

‘E IO A LUI’: DIALOGIC MODELS OF  
CONVERSION AND SELF-REPRESENTATION  
IN MEDIEVAL ITALIAN POETRY

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**Abstract: ‘E io a lui’: Dialogic models of conversion and self-representation in medieval Italian poetry**

David Bowe, St. Hilda’s College, Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Trinity Term, 2014

This thesis examines the role of dialogic processes in representations of conversion narratives and expressions of poetic subjectivity across the works of four poets: Guittone d’Arezzo (c.1235-1294), Guido Guinizzelli (c.1230-1276), Guido Cavalcanti (c.1255-1300) and Dante Alighieri (1265-1321).

The introduction proposes a definition of ‘dialogic processes’ drawing on theoretical models of performativity and dialogism. It presents the usefulness of these approaches to the analysis of narratives of conversion and accounts of subjectivity in poetry. Chapter 1 analyses Guittone’s conversion poetics in light of these processes and seeks to complicate the teleology of his narrative of self. Chapter 2 examines the poetry of Guinizzelli and Cavalcanti, first establishing the ‘poetic conversion’ of Guinizzelli in dialogue with his own and others’ poetry. It then examines Cavalcanti’s physiological performance of a polyphonic subjectivity and how far this poetic expression partakes in the dialogic processes previously discussed in relation to religiously inflected writing. Chapters 3 and 4 will explore the manifestations of these phenomena of dialogue and performance in Dante’s oeuvre with particular focus on the *Commedia* as a key site for intertextual interaction both with his own earlier texts and with the texts (and figures) of the other poets under discussion. These chapters will seek to reopen the teleological

closure which Dante tries to impose on his vernacular predecessors, as well as on his own works.

The weight of critical engagement with Dante's predecessors has treated them as sources or reference points for Dante's own praxis. I aim to consider Guittone, Guinizzelli and Cavalcanti on their own terms and in dialogue with one another before approaching Dante through these poets, thus reconstructing the networks of poetic dialogue in late medieval Italy, and situating Dante firmly within a dialogic tradition of narratives of self and conversion.

**Extended Abstract: ‘E io a lui’: Dialogic models of conversion and self-representation in medieval Italian poetry**

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This thesis examines the role of dialogic processes in representations of conversion narratives and expressions of poetic subjectivity across the works of four poets: Guittone d’Arezzo (c.1235-1294), Guido Guinizzelli (c.1230-1276), Guido Cavalcanti (c.1255-1300) and Dante Alighieri (1265-1321).

The introduction proposes a methodological approach founded on an understanding of four categories of ‘dialogic process’: firstly, direct dialogue between texts or directed toward an addressee, as in *tenzoni*; secondly, staged dialogues within texts; thirdly, intertextual dialogue which alludes to, recalls, or directly cites other texts; finally, the dialogic co-existence of multiple forms of a poetic subjectivity, such as we see in the presence of different versions of the *io* across different works in an oeuvre, e.g., Guittone and Frate Guittone. In this introduction I define these processes with reference to several critical and contextual touchstones: the material circulation of texts in medieval Italy (as evidenced in Vaticano Latino 3793); the practice (as exemplified in the poetic exchanges transmitted to us) and theory (articulated in Brunetto Latini’s *Rettorica*) of the *tenzone* in this period; theoretical models of both performativity (derived from John L. Austin’s distinctions between ‘performative’ and ‘constative’ speech acts) and dialogism and polyphony (as first theorised by Mikhail Bakhtin).

Chapter 1 analyses Guittone’s conversion poetics in light of these processes and seeks to complicate the teleology of his narrative of self. There are three elements to this discussion; in the first – ‘Now and then: performing a conversion’

— I lay out the manner in which Frate attempts to generate a converted self through the palinodic treatment of his early poetry. Through readings of post-conversion *canzoni*, including ‘Ora parrà s’ero saverò cantare’, against the backdrop of an Augustinian model of conversion, I focus on the dialogic and also temporal aspects of this process, and relate it to the discourse of performativity. In the second section — ‘Why so serious? (Frate) Guittone’s (in)sincerity’ — I establish the destabilising effect which the irony of Guittone’s early poetry has on the teleological narrative of converted subjectivity constructed in the post-conversion texts. I offer a comparative analysis of the language of Guittone’s two poetic phases — the ‘erotic’ and the religious — and a reading of the fictive *tenzone* with the ‘*donna villana*’. In so doing, I highlight the dependence of Frate Guittone’s moral diction on the lyric lexicon of the early verse, a lexicon which is destabilised by irony, and also illustrate the perils posed by this dependence. By foregrounding the echoes of pre-conversion lyric language in post-conversion texts I explore the process of Frate Guittone’s conversion poetics and simultaneously seek to complicate any straightforward narrative of poetic conversion and teleological self-representation, through an awareness of the dialogic tensions generated in this process. In the third and final section of this chapter — “‘Vero amore’, ‘vera canzone’” — I undertake a close reading of Frate Guittone’s moral *canzone*, ‘O vera vertù, vero amore’, alongside the pre-conversion *tenzone* with Mastro Bandino. I undertake this analysis to demonstrate the co-presence (along Bakhtinian lines) of the poetic voices of both ‘Guittone’ and ‘Frate Guittone’ and to reinforce the understanding of dialogic processes and tensions in Guittone’s *corpus* through critical engagement on the micro-textual level.

Chapter 2 is divided into two parts; in Part 1 — *Guido Guinizzelli: Dialogic Redefinition* — I examine the ‘poetic conversion’ of Guido Guinizzelli and in Part 2

— *Guido Cavalcanti: Dialogic Disdain?* — I argue for a different model of dialogic, polyphonic and non-religious subjectivity in the poetry of Guido Cavalcanti. In the first section of my discussion of Guinizzelli — ‘Guinizzelli and the voice of God’ — I analyse Guinizzelli’s ventriloquising of the voice of God in ‘Al cor gentil rimpaira sempr’ amore’ and argue that the playing out of this staged dialogue represents a performative process of self-justification. In the course of this reading I propose a ‘poetic conversion’ along more figurative, but no less religiously charged lines to that of Guittone. In the section — ‘Guinizzelli vs. the critics’ — I argue that Guinizzelli’s conversion unfolds through a process of dialogue with his own and others’ poetry. The importance of the *tenzone* as a form comes to the fore again here, with reference to Guinizzelli’s exchanges with two poets: his dialogues with Guittone, comprising ‘Caro padre mēo, de vostra laude’ and Guittone’s ‘Figlio mio diletto in faccia laude’, as well as Guittone’s ‘S’eo tale fosse, ch’io potesse’ and Guinizzelli’s ‘Al cor gentil’; and his *tenzone* with Bonagiunta da Lucca (c. 1220-1290) comprising Bonagiunta’s ‘Voi c’avete mutata la mainera’ and Guinizzelli’s riposte, ‘Omo ch’è saggio non corre leggero’. I read Guinizzelli’s dialogic relationship with Guittone along with that famous exchange with Bonagiunta as representative of a process of self-redefinition and poetic refinement through the process of argument and literary self-defence. The third section — ‘Biblically speaking’ — explores the dialogic implications of Guinizzelli’s recurrent use of scriptural intertexts raising questions of authority and textual hierarchy in the relationship between scriptural language and lyric poetry. In Part 2 — *Guido Cavalcanti: Dialogic Disdain?* — I then examine Cavalcanti’s physiological performance of a polyphonic subjectivity, under the sign of natural philosophy, and explore how far this poetic expression partakes in the dialogic processes previously discussed in relation to religiously inflected writing. In the

first section of this part — ‘Conversations with converts: Cavalcanti *tenzonante*’ — I situate Cavalcanti within a dialogic network which includes Guittone and Guinizelli, and examine the implications of his polemical disengagement from Guittone and his intertextual engagement with Guinizelli. I read ‘Fresca rosa novella’ and ‘Chi è questa che ven, ch’ong’om la mira’ in relation to Guinizelli’s poetics of praise, and highlight the inherent disruptiveness of Cavalcanti’s love experience even in these more ‘positive’ and ‘traditional’ texts. In the second section — ‘Performing a polyphonic identity’ — I read Cavalcanti’s self-fragmentation and concomitant personification of physiological and psychological processes in his poetry as the manifestation of a polyphonic model of subjectivity. With reference to a number of his texts, but particularly ‘Deh spiriti miei’, ‘Io non pensava che lo cor giammai’ and ‘Noi siàn le triste penne isbigottite’, I argue that beyond merely giving voice to these internal and circulatory processes, Cavalcanti presents an intentionally multi-faceted model of subjectivity in which the *io* is but one of many speakers contained within a double *corpus*, the body of the poet and the body of the text.

Chapters 3 and 4 explore the manifestations of these phenomena of dialogue and performance in Dante’s oeuvre with particular focus on the *Commedia* as a key site for intertextual interaction both with his own earlier texts and with the texts (and figures) of the other poets under discussion. The first of these chapters will focus on Dante’s explicit and implicit treatments of the other poets discussed in my thesis and will consider the manner in which they contribute to the construction of his own subjectivity. The latter will draw together the prior discussions through an analysis of Dante’s self-representation in *Purgatorio* and in so doing firmly situate Dante within a context of dialogic performance of the poetic subject in Italian lyric of this period. These chapters will thus seek to reopen

the teleological closure which Dante tries to impose on his vernacular predecessors, as well as on his own works.

In Chapter 3, again in two parts, I focus on Dante's treatment of Guittone, Guinizzelli and Cavalcanti in the *Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia* and then develop further the discussion of Dante's proscription of Cavalcanti from the ranks of the saved in the *Commedia*. Part 1 — *Dialogic Dismissal: the Two Guidos Censured and Superseded; Guittone Erased* — traces Dante's narratives of supersession over Guinizzelli and Cavalcanti from the *Vita Nuova* to the *Commedia* and examines the means by which Dante attempts to de-canonise Guittone in *Purgatorio*. In the first section of this Part — '*Vita Nuova*: from "paura che è nel cor" to "Amor e 'l cor gentil"' — I briefly trace the oscillations between Cavalcantian and Guinizzellian modes in the *libello*, before progressing to the second section — '*Purgatorio*: Guido, Guido, Guittone' — in which I discuss the trajectories of *l'uno e l'altro* Guido and the associated narrative of poetic glory in *Purgatorio*. Over the course of this analysis I offer new readings of Dante's interactions with both Bonagiunta (*Purg.* XXIV) and Guinizzelli (*Purg.* XXVI), as well as suggesting additional Guittonian intertexts in *Purgatorio* XXVI. In Part 2 — *Dialogic Disassociation: Cavalcanti, Ulisse, and the Siren* — I read Dante's treatment of Cavalcanti in the *Commedia* in light of their earlier *tenzone*, comprising Dante's 'Guido, i' vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io' and Cavalcanti's 'S'io fosse quelli che d'amor fu degno' and analyse the importance of dreams in Dante's representation of the divergence of poetic praxis between the two erstwhile friends. In the first section — 'Cavalcanti recalled' — I present the intertextual relationship between the opening lines of *Purgatorio* I and the early sonnet exchange between Dante and Cavalcanti, shedding light on the nautical, poetic, and spiritual implications of this allusion at the start of the second *Cantica*. In the second section — 'Dialogic dreams: Cavalcanti discounted'

— I discuss the importance of dreams for Dante’s poetics in the *Purgatorio*, with particular focus on the dream of the Siren, and I foreground Cavalcanti’s oneiric failings as central to Dante’s condemnation of his first friend’s praxis. In the third and final section of this Part — ‘Cavalcanti’s “Pasturella” in Dante’s Dreams of Authority’ — I argue for a fundamental link between dreaming and poetic authority in Dante’s *Commedia*, centred on the dream of Leah and Rachel, the subsequent coronation scene, and Matelda’s ‘corollario’ in the *paradiso terrestre*. I propose a corrective intertextual treatment by Dante of Cavalcanti’s ‘In un boschetto trova’ pasturella’ in the dream of Leah and Rachel, in addition to the acknowledged existence of such an allusion in the encounter with Matelda. This completes a narrative of supersession and correction of Cavalcanti connected to dreams, which Dante begins in the *Vita Nuova*, and which takes a more explicitly oneiric turn in the *Commedia*.

Chapter 4 is the last of this thesis and draws on the insights developed throughout the discussion thus far to both elucidate and complicate Dante’s performance of a converted subjectivity. This endeavour is founded on an extended close reading of the dream of the Siren which establishes firm intertextual links between this *mis-en-scène* of temptation and escape and the exegetical models of the *Vita Nuova* and especially the *Convivio*. In the first section — ‘*Vita Nuova* di nuovo’ — I turn back to the dreams narrated in the prose and verse of the *Vita Nuova* to begin a discussion of Dante’s failings as represented in both the *libello* and the *Commedia*, to make the first steps in an argument for the ‘*donna santa*’ of the purgatorial dream as an image of Beatrice, and to draw on the parallel mechanics of dreaming in both the *libello* and the *poema sacro*. In the second section — ‘Recalling *Inferno*, restaging *Convivio*’ — my primary focus is on the representation of Dante as a once flawed interpreter and creator of poetic texts. I

posit the Siren as a nexus for the combined intellectual and erotic error represented in the encounters with poets on the subsequent terraces of purgatory (as well as in *Inferno* V), drawing on the intellectual history of *cupiditas scientiae*, the lust for knowledge. Additionally, I draw out further evidence for the dream of the Siren as a meditation of lyric error with concrete ties to *Inferno* V and the texts which it cites (especially Guinizelli's 'Al cor gentil'). In the final section of this chapter — 'Poesis and exegesis from the *Convivio* to the *Commedia*' — I argue, with reference to the exegetical practice of the *Convivio* and the governing image of meaning as a woman 'clothed' in the adornments of poetry, that the dream of canto XIX stages the transfer of all proper signification to the poetry of the *Commedia*. I propose that the incarnation of the exegetical praxes of Dante's *prosimetra* in the interactions between the Siren and the *donna santa* acts as a polemical shying away from the auto-exegetical praxes of the *libello* and the *Convivio*. Finally, I posit that this polemic is a necessary part of Dante's poetic conversion in the *Commedia*, a conversion predicated on a series of dialogic processes, as Dante represents a turning away from intellectual and erotic folly (the *donna gentile* of the *Vita Nuova* who becomes Lady Philosophy in the *Convivio*) and towards Beatrice and thus God.

The weight of critical engagement with Dante's predecessors has treated them as sources or reference points for Dante's own praxis. I have aimed to consider Guittone, Guinizelli and Cavalcanti on their own terms and in dialogue with one another before approaching Dante through these poets, thus reconstructing the networks of poetic dialogue in late medieval Italy, and situating Dante firmly within a dialogic tradition of narratives of self and conversion.

**Abbreviations:**

When quoting Dante's *Commedia* I am referring to *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, Giorgio Petrocchi ed., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 4 vols (Florence: Le Lettere, 1994) and will abbreviate its *Cantiche* as *Inf.* and *Purg.* and *Par.* respectively.

Other abbreviations and editions are given in the notes.

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## Introduction

### Dialogic Processes

It may seem flippant or a commonplace to state that Dante's poetry was not conceived *ex nihilo*. Indeed, numerous studies have been dedicated to some of the ways in which Dante read or used the works of other poets in his own project of self-authorisation.<sup>1</sup> In short, Dante's poetry has many fathers. But it is precisely this approach to poets through Dante, for what they can tell us about Dante's poetry, which can do a disservice to his poetic fathers even as we acknowledge his descent from them. This thesis, then, proposes to read the fathers first, to engage with the poetry of Guittone d'Arezzo, Guido Guinizzelli, and Guido Cavalcanti, before approaching the *Commedia* (via the *Vita Nuova* and *Convivio*).

