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# The Root Of All Evil: Civic Genealogy From Brunetto To Dante

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# The Root Of All Evil: Civic Genealogy From Brunetto To Dante

**Abstract**

ABSTRACT

THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL: CIVIC GENEALOGY FROM BRUNETTO TO DANTE

Chelsea A. Pomponio

Kevin Brownlee

From the thirteenth century well into the Renaissance, the legend of Florence's origins, which cast Fiesole as the antithesis of Florentine values, was continuously rewritten to reflect the changing nature of Tuscan society. Modern criticism has tended to dismiss the legend of Florence as a purely literary conceit that bore little relation to contemporary issues. Tracing the origins of the legend in the chronicles of the Duecento to its variants in the works of Brunetto Latini and Dante Alighieri, I contend that the legend was instead a highly adaptive mode of legitimation that proved crucial in the negotiation of medieval Florentine identity. My research reveals that the legend could be continually rewritten to serve the interests of collective and individual authorities. Versions of the legend were crafted to support both republican Guelfs and imperial Ghibellines; to curry favor with the Angevin rulers of Florence and to advance an ethnocentric policy against immigrants; to support the feudal system of privilege and to condemn elite misrule; to denounce the mercantile value of profit and to praise economic freedom. Consideration of the shifting social and political landscape of Florence further reveals a programmatic personalization of the legend over the course of the Trecento, as the boundaries between civic and familial history are increasingly obscured.

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Chelsea A. Pomponio

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THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL: CIVIC GENEALOGY FROM BRUNETTO TO DANTE

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*To my mother*

## ABSTRACT

## THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL: CIVIC GENEALOGY FROM BRUNETTO TO DANTE

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From the thirteenth century well into the Renaissance, the legend of Florence's origins, which cast Fiesole as the antithesis of Florentine values, was continuously rewritten to reflect the changing nature of Tuscan society. Modern criticism has tended to dismiss the legend of Florence as a purely literary conceit that bore little relation to contemporary issues. Tracing the origins of the legend in the chronicles of the Duecento to its variants in the works of Brunetto Latini and Dante Alighieri, I contend that the legend was instead a highly adaptive mode of legitimation that proved crucial in the negotiation of medieval Florentine identity. My research reveals that the legend could be continually rewritten to serve the interests of collective and individual authorities. Versions of the legend were crafted to support both republican Guelfs and imperial Ghibellines; to curry favor with the Angevin rulers of Florence and to advance an ethnocentric policy against immigrants; to support the feudal system of privilege and to condemn elite misrule; to denounce the mercantile value of profit and to praise economic freedom. Consideration of the shifting social and political landscape of Florence further reveals a programmatic personalization of the legend over the course of the Trecento, as the boundaries between civic and familial history are increasingly obscured.

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## PREFACE

To visitors of Florence, the hilltop town of Fiesole offers a scenic retreat from which to escape the hustle and bustle of the city below. Travelers wander through the verdant hillsides and sprawling villas unaware of the region's darker history, when bitter conflict between the neighboring towns once permeated Florentine consciousness. From the thirteenth century well into the Renaissance, the legend of the city's origins, which cast Fiesole as the antithesis of Florentine values, was continuously rewritten to reflect the changing nature of Tuscan society.

Legends,<sup>1</sup> by their very nature, are subject to the vicissitudes of history. Conceived in the first decades of the thirteenth century as an expression of nationalist propaganda, the legend of Florence's origins soon demonstrated its versatility by crossing social, political, and literary boundaries. Within the space of a century, authors engaged with the legend in chronicles, encyclopedias, manuals of rhetoric, epic poetry, historical novels, and biographies. Within these genres, the legend could be continually rewritten to serve the interests of collective and individual authorities. Versions of the legend were crafted to support both republican Guelfs and imperial Ghibellines; to curry favor with the Angevin rulers of Florence and to advance an ethnocentric policy against immigrants;

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<sup>1</sup> Nathalie Bouloux aptly notes the problematic tendency among historians to refer to Italian *Laudes civitatum* as “foundational myths,” an expression “qu’il conviendrait sans doute d’expliciter et de critiquer, en premier lieu parce qu’elle suppose une opposition entre nos deux temps, celui des origines, mythiques, et celui de la réalité historique: elle se fonde sur notre conception de la vérité historique plus que sur celles des auteurs médiévaux et leur stratégie d’écriture” (103, n.1). See Bouloux, “Étymologie, géographie et origines des villes en Italie (XIII<sup>e</sup>-XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles): le cas génois,” in *Le Passé à l’épreuve du présent: appropriations et usages du passé du Moyen Âge à la Renaissance*, edited by Pierre Chastang (Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2008), pp. 103-17.



to support the feudal system of privilege and to condemn elite misrule; to denounce the mercantile value of profit and to praise economic freedom.

The desire to discover one's origins is an impulse shared by each of the writers represented in my research. The earliest documented interest in Florence's foundation dates from the very beginning of the commune. Bouloux notes: "Passage obligé de toute chronique urbaine, la recherche des origines fonctionne à partir de principes simples: plus une ville est ancienne, plus elle en retire du prestige; plus son fondateur est illustre, plus elle en tire gloire. La construction des origines permet de définir la nature profonde d'une cité mais aussi d'en préfigurer le destin" (103). Despite the legend's diffusion in the literary and civic consciousness of medieval Florence, it has only recently begun to enjoy critical discussion. Curiously, the few studies that have broached this topic have concentrated largely on Giovanni Villani's interpretation of Florentine history in the *Nuova cronica* and its relation to Dante's *Commedia*.<sup>2</sup> Few critics have considered Dante's relation to chronicles antecedent to Villani, or how Dante adapted the legend from the literary or poetic tradition. In the only published monograph on the relationship between Florence and Fiesole, Marthe Dozon<sup>3</sup> sought to trace the legend's diffusion in the literary and historiographical tradition before and after Dante. Her fifty-page study is a welcome starting point for deeper inquiry, though her analysis of the poetic sources of the legend is greatly overshadowed by her attempt to corroborate the legend through

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<sup>2</sup> Giovanni Villani's *Nuova cronica*, begun in 1308 and continued by Matteo and Filippo Villani after Giovanni's 1348 death, lies beyond the scope of this project, which traces the little studied relationship between Dante and the authors and chroniclers of the preceding century. See Louis Green, *Chronicle into History: An Essay on the Interpretation of History in Florentine Fourteenth-Century Chronicles* (Cambridge UP, 1972) for a study of the relationship between Dante and Villani.

<sup>3</sup> Marthe Dozon, *Les légendes de fondation de Fiesole et de Florence au temps de Dante* (Université Paris-X—Nanterre, Centre de recherches de langue et littérature italiennes, 1983).

Tuscan archaeology. The sole mention of Brunetto Latini in her study refers to his character in *Inferno* 15, and fails to recognize the historical Brunetto's own contribution to the diffusion of the legend. Unfortunately, her research is further flawed by the acceptance of Morghen's argument regarding the anteriority of the Malispini chronicle to Villani's *Nuova cronica*.<sup>4</sup>

My research fills this vacuum in medieval literary criticism by considering how Brunetto and Dante adopt the thirteenth-century legend to sustain their political ideology. In highlighting the relationship between Dante and Brunetto, I reveal how Dante reverses the historical Brunetto's republican interpretation of the legend through the prophetic speech of his literary avatar in *Inferno* 15. I further analyze how Dante locates Fiesole within a program of comparing Florence to ancient and modern cities in order to rebuke her present wickedness. Consideration of Tuscan society—particularly civil war and immigration in the late Duecento—will highlight Brunetto and Dante's unique interpretation of the legend of Florence's origins.

Like the legend it studies, my research navigates the boundaries between historiography and literature. I contend that social, political, and economic issues—such as immigration, social mobility, and the transformation of Florence from a feudal to a mercantile society—shaped the manner in which the city perceived its past and how it chose to define its present. Tracing the development of the legend from its origins to its variants in the works of Brunetto Latini and Dante Alighieri, this research highlights the legend's role within the negotiation of medieval Florentine identity. Consideration of the shifting social and economic landscape of Florence reveals a programmatic

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<sup>4</sup> See p. 31, note 49 for a discussion of the *Cronaca malispiniana* and the establishment of the text as a late-fourteenth century forgery.

personalization of the legend over the course of the Trecento, as the boundaries between civic and familial history are increasingly obscured.

### Chapter One: The Legendary Origins of Florence in the Chronicles of the Duecento

The earliest literary manifestations of the legend of the origins of Florence date to the thirteenth century. I begin with the chronicle tradition of the Duecento, which in turn served as the source of Florentine history for authors such as Brunetto Latini, Dante, Giovanni Villani, and Boccaccio. I first establish the historical context of Duecento and Trecento Florence and its changing social values through the viewpoint of medieval historiography. In particular, I focus on the legends surrounding the founding of Florence, which historians situated within a genealogy of cities spanning Fiesole, Troy, and Rome.

The *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentiae* (ca. 1205), considered the oldest extant medieval history of Florence, situates that city within the medieval tradition of *translatio imperii*. The anonymous author recounts that Fiesole was the first city founded in Europe, constructed by the god Atlas and his wife Electra, whose three sons were each destined to rule over an eponymous land. Sicanus left Italy to found the kingdom of Sicily, while his brother Italus remained in Fiesole to reign over Italy. Dardanus, the third brother, departed Fiesole and founded the city of Dardania in the Phrygian territories, a city later known as Troy. Through Aeneas, the progeny of Dardanus later returned to their fatherland to found Rome.

After delineating the common ancestry of the kingdoms of Fiesole, Troy, and Rome, the *Chronica* turns to an explanation of Florence's origins. The *Chronica* takes as

its starting point for the history of Florence the Catiline conspiracy of the first century BCE. Expelled from Rome for his ill-fated attempt to overthrow the Republic, Catiline set up a rebel stronghold in the town of Fiesole, but was later defeated by the Romans in a bloody battle on the site of present-day Pistoia. The Roman troops marched on Fiesole, where the remaining Catiline troops had sequestered themselves, but were pushed back and forced to set up camp Oltrarno. In a fierce battle, the Fiesolans attacked the Roman camp at night and massacred its inhabitants. Furious, the senate sent Julius Caesar to defeat the Catiline forces still barricaded in Fiesole. Eight years, six months, and four days later, Caesar burned Fiesole to the ground.

The surviving inhabitants of Fiesole and Caesar's Romans founded a new city, which took its name from the location where the eponymous Roman hero Fiorino had been slain. The *Chronica* then recounts a second, Christian foundation of Florence, after the tyrant Attila descended into Italy, rebuilt Fiesole, and razed Florence to anger the Romans. While the histories of the neighboring cities of Florence and Fiesole do appear intertwined in the historical sources, the *Chronica* is the first text to designate them as diametrically opposed. The *Chronica* imposes a narrative structure that locks Florence and Fiesole in a perpetual struggle for dominance in the Tuscan *contado*.

While the enmity between Florence and Fiesole held little historical truth, certain embellishments could serve as a basis for political propaganda. Throughout the course of the Duecento, Florentine chroniclers adapted the legend of the origin of their city to reflect their diverse interests. The earliest literary manifestation of the legend in the *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentiae* reflected the burgeoning commune's interest in its origins, and situated Florence and Fiesole within a perpetual struggle that justified the

city's expansionist campaign. Sanzanome's Latin *riscrittura* and continuation of the *Chronica* focused on the military triumphs of the new commune. In particular, his *Gesta Florentinorum* (ca. 1235-45) explored Florence's Roman heritage as the linchpin of its nationalism, which it set in opposition to the barbaric mores of Fiesole. The *Gesta* thus appealed to the mid-thirteenth-century commune's concern with reclamation of its former territories. By connecting Florence to a series of historical aggressions, the author resurrects a semi-historical enemy in a battle for dominance in the region. While the Latin *Chronica* and Sanzanome's *Gesta Florentinorum* advanced the carefully crafted image of a city united against a common threat, the earliest extant vernacular chronicle paints a different story. The *Cronica fiorentina compilata nel secolo XIII*, or Pseudo-Brunetto (ca. 1300), presents Florence as city polarized by the social tensions of the late Duecento.

## Chapter Two: Brunetto Latini's Republican Revisionism

Although Latin chroniclers primarily employed the legend as political propaganda in support of Florentine military dominance, the next iteration of the legend was used to condemn the same warmongering that it had previously engendered. Brunetto Latini's (ca. 1220-1294) narrative of Florentine history diverges significantly from the earlier version of the legend contained within the *Chronica*. While his account retains the basic elements—the foundation of Florence by the Trojan-descended Romans and the establishment of Catiline's stronghold in Fiesole—several alterations invest the story with meaning specific to Brunetto's republican political ideology. Rather than narrating the military exploits of Julius Caesar, a central element of earlier chronicles, Brunetto

Latini focuses on the Catiline conspiracy and the schismatic effects of civil war on society, a concept with which the exiled Guelf was intimately familiar. By moving the drama of the founding of Florence from the battlefield to the Senate courtroom, Brunetto emphasizes the intrinsic value of rhetoric to urban life, positing Cicero as the hero of republican Rome. Brunetto's revised legend of Florence's origins mirrors the transition of contemporary Florentine society from the feudalism of the bellicose Ghibellines to the populist commune, in which the historic Brunetto played a pivotal role.

### Chapter Three: Saguntum, Babel, and Dante's Empire

The third chapter illuminates Dante's conception of civic loyalty through consideration of two cities—Saguntum and Babel—that have enjoyed little critical attention. By comparing contemporary Florence to these cities, Dante establishes an intrinsic link between free will and political sovereignty that is essential to understanding his conception of the Roman Empire.

Dante takes great pains to establish the theological and philosophical superiority of the Roman Empire over all other forms of temporal government. In asserting the equality of the Emperor and pontiff through the voice of Marco Lombardo in *Purgatorio* 16, Dante defies the political machinations of Pope Boniface VIII, whom he held responsible for his exile from Florence. Dante hopes that Henry VII can oppose the papacy's hegemony and usher in a new age of Italian *romanitas*.

While questioning Florence's resistance to Henry's rule in *Epistle* 6, Dante compares Florence to a series of ancient and modern cities that highlight her current depravity. Dante beseeches the Florentines to consider the example of noble Saguntum,

which Hannibal sought to destroy in the opening move of the Second Punic War. Rather than betray their fealty to Rome, the inhabitants of Saguntum sacrificed themselves in an act that underscores Florence's self-serving treachery.

Dante urges the Florentines to reconsider their rebellion by conflating the Tuscan city with Babel. Dante's account of Babel borrows from patristic and medieval exegeses, which designated the giant Nimrod as the architect of the Tower of Babel. Dante's characterization of Nimrod in the *Commedia* and the *De vulgari eloquentia* serves to warn Florence of the ruinous consequences of defying the Holy Roman Emperor.

#### Chapter Four: Negotiating Identity in Dante's Florence

Chapter Four considers the mercurial relationship between Florence and Fiesole, the final entry in *Epistle 6*'s catalogue of cities. Adapting the legend from the chroniclers of the Duecento, Dante insists that Florence should have inherited her mother's Roman virtue. To understand why Florence instead opposes Henry VII's imperial mission, Dante delves into her historic and legendary past. Through a program of prophecies that predict Dante's exile, he identifies the city's original sin, and highlights her relationship to Mars and Fiesole.

Dante depicts the pagan god Mars as the symbol of prideful rebellion against one's creator, as evidenced by Dante's treatment of the giants of *Inferno 31*, Mars's instruments of war. Florence's presumption, symbolized by the statue of Mars that once decorated the settlement's original pagan temple, has contributed to an unstable society. Dante links the displacement of the statue of Mars after the Christian reconstruction of

Florence to the murder of Buondelmonte, an act that led to the division of Guelfs and Ghibellines and the first stirrings of civil war.

This same presumption has culminated in an aggressive campaign of territorial expansion. Florence's violent incursion into the *contado* led to the dispersion of its inhabitants, who flooded the city in a wave of immigration that, according to Dante, has contributed to the city's downfall. The presence of foreign elements in the commune has led to a surge of Fiesolan values. Yet "Fiesolan" becomes a fluid appellation in Dante's imperial ideology, an adjective that has less to do with one's geographic provenance and more to do with one's inner virtue.

Dante's fixation with origin stories is not limited to the foundation of Florence and its relationship with Fiesole. Rather, Dante will entwine the Florentine legend with his own through a series of exilic prophecies that span the length of the *Commedia*, thus grafting the history of Florence onto his own family tree.



## CHAPTER 1

## The Legendary Origins of Florence in the Chronicles of the Duecento

Study of the foundation of Florence requires consideration of the period in which the legend originated. In his seminal article on early Florentine historiography, Nicolai Rubinstein attributed the legend's origin to the early twelfth century, when Florence experienced a burgeoning sense of political independence following the death of Matilda of Canossa in 1115.<sup>5</sup> The granddaughter of Frederick II and sole heir of her family's vast patrimony in Italy and Lorraine, Matilda played a pivotal role in the struggle for investiture rights between Pope Gregory VII and Henry IV, Holy Roman Emperor. In her staunch support of the Papal Curia, the countess vigorously sought to prevent the spread of Henry's influence south of the Apennines. After a number of defeats at the hands of Matilda's armies, Henry finally withdrew from Italy in 1097, leaving Matilda to reign uncontested in the region for nearly twenty years. Her death left Tuscany in a state of political turmoil, as both the papacy and the imperial forces of Henry V struggled to assert control in the region. Taking advantage of the confusion, Florence declared itself an independent commune<sup>6</sup> and undertook an aggressive campaign of territorial expansion

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<sup>5</sup> Nicolai Rubinstein, "The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence: A Study in Medieval Historiography," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 5, 1942, pp. 198-227. After seventy years, Rubinstein's article is still the best study of thirteenth-century Florentine historiography.

<sup>6</sup> The first mention of an independent Florentine commune derives from a treaty between Florence and Pogna, dated 1182. The actual date of the establishment of the commune is unknown, but a Florentine sense of political autonomy certainly existed during the waning years of Matilda's rule. Thus the early twentieth-century historian Pasquale Villari writes that Florence, caught between submission to the Empire or forceful defense, chose the latter since the city "was now conscious of her own strength, and recognised that safety could only be gained by force. The change was accomplished in a very simple and almost imperceptible way. The same worthies who had administered justice, governed the people, and commanded

in the *contado*, the surrounding countryside.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately for the nascent republic, Henry V's successors to the throne of Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa and Henry VI, seized many of the commune's newly conquered territories. When Henry VI died in 1197, leaving behind an infant heir, the Florentines once again turned the political confusion to their benefit. With the support of the papacy, the Tuscan communes—Siena, Florence, Lucca, San Miniato, and the Bishop of Volterra—following the anti-imperial example of the papal-supported Lombard League, asserted their independence by forming a Tuscan League at San Ginesio. While imperial authority steadily declined, Florence continued its expansionist campaign, thus emerging at the dawn of the thirteenth century as a potent force in Tuscan political affairs.

The fervent nationalism of the Florentine commune inspired the desire to document the city's origins. In his study of Savonarola's knowledge of Florentine history, Donald Weinstein offers a concise definition of the legend of the city's origins as "an expression of belief in the Republic's destiny of leadership for high political, moral, and religious purposes" (36):

It was a mode of thinking about the city which the Florentines drew upon, sometimes consciously, sometimes implicitly, to support themselves in their civic enterprises and to comfort themselves in their collective fears, a

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the garrison in Matilda's name, now that she was dead, and no one in her place, continued to rule in the name of the people, and asked its advice in all grave emergencies. Thus these *grandi* became Consuls of the Commune that may be said to have leapt into existence unperceived" (108). See Pasquale Villari, *The First Two Centuries of Florentine History: The Republic and Parties at the Time of Dante*, translated by Linda Villari (T. Fisher Unwin, 1908), particularly pp. 80-130 for the origins of the commune.

<sup>7</sup> The first aggressive act of the new commune seems to have been the capture of the castle of Monte Cascioli, the stronghold of the new Imperial Vicar, in 1119 (Villari 113). The chronicler Sanzanome instead considers the Florentine defeat of Fiesole in 1125 as the first of the newly autonomous commune's military victories. See below pp. 16-21 for a discussion of Sanzanome's early Duecento chronicle.

mode of legitimation that seldom appears entirely separated from other modes, such as those of Guelfism or civic humanism. (36)<sup>8</sup>

The legend found its most dynamic expression in the chronicle tradition of the Duecento, which in turn served as the source of Florentine history for Tuscan authors such as Brunetto Latini, Dante, and Boccaccio. Foremost among the chronicles of the Duecento is the anonymous *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentiae*,<sup>9</sup> compiled around 1205 and considered the oldest extant medieval history of Florence. Because it contains the nucleus of all subsequent versions of the legend, the *Chronica* merits extended consideration.

The *Chronica* situates the origins of Florence within the medieval tradition of *translatio imperii et studii*. Chrétien de Troyes offered the classic definition of this tradition in the prologue to the *Cligès*, dated around 1176:

Ancient books tell us all  
 we know of ancient history  
 and what life was like, back then.  
 And we've learned from those books that in Greece  
 knighthood and learning ranked  
 above all other things.  
 Ancient learning, like knighthood,  
 passed from Greece to Rome,  
 and has reappeared, now,

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<sup>8</sup> Donald Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence: Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance* (Princeton UP, 1970). The first chapter is particularly useful for its survey of the legend of Florence from the Duecento to the late Quattrocento.

<sup>9</sup> Hereafter referred to as the *Chronica*.

in France. God gave us the gift  
 to keep learning alive in a land  
 he smiles on, so France will never  
 give up the honor she's won.  
 Others have gotten from God  
 what was only lent: no one  
 speaks of Greeks or Romans,  
 now: once their lives  
 were snuffed out, so were their voices. (vv. 27-44)<sup>10</sup>

The natural progression of centers of learning and imperial rule may assume propagandist value, whereby one culture becomes the inheritor of the assimilated values of previous cultures. While Chrétien delineated a western *translatio* from Greece to Rome to France, other authors adapted this tradition to appeal to the sensibilities of their own audiences. Thus the sons of Priam of Troy, for example, were popularly considered to have founded

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<sup>10</sup> Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, translated by Burton Raffel (Yale UP, 1997). The text is from *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes: Volume II: Cligès*, edited by Alexandre Micha (Honoré Champion, 1957):

Par les livres que nous avons  
 Les fez des anciens savons  
 Et del siegle qui fu jadis.  
 Ce nos ont nostre livre apris  
 Qu'an Grece ot de chevalerie  
 Le premier los et de clergie.  
 Puis vint chevalerie a Rome  
 Et de la clergie la some,  
 Qui or est an France venue.  
 Dex doint qu'ele i soit maintenue  
 Et que li leus li abelisse  
 Tant que ja mes de France n'isse  
 L'enors qui s'i est arestee.  
 Dex l'avoit as altres prestees:  
 Car des Grezois ne des Romains  
 Ne dit an mes ne plus ne mains,  
 D'ax est la parole remese  
 Et estainte la vive brese. (vv. 25-42)

a number of European monarchies. The *Chronica*, completed approximately fifteen years after the death of Chrétien, adapts this phenomenon to suit the interests of the newly autonomous Florentine commune.

The preface of the *Chronica* declares the anonymous author's intention in recording the history of Florence. Since time has erased certain useful and delightful stories from the minds of men, the author has assumed the responsibility of compiling a work from the historiographers, in order that human history may not be completely lost from memory.<sup>11</sup> As typical in a medieval chronicle, the author situates the origins of Florence within universal history. The *Chronica* leaps from Adam to the tyrannical first king Ninus, whose reign witnessed the construction of the Tower of Babel, the *confusio linguarum*, and the division of the world into the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. After delineating the geographic boundaries of these regions, the *Chronica* describes the foundation of Fiesole, named for its origins as the first city ("Fie sola") founded in Europe. Guided by the astronomer Apollo, the deity Atlas and his wife Electra founded the city of Fiesole upon a hill, the best location in the entirety of Europe due to its excellent geographic position between two seas and its astronomic significance. The couple's three sons, Italus, Sicanus, and Dardanus, were each destined to rule over an eponymous land. Sicanus left Italy to found the kingdom of Sicily. The remaining brothers consulted an oracle, who determined that Italus would remain in Fiesole and reign over Italy while Dardanus would travel abroad.

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<sup>11</sup> "Quoniam homines quasdam utiles ac delectabiles ystorias propter nimiam longitudinem dierum et temporis videntur oblitī, quas a suis memoriis delevit antiquitas, ideo, prout invenitur ab istoriografis, inferius est compilatum, ut inter gentes inde solatium habeatur, ne a memoria elabantur humana. Quarum inceptio sic dignoscitur facienda" (1.1-5). All quotations from the *Chronica* refer to the recent excellent edition by Riccardo Chellini, *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentiae* (Istituto Storico per il Medio Evo, 2009).

Led by Apollo, Dardanus thus left Fiesole and founded the city of Dardania in the Phrygian territories. After his death, the citizens of Dardania changed the name of their city to Troia to reflect the greatness of their eponymous founder's grandson, Tros. The author then recounts the destruction and rebuilding of the city of Troy during the age of Tros' grandson, Laomedon, who had forbidden Hercules and Jason from entering the city in search of the golden fleece. Hercules destroyed the city in revenge while his companion, Telamon, abducted Laomedon's daughter, Hesione. Priam, son of Laomedon, restored the city and, through marriage to Hecuba, fathered Hector, Paris, and Troilus. In retaliation for his Aunt Hesione's abduction, Paris voyaged to Greece and abducted Helen, the wife of King Menelaus of Sparta. The ensuing sack of Troy culminated in the destruction of the city. Only Aeneas and his men escaped the conflagration. Guided by Minerva, Aeneas, who was the great-great-grandson of Tros and thus the descendant of Dardanus, aspired to return to the land of his ancestors in order to establish a new kingdom. After dallying in Carthage, Aeneas entered the city of Alba, where he killed Turnus and married Lavinia.

Having thus followed the heirs of Atlas in their journey from Fiesole to Troy and their return to the Italian peninsula, the author of the *Chronica* next lists the fourteen generations separating Aeneas from his descendants Romulus and Remus. The author pauses here to describe the death of Rhea Silvia, the twins' adoption by the shepherd Faustulus and his wife Acca Larentia, who was called a "lupa" due to her beautiful and rapacious body, and finally the founding of the city of Rome.

The secular origins of Rome now established, the author turns his pen to the Christian foundation of the Eternal City. He briefly summarizes the birth and death of

Jesus Christ, but prefers to focus on two episodes of Christian history concerning the construction of churches, namely the “Quo vadis?” incident of Peter that gave way to the great eponymous basilica, and the *Fons olei* miracle that resulted in the construction of the church of Santa Maria in Trastevere on the site of an oil fountain.

Having examined the ancestry of the kingdoms of Fiesole, Troy, and Rome, the *Chronica* now turns to an explanation of the foundation of its titular subject. The *Chronica* takes as its starting point for the history of Florence the Catiline conspiracy of the first century BCE. Expelled from Rome for his ill-fated attempt to overthrow the Republic, Catiline retreated to Fiesole where he established a rebel stronghold. Learning that the senator Antonius was sending a Roman legion, he fled Fiesole with his soldiers and headed for the Apennines. Antonius’s forces encountered Catiline near Pistoia where, in a bitter battle that destroyed nearly all of Catiline’s soldiers and all but twenty of Antonius’s men, the exiled general perished. Seeking revenge for their significant losses, the consuls Metellus and Florinus marched on Fiesole, where the remaining Catiline troops had sequestered themselves, but were pushed back and forced to set up camp Oltrarno. In a fierce battle, the Fiesolans attacked Florinus’s camp at night and massacred all of its occupants, including the consul and his wife and son. Furious, the senate sent Julius Caesar to defeat the Catiline forces still barricaded in Fiesole. Before laying siege to the city, Caesar established a market on the crossroads where Florinus had been slain.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> “Et precepit ut nullus aliqua victualia mercaretur, nisi in loco ubi mortuus fuerat Florinus, ad hoc: ut semper in memoriam haberetur de iniuria Romanorum, et de morte Florini, ut vindictam facerent condecentem” (7.42-5).

Eight years, six months, and four days later, he succeeded in razing Fiesole, whose inhabitants were constrained to organize a peace.<sup>13</sup>

The surviving denizens of the former city of Fiesole and Caesar's remaining soldiers founded a new city in the location where Florinus had been slain and where Caesar had previously established a marketplace. Architects soon began to construct Roman public structures, such as the pavements, aqueduct, and amphitheater. Having vetoed Caesar's suggestion that the city be called *Cesaria*, the senators decided that whichever architect completed his project first would have the privilege of naming the city. Because all somehow finished on the same day, however, the city assumed the temporary name of little Rome, or "parva Romula." Some time later, the senators once again consulted to decide a name. They chose to name the city after the consul Florinus for a number of suitable reasons: he was the first to live and build in that location, where flowers freely bloomed; he flourished in arms; the master of all arms is the sword, which resembles the lily flower; Florinus bore the name of a flower and was the flower of Roman men. For these reasons, the symbol of the city is a lily similar to a flowering sword.<sup>14</sup>

The *Chronica* skips the next five centuries until the time of the king Bada, "qui Totila flagellum Dei fuit vocatus" (10.1-2), and who intended to defy the Romans by destroying Florence, since the Romans bear a great love for that city. The author confuses

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<sup>13</sup> "...ad hanc concordiam devenerunt, quod ex Romanis et Fesulanis deberet fieri una civitas in loco ubi mortuus fuerat Florinus, videlicet in villa Camartia, et in villa Arnina" (7.48-51).

<sup>14</sup> "Unus quorum consuluit et dixit quod sibi videbatur, cum senator Florinus fuerit primus ad edificandum et ad edificium faciendum in loco, ubi hec civitas est constructa, et quia flores erant tunc in campis ipsius loci, et etiam quia floruit in armis, videlicet quia civitas Fesule fuerit destructa metu armorum, et ensis est domina omnium armorum et est facta ad similitudinem floris lilii, et etiam quia senator Florinus, qui habuit nomen floris, mortuus fuerat ibi, et fuit ibi primus habitator, et quia ex flore hominum Romanorum prius habitata, ipsa civitas debeat perpetuo Florentia appellari" (8.19-28).



the Ostrogothic king Totila, who was originally named Baduila and who died in 552 CE, with Attila, ruler of the Huns and *flagellum Dei* who perished in 453 CE. This was a common error in medieval texts. Both the twelfth-century *Speculum regum* of Goffredo da Viterbo and Boncompagno da Signa's thirteenth-century *Liber de obsidione Ancone*, for example, conflate the two regents.<sup>15</sup> The *Chronica* recounts how, tricking the Florentine magnates into meeting with him individually under the guise of friendship, Totila decapitated each one until the waters of the Arno ran crimson with blood. In this act of deceit that recalls the treachery of the Trojan Horse, Totila destroyed the city of Florence, thus suggestively associating the Tuscan city with its Trojan ancestors. Soon after, he ascended to Fiesole, where he planted his standard and, with the tripartite aim of preventing the reconstruction of Florence, causing harm to the Romans, and repopulating and rebuilding Fiesole, issued an open invitation to the region's inhabitants to resettle freely in Fiesole. Following Totila's death, the Romans decided to rebuild the city of Florence so that it would always stand in opposition to Fiesole.<sup>16</sup> They constructed a new circuit of walls around a smaller space to better protect the city, and erected churches according to the topographical layout of the greatest basilicas of Rome: San Pietro, San Paolo, San Lorenzo, Santo Stefano, and San Giovanni.

Over the course of the next five centuries, as the *Chronica* recounts, Fiesole and Florence continued to foster an enmity that culminated in the battle of Fiesole in 1125.<sup>17</sup> The Florentines besieged Fiesole until the bishops of both cities agreed that the hilltop

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<sup>15</sup> See Chellini 84 for further examples of medieval texts that confuse the two rulers.

<sup>16</sup> "Romani autem ceperunt cogitare qualiter Florentia rehedificaretur ad resistendum semper Fesulanis" (11.1-2).

<sup>17</sup> "Et ita per quingentos annos et plus stetit postea civitas Fesulana et civitas Florentina. Postea crevit inimicitia maxima iter eos" (12.1-2).

city would be destroyed and its citizens relocated to Florence, but that the autonomy of the bishop of Fiesole would remain uncompromised. The *Chronica* thus concludes with the definitive defeat of Fiesole and the triumph of the Florentine commune.

The *Chronica* was first edited by Otto Hartwig, who relied upon what he thought to be the unique Latin manuscript, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II. II. 67 (già *Strozzi*), in 1875.<sup>18</sup> In his review of Hartwig's edition, Cesare Paoli described a second Latin testament of the *Chronica*, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS plut. 29. 8, which forms, under the title *Antiquarum hystoriarum libellus*, folios 36v-39r of Boccaccio's *Zibaldone Laurenziano*.<sup>19</sup> This lifelong workbook of the Certaldese is of significant importance; it contains, for example, the only extant copy of Dante's letter to the Italian cardinals (ff.62v-63r), two treatises by Andalò del Negro, and Boccaccio's own *Elegia di Costanza*. Edoardo Alvisi published an edition of this later manuscript in 1895.<sup>20</sup> The *Chronica* also survives in an incomplete Latin testament, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 5381, which has been edited by Alberto Del Monte, and dated to 1334.<sup>21</sup>

The *Chronica* was originally composed in Latin, although some critics have questioned whether there existed an anterior vernacular edition.<sup>22</sup> Internal dating suggests the *terminus post quem* of 1125, the year of Florence's historic defeat of Fiesole, and the

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<sup>18</sup> *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentiae*, in *Quellen und Forschungen zur ältesten Geschichte der Stadt Florenz*, edited by Otto Hartwig, vol. 1 (Elwert, 1875), column I, 35-69.

