Virgil's display of affection, also conveys the loving bond between the two poets, the only hint of unselfish love in the canto.

*Purgatorio* viii, in contrast to the examples of rage in *Inferno* viii, extends its one display of affection when Dante meets Nino Visconti. In an exchange which demonstrates civic amity and mutual pleasure, the pilgrim is joyful to find Nino, '...quanto mi piacque / quando ti vidi non esser tra' rei!' [How I rejoiced to see you there, and not among the damned] (*Purg.*, viii. 53-54). And Nino, for his part, with 'Nullo bel salutar tra noi si tacque' [No fair salutation was silent between us] (*Purg.*, viii. 55), greets the pilgrim: 'Quant' è che tu venisti / a piè del monte per le lontane acque' [How long is it since you came to the foot of the mountain over the far waters?] (*Purg.*, viii. 56-57). As the grandson of Count Ugolino (punished with the traitors in *Inferno* xxxiii), Nino raises an implicit question about 'virtue in families', an inquiry that also applies to Carlo Martello's family. The pilgrim's second encounter in *Purgatorio* viii continues this theme of civic amity. Although Dante did not know Currado Malaspina, who died in 1294, he was a guest of the Malaspina family in 1306 and uses this occasion to praise the family known throughout Europe for its generosity and gallantry (*Purg.*, viii. 121-33).[39] More particularly, Dante praises this family which 'sola va dritta e 'l mal cammin dispregia' [alone goes right and scorns the evil path] (*Purg.*, viii. 132) even when 'il capo reo il mondo torca' [the wicked head turn the world awry] (*Purg.*, viii. 131), themes that reoccur in *Paradiso* viii. Following the *laudatio*, Currado prophesies Dante's coming exile and, in contrast to Filippo Argenti, who is reputed to have despoiled Dante of what wealth he had possessed following the poet's exile, he promises that Dante's opinion of the family will be proven true (*Purg.*, viii. 133-39).

Dante's meeting with Carlo Martello in *Paradiso* viii further develops these themes, with Dante's status as *exul inmeritus* linking Currado's prophecy with Carlo's spontaneous and regretful 's'io fossi giù stato, io ti mostrava / di mio amor più oltre che le fronde' [for had I remained below, I would have shown you of my love more than the leaves] (*Par.*, viii. 56-57).[40] The section of Carlo Martello's speech following his citation of *Convivio*'s 'Voi che 'ntendendo' (*Par.*, viii. 31-84) states that he and the other souls are 'sì pien d'amor, che, per piacerti, / non fia men dolce un poco di quïete' [so full of love that, in order to please you, a little quiet will not be less sweet to us] (*Par.*, viii. 38-39). Specific contrasts have been drawn between this wave of lovers, or 'lumi divini', who leave the circle of the Seraphim to stop and talk with Dante, and Paolo and Francesca's brief escape from 'la schiera ov è Dido' in *Inferno* v.[41] This becomes yet another occasion to contrast the 'folle amore' of Venus that opens the canto with the divine love that Carlo Martello immediately declares to the pilgrim, of whom he says, 'Assai m'amasti' [Much did you love me] (*Par.*, viii. 55). Like Virgil's reference to the early death of Marcellus in the *Aeneid* (*Aen.*, vi. 890-92), what follows expresses a melancholic sense of the unfortunate and inexplicable loss of a young prince, whose generosity and talents might have unified much of southern Europe. Carlo's expression of regret about what might have been also conveys the ill that is still to follow:

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[38] See Hawkins, 'Virgilio cita le Scritture', pp. 43-45.

[39] See Singleton, Notes, *Purgatorio*, pp. 172-73.

> [...] Il mondo m'ebbe
> Giù poco tempo; e se più fosse stato,
> Molto sarà di mal, che non sarebbe... (*Par.*, viii. 49-51).
>
> [The world held me below but little time, and had it been more much ill shall be that would not have been...]

Carlo's geographic description of the political realms that he would have inherited if he had not died so young includes a hint that he would have restored Sicily to the Kingdom of Naples. Such a political realm would have unified Hungary, Provence and the Kingdom of Naples. At the same time, Carlo chastises his brother, who inherited his place (*Par.*, viii. 76-78), for avarice, thereby allowing Dante to further indict the Capetian and Angevin lineage, already so scathingly exposed for avarice by Sordello in *Purgatorio* vii and by Hugh Capet, the founder of the dynasty, in *Purgatorio* xx. 79-84. Carlo Martello emerges here as an *exemplum*, a *figura* of the monarch, the utopian monarch specifically described in the *Monarchia*:

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[40] Picone, '*Paradiso* VIII', p. 125.

[41] See Ragni, 'Il canto VIII del *Paradiso*', 167-68.

> iustitia potissima est in mundo quando volentissimo et potentissimo subiecto inest; huiusmodi solus Monarcha est: ergo soli Monarche insistens iustitia in mundo potissima est. (*Mon*., I. xi. 8)
>
> [justice is at its strongest in the world when it resides in a subject who has in the highest degree possible the will and power to act: only the monarch is such a subject; therefore justice is at its strongest in the world when it is located in the monarch alone ]

Dante continues:

> Preterea, quemadmodum cupiditas habitualem iustitiam quodammodo, quantumcunque pauca, obnubilat, sic karitas seu recta dilectio illam acuit atque dilucidat. Cui ergo maxime recta dilectio inesse potest, potissimum locum in illo potest habere iustitia; huiusmodi est Monarcha: ergo, eo existente, iustitia potissima est vel esse potest. (*Mon*., I. xi. 13)[42]
>
> [Moreover just as greed, however slight, dulls the habit of justice in some way, so charity or rightly ordered love makes it sharper and brighter. So the man in whom rightly ordered love can be strongest is the one in whom justice can have its principal abode; the monarch is such a man; therefore justice is or can be at its strongest when he exists.]

Highlighting justice informed by *caritas* [charity] as the signature virtue of the ideal monarch and opposing it to *cupiditas* [greed], these passages from *Monarchia* appear to comment on Carlo Martello's career as represented in *Paradiso* viii. Furthermore, *cupiditas*, the trait identified in the *Monarchia* as the mark of an unjust ruler, connects the philosophical discussion to a concrete historical case: Carlo's great promise as a loving ruler is undone by his early death; he is succeeded by an avaricious brother. With the pitting of *caritas* against *cupiditas*, Dante adopts Augustinian language, but on the surface his point appears to differ radically from Augustine, who contrasts the excessive love of the earthly city leading to contempt of God, with the love of the heavenly city leading even to contempt of the world. However, Augustine contrasts those rulers driven by a lust for dominion (for which, of course, he condemns the Romans) with those rulers and citizens who serve one another in love (*caritas*) and, thereby, bring the City of God to earth. This, Dante intimates, is what Carlo Martello would have attempted and what his early death prevented (*City of God* XIV. xxviii).[43]

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[42] *Monarchy*, ed. and trans. by Prue Shaw. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). See also Ragni, 'Il canto VIII *Paradiso*', for the connection between Dante's description of the ideal monarch and Carlo Martello, pp. 168-75.

This historical narrative spurs Dante to question 'com' esser può, di dolce seme, amaro' [how from sweet seed may come forth bitter] (*Par.*, viii. 93), picking up the metaphor of plant and seed used by Sordello in *Purgatorio* vii about Carlo II, Carlo Martello's father. The second part of Carlo's speech (*Par.*, viii. 94-138) answers this question with a corollary (ll. 139-48). Together, they address the main themes of the canto: love, providence, free will, fortune and their connection to citizenship.

Before proceeding, it is worth observing in parenthesis that Aquinas, following his discussion of the order of angels, explores the 'order among men'. Just as angels have an order, so 'divine providence', he writes, 'imposes order on all things'. Following Aristotle (*Politics* I. 4), Aquinas emphasizes that humans have a natural order: those with understanding are naturally suited to governance, while those with strong bodies are naturally fitted for service. But disorder occurs, he explains, in human government 'as a result of a man getting control, not because of the eminence of his understanding, but because either he usurps dominion for himself by bodily strength or because someone is set up as a ruler on the basis of sensual affection'.[44] Aquinas's main point, it seems to me, is that divine providence, with the angels as agents, imposes order, but humans force this order awry.

Returning to Carlo Martello's explanation of why good seed produces bitter fruit, Carlo, who knows the truth directly from God, 'là 've ogne ben si termina e s'inizia' [there where every good ends and begins] (*Par.*, viii. 87), is concerned to show the pilgrim that

> Lo ben che tutto il regno che tu scandi
> volge e contenta, fa esser virtute
> sua provedenza in questi corpi grandi. (*Par.*, viii. 97-99)
>
> [The Good which revolves and contents all the realm that you are climbing makes its providence become a power in these great bodies.]

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43 Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos. Libri XI-XXII*, ed. by Bernard Dombart and Alphonse Kalb, CCSL 48 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955).

44 Thomas Aquinas, *Providence*, in *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*, pp. 274-75. See Paratore, 'Il canto VIII del *Paradiso*', 50-52 for this suggestion.

Whatever the effects produced by these Heavens (infused as they are with the perfect Mind), they cannot be less than perfect because, if God were not directing this order, the result would be 'ruine' (*Par.*, viii. 108). The pilgrim quickly agrees with this statement because to contradict it would make the divinity defective.[45] But, in that case, whence does civil and moral disorder emanate? Rather than an immediate answer, we get Carlo Martello's question, one that goes back to the core concerns of the canto and is equally important for the entire ideological structure of the poem:

'…sarebbe il peggio
per l'omo in terra, se non fosse cive?' (*Par.*, viii. 115-16)

[...would it be worse for man on earth if he were not a citizen?]

The pilgrim is certain that it would be worse and requires no proof. Man, of necessity, must be part of a larger society, not a party to himself. The Latinism *cive* is used only twice in the poem: in the first instance (*Purg.*, xxxii. 101), it refers to Dante's ultimate destiny as a citizen of the City of God; here, it sanctions the earthly destiny of man.[46] Carlo Martello affirms that divine providence orchestrates civil society so that men may have diverse duties, making one born Solon, another Xerxes, another Melchizedek and another Daedalus (*Par.*, viii. 122-26). To create a city or *regnum*, in other words, requires diversity, and it is in this way that Nature disposes of human talents.

The problem still remains, however, that virtue does not run in families: hence Jacob and Esau, Romulus and his base father, Nino, and his treacherous grandfather Ugolino, or Carlo Martello and his father and brother. Carlo attributes this to the world down there ('il mondo là giù') which, not following the foundation of Nature that would make people good ('buona la gente'), instead makes ill proof ('mala prova') of itself (*Par.*, viii. 139-44). Men twist nature by forcing those suited to religion to take up the sword and those suited to the sword and kingly rule into religion (*Par.*, viii. 145-48). Carlo's point is exemplified by the Malaspina family, featured in *Purgatorio* viii and, according to Dante, privileged by nature to avoid the path of evil ('l mal cammin') (*Purg.*, viii. 132). Civic and religious failure – whether institutional or personal – results, in other words, from distorted will: when human arrogance, intransigence and temerity violate Nature and the divinely orchestrated providence that regulates it. In forcing people into professions unsuited to their natural talents, the world has lost its way (è fuor di strada') (*Par.*, viii. 148). Carlo Martello's conclusion connects, thereby, the 'folle amore' of 'la bella Ciprigna' with the disordered politics and society of Dante's own benighted times.[47] In his own person, by contrast, Carlo maintains hope in good government, while deploring bad, exhibits a sense of justice informed by love, and provides a voice of regal courtesy. He knows that divine providence and love would make the people good but equally recognizes that miscreants will work against this divine gift.[48]

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[45] See Peters, 'Human Diversity and Civil Society', 65-68.

[46] See Pézard, *Il Canto VIII del Paradiso*, 19; see also Cioffari, 'Lectura Dantis: *Paradiso* VIII', 104-05.

In the Eights, Dante skillfully brings the affective together with the intellective: characters exhibit a range of emotions from the bitterness of wrathful hatred to the loving warmth of friendship. At the same time, a scholarly speculation on the cause of civil and personal wrongdoing in *Paradiso* viii ties the personal to the political, the civic to the moral, rationalism to faith, passion for civil order to divine providence, and human to transcendent love. Through the retrospective lens of *Paradiso* viii and the canto's central protagonist Carlo Martello, Dante nonetheless leaves us with a sense of melancholy about the elusiveness of what might have been achieved in the civic domain, so vulnerable as it is to the whims of Fortune and to the twisted desires of humans. This ideal of what might have been contrasts with what can still be – as witnessed in the show of friendship, camaraderie and hope in *Purgatorio* viii – and what unfortunately is, recreated for us by the angry, distorted and vitriolic figures at the gates of the city of Dis in *Inferno* viii.

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[47] Pézard, *Il Canto VIII del Paradiso*, 22-23.

[48] Giorgio Cavallini, 'Canto VIII' in *Paradiso: Lectura Dantis Neapolitana*, ed. by Pompeo Giannatonio (Naples: Loffredo, 2000), pp. 163-85.

# 9. 'Without Any Violence'[1]

## *Zygmunt G. Barański*

## Introduction: reflecting ('vertically')

I was about to start preparing the written version of my 'reading' of the Nines, when two things happened that helped me give better order to my reflections. Among the PhD applications I was reviewing, I came across a powerful defence of interpreting the *Commedia* 'vertically'. A few days later, after giving a lecture based on the current chapter at a prestigious North American department of Italian, the idea that Dante's masterpiece might be read 'vertically' was received with a degree of skepticism. Indeed, one colleague launched into an attack that was in every way as forceful as the aspiring doctoral student's justification. I found the conflicting reactions fascinating: the young Dantist enthused by a new way of approaching the *Commedia*; the established scholar unconvinced and deeply committed to exegetical methods that have stood the test of time and seem to have been legitimated by Dante himself. My own position, ever since I was kindly invited to examine possible interconnections between the Nines, has been closer to that of the older Dantist – I would not say skeptical, but certainly

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[1] The video of this lecture is available at the Cambridge Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy website, https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1625418
My aim in this chapter is to recapture something of the range and energy of my spoken presentation. In order to do this and keep to the assigned word-limit, I am not able to document fully some of my claims. For a broader and better-documented 'vertical reading' of the Nines – approximately double the length of this one – see my 'Reading the *Commedia*'s IXs "Vertically": From Addresses to the Reader to *crucesignati* and the *Ecloga Theoduli*', *L'Alighieri* 44 (2014), 5-36.

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wary. Indeed, as my research developed, two questions constantly accompanied my efforts to gauge the efficacy of a 'vertical' investigation of the *Commedia*. First, to what degree did Dante actually want his poem to be read in this manner? Second, how might examining three cantos belonging to different canticles yet sharing the same number illuminate our understanding of both the *canti* and the poem – and we can at least be certain that Dante did want us to take cognizance of the cantos' numbering: 'al ventesimo canto / de la prima canzon' [the twentieth canto / of the first canzone] (*Inf.*, xx. 2-3)?[2]

The evidence that, in line with medieval ideas about the divinely created universe as numerically harmonious, Dante wished the *Commedia* to be considered in its totality and in the interplay of its parts is of course overwhelming. However, to maintain this does not also necessarily imply that a privileged relationship unites cantos distinguished by the same number, and hence that this relationship needs to be examined in itself and as a unique determining feature of the whole. In fact, the explicit indications in this regard are at best scant. They seem to be limited to the opening proemial cantos, to the political Sixes, to the closing canti (but one of these has a unique numbering…), and to a few other triads.[3] Rather than forcing our readerly attention upwards and 'vertically', Dante normally encourages us to reflect and to look backwards: 'Ricorditi, ricorditi!' [Remember, remember!] (*Purg.*, xxvii. 22). In my view, Charles Singleton's work on what he termed the *Commedia*'s 'vistas in retrospect' is just about definitive on this point.[4] Equally, it is generally accepted that the poet regularly established meaningful links between different moments of his poem, and that these associations are rarely dictated by numeration. As regards our three cantos, it is enough to remember the evident bonds that tie *Inferno* ix to the pair of cantos that precede it and the pair that follow it; that, through the figure of St Lucy, connect *Purgatorio* ix to *Inferno* ii and *Paradiso* xxxii; and finally, that join *Paradiso* ix to *Inferno* v and *Purgatorio* xxvi (lust), as well as to *Inferno* xii (Ezzelino da Romano). Indeed, as Amilcare Iannucci demonstrated, this form of organization recalls the Scriptural exegetical device of the 'parallel passage', which not infrequently had recapitulatory functions.[5] Yet, as scholars have also noted, interconnections of setting do unite the Nines. Thus, both *Inferno* ix and *Purgatorio* ix are set in liminal indeterminate hinterlands where distinct largescale regions of the afterlife meet, where otherworldly guardians protect the gates and walls that separate the different areas, and where celestial messengers come to the pilgrim's aid. Dante's aim is obvious: to underscore the differences between the realm of damnation and that of purgation, and to highlight the progress that the *viator* has made since his panic-stricken confusion outside Dis. *Paradiso* ix, too, brings to a close a major discrete section of the Ptolemaic universe, the heavens lying in the shadow of the earth. However, given the marvellous concord and unity of the cosmos, issues of partition, transition, and entry, with their attendant corollaries of uncertain liminality, of obstacles, and of miraculous intervention, are quite alien to the effortless harmony of paradisiacal reality. Thus, unlike the other two cantos, *Paradiso* ix is set in a specific location, the Heaven of Venus, and is structured according to the *Commedia*'s standard narrative model of the encounter between Dante-*personaggio* and exemplary inhabitants of that subdivision of the afterlife. In this respect, considering the Nines simultaneously, the effect is to highlight the singularity of the third realm. However, there is nothing exceptional about the contrasts and parallelisms conjoining our three cantos. Throughout the *Commedia*, Dante employs similar associative techniques to stress the same general points about the nature of the hereafter as emerge from the 'vertical' assessment of the Nines. We are dealing with a commonplace, whose one variation in this instance is that it is the product of a rapprochement between three cantos bearing the same number.

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[2] All translations are my own. My aim is syntactic and semantic accuracy rather than elegance.

[3] For an excellent discussion of the tradition of reading the *Commedia* 'vertically', see, in this collection, Simon A. Gilson, 'The Wheeling Sevens'.

[4] See Charles S. Singleton, 'The Vistas in Retrospect', *Modern Language Notes* 81:1 (1966), 55-80.

This is the danger, I believe, inherent in the 'vertical' reading: it can grant priority to what is obvious—and if there is one writer who is rarely obvious, that writer is Dante Alighieri. Thus, despite what might be presumed in light of the basic narrative similarities uniting *Inferno* ix and *Purgatorio* ix, the poet appears to have actually been more interested in yoking together *Inferno* ix and *Paradiso* ix. Unlike *Inferno* ix and *Purgatiorio* ix, whose connections are externally narratological, those between *Inferno* ix and *Paradiso* ix are calculatedly formal. The two cantos share several rhymes and rhyme words[6] – a sophisticated technique that medieval vernacular poets employed to suggest affinities between texts, and which Dante used with some regularity in the *Commedia*.[7] In addition, the cantos share several other features that distinguish them from *Purgatorio* ix. Specifically, both make reference to heresy, to cemeteries, to sieges, and, most visibly, to sinful cities. What is thus striking is that rather than present the Nines as a triad, Dante was concerned to organize them into two distinct pairs – on the one hand, *Inferno* ix and *Purgatorio* ix; on the other, *Inferno* ix and *Paradiso* ix.

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[5] See Amilcare A. Iannucci, 'Autoesegesi dantesca: la tecnica dell'"episodio parallelo"', *Lettere italiane* 33 (1981), 305-28.

Other hermeneutic perils attend the 'vertical' critical engagement with the *Commedia*. In general, the need to avoid flattening out differences between the *canti*, and so ensuring that each canto's distinctiveness is maintained, is paramount. Yet, the essential associative nature of the 'vertical' approach, with its resultant emphasis on (common) structural, thematic, and ideological concerns, militates against this. For the method to gain currency, it needs also to demonstrate that it can cast light on matters of style and, more vitally, that it contributes to the poem's sophisticated metaliterary system. Finally, when treating a trio of *canti*, the temptation ought to be resisted to equate 'verticality' with numerology. The latter was unquestionably important in medieval culture; however, its impact on Dante was circumscribed. Indeed, I believe this to be the case even as regards the cantos marked with a nine, the number indicating the miraculous, divine intervention, and the power of God, and whose sacred symbolic valences the poet himself underlined in the *Vita nova* (xxix. 3). As embodiments of the nine, our cantos fittingly affirm and dramatize the 'marvellous' workings of the 'Trinity'. However, and this is the point, there is nothing extraordinary about this. Every canto of the *Commedia*, in recounting a unique providentially sanctioned experience, does exactly the same. The spectre of the 'obvious' once again looms large.

My methodological words of caution are not meant to undermine the possibility that a 'vertical' reading is valid and authorized by Dante himself. Thus, to test out the validity of the approach, it becomes necessary to establish whether elements exist that might confirm a deliberately constructed system of correspondences uniting the Nines. However, it is difficult to find clear textual evidence that permits us to extend such a rapport beyond a few basic narrative motifs at the service of reinforcing a few of the *Commedia*'s standard fixed points: most notably, the glory and variety of divine creation, whose constituent parts are providentially ordered and unified. In any case, *Paradiso* ix twice explicitly draws attention to these matters, thereby reminding us just how unexceptional is the 'vertically' established relationship between the Nines. Contrasting his earthly to his celestial love, Folchetto describes the divinely 'ordered' interplay between this world, Purgatory, the Earthly Paradise, the heavens, and the Empyrean (*Par.*, ix. 103-08). A few tercets earlier, when introducing the Occitan poet, Dante observes: 'Per letiziar là sù fulgor s'acquista, / sì come riso qui; ma giù s'abbuia / l'ombra di fuor, come la mente è trista' [By rejoicing up there brightness is gained, as laughter is here; but down there the shade grows dark on the outside, as the mind is sad] (*Par.*, ix. 70-72). Once again, the interconnections and disparities between Paradise, our world, and Hell are made clear. As he does throughout the *Commedia*, Dante also implies that his own artistic practices are modelled on those of the *Deus artifex*. Outlining the external signs of emotion that characterize human beings on earth, in Heaven, and in Hell, Dante introduces a new piece of information about the state of the damned which he had not revealed in *Inferno*: the shades 'grow dark' – *abbuiare* – on feeling sadness (ll. 71-72). Like the 'worth' (*valor*; 105), the poet too carefully organizes the unfolding of his poem, forging meaningful links between its parts. The subtlety of Dante's presentation is noteworthy. With exemplary concision, he adds to our knowledge of Hell, of the workings of the universe, and of his authorial status. The understated, yet richly connotative intricacy of *Paradiso* ix. 71-72 stands in contrast to the mechanistic repetition of narrative motifs that unites the Nines. If Dante had indeed intended our cantos to be read 'vertically', one cannot but wonder whether he would not have made this apparent in that refined and economical manner that marks his recourse to *abbuiare*.

