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# Sursum Ductio. Reasoning Upward. An Investigation into the Vertical Structure of Dante's Commedia.

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Abstract

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This research investigates "vertical readings" of the *Commedia*, i.e., the interpretive method that compares and contrasts same-numbered cantos in the three canticles of the poem: *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*. Although there is a consensus that specific vertical readings are intentional, critics remain skeptical of extrapolating it into a totalizing system. This dissertation aims to delineate the methodology's parameters, trace its emergence in the field of Dante studies, and anchor it within the context of Italian Duecento and Trecento culture. This research investigates the methodology by gathering vertical readings in Dante studies into a comprehensive archive. This catalog provides valuable information regarding the history and emergence of the method and its practitioners' different theoretical bases.

The dissertation is divided into three chapters, and each, in turn, is divided into two parts. The first chapter begins by analyzing the formal elements of Dante's poem. It emphasizes how the poem's structure, symmetries, numbers, and names given to its partitions by Dante prompt vertical readings through a desire to imitate the order of the universe and Scripture. The chapter's second half is a systematic review of the literature on vertical readings. Since various scholars have done vertical readings with differing theoretical bases, a definition is formulated to maximize inclusiveness. The archive suggests two principal hypotheses to explain the poem's co-numerary parallels. First, they are the product of a composition method based on the arts of rhetoric and memory,

revealing the scaffolding Dante used to build his poem. Secondly, the poem's structure is designed to elicit intratextual readings in imitation of Scripture, thus reframing the poem's allegorical status.

Despite the *Commedia*'s instantaneous success, there are no mentions of the poem's vertical patterning before the twentieth-century. Chapter 2 explains this paradoxical situation. The first half is devoted to the thorny issue of Dante, allegory, and medieval literary theory. It analyzes Dante's writings on the topic of allegory and his own exegetical practices. Notwithstanding the numerous clues embedded into his poem, Dante's synthesis of the traditional critical apparatus made his innovations unrecognizable to most commentators, principally because they had to confront a plethora of issues regarding the poem's truth-claims.

Nevertheless, the data shows that the early commentary tradition, in its unfolding and successive iterations, was increasingly glossing the poem along co-numerary lines, particularly at the center of the poem. As a result, *proto*-vertical readings have been identified. In the chapter's second half, the locus of recognition shifts from criticism to poetry because poets hold a privileged position in understanding Dante's deployment of rhetorical strategies that involve matters of structure, form, and content. An investigation of two of Dante's poem's most notable imitations, Petrarch's *Trionfi* and Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione*, shows that the other two 'crowns' of the so-called "Tre corone" of Italian literature were indeed aware of the *Commedia*'s vertical hermeneutics.

In the third and final chapter, vertical hermeneutics keep pointing outwards, beyond the sphere of literary influence, and toward unexpected homologous patterns and sources, such as Canon Tables and visual arts. The first half begins by looking at stylistic elements

in some of Dante's ekphrases in *Paradiso* and underlines their meta-textual nature and their use of spatial semiotics. Geometric features, such as the circle and horizontal and vertical lines, play a crucial role in Dante's representation of the divine and, more importantly, guide the poem's interpretation. They enact a semiotics that emphasizes the spatial relationships between various elements. This form of semiotics is homologous with contemporary visual arts such as the apsidal mosaics in the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe and those of the San Giovanni Baptistery in Florence, as well as paratextual and interpretive tools that have their roots in the arts of rhetoric and memory. Special attention is given to the center of *Paradiso* and its vertical relationship with the figure of Brunetto Latini, Dante's teacher and a prominent protagonist in the revival of the arts of rhetoric and memory.

The consequence of this centrifugal movement, from Dante outwards, is the realization that vertical hermeneutics are part and parcel of a broader tendency, or at least that they had currency within a collective set of unstated assumptions about the arrangement of signs and their meanings during the Middle Ages. In turn, the methodology of spatial semiotics provides a better understanding of the role of structure and form in both the composition and exegesis of medieval cultural artifacts.

*Sursum Ductio*. Reasoning Upward:
An Investigation into the Vertical Structure of Dante's *Commedia*.

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*Anagoge, id est sursum ductio, cum per visibile invisibile factum declaratur.*

– Hugh of Saint Victor, *De Scripturis et Scriptoribus Sacris*.

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# Chapter 1: An Introduction to Vertical Readings

*The crooked made straight. The Daedalian plan simplified by a look from above—smeared out as it were by the splotch of some master thumb that made the whole involuted, boggling thing one beautiful straight line.*

– Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire* (261).

**Introduction**

This initial chapter contextualizes the practice of reading Dante's *Commedia* "vertically." It first examines how the poem's structure encourages vertical readings and then observes how this interpretive practice has unfolded across Dante studies' long history. "Part I: Structural Elements" acquaints the reader with some of the primary and more complex features of the poem's structure. "Part II: Systematic Review of the Literature" surveys the use of vertical readings in Dante studies, notes how it has been legitimated as a practice, and provides a genealogy of its emergence.

Part I begins by looking at how the poem's macrostructure translated itself onto a vertical *mise-en-page* in the poem's early manuscript tradition. It then draws parallels between the poem's micro and macrostructures, that is to say, between the basic rhythms of individual lines and the larger shape they take within the poem's tripartite format. These parallels demonstrate that Dante embedded into his poem structural patterns that reiterate themselves at different magnitudes, enacting a symmetry that cuts across the poem's many layers. These scaled reiterations also act as safeguards for the text's integrity since they facilitate recall and impede or minimize possible interpolations and corruptions.

The following section, "Going in Circles," focuses on the various ways in which the formal structure of the poem, especially its circular form, relates to its content. The poem structurally evinces this circularity with the reappearance at the end of each *cantica* of the word "stelle." Like any glance at the stars, it also requires an upward look, thus adducing a vertical dimension to the

poem's circular form. The textual clusters at the end of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* are moments of acute authorial and readerly awareness. They highlight Dante's claim of a pre-determined structure to the *Commedia* and how the harmony of the universe and the mystery of the Trinity, both represented through circular patterns, serve as models for the poem's configuration. These elements buttress Dante's authorial claims: the veracity of his experience and the divine mission of his poem. They establish a parallel between Scripture and the *Commedia*, both structurally and in terms of the former's human authors with Dante's authorial and prophetic voice.

In the *Commedia*, reiterations also occur within the same structural plane, across all three canticles. Therefore, the following section, "Inter-canticle Symmetries," looks at how all three canticles share homologous structural traits but with different characteristics or, said differently, the same structure but with different content. This section investigates the structural symmetry of the canticles in general and the Nines in particular.[1] A rationale for the distinct 'threshold' character shared by the ninth *canto* of all three canticles will be provided, along with several important observations on how such symmetries emerge through a retrospective glance upon completing the reading experience.

The section "What's in a Name?" closely examines the significance of the names Dante gives to the partitions of his poem: "canzon," "cantica," and "canto." This section demonstrates how Dante's poem imitates Scripture, particularly the *Song of Songs*, and consequently guides the reader along specific hermeneutical lines. Moreover, this exemplifies how Dante experiments with tradition to create novel poetic forms. This dynamic intertextual relationship with Scripture and its authors also extends to Exodus and David's Psalms. The section "Dante: The Davidic Cantor"

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[1] Hereinafter, when referring to a vertical reading of a same-numbered *canto*, the number will be capitalized. For example, a vertical reading of the sixth *canto* of each *cantica* will be referred to as the Sixes.

demonstrates how Dante aligns his own "poema sacro" (*Par.* XXV, v. 1) with the humble and prophetic character of David's poetics.

After discussing the poem's structural components and their names, Part II switches perspective by surveying secondary sources that discuss co-numerical correspondences. The first section, "Terminology: Why Vertical?" analyzes the origins of the methodology's name. It demonstrates the methodology's broad applicability and various forms and catalogs the diverse theoretical bases used to legitimize it. Eventually, the phenomenon of intratextuality emerges from this analysis. In contrast to intertextuality, which involves external relations with other texts, intratextuality refers to the internal relations within a text that provide a sense of narrative continuity and cohesion. From numerology and allegory to the arts of rhetoric and memory and visual arts, intratextuality encapsulates all these theoretical bases used in legitimizing the methodology.

The study of intratextuality within the *Commedia* is not novel. Therefore, the following section, "Vertical Precedents," looks at instances of scholarship that sought to delineate, or draw attention to, the network of co-numerical intratextual references in the poem. Having thus shown that vertical readings *avant-la-lettre* existed for quite some time, "The Political 666" section looks at the inconsistencies regarding the most well-known instance of vertical patterning in the *Commedia*, the Sixes, and confronts the limits of the methodology.

The last section of this chapter analyzes *Dantisti* who have investigated intratextuality within Dante's *Commedia* without necessarily seeking to draw out co-numerical patterns within the poem. "To Stray Among the Stars (of Dante Studies)" begins with a survey of intratextuality in contemporary Dante studies in English and Italian, focusing on the work of the scholars Iannucci, Ascoli, and Tateo. It then proceeds to analyze several others to establish, via a process

of *reductio ad unum*, a genealogy of the method of vertical reading through its intratextual character. The methodology's theoretical impetus gravitates around the structural criticism of Charles Singleton. Therefore, a dedicated section covers Singleton's structuralism's contributions and shortcomings to the field of Dante studies and explains their relationship to vertical hermeneutics.

## Part I: Structural Elements

### Structural Symmetry

> *Whatever the cast-off nature of the materials, the seeming offhandedness,*
> *and whatever the dominance of pure intuition, the man was surely a master-builder.*
> *There was a structural unity to the place, a sense of repeated themes and deft engineering.*

– Don DeLillo, *Underworld* (278).

A brief recapitulation of the primary and salient features of the *Commedia*'s configuration illuminates the symmetrical elements at work in its structure. The poem's macrostructure is divided into three parts, or *cantiche*, and narrates the poet's journey through three different realms: *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*.[2] The Italian term 'cantica,' in its feminine form, is not documented before its use by Dante (Pertile, "Cantica nella tradizione medievale e in Dante" 389). Therefore, Dante intended a particular function.

 In turn, every *cantica* contains smaller individual units called *canti*.[3] The entire *Commedia* contains one-hundred *canti*: thirty-four in *Inferno* and thirty-three in both *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. Dante refers to these smaller textual units as *canto* on three occasions in his poem; first, in *Inferno* XX (v. 2), second, in *Inferno* XXXIII (v. 90), and lastly, in *Paradiso* V (v. 139). As Pertile observes, the amount of one-hundred *canti* is "a perfect number signifying the perfection of the universe and the poem," thus establishing a parallel between the structure of the universe and the poem itself ("Narrative Structure" 8). The numerological choice is not accidental; it elicits further attention to the poetic structure and its numerous correspondences, be they textual or numerical.

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[2] The use of this term and its ramifications will be discussed later in the section "What's in a Name?"
[3] The plural of *canto* is *canti*; however, it is also customary to use the term 'cantos.' As for *cantica*, its plural is *cantiche*, although the term 'canticle(s)' is used interchangeably.

A 'vertical reading,' then, is an interpretative method that consists of comparing and contrasting the same-numbered *canto* of each of the three *cantiche*. For example, a vertical reading of the Sixes consists of *canto* VI of *Inferno*, *canto* VI of *Purgatorio*, and *canto* VI of *Paradiso*. Through this structural approach, correspondences emerge between the three sections of the text that—in most cases—seem too evident to be considered merely fortuitous or coincidental. If a picture is worth a thousand words, this poster is worth 14,233 lines of poetry (see fig. 1). Designed by Graphisoft Edizioni, this poster neatly illustrates the concept of vertical reading since all the cantos are aligned numerically and vertically.



Fig. 1 – Poster of the entire *Commedia*.

These correspondences, compounded with the poet's extraordinary diligence in structuring his poem, imply intentionality or at least encourage us to read them as purposeful elements of the author's design. Consequently, this section pays attention to the various components that structure

Dante's poem and how they contain multiple forms of correspondences, even across different levels of magnitude.

If the *Commedia* is divided into canticles, and they, in turn, are divided into cantos, each *canto* is likewise also divided into smaller units. Regardless of the debate over the authenticity of the *Epistle to Cangrande*, its author—whether Dante or pseudo-Dante—clearly recognizes these structural partitions: "Prima divisio est, qua totum opus dividitur in tres canticas. Secunda, qua quaelibet cantica dividitur in cantus. Tertia, qua quilibet cantus dividitur in rithimos."[4] Succinctly stated, the *Commedia*'s various partitions are, in decreasing magnitude: *cantica*, *canto*, and *terzina*. A *canto* can contain anywhere between 115 and 160 lines of poetry, for an average of 142 lines. The entire poem has a sum of 14,233 lines, with a very minimal variation in total lines per *cantica*: 4,720; 4,755; and 4,758, respectively, with a standard deviation of approximately 17 lines.[5] Moreover, the difference in total lines between *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* is only of a *terzina* (tercet), indicating what could be the result of a regularization process as the poem was heading towards completion.

The average amount of lines per *canto* has had a significant outcome on the poem's physical shape in manuscript form. If one accepts the hypothesis that Dante would have most likely written "in the double columns long customary in legal and other texts," then 12 *terzine* (36 lines of poetry) would have fit in each column and "produce[d] a single sheet holding, on its two sides, a total of 144 verses, that is one-hundredth of the total text, or a *canto* per carta (a *canto* on each *charta*)" (Ahern 12).

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[4] ["The first division is, when the whole work is divided into three canticles. The second, when that same canticle is divided into cantos. The third, when said cantos are divided into rhymes"] (*Ep*. XIII, 26). For a dissenting position to this division, and to the authenticity of the *Epistle*, see Barański "The Poetics of Meter," esp. n.29, 33–35, and "The Epistle to Can Grande" 583–589. Unless stated otherwise, all translations from Italian, French, and Latin are mine.
[5] For an in-depth, and somewhat ambitious, argument regarding the numerical significance of the total amount of verses found in the *Commedia*, see Hardt *Die Zahl in der Divina commedia* and "I numeri e le scritture crittografiche nella «Divina Commedia»" 71–90.
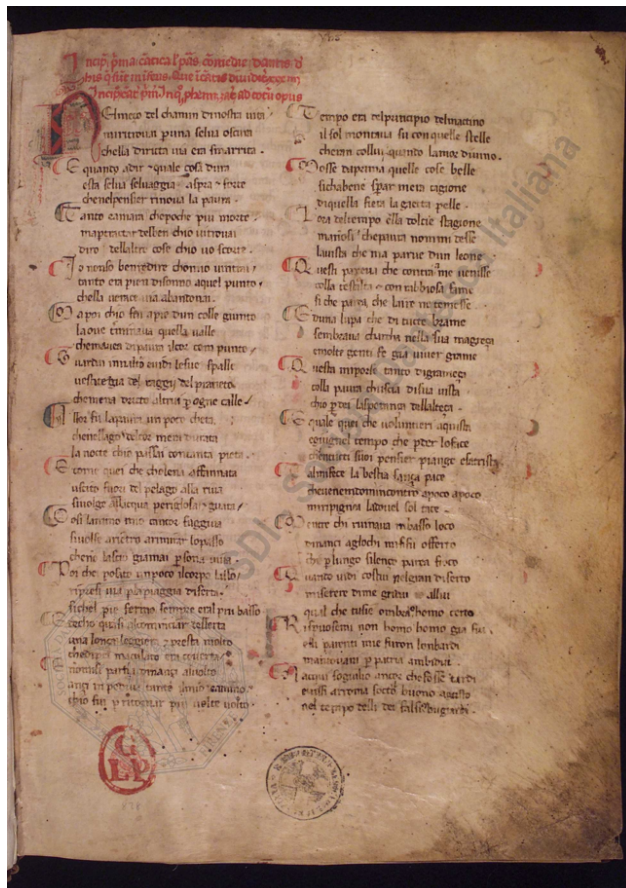
Fig.  2 – Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana Ms. Ashburnham 828.[6]

The codex Laurenziano Ashburnham 828 (see fig. 2), the Landiano 190, and the Trivulziano 1080,

the *Commedia*'s three earliest surviving manuscripts, have 104, 100, and 103 *chartae* (Ahern 12).[7]

Therefore, it would not be far-fetched to conceive that Dante visualized his poem as having a

specific number of *chartae* mirroring the poem's 100 cantos.

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[6] Image taken from *Dante Online*, www.danteonline.it/english/codici_frames/codici.asp?idcod=170. Accessed 10 March 2021.

[7] For more details pertaining to the use of register books in the dissemination of Italian Trecento manuscripts in the vernacular, see Petrucci 169–235, especially 183ff.

The vertical column layout found in the early manuscripts "is the norm for copying romance narrative verse, *chanson de geste*" and "it is in marked contrast to the *mise en page* of lyric verse in the late Duecento and throughout the Trecento, which was almost always copied out horizontally, or as prose (*a mo' di prosa*)" (Clarke 204–05). Therefore, by not using *scriptio continua*, writing without spaces, or other markers between words and sentences, the *Commedia*'s early manuscript tradition broke with the lyric verse tradition, preferring a physical layout typically used for epics. This layout emphasizes the poetry's vertical structure, highlighting acrostics and the rhyme scheme of the poem.[8] It will also have a significant impact on Petrarch and the lyric verse manuscript tradition.[9]

The rhyme pattern used in the *Commedia* is called *terza rima*, also known as *terzina dantesca* or *terzina incatenata*. It is an interlocking three-line meter form that Dante perfected. Its rhyme pattern is: ABA BCB CDC DED ... UVU VZV Z. The first six lines of *Inferno* illustrate it:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra v**ita** | A |
| 2 | mi ritrovai per una selva osc**ura**, | B |
| 3 | ché la diritta via era smarr**ita**. | A |
| 4 | Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa d**ura** | B |
| 5 | esta selva selvaggia e aspra e f**orte** | C |
| 6 | che nel pensier rinova la pa**ura**! | B |

In these opening lines, "vita" (v. 1) rhymes with "smarrita" (v. 3) and will only rhyme twice (AA), whereas "oscura" (v. 2), "dura" (v. 4), and "paura" (v. 6) rhyme in a triple pattern (BBB), and so will "forte" (v. 5) with the following rhyme words, "morte" (v. 7) and "scorte" (v. 9) (CCC), both

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[8] For a more detailed discussion about the transmission, transcription, and visual layout of the early Italian lyric tradition, see Storey, in particular chapter 2, 71–109. This topic, alongside acrostics, will be addressed further in Chapter 2, Part II, in relation to Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione*.

[9] This will be discussed in Chapter 2, Part II, where Petrarch's *Trionfi* take center stage.

omitted for the sake of brevity. The first and third verses (AA) and the last and antepenultimate (ZZ) only rhyme twice instead of thrice, framing the *canto* with a definite beginning and end of two paired rhymes. For example, in *Inferno* I, the rhyme words "vita" / "smarrita" (AA) and "Pietro" / "dietro" (ZZ) respectively open and close the *canto*.

Every single verse of the poem is in an accentual hendecasyllabic form, also known in linguistic terms as a verse with a paroxytone ending. They always have a final accentuation on the tenth syllable, which is more often than not the penultimate syllable. Therefore, this principally results in eleven-syllable verses, but not always. For example, in the first line of the poem, the final accent falls on the penultimate syllable, "vi-." (bold): "Nel/$_1$ mez/$_2$ zo/$_3$ del/$_4$ cam/$_5$ min/$_6$ di/$_7$ no/$_8$ stra/$_9$ **vi/$_{10}$** ta/$_{11}$" (*Inf.* I, v. 1). However, there are only ten syllables in the following example: "Ciò/$_1$ che 'n/$_2$ grem/$_3$ bo^a/$_4$ Be/$_5$ na/$_6$ co/$_7$ star/$_8$ non/$_9$ **può/$_{10}$**" (*Inf.* XX, v. 74). The verse is truncated where the accent falls last, hence the name 'truncated' (*tronco*) for this type of hendecasyllable. Another variation is called a 'slippery' (*sdrucciolo*) hendecasyllable, where the accent 'slips' onto the antepenultimate syllable, thus resulting in a twelve-syllable verse: "O/$_1$ ra/$_2$ cen/$_3$ por/$_4$ ta/$_5$ l'un/$_6$ de'/$_7$ du/$_8$ ri/$_9$ **mar/$_{10}$** gi/$_{11}$ ni/$_{12}$" (*Inf.* XV, v. 1). Both these variations are relatively rare in the *Commedia,* but they are present nonetheless. *In nuce*, the poem's fundamental textual component—the *terzina*—is theoretically composed of 33 syllables: a tercet of hendecasyllabic lines.

The dual rhymes at the beginning and end do not necessarily make the *canto* a self-standing poetic composition. It remains a subordinate part of a larger textual whole; "organically and logically integrated, first, into the scheme of their particular 'canzon,' [i.e., *cantica*] and, then, into the totalizing and unifying embrace of the 'comedìa'" (Barański, "The Poetics of Meter" 12). The poem's structure exhibits a form of diatopic symmetry, interlocking its constituent parts over

various expanses of textual space with an aesthetic sense of proportion that aspires to imitate Scripture and the interpretive practice of *divisio textus*.[10]

In addition to facilitating recall, one of the benefits of the opening and closing rhymes and the poem's metrical structure is that they limit the possibilities of interpolation: "[t]he mandatory syllable count within the line, the non-negotiability of the intricate *terza rima* rhyme scheme, inhibit scribal innovation to some extent" (Shaw, "Transmission History" 232). Despite the inbuilt metrical constraints, Dante's poem was not impervious to textual degradation. For example, the commentary of Jacopo Alighieri, Dante's youngest son and earliest commentator, also holds the distinction for the first documented case of a corrupt reading. Moreover, "[t]he process of textual degeneration in the *Commedia* almost certainly predates Dante's death for those portions of the poem already released to the public" (230). Notwithstanding this inevitability, there is an attempt at limiting textual corruption. The *cantica*, much like the *canto* and the *terzina*, also has an embedded element that prevents unwanted accretions to the text: the reiteration of the word "stelle" at the end of each *cantica* (*Inf.* XXXIV, v. 139; *Purg.* XXXIII, v. 145; *Par.* XXXIII, v. 145). As Barański notes, "the *terza rima*, the *canto*, and the *cantica*, on the account of the 'unbreakable' determinacy of their forms, come together to guarantee the *Commedia*'s textual integrity" ("The Poetics of Meter" 25).

The *Commedia* was distributed sequentially and in parts over an extended period, presumably published diachronically between 1304 and 1321 (Ahern 1). Consequently, it is not unreasonable to assert that Dante embedded components into his poem's structure to protect its integrity. At a micro-textual level, the *terza rima*'s design would expose, or at least limit, interpolations and lacunae. At a macro-textual level, the symbolic word "stelle" at the end of each

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[10] The practice of *divisio* in medieval exegesis is addressed in Part I of Chapter 2: "The *Convivio*", as well as Part II of Chapter 2: "The Early Commentary Tradition."

*cantica* prevents any unwanted additions to the poem (Ahern 11). These elements reinforce the idea of the *Commedia* having recursive details at different magnitudes: the *terzina* pattern for the microstructure and the reiteration of "stelle" for the macrostructure. Much like the ancient Greek notion of seeing the same patterns reproduced in all levels of the cosmos, Dante's macro-text (the *cantica*) and the structure of the micro-text (the *terzina dantesca*) mirror one another. This Platonic axiom is no stranger to Christian thinking and mysticism, and its presence in a poem like the *Commedia* should not come as a surprise.[11]

This equivalence across magnitudes also occurs numerically across the *terzina*, the *canto*, the *cantica*, and the entire *Commedia*. If one is to subtract 1 to the total verse count in any *canto*, one finds a multiple of 3 (*x* being the number of verses: [*x*-1] / 3 = multiple of three). For example, the first *canto* of *Inferno* contains 136 verses, consequently: (136-1)/3=45; or *canto* thirty-four of the same *cantica* has 139 lines: (139-1)/3=46. Likewise, if one subtracts the first *canto* of *Inferno* as a prologue to the entire *Commedia*, one finds a recurrence of multiples of 3 for each *cantica*: 3 x 33.[12] The *Commedia* as a whole contains 100 cantos, therefore: (100-1)/3=33. Said differently, both ratios for the lines per *canto* and the cantos per *cantica* are multiples of three, on the condition that a unit is subtracted to their total count. The Trinitarian symbolism is self-evident.

Despite slight variations found in the hendecasyllable's accentual nature, the presence of an additional *canto* in *Inferno*, and the somewhat differing amounts of verses per *cantica*, both the macro-text and the micro-text mirror one another in their numerical and structural compositions. Like a Mandelbrot set, the poem exhibits a complex structure with recursive details at increasing magnifications. At a macrostructural level, the *cantica* is composed of 33 cantos, whereas, at a

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[11] For a similar 'fractal' component, by means of the structure of *Paradiso*, whereby its Trinitarian principle, as expressed by the angelic hierarchy, extends throughout all of intelligent creation down to the individual, see Cogan 187–214.

[12] For a divergent perspective on the numerical structure of the *Commedia*, see Paden 52–55.

microstructural level, the *terzina dantesca* consists of three eleven-syllable verses (3x11=33), for a total of 33 syllabic units. Freccero describes this homology best: "[w]e have then a formal structure which suggests a certain homology between the versification and the formal divisions of the poem. The 33 syllables of a *terzina* are mirrored in the 33 *canti* of a *cantica* and the three *cantiche* thus represent a kind of cosmic tercet, an encyclopedic representation of the number three" (6–7). Besides the apparent Trinitarian significance of the number three (three different canticles forming one unitary book), these structural elements highlight how the *Commedia* was scaffolded to display correspondences between microstructure and macrostructure.

**Going in Circles**

> *Le cose tutte quante*
> *hanno ordine tra loro, e questo è forma*
> *che l'universo a Dio fa simigliante.*
>
> – *Paradiso* I, vv. 103–105.

Because the *Commedia*'s partitions—*canto* and *cantica*—evoke the notion of singing (Lat.: *cano*, *canere*, *cecinī*, *cantum*), and all three *cantiche* end with the same word, one can indeed liken the poem to a *canzone* of epic proportions. As a matter of fact, Dante does refer to his poem as a "canzon" in *Inf.* XX, vv. 1–3.[13] The presence of "stelle" marks the end-point of a textual unit, much like a line of verse, while its repetition in the form of an identical rhyme mimics a circular motion since it loops the text back to a pre-determined point. It is as though each *cantica* were a line of verse rhyming with one another.

Bologna echoes Freccero's homology of the poem to a "cosmic tercet." He explains how one could conceive of the *Commedia* as a macro-*canzone* woven with the technique of intratextual

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[13] See, for instance, Dante's own definition of the *canzone* in *De vulgari eloquentia*: "dicimus vulgarium poematum unum esse suppremum, quod per superexcellentiam cantionem vocamus" (II, viii, 9). ["And now it is clear what a canzone is, whether we are using the term in a general sense or on account of the form's outstanding excellence" (Botterill trans.).]

and intertextual correspondences, a method that he believes Dante learned and refined during his apprenticeship of lyrical forms (*Il Ritorno di Beatrice* 62). Barolini also likens the *Commedia* to "a really 'gran canzon,' (...) the equivalent of many canzoni stitched together" ("Historiography Revisited: 'l Notaro e Guittone e me" 108). One fine example of a lyrical form that Dante may have come across in his apprenticeship would be the following *versus circulati* (encircled verses):

Gaudia de*bita* temporis or*bita* reddidit *orbi*.

Quod vetus in*tulit* alter Adam *tulit* editus *orbi*.

Lumina luc*ifer* ille salut*ifer* edidit *orbi*. (qtd. in Canettieri 167–168).[14]

It consists of a tercet with identical rhyme words, inter and intra-linear correspondences, circular and vertical elements, and cosmic aspirations. Alongside the intra-linear component of the internal rhyme (-bita/-bita// -tulit/-tulit// -ifer/-ifer//), these three verses have an interlinear element, the same end-word "orbi" at each verse, much like Dante's "stelle" at the end of each *cantica*. Also, a triad of alliterative verbal forms that cut across the poem vertically—"redditit," "editus," and "edidit"—preceeds its appearance. The term "orbi" had a wide semantic range, from 'circle' to 'circular motion' and 'Earth,' and it puts into relation the poem's content and the formal idea behind the *versus circulati* (Canettieri 167). Moreover, the horizontal structure of the internal rhymes in the tercet highlights a vertical patterning across the three verses: -bita -tulit -ifer being repeated in the first two columns, and "orbi" in the last.

The circular and vertical structure of this cosmic tercet indeed calls to mind the *Commedia*'s tripartite structure. Contini noted how the triple occurrence of "stelle" "sembra assimilabile solo agli istituti retorici della lirica, per esempio alla ripresa o al ritornello della ballata

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[14] ["The great circle of time has brought back to the world its owed joys. / That which old Adam has brought, that which was born in the world, he has taken away. / That bringer of life-giving light, has given the world the light" (own translation, with special thanks to Prof. Dario Brancato).] This poem appears in a section titled "De cognitione metri" from the scriptorium of Admont Abbey, a Benedictine monastery in Austria (Cod. Admont. nr.759, 12th c.).

e generi affini, se si vuole anche al riverbero della parola-rima nella sestina" (416).[15] Indeed, echoing Contini and Freccero, Canettieri suggests that "potremo pensare anche al poema dantesco come a una grandiosa *cantilena circulata*, con una parola in rima, stelle, che si ripete identica alla fine di ogni cantica" (168).[16] In the Middle Ages, *cantilena* had the same meaning as 'canto' and would be used for secular and sacred texts. The church fathers would often use the term in designating the Psalms; however, it was also used in the general sense of a 'canzone,' therefore including 'chansons de geste.' For example, Pietro Alighieri's commentary to *Paradiso* VIII (vv. 34–37), where Dante's *canzone* "Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete" is cited, refers to the poem as a "cantilena" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).[17] In *Paradiso* XXXII, Dante uses the term to describe the song sung by the blessed in glorifying Mary: "Rispuose a la *divina cantilena* / da tutte parti la beata corte" (vv. 97–98 emphasis added). In the *De vulgari*, after establishing the pre-eminence of the *canzone* and defining it as "equalium stantiarum sine responsorio ad unam sententiam tragica coniugatio," Dante mentions that if the style were comic, "*cantilenam* vocamus per diminutionem" (II, viii, 8 emphasis added).[18] For the term's origins in the vernacular 'canzonetta' and Dante's use of it in the *De vulgari eloquentia*, Camboni remarks that "[l]a ricerca della precisa accezione tecnica di cantilena nel passo dantesco sembra quindi impresa se non futile certo dispersive" (96).[19] This cluster of terms and the apparent interchangeability of some merit further scrutiny considering Dante's novel use of them.

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[15] ["can be only comparable to the rhetorical paradigms of the lyrical tradition, for example, the 'ripresa' or the 'ritornello' of the 'ballata' and similar genres, even to the echoes of the rhyme-words in the 'sestina.'"]

[16] ["we can conceive of Dante's poem as a grandiose 'cantilena circulata,' with a rhyme word, "stelle", that repeats itself in identical form at the end of each cantica."]

[17] Unless otherwise specified, all quotations from commentaries are from *The Dartmouth Dante Project*: https://dante.dartmouth.edu; bibliographical details for each commentary are available by pressing the "List of Commentaries" button.

[18] ["a connected series of equal stanzas in the tragic style, without a refrain" ... "we would use a diminutive and call it a *canzonetta*" (Botterill trans.).]

[19] ["the analysis of the precise technical meaning of *cantilena* in the Dantean passage therefore seems if not a futile task, certainly a dispersive one."]

The second and third appearances of the word "stelle" are preceded by moments of high authorial consciousness and readerly attention.  In an address to the reader at the end of *Purgatorio*, Dante names his poem as a *cantica* and remarks that:

S'io avessi, lettor, più lungo spazio

da *scrivere*, i' pur *cantere' in parte*

lo dolce ber che mai non m'avria sazio

ma perché piene son tutte le *carte*

ordite a questa *cantica* seconda,

non mi lascia più ir lo fren de l'arte. (XXXIII, vv. 136–141 emphases added)

Dante hints to the reader that his poem has a pre-established program, a pre-determined spatial distribution. He refers to "carte" (v. 139) to describe the material form of what he is writing on, much like the double-columned *chartae* of the early manuscript tradition. Whether the prearranged page count be true or not is beside the point, since ultimately, it is what he wants the reader to believe. The mention of a pre-determined structure is significant because a few lines after this claim, the word "stelle" appears for the second time, rewarding the attentive reader with another hint of symmetrical correspondences. The text reveals this detail at the end of the textual journey, as though it were asking the reader to pause and look back.

This meta-narrative element recurs yet again in *Paradiso*; however, the difference in this final iteration is that, by partaking in a geometric theological language, it takes on a much more doctrinal function than in *Purgatorio*. The last iteration of "stelle" occurs at the zenith of Dante's poetic construction, concluding his entire poem with his rapturous face-to-face with the divine. It is preceded by an attempt to describe his vision of the Trinity as "tre giri / di tre colori e d'una contenenza" (vv. 116–117) and of the Incarnation (vv. 127–132). In Dante's description, he uses

an ineffability *topos* spanning two tercets that compares his poetic task to that of a master-geometer attempting to square the circle:

> Qual è 'l geomètra che tutto s'affige
>
> per misurar lo cerchio, e non ritrova,
>
> pensando, quel principio ond' elli indige,
>
> tal era io a quella vista nova
>
> veder voleva come si convenne
>
> l'imago al cerchio e come vi s'indova; (vv. 133–138)

The difficulty of the task mentioned in Dante's simile is first and foremost epistemological since it is about "the relationship between the infinite and the finite," and, as such, offered enormous poetic possibilities to him (Herzman and Towsley 104).[20] The circle symbolizes eternity, and therefore the divine, whereas the square symbolizes finitude, hence humankind. Dante is seeking to find the principle to relate the diameter of a circle with its circumference. What binds the images together, that of the geometer squaring the circle and Dante attempting to comprehend the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation, is that "they are both rationally unsolvable" (114). Here are the last two tercets of the poem that follow the verses cited above:

> ma non eran da ciò le proprie penne:
>
> se non che la mia mente fu percossa
>
> da un fulgore in che sua voglia venne.
>
> A l'alta fantasia qui mancò possa;
>
> ma già volgeva il mio disio e 'l velle,
>
> sì come rota ch'igualmente è mossa,

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[20] For Dante's references to squaring the circle in his other works, see *Convivio* II, xiii, 27 and *Monarchia* III, iii, 2.

l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle. (vv. 139–145)

In this passage, Dante gets to fulfill his desire, "veder voleva come si convenne" (v. 137), as the mysteries of Christianity are revealed to him "da un fulgore in che sua voglia venne" (v. 141). Although he fails to express this knowledge, his affective power (desire) and his intellect (will), "il mio disio e 'l velle" (v. 143), both move harmoniously with the cosmos. Therefore, the ending highlights the correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm, between the pilgrim's soul and the universe, and the poem's circular nature.

God is a circle and Dante is its geometer, a theologian studying divinity, a mystic much like a Sufi dervish in a harmonious circular movement with the entire universe, "insomma la mediazione perfetta tra mistica e teologia è sintetizzata da quella metafora come sublime proposta di integrazione non iterabile fra *l'esprit de géometrie* [sic] e l'estetica dell'ineffabile (Canettieri 163).[21] This correspondence between the universe and one's soul is also embedded structurally and textually, as shown with the poem's partitions. Dante's circular and reiterative structure indeed derives from aesthetic and theological exigencies, put into a simple syllogism: "Dio è un circolo, ciò che è bello è circolare, il poema sacro ha forma circolare" (Canettieri 171).[22] Likewise, as a contradictory yet harmonious shape with no beginning or end, the circle becomes not only the perfect image for God and the mysteries of Christianity like the Trinity but also for the roundabout structure of the pilgrim's journey. For example, Johannis Serravalle's commentary (1416–1417) to the last lines of *Paradiso* (vv. 133–145) mentions the circular structure of the poem: "Demum per speras celi venit huc, idest ad divinitatem et summum bonum, et *sic complevit circulum*; *et sic*

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[21] ["in sum, the perfect mediation between mysticism and theology is synthesized by that metaphor as a sublime suggestion of a non-repeatable integration between a sense of geometry and the aesthetics of the ineffable."]
[22] ["God is a circle, that which is beautiful is circular, the sacred poem has a circular shape."]

*debet esse finis.*"[23] Therefore, readers should not be surprised to find circular or vertical geometrical patterns in the poem's architecture. Dante seeks to mimic the order of God's two books: Scripture and the universe.[24]

The presence of the verb "move" in the last line of the poem, "l'amor che *move* il sole e l'altre stelle" (v. 145), retrospectively recalls the beginning of *Paradiso*: "La gloria di colui che tutto *move*" (*Par*. I, v. 1 emphasis added). Consequently, the *cantica* itself has a circular structure, just like its more comprehensive partition, the entire poem. The poem's last lines similarly recall *Inferno* I: "e 'l *sol* montava 'n sù con quelle *stelle* / ch'eran con lui quando *l'amor* divino / *mosse* di prima quelle cose belle" (vv. 38–40 emphasis added).[25] This description contains four textual elements of the last line of the poem: the Sun, "sol"; the stars, "stelle"; divine love, "amor divino"; and the movement of the cosmos that it generates, "mosse." Therefore, in *Inferno* I, "[o]ne might also say that [Dante] is three canticles removed from his final goal" (Herzman and Towsley 121). Indeed, "many commentators have pointed out [that] the end of the poem looks back to the beginning of the *Paradiso* as well as the beginning of the entire *Commedia*" (122). Moreover, these correspondences occur at crucial textual nodes within the poem's structure. They are at the beginning and end of each structural level, either between canticles (*Inf*. I and *Par*. XXXIII) or within a canticle (*Par*. I and *Par*. XXXIII). Additionally, they can only be grasped retrospectively as the narrative develops and unfolds. Therefore, intratextual elements of the poem also highlight aesthetic concerns of a theological nature.

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[23] ["Finally, he came through the spheres of heaven to this place, that is, to divinity and to the highest good, and *thus he completed his circle, and it is in this way that it should end*" (Herzman and Towsley 123 emphasis added).]

[24] See Chapter 3, Part I, "Metaphors of Textual Space: The Circle and the Cross."

[25] More can be said about the re-echoing of *Inferno* I in *Paradiso* XXXIII through a Neoplatonic and Pauline perspective; however, for the purpose of this section, the point of circularity is sufficiently substantiated as it is. See, in particular, Freccero "The Final Image: *Paradiso* XXXIII, 144" 14–27.

The beginning of the *Commedia* also stresses this particular focus on perspective. Dante-pilgrim is lost within a dark forest and three beasts impede his climb of the "dilettoso monte" (v. 77). This ascension is presumably to get a bird's-eye-view of the forest into which he strayed. To better understand his situation, to trace his journey out, Dante seeks higher ground; reasoning needs to reach a higher perspective. This effort to get the best perspective and the question of life and death that it entails is stressed in the poem's first simile. It compares the pilgrim to someone narrowly escaping death at sea and taking a retrospective glance:

> E come quei che con lena affannata,
>
> uscito fuor del pelago a la riva,
>
> *si volge* a l'acqua perigliosa e guata,
>
> così l'animo mio, ch'ancor fuggiva,
>
> *si volse a retro a rimirar* lo passo
>
> che non lasciò mai persona viva" (*Inf.* I, vv. 22–27 emphasis added).

Ultimately, understanding demands a higher perspective, a reasoning upward that allows one to "rimirar lo passo," especially when the dangers involved concern not only the pilgrim's soul but that of the reader as well.[26] Interpretation requires a locus from where one can grasp more expansive textual spaces, looking backward on the textual journey completed thus far to see patterns emerge.

Furthermore, Herzman and Towsley make an essential observation in their analysis of *Paradiso* XXXIII's last lines when they explain how the harmony of the universe "is the exact and precise relationship of its parts to each other and the complementarity of the parts in their relationship to the whole" (117–18). Dante seeks to imitate this harmony by embedding textual

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[26] This is particularly true in connection to hermeneutics and heresy, a topic discussed at length in Chapter 2.

and structural correspondences into his poem. The *Commedia*'s tripartite structure emulates the three Persons of the Trinity, "the supreme example of perfection through complementarity" (118–19). The poem's narratological form also partakes in this Trinitarian structure of three-in-one, one-in-three: from Dante-pilgrim (character), Dante-poet (narrator) to, lastly, the historical Dante (author). Pertile himself expresses this neatly when he explains how: "[c]haracter, narrator, and author are indeed intertwined and often overlapping in the *Commedia*, but we cannot always treat them as one; nor can we assume that they are perfectly discrete. It is a structural ambiguity which the poet fully exploits" ("Narrative Structure" 5).

The poem's macrostructure and microstructure display correspondences between beginnings and ends: the entire poem's textual borders (*Inferno* I and *Paradiso* XXXIII), those of the *cantica* (*Paradiso* I and *Paradiso* XXXIII), and the *canto* as well, with the double rhymes (AA/ZZ). The circle and the vertical line are geometries that intersect structurally and textually in the *Commedia*. The following section, "Inter-canticle Symmetries," analyzes similar correspondences between the canticles as a whole and those of the Nines in particular.

**Intercanticle Symmetries**

> *Quella cosa dice l'uomo essere bella, cui le parti debitamente si rispondono, per che de la loro armonia resulta piacimento (...) e dicemo bello lo canto, quando le voci di quello, secondo debito de l'arte, sono intra sé rispondenti.*
>
> – Dante, *Convivio* (I, V, xiii).[27]

Despite representing three completely diverse realms, all three canticles share a similar architecture: "[t]he three realms have (...) parallel structures but distinct characteristics" (Pertile "Narrative Structure" 7). Dante's *esprit de géométrie* also occurs transversally by having structural reiterations across all three *cantiche*. As noted earlier, every iteration of the *cantica* contains thirty-

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[27] ["One calls a thing beautiful when its parts correspond properly, because pleasure results from their harmony (...) and we call a song beautiful when its voices, according to the rules of the art, correspond between themselves."]

three cantos and ends with the word "stelle," but the *cantiche* also share other interesting structural correspondences, mainly how the ninth *canto* of each canticle is a threshold between two different types of spaces.

In the introduction to their translation of *Purgatorio*, Durling and Martinez surprisingly associated this threshold characteristic with the Tens rather than the Nines, and yet, their primary textual sources for this observation all come from the ninth canto: "[m]ajor transitions are found at or near the tenth canto of each cantica: in Hell, as the wayfarers approach and enter the gate of Dis (*Inf.* 9.106); in Purgatory, with admission through the gate of Peter (*Purg.* 9.73–145); and in *Paradiso*, in the ascent from the subsolar planets to the sun (cantos 9–10)" (726).

Dante's *Inferno* contains a vestibule, a liminal space before Hell commonly referred to as Ante-Inferno (*Inf.* I–II), and then nine circles divided into three main realms. The first circle 2) Limbo (*Inf.* III–IV) contains the unbaptized and the "nobile castello" (*Inf.* IV, v. 106); the following four circles form upper Hell and hold sins of incontinence: 3) lust, 4) gluttony, 5) avarice, and 6) wrath (*Inf.* V–IX); whereas beyond the walls of the City of Dis, the final four circles contain evil-doers who have sinned through the use of their intellect: 7) heretics, 8) the violent, 9) the fraudulent, and 10) the traitors. (*Inf.* X–XXXIII). Thus, *Inferno* has nine circles divided into three realms, with the ninth *canto* as a threshold, since that is where Dante and Virgil go beyond the walls of the City of Dis into lower Hell.[28] With the inclusion of Ante-Inferno, we have a total of ten partitions.

At the end of *Purgatorio* IX, Dante and Virgil find themselves at the threshold of an area that contains negligent souls, commonly known as Ante-Purgatorio (*Purg.* IV–IX). This area is where souls need to wait a determined amount of time before ascending the mountain and undergo

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[28] *Inferno* IX is also a meta-poetic *canto* concerned with the danger of heresy in the hermeneutics of classical and Christian texts and will be discussed at length in the parallel section of Chapter 2.

the purgation of their sins. *Purgatorio*'s seven terraces (*Purg.* X–XXVI) are associated with a deadly sin, whereas the Earthly Paradise sits at the mountain's summit (*Purg.* XXVII–XXXIII). Therefore, *Purgatorio* also has a total of ten partitions: 1) its shore guarded by Cato (*Purg.* I–III), followed by nine delimited zones grouped into three areas: 2) Ante-Purgatory (*Purg.* IV–IX), followed by the Terraces of 3) Pride, 4) Envy, 5) Wrath, 6) Sloth, 7) Greed, 8) Gluttony, 9) Lust, and, at last, 10) Earthly Paradise (*Purg.* XXVII–XXXIII). Moreover, the structure of Hell is mirrored and inverted in Purgatory. *Purgatorio* reverses the increasing gravity of sins depicted in the *Inferno* since sins are in decreasing order of severity. As a result, lust and the related theme of lyric poetry bookend both moral structures: Paolo and Francesca, in *Inferno* V and the Terrace of Lust in *Purgatorio* XXV–XXVII. In Hell, sins are divided into three large categories: incontinence, violence, and fraud; likewise, Purgatory's moral topography is split into three areas "malo obietto" (pride, envy, and wrath), "poco di vigore" (sloth), and "troppo di vigore" (greed, gluttony, and lust) (see *Purg.* XVII, vv. 95–96).

Dante claims that there is no hierarchy in Paradise since all souls reside in the Empyrean; however, to render his experience intelligible, souls appear in an order analogous to the modified and expanded version of the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmos. In Dante's geocentric cosmological model, nine concentric spheres rotate around the Earth, each associated with an angelic hierarchy: 1) the Moon, 2) Mercury, 3) Venus, 4) the Sun, 5) Mars, 6) Jupiter, 7) Saturn, 8) the "stelle fisse," and 9) the Primum Mobile. The Empyrean is the tenth Heaven beyond time and space, containing everything and contained by nothing. Therefore, the third canticle, much like the previous two, has ten partitions.

Between *Paradiso* IX and X ends the Heaven of Venus and begins that of the Sun. The idea of the Earth's shadow, whereby the light emitted by the Sun onto the Earth casts a shadow

onto the first three spheres: the Moon, Mercury, and Venus highlights this boundary. These three Heavens are literally and figuratively overshadowed by their earthly proclivities. The Moon is associated with inconstancy and thus with those who have broken their vows. Likewise, Mercury is associated with ambition and thus with individuals who did good not as an end in itself but to achieve earthly fame. Lastly, Venus is associated with love and, therefore, with those who have faltered due to the heart's temptations. In sum, all three spheres represent faulty forms of the cardinal virtues of fortitude (Moon), justice (Mercury), and temperance (Venus).

Consequently, just like Hell and Purgatory, Paradise contains nine spheres divided into three groups: those under the shadow of the Earth, those beyond it, and, lastly, the fixed stars and the Primum Mobile. This inter-canticle symmetry "is not presented as an arbitrary choice, but as an objective requirement of the subject matter itself, a mirror of the reality of the afterlife. The three kingdoms and the symmetrical ways they function are the product of a unified, harmonious plan presented as God's work, witnessed by the pilgrim and related by the narrator (Pertile, "Narrative Structure" 8). Following this line of logic, then, the presence of symmetrical patterning across all three canticles, as exemplified by the Nines, in a text seeking nothing less than to imitate the harmony of God's work, makes plausible the presence of such co-numerical symmetries elsewhere.[29]

Ultimately, the threshold character of the Nines finds its most salient example in the figure of Beatrice. For instance, Pertile remarks how "[i]t can hardly be a fortuitous coincidence that, in [*Purgatorio*] XXVII, after three days, three dreams, and three times nine cantos, Virgil takes his leave, announcing the coming of Beatrice's 'beautiful eyes' (XXVII, 137, the same eyes he saw full of tears in *Inferno* II, 116)" (15–16). In the *Vita nuova*, Dante offers mathematical proof of her

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[29] For numerical symmetry and patterning in the *Monarchia* see Shaw, "Introduction" xxxvi–xxxix and Scott, *Understanding Dante* 148–149, for the *Convivio* see Peterman 125–138.

miraculous function: "questa donna fue accompagnata da questo numero del nove a dare ad intendere ch'ella era uno nove, cioè uno miracolo, la cui radice, cioè del miracolo, è solamente la mirabile Trinitade" (XXIX, 3).[30] Figuratively, the square root of all miracles is the triune God; literally, the square root of nine is three. Beatrice operates as a threshold between the human and the divine, so much so that by bringing Heaven down to Earth, she is a miracle: "par che sia una cosa venuta / da cielo in terra a miracol mostrare" (*Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare*).[31]

Repeated words, images, rhymes, and structures make patterns that retrospectively bring into sharp relief deeper and hidden meanings: "only by completing the journey can the protagonist of the story—and the reader with him—gain the knowledge that the narrator has from the beginning; and only a second reading will begin to release the riches that otherwise remain buried under the surface of the text" (9–10).[32] Co-numerary sequences, such as the Nines, are among the most noticeable effects of this intratextual network. They generally serve "to signal important topics or transitions in the journey" (10). Pertile acknowledges well-known instances of vertical patterning in the *Commedia*. He explains how the Sixes "concentrate on political issues in Florence, Italy, and the Empire" and how the Nines "signal a narrative and theological transition in all three realms and canticles." However, he also includes correspondences between only two canticles rather than all three, like "the cantos XIX of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, and the XXVII of *Inferno* and *Paradiso*" (10).[33] Following Pertile's lead, then, a definition of vertical readings

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[30] ["this lady was accompanied by this number nine with the intention to mean that she was a nine, that is, a miracle, of which the root, that is, of the miracle, is nothing less than the miraculous Trinity."]

[31] For an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the number nine and Beatrice, see Scott 21–24 and Gorni 36.

[32] This retrospective form of reader knowledge will be treated in depth in the second part of this chapter when discussing the contributions of Singleton to the field of Dante studies. One example discussed thus far is the reprise of *Inf*. I and *Par*. I in *Par*. XXXIII.

[33] The flexibility of the vertical interpretative methodology will be shortly discussed in Part II, when examining precedents of vertical analyses of the *Commedia*.

should include readings that involve any combination of same-numbered cantos (whether two or three).

**What's in a Name?**

Thus far, this chapter has examined how Dante textually and structurally arranged his poem to reflect the universe's harmony. The relationships between the parts to the whole and among the parts themselves reflect another powerful Christian symbol, that is, the Trinity. This chapter demonstrated how Dante's poem seeks to imitate the structure of the universe, one of God's two books, but it has yet to explore how the poem imitates God's other book, Scripture. Therefore, the following section sheds light on how Dante sought to guide the poem's exegesis by revolutionizing the use of traditional literary terms and concepts.

As the *exordium* to *Inferno* XX verifies, Dante numbered and named his partitions: "Di nova pena mi conven far *versi* / e dar matera al *ventesimo canto* / de la *prima canzon*, ch'è di sommersi," (vv. 1–3 emphases added). As mentioned earlier, this numbering is further evidence supporting an intentional patterning, provisional or not, to his poem. The use of the word "canzon" is also revealing since the term, "nel senso di serie di composizioni poetiche uniformi e tenute insieme dal filo della stessa *fabula*," has a long-standing tradition behind it (Pertile, "Canto-cantica-Comedía e l'Epistola a Cangrande" 105).[34] This term was mentioned earlier concerning Bologna's description of the poem as a macro-*canzone*, Barolini's as a "gran canzon," and Canettieri's as a "grandiosa *cantilena circulata*."

In the *De vulgari*, Dante defines "cantio" in the barest sense as "nichil aliud esse videtur quam actio completa dicentis verba modulationi armonizata" (II, viii, 6).[35] As such, his definition

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[34] ["in the sense of a uniform series of poetic compositions held together by the thread of the *fabula* itself"].

[35] ["nothing else than the self-contained action of one who writes harmonious words to be set to music" (Botterill trans.).]

encompasses any form of harmonization of words: "omnia cuiuscunque modi verba sunt armonizata vulgariter et regulariter, cantiones esse dicemus."[36] The *canzone* excels all other forms of poetry: "dicimus vulgarium poematum unum esse suppremum, quod per superexcellentiam cantionem vocamus" (7).[37] In the following section, Dante reiterates the *canzone*'s pre-eminence—"per superexcellentiam dicitur"—and further defines "cantio" as a connected series of equal stanzas without a refrain tied to a single tragic theme: "est equalium stantiarum sine responsorio ad unam sententiam tragica coniugatio" (8). Dante then provides his sonnet "Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore" as an example. He then proceeds to distinguish between the tragic *canzone* and the comic *cantilena*, based on the latter's diminutive form of the former "cantilenam vocamus per diminutionem" (II, viii, 8). This *canzone* appears at a crucial juncture in the *Vita nuova* (XIX) when Dante signals a drastic shift in his poetics. It also makes a significant appearance in *Purgatorio* XXIV (v. 51) to define Dante's novel poetics, "le nove rime" (v. 50) and their "dolce stil novo" (v. 57). In sum, the *canzone* offered the terminological flexibility needed to address the novelty of Dante's poetics and the subject matter, the "matera" of *Inferno*.

Also stated earlier, French epic songs were also called "canzone," such as the *Chanson de Roland* (*Canzone di Orlando*), the oldest and most important 'chanson de geste.' Dante seems to have at least been acquainted with "una versione della storia di *Rolando* rimata (con la mediazione dello pseudo Turpino della *Historia Karoli Magni et Rotholandi*), nonché una di quella del ciclo di *Guillaume*, dove compaiono due eroi indicati come beati in Pd 18.46, e cioè 'Guiglielmo e Rinoardo'" (Casadei 162).[38] Moreover, such compositions' structure is analogous to that of the

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[36] ["all arrangements of words, of whatever kind, that are based on harmony, whether in the vernacular or in the regulated language, should be called canzoni" (Botterill trans.).]

[37] ["I say that there is one form of vernacular poetry that excels all others, and that, on account of its pre-eminence, we call the canzone" (Botterill trans.).]

[38] ["a rhymed version of Roland's story (with the mediation of Pseudo-Turpin's *Historia Karoli Magni et Rotholandi*), and one belonging to the *Chanson de Guillaume*, hence the appearance of the two heroes as blessed souls in *Par.* XVIII, v. 46."] For more on the French Epic chanson de geste in Medieval Italy, see Casadei 162ff. esp n.2.

*Inferno* in particular and the *Commedia* as a whole, having *chansons* divided into *lasses* that, in turn, are composed of rhymed decasyllables (163). Moreover, the genre benefitted from a vertical *mise-en-page* in its manuscript tradition, a characteristic also shared by the early manuscripts of Dante's epic poem. As Leonardi explains, the vertical lay-out of poetry was standard for "tutta la poesia narrativa romanza, dalle lasse della *chanson de geste* in Francia e Spagna ai *couplets* del romanzo e dei generi brevi, fino alle terzine della *Commedia* dantesca e alle ottave dei cantari" (270).[39]

The other names used for the poem's partitions, *canto* and *cantica,* also have pre-existing literary traditions tied to Scripture; however, Dante purposefully employs them in new ways. Barański stresses this dialectic in an observation about the tercet at the beginning of *Inferno* XX; he remarks how "a semantic discrepancy is invariably apparent between the conventional values of a term and the way in which Dante applied the concept to his poem," and, consequently, "his readers are encouraged to reflect on his peculiar usages and thus begin to appreciate the *novitas* of his work, as well as its idiosyncratic, but continuing, relationship to the tradition" ("The Poetics of Meter" 4). This process is, in fact, the *modus operandi* of Dante's poetics, an experimentation with tradition that principally consists in innovation via transformation. Throughout Barański's scholarship, he has consistently pointed out that although "Dante mirasse a smontare il sistema di *convenientiae* su cui si reggevano la retorica e la letteratura del suo mondo (...) egli decise di far ciò entro i parametri della tradizione e non fuori di questa, per garantire che il lettore potesse seguire la sua operazione" ("La lezione esegetica di *Inferno* I: allegoria, storia e letteratura nella

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[39] ["the normal and nearly complete vertical writting of narrative romance poetry, from the *lasse* of the *chanson de geste* in France and Spain to the *couplets* of short genres, up to the *terzine* of the *Commedia* and the *ottave* of the *cantari.*"]

*Commedia*" 81).[40] By giving readers pre-existing terms and parameters with which to frame and interpret the poem, this process allows Dante to bring forth its *novitas* and attempt to control its polysemous nature.[41]

The triple use of "stelle," a focal point thus far, is also a pertinent example of Dante's recasting of literary authority and tradition. It has a peculiar intertextual relation to Virgil, Dante's self-proclaimed literary model, his "autore" (*Inf.* I, v. 85). Dante's triple use of "stelle" has been interpreted as an imitation and subversion of Virgil's "umbrae" (shades), appearing at the end of his opening and closing *Eclogues* (I, X), highlighting their circular structure, and of the *Aeneid*.[42] For example, Fosca's commentary (2003–2015) to the last tercet of *Paradiso* hints to this intertextual reference: "dalle *umbrae* pagane di Virgilio (con tale termine si concludono *Egl*. I e X e l'*Eneide* stessa) alle stelle cristiane di Dante Alighieri" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).[43] Dronke also discusses this point, noting that the Tenth Eclogue "has a coda in which the word *umbra* reverberates three times," and a similar triple iteration occurs with Virgil's name in *Purgatorio* XXX, vv. 49–51.[44] Dronke concludes by stating that "[t]he threefold affirmation of stars, and at last of human desire and will at one with the stars, was Dante's joyous reply to Vergil" (38–39). All these elements stress Dante's penchant for working with and against tradition.

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[40] ["Dante aimed at dismantling the system of *convenientiae* upon which was predicated the rhetoric and the literature of his world (...) he decided to do so within the parameters of tradition and not outside of it, in order to make sure that the reader could follow his operation."] This is equally important with regards to Dante's attitude towards allegory and exegesis, topics addressed in full in Chapter 2.

[41] For an overview of this process from the *Vita nuova*, to the *Convivio*, the *De vulgari eloquentia*, and finally the *Commedia*, see Barański "Dante Alighieri: Experimentation and (Self-)exegesis" 561–82.

[42] For the opening *Eclogue*: "maioresque cadunt altis de montibus *umbrae*" (v. 84 emphasis added), as for the closing one, *umbrae* appears three times, but on the antepenultimate and penultimate lines, not the last one: "Surgamus: solet esse grauis cantantibus *umbra*, / iuniperi grauis *umbra*; nocent et frugibus *umbrae* / Ite domum saturae, uenit Hesperus, ite, capellae" (vv. 76–78). Nevertheless, the appearance of "Hesperus," the Evening Star, does provide an intertextual link that has yet to be explored, alongside the circular structure of Virgil's corpus and Dante's own *Eclogues*. For the sake of brevity, this dissertation will not address this very interesting connection.

[43] ["from the pagan Virgilian *umbrae* (with such a term end the first and tenth *Eclogues*, as well as the *Aeneid*) to the Christian stars of Dante Alighieri."]

[44] As is well-known, Dante-pilgrim's farewell to Virgil echoes the latter's own farewell to the genre of the eclogue in *Ecloga* X.

Returning to the exordium of *Inferno* XX, in addition to being "Dante's first explicit internal definition of the *Commedia*'s meter and structure" (Barański, "The Poetics of Meter" 6), this passage indicates a clear numerical attribution to the *canti* themselves, "ventesimo," as well as to the *cantica*, "la prima canzon." Dante's use of the terms "prima canzon," by deduction, also indicates that there will very likely be a second "canzon." As indicated earlier, right before the second instance of the word "stelle" at the end of *Purgatorio* XXXIII, Dante-poet writes that his "carte" are complete and that "l'arte" constrains him to end his "cantica" (vv. 139–141). Dante wanted his readers to believe that the poem had a pre-established program with numerical limits.

Is there a difference between "canzon" (*Inf.* XX) and "cantica" (*Purg.* XXXIII)? For Casadei, the switch from *canzon* to *cantica* was probably done to re-orient the reader's expectations, since the former was not suited to the content of *Purgatorio*: "[d]unque, 'canzone' e 'cantica' appaiono come due termini equivalenti dal punto vista del referente, ma connotati in maniera ben distinta" (170).[45] Commentators such as Jacopo Alighieri, the *Chiose Selmiane*, and Graziolo Bambaglioli prefer side-stepping the issue by using the traditional terms 'liber,' 'pars,' and 'capitulum,' omitting altogether 'canzon' and 'cantica' (Pertile, "Canto-cantica-Comedía e l'Epistola a Cangrande" 108–09). Typically, texts were divided into *libri* (books) and *capitula* (chapters); therefore, most early commentators displayed a conservative approach by preferring these standard terms rather than the ones utilized by Dante. Moreover, the terms 'comedìa' and 'cantica' were used interchangeably when referring to the title of the work (112–13). Nevertheless, Guido da Pisa, Giovanni Boccaccio, Jacopo della Lana, and Francesco da Buti are notable exceptions since they appear to use both *canzon* and *cantica* interchangeably (109–10, Barański, "The Poetics of Meter" 3). Their use did not necessarily mean full understanding, as shown by

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[45] ["therefore, 'canzone' and 'cantica' appear as equivalent terms from the point of view of the referent, but signify in a distinct manner."]

Pertile in relation to Boccaccio who "dimostra chiaramente e a più riprese di non saper distinguere nettamente i due concetti" ("Cantica nella tradizione medievale e in Dante" 390).[46]

Regarding the synonymy between 'canzon' and 'cantica,' one may rightly ask why under these circumstances it was the term *cantica* and not *canzone* that took hold, seeing that both are used only once by Dante and as synonyms. Pertile investigated the rubrics added by copyists and the commentary tradition to the cantos and formulates the hypothesis that Dante decided explicitly on the term 'cantica' only after circulating all of the *Inferno* and completing *Purgatorio* ("Canto-cantica-Comedía e l'Epistola a Cangrande" 117–18). He bases this on Dante's authorship of the *Epistle to Cangrande*, where these structural terms are explicitly stated and defined. As for the terms "sacrato poema" (*Par.* XXIII, v. 62), "poema sacro" (*Par.* XXV, v. 1), and "comedìa" (*Inf.* XVI, v. 128; *Inf.* XXI, v. 2), Casadei argues that "sarà stato appunto il cambiamento del livello stilistico-contenutistico a spingere l'autore a proporre nuove e più adeguate definizioni" (160).[47]

More significantly, the term 'cantica' is related to sacred texts, particularly the biblical Song of Songs, that is to say, the *Canticum Canticorum* or *Canticum Salomonis* (Canticle of Canticles), and its commentary tradition (107–08).[48] In the introductory note to Benvenuto da Imola's commentary to *Inferno* (1375–80), one reads: "Hic liber merito appellatur Cantica; sicut enim in sacra Scriptura quidam liber Salomonis appellatur Cantica Canticorum per excellentiam, ita ista liber in poetria" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).[49] Therefore, for Benvenuto, the name *cantica* also comes with a particular claim to excellence. Just as the Song of Songs is the best of the best, so is Dante's poem.

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[46] ["clearly demonstrates, and more than once, of not being able to neatly distinguish the two concepts."]

[47] ["in the case of 'sacrato poema' o 'poema sacro' ... with the two infernal occurrences of 'comedia' ..., it was the change of style and content that motivated the author to suggest newer and more adequate definitions."]

[48] See also Cachey Jr. 82. For the influence of the Song of Songs on the *Vita nuova*, see Nasti 14–27.

[49] ["This book has the merit of being called Cantica; just as in sacred Scripture a book by Solomon is called *Cantica canticorum* because of its excellence, since this book is in poetry."]

Johannis de Serravalle's commentary (1416–17) is the first to provide a complete definition of the term. In his introductory note to *Inferno*, he writes: "Dum dicitur cantica, denotatur dulcedo poesis et libri poetici; nam poete dulciter loquuntur, tum ex materia quam tangunt, tum ex modo et ordine dicendi, tum ex dulcedine carminum vel rythimorum. Sicut liber Canticorum Salomonis dicitur cantica, per excellentiam, propter modum loquendi, etc.; ita liber poeticus dicitur cantus, vel cantica."[50] Serravalle's commentary combines Benvenuto's observations about the link to Scripture with Boccaccio and Buti's association of the word to the sweetness and melody of music (Pertile, "Cantica nella tradizione medievale e in Dante" 392). Therefore, by using this word, Dante transferred onto his poem a term tied not only to music but, more importantly, to Scripture. Moreover, Dante is implicitly comparing himself to a scriptural author, nothing less than the figure of Solomon. The comparison is a most audacious move considering the risks involved in claiming the same textual authority as Scripture for his poetic work (Pertile 396).

Consequently, one can justify the terminological reluctance of the early commentators of the Trecento due to the implications involved in employing the religiously imbued term "cantica." Its use would implicitly concede intellectual ground to the truth claims of the poem. It explains in part why the predicate "divina" was only added quite late to *Commedia*. It was first mentioned by Boccaccio in his *Trattatelo in laude di Dante*, with a much-deferred use in print during the late Renaissance (1555), and then only became standard in the middle of the eighteenth century. Even the title of the poem is not impervious to such ambiguities. The poem was known by various titles, including *Commedia*, or its variant, *Comedìa*, *Le terze rime di Dante* (1502), and even *La visione*

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[50] ["When it is called 'cantica,' poetic sweetness and poetic books are meant; for poets speak sweetly, both as a result of the matter which they touch, and as a result of the mode and order of speaking, and as a result of the sweetness of the songs or rhythms. Just so, the book of Songs of Salomon is called 'cantica,' through its excellence, because of its way of speaking, etc.; so, a poetic book is called 'cantus' or 'cantica'" (own translation, with special thanks to Prof. Christina S. Kraus).].

(1613). During the eighteenth century, scholars such as the Venetian Gasparo Gozzi argued that *Danteide* was a much more proper name for the *Commedia*. This will also find support in the nineteenth century by the scholar and cleric Giambattista Giuliani. As Cachey Jr. states: "[t]he instability of the title no doubt reflected uncertainties regarding the author's original intentions, doubts that date back to the earliest fourteenth-century commentators" (80). In other words, the religious pretensions of the poem took a long time to take hold, and when they did, they inevitably raised tricky questions.

Undoubtedly, Dante's use of 'cantica' was done with a precise and innovative goal since he could have easily used other words in circulation to describe his poem's structures. Therefore, its use needs to be historicized to grasp its ramifications better. The Song of Songs went through an "extraordinary revival" during the twelfth century, alongside a renewed approach to medieval literary theory and exegesis (Pertile, "Cantica nella tradizione medievale e in Dante" 395–97). Commentators had to confront many exegetical difficulties since it was simultaneously an erotic and sacred text. Secondly, its content was deemed historically authentic, the marriage of an Egyptian princess to King Solomon. However, it was also understood as allegorically representing the Church's love and marriage to Christ, or the love between one's soul and God, or the bride was conceptualized within a Mariological framework. Exodus's salvation pattern, from the slavery of sin in Egypt to the state of salvation in Jerusalem, within the bride's nuptial room, was also used as an interpretative grid and added another intricate allegorical layer. Thirdly, even the title *Cantica* as related to the act of singing was considered awkward. There are indeed figures that sing in the Bible, usually songs in praise of God, for example, after a victorious battle, but not in circumstances in which sexual love and intimacy are reciprocated and celebrated.

Therefore, for a commentator such as Bernard de Clairvaux and a tradition that cuts across the Middle Ages, divine inspiration was the motivating factor for Solomon's song. Thus, it exceeded all other songs, hence the Song of Songs (Pertile 397–99). This interpretation can be traced back to Origen's commentary, where the text's allegorical nature is emphasized. For Origen, the so-called bride must go through a process of perfection before her marriage. This tripartite process begins with the soul being held captive in Egypt, then wandering through the desert, ending in Solomon's nuptial bedroom in Jerusalem. The text's movement from Egypt to Jerusalem and its tripartite structure also overlap with Exodus.[51] The allegory is essentially about seeking and finding harmony within God through a gradual process of self-improvement, be it the Church, the individual, or humankind as a whole, that is to say, a pilgrimage of sorts. Dante repeatedly exploits this pattern in his poem. For example, before Dante's ascent into the Heavens, the personification of the Song of Songs utters "Veni, sponsa, de Libano" (*Purg*. XXX, v. 11). It is a hybrid quotation from the Song of Songs' "Veni de Libano, sponsa mea" (4:8) and serves to announce Beatrice's much-anticipated arrival after Dante's own Exodus, starting from the captivity of sin, *Inferno*, and his wanderings in the desert, *Purgatorio*.[52]

The Song of Songs' status during Dante's time shows how "cantica" pointed to a dramatic and comic genre: "la tradizione esegetica da Origine [sic] al Trecento era solida e unitaria: il Cantico era opera di genere drammatico, e più specificamente 'comico'" (Pertile, "Cantica nella tradizione medievale e in Dante" 403).[53] It was considered comic because it is written in a humble style. Therefore, "se l'opera che stava scrivendo era una 'comedìa,' le parti in cui la suddivideva

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[51] For more on the incipit to Psalm 113 and its relationship to the *Commedia*, see Mazzotta, "Reflections on Dante Studies in America" 329, "Literary History" 223, and *Dante, Poet of the Desert*.

[52] For more on the influence of the Song of Songs on the poetry of the *Commedia*, see Dronke 26–27.

[53] ["the exegetical tradition from Origen to the Trecento was solid and unitary: the Canticle was a work of a dramatic genre, and more specifically 'comic.'"]

non potevano chiamarsi altro che 'cantiche,' e se le parti in cui la suddivideva si chiamavano 'cantiche,' l'opera intera non poteva essere altro che una 'comedìa'" (406).[54] Indeed, "[m]edieval exegetes of the Bible had assimilated the genre of 'comedy' to the biblical poetry of the Song of Songs as early as the ninth century, in light of what was considered to be the dramatic and dialogic mode of the Canticles, as well as their 'comic' theme and language, since love was traditionally considered a non-heroic or non-'tragic' subject" (Cachey Jr. 81). These are the theoretical bases of the Song of Songs' title and its allegory as Dante's contemporaries would have understood it. They are meant to be mobilized when interpreting Dante's own experience of his soul leaving the slavery of Egypt—"In exitu Isräel de Aegypto" (*Purg*. II, v. 46)—and finding harmony within God at the end of *Paradiso*.

To further substantiate this notion, at the risk of overstating the obvious, here is how Beatrice describes Dante's journey, in the same *canto* that describes the poem as a "poema sacro" (v. 1):

> La Chiesa militante alcun figliuolo
>
> non ha con più speranza, com' è scritto
>
> nel Sol che raggia tutto nostro stuolo:
>
> *però li è conceduto che d'Egitto*
>
> *vegna in Ierusalemme per vedere*,
>
> anzi che 'l militar li sia prescritto. (*Par*. XXV, vv. 52–57 emphasis added)

The story of the Israelites fleeing slavery in Egypt, their wandering in the wilderness, and the revelation on Mount Sinai, with the hope for a future life in the Promised Land, is nothing less

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[54] ["if the work that he was writing was a 'comedìa,' the parts in which he subdivided it into could not be called nothing other than 'cantiche,' and if the parts that subdivided it are called 'cantiche,' the entire work could not be called nothing other than 'comedìa.'"]

than a story of salvation, one that offers a transcendent pattern for individual salvation. As Mazzotta points out: "[t]he crucial and explicit structure which sustains the *Divine Comedy* is ... the story of Exodus," it "is the paradigm of the theological interpretation of history in that it typologically prefigures both the Incarnation, the hinge of salvation history, and the event of the New Jerusalem at the end of time" (*Dante, Poet of the Desert* 5). The Jewish *transitus* from Egypt to the Promised Land was used as a structural pattern in the Song of Songs' allegorical exegesis. The Exodus provided Dante with a wealth of coordinates—terminological, structural, theological, and allegorical—to construct his journey's narrative.

In the *Convivio*, Dante explains anagogy, one of the three spiritual senses that Scripture can have along with the allegorical and tropological interpretations, through an analysis of Psalm 113:

> Lo quarto senso si chiama anagogico, cioè sovrasenso; e questo è quando spiritualmente si spone una scrittura, la quale ancora [che sia vera] eziandio nel senso litterale, per le cose significate significa delle superne cose dell'etternal gloria: sì come vedere si può in quello *canto* del Profeta che dice che nell'uscita del popolo d'Israel d'Egitto Giudea è fatta santa e libera: che avegna essere vero secondo la lettera sia manifesto, non meno è vero quello che spiritualmente s'intende, cioè che nell'uscita dell'anima dal peccato, essa sia fatta santa e libera in sua potestate. (II, i, 6 emphasis added)[55]

The anagogic mode is part of a broader interpretative framework, called the four-fold system of biblical exegesis, also known as the 'allegory of the theologians.' It can be summarized as such:

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[55] ["The fourth sense is called anagogic, that is having a sense beyond [the letter]; and this is when one spiritually glosses a text, which still maintains its true literal sense, so that the things signified signify supernal things of the eternal glory; just like one can see in that *canto* of the Prophet that says that in the departure of the people of Israel from Egypt, Judea is made holy and free; which happens to be true according to the literal sense, but not less true than that which is spiritually grasped, that is, that from the departure of the soul from sin, it is made whole and free in its power."] For a position against the authenticity of the epistle, see Barański, "The Epistle to Can Grande" 583–589. This will be further addressed in Part I of the following chapter.

the literal historical sense stands alongside three spiritual ones, each associated with a temporal reality; the past for the allegorical sense, also known as typological, whereby events of the Old Testament are linked to the New; the present for the tropological, also known as moral, whereby interpretation is meant to guide our morality in the now; and, lastly, anagogy deals with future events but seen from the perspective of the end of time. In sum, Dante's choice of Psalm 113 is both causal and theological because it acts as the *clavis lectura* for his poem. It sets up a literal and allegorical analogy between Exodus and the Song of Songs and Dante-pilgrim's journey.[56]

Dante gave specific names to his poem and its partitions because he wanted his commentators to utilize the same hermeneutic approach they would use with Scripture. In the *incipit* to *Inferno* XX, Dante's use of standard terms in non-traditional ways serves to guide the reader's interpretation of the poem: "Dante is prodding his readers to interpret, to act as commentators of his poem—a duty which he openly exhorts them to undertake a few lines later on 'Se Dio ti lasci, lettor, prender frutto / di tua lezione, or pensa per te stesso'" ("The Poetics of Meter" 10) (*Inf.* XX, vv. 19–20). The texts that Dante wanted his readers and commentators to use as guides, as "new models and new points of reference," for his poem were "God's two all-embracing books, the universe and the Bible" (12). One can think of the so-called 'cosmic book' that Dante sees at the end of *Paradiso*:

> Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna,
>
> legato con amore in un volume,
>
> ciò che per l'universo si squaderna:
>
> sustanze e accidenti e lor costume

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[56] A much more detailed analysis is provided in the section: "Dante and Allegory" of Chapter 2.

quasi conflati insieme, per tal modo

che ciò ch'i' dico è un semplice lume. (*Par*. XXXIII, vv. 85–90)

Thus far, it has been shown how the poem's structure has managed to re-create a medieval conception of the universe and Scripture as God's creations. As Barański states, "[j]ust as every part of creation is a 'trace' of the creator, each *canto*, on account of its versatility, stands as a microcosm of the all-embracing 'comedìa'" (12). The choice of the name 'cantica' for the poem's macrostructure reveals how Scripture also acts as a point of reference for Dante's poem. Moreover, the exegetical tradition behind the Song of Songs sheds light on the rationale behind the poem's name, that is, "Comedìa." Furthermore, since Scripture was believed to contain an *ordo*, a similar structure to the universe, the network of intratextual references embedded within Dante's poem, be they circular or co-numerical, bolsters this claim.

**Dante: The Davidic Cantor**

Through an analysis of the names given to the *Commedia*'s various partitions, this chapter has shown how the poem aligns itself with an exegetical tradition that juxtaposes the Song of Songs with the story of Exodus. A series of symbolic layers sublimated the love and sexual longing in the former by representing love between God and humankind, that of the Church and Christ, or even a Mariological reading of the bride. Besides all these allegorical strata, these names relate to the act of singing itself. Serravalle combined the scriptural aspect of the term *cantica* with Boccaccio and Buti's association to the sweetness and melody of music. As a matter of fact, in the *De vulgari*, Dante explains how "si poesim recte consideremus, que nichil aliud est quam fictio rethorica musicaque poita" (II, iv, 2).[57] The Song of Songs is not the only poetic or, say, musical composition in the Bible with which Dante aligns himself.

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[57] ["if we understand poetry aright: that is, as nothing other than a verbal invention composed according to the rules of rhetoric and music" (Botterill trans.).]

The term *cantica* also relates to the Davidic Psalms, particularly the biblical *cantica novum*: "Cantate Domino *canticum novum*; / cantate Domino omnis terra" (95:1 emphasis added).[58] This reference suggests a parallel between David, the "sommo *cantor* del sommo duce" (*Par*. XXV, v. 72 emphasis added), and Dante. It also makes explicit how the *Commedia* itself "is a celebration of God and his creation—to use Dante's terminology, that it is a 'teodía'" (*Par*. XXV, v. 73) (Barański, "The Poetics of Meter" 22). The repetition of the predicate "sommo" also recalls the Song of Songs' title and its justification, interweaving David's figure with Solomon's.

It is not happenstance that Dante-pilgrim's first words in the poem are: "'Miserere di me" (*Inf.* I, v. 65), simultaneously a quote from the penitential Psalm 50: "*Miserere mei*, Deus" and Virgil's *Aeneid*: "alma, precor, *miserere,*" where Aeneas addresses the Sybil before their katabasis (VI, l. 117). The reoccurrence of "miserere" in the penultimate *canto* of the poem, where Dante names by antonomasia the figure of David as the "cantor che per doglia / del fallo disse 'Miserere mei'" (vv. 11–12), is meant to draw attention to the circular structure of the text, to the unfolding and progress of the pilgrim's penitential journey. Furthermore, its occurrence in the *Inferno* is preceded by a description of the "selva oscura" a "gran diserto" (v. 64), intimating the Exodus structure of the journey.

As for "tëodia" to describe David's Psalms, Dante's neologism compounds the words 'theòs' (God) and 'odé' (song), and is based on pre-existing terms such as 'comedìa' and 'tragedìa.' However, this composite form is also used for the noun 'salmodia' (*Purg*. XXXIII, v. 2). The occurrences of the terms "salmodia" and "tëodia" are intertextually linked to Psalms and the figure of David. The former is used in the initial tercet of *Purgatorio*'s last *canto*, where "Deus, venerunt gentes," that is, Psalm 78, is sung alternatively by the personifications of the three

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[58] ["O sing to the Lord a new song; / sing to the Lord, all the earth" (NRSV trans.).]

theological virtues and the four cardinal ones: "'Deus, venerunt gentes,' alternando / or tre or quattro dolce *salmodia*, / le donne incominciaro, e lagrimando;" (*Purg*. XXXIII, vv. 1–3). The latter precedes a word-for-word vernacularization of "Sperent in te qui noverunt nomen tuum" (Psalm 9:11): "'Sperino in te,' ne la sua *tëodia* / dice 'color che sanno il nome tuo'" (*Par*. XXV, vv. 73–74, 98). More importantly, "tëodia" is used in the same *canto* that opens with a prayer describing Dante's poem as a "poema sacro" (v. 1) and where Beatrice compares the pilgrim's journey to Exodus (vv. 55–56). In doing so, Dante is implicitly aligning his divine poem, his sacred song, with the prophetic character of David's poetics, Solomon's Song of Songs, and Exodus.

*Paradiso* XXV also happens to be the second of only two occurrences of the term "poema" in the entire *Commedia*. The first mention occurs two cantos earlier and similarly describes Dante's poem as sacred; "figurando il paradiso, / convien saltar lo *sacrato poema*, / come chi trova suo cammin riciso" (*Par*. XXIII, vv. 61–63 emphasis added). Furthermore, as Barolini puts it best, echoing Barański's observations regarding Dante's *modus operandi*, the term 'tëodia' "is easily transferred to Dante's own *poema sacro*: needing a new descriptive term for his new genre, Dante invents it with the rest of the *Comedy*'s basic poetic baggage, its structure, form, and meter." She goes on explaining that "[t]rue to his fundamental procedural principles of appropriation and revision, he first appropriates a standard rhetorical term, *comedìa*, and then—having redefined it from within as a *poema sacro*—replaces the original term with a new one: *tëodia*" ("Epic Resolution" 277). This is yet another perfect example of how Dante works from within traditional discourses on exegesis to produce novel modes of expression.

Dominican exegetes interpreted the Psalms within a penitential framework, thus overlapping with the story of Exodus, and, as such, David is an individual exemplum of the universal framework offered by Exodus (Maldina 13). The term 'diserto' is also used within an

Exodus framework in *Purgatorio* XI. The sinners expiating the sin of pride recite the 'Our Father' using these lines: "Dà oggi a noi la cotidiana manna, / sanza la qual per questo aspro *diserto* / a retro va chi più di gir s'affanna" (vv. 13–15 emphasis added). The use of "manna" clearly echoes the substance God provided the Israelites during their travels in the desert (Exodus 16:14). The desert is—by analogy—compared to the mountain's expiatory function and—by extension—one's status as *homo viator* in this world.[59]

In conclusion, Dante gestures at a pre-determined numerical organization of his poem (*Inf*. XX and *Purg*. XXXIII), and he adopts and adapts terms from classical texts and Scripture, such as "canzon" and "cantica," to guide readers in their interpretative approach to the poem. This dialectical process is evidenced in Dante's appropriation and subversion of Virgil's "umbrae" as well as the figure of David, since: "[t]he reference to David at the end of the *Paradiso* is intended to function as a recall to the meeting with Vergil, because the divine singer is seen as providing the model that enables Dante to decisively surpass his Roman precursor" (Barolini, "Epic Resolution" 278). Dante aligned his poem with the Song of Songs and its firmly established exegetical tradition that overlaps with Exodus by strategically assigning the name "cantica" to his partitions. As Barański notes: "in order to clarify the novelty of his writings, he needed an exegetical language and terminology which was intelligible to his audience" ("Dante Alighieri. Experimentation and (Self-)Exegesis" 563–64). Therefore, Dante's experimental poetics are anchored within a stable traditionalist literary culture and, in doing so, he "wanted to underline the continuing interpretability of his works" (564).

Said differently, "Dante left the keys to the *Commedia*'s interpretation in the poem itself, and that just about every canto makes a metaliterary contribution to the poem's self-exegesis"

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[59] See Singleton "In Exitu Israel de Aegypto" 173–174.

(Barański, "The 'Marvellous' and the 'Comic': Toward a Reading of Inferno XVI" 94, n. 25). Dante goes to great lengths to exercise control over his texts' polysemous character in all his literary works. He consistently indicates the exegetical framework required to approach his poems. In aligning himself with biblical texts and figures, Dante claimed a similar status for his own "sacred poem," identifying himself with Solomon and David's prophetic voices and the structure of his poem with that of the Exodus as well as the Song of Songs and the penitential Psalms. As Ascoli succinctly points out, "Dante then—and I am not the first (by a long shot), nor will I be the last to say this—builds a comparison between himself and various of the human authors of the Bible (in addition to Isaiah and John, in this episode alone Moses, David, Peter, and Paul can be added, and no doubt others as well)" (*Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* 377). Furthermore, these elements are embedded within the poem's structure to foreground its circular pattern and its relationship to God's "two books": the universe and Scripture. Having spent a considerable amount of time investigating the various ways in which the poem's structural components shape and determine its content, it is now time to focus more readily on the methodology of vertical reading.

**Part II: Systematic Review of the Literature**

**Terminology: Why 'Vertical'?**

Vertical readings have become common parlance and garnered increased interest in recent years thanks mainly to a collaborative initiative between Cambridge, Leeds, and Notre Dame, a public lecture series called Cambridge. Vertical Readings in Dante's 'Comedy.'[1] From 2012 to 2016, the organizers invited scholars to experiment reading the same-numbered *canto* of each *cantica* of the *Commedia*.[2] The co-organizers justify the term 'vertical' by pointing out its use in three different sources: Shoaf (1983), Kirkham (1989), and Kleinhenz (2003). Nevertheless, they are also aware that "'parallel' readings might have worked just as well" ("Introduction" 5). Indeed, vertical readings—understood as an intratextual analysis of cantos sharing the same number—have been done in the past with other descriptors, ranging from 'correspondences' to 'symmetry' and 'retrospective,' and every synonym in-between. This research considers a vertical reading any analysis of the *Commedia* that puts into relation two same-numbered cantos of the three canticles for interpretative gains. In the most reductive way possible, keeping in mind the *Commedia*'s

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[1] The resulting three volumes of this initiative are freely available online, as well as the video recordings of every lecture: https://sms.cam.ac.uk/collection/1366579.

[2] The ability to bring together such an impressive list of international scholars is a testament to the work of the co-organizers, George Corbett and Heather Webb, and also to the intriguing nature of the methodology. The scholars invited were, in alphabetical order and with their affiliation at the time: Zigmunt G. Barański (University of Cambridge and University of Notre Dame), Piero Boitani (La Sapienza, Rome; and University of Italian Switzerland), Theodore J. Cachey Jr. (University of Notre Dame), K. P. Clarke (University of York), George Corbett (University of Cambridge), George Ferzoco (University of Bristol), David F. Ford OBE (University of Cambridge), Simon A. Gilson (Warwick University), Manuele Gragnolati (University of Paris-Sorbonne), Peter S. Hawkins (Yale University), Claire E. Honess (University of Leeds), Tristan Kay (University of Bristol), Catherine M. Keen (University College London), Robin Kirkpatrick (University of Cambridge), Giuseppe Ledda (University of Bologna), Anne C. Leone (University of Notre Dame), Elena Lombardi (Oxford University), Corinna Salvadori Lonergan (Trinity College, Dublin), Simone Marchesi (Princeton University), John Marenbon (University of Cambridge), Ronald L. Martinez (Brown University), Christian Moevs (University of Notre Dame), Vittorio Montemaggi (University of Notre Dame), Paola Nasti (University of Reading), Catherine Pickstock (University of Cambridge), Ambrogio Camozzi Pistoja (University of Cambridge), Claudia Rossignoli (University of St Andrews), Brenda Deen Schildgen (UC Davis), Janet Martin Soskice (University of Cambridge), John Took (University College, London), Matthew Treherne (Univeristy of Leeds), Heather Webb (University of Cambridge), Rowan Williams (University of Cambridge), and Robert Wilson (University of St Andrews).

poster at the beginning of this chapter (see fig. 1), verticality is understood as a straight line with no slope, or else it would be diagonal.

The earliest instance of the term 'vertical' to describe co-numerical correspondences in the *Commedia* that this research has found, either in Italian or English, appears to be from a study of the Thirteens by Viola (1969) whose goal was "di richiamare l'attenzione, appunto, su un'altra di queste strutture *verticali* che attraversano l'intero edificio della *Commedia*, legando fra loro strettamente i tredicesimi canti delle tre Cantiche intorno ad un tema che appare subito essenziale nell'ambito del problema politico più generale: quello degli 'operantes' della vita politica" (230–31 emphasis added).[3] As for the three sources identified by Corbett and Webb, they validate and use the vertical methodology in distinctive yet overlapping ways. Consequently, a glance at each of them provides us with a good sampling of the diverse ways in which the method is used and justified.

Shoaf is the first to use the English term 'vertical' in his analysis of the Thirties (1983). He seeks to illustrate Dante's "slow and painful emergence from narcissism to a just self-love" and uses the vertical methodology in order to bolster his claims by showing how Dante "transcribes that memory in Canto 30 of each canticle" (21). The theoretical bases he mentions for the vertical method are the following: the vertical patterning of the Twenty-sixes as a well-known precedent, along with thematic and word-based inter-canticle—or, say, intratextual—echoes, and some numerological considerations. Shoaf mentions how: "[j]ust as we must read the three cantos 26 *vertically* to map Dante's exploration of the historicity and temporality of language, so we must read the three cantos 30 *vertically* to map his strategy for the recovery of speculation and reflection

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[3] ["to bring attention to, precisely, on another of these vertical structures that cut across the entire edifice of the *Commedia*, tying closely together the thirteenth cantos of the three canticles around the theme that quickly appears essential to the general issue of politics: that of the 'operantes' of political life."]

in art and in life. Common to each Canto 30 in all three canticles is the problematics of imagery"
(22 emphasis added). Shoaf uses the vertical reading methodology to substantiate his claims and
does not limit himself to the Thirties, often connecting other cantos along numerological lines to
consolidate and corroborate his argument. Shoaf also cautions his reader about the limitations of
this method, stating that "[a]lthough a vertical reading of the three Cantos 30 is necessary," the
narrative and autobiographical elements of the poem require "a reading of each Canto 30 in its
narrative situation" (39). One must never lose sight of the narrative's diachronic nature when
taking a synchronic view of the text.

The second source mentioned by Corbett and Webb is Kirkham's vertical reading of the
Elevens (1989). After delving into the tradition of numerology, Kirkham's reading compellingly
argues that the number eleven symbolizes transgression and that "[a]ll three cantos come together,
across the *macrostructure* of the poem, to make a unitary meditation on Tresspass" (40 emphasis
added). Unless shown otherwise, nowhere does Kirkham use the term 'vertical' to describe her
analysis, using instead terms such as 'symmetry,' 'pattern,' 'parallel,' and 'correspondence.' For
example: "*Inferno* XI *parallels Purgatorio* XI, the core of a three-canto sequence on penance for
Pride, which is the sin of transgression by antonomasia. Finally, to triple the *pattern*, *Paradiso* XI
intimates a triumph of the opposite virtue, Humility, epitomized by the Franciscan Order's
founder" (28 emphases added). Furthermore, Kirkham goes beyond the single co-numerical
vertical pattern by centering the Elevens within a vertical triptych flanked on each side by the Tens
and the Twelves (43–45). This multi-*canto* vertical pattern—or say 'multi-directional,' since it
combines horizontal and vertical connections—is utilized by many other scholars, either in
diptychs or triptychs, and speaks of the flexible nature of the methodology.

Consequently, both the name and method, due to its intratextual nature, are pretty flexible. The co-numerical component that is intrinsic to the methodology is but a starting point from which the reader is meant to go beyond the boundaries of the *canto* and *cantica*. Therefore, Shoaf's previous observation can be inverted by stating that one must never lose sight of the narrative's synchronic nature when taking a diachronic view of the text.

The last source mentioned by Corbett and Webb is Kleinhenz's essay "Dante and the Visual Arts" (2003). At the end of his article, Kleinhenz uses the term 'vertical' to highlight possible influences from the visual arts on the structure of Dante's *Commedia*. He points out the intratextual nature of the poem: "[w]e all are well aware of the symmetries that inform the poem; the verbal echoes, the glosses of different passages, one upon the other; the verbal descriptions— and hence the resulting visual similarities—that connect spatially disparate souls" (282). This symmetrical system of correspondences is then likened to the exegetical practice of narrative typology put into practice, for example, by Dante's contemporary Giotto in the Arena Chapel.

Dante himself, when representing visual arts through ekphrases, similarly uses spatial semiotics. One can think of the "visibile parlare" (*Purg*. X, v. 95) on the terrace of pride, where examples of the sin of pride are programmatically placed in contraposition to examples of the virtue of humility.[4] If semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation, spatial semiotics emphasizes how the spatial relation between signs and symbols affects or determines their use or interpretation. This research argues that spatial semiotics are at the heart of the interpretative methodology of vertical reading and other cultural artifacts of the Middle Ages, whether textual or visual.

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[4] This particular ekphrasis will be duly investigated in Part II of Chapter 2, in "The VOM Acrostic."

Kleinhenz then mentions how "there also exists in the *Comedy* a *parallel* structure, by which the poem may be read not only horizontally and linearly (that is, each canticle within itself), but also *vertically* (each canticle holding up foil-mirrors to the others)" (282 emphasis added). Like Shoaf, he points to precedents, what he considers to be well-known instances of vertical patterning in the *Commedia*; however, he does not mention the Twenty-sixes but the Sixes and the Fifteens instead. Moreover, regarding the Fifteens, this reading involves only two canticles: *Inferno* and *Paradiso*, further substantiating the flexible parameters of what is defined as a vertical reading. Pertile, in his analysis of the symmetrical structure of the *Commedia*, also defines as 'vertical' readings those involving only two canticles, such as the Fifteens (*Inferno* and *Paradiso*), the Nineteens (*Inferno* and *Purgatorio*), and the Twenty-sevens (*Inferno* and *Paradiso*) ("Narrative Structure" 10).

Kleinhenz then goes on to suggest that "the idea for this kind of parallel structure came to Dante forcefully from his looking, since the time he was a small boy, and ever with love, upon the mosaics in the cupola of the Florentine Baptistery" (282). The intricate and spectacular program of the mosaics represents, among many other things, four different biblical narratives, two from both the Old and the New Testaments, set in circular narrative bands. The entirety of the program represents all of Christian history, from Genesis to the Final Judgment, in an anagogic perspective. The mosaics' layout allows onlookers to read the scenes sequentially, horizontally like a comic strip, one square after another, in triptychs separated by colorful and diverse architectural columns.

The Baptistery mosaics also beckon to be read vertically, to be interpreted allegorically. Attentive observers can discover typological relations in the gaps between the images when meditating on the correspondences linking the four stories represented. These stories are: 1) from Genesis; 2) from Joseph's life; 3) from the life of Mary and Christ; and, lastly, 4) from St. John

the Baptist, the patron saint of Florence and namesake of the Baptistery. However, Kleinhenz cautions the viewer/reader, stating that "just as perfect correspondence between narrative bands does not obtain, so there is no mechanical scheme precisely linking all the hundred cantos of the *Comedy*" (283).[5] The mosaics' program puts into practice exegetical theories that were already well-known to Dante and his contemporaries, as well as mnemotechnics. Chapter 3 explores this insight further.

Shoaf's mention of the Twenty-sixes as a well-known precedent of verticality in the *Commedia* is further substantiated by two other notable readings that utilize the term 'vertical' before the Cambridge project: Brownlee's *Lectura dantis* of *Paradiso* XXVI (1995) and Cestaro's chapter "The Body of Gaeta: Burying and Unburying the Wet Nurse in *Inferno*," in his *Dante and the Grammar of the Nursing Body* (2003). Towards the end of Brownlee's *lectura*, "[b]y way of conclusion," he situates "the thematics of desire and language treated in *Par*. 26 within two different but complementary structural patterns in the *Divine Comedy*." One of which "is '*vertical*' and involves a set of striking parallels among the three cantos numbered 26, one in each *cantica*" (398 emphasis added). His vertical reading focuses on the recurrent use of specific words along with the themes of transgression and language, such as linguistic multiplicity and duplicity, through the figures of Adam in *Paradiso*, Guido Guinizelli and Arnaut Daniel in *Purgatorio*, and Ulysses in *Inferno*. Brownlee also provides an essential fount of secondary sources that have also highlighted correspondences between the Twenty-sixes: Zenatti (1913), Figurelli (1974), Mazzotta (1979) 192–226, and Hawkins (1980).

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[5] Since the Baptistery will be analyzed in Chapter 3, for now it is sufficient to remark that Kleinhenz's linking of the Baptistery to the vertical structure of the *Commedia* is very pertinent indeed, pertinent enough to grace the cover of the second volume of the Cambridge vertical reading project, as well as the first pages of its introduction.

Cestaro also defines *Inferno* XXVI as "the classical canto that opens a *vertical* series on human language and selfhood" (7 emphasis added). He amplifies his reading into a diptych comprising the Twenty-sevens as well: "[t]he *vertical* series of cantos 26 and 27 (...) reach across the entire poem to give questions of semiosis—language, poetics, speech, and selfhood—prominence of place" (78 emphasis added). Also, Cestaro mentions how "[s]everal critics have noted that these cantos form a vertical series stronger than most" (80), and cites Brownlee (1995), Mazzotta (1979) 192–226, and Hawkins (1980), but also two other essays: Fido (1986) and Tambling (1988).

The one scholar who seems to have given Cestaro the foundation to establish his diptych reading of the Twenty-sixes and Twenty-sevens is Fido (1986). Although never using the term vertical, opting instead for words like 'symmetry,' 'correspondence,' 'parallel,' 'link,' and 'analogue,' Fido's stylistic analysis is essentially intratextual. He delineates two guiding criteria for his examination; first, the "symmetry of position and of self-quotation, or, rather, the repetition at some distance, in various but presumably intentional ways, of the same expressions, stylemes, and images;" and second, "stylistic recurrence, or correspondences in different cantos of certain expressions (...) in a kind of stylistic or *rhetorical figuralism*" (250 emphasis added). This rhetorical figuralism is akin to Kleinhenz's observations concerning narrative typology in medieval biblical exegesis and visual representations, that is, the presence of spatial semiotics.[6]

Fido is willing to concede that "[s]ome of these coincidences may be fortuitous" or "unintentional signs of a 'return of the repressed'"; but, regardless, he does believe that "other parallels can be intentional markers of a path which the author clearly wanted his readers to take"

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[6] For a more in-depth analysis of typology, or *figura*, see Auerbach's succinct definition in his essay dedicated entirely to the concept: "[f]igural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies the second, while the second encompasses the first" ("'Figura'" 53).

(258). Furthermore, Fido justifies his methodology of "symmetry of position" by pointing to precedents such as the Sixes, but also to readings that involve only two canticles: "the meetings with Brunetto and Cacciaguida in Canto XV of the first and third canticle, respectively, or again, the contrast between the self-serving rhetoric of Francesca and the delicate *sermo brevis* of Pia in Canto V of the first two canticles" (250). Fido—like Kleinhenz and Pertile—mentions precedents that involve only two canticles.

This survey demonstrates that vertical readings are indeed quite flexible. They have been executed in the past, albeit under different names. They do not need to involve all three canticles: Fido (1986), Kleinhenz (2003), Pertile (2018). They can also go beyond the narrow confines of a particular set of co-numerical cantos, often involve horizontal groupings into their vertical analysis: Fido (1986), Kirkham (1989), and Cestaro (2003). Another element that Fido highlights, like Kleinhenz's caveat, is that although these symmetrical correspondences are part of Dante's attempt "to convince his readers of the prophetic nature of his poetry," there seems to be an authorial reticence as well due to "the very irregularity and elusiveness with which those same analogies, parallelisms, and self-quotations offer themselves to our reading" (261). When analyzed closely, these elements do not necessarily fit into a rigid or systematic system. What matters is that to convince his public of the truth of his journey, Dante "multiplies thematic, structural, and verbal symmetries in a web that we are just learning to notice" (262). The symmetries embedded into the *Commedia* serve to create the impression of a perfect system of co-numerical correspondences. Dante wanted readers to find their own intra-textual parallels, to interpret his poem as they would with Scripture. Nevertheless, to conceive of the numerical patterning as a perfect system, as though Dante pre-programmed all the cantos to align perfectly, is to fall under Dante's poetic spell. It is not a perfect system but one that seeks to create the illusion that it is.

**Vertical Precedents**

The collaborative Cambridge "experiment" principally sought to see what would happen if the entire *Commedia* was read systematically in a vertical manner, claiming that "this approach had never been pursued in a systematic fashion across the poem" and that "[n]o one has ever read the whole poem 'vertically,' and our cycle is just a first attempt" (Corbett and Webb, "Introduction" vol. 1, 6). This, however, does not mean that no scholar had attempted a somewhat similar endeavor in the past. The co-organizers make it a point to dedicate their initial volume to the memory of the late Robert M. Durling who, along with Ronald L. Martinez, "pioneered the 'vertical reading' approach to the poem in the 'Inter cantica' sections of their translation of *Purgatorio*" (*Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy* ii).

The 'Inter cantica' sections that accompany Durling and Martinez's translation of *Purgatorio* (2003) explore the network of intratextual correspondences between this canticle and *Inferno*. Both scholars define it as "[o]ne of the most striking aspects of the *Comedy*," that is to say, "its system of recall of the earlier cantiche, often in the form of parallels between similarly numbered cantos, sometimes even between similarly numbered lines" (33). Therefore, at the end of each *canto*, Durling and Martinez point out parallels between *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, often but not always numerically associating corresponding cantos that share similar or contrasting themes and concerns. Although Durling and Martinez never use the term 'vertical' to describe their 'Inter cantica' notes, Alfie— in a 2005 review of their translation—mentions how "[o]ften, the 'Inter Cantica' glosses (...) focus on *vertical readings* (i.e., parallels between similarly numbered cantos of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*)" (123 emphasis added). This is particularly interesting because, in

Alfie's perspective, vertical readings do not need to have all three canticles, a parameter that this research shares along with Pertile (2018), Kleinhenz (2003), and Fido (1986).

In their subsequent translation of *Paradiso* (2011), Durling and Martinez noted how "[s]uch references, now involving two [other] cantiche, become particularly dense and frequent in the *Paradiso*," and have therefore chosen to relinquish their explorative model ("Preface" v). However, they do tentatively explore the possibility that this system of intratextual correspondences may be the result of "Dante's mode of composition" that "involved holding the entire poem present to his awareness, with or without (more probably, with) detailed outlines" (v).[7] It may very well be that the co-numerary and symmetrical patterns that are increasingly being noticed in Dante studies indicate a scaffolding system that Dante would have had to use to construct his poetic edifice. One can imagine a grid system of three rows of thirty-three squares juxtaposed one above the other as an organizational map, facilitating the narrative's construction (see fig. 1).

Another previous attempt at similarly reading the *Commedia* can be found in "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*," a very ambitious paper by Paul Shaw (1987). Beginning as a parallel reading of the Twenty-fives, Shaw goes on to extrapolate that "[i]f one reads the whole of the *Divina Commedia* one discovers a cross-current of links and symbols between the corresponding cantos of each canticle" (67–68). Since "[r]eading the *Divina Commedia* sideways, so to speak, reveals patterns which seem too extensive to be accidental," Shaw then boldly goes on to provide a *canto*-by-*canto* overview that lists some of the most significant elements of each *canto*; except *Inf*. XXXIV, because this is "where Satan lurks in unique foulness" (73). Shaw's

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[7] This idea of a provisional yet structured program, used as a compositional tool, shares many theoretical affinities with the arts of rhetoric and memory that will be discussed in Chapter 3.

paper is more a list than an in-depth analysis of vertical readings, sketching an entire parallel structure to the poem but relegating it to an appendix.

A few years later, Richard Kay was to suggest his parallel structure for the *Commedia* in an essay titled "Parallel Cantos in Dante's *Commedia*" (1992). Kay's article's central thesis is that "if the three parts of Dante's *Commedia* are laid side-by-side, striking parallels can be observed between corresponding cantos" (109). Kay justifies his approach "by a well-known feature of the poem, namely that each of the three cantiche ends with the same word: "stelle (stars)," asking "[c]ould it be the poet's hint to the reader that similar, though less obvious, parallels exist throughout the poem?" (109). Interestingly enough, there is a twist to it: the iteration of the word "stelle" serves as a justification not merely for a deliberate design of a "parallel structure" but also for reading the *Commedia* in a 2:1:1 pattern, excluding the first *canto* of *Inferno* based on its role as a prologue to the entire poem.[8]

The first *canto*'s status as a prologue to the entire poem is a commonplace argument when highlighting the *Commedia*'s symmetrical nature. For example, Scartazzini and Vandelli's commentary to *Purgatorio* XXXIII, vv. 139–141 (1929)—where Dante claims a pre-determined structure to his poem—mentions how "nel Poema, D[ante] osserva con cura le leggi della simmetria e delle proporzioni. Ogni cantica ha 33 canti a cui è premesso quello che, canto I dell'*Inf.*, è più veramente proemio generale a tutta l'opera" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).[9] This observation dates as far back as the Cinquecento, when Bernardino Daniello's commentary (1547–1568) to the same lines states how "tenendo il primo canto in luogo di proemio, non particolare di quella sola Cantica, ma universale di tutta la Comedìa. Cosi volle egli ordire questa seconda del

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[8] The use of 2:1:1 signifies the *canto* number of each *cantica* sequentially, that is to say, *Inferno* II, *Purgatorio* I, and *Paradiso* I.

[9] ["in the poem, Dante carefully observes the rules of symmetry and of proportion. Every canticle has 33 cantos, to which is premised that canto I of Inferno is more of a proem to the entire work."]

medesimo numero, come anche farà la terza & ultima" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).[10] Therefore, if the first *canto* of the *Inferno* is a proem, thus giving each *cantica* exactly 33 cantos, and that the three *cantiche* end with the same word, hinting at a vertical—or say, parallel—alignment, should we not be reading in a 34:33:33, 33:32:32, 32:31:31, ..., 2:1:1 pattern? Kay suggests ten examples of parallelism, grouped under various typologies, these are: 31:30:30, 22:21:21, 17:16:16, 23:22:22, 7:6:6, 30:29:29, 5:4:4, 16:15:15, 13:12:12, and 26:25:25. As such, Kay's "parallel" reading slightly deviates from the co-numerical standard set by the Cambridge project and other precedents. Kay's parallel structure appears theoretically sound, and Corbett and Webb are aware of this fact; they point out how "Kay's method yields interesting results," and how "it also raises a broader question about whether we should be lining up single cantos at all, instead of larger groups of cantos" ("Introduction" 3). However, his 2:1:1 system contradicts the *locus classicus* of vertical readings, that is, the Sixes. Nevertheless, by maintaining the premise that vertical readings are co-numerical correspondence involving at least two *cantiche*, Kay's system passes the litmus test.