The inclusion of Guittone in this list may at first appear surprising, given Dante's vigorous and repeated dismissal of the 'commonplace' Aretine and his 'ignorant' followers.<sup>2</sup> Guittone was, however, prolific and influential, and it is my contention that Dante owes more to this predecessor than he is willing to admit. Indeed Dante's very effacement of the friar-poet, an archetype of converted lyric subjectivity and wilful literary teleology, should encourage both suspicion of Dante's motives and subsequent attentive reading of Guittone's *corpus*. Also

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<sup>1</sup> These scholarly undertakings will of course form touchstones for much of what follows, and will be cited accordingly, but a few key monographs include: Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante's Poets: textuality and truth in the Comedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984) & *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2006); Winthrop Wetherbee, *The Ancient Flame: Dante and the Poets*, The William and Katherine Devers Series in Dante Studies (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008); Albert R. Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> 'Substant igitur ignorantie sectatores Guittone Aretinum et quosdam alios extollentes, nunquam in vocabulis atque constructione plebescere desuetos!' [So let the devotees of ignorance cease to cry up Guittone d'Arezzo and others like him, for never, in either vocabulary or construction, have they been anything but commonplace], *De vulgari eloquentia*, II, vi, 8. Text from Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*, Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo ed., in *Opere minori*, II, 1-237 (hereafter *DVE*); English from Steven Botterill trans., *Dante: "De vulgari Eloquentia"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Guinizzelli, despite being explicitly cited by Dante as ‘padre’ in the *Commedia*, is done something of a disservice by readings of him as merely a stepping-stone en route to the developments of the ‘dolce stil novo’ and Dante’s own transcendent poetics. Debts are acknowledged (particularly with regard to the ‘stile della loda’) and respects paid to Guinizzelli as one who paves the way for Dante’s alignment of Beatrice with God and ‘resolution’ of the tensions of *fin’amors* poetry. This inevitably leads to a downplaying of Guinizzelli’s own radical innovations and perhaps results in an overly generous account of Dante’s treatment of the Bolognese Guido in the *Commedia*. The final figure in my triumvirate of pre-Dantean lyric poets is of course Cavalcanti, whose contemporaneity with the author of the *Vita Nuova* and whose naming as ‘primo de li [suoi] amici’ in that selfsame *libello* has often tied his critical fate to Dante’s own. The intertextual and dialogical relationships between this Florentine Guido, the Bolognese Guinizzelli, and Guittone d’Arezzo are sometimes overshadowed by Cavalcanti’s more prominent interactions and disagreements with his compatriot Dante. In treating the texts of these poets first, I propose to foreground these very exchanges — the *tenzoni* which seem fundamental in the development each of their poetics — and to explore the implications of the dialogic relationships at play within and between each of their oeuvres. I then aim to read Dante in light of and in dialogue with these predecessors, as well as with his own literary past, in order to query aspects of the literary teleology which he aims to establish throughout his works.

In undertaking this discussion I will have recourse to a methodological framework comprising certain ‘dialogic processes’, which I will set forth in this introduction. Before doing so, however, I would like to call upon Brunetto Latini to define a key component in these processes and my readings, the *tenzone*:

chi volesse bene considerare la proprietà d’una lettera o d’una canzone,  
ben potrebbe apertamente vedere che colui che lla fa o che lla manda

intende ad alcuna cosa che vuole che sia fatta per colui a cui e' la manda. Et questo puote essere *o pregando o domandando o comandando o minacciando o confortando o consigliando*; e in ciascuno di questi modi *puote quelli a cui vae la lettera o la canzone o negare o difendersi* per alcuna scusa.

(*Rettorica*, 16 [italics mine])<sup>3</sup>

Thus begins the discussion of the *tenzone* in Brunetto Latini's translation of and commentary on Cicero's *De inventione* (commonly referred to as Latini's *Rettorica*). In this text, Brunetto (author also of the *Trésor* and *Tesoretto* and resident of the 7th circle of Dante's hell) glosses Cicero's treatment of the six parts of speech. The passage at hand deals specifically with debate, persuasion and the *tenzone* in Italian literary usage. Having established the basics of argumentative writing, i.e., the production of texts which plead, ask, command, threaten, or offer comfort or advice, Latini moves on to the rhetorical markers of such writing:

Ma quelli che manda la sua lettera guernisce di parole ornate e piene di sentenza e di fermi argomenti, sì come crede poter muovere l'animo di colui a non negare, e, s'elli avesse alcuna scusa, come la possa indebolire o instornare in tutto.

(*Rettorica*, 16)

The verbal ornamentation, coupled with fullness of meaning and strong arguments, are picked out as crucial to any rhetorical attempt to move one's correspondent not to deny one's statement or request. And it is at this point that Latini situates us firmly in the realm of dialogic poetics, stating that 'dunque è una tencione tacita intra loro, e così sono quasi tutte le lettere e canzoni d'amore in modo di tencione o tacita o espressa' (*Rettorica*, 16). Thus the poetic model of the *tenzone* (a model with its earlier roots in the Provençal form of the *tenso*) is theorised in thirteenth-century Italy as a form of dialogic writing which tries to *do* something. Indeed, a fascinating aspect of Latini's model of the *tenzone* is that it doesn't necessarily require an active response; silence in the face of persuasive

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<sup>3</sup> The text is drawn from Brunetto Latini, *La Rettorica*, Francesco Maggini ed., preface by Cesare Segre (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1968) (hereafter *Rettorica*).

speech is conceived of as a dialogic position akin to a responsive argument or statement of agreement. This concept of an implicit *tenzone* is illuminating, as it demonstrates a cultural attitude to the openness of literary exchange and the sense of dialogue *in potentia* as inherent in lyric writing. The dialogic, lyric potential for the development of *tenzoni* is explored in Justin Steinberg's work on the anthologising of Dante's 'Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore' and the circulation of poetry in late medieval Italy.<sup>4</sup> Steinberg's study offered one prompt for my own line of inquiry and particularly my endeavour to establish the importance of inter- and intra-textual interactions in Guittone, Guinizzelli, Cavalcanti and Dante. Indeed, the importance of the *tenzone* as a category is borne out not only by Latini's lengthy discourse on the topic, but also in the earliest single-minded collection of lyric poetry, MS Vaticano Latino 3793, the so-called 'Vatican Canzoniere'. This manuscript contains a significant body of texts grouped together according to one key feature — they are *tenzoni*. Representing a total of nineteen folios of collected texts, each separate *tenzone* is arranged under a marginal heading informing us of its status as a *tenzone* and giving us the number of poems which each exchange comprises. The famous back and forth between Bonagiunta's 'Voi c'avete mutata la mainera' and Guinizzelli's 'Omo ch'è saggio non corre leggero', for example, is tagged 'tenzone ij'.

The *tenzone*, then, is a concept of poetic dialogue that was at the fore in the minds and praxes of both readers and writers of lyric in thirteenth-century Italy. It is also central to the understanding of 'dialogic processes' to be explored in this thesis and will be fundamental to the organisation of this undertaking. The cumulative tradition of *tenzoni* and related intertextual exchanges between Guittone, Guinizzelli, Cavalcanti, and Dante will provide a structural *fil rouge*

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<sup>4</sup> Justin Steinberg, *Accounting for Dante: urban readers and writers in late medieval Italy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), especially pp. 61-94.

through my readings of these poets and their oeuvres. I will examine the dialogues between Guittone's earlier 'erotic' and later religious work, and then read Guinizzelli's texts in dialogue with Guittone's. I will foreground Cavalcanti's dialogues with the poetry of Guinizzelli and Guittone and then focus on Dante in dialogue with all three of these poets. Finally I will turn to the dialogues between the various stages of Dante's own poetic production from the *Vita Nuova* to the *Commedia*. Before embarking on these readings, then, it will be helpful to introduce in more detail what I intend by 'dialogic processes'.

Against a backdrop of Bakhtinian theories of dialogism and polyphony (terms which I will explain more fully below),<sup>5</sup> I see four main categories of dialogic process taking place in these subject-creating operations. The first is direct dialogue between texts or directed toward an addressee, as in *tenzoni* with or without responsive addressees — any 'tencion o tacita o espressa' in Latini's terms (*Rettorica*, 16) — or in addresses to a reader. Secondly, there are the staged dialogues within texts, either between characters or with interlocutors. Thirdly, we have intertextual dialogue which alludes to, recalls, or directly cites other texts in order to express the tensions and differences between the present text and the intertext. Then, fourth and finally, there is the dialogic co-existence of multiple forms of a poetic subjectivity, such as we see in the presence of different versions of the *io* across different works in an oeuvre — Guittone and Frate Guittone for example, or the Dantes of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia*. This last concept owes the most to Bakhtinian polyphony, as it was Bakhtin who drew critical attention to the possibility for an 'authorial' voice to sit alongside other, equally weighty textual voices and be compromised or contradicted by them. In Bakhtin's

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<sup>5</sup> As expressed throughout various of his writings, but see particularly: Bakhtin, 'Epic and the Novel' and 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Michael Holquist ed., Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson trans. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981); and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*.

model of the 'polyphonic text' the voices of non-authorial characters in a polyphonic text 'sound, as it were, alongside the author's word and in a special way combines with it'.<sup>6</sup> In this way the voices of characters, respondents and, as I shall argue, intertexts and quotations interact with and disrupt authorial and authoritative discourses and narratives. The destabilising effect of this polyphony has implications for the teleological narratives of self which poets attempt to construct, as well as creating tension at the most fundamental level of the language of poetic expression.<sup>7</sup>

In my analysis I will draw on the underlying insights of this observation as a useful tool for articulating the tensions created by multiple, contradictory manifestations of a poetic subjectivity as in Guittone's or Dante's multiple periods of poetic production, noted above. It will also be brought to bear in discussions of the presences of other voices belonging to correspondents, interlocutors and other authoritative characters in texts. These dialogic operations are also connected to a performative aspect in certain of the texts, especially the macrotexts of Guittone and Dante, but also in the oeuvres of Guinizelli and Cavalcanti. 'Performative' in this sense derives from the work of John L. Austin, whose work on 'how to do things with words' divined and defined a class of speech which, more than describing a state, makes something so. A prime example of such a 'speech act' would be wedding vows: the declaration 'I will' (which Austin misquotes as 'I do') in response to the question '[name] do you take [name] to be your lawfully wedded wife/husband', changes the legal status of the speakers from unmarried to

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<sup>6</sup> Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> At this point I should note that, in my reading of Bakhtin, 'polyphony', as described in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, falls within the realm of 'dialogism', as theorised in 'Epic and the Novel' and 'Discourse in the Novel'. I understand the co-existence of multiple co-sounding voices to necessarily result in the sorts of simultaneously disruptive and generative tensions which are fundamental to the concept of the 'dialogic'. This understanding and its implications will be explored and clarified through the course of my interpretations in this thesis.

married.<sup>8</sup> This is not, it should be emphasised, a wholesale adoption of an Austinian concept, which would be something of a critical fallacy, as Austin himself moved away from these terms towards a threefold definition of ‘locutionary’, ‘illocutionary’ and ‘perlocutionary’ speech acts for his own specific ends,<sup>9</sup> but rather a qualified use of these terms in as far as they offer a useful expression of certain aspects of medieval literary practice. Indeed, this use sits comfortably alongside concepts of language that *does* things which were circulating in a medieval intellectual milieu, for example in the writings of the medieval thinker and bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosseteste (c. 1168–1253). Grosseteste identified a ‘performative’ category of God’s speech: ‘[the] word of good pleasure, *wherein for Him to say something is for Him to do it*. For, because He speaks in this way, He accomplishes something by speaking’.<sup>10</sup> God, the author of the world, is an author whose speech performs actions and in this He is not alone. A strong case has also recently been made for discussions of the performative in medieval studies, as a means of refocusing on the importance of the written word:

Austin’s notion of performative challenges the view that words are always secondary, recording and stating actions which have preceded an

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<sup>8</sup> In greater detail, Austin’s definition of ‘Performative’ as opposed to ‘Constative’ utterances; a ‘Performative’ utterance being defined as one which ‘[does] not “describe” or report or constate anything at all, [is] not “true or false”; and [...] is or is part of, the doing of an action, which again would not *normally* be described as saying something’, additional examples of which include ‘I bequeath [...]’ in a will, or ‘I name this ship [...]’ at a launch; John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, James O. Urmson ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), pp. 3-5. My adoption of the term bears in mind Gorman’s warnings (in David Gorman, ‘The Use and Abuse of Speech-Act Theory in Criticism’, in *Poetics Today*, 20.1 [Spring, 1999], pp. 93-119) as well as Culler’s more positive discussion about the fortunes of the performative in literary criticism (Jonathan Culler, ‘Philosophy and Literature: The Fortunes of the Performative’ *Poetics Today*, 21.3 [Fall 2000], pp. 503-519).

<sup>9</sup> Austin, *How to do things with Words*, pp. 101-3.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Grosseteste, *On the Cessation of the Laws (The Fathers of the Church, Medieval Continuation)*, Stephen M. Hildebrand trans. (Washington: Catholic University of America Press: Washington, 2012), p. 228.

utterance. Instead, Austin offers a model which sees speech, or at least certain speech acts, as forms of actions.<sup>11</sup>

The relevance and ramifications of the performative for my project will come into focus initially through my discussion of Guittone's oeuvre, before being considered in the contexts of the two Guidos and Dante. This process, which will draw on recent work on Dante's staging of subjectivity in the *Vita Nuova* through 'una performance dell'autore',<sup>12</sup> will form part of the wider consideration of the dialogic aspects of self-creation and presentation in the texts of the four poets under discussion. With recourse to the concept of dialogism I will also complicate the success of any such performance, foregrounding the resistance posed by pre-existent textuality to the sort of 'active revision' undertaken by such a performative endeavour.<sup>13</sup> My analysis will show how these discussions of the dialogic and performative aspects of the texts in question do not fall foul of the potential perils facing any 'polyglot theory',<sup>14</sup> but rather represent a useful synthesis, especially

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<sup>11</sup> Almut Suerbaum, in collaboration with Manuele Gragnolati, 'Medieval Culture "betwixt and between": An introduction', in *Aspects of the Performative in Medieval Culture*, Manuele Gragnolati and Almut Suerbaum ed. (Berlin; New York, NY: De Gruyter, 2010), pp. 1-12 (quotation p. 3).

<sup>12</sup> A performance in a sense that 'va oltre alla scoperta, la ricostruzione e la rappresentazione del passato dell'autore secondo un modello di sviluppo ideale ed esemplare, e che ha a che fare, piuttosto, con la creazione dell'autore attraverso un atto linguistico'; Manuele Gragnolati, 'Trasformazioni e assenze: la performance della *Vita nova* e le figure di Dante e Cavalcanti', in *L'Alighieri*, xxxv (2010), pp. 5-23, collected in *Dante: the Lyrical and Ethical Poet*, Zygmunt G. Barański and Martin McLaughlin ed. (Oxford: Legenda, 2010), pp. 74-91 (76), revised and reprinted as 'Identità d'autore. La performance della *Vita Nuova*', in Gragnolati, *Amor che move: Linguaggio del corpo e forma del desiderio in Dante, Pasolini e Morante* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 2013), pp. 17-34.

<sup>13</sup> Barolini notes that the lyrics included in the *Vita Nuova* 'undergo not only a passive revision in the process of being selected for inclusion, but also an active revision at the hands of the prose narrative, which bends them into a new significance consonant with the poet's "new life"', Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Perils which result in the sort of 'hyper-mobile and opportunistic theory that operates across different systems with potentially opposed claims and objectives, blinding itself to conflicts among and between the theoretical models it employs', also branded 'magpie theory'. These perils include the dangers of overlapping terminologies or superficial compatibility, which do not equate to validly co-usable theories within a pluralist theoretical approach. These issues are confronted, and sensible cautionary advice given, by Paul Strohm in his approach to Chaucer in Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. xiv. My dealings with theory shall be synthetic not merely simultaneous, informed by close textual readings, not by non-specific frameworks.

when considering the role of ‘uptake’ in the performative act. ‘Uptake’ is the key condition of a ‘felicitous’ speech act (i.e. one that is successfully performed). It is necessarily associated with the role of an ‘audience’, a ‘reader’, or another form of witness in the realisation of the textual performance.<sup>15</sup> This recourse to a reader falls within the category of direct dialogue defined above, which firmly situates the aspect of performance within the realm of dialogic processes, as well as re-situating the more abstract elements of this discussion in relation to concrete questions of circulation and textual response. Performance, then, represents a helpful nexus in the web of dialogic interactions — *tenzoni*, staged dialogues and intertextuality — which are evident among the texts of Guittone, Guinizzelli, Cavalcanti and Dante.

My readings in this thesis, then, will draw on these dialogic processes in as much as they pose useful questions to the texts under consideration. In treating Guittone’s work in chapter 1, I will focus on his dialogic performance of conversion through the intertextual and palinodic engagement of his post-conversion poetry — ascribed to ‘Frate Guittone’ and beginning with ‘Ora parrà s’eo saverò cantare’ — with his pre-conversion works and the voice known as ‘Guittone’. This analysis will set in motion a discussion of ‘corrective intertextuality’ and its role in the construction of teleological narratives of subjectivity which will become relevant throughout my argument as a whole. As regards Guittone’s particular, intertwined performances of subjectivity and conversion, it will be necessary to confront the problems of irony in his pre-conversion works and the destabilising effects of the two voices and phases of the one body of work produced to this Aretine poet.

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<sup>15</sup> As outlined in section 2.2 of *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on Speech Acts, ‘Can saying make it so?’; Mitchell Green, ‘Speech Acts’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta ed., <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/speech-acts/>> [accessed 16 April 2009].