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[6] See 'pianto'/'tanto' (*Inf.*, ix. 44, 48 and *Par.*, ix. 5, 9); 'alto'/'assalto' (*Inf.*, ix. 50, 54 and *Par.*, ix. 28, 30); 'sembiante'/'davante' (*Inf.*, ix. 101, 103 and *Par.*, ix. 64, 66); 'bagna' (*Inf.*, ix. 114 and *Par.*, ix. 47); 'cruda' (*Inf.*, ix 23) and 'crude' (*Par.*, ix. 48); 'chiuso' (*Inf.*, ix. 55), 'chiudessi' (*Inf.*, ix. 60) and 'richiude' (*Par.*, ix. 44); 'disio' (*Inf.*, ix. 107) and 'disii' (*Par.*, ix. 79).

[7] See Roberto Antonelli, 'Tempo testuale e tempo rimico. Costruzione del testo e critica nella poesia rimata', *Critica del testo* 1 (1998), 177-201.

## Appealing to the reader

Although I am reluctant to grant special importance to the repetition of narrative elements across the *canti*, nevertheless, there is another feature, common to the Nines, which makes me hesitate before turning my back on the possibility that Dante composed the three cantos in such a way so as to encourage their 'vertical' reading. Addresses to the reader are a significant trait of the *Commedia*. The poet introduces them judiciously, normally for ethical and metaliterary ends, and always at key moments in the text, thereby highlighting their structuring functions. It is precisely this last characteristic of the Dantean address that explains my hesitation, given that each of the Nines includes an appeal to the reader. Even more suggestively, our triad of same-number canti is the only one in the poem that is distinguished in this manner. In Dante, such instances of repetition are rarely without consequence:

> O voi ch'avete l'intelletti sani,
> mirate la dottrina che s'asconde
> sotto 'l velame de li versi strani.
>
> [Oh you who have healthy intellects,
> look at the doctrine that is concealed
> under the veil of the unusual verses.] (*Inf.*, ix. 61-63)
>
> Lettor, tu vedi ben com'io innalzo
> la mia matera, e però con più arte
> non ti maravigliar s'io la rincalzo.
>
> [Reader, you see well how I elevate
> my subject-matter, and therefore don't be surprised
> if I sustain it with greater art.] (*Purg.*, ix. 70-72)
>
> Ahi anime ingannate e fatture empie,
> che da sì fatto ben torcete i cuori,
> drizzando in vanità le vostre tempie!
>
> [Ah deluded souls and impious creatures,
> who from such created good twist away your hearts,
> lifting towards vanities your temples!] (*Par.*, ix. 10-12)

Each address poses substantial critical problems. Regarding the first, scholars disagree as to what value to assign to the 'unusual verses'. Do these refer exclusively to the figures and events that appear in the second part of the canto; or do they encompass the canto as a whole, or the entire episode outside the walls of Dis, or even the *Commedia* in its totality? The second appeal is equally allusive and perplexing. In what way is Dante 'elevating' his 'subject-matter'; and again, to which aspects of the text does 'matera' specifically refer? Furthermore, how precisely does the poet elevate his 'art' to a 'greater' level and how does he 'sustain' it? Finally, many Dantists dispute that *Par.*, ix. 10-12 is an apostrophe directed at the reader. Given the exegetical difficulties surrounding the addresses, and in light of their possibile numerically sanctioned interconnection, the obvious question arises whether the three *invocationes* ought to be considered as one. Confirmation that this might be the correct approach would depend on a 'vertical' reading casting light on some of the passages' obscurities.

Bringing together *Inf.*, ix. 61-63 and *Par.*, ix. 10-12 quickly dispels any doubts regarding the latter's status as an apostrophe. Although *Par.*, ix. 10-12 is an impassioned exclamation, the tercet is an outburst directed at a particular group of readers, those who misuse their reason, just as *Inf.*, ix. 61-63 is addressed to readers who behave in the opposite manner. It is only *Purg.*, ix. 70-72 that involves every reader of the poem. Moreover, putting in contact the *terzine* from the first and last canticles raises interesting issues relating to the interpretation of the *Commedia*. The 'vanities' towards which the 'impious' 'lift their temples' are material wealth; and it is the same avaricious desire that leads contemporary intellectuals to practice sinful interpretation (*Par.*, ix., 133-35). Faulty exegesis of canon law is contrasted to the devoted clarification of sacred texts. This, and not the pursuit of earthly advantage, is the proper activity for 'healthy intellects'; and as a 'sacrato poema' [sacred poem] (*Par.*, xxiii. 62), the *Commedia* too should be studied with due respect and not left 'derelitt[a]' [derelict] (*Par.*, ix., 134). Dante regularly relates his poem to the creations of the *Deus artifex* and to other divinely inspired texts, and *Inf.*, ix. 61-63 and *Par.*, ix. 10-12 essentially constitute another *variatio* on this theme. On the other hand, as a metaliterary declaration, *Purg.*, ix. 70-72, is rather richer than the other two apostrophes. Similar to *Inf.*, ix. 61-63, where he uses the typical vocabulary of the allegoresis of literary texts ('doctrine concealed under the veil' of the *lictera* of poetry), Dante makes use of conventional critical terminology in *Purgatorio* ix: 'subject-matter elevated by greater art'. Yet, in *Inferno* ix, behind the humdrum language of medieval literary criticism, the poet was intent on boldly establishing that the *Commedia* is not to be read, as his choice of terms might at first sight be taken to imply, according to the tenets of literary *allegoria in verbis* but those of providential *allegoria in factis*. Equally, to grant terms such as *innalzare*, *materia*, and *arte* their normal medieval meanings, as Dante commentators tend to do, involves distorting the key element of the poet's radically innovative 'comic' poetics, namely, his rejection of the *genera dicendi* and their artificial distinctions between 'high', 'middle' and 'low' subjects and styles.[8]

Since it is certain that the poem does not adhere to standard medieval compositional norms, what does Dante mean when he talks about 'artistic elevation'? In straightforward stylistic terms, it is difficult to discern any major change between the two parts of the canto separated by the apostrophe. If anything, the first half, on account of its reliance on classical elements, is conventionally closer to the 'high' than the second, which is strongly Christian in character, and hence tied to the *sermo humilis*. It is thus clear that when Dante alludes to a 'higher' *materia* he is not referring to the conventions of the *genera*, but solely to matters of content and value, to the transition to the salvific Christian environment of 'mercy' (l. 110). Dante grants new vigour to the hackneyed vocabulary of the *genera dicendi*. It is no longer a set of literary-critical clichés but is revived to connote the inestimable worth of divinely ordained salvation. Yet, in light of our present purpose, it is striking that *Purg*., ix. 70-72 achieves its effects without needing to make recourse to the other two apostrophes. Indeed, it is difficult to see how these might enrich its already elaborate system of reference. This fact cannot but call into question the appropriateness of applying a 'vertical' interpretation to the Nines, given that their most obvious and unique formal interconnecting feature does not seem to support a unified reading of the apostrophes, and hence of the three *canti* and, by extension, of the *Commedia*. At most, we might conclude that the addresses all have both local and broad functions, illuminating the cantos in which they appear and the poem in general. Thus, *Inf*., ix. 61-63 contrasts 'healthy' exegesis with the hermeneutic errors of the heretics while indicating that the *Commedia* be read according to the 'allegory of theologians'; *Purg*., ix. 70-72 marks the shift between two areas of the afterlife and highlights Dante's rejection of established forms of literary composition; finally, *Par*., ix. 10-12 adds to the condemnation of contemporary greed while pointing to the divine attributes of the 'sacred poem'. In light of the apostrophes' dual function, it is thus probable that 'unusual verses', like the address of which it is part, cannot be interpreted narrowly but alludes both to the events around the gate of Dis and to the

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[8] See Zygmunt G. Barański, '*Magister satiricus*: Preliminary Notes on Dante, Horace and the Middle Ages', in *Language and Style in Dante*, ed. by John C. Barnes and Michelangelo Zaccarello (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), pp. 13-61.

*Commedia* in its entirety.[9] These are all insights of no little import; however, as I have already noted, they are a constant of the poem.

## Texts and violence

While I am convinced that Dante did not intend the Nines to be assessed 'vertically', and that, only occasionally, such as the conjuncture of the Sixes, did he envisage the *Commedia* being read in such a manner, I nevertheless also believe that there might be some advantage in considering together cantos distinguished by the same number. I had better explain myself. If, in philological terms, the evidence is against the 'vertical' reading, at the same time, there may be non-philologically sanctioned reasons for associating the Nines, and hence for extending such an approach to other triads of canti too.

Reading the Nines together one cannot but be struck how certain broad concerns connect them: divine power, the organization of the afterlife, the feminine, angels, horror, paganism, the relationship between the classical and the Christian. These are of course motifs that return consistently throughout the *Commedia*, and that have been extensively explored by Dante scholarship. There is nothing distinctive here. Nevertheless, there is one theme that stretches across the three cantos – a theme that possibly is more insistent than any of the other topics included in them, but which, surprisingly, scholars studying the Nines have largely ignored. And yet, when one isolates our cantos, it is a topic that is almost impossible to disregard. I am thinking of violence – violence broadly understood as the act of inflicting physical and emotional suffering.

It is remarkable that Dantists should have paid little attention to the question of violence in the poet's *oeuvre*.[10] It is a problem that consistently returns across his works, and is at the core of his presentation of life on earth and in eternity. Furthermore, as much recent scholarship on the Middle Ages has argued, violence profoundly marked the medieval world.[11] In particular, from the late eleventh century on, violence became ever more a feature of political, religious, intellectual, and artistic culture. Christianity, traditionally a religion of peace, was especially affected by the increased emphasis on violence.[12] Although the language of violence is regularly employed in the New Testament, this is normally for metaphorical ends. Indeed, to guarantee the fundamental role of peace in Christianity, exegetes had interpreted the historical books of the Old Testament not as literal accounts of wars fought by the Jews, but as allegorical descriptions of spiritual struggles against the devil and his hosts.[13] However, with the advent of the crusades and with the Church's growing involvement in secular affairs, the militarization of Christianity passed from being a matter of symbolic representation to becoming a complex fact of life. In addition, violence was a subject variously discussed by clerics: from discussions of the legitimacy of the crusades, of the notion of just war, and of the limits of papal authority to traditional Scripturally inspired defences of *caritas* and pacifism. A fascination with violence was also ever more graphically visible in religious art and literature, from bloody depictions of Christ's passion to the vividly evoked tortures of martyr narratives and of descriptions of Hell and Purgatory.[14] Such texts, of course, exerted an influence on the *Commedia*; however, their influence pales before that of the classical epic,[15] although their importance for Dante is probably akin to that of the vernacular chivalric tradition and of historical writing. However, what unites all these traditions, whether pagan or Christian, Latin or vernacular, is a persistent concern with violence. Dante's sources are violent, as was much of his culture, and yet, despite this, we continue to show little concern for his views on the subject.

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[9] See Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, ed. by Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 150.

[10] But see Zygmunt G. Barański, '"E cominciare stormo": Notes on Dante's Sieges', in *'Legato con amore in un volume'. Essays in Honour of John A. Scott*, ed. by John J. Kinder and Diana Glenn (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2013), pp. 175-203; Roberto Gigliucci, *Lo spettacolo della morte. Estetica e ideologia del macabro nella letteratura medievale* (Anzio: De Rubeis, 1994), pp. 47-52, 171-79; Robert Hollander, 'Dante and the Martial Epic', *Medievalia* 12 (1986), 67-91; Anne C. Leone, *'Sangue perfetto': Scientific, Sacrificial and Semiotic Blood in Dante* (PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2010), pp. 68-121; Luca Marcozzi, '"La guerra del cammino": metafore belliche nel viaggio dantesco', in *La metafora in Dante*, ed. by Marco Ariani (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2008), pp. 59-112; Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *The Transfiguration of History at the Center of Dante's 'Paradise'* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 14-69; *War and Peace in Dante*, ed. by John C. Barnes and Daragh O'Connell (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015).

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[11] See, for instance, Christiane Raynaud, *La Violence au moyen âge, XIIIe-XVe siècle* (Paris: Léopard d'Or, 1990); Hannah Skoda, *Medieval Violence: Physical Brutality in Northern France, 1270-1330* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), esp. pp. 1-49; *'A Great Effusion of Blood'? Interpreting Medieval Violence*, ed. by Mark D. Meyerson, Daniel Thierry, and Oren Falk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); *La Violence dans le monde médiévale* (Aix-en-Provence: CUER MA, Université de Provence, 1994). See also footnotes 12, 14, and 20.

[12] On Christianity and violence in the Middle Ages, see at least Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Violent Imagery in Late Medieval Piety', *Bulletin of German Historical Institute* 30 (2002), 1-36; Franco Cardini, "Introduzione", in San Bernardino da Siena, *La battaglia e il saccheggio del Paradiso, cioè della Gerusalemme celeste*, ed. by Franco Cardini (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli, 1979), pp. 5-62; Jean Flori, *La Guerre sainte. La Formation de l'idée de croisade dans l'Occident chrétien* (Paris: Aubier, 2001); Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); *'Militia Christi' e Crociata nei secoli XI-XIII* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1992).

[13] See Réginald Grégoire, 'Esegesi biblica e "militia Christi"', in *'Militia Christi'*, pp. 21-45 (p. 25); Katherine Allen Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), pp. 11-13.

[14] See, for instance, Jérôme Baschet, *Les Justices de l'au-delà: Les Répresentations de l'enfer en France et en Italie (XIIe-XVe siècle)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1993); Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint: A Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth*

Each of the Nines repeatedly refers to acts of violence and to violent events. In fact, the range of allusions is remarkable. Thus, without any pretense at offering an exhaustive list, in *Inferno* ix, the confrontation outside the walls of Dis is presented as a siege,[16] and embodiments of violence such as Erichtho, the Furies, and Medusa are evoked; in *Purgatorio* ix, we find tales of abduction (Tithonus, Ganymede), of rape (Ganymede again, Philomela), and of infanticide and cannibalism (Procne killing and cooking her son Itys before feeding him to his father Tereus);[17] finally, in *Paradiso* ix, the contemporary world is depicted as dominated by violence: Ezzelino III da Romano's 'great assault' (l. 30), Can Grande's cruel defeat of the Paduan Guelphs in 1314 (ll. 46-48), Rizzardo da Camino's murder in 1312 (ll. 49-51), and again in 1314 the beheading of four Ferrarese betrayed by the Bishop of Feltre (ll. 52-60). Moreover, the canto's sense of history is one of neverending viciousness: Dido's abandonment and suicide, the crucifixion, the crusades in Palestine and in the Languedoc, and the massacres that marked the siege of Marseille in 43 BCE (ll. 91-93) and that of Jericho (ll. 124-25). From the examples just cited, there would seem to be little doubt that Dante can be characterized as a writer drawn to violence and that the *Commedia* is a catalogue of brutality. Be that as it may; however what exactly was Dante's attitude to violence? Specifically, what was his intellectual position on violence, a major question in late medieval culture?

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*Century* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), pp. 43-61; Gigliucci, *Lo spettacolo*, pp. 119-45; Sarah Kay, 'The Sublime Body of the Martyr: Violence in Early Romance Saints' Lives', in *Violence in Medieval Society*, ed. by Richard W. Kaeuper (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2000), pp. 3-20; Larissa Tracy, *Torture and Brutality in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2012), pp. 31-69. On medieval attitudes to blood, see Bettina Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood. Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

[15] See Gigliucci, *Lo spettacolo*, pp. 15-35.

[16] See Barański, '"E cominciare stormo"', pp. 182-93.

[17] See Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, ed. by Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 153.

And what were his views as regards the representation of violence, namely, as regards descriptions of violence, the use of the terminology of violence, the treatment of figures and situations that the tradition categorized and portrayed as violent?

Let us begin by considering Dante's presentation of the crucifixion, the event that, by the early-fourteenth century, had become symptomatic of his world's fascination with graphic depictions of bloody violence and acute suffering:

> [...] pria ch'altr'alma
> del trïunfo di Cristo fu assunta.
> Ben si convenne lei lasciar per palma
> in alcun cielo de l'alta vittoria
> che s'acquistò con l'una e l'altra palma.
>
> [[...] before any other soul
> of the triumph of Christ she [Rahab]was taken up.
> It was apt indeed to leave her as a palm
> in any heaven of the lofty victory
> that was achieved with one and the other palm.] (*Par.*, ix. 119-23)

In sharp contrast to the grisly detail of standard descriptions of Christ's passion,[18] Dante's treatment is brief, allusive, and bloodless. There is no lingering here on the horrors and viciousness of Jesus' torture and death. Indeed, this aspect of Dante's portrayal is made more striking as it is accompanied by the martial imagery of the *Christus triumphans*, since this too is used with discretion and without violent overtones: the focus is entirely on the 'lofty victory' and its effects. Dante's other references to the crucifixion, whether in the *Commedia* or in his other works, are equally restrained.[19] It is clear that the poet was intent on distinguishing his presentation of Jesus' sufferings from those of his contemporaries – a culturally significant fact that appears to have eluded Dante scholarship.

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[18] See, for instance, Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993); Caroline Walker Bynum, 'The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg', in her *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), pp. 79-117, and 'The Blood of Christ in the Later Middle Ages', *Church History*, 71 (2002), 685-715; Gavin I. Langmuir, 'The Tortures of the Body of Christ', in *Christendom and its Discontents*, ed. by Scott L. Waugh and Peter D. Diehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 287-309.

[19] See, for instance, *Purg.*, vi. 118-19, xxiii. 74-75, xxxiii. 63; *Par.*, xi. 32-33, xiii. 40-42, xx. 105, xxxi. 2-3, xxxii. 128-29; *Mon.*, ii. 11.

Furthermore, if we assess Dante's treatment of blood in the Nines, we discover additional evidence of the restraint with which he tackles matters that involve the spilling of blood. *Sangue* appears four times in our canti:

> tre furïe infernal' di sangue tinte.
>
> [three infernal furies stained with blood.] (*Inf.*, ix. 38)
>
> Lo terzo, che di sopra s'ammassiccia,
> porfido mi parea, sì fiammeggiante
> come sangue che fuor di vena spiccia.
>
> [The third, which from above was amassed,
> seemed to me of porphyry, as flaming
> as blood that gushes from a vein.] (*Purg.*, ix. 100-02)
>
> Troppo sarebbe larga la bigoncia
> che ricevesse il sangue ferrarese,
> — e stanco chi 'l pesasse a oncia a oncia.
>
> [Too broad would be the vat
> that would receive the Ferrarese blood,
> and tired he who would weigh it ounce by ounce.] (*Par.*, ix. 55-57)
>
> Ad un occaso quasi e ad un orto
> Buggea siede e la terra ond'io fui,
> che fé del sangue suo già caldo il porto.
>
> [On one sunset almost and on one sunrise
> Bougie sits and the land from which I was,
> that once made warm with its blood its port.] (*Par.*, ix. 91-93)

It is striking that Dante employed *sangue* literally only in the first of the above passages, and that he should have done so without embellishment. The other three occurrences are figurative. *Sangue* is used in a simile to establish the precise hue of the 'flaming' colour of the third step; while the remaining two instances are incorporated into short, yet highly allusive periphrases to describe respectively the brutal decapitation of four Ferrarese exiles and the blood-soaked horror of the sea battle that brought to an end the siege of Massilia. The poet's purpose in fashioning the circumlocutions is clear: to avoid itemizing in literal terms the violent events that he was recalling, and hence to curtail the dramatic force, sensationalism, and gruesome detail that frequently accompanied descriptions of brutality in classical and medieval texts.[20] The measured restraint of Dante's approach to representing violence is immediately obvious when *Par.*, ix. 91-93 is compared to its source in Book iii of Lucan's *Pharsalia*: 'That once made warm with its blood its port' tones down 'Blood foamed deep upon the wave, /and a crust of gore covered the sea' (ll. 572-73). However, the real difference lies in each poet's individual treatment of the naval engagement: Dante restricts it to one verse, Lucan extends it over 225 lines (ll. 538-762) chock-full of mutilation, slaughter, a gallery of excruciating deaths and bloodletting everywhere.

One might not unreasonably claim that I am not comparing like with like: Lucan was writing a historical epic about an uncompromising civil war; Dante, on the other hand, was recalling his providentially sanctioned journey through the Christian other world. Putting to one side that it is Dante himself who encourages us to compare his poem to Lucan's (*Inf.*, xxv. 94), what is rather more significant here is that the *brevitas* and *reticentia* that characterize the four 'bloody' passages are typical of the manner in which the poet handled violence. Thus, in *Paradiso* ix, he alluded to another brutal event, Can Grande's slaughter of the Paduan Guelphs near Vicenza, by means of a periphrasis that makes no direct mention of even a single drop of blood:

> ma tosto fia che Padova al palude
> cangerà l'acqua che Vincenza bagna,
> per essere al dover le genti crude.
>
> [But soon it will happen that Padua at the swamp
> will change the water that bathes Vicenza,
> because its people are resistant to their duty.] (*Par.*, ix. 46-48)

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[20] See, for instance, Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Gigliucci, *Lo spettacolo*; Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); Leone, *'Sangue perfetto'*, pp. 80-88; Tracy, *Torture and Brutality*: *Violence Against Women in Medieval Texts*, ed. by Anna Roberts (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1998); *Violence in Medieval Courtly Literature: A Casebook*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (New York: Routledge, 2004); *Writing War: Medieval Literary Responses to Warfare*, ed. by Corinne Saunders, Françoise Le Saux, and Neil Thomas (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004).