<sup>19</sup> Cesare Paoli, "Recensione a Hartwig, *Quellen und Forschungen*," *Archivio storico italiano*, vol. 4, no. 9, 1882, pp. 69-85.

<sup>20</sup> Edoardo Alvisi, *Il libro delle origini di Fiesole e di Firenze* (Ferrari and Pellegrini, 1895), pp. 49-73.

<sup>21</sup> Alberto Del Monte, "La storiografia fiorentina dei secoli XII e XIII," *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano e Archivio Muratoriano*, vol. 62, 1950, pp. 175-282.

<sup>22</sup> See Chellini 105 for a summary of both sides of this debate.

*terminus ante quem* of 1235, the year of Sanzanome's *risrittura* and continuation of the *Chronica*. Chellini leans towards 1205 as the final date of composition based upon internal evidence of Florence's political relationship to neighboring Tuscan communes (128).

The *Chronica* also enjoyed a rich tradition of vernacularization whose influence is noted among authors of the period. Hartwig published two *volgarizzamenti* of the *Chronica* in the second and third columns of the first volume of the *Quellen und Forschungen*: a version contained in Lucca, Archivio di Stato, MS *Orsucci*, 40 (column 2) and a later edition, which will be examined below, contained in Florence, Biblioteca Marucelliana C. 300 (column 3), also entitled the *Libro Fiesolano*.

Details regarding the identity of the author of the *Chronica* can only be inferred from the text itself. Clearly, he enjoyed an intimate knowledge of Tuscan political affairs. Stefano U. Baldassarri posits that he must also have had close ties to the bishoprics of Florence and Fiesole, given the chronicle's emphasis on Christian history. Unlike later chronicles such as Sanzanome's *Gesta Florentinorum*, discussed below, the *Chronica de origine* takes care to establish the origins of Christianity before proceeding to the Roman foundation of Florence, thus situating the legend within the context of Christian history.

In addition to first-hand knowledge of the topography of Florence and of local legends, the *Chronica* draws from a variety of historical and literary sources.<sup>23</sup> As the

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<sup>23</sup> See Chellini 107-111 for further discussion of the author's sources. For the importance of Sallust to the late-medieval political imagination, see Patricia J. Osmond, "Catiline in Fiesole and Florence: The After-Life of a Roman Conspirator," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, vol. 7, no. 1, Summer 2000, pp. 3-38. She posits that the legend of Catiline "supplied a basic element of continuity in the transition from communal or Guelf patriotism to the more explicitly classical, secular, and republican civic humanism of the early Quattrocento, two movements or eras that many historians have tended to view, on the contrary, as *discontinuous*" (36). This compelling claim, as well as Catiline's connection to Julius

anonymous chronicler states in the prologue, he has embroidered the *Chronica* “ab istoriografis” (1.3-4). Principal among his sources are the *Historia Romana* of Paulus Diaconus, which contains, for example, the genealogy spanning from Aeneas to Romulus and Remus, Sallust’s *De Catilinae coniuratione*, and the notices on universal history in Orosius’s *Historiae adversus paganos*. The author turns to the *Aeneid* for details concerning Dardanus as progenitor of the Trojan race. While classical sources attributed different homelands to Dardanus, Rubinstein points out that Virgil, who refers to Dardanus as the son of Zeus and Electra, daughter of Atlas, was the first to assign him a Tuscan birthplace (209). When Latinus welcomed Aeneas’s band of men into his palace, he referred to them as the “sons of Dardanus” (Virgil 7.257),<sup>24</sup> and declared:

And I remember, though the years obscure  
the story, that the old men of Aurunca  
would tell how Dardanus, raised in these lands,  
had reached the towns of Phrygian Ida and  
of Thracian Samos, now called Samothrace.  
He came from here—from Corythus, his Tuscan  
homeland—and starry heaven’s golden palace  
enthrones him now; his altars join the gods’. (*Aen.* 7.272-279)<sup>25</sup>

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Caesar and Cicero, particularly in the works of Brunetto Latini, will receive further consideration in the following chapter.

<sup>24</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid*, translated by Allen Mandelbaum (Bantam, 1971).

<sup>25</sup> The text is from Virgil, *The Aeneid. Books VII-XII*, edited by T. E. Page (St. Martin’s Press, 1956).  
atque equidem memini—fama est obscurior annis—  
Auruncos ita ferre senes, his ortus ut agris  
Dardanus Idaeas Phrygiae penetrarit ad urbes,  
Threïciamque Samum, quae nunc Samothracia fertur.

The anonymous author of the *Chronica*, taking advantage of Virgil's scarce geographic details, is the first to identify Corythus, the Tuscan birthplace of Dardanus, with the ancient Etruscan city of Fiesole. Our chronicler also adds the original detail that Dardanus was the first "cavaliere" of human history: "qui fuit primus miles et primum equum equitavit et sub freno et sella reduxit" (3.18-9).

Apart from these unique specifications, the originality of the *Chronica* lies in its narrative structure. The *Chronica* proceeds from the dawn of universal history to the beginnings of the Roman and Christian empires, and then assumes a distinctly local tone with a focus on Tuscan history. One may consider the Tuscan section of the *Chronica* as a narrative diptych, with each part spanning half a millennium. The first part begins with the destruction of Fiesole and the subsequent founding of Florence, and concludes with Totila's destruction of Florence and reconstruction of Fiesole. The second part, picking up immediately after the death of Totila, recounts the second foundation of Florence by the Romans, and then, skipping five hundred years, concludes with the second destruction of Fiesole by the Florentines in 1125.

Further parallels link the two periods. In the first part, the Romans, after the death of the conspirator Catiline, founded Florence according to the civic topography of ancient Rome. Thus the fledgling city, called "parva Romula," replicates the public structures of Rome, such as the towers, pavements, aqueduct, amphitheater, and bathhouse. Five hundred years later, following the death of the tyrant Totila, the Romans once again build Florence, but this time according to the topography of Christian Rome, replicating its

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hinc illum Corythi Tyrrhena ab sede profectum  
 aurea nunc solio stellantis regia caeli  
 accipit, et numerum divorum altaribus auget. (7.205-211)

principle religious structures.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, as Rubinstein points out, the *Chronica*'s cyclical vision of history implies the existence of a third epoch. In accordance with their historical opposition, the defeat of the Fiesolans in 1125 necessarily precipitates a period of Florentine rebirth. The structure of the *Chronica* thus pits Florence against Fiesole in a perpetual struggle, in which "the existence of the one requires the annihilation of the other" (Rubinstein 204).

Consideration of the actual, historical relationship between Florence and Fiesole reveals the author's innovative treatment of the two cities. He claims that Florence was founded by Julius Caesar as a consequence of the destruction of Fiesole. This assertion depends in large part on the author's knowledge of toponymy. Chellini specifies that "l'Anonimo ricava dal poleonimo *Florentia* l'eponimo Fiorino e dai nomi dei colli disposti intorno a Fiesole i nomi dei comandanti Romani che avrebbero assediato la città etrusca. L'etimologia di Monte Ceceri, un colle ad Est di Fiesole, viene dal fitonimo latino *cicer-is*, 'cece', mentre l'Anonimo pretende che risalga a Giulio Cesare" (68). Historically, the exact origins of the city are unclear. The establishment of the Roman colony of *Florentia* at the foot of the Etruscan city of Fiesole has variously been attributed to Sulla, Julius Caesar, and Caesar Augustus.<sup>27</sup> Although the foundation of *Florentia* was not the direct consequence of the destruction of Fiesole, as the *Chronica*

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<sup>26</sup> While the author of the *Chronica* explicitly emphasizes the parallelism of Florentine and Roman churches, Charles T. Davis suggests that he was most likely unfamiliar with the Città Eterna. The "lack of first-hand knowledge of Rome" of the author and *volgarizzatori* of the *Chronica* "is suggested by their hazy grasp of the City's geography and by the fact that they mention the gate of S. Pancrazio in Florence but not the similar positions of the Florentine church of that name and the corresponding Roman basilica" (40). See Charles T. Davis, "Topographical and Historical Propaganda in Early Florentine Chronicles and in Villani," *Medioevo e Rinascimento*, vol. 2, 1988, pp. 35-51. See also Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome* (Clarendon Press, 1957).

<sup>27</sup> See the appendix to Rubinstein, pp. 225-7.

contends, Rubinstein suggests that “the founding of the colony of Florentia was not wholly unconnected with a possible previous decline or destruction of Fiesole” (204). Sallust records that, in 78 BCE, the Fiesolans attacked the veterans of Sulla’s army who had settled in the area on confiscated Etruscan land, which Rubinstein identifies with the Roman colony of Florentia.<sup>28</sup> The second-century CE fragments of the history of Rome by Granius Licinianus confirm the conflict between the Etruscan city and the encroaching Roman colony: “The Fiesolans rushed into the strongholds of Sulla’s veterans and, with many men having been killed, they took back their lands.”<sup>29</sup> According to Licinianus, the Etruscans were thus forced to resort to violence in order to reclaim their own lands. As Rubinstein concludes, the report of the *Chronica* “contains a grain of historical truth” (204), confirmed by Roman sources of the early centuries BCE. The anonymous author of the *Chronica* adapted this tension into the defining characteristic of his native city.

The author further contributed the fictitious account of Totila as the destroyer of Florence. From 535-553 CE, the conflict between Justinian’s Byzantine forces and the Ostrogoths for the control of the former territories of the Western Roman Empire ravaged the Italian peninsula. Fiesole became an Ostrogothic stronghold during this period. It was not, however, reconstructed by the Goths as a consequence of the destruction of Florence. The Ostrogoth king Totila did indeed besiege Florence in 542; however, his forces withdrew from the city after receiving notice that Justinian had sent reinforcements to

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<sup>28</sup> Rubinstein cites Sallust, *De coniuratione Catilinae*, c. 24, 27, 28. See the appendix to Rubinstein for classical sources concerning the date of the foundation of Florence.

<sup>29</sup> My translation (bk.36, lines 36-37). The original reads “Faesulani in[ru]per[unt in] castella [vetera]norum Sullano[r]u[m et complu]ri(bus) occisis agros [su]os re[cep]erunt” (quoted in Rubinstein 226).

assist the Florentines. Because Florence was never actually destroyed, one may dismiss the *Chronica*'s fiction of the second Roman construction of the city.

While the histories of the neighboring cities of Florence and Fiesole do indeed appear intertwined in the historical sources, the *Chronica* is the first text to designate them as diametrically opposed. The motives for this ideological move owe less to the ancient history of Florence, than to the political circumstances concerning the composition of the *Chronica*. Florence and Fiesole were closely connected, and in fact listed as a single, united county, from the middle of the ninth century, when the country passed into the hands of the Counts of Canossa, until the death of Matilda in 1115 (Rubinstein 204). Florence turned the ensuing political confusion to its benefit, and soon declared itself an independent commune. As Florence's closest neighbor, located a scant five miles northeast of the city, Fiesole might have proved a serious threat to the commune's dreams of territorial expansion. The 1125 defeat of Fiesole thus represented the first victory of the military campaign and initiated an era of Florentine rebirth. The anonymous author, writing in the first decade of the Duecento, would have recognized parallels between the early years of the Florentine commune and his own period when, following the formation of the Tuscan League, the city reasserted its independence and once more waged war in the *contado*. By turning to Florence's origins and situating the city within a perpetual struggle with Fiesole, the *Chronica* justifies the thirteenth-century commune's nationalist endeavors.



The first author to incorporate the *Chronica*'s vision of Florentine history was content to promulgate its program of political propaganda. The *Gesta Florentinorum*,<sup>30</sup> written approximately thirty years after the *Chronica*,<sup>31</sup> records the military pursuits of the Florentine commune between the years 1125 and 1231. The author of the Latin prose chronicle paradoxically gives his name as Sanzanome, and several critics have inconclusively sought to identify him with a certain Sanzanome listed as a Florentine judge and notary in documents between 1193 and 1235 (Chellini 136).

Sanzanome takes as his subject the glorious third era of Florentine history precipitated by the defeat of Fiesole. Beginning "post mortem Catiline" (1.18), the *Gesta*, closely following the second part of the *Chronica*, rapidly summarizes the Roman foundation of Florence and its destruction by Totila *flagellum dei*. Sanzanome greatly amplifies the *Chronica* with an imaginative account of the siege, where he lists Cicero as one of the attending generals, and continues his account of Florentine military victories until 1231. From the ancient origins of Florence recounted by the *Chronica*, Sanzanome turns to the modern era of Florentine supremacy: "A destructione itaque Fesularum modernis temporibus facta victoriarum sumatur initium, cum eius occasione Florentia sumpsisset originem" (2.28-9). The destruction of Fiesole, for Sanzanome, denotes the turning point in Florentine history.

Sanzanome's florid accounts of Florentine victories underscore his literary aspirations. Numerous instances of direct speech pepper the account and lend a dramatic sense of urgency to the text. In the first of three orations that accompany his description

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<sup>30</sup> *Sanzanomis Gesta Florentinorum*, in Hartwig, *Quellen und Forschungen*, vol 1, pp. 1-34. Citations refer to the page and line. All translations are my own.

<sup>31</sup> Chellini dates the composition of the *Gesta Florentinorum* to the period between 1235 and 1245.

of the 1125 siege of Fiesole, an anonymous Florentine nobleman addresses his fellow citizens, calling upon their common Roman heritage to incite them to bravery.<sup>32</sup> The Florentine urges his fellow citizens to action:

Therefore because the ancient Fiesolan evils are in living memory, and bold and manifest in their excesses, it is proper for us to remove them by their roots, just as a wise and skilled tiller who cuts away a bad seed that produces a useless herb, and who destroys the herb by means of fire in order that its seed, falling to earth, may not be born again.<sup>33</sup>

The consequences of neglecting their duty are severe:

For we are worthy of intolerable punishment and we are falsely called sons if we will have neglected our vengeance: since then, under the circumstances when Florence was erected, in order that the Fiesolan city might not be raised up, we allowed that city [Fiesole] to dominate in the region for such time and to call itself free which ought to be called a slave: or indeed to call itself equal, which ought to rationally be subject.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> “Si de nobili Romanorum prosapia originem duximus sumpsimus, et ab eisdem victoriosa incrementa virtutum, decet nos patrum adherere vestigiis, ne tamquam ingrati simus gentibus in derisum, et ne blasphememur a filiis tempore procedente, nos uvas acerbas que dentes eorum obstupuerint, dicentibus comedisse” (3.6-9)

<sup>33</sup> “Cum igitur antiqui mali Fesulani sint memores, et in excessibus audaces et prompti, a radicibus extirpare nos oportet eosdem, sicut sapiens cultor et prudens qui malum semen inutilem producentem herbam incidit et eandem, semen eius cadens in terram ne denuo nascatur igne comburit” (3.9-13). Translations from Sanzalone’s *Gesta* are my own.

<sup>34</sup> “. . . nam digni sumus intollerabili pena, et filii mendaciter nominamur, si neglexerimus ultionem, quoniam cum fuisset hedificata Florentia, ne relevaretur civitas fesulana, passi sumus eandem regioni tanto tempore superesse, et appellare se liberam que dici debet ancilla, vel se dicere quasi parem, que debet rationabiliter subiacere” (3.14-18).

The second speech advances the Fiesolan perspective of the engagement. Like the Florentines calling upon their Roman ancestry, the Fiesolans invoke the name of Italus,<sup>35</sup> the son of the founder of Fiesole.

Let each man in this manner be mindful of the blood that has been shed, and of the race now dispersed through the groves, let him not forget: Remember noble Catiline...who more capably chose to die by means of fighting rather than to live without honor by means of fleeing. Therefore let each one of you be bold in war and take up again the force by means of fighting: and because we are strong and equal in number, let us not hesitate to rise up against those men.<sup>36</sup>

Each side of the conflict considers their ancient heritage as the linchpin of communal identity.

These orations contribute to the reader's understanding of the relations between Fiesole and Florence, and differ significantly from their rather ambiguous treatment in the *Chronica de origine civitatis*. The first part of the *Chronica* had praised Fiesole as a *locus amoenus*, emphasizing its geographic and astrological preeminence. Despite the genealogy provided in the first part of the text that denoted the Fiesolans as the progenitors of the founders of Troy, Rome, and Florence, the latter part of the *Chronica* continually juxtaposes the Roman city of Florence and the city of Fiesole, stronghold of Catiline's anti-Roman forces.

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<sup>35</sup> "Viri fratres qui ab ytalo sumpsistis originem, a quo tota ytalia esse dicitur derivata" (3.35).

<sup>36</sup> "Sit itaque quisque memor effusi sanguinis, et gentis per nemora iam disperse non sit oblitus. mementote nobilem Catilinam habentium pro maiori, qui potius elegerunt mori bellando, quam sine honore vivere fugiendo. sit igitur quisque vestrum audax in bello, et vires bellando resummat, et cum simus eis potentia et numero pares, contra ipsos non dubitemus insurgere" (4.8-12).

Rubinstein attributed the incongruity regarding Fiesole between the first and second parts of the *Chronica* to its use of divergent sources. He maintained that the *laus Faesularum* derived from Fiesolan legends, and thus represented “the last echo of Etruscan patriotism” (211), whereas the latter part of the *Chronica* reflected Florentine sources. Chellini offers an alternative hypothesis, positing that the initially positive view of Fiesole was conceived in the midst of Florentine control of the Fiesolan bishopric from the mid-twelfth century onwards. The Florentine leaders sought to convince the Fiesolans not to relocate the episcopal see far from Florentine control. The contradictory treatment of Fiesole may therefore reflect, according to Chellini, “due esigenze urgenti: magnificare le antiche origini di Fiesole, insieme con la centralità e salubrità del sito, e dimostrare al tempo stesso che i Fiesolani si erano macchiati di colpe storiche nei confronti di Roma e dei Fiorentini” (123).

Sanzanome clearly chose to emphasize the latter strain of thought, that of the intractable hostility between the Fiesolans and Florentines. The ancient enmity between the vile, rustic Fiesolans and the noble Florentines, heirs of Roman virtue, is a defining characteristic of Sanzanome’s text. It is this vein of thought that dominates the subsequent chronicler and poetic tradition, as will be seen particularly in Dante’s treatment of the legend.<sup>37</sup> By downplaying the *Chronica*’s Christian influence and emphasizing the commune’s Roman, and thus anti-Fiesolan, virtues, Sanzanome seeks to justify Florence’s aggressive campaign of territorial aggression in the *contado*. The inscription on the façade of the Palazzo del Popolo, constructed roughly a decade after

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<sup>37</sup> This point will be further analyzed in Chapter Four.

Sanzanome's *Gesta*, offers a glimpse into the Florentine nationalism of the mid-Duecento:

Florence is full of all imaginable wealth,  
 She defeats her enemies in war and in civil strife,  
 She enjoys the favor of fortune and has a powerful population,  
 Successfully she fortifies and conquers castles,  
 She reigns over the sea and the land and the whole of the world,  
 Under her leadership the whole of Tuscany enjoys happiness.  
 Like Rome she is always triumphant.<sup>38</sup>

The commune's Roman origins, wealth, and military triumphs thus represent intrinsic characteristics of her identity.

It is worth mentioning another work that, while philologically unrelated to Sanzanome's *Gesta Florentinorum*, bears the same title. Several chroniclers, including the fourteenth-century Ptolemy da Lucca, cite a work entitled the *Gesta Florentinorum*<sup>39</sup> among their sources. This chronicle, written in Tuscan prose, records events from 1080 to 1278. Although the anonymous *Gesta* "no longer survives in its original form," it "was so

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<sup>38</sup> The translation is from Rubinstein, who cites the text found in Robert Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz*, vol. 4 (E. S. Mittler und Sohn, 1896), p. 497:

Est quia cunctorum Florentia plena bonorum  
 Hostes devicit bello magnoque tumultu,  
 Gaudet fortuna, signis, populoque potenti;  
 Firmat, emit, fervens sternit nunc castra salute,  
 Que mare, que terram, que totum possidet orbem  
 Per quam regnantem fit felix Tuscia tota;  
 Tamquam Roma sedet semper ductura triumphos,  
 Omnia discernit certo sub jure conhercens.

<sup>39</sup> *Die Gesta Florentinorum von 1080-1278*, appendix to *Die Annalen des Tholomeus von Lucca*, edited by Bernhard Schmeidler (Weidmann, 1930), pp. 243-77. Citations refer to the page number of Schmeidler's edition.

extensively used by other early fourteenth-century chroniclers that it has been possible for [Bernard] Schmeidler to reproduce what is presumably the bulk of it” (Green 157). Unlike Sanzanome’s chronicle, which limited itself to tracing the commune’s military campaigns in the Tuscan *contado*, the anonymous *Gesta* records a variety of local events situated within larger imperial and papal contexts. The *Gesta* begins with Henry II’s siege of Florence in the early eleventh century and concludes with Emperor Ridolfo della Magna’s defeat of the King of Bohemia in 1278. Sprinkled among notices of international political interest, such as the Christian capture of Damietta in 1218 and the coronations of various popes and emperors, are events of local significance, including the fires that beset Florence in 1115, 1117, and 1177, the collapse of the Ponte Vecchio in 1178, and the great flood of 1269.

Two events are particularly relevant for the history of Florence. Like the *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentiae*, the anonymous *Gesta* records the defeat of Fiesole, although the chronicler writes only that the Florentines had destroyed a certain Fiesolan fortress in 1125 (247).<sup>40</sup> Unlike his predecessors, the author does not seem to attribute special significance to the episode, which stands as only one of Florence’s many victories during this time period. The second event, however, is particularly novel. Indeed, the author is the first<sup>41</sup> to record it, namely the murder of Buondelmonte de’ Buondelmonti in 1215 (*calculus florentinus*). The chronicler writes: “Essendo podesta di Firenze messer Gherardo Orlandini il di di pasqua di resurreso fu morto messer

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<sup>40</sup> “I Fiorentini disfeciono Fiesole certa fortezza, che v’era rimasa suso.”

<sup>41</sup> Because the *Gesta Florentinorum* of Sanzanome contains several lacunae, including the period between 1208 and 1219, we cannot determine if it contained details of the 1215/1216 Buondelmonte murder.

Bondelmonte Uguiccioni, e da indi inanzi fu parte Guelfa e parte Ghibellina in Firenze”  
(252).

This event carried particular significance for Dante, who laments its consequences most notably through the voice of Cacciaguida:

La casa di che nacque il vostro fletto,  
per lo giusto disdegno che v’ha morti  
e puose fine al vostro viver lieto,  
era onorata, essa e suoi consorti:  
o Buondelmonte, quanto mal fuggisti  
le nozze süe per li altrui conforti!

Molti sarebber lieti, che son tristi,  
se Dio t’avesse concesso ad Ema  
la prima volta ch’a città venisti.

Ma conveniensi, a quella pietra scema  
che guarda ‘l ponte, che Fiorenza fesse  
vittima ne la sua pace postrema. (*Par.* 16.136-47)<sup>42</sup>

Dante traces his own misfortune and exile from Florence back to the Buondelmonte affair, and regrets that the Buondelmonte scion had not drowned in the Ema River before stepping foot in the city. Dante’s evocation of Buondelmonte’s murder by the statue of

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<sup>42</sup> All citations from the *Commedia* are from the text established by Giorgio Petrocchi, which may be found in *The Divine Comedy*, edited and translated by Charles S. Singleton (Princeton UP, 1989-1991). See also *Inf.* 13.143-150 and *Inf.* 28.103-11. Dante’s judgment of Buondelmonte will be treated more fully in Chapter Four.

Mars at the foot of the Ponte Vecchio derives from a chronicle once erroneously attributed to Brunetto Latini.<sup>43</sup>

The *Cronica fiorentina compilata nel secolo XIII*, or Pseudo-Brunetto, is the earliest extant Florentine chronicle originally drafted in the vernacular, and records events between 1002 and the close of the Duecento. Like the anonymous *Gesta*, the late thirteenth-century text begins with Henry II's siege of Florence after his coronation as Holy Roman Emperor. The author's account of the battle highlights his unquestioning belief in the Roman foundation of the city. The victorious but grievously wounded soldiers were all miraculously cured, according to the chronicler, "per la virtù d'un bagno ch'era nel decto Cafaggio e presso alle mura; la quale acqua usciva per conducto del monte di Fiesole. E questo bagno fu trovato e facto al tempo de' Romani, quando hedificarono la città di Firençe. La quale acqua guariva certe malactie e etiandio i lebroosi, e gli atracti stendeva e li fediti sanava" (83.4-10). The chronicle thus begins with an affirmation of the Roman origins of Florence that mentions Fiesole. Like the anonymous *Gesta*, the *Cronica fiorentina* is a curious compilation of pseudo-history that situates a vast array of Tuscan events within an international context. The author records the fires that besieged Florence, the heresies that plagued the Church, various Papal councils, the coronation of emperors, praise for the countess Matilda, "divotissima figliuola di San Piero" (87.20-1), and notices concerning the Crusades. He also recounts local legends, such as the discovery of the body of a giant in an underground sepulchre in Rome and the tale of a man plagued by ravenous mice.

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<sup>43</sup> *Cronica fiorentina compilata nel secolo XIII* ["erroneamente attribuita a Brunetto Latini"], in *Testi fiorentini del Dugento e dei primi del Trecento*, edited by Alfredo Schiaffini (Sansoni, 1926), pp. 82-150. All citations refer to the page number and line of Schiaffini's edition.



The Pseudo-Brunetto significantly expands on the anonymous *Gesta*'s account of the defeat of Fiesole:

In questo anno i Fiorentini, avendo per anticho tempo grande nimistade insieme colla città e' cictadini di Fiesole, mossonsi di nocte tempo con popolo e cavalieri, et di subito la mactina, in su l'alba del giorno, entrarono dentro e preserla; e disfecero tucte le porti e li steccati, mura e tucte forteçe, salvo che le chiese. Et allora si misse e fece ordine che giamai, ad perpetua memoria di sempiterna ricordança, in sul poggio drento dalle mura non si rifacessono case, se none cinque braccia alte.  
(97.5-13)

Interestingly, the author concludes his account of the battle with a detail unrecorded in the previous chronicles. Immediately following the defeat of Fiesole, the Florentines, "ritornati in Firençe, tantosto cavalcarono a Montebuoni, il quale era de' figliuoli di Guiccione, i quali s'appellano al presente giorno Buondelmonti; e disfecerlo a terra" (97.14-6). The *Cronica fiorentina* links the defeat of Fiesole with the family whom Dante held responsible for much of Florence's internal strife. The chronicler thus offers an intrinsic connection between the beginnings of Florentine territorial expansion and the outbreak of civil war nearly a century later.

To the Tuscan *Gesta*'s pithy statement that from the murder of Buondelmonte had sprung the Guelf and Ghibelline parties of Florence, the Pseudo-Brunetto appends a remarkably vivid account. In 1215 the cavaliere messer Mazzingo Tegrimi invited all of the good citizens of Florence to a banquet held in Campi, six miles outside of the city. A court jester seized a dinner plate from before Uberto dell'Infangati, a companion of

messer Buondelmonte di Buondelmonti. Messer Oddo Arrighi de' Fifanti cruelly mocked Uberto's embarrassment. Uberto accused the noble offender of lying, and when Oddo threw a platter of meat in his face, "tutta la corte fu travalgata" (118.7) In the ensuing melee, Buondelmonte viciously stabbed Oddo in the arm. The injured parties retired to their homes to consult with their allied families. Oddo and his companions, among whom numbered the Uberti and the Amidei, resolved for peace through the marriage of Buondelmonte to Oddo's niece, the daughter of an Amidei noble. The plan was foiled when madonna Gualdrada, wife of Forese Donati, secretly sent for Bondelmonte and convinced him to marry her own daughter. Consequently, Buondelmonte snubbed the Amidei daughter on their projected wedding day and instead declared his intentions for the Donati lady. The offended Oddo once again consulted his allies, who debated whether to beat Buondelmonte with a stick or to disfigure his face. Messer Mosca dei Lamberti offered the winning solution: "Se ttu il batti o ffiedi, pensa prima di fare la fossa dove tue ricoveri; ma dàlli tale che ssi paia, ché cosa fatta cappa à" (118.36-119.2).<sup>44</sup> Thus on Easter Sunday, Buondelmonte rode his horse "in capo del Ponte Vecchio," where Schiatta degli Uberti struck him to the ground with a mace, and Oddo Arrighi slit open his veins. And "in quello giorno," Pseudo-Brunetto relates,

si cominciò la struzione di Firenze, che inprimamente si levò nuovo  
vocabile, cioè Parte guelfa e Parte ghibellina. Poi dissero i Guelfi: --  
Appellianci parte di Chiesa; -- e' Ghibellini s'apellarono Parte d'Inperio,

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<sup>44</sup> Dante recalls this vicious statement in *Inf.* 28.107.

avengnadio che' Ghibellini fossero publici paterini.<sup>45</sup> Per loro fu trovato lo  
 'nquisitore della resia. Onde per tutti i Cristiani è sparta questa malattia. E  
 iij<sup>c</sup> m. d'uomini e più ne sono morti, ke' Il' uno piglia l'una parte e l'altro  
 l'altra. (119.15-22)

A consideration of the political complexities during this period will aid in contextualizing the author's account. Although chroniclers attributed the outbreak of civil war in Florence to the murder of Buondelmonte, the division of Guelf and Ghibelline reflected a tension that had been steadily festering in the city since the early twelfth century. The animosity stemmed from the shifting social profile of Florence following the establishment of the commune. John Najemy neatly summarizes the conflict:

Florence's history was dominated by a competition, more intense and longer-lasting than similar confrontations elsewhere in Italy, between two distinct but overlapping political cultures and classes: an elite of powerful, wealthy families of international bankers, traders, and landowners organized as agnatic lineages; and a larger community of economically more modest local merchants, artisans, and professional groups organized in guilds and called the popolo. (5)<sup>46</sup>

Because the patrician families fought as mounted knights in the town militia, they considered themselves the nobles of Florence, and dominated the government of the early commune. The demographic explosion of the twelfth century challenged their hegemony.

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<sup>45</sup> Giovanni Villani will also label the Ghibellines as *paterini*, a term that by the Duecento no longer referred to the *Pataria*, the eleventh-century Milanese religious reform movement, but to any group that opposed the interests of the Church.

<sup>46</sup> John Najemy, *A History of Florence, 1200-1575* (Blackwell Pub., 2006). See also Najemy, *Corporatism and Consensus in Florentine Electoral Politics, 1280-1400* (U of North Carolina P, 1982).

Masses of immigrants, both professionals and unskilled workers, swarmed into Florence from the *contado*, contributing to a heightened awareness of social difference. Daniel Bornstein highlights the complexity of the distinction between nobles and the *popolo*, whose wealth increasingly rivaled, and often merged, with that of the ruling class:

The *popolo*...was not a homogeneous group; it included both the *popolani grassi*, the wealthy non-nobles who matched the magnates in wealth and ostentation and sought to match them in political power, and the *popolo minuto*, the more modest merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans who could only hope to share in political power through their participation in such corporate groups as the guilds and the militia companies. It did not include the thousands of ordinary laborers in the wool industry and construction trades, who remained excluded from direct participation in Florentine politics (xv-xvi).<sup>47</sup>

The population of Florence grew from 20,000 inhabitants in the mid-twelfth century to 90,000 in 1300 (Salvemini 318). The old walls of the Roman colony were inadequate to contain the demographic boom, and in 1172, architects constructed a new circuit of walls that tripled the area of the city and allowed for future expansion. A larger circuit of walls was erected between 1284 and 1333 in response to a projected increase in immigration (Salvemini 317-18).<sup>48</sup> The flourishing mercantile and commercial classes increasingly sought representation in the aristocratic government from which they had traditionally been excluded. The formation of the first guilds in 1182, corporate associations

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<sup>47</sup> Daniel E. Bornstein, "Introduction," in *Dino Compagni's Chronicle of Florence*, translated by Bornstein (U of Pennsylvania P, 1986), pp. xi-xxviii.

<sup>48</sup> Gaetano Salvemini, "Florence in the Time of Dante," *Speculum*, vol. 11, no. 3, July 1936, pp. 317-26.

representing the interests of Florentine artisans, reflected the growing involvement of the *popolo* in Florentine political life, and represented the first step in wresting control of the commune from the aristocratic magnates.

Meanwhile, Florence was increasingly embroiled in the conflict between the Guelfs, supporters of the Papacy, and the Ghibellines, adherents of the Empire. In 1246, Emperor Frederick II sent his son Frederick of Antioch to Florence with the aim of fostering Ghibelline support. When Frederick of Antioch exiled the Guelfs two years later, Florence became a Ghibelline city. Ghibelline fortunes changed, however, with their 1250 defeat at the hands of the Guelfs in Figline Valdarno, the populist uprising that culminated in the exile of the Ghibellines, and the return of the Guelfs.