In moving on to the poetry of Guido Guinizzelli in the second chapter, my focus will shift to a more explicitly outward looking version of dialogic subjectivity, one which refines the poetic voice in relation and response to outside forces. The development of Guinizzelli's subjectivity and poetics plays out precisely through his statement and restatement of poetic positions through the dialogic interactions of *tenzoni* with other poets and, at its most ambitious, authoritative and performative, in dialogue with the voice of God. Within the same chapter, Cavalcanti's radical internalism will be raised as point of contrast with the tendencies in these other poets towards unitary poetics and accounts of self, unities which have frequent recourse to religious modes of authorisation. In Cavalcanti's case, as indicated by his intertextual interactions with Guittone and especially Guinizzelli, there is a divergent model of subjectivity and indeed love poetry, one in which the text performs an irreducibly polyphonic subjectivity justified by natural philosophy. The importance of an intra-discursive dialogism, in which poetry and subjectivity are generated through tensions and internalised dialogues will be foregrounded before the discussion moves on to Dante.

Only after having engaged in readings of these first three poets, will I turn to an author who so carefully defined the lyric tradition in relation to himself as well as himself in relation the lyric tradition. The third chapter of this thesis will concentrate on Dante's treatment of these poets, principally through readings of the *Commedia*, but also relating the *poema sacro* to the *Vita Nuova* and *Convivio*. There will be several primary aims in this undertaking: to highlight the undercutting of Guinizzelli even as he is named as 'padre' in *Purgatorio*; to make a case for the proscription of Cavalcanti from the same realm with reference to the early *tenzone* beginning, 'Guido, i' vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io'; to shed new light on the motives for and means of the effacement of Guittone in Dante's works; and

finally to highlight the dialogic tensions inherent in these intertextual moments. After considering Dante in dialogue with the poets who preceded him, the fourth and last chapter will investigate Dante's own efforts to perform a teleological, unitary and converted subjectivity in the *Commedia*. My analysis will seek to both explain and complicate the mechanics of this performance. I will draw on the models established through the discussions of Guittone, Guinizzelli and Cavalcanti to re-open the closure of Dante's apparently felicitous performance of converted textuality and self. This reading aims to open the way for the resiliently disruptive textuality of past works to sound alongside the self-consciously authorial voice of the poet of the *Commedia*.

## Chapter 1: Guittone d'Arezzo

### Dialogic Conversion

As a secular poet, Guittone d'Arezzo (c. 1235-1294) wrote numerous love lyrics, the sincerity of which has been increasingly called into question in the critical discussions of the last few decades.<sup>16</sup> Following his entry into the *Ordo Militiæ Mariæ Gloriosæ*, the *Frati Gaudenti*, the now Frate Guittone turned his hand to poetry characterised by a religious didacticism. The genuine nature of these 'post-conversion' texts, however, is not called into doubt by the internal evidence of his corpus, nor by the critical discourse surrounding them. There is a palinodic quality to this later production which is well established (not to mention stridently evident in the poems themselves), as Frate Guittone takes stock of his past poetics and embarks on a new way of writing.<sup>17</sup> The most often cited and well known of these palinodes is his *canzone*, 'Ora parrà s'eo saverò cantare',<sup>18</sup> which in Teodolinda Barolini's analysis 'forcefully announces the transition from a poesis inspired by love to one driven by moral didacticism'.<sup>19</sup> This manifesto *canzone* certainly clearly

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<sup>16</sup> Vincent Moleta, *The Early Poetry of Guittone d'Arezzo* (London: MHRA, 1976); Lino Leonardi ed., *Canzoniere: i sonetti d'amore del Codice Laurenziano* (Turin: Einaudi, 1994); Antonello Borra, *Guittone d'Arezzo e le maschere del poeta: la lirica cortese tra ironia e palinodia* (Ravenna: Longo, 2000); 'Redefining the "matera amorosa": Dante's *Vita nova* and Guittone's (anti)courtly "canzoniere"', *The Italianist*, 29 (2009), pp. 369-399.

<sup>17</sup> Moleta *The Early Poetry*, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> xxv — 'Ora parrà': for ease of reference I give Egidi's numbering of Guittone's poems alongside their first lines (sonnets are numbered with Arabic numerals, *canzoni* with Roman), but draw texts for sonnets 1-86 from Lino Leonardi ed., *Canzoniere: i sonetti d'amore del Codice Laurenziano* (Turin: Einaudi, 1994), for *canzoni* vii, xi, xv, xix-xx, xxv, xxviii, xxxiii, xxxvii, xxxix, xlvi-xlvii, sonnet 111 from Gianfranco Contini ed., *Poeti del duecento*, 2 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1979), I, and the remainder from Francesco Egidi ed., *Le rime di Guittone d'Arezzo* (Bari: Laterza 1940).

<sup>19</sup> Teodolinda Barolini, 'Guittone's "Ora parrà", Dante's "Doglia mi reca", and the *Commedia's* Anatomy of Desire', in *Seminario Dantesco Internazionale: International Dante Seminar I*, Zygmunt G. Barański ed. (Florence: Le Lettere, 1997), pp. 3-23; reprinted in *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2006), p. 27.

states that, in Frate Guittone's new doctrine, 'chi cantare vole e valer bene' (xxv — 'Ora parrà', 16) must necessarily adopt an explicitly moralising poetics. The question of explicit moralising and of the straightforwardness or otherwise of Guittone's 'love' poetry and Frate Guittone's disavowal of it will be a significant one in this discussion, but nevertheless the shift in production marked in poems like 'Ora parrà', coinciding as it does with the biographical conversion of Guittone's entry into the *Ordo Militiæ Mariæ Gloriosæ*, is commonly referred to as a corresponding poetic conversion, and it is this aspect of conversion that I wish to explore further here. I will examine the concept of conversion as it applies to a developing poetics and, more importantly for this thesis, to a developing poetic subjectivity. The conversion expressed by Frate Guittone is not simply a movement from the writing of secular, amorous poetry to the writing of religious poetry, but is an attempted rewriting of his own poetic past and an expression of poetic subjectivity in relation to and in dialogue with the past manifestations of the subject as it appears in the Aretime poet's pre-existent output. I say 'in dialogue with' because the relationship between the pre- and post-conversion poetry is not one of simple coexistence, but rather of inter-referentiality and, in fact, interdependence. The poetic subject expressing itself in Frate Guittone's later poetry is constituted through the dialogue between past and present expression, through the contrasts articulated and resolutions sought within that dialogue. This dialogue also leads to complications, as the two manifestations of (Frate) Guittone's subjectivity co-exist in tension with one another and the earlier voice continues to 'sound, as it were, alongside the author's word and in a special way

combines with it'.<sup>20</sup> I quote Mikhail Bakhtin, who is here referring to the relationship of Dostoevsky's authorial voice and its relationship with other characters within his novels, because the essence of the observation — that an apparently authorial speaker may co-exist in interdependence and tension with other speakers within a text (or in this instance macrotext) — strikes me as pertinent. As I will show, the different voices of the two periods of Guittone's production, while certainly interconnected in an idealised biographical narrative, continue to sound alongside one another as distinct voices, problematising any straightforward reading of an authoritative conversion narrative in which Guittone becomes Frate Guittone and the 'follore' of youthful erotic verse is set aside for the 'saverè' of religious didactic poetry (xxv — 'Ora parrà', 11).

What I will demonstrate, then, is threefold: that the process of conversion is vital to a proper understanding of the development of Guittone's poetic subjectivity; that this conversion takes place through (and, in fact, necessitates) dialogic processes which continually reconstitute the subject in relation to its previous forms; and finally, that the continued textual and dialogic existence of the 'Guittone' voice allows us to re-open the case of Frate Guittone's conversion and resist the attempt to overlay a teleology on his corpus, the so-called 'canzoniere guittoniano'. Significant to this discussion is the concept that the so-called 'canzoniere guittoniano' (as represented in Laurenziano-Rediano 9, the principle manuscript witness to Guittone's writing) 'constructs' Guittone as an authorial figure.<sup>21</sup> In exploring the construction of subjectivity in Guittone's texts (and the

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<sup>20</sup> Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Caryl Emerson ed. and trans (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 7; the role of the author here is analogous to the role of the Frate Guittone voice in its attempt to authoritatively create a teleological narrative of conversion out of a pre-existent poetic corpus.

<sup>21</sup> See Olivia Holmes, *Assembling the lyric self: authorship from Troubadour song to Italian poetry book* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press 2000), p. 49.

texts of other poets whom I will subsequently discuss), it is also necessary to explore that which Holmes describes as the ‘historical author’, i.e., an author figure rooted in an individualised and ostensibly biographical narrative.<sup>22</sup> It is perhaps more useful to label this author figure as ‘historicised’ rather than ‘historical’: ‘historicised’ indicates a figure expressed within a narrative of development imbued with temporality and avoids the potential implications of biographical criticism inherent in ‘historical’. I will examine the means by which such an authorial subjectivity is constructed, extending the scope of previous studies, through an analysis of the process of self-formation. This analysis will be informed by the concept of performativity and will seek to complicate any straightforwardly teleological reading of Guittone’s *corpus* through an understudying of the dialogic tensions inherent in his project of conversion. I will undertake this task with an eye to the lyric context in which it is a significant presence and within which I aim to situate the operation of Guittone’s (and ultimately Guinizzelli’s, Cavalcanti’s and Dante’s) texts. It is in this endeavour that the concept of dialogic processes set out in the introduction comes into play. The four categories of dialogic process which contribute to the performance of subjectivity (direct dialogue between texts and addressees, staged dialogue, intertextual dialogue and the dialogic co-existence of multiple renditions of subjectivity) will be brought into focus over the course of this analysis of Frate Guittone’s conversion poetics. The importance of *tenzoni* in the development of the poetic *io* will be established, as will the significance of dialogues with fictitious voices. I will also highlight the centrality of corrective intertextual engagement (through palinodic reminiscence) to Frate Guittone’s performance of converted subjectivity. This palinodic interdependence between

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47-69.

‘pre-’ and ‘post-conversion’ texts will in turn point the way to a discussion of the complications caused by the continued availability of Guittone’s ‘pre-conversion’ voice and texts. The continued sounding (along Bakhtinian lines) of that particular voice will be identified as a disruptive factor in Frate Guittone’s endeavours to unify his *corpus* into a teleological conversion narrative.

In discussing the manner in which subjectivity is constructed in Guittone’s poetry, I will make reference to the aforementioned ‘canzoniere guittoniano’, by which I mean specifically the formatted representation of the poetry ascribed to ‘Guittone d’Arezzo’ and ‘Frate Guittone d’Arezzo’ in Laur.-Red. 9. Holmes argues for this ordered sequence’s status as a *canzoniere*, interpreting the staged autobiographism of Guittone d’Arezzo’s collected poetry as a manifestation of a narrative strand that bears the hallmarks of a *canzoniere*, regardless of whether or not the collection was author-ordered. In Holmes’s analysis the development of ‘an all-encompassing macrotext with one narrative line’ through repeated manifestations of a lyric voice, existing in a chronological relationship with one another, supports the tendency to brand Guittone’s *corpus* as a *canzoniere*.<sup>23</sup> Other critics have also found manifestations of *canzoniere*-making tendencies in the Aretine’s poetry. Guittone’s *ars amandi* sonnets (87-110) and the ‘cosidetto *Trattato d’amore*’ (240-251), for example, have been characterised as the first appearance ‘all’interno della tradizione lirica [dell’]idea d’un testo composto di altri testi’.<sup>24</sup> The scholar behind these assertions, Marco Santagata (in arguing for a Guittonian influence on the *Vita Nuova*, no less), refers ‘ad un fenomeno strutturale, all’uso massiccio di quelle connessioni tra i testi poetici che nella

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<sup>23</sup> Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self*, p. 48.

<sup>24</sup> Marco Santagata, *Dal sonetto al canzoniere: ricerche sulla preistoria e la costituzione di un genere* (Padova: Liviana, 1989), pp. 144-145.

nostra ricostruzione appare inaugurato proprio da Guittone'.<sup>25</sup> Leonardi adds his voice to those arguing for a narrative unit, suggesting a limited *canzoniere* comprising sonnets 1 to 86<sup>26</sup> and a number of other critics, before and since, have posited or accepted the concept of a Guittonian macrotext in their discussions of his poetry.<sup>27</sup> Throughout this discussion I side with Holmes in my insistence on reading Guittone's entire corpus as a unified output, regardless of who ordered the poems as they appear in Laur.-Red. 9, due to its autobiographism (its attempt to represent a unified biographical narrative) and more importantly, I would argue, because of the dialogic performance undertaken by the post-conversion poems in respect of the amorous poetry. That performance enacts a unity of lyrics within a teleological macrotext (in such a way as to generate authorial subjectivity) even if there had previously been none, much as Dante's would later do through his compilation of the *Vita Nuova*.<sup>28</sup> Key to this operation is an attempt to rewrite

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.

<sup>26</sup> Leonardi, *Canzoniere*; Leonardi's book was published before the initial article — "'S' eo varrò quanto valer già soglio": The Construction of Authenticity in the "Canzoniere" of Frate Guittone and Guittone d'Arezzo (MS Laurenziano-Rediano 9)', *Modern Philology*, 95.2 (1997), pp. 170-199 — on which Holmes would base the relevant chapter in her book — *Assembling the Lyric Self* — but she emphasises that her article was drafted beforehand and that her conclusions had been reached independently of his research ("'S' eo varrò quanto valer già soglio", p. 170). As such I refer to their findings as independent, simultaneous hypotheses.

<sup>27</sup> See: Claude Margueron, *Recherches sur Guittone d'Arezzo* (Paris; Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), pp. 403-4 for an initial identification of narrative sequences comprising sonnets 1-18, 19-30, 31-80 and 81-86; see Michelangelo Picone, 'Guittone e i due tempi del "canzoniere"', *Guittone d'Arezzo: nel settimo centenario della morte: atti del Convegno internazionale di Arezzo (22-24 aprile 1994)*, Michelangelo Picone ed. (Florence: F. Cesati, 1995), pp. 73-88, reprinted in Picone, *Percorsi della lirica duecentesca* (Florence: Cadmo, 2003), pp. 105-122, for a broader sense of a coherent proto-canzoniere comprising the 'libro di poesie di Guittone nella sua integrità documentaria' (p. 106), i.e. the poetry of Laur.-Red. 9 (which places him largely in accordance with Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self*); see also Francesco Bruni, 'Agonismo guittoniano. Risemantizzazione, polisemia e colori dell'ambiguità in una sequenza di sonetti', in *Guittone d'Arezzo*, Picone ed., pp. 89-123 for the suggestion of a 'narrazione amorosa' made up of sonnets 31-80 (p. 103).

<sup>28</sup> See Gragnolati's discussion in 'Trasformazioni e assenze', which explores the reading of Dante's *libello* in light of a concept of the performative to illuminate the process by which Dante seeks to establish his authority and a teleological biographical development narrative through the lyrics as presented in the prose framework; see also Gragnolati, 'Authorship and Performance in the *Vita Nuova*', in *Aspects of the Performative*, pp. 125-141.

textual memory in order to generate a sense that the *io* of the moral-didactic poems is the same as that expressed in the amorous ones and that it therefore gains an authenticity beyond that enjoyed by previous generic manifestations of the lyric self. It is precisely this sense which the ‘canzoniere guittoniano’ seeks to inculcate, an effort not without its complications — many of which are generated by the very same textual memory that the macrotext tries to reformulate. While it may at first glance seem simpler for Frate Guittone to straightforwardly reject the poetry of his youthful voice, I will demonstrate how this would have been far more problematic for the expression of a religiously enlightened and authoritative lyric subjectivity. Frate Guittone finds it necessary to undertake a slightly tortuous process of re-characterisation of the ‘Guittone’ poetry in order to bring the ‘amorous’ voice into line with an idealised narrative of religious and poetic conversion.

### **I. Now and then: performing a conversion**

My opening contention, then, is that Guittone’s conversion represents a performance, and is, in turn, part of the performance of an author, in the sense that the force of the Frate’s palinodic statements is performative: in other words, these texts do not merely describe a state, but make it so by uttering it. The statement of ‘Ora parrà s’eo saverò cantare’ (*canzone* xxv in Egidi, but the first in MS Laur.-Red. 9) lays the groundwork for a poetic expression of a new singing subjectivity, a subjectivity whose identity is performed by that same singing. The importance of the performative in a religious context has been gaining recognition since the 1970s<sup>29</sup> and more recently in Susanne Rupp and Tobias Döring’s work on

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<sup>29</sup> Jean Ladrière, ‘The Performativity of Liturgical Language’, *Concilium* 9.2 (February 1973), pp. 50-62.

the ‘performance of the sacred’ and ‘the crucial point for which it is employed [...] [which] lies in shifting our critical attention from texts to acts, from products to processes from codes and structures to modes and dynamic strategies’.<sup>30</sup> While these studies have been focussed on collective liturgical practices, some of their conclusions may be usefully brought to bear in reading Frate Guittone’s religiously charged, theologically inspired performative poetics. More recently, the significance of performance in a broader medieval cultural context — encompassing ritual, philosophical, literary and musical texts — has been explored in a volume on ‘aspects of the performative in medieval culture’.<sup>31</sup> From the religious perspective, the conversion manifested in the poetry of Frate Guittone, then, already carries a performative charge, because conversion is just the sort of sacred performance with which Rupp and Döring are concerned, not to mention that entering a religious order is a process which includes the taking of vows (one of Austin’s principal examples in his establishment of the concept of a performative speech act).<sup>32</sup> So, Frate Guittone’s songs of conversion echo this performative utterance and they also enact the reconstitution of a converted subjectivity in poetry which renders these poems performative *per se*. The focus provided by the concept of performativity on the processes of expression, rather than its products allows us to effectively analyse the generation of Frate Guittone’s *io* through the development of his poetic output. I am not merely seeking to discern what the nature of the self or subjectivity is, but how it comes about (and in

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<sup>30</sup> Susanne Rupp and Tobias Döring, *Performances of the sacred in late medieval and early modern England* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> See Suerbaum and Gagnolati’s ‘Introduction’ for a survey of the ‘performative turn’ in literary criticism, *Aspects of the Performative in Medieval Culture*, Gagnolati and Suerbaum ed., pp. 2-6, and the volume as a whole for examples of how the performative can be usefully employed in discussions of psalms, prayers, parliament rolls, poetry, and rhetorics.