In fact, as if to ensure that his presentation of Can Grande's actions is as sober as possible, Dante constructs it out of a series of interconnecting tropes: a mix of circumlocution, metonymy, and antonomasia. The poet acknowledged the reality of human brutality; however, he was determined to avoid doing so graphically.[21] He consistently took the same approach, relying heavily on metaphorical displacement, single words, or a single qualifying epithet to refer to violent persons, acts of violence, and violent events. This representational *diminutio* is especially obvious in Dante's treatment of one of the most macabre moments in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (vi. 412-676), the barbaric story of Procne and Philomela – a tale which so fascinated the medieval imagination that it received elaborations that went beyond even the viciousness of the original.[22] Conversely, Dante merely mentions Philomela's existence as a 'rondinella' [swallow], the transformation that allowed her to escape the horrors in which she had become embroiled – horrors, which the poet distilled into the vaguest of vague 'primi guai' [first woes] (*Purg*., ix. 13-15).[23]

There thus seems little doubt that Dante had strong reservations about explicit and sustained descriptions of violence. There are two principal and interconnected reasons for this, one literary, the other ideological. First, as ever, he was keen to distinguish his Christian *comedía* from classical *tragedia* and by extension, from the vernacular chivalric epic, contemporary chronicles, and accounts of the afterlife. Consequently, Dante drew attention to and called into question the frequently drawn-out, elaborate, and excessive treatment of carnage typical of epic and historical writing.[24] It is thus suggestive that the only Latin 'tragedy' that is unambiguously remembered in each of the Nines – perhaps a new hint at their 'vertical' interconnectivity? – is the notoriously violent *Pharsalia*: Erichtho in *Inferno* ix, Caesar's looting of the public treasury in *Purgatorio* ix, and the siege of Massilia in *Paradiso* ix.[25] Yet, Dante reworked Lucan in a radically contrastive pianissimo and minor key. Furthermore, thanks to his obliquely restrained allusion to the siege of Jericho – 'la prima gloria / di Iosüè in su la Terra Santa' [the first glory of Joshua in the Holy Land] (*Par.*, ix. 124-25) –, the poet drew attention to the rather more tempered language of war characteristic of the Old Testament (Joshua 6. 20-21). Nonetheless, as is evident fom *Par.*, ix. 124-25, when it came to violence, Dante felt the need to downplay even the solutions of Scripture.[26] In any case, his misgivings as regards the validity of detailed evocations of cruelty and aggression were more than just metaliterary in nature. He rejected them for time-honoured ideological and moral reasons. In part, Dante seems to have been motivated by the standard view that words are the precursors of actions: the representation of violence, and especially the 'tragic' celebration of warfare and heroism, can lead to real brutal behaviour.[27] More substantially, his ideas were shaped by his fundamental sense that God is *Amore*, and hence the antithesis of violence, and all-powerful. The divine Will asserts itself effortlessly (*Inf.*, ix. 95-96), as is evident from the token energy that the *messo* exerts to defeat the massed infernal hordes defending Dis (ll. 89-90). Equally, the 'lofty victory of Christ's triumph' is not presented as the result of a bloody sacrifice involving every fibre of Jesus' body and personality – a view that had achieved considerable currency by the early fourteenth century –, but as a feat that had involved merely 'one and the other palm' (*Par.*, ix. 123). Ultimately, Dante was affirming his belief in Christ's message of love with its stress on charity, respect for others, and the sanctity of human life. When Dante composed the *Commedia*, given the Church's and Christianity's increasing involvement with and legitimation of violence, to express reservations about this fraught rapprochement, even if subtlely, was a matter of no small purport. It aligned Dante with contemporary pacifist and minority opinion. At the same time, as his approval of Joshua's victory makes clear, the poet was not against aggression that was divinely sanctioned, what the Old Testament termed 'God's wars' (Numbers 21.14; I Samuel 18. 17, 25. 28).[28]

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[21] In this regard, it is striking that in the Nines the most sustained and striking descriptions of violence all relate to natural phenomena: the storm (*Inf*., ix, 64-72), the 'biscia' (*Inf*., ix. 76-78), and the eagle (*Purg*., ix. 20-30).

[22] See Mark Amsler, 'Rape and Silence: Ovid's Mythography and Medieval Readers', in *Representations of Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, ed. by Elizabeth Robertson and Christine Rose (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 61-96; Jane E. Burns, *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 115-50; Madeleine Jeay, 'Consuming Passions: Variations on the Eaten Heart Theme', in *Violence Against Women*, pp. 75-96.

[23] Dante's treatment of the two sisters is equally understated elsewhere in the *Commedia*: see *Purg*., xvii. 19-20.

[24] Marcozzi examines 'il rifiuto dantesco dell'ideale eroico della guerra e della rappresentazione letteraria a essa legata' ('"La guerra"', p. 81, and see also p. 82).

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[25] On Lucan as the key model for medieval depictions of the horrors of war, see Jessie Crosland, 'Lucan in the Middle Ages: With Special Reference to the Old French Epic', *The Modern Language Review* 25 (1930), 32-51.

[26] In doing this, Dante was not calling into question God's actions but the manner in which the *scribae Dei* had chosen to describe these. Since the twelfth century, it had become increasingly recognized that, while God was the 'author' of the events recorded in, and the senses of, Scripture, its human authors were responsible for the *lictera*, the form in which these were granted expression. See Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2nd revised edn 2010).

[27] See Edwin D. Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 51-52, 160-61. See also Marcozzi, '"La guerra"', pp. 80-81.

Dante's position hints at the tensions inherent in late-medieval Christianity's attitude to violence. Even if the *Commedia*'s primary emphasis is on an ordered universe ruled by a loving Creator and on a vision of earthly existence as ideally predicated on peace, Dante never ignored the reality of violence. Indeed, he accepted it as part of divine and mortal being. However, unlike the pagan deities, God's use of force is a manifestation not of willful cruelty and aggression but of power perfectly exercised as love, wisdom, and justice (*Inf.*, iii. 4-6). Divine violence is proportionate, as evidenced by the faultlessly calibrated nature of otherworldly punishment, a solution of last recourse, and executed at just the right moment (*Par.*, xxii. 16-17). On the other hand, throughout the *Commedia*, human violence, like that of the ancient gods, is portrayed as arbitrary, excessive, and unjust. In particular, *Paradiso* ix provides ample evidence of this sad fact. Indeed, the strong bonds with which Dante bound the canto to *Inferno* ix highlight the infernal character of the contemporary world: the monstrous defenders of Dis find their earthly counterparts in rulers and clerics selfishly and bloodily safeguarding their own interests. Naturally, Dante acknowledged that, as with the conquest of the Holy Land, there were circumstances when violence was necessary; however, such acts of human violence are normally depicted as either endorsed by God or in defence of His divine order.[29] Moreover, the quintessential *miles Christi* is a figure of peace, like the pilgrim and Virgil who, unarmed yet protected by God, succeed in besting an enemy that seems immeasurably superior. Indeed, as the 'triumph of Christ' established, those who belong to the celestial 'militia' achieve victory not through the exercise of violence but by having violence inflicted on them (*Par.*, ix. 139-41).

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[28] On *Inferno* xxviii as constituting the limit case of Dante's representation of violence and bloodshed, as well as its moderate treatment of bloody warfare when compared to standard classical and medieval descriptions, see Barański, '"E cominciare stormo"', pp. 186-87.

[29] On the pilgrim having recourse to violence against Pier delle Vigne and Bocca, see Barański, 'Reading', p. 25, n. 51.

## *Crucesignati*

One of the most accessible marks of Dante's Christian pacificism, the point where poetics and ideology, form and ethics merge, is his reluctance to present directly even those acts of violence that have God's approval. Emblematic in this respect is his treatment of the crusades. In general, Dante pays relatively little direct attention to crusading;[30] however, and this is suggestive in 'vertical' terms, references to the crusades, albeit highly allusive, appear in each of the Nines. Although not all scholars agree, it is hard to imagine that the repeated mention of the Church's neglect of the 'Holy Land, / which little touches the Pope's memory' ('la Terra Santa, / che poco tocca al papa la memoria') (*Par.*, ix. 125-26), an accusation which is almost immediately reiterated (ll. 136-38), is not supposed to evoke the crusades of the past, while appealing to the Pope to call for a new military effort to liberate Jerusalem. Indeed, lines 124-26 and 136-41 recall commonplaces of crusader literature, in particular of sermons in support of the crusades and of Occitan poetry commenting on their failure.[31] Thus, the correspondences between the close of *Paradiso* ix and Guiraut Riquier's bitter recrimination, 'Charity and love and faith', are noteworthy:

> It would have been recovered, if this had been desired,
> The place where Jesus Christ was born
> And lived and was raised on the cross,
> And the holy sepulchre, where he was placed.
> But the wealthy have turned it into a marketplace,
> Engaging only in operations for profit,
> So God has not helped them. (41-47)[32]

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[30] See Brenda Deen Schildgen, *Dante and the Orient* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002), pp. 45-91; Lawrence Warner, 'Dante's Ulysses and the Erotics of Crusading', *Dante Studies* 116 (1998), 65-93; Mary Alexandra Watt, *The Cross that Dante Bears* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2005).

[31] On preaching and the crusades, see Christoph T. Maier, *Crusade Propaganda and Ideology: Model Sermons for the Preaching of the Cross* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; all references to crusade sermons are taken from this edition). On the troubadours, see Saverio Guida, 'Le canzoni di crociata francesi e provenzali', in *'Militia Christi'*, pp. 403-41.

[32] Monica Longobardi, 'I *vers* del trovatore Guiraut Riquier', *Studi mediolatini e volgari* 29 (1982-83), 17-163 (p. 69). Compare too 'and the Sepulchre is completely forgotten/and the land where Jesus Christ was born' (49-50), in 'Even if I have no joy or pleasure', in *Il trovatore Peire Cardenal*, ed. by Sergio Vatteroni, 2 vols (Modena: Mucchi, 2013), II, p. 661. See also Elizabeth Siberry, *Criticism of Crusading, 1095-1274* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

Equally, remembering Joshua and Rahab,[33] attacking the greed of the powerful for the crusaders' lack of success,[34] invoking St Peter,[35] condemning those who 'do not care about the Holy Land',[36] alluding to abandoned flocks and 'shepherds' as 'wolves' (*Par.*, ix. 131-32),[37] and mentioning Christ's hands and victory through the cross[38] are typical of the tropes employed by preachers (and poets) to build support for the crusades.

However, already in *Inferno* ix, Dante had delicately evoked the crusades and the liberation of Jerusalem, an event that is prefigured in the canto both by means of hints to earlier sieges of Jerusalem and through the *viator*'s and Virgil's entry into Dis, which is presented as a Muslim stronghold (*Inf.*, viii. 70-73).[39] The infernal city is a grotesque parody of the contemporary earthly Jerusalem, a distortion that hints at the latter's perverted state under Islamic rule. Inside its walls, there is no trace of the Holy Sepulchre; instead the 'great plain' ('grande campagna') (l. 110) is full of 'sepulchres' ('sepulcri) (l. 115) housing the souls of heretics who denied the Resurrection, one of whom, in addition, appears as an abnormal embodiment of the dead Christ standing in the tomb, the so-called *Imago pietatis* (*Inf.*, x. 32-33). By 'entering' (''ntrammo') (*Inf.*, ix. 106) the 'fortress' ('fortezza') (l. 108) thanks to God's grace, the pilgrim and Virgil can be viewed as symbolizing crusaders who have successfully achieved their goal – and it ought to be noted here that it was another commonplace to present fighting in the Holy Land as a *peregrinatio* rather than as an act of war.[40] The crusaders were the *crucesignati*, those who were 'signed with the cross', and their sacred endorsement was supported by two Scriptural *auctoritates*, Ezekiel 9. 3-11 and Revelation 7. 2-3, 9.[41] Significantly, the same two Biblical passages are the principal sources behind the pilgrim's own 'signing':

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[33] Rahab: James of Vitry, *Sermo* ii. 5 (p. 102); Gilbert of Tournai, *Sermo* i. 20 (p. 188). Joshua: Eudes of Châteauroux, *Sermo* ii. 10 (p. 150); Bertrand de la Tour, *Sermo* iii (pp. 244-46). On Joshua see also Smith, *War and the Making*, pp. 12, 14, 17; Warner, 'Dante's Ulysses', p. 82.

[34] Eudes of Châteauroux, *Sermo* v. 11, 13 (pp. 172-74). See also, tellingly, Folchetto's crusade song: 'Singing becomes painful for me' (25-60), in *Le poesie di Folchetto di Marsiglia*, ed. by Paolo Squillacioti (Pisa: Pacini, 1999), pp. 328-30; Peire Cardenal, 'Even if I have no joy or pleasure' (45-48), in Vatteroni, p. 661. See also Guida, 'Le canzoni', p. 418.

[35] Eudes of Châteauroux, *Sermo* iv. 14 (p. 164). See also Guida, 'Le canzoni', pp. 422, 439.

[36] James of Vitry, *Sermo* i. 8 (p. 88). See also Folchetto's 'From now on I don't know a reason', in Squillacioti, pp. 370-75, esp. ll. 1-33 (pp. 370-73).

[37] See, for instance, Humbert of Romans, *Sermo* i. 3 (p. 222); Huon de Saint-Quentin, 'Jerusalem weeps' (12-20), in Arié Serper, *Huon de Saint-Quentin: Poète satirique et lyrique. Étude historique et édition des textes* (Potomac, Studia Humanitatis, 1983), pp. 84-85; Peire Cardenal, 'Clerics pretend to be shepherds' (1-12), in Vatteroni, I, pp. 472-73.

[38] James of Vitry, *Sermo* ii. 6 (p. 104), 14 (p. 110). See also Gilbert of Tournai, *Sermo* iii. 7 (p. 200).

[39] See Barański, '"E cominciare stormo"', p. 183; Warner, 'Dante's Ulysses', p. 65.

[40] See Cole, *The Preaching*, pp. 2-4 and passim. See also Picone, '*Paradiso* IX', p. 80.

> Sette P ne la fronte mi descrisse
> col punton de la spada, e 'Fa' che lavi,
> quando sè dentro, queste piaghe' disse.
>
> [Seven Ps on my forehead he inscribed
> with the tip of his sword, and 'Ensure you wash,
> when you are inside, these wounds' he said.] (*Purg.*, ix. 112-14)

*Purgatorio* ix thus intertextually confirms Dante-*personaggio*'s status as a 'crusader',[42] which the poet had first adumbrated in *Inferno* ix, although it is not until *Paradiso* ix that he referred to the crusades more directly. This set of 'vertical' correspondences is unquestionably striking, and cannot but require that I partially modify my earlier position as regards the validity of undertaking a 'vertical' reading of the Nines. While I remain convinced that Dante did not intend the cantos to be read 'vertically', it does nonetheless seem to be the case that he introduced into each of them references to the crusades – a coherent and consistent structure whose full meaning is best appreciated when the three cantos are examined together. Thus, on the basis of the evidence offered by the Nines, I should like to suggest that, if a 'vertical' reading at the macro level of the canto does not seem to be authorially endorsed, on the other hand, such a reading does seem to be authorized by Dante at the micro level of the theme of the crusades. In fact, the events at the gate of Purgatory bring to mind another important crusader motif. The Church promised soldiers who died fighting to free the Holy Sepulchre that the *portae Paradisi* would be miraculously opened to them without their having to confess their sins and undergo purgation.[43] In contrast, Dante affirms the need for his unarmed living 'crusader' to pass through the 'sacred door' ('porta sacrata') (*Purg.*, ix. 130) of Purgatory, and so fully repent his sins and purge his sinful dispositions, before being permitted to proceed to Heaven. The question thus arises whether the poet's juxtaposing treatment implies a veiled criticism of the Church's use of indulgences to convince people to fight on its behalf. In light of his normal reservations regarding violence – as with other acts of war, Dante's treatment of the crusades in the Nines is typically understated and cursory –, such a censure would not be out of place. Once again, the contradictions inherent in late-medieval Christianity's approach to violence leave their 'sign' on the fabric of the *Commedia*.

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[41] James of Vitry, *Sermo* i. 5, 6 (p. 86), 9 (p. 88), 13 (p. 92); Eudes of Châteauroux, *Sermo* v. 1, 2, 3, 4 (pp. 166-68), 7, 8 (p. 170), 11 (p. 172); Gilbert of Tournai, *Sermo* i. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (pp. 176-78), 10 (p. 180), 25 (p. 190), ii. 1 (p. 192), iii. 1, 2 (p. 198), 7 (p. 200).

[42] See also Schildgen, *Dante*, pp. 81-82; Schnapp, *The Transfiguration*, p. 103; Watt, *The Cross*.

[43] James of Vitry, *Sermo* ii. 18-19 (p. 112); Gilbert of Tournai, *Sermo* i. 20 (p. 188). See Cole, *The Preaching*, p. 208.

## Conclusion

'Without any violence' ('sanz'alcuna guerra') (*Inf.*, ix. 106), the expression with which Dante fixed the manner of the *viator* and Virgil's miraculous entry into the 'fortress' (l. 108) of Dis, effectively captures the principal drift of my argument as regards the poet's attitude to violence, which the Nines, helpfully though not systematically, illustrate. What the phrase cannot do, naturally, is cast light on the efficacy of reading the *Commedia* 'vertically'. I remain unconvinced that Dante intended the three canti to be assessed 'vertically', or that he judged this a hermeneutic approach normally appropriate for his poem. Nonetheless, as far as the crusades are concerned, I do think that the poet deemed our cantos' allusions to these as constituting a single system. This would imply that Dante may have deliberately introduced partial 'vertical' interconnections between canti distinguished by the same number. Mine is nothing more than a tentative suggestion; although I hope that some of the other essays in this and future volumes of *Vertical Readings in Dante's 'Comedy'* may provide corroborating evidence for my proposal. In some ways, what I found most fruitful about evaluating the Nines 'vertically' was the unexpected insights this mode of reading offered into Dante's compositional practices which, otherwise, I would undoubtedly have missed. Thus, while the repetition of *palma, -e* in *Inferno* ix – 'battiensi a palme' [struck themselves with their palms] (l. 50) – and in *Paradiso* ix – 'con l'una e l'altra palma' [one and the other palm] (l. 123) – seems calculated to establish a vivid contrast between the Furies and Christ, as well as their respective military prowess, a thin, almost invisible thread also connects the term to *Purgatorio* ix. As commentators observe, the dream of the eagle with its evocation of Ganymede (ll. 19-27) finds its precedent both in *Aeneid* v. 254-57 and in *Metamorphoses* x. 155-61. Virgil's vignette includes the detail that 'his aged guardians in vain stretch out their palms to the stars' (ll. 256-57). Treating the cantos 'vertically', the upraised *palmae* of the 'guardians' are eye-catching. Do their 'palms' offer a clue as to how, as Dante composed a canto, other canti characterized by the same number could, at a deep structure, exert an influence on his formal choices? Indeed, since Dante's verses are closer to Virgil's than to Ovid's, could 'le feroci Erine' [the fierce Erinyes] (*Inf.*, ix. 45) have exercised some sort of pull on his opting for the former? It is for this and the other unexpected and highly alluring glimpses[44] into how Dante may have woven the fabric of the *Commedia* that I am most grateful to have been granted the opportunity to read the Nines 'vertically'.

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[44] See Barański, 'Reading', pp. 5-35.

# 10. Humility and the (P)arts of Art[1]

## *K P Clarke*

‘Poetry is Vertical’[2]

No reader can fail to feel the constant pull of the vertical and horizontal axes in Dante’s *Comedìa*. A cycle of readings alive to the vertical, then, is as welcome as it is stimulating. The poem’s comic trajectory moves upwards, from *asperitas* to *prosperitas*, from a beginning that is *horribilis et fetida*, to an end that is *prospera, desiderabilis et grata*.[3] The figure of Dante in the *Comedìa* is continually in a state of opposing tensions between his corporeal *downwardness* and his (spiritually and morally) striving *upwardness*. Verticality exerts itself powerfully upon the imagination, both poetic and philosophical. Aristotle, in Book Four of the *Physics*, emphasized the importance of above (ἄνω) and below (κάτω), *up* being ‘where fire and what is light are carried’ [τὸ πῦϱ καὶ τὸ κοῦφον], while *down* is ‘where what has weight and what is made of earth are carried’ [τὰ βάϱοσ καὶ τὰ γεηϱά].[4] The vertical axis is deeply imbricated even in the simplest and

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[1] The video of this lecture is available at the Cambridge Vertical Readings in Dante’s Comedy website, https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1628853

[2] Thus the title of a manifesto published in *transition* 21 (March 1932), pp. 148-49, signed by Hans Arp, Samuel Beckett, Carl Einstein, Eugène Jolas, Thomas McGreevy, Georges Pelorson, Theo Rutra, James J. Sweeney and Ronald Symond; see Eugène Jolas, *Critical Writings, 1924-1951*, ed. by Klaus H. Kiefer and Rainer Rumold (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), pp. 266-67.

[3] *Epistola* XIII, 29 and 31.

[4] Aristotle, *Physics*, Book 4, 1 (208b19-22), citing Hardie and Gaye’s translation in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, The Revised Oxford Translation, gen. ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), vol. 1, p. 355. See too Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, 2nd edn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 76-82.

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most quotidien words: 'up' and 'down' are counted amongst those essential 'orientational' *Metaphors We Live By* studied by Lakoff and Johnson.[5] The privileging of the vertical axis is also felt in the philological lexicon of textual recension: one manuscript will find itself placed *higher* on a given stemma than another, while the (often lost) 'original' is placed at its apex. A text is said to be transmitted 'vertically' or 'horizontally': horizontal transmission is the more common phenomenon, but a good deal messier; the vertical, on the other hand, is a rarer but much more textually faithful axis.[6]

The vertical and horizontal axes at work in the *Comedìa* were perhaps most famously discussed by the Russian literary critic Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, in his account of forms of time and what he calls the 'chronotope' [Хронотоп] in the novel. When illustrating the handling of fictional time and space in the later Middle Ages, he points to the ways in which Dante, with 'the consistency and force of genius', stretches out the historical world along a vertical axis, a world, he says, 'structured according to a pure verticality'. He goes on: 'The temporal logic of this vertical world consists in the sheer simultaneity of all that occurs (or "the coexistence of everything in eternity")'. Bakhtin sees this vertical axis as presenting a challenge to the historicity of the characters, who act on a horizontal plane, or rather, as 'horizontal time-saturated branches at right angles to the extratemporal vertical of the Dantesque world'.[7]

The *Comedìa* is a vertical poem. This is not just written into its narrative and moral trajectory, but is intimately inscribed in the pronounced verticality of the poem's material form. The manuscript layout of the poem is invariably in columns, single or double, in which the line endings are rendered clearly visible.[8] While this is the norm for copying romance narrative verse, *chanson de geste*, it is in marked contrast to the *mise en page* of lyric verse in the late Duecento and throughout the Trecento, which was almost always copied out horizontally, or as prose (*a mo' di prosa*).[9] Lino Leonardi, in an important and, in the present context, richly resonant essay, 'Le origini della poesia verticale', argues for the influence of the *Comedìa* – though of course not just the *Comedìa* – on the development of vertical layouts for vernacular poetry.[10]

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[5] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 14-21.

[6] See Gianfranco Contini's seminal essay 'Filologia', in *Breviario di ecdotica* (Milan: R. Ricciardi, 1986), pp. 21-22 and also ibid., *Filologia*, ed. by Lino Leonardi (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014), pp. 27-28 and Leonardi's commentary on pp. 86-88; for 'vertical' and 'horizontal' transmission, see Giorgio Pasquali, *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo* (Florence: Le Monnier, 2nd edn 1962), p. 141.

[7] M. M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Towards a Historical Poetics' [1937-1938], in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 157-58. See also Julia Kristeva's formulation of dialogue and intertextuality, itself heavily influenced by Bakhtin: 'Le statut du mot se définit alors *a) horizontalement*: le mot dans le texte appartient à la fois au sujet de l'écriture et au destinataire, et *b) verticalement*: le mot dans le texte est orienté vers le corpus littéraire antérieur ou synchronique' (Julia Kristeva, *Σημειωτική*: *Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969), p. 145).