The rule of the *popolani* triumphed with the establishment of the government of the Primo Popolo in 1250. Under the new government, the leaders of the guilds increasingly dominated the political landscape through the creation of “a second, parallel series of institutions intended to represent the interests of the *popolo*, just as the podestà and his councils represented the noble lineages” (Bornstein xvii). The reign of the *popolo* came to an end in 1260, when Manfred’s imperial forces defeated the Guelfs at the Battle of Montaperti. The Ghibellines retook the city, exiled the Guelfs, and burned down their ancestral towers. The Ghibellines drastically proposed the complete destruction of the city in 1264, but opposition led by the Ghibelline magnate Farinata degli Uberti, as Dante recounts in *Inferno* 10, safeguarded the city. Fortunes changed once more when the Guelfs defeated Manfred at the Battle of Benevento in 1266 and the Ghibellines were again ousted from Florence by a populist insurrection.

Florentine harmony was fleeting, however, as a scant thirty years after expelling the Ghibellines, civil war once again polarized the city. Although the Guelfs and *popolo* traditionally allied with the papacy for its banking institutions and the Angevin court for its commercial interests, the two groups were by no means synonymous. Indeed, tensions between the Guelf aristocracy and the *popolo* began to develop in the last decades of the thirteenth century. After the expulsion of the Ghibellines, the *popolani grassi*, who cemented their commercial interests through marriage to the Guelf aristocracy, increasingly dominated Florentine politics to the exclusion of the *popolo minuto*. In 1293, the podestà Giano Della Bella sought to reassert populist control through the institution of the Ordinamenti di Giustizia, which prohibited the magnates from participating in political life unless they were enrolled in a guild. The subsequent confrontation, and the exile of Giano from Florence in 1295, contributed to the division of the Guelfs into the Black and White factions and the ensuing civil war.

The *Cronica fiorentina*'s account of elite misrule reveals its author's populist sympathies. The author claims that when the "buona gente di Firenze" (117.35) assembled at cavaliere Mazzingo Tegrimi's banquet in 1216, "messer Oddo Arrighi de' Fifanti, huomo valoroso, villanamente riprese messer Uberto prelecto" (118.3-5). The juxtaposition of "huomo valoroso" and "villanamente" exposes the hypocrisy of the patriciate, which, despite its noble pretensions, succumbs to barbarous behavior. Madonna Gualdrada's supplication of Buondelmonte plays on the younger knight's insecurities regarding his own fragile position in society: "Chavaliere vitiperato, ch'ài tolto molgle per paura dell' Uberti e di Fifanti; lascia quella ch'ài presa e prendi questa, e sarai senpre inorato chavaliere" (118.20-22). Buondelmonte's fear of becoming a pawn

of the bellicose patriciate and his preoccupation with knightly honor lead to a civil war in which no one is spared: “Ritornati i Ghibellini in Firenze sconfitti, la guerra cittadina fue coninciata, le fortezze di torri e di palagi tutto giorno combatteano di manganelli e di trabocchi, dove molta gente peria” (120.4-7). The anonymous author declares: “Poi rimase la guerra di Buondelmonti colli Uberti e colli Fifanti con molta travalgla, sì come legendo iscritto troverete, ke ll’una parte è Guelfa traditori e l’altra sono Ghibellini paterini” (120.25-28). Neither side is preferable: the Guelfs are traitors and the Ghibellines are patarine heretics. Over the course of the next century, the aristocrats of Florence would continue to wage a war afflicting every social class.

The final entry in the Pseudo-Brunetto offers a pessimistic view of the author’s own era. In the year 1300:

Istando inferma di gravi e dure malattie la città di Firenze, fue santamente proveduto dalla Chiesa di Roma e da messer lo papa Bonifazio, sì come attore di pace, di volere sanare quelle piaghe, e di riconciare la cittade e’ cittadini insieme a stato di pace e di tranquillade. Diligentemente in concesstorio fue fermato vecepapa paziaro nella città di Firenze frate Matteo cardinale d’Acquassparte. Giunto in Firenze, honorevolmente fue ricevuto; predicando pace e volendo dar pace, non lli fue creduto. (150.25-33)

One final chronicle<sup>49</sup> deserves mention for its propagandist embellishment of the legend of Florence’s origins. The *Libro Fiesolano*, composed between 1284 and 1330,<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> I have chosen not to include the *Cronaca malispiniana* in my examination of the early sources of the Florentine legend. Critical studies of historiography, particularly at the turn of the nineteenth century, frequently passed over the *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentiae* in favor of prioritizing the *Cronaca* of

contributes several additions to the tale. The anonymous author specifies, for example, that Italus and Dardanus consulted Mars instead of an unnamed oracle, thus alluding to the influence of the martial god in Troy's foundation. More significantly, the *Libro fiesolano* recounts how Catiline survived the Battle of Pistoia, took a Fiesolan bride, and issued an heir—Uberto Cesare—who was exonerated of his father's treason and permitted to rule Florence under the aegis of Rome. From the union of Uberto Cesare's descendant, Uberto Catilina, and a Saxon woman, sprang the Uberti family of Florence. The *Libro fiesolano*'s propagandist tone suggests that the author most likely sought to curry favor with the Uberti family who, even after their exile from Florence in 1267, still exercised great power in the city (Barnes 133).<sup>51</sup>

Throughout the course of the Duecento, Florentine chroniclers adapted the legend of the origin of their city to reflect their diverse interests. While the enmity between Florence and Fiesole held little historical truth, certain embellishments could serve as a basis for political propaganda. The earliest literary manifestation of the legend in the *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentiae* reflected the burgeoning commune's interest in

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Ricordano Malispini, which ends its account of Florentine history in 1284, as a common source of Giovanni Villani and Dante. Morghen, for example, claims that Malispini was a Guelf banished after the 1260 Battle of Montaperti. See Raffaello Morghen, "Dante and the Florence of the Good Old Days," in *From Time to Eternity: Essays on Dante's Divine Comedy*, edited by Thomas G. Bergin (Yale UP, 196), pp. 19-37. The *Cronica malispiniana* is now widely dismissed, however, as a late fourteenth-century forgery copied from Villani's *Nuova cronaca* and the *Libro fiesolano*. See Charles T. Davis, "Il buon tempo antico," in *Dante's Italy and Other Essays* (U of Pennsylvania P, 1984), pp. 71-93, for a convincing refutation of Morghen's argument.

<sup>50</sup> MS. Flor. Bibl. Naz. Marucelliana C. 300, which is edited in the third column of Hartwig, *Quellen und Forschungen*. This is not to be confused with the vernacular translation contained in Gaddi *reliqui* MS 18 in Florence's Biblioteca Laurenziana, recently edited under the misleading title of *Il libro fiesolano* by Colette Gros, "La plus ancienne version de *Il libro fiesolano* (la *Légende des origines*)," *Letteratura italiana antica*, vol 4, 2003, pp. 11-28.

<sup>51</sup> John C. Barnes, "Dante's Knowledge of Florentine History," in *Dante in Oxford: The Paget Toynbee Lectures*, edited by Tristan Kay et al. (Legenda, 2011), pp. 131-46.



its origins, and situated Florence and Fiesole within a perpetual struggle that justified the city's expansionist campaign. Sanzanome's *risrittura* and continuation of the *Chronica* focused on the military triumphs of the new commune. In particular, Sanzanome's *Gesta florentinorum* explored Florence's Roman heritage as the linchpin of its nationalism, which it set in opposition to the barbaric mores of Fiesole. The *Gesta* thus appealed to the mid-thirteenth-century commune's concern with aggressive reclamation of its former territories. The Pseudo-Brunetto chronicle significantly expanded on the anonymous *Gesta*'s pithy account of the Buondelmonte murder and the origins of Florentine civic discord. While the author of the *Libro fiesolano* clearly sought to glorify the powerful Uberti lineage, the Pseudo-Brunetto's account of the murder reveals its author's populist loathing of such noble families. Unlike the *Chronica* and Sanzanome's carefully constructed image of Florence as a city united in its struggle against the barbaric Fiesolans, the Florence of the Pseudo-Brunetto is now divided against itself. The author laments the brutish behavior of the aristocracy, which led both to the wars between the Guelfs and Ghibellines, and to the civil war between White and Black Guelfs that plagued the Florence of his own period. By the end of the Duecento, the legend had passed into the vernacular literary tradition in which, for the exiled Brunetto Latini, it assumed a distinctly personal relevance, as shall be demonstrated in Chapter Two.

## CHAPTER 2

## Brunetto Latini's Republican Revisionism

On the second day of his journey through the infernal afterlife, Dante-pilgrim passes through the circle of those who sinned against nature. In that murky place, Dante recognizes the “cotto aspetto” (*Inf.* 15.26) of ser Brunetto, the Florentine notary, author, and civil servant who serves as the subject of this chapter.

Readers of the *Commedia* have long been puzzled by the seeming paradox between the pilgrim's reverential treatment of his “maestro” and the poet's condemnation of his teacher as a sodomite hopelessly preoccupied with secular glory. Like Virgil among the virtuous pagans, Brunetto's place among the sodomites prompts readers to question the justice of Dante's punishment. Various critics have posited alternative reasons for Brunetto's place in the third *girone* of the seventh circle. Whether for his political philosophy,<sup>52</sup> his choice to abandon the Italian vernacular in favor of French,<sup>53</sup> or for the sin of usury,<sup>54</sup> to name only a few theories, readers have long focused on the identification of the true nature of Brunetto's sin as the key to understanding the enigmatic canto. Teodolinda Barolini questions this approach to the *Commedia*, citing the required suspension of disbelief of Dante's narrative strategy, which propels “critics to

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<sup>52</sup> See Catherine Keen, *Dante and the City* (Tempus, 2003), particularly the first chapter.

<sup>53</sup> André Pézard, *Dante sous la pluie de feu* (Vrin, 1950).

<sup>54</sup> Julia Bolton Holloway, *Twice-told Tales: Brunetto Latino and Dante Alighieri* (Peter Lang, 1993). Holloway has also translated the *Tesoretto*. See Brunetto Latini, *Il tesoretto (The Little Treasure)*, translated by Julia Bolton Holloway (Garland, 1981).

pose their questions and situate their debates within the very presuppositions of the fiction they are seeking to understand” (139).<sup>55</sup> This results in

...the common defensive move we could call the collocation fallacy, whereby a critic argues that reading x is not tenable with regard to soul x because, if it were operative, soul x would be located elsewhere (e.g. Ulysses cannot be guilty of fraudulent discourse, because then he would be with Sinon among the falsifiers of words). But why should collocation be elevated to a heuristic device? Only because we approach the poem through the lens of its own fiction treated as dogma. (139)

Early commentators on the *Commedia*, on the other hand, either implicitly accepted Dante’s condemnation, or remained silent about the nature of Brunetto’s sin. Rather than discussing the illicit details of the author’s private life, they preferred overwhelmingly to focus on Brunetto’s public image. The *Ottimo Commento* (1333), for example, paints a flattering portrait of Brunetto:

Questi fu un valente uomo, e scenziato di Firenze, e visse nella gioventute dello Autore, chiamato maestro Brunetto Latini. Fue uno ornato parlatore; seppe morale filosofia, e liberali arti; compuose più belle opere, e infra l’altre fece un libro in lingua francesca chiamato il *Tesoro*, nel quale trattòe in tre libri di tutte materie utili e dilettabili, e di tutti li membri di filosofia; e grande parte della sua vita fue onorato in tutti i grandi fatti del

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<sup>55</sup> Teodolinda Barolini, “Q: Does Dante hope for Vergil’s Salvation? A: Why do We Care? for the Very Reason We Should not Ask the Question (Response to Mowbray Allan [*MLN* 104],” *MLN*, vol. 105, no. 1 Jan. 1990, pp. 138-44.

Comune di Firenze; e, sì come appare, l'Autore prese da lui certa parte di scienza morale. (Commentary to *Inferno* 15.25)<sup>56</sup>

It is precisely the issue of Brunetto's "scienza morale" that I wish to explore in this chapter. Specifically, I consider Dante's decision to select Brunetto as the first to utter an extended prediction of Dante's exile from Florence in *Inferno* 15 as inextricable from Brunetto's own literary treatment of the Tuscan city. While the details of Brunetto's prophecy will be discussed at length in Chapter Four, for now it behooves us to understand Brunetto *qua* Brunetto, rather than as Dante's fictional creature.

Brunetto was born in Florence around 1220 to a family that resided in the Porta di Duomo district of the city. His father, Bonaccorso Latini, was a notary and judge associated with the bishopric of Fiesole, and there is some evidence that a number of Brunetto's brothers followed their father's choice of profession.<sup>57</sup> Brunetto first appears in documents in 1254 in his capacity as notary employed by the Florentine commune. Between 20 April and 11 June of that year Brunetto composed a peace treaty with Siena: "Et ego Burnectus Bonaccursi Latinus notarius predictis interfui et ea dictorum dominorum potestatis, capitanei, Anzianorum et consiliorum omnium predictorum mandato, publice scripsi" (quoted in Holloway 318). In October, he notarized a treaty with Genoa and Pisa, while in June of 1257 he penned part of a document arranging for Florentine and Aretine financial support of Pope Innocent IV's campaign against Manfred.

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<sup>56</sup> *L'Ottimo Commento della Divina Commedia [Andrea Lancia]. Testo inedito d'un contemporaneo di Dante*, edited by Alessandro Torri (N. Capurro, 1827-29).

<sup>57</sup> See Holloway 1993, particularly Chapter Six, for discussion of Brunetto's family.

In 1257, Alfonso X of Castile and Richard, Earl of Cornwall were each elected *Romanorum Rex*, and waged a bitter war to uphold their individual claim to the throne. The Florentines, wary of Manfred's support of the Ghibelline communes in Tuscany, particularly of Siena, sought a powerful champion who could defend the Guelf cause against Manfred. Preferring to hedge their bets, the Florentine commune sent ambassadors to both regents in 1260. The Florentine diplomat Guglielmo Beroardi journeyed to Bavaria to petition Richard, while the commune simultaneously sent Brunetto as ambassador to the court of Alfonso of Castile, as Brunetto describes in the opening lines of his *Tesoretto*:

Lo tesoro comincia,  
 Al tempo ke fiorença  
 Fioria e fece frutto,  
 Sì ch'ell'era del tutto  
 La donna di toscana;  
 Ancora che lontana  
 Ne fosse l'una parte  
 Rimossa in altra parte,  
 Quella de ghibellini.  
 Per guerra di vicini,  
 Eppo comune saggio  
 Mi fece suo messaggio  
 All'alto re di spagna. (vv.113-125)<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Brunetto Latini, *Il tesoretto*, edited by Marcello Ciccuto (Rizzoli, 1985).

Giovanni Villani summarized the political situation in the *Cronica*:

E per molti anni era stata a discordia de' due eletti, ma la Chiesa di Roma più favoreggiava Alfonso di Spagna, acciò ch'egli colle sue forze venisse ad abattere la superbia e signoria di Manfredi; per la qual cagione i Guelfi di Firenze gli mandarono ambasciatori per somuoverlo del passare, promettendogli grande aiuto acciò che favorasse parte guelfa. E l'ambasciadore fue ser Brunetto Latini, uomo di grande senno e autoritate; ma innanzi che fosse fornita l'ambasciata, i Fiorentini furono sconfitti a Monte Aperti, e lo re Manfredi prese grande vigore e stato in tutta Italia. (7.73)<sup>59</sup>

Manfred's victory devastated the city of Florence, as Villani went on to recount: "Venuta in Firenze la novella della dolorosa sconfitta, e tornando i miseri fuggiti di quella, si levò il pianto d'uomini e di femmine in Firenze sì grande, ch'andava infino a cielo; imperciò che non avea casa niuna in Firenze, piccola o grande, che non vi rimanesse uomo morte o preso" (7.79). Most Guelfs chose to leave the city for refuge in Lucca or in neighboring Guelf communes.

Although Villani named Brunetto as one of the exiles who had elected to depart from the *sesto* of Porta di Duomo on 13 September 1260,<sup>60</sup> Brunetto writes in the *Tesoretto* that he was in fact returning from his mission when he heard news of the Guelf defeat. While traversing the pass of Roncesvalles, the site of Roland's tragic fall, Brunetto encountered a scholar from Bologna:

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<sup>59</sup> Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, edited by G. Porta (Fondazione Pietro Bembo/Guanda, 1991).

<sup>60</sup> "Di porte del Duomo: i Tosinghi, Arrigucci, Agli, Sizzi, Marignolli, e ser Brunetto Latini e' suoi, e più altri" (7.79).

E io'l pur domandai  
 Novelle di toscana  
 In dolçe lingua e piana;  
 Ed e' cortesemente  
 Mi disse immantenente  
 Che guelfi di fiorença,  
 Per mala provedença  
 E per força di guerra,  
 Eran fuori de la terra,  
 E'l dannaggio era forte  
 Di pregione e di morte. (vv. 152-162)

Brunetto expanded on the account of his exile in the *Tresor*, written shortly after the *Tesoretto*. When Frederick II died, leaving the imperial throne vacant, his son Manfred soon took up his father's mantle.

[Manfred]...tenne il regno di Puglia e di Sicilia contro Dio e contro ragione, come colui che fu in tutto contrario a santa Chiesa. Perciò fece molte guerre e svariate persecuzioni contro tutti gli italiani che stavano dalla parte della santa Chiesa, in particolare contro la parte guelfa di Firenze, tanto che essi vennero cacciati fuori dalla città e le loro cose messe a fuoco e fiamme e distrutte. Con costoro fu cacciato Maestro Brunetto Latini, e per quella guerra era esiliato in Francia quando compose

questo libro per amore del suo amico, secondo quanto ha detto sopra nel prologo. (1.93.2)<sup>61</sup>

Brunetto's father composed a lachrymose letter informing his son about the sad fate of the Guelfs:

The pages of this tearful letter are soaked, as you can clearly see, by the stains of many blots, flowing from the flood of tears which one ought not nor can not restrain, while writing, moistening both my breast and this sheet. (Holloway 53)<sup>62</sup>

The consequences of Montaperti were dire, as Brunetto's father enumerated:

The Ghibellines truly, dancing in triumph, returned to Florence, dominating the city and citizens, placing you and all Guelf leaders and people in perpetual exile, from there with all your family. Not without bitterness of heart, I have cared to make this known, that with this knowledge you may be able prudently to foresee how to plan your affairs. (Holloway 53)<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> "... tint le roiaume de Puille et de Secille contre Dieu et contre raison, si come celui qi dou tout fu contraire a sainte Yglise. Por ce fist il maintes guerres et diverses persecucions contre touz les ytalienz qui se tenoient devers sainte Yglise, meesmement contre l[a] guelfe partie de Florence, tant qui [i] furent chacies hors de la vile et lors choses furent mises a feu et a flambe et a destruction. Avec eaus en fu chaciés maistre Brunet Latin, et si estoit il por cele guerre exiliez en France quant il fist ce livre por amor son ami, selonc ce qui il dist au prologue devant." All citations of the *Tresor* derive from Brunetto Latini, *Tresor*, edited by Pietro Beltrami et. al. (Einaudi, 2007), which provides both the original French text and an excellent facing-page Italian translation. I have chosen to include the Italian translation of the *Tresor* given the flawed authority of Barrette and Baldwin's English translation, discussed below, pp. 44-5.

<sup>62</sup> "Mestam flebilis epistole paginam, quam forte videbis lituris multipliciter maculatam, defluens ab intrinsecus diluvium lacrimarum quas nec debebam nec poteram continere, scribentis faciem, pectus et cartulam proluebat" (quoted in Holloway 52).

<sup>63</sup> "... ghibellini vero cum triumphorum tripudiis regressi Florentiam, civitati et civibus dominantur, te et alio guelfos et populares bannis perpetuis supponentes. Qua omnia filiacioni tue, non sine cordis amaritudine,



Unable to return to Florence, Brunetto journeyed to France and continued to practice as a notary. Several documents attest to his presence in Arras and Bar-sur-Aube during this period, and to his political activity among the exiled Florentine mercantile community (Holloway 54).

Back in Italy, Pope Urban IV was increasingly entangling the *curia* in secular politics. John Larner recounts how Urban, determined to ruin Manfred's allies financially, "ordered all Christians to renege on their debts to Sienese banking houses that supported Manfred. In July 1263 he commanded the seizure of all goods of Florentine Ghibelline merchants throughout Europe"<sup>64</sup> In June 1263, the Pope secured an alliance with Charles of Anjou, brother of Louis IX of France, whereby Charles agreed to defend the papal cause against Manfred. Charles was crowned King of Sicily and Senator of Rome in 1265. He then proceeded to march up the peninsula that winter and conquer Manfred's forces at the Battle of Benevento in February 1266. Two years later, Charles defeated Conradin, the last heir of the Hohenstaufen dynasty, at the Battle of Tagliacozzo, thus securing Guelf hegemony in Italy.

The Battle of Benevento signaled the end of the exile of the Guelfs. Brunetto returned to Florence in 1267, where he resumed his promising political career. Over the next three decades, Brunetto served the commune in a number of decisive roles—as Cancelliere in 1272, as a member of the Consiglio del Podestà in 1284, and as Prior in 1287. Brunetto died in 1294, and was buried in Santa Maria Maggiore in Florence.

Giovanni Villani eulogizes Brunetto thus in his *Cronica*:

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significare curavi, ut ex eorum sciencia valeas prudenter et provide tuis processibus precavere" (quoted in Holloway 52).

<sup>64</sup> John Larner, *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch, 1216-1380* (Longman, 1980).

Nel detto anno MCCLXXXIII morì in Firenze uno valente cittadino il quale ebbe nome ser Brunetto Latini, il quale fu gran filosofo, e fue sommo maestro in rettorica, tanto in bene sapere dire come in bene dittare. E fu quegli che spuose la Rettorica di Tulio, e fece il buono e utile libro detto Tesoro, e il Tesoretto, e la Chiave del Tesoro, e piu' altri libri in filosofia, e de' vizi e di virtù, e fu dittatore del nostro Comune. Fu mondano uomo, ma di lui avemo fatta menzione pero' ch'egli fue cominciatore e maestro in digrossare i Fiorentini, e farli scorti in bene parlare, e in sapere guidare e reggere la nostra repubblica seconda la Politica. (9.10)

Other than the ambiguous references to the *Chiave del Tesoro* and the book “de' vizi e di virtù,” Villani's epitaph cites Brunetto's principle works.

The *Rettorica* dates from the period of Brunetto's exile in France. Although he had planned to write a complete translation of Cicero's *De inventione* from Latin into the vernacular Tuscan, and to include his own erudite commentary based upon the wisdom of philosophers and existing commentaries, the *Rettorica* is incomplete. The prologue to the *Rettorica* sets forth Brunetto's reason for undertaking this project, which he relates to his exile:

La cagione per che questo libro è fatto si è cotale, che questo Brunetto Latino, per cagione della guerra la quale fue tralle parti di Firenze, fue isbandito della terra quando la sua parte guelfa, la quale si tenea col papa e colla chiesa di Roma, fue cacciata e sbandita della terra. E poi si n'andò in Francia per procurare le sue vicende, e là trovò uno suo amico della sua

cittade e della sua parte, molto ricco d' avere, ben costumato e pieno de grande senno, che lli fece molto onore e grande utilidade.<sup>65</sup> (1. Sp. 10)

A naturally gifted orator, Brunetto's friend desired to learn what wise men had written about rhetoric:

e per lo suo amore questo Brunetto Latino, lo quale era buono intenditore di lettera et era molto intento allo studio di rettorica, si mise a ffare questa opera, nella quale mette innanzi il testo di Tulio per maggiore fermezza, e poi mette e giugne di sua scienza e dell'altrui quello che fa mistieri. (1. Sp. 10)

Although Brunetto never translated past the seventeenth chapter of the *De inventione*, a French version, greatly revised and reduced, opens the third book of the *Tresor*. Brunetto also penned *volgarizzamenti* of three of Cicero's orations: the *Pro Ligario*,<sup>66</sup> *Pro Marcello*, and *Pro rege Deiotaro*.

The third work cited by Villani is the *Tesoretto*, a didactic and allegorical dream-vision and pre-text for Dante's *Commedia* in which Brunetto-protagonist loses himself in a "selva diversa" and encounters the personifications of Nature and Virtue. Although not cited by Villani, Brunetto also wrote the *Favolello*, an epistolary poem on friendship addressed to the Ghibelline poet Rustico di Filippo, which the manuscript tradition often paired with the *Tesoretto*.

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<sup>65</sup> Brunetto Latini, *La Rettorica*, edited by Francesco Maggini (Galette e Cocci, 1915).

<sup>66</sup> The "Pro Ligario" has enjoyed the most critical attention, and is the only of Brunetto's vernacular orations to exist in a modern edition. See Brunetto Latini, "Volgarizzamento dell'Orazione 'Pro Ligario'," in *La prosa del Duecento*, edited by Cesare Segre and Mario Marti (Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1959), pp. 171-84.

It is the “buono e utile libro detto Tesoro” that will be the principle focus of this chapter. Composed during Brunetto’s exile, the *Tresor* serves as a compendium of knowledge necessary for the practice of governing a city, particularly a commune such as Florence.

The three books of the *Tresor* reflect the divisions of philosophy. The first tome concerns theoretical philosophy, “quella scienza specifica che c’insegna la prima questione, sapere e conoscere la natura di tutte le cose celesti e terrene” (1.3.1).<sup>67</sup> With this exploratory aim, the first book pairs a universal chronicle tracing the history of kings from the Old Testament patriarchs to Manfred, with *vite* of the prophets and saints, discussions of medicine, astronomy, architecture, agriculture, and a lengthy bestiary. The second book examines practical philosophy in its ethical and economic divisions, beginning with a *volgarizzamento* of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and concluding with a treatise on vices and virtues. The final book contains two distinct sections dedicated to rhetoric, which is the third division of practical philosophy. The first of these is a *volgarizzamento* of Cicero’s *De inventione*, which Brunetto had earlier written, though in a more nuanced edition, in the *Rettorica*. The final section of the *Tresor*’s third book contains a treatise on the governance of cities according to the contemporary Italian custom.

The *Tresor* enjoyed immense success in the ensuing years. Beltrami lists 61 complete extant manuscripts, with 11 incomplete, and 13 reduced to fragments (xxii). A second redaction of the *Tresor*, which continues the chronicle of Book I to the Battle of Tagliacozzo of 1268, soon appeared in late Duecento manuscripts. Much ink has been

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<sup>67</sup> “...cele proprie science qui nos enseigne la premiere question, de savoir et de conostre les natures de toutes choses celestiaus et terrienes.”

spilled about the author of this second redaction. Francis Carmody, believing the redaction to be an *aggiornamento* by Brunetto upon his return to Florence, possibly written to curry favor with Charles of Anjou, used the redaction as the basis for his edition.

The popularity of Brunetto's text has prompted scholars to produce very different editions of the *Tresor*. The first modern editor of Brunetto's *Tresor* was Polycarpe Chabaille, whose 1863 edition transcribed the ms. F [Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fr. 12581 (già suppl. 198)], which dates from 1284, and contains the original redaction of the *Tresor*.<sup>68</sup> This was followed by Francis J. Carmody's 1948 edition, which instead followed the second redaction.<sup>69</sup> Carmody based his text almost exclusively upon ms. T, [Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fr. 1110 (già 7364); sec. xiii], without sufficient regard for other manuscript emendations. Paul Barrette and Spurgeon Baldwin published the first complete English translation of the *Tresor* in 2003.<sup>70</sup> The editors used as their *texte de base* the Escorial manuscript [M<sup>3</sup>: Madrid, Biblioteca de l'Escorial L. II. 3; sec. xiii], which they consider "a complete and very early second-redaction manuscript, prepared soon after Brunetto's return to Italy, and sent right away to the Learned King Alfonso, in accord with what we presume to be a strong political and intellectual affinity between the Florentine official and the Spanish monarch" (xiv). Recently, Pietro G. Beltrami, Paolo Squillacioti, Plinio Torri, and Sergio Vatteroni have

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<sup>68</sup> Brunetto Latini, *Li Livres dou Tresor*, edited by Polycarpe Chabaille (Imprimerie Impériale, 1863). For a complete list of the manuscript tradition of the *Tresor*, see Beltrami xlvi-lv.

<sup>69</sup> Brunetto Latini, *Li Livres dou Tresor*, edited by Francis J. Carmody (U of California P, 1948).

<sup>70</sup> Brunetto Latini, *The Book of the Treasure*, translated by Paul Barrette and Spurgeon Baldwin (Garland, 1993).

published and translated the text into Italian through Einaudi in 2007. The editors based their edition upon V<sup>2</sup>, (Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, DVIII) [sec xiv *in.*], but with appropriate *lezioni* from a number of manuscripts.

Beltrami questions the authenticity of the second redaction, justly noting that the second version curiously eliminates mention of the author in one notice that was particularly significant for Brunetto, the Battle of Montaperti. Whereas the first redaction emphasized that Brunetto was exiled after the battle,<sup>71</sup> the second version merely alludes to the battle and its consequences, recounting only that: “l’anno prima che egli fosse papa gli uomini di Manfredi erano entrati in Toscana e avevano cacciato i guelfi di Firenze dalla citta’ e dal paese” (translation of 1.98.5 of Carmody’s edition, quoted in Beltrami xxiii).<sup>72</sup> Due to the difference in tone between the two redactions and the depersonalization of events that had profoundly affected Brunetto, the editors of the 2007 *Tresor* conclude that the “cosiddetta ‘seconda redazione’ non è dunque che uno degli interventi piú antichi sul testo di Brunetto” (xxiii). Thus, contesting Carmody, the editors publish only the first redaction of the *Tresor*, eliminating the chronicle sections that Carmody had supposed Brunetto to have penned upon his return to Florence in 1267.

In addition to the second redaction in French, a Tuscan *volgarizzamento* of the *Tresor*, known as the *Tesoro*, also appeared in the final decades of the Duecento. The *Tesoro* differs in several respects from its French predecessor. The *Tresor* ended its historical observations with the Battle of Montaperti in 1260, while the *Tesoro* extends its

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<sup>71</sup> See *Tresor* 1.93.2, quoted above.

<sup>72</sup> “et ke l’annee devant k’il fust apostoiles les gens Mainfroi entrerent en Toschane et chacierent les Guelfs de Florence hors de la vile et du païs” (Carmody 1.98.5).

chronicle section down to the Guelfs' return to power in 1266 and the death of Conradin in 1268, concluding with an account of the Sicilian Vespers in 1282, the popular uprising that initiated the end of Charles' rule in Sicily. The chronicle additions have usually been interpreted as "countering the *Tresor*'s propaganda for Charles d'Anjou" (Holloway 10), and were accordingly considered for several centuries to be the work of the Ghibelline Bono Giamboni, a Florentine contemporary of Brunetto and author of several treatises on virtue in addition to *volgarizzamenti* of Vegetius and Orosius. In 1959, however, Cesare Segre pointed out that the language of the manuscript is rather different than that of Bono's other works.<sup>73</sup> While modern scholarship now discounts the attribution of the *Tesoro* to Bono Giamboni, critics are still divided as to the identity of the translator. Julia Bolton Holloway, in an assertion typical of her imaginative criticism, maintains that a young Dante copied the *Tesoro* translation under Brunetto's direction in ms. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale II. VIII. 36 (Holloway 288).

In addition to the *Tesoro*, the *Tresor* enjoyed a rich history of vernacular translation. Barrette and Baldwin cite the "remarkable popularity of Brunetto's work in medieval Spain (at last count, at least 13 medieval manuscripts in Castilian, four more in Catalan, and one in Aragonese" (xiii). Brunetto had intended his work to reach a wide audience, choosing to write in Picard, the dialect of Picardy and the Artois region. In a move that seems to anticipate André Pézard's thesis, Brunetto defended his choice of language: "E se qualcuno chiedesse perché questo libro è scritto in volgare nella lingua di Francia, visto che siamo italiani, gli dirò che è per due ragioni: l'una è che siamo in

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<sup>73</sup> See Segre's introduction to Brunetto's *Tesoro* in *La prosa del Duecento*, edited by Cesare Segre and Mario Marti (Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1959), pp. 311-12.

Francia, l'altra è perché la lingua è più piacevole e più diffusa fra le genti di tutte le lingue" (1.1.7).<sup>74</sup>

The narrative of Brunetto's life cannot help but recall the biography of Dante. As Florentine citizens exiled while serving as ambassador on behalf of the commune, Brunetto and Dante seem to share a kindred spirit. In their political theory, however, the two authors were radically opposed. These differences are reflected in their unique approaches to Florentine history.

Brunetto's narrative of the founding of Florence diverges significantly from the earlier version of the legend contained within the *Chronica de origine civitatis*. While his account retains the basic elements—the founding of Florence by the Romans, descendants of the Trojans, and the establishment of Catiline's anti-Roman stronghold in Fiesole—several alterations invest the story with meaning specific to Brunetto's republican political ideology.

