

# *The wise poet: Solomon in Dante's Heaven of the Sun*

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# The Wise Poet: Solomon in Dante's Heaven of the Sun<sup>1</sup>

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Some sort of Trap-Door must have opened. Crowds from foreign parts with cornered hats and long garments are coming and going.

Suddenly my voice is heard (though I'm not talking): you, my fair Roman ladies la luce onde s'infiora vostra sustanza rimarrà con voi etternalmente si con'ell' é ora?

And after some time, like an echo, the response: tu non se in terra, si come tu credi ... tu non se in terra ... tu non se in terra

...  
(Odysseus Elytis, 'KHPIAKH, 3 M', from *Journal of an Unseen April*)

## i. Rethinking Solomon

Leaving behind the earth's shadows, the pilgrim of the *Commedia* raises to the Heaven of the Sun (*Paradiso* X-XIV).<sup>2</sup> Here, in the splendour of the fourth sphere, he encounters the gleaming souls of the wise men, philosophers, mystics, saints and masters of knowledge who spent their lives in the pursuit of wisdom. Beatrice and her beloved are spectacularly encircled by some of the most important personalities of Christian culture: Thomas Aquinas, Peter Lombard, Pseudo-Dionysius, Boethius, Bede, Richard of Saint Victor, Siger of Brabant, Bonaventure, Hugh of Saint Victor, Anselm, Joaquim of Flora, to mention just a few. It is clear that these are no less than the authors of the ideal library of the divine poet. The range and diversity of the list of names is nonetheless bewildering. Indeed, Dante parades, in the same location, the most representative intellectuals of different schools of theological and religious thought. Remarkably, he succeeds in presenting them in a largely objective fashion, thus creating a sense of harmony and equality between them.<sup>3</sup> The significance of Dante's textual strategy is clear: in the presence of God there is only one wisdom, only one truth, in which all the cultural and ideological

contrasts existing on earth must be dissolved and reconciled. All the divergent or even opposing paths of knowledge attempted by the human mind appear, in fact, equally noble and good as long as their supreme preoccupation is God. In the Heaven of the Sun, therefore, Siger of Brabant, Thomas Aquinas, Joachim of Flora and Bonaventure, superseding their intellectual dissimilarities, celebrate in God the same wisdom and enjoy the same bliss.<sup>4</sup>

Even in Dante's harmonious system there are loopholes, though. Recently, in fact, scholars have been ready to accept that, despite the conciliatory intentions of these cantos, Dante could not veil his preference for certain traditions of thought and epistemological methodologies: namely Bonaventure's mystic theology, symbolic exegesis, Christian Neoplatonism and Franciscan pauperism.<sup>5</sup> Dante's predilection for Bonaventure's approach to acquiring knowledge about God and about God's two Books is enhanced by the very fact that in the fourth heaven Thomas Aquinas, in opposition to his earthly modes of writing,<sup>6</sup> repeatedly employs symbolic-poetic terms, thus offering a palinode of his earthly intellectual choices. In spite of his knowledge of and respect for Thomas's doctrine, Dante openly draws attention to the limitations of the theologian's hermeneutical approach.<sup>7</sup> The reassessment of Dante's Thomism and the new appreciation of his preference for the symbolic and exegetical tradition, call for an extensive reconsideration of the cantos in which Dante comes to terms with his own cultural milieu. In the present article, I propose to broaden our understanding of Dante's idea of knowledge by examining the poet's presentation of king Solomon.

Given the quality and nature of the dwellers of the fourth heaven, it is somehow startling to discover that, the central character of the group is, in fact, a King. The fifth light of the first circle of souls is introduced to the pilgrim in quite an elaborate way:

La quinta luce, ch'è tra noi piú bella,  
 spira di tale amor, che tutto 'l mondo  
 là giú ne gola di saper novella:  
 entro v'è l'alta mente u' sí profondo  
 saver fu messo, che, se 'l vero è vero,  
 a veder tanto non surse secondo. (*Par.* X, 109-14)

Although his name is never openly declared, the identity of the character is made clear by Thomas' reference to a passage of the Bible pertaining to the superlative nature of King Solomon's wisdom:

Apparuit Dominus Salomoni per somnium nocte dicens: postula quod vis, ut dem tibi [...]. Dabis ergo servo tuo cor docile ut iudicare possit populum tuum et discernere inter malum et bonum [...]. Placuit ergo sermo coram Domino, quod Solomon rem huiusmodi postulasset, et dixit Deus Salomoni: quia postulasti verbum hoc et non petisti tibi dies multos nec divitias aut animam inimicorum tuorum [...] ecce dedi tibi cor sapiens et intelligens, in tantum ut nullus ante te similis tui fuerit nec post te surrecturus sit. (3 Kings 3, 5-12)

Hence, the brightest light of the Heaven of the Sun is Solomon, son of David, king of Israel and biblical author. Dante scholars have not devoted a great deal of time to this enigmatic figure.<sup>8</sup> In truth, his momentous position in the fourth sphere demands more attention. Not only is Solomon the most radiant, the wisest, and therefore the closest to God of all the other souls, he has also a crucial role in the whole of the episode of the Heaven of the Sun. He reappears in canto XIII when Thomas discusses the nature and limits of his wisdom, and in canto XIV where he gives a lecture on the resurrection of the body. Furthermore, as I will illustrate, he is also indirectly present in cantos XI and XII. The reasons for and implications of this pre-eminence need to be fully understood if we are to grasp the bearing of these cantos within the architecture of the *Commedia*. Since wisdom and knowledge are the issues at stake in this heaven, it seems reasonable to assume that Solomon represents Dante's ideal of wisdom. Nevertheless, as anyone familiar with medieval culture will realise, neither the definition of Wisdom,<sup>9</sup> nor the perception of Solomon's figure, were easy matters in the Middle Ages.<sup>10</sup> The king of Israel had, in fact, a problematic and multifaceted profile. In both western and eastern cultures, on account of the biblical story of his life, Solomon was regarded as the wisest of all men. His expertise was considered to range from the knowledge of animal languages to the practice of exotic gardening, from even-handed jurisdictional competence to black magic, and from an understanding of love and women to the control of natural phenomena.<sup>11</sup> Notwithstanding these incredible abilities, Solomon had his flaws. For instance, theologians and exegetes

nurtured serious doubts about his moral behaviour and therefore about his eternal destiny. Following the ambiguous biblical account, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine and most of the medieval exegetes believed that in his later years the king had indulged in polygamy and idolatry, thus losing God's favour. Whether Solomon was to be considered a doomed sinner was a question open to debate; the Venerable Bede had no hesitation in condemning him, Bonaventure, on the other hand, showed more clemency and supposed that the King had repented before his death.<sup>12</sup> The *querelle* obviously had no easy solution, but for Dante the case was clear: Solomon was not only saved, he also enjoyed the highest degree of bliss among the wise souls. As in analogous problematic cases of 'salvation' in the *Commedia*,<sup>13</sup> Solomon's presence in Heaven must be justified by Dante's intention to tackle important ideological and cultural issues. Unquestionably, the poet's choice was affected by the medieval cliché of Solomon's peerless wisdom. Nonetheless, it is my belief, that he intended to exploit and manipulate this commonplace in order to address more complex questions, to represent, in other words, a more wide-ranging and versatile ideal of wisdom. In an attempt to delineate this notion of knowledge and to disclose the message encoded in this segment of Dante's text, I would like to scrutinize the possible implications and connotations related to Solomon's presence in cantos X to XIV of *Paradiso*. To this end, I shall first offer an appraisal of some aspects of the medieval appropriation of Solomon, and then of the issues associated with his figure, and his biblical writings.

Dante's ideas on Solomon's wisdom are outlined by Thomas Aquinas in *Paradiso* XIII. Questioned by the pilgrim, who had been puzzled by the declaration of Solomon's incomparable intelligence ('a veder tanto non surse secondo': *Par.* X, 114), Thomas clarifies that Solomon's is a kingly and political wisdom:

Or s'i' non procedesse avanti piúe,  
 'Dunque, come costui fu senza pare?'  
 comincerebber le parole tue.

Ma perché paia ben ciò che non pare,  
 pensa chi era, e la cagion che'l mosse,  
 quando fu detto "Chiedi", a dimandare.

Non ho parlato sí, che tu non posse  
 ben veder ch'el fu re, che chiese senno  
 acciò che re sufficiente fosse (*Par.* XIII, 88-96)

Thomas's argument is clearly based on the biblical narration of the Book of Kings: Solomon, as we have seen, had asked God only for a 'cor docile' in order to judge the people of Israel and distinguish between 'malum et bonum' (3 Kings 3, 5). For Thomas, therefore, the perfection of Solomon's wisdom cannot be expressed in unconditional terms but only in relative ones, the king's 'prudenza' is strictly connected to the earthly role that God had entrusted on him, that is, to sacred royal commitment:

Onde, se ciò ch'io dissi e questo note,  
 regal prudenza è quel vedere impari  
 in che lo stral di mia intenzion percuote;  
 e se al "surse" drizzi li occhi chiari,  
 vedrai aver solamente rispetto  
 ai regi, che son molti, e ' buon son rari. (*Par.* XIII, 103-08)

Thomas Aquinas had elucidated the nature and importance of 'regal prudenzia' in his *Summa Theologica* (Part II. II, *questio* 47-50); kingly prudence is, in fact, a part of what he defines as practical wisdom.<sup>14</sup> Political wisdom is considered the most important of practical virtues because it is concerned with the common good. In the light of these considerations, Thomas had underlined the pivotal role of the monarch in guiding humanity towards the achievement of the common good. Indeed, during his exposition, he had repeatedly quoted Solomon as an example of kingly perfection.