**The Political '666'**

The *locus classicus* used by scholars to justify a vertical reading is the precedent of the Sixes: the co-numerary alignment of the sixth *canto* of each *cantica* of the *Commedia*. The vertical alignment of the Sixes has been used to justify vertical readings and other similar arguments of verticality and symmetry by Antonelli (2011), Barański (2014), Corbett (2013), Corbett and Webb (2013), Durling (2010), Fido (1986), Kleinhenz (2003), Massi (1996), Schildgen (2017), Shaw (1987), and Viola (1969). Several scholars have also underlined it during the Cambridge vertical reading

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[10] ["keeping the first canto as a proem, not solely in relation to that canticle, but universally to the entirety of the *Commedia*. In this way he wanted to order the second [canticle] with the same number, just as the third and last."]

project: Barański (2015), Cachey Jr. (2017), Corbett and Webb (2015), Gilson (2015), Marchesi (2016), and Wilson (2016).

Dubbed the "political 666" by Raffa (245–46), the Sixes are considered by many as the most apparent instance of a symmetrical-numerical patterning within Dante's poem. In *Inferno* VI, the theme of local politics is touched upon through the figure of the Florentine glutton Ciacco who delivers a prophecy regarding Florence (vv. 34–93). In *Purgatorio* VI, as Virgil and Sordello, fellow Mantuan countrymen, embrace in regional patriotism (vv. 58–75), Dante-poet goes on a lengthy rant, taking up one-half of the *canto*, lamenting the regional political situation of the Italian peninsula (vv. 76–151). Lastly, in *Paradiso* VI, the perspective expands once more as Justinian narrates the history and function of the Roman Empire (vv. 28–96) and then follows with a sharp rebuke of both the Guelphs and Ghibellines (vv. 97–111), thus taking on an imperial and global aspect. Raffa also argues that "[...] these three political cantos, taken together, are marked with the "number of the beast"—the "666" of Apocalypse (Revelation) 13:18" (246).[11] Unfortunately, Raffa does not investigate further this promising intertextual and numerological connection with the prophetic Book of Revelation.

Nevertheless, this scholarly consensus of the Sixes has two significant drawbacks. First, it is incongruent with the second most-often used evidence, that is, the "stelle" premise at the basis of Kay's 2:1:1 numerical model. Secondly, every mention of it points to its commonplace status, but no one cites its first indication or the previous scholars who have mentioned it. For example, Chiavacci Leonardi observes in her note to *Paradiso* VI (1991–1997): "[c]*ome è sempre stato osservato*, ai sesti canti Dante affida in tutte e tre le cantiche un tema politico, svolto in chiave

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[11] "Hic sapientia est. Qui habet intellectum, computet numerum bestiae. Numerus enim hominis est: et numerus ejus sexcenti sexaginta sex" ["This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six" (NRSV trans.).]

profetica, che li connota in modo tutto particolare. E *si è anche notata* una progressione, in crescendo, dell'estensione del tema, che sempre porta al suo doloroso centro la discordia che mette gli uomini gli uni contro gli altri" (*Dartmouth Dante Project* emphasis added).[12] Despite mentioning the "chiave profetica," Chiavacci Leonardi—unlike Raffa—does not associate it with the numerology found in Revelation.

This matter-of-factness also appears in Bosco and Reggio's commentary of *Paradiso* VI, vv. 97–111 (1979): "[i] *commentatori unanimi* sottolineano una simmetria strutturale 'in crescendo' tra i sesti canti delle tre cantiche: Firenze, Italia, Impero" (*Dartmouth Dante Project* emphasis added).[13] Who are these commentators? Are they really unanimous? The same occurs in Mattalia's commentary of *Purgatorio* VI (1960), where he mentions the symbolic value of the number six but does not relate it to the Book of Revelation (Raffa) nor prophecy (Chiavacci Leonardi). Instead, Mattalia prefers to associate it with order and symmetry (Bosco and Reggio) and as homologous to the role of imperial authority: "*È notazione ormai badiale* che i sesti canti delle tre cantiche sono fra loro in puntuale rispondenza tematica, e cioè d'argomento politico. Il punto di raccordo è il valore simbolico del numero 6, significativo d'idee d'ordine e di assetto: il compito, appunto, dell'autorità imperiale" (*Dartmouth Dante Project* emphasis added).[14]

If one considers the fact that there are almost seven centuries of Dante criticism, one would expect to see a mention of such symmetrical patterning of a political theme within the early commentary tradition, but the oldest mention this research has been able to find was in Scartazzini

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[12] ["as it has always been observed, to the sixth canto Dante assigns in all three canticles a political theme, developed in a prophetic key, that gives them a particular connotation. Also, it has also been noted that a progression, in crescendo, of the extension of the theme, that always carries in its dolorous center the discord that pits men against one another."]

[13] ["The commentators unanimously underline a structural symmetry 'in crescendo' between the sixth cantos of each canticle: Florence, Italy, Empire."]

[14] ["It is a common-place observation that the sixth canto of all three canticles are between themselves in a precise thematic correspondence, and that is of a political theme. The connecting link is the symbolic value of the number 6, signifying ideas of order and arrangement: the duty, precisely, of imperial authority."]

and Vandelli's commentary to *Paradiso* VI (1929): "Nel c. VI dell'*Inf.* le vicende di Firenze; nel VI del *Purg.* le condizioni d'Italia; nel VI del *Par.* la Storia dell'Impero romano. Firenze, l'Italia, l'Impero!" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).[15] This research has thoroughly investigated the Dartmouth Dante Project commentary database in English, Italian, and Latin, controlling each canticle. It has found no mention of the Sixes' symmetry in the early commentaries.

In a somewhat counter-intuitive way, three notable occurrences link only two out of the three Sixes and, as such, they cannot be considered "vertical readings" nor a "666" simply because they appear to be oblivious to the seemingly obvious patterning of the Sixes. Nevertheless, one can assign the moniker "proto" to them, a term that will prove helpful in the following chapter. First, there is Alessandro Vellutello's linking of *Purg.* VI with *Par*. VI, as well as *Monarchia*, in his 1544 commentary to *Paradiso* VI, vv. 28–33: "Et in somma vuol inferire (...) che ne le cose temporali si debba sempre obedir a l'Imperio, havendolo comandato Dio. *Come a tal proposito vedemmo nel sesto del Purg.* in quell'altra sua digressione Ahi serva Italia e cet., ove dice, *Ahi gente, che dovresti esser devota E lassar seder Cesar in la sella Se ben intendi ciò che Dio ti nota*" (*Dartmouth Dante Project* emphasis added).[16] However, there is no mention of *Inferno* VI; therefore, it cannot be categorized as a "666" but still passes the definitional test of a vertical reading, that is, two co-numerical cantos: *Purg*. and *Par*. VI.

Based on this definition of a proto-vertical reading, the oldest co-numerary reading of two out of the three Sixes is the commentary to lines 40–42 of *Paradiso* VI in l'*Ottimo* (1333), where the commentator writes in relation to Lucretia's death: "Della qual morte immantanente seguitò la cacciata di Tarquino e de' suoi, con perpetua danazion del nome reale, come è scritto di sopra,

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[15] ["In the sixth canto of *Inferno*, the vicissitudes of Florence; in the sixth canto of *Purgatorio*, the conditions of Italy; in the sixth of *Paradiso*, the history of the Roman Empire. Florence, Italy, Empire!"]

[16] ["And, in sum, he wants to infer (...) that in temporal matters one needs to always obey the Empire, it having been ordered by God. Just as, on the matter, we see in the sixth of Purg., in that other digression of his."]

capitolo VI *Inferni*" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).[17] The third occurrence is in Pietro Alighieri's

(1340–42) commentary to *Paradiso* VI (vv. 52–54), where he relates Florence's Roman past to

cantos VI and XV of *Inferno*: "ut dixi supra in Inferno, Capitulo XV. et in Capitulo VI" (*Dartmouth*

*Dante Project*).[18] We essentially have three instances of intratextual glosses, where the

commentator sends the reader to another section of the text, which just so happens to be co-

numerical. There is no further development nor mention of symmetry. Faced with this critical

omission, the following chapter of this research will further investigate the commentary tradition

in an attempt to identify whether or not Dante's contemporaries, or the subsequent generation,

were tuned to the vertical symmetries contained within the *Commedia*.

Federzoni (1904) holds the distinction of having written the oldest vertical reading that this

research has been able to find, that of the Thirteens, and also provides a curious alternative vertical

reading of the Sixes. Federzoni's *lectura* is a nuptial gift in honor of the wedding of Signorina

Gabriella Pellagri and Dottore Enrico Garagnani, celebrated in Bologna on 21 April 1904. The

print version of the *lectura* includes a dedication and the reprinting of a letter addressed to "Cara

Gabriella" wherein Federzoni explains how

> [n]ozze così gentili, e così care al mio animo, volevano da me lietezza di rime o almeno
>
> alcuna cosetta graziosa in parlar sciolto. Invece! Il pochissimo tempo lasciatomi dalle mie
>
> eccessive occupazioni mi obbliga ad offrirti quel che ho pronto per essere pubblicato, ed è
>
> pur troppo cosa grave e di erudizione. Mi sono sentito però confortato a presentarti questa

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[17] ["From whose death immediately followed the ousting of Tarquinus and his followers, with a perpetual damnation of his regal name, as witten previously in, chapter six of *Inferno*."]
[18] ["where it was said above in Inferno, in chapter fifteen, and in chapter six."]

non vivace prosa dal pensiero del grande amore che tu hai sempre avuto allo studio serio

delle lettere nostre e massimamente a quello della *Divina Commedia*. (3–4)[19]

In addition to this delightful paratextual element, Federzoni's *lectura* was initially given at a

conference fifteen to sixteen months before the wedding (approximately January 1903 or

December 1902). Once again, it is thanks to an invitation by another woman, "Donna Natalia

Francesetti," that Federzoni was able to give his *lectura* of *Purgatorio* XIII at the 'sala Dante' in

Rome (5). The involvement of Signorina Pellagri and Donna Francesetti in particular, and women

in general, in the promotion of Dante scholarship in Italy, at the turn of the twentieth century, is a

line of inquiry that merits further investigation; however, it is beyond the scope of the present

research.

Not wanting to burden the reader with trite observations and well-established facts,

Federzoni decided to only publish the last part of his presentation, "anzi particella, che credo nuova

per gli studiosi del poema sacro" (6).[20] Moreover, so novel are his observations that Federzoni also

feels the need to preemptively defend them, stating:

[s]e per le rispondenze da me avvertite sarò accusato (siccome già m'è avvenuto per altri

miei scritti danteschi) di troppa sottilità, mi conforterò pensando che non è molto onorevole

il veder solo quello che veggon tutti, e che Dante stesso era assai contento di figgere lo

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[19] ["a wedding so lovely, and so dear to my soul, required from me merry rhymes or at least a gracious something with which to harmoniously speak. Instead, the small amount of time left to me from my excessive occupations oblige me to offer you that which is ready for publication and, unfortunately, it is something rather serious and erudite. However, I found myself comforted in presenting this not too lively prose by the thought of the great love that you have always had for the study of our literature and mostly that of the *Divine Comedy*."]

[20] ["or say, small little part, that I believe to be novel for students of the sacred poem."]

sguardo dell'intelletto sottilissimamente in tutto ciò che studiava e amava, per vedervi

rispondenze di cose che nel fatto non ne avevano nessuna. (6)[21]

This is particularly striking to consider. Is this merely a modesty topos? If not, then it would mean

that within the Italian tradition of Dante studies, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the

pointing out of "rispondenze," that is, co-numerical correspondences, was a novel methodological

approach to the poem, or at least displaying what Federzoni calls "troppa sottilità." However, after

demonstrating the thematic correspondence of envy between the thirteenth *canto* of *Inferno* and

*Purgatorio*, Federzoni remarks: "[n]é si deve pensare che un riscontro di numeri come questo sia

casuale nel poema di Dante; ché ne troviamo non pochi, e nel poema stesso e nella *Vita nuova*, dei

quali per altro sarebbe qui troppo lungo, e fuor di luogo, anche un breve cenno" (10).[22] Specific

questions arise: are these correspondences common knowledge to Federzoni himself or Dante

scholars as well? Based on his initial apology, one would be inclined to think that this is a literary

predisposition on the part of Federzoni alone.

After mentioning other correspondences in the Thirteens, Federzoni points out how the

theme of envy also traverses the sixth *canto* of each canticle. In the sixth *canto* of *Purgatorio*,

Pierre de la Broce is a figure slandered by an envious court (vv. 19–24), whereas, in *Paradiso* VI,

a similar figure is designated with Romeo di Villanova (vv. 127–142) (11). He goes on to add, in

a footnote, that even *Inferno* VI gestures to the same theme when Ciacco describes Florence as

"piena d'invidia" (vv. 49–50) (11). This would mean that the oldest reference of a thematic vertical

correspondence of all three of the Sixes does so through the recurrence of the theme of envy rather

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[21] ["if, for the correspondences highlighted by me, I am accused (because it has already occurred in my other Dantean texts) of being too subtle, I shall find comfort thinking that there is little honor in seeing only what everyone sees, and that Dante himself was very happy to fix the eye of his intellect most subtly in everything that he studied and loved, in contrast to seeing correspondences of things that in fact do not have any."]

[22] ["nor should we think that numerical correspondences of the sort are casual in Dante's poem, since we find quite a few, in the poem itself and in the *Vita nuova*, of which it would be too long, and out of place, to even briefly discuss."]

than politics. This seems to contradict the commonplace status of the Sixes stipulated by the scholars mentioned above.

Furthermore, notwithstanding the purported consensus regarding the presence of a correspondence of at least one set of co-numerical cantos, there is no agreement as to whether the entire text can or should be read in this manner. As Corbett and Webb (2015) aptly pointed out: "[w]hile there is significant scholarly consensus that Dante must have intended the Sixes to be read in parallel, it does not, of course, follow that he had such a plan for every canto set" ("Introduction" vol. 1 7). Most of the scholars in the Cambridge series "concurred in emphasizing that although some vertical 'columns' may be weight-bearing, not all verticals, of necessity can bear the same structural burden" ("Introduction" vol. 2 4). This stance has been echoed previously by Kleinhenz (2003) with the typological relations in the cupola mosaics and the *Commedia*'s vertical structure, along with Fido (1986) in terms of what he perceives to be an authorial reticence. The other issue is that the two most poignant arguments for the presence of a vertical structure in the *Commedia*, the political '666' and the reiteration of the word "stelle," are incompatible with one another. If we are to be strict logicians and give credence to the latter, the former would have to be in a 7:6:6 pattern.

**To Stray Among the Stars (of Dante Studies)**

> *Come critico di se stesso, Dante dimostra di essere*
> *non solo uno storico della letteratura ma anche una specie di strutturalista.*
>
> – Amilcare Iannucci. "Autoesegesi dantesca: la tecnica dell'episodio parallelo nella
> 'Commedia'" 307).[23]

The first mention of the reiteration of the word "stelle" at the end of each *cantica* in the commentary tradition is almost a century after Dante's death, in the early Quattrocento, in Johannis

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[23] ["As a critic of himself, Dante demonstrates not only his being a literary historian but also a sort of structuralist."]

de Serravalle's commentary to *Paradiso* XXXIII, 133–145 (1416–17): "Ecce quod auctor finit omnes tres suos libros in isto vocabulo, sive termino, stelle. Infernus finit sic: Et hac eximus, scilicet de Inferno, ad videndum stellas. Purgatorium finit sic: Purus et dispositus ad ascendendum ad stellas. Paradisus finit hic sic: Amor qui movet solem et alias stellas" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).[24] However, Serravalle's commentary does not push the observation further. Glad to have finally finished his commentary to the *Commedia*, he concludes a few lines after this observation with the pious and customary: "Amen. Et sic est finis."

As has been shown, the fact that all three canticles end with the same word has been considered sufficient evidence by scholars to sleuth the poem for intratextual correspondences along symmetrical lines. In 1983, Freccero pointed out how "[r]eaders have for centuries noted innumerable correspondences between the three *cantiche*, constituting *retrospective* recalls over the course of the poem, the most familiar of which, perhaps, is the recurrence of the word *stelle* at the end of each of them" (7 emphasis added). Who are these readers that have noted such correspondences, and, more importantly, were any of them co-numerical?

Freccero's use of the word "retrospective" is significant; it is a constitutive part of Singleton's structuralist interpretative model.[25] It is, therefore, no surprise that Freccero follows this statement by singling out Singleton's essay, "The Vistas in Retrospect" (1966), as "the only full treatment of the subject [of correspondences] at both the lexical and thematic level" (7), adding that: "Singleton brilliantly illustrates the manner in which the theme proceeds by a gradual unfolding that is recaptured en route in a series of *retrospectives* that range from the minute (the

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[24] ["And here the author finishes all his three books with this word, or term, "stelle". *Inferno* ends like this: 'E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.' *Purgatorio* ends like this: 'puro e disposto a salire a le stelle.' *Paradiso* finishes in this way: 'l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.'"]

[25] For some reason, Corbett and Webb assign the origin of the term "retrospective" to Freccero; whereas it quite obviously derives from Singleton, his teacher and peer at John Hopkins during the late Fifties and early Sixties ("Introduction" vol. 2 5). See, for example, Barański who describes Freccero as "Singleton's most important student" ("Reflecting on Dante in America: 1949–1990" 65).

*retrospective* gloss on the word 'ruina,' for example) to the cosmic (as in the backward glance of the pilgrim from the Gemini in the starry heaven)" (7–8 emphasis added). A closer examination of the various scholarly works on intratextuality in the *Commedia* delineates the broader parameters within which vertical hermeneutics are situated. This allows for a better contextualization of the significance of Singleton's contribution to the field of Dante studies in general and his role in the emergence of the interpretative model of vertical reading in particular.

Attention to intratextuality and self-exegesis was apparent in Fido's (1986) reading of the Twenty-sixes and Twenty-sevens (250). This consideration was also evident when Kleinhenz (2003) discusses "the symmetries that inform the poem; the verbal echoes, the glosses of different passages, one upon the other; the verbal descriptions," that partake in the vertical structure of the *Commedia* (282). Pertile as well, in his 2018 essay on the poem's structure, mentions the importance of a "network of intratextual references, signalled by the repetition of the same word, image, rhyme, or structure [that] enriches the *Commedia* with unsuspected and deeper meanings," adding how "[s]ome episodes are illumined *retrospectively* by later passages" ("Narrative Structure" 9–10 emphasis added). However, this section examines scholars who have analyzed the poem's intratextuality but with no specific emphasis on co-numerary symmetries: Iannucci (1981), Tateo (2001), and Ascoli (2011). Several other scholars who have examined the phenomena of intratextuality in the *Commedia* are also addressed to provide a comprehensive overview of the various theoretical possibilities. The focus is ultimately shifted onto the figure of Singleton as a result of the genealogy of the methodology within the field of Dante studies.

When discussing vertical reading as a methodology, Iannucci's essay frequently appears as a reference. It is mentioned in three of the most complete analyses of the methodology by scholars who partook in the Cambridge project; Gilson's reading of the Sevens, Barański's reading

of the Nines, and Wilson's reading of the Thirteens (Gilson "The Wheeling Sevens" 145–46; Barański, "Without Any Violence" 182–83; Wilson 33). The co-organizers also mention it in their introduction to the first volume (Corbett and Webb, "Introduction" 4). Iannucci's essay is not concerned with co-numerical correspondences but instead with how Dante embedded an interpretative key, an auto-exegetical system, into his poem through parallel episodes.

Iannucci calls this process "commentare Dante con Dante," a well-known maxim in Dante studies coined in the late Ottocento by Giambattista Giuliani and exemplified by an early commentary such as l'*Ottimo*.[26] Iannucci laments that too few Dante scholars abide by this maxim—with the notable exception of Singleton. In a footnote, he observes how: "[n]el suo commento alla *Commedia*, Charles S. Singleton adotta un metodo che si avvicina a tale procedimento. Invece di anticipare la spiegazione di brani il cui significato verrà chiarito solo in seguito, egli lascia che il poema riveli il proprio significato gradatamente mentre costruisce il proprio contesto" (306, n.2).[27] In a later essay from 1998, Iannucci reiterates Singleton's contribution to the field of Dante studies by describing his methodology as "the enabler for a new generation of readers of a well-thought-out and original approach to Dante" ("Dante's Intertextual and Intratextual Strategies in the *Commedia*: The Limbo of the Children" 64). Both Freccero and Iannucci signal their indebtedness to Singleton's approach to the poem, one where intratextuality happens to play a significant hermeneutic role as a self-glossing system.

As early as the *Vita nuova*, Dante himself demonstrates a great preoccupation with the interpretation and interpretability of his own poetr: "grande vergogna sarebbe a colui che rimasse

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[26] See Giuliani (1861). As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, l'*Ottimo commento* contains a significant amount of intratextual glosses that guide the reader by cross-referencing corresponding cantos in the other canticles.

[27] ["in his commentary to the *Commedia*, Charles S. Singleton adopts a methodology that is very similar to this procedure. Instead of anticipating the explanation of textual sections whose meaning will be only clarified later, he lets the poem reveal its own meaning progressively while constructing the right context."]

cose sotto vesta di figura o di colore rettorico, e poscia, domandato, non sapesse denudare le sue parole da cotale vesta, in guisa che avessero verace intendimento" (XXV, 10).[28] Therefore, in his prosimetrum, Dante gathers, comments, and explains his poetry by employing traditional exegetical procedures, so much so that Boccaccio treated the expository prose of the poems' divisions as marginal glosses in his copy of the *Vita nuova* (MS Vatican Chigiano L. V. 176).[29] Albeit with a much more philosophical and encyclopedic bent, this propensity for self-commentary also occurs in Dante's unfinished *Convivio*, where Dante's poetry serves as a springboard for philosophical expositions. As Iannucci points out, leaving the *Epistle to Can Grande* aside, "[d]elle tre opere maggiori di Dante solo la *Commedia* non ha un commento in prosa ("Autoesegesi dantesca: la tecnica dell'episodio parallelo nella '*Commedia*'" 311). Barański supports Iannucci's claims, explaining how the internal correspondences can be understood as enacting an auto-exegetical function: "[i]t is now widely accepted that just about all Dante's works, from the *Vita nuova* onwards (ca.1293–5), mark major new departures in literary history; as a result, like the *Commedia*, each of these is accompanied by its own internal self-exegetical apparatus" ("Dante and Medieval Poetics" 8).

Dante's preoccupation with hermeneutics pushed him to guide his readers in the interpretation of his poem, and he did so by appropriating traditional literary terms and interpretive techniques, transforming and embedding them in his poetry's structure to form a critical apparatus that is "totalmente integrato nella struttura poetica dell'opera" (Iannucci 312).[30] Both Iannucci and Barański point to the biblical exegetical technique known either as "testimonianza" (testimony) or

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[28] ["for it would be a great disgrace if someone composing in rhyme introduced a figure of speech or rhetorical ornament, and then on being asked could not divest his words of such covering so as to reveal a true meaning" (Reynolds trans.).]

[29] Boccaccio's relationship with Dante will be further discussed in Part II of Chapter 2.

[30] ["is totally integrated within the poetic structure of the poem."]

"episodio parallelo" (parallel episode) as a model for Dante's system of self-commentary (Barański "La lezione esegetica di *Inferno* I: Allegoria, storia e letteratura nella '*Commedia*'" 93). In this technique, the biblical commentator, "in accordance with the old rule that one passage in Scripture must be interpreted in comparison with others," interprets a problematic passage by looking at other instances that use the same word(s), "until the commentator 'falls back into the channel of discourse which he had prepared for himself'" (Smalley 34). Since this form of exegesis is predicated upon the reoccurrence of words, it can be subsumed under the broader concept of intratextuality.

Dante uses this technique with great precision in the *Monarchia* (Iannucci 312–13; Smalley 306–07). Through chapters IV to IX of Book III of his political treatise, Dante disproves biblical exegetical interpretations supporting the Church's claim to temporal power. What is of particular interest is in chapter nine, the 'two swords' argument (Luke 22:38) that "had been expounded and debated for centuries to justify the supremacy of papal authority" (Prue Shaw, "Introduction" xxv). Papal apologists allegorically interpreted the 'two swords' argument as symbolizing temporal and spiritual power, but Dante rejects this exegesis via two negative proofs and then concludes with a positive one using a parallel episode. He suggests an alternative allegorical interpretation by examining how the word 'sword' is used in another context in the Gospel of Matthew (10:34–35) and how it relates to those spoken by Luke in Acts (1:1). In Dante's view, these swords allegorically represented an active engagement in the world, by word and deed. Moreover, since no source has thus far been identified, Dante very probably invented this allegorical interpretation on his own (Prue Shaw, "Introduction" xxvi). This little excursus into the *Monarchia* shows that Dante was aware of biblical exegetical techniques that involved intratextuality and that he was also able to utilize them to generate novel and creative interpretations for his own ends.

The *Commedia* is replete with words, expressions, characters, and themes that only become fully comprehensible when reoccurring in a different context and setting. Perfect examples are the parallel episodes between Brunetto Latini and Cacciaguida (*Inf*. XV and *Par*. XV–XVII) and Guido and Buonconte da Montefeltro (*Inf*. XXVII and *Purg*. V). Oddly enough, Iannucci mentions the Latini and Cacciaguida episodes, which would have been—by sharing two co-numerical cantos—a vertical reading, as well as a perfect example of a 'parallel episode,' only to remark that: "[l]'accoppiamento (...) non ha niente a che fare con la tecnica critica dell'episodio parallelo." Iannucci counter-intuitively argues that the Cacciaguida episode "non fornisce una prospettiva critica dell'incontro di Dante con il suo vecchio maestro … in nessun modo getta luce sulla natura della colpa di Brunetto e neanche chiarisce la relazione tra ciò che egli dice ed il peccato per cui egli viene esiliato all'inferno" (317, n.2).[31] Several other scholars disagree with Iannucci's statements since the Latini-Cacciaguida pair is one of the most frequently cited examples of verticality in the *Commedia*, it is cited by Ambrosini (2002), Antonelli (2011), Armour (1983), Barolini (1987), Fido (1986), Gilson (2015), Kay (1978; 1994), Keane (2017), Kleinhenz (2003), Marchesi (2016), Pézard (1950), and Schnapp (1986). Instead, Iannucci parallels the episode of Latini with that of Oderisi da Gubbio in *Purgatorio* XI, within the context of a wider discourse pertaining to the gap between human glory and divine justice.

As for the Guido da Montefeltro episode, Iannucci assigns it "la funzione di correttivo al *Convivio* IV, xxviii, 8 dove Dante cita 'lo nobilissimo nostro latino Guido montefeltrano'" (314).[32] Iannucci's understanding of the *Commedia* as a locus from which Dante could revise stances taken

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[31] ["the coupling (...) has nothing to do with the technique of the parallel episode. The episode of Cacciaguida does not provide a critical perspective on Dante's encounter with his old teacher. In no way does it shed light on the nature of Brunetto's sin and does not even clarify the relation between what he says and the sin for which he is exiled in Hell"]

[32] ["the function of correcting *Convivio* IV, xxviii, 8 where Dante cites 'our most noble Latin Guido montefeltrano.'"]

by him in his previous works, or within the poem itself, thus taking on a palinodic function, is highly pertinent since several scholars who have used the technique of vertical reading have called it as such. For example, Schildgen's vertical reading of the Fours not only uses the Singletonian notion of retrospection but also describes the process as essentially palinodic, stating "as a *palinode* for parts of the *Convivio* and as a *retrospective* gaze on *Inferno* 4, *Paradiso* 4 addresses why Plato, Aristotle, Avicenna, and Averroes find themselves in Limbo" (115). Tambling does the same when investigating the Twenty-sixes, writing that "the questioning of rhetoric, of the arts of language, in *Inferno* XXVI, means that there is something *palinodic* about *Purgatorio* XXVI, as it goes over the subject matter of *Inferno* XV again, as well. [...] For the *palinodic* note continues in *Paradiso* XXVI" (144). To recapitulate, parallel episodes in the *Commedia* enact an auto-exegetical function, and they can take the form of a palinode.

Ascoli defines the function of the palinode "within the economy of Dante's literary self-representation," as "a particular form of auto-exegetical revisionism—namely the explicit and/or allusive invocation and transformation of materials from prior Dantean texts within their successors, above all the *Commedia*'s critical evocation of Dante's earlier efforts" (275). He points out how scholars tend to assign a teleological function to the *Commedia* so that they can retrospectively chart the poet's progression and create "a coherent and evolutionary interpretation of Dante's literary career and intellectual biography." However, in doing so, they have inadvertently downplayed "Dante's ceaseless linguistic experimentalism" and his ability to create the illusion of such a coherence thanks to the rhetorical figure of the palinode (276). For Ascoli, the necessary corrective to this dominant teleological view was brought about through the figures of Contini and Freccero. For the latter, he explains how "[t]he structure of the palinode was congenial to Freccero, since in the domain of literary intertextuality it approximates the psychic

and narrative structure of conversion that form the basis of his reading of the *Commedia*" (277). Said differently, "the pattern of repetition and recantation is fundamental" to Dante's poetics, be that between his own texts, between his and other authors, or within his own individual texts (277–78). It is, therefore, no surprise, concerning the last point, that Ascoli cites, alongside Singleton's "Vistas in Retrospect," several of the other essays discussed thus far as examples of intratextual revisionism, those are Iannucci (1981), Shoaf (1983), and Fido (1986). An essential node of Dante scholars focusing on intratextuality and correspondences thus comes into focus.

Ascoli also draws attention to "the traditional question of *intra*-textual development of character, especially over the course of *Purgatorio*," adding that this "has not been seriously or at least systematically revisited since the seminal work of Singleton in the 1950s" (308). After a lengthy analysis, he incidentally mentions the vertical dimension of the hermeneutics of the poem, pointing out how the "*vertical* progress through the realms of the other world brings with it a continuous reframing of fundamental problems from new and higher perspectives," citing, in parentheses, Singleton's seminal article "The Vistas in Retrospect" (341 emphasis added). Within these theoretical parameters, Ascoli parenthetically links *Inferno* XIX with its counterpart in *Purgatorio*, citing Durling and Martinez's 'Inter cantica' section (2003) and Scott (1996), another vertical reading of the Nineteens. Later on, in an analysis of Dante's dream in *Purgatorio* XXVII, Ascoli points out how dreams have a "pivotal and 'liminal' function, rehearsing what has recently passed and preparing for a change to come" (352), thus partaking into a retrospective as well as a prospective function. Therefore, it is only natural for Ascoli to cite, in a footnote, Barański's vertical reading of the Twenty-sevens (1986), which will be discussed shortly. Ascoli's theoretical analysis of the palinode inevitably touches upon many intratextual references within the poem,

often along co-numerical lines. Therefore, his book contains several vertical readings; however, they are never explicitly named as such, and they are almost always cited in an offhanded manner.

For example, Ascoli recognizes an internal patterning between *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* XXIV and states how "[t]he numerical coincidence between the purgatorial episode and the canto which introduces the examination suite reinforces the connection" (386). Later on, he identifies a similar pattern across the Twenty-sixes and Twenty-sevens, only to bury his observation in a footnote, stating how "*Par*. 26., paired with 27, is the culmination of a structural-thematic sequence of parallel cantos in the successive canticles" and citing the previously mentioned essays of Mazzotta (1979), Fido (1986), and Cestaro (2003), as well as another vertical reading, Valerio (2003). In sum, the palinode's ability to enact an intratextual function within a text, much like Iannucci's "parallel episodes," shares many theoretical affinities with the interpretative model of vertical reading.

A few years prior to Ascoli's book, Tateo published *Simmetrie dantesche* (2001), an entire book dedicated to symmetry in Dante's work. In its preface, Tateo explains his understanding of symmetry as "uno dei modi dell'analogia, forse il più scoperto e allo stesso tempo il più radicato nel metodo stesso della composizione, la simmetria può costituire infatti un aspetto del disegno organico del poema, riguardarne l'interpretazione complessiva" (7).[33] Therefore, to repeat a common theme, structure plays a significant role for the poem's construction and exegesis. For Tateo, much like Barański, this function of symmetry can be traced back to the role of *dispositio* in the art of rhetoric, whereby content is organized according to theological and ethical frameworks and a "disposizione soprattutto dei segnali in grado di evidenziare sistemi, svolte e sequenze che

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[33] ["one of the modalities of analogy, perhaps the most obvious and, at the same time, most rooted in the method itself of composition, symmetry can constitute, as a matter of fact, an aspect of the organic design of the poem, as well as regarding its entire interpretation."]

fanno riflettere sul senso del viaggio" (7).[34] Consequently, Dante's journey is layered with a series of correspondences that underline the author's intentionality, as well as an important series of turning points, what Tateo calls "svolte", that can overlap with preexisting partitions such as the *canto* and the *cantica* (7–8).

In his analysis, Tateo distinguishes three systems that partake in the function of symmetry and that are not exclusive to one another, for indeed "convivono, o s'incontrano e si combinano per via analogica": first, the topography and chronological sequence of the voyage itself; second, the external structural division of the poem, based on theological and scriptural presuppositions and therefore highly influenced by numerology; and, lastly, "l'articolazione profonda significata dalla simmetria delle concordanze, che si avvale di elementi retorici" (8).[35] The first point has been addressed earlier when looking at inter-canticle symmetries, whereas the second point was explored in light of the partitions' names and the poem's circular pattern. The last point has been addressed throughout, as seen with the repetition of "stelle," or critical words at strategic textual moments.

In sum, a phenomenon of repetition and difference is necessary for the narrative's internal consistency and unity and the diversity of its content. However, this is where Dante's artistry and ability come through, where he can use the structure of the text to make parallels and antitheses "capaci di illuminare la casistica morale e suoi impliciti significati su piani diversi" (8).[36] Tateo sees this play out at various levels, whether it be the repetition at some distance of significant

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[34] ["disposition, above all of signs capable to render obvious systems, turns, and sequences that make us reflect on the meaning of the voyage."] For Barański and the function of *dispositio* in Dante, see "Inferno VI. 73: A Controversy Re-Examined" 1–26, "Structural Retrospection in Dante's *Comedy*: The Case of *Purgatorio* XXVII" 1–23, "The Poetics of Meter" 3–41; as well as an early article, co-written with Barnes, "Dante's 'Canzone Montanina'" 297–307. Other scholars that have pointed out the role of *dispositio* are Bologna (1998), Boyde (1971), Gilson (2015), and Marti (1980).

[35] ["coexist, or encounter and combine with one another by means of analogy" (...) "the profound articulation signified by the symmetry of correspondences, that avails itself of rhetorical elements."]

[36] ["capable of illuminating the moral system and their implicit significations on various levels."]

words and topics or in the sequencing of a group of cantos. Nevertheless, one system of symmetry that he does privilege is vertical reading, or what he calls the "corrispondenza dei canti di analogo argomento collocati alla stessa altezza numerica nelle tre rispettive cantiche" (8).[37] As a result, his book contains no less than ten vertical readings; five comprise all three canticles, whereas the other half involves only two. Tateo never uses the term 'vertical' to describe this co-numerical symmetry, and the range of the vertical readings in his book goes from a passing mention to a sustained argumentation. A more recent article by Tateo (2020), which consists of a vertical reading of the Twenty-fours, continues to explore said symmetries but still with no explicit attention to pre-existing scholarship on co-numerary correspondences in the poem.

The last scholars to briefly address before discussing Singleton's impact are Howard (2001), Antonelli (2011), Barański (1986), and Viglionese (1986). Howard's study—much like Tateo (2001) and Fido (1986)—focuses on "recurrent linguistic patterns, or formulas, embedded in the *Commedia*, devised by the poet to guide the reader along an alternative interpretative journey across textual space" (3). The itineraries traced are, by default, retrospective and focus on signposts that are either word clusters or rhyme patterns. Howard's definition of a "formula" consists of a group of words that is repeated but not regularly employed, and their function is to act as "signposts, guiding the reader on an alternate journey across the cantos of the text" (5). Incidentally, none of these journeys happen to occur in co-numerical patterns.

Antonelli's research has focused—among different things—on the particular role of mnemonics on the structure and patterning of Dante's *Commedia*. In an essay from 2003, Antonelli discusses how the poem's macrostructure is anchored in the art of memory, particularly the rhetorical categories of *inventio* and *dispositio*. A few years later, Antonelli re-elaborates this essay

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[37] ["the correspondence of cantos with analogous themes located at the same numerical height in all three respective canticles."]

by asking how Dante went about composing the *Commedia*, not in terms of style, "ma in quello forse meno ovvio e più misterioso e intrigante della concezione e organizzazione della macrostruttura dell'opera, del quadro d'insieme, dello schema e delle molteplici e complesse relazioni interne che un poema del genere comportava" ("Come e perché Dante ha scritto la *Divina Commedia*?" 3).[38] The tools that Antonelli sees as underlying Dante's scaffolding and construction of the poem is the medieval art of memory, describing the poem as a "gigantesco teatro della memoria" (10).[39] It is within such an understanding of the poem that Antonelli points to "correlazioni fra canti corrispondenti di ogni cantica" (12), naming as examples the political diptychs of the Sixes and Sevens and of the Fifteens and Sixteens.[40] He then gives a vertical reading of the Twenty-sevens, even adding what he calls a retrograde reading—subtracting seven cantos from both ends to compare *Inferno* VII with *Paradiso* XXVII.

Antonelli, much like Federzoni (1904) more than a century ago, admits that such subtle correspondences may appear as fantasies of modern criticism "se non corrispondessero perfettamente ad un'arte retorica che s'imparava a scuola e continuava ad esercitarsi per tutta la vita nella continua *ruminatio*, divenendo quasi una seconda natura, anche nella fase creativa" (14).[41] Like Barański, Bologna, and Tateo, Antonelli considers the *Commedia*'s symmetrical correspondences as part of standard rhetorical procedures. In other words, Antonelli is asserting a particular form of spatial semiotics inherent to the culture of Dante's time, a specific way of observing and interpreting visual and written signs that is second nature. Antonelli then rightly

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[38] ["'but in the perhaps less obvious and more mysterious and intriguing sense of the conception and organization of the macrostructure of the work, of its overview, of its schema, its outline and its multiple and complex internal relations that a poem of the sort entails."]

[39] ["a gigantic memory theatre."]

[40] ["correlations between corresponding cantos of each canticle."]

[41] ["if they did not correspond perfectly at an art of rhetoric that one would learn in school and continue to practice in life in continuous *ruminatio*, becoming almost second nature, even in the creative phase."]

asks: "[q]ual è lo scopo di tali simmetrie e corrispondenze?"[42] His answer, much like the argument developed throughout this chapter, is that they supply the poem's readers with exegetical cues, hermeneutic paths to follow, signposts—as Howard puts it—that come from "una effettiva volontà dell'autore nel collocare segnali verbali lungo il percorso per guidare la memoria del lettore" (17).[43]

Antonelli's mention of the rhetorical technique of *dispositio* and Howard's notion of "signposts" coincide with a series of observations by Barański. First, Barański concurs with the sustained argument that the *Commedia*'s structural correspondences "satisfy medieval ideological presuppositions concerning the relationship between creation and order, between creator and thing created." Furthermore, "they reflect classical and medieval doctrines on *dispositio*, according to which significant connections should be forged between different sections of a text" ("Structural Retrospection in Dante's *Comedy*: The Case of *Purgatorio* XXVII" 2–3).[44] Additionally, the essay hints at Singleton's exegetical practice by its very title: "structural retrospection."

Barański shows how the intratextual echoes found in *Purgatorio* XXVII act as "signposts," forming "some kind of consistent and recognizable patterning" (8). Barański, like Antonelli, executes a vertical reading of the Twenty-sevens that focuses on the use of the term 'foco,' seeing it as "an intratextual signpost recalling a common narrative motif." He concludes by stating how "[w]ithout its web of connections and reminiscences the *Comedy* would collapse into a jumble of disconnected self-contained episodes, and so lose that overall coherence and excellence, the

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[42] ["what exactly is the purpose of such symmetries and correspondences?"]

[43] ["from an actual desire by the author to collocate verbal signs along the journey to guide the memory of the reader."]

[44] For more work by Barański on repetition as a structural-rhetorical framework, signposting, and "inter-canto similarities," see "Inferno VI. 73: A Controversy Re-Examined" 1–26. For intratextuality by means of "inter-canto repetitions and antitheses," see "Dante's Three Reflective Dreams" 213–236. See Bologna for a similar argument of "segnali mnemonici" ('mnemonic signs') to be identified "con le simmetrie del linguaggio nell'*inventio*, nella *dispositio*, e nell'*elocutio*" ('with the symmetry of language in *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio*') (*Il Ritorno Di Beatrice* 14–17).

integration of all the parts in the whole, which reveal, according to its fiction, the hand of God behind its writing and goals" (23). This divine and thus harmonious relationship of the parts to one another and the whole is identical to what Dante-pilgrim describes at the climax of his vision, and Dante-poet reproduces it within his poem's structure. What is worth underlining here is that Barański, like Tateo, in no way restricts himself solely to the co-numerical aspect of intratextuality; instead, it acts as one of many paths that the reader can take.

Barański notes that: "[t]he critic has the responsibility of tracing a few of the potentially infinite thematic, formal, and ideological interplays between and within the *Commedia*'s cantos" ("The 'Marvellous' and the 'Comic': Toward a Reading of *Inferno* XVI" 75). Barański also remarks that within Dante scholarship, "the basic methodological tendency is still to fragment and to isolate: the canto is privileged over the poem" ("Dante and Medieval Poetics" 7). Iannucci echoes this poignantly when he addresses how the examination of cantos within the *lectura dantis* tradition, which still today dominates contemporary Dante criticism, "is totally inadequate when it comes to dealing with those episodes (...) extending beyond the canto of origin, episodes which continue to produce meaning throughout the poem and continue to resonate their themes and issues" ("Dante's Intertextual and Intratextual Strategies in the *Commedia*: The Limbo of the Children" 82–83). The co-organizers of the Cambridge project are acutely aware of this advantage of vertical reading, hence beginning their introduction to their first volume by pointing out how, unlike the *lectura dantis* format, "[a] vertical reading invites us to keep the three canticles continually in dialogue with each other" (Corbett and Webb, "Introduction" 1–2). For Iannucci, these "structurally determining" episodes are primarily found in the *Inferno* and raise essential issues without resolving them. These initially opaque episodes, seen "through a glass darkly," gradually become more apparent, finding a resolution "in episodes located in the *Purgatorio* and

especially in the *Paradiso*, in structurally determining episodes whose function is not to produce meaning but rather to gather it in and bring it to completion" (83). What can be ventured to add to Barański and Iannucci's emphasis on the necessity for an intratextual hermeneutic approach is that the co-numerical route is a privileged starting point and it does not exclude other pathways.

Lastly, Viglionese discusses the notion of intratextuality albeit within the theoretical framework of what he calls the "text-unifying device" of "internal allusion," that is: "a direct or approximate citation, not of another text, but of one part by another part of the same" (239). He combines this "device" with the function of symmetry, understood as a phenomenon analogous to the previously mentioned spatial semiotics and that is "connected with the visual, spatial qualities of objects (texts included) in the world" (239). Equipped with these theoretical concepts, he approaches the two cantos at the center of the *Commedia*'s structure: *Purgatorio* XVI and XVII. Viglionese assigns to the mid-point of the poem the signification of "new beginning," teasing out the implications of what is essentially a retrospective glance towards the beginning of the *Inferno* where, in turn, a trajectory towards salvation is intimated (240 ff.). In sum, for Viglionese, "the two beginnings [*Inf.* I and *Purg.* XVII] are linked through an internal allusion on the level of the larger structures of the conceptual content of the poem just as much as they are by word choice and the more material factors of linguistic structure" (247).[45] What Viglionese articulates, without referring to Singleton or using the co-numerical approach, is influenced by a structural approach toward the poem that makes good use of both looking backward and forward and recognizing the repetition at some distance of critical words and themes.

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[45] For an analysis on the *Inferno* I's role as an *incipit* to the *Commedia* and as an interpretative guide, see Barański's "La lezione esegetica di *Inferno* I: Allegoria, storia e letteratura nella '*Commedia*'" 79–98. For an analysis of how the mid-point of the *Inferno*, *canto* XVI, partakes in both retrospective and prospective functions, by recalling the poem's prologue as well as its ending, see Barański's "The 'Marvellous' and the 'Comic': Toward a Reading of *Inferno* XVI" 72–95.

As can be seen, Iannucci, Ascoli, Tateo, Howard, Antonelli, Barański, and Viglionese are not primarily concerned with co-numerical correspondences in the *Commedia*. However, their theoretical examinations of intratextuality reveal several ways with which vertical readings can be conceptualized: 1) as a form of auto-exegesis modeled on biblical exegesis (Iannucci); 2) as partaking in the rhetorical device of the palinode (Ascoli, Schildgen, Tambling); 3) as enabling mnemonic recall for what was both an oral and written public (Howard); and, lastly, 4) as guiding the reader along interpretative pathways based on the practices of the arts of memory and rhetoric (Antonelli, Barański, Bologna) and the poem's system of allusions and structure (Viglionese).[46] Except for the concept of the palinode, Tateo addresses all these aspects in his book. One can see how all enact the Singletonian principle of retrospective reading, which Antonelli—much like Iannucci, Howard, and Ascoli—recognizes ("Come e perché Dante ha scritto la *Divina Commedia*?" 15, n. 24).[47] Moreover, these various intratextual approaches to the *Commedia* have generated several vertical readings, as seen in Tateo, Ascoli, Antonelli, and Barański. Therefore, studies examining intratextuality in the *Commedia* have brought about a new awareness regarding parallels, repetitions, symmetries, antitheses (and syntheses, since the poem's tripartite structure allows it), of which the co-numerical path proves to be quite fertile. Ultimately, this concern with intratextuality in the *Commedia* can be traced back to the work of Singleton.

## Singleton's Structural Hermeneutics

*The temporal logic of this vertical world consists in the sheer simultaneity of all that occurs (or 'the coexistence of everything in eternity').*

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[46] One scholar worth noting who is a contemporary of Singleton and touches on repetition in the *Commedia* is Wilkins "Reminiscence and Anticipation in the 'Divine Comedy'" 1–13. For a closer analysis of the use of repetition and signposts in the art of rhetoric and its use in Dante's lyric poetry, see Boyde's chapter "Repetition and Antithesis" 237–264. For similar stylistic elements within the Bible, see Kugel's chapter "The Parallelistic Line" 1–58. For a wider understanding of intratextual scriptural exegesis—akin to Iannucci's 'parallel episode'—see Kugel's chapter "Biblical Poetry and the Church" 135–170.

[47] It is also no surprise to see Howard thank Singleton in his "Acknowledgments," since he guided him in his graduate work at John Hopkins.

– Bakhtin, M. M. "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" 3/23/21 2:38:00 PM.

This last section situates how and where the methodology of vertical reading has emerged in Dante studies. Several signposts have been disposed throughout this chapter regarding Singleton's particular influence, and it is now time to expand on the matter more fully. Indeed, the end of this chapter's privileged viewpoint enables a retrospective glance that lets patterns surface. For example, the first section of this chapter alludes to the title of Singleton's collection of essays on the *Commedia*: *Dante's 'Commedia:' Elements of Structure* (1954). Therefore, one can infer from the title that structuralism, or how formal elements determine content, significantly influenced Singleton's interpretive approach to Dante's poetics.

At the beginning of the Nineties, Barański wrote a reflection on Dante studies in America, highlighting the importance of Singleton's influence and the state of the field at that particular moment in time. Barański describes the latter as "faced with a healthy jockeying for critical position in a recognizably pluralistic field," one in which "variety is the new watchword." However, he also recognizes that "[f]or many years—I would estimate from about the end of the 1950s to the mid-1980s—Singleton (and his followers) dominated and defined the field of American Dante scholarship," and that "[t]he shadow of Charles Singleton continues to loom large" ("Reflecting on Dante in America: 1949–1990" 60–63).

The word in the field was that the Nineties initiated an era of post-structuralism. For instance, Robey describes several critics that "cast a novel light on Dante's work" that "can all be loosely associated with post-structuralism by virtue of an emphasis on intertextuality, or on the process of reading, or on the problem of representation," citing, among others, Shoaf and Barolini (123). Post-structuralism does not necessarily represent a clear break with structuralism since, alongside discontinuities, there are several continuities as well. Said differently, post-structuralism

is just what occurred after structuralism, that is to say, an extension and critique of structuralism in critical textual analysis. Barański similarly articulates a post-Singletonian landscape, whereby Singletonian premises are combined with different approaches to the poem.

For instance, Barański notes how for many *Dantisti* from the late Seventies onward, "Singleton is no longer a point of critical arrival but an important stage on a personal interpretative path to other goals." He cites Ahern, Ascoli, Barolini, Brownlee, Cachey Jr., Cornish, Durling, Franke, Iannucci, Martinez, Mazzotta, and Schnapp, adding that, "by and large, these scholars have firmly returned to what is best and most enduring in Singleton's proposals" ("Dante, America, and the Limits of 'Allegory'" 145). It is no coincidence that all the above scholars have used the vertical reading methodology in some manner or other in their work. Based on Barański's assertion, one could claim that "vertical readings" are an essential and integral element of Singleton's teachings.

Barański highlights one crucial and enduring contribution of Singleton: Dante's debts to biblical exegesis and allegory. In the section titled "Going in Circles," Mazzotta was cited mentioning how "[t]he crucial and explicit structure which sustains the *Divine Comedy* is, as Singleton as shown, the story of Exodus" (*Dante, Poet of the Desert* 5). Singleton's hermeneutic approach to the poem is tied to the "allegory of the theologians" and based on Exodus' narrative structure. However, Barański underlines that "the manner in which [Singleton] worked out the details of this relationship is anything but convincing" ("Reflecting on Dante in America: 1949–1990" 69).[48] Nevertheless, Barański does recognize how Singleton's "preoccupation with matters of structure and hermeneutics led him to his most important discoveries," such as Dante's imitation

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[48] For instance, Barański points out how: "having recognized the complexity of Biblical exegesis, Singleton ignored his own discovery and in general concentrated solely on one of its possible 'senses'—the 'moral' (and this simply in strict theological terms)—while eliding both the 'allegorical' and the 'anagogical,' and, of course, largely forgetting about the 'letter' of the text" ("Dante, America, and the Limits of 'Allegory'" 142).

of Scripture as a determining factor on the narratological and ideological organization of his writing, which "like the things of God, is essentially 'circular' and self-reflective" (69).[49]

In Dante studies' broader context, this *rapprochement* of the poem with the Bible is significant since it signals a break from the Crocean position that tended to dominate the field, particularly in Italy with its robust philological approach of which Contini stands as a dominant figure. Croce's philosophical aesthetics made a binary distinction between poetry on the one hand, what was 'modern' in Dante, and on the other, didacticism and structure, that which is 'medieval,' thus separating "il lirico" from the "romanzo teologico," "poesia e non poesia" (Fubini, "Croce, Benedetto" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*). One notable figure that stands apart is Bruno Nardi, "who, as early as 1942, by championing a Dante-profeta, had proposed a specifically Italian variant" of Singleton's insight onto the *Commedia*'s mode of signifying (Barański, "Dante, America, and the Limits of 'Allegory'" 145). As Freccero points out, "[b]y refusing to accept the traditional dichotomy of poetry and belief [...] [Singleton] demonstrated the relevance of theology not only to the literary archeologist, but also to the literary critic" (259).[50] Nonetheless, contemporary *Dantisti* in Italy have merged their strong philological focus with an equally intelligent structural approach to find patterns of meaning within the poem.

During this era of "post-structuralism" in Dante studies, Kleiner wrote *Mismapping the Underworld: Daring and Error in Dante's "Comedy"* (1994), a book that highlights several blind spots in Dante criticism. It provides a perfect case study for the lasting legacy and shortcomings of Singleton's structuralism. In one particular essay, titled "Finding the Center," Kleiner focuses

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[49] The reader may recall the section titled "Going in Circles" where this topic was discussed at length.

[50] Moreover, as hinted earlier by Iannucci, Singleton's "formal criticism represents a dramatic departure from the tradition of the *lectura dantis*, for it deals with the unity and coherence of the entire poem, rather than with single cantos or lyric passages. At the same time, that view of the whole necessarily involves accepting theology as part of that coherence" (Freccero 259).

on Singleton's endorsement of the alleged symmetrical pattern detected by the nineteenth-century *Dantista* Dante Gabriel Rossetti in Dante's *Vita nuova*.[51] His analysis reveals "the difficulty of interpreting patterns that promise more than they achieve—patterns that seem as if they should be perfectly executed but are not" (7). Indeed, he shows that it is pretty tricky—for several reasons—to substantiate Singleton's claim, demonstrating how his arguments are "seriously flawed" (7). These flaws are not of particular interest. What matters is the theoretical underpinning of Singleton's approach, "a theological theory of poetic form," one premised on the notion that, in Dante's time, "the art of poetry was understood as an extension of divine art"; and that Dante is, therefore, a "theomimetic poet," in that his poetry reflects the structure and order of the cosmos and the hermeneutic structure of Scripture, God's "two books" (7).

Therefore, symmetry acts as "a hermeneutic principle because of the peculiar structure of Christian history" (8). Since the central event in Christian history is the crucifixion, it breaks history into two halves. Thus, "there are essentially two kinds of text corresponding to two distinct historical periods: there is the prospective text of the Old Testament the retrospective of the New" (8). As a consequence, "if a poet is to imitate this structure, then he should locate at the center of his work an event of comparable importance—an event that grants his narrative meaning and direction" (8). Therefore, if universal Christian history is 'Christocentric,' one should expect the same in the formal structure of Dante's poem. The theoretical principle is that meaning and content are disclosed through a sequencing in form and structure that aspires to imitate God's two books.

The point with the methodology of vertical reading is Kleiner's remark that "[s]ince the *Essay*'s publication [1949, reprint 1977], scholars have discovered dozens of numerical patterns and symmetries unsuspected by previous generations of readers." He goes on to specify that

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[51] As a matter of fact, Singleton's 1949 *Essay on the 'Vita nuova,'* "as long been recognized as a watershed in the history of Dante studies" (Kleiner 7).

"[t]hese range from relatively accessible insights—*the realization that like-numbered cantos of the Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso have important thematic ties*—to truly abstruse discoveries about the positions of critical words or rhymes" (9 emphasis added).[52] Therefore, following Kleiner's lead, one can trace the emergence of vertical reading via Singleton and his followers since they have shown how the *Commedia* exhibits symmetry patterns and how they reflect and guide the poem's interpretative process. Therefore, within such theoretical parameters, it should not be surprising to see Singleton himself pointing out co-numerary correspondences between canticles in his early works.[53]

Another example of Singleton's structuralism and its aftereffects is his essay "The Poet's Number at the Center" (1965). The number of lines in the central cluster of cantos from *Purgatorio* reveals a symmetrical pattern centered around the seventeenth *canto*. Since its publication, "the hunting and debunking of centers has become a minor cottage industry among Dante scholars" (Kleiner 145, n. 6).[54] One notable scholar who extended Singleton's observations to *Paradiso* as well is Logan, who argues that: "Canto xvii of the *Purgatorio* and Canto xvii of the *Paradiso* are central cantos in more than one sense of the word," thus establishing a co-numerical symmetry between both canticles (97).[55] Despite the fact—as Kleiner points out—that "when it comes to his

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[52] In a footnote, Kleiner cites Mazzotta's reading of the Sevens in his chapter "A pattern of Order: *Inferno* VII and *Paradiso* VII" 319–328. Moreover, the "positions of critical words or rhymes" are in no way abstruse, as for example the convincing vertical reading of the Ones based on the correspondence of verses starting exactly at same line by Bernardo "Dante's Pervasive Symmetry" 458–460.

[53] In his essay "The Other Journey" (1952), Singleton remarks how "[w]hen the poem is unfolded in its entirety and we may stand back from it for a comprehensive view" and points to the correspondences between the opening scene of *Inferno* I with that of *Purgatorio* I (193–94). He reiterates this statement in another essay, wherein he delineates how the figure of the Exodus is paradigmatic to Dante's poetic endeavor: "[t]he unmistakable confirmation of the fact that the Exodus figure is the controlling image and matrix of the prologue scene of the *Comedy* comes at the beginning of the *Purgatory*, thirty-three cantos later, where the wayfarer 'returns' to a similar scene" ("In Exitu Israel de Aegypto" 172).

[54] This so-called "minor cottage industry" is not limited to North America, see, for example, Arianna Punzi's "Centro e centri nella *Commedia*" 73–89. This also extends to the counting of lines per *canto*: for a probabilistic analysis of symmetrical sequences in the poem, see Turelli 23–39.

[55] For a lucid reading of the center of the *Commedia*, see John A. Scott's chapter "The Poem's Center (*Purgatorio* XII—XVIII)" 144–157.

own theory, [Singleton] proves less than a perfectionist," his invitation "to admire the medieval artist's devotion to perfectly executed patterns" has been answered emphatically by scholars. Consequently, in several if not most of the vertical readings that this research has been able to gather, the name of Singleton appears often, not only in American scholarship but also in Italian (Ambrosini; Bologna, *Il Ritorno Di Beatrice*; Bologna, "Beatrice e Il Suo 'Anghelos' Cavalcanti Fra 'Vita Nova' e 'Commedia'"; Bologna, "Canto XXXI"; Bologna, "Purgatorio XVI. Al Centro Del Libro e Del Viaggio").

This dual filiation, both in Italian and English Dante criticism, can be traced back to Singleton's critical essay titled "The Vistas in Retrospect" (1966). The essay originates from a lecture he gave in 1965, at the *Congresso Internazionale di Studi Danteschi* held in Florence to celebrate the seven-hundredth anniversary of Dante's birth, where he was invited to receive the golden medal for Dante studies. Singleton used the momentousness of the occasion to point out "the shortcomings in the understanding and public explication of Dante's poetry," what he called the "blind spots in our gloss on the great *structure*" ("The Vistas in Retrospect" 56 emphasis added). What Singleton ultimately calls for is the full actualization of the poem's form and, to do so, summons scholars to recover the context of "the dominant modes of thought and feeling, the master patterns of the Christian mind and imagination ... patterns which Dante had every reason to assume would continue to be a part of our heritage ... as a living context for his Poem" (58).[56] One such mode of thought would be reading retrospectively to see patterns emerge along symmetrical lines.

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[56] The spirit of Singleton's theoretical approach is to be found in the European scholarship of Nardi, Gilson, Auerbach, Spitzer, Curtius, Lewis, Busnelli, Marigo, Smalley, and Vandelli, that is, in the attempt to recuperate a certain medieval *weltanschauung*, see Candido 116. Singleton partially recognizes this in a footnote, stating: Rassegna di studi danteschi in Nord America (1990-2010) "[o]ne surely thinks of Etienne Gilson and Bruno Nardi as our Masters in this" ("The Vistas in Retrospect" 58, n.5).

Singleton begins by underlining "goals and major pivots" within the poem from which "to view in retrospect the line of action to that point and gaze upon broad configurations of meaning that become visible *from there*" (55). Singleton likens this process to the remembrance of Christ's death through Beatrice's death at the center of the *Vita nuova*, with the subtle difference of now having three centers.[57] Furthermore, Singleton emphasizes the last goal "toward which all moves, that Vision wherein it is the wayfarer's final desire to gaze upon a second circle, which is Christ" (56). What the reader can see from the end are patterns that, according to Singleton, "are strangely neglected, and forgotten somehow in our *commenti* and our *lecturae Dantis*, and in our scattered essays and studies on the Poem" (56).[58] Much like Iannucci's "testimonianza," Singleton then goes on to provide an example of this method by focusing on instances of the word "ruina" in the poem. He demonstrates how every iteration recalls the previous one, gradually disclosing the whole meaning of the term and its implications, concluding that "[h]ere, then, are dimensions of a poem that appear to have been lost and forgotten in our gloss on a great poetic structure" (79).

Singleton's method is premised on the notion of a particular *modus operandi* inherent to Dante's time and culture, a second nature that has been lost. Secondly, Singleton emphasizes the idea of a progressive revelation of meaning through form, citing, for example, Augustine's notion that the meaning of a sentence can only be fully acknowledged once it is finished when the mind's eye can retrospectively glance upon the whole.[59] Thirdly, this necessitates a mnemonic capacity in

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[57] Auerbach also points out the ways in which Beatrice can be seen as a *figura Christi*, noting that "one need only consider the interpretation of her appearance behind Monna Vanna (24); the events accompanying the vision of her death (23); eclipse, earthquake, the hosannas of the angels; and the effect of her appearance in *Purg.*, 30" ("'Figura'" 237 n. 50).

[58] Singleton recognizes that this form of retrospective pattern detection is not restricted to Dante's poem, citing as an example Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*. In the same year as Singleton's essay, Frank Kermode held a series of lectures at Bryn Mawr College, under the title "The Long Perspectives," that explored this question in modern literary structures. These would then be published in 1967 under the title *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*.

[59] This is particularly relevant in Latin syntax where verbs are often found at the end of sentences.

the reader to recognize signposts along the pilgrim's journey. Lastly, if the coherence of the whole poem can only be grasped from a view from the ending, the same can be said of the poet's life, or even our own, that it could only be grasped in retrospect, from the perspective of death, symbolized in the act of conversion.[60] Moreover, much like the anagogical mode from the "allegory of the theologians," the coherence of universal history can only be grasped from the perspective of the end of time.

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[60] This last point would be developed in full by Singleton's pupil, Freccero who noted how "Dante perceived in Augustine's life the same pattern of conversion that he was later to read retrospectively in his own experience" ("Dante's Prologue Scene" 2). Consequently, there are between Dante and Augustine "not only analogies of detail but also of structure," since, for Freccero, Dante's entire spiritual autobiography is essentially Augustinian in structure" (11). Freccero and Mazzotta, both students of Singleton, brought the theme of conversion to the attention of Dante scholarship in arguing, each in their own manner, that the *Commedia* is essentially Augustinian in structure. Mazzotta also links the pattern of Exodus onto the figure of Christ, stating that "Dante's principle of poetic construction is the dramatization of the typological equation postulated by St. Paul in I *Corinthians*: 'Christ our Exodus'" ("Dante's Literary Typology" 10), thus rendering the poem at once *literally* anagogical and typological.

**Conclusion**

This chapter's analysis of intratextuality in Dante studies, alongside the archive of vertical readings of the *Commedia*, serves two purposes: first, to trace the emergence of vertical readings in the field; second, to get a sense of the various theoretical bases that scholars utilize to support the methodology. It demonstrated a strong correlation between vertical readings' gain in popularity and Singleton's influence. As for the methodology's theoretical bases, the archive shows four main development lines in the twentieth century that can fall under the broad category of intratextuality.

Mentions of vertical correspondences in Italian scholarship tend to occur in works that privilege a strong philological disposition towards textual and linguistic factors combined with a focus on the arts of rhetoric and memory: Antonelli (2003, 2011), Bologna (1998), Canettieri (1995), Marti (1980), Mocan (2005, 2015), Punzi (1999), and Tateo (2001, 2020), among others. The second line of development, made up of scholars that straddle both the Italian and English spheres of Dante scholarship, also focuses on the arts of rhetoric and memory, as well as related stylistic aspects: Ascoli (2008), Boyde (1971), Barański and Barnes (1978), Barański (1981, 1986, 1995), Durling and Martinez (2011), Durling (2011), Gilson (2015), and Howard (2001). A third line applies biblical numerological arguments: Brownlee (1995), Kirkham (1989), Raffa (2007), Shoaf (1983), et al.; whereas a fourth shares a common biblical exegetical perspective: Auerbach (1938), Fido (1986), Freccero (1964, 1966, 1983), Hawkins (1980), Iannucci (1981), Kleinhenz (2003), Mazzotta (1979), Pertile (2018), and Singleton (1949, 1952, 1954, 1960, 1965, 1966).

The first two lines of development both emphasize the arts of rhetoric and memory in support of symmetries within the poem, whereas the last two are more concerned with medieval literary theory in terms of biblical exegesis and numerology. This is not to say that these broad categories do not overlap. They often do, especially in the work of Barański, but rather that they

arrive at the same observations—the presence of co-numerary correspondences—from a different starting point, focusing primarily on one element more than another.

In general terms, the data indicates that co-numerary cross-canticle correspondences are articulated around two principles: first, classical elements of rhetoric, particularly the art of memory, and second, biblical exegesis. Consequently, the *Commedia*'s vertical structure may likely be revealing is both a scaffolding process for its composition, based on the art of rhetoric and an auto-exegetical system shaped by biblical exegesis.[61] The following chapter, "Vertical Hermeneutics in the Early Commentary Tradition, Boccaccio, and Petrarch," investigates the last claim, that is, what initially appears as a correlation between biblical exegetical apparatuses, particularly theories concerning allegory, and the observation of co-numerary patterns in contemporary Dante studies.

By process of *reductio ad unum*, the source of this gain in popularity is correlated with the impact of Singleton's theoretical postulates. This is so for two primary reasons: first, his structuralist "retrospective" approach to the poem and, second, his anchoring of its mode of signification within the hermeneutic system of the allegory of the theologians. These two theoretical axioms invite readers of the poem to sleuth Dante's poem for intratextual and structural correspondences at crucial textual nexuses. This facilitates the observation of symmetrical patterns in the poem, and, as a result, co-numerical correspondences between canticles gained currency and traction in Dante studies. Vertical hermeneutics is an appeal to consider the text's structure, in the etymological sense of 'considerare,' of looking closely at the stars

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[61] See Gilson who notes that "[a]n important strand in recent Dante scholarship has, moreover, suggested that the *Comedy* contains within itself its own auto-exegesis in a way that is designed to assist his readers and to close off the poem to misinterpretation" ("Introduction" 5). In the list of scholars mentioned in the related footnote, we find Ascoli, Barański, and Iannucci (240 n. 17).

# Chapter 2: Vertical Hermeneutics and Allegory in the Early Commentary Tradition, Boccaccio, and Petrarch

*Meministi, ut aestimo, supra me divinam scripturam aedificio similem dixisse, ubi primum, fundamento posito, structura in altum levatur; plane aedificio similem, nam et ipsa structuram habet. Non ergo pigeat si hanc similitudinem paulo diligentius prosequamur.*

– Hugonis De Sancto Victore, "De allegoria," *Didascalicon*.[1]

## Introduction

In 1965, Singleton famously pleaded with his fellow *dantisti* to recover "the master patterns of the Christian mind and imagination ... patterns which Dante had every reason to assume would continue to be a part of our heritage as a living context for his poem" ("The Vistas in Retrospect" 58). For Singleton, one such "master pattern" is reading Dante's poem retrospectively by grasping the text's gradual disclosure of meaning. Intratextual clues invite readers to look back on their textual journeys and to consider how meaning is generated at pivotal moments in the text. In combination with Singleton's influence in Dante studies and the tendency toward structuralism in literary theory, this theoretical axiom has contributed to the emergence of vertical readings of the *Commedia*.

This research explores, as Singleton suggests, the "modes of thought and feeling" (58) inherent to Dante's epoch. Through an analysis of retrospective readings, medieval theories of allegory, and the vertical hermeneutics of the poem, this research postulates that these "modes of thought and feeling" are part of a cultural context wherein the spatial and sequential relationships between signs, operating within a specific structure, engendered a system of complementary meanings. This comparative, vertical approach applies to Dante's sacred poem, Scripture, or

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[1] ["You remember, I suppose, what I said above that Divine Scripture is like a building, in which, after the foundation has first been laid, the structure itself is raised up; it is altogether like a building, for it too has its structure. For this reason, let it not irk us if we follow this similitude a little more carefully" (Taylor trans.).]

contemporary visual arts. Succinctly put, the emergence of vertical readings in the latter half of the twentieth century corresponds to a broader recovery process of the living context of Dante's poem.

Chapter 1 brought to light some of these Singletonian "master patterns of the Christian mind" that substantiate a vertical structure in the *Commedia*. In "Structural Elements" (Chapter 1, Part I), the exploration of the building blocks that make up the edifice that is the *Commedia* showed how the poem's patterns of symmetry reflected traditional notions of the harmony of God's universe and Scripture, of a cosmic *ordo Dei*.[2] The studies mentioned in "Systematic Review of the Literature" (Chapter 1, Part II) also gave prominence of place to some of these "master patterns," especially those articulated around intratextuality, the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, and biblical exegetical techniques.

For instance, Kleinhenz's essay indicated how in contemporary visual arts, from Giotto in the Arena Chapel to the mosaics in the cupola of San Giovanni's Baptistry, the representation of intratextual relationships between different sections of the Bible were represented allegorically, or say typologically, through *figurae*.[3] Iannucci's analysis of the *Commedia*'s "parallel episodes" indicated their resemblance to "testimonianza," that is, a biblical exegetical technique that specifically involves intratextual analysis and that Dante deploys in the *Monarchia*.[4] In sum, all these elements share characteristics of verticality, understood in the larger sense of semiotics of space. The *Commedia*'s circular and vertical patterning, its system of symmetries, shares family

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[2] See, for instance, Beatrice's words in *Paradiso* I: "e cominciò: 'Le cose tutte quante / hanno ordine tra loro, e questo è forma / che l'universo a Dio fa simigliante" (vv. 103–105).

[3] Auerbach also discusses this phenomenon in visual arts, remarking that "[f]rom the very beginning of Christian art and poetry, the *figurae* have a tendency to appear in series. These series of figures can be found already on the early Christian sarcophagi; we find for example the liberation of Joseph from the pit, the liberation of Jonah from the belly of the whale (after three days) and the resuscitation of Lazarus (also after three days) represented side by side as figures of Christ's resurrection" ("Typological Symbolism in Medieval Literature" 8).

[4] With regards to Dante's stylistic experimentation and the relationship between the Old Testament and the *Commedia*, see Ricci 197–229.

resemblances with other contemporary products of Dante's culture, particularly in terms of spatial semiotics.

The archive presented in this chapter share familiarities in the sense of Wittgenstein's notion of *Familienähnlichkeit*, that is, things thought to be connected by one essential feature in common may be joined by a nexus of continuous and discontinuous connections linking two or more things, a web of overlapping similarities rather than one in particular.[5] Cogan makes a similar observation regarding the structural symmetries, along moral lines, between *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*: "[t]here seems to be obscure symmetries between the two realms—as, indeed, we would expect there should be, since both are concerned, if in different ways, with the same subject, sin—but *these half-symmetries tease our understanding with their simultaneous parallelism (perhaps reciprocity would be a better term) and incompleteness*" (79 emphasis added). As stated by Kleinhenz (2003) and Fido (1986), conceiving the *Commedia* as containing a mechanical scheme is to misunderstand the Middle Ages profoundly.

Singleton's "master patterns" or "modes of thought and feeling" can be understood as a particular *sensus communis*, a second nature, a deeply ingrained habit or skill to perceive, understand, and judge, that is shared by a group of people, at a specific given time, in a particular place. It is very much kindred to C. S. Lewis' conception of a medieval "Model of the universe": an implicit, provisional, and commonly shared heuristic device, a valuable mode of organizing and interpreting signs.[6] For Lewis, this "Model" is not only a "supreme medieval work of art" but also

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[6] Lewis describes the "Model" as such: "[t]his is the medieval synthesis itself, the whole organisation of their theology, science, and history into a single, complex, harmonious mental Model of the Universe. The building of this Model is conditioned by two factors (...): the essentially bookish character of their culture, and their intense love of system. They are bookish. They are indeed very credulous of books. They find it hard to believe that anything an old *auctour*

"the central work, that in which most particular works were embedded, to which they constantly referred, from which they drew a great deal of strength" (12). More to the point, in connection to the *Commedia*, Lewis remarks how the "[d]elighted contemplation of the Model and intense religious feeling of a specifically Christian character are seldom fused except in the work of Dante" (19). As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Dante re-presented said model within the frame of his poem. The "Model" is an aid in organizing and interpreting data from texts and images; in sum, a constructivist model for discovering patterns. In this light, vertical hermeneutics should be understood as an integral part of a broader, more comprehensive worldview that existed during the Middle Ages that involved using a model, an interpretative grid, in the creation, organization, and analysis of texts and images.[7]

The two significant factors that shaped said model were biblical exegesis and the arts of rhetoric and memory. In addition to the poem's *rapprochement* to Scripture and its authors through its structure and partitions, vertical hermeneutics is also related to biblical exegesis because two out of the three allegorical senses, the typological and the anagogical, invite intratextual analysis to reveal patterns of meaning. Typological allegory invites readers to find within the Old Testament figural correspondences with the New Testament. Anagogy, much like the repetition of "stelle" at the end of each *cantica*, calls upon the reader to see things from the perspective of the end, thus allowing for patterns of meaning to emerge from that privileged viewpoint, like Singleton's retrospective methodology. Augustine best describes this understanding of narrative time best when, in his *Confessions* (XI, xxviii, 38), he compares it to a gradually unfolding

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has said is simply untrue" (11). He later adds how "[o]n the highest level, (...) the Model was recognised as provisional" (16). It is also interesting to note the contemporary and complementary nature of the works of Lewis (1964), Singleton (1965), and Kermode (1967).

[7] For an example of how spatial semiotics influenced the rise of a new type of religious library within mendicant orders in the Duecento, see Petrucci 206.

sentence whose meaning can only be grasped once it ends, that is to say, the sense of all the various elements of a sentence, or one's life, is only manifest once it reaches a complete stop. This is especially true with Latin syntax since verbs were often—following Cicero's style—positioned at the end of a sentence. Therefore, the structuralist interpretative mode of Singleton's retrospective reading, the fourfold allegorical interpretation of Scripture, and vertical hermeneutics can all be subsumed under the broader category of intratextuality. They all share a common interest in correspondences between various sections of a text, whether numerical or not.

There are, however, two significant issues. If there indeed existed in Dante's time a ubiquitous way to see and read images and texts to extract complementary meanings out of their spatial organization and their interrelations, whether Singleton's "master patterns" or Lewis' "Model," why is there no explicit mention of the vertical patterning of the *Commedia* within the early commentary tradition? Despite the instant popularity and numerous commentaries on the *Commedia*, there is no explicit mention of a vertical pattern in the commentary tradition before the twentieth century. The issue of allegory certainly complicates matters, which, unlike vertical readings, is a well-observed medieval pattern over which *dantisti* have argued for centuries.[8]

In the twentieth century, the debate reemerged through the work of Singleton, who noted that "[t]he allegory of the *Divine Comedy* is [...] so clearly the 'allegory of the theologians' (as the *Letter to Can Grande* by its example says it is) that I can only continue to wonder at the efforts made to see it as the 'allegory of the poets'" ("Dante's Allegory" 81).[9] Part I of this chapter

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[8] See Barański "[t]he issue of Dante's relationship to the allegorical tradition and, in particular, of the *Commedia*'s dependence on its forms has, for centuries, represented the major area of disagreement between his readers" ("Dante Alighieri. Experimentation and (Self-) Exegesis." 579).

[9] See Ascoli, who begins his essay on Dante and allegory, by stating: "[s]ince the seminal work of Charles Singleton in the 1950s, the subject of allegory has been at the controversial heart of Dante scholarship" ("Dante and Allegory" 128). For the situation in Italy, the debate arose out of different circumstances, mainly as a reaction to Crocean aesthetics. See Padoan: "[m]inimizzare o, peggio, negare tutto ciò significa rinunciare a capire perché Dante potesse chiamare 'sacro' il suo poema, significa rischiare l'alea di un totale fraintendimento della Comedìa" ["to minimize or,

analyzes Dante's writings and interpretive practices that touch upon allegory to get a clearer picture of his adaptation of traditional and contemporary literary theory.

The position taken is that Dante lifts upwards—*sursum ducit*—the binary distinction between the allegory of the poets and that of the theologians. In Hegelian terms, one can say that the binary system has undergone the dialectal process of *aufhebung*: its original dynamics are both abolished and preserved, being raised upwards to a higher plane. All that was previously reasonable in the previous system is kept but now set within a superior frame through a dialectical process. To speak of both allegorical modes as mutually exclusive hermeneutic systems is to grossly misrepresent the status of literary theory in Dante's time. A hermeneutic built off of contradictions is possible. Moreover, Dante was able to complete this paradigm shift by literalizing the spiritual senses in his poem.

If allegorical exegesis was divided into two modes, one for poets and another for theologians, they, in turn, were also partitioned into two levels of interpretation: literal and spiritual. The allegory of the poets customarily contains a fictive literal sense and a moral tropological sense; conversely, the allegory of the theologians has a true literal sense and three spiritual senses: typological, tropological, and anagogic. A temporal frame structures these senses: the typological relates to the past, the tropological to the present, and the anagogic to the future. Typology compares figures and symbols from the Old Testament with those found in the New Testament. Tropology is concerned with the present, seeking to relate the passage to our contemporary lives as Christians. Lastly, anagogy looks toward the future, to the end of time but with a retrospective glance at the present.

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far worse, to deny all this means to renounce an understanding as to why Dante called his poem 'sacro', it means risking a total misunderstanding of the *Commedia*"] ("La «mirabile visione» di Dante e l'Epistola a Cangrande" 39).

Dante literalized the allegory of the theologians by commingling two levels of exegesis: the literal and the spiritual; therefore, the *Commedia* is literally typological, tropological, and anagogic. The poem provides a view from the end of time (anagogic), where individual souls reap the rewards of their earthly existence since they are figures of their historical life (typological), and it is written "in pro del mondo che mal vive" (*Purg.* XXXII, v. 103), that is, to spiritually elevate his contemporaries (tropologic). The distinctions between pagan and scriptural texts were already eroded by Dante's time; however, Dante "decidedly obliterates ... the distinction between the allegory of the poets and allegory of the theologians conventionally based on the fictive or nonfictive status of the literal sense" (Mazzotta "Allegory: Poetics of the Desert" 252).

Part II of this chapter sheds light on some of the possible reasons why the early commentary tradition does not explicitly mention any vertical correspondences in Dante's poem. One hypothesis is that commentators did not grasp Dante's exegetical clues and therefore lacked the necessary critical apparatus to unearth the poem's symmetrical patterns. Nevertheless, as will be shown, early thirteenth-century commentators did increasingly pay attention to intratextuality in the *Commedia*.

As an early scholar and poet, Boccaccio figures prominently in this investigation since he addressed the relationship between Dante, poetry, and allegory in three key works: the *Trattatello*, the *Genealogia*, and his public lectures on Dante's poem, the *Esposizioni*. Moreover, he also was a poet who sought to imitate Dante's style, thus giving him the dual perspective of being both a theorist and a practitioner. Boccaccio understood Dante's allegorical claims but was a reticent commentator at best due to socio-political and personal circumstances. Ultimately, his *Amorosa visione*, an allegorical poem written in imitation of Dante's *Commedia*, reveals Boccaccio's

awareness of the poem's vertical patterning.[10] His use of an acrostic as a compositional scheme for the entire poem and his representation of the figure of Ulysses, mediated by a vertical reading of the twenty-sixth canto of both *Inferno* and *Paradiso*, indicate an awareness of symmetrical textual patterns in Dante's poem.

Acrostics are akin to vertical readings because, in functional terms, a complementary meaning is generated by the vertical layout of a textual element, in this case, the first letter of a tercet. Its position and repetition on the page, typically offset on the manuscript, would make it obvious to any careful reader or scribe, for example, in Quaglio and Pasquini's commentary to *Par*. XIX, they qualify the "LVE" acrostic as a "disegno *verticale*" ('vertical design') and, later, as a "lettura *verticale* del testo" ('vertical reading of the text') (326 emphasis added). This form of vertical patterning is the same when considering cross-canticle correspondences. Each textual element's relative position, such as a *canto* sharing the same numerical position in a sequence, generates complementary meaning.

This investigative thread of imitators of Dante's poem will lead us to Petrarch's response to Dante, yet another vexed question in Italian studies. Despite the complicated nature of the debate, this section is brief and focuses on one work in particular, Petrarch's most Dantean poem, the *Trionfi*. Not only was Petrarch conscious of Dante's strategies of self-authorization, whether via the figure of Ulysses or Oderisi's discourse on the arts on the terrace of pride in *Purgatorio*, but he was able to manipulate them for his own literary goals and self-fashioning as an *auctor*. Furthermore, the *Trionfi* reveal a surprising and exciting genealogy of lyric poetry's vertical layout, as hinted at in the preceding chapter with *scriptio continua*. The paternity of the format is

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[10] See Usher who describes Boccaccio's writing of the *Amorosa visione*, his most Dantesque work, as "a bold move for somebody of Boccaccio's generation, as the cult of Dante had not yet begun in earnest, and Dante's quirky contrarian political stance still made for uncomfortable reading in Florence" (119).

traditionally attributed to Petrarch but what is shown is that its roots lay in his experimentation with Dante's poetics, *in specie*, his *confronto* with the *Commedia*. In sum, this chapter confronts the thorny issue of Dante and allegory and tries to understand why commentators in the early commentary tradition did not mention vertical patterns.

## Part I: Dante and Allegory

*Beatus qui legit, et audit verba prophetiae hujus,*
*et servat ea, quae in ea scripta sunt: tempus enim prope est.*

– Apocalypsis 1:3.[11]

Although the term 'allegory' appears nowhere in the *Commedia* and no interpretative key is overtly

provided within the poem, Dante does directly indicate to the reader that allegory is at play at two

specific occasions: *Inferno* IX (vv. 61–63) and *Purgatorio* VIII (vv. 19–21). An analysis of two

key elements surrounding the first address to the reader—Virgil's use of aposiopesis and the

subsequent apparition of the "messo celeste"—reveals how *Inferno* IX is a meta-*canto* about

hermeneutics. Both instances indicate a synthesis of pagan and Scriptural elements whereby

Virgil's poetics and the Old Testament are put on equal footing.

As for Dante's other works, the topic of allegory is directly addressed by him in the

*Convivio* and the perpetually debated *Epistola a Can Grande*.[12] The debate regarding the *Epistle*'s

authenticity is significant because if it is Dante's, it theoretically should provide precious and

clarifying elements regarding the poem's mode of signification. Regrettably, as will be shown,

there seems to be no consensus about its authenticity nor what it states regarding allegory. The

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[11] ["Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near" (NRSV trans.).]

[12] For an update on the question of the *Epistle*'s authenticity, see De Ventura who remarks: "la discussione sull'epistola a Cangrande è uno dei migliori esempi di certo accanimento accademico, fatto di botte e risposte, di duelli privati senza esclusione di colpi" ["the discussion surrounding the Epistle to Cangrande is one of the best examples of academic doggedness, made of blows and backlash, of private duels with no holds barred"] (4). For more on the recent discovery by Azzetta of a mention of the letter in 1343, see Barański's "The *Epistle to Can Grande*" 583–589. Recent research on the Florentine notary Andrea Lancia has showed that, in the early 1340s, prior to the previously first attested mention of the letter with Filippo Villani in circa 1405, the *Epistle* "era nota nella sua interezza ed era attribuita al poeta" ["was known in its entirety and attributed to the Poet] (Lancia and Azzetta 25; Azzetta, "Le Chiose Alla 'Commedia' Di Andrea Lancia, l''Epistola a Cangrande' e Altre Questioni Dantesche" 37). See also Hollander's most recent article on the topic that takes to task Ginzburg's recent hypothesis of a Boccaccian hoax: "Due recenti contributi al dibattito sull'autenticità dell'Epistola a Cangrande," in *Letteratura italiana antica: rivista annuale di testi e studi* 10 (2009): 541–552. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the *Epistle* is beyond a doubt Dante's.

scholarly interpretations of both questions are overdetermined by an *a priori* position on the *Commedia*'s allegorical status, thus further complicating matters.

As for the *Convivio*, its exposition of both allegorical systems appears at first glance generic and somewhat clumsy. However, a closer look reveals what Dante is dissimulating: the possibility of both forms co-existing in his poetry. Two key elements support this position: first, his elision of the figure of Orpheus with that of Christ; second, Dante's glosses to the *canzone* "Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete." The poet's self-commentary reveals a structuralist hermeneutic strategy anchored in the biblical exegetical practice of *divisio textus*. This approach focuses on the literal surface of the text, its structure, order, and numbering, to reveal the *sentenza* of his verses.

## The *Commedia*

*A good writer wants from us—or has no right to ask more than—intelligence, good faith, and time.*

– John Jeremiah Sullivan, "Foreword," *Absalom, Absalom!* (x).

In the *Commedia*, Dante-poet directly addresses his reader on numerous occasions, beckoning them to interpret and pay attention to what is about to unfold or ponder the poet's emotional state. In sum, they are all meta-narrative moments. As Hollander neatly puts it: "[t]he more than twenty addresses to the reader (...) are perhaps the single most unmistakable sign that Dante has invited us to share the burden of the poem's interpretation, suggesting both that he has written it in such a way as to create a series of problems for the reader, and that these problems have solutions ("Dante and His Commentators" 226). In such instances, Dante displays, on the one hand, awareness of the various levels of ability of his readership and, on the other, anxiety regarding the proper interpretation of his verses. At the beginning of *Paradiso*, the poet even cautions his reader not to

follow him further if they are not adequately equipped.[13] On two other occasions, Dante specifically calls upon his reader to allegorically interpret his verses.

This preoccupation with the abilities of his readership, in terms of intellect, appears textually in the poem's first mention of allegory: "O voi ch'avete li 'ntelletti sani / mirate la dottrina che s'asconde / sotto il *velame* de li versi strani" (*Inf.* IX, vv. 61–63). The second mention of allegory also occurs in an address to the reader: "Aguzza qui, lettor, ben li occhi al vero, / ché 'l *velo* è ora ben tanto sottile, / certo che 'l trapassar dentro è leggero" (*Purg.* VIII, vv. 19–21 emphasis added). In both examples, Dante gestures at the difficulty in interpreting his verses: the need for a "sane intellect" and the presence of a very "subtle" veil. Both allude to a 'veil' (the "velame" and "velo"), what the So-Called Silvestris Commentary of the *Aeneid* refers to as an 'integumentum.' This 'outer layer or coat' is used to define the covering employed by poets to conceal the truth underneath their fictional texts.[14]

At first glance, both instances of the "veil" would seem to indicate the presence of the allegory of the poets, that is, a composition with a fictitious literal level, a covering of sorts, a beautiful lie under which a moral truth can be found. However, Dante goes to great lengths throughout his poem to substantiate his journey's veracity, that it is indeed a historical event. Therefore, the best possible hypothesis is that he willingly overrides this distinction by commingling both modes: the poem is at once literally and allegorically true and may also contain fictive elements.

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[13] See *Par.* II, vv. 1–15. This discrimination in readership will be pertinent when analyzing Dante's exposition on allegory in the *Convivio*.

[14] See, for instance, Barański's explanation: "[e]ssentially, it was believed that the fictional 'letter' acted as a veil or covering (*integumentum*, *involucrum*) under which were hidden moral, scientific, and, occasionally, even metaphysical truths, which an allegorical reading could bring to light" ("The 'Marvellous' and the 'Comic': Toward a Reading of *Inferno* XVI" 86).

The *Inferno* IX excerpt is set at the gates of Dis, where devils impede Dante-pilgrim and Virgil's ingress to the infernal city. It also precedes Dante-poet's description of an angelic figure's arrival, a *deus ex machina* who resolves the impasse and grants safe passage to both travelers. Having crossed into the infernal city, *Inferno* X introduces the reader and the pilgrim to the first sin of lower Hell: heresy. As shown in "Inter-canticle Symmetries" (Chap. 1 Part I), the ninth canto acts as a structural threshold in all three canticles. In a parallel fashion, Dante's address to the reader in *Inferno* IX asks the reader to reach the meaning and content beyond an allegorical veil: "la dottrina che s'asconde / sotto 'l velame de li versi strani" (vv. 62–63). In this way, *Inferno* IX literally enacts the function of a 'metaphor,' a carrying over in narrative and structural terms between two distinct spaces. The reader's access to the truth hidden under the veil of strange verses (textual) is analogous to the pilgrim's ingress within the infernal city (structural/narrative).[15] With words such as "parole" (vv. 12, 105) and "parola" (v. 14), being described as "diverse" (v.12), "tronca" (14), and "sante" (v. 105), language is foregrounded and meaning is questioned. The many references to language reflect, in short, that *Inferno* IX is a meta-*canto* about hermeneutics.

Mazzotta, in his analysis of the theme of heresy in *Inferno* IX–X, shows how "intelletti sani" is linked to "the heresy of reading and translates a commonplace of biblical exegesis" ("The Language of Faith: Messengers and Idols" 279).[16] Heresy derives from the Greek word 'to choose'

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[15] See Franke, who notes how "[t]his threshold (actually termed l'orribil soglia" in IX. 92), with its attendant metaphorics of depth and innerness, is chosen by Dante for intensive problematization of the pilgrim's progress, which is treated as fundamentally a hermeneutic problem and linked to that of getting inside the meaning of the poem" ("Dante's Hermeneutic Rite of Passage: *Inferno* IX" 82). He also recognizes the thematic symmetry in the co-numerary *canto* in *Purgatorio*, stating how "[t]he same metaphorics of sight, where, precisely, nonimmediacy and looking beneath or beyond an invisible, spiritual, or at any rate allegorical truth are aimed at, recurs at a juncture of the *Purgatorio* that corresponds symmetrically with *Inferno* IX, namely, the sacral representation, also a symbolic rite of passage, just before the entry from Ante-Purgatory into Purgatory proper in Canto IX" (88).

[16] See Franke who also recognizes how "the principle of impasse on the surface requiring a move to another depth and sense was, of course, fundamental to the scriptural hermeneutics of the fathers of the Church: a millenary tradition stands behind Dante's representation of impasse as the situation out of which the need for and call to *hermeneusis* arise" ("Dante's Hermeneutic Rite of Passage: *Inferno* IX" 86).

and implies an interpretative decision, an act of the intellect, imagination, and will unaided by faith in God. In sum, it "designates primarily the act of tenaciously adhering to interpretive error" (302).[17] Furthermore, by transposing the "the patristic commonplace 'intelletti sani,' to his own text, [Dante] claims that his own poem demands the same interpretive discipline accorded to the Bible" (294). Mazzotta explains how cantos IX and X dramatize "what might be called a heresy of reading, the doctrinal error of extrapolating, unaided, one's own truth from the poem." He contrasts it to "the virtue of faith in God's Word as the perspective from which the spiritual interpretation of the poem can be attained" (276).[18] Since readers are asked to correctly interpret the poem's verses, to have faith in the poet's status as a vehicle for "God's Word," and that the first sin they encounter afterward concerns heresy, a negative *exemplum* of hermeneutics, Dante-poet harmoniously merges form and content in this particular *canto*.

As for the psychopomp figure that appears, he is "the faithful interpreter of God who removes the obstacles from the pilgrim's ascent and opens the way to God" (294).[19] In sum, he is the embodiment of hermeneutics done right, an *exemplum* that literally unlocks what is beyond the text's surface. Barański, like Mazzotta, emphasizes the appearance of the celestial "messo" as an invitation to the act of interpretation.[20] What is of interest and familiar to both Barański and

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[17] See Mazzotta, who explains how: "[i]n effect, Dante develops his figuration of heresy along the broad lines of Thomas Aquinas' conception. In an elaborate passage of the *Summa*, Aquinas views heresy as a sin of choice (the word comes, he says quoting Jerome and Isidore, from the Greek *hairesis* meaning choice); as a misinterpretation of Scripture, it is a denial of the truth on which faith is founded and, in this sense, it designates an intellectual error" (283–84).

[18] As Mazzotta further explains, the allegorical interpretation of Scripture requires faith, since "faith ostensibly affords the perspective from which language can have a precise signification, and the contingent and the eternal are fused together" (295), it is "the virtue which gives coherence to the text and to life" (305).

[19] For more regarding a syncretic interpretation of the "messo," see Barsella who notes that "thus far scholars and commentators have not provided a satisfactory exegesis of this heavenly figure. One of the reasons is that this text resists univocal interpretation: the *tal* sent by Heaven is a polysemic character where a plurality of symbolic references meet. Interpretations tend to focus either on the pagan elements characterizing this figure, or on its Christian symbolism" (371).

[20] Barański will pick up this interpretative thread in his own essay on the various "cruces" disseminated within the horizontal sequence of cantos IX, X, and XI of the *Inferno*. His analysis of this triptych, echoing Mazzotta, puts a

Mazzotta is that the "messo" principally symbolizes the practice of hermeneutics and, by extension, the function of man's intellect (Barański, "Guido Cavalcanti tra le *cruces* di *Inferno* IX-XI, ovvero Dante e la storia della ragione").[21] Moreover, the "messo" is a composite figure of both Christian and pagan symbolism, particularly the figure of Mercury (Hermes) for the latter, god of boundaries, travelers, communication, as well as divination, among others.[22] This concern with interpretation and the polysemy of communication not only goes beyond the description of the "messo" to *Inferno* X and the sin of heresy depicted therein but also precedes it.[23]

Already in the canto's initial verses, after a futile attempt at reasoning with the devils, Virgil is represented undertaking an interpretive act in expectancy of someone coming to save them. He is compared to a man listening attentively, using sound to compensate for his hindered vision: "Attento si fermò com' uom ch'ascolta; / ché l'occhio nol potea menare a lunga / per l'aere nero per la nebbia folta" (vv. 4–6).[24] This image anticipates Statius' description of Virgil as a blind man leading those behind him (*Purg.* XXII, vv. 67–69). In turn, it highlights the issue of the

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particular emphasis on Guido Cavalcanti's "disdegno" that curiously occupies the same verse numbers (vv. 61–63) as Dante's address to the reader in the previous *canto*.

[21] Barański points out how the "messo" "concentra emblematicamente in sé l'interesse determinante dell'episodio per l'interpretazione—l'interpretazione, che, come sistema intellettuale e spirituale integrante esegesi, etica e conoscenza, conduce l'uomo alla salvezza oppure alla dannazione. Non sorprende quindi che i ben noti lineamenti del *messo* che lo associano a Mercurio lo situino categoricamente nella sfera dell'ermeneutica, dato che era convenzionale glossare il nome del dio come 'interprete'" ["emblematically concentrates onto itself the determining interest of the episode for interpretation—an interpretation that, as an intellectual and spiritual system integrating exegesis, ethics, and knowledge, guides man either to salvation or damnation. Therefore, it is not surprising that the well–known characteristics of the 'messo' that associate him to Mercury categorically situate him in the sphere of hermeneutics, since it was convention to gloss the name of the god as 'interpreter'"] (51).

[22] See Iannucci, who similarly argues how the "messo" embodies both pagan and scriptural elements on the basis of Hercules descent (*Inf*. IX, vv. 98–99) and the Gospel of Nicodemus: "[t]ale discesa prenderà la forma di una sintesi radicale di immagini pagane e cristiane in cui la discesa di Ercole è vista, attraverso un'appropriazione tipica dell'allegoria teologica dantesca, come prefigurazione del più determinante gesto finale di Cristo" ["such a descent will take on the form of a radical synthesis of pagan and Christian imagery whereby the descent of Hercules is seen, through a typical appropriation of theological allegory by Dante, as a prefiguration of the more determinant final gesture of Christ"] ("Dottrina e Allegoria in 'Inferno' VIII, 67–IX, 105" 102).

[23] See Franke who interprets Virgil covering Dante's eyes prior to the address to the reader, which precedes the arrival of the psychopomp figure, as virtually reproducing "Dante's hands-on obtrusion of hermeneutic direction into his text, imposing it on his reader" ("Dante's Hermeneutic Rite of Passage: *Inferno* IX" 84).

[24] Franke describes this as the "quintessentially hermeneutic posture of waiting attentively upon, of hearkening to, what must be revealed" ("Dante's Hermeneutic Rite of Passage: *Inferno* IX." 87).

hermeneutics of pagan texts, such as Virgil's "messianic" Fourth Eclogue. It also points to the pagan nature of Virgil's knowledge and experience, his limited ability to see, "ché l'occhio nol poeta menare a lunga." However, his reliance on sound rather than sight, on another sense of the intellect, allows Virgil to compensate for this lack of knowledge.

With devils impeding their ingress and facing an impasse, Virgil's thinking process is externalized: "'Pur a noi converrà vincer la punga,' / cominciò el, 'se non... Tal ne s'offerse'" (vv. 7–8). The movement goes from confidence, "we have to win this battle," to doubt, "if not...," to faith, "such a person offered us their help." The previous occurrence of the indefinite pronoun "tal" is in *Inferno* VIII, where Dante-pilgrim suggests to Virgil that "se 'l *passar più oltre* ci è negato" (v. 101 emphasis added), they should simply retrace their steps; to which the guide then replies: "non temer; ché 'l nostro *passo*, / non ci può tòrre alcun: da *tal* n'è dato" (vv. 104–105 emphases added). Virgil then tells the pilgrim to feed and comfort himself with "buona speranza" (v. 107), "good hope," to have faith in his guide and his mission. After Virgil's failed attempt at reasoning with the devils (vv. 109–120), the *canto* concludes with him lifting Dante's spirits. He indirectly references Christ's triumphant descent into Hell, alluding to the doors of *Inferno* III. Virgil then confidently states that the one who will unlock this realm is already on his way: "già di qua da lei discende l'erta, / passando per li cerchi sanza scorta, / *tal* che per lui ne fia la terra aperta" (vv. 128–130 emphasis added).

In the initial sequence of *Inferno* IX that follows and repeats this mysterious "tal," Virgil expresses himself using the rhetorical device of aposiopesis: "la parola tronca" (v. 14): "'se non... *Tal* ne s'offerse'" (v. 8 emphasis added). In turn, the aposiopesis triggers another interpretative act. This textual gap becomes an obstacle to understanding, and Dante-pilgrim interprets the presence of the device in Virgil's speech as an *integumentum*; "I' vidi ben sì com' ei *ricoperse* /

lo cominciar con l'altro che poi venne, / che fur *parole* a le prime diverse; (vv. 10–12 emphasis added). Dante-pilgrim is confronted with Virgil's veiled words and seeks to uncover their meaning. Interestingly, Dante pre-emptively admits that he overshot his understanding of the "sentenzia" of Virgil's words: "io *traeva* la *parola tronca* / forse a peggior *sentenzia* che non tenne" (vv. 14–15 emphasis added). He extracted, 'ex-trahere,' carried out of Virgil's use of aposiopesis a meaning it did not necessarily have.[25] Dante is questioning Virgil's knowledge. He lacks faith in his guide; hence his follow-up question (vv. 16–18), to which Virgil responds by deferring to the authority of another Latin *auctor*: Lucan's *Pharsalia* (vv. 19–33).[26]

Virgil's use of aposiopesis in the *Aeneid* also occurs at the walls of a fortified city, when Sinon, "'l falso Sinon greco di Troia" (*Inf.* XXX, v. 98), uses the rhetorical figure to deceive the Trojans into accepting the Greek horse (*Aeneid* II, vv. 57–194). This intertextual web between the *Commedia* and the *Aeneid* reveals a primary concern with interpreting God's *signa* in history. On the one hand, *Inferno* IX can be said to be representing the dark aspects of classical culture, with the Medusa and the Furies making an appearance. On the other, Dante's self-indictment for not extracting the proper meaning from Virgil's discourse is an implicit concession to the positive value that pagan knowledge and poetics can have when strengthened by faith. Unbeknownst to the Trojans, their falling prey to Sinon's rhetorical ruse will ultimately have a positive outcome despite

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[25] The verb "trahere" is etymologically linked to "tractate" and the terms *forma tractatus* and *forma tractandi*, and relates to invention and composition, see Carruthers (*The Book of Memory* 250–51). As Franke points out, the term "sentenzia" is also "a technical term used in medieval schools for a third level of reading: beyond grammatical comprehension of the *littera* and a grasp of the 'sensus' (content), the higher doctrinal significance of a text was termed 'sententia'" ("Dante's Hermeneutic Rite of Passage: *Inferno* IX" 83 n.1).

[26] Iannucci and Hollander have both interpreted the intertextual reference to Lucan's Erichto at the gates of Dis as emblematic of a significant shift in Virgil's influence on Dante's poetics. See, for example, Iannucci, who remarks that "[t]he Erichtho scene therefore has a symbolic function which marks a shift to an increased reliance on Lucan whose work now sets the tone for much of lower Hell" ("Virgil's Erichthean Descent and the Crisis of Intertextuality" 20).

their limited understanding of God's role in the unfolding of history, be it the foundation of Rome

through Aeneas or Christ dying as a Roman citizen.

Returning to Barański, his analysis' thrust is that, in Dante's view, the human intellect

needs to be subservient to divine revelation. Only in this way can one correctly interpret the

polysemous signs of our existence. Barański explains that, for Dante, "la ragione umana, per

pienamente realizzare le sue potenzialità, ha molto più bisogno dei *signa* divini che dei meccanismi

raziocinativi dell'intelligenza" ("Guido Cavalcanti tra le *cruces* di *Inferno* IX-XI, ovvero Dante e

la storia della ragione" 73).[27] In other words, pagan culture—whether it be poetry, ethics, or

philosophy—appears limited and unable to overcome the evil with which it is confronted, hence

Virgil getting spurned by the devils when attempting to reason with them. Despite recognizing this

orthodox difference between pagan and Christian culture, the various signs embodied by the

"messo" and Virgil's faith in the arrival of an indefinite "tal" conversely illustrate Dante's

syncretistic approach to both: "sottolineando in questo modo non solo le rispettive conquiste delle

due ere e la possibilità della loro interazione, ma anche, e più significativamente, la presenza del

divino lungo il corso intero della storia" ("Guido Cavalcanti tra le *cruces* di *Inferno* IX-XI, ovvero

Dante e la storia della ragione" 66).[28] Said differently, both divine providence and human intellect

constitute elements of continuity between pagan and Christian history.

The rigid binary system of the allegory of the theologians and the allegory of the poets was

already eroded in Dante's time. As Botterill explains, "[b]y the beginning of the fourteenth century,

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[27] ["human reason, to fully realize its potential, has much more need of divine signs than the ratiocinative mechanics of the intellect."]

[28] ["underlining, in this way, not only the respective conquests of both eras and the possibility of their interaction, but also, and more significantly, the presence of the divine along the entire course of history."] See also Barsella, who notes that "[i]n the Middle Ages, pagan and Christian imageries were seen in a figural relation, where the pagan era prefigured the Christian era. This intellectual attitude was founded on the belief that God manifested Himself to men even before Revelation; pagan divinities were but the signs of God's intervention in the world. A relation of continuity was believed to characterize these two cultures, which in the aesthetic sensibility of the Middle Ages overlapped [sic] and transformed into each other" (383).

it had long been acknowledged that a few privileged secular works—most notably, Virgil's Fourth Eclogue, which was read as prophesying the coming of Christ—could not entirely be contained within the confines of the 'allegory of the poets'" (590). It is for this purpose that Dante has Statius tell Virgil, using one of the most beautiful similes in the poem, that "[f]acesti come quei che va di notte, / che porta il lume dietro e sé non giova, / ma dopo sé fa le persone dotte," followed with the emphatic: "[p]er te poeta fui, per te cristiano" (*Purg.* XXII, vv. 67–69, 73). As Mazzotta aptly puts it: "Dante dramatizes the spiritual conversion of Statius in terms of a literary conversion through the mediation of Vergil's 'prophetic' writings" ("Dante's Literary Typology" 2). Dante highlights how Virgil's pagan poetry led to Statius' conversion to Christianity; he had interpreted his verses with a sane intellect, one bolstered by faith.

Dante's representation of a blind Virgil in *Inferno* IX and *Purgatorio* XXII juxtaposes an image used initially by Augustine to describe the spiritual condition of the Jews: "O Jews, you carried in your hands the lamp of the law in order to show the way to others while you remained in the darkness" (*De Symbolo ad Catechumenos sermo*, IV, 4, *PL* 40, 664, qtd. in "Dante's Literary Typology" 16). Dante "brings secular history and salvation history into one focus, and more particularly, the process of transposition of the methods of patristic hermeneutics from the Bible into secular literature" (16). Dante conceives Virgil's poetics as historically accurate and not necessarily fictive, prefiguring—like the Old Testament—Christianity's truths. *In nuce*, Virgil's poetics are being put by Dante at the same level of historical validity as the prophets of the Old Testament. Furthermore, Dante's two models, or say authorities, Scripture and Virgil, contained the possibility of having both allegorical forms. Not all passages of Scripture contained a clear

literal or historical sense. In contrast, the *Aeneid*, much like the *Pharsalia* and other classical texts, was deemed to narrate actual historical events, thus operating with its framework of truth-claims.[29]

At the beginning of the poem, Dante replies to Virgil that "Io non Enëa, io non Paulo sono;" (*Inf.* II, v. 32). He explicitly puts side-by-side the *Aeneid* and the Pauline epistles and implicitly indicates their shared historical reality, continuity, and similarity. Moreover, their respective motions are unified in Dante's poem: Aeneas' *katabasis* and the apostle Paul's *elevatio* form vertical lines and, by their down-and-up movement, a circle as well. As a matter of fact, with these verses, Dante commingles both forms of literature and states the opposite. Retrospectively, his simile introducing his encounter with Cacciaguida as akin to that of Aeneas and Anchises (*Par.* XV vv. 25–27), the reference to the healing hand of Ananias, linking Paul's blindness and healing with Dante-pilgrim's **(***Par.* XXVI, v. 12), confirm that, indeed, he *is* Aeneas, he *is* Paul.[30]

In the *Monarchia*, Dante considers the events narrated in the *Aeneid* as historical facts: "il poema virgiliano è considerato quasi un libro sacro, la Bibbia dell'impero, e la visione d'Enea e messa quasi sullo stesso piano della visione di san Paolo" (Nardi, "Dante Profeta" 301).[31]

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[29] Hollander also takes a similar position, underlining the typological function of Virgil and his *Aeneid*: "[a]nd if the poet himself, as protagonist of his own poem, is the new Aeneas (...), if the *Commedia* is the new *Aeneid*, then I am not surprised that *Paradiso* is the new Elysium. And so I am willing, am even compelled, to argue for a 'figuralized' Virgil in Dante's treatment, one different from all other medieval treatments of Virgil. I am not arguing that Dante believed that Virgil's poem had four senses (even if Servius did say it was 'polysemous,' a word Dante will use to describe his own poem in the Epistle), but that he did take its literal sense as historical, or realized, as Singleton would later realize of the *Commedia*, that the fictional pretext of the *Aeneid* is that the work is not fiction, but history" ("Dante 'Theologus-Poeta'" 110).