<sup>32</sup> Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, p. 5.

fact the blurring of boundaries between those two concerns). The crux of this process of coming about is the interplay of texts within the larger body of text that is Guittone's corpus.

The first instance of this kind of process encountered in collections of Guittone's poetry is the so-called 'manifesto' *canzone*, 'Ora parrà s'eo saverò cantare'.<sup>33</sup> This *canzone* is found at the beginning of the 'Frate Guittone' section of MS Laur.-Red. 9 and is the first of the 'canzoni ascetiche e morali' in Egidi's collection.<sup>34</sup> The *canzone*'s opening exclamation — 'Ora parrà s'eo saverò cantare' — situates the text and its readers in an immediate temporality, a textual present. This relative temporal positioning (a 'now' is always opposed to a 'then'), together with Fra Guittone's proclamation of a new poetics based on moral value typifies an approach to past forms of subjectivity and the manner in which they are rewritten through intertextual dialogic processes. The poem begins with the friar-poet stating that it will become apparent whether (and implicitly that) he still knows how to write under the new sign of a moral poetics, before roundly dismissing erotic lyric and the false wisdom of those who privilege the follies of 'Amor' as the only source of valid poetry:

*Ora parrà s'eo saverò cantare*  
 e s'eo varrà quanto valer già soglio,  
 poiché del tutto Amor fuggo e disvoglio,  
 e più che cosa mai forte mi spare!  
*Ch'ad om tenuto saggio odo contare*  
*che trovare — non sa, né valer punto,*

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<sup>33</sup> Achille Tartaro, *Il manifesto di Guittone e altri studi fra Due e Quattrocento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1974), p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> Egidi establishes a different sequence to that of MS Laur.-Red. 9. While he maintains the integrity of the four sections (moral *canzoni*, amorous *canzoni*, amorous sonnets, moral sonnets) he begins with the amorous *canzoni*. Thus Egidi's edition follows the pattern: amorous *canzoni*, moral *canzoni*, amorous sonnets, moral sonnets. This is in contrast to the chiasmic structure of the manuscript which runs: moral *canzoni*, amorous *canzoni*, amorous sonnets, moral sonnet. The question of editorial practices in Guittone's work is, as you can see, a somewhat tangled one.

*omo d'Amor non punto;*  
 ma ch'è digiunto — da verità mi pare,  
 se lo pensare — a lo parlare — assembrà;  
 ché 'n tutte parte, ove dstringe Amore,  
*regge follore — in loco di sapere.*  
 Donqua como valere  
 po, né piacere — di guisa alcuna fiore,  
 poi dal fattore — d'ogne valore — dissembra,  
 ed al contrario d'ogne maniera sembra.  
 (xxv — 'Ora parrà', 1-15 [italics mine])

In this frequently quoted opening we witness the vigorous eschewing of any poetics grounded in earthly love, which is tied to folly and worthless poetic production. This first person declaration is followed by Frate Guittone's new recipe for moral and poetic success. Further distancing himself from the poetry of earthly love, he counsels new markers of poetic value: righteousness, wisdom and God. These qualities should provide the guidance for worthy poetry, the writing of which is cast as a sea voyage (an image of poesis with a long classical tradition and which will become the governing image of poetic creation in Dante's *Commedia*).<sup>35</sup> This new poetics is then closely related to abstinence and honest labour, an antidote to the 'follore' of erotic love:

*Ma chi cantare vole e valer bene,*  
*in suo legno nochier diritto pone,*  
*ed orrato saver mette al timone,*  
*Dio fa sua stella e ver lausor sua spene;*  
 ché grande onor né gran ben non è stato  
 conquistato, — carnal voglia seguendo,  
 ma promente valendo,  
 ed *astenendo — a vizi ed a peccato;*  
 unde 'l sennato — apparecchiato — ognora  
 de core tutto e di poder dea stare  
 ad avanzare — lo suo stato ad onore,  
*no schifando labore;*  
 ché già riccore — non dona altrui posare,  
 ma 'l fa alungiare; — e ben pugnare — onora:

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<sup>35</sup> See Ernst R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Medieval*, William R. Trask trans. (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1953), pp. 128-130 for a summary of deployment of the boat as metaphor for poetic creation throughout the classical tradition. For the image in Dante, see discussion and notes in chapters 3 and 4 of the present thesis.

ma tuttavia lo 'ntenda altri a misura.  
 (xxv — 'Ora parrà', 16-30 [italics mine])

The seesawing between individualised expression and extrapolated instructions to a generalised 'omo' evident in the transition between these lines and the opening reproduced above is a fairly common feature of Frate Guittone's verse, other examples of which will emerge over the course of this discussion. I won't reproduce the remainder of the moral advice contained in 'Ora parrà' here, but suffice to say it takes on several of the themes which we will come to recognise as typically Guittonian, such as 'falsia' (38) and the dangers of greed:

Non manti acquistan l'oro,  
 ma l'oro loro; — e i plusor di ricchezza,  
 di gentilezza — e di bellezza — han danno [...]  
 (xxv — 'Ora parrà', 52-54)

This warning on the adverse and overpowering effects of excess on the excessive individual reflects the proverbial style of Frate Guittone's advice throughout the *canzone*,<sup>36</sup> with its impersonal structures ('Ch'ad om tenuto saggio [...]', 5; 'Ma chi cantare vole [...]', 16; 'omo fellon', 47; 'Ma chi ricchezza dispregia [...]', 55) and moral-religious commonplaces. These moral maxims give way to a stanza concerned with God's creation of the world for man (beginning 'Onne cosa fue all'om creata', 61) and the human duty to endeavour to be guided by reason in all their activities ('quanto potesse, — far che stesse — in possa / onne cosa, che per ragione è mossa', 74-5) until arriving at its envoi:

Ahi, come valem poco mostranza!  
 Ch'ignoranza — non da ben far ne tolle,  
 quanto talento folle,  
 e ma' ne 'nvolle — a ciò malvagia usanza;

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<sup>36</sup> Barolini has also provided an insightful reading of the themes of this *canzone* as demonstrating 'a *contaminatio* between different kinds of desire' going on to say, 'having first demystified courtly love, calling lust, carnal desire, Guittone then links love to other forms of immoderate and excessive desire, all rooted in cupidity', Barolini, *Dante and the Origins*, pp. 50-51. This merging of cupidinous sins (and Barolini's discussion of it) will prove significant for the analysis of Dante's *Purgatorio* in chapter 4 of this thesis.

ché più fallanza — è che leanza — astata.  
 No è 'l mal più che 'l ben a far leggero.  
 Ma che? fero — lo ben tanto ne pare,  
 solo per disusare,  
 e per portare — lo contrar disidero;  
 ove mainero — e volontero — agrata,  
 usar l'aduce in allegrezza orrata.

(xxv — 'Ora parrà, 76-86)

This conclusion, that good should be easier than evil but people are out of the habit of acting morally, provides a fitting culmination to the litany of moral diktats in this poem. The speaker in this text is not only preaching to others, but also implying his own new habit of acting morally, thanks to his entry into a lay order of 'cari frati' (xxxii — 'O cari frati miei', 1) and his disavowal of erotic verse.

In this palinodic *canzone*, then, beyond the manifesto of a new post-conversion poetics we see the manifestation of a subjectivity which makes claims not just for its present state (in the 'ora' of this microtext), but also for the state of the self throughout the implied 'then' of the macrotext. The 'ora' also makes a claim on the reader of Frate Guittone's text, and indeed texts, as the success or failure of the new poetics will now become apparent ('ora parrà') to the reader. In raising the question of whether he still seems to know how to sing, Frate Guittone exhorts his audience<sup>37</sup> to analyse the Guittonian corpus in its entirety, in order to establish whether the claims made in this *canzone* are in fact validated. Any such validation depends not only on the quality of this new moral poetry, but also on a comparison with Guittone's pre-conversion output, the poetry of 'disamor ch'amai' (as he will describe it in *canzone* xxvii, 'Ahi quant' ho che vergogni', 27). 'Ora parrà' enlists an element of reader collaboration both in accepting Frate Guittone's new

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<sup>37</sup> 'Audience' here is of course as figurative as the sonic verb 'cantare', but the imagery of sound and hearing persists from troubadour conventions in this lyric 'born [...] under the signs of Latinity and of writing' (Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self*, p. 47). This semantic field of sound, however, heightens the sense of intertext as dialogue and speech act.

verse and in redefining Guittone's amorous writing as representative of a flawed poetic production:

un microtesto [...] della seconda parte si costruisce a partire dalle relazioni di tipo oppositivo o completivo che esso stabilisce col microtesto parallelo contenuto nella prima parte. E, viceversa, un microtesto amoroso dipende, per la piena determinazione del proprio significato, dalla correzione offerta dal parallelo microtesto morale.<sup>38</sup>

In this passage Picone identifies something essential about the connection between the texts of Guittone and those of Frate Guittone, but we should query and qualify elements of his interpretation. The idea that the erotic texts take on some sort of full, definitive meaning once contextualised by the religious verse vastly understates the independent textual existence of the pre-conversion poems and the 'Guittone' voice which still haunts and resists Frate Guittone's teleological project. In Austinian terms, such a reading too readily provides uptake for the performance of a new, converted subjectivity; a performance which is not nearly as 'felicitous', not as seamlessly successful as Picone implies. This determination of meaning through post-conversion intertextuality, then, is an effective description of Frate Guittone's attempts to construct a linear conversion narrative, but cannot stand as an uncomplicated analysis of the status of those interrelated texts. We can accept Picone's assertion, which finds support in the acute awareness of the pre-conversion poems expressed in the Frate's post-conversion writing,<sup>39</sup> as far as it represents the *project* of the post-conversion poetry. We can also accept the

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<sup>38</sup> Picone, *Percorsi*, p. 109; Holmes also follows a not dissimilar hermeneutic path, albeit one which is consciously predicated on the construction of MS Laur.-Red. 9, when she argues that she '[does] not believe that we, as readers are supposed to receive Guittone's constant thematic and technical experiments — or erotic allusions — with moral neutrality. Our familiarity with Frate Guittone's letters and conversion *canzoni* at the beginning of the manuscript, in which love of women is defined as a form of madness, ought to condition our reception', Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self*, p. 66.

<sup>39</sup> Moleta notes that 'Guittone refers to that body of work [his *fin' amors* poetry] several times in cc. xxv, xxvii, xxviii, xxxii, and in ss. 164, 210, 211 and 237', i.e., in a range of his post-conversion texts (*The Early Poetry*, p. 17).

reader's role in the prospective completion of this project:<sup>40</sup> any understanding of an intertextual revision of 'pre-conversion' poetry by 'post-conversion' texts depends on the acknowledgement that such a bipartition is, in fact, expressed in Guittone's poetry.<sup>41</sup> This reader complicity is a necessary condition of the performance of an authorial subjectivity which Guittone is undertaking in his corpus considered as a whole. In fact it is also key in justifying a stubborn consideration of that corpus as a whole, as a macrotextual phenomenon, precisely because it presupposes an awareness of the 'cantare' which took place 'then', during the pre-conversion period of Guittone's poetic production. This is a sense which is reinforced when we encounter texts such as sonnet 237, 'A te, Montuccio, ed agli altri, il cui nomo', in which the addressees are instructed to avoid the 'pomi [...] venenosi' of Guittone's love poems (9-10) and instead pick 'quelli, che triaca io so verace, / contra essi e contr'ogne veleno usate, / a ciò che 'n vita siate eternali' (12-14). This poem is addressed specifically to 'Montuccio', but also 'agli altri', opening the sonnet up to a wider audience and implying a readership not dissimilar to Dante's 'fedeli d'amore',<sup>42</sup> in this case those habitual and sympathetic readers of Guittone's pre-conversion verse.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> This role is connected to the concept of 'uptake' described above, in other words, the reader must accept the assertions of the poetic subject in order for them to successfully constitute the new form of that subject. The anxiety of uptake represents a fascinating strand in the manifestations of poetic self and authority in the poets under consideration in this study and we will witness increasingly elaborate stagings of uptake within the texts of Guinizzelli and Dante to be considered in later chapters.

<sup>41</sup> A recognition apparent in the classifications of poems as 'ascetiche e morali' or 'd'amore' in Laur.-Red. 9, and under the distinct banners of 'guittone d'arezo' and 'ffrate guitone [sic] deluiuarezo' in Vat. Lat. 3793.

<sup>42</sup> VN, III, 9. The text of the *Vita Nuova* is taken from Dante Alighieri, *Opere Minori*, I, pt. 1, Domenico de Robertis e Gianfranco Contini ed. (Milan; Naples: Ricciardi, 1973) (hereafter VN).

<sup>43</sup> This is, of course, a group that can be extended to anyone who becomes a reader of Guittone; the openness of an address to 'gli altri' allowing space for a broad circulation of both Guittone's erotic verse and the Frate's subsequent rebuttal of it.

Familiarity with poetry across the range of Guittone's output is, then, not a luxury afforded merely to a few scholars armed with critical hindsight, but is also expected of a contemporary 13<sup>th</sup> century readership to which Frate Guittone is now affirming two things: the sincerity of his past poetic output and his conviction that his new found moral and religious fervour takes precedence over and corrects that literary (and constructed biographical) past. I keep raising the issue of sincerity, because, since Vincent Moleta's work on 'Guittone cortese',<sup>44</sup> the sincerity or otherwise of the amorous poetry has been firmly on the table as a point of consideration in the discussion of the 'conversion' staged in 'Ora parrà' and the other palinodic poems.<sup>45</sup> Moleta contends that Guittone rewrites his literary past to claim sincerity for certain manifestations of his past lyric *io* which were in fact ironic, or at best generic.<sup>46</sup> In poems such as 'Ahi quant' ho che vergogni e che doglia agia' (*canzone* xxvii) Guittone takes 'as substantial poetic statement precisely those elements in his "poesia d'amore" which apparently did *not* anticipate the conversion and his later poetic manner'.<sup>47</sup> To elaborate, in that poem, as in 'Ora parrà', 'A te, Montuccio, ed agli altri, il cui nomo', and numerous others,<sup>48</sup> Guittone expresses shame and regret at his sins, for example:

Fra gli altri miei follor fo, ch'eo trovai  
De disamor, ch'amai:  
pregiai onta, e cantai dolze di pianto;  
ed ingegnaime manto  
in fare me ed altrui saccente e forte

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<sup>44</sup> This formulation comes from the title of the Italian translation of his book, *The Early Poetry*: Vincent Moleta, *Guittone cortese*, Caterina di Bella trans. (Naples: Liguori Editore, 1987).

<sup>45</sup> Moleta, *The Early Poetry*, pp. 14-33 (see especially pp. 16-7 & 62-3).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-21.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>48</sup> See *canzoni* xxv, xxvii, xxviii and xxxii, and sonnets 164, 210, 211 and 237, as highlighted by Moleta (*The Early Poetry*, pp. 4-5).