Far from being an exclusive prerogative of Aquinas, the use of Solomon as a model of good kingship was yet another commonplace of medieval culture. In the political literature of the Carolingian period, for example, the Kings of Israel, David and Solomon, became the icons of divinely empowered rulers used as sources of inspiration, edification and legitimization for the kings of the Franks.<sup>15</sup> Following this tradition, Dante himself mentions Solomon in *Convivio* IV, xxvii, 6, in relation to political prudence. Moreover, it appears that the image of the just king described in Dante's political letters is heavily intertwined with quotations and images taken from Solomon's writings.<sup>16</sup> It is no coincidence, therefore, that Dante decided to open the cantos of the Heaven of Jupiter (the sphere of Justice) with a *sententia* taken from the Book of Wisdom.<sup>17</sup>

Mostrarsi dunque in cinque volte sette  
 vocali e consonanti; e io notai  
 le parti sí, come mi parver dette.  
 'DILIGITE IUSTITIAM', primai  
 fur verbo e nome di tutto 'l dipinto;  
 'QUI IUDICATIS TERRAM', fur sezzai. (*Par.* XVIII, 88-93)

In the light of these remarks a simple question arises: why did Dante place Solomon in the Heaven of the Wise and not in the Heaven of Jupiter together with his father David and the other just kings? According to Dante scholars, Solomon is presented in the solar sphere to signify those practical aspects of knowledge which, according to Dante and his culture, were fundamental to the definition of the nature of wisdom itself. It is clearly another cliché of medieval culture: knowledge is both contemplative and practical, and the one dimension cannot exist without the other, as Dante himself pointed out in the *Convivio*. Nevertheless, it is equally true that contemplation was considered a higher and nobler form of *sapientia* than the pragmatic *prudentia*. Hence, in spite of the significance that the common good has within the ethical framework of the *Commedia* and its political focus, it would be a misjudgement to overestimate the weight of practical wisdom in Dante's ultimate definition of wisdom. It is therefore crucial to appreciate that Solomon appears amidst the contemplative and learned spirits also, and above all, as an intellectual and a biblical author.

## ii. A Rhetoric of the Divine

Solomon's authorial profile is one of excellence. Medieval exegetes attributed to him the authorship of at least three books of the Old Testament: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs.<sup>18</sup> On the basis of a Jewish tradition, it was commonly held that these three books covered the main areas of human doctrine: politics, ethics, and theology. For instance, following Origen, Jerome and all the Latin fathers, Bonaventure notes in the Prologue to his commentary on Ecclesiastes:

Quoniam igitur sapientis est viam docere ad veniendum in beatitudinem, hoc fuit praecipuum et operae pretium sapienti Salomoni; sed quia, ut patet ex dictis, ad beatitudinem

acquirendam necesse est, aeterna diligi et praesentia despici, et ulterius scire in medio pravae nationis debite conversari; ideo tres libros edidit, Proverbiorum scilicet in quibus doce filium sapienter in hoc saeculo conversari; Ecclesiasten, in quo docet praesentia contemnere; et Cantica canticorum, in quibus docet caelestia diligere, maxime ipsum Sponsum.<sup>19</sup>

Such was the authority of this idea that, in the thirteenth century, the enthusiastic students of philosophy at Paris and Oxford equated Solomon's multi-layered knowledge with the achievements of Aristotle, the philosopher *parexcellence*.<sup>20</sup> But, for the medieval mind, Aristotle's *scientia naturalis* could not outshine the divinely instilled *sapientia* of the king of Israel.<sup>21</sup> Solomon was, after all, one of the prophets of God. Not only had he been enlightened by God to discuss the nature of the elements, he had also discovered, in a contemplative *raptus*, the beauty and sweetness of God's love which he praised in the book of all books: the Song of Songs. The Song is undoubtedly one of the Bible's most charming and most enigmatic texts. It has always been extremely difficult, in fact, to explain the presence of a collection of love poems celebrating the love between a beautiful Bride and her Bridegroom, at the very heart of the Book of God. In the Middle Ages, Solomon's wedding song was interpreted as the prophecy of the union between Christ and his Church, as well as the celebration of the mystical marriage between God and the human soul allowed by the mystery of the Incarnation.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the exegetes had transformed the human love relationship narrated by the Bible into a spiritual experience, and elevated the erotic language of the lovers to the sphere of the ecstatic colloquy between the soul and the divine.

The hypothesis that Solomon's presence in the Heaven of the Sun is strongly related to his authorship of the Song of Songs goes back to Steiner's *lecturae* of the episode. But it is the wider understanding of the impact of the tradition of the Song of Songs in the formation of Dante's thought, poetic language and prophetic imagery offered by recent studies that sheds new nuances on the appearance of Solomon in Dante's ideal library.<sup>23</sup> In the light of the latest studies, it seems more and more indisputable that Solomon is celebrated in the fourth heaven as one of Dante's *auctores*, one of his intellectual models and precursors. In particular, as I will try to show in the present article, he is displayed in the celestial sphere to celebrate Dante's idea of divinely inspired human poetry. A first piece of evidence for this hypothesis is



the occurrence, throughout cantos X to XIV, of strong echoes of Solomonic language, that is to say the language of Solomon's writings as filtered through their exegesis.<sup>24</sup> Most of the imagery and the semantic fields used in these cantos can in fact be labelled as Solomonic. For instance, the image of the sacred banquet which the blessed souls enjoy in heaven and, therefore, all the images belonging to the semantic field of 'taste' are clearly dependent on the metaphorical representation of knowledge as food found in Solomon's books.<sup>25</sup> The source for all these images is Solomon's eminent description of the Banquet of Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs:

Sapientia [...] immolavit victimas suas, miscuit vinum, et proposuit mensam suam. Misit ancillas suas ut vocarent ad arcem et ad moenia civitatis: Si quis est parvulus, veniat ad me. Et insipientibus locuta est: Venite, comedite panem meum, et bibite vinum quod mescui vobis (Proverbs 9, 2-5).

But one should also mention all the allegorical readings of the sensual images of *degustatio* found in the Song of Songs:

Sicut malum inter ligna silvarum, sic dilectus meus inter filios. Sub umbra illius quem desideraveram sedi, et fructus eius dulcis gutturi meo. Introduxit me in cellam vinariam; ordinavit in me caritatem. Fulcite me floribus, stipate me malis, quia amore langueo (Song of Songs 2, 3-4)

and also:

Veniat dilectus meus in hortum suum, et comedat fructum pomorum suorum. Veni in hortum meum, soror mea, sponsa. Messui myrrham meam cum aromatibus meis; comedi favum cum melle meo; bibi vinum meum cum lacte meo, comedite, amici, bibite et inebriamini, carissimi. (Song of Songs 5, 1)

On the basis of the paronomasia *sapientia-sapida*, the exegetes had commonly interpreted these verses as metaphors of the soul's encounter with the wisdom of Christ.

But Solomonic language also reverberates in Dante's celebration of the order and harmony of God's creation at the opening and close of the tenth canto.<sup>26</sup> Dante's portrait of the universe as a perfect

mechanism recalls Solomon's description of the 'opus sapientiae in mundi creatione' in the Proverbs, as well as echoing the tribute to God's artistry of the Book of Wisdom.<sup>27</sup>

Notwithstanding the allure of such images, I intend to focus my attention on a single metaphor used by Dante in the cantos we are analysing: the image of the mystical marriage. This comparison is employed by Dante as a poetic correlative of wisdom understood above all as an act of Love and Charity. On the basis of the typological interpretations of the Song of Songs, the medieval spiritual, iconographical, liturgical and theological traditions considered the mystical marriage as the Solomonic theme *par excellence*. In the Heaven of the Sun, as in the whole of medieval culture, the erotic imagery of the Song of Songs is used to represent and celebrate the union between the human and the divine,<sup>28</sup> the bond, which, in Dante's view, is at the very core of any true intellectual experience.

In canto X, describing the beatitude experienced by the glorified souls, Dante recalls the devotional love of the Christian community expressed in the prayers of the morning liturgy. The blessed souls, therefore, take on the role of the Bride in the Song of Songs:

Indi, come l'orologio che ne chiami  
 ne l'ora che la sposa di Dio surge  
 a mattinar lo sposo perché l'ami  
 che l'una parte e l'altra tira e urge,  
 tin tin sonando con sí dolce nota,  
 che 'l ben disposto spirto d'amor turge;  
 così vid' io la gloriosa rota  
 muoversi e render voce a voce in temprà  
 e in dolcezza ch'esser non pò nota  
 se non colà dove gioir s'imsempra (*Par.* X, 139-48)<sup>29</sup>

In canto XI, the reference to the Song of Songs is more subtle but no less powerful. The narration of San Francis's life as an allegorical wedding between the saint and Lady Poverty has often puzzled critics, since is not common, or at least is not prevalent in official Franciscan literature.<sup>30</sup> Let us recall Dante's reconstruction of Francis' life:

Non era ancor molto lontan da l'orto,  
 ch'el cominciò a far sentire la terra  
 de la sua gran virtute alcun conforto;

ché per tal donna, giovinetto, in guerra  
 del padre corse, a cui, come a la morte,  
 la porta del piacer nessun diserra;  
 e dinanzi a la sua spirital corte  
*et coram patre* le si fece unito;  
 poscia di dì in dì l'amò piú forte.

Questa, privata del primo marito,  
 millecent'anni e piú dispetta e scura  
 fino a costui si stette senza invito;  
 né valse udir che la trovò sicura  
 con Amiclate, al suon de la sua voce,  
 colui ch'a tutto 'l mondo fé paura;  
 né valse esser costante né feroce,  
 sí che, dove Maria rimase giusto,  
 ella con Cristo pianse in su la croce. (*Par.* XI, 55-72)

Searching for the sources of Dante's verses, scholars have noticed that there is actually an early text of the Franciscan tradition based on the same love metaphor: the *Sacrum Commercium sancti Francisci cum domina paupertate*, an allegorical text that describes Francis's life as an erotic *quête* for Lady Poverty.<sup>31</sup> It is not clear whether Dante knew this text, but the image of the holy marriage was taken up by Ubertino da Casale in his *Arbor Vitae*, which was one of Dante's sources for the episode of St Francis.<sup>32</sup> Ascertaining the dependence of Dante's allegorical scheme on one or both of these sources seems somehow an impossible and even a rather pointless task. The fact that both the Franciscan texts and *Paradiso* XI based their allegorical strategies on the exegetical tradition of the Song of Songs seems a more meaningful argument. Like the two Franciscan authors, Dante modelled the story of the humble saint on the archetypal love relationship of the Song narrated by Solomon, thus claiming for the union of St. Francis and Lady Poverty the same spiritual interpretation that had been applied to the Bride and Bridegroom. As a matter of fact, there are a number of lexical keys that suggest and reinforce the idea that canto XI is an original rewriting of the Song of Songs. Unfortunately limits of space do not allow me to develop a close reading of the episode. Suffice to say that words such as 'scura', 'feroce', 'porta', 'morte' and 'forte' create a compelling identity between Dante's verses and those of the biblical poem. These very terms chosen by the poet acquire a different intensity if read with the

accompaniment of the medieval glossed Song, truly transforming the poetic language into a celestial discourse, signifying the heights of spiritual love and mystical marriage.<sup>33</sup> The same can be said of the many military and regal metaphors that pervade Francis's canto. These images, certainly related to the courtly descriptions of the saint's challenges often found in Franciscan literature, are perfectly attuned to the atmosphere of the Song of Songs. The *epithalamium* is replete with war images, and the bride herself is compared to a military field.<sup>34</sup> The exegetes had read into these wars the signs of the daily struggles in which the Christian soul battles against sin and temptation. Likewise, Francis the Bridegroom had fought tenaciously to accomplish God's will on earth.<sup>35</sup> In Dante's text, therefore, the marital allegory is not a simple rhetorical embellishment but an *integumentum* that reveals the figural and eschatological meaning of Francis's personal history. As in the commentaries to the Song of Songs, the *littera* is the necessary and beautiful clothing of the hidden truth. The sensual love between the Saint and Poverty is in fact the *figura* of the spiritual *dilectio* that the saint enjoyed in life, the union between human and divine that he achieved when receiving the stigmata.