[30] See, for example, Barolini who writes: "the pilgrim's concern that 'Io non Enëa, io non Paulo sono' (*Inf.* 2.32) is a supreme example of the double bind in which Dante is placed as the guarantor of his own prophetic status: the very act by which the pilgrim demonstrates humility serves the poet as a vehicle for recording his visionary models and for telling us, essentially, that 'Io *sì* Enëa, io *sì* Paulo sono'" ("Ulysses, Geryon, and the Aeronautics of Narrative Transition" 57). For more parallels between the apostle Paul and Dante, see Brownlee "Language and Desire in *Paradiso* XXVI" 46–59.

[31] ["the Virgilian poem is almost considered as a sacred book, the Bible of empire, and Aeneas' vision is almost put on the same level as St. Paul's vision."] Nardi states this aptly, "[l]a discesa d'Enea all'Eliso del pari che il *raptus* di san Paolo al terzo cielo, intorno al quale esiste una copiosissima letteratura teologica medievale, non sono per Dante semplici finzioni poetiche, ma veraci visioni concesse per una grazia speciale a questi due uomini privilegiati, in vista della missione affidata ad essi da Dio, per la fondazione dell'impero e per la propagazione della fede cristiana" ["Aeneas' descent to Elysium as well as St. Paul's raptus to the third heaven, around which exists a very copious theological medieval literature, are not for Dante simple poetic fictions, but true visions conceded by a special grace

Auerbach also substantiates this position when addressing the presence of Cato as a gatekeeper in *Purgatorio*, noting that: "Dante believed in a predetermined concordance between the Christian story of salvation and the Roman secular monarchy; thus it is not surprising that he should apply the figural interpretation to a pagan Roman," adding that "in general he draws his symbols, allegories, and figures from both worlds without distinction" ("'Figura'" 67). In the previously unfinished *Convivio*, Dante elevates intellect, via Lady Philosophy, to the status of a Solomonic *Sponsa Dei* (III, xi, 13); only to later apply it, perhaps as a palinode, to the figure of Beatrice in the *Commedia* (Purg. XXX, vv. 10–12). One can sense that Dante, in the unfinished *Convivio*, is treading on heretical—or at least heterodox—ground. These instances are examples of Dante's re-evaluation of pagan culture in light of faith in Christian truth.

Albeit provisionally abandoned in the *Convivio*, this hermeneutic project was taken up once more with greater rigor and boldness in the *Commedia*. Within the poem's allegorical framework, "not only the world of the Christian religion, but also the ancient world is included in Dante's figural system; the Roman empire of Augustus is for Dante a figure of God's eternal empire, and the prominent part Virgil plays in Dante's work is based on this assumption" (Auerbach, "Typological Symbolism in Medieval Literature" 6).[32] The relationship between pagan and Scriptural hermeneutics, intellect, faith, and heresy forms the dominant theme of *Inferno* IX.[33] In

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to these two privileged men, in light of the mission entrusted to them by God, for the foundation of the empire and the propagation of Christian faith"] ("Dante Profeta" 285). Scott also points out how in the *Monarchia* Dante assigns to Virgil the epithet 'divinus' (II, iii, 9) and that the *Aeneid* "ranks as a historical source and that Aeneas' descent to the underworld constitutes historical fact in *Conv*. IV. xxvi. 9" ("Dante's Allegory" 576–77).

[32] As Barański explains, in Dante's perspective: "i rapporti ideologici tra il paganesimo e la cristianità, non [sono] visti riduttivamente come due mondi in opposizione, ma valutati ciascuno *ex bono* e *ex malo*, cosicché i meriti ed i demeriti di entrambi, come anche i loro punti di contatto, possano emergere" ["the ideological links between paganism and Christianity are not reductively seen as two worlds in opposition, but instead, both are assessed *ex bono* and *ex malo*, so that the merits and demerits of each, as well as their points of contact, can emerge"] ("Guido Cavalcanti tra le *cruces* di *Inferno* IX-XI, ovvero Dante e la storia della ragione" 79).

[33] See, for example, Lansing's remark that "[f]or critics like Pietrobono and Nardi, Dante's love of philosophy constitutes a kind of heretical, secular philosophism based on reason and not revelation, amounting to a sinful straying from the right way. For some, indeed, the image of the *selva oscura* in the opening lines of *Inferno* records the poet's crisis of pure philosophism, his error in abandoning Beatrice for Lady Philosophy, and his ultimate rejection of his

sum, the ideological relations and tensions between paganism and Christianity are the central issues hidden under the "veil" of Dante's strange verses.[34]

In a somewhat roundabout yet ingenious way, Dante-poet disburdens himself of the accusation of heresy by displacing interpretative responsibility onto the reader. As Franke remarks, "[a]lthough Dante is confronted with mythological enemies, to understand them as such is really the reader/interpreter's victory, and in this sense the burden of the journey shifts to the reader's interpretive journey" ("Dante's Hermeneutic Rite of Passage: *Inferno* IX" 90). He later goes on to specify that "[o]nce it has, through the hermeneutic process, been given its due doctrinal weight, myth comes to represent a means of revelation rather than a dangerously seductive veil" (100). Readers need a particular intellectual apparatus alongside faith in the poet's authority as a vernacular author, the same way they should in interpreting Scriptural and pagan authors.[35] Consequently, the poem integrates both hermeneutic modes, just like biblical exegetes were doing during Dante's time. Pagan texts do partake in a legitimate historical truth and, conversely, fiction can also be present in Scripture. This brief exploration of the *Inferno* passage shows that one should not approach allegory in the *Commedia* within a binary framework; that would be like thinking that our two eyes should be seeing two different pictures instead of a unified image.

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moral lapse (Purg. 30–31)" (230). However, as will be shortly demonstrated, the operative process in the *Convivio* is one of synthesis, not exclusion. As Lansing points out "in the *Convivio* Dante never explicitly sets reason in opposition to faith or philosophy against theology;" adding that, "[h]is goal (...) is forever one of synthesis, of bringing together, or at least correlating, diverse systems of thought" (230).

[34] Franke rightly remarks how the address to the reader "enacts at the metanarratological level the same sequence of impasse-calling-forth-interpretation that is illustrated within the narrative" ("Dante's Hermeneutic Rite of Passage: *Inferno* IX" 86).

[35] Barański explains that the poem is the fruit of such a historical collaboration, imitating simultaneously "le forme della Sacra Scrittura e della *tragedia* classica" ["the forms of Sacred Scripture and classical tragedy"] ("Guido Cavalcanti tra le *cruces* di *Inferno* IX-XI, ovvero Dante e la storia della ragione" 70).

**The *Epistle to Can Grande***

The long-standing dispute in Dante studies regarding the *Commedia*'s allegorical purport was revived in Italy in the early Novecento in reaction to yet another binary structure: Croce's "poesia e non-poesia." As a result of Croce's dismissal of the poem's theological content, notable Italian *dantisti*, such as Luigi Pietrobono, Michele Barbi, and Giorgio Padoan, and Bruno Nardi, reacted by emphasizing its prophetic character.[36] Nevertheless, as Padoan explains, in the first half of the twentieth century and spilling over to the second; "si registra, soprattutto in Italia, piuttosto la tendenza a lasciar cadere quella linea interpretativa, a minimizzare il carattere profetico del poema, a ridurne la effettiva tensione escatologica a qualche passo particolare, a qualche singola affermazione, come componente laterale e non essenziale dell'opera" ("La «mirabile visione» di Dante e l'Epistola a Cangrande" 31).[37] In Italy, the Crocean axiom of interpreting the poem as a poetic invention, a '*fictio poetica*,' remains strong today, despite Singleton's influence to inspire a medieval, religiously-minded interpretative approach.[38]

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[36] For example, Nardi writes: "[p]oesia, e poesia altissima, è certamente il poema dantesco, come permeati di poesia sono i libri profetici della Bibbia; ma il motivo centrale che anima siffatta poesia è un motivo morale e religioso, sì che chi considera la visione dantesca e il rapimento del poeta al cielo come finzioni letterarie, travisa il senso di quello che per Dante è, prima di tutto, 'poema sacro,' perché inteso a narrare la meravigliosa rivelazione concessa allo spirito del poeta da Dio" ["poetry, and most exalted poetry, is certainly Dante's poem, just as permeated with poetry are the prophetic books of the Bible; but the central motive that animates said poetry is a moral and religious motive, so that whomsoever considers Dante's vision and his raptus to the heavens as a literary fiction misrepresents the meaning of what, for Dante, is first and foremost, a sacred poem, understood as narrating the marvelous revelation conceded to the poet's spirit by God"] ("Dante Profeta" 308). For a succinct analysis of Nardi's theoretical position, as well as the history of the handling of Dante's truth claims, see Barolini's "Detheologizing Dante: Realism, Reception, and the Resources of Narrative" 3–20.

[37] ["one denotes, especially in Italy, the tendency to discard such an interpretative line, to minimize the prophetic character of the poem, to reduce from it its effective eschatological tension to some some particular passage, to some particular saying, as a lateral and non-essential component of the poem."] Barolini explains the situation succinctly: "Italian *dantismo*'s protectionist attitude toward what it calls the 'poetry' is a Crocean legacy, and Croce's reading—motivated by his legitimate disgust with deracinated allegorizing—represents in its essence nothing but a willed and consistent application of a method already canonical in Dante studies, to wit, the dichotomized *theologus-poeta*" ("Detheologizing Dante: Realism, Reception, and the Resources of Narrative" 7).

[38] See, for example, Lanapoppi who refutes Singleton and writes: "sembra che la conclusione discenda da sola: poiché Dante non è certo disceso di persona all'*Inferno*, né egli pretendeva, per quanto ne sappiamo finora, che il lettore credesse alla realtà storica del viaggio, l'allegoria della *Commedia* si presenta come allegoria 'dei poeti': un significato di verità nascosto sotto il velo della favola o dell'invenzione poetica" ["it seems that the answer is self-evident: since Dante certainly did not go in person to Hell, nor did he have the pretension, so far as we know, that the reader would

What follows is a perfect example of the intricacies regarding allegory in the *Commedia* in twentieth-century Italian scholarship, mediated by the *Epistle*'s reception and the subsequent *Cangrande Dispute*.[39] For Mazzoni, the *Epistle* is indeed genuine, and it treats the poem as a poetic allegory.[40] Nardi directly refutes Mazzoni and negates the *Epistle*'s authenticity. One primary reason is that its content contradicts the theological purport of the poem's allegory (Minnis and Scott, "Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 440).[41]

| Scholars | Authenticity of the Epistle | Content of the Epistle in Terms of Allegory | Allegory of the Commedia |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Mazzoni* | Y | Poet | Poet |
| *Nardi* | N | Poet | Theologian |
| *Padoan* | Y | Theologian | Theologian |

Table 1 – Italian Scholarship on the Question of the Epistle's Authenticity, Content, and the Allegorical Mode of the *Commedia*.

believe the historical reality of the voyage, the allegory of the *Commedia* presents itself as an allegory of 'the poets': a true meaning hidden under the veil of a fable or of a poetic invention"] (19).

[39] An indirect tradition allows the dating of its first mention to Villani in 1405. The first scholar to put into doubt the authenticity of the *Epistle* was Scolari in 1819 with his *Note ad alcuni luoghi delli primi cinque canti della "Divina Commedia"* 17-21 (De Ventura 5).

[40] See Mazzoni "Per l'Epistola a Cangrande" 498–516 and "L'Epistola a Cangrande" 157–198.

[41] With the exception of the first thirteen paragraphs, Nardi—as well as his student Giorgio Brugnoli—regarded the letter as inauthentic (Barański, "Comedìa: Dante, l'Epistola a Cangrande e la commedia medievale" 43). As Barolini explains, "[w]hile Singleton grounds his defense of the *Commedia*'s literal sense in an appeal to the Epistle to Cangrande (...) Nardi refuses to acknowledge the Dantesque paternity of much of the Epistle because he thinks that it treats the poem's literal sense as mere *fictio*" ("Detheologizing Dante: Realism, Reception, and the Resources of Narrative"7).

In sum, Mazzoni and Nardi disagree on its authenticity yet agree on what its contents express: a poetic fiction, an allegory of the poets.[42] But the plot thickens since Padoan, a student of Nardi, will side with Mazzoni's argument that the *Epistle* is authentic but does so to defend Nardi's position that the *Commedia* is indeed an allegory of the theologians.[43] Padoan and Mazzoni agree on its authenticity but not on what its contents express. Conversely, Mazzoni and Nardi agree on its content but not on its authenticity. The poem's allegorical mode is intrinsically linked to the issue surrounding the authenticity and content of the *Epistle*. To summarize, Ascoli states it best when he notes how "[the *Epistle*'s] authenticity is affirmed or denied in tandem with the critic's perception that it either supports or undermines his or her interpretation of the poem" ("Access to Authority: Dante in the Epistle to Cangrande" 312).[44]

For Singleton, the *Commedia* is without a doubt an allegory of the theologians, as he believes the *Epistle* demonstrates, following an interpretation shared by prominent medievalists outside of Italy, like Etienne Gilson and Henri de Lubac (Padoan, "La «mirabile visione» di Dante e l'Epistola a Cangrande" 55–56).[45] Conversely, Minnis and Scott's analysis of the *Epistle* deems

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[42] Nardi interprets the intention of the *Epistle*'s author as "proprio quello di scagionare il Poeta dalle accuse d'eresia," by grounding the allegory of the poem as a poetic fiction ["really trying to exonerate the Poet from the accusation of heresy"] (*Il punto sull'Epistola a Cangrande* 30).

[43] For Padoan, the letter—particularly in its last paragraphs—clearly indicates its prophetic character: "nell'*Epistola*— proprio come abbiamo visto per la *Comedìa*—si afferma esplicitamente che non di viaggio metaforico si tratta, né di immaginazione di fantasia, bensì di vera e propria 'elevatio ad coelum'" ["in the *Epistle*—just as we have seen in the *Commedia*—it is explicitly stated that it is not a metaphorical voyage, nor of imagination or fantasy, but rather a true and proper 'elevatio ad coelum'"] ("La «mirabile visione» di Dante e l'Epistola a Cangrande" 43). Padoan's position aligns itself with Singleton.

[44] He also makes a cogent argument when he points out that the letter has more than one purpose, one of which is to obtain patronage, and another in presenting Dante as an *auctor* and his poem as an *auctoritas*, "[a]nd it may be that these multiple purposes determine the content of the Epistle as much or more than the impulse to 'tell the truth' about the *Commedia*, which, after all, speaks pretty well for itself" (312).

[45] One could also add Auerbach to the list, who, in a footnote, remarks: "[w]hat [Dante] claims in this passage [paragraph 7] is not exactly the principle of manifold typological interpretation, but the 'polysemy' of the fourfold method in general; anyway, he claims 'polysemous' interpretation of his work. Many doctors of the Church claim the right of multiple meanings for the Holy Scriptures only, in explicit contrast to all human literature; this should be considered in explaining the special mission Dante attributes to himself" ("Figurative Texts Illustrating Certain Passages of Dante's Commedia" 475 n.5). See also Barański, who cites Sandkühler, Hollander, Jenaro-MacLellan, and Armour as international scholars who support the authenticity of the *Epistle* ("Comedìa: Dante, l'Epistola a Cangrande e la commedia medievale" 43–44 n. 9).

it quite "conservative," they articulate a middle position, qualifying the poem as a "verisimilar fiction," whereby "Dante did not actually visit Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, but his imaginative account of such a journey keeps within the realm of the possible" ("The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio" 385).[46] In their perspective and Barański's, it does not expound the allegory of the theologians. When the *Epistle* addresses the allegory of the *Commedia* in paragraph 8, it does so through what Minnis and Scott consider a moral-tropological sense whereby "characters are taken as *exempla* of what to do and what to avoid." Moreover, following the *accessus ad auctores* formula, the text's classification under the branch of ethics seems to substantiate their point further, since secular literature fell under that category ("The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio" 385–86).[47]

However, the tropological sense—a moralizing allegorical interpretation concerned with the here and now—is likewise part of the allegory of the theologians. The tropological is nestled between the typological (past) and the anagogic senses (future). It manifests meaning in the here and now in terms of Christian ethics, which are predicated on the concept of salvation, that is, saving someone's soul from sin and its consequence. This is precisely the allegorical context established at the beginning of the *Commedia*, where Virgil was sought out by Beatrice—at the behest of the Virgin Mary—to save Dante's soul from damnation, to convert him onto the right path.

The *Epistle*'s moral-tropological interpretation of Psalm 113 in paragraph 7, which recounts the Exodus narrative, is precisely formulated in terms of conversion. As shown with Singleton, Freccero, and Mazzotta, the exodus narrative is a central structural component of the

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[46] For an argument *contra* Singleton, emphasizing the fictive nature of the poem, see Green 118–128.

[47] See, for instance, Barański who similarly argues that "by stating that the *Commedia* has a moral *subiectum*, the *Epistle* reduces it to the most basic of contemporary critical notions, since it was widely asserted that literature was classifiable under ethics" ("Dante and Medieval Poetics" 17).

*Commedia*: "si ad moralem sensum, significatur nobis *conversio* anime de luctu et miseria peccati ad statum gratie" (emphasis added). This gloss is not necessarily in contradiction with the moral sense expounded in paragraph 8 of the *Epistle* that scholars like Minnis and Scott, among others, believe to be expounding an allegory of the poets.

The moral impetus in representing "homo prout merendo et demerendo per arbitrii libertatem iustitie premiandi et puniendi obnoxius est" is to urge others to become better Christians, to bring about a moral conversion from sin to salvation. This is the same trope previously highlighted concerning Exodus and the Song of Songs, a movement from slavery in Egypt to freedom in Jerusalem. Therefore, what distinguishes the poets' moral sense from that of the theologians would be whether the text's literal sense is fictional. As Singleton famously stated, "the fiction of the *Comedy* is that it is not fiction" ("The Irreducible Dove" 129). As such, even if we do not believe that Dante visited Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, the hermeneutics of the text require readers to suspend their disbelief. The questions regarding the letter's author and its content may remain open and inconclusive; however, one thing is sure, in the *Epistle*, there is an attempt to adapt traditional exegetical apparatuses to Dante's poem. The author is aware of Dante's auto-exegetical propensity as found in the second treatise of the *Convivio*. A closer look at the letter itself will clarify some of its ambiguities and explain their necessity.

The first four paragraphs of the *Epistle* consist of a *dedicatio* to the patron Can Grande della Scala, Lord of Verona from 1311 to 1329, that some scholars believe is written by Dante.[48] Paragraphs five to sixteen contain a general discussion of allegory and follow the academic

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[48] A variant theory of authorship by Augusto Mancini, and followed by Nardi, D'Ovidio, Pietrobono and Brugnoli, is that the *Epistle* is a composite of either one or two Pseudo-Dante's (Kelly and Barański) or three different textual layers: a possibly authentic Dantean *dedicatio*, an unfinished commentary of the *Paradiso* by an anonymous commentator, and a third person that inexpertly brought both sections together and tried to edit the text accordingly (Nardi, *Il punto sull'Epistola a Cangrande* 6–10). This is the most persuasive and lucid argument regarding the possibility of Dante composing of the *Epistle*.

prologue tradition known as the *accessus ad auctores*.[49] From paragraph seventeen to thirty-one, the penultimate section consists of a philosophical and theological interpretation of the first four *terzine* of *Paradiso* that, for Padoan, is undoubtedly supporting a theological allegory. The commentary appears to end abruptly at paragraph 32. In the last section that concludes the letter, the author notes "[i]n speciali vero non exponam ad presens;" and laments that "urget enim me rei familiaris angustia," which would seem to contradict the praise of Can Grande's patronage in the *dedicatio*.[50] However, the crux of the allegory issue in the *Epistle* is in the transition from the seventh paragraph to the eighth.[51]

Paragraph seven begins by stating that the poem is indeed polysemous, it can contain many meanings: "[a]d evidentiam itaque dicendorum sciendum est quod istius operis *non est simplex sensus, ymo dici potest polysemos*, *hoc est plurium sensuum*" (emphasis added).[52] It then states that "nam primus sensus est qui habetur per litteram, alius est qui habetur per significata per litteram. Et primus dicitur litteralis, secundus vero allegoricus sive moralis sive anagogicus."[53] This seems to imply that Dante's poem has a biblical allegorical structure.

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[49] The *accessus* comprises of six questions pertaining to the work under analysis: "what are its subject (*subiectum*), authorship (*agens*), form (*forma*), purpose (*finis*), title (*titulus*) and branch of philosophy (*genus phylosophie*)" (Botterill 595).

[50] ["the particular meaning I shall not expound on the present occasion for anxiety as to my domestic affairs presses so heavily upon me."]

[51] For the numbering of the paragraphs of the *Epistle*, there are two standard forms of *divisio textus*: 1 to 33 (!) and 1 to 90, this research follows the former.

[52] ["For the elucidation, therefore, of what we have to say, it must be understood that the meaning of this work is *not of one kind only; rather the work may be described as 'polysemous,' that is, having several meanings*."] As Auerbach notes, "[t]he principle of 'polysemy,' which Dante claims for his poem in the *Letter of Cangrande*, had already been established for the figurative exposition of the Bible by Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* 3, 25 *et seq.*, and the later commentators almost always give for difficult passages several typological interpretations, sometimes alternative, more often cumulative, *on condition that they do not contradict the faith*" ("Figurative Texts Illustrating Certain Passages of Dante's *Commedia*" 475–76 emphasis added). Notice how Auerbach underlines the subservient nature of hermeneutics and the intellect to faith. This notion has been discussed above with regards to our analysis of *Inferno* IX.

[53] ["for the first meaning is that which is conveyed by the letter, and the next is that which is conveyed by what the letter signifies; the former of which is called literal, while the latter is called allegorical, or mystical, or moral, or anagogical."]

The author then proceeds with an example of all four senses using verses taken from Psalm 113: "In exitu Israel de Egipto, domus Iacob de populo barbaro, facta est Iudea sanctificatio eius, Israel potestas eius."[54] The author then explains all four senses, these are (1) literal: "significatur nobis exitus filiorum Israel de Egipto, tempore Moysis," (2) allegorical: "nostra redemptio facta per Christum," (3) moral: "nobis conversio anime de luctu et miseria peccati ad statum gratie," and (4) anagogic: "exitus anime sancte ab huius corruptionis servitute ad eterne glorie libertatem."[55] Paragraph 8 follows by explaining the allegory of the poem as such: "Si vero accipiatur opus allegorice, subiectum est homo prout merendo et demerendo per arbitrii libertatem iustitie premiandi et puniendi obnoxius est."[56] Since secular literature was classified under the branch of knowledge of ethics, this moral interpretation appears to represent the allegorical sense of the allegory of the poets, anchoring the poem's meaning in what is essentially a moral paradigm.

For Barański, this new paragraph represents a shift from a discussion of allegory in general terms, as found in paragraph 7, to that of its presence in the poem in particular, that is to say, that "[t]he poem's actual exegesis begins in paragraph 8" ("Dante and Medieval Poetics" 18). Ultimately, the seventh paragraph "offers a presentation of allegory's full range, which, conventionally, had to be illustrated with biblical references" (17).[57] Barański agrees that the

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[54] ["When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion" (NRSV trans.).]

[55] For (1) the literal: "the going out of the children of Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses," (2) the allegorical/typological: "our redemption through Christ," (3) the moral/tropological: "the conversion of the soul from the sorrow and misery of sin to a state of grace," and (4) the anagogic: "the passing of the sanctified soul from the bondage of the corruption of this world to the liberty of everlasting glory." The author gives the same four senses as expounded in the *Convivio*; however, there are two small variations. First, unlike the *Convivio*, Dante explains all four senses through the use of a single passage; secondly, in the *Convivio*, Dante seemingly omits the allegorical/tropological interpretation.

[56] ["If, however, the work is to be regarded from the allegorical point of view, the subject is man according to his merits or demerits in the exercise of his free will and his deserving of reward or punishment by justice."]

[57] Ascoli also agrees that this seventh paragraph does not describe "the mode of signifying of the *Commedia*," he understands it instead as exemplifying "the meaning of the word 'polysemous'" ("Dante and Allegory" 135). For more on Barański's analysis of paragraphs 7 and 8, see "Comedìa: Dante, l'Epistola a Cangrande e la commedia medievale" 66–75.

preceding paragraph would seem to align the poem with biblical allegory; "[h]owever, this statement not only goes against what is said in the following paragraph, but it also undermines the letter's own overall secularizing interpretation of the *Commedia*" ("Dante and Medieval Poetics" 17). On the one hand, Barański does not address the last section of the letter that Padoan uses to underline the theological purport of the poem's allegory. On the other, his analysis of the *accessus* section and the letter's placing of Latin above the vernacular are convincing in claiming them as contradictory to Dante's positions. Therefore, for Barański, like Mazzoni and Nardi, the *Epistle* presents a poetic allegory.

Hollander, building on the insights provided by Auerbach, sees the allegorical exposition in paragraph 8 differently:

> In saying that his allegorical sense will reveal that the free will of each personage in the *Commedia* resulted in his reward or punishment in the afterworld he has tried to establish, as Auerbach realized, *the figural nature of his allegorical sense* (a life then in the world 'prefigures' the life after that in the afterworld). This is not the allegory of the poets, but of the theologians—at least in Dante's perhaps strained literary *adaptation* of that kind of allegory. ("Dante 'Theologus-Poeta'" 105–06 emphasis added)

Ascoli appears to echo Hollander's position. He interprets the relationship between both paragraphs as "not simply one of incompatibility or contradiction" but possibly "part of a process of *adapting* traditional categories of the fourfold model to better fit the *Commedia*" ("Access to Authority: Dante in the Epistle to Cangrande" 333–34 emphasis added). In his opinion, "the author of the *Epistle* recognized a simple, basic fact: that the fourfold model is inapplicable as such to the *Commedia*, not, or at least not only, because of the difference between poetry and Scripture, but because of a special problem presented by the *literal* subject of the 'poema sacro'" (332–33

emphasis added). Ascoli cuts the Gordian knot of allegory in Dante by focusing on the seemingly idiosyncratic character of Dante's auto-exegesis, the explicitly *literal* nature of the poem: "[t]he *Epistle*'s gloss on *Paradiso* then makes no attempt at all to apply the model of biblical exegesis: rather, it is resolutely, explicitly, *literal*" ("Dante and Allegory" 135). This will be explored shortly, but it is sufficient to consider how the poem literally represents the typological, tropological, and anagogic modes.

The moral-tropologic mode is meant to be applied to a Christian's everyday existence. It has both a universal and individual dimension, as indicated in the poem's first lines: "Nel mezzo del cammin di *nostra* vita / *mi* ritrovai..." (*Inf*. I, vv. 1–2 emphasis added). This ethical and didactic component is hardwired into the poem's narrative; however, the moral interpretation of text also overlaps with the allegory of the poets. This, in part, explains the seemingly secularizing nature of the 8th paragraph of the *Epistle*.

The anagogic mode plays itself out in the poem in two significant ways. First, by representing the state of souls after death, Dante is *de facto* adopting an anagogic perspective that is identical to the *literal* level. This is precisely what Dante is narrating—a literal view from the end. More importantly, the anagogic and typological modes can also manifest themselves in one's personal history through the act of conversion, hence the universal pretensions of Dante's poem and the high stakes he associates to correctly interpreting his verses.

A Christian's individual life can partake of universal Christian history, much like Christ's or Dante's own journey, a believer can "vitally reenact and partake in the paradigmatic story of Exodus" (Mazzotta, "Introduction" 5).[58] In typological terms, Dante-pilgrim literally reenacts the

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[58] See, for example, Singleton's statement that: "(...) Exodus is the established and familiar 'figure' of conversion, we could not be told more plainly. If the historical event of the Exodus can point beyond itself, signifying conversion, may not a conversion, any conversion, point back to the historical event of Exodus?" ("In Exitu Israel de Aegypto" 169).

story of Exodus, and Christian readers, as individuals, can take part in its universalism.[59] In anagogic terms, Dante-poet writes from the perspective of a journey that has already ended, hence the privileged viewpoint. Mazzotta goes on to specify that the *Commedia* is "patterned on the figural experience of *Exodus*, but *at the same time, it is a dramatic reenactment, at its precise liturgical time, of the descent of Christ through Hell on Good Friday and His resurrection on Easter Sunday*. Since the poem is the record of the journey toward salvation, it has a structure analogical both to *Exodus* and to Christ" ("Dante's Literary Typology" 10 emphasis added). Indeed, this "reenactment" is not solely allegorical (typological, moral, and anagogic), but also literal and historical, it is an event happening in time. Dante is literally reenacting Christ's and Aeneas' descents. The apostle Paul's rapture and Christ's ascension serve as types, figures for Dante's journey. Moreover, the souls he meets, the damned in *Inferno*, the penitents in *Purgatorio*, and the blessed in *Paradiso*, are the corresponding *figures* of their earthly existence.

In sum, there seem to be three questions, of which two are subordinate to one. The most important question is whether Dante expected his readers to interpret his poem employing the allegory of the theologians or an adaptation thereof. The secondary set of questions, the authenticity of the *Epistle* and what it states precisely in terms of the poem's allegory, have been significantly determined by the status of the first.[60] A subsidiary question would be: "how are we to realistically apply the fourfold method?"[61]

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[59] See *Par*. XXV, vv. 55–57, where Beatrice describes Dante's journey in terms of the Exodus: "però li è conceduto che d'Egitto / vegna in Ierusalemme per vedere, / anzi che 'l militar li sia prescritto."

[60] Barolini states it best when she remarks that "by linking a tangential issue (the Epistle's authorship) to the main issue (the *Commedia*'s mode of signifying) and then blurring the lines between the two, we have allowed the critical waters to become fearfully muddied" (*The Undivine Comedy* 9). See also De Ventura: "nei partecipanti al dibattito si potrebbe indovinare una presa di posizione a priori, *un parti pris*, 'un'idea di Dante' costituita e inamovibile, fondata altrove e su ben altri testi, impermeabile a incrinature, revisioni e rettifiche" ["within the participants in the debate one can make out an a priori position, un parti pris, 'an idea of Dante,' constituted and immovable, based elsewhere and on many other texts, resistant to cracks, revisions and rectifications"] (6).

[61] Hollander provides a succinct answer based on Augustine's understanding of the matter (*De civitate Dei*, XVI, ii): "[c]ritics who, in an attempt to discredit the fourfold method of interpretation, argue that not everything in Dante

A preliminary answer is that Dante has literalized the spiritual senses in the representation of his journey. This can be understood in the Auerbachian sense, mentioned above by Ascoli and Hollander, as well as converging with Nardi, Padoan, and Singleton's stance, that "a life then in the world 'prefigures' the life after that in the afterworld."[62] For example, the *dispositio* of the blessed, the "gente antica e novella" in the heavenly "candida rosa," follows a typological pattern (*Par*. XXXI). Similarly, typology can also function as an interpretive tool when deciphering representations of Old Testament individuals within the poem, as Auerbach does when he interprets the presence of Rahab in the sphere of Venus.[63]

Secondly, by framing the poem as having scriptural characteristics and wanting to be interpreted as such, the reader is beckoned to look at the text's surface to unearth a system of intratextual correspondences, an order between clearly delineated and numbered sections of the poem. For example, this biblical exegetical technique can be executed between the two primary partitions of Scripture, the Old and New Testaments, or between all four Gospels in Canon Tables used for reference and comparison.

Moreover, Ascoli makes a thought-provoking point regarding the literal nature of the poem, an issue addressed earlier, when he describes how "[t]hroughout the *Commedia* (...) Dante looks back at human history from the perspective of eternity and witnesses 'the state of the souls

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would seem to be allegorical in this way seem to forget that not everything in Scripture is meant to be taken as being allegorical in this way—or even allegorical at all" ("Dante 'Theologus-Poeta'" 129 n.50).

[62] Barolini, once again, aptly puts it when she explains how "what one could call Dante's prophetic mode [Nardi and Padoan] corresponds to Singleton's allegory of the theologians or Auerbach's figural mode. This claim is the more readily made in that it is less the fourfold method per se, as a practical exegetical technique, that is important for Dante, than what that method radically signifies" ("Detheologizing Dante: Realism, Reception, and the Resources of Narrative" 10). The position taken in this dissertation, however, does grant the practical exegetical technique a function, particularly in light of elements of intratextuality.

[63] Auerbach explains how: "all ancient commentators consider her as a type of the church; her house alone, with all its inhabitants, escapes perdition, just as the church of the faithful will alone be saved when Christ appears for the last judgment; she found freedom from the fornication of the world by way of the window of confession, to which she bound the scarlet rope, the sign of Christ's blood, *sanguinis Christi signum*. Thus she is *figura Ecclesiae*, and the scarlet rope, like the posts struck with the blood of the Lamb in Exodus, becomes the figure of Christ's redeeming sacrifice" ("Typological Symbolism in Medieval Literature" 4).

after death.'" Therefore, "the literal subject of the *Commedia* [the 'status animarum post mortem'] is closely related to the anagogical sense as described in paragraph VII and throughout the theological tradition" ("Access to Authority: Dante in the Epistle to Cangrande" 333).[64] Indeed, the anagogic mode is intrinsic to Singleton's retrospective approach and the *Commedia*'s vertical patterning.

Hugh of Saint Victor defines anagogy as a "sursum ductio, cum per visibile invisibile factum declaratur," that is, reasoning upward, by which from the visible, the invisible is revealed. This view from above is what allows one to grasp the patterns hidden in plain sight. This is the same reasoning the pilgrim makes when attempting to ascend the mountain at the beginning of *Inferno*. To better orient himself out of the "selva oscura," the pilgrim seeks higher ground. Moreover, defining the mode of signification of the poem as anagogic, whether literally, in terms of the lives of the sinners represented post-mortem, or figuratively, as in espousing the need for the reader to interpret the poem from a higher perspective, that is, the perspective of the end, further substantiates the presence of the vertical hermeneutic system, or of a system that can reveal patterns of meaning from the privileged viewpoint of the end.[65]

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[64] In a related footnote, Ascoli pre-emptively rebukes the objection that the poem cannot be anagogical since it does not refer to the eschaton proper by underlining how "the equation between anagogy and eschatology is not completely stable in the tradition," citing the work of De Lubac who demonstrated "that anagogy is often used to refer generally to the transcendent visionary experience of still living individuals" (350–51 n.82). Furthermore, Ascoli is not alone in propounding this argument, as Martinez notes, "a number of readers (Charity, Allen) suggest that the literal sense of the poem is anagogy and that its principal additional level is the 'moral,' or ethical, given that Dante's otherworld archives the results of moral choices (tropology)" (30). Hollander makes a very similar observation, even echoing Singleton's 'retrospective' mode, when he notes that "[w]e should remember that the pretext of the poem is that, from our own point of view and in terms of ordinary human consciousness, we have entered the 'future,' the world of the dead, and are thus 'reading backwards'" ("Dante 'Theologus-Poeta'" 108).

[65] Auerbach makes a very cogent argument that enables this literal view of the poem's allegorical system. In his essay 'Figura,' he explains how in his previous work *Dante, Poet of the Secular World* (1929) he attempted to show "that in the *Comedy* Dante undertook 'to conceive the whole earthly historical world...as already subjected to God's final judgement [read: anagogic] and thus put in its proper place as decreed by divine judgment, to represent it as a world already judged...in so doing, he does not destroy or weaken the earthly nature of his characters [read: literal and/or historical], but captures the fullest intensity of their earthly-historical being and identifies it with the ultimate state of things' (p. 108)" ("'Figura'" 71). Mazzotta, in an Augustinian and Singletonian fashion, also underlines how "[t]he emphasis on the 'end' is possibly the most Augustinian trait in Dante's poetics. In St. Augustine's epistemology, signs and their meanings never coincide and it is in the silent space of the end, when the articulation of the syllables of a

Therefore, within the larger picture of this dissertation, typological or figural readings theoretically overlap with vertical readings since, "with the figurative approach, ... in order to explain the significance of a single historical event, the interpreter had to take recourse to a *vertical* projection of this event on the plane of providential design by which the event is revealed as a prefiguration or a fulfillment or perhaps as an imitation of other events" (Auerbach, "Typological Symbolism in Medieval Literature" 5 emphasis added). Figural and vertical readings both require a diachronic and synchronic perspective of texts. This does not mean that readers cannot execute typological and anagogic readings upon the letter of the poem. One can think of the fourfold readings of commentators such as Guido da Pisa and Jacopo della Lana. Dante self-consciously used poetic and narrative strategies in the service of a vision he either believed to be true or wanted readers to believe to be so. In deploying stratagems and rhetorical techniques taken from Scripture, biblical exegesis, and classical texts, Dante demonstrates that prophets can indeed be poets and vice-versa.[66]

**The *Convivio***

In addition to the corrupted state of the text of the *Convivio*, the exposition of allegory it contains appears maladroit and unclear, seemingly "trapped into clumsiness by the different and conflicting denotations of that tricky term *allegoria*" (Minnis and Scott, "The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio" 383). In the second treatise of the work, Dante begins by addressing the allegory of the poets and considers it as comprising both a literal sense (P1) and an

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text, a life, and history is over, that meaning surfaces. The present has no space and, as he writes in the famous passage in book XI of the *Confessions*, understanding has necessarily a *retrospective* structure" ("Allegory: Poetics of the Desert" 253).

[66] As Barolini reminds us "the use of rhetorical techniques in the service of a divinely inspired message is explicitly defended by Augustine in the *De doctrina Christiana*, who furnishes examples of Paul's rhetorical prowess" ("Detheologizing Dante: Realism, Reception, and the Resources of Narrative" 11).

allegorical one (P2).[67] Dante states that the allegory of the poets seeks to unearth "una veritade ascosa sotto bella menzogna" and, using Ovid's tale of the myth of Orpheus as an example, he expounds its meaning as "lo savio uomo con lo strumento de la sua voce far[r]ia mansuescere e umiliare li crudeli cuori" (II, i, 3).[68] The myth of Orpheus would be a "bella menzogna," a beautiful fiction, that hides a moral truth: the wise person, be they a poet or a rhetorician, with the use of their voice, can convert others from a state of depravity to one of humanity. What distinguishes the allegory of the poets is that the literal sense is considered to be fictional, unlike the allegory of the theologians.

This expression of a truth hidden beneath a beautiful lie, echoing the idea of the "velame," the *integumentum*, will be reiterated before Dante's flight on Geryon's back in *Inferno* XVI, but with a very different intent. *Inferno* XVI is the first of only two occurrences, the other being *Inferno* XXI (v. 2), where Dante explicitly names the genre and title of his poem in an address to the reader:

> Sempre a *quel ver c'ha faccia di menzogna*
>
> de' l'uom chiuder le labbra fin ch'el puote,
>
> però che sanza colpa fa vergogna;
>
> ma qui tacer nol posso; e per le note
>
> *di questa comedìa, lettor, ti giuro,*
>
> s'elle non sien di lunga grazia vòte,
>
> *ch'i' vidi* per quell' aere grosso e scuro
>
> venir notando una figura in suso,

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[67] The symbols P1 and P2 are used to mark the various interpretative possibilities found in the allegory of the poets; P1 denotes the literal sense, whereas P2 the allegorical. The same system is applied for the allegory of the theologians: T1, literal sense; T2, typological; T3, tropological; and T4, anagogic.

[68] ["a truth hidden beneath a beautiful lie (...) that the wise man with the instrument of his voice can tame and humble cruel hearts."]

maravigliosa ad ogne cor sicuro (vv. 124–132 emphases added)[69]

The mention of "that truth which seems a lie" occurs before naming the poem's genre and title and is set within the frame of an address to the reader, thus heightening its metatextual importance. Geryon, the hybrid beast that he will later describe and that seems incredible, "una figura (...) maravigliosa," much like his journey, is literally true, there is no "bella menzogna." Hollander, in his commentary to these lines (vv. 124–132), explains how "Dante has put the veracity of the entire *Comedy* (...) upon the reality of Geryon" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).[70] Dante's poem is the antithesis to Geryon, the personification of fraud, hinting at an allegorical mode that does not align with that of the poets but rather with that of the theologians.[71]

In the *Convivio*, after the passage discussing the myth of Orpheus, Dante claims that theologians understand the allegorical form of the allegory of the poets (P2) differently: "[v]eramente li teologi questo senso prendono altrimenti che li poeti;" adding that in the exposition of his poetry in the *Convivio* he will follow the allegorical mode of the poets (P1, P2): "ma però che mia intenzione è qui lo modo delli poeti seguitare, prendo lo senso allegorico secondo che per

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[69] The second instance is: "Così di ponte in ponte, altro parlando / che la mia *comedìa* cantar non cura, / venimmo; e tenavamo 'l colmo, quando" (*Inf*. XXI, vv. 1–3 emphasis added).

[70] Barolini also interprets the Geryon episode in a similar manner: "Geryon serves as an outrageously paradoxical authenticating device: one that, by being so overtly inauthentic—so literally a figure for inauthenticity, a figure for 'fraud'—confronts and attempts to defuse the belatedness or inauthenticity to which the need for an authenticating device necessarily testifies." As to the mention of the title of the poem. Barolini notes how "Geryon also serves as the poem's very baptismal font: this is the passage in which Dante first anoints his poem a *comedìa*, using a term that he will contrast to *tragedìa* later in the *Inferno*" ("Ulysses, Geryon, and the Aeronautics of Narrative Transition" 59).

[71] See, for example, Fosca's commentary to vv. 127–132: "[e]gli vuole che, anche in questa delicata occasione, sia dato credito effettivo alla formula io vidi, che essa sia cioè presa alla lettera: ed è una rivendicazione che coinvolge l'intero poema, il quale va dunque letto secondo le modalità della cosiddetta 'allegoria dei teologi'" ["he wants that, even in this delicate occasion, effective credit be given to the formula 'I saw', that is be taken literally, and it is a claim that involves the entire poem that, therefore, must be read according to the modality of the so-called 'allegory of the theologians'"] (*Dartmouth Dante Project*). Barański shares this opinion as well, adding that the episode makes explicit the poem's partaking in the allegory of the theologians, stating: "Dante made this point explicit by associating his 'comedy' with Geryon, who, as divinely created *mirabile*—and hence like the Bible and the universe in general—was an *allegoria in factis* and not simply *in verbis*" ("The 'Marvellous' and the 'Comic': Toward a Reading of *Inferno* XVI" 86–87).

li poeti è usato."[72] However, since Dante does not specify the difference, the reader is left wondering how the allegorical interpretation of the poets (P2), exemplified by Orpheus, is dissimilar from the allegorical interpretation of the theologians, otherwise known as typological, figural, or Christological (T2).[73]
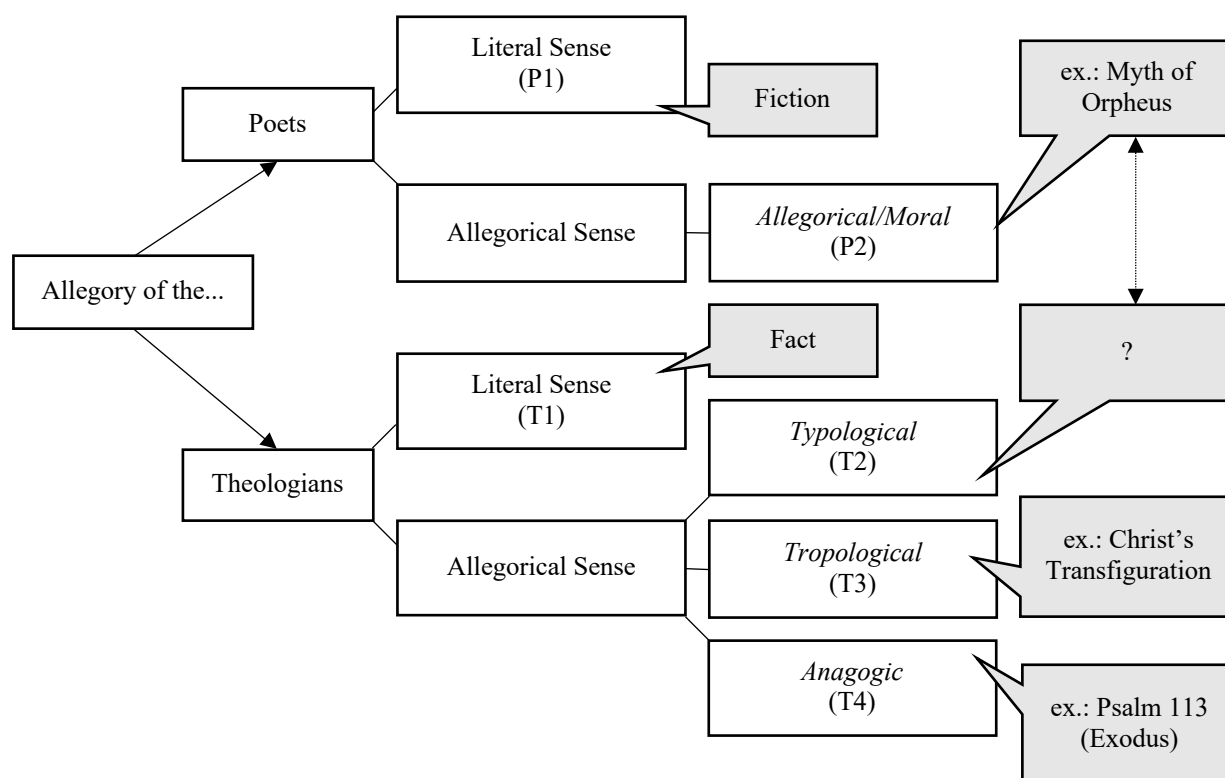


Table 2 – Schema of the Allegory of the Poets and the Theologians as Expounded in the *Convivio*.

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[72] ["truly, theologians take this sense differently than poets (...) but since my intention is to follow the mode of the poets, I take the allegorical sense that is used by poets."]

[73] Ascoli remarks that "sebbene il testo indichi una divergenza dell'esempio 'poetico' di Orfeo dalle intenzioni e/o interpretazioni dei teologi, non spiega in cosa consista tale differenza—non rende neppure chiaro se la differenza inerisca al testo letterale che viene interpretato (poetico o biblico) o all'interpretazione allegorica derivata da quello (etico o cristologico)" ["even though the text indicates a divergence in the 'poetic' example of Orpheus with the intentions and/or interpretations of theologians, it does not explain in what consists such a difference—it does not even render clear if the difference regards the literal text that is being interpreted (poetic or biblical) or to the allegorical interpretation derived from it (ethical or Christological)"] ("Tradurre l'allegoria: *Convivio* II, i" 166).

No example of an allegorical interpretation, in the narrower sense comprised within the frame of the allegory of the theologians, is provided. Dante then addresses what he calls the third 'moral' sense (T3) and the anagogic sense (T4), seemingly skipping the allegorical or typological sense (T2) or perhaps eliding it with the figure of Orpheus (P2). An attentive reader would ask themselves why Dante has omitted the allegorical sense (T2) from his set of examples of the allegory of the theologians?[74]

Although Dante's allegory of the myth of Orpheus seems like a perfect example of poetic allegory, for Ascoli, something more subtle is happening: "what we are presented with is *not* a lesson for the reader, but rather an illustration of how the poet-philosopher or poet-theologian goes about instilling such lessons through the power of his language" ("Dante and Allegory" 133).[75] As Ascoli puts it, "l'esempio di Orfeo costituisce un'allegorizzazione del lavoro di Dante-poeta, i bei versi che hanno come mèta il 'delectare, docere, movere' della retorica ciceroniana" ("Tradurre l'allegoria: *Convivio* II, i" 166).[76] The figure of Orpheus "because of his descent into and return from Hell, was often treated as a *figura Christi* in medieval allegorizations," thus also partaking in the conflation and blurring of the lines between both allegorical forms ("Dante and Allegory" 133; Ascoli, "Tradurre l'allegoria: Convivio II, i" 167–68).[77] Therefore, the allegorical mode (P2)

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[74] According to Minnis and Scott, "Dante is shying away from the suggestion that the 'allegory of the poets'—this being the interpretative method he intends to apply to at least the first two of his *canzoni*—has anything in common with that [i.e. the typological sense]" ("The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio" 383).

[75] Ascoli presents the distinction between both allegorical modes in the *Convivio* has containing a much more subtle process, harking back to Jean Pépin's work on allegory, whereby Dante "presents the distinction between allegory and allegoresis, only to elide it" ("Dante and Allegory" 131). In other words, since Dante is at once both the glossator and the author, there is "an attempt to conflate allegoresis, a practice of reading, with allegory, a practice of writing" (129).

[76] ["the example of Orpheus constitutes an allegorizing of the work of Dante-poet, the beautiful verses that have the goal of 'delectare, docere, movere' of Ciceronian rhetoric."] The mention of Ciceronian rhetoric is pertinent for reasons that will become apparent in the following chapter in relation to the figure of Brunetto Latini and the art of rhetoric.

[77] Scott flirts with this idea, only to reject it, stipulating that "if Dante was aware of the parallel between Orpheus and Christ, then his interpretation of the story as a fable illustrating the power of poetry and music was a deliberate choice of unilateral analysis, as opposed to the other possibility, whereby the same tale 'nobis significatur nostra redemptio facta per Christum'" ("Dante's Allegory" 575 n. 9).

explained in the *Convivio* is not that different from the one expounded in the *Epistle*, despite

Dante's claim that theologians understand it differently. If typological allegory (T2) is meant to

signify redemption through Christ, as indicated in the *Epistle*: "significatur nostra redemptio facta

per Christum"; the same type of operation seems to be happening in the allegorical mode of the

poets expounded by Dante in the *Convivio* through the figure of Orpheus (P2): "de la sua voce

far[r]ia mansuescere e umiliare li crudeli cuori." Orpheus' ability to redeem men from their beastly

desires through the instrument of his voice and his status as a *figura* for Christ, by definition,

embodies the allegorical mode of the theologians, particularly that of the typological sense.[78] This

is the same sense that Dante seemingly omits in his exposition; therefore, one can suggest that P2

= T2.

Despite the alleged "veritade ascosa sotto bella menzogna" of the allegory of the poets

(P2), Dante does represent a historical Orpheus in the *Commedia*, placing him in Limbo alongside

the philosophers of Antiquity (*Inferno* IV, v. 140) and, right next to Cicero, "Tulïo" (v. 141), the

master of rhetoric himself. Therefore, the premise of a non-historical fiction at the basis of the

allegory of the poets does lose some of its tenor since there seems to be a literal and historical basis

to the figure of Orpheus.[79]

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[78] Sarolli also made this point a while ago, stating that when Dante alleges the difference between poets and theologians "si dimostra ben conscio che proprio il mito d'Orfeo e l'identificazione tipologica Orfeo-Cristo era stato ["he shows himself conscious that precisely the myth of Orpheus and the typological identification Orpheus-Christ was"] 'as ancient a theme as Christianity itself, and one of the major Medieval and Renaissance interpretations of the classical myth devotes itself to elaborating the parallelism'" (31).

[79] Scott, however was eventually seduced but non-committal, some 17 years later, by Dante's use of Orpheus, writing that "it is also interesting to recall that Dante placed Orpheus in Limbo among the *poetae theologi* (*Inferno* IV, 132). For the writer of the *Comedy*, then, Orpheus was a historical character—one, we may add, who was well established as a *figura Christi* on account of his descent to the underworld. It is interesting to speculate whether Dante was aware of this other dimension [!]; in other words, that the Orpheus myth was capable of two quite different interpretations, depending on whether it was interpreted as an extended metaphor, signifying the power of poetry and music over the human spirit, or as prefiguration of Christ's preaching and His Harrowing of Hell" ("Dante's Allegory of the Theologians" 35). The position taken here is that both are not mutually exclusive, and this is the sleight of hand that Dante is playing in front of our eyes.

Furthermore, Orpheus' rhetorical ability to tame the hearts of men mirrors Dante's antitype, Ulysses, and his "orazion picciola" in *Inferno* XXVI: "fatti non foste a viver come bruti, / ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza" (*Inf.* XXVI, vv. 119–120).[80] As Mazzotta frames it: "[t]he story it tells is that of a mind-bewitching orator who moves men by the power of his speech to the pursuit of the good and the true"; adding that, "Ulysses casts himself as the rhetorician who fashions moral life: an Orpheus or a civilizing agent who assuages the beast within and sees life as an educational process" ("Ulysses: Persuasion versus Prophecy" 350). The parallels between Dante-poet and Dante-pilgrim with the figure of Ulysses is a well-known *topos* and an infamous *querelle* in Dante studies. What is of interest here is that Ulysses represents the limitations and pitfalls of poetics without divine sanction or, instead, the power of eloquence *in malo*.[81] The debate surrounding Dante's Ulysses foregrounds the issues of authorial intent, language, and rhetoric.[82] Moreover, it also disguises the figure of another influential rhetorician contemporary to Dante: Brunetto Latini. Therefore, in the *Convivio*, the myth of the poet Orpheus can simultaneously stand as a *figura* of the power of Christ and his message of man's redemption.

For the tropological interpretation of the allegory of the theologians (T3), Dante uses the Transfiguration of Christ as a moral exemplum, stating that "a le secretissime cose noi dovemo avere poca compagnia."[83] For Ascoli, this "more Machiavellian than Biblical" allegorical interpretation "could also be read meta-poetically, since it provides an implicit justification for the

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[80] It is interesting to note that Ulysses' claims how his 'little oration' made his companions so ardent "al cammino," the same word used by Dante in the incipit of the poem.

[81] Moreover, the image of the *contrapasso*, Ulysses being entrapped in a fiery tongue, further substantiates the imagery of discourse without grace since it seems to parody the descent of the Pentecostal tongues of fire upon Christ's disciples. Mazzotta also observes how "[t]his contrast is made more cogent by the fact that the tongue of fire is an image that describes both the gift of prophecy and the rhetorical craft" ("Ulysses: Persuasion versus Prophecy" 354).

[82] This theme is shared co-numerically with *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* XXVI.

[83] ["for secretive things we should have little company."] For the Transfiguration of Christ, see Matthew 17:1–8, Mark 9:2–8, and Luke 9:28–36.

obscurity of allegorical discourse" ("Dante and Allegory" 134).[84] Conceding the possibility that Dante may be hinting at his exposition's deliberate ambiguousness, he nevertheless provides valuable clues to his readers to guide their interpretation in his glosses to his poems.

In the *Convivio*, just like in the *Commedia*, Dante shows an acute awareness of his readership's divergent abilities. For instance, before his exposition of the allegorical modes, the second treatise opens with the *canzone* "Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete" and finishes with this peculiar *tornata*:

Canzone, io credo che saranno radi

color che tua ragione intendan bene,

tanto la parli faticosa e forte.

Onde, se per ventura elli addivene

che tu dinanzi da persone vadi

che non ti paian d'essa bene accorte,

allor ti priego che ti riconforte,

dicendo lor, diletta mia novella:

'Ponete mente almen com'io son bella!' (vv. 53–61)[85]

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[84] Ascoli mentions how "[a] ben guardare, però, anche questo esempio, come quello di Orfeo, si presta ad una lettura 'meta-poetica', in quanto, secondo la lettera, descrive l'adempimento figurale-allegorico degli eventi, dei personaggi, e delle profezie dell'Antico Testamento e nella sua *sententia* allegorica fornisce una giustificazione implicita (molto comune nella tradizione, a partire da Agostino nel *De Doctrina Christiana*) per il 'parlar coperto' del discorso poetico" ["looking closely, however, even this example, just like that of Orpheus, lends itself to a 'meta-poetic' reading, since, according to the letter, it describes the figural and allegorical fulfillment of the events, characters, and prophecies of the Old Testament and, in its allegorical *sententia*, it provides an implicit justification (very common in the tradition, since Augustine in the *De Doctrina Christiana*) for the 'veiled language of poetic discourse')"] ("Tradurre l'allegoria: Convivio II, i" 171–72).

[85] ["Canzone, I think they will be few / those who will rightly understand your meaning / so difficult and complex is your speech. / So, if it perchance happens / that you should appear before people / who do not grasp it well at all, / I therefore pray you to find comfort / by telling them, my dear newborn song: 'Consider at least how beautiful I am!'"]

Dante shows an acute awareness of the possibility of not being correctly understood: "io credo che saranno radi / color che tua ragione intendan bene" (vv. 53–54). But, if the case presents itself, they—the readers—must pay attention to its beauty, as emphasized by the use of the imperative: "Ponete mente almen com'io son bella!" Dante will later, in section xi, espouse the literal sense of this *tornata* as such:

> Che non voglio in ciò altro dire, secondo che è detto di sopra, se non: O uomini, che vedere non potete la *sentenza* di questa canzone, non la rifiutate però; ma *ponete mente* la sua bellezza, che è grande sì per [la] *construzione*, la quale si pertiene alli gramatici, sì per l'*ordine* del sermone, che si pertiene alli rettorici, sì per lo *numero* delle sue parti, che si pertiene alli musici. *Le quali cose in essa si possono belle vedere, per chi ben guarda*. (emphases added)[86]

Said differently, if the reader cannot grasp the *sentenza*, the doctrine hidden underneath the veil of allegory, they should pay attention to its beauty: its grammatical syntax ("costruzione"), its rhetorical *dispositio* ("ordine del sermone"), and its musical numbering. All traits, by the way, shared with the figure of Orpheus and the art of rhetoric. The beauty to which readers must "ponete la mente" is reflected on the text's surface. It focuses attention on its literal nature, its *ordinatio*, its *divisio*, and its *dispositio*.[87]

Aquinas had declared "Sapientis est ordinare" at the beginning of his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, "a work which Dante repeatedly drew in the *Convivio*: it is the function and obligation of the wise man to 'order' in every sense of the word" (Minnis and Scott, "The

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[86] ["For I mean nothing by this, as has been said above, other than: O men who cannot see the *meaning* of this canzone, do not therefore reject it; but rather consider its beauty, which is great by virtue of its *composition*, which is the concern of the grammarians, by virtue of the *order* of its discourse, which is the concern of the rhetoricians, and by the virtue of the *number* of its parts, which is the concern of the musicians. *These things can be seen beautifully within it, by those who look closely*."]

[87] The concept of *divisio* in relation to exegesis will be further explored in Part II of this chapter, in the section "The Early Commentary Tradition," as well as in Chapter 3.

Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio" 380).[88] Indeed, Dante remarks in the *Convivio* how: "sì come dice lo filosofo nel primo della Fisica, la natura vuole che *ordinatamente* si proceda nella nostra conoscenza, cioè procedendo da quello che conoscemo meglio in quello che conoscemo non così bene: dico che la natura vuole, in quanto questa via di conoscere è in noi naturalmente innata" (II, i, 13 emphasis added). In his commentary to his *canzone*, Dante expresses the view, shared with thirteenth-century scholars, of putting a premium on orderly procedure. He follows a hierarchy of scientific activities, engaging in *definitio* and *divisio* first, and "only then could conclusions follow logically from propositions, and points of doctrine be proved or disproved" (Minnis, "Literary Forms in the 'Literal Sense'" 146).[89]

Regarding the poem's musicality: "per lo numero delle sue parti, che si pertiene alli musici," it does two critical things. First, it emphasizes the number of partitions of the poem, focusing on its numbering and sequencing. Secondly, it also echoes the view propounded by Boethius that music has the power to soothe savage passions, much like Orpheus: "far[r]ia mansuescere e umiliare li crudeli cuori" (*Convivio* II, i, 3). For a contemporary Florentine theologian such as the Dominican Nicholas Trevet, this notion extends to a poet-musician like David and his Psalms, an *auctor* that Dante seeks to draw parallels with throughout the *Commedia*.[90]

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[88] Cogan expresses this principle concisely when, in his investigation into the relationship between the structure of the *Commedia* and its moral *sententia*, he mentions how "[i]n the previous two *cantiche* of the *Commedia* the underlying allegorical structure was always also indicated in the narrative details of the literal journey" (190).

[89] For example, by "[a]pplying [Aquinas'] explanation of Aristotle's two kinds of order, one can say that the parts of a text are mutually ordered to each other, but this order of the parts among themselves exists because of the order of the whole text to the *finis* intended by its *auctor*. Literary *ordinatio* involves 'subordination': the parts of doctrine are 'subordinated' to chapters, chapters are 'subordinated' to books, and individual books are 'subordinated' to the complete work. A text can be thought of as a hierarchy of superior and 'subordinate' parts" (Minnis, "Literary Forms in the 'Literal Sense'" 147–48). There is no reason to think that this process could not be applied to poems, be them *canzoni* or the entire *Commedia*.

[90] For example, Nicholas Trevet not only made use of Virgil's *Aeneid*, a pagan poetic text, in his commentary on the Psalms, but relates an anecdote from Boethius' *De musica*, whereby "by means of touch a musical sound proceeds from the psaltery in which resides a power sedative to passions." This was not uncommon since, for instance, Boethius's *De musica* "was drawn on by Giles of Rome also, in a discussion of sacred song which forms part of the

By focusing on the beauty of the poem, that is, its surface and order, the reader may, "per chi ben guarda," find elements emerge from its structure that can, in turn, reveal a secret doctrine. As Minnis notes, albeit concerning Scripture, "[c]areful summarising of the literal structures of the Bible became the normal preliminary to detailed exegesis," later stating how "the new techniques of *divisio textus* actually fostered a sort of 'structuralist' exegesis" ("Literary Forms in the 'Literal Sense'" 150–51). Therefore, Singleton's structuralist approach to the *Commedia* is not necessarily solely the result of a wider trend in contemporary literary theory. It is indeed recapturing "the master patterns of the Christian mind."[91]

Dante emphasizes the literal sense and the canzone's surface structure—"com'io son bella!"—which echoes his explanation of its importance in the allegory of the theologians in the *Convivio*. After explaining the moral-tropological sense (T3), Dante then expounds the fourth sense, that is "anagogico, cioè sovrasenso" (T4), using "In exitu Israel de Aegypto" (Psalm 113) as an exemplum that "ne l'uscita de l'anima dal peccato, essa sia fatta santa e libera in sua potestate" (II, i, 7).[92] He then states that the literal sense is effectively true, the Hebrew people indeed fled from Egypt, and emphasizes the importance of this historical or literal sense before any consideration of an allegorical sense: "sempre lo litterale dee andare innanzi, sì come quello nella cui sentenza li altri sono inchiusi, e sanza lo quale sarebbe impossibile ed inrazionale

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prologue to his commentary on the Song of Songs" (Minnis, "Literary Forms in the 'Literal Sense'" 134). See also "Dante: The Davidic Cantor" (Chap. 1, Part I).

[91] It is also interesting to note that, contemporary to Singleton's structuralism and his famous lecture "The Vistas in Retrospect" (1965), in Italy, Contini defined one of the new functions "del dantismo moderno": "scoperte di collegamenti particolari in cui si rispecchiano, come nella monade il macrocosmo, dati della struttura generale" ["discoveries of particular correspondences in which are mirrored, just like the macrocosm in the monad, data of the general structure"] (410). One page later, he recognizes Singleton as "uno degli ultimi interpreti ideologici serî" ["one of the last serious ideological interpreters"] (411).

[92] ["when the soul departs from sin it is made whole and free in its power."] As seen earlier, the author of the *Epistle* uses this same Psalm to illustrate all four components of the allegory of the theologians. See also *Purg*. II, v. 46.

intendere alli altri, e massimamente allo allegorico" (II, i, viii).[93] Therefore, by stressing the literal

aspect of his poetry, such as the structure, sequence, and numbering of the poem, Dante instructs

his readers that these elements form the necessary starting point, via subordination, to the doctrines

nestled within his poetry.[94] The remainder of the first chapter of the second treatise of the *Convivio*

goes on stressing the importance of the literal sense, stating: "la litterale sentenza sempre sia

subietto e materia dell'altre, massimamente dell'allegorica, impossibile è prima venire alla

conoscenza dell'altre che alla sua" (11), or "la litterale dimostrazione sia fondamento dell'altre,

massimamente dell'allegorica, impossibile è [al]l'altre venire prima che a quella" (12). Dante then

concludes his exposition on allegory by indicating that in interpreting his *canzoni* he will first

expound a literal sense (1) and then an allegorical sense (2), "cioè la nascosa veritade," which

would lead one to think that he is adopting the allegory of the poets. However, he then adds that

"talvolta de li altri sensi toccherò incidentemente, come a luogo e a tempo si converrà," which

could only mean the allegorical (3), moral-tropological (4), and anagogical (5) senses of the

allegory of the theologians (15).[95] Therefore, is Dante implying that his poetry can be allegorized

in both modes?

For a scholar like Hollander, this is precisely what Dante is implying: "[t]he allegory of

*Convivio* II, i, ... is a hybrid, an attempt to combine what should not be combined .... It is the sin

of the poet, ... to claim for secular literature a license for a higher form of truth-telling that is

explicitly reserved to the Bible and to the writings of its annointed [sic] interpreters" ("Dante

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[93] ["the literal should always come first, as being the sense whose meaning encloses the others, and without which it would be impossible and illogical to attend to the other senses, and especially the allegorical."] Therefore, this dissertation respectfully disagrees with Scott when he states that "it did not appear necessary to the author of the *Convivio* to place great importance on the literal sense of the poems he was using as a springboard for his moral truths" ("Dante's Allegory of the Theologians" 31).

[94] As Minnis explains, "[o]ne justification for such literary division and collection seems to have been that the intentions of the *auctores* were thereby clarified: precise and complete presentation enabled an author's argument to emerge" ("Literary Theory and Literary Practice" 153–54).

[95] ["at times touching on the other senses, when opportune, as time and place deem proper."]

'Theologus-Poeta'" 96).[96] Moreover, Hollander argues that since both forms of allegory were already at play in Dante's *Vita nuova*, both can naturally co-exist within the *Convivio*.[97] Scott also believes that Dante is indeed eliding both forms of allegory, "it is here that Dante's audacity comes to the fore—in his claim that poets can rival the Bible's four levels of meaning" ("Dante's Allegory of the Theologians" 30).

Even if we are to remove the *Epistle* and the *Convivio* from our consideration of allegory in the *Commedia*, the poem itself is replete with authenticating devices—much like the figure of Geryon mentioned above—that serve to emphasize its truth and divine sanction. For example, when the apostle Peter tells Dante "tu, figliuol, che per lo mortal pondo / ancor giù tornerai, apri la bocca, / e non asconder quel ch'io non ascondo" (*Par.* XXVII, vv. 64–66).[98] As Barański aptly puts it: "the *Commedia* does not, in fact, need the *Epistle*, or any other text, in order to highlight its reliance on the 'allegory of the theologians'" ("The Epistle to Can Grande" 589). Moreover, this divinely sanctioned *visio* is by no means a *unicum* in medieval literature, as Padoan underlines: "basta scorrere la produzione mistica o le biografie di santi e di sante scritte nei secc. XII–XIV o gli stessi *Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius* per trovarne esempi a piene mani: da frate Egidio che fu rapito al terzo cielo come S. Paolo, a frate Bernardo da Quintavalle che fu rapito in Dio 'frequentissime,' a frate Giovanni d'Alvernia (...)" ("La «mirabile  visione» di Dante e l'Epistola

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[96] Hollander's essay provides a useful historical contextualization of a wider dispute pitting theologians against poets. As he puts it, "[i]t is with this battle between poets and theologians in mind that we should approach Dante, for the context of this dispute is probably the one which shaped his own formulations—especially in such self-exegetical texts as *Convivio* II, i, and the *Epistle to Cangrande*" ("Dante 'Theologus-Poeta'" 100).

[97] Hollander notes how, in the *Vita nuova*, "Dante's first donna, Beatrice, gains her true significance only as we see her 'typological' relationship to Jesus Christ; the second donna, only as we understand her as being a poet's allegory of philosophy" ("Dante 'Theologus-Poeta'" 102). For the sake of brevity, this chapter will not touch upon Dante's own exegesis in the *Vita nuova*; however, it should be noted that Dante practices the same technique of *divisio textus* throughout his collection of poems.

[98] As a matter of fact, this is the third, and last, time that Dante is charged with his prophetic task. Prior to Peter, there was Beatrice in *Purgatorio* (XXXII, vv. 103–105; XXXIII, vv. 52–57) and Cacciaguida ten cantos earlier (XVII, vv. 124–142), "thus making threefold the source of the poet's authority to reveal his vision. This represents his final investiture in his role as God's prophet" (Robert Hollander, Commentary to lines 64–66, 2000–2007, *Dartmouth Dante Project*).

a Cangrande" 37).[99] However, if one can understand the reluctance of Trecento commentators in granting Dante his truth claims due to social, political, and cultural factors, why the persistence today? The argument here is not whether Dante indeed visited the 'beyond' but instead granting the poem its theoretical presuppositions, as though playing by the dealer's rules at a card game. The hermeneutic key is to take the truth-claims of the poem in all seriousness.

Dante did not necessarily expect his readers to find fourfold allegorical meanings in all of his verses but rather that, within the larger scheme of things, his text embodies, and has embedded within it, an interpretive apparatus that one would use in approaching Scripture in search of correspondences.[100] The point of departure for textual analysis is to give mind to the poem's structure, order, and numbering. This process of *divisio* facilitates the comparison of various textual nodes within the text, thus enabling intratextual glosses, of which vertical readings are a subset. Indeed, several co-numerical correspondences are stronger than others, particularly the Twenty-Sixes, the Fifteens, the Thirteens, and the Nines; convincing enough to persuade readers to look for more co-numerary correspondences. The ambiguity about whether the entire poem should be read in this manner unwittingly concedes intellectual ground to the poem's pretensions. Even the process of sleuthing the poem for intratextual correspondences *de facto* aligns the poem with Scripture.

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[99] ["it is sufficient to leaf through the production of mystical texts or the biographies of saints written between the 12th and 14th centuries, or the *Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius*, to find hand fulls of examples: from Giles of Assisi, who was enraptured to the third heaven like St. Paul, to Bernard of Quintavalle, who was enraptured in God 'most frequently', to John of Auvergne"] See Nardi's echoing of Padoan's point: "[i]l vero è, che le vite dei santi e gli scritti dei mistici medievali sono pieni di siffatte visioni e rapimenti estatici; e che ad essi si prestava comunemente fede, e si cercava di spiegarli con ragionamenti filosofici e teologici, come si trattasse non di finzioni poetiche, ma di apparizioni e rivelazioni sovrannaturali, o, comunque, insolite" ["the truth is that the lives of saints and the writings of medieval mystics are filled with such visions and estatic raptures; and to these were commonly given credence, and philosophical and theological reasoning were used to explain them, as though they were not poetic fictions, but supernatural apparitions and revelations, or, in any case, as unsual"] ("Dante Profeta" 287–88). Moreover, Nardi provides, in detail, medieval doctrines concerning the power of prophecy contemporary to Dante's time.

[100] See Mazzotta who points out how "the allegory of the *Divine Comedy*, far from being simply a device to induce mechanically from the outside a moral sense into the poetic texture or a rhetorical modality only sporadically present in the poem, *is indeed its very principle of structure*" ("Allegory: Poetics of the Desert" 229 emphasis added).

Lanapoppi, who at one point argued for an allegorical mode of the poets, also presents the debate between both allegories in the *Commedia* as a false dichotomy: "bisogna ora ricondurre il problema alle sue giuste proporzioni e riconoscere che in verità la distinzione tra i due generi non era ... così chiaramente presente alla mente dei contemporanei di Dante" (27).[101] Likewise, within the larger field of medieval scriptural exegesis, fiction was also considered to be present in the Bible and "that not all the books of the Bible were supposed to be comprehensible in simply referential terms" (Minnis and Scott, "The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio" 385).[102] During Dante's time, the two types of allegory were not mutually exclusive since theological allegory was also occasionally applied onto non-scriptural texts and that Scripture sometimes contains "figures, fictions, and enigmas" (Minnis and Scott, 386).

Interestingly, if Dante's journey is interpreted as factual, this does not exclude the possibility of fiction either. Much like a Matryoshka doll, his poem—the telling of a vision—contains within it a series of visions. For instance, in *Purgatorio* XV, on the terrace of wrath, Dante describes the visions he is experiencing as non-false errors: "Quando l'anima mia tornò di fori / a le cose che son fuor di lei vere, / io riconobbi i miei non falsi errori" (vv. 115–117). This ambiguity is the core of Dante's authenticating strategy, and it is subjected to even greater tension in *Paradiso* because the souls that appear to the pilgrim in the various spheres only do so for the sake of making Dante's experience intelligible. All the souls find themselves united—without distinction—in the Empyrean. Their appearance under the guise of difference through the various heavens is a

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[101] ["it is now necessary to bring back the problem to its right proportions and recognize that, in truth, the distinction between both genres were not (...) so clearly present in the minds of Dante's contemporaries."]

[102] See, for example, Scott who points out that Origen admitted that "the Bible at times encased spiritual truth in a false frame (*In Johan*. X, v, 20), while, nearer to [Dante's] times, Hugh of Saint Victor agreed that the literal sense occasionally seemed absurd or impossible (*PL*, CLXXVI, 802)," and that, therefore, "Jerome, Augustine, and others looked to allegory as a way out, revealing the *veritade ascosa*" ("Dante's Allegory" 584).

necessary fiction to allow Dante to grasp what would otherwise be impossible to understand. One can recall Beatrice's discourse in *Paradiso* IV:

> Così parlar conviensi al vostro ingegno,
>
> però che solo da sensato apprende
>
> ciò che fa poscia d'intelletto degno.
>
> Per questo la Scrittura condescende
>
> a vostra facultate, e piedi e mano
>
> attribuisce a Dio e altro intende;
>
> e Santa Chiesa con aspetto umano
>
> Gabrïel e Michel vi rappresenta,
>
> e l'altro che Tobia rifece sano. (vv. 40–48)[103]

The representation of *Paradiso* or, say, the pilgrim's experience of it, needs to have recourse to fiction, much like Scripture.

Consequently, putting both the *Epistle* and the *Convivio* aside and the notion that they necessarily reflect either directly or indirectly Dante's position regarding the *Commedia*'s allegory, the poem continually speaks for itself. One way to interpret the confusion in Dante's *expositio* of the allegorical modes in the *Convivio* would be teleological, that is, as "a transitional moment in Dante's movement from standard poetic allegory toward the theological allegory implemented in the *Commedia* and described in the *Epistle to Cangrande*" (Ascoli, "Dante and Allegory" 135).[104] By the time of the publication of the *Epistle*, presumably circa 1315, the *Inferno*

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[103] For an in-depth analysis of what is referred to as 'accommodative metaphor,' compare Aquinas' statement on the matter (*Summa* I, i, 9–10).

[104] Ascoli, however, prefers putting the emphasis of his analysis of this section of the *Convivio* as serving purposes that point towards "modern notions of authorial self-reflexivity and intentionality and of the textual letter as the basis for all interpretation," which will form the core of his later book *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (2008).

and the *Purgatorio* were already in circulation, and both canticles already contained indications as to the allegorical status of the poem: "Dante suggested that the journey, since it was part of God's providential scheme, had to be interpreted in the light of fourfold biblical allegory, although all those sections of the poem which did not directly refer to this event had to continue to be viewed in terms of its twofold secular model" (Barański, "Dante Alighieri. Experimentation and (Self-) Exegesis." 580).[105] Therefore, both allegorical systems cohabit the poem, and this represents the poet's incredible skill of merging religious and secular culture, of converging biblical and literary exegesis, "[i]t was in the space between these traditions that he tried to locate the *novitas* of his own poem" (580).[106] This innovative reconciliation of both allegories, or, say, synthesis, was— and still is—"no easy task, for Dante as for his readers"; however, it is clear that theological allegory "did sporadically influence Dante's *modus componendi* in the *Divine Comedy*—and it must be recognized that he believed himself to be chosen to fulfil a divine mission" (Minnis and Scott, "The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio" 386–87).[107]

Dante's adaptation of biblical exegesis did not occur in isolation since during his time commentators of the Bible became increasingly interested in the literal sense and, among other things, the literary merits, style, and personalities of the authors who wrote under divine inspiration.[108] From a primacy of allegorical interpretation to focusing on the literal sense and the

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[105] In the same vein, Martinez, in his entry on "Allegory" in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, remarks that "[t]he *Convivio* discussion [on allegory] might well be read as proposing one fourfold system of interpretation for all texts (*scritture*), with subdistinctions accounting for the different status of Scripture" (28).

[106] Minnis and Scott echo this notion when they underline how Dante was "the great innovator" who fully took advantage of the use of "theological allegory into the discussion of the meaning of secular texts" ("The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio" 386).

[107] For evidence of a similar operation in the *De vulgari eloquentia*, see Pépin: "[l]e remarquable est ici que l'allégorie des poètes et l'allégorie biblique soient, une fois au moins, traitées de la même façon, jusqu'à laisser supposer, pour tels passages de la Bible également, la fausseté du sens littéral" ["the remarkable thing here is that the allegory of the poets and biblical allegory are, at least once, treated the same way, letting one suppose, for such passages of the Bible as well, the falsity of the litteral sense"] (55).

[108] See Padoan, pp. 48–49ff. See, as well, Minnis who notes how: "in the thirteenth century, a new type of exegesis emerged, in which the focus had shifted from the divine *auctor* to the human *auctor* of Scripture. It became fashionable to emphasise the literal sense of the Bible, and the intention of the human *auctor* was believed to be expressed by the

human *auctor* in Scripture, this shift was due primarily to the flourishing influence of Aristotle.[109] Indeed, this increased exegetical attention on the literal or historical sense of Scripture was concurrent to a decline in extensive allegorical exposition.[110] Furthermore, the same attention was given to texts that are not necessarily Scripture, such as the commentaries to Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae* by Nicholas Trevet and William of Aragon (143).[111]

The resurgence of Aristotle in medieval literary theory, with its emphasis on the literal or historical sense, be it for the fables of poets or the poems in Scripture, set the foundation for humanism's emergence. Medieval theologians were interested in evaluating poetry and "provided, at least, the foundation on which later writers could build their poetics and theories of art" (Minnis, "Literary Forms in the 'Literal Sense'" 144). If allegorizing pagan texts served as a way to justify their study and preservation, despite their occasional distortion through Christocentric readings, which are essentially moral-tropological, the focus on the letter of the text, the study of style—be it in Scripture or pagan poetry—contributed to a nascent form of philology. Said differently, pagan texts, whether theoretical ones, such as Cicero's *De oratore* or the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, or poems such as Virgil's *Aeneid*, were instrumental to the study of stylistic elements found within Scripture.[112]

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literal sense. As a result, the exegetes' interest in their texts became more literary" ("Introduction: The Significance of the Medieval Theory of Authorship" 4). For more on this shift, see Minnis, who denotes that "[i]f twelfth-century exegetes had sometimes ignored stylistic considerations in their search for allegorical meanings, their successors placed a premium on the right meaning in the right literary form" ("Literary Forms in the 'Literal Sense'" 131).

[109] See Minnis, "Introduction: The Significance of the Medieval Theory of Authorship" 5 and "Literary Forms in the 'Literal Sense'" 118–59.

[110] See Minnis, "Literary Forms in the 'Literal Sense'" 143.

[111] For instance, "[t]o take the case of Trevet, although his expositions of the pagan fables alluded to by Boethius are heavily indebted to the glosses of William of Conches, there is a considerable difference in their attitudes to the material. Trevet was more interested in historical exposition than was his predecessor: he consistently reduced the amount of interpretation 'by integument' and augmented the historical information provided by William of Conches" (Minnis, "Literary Forms in the 'Literal Sense'" 143).

[112] "In fact, thirteenth-century theologians produced a vocabulary which enabled the literary features of Scriptural texts to be analysed thoroughly and systematically, and which encouraged the emergence, in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, of a more liberal attitude to classical poetry" (Minnis, "Literary Forms in the 'Literal Sense'" 144).

In sum, what seems to be happening is a total merger of the traditional categories of exegesis, something that an early commentator like Guido da Pisa would experiment with and that Boccaccio would later seize upon and expound in several of his works. The most astonishing part of this debate regarding Dante's truth claims, his use of allegory, and his status as a poet and prophet is best described by Barolini, who remarks how "[t]he *Commedia* makes narrative believers of us all," that is to say that "[w]e read the *Commedia* as Fundamentalists read the Bible, as though it were true, and the fact that we do this is not connected to our religious beliefs, for on a narrative level, we believe the *Commedia* without knowing that we do so" ("Detheologizing Dante: Realism, Reception, and the Resources of Narrative" 16). In other words, Dante's ability to transform us into "narrative believers," "his ability to make a text that we treat as a real world constitutes his essential 'allegory of the theologians'" (16). The presence of co-numerary correspondences is symptomatic of this transformative power. Dante did want his readers to approach his poem in the same way exegetes handled the Bible, prioritizing the literal sense of the fourfold system of allegory. Indeed, Dante most likely intended certain cantos to echo one another on a numerical basis, encouraging readers to sleuth the poem for intratextual correspondences. It is but one of many authorial stratagems used to substantiate his truth claims.

**Part II: The Early Commentary Tradition, Boccaccio, and Petrarch**

> *La* Divina Commedia *è un verminaio di glossatori.*
>
> – Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *L'Italia Futurista*, 1917.[1]

**The Early Commentary Tradition**

The working hypothesis regarding the pattern of co-numerical correspondences in the *Commedia* is that they are part of an auto-exegetical system embedded within the poem's structure to imitate how authoritative Latin texts, scriptural and pagan, were studied and analyzed. The tools used by exegetes and poets in interpreting and composing texts are shaped by Singleton's claim of a "master pattern" inherent to the *weltanschauung* of Dante's time. These techniques enact a semiotics of space that considers the spatial disposition of signs to generate complementary meanings. Vertical readings are a product of this "master pattern," and rather than being a mere mechanical gimmick, or a quirky feature designed to draw attention without any intrinsic value, vertical hermeneutics characteristically have both a creative and interpretive function.

The premise for this hypothesis is that the *Commedia*'s truth-claims would entail adopting a scriptural hermeneutic apparatus or an adaptation of the allegory of the theologians to elucidate its meaning. This interpretive approach is inherently intratextual, and, as such, it should facilitate and enable the discovery of patterns such as symmetries between co-numerary cantos. Nevertheless, there is a contradiction in the claim of a "master pattern" of verticality contemporary to Dante's time because there are no explicit mentions of a vertical patterning of the *Commedia*'s canticles in the early commentary tradition. This section seeks to explain this state of affairs.

As testified by its roughly 600 extant manuscripts, Dante's *Commedia* was an immediate success in Medieval Europe (Parker 240). Indeed, "only the Bible was read or recited from with

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[1] ["The *Divine Comedy* is a can of worms of commentators."]

greater frequency in fourteenth-century Italy" (Minnis and Scott, "Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 439). By the time of Dante's death in September of 1321, copies of the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio* were already widely circulating, and the poem's novelty and complexity consequently created "a demand, in short, for commentary" (439). A first commentary in the vernacular on the entirety of the poem by Jacopo della Lana had already appeared by the end of the 1320s (Botterill 590, 592). After four decades, at least eight commentaries, both in Latin and Italian, either on the entirety of the poem or just one *cantica* had been composed. Expository and interpretative glosses were typically reserved for sacred or authoritative Latin texts, such as Aristotle or Virgil. Therefore, it is a momentous event in the history of literary theory and criticism since an entire literary tradition with its own set of analytic procedures for expounding Scripture and allegorizing pagan poems is now being applied to the work of a 'modern' poet in the vernacular.[2]

Trecento commentators of the *Commedia* focused primarily on establishing Dante as an *auctor*. They did so by transforming and adapting traditional exegetical apparatuses to the *Commedia*, such as the *accessus ad auctores*, *divisio textus*, and academic vocabulary, like the literary *modi* (modes): *modus tractandi* (mode of procedure), *modus scribendi* (mode of writing), et al. As Minnis and Scott state, "[a]cademic commentary became a precedent and source for 'modern' commentary (i.e. commentary on writers who were *moderni*) and even 'self-commentary'" ("The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio" 374). This process of adaptation of the commentary tradition of Latin *auctores*, pagan or scriptural, to "modern" vernacular writers did not appear *ex nihilo*, since by Dante's time a few vernacular texts

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[2] As Barański neatly states: "[w]ith Dante, Western literary criticism reached a watershed (...) [n]ot only did a vernacular author claim the same artistic status as the great writers of the past, but he also established a critical tradition whose specific task was to analyse vernacular literature" ("Dante and Medieval Poetics" 10).

were being commented on similarly to the Bible and major Latin texts.[3] By the early Trecento, when the *Commedia* was circulating, secular poetry and Scripture had come together in stylistic exegesis.[4] What is extraordinary with Dante's writings and the commentary tradition they generated is that sacred and secular literary theory is unified in a universal interpretative model.

Before delving deeper into the early commentary tradition, a particular Dantean quirk needs to be given its due prominence. As illustrated in the discussion regarding allegory in Part I of this chapter, the earliest Dante commentary begins with Dante himself. In his quest to establish himself as an *auctor* and exercise control over his poetry's meaning, Dante commented on his vernacular poetry in the *Vita nuova* and the *Convivio* using traditional modes of exegesis ranging from *divisio textus* to intratextual glosses.[5]

The unfinished *Convivio* "is quite clearly based on the medieval genre of the commentary on an *auctor*; indeed, Dante calls it 'quasi comento'" (Minnis and Scott, "The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio 377).[6] As for the *Epistle*, even if it is not Dante's, it

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[3] "In the early Trecento, Francesco da Barberino and Niccolò de' Rossi glossed their own vernacular poetry (in Latin), and the physician Dino del Garbo wrote a commentary on Guido Cavalcanti's notoriously elusive canzone 'Donna mi prega'" (Botterill 591). Albeit in Latin, other non-Classical texts had also received their share of glosses from the literary establishment, such as Walter de Châtillon's *Alexandreis* (finished ca. 1182) and Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus* (Minnis and Scott, "The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio" 373).

[4] As Minnis aptly puts it: "[s]omething of the prestige, the new authority, which had been afforded to Scriptural poetry in particular, and to the poetic and rhetorical modes employed throughout Scripture in general, seems to have rubbed off on secular poetry. Scriptural *auctores* were read literally, with close attention being paid to those poetic methods which were part of the literal sense; pagan *poetae* were read allegorically or 'moralised'—and thus the twain could meet" ("Literary Forms in the 'Literal Sense'" 142).

[5] See, for example, Barański's take: "[b]oth works in fact, are closely modelled on the structures of contemporary critical works, in particular, on those of the glossed poetic manuscript" ("Dante and Medieval Poetics" 10). See Minnis and Scott who remark that "[t]he whole of Dante's career as poet and literary theorist is (...) inclusive of a process of 'auto-exegesis'" ("Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 443).

[6] "E però che lo mio pane è purgato da una parte, convienlomi purgare da l'altra, per fuggire questa riprensione, che lo mio scritto, *che quasi comento dir si può*, è ordinato a levar lo difetto de le canzoni sopra dette, ed esso per sè fia forse in parte alcuna un poco duro" ["Now that my bread has been purged on one side, it is necessary for me to clean it on the other to escape a censure of this kind, for my writing, *which can almost be called a commentary*, is intended to remove the defect of the canzoni mentioned above, and this may itself prove to be perhaps a little difficult in part"] (*Convivio*, I, iii, 2, emphasis added).

still exhibits the characteristic Dantean trait of auto-exegesis.[7] Likewise, by using Psalm 113 to expound the allegory of the theologians, "the *Epistle* is directing us back both to the poetry of the *Comedy* and to the theorizing of the *Convivio*" (Minnis and Scott, "Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 443). The souls arriving upon the shores of Purgatory sing that very same Psalm: "'In exitu Isräel de Aegypto'" (*Purg*. II, v. 46), highlighting the poem's dependence on the allegorical model of Exodus. The same *canto* where this important interpretive key is given also contains Dante's self-citation of "Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona" (v. 112). Dante analyses this particular *canzone* in the *Convivio* (III), where he also uses Psalm 113 to expound the anagogic allegorical mode (II, i). This dynamic interplay between texts is both intertextual and intratextual: it brings into play other texts, but from the same, or presumed to be, *auctor* and therefore is internal to a single corpus.

As for the *Commedia*, Dante not only invites his readers to interpret his verses in *Inferno* IX and *Purgatorio* VIII allegorically, but he also presents his own experience as a text meant to be glossed intratextually. In *Inferno* XV, upon hearing Latini's prophecy, Dante responds by stating that "[c]iò che narrate di mio corso scrivo," presumably in the book of his memory, "e serbolo a *chiosar* con altro testo" (vv. 88–90 emphasis added). This 'signposting' indicates, in no uncertain terms, the need for the pilgrim/reader to gloss the poem intratextually. In *Purgatorio* XI, another instance of authorial awareness, the artist Oderisi da Gubbio closes the *canto* by telling Dante: "Più non dirò, e scuro so che parlo; / ma poco tempo andrà, che ' tuoi vicini / faranno sì che tu potrai *chiosarlo*" (vv. 139–141 emphasis added). The task of glossing will eventually fall on his ancestor Cacciaguida who, in *Paradiso* XVII, provides him with said glosses: "queste son

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[7] Minnis and Scott remark that "[w]hether or not Dante and the *Epistle*'s author are one and the same, then, their conceptions of the enterprise of the *Comedy* (and of its historical moment) are commensurate" ("Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 444).

le *chiose* / di quel che ti fu detto" (vv. 94–95 emphasis added). The characters within the poem tell Dante that he will be able to gloss their discourse *qua* text with future texts.

Dante's poetics worked in tandem with the literary theories and practices of his time, as evidenced by the cluster of intertextual references between the *Epistle*, the *Convivio*, and the *Commedia* and the mention of intratextuality as an exegetical tool to "chiosar" his journey. They were not a theoretical afterthought imposed on his writing *post facto* but a constitutive part of his creative process.[8] Throughout his works, Dante disseminates exegetical cues so that "fourteenth-century readers were meant to imitate his example and, following standard exegetical procedures, they were supposed to understand for themselves the reasons for and the mechanisms behind the *novitas* of his texts" (Barański, "Dante Alighieri. Experimentation and (Self-)Exegesis." 564).[9]

This auto-exegetical proclivity is also apparent in the *Vita nuova*, where Dante demonstrates the exegetical procedure of *divisio textus*: "an aspect of the scholastic commentators' concern with *forma tractatus* or *ordinatio libri*, i.e., the structure and arrangement of the various parts which constituted a whole work" (Minnis and Scott, "The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio" 376–77). As Singleton indicates, "a division serves to open up the *sentenzia* or the *intendimento* of a poem—the substance, that is, and the intention of what the poem says" (*An Essay on the Vita Nuova* 46).[10] Thirteenth-century clerks developed the process

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[8] This does not necessarily imply a teleological thrust in the sequence of Dante's works, see for instance Ascoli and his work on the figure of the "palinode" (1997, 2011). What can be observed is that the strategy of self-authoring, of gathering a pre-existing body of work of a single author to attribute it an overarching unified theme or narrative, either by self-citation, commentary, or self-representation, is deployed in the *Vita nuova*, the *Convivio*, the *De vulgari eloquentia*, the *Epistle*, as well as the *Commedia*.

[9] Barański reiterates this point, stating how "[i]l poema, di fatto, come era comune in altri testi medievali, è strapieno di contrassegni di carattere tecnico con cui Dante voleva illuminare la sua novità" ["the poem, in fact, as was common place in other medieval texts, is replete with signposts of a technical character with which Dante wanted to highlight his novelty"] ("La lezione esegetica di *Inferno* I: allegoria, storia e letteratura nella *Commedia*" 80). Ascoli aptly calls this process "the eminently Dantean dialectic of tradition and innovation," or put differently, the "assimilation and simultaneous transformation of the Latin critical tradition" ("Access to Authority: Dante in the Epistle to Cangrande" 329).

[10] For instance, in the *Vita nuova*, Dante writes: "la divisione non si fa se non per aprire la sentenzia de la cosa divisa" ["I will not subdivide this sonnet as such analysis is made only in order to disclose the meaning"] (XIV); or, later,

of *divisio* by "building on techniques well advanced in the twelfth century," and they "applied high standards of textual organization in many spheres of literary activity and creation" (Minnis, "Literary Forms in the 'Literal Sense'" 145). In theoretical terms, this form of rational structuring draws a parallel between God's two books, the universe and the Bible, and, by extension, the underlying logic of a text.[11] Moreover, it implies that the poet, or the inspired author of Scripture, has a rational structure integrated into his writings that enables its *sentenzia*, its meaning, to emerge. In practical terms, mapping out the structure, sequence, and partitions of a text, as well as their interrelations, is the *sine qua non* of exegesis. All these considerations overlap with technical processes derived from the arts of rhetoric and memory.[12] Indeed, these arts have made significant inroads into theology.

The structural model of a work of art, be it textual or visual, should aim to replicate what Lewis calls the "Model of the universe." This structure should evince a harmonious pattern, such as those found in nature and Scripture. In his *Vita nuova*, Dante used exegetical methods, derived from the art of rhetoric, that constitute outward evidence of such a theological mode of signification.[13] To access the meaning of his poetry, exegetes had to begin by focusing on its literal

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commenting on *Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore*, he remarks: "a più aprire lo intendimento di questa canzone, si converebbe usare di più minute divisioni" ["to uncover still more meaning in this *canzone* it would be necessary to divide it more minutely" (Reynolds trans.).] Needless to say, the use of divisions and/or rubrics is intrinsically linked to *ars memoriae*. See, for instance, *Par.* XXIX, where Beatrice explains to Dante-pilgrim how angels need not to use the concept of *divisio,* since they have no memory faculty: "Queste sustanze, poi che fur gioconde / de la faccia di Dio, non volser viso / da essa, da cui nulla si nasconde: / però non hanno vedere interciso / da novo obietto, e però *non bisogna* / *rememorar per concetto diviso*;" (vv. 76–81 emphasis added).

[11] Singleton notes how the "work of poets ought to resemble the work of God, ought, like His creation, to be addressed to a reasonable reader and be susceptible of the same exegetical methods," that is, poems should reveal "a structure in 'imitation' of the creation of God" (*An Essay on the Vita Nuova* 48). See also Chapter 1, "Part I: Structural Elements".

[12] This will be analyzed in Chapter 3, alongside visual arts and the art of memory.

[13] Therefore, for Hollander, "[h]ad Dante assigned a designation to the mode of signifying of the *Vita nuova*, using the same two possibilities he set before us in the *Convivio*, he would not have hestitated [sic] to have told us that the *Vita nuova* was written in the mode of the allegory of the theologians" ("Dante 'Theologus-Poeta'" 101). Hollander justifies his position by underlining: "[Dante's] opening insistence on the historicity of the events narrated, the nature of those events as they relate to other events in the Old and New Testaments, the concluding vision of Beatrice among the blessed, for which Dante is clearly if tacitly made to function as a new Paul in Johannine clothing, all these (and many other) details point to his governing awareness of the Bible and of biblical exegesis as the central source of the significative pattern of the work" ("Dante 'Theologus-Poeta'" 101). Scott also agrees with Hollander's position, but

surface: the structure, numbering, and sequence of the poems: "Ponete mente almen com'io son bella!" (*Convivio*, II).[14] This surface-level attention to beauty gives our contemporary use of the noun 'gloss' to describe an outward shine and brightness, and its etymological cousin 'glow,' a particular resonance with the technical term used for explaining, translating, interpreting, and commenting a problematic passage: 'to gloss.'

Despite Dante's auto-exegetical propensity and his "clues," his adaptation of the Latin critical tradition was perhaps too brilliant to be seen immediately, creating an ambiguous intermediate situation, a period of adjustment where onlookers had to adjust their sight momentarily. Indeed, Dante's "appropriation of traditional categories to authorize a new kind of work can result, intentionally or not, in transforming them beyond easy recognition" (Ascoli, "Access to Authority: Dante in the *Epistle to Cangrande*" 334). Dante's adaptation of the traditional allegorical apparatus and poetic terms such as *cantica* and—more importantly—his truth-claims all presented a series of significant difficulties for early commentators.[15]

The premise of vertical readings is that they are the result of adapting an allegorical system that is dependent on certain truth-claims—it is *not* fiction. Conversely, commentators struggled with such innovations and the implications derived from said claims. Therefore, this may partly explain why there are no explicit mentions of the poem's symmetrical patterning in the early Trecento. Nevertheless, a closer look reveals a delayed reaction, a staggered process towards

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with one important distinction, the emphasis on the historicity or fictiveness of the literal sense as a determining factor ("Dante's Allegory of the Theologians" 37).

[14] This was illustrated earlier in Part I of this chapter when discussing Dante's self-commentary in the *Convivio*.

[15] A sample of the inability of contemporary readers to perceive, or reluctance to acquiesce, the novelty of Dante's poetics was illustrated in "What's in a Name?" (Chap. 1) with Pertile's examination of the names given to the partitions that divide and subdivide the poem, "canzon," "cantica," and "canto," as well as to the poem itself, either as a "Comedìa" or a "poema sacro." On the one hand, he has shown, much like Iannucci, how Dante was acutely aware of the exegetical trends and allegorical systems of his time and, likewise, that he intended his readers to follow them when glossing his text. On the other, Pertile demonstrated the reticence of the early commentators in using the terminology that Dante employed in his poem, indicating the limited impact his auto-exegetical cues had for a whole generation of readers.

recognizing the pattern.[16] This is substantiated in the iterations of commentaries by the same commentator (the author of l'*Ottimo* and Pietro Alighieri) and in what they chose to borrow from one another. Albeit never reaching its full potential, there is a progression towards recognizing co-numerary parallels in the *Commedia* in the early commentary tradition. As will be shortly demonstrated, the real locus of recognition transcends the space of literary criticism and enters the world of poetic creation with Boccaccio and Petrarch.

| Commentator | | Dates | Language | Text |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jacopo Alighieri | | 1322 | Italian | *Inferno* |
| Graziolo di Bambaglioli | | 1324 | Latin | *Inferno* |
| Jacopo della Lana | | 1324–1328 | Italian | *Commedia* |
| Anonymus Lombardus | | 1325 | Latin | *Purgatorio* |
| Guido da Pisa | | 1327–1328 | Latin | *Inferno* |
| L'*Ottimo commento* | 1st vers. | 1333 | Italian | *Commedia* |
| | 3rd vers. | 1338 | | *Inferno* |
| Anonimo Selmiano | | 1337 | Italian | *Inferno* |
| Pietro Alighieri | 1st vers. | 1340–1342 | Latin | *Commedia* |
| | 2nd vers. | 1344–1355 | | *Inferno* |
| | 3rd vers. | 1359–1364 | | *Commedia* |

Table3 – List of Early Commentaries of Dante's *Commedia*.[17]

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[16] The same can be said of the recognition of the presence of acrostics in the *Commedia*. See the section "The *Amorosa visione* and Dante's Acrostics."

[17] The sequence presented here is taken from Hollander's proposed dates on the *Dartmouth Dante Project* website. Minnis and Scott cautiously remark how the interrelations between each commentary "are complex and their sequence

The *Epistle*'s discussion on the allegorical interpretation of Scripture via the fourfold method appears in the glosses of commentators such as Guido da Pisa and Jacopo della Lana (Barański, "The Epistle to Can Grande" 588). However, much like twentieth-century Dante criticism, how early commentators treated the poem's allegory is a critical point of divergence and contention (Botterill 599). Even if the early commentators acknowledge "the four levels of exegetical interpretation in their prologues, in practice, they tend to confine themselves to pointing out the poem's moral significance;" moreover, they "differ widely in the extent to which each seeks to uncover other levels of allegorical meaning" (Parker 242). Therefore, even if they situate the poem's hermeneutic frame within the allegory of the theologians, this does not necessarily imply a systematic four-fold interpretation.

For example, Pietro Alighieri interprets the poem as a poetic fiction, an allegory of the poets; his main focuses are Dante's literary achievement as a classical poet—rather than the poem's theological underpinnings and the poet's visionary powers—and exculpating his father from accusations of heresy. There is an insistence on the notion of poetry as *fictio*: "Pietro sees Dante, in essence, as a learned poet of classical stature; and the key term here is *poet*" (Minnis and Scott, "Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 451).[18] Similarly, Graziolo de' Bambaglioli also eschews questions of prophecy and veracity, preferring to limit allegorical readings and defend Dante's orthodoxy.[19] On the other end of the spectrum, Jacopo Alighieri's

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uncertain" and, citing Hollander, they note that the dates are "approximate and often conjectural" (442). Their sequence is an adaptation of Hollander's: Jacopo Alighieri (1322), Graziolo de' Bambaglioli (1324), Anonymus Lombardus (1322–1325), Jacopo della Lana (1324–1328), Guido da Pisa (1327–1328), Ottimo (1st vers. 1329–1331), Chiose Selmiane (1337), and Pietro Alighieri (1st vers. 1340).

[18] Hollander states it aptly when he remarks: "Pietro nervously attempts to reassure the jittery reader that his father did not really think he had been in the Empyrean (nor the rest of the afterworld, by implication), but only feigns to have been there, while in my view Dante is feigning that he is not feigning" ("Dante 'Theologus-Poeta'" 117).

[19] See Mazzoni, who notes: "proprio per la fruttuosa limitazione dell'allegoria a quella 'fondamentale' (che valga insomma a dichiarare inizialmente i termini della 'fictio' sia rispetto ai personaggi principali che quanto al figurato) senza successivi cedimenti e sovrapposizioni, il commento di G. si viene in un certo senso a contrapporre al tutto programmatico allegorismo delle Chiose di Iacopo [Alighieri?]" ["specifically for its fruitful limitation of allegory to

commentary—Dante's youngest son and the first link in the chain of Dante commentary—

expounds the *Commedia*'s allegory along the lines of the *Epistle* with a strong allegorical bent, but

with somewhat sterile results.[20] Jacopo della Lana indirectly cites the *Epistle* and considers the

poem a doctrinal work, a didactic encyclopedia. He also aligns his political views with those of

Dante, citing the *Monarchia* on multiple occasions.[21] Guido da Pisa's commentary also situates

the poem within a prophetic theological framework.[22]

Despite its popular success, or perhaps because of it, not all commentators "were charitably

disposed towards the *Comedy*," it was not passively accepted by the cultural establishment (Minnis

and Scott, "Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 445).[23] For example, Bologna was

the focal point of the early commentary tradition and the *Commedia*'s manuscript production. In

1322, Jacopo Alighieri's commentary was sent to Guido Novello da Polenta, Bologna's Capitano

del Popolo, while Graziolo de Bambaglioli was a Bolognese "cancelliere." Jacopo della Lana was

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a fundamental one (that basically means the same as initially declaring the terms of the fiction for both the principal characters and the figurative ones) without any later concessions or juxtapositions, the commentary of Graziolo stands in a certain contrast to the entirely programmatic allegorical glosses of Jacopo"] ("Bambaglioli, Graziolo de'" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*).

[20] See Mazzoni, who notes "[n]el Proemio I[acopo] espone l'allegoria fondamentale della Commedia in piena coincidenza con l'Epistola a Cangrande; ma nello scendere, canto per canto, all'analisi particolare, egli non riesce più a cogliere dall'interno il significato concreto della fictio, della rappresentazione: l'immagine dà avvio a uno sterile, astratto allegorismo, sovrapposto alla lettera della poesia, anche laddove non è manifestamente in causa un sovrasenso" ["in the Proem, Jacopo expounds the fundamental allegory of the *Commedia* in full coincidence with the *Epistle*; but, in going through *canto* by *canto*, to analyzing the particulars, he no longer succeeds in gathering from within the text the concrete meaning of the fiction, of representation: the images gives way to a sterile and abstract allegorism, imposed onto the letter of the poetry, even where a it is not manifestly at play"] ("Alighieri, Iacopo" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*). See also Minnis and Scott: "meaning is imposed from without, not discovered within" ("Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 450).

[21] See Mazzoni: "[c]''è una pressoché totale adesione, da parte del commentatore, alle posizioni dantesche, in qualche caso addirittura 'scavalcate' in senso più apertamente 'ghibellino' e antiierocratico" ["there is an almost complete adherence on the part of the commentator to Dante's positions, even in certain occasions 'overtaking' more openly 'ghibelline' and anti-hierocratic positions"] ("Lana, Iacopo della" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*).