'n perder perdendo nostro Dio e amico.  
(xxvii — 'Ahi quant' ho che vergogni', 26-31)

He also describes God's 'merzé' (20) — which he has abused, needed, and of which he has been unworthy ('ma come bisognoso e non già degno', 110). This text explicitly recalls the amorous poetic practices of the young Guittone ('ché tutto el ditto mal m'avea sapore', 12), but more importantly claims for them a genuine and soul-imperilling subjective intent, not merely an ironic deployment of conventional tropes. Frate Guittone accuses his younger self of having used God's gifts, not 'sola a lauda ed a salute mea / ed al prossimo meo prode tenere,' (22-3), but instead 'ad oltraggio di Lui ed a mia morte / ed a periglio altrui l'operai' (24-25). This expression of personal failure, which endangered not only himself but others thanks to the circulation of his poetry, individualises the generalising statement which immediately precedes it:

Ché pur nel mal, lo qual for grato offende,  
alcun remedio om prende,  
ma mal gradivo ben tutto roina,  
e non ha medicina,  
che solo la divina pietate.  
(xxvii — 'Ahi quant' ho che vergogni', 15-9)

In light of the concern expressed for 'altrui' and the imagery of 'veleno' and its antidote (Guittone's erotic verse and Frate Guittone's moral poetry respectively) in 'A te, Montuccio', discussed above, we should be prompted to read this as a similar warning to readers of the whole Guittonian corpus. The false remedies of erotic lyric must be corrected by the only true medicine — religious observance and religious writing. Furthermore, the conjunction of this general moral lesson with the personal confession quoted above establishes a serious claim for the authenticity of the damaged moral state of the past self, going beyond a generic eschewing of the follies of youth and stating the specific 'follor' of this individual

subjectivity. It is Moleta's contention, which he supports with a range of textual evidence, that this claim is at odds with the actual expression of the pre-conversion Guittonian subjectivity;<sup>49</sup> in other words, the pre-conversion poetry does not express the sincere, personal faults which are subsequently attributed to it in the post-conversion palinodes. Thus, the speaker known as 'Frate Guittone' articulates an attempt to construct an idealised biographical narrative, which departs from the depths of youthful error to follow the Augustinian model of a return to God and an acknowledgement of the, now allegedly genuine, faults of the young 'Guittone'.<sup>50</sup>

A brief discussion of the 'Augustinian model' would be worthwhile at this juncture, as we have seen the significance of the model of the *Confessions* as exemplar for Guittone. The correlations with Augustine's text can be pushed further in light of James J. O'Donnell's work on the *Confessions* and Chloë Talyor's elaborations (and caveats) on his reading.<sup>51</sup> O'Donnell's proposal is this:

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<sup>49</sup> Moleta, 'Fra Guittone reviews his love poetry', *The Early Poetry*, pp. 14-33; specifically: 'The love poems offer not only a range of thematic content and courtly idealism. They also reveal differing degrees of identity between the voice of the protagonist and that of the poet, various levels of enthusiasm for his 'materia', and degrees of seriousness in his presentation of *fin' amors* ideals' (*The Early Poetry*, p 17).

<sup>50</sup> Frate Guittone's letters (as attested in Laur.-Red. 9) make frequent reference to Augustine as an authoritative source of moral teaching. For example, Letter III addressed to Monte Andrea, in which Guittone quotes the saint multiple times in an argument against worldly pleasure, e.g.: 'E Agustino: "Pregio de le virtù è Esso che virtù diede, siccome Dio"' (III.3, with reference to *De civitate Dei*). Text quoted from Guittone d'Arezzo, *Lettere*, Claude Margueron ed. (Bologna: Commissione per i Testi di Lingua, 1990). Other examples of multiple Augustinian citations can be found in Letters XXI, XXXIII and XXXVI (for a full list of occurrences and source texts, see Margueron ed., *Lettere*, p. 359. See Holmes on how Frate Guittone's 'staging of a conversion, a turn toward divine — and away from carnal — love (and from secular literature) cannot but remind us of one of the few models of autobiographical narrative available in Guittone's time: Saint Augustine's *Confessions*' (Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self*, p. 49); see also Tristan Kay, who argues that 'the bipartition of Guittone's corpus aims to lend it an Augustinian gravitas'; Kay, 'Redefining the "matera amorosa"', p. 370.

<sup>51</sup> James Joseph O'Donnell, 'Augustine's Unconfessions', in *Augustine and Post-modernism: Confessions and Circumfession*, John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), and Chloe Taylor, *The Culture of Confession from Augustine to Foucault: A Genealogy of the 'Confessing Animal'* (Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2009).

It is the achievement and the canniness of Augustine to see that confession can be self-constructive [...] that unity of narrative is a pearl of great price and that it can be acquired [...] by a rhetorical self-effacement that becomes self-assertion.<sup>52</sup>

This idea of ‘rhetorical self-effacement’ through confession as the starting point for the construction of a unitary narrative has obvious implications for a reading of Guittone’s performance of conversion. Such a ‘self-effacement’ encompasses a disavowal of the sinful self, a cleaving to the will of God, and, in the process, an erasure any part of the narrative of self that doesn’t fit into a teleological unity.<sup>53</sup> It is only by subtracting something, the self-conscious complications and ironies of the ‘Guittone’ poems, that Frate Guittone is able to construct his unitary teleology of conversion. With regard to Augustine, Taylor takes us further down this fruitful path. Seeking to problematise O’Donnell’s argument for self-conscious, disingenuous self-creation as a totalised reading of the *Confessions*, she insists on the sincerity of the theological confusion and the uncertainty regarding audience, concluding:

Augustine’s project of self-constitution, or of fashioning a new bishop through his text, and thus the resonance of the *Confessions* with ancient practices of the self, is important to note, but it is, on my reading, but one of the many contradictory threads with which the *Confessions* are woven.<sup>54</sup>

For Taylor, these contradictory threads comprise genuine religious conviction and an honest desire to create a work which is instructive to a religious audience, rather than merely an autobiography projected and constructed for the eyes of worldly readers. In other words, there is an anxiety and desire that Augustine’s text be ‘overheard’, but there is also more at stake than just the defensive self-

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<sup>52</sup> O’Donnell, ‘Augustine’s Unconfessions’, p. 218.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 218-9.

<sup>54</sup> Taylor, *The Culture of Confession*, pp. 38-9.

performance which forms the backbone of O'Donnell's reading.<sup>55</sup> Frate Guittone's praxis can be read in a similar light; the Friar-poet's self-designation as a moral authority requires the confrontation of any material which could be construed as undermining the voice of a *cantor rectitudinis*. Any such material must be enfolded within an idealised biographical narrative which both accounts and repents for that material. The performance of this converted self and associated teleology is not, however, all that is going on in Frate Guittone's texts. Such a performance is in service to a didactic, religious and moral programme which is played out through the post-conversion poems. The knowledge that Frate Guittone adopts the Augustinian model of reflexive self-representation to lend weight to his own staged conversion should direct us towards a fruitful reading of his corpus in the light of the *Confessions*. Such a reading would need to go beyond a reception study and into the realm of the comparative, as I'm not suggesting that Guittone was interpreting Augustine in this way. Rather, in adopting the Augustinian model of a conversional, confessional narrative, Frate Guittone also pursues a comparable process of confession as self-construction. Unfortunately there will not be space in this thesis to undertake a full comparative or receptive reading of Guittone with Augustine, but I hope that this brief treatment of some of the common issues will help to shed light on the processes of Frate Guittone's conversion poetics.

The significance of the *Confessions* as a model for lyric conversion stories and the impact of this model on the development of representations of the lyric self is not to be underestimated. The absorption of the late-antique, Latin framework of conversion into Guittone's medieval, vernacular lyric context appears to catalyse

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-45.

the development of a reflexive form of self-representation. Guittone's *io* is no longer simply generic and choral, but specified and situated in time (the converted 'now', in relation to the pre-converted 'then' and, of course, to an eschatological future). This construction of an Augustinian narrative is a means to confront the sinful past, in Guittone's case through the dense intertextuality of his post- and pre-conversion texts and the repeated temporal signifiers. This construction is undertaken in order to establish a morally and religiously justified present, and fuels the attempt to render each poem as part of a continual time line, a moment in the developing, temporal existence of the self.

The Augustinian shape being thrust upon the Guittonian corpus by the post-conversion texts marks a part of the performance of sincerity in those texts also, as Augustine's model is one of apparently genuine sins recounted and repented in the act of dedicating the self to God. The biographical<sup>56</sup> rendering of a reflexive self in this authoritative example would be at odds with the unreconstructed, ironic Guittonian lyric past, a past riddled with moments which Moleta highlights as 'insincere': namely those poems in which the poet 're-creates the charmed circle of *fin' amors*' and in which 'his "I" is a standard lover cast in the courtly mould; an anonymous subject of commonplace emotions'.<sup>57</sup> Moleta cites sonnet 3 ('Spietata donna e fera') and *canzone* v ('Gioia ed allegrezza') as immediate examples of the standardised experience of a 'Spietata donna e fera' (3 — 'Spietata donna', 1) and the 'gioia ed allegrezza' of 'fino amore' (v — 'Gioia ed allegrezza', 1-2), respectively.<sup>58</sup> This sense is only reinforced if we spread our gaze further afield, as

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<sup>56</sup> I reiterate for the record at this point that by biographical I am referring merely to the form and trappings of biography, and not trying to reconstruct a 'true' history of Guittone the man.

<sup>57</sup> Moleta, *The Early Poetry*, p. 11.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

in *canzone* iv — ‘Ahi, bona donna, che è devento’ — in which the speaker describes his desire in terms of the ‘vaguezza / de fino amore’ (33) prompted by (and rhymed with) the lady’s ‘bellezza’ (28). He concludes the same poem lamenting the pains of service and *fin’amors* secrecy: ‘or agio eo ben provato / ch’amar troppo celato / ten l’om de gioi d’amor sempre mendico’ (iv — ‘Ahi bona donna’, 62-4). We could also just as easily turn to sonnet 55 — ‘Certo noia’ —, which expresses the fickleness of the beloved (‘sì trovo en voi diversa openione’, 2) and its effect on the dismayed lover (‘sì son smarrito, ch’eo non veggio quello / che fare deggia enver ragion sì strana’, 13-14).

## II. Why so serious? (Frate) Guittone’s (in)sincerity

The understanding of the courtly production of Guittone as ironic has developed since Moleta’s initial study of it, beginning with d’Arco Silvio Avalle’s reading of an ‘anti-courtly’ irony in certain of texts among the early poetry. The crux of this interpretation lies in the so-called *ars amandi* sonnets (87-110), which, in Avalle’s analysis offer a representation of the moral difficulties at the centre of *fin’amors* writing through parody of it.<sup>59</sup> These sonnets, drawing heavily on elements of Andreas Capellanus’s *De Amore*, instruct a lover in how to win over a lady through a show of great love, which need not be anything more than a show, a ‘bel parere’ (92 — ‘Eo non credera già’, 6). This representation reinforces the sense of insincerity elsewhere in Guittone’s amorous verse, which has been suggested more recently by the work of Leonardi, Holmes and Tristan Kay, building on Avalle’s

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<sup>59</sup> D’Arco Silvio Avalle, *Ai luoghi di delizia piena: Saggio sulla lirica italiana dell XIII secolo* (Milan; Naples: Ricciardi, 1977), pp. 56-86.

observations.<sup>60</sup> This insincerity is manifested most explicitly in a short series of sonnets beginning with number 19:

Sì como ciascun, quasi enfingitore,  
 e ora maggiormente assai c'amante,  
 so' stato ver' di lei, di beltà fiore;  
 e tanto giuto ei so' dietro e davante  
 con prego e con mercé e con clamore,  
 facendo di perfetto amor senbrante,  
 che me promise loco en su' dolzore,  
 adesso che lei fusse benestante.

(19 — 'Sì como ciascun')

These quatrains further demonstrate the early Guittone's undercutting of the courtly tradition, using the term 'enfingitore' to describe the *io*, thus emphasising the impression of a 'seeming'-lover. Such an impression is only re-enforced by the report of his behaviour, which, like a textbook lover, sees Guittone making pleas, calls for the lady's pity and other such 'clamore' in order to make a convincing show of perfect love. The status of courtly language is rather violently degraded in the use of the particular term 'clamore', implying an irksome, noisy complaining, a far cry from the beauty expected of lyric verse. This image of the pestering lover is not exactly flattering, even to those who aren't merely 'faccendo senbrante' of love. Furthermore, given that the lady, in response to this play-acting, 'promise loco en su' dolzore' to Guittone, any reader would be forced to admit that something has gone awry with the courtly system. Highlighting the falsehood of the *fin'amors* lyric process in such a way, and in an extended narrative cycle within the wider pre-conversion oeuvre, offers a sense, not of the Guittone speaker as simply a false lover, but rather of a subtext of irony and subversion in which it is the falsehood of this model of love and lyric that is being exposed. The significance of this and the

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<sup>60</sup> Lino Leonardi, "Tradizione e ironia nel primo Guittone: il confronto con i siciliani", in *Guittone d'Arezzo*, Picone ed., pp. 125-164 (128-130), and *Canzoniere*, pp. xlii-lij; Kay, 'Redefining the "matera amorosa"', pp. 377-81; Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self*, pp. 58-69.

subsequent sonnets (20-25) in their expression of the courtly ‘bad faith’ and ironic critique of *fin’amors* practice, emphasised in recent critical discussion,<sup>61</sup> has important lexical consequences and I will explore further the discourse of ‘senbranza’ which is apparent here. In these self-analytical poems the Guittone-*io* realises the problems of his *fin’amors* path and the necessity of a different basis for love and writing about love.<sup>62</sup> In sonnet 21 Guittone reports his desire to want to love and the multiple mediations of this statement already cast a question mark of the modes of courtly love. The poet explains that he has been comporting himself like a lover, despite this apparent absence of actual loving sentiment; seeming rather than truth is once again foregrounded:

En tale guisa son rimaso amante  
 e disioso di voler amare,  
 sì che lo core meo tutto e ’l semblante  
 aggio locato in ciò dir sempre e fare.  
 (21 — ‘En tale guisa’, 1-8)

Having acknowledged the faultiness of his previous model, Guittone turns to a correspondent, Mastro Bandino, for advice which ultimately puts him back on the track of traditional courtly expression (in sonnets 28-30). I will be quoting the full texts of this *tenzone* below in the course of a more detailed reading, so will not do so here, but the key elements of the exchange are as follows: Guittone asks the advice of Mastro Bandino on how to love his lady as he finds himself incapable (sonnet 28); Bandino responds to ‘Leal Guittone’ that he must contemplate nothing but his lady’s beauties when alone, and always discuss love when in company to solve his problem (sonnet 29); Guittone then enthuses about the efficacy of his friend’s advice (sonnet 30) and we immediately witness its

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<sup>61</sup> Kay, ‘Redefining the “matera amorosa”’, pp. 378-9; and Leonardi, *Canzoniere*, p. 57.

<sup>62</sup> Kay, ‘Redefining the “matera amorosa”’, pp. 379-80.

consequences in sonnet 31, ‘Tuttor ch’eo dirò gioi, gioiva cosa’. The fact that Guittone returns to a courtly mode which has already been dramatically problematised as mere ‘seeming’ inevitably leads to a sense that ‘the narrative [of Guittone’s amorous-poetic exploits] now proceeds in the shadow of the lover’s *malfede*’.<sup>63</sup> That is to say, that any appearance of *fin’amors* poetic endeavour from this point onward, carries with it the sense of insincere courtliness and ironic critique. This is not, it should be emphasised, merely an admission that the speaker is using the trappings of love to disguise lust, but is in fact an attempt to demonstrate the potential for (and possibly the inevitability of) such an abuse of the language of love. Kay develops both Moleta’s and Leonardi’s readings of this courtly *io* to arrive at the conclusion that it is the central player in ‘a project of demystification, climaxing with the terminal impasse of the concluding *tenzone* [between the lover and the “*donna villana*”, sonnets 81-86]’.<sup>64</sup> In Kay’s reading of this exchange ‘what the first 80 sonnets of Guittone’s “*canzoniere*” sought to convey implicitly — the faultiness and deceit of the courtly ethos — is conveyed explicitly’.<sup>65</sup> This is a crucial aspect of that insincerity which characterises the expression of the courtly *io*, an *io* which serves an ironic purpose throughout the amorous verse. The same, ironic *io* will subsequently be claimed as sincere by Frate Guittone so that the conversion to lay brotherhood and moral didacticism can be dramatically undergone.

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<sup>63</sup> Kay, ‘Redefining the “*matera amorosa*”’, p. 381.

<sup>64</sup> These texts represent ‘concluding’ poems according to Leonardi’s conviction, shared by Kay, that sonnets 1-86 represent a smaller *canzoniere*, with a complete and coherent narrative, within the wider Guittonian corpus; Leonardi, *Canzoniere*, pp. xxxii-xlii (discussion sonnets 81-6 specifically, pp. xxxix-xlii), Kay, ‘Redefining the “*matera amorosa*”’, pp. 370-1.

<sup>65</sup> Kay, ‘Redefining the “*matera amorosa*”’, p. 390.