Finally, Francis's *imitatio Christi*, a crucial element of the Franciscan hagiographic tradition apparently absent in canto XI, enters Dante's text through the imitation of the Song of Songs.<sup>36</sup> As has been seen, in the Middle Ages the Bridegroom of the Song was in fact interpreted as a *figura Christi*, so by presenting the Assisian saint as the new bridegroom Dante is allowing the *littera* of the *Commedia* to reveal his Christological fibre.

Turning to the other champion of the Christian faith presented by Dante in the Heaven of the Wise, one cannot ignore the clear parallelism between cantos XI and XII.<sup>37</sup> In writing the life of St. Dominic, Dante followed the model created for Francis, thus reinforcing the idea of unison and harmony that permeates the Heaven of the Sun. The image of the mystical wedding between the saint and a divine female personification is therefore duplicated in canto XII, although less successfully. Saint Francis's humble marriage is replaced by the martial 'sponsalitie' between the Spanish saint and Lady Faith:

Poi che le sponzalizie fuor compiute  
 al sacro fonte intra lui e la Fede,  
 u' si dotar di mutua salute,  
 la donna che per lui l'assenso diede,  
 vide nel sonno il mirabil frutto  
 ch'uscir dovea di lui e de le rede (*Par.* XII, 61-66)

As in the *vita Francisci* the life of Dominic follows the scheme of the biblical marriage, and as in canto XI a number of textual details could be pointed out in order to show the echoes of the glossed Song of Songs in Dante's poetic rendition of the saint's biography. On this occasion too, however, I must restrict my observations to this general level and move on to the next relevant point.

Indeed, the leitmotif of the mystical marriage reaches its apotheosis in canto XIV. In this canto, as I mentioned, Solomon is asked to give a theological lecture on one of the most substantial mysteries of the Christian religion: the resurrection of the body, and the nature of the beatifying vision of God. Solomon's speech is a beautiful and highly poetic glorification of the resurrection seen as the supreme love union with God, as the true eternal moment of satisfaction of every man's burning desire to reach his homeland.<sup>38</sup>

### iii. 'La rivestita carne'

The question of the resurrection of the body, taken up by Solomon's soul, was one of the most controversial in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Especially around 1320, the dispute on the nature of the *visio Dei*, and therefore on the conditions of the afterlife, became extremely intense and involved the most important theologians of the time. With his usual peremptory decisiveness, Dante evaded the subtle discussion and offered his own solution through the voice of Solomon. Due to the significance of the theme within the framework of Christian culture and to the importance of the body in the *Commedia*,<sup>39</sup> it is vital to trace the origin of Dante's arguments, in other words, to ascertain his ideological sympathies and alliances on this topic. From this perspective, therefore, it is extremely important to grasp the reasons that persuaded the poet to elect Solomon as a spokesman for one of the the *Paradiso's* most complex and beautiful theological discussions.

After the pioneering work of Steiner, to say that Solomon was selected on the basis and on behalf of the Song of Songs has become a commonplace among Dante commentators. Nevertheless, I am convinced that there is more to add to the statement. As a matter of fact, Dante chose Solomon following a long and weighty exegetical and theological tradition that connected the discussion on the resurrection of the body to the Song of Songs. More precisely, by 'using' Solomon, the poet emulated the arguments and methods established by mystical writers and theologians like Bonaventure, St. Bernard and the Cistercian friars. In order to prove my argument, I would like to focus on their discourses on the resurrection of the body in order to detect the affinities between their treatment of the issue and Dante's textual and rhetorical strategies in *Paradiso* XIV.

The doubts about the condition of the separated soul between death and the day of the Last Judgement were resolved a few years after Dante's death. In 1336, the official theory approved by the Church claimed that the soul could reach the beatific vision soon after death and purgation, before being rejoined to the resuscitated body.<sup>40</sup> According to this resolution, therefore, the resurrection of the body was no longer necessary for the achievement of heavenly bliss, and the unity of body and soul was rendered superfluous. The papal decision aimed at illustrating bliss as a status of eternal *quies* and perfection even for the separated blessed soul. Postponing the full vision of God until Judgement Day would have meant abandoning the soul in a frustrating state of longing and desire: longing for the return of the body, longing for the vision of God, until the end of time. For most Christian theologians, longing was a negative sign of inadequacy that could not be accepted in heaven. Peace was, in fact considered the most precious quality of beatitude by the majority of theologians.

Conversely, as is proved by contemporary Dante scholarship, desire and longing are crucial in *Paradiso* and in the poet's description of eternal bliss.<sup>41</sup> For him, the *visio Dei* is above all a matter of love and charity. According to Solomon's speech, in fact, the separated souls long for the return of their bodies in order to reach the fullness of knowledge and vision, but also in order to be able to love and desire God ceaselessly. Thus, through Solomon, Dante declares that, after the resurrection of the body, the blessed will be able to see more deeply into the divine mind, and that this vision will increase the flame of charity that illuminates them. The body will add light to

light and love to love, for this reason, Dante's separated souls ardently desire to be joined once more to their buried bodies:<sup>42</sup>

[...] Quanto fia lunga la festa  
di paradiso, tanto il nostro amore  
si raggerà dintorno cotal vesta.

La sua chiarezza séguita l'ardore;  
l'ardor la visione, e quella è tanta,  
quant'ha di grazia sovra suo valore.

Come la carne gloriosa e santa  
fia rivestita, la nostra persona  
piú grata fia per esser tutta quanta;  
per che s'accrescerà ciò che ne dona  
di gratiuto lume il sommo bene,  
lume ch'a lui veder ne condiziona;  
onde la vision crescer convene,  
crescer l'ardor che di quella s'accende,  
crescer lo raggio che da esso vene.

Ma sí come carbon che fiamma rende,  
e per vivo candor quella soverchia,  
sí che la sua parvenza si difende;

cosí questo folgór che già ne cerchia  
fia vinto in apparenza da la carne  
che tutto dí la terra ricoperchia;  
né potrà tanta luce affaticarne:  
ché li organi del corpo saran forti  
a tutto ciò che potrà dilettarne. (*Par.* XIV, 37-60)

Hence, as vividly depicted by Solomon, the vision of God is not only 'luce intellettuale' but also, and above all, an experience of love and desire, a prolonged desire that endures for eternity. This was the line of thought championed by Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, and Bernard of Clairvaux. A glance at their treatment of the subject will therefore enable us to understand that not only did Dante conform to their ideas, he also described the resurrected body with metaphors and words borrowed from their mystic writings. And, as we will see, Solomon's love poetry lies at the very heart of the matter.

Desire is central in Bonaventure's conception of the resurrection.<sup>43</sup> For the Franciscan doctor, the body and the soul desire each other and long to be rejoined after death due to a *naturalis inclinatio*:

Deus in productione corpus animae alligavit et naturali et mutuo appetitu invicem copulavit [...] nec naturalis appetitus patitur, quod anima sit plene beata, nisi restituatur ei corpus, ad quod resumendum habet inclinationem naturaliter insertam.<sup>44</sup>

Undoubtedly, the problematic nature of desire persists; after all, it is a *retardatio*, a need that distracts the soul from the heavenly *satietas*. Nevertheless, Bonaventure acknowledges desire as a manifestation of the joy experienced in heaven, and perceives the body as a tool to increase the inebriation of bliss:

Quid enim ama, caro mea, quid desideras anima mea? Ibi est quidquid amatis, quiquid desideratis. Si delectat pulcritudo; *fulgebunt iusti sicut sol* [...] Si longa et salubris vita; ibi est sana aeternitas et aeterna sanitas, quia *iusti in perpetuum vivent* [...] Si ebrietas; inebriabuntur ab ubertate domus dei. [...] Si quaelibet non immunda, sed munda voluptas; torrente voluptatis tuae potabis eos. (*Breviloquium* VII, vii 7)

As Walker Bynum observes, these phrases 'surely suggest that blessedness is not the cessation but the expression of desire, that love moves and seeks even in heaven, that body can be the probe, the taster, the instrument of heavenly experience' (p. 251).<sup>45</sup> Even more meaningful to my present discussion is the very fact that the reciprocal desire of body and soul to be reunited in God is depicted by Bonaventure as a love relationship; the gifts that the soul and the body receive at the resurrection are for instance considered as dowries (*Breviloquium* VII, vii. 4-5). Even if the friar does not quote it openly, the influence of the erotic imagery of the Song of Songs is remarkable. There can be no doubt that Bonaventure conceived of the resurrection as an accomplishment of the mystical marriage between the human and the divine; together with the soul, the resurrected body 'plenitudo dulcedinis et beatitudinis ebrietas redundant, et quantum est possibile derivatur' (*Breviloquium*, VII, vii, 4).