[22] Minnis and Scott remark that he is "the most vigorous advocate of the poem's prophetic status" ("Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 444 n. 21).

[23] Minnis and Scott go on to explain how: "[s]ome felt threatened or insulted by its religious and political views. Some were disturbed to find their ancestors or their cities (or even themselves) consigned to unpleasant parts of the Dantean universe; and others were alarmed to find that their greatest source of civic or artistic pride (...) received no mention in Dante's text" ("Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 445).

also Bolognese and the first to comment on the entire poem. However, Bologna was also home to many of Dante's enemies, as indicated in his second eclogue to Giovanni del Virgilio.[24] Dante's political treatise *Monarchia* was publicly burnt there by Cardinal Bertrando dal Poggetto in 1329. The reproof of the treatise, written by the Dominican Guido Vernani, probably at the behest of Poggetto, was dedicated in admonition to the commentator Graziolo de' Bambaglioli.[25] After the ousting of Poggetto from Bologna, Bambaglioli also went into exile in 1334 and sought refuge in Naples. Evidently, Dante commentary developed in uneasy conditions, and these, in turn, must have played a role in the interpretation of the poem.[26]

The format of the commentary itself, being organized by *canto*, may also contribute to isolating the text since it deploys a diachronic and sequential perspective that, in turn, impedes retrospection and anticipation. Certain commentaries, such as Jacopo Alighieri, Graziolo de Bambaglioli, the Anonymous Lombard, Guido da Pisa, and the Selmian glosses, focus on a single *cantica*. This hinders a synchronic perspective of the poem, limiting the range of possible intratextual references between canticles. Despite this, both Guido da Pisa's commentary and the

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[24] See Rossi, who notes how polemic writings against Dante in Bologna were "motivated by both cultural reasons (his choice of Italian instead of Latin for such an elevated subject) and political reasons (Bologna was a Guelph stronghold)" (206).

[25] "Si comprende come l'apologetico entusiasmo di G[raziolo] potesse in qualche modo turbare (certo in rapporto alla sua posizione) chi mal riusciva a cogliere, anche sul piano politico, le esatte prospettive di cui si era animato il pensiero dantesco: non a caso fra' Guido Vernani dedicherà in quegli anni proprio al Bambaglioli, con una *inscriptio* ammonitrice, il *De reprobatione Monarchiae*" ["One can understand how the enthusiastic defense of Dante by Graziolo could in a certain way cause consternation (certainly in relation to his position) in whom was unable to grasp, even on a political level, the exact perspectives that animate Dante's thought: it is no coincidence that Friar Vernani would dedicate in those years to Bambaglioli, with a textual admonition, the *De reprobatione Monarchiae*"] (Mazzoni, "Bambaglioli, Graziolo de'" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*).

[26] Other important elements to consider regarding the content of the commentaries are: the patrons and the public of the commentary itself, the personal styles and proclivities of the commentators, their monastic or civil affiliations, their personal stakes, such as Dante's own sons, paratextual elements, etc.

Anonymous Lombard have 14 and 20 inter-canticle connections; however, none are co-numerical.[27]

Guido da Pisa's Latin commentary of *Inferno* (1327–1328) stands out for several reasons.[28] First, the Carmelite friar had experience in commentating and translating classical texts and traditional religious training. Secondly, he alludes to the allegory of the theologians in his prologue with wording similar to the *Epistle*.[29] Minnis and Scott claim that "Guido is the first commentator to make use of the *Epistle*, and he uses it with great intelligence and discrimination," so much so that it was suggested at one point that he had written it himself ("Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 446). Guido understands Dante's poem as taking part of the allegory of the theologians, expounding, for example, the fourfold allegorical scheme onto non-scriptural figures such as Minos and Beatrice; however, he also makes space for poetic fiction.[30]

There is a particular nuance regarding the poem's literal level for the Carmelite friar, which is apparent in his unorthodox commentary on the poem's first line. It is commonly interpreted as indicating Dante's age and the year of the voyage: 35 years old and thus setting the events in the year 1300. But, for this Pisan friar, when Dante: "dicit quod in medio itineris nostre vite, hoc est in somno," that is, Dante meant to say that his poem is a *visio prophetica in somnium*. Furthermore, the poet/theologian binary is staggered across the three canticles: in the *Inferno,* Dante is a poet;

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[27] The data presented in this section was collected from the *Dartmouth Dante Project*'s commentary search engine. The glosses accounted for are any instance of intratextuality between canticles; therefore, intratextuality within the same canticle has not been tracked.

[28] For more information regarding the dating of the commentary, see Iliescu 146 ff.

[29] Guido writes "ista Comedia continet quatuor sensus, quemadmodum et scientia sacre theologie. Currit enim in hoc poesia cum theologia, quia utraque scientia quadrupliciter potest exponi; imo ab antiquis doctoribus ponitur poesia in numero theologi" ["this Comedy contains four senses, as well as the knowledge of sacred theology. For in this work poetry accords with theology, because each one of these sciences can be explained in a fourfold manner: all the more because by the ancient doctors poetry is included under theology"] (Cioffari and Mazzoni 135–36).

[30] Guido da Pisa expounds the four-fold division in his prologue and then use Minos as an example: "Primus namque intellectus sive sensus quem continet Comedia dicitur hystoricus, secundus allegoricus, tertius tropologicus, quartus vero et ultimus dicitur anagogicus" ["For the first meaning or sense which the Comedy contains is called historical, the second allegorical, the third tropological, the fourth and last is called anagogical"] (Cioffari and Mazzoni 136).

whereas, in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, he is a theologian.[31] This, in turn, allows him to make space for fictional elements within the poem.

Furthermore, Guido's euhemerist approach to pagan deities foreshadows Boccaccio's own defense of poetry in his *Genealogia*, whereby pagan gods and myths can be read allegorically in light of Christian truth.[32] For example, Guido presents both Hercules and Theseus as *figurae Christi*, echoing Dante's take on the figure of Orpheus in the *Convivio* (Rigo 202).[33] Likewise, his procedure of separating the literal from the allegorical in his commentary "was to be taken up by Boccaccio in his *Genealogia* and was to become the major structuring principle of Boccaccio's Dante lectures, the *Esposizioni*" (Minnis and Scott, "Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 448). It would seem that the Pisan friar was finely tuned to Dante's recasting of allegory and that his commentary does contain intratextual glosses, but none that are co-numerary.[34]

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[31] "Et tanto maior poeta omnibus aliis est censendus, quanto magis sublime opus ipse composuit, non solum de Inferis, ut simplex poeta loquendo, sed ut theologus de Purgatorio ac etiam [de] Paradiso, quantum homo aliquis subtilius ymaginari potest, ad utilitatem omnium viventium venustissime pertractando" ["And he is to be deemed so much greater a poet than all other poets inasmuch as he composed a more sublime work, not only about the Lower World, speaking as a simple poet, but as a theologian treating beautifully, insofar as man can subtly imagine, of Purgatory and even of Paradise, for the welfare of all the living"] (Cioffari, "Guido Da Pisa's Basic Interpretation (A Translation of the First Two Cantos)" 22).

[32] See Rigo 203–5, where Guido cites the same authorities—Varro and Augustine—that Boccaccio will also use in his defense of poetry. Moreover, see Iliescu who sees in Guido da Pisa a proto–humanist: "[q]uello che gli umanisti diranno più tardi di Petrarca è già detto ora, con fermezza, di Dante, a soli pochi anni dalla sua morte" [that which the humanists will later say of Petrarch is already said now, firmly, about Dante, only a few years away from his death"] (147).

[33] "Meno inquietanti appaiono al frate gli dei e gli eroi della mitologia classica perché l'interpretazione evemeristica, fisica e morale da tempo aveva conciliato il pantheon pagano con il cristianesimo. Ma rompere con tanta serenità i limiti cui si atteneva cautamente l'esegesi vulgata, quella di tipo fulgenziano, leggendo in alcuni miti segni cristiani è tratto distinto di Guido, ignoto agli altri commenti trecenteschi della *Commedia* ed a gran parte della trattatistica mitografica ufficiale del Medioevo" ["Less worrisome appear to the friar the gods and heroes of classical mythology because the euhemerist intepretation, physical and moral, for some time had already reconciled the pagan pantheon with Christianity. But to break away, with such serenity, from the limits that traditional exegesis abided to, such as Fulgentius, reading in certain myths Christian signs is a distinctive trait of Guido, unaware of other Trecento commentaries [?] of the *Commedia* and, in large part, established mythographic treatises of the Middle Ages"] (Rigo 201–02).

[34] Guido was aware of the dangers involved in celebrating Dante's prophetic powers, since "towards the end of the prologue to his *Expositiones* he feels bound to point out that those *personae* whom Dante consigns to the Inferno are there not in reality, but only by way of example; and later in the same text he subjects all his findings to ecclesiastical scrutiny and correction" (Minnis and Scott, "Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 445).

One would think that this ambiguity vis-à-vis the truth-claims of the poem, and therefore its interpretative apparatus, would hinder the presence of inter-canticle glosses; however, commentators did pay attention to intratextuality in Dante's poem, regardless of their respective position regarding the poem's allegory. The use of *divisio* and intratextual glosses became the stock and trade of medieval literary practices in Trecento Italy. Although never explicitly mentioning the presence of numerical parallelisms between the three canticles, the early commentary tradition did apply exegetical procedures that brought together different sections of the poem and thus laid down the necessary foundation for vertical hermeneutics.

However, by the beginning of the fifteenth century, a "critical stagnation" in the development of the *Commedia*'s commentary tradition occurred due in large part to its imitative process (Botterill 594). Following the explosion of commentaries in the early Trecento, a period of stagnation occurred in the second half, only to be taken up once more but in the novel format of public lectures by Boccaccio in the 1370s. It can also be hypothesized that in explicitly recognizing the poem's symmetrical patterns, commentators would be yielding intellectual ground to Dante's truth-claims and consequently position themselves in a precarious position. All these factors, among others, may have contributed to impeding the explicit mention of the poem's symmetrical structure.

Inter-canticle intratextual references are predictably far more numerous in commentaries on the entirety of the poem. For example, Jacopo della Lana's commentary is replete with intratextual references between canticles, but only 2 out of the 108 found are co-numerary: *Par.* V, vv. 64–72 > *Inf.* V and *Par.* XVII, vv. 1–6 > *Inf.* XVII. The latter gloss is unique to Guido, whereas the former is shared in common with the first redaction of l'*Ottimo commento*.

Additionally, both entries are retrospective since the inter-canticle references to the *Inferno* happen from the perspective of *Paradiso*.

The *Ottimo* commentary takes its name from its excellence, a designation assigned in the early Settecento by the Accademia della Crusca for its Florentine vernacular, even though a candidate for its authorship has been proposed for some time: the Florentine notary Ser Andrea di Ser Lancia.[35] There are three distinct versions from at least 34 manuscripts; the first, dated to around 1333–1334, the second, slightly later, found in two codices, and the third, after 1337 but previous to Pietro Alighieri's 1340 Latin commentary (Mazzoni, "Ottimo commento, L'" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*).[36] It is remarkable because it is a *summa* of sorts, a synthesis of preceding commentaries until Pietro Alighieri.[37] This summative effect can be seen replicated when mapping

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[35] Azzetta contests Lancia's authorship of the *Ottimo commento* ("Le chiose alla 'Commedia' di Andrea Lancia, l''Epistola a Cangrande' e altre questioni dantesche" 55). He disputes the idea of a unique author to the commentary, stating: "l'anonimo *Ottimo Commento*, compiuto intorno al 1334 e tradito da oltre quaranta testimoni in forme diverse, che attestano non tanto il lavorío redazionale di un unico autore, come in passato si è creduto, quanto invece il processo rielaborativo a cui fu sottoposto questo testo dalla tradizione particolarmente attiva" ["the anonymous commentary, completed around 1334 and handed down in over forty instances of various forms, does not certify the redactional work of a single author, as thought in the past, but instead the re-elaborative process to which such a text was undergoing in a particularly active tradition"] ("Andrea Lancia copista dell'«Ottimo commento». Il Ms. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 676" 173).

[36] Hollander dates the first redaction to 1333 and the third to 1338. See also Azzetta, who points out how the third redaction was done in Florence between 1337 and 1343 and sought to prune to previous commentaries and integrate new textual sources, such as the *Monarchia*, the *Convivio*, and the *Epistle to Cangrande* ("Andrea Lancia copista dell'«Ottimo commento». Il Ms. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 676" 173–74). The second redaction principally consists in the rewriting of the first three cantos of *Inferno* based on the commentary of Bambaglioli, see Mazzoni who remarks: "tipico della seconda redazione è il rifacimento delle postille ai primi tre canti dell'Inferno, fondato sulla massiccia assunzione del dettato di Graziolo Bambaglioli, la cui presenza (nella prima redazione, ai canti corrispondenti) era del tutto trascurabile" ["typical of the second redaction is the rewriting of the notes to the first three cantos of the Inferno, based on its engaging with the discourse of Graziolo Bambaglioli, whose presence (in the first redaction, for the corresponding canto, was absolutely negligible"] ("Ottimo commento, L'" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*).

[37] Manzoni explains how "[i]l punto di partenza del commento è dunque interpretativo ed espositivo insieme, ma anche decisamente impegnato a fare un bilancio dei risultati anteriori; bilancio che se più spesso si concreta nella materiale assunzione delle precedenti chiose (in particolare da Iacopo Alighieri, da Graziolo Bambaglioli e soprattutto da Iacopo della Lana), talora impegna l'autore o in una diretta polemica coi suoi predecessori, oppure in una collazione e giustapposizione di una 'varia lectio' interpretativa" ["the point of departure of the commentary is therefore both intepretative and expository, but also deeply engaged in making an appraisal of previous results; an appraisal that even if more often than not resulting in the material borrowing of previous glosses (particularly from Jacopo Alighieri, Graziolo Bambaglioli and most of all Jacopo della Lana), the author engages either in a direct polemic with his predecessors, or in a colation and juxtaposition of an interpretative 'varia lectio'] ("Ottimo commento, L'" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*).

the inter-canticle intratextual references shared between commentators since it contains the highest amount of such glosses.

| | AL | JdL | GdP | O1 | O3 | P1 | P2 | P3 | B | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AL | | 11 | | 5 | | 1 | | | | 17 |
| JdL | 11 | | | **29** | | 6 | | 1 | | 47 |
| GdP | | | | 2 | | | | | | 2 |
| O1 | 5 | **29** | 2 | | 6 | 8 | 2 | 6 | | 58 |
| O3 | | | | 6 | | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 19 |
| P1 | 1 | 6 | | 8 | 3 | | 2 | 3 | 1 | 24 |
| P2 | | | | 2 | 4 | 2 | | 7 | | 15 |
| P3 | | 1 | | 6 | 4 | 3 | 7 | | 1 | 22 |
| B | | | | | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | 4 |
| TOTAL | 17 | **47** | 2 | **58** | 19 | **24** | 15 | 22 | 4 | 208 |

Table 4 – Comparison of Inter-canticle Glosses Shared Between Commentators.[38]

The above table illustrates inter-canticle glosses held in common between commentators, the most, 29, occurring between l'*Ottimo* (1st version) and Jacopo della Lana, who, in turn, shares almost a quarter of his with Graziolo de' Bambaglioli, absent from the list. The same can be stated between the first versions of the *Ottimo* and Pietro Alighieri, with eight glosses in common,

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[38] "AL" stands for the Anonymus Lombardus; "JdL," Jacopo della Lana; "GdP," Guido da Pisa, "O1" and "O3," the first and third versions of l'*Ottimo*; "P1," "P2," and "P3," the first, second, and third versions of Pietro Alighieri; and, lastly, "B," Boccaccio. The use of bold is to identify high levels of inter-canticle gloss borrowings.

indicating the possibility of Pietro's dependence on the *Ottimo* commentary. Indeed, Jacopo della Lana, the *Ottimo*, and Pietro Alighieri's first commentaries have the most shared inter-canticle glosses, with 47, 58, and 24, respectively. Out of the 544 inter-canticle glosses collected in this analysis, 400 were unique to each commentary, whereas 144—more than a quarter—are held in common with at least one other commentator. This high percentage suggests intentionality; it is statistically significant. The highest number of commentators sharing the same inter-canticle gloss never surpasses 4.[39] What this illustrates is that commentators actively borrowed inter-canticle glosses from one another.[40] Only a small percentage of inter-canticle glosses were co-numerary (24/544, 4.41%); however, almost half of the co-numerary glosses (10/24, 41.6%) were shared with at least one other commentator. This higher incidence of borrowing co-numerary glosses (42%) than non-co-numerary (134/520, 26%) can also indicate a preference for, or a particular relevance given to, glosses between cantos having the same number.

The first version of l'*Ottimo*, which covers all three canticles, shares 45 glosses out of 240 with at least one other commentator; conversely, in the third version, which covers only the *Inferno*, 11 out of 45 are shared, indicating an increase of 20% in glosses held in common.[41] Regarding co-numerary glosses, the first version of l'*Ottimo* has ten, three of which are shared with Jacopo della Lana, the third version of the *Ottimo*, and Pietro Alighieri's second and third versions. The *Ottimo*'s third commentary, in turn, has seven co-numerary glosses, of which four are unique (the Twos, the Sixteens twice, and the Seventeens); conversely, three are shared with his first version and one with Pietro Alighieri's second and third commentaries.

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[39] There are in fact 4 inter-canticle cross-reference that are shared by four commentators, these are: *Purg.* XX > *Inf.* XXX (AL, JdL, O1, P1); *Inf.* XXVI > *Purg.* IX (O1, O3, P2, P3); *Inf.* I > *Purg.* II (O3, P1, P3, B); *Inf.* I > *Purg.* XXXIII (O3, P1, P2, P3).

[40] A polygenetic argument can also be advanced; however, this in no way impedes the overarching argument of an intratextual auto-exegetical pattern within the poem. If anything, it strengthens it by demonstrating how different individuals, in isolation from one another, observed the same intratextual patterns in the *Commedia*.

[41] Evidently, more than half (6) belong to the first version of the commentary.

| Year | Commentator | | Text | Inter-canticle glosses | Unique | Shared | Co-numerical glosses | Unique | Shared |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1322–1325 | Anon. Lombardus | | *Purgatorio* | 20 | 7 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1324–1328 | Jacopo della Lana | | *Commedia* | 108 | 71 | 37 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 1327–1328 | Guido da Pisa | | *Inferno* | 14 | 12 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1327–1328 | Ottimo | 1 | *Commedia* | 240 | 195 | 45 | 10 | 7 | 3 |
| 1338 | | 3 | *Inferno* | 45 | 34 | 11 | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| | | | SUM | 285 | 229 | 56 | 17 | 11 | 6 |
| 1340–1342 | Pietro Alighieri | 1 | *Commedia* | 32 | 18 | 14 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 1344–1355 | | 2 | *Inferno* | 28 | 18 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 1359–1364 | | 3 | *Commedia* | 57 | 45 | 12 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| | | | SUM | 117 | 81 | 36 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| | | | SUM | 544 | 400 | 144 | 24 | 14 | 10 |
| | | | % | | 74 | 26 | % | 58 | 42 |

Table 5 – Comparison of Inter-canticle and Co-numerical Glosses between Commentators.[42]

Out of all the commentaries with inter-canticle correspondences, the combined *Ottimo* commentaries contain the highest ratio of co-numerary glosses: 17/285 (5.96%); Pietro Alighieri comes second with 5/117 (4.27%); and Jacopo della Lana last with 2/108 (1.85%). When broken

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[42] Boccacio has been omitted from this figure since he chronologically does not belong to the early commentary tradition.

down into individual commentaries, the third version of l'*Ottimo* has the highest percentage of co-numerary glosses: 15.6%, almost four times the ratio of the first version of the *Ottimo*: 4.17%. Comparing inter-canticle glosses specifically for the *Inferno* between the first and third versions of l'*Ottimo* also reveals a stronger propensity towards inter-canticle glosses, from 33 to 45, an increase of almost 50%.[43] The same can be observed when comparing the first and third versions of Pietro Alighieri's commentaries; in the first, only 1 out of the 32 inter-canticle glosses were co-numerary (3.13%); whereas in the third 3 out of 57 (5.26%). Overall, the data suggest that the observation of co-numerical inter-canticle correspondences was increasingly noticed in subsequent commentaries by the same commentator. Moreover, they also formed a significant portion of what commentators would borrow from one another (42%).

There are several occurrences of co-numerary inter-canticle glosses in the early commentary tradition. However, they are never explicitly mentioned as being symmetrical or co-numerary. Therefore—in definitional terms—they cannot be considered vertical readings (see Table in Appendix). Conversely, they are *proto*-vertical readings since, in several instances, the author of the *Ottimo* cross-references all three canticles but in two separate entries to a single *canto*, never merging them for a unified vertical reading. For example, in the introductory note to *Inferno* II, the *Ottimo* cross-references *Purgatorio* II. Later, in a gloss to verses 94–103 of the same *canto*, he cross-references *Paradiso* II, thus linking all three canticles in his commentary of a single *canto*. The same happens with the Sixes and twice with the Sixteens, as indicated by the grey background in the Table provided in the Appendix.

It would appear that there is a certain process of selection and refinement in the *Ottimo*'s exegesis. It is on a trajectory towards recognizing correspondences between co-numerical cantos

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[43] If we isolate the *Inferno* in the first version of *Ottimo*'s commentary, 3 out of the 33 are co–numerary (9.09%).

of the *Commedia*. Although Mazzoni does not recognize an obvious qualitative evolution in the *Ottimo*'s commentaries, the third version does contain "preziose novità" ('precious novelties') such as "la progressiva e ancor più diffusa infiltrazione di rimandi e richiami sempre più fitti a *luoghi paralleli* delle varie opere dantesche, non disgiunta nel contempo da alcune vigorose potature (...) effettuate in altre parti della chiosa, quasi per porre freno alla tecnica 'summatica' delle precedenti redazioni, e raggiungere un'ideale 'misura' di equilibrio esegetico" ("Ottimo commento, L'" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*).[44] By weaving the rest of Dante's corpus into its glosses, the third version of the *Ottimo* is more intertextually savvy. Moreover, the commentator significantly "prunes" his comments, thus proceeding to a selection process. Mazzoni's observation of an increase in intra and intertextual references—"rimandi e richiami"—statistically extends to co-numerary correspondences as well. This is indicated by the tripling of the ratio of co-numerary glosses between the first and third versions: $4.17 < 15.6$ %. Mazzoni also recognizes *Ottimo*'s method as being the closest to the technique mentioned earlier of commentating Dante with Dante, particularly for its accurate *literal* glosses.[45] The presence of 3 out of the 4 *proto-vertical* readings in the *Ottimo*'s last version—glosses that link all three canticles but in two separate entries to a single *canto*—further substantiates the hypothesis that commentators were trending towards noticing the vertical patterning of co-numerary cantos in the poem. The following

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[44] ["a progressive and even more widespread infiltration of dense cross-references and recalls to parallel places in Dante's various works and, at the same time, it is not disjointed from vigorous pruning in certain glosses, almost to put a stop to the summarizing technique of the previous redactions, and to arrive at an ideal measure of exegetical equilibrium."]

[45] See Mazzoni who remarks that "potrebbe dirsi che l'O[ttimo] ha per primo attuato il canone, poi epigraficamente espresso da Giovan Battista Giuliani, di 'spiegar Dante con Dante' (anche se tale canone mira nel commento *più alla chiosa puntuale* che a far centro nella concreta ideologia di D[ante])" ["we could say that l'Ottimo was the first to set into motion the canonical technique, later coined by Giovan Battista Giuliana, of 'explaining Dante with Dante' (even if said technique in the Ottimo *aims more towards accurate glosses* rather than giving a center to Dante's concrete ideology)"] ("Ottimo commento, L'" *Enciclopedia Dantesca* emphasis added).

two *proto*-vertical readings deserve further attention since the first touches upon the "Political 666" and, the second, the structural center(s) of Dante's poem.

The *Ottimo*'s first commentary contains a *proto*-vertical reading of the Sixes since it weaves together the sixth *canto* of each canticle in two separate entries to a single *canto*. As was established previously, the Sixes are a *locus classicus* of co-numerary correspondences in contemporary Dante studies.[46] It is often used as a precedent to justify a scholar's vertical reading of the poem. Another significant element is that the *Ottimo* observes these links retrospectively, that is, from the perspective of *Paradiso*, looking back onto the two previous canticles and thus giving credence to Singleton's approach. The first correspondence occurs in *Ottimo*'s introductory note to *Paradiso* VI where, in the context of explaining the figure of Justinian, he makes a list of the first lawmakers and notes that: "Solone primo diede le leggi alli Atteniesi, delle quali leggi tocca sopra, capitolo VJ Purgatorii. Ligurio le diede alli Lacedemoniensi, infingendo d'averle aute da Appolline; delle quali dice nel detto VJ capitolo" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*). The reference is to the end of *Purgatorio* VI, where Dante's political invective contrasts the fickle and mutable nature of Florence's legal system to the ancient and enduring laws of Athens and Lacedaemon (vv. 139–141).[47] Later, in a note to verses 40–42: "E sai ch'el fé dal mal de le Sabine / al dolor di Lucrezia in sette regi, / vincendo intorno le genti vicine," the commentator establishes a cross-canticle correspondence with *Inferno* VI: [d]ella qual morte immantanente seguitò la cacciata di Tarquino e de' suoi, con perpetua danazione del nome reale, come è scritto di sopra, capitolo VI Inferni (ibid.). However, there is no mention of Tarquin or anything remotely related, either in the

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[46] See "The Political '666'" in Part I of Chapter 1.
[47] Only Pietro Alighieri's third version observes the obvious textual link via the figure of Justinian between *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. In his gloss to verses 88–130 of *Purgatorio*, Pietro writes: "ut dicitur infra in Paradiso in capitulo VI."

*canto* itself or *Ottimo*'s commentary of *Inferno* VI. This may explain why it was removed in his third version.

The Sixteens' popularity, accounting for one-third of all the co-numerary inter-canticle glosses (8/24), is also noteworthy. If we are to add the Seventeens, 11 out of the 24 instances—almost half—happen in the vicinity of each canticle's structural mid-point.[48] This is significant considering the importance given by medieval exegetes to the internal organization and structure of texts.[49] For example, Hugh of Saint Victor's *Didascalicon: de studio legendi*, a textbook for students at the Abbey of St. Victor on how to read and study texts, both pagan and scriptural, is composed of 101 units.

| | Preface | Bk I | Bk II | Bk III | Bk IV | Bk V | Bk VI | Appendix |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chapters | 1 | 11 | 30 | 19 | 16 | 10 | 13 | 1 |
| Sum | 1 | 12 | 42 | 61 | 77 | 87 | 100 | 101 |

Table 6 – Distribution of the Partitions of Hugh of Saint Victor's *Didascalicon*.

This is a significant number considering its close relation to 100 and the idea it entails of perfection, as indicated by the *Commedia*'s own choice of 100 cantos. The center of the text is at the $51^{st}$ unit, which would be the sixth chapter of Book III, fittingly sharing the title of the work itself: "De modo legendi" ["Concerning the Method of Expounding a Text" (Taylor trans.)]. This section also

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[48] For both *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, the mid-point—determined on the basis of cantos per *cantica*—would be canto XVII; whereas for *Inferno*, it would be distributed on both cantos XVI and XVII.

[49] See, for instance, Singleton's *An Essay on the Vita Nuova* and "The Poet's Number at the Center" 1–10, as well as Logan 95–8, who also happens to do a vertical reading of the Seventeens. Logan notes how "the number pattern at the center is no mere surface ornament, but that it reaches deep into the movement of the poem; and this will come to us as no great surprise, but rather as the expected thing, for we do not forget that the same was true of the number pattern of the *Vita nuova*" (97).

has the same title as the penultimate chapter in Book VI, thus having a structural correspondence, or an equidistant repetition, at the beginning, the center, and the end of the *Didascalicon*. This is by no means redundant or superfluous.[50] In this chapter of Book VI, which concerns itself on the method of expounding a text in a book designed to instruct on how to expound texts, Hugh writes: "[m]odus legendi in *dividendo* constat. *Divisio* fit et partitione et investigatione. Partiendo *dividimus* quando ea quae confusa sunt distinguimus. Investigando *dividimus* quando ea quae occulta sunt reseramus" (emphases added).[51] In other words, analysis of a text begins by dividing it into its constituent parts by process of *divisio* which, in turn—much like the anagogic mode's "cum per visibile invisibile factum declaratur"—reveals that which is hidden "quae occulta sunt reseramus."

Chapters ix–xi of Book III, the structurally strategic center of the *Didascalicon*, make a parallel between analyzing texts and retaining their information through memory: "sicut ingenium dividendo investigat et invenit, ita memoria colligendo custodit."[52] Hugh urges his students to find its center through *divisio* and to use the same method to structure and safeguard the information gathered in one's memory, remarking how: "unus fons est et multi rivuli, quid anfractus fluminum sequeris? tene fontem et totum habes."[53] To recapitulate, in a manual for students on how to study and memorize texts, Hugh—at the center of his text—tells his students to find the center of a text to reveal its essential information.[54] What is crucial to the present argument is that exegetes gave

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[50] Taylor, in a footnote, recognizes this correspondence in Hugh's text but does not know what to make of it, observing how "the later chapter is briefer than the present one and adds nothing to it" (214 n. 55).

[51] "[The method of expounding a text consists of analysis. Analysis takes place through separating into parts or through examination. We analyze through separation into parts when we distinguish from one another things which are mingled together. We analyze by examination when we open up things which are hidden" (Taylor trans.).]

[52] ["just as aptitude investigates and discovers through analysis, so memory retains through gathering" (Taylor trans.).]

[53] ["The fountainhead is one, but its derivative streams are many: why follow the windings of the latter? Lay hold upon the source and you have the whole thing" (Taylor trans.).]

[54] Another text by Hugh of Saint Victor, titled *De arca Noe mystica*, actually begins with: "First, I find the center point..." For more regarding this text, see Rudolph 2004, and Carruthers "Models for the Memory" 53–55.

special consideration to a text's structural mid-point. This provides a rationale for the considerable amount of co-numeric glosses to cantos XVI and XVII in the early commentary tradition.

To conclude, it would appear that the author of the *Ottimo* was progressively discovering a series of overlapping correspondences between same-numbered cantos. Yet, he never explicitly references all three canticles together in a unified commentary. The foundation for observing the poem's vertical patterning was progressively established, peaking with the *Ottimo commento* and Pietro Alighieri but never reaching its full potential. Several factors have played a role in preventing their observation. As mentioned earlier, the reception of the poem and the following tradition of Dante commentary developed "in difficult, sometimes turbulent conditions"; therefore, commentators had to operate with remarkable tact when elucidating the intricacies of the poem or articulating their interpretations with regards to its truth claims (Minnis and Scott, "Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 446).[55] Out of fear of putting the poem on the same level as Scripture, perhaps commentators preferred not indicating the poem's symmetrical patterns.

Nevertheless, by Dante's time, Scripture and Latin texts had come together in exegetical methods and stylistics. Dante was applying these techniques to his vernacular compositions and likewise, so did the commentary tradition to his *Commedia*. Consequently, regardless of the commentators' theoretical positions—whether Dante is simply a poet or a divinely-inspired

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[55] For example, as mentioned above, about a decade after Dante's death, Guido da Vernani da Rimini, a Dominican friar, set out to refute Dante's political treatise *Monarchia*. Moreover, a few years later, in a congress of Dominicans held at Santa Maria Novella in Florence in 1335, it was prohibited for any member to have in their possession any books written by Dante (Nardi, *Il punto sull'Epistola a Cangrande* 25–26). For these reasons, among others, Nardi argues that "tutti i primi commentatori della *Commedia* si son preoccupati di difender Dante dall'accusa di eresia (...). Tutti, dico, da Graziolo a Pietro, da Jacopo dalla Lana a Guido da Pisa, dall'Ottimo al Boccaccio. E tutti lo mettono al riparo da questa accusa nello stesso modo, cioè distinguendo quello che Dante scrive come poeta (*poetizans*) da quello che Dante pensa come teologo 'nullius dogmatis expers', ossia, in sostanza, fra il senso letterale, intenzionalmente svalutato, e il senso allegorico, il solo vero" ["all the first commentators of the *Commedia* were preoccupied with defending Dante from the accusation of heresy (...). All of them, I say, from Graziolo to Pietro, from Jacopo dalla Lana to Guido da Pisa, from the Ottimo to Boccaccio. And all of them protect Dante from this accusation in the same way, that is, by distinguishing that which Dante writes as a poet (*poetizans*) from what Dante thinks as a theologian 'nullius dogmatis expers', namely, in substance, between the literal sense, intentionally devalued, and the allegorical sense, the only truth"] (26–27).

prophet, or both—they applied intratextual glosses to the poem for interpretative gains. As the tradition grew, these intratextual glosses did as well, both in number and in quality. Commentators increasingly borrowed them from one another. They noticed the same correspondences between different sections of the poem. This section has shown how, out of all the parallels held in common, co-numerical glosses are more likely to be borrowed than non-co-numerical ones. It can be suggested that they were given more exegetical weight by commentators when borrowing from each other.

Additionally, as commentators like Pietro and the *Ottimo* refined their commentaries, co-numerary inter-canticle glosses grew proportionally. As demonstrated, *Ottimo*'s commentaries contain all the material necessary for constructing a vertical reading since they have correspondences between the same numbered *canto* across all three canticles in the glosses to *Inferno* II (3rd version), *Paradiso* VI (1st version), and *Inferno* XVI (3rd version). Yet, they never further extrapolate their interpretative potential.[56] It appears that in the first half of the Trecento, the commentary tradition was well along its way to discovering the vertical patterns of the poem. Still, a confluence of factors impeded their detection after the 1350s.

In addition to literary exegesis and socio-political factors, natural events also affected the *Commedia*'s reception, criticism, and dissemination.[57] The Black Death undoubtedly impacted the academic establishment and the transmission of an intellectual and cultural tradition inherent to Dante's culture. This epoch-making transition between both halves of the Trecento could have contributed to the loss of certain "master patterns of the Christian mind" that Dante may have

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[56] There is a second occurrence of the Sixteens but from a combination of *Ottimo*'s first and third commentary; the first version links *Inferno* with *Paradiso*, the third, *Inferno* with *Purgatorio*.

[57] See Padoan who, in his introduction to Boccaccio's *Esposizioni*, writes: "la *Commedia* non era allora pacificamente accettata da tutti, perché troppi interessi, teologici, culturali, politici, familiari, ne sembravano colpiti" ["the *Commedia* was not peacefully received by everyone, because too many interests, theological, cultural, political, and familial, seemed targeted by it"] ("Introduzione" ix).

assumed would still be present.[58] Rossi observes a similar phenomenon with the production of commentaries of Dante's *Commedia*: "[t]here is a sort of exegetical blackout from the 1350s through the 1370s." Rather than pointing to the plague as a natural cause, he identifies a cultural one, that is, "the influence of the new cultural wave, based on the cult of Latin classical authors and on an aristocratic idea of culture, initiated by Petrarch" (207). Indeed, professional writers and members of the literary elite now followed dominant cultural figures like Petrarch, Mussato, and Giovanni del Virgilio, who were all more interested in Latin and Greek Antiquity than Christian mysticism or works in the vernacular, thus paving the way for Humanism.

However, one significant figure, Boccaccio, applied the same humanist ideals to Dante's texts in the vernacular. It is precisely his humanist sensibility, not Boccaccio's inheritance and development of Dante's theories surrounding allegory and pagan myths, nor his public lectures, that provides the best clues of his awareness of Dante's vertical patterns. Towards the end of his life, Boccaccio lamented about and distanced himself from the "meccanica turba," the newly emerging social class that filled the demographic void in the post-plague world of Northern Italy and that attended his public lectures on Dante's *Commedia*. In fact, he claimed that his illness was divine punishment for exposing the Muses to the "ingrato vulgo" by publicly commenting on the poem (Padoan, "Introduzione" xiii–xiv). Alongside the unfinished state of the *Esposizioni*, these factors may partly explain why Boccaccio does not mention in his lectures any elements of verticality within the *Commedia* and is reticent to apply allegorical readings to the poem. Conversely, his most Dantean work, the *Amorosa visione*, contains a poem-long acrostic, as well

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[58] For example, the Church suffered greatly with many members of the clergy dying as a result of activities such as tending to the sick. Their newest members were hastily trained, which led to a drastic drop in the quality of the clergy. See Epstein who notes how, as a result of the plague, "the new clergy may not have been as educated or as diligent as many of their predecessors" (182).

as other vertical elements, indicating that, at some level, Boccaccio was indeed attuned to Dante's vertical hermeneutics.

## Boccaccio: Dante Scholar, Commentator, Copyist, and Imitator

> *Boccaccio, we realize, like his best peers in the business, practiced an art of reticent commentary.*
>
> – Victoria Kirkham "Eleven is for Evil" (38).

Although several commentaries on Dante's *Commedia* circulated shortly after his death, including two by his sons Jacopo and Pietro, the first full-fledged *dantista* was no other than Giovanni Boccaccio.[59] Boccaccio was the first scholar entrusted with publicly explaining the intricacies of Dante's poem: he discussed its literal and allegorical meanings from the pulpit of the church of San Stefano, as one would do with a sacred text.

Before these public lectures, Dante already had a significant impact on Boccaccio's life and writings. The *Caccia di Diana*, one of Boccaccio's first literary works, like Dante's *Commedia*, is composed in *canti*, written in the vernacular and *terza rima*. It sustains a double-focus through its allegorical structure: on the one hand, it reveals moralizing and spiritual truths, and, on the other, refers to historical individuals from Neapolitan and Florentine high society. As a result, much like the *Commedia*, it is at once an allegorical poem and a chronicle of contemporary society. An autograph manuscript of Boccaccio's romance epic, the *Teseida*, also an early work written in the vernacular, comes with the author's glosses written in the margins, imitating Dante's auto-exegetical proclivity and self-fashioning as an *auctor*.[60] In the last page of the *Filocolo*, a

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[59] Minnis and Scott state it best when he remarks how: "Boccaccio's lifelong devotion to Dante expressed itself through an extraordinary range of literary roles: he was, by turns, a poetic imitator, a biographer, a transcriber and editor, a glossator, a commentator, and (finally) a lecturer, all *in honorem Dantis*" ("Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 453).

[60] See Carruthers, who remarks: "[b]y giving his new work all the trappings of a glossed book, Boccaccio was claiming for it the immediate institutional status of an *auctor*" ("Memory and Authority" 271). Moreover, Boccaccio does the same thing with Dante's prose glosses, the *divisio textus*, of the *Vita nuova*. See Armstrong who explains how

prose narrative written in the vernacular, Boccaccio cements Dante's position as an *auctor* by placing him alongside Virgil, Statius, Lucan, and Ovid.[61] In the *Amorosa visione*, Boccaccio imitates the genre, structure, and meter of the *Commedia* and triumphantly presents Dante crowned with laurels. Even the *Corbaccio* is a typical medieval vision with echoes of Dante's *Inferno*. Boccaccio's most famous work, the *Decameron*, presents one hundred and one stories, one more than the total amount of *canti* in the *Commedia*, and stages a modern theater of virtues and vices, of saints and sinners.[62] Boccaccio also took on the scribe's humble duty, copying some of the most precious manuscripts of Dante's works.[63] In 1350, Boccaccio even traveled to a convent in Ravenna to present Dante's daughter Antonia, now named Sister Beatrice, with ten gold florins on behalf of a group of Florentine merchants.[64]

This brief list certainly does not exhaust the extent of Boccaccio's passion for Dante's oeuvre, nor address the complexity of that relationship through the influence and mediation of another literary giant, Petrarch. Nevertheless, it sets up a rich context for what follows: a survey of Boccaccio's *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, which cuts across his post-plague career with not one but three redactions, his passionate defense of poetry in *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, and his public commentary on the *Commedia*: the *Esposizioni*.[65] All three texts provide a comprehensive

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Boccaccio's assigning Dante's prose *divisio* "the visual status of glosses, Dante's authority is subtly subsumed to Boccaccio's own editorial aims by adopting the mise-en-page of a compilation of a classical author" (125).

[61] Boccaccio will repeat this *quattuor* of *auctores* in his *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, with a small variation, substituting Lucan with Horace (I Red., 22–23). Altogether, Dante comprised, they form "la sesta compagnia" (*Inf.* IV, v. 148).

[62] See Hollander, who succinctly notes how: "[f]rom the first pages of the *Caccia di Diana* (1334?) the presence of Dante in and behind Boccaccio's poems has been perceptible to almost all readers. The same may be said of all his later poetic production" ("Boccaccio's Divided Allegiance" 221).

[63] See Armstrong, who remarks that: "[t]he most important documents of Boccaccio's work as a Dantist are the three autographs of the *Comedy* which he made between the mid-1350s and late 1360s, known as 'To' (Toledo, Biblioteca Capitular, Zelada 104.6), 'Ri' (Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 1035), and 'Chig' (now in two volumes, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Chigi l. vi. 213 and MS Chigi l. v. 176)" (123).

[64] For a succinct yet detailed analysis of Dante's influence on Boccaccio, see Gilson "Boccaccio and Petrarch" 22–25.

[65] Minnis and Scott point out how the manuscript evidence of the first redaction of the *Trattatello*, written sometime between 1351 and 1355, indicates that it "was not designed to be read apart from (or even in lieu of) the *Comedy*: it aims (like a good introduction to a modern critical edition) to aid and encourage us in our own approaches to the text"

understanding of Boccaccio's outlook on Dante's poetry and the function of allegory, which will set up a discussion on his *Amorosa visione*.

Boccaccio was indeed attuned to Dante's commingling of allegorical modes, something that he expresses in his *Trattatello* and, in turn, developed into a hermeneutic tool for his own *Genealogia* as well as a structuring principle for his *Esposizioni*. Unfortunately, since his public lectures never went further than *Inferno* XVII, they contain no instances of vertical readings. The lectures' content indicates that Boccaccio grew wary and weary of allegorical interpretations, constantly deferring them and preferring to focus instead on the text's literal sense. His correspondence and verses written during this period also show that Boccaccio felt shame and was reticent about revealing Dante's truth-claims to a broad vernacular audience.[66] All these factors partly explain his reticence in expounding the subtler intricacies of the poem.

### The *Trattatello in laude di Dante*

*In ogni poeta veramente ispirato, c'è la natura del profeta, e il profeta è a suo modo un poeta.*

– Bruno Nardi, "Dante Profeta" (294).[67]

The *Trattatello*'s primary purpose is to solidify Dante's status as an *auctor*, that is, an authoritative author. It does so by combining facts and fiction, using tropes found in other biographies of classical authors and medieval saints' lives.[68] One of the most significant elements in the narrative,

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("Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 454–55). As for the multiple redactions, they illustrate the ambivalent position in which Boccaccio found himself when dealing with Dante's allegorical claims. The second redaction, probably written in 1360, does not contain Boccaccio's reflections on poetry and its relation with theology. In the third version, completed by 1372, Boccaccio reinstated and expanded on his defense of poetry. In sum, "[s]uch modifications, cuts, and expansions, suggest that the status of poetry and its relation to theology were still very sensitive issues in the later fourteenth century" (455).

[66] See, for instance, Papio's introduction to his translation of the *Esposizioni*, where he remarks how Boccaccio's "own evaluation of this incomplete series of public lectures on the *Comedy* turned out to be rather negative" (5). Papio also later remarks that "[l]ike a good professor who is placed in front of a bad class, Boccaccio found the experience distasteful—not on account of the valuable material he tried to impart, but because he felt that he had tarnished the splendour of its innate beauty by exposing it to men who could not understand it" (7).

[67] ["In every truly inspired poet, there is the nature of the prophet, and the prophet is, in his own way, a poet."]

[68] See, for example, Minnis and Scott, who mention how Boccaccio's *Trattatello* has its roots "in the moralistic *vitae auctorum* which formed part of the twelfth-century 'Introduction to the authors' or *accessūs ad auctores* and

structurally embedded at the beginning and the end of the text, is the dream vision of Dante's pregnant mother, Gabriella degli Abati:

> Pareva alla gentile donna nel suo sonno essere sotto un altissimo alloro, sopra uno verde prato, allato ad una chiarissima fonte, e quivi si sentia partorire uno figliuolo, il quale in brevissimo tempo, nutricandosi solo delle orbache, le quali dello alloro cadevano, e delle onde della chiara fonte, le parea che divenisse un pastore, e s'ingegnasse a suo potere d'avere delle fronde dell'albero, il cui frutto l'avea nudrito; e, a ciò sforzandosi, le parea vederlo cadere, e nel rilevarsi non uomo più, ma uno paone il vedeo divenuto. (I Red, 17–18)[69]

Sasso remarks how: "[i]l sogno presago della madre costituiva canonico suggello alla biografia di un illustre personaggio, come insegnava, con innumerevoli esempi, la letteratura antica e medievale" (11 n. 6).[70] More importantly, he rightly points to Aelius Donatus' *Life of Virgil* for a significant intertextual reference and Dante's use of the *topos* in his hagiography of Saint Dominic (*Par*. XII, vv. 58–60).[71] Through his use of intertextual sources such as the various *Vitae*

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subsequently of the prologues to exegesis of scriptural texts" ("General Introduction: The Significance of the Medieval Commentary-Tradition" 2). Filosa explains how "Boccaccio wanted to reconnect Dante's vernacular poetry with the classical tradition—a wish that emerges immediately with the choice of a Latin title—and to tie the life of Dante to that or Virgil" (215–16). As for its hagiographic character, Boccaccio's "intention is to cloak the 'divine' poet, and especially his masterpiece, with a sacred destiny" (216). See also Barański: "lo scopo di Boccaccio era quello di rafforzare e legittimare l'immagine di Dante quale *auctor*" ["the goal of Boccaccio was to strengthen and legitimize the image of Dante as *auctor*"] ("Boccaccio, Benvenuto e il sogno della madre di Dante incinta" 104–05).

[69] ["It seemed to the gentle lady that, in her dream, she was under a very tall laurel tree, on a green meadow, beside a most clear spring, and there she felt herself give birth to a son who, in a short period of time, nourishing himself solely with berries, which were falling from the laurel tree, and from the waters of the clear spring. It then seemed to her as though he became a shepherd and that he sought with all his power to get leafy branches from the tree, whose fruit had nourished him, and, forcing himself thusly, it appeared as though she saw him fall, and in getting back up was no longer a man, but a peacock."]

[70] ["the premonitory dream of the mother constitutes the canonical stamp of a biography of an illustrious individual, as was taught, with innumerable examples, by classical and medieval literature."]

[71] As Pasquini and Quaglio note in their commentary to verse 60: "Secondo la leggenda, la madre di Domenico sognò di partorire un cane bianco e nero (il colore dell'abito domenicano), con in bocca una fiaccola che incendiava il mondo (simbolo della fede ardente del santo)" ["According to the legend, the mother of Dominic dreamt of giving birth to a black and white dog (the color of the Dominican garb), with in its mouth a torch that set the world on fire (symbol of the ardent faith of the saint)"] (*Dartmouth Dante Project*). As for the precedent in the Donatus' *Vitae* of Virgil, see Barański "Boccaccio, Benvenuto e il sogno della madre di Dante incinta" 115.

*Vergilianae*, it is clear that Boccaccio's rationale is to represent Dante as an *auctor* in the *volgare*, but there is much more happening here.[72] This dream narrative will later be addressed to illustrate how Boccaccio conflates theological and secular elements in depicting Dante and his poetry.

In a textual digression, Boccaccio explains the origins of poetry and poets as a consequence of primitive religion and the first forms of civilization, equating poetry with theology and poets with priests (cf. I Red, 128–156).[73] Boccaccio's objective is to show how poetry is also theology, stating how "molti non intendenti credono la poesia niuna altra cosa essere che solamente un fabuloso parlare, oltre al promesso mi piace brievemente quella essere teologia dimostrare" (I Red., 137), an idea that will be amplified in his *Genealogia*.[74] Boccaccio will even go as far as stating that the ancient poets—"tanto quanto a lo 'ngegno umano è possibile"—imitated the vestiges of the Holy Spirit (I Red., 138).[75] Boccaccio is attempting a complex and delicate operation, that is, to overcome the distinction between poetry and theology. Although he maintains the superiority of theology, he thrusts the former into the latter's orbit. This results in some confusion and many circumlocutory passages since poetry is found in Scripture and pagan texts as a mode of expression.[76]

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[72] See, for instance, where Boccaccio writes how Dante: "secondo il mio giudicio, egli primo non altramenti fra noi Italici esaltò e recò in pregio, che la sua Omero tra' Greci o Virgilio tra' Latini" ["according to my judgment, he was first among Italians to have exalted and given prestige (to the Italian tongue), no differently then Homer among Greeks and Virgil among Romans"] (I Red, 84).

[73] This is perhaps the most studied topic about the *Trattatello*. For the most important contributions to the field, see Curtius 214–27, Mésoniat 1984, Ronconi 1976; Zaccaria 281–311, and Papio 3–38.

[74] ["many, who do not understand, believe that poetry is nothing else but a fictional way of speaking, beyond what I have promised, it will be pleasing to me to briefly demonstrate that it is theology."] See Gilson, who remarks: "[t]his presentation of Dante as the personification of the poet-theologian is re-emphasized in the *Esposizioni* and the *Genealogie* ..." ("Boccaccio and Petrarch" 31).

[75] ["as much as possible by means of human reason"]

[76] Papio relates how "[m]any of Boccaccio's concepts, beyond being difficult to explain convincingly to orthodox critics, led to certain contradictions, largely because the equation of poetry to theology is exceedingly knotty in its details as long as the poets who are being used as the specimens of his analysis are pre-Christian. Once its essential points are put at the service of an authentically Christian poet like Dante, however, many of the difficulties begin naturally to fade away" (20).

For one, Boccaccio believes that both poetry and theology operate in the same way in terms of stylistic and rhetorical figures, as well as other formal features; however, their content may be different, if not at times antithetical to one another (I Red., 147).[77] Theology communicates truth; whereas poetry "ne suppone alcune per vere, le quali sono falsissime e erronee e contra la cristiana religione" (I Red., 148).[78] He will reiterate the idea of the equivalence between poetry and theology several times in the *Trattatello*: "Dico che la teologia e la poesia quasi una cosa si possono dire, dove uno medesimo sia il suggetto; anzi dico più: che la teologia niuna altra cosa è che una poesia di Dio" (I Red., 154), and later on: "bene appare, non solamente la poesì essere teologia, ma ancora la teologia essere poesia" (155).[79] Boccaccio will anchor this concept in the authority of Aristotle, "degnissimo testimonio ad ogni gran cosa, il quale afferma sé avere trovato li poeti essere stati li primi teologizzanti" (I Red., 155).[80] This reference serves as a justification for comparing secular poets with sacred poets in terms of style and in terms of subject (Minnis, "Epilogue: The Familiar Authors" 216). Already in the thirteenth century, due to the influence of Aristotelian causality, literary criticism was interested in a new type of exegesis, one that shifted the focus from the divine *auctor* to the human *auctores* of Scripture, analyzing them for their literary and stylistic merits.[81]

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[77] Minnis further explains how "[w]hen their subject is the same, Boccaccio explains, theology and poetry can be considered as almost one and the same thing. When their subject is not the same, theology and poetry *at least agree in their method of treatment (forma dell'operare)*" (Minnis, "Epilogue: The Familiar Authors" 216–17 emphasis added).

[78] ["conjectures some of them as true, which are very mistaken, erroneous, and against Christian religion."]

[79] ["I say that theology and poetry can be said to be almost the same thing, when they share the same subject; actually, I say even more emphatically, that theology is nothing else but a poetry from God (...) it appears clearly, not only that poetry is theology, but also that theology is poetry."]

[80] ["most worthy authority for every great thing, who affirms himself to have found poets to be the first to have theologized."] This idea, of the first theologians being poets, although based in Aristotelian philosophy (*Metaphysics* 2.4.12), could also derive from Petrarch's *Epistles* (*Familiares* X, 4, 3–5), written in 1349, which in its turn is indebted to Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae* VIII, vii, 1–3). Another possibility is also Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, XVIII, xiv.

[81] See Minnis and Scott, who note that "[i]n the criticism which this theory influenced, an inspired writer, being a cause which existed between the first efficient cause, God, and the effect, the scriptural text, was granted his personal purpose and procedure. Consequently, the differences between the personalities of the *auctores* of the Bible and the various formal causes (i.e. styles and structures) of their works could be recognized fully" ("Scriptural Science and Signification" 199).

Consequently, when Boccaccio tries to categorize Dante as either a poet, a philosopher, or a theologian, he writes: "*alcuni* il chiamarono sempre 'poeta', *altri* 'filosofi', e *molti* 'teologo'" (Red. I, 26 emphasis added).[82] In the overall picture depicted here by Boccaccio, Dante is indeed represented as a poet and a philosopher but, most of all, as a theologian.[83] When Boccaccio describes one of Dante's shortcomings, his alleged lustfulness, he uses as moral *exempla* the love affairs of Solomon and David (I Red., 172–174), respectively considered to be the divinely-inspired authors of the Song of Songs and the Psalms. The *rapprochement* is not casual since Dante himself, in the *Commedia*, conflates his poetic persona with both scriptural poets, be it in terms of content or the names he attributes to his poetic partitions (*canto*, *cantica*, *canzone*, etc.). In sum, Boccaccio's comparison implicitly claims that Dante "shared literary roles and forms with Scriptural authors" (Minnis, "Epilogue: The Familiar Authors" 215–16). This overlapping with scriptural authors also bleeds into Dante's biography, thus taking on a hagiography tenor.

One particularly striking example, alongside Dante's mother's dream, is Boccaccio's story regarding the *Commedia*'s last thirteen cantos (I Red., 183–189). According to Boccaccio, when Dante passed away, the *Commedia* was left incomplete. Under the pressure of friends, his two sons, Jacopo and Pietro, were contemplating finishing the work "acciò che imperfetta non procedesse" (I Red., 185).[84] However, Jacopo had a "mirabile visione," just like the conclusion of Dante's *Vita nuova*, about the missing cantos. Boccaccio here makes an interesting judgment, placing Jacopo above Pietro in terms of fervor, describing the former as "il quale ... era molto più

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[82] ["some always call him 'poet', others 'philosopher', and many 'theologian.'"] It would appear that Boccaccio is here following Pietro's prologue to his commentary where he describes his father as "gloriosus theologus, philosophus et poeta" (qtd. in Minnis and Scott "Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 451, n. 55).

[83] As exemplified by the epitaph by Giovanni del Virgilio, cited by Boccaccio, that begins with: "*Theologus Dantes, nulluis dogmatis expers;*" and that assigns to Dante the status of an *auctor*: "vulgo gratissimus *auctor*" (I Red, 91 emphasis added).

[84] ["so that it did not go on being incomplete."]

che l'altro fervente."[85] Jacopo and Pietro's commentaries significantly diverge in allegorical content; the latter is more concerned with establishing the poem's fictionality, and the former looks backward to the tradition of allegorical and didactic poems and is overladen with allegorical interpretations. According to Boccaccio's story, nine months after Dante's death—a number that contains a symbolic purport—shortly after the early hours of the morning, when "presso al mattin del ver si sogna" (*Inf.* XXVI, v. 7),[86] Jacopo showed up to the notary Piero Giardino's house and told him that his father appeared to him in a dream vision and indicated the missing cantos' location.

Towards the end of the *Trattatello*, Boccaccio re-introduces Dante's mother's dream vision, given to her by "[l]a divina bontà," seeking to elucidate the allegory it contains (I Red., 210–211).[87] The laurel tree under which she gives birth to a son is understood as "la disposizione del cielo la quale fu nella sua natività, mostrante sé essere tale che magnanimità e eloquenzia poetica dimostrava" (I Red., 211).[88] The "orbache" with which the child nourishes himself "sono i libri poetici e le loro dottrine, da' quali libri e dottrine fu altissimamente nutricato, cioè ammaestrato" (I Red., 213).[89] As for the "onde della chiara fonte" from which he drinks, they signify the abundance of doctrines from moral and natural philosophy (I Red., 214). His rapid transformation into a shepherd, a "pastore," demonstrates not only the excellence of his mind but also that he was "d'ottima dottrina, o leggendo quello che gli passati hanno scritto, o scrivendo di nuovo ciò che loro pare o non tanto chiaro mostrato o omesso, informano e l'anime e gl'intelletti

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[85] ["being much more fervent than the other."]
[86] For other instances of prophetic dreams before dawn, see *Purg.* IX, vv. 13–18 and *Convivio* II, viii, 13.
[87] For a more in-depth analysis by Sasso of this dream, see "La carne del pavone" 85–91. For the dream's significance within the larger context of medieval peacock symbolism, see Kirkham, "The Poisoned Peacock" pp. 200–50.
[88] ["the disposition of the heavens when he was born, demonstrating both magnanimity and poetic eloquence."]
[89] ["the poetic books and their doctrine, from which books and doctrines he was greatly nourished, that is trained."]

degli ascoltanti o de' leggenti" (I Red., 217).[90] In other words, the "pastore" symbolizes the authority of an *auctor*. His attempt at gathering the laurel represents, evidently, his ardent desire to be crowned as a poet laureate; his fall symbolizes his death, which happened at the moment when he most desired to be recognized (I Red., 219).

As for the peacock, Boccaccio claims it to be the *Commedia* for four principal reasons: first, its angelic feathers and one-hundred eyes; second, "egli ha sozzi piedi e tacita andatura" (I Red., 221); third, it has a horrible voice; lastly, its flesh is odorless and incorruptible. All these traits are shared with Dante's poem. Boccaccio writes that: "il senso della nostra *Comedia* è simigliante alla carne del paone, perciò che esso, o morale o teologo che tu il dèi a quale parte più del libro ti piace, è semplice e immutabile verità, la quale non solamenente corruzione non può ricevere, ma quanto più si ricerca, maggiore odore della sua incorruttibile soavità porge a riguardanti (I Red., 222).[91] Here Boccaccio claims the possibility of interpreting the *Commedia* along the lines of the allegory of the theologians yet is reticent to do so explicitly: "o morale o teologo." In the following line, he states that he could provide many such examples, but avoids them, leaving "il cercarne agl'intendenti" (I. Red., 222).[92] Seen in this light, the allegorical dream acts as a buffer to this claim, a smokescreen of sorts. In short, it is an allegory about the allegory of Dante's poem.

As Sasso points out in his footnote, comparing the *Commedia* to a peacock "significa per Boccaccio ribadire la già postulata affinità con la Sacra Scrittura," adding how "Giovanni Scoto Eriugena aveva sostenuto infatti che la Bibbia possiede infiniti sensi, così come inesauribile è

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[90] "...of excellent doctrine, either by reading that which the ancients have written, or writing anew that which they seemed to have demonstrated not too clearly or omitted, informing the souls and intellects of listeners or readers."
[91] ["the meaning of our *Commedia* is similar to the flesh of the peacock, for this reason it, either morally or theologically, as you assign to the part of the book you like the most, is a simple and immutable truth, which not only cannot be corrupted, but the more one searches, the more its uncorruptable sweet scent is given."]
[92] ["leaving finding them to those who understand."]

l'iridiscenza della coda del pavone, cioè la 'mirabilis ac pulchra innumerabilium colorum varietas' (*Periphyseon*, lib. 4, 5)" (81 n. 1).[93] The angelic feathers are understood as "la bellezza della peregrina istoria, che nella superficie della *lettera* della *Comedia* suona" (I Red., 223–225 emphasis added).[94] The one-hundred eyes found in the tail of the peacock symbolize the number of cantos in the poem. Boccaccio's distinction between the flesh and the feathers should not be overlooked. The feathers are meant to represent the poem's surface, its literal sense, while the flesh underneath signifies the incorruptible and simple truth of theology, that is, the spiritual sense. The "piè sozzi e l'andatura queta" serve to support the peacock, just like the *volgare* is the basis upon which the *Commedia* articulates itself and the "andar quieto" symbolizes "l'umiltà dello stilo" and, by definition, the genre of comedy (I Red., 226). As for the horrible voice, "chi più orribilmente grida di lui, quando con invezione acerbissima morde le colpe di molti viventi quelle de' preteriti castiga?" (I Red., 227).[95] In sum, while alive, Dante was a shepherd, and upon his death, a peacock "sì come credere si puote essere stato per divina spirazione" (I Red., 227).[96] The metaphoric motion from shepherd to peacock casts into relief the blurring of pagan and Christian symbolism.

What can be gathered from the *Trattatello* is that Boccaccio represents Dante's poetic vocation as a divine blessing. Moreover, his comparison of Dante to a shepherd is a well-established topos of that of an *auctor* as well as semantically pregnant with Christian symbolism.

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[93] ["means for Boccaccio reaffirming the already postulated affinity with Sacred Scripture ... John Scotus Eriugena had already claimed indeed that the Bible contains infinite meanings, just as the iridescence of the peacock's tail is inexhaustible..."] Moreover, it is curious to note that in Chapter 4 of Book XXI of the *City of God*, Augustine addresses the question of the suffering of souls deprived of bodies in Hell and mentions the "incorruttibile soavità" of the flesh of peacocks as an example that bodies may remain unconsumed and alive in fire. Moreover, Tertullian, at the beginning of his *De resurrectione carnis*, recalls the myth of Homer transforming into a peacock as proof that pagans believed in the immortality of the soul. It, in turn, is a reference to Ennius' dream of Homer, at the beginning of the *Annales*, whereby the latter declares having been temporarily incarnated into the bird.

[94] ["the beauty of the precious story that on the surface of the literal sense of the *Commedia* resonates…"]

[95] ["who screams more horrendously than he, when with the most bitter invectives fixes upon the sins of many of the living and castigates those of the dead?"]

[96] ["as one would believe could have been by means of divine inspiration..."]

For instance, in *Purgatorio* XXVII, right before Virgil crowns Dante-pilgrim, Dante-the-author compares both Statius and Virgil to "pastori" (vv. 85–87). However, the representation goes beyond that of an *auctor*. Boccaccio depicts Dante's text with moral and sacred symbolism, establishing it as a "poema sacro" (*Par.* XXV, v. 1). Said differently, the parallels between the *Commedia* and Scripture, already hinted at by the attribution to the poem of a theological purport, come into their own through the image of the peacock. As Sasso notes: "la scelta boccacciana dell'animale simbolico non è casuale, ma pertinente e oculata: nel pavone confluiscono e si riflettono, collocandosi infine su uno stesso piano, la *Commedia* e la Sacra Scrittura" (xxxiv).[97]

## The *De genealogia deorum gentilium*

> *The cross-fertilization between Boccaccio's view of poetry in the* Genealogie *and his Dantean interests may well be more pronounced than has been previously noted.*

> – Simon A. Gilson, "Boccaccio and Petrarch" (23).

The above-expressed notions of the interplay between poetry, mythmaking, and theology in the *Trattatello* re-appear in Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum gentilium*. This encyclopedia is in Latin prose, consists of fifteen books, contains 723 entries, and was constantly worked on from 1350 until Boccaccio's death in 1375. The frame for this literary endeavor is a response to the wish of King Hugo IV of Cyprus and Jerusalem, expressed through his emissary and soldier Donino of Parma, "to have compiled a Genealogy of the Gentile Gods and of the heroes who, according to ancient mythology, sprang from them," and "[a]t the same time, ... an explanation of the meaning which various eminent men have perceived beneath the surface of these myths" (I, Prohemium, Osgood trans.).[98] In sum, it is a mythographic genealogy that attempts to disentangle the

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[97] ["Boccaccio's choice of the symbolic animal is not casual, but pertinent and cautious, since, by means of the peacock, converge and are reflected, being situated on the same level, the *Commedia* and Sacred Scripture."]

[98] ["summopere cupis genealogiam deorum gentilium et heroum ex eis iuxta fictiones veterum descendentium, atque cum hac, quid sub fabularum tegmine illustres quondam senserint viri" (I, Prohemium).] Boccaccio will underline the pertinence of this last request a few paragraphs later: "Addebas preterea, ut explicarem, quid sub ridiculo cortice

relationships between the various divinities and their progeny in ancient Greek and Roman myths. The myths are, in turn, supplemented with commentary in the form of literal (historical and/or scientific) and/or allegorical interpretations. Since one of its intentions is the justification and defense of ancient classical literature, found in the last two books, Boccaccio takes on the additional task of revealing the meaning hidden beneath their surface.[99]

Indeed, Book XIV of the *De genealogia* explores the same connection between poetry, myth, and theology found in the *Trattatello*. It restates the Aristotelian *dictum*—"poetas primos fuisse theologos" (viii), the first poets were theologians—and cites the previously discussed Orpheus, among others, as an example.[100] Here, Boccaccio "posits a sort of historical progression from the ancient theologians to their Christian successors, and declares that the old theology can sometimes be employed to good effect in the service of the new one" (Minnis and Scott "The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio" 389).[101] Therefore, the interpretative labor in the *Genealogia* is declared at the outset as one suited for a theologian,

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fabularum abscondissent prudentes viri" ["You added a further request, that I explain the meaning which wise men had hidden under this cover of absurd tales" (Osgood trans.).]

[99] Solomon, citing *Genealogia* XIV, xxii, 1 and XV, viii, 4, explains how "[a]gainst the 'enemies of the name of poetry' (*poetici nominis hostes*) Boccaccio argues that poetry provides an allegorical accounting of divine truths, whether these truths are theological, physical, or historical" (237). Boccaccio's defense is articulated against three types of enemies of poetry and, as Ricci notes in his commentary, they are "ricalcate su ciò che è detto nel commento tomistico dell'*Etica*, o direttamente o attraverso la mediazione del *Convivio* dantesco" ["follow that which is stated in Aquinas' commentary to the *Ethics*, either directly or through the mediation of Dante's *Convivio*"] (910 n. 3).

[100] Here, echoing the *Trattatello*, Boccaccio writes: "Nam cum primo inter rudes adhuc homines non nulli celsioris ingenii cepissent nature parentis opera admirari et inde per meditationes sensim intrare credulitatem, aliquem unum esse, cuius opere et imperio gubernarentur et ordinarentur cunctaque cernerent, et eum unum vocavere deum" ["while they [the primitive Greeks] were still rude, some of them, above the rest in intellectual power, began to wonder at the works of their Mother Nature; and as they meditated they came gradually to believe in some one Being, by whose operation and command all visible things are governed and ordered. Him they named God" (XIV, viii, Osgood trans.).] For the use of Aristotle, see Book XV, viii as well. The notion of Orpheus as a theologian is also found in Augustine's *De civitate Dei* (XVIII, xiv). For the ambiguity surrounding the figure of Orpheus in exegesis, see the above section that treats of allegory in the *Convivio*. For Boccaccio's interpretation of Orpheus, very similar to Dante's own, but with no Christological undertones, see Book V, xii.

[101] See, for example Book XV, viii: "[b]ut the old theology can sometimes be employed in the service of Catholic truth (...). Nor let my pious critics be offended to hear the poets sometimes called even sacred theologians" (Osgood trans.). Cfr. Book XIV, viii, as well as XV, ix, where Boccaccio cites authorities like Augustine, Jerome, and Lactantius for the proper use of studying pagan poetry.

*"theologi hominis labor est"* (I, Prohemium), and its theoretical model that of the fourfold allegory

of the theologians.[102]

As an *exemplum*, in Book I, Boccaccio interprets the myth of Perseus' killing of the Gorgon

by assigning it both a literal and an allegorical level (iii).[103] The allegorical level contains three

types of interpretation: 1) the typological/figural (also called allegorical but in a narrower sense),

2) the moral/tropological, and 3) the anagogic.[104] Nevertheless, there's a caveat. In the rest of the

*Genealogia*, Boccaccio reserves himself the right to propose just one of the three possible

readings—more often than not the moral interpretation—seeing it as sufficient in and of itself to

legitimize the usefulness of the myth.[105]

Therefore, in practice, it seems that Boccaccio rarely employs this fourfold system.[106]

Consequently, this can lead one to conclude that his practical model is that of the allegory of the

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[102] Osgood also points out the co-presence of two other theoretical models, one from antiquity (Varro) and the other Augustinian, and, by comparison, shows how they essentially concord with either the literal or the moral interpretation of the allegory of the theologians: "[t]hree traditional schemes of interpretation Boccaccio either describes or at least has in mind. In reality, they amount to different arrangements of the same ideas" (xvii).

[103] "Nam sensus primus habetur per corticem, et hic *licteralis* vocatus est; alii per significata per corticem, et hi *allegorici* nuncupantur" (emphasis added) ["The outer cover contains a first layer of understanding, which is called 'literal.' It also reveals other interpretations under its covering, and these are called 'allegorical'" (Solomon trans.)].

[104] "Si *moralis* ex hac lictera queritur intellectus, victoria ostenditur prudentis in vicium, et ad virtutem accessio. *Allegorice* autem si velimus assummere, pie mentis spretis mundanis deliciis ad celestia elevatio designatur. Preterea posset et *anagogice* dici per *fabulam* Christi ascensum ad patrem mundi principe superato *figurari*" ["If one seeks a *moral* understanding from a reading, it reveals how the prudent conquer vice and accede to virtue. If we wish to treat it *allegorically*, it means that by spurning earthly delights the pious mind ascends to the heavens. In addition, an *anagogical* interpretation would say that the *fable* recon*figure*s the ascension of Christ to the Father after overcoming the ruler of the world" (Solomon trans. emphasis added)] (emphasis added).

[105] "But even so, I do not intend to open up the following fables to every kind of interpretation; I think it will be sufficient to offer one of many explanations, although on occasion I might offer several" (Solomon trans. emphasis added) ["Verumtamen non est animus michi secundum omnes sensus enucleare fabulas que sequuntur, *cum satis arbitrer unum ex pluribus explicasse*, esto aliquando apponentur fortasse plures"] (emphasis added).

[106] Moreover, in Book XIV, xiii, Boccaccio does give a fourfold interpretation of Virgil's story of Dido, but the anagogic and typological senses are not clear. He divides the myth into a literal (history) and an allegorical sense, that is, with the purpose "to show with what passions human frailty is infested, and the strength with which a steady man subdues them" (Osgood trans.). Alongside this allegorical moral sense (tropological), two other purposes are mentioned: "to extol the *gens Julia* in honor of Octavius" and "to exalt the glory of the name of Rome" (ibid.). Osgood points out how these two purposes are found in Donatus as well as Servius' commentary to the *Aeneid* (174 n. 33). Therefore, Boccaccio is simply following a pre-established allegorical/moral interpretative tradition found in various *Vitae Vergilianae*, such as: Servius's commentary, Donatus' *Vita*, Fulgentius's *Expositio Virgilianae continentiae*, the so-called Silvestrus Commentary, John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (VIII, xxiv), as well as Petrarch's *Seniles* (IV, v).

poets, that is, an allegory of two levels, literal and moral, whereby the only distinction with the allegory of the theologians is in terms of the veracity of the literal sense (this for that, instead of this and that). But this boundary had already been rendered porous by Dante's time thanks to several generations of theologians.[107] In terms of development, the result was that by Boccaccio's time, one could interpret the polytheism of pagan texts as anthropomorphic representations of the processes of nature, understood as planetary influences, and consequently have a literal, that is, historical truth claim.[108]

For Boccaccio, the pagan gods, much like Dante's representation of Fortune in the *Inferno*, are but spiritual ministers, a way to represent natural phenomena:

Colui lo cui saver tutto trascende,

*fece li cieli* e diè lor chi conduce

sì, ch'ogne parte ad ogne parte splende,

distribuendo igualmente la luce.

Similemente a li splendor mondani

*ordinò general ministra e duce*

che permutasse a tempo li ben vani

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[107] See Minnis and Scott, who note that "it is incorrect to say that for Dante and medieval writers in general *fictio* invariably meant a false, or at least different, device for the concealment of the truth" (384). Since, as discussed, *fictio* is also to be found in Scripture. See *Genealogia* XIV, xiii: "there is one kind of fiction very like the truth, which as I said, is more like history than fiction" (Osgood trans.).

[108] Boccaccio derives the identification of pagan deities as planetary influences, agents of a single divine entity, from Apuleis' *De Dogmate Platonis*, mentioned by Augustine in *De civitate Dei* IX (Osgood xx). For the relationship between pagan poetic associations with planets and stars and their redefinition as the reflected influence of an angelic power with certain attributes, see Cogan (194 ff.). For the expression of similar ideas in the *Trattatello*, see I Red., 128–132. For another genealogy, but of the moralization of pagan deities in the commentary tradition, from the so-called Silvestrus commentary on the *Aeneid*, the various expositions of Boethius' meters (William of Conches, William of Aragon, Nicholas Trevet) to the *Tre Corone* and their transformation of said tradition, see Minnis and Scott (2003). For its presence within the 'cenacolo padovano' with figures like Giovanni del Virgilio and Albertino Mussato, and the rebuttal by the cleric Giovannino of Mantua, see Curtius 2013 pp. 215–221; Osgood, p. xli, n. 97; Solomon 2011: p. xvii. It should also be noted that the aforementioned Dino Del Garbo, who wrote a Latin commentary on Guido Cavalcanti's vernacular poem "Donna me prega," navigated in the same circles as Mussato, see *Scriptum super cantilena Guidonis de Cavalcantibus* (Bibl. Apost. Vat., Chig. lat., V, 176).

> di gente in gente e d'uno in altro sangue,
>
> oltre la difension d'i senni umani;
>
> per ch'una gente impera e l'altra langue,
>
> seguendo lo giudicio di costei,
>
> che è occulto come in erba l'angue.
>
> Vostro saver non ha contasto a lei:
>
> questa provede, giudica, e persegue
>
> suo regno *come il loro li altri dèi*. (vv. 73–87 emphasis added)

God created the "cieli," the 'heavens' and assigned to various planetary forces the role of influencing the earth. For Boccaccio, much like Dante's own cosmology, these divinely-influenced natural motions are represented poetically through multiple gods, "merely as agencies of the one true God" or as "operations of the Celestial Hierarchy," which assigns it "a certain perennial truth" (Osgood xx–xxi).[109] In this way, Boccaccio's readings are at once literally 'true' as well as spiritually, that is, morally, instructive. He has synthesized both allegorical models and articulated them within a euhemerist principle, a historical theory of mythology.

Conversely, in terms of textual production (*modus componendi*), Boccaccio points out how Scripture also contains fictional elements in both the Old and New Testaments.[110] He cites Christ's

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[109] See XIV, x: "Reliquam autem deorum multitudinem non deos, sed Dei membra aut divinitatis officia putavere, quod Plato, quem theologum nuncupamus, etiam opinatur" ["The multitude of other gods they looked upon not as gods, but as members and functions of the Divinity; such was Plato's opinion, and we call him a theologian" (Osgood trans.).] See Augustine's *De civitate Dei* VII, xxviii; as well as Dante's *Convivio* II, iv, 4–6.

[110] Boccaccio addresses this issue several times in the *Genealogia*, see XIV, xiii–xiv, xviii. See Augustine's *De doctrina Cristiana* for a similar notion on the poetic quality of Scripture by use of *tropes* (rhetorical devices); "Sciant autem litterati, modis omnibus locutionis, quos grammatici graeco nomine *tropos* vocant, auctores nostros usos fuisse" ["I would have learned men to know that the authors of our Scriptures use all those forms of expression which grammarians call by the Greek name *tropes*"]; as well as its usefulness in biblical exegesis: "Quos tamen *tropos* qui noverunt agnoscunt in Litteris sanctis eorumque scientia ad eas intellegendas aliquantum adiuvantur" ["Nevertheless those who know these tropes recognize them in Scripture, and are very much assisted by their knowledge of them in understanding Scripture"]; and adding how, in Scripture, *tropes* can take the form of allegory, enigma, or parable: "Istorum autem troporum non solum exempla, sicut omnium, sed quorumdam etiam nomina in divinis Libris leguntur,

speaking in parables and the biblical tale of the trees anointing a king as examples: "in sacris licteris legimus, ligna scilicet silvarum de constituendo sibi rege habuisse colloquium" (XIV, ix).[111] He goes on to say that what the poets called *fabula* or *fictio*, the theologians call *figura*.[112] Therefore, the *modus componendi* between pagan poets and those from Scripture is considered identical (XIV, ix).[113] Also, "[t]ime and time again Boccaccio compares the styles of the poets with those of the inspired authors of Scripture, greatly to the credit of the former" (Minnis and Scott, "The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio" 388).[114] If anything, "the poets of the Gentiles in their poetry—not perhaps without understanding—followed in the steps of these prophets [i.e., others who, like Moses, at dictation of the Holy Spirit wrote in verse]" (XIV, viii, Osgood trans.).[115] In terms of development, by the time of the Trecento, pagan and Christian authors, be they scriptural or not, "could freely be compared in terms of styles and structures, of authorial roles and degrees of authority, and of shortcomings and sins" (Minnis,

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sicut allegoria, aenigma, parabola" ["Now of some of these figures of speech we find in Scripture not only examples (which we have of them all), but the very names as well: for instance, allegory, enigma, and parable"] (III, xxix).

[111] See as well Book XV, viii. As for the New Testament: "hac specie sepissime Christus deus in parabolis usus est" ["Christ, who is God, used this sort of fiction again and again in his parables!" (XIV, ix, Osgood trans.).] See as well XIV, xviii. For the trees anointing a king, see *Iudicum* IX: 8–15, "Ierunt ligna, ut ungerent super se regem: dixeruntque olivae: Impera nobis." This same passage is cited by Pierre Bersuire in legitimizing his moralization of Ovid's fables (Minnis and Scott 210). The treatment of this passage is addressed by both Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae* I, xl, 6), and Augustine (*Contra mendacium* XIII, xxviii). Nevertheless, it should be noted that this notion of Scripture containing fables was condemned by Stephen Tempier, Bishop of Paris, among the 217 propositions of 1277 (Minnis and Scott, "Scriptural Science and Signification" 211). Moreover, in a lengthy digression in Book XV, xiv, Boccaccio goes to great lengths and precautions to establish his religious orthodoxy. As Osgood points out: "[t]his chapter, with its recital of the Creed, its abundant commentary, its citations from the Gospels (...), its anxious display of orthodoxy, is by no means irrelevant" (195 n. 1).

[112] See Auerbach "Figurative Texts Illustrating Certain Passages of Dante's *Commedia*" 475–476. For Augustine and the presence of *figurative* language in Scripture, saying one thing but meaning another, see Osgood 165–166 n. 18. Boccaccio addresses this as well in XIV, x.

[113] See *Trattatello* (I Red., 147).

[114] For example, Boccaccio writes: "testimonium reddant ipsa vatum poemata, inpulsu trahentis *eleganti stilo* poetarum descripta calamo" ["let the poems of the prophets [Scripture] bear witness in their own words, written down as they are *in excellent style* by the pen of poets under direct impulse of this divine knowledge" (XIV, iv, Osgood trans. emphasis added)]. For more regarding the notion that much of the Bible is poetry see *Genealogia* XI, ii; XIV, viii–ix, xiii, xvi, xviii, xxii. As for its presence in patristic texts, particularly Jerome, see Osgood 149 n. 10.

[115] "Et sic alios non nullos equo modo magnalia dei sub metrico velamine licterali, quod poetico nuncupamus, finxisse. Quorum ego, nec forsan insipide, reor poetas gentiles in componendis poematibus secutos vestigia" (XIV, viii).

"Epilogue: The Familiar Authors" 217). With a newfound emphasis on the literal/historical sense, this new paradigm of approaching texts aligns itself neatly with the emerging humanistic perspective based on the philological recovery and re-evaluation of classical Latin and Greek literature.[116]

Dante's conflation and blurring of the lines of the traditional distinctions between secular poetry and Scripture acted as an essential contributor to this shift in literary theory.[117] For instance, in *canto* XXVIII of *Purgatorio*, Dante-poet stages himself alongside the Roman poets Statius and Virgil in their encounter with the enigmatic figure of Matelda in Earthly Paradise. This space is a hybrid between the *locus amoenus* and pastoral settings from classical texts and the Christian Garden of Eden. The "*selva* antica" (v. 23) is also a counterpoint to the initial "*selva* oscura" from *Inferno* I. It is described as a "*divina* foresta" (v. 2) and later on as "la selva *antica*" (23), gesturing with both descriptors to intertextual sources, imagery, and potential connotations from Scripture, "divina," and Classical Antiquity, "antica."[118] Matelda, when adressing the nature of the space, tells the pilgrim: "Quelli ch'*anticamente poetaro* / l'età de l'oro e suo stato felice, / forse in Parnaso esto loco sognaro" (vv. 139–141 emphasis added). Dante, upon hearing this, turns around "a' miei poeti, e vidi che con riso / udito avean l'ultimo costrutto;" (vv. 146–148). What Matelda is alluding

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[116] See Padoan who, in relation to Boccaccio's predilection for, and particular attention to, the literal sense in his *Esposizioni*, describes this as distinct from traditional medieval exegesis (focused on allegorical readings) and as a sign of "i nuovi interessi umanistici che ormai animavano il Boccaccio" ["the new humanistic interests that henceforth animated Boccaccio"] ("Introduzione" xxi).

[117] Osgood recognizes the role Dante played in assigning pagan deities as spiritual ministers of a monotheistic God (xxi). See, however, Minnis and Scott who cautiously remark how "[m]uch personal credit is due to Dante, and it should be given to him. He did not, however, think and write in splendid isolation. His achievement may be considered as part and parcel of a definite cultural trend, namely, that gradual process of literary assimilation by which sacred and secular literature had, in the eyes of its readers, come together in respect of subject-matter, stylistic form, and end" ("The Transformation of Critical Tradition: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio" 387). The various textual traditions alluded to thus far testify to its continuity through time. For a historical survey of the practice of establishing parallels between Scripture and pagan myth, see Curtius 219–220.

[118] See, for example, the Ulysse's episode "Lo maggior corno de la *fiamma antica*" (*Inf*. XXVI, v. 85 emphasis added) and its antitype upon Beatrice's entrance: "*conosco* i segni de l'*antica fiamma*" (*Purg*. XXX, v. 48 emphasis added), itself a citation from, and a fitting farewell to, Virgil: "*Agnosco veteris* vestigia *flammae*" (*Aeneid* IV, l. 23 emphasis added).

to, albeit qualified with the adverb 'forse,' is that the poets of Antiquity were able to represent through their poetry, and thus visualize, the Biblical Edenic garden.[119] The response of the poets, their smile, acts as a tacit confirmation of Matelda's hypothesis.

Therefore, the figure of Dante loomed large in the interstices of Boccaccio's textual defense of poetry.[120] For example, even at a lexical level, Boccaccio's qualification of these myths is that they contain more than a single meaning. He describes them with the term *polisenum*, "dici potest potius *polisenum*, *hoc est moltiplicium sensum*" (I, iii), the same way which the author of the *Epistle* explains allegory in the *Commedia*: "istius operis non est simplex sensus, ymo dici potest *polysemos, hoc est plurium sensuum*" (emphasis added).[121] In terms of Dante's *Commedia*, the dual-mode of exposition used in the *Genealogia* was "to become the major structuring principle of Boccaccio's Dante lectures, the *Esposizioni*" (Minnis and Scott, "Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 448).[122] Although Boccaccio bought into Petrarch's humanistic perspective, his literary vision was inclusive, therefore unwilling to exclude Dante and the vernacular from the Latin and Greek *auctores*.[123] In this light, Boccaccio's editorial and scribal

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[119] See Ovid's description of the Golden Age at the beginning of his *Metamorphoses* (I, ll. 89–102, ff.), or Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue* (see *Purg.* XXII, vv. 70–72).

[120] See Armstrong, who writes: "Dante is present here [in the *Trattatello*] not just as foregrounded subject, but in the very lexical structures of Boccaccio's language" (129).

[121] As Armstrong rightly points out, "[i]n fact, Boccaccio is the only Trecento commentator to use 'polysemous' to describe Dante's allegory, here and in the *Genealogia* (i. iii. 7), showing his knowledge of the *Epistle to Can Grande*" (131). In fact, Carlo Ginzburg presents an *ad hoc* hypothesis that Boccaccio could be the author of the Epistle (De Ventura 20–21). Another possible source, mentioned by Osgood, could be from Servius' commentary on the *Aeneid* I, i (25). Augustine, in the *De doctrina Cristiana* (III, xxv), also discusses the polysemous nature of text: "Sic et aliae res non singulae, sed unaquaeque earum non solum duo aliqua diversa, sed etiam nonnumquam multa significat, pro loco sententiae, sicut posita reperitur" ["[a]nd in the same way other objects are not single in their signification, but each one of them denotes not two only but sometimes even several different things, according to the connection in which it is found" (Green trans.).]

[122] See Armstrong, who notes how "Boccaccio organizes his readings according to the standard scholastic method of textual division, formally separating the literal from the allegorical reading for each canto" (131).

[123] As Filosa rightly points out: "[i]t is in accordance with this inclusive vision that Boccaccio composes the Chigiano manuscript, bringing together Dante's *Commedia* and Petrarch's *Rime sparse*, in an important early anthology of vernacular Italian literature, whether the *Magister* wishes it or not" (220).

activities with Dante's corpus, mentioned briefly earlier, should not be overlooked since it brought into focus a humanist sensibility to Italian vernacular texts.

## The *Esposizioni*

Unlike the *Genealogia*'s focus on allegory, Boccaccio's *Esposizioni* show a "strict attention to all of the literal sense of the text" and "is rigidly adhered throughout" (Hollander, "Boccaccio's Divided Allegiance" 225).[124] However, his allegorical interpretations revert to a traditional stance, depicting Dante as a poet rather than a theologian, thus, seemingly contradicting what was implicit in the *Trattatello* and his defense of poetry in the *Genealogia*.[125] His reticence appears early on. For example, when expounding on Dante's riddle of the "veltro" (*Inf*. I, v. 101), Boccaccio gives three possible hypotheses and then follows with "a call for restraint in allegorizing, a call eventually placed under the auspices of Saints Jerome and Augustine, with citations of their warnings against unnecessarily fanciful analyses of texts" ("Boccaccio's Divided Allegiance" 228). What is happening is that, up until then, the commentary tradition was able "to keep the illiterate at bay by 'classicizing' the text behind a high wall of Latin commentary"; however, the public expositions dealt with an entirely different audience (Minnis and Scott, "Assessing the New Author: Commentary on Dante" 439).[126] The *Genealogia* defends the obscurity of poetry as a way "to make truths which would otherwise cheapen by exposure the object of strong intellectual effort," citing at the end of his chapter the divine command from Matthew (7: 6): "we are forbidden

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[124] See Armstrong, who remarks that "his predilection for the literal reading is displayed on a vast scale in the *Esposizioni*" (130).

[125] In the *Genealogia*, Boccaccio states "Quis tam sui inscius, qui, advertens nostrum Dantem sacre theologie implicitos persepe nexus mira demonstratione solventem, non sentiat eum non solum phylosophum, sed theologum insignem fuisse?" ["let any man consider our own poet Dante; will such a one be so insensible as not to perceive that Dante was a great theologian as well as philosopher" (XIV, x, Osgood trans.).] See, as well: XIV, xi, xxii, and XV, vi.

[126] Hollander mentions how the last compositions Boccaccio was to write were addressed to Dante and Petrarch. Of the four directed to the former, "all express shame for the prostitution of Dante's poetry, of which Boccaccio now admits himself guilty, confessing to having strewn Dantean 'pearls' before the Florentine 'swine'" ("Boccaccio's Divided Allegiance" 231).

by divine command to give that which is holy to dogs, or to cast pearls before swine" (XIV, xii Osgood trans.).[127] This also echoes Dante's own 'machiavellian' tropological interpretation of the Transfiguration of Christ in the *Convivio*: "a le secretissime cose noi dovemo avere poca compagnia." As the *Esposizioni* go on, less and less allegorical interpretations are given, being consistently deferred to other sections of the poem, making Boccaccio principally a glossator of the *literal* sense.[128]

This overview of Boccaccio's understanding of allegory, poetry, and theology shows the extent to which he was attuned to Dante's own comingling of the traditional binary system of the allegory of the poets and that of the theologians.[129] Moreover, he was—in certain settings—a staunch supporter of Dante's truth-claims, that is, that he was nothing less than a theologian inspired by the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, his public commentary of the poem focused on the literal sense of the poem, never went past *Inferno* XVII, and was a private source of regret and disappointment. These factors, in part, can explain the absence of vertical readings of the poem. However, Boccaccio's role as a copyist and imitator of Dante's *Commedia*, his literary "dantismo," reveals the weightiest evidence of his awareness of a vertical structure in the poem. Indeed,

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[127] Boccaccio, as mentioned previously, in a correspondence, accepts the accusation that he had prostituted the Muses in accepting the task of the *Esposizioni*, stating that his illness is a divine punishment for his "follia." As Padoan states: "[e]d è questa la triste, ma non inattesa, conclusione di quest'ultima opera del massimo prosatore italiano" ["...and this is the sad, but not unexpected, conclusion of this last work of the best Italian prose writer"] ("Introduzione" xiii–xiv).

[128] Hollander remarks how "[i]f Boccaccio's performance as an allegorist is curious, defective, and spotty, the reader should be aware of this extraordinary fact: in all his *esposizioni litterali* that have come down to us, there is not a single line or a single word of Dante's text that the glossator omits" ("Boccaccio's Divided Allegiance" 229). Padoan mentions how "[c]iò che più sorprende favorevolmente il lettore delle *Esposizioni* è l'evidente attenzione del commentatore alla 'littera'" ["...that which most favorably surprises the reader of the *Esposizioni* is the obvious attention of the commentator to the 'littera'"] ("Introduzione" xviii). Armstrong points out how "Boccaccio shows a strong preference for literal readings over allegorical, even omitting the allegorical interpretation altogether in cantos x–xi and xv–xvi" (131).

[129] See Papio, who notes that "[b]y considering poetic narrations to be bearers of 'proto-Christian' teaching, Boccaccio manages not only to recuperate the ethical traditions of the ancients (as in the *Genealogie*), but also, in the *Expositions*, to bring Dante's mythological references into line with contemporary doctrinal notions by showing how they already contained the germs of such teaching" (19).

Boccaccio's focus on the letter of the text combined with his conscientious scribal work would undoubtedly have brought to his attention the various acrostics found in Dante's poem: *Purg*. XII, vv. 25–63 ("VOM") and *Par*. XIX, vv. 115–141 ("LVE").[130] As a matter of fact, in his autograph manuscripts of Dante's poem (Riccardiano 1035; Chig. L. VI 213, see figure below), the offsetting of the first letter of a tercet (circled in black) would have further emphasized the reiterative nature of the letters that make up said acrostics.[131] It is also, therefore, no surprise that his most Dantean work, the *Amorosa Visione*, is a poem-long acrostic.

**The *Amorosa visione* and Dante's Acrostics**

Armstrong points out how Boccaccio deploys three primary strategies in his imitation of Dante:

> The first is a structural or formal use, in which Boccaccio deploys structural elements or poetic forms derived from Dante's works as the macro-architecture of his own texts. The second is what might be loosely termed a 'thematic' or 'narrative' use of particular situations, characters, or locations from Dante; and the third a 'textual' (i.e. allusive and citational) use, whereby Boccaccio reuses words or phrases, most often from these key passages. (133)

What is of interest is the first of these strategies, the structural or formal use of Dantean macro-architectural elements, since, in the *Amorosa visione*, "Boccaccio maps the whole text within a gigantic acrostic in the form of three sonnets dedicated to 'Fiamma,' constructed with the first letter to each line of the poem" (Armstrong 134). It is doubtless that Boccaccio imitated Dante's

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[130] Arduini mentions how Boccaccio's activity as a copyist "reveals his awareness and appreciation of the relationship between the presentation and content of the text" (22). Later adding that, "his decision not to employ a professional scribe put Boccaccio in a position of control over the material and presentational features of the works he transcribed, whereas Petrarch, who employed professional scribes, often complained about contemporary scribal practices" (24).

[131] As Arduini points out: "[a]s the scribe, rubricator, and sometimes illustrator of his own and others' works, Boccaccio could choose the script and layout of the texts" (25). Moreover, Kay points out how modern textual layouts of the poem tend to conceal the acrostics, whereas medieval ones tended to reveal such patterns: "[i]n the earliest manuscript copies of the *Commedia*, however, the initial letters of the *terzine* were prominently displayed as oversize capitals, hanging in the margin to the left of the text" ("Dante's Acrostic Allegations: *Inferno* XI–XII" 27).

use of the technique for his acrostics ("VOM" in *Purg.* XII, vv. 25–63 and "LVE" in *Par.* XIX, vv. 115–141). However, "though strange to say," much like vertical readings—and this point bears weighty consideration—the first mention in Dante studies of the *Commedia*'s acrostics only date to the end of the Ottocento and the beginning of the Novecento (Kay, "Dante's Acrostic Allegations: *Inferno* XI–XII" 26).[132]
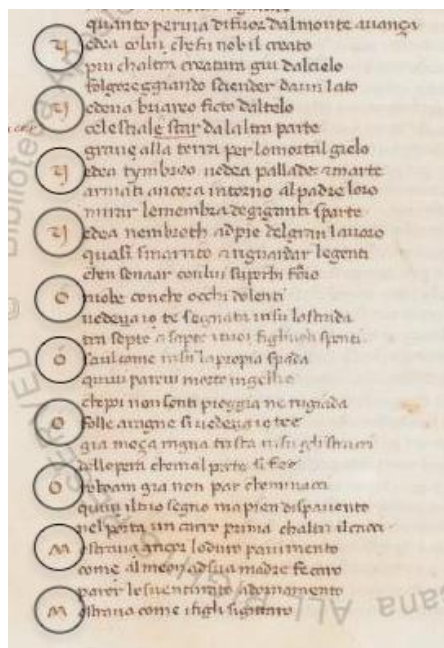


Fig. 1 – *Purg.* XII "VOM" Acrostic (Detail from Chig.L.VI.213).

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[132] The first mention of the "VOM" acrostic dates back to 1898, to A. Medin, "Due chiose dantesche," *Atti e Mem. Accad. Padova* XIV, 1898, pp. 66 ss.; whereas the first mention of the "LVE" acrostic is from five years later, in 1903, by M. Flamini, "Appunti d'esegesi dantesca," *Miscellenea di studi critici* 1903, pp. 645–653 (Baldelli, "Acrostico" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*). For a detailed history of acrostic sightings in Dante criticism, see Barolini "Re-Presenting What God Presented: The Arachnean Art of Dante's Terrace of Pride" 59 n. 13. For a rather unconvincing attempt to argue for other acrostic patterns in the *Commedia* that reveal "the poet's references to his sources," see Kay "Dante's Acrostic Allegations: *Inferno* XI–XII" 29.

The acrostics in the *Commedia*—much like Dante and allegory—combine both biblical and classical conventions into a single system.[133] In line with what Ascoli and Barański called Dante's "*novitas*" in terms of allegory, Kay explains the delay in the recognition of the acrostics in the commentary tradition as a result of "the poet's originality," since his combination of both conventions "would not have corresponded to the expectations of Dante's contemporaries" ("Dante's Acrostic Allegations: *Inferno* XI–XII" 26). However, it is evident that Boccaccio grasped Dante's innovation and made use of it himself. Moreover, despite the absence of their mention in the commentary tradition, it would also appear that acrostics were part of a more significant literary trend in Florence during Dante's time.[134]

Consequently, the use of a poem-long acrostic as an organizational principle for textual content, one whereby the vertical alignment of the first letter of a tercet produces a complementary text with which to gloss the poem, is not only strikingly similar to the function of the vertical structure of Dante's *Commedia* but was also a diffused rhetorical practice in Florentine literary circles.[135] Boccaccio was aware of the acrostics' presence within Dante's poem, thus increasing the likelihood that he knew about certain vertical correspondences at a thematic and textual level.

Moreover, as for Armstrong's second point, Boccaccio's "'thematic' or 'narrative' use of particular situations, characters, or locations from Dante," his textual depiction of the figure of Ulysses clearly shows that he read *Inferno* XXVI in light of its corresponding canto in *Paradiso*

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[133] As Kay aptly points out: "[t]he example of these classical models was reinforced for medieval writers by the authority of Scripture, where acrostics based on the Hebrew alphabet could be clearly recognized in the Vulgate version of Lamentations I–4" ("Dante's Acrostic Allegations: *Inferno* XI–XII" 26). However, it is unknown as to whether Dante knew of the presence of acrostics in the Bible.

[134] Padoan explains that: "[l]a documentazione, relativamente larga in un periodo non molto ampio, rivela che tali artifici dovettero raggiungere una qualche diffusione e una certa moda letteraria, proprio alla fine del secolo XIII e nella prima metà del XIV, specialmente nell'ambiente letterario fiorentino" ["the documentation, relatively large for such a short period of time, reveals that such artifices must have reached a particular circulation and a certain literary trend, precisely at the end of the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth, especially in Florentine literary circles"] (256 "Note agli acrostici").

[135] Padoan notes that "ordine retorico" and the trend of acrostics "dominavano allora in Toscana" (xxiii).

XXVI, which happens to be the most common form of vertical patterning in the meta-analysis study conducted in this research. Lastly, Boccaccio's reuse of Adam's "trapassar del segno" (*Par*. XXVI, v. 117) to describe Ulysses and his poetic endeavor at the end of the poem clearly shows a deep understanding of the textual resonances within the poem.

**The "VOM" Acrostic**

It is perhaps helpful to begin by recalling several key textual elements before the first acrostic occurrence in *Purgatorio* XII. Dante, finding himself on the terrace of pride, describes with an ekphrasis marble engravings produced by the ultimate artificer, that is, "Colui che non vide mai cosa nova / produsse esto visibile parlare" (*Purg*. X, vv. 94–95). The artistic program is elaborated in three cantos, from X to XII, forming a triptych that is intensely metapoetic or, as Barolini would say, "nowhere else in the poem does the poet dramatize representation as he does on the terrace of pride" ("Re-Presenting What God Presented" 53). As a matter of fact, in the descriptions of cantos X and XII: "we find the programmatic use of a lexicon that blurs the boundary between the divine mimesis and the text that is charged with reproducing it: God's sculpted art is strangely textual" (47).[136] The images depicted are literary adaptations of Scripture and pagan history. These images *qua* literary adaptations are, in turn, put into verse by Dante-the-author, thus blurring the boundaries between images and texts. This elevates the importance of the representation of signs, be them letters or images. Aesthetics and literary exegesis are combined in an ethical and didactic program.

The first panel of the triptych, *canto* X, introduces three examples of humility, the opposite virtue to the vice of pride, through an ekphrasis.[137] *Canto* XI is where Dante engages with penitents

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[136] Barolini, a few lines later, adds that "[t]he presentation of the examples of pride in Canto XII is also marked by an insistently representational lexicon" ("Re-Presenting What God Presented" 47).

[137] For an analysis relating the importance of history and allegory in *canto* X, see Mazzotta "Allegory: Poetics of the Desert" 237 ff.

on the terrace of pride. Lastly, in canto XII, Dante does yet another ekphrasis, but this time depicting the vice opposite of humility, pride. In *canto* X, the first example of humility is twelve verses long, represents the Annunciation (vv. 34–45), and is textually mediated by the Gospel of Luke (1: 26–38). The second, fifteen verses long, depicts David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant (2 *Samuelis* 6: 12–23) (vv. 55–69). It contains two important details that are worth further analysis.

The first detail is a reference to Uzzah, "per che si teme officio non commesso" (v. 57), who was struck down for daring to steady the Ark, and the second, a vignette of Michal, Saul's daughter and David's wife (vv. 67–69). For the former, Barolini rightly points out how the figure of Uzzah, also mentioned in Dante's Epistle to the Italian cardinals (XI, 12), contains, by reference to the element of transgression, the figure of Dante's antitype, Ulysses.[138] There are several intratextual references to Ulysses in these cantos. For example, in *Purgatorio* XII, Virgil tells Dante "ché qui è buono con l'*ali* e coi *remi*, / quantunque può, ciascun pinger sua barca" (vv. 5–6) and, later, the transgression of Arachne is described as "folle" (v. 43). Both echo the lexicon found in *Inferno* XXVI, both its incipit and Ulysse's description of his voyage: "de' *remi* facemmo *ali* al *folle* volo" (v. 125 emphasis added). In sum, "Dante's evocation of a figure whom he associates with his own writerly presumption—Uzzah—serves [as a] warning regarding the tensions at the core of this episode" (Barolini, "Re-Presenting What God Presented" 53). There are thematic resonances with Ulysses' transgressive nature and, by antithesis, with Dante's poetic project.

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[138] Barolini writes: "[b]ecause Dante-[the]-poet's extraordinary handling of the terrace of pride cannot fail to make us wonder whether his is an *officio commesso*, he lets us know that he is not like Uzzah (or therefore like the other examples of pride whom Uzzah anticipates), nor like the recalcitrant oxen of the Epistle, but rather like a humble and well-behaved ox doing its assigned job, its *officio commesso*" ("Re-Presenting What God Presented" 52).

The second detail is that the Davidic scene is enacted under the gaze of Michal who, looking through the frame of her window, according to Scripture, "despexit eum in corde suo," which Dante renders into: "Di contra, effigïata ad una vista / d'un gran palazzo, Micòl ammirava / sì come donna dispettosa e trista" (vv. 67–69). This particular piece of information, the description of someone looking from the frame of a "vista / d'un gran palazzo" onto the scene of David dancing, shifts the perspective to that of another onlooker. Michal's negative assessment of David's actions, her inability to grasp the significance of the humble psalmist's dancing and lifting his robe, a form of elevation by lowering oneself, contains in itself a lesson in interpretation. One can imagine Michal looking through a window that, in turn, acts as a frame for visualizing David, thus rendering the analogy with visual arts much more apparent. From these textual details, we can gather that the Davidic scene contains two negative examples of interpretative transgression.[139] Interestingly, these concerns also resonate with the issue of exegesis and paganism found in the parallel cantos of the *Inferno* that were discussed earlier,

The third and final representation takes up twenty-one verses and is that of Emperor Trajan and the "vedovella," probably taken from John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (V, 8) (vv. 83–93). In sum, the artistic program of the examples of humility depicts a story from the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Roman history with an underlying sense of unity and continuity in terms of

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[139] Uzzah's touching of the ark also contains a reference to erroneous interpretation. Ascoli remarks how Dante's comparison of the literal sense as the wood with which the "arca" of allegory is built: "sia stato scelto proprio per illustrare il rapporto tra senso letterale e senso allegorico, in quanto la parola, oltre a designare una cassa, può anche essere usata per una tomba, come quelle in cui si trovano gli eretici in *If* 10, 29, nonché per l'arca santa, che viene menzionata *nel canto parallelo* del *Purgatorio* (10, 56), e forse anche l'arca di Noè. Tutti questi significati 'letterali' della parola si prestano anche ad interpretazioni allegorico-tipologiche–l'arca di Noè in particolare essendo interpretata regolarmente come *figura* della Chiesa" ["was chosen precisely to illustrate the relation between the literal sense and the allegorical sense, insofar that the word, in addition to designating a case, can also be used for a tomb, just like those in which the heretics finds themselves in *Inf.* X, v. 29, as well as the holy ark, that is mentioned *in the parallel canto* of *Purgatorio* (X, v. 56), and perhaps even Noah's ark. All these 'literal' meanings of the word also lend themselves to allegorical-typological interpretations—Noah's ark in particular, being regularly interpreted as a *figure* of the Church"] ("Tradurre l'allegoria: *Convivio* II, i" 164 n. 24 emphasis added).

content.[140] The reader, "therefore, confronts a sequenced unit of verbal images representing sculpted images illustrating texts which in turn describe events: the second before Christ; the first, in Christ; and the third, after Christ" (Vickers 68).[141] This pattern will be repeated, but with minor variations, in the depictions of the vice of pride in *canto* XII.

The central panel, *canto* XI, begins with Dante-poet daringly translating and adapting the *Pater nostrum* from Matthew (6:9) into the vernacular, as it is sung by the penitents on the terrace (vv. 1–24). The opening line of Virgil's address to them, "Deh, se *giustizia* e *pietà* vi disgrievi" (v. 37 emphasis added) is lexically connected to the artwork depicted on the side of the mountain, by weaving together the previous *canto*'s text, Trajan's words "*giustizia* vuole e *pietà* mi ritene" (*Purg*. X, v. 93). One can picture this middle section of the triptych fractally. The center of the triptych contains yet another triad with its three penitents: Omberto Aldobrandeschi (vv. 46–72), Oderisi da Gubbio and Provenzan Salvani (vv. 73–142). Oderisi da Gubbio, who is at the center of these three protagonists, speaks on the transient nature of artists' fame with three examples from a different artistic field: illumination, painting, and poetry. This grouping together of various forms of artistic representation highlights the importance of representation of texts and images, particularly since Dante's mouthpiece, Oderisi, works with a medium that combines both in a reciprocal artistic relationship. Each example provided by Oderisi, in turn, is articulated around three poles and represents the idea that one's fame (1) eclipses someone else's (2) and will, itself, also be eclipsed by a third person (3). From Oderisi being eclipsed by Franco Bolognese (vv. 82–84) to Giotto surpassing Cimabue (vv. 94–96), to last, and certainly not least, Cavalcanti

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[140] As Vickers points out: "David and Aeneas were, according to Dante, contemporaries: David's line reaching fulfillment in the Virgin and Christ, and Aeneas'—at the same preordained moment—producing a true world government in the form of imperial Rome. Mary, David, and Trajan, then, are related in a complex historical scheme" (68).