The fictive *tenzone* with the ‘villana donna’ consists of two distinct voices. As regards the four dialogic processes, defined above, this *tenzone* occupies an interestingly liminal space. It is not a straightforward *tenzone*, as both voices are written by Guittone, yet neither is it simply a staged dialogue within a text, in the *contrasto* style (the classic example of which would be the *cosidetto* Cielo d’Alcamo’s famous ‘Rosa fresca aulentis[s]ima’). D’Alcamo’s dialogue was also staged between two invented characters, a lover and a lady, in which the lover aims at seducing the lady, is initially rebuffed for his ‘follia’ (‘Rosa fresca’, 6), but d’Alcamo’s eventually wins out, as the lady apologises for mistreating him and invites him to bed. In *contrasti* the male and female voices alternate within a single poem and in the case of ‘Rosa fresca’ the lover and the lady take turns strophe by strophe. The final strophe of ‘Rosa fresca’ is in the lady’s voice:

‘Meo sire, poi juràstimi, eo tut[t]a quanta incenno.  
 Sono a la tua presenz[i]a, da voi non mi difenno.  
 S’eo minespreso àjoti, merzé, a voi m’arenno.  
 A lo letto ne timo a la bon’ora,  
 ché chiesa cosa n’è data in ventura’  
 (‘Rosa fresca’, 156-60)<sup>66</sup>

The narrative of seduction in this, probably the oldest example of a more ‘popolaresca’, even ‘giullaresca’ form of poetic expression,<sup>67</sup> shares greater similarities with genres like the *pastourelle* (a poetic tradition in which the knight-speaker generally succeeds in seducing a shepherdess) than the highbrow debates

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<sup>66</sup> The text for the ‘Contrasto’ is drawn from Contini, *PD*, I, pp. 177-85. Given the perhaps excessive distance of this text even from the Italian of Guittone, Dante et al, please accept my rough prose translation: “My lord, since you have made your oath to me, I am all aflame. I am before you and I offer no defence. If I have wronged you, have mercy, I surrender to you. Let’s go to bed at last, as maybe that’s our fate”.

<sup>67</sup> Contini, *PD*, I, pp. 173-5.

and discourses associated with the *tenzone*.<sup>68</sup> That said, the *contrasto* clearly plays an important role in the history of Guittone's exchange with 'villana donna'. The interaction of a poet's voice with a fictive (and critical) lady is redolent of the history of the *contrasto* and these two exchanges may even share a problematising attitude to the courtly discourse.<sup>69</sup> There are, however, key differences which necessitate the organisation of Guittone's dialogue as a *tenzone*. By distributing the two voices across multiple microtexts, instead of a within single poem containing alternating voices, Guittone relinquishes some of the control inherent in incorporating a second voice within a text (a control which will become very important for the other poets to be discussed in this thesis). There are generic implications in this decision as, rather than representing the course of a seduction, *tenzoni* can express divergent interpretive or intellectual positions (for example in the Sicilian debate on the nature of love between Jacopo Mostacci, Pier de la Vigna and Giacomo da Lentini).<sup>70</sup> Agreement is not necessarily expected in the *tenzone* form, even if it is sought, and it is this freedom to disagree which allows Guittone's fictive *tenzone* to end without any mollification on the part of lady's voice. The significance of this generic distinction was both noted and seemingly accepted by early readers, as we find the *donna villana* collected among the *tenzoni* of the 'Vatican Canzoniere',<sup>71</sup> despite the ascription of both voices to Guittone. The acknowledgement on the part of the manuscript's compiler that the entire

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<sup>68</sup> Karl Reichl, *Medieval Oral Literature* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), p. 583; Andrea Fassò, 'I primi documenti della letteratura italiana', in Enrico Malato ed., *Storia della letteratura italiana*, I (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1995), pp. 255-7; Ugo Dotti, *Storia della letteratura italiana* (Rome; Bari: Laterza, 1991), pp. 18-9.

<sup>69</sup> On which, see Steinberg, *Accounting for Dante*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>70</sup> In Contini, *PD*, I, pp. 88-90.

<sup>71</sup> The *tenzoni* are to be found on ff. 141-160 of Vat. Lat. 3793, with Guittone's exchange with the 'villana donna' located at f. 150.

exchange pertains to 'Guittone medesimo' does not detract from the sense that we are faced with a different, specific kind of discourse, one with different generic expectations. The staging of this dialogue as a *tenzone*, then, allows the Guittone-*io* to maintain its ironic façade while exposing the insincerity of its position through the intervention of another voice. It acts, perhaps, as an antidote to the Bandino exchange, in which courtly behaviour is commended as an antidote to a lover's insincerity. The two voices of the 'donna villana' *tenzone* — the lover ('villan parladore') and the donna — trade blows in an increasingly crude exchange, culminating in the donna's declaration that 'Or son maestra di villan parlare / perché saccia di te dir villania' (86 — 'Or son maestra', 1-2). This 'villan parlare' has consisted of curses and accusations from the erstwhile lover (for example, 'Che Dio male ti dia come se' degna, / e tollati la vita, a ciò che danno / non fusse più di tua malvagia 'nsegna'; 85 — 'Ahi Deo, chi vidde', 9-11). The donna, meanwhile has provoked these violent words only by exposing the true motivations of the allegedly courtly speaker, whom she exposes and calls to task for his lies ('tu menzogna di' ad isciënte'; 84 — 'Così ti doni Dio', 2) and 'malvagia lingua mesdicente' (84 — 'Così ti doni Dio', 4). Notably 'dire', a key verb of love lyric production — the 'detti d'amore', 'dolci detti', etc. — appears in two forms in this quatrain (and repeatedly throughout the exchange).<sup>72</sup> In both instances it is negatively charged and tinged with a sense of falsehood, a fact which reinforces the sense of an insincere, or falsely signifying lyric voice in the 'Guittone' poems. In fact the 'donna' voice explicitly notes the contrary nature of Guittone's purported and true natures:

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<sup>72</sup> The 'donna' uses the verb in its various forms in all the sonnets in which she speaks (in addition to the examples quoted from 84, see 82, 1, 7 and 86, 13).

Or como crederia che 'n te valore  
 di *fino amant'e amor* fusse giamai?  
 ch'ogn'altra fina cosa è di te fore,  
 e *la contrara* per te regna assai.

(82 — 'Non mi disdico', 3-6 [italics mine])

Registering her disbelief that 'fino amor' could be the motive for the lover's previous speech (as manifested in text), the 'donna' notes that what truly guides the speaker is the contrary of what he claims. The fact that these two voices come from one pen should inevitably provoke readers of Guittone's amorous verse (both his contemporaries and ours) to reconsider the sincerity of any of his love lyric. It is through highlighting the contrary motivations of the 'villan parladore' of the erotic verse in these poems that Guittone not only exposes the duplicity of the role being played by this speaker, but, as noted by Kay, self-consciously and ironically undermines the very mode of *fin'amors* poetry, of which that speaker avails himself.<sup>73</sup> This is surely not, then, a sincere *io* in the courtly mode (generic or otherwise), but a complicating manifestation of a role played to highlight the game of masks which *fin'amors* is portrayed as comprising.

The disjunction between the acknowledged problematic aspects of the traditional love lyric and the insistence on the courtly self-expression of the *io* throughout the pre-conversion corpus generates an irony which destabilises and designifies the very lexicon of that expression. The apparently generic *fin'amors* poetry which constitutes the remainder of the 'anti-courtly *canzoniere*' can no longer be read superficially, as conventional courtly verse. Rather, the irony at play in the 'canzoniere guittoniano' points to a meaning beyond the surface, a meaning which problematises the courtly discourse, designifies its language and which, moreover, would have been available to the adherents of Guittone's poetry.

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<sup>73</sup> Kay, 'Redefining the "matera amorosa"', p. 390.

The level of familiarity with his texts which Frate Guittone seems to have expected of his readership (a palinode is, after all, predicated on a poetic counterpoint) and his contemporary popularity strongly indicate that this irony was not lost on its intended audience. It is also worth noting the precision with which his verse was parodied, critiqued and engaged with by various *tenzonanti*, like Guinizzelli and Cavalcanti and even Dante, aspects of which will be explored over the following chapters. The lack of sincerity in the poems of the ‘Guittone’ speaker would not, then, have gone unnoticed. Thus, his post-conversion subjectivity, ‘Frate Guittone’, had to re-appropriate the sincerity which his pre-conversion, erotic *io* had eschewed. Indeed, by bringing the issues of dishonesty and insincerity to the fore, sonnets 81 to 86 — the aforementioned exchange with the ‘*donna villana*’ which rounds off the Leonardi-designated sub-‘*canzoniere*’ — explicitly compound the sense of an implicit problematisation of the courtly mode elsewhere in the young Guittone’s verse.

The insincerity of the ‘Guittone’ subject continues to resonate even after the post-conversion palinodic exercise. The pre-conversion treatment of the conventions and language of *fin’amors* — with an attitude of problematising irony rather than sincere sinfulness — provides just the sort of Bakhtinian, dialogic voice defined above. The evidence of insincere pre-conversion subjectivity expressed in Guittone’s poetry, its insistent textuality, speaks in tension with the idealised, teleological conversion narrative expressed by the voice of Frate Guittone.<sup>74</sup> This latter *io*, which claims for itself an authorial weight, nonetheless merely sounds alongside the voice of the pre-conversion *io* just as the voice of Bakhtin’s novelistic

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<sup>74</sup> I agree largely with Holmes’s claim that ‘the love poems [...] are never entirely suppressed’ (*Assembling the Lyric Self*, p. 55), but my reading differs in as far as it understands the ‘love’ poems as constantly ironic. The argument in this chapter hinges on the attempted suppression as relating to secondary meaning — of critical irony — in the ‘love’ poetry, not on the attempted suppression of a straightforwardly erotic discourse.

author speaks alongside and with the same weight as its characters. Thus the insincere, young Guittone maintains an independent and often contradictory voice within the sincere, idealised autobiographical revisionism of the later friar-poet. This tension between sincerity and insincerity is important to my analysis of the performance of conversion through dialogic processes because it highlights the cracks which such a performance seeks to paper over. In so doing, it brings to the fore the aspect of textual memory, manifested in the independent 'Guittone' voice, which resists such a performance even as it is being staged. In short, it is the insistent textuality of this speaking, pre-conversion subjectivity that both necessitates and disrupts the attempted performance. Each text recalled and re-presented by Frate Guittone in his post-conversion poetry takes on a dual state, vacillating between its original, ironic anti-courtliness and its re-calibrated expression of sincere youthful sin within the context of the idealised autobiographism of the Guittonian corpus. The Frate's efforts to characterise his earlier output as straightforwardly negative, as *pomi venenosi* to be avoided or treated cautiously by 'Montuccio e [...] gli altri', belie an awareness of the gap between each pre-conversion microtext and the same text within the post-conversion macrotext of the 'canzoniere guittoniano'. Moreover, all this talk of 'pre-' and 'post-conversion' poems highlights the temporality of the process under way in these texts. The tension between irony and sincerity in Guittone's pre-conversion output is bound up with the tension between the 'now' of the amorous poetry at time of writing, and the 'then' into which it is recast explicitly by the 'ora' of 'Ora parrà' and implicitly throughout the moral and ascetic poems which relate to past texts and past sins. Thus this analysis is of a dialogic relationship between two temporal periods of textuality, yes, but also between two versions of a history

of poetic meaning. On the one hand, the continued existence and presence of the pre-conversion poetry represents a sort of textual memory which may remind the reader of the still-extant ironic posturing of the erotic verse of 'Guittone'. On the other, the new voice of the converted 'Frate Guittone' sings a revisionist narrative trying to erase the lyric memory of the actual 'Guittone' voice in order to incorporate the pre-conversion poems into a model conversion narrative.

The post-conversion texts, then, perform a twofold revision: a revision of meaning in the pre-conversion texts; and a temporal revision, expressing a new timetable for the development of Guittone's subjectivity by imposing a teleological narrative of conversion on the ironic-erotic past. This rewriting of past time is undertaken in order to incorporate that actual, insincere past into an idealised development from a pre-conversion 'then'<sup>75</sup> into the converted 'now' of 'Ora parrà', which, in turn, is rewriting the erotic 'then' in order to stage the performance of the conversion. So, the sinfulness of the pre-conversion Guittone-speaker is insincere and ironic. The counterfeit love and Guittone's persistence in continuing to write poetry within an already problematised erotics discourse are expressed to undermine the *fin'amors* world from which those texts draw their language and scenarios. Furthermore, as noted above, the insincere, pre-conversion subjectivity of Guittone continues to speak alongside the idealising, authorial Frate Guittone, in the manner of the voice of a Bakhtinian novelistic character sounding with a force equivalent to the authority of the narratorial (speaking) voice.<sup>76</sup> It is the continued, audible presence of this early voice which complicates the later attempts to represent the pre-conversion poetry as straightforwardly and sincerely

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<sup>75</sup> In fact, it only truly becomes pre-conversion, or relative to a conversion, once the conversion poetry attempts to situate it within this teleological narrative.

<sup>76</sup> Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 7

sinful (i.e. as erotic verse written to gain carnal favours, rather than ironic verse written to problematise courtly expression) within the teleological conversion narrative being retrospectively established by Frate Guittone.

Subsequently, the Frate's insistence, in the face of textual evidence and the still-sounding voice of young Guittone, on the sincerity of the pre-conversion lyrics may strike us as odd considering that the now friar-poet is staging a conversion to a morally superior state, to which a less sinful youth could hardly be considered a hindrance. It has already been noted that a renunciation of the follies of youth recalls the Augustinian model and lends the conversion a more dramatic air (cf. note 50 and discussion above), not to mention the implications such a conversion holds for the development of a reflexive self. These considerations, however, do not seem to justify the full extent of the Guittonian insistence on his actual, sincere expression of amorous sin; surely a simple, generic expression of the follies of youth would have sufficed to effect the bi-partition of his textual biography? In short, no, it would not. The irony of Guittone's 'anti-courtly canzoniere' must be overridden before a poetic performance of conversion can be felicitously undertaken. Frate Guittone's post-conversion verse is too intertextually invested in the pre-conversion poetry to simply dismiss it as a generically sinful. It is essential that Guittone's youthful verse be retrospectively reformulated as a sincere expression of sinful attitudes and acts because of the very language which Frate Guittone uses in the ascetic and moral poems. This is relevant at a general level to his continued use of vernacular poetry and more specifically to the continued employment of certain aspects of his courtly register in praising Mary, God and divine love. If Frate Guittone is to embark on his new, vernacular and religious 'cantare' he must reclaim that vernacular, and the courtly lexicon, from

designifying irony Moleta notes sonnet 210, ‘Deo, con fu dolce e ben avventuroso’, as a prime example of continuity of register between the amorous and moral verse, as well as the juxtaposition of the current speaker,<sup>77</sup> ‘ch’allora departi’ d’esser noioso / e dispiacente a ragione e a Dio’ (3-4), with his past self:

Ahi, como e quanto allegro esser deggio,  
 poi da tua signoria, malvaggio Amore,  
 l’alma e ’l corpo mio francato veggio.  
 (210 — ‘Deo, con fu dolce’, 9-11)

Even when not referring to the failings of the amorous past this poem shares a register with that past, as is clear in the oppositional relation between ‘gioia’ (in line 2) — the *senhal* for his lady acting as representative for Guittone’s old *io* — and ‘gioioso’ (in line 7) — the descriptor of his post-conversion state (an opposition similar to ‘amore’ being bifurcated into ‘carnal voglia’/‘vero amore’ in *canzone* xxix, ‘O vera virtù, vero amore’, which will be discussed at length below). Indeed, when referring to the failings of the past Guittone, ‘the personified deity in the *terzine* shows that the poet’s “moral deformity” came entirely through amatory experience seen in archetypal terms as the “signoria d’Amore”<sup>78</sup>. This reference to personified Amore in fact sets up a further opposition, between two Lords, Amore and Dio. Moreover, staging this particular opposition authenticates the ‘signoria d’Amore’ even as it is criticised, by acknowledging its power and mastery as (negative) alternative to God’s. This in turn must trigger the sort of rhetorical manoeuvring that we will witness in ‘O vera virtù’ whereby ‘sol boni in Amore bon venimo, / ed amato el seguimo’ (xxix — ‘O vera virtù’, 115-6) and ‘Solo bono è Dio, ch’empie / e soempie onni senno e onni core’ (xxix — ‘O vera virtù’, 123-4), thus carving out by association a Vero Signor Amore (God as Love) as well as a true

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<sup>77</sup> Moleta, *The Early Poetry*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23



amorous poet's 'gioia' is supplanted by a true, 'celestial gioia' (xxxvi — 'Graziosa e pia', 38) engendered by the sweet love for Mary. The repetitions of 'amore', 'core', 'gioia' and their variants continue a trend for the redeployment and 'risemantizzazione' of pre-conversion lyric vocabulary in a religiously charged context,<sup>83</sup> always with the implicit, and often explicit, process of contrast between the 'true', divinely inspired and morally guided emotions and their false, mundane counterparts. This process of opposition, through which the conversion of Guittone into Frate Guittone is performed, depends on the sincerity of the earlier courtly lexicon, so that its language can be redefined, corrected in the 'ora' of the converted friar-poet.