Desire is also at the core of saint Bernard's mystical theology.<sup>46</sup> For the *doctor mellifluus* the longing for God endures death and is actually augmented by the resurrection of the body. For Bernard, the reunion of body and soul is more than the return to the state of perfection lost by Adam and Eve, the resurrection of the flesh is the necessary requisite to the derivation of full pleasure from the ultimate experience of bliss.



Therefore, the body, rejected from a sexual point of view, is highly valued in the experience of spiritual *dilectio*. Bliss at resurrection is not *quies* but a real state of intoxication or drunkenness. It was this pivotal importance of desire that led Bernard to use the erotic language of the Song of Songs in order to describe the spiritual experience of sacred ecstasy. In the *De diligendo Deo*, for instance, the friar declares that after the resurrection of the body we shall be inebriated as the bridegroom of Song of Songs promises to his bride:

post mortem vero in vita spirituali iam bibimus, suavissima quadam facilitate quod perceptitur colantes: tandem reddivis corporibus in vita immortalis inebriamur, mira plenitudine exuberantes. Haec pro eo quod sponsus in Canticis dicit: *Comedite, amici, et bibite; et inebriamini charissimi*. Comedite ante mortem, bibite post mortem, inebriamini post resurrectionem. Merito iam carissimi, qui caritate inebriatur: merito inebriati, qui ad nuptias Agni introduci merentur edentes et bibentes super mensam illius in regno suo.<sup>47</sup>

Likewise, commenting on a passage of the Song of Songs in his *Sermones*, the mystic describes the vision of God as an interminable desire, a feeling of longing and thirst for the presence of God, the only bridegroom:

*Indica mihi quem diligit anima mea, ubi pascas, ubi cubes in meridie* (Cant. 1, 6) [...] Nempe illa visio stat, quia forma stat quae tunc videtur; est enim: nec ullam capit ex eo quod est, fuit, vel erit, mutationem. [...] Nam et quo apparet, ut invariabile in se est, ita invariabiliter intuentibus praesto est; et quibus apparet, nil videre desiderabilius volunt, nil possunt delectabilius. Quando ergo illa vel fastidiet avididitas, vel se subtrahet suavitas, vel fraudabit veritas, vel deficiet aeternitas? Quod si in eternum exenditur videndi copia pariter et voluntas; quomodo non plena felicitas? Nil quippe aut deest jam semper videntibus, aut superest semper volentibus.<sup>48</sup>

If we now turn briefly to the *auctoritas* most commonly quoted by Dante scholars, Thomas Aquinas, we should not be surprised to discover that he is alien to the language of desire.<sup>49</sup> Thomas writes perfect syllogisms on the nature of the resurrection, but he is rarely

conquered by the sentimental rhetoric that fascinated the minds of Bonaventure and Bernard. He feels uncomfortable with the notion of the soul's desire for the body, refuses the idea of a natural drive within the soul to be rejoined to its earthly flesh and believes that the resurrection is necessary just to enhance the splendour of the soul. The distance between Dante and the master of theology, is therefore both ideological and rhetorical, as is clearly shown in the following passage taken from the *questio De vita eterna*, in his *Summa contra Gentiles*:

Claritas illa causabitur ex redundantia gloriae animae in corpus [...]. Et [...] claritas, que est in anima ut spiritualis, recipitur in corpore ut corporalis. Et ideo, secundum quod anima erit maioris claritatis secundum maius meritum, ita etiam erit differtia claritatis in corpore, ut patet per apostolum, I Cor. 15, 41-42. Et ita in corpore glorioso cognoscetur gloria animae, sicut in vitro cognoscitur color coporis quod continetur in vase vitreo.<sup>50</sup>

These observations lead to at least two principal conclusions. Firstly, Dante's concept of bliss is line with the mystic theology of Bonaventure and Bernard. Secondly, and most importantly for my discussion, these analogies are not made explicit in the poem, but rather emerge through a subtle strategy of allusive intertextuality. Dante anchors his vision of the resurrection to the mystical tradition through Solomon's presence. As in the works of the two medieval thinkers, in *Paradiso XIV* the discourse on the *visio Dei* is spelled out through Solomon's voice and his biblical metaphorical language of desire. This 'coincidence' is certainly explained by the fact that both Dante and the medieval mystics had understood the ways in which the language of human erotic poetry can actually signify a higher spiritual desire thanks to the exegetical tradition of the Song of Songs. Dante's interest, in fact, was not merely in the rhetorical potential of Solomon's poem; more notably he was fascinated by the epistemological efficacy of sacred poetry. The commentaries to the Song of Songs proved the supremacy of metaphorical language in the pursuit of truth and knowledge. As noted by Marguerite Mills Chiarenza, 'the triumph of Solomon [...] represents also the victory of poetry as the expression of intangible mysteries that confuse and defeat reason. The Canticle of Canticles offers the perfect example [...] of the value of poetry in communicating mysteries' (p. 172).

#### iv. A Sweetness of Language

To conclude my discussion of divine rhetoric, I would like to offer a few more observations on the rhetorical and poetic implications arising from Solomon's speech. Solomon's discourse has been defined as one of the most beautiful in the *Commedia* by many commentators. As we have seen, theoretically it is very dense. Rhetorically, the piece is equally complex, saturated with rhetorical artifice and *colores*.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, despite this complexity, Solomon's verses flow as an incredibly clear speech; clear and moderate, as Dante himself states by defining the king's voice as a 'voce modesta':

E io udi' ne la luce piú dia  
del minor cerchio una voce modesta,  
forse qual fu da l'angelo a Maria (*Par.* XIV, 34-36)

Scholars have often questioned the occurrence of the term 'modesta' here, the explanations offered, however, are not fully satisfactory.<sup>52</sup> It is my belief that that the word bears technical implications and actually defines the rhetorical nature of Solomon's speech. Clearly the term refers to the intellectual moderation of King Solomon. Humility and moderation are fundamental aspects of Dante's definition of wisdom, as his treatment of Francis shows. After all, the very episode of Solomon's life quoted by Dante is a clear *exemplum* of the king's humble respect for God's will. However it seems very likely that the term 'modesta' should also be related to the *sermo humilis*, the language of the Bible, celebrated by Augustine as the most simple and yet the most revealing and divine form of expression.<sup>53</sup> The definition of *sermo humilis* and the problem of divine language are extremely complex and they would require a series of studies in order to begin to clarify them. Nevertheless it is possible to draw some conclusions, starting from the terminology used by Dante here. The description of Solomon's voice as 'modesta' is immediately followed by a comparison between the king's utterance and the voice of the Archangel at the Annunciation. The parallelism with angelic speech obviously links the term *modesta* to divine, biblical and inspired language. In this perspective, most revealing is the fact that Dante's comparison is based on the Marian and Mariological interpretations of the Song of Songs. Towards the end of the ninth century, exegetes had

started to read the Song as the story of the relationship between Mary and Christ,<sup>54</sup> as the *historia* of the Virgin's life and as a prophecy of the episode of the Annunciation narrated in Luke 1, 26-32. This interpretation was not confined to the exegetical milieu, but rather was common in liturgical and devotional writings. On this basis, the Cistercian Guerric of St Igny, for instance, could celebrate the Annunciation as the fulfilment of Solomon's prophecy:

Beatus igitur venter, qui te, Domine Jesu, portavit! [...] Proinde namque Salomon, cum in carmine amoris castitatem praedicaret virginis, seu sponsaque, videlicet seu sponsi [...] ut castitatem illius adornatam nostramque adornandam etiam aliis virtutibus doceret, ait: *Venter ejus eburneus, distinctus sapphiris* (Cant. 5, 14) [...] Videtur tamen sermoni iste, prophetia hujus esse diei, per Salomonem olim praedicta, per Jesum hodie impleta.<sup>55</sup>

The cliché was so strong that even outside a strictly Marian context, we encounter the parallel between the Song of Songs and the Annunciation episode. Bonaventure, for example, interprets the conversation between the messenger of God and Mary as a *typus* of the dialogue between the Bride and the Bridegroom in the Song of Songs:

In mense autem sexto, missus est angelus Gabriel a Deo in civitatem Galilaeae, cui nomen Nazareth, ad virginem desponsatam viro, cui nomen erat Ioseph, de domo David, et nomen virginis Maria. Et ingressus angelus ad eam dixit: Ave gratia plena: dominus tecum: benedicta tu in mulieribus [...] Ideo ergo nominat Virginem, ut ostendatur, ipsam fuisse praeparatam, non casu inventam. [...] hoc Solomon praevидit in forti muliere et eius pretio [...] Gabriel tandem exhibuit ipsam Virginem salutando. [...] Dixit autem Maria etc. [...] Postremo subditur consensus perfectus ex caritate, cum dicitur: Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum. 'Fiat, ut dicit Bernardus, est desiderii signum, non dubitationis indicium'. Etiam est signum assertionis, sicut in Psalmo: 'Dicet omnis populus: Fiat, fiat'; et iterum affectionis, ut in Psalmo: 'Fiat manus tua, ut salvet me' - idem est verbum et manus Patris [...] Haec est vox dulcissima hominibus Angelis et ipsi Sponso. Hanc petebat in

Canticorum secundo: 'Sonet vox tua in auribus meis; vox enim tua dulcis, et facies tua decora'; quod facit, cum dixit Angelo: Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.<sup>56</sup>

The linking of the two biblical stories, the Annunciation and the mystical marriage, encouraged the exegetes to define the exchange between Mary and Gabriel as an experience of *dulcedo*. Rupert of Deutz, author of one of the most consistent and detailed Mariological commentaries on the Song of Songs, commenting on the first words of the Song assimilates the request of the Bride for a kiss with Mary's first utterance to the Archangel. This conversation is then defined as an encountering of 'suavitatis inenarrabilis', an expression of jubilation:

OSCULETUR ME OSCULO ORIS SUI. Quae est ista exclamatio tam magna, tam repentina? O beata Maria, inundatio gaudii, vis amoris, torrens voluptatis, totam te operuit totam te obtinuit penitusque inebriavit et sensisisti *quod oculus non vidit et auris non audiunt* [...] (I Cor. 2, 9), et dixisti: *Osculetur me osculo oris sui*. Dixisti enim ad angelum: *Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum* (Lc. 1, 45). Quod erat illud verbum? Quid locutus fuerat tecum? *Invenisti, ait gratiam apud Deum: Ecce concipies et paries filium, et vocabis nomen eius Iesum?* (Lc. 1, 30-31). Ac deinceps: *Spiritus sanctus superveniet in te, et virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi. Ideoque et quod nascetur ex te sanctum, vocabitur Filius Dei* (Lc. 1, 35). Nonne hoc verbum angeli verbum et sponsio erat iam imminentis osculi oris Domini? [...] *Profecto anima tua liquefacta est, ut dilectus locutus est* (Cant. 5, 6), scilicet Deus Pater locutione admirabili, locutione ineffabili, dum substantiam Verbi sui cum illo amore suo Spiritu sancto tuae menti, tuo ventri penitus insereret: in quo nec primam similem visa es nec habere sequentem. Et angelum quidem dixisse suffecerit, *fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum, angele Dei, ut ille osculetur me osculo oris sui*, ad ipsum autem dilectum Deum conversa loqui et iubilare anima tua non desiit, in ipso experimento suavitatis inenarrabilis, cuius videlicet iubilationis summa haec est.<sup>57</sup>

Dante himself in *Paradiso* XXXII, describes Gabriel's approach to the Virgin as 'leggiadro'. Indeed, this is the Mariological lesson exposed by Saint Bernard to the pilgrim:

Ed elli a me: 'Baldezza e leggiadria  
 quant' esser puote in angelo e in alma,  
 tutta è in lui; e sí volem che sia,  
 perch' elli è quelli che portò la palma  
 giuso a Maria, quando 'l Figliuol di Dio  
 carcar si volse de la nostra salma. (*Par.* XXXII, 109-14)

What is the real meaning of the terms 'dulcedo', 'suavitas' and 'leggiadria'? In actual fact, the words pronounced by the angel at the Annunciation were often described by the exegetes as obscure and difficult to interpret, even for Mary herself. Origen, for example, describes Gabriel's speech as a terrifying experience for the Virgin. According to the Greek exegete, Mary's fear originated in the obscurity of the Archangel's discourse, but such obscurity was necessarily linked to the novelty of the formula used, and the novelty of the mystery announced by the messenger:

Quia vero angelus novo sermone Mariam salutavit, quem in omni Scriptura invenire non potui, et de hoc pauca dicenda sunt. Id enim quod ait: Ave, gratia plena [...] Soli Mariae haec salutatio servatur. Si enim scisset Maria et ad alium quempiam similem factum esse sermonem, habebat quippe legis scientiam, et erat sancta, et prophetarum vaticinia quotidiana meditatione cognoverat, numquam quasi peregrina eam salutatio terruisset.<sup>58</sup>

As we have noted, only when associated with the Song of Songs was the language of the Annunciation converted into a sweet melody. The Song worked as a catalyst for the change in perspective. But what were the technical connotations of the sweetness found in the Song of Songs? In the Middle Ages, the language of the Song of Songs was conceived of as *comicus*, firstly because of the theatrical nature of the text and secondly because it spoke the morally low language of the body, the language of sex and sensuality.<sup>59</sup> According to the exegetes, this language debased the divine concept of love veiled in the text; yet, on the other hand, it was an absolutely necessary tool. 'Bodily'

language was, in fact, the only language known to men to describe the experience of divine love and longing. For the commentators, the erotic metaphor of the Song of Songs was the indispensable rhetorical device through which a shadowy and yet true image of the joyful relationship between God and his creatures is given. The *littera* kills, as Paul said, but it could also save if correctly interpreted. Gregory the Great, author of one of the most influential commentaries to the Song invited the reader to transcend the 'vulgar' language of the body and taste the greatness of divine love:

Hinc est enim, quod in hoc libro [...] amoris quasi corporei verba ponuntur: ut a torpore suo anima per sermones suae consuetudinis refricata recalescat et per verba amoris, qui infra est, excitetur ad amorem, qui supra est. Nominantur enim in hoc libro oscula, nominantur ubera, nominantur genae, nominatur femora; in quibus verbis non irridenda est sacra descriptio, sed maior dei misericordia consideranda est: quia, dum membra corporis nominat et sic ad amorem vocat, notandum est quam mirabiliter nobiscum et misericorditer operatur, qui, ut cor nostrum ad investigationem sacri amoris accenderet, usque ad turpis amoris nostra verba descendit. Sed, unde se loquendo humiliat, inde nos intellectu exaltat: quia ex sermonibus huius amoris discimus, qua virtute in divinitatis amore ferveamus.<sup>60</sup>

Bernard of Clairvaux, in his Sermons on the Song attracted his friars to the difficult task of reading the book of Solomon with the promise of achieving great spiritual pleasure. Bernard enhanced the sweetness and playfulness of the sensual language that hides the most profound revelations:

*Osculetur me* [...] Et quidem jucundum eloquium, quod ab osculo principium sumit, et blanda ipsa quaedam Scripturae facies facile afficit et allicit ad legendum, ita ut quod in ea latet, delectet etiam cum labore investigare, nec fatiget inquirendi forte difficultas ubi eloquii suavitas mulcet. Verum quem non valde attentum faciat istiusmodi principium sine principio, et novitas locutionis in veteri libro? Unde constat hoc opus non humano ingenio, sed Spiritus arte ita compositum, ut quamvis difficile intellectu, sit tamen inquisitu delectabile. (I, 5)

The *novitas* of the Song is the evidence of the poet's divine inspiration, the Holy Spirit had dictated to the wisest of all men the most delectable poem on loving God. However the incredible beauty of the Song can be fully appreciated only through careful and prudent interpretation. Therefore the language that exalts the complexity and beauty of God's mystery is sweet and pleasant, or sweet and bold (comprising 'baldezza e leggiadria') like the voice of the Archangel.

#### v. Conclusions

In the light of the documentation provided it would appear that the modesty of Solomon's language is a sign of his intellectual humbleness, it also points towards the strong ethical implications of his writings as a biblical author. But, as the parallel with the Archangel suggests, the term 'modest' carries further poetic and technical connotations. Indeed, the locution 'voce modesta' conveys most of Dante's considerations on the nature of divinely inspired language, its sweetness, and its clarity – a clarity, which does not imply simplicity, and which can only be achieved after a difficult process of interpretation. As for the exegetes of the Song of Songs, for Dante the sweetness and the moderation of poetic language can only be experienced if the *sententia* is fully understood, if the spiritual meanings (that is to say the allegorical, moral and anagogical meanings) are fully appreciated. Solomon's writings and their interpretations emerge as the essential paradigm for all inspired poetry, and Solomon himself figures as a very authoritative precursor of Dante himself. And not only in the field of love poetry; for as I have illustrated here, Solomon the intellectual takes on different roles in Dante's treatment of the nature of wisdom. He is the exemplary king, the enamoured lover of sacred Wisdom, a biblical *auctor*, a philosopher, a contemplative mind, and last but not least, the poet of the divine. Solomon, in other words, summarises all the different aspects of Dante's idea of Wisdom – that same wisdom that he himself aspired to achieve.

#### NOTES

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work. This article is derived from my doctoral thesis on Dante and the medieval Solomonian tradition.

<sup>2</sup> For a first critical appreciation of the episode of the Heaven of the Sun, see the following works: on *Paradiso* X, G. P. Cestaro, 'Canto X', in *Dante's Divine Comedy. Introductory Readings. III: Paradiso*, ed. by T. Wlassics (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1995), pp. 146-55; L. Fassò, 'Il canto X del *Paradiso*', in *Lecture dantesche. Paradiso* (Florence: Sansoni, 1961), pp. 195-216; F. Forti, 'Canto X', in *Lectura Dantis Scaligeri. Paradiso* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1968), pp. 349-86; K. Foster, 'The Celebration of Order: *Paradiso* X', in *The Two Dantes and Other Studies* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977), pp. 120-36; J. Freccero, 'Paradiso X: The Dance of the Stars', *Dante Studies*, 86 (1968), 85-111; E. Giachery, 'Il canto X del *Paradiso*', in *Paradiso. Lecture degli anni 1979-81* (Rome: Bonacci, 1989), pp. 293-312; B. Nardi, 'Il canto X del *Paradiso*', in '*Lecturae*' e altri studi danteschi (Florence: Le Lettere, 1990), pp. 163-72; G. Vallese, 'Il canto X del *Paradiso*' in *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1973), VI, 69-91; on *Paradiso* XI, E. Auerbach, 'Il canto XI del *Paradiso*', in *Lecture dantesche. Paradiso*, pp. 217-35; I. Baldelli, 'Il canto XI del *Paradiso*', in *Nuove letture dantesche*, VI, 93-105; U. Bosco, 'Canto XI', in *Lectura Dantis Scaligeri, Paradiso*, pp. 387-418; N. Mineo, 'Il canto XI del *Paradiso*', in *I primi undici canti della 'Commedia'*, *Lectura Dantis Metelliana*, ed. by A. Mellone (Rome: Bulzoni, 1992), pp. 221-320; B. Nardi, 'Il canto di s. Francesco', in '*Lecturae*' e altri studi danteschi, pp. 173-84; M. Trovato, 'Canto XI', in *Dante's Divine Comedy. Introductory Readings. III: Paradiso*, pp. 156-71; on *Paradiso* XII, A. Bertoldi, 'Il canto XII del *Paradiso*', in *Lecture dantesche. Paradiso*, pp. 237-54; S. Botterill, 'Canto XII', in *Dante's Divine Comedy. Introductory Readings. III: Paradiso*, pp. 172-85; A. Di Pietro, 'Canto XII', in *Lectura Dantis Scaligeri. Paradiso*, pp. 419-46; R. Manselli, 'Il canto XII del *Paradiso*', in *Nuove letture dantesche*, VI, 107-28; F. Ulivi, 'San Francesco e Dante', in *Lecture Classensi*, 11 (1982), 9-24; on *Paradiso* XIII, G. Rati, 'Il canto XIII del *Paradiso*', in *Paradiso. Lecture degli anni 1979-81*, pp. 353-79; G. Toffanin, 'Canto XIII', in *Lectura Dantis Scaligeri. Paradiso*, pp. 447-78; J. Took, 'Canto XIII', in *Dante's Divine Comedy. Introductory Readings. III: Paradiso*, pp. 186-97; G. Vandelli, 'Il canto XIII del *Paradiso*', in *Lecture dantesche. Paradiso*, pp. 255-78;