[141] Berk, albeit unconvincingly, argues for the presence of an "DIQ" acrostic in the center of *canto* X whereby the 'Q' would be read as an 'O' thus forming the word "DIO" (vv. 67–75) (62).

surpassing Guinizelli but, with a third person already outshining them both, a not too subtle self-reference to Dante himself. This particular passage will be re-utilized by Petrarch in his *Trionfi*, as will be articulated later. Furthermore, the meta-textual elements in this canto are once again brought to the fore towards the end of the canto, when Oderisi tells Dante that time will eventually allow him to gloss his obscure speech (vv. 139–141).

The third panel, *canto* XII, completes the aesthetic program by introducing examples of the vice of pride, as depicted on the ground on which the penitents walk. It is essential to visualize the spatial layout of the terrace's artistic program since it reveals an overarching rehabilitative program for the penitents and a didactic one for the readers. The gaze of the penitents, burdened by boulders, is directed upwards to contemplate stories of moral elevation via humility, whereas looking downwards, it provides them with examples of the vice of pride. The unity of the entire artistic program is articulated on a vertical axis.

At the very beginning of this triptych, Virgil states that this new space requires art to navigate, "Qui si conviene usare un poco d'*arte*" (X, v. 10 emphasis added), and, later on, he educates Dante on how to look at the artwork he sees. After the depiction of the Annunciation, Virgil tells Dante: "'Non tener pur ad un *loco* la mente'" (v. 46 emphasis added), and his gaze is then directed towards the Davidic scene. Dante will pick up Virgil's advice on his own when he shifts his feet to see another narrative: "I' mossi i piè del *loco* dov' io stava, / per avvisar da presso un'altra istoria" (vv. 70–71 emphasis), that is, the story of Trajan. The viewer's gaze, be that of Dante-pilgrim, the penitents, or the readers themselves, needs to move to see the relationship between the various elements or, say *loci*, that make up the entire artistic program. There is a grid of images set out in sequence (*dispositio*), and Dante is shuffling through various *loci* that, in turn, contain an "istoria."

Similarly, in the textual representation of the "candida rosa" of *Paradiso* XXXI, Bernard of Clairvaux directs Dante-pilgrim's eyes:

'Figliuol di grazia, quest' esser giocondo,'

cominciò elli, 'non ti sarà noto,

tenendo li occhi pur qua giù al fondo;

ma guarda i cerchi infino al più remoto,

tanto che veggi seder la regina

cui questo regno è suddito e devoto.' (vv. 112–117)

Dante-pilgrim is still learning to lead his eyes through the various rungs, the *intercolumniae* that act as a hierarchical grid separating the blessed: "menava *io* li occhi per li *gradi*, / mo sú, mo giú, e mo recirculando" (*Par*. XXXI, vv. 47–48 emphasis added). His gaze goes up, then down, and then in a circular motion, in an attempt to understand the whole by utilizing the spatial relationship of its parts. These motions, vertical, up and down, and circular, "recirculando," echo the same hermeneutic approach to the poem itself.

By the time of his final ecstatic vision, in *Paradiso* XXXIII, Dante can see without the guidance of Bernard, he anticipates his guide's directions: "Bernardo m'accenava, e sorridea, / perch' io guardassi *suso*; ma io era / già per me stesso tal qual ei volea" (vv. 49–51 emphasis added).[142] The use of *suso* is not casual; its root is the Latin adverb *sursum*, which means upwards, above. Hugh of Saint Victor used this same term to define the anagogic mode of the allegory of the theologians, that is, a "sursum ductio," a reasoning upward, whereby, from the visible, the

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[142] See Quaglio and Pasquini who remark that "[g]li incoraggiamenti mimici di Bernardo suonano superflui, la marcia visiva del visitatore sembra ormai spedita e inarrestabile" ["the mimetic encouragements of Bernard come off as superfluous, the visual process of the pilgrim seems at this point on its way and unstoppable"] (589).

invisible is revealed.[143] The poem's vertical structure calls upon readers to exercise a similar aesthetic judgment, putting the text's spatial coordinates into relation by looking upwards from the end's perspective. Therefore, it is only fitting that the end of the poem coincides with the completion of Dante-pilgrim's aesthetic education.

Like the triptych of the terrace of pride, *Canto* XXXI is remarkable for its emphasis on sight and representation. In addition to the repeated use of similes based on vision, the barbarians seeing Rome (vv. 31–36), the pilgrim in the temple (vv. 43–45), and the Croatian seeing the Veronica (vv. 103–111), visual verbs and nouns abound.[144] Furthermore, the representation of the blessed follows a typological and vertical design "in gente antica e in novella" (v. 26).[145] As Quaglio and Pasquini point out in their commentary to verses 16–18: "Dal primo seggio, dove siede Maria, al settimo, occupato da Ruth, fino ai sottostanti le donne ebree vissute prima di Cristo, quelle del Vecchio Testamento, sono disposte *verticalmente* una sotto l'altra, in modo da formare una linea divisoria... che bipartisce la rosa" (554 emphasis added).[146] The same *dispositio* occurs with the figure of John the Baptist and the succession of "campioni della Chiesa (*altri*), digradanti di ordine in ordine sino alla parte bassa della rosa: un seggio sotto l'altro, *verticalmente* (cfr. vv,

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[143] Hugh of Saint Victor uses a similar "upward" terminology when defining anagogy in his *Super Ierarchiam Dionysii*: "anagoge enim, sicut dictum est, *ascensio* mentis, sive *elevatio* vocatur in contemplationem supernorum. Anagogice igitur circumvelatur, quia ad hoc velatur ut amplius clarescat; ob hoc tegitur ut magis appareat" ["truly, anagogy, as it is said, is an ascent of the mind or, rather, it is called an elevation into the contemplation of the supernal. The anagogic, therefore, is concealed all around, because for this purpose, it is concealed in order to be more illuminated; because of this it is covered so that it appears more clearly"] (*Patrologia Latina* 175, 946).

[144] Cfr. "mi si mostrava" (v. 2), "vede" (v. 4), "la vista" (v. 21), "guarda" (v. 30), "veggendo" (v. 34), "menava io li occhi per li gradi, / mo sú, mo giú, e mo recirculando" (vv. 47–48), "vedea" (v. 49), "mio sguardo" (v. 53), "veder... vidi" (v. 59), "per li occhi" (v. 61), "riguardi sú" (v. 67), "rivedrai" (v. 68), "li occhi sú levai" (v. 69), "vidi" (71), "occhio mortale" (v. 74), "la mia vista" (v. 76), "i' ho vedute" (v. 82), "riguardommi" (v. 92), "vola con li occhi" (v. 97), "veder" (v. 98), "veder" (v. 104), "mirando" (v. 108), "guarda" (v. 115), "levai li occhi" (v. 118), "con li occhi, vidi" (v. 122), "vid'io" (v. 131), "Vidi" (v. 133), "era ne li occhi" (v. 135), "vide" (v. 139), "rimirar" (v. 142).

[145] See *Par*. XXXII, vv. 16–27, 37–39.

[146] "From the first seat, where Mary sits, to the seventh, occupied by Ruth, up until the Hebrew women underneath who have lived before Christ, those of the Old Testament, are disposed *vertically* one under the other, in such a way as to form a dividing line ... that splits the rose in two."

16–18)" (556 emphasis added).[147] Moreover, Dante refers to the seat from which Bernard appears to him as "il dolce *loco*" (v. 101 emphasis added), also used in his ekphrasis of the "visibile parlare" on the terrace of pride (*Purg.* X, vv. 48, 70), and reminiscent of the architectural mnemonic, that is, the system of loci of the *ars memoriae*. The celestial rose takes on the shape of a monumental amphitheater with a grandiose architecture "ineccepibile per simmetria geometrica e ordine matematico di muraglie, scale, linee, spaccati topografici di significanza simbolica" (Alighieri, Quaglio, et al. 570).[148] Undoubtedly, Dante's didascalic representation partakes in the tradition of *pictura*, that is, verbal ekphrasis, a trope of monastic rhetoric exemplified in the work of Victorines such as Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, among others.[149]

The representation of the celestial rose partakes in a literal representation of the allegory of the theologians; that is, typologically, in terms of the spatial relationship between the Old and New Testaments, and it is also anagogic since it is a view of the blessed from the perspective of the end of time, representing the future through the seats yet to be filled, "onde sone intercisi / di vòti" (vv. 25–26). As is known, the allegory of the theologians' tripartite structure can be articulated according to a temporal frame, the past (typological), "quei che credettero in Cristo venturo" (v. 24), which completes one half of the rose, the present (moral), and the future (anagogic), "quei ch'a Cristo venuto ebber li visi" (v. 27). The same format was detailed earlier with the examples of humility on the terrace of pride: Old Testament, New Testament, and pagan history. As such, Dante represents all three in one moment through a symmetrical patterning along a vertical axis.

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[147] ["champions of the Church, descending from rung to rung up until the lower part of the rose, one seat under the other, *vertically*."]

[148] ["exemplary by its geometrical symmetry and mathematical order of walls, ladders, lines, in a vertical topography of symbolic meaning."]

[149] For the use of pictures, both verbal and graphic, for didactic and mnemonic purposes see Carruthers "Memory and the Book" 293–309 and *The Craft of Thought* 196–220.

Returning to *Purgatorio*, the pilgrim on the terrace of pride, the *agens*, is undergoing an education in aesthetics. He is being taught how to look at art, divine art, no less, but mediated by the textual representation of an *auctor*, that is, Dante-poet. These same images are essentially textual; therefore, there is an exegetical didacticism as well. In other words, Dante is commentating Dante. There is a lesson here in exegesis. This theme of seeing continues after the ekphrasis of the examples of humility, when Dante is unable to perceive the penitents:

Io cominciai: 'Maestro, quel ch'io veggio

muovere a noi, non mi sembian persone,

e non so che, sì nel veder vaneggio'. (vv. 112–114)

Virgil, once more, redirects the pilgrim's gaze, telling him:

Ma guarda fiso là, e disviticchia

col viso quel che vien sotto a quei sassi:

già scorger puoi come ciascun si picchia. (vv. 118–120).

Throughout the triptych, Virgil is consistently directing Dante's gaze and, consequently, the reader's as well. There is an important analogy between Dante-pilgrim learning how to read God's "visibile parlare" and the reader being guided on how to read Dante-poet's text, which is also 'visible speech.'

*Purgatorio* XII also begins with Virgil guiding the pilgrim's sight, directing it vertically downwards:

ed el mi disse: '*Volgi li occhi in giùe*:

buon ti sarà, per tranquillar la via,

*veder lo letto* de le piante tue' (vv. 13–15 emphases added).

The same textuality of images is at play in this ekphrasis and, consequently, one cannot help but feel that "letto" here, literally "to see the *bed* of your tears," also resonates with the past participle of "leggere," that is, "to see what's read."[150] The simile that introduces the examples of the vice of pride sculpted into the ground of the terrace compares them to etchings on pavement tombs that serve to commemorate the dead and incite the pious, subtly underlining the didactic and moral component of the artwork. Dante patterns his ekphrasis around a series of anaphoras, each repeated four times at the beginning of a tercet: "Vedea" (vv. 25, 28, 31, 34), "O" (vv. 37, 40, 43, 46), and "Mostrava" (vv. 49, 52, 55, 58), the first and last being verbs focusing on sight. Moreover, the pattern is reiterated in a one-tercet coda (vv. 61–63). When combined, these letters form "VOM," that is 'uom,' which means 'man.'[151]

Each anaphora introduces a story from either a classical source or from Scripture, for a total of thirteen examples. The first *quattuor*, the "V," is composed of Lucifer (vv. 25–27), Briareus (vv. 28–30), the giants defeated by the gods (vv. 31–33), and Nimrod (vv. 34–36). We have one example from the Old and New Testaments, Lucifer textually mediated by *Isaias* 14: 12–13 and *Lucas* 10:18, one from the Old Testament, Nimrod (*Genesis* 11: 2–4), and the other two from various classical sources (Virgil, *Aeneid* III, l. 85; Statius, *Thebais* I, l. 643; and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X, ll. 150–151). The following anaphora, with the use of the vocative "O," depicts Niobe (vv. 37–39), Saul (vv. 40–42), Arachne (vv. 43–45), and Rehoboam (vv. 46–48). Much like the previous *quattuor*, we have two biblical figures alongside two classical ones, a pattern that is

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[150] Mandelbaum translates the line to "you pay attention to the pavement at your feet," whereas Longfellow renders it into "To look upon the bed beneath thy feet."

[151] Modern commentators have tended to view the acrostic as distasteful. Sinclair called it "childish" whereas Momigliano considered it "uno dei peggiori esempi degli artifici costruttivi di Dante, di significato morale e di gusto medioevale, artisticamente affatto inutili o dannosi" ["one of the worst examples of Dante's architectural artifices, with a moral significance and of medieval taste, by all means artistically useless or detrimental"] (qtd in Berk 59, 74 n. 1).

also repeated in the last set.[152] The letter "M," which completes the acrostic, comes from the repetition of "Mostrava" that, in turn, 'shows' the stories of Eriphyle (vv. 49–51), Sennacherib (vv. 52–54), Cyrus (vv. 55–57), and Holofernes (vv. 58–60).[153] Two classical figures stand beside two from Scripture.[154] The coda, the thirteenth example, amplifies the topic of pride from individual protagonists to an entire city, summing up all the other examples with

*Vedeva* Troia in cenere e in caverne;

 *o* Ilión, come te basso e vile

*mostrava* il segno che lì si discerne! (vv. 61–63 emphasis added)[155]

Fittingly, the first exemplum depicts the archetype of pride, Lucifer himself, whereas the last protagonist, Holofernes, represents the end of the Babylonian captivity.[156]

By having all these thirteen examples combine to generate the word 'man,' Dante indicates how the sin of pride is inseparable from the human condition.[157] Indeed, as Raffa explains, Dante's

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[152] The textual sources utilized by Dante in his depiction of Saul are I *Samuelis* XIII:13–14; XV:24–26; XVI: 1; XXXI:5; II *Samuelis* I: 21. The lines: "quivi parevi morto in Gelboè, / che poi non sentì pioggia né rugiada!" (vv. 41–42) are echoed in Dante's Epistle VI: "adeo roris altissimi, ceu cacumina Gelboe" (11). Rehoboam "ma pien di spavento / nel porta un carro" is taken from I *Samuelis* XII: "festinus ascendit currum, et fugit in Jerusalem" (18). Niobe and Arachne both derive from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book VI, ll. 146–312 for the former, and the same book but ll. 5–145 for the latter.

[153] The story of Eriphyle is taken from various sources: Statius, *Thebais* II, ll. 265–305, IV, ll. 187–213; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IX, ll. 406–407; Virgil, *Aeneid* VI, l. 445. Sennacherib's representation comes from 2 *Regum* XVIII:13–37; XIX: 1–37; Cyrus from Orosius' *Historiarum adversus paganos libri septem* II, 7, 6; and Holofernes from *Iudith* XI–XIV.

[154] Barolini argues for another set of parallelisms between cantos XI and XII. The three penitents encountered in *canto* XI represent three different forms of pride that are, in turn, reflected in the selection of stories in *canto* XII.

[155] Berk argues that the acrostic extends to the next nine verses whereby the initial Q of the following *terzina* is read as an 'O' and is followed by M and O (vv. 61–70), thus spelling out VQMO (uomo) (60).

[156] For an in-depth analysis of the textual sources used by Dante in this acrostic, as well as an attempt to read the use of thirteen examples as numerological and chiliastic in nature, see Brugnoli 55–72.

[157] Barolini writes that, by means of the acrostic, Dante is "graphically illustrating the role of pride in man's history" ("Re-Presenting What God Presented" 47). Brugnoli describes it as demonstrating che "il peccato mortale della superbia è quello più usuale e universale nell'uomo e pressocché inevitabile nella natura umana, portata dal libero arbitrio a tentare in ogni modo di realizzare se stessa" ["the mortal sin of pride is the most typical and universal in man and almost inevitable in human nature, brought about by free will to attempt in any way possible to realize itself"] (61). Mazzotta remarks that "pride, the conventional *initium omnis peccati* is man's primal sin which marks the fall from the garden" ("Vergil and Augustine" 153). Berk defines it as "pride's epitaph, a message as self-defeating as the oracular acrostic (...) in Jean Cocteau's *Orphée*: 'Mme Euridice Reviendra des Enfers'" (that is, "merde") (60).

view of pride as intrinsic to humans "accords with pride's foundational status in the Bible and medieval Christian thought" (157–58).[158] Dante concludes the ekphrasis by praising the artwork (vv. 64–69) and then, in an apostrophe addressed to the sons of Eve, "figliuoli d'Eva" (v. 71), a periphrasis for humankind and, by extension, for both the penitents and the readers, tells them not to lower their eyes, unless to see man's evil path: "non chinate il volto / sì che veggiate il vostro mal sentero!" (vv. 71–72).[159] After a brief interlude describing the temporal dissonance between the duration of his aesthetic experience and real time (vv. 73–75), Virgil, once more, directs Dante's sight: "'Drizza la testa; / non è più tempo di gir sì sospeso" (vv. 77–78), telling him to look upwards.

The strong emphasis in this triptych on directing the gaze of the pilgrim, upwards and downwards, as well as those of the penitents and, by extension, of the reader, in what is essentially a set of metapoetic cantos, highlights the importance of aesthetic concerns and vertical hermeneutics. The Michal vignette in *Purg*. X (vv. 67–69) highlights the moral implications of not interpreting 'correctly,' thus echoing the same concerns found in the corresponding cantos of *Inferno* IX and X. The reader's gaze—much like the pilgrim's and the penitents'—has to travel from one set of textual representations to another, from above to below and circling back up again, "Non tener pur ad un *loco* la mente" (X, v. 40 emphasis added), "Ma guarda fiso là," (X, v. 118); "Volgi li occhi in giùe" (XII, v. 13), "Drizza la testa" (v. 77). Our eyes need to scroll through the textual grid, from one "loco" to another, as though in a mnemonic system of *loci*, to generate

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[158] Raffa cites Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* (31.45.7–8) and Aquinas' *Summa theologiae* (3a.1.5; and 2a2ae.162.6–8).

[159] It is also interesting to note how the presence of "Eva" (XII, v. 71) forms a boustrophedon, or a semordnilap, with the "Ave" uttered by the Angel Gabriel to Mary in *canto* X (v. 40), thus completing the typological relationship between both figures: Mary redeeming the fall of mankind's first mother Eve. This also reinforces the sense of unity within the artistic program of the triptych. Mazzotta points out how "'Ave' is commonly glossed as the typological reversal of Eve, the first woman who figures the pride of the Fall, and the image of Mary as she who 'volse la chiave' stresses the reversal" ("Allegory: Poetics of the Desert" 238–39).

meaning from the *dispositio* of the various images set in the architectural backdrop of the terrace of pride.[160]

The pilgrim needs to understand the relationship of the various parts to the whole and vice-versa, whether that be the spatial relation (above and below) that embodies the opposition between the virtue of humility and the vice of pride, or the symmetry in the set of examples for each anaphora (two from Scripture, two from classical sources), showing its historical continuity, or the acrostic "VOM" embedded within the textual structure of the poem. Dante-poet is proposing a way of looking at signs that involves spatial semiotics, and it is for this reason that the last section of *Purgatorio* XII should be read with a sense of irony.

For the first time, Dante-pilgrim experiences the ritual at the end of each terrace of having a letter "P" removed from his forehead by a custodian angel. The simile he uses to describe the ritual is that of individuals going about their day oblivious to the fact that there's something on their head, "Allor fec' io come color che vanno / con cosa in capo non da lor saputa," until signs from others make them suspicious of the presence of something that they cannot see and might want to take a moment to verify: "se non che ' cenni altrui sospecciar fanno;" and that one's own hand can only confirm since their sight was not able to verify,

> per che la mano ad accertar s'aiuta,
>
> e cerca e truova e quello *officio* adempie
>
> che non si può fornir per la veduta; (vv. 127–132 emphasis added)

What we have here is a counter-example of the figure of Uzzah with a repetition of the word "officio" (*Purg*. X, v. 57; XII, v. 131) and the need to use one's hand. Here, Dante is duplicitous

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[160] See Carruthers who explains how "from the earliest times medieval educators had as visual and spatial idea of *locus*... which they inherited continuously from antiquity, and indeed that concern for the lay-out of memory governed much in medieval education designed to aid the mind in forming and maintaining heuristic formats that are both spatial and visualizable" ("Models for the Memory" 37).

with his readers, hinting to them, one more time, his deployment of a textual artifice that an inattentive onlooker, with no direction, might miss. The reader is invited to touch the "visibile parlare," that is, the *auctor*'s text, to find for themselves what they may have missed. Conversely, maybe the hand that seeks, finds, touches, and provides the services that sight cannot offer (vv. 130–132) is analogous to that of the scribe who, in this particular *canto*, would have most likely— like Boccaccio—set off the first letters that make up the acrostics and thus guide the reader to its presence.

What matters here is that Dante suggests an analogy between his verbal representation of God's art and the divine artificer itself: "his strategies for rendering the *visibile parlare* of the engravings work to suggest the interchangeability of the two artists, and to approximate on the page what God did in stone" (Barolini, "Re-Presenting What God Presented" 50). Barolini reiterates her point at the end of her essay, remarking how:

> Dante's representation of God's art in *Purgatorio* XII takes the form of a rivalling *artificio*: the acrostic spelling VOM, a form of visual poetry signifying man's sinful tendency toward pride, is also an example of the very pride it condemns, since it affords the poet—through the design of the letters on the page—a way of inscribing a visual art of his own into his representation of God's visual art, and so of further conflating the two artists and their work. ("Re-Presenting What God Presented" 56)

If this is indeed the case, then Dante, as a *scriba Dei*, also indicates to his readers how to look at textual signs, one in accord with biblical exegesis and medieval literary theory and practices: vertically and circular. By extension, his description of the divine artwork on the terrace of pride replicates his poetic construction, the *Commedia*, a 'visible speech' whose first cause is God, and, as such, we, as readers, must also move our eyes vertically across his text, from tercet to tercet,

and from canto to canto, to notice what may not necessarily be apparent at first glance, that is, correspondences that emerge via repetition and difference throughout the poem.

**The "LVE" Acrostic**

> *Dies ìrae, dìes ìlla,*
> *Solvet seclum in favìlla*
> *Teste David cum Sybìlla...*

> – Tommaso da Celano. *Dies irae*.[161]

The occurrence of the second acrostic in *Par*. XIX is also set within a metapoetic frame. The pilgrim finds himself in the heaven of Jupiter, where just spirits sing while flying and forming letters in the air to then take on the shape of a celestial eagle. In the previous *canto*, the souls partake in what can be best described as divine writing, taking on the form of letters for Dante-pilgrim (and the reader) to decipher (*Par*. XVIII, vv. 73–78, 88–93). The letters are described as a painting, a "dipinto" (v. 92), whereby the letter "M," nestled within an internal rhyme "IUSTITIAM / TERRAM" (vv. 91, 93), then takes on the shape of an eagle. The sentence formed, "diligite iustitiam qui iudicatis terram," is the incipit to the Book of Wisdom. All these elements combine in emphasizing the hyper-literacy of Dante-poet's representation. Moreover, much like the triptych of the terrace of pride, God is also represented as an artist (v. 51). Indeed, both textual instances partake in metapoetic elements that focus on figurative language and divine art, be it as a script written in the sky or the "visibile parlare" of God's sculptures on the side of Mount Purgatory.

Canto XIX begins with the repetition of the visual cue "Parea" (vv. 1, 4), as well as a textual borrowing from Scripture, that is, the depiction of a talking eagle from the book of

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[161] "The day of wrath, that day / will dissolve the world in ashes, / David being witness along with the Sibyl."

Revelations (v. 10).[162] The theme of justice and piety comes immediately to the fore in the speech of the celestial eagle, echoing not only the depiction of Trajan and the penitents on the terrace of pride (*Purg*. X, v. 93; XI, v. 37) but also foreshadowing the disposition of the blessed in the celestial rose (*Par*. XXXII, v. 117).[163] Towards the end of the *canto*, the celestial eagle brings up the eschaton and the final judgment (v. 107), and the resulting metaphor that introduces the "LVE" acrostic is that of what will be written in "quel volume aperto / nel qual si scrivon tutti suoi dispregi" (vv. 113–114). The "volume" in question is yet another reference taken from Revelations: "Et vidi mortuos, magnos et pusillos, stantes in conspectu throni, et libri aperti sunt: et alius liber apertus est, qui est vitae: et judicati sunt mortui ex his, quae scripta erant in libris, secundum opera ipsorum" (XX: 12).[164] The ekphrasis within which is nested the acrostic is that of the book of divine justice itself. It is a moment of hyper-literacy, of a book being described within a book. Moreover, the letter imagery of the previous canto continues here as well. The reader's focus is directed towards the textual nature of the experience and the elements that make up the text. Letters that make up words can contain within themselves secondary shorthand or bachigraphic signs:

> Vedrassi al Ciotto di *I*erusal*emme*
>
> segnata con un *i* la bontate,
>
> quando 'l contrario segnerà un *emme*. (vv. 127–129 emphases added)

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[162] Cfr. *Apocalypsis* VIII: 13: "*Et vidi, et audivi vocem unius aquilae* volantis per medium caeli dicentis voce magna: Vae, vae, vae habitantibus in terra de ceteris vocibus trium angelorum, qui erant tuba canituri" (emphasis added) ["*Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice* as it flew in midheaven, 'Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!'" (NRSV trans.)].

[163] There are other intratextual references to the terrace of pride in this canto, such as the depiction of Lucifer: "E ciò fa certo che 'l primo superbo, / che fu la somma d'ogne creatura, / per non aspettar lume, cadde acerbo" (vv. 46–48), compared to *Purg*. XII: "Vedea colui che fu nobil creato / più ch'altra creatura, giù dal cielo / folgoreggiando scender, da l'un lato" (vv. 25–27).

[164] "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also, another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books" (NRSV trans.).

The first and last four letters of the word "*I*erusal*emme*" are isolated to form the Latin numerals one (I) and one thousand (M), representing on one level the stark quantitative contrast between good and evil actions by Ciotto, but it also signals to the reader the canto's meta-textual character.[165]

Much like the acrostic in *Purgatorio* XII, the "LVE" acrostic is created through the repeated use of anaphoras, three to be precise, two containing the visual verb 'vedere': "Lì si vedrà" (vv. 115, 118, 121) and "Vedrassi" (vv. 124, 127, 130), as well as the conjunction "e" (vv. 133, 136, 139). Unlike the acrostic in *Purgatorio*, Dante does not add a coda and opts for three repetitions rather than four; however, the technique is essentially the same since it functions by isolating the first letter of each tercet.[166] The depiction partakes in the allegory of the theologians because it is an anagogic view of the fate of European princes. It is a view from the end, and the futurity of the text is represented by the use of the future tense in two of the anaphoras as well as many other verbs, such as: "parranno" (v. 136) and "conosceranno" (v. 140). Moreover, the prophetic mode of the text, a condemnation of Christian princes in light of the "dies irae," is heightened by using the "LVE" acrostic, indicating how their behavior is comparable to a plague.

**Verticality in the *Amorosa visione*.**

The *Amorosa visione*, probably written in the year 1342 or early 1343, is in *terza rima*, composed of fifty cantos—"a consciously humble demi-*Divine Comedy*"—and narrates "a vision in which a young man is encouraged to reform, morally and spiritually, after being shown, by a guide, a thematically organized exhibition of portraits of personages representing virtues and vices" (Usher

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[165] Brugnoli unpersuasively argues that these two letters, when combined to the "LVE" acrostic, are meant to form the anagram "VMILE." He explains that "Dante volle far così notare che la perversità di questi regnanti era dovuta alla mancanza in loro della necessaria 'umiltà'" ["Dante wants, in this way, to denote that the perversity of these rulers is due to their lacking of a necessary 'humility'"] (71).

[166] Other minor differences are the irregular distribution of the individuals; within one textual block more than two protagonists can be represented and, vice-versa, two textual blocks can be dedicated to a single individual.

120).[167] Said differently, the *Amorosa visione* consists of a series of ekphrases, recalling Dante's use of the technique in the *Commedia* (esp. *Purg*. X–XII and *Par*. XXXI–XXXIII), that seeks to trigger a moral conversion of the main protagonist.[168] The ekphrases also recall the last cantos of *Purgatorio*, since they are of a series of various triumphs, beginning with "Sapienza" (IV–VI), followed by "Fama" (VI–XII), "Ricchezza" (XII–XIV), "Amore" (XV–XXX), and lastly "Fortuna" (XXXIV–XXXVII).[169] Shortly after that, Petrarch will also imitate Boccaccio's adaptation of the visionary genre with his own *Trionfi*, but more of this later.

Besides structural and lexical components, Dante's influence is ubiquitous throughout Boccaccio's poem.[170] The situation of the narrator undergoing conversion through a vision mediated by a divinely-sent guide, as well as the promise, at the end of the poem, of narrating his journey, all echo Dante's *Commedia*. More importantly, at the end of Canto V (vv. 70–88) and at the beginning of Canto VI (vv. 1–36), Boccaccio features Dante being crowned with the laurel in the triumph of wisdom. In the poets enumerated by Boccaccio, starting with Virgil and culminating with Dante, the latter is the only modern author present. As discussed previously with regards to the *Trattatello*, the *Genealogia*, and the *Esposizioni*, this is the first of a series of endeavors by

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[167] For the dating of the text, see Padoan, "Introduzione" viii–ix. There are two manuscript traditions of the poem; an "A" version, which consists of eight manuscripts, and a "B" version found in the *editio princeps* by Girolamo Claricio in 1521. There is a *querelle* regarding the authenticity of the latter version since it contains many textual variants, adaptations, and interventions probably made by Claricio himself. Giuseppe Billanovich advances the idea that the "B" version is the result of Boccaccio's revisions after his encounter with Petrarch in 1351, see 1–52. Nevertheless, for all intents and purposes, the poem–long acrostic remains exactly the same in both versions. The only significant difference is that the "B" version refers to the acrostics at the end of the text in Claricio's "Apologia."

[168] See Padoan xiv and Usher who notes that the poem "may well have been inspired by the sculpted terrace of the proud in Dante's *Purgatorio*" (120).

[169] Branca defines the design of the *Amorosa visione* as "un complesso e logicamente architettato susseguirsi di *trionfi*, che comprendono tutti i più grandi valori umani" ["a complex and logically designed sequence of triumphs, that gathers together the greatest human values"] (29).

[170] Branca describes l'*Amorosa visione* as Boccaccio's "prima incondizionata ed entusiastica adesione alla civiltà toscana e dantesca" ("Introduzione" v) and, later on: "per l'ispirazione generale, per l'assiduo e diversissimo influsso della *Divina Commedia*, per l'alto omaggio reso al Poeta (canti V–VI), l'*Amorosa Visione* può esser detta la più dantesca delle opere giovanili del Boccaccio" ["the first unconditional and enthusiastic adherence to Tuscan and Dantean culture ... for the general inspiration, for the assiduous and various influence of the *Divine Comedy*, for the great homage given to the Poet (cantos V–VI), the *Amorosa Visione* can be said to be the most Dantean early works of Boccaccio"] (xv).

Boccaccio to establish Dante as an *auctor*.[171] So enthralled is the protagonist in admiring the representation of Dante that "[n]either the 'pilgrim' nor his author seems to wish to continue" (Hollander, *Boccaccio's Two Venuses* 205 n. 67). Much like Virgil's own promptings in *Purgatorio* X: "Non tener pur ad un loco la mente" (v. 46), as well as Bernard's in the last cantos of *Paradiso*, the guide has to direct the sight of the main protagonist elsewhere, "volgi omai / gli occhi" (VI, vv. 26–27).[172]

Unlike the *Commedia*, the theological resonances of the poem are minimal. Hollander describes the main protagonist as "one of the slowest and most perverse learners since the dreamer-protagonist of the *Roman de la Rose*, a work with which the *Amorosa Visione* has many affinities" (*Boccaccio's Two Venuses* 80). Indeed, in contrast to Dante-pilgrim, who progressively undergoes a moral transformation, Boccaccio's protagonist persistently makes the wrong choices, "the closer he comes to truth and morality, the less he wants them" (Hollander, *Boccaccio's Two Venuses* 88).[173]

As the title indicates, the *Amorosa visione* weaves together Boccaccio's own romantic experience with the traditional mode of didactic allegory, that is, of visionary literature. This has resulted in mostly negative assessments in twentieth-century scholarship. Sapegno called the poem a "confuso organismo," and Branca defines the commingling of Boccaccio's sensuality with the *stilnovo* style and didactic-allegorical genre as gravely compromising the coherence and logical

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[171] Branca, once again, aptly remarks that "il Boccaccio inizia con l'*Amorosa Visione* questa nuova tradizione, la dantesca: la inizia con questa 'visione' in cui Dante, per la prima volta, appare consacrato come 'classico'" ["Boccaccio initiates with the *Amorosa Visione* this new tradition, the Dantean: he initiates it with this 'vision' in which Dante, for the first time, appears consacrated as a 'classic'"] (viii–ix).

[172] Additionally, in relation to the beginning of the ekphrasis of the "candida rosa" in *Purgatorio* XXXI (vv. 103–111), Usher argues that this particular section of the *Amorosa visione* "is modeled consciously on the wonderment felt by the Croatian pilgrim whom Dante describes as gazing at the Veronica in Rome, finally satisfying himself about the appearance of the Savior" (125).

[173] A more generous interpretation would be along an Augustinian line of "da mihi castitatem et continentam, sed noli modo" ["give me chastity and continence, but not just yet"] (*Confessiones* VIII, vii, 17).

clarity of the action being represented (qtd in Smarr 146–47).[174] Nevertheless, the influence of Boccaccio's poem is unquestionable, initiating a literary subgenre of its own with no less than Petrarch as its first imitator, as well as a visual one too.[175] What is of interest here, however, is the influence of Dante's acrostics on the structure of the poem.

The poem-long acrostic, "a massive *preprogramming* of the initials of all the tercets of the poem" (Usher 120 emphasis added), demonstrates a clear overarching structure, a *dispositio*, that guided the composition of the entire poem. Padoan, who describes them as an "eccezionale *tour de force*," also supports this stance, noting that "mi pare del tutto credibile che la stesura primitiva degli acrostici abbia preceduto quella del poema" (256 "Note agli acrostici").[176] The resulting acrostic forms three *sonetti caudati* (sonnets with additional tercets) that, in turn, provide a gloss for the whole poem.

They also contain a *sphragis*, that is, a literary device by which the identity of the author is encrypted within the text to prevent interpolation and plagiarism:

Cara Fiamma, per cui 'l core ò caldo,

que' che vi manda questa Visione

Giovanni è di Boccaccio da Certaldo. (1º sonetto, vv. 16–18)[177]

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[174] See also Huot, who remarks: "[u]nable to resolve its apparently conflicting signals—celebration of human sensuality, condemnation of carnal desires; autobiographical veracity, allegorical artifice—critics have tended to regard it as awkwardly written, one of Boccaccio's less successful poetic ventures" (109).

[175] For the "fortuna" of the *Amorosa visione* in the Quattrocento and Cinquecento, in Italy and abroad, see Branca 40–47. Amusingly, Branca remarks: "[u]na fortuna così varia, così larga, così estesa e a età diverse può sorprendere, specialmente quando si abbia sperimentato l'arida povertà del poema" ["a success so various, so large, so extensive, and in such diverse eras can be surprising, especially when one had experienced the arid poverty of the poem"] (47).

[176] ["it seems to me absolutely believable that the writing of the acrostics preceded that of the poem."] Hollander describes the acrostics as "the most imposing piece of scrimshaw in the history of literature" (*Boccaccio's Two Venuses* 78); whereas Branca declares them "un vero capolavoro che non teme confronti" ["a real masterpiece that fears no comparison"] (qtd. in *Boccaccio's Two Venuses* 203 n. 59).

[177] The *Amorosa visione* is the only fiction wherein Boccaccio refers to himself by name. Classical examples of *sphragis* can be found, most notably, in Virgil's *Georgics* (IV, ll. 563–566) and Ovid's *Amores* (III, xv). As for acrostic variants of *sphragis*, it is claimed that Virgil uses the technique to sign his own name in several works. See, for instance, Castelletti 83–95.

Despite not using this technical term, Hollander also argues that Boccaccio "in this way 'signed' his strange creation" (*Boccaccio's Two Venuses* 78). Moreover, ever since Antiquity, such stylistic flourishes were repeatedly used, particularly in sibylline texts or for purposes of *sphragis* in poetry ( Branca, "Note agli acrostici" 255).[178] Furthermore, the Christian literary tradition also made good use of such artifice (ibid). Indeed, it is now known that there are acrostics in the Bible; however, it remains uncertain as to whether Dante was aware of them.[179]

Nevertheless, the prophetic nature of acrostics is discussed by Augustine regarding a pagan prophetess of Christ, the Erythrean Sibyl: "Haec sane Erythraea Sibylla quaedam de Christo manifesta conscripsit" (*De civitate Dei*, XVIII, xxiii).[180] Additionally, Augustine points out that her writings disparage pagan gods and that she, a pagan priestess, would belong to the City of God: "nihil habet in toto carmine suo, cuius exigua ista particula est, quod ad deorum falsorum sive factorum cultum pertineat, quin immo ita etiam contra eos et contra cultores eorum loquitur, ut in eorum numero deputanda videatur, qui pertinent ad civitatem Dei" (ibid).[181] Augustine goes on to describe how he was shown "ubi ostendit quodam loco in capitibus versuum ordinem litterarum ita se habentem, ut haec in eo verba legerentur: Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ Υἱὸς Σωτήρ, quod est latine:

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[178] For the prophetic function of acrostics see, for instance, Cicero's *De divinatione*: "Atque in Sibyllinis ex primo versu cuiusque sententiae primis litteris illius sententiae carmen omne praetexitur. Hoc scriptoris est, non furentis, adhibentis diligentiam, non insani" ["And in the Sibylline books, throughout the entire work, each prophecy is embellished with an acrostic, so that the initial letters of each of the lines give the subject of that particular prophecy. Such a work comes from a writer who is not frenzied, who is painstaking, not crazy"] (II, liv, 112).

[179] This opinion is also shared by Berk, who notes that "I cannot say whether Dante was aware or not of the use of acrostics as an organizing principle in the Hebrew Old Testament. Cf. Nahum 1: 2–10; Prov. 31: 10–31; Lam. 1–4" (74 n. 7).

[180] ["The Sibyl of Erythrae, at any rate, wrote some things that clearly concern Christ."] Berk remarks that: "Dante, perhaps unaware of Biblical examples, would have found a precedent in the compound acrostic verses of the Erythraean (or Cumaean) Sibyl quoted by Augustine in *De civitate Dei*: 'IESOVS CHRISTOS THEOV VIOS, SOTER'" (72). Bourke, in his note to this section of Augustine's text, remarks that "[m]odern scholars date this 'Sibylline' acrostic toward the end of the second century of the Christian era" (Augustine and Walsh 399 n. 1); whereas Augustine posits the possibility of it having been written at the time of the Trojan War: "belli Troiani tempore fuisse scripserunt" (XVIII, xxiv).

[181] ["This Erythrean Sibyl's entire poem, of which I have cited but a tiny segment, contains nothing at all in favor of worshipping false or man–made gods. Quite to the contrary, it speaks out so openly against them and their votaries that the prophetess herself, it seems, must be counted among those who belonged to the City of God" (Augustine and Walsh 400).]

Iesus Christus Dei Filius Salvator" (ibid).[182] An acrostic is found in her text that generates the

sentence: "Jesus Christ, [our] Savior, Son of God." Moreover, by sequencing the first letter of each

noun that make up the acrostic, an acronym is formed, that is: "si primas litteras iungas, erit ἰχθύς,

id est piscis, in quo nomine mystice intellegitur Christus, eo quod in huius mortalitatis abysso velut

in aquarum profunditate vivus, hoc est sine peccato, esse potuerit" (ibid).[183] The resulting acronym,

"ichthys" (ἰχθύς), meaning fish, is interpreted as representing Christ.[184]

This prophetic use of acrostics further substantiates their function in Dante's poem,

particularly the "LVE" acrostic since it is nestled within the framework of the last judgment.[185]

Lactantius, the early Christian rhetorician and theologian, is mentioned by Augustine as alluding

to Sibylline texts and the Hermetic corpus in his *Divinae Institutiones* for pagan prophecies of the

coming of Christ: "esse autem summi dei filium, qui sit potestate maxima praeditus, non tantum

congruentes in unus voces prophetarum, sed etiam Trismegisti praedicatio et Sibyllarum vaticinia

demonstrant" (IV, vi).[186] Lactantius alludes explicitly to the Erythrean Sibyl, writing that: "Sibylla

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[182] ["in a certain passage the initial letters of the verses fell in such sequence you could read the acrostic."]

[183] ["If, moreover, you string along together the initial letters of the five Greek words in question, you get the Greek word, *Ichthys*, which means fish. This, by mystical application, is a name for Christ, because as a fish can live in the depths of waters, Christ was able to live in the abyss of our mortality without sin, which is truly to live" (ibid).]

[184] For the use of the "ichthys" acrostic and symbolism in early Christianity, see Edmonson 57–66. Edmonson explains, among other things, how: "[b]elievers in the nascent Church employed the icon in a variety of ways. For some the fish was possibly a secret code, used to identify themselves quietly to fellow Christians in a world hostile to their convictions. For others, it was simply a quick, formulaic way to express one of their core beliefs, the high Christology that separated Christianity from other religious movements in the Empire. For still others, tracing or drawing the fish made a political statement, leveling a subversive jab at the Roman emperors' claims to divinity" (58).

[185] Moreover, in *Paradiso* XXXIII, in Dante's final ecstatic vision of God, as he fixes his gaze onto the divine light, he compares the experience in a triple simile to a dream leaving an imprint on one's emotions but not their memory (vv. 58–63) and the resulting sensation of sweetness distilled into his heart to snow melting in the sun (v. 64) and, lastly and most pertinently, to the wind blowing away the sibylline leaves upon which prophecies were written (vv. 65–66). The sibylline reference is to Virgil's *Aeneid*, where the Cumean Sibyl "in foliis descripsit carmina virgo, / digerit in numerum, atque antro seclusa relinquit" (III, ll. 444–445). What is pertinent here is the association of the dispersal of pagan prophecies to Dante's own attempt to recall and put into words his experience. This indirect identification with the Sybil further substantiates the notion that Dante's use of acrostics is set within the framework of a prophetic mode of expression.

[186] ["But that there is a Son of the Most High God, who is possessed of the greatest power, is shown not only by the unanimous utterances of the prophets, but also by the declaration of Trismegistus and the predictions of the Sibyls."] See also xiii, xv, xviii, xix, xx.

Erythrea in carminis sui principio, quod a summo deo exorsa est, filium dei ducem et imperatorem omnium his versibus praedicat" (ibid), but there is no mention of an acrostic.[187] Tertullian, another early Christian apologist, also mentions the "ichthys" in his *De Baptismo*, in what may possibly be "the first Christian pop culture reference" (Edmondson 57). The "ichthys" acrostic will be further discussed at the beginning of the next chapter. For now, it is sufficient to understand that acrostics partake in a particular prophetic tradition and that Dante's use of acrostics, rather than filling the function of *sphragis*, as does Boccaccio's, is set within a prophetic mode of expression.[188]

Nevertheless, this functional distinction between Dante and Boccaccio's use of acrostics in no way hinders the overarching argument that Boccaccio was indeed aware of their presence in the *Commedia*. As mentioned previously, Boccaccio's acrostic provides a gloss and an *accessus* to the poem. It contains a *dedicatio* to a "donna gentile," Fiammetta, his "signature," the impetus behind his writing, a reference to his acrostics, and an address to the reader. Moreover, Huot recognizes how "the narrative text can be read as an amplification of, and commentary on, the lyric text," while simultaneously, "the lyric poems are themselves an introduction to and commentary on the narrative vision;" in fact, "the two forms of discourse are literally fused" (110).[189] The acrostic indicates Boccaccio's awareness of his text's vertical mise-en-page and how verticality can play a creative role in amplifying the poem's hermeneutics. Huot rightly points out how the narrative is an expansion of the sonnets that result from the acrostics: "it grows out of them, filling

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[187] ["The Erythrean Sibyl, in the beginning of her poem, which she commenced with the Supreme God, proclaims the Son of God as the leader and commander of all."]

[188] Boccaccio, in the *Filocolo*, does represent a Sibyl as a prophetess of Christ under the reign of Octavian (V, liv, vv. 15–16).

[189] Huot analyzes the tension between the "lyric sequence created by the acrostics, and the narrative poem" to raise fundamental questions about how to read Boccaccio's poem.

the space created when they are opened up and written *vertically* down the page" (110 emphasis added).

The focus now shifts onto the representation of Ulysses at the end of canto XXVII of the *Amorosa visione*. If one considers the three sonnets as autonomous textual elements, the entire poem would be composed of 53 textual units. Therefore, canto XXVII would represent the mid-point of the poem (26:1:26), a very significant structural position in terms of exegesis.[190] Ulysses appears in the triumph of Love, which, with its fifteen cantos, is the most extended sequence of all the triumphs. He is depicted among the heroes of Greek antiquity but mediated through the figure of Penelope:

> Or era ancora verso lei rivolta
>
> Penelopè, che aspettando Ulisse
>
> giammai non fu dal suo amor disciolta.
>
> Nella qual tenend'io le luci fisse,
>
> fra me volvea quanto fosse il disire
>
> di que' che mai non cre' ch'a lei reddisse
>
> e quanto volle del mondo sentire,
>
> ché per voler veder *trapassò il segno*
>
> dal qual nessun poté mai in qua reddire,
>
> io dico forza usando né suo ingegno. (Version A, vv. 79–88 emphasis added)[191]

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[190] Smarr argues that the actual mid–point would be the previous canto, that is XXVI, and substantiates her claim with Branca's observation that "in version B only cantos 26 and 50 have more than the usual 85 lines. This emphasizes the middle and end of the poem and lends weight to my assumption that Boccaccio was aware of the centrality of canto 26" (147 n. 4). In relative terms, both cantos—with their reference to Hercules and Ulysses—share textual elements with Dante's *Inferno* XXVI.

[191] Version B: "Ov'era ancora verso lei rivolta / Penelopè aspettante il caro Ulisse, / che dal fidel suo amor mai non fu sciolta. // Nella qual io le luci avendo fisse, / fra me pensava quanto fu il disire / di que' che mai non cre' ch' a lei redisse. // Ello, volendo del mondo esperire / varie genti e cittati, *passò il segno* / dal qual nessun mai poté in qua redire, / invano usando forze, invan l'ingegno" (vv. 79–88 emphasis added).

The intertextual link with *Inferno* XXVI: "...l'ardore / ch'i' ebbi a divenir del mondo esperto / e de li vizi umani e del valore" (vv. 97–99) is reflected in verses 83–86 of both versions.[192] What is even more striking is the borrowing from *Paradiso* XXVI: "il trapassar del *segno*" (v. 117 emphasis added) that also echoes the "segno" from *Inferno* XXVI: "dov' Ercule *segnò* li suoi riguardi / acciò che l'uom più oltre non si metta" (vv. 108–109 emphasis added). Boccaccio was attuned to the correspondences between cantos XXVI of *Inferno* and *Paradiso*, as well as their ramifications in terms of Dante's literary project and Ulysses' transgression. Consequently, at the end of the *Amorosa visione*, when the protagonist wakes up from his vision, he submits to his guide's authority stating:

> Donna gentile, io vegno,
>
> né più da te voglio esser mai diviso.
>
> Umile e pian, quant'io posso, m'assegno
>
> a te: fa sì ch'al piacer di colei
>
> di cui io sono, *io non trapassi il segno*. (Version A, L, vv. 32–36 emphasis added)[193]

Branca rightly notes the connection to *Paradiso* XXVI, also adding how "al piacer di colei" (v. 35) echoes Dante's "Al suo piacere" (v. 3) in the same canto. In sum, the Ulysses-Adam-Dante connection established in a vertical reading of the Twenty-sixes is, in turn, extended by Boccaccio to include himself and his poetic project.

**Petrarch's *Trionfi***

> *Petrarch pushed hard to dislodge Dante and the* Commedia *from their position of "authority"; and it is not hard to imagine the poet, the* Triumphi *in hand, ready to claim for himself their vacated space.*

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[192] Branca notes the obvious links to the Dantean Ulysses in his commentary ("Note al canto XXVII" Boccaccio and Branca 426–27).

[193] Version B: "Donna gentile, i' vegno / né più da te voglio esser mai diviso. // Humile e pian, quanto io posso, m'assegno / a te, fa sì ch'al piacer di colei, / di cui son tutto, *i' non trapassi 'l segno*" (vv. 32–36 emphasis added).

– Barański, "Petrarch, Dante, Cavalcanti" (73).

The *Trionfi*, much like the *Amorosa visione* for Boccaccio, is Petrarch's most Dantean text.[194] It is also—simultaneously—his most Boccaccian work, thus going against the dominant narrative of unidirectional influence between the alleged master and disciple.[195] Bernardo lists the similarities between all three poems, noting that: "all three involve guides other than the beloved who initially accompany the protagonists in order to explain what is being seen and to suggest how to proceed;" whereas "[o]n the formal level, all three use *canti*, or the equivalent as basic divisions, and all three use *terza rima* to reflect the spiritual seriousness and cosmic implications of the visions;" furthermore, "all three include a beloved who plays a central and critical role in the unfurling of the vision or visions of triumphal accomplishment;" and, lastly, "all three incorporate ambiguous triumphs that are either incomplete or mark the victory of negative or illusory values" ("Triumphal Poetry: Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio" 35).[196] Additionally, the poem's division into large and small structures, the triumphs and the *canti*, mirrors the *cantica* and the *canto* of the *Commedia*. Petrarch likely started writing the poem in 1352, shortly after reading Boccaccio's *Amorosa*

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[194] See Sturm-Maddox who remarks: "[l]ike Boccaccio's *Amorosa Visione* (to which it is also much indebted), it [the *Trionfi*] is composed in the *terza rima* of the *Commedia* and adopts myriad thematic, stylistic, and linguistic elements from Dante's poem" (311). Also, Bernardo, dating the writing of the poem to 1350, writes: "Petrarch began writing the *Trionfi*, again using Dante's *terza rima* and a guide, this time a male, in obvious imitation of both Dante and Boccaccio, in an attempt to celebrate his beloved Laura, within an epic–like framework" ("Triumphal Poetry: Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio" 34). See also Finotti, who notes that: "[w]ith his *Triumphi* Petrarch shifts from the lyrical *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* to an allegorical narrative genre, responding to the *Divina commedia* as does his friend Boccaccio with the *Amorosa visione*" (63). For the wider question of Petrarch's process of imitation or, say, *contaminatio*, see Iannucci "Petrarch's Intertextual Strategies in the *Triumphs*" 3–10. For instance, Iannucci recognizes that Petrarch's "two important predecessors" are Dante and Boccaccio; however, he also acknowledges that the question of the extent of their influence "is among the most problematic in Petrarch criticism" (8).

[195] Cachey Jr. rightly observes how "[t]here is, indeed, a kind of balance of reciprocal literary influence to be observed in Boccaccio's turn to Latin, on the one hand, and Petrarch's renewed and intensified engagement with the vernacular in response to Boccaccio's Dante, on the other, as reflected in the compositional histories of the *Canzoniere* and the *Triumphi*" ("Between Petrarch and Dante: Prolegomenon to a Critical Discourse" 20).

[196] The long–established and critically complex debate regarding Petrarch's ambiguous relationship with Dante will be only cursorily addressed. What is of interest here is whether or not Petrarch was attuned to the vertical semiotics of Dante's *Commedia* and, as will be shown, the answer is yes. A seminal work on the question is Bernardo "Petrarch's Attitude Toward Dante" 488–517. See also Sapegno 169–196, Billanovich "Tra Dante e Petrarca" 1–44, and, for an exhaustive list of critical contributions, see Barański "Petrarch, Dante, Cavalcanti" 93–94 n. 1.

*visione*. However, it is also known that he was still working on the *Trionfo dell'Eternità* in January

of 1374, six months before his death (Bezzola "Introduzione" 7).[197] This clearly shows the extent

of Petrarch's investment in this epic vernacular literary project or, rather, of this significant "sfida"

towards Dante.

Despite the unfinished status of the work, the overarching structure remains stable since it

involves a dialectical sequence of six triumphs superseding one another or, say, a series of

palinodes that culminate with the end of time.[198] The Triumph of Love (*Triumphus Cupidinis*) is

vanquished by Chastity (*Triumphus Pudicitie*), who, in turn, is overruled by Death (*Triumphus*

*Mortis*) only to be outdone by Fame (*Triumphus Fame*) and then overpowered by Time

(*Triumphus Temporis*), ending with its supersession by Eternity (*Triumphus Eternitatis*).[199] This

series of supersessions is similar to Dante's self-definition as a poet in Oderisi's discourse about

artistic fame in *Purg.* XI, but more of this later. This dialectical movement in the poem's narrative

shares the same anagogic characteristic as the *Commedia* and, in this way, a vertical structure as

well, since "[a] *vertical* progression structures the 'capitoli,' or chapters, like a ladder that the poet-

persona climbs, each rung representing a victory and a progression over the preceding" (Finotti 63

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[197] Cachey Jr. notes that "[i]n 1352, the year after his second meeting with Boccaccio in Padua, (...) Petrarch probably began in Vaucluse, under the influence of Boccaccio's Dantean *Amorosa visione*, the composition of the *Triumphi*" ("Between Petrarch and Dante: Prolegomenon to a Critical Discourse" 23). It should also be noted that the *Trionfi* remain an unfinished work: "i *Trionfi* sono dunque un poema non condotto a termine, più volte rivisto e modificato, così da consentire successive sistemazioni interne e anche diverse stesure testuali (uno dei motivi per cui un'edizione critica pienamente soddisfacente per i *Trionfi* non si è ancora avuta, nonostante i benemeriti sforzi dell'Appel e del Chiòrboli)" ["the *Triumphs* are therefore an unfinished poem, often revised and modified, in such a way as to having successive internal systematizations and even diverse writing processes (one of the motives why a fully satisfying critical edition is yet to be produced, despite the meritorious efforts of Appel and Chiòrboli)"] (Bezzola "Introduzione" 8).

[198] See Barański, who points out that "for all its 'provisional' air, it is in fact constrained by its form, which therefore offers us at least a glimpse of the 'finished' poem" ("A Provisional Definition of Petrarch's *Triumphi*" 75).

[199] See Bezzola, who remarks: "[l]a costruzione ideale, la 'macchina' come si usava dire, è senza dubbio geniale, con quelle progressive vittorie della morte sull'amore e sulla castità, della fama sulla morte via via fino al trionfo dell'eternità con il quale tutto si dissolve e torna ai suoi principî" ["the ideal construction, the 'machine' as they used to say, is without a doubt ingenious, with those progressive victories of death over love and chastity, of fame over death and so on until the triumph of eternity with which everything dissolves and turns back to its principles"] ("Introduzione" 9). Schwebel describes the poem as performing "a cycle of conquest on a loop: again and again, conquerors become the conquered as new victors appear" (91).

emphasis added).[200] Both poems deal with Christian history's future events, be it Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, or the Last Judgment and the Resurrection, and provide readers a view from the end.[201] In other words, the Triumph of Eternity offers a retrospective view, one from the end of time, much like Revelations—the anagogic text *par excellence*—that allows to make sense of the sequence that precedes it.[202]

Furthermore, in terms of content, much like Boccaccio, Petrarch also mediates his representation of Ulysses via a corresponding reading of *Inferno* and *Paradiso* XXVI. In the Triumph of Fame, Ulysses is found alongside Diomedes and described as "desiò del mondo veder troppo" (II, vv. 17–18). Barolini notes how the "folle volo" (*Inf*. XXVI, v. 125) "cannot be overlooked in an assessment of Ulysses' role within the poem," since "Dante's Adam explains that his banishment was caused by his over-reaching, a trespass the poem has long coded as Ulyssean: 'non il gustar del legno / fur per sé la cagion di tanto essilio, / ma solamente il trapassar del segno' [...] (*Par*. 26.115–17)." Barolini, in the context of a *querelle* between the scholars Fubini and Nardi, goes on to explain how both Boccaccio and Petrarch understood this correspondence of the Twenty-sixes and that, "[f]ar from being anachronistic, as claimed by Fubini, Nardi is reviving a contemporary insight when he associates Ulysses with Adam" ("Dante's Ulysses: Narrative and Transgression" 116). This contemporary insight, the linkage between *Inferno* and *Paradiso* XXVI

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[200] Finotti also remarks that, much like the *Commedia*, whereby "canto articulation does not correspond strictly to various groups of souls," Petrarch "feels free to dedicate four full chapters to the *Triumphus Cupidinis*, three to the *Triumphus Famae*, and two to the *Triumphus Mortis*, whereas the other three are built as single chapters" (63). Moreover, the organization of a sequence of six triumphs and twelve chapters is numerologically significant since the number six stands for "the date of Petrarch's enamorment and Laura's death" (63).

[201] Hooper, with regards to the use of allegory, points out how "[a]lthough there are important differences between the two poets' approaches [Dante and Petrarch], both adopt a moderate eschatological realism in characterizing saved souls" (290).

[202] See Barański who duly notes how "[i]n the *Triumphus Eternitatis* ... Petrarch introduces not only the Last Judgement and describes the glory of the blessed, but overtly calls attention to his debts to the *Book of Revelations*: the start of the dreamer's final vision, 'veder mi parve un mondo / novo... / ...e tutto 'l ciel disfar... / ...ancor la terra e 'l mare' (20–23), calques the opening to John's description of the New Jerusalem: 'Et vidi coelum novum et terram novam. Primum enim coelum, et prima terra abiit, et mare iam non est' (XXI, 1)" ("A Provisional Definition of Petrarch's *Triumphi*" 68).

through the figures of Ulysses and Adam, indicates an awareness of the vertical hermeneutics of the *Commedia*.

Moreover, Petrarch subtly evokes the Ulysses theme in a famous autobiographical letter to Boccaccio wherein he seems to praise Dante:

> In quo illum satis mirari et laudare vix valeam, quem *non* civium iniuria, *non* exilium, *non* paupertas, *non* simultatum aculei, *non* amor coniugis, *non* natorum pietas ab arrepto semel calle distraheret, cum multi quam magni tam delivati ingenii sint, ut ab intentione animi level illos murmur avertat; quod his familiarus evenit, qui numeris stilum strigunt, quibus preter sententias peter verba iuncture etiam intentis, et quiete ante alios et silentio opus est. (*Familiares* XXI, 15)[203]

The repetition of six negatives, "*non* civium iniuria, *non* exilium, *non* paupertas, *non* simultatum aculei, *non* amor coniugis, *non* natorum pietas," intertextually evokes the same rhetorical artifice used by Dante in Ulysse's speech, doubling Dante's three "né":

> *né* dolcezza di figlio, *né* la pieta
>
> del vecchio padre, *né* 'l debito amore
>
> lo qual dovea Penelopè far lieta,
>
> vincer potero dentro a me l'ardore
>
> ch'i' ebbi a divenir del mondo esperto
>
> e de li vizi umani e del valore. (*Inf.* XXVI, vv. 94–99 emphases added)

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[203] ["I can hardly marvel at him and praise him enough, given that the injustice of his fellow citizens, exile, poverty, the goads of feuding, his love for his wife, and piety toward his children, did not ever distract him from the path he had once taken up, although many men's intellects, however great, are so delicate that a trivial murmur drives away their concentration. This happens more frequently to men who restrict their writing to verse, intent not only on their thoughts and choice of terms, but also on the combination of words: they need calm and silence more than others" (Petrarca 319).] See Gilson who remarks that "a closer reading of the letter shows that his 'praise' of Dante is constantly qualified in ways that emphasized the differences between the two poets and serve to stress Petrarch's superiority in literary and cultural terms" ("Boccaccio and Petrarch" 33).

As Cachey Jr. remarks, citing the work of Gilson, "Petrarch here praises Dante for his single-minded pursuit of glory and implicitly compares him to Ulysses" ("Between Petrarch and Dante: Prolegomenon to a Critical Discourse" 26).[204] The unbridled desire for fame for which he appears to extoll Dante in this letter as well as the representation of the figure of Ulysses in Petrarch's *Triumphus Fame* reveal an underhanded criticism of Dante's authorial self-representation and poetic claims. Indeed, Petrarch's appropriation of Dante's Ulysses, here and elsewhere, "represented an implicit critique of Dante's utilization of Ulysses in the *Commedia* as a vehicle for authorizing his own poetic journey," and that it "goes to the heart of Petrarch's resistance to Dante and his theological-poetic system" (Cachey Jr., "Between Petrarch and Dante: Prolegomenon to a Critical Discourse" 36–37).[205] These structural and textual elements, the anagogic perspective and the Ulysses-Adam-Dante insight, support the argument that Petrarch was attuned to the vertical correspondences in Dante's poem.

Regarding the fraught relationship between Petrarch and Dante, it is essential to underline that Petrarch's historiographical self-authoring within the vernacular lyrical tradition in the *Trionfi* is modeled upon Dante's own in *Purgatorio* XI, a significant canto—as we have seen—in terms of vertical semiotics. The *Trionfi* "respond to and rewrite a specifically Dantean model of

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[204] See Gilson who notes that this passages not only "echoes Dante's own presentation, ultimately a negative one, of Ulysses' unrestrained pursuit of knowledge of human vices and virtues to the detriment of his family commitments," but also also borrows from Boccaccio's *Trattatello* ("Boccaccio and Petrarch" 34): "*Non* poterono gli amorosi disiri, *né* le dolenti lagrime, *né* la sollecitudine casalinga, *né* la lusinghevole gloria de' publici ofici, *né* il miserabile esilio, *né* la intollerabile povertà giammai con le lor forze rimuovere il nostro Dante dal principale intento, cioè da sacri studii" (I Red. 82 emphasis added). Furthermore, Gilson underlines that despite the fact that both "Boccaccio and Petrarch use the passage to comment upon Dante's studious resolve, it is only Petrarch who mentions a lack of *pietas*, and thereby gives his own presentation a distinctive negative charge" ("Boccaccio and Petrarch" 34). See also Fenzi 508–518.

[205] However, this dissertation disagrees with Cachey Jr. and Emilio Pasquini's claim that "Petrarch was the first to grasp the manipulative self-authorizing strategy that informed Dante's shipwreck of Ulysses in *Inferno* 26, that is to say, the way in which Dante makes Ulysses and his shipwreck the negative double of himself and his own successful journey" ("Between Petrarch and Dante: Prolegomenon to a Critical Discourse" 36). As shown earlier, Boccaccio was clearly attuned to the role of Ulysses as an antitype for Dante. For more regarding Petrarch's appropriation of Dante's Ulysses, see Fenzi 493–518.

vernacular poetry" and, in the Triumph of Love (IV, v. 31), "Petrarch articulates Dante's role as both his prototype and competitor, praising Dante while implying his own imminent rise to victory" (Schwebel 91). The intertextual evidence indicates that Petrarch is cocking a snook to Dante's self-praise on the terrace of pride where, using Oderisi as a mouth-piece, he stages a poetic supersession, stating that "forse è nato / chi l'uno e l'altro caccerà del nido" (*Purg*. XI, vv. 98–99).[206] Said differently, "Petrarch implies his own imminent poetic ascendancy using Dante's model of self-promotion and intertextual commentary," as found in *Purg*. XI (Schwebel 96).

In the *Triumphus Cupidinis*, the narrator, through an ekphrasis, a primary feature of the epic genre, enumerates a long list of poets that are subjugated by 'Amor.' Starting from Antiquity, with Orpheus (vv. 13–15), Alcaeus of Mytilene (v. 16), Pindar and Anacreon (v. 17); and then with the Latin poets Virgil (v. 19), Ovid and Catullus (v. 22), Propertius (v. 24), Tibullus (v. 25), and, lastly, the Greek Sappho (vv. 25–27), the protagonist then moves his gaze to see a group of people "d'amor *volgarmente* ragionando" (vv. 29–30 emphasis added).[207] The following verses catalog the tradition of vernacular love poetry, starting within the Italian peninsula and then moving beyond:

> Ecco Dante e Beatrice, ecco Selvaggia,
>
> ecco Cin da Pistoia, Guitton d'Arezzo,
>
> che di non esser primo par ch' ira aggia;
>
> ecco *i due Guidi che già fur in prezzo*,

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[206] See Gilson who points out how "Petrarch here deliberately echoes the *Comedy*, especially Dante's own judgments in the *Purgatorio* on his predecessors in the lyric tradition (*Purg*. XI, 97–99; XXVI, 124–26), but, as in that letter, he also in effect gives his own judgement on Dante by resolutely assigning him to the ranks of vernacular love poets" ("Boccaccio and Petrarch" 38).

[207] In this list of elite love poets, Barański sees an intertextual link with *Inferno* IV, where Dante claims to be "sesto tra cotanto senno" (v. 102), and that Sappho's presence, with her "stil soave e raro" (v. 27), serves as a polemical jab—by means of a gender reversal—to Dante's "dolce stil novo" (*Purg*. XXIV, v. 57) ("Petrarch, Dante, Cavalcanti." 68–69).

Onesto Bolognese, e i Ciciliani,

che fur già primi e quivi era da sezzo,

Sennuccio e Franceschin, che fur sì umani

come ogni uom vide… (vv. 31–38 emphasis added)

As mentioned earlier, the reference of "i due Guidi che già fur in prezzo" (v. 34) is an apparent intertextual reference to *Purgatorio* XI, where Dante constructs his own poetic genealogy: "così ha tolto *l'uno a l'altro Guido* / la gloria de la lingua" (vv. 97–98 emphasis added). In a wider analysis of "Petrarch's manipulations of genealogical constructs in a set of strategically differentiated discursive and generic contexts," Brownlee focuses on this particular section of the *Trionfi* and makes two significant observations. First, "Dante is here presented as the first in the Petrarchan list of vernacular love poets, a list that culminates, again, with Petrarch himself writing in the present, as a vernacular love poet;" and, secondly, "the Petrarchan Dante is only named, only acknowledged explicitly, in the context of vernacular lyric love poetry, which serves to define, to limit, his identity and authority within the overall context of Petrarch's *oeuvre*" ("Power Plays" 471). In other words, "Dante is the *rimatore* of the *Vita nuova* and not the *auctor* of the *Comedy*" (Gilson, "Boccaccio and Petrarch" 38).

The idea Brownlee is proposing is that Petrarch—by pairing Dante with Beatrice in a list of victims of erotic love—wanted to undercut Dante's claims to "uniqueness in theological (and, indeed, epic) terms," thus, implicitly destabilizing "the unique religious status assigned to Dante's beloved both in the *Vita nuova* and in the *Commedia*: that is, the entire transcendent dimension that Dante claims for his love of his *donna*" ("Power Plays" 476).[208] In Petrarch's lyric poetry,

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[208] See, for instance Cachey Jr., who—parafrasing the work of Maria Cecilia Bertolani's fourth chapter, "Nelle profondità della parola: Dal *Canzoniere* al *Trionfo dell'Eternità*," in *Petrarca e la visione dell'eterno* (2005)—remarks that both the *Canzoniere* and the *Triumphus Eternitatis* "each in their own way, express an unwavering dissent from the claims for Beatrice upon which Dante founded his *Commedia*" ("Between Petrarch and Dante: Prolegomenon to

there is a subtle and long-standing program of subverting Dante's extraordinary assertions for the figure of Beatrice and, by extension, of the *Commedia*'s metaphysical claims.[209]

In other words, in the *Trionfi*, a vernacular poem with epic pretensions just like the *Commedia*, Petrarch labels Dante as a lyric love poet *tout court*, short-circuiting Dante's claims to the epic genre in his divine poem.[210] This genre-excluding operation that is Petrarch's removal of Dante from epic poetry, or confinement to the lyric genre, is particularly significant in terms of the material layout of Petrarch's own lyric poetry. This is because the *Commedia*'s vertical layout—typical for epic narratives—was first appropriated and experimented with by Petrarch for his *Trionfi* and then subsequently applied rigorously for his own lyrical production in the *Canzoniere*. This, in turn, provides the most surprising evidence of Dante's verticality influencing Petrarch.

**The Origin(s) of Vertical Poetry**

The beginning of the first chapter mentioned how the *Commedia*'s early manuscript tradition broke with the lyric verse tradition by opting for a physical layout typically used for epics instead of the *scriptio continua*. This new layout emphasized the vertical structure of the poetry itself, highlighting elements such as acrostics and the rhyme scheme of the poem. This observation comes back to the fore to address the surprising way the *Commedia*'s vertical layout impacted—via Petrarch and his *Trionfi*—the entire lyric tradition.

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a Critical Discourse" 14). See also Barański who writes: "[b]y fixing Beatrice as simply a love poet's lady, the equal of Cino's Selvaggia, Petrarch, as he had done in sonnet 287, denied her role as heavenly guide and hence once again challenged the *Commedia*'s metaphysical claims" ("Petrarch, Dante, Cavalcanti." 65).

[209] One obvious example would be the concluding canzone of the *Canzoniere*, where the Virgin Mary, "Vergine glorïosa," is described as "vera Beatrice" (CCCLXVI, v. 52), in opposition to the "Beatrice, lode di dio vera" (*Inf*. II, v. 103). See also sonnet CCLXXXVII, mentioned above by Barański, where Petrarch demotes Dante from the *theologus–poeta* status to the sphere of Venus, "la terza spera," that is, as a lyric love poet. Barański states it best when he remarks that Petrarch's "aim, therefore, appears to have been to redimension and delimit Dante's enormous prestige, thereby opening up a space in which to locate himself and his own work" ("Petrarch, Dante, Cavalcanti." 56–57).

[210] Barański cogently argues how for Petrarch, "[t]he *Trionfi*, by reviving the artistic standards of the ancients, was to have been the great 'modern' epic in absolute terms" ("A Provisional Definition of Petrarch's *Triumphi*" 74).

Leonardi, in an important study, re-examines the codicological characteristics of the romance poetic tradition, particularly of the lyric genre of the *canzoniere*, and focuses on the change in the *mise-en-page* of medieval lyric poetry by asking:

> quando e perché si è affermato la disposizione dei versi in colonna? si è passati cioè definitivamente da una visione 'orizzontale' della poesia, apparentemente non distinta sulla pagina—se non per segni interpuntivi—dal *continuum* della prosa, a una visione *verticale*, che pone il singolo verso come unità minima, fisicamente e visivamente, per la struttura della poesia lirica? ("Le Origini Della Poesia Verticale" 267–68 emphasis added)[211]

Leonardi remarks how the horizontal layout of lyric poetry is truly generalized up until the Duecento: "nessun settore della tradizione lirica medievale, entro il secolo XIII, può dirsi esente dall'impostazione orizzontale" (268).[212] Whether it be in two columns or covering the entire page in *scriptio continua* or having two verses per line, this layout dominates the entire manuscript tradition up until the late Trecento and Quattrocento where it almost disappears completely (269). Although subscribing to a polygenetic theory for this paradigm shift in the manuscript layout of lyric vernacular poetry, such as the passage of parchment to paper, Leonardi isolates the pre-existing tradition of a vertical *mise-en-page* in epic poetry, that is, "la poesia narrativa romanza, dalle lasse della *chanson de geste* in Francia e Spagna ai *couplets* del romanzo e dei generi brevi, fino alle terzine della *Commedia* dantesca e alle ottave dei cantari" (270).[213] As for the continuous

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[211] ["when and why did the disposition of verses in columns established itself? We've passed from a definite 'horizontal' vision of poetry, seemingly undistinguishable on the page—if not for signs of punctuation—from the continuum of prose, to a *vertical* vision, which posits the singular verse as the minimal unit, physically and visually, for the structure of lyric poetry?"]

[212] ["no branch of the medieval lyric tradition, up until the thirteenth century, can claim to be exempt from the horizontal format."]

[213] ["the romance narrative poetry, from the lyric lay of the *chanson de geste* in France and Spain to the couplets of the novel and of short genres, up until the tercets of Dante's *Commedia* and the ottaves of the 'cantari.'"] Storey has written on the subject–matter, as mentioned in Chapter 1; however, his book focuses primarily on the Italian lyric tradition. Nevertheless, Storey is a precursor to Leonardi by questioning the Petrarchan origin of the visual *mise–en–page* of lyric poetry: "[t]hus Petrarch's concepts and applications of a visual poetics tied to specific scribal forms,

"horizontal" script of vernacular lyric poetry, Leonardi—citing the work of Bourgain—explains its origins in "la matrice mediolatina" (271). Consequently, two standards emerged by the end of the Duecento: a vertical layout for narrative epic texts and a horizontal *mise-en-page* for lyric poetry.

Therefore, when the Italian sonnet initially appeared in manuscript form, more often than not, it typically had two verses per line, simply because it was following a medieval Latin convention: "la rappresentazione grafica del nuovo metro, così nuova anch'essa e singolare rispetto al retroterra lirico provenzale e francese, fosse tutt'altro che un'invenzione, applicando semplicemente un modello di mise en texte in uso da secoli per l'innografia mediolatina" (273).[214] The structure of the sonnet predisposed it to eventually taking on a vertical layout and, as such, it is therefore no surprise to see an intermediary phase develop, whereby the end of a line coincides with the end of a verse. This was applied "innovativamente da Petrarca anche alla canzone e agli altri generi minori (ballata e madrigale), con una rottura della distinzione—tra canzoni-ballate in scrittura continua *vs* sonetti a coppie—tipica dei canzonieri italiani due-trecenteschi" (274).[215] Eventually, Petrarch will adopt a revolutionary and single macrotextual model for his poetry, "[e] questo sarebbe il vero avvio della nuova stagione, simbolicamente instaurato da colui che fu il massimo modello di tutta la tradizione lirica nell'Europa dei secoli XV e XVI" (274).[216] Nevertheless, Leonardi presents a much more nuanced history of the development of vertical

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most clearly materialized in the transcriptional strategies in his autograph copy of the *Canzoniere*, do not spring simply from the author's own dedication to a poetics of writing. Rather Petrarch's written poetics are also founded on the resourceful experimentalism of his Italian predecessors and his emendations of their strategies" (xxiii).

[214] "...the graphic representation of the new meter, so novel in and of itself and singular with respect to the Provençal and French lyric background, was everything but an invention, simply applying a layout model used for centuries for medieval hymnography."

[215] "...innovatively by Petrarch even to the *canzone* and other minor genres (*ballata* and *madrigale*), breaking with the distinction – between *canzone–ballata* in continuous script *vs* sonnets in double lines – typical of Italian song books from the Duecento and Trecento."

[216] "...and this would be the true onset of the new season, symbolically established by he who was the greatest model of all the lyrical tradition in Europe for the 15th and 16th centuries."

poetry and its indebtedness to Petrarch, since codicological evidence shows that Petrarch's innovation came about through his "confronto" with the Dantean corpus, particularly when he began work on his *Trionfi*.

Indeed, verticality acted as a norm in differentiating poetry from prose—a binary system already used in medieval prosimetra such as Boethius' *Consolatio* and later adopted for Dante's sonnets in the *Vita nuova*. Leonardi explains how "i primi esempi di scrittura verticale, anche al di fuori dal contesto della prosa, riguardino esclusivamente sonetti," and this is partly clarified by their inherent structure, among other reasons, but also by their contact and co-habitation in manuscripts with narrative texts (281).[217] However, the important argument that Leonardi puts forward is that "un ruolo decisivo nell'affermazione della verticalità in ambito lirico, più che il *Canzoniere*, lo abbia giocato la *Commedia*" (289).[218]

Dante's poetry, which was ubiquitous in manuscripts, be it the prosimetric *Vita nuova* or the *Commedia*, was consistently written vertically, often accompanied by other sonnets from other authors that took on the same layout. In contrast, *canzoni*—for the time being—remained horizontal. Indeed, in his editorial and scribal work on Dante's corpus, Boccaccio himself uses both forms of layout for a while: horizontal for the *canzoni* and vertical for the *Commedia*. Similarly, "il più autorevole esempio di questa convivenza di impostazioni diverse sarà lo stesso Petrarca, che nelle carte riunite nel Vat. lat. 3196 adotta per i *Triumphi* uno schema rigorosamente verticale" (292).[219] However, as mentioned earlier, Petrarch will dismiss this distinction in his later manuscripts.

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[217] ["the first examples of vertical writing, even outside the context of prose, exclusively concern sonnets."]

[218] ["a decisive role in the establishment of verticality in the lyric tradition, more than the *Canzoniere*, was played out by the *Commedia*."]

[219] ["the most authoritative example of this cohabitation of diverse formats would be the very same Petrarch that, in the manuscript Vat. lat. 3196, adopts for the *Triumphs* a rigorously vertical layout."]

In other words, "[s]onetto e terza rima sono dunque verosimilmente i due termini del connubio che ha determinato il successo della verticalità in Italia" (294).[220] Within this broader paradigm, Petrarch's engagement with Dante's poetry and his subsequent experimentation with the *terza rima* in his *Trionfi* gave him the impetus to follow the same *mise-en-page* with his *Canzoniere*, setting about the standardization of the vertical layout for lyric poetry in Italy. The more significant role attributed by Leonardi to Dante, particularly to the manuscript tradition of the *Commedia* and the *Vita nuova*, in opposition to Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, sheds light on the pivotal role that the *Trionfi* played in this transformative process.[221] The vertical layout of Dante's *Commedia*, typically reserved for narrative epic poetry, suggested to Petrarch the possibility of adopting the same structure for his own lyrical works, which he so successfully did that he overshadowed Dante's actual contribution to the development of the vertical lyric layout. To recapitulate, Petrarch's confinement of Dante's poetry to the lyric genre, typically written horizontally, is part of an operation to claim for himself the prestige of the epic, historically written vertically, just like the *Triumphs*. Analogously, his novel use of the vertical layout for lyric poetry has occluded the critical role that Dante played in this crucial paradigm shift in the manuscript tradition.

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[220] ["sonnets and *terza rima* are therefore most likely the two terms that, in combination, determined the success of verticality in Italy."] Leonardi points out how "[l]'isometria del sonetto, inedita nella tradizione lirica, e la sua tendenza genetica a fungere da elemento–base per serie macrotestuali, anche di sviluppo narrativo, inaugurano una tendenza che solo l'enome [sic] successo della *Commedia*, nonché la penetrazione del suo metro nell'evoluzione della lirica trecentesca, renderanno inarrestabile, secondo linee probabilmente del tutto indipendenti dall'influsso dell'autografo petrarchesco" ["the isometry of the sonnet, unparalleled in the lyric tradition, and its genetic tendency to function as a fundamental element for macrotextual series, even with a narrative development, inaugurated a tendency that only the enormous success of the *Commedia*, as well as the diffusion of its meter in the evolution of the Trecento lyric, made it unstoppable, according to lines probably completely independent from the influence of Petrarch's original manuscript"] (294–95).

[221] Cachey Jr. notes that "the two major letters that Petrarch addressed to Boccaccio concerning Dante coincide with the compositional histories of the *Canzoniere* and the *Triumphi* ... [t]he first of these, *Familiares* 21.15, was written during the summer of 1359, in the same year in which Petrarch embarked on the Chigi form of the *Canzoniere* (1359–1363)" and "surviving manuscript annotations point to intensive work on the *Triumphi* toward the end of the 1350s, for which there is also evidence ... in letters from the *Familiares* written during the same period" ("Between Petrarch and Dante: Prolegomenon to a Critical Discourse" 20).

# Conclusion

This chapter began by proposing two arguments; first, vertical hermeneutics are the product of a cultural context wherein the spatial and sequential relationships between signs, operating within a specific structure, generated complementary meanings; second, the emergence of vertical readings in twentieth and twenty-first-century Dante studies is part of a broader recovery process of said context. Its re-emergence is principally the result of the influence of Singleton's structuralist methodology: a retrospective approach that is anchored in the allegory of the theologians and premised on the recovery of specific "master patterns of the Christian mind." This chapter demonstrated how During Dante's time, medieval literary theory in general, and Dante's own auto-exegetical poetic practices, had an inherently structuralist approach to hermeneutics, substantiated by techniques such as *divisio textus* and intratextual glosses.

Since vertical readings and Singleton's interpretative methodology theoretically put into relation different locations of a text to extract some sort of clarification or further meaning, they both can be subsumed under the broader category of intratextuality. As an exegetical method, intratextuality is concerned with the relationship between the whole and its parts and the parts among themselves. It explores parallels between passages in disparate locations of a unitary text, and it elicits interpretative gains by making connections that cut across its linear sequence.[222] Furthermore, intratextuality is fundamentally literal, and it emphasizes the surface of a poem: its structure, ordering, and numbering.[223] This is because the practice of comparing separate passages

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[222] Therefore, by definition, "structural connections and distinctions within texts become intratextual when they contribute to interpretation" (Sharrock).

[223] See Oliensis who remarks that: "what differentiates intratextual citation from repetition is its peculiarly textual, literal character. It is a matter first and foremost of letters, not of meanings—of the representation, not the representandum" (30).

requires an *a priori* division of the text into smaller units that are, in turn, sequentially sequenced in an overarching structure.

Dante's auto-exegetical propensity demands readers to gloss the poem intratextually. Several clues are embedded in the text, from naming and numbering his partitions to hinting at a pre-determined structure, to facilitate this process.[224] This process of *divisio*, of partitioning a text, is fundamental to both compositional and exegetical practices during the Middle Ages. There are precedents of Dante applying it in his other works for interpretative gains. In sum, the poem educes intratextual glosses, from which co-numerary glosses emerge as a primary type because they can easily be detected and committed to memory.[225]

Part II of this chapter sought to explain the paradoxical fact that the early commentary tradition makes no mention of the *Commedia*'s vertical pattern, despite the claim of its ubiquity in Dante's time. This research initially posited that to detect the poem's vertical design, the commentator would have to either concede to Dante's truth-claims or at least grasp the allegorical system that Dante had adapted to interpret his poem. For the former, it was shown how that concession would entail significant risks, whereas, for the latter, Dante's innovations were not always easily grasped by his readers. Notwithstanding the position taken by early commentators on the nature of allegory in Dante's poem, they did make good use of intratextual glosses, often borrowing them from one another. Attention was therefore given to the presence of intratextual glosses in the early commentary tradition. A particular subset of those intratextual glosses happens to be co-numerary, and their analysis revealed the presence of *proto*-vertical readings. Overall, it

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[224] See the incipit to *Inf.* XX: "Di nova pena mi conven far versi / e dar matera al *ventesimo canto* / de la prima canzon ch'è d'i sommersi" (vv. 1–3 emphasis added) and the ending to *Purg.* XXXIII, a *terzina* prior to the second iteration of the word "stelle," where Dante addresses the reader thusly: "S'io avessi, lettor, più lungo spazio / da scrivere, i' pur cantere' in parte / lo dolce ber che mai non m'avria sazio; / *ma perché piene son tutte le carte / ordite a questa cantica seconda,* / non mi lascia più ir lo fren de l'arte" (vv. 136–142 emphasis added).

[225] This does not necessarily imply that all cantos were pre–programmed to align perfectly, much like Lewis' "Model of the universe," vertical hermeneutics allow degrees of imprecision.

appears that the early commentary tradition was on a trajectory, peaking with the *Ottimo commento* and Pietro Alighieri, towards potentially rendering explicit the poem's vertical pattern. However, in the second half of the Trecento, a critical stagnation took hold until Boccaccio's public lectures, since they served as a model for Quattrocento commentators like Benvenuto da Imola and Francesco Buti and initiated the ongoing tradition of *lecturae Dantis*. There was a momentous cultural shift away from the vernacular, initiated by proto-humanists such as Mussato, possibly explaining the considerable delay of its mention in Dante criticism. However, this does not imply that the commentators were not aware of vertical hermeneutics in Dante's poem. For instance, the explicit recognition of the *Commedia*'s acrostics was deferred to the turn of the twentieth century; nevertheless, Boccaccio certainly knew about their presence since he modeled his most Dantean text—the *Amorosa visione*—on them.

Boccaccio was a focal point of analysis since he was a commentator of the *Commedia* and also an inheritor of its forms: a theorist and a practitioner of poetics. Two significant observations were made: first, his theoretical writings about Dante do not mention the vertical hermeneutics of the poem, but they do demonstrate how he was attuned to Dante's adaptation of the allegorical tradition; second, his poetic *Amorosa visione* is not only entirely scaffolded on a vertical structure, but its content bares Boccaccio's knowledge of the vertical patterning of the Twenty-sixes. The same can be said with the figure of Petrarch since his *Trionfi* share homologous traits with the *Commedia*. Petrarch was also aware of the Ulysses-Adam correspondence but was principally interested in its relation to Dante's self-authorizing strategies. Petrarch uses it to relegate Dante to the lyric genre and to obfuscate Dante's claims on the epic in a move designed to supersede him in both categories. The result of this authorial operation is evident in the long-lasting but recently revised narrative that the vertical layout of vernacular poetry is the result of Petrarch's work on his

*Canzoniere*. The work of Leonardi shows how it was Petrarch's engagement with the *Commedia*, particularly during the initial writing period of his *Trionfi*, that the vertical *mise-en-page* of his *Canzoniere* materialized itself. Consequently, it can be confidently stated that Boccaccio and Petrarch were aware of the vertical hermeneutics of Dante's *Commedia* and that they used them for their own poetic projects.

Since allegory directly concerns itself with hermeneutics, it was necessary to begin this chapter by exploring what Dante wrote on the subject and how that related to vertical readings. Dante's relationship to the allegorical tradition, and the *Commedia*'s dependence on its forms, is a significant area of disagreement in Dante studies. Consequently, Part I of this chapter outlined a position whereby Dante synthesized the binary system of the allegory of the theologians and the allegory of the poets into a universal interpretative model. Dante emphasized the exegetical importance of the literal sense, but he also literalized the spiritual senses. Incidentally, two of the spiritual senses already enact an intratextual dynamic: typology, by comparing the Old and New Testaments, and anagogy, by focusing on the end's perspective.

There is a perfect analogue to this literalization of the spiritual senses of the allegory of the theologians: the mosaics of the cupola of the "bel San Giovanni, / fatti per loco d'i battezzatori" (*Inf.* XIX, vv. 16–18). The same place where Dante wishes to be crowned with the poetic laurels: "con altra voce omai, con altro vello / ritornerò poeta, e in sul fonte / del mio battesmo prenderò 'l cappello" (*Par*. XXV, vv. vv. 7–9).[226] The mosaics are a representation, a visual adaptation of Scripture, that is bookended—just like Scripture—by Genesis and Revelations. They have a structural program that elicits typological, and therefore intratextual, correspondences between four different textual locations of the Bible. Moreover, by depicting both Genesis and the final

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[226] See Kleinhenz 274–292.

judgment, it represents all of Christian history from the perspective of the end, thus giving it an anagogic component. The four narrative sequences taken from Scripture are subsumed into two primary partitions—the Old and New Testaments and make use of *intercolumniae*. This visual cue has its roots in the arts of rhetoric and memory. Medieval Canon Tables are homologous to the mosaics' spatial semiotics since they used the same structural system of architectural columns to compare the four Gospels. The Canon Tables represent the most extended and continuous use of the architectural mnemonic precepts as expounded in the Pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herrenium*. The centrality of the mosaics to Florentine identity and culture and the widespread use of Canon Tables indicate vertical hermeneutics' extensive presence during Dante's time. They also reveal the genealogy of vertical readings. Chapter 3 will address visual arts and the arts of rhetoric and memory to show these fundamental similarities based on a common matrix. The textual archive presented therein will focus on Dante's ekphrases in *Paradiso*, the *cantica* of the stars.

# Chapter 3: Vertical Hermeneutics and the Arts

*It is important that we realize that these arts of rhetoric, grammar, and dialectic meant something to a late medieval and early Renaissance man that, we, today can only dimly sense with an exercise of the historical imagination. To such a scholar, the art of grammar, for example was not merely a mechanical disposition of the parts of speech.*

– John Williams, *Stoner* (134).

## Introduction

This chapter begins by looking at stylistic elements in some of Dante's ekphrases in *Paradiso* XIV and underlines their meta-textual nature and their use of spatial semiotics. Geometric features, such as the circle and horizontal and vertical lines, play a crucial role in Dante's representation of the divine and, more importantly, guide the poem's interpretation. Dante's deployment of spatial metaphors in *Paradiso* XIV plays with the tension between the linear and the circular using chiasmi, similes, and the position and repetition of rhyme words. These geometries manifest themselves in form and content and serve an interpretive purpose that stretches beyond the *canto*, covering the poem's entirety. What emerges from this analysis is further evidence of an emphasis on representing space through the rhetorical technique of *dispositio*, the arrangement of text based on the rules of the art of eloquence, and, as such, it offers a reevaluation of the poem's formal features and their importance in guiding interpretation.[1]

In the *Commedia*, Dante developed a didactic program of interpreting images in such a way that Dante-pilgrim—as well as the reader—undergoes an aesthetic education. The analysis of Dante's ekphrases reveals a prescriptive mode of looking at signs, one that entails moving one's

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[1] See for instance its definition in Cicero's *De inventione*: "dispositio est rerum inventarum in ordinem distributio" ["*dispositio* is the orderly distribution of one's inventory of arguments"] (I, vii, 9). The etymological connection between 'invention' and 'inventory' makes clear the conception of 'things for ideas' with the attendant notion that ideas can be stored in one's mind by the use of mental schemata such as diagrams and images. It is a modern-day misconception to think of these devices solely as retrieval systems with the intent of accuracy; they are rather compositional tools, to *invent* arguments.

eyes across a grid composed of *loci* and noticing spatial relations, repetitions, and symmetries for interpretive purposes.[2] All these instances of metatextuality contain a semiotics of space within them, a prescriptive way of interpreting a set of signs distributed within a grid that considers their *dispositio* to reveal allegorical meanings.[3] This practice is also meant to be applied to the *Commedia* itself as a form of self-commentary. This auto-exegetical system invites readers to find correspondences for a critical explanation and interpretation. Because this is fundamentally an intratextual practice, it comprises—but is not limited to—comparing same-numbered cantos across all three canticles. However, co-numerary correspondences offer a privileged entry point for exegesis because they represent a symmetrical relationship that foregrounds the poem's circular and linear structures.

The ekphrasis of the *crux gemmata* of the Heaven of Mars in the second half of *Paradiso* XIV stands out for several reasons. The description of a cross at the center of a circle recalls the circular, horizontal and vertical patterns found at the *canto*'s beginning. Stylistically, these patterns are what weld together a transitional *canto* split between the Heaven of the Sun and that of Mars. The ekphrasis contains a wealth of formal and textual cues, small-scale examples of spatial semiotics that emphasize the harmonious spatial relations between the different constituent parts of a whole. The apsidal mosaics of the Basilica di Sant'Apollinare in Classe are a likely visual source for the ekphrasis of the cross in *Paradiso* XIV. An analysis of their iconography demonstrates how the poem and the mosaics both partake in vertical hermeneutics, whereby the

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[2] See "The 'VOM' Acrostic" and the "The 'LVE' Acrostic" in Chapter 2 for some of the most salient textual moments of this aesthetic pedagogy: the triptych on the Terrace of Pride and the "VOM" acrostic (*Purg*. X–XII), the divine script and the "LVE" acrostic (*Par*. XVIII–XIX), and the ekphrasis of the "candida rosa" (*Par*. XXXI–XXXIII).

[3] Fengler an Stephany, in their study of the influence of visual arts on the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*, point out the spatial semiotics in Dante's ekphrasis of God's art on the Terrace of Pride and their relationship to biblical exegesis and allegory: "the arrangement of the three reliefs and their relationship to each other reflect contemporary artistic practice. Images from the Old Testament and from pagan antiquity frequently foreshadowed Christian events or elaborated on the moral lesson in a Christian story" (130).

spatial *dispositio* of signs within geometric structures reveals allegorical meanings. The mosaics

and Dante's ekphrasis of the cross are a *pictura*, a didactic and visual form that uses the circle,

horizontal and vertical lines, and other features of spatial semiotics to impart allegorical meanings.[4]

The jeweled cross also sets the stage for the central cantos of *Paradiso* that feature the

character of Cacciaguida, Dante's great-great-grandfather (XV–XVII), whose voice emanates

from one of the lights making up the cross. This triptych's hermeneutic centrality is emphasized

structurally by containing the mid-point of the *cantica*: *Paradiso* XVII.[5] This privileged position

of the mid-point is corroborated by the presence of the "Cristo" rhymes that bookend cantos XIV–

XIX, Dante's association of Mars with music, order, and prophecy in the *Convivio*, and other

elements such as the Baptistery of San Giovanni and the foundation of Florence.[6]

The lexicon related to the jeweled cross of gems and treasures extends into the encounter

with Cacciaguida, whom Dante calls "il mio tesoro" (*Par*. XVII, v. 121), symbolically and

textually intersecting with Latini's "il mio Tesoro" (*Inf*. XV, v. 119).[7] Indeed, the Cacciaguida

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[4] Carruthers explains how the use of *pictura*, or *imagines rerum* set in diagrams, "require one to stay and ponder, to fill in missing connections, to add to the material which they present. They are the machines and instruments of thought" ("The arts of Memory" 186).

[5] For a vertical reading of the Seventeens of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, the central *canto* of both *cantica*, see Logan (1971). For a vertical reading of the central cantos of each *cantica*, see Brownlee "Phaeton's Fall and Dante's Ascent" 135–144, Davis 189–19, and Tristan Kay 127–149. For a patterning of the Seventeens, see Ambrosini: "[g]ià da queste osservazioni si comprendono facilmente il rilievo e la funzione di questo canto nell'economia e nella struttura dell'opera: collocato al centro della terza cantica, si richiama espressamente al XVII del *Purgatorio* perché entrambi trattano del libero arbitrio, mentre col XVII dell'*Inferno* può esserci un collegamento *e contrario*" (253). See also Bologna, who in his reading of *Purgatorio* XVI explicitly correlates vertical readings and textual centers with mnemotechnics: "[l]e simmetrie, i parallelismi, i sottili e fortissimi richiami intratestuali su cui poggia la struttura della *Commedia* sono più espliciti e precisi che mai in questo punto dell'edificazione del *theatrum memoriae*" ["the simmetries, parallelisms, and subtle and potent textual echoes upon which rests the structure of the *Commedia*, are more than ever explicit and precise at this point of the edification of the *theatrum memoriae*"] ("Purgatorio XVI. Al centro del libro e del viaggio" 2). See also Viglionese 237–249. For the center(s) of the *Commedia* and their symbolic significance, see Punzi 73–89, and Singleton "The Poet's Number at the Center" 1–10. For a criticism of Singleton's position and structuralist methodology, see Kleiner's chapter "Finding the Circle" 5–22.

[6] For more on glossing the center of the *Commedia* in the early commentary tradition and its prescription and practice in Hugh of Saint Victor's *Didascalicon*, see "The Early Commentary Tradition" in Chapter 2.

[7] For a listing of mentions of "tesoro" in the *Commedia* and their significance, see Hollander's commentary to these lines in the DDP who remarks that "[i]t seems strange, but notice of the obvious self-citation evident in this second deployment of the phrase 'il mio tesoro' seems to be of fairly recent vintage" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*); but, in fact

encounter has strong intratextual links with the Brunetto Latini episode in *Inferno* XV, one of the most cited vertical readings in scholarship (see Appendix). Formal and textual evidence suggests that Dante-poet is inviting readers to retrospectively gloss the Latini episode in light of Dante-pilgrim's encounter with Cacciaguida. The reader has to move their eyes along the grid of the text from the center of the *cantica* down to *Inferno* XV, but to what purposes? What are the implications of these correspondences? What do they entail with regards to the structure and interpretation of Dante's poem? The angle taken to explore these questions is Latini's prominent role in the revival of Ciceronian rhetoric and the cultural products that derived from it, such as his very own *Trésor* and contemporary visual arts. As a corollary to the revival of Ciceronian rhetoric, the use of mnemotechnics can be observed in the program of the cupola mosaics of the San Giovanni Baptistery, the metonymical center of Florence.

The cupola mosaics of the "bel San Giovanni" (*Inf.* XIX, v. 117) share significant iconographic and formal elements analogous to the *Commedia* and partake in vertical hermeneutics. The Baptistery's central role in the life and identity of Florentines is mirrored by its textual presence at the center of *Paradiso* and, vertically, in the correspondences between the Latini and Cacciaguida episodes. After contextualizing the Baptistery's socio-economic, cultural, and theological significance, this chapter then focuses on its mosaics' program. The use of columns to frame the images reveals the mosaics' indebtedness to the Herennian architectural mnemonic, a locational heuristic used for compositional and exegetical purposes described in full detail in the Pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. The revival of this mnemonic in Northern Italy, with Florence as a focal point, was concurrent to the elaboration of the cupola mosaics and explains the presence of columns to partition the various images representing Scripture. This research reveals

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Pézard does make mention of this in "Le Trésor de Dante" 401–5. This observation is equally applicable to the presence of acrostics and vertical readings, since their mention are also relatively recent.

that the columns are the result of mnemonic principles for composition and allegorical interpretation. They are physical evidence of the Herennian architectural mnemonic being disseminated during Dante's time.

All the instances above of vertical hermeneutics indicate a pervasive and widespread use of spatial semiotics, shaped principally by compositional and exegetical practices found in medieval literary theory that, in turn, applied principles derived from the arts of rhetoric and memory. Spatial semiotics evince the fact that "medieval culture was fundamentally memorial" (Carruthers, "Introduction" 9). It sought to set down thoughts in such a way as to retrieve them later—a vital practice for maintaining precarious archives alive—but also for creative purposes, to generate thought. Spatial models or, say, diagrams with geometric structures are meant to organize and enhance data interpretation. As such, vertical hermeneutics are a product of these practices. This modality of signs is not innate; it is learned, a craft, literally a technology, and, as such, it is the manifestation of a culture, one belonging to a circle of cognoscenti, individuals versed in the arts of rhetoric and—especially—of memory, such as Brunetto Latini, Bono Giamboni, and Dante. Dante expands the circle to include the cognizant and well-read reader, if they can read between the vertical lines.

In chapter two, the investigation of vertical hermeneutics in the *Commedia* showed how this interpretive pattern had influenced two of its most notable imitators: Boccaccio and Petrarch. The former's *Amorosa visione* uses an acrostic to structure and guide the interpretation of his poem. Petrarch's *Trionfi*, among many other things, initiated the transition to a vertical manuscript layout of vernacular poetry. In this final chapter, vertical hermeneutics keep pointing outwards, beyond the sphere of literary influence, and toward unexpected homologous patterns and sources, such as Canon Tables and visual arts. The consequence of this centrifugal movement, from Dante

outwards, is the realization that vertical hermeneutics are part and parcel of a broader tendency, or at least that they had currency within a collective set of unstated assumptions about the arrangement of signs and their meanings during the Middle Ages. In turn, the methodology of spatial semiotics provides a better understanding of the role of structure and form in both the composition and exegesis of medieval cultural artifacts.

## Part I: Dante and Contemporary Visual Arts

## Metaphors of Textual Space: The Circle and the Cross

> Ad pulchritem tria requiruntur. Primo quidem integritas, sive perfectio (...) Et debita proportio, sive consonantia. Et iterum claritas.
>
> – Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1, q. 39, a. 8 c.[8]

Dante's *Commedia* seeks to structurally replicate the figure of the circle for theomimetic purposes, writing poetry that reflects the formal order of the cosmos and the hermeneutic order of Scripture.[9] This circular configuration is achieved using symmetrical patterns that cut across the text's expanse, such as the repetition and position of the word "stelle" at the end of each *cantica*. Likewise, the *Commedia*'s final simile explicitly correlates the poet's impossible task of representation with that of a geometer wanting to measure a circle (*Par*. XXXIII, vv. 133–134). In addition to establishing an analogy between poetry and geometry, the simile is also an ineffability topos. This rhetorical strategy draws attention to the craft of poetry and the tools with which the poet attempts to describe the indescribable, further highlighting the text's metatextuality and its fusion of form and content.

Paolo Vinassa da Regny remarked how the last 22 verses of the *Commedia* form a circular subsection of its own: starting with the vocative "O luce etterna..." (v. 124) and ending with "il sole e le altre stelle" (v. 145). These 22 verses are partitioned into seven *terzine* plus one additional line (7 1/3), thus closely replicating the medieval ratio for π: 22/7 (qtd. in Hart, "'''" 272).

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[8] "[For beauty requires three conditions, 'integrity' or 'perfection,' ... due 'proportion' or 'harmony'; and lastly, 'brightness' or 'clarity.']"

[9] See for example Dragonetti who notes that: "l'architecture de la Divine Comédie est essentiellement circulaire, et on pourrait dire, en simplifiant beaucoup, que tout le chemin parcouru par Dante est une recherche du vrai centre, recherche qui s'effectue par le passage d'un centre analogique à l'autre, tous placé sur un même axe" ["the architecture of the *Divine Comedy* is essentially circular, and we could say, by simplifying a lot, that the whole journey undertaken by Dante is the search a true center, a search that goes from an analogical center to another, all placed on the same axis"] (qtd in Bologna, "Beatrice e il suo 'Anghelos' Cavalcanti fra 'Vita nova' e 'Commedia'" 120).

Additionally, the pattern of [3 x + 1] (3 * 7 + 1 = 22) also replicates the distribution of cantos in the *Commedia* (3 * 33 + 1 = 100). In sum, these 22 verses "reflect tension between curvilinear (circumference) and rectilinear (diameter) dimensions in the circle, whether based on 22 = 7 1/3 *terzine*, as da Regny formulated it, or on the alternative possibility, 22 = 3 x 7 + 1 verses" (273). This unit of 22 verses also contains a circularity because there are repetitions of words at its beginning and end that signal by recurrence the edges of textual space; for example, "sola" (v. 124) > "sole" (v. 145) and "ami" (v. 126) > "amor" (v. 145).[10] They fractally reproduce the same intratextual circularity found at the level of the *cantica*: *Paradiso* I and XXXIII and the entire poem: *Inferno* I and *Paradiso* XXXIII.

More importantly, at the center of this 22-verse structure—a significant hermeneutic locus—stands the analogy of the geometer attempting to measure a circle. The repetition of textual elements delimits a structural unit and designates spatial coordinates that invite readers to find the relationship between the center and the circumference. In other words, this textual unit bolsters the claim that the circle and the vertical line are geometries that transect structurally and textually in the *Commedia*. Its occurrence in a small textual unit such as the last 22 verses of the poem also supports the claim of an overarching and analogous structure across the different levels of the poem, from the *terzina* to the *canto*, the *cantica*, and the entirety of the poem.

*Paradiso* XIV is another instance where Dante uses this tension between the circumference and the circle's diameter as a poetic motif that can represent and circumscribe his experiences. Although *Paradiso* XIV is a transitional *canto* split between the Heavens of the Sun and Mars, where the wise and combative souls respectively reside, the *canto*'s geometric poetic register—

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[10] This form of textual circularity by means of repetitions at both ends of a textual unit is as old as Horace's *Ars poetica*: "primo ne medium, medio ne discrepet imum" ["...that the middle is not discordant with the beginning, nor the end with the middle" (l. 152, Fairclough trans.).] For more on the circularity of this last "paragraph" of the *Commedia*, see Hart "'''" n. 11, 273–274.

alongside a large number of similes in a *sermo humilis* style—are what hold the *canto* together as a poetic unit. This humble style, which falls in the rhetorical category of *elocutio*,[11] that is, how something is spoken, is the most fitting for communicating complex Christian truths to a lay audience and manifests itself with the use of *comparationes domestica*, similes taken from the everyday life of the home.

Dal ^A centro al ^B cerchio, e sí dal cerchio ^B al centro ^A
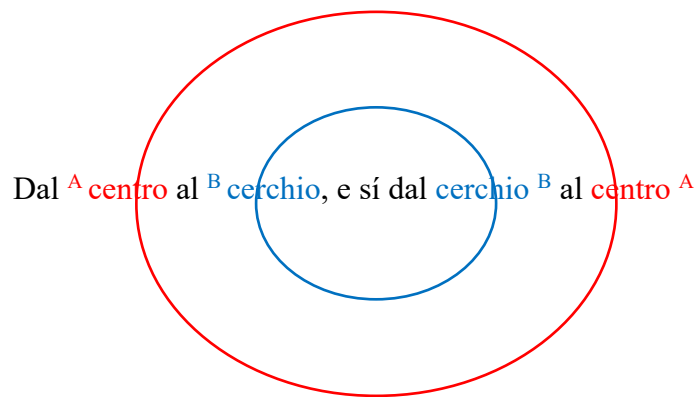
Fig. 2 – Representation of the Ring Structure of the Incipit to *Paradiso* XIV.