According to the *Chronica*, the god Atlas and his wife Electra founded the city of Fiesole and had three children, each of whom ruled over an eponymous realm. Brunetto offers an alternate genealogy of Dardanus that eliminates his Fiesolan heritage, but which nonetheless connects him to the founding of Troy and eventually to Rome and Florence. In the section of the *Tresor* concerning the origins of kings and kingdoms, Brunetto names Dardanus as one of the two sons of Jove, who had constructed and presided over the great city of Athens, and whose father, Saturn, was a king of Greece. In accordance with his euhemerist views, he describes Saturn and Jove as great kings whom men

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<sup>74</sup> "Et se aucun demandoit por quoi ceste livre est escrit en roman selonc le patois de France, puis qui nos [so]mes ytalien, je diroie que ce est par .ii. raisons: l'une que nos [so]mes en France, l'autre por ce que la parleure est plus delitable et plus comune a touz languaiges."



considered deities. City-building ran in their bloodline; Dardanus' great-grandfather, Cres, was the first king of Greece, who lent his name to the island of Crete. Jove's great-great-grandfather, moreover, was the first and most famous postdiluvian builder of cities, the giant Nimrod. The architect of the cursed Tower of Babel who introduced the practice of worshipping false gods (1.24.2), Nimrod was also "le premier roi" (1.23.1) in human history.

Nimrod's descendants form a crucial part of Brunetto's narrative of *translatio imperii*. One of his progeny, Belo, was the first king and lord of the Egyptians and Assyrians (1.24.3), who ruled the world before the Romans. Belo's son, Nino, "fu il primo a radunare uomini in un esercito per predare e combattere, poich  assedi  Babilonia e prese la citt  e la torre di Babele a viva forza" (1.24.3).<sup>75</sup> Brunetto lists one of Nimrod's sons as Italo, whom the *Chronica* had named as the son of Atlas and brother of Dardanus. In the *Tresor*, Italo is instead a many times great-uncle of Dardanus. Nonetheless, Italo "venne in Italia e ne fu signore per tutta la vita; in seguito la tenne suo figlio Giano" (1.34.1).<sup>76</sup> Brunetto recounts how Saturn was exiled from Greece by his own son, and then "se ne and  in Italia, e l  divenne re e signore di quella terra" (1.34.1).<sup>77</sup> After establishing the Italian dynasty, Brunetto returns to the development of the Trojan kingdom. Having exiled his father, Jove remained in Greece and built Athens. His two sons went on to rule their own kingdoms. Danao became king of the Greek

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<sup>75</sup> "Et sachiez que Ninus fu le premier qui onques asembra genz en ost en feure et en guerre, car il asseia Babyloine et prist la cit  et la tor Babel a fine force."

<sup>76</sup> "Et fu voirs que Ytalus, qui fu fis Nembrot qui fist la tor Babel, vint en Ytalie et si en fu sires toute sa via; apr s la tint Janus son fis."

<sup>77</sup> Lors avint selonc ce que les estoires racontent que Saturnus rois de Grece fu esilliez de son regne et s'en ala en Ytalie, et la fu il rois et sires de la terre."

border states, Crete, and Micene. His descendants include Alexander the Great, “che fu re e imperatore dell’intera Grecia. E da allora in avanti vennero chiamati imperatori, non piu’ re di Grecia” (1.28.4).<sup>78</sup> Dardanus, the other son of Jove, built a city in Greece, which he then named Dardania. His grandson Troo constructed the city of Troy.

The account of Dardanus’ genealogy thus varies significantly between the *Chronica* and the *Tresor*. In the earlier version, Italus, Dardanus, and Sicanus were brothers, sons of the founder of Fiesole, whose kingdoms, for a time, coexisted peacefully. Dardanus’ heirs returned to Italy after the fall of Troy, constructed Rome, and, through Julius Caesar, founded Florence.

Brunetto, however, attributes the war between the Greeks and Trojans as an act, not of two foreign nations, but of family rivalry. By making the kings of the Greek and Trojan kingdoms brothers, Brunetto focuses on the bitter consequences of civil war, a concept with which the Florentine notary was intimately familiar. Danao and Dardano formed two sides of a conflict that would repeat itself throughout history. Thus Danao’s entrance into war against his great-nephew Troo, and his murder of Troo’s son, Ganimede, “fu la prima causa dell’odio fra troiani e greci” (1.28.3).<sup>79</sup> Danao’s descendants Agamemnon and Menelaus, and Dardano’s progeny Priam, would later reenact their forefathers’ rivalry during the long siege of Troy. Furthermore, by connecting Dardanus to Nimrod, Brunetto emphasizes the bellicose heritage of the founders of Troy and Rome, whose patriarchs—from Nimrod to Nino to Alexander the Great—employed forceful means to establish their kingdoms.

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<sup>78</sup> “Et tant ala de roi en rois que Phelipes de Macedoine en fu rois, [et puis Alixandre don filz, qui fu rois] et empereor de toute Grece. Et de lors en avant furent apelez empereor, non mie rois de Grece.”

<sup>79</sup> “Ceste [fu] la premiere heine des troians et des grezois.”

Moreover, Brunetto's account of Florentine history in the *Tresor* significantly reduces the role of Fiesole. Rather than naming Fiesole as the *capostipite* of an illustrious genealogy of cities, Brunetto prefers to leave its origins unknown. The city assumes significance only its relation to Catiline, who fled there after his exile "e la indusse a ribellarsi contro Roma" (1.37.1). The Roman army eventually defeated Catiline's army and killed its leader on the site where Pistoia now stands.<sup>80</sup> The Romans destroyed Fiesole and founded a new city in the adjacent plains. Brunetto then adds a detail not contained within any of the earlier accounts:

E sappiate che la parte di territorio dove si trova Firenze si chiamò un tempo Campo di Marte, cioè campo di battaglia, perché Marte, che è uno dei sette pianeti, è detto dio della guerra, e in quanto tale fu anticamente adorato. Perciò non c'è da meravigliarsi se i fiorentini sono sempre in guerra e in discordia, perché quel pianeta regna su di loro. Di ciò Maestro Brunetto Latini deve ben conoscere la verità, perché ci è nato, e si trovava in esilio, quando compilò questo libro, a causa della guerra fra i fiorentini. (1.37.2-3)<sup>81</sup>

Brunetto's etymology of "Chiés Mars" as "Campo di Marte," though fictitious, nonetheless reinforces his emphasis on the bellicose origins of Florence.

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<sup>80</sup> Like the *Chronica*, the *Tresor* explains that Pistoia derives its name "per la pestilenza provocata da quel grande massacro" (1.37.1).

<sup>81</sup> "Et sachiez que la place de la terre ou Florence siet fu jadis apelee Chiés Mars, c'est a dire maisons de bataille, car Mars, qui est une des .vii. planetes, est apellé dieu de bataille; et ensi fu il aorés ancienement. Por ce ne n'est il mie mervoille se les florentins sont tozjors en guerre et descordes, car cele planete regne sor els. De ce doit maistre Brunet Latin savoir la verité, car il en est nes, et si estoit en exil, lors qui il compila cest livre, por achoison de la guerre as florentins."

Brunetto's adaptation of the legend of the founding of Florence reflects the vicissitudes of late Duecento Tuscany. Brunetto's Florence differed significantly from the city portrayed by his predecessors in the *Chronica de origine civitatis* and in Sanzanome's *Gesta Florentinorum*. The latter authors, writing during a revival of nationalist fervor following the death of Henry VI in 1197 and the subsequent establishment of the Tuscan League, concentrated on the city's military excursions in the surrounding *contado*. The representation of Fiesole as an external threat to the hegemony of the commune served to emphasize Florence's unity—and the unity of her citizens, the noble descendants of the ancient Roman founders. As Stefano U. Baldassarri points out, however, "From about the middle of the thirteenth century, the main Tuscan communes had extended their dominion over the surrounding territories to a point that was not to be surpassed for almost a hundred years. Consequently, internal strife between various groups—be they either Guelfs against Ghibelline or the *popolo* against the *nobili*—could no longer find a profitable outlet in the conquest of neighboring territories" (36).<sup>82</sup> In Brunetto's account, it is no longer the external threat of a rival city-state that menaces Florence, but rather its own civil discord.

The new threat to Florence's political stability thus lay within her ancient gates. In his chronicle of Florentine history, the Guelf Dino Compagni describes the civic strife that plagues his native city:

Piangono adunque i suoi cittadini sopra loro e sopra i loro figliuoli; i quali, per loro superbia e per loro mailzia e per gara d'ufici, àno così nobile

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<sup>82</sup> Stefano U. Baldassarri, "A Tale of Two Cities: Accounts of the Origins of Fiesole and Florence from the Anonymous *Chronica* to Leonardo Bruni," *Studi Rinascimentali*, vol. 5, 2007, pp. 29-56.

città disfatta, e vituperate le leggi, e barattati gli onori in picciol tempo, i quali i loro antichi con molta fatica e con lunghissimo tempo ànno acquistato; e aspettino la giustizia di Dio, la quale per molti segni promette loro male siccome a colpevoli, i quali erano liberi da non potere esser soggiogati. (1.2)<sup>83</sup>

Compagni continues: “Dopo molti antichi mali per le discordie de’ suoi cittadini ricevuti, una ne fu generata nella detta città, la quale divise tutti i suoi cittadini in tal modo, che le due parti s’appellorono nimiche per due nuovi nomi, ciò è Guelfi e Ghibellini” (1.2). Like the anonymous *Gesta* and the Pseudo-Brunetto chronicle, Compagni considers the murder of Buondelmonte as the defining event that fractured the city. “Onde di tal morte i cittadini se ne divisono,” he argues, “e trassersi insieme i parentadi e l’amistà d’amendue le parti, per modo che la detta divisione mai non finì; onde nacquero molti scandoli e omicidi e battaglie cittadinesche” (1.2).

Like Dante, Brunetto attributes his exile to the internecine feud of his native city. Brunetto emphasized the *discordia* of Florence, even rewriting the legend to demonstrate how the threat to the commune’s stability no longer originated from outside the city, but from within. In addition to offering a new genealogy of Dardanus and emphasizing the martial origins of Florence, Brunetto focused his narrative on the figure of Catiline, the paragon of civil dissidence.

Brunetto devotes considerable attention to retelling the Catiline story in the *Rettorica* and the *Tresor*. Beltrami points out that Brunetto’s insistence on the episode of Catiline in the latter work “è veramente notevole, in un’opera che tratta la storia

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<sup>83</sup> Dino Compagni, *Cronica delle cose occorrenti ne’ tempi suoi*, edited by G. Luzzatto (Einaudi, 1968).

universale per sommi capi dedicando coerentemente poche righe agli eventi piú rilevanti, storici o leggendari” (Beltrami xxi). He highlights, for example, Brunetto’s pithy summary of the first six books of the *Aeneid*, writing that after the fall of Troy, Aeneas “e la sua gente andarono per mare e per terra un po’ di qua, un po’ di là, finché egli arrivò in Italia” (1.33.1).<sup>84</sup> Brunetto references the Catiline conspiracy in each of the three books of the *Tresor*. In the first, he dedicates several chapters to recounting the affair, particularly chapters thirty-six (“Romolo e i romani”) and thirty-seven (“La congiura di Catilina”). In the second book, Brunetto warns citizens not to follow the example of Catiline’s pride. In the final book of the *Tresor*, in the section dedicated to rhetoric, Brunetto includes speeches by Julius Caesar and Cato the Younger regarding the punishment of the Catiline conspirators. Brunetto had earlier penned slightly different versions of these speeches, which he adapted from Sallust, in his commentary to the vernacular *Rettorica*.

For the republican Brunetto, Catiline’s conspiracy was of premier importance as the event that definitively ended the Roman Republic. In the chapter of the *Tresor* dedicated to Romulus and the Romans, Brunetto recounts how Tarquin the Proud violated the chaste Roman matron Lucretia:

Per questa ragione Tarquinio fu scacciato dal suo regno e fu stabilito dai romani che non ci fossero mai piú re, ma che la città e tutto il regno fossero governati dai senatori, dai consoli, dai tribuni e dai dittatori e da altre istituzioni, secondo la rilevanza dei compiti dentro e fuori la città. E questo sistema di governo durò 465 anni, fino a che Catilina fece una

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<sup>84</sup> “...et sa gent s’en alerent par mer et par terre, une hore ça et autre [hore] la, tant que il ariva en Ytalie.”

congiura contro coloro che governavano Roma, per ottenere un cambiamento dei poteri. (1.36.4-5)<sup>85</sup>

This new periodization of Roman history thus couples the tyrant Tarquinius Superbus and Catiline.

Brunetto's various accounts of the Catiline conspiracy emphasize its schismatic consequences on the welfare of the city. Brunetto recounts how Cicero, having discovered and decried the conspiracy before the Senate, asks them to decide the means of punishing the conspirators. Julius Caesar, addressing the Senate, summarizes the negative effects of the conspiracy on the city: "Coloro che si sono pronunciati prima di me hanno mostrato assai bene il male che può derivare dalla congiura: crudeltà di battaglie, fanciulle violate, bambini strappati dalle braccia di padri e madri, donne violentate e disonorate, tempi e case spogliati, uccisioni, incendi, la città piena di cadaveri, di sangue e di pianto" (3.35.5).<sup>86</sup> Although Catiline had fled Rome, his supporters still presented a threat within the city. In his address to the Senate, Cato justifies the need for immediate action against the conspirators: "Ma parlo così perché siamo stretti da ogni parte da un grande pericolo: Catilina è in vista là fuori con tutto il suo esercito, e vuole divorarci; gli altri sono dappertutto in città; noi non possiamo preparare né discutere nulla che i nostri nemici non sappiano: perciò ci dobbiamo

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<sup>85</sup> "Por ceste achoison fu cil Tarquinius chaciez de son regne et fu establi par les romains que jamais n'i eust rois, mes fust la citez governee et tout son regne par les senators, et par les consules et tribunes et dicteurs, et par autres offices selonc ce que les choses sont granz et dedenz la ville et dehors. Et cele seignorie dura .ccc.lxv. anz, jusques a tant que Kate[l]ine fist a Rome la conjuroison encontre ceaus qui governoient Rome, por le mument des dignetez."

<sup>86</sup> "Cil qui ont avant moi sentence donee ont assez bellement mostré ce qui il peut de mal avenir por lor conjroison: cruauté de batailles, prendre pucelles a force, esrachier les enfans des bras as peres et as meres, faire forc et honte as dames, despoillier temples et maisons, occire, ardoir, emplir la cité de charoingne et de sanc et de plor."

affrettare. Per questo dirò il mio parere: è vero che lo stato è in pericolo per la scellerata decisione di cittadini sacrileghi e sleali” (3.37.13-14).<sup>87</sup>

In Cato’s speech, Brunetto could understandably have found a mirror to the civil unrest that marred Florence, daughter of Rome, in his own era. Indeed, his *volgarizzamento* of Sallust in both the *Rettorica* and the *Tresor* domesticates the ancient source material, making it more accessible to a medieval audience.<sup>88</sup> Thus Brunetto refers to the Roman “res publica” in the *Tresor* as a “comun,”<sup>89</sup> and even speaks of “le comun de Rome” (3.35.9) in Caesar’s address to the Senate.<sup>90</sup> Concerning various methods of *captatio benevolentiae*, Brunetto writes in the *Rettorica*:

Altressì fie inteso s’io dico ch’io voglia trattare di cose nuove e contare  
 novelle e dire ch’è avvenuto o puote advenire per le novitadi che fatte sono,  
 sì come disse Catellina: ‘Poi che lla forza del comune è divenuta alle mani  
 della minuta gente et in podere del populo grasso, noi nobili, noi potenti a  
 cui si convengono li onori, siemo divenuti vile populo senza onore e senza  
 grazia e senza autoritade.’ (102. Sp.3)<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> “Mes por ce le di, que nos sumes enclos en grant peril de totes pars: Chateline a tout son ost nos est as iaus la dehors, et nos cuide englotir; les autres sont en mi ceste ville par tout; nos ne poons riens apareillier ne consoillier que nos ennemis ne sachent: dont nos [nos] devons plus haster. Por ice dirai je tel sentence: [voirs est que] le comun est en peril par le maudit consoil des citiens escominiez et desloiaus.”

<sup>88</sup> For further discussion of Brunetto’s practice of *volgarizzamento*, see Alison Cornish, *Vernacular Translation in Dante’s Italy: Illiterate Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), especially pp. 126-157, and Ronald G. Witt, “Latini, Lovato and the Revival of Antiquity,” *Dante Studies*, vol. 112, 1994, pp. 53-61.

<sup>89</sup> See also *Tresor* 3.35.6.

<sup>90</sup> See also *Tresor* 2.114.2.

<sup>91</sup> Citations of the *Rettorica* derive from Maggini’s aforementioned 1915 edition.



Catiline's lament that the nobility has fallen into disgrace due to the combined power of the "minuta gente" and the "populo grasso" calls to mind the division of the Florentine *popolo* into the impecunious *popolo minuto* and the wealthy *popolani grassi*.<sup>92</sup> Brunetto further emphasizes the conflict between Catiline's noble conspirators and the *popolo* in the second book of the *Tresor*. In his discourse on virtue, Brunetto cites beauty, nobility, agility, force, greatness, and health as the good qualities of the body (2.114). The first two he declares to be inimical to virtue, as beauty and chastity are contrary. He then demonstrates that nobility is an innate, individual predisposition to virtue, and does not derive solely from the greatness of one's ancestors. Indeed, one's noble lineage should be a source of shame if one possesses a wicked character:

perché quando Catilina ordiva di nascosto la congiura di Roma, e non avrebbe fatto altro che male, e declamava davanti ai senatori la bontà di suo padre e la nobiltà della sua stirpe e il bene che essa aveva fatto al comune di Roma, certamente declamava più la propria vergogna che il proprio onore. (2.114.2)<sup>93</sup>

As the paragon of civic discord, Catiline could stand for any citizen who threatened to destabilize the government. Thus Dino Campagni, for example, would later write of the parallel between Catiline and Corso Donati, leader of the Black Guelfs.

Uno cavaliere della somiglianza di Catellina romano, ma più crudele di lui, gentile di sangue, bello del corpo, piacevole parlatore, addorno di belli costumi, sottile d'ingegno, con l'animo sempre intento a malfare, col

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<sup>92</sup> For a discussion of the Florentine *popolo* and its Guelf allegiance, see pp. 26-39.

<sup>93</sup> "...car quant Cateline faisoit la conjuroison de Rome priveement, et ne euvrit sa mau non, et il disoit devant les senators la bonté son pere e la hautesce son lignaige et le bien que son lignaige fist au comun de Rome, certes il disoit plus sa honte que son honor."

quale molti masnadieri si raunavano e gran séguito avea, molte arsioni e molte ruberie fece fare, e gran dannaggio a' Cerchi e a' loro amici; molto avere guadagnò, e in grande altezza salì. Costui fu messer Corso Donati, che per sua superbia fu chiamato il Barone. (2.20).

Through his presentation of Catiline, Brunetto condemns the *nobiltà* who, much like the Ghibellines, defended their political and economic hegemony by citing their ancestral claim. By focusing on Catiline's conspiracy, Brunetto thus highlights its relevance to his own era, when the wealthy, bellicose Ghibellines threatened the stability of the city with their opposition to the *popolo* and their preoccupation with personal vendetta.

Earlier accounts of the Catiline conspiracy emphasized the role of Caesar in defeating Catiline and founding Florence. The *Chronica de origine civitatis*, for example, describes Caesar's role in the siege of Fiesole and his desire to bestow his name upon the fledgling city. Brunetto takes a different stance on Caesar's involvement. He eliminates Caesar's name from the siege of Fiesole, writing only that "les romains" (1.37.1) sent an army to Fiesole and that they defeated Catiline where now stands the city of Pistoia. By dedicating few lines to the battle, and several chapters in the *Tresor* to the speeches, Brunetto moves the drama from the battlefield to the Senate. Not only does he eliminate Caesar from his traditional role in opposition to Catiline, Brunetto casts a suspicious light on Caesar's allegiance when he writes:

Ma quella congiura venne scoperta al tempo in cui il saggissimo Marco Tullio Cicerone, il miglior oratore del mondo e maestro di retorica, era console di Roma, che con la sua grande intelligenza sconfisse i congiurati, e ne catturò e ne fece sterminare una gran parte con il sostegno del buon

Catone che li condannò a morte, anche se Giulio Cesare riteneva che non andassero condannati a morte, ma che andassero chiusi in prigioni separate. (1.36.5)<sup>94</sup>

In his speech in the *Tresor*, Caesar pleads that punishing the *congiurati* with death would impugn the moral integrity of the state.

Yet Brunetto casts aspersions on Caesar by citing his speech to the Senate as an example of manipulative and misleading rhetoric. Brunetto demonstrates how Caesar “si avvalse di coperture e parole ornate, perché la sua materia era avversa” (3.36.1).<sup>95</sup> Cato’s response further underscores Caesar’s deceit when he suggests that, by his insistence on mercy for the conspirators, Caesar would willingly risk harm to the city. It is interesting to note that the Catiline affair and Cato’s anti-Catiline speech occupy the thirty-sixth chapter of Books I and III, respectively, suggestively reinforcing the contrastive relationship of these two men. Brunetto further condemns Caesar in the *Tresor* for his reckless ambition:

Nel frattempo Giulio Cesare s’impegnò tanto in ogni direzione, dopo che ebbe ottenuto molte vittorie e sottomesso molti paesi alla città di Roma, che combatté contro Pompeo e contro gli altri che allora governavano la città, finché li sconfisse e scacciò tutti i suoi nemici, ed ebbe da solo il governo di Roma. E dal momento che i romani non potevano avere re,

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<sup>94</sup> “Mes cele conjuroison fu descuberte au tens que li tres saiges Marcus Tullius Cicero, li miauz parlanz homme dou monde et maistre de rethorique, fu consules de Rome, qui par son grant sens vainqui les conjurés, et en prist et fist destruire une grant partie par le conseil dou bon Caton qui les juga a mort, ja soit ce que Julius Cesar ne consoilla pas quie il fussent jugiez a mort, mes fussent mis en diverses prisons.”

<sup>95</sup> “...se retorna as couvertures et as mos dorés, por ce que sa matire estoit contraire.”

secondo le regole che furono disposte al tempo di Tarquinio, che il trattato ha ricordato qui sopra, si fece nominare imperatore. (1.38.1)<sup>96</sup>

Brunetto claims that, because of Caesar's aversion to capital punishment for the conspirators,

i più sostennero che Cesare fu complice di quella congiura; e a dire il vero egli non amò mai i senatori e gli altri governanti di Roma, né loro amarono lui; perché egli discendeva dalla stirpe di Enea, e oltre a ciò era di così grande animo che ad altro non aspirava se non ad ottenere tutto il potere, come lo avevano avuto i suoi antenati. (1.36.6)<sup>97</sup>

Brunetto also parallels Caesar and his ancestor Aeneas when he writes that each ruled for a period of three years and six months (1.34.3 and 1.38.1). He further emphasizes the connection between his pugnacious forefathers by citing Caesar's empire as the heir of Tarquin the Proud's kingdom.

The emphasis of the earlier Florentine chronicles on Caesar's heroic opposition to Catiline would have discomfited the republican Brunetto. Caesar's pernicious use of rhetoric, his disrespect for the Roman senators, who protected the interests of the people,

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<sup>96</sup> “Endemantiers Jule Cesar porchaça tant amont et aval après ce que il ot eues maintes victoires et mainz païs souzmis au comun de Rome, que il se combati contre Pompei et contre les autres qui lors governoient la cité, tant que il les vainqui et chaça toz ses henemis, et il soul ot la seignorie de Rome. Et or ce que les romains ne povoient avoir roi, selonc les establisemenz qui furent fait au tens Tarquinius, de quoi li contes fist memoire ça en arrieres, se fist il apeler empereor.”

<sup>97</sup> “Et por ce distrent les plusors qu'il fu compains de cele conjuroison; et a la verité dire il n'ama onques les senators ne les autres officiaus de Rome, ne eaus lui; car il estoit estrait de la lignee Enee, et après ce estoit il de si haut coraige [que il ne baoit] fors qu'[a] la seignorie avoi[r] dou tout, selonc ce que ses ancestres avoient [eu].”

his thirst for power and his tyrannical ancestry would not have recommended the dictator to a fervent proponent of popular government.<sup>98</sup>

In his search for a hero who *could* best embody the interests of the Florentine commune, Brunetto needed to look no further than to Cicero. Osmond reveals how the narrative of the rivalry between Cicero and Catiline was important in

reinforcing the claims of the Guelf mercantile community, ennobling the ideals of guild republicanism, as these were gradually transforming the political discourse of the Florentine aristocracy, and, at the same time, strengthening the resistance to new challenges from lower-class movements. The *homines novi* or *gente nuova* rising to a position of prominence in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century could identify with Cicero, the most respected and admired *homo novus* of Roman antiquity. (34-35)

Brunetto emphasizes Cicero's *borghese* status when he writes in the *Rettorica* that:

Tulio era cittadino di Roma nuovo e di non grande altezza; ma per lo suo senno fue in sì alto stato che tutta Roma si tenea alla sua parola, e fue al tempo di Catellina, di Pompeo e di Julio Cesare, e per lo bene della terra fue al tutto contrario a Catellina. Et poi nella guerra di Pompeo e di Julio Cesare si tenne con Pompeo, sicome tutti 'savi ch'amavano lo stato di Roma. (1. Sp.16)

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<sup>98</sup> For two excellent studies of Brunetto's republicanism, see John M. Najemy, "Brunetto Latini's 'Politica'," *Dante Studies*, vol. 112, 1994, pp. 33-51 and Cary J. Nederman, "Commercial Society and Republican Government in the Latin Middle Ages: The Economic Dimensions of Brunetto Latini's Republicanism," *Political Theory*, vol. 31, no. 5, Oct. 2003, pp. 644-63.

Cicero further appealed to Brunetto by his insistence on the value of rhetoric for civic life: “Tullio dice che la scienza piú elevata del governo della città è la retorica, cioè la scienza del parlare; infatti, se l’eloquenza non esistesse, non esisterebbe neppure la città, né alcun ordinamento di giustizia e di umana convivenza” (*Tresor* 3.1.2).<sup>99</sup> In Brunetto’s *opere*, the rhetoric of Cicero replaces the military prowess of Caesar, and thus of the Ghibellines, as the most effective means of defending the common good.

As an orator for the Florentine commune, Brunetto consciously paralleled himself to Cicero. Holloway underlines how Brunetto “wrote of Cicero in one instance as, like himself, an ‘avogado e maestro del parlare,’ and he is illuminated with him within the curves of an S, in that text, in another, speaking of Cicero as ‘quasi per una mia sichura cholonna, sicchome una fontana che non è istagna” (7), a declaration that recalls Dante’s address to Virgil in *Inferno* 1.

This pairing of literary models will be relevant in understanding Dante’s depiction of Brunetto in *Inferno* 15. Brunetto’s reverence of Cicero accords with his adaptation of the legend of Florence’s origins to emphasize her transition from the bellicose Ghibellines to the republican *popolo*. The following chapters will examine how Dante, through the speech of the condemned Brunetto, rewrites Brunetto’s republican version as a defense of imperial politics.

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<sup>99</sup> “Tulles dit que la plus haute science de cité gouverner si est rethorique, ce est a dire la science dou parler; car se parleure ne fust, citez ne seroit, ne nul establissement de justise ne de humane compaignie.”

## CHAPTER 3

## Saguntum, Babel, and Dante's Empire

Like the chroniclers of the Duecento and Brunetto Latini, Dante's adaptation of the origins of Florence reflects the vicissitudes of his age. In an era of political instability and personal strife, Dante employs the legend to sustain his imperial ideology. Dante will evoke Florence's illustrious Roman heritage in order to rebuke her present wickedness—a point that he emphasizes through a comparison to three cities. This chapter will examine two of these cities—Saguntum and Babel—while the following chapter will consider the mercurial relationship between Florence and Fiesole.

The empire, according to Dante, is the only form of government uniquely suited to human nature. Dante defines the empire, or temporal monarchy, as “the political supremacy of one, and it is over all things temporal, or more precisely, among and over all things that are measured by time” (*De monarchia* 1.2.2).<sup>100</sup> Only the empire can account for humanity's social character:

Lo fondamento radicale de la imperiale maiestade, secondo lo vero, è la necessità de la umana civiltade, che a uno fine è ordinata, cioè a vita felice; a la quale nullo per sé è sufficiente a venire senza l'aiutorio d'alcuno, con ciò sia cosa che l'uomo abbisogna di molte cose, a le quali

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<sup>100</sup> “Est ergo temporalis Monarchia, quam dicunt ‘Imperium,’ unicus principatus et super omnes in tempore vel in hiis et super hiis que tempore mesurantur.” Text and translation derive from Dante Alighieri, *De monarchia*, edited and translated by Richard Kay (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998).

uno solo soddisfare non può. E però dice lo Filosofo che l'uomo naturalmente è compagnevole animale. (*Convivio* 4.4.1)<sup>101</sup>

Relying upon philosophical and theological arguments, Dante avers that no other form of government is so fully entwined into the very fabric of society.

Man's highest faculty is his capacity for rational understanding, a gift that renders him unique among God's creations (*Mon.* 1.3). He may solely realize his intellect when living under the condition of universal peace, a state that only a temporal monarch can ensure. Following Aristotle's *Politics*, Dante insists that "when many persons are organized for one purpose, one of them ought to direct or rule, and the others ought to be directed or ruled" (*Mon.* 1.5.3).<sup>102</sup> Just as the *paterfamilias* unites his household in the common goal of living well, so too must a single leader unite the entire human race in harmony. Without a temporal leader to direct mankind to its proper end, "not only do the inhabitants of the kingdom fail to attain their goal, but the kingdom itself will begin to fall apart" (*Mon.* 1.5.8).<sup>103</sup> Only one supreme monarch can suffice, since man's incessant thirst for glory causes kingdoms to vie for power and households to be torn asunder, thus impeding his path to self-fulfillment:

Onde, con ciò sia cosa che l'animo umano in terminata possessione di terra son si queti, ma sempre desidera gloria d'acquistare, sì come per esperienza vedemo, discordie e guerre conviene surgere intra regno e regno, le quali sono tribulazioni de le cittadi, e per le cittadi de le

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<sup>101</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Convivio*, edited by Giorgio Inglese (Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 2007).

<sup>102</sup> "Asserit enim ibi venerabilis eius autoritas quod, quando aliqua plura ordinantur ad unum, oportet unum eorum regulare seu regere, alia vero regulari seu regi."

<sup>103</sup> "...aliter non modo existented in regno finem non assecuntur, sed etiam regnum in interitum labitur."



vicinanze, e per le vicin[anz]e de le case, [e per le case] de l'uomo; e  
così s'impedisce la felicitade. (*Conv.* 4.4.3)

The monarch who oversees the entire human race will be incapable of greed, because he can have nothing left to desire and “when greed is altogether absent, nothing remains that is opposed to justice” (*Mon.* 1.11.11).<sup>104</sup> It thus follows “that the monarch can be the purest human subject of justice,” (*Mon.* 1.11.12)<sup>105</sup> and will be capable of mediating among the kings under his rule and of stemming the human tendency towards cupidity.

Dante's ideal monarch must be a Roman prince. While one might argue that an empire acquired by force is a poor model for guaranteeing universal peace, Dante, citing Virgil, affirms the divine origin of the Roman Empire: “E in ciò s'accorda Virgilio nel primo de lo Eneida, quand dice, in persona di Dio parlando: ‘A costoro (cioè a li Romani) né termine di cose né di tempo pongo; a loro ho dato imperio senza fine.’” (*Conv.* 4.4.11) Since the dawn of civilization, mankind has only attained a state of universal peace once—“when there was a perfect monarchy under the godlike Augustus, who was truly a monarch” (*Mon.* 1.16.1).<sup>106</sup> Christ, who would not have chosen to be born under an unjust rule, permitted himself to be counted as a citizen of Rome under the worldwide census, thus legitimizing the Roman Empire under Augustus (*Mon.* 2.10.6-8).<sup>107</sup> Dante's

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<sup>104</sup> “Remota cupiditate omnino, nichil iustitie restat adversum.”

<sup>105</sup> “Ex quo sequitur quod Monarcha sincerissimum inter mortales iustitie possit esse subiectum.”

<sup>106</sup> “...nam inveniemus nisi sub divo Augusto monarcha, existente Monarchia perfecta.”

<sup>107</sup> Dante advanced a similar argument to demonstrate the superiority of Hebrew in the *De vulgari eloquentia*. After the destruction of the Tower of Babel, Dante wrote that Hebrew alone was spared the *confusio linguarum*, as it persisted in the citizens of Babel who had refrained from building the Tower. God rewarded the pious citizens by allowing their language to flourish for centuries, so that Christ would one day speak an uncorrupted language. Dante would later recant this theory in *Par.* 26, where Adam insists upon the equality of vernacular tongues.