on *Paradiso* XIV, E. Bonora, 'Struttura e linguaggio nel *Paradiso* XIV', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 146 (1969), 1-17; L. Blasucci, 'Discorso teologico e visione sensibile nel canto XIV del *Paradiso*', *Larassegna della letteratura italiana*, VIII, 95, iii (1991), 5-19; U. Bosco, 'Domesticità del *Paradiso* (lettura del XIV canto)', in *Studi in onore di Alberto Chiari*, 2 vols (Brescia: Paideia, 1973), II, 217-34; E. Esposito 'Il canto XIV del *Paradiso*', in *Paradiso. Letture degli anni 1979-81*, pp. 381-95; G. Fallani, 'Il canto XIV del *Paradiso*, in *Nuove letture dantesche*, VI, 147-62; E. Soprano, 'Canto XIV', in *Lectura Dantis Scaligera. Paradiso*, pp. 479-504; M. U. Sowell, 'Canto XIV', in *Dante's Divine Comedy. Introductory Readings. III: Paradiso*, pp. 198-212; C. Steiner, 'Il canto XIV del *Paradiso*', in *Letture dantesche. Paradiso*, pp. 279-96. For other relevant studies on the Heaven of the Sun, see A. Cornish, 'The Shadows of Ideas, *Paradiso* 13', in *Reading Dante's Stars* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 93-107; P. Dronke, *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 82-102; E. Noè Girardi, 'La struttura del *Paradiso* e i canti del Sole (*Par.* X-XIV, 81)', in *Studi in onore di Alberto Chiari*, I, 629-52; M. Marietti, 'Au Ciel du Soleil (*Paradis*, X-XIV)', *Chroniques italiennes*, 57 (1999), 29-48; A. Meekins, 'Reflecting on the Divine: Notes on Dante's Heaven of the Sun', *The Italianist*, 18 (1998), 28-70.

<sup>3</sup> The concept is widely developed in most of the literature on the Heaven of the Sun. For a more original perspective see T. Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 194-217.

<sup>4</sup> The problematic appearance of these figures has been discussed by the majority of the scholars who comment on the Heaven of the Sun. See, for instance, Botterill, p. 184; Dronke, pp. 82-102; Forti, pp. 376-81.

<sup>5</sup> See Z. G. Baranski, 'Dante's Signs: An Introduction to Medieval Semiotics and Dante', in *Dante and the Middle Ages*, ed. by J. C. Barnes & C. Ó Cuilleánáin (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995), pp. 139-80, especially pp. 162-66. See also Baranski's treatment of the subject in his books: *I segni di Dante* (Naples: Liguori, 2000), and 'Sole nuovo, luce nuova'. *Saggi sul rinnovamento culturale in Dante* (Turin: Scriptorium, 1996). On Bonaventure in the Heaven of the Sun, see also: A. Meekins,

'Reflecting on the Divine'; 'The Study of Dante, Bonaventure and Mysticism', in *In amicizia: Essays in Honour of Giulio Lepschy*, ed. by Z. G. Baranski and L. Pertile, Special Supplement to *The Italianist*, 17 (1997), 83-99; R. S. Beal, 'Bonaventure, Dante and the Apocalyptic Woman Clothed with the Sun', *Dante Studies*, 114 (1996), 209-28.

<sup>6</sup> E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 594; A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship* (London: Scholar Press, 1984), p. 128

<sup>7</sup> See Baranski, 'Dante's Signs', especially pp. 157-59; Meekins, 'Reflecting on the Divine', especially pp. 47-50; M. Mills Chiarenza, 'Dante's Lady Poverty', *Dante Studies*, 111 (1993) 153-75 (especially pp. 168-71). Thomas's ratiocinative methodology is not the only issue on trial in these cantos; as Bosco suggests, Thomas is also making a retraction of his idea that Dominicans could abandon a strict observance of the law of poverty (Bosco, 'canto XI', p. 392, n. 1). On the limitations of reason and the treatment of Thomas Aquinas in the Heaven of the Sun see also C. Cahill, 'The Limitations of Difference in *Paradiso* XIII's Two Arts: Reason and Poetry', *Dante Studies*, 114 (1996), 245-69.

<sup>8</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, Michele Scherillo underlined the need to understand the reasons behind Solomon's salvation. Since then, little has been done to develop the topic. See M. Scherillo, 'Perché Dante salva Salomone', in *Alcuni capitoli della biografia di Dante* (Turin: Loesher, 1896), pp. 299-311. Some very relevant points on Solomon in the Heaven of the Sun are to be found in more recent studies: Chiarenza, 'Dante's Lady Poverty'; Dronke, *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions*; Marietti, 'Au ciel du Soleil'; Meekins, 'Reflecting on the Divine', Steiner, 'Il canto XIV del *Paradiso*'.

<sup>9</sup> The definition of *Sapientia* as opposed to *scientia* is one of the most complex issues of Christian culture. Over a span of centuries, from Augustine to the Victorines, from the cloisters to the schools in Paris and Oxford: the debate on the nature of knowledge involved all the great minds of the Middle Ages, never to come to a definite conclusion. In the thirteenth century, the *questio* became even more harsh with the 'disclosure' of Aristotelian natural and ethical sciences. The gap between theology and philosophy became wider and more problematic. Dante himself tried to tackle this problem in his *Convivio*. The bibliography on the subject is incredibly vast; for an

introduction, see: M. D. Chenu, *La théologie au douzième siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1957), and *La théologie comme science au XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1957); G. R. Evans, *Philosophy and Theology in the Middle Ages* (London & New-York: Routledge, 1993); S. C. Ferruolo, *The Origins of the University* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985); D. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (London & New York: Longman, 1988); J. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and The Desire of God: A Study of Monastic Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982); H. I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris: De Boccard, 1937).

<sup>10</sup> A first appraisal of Solomon in the Middle Ages is to be found in M. Bose: 'From Exegesis to Appropriation: the Medieval Solomon', *Medium Aevum*, 65.ii (1996), 187-210. Solomon as master of love has often been at the centre of Jean Leclercq's studies: see, for example, *The Love of Learning; Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). On Solomon's medieval *auctoritas* see Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*. For general information on Solomon's biblical character and writings see the entries on 'Solomon' in *Dizionario enciclopedico della Bibbia e del mondo biblico*, ed. by E. Galbiati (Milan: Massimo, 1986); M. Bocian, *I personaggi biblici. Dizionario di storia, letteratura, arte e musica* (Milan: Mondadori, 1997); *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. by B. M. Metzger & M. D. Coagan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> On the 'Solomonic' magical tradition see C. C. McCown, 'The Christian Tradition as to the Magical Wisdom of Solomon', *The Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, 2 (1922), 1-24; L. Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), in particular the entry 'Solomon and the *Ars Notoria*' (pp. 279-89). For Dante's relationship with this tradition and the significant allusions to it in the Heaven of the Sun see A. Cornish, 'I miti biblici. La sapienza di Salomone e le arti magiche', in *Dante Mito e Poesia. Atti del Secondo Seminario Dantesco Internazionale (Monte Verità, Ascona, 23-27 giugno 1997)*, ed. by M. Picone & T. Crivelli (Florence: Cesati Editore, 1998), pp. 391-403. Indeed, Cornish's observations on the allusions to the *Ars Notoria* techniques in the fourth sphere of the *Paradiso* is another element in favour of the hypothesis supported in this article, that is,

Dante's focus on Solomon's *auctoritas* throughout the Heaven of the Sun episode.

<sup>12</sup> For a summary of the medieval debate on Solomon's moral conduct and relevant references see Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, pp. 104-10.

<sup>13</sup> The presence of Ripheus in the Heaven of Jupiter is another interesting case (Par. XX, 67-72). This problematic salvation has been widely examined by Dante scholars. For an introduction to the debate, see M. Picone, 'La viva speranza di Dante e il problema della salvezza dei pagani virtuosi. Una lettura di *Paradiso* 20', *Quaderni d'italianistica*, 10 (1989), 251-68.

<sup>14</sup> 'Philosophus dicit, quod *prudencia est propria virtus principis*. Ergo specialis prudencia debet esse regnativa. Respondeo dicendum quod [...] ad prudencia pertinet regere et praecepere, et ideo ubi invenitur specialis ratio regiminis et praecepti in humanis actibus, ibi etiam invenitur specialis ratio prudentiae. Manifestum est autem quod in eo qui non solum seipsum habet regere, sed etiam communitatem perfectam civitatis vel regni, invenitur specialis et perfecta ratio regiminis; tanto enim regimen perfectius est, quanto universalius est, ad plura se extendens, et ulteriorem finem attingens. Et ideo regi ad quem pertinet regere civitatem, vel regnum, prudencia competit secundum specialem et perfectissimam sui rationem: et propter hoc regnativa ponitur species prudentia. Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod omnia quae sunt virtutum moralium, pertinent ad prudencia sicut ad dirigentem; unde et *ratio rectae prudentiae* ponitur in definitione virtutis moralis, ut supra dictum est (2a2ae qu. 47, art. 5, ad 1; et 1a2ae qu. 58, art. 2, ad 4). Et ideo etiam executio justitiae, prout ordinatur ad bonum commune, quod pertinet ad officium regis, indiget directione prudentiae. Unde istae duae virtutes sunt maxime propriae regi, scilicet prudentia et justitia, secundum illud Jerem.: *Regnabit rex, et sapiens erit, et faciet iudicium et justitiam in terra*. [...] Ad secundum dicendum quod regnum inter alias politicas est optimum regimen, ut dicitur in *Ethic*. Et ideo species prudentiae magis debuit denominari a regno; ita tamen quod sub regnativa, comprehendatur omnia alia regimina recta, non autem perversa, quae virtuti opponuntur: unde non pertinent ad prudentiam' (St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 60 vols (London and New York: Blackfriars, 1964-76), vol. XXXVI, 2a2ae, qu. 50, art. 1).