The incipit of *Paradiso* XIV straightaway establishes a geometric register, both in form and in content: "Dal centro al cerchio, e sí dal cerchio al centro / movesi l'acqua in un ritondo vaso, / secondo ch'è percosso fuori o dentro" (vv. 1–3).[12] In terms of content, the image it conjures is immediate: a center, a circumference, and a to-and-fro movement along a radius. Moreover, the verse is a chiasmus, thus simultaneously representing the circle formally and textually. The circular

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[11] See *De inventione*: "elocutio est idoneorum verborum ad inventionem accommodatio" ["*elocutio* is to properly match the language to the ideas"] (I, vii, 9).

[12] As Singleton remarks in his commentary to the *incipit*; however, in relation to the Heaven of the Sun: "the image of the circle remains uppermost in this heaven of the *sapienti*" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).

pattern of the chiasmus, its ring structure (AB/BA), also reproduces the two "corone" of wise souls with whom Dante-pilgrim interacts in the Heaven of the Sun, described as two circles nestled one within the other (*Par*. XII, vv. 4–6, 21; XIV, vv. 34–36). Additionally, a chiasmus is also known for containing within itself a cross structure, hence its name. As such, the very first line of *Paradiso* XIV represents the circle and the cross.

This *incipit* is part of a domestic simile comparing the movement of sound through space with the motion of water undulating on the surface as its circular recipient—"un ritondo vaso" (v. 2)—is struck. As Aquinas speaks from one of the two "corone" of wise souls, sound moves from the circumference to the center, whereas Beatrice's speech moves from the center to the circumference.[13] The rhetorical device is a *comparatio domestica* since the image generated brings together a common observation about domestic life with the complexity of hydrodynamics, i.e., rings rippling within a circular rim. Even Dante himself appears stunned at the simile that his memory conjured, and the text becomes self-referential: "ne la mia mente fé sùbito caso / questo ch'io dico" (vv. 4–5). His observation is part of a meta-commentary, drawing further attention to the image he is representing and the means with which he does so, pointing out to the reader his rhetorical device with the word "similitudine" (v. 7), a hapax in the *Commedia*.

A few lines later, Dante-poet maintains this geometric register by comparing the motion of the wise souls—in reaction to Beatrice's question on his behalf—to dancers in a ring "che vanno a rota / levan la voce e rallegrano li atti" (vv. 20–21). Laura Pasquini associates the description of the two rings in the Heaven of the Sun (*Par*. X–XIV) to the iconography of certain mosaics in Ravenna: "[d]odici beati si dispongono quindi a costituire una sorta di corona lucente che ruota

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[13] Compare with *Paradiso* X, where Dante describes the spatial relationship between himself and Beatrice with that of the wise souls in the Heaven of the Sun: "Io vidi più folgór vivi e vincenti / far di noi centro e di sé far corona" (vv. 64–65).

intorno al poeta e a Beatrice: l'immagine richiama ancora alla memoria le decorazioni musive dei due battisteri ravennati [degli ortodossi e degli ariani] dove i dodici apostoli si dispongono a formare una sorta di 'gloriosa rota' [*Par*. X, v. 145]" (*Iconografie Dantesche* 28–29).[14]



Fig. 3 – Ceiling Mosaics of Arian and Neonian Baptisteries in Ravenna.

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[14] ["twelve blessed souls are arranged in such a way as to make up a bright crown that revolves around the poet and Beatrice. The image recalls the mosaic decorations of two baptisteries in Ravenna (the Neon, or Orthodox, and Arian Baptisteries) where the twelve disciples are arranged to form a type of 'glorious wheel.'"]

In the above mosaics (fig. 3), the twelve apostles are separated by foliage and decorative plants, columns of sort, like spokes in a wheel, to distinguish the coded iconography of each apostle. However, unlike the apostles, the columns do not have any distinguishing features. What is also noteworthy is a detail on the Arian Baptistery's cupola mosaic: a jeweled cross sitting on a throne representing the Hetoimasia, the 'Preparation of the Throne' of Christ's second coming (see fig. 4).



Fig. 4 – Detail from the Arian Baptistery Mosaic Showing a Jeweled Cross.

Much like the two rings circling the figures of Dante and Beatrice in the Heaven of the Sun that give way to a jeweled cross in the Heaven of Mars, the twelve apostles form a procession led in separate directions by Peter and Paul that circle the dome and meet at a throne where sits a jeweled crucifix. These iconographic elements will prove instrumental in deciphering the relationship between Dante's poetics and contemporary visual arts.

The "santi cerchi" sing and dance in a circle and utter three times a hymn to the Trinity: "Quell' uno e due e tre che sempre vive / e regna sempre in tre e 'n due e 'n uno, / non circunscritto, e tutto circunscrive" (vv. 28–30). The incipit's chiastic pattern is now doubled and spread onto two verses (ABCD/DCBA). Much like the initial image of circular waves undulating on water's surface, the two rings are now amplified and become four. Moreover, they form a palindrome, moving horizontally in both directions at the line's level, thus imitating the previous simile of sound traveling in two directions.[15] Furthermore, the *terzina* concludes with a polyptoton—a stylistic device in which words derived from the same root are repeated—that focuses precisely on writing the circle 'circum/scrivere': "non circunscritto, e tutto circunscrive" (v. 30).[16]
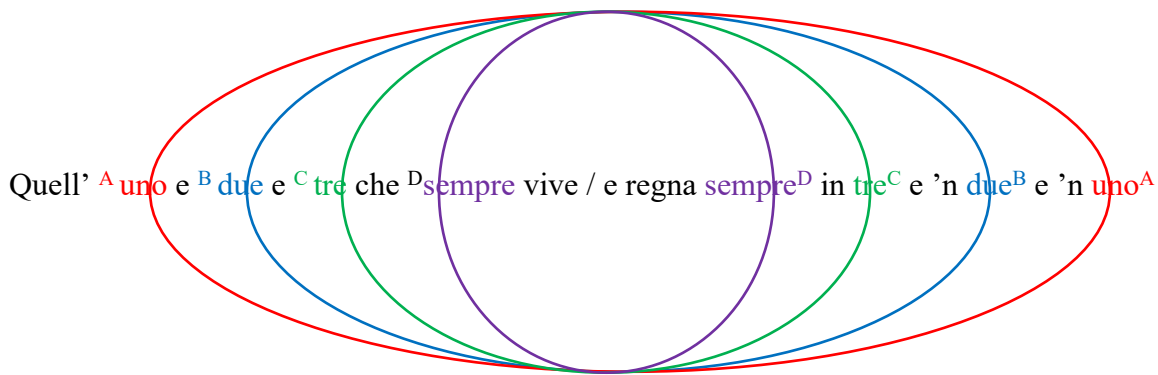


Fig. 5 – Representation of the Ring Structure of vv. 28–29 of *Paradiso* XIV.

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[15] Chiavacci-Leonardi states it best when she remarks how: "[n]ei due versi che si rimandano, come un andare e venire, i tre numeri in senso inverso, a significarne la circolare unità, Dante esprime con la poesia, in modo musicale e insieme altamente teologico, il mistero inesprimibile in termini razionali dell'unità e trinità di Dio" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*). Hollander, in his commentary, relates the palindromatic structure of these lines to: "Joachim of Flora's structure of history, with its three great Ages: the first, of the Father; the second, of the Son; the third, of the Spirit" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).

[16] The use of the term "circunscritto" intratextually resonates with "O Padre nostro, che ne' cieli stai, / non *circunscritto*" on the Terrace of Pride, another significant metatextual locus in the *Commedia* (*Purg.* XI, vv. 1–2 emphasis added).

In terms of spatial semiotics, the juxtaposition of the two lines, their vertical *dispositio* one above the other, creates a set of intersecting relations whereby "uno" is both above and below "sempre" as well as "due and "tre." This spatial arrangement heightens what is essentially an enunciation of the Trinity in geometric terms: "uno/sempre" God is one and eternal; "due/tre" divine and human, as well as triune.[17]



Fig. 6 – Representation of the Chiastic and Vertical Patterns of vv. 28–29.

After the thrice-sung hymn, *canto* XIV describes Solomon's answer to Dante-pilgrim's query (vv. 37–60).[18] Solomon's dis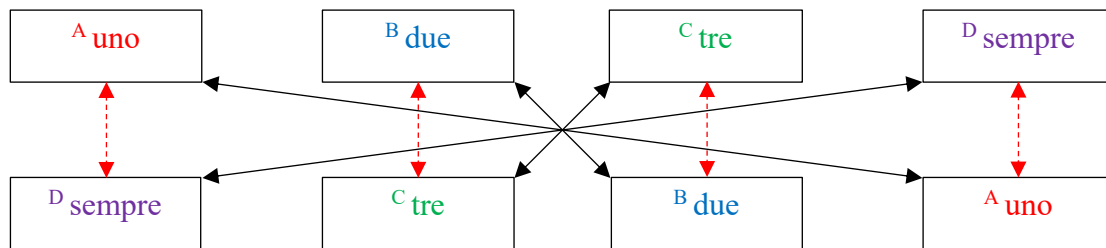course in vv. 40–51 effectively expands on the chiasmus of vv. 28–29.[19] In lines 40–42, the succession of four terms is such that "chiarezza" (A) depends on

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[17] Fosca and Hollander, in their respective commentary to verses 28–33, cite the scholar Lombardi who offers a variant "vertical" disposition of the chiasmus, accounting for the use of "sempre" in a different manner. Fosca writes: "[a] parere di Lombardi, il 'giusto intendimento del Poeta' è quello 'di volere che l'*uno* del primo verso del terzetto corrisponda all'*in tre* del secondo verso, e il *due* del primo al *due* del secondo, e il *tre* del primo all'*uno* del secondo: come se detto avesse *Quell'uno che sempre vive e regna in tre* [cioè quell'uno Dio, che viverà e regnerà sempre in tre Persone]; *quel due che vive sempre e regna in due* [quello di due nature divina ed umana, Gesù Cristo, che nelle medesime viverà e regnerà eternamente]; *quel tre, che vive sempre e regna in uno* [quelle tre divine Persone che viveranno e regneranno sempre in unità di natura]" ["according to Lombardi, the 'correct intention of the Poet' is that 'of wanting the *uno* of the first verse of the tercet to correspond to the *in tre* of the second verse, and the *due* of the first to the *due* of the second, and the *tre* of the first to the *uno* of the second: as though he had said *That one who always lives and rules in three* {that is, that one God, that will live and rule always in three Persons}; *that two who always lives and rules in two* {who is of two natures, human and divine, Jesus Christ, who will live and rule through both eternally}; *that three who always lives and rules in one* {the three divine Persons who will live and rule always in a unity of nature}]" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).

[18] Solomon is the presumed author and poet of the *Cantica canticorum*, a poem that biblical exegetes interpreted—among other interpretations—as the mystical union between body and soul as well as the divine and the human in the figure of Christ. For the importance of the *Cantica canticorum* and its interpretive popularity in the Middle Ages, see "What's in a Name?" in Chapter 1.

[19] "Particularly interesting from this point of view are the uses of chiasmus in *Paradiso* XIV, 28-30, and 40-51, in one case to express the paradox of the Trinity, and in the other to describe the parallel movements of the intellect and the

"ardore" (B), "ardore" (B) on "visïone" (C), and it, in turn, depends on "grazia" (D); whereas, in lines 47–51, the order is reversed: "gratuito lume" and "lume" [grazia] (D) conditions "vision" (C), it, in turn, conditions "l'ardor" (B) that conditions "lo raggio" [chiarezza] (A), thus forming an ABCD/DCBA pattern.[20]

| *Par*. XIV, vv. 40–42 | *Par*. XIV, vv. 47–51 |
|---|---|
| | di **gratüito lume** il sommo bene, |
| La sua **chiarezza** séguita **l'ardore**; | **lume** ch'a lui veder ne condiziona; |
| **l'ardor** la **visïone**, e quella è tanta, | onde **la visïon** crescer convene, |
| quant' ha di **grazia** sovra suo valore. | crescer **l'ardor** che di quella s'accende, |
| | crescer **lo raggio** che da esso vene. |

Fig. 7 – Representation of the Chiastic Structure of Solomon's Reply in *Par*. XIV.

As Quaglio and Pasquini point out: "è come se ci trovassimo di fronte a una proporzione costituita da due serie omogenee e inverse, con un ragionamento prima ascendente, che procede da effetto a causa, e poi discendente, che digrada da causa ad effetto" (214).[21] In other words, the ascending and descending motifs replicate a circular motion: "esempio superbo di quella

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will in the achievement of beatitude" (Barolini, "Dante's Heaven of the Sun as a Meditation on Narrative" 13–14 n. 20).

[20] See Quaglio and Pasquini who, in their commentary to *Paradiso* XIV, remark how Solomon's answer has a "quadruplice articolazione: *chiarezza* → *ardore* → *visione* → *grazia* (che si risolve poi in una solenne proporzione, *chiarezza* sta a *ardore* come *visione* sta a *grazia*)," as well as a "quattro momenti paralleli, con minime varianti lessicali nei termini estremi e perfetta uguaglianza negli intermedi: *gratuito lume* [= *grazia*] → *vision* → *ardor* → *lo raggio* [= *chiarezza*]" ["quadruple articulation: *chiarezza* → *ardore* → *visione* → *grazia* (that then resolves itself in a solemn proportion, *chiarezza* is to *ardore* like *visione* is to *grazia*)" ... "four parallel moments, with minimal lessical variations in the terms at the extremes and a perfect equality in the intermediate ones: *gratuito lume* [= *grazia*] → *vision* → *ardor* → lo *raggio* [= *chiarezza*]"] (214).

[21] ["it is as though we find ourselves in front of a proportionality constituted of two homogeneous and inverted series, with first an ascending reasoning proceeding from effect to cause, and then descending from cause to effect"].

circolarità dello stile che alcuni interpreti hanno riconosciuto quale connotato primario del *Paradiso*" (214).[22] In other words, Dante uses another chiasmus in these lines that amplifies the preceding two, for a succession of three chiasmi expanding from a single line, to two, and then to eight (v. 1; vv. 28–29; vv. 40–42, 47–51). This stylistic choice re-enacts the image of the ripple effect, of circular waves undulating on the surface of water that Dante-poet conveys at the *incipit* of the *canto*.

For a structuralist scholar like Hart, the "spectacular instance" of geometric imagery found in verses 28–29 of *Paradiso* XIV is evidence of a fundamental principle of aesthetics and literary theory, an emphasis on "the union of *forma* and *materia* characteristic of hylomorphic theories Dante emphasized in other regards" ("Geometric Metaphor and Proportional Design in Dante's *Commedia*" 115).[23] Indeed, form and content merge in Dante's text, particularly in light of the poem's self-referential nature.[24] As expounded in the previous chapter in terms of Dante's auto-exegetical proclivity, Hart similarly suggests that "the 'lines' or 'vectors' of [Dante's] design may, to the extent they were fundamental factors in the poem's genesis, serve almost as a kind of commentary on the poem by the author" (129). In other words, formal elements delineating spatial patterns are meant to guide interpretation. The *Commedia*'s linear and circular patterns are two sides of the same coin: an auto-exegetical system embedded into the poem and the result of a *modus componendi* that involved geometrical and physical considerations.

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[22] ["superb example of that circular style that certain critics have recognized as the primary characteristic of *Paradiso*"].

[23] Hart's analysis considers the resulting textual shape of these lines as an equilateral triangle, which is then proportionally coordinated on the line ratios of the poem. Hart's inference is not necessarily wrong, but it does seem forceful.

[24] Since Hart's work seeks to describe the *Commedia*'s "'networking' of individual patterns into larger designs" (120) and claims to provide an interesting glimpse into "important new features of [Dante's] compositional process" (126), his critical approach to the *Commedia* overlaps with this research's concerns and, as such, his work figures prominently throughout this chapter.

The theoretical difference between what this research argues and what Hart concludes lies within the extent of the programming itself. To what degree of precision did Dante-poet deploy structural symmetries? Are these patterns as exact as an adding machine, like Hart's research seems to suggest? Or are they much more imprecise? The co-numerary patterns of the *Commedia* or, say, its vertical hermeneutics are very much like mosaics.[25] When looking at them closely for maximal precision and purposes of argumentative rigor, one no longer perceives the patterns and images that result from the layout of the tesserae. Instead, all one grasps is an irregular disposition of asymmetrical cube-like tiles of various colors. However, looked at from the proper distance, at a lower though no less adequate resolution, patterns are not only visible but conjure otherworldly marvels. In sum, mosaics—just like vertical hermeneutics—are an art form that uses somewhat irregular materials to create the illusion of a unified image that praises—by imitation—a perfect spiritual reality.[26]

## The "Cristo" Rhymes and the Centrality of Mars

*Willie's deep breath carried a silent prayer of gratitude to whoever cared to listen. "But they aren't zeros, they're O's. Three eternal circles that are quite appropriate for a home owned by the church. And after that hint, I'm sure you can guess what they stand for." The only thing that came to Willie's mind was a basketball court.*

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[25] Fengler and Stephany recognize the affinity between mosaics and Dante's mode of representation in the *Commedia*, stating that: "[i]n mosaic technique, *tesserae*, the individual pre-cut tiles of various sizes and colors, are so arranged as to depict the desired image …. What two-dimensional reproductions do not reveal, however, is that the tiles are intentionally set at oblique angles to each other. A smooth, continuous surface would frustrate one of the principal effects of Byzantine mosaics, namely the shimmering, other-worldly play of colors as the light source or observer changes position" (138).

[26] The spatial semiotics that this dissertation proposes do not exclude the possibility of other patterns such as those proposed in the scholarship of Hart. Although aesthetic proportionality does connotate mathematical proportionality no more inferences should be made than necessary. There is much agreement with Hart's claim that "Dante and many other medieval poets apparently started with the physical dimensions and elaborated the narrative material to fit, and literally to *conform* to, a predetermined abstract design" (125); however, this thesis argues that mnemotechnics provide a far simpler and more flexible explanation than arithmetic proportionality. In this particular case, where Hart perceives in verses 28–29 the presence of a triangle, the rule mentioned above seems to apply adequately. The geometric imagery in the first half of *Paradiso* XIV, of circles and crosses, continues onto the second half, with the ekphrasis of the "crux gemmata": a bejeweled cross within a circle. There is a consistency as well as an insistence on the image itself, on the geometry of the circle, of the relationship between center and circumference and the cross at its center. In fact, it is this specific image that stitches the *canto* together despite it being split into halves. This does not dismiss the possibility of a triangular pattern, but considers that of the circle and the cross as more likely.

The second half of *Paradiso* XIV (vv. 82–139) describes Dante-pilgrim's arrival in the Heaven of Mars. The Heaven is noticeable for its fiery red color—"più roggio che l'usato" (v. 87)—and the appearance of a celestial cross within a circle—"il venerabil segno / che fan giunture di quadranti in tondo" (vv. 101–102)—in which the image of Christ flickers: "quella croce lampeggiava Cristo" (v. 104). This serves as a narrative setup for the appearance of Dante's great-great-grandfather, Cacciaguida, whose voice emanates from the cross and dominates cantos XV to XVII, the longest of any instances in the poem.

In a typical Dantean synthesis of paganism and Christianity, the redness of the heaven blends the ancient notion of Mars as the 'red planet' with the blood that Christ shed on the cross and, by extension, of those who have done so as martyrs in his name. The pagan God of war, *Marte*, now becomes rebranded as the representative of the Christian warrior and crusader, of the soldier of the Cross, the *martyr* for Christ.[27] This positive transformation is peculiar and serves a thematic contrast: to draw a parallel between war in its celestial nobility, Christ's victory over death as symbolized by the cross, and its earthly corruptness: the city of Florence under the influence of the pagan God Mars. This movement from the universal to the particular is anchored within two architectural spaces: the Baptistery of San Giovanni and Dante's very own poem. Before discussing the presence of the "Cristo" rhymes, a brief overview of the symbolic

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[27] In the *Commedia*, Mars as the pagan god of war is mentioned with negative connotations in *Inf*. XXIV, v. 145; *Inf*. XXXI, v. 51; *Purg*. XII, v. 31. See Schnapp: "[o]mnipresent in the *Commedia*'s first canticle, Mars appears as the virtual lord of Dis, the city of Martial dis-cord by antonomasia" ("Marte/Morte/Martirio: The Dilemma of Florentine History" 37).

connotations of Mars will prove helpful since the planet informs a more significant cultural reading intrinsic to Florence and Florentines.[28]

The transformation of Mars into a Christian symbol harks back to Florence's genealogy, its two successive patrons, as this periphrasis from an anonymous suicide in *Inferno* indicates: "la città che nel Batista / mutò 'l primo padrone" (XIII, vv. 143–144).[29] As part of Florence's foundational myth, the Baptistery of San Giovanni was believed to have once been a temple erected in honor of Mars. A statue that once adorned it was moved onto Ponte Vecchio until 1333, when it was washed away in a flood.[30] A long-standing belief—later written down by Villani—was that Romans erected the temple after defeating the neighboring city of Fiesole, a base for Catiline, who had fled there after Cicero's discovery of his plot. Florence was later founded in the valley below with a population of Romans and Fiesolans.[31] This theme appears in Dante's encounter with both

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[28] For a much more in-depth analysis of the peculiar symbolism of Mars with the history of Florence, see Schnapp "Marte/Morte/Martirio: The Dilemma of Florentine History" 36–69.

[29] As the "Firenze" entry in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* explains: "delle discordie fiorentine, anzi della predisposizione naturale alla discordia, parla lo scialacquatore suicida .... Anche qui F[irenze] è indicata con una perifrasi ... che rievoca un'antica tradizione che vuole la città consacrata a Marte, poi sostituito da [San] Giovanni Battista; l'anonimo dannato ... volge la leggenda a segno di una fondamentale irreligiosità insita nei Fiorentini, quasi superstiziosamente attaccati a un irriconoscibile troncone di statua pagana che "'n sul passo d'Arno / rimane ancor a far trista la città con l'arte sua" (e cfr. *Pd* XVI 146–147)" ["Again of Florentine discord, rather of its natural predisposition to it, speaks the profligate suicide .... Even here Florence is indicated with a periphrasis ... that evokes an ancient tradition that claims the city once being consecrated to Mars, then substituted with Saint John the Baptist; the anonymous damned ... spins the legend to signify a fundamental and inherent irreligiosity in Florentines, almost superstitiously attached to an indistinguishable piece of a pagan statue"] (Sestan et al.).

[30] See Padoan, Poulle, and Aurigemma's entry for "Marte" in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (1970): "In *If* XIII 143-150 il poeta ricorda come M[arte] fosse stato il patrono della Firenze pagana: antica tradizione che i Fiorentini solevano addurre non senza una punta di orgoglio, e che sembrava comprovata dalla presenza sul Ponte Vecchio di una statua monca di un uomo armato a cavallo …, in cui si volle ravvisare Marte. Quella scultura sarebbe stata creata nell'antichità per il tempio di M[arte] in Firenze, che dai cristiani fu poi dedicato al nuovo patrono Giovanni Battista (più tardi vi sarà edificato il Battistero)" ["In *Inf.* XIII, vv. 143–150, the poet recalls how Mars was the patron of pagan Florence: an old tradition that Florentines brought up not without a certain sense of pride, and that seemed legitimate thanks to the presence on Ponte Vecchio of the remnant of a statue of an armed man atop a horse …, that one would identify as Mars. That sculpture would have been created in antiquity for the temple of Mars in Florence that was later dedicated by Christians to the new patron John the Baptist (where the Baptistery would later be built)"].

[31] See Verdon who remarks, in an analysis of Vasari's painting *The Founding of Florence*, that "Giorgio knew the tradition according to which the Baptistery was an ancient temple 'converted' to use as a Christian church—'a marvellous temple' as Villani had written, built 'to honour the god Mars for a Roman victory over the city of Fiesole'" (16).

Cacciaguida and Latini, who mentions it in his *Trésor*.[32] Cicero's presence in this narrative of Florence's foundation is particularly significant in light of Latini's role as a promoter of Ciceronian rhetoric, which will later be addressed.[33] As such, the Baptistery juts prominently as both a literal and metonymical center for the history and identity of Florence, particularly so in the Heaven of Mars.[34]

In the encyclopedic *Convivio*, Dante associates to each heaven one of the seven liberal arts that make up the trivium and the quadrivium, associating Mars with music.[35] Dante explains this

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[32] See Davis, who remarks: "Brunetto, in fact, summarizes the whole legend with the exception of the last detail about the mixed composition of the Florentine populace" since he "attributed the later divisions of Florence not to her mixed population, but to the fact that the place on which she was built was called originally 'chiés Mars,' indicating that the planet of the god reigned over her (*Trésor*, I, 37)" ("Brunetto Latini and Dante" 176). For Fiesole, see also *Inf.* XIII, vv. 143–144 and *Par.* XVI, vv. 46–47. For Latini and Catiline, see Ward: "in the third book of his *Trésor* Brunetto analysed rhetorically Caesar's speech in favour of Catiline, which he introduced with background material drawn from Sallust's life of the rebel" (201). In fact, Latini wrote about Catiline in most of his works, translating into Florentine vernacular Catiline's address to his soldiers before the battle of Pistoria that Dante seems to borrow from for Ulysses' speech to his sailors in *Inferno* XXVI. For more on Catiline and the history of Florence, see Osmond: "[Catiline's] attempted overthrow of the Republic in 63 B.C. during the consulship of Cicero, his subsequent flight to Fiesole and resistance against Rome, and his defeat and death early in the following year in the battle at 'Campo Piceno' were recounted in numerous narratives from the *Chronica de origine civitatis* and Giovanni Villani's *Nuova cronica* to Leonardo Bruni's *Historiarum florentini populi libri* XII, and beyond. In the imagination of some storytellers Catiline even survived the battle to embark upon a new career, or careers, as leader of Fiesole against the Romans, progenitor of the Uberti of Florence, and husband or lover of Queen Belisea, widow of the Roman commander Florinus" (4).

[33] On Latini's background, see Mazzoni's entry in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (1970): "Fu guelfo militante, notaro, ambasciatore, magistrato: e insieme retore e filosofo e institutore e divulgatore, nella Firenze duecentesca, della nuova cultura retorica (che intorno la metà del secolo veniva attingendo le antiche fonti, riducendo ad esempio in volgare - si rammenti fra Guidotto da Bologna - la *Rhetorica ad Herennium*) nonché di un rinnovato enciclopedismo (fondato su elementi culturali transalpini) e di un umanesimo tutto 'civile', che muove non solo da Aristotele ma da un preciso filone di pensiero stoico divulgato attraverso il *Moralium dogma philosophorum* e testi similari."

[34] "What does a monument like the Baptistery mean to people living in Florence? Or, to put it differently, what minimum level of awareness may one take for granted in the man in the street—in ordinary passersby, not professional scholars or 'learned foreigners', as tourists were once called? A resident or regular visitor might answer initially in topographical terms: *the Baptistery is 'in the centre of town'*. This is so in fact: although originally on the outskirts of the populated area, San Giovanni has constituted the epicentre of a main network of city streets, since the twelfth century, when Florence began to expand" (Verdon 9 emphasis added).

[35] See the *Convivio*: "A che è mestiere fare considerazione sovra una comparazione che è nell'ordine delli cieli a quello delle scienze. Sì come adunque di sopra è narrato, li sette cieli primi a noi sono quelli delli pianeti; poi sono due cieli sopra questi, mobili, e uno sopra tutti, quieto. Alli sette primi rispondono le sette scienze del Trivio e del Quadruvio, cioè Gramatica, Dialetica, Rettorica, Arismetrica, Musica, Geometria e Astrologia. All'ottava spera, cioè alla stellata, risponde la scienza naturale, che Fisica si chiama, e la prima scienza, che si chiama Metafisica; alla nona spera risponde la Scienza morale; ed al cielo quieto risponde la scienza divina, che è Teologia appellata. E [la] ragione per che ciò sia, brievemente è da vedere" (II, xiii, 7–8). Whether or not this is meant to be systematically applied to *Paradiso* is irrelevant to the present argument, since what is of interest are the symbolic connotations of the Heaven of Mars.

based on two properties. The first highlights the structural position of the planet, its symmetry with the totality of the cosmos: "l'una si è la sua più bella relazione, che, annumerando li cieli mobile, da qualunque si comincia o da l'infimo o dal sommo, esso cielo di Marte è lo quinto, *esso è lo mezzo di tutti*" (II, xiii, 20 emphasis added). In Dante's cosmology, Mars primarily stands out for its central position within a sequence, for its harmonious relationship with its outer limits: one and ten. In the *Commedia*, this centrality is replicated in the structure of *Paradiso* with the triptych of martial cantos containing the central *canto* of the poem, flanked—as will be shown—by the symmetrical position of the "Cristo" rhymes.[36]

The second property Dante illustrates is Mars' association with prophecy and politics.[37] Dante cites textual sources correlating the vapors that give Mars its particular color with prophetic events, as a *segno* in the unfolding of history: "l'accendimento di questi vapori significa morte de regi e trasmutamento di regni" (22).[38] Dante justifies these historical occurrences has a result of Mars' influence, even assigning to it Florence's ill fate with the descent of Charles de Valois in 1301: "nel principio de la sua destruzione, veduta fu ne l'aere, *in figura una croce*, quande quantità di questi vapori seguaci de la stella di Marte" (22 emphasis added). This intertextual reference amplifies the symbolic range of the image of the cross with the Heaven of Mars, all while centering it in the city of Florence.[39] Dante provides an image that serves as a *figure* for things to come, for

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[36] The Heaven of Mars extends from *Paradiso* XIV, v. 82 to *Paradiso* XVIII, v. 51.

[37] For example, the statue of Mars was believed to have had powers bestowed by the motion of the planets that influenced Florence, see Villani's *Nova Cronica* XII, 1: "E cadde in Arno la statua di Mars, ch'era in sul pilastro a piè del detto ponte Vecchio di qua. E nota di Mars che li antichi diceano e lasciarono in iscritta che quando la statua di Mars cadesse o fosse mossa, la città di Firenze avrebbe gran pericolo o mutazione. E non sanza cagione fu detto, che per isperienza s'è provato, come in questa cronica farà menzione" ["And fell into the Arno the statue of Mars, which was on a column at the foot of the Ponte Vecchio. It is noted about Mars that the ancients said and left in writings that when the statue of Mars falls or is moved, the city of Florence will face great danger and change. And this was not said without reason, since experience proves it true, as will this chronicle mention"]. See also I, 42; II, 1; and III, 1.

[38] In *Inferno* XXIV, the damned Vanni Fucci mentions the vapors of Mars and the battle fought by Catiline and his supporters at "Campo Picen"—believed to be Pistoia in Dante's time—in his prophecy on the fate of the White Guelphs and Ghibellines (vv. 145–150).

[39] Cudini notes in his commentary that the reference to the destruction of Florence has been associated to the Ostrogoth King Totila, but "è senz'altro più plausibile ricordare che l'immagine della croce apparsa nel cielo di Firenze è riferita

events that will happen to Florence in the real world, after the alleged date of his journey. Therefore, just like Mars' relational position to the other planets, it is to be expected that a political prophecy is to be found in the Heaven of Mars. This link with prophecy is also intricately woven into the sequential program of the Cacciaguida triptych, since it concludes a sequence moving from Florence's past (XV), its degeneracy into the present (XVI), and, lastly, its future (XVII).

Dante sums up his explanation of these two properties by stating that "queste due proprietadi sono ne la Musica, la quale è tutta relativa," that is, that Mars properties consist in a series of relations, as seen "ne le parole armonizzate e ne li canti" whereby the harmony sweetens the more the relation is beautiful.[40] This evidence suggests that Dante particularly intends his readers to be attentive to elements of structure and prophecy in the Heaven of Mars, encouraging them to consider the central position of the Heaven and its harmony with the various parts of the poem.

Following the aforementioned use of spatial metaphors combining the circle and the cross throughout this *canto*, and just before the description of the cross from which Cacciaguida radiates, the rhyme word "Cristo" repeats itself thrice (vv. 104, 106, 108), nestled within an ineffability topos.[41] This narrative strategy is meant to draw attention to the craft of poetry itself, simultaneously stating and undercutting the limitations of poetic expression and representation. The identical rhyme "Cristo" does more than simply give further attention to the text itself; it also

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da Dino Compagni nella *Cronica* (II 19) in occasione della venuta di Carlo di Valois, il 1° novembre 1301; e questa occasione può essere certo, per Dante in esilio, il principio della 'distruzione' della sua città" ["it is much more plausible to recall the image of a cross appearing in the sky of Florence mentioned by Dino Compagni in his *Cronica* on the occasion of Charles of Valois' visit on the 1st of November 1301, and this occasion can certainly be, for Dante in exile, the cause of the 'distruzione' of his city"] (n. 49 *Convivio* 112).

[40] It is also interesting to note that Dante also associates music with the capacity of drawing to itself humans, a motif that also extends to the figure of poet and the myth of Orpheus (24), a theme discussed at length in "Dante and Allegory" in Part I of Chapter 2.

[41] In fact, the *Commedia* contains four triple rhymes of "Cristo," all found in *Paradiso*: XI, vv. 71–75; XIV, vv. 104–108; XIX, vv. 104–108; and XXXII, 83–87.

draws a vertical line along the horizontal axis of the material page, replicating the spatial dynamics of the cross.[42] The symbolic significance implied is that word "Cristo" acts as though unequaled in value and therefore only capable of rhyming with itself.[43]

| *Par*. XIV, vv. 101–108 | *Par*. XIX, vv. 101–108 |
|---|---|
| Marte quei raggi il venerabil **segno** | de lo Spirito Santo ancor nel **segno** |
| che fan giunture di quadranti in tondo. | che fé i Romani al mondo reverendi, |
| Qui vince la memoria mia lo 'ngegno; | esso ricominciò: 'A questo regno |
| ché quella croce lampeggiava **Cristo**, | non salì mai chi non credette 'n **Cristo**, |
| sì ch'io non so trovare essempro degno; | né pria né poi ch'el si chiavasse al legno. |
| ma chi prende sua croce e segue **Cristo**, | Ma vedi: molti gridan "Cristo, **Cristo**!'", |
| ancor mi scuserà di quel ch'io lasso, | che saranno in giudicio assai men prope |
| vedendo in quell' albor balenar **Cristo**. | a lui, che tal che non conosce **Cristo**; |

Fig. 8 – Comparison of the 2nd and 3rd Occurrences of the "Cristo" Rhymes.

Curiously, the second and third instances of the "Cristo" rhymes in the *Commedia* occur at the same verse locations (vv. 104, 106, 108) and their parallel *dispositio* also extends to the rhyme-word "segno," which is located in an identical textual *locus* (v. 101). Both instances are also closely

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[42] This is even more obvious when considering the double-columned *chartae* used in the early manuscript tradition.

[43] As for the significance of the triple rhyme, Fosca's commentary on *Par*. XII, vv. 70–72 points out that: "[c]ertamente è una forma di rispetto per tale santo nome; quasi a significare che nessuna altra parola è degna di rimare con esso; ma è pur vero che Dio, nome non meno santo, Dante lo rima con altre parole, e così pure Maria" ["certainly it is a form of respect for such a holy name, as though signifying that no other word is worthy to rhyme with it; however, it is also true that God, a no less holy name, Dante rhymes it with other words, as well with Maria"] (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).

related in wording and content, placing due emphasis on the symbolism of the cross.[44] In proportional terms, these two "Cristo" rhymes have a retrograde character since they respectively occur at a distance of 14 cantos from both extremities of the *cantica*: 14–5–14 (I–XIV, XV–XIX, XX–XXXIII), partitioning *Paradiso* into three sections and framing the five central cantos of *Paradiso*, with the prophetic *canto* at its center: XV, XVI, **XVII**, XVIII, XIX. In short, both "Cristo" rhymes stand in a symmetrical pattern and bookend the five central cantos of *Paradiso* in the Heaven of Mars that contain: an ekphrasis of a jeweled cross (XIV), Dante's crucial encounter with Cacciaguida as well as the mid-point of the *cantica* (XV–XVII), an ekphrasis of a divine script (XVIII), and the "LVE" acrostic (XIX).

As mentioned above, the "Cristo" rhyme of *Paradiso* XIV is nestled within an ineffability topos that strategically precedes an ekphrasis of considerable importance:

Qui vince la memoria mia lo 'ngegno;

ché quella croce lampeggiava *Cristo*,

sì ch'io non so trovare essempro degno" (vv. 103–105 emphasis added).

The term "essempro" intratextually recalls a simile taken from the visual arts: "come pintor che con essempro pinga" (*Purg*. XXXII, v. 67). Dante declares that there is no way to find in his "memoria" a worthy model of what he saw but he will do it regardless: "ma chi prende sua croce e segue *Cristo*, / ancor mi scuserà di quel ch'io lasso, / vedendo in quell' albor balenar *Cristo*" (vv. 106–108 emphases added). Besides the obvious relevance of "memoria" (v. 103) for poetic representation, the "chi" that structures the impersonal construction rings almost like an imperative to *follow* Christ on a moral/tropological level of *imitatio Christi*, that is, to indulge Dante's attempt

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[44] The first "segno" is related to the figure of Christ on the cross, whereas the second occurrence is about the sign of the Roman eagle. Their juxtaposition, in light of Dante's synthesis of pagan and religious history, should not come as a surprise.

at representation.[45] However, it also asks the reader to take up the cross and to *follow* Christ literally on the surface of the page: they who take their cross and *follow* the signifier "Cristo" will gratify the poet in his representation of it.

Dante goes on to describe the indescribable by representing two beams composed of various lights shining forth and forming two diameters of equal length intersecting at a right angle: one horizontal "di corno in corno" and the other vertical "di cima in basso" (v. 109).[46] As a result, they divide a circle into four quadrants from which a cross and the figure of Christ manifest themselves: "il venerabil segno / che fan giunture di quadranti in tondo" (vv. 101–102). Dante compares—in yet another powerful *comparatio domestica*—the motion of the lights to particles, both long and short, moving across a ray of light that shoots across a shadowed room:

così si veggion qui *diritte e torte*,

*veloci e tarde*, rinovando vista,

le minuzie d'i corpi, *lunghe e corte*,

moversi per lo raggio onde si lista

talvolta l'ombra che, per sua difesa,

la gente con *ingegno* e *arte* acquista. (vv. 112–117 emphases added)[47]

Their motion—"qui diritte e torte, / veloci e tarde…/ lunghe e corte" (vv. 112–114)—is described in pairs of opposites: straight and slanted, fast and slow, long and short; whereas their joining

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[45] See for instance the Gospel of Matthew: "si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum et tollat crucem suam et sequatur me" ["If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (NRSV trans).] (16: 24).

[46] Singleton, in his commentary, underlines the military connotation of the term "corno" that both in Italian and Latin can refer to the flank of an army. As for Dante's synecdochic use of "corno" for the arm of the cross, see *Par*. XV, v 19 and XVIII, v. 34.

[47] See Hollander's commentary to verses 109–117: "The first of two consecutive similes, this one has armies of admirers for its small detail drawn from ordinary daily life, an experience that all have known but never expected to find in an 'important' poem, the motes suspended in air irradiated in the streaks of sunlight making their way through shutters" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).

together and intersection—"scintillando forte / nel congiugnersi insieme e nel trapasso:" (vv. 110–111) —intensifies their luminosity. Both visual (linear and aslant) and temporal indications (quick and slow) seem contradictory and confused. These cues bring up spatial geometry, i.e., the relationship between several points in space (angle, velocity, acceleration), and they also express a dialectical unity of opposites, a *coincidentia oppositorum*. Analogously, intratextuality between various sections of the poem magnifies interpretive possibilities and, as such, vertical readings should be understood in the very same way. The imprecision in the direction, speed, and distance of the lights still allows for illumination when they intersect and overlap one another.

The image Dante creates with this simile is a linear beam of light cutting across a darkened room, revealing particles that are usually hidden from sight in "l'ombra che, per sua difesa, / la gente con ingegno e arte acquista" (vv. 116–117)—a lengthy circumlocution to essentially describe a darkened room. Intratextuality, the repetition of "ingegno" paired with "arte" (v. 117) is meant to recall the earlier pair of "la memoria mia lo 'ngegno" (v. 103) at the beginning of the ekphrasis. The literal implication of these verses is that people acquire "shadow" by crafting a house, by setting up a structure. The domestic analogy certainly sets the stage for Dante's blood relative Cacciaguida to make his entrance, but there is more going on here.

The presence of "ingegno e arte" (v. 117) with the pair "ingegno" and "memoria" (v. 107) semantically gravitates around the craft of poetry and its analogous relationship to architecture and space. A great lexical example of this confluence of architecture and poetry than the word "stanza," at once a section of an edifice and that of a poem: "stantia, hoc est mansion capax sive receptaculum totius artis" (*De vulgari eloquentia*, II, ix, 2).[48] In sum, there is a parallel discourse about representation and interpretation. The image of motes invisibly floating into space and

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[48] ["stanza, that is, a capacious edifice or receptacle for all of the arts."]

appearing through a ray of light echoes Hugh of Saint Victor's definition of anagoge, whereby looking through the visible, upwards "sursum," either at a beam of light, the Milky Way, or the "stelle," results in revealing what was previously hidden from sight: "per visibile invisibile factum declaratur." In sum, concealment through "l'ombra che, per sua difesa, / la gente con ingegno e arte acquista" is symbolic of the allegorical process itself since the goal is to illuminate through obscurity.[49]

The diatopic movement from the preceding cosmic simile, which compares the brightness of the lights to the Milky Way (vv. 97–102), to the *comparatio domestica* of motes dancing in sunlight covers the expanse between the heavenly and the minute, the macro-universe and the micro-universe, in a vertically transcending manner. In the *Convivio*, Dante describes the Milky Way, the "Galassia" (v. 99), as "quello bianco cerchio" (II, xiv, 1) and, as such, the symbolic power of the circle is implied in this vertical movement from the divine to the earthly, combining the circular with the linear. The conjunction of both the divine and the human naturally symbolizes Christ, the cross upon which he perished, and his victory over death with his resurrection, all elements that are central to *Paradiso* XIV and the iconography of the mosaics in Classe.

From the totality embodied in the numeric symbolism of the 100-*canto* system to the poem's pretensions of imitating the circular structure of the cosmos, Dante's structuralism—the layout of his poetic *edifice*—can be easily misconstrued as a total system. It is the *illusion* of one, a shadow play whereby the relationship between light and geometric figures creates discernable patterns that elucidate through the shadow provided by the architecture, the form of the poem. The same paradigm applies to the vertical correspondences of the poem, they are meant to illuminate

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[49] In his *Super Ierarchiam Dionysii*, Hugh describes anagoge as "circumvelatur, quia ad hoc velatur ut amplius clarescat; ob hoc tegitur ut magis appareat" ["concealed all around, because for this purpose, it is concealed in order to be more illuminated; because of this it is covered so that it appears more clearly"] (*Patrologia Latina* 175, 946).

and not overdetermine interpretation: they are organic rather than mechanical. Much like the motes floating across the beam of light, the vertical hermeneutics of the *Commedia*—upon closer inspection—is somewhat imprecise, both straight (1:1:1) and slanted (2:1:1), jumping forwards and backward (proleptic and retrospective as well as palinodic), long (3 cantos) and short (2 cantos); however, their use results in flashes of interpretative insights. Fundamentally, vertical readings are anagogic, they are readings from the perspective of the end, a beam of interpretive light that cuts across the edifice of the poem and illuminates the text, revealing what is concealed within the poem's structure.

Dante's ekphrasis of the cross goes on describing the motion and speed of the lights, their spatial relationship, and their movement appears to create a harmony, a "melode" that holds the pilgrim in rapture (v. 122). By using a musical simile, Dante-poet shifts his sensorial poetics from visual cues to auditory ones, further developing the symbolic link of Mars with music:

> E come giga e arpa, in tempra tesa
>
> di molte corde, fa dolce tintinno
>
> a tal da cui la nota non è intesa,
>
> così da' lumi che lì m'apparinno
>
> s'accogliea per la croce una melode
>
> che mi rapiva, sanza intender l'inno. (vv. 118–123)

Both these instruments—"giga e arpa" (v. 118)—have a set of linear strings that, when tension is vertically exercised upon them and are struck sequentially, produce a harmony, a "dolce *tintinno*" (v. 119 emphasis added).[50] This modulation of parameters creates a fuzzy logic system; however,

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[50] There are a few other details about this simile that is worth addressing further. The melody produced is described with the word 'tintinno' and it, in turn, graphically represents at the level of the signifier the notion of correspondence, repetition and/or echoing with the duplication of the onomatopoeic 'tin.' It also echoes its previous iteration in *Paradiso* X. In the Heaven of the Sun, the harmonious circular movement of the wise philosophers is compared to the

it is precisely this imprecise character of vertical hermeneutics that gives it its flexibility and interpretative potential. Much like the use of "aposiopesis" and its relationship to exegesis previously explored in Chapter II, vertical hermeneutics require readers to fill in a gap by connecting the dots between two cantos or even to triangulate them with a possible third *canto*. They partake in the practice of *pictura*.[51] The interpretative burden, or the welcome challenge, is cast upon the recipient of the message; in the same way in which the *a priori* axiom of an order embedded in the structure of Scripture invites readers to search for correspondences.

What is also striking is the use of the term "melode" (v. 119) and the fact that it is not heard or, at least, not understood.[52] The term "melode" that Dante uses to describe what the pilgrim senses emanating from the cross is significant in light of Dante's self-definition of his sacred poem as a "tëo*día*" (*Par*. XXV, v. 73) and his rapprochement with the scriptural authority of David and his "salmo*dia*" (*Purg*. XXXIII, v. 2) as well as Solomon's *Cantica Canticorum*.[53] The preceding visual confusion described in the motion of the lights along the diameters of the cross also extends

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movement of a tower clock indicating the time for prayer and thus bringing about sweet sounds: "*tin tin* sonando con sì *dolce* nota" (v. 143 emphases added), which echoes the "in tempra tesa / di molte corde, fa *dolce tintinno*" (*Par*. XIV, vv. 118–119 emphases added). Moreover, the harmonious polyphony of the wise souls singing in unison is described as "in tempra" (v. 146), the same terms Dante uses to describe harmony of the string instruments "in tempra tesa" (*Par*. XIV, v. 118). The Heaven of the Sun, much like the entirety of *Paradiso*, also partakes in a unity of opposites, of an attempt at overcoming difference especially in representational terms. The previously mentioned *coincidentia oppositorum* in Dante's description of the motion of the lights in the Heaven of Mars also applies to the chiasmic structure of the cantos of the Heaven of the Sun (XI–XII). See Barolini's outstanding essay on the matter "Dante's Heaven of the Sun as a Meditation on Narrative" 3–36.

[51] See n. 4.

[52] There is a debate regarding the exact meaning of Dante's expression, see Chiavacci-Leonardi's commentary to lines 118–120: "oggi i più preferiscono intendere, seguendo il Monterosso ..., che non si tratti di difetto dell'ascoltante, ma di 'indeterminatezza originaria del suono stesso'. Tuttavia questa interpretazione non corrisponde né alla formulazione del testo ..., né soprattutto all'altro termine del paragone (vv. 121–3), dove Dante appare rapito pur senza intendere le parole dell'inno, che evidentemente esistevano. Così sulla terra—egli dice—si è rapiti dall'armonia di una musica fatta di più voci, anche se non la si distingue nelle sue parti" ["nowadays, the majority prefer interpreting this, following Monterosso ..., not as the listener being unable to hear but rather the 'undeterminate origin of the sound itself.' However, this interpretation does not correspond neither to the formulation of the text ..., nor above all the other term of the comparison (vv. 121–123), where Dante appears enraptured without discerning the words of the song, that evidently existed. As such, on earth—he says—one is enraptured by the harmony of a music composed of many voices, even if one does not distinguish it in its parts"] (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).

[53] See Chapter I, Part I: "Dante the Davidic Cantor." For "melode" in the *Commedia*, see *Par*. XXIV, v. 114 and XXVIII, v. 119.

to the pilgrim's auditory capacities: "una melode / che mi rapiva, sanza intender l'inno" (vv. 122–123). Despite the correspondence and harmony between the various elements, it is hard to discern them in their particulars. The canto concludes with the pilgrim, like someone who hears but does not understand, eventually making out the *words* "Resurgi" and "Vinci" ('arise' and 'conquer'), which celebrate Christ's resurrection, his victory over death, and is symbolized by the cross. As such, this eschatological component further underlines the anagogic interpretative frame at play in Dante's metaphors of textual space.

As mentioned earlier, the "Cristo" rhymes are much like the repetition of "stelle" at the end of each *cantica*, they are meant to stand out and signal a structural connectedness. The geometric and symmetrical character of the "Cristo" rhymes serve as the starting point for two seminal mathematical studies of the *Commedia* by the scholars Hardt (1973), *Die Zahl in Der Divina Commedia*, and Hart (1990), "The Cristo-Rhymes, the Greek Cross, and Cruciform Geometry in Dante's *Commedia*." The latter, building upon the findings of the former, provokingly argues that Dante used specific ratios to construct his poem, one of which is the medieval approximation for $\pi$: 22/7.[54] According to Hart, this ratio predetermined the locations of all four "Cristo" rhymes in *Paradiso* in such a way as to represent the quadrants of a Greek cross set in a circle and formed by two diameters intersecting at a right angle.[55] Based on the premise that the

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[54] As Hart explains: "[w]ith the help of a computer program (...), I made a systematic analysis of the ratios generated by the placement of these four passages relative to one another and to the beginnings and ends of the three *cantiche*. This analysis revealed that the placement of the *Cristo*-rhymes is governed by a proportional design of remarkable intricacy, well-formedness, precision, and textual relevance" ("The Cristo-Rhymes, the Greek Cross, and Cruciform Geometry in Dante's *Commedia*" 116). See, as well, the two passages in *Inferno* where Dante provides a measurement for the ninth and tenth *bolgias*: "miglia ventidue la valle volge" (*Inf*. XXIX, v. 9) and "ella volge undici miglia" (XXX, v. 86). The use of "ventidue" is by no means arbitrary, since it would naturally occur in reference to a circle with the implication of a diameter 'sette miglia' long. Of particular interest to the geometric concerns of this research is the relationship between the "Cristo" rhymes and Hart's observation of "the $\pi$-based symbolism of the great cross in Mars" (Hart, "'"" 267).

[55] Albeit in the form of a rhetorical question, Hart posits his argument thusly: "[a]re the four sets of Cristo-rhymes disposed in such a way that the line totals of intervals that they mark off reflect the proportionality of a cross (two diameters at right angles) within a circle?" ("The Cristo-Rhymes, the Greek Cross, and Cruciform Geometry in Dante's *Commedia*" 119).

*Commedia* seeks to imitate the circular structure of creation, its 14,233 lines would therefore represent the circumference of a circle. Hart demonstrates in an elaborate, and at times convoluted, fashion how the poem replicates—via proportionality—the geometry of the cross in a circle (122–24).[56] This is the very same cross pattern that Dante describes using an ekphrasis in *Paradiso* XIV.

In similar terms to this research, Hart describes his work as seeking to call attention to "remarkable features" that have not been recognized "even by the early commentators" and that are "crucial to Dante's design for the poem and embody essential principals of his literary aesthetics" (106–07). As mentioned above, his structural interpretative approach to the *Commedia*—much like Singleton's—significantly converges with the overall concerns of this research.[57] The principal difference however lies in the mode of being, the "esthetic situs" of these "remarkable features," since Hart situates it in Dante's "fascination with mathematics" (107), particularly with Euclidean geometry; whereas, this research has articulated it in the broader terms of spatial semiotics.[58] The area of application of Hart's mathematical interest is at the level of "the architecture of textual design, the authorial use of numerical patterns in setting out the physical dimensions of a text prior to, or in the embryonic stages of, writing the text itself" ("Geometric Metaphor and Proportional Design in Dante's *Commedia*." 98). Consequently, Hart's geometric concerns, especially with linear and circular patterns, intersect with this research's interest in spatial semiotics and Dante's *modus componendi*. Conversely, the main variation with Hart's approach—as mentioned earlier—lies in the degree of precision that such an intentional design necessitates.

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[56] In his conclusion, Hart writes: "the regularity and precision of this set of correlations between the text's wording and the text's dimensions, indicate that Dante planned and calculated the placement of the *Cristo*-rhymes to mark off intervals of text whose verse totals would correspond to the pi/2-proportionality of the circumscribed cross" (128).

[57] Hart recognizes the influence of Singleton on his mathematical studies of the *Commedia* ("Geometric Metaphor and Proportional Design in Dante's *Commedia*" 96).

[58] Unlike Kirkham (1989) and Hardt (1973, 1995), Hart's approach is not premised on numerology or number symbolism but rather on Euclidean geometry and arithmetic (107).

Hart's systematic analysis of mathematical correspondences in the *Commedia* resulted in "a growing inventory of evidence for correspondences or 'patterns' relevant to geometric constants, like π" ("'Per misurar lo cerchio'" 267).[59] Using these patterns, Hart—like this dissertation—also describes "a *radically new* picture of the compositional process, with use of grids and calculations and concordances and all that that implied," but never mentions the art of memory (270 emphases added).[60] The theoretical overlap with vertical readings comes together when, as a result of Hart's structuralist approach to the *Commedia* and based on "stelle" at the end of each *cantica*, he produces a vertical reading of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* XXXIII.[61]

The question that would naturally flow from this convergence is whether the vertical correspondences found in the poem can be both arithmetical and mnemonic in origin. Two observations are to be made. First, since the best explanation of an occurrence, or set of occurrences, is the one that is the simplest, using the fewest assumptions or hypotheses, it would be simpler to explain the poem's symmetries—planned out with a system of "grids" and "concordances" as Hart describes—as the product of the arts of rhetoric and memory rather than arithmetic and geometry. However, this is no way entails that one necessarily excludes the other.[62]

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[59] Hart enumerates five different models of patterns: homology, "a correspondence between the mathematical properties of a pattern and the meaning of the words which constitute that pattern"; proportionality, "especially what Boethius called the 'minima proportio', A is to B as B is to C"; polyvalence, Dante's coordinates can function within more than just one pattern; lastly, precision and consistency, "all ratios are precise to the nearest integral factor, i.e. to the nearest verse" (272). For similar findings in a less specialized context, see Hart's "Poetry, Mathematics and the Liberal Arts Tradition." *Syracuse Scholar* 3, 1, 1982, 58–73.

[60] Hart puts due focus on the musical connotation of Dante's use of ratios; however, this chapter focuses instead on mnemonic tools—which overlap with music—that make use of sequenced and numbered grid systems.

[61] Hart explains how: "[a]n important clue to that structural logic is provided by one of the many textual parallels that have been noticed in the *Commedia*, in fact the most conspicuous and most famous of the poem's parallels, the recurrence of the concept *stelle* 'stars' as the final word in each of the three canticles. This parallel seems to imply a syntax of position, a built-in potential for thematic or other conceptual parallels at points of positional correspondence among the poem's major formal divisions. In the case of the last two canticles the verbal parallel in the respective final lines has a numerical dimension as well: both the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* conclude with cantos which, in addition to being positionally coordinate as the thirty-third canto in each canticle, have the same number of lines, 145 each" ("Geometric Metaphor and Proportional Design in Dante's *Commedia*" 102).

[62] Hart mentions how "the use of numbers in the ordering of any artistic artifact appears to have been, in the main, *an unquestioned cultural presupposition*. At least this seems to be the judgment forced on us by the evidence now

Secondly, Hart's use of the terms 'radically new' is etymologically relevant, hinting at the roots of a specific culture, of its conceptual *radix*. Inversely, it is "new" only to *our* contemporary eyes, not for Dante and his contemporaries, because it was an inherent part of the medieval mindset, part of a set of unquestioned cultural presuppositions about how to look at and interpret signs.[63] Said differently, vertical readings are radically novel because one can see anew the roots from whence the *Commedia* sprung and cast new eyes onto medieval aesthetics.

**The "Crux Gemmata": Sant'Apollinare and the Heaven of Mars**

It has been shown how the ekphrasis of the jeweled cross in *Paradiso* XIV deploys circular and linear imagery and prescribes a mode of looking at signs, one that extends to the entirety of the poem. This modality of text and images is not unique to Dante's representation of the martial cantos of *Paradiso* nor to the *Commedia* as a whole. However, Dante's claim of being unable to find an "essempro degno" (v. 105) of the said cross is challenged by the apsidal mosaics of the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna (Schnapp, "Sant'Apollinare in Classe and Dante's Poetics of Martyrdom" 171–73).[64] They, like the *Commedia*, also partake in spatial semiotics (see fig. 9).

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available: on the one hand the wide currency of such numerical techniques, on the other the manner in which they were mentioned only obliquely, if at all, in medieval treatises on poetic theory (e.g., the late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century *Poetria nova* by Geoffrey of Vinsauf, lines 43-81)" ("Geometric Metaphor and Proportional Design in Dante's *Commedia*" 99 emphasis added). Interestingly, nowhere does Hart mention the art of memory and its use of sequenced and numbered grids. Moreover, there is indeed an abundance of texts and manuscripts containing the precepts of the Herennian mnemotechnic in Dante's time, see Ward 255–265.

[63] Hart writes, in another essay: "[i]f one reason for reading back into our literary tradition is to be confronted and challenged by values once passionately held but subsequently displaced and forgotten, surely one of the more challenging features of the *Commedia* for today's reader is Dante's fascination, even obsession, with the world of number" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).

[64] See Laura Pasquini, who writes how: "[n]el cielo di Marte una croce greca a bracci uguali in un lampo abbagliante rimanda l'immagine di Cristo. Benché Dante affermi con chiarezza di non saper trovar 'essempro degno', ovvero un adeguato termine di paragone rispetto a quella visione straordinaria, un confronto convincente è stato individuato dalla critica, che ha più volte raffrontato la croce dantesca con quella latina gemmata che risplende nel catino absidale di S. Apollinare in Classe" (*Iconografie Dantesche* 30). See also Pasquini, "Fonti iconografiche della *Commedia*" 150. See also Chiavacci-Leonardi who remarks, in her commentary to lines 100–102, that: "[l]a figura di una croce greca gemmata sul fondo d'oro con al centro il volto di Cristo appare nell'abside di S. Apollinare in Classe a Ravenna, di dove poté forse venire a Dante un suggerimento" ["the image of a jeweled Greek cross on a golden background with

Indeed, many of the images and similes that populate *Paradiso* can be traced back to Dante's last years in Emilia-Romagna.[65] Nevertheless, as Schnapp points out, there is a significant "lack of a systematic study" of the interrelationship between visual arts and the *Commedia* in Dante studies; whereas for the apsidal mosaics of Sant'Apollinare in particular "the state of affairs is essentially the same: scattered remarks here and there but not a single in-depth study" (173–74).[66] Iconographic studies of the *Commedia*, up until Schnapp's book, have indeed been lacking.[67] This presents an interesting situation whereby literary scholars and art historians seem to have not mutually translated their expertise into a common discourse on the topic. In a similar manner to Schnapp's goal of posing "in a new and provocative manner the question of the importance of the visual arts to Dante's poetics," this chapter seeks to contribute to filling that gap (177).

There are several parallel iconographic elements between the "croce gemmata" of Sant'Apollinare in Classe and the one described in the Heaven of Mars. First of all, the cross stands above the name-sake martyr of the Basilica itself, Saint Apollinaris, who was its first bishop, suffered persecution and, like Dante, exile. Analogously, the cross in *Par*. XIV–XVIII houses martyrs who fought on behalf of Christendom and one of them will announce to Dante his suffering and exile:

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the face of Christ at its center appears in the apside of Sant'Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna, from where may have come to Dante as a suggestion"] (*Dartmouth Dante Project*). See also Bosco and Reggio's commentary to verses 94–117, where they note how "[i]l Fallani e il Chiarini hanno ricordato in particolare la croce dell'abside di S. Apollinare in Classe a Ravenna, che reca, dice il secondo, 'entro un rosso cerchio tempestato di gemme', 'l'immagine di Cristo affiorante... nel punto d'incontro dei due raggi'" ["Fallani and Chiarini have particularly emphasized the apsidal cross of Sant'Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna, that has, according to the latter, 'inside a red circle studded with gems,' 'the image of Christ surfaces... at the point of encounter of two rays"] (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).

[65] Schnapp remarks that "[t]hematic and iconographic correspondences between the various mosaic ensembles of Ravenna and certain portions of *Paradise* have been noted casually at least since Corrado Ricci's *L'ultimo rifugio di Dante Alighieri* [1891]" (171).

[66] Schnapp does point out several studies that are exceptions, such as Gmelin's commentary, which "raises the possibility of an interdependence only to reject it on the grounds that the cross at Sant'Apollinare is not perfectly symmetrical," and Eugenio Chiarini's entry on Ravenna in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (174). More recently, the work of Laura Pasquini stands out in her analysis of the influence of Ravenna's mosaics on the imagery of the poem.

[67] The reader may recall the illuminating yet tentative nature of Kleinhenz's suggestion of an analogy between the vertical structure of the *Commedia* and that of the cupola mosaics of the San Giovanni Baptistery (2005).

Tu lascerai ogne cose diletta

...

Tu proverai sì come sa di sale

lo pane altrui, e come è duro calle

lo scendere e 'l salir per l'altrui scale. (*Par.* XVII, vv. 55, 58–60).

Secondly, the cross stands against a backdrop of ninety-nine stars, as though floating in the heavens. Once again, the number one-hundred reappears (99 stars + 1 cross), suggesting an interesting link between the one-hundred cantos of the *Commedia*. Schnapp recognizes this connection, albeit in a footnote and with a rhetorical question:

> [t]his logic of 1 + 99 = 100 of course structures the *Commedia*: a poem of 1+ 99 cantos whose outermost projections—the final words of each canticle—are "stelle" in a mode analogous to the construction of the cosmos. Might not Dante have seen in the central portion of the apse at Classe a figuration of his own completed book and of its ultimate model, God's completed *magno volume*? (184–85 n. 20).[68]

Thirdly, the red circle studded with gems, within which the cross and the ninety-nine stars are housed, echoes the fiery red planet of Mars, but to suggest that it is specifically referencing it is tenuous at best.[69] Conversely, this in no way impedes the possibility of it contributing to Dante's crafting of his martial cantos of *Paradiso*. Fourthly, the reader may recall the significance of the "ichthys" (ἰχθύς) acrostic previously discussed in the section of Chapter II titled "Verticality in the *Amorosa visione*." Dante's use of acrostics fulfills a prophetic function and is essentially a vertical

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[68] Schnapp also suggests—citing Dinkler—that the ninety-nine stars "may stand in turn for the ninety-nine angels which, according to Cyril of Jerusalem, would accompany Jesus' *parousia* at the end of time" (184).

[69] Schnapp agrees, stating that "there is admittedly no clear indication that the bejeweled red nimbus of Sant'Apollinare bears any specific cosmological meaning"; however, he does associate it with the Milky Way, "that galactic 'reddish royal crown and diadem, glittering with circling gems' flashing like lightning around the goddess Natura's head in the opening prose section of Alan of Lille's *Plaint of Nature*" (181–82).

hermeneutic system modeled on pagan and Christian symbolism. Therefore, the appearance of the "ichthys" acrostic above the vertical axis of the jeweled cross does take on a heightened significance, since the mosaics' figurative appropriation in *Paradiso* XIV–XVIII is followed in *Paradiso* XIX by the "LVE" acrostic.[70]
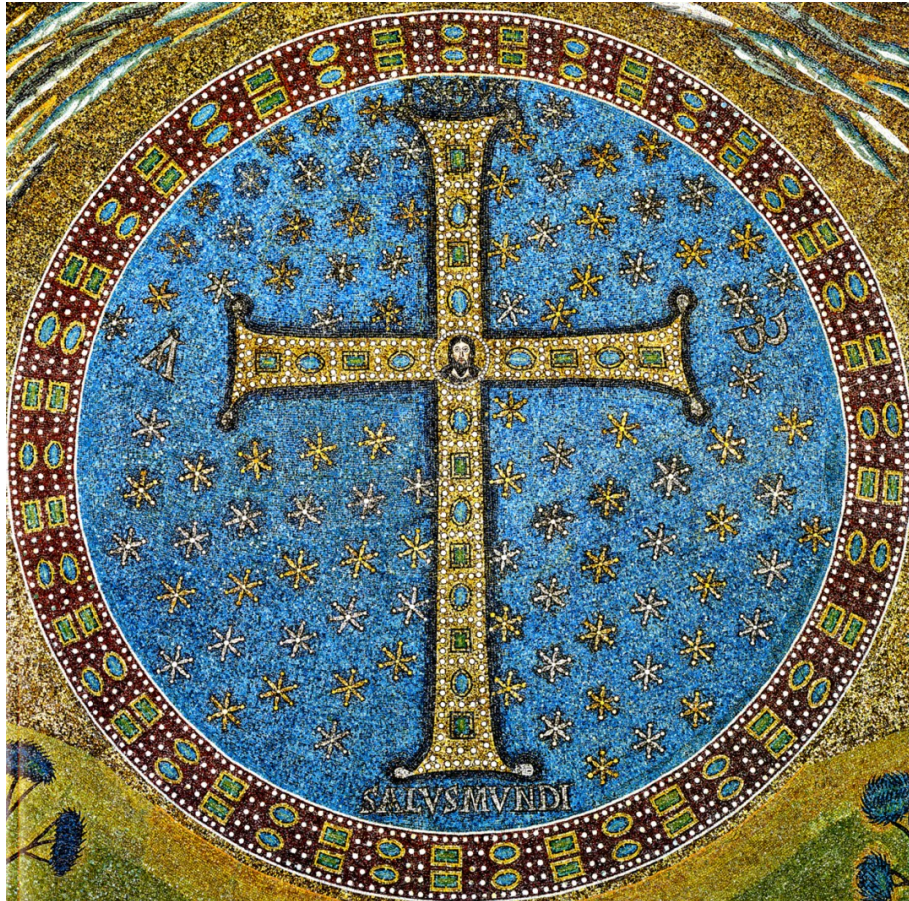


Fig. 9 – The "Crux Gemmata" of the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe.

As for the horizontal line of the cross, its extremities are identified with the letters 'alpha' and 'omega,' the first and last letter of the classical Greek alphabet and a title for Christ and God

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[70] Schnapp remarks that "[t]he presence here [in the apsidal mosaic] of the most famous of Sibylline *ambages* might well have seemed to place upon the apocalyptic sign of Sant'Apollinare the sort of specialized hermeneutic burden that it bears at the center of *Paradise*" (185).

in Revelations (1:8; 21:6; and 22:13). These letters also symbolize the idea of the beginning and the end, thus foregrounding the prophetic and eschatological purpose of the imagery. Furthermore, this horizontal line represents the notion of time as linear, as having a beginning and an end. Therefore, the vertical line that transects at the middle creates a before and an after, a "Kairos" in the sequence of "Chronos," a transcendental encounter with eternity; hence the figure of Christ at the intersection of both lines, the point of contact between the human and the divine.[71] The vertical axis therefore transcends time, thus the importance of the prophetic "ichthys" at the apex of the vertical crossbar, indicating how a vertical—and, by inference, anagogic—perspective allows meaning to emerge out of the visible. A complementary significance, a higher reasoning premised on the interrelationship of signs in space, emerges from the *dispositio* and geometry of the iconography.

Schnapp's analysis of the overall pictorial symbolism highlights the tension between the linear and the cyclical in temporal terms. The cyclical succession of time and human suffering, the flux of all history, ends in the perpetual spring of a pastoral paradise (187–88). It is a vision of humanity's ultimate reconciliation "under the Divine Shepherd" (189). In sum, the apsidal mosaics' spatial semiotics, much like the aesthetic experience of *Paradiso*, offers a *coincidentia oppositorum*, since their "central pictorial statement would seem to be the reconciliation of contraries (opposing scenes, walls, cities) through Christ and his cross" (189). These contraries, for Schnapp, are spatially articulated along vertical and horizontal planes; the vertical axis of composition establishes "a perfectly symmetrical descending chain of Christ-symbols" unified

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[71] Schnapp's chapter frames the overall iconography of the apsidal mosaics as a conflation of the Exaltation of the Cross and the Transfiguration: "[a]lthough the cross of light provides a powerful clarification of the cryptic Sibylline message, its ultimate "reality" ... must be sought in the Transfiguration, which it invests with a singularly eschatological meaning" ("Sant'Apollinare in Classe and Dante's Poetics of Martyrdom" 185). He goes on to argue that "the scene represented in the mosaics of Sant'Apollinare, then, is quite literally the anticipatory dawning of the *sol Christi* over the eschatological city: ... as it rises over an earthly landscape that has been restored to its originary Edenic state" (186).

through the figure of Christ; whereas the horizontal axis stages "the text of history in all of its diversity, constantly structuring a play of symmetrical opposites along the central Christological axis" (190).[72] The apsidal mosaics' spatial semiotics offers an analogous model and interpretive framework to Dante's representation of the jeweled cross and the *Commedia*.

## The Latini and Cacciaguida Episodes

*Paradiso* XV begins by recalling the musical simile at the end of *Paradiso* XIV, extending the thematic link of Mars with music and order through the imagery of strings being strummed: "silenzio puose a quella dolce lira, / e fece quïetar le sante corde / che la destra del cielo allenta e tira" (vv. 4–6).[73] In Dante's continued metaphor, the harmony of the blessed is the result of God's hand having tuned their voices like a stringed instrument.[74] These verses speak of aesthetic beauty—"una melode / che mi rapiva" (*Par*. XIV, vv. 122–123)—achieved by the harmonious interrelations between the constituent parts of a whole.[75]

In the *De vulgari eloquentia*, Dante defines poetry as the combination of music with rhetoric: "nichil aliud est quam fictio rethorica musicaque poita" (II, iv, 2).[76] More importantly, in

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[72] Schnapp summarizes his analysis thusly: "[t]he centering and unifying point in this statement, both vertically and horizontally, literally and figuratively, is rendered by the mosaics of Sant'Apollinare in the form of the great eschatological *signum* enclosed within a radiant circle, the point of anchorage of the entire pictorial edifice" (190). See also 202 ff.

[73] Compare with: "E come giga e arpa, in tempra tesa / di molte corde, fa dolce tintinno / a tal da cui la nota non è intesa, / così da' / lumi che lì m'apparinno / s'accogliea per la croce una melode / che mi rapiva, sanza intender l'inno" (*Par*. XIV, vv. 118–123).

[74] Dante and Beatrice discuss the biblical metaphor of *digita Dei* in *Par*. IV (vv. 40–48) to establish an analogy with what Dante-pilgrim will experience in *Paradiso*, that is: the physical differentiation that he witnesses is a fiction to signify a real spiritual differentiation that he cannot grasp in the same way in which that the Bible condescends to human faculties by anthropomorphizing God, when what it signifies is something altogether different. See Barolini, "Problem in Paradise: The Mimesis of Time and the Paradox of *più e meno*" 183–189.

[75] For theologians, this notion of harmony extended to the universe itself as well as the Bible, considered to contain within itself an order mirroring that of the cosmos. For more on how the poem's patterns of symmetry reflected traditional notions of the harmony of God's universe and of Scripture, of a cosmic *ordo Dei*, see "Structural Elements" in Part I, of Chapter 1. For God as the supreme artificer, see also "The VOM Acrostic" in Part II, of Chapter 2.

[76] Moreover, "[t]here is in *De vulgari eloquentia*, in effect, a delineation of the ethics of language, the conviction that political myths and moral values are established and legitimized by the language of art" (Mazzotta, "Poetry and the Encyclopedia" 21). The unfinished Latin treatise seeks to establish the rules of eloquence but from a linguistic perspective, "it aims at constructing a grammar of rhetoric" (21).

Dante's definition, "poetry comes forth as a unique art capable of crossing the boundaries between a discipline of the *trivium* (rhetoric) and two of the *quadrivium* (music and arithmetic), as an art capable of harmonizing and joining together words and numbers" (Mazzotta, "Poetry and the Encyclopedia" 21). This function of poetry will prove pertinent when diving deeper into the genesis of the poem itself. Suffice to say that throughout the *Commedia*, Dante presents an analogy between his musical representation of God's art, his "teodía" (*Par.* XXV, v. 73), and the divine artificer itself.[77] Therefore, for a theomimetic poet, an author attempting to imitate this divine order and harmony—who explicitly names the partitions of his poem after musical terms: the *canto* and the *cantica*—it is no surprise to find in the Heaven of Mars symmetries that cut across the various partitions of his "poema sacro" (*Par.* XXV, v. 1).[78]

The culmination of the pilgrim's encounter with Cacciaguida is Dante's poetic investiture, a metatextual moment of self-authorization whereby Dante is told that he must write what he has witnessed, that he must take on a prophetic voice. In this context, it appears only fitting that symbolic and textual elements that allude to the theoretical foundations of Dante's poetics, music and rhetoric, are ubiquitous. If the musical and numerical aspects are readily apparent, rhetoric is more subterranean. An excavation of the parallelisms between the Latini and Cacciaguida episodes brings to the surface rhetoric's political role in the foundation and vicissitudes of both

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[77] For the names used by Dante for his poem, see "Dante: The Davidic Cantor" in Part I of Chapter 1.

[78] See Punzi, who notes that "[s]arà allora opportuno ancora una volta fare i conti con le modalità di lavoro di un poeta che organizza il suo testo sempre tenendo presente l'insieme dell'opera. realizzando soprattutto nella *Commedia* (ma potremmo aggiungere con le dovute cautele anche la *Vita nova*) una struttura perfettamente armonica in ognuna delle sue parti e le cui relazioni interne appaiono guidate da un criterio numerico che interagendo con quello più specificatamente poetico, si carica di una nuova significazione tale da creare percorsi di senso insospettati" ["it is therefore opportune to settle the score with the working modalities of a poet who organizes his text while always keeping in mind the totality of the work, realizing most of all in the *Commedia* (but we can also add, with the proper caveats, the *Vita nuova*) a structure that is perfectly harmonious in each of its parts and whose internal relations seem guided by a numerical principle that interacts with the more specific one of poetics, it carries a new signification such as to produce unexpected trajectories of meaning"] (88).

Rome and Florence, as well as its relationship with exegesis and Dante's experimentation with form, his encyclopedism.

The tercet that immediately follows the musical metaphor at the beginning of *Paradiso* XV recalls the *Inferno*, sending the reader back to the first *cantica*, to those who suffer without end: "Bene è che sanza termine si doglia / chi, per amor di cosa che non duri / *etternalmente*, quello amor si spoglia" (vv. 10–12 emphasis added). The *canto* begins by looking backward at the previous *canto*, as well as the first *cantica* of the poem. In a Janus-like fashion, the themes of musical harmony and divine order, combined with the *Inferno* flashback, seem to coax readers to look retrospectively at the first *cantica* in anticipation of what is about to come. As the narrative with Cacciaguida unfolds, this *memento inferni* takes on a more precise form, due to the frequency of the narrative's correspondences with *Inferno* XV.[79]

After this tercet, Dante-poet deploys the first simile of *Paradiso* XV, comparing the movement of the light whence Cacciaguida will speak to a star in motion: "pare stella che *tramuti loco*" (v. 16 emphases added), requiring the viewer to move their static eyes: "movendo li occhi che stavan sicuri" (v. 15).[80] The resulting movement is horizontal and then vertical, from the right-hand side of the cross to its center and then down to its foot: "dal corno che n' destro si stende / a piè di quella croce *corse* un astro" (vv. 19–20 emphasis added). Dante's description of the light's motion beckons readers to move their eyes accordingly: from the right-hand quadrant of the circle to the center of the cross, and then down to its foot, along the vertical *radius* of the circle "per la lista *radïal* trascorse" (v. 23 emphasis added). If the *Commedia* is thought to reproduce the

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[79] The use of the adverb "etternalmente" (v. 12) to describe the love of non-eternal goods also resonates with Dante's use of the reflexive verb 'etternarsi' in his encounter with Latini in *Inferno* XV (v. 85).

[80] The fixing of one's eyes onto the motion of the stars is evidently a recurrent motif in the *Commedia*: from the intratextual repetition of "stelle" at the end of each *cantica*, to Latini's own advice to Dante-pilgrim in *Inferno* XV, where it appears in combination to a nautical metaphor that also permeates the text, recalling the Ulysses episode: "Se tu segui tua *stella*, / non puoi fallire a glorïoso porto" (vv. 55–56).

geometry of the cross and the circle, it would appear that the same motion of the readers' eyes, "movendo li occhi," down the vertical axis of the poem to *Inferno* XV is being figured here.

Dante then immediately follows with another simile, whereby Cacciaguida's greeting of the pilgrim is compared to the epic encounter between Aeneas and Anchises, citing the poetic authority of Virgil:

Sì pïa l'ombra d'Anchise si porse,

se fede merta nostra maggior musa,

quando in Eliso del figlio s'accorse. (vv. 25–27)[81]

The following tercet, the first words uttered by Cacciaguida, contain the only occurrence of Latin in the entire poem:

O sanguis meus, o superinfusa

gratïa Deï, sicut tibi cui

bis unquam celi ianüa reclusa? (28–30)

The overall utterance synthesizes the sacred language of the church, "superinfusa / gratïa Deï," with classical texts; for example, the use of "sanguis meus" has long been recognized as an intertextual borrowing from Virgil's *Aeneid*, when Anchises refers to his descendant Julius Caesar (VI, l. 835).[82] The overall effect is austere and solemn, epic—to say the least.

*Paradiso* XV is filled with words related to family ties, paternity, filiation, and progeny: "nel mio seme" (v. 48), "figlio" (v. 52), "*paterna* festa" (v. 84 emphasis added). These textual elements are also present in *Inferno* XV, where Latini greets Dante-pilgrim with "O figliuol mio"

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[81] The intertextual borrowings are evident, see *Aeneid* VI, ll. 684–686 and 831–835. Retrospectively, this serves as a palinode to Dante-pilgrim's claim in *Inferno* II that: "Io non Enea, io non Paolo sono" (v. 32); indeed, as the text goes on, *he is Aeneas, he is Paul*. The reconfirmation of this dual claim occurs in *Paradiso* XXVI where Dante's overcoming of blindness is comparted to the hand of Ananias curing the apostle Paul's blindness (v. 12). See Chapter 1, Part I: "Dante and Allegory."

[82] For the meaning of "superinfusa / gratïa Deï" (vv. 28–29) as well as other Virgilian echoes, see Fosca's commentary to these lines (vv. 28–30).

(v. 31) and then addresses him again as "O figliuol" (v. 37).[83] In the co-numerical *canto* of *Purgatorio* XV, Dante's "maestro" and "autore" (*Inf.* I, v. 85) is also referred to twice as "dolce padre" (vv. 25, 124). The pilgrim also reciprocates this familiarity, addressing Latini as "la cara e buona imagine *paterna* / di voi" (vv. 83–84 emphasis added), just before declaring how Latini taught him, while alive, how a man can make himself eternal (v. 85).[84]

Both paternal encounters are patterned on an epic common-place, since "[t]he quest for the father was an obligatory theme in the epic tradition, from Homer to the *Somnium Scipionis*, for it served both to authenticate the hero's (usually noble) lineage and to provide him with an identity and a mission that transcended the purely mortal" (Freccero, "The Eternal Image of the Father" 81). In the case of *Inferno*, Latini prophesizes Dante's exile and addresses the theme of literary glory via the praise of his encyclopedic "Tesoro" (v. 119). As for *Paradiso*, Cacciaguida also reveals Dante's imminent exile, provides clarifications to earlier prophecies in the text—notably Latini's—and then declares our poet's divinely sanctioned mission of writing what he has witnessed. The correspondences are too numerous to be merely accidental.

At a structural level, similarly to Aeneas and Anchises' prophetic encounter at the center of the *Aeneid*, Dante and Cacciaguida also meet at the center of *Paradiso*.[85] The martial cantos are

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[83] Freccero makes a cogent case for the importance of Augustine's *Confessions* as an important literary precedent of surrogate father figures, noting that: "[o]ne of the surrogate fathers [Augustine] chooses and ultimately rejects is Faustus the Manichean, a writer of encyclopedias and an astrologer to whom he had looked for the solution of his intellectual problems. Faustus reveals himself to be an ineffectual old man, with an engaging rhetorical gift but little else to offer the young man in his quest. Such disillusionment was to become a topos of confessional literature, the disappointing but ultimately salutary discovery of human flaws in a once-revered authority. In its most modern and comforting variant, the Wizard of Oz proves by his incompetence that one need not go farther than Kansas to find the truth" ("The Eternal Image of the Father" 82).

[84] The term "paterna" in the feminine appears twice in the poem, in *Inf.* XV, v. 83 and *Par.* XV, v. 84; whereas the masculine "paterno" appears only once, in reference to Cacciaguida in *Par.* XVII, v. 34.

[85] The structural center of the *Aeneid* is Book VI, which describes Aeneas' katabasis and encounter with the shade of his father Anchises who prophesizes the destiny of Rome and Aeneas' mission. Schnapp recognizes this formal patterning (1986): 36–69. For more on ring composition and the use of chiastic structures in Scripture and in classical texts, see Douglas: "[r]ing composition is found all over the world, not just in a few places stemming from the Middle East, so it is a worldwide method of writing. It is a construction of parallelisms that must open a theme, develop it,

central to *Paradiso* and this is supported by various features, such as the position of the Heaven of Mars with the logic of the universe within the poem, the fifth of nine heavens (4-1-4); the cantos being bookended by the aforementioned "Cristo" rhymes, thus forming a retrograde pattern (14-5-14); and, lastly, the presence of the numerical center of *Paradiso*: the seventeenth *canto* of the thirty-three cantos that make up the *cantica* (16-1-16).[86] This central position is meant to serve several overlapping functions; it is prophetic, declaring Dante's exile and travails; it is hermeneutic, providing retrospective 'glosses' to previous utterances in the poem; and it is also meta-textual in referring to the genesis of the poem itself, putting into focus the core concerns of the *Commedia* and the mission of its main protagonist.[87] As such, the allusion to the *Aeneid* foregrounds the influence of Virgil's poetics on the formal and rhetorical configuration of the poem.[88] This also extends, naturally, to the figure of Latini.

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and round it off by bringing the conclusion back to the beginning. It sounds simple, but, paradoxically, ring composition is extremely difficult for Westerners to recognize" ("Preface" x).

[86] See Fosca (2003–2015), who in his commentary to verses 28–30, Cacciaguida's Latin utterance, states how "[l]'episodio di Cacciaguida, collocato nel centro del *Paradiso*, forma come l'ideale perno non solo della *cantica*, ma del poema intiero, perché in esso è confermata l'alta missione di Dante: missione poetica e morale, che è come l'essenza stessa del poema. E poiché tale missione è congiunta alla solenne profezia dell'esilio e a quella non meno solenne di Cangrande e delle sue imprese meravigliose (*Par*. XVII.76-93), era necessario che a tutto ciò facesse da sfondo uno scenario austero e grandioso, per dare a questa terna di canti uno speciale rilievo" ["the Cacciaguida episode, set in the center of *Paradiso*, forms the ideal cornerstone not only of the cantica, but of the entire poem, because in it is confirmed Dante's great mission: a poetic and moral mission, which is the very essence of the poem. And since this mission is related to the solemn prophecy of his exile and the no less solemn one of Cangrande and his glorious undertakins ..., it was necessary that the background to all that ought to be austere and grand, to give this triad of cantos a particular importance"] (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).

[87] Hermeneutic centrality being mirrored structurally in the middle of a text, or of a portion of text, is also hinted at in the *Vita nuova*, where Dante describes the apparition of the figure of Amore "nel mezzo de lo mio dormire" (XII, 3) describing himself as the center of a circle: "Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simili modo se habent circumferentie partes;" ["I am like the center of a circle, to which the parts of the circumference are related in a similar manner" (Alighieri, *Vita Nuova* 14 n. 2)] (4). Evidently, this also recalls the *incipit* of the *Commedia*, which begins "Nel mezzo del cammin" (*Inf*. I, v. 1).

[88] As Mazzotta points out: "[t]he point of departure of the poem is the encounter with Vergil, whose 'parola ornata' (*Inf*. II, 67) (fair speech), an allusion to the *ornatus* of rhetoric, has the power, in Beatrice's language, to aid the pilgrim in his quest" ("The Light of Venus" 67).

Alongside the theme of father figures, the theme of *patria*, of the fatherland, is also discussed at length in both encounters.[89] This is only natural considering that the prophecy concern's Dante's exile, but what is particularly interesting, as Marchesi points out, it that "[b]oth Brunetto and Cacciaguida insist on the necessary, biological connection of Florence to Rome—and both evoke the fall of Fiesole as the city's myth of origin" (92). Latini's prophecy begins by praising Dante's abilities and expresses regret for dying before Dante's journey for "dato t'avrei a l'opera conforto" (*Inf.* XV, v. 60).[90] He then speaks of "quello ingrato popolo maligno / che discese di Fiesole *ab antico*" (vv. 62–63 emphasis added), the descendants of Catiline who will be inimical to Dante in the future due to his political rectitude: "ti si farà, per tuo *ben far*, nimico" (v. 64 emphasis added).[91] Latini then comforts Dante, assuring him great honor but tells him to stay clear from the factional rivalries of Florence, repeating word for word, in a reversed pattern, the descriptors of the city—"avara, invidiosa e superba" (v. 68)—used in a previous prophetic encounter with the Florentine Ciacco in *Inferno* VI: "superbia, invidia e avarizia" (v. 74). Throughout the prophecy, Latini deploys a sustained metaphor whereby the Fiesolans, keeping with their mountainous origins, are wild goats and sour sorbs and Dante a "dolce fico" (v. 66), implying that the "bestie fiesolane" (v. 73) must be kept at a distance from him and that he must transplant himself elsewhere to grow.[92] Latini then seems to imply, via the botanical analogy with

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[89] See Marchesi, who notes how "one we read them [the cantos] vertically, we can see that the cantos numbered fifteen tell a tale of several pairs of cities. ... The vertical perspective invites readers to move backward from the Florence of the good old days that find in *Paradiso* XV and XVI to the corrupt Florence of the present depicted in *Inferno* XV and XVI" (89).

[90] It is hard to decipher whether this means political assistance or help of a literary nature, or if they are even meant to be distinguished considering Latini's politicization of rhetoric. For an overview of the question, see Vasoli (1994).

[91] The use of "ben far" as political action also has an echo in Latini's *Tesoretto*: "tutti per comune / tirassero una fune / di pace e di *benfare* / che già non può scampare / terra rotta di parte" (vv. 175–179, emphasis added). See also Dante's encounter with *Ciacco* in Inf. VI, where the pilgrim asks his fellow Florentine about the whereabouts of illustrious men of their city "ch'a *ben far* puoser li 'ngegni" (v. 81 emphasis added).

[92] The reference to a sweet fig also echoes Scripture, see the Gospels of Matthew (7:15–20): "Attendite a falsis prophetis, qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium, intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces: a fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos. Numquid colligunt de spinis uvas, aut de tribulis ficus? Sic omnis arbor bona fructus bonos facit: mala autem arbor malos fructus facit. Non potest arbor bona malos fructus facere: neque arbor mala bonos fructus facere. Omnis

Dante, that he contains the sacred seed of those Romans—"la sementa santa / di que' Roman" (*Inf.* XV, vv. 76–77)—that stayed and founded Florence after defeating the supporters of Catiline.[93]

As for Cacciaguida, he refers to the genealogy of the city of Florence as a history handed down orally, in the vernacular, by women that would narrate "d'i Troiani, di Fiesole e di Roma" (*Par.* XV, v. 126).[94] In *Paradiso* XVI, this foundational myth in tandem with the theme of miscegenation serve to justify the ongoing strife during Dante's time, perceived as resulting from the mixing of peoples: "Sempre la confusion de le persone / principio fu del mal de la cittade" (vv. 67–68).[95] It would appear that poetic genealogies, Virgil and Latini, bloodlines—Anchises, Aeneas, and Caesar, as well as Cacciaguida and Dante—and the birth and growth of cities, all serve as the backdrop to the genesis of the poem itself. After all, it is the Heaven of Mars, whose

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arbor, quæ non facit fructum bonum, excidetur, et in ignem mittetur. Igitur ex fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos" ["Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits" (NRSV trans.)]. See Luke as well (6:43–44).

[93] There is an obvious parallel with the Ulysses encounter, where his oration begins with: "Considerate la vostra *semenza*: / fatti non foste a viver come bruti, / ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza" (vv. 118–120 emphasis added).

[94] As the "Firenze" entry in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* points out, "non vuol dire che D[ante] e i suoi contemporanei ritenessero 'favole' le tradizioni sulle origini e i più antichi tempi della città. Erano per essi verità storiche, come tutto quello, del resto, che era contenuto nel mito—anche nel mito classico—e nell'epos: mito, epos, storia, tutto era sul medesimo piano di verità. D[ante] sa poco, o piuttosto dice poco, della F[irenze] preromana e romana: sa della discendenza da Fiesole (miserrima Faesulanorum propago, in *Ep* VI 24; quello ingrato popolo maligno / che discese di Fiesole ab antico, *If* XV 61-62; le bestie fiesolane, v. 73); sa di F[irenze] colonia romana, se questo, come pare, è il senso di quella bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma, Fiorenza, in *Cv* I III 4 (e la sementa santa / di que' Roman che vi rimaser quando / fu fatto il nido di malizia tanta, *If* XV 76-78; e vere matrem viperea feritale [Firenze] dilaniare contendit, dum contra Romam cornua rebellionis exacuit, quae ad ymaginem suam atque similitudinem fecit illam, *Ep* VII 25), ma gliene parlano il simulacro di Marte in capo al ponte, e i sarcofaghi davanti al bel San Giovanni" ["do not mean that Dante and his contemporaries considered as 'fables' the traditions on the origins and the most remote times of the city. They were to them historical truths, as all that was contained in the myth—even the classical one—and epic poetry: myth, epics, history, all were on the same plane of truth. Dante knows little, or rather says little, of the pre–Roman and Roman Florence: but he knows of its lineage with Fiesole ..., of Florence as a Roman colony ..., but the stone simulacrum of the statue of Mars on top of the bridge and the sarcophagi in front of the bel San Giovanni speak to him about it"] (Sestan et al.).

[95] In the parallel *canto* of *Inferno*, Dante mentions: "La gente nuova e i sùbiti guadagni / orgoglio e dismisura han generata, / Fiorenza, in te, sì che tu già ten piagni" (vv. 73–75). In Dante's invective against Pistoia in *Inferno* XXV, he alludes to the seed of defeated supporters of Catiline: "Ahi Pistoia, Pistoia ... / che 'n mal fare il seme tuo avanzi" (vv. 10–12). See Davis who compares these two mythological narratives: "[i]n the encounters with Brunetto in Hell and Cacciaguida in Paradise, Dante explicitly accepts the role of the rhetorician who gains honor from his advocacy of virtue" ("Brunetto Latini and Dante" 191).

symbolism directly implies political prophecies and involves the city's foundational myth, but what emerges from this confluence of themes is the significance and importance of rhetoric in giving form to the *Commedia*.

The theme of rhetoric is intrinsically tied to Florence's foundational narrative by the figure of Cicero, since it was the master of rhetoric himself who denounced Catiline, triggering the series of events that culminated in the city's foundation. In the *Convivio*, Dante sees nothing less than the providential hand of God at work in Cicero's defense of liberty and denunciation of Catiline.[96] Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*—alongside Virgil's *Aeneid*—is an important literary antecedent to both the Cacciaguida and Latini encounters in particular and, in general terms, to the *Commedia*.[97] Cicero is also the figure that brings together apparently disparate elements in Latini's encounter with Dante in *Inferno* XV: the mythical foundations of Florence, Dante learning from Latini "come l'uom s'etterna" (v. 85), and the promotion of his "Tesoro" (v. 121). For example, in Latini's *Rettorica*, an unfinished commentary to Cicero's *De inventione*, Brunetto presents himself as a double for Cicero:

> [l]'autore di questa opera è doppio: uno che di tutti i detti de' filosofi che fuoro davanti lui
>
> e della viva fonte del suo ingegno fece suo libro di rettorica, ciò fue Marco Tulio Cicero,
>
> il più sapientissimo de' Romani. Il secondo è Brunetto Latino, cittadino di Firenze, il quale

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[96] "E non puose Iddio le mani quano uno nuovo cittadino di picciola condizione, cioè Tullio, contra tanto cittadino quanto era Catellina la romana libertà difese? Certo sì" (IV, v).

[97] Scipio's dream is the only part of Cicero's *De re publica* that was known to Dante and his contemporaries and it typically circulated alongside Macrobius' commentary. See the "Cicero" entry in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca*: "Che D[ante] abbia conosciuto il *Somnium Scipionis*, se si pensa alla sua diffusione lungo il corso del Medioevo, grazie a Macrobio, è in sé altamente verosimile: se e dove siano da vederne le tracce o le riprove, è questione aperta" ["That Dante had known the Dream of Scipio, if one thinks at its reception throughout the Middle Ages, thanks to Macrobius, is highly likely: if and where one can see its traces or evidence, is an open question"] (Ronconi). Curiously, Macrobius' commentary to the Ciceronian text was also a medieval source for the medieval approximation of pi: 22/7 (Hart, "Architecture and Text: The Florentine Baptistery in Dante's 'Commedia'" 158).

mise tutto suo studio e suo intendimento a isponere a chiarire ciò che Tulio aveva detto.

(qtd. in Ciccuto 55)[98]

The correspondences between both episodes present a series of genealogies: intellectual, historical, and literary, that encompass authors like Virgil, Cicero, and Latini and cities like Troy, Rome, and Florence. This theme extends to the genesis of the poem itself, revealing a dialectical relationship between Dante's encyclopedism and Brunetto's literary projects that links rhetoric with wisdom and politics. The themes of rhetoric, wisdom, politics, fame, and encyclopedism, are core concerns of the *Commedia* and they reappear—often combined—in various striking episodes, like *Inferno* XXVI, where behind the critique of Ulysses rhetorical dexterity Mazzotta deftly discerns Dante's poetic project as well as Latini's shadowy figure.[99]

Since Cacciaguida's voice emanates from the jeweled cross, its lexicon of rich materials extends throughout the encounter. The description of the movement of the light across the horizontal and vertical bands that make up the sign of the cross compares Cacciaguida to a "gemma": "né si partì la *gemma* dal suo nastro" (v. 22 emphasis added). Dante later addresses his forefather as a precious stone:

Ben supplico io a te, vivo *topazio*

che questa gioia prezïosa *ingemmi*,

[98] For details on the *Rettorica*, see Armour: "[a]n apparently unfinished translation and commentary on Cicero's *De inventione*, chapters 1-17, it expounds the context of Wisdom (Philosophy) and the Liberal Arts and then goes on to deal with the categories and purposes of rhetoric and the construction of speeches and letters, with discussion of some defects. Pertaining to the Ciceronian tradition underlying the medieval *ars dictandi* (the art of rhetorical composition), it is also a notable example of early Florentine civic prehumanism in the vernacular" ("Brunetto Latini" 127).

[99] Mazzotta, as part of an analysis of a Dante–Brunetto–Ulysses node around the notion of rhetoric, argues that in *Inferno* XXVI, Dante has as his polemical target "his own teacher Brunetto Latini's humanistic myth of rhetoric as man's medium to act upon the formlessness of the world and make the world the place of life" ("Rhetoric and History" 73). This is anchored in a thought-provoking teleological analysis of "the movement from the *Convivio* to the *Divine Comedy*," arguing how "the *Convivio* ends with a neoplatonic interpretation of the *Aeneid*; the *Divine Comedy* begins with the resumption of a neoplatonic attempt at self-transcendence which fails and with the subsequent rediscovery of the *Aeneid* as the poem of history" (81–82). According to Mazzotta, Ulysses—and Latini—both represent the pitfalls of rhetoric for rhetoric's sake and the movement from the *Convivio* to the *Commedia* represents a "logical shift from the political view of rhetoric to the awareness that language is an inherently unstable and murky instrument" (73).

perché mi facci del tuo nome sazio (vv. 85–87 emphases added).

In *Paradiso* XVII, during the conclusion of Dante-pilgrim's encounter with Cacciaguida, Dante describes his blessed patriarch as "il mio tesoro" (v. 121) and a golden mirror, a "specchio d'oro" (v. 123).[100] In the *Epistola a Can Grande*, Dante's patron is effectively called a "quasi thesaurus": "Preferens ergo amicitiam vestram *quasi thesaurum* carissimum, providentia diligenti et accurata solicitudine illam servare desidero." [101] The epistle's author will also later call the poem a result of Dante's mind, a "quasi thesaurum" (19). The pertinence of the term will be unpacked shortly. As mentioned, within the internal network of the poem, "il mio tesoro" (v. 121), is a self-citation, repeating word for word "il mio Tesoro" (v. 119) of the Latini episode in *Inferno* XV.[102]

It is after Latini's prophecy that the pilgrim responds by praising his former teacher and mentioning how it was him who had taught Dante how a man can make himself eternal: "m'insegnavate come l'uom s'etterna" (v. 85). Following these lines, the poet makes it a point of emphasis to express the influence of Latini: "mentr' io vivo / convien che ne la mia lingua si

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[100] Laura Pasquini aptly observes how with these verses (vv. 121–123) "[c]iò che Dante vuole descrivere è una superficie dorata la cui lucentezza aumenta a seconda dell'intensità della luce che vi si rifrange, uno specchio in cui, come nelle tessere dei fondi dorati, al piombo si è sostituito l'oro. L'anima gioiosa dell'avo si staglia dunque sul fondo incorporeo di un mosaico dorato in maniera non dissimile rispetto alle immagini sante che rinveniamo numerose nelle composizioni musive di Ravenna tardoantica" ["that which Dante wants to describe is a golden surface whose brightness increases according to the light's intensity that refracts in it, a mirror in which, just like tesserae with golden backgrounds, lead has been substituted with gold. The joyous soul of his ancestor is thus projected onto an incorporeal background of a golden mosaic in a similar fashion to the numerous holy images in Ravenna's late-antique mosaics"] (*Iconografie Dantesche* 39).

[101] ["Esteeming, then, your friendship as a most precious treasure, I desire to preserve it with assiduous forethought and anxious care"] (3 emphasis added).

[102] Freccero interprets this self-citation as "not only the poet's claim to have superseded Brunetto's work with his own, but also a hint at the nature of their difference: Brunetto's text is reified, autochthonous, and eternal; Dante's text is in the making, a series of glosses on the 'magno volume' of God's Book" ("The Eternal Image of the Father" 83). Schnapp also recognizes a correspondence with *Inferno* XV, citing the work of the French Dantista André Pézard: Cacciaguida "is Dante's 'treasure' in pointed contrast with Brunetto Latini's *Tresor*: the speaker of a prelapsarian Florentine dialect and authentic Christian father and teacher, who contrasts the linguistically and philosophically corrupt humanist paternal image (*Inf*. 15.83)" ("Sant'Apollinare in Classe and Dante's Poetics of Martyrdom" 199). However, he does not pursue this interpretive path any further, taking instead another direction by exploring the Christian lapidary tradition. For Pézard, see "Le trésor de Dante" 401–405. Seen in this light, the golden mirror in verse 123 may also be hinting at another widely read encyclopedia in Dante's time: Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum maius* (*Great Mirror*).

scerna" (vv. 86–87). The reader is left pondering on the nature of this knowledge, especially in light of the situation within which Brunetto finds himself.[103]

The point of contact is literary and philosophical, but how and what? The suggestion that this could be Latini's use of the Italian vernacular in his poetic compositions is dismissed by a passage in the *De vulgari eloquentia* where Dante rejects him as a stylistic model.[104] This critique of Latini is also corroborated by a less explicit mention of him in the *Convivio*, where Dante condemns to "perpetuale infamia e depressione" Italians who praise "lo volgare altrui e lo loro proprio dispregiano" (I, xi, 1).[105] Additionally, Dante's comment is made with a reference to the authority of Cicero himself and this cannot be overlooked in light of Latini's posturing as a double of the great Roman orator.[106] Since Latini wrote his *Trésor* in French, wherein he praises that vernacular above all others, it appears to concern him directly.[107] But the overall critique remains

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[103] Much ink has been spilled on the question of what exactly did Latini teach Dante. For more on the question and a list of secondary sources, see Hollander's commentary to lines 83–85 of *Inferno* XV (2000–2007): "Dante pays his debt to Brunetto. But what was it that Brunetto (or, more likely, his writings) taught Dante about immortality? Brunetto himself (*Tresor* II.cxx.1) says that fame for good works gives one a second life on earth. Surely that is not enough for the Christian Dante, who knows the true meaning of immortality. The only *seconde vie* that matters is in the afterlife. Is Dante saying that Brunetto taught him this? That seems impossible. But he did learn from him how his earthly fame might be established by writing a narrative poem in Italian. And his heavenly reward might be combined with that one if his poem were, unlike Brunetto's work, dedicated to a higher purpose" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*). See also Bosco and Reggio's commentary to lines 55–78 (1979). See also Freccero's analysis: "[t]he pilgrim's acknowledgment of the lessons learned from Brunetto—"come l'uom s'etterna"—must also be read with the clash of antiquity and Christianity in mind. The pursuit of immortality may be perfectly laudable from a secular point of view, but the secular point of view is a luxury restricted to the living. It contrasts as sharply with the transcendent meaning of eternity, that is, salvation, as the pilgrim's filial piety contrasts with the degrading circumstances in which he finds his father image" ("The Eternal Image of the Father" 88).

[104] In his quest for the "vulgaris illustris," Dante qualifies the poetry of "Brunectum Florentinum" as "non curialia sed municipalia tantum invenientur" ["in una lingua non più che municipale e mai curiale"] (I, xiii, 1).

[105] This is repeated at the end of the section: "lo pusillanimo sempre le sue cose crede valere poco, e l'altrui assai; onde molti per questa viltade dispregiano lo proprio volgare, e l'altrui pregiano" (I, xi, 20).

[106] "Contra questi cotali grida Tulio nel principio d'un suo libro che si chiama *Libro di Fine de' Beni*, però che al suo tempo biasimavano lo latino romano e commendavano la gramatica greca, per simiglianti cagioni che questi fanno vile lo parlare italico e prezioso quello di Proenza" (I, xi, 14). These are strong arguments in support of Pézard's linguistic interpretation of Latini's sin.

[107] Mazzoni notes that "anche se nel *Convivio* (come prova l'acceso, risentito aggettivare, ben rispondente del resto alla non meno accesa e impegnata professione di fede nella bontà naturale del volgare italico) il giudizio porta inoltre sulla prassi, investendo direttamente il comportamento, le scelte concrete di un gruppo (sia pur esiguo) di scrittori: dal quale non è possibile isolare il Latini. Ma anche in questo caso, la condanna manifesta non tocca i contenuti del *Tresor*" ("Latini, Brunetto" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*).

confined to linguistic and stylistic issues: the praising of French over Italian and the municipal style of the latter, not necessarily the structure and content of his literary output.

Dante then states that he has taken mental notes of Latini's prophecy, so that he can gloss them later:

Ciò che narrate di mio corso scrivo,

e serbolo a *chiosar* con altro testo

a donna che saprà, s'a lei arrivo. (vv. 88–90 emphasis added)

Considering Latini's preeminence as a rhetorician, it seems fitting that a former student would ostentate abilities in the arts of rhetoric and memory, such as intratextual glossing—"chiosar"—and using the book-of-memory metaphor: "mio corso scrivo."[108] As for the change from a proleptic "donna che saprà, s'a lei arrivo" in *Inferno* XV to Cacciaguida in *Paradiso* XV, this is not indicative of a weak authorial design or a lapsus on Dante's part, but quite the opposite, since it follows yet again the formal patterns of the *Aeneid*.[109] In Book III, Helenus tells Aeneas that he will learn of the future from the Sybil but it is Anchises instead that does so; the Sybil, like Beatrice, guides our hero to the center of the poem.[110]

A quick note regarding Virgil's silence throughout the *canto* and Dante appearing to evade Latini's question "chi è questi che mostra 'l cammino?" (v. 48). This has been variously interpreted

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[108] See Mazzotta, who remarks that "[i]t may be added that Dante uses the word 'chiosar' in a technical sense, as if to show his teacher his grasp of techniques of reading" ("Theology and Exile" 270 n. 4).

[109] Marchesi argues that since it is not "a donna" but Cacciaguida instead that completes the proleptic reference, it points to unfulfilled expectations and thus destabilizes the notion of a "strong authorial design" and questions "the internal coherence of the work to the point of discounting the possibility of an holistic hermeneutic for the poem" (78–79). Marchesi goes on to say that "[t]he return of the technical term 'gloss' explicitly marks the unfulfilled and displaced connection" (79). The contrary can easily be argued by simply pointing out the homodiegetic nature of the text, that it was Dante-pilgrim and not the poet who uttered those words in the *Inferno* and within the logic of the narrative, it is normal that the main protagonist is unaware of what was to come, other than a possible reunion with Beatrice, hence the assumption. If anything, this can serve to legitimize the realism of his journey, an authenticating device underlining the pilgrim's gap in knowledge, but not necessarily the poet's. See also *Purg*. XI: "Più non dirò, e scuro so che parlo; / ma poco tempo andrà, che ' tuoi vicini / faranno sì che tu potrai *chiosarlo*" (vv. 139–141 emphasis added); and *Purg*. XX, v. 99.