A crucial aspect of the verticality of the *Comedìa* is its metre and verse form: hendecasyllabic *terza rima*.[11] If a horizontal pull draws the reader to the end of the line, the rhyme word creates a vertical drop, connecting that word with those rhyme words that follow it. The word 'vertical' is etymologically related to 'vortex' and 'vertere', suggesting a turning, which gives rise to the word 'verse' for a line of poetry, the line-ending being the point of (re)turning.[12] Rhyme and the vertical are thus intrinsically related. Since *terza rima* is a concatenated rhyme, the rhyme words are constantly reaching beyond the three-line unit of the *terzina* itself. It has often been observed that the pronounced verticality of *terza rima* lends itself to a reading on a kind of 'parallel slope', with the rhyme words telling their own story, but in fast-forward. Dante maintains a remarkable control over the rhyme words so that they work in an allusive polychromy. The deployment, reuse and repetition of a rhyme word offers the reader a point of privileged intratextual access, acting like a lightning rod that runs vertically along the entire length of the poem.[13]

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[8] See Marcella Roddewig, Dante Alighieri, *Die göttliche Komödie: vergleichende Bestandsaufnahme der Commedia-Handschriften* (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1984); Marisa Boschi Rotiroti, *Codicologia trecentesca della Commedia: entro e oltre l'antica vulgata* (Rome: Viella, 2004); Gabriella Pomaro, 'Forme editoriali nella Commedia', in *Intorno al testo: tipologie del corredo esegetico e soluzioni editoriali. Atti del convegno di Urbino, 1-3 ottobre 2001* (Rome: Salerno, 2003), pp. 283-319.

[9] The best known manuscripts of lyric poetry of this period are: Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Rediano 9; Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Banco Rari 217, ex Palatino 418; Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 3793. For facsimiles, and a volume of critical studies, see Lino Leonardi (ed.), *I canzonieri della lirica italiana delle origini*, 4 vols (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2001).

[10] Lino Leonardi, 'Le origini della poesia verticale', in *Translatar i transferir: la transmissió dels textos i el saber (1200-1500)*, ed. by Anna Alberni, Lola Badia and Lluís Cabré (Santa Coloma de Queralt: Obrador Edèndum – Publicacions URV, 2010), pp. 267-316. My gratitude is warmly extended to Prof. Leonardi for graciously furnishing me with a copy of this article, as well as generously reading this *lectura* in draft.

[11] On *terza rima*, see: David Robey, 'Terza rima', in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Richard Lansing (New York and London: Garland, 2000), pp. 808-10; Ignazio Baldelli, 'terzina', in *Enciclopedia dantesca*, ed. by Umberto Bosco, 6 vols (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana Fondata da Giovanni Treccani, 2nd edn 1984), vol. 5, pp. 583-94 and his entry 'rima', vol. 4, pp. 930-49; Pietro G. Beltrami, *La metrica italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 5th edn 2011), §226-227, pp. 310-13. On rhyme, see Aldo Menichetti, *Metrica italiana: fondamenti metrici, prosodia, rima* (Padova: Antenore, 1993), pp. 506-90.

[12] See the beautiful reflections of Giorgio Agamben, 'La fine del poema', in *Categorie italiane: studi di poetica e di letteratura* (Bari: Laterza, revised edn 2010), pp. 138-44.

A reading of the Tens along a vertical, alive to the verticality of *terza rima,* immediately presents a striking example of a richly allusive reuse and repetition of three rhyming words of a *terzina*, a *Reimbildung*, in the term used by Giorgio Brugnoli. These words are *parte*: *parte*: *arte*, appearing in: *Inf.*, x. 47, 49, 51; *Purg.*, x. 8, 10, 12; and *Par.*, x. 8, 10, 12. The structural parallelism is deliberate and artfully constructed, with two of these instances even occurring in the same line numbers.[14] The *Reimbildung* is constructed on what has been termed an 'inclusive rhyme', that is, *arte* is contained in the word *parte*. But it is further distinguished by the fact that the word *parte* is used in *rima equivoca*.[15] It is the only example in the *Comedìa* of such a repetition occuring across three parallel *canti*. These recurrences have been noted rarely, and discussed even less.[16] This 'vertical' *lectura* will not attempt a synthetic or general reading of all three cantos but aims instead at something delimited and modest in scope: it will focus on the *Reimbildung* as a locus of hermeneutic value in engaging with the Tens, taking a cue from Dante's own 'technical' intratextual connecting of these cantos.

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[13] On intratextuality, see Alison Sharrock, 'Intratextuality: Texts, Parts, and (W)holes in Theory', in *Intratextuality: Greek and Roman Textual Relations*, ed. by Alison Sharrock and Helen Morales (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 1-39.

[14] The rhyme words *parte*: *parte*: *arte* also recur in *Purg.*, iv 80, 82, 84, and *Par.*, xiii 119, 121, 123, but these will not be discussed here.

[15] On 'inclusive rhyme' see Beltrami, *La metrica italiana*, §155, p. 215; Corrado Bologna, *La macchina del Furioso. Lettura dell' "Orlando" e delle "Satire"* (Turin: Einaudi, 1998), pp. 136-37 (previously published in *Letteratura italiana. Le opere*, gen. ed. Alberto Asor Rosa, 4 vols [Turin: Einaudi, 1992-1996], vol. 2 [1993], p. 283); on *rima equivoca*, see Beltrami, *La metrica italiana*, §156, pp. 215-16.

[16] The sheer scale of Dante criticism makes it rather imprudent to refer to something as never having been discussed; I have, however, been unable to track down thus far any extended discussion of this *Reimbildung* or of its parallel placement in the Tens. (An insightful but brief mention of repeated rhymes, including *arte*: *arte*: *parte*, can be found in Arianna Punzi, *Rimario*, p. 41 and n. 79; see n. 19 below.)

## *Rimanti* and *Reimbildungen*

It is Roberto Antonelli who has done the most to elucidate and explore the rich rhyme landscape of Duecento vernacular Italian lyric.[17] He has argued that the rhyme is a point on the line swollen with both poetic and hermeneutic force, powered by a tension between sound and sense. In an eloquent assertion, Antonelli has stated that:

> La rima e i rimanti contengono insomma organicamente un discorso altro e comportano pertanto un potere di intensificazione linguistica, una pluralità di senso che può agire, per il produttore e per l'utente, sia a livello conscio che inconscio o subliminale (così come le ripetizioni e i giochi fonici interni al verso, ma certamente ad un livello maggiore di formalizzazione e comunicazione).[18]
>
> [Rhyme and rhyme words contain, then, a different discourse and bring with them a linguistic heightening, a plurality of sense which, for both the writer and the reader, can act on different levels, both consciously and unconsciously (such as repetitions, and playing on sounds within the line, but certainly at a level more than simply of formalization and communication).]

That is, rhyme words can and do work rather hard on the line. Not only that, but certain rhyme words tend to gather other words around them: they have, in the fortunate formulation of Cesare Segre, a certain 'stickiness'.[19] It is also true that Dante and Petrarch exert a considerable and transformative force on the deployment of certain rhymes throughout the Trecento, and the works of Arianna Punzi and Carlo Pulsoni are especially important in showing how this happens.[20] Both the variety and particular kind of rhymes that Dante and Petrarch use can be considered in themselves a subtle poetic processing of the Duecento's lyric tradition.[21]

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[17] Roberto Antonelli, 'Rima equivoca e tradizione rimica nella poesia di Giacomo da Lentini. 1. Le canzoni', *Bollettino del Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani* 13 (1977), 20-126; 'Ripetizione di rime, "neutralizzazione" di rimemi?', *Medioevo romanzo* V (1978), 169-206; 'Equivocatio e repetitio nella lirica trobadorica', in *Seminario romanzo* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1979), pp. 111-54; 'Metrica e testo', *Metrica* 4 (1986), 37-66; 'Tempo testuale e tempo rimico: costruzione del testo e critica nella poesia rimata', *Critica del testo* 1/1 (1998), 177-201, not to mention his *Repertorio metrico della scuola poetica siciliana* (Palermo: Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani, 1984). See too the three volumes dedicated to 'Dante, oggi', edited by Roberto Antonelli, Annalisa Landolfi and Arianna Punzi, of the journal *Critica del testo* XIV, 1-3 (2011), with numerous articles bearing the imprint of Antonelli's concerns; specifically, see his 'Come (e perché) Dante ha scritto la *Divina Commedia*?', in the opening volume, pp. 3-23.

[18] Antonelli, 'Tempo testuale e tempo rimico', p. 193.

[19] For Segre's 'legge di vischiosità', see his *Esperienze ariostesche* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1966), pp. 51-83 (p. 57). The rhyme words *Troia*: *noia*: *gioia*: *croia* are a good example. See Annalisa Comes, 'Troia, Elena e Paride: un mito per le rime', *Studi mediolatini e volgari* 44 (1998), 195-212 (pp. 197-203). This is so powerful that it can even exert itself upon English; cf. the opening lines of Chaucer's great poem *Troilus and Criseyde*, constructed around the rhyme words *Troie*: *joie*: *fro ye*.

The repetition of only certain rhyme words in the *Comedìa* has received critical attention, such as *Cristo*: *Cristo*: *Cristo* in *Par* xii, xiv, xix and xxxii, or the way that *diserto*: *esperto* (*Purg.*, i. 130, 132) recalls those same rhyme words used by Ulysses in *Inf.*, xxvi. 98, 102.[22] Many other repetitions are rarely discussed. For example, *Silvestro*: *maestro*: *capestro* in *Par.*, xi. 83, 85, 87, is repeated in *Inf.*, xxvii 95, 97, 92. Speaking as a tongue of flame, and with almost unbearable sarcasm, the fraudulent Guido da Montefeltro describes how Pope Boniface VIII had no concern for Guido's status as a Franciscan (*capestro*), and like the emperor Constantine calling Pope Silvester (*Silvestro*) in order to be baptised and healed from a fever, so too was Guido called as doctor (*maestro*) to heal Boniface of his own proud fever. The rhyme words 'capestro', 'Silvestro' and 'maestro' each refer here to Guido himself. Their use in *Par.*, xi to describe St Francis represents a polemical counterpoint, with each rhyme word 'answering' its previous appearance in *Inf.*, xxvii, healed of their fraudulent use by Guido. If, in Guido's account, the *capestro* no longer fitted around the increasing waistlines of the Franciscans

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[20] Arianna Punzi, *Rimario della Commedia di Dante Alighieri* (Rome: Bagatto libri, 2001) and see also ead., *Appunti sulle rime della Commedia* (Rome: Bagatto libri, 1995); Carlo Pulsoni, *La tecnica compositiva nei 'Rerum vulgarium fragmenta'. Riuso metrico e lettura autoriale* (Rome: Bagatto libri, 1998). My thanks to Prof. Punzi for her insightful and generous reading of this article in draft.

[21] See Andrea Afribo, 'Sequenze e sistemi di rime nella lirica del secondo Duecento e del Trecento', *Stilistica e metrica italiana* 2 (2002), 3-46; idem, '*A Rebours*. Il Duecento visto dalla rima', in *Da Guido Guinizzelli a Dante: nuove prospettive sulla lirica del Duecento. Atti del Convegno di studi, Padova-Monselice, 10-12 maggio 2002*, ed. by Furio Brugnolo and Gianfelice Peron (Padova: Il poligrafo, 2004), pp. 227-37. See too Giovanna Santini, *Tradurre la rima. Sulle origini del lessico rimico nella poesia italiana del Duecento* (Rome: Bagatto Libri, 2007) and her, 'Rima e memoria', *Rivista di filologia cognitiva* 3 (2005). Still of value is Leandro Biadene, 'La rima nella canzone italiana dei secoli XIII e XIV', in *Raccolta di studi critici dedicata ad Alessandro D'Ancona festeggiandosi il XL anniversario del suo insegnamento* (Florence: Tipografia di G. Barbera, 1901), pp. 719-39 (pp. 730-36 on *rima equivoca*).

[22] On repetition see Lloyd Howard, *Formulas of Repetition in Dante's Commedia: Signposted Journeys across Textual Space* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); on repeated rhyme, see Guglielmo Gorni, 'Rime ripetute: in canzoni di Dante e in uno stesso canto della *Commedia*', *Filologia e critica* 20 (1995), 191-99. A very stimulating treatment is Dante Bianchi, 'Rima e verso nella "Divina Commedia"', *Rendiconti dell'Istituto Lombardo, Accademia di Scienze e Lettere* 95 (1961), 127-40 (pp. 134-40).

(echoing the critical use of the key verb *impinguare*, to fatten, in *Par.*, x. 96 and xi. 25, 139), then for Francis the cincture is, properly speaking, the symbol of his humility. Guido's *Silvestro* is a weak pope (ab)used by the emperor Constantine, while for Francis, Silvester is amongst the first to divest himself of his worldly possessions and follow the saint in his life of poverty.

The words that form the *parte*: *parte*: *arte Reimbildung* might be described as low-key; it is perhaps for this reason that they have escaped the notice of critics for so long. The *rimanti parte*: *arte* is not unusual in Duecento vernacular verse nor in the *Comedìa*, displaying much of that 'stickiness' described by Segre. Indeed, as Allan Gilbert has pointed out, in all but one occurrence of the rhyme word *parte* in the *Comedìa*, it appears with the word *arte*. He concludes that this constitutes an example of 'rime for rime's sake', a point that echoes Contini's sense in Dante of a subordination of meaning to an aestheticising of sound and repetition ('il preponderare del significante sul significato').[23] But while these are not amongst Dante's most flamboyant rhymes, they are not empty words, nor is this *Reimbildung* a meaningless repetition or empty patterning of rhyme. Dante protects this *Reimbildung* from the risk of monotony by using the rhetorical figure of *rima equivoca*, with each occurrence marked by an emotional tension and a stylistic heightening.[24]

Even if the words *parte* and *arte* appear relatively often in rhyme position in the lyric poetry of the Duecento and in Dante, they are somewhat rarer in rhyme combination, as *rimanti*.[25] Instances of the word *parte* in *rima equivoca* are neither rare nor frequent, with the bulk of examples occurring in the works of poets who are associated with such rhyme, such as Giacomo da Lentini, Guittone d'Arezzo, Monte Andrea and Chiaro Davanzati.[26] Amongst the most notable examples is Monte Andrea's poem 'Eo saccio bene che volontà di partte', which is constructed upon two rhyme words, *parte* and *passo*, with *parte* occurring in the first ten lines (more precisely: ll. 1, 2, 5-10, with ll. 3 and 4 containing *spartte* and *compartte*).[27] If the survey is widened to include all the words of the *Reimbildung* in question, namely, *parte*: *parte*: *arte*, the results are unexpectedly meagre, furnishing only three examples.[28] The first is Arrigo Testa, 'Vostra orgogliosa cera', ll. 18, 19, 22 (*parte*: *parte*: *arte*), and with l. 23 having *parte* in *rima identica*.[29] The second is a text described by Contini as 'il più antico testo misogino in volgare italiano', known as the 'Proverbia que dicuntur super natura feminarum', ll. 737, 738, 739, 740 (*arte*: *parte*: *carte*: *parte*).[30] The final example occurs in a sonnet by Guittone d'Arezzo, 'Ai Deo, chi vidde donna visiata', ll. 2, 4,

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[23] Allan H. Gilbert, 'Dante's *Rimario*', *Italica* 44 (1967), 409-24 (p. 412); Gianfranco Contini, 'Un'interpretazione di Dante' [1965], in *Un'idea di Dante: saggi danteschi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), p. 87.

[24] On the 'monotony' of Duecento rhymes, see Afribo, 'Sequenze e sistemi di rime'.

[25] See Dante, *Rime*, 5. 13, 15; 6. 95, 96; 82. 5, 8 – a response to Dante da Maiano's poem 'Amor mi fa sì fedelmente amare'. For *parte*: *parte* see *Vita nova* 4. 9-12 [IX], vv. 10, 13 and *Vn* 20. 8-17 [XXXI], vv. 50, 53. It is worth noting (without entering the debate about authenticity) that both the *Fiore* and *Il Detto d'Amore*, so heavily constructed on *rime ricche* and *equivoche*, are copied vertically in Montpellier, Bibliothèque Universitaire, Section Médicine, H.438 and Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Ashb. 1234 *bis*; cf. Leonardi, 'Le origini', pp. 281-82, and more specifically on the manuscripts see Teresa De Robertis Boniforti, 'Nota sul codice e la sua scrittura', in *The Fiore in Context: Dante, France, Tuscany*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Patrick Boyde (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), pp. 49-72. For *parte*: *parte*: *carte*: *parte*, see *Fiore* XLI, 1, 4, 5, 8 (which Contini notes as being in 'rima equivoca' (*Il Fiore*, ed. by Gianfranco Contini, in *Opere minori*, I, pt. I, p. 605; cf. *Il Fiore e il Detto d'amore*, ed. by Gianfranco Contini [Milan: A Mondadori, 1984], pp. 84-85); see too *Fiore* LXII, 1, 4, 5, 8 for *arte*: *parte*: *parte*: *carte* and CC, 1, 4, 5, 8 for *diparte*: *parte*: *parte*: *arte*; see *Detto*, ll. 53-54 (*parte*: *part'è*); ll. 97-98 (*parte*: *parte*); ll. 449-450 (*parte*: *parte*).

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[26] See D'Arco Silvio Avalle (ed.) *Concordanze della lingua poetica italiana delle origini (CLPIO)*, vol. 1 (Milan: R. Ricciardi, 1992), pp. 622-23, #161.1, 3 18 and 20. Reference should also be made to the database *LirIO. Corpus della lirica italiana delle origini. 2. Dagli inizi al 1400*, ed. by Lino Leonardi e di Alessio Decaria, Pär Larson, Giuseppe Marrani, Paolo Squillacioti (Florence: SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2013).

[27] Cf. *CLPIO* V 888; see too Monte Andrea da Firenze, *Le rime*, ed. by Francesco Filippo Minetti (Florence: L'Accademia della Crusca, 1979), pp. 252-53. See too the sonnet 'Bene m' à messo Amore in gran partte' (*CLPIO* V 684; Minetti, p. 187), which, in a very tongue-in-cheek manner, rhymes the words *partte* and *monte* in the octet, answering *per le rime* the sonnet by Terino da Castelfiorentino, 'Non t' à donato Amore piciola partte' (*CLPIO* V 683; Minetti, pp. 186-87). The 'afterlife' of *parte* in *rima equivoca* will remain outside the scope of this essay, but one extraordinary example cannot go unnoted: Petrarch's sonnet 'Quand'io son tutto vòlto in quella parte' (*Rvf* 18), with *parte*, *luce*, *morte*, *desio* and *sole* used as the ABCDE rhymes, respectively.

[28] Not counting but nevertheless noting the example of Panuccio del Bagno, 'La dolorosa noia', vv. 6, 12, 28, 29, 77, 78 (*parte*: *parte*: *parte*: *disparte*: *parte*: *arte*), where the relevant rhyme words occur (in the context of a complex and innovative rhyme scheme: abbCcD, aeeFfD, GgHhIiLL, and double congedo ABbCcA, ABbCcDdA), but not close enough to form a *Reimbildung parte*: *parte*: *arte*. Cf. *CLPIO* L 95; Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, I, 304-308; Panuccio del Bagno, *Le rime*, ed. by Franca Brambilla Ageno (Florence: l'Accademia della Crusca, 1977), pp. 72-78, and see too Mark Musa, *The Poetry of Panuccio del Bagno* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), No. IV, pp. 30-37, notes on pp. 119-20, and commentary on pp. 149-53.

[29] See *CLPIO*, V 35, L 61, P 62; and see the edition of Corrado Calenda, in *I poeti della Scuola Siciliana*, II, *Poeti della corte di Federico II*, gen. ed. Costanzo Di Girolamo (Milan: Mondadori, 2008), pp. 235-45. Calenda, on p. 235, notes the rhymes as *equivoche* and *identiche*. See too his entry 'Arrigo Testa' in *Enciclopedia Fridericiana*, gen. ed. Ortensio Zecchino, 3 vols (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2005-2008), I, pp. 102-03.

[30] See *CLPIO* S Prov, pp. 73-79; see too Gianfranco Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, 2 vols (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1960), I, pp. 521-55.

6 (*arte*: *par te*: *parte*).[31] This is a particularly interesting example because Guittone has drawn attention to the rhyme by splitting the word at the end of the line: 'E' veggio che del gioco non ài par te'. The word *parte* is now a kind of 'broken' rhyme or 'falsified' *rima equivoca*, emphasizing its own *equivocatio* and the parts of *parte*.[32]

## *Rima equivoca*

Critics have not been much concerned with Dante's use of *rima equivoca*.[33] This is perhaps influenced by Dante himself: in the context of a brief discussion in *De vulgari eloquentia* on the over-use of rhyme and repetition, he expresses reservations about the use of *rima equivoca* for a poet in the high style. Its abuse, Dante asserts, results in it being *inutilis*, 'que semper sententie quicquam derogare videtur' [which always seems to detract to some extent from meaning] (*DVE.*, II. xiii. 13).[34] Though the passage has often been read as an example of Dante censuring his own petrine sestina 'Amor, tu vedi ben che questa donna',[35] what is important to recognize here is the clear connection being established between 'sententia' and rhyme: the rhyme, that is, must be handled with sufficient dexterity and care in order for the poem's *sententia* to be expressed and not obscured.[36] Rhyme, in other words, *is* meaning, and so is *rima equivoca*. For Dante, it has, in the formulation of Luigi Tassoni, 'una funzione determinante ai fini della produzione del Senso'.[37] In a rich discussion of rhyme in Dante, Ignazio Baldelli pointed out that *rima equivoca* is often clustered together with other rhetorical and poetic techniques.[38] Joan Ferrante has discussed the subtle but precise patterning of repeated *rime equivoche* across the three *cantiche*, highlighting how there are only *three* such rhymes repeated in the *Comedìa*: the words *volto*, *porta* and *parte*.[39] The word *parte* lends itself to *rima equivoca* because of its frequency, its semantic range and homophony with the third-person singular of the present indicative of the verb *partire*.[40]

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[31] Cf. *CLPIO*, L 209; see too *Le rime di Guittone d'Arezzo*, ed. by Francesco Egidi (Bari: Laterza, 1940), No. 85, p. 181; Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, I, p. 253; and Guittone d'Arezzo, *Canzoniere: i sonetti d'amore del Codice Laurenziano*, ed. by Lino Leonardi (Turin: Einaudi, 1994), No. 85, pp. 254-56.

[32] For *rima franta*, see Contini; for *rima equivoca contrafatta*, Leonardi, and see too his note *ad loc.*, on p. 254.