<sup>15</sup> 'Au IX siècle la figure de Solomon constructeur du temple, auteur présumé du Livre de la Sagesse, est plus évoquée que celle de David. Les rois carolingiens doivent méditer la parole: *omnia in sapientia fecistis*, se conduire selon les lois de la Sagesse' (P. Riché, 'La Bible et la vie politique', in *Le Moyen Age et la Bible*, ed. by P. Riché & G. Lobrichon (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984), pp. 385-400 (pp. 389-90)). See also E. H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).

<sup>16</sup> For a first analysis see L. Pertile, 'Dante Looks Forward and Back: Political Allegory in the Epistles', *Dante Studies*, 115 (1997), 1-17.

<sup>17</sup> 'Diligite iustitiam, qui iudicatis terram. Sentite de Domino in bonitate, et in simplicitate cordis quaerite illum' (Wisdom 1, 1); and compare 'Si ergo delectamini sedibus et sceptris, o reges populi, Diligite sapientiam, ut in perpetuum regnetis. Diligite lumen sapientiae, omnes qui praeceditis populis' (Wisdom 6, 22-3).

<sup>18</sup> The Christian tradition attributed to Solomon a wide number of apocrypha, most importantly the Book of Wisdom, which, although excluded from the Jewish canon, became part of the Christian Bible. On the medieval debate on this issue, see Minnis, pp. 95-97.

<sup>19</sup> Bonaventure of Bagnoreggio, *Commentarius in Ecclesiasten*, in *Opera Omnia*, 10 vols (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), VI, 5.

<sup>20</sup> B. Smalley, 'Some Thirteenth Century Commentaries on the Sapiential Books', *Dominican Studies*, 2 (1949), 318-55; 'Some Thirteenth Century Commentaries on the Sapiential Books', *Dominican Studies*, 3 (1950), 41-77 and 236-274; 'Some Latin Commentaries on the Sapiential Books in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Century', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen age*, 25-26 (1950-51), 103-129; H. A. Oberman, 'Facientibus quod in se est Deus non denegat gratiam'. Robert Holcot, O. P. and the Beginnings of Luther's Theology', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 50.iv (1962), 317-42 (p. 321); Minnis, pp. 115-8.

<sup>21</sup> For instance, the thirteenth-century Jacques of Vitry praised Solomon's wisdom above that of all others in one of his sermons. See Ferruolo, p. 232.

<sup>22</sup> On the Song of Songs' medieval exegesis see F. Ohly, *Hohelied-Studien. Grundzüge einer Geschichte der Hoheliedauslegung des*

*Abendlandes bis um 1200* (Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1958); A. Astell, *The Song of Song in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1990); A. Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved. The Song of Song in Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990); D. Turner, *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Interpretations of the Song of Songs* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995); Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*.

<sup>23</sup> On the relationship between the medieval Song of Songs and the *Commedia*, see the fundamental works by L. Pertile: *La puttana e il gigante. Dal Cantico dei Cantici al Paradiso Terrestre di Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 1998); ‘“Canto”-“Cantica”-“Comedia” e l’Epistola a Cangrande’, *Lectura Dantis*, 9 (1991), 105-23; ‘“Così si fa la pelle bianca nera”: l’enigma di *Paradiso* XXVII 136-38’, *Lettere Italiane*, 43 (1991), 3-26; ‘“Cantica” nella tradizione medievale e in Dante’, *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa*, 27 (1991), 389-412; ‘L’antica fiamma: la metamorfosi del fuoco nella *Commedia*’, *The Italianist*, 11 (1991), 29-60; ‘“La punta del disio”: storia di una metafora dantesca’, *Lectura Dantis*, 7 (1990), 3-28. See also: E. Auerbach, *Studi su Dante* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1991), pp. 248-56 and 261-68; J. Chydenius, *The Typological Problem in Dante* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1958); P. Priest, ‘Dante and the *Song of Songs*’, *Studi danteschi*, 49 (1972), 79-113. On the impact of the Song of Songs on the *Vita Nuova*, see my ‘La memoria del *Cantico* e la *Vita Nuova*: una nota preliminare’, *The Italianist*, 18 (1998), 14-27. On *Convivio* and the Song of Songs, see P. Dronke, *Dante’s Second Love. The Originality and the Contexts of the ‘Convivio’*, Occasional Papers of the Society for Italian Studies II, (Leeds: Maney, 1997). For a general overview see G. Sarolli, ‘Salomone’ in *E.D.* IV, 1079-83.

<sup>24</sup> In the Middle Ages texts such as the Bible and the Latin classics were read only with the accompaniment of glosses. On the role of the commentary tradition in the forms and modes of reading and learning for Dante and his contemporaries, and for a wide bibliography see Baranski, *I segni di Dante*, esp. pp. 9-22. Baranski underlines that ‘è tempo di tornare ai rapporti tra il poeta e la tradizione esegetica del suo tempo, la quale costituiva uno dei fondamenti di base su cui si ergeva il sistema d’insegnamento nel Medioevo. Il punto chiave di questo rapporto, come per tutti i contemporanei del poeta, è che l’influsso determinante su di lui fu esercitato dal *commentum*, e non dal testo



commentato' (pp. 19-20). For the notion of intertextuality in the Middle Ages see C. Segre, 'Intertestuale-interdiscorsivo. Appunti per una fenomenologia delle fonti', in *La parola ritrovata. Fonti e analisi letteraria*, ed. by C. Di Girolamo & I. Paccagnella (Palermo: Sellerio, 1982), pp. 15-28. Regarding the impact of the exegetical tradition of the Song of Songs on Dante's imagination, Pertile observes that, in this case, 'i fenomeni di intertestualità non si presentano mai allo stato puro [...] ma piuttosto in aggregati in cui i singoli elementi si fondano e confondono gli uni con gli altri. Perciò è arduo stabilire se la moltitudine di frammenti scritturali [...] derivino direttamente dal testo della Scrittura, o non vi discendano di seconda o terza mano, passando prima per la chiosa esegetica' (*La puttana e il gigante*, p. 7).

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, *Paradiso* X, 3-6, 22-27 and 49-51.

<sup>26</sup> 'Guardando nel suo Figlio con l'Amore / che l'uno e l'altro eternalmente spira, / lo primo e ineffabile Valore / quanto per mente e per loco si gira / con tant' ordine fé, ch'esser non puote / senza gustar di lui chi ciò rimira' (*Par.* X, 1-6). This theme recurs at the end of canto X with 'the metaphor of the clock with its regular rhythm and the harmony of its movements' (Meekins, 'Reflecting on the Divine', p. 39). The idea of order is also represented by the repeated use of the image of the circle (See *Par.* X, 64-9, 76, 91-2, 145; XII, 3, 10-12, 19-20; XIII, 4-21). Meekins rightly underlines the Bonaventurian character of these metaphors ('Reflecting on the Divine', pp. 37-43). See also Mineo, pp. 255-7.

<sup>27</sup> Proverbs 8, 22-36; Wisdom 7, 16-21.

<sup>28</sup> See for example: Chiarenza, pp. 156-57; Mineo, pp. 259-61.

<sup>29</sup> In a similar fashion, Thomas Aquinas describes the Church as the Bride acquired through the sacrifice of Christ. Dante writes that the births of Saint Francis and Saint Dominic consolidated this divine marriage (*Par.* XI, 28-36).

<sup>30</sup> E. Auerbach, 'Francesco d'Assisi nella *Commedia*', in *Studi su Dante*, pp. 221-35; L. Battaglia Ricci, 'Figure di contraddizione. Letture dell'XI canto del *Paradiso*', in *Le varie fila. Studi di letteratura italiana in onore di Emilio Bigi* (Milan: Principato, 1997), pp. 34-50; 'Scrittura e riscrittura: Dante e Boccaccio "agiografi"', in *Scrivere di santi. Atti del II convegno di studio dell'Associazione italiana per lo studio della santità, dei culti e dell'agiografia, Napoli, 22-25 ottobre 1997*, ed. by G. Luongo (Rome: Viella, 1999), pp. 147-75;



U. Bosco, 'San Francesco', in *Dante vicino* (Caltanissetta-Rome: Sciascia, 1966) pp. 316-41; Chiarenza, 'Dante's Lady Poverty'; U. Cosmo, 'Le mistiche nozze di Frate Francesco con Madonna Povertà', *Giornale dantesco*, 6 (1898), 49-82 and 97-117; C. Delcorno, 'Cadenze e figure della predicazione nel viaggio dantesco', in *Lecture Classensi*, 15 (1986), 42-60; J. V. Fleming, *Introduction to Franciscan Literature* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977); K. Foster, 'Gli elogi danteschi di S. Francesco e di S. Domenico', in *Dante e il francescanesimo* (Cava dei Tirreni: Avagliano, 1987), pp. 231-49; R. Manselli, 'San Francesco e San Domenico nei canti del *Paradiso*', in *Da Gioacchino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo. Studi sul francescanesimo spirituale, sull'ecclesiologia e sull'escatologismo bassomedievali* (Rome: Istituto Storico per il Medioevo, 1997), pp. 201-11; S. Pasquazi, 'San Francesco', in *D'Egitto in Gerusalemme. Studi danteschi* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1985), pp. 181-217; S. da Campagnola, 'Francesco di Assisi', in *E.D.* III, 17-23; F. Ulivi, 'Il "magnanimo" S. Francesco di Dante', in *Dante e il francescanesimo*, pp. 77-94.

<sup>31</sup> The work was first highlighted by the Dantist, E. Alvisi, *Nota al canto XI (versi 43-75) del 'Paradiso' di Dante Alighieri* (Città di Castello: Collezione di opuscoli danteschi inediti o rari, 1894). *Sacrum Commmercium Sancti Francisci cum Domina Paupertate*, ed. by S. Brufani, in *Fontes Franciscani*, ed. by E. Menestò & S. Brufani (Assisi: Porziuncola, 1995), pp. 1693-732. The date of composition of the *Commmercium* is uncertain, but according to Brufani, '[s]embra possibile ipotizzare come humus, in cui fu concepita l'opera, l'ampio e duro contrasto che oppose clero secolare e mendicanti tra gli anni cinquanta e settanta del secolo XIII, che prese le mosse dallo studium parigino' (p. 1695).

<sup>32</sup> It is commonly believed that the main sources of Dante's retelling of Francis's story were actually Bonaventure's *Legenda Sancti Francisci* and Ubertino da Casale's *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae Jesu*. The link between canto XI and the *Arbor Vitae* has been postulated by various scholars. See, for example: Fleming, p. 212; Chiarenza, p. 154, Battaglia Ricci, 'Figure di contraddizione', p. 42.