In his discussions of 'vero amore', which have been touched upon above and will be explored more fully in the next section of this chapter, just as in these other examples, the now 'Frate Guittone' utilises the lexicon of the selfsame courtly poetry which 'Guittone' — ironic amorous poet — undermines and ultimately de-signifies in his insincere and deconstructive treatment of the rarified world of *fin'amors* verse. The issue is this: if the *io* of the pre-conversion verse is not sincere and its ironic language does not signify truly, then the expression of love and praise for the divine couched in that same courtly lexicon must be meaningless. If Frate Guittone's songs of conversion are founded on the appropriation of a false language, they lack the linguistic force to perform a conversion or assert a new genuine poetics. This need for the language of his past lyric to actually mean what it says motivates the reconstruction of the erotic past as sincere, as opposed to a making a more straightforward rejection of all pre-conversion output. The ironic language of the 'anti-courtly canzoniere' must be reformulated as a genuinely

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<sup>83</sup> Bruni, 'Agonismo guittoniano', pp. 97-102.

signifying vocabulary in order that the re-contextualised courtly terminology used by the converted Frate Guittone in his moral verse may be employed to effectively signify praise and religious expression. In finding his feet as a *cantor rectitudinis* after his entry into the *Frati Gaudenti*, Guittone re-assimilates the language of his amorous production and in so doing condemns his youthful subjectivity to the role of the sincere sinful speaker of a *fin'amors* language.

Such an understanding of the role of this newly claimed sincerity for Guittone's pre-conversion amorous output helps to clarify the apparent disjunction between his politically or socially charged, yet still pre-conversion, texts, for which the claim of an insincere *io* is not made,<sup>84</sup> and nor should it be. The evidently genuine nature of this stance — the absence of any of the ironic intertextual layering found in the sequences of courtly texts — therefore does not need to be re-authenticated by the converted poet. Take, for example, 'Ahi lasso, che li boni e li malvagi' (*canzone* xx), a *canzone* which, while still related to women, is not wooing a beloved, but rather seeking to defend women against the railings of misogynists. Guittone criticises all those men who 'hanno preso accordanza / di mettere le donne in despregianza' (xx — 'Ahi lasso, che li boni', 2-3) and notes the hypocrisy of finding fault in women when men are so at fault:

Poi più savere e forza en l'om si trova,  
perché non s'è ben prova?  
Non vol; ma falla e fa donna fallare:  
adonque che diritto ha 'n lei biasmare?  
(xx — 'Ahi lasso, che li boni', 42-5)

There is a concern with the amorous in this *canzone*, in that it deals with love and the relationships between men and women, but, even as it reaches its *congedo* and

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<sup>84</sup> Moleta, *The Early Poetry*, pp. 109-13; Leonardi, 'Tradizione e ironia' pp. 127-8.

is addressed to his love, it does not adopt a tone akin to the *fin'amors* sonnets we are to encounter:

Ad Arezzo la mia vera canzone  
 mando, amore, a voi, per cui campione  
 e servo de tutt'altre esser prometto.  
 (xx — 'Ahi lasso, che li boni', 101-3)

Ultimately, then, this 'vera canzone' seeks to establish the kind of discourse that the sonnets never achieve. It is amorous verse with a social conscience, or, more accurately, socially conscious verse with an amorous inflection. It is also true verse, a 'vera canzone' which does not need to be recast as sincere in the performative present of 'Ora parrà', et al.

The other 'Ahi lasso' (xix — 'Ahi lasso! or è stagion de doler tanto'), written in lament of Florence's loss at the Battle of Monteperti in 1260, is straightforwardly political and has no amorous content:

Ohi lasso, or quale dia  
 fu mai tanto crudel dannaggio audito?  
 [...]  
 Leone, lasso, or no è, ch'eo li veo  
 tratto l'onghie e li denti e lo valore,  
 e 'l gran lignaggio suo mort'a dolore,  
 ed en crudel pregio[n] mis' a gran reo.  
 (xix — 'Ahi lasso! or è stagion', 12-13, 31-4)

I won't reproduce any more of the text here, as these two brief quotations more than adequately sum up the tone of a *canzone*, which, in its strident political sentiment hardly fits the mould of 'canzone amoroso'.

These texts, then, present little in the way of potent contrast with the post-conversion poems, nor do they present a problem of linguistic de-signifying like that offered in the ironic *fin'amors* poetry. They do not have to be re-formulated with hindsight in order to validate a converted poetic when the speaker must take stock and discover his new voice:

Ora parrà s'eo saverò cantare  
 e s'eo varrò quanto valer già soglio,  
 poiché del tutto Amor fuggo e disvoglio,  
 e più che cosa mai forte mi spare!  
 ('Ora parrà', xxv.1-4)

The one thing these poems lack (and admittedly it represents a significant shortfall for the Frate) is an explicitly religious orientation. While 'Ahi, lasso, che li boni e li malvagi' does have recourse to the figure of Amore, it nonetheless represents a sentiment which will be revisited in 'Altra fiata aggio già, donne, parlato' (*canzone* xlix), as noted by Moleta in a detailed discussion of the text within his study of the early poetry.<sup>85</sup> The fact that these texts are not written from any explicit or implicit religious standpoint, but rather from the perspective of a sort of bourgeois morality, will be insufficient for the converted friar-poet. These texts wear their critical attitude on their sleeves, thus bypassing the kind of ironic critical undertaking of the amorous poetry, but they still require a more straightforward correction and incorporation into a system of religious morality. Appeals to the god Amore are replaced by appeals to God ('per Deo' in line 149 of 'Altra fiata aggio già'); the underlying sentiment remains intact.

### III. 'Vero amore', 'vera canzone'

Thus far, we have seen how Frate Guittone's conversion is performed through the interrelationship of texts and how this conversion, along with the intertextuality on which it relies, serves the process of performing an authorial, reflexive subjectivity. I have also highlighted Frate Guittone's attempts to construct the sincerity on which such a performance is reliant in order to be felicitous. Furthermore, investigating the motivations for these attempts has exposed the insistent textual

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<sup>85</sup> Moleta, *The Early Poetry*, pp. 113-8.

and dialogic presence of the past lyric voice and its complicating implications. All of these processes, performances and problems develop through the intertextual relations established in the post-conversion poetry of Frate Guittone. This intertextuality, as has emerged from the texts discussed so far, is necessarily vexed as it seeks to recast pre-existent texts in the light of a new hermeneutics. I would here like to undertake a more in depth analysis of a specific example of this intertextual tension and its performative and dialogic repercussions within the conversion narrative of Guittone's *corpus*. My example will be the pre- and post-conversion appearances of a particular addressee (and correspondent) Bandino. While Guittone addresses a range of other correspondents,<sup>86</sup> the example of Bandino is particularly useful thanks to the 'before and after' effect we witness in Guittone's interaction with him. Amongst the amorous sonnets we find the *tenzone* (touched upon above), comprising sonnets 28-30, in which Guittone turns to 'Mastro Bandino' for advice on how to proceed in his love life after a moment of explicit doubt in the validity of *fin'amors* pursuits.

We have already seen how this *tenzone* contributes to the understanding of insincerity in the erotic verse of Guittone and it will be reproduced here to elucidate Frate Guittone's intertextual process. Having previously established his status as an 'enfingitore' (19 — 'Sì como ciascun omo', 1) in his amorous dealings with his lady, the lover Guittone requests assistance:

Mastro Bandino amico, el meo preghero  
vòi ch'entendiate sì ch'a onor vo sia.

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<sup>86</sup> Addressees include various unnamed 'cari frati miei' (xxxii — 'O cari frati miei, con malamente', 1) and the aforementioned 'Montuccio', as well as poets such as Guinizzelli ('Figlio mio diletto, in faccia laude') and to the fictional 'donna villana' in his erotic lyrics. Some of these represent fully formed and documented *tenzoni*, of other remain only Guittone's side of the conversation, replies lost, or indeed never made. In light of Brunetto Latini's commentary on *de Inventione*, cited in the introduction, these apparently unanswered addresses should still, however be regarded as *tenzoni*, each 'una tencione tacita', as they seek a response (either textual or behavioural); Latini, *Rettorica*, 16.

*Amare voglio e facemi mistero,  
 che non son degno, e 'n gran ben n'averria,  
 ché, senza ciò, aver onor no spero;  
 e pur d'ennamorar no ho bailia.  
 Unde sovente vivonde in pensiero,  
 ché meraviglia sembrame che sia,  
 vedendo manti stanno innamorati,  
 sì che tutt'altro poneno in obbria,  
 en tale loco, u' son sempre isdegnati.  
 Però vo prego m'assenniate via,  
 ch'a ciò mi guidi, a guisa de li amati,  
 ché credo bene aggratene bailia.*  
 (28 — 'Mastro Bandino amico' [italics mine])

As in sonnet 21, the double mediation of love is at play here as Guittone 'wants to love' (line 3). The poet's particular problem, rather unusual for the *fin'amors* lover, is that he is unable to fall in love with his lady (6) and the potential for dishonour entailed by his predicament (4-5). This would-be lover declares himself aware of the potential shame and the peculiarity of his state, marvelling at those who are successfully enamoured (7-11). In the second tercet, Guittone seeks guidance on how to comport himself 'a guisa de li amati', asking his more learned friend to give him directions and resolve his predicament (12-14). Bandino's reply incorporates the first naming of the subject 'Guittone' and, with a certain irony considering the nature of the Aretine's request, grants him the honorific 'Leal' and deems him worthy of great praise:

Leal Guittone, nome non verteri,  
 degno de laude se' maggior, che taccio;  
 (29 — 'Leal Guittone', 1-2)

This sonnet's opening statement will, in fact, be thoroughly countered in the post-conversion world of Frate Guittone, for whom praise will be due only to the moral poet and the God and the Virgin he in turn praises, as seen in the exhortation in 'Ora parrà' to 'chi cantare vole e valer bene' (xxv — 'Ora parrà, 16) who must submit to 'saver' (18) and 'Dio' (19), eschew 'carnal voglia' (21) and who will find

honour in ‘astenendo — a vizi ed a peccato’ (23). Returning to the sonnet under consideration, the text continues with Bandino’s acknowledgement of Guittone’s problem, and, in an inversion of the courtly trope, some advice how to melt the poet’s own icy heart:

leanza sembra el consil che mi cheri  
 como tu vogli amar, che ’l cor fa ghiaccio.  
 Amico caro, eo tel do volonteri,  
 avegna che grand’ardimento faccio,  
 ché in questo fatto gran senno recheri;  
 ma pur dirò gioios’, e ’n ciò te piaccio.  
 Ormai sta solo e in loco celato,  
 e sol bellezza pensa e canoscenza  
 de la tua donna, ed altro non pensare.

(29 — ‘Leal Guittone’, 3-11)

The slightly monastic advice handed down is to contemplate the virtues of the lady in isolation and then:

D’amor ragiona, se se’ accompagnato;  
 a le’ tu, o’ sta’ con ella, gioi né ’ntenza  
 tutto cела: sì porai amare.

(29 — ‘Leal Guittone’, 12-14)

Long before Dante’s invitation to Cavalcanti to ‘ragionar sempre d’amore’ (‘Guido, i’ vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io’, 12), Guittone is encouraged to do the same, not in order to reflect on the love he enjoys, but to engender the love he is failing to experience. Guittone’s response (and the conclusion of the *tenzone*) reads as follows:

Mastro Bandin, vostr’e d’Amor mercede,  
*or aggio ciò che tant’ho disiato,*  
*sì che lo core meo non se crede*  
*esser de gioia mai apareggiato,*  
 pensando quanto è ’n lui d’Amor fede,  
 e quanto è preso el suo servire in grato,  
 e qual è quella donna en cui el crede,  
 e com’ha pregio ’l suo ben acquistato;  
 per ch’al mondo, de ciò, meo par non regna,  
 considerando ben ciò che par aggio;  
 e paremevi bene cosa degna.  
*Donque se lo cor meo tant’allegraggio*

*pare non crede, veritate assegna;  
ch'è bene, ed esser dea per bon usaggio.  
(30 - 'Mastro Bandin, vostr'e d'Amor mercede,')*

Bandino's advice here seems to have done the trick, the Guittone speaker is in a mood of great happiness, his heart in a previously unimaginable state, and ready for the good offices of a true courtly lover. This avowed courtly fervour necessarily evokes a suspicion of falsehood, as we have just witnessed Bandino's advice to speak of love in company, regardless of the absence of underlying emotion. The following sonnet, 'Tuttor ch'eo dirò gioi, gioiva cosa' ably, even excessively, reinforces the speaker's claim to a new found satisfaction, with its *twenty-five* repetitive variants on 'gioia', the *senhal* of his lady. Holmes puts it succinctly:

The poem appears to represent a lexical orgasm, an attempt to adapt form to content, the poet's words to the lover's intense feelings, by a display of poetic bravura.<sup>87</sup>

And 'appears' is precisely the right term: following the *tenzone* with Bandino — and in light of the established irony of the *io* by this point — it becomes impossible to read this ostentatious declaration of erotic zeal and amorous pleasure as anything other than *ragionar d'amor* on Guittone's part, when he finds himself 'accompagnato' by the readers of his text. The 'bel parere' of exultation in the beloved becomes hollow and meaningless.

Let us now turn to the converted Frate, member of the *Gaudenti*, author of 'Ora parrà' and also of the *canzone*, 'O vera vertù, vero amore', which refers once more to Bandino (along with Gualtieri),<sup>88</sup> and to the master/servant relationship

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<sup>87</sup> Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self*, p. 66.

<sup>88</sup> Whom Frate Guittone also addresses in sonnet 211, 'Alcun conto di te, conte Gualtieri', warning the conte off the young Guittone's 'perigliosi motti, / und'eo vertude strussi e vizi ornaì' (13), much as he cautions Montuccio against his youthful 'pomi venenosi'. Moleta notes this as a key example of Frate Guittone's review and refutation of his early poetry (the Frate does indeed acknowledge the folly of his erotic verse and states, 'io lo vieto a tutti' [10], Moleta, *The Early Poetry*, pp. 23-4), so the presence of Gualtieri as addressee fits comfortably with the corrective nature of this *canzone*.

established in those amorous sonnets. This explicit recollection occurs in the poem's *congedo*:

Bandin conte e Gualtieri,  
 non poco volonteri  
 verria con voi congiunto in tanto amore;  
 ma de grande a minore  
 convene benvoglienza: io non la saccio;  
 unde amor comun taccio  
 e chero, se piace voi,  
 che sia sempre infra noi  
 ciò che dea da bon servo a ben signore.  
 (xxix — 'O vera virtù', 211-219)

The links with the earlier *tenzone* go beyond the shared addressee (Bandino being one of several names dropped in the *canzone*, including a pair of Guidos and the aforementioned Gualtieri). This *congedo* shares the rhymes '-accio' and '-eri' and indeed rhyme words, 'taccio' and 'volonteri' (rhymed with 'cheri' in 'Leal Guittone', a verb appearing in the first person here) with the sonnet from 'Mastro Bandino'. The *congedo* then casts an intertextual eye back to the younger Guittone's *tenzone* and seeks to reconsider what it is to 'amare', what is truly 'degno' and how one gains 'onore' in the new context of a moral-religious poetics. These features begin to establish the sense of this *canzone* as an extension of that earlier *tenzone*, the voice of Frate Guittone in dialogue with and correcting both the young Guittone's voice and the original correspondent Bandino.

O vera virtù, vero amore,  
 tu solo se' d'onne virtù virtù,  
 e bon solo noi tu,  
 da cui solo onne bono e for cui niente!  
 (xxix — 'O vera virtù', 1-4)

The opening insistence on the 'true' nature of the virtue and love which Frate Guittone is treating here can only take effect in relation to an understanding of any past amorous poetic matter as 'falso'. This sense is constructed in other *canzoni morali*, as in the 'carnal voglia' described in 'Ora parrà', or 'O tu, de nome Amor,

guerra de fatto', which directly precedes 'O vera virtù' in Laur.-Red. 9 ordering and opens:

O tu, de nome Amor, guerra de fatto  
 secondo i toi cortesi eo villaneggio,  
 ma secondo ragion cortesia veggio,  
 s'eo blasmo te, o chi teco ha contratto;  
 perché seguo ragion, no lecciarìa,  
 ond'ho già mante via  
 portato in loco di gran ver menzogna,  
 ed in loco d'onor propia vergogna,  
 in loco di saver rabbia e follia.