[33] The figure has been studied in relation to the Provençal traditions; specifically on *rima equivoca* in Galician-Portuguese literature, for example, see Simone Marcenaro, *L'equivocatio nella lirica galego-portoghese medievale* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2010); several essays are available on Marcenaro's page at http://www.academia.edu

[34] Citing Mengaldo's text and *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. and trans. by Steven Botterill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 87. On the value of 'inutilis', see the perspicacious note in *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. by Mirko Tavoni, in *Opere*, gen. ed. Marco Santagata, vol. 1: *Rime, Vita Nova, De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. by Claudio Giunta, Guglielmo Gorni and Mirko Tavoni (Milan: A. Mondadori, 2011), pp. 1542-43 *ad loc.*

[35] The sestina has a particular role in the history of vertical layouts for lyric poetry; for the importance of a vertical layout of the *sestine* in Petrarch's autograph of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 3195), and its importance in reading the rhymes, see Leonardi, 'Le origini', pp. 287-88 and nn. 49-50.

[36] See *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. by Enrico Fenzi, with the collaboration of Luciano Formisano and Francesco Montuori (Rome: Salerno editrice, 2012), pp. 236-37, *ad loc.*

*Rima equivoca* provokes an *aporia* in the reader, in which the graphic and phonic sameness is in tension with the difference in meaning, necessitating retrospection and a re-reading of the *terzina*. This re-reading activates the two directions of verticality, up and down. *Aequivocatio* is experienced on the threshold of meaning, a passing over from meaning, which is then compromised by doubt, and in turn restored. The meaning restored is inflected by the paired equivocal term: it no longer signifies on its own, but interacts with the rhyme unit. As such, it is a figure working on and powered by a *limen*, nourished not just by transition, but also by potentiality.[41]

## The Cantos Ten

The Tens are connected at several thematic levels, facilitating a 'vertical reading'. Ronald L. Martinez has referred to the Tens as 'threshold' cantos, each representing an important point of transition.[42] Both *Inferno* x and *Purgatorio* x are marked by gates, each leading respectively into Hell and Purgatory proper; *Paradiso* x is the first to be free of the shadow of the earth. While there is no shortage of studies pointing out the connections between the Tens, it is to George Corbett that we owe a 'vertical' reading, an axis that distinguishes itself in *Inferno* x's interest in the Resurrection of the Body (that is, the end of time), echoed and nuanced with *Purgatorio* x's emphasis on the Incarnation (God's entry into time), and *Paradiso* x's interest in Creation (the beginning of time): the 'vertical axis therefore sets into relief God's creation of (*Par.*, x), entry into (*Purg.*, x), and consummation of (*Inf.*, x) the history of mankind'.[43] Guido Cavalcanti is at the heart of Alison Cornish's beautiful reading of the 'vertical' axis of the Tens, and her succinct but deep reading of the cantos is an essential reference point for the reflections that follow.[44] Even though both Corbett and Cornish have convincingly connected the three cantos, neither has noted the repeated use of the *parte*: *parte*: *arte Reimbildung* across the Tens. In each case, the *rima equivoca* rhetorically signals a moment of emotional heightening and stylistic enhancement; in each case the thematic context is richly suggestive, strictly in the service of (in the words of Tassoni, cited above) 'la produzione del Senso'.

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[37] Luigi Tassoni, '*Aequivocatio* e statuto del senso in Dante', *Verbum: Analecta neolatina* 3/1 (2001), 131-41 (p. 131).

[38] See Ignazio Baldelli, 'rima', in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, IV, pp. 930-49 (p. 932).

[39] Joan Ferrante, 'A Poetics of Chaos and Harmony', in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 181-200 (p. 190).

[40] See Antonietta Bufano, 'parte', in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, vol. 4, pp. 323-28 (p. 328).

[41] Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 2, for liminality not just as *transition* but *potentiality*.

[42] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, ed. by Robert M. Durling, 3 vols (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996-2011), vol. 3, pp. 726-30.

Attending to the 'vertical' intratextuality and thematic convergences between the Tens renders evident some further resonances, in particular a shared concern with the 'arch-vice' pride, the sin that gives rise to all other sins (*quoniam initium peccati omnis superbia*; Ecclesiasticus 10. 15).[45] Pride and humility may be described as operating on a vertical axis, those that place themselves above (*super*) all others are eventually laid low; the most humble are exalted. In *Inf.*, x, close to the surface of Farinata's characterization as *magnanimo* (l. 73), lies the sin of *superbia*.[46] He is repeatedly described as emphatically proud: he is 'sdegnoso' (l. 41), has Hell in 'gran dispitto' [great disdain] (l. 36) and even his gestures towards Dante reveal his pride, 'ei levò le ciglia un poco in suso' [he raised his brows a little upwards] (l. 45). Scott describes him as a figure symbolizing 'partisan pride'.[47] Cavalcante, too, is filled with pride in his son and his intellectual abilities, asking Dante if he travels through the realm of *Inferno* 'per altezza d'ingegno' [because of your high genius] (l. 59). Guido's *disdegno* finds a parallel, then, in Farinata's own *dispitto*. At the heart of *Purgatorio* x is its representation of humility in the figures of the Virgin Mary, King David before the Ark and the Emperor Trajan responding to the supplication of the poor widow for justice. The humility of each is realized on the vertical axis, in their respective acts of lowering themselves. In *Paradiso* x, Dante presents himself humbly as the canto's mere *scriba*, acutely aware that such a height (*tanta altezza*) presents an almost insurmountable challenge for the lowness of his imagination (*se le fantasie nostre son basse*, ll. 46-47). Thomas Aquinas, from the peaks of wisdom, describes himself in humble terms as one of Dominic's flock ('Io fui de li agni de la santa greggia / che Domenico mena per cammino' ['I was among the lambs of the holy flock that Dominic leads by a path'] (ll. 94-95), and it is Thomas who will, in the following canto, present a memorable account of the life of Saint Francis, 'il poverel di Dio' [God's pauper] (*Par.*, xiii. 33), the Heaven of the Sun's figure of humility *par excellence*.

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[43] George Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus: A Dualistic Vision of Secular and Spiritual Fulfilment* (Oxford: Legenda, 2013), p. 82. The Bakhtinian chronotope might well be considered in light of these observations; as Gillian C. Price asserted, in a paper delivered at a conference entitled *'Vertical' Time and Space in Literature* held in the University of Durham's Department of Theology and Literature in July 1995, 'For the theologian, the vertical can thus be understood as a divine chronotope, where the horizontal chronotope is recognizably human. The place at which the two intersect is therefore the chronotopic moment of incarnation'; see the paper at https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/theology.religion/research/projects/verticaltimeandspace/XHoban%20-%20Heir%20to%20Bakhtinian%20Vertical.pdf On verticality and theology, see Anthony J. Steinbock, *Phenomenology and Mysticism: The Verticality of Religious Experience* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007); see too Antoine Vergote, 'The Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions in Symbolic Language about God', in *In Search of a Philosophical Anthropology: A Compilation of Essays*, trans. M. S. Muldoon (Leuven and Amsterdam: Leuven University Press and Rodopi, 1996), pp. 217-42.

[44] Alison Cornish, 'Sons and Lovers: Guido in Paradise', *MLN* 124/5 Suppl (2009), S51-S69.

[45] On pride, see Patrick Boyde, *Human Vices and Human Worth in Dante's Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 174-97.

[46] See John A. Scott, *Dante magnanimo: studi sulla Commedia* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1977), Ch. 1, "Inferno" X: Farinata 'magnanimo', pp. 9-45 (which had previously appeared as '*Inferno*, X: Farinata as *Magnanimo*', *Romance Philology* 15 [1962], 395-411).

## *Inferno* x

With the magnificent character of the Ghibilline Farinata degli Uberti, *Inferno* x is a canto deeply concerned with division, with political factionalism and the tensions threatening to break apart the communal structure of the city of Florence. This rending was not just political but also social, resulting in the exile of members of now one family, now another. The desire for power, influence and control is set above wider comunal concerns. Farinata nicely betrays this in *Inf.*, x. 46-47, '"Fieramente furo avversi / a me e a miei primi e a mia parte"'['Fiercely were they opposed to me and to my ancestors and to my party'], where the insistence on *me* is of a piece with the political *parte*. If Farinata gets the first use of 'parte', Dante keeps the second for himself. He responds to Farinata's account of the exile of the Guelphs from Florence with the assertion that, crucially, the Guelphs, unlike Farinata's family, at least managed to return to the city:

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[47] Scott, '*Inferno*, X', p. 410 [*Dante magnanimo*, p. 42].

> 'S'ei fur cacciati, ei tornar d'ogne parte',
> rispuos'io lui, 'l'una e l'altra fiata;
> ma i vostri non appreser ben quell'arte'. (*Inf.*, x. 49-51)
>
> ['If they were driven out, they returned from every side', I replied, 'the first time and the second; but your people did not learn that art well'.]

Here the word 'parte' indicates *locus*, the many places where the Guelphs were scattered. The emphatic oneness of Farinata's *parte* contrasts with the multiplicity of *ogne parte*, and yet that multiplicity is being remedied in their *return* to the oneness of Florence. Dante's response here is fierce, in the tradition of *improperium*. The dynamic of Dante's *rinfaccio* (reproach) is repetition, repeating the words of Farinata but on his own terms, and he uses the structure of the *terzina*'s rhyme to emphasize the gap between them. Thus, Farinata's use of the word *fiate* in l. 48 is answered by Dante in l. 50, who brings the word into rhyme position, stretching the line (he turns Farinata's *due fiate* into 'l'una e l'altra fiata') and emphasizing that *each* time the Guelphs were expelled, they returned. It builds pressure on the third line of the *terzina*, l. 51, the climax of the *improperium*, in pointing out the failure of Farinata's family to return. The possessive adjective *vostri* critically answers the 'a me e a miei primi e a mia parte' of l. 47, expressing a distance between them, a pushing away of Farinata. (The possessive adjective reappears sharply later on in one of the canto's most famous lines, l. 63, 'forse cui Guido vostro ebbe a disdegno' [perhaps to one your Guido had in disdain]). This first part of the encounter between Farinata and Dante—about to be interrupted by Cavalcante—is left hanging on the word *arte*.

The word 'arte' refers to the art of politics and politicking (as in *Par.*, vi. 103, 'Faccian li Ghibellin, faccian lor arte / sott'altro segno' [Let the Ghibellines, then, let them work their arts under some other emblem]; *arte* rhymes with *parte*: *diparte*). It is also the art of returning, of ending one's exile. The word, used in this sense, will ricochet in Farinata's mouth when he reveals that the inability of his descendents to learn the art of return torments him more than Hell itself (ll. 77-78), and hints darkly that Dante, too, will know the pain of this failure (l. 81). It is no surprise that in such a rhetorically charged moment as Farinata's prophecy, another highly evocative *rima equivoca* is deployed, with the word 'regge' in ll. 80 and 82, meaning 'to rule' in l. 80 (from *reggere*) and 'to return' in l. 82 (from the Latin *redeas*). An example of *rima identica* (a figure used relatively rarely by Dante, where the same word, in both form and meaning, is repeated) occurs with 'mosso' in ll. 88 and 90.[48] The emotional heightening being signalled here on the theme of exile, the failure of the art of returning, alerts the reader to the long shadow it casts over the whole poem. Dante's exile profoundly inflects many of the poem's crucial themes, not least of which is the politics of *Inferno* x.[49]

## *Purgatorio* x

The opening lines of *Purgatorio* x signal the transition to Purgatory proper, with Dante and Virgil crossing its threshold, the door loudly creaking shut behind them. The description of the rocky terrace, dedicated to those guilty of pride, is anxiously vague: critics have strongly divergent interpretations of the *pietra fessa* that 'moves' one way and another, like a wave rushing out and then back in again. Both occurrences of the word *parte* are in the service of expressing vividly an elaborate 'this-way-and-that-way' movement. Just as the rock moves 'e d'una e d'altra parte' [from side to side] (l. 8), so too must the pilgrim negotiate the rock 'in accostarsi / or quinci, or quindi al lato che si parte' [clinging to the side that recedes, now here, now there] (l. 12). For a canto that is all about representation, mimesis, similitude, artistry, the lack of precision in these lines is striking, drawing attention to the act of representation.[50] The deployment of a *rima equivoca* functions as a key part of this ambiguity. The description of the *pietra fessa* (broken rock) is built upon a *rima equivoca*, a technique that depends upon breaking meaning apart, and only emphasized in the use of the word *parte*, itself a word that is all about separation and the lack of wholeness. When Virgil says 'Qui si conviene usare un poco d'arte' [Here we must use a little skill] (l. 10), the challenge is not just for the pilgrims in navigating the rocky terrain but also for readers in navigating the ambiguity of the passage.

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[48] On the reading of *mosso* in l. 88 there has been some philological discussion; see Dante Alighieri, *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi, 2nd edn, 4 vols (Florence: Le Lettere, 1994), I, p. 175, as well as the note *ad loc.*; see too Dante Alighieri, *Commedia*, ed. by Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi, 3 vols (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1991-1997), I, p. 323 *ad loc.*

[49] On exile in Dante, see Catherine Keen, 'The Language of Exile in Dante', *Reading Medieval Studies* 27 (2001), 79-102; see, too, the entry 'exile', by George Andrew Trone in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Richard Lansing (New York and London: Garland, 2000), pp. 362-65, with bibliography.

[50] Particularly good on this is Paul Spillenger, 'Dante's *Arte* and the Ambivalence of Retrospection', *Stanford Italian Review* X (1991), 241-68; see too Matthew Treherne, 'Ekphrasis and Eucharist: The Poetics of Seeing God's Art in *Purgatorio* X', *The Italianist* 26 (2006), 177-96.

At the centre of the *rima equivoca* on 'parte' is the rhyme word 'arte', a word that will come to have significant resonance throughout the canto and, indeed, the rest of *Purgatorio*.[51] As numerous critics have pointed out, the canto explores the nature of art and the problems of representation. The artistry found in *Purgatorio* x is extraordinary.[52] The artist's hand, responsible for *bas-reliefs* that are more real than Nature, is the hand of God. But the centre of the problem here is that this representation is *not* divine, but Dante's own. Teodolinda Barolini has rightly asserted that the boundary is blurred between 'the divine mimesis and the text that is charged with reproducing it'.[53] If the 'arte' in l. 10 is one of navigation and negotiation, making one's way safely through the obstacle course that is the terrace, then this is also a navigation of meaning, of the artfulness of Dante's poem: an art, in sum, that candidly implicates the reader.

Hermeneutics, the art of meaning, lies at the heart of *Purgatorio* x, since the whole canto comprises an act of reading on Dante's part. In this canto he does not meet any specific, named individuals guilty of pride (he will in the following canto); rather, he reads a series of images representing humility, the counter-examples to pride, images comprising the Virgin Mary, David before the Ark and the Emperor Trajan. Indeed, the protagonist of *Purgatorio* x is surely the sculpted reliefs of the terrace. Dante describes himself shifting position in an effort to get a better view of these reliefs, to read them more clearly: 'per ch'io varcai Virgilio, e fe'mi presso, / acciò che fosse a li occhi miei disposta' [therefore I crossed beyond Virgil and drew near it, so that it would be wholly before my eyes] (ll. 53-54); 'I' mossi i piè del loco dov'io stava, / per avvisar da presso un'altra istoria, / che di dietro a Micòl mi biancheggiava' [I moved my feet from the place where I was standing, so as to see up close another story that shone white for me from behind Michal] (ll. 70-72). Virgil's word *arte*, then, is a key term for the drama of reading that unfolds on this terrace, a co-ordinated effort of both mental and physical skill.

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[51] For a recent (though brief) treatment of the occurrences of the word in the *Comedìa* see Jennifer Petrie, 'Art, *Arte*, Artistry and the Artist', in *Nature and Art in Dante: Literary and Theological Essays*, ed. by Daragh O'Connell and Jennifer Petrie (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), pp. 11-24.

[52] For a short bibliography, see Georges Güntert, 'Canto X', in *Purgatorio*, ed. by Georges Güntert and Michelangelo Picone, *Lectura Dantis Turicensis* (Florence: F. Cesati, 2001), pp. 139-55 (p. 155).

[53] Teodolinda Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 126 (the chapter had previously appeared as 'Re-Presenting What God Presented: The Arachnean Art of Dante's Terrace of Pride', *Dante Studies* 105 [1987], 43-62).

## *Paradiso* x

*Paradiso* x is the first canto of the fourth sphere, the Heaven of the Sun; it is thus the first to be completely free of the shadow of the earth. The canto opens with six lines of exquisite contemplation of the Trinity. The three persons of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Ghost – are described in terms of a contemplative mutuality, with the *primo e ineffabile Valore*, the Father, watching, looking into, contemplating – the gerund *guardando*, the first word of the canto, holds the whole six lines together – the Son with Love (the Holy Spirit) which *inspires* (in-spire, 'breathes between') both eternally. The order and perfection created by the Trinity mean that anyone who looks at or contemplates it cannot but taste Him (God). These first two *terzine* end with the word 'rimira', a verb which echoes and reflects the opening gerund 'guardando'. We look (*mirare*) at the Trinity, which is itself the Father looking (*guardare*) at the Son and, by looking, we taste. These opening lines of *Paradiso* x echo, then, the remarkable synaesthesia of *Purgatorio* x, with Dante delighting in looking at God's work, hearing the images in dialogue and smelling the scenes before him.

This pair of *terzine* opens the canto and is followed by a long direct address to the reader, 'Leva dunque, lettore' (l. 7), lasting for seven *terzine* (up to l. 27).[54] Within this address appears the *parte*: *arte*: *parte Reimbildung*, precisely mirroring their position in *Purg*., x, that is, lines 8, 10 and 12. The rhetorical heightening is clearly signalled, with the reader urged to attend to the vertical, to raise her eyes upwards in contemplation of the heavens. Another *rima equivoca* will be used at the close of the canto, where the harmony produced by the circling *corona* ('in dolcezza ch'esser non pò nota' [with sweetness that cannot be known] (l. 147) is likened to the chimes of a divine clock, 'tin tin sonando con sì dolce nota' [sounding *tin tin* with so sweet a note] (l. 143)).[55] The *Reimbildung* is accommodated in two *terzine* that express the harmony of this sphere of the Sun and the beauty of the art of the Creator. The rhyme words are used in a way similar to their occurrences in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, that is, with 'parte' meaning 'place' or 'spot' in line 8, and the third-person singular of the present indicative verb 'partire' meaning 'divide from', 'separate from', in line 12.

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[54] See Alison Cornish, *Reading Dante's Stars* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 23-25.

[55] See, on this, the masterful treatment by Christian Moevs, 'Miraculous Syllogism: Clocks, Faith and Reason in *Paradiso* 10 and 24', *Dante Studies* 117 (1999), 59-84.

The three words, however, have undergone a transformation in their use in *Paradiso*, subjected to a vertical fulfillment. While 'arte' in *Inf.*, x. 51 and *Purg.*, x. 10 means (human) 'skill', 'technical know-how', here in line 10, the word suggests divine art, the Creator's harmony. Dante directs the reader's attention to 'quella parte', that place where the contrary motions of the heavens result in the Spring equinox (this will be clarified in ll. 28 ff., and the locution *quella parte* will recur in l. 31). But the contrary motions of the sphere are a phenomenon that does not have a 'place', and what we see no longer happens in time and space. Likewise, the use of the verb *partire* indicates a gaze that never breaks away, that remains forever fixed on its object: 'mai da lei l'occhio non parte' [he never moves his eye away from it] (l. 12). A word that meant division and separateness now means wholeness, oneness.

A *Reimbildung* built upon *equivocatio* draws attention to shifts in meaning, including shifts in the meaning of the 'stable' term *arte*. The reader's encounter with the word, as it occurs in the Tens, is primed by its occurrence in (as well as out of) rhyme position in the cantos immediately preceding and immediately following. This echoing is further reinforced by the fact that in all of these instances, the word *arte* is in rhyme with *parte*.[56] Though a fuller treatment lies outside the immediate scope of this essay, it is necessary nonetheless to point out how the only two other uses of the *Reimbildung* enter into a rich and allusive intratextuality with the Tens. The occurrence of *arte*: *parte*: *parte* in *Purg.*, x recalls the appearance of those same rhyme words in *Purg.*, iv. 80, 82, 84. Indeed, these rhyme words at the opening of *Purg.*, x describe a difficult and arduous climb through broken rocks, with a wording ('Noi salavam per una pietra fessa' [We were climbing up through a broken rock] (l. 7)) that precisely mirrors the difficult negotiation of the ascent of Mount Purgatory ('Noi salavam per entro 'l sasso rotto' [We were climbing within the broken rock] (*Purg.*, iv. 31)).[57]

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[56] See *Inf.*, ix. 120; *Inf.*, x. 77, 81 (not in rhyme); *Inf.*, xi. 100, and, not in rhyme at 103, 105; *Purg.*, ix. 71, and, not in rhyme at 125; *Purg.*, xi 80; *Par.*, ix. 106 (not in rhyme); *Par.*, x. 43 (not in rhyme); *Par.*, xii. 138 (not in rhyme).

[57] The echo has been noted in the commentaries of recent critics such as Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, Pasquini and Quaglio, and Bosco and Reggio.

Repeating the *Reimbildung* within the same cantica – in this case *Purgatorio* – feels sufficiently marked that it be noticed by readers; repeating it within the same sphere in *Paradiso* is a much more startling and intense kind of repetition. The Heaven of the Sun accommodates two occurrences of *parte*: *parte*: *arte* – in *Par.*, x, and again in *Par.*, xiii. 19, 121, 123.[58] Canto xiii has Thomas Aquinas warn against rushing to judgment or being convinced of one's opinions too quickly and taking easy comfort in such conviction. The injunction alerts the reader to the skill required for the art of making acute and meaningful distinctions.[59] Reading a *rima equivoca,* similarly, requires an act of distinction. Art is figured again in Thomas's explication of the perfection and wisdom of Adam and Christ, perfect because made directly by God Himself and in contrast to corruptible earthly existence. The perfection of divine ideas must be counter-distinguished from Nature, 'similemente operando a l'artista / ch'a l'abito de l'arte ha man che trema' [working like the artist who has the habit of art but a hand that trembles] (*Par.*, xiii. 77-78).[60] The artist, whose trembling hand imperfectly renders the ideal image in his mind, is a figure which implicates Dante the poet, whose abilities are always expressing imperfectly the (vertical) extremes of his experiences in the otherworld.