La lingua ch'io parlai fu tutta spenta

frequent references to “quella Roma onde Cristo è romano” (*Purg.* 32.102) substantiate this momentous claim.<sup>108</sup>

The nature of man, both as a citizen and as an individual, validates imperial rule. To understand the Empire, one must comprehend the soul’s capacity for free will. In the *Monarchia*, Dante claims that free will (*libertas arbitrii*) is the greatest of God’s gifts (*Mon.* 1.12.6),<sup>109</sup> and compels the reader to refer to his words in *Paradiso* as further evidence:

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. (*Par.* 5.19-24)

Dante most fully elucidated this claim in *Purgatorio* 16, which opens with a harmonious song of peace: “Io sentia voci, e ciascuna pareva / pregar per pace e per misericordia / l’Agnel di Dio che le peccata leva” (*Purg.* 16.16-8). Here at the textual center of the

innanzi che a l’ovra inconsumabile  
fosse la gente di Nembròt attenta:  
ché nullo effetto mai razionabile,  
per lo piacere uman che rinovella  
seguendo il cielo, sempre fu durabile.  
Opera naturale è ch’uom favella;  
ma così o così, natura lascia  
poi fare a voi secondo che v’abbella. (*Par.* 26.124-32)

<sup>108</sup> In this instance, Matelda proleptically proclaims to Dante that he shall be forever a citizen of the Rome where Christ was a citizen, thus conflating the earthly and heavenly *città eterna*.

<sup>109</sup> “Hoc viso, iterum manifestum esse potest quod hec libertas sive principium hoc totius nostre libertatis est maximum donum humanae nature a Deo collatum—sicut in *Paradiso Comedie* iam dixi—quia per ipsum hic felicitamur ut homines, per ipsum alibi felicitamur ut dii.”

*Commedia*, the pilgrim encounters a gentleman renowned in life for his probity. Dante asks Marco Lombardo why the world is now devoid of virtue, defined in the *Convivio* as the one root “che fa l’uom felice in sua operazione” (*Conv.* 4.17.1), and whether one ought to attribute such discord to earthly or celestial agents. The Lombard decries the human tendency to assign both good and evil to Heaven, as such attribution negates the gift of free will. Although the Heavens exert a certain influence over mortal appetites, humans are ultimately responsible for their own actions:

Voi che vivete ogne cagion come recate  
pur suso al cielo, pur come se tutto  
movesse seco di necessitate.

Se così fosse, in voi fora distrutto  
libero arbitrio, e non fora giustizia  
per ben letizia, e per male aver lutto.

Lo cielo i vostri movimenti inizia;  
non dico tutti, ma, posto ch’i’ ‘l dica,  
lume v’è dato a bene e a malizia,  
e libero voler... (*Purg.* 16.67-76)

Because it owes its origin to primal love, the human soul seeks love in return: “Né creator né creatura mai /...fu senza amore, / o naturale o d’animo” (*Purg.* 17.91-3). Like a little girl (“fanciulla,” *Purg.* 16.84), the soul loves capriciously, without the guidance to discern good from evil: “L’animo, ch’è creato ad amar presto, / ad ogni cosa è mobile che piace, / tosto che dal piacere in atto è desto” (*Purg.* 18.19-21). The pursuit of pleasure can easily lead her astray, since “non ciascun segno / è buono, ancor che buona sia la

cera” (*Purg.* 18.38-9). Like the horse that runs amok if unchecked by guide or curb—“se guida o fren non torce suo amore” (*Purg.* 16.93)—individuals require guidance in order to direct their desires towards the proper end.<sup>110</sup>

Marco’s discourse reveals the sociopolitical ramifications of virtue. Though laws concerning ethical actions do currently exist, Italy lacks a leader to uphold them: “Le leggi son, ma chi pon mano ad esse?” (*Purg.* 16.97). Marco crafts his argument through an extended celestial metaphor. He reasons that Rome once had two suns that together illuminated the paths of God and of the world: “Soleva Roma, che ‘l buon mondo feo, / due soli aver, che l’una e l’altra strada / facean vedere, e del mondo e di Deo” (*Purg.* 16.106-8). The *Monarchia* specifies that the two suns are “the supreme pontiff, who leads the human race to eternal life by means of revealed doctrines, and by the emperor, who directs the human race to temporal happiness by means of philosophic doctrines” (3.15.10).<sup>111</sup> Working in harmony, these two powers are together responsible for guiding men towards the realization of the two ends that “have been set by God’s inexplicable providence for man to attain” (*Mon.* 3.15.7).<sup>112</sup> Dante elucidates these goals in the *Monarchia*:

One is the beatitude of this life, which consists in the exercise of man’s own powers, and which is symbolized by the earthly paradise. The other is the beatitude of eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment

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<sup>110</sup> “Onde convenne legge per fren porre; / convenne rege aver, che discernesse / de la vera cittade almen la torre” (*Purg.* 16.94-6). Dante’s consideration of the tower motif and its relation to imperial rule will be considered more fully below. See pp. 88-90.

<sup>111</sup> “...scilicet summo Pontifice, qui secundum revelata humanum genus perduceret ad vitam eternam, et Imperatore, qui secundum philosophica documenta genus humanum ad temporalem felicitatem dirigeret.”

<sup>112</sup> “Duos igitur fines providentia illa inenarrabilis homini proposuit intendendos.”

of the divine vision (to which man's own powers cannot ascend unless aided by divine light), and which is symbolized by the heavenly paradise. (*Mon.* 3.15.7)<sup>113</sup>

Dante avers that to "attain these two beatitudes it is necessary to use two different means, just as different conclusions require different means of proof" (*Mon.* 3.15.8).<sup>114</sup>

Dante's theory directly challenged the political machinations of Pope Boniface VIII, whom contemporaries described as: "He came in like a fox, he reigned like a lion, and he died like a dog" (Schaff 12).<sup>115</sup> From using the revenue of the Jubilee to fund his wars against Sicily to excommunicating his political detractors,<sup>116</sup> Boniface sought to consolidate and expand the temporal authority of the papacy. Though Boniface's insatiate lust for power brought him into conflict with numerous temporal monarchs, his most tempestuous relationship was with the French king Philip IV, *Philippe le Bel*. When Philip levied taxes upon French clergy to support his war with England, Boniface threatened the monarch with excommunication. In 1302, at the height of their conflict, Boniface VIII issued the Papal bull *Unam sanctam*, which asserted the superiority of the spiritual order by denying any salvation *extra Ecclesiam*. Boniface found theological

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<sup>113</sup> "...beatitudinem scilicet huius vite, que in operatione proprie virtutis consistit et per terrestrem paradysum figuratur; et beatitudinem vite eterne, que consistit in fruitione divine aspectus ad quam propria virtus ascendere non potest, nisi lumine divino adiuta, que per paradysu, celestem intelligi datur."

<sup>114</sup> "Ad has quidem beatitudines, velut ad diversas conclusiones, per diversa media venire oportet."

<sup>115</sup> "Intravit ut vulpes, regnavit ut leo, mortuus est sicut canis."

<sup>116</sup> Such as Boniface's infamous imbroglio with the Colonna family, ardent supporters of his ill-fated predecessor, Pope Celestine V. See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 6: The Middle Ages (WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), particularly 12 ff.

support in Christ's affirmation in Luke 22:38<sup>117</sup> that two swords are a sufficient number for his Apostles, which Boniface designates as the temporal and spiritual powers.

Therefore, both are in the power of the Church, namely, the latter is to be used for the Church, the former by the Church; the former by the hand of the priest, the latter by the hand of princes and kings, but at the nod and sufferance of the priest. The one sword must of necessity be subject to the other, and the temporal authority to the spiritual. (Schaff 26)<sup>118</sup>

Thus, "if the earthly power deviate from the right path, it is judged by the spiritual power...but if the supreme power [the papacy] deviate, it can be judged not by man but by God alone" (26).<sup>119</sup> Boniface concluded "that every human creature is subject to the Roman pontiff—this we declare, say, define, and pronounce to be altogether necessary to salvation" (27).<sup>120</sup>

Dante reserves the harshest of punishments for Boniface, to whom he attributed the circumstances of his exile from Florence. While journeying through the circle of the simoniacs during the Holy Week of 1300, the pilgrim encounters the shade of Pope Nicholas III, who mistakes Dante for Boniface and accuses the latter of violating the sacred church:

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<sup>117</sup> "At alli dixerunt, 'Domine, ecce: gladii duo hic.' At ille dixit eis, 'Satis est.' (But they said 'Lord, behold: here are two swords.' And he said to them, 'It is enough')." Text and translation are from *The Vulgate Bible: Volume VI: The New Testament*, edited by Angela M. Kinney (Harvard UP, 2013).

<sup>118</sup> "Uterque ergo est in potestate ecclesiae, spiritualis scilicet gladius et materialis. Sed is quidem pro ecclesia, ille vero ab ecclesia exercendus, ille sacerdotis, is manu regum et militum, sed ad nutum et patientiam sacerdotis. Oportet autem gladium esse sub gladio, et temporalem auctoritatem spirituali sibjici potestati" (27-8). The Latin text and English translation of *Unam sanctam* derive from Schaff.

<sup>119</sup> "Ergo, si deviat terrena potestas, judicabitur a potestate spirituali...si vero suprema, a solo Deo, non ab homine poterit judicari" (28).

<sup>120</sup> "Porro subesse Romano Pontifici omni humanae creaturae declaramus dicimus, definimus et pronunciamus omnino esse de necessitate salutis" (28).

Ed el gridò: “Se’ tu già costì ritto,  
 se’ tu già costì ritto, Bonifazio?  
 Di parecchi anni mi menti lo scritto.  
 Se’ tu sì tosto di quell’aver sazio  
 per lo qual non temesti tòrre a ‘nganno  
 la bella donna, e poi di farne strazio?” (*Inf.* 19.52-7)

In a particularly vindictive move that underscores their personal feud, Dante condemns the pope to Hell *in advance* of his 1303 death. While Dante traveled as a Florentine ambassador to the papal court in 1301, Boniface conspired to expand his power in Tuscany. At the pontiff’s behest, Philip’s brother, Charles of Valois, entered Florence on 1 November 1301, ostensibly to mediate between the warring Black and White Guelfs. Shortly after his arrival, Charles allowed the pro-papal *neri* to seize control of the city and exile the *Guelfi bianchi*, including Dante Alighieri.

Dante directly responds to *Unam sanctam* through Marco’s description of the tempestuous relationship between the empire and the papacy:

L’un l’altro ha spento; ed è giunta la spada  
 col pastorale, e l’un con l’altro insieme  
 per viva forza mal convien che vada;  
 però che, giunti, l’un l’altro non teme. (*Purg.* 16.109-12)

Valor and courtesy were once welcome in Lombardy, before the papacy took up the sword against Frederick II, the last of the Holy Roman Emperors. Now that the papacy claims the empire’s powers for its own, Dante fears that “la Chiesa di Roma, / per confondere in sé due reggimenti, / cade nel fango, e sé brutta e la soma” (*Purg.* 16.127-

9). The source of society's present dissolution stems not from human nature but from poor leadership: "la mala condotta / è la cagion che 'l mondo ha fatto reo, / e non natura che 'n voi sia corrotta" (*Purg.* 16.103-5). By locating the discussion of free will and its political ramifications at the center of the *Commedia*, Dante *poeta* reveals the centrality of such themes to understanding his poem and the world it represents.

Dante had earlier expounded upon the same doctrine in the voice of a different Lombard in *Purgatorio* 6. Upon learning that Dante's guide also hails from Mantua, the thirteenth-century poet Sordello embraces Virgil out of love for their shared heritage. This provokes Dante *poeta* into an extended tirade against Italy, juxtaposing the love of two Mantuan strangers against the current state of Italy, where civil war pits brother against brother and tears cities apart. Castigating the monarchs since Frederick II who have neglected their temporal duties in Italy, "l giardin de lo 'mperio" (*Purg.* 6.105), in favor of acquiring land closer to home, he cries:

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.* 6.91-6)

He imagines Italy as a horse whose riders have deserted her to her own devices. The imperial abandonment of Italy is all the more shameful since Justinian had imposed just laws. Yet as Dante points out, "Che val perché ti racconciasse il freno / Iustiniano, se la sella è vota?" (*Purg.* 6.88-90).



The equine metaphor of *Purg.* 6 and 16 resurfaces in *Convivio*'s description of imperial responsibilities:

Sì che quasi dire si può de lo Imperadore, volendo lo suo officio figurare con una imagine, che elli sia lo cavalcatore de la umana volontade. Lo quale cavallo come vada senza lo cavalcatore per lo campo assai è manifesto, e specialmente ne la misera Italia che senza mezzo alcuno a la sua governazione è rimasa! (*Conv.* 4.9.10)

Church leaders who manipulate the bridal of Italy without allowing the rider to seat himself in the saddle only exacerbate Italy's dire political situation. Dante likely had in mind the numerous popes who meddled in temporal elections—such as Boniface VIII and Clement V, who interfered respectively in the elections of Albert in 1298 and Henry VII in 1308. Such pontiffs arrogantly flout the Gospel's injunction to “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's” (Matthew 22:21).<sup>121</sup>

Only one contemporary monarch can rescue Italy from her current state, oppose the papacy's totalitarian rule, and usher in a new age of universal peace not experienced since the time of Augustus. In *Paradiso* 30, Beatrice directs the pilgrim's attention to an empty chair among the blessed:

E 'n quel gran seggio a che tu li occhi tieni  
per la corona che già v'è sù posta,  
prima che tu a queste nozze ceni,  
sederà l'alma, che fia giù agosta,

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<sup>121</sup> “Reddite ergo quae sunt Caesaris Caesaris, et quae sunt Dei Deo” (Kinney 2013).

de l'alto Arrigo, ch'a drizzare Italia

verrà in prima ch'ella sia disposta. (*Par.* 30.133-8)

Within the intradiegetic time of Dante's journey, the imperial seat was still vacant. In the year 1300, Henry, Count of Luxembourg, served as a vassal to Philip IV of France. Upon the 1308 assassination of Albert I, King of the Romans, Philip schemed to elect his brother Charles of Valois *Romanorum rex*. It was Henry, however, who would be crowned at Aachen the following year. Dante was an ardent proponent of Henry, and believed the young monarch would quell the anti-imperial *Guelfi neri* and bring peace to the Italian peninsula. He recalls the joyous occasion of Henry's initial entry into Lombardy:

So when you, the successor of Caesar and of Augustus, bounded over the Apennines to return the reverend Roman standards, immediately our deep sighs stopped and our flood of tears dried up; and, like the rising of a much-desired sun, new hope for a better age for Italy shone out. Then many people, anticipating the fulfillment of their wishes, joined their joyful voices with that of Virgil, and sang of Saturn's reign and the return of the Virgin. (*Epist.* 7.1)<sup>122</sup>

Regrettably, Henry would perish of malaria before he could realize Dante's dream of unification.

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<sup>122</sup> "Cumque tu, Cesaris et August successor, Apennini iuga transiliens veneranda signa Tarpeia retulisti, protinus longa substiterunt suspiria lacrimarumque diluvia desierunt; et, ceu Titan preoptatus exoriens, nova spes Latio seculi melioris effulsit. Tunc plerique vota sua prevenientes in iubilo tam Saturnia regna quam Virginem redeuntem cum Marone cantabant." The Latin text of the *Epistles* derives from Dante Alighieri, *Epistole*, edited by Ermenegildo Pistelli, vol. 2 (Società Dantesca Italiana, 1960). The English translation may be found in Dante Alighieri, *Four Political Letters*, edited and translated by Claire Honess (Modern Humanities Research Association, 2007).

As the divinely ordained heir of the Roman emperors, Henry was uniquely suited to the endeavor. Dante frequently refers to Henry as the new Christ, new Caesar, and new Aeneas. Dante's epistle to the princes and peoples of Italy (*Epistle 5*) is replete with messianic imagery. Like John the Baptist, Dante heralds the savior's imminent arrival:

The great Lion of the tribe of Judah has pricked up his merciful ears,  
and 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. (*Epist. 5.1*)<sup>123</sup>

While declaring Henry the new Christian messiah, Dante insists upon his idealized Roman and Trojan heritage. Frequent references to Henry as "holy Augustus and Caesar"<sup>124</sup> pepper Dante's letters, while *Epistle 5* paints Henry as the "Hectorean shepherd" ("Hectoreus pastor").<sup>125</sup> Dante's program of establishing Henry's divine right to rule the Holy Roman Empire culminates in the Tuscan poet's letter to Henry, whose salutation begins as follows:

To the most holy, most glorious, and most fortunate conqueror and  
sole lord, the lord Henry, by divine providence king of the Romans,  
and forever Augustus, from his most devoted Dante Alighieri, a

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<sup>123</sup> "Arrexit namque aures misericordes Leo fortis de tribu Iuda; atque ullulatum universalis captivitatis miserans, Moysen alium suscitavit qui de gravaminibus Egiptiorum populum suum eripiet, ad terram lacte ac melle manantem perducens."

<sup>124</sup> "divus et Augustus et Cesar" (*Epist. 5.2*).

<sup>125</sup> *Epistle 5.5*.

Florentine undeservedly in exile, and from all Tuscans who desire peace, who kiss the ground beneath his feet. (*Epist.* 7)<sup>126</sup>

Unfortunately for Dante and Henry, not all Tuscans truly desired peace.

In October 1310, just eight years before his death, Henry, believing that French pope Clement V would crown him Holy Roman Emperor, descended into northern Italy. Yet the Florentine oligarchy resisted Henry's advances, objecting to his extension of imperial authority to the communal lands of the Tuscan countryside, and his insistence that all exiles, regardless of political affiliation, should be recalled. When Henry was crowned King of Italy in Milan on 6 January 1311, Florentine leaders conspicuously declined to send representatives. Claire Honess notes that "During this time, the Florentine commune stopped referring to Henry in its official documents as 'King of the Romans' and instead gave him the title of 'King of the Germans'" (58).

Two months after Henry's coronation as King of Italy, Dante penned the "Letter to the Florentines" (31 March 1311), in which he excoriates his countrymen for their senseless rebellion against Henry. He begins by reminding the recipients of the Empire's divine authorization. In addition to substantiating this truth in the Bible and ancient authorities such as Lucan and Virgil, one must only recall that:

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

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<sup>126</sup> "Sanctissimo gloriosissimo atque felicissimo triumphatori et domino singulari domino Henrico divina providentia Romanorum Regi et semper Augusto, devotissimo sui Dantes Alagherii Florentinus et exul inmeritus ac universaliter omnes Tusci qui pacem desiderant, terre osculum ante pedes."

describe it, and the abject Italians themselves can scarcely measure it with their tears. (*Epist.* 6.1)<sup>127</sup>

The concept of free will is key to understanding Florence's recalcitrance. The Florentines, according to Dante, have resisted Henry's advance out of a misplaced love of liberty. Quoting Romans 13:2<sup>128</sup> in a letter to Henry, Dante excoriates Florence for "rebell[ing] against God's decision, worshipp[ing] the idol of her own free will" (*Epist.* 7.7).<sup>129</sup> The Florentines assert the right to self-sovereignty of the city and its *contado*, thus contesting Henry's imperial claim to the territory. While the Florentines congratulate themselves on resisting tyranny, in truth, their voracious cupidity has made them prisoners of the law of sin (*Epist.* 6.5). He warns them of the consequences of their actions: "while you believe yourselves to be defending the threshold of false liberty, instead you will be thrown into the prison of true slavery" (*Epist.* 6.3).<sup>130</sup>

Dante had conjoined free will and sovereignty in an earlier letter to the peoples of Italy (*Epist.* 5), where he had urged his countrymen to accept Henry as their political savior who comes bearing peace: "Wake up therefore, all of you; rise up to meet your king, you inhabitants of Italy, who are destined to be not only subjects of his Empire, but

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<sup>127</sup> "...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 feratur verba non caperent, sed et vix Ytali infelices lacrimis metiuntur."

<sup>128</sup> "Therefore he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist purchase to themselves damnation. (Itaque qui resistit potestati Dei ordinationi resistit, qui autem resistunt ipsi sibi damnationem adquirunt)" (Kinney 2013).

<sup>129</sup> "Vere 'Dei ordinationi resistit,' proprie voluntatis ydolum venerando..."

<sup>130</sup> "...et quo false libertatis trabeam tueri existimatis, eo vere servitutis in ergastula conciditis."

also free men under his leadership” (*Epist.* 5.6).<sup>131</sup> Without a just ruler to direct her natural inclination to love, Italy will be like the *fanciulla* who lacks the guidance to choose between loving the good or the bad. The Emperor is thus intrinsic to the exercise of free will. The Florentines, “the first and only ones to dread the burden of liberty” (*Epist.* 6.2),<sup>132</sup> fail to recognize this connection, and presumptuously believe themselves able to rule better than Henry. By opposing the Empire and claiming the right to self-government, they subject themselves to an unstable, private government, “opposed to the ‘public rights’ which the Emperor holds over all imperial territories” (Hones 61). Dante juxtaposes Henry, who desires not his own advantage but the public good (*Epist.* 6.6) and the Florentines, who claim to desire the public good, but in reality are wickedly pursuing their own self-interest. Ensnared by cupidity, the Florentines fail to recognize the looming self-destructiveness of their actions. Though they brazenly believe themselves capable of opposing the Empire, building battlements and hiding behind fortifications (*Epist.* 6.3),<sup>133</sup> Dante warns that there is no escape from the keen eye of the Imperial Eagle.

Resistance to Henry VII is therefore tantamount to divine treason.<sup>134</sup> Only the Holy Roman Emperor can guarantee the conditions under which man can realize his God-given potential. Yet universal peace cannot be attained until Henry has defeated the

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<sup>131</sup> “Evigilate igitur omnes et assurgite regi vestro, incole Latiales, non solum sibi ad imperium, sed, ut liberi, ad reginam reservati.”

<sup>132</sup> “...primi et soli iugum libertatis horrentes...”

<sup>133</sup> “An septi vallo ridiculo cuiquam defensionis confiditis?”

<sup>134</sup> The final punishment of *Inferno* 34, where Judas Iscariot, Brutus, and Cassius are eternally masticated in the mouths of Lucifer, supports this belief.

rebellious Florentines. Only then will the gift of peace, “our inheritance, whose loss we unceasingly lament...be fully restored to us” (*Epist.* 7.8).<sup>135</sup>

At the height of the “Letter to the Florentines,” Dante compares Florence to a series of ancient and modern cities, hoping that their examples will check Florence’s reckless pride. This chapter will focus on two of these cities—Saguntum and Babel—while the following chapter will consider the case of Fiesole.

Dante begins by admonishing the Florentines for their presumption, and beseeching them to recall the example of ancient Saguntum:

To your anguish, you will see the buildings, which you did not erect prudently according to your needs, but rather developed recklessly for your own pleasure, destroyed by battering-rams and burned by fire...Likewise, you will be ashamed to see your holy places, where groups of women congregate each day, defiled, and your children, bewildered and ignorant, destined to pay for the sins of their fathers. And if my prophetic gift does not deceive me in foretelling what it has been shown both by unequivocal signs and by unquestionable arguments, then once the majority of your citizens has been lost, either through death or through captivity, those few who are left to endure exile will see, through their tears, the city, worn out by its protracted mourning, finally handed over to strangers. In short, the misfortunes which the glorious city of Saguntum endured, in its loyalty, for the sake of liberty, you too, in your

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<sup>135</sup> “Tunc hereditas nostra, quam sine intermissione deflemus ablatam, nobis erit in integrum restituta.”

disloyalty, will suffer, but ignominiously, not for freedom, but to become slaves. (*Epist.* 6.4.)<sup>136</sup>

Saguntum, now a popular tourist stop thirty kilometers from Valencia in contemporary Spain, was by 219 BCE a prosperous Roman hill town of strategic and symbolic importance. The city gained particular significance during the classical era as the site of the opening move of the Second Punic War. Livy dedicated the first seventeen chapters of Book 21 of *Ab urbe condita* to Hannibal's siege of Saguntum and the bloody consequences it inspired. Livy elaborates upon the war's significance in the opening chapter of the twenty-first book:

I consider myself at liberty to commence what is only a section of my history with a prefatory remark such as most writers have placed at the very beginning of their works, namely, that the war I am about to describe is the most memorable of any that have ever been waged, I mean the war which the Carthaginians, under Hannibal's leadership, waged with Rome. No states, no nations ever met in arms greater in strength or richer in resources...And yet, great as was their strength, the hatred they felt towards each other was almost greater. (21.1.1-2)<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> "Videbitis edificia vestra non necessitati prudenter instructa sed delitiis inconsulte mutata...tam ariete ruere, tristes, quam igne cremari...Templa quoque spoliata, cotidie matronarum frequentata concursu, parvulosque admirantes et inscios peccata patrum luere destinatos videre pigebit. Et si presaga mens mea non fallitur, sic signis veridicis sicut inexpugnabilibus argumentis instructa prenuntians, urbem diutino merore confectam in manus alienorum tradi finaliter, plurima vestri parte seu nece seu captivitate deperdita, perpersuri exilium pauci cum fletu cernetis. Utque breviter colligam, quas tulit calamitates illa civitas gloriosa in fide pro libertate Saguntum, ignominiose vos eas in perfidia pro servitute subire necesse est."

<sup>137</sup> "In parte operis mei licet mihi praefari, quod in principio summae totius professi plerique sunt rerum scriptores, bellum maxime omnium memorabile quae unquam gesta sint me scripturum, quod Hannibale duce Carthaginenses cum populo Romano gessere. Nam neque ualidiores opibus ullae inter se ciuitates gentesque contulerunt arma neque his ipsis tantum unquam uirium aut roboris fuit...Odiis etiam prope maioribus certarunt quam uiribus." The Latin derives from Titus Livy, *Ab urbe condita. Liber XXI*, edited



Following the sudden drowning of Hannibal's father Hamilcar ca. 229 BCE, Hannibal's brother-in-law Hasdrubal the Fair led the Carthaginian forces in Iberia. In 226 BCE, the Romans renewed an earlier treaty with Hasdrubal, and stipulated that "under its terms, the River Ebro was to form the boundary between the two empires, and Saguntum, occupying an intermediate position between them,<sup>138</sup> was to be a free city" (21.2.7).<sup>139</sup> Upon succeeding Hasdrubal following the latter's assassination in 221 BCE, Hannibal turned his mind to conquering Italy. Fully cognizant that a direct move on Saguntum would infuriate the Romans, Hannibal immediately made plans to conquer the city, thus ushering in one of the most savage wars of antiquity. Attila's similar decision to attack Florence in order to strike at Rome underscores Dante's comparison of Florence and Saguntum.

In the ensuing chapters, Livy estimates Hannibal's force as 150,000 men (21.8.3). For eight months, the Phoenician siege towers and battering rams pummeled the city bulwarks, but the Saguntines fiercely defended their walls with the *phalarica*, an incendiary javelin that easily pierced Carthaginian shields and left destruction in its wake. Rather than rushing to defend the Saguntines, the Romans first attempted a diplomatic solution. When the Roman ambassadors arrived on the Spanish shore, Hannibal refused to listen to their entreaties (21.9.3). The emissaries then traveled to New Carthage to reason with the Phoenician senate, but were informed that "the war was started by the

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by P.G. Walsh (University Tutorial Press, 1973). The English translation may be found in Titus Livy, *History of Rome*, translated by Rev. Canon Roberts (E.P. Dutton and Co., 1912).

<sup>138</sup> Saguntum was geographically located at the approximate midpoint between the Ebro River and New Carthage (Cartagena).

<sup>139</sup> "...ut finis utriusque imperii esset amnis Hiberus Saguntinique mediis inter imperia duorum populorum libertas seruaretur."

Saguntines not by Hannibal, and that the Roman people would commit an act of injustice if they took the part of the Saguntines against their ancient allies, the Carthaginians” (21.11.2).<sup>140</sup>

While the Romans dithered, Alorcus, a Spaniard in Hannibal’s army who had previously enjoyed *hospitium*, or guest-rights in Saguntum, entered the city to plead for peace:

As long as you had any hopes of help from Rome, I never breathed a word about making peace. But now that you have no longer anything to hope for from Rome, now that neither your arms nor your walls suffice to protect you, I bring you a peace forced upon you by necessity rather than recommended by the fairness of its conditions. (21.13.3-4)<sup>141</sup>

Alorcus presented Hannibal’s terms to the Saguntine senate: in exchange for offering up all gold and silver and relinquishing the city, Hannibal would allow the Saguntines to depart with a single suit of clothes to a site designated by the Phoenician, “where you can build a new town” (21.13.6).<sup>142</sup> Rather than submit, the Saguntines cast their own gold into the fire, and panic quickly spread among the townspeople. As the sentinels abandoned their posts, Hannibal took advantage of the confusion and penetrated the city walls. His troops invaded the city and murdered the adult inhabitants. Hannibal had

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<sup>140</sup> “Responsum inde legatis Romanis est bellum ortum ab Saguntinis, non ab Hannibale esse; populum Romanum iniuste facere, si Saguntinos uetustissimae Carthaginiensium societati praeponat.”

<sup>141</sup> “Uestra autem causa me nec ullius alterius loqui quae loquor apud uos uel ea fides sit quod neque dum uestris uiribus restitistis neque dum auxilia ab Romanis sperastis pacis unquam apud uos mentionem feci. Postquam nec ab Romanis uobis ulla est spes nec uestra uos iam aut arma aut meonia satis defendunt, pacem adfero ad uos magis necessariam quam aequam.”

<sup>142</sup> “Urbem uobis, quam ex magna parte dirutam, captam fere totam habet, adimit: agros relinquit, locum adsignaturus in quo nouum oppidum aedificetis.”

ordered their deaths, “a cruel order, but under the circumstances inevitable, for whom would it have been possible to spare when they either shut themselves up with their wives and children and burnt their houses over their heads, or if they fought, would not cease fighting till they were killed?” (21.14.3-4).<sup>143</sup> Saint Augustine of Hippo described the siege in *De civitate dei* as the most lamentable disaster of the Second Punic War, and implied that the Saguntines may have resorted to cannibalism after famine ravaged the embattled city.

First the city was wasted by famine; and some even report that she fed on the corpses of her own inhabitants. Then, at the end of their rope, the Saguntines—to keep themselves, at least, from falling into Hannibal’s hands as prisoners—built a huge public funeral pyre, ran everyone through with their swords, and threw themselves and their families into the flames. (3.20).<sup>144</sup>

As Saguntum burned, the Roman ambassadors returned from New Carthage and announced the fall of the city:

And such was the distress of the senate at the cruel fate of their allies, such was their feeling of shame at not having sent help to them, such their exasperation against the Carthaginians and their alarm for the safety of the

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<sup>143</sup> “Quod imperium crudele, ceterum prope necessarium cognitum ipso euentu est; cui enim parci potuit ex iis qui aut inclusi cum coniugibus ac liberis domos super se ipsos concremauerunt aut armati nullum ante finem pugnae quam morientes fecerunt?”

<sup>144</sup> “Primo fame contabuit; nam etiam suorum cadaveribus a nonnullis pasta perhibetur. Deinde omnium fessa rerum, ne saltem captiva in manus Hannibalis perveniret, ingentem rogam publice struxit, in quem ardentem ferro etiam trucidatos omnes se suosque miserunt.” Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, edited by George E. McCracken, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1: Books I-III (Harvard UP, 1957). The English translation derives from Augustine, *The City of God*, translated by William Babcock, vol. 6: Books I-X (New City Press, 2012).

State—for it seemed as though the enemy were already at their gates—that they were in no mood for deliberating, shaken as they were by so many conflicting emotions. There were sufficient grounds for alarm. Never had they met a more active or a more warlike enemy, and never had the Roman republic been so lacking in energy or so unprepared for war.

(Livy 21.16.2-3)<sup>145</sup>

The fall of Saguntum thus spurred the senate to declare war against Carthage.

The city of Saguntum has enjoyed little critical attention. Although the sixth *Epistle* contains the only reference to Saguntum in all of Dante's works, the reference is central to his conception of civic loyalty. Dante's evocation of Saguntum here serves to rebuke the Florentines for their treachery. Rather than following Saguntum's noble example of self-sacrifice and unwavering fealty to Rome, the Florentines currently enslave themselves in rebellion against the Empire. Dante will expand upon this concept of civic treachery in relation to the following city, which highlights the relationship between cities and pride.

In *Epistle* 6.2, Dante questions why the Florentines “insist on forsaking the holy Empire and on trying to build new kingdoms, like second Babylonians, as if the politics of Florence were one thing and that of Rome something quite different” (*Epist.* 6.2).<sup>146</sup> In the Middle Ages, Babylon was conflated with Babel, and was synonymous with “confusion.” Augustine, for example, notes: “This city which was called Confusion is

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<sup>145</sup> “...tantusque simul maeror patres misericordiaeque sociorum peremptorum indigne et pudor non latius auxilii et ira in Carthaginienses metusque de summa rerum cepit, uelut si iam ad portas hostis esset, ut tot uno tempore motibus animi turbati trepidarent magis quam consulerent: nam neque hostem acriorem bellicosioremq; secum congressum, nec rem Romanam tam desiderem unquam fuisse atque imbellem.”

<sup>146</sup> “Quid, fatua tali oppinione summoti, tanquam alteri Babilonii, pium deserentes imperium nova regna temptatis, ut alia sit Florentina civilitas, alia sit Romana?”

Babylon itself, whose marvelous construction is praised even by pagan historians (for in fact Babylon means ‘confusion’)” (16.4).<sup>147</sup> Dante compares contemporary Florence to Babel with regards to their shared sin of pride, symbolized by the recurring tower motif, which led each city to rebel against a just empire.