<sup>33</sup> One of the most interesting links between the two texts is certainly Dante's reference to 'la porta del piacer' (*Par.* XI, 60). This image recalls a famous line of the Song of Songs: 'Aperi mihi, soror mea, amica mea, columba mea, immaculata mea, quia caput meum plenum

est rore, et cincinni mei guttis noctium' (Song of Songs 5, 2). On the 'porta' *querelle* see Chiarenza, pp. 155-63; C. S. Singleton, "'La porta del piacere" (*Paradiso* XI, 60)', in *Modern Language Notes*, 63 (1948), 339-42. Although these scholars have established a connection between Dante's image and the Song of Song, they have stressed above all its erotic connotations. Nevertheless, one should consider the interpretations of this metaphor offered by the exegetical tradition in order to grasp the spiritual meanings hidden behind the daring sensual image of the *Commedia*. I have proposed a broader exemplification and examination of this and other textual identities between the Song of Songs and canto XI in my doctoral thesis and in a paper given at University College Dublin as part of the 2001 Dante Series. A written version of my paper is to be published, in the volume containing the papers given at the 2000-2001 Dante Series, by the Irish Academic Press.

<sup>34</sup> 'Pulchra est, amica mea, suavis, et decora sicut Ierusalem; terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata' (Song of Songs 6, 3).

<sup>35</sup> See for example St Ambrose of Milan, *Commentarius in Cantica Cantorum e Scriptis Sancti Ambrosii a Guillelmo Abbate Sancti Theodorici Collectus*, ed. by G. Banterle (Milan-Rome: Città Nuova, 1993), VI, 6: '*Speciosa sicut Ierusalem, admiratio sicut ordinata, quod civitatis aeternae universa habeat mysteria et admirationi sit omnibus videntibus eam, quia plena ut aequitas atque perfecta est; et fulgorem de Verbi lumine mutuata, dum id semper intendit, sit etiam terribilis ordine quodam ad summum provecta virtutum*' (p. 234).

<sup>36</sup> Bosco believes that Dante did not intend to stress the Christological features of St Francis ('Canto XI', pp. 409-11). For an opposite view see Auerbach, 'Il canto XI del Paradiso', pp. 232-34.

<sup>37</sup> As well as the *lecturae* and articles quoted in the notes 1 and 28 of this article, see, in particular, Barolini, p. 199.

<sup>38</sup> A. M. Chiavacci Leonardi, 'Le bianche stole': il tema della resurrezione nel *Paradiso*', in *Dante e la Bibbia*, ed. by G. Barblan (Florence: Olschki, 1988), pp. 249-71 (p. 260).

<sup>39</sup> 'Il poema è fatto di corpi, non di spiriti, né di astratte figure allegoriche, come altri celebri testi medievali' (Chiavacci Leonardi, "'Le bianche stole"', p. 252). She also points out that Dante is interested primarily in 'l'uomo intero, col suo corpo nato e cresciuto nella storia, e pure destinato all'eternità. E il corpo assume, in questo luogo eminente del paradiso, un valore primario che forse nemmeno la

teologia aveva così formulato' (p. 261). On the resurrection in Dante, see also G. Muresu, 'La "gloria della carne": disfacimento e trasfigurazione (*Paradiso* XIV)', in *La Rassegna della letteratura italiana*, 91 (1987), 253-68.

<sup>40</sup> A. Michel, 'Résurrection des morts', in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, ed. by A. Vacant et al., 15 vols (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1909-1950), 13.ii, 2501-71; H. M. McElwain, 'Theology of the Resurrection of the Body', in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 15 vols (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 12, 419-27; C. Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). On the *visio Dei* controversy, see Walker Bynum, pp. 291-305.

<sup>41</sup> A. M. Chiavacci Leonardi, 'Il *Paradiso* di Dante: l'ardore del desiderio (14 settembre 1997)', *Lecture Classensi*, 27 (1998), 101-12; L. Pertile, 'Paradiso: A Drama of Desire', in *Word and Drama in Dante*, ed. by J. C. Barnes & J. Petrie (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), pp. 143-80.

<sup>42</sup> 'It is hardly surprising that Dante the poet, who foreshadowed the resurrection even in hell, should give Dante the traveller a glimpse of the risen and glorified body in paradise even before the end of time' (Walker Bynum, pp. 302-3).

<sup>43</sup> See Walker Bynum, esp. pp. 247-55. On Bonaventure's thought, see E. Gilson, *The Philosophy of St Bonaventure* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1938).

<sup>44</sup> Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Breviloquium*, in *Tria Opuscula Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae*, 1925), VII, vii, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Bonaventure concludes his treatment of the article *De gloria paradisi* with a melodious celebration of the *gaudium* and with an prayer to the Lord: 'Meditetur interiim inde mens mea, loquatur inde lingua mea, amet illud cor meum, sermocinetur os meum, esuriat illud anima mea, sitiatur caro mea, desiderat tota substantia mea, donec intrem in *gaudium Domine mei*' (*Breviloquium*, VII, vii, 9).

<sup>46</sup> On Bernard see G. R. Evans, *The Mind of St. Bernard of Clairvaux* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); J. Leclercq, *Recueil d'études sur Saint Bernard et ses écrits*, 5 vols (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1962); *Nouveau visage de Bernard de Clairvaux* (Paris: Cerf, 1976); E. Gilson, *La théologie mystique de Saint Bernard* (Paris: Vrin, 1947).

<sup>47</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *De diligendo Deo*, ed. by J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot and H. M. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercensis, 1963), XI, 33, ll. 5-12.

<sup>48</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum*, ed. by J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot & H. M. Rochais, 2 vols (Rome: Editiones Cistercensis, 1957), vol. I (XXXI, 1). This interpretation is common to most of the Cistercian friars. For instance, William of St Thierry believed that the Song of Songs celebrates the final *amplexus* between God and the resurrected body: '*Laeva eius sub capite meo, et dextera eius amplexabitur me* (2, 6). *Amplexus iste circa hominem agitur, sed supra hominem est. [...] Amplexus autem iste hic initiatur, alibi perficiendus. Abyssus haec alteram abyssum invocat; exstasis ista longe aliud quam quod videt somniat; secretum hoc aliud suspirat; gaudium hoc aliud gaudium imaginatur; suavitas ista aliam suavitatem praecorditur. [...] Hoc siquidem mortalitatis est, illud aeternitatis; hoc iae, illud stationis [...]. Cum enim plene revelabitur facies ad feaciem, et perficietur mutua cognitio, et cognoscet sponsa sicut et cognita est, tunc erit plenum osculum, plenusque amplexus, cum non idigebitur laeva fulcimente, sed totam amplexabuntur sponsam delectationes dexterae sponsi usque in finem aeternitatis infinitae'* (William of St Thierry, *Expositio Super Cantica Canticorum*, ed. by P. Verdeyen, in *CCCM* (Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1997), vol. LXXXVII (XXVII, 128, ll. 3-23).

<sup>49</sup> Walker Bynum, pp. 256-271. On Thomas Aquinas, see M. D. Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Montréal-Paris: Vrin, 1950); E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1957).

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super quarto libro sententiarum* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1947), dist. XLIV, qu. 2, art. 4, sol. 1; quoted by Chiavacci Leonardi, '“Le bianche stole”', p. 261.

<sup>51</sup> See for example: Girardi, especially pp. 637-41 and Blasucci, especially pp. 68.

<sup>52</sup> Apart from the articles on and *lecturae* of canto XIV already quoted, see R. Kirkpatrick, *Dante's Paradiso and the Limitations of Modern Criticism. A Study in Style and Poetic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), especially pp. 28-50.

<sup>53</sup> Bonora points out that: 'A questo proposito Erich Auerbach [...] ha ben precisato che “humilis” – del quale il “modesto” di Dante è fedele traduzione – non divenne solo tra gli scrittori cristiani una delle

definizioni più usate dello stile inferiore, ma fu “uno degli aggettivi più importanti per definire l’Incarnazione [...] Non è dunque il prodotto di una libera interpretazione del Vangelo ciò che Dante immagina del tono di voce dell’Arcangelo Gabriele; e se con lo stesso accento di modestia suona la voce di Salomone in paradiso la ragione è chiara: tra il mistero del Verbo che si fa carne e il mistero delle anime che dopo il giudizio rivestiranno la loro spoglia mortale non c’è differenza sostanziale” (Bonora, p. 186).

<sup>54</sup> R. Fulton, “Quae est ista quae ascendit sicut aurora consurgens?": The Song of Songs as the Historia for the Office of the Assumption,' *Medieval Studies*, 60 (1998), 55-122. On the Marian exegesis of the Song of Songs see Matter, pp. 151-200; M. Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex. The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Vintage, 1976), pp. 121-33.

<sup>55</sup> Gueric of Igny, *In Annunciatione Dominica*, in *P.L.* vol. 185.i (I, coll. 5-6).

<sup>56</sup> Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Commentum in Evangelium Lucae*, in *Opera Omnia*, 10 vols (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1883-1902), vol. VII, pp. 45-46 & 67-69.

<sup>57</sup> Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria in Canticum Canticorum*, ed. by H. Haacke, in *CCCM*, (Turnholt: Editores Pontificii, 1974) vol. XXVI (I, ll. 1-45).

<sup>58</sup> St Jerome: *Translatio Homiliarum Origenis in Lucam ad Paulam et Eustachium*, in *P.L.* 26, Hom. VI, coll. 229-331 (col. 246).

<sup>59</sup> Z. G. Baranski, 'The Poetics of Meter: "Canto", "Canzon", "Cantica"', in *Dante Now*, ed. by T. J. Cachey Jr (Notre Dame & London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), pp. 3-41; L. Pertile, "Cantica" nella tradizione medievale e in Dante'; *La puttana*, pp. 227-45.

<sup>60</sup> Gregory the Great, *Expositio in Canticum Canticorum*, ed. by P. Verbraken, in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnholt: Editores Pontificii, 1963), vol. CXLIV (ll. 23-37). Quoted in Pertile, *La puttana*, p. 236.