[110] See Book III, ll. 374–462.

as indicating a reticence in introducing a superior teacher and/or a criticism of Brunetto's knowledge and appreciation of Virgil.[111] For the present concerns, what matters is that the only time that Virgil, the other literary "maestro" (v. 97), does speak in this *canto*, it is to highlight Dante's mental note-taking: "Bene ascolta chi la nota" (v. 99), making the elements of memory and reading a focal point.[112] At the end of Dante's encounter with Latini, the latter claims to live on in his: "Tesoro / *nel qual io vivo ancora*" (vv. 119–120 emphasis added), thus providing some information about "come l'uom s'etterna" (v. 85). In the subsequent *canto*, after addressing Latini's influence and the latter's claim of immortality through his "Tesoro," Dante-poet directly addresses the reader and, nestled within yet another ineffability *topos*, links this same mental note-taking of his journey with the first explicit mention of his poem: "per le *note* / di questa *comedìa*, lettor, ti giuro" (vv. 127–128 emphases added). It seems that the medium through which this purported second life is achieved—according to a consensus between Latini and Dante-pilgrim—is the fame garnered by his second body, his literary *corpus*.[113]

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[111] See Bosco (1966), who notes "[d]el silenzio, oltre quest'ultima regola generale, sono state addotte varie ragioni, sottilmente, troppo sottilmente escogitate: che tacesse per non umiliare Brunetto, presentandogli un altro suo maestro, e più grande; che la poca conoscenza che Brunetto avrebbe avuta delle opere di Virgilio lo facesse indegno della presentazione" (101). The questions posed to Dante by Brunetto echo Deiphobus' questions to Aeneas in the *Aeneid*: "Sed te qui vivum casus, age, fare vicissim, / attulerint. Pelagine venis erroribus actus, / an monitu divom? An quae te Fortuna fatigat, / ut tristes sine sole domos, loca turbida, adires?" (ll. 531–534) ["But come, tell in turn what chance has brought you here, alive. Have you come here rive by your ocean-wanderings, or at Heaven's command? Or what doom compels you to visit these sad, sunless dwellings, this land of disorder?" (Fairclough trans.)].

[112] De Poli, citing Vandelli and Sapegno, also recognizes the mnemonic function of Virgil's interjection (*La structure mnémonique de la Divine Comédie* 205). This verse, like many other in the poem, is much debated. A standard interpretation is that one is a good listener if they take note of what they hear, and stamp it in their memory for a later use. In relation to the act of listening to prophecy, the verse is also close in phrasing and meaning to Revelations: "beatus qui legit et qui audiunt verba prophetiae et servant ea quae in ea scripta sunt tempus enim prope est" (Apocalypsis I:3). Others have also noted the relationship between Dante's discourse on fortune in verses 94–96 and those found in the *Aeneid*: "quidquid erit, superanda omnis fortuna ferendo est" (V, l. 710), thus making Virgil's interjection a nod to his own poem as well.

[113] In the *Trésor*, Latini expounds the trope of fame as a second life, writing how "cil ki traitent de grans choses tesmoignent que glore done au preudome une seconde vie; c'est a dire que après sa mort la renomee ki maint de ses bones oevres fait sambler k'il soit encore en vie" (II, 120, i, qtd in Contini, *Laude, poesia didattica dell'Italia centrale, poesia realistica toscana* 170).

From an interpretive point of view, the Latini encounter in *Inferno* XV presents two distinct

yet overlapping issues: first, the precise nature of Latini's sin, and secondly, the type of knowledge

he imparted onto Dante.[114] The argument put forth is that the knowledge Latini conveyed to Dante

is linked to encyclopedism and rhetoric, the two distinctive traits of the rhetor's body of work. The

ironic context within which Dante praises his former teacher, and the latter's commending of his

own "Tesoro"—while in eternal damnation as a sodomite—certainly complicates the nature of the

knowledge imparted, or at least destabilizes it, pointing perhaps to its limitations and pitfalls.[115]

Indeed, despite the filial affection and touching farewell, the fact remains that Dante casts a moral

judgment on Latini, since—ultimately—he is the one that places him in hell.[116] Freccero states it

best when he points out how: "[t]he pilgrim's shock at finding Brunetto here—'Siete voi qui, ser

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[114] Davis suggests several possibilities, only to dismiss them, such as it was perhaps a specific "understanding of the nature of true nobility the debt to Brunetto which Dante acknowledged in the *Commedia*"; that it was stylistic, but Dante's other writings suggest otherwise; or that it was perhaps moral and theoretical, as suggested by his son's Pietro's commentary ("Brunetto Latini and Dante" 185–187). See Mazzoni who responds to this question by stating that "[è] dunque un ampio ventaglio di possibilità, per chi voglia definire l'essenza dell'insegnamento ideale e pratico insieme, svolto da Brunetto nei confronti dei giovani fiorentini: di retorica, di etica, di politica: lezione amplissima, insomma, e di un ben alto e civile umanesimo" ["there is therefore a wide selection of possibilities, for those who want to define the essence of both the ideal and practical teachings of Brunetto to young Florentines: of rhetoric, ethics, politics, a very broad lesson indeed, and a high and civil humanism"] ("Brunetto Latini" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*). See also Bosco, who cites Vittorio Rossi on the topic: "erano ammaestramenti di rettorica e di politica, che su quella bocca prendevano l'aspetto e l'elevatezza di ammaestramenti di moralità e giustizia civile, e avviavano chi li seguisse, ad acquistar gloria di scienza e virtù" ["they were teachings of rhetoric and politics, that on those lips took on the aspect and elevation of teachings pertaining to morality and social justice, setting off those who followed them, to acquiring glory of science and virtue"] (106).

[115] Davis acknowledges this irony, but responds that: "[i]n view of the close parallels in content and tone between the Brunetto and Cacciaguida episodes, it seems far-fetched to conclude that Dante meant his meeting with his old master to be interpreted ironically" ("Brunetto Latini and Dante" 195). Armour also points to this difficulty, mentioning that: "[a] problem facing all interpreters of *Inferno* XV concerns its positive aspect. ... Despite Brunetto's belief in destiny and the stars and despite the limitations of his concept of immortality, his lessons to Dante in life and in the poem are here proclaimed as positive. In some way, political, moral, and maybe literary, he was and will always remain Dante's 'father'" ("Dante's Brunetto: The Paternal Paterine" 23).

[116] The Latini episode—like many other—has generated a long-standing debate regarding the exact nature of Latini's sin. The most reasonable argument presented thus far is the oft-cited but rarely read work of Pézard that insists on Brunetto's sin being linguistic rather than sexual. Alternative hypotheses include, but are not limited to, political and epistemological sins (astrology, intellectual pride and contempt for religion, Manicheism, perjury, opposition to the empire, et al.). For example, see Kay "The Sin(s) of Brunetto Latini" 19–31, Armour "Dante's Brunetto: The Paternal Paterine" 1–38 and "Brunetto Latini" 127–9. Freccero states it best when he points out how: "[t]he pilgrim's shock at finding Brunetto here—'Siete voi qui, ser Brunetto?' (Are you here, ser Brunetto?) (*Inf*. 15.30)—is matched by our own, each time we realize that it is the very same Dante who places him among the sodomites" ("The Eternal Image of the Father" 84).

Brunetto?' (Are you here, ser Brunetto?) (*Inf.* 15.30)—is matched by our own, each time we realize

that it is the very same Dante who places him among the sodomites" (84). One could assume a

negative import to the nature of Latini's knowledge, but this is not necessarily an either/or

situation, since the assumption would fall in something akin to what Barolini describes as the

collocation fallacy.[117] A nuanced approach is possible, Latini's "Tesoro" can both positively

influence Dante's writings and be criticized, regardless of his sin, thus giving space to both Dante's

moral judgment and the positive value and human dignity of Brunetto Latini and his *corpus*.[118]

Are we to discard the formal and textual influences of Virgil on Dante's poetry due to his status

within the economy of the *Commedia*? Of course not.

Keeping with the epic common-place of the prophetic paternal encounter, in *Paradiso*

XVII, Cacciaguida tells Dante of his future destiny in three parts: the incumbent sufferings of exile

(vv. 43–69), his first stay in Verona with Bartolomeo della Scala (70–75), and, lastly, his second

stay there under the patronage of Can Grande (vv. 76–93).[119] In the first part, Cacciaguida uses a

similar language to Brunetto's prophecy, proposing a way out of the dual-threat mentioned by

Latini, "La tua fortuna tanto onor ti serba, / che *l'una parte e l'altra* avranno fame / di te" (*Inf.*

XV, vv. 70–72 emphases added), stating that Dante should remain autonomous: "ch'a te fia bello

/ averti fatta *parte* per te stesso" (*Par.* XVII, vv. 68–69 emphasis added). It is also Cacciaguida

who, at the end of his prophecy, states that he has provided the literal and metaphorical glosses to

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[117] Barolini explains the "collocation fallacy" as such: "the set of assumptions that permit a critic to argue against a given point of view on the basis of that soul's collocation within the fictive possible world of the *Commedia*. Thus, reading X is not tenable with regard to character X because, if it were operative, character X would be located elsewhere" ("Detheologizing Dante: Realism, Reception, and the Resources of Narrative" 15).

[118] This is the perspective taken by both Chiavacci-Leonardi (1991–1997) and Fosca (2003–2015), with the latter writing that: "l'eternità cui qui si fa riferimento è quella conseguita mediante opere svolte in ambito terreno: per il poeta, la vera eternità è quella data dalla salvezza, quindi l'insegnamento di Latini è limitato alla conquista della fama mondana (cfr. *Inf.* XXIV, n. 46-51), ossia è limitato in sé e per sé" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).

[119] This last section serves as an encomium to Dante's patron, who is himself associated with the figure of Mars by means of a periphrasis: "Con lui vedrai colui che 'mpressso fue, / nascendo, sí da questa stella forte" (vv. 76–77).

Dante's textual journey, looking backwards to what was said previously: "le *chiose* / di quel che ti fu detto" (*Par*. XVII, vv. 94–95 emphasis added). This has a direct correspondence with "chiosar" in *Inferno* XV, the mental note-taking that Virgil made a point to highlight and that reappears in *Inferno* XVI, one verse before the appearance of the 'comedía.' The *Paradiso* passage is preceded by Cacciaguida instructing Dante to use his book-of-memory: "portera'ne scritto ne la mente" (v. 91).[120] The occurrences of "chiosar" and "chiose" both make use of the memory-as-book metaphor and deal with interpreting prophetic matters.

Dante-poet then uses a weaving metaphor that compares Cacciaguida's "chiose" to woof— "trama" (*Par*. XVII, v. 101)—and the pilgrim's questions to warp—"tela" (v. 102). In a piece of woven fabric, the warp alludes to threads that run lengthwise; whereas the woof runs *cross*wise and, when combined, completes a pattern. The analogy between warp and woof with the exegetical practice of glossing puts into emphasis the poem's structure and organization, how weaving symmetrical strands of texts can elucidate prophetic messages.[121] Dante's use of the weaving and glossing metaphors is not casual.[122] They are a textual signpost that indicates knowledge of mnemonic practices for compositional and exegetical purposes. Would this also be part of the type of knowledge that Brunetto imparted to Dante, one related to the arts of rhetoric and memory, to the skills involved in constructing a self-glossing poem?

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[120] A similar occurrence is found in *Purg*. XXXIII, where Beatrice urges Dante to remember by means of text and images painted in one's memory: "voglio anco, e se non scritto, almen dipinto, / che 'l te ne porti dentro a te" (vv. 76–77). See also Dante-poet's invocation of the Muses in *Inf*. II: "o mente che scrivesti ciò ch'io vidi" (v. 8).

[121] For a similar occurrence of the metaphor, see *Par*. III, vv. 95–96: "per apprender da lei qual fu la tela / onde non trasse infino a co la spuola."

[122] For more on the weaving metaphor, see Martinez, who describes it as "the most far-reaching textile metaphor of the *Commedia*" ("Dante 'buon Sartore' (*Paradiso* 32.140): Textile Arts, Rhetoric, and Metapoetics at the End of the *Commedia*" 35). It is also no surprise to see Martinez mention the parallel structure of the *Commedia*, citing Simon Gilson's essay on vertical readings in the accompanying footnote to this statement: "[t]o characterize Dante as someone who plans his work in advance might seem to belabor the obvious, but it is scarcely trivial that Dante implies, as he finishes his poem, that he had conceived of and planned out his work in its entirety in the recesses (*arcanum*) of his mind, and to have put in place at an early stage of planning structures such as the 'parallel' cantos that have been recognized as consistent over the three cantiche" (38).

Following a vocative "padre mio" (*Par*. XVII, v. 106), Dante acknowledges the benefits of foresight when dealing with the blows of fortune, repeating a similar response to Latini's prophecy in *Inferno* XV, but this time keeping tune with the martial symbolism of the Heaven of Mars:

> Ben veggio, padre mio, sì come sprona
>
> lo tempo verso me, per colpo darmi
>
> tal, ch'è più grave a chi più s'abbandona;
>
> per che di provedenza è buon ch'io m'armi. (vv. 106–109)[123]

Dante then recapitulates the three sections of his poem, starting from *Inferno*, "giù per lo mondo sanza fine amaro" (v. 112), then his climb in *Purgatorio*, "per lo monte del cui bel cacume / li occhi de la mia donna mi levaro" (vv. 133–114), and, his ascent to *Paradiso*, "poscia per lo ciel, di lume in lume" (v. 115). This process of relating the pilgrim's previous experiences also occurs in *Inferno* XV, where Dante answers Latini's questions by recounting the incipit of the poem with borrowings from his teacher's *Tesoretto* (vv. 49–54).[124] This recapitulation frames the pilgrim's

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[123] Compare "ch'a la Fortuna, come vuol, son presto. / Non è nuova a li orecchi miei tal arra: / però giri Fortuna la sua rota / come le piace, e 'l villan la sua marra" (*Inf*. XV, vv. 93–96). See also *Par*. XVII, where Dante-pilgrim asks Cacciaguida about the prophecies he has heard in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*: "mentre ch'io era a Virgilio congiunto / su per lo monte che l'anime cura / e discendendo nel mondo defunto, / dette mi fuor di mia vita futura / parole gravi, avvegna ch'io mi senta / ben tetragono ai colpi di ventura;" (vv. 19–24). For "tetragono", see Chiavacci-Leonardi's commentary (1991–1997) to verse 24: "[i]l termine, che letteralmente indica una figura geometrica quadrangolare, era dagli antichi riferito al cubo, come appare dall'*Etica Nicomachea* (I, xi 1100a), dove è usato con un simile senso metaforico, così illustrato nel commento di Tommaso, da dove evidentemente Dante lo deriva: 'chiama tetragono colui che è perfetto nella virtù a somiglianza del cubo che ha sei superfici quadrate, per cui sta bene in piedi su qualsiasi superficie. Allo stesso modo il virtuoso si trova bene in qualsiasi condizione di fortuna'" ["the term, which literally indicates a quadrangular geometric figure, was used since antiquity to refer to the cube, as it appears in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where it is used in a similar metaphorical sense, as illustrated in Aquinas' commentary, whence Dante evidently borrowed it: 'is called 'tetragono' he who is perfect in virtue similarly to the cube that has six square surfaces, for which it stands on its feet on whatever surface. In the same way, the virtuous person finds themselves well in whatever situation"] (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).

[124] See Fosca's commentary (2003–2015) who points out the similarity with Latini's *Tesoretto*: "[a]nche Brunetto, nel *Tesoretto*, narra di aver perso 'il gran cammino' e di essere entrato in una 'selva diversa': 'e io, in tal corrotto / pensando a capo chino, / perdei il gran cammino, / e tenni a la traversa / d'una selva diversa" (vv. 186-90). Ma alla fine, dopo essersi convertito, il protagonista rinuncia alle delizie di un futuro cristiano a favore delle attrattive terrene, ritornando 'a la foresta' (v. 2893)" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*). See also Mazzotta: "[a]s has so often been remarked,

doubts about retelling his experience, because: "s'io ridico, / a molti fia sapor di forte agrume" (vv. 116–117). Besides being exiled from Florence, Dante fears losing other possible places of refuge because of his verses: "se loco m'è tolto piú caro, / io non perdessi li altri per miei carmi" (vv. 110–111), which does sound hollow, considering that Cacciaguida just told him about his glorious future patrons.[125] Conversely, Dante fears losing fame if he were to remain silent:

> s'io al vero son timido amico,
>
> temo di perder viver tra coloro
>
> che questo tempo chiameranno antico. (vv. 118–120)[126]

Just like Latini, Dante seeks to live—"*viver*"—in the future through the writing of his poem and achieving the status of an *auctor*. Latini's "Tesoro" has something significant to do with the genesis and structure of the *Commedia*.

The poem here becomes self-referential, it refers to its inception and purpose. It is a metatextual moment, the second of three poetic investitures in an authorial operation of self-legitimation (*Purg*. XXXII, vv. 103–105; *Par*. XXVII, vv. 64–66). The following verse—"La luce in che rideva *il mio tesoro*" (v. 121 emphasis added)—is used by Dante to describe Cacciaguida's reaction to Dante's quandary but it also sets up a clear comparison on the topic with Latini's "Tesoro / nel qual io vivo ancora" (*Par*. XVII, vv. 119–120).[127] Its occurrence is meant to mobilize

Dante's lines on his going astray in a valley, which recapitulate the opening verses of the poem, deliberately echo the beginning of Brunetto Latini's *Tesoretto*" ("Poetry and the Encyclopedia" 30).

[125] See Hollander's commentary (2000–2007) to these lines: "[t]his tercet sounds a rare (and disingenuous) note of caution on the poet's part. If he will lose his native city within two years because of his obstinate adherence to telling the truth, should not he then consider mitigating his bitter words in complaint of the human iniquity found in other parts of Italy lest he be denied shelter and support in his exile?" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).

[126] Hollander also observes how "Brunetto seems to have been on Dante's mind in this context" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*). De Poli also recognizes this correspondence, citing Pézard (*La structure mnémonique de la Divine Comédie* 199).

[127] If Dante calls his *Convivio* is a "quasi comento" (I, iii, 2), the *Commedia* is likewise a quasi-*Tesoro*, as expressed by the author of the *Epistola a Can Grande*: "dicere vult de regno celesti quicquid in mente sua, *quasi thesaurum*, potuit retinere" ["he wants to tell of the celestial kingdom whatsoever he was able to store up, *almost like a treasure*, in his mind"] (19 emphasis added). This closely resembles the beginning of *Paradiso*, where Dante states: "quant'io del regno santo / *ne la mia mente potei far Tesoro* / sarà ora materia del mio canto" (vv. 10–12 emphasis added).

a series of connections, a constellation of themes, regarding the coming into being of the poem and the relationship between encyclopedism, rhetoric, and politics embodied by the works of Latini.

*Paradiso* XVII ends with Cacciaguida urging Dante to write down all that he has seen, "tutta tua visïon fa manifesta" (v. 128). Despite the bitter taste of his words, "vital nodrimento / lascerà poi, quando sarà digesta" (vv. 131–132). This is a variation of a similar metaphor found in yet another investiture, no less than that of the prophet John in Revelations.[128] Indeed, as Mazzotta rightly observes, "the references to his own words as a palpable and edible substance place the poem within the tradition of the public utterances of biblical prophets" ("Theology and Exile" 179). It also borrows from Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, another significant rhetorical antecedent, alongside Augustine's *Confessions*, that gives license to a homodiegetic narrative, that is, an author talking about their personal experiences.[129] Boethius' text is also cited as an authority in justifying Dante's desire to redress the perpetual infamy of his exile and writing his encyclopedic *Convivio*.[130]

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[128] "Et abii ad angelum, dicens ei, ut daret mihi librum. Et dixit mihi: Accipe librum, et devora illum: et faciet amaricari ventrem tuum, sed in ore tuo erit dulce tamquam mel. / Et accepi librum de manu angeli, et devoravi illum: et erat in ore meo tamquam mel dulce, et cum devorassem eum, amaricatus est venter meus: / et dixit mihi: Oportet te iterum prophetare gentibus, et populis, et linguis, et regibus multis" (10:9–11) ["So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll; and he said to me, 'Take it, and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth.' So I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it; it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. Then they said to me, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples and nations and languages and kings'" (NRSV trans.)].

[129] Compare these lines to Boethius' *De consolatione philosophae*: "Talia sunt quae restant, ut degustata quidem mordeant, interius autem recepta dulcescant" (III, Pr. I, 13–14) ["Those remedies that are left now are like those that sting on the tongue, but sweeten once taken within" (Boethius 229)]. "The convention, Dante says, has been violated by Boethius and St. Augustine, who have deployed an autobiographical focus in *The Consolation of Philosophy* and the *Confessions*, respectively, in order for Boethius to remove the suspicion of infamy from his own exile and, in the case of St. Augustine, to set a useful example that others might emulate" (Mazzotta, "Theology and Exile" 181).

[130] See the *Convivio* (I, ii): "E questa necessitate mosse Boezio di se medesimo a parlare, acciò che sotto pretesto di consolazione escusasse la perpetuale infamia del suo essilio, mostrando quello essere ingiusto, poi che altro escusatore non si levava. L'altra è quando, par ragionare di sé, grandissima utilitade ne segue altrui per via di dottrina; e questa ragione mosse Agustino ne le sue Confessioni a parlare si sé" (13–14) ["This necessity moved Boethius to speak of himself, so that under the pretext of consolation he might defend himself against the perpetual infamy of his exile, by showing it to be unjust, since no other apologist came forward. The other arises when by speaking of oneself very

Much like Dante's first poetic investiture by Beatrice, Dante's mission is to write "in pro del mondo che mal vive" (*Purg.* XXXII, v. 103). Cacciaguida compares Dante's poetic voice to a wind striking the highest summits, adding that "ciò non fa d'*onor* poco argomento" (*Par.* XVII, v. 135 emphasis added).[131] The *canto* concludes by stating that it is precisely for these reasons that Dante witnessed and encountered in his voyage famous people—"l'anime che son di fama note" (v. 138)—so that the mind of his reader "l'animo di quel ch'ode" (v. 139) is provided with an "essempro" (v. 140) that is recognizable and, more importantly, memorable.[132] The use of 'animo' is not insignificant; 'anima' *anima*tes the body whereas "animo" is the seat and principle of our faculties (intellectual, affect, and will), the force within the mind that wills, that is to say, our *animus*, that in us which decides.[133] In other words, Dante's *imagines* are meant to be *exempla*, to leave a lasting impression on the mind of his readers.

Cacciaguida sanctions Dante's literary project on the basis of ethical and pedagogical goals and ends by enunciating a principle of rhetorical strategy: the use of *exempla* for moral instruction.[134] The narrative sequence of encounters with famous people throughout his voyage is designed to leave a lasting impression in the memory of his future listeners.[135] As Yates famously

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great benefit comes to another by way of instruction; and this reason moved Augustine to speak of himself in his Confessions."]

[131] This also has a textual echo in *Inferno* XV, when Latini mentions how Dante's future holds great honor: "La tua fortuna tanto *onor* ti serba" (v. 70 emphasis added).

[132] This welding of wisdom and eloquence is reminiscent of the myth of Orpheus but also that of Cicero's *De inventione*, where he prescribes how to attract the good-will of the audience: "[a]ttentos autem faciemus si demonstrabimus e aquae dicturi erimus magna, nova, incredibilia esse, aut ad omnes aut ad eos qui audient, aut ad aliquos illustres homines aut ad deos immortales aut ad summam rem publicam pertinere" (I, xvi, 23) ["We shall make our audience attentive if we show that the matters which we are about to discuss are important, novel, or incredible, or that they concern all humanity or those in the audience or some illustrious men or the immortal gods or the general interest of the state" (Hubbell trans.)].

[133] Hence the root of the English word "animosity."

[134] As Hollander points out: "[t]he general sense is clear enough: exemplary figures and clear arguments are both required to convince a reader" *(Dartmouth Dante Project)*. The overlapping issue regarding the allegory of the poem has been broached in Part I of Chapter 2: "Dante and Allegory."

[135] De Poli recognizes in this passage "des techniques très proches de celles des prédicateurs dominicains qui participèrent à la formation du jeune Dante" ["techniques that are very close to those of Dominican preachers, who participated in the education of a young Dante"] (*La structure mnémonique de la Divine Comédie* 177–78).

stated, the *Commedia* is a rhetorical and mnemonic *summa*: "[i]f one thinks of the poem as based on orders of places in Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, and as a cosmic order of places in which the spheres of Hell are the spheres of Heaven in reverse, it begins to appear as a *summa* of similitudes and *exempla*, ranged in order and set out upon the universe" (104). The rhetorical *dispositio* of the *exempla*—the programmatic nature of their sequence—matters, and symmetrical echoes are meant to provoke intratextual comparisons, thematic itineraries that cut across the architecture of the poem.[136]

Additionally, according to Robson, the classical references in the *Commedia*—the various citations from *auctoritates* interwoven within the structure of the text—are mediated through secondary sources like Brunetto's encyclopedic works, and form *exempla*, "*imagines*, in the sense defined by Frances A. Yates, of the kind cultivated by the exponents of the artificial memory" (83).[137] Indeed, the *dispositio* of the *imagines* within the structure of the poem "may provide us with a key to an early draft of the poem, cartoon, maquette, or blueprint, which Dante drew up before embarking on his greatest work" (95). The investigation of the correspondences between

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[136] See Tateo: "l'ordine narrativo è costellato di *exempla* che si collegano, al di là della trama del viaggio, in sequenze, ossia in itinerari tematici. I segnali della simmetria scandiscono, infatti, il percorso complessivo, o funzionano all'interno di percorsi minori o specifici; alludono all'immaginaria architettura di riferimento, quella dei regni ultraterreni in quanto luoghi del cosmo presunto dotati di un significato definito, ma concorrono a costruire un'architettura in competizione—si direbbe—con la misura delle cantiche e dei canti, definendo segmenti interni ai canti o sezioni ad essi trasversali, e definendo accorpamenti diversi" ["the narrative order is constellated with *exempla* that are connected, beyond the plot of the journey, in sequences or thematic itineraries. The signals of symmetry mark, as a matter of fact, the overall journey, or function within minor or specific paths; they allude to the imaginary architecture of reference, that of the otherworldly realms as places within the cosmos presumably equipped with a definite meaning, but they also contribute in constructing a competing architecture—it would seem—with the measure of the canticles and the cantos, defining internal segments of the cantos or sections that are transversal to them, and defining diverse groupings"] ("Prefazione" 8).

[137] Robson notes how "[s]tarting out from his thirteenth-century background, inherited from Brunetto Latini and the Bolognese arts teachers, we see Dante gradually transforming this scholastic culture of *auctoritates* and *exempla* by his personal study of Ovid, and then by a systematic excerpting of Virgil, Ovid, Statius, and Lucan" (82). Robson goes on to propose that the *dispositio* of the 120–144 references, or *imagines*, can be "compared with the mental images cultivated in the artificial memory of the ancient rhetoricians. This system, explained technically in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* was undergoing a great revival in the generation before Dante especially at Bologna, and it was commented on by both Albertus Magnus and Aquinas" (94).

the Latini and Cacciaguida episode demonstrates a consistent discourse regarding the genesis, structure, and purpose of the poem.

Latini embodies in his life and works, from the *Trésor* to the *Tesoretto* and the *Rettorica*, the Ciceronian conception of rhetoric as the foundation and instrument of civil society. As Davis points out in his seminal research on lay education in Florence during Dante's time: "Brunetto set forth the old Roman ideal of fame as the reward for virtue, which is true nobility; the rhetorician or orator should persuade his fellow citizens to live according to justice and reason" ("Education in Dante's Florence" 420).[138] The notion is also at the heart of Dante's discussion of the allegory of Ovid's myth of Orpheus in the *Convivio* (II, i, 3).[139] As Mazzotta aptly summarizes: "Brunetto roots the emergence of the political order in the gift of language as the fundamental tool of man's presence to himself and the world," adding that "[t]he orator is the civilizing agent, the Orpheus who assuages the beast within and teaches mankind the virtues of moral life" ("Rhetoric and History" 78).[140] A comparison between Dante and Latini's major works puts into relief the influence of the latter over the former.

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[138] Davis also remarks how: "[o]ne fact about lay education in Florence is, however, clear. The appearance of Brunetto Latini was accompanied by a distinct advance in general culture and by a new enthusiasm for the ancient authors. ... Brunetto may have given lectures on *ars dictaminis* and Ciceronian rhetoric and perhaps even on astrology to the youth of the city. Whether he engaged in formal teaching or not, they could find rhetorical instruction in his translation of and commentary on part of Cicero's *De Inventione* and in his *Tresor*, soon translated into Italian. He also seems to have been responsible, as the leading *dittatore* of the commune, for introducing the *stilus altus* of Frederick II''s chancery into the chancery of Florence. But his knowledge of rhetoric was put to wider uses than this. In him the mediaeval Italian tradition of *ars dictaminis* was refreshed by a deeper understanding of Cicero's praise of the civic function of the orator" ("Education in Dante's Florence" 420)

[139] "sì come quando dice Ovidio che Orfeo facea con la cetera mansuete le fiere, e li arbori e le pietre a sé muovere; che vuol dire che lo savio uomo con lo strumento de la sua voce fa[r]ia mansuescere e umiliare li crudeli cuori, e fa[r]ia muovere a la sua volontade coloro che non hanno vita di scienza e d'arte ...." See "Dante and Allegory" in Part I of Chapter 2.

[140] A principal textual site for Dante's critique of rhetoric as a civilizing tool is without a doubt the Ulysses' episode in *Inferno* XXVI. Mazzotta recognizes in Ulysses speech a connection with Brunetto Latini via rhetoric and prophecy, showing how "Dante draws from Cicero's *De Inventione* and, more lavishly, from a text written by his teacher Brunetto Latini," that is, the *Rettorica*, which "describes the origin of the city of life in terms of a rhetorical process, the language of which Dante weaves into the texture of Inferno XXVI" (76). For Mazzotta's reading of the Brunetto episode, see also "*Communitas* and its Typological Structure" 138–141.

In a similar way to Latini's works, Dante's *Commedia* also calls for the moral renewal of man and society but pushes this one step further by anchoring rhetoric within a prophetic function. As Mazzotta observes, "the theological view of wisdom is the perspective from which Dante mounts a critique of Brunetto's educational ideas" ("Poetry and the Encyclopedia" 31).[141] Remarkably, this is articulated with textual sources taken from pagan and secular texts, alongside Scripture. Just like the intertextual references in *Paradiso* XVII to the *Aeneid*, Boethius, and the investiture of John in Revelations, Latini's "Tesoro" also emerges as a literary precedent of importance for the rhetorical conception of the *Commedia*.[142]

In conclusion, the correspondences between the episodes of Latini (*Inf.* XV) and Cacciaguida (*Par.* XV–XVII) are propped by formal features, such as the co-numerical value of the cantos and their structural position, alongside common themes of paternity, fatherland, prophecy, rhetoric and politics, literary authority and fame.[143] As Freccero states: "[t]here can be little doubt that the episode of Cacciaguida, in *canto* 15 of *Paradiso*, was meant to be read in the light of *canto* 15 of *Inferno*, as several allusions make clear" ("The Eternal Image of the Father" 83). In Dante studies, both encounters are typically interpreted in oppositional terms; the

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[141] Mazzotta goes on to qualify this statement, noting that "if Dante's critique of knowledge were simply theological, it would be a radical but ultimately predictable, and thus not very interesting, procedure. Dante's critique is powerful because he finds Brunetto's educational ideas intrinsically self-contradictory" (31).

[142] In fact, in the *Convivio*, Dante mentions turning to the works of Cicero and Boethius for consolation after Beatrice's death, opening the path to his discovery of Lady Philosophy (II, xii). This is part of his allegorical exposition of the *canzone* "Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete" that opens Book II and refers to the Heaven of Venus. In the following expository section, Dante associates Venus to rhetoric on the basis of its beauty and clarity.

[143] Strict logicians may argue that the slanted disposition of the correspondence between Dante's encounter with Latini in *Inferno* XV with Cacciaguida in *Paradiso* XV–XVII dismisses the legitimacy of co-numerary vertical readings of the *Commedia*. As demonstrated with the contradictory nature of the two most cited textual clues for the parallel structure of the poem, the "666" and "Stelle" arguments, and with the variability of the hendecasyllabic meter, which can contain between 10 to 12 syllables; this in no way hinders the methodology but simply highlights its flexibility and creative capabilities. To project a rigid and systematic pattern cutting across the entire poem is to deeply misunderstand the nature of the arts of rhetoric and of memory, both involved in the *modus componendi* of the *Commedia*. There are logical gaps and like the rhetorical device of aposiopesis, or a gutter in a graphic novel, they invite readers to fill them in, to draw connections and make associations by means of intratextuality. For more on the theme of exegesis and aposiopesis, see "Dante and Allegory" in Part I, of Chapter 2.

Cacciaguida encounter serves a palinodic function, or an Augustinian *retractatio* or conversion, overturning the apparent positive representation of Latini as a surrogate father figure via its contrast with Dante's ancestor.[144] The interpretive path taken here however is not oppositional, but complementary since it is viewed in dialectical terms. The contrasting situations of Latini and Cacciaguida certainly validate ironic readings and interpretations of a critique by Dante of his "maestro" but this need not discredit the interpretive possibilities afforded by recognizing a positive value to the figure of Latini.[145]

The above-mentioned symbolic associations of Mars with the cross and the circle, order and prophecy, and the genesis and vicissitudes of Florentine history also factor into this pattern. When all combined, these features draw a clear vertical line from the center of *Paradiso* across the circular structure of the poem down to *Inferno* XV.[146] The correspondences between this horizontal and central sequence of *Paradiso* with *Inferno* XV result in a vertical axis within a circular text, consequently replicating the symbol of the cross within a circle. On a surface level, this configuration is meant to enact a hermeneutic function onto a prophetic statement, to provide an intratextual gloss. At the root of this parallelism is a process of authorial legitimation and self-

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[144] As Marchesi states, "[t]he connection on this point is one that is not difficult to interpret. Readers are asked to construct an oppositional pair from the two episodes and their protagonists. In one corner we find Brunetto Latini, the paternal man of letters, burned by the rain of fire in Hell, earthly in the scope of his teachings. (After all, earthly fame is for him a viable surrogate of eternity, as his last words to Dante attest.) Opposite Latini stands Cacciaguida, the fatherly martyr, fully immersed in the glory of God, yearning for, and yet peacefully awaiting in Heaven, the encounter with Dante. He stands poised to give the protagonist a new perspective on work and fame, time and eternity, martyrdom and peace" (87).

[145] This is where this research's framework collides with Freccero's Augustinian interpretation of Dante, since the irony of the episode is hardwired into his signature retrospective "conversion" understanding of the poem: "[t]he salutary effect that Brunetto had on Dante's life, attested by the words of the pilgrim, is irrelevant to the moral judgment placed on the old man: This is the essence of the irony of his portrait in *Inferno*, an irony inherent throughout the *cantica*, where every secular, even humane, affirmation awaits retrospective correction from the perspective of conversion" ("The Eternal Image of the Father" 84).

[146] Marchesi's vertical reading of the Fifteens delineates two principal and related textual elements: "father figures and imaginary fatherlands" (81). Keane identifies three themes: fatherhood, literary fame, and Florentine history (477). See Davis who points to Parodi's observation of a set of correspondences that cut across the center of each *cantica* of the poem: "[i]n the center of each *cantica* Dante places his message to the political world; Brunetto, Marco Lombardo, and Cacciaguida are its chief spokesmen" ("Brunetto Latini and Dante" 194).

fashioning. Since the idea of who we are is very much founded in our idea of who we were, Dante traces various genealogies, such as that of his family, his native city, and his poetic project. As such, the encounter with Cacciaguida and its echoes with the Latini episode are not solely meant to be understood in oppositional terms, they also signal a literary and intellectual genealogy to his poem. Another element that is contiguous to these themes of Florentine history and identity is the Baptistery of San Giovanni. It is mentioned twice in the martial cantos; first, in *Paradiso* XV by Cacciaguida, right before naming himself: "ne l'antico vostro Batisteo / insieme fui cristiano e Cacciaguida" (v. 134) and in the following *canto*, also by Dante's great-great-grandfather, as a geographical and demographic reference: "Tutti color ch'a quel tempo eran ivi / da poter arme tra Marte e '1 Batista" (*Par*. XVI, vv. 46–47). Both the literal and figurative centrality of the Baptistery to the identity of Florence textually appears in the central cantos of the *Commedia*. Latini's life and works are intrinsically tied to the art of rhetoric, of applying Ciceronian principles to vernacular French and Italian, both in written compositions or in public speaking. The art of eloquence was considered by Latini the ultimate political tool, a civilizing and moral force, a theme that is at the heart of Dante's poetic mission and the impetus behind the *Commedia*. Therefore, the correspondences between *Inferno* XV and *Paradiso* XV-VII features Dante's overt reflection on, and judgment of, a certain type of encyclopedic and didactic literature, as well as the relation between rhetoric, language, politics, and knowledge.

**Part II: Dante and the Arts of Memory and Rhetoric**

**The Art of Rhetoric and Encyclopedism**

> *Nel detto anno MCCLXXXXIIII morì in Firenze uno valente cittadino il quale ebbe nome ser Brunetto Latini, il quale fu gran filosafo, 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 più 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 però 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 secondo la Politica.*

> – Villani, Giovanni. *Nuova Cronica* (IX, x).[1]

Alongside grammar and logic, rhetoric was considered one of the seven sciences making up the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*, which consisted of music, astronomy, arithmetic, and geometry. Rhetoric played a fundamental role in Dante's poetics since it is the subject of profound theoretical reflections throughout his works. At its simplest, rhetoric designates the art of persuasion, of knowing how to efficiently construct an oration; however, in its evolution, it eventually took on a wider role in being applied to all forms of written and spoken expressions, from preaching to letter writing. As a result, even before Dante's time, poetic treatises were synonymous with rhetorical ones.[2]

Furthermore, rhetoric left ample space for creativity, in contrast to grammar and dialectic, which are respectively attached to grammatical rules and the rigor of logic. The relationship between all three was that grammar, knowledge of the rules of language, was extended to logic,

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[1] ["In the year 1294, died in Florence a worthy citizen named Brunetto Latini, who was a great philosopher and a supreme master of rhetoric, understanding both how to speak and write well. It was he who commented on Cicero's Rhetoric and made the good and useful book called *Tesoro*, and the *Tesoretto*, and the *Chiave del Tesoro*, and other books pertaining to philosophy, of vices and virtues, and he was the dictator of our commune. He was a worldly man, but we have made mention of him because it was he who was the initiator and master in refining the Florentines, and make them capable of speaking well, and of guiding and ruling our republic according to the principles of Politics."]

[2] See, for example the *Poetria nova* (1208–1213) and the *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi* (after 1213) of Geoffrey of Vinsauf.

the mechanics of thought and analysis, and then transmitted outwards as wisdom through rhetoric, that is, in the orderly and ornate production of a speech or a text. It is also important to point out that memory and didacticism played a vital function in this dynamic.[3]

The seven Liberal Arts were eventually mapped onto the planetary system and used as a discursive scaffold in encyclopedic and didactic texts, as alluded earlier with Dante's association of Mars with music in the *Convivio*.[4] The configuration of the order of knowledge in encyclopedic texts sought to reflect the order of the universe; for example, the structure of Dante's *Convivio*, although unfinished, is sequenced along a hierarchy of the sciences that brings the reader "oltre la tradizionale catena delle 'arti', ma anche oltre la 'fisica' e 'l'etica' e la stessa 'metafisica' a quella scienza divina che è, insieme, filosofia e teologia e, soprattutto, unica e unitaria sapienza" (Vasoli 380).[5] There is a programmatic structure organized along the lines of the model of the universe, a pattern that would ultimately find its expression in Dante's *Commedia*.[6]

Although expressing a certain reticence in using the term 'encyclopedia', Barański recognizes that: "durante la maggior parte della sua vita, Dante fu affascinato, per non dire ossessionato, dalle possibilità artistiche e intellettuali che—e non riesco a trovare una parola migliore—l''enciclopedismo' gli offriva" ("Dante Fra 'sperimentalismo' e 'Enciclopedismo'"

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[3] Carruthers explains the role of *memoria* in the trivium as such: "[i]t was especially to the investigative and inventive tasks of dialectic and rhetoric that mnemonic *techne* was addressed. Thus, as grammar provided the foundation upon which the trivium built, so memorized texts were thought to provide the exemplars and the materials for new composition" ("How to Make a Composition. Memory-Craft in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages" 20).

[4] See *Convivio*: "Alli sette primi rispondono le sette scienze del Trivio e del Quadruvio, cioè Gramatica, Dialetica, Rettorica, Arismetrica, Musica, Geometria e Astrologia" (II, xiii, 8).

[5] ["beyond traditional chain of the arts, but also beyond physics, ethics, and metaphysics, to the divine science that is the combination of philosophy and theology and, most of all, a unique and unitary wisdom."]

[6] Barański recognizes this initial theoretical impetus in Dante's *Convivio*; however, in practice, "durante il corso del trattato, l'Alighieri rende più che evidente che non si può fissare lo scibile entro i confini delle undici 'scienze' elencate nei capitoli xiii e xiv del Libro II" ["during the course of the treatise, Dante renders more than obvious the fact that one cannot dispose knowledge within the confines of the eleven 'sciences' enumerated in chapters xiii and xiv of Book II"] ("Dante Fra 'sperimentalismo' e 'Enciclopedismo'" 390).

386).[7] Indeed, to speak of encyclopedic texts in the Middle Ages is slightly anachronistic, but it is useful in describing a type of literary work that sought to gather together and organize human knowledge for practical purposes. For this and several other reasons, "[i]t has long been acknowledged that the *Divine Comedy* is a poetic encyclopedia or a *summa medievalis*" (Mazzotta, "Poetry and the Encyclopedia" 15).[8]

Latini's encyclopedic projects, his direct role in the revival of rhetoric and its ancillary art of memory, his gathering, translating, and dissemination of classical sources on the topic into the vernacular, are all important precedents in transforming abstract configurations of the totality of knowledge into allegorical narratives with vivid images set in specific topographical structures. It is undeniably suggestive that Dante's first definition of the poem as a "comedía" (*Inf.* XVI, v. 38) follows Dante's encounter with the first vernacular author in the poem, Brunetto, "il maggiore 'enciclopedista' volgare del Duecento autore sia di una *compilatio* in prosa sia di un poema 'enciclopedico', ambedue evocati attraverso la designazione 'Tesoro' (*Inf.* XV, 119), termine squisitamente ambiguo nella bocca di Brunetto" (Barański, "Dante Fra 'sperimentalismo' e 'Enciclopedismo'" 396).[9] Indeed, as Barański points out, it remains unclear exactly what encyclopedic work Latini promotes in *Inferno* XV.[10]

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[7] ["during a great part of his life, Dante was fascinated, to not say obsessed, by the artistic and intellectual possibilities afforded by 'encyclopedism', for lack of a better word."]

[8] See also Barański: "In effetti, è diventato quasi un topos della critica moderna notare—particolarmente per la *Commedia*—l''enciclopedismo' della prassi dantesca" ["As a matter of fact, it has almost become a common-place of modern criticism to point out—particularly for the *Commedia*—the 'encyclopedism' of Dante's praxis"] ("Dante Fra 'sperimentalismo' e 'Enciclopedismo'" 384).

[9] ["the major encyclopedist in the vernacular of the Duecento, author of both a *compilatio* in prose and of an encyclopedic poem, both evoked by the designation 'Tesoro' (*Inf.* XV, v. 119), an exquisitely ambiguous terms in the mouth of Brunetto."] Barański also notes that"[m]i pare altamente appropriato che al momento in cui Dante stava per iniziare la definizione della sua 'comedía', egli l'abbia messa a raffronto con quella che doveva sembrargli l'opera italiana più importante di carattere didattico-allegorico in versi, il 'Tesoro'/Tesoretto" ["it appears to me highly appropriate that at the moment when Dante is about to define his 'comedía', he did it in contrast with what must have seemed to him the most important verse work of a didactic-allegorical character, the 'Tesoro'/Tesoretto"] ("Dante Fra 'sperimentalismo' e 'Enciclopedismo'" 396).

[10] There is a long-standing and well-documented debate on the matter, see Hollander's commentary to v. 119 for a succinct overview of the question (2000-2007).

It could be the French *Li livres dou Trésor* (*The Books of the Treasure*), the first encyclopedia in a modern European language; its Italian translation believed to have been done either by Bono Giamboni or Latini himself; and/or its unfinished Italian verse translation, the *Tesoretto*, itself considered to be a reworking of his previous *Rettorica*.[11] The ambiguity of the utterance is probably voluntary, gesturing at Latini's encyclopedic *corpus* as a whole rather than one text in particular. Luckily, his encyclopedic works do share several common traits; they are didactic texts in the vernacular that seek to circumscribe knowledge within a unitary and compartmentalized structure. Additionally, they are written by an author dedicated to promoting the art of efficiently constructing texts, thus bringing into focus the notion of structure and mnemonics.

Moreover, Latini's works all share a particular emphasis on the political value of Ciceronian rhetoric and "[t]his unusual emphasis was his chief originality as an encyclopedist" (Davis, "Brunetto Latini and Dante" 171).[12] This is because Latini's encyclopedism intersects with his role in the revival of rhetoric among proto-Humanists of Northern Italy. Considering Latini's numerous political interventions during his lifetime, this literary interest in the political function

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[11] The *Tesoretto* (Little Treasure) "with the internal title of *Tesoro* ('Treasure'), is an unfinished poem in Italian, composed of 2,944 *settenari baciati* (seven-syllable rhyming couplets), probably also written during its author's exile and showing the influence of the French allegorical romance tradition, to which the *Romance of the Rose*, written in octosyllabic rhyming couplets, also belongs" (Armour, "Brunetto Latini" 127). For more regarding the dating and sequence of these works, see Beltrami 115–90. On Giamboni possibly being the translator of the *Trésor*, see Ciccuto's entry in the first volume of Asor Rosa's anthological *Letteratura italiana* (1982–1991): "[c]omplessa comunque la situazione anche per il volgarizzamento dell'opera originale. Una vecchia legenda, confortata dalla scrizione di poco autorevoli codici ..., lo vorrebbe realizzato da Bono Giamboni .... Ma i codici più antichi, nella maggioranza fiorentini, contengono indicazioni rilevanti e persino utili a sostenere un'eventuale candidatura di Brunetto alla paternità del volgarizzamento" ["complex, however, also is the situation for the vernacularization of the original work. An old legend, aided by the writing of unreliable codices, want it realized by Bono Giamboni. But the oldest codices, most of them Florentine, contain pertinent information and even useful ones eventually sustaining Brunetto's candidacy for the paternity of the translation"] (46).

[12] Latini's claim to fame was precisely his attitude towards Ciceronian rhetoric: "[h]e imitated Cicero's style, he appropriated Cicero's political ideal, and he viewed Cicero not merely in the usual medieval way as a philosophical authority but also a civic hero: as a wise leader who defended his city against her enemies" (Davis, "Brunetto Latini and Dante" 169). Not only did he write about the art of rhetoric, but he applied it in his own professional experience as chancellor, notary, public orator, and diplomat.

of rhetoric was not unconnected to *praxis*.[13] Moreover, as Villani noted, "il buono e *utile* libro detto *Tesoro*" (emphasis added), Latini's encyclopedia had a practical function for its readers.[14]

The memory-as-treasure-chest metaphor implicit in the name "Tesoro" is the root of our modern-day use of the word *thesaurus* to designate dictionaries, encyclopedias, or any other comprehensive reference books on a subject matter. It is also at the root of the term *treasury*, mostly meaning a building, room, chest, or any physical storage space for the preservation of valuable goods, but also a collection of highly prized writings like anthologies. The term "Tesoro" also involves, by its very principle, organizing material for specific ends and putting a premium on withstanding the passage of time.[15] It is not merely a question of archiving data culled from various literary authorities, but rather one of organizing information in such a way that it is useful to the reader, that it can serve a practical purpose in the future.

As such, the term encyclopedia is meant to refer to textual treasure-houses, attempts at systematizing knowledge within a textual sequence designed to facilitate both the storage and retrieval of knowledge that was then considered the most advanced of the day.[16] For example, the

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[13] For instance, in Florence, from 1282 to 1292: "[n]on vi fu in quel decennio una deliberazione, politica o amministrativa, in cui Brunetto insomma non compaia, non dica la sua, non venga ascoltato. E sono gli anni in cui D[ante], per conto proprio, si veniva affacciando alla vita sociale (se non ancora politica) della città" ["there was not in that decade a deliberation, political or administrative, in which Brunetto does not appear, does not say his piece, is not heard. And these are the years where Dante, on his own, began interacting in the social, if not yet political, life of the city"] (Mazzoni, "Latini, Brunetto" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*).

[14] See Holloway, who presents Latini's encyclopedic project of the *Trésor* as written to teach Charles D'Anjou how to govern in Italy "lavorando al suo progetto aristotelico-ciceroniano condiviso dai banchieri guelfi del governo fiorentino in esilio, per insegnare a Carlo il 'Buon Governo' repubblicano in Italia" ["working on his Aristotelian and Ciceronian project in collaboration with the guelph bankers of the Florentine government in exile, to teach Charles good republican government in Italy"] (82).

[15] See De Poli, who succinctly remarks that "[l]e trésor (thesaurum) indique à la fois l'oeuvre elle-même et l'opération de compilation mnémonique éxigée par celle-ci" [the treasure (thesaurum) indicates both the work itself and the operation of mnemonic compilation required by it"] (*Mémoire et écriture poétique dans le chant XVII du Paradis* 35).

[16] An important textual precedent that makes good use of these techniques is Hugh of Saint Victor's *Mystic Ark*. See Carruthers, who remarks how Latini's "*Trésor* is a compendious florilegium of things to be remembered from classical writers on a variety of ethical and rhetorical subjects. Though it does not include Tullius' memory art [*Rhet. ad Herr.*], there is some basis for thinking that such compilations were thought of specifically as memory books, and their compilers revered at this time in Italy as major exponents of *ars memorativa*" ("The Arts of Memory" 194). See also, in another essay, "the premodern encyclopedia itself is a variety of memory-book, the flowers of one's reading

indexing of dictionaries in an alphabetic order facilitates the navigation of the text for the retrieval of information. As Carruthers points out, "[i]ndeed, the premodern encyclopedia itself is a variety of memory-book, the flowers of one's reading gathered up in some orderly arrangement for the purpose of quick, secure recollection in connection with making a new composition" ("How to Make a Composition. Memory-Craft in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages" 21). Compilatory texts were memory books, schematized file holders to hold data; therefore, alongside verbal ornaments, the rhetorical *ornatus*, the arrangement of the material itself— the so-called *ordo artificialis*—was an essential part of the creative process and it involved sequencing topics in such a way as to maximize retention and redeployment of information.[17]

For example, Latini's *Trésor* is composed of three books, and each is assigned a specific type of treasure: Book I contains coins—"de deniers contans"—that is, a universal and natural history; Book II houses precious stones—"de precieuses pieres"—virtue and vices; lastly, Book III, the most significant section in terms of content, encloses fine gold—"de fin or"—rhetoric and politics. The content gathers, translates, and organizes various Latin texts, from commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics* to Cicero's *De inventione*, also known as the *Rhetorica vetus*.[18] The structure is meant to move from a theoretical first part to a practical second part, and lastly:

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gathered up in some orderly arrangement for the purpose of quick, secure recollection in connection with making a new composition" ("How to Make a Composition. Memory-Craft in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages" 21).

[17] Although the term 'encyclopedia' is coined much later, the diversity of texts that can be grouped under this genre speaks of its creativity: "I titoli stessi—così diversi tra loro—di quelle opere che a noi piace raccogliere sotto la designazione filologicamente poco appropriata di 'enciclopedie' offrono un primo indizio delle loro differenti direzioni epistemologiche: uno *Speculum* non era la stessa cosa di una *Summa*, ed una *Summa* non era la stessa cosa di un *Tresor*; per non parlare, poi, di tutto quello che può separare un *Convivio* da una *Comedia*" ["The titles themselves—so diverse one from the other—of those works that we like to gather under the inadequate philological designation of 'encyclopedias' offer a first clue of their different epistemological directions: a *Speculum* was not the same as a *Summa*, and a *Summa* was not the same thing as a *Tresor*, without mentioning all that can distinguish a *Convivio* to a *Comedia*"] (Barański, "Dante fra 'sperimentalismo' e 'enciclopedismo'" 386).

[18] In fact, the *Trésor*'s "third book, a comprehensive treatment of rhetoric in its classical guise, is heavily dependent— verbatim or by close paraphrase—for some two-thirds of its length on about three-quarters of the *De inventione* Book 1" (Ward 200).

[t]he climax of the work, the gold 'which surpasses all other sorts of metal', is the science of speaking well and of governing people'; this is 'the most noble art in the world', 'the science which first directed the world to good deeds (*a bien fere*)', and so the work ends with rules for rhetoric and for the conduct of a *podestà*. (Armour, "Dante's Brunetto: The Paternal Paterine" 7–8)[19]

In an analogous manner to the *Convivio* and the *Commedia*, Latini's "Tesoro" literally and figuratively traces a 'circle of education', an 'encyclopedia' with clear didactic and political intentions. Latini's encyclopedias sought to shape and educate a nascent professional political class, to provide training in *ars loquendi* as a code of conduct and mode of interaction within society.

Latini's works, alongside many other treatises on the topic of rhetoric, show a wide distribution and popularity throughout the Middle Ages and, as Ward puts it: "one can only be impressed at the fundamental role rhetorical instruction played in medieval society" (258).[20] The primary interest for the present argument is the particular role of rhetoric and mnemotechnics in shaping Dante's encyclopedism.[21] In this light, Latini is a most notable person of interest because

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[19] Contini notes that "[i]l *Tresor* è una somma, esplicitamente compilatoria, 'de tous les membres de la philosophie'," adding that "[l]'aspetto relativamente enciclopedico dell'opera rinvia all'epistemologia allora corrente" and that it should be interpreted as a "manuale di formazione dell'uomo politico" ["the *Tresor* is a *summa*, explicitly compilatory 'of all the parts of philosophy' ... and the relatively encyclopedic aspect of the work points to the epistemology then current ... it is a training manual for politicians"] (*Laude, poesia didattica dell'Italia centrale, poesia realistica toscana* 171–72). See also Tomasoni, who remarks: "[l]'ideale di una cultura con precise finalità politiche emerge dalla complessa architettura del *Trésor*, la vasta enciclopedia in prosa francese in cui tutto lo scibile concorre alla formazione del perfetto uomo di governo" ["the ideal of a culture with precise political ends emerges from the architecture of the *Trésor*, the vast French prose encyclopedia in which all that is knowable comes together in shaping of the perfect man of government"] (237).

[20] Ward remarks how "[t]he arts of epistolography, poetry and preaching, as many separate investigations have shown, were founded on the preceptive rules of the classical rhetorical treatises, and the composition of original poetic and historical works was greatly influenced by the same precepts, *in particular as they affected verbal ornament and the arrangement of material*. Although there is much debate today about the extent of originality (defined in modern terms) that literary composition in the middle ages displayed, the profound impact which classical rhetorical theory (and the curriculum instruction based upon it) exerted on medieval literary works is no longer denied" (256 emphasis added).

[21] Dante's concern with rhetoric is also reflected in the *De vulgari eloquentia*. Mazzotta notes how "[t]he concern with style and taste, which occupies a large portion of *De vulgari eloquentia*, dramatizes the partial identification of rhetoric

of location and time. His "Tesoro" is a clear model for Dante's *Commedia*, as Dante appears to imply by acknowledging his teacher's influence. Latini actively promoted the art of rhetoric, whence the art of memory derives from, and modeled himself on Cicero. This may very well be what Latini taught Dante: to compose encyclopedic texts based on rhetorical and mnemonic principles. Dante's creativity lies in deploying these compositional strategies in designing a structure that encourages exegetical practices, inviting commentary as though it were Scripture or an authoritative text like Virgil's *Aeneid*.

It is also important to underline that Virgil's poetic *corpus*, Dante's other 'father figure,' was also conceived as embodying encyclopedic knowledge. For example, Mazzotta underlines how the reference to Virgil in *Inferno* VII as "savio gentil, che tutto seppe" (v. 3): "echoes Macrobius's definition of Vergil as an encyclopedic poet whose knowledge branches out into all directions of learning (*Saturnalia* V, I, 18-19)" ("Poetry and the Encyclopedia" 26).[22] The Neoplatonic tradition had allegorized the *Aeneid* as a parable of the hero's education for quite some time, in tandem with Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*.[23] In truth, Dante's encyclopedic poetics pulls into its orbit an entire tradition of didactic texts, from Augustine's *Confessions*, Latini's "Tesoro", and other texts such as "the *Romance of the Rose* and Neoplatonic allegories of education, such as the *Cosmographia* of Bernard Silvester or the *Anticlaudianus* of Alan of Lille, [that] flagrantly enact the dramatic convergence of encyclopedic context and narratives of

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and poetry. At the same time, as the art of discourse, the art of pleading political or juridical causes, rhetoric is also in *De vulgari eloquentia* the tool for the establishment of political, legal, and moral authority" ("The Light of Venus" 57).

[22] See Barański, who notes how "in Virgilio, 'quel savio gentil, che tutto seppe' (*Inf.* VII, 3), il quale, nella *Commedia*, è posto in tensione dialettica con Aristotele, ''l maestro di color che sanno' (*Inf.* IV, 131), tensione che drammatizza la relativa efficacia conoscitiva della poesia e della filosofia, problematica centrale nella carriera artistica e intellettuale di Dante" [Virgil ..., in the *Commedia*, is positioned in a dialectical tension with Aristotle ..., a tension that dramatizes the relative cognitivie efficiency of poetry and philosophy, a central problematic in the artistic and intellectual career of Dante"] ("Dante fra 'sperimentalismo' e 'enciclopedismo'" 386).

[23] Mazzotta explains how the *Aeneid* "in the Neoplatonic allegorizations of Bernard Silvester, Fulgentius, and Dante himself in *Convivio* is understood also as a parable of the hero's education" ("Poetry and the Encyclopedia" 27).

education" (Mazzotta, "Poetry and the Encyclopedia" 27). The correspondences between the Latini and Cacciaguida episodes bring into light the specific convergence of Latini's encyclopedic works with Dante's literary output.

This common formal trait of encyclopedism in Dante's major works can be best described by what Barański calls the result of a "sperimentalismo formale," an experimentalism of form.[24] As such, the formal and thematic affinities between Latini and Dante extend beyond their respective *Trésor* and *Commedia*. For example, Latini's *Tesoretto* and Dante's *Convivio* are both unfinished prosimetra in the vernacular with an encyclopedic intent. Moreover, the *Tesoretto*'s first-person allegorical-visionary narrative frame to map and sequence the various topics covered further strengthens Latini's role as a model and precursor to Dante's *Commedia*.[25]

Admittedly, Latini's *Trésor* and *Tesoretto* do have distinctive traits: the former is in French prose, ostensibly finished, and framed as an intellectual journey with a significant secular bent; whereas the latter is in Italian verse, unfinished, has a visionary-allegorical structure and, therefore,

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[24] See Barański's succinct analysis of Dante's encyclopedic *corpus*: "[o]gnuna delle sue opere maggiori offre una prospettiva di stampo globale. La *Vita nuova* esamina i diversi gradi dell'amore e passa in rassegna la letteratura erotica in volgare; il *Convivio* abbraccia la 'scienza' e, in particolare, i legami tra filosofia e teologia; il *De vulgari eloquentia* indaga il linguaggio umano e il complesso delle sue creazioni; la *Monarchia* fa il punto su questioni politiche; mentre la *Commedia* tenta di legare 'in un volume, / ciò che per l'universo si squaderna' (*Par.* XXIII, 86-87). Se si considera la forma di questi testi, non può non colpire il fatto che i loro chiari fini summatici emergono, in parte e in modi più o meno marcati, dai rapporti che ogni opera stabilisce con specifiche e ben riconoscibili strutture 'enciclopediche'" ["every major work by Dante offers a global perspective. The *Vita nuova* examines the diverse levels of love and surveys erotic literature in the vernacular, the *Convivio* embraces 'science' and, in particular, the links between philosophy and theology; the *De vulgari eloquentia* investigates human language and the totality of its creations; the *Monarchia* assesses the situation of political questions; whereas the *Commedia* .... If one considers the form of these texts, one is struck by the fact that their clear summatic functions emerges, in part or in more or less marked ways, by the relations that each work establishes with specific and easily recognizable 'encyclopedic' structures"] ("Dante Fra 'sperimentalismo' e 'Enciclopedismo'" 388).

[25] For example, the *Tesoretto* begins with Latini being stranded in a forest: "pensando a capo chino, / perdei il gran cammino, / e tenni a la traversa / d'una selva diversa" (vv. 187–190, Tomasoni 248). See Contini: "[n]on solo nella maggior parte dei singoli punti, ma nell'organizzazione generale, il *Tesoretto* ... è vicino al *Trésor*: salvo beninteso la struttura visionario-allegorica" ["not only on the majority of single elements, but also in the overall organization, the *Tesoretto* ... is close to the *Trésor*; except for the allegorical-visionary structure"] (*Laude, poesia didattica dell'Italia centrale, poesia realistica toscana* 173).

a slightly more religious itinerary.[26] Both however are also very similar; for instance, they are framed by the Guelph defeat at Montaperti and Latini's subsequent exile.[27] Moreover, in the *Tesoretto*, just like in Dante's *Commedia* and the *Convivio*, this exile is what prompts and legitimates the writing of the text and its homodiegetic narrative.[28] Latini's work sets a notable and local precedent of a didactic, allegorical, encyclopedic, and autobiographical poem in the vernacular.

Therefore, the *Convivio* should also be assessed in light of Latini's influence. Dante's stated purpose in writing the *Convivio* is two-fold: first, to reclaim his intellectual dignity that has been tarnished by exile, and second, offer philosophical and ethical knowledge to a new public, one representing an emerging lay and vernacular class. Dante calls upon whomsoever has domestic and civil responsibilities—"qualunque è [per cura] familiare o civile nella umana fame rimaso" (I, i, 13)—to join his metaphorical banquet. These didactic aims significantly overlap with Latini's

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[26] Beltrami points to these distinctions, noting that: "[i]l *Tresor*, che all'occhio dei moderni può apparire l'opera più innovativa, nel modo di trasmissione della conoscenza, è disegnato in forma di itinerario intellettuale: il lettore è guidato alla sua formazione di uomo politico della nuova civiltà comunale da un 'maestro' che allude solo discretamente alla propria realtà biografica, attraverso un percorso nel quale le diverse scienze sono disposte una in funzione dell'altra. Il *Tesoretto* è sì anch'esso un'opera che trasmette la conoscenza, ma lo fa narrando un itinerario morale: protagonista è l'autore, personaggio che dice 'io' e fa della propria realtà biografica il punto di partenza e la garanzia della finzione allegorica" ["The *Trésor*, which would appear to modern eyes as the most innovative work in the way in which it transmits knowledge, is designed as an intellectual journey: the reader is guided to their political education of communal politics by a master who alludes to his own biography discretely throughout a journey in which the sciences are sequenced in function of one another. The *Tesoretto* is also a work that transmits knowledge, but it does this by narrating a moral journey: the protagonist is the author, a character that says 'I' and that makes of their own biographic reality the point of departure and guarantee of the allegorical fiction"] (148).

[27] Boethius is mentioned in both the *Trésor* and the *Tesoretto*, since he was the "modello ideale che autorizza la costituzione dell'autore, con la propria vicenda biografica, in protagonista esemplare di una vicenda allegorica" ["ideal model that authorized the use of the author, with his own biography, as an exemplary protagonist of an allegorical experience"] (Beltrami 149). Dante uses the same discourse at the beginning of his own encyclopedic *Convivio*, acknowledging the rules of rhetors that proscribe writing of oneself—"[n]on si concede per li retorici alcuno di sé medesimo sanza necessaria cagione parlare"—but justifying his indiscretion on the authority of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* and Augustine's *Confessions* (I, ii).

[28] "The didactic allegory of that autobiographical poem [*Tesoretto*] recounts Brunetto's exile from the city and his own educational quest through the stations of the liberal arts for the intellectual principles of a new order under the guidance of the allegorical figure of Nature" (Mazzotta, "Poetry and the Encyclopedia" 30).

encyclopedic projects.[29] As Vasoli noted, the *Convivio* and Latini's encyclopedic works share the same end: "l'ammaestramento di uomini di una nuova 'nobiltà' che intendono realizzare le proprie virtù nella città terrena e che, proprio per guidare i loro simili, hanno necessità di coniugare sapienza e retorica" (372).[30] Latini appears to be an important key to Dante's encyclopedism, in experimenting with form, wisdom and rhetoric, from the intellectual project of the *Convivio* to the *Commedia*.[31]

In the *Convivio*, Dante symbolically associates rhetoric with the planet of Venus based on its clarity and its presence both day and night. The "chiarezza del suo aspetto, ché è soavissima a vedere più che altra stella" ["brightness of its aspect, which is sweeter to look upon than that of any other star"] (II, xiii, 13) represents the poetic *ornatus* that opens the path towards the love of knowledge, that is, philosophy. This Orphic function of eloquence, of wisdom dressed in rhetoric, as a civilizing force, is at the core of Dante's poetics and it "reenacts the concerns of a cultural tradition that ranges from Cicero to Brunetto Latini" (Mazzotta, "The Light of Venus" 57). As for "la sua apparenza or da mane or da sera" (II, xiii, 13),[32] it is symbolically interpreted by Dante as representing *ars oratoria*, when the speaker is present, and *ars dictaminis*, when the speaker is

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[29] For a list of concordances between the *Trésor* and the *Convivio*, see Vasoli who notes how Latini's *Trésor* "rappresenta un probabile 'antefatto' del *Convivio* e che all'opera dantesca si approssima anche per il suo evidente proposito di fornire a chi era estraneo alla difficile 'via' didattica delle 'Scholae' un sapere di carattere enciclopedico e già 'volgarizzato'" ["represents a probable precedent of the *Convivio* and it also approximates Dante's work for its evident aim of providing to those excluded from the difficult didactic path of the 'Scholae' a wisdom of an encyclopedic character and already vernacularized"] (370).

[30] ["training men of a new 'nobility' who intend to realize their own virtues in the earthly city and that, in order to guide their fellows, need to join wisdom and rhetoric."]

[31] See Vasoli who remarks that the *Trésor* is the "vera chiave dell'enciclopedismo dantesco e del progetto intellettuale ed umano da cui esso è nato" (373). See also Scariati who notes that "alcune tessere dantesche tradiscano, a monte, la funzione mediatrice del *Tesoro*" (12). See also Mazzoni: "D[ante] a ben guardare si accingeva a imitare, e vorrei dire emulare, la tipologia globale e le linee maestre della sua operosità [di Latini]: nel libro II del *Tresor* è la condizione prima dell'esperimento del *Convivio*, aristotelicamente concepito come un'enciclopedia filosofica volta a dichiarare le virtù morali e intellettuali e a segnare le linee tutte umane di un cammino verso la felicità di questa vita; mentre lo stesso *De vulg. Eloq.*, pur tenendo presente che vuol essere un'arte poetica diretta a precise conquiste di stile, può esser messo in rapporto sia con la *Rettorica*, sia con l'ultima parte del *Tresor*: non per nulla l'anonimo quanto acuto lettore del codice berlinese poté benissimo inquadrare l'operetta sotto la ben nota epigrafe 'Incipit Rectorica Dantis'" ("Latini, Brunetto" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*).

[32] ["its appearance now in the morning, now in the evening."]

afar: "appare da mane quando dinanzi dal viso dell'uditore lo rettorico parla; appare da sera, cioè retro, quando da lettera, per la parte remota, si parla per lo rettorico" (II, xiii, 14).[33] As such, rhetoric covers both speech and writing and has a direct relationship with poetry, since it represents the ornament with which wisdom—knowledge—can shine forth. This function is amply evident in Dante's glosses to the *congedo* of the *canzone* "Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete," which opens the second treatise of the *Convivio*.[34] Addressed to those whose intellect move the sphere of Venus, its reappearance in the Heaven of Venus of *Paradiso* as a self-citation underlines its centrality in Dante's poetics.[35]

Additionally, when Bonagiunta da Lucca cites Dante's *Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore* (*Purg*. XXIV, v. 51), which had already appeared in the *Vita nuova* (XIX), Dante-pilgrim goes on

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[33] ["it appears in the morning when the rhetorician speaks before the face of his hearer, and it appears in the evening, that is, behind, when the rhetorician speaks through writing, from a distance."] See Mazzotta, who remarks how "[t]he definition alludes, as is generally acknowledged, to the traditional double function of rhetoric: oratory and the *ars dictaminis*, or letter writing" ("The Light of Venus" 56).

[34] See "Dante and Allegory" in Part I of Chapter 2. Tateo aptly comments on Dante's gloss, stating how: "[a] parte il fatto che la bella disposizione delle parti, l'ordine del sermone, di cui parla D[ante] in questo luogo, non riguardano la perfezione rappresentativa quanto l'armonia della composizione nella sua forma esterna .... Inoltre la bellezza quale risultato dell'elaborazione retorica non sembra tanto riguardare, in questo caso, l'*ornatus* con le sue figure di pensiero, che intervengono nel concepimento vero e proprio della poesia e ne sorreggono il senso intrinseco, quanto l'ordine del sermone (così come la grammatica contribuisce alla bellezza con la grandezza della costruzione, e la musica con il ritmo, II XI 9), cioè l'aspetto veramente più tecnico della R[ettorica] come arte del discorso. A questo più generico significato sembrano riferirsi i versi della *Commedia*, in cui Beatrice affida a Virgilio il compito di dare a D[ante] ammaestramenti di vita con la sua parola ornata (*If* II 67-68). Ma si ripropone certo in questo tema quello del *Convivio*, per il quale attraverso la parola ornata dei grandi scrittori dell'antichità D[ante] aveva ricevuto l'illuminazione della scienza" ["besides the fact that the beautiful disposition of the parts, the order of the sermon, of which Dante speaks here, it has less to do with the perfection of representation than with the harmony of the composition in its external form .... Moreover, the beauty that results from rhetorical elaboration is not concerned here, in this case, with the *ornatus* and its figures of speech, which intervene in the conception proper of poetry and that upholds its intrinsic meaning, but instead with the order of the sermon (just like grammar contributes to beauty with the greatness of a construction, and music with its rhythm), that is, the truly technical aspect of rhetoric as an art of discourse. To this more generic meaning seem to refer the verses of the Commedia where Beatrice assigns to Virgil the obligation of giving Dante instruction by means of his ornate speech (*Inf*. II, vv. 67–68). But here is being proposed once more the theme of the *Convivio*, by which the ornate speech of the great writers of Antiquity, Dante had received the illumination of science"] ("Rettorica" *Enciclopedia Dantesca*).

[35] "'*Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete*'; / e sem sì pien d'amor, che, per piacerti, / non fia men dolce un poco di quïete" (*Par*. VIII, vv. 37–39). The intention behind this self-citation has been the subject of much debate, but is mainly understood as a retraction of the philosophical path expounded in the *Convivio* of substituting Beatrice with Lady Philosophy and/or the angelic hierarchy proposed therein, see Hollander's commentary (2000–2007) to these lines (vv. 34–39).

to describe his poetic process in terms related to mnemonics and *ars dictaminis*, whereby Amor internally dictates to Dante, and he, in turn, notes down—presumable in the book of his memory—and then expresses through signs, a process akin to the inspiration of prophets by the Holy Spirit.[36]

The *Convivio* is filled with rhetorical precepts, from how to admonish indirectly (II, xi, 6 and III, x, 5–6), to ennobling and embellishing one's work once completed (IV, xxx, 2), taking care of one's choice of words when addressing adversaries (IV, viii, 10), and establishing the purpose of the speaker: "lo dicitore massimamente dee intendere alla persuasione, cioè all'abellire dell'audienza" (II, vi, 6).[37] Surprisingly, out of the sixty allusions and citations of Cicero in Dante's *corpus*, only three come from rhetorical works and the rest are taken from philosophical texts, such as *De amicitia* (Ronconi).[38] However, one aspect that is most pertinent for the present investigation is Dante's emphasis on the exegetical aspects of rhetoric, and this is apparent in the *Convivio* as

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[36] "I' mi son un che, quando / Amor mi spira, noto, e a quel modo / ch'e' ditta dentro vo significando" (vv. 52–54). Yet another notoriously debated passage in the *Commedia*. See Hollander's commentary (2000–2007): "[t]here is perhaps no more debated tercet in this poem than this one, and perhaps none that has more far-reaching implications for our general understanding of Dante's stance as a poet. Does he refer to Amore as the god of Love? or as the name of the true God in His Third Person, the Holy Spirit? Dantists are deeply (and fiercely) divided by this issue. The bibliography of work devoted to it is immense" (*Dartmouth Dante Project*).

[37] The use of the term "abellire" is particularly striking in light of its appearance in French in *Purgatorio* XXVI, a *canto* dedicated to poetry and poetics, where the "miglior fabbro del parlar materno" (v. 117), the best poet in the vernacular, Arnaut Daniel, acquiesces Dante's rhetorical skills by replying: "Tan *m'abellis* vostre cortes deman" (v. 140 emphasis added). Arnaut Daniel is known to have created the most elaborate fixed verse form in the Romance lyric tradition, the *sestina*, and is frequently mentioned as a positive model by Dante in the *De vulgari* (II, ii, 9; vi, 6; x, 2; xiii, 2). Moreover, the use of "*consiros*" (v. 143) also echoes Ulysses opening word "considerate" in his own rhetorical feat, his "orazion picciola" (v. 122) in *Inf.* XXVI. The reappearance of the term in *Par.* XXVI is also no accident. Adam's reply to Dante regarding the mutability of language, a palinode to Dante's previous position, articulated in the *De vulgari eloquentia*, states: "Opera naturale è ch'uom favella; / ma così o così, natura lascia / poi fare a voi secondo che *v'abbella*" (vv. 130–132 emphasis added).

[38] In the *Convivio*, alongside Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, Dante cites Cicero's *De amicitia* as prompting his philosophical quest: "E udendo ancora che Tulio scritto avea un altro libro, nel quale, trattando dell'Amistade, avea toccate parole della consolazione di Lelio, uomo eccellentissimo, nella morte di Scipione amico suo, misimi a leggere quello" ["And hearing further that Tully had written another book in which, while discussing Friendship, he had addressed words of consolation to Laelius, a man of the highest merit, upon the death of his friend Scipio, I set about reading it"] (II, xii, 3) and "Per le ragionate similitudini si può vedere chi sono questi movitori a cu' io parlo. Ché sono di quella movitori, sì come Boezio e Tulio, li quali colla dolcezza di loro sermone inviarono me, come detto è di sopra, nello amore, cioè nello studio, di questa donna gentilissima Filosofia" ["By the resemblances discussed it may be seen who are these movers to whom I speak, who are the movers of this heaven, like Boethius and Tully, who with the sweetness of their discourse guided me, as has been said above, along the path of love--that is, into the pursuit of this most gentle lady Philosophy"] (II, xv, 1).

well as the *Vita nuova*, where he puts into practice the technique of *divisio textus* that focuses on the structural aspects of a composition.[39]

Moreover, also in the *Vita nuova*, Dante recalls how on the anniversary of Beatrice's death, he was so absorbed in thinking of her as he sat drawing angels, a common figure in mnemonic compositional practices, that he paid no heed to the crowd that had gathered around him nor certain men to whom respect was due. After noticing them and apologizing, Dante diligently returned to his "opera, cioè del disegnare figure d'angeli: e faccendo ciò, mi venne uno pensero di dire parole, quasi per annovale, e scrivere a costoro li quali erano venuti a me" (XXXIV, 3).[40] Dante relates how the use of visual representations is tied to the genesis of his poem. The practice of "disegnare figure d'angeli" assists poetic composition by being a meditational diagram.[41]

More importantly, the formal aspects of rhetoric—how the structure of a text ought to be constructed—are particularly relevant to encyclopedias since these texts strove to be representations of the world and, as such, their structure sought to mirror the order of the universe.[42] This aligns the encyclopedic genre with how Scripture was believed to be ordered and therefore studied; as Dante states:

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[39] See *Convivio* II, xi, 9.

[40] ["work of drawing figures of angels and as I drew, there came to me the idea of composing some anniversary verses, to be addressed to those who had just visited me" (Reynolds trans.).]

[41] As for the image of angels as a mnemonic device, see for example the mnemonic treatise on penance once attributed to Alan of Lille: *De sex aliis Cherubim* (Carruthers and Ziolkowski 83–102). See also Carruthers, who remarks how "[t]he schemes used for organizing memory varied greatly. One could choose among using an architecturally modeled plan and section of a large though entirely literary building (for example the Temple), the feathers on the six wings of a seraphic angel, a five-story, five-room section of a house, a world map, a columnar diagram, the stones in the wall of a turreted castle tower, the rungs of ladders, or the rows of seats in an amphitheater" ("How to Make a Composition. Memory-Craft in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages" 22).

[42] See Vasoli: "Perché le enciclopedie antiche, medievali, rinascimentali e persino ancora delle origini dell'età moderna hanno voluto essere, e sono state, in primo luogo, delle 'imagines mundi', libri che, nel loro stesso ordine e nella disposizione del sapere, intendevano rispecchiare l'immenso 'libro dell'universo', i suoi 'caratteri', le sue 'immagini' e le sue 'parole' essenziali" ["Because in antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and even at the origins of the modern era, encyclopedias wanted to be, and have been, first of all, images of the world, books that, in the very order and disposition of wisdom, sought to mirror the immense 'book of the universe', its 'characters', its 'images', and its essential 'words'"] (378).

…Le cose tutte quante

hanno ordine tra loro, e questo è forma

che l'universo a Dio fa simigliante. (*Par*. I, vv. 103–105)[43]

Consequently, this brings the encyclopedic project of the *Convivio* in line with that of the *Commedia*: "l'ordine in cui si disponevano le scienze degli uomini doveva apparire identico o, almeno, simile a quello universale delle cose e delle loro gerarchie" (Vasoli 378).[44] The difference, however, between encyclopedias and Scripture is that the former allowed for creativity in developing a structure to contain the information, whereas, for the latter, the exegetical task consisted of creatively uncovering the patterns presumed to be already embedded within. This creative aspect of encyclopedias was intrinsically linked with providing useful heuristic structures since ordered patterns served mnemonic purposes for both teacher and student.[45]

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[43] Such an approximation between the order and totality of divine wisdom as a *thesaurus* is intimated in Proverbs 2:3–6: "Si enim sapientiam invocaveris, et inclinaveris cor tuum prudentiae; / *si quaesieris eam quasi pecuniam, et sicut thesauros effoderis illam*: / tunc intelliges timorem Domini, et scientiam Dei invenies / quia Dominus dat sapientiam, et ex ore ejus prudentia et scientia" ["if you indeed cry out for insight, and raise your voice for understanding; *if you seek it like silver, and search for it as for hidden treasures*—then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding"] (NRSV trans.).

[44] ["the order in which were arranged the sciences of man had to appear identical or at least similar to the universal order of things and of their hierarchy."] See Mazzotta, who writes that "[t]he celebrated remark by Alan of Lille—'omnis mundi creatura / quasi liber, et pictura / nobis est, et speculum. / Nostrae vitae, nostrae mortis, / nostrae status, nostrae sortis. / Fidele signaculum' (Every creature in the world is like a book and a picture to us, and a mirror. A faithful representation of our life, our death, our condition, and our end)—is certainly a useful, if vague, description of the most general principles on which the poem's encyclopedic structure, its inclusive, expansive representation of the heterogeneity and totality of the world, may be rooted. For Alan's much quoted verse reflects the sense that the whole of creation is a harmonious totality and a symbolic construction of things and words, a book and a mirror, whose alphabet can be deciphered, whose arcane signs can be distinguished and classified, and whose secret allegorical images can be revealed as a faithful representation ('fidele signaculum') of our condition" ("Poetry and the Encyclopedia" 17).

[45] Vasoli remarks how these patterns "si identificavano nella memoria di chi insegnava e di chi apprendeva, secondo un procedimento di analogie, metafore, allegorie, figure e segni simbolici che facevano dell'universo lo spazio concluso in cui acquistava senso l'insaziabile volontà umana di conoscenza, pronta a trasformare la stessa enciclopedia in una rappresentazione della 'fabula mundi'" ["were identified, in the memory of whom was teaching and learning, according to a process of analogies, metaphors, allegories, figures and symbolic signs that made the universe the closed space within which man's insatiable desire for knowledge acquired sense, ready to transform the same encyclopedia into a representation of the 'fabula mundi'"] (378–79).

The variety of results is surprising, such as the *Liber de moribus hominum et officiis nobilium ac popularium super ludo scachorum* (circa 1300), "[o]ne of the most popular of late medieval ethical manuals" that uses a chessboard as a mnemonic grid "into which imagines (the chess pieces, described with vivid and unusual detail) are fitted" (Carruthers, "The Arts of Memory" 179).[46] It was written by the Dominican friar Jacopo da Cessole, from the same Genoan milieu whence came the extremely popular *Legenda Aurea* (1298), a *compilatio* of hagiographies by Jacopus de Voragine (Iacopo da Varazze), and Johannes de Balbi's moral dictionary *Catholicon* (Di Lorenzo 205).

This is part and parcel of the logic behind Dante mapping the Liberal Arts onto the order of the planets in the *Convivio*.[47] Peterman, working on the structuralist premises of Singletonian hermeneutics, even argues that "the separate books [of the *Convivio*] seem to follow similar numerical orders, with key arguments appearing in parallel positions" (125), thus intimating the co-numerical patterns of the *Commedia*.[48] More importantly, as Petrucci points out in his extensive study of reading practices of vernacular texts in 13 and 14th century Italy:

> it was a reading that was to some extent mnemonic, that permitted or could permit the acquisition of the text read at the structural and verbal level, and thus, by extension, a possibility of autonomous repetition of these texts in writing or orally: thus we see the frequent citation of vernacular authors from memory (especially, but not only, Dante) .... (224–225)

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[46] See Carruthers, who explains how "Jacopo prefaces the work, which is basically a florilegium, by saying that chess was invented by a philosopher who sought to correct a tyrannical king. As they played the game, the philosopher instructed the king in the virtues and vices that attached to each piece. Thus the game itself became for the king a mnemonic of kingly virtue and responsibility, a Rule for Princes presented in a form that embeds its own mnemonic— the form of a grid filled with images, familiar to medieval audiences as a basic format for the page of memory" ("The Arts of Memory" 179).

[47] See *Convivio* II, xiii, 2–8.

[48] For more on the structure of the *Convivio*, see Peterman who notes how "Dante speaks openly of ordering arguments numerically in the *Convivio* and a variety of numerical patterns may be found" (125).

The argument, therefore, is that the task of writing poetic treatises and/or encyclopedic texts, which put a theoretical premium on rhetoric, with a didactic function in the vernacular, would necessarily imply a *dispositio* that is meant to be mnemonic and easily schematized for practical purposes. The success with which Dante was cited from memory indicates an efficient mnemonic design, from the level of the verse to that of the *canto*, the *cantica*, and the *Comedía*.

The dissemination of texts in the vernacular on the subject matter, particularly the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, around, or directly by, Florentine figures like Latini and Giamboni substantiates the plausibility of Dante employing them in his construction of the *Commedia*. The correspondences in the *Commedia* appear to be the result of a textual organization inspired by allegorical considerations, thus imitating the intratextual nature of biblical exegesis, and they have been embedded using the classical arts of rhetoric and memory. This chapter presents evidence that Dante very likely followed the precepts of the Herennian mnemonic in crafting his poem: a creative process that uses spatial mnemonics and numerical collocations to both craft and interpret texts and images.

In classical rhetoric, the compositional process is segmented into five phases: *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, and *pronuntiatio*.[49] *Inventio* is a systematic search for arguments via

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[49] See Latini's "Des parties de Rectorique," *Li livre dou tresor*. III, 1[ière] partie, iii, where these five aforementioned elements of rhetoric are enumerated: "En ceste science, ce dit Tulles, a. v. parties; ce sont: Trovemens, ordre, parables, memoire et parleure." Compare with *Rhet. ad Herr*. (I, ii, 3): "Oportet igitur esse in oratore inventionem, dispositionem, elocutionem, memoriam, pronuntiationem" ["The speaker then should possess the faculties of Invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory, and Delivery" (Caplan trans.)]. See also *De inventione* (I, vii, 9): "Quare materia quidem nobis rhetoricae videtur artis ea quam Aristoteli visam esse diximus; partes autem eae quas plerique dixerunt, inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, pronuntiatio" ["Therefore the material of the art of rhetoric seems to me to be that which we said Aristotle approved. The parts of it, as most authorities have stated, are Invention, Arrangement, Expression, Memory, Delivery" (Hubbell trans.)"; and Quintilian's *Ist. Ora*. (III, iii, 15): "namque in his singulis rhetorice tota est, quia et inventionem et dispositionem et elocutionem et memoriam et pronuntiationem" ["For each of them contains the whole of rhetoric, since each of them requires invention, arrangement, expression, memory and delivery" (Butler trans.)]. Hence, Giovanni Villani's description of Latini in his *Cronica* as "*sommo maestro in rettorica*, tanto in bene saper dire come in bene dittare ... cominciatore e maestro in digrossare i Fiorentini e fargli scorti in ben parlare, e in sapere guidare e reggere la nostra repubblica secondo la Politica" (qtd. in Contini 170 emphasis added) ["upmost master in rhetoric, as much in knowing how to say things well than in knowing how to dictate them ... initiator and master in instructing the Florentines and making them aware of how to speak well and

a perusal of one's own 'thesaurus,' that is, a treasure chest, a textual *inventory* of topics (*loci*), in something akin to free-associating.[50] Dante explicitly alludes to this technique in the first canto of *Paradiso*, stating: "Veramente quant' io del regno santo / ne la mia mente potei far *tesoro*, / sarà ora materia del mio canto" (vv. 10–12 emphasis added). Moreover, the implication that his memory transformed his experience into a "tesoro," a treasure-chest that narrates and organizes his experience, finds a pertinent echo in the aforementioned Latini and Cacciaguida episodes.[51]

As part of *dispositio*, the second of the five canons of rhetoric, considerable attention was given to creating organizational structures, sets of sequenced and numbered locations (method of *loci*), architectural backdrops upon which particularly vivid images would be assigned, just like concept mapping to organize and structure knowledge.[52] This spatial organization was achieved

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in knowing how to lead and rule our republic according to Politics"]. His rhetorical skills apply to both speaking and writing and are framed within a wider political goal. This overt frame is also found in the *Trésor*, where the third book opens with a Ciceronian quote stating that: "Tulles dit que la plus haute science de cite governer si est rectorique, ce est à dire science dou parler," linking politics and rhetoric.

[50] The etymology of the term "topic" stems from the Greek 'topoi' meaning a 'place' where memorial knowledge can spatially be aggregated, the Latin equivalent being 'locus.' The word *invention* is etymologically linked to 'inventory,' "[t]his word refers to the storage of many diverse materials, but not to random storage: clothes thrown into a closet cannot be said to be inventoried. Inventories must have an order. Inventoried materials are counted and placed in locations within an overall structure that allows any item to be retrieved easily and at once. This last requirement also excludes inventories that are too cumbersome or too indistinct to be useful; consider, for example, the difficulty of locating one's automobile in a vast parking lot" (Carruthers, "How to Make a Composition. Memory-Craft in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages" 16).

[51] De Poli observes how "[c]e rapprochement mémoire-trésor conduit le lecteur à un autre rapprochement, celui des rencontres de Dante personnage avec Brunetto Latini et Cacciaguida" ["this coming together of memory and treasury brings the reader to another connection, that of the encounters of Dante-pilgrim with Latini and Cacciaguida"] ("Mémoire et écriture poétique dans le chant XVII du *Paradis*" 33).

[52] Tateo recognizes the function of *dispositio* as structuring the symmetries of the *Commedia*, noting in his preface that: "[l]a gamma di sondaggi qui riproposti, originariamente avviati nel solco delle 'letture' ma rivolti ad inseguire la funzione simmetrica nella scrittura dantesca pur nel contesto proprio e molteplice dei singoli canti, si riferisce ad alcune fasi del 'viaggio' riconducibili alla retorica della *dispositio*: disposizione della materia storica e culturale secondo schemi teologici ed etici, ma 'disposizione' soprattutto dei segnali in grado di evidenziare sistemi, svolte e sequenze che fanno riflettere sul senso del viaggio" ["the range of essays reproposed here, originally written for the sake of 'readings' but now turned towards following the function of symmetry in Dante's writings in the proper and multiple context of singular cantos, refers to some phases of the 'voyage' that are attributable to the rhetoric of *dispositio*: disposition of the historical and cultural subject matter according to theological and ethical schema, but most of all a 'disposition' of signs that evince systems, turns, and sequences that provoke reflection on the meaning of the journey"] ("Prefazione" 7).

utilizing *divisio*, a process that serves to establish the order and sequence of the material gathered.[53]

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, *divisio* is a key component of exegesis in the *Vita nuova* and the *Convivio* as well. The third canon is *elocutio*, the manner and style in which something is said to efficiently impact the intended audience. This affective aspect, as well as the sequence and outline of the major arguments (*dispositio*), would aid *memoria*, the fourth of the five canons of rhetoric, that, in turn, facilitated the recollection of said topics. Lastly, *pronuntiatio* is the delivery of said text or speech.

The use of mnemonics within the rhetorical process of *inventio* is essentially equivalent to our modern-day concept of creativity.[54] The process of composition was effectively considered a mnemonic task, a reiterative process that begins in *inventio* and ends with *pronuntiatio*, that is, composition.[55] As such, *memoria* is meant to be a "tesoro", literally the "thesaurum inventorum," an inventoried treasure-chest, and, as such, the custodian of all the parts of rhetoric.[56] To recapitulate, *inventio* produced an *inventory* of *images* for ideas, *imagines rerum*, created by our *imaginative* faculty, that were then *disposed* (*dispositio*) within a sequenced and ordered structure, such as an architectural backdrop, a treasure-chest, or an imaginary page with rubrics and sections.[57] Since the art of rhetoric is intrinsically tied to the art of memory, Latini's central role

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[53] See *Rhet. ad Herr*. (I, iii): "Divisio est per quam aperimus quid conveniat, quid in controversia sit, et per quam exponimus quibus de rebus simus acturi" ["By means of the Division we make clear what matters are agreed upon and what are contested, and announce what points we intend to take up" (Caplan trans.)].

[54] See Carruthers: "memory and invention—what we now call creativity—if not exactly the same, are the closest thing to it" ("How to Make a Composition. Memory-Craft in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages" 15–16).

[55] See Carruthers who explains that "*inventio* and the mnemonic task it serves, *compositio*, are tasks equally of finding and gathering material in one place from a number of previously stored places" ("Memory and the Book" 309). See also 237–243.

[56] See *Rhet. ad Her*.: "Nunc ad thesaurum inventorum atque ad omnium partium rhetoricae custodem, memoriam, transeamus" ["Now let me turn to the treasure-house of the ideas supplied by Invention, to the guardian of all the parts of rhetoric, the Memory" (Caplan trans.)] (III, xvi, 28). See also Carruthers who explains how "[t]he second major metaphor [after the memory-as-book metaphor] used in ancient and medieval times for the educated memory was that of thesaurus, 'storage-room,' 'treasury,' and 'strongbox.'" Moreover, unlike the memory-as-book metaphor, "this second metaphor refers both to the contents of such a memory and to its internal organization" ("Models for the Memory" 37).

[57] For an in-depth analysis of Dante's notion of imagination and memory, see Gardner

in promoting Ciceronian rhetoric provides a solid connection with the scaffold and design of Dante's own "tesoro", that is, the *Commedia*, one that invites intratextual and symmetrical correspondences.

## The Herennian Architectural Mnemonic and Exegesis

> *La fantaisie de Dante manipule l'univers pour lui faire signifier des idées;*
> *il traite le monde comme une mnémotechnie.*

> – Batard, Yvonne. *Dante, Minerve et Apollon, les images de la Divine Comédie* (1952).[58]

During Dante's time in Florence, the Ciceronian rhetorical tradition was undergoing a significant revival in the vernacular.[59] Local figures of the intelligentsia, such as Brunetto Latini and intellectuals in his circle like Bono Giamboni, were disseminating texts that contained vernacular translations of classical sources on the arts of rhetoric and memory.[60] These include works such as Cicero's *De inventione* and, more importantly, the Pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, believed at the time to have been written by Cicero.

As Yates explains, these two works typically appeared together in manuscripts, becoming standard by the twelfth century, and "[t]he *De inventione*—described as the 'First Rhetoric' or the

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[58] ["Dante's fantasy manipulates the universe to make it signify ideas; he treats the world like a mnemotechnic."]

[59] For an history of the reception and medieval teaching of both the Pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and the *De inventione*, see John O. Ward's "Ciceronian Rhetoric in Treatise, Scholion, and Commentary" (1995).

[60] As for Bono Giamboni, the scholar Speroni has assigned to him two out of the four known versions of the *Fiore di rettorica*, a vernacular translation of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* that includes excerpts from Cicero's *De inventione*. Foà notes how "[l]a prima redazione, finora ritenuta opera di un anonimo, è stata attribuita al G[iamboni] sulla base delle numerose coincidenze nel dettato sia con il *Libro de' vizî e delle virtudi*, sia con gli altri suoi volgarizzamenti .... La seconda redazione, rimaneggiamento della precedente con l'importante aggiunta di un capitolo sulla memoria, è invece attribuita al G[iamboni] direttamente nella tradizione manoscritta: 'Questo libro tratta degl'amaestramenti dati da' savi a' dicitori che voglion parlare con parola buona, composta, ordinata e ornata, e in su le proposte sapere consigliare, il detto suo piacevolmente profferere: recati a certo ordine per messer Bono Giamboni, a utilità di coloro a cui piacerà di legger in volgare'" ["the first version, up until recently held to be anonymous, has been attributed to Giamboni on the basis of the numerous coincidences in dictation with both the *Libri de' vizî e delle virtudi* and with his other vernacular translations .... The second redaction, a rehashing of the previous version with the important addition of a chapter on memory is, instead, directly attributed to Giamboni in the manuscript tradition: 'This book talks about the teachings given from the wise to orators that want to speak with the right word, well-arranged, ordered, and ornate, and how to advise certain propositions and proffer them pleasantly; gathered in an orderly fashion by messer Bono Giamboni, to the utility of those to whom it pleases to read in the vernacular'"] ("Giamboni, Bono" *Dizionario Biografico*).

'Old Rhetoric' [*Rhetorica vetus*]is given first, and is immediately followed by the *Ad Herennium*, as the 'Second Rhetoric' or the 'New Rhetoric' [*Rhetorica nova*]" (67). On the one hand, the *Rhetorica vetus* "gave much attention to ethics and to the virtues as 'inventions' or 'things' with which the orator should deal in his speech"; on the other, the *Rhetorica nova* "gave rules as to how the invented 'things' were to be stored in the treasure-house of memory" (67). The *Ad Herennium* was undergoing a significant revival between 1275 and 1325, presumably for its rhetorical advice for structuring compositions within the context of the development of the vernacular *ars dictaminis* and *ars predicandi* traditions.[61] More importantly, the *Ad Herennium* is "the main source, and indeed the only complete source, for the classical art of memory," and "[i]ts role as the transmitter of the classical art to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance is also of unique importance" (21). The *Ad Herennium* advocates a locational heuristic, a compositional method based on the system of *loci*, and the intellectual circles around the figure of Latini appear to have been a vibrant force in its dissemination in the vernacular.[62]

The appeal and promotion of the Herennian mnemonic, however, were not limited to Florentine proto-Humanists like Latini and Giamboni, but also held sway in various settings: the scholasticism of Dominicans, universities like Bologna and Padua, and by way of monastic practices, particularly those of the Franciscans who had a deep appreciation of the Victorine

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[61] Ward speculates that the revival of the *Ad Herennium* "probably took its birth in Italy between 1275 and 1325 A.D., on the basis of northern exemplars, either as part of the 'classicizing' trend which Wieruszowski considers to have been an attempt to upgrade the quality of *dictamen* education in the time of Dante, or ... as an attempt to 'supersede' the classical treatises on rhetoric" (203).

[62] See Carruthers who argues that "the self-described Ciceronians of early humanist Italy played an important role in the revival of the Herennian mnemonic; indeed, some evidence points to the circle around Brunetto Latini as one agency of this revival" ("The Arts of Memory" 155). See also 192–194. For the reception and revival of Ciceronian rhetoric in Duecento and Trecento Italy, see Ward's chapter "Evolution of the Genre" 74–201: "[b]ehind this sudden upsurge lay a developed dictamen tradition, and an uncertain local (Brunetto Latini/Bono Giamboni?), imported (Jacques de Dinant?) or derivative (the gloss preserved in MS Oxford Bodl. Lib. Canon. Class, lat. 201) tradition of scholarly attention to the *Ad Herennium* and *De inventione* themselves" (202).

tradition (Carruthers, "The Arts of Memory" 155).[63] Scholasticism played a key role in the revival of the Herennian mnemonic, since its two most influential thinkers considered it as the best memory system: Aquinas and Albert the Great (193).[64] The Dominican order was both "responsible for developing many of the most useful tools for the study of the written texts during the thirteenth century," and they were the most active single proponent and popularizer of the Herennian architectural mnemonic (193). Evidence of this was alluded to earlier, when briefly mentioning the Dominican friar Cessola's allegorical, didactic, and mnemonic chessboard.[65]

Nevertheless, it was Bono Giamboni's translation into Italian of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*—once believed to have been done by Latini—that instigated the development of *ars memoriae* in Italy.[66] What follows is a brief survey of important Duecento texts from different milieux, principally Dominican and academic, that bring together and mobilize rhetoric, *memoria*, and encyclopedism for specific ends, resulting in a multiplication of genres and models ranging from *ars oratoria*, *ars poetriae*, *ars notaria* to *ars dictaminis*.[67] As a result of Aquinas and Albert

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[63] The works of Hugh of Saint Victor are most closely aligned with the precepts found in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: "they both employ a system of consciously adopted, rigidly ordered backgrounds as a grid which is then filled with the images constituted by the text" (Carruthers, "Elementary Memory Design" 101). This is also without mentioning the impact of Augustine's mystical treatment of memory and the imagination both in the *Confessions* and *De Trinitate*, see Gardner 275.

[64] Carruthers writes: "[b]oth Thomas's and Albertus's commentaries on *De memoria* use the memory advice of the *Ad Herennium* as their prime example of the application of Aristotle's general precepts concerning the associative nature of recollective searching" (*The Book of Memory. A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* 155). She later explains how "[t]hese two great saints exercised their influence for several centuries in ensuring Dominican sponsorship of the Herennian architectural mnemonic" (193).

[65] For more on Cessola's chessboard, see Di Lorenzo 205–221.

[66] See Yates who points out that "[t]he detached memory section of the *Ad Herennium* in Giamboni's translation, circulating by itself, is an ancestor of the separate *Ars memorativa* treatise" (99). Alongside Giamboni's *Fiore di rettorica*, a contemporary, Fra Guidotto of Bologna, a rhetor and "doctor gramatice discipline et rectorice artis" is also believed to have translated the text into Italian. On the authorship and dating of the *Fiore di rettorica*, see Speroni (1994): "[i]l testo ci è pervenuto in quattro differenti redazioni; di esse, due sono anonime, una terza reca nei codici l'attribuzione a Bono Giamboni, una quarta a Guidotto da Bologna" (xv).

[67] Paolo Rossi traces various lines of development of the art of memory in the early Trecento based on the reception and commentary of five texts: Aristotle's *De memoria et reminiscentia*, Cicero's *De oratore* (II, 86–88), Quintilian's *De institutione oratoria* (XI, 2), the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* (III, 16–24), Albert the Great's *De bono* (IV, 2) and his and Aquinas' commentary on Aristotle's *De memoria et reminiscentia*. He goes on to state that: "[a]ttraverso una vasta produzione, questa tradizione si era andata svolgendo secondo diverse linee di sviluppo e su piani differenti: mentre il testo aristotelico affrontava questioni connesse con il problema della sensazione ..., della immaginazione e

the Great synthesizing Aristotelian doctrines with Cicero's rhetoric, Dominican scholasticism

produced a wide array of encyclopedic texts aimed at moral edification by means of

mnemotechnics.

For example, an important medieval text on the art of memory in the vernacular is the

encyclopedic and didactic *Ammaestramenti degli antichi* by the Dominican preacher Bartolomeo

di San Concordio (ca. 1260–1347).[68] It seems to have been published during Bartolomeo's time

as a lector on rhetoric at the convent of Santa Maria Novella, from 1297 to 1304, thus briefly

overlapping with Dante's last years in Florence. It contains an entire section dedicated to *ars

predicandi*, wherein he promotes Aquinas' rules on artificial memory based on the Herennian

mnemonic.[69] Bono Giamboni's translation of the *Rhetorica nova* was eventually attached as a final

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dei rapporti fra anima sensitiva e anima intellettiva, i testi di Cicerone, di Quintiliano e dello pseudo-Cicerone si erano mossi su un piano tipicamente ed esclusivamente 'retorico' richiamandosi all'arte della memoria come ad una tecnica i cui compiti e i cui problemi si esaurivano sul piano di una funzionalità, in vista dei particolari fini perseguiti dall'oratore" ["throughout a vast production, this tradition unfolded according to different lines of development and on different levels: while the Aristotelian text confronted questions connected to problems of sense perception, imagination, and the relations between the sensitive and intellective parts of the soul, the texts of Cicero, Quintilian, and of Pseudo-Cicero were mobilized on a typical and exclusively rhetorical level, calling on the art of memory as a technique whose duties and problems were functional, depending on the ends pursued by the speaker"] (38–39).

[68] See Vecchio, who remarks that "[i]l riferimento alla memoria si rivela fondamentale nel modello di sapere costruito da Bartolomeo. Convinto che poco gioverebbe apparare, se l'uomo non si brigasse di tenere a memoria, Bartolomeo ha dedicato ampio spazio a questo tema all'interno della sua produzione letteraria: al di là degli opuscoli sulla memoria che gli sono stati attribuiti, certamente una sorta di arte della memoria è l'ultima parte della distinzione IX degli *Ammaestramenti*, dove, montando abilmente le citazioni tratte dalla *Retorica ad Herennium*, dal *De memoria et reminiscentia* di Aristotele nonché dal commento di Tommaso d'Aquino, Bartolomeo stabilisce le regole che aiutano a rinforzare la memoria" ["the reference to memoria shows to be fundamental in the model of knowledge constructed by Bartolomeo. Convinced that little would one gain in learning, if one could not hold things in their memory, Bartolomeo dedicated much space to this theme in his literary production: beyond those opuscules on memoria that are attributed to him, certainly a type of art of memory is the last part of the 'distinzione' IX of the *Ammaestramenti*, where, working deftly with citations taken from the *Ad Herennium*, from Aristotle's *De memoria et reminiscentia* as well as Aquinas' commentary, Bartolomeo establishes the rules that help strengthen memoria"] ("Quasi armarium scripturarum. Bartolomeo da San Concordio come biblioteca vivente" 28–29).

[69] See the Bartolomeo entry in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (1970): "le pagine sull'ingegno naturale, sulla memoria, sull'arte dello scrivere e del predicare rivelano una cordiale adesione a quella poetica dell'intelligenza che è forse il tratto più comune alla cultura pisana e fiorentina del primo Trecento: e molti luoghi topici, anche emblematici (la cera da plasmare, le tenebre da schiarire, l'agone da correre) sono comuni agli *Ammaestramenti* e alla *Commedia* o al *Convivio*" ["the pages on natural genius, on memory, on the art of writing and preaching reveal a cordial adherence to a poetics of knowledge, which is likely to the most common trait to Pisan and Florentine culture at the beginning of the Trecento: and many common places, even emblematic ones (the wax and seal metaphor, darkness to light, the battle to undergo) are shared between the *Ammaestramenti* and the *Commedia* or the *Convivio*"] (Lanza). Carruthers, however, dates the *Ammaestramenti* to 1300 and to the convent of San Concordio in Pisa.

appendix to Bartolomeo's *Ammaestramenti* and, as such, it signals an important connection between mnemonics and encyclopedism and demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of both (Carruthers, "The arts of memory" 194, "Memory and the ethics of reading" 229–30).[70]

Another Dominican of importance is Giovanni da San Gimignano (ca. 1260–1333), who wrote the *Liber de exemplis et similitudinibus rerum* (1298–1314). The stated intent of this Latin, encyclopedic, and didactic text is to provide preachers with a treasure-chest of *exempla* organized in an alphabetic order, to assist memory in preaching sermons.[71] Interestingly, the examples provided come from profane and sacred writers and are meant to aid composition rather than merely being a recall strategy.[72]

De Poli argues that Bartolomeo and Giovanni must have played a role in Dante's training in *memoria* and, since both Dominicans wrote in the vernacular, "cela confirme que la mémoire artificielle se diffusait, qu'on la recommandait aux laics comme exercice de devotion et qu'elle n'était pas réservée aux seuls prédicateurs" (*La structure mnémonique de la Divine Comédie* 17).[73] The use of *exempla* in the *ars predicandi* had the specific purpose of leaving a lasting imprint on

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[70] For more regarding the art of memory, mnemotechnics, and the art of preaching in the Trecento, see Rossi 38–49..