Dante characterizes both cities as bastions of tyranny. Medieval exegetes accused Nimrod of being the first tyrant, a belief that Dante underscores in numerous passages in the *De vulgari eloquentia* and the *Commedia*. The Genesis 11 narrative of the Tower of Babel separates two accounts of the descendants of Noah. The first account, the Genesis 10 Table of Nations, delineates the descendants of Noah’s second son Ham, whose son Cush bore Nimrod, “a mighty one on the earth. And he was a stout hunter before the Lord. Hence came a proverb: ‘Even as Nimrod, the stout hunter before the Lord.’ And the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon and Erech and Accad and Chalanne in the land of Shinar” (Gen. 10.8-10).<sup>148</sup> Genesis 11 continues the account of the settlement of Shinar, and culminates in the establishment and destruction of the Tower of Babel. Arriving in Shinar, the restless inhabitants cried: “Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top

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<sup>147</sup> “Ista civitatis quae appellata est confusio, ipsa est Babylon, cuius mirabilem constructionem etiam gentium commendat historia. Babylon quippe interpretatur confusio.” Text is from Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, edited by Eva Matthews Sanford and William McAllen Green, The Loeb Classical Library, vol 5: Books XVI-XVIII (Harvard UP, 1965). The translation derives from Augustine, *The City of God*, translated by William Babcock, vol. 7: Books XI-XXII (New City Press, 2013). For Dante’s conflation of Babel and Babylon, see *De vulgari eloquentia* 1.7.4 and *Epistle* 7.4, discussed pp. 86 and 94, respectively.

<sup>148</sup> “Porro Chus genuit Nemrod; ipse coepit esse potens in terra. Et erat robustus venator coram Domino. Ab hoc exivit proverbium: ‘Quasi Nemrod, robustus venator coram Domino.’ Fuit autem principium regni eius Babylon et Arach et Archad et Chalanne in terra Sennaar.” Text and translation from *The Vulgate Bible: Volume I: The Pentateuch*, edited by Swift Edgar (Harvard UP, 2010).

may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11.4).<sup>149</sup> God descends and observes the construction:

‘Behold! It is one people, and all have one tongue, and they have begun to do this, neither will they leave off from their designs till they accomplish them in deed. Come ye, therefore, let us go down and there confound their tongue that they may not understand one another’s speech.’

And so the Lord scattered them from that place into all lands, and they ceased to build the city. And therefore the name thereof was called Babel because there the language of the whole earth was confounded, and from thence the Lord scattered them abroad upon the face of all countries. (Gen. 11.6-9)<sup>150</sup>

Although Genesis 11 does not specifically mention Nimrod in conjunction with the Tower, the placement of Babel in Nimrod’s kingdom of Shinar led early Biblical exegetes to designate the son of Cush as supreme architect. Flavius Josephus’ first-century *Antiquities of the Jews* conflates Babel with the libertine Babylon and depicts Nimrod as a tyrant who builds the Tower both to avoid a potential flood and to defy God.

Nimrod persuaded men not to ascribe it to God if happiness came to them, saying that it was given them through their own power [*propria virtute*].

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<sup>149</sup> “Venite; faciamus nobis civitatem et turrem, cuius culmen pertingat ad caelum, et celebremus nomen nostrum antequam dividamur in universas terras” (Edgar 2010).

<sup>150</sup> “‘Ecce! Unus est populus, et unum labium omnibus, coeperuntque hoc facere, nec desistent a cogitationibus suis donec eas opere compleant. Venite, igitur, descendamus et confundamus ibi linguam eorum ut non audiat unusquisque vocem proximi sui.’ Ataque ita divisit eos Dominus ex illo loco in universas terras, et cessaverunt aedificare civitatem. Et idcirco vocatum est nomen eius Babel quia ibi confusum est labium universae terrae, et inde dispersit eos Dominus super faciem cunctarum regionum” (Edgar, 2010).

He won his kindred to the cause of tyranny, presuming in his own right to call men away from the fear of God and make them set their hopes in their own power. (Quoted in Dronke 46)<sup>151</sup>

Although familiar with the *Antiquities*, it was Augustine's exegesis of Genesis that most influenced Dante's portrayal of Nimrod. Like Josephus, Augustine in *De civitate Dei* presents Nimrod as the despotic engineer of the Tower of Babel. Augustine, however, adds that Nimrod was a giant whose artistic endeavor reflects his impious pride. Peter Dronke elucidates the source of Augustine's claim: "The Old Latin (Vetus Latina) translation of Genesis—which was quoted by numerous Church Fathers—repeatedly calls Nimrod not only a mighty hunter but a giant" (39). Dronke notes that Jerome would later replace the word "giant" in each case, by 'mighty' and 'robust' (*potens, robustus*)" (134). Augustine presents Nimrod as a "hunter against the Lord" rather than "before the Lord," and attributes previous mistranslations to the ambiguity of the Greek epithet.<sup>152</sup> Brian Murdoch clarifies Augustine's explanation: "Citing parallels elsewhere in the Scriptures, Augustine offers a textual criticism of Genesis 10:9 by taking *εναντίον* to mean 'against' rather than 'before' in the phrase *εναντίον Κυρίου* in the Septuagint version, so that Nimrod is a 'hunter against the Lord', and therefore a persecutor and killer" (132).<sup>153</sup> Augustine emphasizes that Nimrod did not intend merely to touch Heaven, but to usurp the dominion of God (16.4).

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<sup>151</sup> Peter Dronke, *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions* (Cambridge UP, 1986).

<sup>152</sup> See Augustine, *The City of God* 16.4.

<sup>153</sup> Brian Murdoch, *The Medieval Popular Bible: Expansions of Genesis in the Middle Ages* (D. S. Brewer, 2003).

Following Augustine and subsequent medieval depictions of Nimrod,<sup>154</sup> Dante paints Nimrod as the colossal architect who recklessly defied God's dominion:

Incorrigible humanity, therefore, led astray by the giant Nimrod, presumed in its heart to outdo in skill not only nature but the source of its own nature, who is God; and began to build a tower in Sennaar, which afterwards was called Babel (that is, 'confusion'). By this means human beings hoped to climb up to heaven, intending in their foolishness not to equal but to excel their creator. (*De vulgari eloquentia* 1.7.4)<sup>155</sup>

These characteristics inform Dante's portrayal of Nimrod in the *Commedia*, where the giant resurfaces at key points to highlight the futility of divine treason.

The pilgrim first encounters Nimrod among the classical giants of *Inferno* 31.<sup>156</sup> Descending into the miasmatic depths of Hell, the pilgrim hears a thundering bugle blast:

...ma io senti' sonare un alto corno,  
 Tanto ch'avrebbe ogne tuon fatto fioco,  
 che, contra sé la sua via seguitando,  
 drizzò li occhi miei tutti ad un loco.  
 Dopo la dolorosa rotta, quando  
 Carlo Magno perdé la santa gesta,

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<sup>154</sup> Such as Peter Comestor and Paulus Orosius.

<sup>155</sup> "Presumpsit ergo in corde suo incurabilis homo, sub persuasione gigantis Nembroth, arte sua non solum superare naturam, sed etiam ipsum naturantem, qui Deus est, et cepit edificare turrin in Sennaar, que postea dicta est Babel, hoc est 'confusio,' per quam celum sperabat ascendere, intendens inscius non equare, sed suum superare Factorem." Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*, edited by Steven Botterill (Cambridge UP, 1996). Botterill's edition includes the Latin based upon Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo's established text.

<sup>156</sup> Nimrod's relation to the classical giants will be explored below, pp. 100-2.



non sonò sì terribilmente Orlando. (*Inf.* 31.12-8)

Dante's allusion to the *Chanson de Roland* recalls the Frankish warrior's oliphant:

Count Roland is fighting nobly,

But his body is covered with sweat and is very hot.

He has an ache and a great pain in his head,

His temple is burst because he sounded the horn.

But he wants to know if Charles will come,

He draws the oliphant, he sounded it feebly.

The Emperor halted and listened to it:

"My lords," he said, "things are going very badly for us!

My nephew Roland will be gone from us this day,

I hear by the sound of the horn that he will not live much longer." (*laisse*

156, vv. 2099-2108)<sup>157</sup>

The horn that signaled Roland's ruination, caused by his reckless ego, proleptically sounds the giant's own humiliation.

After this initial aural impression, Dante seems to spy many towers, asking his guide, "Maestro, di, che terra è questa?" (*Inf.* 31.21). Virgil tenderly corrects the

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<sup>157</sup> The Oxford text and English translation derive from *La Chanson de Roland*, edited and translated by Gerard J. Brault (Pennsylvania State Press, 1984):

Li quens Rollant gentement se cumbat,  
 Mais le cors ad tressüet e mult chalt.  
 En la teste ad e dolor e grant mal,  
 Rumput est li temples, por ço que il cornat.  
 Mais saveir volt se Charles i vendrat,  
 Trait l'olifan, fieblement le sunat.  
 Li emperere s'estut, si l'escultat:  
 "Seignurs," dist il, "Mult malement nos vait!  
 Rollant mis niés hoi cest jur nus defalt.  
 Jo oi al corner que guaires ne vivrat.

Florentine poet, and responds, “sappi che non son torri, ma giganti, / e son nel pozzo intorno da la ripa / da l’ombelico in giuso tutti quanti” (*Inf.* 31.31-3). As the mist clears, Dante perceives his error and his fear heightens, for he can now apprehend the giant-rimmed pit. He begins to discern the face of a giant who addresses the wayfarers in an unintelligible tongue. Virgil admonishes the giant for speaking, and orders him to employ the horn that is fastened around his chest when his passions next consume him:

...Anima sciocca,  
tienti col corno, e con quel ti disfoga  
quand’ira o altra passion ti tocca!  
  
Cércati al collo, e troverai la soga  
che ‘l tien legato, o anima confusa,  
e vedi lui che ‘l gran petto ti dogà. (*Inf.* 31.70-5)

Virgil finally reveals the giant’s identity to Dante:

...Elli stessi s’accusa;  
questi è Nembrotto per lo cui mal coto  
pur un linguaggio nel mondo non s’usa.  
  
Lasciànlo stare e non parliamo a vòto;  
ché cos’ è a lui ciascun linguaggio  
come ‘l suo ad altrui, ch’a nullo è noto. (*Inf.* 31.76-81)

Virgil’s patronizing words—“spoken to Nimrod, perhaps hoping—as we might, when speaking to an animal, or a very young child, or an idiot—that something at least would get across” (Dronke 39)—underscore the suitability of this *contrapasso*. Nimrod’s presumptuous construction of the city of Babel—which resulted in the *confusio*

*linguarum*—has rendered Nimrod a frustrated figure who blows his bugle because he lacks the proper outlet of expression. Virgil’s appellation of Nimrod as “*anima confusa*” (*Inf.* 31.74) further recalls the confusion of tongues effected by the destruction of the Tower.

While Dante’s description of the giant’s face as “*lunga e grossa / come la pina di San Pietro a Roma*” (*Inf.* 31.58-59)—alluding to the bronze fir-cone that Dante would have seen during his visit to Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome—evokes the spiritual rebellion of Boniface VIII, it is the tower that most clearly symbolizes the giants’ pride. This image is:

expressed four times by the noun *torre* (20, 31, 41, 107) and reinforced twice, once by means of the coined verb *torreggiare* and once by the homonymous verb *tòrre* ‘togliere.’ Moreover, two other towers appear in this canto: the Tower of Babel, implicit in the mention of Nimrod, and the Garisenda Tower in Bologna, likened to the bending figure of Antaeus in the final image. For each of the three giants observed and described, there is a corresponding allusion to a tower; in fact, the emphasis is such that the canto could be properly called either that of the towering giants or that of the giant towers. (Kleinhenz 271)<sup>158</sup>

Emphasizing their inimical relationship to divine power, Dante compares the ring of giants to the towers of Monteriggioni:

Però che, come su la cerchia tonda

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<sup>158</sup> Christopher Kleinhenz, “Dante’s Towering Giants: *Inferno* XXXI,” *Romance Philology*, vol. 27, 1974, pp. 269-85.

Montereggion di torri si corona,

così la proda che 'l pozzo circonda

torreggiavan di mezza la persona

li orribili giganti, cui minaccia

Giove del cielo ancora quando tuona. (*Inf.* 31.40-5)

The massive walls of the Tuscan fortress, located eight miles northwest of Siena, were constructed by the Sienese shortly after their victory over the Florentine Guelphs at Montaperti, a battle that signaled the bloodiest clash between papal and imperial interests in medieval Italy.

The symbolism of *Inferno* 31—as well as Nimrod's *contrapasso*—paint Nimrod as a tyrannical giant whose reckless ego led to the ruination of his people. Nimrod's *superbia* links him to an earlier Old Testament figure who engaged in a fateful transgression against his creator. As the patriarch of mankind, Adam exerts a pervasive influence in the *Commedia*. Dante's description of Nimrod's gargantuan dimensions establishes a semantic link between Adam and the giant:

sì che la ripa, ch'era *perizoma*

dal mezzo in giù, ne mostrava ben tanto

di sovra, che di giugnere a la chioma

tre Frison s'averien dato mal vanto. (*Inf.* 31.61-4; my emphasis)

*Perizoma*, a hapax legomenon in the *Commedia*, recalls the “perizomata” of Genesis 3.7, “the word used of the fig-leaves with which Adam and Eve covered their genitals”

(Dronke 38).<sup>159</sup> Kleinhenz notes:

Just as Adam and Eve’s transgression resulted in banishment from the Garden of Eden, a punishment charged with both individual significance and universal consequences, the effect of Nimrod’s insubordination in building the Tower of Babel was the confusion of his own speech and that of the world’s languages. Pride then has made the creature rebel against his Creator with the result being the double loss of innocence and a single, divine language. (“Dante and the Bible” 228)<sup>160</sup>

The physical description of Nimrod thus evokes the primal *nec plus ultra* transgression of Adam, the symbol of proud rebellion against one’s creator.

Adam later makes explicit this connection when responding to Dante’s desire to know what language he used in Eden:

La lingua ch’io parlai fu tutta spenta  
innanzi che a l’ovra inconsumabile  
fosse la gente di Nembròt attenta:  
ché nullo effetto mai razionabile,  
per lo piacere uman che rinovella  
seguendo il cielo, sempre fu durabile. (*Par.* 26.124-9)

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<sup>159</sup> “Et aperti sunt oculi amborum, cumque cognovissent esse se nudos, consuerunt folia ficus, et fecerunt sibi perizomata. (And the eyes of them both were opened, and when they perceived themselves to be naked, they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves aprons)” (Edgar 2010).

<sup>160</sup> Christopher Kleinhenz, “Dante and the Bible: Intertextual Approaches to the *Divine Comedy*,” *Italica*, vol. 63, no. 3, Autumn 1986, pp. 225-36.

Having returned from his exile in Limbo to the Earthly Paradise only through Christ's Harrowing, Adam confirms the vanity of Nimrod's endeavor. Mankind, bereft of God's grace, is naturally unstable. Any attempt to counter this instability without divine intervention will prove to be equally as volatile. Dante further positions Babel as the culmination of a program of exile that began with Eden and the Flood: "And so, reader, the human race, either forgetful or disdainful of earlier punishments, and averting its eyes from the bruises that remained, came for a third time to deserve a beating, putting its trust in its own foolish pride" (*De vulg.* 1.7.3).<sup>161</sup> This transgression resulted in exile from the delights of its homeland (1.7.2).<sup>162</sup>

Adam's sin has made the human race particularly susceptible to pride, a burden that Dante knows only too well. Like Adam, Dante serves as both Everyman—the representative of the human race, exiled from Edenic perfection—and individual—the historical poet expelled from his native city, as the opening *terzina* of the *Commedia* attests: "Nel mezzo del cammin di *nostra* vita / *mi* ritrovai per una selva oscura, / che la diritta via era smarrita" (*Inf.* 1.1-3; my emphasis). The sin of *superbia* plagues both Dantes. As an individual, Dante recognizes that he carries "lo 'ncarco" of pride:

Li occhi...mi fieno ancor qui tolti,  
ma picciol tempo, ché poca è l'offesa  
fatta per esser con invidia vòlti.

Troppa è più la paura ond'è sospesa

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<sup>161</sup> "Ecce, lector, quod, vel oblitus homo, vel vilipendens disciplinas priores et avertens oculos a vibicibus que remanserant, tertio insurrexit ad verbera per superbam stultitiam presumendo."

<sup>162</sup> "Num fuerat satis ad tui correptionem quod per primam prevaricationem eliminata, delictiarum exulabas a patria?"

l'anima mia del tormento di sotto,  
 che già lo 'ncarco di là giù mi pesa (*Purg.* 13.133-8).

In his role as the Everyman, Dante is equally as culpable, and universalizes this burden by addressing the readers of the *Commedia* as “figliuoli d'Eva” (*Purg.* 12.71), thus conveying “the universal implications of original sin” (Kleinhenz, “Dante’s Towering Giants” 282).

The first terrace that Dante visits in Purgatory is the Terrace of Pride, where the souls expiate their sin by crouching under the weight of heavy boulders. Here, one may recall the repeated use of “chinare” to describe the Well of Giants in *Inferno* 31.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, the terrace is described as “un piano / solingo” (*Purg.* 10.20-1) significantly devoid of haughty towers. Compelled by their burdens, the prideful behold the elaborate tiles beneath their feet that serve as *exempla* of *humilitas*—such as Mary’s “Ecce ancilla Dei” (*Purg.* 10.44) and the Psalmist’s humble dance—and of *superbia*—including Troy, Niobe, Arachne, Lucifer and Briareus. The architect of the Tower of Babel is certainly present: “Vedea Nembròt a piè del gran lavoro / quasi smarrito, e riguardar le genti / che ‘n Sennaàr con lui superbi fuoro” (*Purg.* 12.34-6). It is on this Terrace that Virgil reminds Dante of the burden he carries: “Ché questi che vien meco, per lo 'ncarco / de la carne d'Adamo onde si veste, / al montar sù, contra sua voglia, è parco” (*Purg.* 11.43-5), thus cautioning the pilgrim that he too will spend part of the afterlife contemplating the consequences of Nimrod’s transgression.

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<sup>163</sup> See *Inf.* 31.126, 137, 140, 144.

Arrogance is a trait shared by both Babel and Florence.<sup>164</sup> In *Epistle 7*, Dante rebukes Henry for tarrying in northern Italy rather than quashing the Florentine resistance. He warns that the “tyrant of Tuscany is bolstered by its confidence in your continued hesitation, and becomes stronger and stronger day to day by appealing to the pride of the evil-doers, adding insult to injury” (*Epist. 7.4*).<sup>165</sup> Therefore, “for a long time we have wept beside the streams of confusion,<sup>166</sup> and have ceaselessly invoked the protection of our rightful king, praying that he will destroy the brutal tyrant’s hangers-on and restore us to justice” (*Epist. 7.1*).<sup>167</sup> Dante further accuses the Florentines in *Epistle 6* of being united only in doing evil, an accusation he had earlier levied at the inhabitants of Babel who came together to build the tower.<sup>168</sup>

Fearing they would be scattered upon the earth and lose their autonomy, the ancient inhabitants of Babel constructed a tower in opposition to God’s rule. The Florentines too dreaded the loss of their independence, and believed that by building towers, they would preserve their liberty against the Roman emperor. Dante chastises them for the futility of this endeavor in *Epistle 6.3*:

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<sup>164</sup> Cacciaguida and Brunetto will connect this Florentine sin to the new mercantile ideology of *guadagno*. See pp. 126-31.

<sup>165</sup> “...et ab Augusti circumspection non defluat quod Tuscania tyrannis in dilationis fiducia confortatur, et cotidie malignantium cohortando superbiam vires novas accumulate, temeritatem temeritati adiciens.”

<sup>166</sup> A reference to Psalm 136 of the Vulgate: “Upon the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. (Super flumina Babylonis, illic sedimus et flevimus cum recordaremur Sion).” Text and translation from *The Vulgate Bible: Volume III: The Poetical Books*, edited by Swift Edgar (Harvard UP, 2011).

<sup>167</sup> “Hinc diu super flumina confusionis deflevimus, et patrocina iusti regis incessanter implorabamus, qui satellitium sevi tyranny disperderet et nos in nostra iustitia reformaret.”

<sup>168</sup> See Dante’s statement in the *De vulgari eloquentia* that “Almost the whole of the human race had collaborated in this work of evil. (Siquidem pene totum humanum genus ad opus iniquitatis coierat)” (1.7.6).



Has your presumptuous arrogance deprived you, like the mountains of Gilboa, of that dew which falls from heaven, to such an extent that not only do you remain unworried at having resisted the decree of the eternal Senate, but neither, moreover, are you worried by your own lack of fear? If so, do you also expect to remain untouched by that fear of destruction which is human and this-worldly, now that the inevitable sorry end of your proud blood and of the pillage which has caused so much grief is fast approaching? Or do you believe that you can somehow defend yourselves from behind your pathetic fortifications? Oh you, who are united only in doing evil! Oh you, who have been blinded by your extraordinary cupidity! (*Epist.* 6.3)<sup>169</sup>

Dante warns the Florentines that “your opposition will only further provoke the just king when he comes, so that the mercy which always accompanies his army will fly away in indignation; and while you believe yourselves to be defending the threshold of false liberty, instead you will be thrown into the prison of true slavery” (*Epist.* 6.3).<sup>170</sup> In conflating Babel and Florence, and contrasting the latter with loyal Saguntum, Dante underscores the self-serving and ill-fated presumption of those who oppugn God’s Empire. Dante will explore the source of Florence’s deviance as well as its consequences in the following chapter.

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<sup>169</sup> “Sin prorsus arrogantia vestra insolens adeo roris altissimi, ceu cacumina Gelboe, vos fecit exsortes, ut Senatus eterni consulto restitisse timori non fuerit, nec etiam non timuisse timetis; nunquid timor ille perniciosus, humanus videlicet atque mundanus, abesse poterit, superbissimi vestri sanguinis vestreque multum lacrimande rapine inevitabili naufragio properante? An septi vallo ridiculo cuiquam defensionis confiditis? O male concordēs! o mira cupidine obcecati!”

<sup>170</sup> “Non equidem spes, quam frustra sine more fovetis, reluctantia ista iuvabitur, sed hac obice iusti regis adventus inflammabitur amplius, ac, indignata, misericordia semper concomitans eius exercitum avolabit; et quo false libertatis trabeam tueri existimatis, eo vere servitutis in ergastula conciditis.”

## CHAPTER 4

## Negotiating Identity in Dante's Florence

Comparisons to Saguntum and Babel have illustrated Florence's pride, but to understand fully her depravity, Dante must return to the beginnings of her history. As he delves into Florence's past, Dante will discover that civic and familial genealogy are intimately entwined. Only by illuminating Florence's past will he uncover his future destiny.

One cannot comprehend contemporary Florence without tracing her relationship to Fiesole, the last entry in *Epistle 6*'s catalogue of cities. The Tuscan poet accepted and elaborated upon the legendary foundation of Fiesole as advanced in the *Chronica de origine civitatis* and subsequent Florentine chronicles. He attributes the foundation of Fiesole to the god Jupiter and his wife Electra, whose son Dardanus founded the city of Troy. As progenitor of the Trojans, and therefore of the Romans, Electra leads the crowd of virtuous pagans in *Inferno 4*: "I' vidi Eletra con molti compagni, / tra ' quai conobbi Ettòr ed Enea, / Cesare armato con li occhi grifagni" (*Inf.* 4.121-3). Though Dante dismisses the godly heritage of Dardanus as a fable that should not enter into philosophical discussions, he nonetheless cites Dardanus as *capostipite* of the Trojans in *Conv.* 4.14.14-5.<sup>171</sup>

Dante traces the parentage of Florence from Fiesole to Troy to Rome. The notion that virtue may be inherited is central to understanding this genealogy of cities. Not only

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<sup>171</sup> "E non è contro a ciò, che si dice Dardano esser stato figlio di Giove, ché ciò è favola, de la quale, filosoficamente disputando, curare non si dee."

was Aeneas a paragon of personal nobility, as Virgil describes in the *Aeneid*, but he also inherited nobility from his ancestors and wives. Thus “Europe ennobled him through his most remote male ancestor, namely Dardanus; while Africa did likewise through his oldest female ancestor, namely Electra, who was the daughter of the famous king Atlas” (*Mon.* 2.3.11).<sup>172</sup> Dante concludes this chapter of the *Monarchia* by asking the reader: “Who is not sufficiently persuaded that the father of the Roman people, and consequently that people itself, was the most noble under the heavens? Or from whom shall divine predestination be hidden in that double confluence of blood from every part of the world into one man?” (2.3.17).<sup>173</sup> As descendants of pious Aeneas, the Romans have inherited their father’s virtue. Upon pointing out the twinned flame that contains Ulysses and Diomedes in *Inferno* 26, Virgil declares to Dante that “dentro da la lor fiamma si geme / l’agguato del caval che fé la porta / onde uscì de’ Romani il gentil seme” (*Inf.* 26.55-60). Similarly, Dante writes in the *Convivio*: “E però che più dolce natura [in] signoreggiando, e più forte in sostenendo, e più sottile in acquistando né fu né fia, che quella de la gente latina—sì come per esperienza si può vedere—e massimamente [di] quello popolo santo, nel quale l’alto sangue troiano era mischiato, cioè Roma, Dio quello elesse a quello officio” (*Conv.* 4.4.10). The confluence of Trojan blood in Roman veins further guarantees their sovereignty.

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<sup>172</sup> “Europa vero avo antiquissimo, scilicet Dardano: Affrica quoque avia vetustissima, Electra scilicet, nata magni nominis regis Athlantis.”

<sup>173</sup> “...cui non satis persuasum est romani populi patrem, et per consequens ipsum populum, nobilissimum fuisse sub celo? Aut quem illo duplici concursu sanguinis a qualibet mundi parte in unum virum predestinatio divina latebit?”

Dante appends Florence, “bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma” (*Conv.* 1.3.4.), to this imperial genealogy. Dante follows the early chroniclers<sup>174</sup> in dating Florence’s origins to the birth of the Roman Empire. In the course of his description of the imperial standard, Justinian traces the “sacrosanto segno” (*Par.* 6.32) in its opposition to tyranny:

Esso atterrò l’orgoglio de li Aràbi  
 che di retro ad Anibale passaro  
 l’alpestre rocce, Po, di che tu labi.  
 Sott’ esso giovanetti triunfaro  
 Scipione e Pompeo; e a quel colle  
 sotto ‘l qual tu nascesti parve amaro. (*Par.* 6.49-54)

By locating Dante’s native city of Florence beneath the shadow of Fiesole, Justinian alludes to Fiesole’s support for Catiline during the conspiracy and the hilltop city’s historic opposition to Julius Caesar. Justinian’s description of Caesar’s rule, immediately following his reference to Fiesole, underscores this connection: “Poi, presso al tempo che tutto ‘l ciel volle / redur lo mondo a suo modo sereno, / Cesare per voler di Roma il tolle” (*Par.* 6.55-57). Justinian castigates Fiesole, headquarters of Catiline’s forces, for its rebellion against Roman law.

As the daughter of Rome and granddaughter of Troy,<sup>175</sup> Florence should reflect her illustrious lineage and stand in virtuous opposition to tyranny. At some point between

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<sup>174</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>175</sup> He adds in *Epistle* 7.7 that Rome had made Florence in her own image (“ad ymaginem suam”), referring to the reconstruction of Florence after its destruction by Totila, when the city was based upon the model of Christian Rome.

Caesar's foundation and the early Trecento, however, the city had lost its way. Betraying her imperial heritage, she has now become the tyrant of Tuscany.<sup>176</sup> After comparing Florence to Saguntum and Babel, Dante concludes his catalogue of cities with reference to Florence's original nemesis: "You most worthless offspring of Fiesole! You savages, now punished once again!" (*Epist.* 6.6). Having rebelled against Henry, the new Caesar, Florence has perverted her filial relationship to Rome and evolved into the very city that she was built to oppose.

Outside of the *Commedia*, perhaps Dante's most scathing condemnation of Florence may be found in his epistle to Henry (*Epist.* 7), where he likens his native city to a "viper who turns against the vitals of her own mother."<sup>177</sup> In a feverish diatribe, he continues:

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, which made her in its own image and likeness. She gives off fetid fumes, dripping with gore, which cause any nearby flocks still unaware of her ways to waste away, when, seducing them with insincere flattery and outright lies she wins her neighbours over to her side and, having won them over, makes fools of them. (*Epist.* 7.7)<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> "Tuscan tyrannus" (*Epist.* 7.4).

<sup>177</sup> "Hec est vipera versa in viscera genitricis."

<sup>178</sup> "Vere matrem viperea feritate dilaniare contendit, dum contra Romam cornua revellionis exacuit, que ad ymaginem suam atque similitudinem fecit illam. Vere fumos, evaporante sanie, vitiantes exhalat, et inde vicine pecudes et inscie contabescunt, dum falsis illiciendo blanditittis et figmentis aggregat sibi finitimos et infatuat aggregatos."

Within the *Commedia*, Florence continues to receive the brunt of Dante's frustration.<sup>179</sup>

Both nostalgic and inflammatory, his account of the origins of Florence evinces his disappointment in Florence's depravity. Dante will first focus upon the mercurial relationship between Florence and Fiesole vis-à-vis the statue of Mars.

The pagan god Mars played an integral role in the fate of Florence, but Dante's Mars is not the god of generic war; rather, he is the patron of *civil* war, of the prideful rebellion against divine law. Dante's emphasis on Mars's relation to civil war is most evident in his depiction of the giants in the *Commedia*. These creatures of Mars, "li orribili giganti, cui minaccia / Giove del cielo ancora quando tuona" (*Inf.* 31.44-45), are instruments of war.<sup>180</sup> Both biblical and classical authorities inform Dante's depiction of the giants in *Inferno* 31. The Book of Baruch refers to the giants as "those renowned men that were from the beginning of great stature, expert in war" (*Bar.* 3:26).<sup>181</sup> Despite their imposing stature, "the Lord chose not them, neither did they find the way of knowledge; therefore did they perish. And because they had not wisdom, they perished through their

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<sup>179</sup> Though Dante certainly does not refrain from critiquing other cities for their vices. See, for example, Dante's condemnation of Pistoia (*Inf.* 25.12-5), Pisa (*Inf.* 33.79-90), and Genoa (*Inf.* 33.151-7).

<sup>180</sup> Dante praises Nature for ceasing to produce the giants, thus depriving Mars of his terrible instruments:

Natura certo, quando lasciò l'arte  
di sì fatti animali, assai fê bene  
per tòrre tali essecutori a Marte.  
E s'ella d'elefanti e di balene  
non si pente, chi guarda sottilmente,  
più giusta e più discreta la ne tene;  
ché dove l'argomento de la mente  
s'aggiugne al mal volere e a la possa.  
nessun riparo vi può far la gente. (*Inf.* 31.49-57)

<sup>181</sup> "Ibi fuerunt gigantes, nominati illi qui ab initio fuerunt statura magna, scientes bellum." Text and translation from *The Vulgate Bible: Volume IV: The Major Prophetic Books*, edited by Angela M. Kinney (Harvard UP, 2012).

folly” (*Bar.* 3:27-28).<sup>182</sup> In the Well of Giants that divides the eighth and ninth circles of Hell, only one giant, the aforementioned Nimrod, directly defied the Christian God.<sup>183</sup>

The remaining named inhabitants of the Well of Giants derive from classical sources.

In pairing Nimrod and the classical giants, Dante conflates the rebellion of the classical giants against Jove with rebellion against the Christian deity. After his encounter with Nimrod, Dante meets Ephialtes, the son of Neptune who defied the Olympian gods: “Questo superbo volle esser esperto / di sua potenza contra ‘l sommo Giove” (*Inf.* 31.91-2). Dante then inquires after Briareus, but Virgil instead directs the pilgrim’s attention to Antaeus, claiming that “Quel che tu vuo’ veder, più là è molto / ed è legato e fatto come questo, / salvo che più feroce par nel volto” (*Inf.* 31.103-105). Though Dante will not meet Briareus face-to-face in Hell, the pilgrim will encounter his likeness among the carved effigies of *Purgatorio* 10-12, where the giants number among the *exempla in malo* of pride. Here Dante also presents Briareus as the classical counterpart of Lucifer:

Vedea colui che fu nobil creato  
più ch’altra creatura, giù dal cielo  
folgoreggiando scender, da l’un lato.  
  
Vedëa Briareo fitto dal telo  
celestial giacer, da l’altra parte,  
grave a la terra per lo mortal gelo. (*Purg.* 12.25-30)

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<sup>182</sup> “Non hos elegit Dominus, neque viam disciplinae invenerunt; propterea perierunt. Et quoniam non habuerunt sapientiam, interierunt propter insipientiam suam” (Kinney 2012).

<sup>183</sup> See pp. 83-95 for Nimrod’s significance to Dante’s political theory.