This discussion has concentrated on the rather rare phenomenon of one particular *Reimbildung* being repeated across a set of cantos, in this case, the Tens. However, a 'vertical' reading of the *Comedìa* would also recognize the marked way in which Dante deploys an –*arte* rhyme across the cantos Thirty-One. These are: *parte*: *arte*: *Marte* (*Inf.*, xxxi 47, 49, 51); *parte*: *arte*: *sparte* (*Purg.*, xxxi 47, 49, 51); and *parte*: *sparte*: *arte* (*Par.*, xxxi 128, 130, 132). Particularly striking is how the first two instances mirror each other's line numbers. This intratextual signposting across the cantos Thirty-One even presents connections to the Tens, where the other –*arte* rhyme series is found. It has been noted, for example, that the image of Farinata in *Inf.*, x echoes the giants in *Inf.*, xxxi standing waist-deep in the *pozzo*.[61] A more detailed investigation is needed of the 'vertical intratextuality' created by these rhyming patterns and lexical convergences.

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[58] Two examples of *rime equivoche* are also found in *Par.*, xiii, at ll. 37, 39, on *costa*, and at ll. 89, 91, on *pare*.

[59] See Courtney Cahill, 'The Limitations of Difference in *Paradiso* XIII's Two Arts: Reason and Poetry', *Dante Studies* 114 (1996), 245-69.

[60] The word *artista* appears only four times in the *Comedìa*, all in rhyme position, and all in *Paradiso*: cf. xvi. 51; xviii. 51; xxx. 33.

[61] See Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi's comment in her *Commedia*, vol. 1, p. 914.

## Conclusion

The vertical expresses itself not just thematically, in the narrative trajectory of the *Comedìa*, but also technically, in the handling of rhyme, the poem's most pronounced vertical dimension. This vertical articulation allows Dante to range up and down the whole length of the poem. An allusive intratextuality creates connections between themes, episodes and characters, joining up precise textual points in repeated *Reimbildungen*, the focus of which are distinctly the end of the poem. The verse (*verso*; *versus*) is fulfilled at the moment of turning, a crossing over between sound and sense. Rhyme, therefore, bears the weight of this turning, and Dante puts the pressure it creates to exquisite use in structuring the soundscape of the poem.[62]

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[62] For support towards this research, my gratitude is warmly extended to the Department of English and Related Literature, University of York, and the Danish National Research Foundation (DNRF102ID).

# 11. The Art of Teaching and the Nature of Love[1]

## *Paola Nasti*

### Numbers, Words, Themes and Genres: Bridging the Elevens

Lexical similarities, recurring rhyming patterns, thematic crossovers and narrative reverberations can be found in whichever way we direct our reading of Dante. Indeed, this is the genius of the *Commedia*, a poem that requires horizontal, vertical and, more often, diagonal, back-and-forth movements from its readers by intentionally creating links between cantos, groups of cantos and/or *terzine*. To prove that Dante deliberately created a vertical numerological structure, however, we would have to demonstrate that vertical structures are used consistently to advance or revise specific themes or arguments in more substantial ways than diagonal, horizontal or serendipitous ones. In other words, we would have to ascertain that strong vertical links exist and that they are a consistent and privileged method of creating meaning in the *Commedia*. Our challenge is to consider whether this

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[1] The video of this lecture is available at the Cambridge Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy website, https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1631609
I would like to thank colleagues who have given me essential feedback on previous versions of this *lectura*: Zygmunt Barański, Anna Pegoretti, Claudia Tardelli and Virginia Campbell. The Bible quoted is the Approved King James translation.

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kind of tie exists amongst the Elevens. In approaching a vertical reading, our point of entry is, of course, numerological in nature.

Numbers had symbolic meaning in medieval textual architectures like the *Commedia* on the basis of the biblical assumption that Wisdom 'arranged all things by measure and number and weight' (Wisd., 11:20). The number eleven had been described by both Saint Augustine in *De civitate Dei* and Hugh of St Victor in his *Exegetica de Scripturis et Scriptoribus Sacris* as the blazon of sin because it signified the transgression of law and measure represented by the number ten.[2] The 'spiritual' meaning of our number perfectly suits *Inferno* xi. It is here, in fact, that Virgil offers a scholastic lecture on the strict correspondence between the Aristotelian classification of sin and the *Commedia*'s infernal geography. The long monologue logically organizes the topic of wrongdoing to help the pilgrim and the readers understand the moral significance of the story that is unfolding. Obviously, the vertical commentator's job is much harder when it comes to the Elevens of the second and third *cantiche*: there, no clear numerological correspondence seems to be in place. Nevertheless, the symbolism of the number eleven sheds some light on these two cantos when we consider that the interpretation of what constitutes sin and its opposite, virtue, is at the heart of both. To be precise, *Purg.*, xi and *Par.*, xi equally exalt humility and charity as remedies to the *aversio* that leads men to sin. My numerological interpretation is not a flight of the imagination. In discussing the significance of eleven, Augustine himself noted that, on the basis of *Exod.* xxv, 7, the number also signified the *cilicium* [sackcloth], which pertained to sin because, as Psalm 51 exemplified, it reminded humanity of their sins in their daily practice of the virtuous life.[3] From this perspective, it is possible that, following the model of Augustine's reasoning on Psalm 51, in *Purgatorio* xi and *Paradiso* xi, Dante might want to suggest that there can be no virtue which does not remind us of sin.

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[2] 'Since, then, the law is symbolized by the number ten, whence that memorable Decalogue, there is no doubt that the number eleven, which goes beyond ten, symbolizes the transgression of the law, and consequently sin. For this reason, eleven veils of goat's skin were ordered to be hung in the tabernacle of the testimony, which served in the wanderings of God's people as an ambulatory temple. And in that haircloth there was a reminder of sins, because the goats were to be set on the left hand of the Judge; and therefore, when we confess our sins, we prostrate ourselves in haircloth, as if we were saying what is written in the psalm, 'My sin is ever before me.' The progeny of Adam, then, by Cain the murderer, is completed in the number eleven, which symbolizes sin; and this number itself is made up by a woman, as it was by the same sex that beginning was made of sin by which we all die' (St Augustine, *The City of God* , trans. by Marcus Dods, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, ed. by Philip Schaff [Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887], II, Book XV, c. 20, 4-10). Hugh of St Victor, *Exegetica de Scripturis et Scriptoribus Sacris*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. by J. P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Garnier, 1844-1855), 175, col. 22.

Numerology aside, at a macro-structural level there are other similarities that a vertical reading of our cantos reveals. All three cantos are more or less liminal; they mark a transition in the narrative to a different geographical or astronomical, and therefore ethical and spiritual, area in their respective realm. In *Inferno* xi we have just entered the City of Dis,[4] or lower Hell; in *Purgatorio* xi the *agens* has arrived in Purgatory proper;[5] and in *Paradiso* xi he has left behind the Heavens that still bear the shadowy presence of planet Earth.[6] As such, all cantos represent, to a certain extent, a sort of meditative pause on the theological and ethical meaning of the pilgrim's and the readers' voyage. Likewise, all three cantos stage the rehearsal of a major genre: a *quaestio disputata* in *Inferno*,[7] a liturgical prayer which is also a biblical *volgarizzamento* in *Purgatorio*,[8] and a hagiographical piece within a *lectio* in the last cantica.[9] This, as we shall see, is no meaningless coincidence when we consider that a sustained reflection on different forms of art, knowledge and learning runs across our three cantos.

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[3] See the reference to Psalm 51 in note n. 3. St Augustine's comment on Psalm 51 puts great emphasis on the need to consider David as a penitent: 'This Psalm then, while it maketh heedful those that have not believed, so doth not will them that have fallen to be despaired of. Whoever thou art that hast sinned, and hesitates to exercise penitence for thy sin, despairing of thy salvation, hear David groaning. To thee Nathan the prophet hath not been sent, David himself hath been sent to thee. Hear him crying, and with him cry: hear him groaning, and with him groan; hear him weeping, and mingle tears; hear him amended, and with him rejoice. If from thee sin could not be excluded, be not hope of pardon excluded' (St Augustine, 'Exposition on the Book of Psalms', in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, VIII, Psalm 51, 8).

[4] The bibliography on *Inferno* xi is vast, and here I mention only some of the most relevant readings of the canto: Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Segni e struttura Canto XI', in his *Dante e i segni: saggi per una storia intellettuale di Dante Alighieri* (Naples: Loffredo, 2000), pp. 127-46; Theodore J. Cachey, 'Cartographic Dante', *Italica* 87:3 (2010), 325-54; Carlo Delcorno, 'Dare ordine al male (*Inferno* XI)', *Lettere Italiane* 63:2 (2011), 181-207; idem, 'Inferno XI', in *Lectura Dantis Bononiensis*, ed. by Carlo Galli and Emilio Pasquini (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2012), II, pp. 137-56; Francesco Mazzoni, 'Canto XI dell'*Inferno*', in *Lectura Dantis Neapolitana. Inferno*, ed. by Pompeo Giannantonio (Naples: Loffredo, 1986), pp. 167-209; Bruno Nardi, 'Il canto XI dell'*Inferno*', in *Lecturae ed altri studi danteschi*, ed. by Rudy Abardo (Florence: Le Lettere, 1990), pp. 71-80; Cesare Vasoli, 'Il canto XI dell'*Inferno*', *L'Alighieri. Rassegna bibliografica dantesca* 33:2 (1992), 3-22.

[5] For good general discussion on *Purg*., xi see: V. Stanley Benfell, '"Blessed Are They that Hunger after Justice": From Vice to Beatitude in Dante's *Purgatorio*', in *The Seven Deadly Sins. From Communities to Individuals*, ed. by Richard Newhauser (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), pp. 185-206; Giovanni Fallani, 'Il canto XI del *Purgatorio*', in *Purgatorio. Casa di Dante in Roma* (Rome: Salerno Editore, 1981), pp. 231-46; Mario Marti, 'Canto XI', in *Lectura Dantis Neapolitana. Purgatorio*, ed. by Pompeo Giannantonio (Naples: Loffredo, 1989), pp. 227-45; Anthony Oldcorn, 'Canto XI. Gone with the Wind', in *Lectura Dantis. Purgatorio*, ed. by Allen Mandelbaum, *Anthony Oldcorn*, and Charles Ross (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, *2008*), pp. 103-18; Michelangelo Picone, 'Dante nel girone dei superbi (*Purg*. X-XII)', in *L'Alighieri. Rassegna dantesca* 46 (2005), 97-110; Mirko Volpi, 'Dante tra superbia e invidia. Lettura del canto XIII del *Purgatorio*', *Rivista di Studi Danteschi* 12:2 (2012), 326-60.

Links of a thematic nature can also be established, but mainly in binary combinations, between the Elevens of *Inferno* and *Paradiso* or the Elevens of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. Such links mostly centre on notable semantic oppositions or couples: humility and pride; sin and repentance; family pride and spiritual families; bad and good popes;[10] true and false wealth; poverty and usury; time versus eternity; earthly fame versus glory in Heaven; teaching and learning; philosophy and Scripture. Where and when these themes are reprised, the *memoria dantesca* is at times active: tropes, words and rhymes are often repeated. Unsurprisingly, thematic or lexical repetition occur with some frequency especially across *Purgatorio* xi and *Paradiso* xi, where the themes of humility and *superbia* are dealt with (in *Paradiso* xi with specific reference to St Francis). The points of contact are less obvious between the cantos of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, a fact that does complicate the possibility of a vertical reading as much as suggest that the consideration that not all the actual reprises are significant, or exclusive to our three cantos.

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[6] On *Paradiso* xi : Erich Auerbach, 'Il canto XI del *Paradiso*', in *Letture dantesche: Paradiso*, ed. by Giovanni Getto (Florence: Sansoni, 1961), pp. 217-35; Umberto Bosco, *Lectura Dantis Scaligera: Il Paradiso, Canto XI* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1990), pp. 387-418; Andrea Mazzucchi, 'Per una genealogia della Sapienza. Lettura di *Paradiso*, XI', *Rivista di Studi Danteschi* 9:2 (2009), 225-62; Nicolo Mineo, 'Il canto XI del *Paradiso*', in *I primi undici canti del Paradiso: Lectura Dantis Metelliana*, ed. by Attilio Mellone (Rome: Bulzoni, 1992), pp. 221-320; Paola Nasti, '*Caritas* and ecclesiology in Dante's Heaven of Sun', in *Dante's 'Commedia': Theology as Poetry*, ed. by Vittorio Montemaggi and Matthew Treherne (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), pp. 210-44; Giuseppe Mazzotta, 'Dante's Franciscanism', in *Dante and the Franciscans: Poverty and the Papacy in the 'Commedia'*, ed. by Nick Havely (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 171-98; Mario Trovato, 'Canto XI', in *Dante's Divine Comedy: Introductory Readings: III. Paradiso*, ed. by Tibor Wlassics (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1995), pp. 156-71.

[7] See for example Corrado Calenda, 'Lettura di *Inferno* XI', *Filologia e Critica* 20:2-3 (1995), 217-41.

[8] As well as the *lecturae* on *Purg*., xi listed in n. 6, on Dante's *Pater noster* and the contamination of genres in this prayer see: Sergio Cristaldi, 'Il 'Padre nostro' dei superbi', in *Preghiera e liturgia nella Commedia*. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Ravenna, 12 novembre 2011, ed. by Giuseppe Ledda (Ravenna: Centro Dantesco dei Frati Minori Conventuali, 2013), pp. 67-88; Nicolò Maldina, 'L'*oratio super Pater Noster* di Dante tra esegesi e vocazione liturgica. Per *Purgatorio* XI, 1-24', *L'Alighieri. Rassegna dantesca* 53 (2012), 89-108.

[9] See Lucia Battaglia Ricci, 'Figure di contraddizione: Letture dell'XI canto del *Paradiso*', in *Le varie fila: Studi di letteratura italiana in onore di Emilio Bigi*, ed. by Fabio Danelon, Hermann Grosser, and Cristina Zampese (Milan: Principato, 1997), pp. 34-50. On Dante's representation of St Francis see: Erich Auerbach, 'Francesco d'Assisi nella *Commedia*', in his *Studi su Dante* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1990), pp. 227-40; Umberto Bosco, 'San Francesco', in his *Dante vicino: Contributi e letture* (Caltanissetta and Rome: Sciascia, 1966) pp. 316-41; Umberto Cosmo, 'Le mistiche nozze di Frate Francesco con Madonna Povertà', *Giornale dantesco* 6 (1898), 49-82 and 97-117; Kenelm Foster, 'Gli elogi danteschi di S. Francesco e di S. Domenico', in *Dante e il francescanesimo*, ed. by Agnello Baldi (Cava dei Tirreni: Avagliano, 1987), pp. 231-49; Roul Manselli, 'San Francesco e San Domenico nei canti del *Paradiso*', in *Da Gioacchino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo: Studi sul francescanesimo spirituale, sull'ecclesiologia e sull'escatologismo bassomedievali*, ed. by Raoul Manselli (Rome: Istituto Storico per il Medioevo, 1997), pp. 201-11.

Perhaps the two most noticeable lexical points of contact are the re-occurrence in all three cantos of two words: 'sasso' and 'amore'. In *Inferno*, 'sasso' clearly refers to the rocky landscape of the City of Dis, which is a symbol of spiritual loss and pain;[11] in *Purgatorio*, the weighty rock is what bends down the penitent necks of the proud;[12] in *Paradiso*, it allludes to the impervious mountain where the *penitens-in-viam* Francis received the miracle of the stigmata:

> nel crudo sasso intra Tevero e Arno
> da Cristo prese l'ultimo sigillo,
> che le sue membra due anni portarno. (*Par*., xi. 106-108)[13]
>
> [on the bare rock between Tiber and Arno from Christ he then took the last seal, which his limbs bore for two years.]

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[10] In *Inferno* the reference is to Pope Anastasius ('Anastasio papa guardo, / lo qual trasse Fotin de la via dritta'. xi. 8-9); this has been the subject of a long controversy; for an interesting assessment see: Ronald L. Martinez, '"Anastasio papa guardo" (*Inferno* 11.8-9). The descent into Hell, and Dante's heretics', *Mediaevalia* 39:2 (2008), 15-30. In *Paradiso* Dante uses a papal 'attribute' for St Francis: 'di seconda corona redimita / fu per Onorio da l'Etterno Spiro / la santa voglia d'esto archimandrita' (xi. 97-99). Since we are reading vertically it might be interesting to note that Francis is presented here as a true archimandrite, i.e. pope, who chose 'terra' [soil] as the proper 'bara' [coffin] to his body, whereas in *Inferno* xi we encounter the first pope directly mentioned by Dante in a tomb that one day will be shut forever.

[11] 'Figliuol mio, dentro da cotesti sassi', / cominciò poi a dir, 'son tre cerchietti / di grado in grado, come que' che lassi' (*Inf.*, xi. 16-18).

[12] 'E s' io non fossi impedito dal sasso / che la cervice mia superba doma, / onde portar convienmi il viso basso' (*Purg*., xi, 52-54). The *contrappasso* here is of course modeled on the myth of Sisyphus.

[13] Note in this case also the reprisal of the image of the seal ('sigillo') in *Inferno* xi: 'e però lo minor giron suggella / del segno suo e Soddoma e Caorsa / e chi, spregiando Dio col cor, favella' (49-51), where the seal marks the irreversibility of the sinners' reclusion in Hell. For St Francis the 'sigillo' is instead the confirmation of his salvation and a mark of perfection.

Clearly the semantic metamorphosis of the rock mirrors the ascending moral and allegorical path from sin to salvation. The lexical reminiscence is therefore consistent with the cantos' trajectory from sin to virtue, one that we have already mentioned in relation to the significance of numbers.

The term 'amore' is of course one that liberally resonates across *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, but in the first cantica, with the obvious exception of canto v and the two introductory cantos, the term is rare.[14] In *Inferno* xi, however, the term occurs twice when Virgil explains to Dante that the bond of love is broken by the sinners who turn their back on God and Nature (this is the core of the concept of aversion):

> Questo modo di retro par ch'incida
> pur lo vinco d'amor che fa natura;
> onde nel cerchio secondo s'annida. (*Inf.*, xi. 55-57)

> [This latter mode seems to cut solely into the bond of love that Nature makes; thus in the second circle find their nest.]

> Per l' altro modo quell'amor s'oblia
> che fa natura, e quel ch'è poi aggiunto,
> di che la fede spezïal si cria (*Inf.*, xi. 61-63)

> [The former mode forgets the love that Nature makes and also that which is added to it, from which special trust is created.]

In *Purgatorio* xi 'amore' (in rhyming position with 'valore' and 'vapore') is acknowledged by the penitents as one of the gifts of the Trinity which make salvation possible:

> O Padre nostro, che ne' cieli stai,
> non circunscritto, ma per più amore
> ch'ai primi effetti di là sù tu hai (*Purg.*, xi. 1-3)

> [O our Father who are in the heavens, not circumscribed, but because of the greater love you bear those first effects up there.]

In *Paradiso* xi, which is in fact an extended allegory of love, the term finds several declinations (from 'diletto' and 'concordia', to 'amò', 'amasser' and

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[14] *Inf.*, xiii. 40-42; xxvi. 94-96; xxx. 37-39.

'amanti') and describes the affection that ties Francis to his Lady, his friars to both of them and, by extension, the church militant to Christ:

> La lor concordia e i lor lieti sembianti,
> amore e maraviglia e dolce sguardo
> facieno esser cagion di pensier santi (*Par.*, xi. 76-78)
>
> [Love and admiration and joyful glances caused their harmony and their cheerful look to be the occasion of holy thoughts.]

It would appear, therefore, that in our cantos from *Inferno* to *Paradiso*, the term 'amore' is semantically stable like the God from which it emanates. Its relevance, however, is subject to the *habitus* of the human agent, who may choose to sway from it ('incida'), forget ('oblia') his divine origin or embrace it instead. The exceptional double occurrence of the term in *Inferno* xi, alongside the celebrations of love in the other two cantos, can be considered a strong index of verticality which reflects the importance of the concept of *caritas* in the Elevens.

Further thematic ties patently exist between our cantos. These rotate around the pivotal treatment of humanity's obsession with, or refusal of, earthly values such as wealth, fame, dominance and family. Whilst I shall subsequently analyse some of these issues at greater length, a consideration of a lexical reoccurrence related to the theme of family, the word 'padre', might offer a cogent introduction to Dante's argument on earthly values in the Elevens. As stated in *Convivio*,[15] following Aristotle, Dante considered family one of the pillars of society. As important as it might be, however, Dante is clear that family cannot lead the Christian to neglect the more important principles of humility and charity. In *Purgatorio* xi, Guglielmo Aldobrandesco suffers to expiate the pride he took in the noble past and present of his family by carrying around a rock which forces his eyes and his entire body downwards. This is not only a criticism of the traditional concept of nobility, but also a direct comment on the relative value of blood relations:[16]

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[15] The positive value of family is noted in *Conv* IV. iv. 2 and *Par.*, xv. 125. Umberto Bosco, 'Gli affetti familiari di Dante nella *Commedia*', *L'Alighieri* 27:1 (1986), 3-15. On the theme of community in Dante, see Claire E. Honess, *From Florence to the Heavenly City: The Poetry of Citizenship in Dante* (London: Legenda, 2006).

[16] For a comprehensive bibliography on the question of nobility in Dante, see Dante Alighieri, *Convivio*, ed. by Gianfranco Fioravanti (Milan: Mondadori, 2014). A recent

> Io fui latino e nato d'un gran Tosco:
> Guiglielmo Aldobrandesco fu mio padre;
> non so se 'l nome suo già mai fu vosco.
> L'antico sangue e l'opere leggiadre
> d'i miei maggior mi fer sì arrogante,
> che, non pensando a la comune madre,
> ogn' uomo ebbi in despetto tanto avante. (*Purg.*, xi. 58-64)

> [I was Italian, born of a great Tuscan: Guglielmo Aldobrandesco was my father; I know not if his name was ever known to you. The ancient blood and noble works of my ancestors made me so arrogant that, forgetting our common mother, I looked down on every man.]

In *Paradiso* xi, on the contrary, familial affiliations are rejected by a young Francesco, who embraces the spiritual 'corte' of the Church and creates a new 'famiglia' which will bring fresh, holy blood to the community as a whole:

> ché per tal donna, giovinetto, in guerra
> del padre corse, a cui, come a la morte,
> la porta del piacer nessun diserra;
> e dinanzi a la sua spirital corte
> *et coram patre* le si fece unito (*Par.*, xi. 58-62)

> [when, still a youth, he had to do battle with his father for a lady to whom, as if she were death, no one unlocks the gate of pleasure, and before the bishop's court *et coram patre* he wedded her.]

> Indi sen va quel padre e quel maestro
> con la sua donna e con quella famiglia
> che già legava l'umile capestro. (*Par.*, xi. 85-87)

> [So he goes on, that father, that master, with his lady and that family already girt with the humble rope.]

Dante was certainly aware of the fact that the motive behind Francis's refusal of his native family was modelled on a notorious precept preached by Christ in the synoptic Gospels:

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important addition is Andrea A. Robiglio, 'The Thinker as a Noble Man ('bene natus') and Preliminary Remarks on the Concept of Nobility', *Vivarium* 44:2-3 (2006), 205-47.

> Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Mat. 10:37-39)

According to the traditional exegesis of this passage and its parallels, Christ's teaching did not disrupt the concept of family *per se*, but simply extended the term to include the Church as a whole.[17] In *Purgatorio* xi, such a lesson is learned and preached by the penitents who in fact extend their prayer to all the living, the community of families left behind:

> Quest' ultima preghiera, segnor caro,
> già non si fa per noi, ché non bisogna,
> ma per color che dietro a noi restaro. (*Purg*., xi. 22-24)
>
> [This last prayer, dear Lord, we do not make for ourselves, since there is no need, but for those who have stayed behind.]

## The Worth of Philosophical Teaching from Hell to Heaven (Tentative Verticality)

*Inferno* xi is the first sustained lecture in Hell from the 'maestro [della] filosofica famiglia' [master [of the] philosophical company] (*Inf.*, iv. 131-32). Centuries of commentary have proven that Virgil's lecture in this canto is based on Dante's perfect mastery of the style and mode of scholastic philosophical *quaestiones*. In this context, the highest degree of attention must be paid to the fact that the word 'filosofia' is cited here and never again in the whole *Commedia*:

> 'Filosofia', mi disse, 'a chi la 'ntende,
> nota, non pure in una sola parte,
> come natura lo suo corso prende'. (*Inf.*, xi. 97-99)
>
> ['Philosophy', he said, 'to one who understands it, notes, and not merely in one place, how Nature takes its course'.]

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[17] See Thomas of Aquinas, 'Catena in Matheum', in *Catena aurea in quatuor Evangelia*, ed. by A. Guarenti (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1953), ch. 10, *lectio* 14.

The same mark of exceptionality applies to the mention of the titles of two of Aristotle's works: 'Etica' (*Nichomachean Ethics*, line 80) and 'Fisica' (*Physics*, line 101). These *hapax legomena* suggest that the lecture that Virgil gives amongst the tombs of the heretics (this detail must also be significant) spells out very clearly, literally in fact, the intellectual paradigms from which Dante the pilgrim will mainly benefit whilst under the care of his pagan guide. The *quaestio de malo*, delivered by Virgil, is in fact a narrative pause of great theological and figural significance that allows the poet to discuss matters of doctrine. At first, at least, Virgil appears to be a well-organised teacher, his language technically sound, his erudition vast but neatly arranged in precise *distinctiones*. The scholasticism of the maestro is not surprising, given that Dantists have long accustomed us to the notion that the classification of sin used to describe the geography of Hell is largely taken from Thomas Aquinas' commentary on the *Ethics* and other *loci* of his *oeuvre*.[18] Recently, however, Zygmunt Barański and Carlo Delcorno have observed several inconsistencies in Virgil's discourse: the speech not only mixes Aristotelian and Ciceronian theories, but also avoids giving a clear, exact account of the actual geography of lower Hell.[19] It would be hard to prove whether or not this lack of consistency is due to the fact that the *Commedia*'s modes of transmission did not allow the poet to revise his work. To understand whether Dante in fact planned these irregularities, we must look for interpretative keys in the text itself. At the level of the narrative, Virgil's lecture on sin is not exhaustive; on the contrary, it focuses only on the sins that are committed *ex malitia*. This leads the pilgrim to ask Virgil a question about the nature of the sins punished in upper Hell:

> Ma dimmi: quei de la palude pingue,
> che mena il vento, e che batte la pioggia,
> e che s'incontran con sì aspre lingue,

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[18] On the structure of Hell as well as the above mentioned *lecturae* see: Marc Cogan, *The Design in the Wax: The Structure of the Divine Comedy and its Meaning* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), pp. 1-75; Paolo Falzone, 'Dante e la nozione aristotelica di bestialità', in *Dante e il mondo animale*, ed. by Giuseppe Crimi and Luca Marcozzi (Rome: Carocci, 2013), pp. 62-78.

[19] Barański, 'Segni e struttura Canto XI'; Delcorno, 'Dare ordine al male'. Raffaele Pinto tried to explain these inconsistencies in his 'Indizi del disegno primitivo dell'*Inferno* (e della *Commedia*): *Inf.* VII-XI', *Tenzone. Revista de la Asociación Complutense de Dantología* 12 (2011), 105-52.

> perché non dentro da la città roggia
> sono ei puniti, se Dio li ha in ira?
> e se non li ha, perché sono a tal foggia? (*Inf.*, xi. 70-75)

> [But tell me: those of the greasy swamp, those driven by the wind and beaten by the rain, and those who collide with such harsh words, why are they not punished inside the ruddy city, if they are under God's wrath? and if not, why are they treated so?]

Questioning for the purpose of clarification was a common feature of medieval philosophical debates and Aquinas, the commentator followed in this canto, was a *virtuoso* of such mannerisms.[20] One doubt, even the least plausible, was always discussed and reversed by the discussant in each Scholastic *quaestio*. Instead, in *Inferno* xi, in spite of his affected scholasticism, Virgil reacts rather brusquely to the learner's curiosity; he accuses him of losing his reason ('delirare') and forgetting the teaching of Aristotle's *Ethics*:

> Ed elli a me 'Perché tanto delira',
> disse, 'lo 'ngegno tuo da quel che sòle?
> o ver la mente dove altrove mira?
> Non ti rimembra di quelle parole
> con le quai la tua Etica pertratta
> le tre disposizion che 'l ciel non vole?' (*Inf.*, xi. 76-81)

> [And he to me: 'Why does your wit', he said, 'so wander from its usual course? or where does your mind gaze mistaken? Do you not remember the words with which your *Ethics* treats so fully the three dispositions that Heaven refuses?']

By means of this 'school drama', Dante clarifies for his reader the twofold division of Hell's upper and lower regions. He also informs his readers of his deep knowledge of fundamental philosophical *auctoritates*, showcased to support his *fictio poetica*'s claims of truth. These are not details of little importance, but there might be even more to unveil. However defensible, Virgil's fury remains an unresolved problem. The momentous nature of this narrative event is also underlined by the unusual vocabulary used by the guide to attack his follower. The verb 'delirare' spoken by Virgil here is used only once more in the whole of the *Commedia*, namely in an episode that should be clearly considered parallel to ours: *Paradiso* i. There it is Beatrice who teaches Dante, but her reaction to his ignorance is silent and maternally charitable; significantly, on this occasion, the term 'delirare' is used by the narrator and it is, therefore, not part of the *diegesis*:

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[20] On the genre: Brian Lawn, *The Rise and Decline of the Scholastic 'Quaestio Disputata': With Special Emphasis on its Use in the Teaching of Medicine and Science* (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

> Ond' ella, appresso d'un pïo sospiro,
> li occhi drizzò ver' me con quel sembiante
> che madre fa sovra figlio deliro (*Par.*, i. 100-102)
>
> [Wherefore she, after a pitying sigh, directed her eyes at me with the expression that a mother has over a delirious child.]

Undoubtedly, the dynamic between teacher and learner in *Inferno* xi stands in stark contrast to the pious attitude of the blessed guide in *Paradiso*. Perhaps not coincidentally, pedagogical relationships are also at the centre of *Paradiso* xi where Thomas Aquinas, as teacher, is in fact as helpful and willing as Beatrice in canto i:

> Tu dubbi, e hai voler che si ricerna
> in sì aperta e 'n sì distesa lingua
> lo dicer mio, ch'al tuo sentir si sterna (*Par.*, xi. 22-24)
>
> [You are puzzled, and you wish my words to make clear, in such open and ample language as befits your hearing.]

In the light of the 'teaching' theme that seems to runs from *Inferno* xi to *Paradiso* xi, the fury of Virgil in the circle of Hell singles him out as a bad pedagogue. This is further emphasized by the fact that in the infernal canto the readers are also reminded of Virgil's uneasy show of incompetence at the gates of the City of Dis in *Inferno* ix.[21] From an exegetical perspective, the master's anxiety could be read as an index of Dante's views on the shortcomings of the philosophical knowledge that the ancient character flaunts at the pilgrim.

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[21] The most important observations on Dante's problematic representation of Virgil are still by Robert Hollander, 'Dante's Virgil: A Light that Failed', *Lectura Dantis* 4 (1989), 3-9; 'Dante's Misreadings of the *Aeneid* in *Inferno* 20', in *The Poetry of Allusion: Virgil and Ovid in Dante's Commedia*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff and Jeffrey T. Schnapp (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 77-93.

This is even more apparent if we take into the account the possibility that Dante-character's questioning of Virgil's classification of sin might actually not be as delirious as the maestro suggests. Although in his *Ethics* Aristotle had made a distinction between malice and incontinence, the philosopher had also opposed incontinence to intemperance and considered the latter more serious. Yet in the commentary of Aquinas there remained no clear cut equation between *intemperantia* and malice. Thus, even in the reference-books of the time, the taxonomy of sin was not as transparent as a student of philosophy might have hoped for. To complicate matters, as Aquinas explained, incontinence could also be considered simply a *habitus*, a *quasi*-sin, because it was not unqualified badness:[22]

> 1428. […] although incontinence is not unqualified badness it is still vice in some sense, as previously stated (1379); it is then a quasi-vice, being but transitory. It is obviously not unqualified vice because incontinence sins without deliberate choice but real vice with deliberate choice. […]
>
> 1433. […] the incontinent are amenable and inclined to be penitent. He says that these people exceed the limits of right reason because of passion overcoming them to this extent that they do not act according to right reason, but […] such people continue in a right evaluation of the end after the cessation of passion, which passes quickly. Such is the incontinent person who in this respect is better than the intemperate person and not absolutely evil because he does preserve the highest principle, which is the correct evaluation of the end.[23]

If, as it appears, this was the *sententia* of Aristotle read by Aquinas, I would argue that Dante had the pilgrim ask whether the sinners of upper Hell fully attract God's wrath in order to mimic the doubts and arguments (*pro* and *contra*) of Aristotle's commentator over the difference between *habitus* and deliberate sin. If this was the case, and if we consider that Virgil is ultimately made to deliver a speech that combines, often confusingly, different ethical classifications, such as Cicero's and Aristotle's, the guide's violent reaction could be seen as an 'event' intentionally forged by Dante-poet to puzzle the reader and provoke him into critically judging Virgil's behaviour. It would be intriguing to see the humiliation of Dante the student, who is rightly curious about a doctrinal *crux*, as a negative comment on his teacher, on the philosopher who tries to offer clear definitions of wrongdoing but is, alas, left wanting. In other words, we could consider the difficult dialogue between teacher and learner not only as an intentional statement on the fine balance that exists between sin and reason but also on the question of the appropriate epistemology and sources.

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[22] For a masterful discussion and an extensive bibliography on such a thorny question, see Lorenza Tromboni, '"Illud enim quod continemus in nostra potestate habemus". La dignità del continens dal *De malo* alla *Sententia libri Ethicorum* di Tommaso d'Aquino', *Memorie Domenicane* 42 (2011), 171-98.

[23] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by C. I. Litzinger (Chicago, IL: Regnery, 1964), book VII, lect. 8, ch. 8.

Obviously, at the height of *Inferno* xi, the pilgrim does accept philosophy as the correct epistemology, and he is in fact moved by this belief to the highest possible praise of his pagan master:

> O sol che sani ogne vista turbata,
> tu mi contenti sì quando tu solvi,
> che, non men che saver, dubbiar m'aggrata. (*Inf.*, xi. 91-93)
>
> [O sun that heals every clouded sight, you content me so when you resolve questions, that doubting is no less pleasurable than knowing.]

No other historical character of the *Commedia* receives such an ovation, with the exception of Saint Francis in *Paradiso* xi:

> Di questa costa, là dov' ella frange
> più sua rattezza, nacque al mondo un sole,
> come fa questo talvolta di Gange. (*Par.*, xi. 49-51)
>
> [From this slope, where it most breaks its steepness, was born to the world a sun, as this one is born at times from Ganges.]

Given the uniqueness of this comparison, from our vertical perspective, we should probably not consider it a coincidence. From the height of *Paradiso* xi, where the 'sole' ('sun') is one of the most perfect examples of Christian holiness, the attribution of the same praise to the philosophical teaching of a pagan poet in *Inferno* xi does not appear appropriate. The possibility that the later repetition of the word 'sole' is in fact a sort of commentary on the spiritual and intellectual limitations of Virgil as well as of the pilgrim who had fallen for his philosophical erudition in *Inferno* xi is very tempting. This hypothesis is even more alluring when we consider that the incipit of *Paradiso* xi confirms the risks of philosophy as a sort of epistemological error when it condemns 'silogismi', the philosophical procedure *par excellence*, as defective:

> O insensata cura de' mortali,
> quanto son difettivi silogismi
> quei che ti fanno in basso batter l'ali! (*Par.*, xi. 1-3)
>
> [O senseless care of mortals, how defective are the syllogisms that make you ply your wings downward!]

Interestingly, there are syllogisms mentioned in the *Commedia* that the pilgrim considers not as 'difettivi', obtuse, but as more perfect than any other philosophical 'dimostrazion'. These, as *Par.*, xxiv. 91-96 shows, are the words of the Bible:[24]

> … 'La larga ploia
> de lo Spirito Santo, ch'è diffusa
> in su le vecchie e 'n su le nuove cuoia,
> è silogismo che la m'ha conchiusa
> acutamente sì, che 'nverso d'ella
> ogne dimostrazion mi pare ottusa'. (*Par.*, xxiv. 91-96)
>
> ['The plentiful rain of the Holy Spirit, poured out on both the old and the new skins, is a syllogism that has concluded it for me so sharply that next to it every demonstration seems dulled'.]

Perhaps not coincidentally, the Bible as the 'foundation' of truth is also a further point of convergence between our three cantos.

## The Bible and the Value of Exegesis

If in *Inferno* xi criticism of the human art of philosophizing is subtle, *Paradiso* xi and *Purgatorio* xi challenge the value of human 'arts' more openly. In the first verses of St. Francis' canto, the reader is reminded that all human arts are at risk of being transient and fallacious. Likewise, *Purgatorio* xi demonstrates the intrinsic dangers of human belief in the absolute value of human production. As the stories of Oderisi da Gubbio and other artists mentioned on the terrace of the proud show, human art is not perfect; it might resemble the work of God the creator, but it is ultimately defective because the unconditional worth of man's achievements (practical, mechanical or theoretical) is marred by their temporal nature.[25] To believe in the perfection of one's accomplishments in the practice of art is a sinful *habitus*, one that can only be mocked by future generations and punished by God. In fact, looking at *Paradiso* xi. 10-12, the reader is reminded that true glory is ultimately not that experienced by Cimabue or Giotto, but that one enjoyed by Dante the pilgrim in Heaven where he is 'cotanto gloriösamente accolto' ['so gloriously received'] (*Par.*, xi. 12).

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[24] See also *Par.*, xxiv. 76-78.

Whilst human arts are bound to fail, our three cantos clearly confirm that the steadiest source of knowledge is, in fact, the Bible. The book of God takes centre-stage in *Purgatorio* xi, where the prayer of the penitent is, in fact, a translation of a Gospel passage. This is the longest prayer in the *Commedia*, and consequently the longest *volgarizzamento* of the Bible in the poem. The length of the biblical reenactment is, of course, proportional to the importance of the spiritual message that it announces and that reverberates throughout Purgatory: companionship, humility and compassion are essential to salvation. The prayer also confirms, theologically, the importance of the relationship between the world of the living and that of the dead, a fundamental and original addition to Dante's creation of this 'new' realm of the Afterlife. Last but not least, the *Pater noster* sung by the souls also establishes the epistemological paradigm chosen by those who will be saved. The penitents acknowledge the limitations of the human 'ingegno', even the most perfect ('tutto'), and ask for divine grace:

> Vegna ver' noi la pace del tuo regno,
> ché noi ad essa non potem da noi,
> s'ella non vien, con tutto nostro ingegno. (*Purg.*, xi. 7-9)
>
> [Let the peace of your kingdom come to us, for we cannot attain to it by ourselves, if it does not come, with all our wit.]

Dante the Christian knows, with 'his' souls in *Purgatorio*, that human reason and knowledge cannot fight evil; the 'antico avversario' can be avoided only thanks to the grace and love of God for man, and even repentance is ultimately a gift from God:

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[25] On Dante's reflection on art in *Purgatorio* xi as well as the cited *lecturae* see: Giuseppe Mazzotta, 'The Book of Questions: Prayer and Poetry', *Dante Studies* 129 (2011), 25-46; Michelangelo Picone, 'Il cimento delle arti nella *Commedia*. Dante nel girone dei superbi (*Purgatorio* X-XII)', in *Dante e le arti visive*, ed. by M. M. Donato, L. Battaglia Ricci, M. Picone and G. Z. Zanichelli (Milan: Unicopli, 2006), pp. 81-107; Jeremy Tambling, 'The Art of Pride', in his *Dante in Purgatory: States of Affect* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 81-101.

> Nostra virtù che di legger s'adona,
> non spermentar con l'antico avversaro,
> ma libera da lui che sì la sprona. (*Purg.*, xi. 19-21)
>
> [Our strength, which is easily subdued, do not tempt with the ancient adversary, but free it from him who spurs it so.]

The logical consequence of such discourse is straightforward: for the living, true knowledge can ultimately be found only in the Bible.[26]

The Bible also shapes *Paradiso* xi, where St Francis is celebrated as the greatest interpreter of God's love and the most sublime example of true wisdom. The narrator in this canto is, perhaps not coincidentally, Thomas Aquinas, the commentator of Aristotle employed by Dante in *Inferno* xi. At the start of my chapter, I classified this canto as homage to hagiography. *Paradiso* xi is, of course, many things at the same time: it is, for example, a panegyric, a *lectio* (more importantly) and a commentary to a phrase spoken by the character of Aquinas in the previous canto. As Thomas's words explain, this lecture/commentary, like so many others in the *Commedia*, takes off from a doubt sparked in the pilgrim's mind:

> Tu dubbi, e hai voler che si ricerna
> in sì aperta e 'n sì distesa lingua
> lo dicer mio, ch'al tuo sentir si sterna,
> ove dinanzi dissi: 'U' ben s'impingua',
> e là u' dissi: 'Non nacque il secondo';
> e qui è uopo che ben si distingua. (*Par.*, xi. 22-27)
>
> [You are puzzled, and you wish my words to make clear, in such open and ample language as befits your hearing, where earlier I said: 'Where one fattens well', and where I said: 'The second had not been born'; and here one must distinguish well.]

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[26] As Francesco da Buti says at *Paradiso* xi. 16: 'et tucti girano intorno ad essa [scil. the Bible], andando con belle speculationi et invectioni et poi in lei si fermano'. The passage is quoted from Claudia Tardelli, *Francesco da Buti's commentary on Dante's 'Commedia'. New Critical Edition, Based on MS Nap. XIII C 1. 'Purgatorio', 'Paradiso'* (PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, forthcoming in 2015).

In these lines, 'ricerna/sterna/distingua' are technical terms that belong to the field of rational enquiry; Dante uses them also for his scholastic interrogation of charity in *Paradiso* xxvi. This seems to suggest that, like Virgil in *Inferno* xi, Aquinas acts here as a pedagogue who describes the *vita Francisci* to explain the decadence of his mendicant order whilst, at the same time, confirming the values that should animate the Dominicans and the Church as whole.[27] The hagiographical narrative is, therefore, the premise of a demonstrative argument.

In this 'scholastic' context, it is surprising that to express the real value of Francis's life, Thomas, as the mouthpiece of Dante, chooses a vocabulary and a *modus scribendi* that pertains to the Revelation – the *sermus biblicus*. Yet the use of a biblically fashioned *exemplum* is not necessarily common in the context of a rational demonstration; therefore, Dante's decision to operate such a modal shift requires a clear assessment. Clearly, the choice is partly motivated by the hagiographical tradition that used biblical models to exalt the Christian values of each and every saint.[28] The modality also pertains to the tradition of preaching.[29] If we look at the specific biblical models followed by the poet in this canto, the *vita* of St Francis is not written as a *historia* but as a *fabula*, a fiction with allegorical meaning. In particular, Francis and Poverty are transformed into *sponso* and *sponsa* like the protagonists of the *Song of Songs* attributed to Solomon. This biblical book had been interpreted for centuries as an allegory and *figura* of the love that unites God and Christ to the Church or the human soul.[30] As I have written elsewhere, the allegory of the *brautmistik* is a biblical *topos* that Dante deploys here to show how, through the imitation of Christ, Francis incarnates the ideal of *caritas* which is at the centre of the Christian message. In doing so, Dante chooses a hagiographical line that was not thoroughly dominant in the Franciscan tradition to call for a radical reform of the Church based on the value of love.[31] However, there might also be another agenda.

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[27] Dante follows here a procedure that he employs also in the *Monarchia* to prove the truthfulness of Christ's teaching. For Dante, the conversion of the world to Christ is a miracle that proves the value of his doctrine, likewise the life of St Francis is a miracle that proves God's love for men.

[28] René Aigrain, *L'hagiographie. Ses sources, ses méthodes, son histoire*, Subsidia Hagiographica 80 (Paris: Bloud and Gay, 1953; 2nd edn, with a supplement by Robert Godding (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 2000)). James W. Earl, 'Typology and Iconographic Style in Early Medieval Hagiography', *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 8 (1975), 15-46.

[29] On Dante and preaching see: Carlo Delcorno, 'Dante e l'"exemplum" medievale', *Lettere Italiane* 35:1 (1983), 3-28; idem, 'Cadenze e figure della predicazione nel viaggio dantesco', *Lettere Italiane* 37:3 (1985), 299-320; idem, *Exemplum e letteratura. Tra Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989).

[30] On Dante and the *Song of Songs*, see Erich Auerbach, *Studi su Dante* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1991), pp. 248-56 and 261-68; Johan Chydenius, *The Typological Problem in Dante* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1960); Jean Leclercq, *Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 137-44; Lino Pertile, *La puttana e il gigante. Dal Cantico dei cantici al Paradiso Terrestre di Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 1998); Paola Nasti, *Favole d'amore e 'saver profondo'. La tradizione salomonica in Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 2007).