[71] Paolo Rossi remarks how "[i]n quel testo che si era presentato come 'utilissimo ai predicatori, di qualunque argomento essi vogliano parlare', la costruzione di analogie fra i vizi e le virtù da una parte e i corpi celesti e i moti della terra dall'altra dava luogo appunto ad una tecnica del costruire immagini capace di consentire al predicatore una ordinata esposizione e di colpire la fantasia degli ascoltatori" ["in this text, which presents itself as 'very useful for preachers, for whatever topic they chose to talk about,' the construction of analogies between vices and virtues on the one hand and the celestial bodies and the motions of the earth on the other gave place to a technique of constructing images capable to equip the preacher with a ordered discourse and to strike the imagination of the audience"] (42).

[72] The entry for Giovanni in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (2001) remarks how "[i]l *Liber* si configura come un importante sussidio per la memoria dei predicatori, ai quali fornisce anche un ammaestramento tecnico e una serie di suggerimenti per facilitare il ricordo: l'opera, suddivisa in 10 libri organizzati secondo l'ordine alfabetico, fornisce tutte le possibili associazioni tra una serie di soggetti di natura morale o teologica e i diversi ambiti degli esempi naturali che ne illustrano le caratteristiche, in maniera tale da fissarsi nella memoria tanto dei predicatori quanto degli ascoltatori" ["the *Liber* is configured as an important memory aid for preachers, to whom it even provides a technical mastery and a series of suggestions to facilitate recall: the work, divided into 10 books in an alphabetical order, provides all the possible associations between a variety of subjects from morality or theology and the various provenance of the natural examples that illustrate their characteristics, in such a way that they can remain fixed in the minds of both preachers and listeners"] (Vecchio).

[73] ["and this confirms that artificial memory was being disseminated, that it was recommended to lay individuals as a devotional exercise and that it was not reserved solely for preachers."]

the 'animo' of the audience, much like the stated purpose of Dante's poetic investiture by Cacciaguida in *Paradiso* XVII (vv. 136–142). By the end of the Duecento, the Dominicans had deployed *memoria* at the service of virtue, prudence to be precise, preaching to audiences by means of *exempla*, creating vivid verbal images of virtues and vices with the intent of leaving a lasting impression.[74]

In the early years of the Duecento, Boncompagno da Signa (ca. 1170–1240), a *magister* of grammar and rhetoric at the Universities of Bologna and Padua had also written two works concerned with rhetoric: the *Rhetorica antiqua* (1226) and the *Rhetorica novissima* (1235).[75] The latter's name parodies and aims to outdo the *Rhetorica nova*, believed by him to be without relevance to practical life and wanting to make up for its deficiencies (Carruthers and Ziolkowski 103).[76] In Book VIII of his *Rhetorica*, Boncompagno also merges artificial memory with ethics through representations of hell and paradise—*De memoria inferni* and *De memoria paradisi*—set within a mnemonic grid of signs, sharing an obvious affinity with the *Commedia*.[77] In terms of the

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[74] See Paolo Rossi, who notes that "della diffusione negli ambienti domenicani del secolo XIV dell'ars memorativa fanno fede, oltre i testi citati, anche quella connessione, che in molti casi venne a stabilirsi fra l'ars memoriae e l'ars praedicandi" ["the Trecento dissemination of the art of memory in Dominican settings is evidenced, in addition to the already cited texts, also that connection, which in many cases established itself between the art of memory and the art of preaching"] (42).

[75] For more on the *Rhetorica novissima*, see Ward 126 ff.

[76] "B[oncompagno] si fa banditore di una retorica concreta, legata alla vita, lontana dall'insegnamento tradizionale che aveva i suoi pilastri nella *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, nel *De inventione* di Cicerone e in Prisciano. Testi tutti che B[oncompagno] conosce e qualche volta cita, ma verso i quali ostenta assoluta indipendenza, se non addirittura disprezzo, rivendicando la propria originalità" ["Boncompagno makes himself the promoter of a concrete form of rhetoric, bound to life, far from the traditional teachings that took root in the Ad Herennium, the Ciceronian De inventione and in Priscian. All texts that Boncompagno knows and sometimes cites, but towards whom he ostentates an absolute independence, if not contempt, insisting on his own originality"] (Pini). Carruthers remarks how in the *Rhetorica novissima* Boncompagno lists "a variety of signs and symbols that are useful as artificial aids to natural memory ... and describes as well how he has used an imaginary alphabet as a memory code" ("Elementary memory design" 138–9). See also "The arts of memory" 184–185, 187.

[77] See Antonelli, who notes how: "Boncompagno da Signa, famoso professore universitario di Bologna (città ove Dante studiò e visse poco tempo dopo), aveva già connesso la memoria artificiale coll'Inferno e il Paradiso e che vi aveva anche collegato delle 'note mnemoniche' 'connesse con la primaria necessità', per salvare la propria anima, 'di ricordare Paradiso e Inferno, come fondamentale esercizio di memoria': fra queste note mnemoniche troviamo '... sapienza, ignoranza, sagacia, imprudenza, santità, perversità, benignità, crudeltà, ... superbia, umiltà, ... coraggio, magnanimità, ... pusillanimità ecc.', ovvero la gran parte dei vizi e delle virtù rappresentate nei nove gironi, nei nove cerchi e nei nove cieli del poema" ["Boncompagno, famous professor at the University of Bologna (city where Dante

development of *memoria*, Boncompagno anchors it in theological rectitude, foreshadowing its handling by Albert the Great and Aquinas.[78] What this also demonstrates is that there were serious attempts at reassessing and adapting the *Rhetorica nova*, particularly its mnemonic principles, to contemporary purposes.

Another teacher of rhetoric at the University of Bologna is Bene da Firenze (… –1238/42), believed to be Boncompagno's successor after his departure in 1215 and one of his most ardent adversaries. Bene was the encyclopedic author of various *summa*, one of which was a *Summa dictaminis*, also called the *Candelabrum* (1220–1238), a rhetorical text on the *ars dictaminis* that discusses the art of memory, also in Book VIII.[79] Bene's contribution to the development of rhetoric in the Duecento is linking together in the theory of the *ornatus* both the construction of the text—the *ordo artificialis*—and its metrical system, much like the symmetries between macro and microstructure in the *Commedia*. Moreover, he also formulates a poetics based on rhetoric and linked with music and arithmetic, akin to what Dante espouses in the *De vulgari eloquentia*.[80]

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studied and lived a few years later), had already juxtaposed artificial memory with hell and paradise and had even added mnemonic notes connected with the primary necessity of saving one's soul by remembering hell and paradise, and as a fundamental mnemonic exercise: in these mnemonic notes, one finds ... the greater part of the vices and virtues represented in the nine gironi, nine cornices, and nine heavens of the poem"] ("Come e perché Dante ha scritto la Divina Commedia" 7). See also Yates 69–72.

[78] See Ward, who mentions that Boncompagno is deliberately attempting "to evade the precedent set by the *Ad Herennium* and *De inventione* as possible and deals extensively with the physiological and general nature of memory, and with memory as an aid to theological rectitude rather than as an aid to oratory" (188).

[79] See Ward, who mentions how Bene's *Candelabrum* "makes clear the currency of *Ad Herennium* study in the first half of the thirteenth century in northern Italy" (177). However, Ward finds the *Candelabrum* essentially "derivative" and "in practice, [Bene's] advice follows that of Boncompagno, in places directly, and confines itself to general and physiological observations" (188–189).

[80] For more regarding theoretical similarities between Bene and Dante, see his entry in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (1970): "Ché se B[ene] trasferisce alla prosa dettatoria le norme delle *artes poeticae*, egli non solo mostra di concepire il linguaggio prosastico strettamente congiunto con quello poetico secondo un principio da cui anche D[ante] trarrà le mosse in VE II I, ma tratta espressamente anche del ritmo, definendolo in termini vicini all'uso dantesco ('Rhitmus certum numerum sillabarum et consonantiam finalem considerat', *Candelabrum* V XVII; cfr. VE, dove rithimus vale 'rima')" ["if Bene transfers to *dictamen* prose the rules of *artes poeticae*, he not only demonstrates conceiving of prose as closely connected with poetry according to a principle from which even Dante would find inspiration in the *De vulgari* (II, i), but also analyses meter and verse, defining them in terms close to Dante"] (Tateo).

This genealogy of texts brings together a wide array of figures that are all characterized by encyclopedism, rhetoric, and mnemonics.[81] It also illustrates the polyvalence of Herennian mnemonics.[82] As such, one can enumerate several possible points of contact between Dante and the art of memory either in Bologna or Florence: around academics or jurists related to the *ars dictaminis*, in the schools belonging to the Dominican and Franciscan orders, or in political and civic settings around figures like Latini and Giamboni.[83] In sum, rhetorical wisdom was highly sought after and the *Ad Herennium* had gained significant intellectual currency throughout various circles of literati during the second half of the Duecento.

To recapitulate, it was out of the art of rhetoric that the art of memory emerged as a self-standing craft and, in this context, Bono's translation of the *Ad Herennium* played a unique role.[84] The *Ad Herennium* makes the most explicit elaboration on the metaphors of memory as a book and as a treasure-chest; it is also the most technical text on the system commonly referred to as the 'method of loci' or the 'architectural mnemonic' and it provided readers guidelines and techniques on how to map out discourses by means of architectural structures.[85] It prescribes the use of a

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[81] It should be noted that the coupling of memory and ethics is not necessarily novel, see for instance Augustine's discussion on *memoria* and *inventio* in Book X of the *Confessions*. For Aquinas and Albert the Great and their displacement of artificial memory from rhetoric to the Christian virtue of prudence, see De Poli *La structure mnémonique de la Divine Comédie* 3–5, and Carruthers section titled "Memory and the habits of virtue" 81–9.

[82] Ward observes that "[t]he late medieval tracts assume theological, monastic and scholastic contexts, and although they derive their basic doctrine from the *Ad Herennium*, there is much additional adaptation for contemporary uses" (189).

[83] See the *Convivio*, where Dante mentions the beginning of his philosophical journey by attending "nelle scuole delli religiosi e alle disputazioni delli filosofanti; sì che in picciolo tempo, forse di trenta mesi, cominciai tanto a sentire della sua dolcezza, che lo suo amore cacciava e distruggeva ogni altro pensiero" ["the schools of the religious orders and the disputations held by the philosophers, so that in a short period of time, about thirty months, I began to feel her sweetness so much that the love of her dispelled and destroyed every other thought"] (xii, 7).

[84] See Carruthers, who remarks: "it is the identification of the Herennian mnemonic scheme with humanism that led to its dominance in the memory texts of the Renaissance, many of which emanate from a milieu that is Italian and also Dominican" ("The arts of memory" 155).

[85] The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* has "the most detailed description of the ancient architectural mnemonic" and "contains the fullest elaboration of the metaphor that likens memory to writing on wax or papyrus" ("Models for the memory" 32). See *Rhet. ad Her*. III, xvi–xxiv. In particular, the section dedicated to "artificiosa memoria": "[c]onstat igitur artificiosa memoria ex locis et imaginibus. Locus appellamus eos qui breviter, perfecte, insignite, aut nautra aut manu sunt absolute, ut eos facile naturali memoria conprehendere et amplecti queamus: ut aedes *intercolumnium*, angulum, fornicem, et alia quae his similia sunt" (emphasis added) ["[t]he artificial memory includes backgrounds

sequenced grid system set onto an architectural background where structural elements, such as columns (*intercolumniae*) and/or colored rubrics (a form of *divisio textus* using the color red, *rubrum* in Latin), served to spatially contain and distinguish *imagines rerum* or *verborum*, images for things or for words.[86]

By the beginning of the thirteenth century, the *Ad Herennium* overtook the *De inventione* and this was reflected in the switching of their order within manuscripts: "[m]ost manuscripts of the time, where they have the two texts, place the *Ad Herennium* before the *De inventione*, and glossing will usually favour the first" (Ward 202).[87] All these sites of diffusion converge in what appears to be a pervasive form of technology, that is, a concurrence of discourses surrounding a specific craft that can be adapted to various functions. They point to what Carruthers calls a "memorial culture" and, as such, it manifests itself in communicative modalities: visual arts, poetry, disputations, sermons, oral addresses, epistolary texts, etc.

The localized site of diffusion, Florence, in combination with Latini's influence on the encyclopedic project of the *Commedia*, substantiates the possibility of a direct transmission of the

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and images. By backgrounds I mean such scenes as are naturally or artificially set off on a small scale, complete and conspicuous, so that we can grasp and embrace them easily by the natural memory—for example, a house, *an intercolumnar space*, a recess, an arch, or the like" (Caplan trans. emphasis added)].

[86] The importance of *divisio* is two–fold: it can pertain to the creation and composition of a text or an oration, as well as the analysis of literary texts. As shown, the technique of *divisio* is used by Dante in both the *Vita nuova* and the *Convivio* to elucidate the meaning, the *sentenzia*, of his poetry. The idea of the book of memory, and its use of rubrics, is explicitly mentioned by Dante at the beginning of the *Vita nuova*: "In quella parte del *libro de la mia memoria* dinanzi a la quale poco si potrebbe leggere, si trova una *rubrica* la quale dice: *Incipit vita nova*. Sotto la quale *rubrica* io trovo scritte le parole le quali è mio intendimento d'assemplare in questo libello; e se non tutte, almeno la loro sentenzia" (I, i emphasis added) ["In the book of my memory, after the first pages, which are almost blank, there is a section headed *Incipit vita nova*. Beneath this heading, I find the words which it is my intention to copy into this smaller book, or if not at all, at least their meaning" (Alighieri Reynolds trans.)]. It also serves as the title to one of the most important contributions to the study of the art of memory in the Middle Ages, Mary Carruthers' *The Book of Memory*. For the interpretive function of rubrications, see Liere 106.

[87] See Ward, who notes that "[t]he reasons for this development have to do with the deepening and broadening vitality of rhetorical study in medieval society and reflect social changes of considerable importance .... The shift to the *Ad Herennium* was in many ways a commonsense one, and marked the emergence of the full-scale rhetorical curriculum in which *inventio* (hitherto pursued in a dialectical context) was married to the *colores* (pursued hitherto in a largely grammatical and literary context) together with *dispositio* (to figure largely in the *artes poetriae*) and *memoria* and *pronuntiatio* (the latter of interest perhaps in view of the growth of drama and the increasing relevance of real, often diplomatic speech situations)" (155).

Herennian architectural mnemonic; however, the most substantial confirmation of its influence on

Dante is that to describe the basic rules of the Herennian mnemonic "equivale quasi a caratterizzare

succintamente la struttura letteraria della *Divina Commedia*" (Weinrich 14).[88] The data appears

overwhelming that the revival of Ciceronian rhetorical texts in Florence around the figure of Latini,

who Dante explicitly acknowledges as having influenced his poetic project, has had an impact on

the composition of the *Commedia*.[89]

Therefore, the proem of Dante's *Vita nuova* that introduces Dante's book of memory is no

ordinary metaphor but a common cultural practice of *memoria* in the service of composition and

exegesis: "In quella parte del *libro de la mia memoria* dinanzi a la quale poco si potrebbe leggere,

si trova una *rubrica* la quale dice: *Incipit vita nova*. Sotta la quale *rubrica* io trovo scritte le parole

le quali è mio intendimento d'assemplare in questo libello, e se non tutte, almeno la loro sentenzia"

(I emphases added).[90] As Carruthers explains, "[i]n composing, Dante sees the work in visual form,

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[88] ["to summarize in five basic rules the sum of the art of memory according to the rules of classical rhetoric is almost the equivalent of succinctly describing the literary structure of the *Divine Comedy*."] For a commentary on Weinrich's text, see Antonelli ("Come e perché Dante ha scritto la Divina Commedia" 5–6). See also Bolzoni who, in her book *The Web of Images*, seeks to "reconstruct a rhetorical, logical, mental *outillage* that was in common use. Dante had it at his disposal and it seems unlikely that he would have failed to use it when describing a journey through places and images that is also a journey of understanding the vices and virtues, and of progressive inner transformation, leading to an encounter with the divine. It is a journey that can be written about because it is lodged in the memory, and it in turn can operatively write itself on the memory–and body–of the reader" (8).

[89] Dante never cites the *Ad Herennium*, but he does cite the *De inventione* (I, 38), also known as the *Rhetorica vetus* or *Rhetorica prima*, in the *Monarchia*: "Propter quod bene Tullius in *Prima rethorica*: semper—inquit—ad utilitatem rei publice leges interpretande sunt" ["Hence Cicero is correct when he says in the *De inventione* that laws are always to be interpreted for the benefit of the community" (Shaw translation)] (II, v, 2). The *Ad Herennium* is mentioned in the *Epistola a Can Grande*: "Propter primam partem notandum quod ad bene exordiendum tria requiruntur, ut dicit Tullius in *Nova Rethorica*, scilicet ut benevolum et attentum et docilem reddat aliquis auditorem; et hoc maxime in admirabili genere cause, ut ipsemet Tullius dicit" (49). But it is a misattribution, since it is actually from the *De inventione* (I, xv, 20–21), casting doubts on the author's presumed abilities. Dante's direct knowledge of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* can only be speculative; nevertheless, in the *De vulgari eloquentia*, a borrowing on the division of styles: "Stilo equidem tragico tunc uti videmur quando cum gravitate sententie tam superbia carminum quam constructionis elatio et excellentia vocabulorum concordat" (II, iv, 7) indicates some form of textual knowledge of its mention in the *Ad Herennium*: "Gravis est quae constat ex verborum gravium levi et ornate constructione" (IV, viii, 11).

[90] ["In the book of my memory, after the first pages, which are almost blank, there is a section headed *Incipit vita nova*. Beneath this heading I find the words which it is my intention to copy in this smaller book, or if not at all, at least their meaning" (Reynolds trans.).]

written in his memory as pages with text, rubrics, and paraphs " ("Memory and the book" 278–9).[91] This is the same motif behind Dante-poet's invocation of the muses in *Inferno* II: "O muse, o alto ingegno, or m'aiutate; / *o mente che scrivesti ciò ch'io vidi*, / qui si parrà la tua nobilitate" (vv. 6–8 emphasis added) and his description of memory as a book in *Paradiso* XVII: "e portera'ne scritto ne la mente" (v. 91) and *Paradiso* XXIII: "libro che 'l preterito rassegna" (v. 54). This no simple metaphor or a mere literary *topos*, it alludes to the "ingegno" needed in crafting a poem employing a textual "mente" (memory).

Contrary to our modern expectations, these systems were not principally used to facilitate rote memorization of a sequence of text or speech: they had a creative function, particularly with *inventio*.[92] They served as a heuristic device to discover persuasive arguments for one's textual or spoken communicative act.[93] On the one hand, in terms of composition, it allowed the combination and sequencing of several arguments to generate novel and more persuasive ones, to make unexpected connections between disparate ideas. On the other hand, in terms of exegesis, it facilitated intratextual analysis, such as comparing and contrasting scriptural passages. The relative position between the various components generated complementary meaning through association, sequencing, and symmetry. Therefore, as a process, in no way does it impede creativity, since the use of such visual structures produces a sense of textual unity, provides authors and exegetes alike

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[91] For an analysis of the metaphor and its ramifications, see Singleton, *An Essay on the Vita Nuova* 25–54.

[92] "Rote repetition, since it is not 'found out' by any heuristic scheme, is not considered recollection or true memory (*memoria*). (...) All mnemonic organizational schemes are heuristic in nature. They are retrieval schemes, for the purpose of *inventio* or 'finding'" (Carruthers, "Models for the memory" 23). In another essay, Carruthers mentions how "[i]n earlier times, *ars memorandi* was thought of primarily as a practical instrument of rational investigation and discovery, or 'invention,' useful for a wide variety of purposes and—by the thirteenth century—addressed to a greatly varied audience" ("How to Make a Composition. Memory-Craft in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages" 15).

[93] Boccaccio, in his *Trattatello*, praises Dante for this particular skill: "D'altissimo ingegno e di *sottile invenzione* fu similmente, sì come le sue opere troppo più manifestano agl'intendenti che non potrebbono fare le mie lettere" [Of the highest genius and of subtle *invention* he was equal in both, just as his works make more manifest to those who are in the know than my writing can" (I Red., 124 emphasis added). However, notice Boccaccio's reticence in discussing it further.

with a map of text(s), and facilitates recollection through numerical collocation.[94] The *Commedia*'s co-numerary patterns are the result of such a *modus componendi*, a scaffolding technique, intrinsic to the method of loci as espoused in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.

In terms of intratextuality and exegesis in Dante's *Commedia*, there are several 'horizontal' numerical sequences of cantos that form self-contained textual units, either diptychs (e.g., *Inf*. XXVI–XXVII) or triptychs (e.g., *Purg*. X–XII, *Par*. XV–XVII, *Par*. XXIV–XXVI) or even chiasmic sequences (*Par*. XI–XII).[95] Other sequences can be the result of a "vertical" correspondence, using co-numerary cross-canticle correspondences; whereas others can be "slanted," through their textual content and relative positioning (*Inf*. XXVI-*Purg*. V); or even conical (*Inf*. XV-*Par*. XV–XVII). Much like the closed metrical structure and rhyme scheme of a *terzina* allow content to flourish, this seemingly mechanical set of rhetorical guidelines gives texts a sense of unity and variety, difference and repetition, and an overall coherent yet compellingly creative narrative. It is, therefore, no coincidence to see common themes or imagery reflected within the same–numbered *canto*: it is the result of the scaffolding system Dante used to structure and build his textual edifice.

In 2011, Antonelli revised a previously published essay from 2003 in honor of Harald Weinrich, that had asked how Dante composed his poem "non nel senso più ovvio dello stile ma in quello forse meno ovvio e più misterioso e intrigante della concezione e organizzazione della macrostruttura dell'opera, del quadro d'insieme, dello schema e delle molteplici e complesse relazioni interne che un poema del genere comportava" ("Come e perché Dante ha scritto la Divina Commedia" 3, "«Memoria rerum» et «memoria verborum». La costruzione della «Divina

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[94] This author's personal experience has shown that visualizing the *Commedia* in this manner, through symmetrical correspondences and horizontal sequences, as made it much easier to recall and locate textual arguments.
[95] For the chiasmic structure of *Paradiso* XI–XII, see Barolini, "The Heaven of the Sun" 194–217 esp. 334–335, n. 11.

Commedia»").[96] Antonelli gathers together the highly suggestive but brief statements of Weinrich (1994) and Yates (1966) on the role of artificial memory in Dante's composition of the *Commedia* in order to argue, in no uncertain terms, that the *Commedia* "è dunque anche un gigantesco teatro della memoria" ["is therefore even a giant theater of memory"] (10). Said differently, the macrostructure of the poem, established by means of *inventio* and *dispositio*, is reminiscent of the art of memory, especially *memoria rerum*, 'memory of things', while at the level of the microstructure (the *elocutio* or the writing) the *memoria verborum*, 'memory of words', is seen at work in the textual correspondences and repetitions. It is within this mnemonic context that Antonelli situates the "correlazioni fra canti corrispondenti di ogni cantica" ["the correlations between corresponding cantos of each *cantica*"], those are, the vertical patterns that cut across the macrostructure of the poem, citing the Sixes, alongside the Fifteens and Sixteens, and the Twenty-Sevens (12). Following the work of Yates, Carruthers, Weinrich, De Poli, and Antonelli, this research seeks to further substantiate the claim that the vertical patterning of the *Commedia* is a result of mnemonic compositional practices.

**The Cupola Mosaics of the Baptistery of San Giovanni**

> …at si quid videmus aut audimus egregie turpe, inhonestum, insuitatum, magnum, incredibile, ridiculum id diu meminisse consuevimus ... insignes et novae diutius manent in animo.
>
> – *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (III, xxii, 35–36).[97]

One particular principle of the Herennian mnemonic that has withstood the passage of time is the *intercolumnia*, "one of the most enduring types of memory locus" (Carruthers, *The Book of Memory. A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* 118).

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[96] ["not in the more obvious sense of style but rather in that less obvious and more mysterious and intriguing sense of the conception and organization of the macrostructure of the work, in the overall picture of the schema and the multiple complex internal relations that a poem of that type involved."]

[97] ["But if we see or hear something exceptionally base, dishonourable, extraordinary, great, unbelievable, or laughable, that we are likely to remember a long time" ... "the striking and novel stay longer in mind" (Caplan trans.).]

Fig. 10 – Carolingian Gospel Book with Canon Tables.[98]

The use of architectural columns to separate, organize, and then analyze textual elements has a long and unbroken tradition and it played a significant role in biblical exegesis. For example, the Canon Tables of Eusebius were a paratextual element "added to virtually all medieval Bibles" (118). These ten tables were devised by Eusebius of Caesarea in the fourth century and offer "a quick comparison across the texts of the four Gospels and showed a listing of all passages that

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[98] Made about 825–50, probably in Metz. "The Gospel Book, which contained the Bible's several versions of the life of Jesus, reigned supreme. No churchman, court advisor, noblewoman or king would want to be without one. ... In this example, perhaps made for a queen, painted illustration is reserved for the Canon Tables, an elaborate concordance used to compare and contrast passages from the four gospel texts. Here, splendid arcades organize the essential information. *The decoration is so varied and lively—to the point of whimsy at times—that turning the pages approximates n extraordinary architectural tour*" (Museum Plaque emphasis added). The Cloisters Collection, 2015 (2015.560). Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New York, NY. Seen on: December 16, 2017.

could be found in all four Gospels; followed by passages common to Matthew, Mark, and Luke; the passages common to Matthew, Luke, and John next; and so on, until all possible combinations were covered" (Liere 106). The architectural layout of the Tables demonstrates the continuous influence of the Herennian mnemonic in biblical exegesis, since "[s]uch a layout is clearly designed for mnemonic ease" (118).[99] Other significant aspects are that there are no written passages, except for the names of the Gospels; portions of the texts are cited numerically and listed vertically; and architectural columns—each unique in color and pattern, to facilitate recall—separate the four main vertical spaces on the page. More importantly, although the intercolumnar layout of the Tables is visibly meant to facilitate recall, their overall purpose is to assist exegesis, namely the intratextual glossing of the Gospels.

As discussed in the previous chapter, intratextual analysis of parallel passages in the Bible was fundamental to medieval biblical exegesis. As an exegetical technique, it was deployed in the service of typological readings of the Old and New Testament and in interpreting words through parallel passages, what Iannucci and Smalley describe as "testimony" and that Dante executes with great bravura in the *Monarchia* (Iannucci, "Autoesegesi dantesca: la tecnica dell'episodio parallelo nella 'Commedia'" 312; Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* 34). The Canon Tables likewise facilitated intratextual exegesis through a vertical and horizontal layout set on an architectural backdrop, on a two-dimensional page with a numerical system of *divisio textus*.[100]

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[99] Carruthers explains how "[w]ithin each rectangular space made by the columns in the Eusebian Tables, the name of the gospel is written at the top, and then the chapter numbers of the synoptic passages are recorded. Horizontal lines, sometimes colored, are drawn between every four numbers (in the Greek) or five (in the Latin); the effect is to divide the page into a series of small rectangular bins, none holding more than five items. Such a layout is clearly designed for mnemonic ease" ("Elementary memory design" 118).

[100] Since they do not contain any written text, passages are cited by number, following the *divisio textus* used by Eusebius. Liere explains how "[t]he tables contained numerical codes that corresponded to numbers in the margin of the Gospel texts, facilitating a quick lookup of the parallel passage in any of the other Gospels" (106). Carruthers succinctly explains the Canon Tables as such: "[t]here are ten tables in all, the first showing concordant passages in all four Gospels; the next three show concordances among three of the four; the next five those among any two; and the last one lists passages unique to each of the four. The tables are laid out in columns ..., the numbers listed one after

This programmatic representation of the Gospels displays characteristics akin to those found in Dante's *Commedia* and, as such, presents a homology through mnemonics and exegesis. The same characteristics also extend to other forms of visual representations of Scripture that Dante undoubtedly witnessed, as shown earlier in the apsidal mosaics in Classe and, now, in those of the San Giovanni Baptistery's cupola in Florence.

As the Herennian mnemonic revival was underway in Florence, work on the baptistery mosaics had also just begun.[101] One can imagine Dante being in the know of what was then the most ambitious artistic endeavor of the time right in the heart of Florence. The project would by necessity involve large numbers of artisans bustling about in the city center for an extended period of time. Considering the prestige, cost, and significance of the undertaking—a projection of the city's ambition and power— some form of daily interaction between artists, workers, locals, and key city officials was inevitable.

De Poli argues that Latini should be considered "maître de mémoire du jeune Dante Alighieri" and that one could imagine "tous deux se déplaçant dans des édifices publics, determinant des lieux à parcourir et proposant la meilleure image possible" (*La structure mnémonique de la Divine Comédie* 21).[102] Furthermore, as an aside to the common advice of

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another vertically, and architectural columns are drawn to separate the four main vertical spaces on the page, together with arches and other architectural elements representing a classical façade" ("Elementary memory design" 118).

[101] There is scant documentation pertaining to the Baptistery and its mosaics; the oldest is from 1216: a signed agreement between the powerful Calimala guild of merchants "with the Opera di San Giovanni concerning the temporal administration of the Baptistery which encompassed its decoration and maintenance" (Giusti 281). It would be interesting to investigate who the guild contracted and consulted for designing the layout of the cupola mosaics. One of the earliest signs of work being done on the mosaics is a chancel inscription dated from 1225 by a Franciscan lay brother, Fra Iacopo (Verdon 21); but, as Hueck points out: "[d]oubts have been cast upon the authenticity of the chancel inscription (cf. Anna Maria Giusti in this volume), and Schwarz,' for instance, has made the interesting suggestion that its dating has personal and eulogizing overtones (*Annus ... Federice tuo quintus monarcha decori*) and that it was not carried out in 1225, when Florence refused the obligatory oath of allegiance to the Emperor, but after 1238 when it could have been in the Commune's interest to anticipate in this way its presumed esteem for Frederick II" (229).

[102] ["memory teacher to the young Dante Alighieri" ... "both of them walking around public buildings, determining spaces to browse and proposing the best possible image."]

signaling every fifth background in one's mnemonic grid, De Poli argues that every fifth *canto* of each *cantica* forms a pattern of correspondences.[103] Considering the importance of the mosaics project, this fictional re-enactment of Latini and Dante seeking mnemonic grids in the city's architecture may indeed be a reality; whereas his vertical readings of the Fives, Tens, Fifteens, Twenties, Twenty-fives, and Thirties appear, at best, ambitious considering the small space devoted to the matter.[104] De Poli, instead provides what he believes to be a sequential 'infrastructure' to the *Commedia* set around the number five; but, it is not linked to the number of the cantos, assigning instead the mnemonic backgrounds to the geographical space within the narrative. The end result appears somewhat arbitrary; though, as a personal mnemonic of the poem for De Poli himself, it may indeed prove useful.[105] It would also appear incongruous to think that the Baptistery was inaccessible to Florentines during this extended period of time; therefore, Dante could have been witnessing in real-time the development of the mosaics' program, while simultaneously learning about Herennian mnemonics.

As indicated earlier, the Baptistery at the center of the city was a physical artefact of Florence's genesis, representing the city's pagan foundation and later conversion to Christianity.

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[103] De Poli states that "la mise en correspondance des chants des 3 *cantiche* placés sous le signe du cinq nous a permis de dégager une identité de contenu dans les six triades ainsi formées" ["the setup of correspondences of the cantos of the three *cantica* under the sign of the number five allows us to trace an identity in content in the six resulting triads"], and then provides a figure indicating the common themes shared between each triad: "[a]insi, dans les trois chants V domine le thème du meurtre dans la famille, dans les chants X celui de l'orgueil ou de son contraire. Les chants XV sont reliés sémantiquement par le thème de l'héritage alors que les chants XX se fondent sur l'idée de la prophétie .... Les chants XXV ont en commun la transformation du corps .... Enfin, les chants XXX sont marqués par le thème de l'eau et du fleuve" ["therefore, in all three canto V the theme of family murder, in the X that of pride or its opposite. The XV are connected in semantic terms related to heritage whereas the XX are founded on the idea of prophecy .... The XXV have in common the transformation of the body .... Finally, the XXX are marked by the theme of water and rivers"] (*La structure mnémonique de la Divine Comédie* 135–137).

[104] De Poli recognizes this, stating "[d]e telles correspondances sémantiques, pour intéressantes qu'elles soient, ne structurent pas le poème de manière indiscutable: certains des thèmes n'occupent qu'une partie du chant, parfois seulement quelques vers. En outre, notre recherche vise plus à la mise en lumière d'une structure mnémonique que d'un réseau thématique comme celui-ci" ["such semantic correspondences, albeit as interesting as they are, do not necessarily structure the poem in an unquestionable manner; some of the themes only occupy a portion of the *canto*, sometimes only a few verses. Moreover, our research aims more at shedding light on a mnemonic structure than a thematic network such as this"] (*La structure mnémonique de la Divine Comédie* 138).

[105] See 142–157.

As Verdon succinctly puts it with regards to the symbolism of the Baptistery: "[n]ew life in ancient forms; transformation yet at the same time uninterrupted continuity: these are fundamental notions" (17). It is telling that one could easily mistake Verdon's observation on the Baptistery as a commentary on the fundamental aspects of Dante's poetics.

As mentioned earlier in Part I of this chapter, the Baptistery is also the physical object upon which pivot the positive and negative associations of the pagan god Mars in *Paradiso* XIV–XVIII: Christ's martial victory over death by his resurrection, represented by the symbol of the cross, and its planetary influence on, and prophetic link with, the political vicissitudes of Florence. Indeed, the Baptistery offers a permanent ligature with the past, an emblem of Florence's antiquity and connection to Rome, but it also regulated the city's daily life and projection into the future, thus holding profound symbolic and political connotations in the collective mind of its citizens.[106] It is also the symbol of a Florence that has undergone a conversion, and the death of the old self and its rebirth is theologically tied to the sacrament of Baptism and the formal structure of the building. As such, the building does present thematic and structural affinities with Dante's *Commedia*, itself the story of a conversion, from Dante-pilgrim to that of Dante-poet.

The idea of an individual and collective 'vita nuova' is also the theological focus of the cupola mosaics: "[a]s in the individual who receives Baptism, that is, so in his city: the 'members' of a body doomed to die receive new life! This indeed is the theme of the mosaics that completed the Baptistery's decoration in the center, above the font and altar, we see the dead who 'rise in Christ'" (Verdon 17–18). Therefore, it is significant that the Baptistery is the point upon which Cacciaguida fixes his identity, proclaiming his name and faith within it: "ne l'antico vostro

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[106] For instance, on the 24th of June, St. John the Baptist's day, cities that were subject to Florence would present wax offerings and "[d]uring the Middle Ages, prisoners of the Commune, before being formally released, were consigned to the Baptist as spoils of war and then freed in his name" (Hueck 229).

Batisteo / insieme fui cristiano e Cacciaguida" (*Par*. XV, vv. 134–135). This also partly explains why the Baptistery, the place of the first *sacrament*, is where Dante wishes to *consecrate* his identity as a poet and his "poema *sacro*":

> con altra voce omai, con altro vello
>
> ritornerò poeta, e in sul fonte
>
> del mio battesmo prenderò 'l cappello. (*Par*. XXV, vv. 1, 7–9)

As Emilio Pasquini eloquently puts it, the Baptistery is a "vero umbilicus Urbis" (9). Additionally, the Baptistery is connected to the vertical reading of the Fifteens, being part of the mythical genealogy of Florence and links together intellectual, civic, and familial lines to architectural ones: the Baptistery and the *Commedia*.
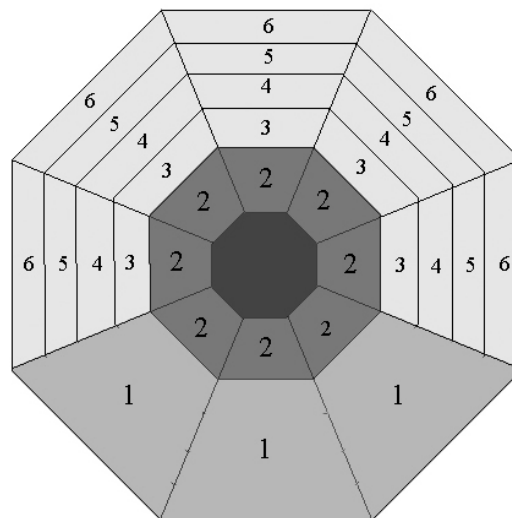


Fig. 11 – Schema of the *dispositio* of Images in the Cupola Mosaics.[107]

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[107] In this schema, 1 represents the Final Judgment with Christ at the center; 2 is the hierarchy of angels, 3 is the stories of Genesis, from Creation, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and Noah, 4 is the story of Joseph, son of Jacob, 5 is stories from the life of Mary and Christ, and 6 is the narrative of the life of St. John the Baptist.

The extent of the Herennian architectural mnemonic's influence can be seen in the layout used for the mosaics program of the cupola and this has never been pointed out before this research. The mosaics are a clear indication of the practice of *dispositio* through *columniae*, partitions used to guide interpretation, to invite readers to do read across four textual sources, much like the Canon Tables but, instead of the four Gospels, it involves two sections from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament. The layout beckons viewers to interpret these images allegorically, on the premise that there is a divine harmony undergirding Scripture. There are no known precedents of these columns in contemporary visual arts and historians assign their presence as part of an early-Christian aesthetic revival; however, this research argues that they are physical evidence of the influence of Herennian architectural mnemonics circulating in Florence during that period.

The dating of the various sections of the mosaics indicate that the artists worked vertically, that is to say, they executed one triptych from each narrative, rather than working narrative by narrative. The chronology of the mosaics indicates that the artists did the four narratives sequentially, from the center outward along the radius of the cupola; only to begin anew in the next sequence until all the triangular segments that make up the octagon are completed. For example, the first triptych from the Genesis narrative (3), which depicts the creation of the world, Adam, and then Eve, is assigned to the milieu of Coppo di Marcovaldo (ca. 1270–1275). The second triptych of the Genesis narrative (3) in the adjacent triangular segment, representing original sin, God's rebuke, and the expulsion from Eden, is assigned to a later and different environment, one close to Cimabue (ca. 1280–1285).

Fig. 12 – Stories from the First Vertical Segment.

Conversely, the first triptych from the life of Joseph (4), which presents Joseph's dream, his retelling of it to Jacob, and his joining of his brothers in Dothan, appears to have been done by two different groups: the first, Joseph's dream, would have been done by the same artists of the first triptych of Genesis (ca. 1270–1275); whereas the other two appear done by a certain Deodato Orlandi (ca. 1300–1305).[108] Moving downwards, the triptych of the life of Mary and Christ (5), which depicts the Annunciation, the Visitation, and the Nativity, has been recognized as belonging a forerunner to Cimabue (ca. 1275–1280). Lastly, the first triptych from the life of St. John the Baptist (6) also belongs to this group but at a later date (ca. 1280–1285). As art historian Anna-Maria Giusti explains: "work proceeded on the various segments working from the top down, as

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[108] Giusti remarks that "[i]t is only in this area of the vault, inexplicably, that the chronological order of the stories is ignored as they were designed to develop through the segments. This can perhaps be explained by a 'new start' on an unfinished area of the vault some twenty-five years after the rest was completed, or by their remaking after being damaged, or even by a change in the iconographical programme" (312).

we can infer from the different stylistic phases" (307). The pattern—with the exception of Orlandi—is that of working progressively from the center outwards and then moving onto the next vertical sequence of four narratives.[109]

This makes sense for two reasons. First, in practical terms, the scaffolding used to hoist workers near enough to the cupola to execute the mosaics would be built in such a way that it would be more efficient to work linearly along the radius of the octagon rather than circling around the lantern.[110] Secondly, this implies a pre-established—but not necessarily inflexible—program of images based on allegorical, didactic, and exegetical principles, thus requiring some form of theological guidance either by Dominicans or Franciscans, or both. As Giusti observes, "[i]n an undertaking which took over fifty years to complete some modifications might well have been incorporated but the thematic scheme and overall composition, essential to a work of this complexity, must have been well defined from the start" (302–303). The same rhetorical process is at work in the *Commedia*, Dante provides numerous textual cues to guide analysis, prescribing modes of interpretation that take into account formal aspects of the text and gloss the poem intratextually—as though it contained an internal order and harmony akin to Scripture.

The oldest document relating specifically to dating work on the mosaics in the Baptistery is from 1271; it "ratifies a financial agreement between the [Cathedral] Chapter and the consules mercatorum Callismale civitatis Florentiae pro se ipsis et vice ac nomine picture mosayce Sancti

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[109] The dating of the second set of triptychs is, for Genesis: artists close to Cimabue (ca. 1280–1285); for Joseph, his being sold into slavery is also by artists close to Cimabue (ca. 1280–1285), whereas the other two are attributed to the milieu of the Master of the Magdalen (ca. 1280–1290); for the life of Mary and Christ and that of St. John the Baptist, these mosaics are also assigned to the Master of the Magdalen.

[110] The angelic hierarchy was executed first and in a circular fashion; however, as work expanded the method changed: "[t]his change in method was no doubt based on practical considerations: scaffolding for the more confined area at the top of the vault only occupied a limited ground space but as the area of the vault widened so the required ground area for scaffolding would have cluttered the whole building. Work on the segments (with a scaffolding that for structural reasons probably covered two at a time) continued from the top down as had been the method when the workshop was established" (Giusti 307).

lohannis Baptiste" ["the Consuls of the merchants of the Calimala guild of the city of Florence for the mosaic decoration of the Baptistery of San Giovanni"] (Giusti 281).[111] The text seems to imply that by 1271 work had already begun on the vault mosaics, and this is supported by the dating and stylistic identification of the various sections of the program; whereas other documents indicate that by 1300, the mosaics were nearing completion. Another important document from the Calimala statutes of 1301–1313 shows that in 1301–1302, "masters and others" were required to do work on the wooden scaffolding used to elevate workers "facte dudum pro opera musaico depingendo" ["installed some time ago for the mosaic work"] (Giusti 282). This implies that the scaffolding had been in place for quite some time, spanning probably decades.

Other significant factors to consider are that "the demands and complications in establishing a mosaic workshop on that scale, they can only have been increased in a city like Florence with no previous experience in the field" (Giusti 300). In addition to the provision of materials, the craftmanship it necessitated was lacking at that time, hence the hypothesis that the first masters to coordinate the mosaics were Venetian (see fig. 13–14); however, its design "even in the earliest tiers, was Florentine, as if there was a conscious intention to unite the recent achievements in Florentine painting with another ancient and much-celebrated tradition" (Giusti 301).[112] This research would add that the same holds true with regards to the recent literary achievements of Florentines, such as the encyclopedism and revival of Ciceronian rhetoric of Latini.

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[111] It should also be noted that the relationship between the powerful Calimala guild and ecclesiastical authorities, such as the Cathedral Chapter, was not immune to political intrigues; for example, in 1298, Pope Boniface VIII intervened and imposed an interdict on the Baptistery (Giusti 282).

[112] See also Consoli, who argues that "[e]siste dunque uno stretto legame tra i mosaici del Battistero e la pittura fiorentina del '200, fatto che la critica moderna non ha mancato di sottolineare" ["there exists a strong link between the Baptistery's mosaics and Duecento Florentine painting, a fact often underlined in modern criticism"] (58).

Fig. 13 – Genesis Cupola Mosaics at the Narthex of the Basilica of San Marco in Venice.

It appears that after the angelic hierarchy, work on the mosaics moved on to the 'saved' portion of the Final Judgment circa 1260–1275 and it was executed by local Tuscan artists.[113] The rest of the mosaics appear to have been completed during Dante's time in Florence, perhaps even in their entirety before his exile. The dating of the last vertical segment, from 1290 to circa 1305, overlaps with Dante's entrance into politics in the early 1290s until his ill-fated embassy to Rome in 1300 and subsequent exile.[114] If the mosaics were indeed visible to the public, and/or to city

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[113] See Giusti: "[a]s far as the chronological sequence of the mosaics is concerned, the three segments treating the monumental Last Judgement, are generally and I believe rightly, thought to have been done before the scenes in the other five segments which start from the segment to the right of Hell" (307). The identities of the numerous individuals working on the mosaics remain unknown, except for two individuals with fantastic names—Bingo and Pazzo—who would probably prefer being forgotten since their names appear in a 1298 document "which orders their expulsion from the Baptistery for the theft of tesserae" (Giusti 283).

[114] In the last vertical segment, the stories of Noah and Joseph are attributed to an artist working in a Sienese style circa 1290–1295; the Crucifixion and the Lamentation from the triptych of the life of Christ are credited to a Lippo di Benivieni (?) circa 1300, whereas the holy women at the tomb are deemed to be from the aforementioned Sienese artist; lastly, St. John's triptych, is ascribed to Deodato Orlandi circa 1300–1305

officials and political figures like Dante, this would mean that our poet witnessed the vertical progress of the mosaics program, whereby artists would be executing the images from a typological viewpoint. This serialized experience of the mosaics program would have inevitably come with a certain suspense for the public, probably anticipating the next episodes and how they connect to previous ones.



Fig. 14 – Detail from the Dome of Abraham Mosaics in the Narthex of the
Basilica of San Marco.

Giusti recognizes the mosaics' "rational spatial organization," that is, how the overall composition was programmed in advance and contains internal harmonies to highlight allegorical relations. She also points to the curious aspect of the columns, assigning it to the Classicism of an early-Christian revival, but is unable to find concrete precedents.[115] The hypothesis that the masters

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[115] See Giusti who writes: "[i]n an undertaking which took over fifty years [ca. 1271–ca. 1323] to complete some modifications might well have been incorporated but the thematic scheme and overall composition, essential to a work of this complexity, must have been well defined from the start. Ingenious indeed was the master, or masters, who could organize a pictorial programme conceived by others with internal harmony but also in keeping with the architectural framework. Classicism and a rational spatial organization were the chief considerations in the planning

were Venetian finds some credence when considering the concentric arrangement of rectangular frames in the Genesis cupola mosaics in the narthex of the Basilica of San Marco in Venice (see fig. 13). Another set of mosaics in the narthex of the Basilica, also from the mid-13th century, the Dome of Abraham, does have columns but they are not used systematically (see fig. 14). Work on these mosaics is believed to have concluded by 1270, thus chronologically coinciding with the beginning of work on the cupola mosaics in Florence. Nevertheless, there are significant differences, notably the absence of the columns dividing the images, the non-symmetrical aspect of the concentric bands, and the representation of a single text rather than multiple narratives.

Giusti goes on to propose that "[t]he classical solution of the dividing columns was perhaps inspired by earlier works in central-southern Italy" (303), pushing forth the argument of an early-Christian aesthetic model. However, as shown in the cupola mosaics of the Arian and Neonian Baptisteries in Ravenna (see fig. 3), both Late Antique (5th and 6th centuries), floral elements do separate the twelve apostles, but they are not columns and have no distinguishing features. Some of these innovations—the *columniae* and the symmetrical alignment—could simply be Florentine in origin, based on contemporary discourses pertaining to the arts of rhetoric and memory and biblical exegesis. Another leading scholar on the mosaics, Hueck, also notes how:

> [i]n several of the medieval cycles based upon the tradition of early-Christian models the scenes are also separated by columns, but they never constituted a decorative system related to actual structural elements. The mosaics in the Florentine Baptistery vault are the first post-antique decoration that deliberately sought coherence with the building's structure. (232)

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of the mosaics, as they had been elsewhere in the Baptistery: this is evident in the intercolumniation within the mosaics" (303).

Hueck goes on to suggest that the columns were a later addition: "there are reasons for thinking that the subdivision of scenes by means of columns was a modification only carried out in the Cimabuesque phase of the mosaics' execution [ca. 1280–1285], as if to emphasize the derivation from early-Christian models already evident in the cycles themselves" (233). The possibility that they were added later does not discredit the fact that they derive from mnemonic practices. Moreover, it would appear that Cimabue and his school were known to Dante, if not personally, at least stylistically. Dante's description of Cimabue being surpassed by Giotto in visual arts is confirmed by the way in which the mosaics program shows a stylistic transition from one to the other (*Purg*. XI. vv. 94–96).[116] If anything, the later addition of the columns would bring their use even closer to Dante's more mature years and Latini's time in Florence.[117] The range in terms of dating for the mosaics of the first vertical segment is circa 1270–1285 and it overlaps with Latini's last years, Dante's youth, the revival of the Herennian mnemonic, and—according to Hueck—the addition of the columns.

As for the depictions of hell in the mosaics, it is by now a common-place to observe similarities with Dante's representation in the *Inferno*.[118] Hueck muses that "[a]s children, Giotto and Dante must have had goose-flesh looking at the *Inferno* in 'beautiful San Giovanni', and one knows that as adults far from home *such images remained in their imaginations*" (248 emphasis added). Hueck's observation of the lasting mnemonic impression the mosaics left on the minds of

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[116] See Giusti: "Certain parallels to Giotto's style are indeed visible in the last of the mosaic series under discussion" (322); later adding that "[a]lthough their style emulates Giotto, it still retains strong thirteenth-century traits which ensure the continuity of these last scenes with the previous work" (330).

[117] See Bonicatti's entry on Cimabue in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (1970): "è indispensabile comunque osservare che C[imabue] doveva rappresentare per D[ante], in pittura, il fenomeno artistico più saliente attuatosi negli anni della sua giovinezza a Firenze."

[118] Along with Kleinhenz, see Wilkins classic study "Dante and the Mosaics of His Bel San Giovanni" 1-10. See also Laura Pasquini (2017): "[d]al mosaico del Battistero fiorentino, Dante poté in realtà trarre numerosi spunti" ["from the Floretine Baptistery's mosaics, Dante could have in fact drawn from numerous elements"] ("Fonti Iconografiche Della Commedia" 141). See also Emilio Pasquini 9–20 and Consoli 55–83.

Giotto and Dante is not to be undervalued: the entire mosaics program is itself a thesaurus, an encyclopedic treasure-chest of theological precepts, of *exempla* in an all-encompassing structure intimating an anagogic understanding of history. Giusti echoes this notion, remarking that the impetus behind the mosaics was to represent "an *eloquent* illustration of the truths of the Faith" (302 emphasis added); implying, perhaps unbeknownst, the rhetorical component of the representation.

The dating of the mosaics representing the damned are dated to circa 1270–1275, in the milieu of Coppo di Marcovaldo; this is the same team of workers that subsequently worked on the first triptych of Genesis: "[t]he scenes in the segment adjacent to Hell must have been begun immediately after the Last Judgement; in fact the master responsible for Hell ... is recognizable in the first three Scenes from Genesis on the third tier and in the first Scene from the Life of Joseph which begins the tier beneath" (Giusti 311–12).[119] As mentioned in the first chapter, Kleinhenz's essay on the influence of visual arts on the *Commedia* tentatively suggests that the vertical patterning of the poem "came to Dante forcefully from his looking, since the time he was a small boy, and ever with love, upon the mosaics in the cupola of the Florentine Baptistery" (282). Indeed, the period where Coppo and his workers were executing the mosaics of hell and those of the first two narratives from the Old Testament overlaps with Dante's youth; but rather than implying a direct source of influence for the poem's structure, what the columns organizing the mosaics reveal is the extent of the influence of Herennian mnemonics in Florence at that time.

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[119] Giusti aptly explains the difficulties involved in doing a stylistic analysis of the mosaics, particularly in light of the incessant restorations that gradually distorted the original representations. There is also the scale and duration of the undertaking, "lasting as it did for more than half a century, required the succession and collaboration of masters and of countless artists and craftsmen" (Giusti 299). Giusti after these caveats, remarks that "[a]ll these factors create uncertainties and contradictions and inhibit critical studies, of which there are very few considering the importance of the subject-matter" (299).

The proof required to demonstrate that a structural feature in one medium, the vertical patterning of the mosaics, is a source rather than simply analogous to the *Commedia*, symptomatic of a wider cultural practice, bears a burden that is both unnecessary and redundant: correlation does not imply causation. What matters is that a specific semiotics of space inspired by principles of rhetoric and mnemonics was part of the period's *weltanschauung*. The revival of the Herennian mnemonic, both locally, through figures like Latini and Giamboni, and beyond, in Dominican and monastic circles, is evidence of its pervasiveness. As such, Kleinhenz is correct in adding that "this manner of 'reading' was reinforced by ... other visual narratives, especially those by Giotto in the Arena Chapel in Padua" (282). The evidence suggests a series of correlated modes of representation since "this manner of 'reading'" is equally apparent in other visual arts, such as the apsidal mosaics in Classe and paratextual elements like Canon Tables, as well as in treatises being disseminated at that time that discussed and commented on the Herennian architectural mnemonic.

The scholar Hart rightly intuits a symbolic and structural influence of the Baptistery on the *Commedia*. In a similar fashion to the circle and the Cross in *Paradiso* XIV and the "Cristo" rhymes, both Hart and this research agree that the Baptistery demonstrates "a deliberate and carefully calculated 'architectural' design" similar to the *Commedia*; however, there is a disagreement on how this homology is constructed.[120] In keeping with his arithmetical approach to the poem, he argues that Dante, in *canto* XIX of *Inferno*, "carefully calculated the placement of his celebrated praise for the Florentine Baptistery ... so that the totals of verse-lines involved ... reflect, with a high degree of mathematical precision and consistency, a salient feature of the

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[120] As indicated previously, Hart is acutely aware of the significance of the poem's partitions and structure, stating how "discoveries by Charles Singleton, Manfred Hardt, and Gian Roberto Sarolli, among others, began to reveal that Dante also exploited less obvious mathematical properties of his text for structural purpose"; and adding how "[m]ost recent findings indicate that Dante's interest in the mathematical potential of his *cantiche*/canto-divisions was much more technically ambitious than we are accustomed to expecting of poets" ("Architecture and Text: The Florentine Baptistery in Dante's 'Commedia'" 156).

Baptistery's symbolic geometry, namely the proportionality of a regular octagon" ("Architecture and Text: The Florentine Baptistery in Dante's 'Commedia'" 156).[121] Arithmetic, one of the liberal arts of the *quadrivium*, does play a role in the composition of Dante's poem. There is no disagreement with Hart's claim that Dante carefully planned a set of relationships forming an "architectonic pattern" (158); but to isolate arithmetic from rhetoric and music in formulating a principle of literary theory and poetics, or to not further scrutinize how they possibly interrelate with one another, remains a somewhat narrow perspective.[122]

Nevertheless, an explanation of the octagonal frame's symbolism provides a better understanding of the mosaic program and how its form relates to its content. The octagonal shape of the building, which frames and contains the cupola mosaics, is symbolically tied to the notion of Baptism, of the individual and society's rebirth in Christ. Verdon mentions a poem ascribed to St. Ambrose that develops the notion that "an octagonal font is worthy of God's gift of life, and that the hall where Baptism is administered also should have a shape associated with the number eight, since through this sacrament the world attains to salvation in the risen Lord, who has burst the gates of death and summoned from their graves those who have died" (18). The idea is that humans live in linear time, ordered units of finite time, just like the seven days of the week; however, by believing in Christ and through Baptism, "believers pass over into eternal life, beyond measurable time"; and, as such, "[t]hey enter into an 'eighth day', '*octava dies*', in which death's

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[121] Moreover, Hart also argues that, with the same mathematical precision and consistency, "the poem's two other allusions to the Baptistery by name, both in the *Paradiso*, are similarly placed within the 4758-line text of that *cantica* so that line-totals of the resulting intervals reflect the same octagonal proportionality" ("Architecture and Text: The Florentine Baptistery in Dante's 'Commedia'" 156).

[122] Hart mentions the mosaics but offers no interpretive analysis of the relationship between form and content: "The octagon also governs the famous mosaic of the dome above: the stories of Genesis, of Joseph, of Mary and Christ, and of John the Baptist are set in frames rigidly defined by great concentric octagonal rings. The octagonal shape in structure and decoration was of course characteristic of San Giovanni for its symbolism as well as for its esthetics: eight was the number traditionally viewed as symbolic of regeneration (return to original unity after the seven days of the week), of the age of final redemption, and accordingly of baptism" ("Architecture and Text: The Florentine Baptistery in Dante's 'Commedia'" 162–63).

bonds are sundered by the Lord of life" (18). Therefore, the octagon—to the Christian mind and imagination—implies the themes of resurrection and eschatology.

Seeing that the program of the Baptistery's mosaics is structured in an octagonal shape, it is therefore only fitting that the content should represent the eschaton and, therefore, provide viewers an anagogic perspective of human history. The pictorial program does have a linear sequential narrative; beginning with the first book of the Bible, Genesis, and ending with Christ sitting in judgment at the end of time, as proclaimed in the final book of the Christian Bible, Revelation.[123] The textual origin of the images is significant because their representation and disposition reflect the premise of biblical exegesis that God's book, Scripture, was harmoniously structured and, as such, they illustrate the three spiritual senses of the allegory of the theologians. The choice of the Last Judgment as the main subject, occupying three out of the eight triangles making out the octagonal cupola, foregrounds the anagogic mode of the representation; whereas the intratextual relationship between the four scriptural texts reveals its typological and tropological function.

Moreover, the mosaics surrounding the cupola depict the Fathers of the Church and serve as a paratext, a form of commentary on the cupola mosaics' program. They are like footnotes justifying the theological ideas represented within, "as if to introduce viewers to the biblical stories 'through' the early Christian tradition of theological thought (an arrangement that accurately

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[123] See Hueck's description of the mosaics' program at the beginning of her essay: "the whole scheme represents the cosmos of Christian belief: the history of Salvation from the creation of the World to Judgement Day, and at the same time acknowledges the Baptist's special role as patron not only of the building but of the entire city of Florence" (229). See *Apocalypsis*: "Et vidi thronum magnum candidum, et sedentem super eum, a cujus conspectu fugit terra, et caelum, et locus non est inventus eis. Et vidi mortuos, magnos et pusillos, stantes in conspectu throni, et libri aperti sunt: et alius liber apertus est, qui est vitae: et judicati sunt mortui ex his, quae scripta erant in libris, secundum opera ipsorum" (20:11–12) ["Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books" (NRSV trans.)].

reflects the Scholastic interpretative context of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries)" (Verdon 22). As such, the theological discourses framing the cupola mosaics reflect contemporary notions of biblical exegesis—presumably Dominican. Hueck's analysis of these 'paratextual' elements surrounding the cupola mosaics, such as the tribunes and other cycles, also indicates a coordinated effort in having a programmatic typological *dispositio* of images by means of symmetry and opposition.

As for the hierarchy of angels surrounding the lantern (2), it is based on Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite's *De coelesti hierarchia* and it appears the be the oldest section of the program, completed in a circular motion, that is, working around the center of the lantern. Dante presents the exact same hierarchy in *Paradiso* XXVIII (vv. 99–135), a palinode to the one he previously presented in the *Convivio*, which was aligned with the version of Gregory the Great (II, v, 5–11). The outer ring of the cupola mosaics is the closest to viewers and contains the widest and most prominent mosaics: stories from the life of St. John the Baptist (6). This is only fitting considering the function of the building—a Baptistery—and the fact that he is, after all, the city's patron saint and protector. All four narratives are narrated in five triptychs that go around the center of the lantern anti-clockwise.

Above St. John the Baptist (6), in the second ring (5), are also depicted stories from the New Testament, specifically from the life of Mary and Christ and "episodes in the two life narratives tend to be arranged so as to shed light on each other" (Verdon 22). This figural relationship between St. John the Baptist and Christ is evidently understood in anticipatory terms and Dante deploys this theological motif in his own poetry. For example, in the *Vita nuova*, Dante comments on his sonnet "Io mi senti svegliar dentro a lo core" with a Christological language that, by analogy, sets a series of correspondences between himself and his poetic mentor and "primo

amico" Guido Cavalcanti. In the vision that Dante describes, Amore shows to him a "gentile donna" named Giovanna who also goes by "Primavera" (Spring) and "appresso lei, guardando, vidi venire la mirabile Beatrice" (XXIV). The names are meant to be figurations of two specific forms of poetics: Cavalcanti's, which bloomed first, and Dante's, which came after. Dante's commentary explains that Primavera homophonically implies 'prima verrà', that is, 'she will come first'; whereas the name Giovanna derives "da quello Giovanni lo quale precedette la verace luce, dicendo: 'Ego vox clamantis in deserto: parate viam Domini'." The relation established is Christological: Cavalcanti's Giovanna leads the way for Dante's Beatrice, the same way that St. John the Baptist does for Christ. In sum, the anticipatory role of St. John the Baptist is deployed to announce how Beatrice embodies a novel concept of lyric poetry in the vernacular. This excursus is not meant to show that Dante was aware of typological allegory, the matter was put to rest a while ago, but rather that he was able to deploy these symbolic discourses creatively for his own poetic ends, to establish his *auctoritas*.

In the cupola mosaics, the typological relation between St. John the Baptist and Christ is rendered obvious by several forms of vertical patterning; for instance, the position of Christ upon the Cross above St. John's imprisonment and death or the Annunciation to Mary above that of Zacharias in the Temple. Above the narratives of Christ (5) and St. John the Baptist (6), the mosaics depict stories from the life of Joseph (4), Jacob's son, and Genesis (3), with stories from Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and Noah. The intratextual 'figural' function also extends to these narratives. As Verdon aptly points out, this is a fundamental allegorical notion and it is represented in such a way as to be didactic as well, "[i]t is a way of teaching people to look—in every human story, whether of a saint's life or our own—for parallels in the life of Christ" (23).[124] Verdon's

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[124] See Friedman, who remarks how church images "aient été connues depuis longtemps comme des outils didactiques destiner à présenter au peuple illettré les vérités de la religion, on n'a pas remarqué de façon générale comme plusieurs

description is—by definition—the allegorical mode of the theologians known as moral or tropological. In sum, the mosaics represent an allegorical-didactic account of all of human history, from Genesis to the eschaton, that simultaneously illustrates all three forms of the allegory of the theologians.

Verdon is acutely aware of the theological and allegorical program at work, indicating how "[t]he choice of biblical personages and events is traditional, based on a view of the history of salvation defined in the patristic era" (23).[125] Nevertheless, he is surprisingly reticent in expanding further the allegorical-didactic function of the mosaics, stating that "[d]espite the richness of these iconographic associations, it is hard to believe that aim of the whole grand programme was merely to furnish a detailed catechism lesson"; and asks: "[w]hat then was the function of all these images?" (23–24). Verdon acknowledges that "[t]he enormous care with which the subjects were chosen and arranged makes clear that they were not mere decoration," yet offers a surprisingly underwhelming answer: "[p]robably the larger goal of the iconographic programme was simply to reinforce believers' baptismal faith" (24).

In Verdon's conclusion, he interprets the mosaics in light of the Letter to the Hebrews and explains how "believers were meant to perceive themselves as descendants, through faith, of the

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d'entre elles avaient aussi une fonction mnémotechnique. Elles aident le spectateur à se rappeler les principaux points de la doctrine chrétienne aussi bien que les événements de l'histoire du salut, et, par le biais de la mémoire, à situer sa position spirituelle et temporelle dans l'ensemble plus large du monde" ["have been recognized for quite some time as didactic tools destined to present to the illiterate the truths of religion, we have not generally noticed how many of them also had a mnemotechnic function. They help the spectator to recall the principle points of Christian dogma as well as the historical signs of salvation, and, by the subjective nature of memory, to situate his or her temporal and spiritual position in the wider context of the world"] (170).

[125] Verdon explains how "Joseph is a 'figure' of Christ, albeit an imperfect one: loved by his father, he is betrayed by his brothers and sold to enemies. He finds grace in the king's eyes, however, is lifted from abjection and given authority, which he uses to save the very brothers who betrayed him, forgiving their offense and feeding them. So too the uppermost stories: Adam who, with a woman, disobeyed and was separated from God, is a negative image of Christ, the 'second Adam' who, thanks to Mary's obedience, became 'God-with-us', Emmanuel. Cain, who killed his brother, is a negative image of Christ who voluntarily gave his life for his brothers; and Noah, saved with his family 'upon the waters' in token of God's pledge not to destroy creation, becomes a sign of the Creator's desire to save mankind through Baptism, using the same element that once served for punishment: water" (23).

sacred personages depicted" (24), expressing an idea that is akin to that of "a family celebration which doesn't get under way until everyone has arrived" (24). One cannot help but hear echoes of Dante's own encounter with Cacciaguida, a prominent and important section of the poem, as implied by having the longest one-person encounter in the entire *Commedia*. The argument proposed by this research is that the program of the cupola mosaics demonstrates by its formal arrangement of images set in architectural columns, *imagines* substituting textual passages from Scripture much like numbers in Canon Tables, a mnemonic grid. The implications of the pictorial program's mnemonic design are that they are meant to be imprinted onto the 'animo' of onlookers (*Par.* XVII, vv. 136–142), as a thesaurus, a Christian encyclopedia of *exempla*, in the very same way in which the *Ad Herennium* states that: "at si quid videmus aut audimus egregie turpe, inhonestum, insuitatum, magnum, incredibile, ridiculum id diu meminisse consuevimus"; adding that "insignes et novae diutius manent *in animo*" (III, xxii, 35–36 emphasis added).[126] The overall *pictura* is meant to be mobile and practical, one ought to be able to recall the schema of the four narratives. Moreover, like a prosthetic memory making good use of the unique columns separating each image, this transforms the representation into a thinking machine activated by its self-referential—or auto-exegetical—component.

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[126] ["But if we see or hear something exceptionally base, dishonourable, extraordinary, great, unbelievable, or laughable, that we are likely to remember a long time" ... "the striking and novel stay longer in mind" (*Cicero* 217–218)]

## Conclusion

> *Erik Lonnrot studied the documents. The three sites were in fact equidistant. Symmetry in time (the third of December, the third of January, the third of February); symmetry in space as well . . . Of a sudden he sensed he was about to decipher the mystery. A set of calipers and a compass completed his sudden intuition.*

> – Borges, "Death and the Compass."

The Trecento scholar Sapegno noted that: "[t]here are many roads by which one may penetrate to the heart of Dante's poetry in the *Comedy*, and they differ greatly from one another in their method and their aims"; and "each can be useful to some degree, provided we recognize that each has its limits, and that each needs to be complemented by the others" ("Genesis and Structure: Two Approaches to the Poetry of the 'Comedy'" 14–15). This research into vertical readings of the *Commedia* sought to maintain this balanced line of thought. It points simultaneously to the method's usefulness and to its limits; showing how it can complement the study of Dante and the Middle Ages by pointing outwards, to other instances of vertical hermeneutics that are part of a wider cultural phenomenon partaking in a semiotics of space.

Vertical readings of the *Commedia* provide an entry-point into a particular medieval world-view, one that involved a semiotics of space that played itself out in a plurality of modalities of texts and images. In order to substantiate this form of spatial semiotics, this research tried to piece together a picture of the of the Christian mind and imagination in the period when the *Commedia* was born, focusing on the structure and genesis of the poem: "[f]or it was the actual 'genesis' of the work which fixed at once its subject matter, its logical architecture, its structure, the free and wide-ranging role of imagination, the novelty and wealth of the expressive resources" (Sapegno 14–15). The result is that vertical readings deepen our knowledge of the genesis of the poem by reassessing the role of the arts of rhetoric and memory, by putting into focus the structure of the

poem, the ways in which form and content interact, and therefore unlocking the potency of intratextuality and self-referentiality. The intratextual nature of vertical readings certainly gives the methodology a solid theoretical foundation; but what is cast into doubt is the extent of its systematization, the deliberateness of having every single *canto* correspond numerically across all three *cantica*. To conceive of vertical readings in this way is to deeply misunderstand the arts of rhetoric and memory and the function of biblical allegory.

This research does not put forth the argument that the *Commedia* contains a perfect system of correspondences along co-numerical lines. It is more interested in how Dante achieves the appearance of a structured network of internal correspondences and the ends this serves. This research delineated the emergence of the methodology within the field of Dante studies and then tested the theoretical premises upon which the method rests. A flexible terminology was formulated, allowing for maximal inclusion of what is admittedly a very diverse archive: a vertical reading is an intratextual analysis of at least two cantos sharing the same number. Scholars using the method appear to base its legitimacy either on biblical hermeneutics (biblical exegetical techniques, numerology, etc.) and/or visual arts and the arts of rhetoric and memory. This chapter investigated the latter, and Chapter 2 sought to investigate the former, focusing on the scholarship and influence of Singleton.

Singletonian structuralism claimed to recapture the "master patterns of the Christian mind and imagination" by placing a strong emphasis on the structure of the poem and on the *Commedia*'s imitation of Scripture, anchoring the poem's hermeneutics in the allegory of the theologians. These two traits coalesce in bringing about vertical readings since the allegorical mode of the theologians implies intratextuality, and therefore an internal network of textual and thematic correspondences; whereas Singleton's 'retrospective' approach not only stresses structural and textual repetitions

within the poem, but also overlaps with the anagogic mode of the allegory of the theologians. The consequences of these theoretical premises have been an exponential growth in mentions of co-numerary correspondences in Dante studies, which, up until Singleton, were found solely in Italian scholarship. The hypothesis is that vertical readings are part and parcel of these so-called "master patterns" and that scholarship is only now noticing them because it has been able to recapture a semiotics inherent to Dante's *weltanschauung*.

The implication that vertical hermeneutics are part of the patterns of the Christian mind and imagination during Dante's time has led this research to sleuth for evidence of their presence in cultural products contiguous to the *Commedia*. A first site of investigation was what Dante himself had to say about allegory and poetics since it is fundamentally connected to hermeneutics and the interpretation of the poem. The evidence shows a complex landscape hampered by centuries of criticism; however, what was clearly evident was Dante's attempt at adapting and deploying of traditional exegetical tools onto his poetry, such as *divisio textus* and allegory. Dante's synthesis of the traditional critical apparatus, his literalization of the allegorical meanings of Scripture, presented the curious situation whereby his transformation of tradition made it unrecognizable to his peers.

Attention was then naturally given to the commentary tradition and the evidence showed that Dante's innovation was not recognized, since commentators had to confront a plethora of issues regarding the poem's truth-claims, an axiom that traditionally distinguished the binary system of literary exegesis at the time. A complex picture of the commentary tradition and of the tools with which it sought to interpret the poem was presented; but, interestingly, the data did show that the commentary tradition, in its unfolding and successive iterations, was increasingly glossing

the poem along co-numerary lines, particularly at the center of the poem, and several *proto*-vertical readings of the poem have been identified and explained.

The perspective then moved from the field of criticism to that of poetry itself, with the idea that poets hold a privileged position, a form of artistic intuition, in understanding Dante's deployment of rhetorical strategies that involve matters of structure, of form and content. Two of the most notable imitations of the *Commedia*—Petrarch's *Trionfi* and Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione*—reveal the extent of the influence of Dante's vertical hermeneutics since both poems indicate an awareness of the parallel cantos of Ulysses and Adam (*Inf.* XXVI, *Par.* XXVI); in addition to their respective appropriations, such as Boccaccio's use of acrostics and Petrarch's vertical lay-out for his *Canzoniere*.

In this chapter, the investigation kept circling around visual artefacts that shared homologous structures to the *Commedia*. The cupola mosaics of the Baptistery of San Giovanni proved to be of capital importance in explaining the genesis of Dante's poem. The dating and of the mosaics project overlaps with Dante and Latini's time in Florence as well as the revival of Herennian mnemonics. It also provides an excellent example of the literalization of the three spiritual senses of Scripture and how the art of memory was used in the service of biblical exegesis, much like Canon Tables. The allegorical relationship between the four narratives is analogous to the thought process when applying vertical hermeneutics: some patterns are obvious and clearly intentional, but others are meant to be discovered or, say, invented by the viewers themselves for their own moral edification. In sum, viewers are encouraged to discover patterns that cut across Christian history; whether intentional or not.

The mosaics were being executed while a significant revival in Herennian mnemonics was underway in the vernacular, with Dominican circles, Florentine proto-Humanists, and academics

from Universities like Bologna and Padua as the main instigators. One of the most distinctive features of this Herennian mnemonic is its architectural character, especially the use of columns. It just so happens that art historians who have studied and analyzed the mosaics' program are puzzled by the presence of columns separating the various scenes; they appear unaware of their origin in the art of memory. The columns in the mosaics program are physical evidence of the popularity and impact of mnemonics in Duecento and Trecento Italy and their important role in both interpreting and representing Scripture.

On the one hand, Dante structured his poem in such a way as to make readers believe in a harmonious interrelation of its constituent parts, imitating both the order of Scripture and the universe: God's two books. This research has repeatedly turned to the poem and Dante's other writings to show how his poetry achieves this; principally through elements of structure and verbal repetitions, patterns of symmetry and repetition within and across the different levels of the poem, ekphrases that involve visualizing mnemonic structures and moving one's gaze, similes that are both geometric and self-referential whereby the text talks about its own materiality, its own genesis, and pretensions.

Indeed, there are symmetries that cut across the structure of the poem; but, on the other hand, it has also been shown that to extrapolate a 'perfect' system quickly devolves into incongruences. The effect of this assumption is the tendency to overestimate the internal logic and coherence of the universe that Dante created. Dante's narrative strategy is to create the *illusion* of a text imitating Scripture with the implication that a certain type of critical apparatus needs to be deployed, one that would apply biblical exegetical techniques, such as comparing and contrasting different sections of the poem, as hinted with the repetition of the word "stelle" (stars).

# Appendix

## List of Vertical Readings

| Vertical Reading | Scholar | Source | Year | *Inf.* | *Purg.* | *Par.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ones | Singleton | "The Other Journey." | 1952 | x | x | |
| | | "In Exitu Israel de Aegypto." | 1960 | x | x | |
| | Bernardo | "Dante's Pervasive Symmetry." | 1971 | x | x | x |
| | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | R. Kay | "Parallel Cantos in Dante's *Commedia*." | 1992 | | x | x |
| | Corbett & Webb | "Three Paths in One Journey: A Vertical Reading of *Inf.* I, *Purg.* I, and *Par.* I." | 2013 | x | x | x |
| | Corbett* | "Pagan Dawn of a Christian Vision." | 2015 | x | x | x |
| | Webb* | "Orientation." | 2015 | x | x | x |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| Twos | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Treherne* | "Reading Time, Text and the World." | 2015 | x | x | x |
| Threes | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Montemaggi* | "The Bliss and Abyss of Freedom: Hope, Personhood and Particularity." | 2015 | x | x | x |
| Fours | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | R. Kay | "Parallel Cantos in Dante's *Commedia*." | 1992 | | x | x |
| | Tateo | "Gli antichi a confronto (*If* IV)" | 2001 | x | x | x |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Schildgen | "Philosophers, Theologians, and the Islamic Legacy in Dante: *Inferno* 4 versus *Paradiso* 4." | 2007 | x | x | x |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Marenbon* | "Virtuous Pagans, Hopeless Desire and Unjust Justice." | 2015 | x | x | x |
| Fives | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | De Poli | *La structure mnémonique de la Divine Comédie.* | 1999 | x | x | x |
| | Tateo | "Il polittico dell'Antipurgatorio (*Pg* V)" | 2001 | x | x | |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Kirkpatrick* | "Massacre, Miserere and Martyrdom." | 2015 | x | x | x |
| Fives and Sixes | Massi | "A proposito dei sesti canti della *Commedia*." | 1996 | x | x | x |
| | | | | x | x | x |
| Sixes | Federzoni | *Rispondenze fra il canto XIII dell'Inferno e il XIII del Purgatorio.* | 1904 | x | x | x |
| | Scartazzini and Vandelli | Commentary to *Paradiso* VI (DDP). | 1929 | x | x | x |
| | Mattalia | Commentary to *Purgatorio* VI (DDP). | 1960 | x | x | x |
| | Bosco and Reggio | Commentary to *Paradiso* VI, vv. 97–111 (DDP). | 1979 | x | x | x |

| | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Chiavacci-Leonardi | Commentary to *Paradiso* VI (DDP). | 1997 | x | x | x |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Raffa | *Danteworlds: A Reader's Guide to the Inferno.* | 2009 | x | x | x |
| | Durling | "Notes to *Paradiso* VI." | 2011 | x | x | x |
| | Honess* | "Divided City, Slavish Italy, Universal Empire." | 2015 | x | x | x |
| | Pertile | "Narrative Structure." | 2018 | x | x | x |
| Sixes and Sevens | Schildgen | "Dante's *Commedia* and the Ascent to Incarnational History." | 2012 | x | x | x |
| | | | | x | x | x |
| Sevens | Mazzotta | "A Pattern of Order: *Inferno* VII and *Paradiso* VII." | 1979 | x | | x |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Gilson* | "The Wheeling Sevens." | 2015 | x | x | x |
| Eights | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Schildgen* | "*Civitas* and Love: Looking Backward from *Paradiso* viii." | 2015 | x | x | x |
| Nines | Mazzotta | "The Language of Faith: Messengers and Idols." | 1979 | x | x | x |
| | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | R. Kay | "Parallel Cantos in Dante's *Commedia*." | 1992 | | x | x |
| | Franke | "Dante's Hermeneutic Rite of Passage: *Inferno* IX." | 1996 | x | x | |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Barański | "Reading the *Commedia's* IX's 'vertically': from addresses to the Reader to the *crucesignati* and the *Ecloga Theoduli*." | 2014 | x | x | x |
| | | "Without any Violence."* | 2015 | x | x | x |
| | Pertile | "Narrative Structure." | 2018 | x | x | x |
| Tens | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | De Poli | *La structure mnémonique de la Divine Comédie.* | 1999 | x | x | x |

| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mocan | "Ulisse, Arnaut e Riccardo di San Vittore: convergenze figurali e richiami lessicali nella *Commedia*." | 2005 | x | x | x |
| | Cornish | "Sons and Lovers: Guido in Paradise." | 2009 | x | x | x |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Additional Notes: 6. The Threshold Cantos in the Comedy." | 2011 | x | x | x |
| | Corbett | "The Vertical Axis: *Inferno* X, *Purgatorio* X, *Paradiso* X." | 2013 | x | x | x |
| | Gilson | "Divine and Natural Artistry in the *Commedia*." | 2013 | | x | x |
| | Clarke* | "Humility and the (P)Arts of Art." | 2015 | x | x | x |
| Tens, Elevens, Twelves | Kirkham | "Eleven Is for Evil: Measured Trespass in Dante's *Commedia*." | 1989 | x | x | x |
| | | | | x | x | x |
| | | | | x | x | x |
| Elevens | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |

| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Nasti* | "The Art of Teaching and the Nature of Love." | 2015 | x | x | x |
| Twelves | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | R. Kay | "Parallel Cantos in Dante's *Commedia*." | 1992 | | x | x |
| | Moevs* | "Centaurs, Spiders, and Saints." | 2016 | x | x | x |
| | Gianferrari | "Pride and Tyranny: An Unnoted Parallel between *Purgatorio* 12 and *Policraticus* 8.20-21." | 2016 | x | x | x |
| Thirteens | Federzoni | *Rispondenze fra il canto XIII dell'Inferno e il XIII del Purgatorio.* | 1904 | x | x | |
| | Zenatti | *Il canto XIII del Purgatorio.* | 1909 | x | x | |
| | Viola | "Un trittico del comportamento politico: i tredicesimi canti della *Commedia*." | 1969 | x | x | x |
| | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | De Nicola | "*Purgatorio* XIII." | 1989 | x | x | |

| | Chiavacci-Leonardi | "*Purgatorio* XIII, nota" (DDP). | 1994 | x | x | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Muresu | "La selva dei disperati (*Inferno* XIII)." | 1997 | x | | x |
| | Tateo | "Topografia e casistica dell'invidia (Pg XIII)." | 2001 | x | x | |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Glenn | "The Envious Eye: Echoes of *Inferno* XIII in *Purgatorio* XIII (the Figures of Pier della Vigna and Sapia)" | 2004 | x | x | |
| | Mocan | "Il livore dell'invidia e la luce della Sapienza: lettura di *Purgatorio* XIII." | 2015 | x | x | x |
| | R. Wilson* | "Would you Adam and Eve it?" | 2016 | x | x | x |
| | R. Kay | "The Sin(s) of Brunetto Latini." | 1994 | | x | x |
| Fourteens | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | Tateo | "Il politico della violenza (If XIV)." | 2001 | x | x | |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Keen* | "The Patterning of History: Poetry, Politics and Adamic Renewal." | 2016 | x | x | x |
| Fifteens | Parodi | "Il canto di Brunetto Latini." | 1920 | x | | x |
| | Pézard | *Dante Sous La Pluie de Feu. (Enfer, Chant XV).* | 1950 | x | | x |
| | R. Kay | *Dante's Swift and Strong.* | 1978 | x | | x |
| | | "Parallel Cantos in Dante's *Commedia*." | 1992 | | x | x |
| | Schnapp | "Sant'Apollinare in Classe and Dante's Poetics of Martyrdom." | 1986 | x | | x |
| | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | Barolini | "Re-Presenting What God Presented: The Arachnean Art of the Terrace of Pride." | 1992 | x | | x |
| | De Poli | *La structure mnémonique de la Divine Comédie.* | 1999 | x | x | x |
| | Marchesi* | "Dante's Fatherlands." | 2016 | x | x | x |
| | Keane | "Teaching Brunetto Latini with Cacciaguida: A Vertical Reading of *Inferno* and *Paradiso* 15." | 2017 | x | | x |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fifteens, Sixteens, Seventeens | Armour | "Dante's Brunetto: The Paternal Paterine." | 1983 | x | | x |
| | | | | x | x | x |
| | | | | x | x | x |
| Sixteens | Marti | "Tematica e dimensione verticale del XVI dell'*Inferno* (dai 'campioni' alla 'corda')." | 1980 | x | x | x |
| | R. Kay | "Parallel Cantos in Dante's *Commedia*." | 1992 | | x | x |
| | Tateo | "Arte divinatoria e sapienza rivelatrice." | 2001 | x | x | x |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Gilson | "*Inferno* XVI." | 2011 | x | x | x |
| | Bologna | "*Purgatorio* XVI. Al centro del libro e del viaggio." | 2014 | x | x | |
| | Gragnolati* | "Politics of Desire." | 2016 | x | x | x |
| Seventeens | Logan | "The Poet's Central Numbers." | 1971 | | x | x |
| | Brownlee | "Phaeton's Fall and Dante's Ascent." | 1984 | x | x | x |
| | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | Ambrosini | "Canto XVII." | 2002 | x | x | x |

| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | T. Kay* | "Seductive Lies, Unpalatable Truths, Alter Egos." | 2016 | x | x | x |
| Eighteens | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | Tateo | "La svolta di Malebolge (If XVIII)." | 2001 | x | x | x |
| | Leone* | "Women, War and Wisdom." | 2016 | x | x | x |
| Nineteens | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | Scott | "The She-Wolf and the Shepherds." | 1996 | x | x | x |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Introduction." | 1996 | x | x | |
| | | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Tateo | "Il trittico dei sogni veritieri e il sistema dell'avarizia (Pg XIX)." | 2001 | x | x | x |
| | Ascoli | "The Author of the *Commedia*." | 2008 | x | | x |
| | Pistoia* | "Inside Out." | 2016 | x | x | x |
| | J. H. Wilson | "Just Look through the Eagle's Eye: Teaching Justice and | 2017 | x | x | x |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Vision in Cantos 19 of the *Divine Comedy*." | | | | |
| | Pertile | "Narrative Structure." | 2018 | x | x | |
| Twenties | De Poli | *La structure mnémonique de la Divine Comédie.* | 1999 | x | x | x |
| | Tateo | "Arte divinatoria e sapienza rivelatrice." | 2001 | x | x | x |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Rossignoli* | "Prediction, Prophecy and Predestination: Eternalising Poetry in the *Commedia*." | 2016 | x | x | x |
| | Collins | Virgil's Digression and Dante's Comedìa." | 2017 | x | x | x |
| Twenty-ones | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | R. Kay | "Parallel Cantos in Dante's *Commedia*." | 1992 | | x | x |
| | Salvadori Lonergan* | . "God's Beloved: From Pitch, Through Script, to Writ." | 2016 | x | x | x |
| Twenty-twos | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |

| | R. Kay | "Parallel Cantos in Dante's *Commedia*." | 1992 | | x | x |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Ledda* | "Truth, Autobiography and the Poetry of Salvation." | 2016 | x | x | x |
| Twenty-threes | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Hawkins* | "Our Bodies, Our Selves: Crucified, Famished, and Nourished." | 2017 | x | x | x |
| | Park | "Birds of Paradise and Other Transitional Phenomena: A Vertical Reading of Cantos 23." | 2017 | x | x | x |
| Twenty-fours | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | Tateo | "'Gusto' e sapienza (Pg XXIV)." | 2001 | x | x | x |
| | | "Una (im)probabile simmetria dantesca: *Inf*. XXIV, *Purg*. XXIV, *Par*. XXIV." | 2020 | x | x | x |
| | Ascoli | "The Author of the *Commedia*." | 2008 | | x | x |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Soskice* | "True Desire, True Being, and Truly Being a Poet." | 2017 | x | x | x |
| Twenty-fives | Brownlee | "Why the Angels Speak Italian: Dante as Vernacular Poeta in *Paradiso* XXV." | 1984 | x | x | x |
| | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | R. Kay | "Parallel Cantos in Dante's *Commedia*." | 1992 | | x | x |
| | De Poli | *La structure mnémonique de la Divine Comédie.* | 1999 | x | x | x |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Ferzocco* | "Changes." | 2017 | x | x | x |
| Twenty-sixes | Zenatti | *Il canto XXVI del Paradiso, letto da Albino Zenatti nella sala di Dante in Orsanmichele* | 1913 | x | x | x |
| | Corradini | "Il folle volo." | 1921 | x | | x |
| | Valli | "Ulisse e la tragedia intellettuale di Dante." | 1935 | x | | x |
| | Nardi | "La tragedi d'Ulisse." | 1942 | x | | x |
| | Figurelli | "Il canto XXVI del *Paradiso*." | 1974 | x | x | x |

| | Iannucci | "Ulysses' 'folle volo': The Burden of History | 1976 | x | | x |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mazzotta | "Literary History." | 1979 | x | x | x |
| | Barolini | "Epic Resolution." | 1984 | x | | x |
| | | "Dante's Ulysses: Narrative and Transgression." | 1997 | x | | x |
| | Tambling | "Attitudes to Language." | 1988 | x | x | x |
| | Borsellino | "Notizie dell'Eden ('*Paradiso*' XXVI)." | 1989 | x | | x |
| | Brownlee | "Language and Desire in *Paradiso* XXVI." | 1990 | x | x | x |
| | | "*Paradiso* XXVI." | 1995 | x | x | x |
| | Rati | "Il canto XXVI del «Paradiso»." | 1991 | x | | x |
| | Barolini | "Ulysses, Geryon, and the Aeronautics of Narrative Transition." | 1992 | x | | x |
| | Bologna | "Beatrice e il suo 'Anghelos' Cavalcanti fra 'Vita nova' e 'Commedia.'" | 2001 | x | x | x |
| | | "*Purgatorio* XVI. Al centro del libro e del viaggio." | 2014 | x | | x |

| | Valerio | "Lingua, retorica e poetica nel canto XXVI del *Paradiso*." | 2003 | x | x | x |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Mocan | "Ulisse, Arnaut e Riccardo di San Vittore: convergenze figurali e richiami lessicali nella *Commedia*." | 2005 | | x | x |
| | Franke | *Dante and the Sense of Transgression: The Trespass of the Sign.* | 2013 | x | x | x |
| | Bolduc | "Medieval Rhetoric and the *Commedia*." | 2013 | x | x | x |
| | Lombardi* | "The Poetics of Trespassing." | 2017 | x | x | x |
| Twenty-fours, Twenty-fives, Twenty-sixes | Hawkins | "Virtuosity and Virtue: Poetic Self-Reflection in the '*Commedia*.'" | 1980 | x | x | x |
| | | | | x | x | x |
| | | | | x | x | x |
| Twenty-sixes, Twenty-sevens | Fido | "Writing like God, or Better?: Symmetries in Dante's 26th and 27th Cantos." | 1986 | x | x | x |
| | | | | x | x | x |
| | Cestaro | | 2003 | x | x | x |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | "The Body of Gaeta: Burying and Unburying the Wet Nurse in *Inferno*." | | x | x | x |
| | Ascoli | "The Author of the *Commedia*." | 2008 | x | x | x |
| | | | | x | x | x |
| Twenty-sevens | Barański | "Structural Retrospection in Dante's *Comedy*: The Case of *Purgatorio* XXVII." | 1986 | x | x | |
| | Antonelli | "Come e perché Dante ha scritto la *Divina Commedia*?" | 2011 | x | x | x |
| | Herzman & Stephany | "Dante and the Frescoes at Santi Quattro Coronati." | 2012 | x | | x |
| | Martinez* | "Containers and Things Contained." | 2017 | x | x | x |
| | Pertile | "Narrative Structure." | 2018 | x | | x |
| Twenty-eights | Tateo | "'Le sustanze che t'appaion tonde': alle soglie dell'ultimo cielo (Pd I e XXVIII)." | 2001 | | x | x |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Cachey Jr.* | "Cosmographic Cartography of the 'Perfect' Twenty-Eights." | 2017 | x | x | x |

| Twenty-nines | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | R. Kay | "Parallel Cantos in Dante's *Commedia*." | 1992 | | x | x |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Took* | "Truth, Untruth and the Moment of Indwelling." | 2017 | x | x | x |
| Thirties | Brownlee | "Dante and Narcissus (*Purg.* XXX, 76-99)." | 1978 | x | x | x |
| | Shoaf | "Dante's *Commedia* and the Promise of Reference." | 1983 | x | x | x |
| | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | R. Kay | "Parallel Cantos in Dante's *Commedia*." | 1992 | | x | x |
| | De Poli | *La structure mnémonique de la Divine Comédie.* | 1999 | x | x | x |
| | Bologna | *Il ritorno di Beatrice: simmetrie dantesche fra Vita nova, "petrose," e Commedia.* | 1998 | | x | x |
| | | "Canto XXXI." | 2001 | | x | x |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | "Beatrice e il suo 'Anghelos' Cavalcanti fra 'Vita nova' e 'Commedia.'" | 2001 | | x | x |
| | Boitani* | "Brooks, Melting Snow, River of Light." | 2017 | x | x | x |
| Thirty-ones | Tateo | "'Sappi che non son torri, ma giganti': alle soglie dell'ultimo cerchio (If XXXI)." | 2001 | x | x | |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Pickstock* | "Beauty and the Beast." | 2017 | x | x | x |
| | Hughes | "Teaching the Antepenultimate Cantos of the *Divine Comedy*: The Dilemma of Not Moving." | 2017 | | x | x |
| Thirty-twos | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Ford* | "Particular Surprises: Faces, Cries and Transfiguration." | 2017 | x | x | x |
| Thirty-threes | Shaw | "A Parallel Structure for the *Divina Commedia*." | 1987 | x | x | x |
| | Durling & Martinez | "Inter-cantica Notes" | 2003 | x | x | |
| | Williams* | "Ice, Fire and Holy Water." | 2017 | x | x | x |

\* = Cambridge Vertical Reading Project.
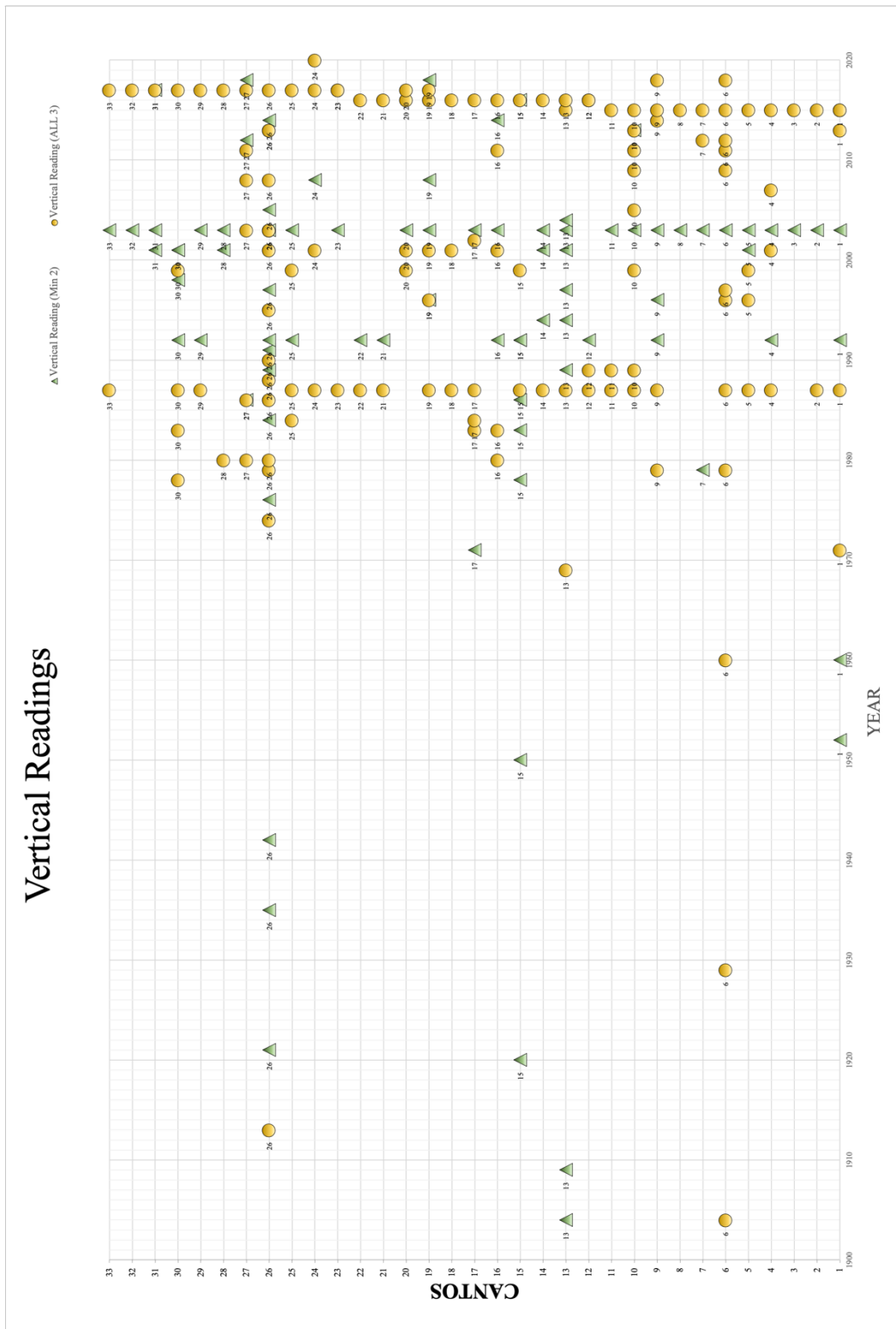
Fig. 1 – Distribution of Vertical Readings (1900–2020).
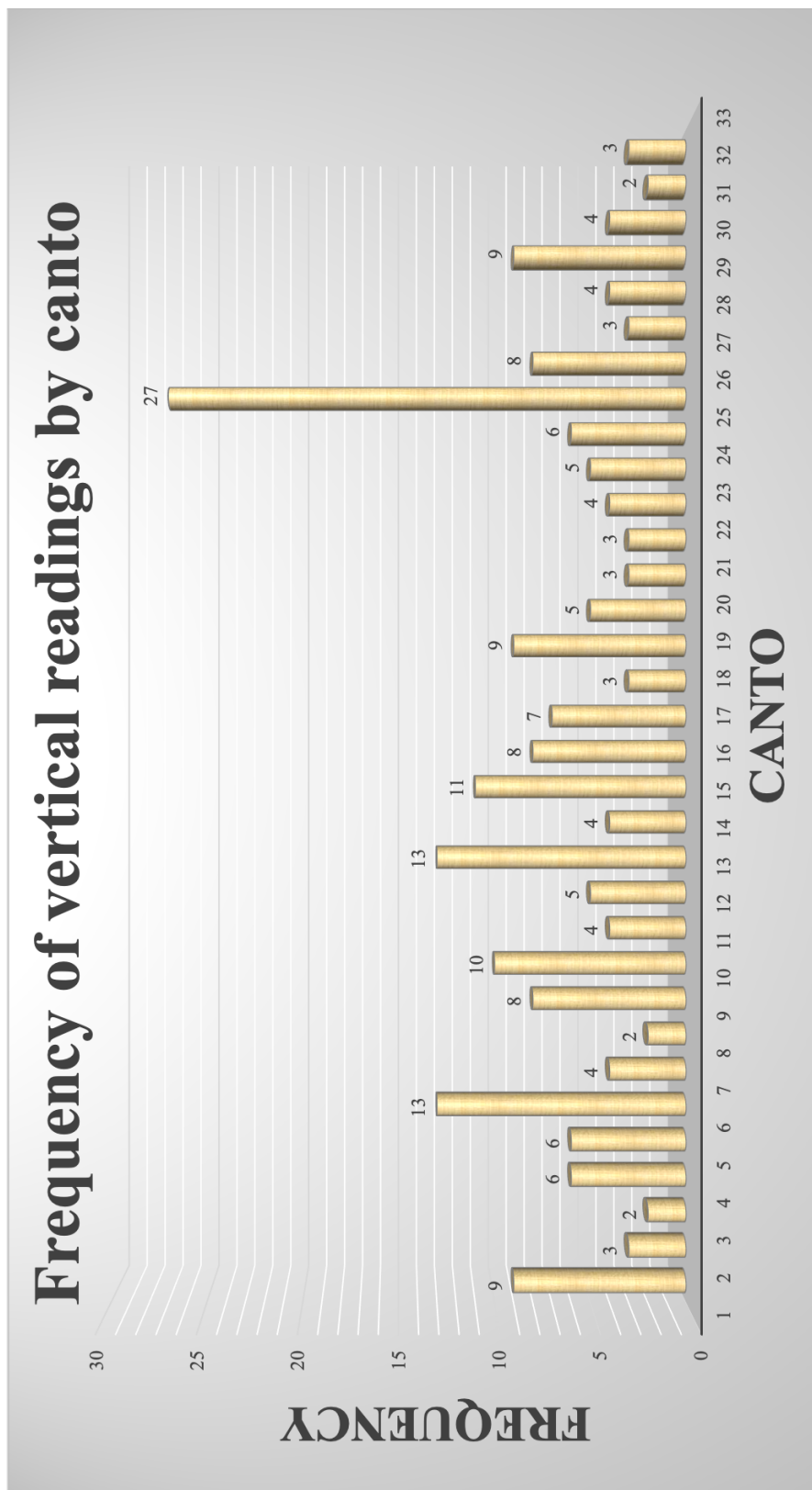
Fig. 2 – Frequency of Vertical Readings by *Canto*.

## Methodology and Findings

The above timeline shows the distribution of vertical readings from 1900 until today. The green triangles indicate vertical readings that consist of only two canticles, whereas the yellow circles show readings that involve all three. Six main clusters can be noted; those are Shaw (1987), Kay (1992), De Poli (1999), Tateo (2001), Durling and Martinez's "Inter-cantica Notes" (2003), and the Cambridge project (2015–2017).

The definition of a vertical reading is inherently flexible: it involves any two same-numbered cantos from any canticle, thus allowing for maximal inclusion, such as Kay's model for the parallel structure of the *Commedia* and Durling and Martinez's "Inter cantica" notes. This research sought to unearth as many instances as possible of this methodology, establishing a comprehensive but not exhaustive archive that comprises: scholarly articles, books, book chapters, *lecturae dantis*, commentaries, conference proceedings, appendices to translations of the *Commedia*, such as the "Inter cantica" notes, pedagogical texts designed for teachers about teaching Dante (*Journal of Pedagogy*), and reader's guides made for students, such as Guy Raffa's *Danteworlds* (2009). Linguistically, this research was mainly confined to English, Italian, and Latin; however, the French scholar André Pézard also found his way into the archive. It is also interesting to note that all the vertical readings from the first half of the twentieth century come from Italy; these are Federzoni (1904), Zenatti (1909, 1913), Parodi (1920), Corradini (1921), Scartazzini and Vandelli (1929), Valli (1935), and Nardi (1942). Singleton's vertical reading of the Ones signals the first occurrence of the method in English (1950).

Once having found an analysis of co-numerical cantos in a scholarly work, the methodology consisted of working backward through the sources cited—if any—and expand the dataset even further. Other than 'vertical," the search terms when combing through scholarly

databases were: symmetr*, simmetri*, corresponden*, corrisponden*, rispond*, parallel*, retrospect*, link*, resona*, analog*, and intrate*.[1] As for other inclusion factors, 'passing mentions,' that is to say, texts that would mention the instance of a co-numerical patterning as an afterthought, a mere curiosity, or a well-established fact not requiring further analysis, were also flagged. On the other hand, readings that involved 'diagonal' but not co-numerical cantos, e.g., Guido and Buonconte di Montefeltro (*Inf.* XXVII and *Purg.* V), were excluded.

The findings indicate that there are more readings involving all three canticles than involving only 2, at a ratio of approximately 13:8 (130/83), for a total of 213 (see fig. 2). This indicates that more often than not, having noticed a correspondence between two cantos, scholars tend to triangulate by analyzing a third possible *canto*, thus showing how the methodology invites readers to pursue further an alternate interpretative journey through the text. The three most popular cantos to be read vertically are, in decreasing order, the Twenty-sixes (27), the Sixes and the Thirteens (13), and the Fifteens (11). Moreover, despite these cantos' popularity, every *canto* has at least two vertical readings, thus demonstrating the method's broad applicability. It should also be noted that the Twenty-sevens are often found in a diptych, such as Fido (1986), Cestaro (2003), and Ascoli (2008). Indeed, cantos are often grouped 'horizontally' in diptychs and triptychs. For other cantos in groups of two, Massi (1996) combines the Fives and Sixes, and Schildgen (2012) the Sixes and Sevens. For triads, Kirkham (1989) strings together the Tens, Elevens, and Twelves; Armour (1983) the Fifteens, Sixteens, and Seventeens; and Hawkins (1980) the Twenty-fours, Twenty-fives, and Twenty-sixes. Approximatively 40% of the readings are but passing mentions, showing that for quite a considerable number of scholars, these elements of symmetry are either a *fait accompli* or simply unworthy of further analysis.

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[1] The * indicates truncation in order to maximize variants of the word.

## List of Inter-canticle Glosses Between Co-numerary Cantos

| Canto | Cantica | Verses | Cantica | Verses | Commentator |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| II | Inferno | Nota | Purgatorio | 2 | Ottimo (3) |
| II | Inferno | 94–103 | Paradiso | 38 | Ottimo (3) |
| IV | Paradiso | 82–87 | Purgatorio | —— | Ottimo (1) |
| IV | Paradiso | 82–84 | Inferno | —— | Pietro (1) |
| V | Paradiso | 64–72 | Inferno | —— | JdL |
| VI | Purgatorio | 88–138 | Paradiso | —— | Pietro (3) |
| VI | Paradiso | Nota | Purgatorio | —— | Ottimo (1) |
| VI | Paradiso | 40–42 | Inferno | —— | Ottimo (1) |
| VII | Paradiso | 136–141 | Inferno | —— | Ottimo (1) |
| XVI | Inferno | Nota | Purgatorio | 115 | Ottimo (1) |
| XVI | Inferno | Nota | Purgatorio | 115 | Ottimo (3) |
| XVI | Inferno | 28–45 | Purgatorio | 97 | Ottimo (3) |
| XVI | Inferno | 34–39 | Paradiso | 97–99 | Ottimo (1) |
| XVI | Inferno | 64–75 | Paradiso | —— | Pietro (2) |
| XVI | Inferno | 73–75 | Paradiso | —— | Pietro (3) |
| XVI | Inferno | 67–75 | Paradiso | 49–50 | Ottimo (3) |
| XVI | Inferno | 64–66 | Purgatorio | 115 | Ottimo (3) |
| XVII | Paradiso | 1–6 | Inferno | —— | JdL |
| XVII | Paradiso | 1–6 | Inferno | 106 | Ottimo (1) |
| XVII | Inferno | 106–111 | Paradiso | 1 | Ottimo (3) |

| XIX | *Inferno* | 67–72 | *Purgatorio* | 103 | Ottimo (1) |
|------|-----------|-------|--------------|-----|------------|
| XX | *Inferno* | 10–15 | *Purgatorio* | —— | Pietro (1) |
| XX | *Purgatorio* | 112 | *Inferno* | —— | Ottimo (1) |
| XXVII | *Paradiso* | 82–84 | *Inferno* | —— | Ottimo (1) |

Table 7 – List of Co-numerary Inter-canticle Glosses of the *Commedia* in the Early Commentary Tradition.[2]

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[2] Sections that have bold borders indicate a shared co-numerary inter-canticle gloss; whereas greyed backgrounds indicate a linkage of all three canticles.

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