Lucifer, whose vainly flapping wings contribute to his own stasis, is the original exemplum of the futility of pride. In the first terrace of Purgatory, Dante warns his readers to beware of mankind's predisposition towards *superbia*:

O superbi cristian, miseri lassi,  
 che, de la vista de la mente infermi,  
 fidanza avete ne' retrosi passi,  
 non v'accorgete voi che noi siam vermi  
 nati a formar l'angelica farfalla,  
 che vola a la giustizia senza schermi? (*Purg.* 10.121-6)

In *Inferno* 34, Lucifer, who “contra ‘l suo fattore alzò le ciglia” (*Inf.* 34.35), has been reduced to a wormlike state: “vermo reo che ‘l mondo fóra” (108). Lucifer's epithet concretizes the base state of human nature when devoid of grace. Adam and Lucifer, like the classical and biblical giants, asserted their superiority to their creator, and rebelled against divine law, the very definition of pride.

One last classical figure anticipates Dante's encounter with the irreverent giants. Among the blasphemers of *Inferno* 14, the pilgrim inquires after a shade who seems disdainful of physical punishment. Proud Capaneus recounts the circumstances of his death:

...Qual io fui vivo, tal son morto.  
 Se Giove stanchi ‘l suo fabbro da cui  
 crucciato prese la folgore aguta  
 onde l'ultimo dì percosso fui;

.....



e me saetti con tutta sua forza:

non ne potrebbe aver vendetta allegra. (*Inf.* 14.51-54, 59-60)

One of the seven kings who assailed Thebes, Capaneus' disdain for God seems undiminished in death.<sup>184</sup> In essence, both classical and biblical giants are punished in Hell for their rebellion against divine authority. Prideful presumption, as symbolized by the grotesque instruments of Mars, results in a self-induced fall from grace.

How fitting then that Mars was traditionally believed to be the original patron of the "città partita" (*Inf.* 6.61). The malign influence of the god of civil war is intrinsic to the history of Florence. Guido da Pisa explains that when the Romans united with the displaced Fiesolans to construct a new city, they wished to honor the god who had granted them victory.<sup>185</sup> After defeating Catiline's Fiesolan forces, the first generation of Florentine settlers elected Mars as their civic patron, a choice that reflected the pagan populace's martial values. Jacopo della Lana (1324-8) explains in his commentary to *Inf.* 13 that the choice of Mars as patron allegorically meant that "Firenze triunfava per

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<sup>184</sup> "Que fu l'un d'i sette regi / ch'assiser Tebe; ed ebbe e par ch'elli abbia / Dio in disdegno, e poco par che 'l pregi" (*Inf.* 14.68-70).

<sup>185</sup> Guido notes: "Civitas ista est civitas florentina, que tempore paganorum habuit patronum Martem, qui a paganis dicitur deus belli, tempore vero christianorum habuit patronum Iohannem Baptistam. Ad quorum evidentiam clariorem est sciendum quod, quando Romani una cum Phesulanicam civitatem Florentie [h]edificaverunt, volentes diis templa erigere, sapientes consulerunt cuinam deo et in quo loco civitatis templum tali deo edificare deberent. Qui a Marte victoriam de Phesulanicis se habuisse credentes, et per astrorum scientiam contemplantes quod in quadam parte ipsius patrie ipse deus belli, sive potius ipse planeta, suam influentiam influebat, dederunt consilium quod ipsi Marti templum venerabile consecrarent, in illa scilicet parte ubi, secundum astrologiam, suam influentiam cognoverunt, ut dictum est. Unde cives pulcherrimum templum forma rotundum, ad honorem ipsius Martis, secundum habita oracula, construxerunt" (commentary to *Inf.* 13.143-4). Guido da Pisa, *Guido da Pisa's Expositiones et glose super Comediam Dantis, or Commentary on Dante's Inferno*, edited by Vincenzo Cioffari (State U of New York P, 1974).

battaglie, e non metteva altro mezzo nelli suoi affari che farla con le mani.”<sup>186</sup> With the proliferation of Christianity during the time of Constantine, the city decided to change its patron to John the Baptist, which Jacopo attributes to a shift in cultural values, though not a particularly positive one, between the original population and its Christian progeny:

Or qui per allegoria l’autor mostra la qualità dei fiorentini dopo il primo reggimento, cioè di poi in li non mettea ne’ suoi affari altro fare che a duello, e pone *per locum a simili* che sicome tra li altri discipuli e fedeli ch’ebbe le nostro Signore, san Joanni Baptista fue salvatico ed astratto da ogni conversazione e vita umana, così li fiorentini sono astratti, diversi, selvatichi e crudi a comparazione di tutti li altri umani atti. (Commentary to *Inf.* 13.143-5)

According to Florentine legend, this second, Christian construction of Florence occurred in response to Totila’s reconstruction of Fiesole. Having been usurped by a Christian saint, the god of war thus sought to fracture the Florentine state.

Mars’ pernicious influence on Florentine affairs is concretized in a statue of a knight astride his horse. Known to early chroniclers as the statue of Mars, the effigy was thought to have originally decorated a pillar of the Roman settlement’s Temple of Mars. The Florentine populace believed that the pagan god exercised his power through the vigilant eye of his idol:

...tennero molti, che quando la statua avesse mutamento, che la città di Firenze l’abbia. Onde oppinano, che Marte faccia sua influenza

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<sup>186</sup> Jacopo della Lana, *Comedia di Dante degli Allagherii*, edited by Luciano Scarabelli (Tipografia Regia, 1866).

grandemente sopra quelli cittadini in odj, discordie, e omicidj tra loro,  
 e querre cittadine, e strane, le quali fanno tristizia, sì come la pace  
 letizia. (Ottimo 1333, commentary to *Inf.* 13.144-8)

Upon the Christianization of the city and dedication of the Temple to John the Baptist, the statue was removed and placed on a tall tower near the Arno. In his commentary to *Inf.* 13, Boccaccio explains that some elements in the city, fearing the pagan god's reprisal, "non la vollero disfare né gittar via" (143-5),<sup>187</sup> as they believed the fate of the city was bound to that of the statue. The Ottimo (1333) dismisses this belief as originating from "una falsa oppinione, ch'ebbero li antichi di quella cittade, la quale io scrittore domandandonelle, udii così raccontare" (commentary to *Inf.* 13.144-8). At the time of Attila (Totila's) alleged destruction of the city,<sup>188</sup> the statue fell into the Arno, where it was lost for centuries.

Boccaccio recounts that the statue was recovered only around the time of the second, Roman reconstruction of Florence, whereupon it was placed on a pillar at the foot of the Ponte Vecchio. However, the years of submersion in the Arno had maimed the idol. Boccaccio notes that the statue was "ripescata e ritrovata, ma non intera, per ciò che dalla cintola in su la imagine di Marte era rotta e quella parte non si ritrovò mai; e così diminuita dicono che fu posta, come di sopra è detto, sopra ad un pilastro in capo del ponte Vecchio" (commentary to *Inf.* 13.143-5). There it remained until the great flood of

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<sup>187</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante*, edited by Giorgio Padoan, vol. 6 of *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, edited by Vittore Branca (Mondadori, 1965).

<sup>188</sup> The alleged date of the (fictitious) destruction of Florence varies among chroniclers. The Ostrogoth king Totila, commonly confused with Attila, ruler of the Huns, did besiege Florence in 542, though his forces eventually withdrew, leaving the city in tact. Boccaccio, following Giovanni Villani, locates the event in the year 450 CE, while the Ottimo prefers the year 444 CE. See Chapter One, pp. 13-6 for further discussion of this point.

1333, when it was lost once more to the murky waters of the Arno. The Ottimo (1338) summarizes the symbiotic link between the city and statue:

Qui tocca l'auctore una oppinione ch'ebboro li antichi Fiorentini la quale fue circa la detta statova, ch'ella fosse socto una medesima constellatione facta et edificata la cittade de Firenze, sì che consumata la statova, fosse consumata la cittade et quando la statova se mutasse per alcuno modo, si mutasse lo stato della detta cittade. (Commentary to *Inf.* 13.146-50)<sup>189</sup>

Boccaccio, like the Ottimo, dismisses this belief as a pagan error:

...tocca l'autore una oppinione erronea, la qual fu già in molti antichi, cioè che, per la detta permutazione, Marte con guerre e con battaglie, le quali aspettano all'arte sua, cioè al suo essercizio, abbia sempre poi tenuta questa città in tribulazione e in mala ventura. La qual cosa non è solamente sciocchezza, ma ancora eresia a credere, che alcuna costellazione possa nelle menti degli uomini porre alcuna necessità; né sarebbe della giustizia di Dio che alcuno, lasciando un malvagio consiglio e seguendone un buono, dovesse per questo sempre essere in fatica e in noia; ma si dee più tosto credere che di molti pericolo n'abbia la divina misericordia tratti, ne' quali noi saremmo venuti, se questa buona e santa operazione non fosse stata fatta da' nostri passati. (Commentary to *Inf.* 13.143-5)

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<sup>189</sup> L'Ottimo Commento (1338), *L'ultima forma dell'Ottimo commento. Chiose sopra la Comedia di Dante Alighieri fiorentino tracte da diversi ghiosatori*, edited by Claudia Di Fonzo (Longo, 2008).

Not only has Mars shaped milestone events in Florence's path to political ruin, but Dante also attributes the very beginning of Florence's downfall to Mars's noxious influence. Dante traces the present dissolution of Florentine society to the 1216 murder of Buondelmonte de' Buondelmonti, an event that occurred under the wrathful eye of the statue of Mars.

Dante adapts the story of Buondelmonte as disseminated by early Florentine chroniclers. The anonymous *Gesta Florentinorum*,<sup>190</sup> which recorded events from 1080 to 1278, was the first to mention the 1216 murder of Buondelmonte.<sup>191</sup> The chronicler pithily notes that, "Essendo podesta di Firenze messer Gherardo Orlandini il di di pasqua di resurreso fu morto messer Bondelmonte Uguiccioni, e da indi inanzi fu parte Guelfa e parte Ghibellina in Firenze" (252) A second chronicle, the *Cronica fiorentina compilata nel secolo XIII*, or Pseudo-Brunetto, the earliest extant Florentine chronicle originally drafted in the vernacular, vividly elaborates upon the circumstances leading up to Buondelmonte's murder and its devastating repercussions.<sup>192</sup>

The Pseudo-Brunetto recounts the raucous melee that occurred between Buondelmonte and Oddo Arrighi at a banquet in the Florentine countryside. Seeking peace, Buondelmonte agreed to marry Oddo's niece, the daughter of an Amidei noble. When Buondelmonte snubbed his betrothed on their wedding day, Oddo and his allies sought vengeance. When debating whether to disfigure Buondelmonte's face or simply to

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<sup>190</sup> The work bears the same title as Sanzalone's Latin opus, though the two are philologically unrelated. Although the anonymous vernacular *Gesta* has been lost to history, Bernhard Schmeidler has pieced together a semi-complete reproduction based upon fragments found in early fourteenth-century chronicles. See Chapter One, pp. 21-3 for discussion of Schmeidler's edition.

<sup>191</sup> Florentine chroniclers date the event to 1215 (*calculus florentinus*).

<sup>192</sup> The following episode is analyzed in Chapter One, pp. 25-31.

beat him with a stick, Mosca dei Lamberti offered these fatal words: “Se ttu il batti o ffiedi, pensa prima di fare la fossa dove tue ricoveri; ma dàlli tale che ssi paia, ché cosa fatta cappa à” (118-19.36-2).<sup>193</sup> As Buondelmonte rode his horse past the statue of Mars on the Ponte Vecchio, he was viciously slain by Schiatta degli Uberti and Oddo Arrighi. “In quello giorno,” Pseudo-Brunetto relates,

si cominciò la struzione di Firenze, che inprimamente si levò nuovo  
vocabile, cioè Parte guelfa e Parte ghibellina...Onde per tutti i Cristiani è  
sparta questa malattia. E iij<sup>o</sup> m. d’uomini e più ne sono morti, ke’ Il’ uno  
pilgla l’una parte e l’altro l’altra. (119.15-22)

Dante elaborates upon early narratives of Buondelmonte’s murder to emphasize the disastrous fall of Florence from grace, a fall that culminates in his exile from Florence in 1302.

Dante will entwine the history of Florence with his own through a series of exilic prophecies. It is therefore fitting that the *Commedia*’s first reference to Florence accompanies the first mention of Dante’s exile. Ciaccio’s condemnation of Florence in the circle of the gluttons serves as a reference to both the generic civic strife endemic to the Italian Duecento and to the historical events that led in Dante’s exile. The pilgrim’s tripartite query concerns the future, present, and past of his native city:

ma dimmi, se tu sai, a che verranno  
li cittadin de la città partita;  
s’alcun v’è giusto; e dimmi la cagione  
per che l’ha tanta discordia assalita. (*Inf.* 6.60-3)

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<sup>193</sup> Dante recalls this statement in *Inf.* 28.107.

Ciacco's response alludes to the political turmoil—the temporary victory of the *bianchi* and their defeat at the hands of the papal-backed *neri*—that will contribute to Dante's expulsion from Florence. He then concedes that there are two just men in Florence, though their fellow citizens heed neither. Finally, he explains the characteristics of Florence that have resulted in its division: “superbia, invidia e avarizia sono / le tre faville c'hanno i cuori accesi” (*Inf.* 6.74-5).

Although Ciacco does not reveal the origin of these three sparks, that is, the reason why these particular characteristics assail the Tuscan city, the pilgrim's next question alludes to several citizens who may have contributed to its downfall:

E io a lui: “Ancor vo' che mi 'nsegni  
 e che di più parlar mi facci dono.  
 Farinata e 'l Tegghiaio, che fuor s'è 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 sapere  
 se 'l ciel li addolcia o lo 'nferno li attosca. (*Inf.* 6.77-84)

Ciacco responds that these men reside among the darkest souls, but that Dante will encounter them if he should descend further into hell.

This strange catalogue, which contains the poem's first allusion to the Buondelmonte murder, begs further analysis. Dante will encounter the sodomites Tegghiaio and Iacopo Rusticucci, perhaps the most courteous sinners outside of Limbo, upon the fiery plains of the seventh circle. There Dante will reveal that:

“La gente nuova e i sùbiti guadagni / orgoglio e dismisura han generata, / Fiorenza, in te, sì che tu già ten piagni” (*Inf.* 16.73-5), a sentiment that Cacciaguیدا will elaborate upon in *Paradiso* 16.

The first name in Dante’s catalogue is also the second exilic prophet. Whereas Ciaccio speaks as a bystander removed from politics, Farinata degli Uberti was intimately involved with the Florentine political situation. Although worldly affairs can no longer have bearing on the fate of the dead, the heretic retains his obsession with earthly partisanship, as evidenced by his opening question to Dante: “Chi fuor li maggior tui?” (*Inf.* 10.42). Passion for politics ensnares the pilgrim, who eagerly and not a little conceitedly discloses his lineage at Farinata’s behest. The onetime exiled leader of the Ghibellines responsible for the defeat of the Guelfs at Montaperti in 1260 addresses Dante as “O Tosco che per la città del foco / vivo ten vai così parlando onesto” (*Inf.* 10.22-3). Upon discovering their political differences, the pair trade heated *battute* as though they had just crossed paths in the streets of Florence, and not among the fiery sepulchers of Hell. The Ghibelline magnate declares that Dante’s ancestors “fieramente furo avversi / a me e a miei primi e a mia parte” (*Inf.* 10.46-7). For Farinata, as for Dante, familial and civic history are one and the same. Farinata reveals that before fifty months will have passed Dante, like his banished ancestors, will learn how difficult is the art of returning from exile. His pronouncement weighs heavily on the pilgrim, whom Virgil contents by explaining that Beatrice will soon reveal the fate of Dante’s journey.

The penultimate name in Dante’s catalogue of Florentines is also the only one whose identity remains a mystery, and who does not reappear in the poem. Hollander vividly notes: “it is the puzzle created by Arrigo’s not being further referred to in hell that



has drawn commentators like flies to rotten meat.”<sup>194</sup> Early exegetes, such as Benvenuto da Imola and Boccaccio, suggest that Dante may be referring to Odarrigo (Oddo) de’ Fifianti, who was implicated in the murder of Buondelmonte.<sup>195</sup>

It is the poet’s decision to name Mosca as one of the men “ch’a ben far puoser li ‘ngegni” (*Inf.* 6.81) that seems most counterintuitive, considering his decisive role in the murder of Buondelmonte and consequent political upheaval in Florence. Singleton attributes this seeming disparity to a meeting of the earthly and heavenly perspectives:

The wayfaring Dante asks his question from the human point of view and judges these figures by the criteria of the *polis*, the city-state of Florence. But his question, as he continues, recognizes that Divine Justice does not judge by any such standards and that those ‘who set their talents to good works’ (vs. 81) may be in Hell (where in fact they are). The meeting of the human and divine perspectives, which we have already noted in the episode of Paolo and Francesca (see n. to *Inf.* V, 109), is evident here in the way Dante phrases his question. (Commentary to *Inf.* 6.81-4)

Francesco da Buti (1385-95) would contest Singleton’s interpretation. Da Buti posits that, when Dante inquires after these “worthy” men:

Puossi intendere che l’autore parli per lo contrario: però che costoro furono uomini viziosissimi, ben che fossono famosi: però che costoro furono della setta dei Neri, contra la sua, e perchè erano onorati per la parte, bene che fossono viziosissimi uomini; e però parla così di loro,

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<sup>194</sup> Commentary to *Inf.* 6.77-84. See Robert Hollander, ed. *Inferno*, translated by Robert and Jean Hollander (Doubleday/Anchor, 2000).

<sup>195</sup> See Singleton’s commentary to *Inf.* 6.77-84 for this argument.

per mostrare che oltre al vizio della gola, ebbano altri maggiori vizi, e però dice che fur sì degni; cioè reputati. (Commentary to *Inf.* 6.77-84)<sup>196</sup>

The question remains: does Dante name Mosca in Ciaccio's catalogue of worthy citizens ironically, as da Buti suggests, taking pleasure in his enemy's damnation? Or does the episode highlight the simple ineffability of divine justice? Dante's encounter with Mosca in *Inferno* 28 seems only to complicate this issue.

Dante will meet Mosca among the schismatics of the eighth circle, whose inhabitants include Mohammed, Curio, and Bertran de Born. The punishment of the other named schismatics seems more straightforward. Curio, for example, whose wicked tongue, according to Lucan,<sup>197</sup> counseled Caesar to cross the Rubicon, has lost his instrument of persuasion: "Oh quanto mi pareva sbigottito / con la lingua tagliata ne la strozza / Curio, ch'a dir fu così ardito!" (*Inf.* 28.100-2). One of the *Commedia's* most emblematic punishments occurs at the end of the canto. The law of *contrapasso*, which has ruled the system of infernal punishment since the beginning of the poem, is here given a formal name by Bertran de Born, who carries aloft his severed head:

Io feci il padre e 'l figlio in sé rebelli;  
Achitofèl non fé più d'Absalone  
e di David coi malvagi punzelli.

Perch'io parti' così giunte persone,

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<sup>196</sup> Francesco da Buti, *Commento di Francesco da Buti sopra La Divina Commedia di Dante Allighieri*, edited by Crescentino Giannini (Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62).

<sup>197</sup> See Singleton's commentary to *Inf.* 28. Singleton points out that Dante's description of Curio derives partly from Lucan's *Pharsalia*, particularly the description of Curio's power of speech: "Audax venali comitatur Curio lingua." ("With them came Curio of the reckless heart and venal tongue.") The translation is Singleton's.

partito porto il mio cerebro, lasso!,

dal suo principio ch'è in questo troncone.

Così s'osserva in me lo contrapasso. (*Inf.* 28.136-142)

Yet the reason for Mosca's *contrapasso* is not quite as succinct.

E un ch'avea l'una e l'altra man mozza,

levando i moncherin per l'aura fosca,

si che 'l sangue faceva la faccia sozza,

gridò: "Ricordera' ti anche del Mosca,

che disse, lasso!, 'Capo ha cosa fatta',

che fu mal seme<sup>198</sup> per la gente tosca." (*Inf.* 28.103-8)

At first glance, the choice to mutilate Mosca's hands appears less obvious than the other punishments of this canto. The consensus among early commentators seems to be that, because Mosca played such a decisive hand in the event that fractured Florentine society, he has lost these specific appendages. Jacopo Alighieri (1322) writes: "Per la cui morte il cominciamento del partito istato di Firenze ebbe processo, ond'ei, figurativamente, senza le mani nella presente colpa si pone, per lo scommettere dell'operazione simigliante, che per lui ordinato si fece" (commentary to *Inf.* 28.106-8).<sup>199</sup> Francesca da Buti agrees, explaining that "et ancor più che abbie le mani mozze, perchè diede lo consiglio d'operare le mani all'omicidio; e questa è conveniente pena" (commentary to *Inf.* 28.103-

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<sup>198</sup> For Mosca's connection to Adam through the phrase "mal seme" and interplay of theological and political sin in Florence, see Lloyd Howard and Elena Rossi, "Textual Mapping of Dante's Journey Back to Political Original Sin in Florence," *MLN*, vol. 106, no. 1, Jan. 1991, pp. 184-8.

<sup>199</sup> Jacopo Alighieri, *Chiose alla Cantica dell'Inferno di Dante Alighieri scritte da Jacopo Alighieri, pubblicate per la prima volta in corretta lezione con riscontri e facsimili di codici, e precedute da una indagine critica per cura di Jarro [Giulio Piccini]* (R. Bemporad e figlio, 1915).

11). Benvenuto da Imola (1375-80) advances a similar rationale: “Here note how the author gives them due punishment, because from his counsel it has come to blood, to deaths, to wounds; and because Mosca not only with his tongue, but with his hands procured said discord; it is therefore fitting that he is placed without hands by the author, for such death was the greatest cause of the civil wars, and of the scandals of Florence” (commentary to *Inf.* 28.103-8).<sup>200</sup> As Benvenuto and early commentators note, the consequences of Mosca’s advice continue to affect contemporary Florentine society. The Ottimo (1333) elaborates on these repercussions: “Per la cui morte nacque quella zizania di parte, e quella divisione d’animi, che non pare che mai debbia finire; d’onde innumerabile morte, e fedite, [e] ruberie, e arsoni, e presure, e essilii, [e] povertadi, e inopie, e avolterii, e altri mali sono seguiti in Toscana” (commentary to *Inf.* 28.103-11).<sup>201</sup>

Unfortunately for Mosca, his advice to kill rather than maim Buondelmonte backfired spectacularly, as the pilgrim points out in his response to Mosca in *Inf.* 28: “E io li aggiunsi: “E morte di tua schiatta”; / per ch’elli, accumulando duol con duolo, / sen gio come persona trista e matta” (109-111). Seeking to maim emotionally the mutilated sinner, Dante alludes to the exile in 1258 of prominent Ghibelline families, including the Lamberti, whereupon the Ghibellines faded from prominence in Florentine politics.

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<sup>200</sup> “Hic nota quod autor dat isti debitam poenam, quia ex consilio eius deventum est ad sanguinem, ad mortes, ad vulnera; et quia Musca non solum cum lingua, sed cum manibus procuravit dictam discordiam; ideo bene ab autore ponitur sine manibus, ista enim mors fuit potissima causa bellorum civilium, et scandalorum Florentiae.” Benvenuto da Imola, *Comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam*, edited by William Warren Vernon and Giacomo Filippo Lacaita (Barbèra, 1887). My translation.

<sup>201</sup> Guido da Pisa notes that Mosca sowed so much scandal and division in Florence that it was never again at rest: “Iste fuit unus miles de Lambertis de Florentia, qui uno solo verbo tantam divisionem et tantum scandalum in Florentia seminavit, quod nunquam dicta Florentia postea quieta pace quievit” (commentary to *Inf.* 28.103-9).

Whether he regrets his words or not, Mosca does at least seem aware of the grave consequences of his advice, and its damning effect on his own political party and family.

Several early commentators point out the similarity here to the pilgrim's interaction with Farinata in *Inferno* 10. The clans of both Ghibelline magnates, named in Ciacco's catalogue of Florentines in *Inf.* 6, were politically allied. It was Farinata's ancestor, Schiatta degli Uberti, who struck Buondelmonte from his horse with a mace, while Oddo Arrighi slit open his veins, thus precipitating the alliance of the Ghibelline Lamberti and Uberti families against the Guelf Buondelmonte and Cerchi clans. Dante responds similarly to Farinata in *Inf.* 10, telling the Ghibelline magnate that his descendants were never quick to learn the art of returning to Florence from exile (*Inf.* 10.49-51). The knowledge of their family's exile weighs heavily on both Farinata and Mosca, adding a psychological element to their physical punishment. Farinata responds to Dante's taunt revealing that the fate of his family "mi tormenta più che questo letto" (*Inf.* 10.78), while Mosca "accumulando duol con duolo, / sen gio come persona trista e matta" (*Inf.* 28.110-1). The Ottimo Commento notes that "questo medesimo effetto quasi ebono le parole dell'Autore: capitolo decimo *Inferni*, di messer Farinata delli Uberti."<sup>202</sup> Though Dante exchanges heated words with Farinata, he does praise the Ghibelline's decision to preserve Florence after the Guelf defeat, rather than raze the city as his political allies had proposed.

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<sup>202</sup> Benvenuto da Imola similarly compares the turbulent background of Mosca and Farinata's Florence: "quia cum Florentia caput et decus Tusciae movetur, tota regio turbatur; unde jam dictum est qualiter propter mortem unius secuta est discordia civilis et expulsio unius partis potentis, ex qua multa bella nata sunt, quibus diu quassata est tota Tuscia, sicut jam satis dictum est supra capitulo X" (commentary to *Inf.* 28.103-8).

More vindictive is Dante's treatment of the final infernal prophet, who connects Dante's exile to both the foundation of Florence and the wrath of Mars. Framing his prophecy within a martial metaphor, Vanni Fucci predicts the exile of the *Guelfi bianchi* in 1302 following the disastrous mission of Charles of Valois:

Ma perché di tal vista tu non godi,  
 se mai sarai di fuor da' luoghi bui,  
 apri li orecchi al mio annunzio, e odi.  
 Pistoia in pria d'i Neri di dimagra;  
 poi Fiorenza rinova gente e modi.  
 Tragge Marte vapor di Val di Magra  
 ch'è di torbidi nuvoli involuto;  
 e con tempesta impetuosa e agra  
 sopra Campo Picen fia combattuto;  
 ond'ei repente spezzerà la nebbia,  
 sì ch'ogne Bianco ne sarà feruto.

E detto l'ho perché dolor ti debbia! (*Inf.* 24.140-56)

Raising his fist in defiance of God, the Black Guelf foretells a tempestuous battle to be fought in the Pistoian district of the Campo Piceno. Although chroniclers have recorded no such historic battle, critics have suggested an allusion to one of several skirmishes that occurred in or near Pistoia in 1302.<sup>203</sup> Early chroniclers, including Dino Compagni and Giovanni Villani, followed Sallust in locating the defeat of Catiline on the Campo

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<sup>203</sup> See Singleton's commentary to *Inf.* 24.145-50 for a summary of these theories.

Piceno,<sup>204</sup> an event that led to the Roman foundation of Florence, and which anticipates Brunetto's prophecy.

Vanni Fucci's prophecy references an attribute of Mars that Dante had earlier described in the *Convivio*. In his delineation of the heavens and their assigned properties in *Convivio* 2.13, Dante ascribes the quality of heat to the fifth heaven:

...[e]ss[o] Marte dissecca e arde le cose, perché lo suo calore è simile a quello del fuoco; e questo è quello per che esso pare affocato di colore, quando più e quando meno, secondo la spessezza e raritate de li vapori che 'l seguono, li quali per lor medesimi molte volte s'accendono, sì come nel primo de la Metaura è diterminato. (2.13.21)

These vapors, portents of political change, signify a particular danger for Florence. Dante continues:

E però dice Albumasar che l'accendimento di questi vapori significa morte di regi e transmutamento di regni; però che sono effetti de la signoria di Marte; e Seneca dice però che, ne la morte d'Augusto imperadore, vide in alto una palla di fuoco; e in Fiorenza, nel principio de la sua destruzione, veduta fu ne l'aere, in figura d'una croce, grande quantità di questi vapori, seguaci de la stella di Marte. (*Conv.* 2.13.22)

Giorgio Inglese<sup>205</sup> explains that the reference to "una palla di fuoco" likely alludes to an episode of 6 November 1301, which Dino Compagni claimed to have witnessed, and later described in his *Cronica*:

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<sup>204</sup> See Singleton's commentary to *Inf.* 24.145-50 for Villani's reading of Sallust.

<sup>205</sup> Note to *Conv.* 2.13.22.

La sera apparì in cielo un segno maraviglioso; il qual fu una croce vermiglia, sopra il palagio de' priori. Fu la sua lista ampia più che palmi uno e mezo; e l'una linea era di lungheza braccia XX in apparenza, quella attraverso un poco minore; la qual durò per tanto spazio, quanto penasse un cavallo a correre due aringhi. Onde la gente che la vide, e io che chiaramente la vidi, potemo comprendere che Iddio era fortemente contro alla nostra città crucciato. (2.19)

This miraculous sign occurred several days after Charles of Valois' duplicitous entrance into Florence. The "croce vermiglia"<sup>206</sup> above the Palazzo Vecchio foreshadowed the ensuing destruction, which culminated in the exile of Dante and the *Guelfi bianchi*.<sup>207</sup>

Compagni continues:

Gli uomini che temeano i loro adversari, si nascondeano per le case de' loro amici: l'uno nimico offendea l'altro: le case si cominciavano ad ardere: le ruberie si faceano; e fuggivansi gli arnesi alle case degli impotenti: i Neri potenti domandavano danari a' Bianchi: maritavansi fanciulle a forza: uccideansi uomini. E quando una casa ardea forte, messer Carlo domandava: "Che fuoco è quello?" Erali risposto che era una capanna, quando era un ricco palazzo. E questo malfare durò giorni sei, ché così era ordinato. Il contado ardea da ogni parte. (2.19)

The remaining exilic prophets will elucidate the cause of this destruction.

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<sup>206</sup> For the scarlet attribution of Mars, see also Guido da Pisa: "The art of Mars is the shedding of blood. For, as Saint Isidore affirms in Book XVIII of the *Etymologies*: the standard of the Romans is decorated in scarlet, that is the color red, because Mars delights in blood. (Ars autem Martis est effusio sanguinis. Nam ut ait beatus Ysidorus, XVIII libro *Ethymologiarum*: Romamorum vexillum ideo coceo, idest colore rubeo, decoratur, quia Mars gaudet in sanguine)" (commentary to *Inf.* 13.145). My translation.

<sup>207</sup> See p. 70 for the political consequences of Charles of Valois' mission to Florence.



Three figures in *Purgatorio* further contribute to the discussion of Dante's exile from Florence. In *Purgatorio* 8, Currado Malaspina foresees that Dante will spend time with his kin before seven years have passed, as indeed, the Malaspina family entertained Dante in Lunigiana in 1306. Oderisi da Gubbio, the famed illuminator of *Purgatorio* 11, predicts that Dante, through the machinations of his "vicini" (*Purg.* 11.140) will be acquainted with suffering. The most obscure prophecy is pronounced by Bonagiunta da Lucca, the poet of the old style that stands in opposition to the "dolce stil novo" (*Purg.* 24.57) of Dante's *rime*. The poet mutters a single word—"Gentucca"—and enigmatically predicts that "femmina è nata, e non porta ancor benda, / che ti farà piacere / la mia città, come ch'om la riprenda" (*Purg.* 24.43-5). Bonagiunta also alludes to the death and damnation of Corso Donati, leader of the Florentine faction of the *neri*.

Dante *poeta* gives the most extended space to the exile predictions uttered, not by Dante's enemies, artists, or patrons, but by two paternal figures who illuminate the source of Dante's sorrow. From the "città partita" of *Inferno* 6 to the heated encounters of *Inferno* 10 and 24, *discordia* stands out as the defining characteristic of Dante's Florence. Brunetto and Cacciaguida reveal that it is precisely this civic discord, which stems from the inherent strife between the virtuous Romans and the rustic Fiesolani, that lies at the heart of Dante's exile. Brunetto will provide the first extended prediction of Dante's exile, which Cacciaguida, and not Beatrice as Virgil had promised, will fully elaborate.

It is significant that Dante's exile is most clearly expounded by Brunetto and Cacciaguida. Both are paternal figures who address the pilgrim as "son,"<sup>208</sup> to whom

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<sup>208</sup> Brunetto first addresses Dante as "figliuol mio" (*Inf.* 15.30), and the pilgrim later recalls Brunetto's "cara e buona imagine paterna" (*Inf.* 15.83). Cacciaguida will address Dante as "figlio" twice during his

Dante returns the honorific “voi,” an address reserved for very few of Dante’s interlocutors.<sup>209</sup> The author structurally reinforces the parallels between these figures by introducing both within the fifteenth canto of their respective *cantica*. Dante further establishes a semantic connection between these figures through his choice of rhyme words. In *Inf.* 15, the pilgrim describes the reason for his journey through the afterlife:

“Là sù di sopra, in la vita serena”,  
rispuos’io lui, “mi smarri’ in una *valle*,  
avanti che l’età mia fosse piena.