As previously discussed, Dante's understanding of Aristotle's work and concept of sin in *Inferno* xi is certainly dependent on the Thomist interpretation of the *Nichomachean Ethics*. The 'structural' reoccurrence of Aquinas in *Paradiso* xi could suggestively incline us to consider Francis's canto as a corrective reply to the exaltation of 'filosofia' pursued through the character of Virgil in *Inferno* xi. It is plausible that in the Heaven of the Sun, Dante should call Aquinas to testify and attribute to him a demonstration based on the sacred words of the Bible, perhaps reminding the reader that the real *auctoritas* on both virtue and vice is ultimately the book of God. After all, Dante's biblically fashioned Francis is as far as possible from the virtuous Aristotelian or Virgilian ideal man; his marital passion for Poverty and his love of God are so excessive that they can only be explained by and compared to the scandal of the crucifixion recalled in *Paradiso* xi. 31-33. If this suggestion is valid, it could provide a useful interpretative key: we could argue that through the story of the 'poverello di Dio', Dante demonstrates that one cannot define sin, like Virgil attempted to do in Hell, if one does not know, through the Word of God, what *ingiuria* or malice really mean. Perhaps with intent, the word 'ingiuria' is used in the *Commedia* only with reference to the evil of the crucifixion in *Par.*, vii. 43-45 and *Purg.*, xvii. 121-23. In other words, the conclusion to which a vertical reading seems to lead us is that only in the light of grace and its manifestations in the world can philosophy make proper sense of the nature of sin and virtue, of damnation and salvation.[32]

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[31] See Nasti, '*Caritas*'. For the occurrence of this *topos* in other Franciscan texts, above all the *Sacrum Commercium*, see Umberto Cosmo, 'Il primo libro francescano', in his *Con Madonna Povertà: Studi francescani* (Bari: Laterza, 1940), pp. 3-58 (pp. 36-38, 56-57); Stanislao Da Campagnola, 'Le prime 'biografie' del Santo', in *Francesco d'Assisi: Storia e Arte*, ed. by Roberto Rusconi (Milan: Electa, 1982), pp. 36-52 (p. 40); Nicholas R. Havely, 'Poverty in Purgatory: From *Commercium* to *Commedia*', *Dante Studies* 114 (1996), 229-43.

[32] The debate on the relationship between philosophy and revelation or theology in Dante's work is still one of great intensity. The bibliography on the issue is therefore too vast and complex to be quoted here in full. Just a few titles will suffice: *Il pensiero filosofico e teologico di Dante Alighieri*, ed. by Alessandro Ghisalberti (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2001). See also: Zygmunt G. Barański, 'L'iter ideologico di Dante', in *Dante e i segni*, pp. 9-39; Otto A. Bird, 'Dante the Thinker: Poetry and Philosophy', in *The Great Ideas Today* (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1983), pp. 204-35; Ruedi Imbach, *Dante, la philosophie et le laïcs: initiation à la philosophie médièvale* (Paris: Fribourg, Editions du Cerf / Editions Universitaires de Fribourg, 1996), Bruno Nardi, *Dal 'Convivio' alla 'Commedia' (sei saggi danteschi)* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1992).

If all of this brings home the Christological, mystic and affective dimensions of Dante's epistemology, there is no doubt that his representation of Aquinas also champions his teaching style and significantly contrasts it with Virgil's method in *Inferno* xi. True to his earthly loyalty to clarity in order to avoid the confusion that the allusive language of *fabulae* can cause, Thomas offers the pilgrim the necessary clues to interpret his poetical flurry:

> Ma perch'io non proceda troppo chiuso,
> Francesco e Povertà per questi amanti
> prendi oramai nel mio parlar diffuso. (*Par*., xi. 73-75)
>
> [But that I may proceed not too obscurely, take Francis and Poverty for these two lovers now in my extended speech.]

Here, the insistence on clarity ('parlar diffuso') highlights how avoiding obscurity is a responsibility of the teacher, who must always prevent or welcome his pupils' doubts where and when he has been too allusive or 'chiuso'. If we read the Elevens vertically, from Hell to *Paradiso* xi, the reader is invited to consider how teaching and learning, as well as the virtuous life that avoids sin, are *moti amoris* [motions of love, caused by love]. From the perspective of Thomas's pedagogical excellence, Virgil's lack of modesty and patience towards the learner Dante in *Inferno* xi strikes us as an uncharitable mark of selfishness. Significantly for our exegetical exercise, clarity of exposition is also a concern in *Purgatorio* xi, where Dante rewords the *Pater noster* in order explain its value to the reader. As recently shown by Nicolò Maldina, the poet in fact rewrites the prayer by adopting features of the preaching genre to explain the theological and spiritual content of the liturgical text to his readers.[33]

The line of reading I have proposed is put to the test by an extraordinary event that takes place in *Inferno* xi. Virgil does something rather astonishing that seems to contradict my portrayal of him as a representative of rational and therefore 'limited' modes of thinking: the guide quotes directly from the Bible once and alludes to it a second time.[34] The first reference is to

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[33] Maldina, 'L' *oratio super Pater Noster*'. Dante had clearly expressed the importance of teaching in *Mon*., I. i, 2.

[34] Peter S. Hawkins, 'Virgilio cita le scritture', in *Dante e la Bibbia*. Atti del Convegno internazionale promosso da 'Biblia', Firenze, 26-28 settembre 1986, ed. by Giovanni Barblan (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1988).

Genesis and it occurs when the pilgrim requests a fundamental clarification regarding usury as a sin against nature. Virgil reminds him that philosophy, and Aristotle's *Physics* in particular, demonstrates how nature takes her course from the divine mind, and how, in turn, art follows nature like a student follows his master. Obviously, this latter reference to teaching and learning cannot be taken as coincidental in a canto that provides a display of teaching skills on Virgil's part. Moreover, we also realize that our infernal canto analyses in detail the close relationship between God's creation and man's art exactly as *Paradiso* xi and *Purgatorio* xi do; evidently, the reflection on the practice of any art, not only philosophy, teaching, preaching or painting, is a further vertical link between our cantos. Turning to the matter at hand, in *Inferno* xi, usury is also described as a human art and its nature is discussed following Aquinas's line of thought. In his argument, Thomas had followed Aristotle, who considered usury to be contrary to nature because 'it is in accordance with nature that money should increase from natural goods and not from money itself'.[35] Confirming this interpretation in the *Commedia*, Virgil also quotes Genesis (3:17). The passage reminds men that after the fall, growth could only be achieved through work, that is to say art, even though God had created nature to help advance humankind (the reference is to the famous passage 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth': Gen., 1:28). We may note that whereas for his definition of malice and incontinence, Dante the author did not let the Roman quote the revelation, here, he is keen to deploy all possible biblical 'means'. Significantly he does so to demonstrate that the usurer uses his work neither to advance people, nor to produce goods; he hopes to earn money with money. To accentuate this point, Dante has Virgil quote the Bible a second time to describe the usurer as one whose hopes for returns on his money-lending contradicts Jesus's appeal to his followers to 'lend, expecting nothing in return' (Luke 6:35):

> 'Filosofia', mi disse, 'a chi la 'ntende,
> nota, non pure in una sola parte,
> come natura lo suo corso prende
> dal divino 'ntelletto e da sua arte;
> e se tu ben la tua Fisica note,
> tu troverai, non dopo molte carte,

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[35] Aristotle, *Politcs*, I, 8 134. On usury in Dante see at least Ovidio Capitani, 'Cupidigia, avarizia, *bonum commune* in Dante Alighieri e in Remigio de' Girolami', in *Da Dante a Bonifacio VIII* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2007), pp. 95-111.

che l'arte vostra quella, quanto pote,  
segue, come 'l maestro fa 'l discente;  
sì che vostr'arte a Dio quasi è nepote.  
Da queste due, se tu ti rechi a mente  
lo Genesì dal principio, convene  
prender sua vita e avanzar la gente;  
e perché l'usuriere altra via tene,  
per sé natura e per la sua seguace  
dispregia, poi ch'in altro pon la spene'. (*Inf.*, xi. 97-111)

> ['Philosophy', he said, 'to one who understands it, notes, and not merely in one place, how Nature takes its course from the divine intellect and art; and if you take good note of your *Physics*, you will see, after not many pages, that your art follows Nature as much as it can, as a disciple follows the master; so that your art is almost God's grandchild. From these two, if you bring to mind the beginning of Genesis, we must draw our life and advance our people; and because the usurer holds another way, he scorns Nature in herself and in her follower, since he puts his hope in something else'.]

At this point, considering the shortcomings of Virgil's discourse on sin, we might wonder why Dante has Virgil quote Genesis when, in this setting, Aristotle would have sufficed. Clearly we need to make sense of the extreme measures taken by Dante in the *explicit* of his complex canto.

## The Fallen Arts and the Vertical Law of Charity

Whereas other philosophical and theological issues related to sin, virtue, repentance and grace are explained at length elsewhere in the poem, the matter of usury is solved in *Inferno* once and for all. As *Purgatorio* xi and *Paradiso* xi teach, only Scripture can offer the final seal to an argument; it is therefore possible that Virgil's biblical recital is necessary to close off the discussion on this mortal sin. It is also possible that other contingent reasons explain Dante's sense of urgency here. The discussion on usury was perhaps inspired by the fact that the issue had become more and more slippery at the hands of his contemporaries around the beginning of the 1300s.[36] As studies on the history of economic practice and theory have more recently demonstrated, the years in which Dante was alive and writing were years of profound change not only for the economy but also for the ways in which people started to understand and talk about economics.[37] Historians are now convinced that these latter changes took place, paradoxically, within Franciscan circles, where the necessity to theorize poverty against the accumulation of wealth forced them to discuss money and wealth in abstract terms even more than before. Interestingly, some historians believe that the first notion of money as capital, the root of our modern economic system, was in fact introduced by the Franciscan John Peter Olivi.[38] Whereas money was generally taken at face value and considered as a tool for exchange, Olivi was the first to affirm in his famous treaty on usury, *Tractatus de emptionibus et venditionibus, de usuris, de restitutionibus*, written around 1295, that money can be considered as a seed from which further wealth can be derived:

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[36] On usury, the study of T. P. McLaughlin is still valid: 'The Teaching of the Canonists on Usury (XII, XIII and XIV Centuries)', *Mediaeval Studies* 1 (1939), 81-147 (pp. 97, 112-25); but see above all, Giacomo Todeschini, *Il prezzo della salvezza: lessici medievali del pensiero economico* (Rome: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1994), pp. 163-228; idem, *I mercanti*

> The reason why [money of a certain kind] can be bought or exchanged for a price [more than itself] is because […] money […] possesses not only the qualities of money in its simple sense but beyond this a kind of seminal cause of profit within itself, which we commonly call "capital" (communiter capitale vocamus).[39]

On the basis of this and other passages, Giacomo Todeschini demonstrated how Olivi considered money as multipliable 'in infinitum' for any sort of

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*e il tempio: la società cristiana e il circolo virtuoso della ricchezza fra Medioevo et Età Moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino 2002).

[37] Joel Kaye, 'Changing Definitions of Money, Nature, and Equality, c. 1140-1270, Reflected in Thomas Aquinas's Questions on Usury', *Credito e usura fra teologia, diritto, e amministrazione*, ed. by Diego Quaglioni, Giacomo Todeschini, and Gian Maria Varanini (Rome: École française de Rome, 2005), 25-55, http://barnard.edu/sites/default/files/money_equality_and_usury.pdf

[38] Joel Kaye, *Economy and Nature in the Fourteenth Century*: Money, Market Exchange, and the Emergence of Scientific Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), especially pp. 116-33; idem, *A History of Balance, 1250-1375: The Emergence of a New Model of Equilibrium and its Impact on Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 20-76; Cosimo Perrotta, *Consumption as an Investment* (New York: Routledge, 2004), especially pp. 75-81, Amleto Spicciani, 'Pietro di Giovanni Olivi: Indigatore della razionalità economica medioevale', in *Usure, compere e vendite. La scienza economica del XIII secolo*, ed. by Amleto Spicciani, Paolo Vian and Giancarlo Andenna (Milan: Jaca Book, 1998), pp. 21-72.

[39] Giacomo Todeschini, *Un trattato di economia politica francescana: il 'De emptionibus et venditionibus, de usuris, de restitutionibus' di Pietro di Giovanni Olivi* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, 1980), p. 85. The translation is found in Kaye, *A History of Balance*, p. 76.

business.[40] We cannot be sure Dante knew this treatise, but quodlibetal debates and sermons on usury had become increasingly common around the end of the 13th century, and especially in Florence.[41] It is not difficult to imagine theories of this kind being discussed in Florence during the essential years of Dante's intellectual formation, especially when we learn that Olivi was at the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence in the same years in which his treaty was composed.[42] Given Dante's fond interest for contemporary Franciscan discourses on ecclesial poverty, and given the fact that Dante's family had been accused of money lending (see *Purgatorio* xxii-xxiii), it would not be too farfetched to consider Virgil's biblical approach to the question as a radical, urgent criticism of those who, like Olivi, attempted to define poverty and defend it as an exclusive Franciscan charism, but inadvertently risked reversing the biblical principles that Dante (and Aquinas) considered natural and divine law, thus subverting the message of the Bible. To accept, like Olivi did, that money could generate money, was for Dante not only against the law of nature and creation, it was ultimately and above all against the charitable principle invoked by Christ and spoken by Virgil in *Inferno* xi: 'do not hope for returns for the help you have offered'.

I might be reading too much into Dante's text in the attempt to find connections between our cantos, but this interpretation seems to resonate with the final message conveyed by *Paradis*o xi. In this canto, there is no doubt that poverty is a focal point of the *vita* of St Francis: Lady Poverty is in fact the *sponsa* of a miraculous love story. However, Poverty is not exclusively presented as a Christian bride; Amiclas is also remembered as one of her spouses.[43] What is marvelous, the 'meraviglia', in St Francis's marriage with her is, in fact, the Heavenly peace arising from their love. At last, this is real 'ricchezza' ('Oh ignota ricchezza! oh ben ferace!' [Oh unknown riches! oh fertile good!] (*Par.*, xi. 82)), which Francis had been allowed to enjoy on earth because of his excess of *caritas*. It was in fact Francis's extreme love, understood as *caritas* and *humilitas*, which won him the stigmata and created the Franciscan charism:

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[40] Giacomo Todeschini, 'Olivi e il "Mercator" Cristiano', in *Pierre de Jean Olivi (1248-1298). Pensée scolastique, dissidence spirituelle et société.* Actes du Colloque de Narbonne (mars 1998), ed. by Alain Boureau and Sylvain Piron (Paris: Vrin, 1999), pp. 412, 217-38, 226-27.

[41] Of particular importance in this sense is the work of Remigio de' Girolami of Santa Maria Novella, who composed a treatise, a sermon and several *quodlibeta* on usury. Apart from his treatise, none of these other texts are published: Ovidio Capitani, 'Il *De peccato usure* di Remigio de Girolami', *Studi Medievali* 6 (3rd series) (1965), 537-662.

[42] See Raoul Manselli, 'Firenze nel Trecento: Santa Croce e la cultura francescana', *Clio. Rivista trimestrale di studi storici* 9 (1973), 324-42. On Dante and Olivi: V. Stanley Benfell, 'Dante, Peter John Olivi, and the Franciscan Apocalypse', in *Dante and the Franciscans,* ed. by Santa Casciani (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 9-50; Giorgio Brugnoli, 'Tracce di Pierre de Jean Olieu nella *Divina Commedia*', in *San Francesco e il francescanesimo nella letteratura italiana dal XIII al XV secolo*. Atti del Convegno Nazionale, Assisi, 10-12 dicembre 1999, ed. by Stanislao Da Campagnola and Pasquale Tuscano (Assisi: Accademia Properziana del Subasio, 2001), pp. 139-68; Sergio Cristaldi, *Dante di fronte al gioachimismo. I. Dalla Vita Nova alla Monarchia* (Caltanissetta and Rome: Sciascia, 2000), pp. 223-392; Alberto Forni, 'Pietro di Giovanni Olivi e Dante, ovvero il panno e la gonna', in *Pierre de Jean Olivi* (1999), pp. 341-72.

> La lor concordia e i lor lieti sembianti,
> amore e maraviglia e dolce sguardo
> facieno esser cagion di pensier santi;
> tanto che 'l venerabile Bernardo
> si scalzò prima, e dietro a tanta pace
> corse e, correndo, li parve esser tardo. (*Par.*, xi. 76-81)
>
> [Love and admiration and joyful glances caused their harmony and their cheerful look to be the occasion of holy thoughts, so that the venerable Bernard was first in taking off his shoes, and ran after such great peace, and, running, thought himself slow.]

This blissful peace also reminds us of the peace of the heavenly kingdom that the souls of *Purgatorio* xi invoke:

> Vegna ver' noi la pace del tuo regno,
> ché noi ad essa non potem da noi,
> s'ella non vien, con tutto nostro ingegno. (*Purg.*, xi. 7-9)
>
> [Let the peace of your kingdom come to us, for we cannot attain to it by ourselves, if it does not come, with all our wit.]

If we see the *Pater noster* in this vertical light, we also perceive with greater profit why the prayer of *Purgatorio* xi opens with a clear allusion to Francis's praise of creation as a hymn to and of love:

> O Padre nostro, che ne' cieli stai,
> non circunscritto, ma per più amore
> ch'ai primi effetti di là sù tu hai,

---

[43] See: 'né valse udir che la trovò sicura / con Amiclate, al suon de la sua voce, / colui ch'a tutto 'l mondo fé paura' [nor had it availed that he who terrified the / whole world with his voice had found her fearless / with Amyclas] (*Par.*, xi. 67-69).

> laudato sia 'l tuo nome e 'l tuo valore
> da ogne creatura, com'è degno. (*Purg*., xi. 1-5)
>
> [O our Father who are in the heavens, not circumscribed, but because of the greater love you bear those first effects up there, praised be your Name and your Power by every creature, for it is fitting.]

By placing this 'loda d'amore' at the heart of the most important daily prayer, the invocation that brings together the living and the dead, Dante is declaring that the most important message of the Franciscan charism is in fact not unique to Francis but is shared by Christianity as a whole.[44]

Has my vertical reading offered us the chance to read our cantos differently? My overall feeling is that it has at least as far as *Inferno* xi is concerned. Virgil's lecture shows a lack of proper method, a faulty logic and a competitive view of teaching and learning; those two important arts are instead mastered by Thomas Aquinas and by Dante when they adhere to the principle of charity. Charity is seen as the core of all human activities; only the absence of charity defines vice; art is good as long as it contributes to the appreciation of the rule of love in Creation; and, finally, philosophy is primarily useful in confirming the message of the Bible, the one great poem of love.

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[44] On the presence of Franciscan elements in *Purgatorio* xi and also for a more general discussion, see Andrea Mazzucchi, 'Filigrane francescane tra i superbi. Lettura di *Purgatorio*, XI', *Rivista di Studi Danteschi* 8:1 (2008), 42-82. See also Edoardo Fumagalli, *San Francesco, il 'Cantico', il 'Pater noster'* (Milan: Jaca Book, 2002).

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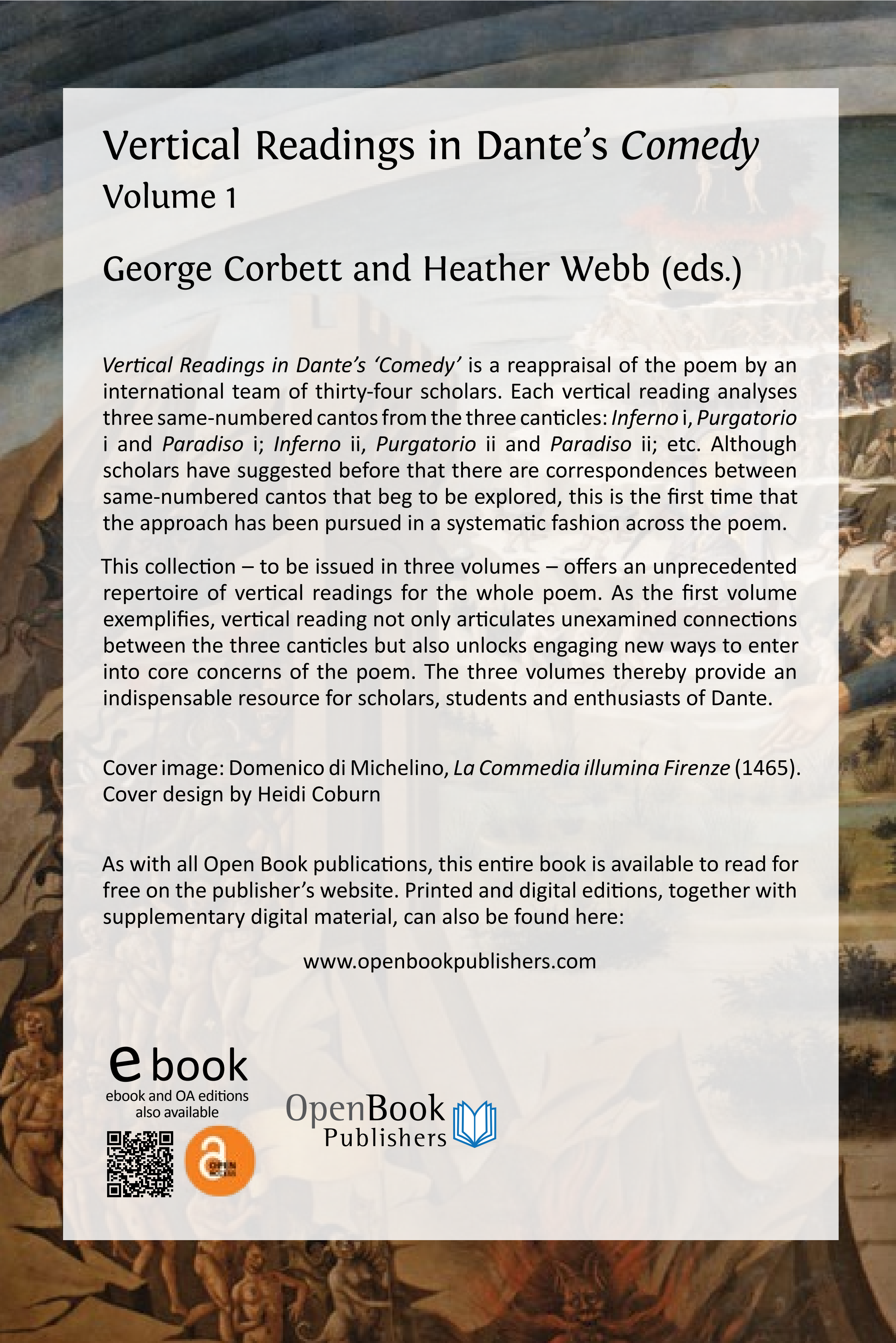

# Vertical Readings in Dante's *Comedy*

## Volume 1

## George Corbett and Heather Webb (eds.)

*Vertical Readings in Dante's 'Comedy'* is a reappraisal of the poem by an international team of thirty-four scholars. Each vertical reading analyses three same-numbered cantos from the three canticles: *Inferno* i, *Purgatorio* i and *Paradiso* i; *Inferno* ii, *Purgatorio* ii and *Paradiso* ii; etc. Although scholars have suggested before that there are correspondences between same-numbered cantos that beg to be explored, this is the first time that the approach has been pursued in a systematic fashion across the poem.

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