Pur ier mattina le volsi le *spalle*:  
questi m’apparve, tornand’io in quella,  
e reducemi a ca per questo *calle*”. (*Inf.* 15.49-54)<sup>210</sup>

The rhyme scheme of “valle, spalle, calle” first occurred in *Inf.* 1 to describe the outset of Dante’s voyage, where it appears in the same order as in *Inf.* 15:

Ma poi ch’i’ fui al piè d’un colle giunto,  
là dove terminava quella *valle*  
che m’avea di paura il cor compunto,  
guardai in alto e vidi le sue *spalle*  
vestite già de’ raggi del pianeta  
che mena dritto altrui per ogni *calle*. (*Inf.* 1.13-8)<sup>211</sup>

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*canti* (*Par.* 15.52 and *Par.* 17.94), and Dante will announce to Cacciaguida that “voi siete il padre mio” in *Par.* 16.16.

<sup>209</sup> The other characters for whom Dante reserves this reverential address are Farinata degli Uberti (*Inf.* 10.51), Cavalcante de’ Cavalcanti (*Inf.* 10.63), Currado Malaspina (*Purg.* 8.121), Pope Adrian V (*Purg.* 19.131), and Guido Guinizzelli (*Purg.* 26.112).

<sup>210</sup> My emphasis.

This exact order of “valle, spalle, calle” will resurface in *Inf.* 20, 25, and 29, while the alternate “valle, calle, spalle” will appear in *Inf.* 18 and *Purg.* 8. The only instance of this rhyme in *Paradiso* occurs in *Par.* 17, where Cacciaguida reveals Dante’s destiny:

Tu proverai sì come sa di sale  
 lo pane altrui, e come è duro *calle*  
 lo scendere e ‘l salir per l’altrui scale.  
 E quel che più ti graverà le *spalle*,  
 sarà la compagnia malvagia e scempia  
 con la qual tu cadrai in questa *valle*. (*Par.* 17.58-63)<sup>212</sup>

This is the only canto in which Dante completely reverses the earlier rhyme. Given their structural and rhetorical similarities, one may consider Brunetto as an imperfect predecessor of the pious crusader.

Brunetto Latini utters the first extended prediction of Dante’s exile. Brunetto, who had recounted the matter of his own exile from Florence in the *Tesoretto*, the visionary poem that serves as a model for Dante’s *Commedia*, expounds on Ciaccio and Farinata’s prophecies by citing the ancient cause of Florence’s discord. Drawing upon the history of Florence disseminated through the *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentiae*, and elaborated upon in Brunetto Latini’s own *Tresor*, Dante *poeta* has the character of Brunetto situate Dante’s exile within the antipathy between Roman and Fiesolan values:

Ma quello ingrato popolo maligno  
 che discese di Fiesole ab antico,

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<sup>211</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>212</sup> My emphasis.

e tiene ancor del monte e del macigno,

ti si farà, per tuo ben far, nimico. (*Inf.* 15.61-4)

Brunetto alludes to the founding of Florence, when the Romans destroyed the city of Fiesole, refuge of the conspirator Catiline, and erected a city at the foot of the mountain where Fiesole was located. The Roman inhabitants of the nascent city of Florence allowed the displaced Fiesolans to populate their city, an act that has had devastating consequences. Through an extended agricultural metaphor, Brunetto lists the effect of this watershed event:

ed è ragion, ché tra li lazzi sorbi

si disconvien fruttare al dolce fico.

Vecchia fama nel mondo li chiama orbi;

gent'è avara, invidiosa e superba:

dai lor costumi fa che tu ti forbi.

La tua fortuna tanto onor ti serba,

che l'una parte e l'altra avranno fame

di te; ma lungi fia dal becco l'erba.

Faccian le bestie fiesolane strame

di lor medesme, e non tocchin la pianta,

s'alcuna surge ancora in lor letame,

in cui riviva la sementa santa

di que' Roman che vi rimaser quando

fu fatto il nido di malizia tanta. (*Inf.* 15.65-78)

Brunetto contextualizes Dante's exile within the discord between these two lineages: the race descended from the noble and virtuous Romans, the original founders of Florence, and the race descended from the rustic Fiesolans, the common people who invaded Florence in a wave of immigration that, as Cacciaguida will emphasize, was detrimental to the health of the city. The present-day inhabitants of Florence, "quello ingrato popolo maligno" (*Inf.* 15.61) that still bears the rustic and uncouth nature of its Fiesolan ancestors, are diametrically opposed to the Roman-descended Dante's "ben far" (*Inf.* 15.64). One may suppose, based on this passage, that Dante's ancestors presumably refrained from interbreeding with the savage Fiesolans. Yet Dante's theory of nobility, as expounded particularly in *Convivio* 4, relies not on the purity of one's blood, but on individual merit. Charles T. Davis notes that:

A decade later, after Florence had come under the control of the Black Guelf faction and had set herself against the emperor, Dante denounced her as the "most wretched offspring of the Fiesolans," guilty of having seduced the pope with her florins and of having rejected her Roman heritage. Her citizens are Fiesolans not because of their birth, but because they are rebels against legitimate authority and slaves to their own selfish and anarchic desires. ("Il buon tempo antico" 86)

It is Dante's inner virtue, not the genetic *romanità* of his bloodline, that figuratively permits him to remain the sole "pianta" in which survives the "sementa santa" (*Inf.* 15.76) of the Roman founders of Florence. The three sparks cited by Ciacco that enflamed men's hearts and silenced the just Florentines are here repeated as the defining characteristics of the descendants of the Fiesolans: "una gente avara, invidiosa e superba"

(*Inf.* 15.68). Because of the intractable war between these two lineages, Florence became “il nido di malizia tanta” (*Inf.* 15.78), and the source of Dante’s personal ill fortune. The pilgrim resists asking for clarification, echoing Virgil’s claim that Beatrice will reveal all in due time, and assuring Virgil that he is prepared to withstand the blows of Fortune. Brunetto’s assertion that Dante’s Roman values place him at odds with his Fiesolan countrymen foreshadows the pilgrim’s interaction with Cacciaguida.

Considering Dante’s fixation with origin stories, it is only appropriate that the root of the poet’s family tree<sup>213</sup> will reveal the source of his exile. The ancient crusader’s son was Dante’s great-grandfather, who gave his name to Dante’s family and has since circled the first ledge of Purgatory for a century and more. Cacciaguida juxtaposes the corruption and discord of Dante’s contemporary Florence with the felicity of the ancient city to which the crusader belonged, when “Fiorenza dentro da la cerchia antica, / ond’ ella toglie ancora e terza e nona, / si stava in pace, sobria e pudica” (*Par.* 15.97-9). Through a series of nine anaphoras, Cacciaguida contrasts the Florence of the first half of the twelfth century to its current iteration, focusing upon female behavior as the linchpin of civic virtue.

Non avea catanella, non corona,  
 non gonne contigiate, non cintura  
 che fosse a veder più che la persona.

Non faceva, nascendo, ancor paura  
 la figlia al padre, che’ ‘l tempo e la dote  
 non fuggien quinci e quindi la misura. (*Par.* 15.100-5)

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<sup>213</sup> “O fronda mia in che io compiaccemmi / pur aspettando, io fui la tua radice” (*Par.* 15.88-9).

The modest clothing and domestic bliss of the family, the cornerstone of civic life, reflects the city's *concordia*. Cacciaguida recalls that “ciascuna era certa / de la sua sepultura, e ancor nulla / era per Francia nel letto diserta” (*Par.* 15.118-20), implying that neither did partisanship divide the city amongst itself, driving part of its citizens into exile, nor did husbands abandon their wives to seek wealth in mercantile France. Women did not value ostentation more than their uxorial duties:

Bellincion Berti vid' io andar cinto  
di cuoio e d'osso, e venire da lo specchio  
la donna sua senza 'l viso dipinto;  
e vidi quel d'i Nerli e quel del Vecchio  
esser contenti a la pelle scoperta,  
e le sue donne al fuso e al pennechio. (*Par.* 15.112-7)

Such dutiful women, “traendo a la rocca la chioma, / favoleggiava con la sua famiglia / d'i Troiani, di Fiesole e di Roma” (*Par.* 15.124-6). Now citizens such as the irascible Cianghella and duplicitous Lapo Salterello have eclipsed the pious members of the old Florentine aristocracy.

Non avea case di famiglia vota;  
non v'era giunto ancor Sardanapalo  
a mostrar ciò che 'n camera si puote.  
Non era vinto ancora Montemalo  
dal vostro Uccellatoio, che, com' è vinto  
nel montar su', così sarà nel calo. (*Par.* 15.100-11)

By Dante's time, less than a century later, any sense of a cohesive, united Florentine people had disintegrated in the face of factionalism.

Dante estimates the arms-bearing population of Cacciaguida's Florence to just one-fifth of the city's current number: "Tutti color ch'a quel tempo eran ivi / da poter arme tra Marte e 'l Batista, / erano il quinto di quei ch'or sono vivi" (*Par.* 16.46-8). Indeed, Florence needed to expand its city-walls in 1172 and 1284 in order to accommodate its growing citizenry.<sup>214</sup> Florence's booming population was due to its aggressive campaign of territorial expansion. Earlier generations valued Florence's military prowess. Sanzanome's *Gesta Florentinorum* (1235-45)<sup>215</sup> glorified the military pursuits of the Florentine commune, while the *Primo Popolo* (1250-60) exalted her martial success, as the façade of the Palazzo del Popolo attests.<sup>216</sup> In *Inferno* 26, Dante rewrites the inscription, still seen today on the façade of the Bargello, as a scathing condemnation of her current infamy: "Godi, Fiorenza, poi che se' sì grande / che per mare e per terra batti l'ali, / e per lo 'nferno tuo nome si spande!" (*Inf.* 26.1-3).

Florence has been the agent of her own destruction. Had she not exceeded her limits and conquered neighboring castles, the *contado*'s displaced inhabitants would not have relocated to Florence. Dante cites the history of the Buondelmonti clan as evidence. Singleton notes that the family "left the country and took up their residence in Florence in 1135, on account of the destruction of their castle of Montebuono in the Valdigueve close to Florence, in the process of the expansion of the city" (commentary to *Par.* 16.66).

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<sup>214</sup> See Rubinstein 206, note 2 for information on Florence's population at this time. See also Salvemini 138.

<sup>215</sup> See pp. 16-21 for Sanzanome's chronicle.

<sup>216</sup> See p. 20, note 38 for Rubinstein's quotation of the original inscription found in Davidsohn.



Cacciaguida remarks that if Florence had not transgressed her boundaries, “sariesi Montemurlo ancor de’ Conti; / sarieno i Cerchi nel piovier d’Acone, / e forse in Valdigueve i Buondelmonti” (*Par.* 16.64-6).<sup>217</sup> Had the Buondelmonti remained in the country, the populace would not have known civil war. Cacciaguida laments the circumstances that led to Florence’s downfall:

O Buondelmonte, quanto mal fuggisti  
le nozze süe per li altrui conforti!

Molti sarebber lieti, che son tristi,  
se Dio t’avesse concesso ad Ema  
la prima volta ch’a città venisti.

Ma conveniesi, a quella pietra scema  
che guarda ‘l ponte, che Fiorenza fesse  
vittima ne la sua pace postrema. (*Par.* 16.140-7)

After the murder of Buondelmonte at the foot of the statue of Mars, the Florentine citizenry was henceforth divided into Guelf and Ghibelline.

By exceeding its limits and annexing new territories, Florence has exposed itself to the corruption of an immigrant population whose mercantile values clash with the virtuous harmony of Cacciaguida’s Florence.

Ma la cittadinanza, ch’e’ or mista  
di Campi, di Certaldo e di Fegghine,  
pura vediesi ne l’ultimo artista.

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<sup>217</sup> Cacciaguida adds that the Borgo Santi Apostoli, where the Buondelmonti settled after their move to Florence, would have been much quieter without these new neighbors: “Già eran Gualterotti e Importuni; / e ancor saria Borgo più quieto, / se di novi vicin fosser digiuni” (*Par.* 16.133-5).

Oh quanto fora meglio esser vicine  
 quelle genti ch'io dico, e al Galluzzo  
 e a Trespiano aver vostro confine  
 che averle dentro e sostener lo puzzo  
 del villan d'Aguglion, di quel da Signa,  
 che gia' per barattare ha l'occhio aguzzo! (*Par.* 16.49-57)

These country bumpkins have disseminated violence and corruption and contributed to the decline of Florence's aristocracy.

Cacciaguida catalogues the once noble families of Florence who have since, by Dante's generation, either become extinct, such as the Ughi and Greci, or fallen into dissolution, such as the Adimari: "Oh quali io vidi quei che sono disfatti / per lor superbia!" (*Par.* 16.109-10). Cacciaguida includes among these noble families the Amidei, "la casa di che nacque il vostro fletto, / per lo giusto disdegno che v'ha morti / e puose fine al vostro viver lieto" (*Par.* 16.136-8). This house enjoyed an illustrious reputation, and would still be honored today had the Buondelmonti not set foot within the city. Thus "sempre la confusion de le persone / principio fu del mal de la cittade" (*Par.* 16.67). Had Florence remained a humble "ovile" (*Par.* 16.25) within her ancient walls, she would not have allowed herself to be corrupted by foreign influences.

Against this backdrop of political instability, Dante will play a salvific role. Dante wishes to know the full import of the predictions uttered by the infernal (Ciaccio, Farinata, Brunetto, and Vanni Fucci) and purgatorial (Corrado, Oderisi, Bonagiunta) prophets:

mentre ch'io era a Virgilio congiunto  
 su per lo monte che l'anime cura

e discendendo nel mondo defunto,  
 dette mi furo di mia vita futura  
 parole gravi, avvegna ch'io mi senta  
 ben tetragono ai colpi di ventura;  
 per che la voglia mia saria contenta  
 d'intender qual fortuna mi s'appressa:  
 ché saetta previsa vien più lenta. (*Par.* 17.19-27)

With “chiare parole e con preciso / latin” (*Par.* 17.34-5) Cacciaguida responds: “Qual si partio Ipolito d’Atene / per la spietata e perfida noverca, / tal di Fiorenza partir ti convene” (*Par.* 17.46-8). Dante will experience the sorrow and instability that are inherent in losing one’s civic identity:

Tu proverai sì come sa di sale  
 lo pane altrui, e come è duro *calle*  
 lo scendere e ‘l salir per l’altrui scale.  
 E quel che più ti graverà le *spalle*,  
 sarà la compagnia malvagia e scempia  
 con la qual tu cadrai in questa *valle*. (*Par.* 17.58-63)<sup>218</sup>

Yet Dante’s destiny will transcend the earthly city.

Cacciaguida and Brunetto emphasize Dante’s status as an outsider in his own city, both prior to and during his exile. As the last bastion of Roman values in Florence, Dante stands apart from his fellow Florentines, whom Brunetto refers to as the “bestie fiesolane” (*Inf.* 15.73) who have been tainted by the ideology of *guadagno*. Brunetto

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<sup>218</sup> My emphasis.

recommends that Dante purge himself of the influence of the Florentines: “Vecchia fama nel mondo li chiama orbi; / gent’è avara, invidiosa e superba: / dai lor costumi fa che tu ti forbi” (*Inf.* 15.67-9). Cacciaguida similarly adds that Dante, after joining his fellow exiled *bianchi*, will abandon them to their malevolence and must instead become a party unto himself.

E quel che più ti graverà le spalle,  
sarà la compagnia malvagia e scempia  
con la qual tu cardai in questa valle;  
che tutta ingrata, tutta matta ed empia  
si farà contr’a te; ma, poco appresso,  
ella, non tu, n’avrà rossa la tempia.

Di sua bestialitate il suo processo  
farà la prova; sì ch’a te fia bello  
averti fatta parte per te stesso. (*Par.* 17.61-9)

The Florentines have exposed themselves to a corrupting ideology that has made them more akin to the bestial and presumptuous Fiesolans than to their virtuous Roman ancestors. Dante’s inner virtue, characterized as Roman blood, naturally distinguishes him from his fellow Florentines.

Yet Cacciaguida advises Dante not to be discontent with his exiled state:

...Figlio, queste son le chiose  
di quel che ti fu detto; ecco le ‘nsidie  
che dietro a pochi giri son nascose.

Non vo’ però ch’a’ tuoi vicini invidie,

poscia che s'infutura la tua vita

via più là che 'l punir di lor perfidie. (*Par.* 17.94-9)

Cacciaguida's promise that Dante's life will *infuture* itself, that it will endure beyond the punishment of his neighbors, calls to mind Brunetto's advice to Dante in *Inferno* 15: "Se tu segui tua stella, / non puoi fallire a glorïoso porto, / se ben m'accorsi ne la vita bella" (*Inf.* 15.55-7). The immortality to which Cacciaguida alludes is not the same glory that Brunetto had predicted for Dante. Earthly fame is fleeting, as the renowned illuminator Oderisi da Gubbio reminds the pilgrim in *Purgatorio* 11: "Oh vana gloria de l'umane posse! / com' poco verde in su la cima dura, / se non è giunta da l'etati grosse!" (*Purg.* 11.91-3). The artist contrasts the vanity of human glory to the immortality of the heavens:

Non è il mondan romore altro ch'un fiato  
di vento, ch'or vien quinci e or vien quindi,  
e muta nome perché muta lato.

Che voce avrai tu più, se vecchia scindi  
da te la carne, che se fossi morto  
anzi che tu lasciassi il 'pappo' e 'l 'dinid',  
pria che passin mill'anni? ch'è più corto  
spazio a l'eterno, ch'un muover di ciglia  
al cerchio che più tardi in cielo è torto. (*Purg.* 11.100-8)

The earthly renown that Oderisi rebukes is precisely the fame that the condemned Florentine rhetorician had hoped to achieve in his own text. The pilgrim, walking above the scalding rain of the seventh circle, lamented Brunetto's damnation:

'Se fosse tutto pieno il mio dimando',

rispuos'io lui, 'voi non sareste ancora  
 de l'umana natura posto in bando;  
     ché 'n la mente m'è fitta, e or m'accora,  
 la cara e buona imagine paterna  
 di voi quando nel mondo ad ora ad ora  
     m'insegnavate come l'uom s'eterna:  
 e quant'io l'abbia in grado, mentr'io vivo  
 convien che ne la mia lingua si scerna.' (*Inf.* 15.82-7)

Brunetto beseeches Dante to remember his literary work through which he yet lives:

“Sieti raccomandato il mio Tesoro / nel qual io vivo ancora, e più non cheggio” (*Inf.* 15.119-20).

Brunetto's praise for earthly fame attained through one's literary work echoes a passage in the *Tresor*: “Gloire done au proudome une seconde vie, ce est a dire que après sa mort la renomée qui remainit de ses bones euvres fait sembler que il soit encore en vie” (2.120.1).<sup>219</sup> As Robert Hollander deftly points out, the valence of the word *tesoro* undergoes a significant change over the course of the *Commedia*. In his commentary to *Paradiso* 17,<sup>220</sup> Hollander traces the word from its first appearance in *Inferno* 15.119 where it signifies earthly glory to its final utterance in *Paradiso* 23.133, where it denotes the treasure in Heaven, which the celestial souls now enjoy:

Quivi si vive e gode del tesoro

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<sup>219</sup> “Gloria dà all'uomo di valore una seconda vita, vale a dire che dopo la sua morte la fama che resta delle sue buone opere fa sembrare che egli sia ancora in vita.” Text and translation from Beltrami's edition of the *Tresor*.

<sup>220</sup> Hollander, ed. *Paradiso*, translated by Robert and Jean Hollander (Doubleday/Anchor, 2007).

che s'acquistò piangendo ne lo essilio  
di Babillòn, ove si lasciò l'oro.

Quivi trïunfa, sotto l'alto Filio  
di Dio e di Maria, di sua vittoria,  
e con l'antico e col nobo concilio,

colui che tien le chiavi di tal gloria. (*Par.* 23.133-9)

Hollander concludes that this “last reference eventually colors all that precedes it” (commentary to *Par.* 17.121-2). He continues:

In the final reckoning, worldly treasure is measured against this sole standard. And thus the word *tesoro*, which begins its course through the poem as the title for one of Brunetto Latini's works (by which he hopes to have achieved “immortality” in the world, a contradiction in terms), is examined and re-examined in such ways as to suggest either the desirability of renunciation of earthly “treasure” or the preferability of its heavenly counterpart, that “treasure in Heaven” that we may discover through the exercise of God's greatest gift to us, our true treasure here on earth, the free will, in our attempt to gain a better (and eternal) reward.

Though Dante fears being forgotten by future generations, Cacciaguida assures him that he will achieve eternal honor through the veracity of his poem's message:

Ma nondimen, rimossa ogne menzogna,  
tutta tua visïon fa manifesta;  
e lascia pur grattar dov'è la rognà.

Ché se la voce tua sarà molesta

nel primo gusto, vital nodrimento

lascerà poi, quando sarà digesta.

Questo tuo grido farà come vento,

che le più alte cime più percuote;

e ciò non fa d'onor poco argomento. (*Par.* 17.127-135)

As the harbinger of divine truths, Dante's fame will eclipse the vanity of human presumption. The changing valence of *tesoro* throughout the *Commedia* signifies a shift from the desire for earthly fame extolled by Brunetto to the superiority of heavenly renown praised by Oderisi and Cacciaguida.

Eternal glory is intrinsically tied to the concept of free will, a faculty that man may fully exercise only under the guidance of the Holy Roman Emperor. At the outset of his journey, Dante had questioned his qualification to undertake the otherworldly voyage, claiming that "Io non Enëa, io non Paulo sono; / me degno a ciò né io né altri 'l crede" (*Inf.* 2.32-3). In *Paradiso*, Dante-pilgrim will assume the divine mission of both these voyagers.

The connection between the Holy Roman Empire and Dante's salvific mission is made explicit through Cacciaguida's interaction with Dante in *Paradiso* 15: "Sì pïa l'ombra d'Anchise si porse, / se fede merta nostra maggior musa, / quando in Eliso del figlio s'accorse" (25-7). The crusader's paternal embrace recalls Anchises' delight at seeing Aeneas in Elysium, thus equating Dante with Aeneas, the man God chose to father holy Rome. Cacciaguida's opening lines conjoin his political mission with that of St. Paul: "O sanguis meus, o superinfusa / gratïa Deï, sicut tibi cui / bis unquam celi ianua reclusa?" (*Par.* 15.28-30). Dante has been granted what none since St. Paul have



achieved: the permission to transgress twice over the gates of Heaven. In repeating the phrase “sanguis meus” the poet further invokes Anchises’ address to Julius Caesar: “Proice tela manu, sanguis meus” (Cast from thy hand the sword, thou blood of mine!) in *Aen.* 6, 835 (quoted in Singleton’s commentary to *Par.* 15.25-30). Like Aeneas and Paul, Dante Alighieri has undertaken a divinely authorized transgression of mortal boundaries.

Who better to remind Dante of his salvific mission than Cacciaguida, a blood relative and Christian crusader who died in service to Conrad III, *Romanorum rex*? Cacciaguida recognizes the temporality of mortal existence, and condemns the contemporary Florentines for their love of earthly vanities. Dante’s fellow citizens claim the right of self-government, yet fail to recognize that free will, the key to maximizing mankind’s potential and ensuring his continuance beyond the mortal realm, can only be attained under the Holy Roman Empire.

All cities are subject to the ravages of time, and even Cacciaguida’s Florence, whose humble citizens dwelt in *concordia*, would eventually become the nest of wickedness (*Inf.* 15.78) that expelled its most noble citizen. As the last Roman in a Fiesolan city, Dante must trust in the Heavenly and Earthly Empire for salvation. Only then will Dante, *florentini natione, non moribus*, achieve transcendence for his soul and for his poem.

## CONCLUSION

Over the course of a century, Tuscan authors crafted the legend of Florence's origins to reflect the vicissitudes of Florentine society. The legend's versatility lent itself to the chroniclers of the early Duecento, who sought to wield the legend as a form of nationalist propaganda, uniting the Florentines against a semi-historical enemy. By the end of the century, chroniclers such as the Pseudo-Brunetto rewrote the legend to reveal their dissatisfaction with the fractured city. As a Florentine exile living in France, Brunetto Latini cast the legend in a republican light that condemned the warmongering of earlier chroniclers and shifted the drama from the battlefield to the Senate. Dante countered Brunetto's republican revisionism by employing the legend to sustain his imperial ideology. Dante's comparison of Florence to the cities of Saguntum, Babel, and Fiesole underscores her cupidity, which he attributed to the founding populace's martial values. In the search for the root of Florence's depravity, Dante contextualizes his autobiography within the legendary history of his native city.

My investigation reveals that the legend of Florence is not a literary conceit far removed from social realities. Rather, it is a constantly evolving, highly adaptive mode of legitimation that proved crucial in the negotiation of medieval civic and familial identity. In light of these findings, scholars should closely examine the fluid relationship between historiography and literature in the Middle Ages, particularly as it concerns Giovanni Boccaccio.

Overshadowed perhaps by the other members of the Tre Corone, Boccaccio has traditionally garnered the reductive reputation as the irreverent author of the *Decameron*. Although critics in recent decades have begun to examine the less ribald aspects of Boccaccio's works,<sup>221</sup> his concern for politics has been significantly neglected, particularly in his *opere minori*. This opinion is largely due to Francesco De Sanctis' judgment of Boccaccio in the *Storia della letteratura italiana*: "Il Boccaccio è tutto nel mondo di fuori tra' dilette e gli ozi e le vicissitudini della vita e vi è occupato e sodisfatto, e non gli avviene mai di piegarsi in sé, di chinare il capo pensoso. Le rughe del pensiero non hanno mai traversata quella fronte e nessun' ombra è calata sulla sua coscienza" (1.359).<sup>222</sup> In an article entitled "Wanted: Translators of the *Decameron's* Moral and Ethical Complexities," Marilyn Migiel praises the recent trend of critics to break away from De Sanctis' paradigm, recognizing that

the *Decameron* complicates a landscape of blacks and whites, that it calls into question the world of established authorities, and that it shows the tensions between conflicting systems of values, that things commonly held to be virtues may not always be so laudable and that things we thought of as reprehensible are not necessarily to be excluded from our moral palette.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Notable studies include Vittore Branca, *Boccaccio medievale e nuovi studi sul Decameron* (Salerno, 1956); Victoria Kirkham, *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio's Fiction* (L. S. Olschki, 1993); Kristina M. Olson, *Courtesy Lost: Dante, Boccaccio, and the Literature of History* (U of Toronto Press, 2014); Jason M. Houston, *Building a Monument to Dante* (U of Toronto P, 2010); Timothy Kircher, "The Modality of Moral Communication in the *Decameron's* First Day, in Contrast to the Mirror of the Exemplum," *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 54, 2001, pp. 1035-73.

<sup>222</sup> Francesco De Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, vol. 1 (Einaudi, 1992).

<sup>223</sup> *Heliotropia*, vol. 6, no.1-2, 2009, n. pg.

Despite this commendable trend, she continues, “many readers cling to deeply entrenched ideological views of the *Decameron* that hinder an accurate understanding of its ethical project.” Nowhere is the De Sanctisian judgment of Boccaccio as a superficial author concerned solely with pleasure and love more evident than in the critical treatment of Boccaccio’s vernacular *opere minori*.

Yet consideration of Boccaccio’s relationship to Dante vis-à-vis their literary treatment of Florence reveals Boccaccio as a political and ethical thinker deeply concerned with the welfare of the city. Various critics have dismissed Boccaccio’s interpretation of the legend while some have spared merely a cursory glance. Baldassarri, for example, claims that Boccaccio “showed a purely literary attraction to the topic of the origins of Fiesole and Florence” (46), and posits that Boccaccio and Petrarch’s “contribution to so central an issue as the origins of Florence was marginal” (46). Dozon’s monograph on the subject of Florence and Fiesole dedicates merely five pages to Boccaccio’s appropriation of the legend. Yet the fact that Boccaccio returned repeatedly throughout his illustrious career to the theme of Florence’s origins bespeaks his preoccupation with this foundational legend and demands further critical attention.

The author summarizes the legend in several of his early works, including the *Commedia delle ninfe fiorentine*, *Amorosa visione*, *Filocolo*, and *Ninfale fiesolano*. Moreover, the legend continues to resurface in his later compositions, such as the *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, *Esposizioni*, and the encyclopedic *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, thus signifying the overarching importance of this legend throughout Boccaccio’s career.

The foundation of Florence is a central focus in the *Ninfale fiesolano* (1341-42), which traces the history of Fiesole and of Florence from their mythic origins to the medieval era. Boccaccio accepts the genealogy of cities advanced by the chroniclers of the Duecento and Dante. In the *esposizione litterale* (1373-74) to *Inferno* 4.121, Boccaccio comments that Dante chose to name Electra as the first of the great spirits of Limbo because she was the progenitor of the shades who follow. Her descendants include Dardanus, Aeneas and Romulus, the Caesars, the sons of Hector, and the kings of France. Boccaccio had earlier traced this genealogy in the *Amorosa visione* 7.13-27 (c. 1342-43), where he named Atlas, Electra, and their sons in a list of mythical figures concerned with terrestrial glory, a list that posits Dardanus as the founder of Troy and the first *cavaliere* of human history.

Numerous citations arise in reference to Dante. Like Brunetto in *Inferno* 15 and Cacciaguida in *Paradiso* 15, Boccaccio employs the legend of Florence's origins in order to comment on the contemporary state of civic corruption. Although she is the daughter of Rome and granddaughter of Troy, Florence is contrary to its "antica umanità" (1.18).<sup>224</sup> His invective against Florence concentrates on the city's betrayal of its ancient Roman virtue, particularly in the form of mercantile values, which both Brunetto and Cacciaguida had attributed to the presence of immigrants within the boundaries of Florence.

Just as Dante rewrote Brunetto Latini's republican version of the legend through his literary avatar in *Inferno* 15, Boccaccio crafts an image of Dante that reflects the later author's political sensibilities. Following in the footsteps of Brunetto and Cacciaguida,

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<sup>224</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, edited by Vittore Branca (Mondadori, 1974).

Boccaccio situates Dante's exile within the inherent animosity between Florence and Fiesole, thus grafting the legendary history of Florence onto Dante's family tree. In the *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, Boccaccio elaborates on the details of Dante's illustrious lineage in order to emphasize his unique status. Boccaccio writes that Dante, "antico cittadino ne' d'oscuri parenti nato" (1.1), descends from an ancient Roman family that built Florence before it was destroyed by Attila and invaded by the Fiesolans. Much like Dante's avowal in the *De vulgari eloquentia* that Hebrew alone remained uncontaminated by the confusion of tongues, such that Christ was able to speak a pure language, so too does Dante's untainted heritage serve to sanctify his mission.

By emphasizing the purity of Dante's Roman lineage, Boccaccio seems to support the poet's claim that the confusion of people is the source of Florence's evil. Elsewhere, however, Boccaccio assumes a more ambiguous approach to migration, particularly as it regards his own civic and familial identity. As the son of a wealthy merchant from Certaldo, a city that Cacciaguada blames for Florence's corruption in *Paradiso* 16,<sup>225</sup> Boccaccio must have felt rather uncomfortable with Dante's version of Florentine history. My research has revealed a systematic personalization of the legend over the course of the Trecento, as the boundaries between civic and familial history are increasingly obscured. Boccaccio's adaptation of the legend supports this finding.

The ancient antipathy between the Fiesolans and the Romans assumes a distinctly personal tone for Boccaccio in the *Filocolo* (c. 1336-39). In Book 5.38-43, the eponymous character witnesses a disordered skirmish between two ragtag groups of peasants. The leader of the Caloni explains that the factions are engaged in a fierce

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<sup>225</sup> See pp. 125-7.

territorial dispute, but when pressed, admits that “Certo, più contrarietà di sangue che vaghezza di terreno ci muove a queste brighe, per mio avviso” (5.39).<sup>226</sup> Messaallino responds: “E che contrarietà di sangue è tra voi? Non siete voi tutti uomini, e in una contrada abitate e in un luogo?” (5.39). The leader reveals that the “rozzo popolo” are in fact descendants of the Florentines and Fiesolans, who each fled the destruction of their respective cities for the safety of the *contado*.

Filocolo takes pity on the peasants, a group in whom, “né nobiltà di cuore, né ordine, né senno, né arme non dimora” (5.41) and offers to found a new city for their shared habitation. He declares: “Io pietoso de’ vostri danni voglio che l’uno all’altro perdoni le ricevute offese, e sia tra voi vera e perfetta pace; e sì come voi foste fratelli, così ritorniate, e de’ due popoli piccoli e cattivi divegnate uno buono e grande” (5.41). From this rustic, divided people, Filocolo founds the city of Certaldo, from whence, as Book 4.1 had proleptically announced, Boccaccio will be born. The poet thus adds Certaldo, and by consequence his own family, to the genealogy of cities developed by the medieval chroniclers and Dante.

Application of my research to the legend of Florence’s origins may therefore illuminate not only Boccaccio’s relationship with Dante, but also his understanding of the political and cultural boundaries that separated Boccaccio’s Florence from the city of Dante. Boccaccio employs the legend both to uphold Dante’s purity, and to establish his own bastardized background. While the confusion of people for Dante is the root of Florence’s evil, for Boccaccio, it is the root of his family tree.

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<sup>226</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, “Filocolo,” in *Tutte le opere*, edited by Antonio Enzo Quaglio, vol. 1 (Mondadori, 1967).

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