(xxviii — 'O tu, de nome Amor', 1-9)

Attempts on Frate Guittone's part to characterise his erotic output in a recast 'then' of folly, madness, shame and lies (to the lady to gain sexual gratification) in opposition to his 'now' of truth, honour and wisdom, are not a rarity, as the moralising *io* of the Frate builds the palinodic case against the self known as Guittone. Returning to *canzone* xxix with this in mind, we have a reinforced sense of the dependence of the authority of the moral poet on an expressly immoral past. This treatment of true love then sits, like 'saver', 'onor' and 'gran ver' in the previous *canzone*, in opposition to the 'menzogna', 'vergogna', 'rabbia e follia' of the re-conceived erotic past. The invocation of Bandino, the theme of *ragione* (xxix — 'O vera virtù', 19, 41, 57, 74, 79, 97, 100) linguistically (if not thematically) recalling Bandino's injunction, 'D'amor ragiona, se se' accompagnato', and the discussion how to love (with *caritas* rather than *eros*) all point to an alternative response to the young Guittone, one in which Bandino's original advice is shown to be at odds with Frate Guittone's new moral model. Thus Guittone now takes on the role of teacher, his didacticism is for Bandino's attention, and while he continues to express a hierarchical loyalty ('da bon servo a ben signore') he no longer refers to Bandino as a 'mastro', but as a 'conte'. This time it appears to be the rank of the addressee necessitating a certain obeisance in Frate Guittone, not the knowledge of

a teacher encouraging the studentship of the poet. The teacher-pupil relationship is reversed as Frate Guittone instructs his former advisor (on matters of profane love) in true, divine love, which alone unites in goodness:

O vero amor, tu uno fai  
 de Dio, d'angelo e d'omo, e in loco ono  
 li lochi ad onne bono  
 (xxix — 'O vera virtù', 27-29)

The role of true love is explained as uniting the true lover with the divine, as opposed to the aims of 'carnal voglia' which, according to Frate Guittone, are to unite the false lover with the earthly lady in all too earthly activities. These are examples of intertextual reference with a corrective function manifested through the binary oppositions 'vero'/'falso' equated with 'then'/'now' and the *tenzone*-like qualities (shared rhymes and themes, named correspondents) of the text. The *canzone* thus presents itself as an alternative, valid response to the younger Guittone's queries and as a new point of contention with Bandino's sonnet. Perhaps the passage which most explicitly demonstrates this tendency, in a *canzone* well endowed with the sort of corrective intertextuality discussed above, comes towards the end of the poem:

Amar ben dunque è bene,  
 e gentil cor convene  
 quanto sé altrui amare e servir forte.  
 Alquanto, amor, dett'ho perchee  
 infra noi te devem dir como dea;  
 dico ch'amor non crea  
 che sol piacere e non piacer che bono.  
 Parta ciascun dunque da see  
 al piacer de l'amico onni spiacente,  
 ed aduca piacente;  
 e se conven ch'amor pur sia in ciascuno,  
 e' sian da poi un core ed un podere,  
 sí che non mai volere  
 né desvolere l'un for l'altro deggia;  
 ma' non faccia, né cheggia  
 alcuno a l'altro desonesta cosa,

ché non già è amorosa,  
 ma contra amor, quant'è contra onestate;  
 (xxix — 'O vera virtù', 154-171)

In these lines we see definitions of love and 'good pleasure' (the only sort love creates) and that from this love and its honest pleasures no dishonesty can arise, as dishonesty is incompatible with and indeed contrary to love, and anything not rooted in truth is, equally, not rooted in love. Frate Guittone shares this insight as he states that it is the sort of thing which should be discussed between himself and his correspondents here ('Alquanto, amor, dett'ho perchee / infra noi te devem dir como dea', 157-8). In addition to preaching to its immediate audience, this didacticism also acts as a chiding reply to the younger Guittone's request for Mastro Bandino's instruction on how to pass as a lover ('a guisa de li amati', 'Mastro Bandino amico, 13) despite the absence of true feeling towards his lady. This forms an aspect of the discourse of semblance and insincerity which is characteristic of the pre-conversion poetry and which has been discussed in the previous section of this chapter.<sup>89</sup> There are numerous points of contact between this *canzone* and the earlier *tenzone*: the aforementioned reversal of the teacher-pupil relationship; the appeal to 'Mastro Bandino, amico' in the sonnet, which is answered by the discussion of the role of friends in the guidance towards 'piacer' in the *canzone*; and the insistence that an act is 'contra amor' ('O vera virtù', 171) in as much as it is dishonest, recalling Guittone's 'guisa' and self-identification as 'enfingitore' (19 — 'Sì como ciascun omo', 1). Frate Guittone, then, chastises his younger self, casting the sinfulness expressed by Guittone as sincere. In so doing he asserts his converted standpoint and corrects his erstwhile mentor, Bandino.

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<sup>89</sup> To recap briefly, Guittone's voice as lover is often expressed with apparently ironic undertones, as in the *malfe* of the 'anti-courtly canzoniere' or the *ars amandi* sonnets (87-110), in which the focus is on 'bel parere' (92 — 'Eo non credera già ch'alcuno amante', 6), regardless of what lies behind the lovely façade, for a fuller treatment of which see section II.

This *canzone* is set in the ‘now’ of conversion, and the sonnets to which it refers are intertextually recast in the ‘then’ of sincere erotic error. This interaction between the ‘now’ and the rewritten ‘then’ perfectly exemplifies the dialogic tensions generated by the performance of conversion. The original correspondence between Guittone and Bandino, when read in the context of the ironic, pre-conversion context of the erotic poems (as established above) is at odds with its representation as sincere folly within the post-conversion ‘now’ of the ‘ascetic and moral’ poems. By addressing himself to Bandino once more, the converted subjectivity of Frate Guittone also readdresses that previous exchange. In so doing, he attempts to reclassify it as genuinely sinful, rather than ironically critical of *fin’amors*. Frate Guittone then corrects both the allegedly sinning stance of the Guittone-*io* and the views of his correspondent Bandino. He thus situates the original *tenzone* within the reconfigured time-line of conversion which he is performing in ‘O vera virtù’. A large part of the performative weight of ‘O vera virtù, vero amore’ lies in its endeavour to render sincere that ironic, erotic past which contains the poetic exchange with Bandino. Within the new context of Frate Guittone’s conversion narrative those poems must be stripped of irony in order to fit within an ideal, teleological narrative of folly and redemption *à la* Augustine. Simultaneously, this *canzone* engages in the performance of the new, converted *io*, and the resignification of the courtly lexis on which this performance depends, and which depends in turn on the retrospectively ascribed sincerity of Guittone’s amorous lyric.

In Guittone’s amorous verse, then, we are presented with an insincere, ironic *io* which insistently undercuts the mode of *fin’amors* poetry in order to problematise courtly love lyric. However, the irony of this erotic, early verse must

be recuperated, so that its sinful stance can be recast as sincere in order to then be spurned for a religious calling. The performance of this calling, Frate Guittone's poetic conversion, requires such a recasting because it utilises the lexicon of the newly sincere erotic poetry, re-contextualising it in a moral 'cantare'. It is precisely the re-appropriation of that lexicon, with the post-conversion emphasis on the 'true' senses of terms such as 'amore', 'gioia' and 'onore', that necessitates the performance of a pre-conversion sincerity so that Frate Guittone may write his vernacular, moral-didactic, converted poetry. If the irony of the language of Guittone's lyric were allowed to stand uncorrected, a felicitous performance of the conversion of the lyric *io* would become impossible as the residual irony would render the speech acts — the new, religious 'detti' — empty of meaning and devoid of illocutionary force. The conversion and, indeed, the posthumous assertion of pre-conversion sincerity are attempted through the dialogic process of intertextual engagement by the converted 'Frate Guittone' subject with the 'Guittone' of the early verse. This process sometimes combines with the process of the *tenzone*, as when Frate Guittone inserts his voice into the exchange between Guittone and Mastro Bandino. Through the act of *tenzone* writing (tacit or otherwise), the addresses to a cast of 'frati' and correspondents named or unnamed also play a vital role in the performative utterance of conversion. Through these addressed poems Frate Guittone selects and enlists an audience in the attempt to generate the complicity necessary for the uptake for his performance.

Of course all of these efforts are haunted by the voice of the unconverted, ironical Guittone. Two versions of the poetic past co-exist for the reader, presenting a tension between that which the early poetry says and that which it is later claimed to have said by Frate Guittone, who ardently attempts to elide these

differing histories into one idealised narrative. Meanwhile, the opportunity to read the pre-conversion texts on their own terms still exists. They maintain a textual stability alongside the post-conversion attempts to correct them and place them within a teleological narrative. The voice of the unconverted subjectivity sounds, like Bakhtin's non-narratorial voices, alongside the authority seeking voice of Frate Guittone, in dialogue with it and allows us to question its stability. This potential lack of teleological stability does not detract from the fact that we are faced with a striking example of the endeavour to develop, through performative and dialogic processes, a reflexive, lyric self which exists in a temporal and personalised form. The insistent textuality of the 'Guittone' texts does, however, allow readers (including critics) to resist Frate Guittone's performance, to question teleological readings of his corpus and to assert the independent significance of the pre-conversion texts.

## Chapter 2: ‘L’uno a l’altro Guido’

### *Part 1 – Guido Guinizzelli: Dialogic Redefinition*

Guido Guinizzelli (1230-1276), who once corresponded with Guittone and would later be designated as Dante’s poetic ‘padre’ in *Purgatorio* (XXVI, 97), represents another form of dialogic conversion: a form in which poetics and subjectivity change by degrees from being earthbound to facing heavenward in their imagery and scope. While this ‘conversion’ may be more figurative than the literal entry into a religious order and associated poetic shift exemplified by Guittone, it remains an important example of change in both the speaking self and the nature and presentation of subject matter. This change unfolds not through the sort of palinodic self-citation witnessed in Frate Guittone’s transition into religious life and poetry, but rather through a series of *tenzoni* (the most direct expression of dialogue between poets), in which the poet responds to the criticisms of his peers. Guinizzelli’s development culminates in the staged dialogue between the poet and God in ‘Al cor gentil’ rimpaira sempr’ amore’, in which he defends his praxis against the celestial criticisms of the highest judge. The manner in which he undertakes to represent the *donna* also has a profound impact on the language and imagery of representation in the works of those who follow him. His poetic conversion, then, is articulated in dialogue with his critics (both real and hypothesised) – namely Bonagiunta, Guittone, and God – and dialogically through intertextual interactions and a resultant textual polyphony.

#### **I. Guinizzelli and the voice of God**

Just as any discussion of Guittone’s *corpus* inevitably starts with ‘Ora parrà’, any

investigation of Guinizzelli's poetry seems fated to first engage with 'Al cor gentil rimpaira sempr' amore'. As in the case of Guittone's *canzone*, this is not a decision prompted by chronology (indeed, the chronology of Guinizzelli's verse is largely hypothetical), but rather by a desire to get to grips with Guinizzelli's poetics. There are also good methodological reasons for beginning with this *canzone*, as it represents the lynchpin in a dialogic process which will be central to the arguments put forth in this chapter. Representing the fullest ideological expression of Guinizzelli's poetic conversion, the *canzone* 'Al cor gentil', like Guittone's 'Ora parrà', is often characterised as a manifesto.<sup>90</sup> This status is reinforced by the criticisms of the sonnet, 'Voi c'avete mutata la mainera',<sup>91</sup> with which Bonagiunta Orbicciani da Lucca (c. 1220-1290) responded to the *canzone*. This poem will be quoted and discussed at greater length below, so for now let it suffice to report that Bonagiunta censures Guinizzelli for his 'sottigliansa' ('Voi c'avete', 9) and his 'iscura [...] parlatura' ('Voi c'avete', 11), concluding with a critique of Guido's process of 'traier canson per forza di scrittura' ('Voi c'avete', 14). Any reading of 'Al cor gentil' and its implications for Guinizzelli's poetics must keep in mind the role of the subsequent exchange between the author and Bonagiunta in developing the position of this *canzone* as manifesto. This exchange, incorporating not just 'Voi c'avete', but also Guinizzelli's rebuttal, 'Omo ch' è saggio non corre leggero', functions in some aspects like Frate Guittone's reiterations of the conversion theme in his *corpus*. At a basic level, the *canzone* presents a discussion of models of nobility which is not inherently novel and is heavily indebted to the influence of

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<sup>90</sup> Vincent Moleta, *Guinizzelli in Dante* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1980), p. 11; Enrico Malato, 'Amor cortese e amor cristiano da Andrea Cappellano a Dante', in *Lo fedele consiglio de la ragione: Studi e ricerche di letteratura italiana* (Rome: Salerno, 1989), pp. 126-227 (p. 160).

<sup>91</sup> I will quote Bonagiunta's sonnet, as well as all the texts of Guinizzelli's poems, from Guido Guinizzelli, *Rime*, Luciano Rossi ed. (Turin: Einaudi 2002).

Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore* in Guinizzelli's intellectual milieu. Emerging from this context, 'Al cor gentil' argues for *probitas morum* (gentility of behaviour) over *nobiltas generis* (nobility of birth) as the proper markers of a noble nature, a noble heart.<sup>92</sup> While the basic argument may not be revolutionary, this *canzone* does still represent the locus of philosophical and poetic innovation. This is particularly evident in two areas: the synthesis of the Aristotelian concept of *potentia/actus* with aspects of metaphysical-theological thought and in the fresh interrogation of the tensions between God and the lady, between the *donna-angelicata* as metaphor and a theologisation of the erotic discourse.<sup>93</sup> Recalling the earliest texts of the Italian tradition, and specifically Giacomo Da Lentini's sonnet 'Io m'aggio posto in core a Dio servire', we find the essential character of the opposition between the *donna* and *Dio*, which continued to haunt Italian lyric well after the Sicilians ceased to write poetry. The speaker in the Notaio's sonnet opens with a declaration of service to God with the anticipated result that 'io potesse gire in paradiso' ('Io m'aggio posto', 2). The godly sentiment of the first four lines, however, is rapidly counterpointed by the second quatrain's admission that 'sanza mia donna non vi voria gire / [...] ché senza lei non poteria gaudere' ('Io m'aggio posto', 5-7). The conclusion of Giacomo's sonnet conceives of finding 'consolamento' only in 'veggendo la mia donna in ghiora stare' ('Io m'aggio posto', 13-14).<sup>94</sup> It is this conflict, at least as old as the Italian lyric tradition, which Guinizzelli revisits in 'Al cor gentil'. Having progressed through its disquisition on the nature of nobility and love, Guinizzelli's *canzone* tackles the relationship

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<sup>92</sup> Gianfranco Contini, *Letteratura italiana delle origini* (Florence: Sansoni, 1970), p. 152; Luciano Rossi, in Rossi ed., *Rime*, p. 30.

<sup>93</sup> Contini, *Letteratura italiana*, p. 152.

<sup>94</sup> XII, in Contini, *PD I*, p. 80.

between the beloved and the lover, and places the poet's discourse on a firmly celestial footing:

Splende 'n la 'ntelligenzia del cielo  
 Deo creator più che [ 'n] nostr' occhi 'l sole:  
 ella intende suo fattor oltra 'l cielo,  
 e 'l ciel volgiando, a Lui obedir tole;  
 e consegue, al primero,  
 del giusto Deo beato compimento,  
 così dar dovria, al vero,  
 la bella donna, poi che [ 'n] gli occhi splende  
 del suo gentil, talento  
 che mai di lei obedir non si disprende.  
 ('Al cor gentil', 41-50)

These lines offer a daring representation of the manner in which the lover relates to the beloved, making an analogy between the angels' relationship with God. Guinizzelli's *canzone* appears to approach a resolution, or dissolution, of the long-standing *donna-Dio* tension. The temerity of such a simile was remarked upon by Contini, who considered the lines that follow as an 'ironica autocritica'.<sup>95</sup> This in turn initiated a tradition of readings of the poem's *congedo* as a climbing down from the radical position of this last stanza, and a reinstatement of the old tension:<sup>96</sup>

Donna, Deo mi dirà: 'Che presomisti?',  
 siando l'alma mia a lui davanti.  
 'Lo ciel passasti e 'nfin a Me venisti  
 e desti in vano amor Me per semblanti:

<sup>95</sup> Contini in *PD* II, p. 460.

<sup>96</sup> Malato dismisses the comparison with an angel as 'utile per aggirare l'ostacolo [della tensione fra la donna e Dio], ma non per rimuoverlo' (Malato, 'Amor cortese e amor cristiano', p. 165), agreeing with Roncaglia's assessment that 'l'angelicazione o divinizzazione della donna nella poesia provenzale e nella poesia italiana anteriore a Dante é semplice metafora, senza significato religioso' specifically in relation to Guinizzelli's 'Al cor gentil'; Aurelio Roncaglia, 'Precedenti e significato dello "Stil nuovo" dantesco', in *Facoltà di lettere e filosofia dell'Università di Bologna* ed., *Dante e Bologna ai tempi di Dante* (Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1967), pp. 13-34 (22), as cited in Malato, p. 165. Roncaglia also reads Guinizzelli as 'cosciente dell'irreverenza del paragone' between the lady and a celestial being (be it God or an angel), but does admit that 'Al cor gentil' represent a transformation of the *donna-angelo* image 'dal piano metaforico a quello metafisico', even if 'l'amore cantato dal Guinizzelli non è spiritualizzato in senso religioso'; Roncaglia, 'Precedenti e significato', pp. 22-26). Barolini asserts that Guinizzelli 'backs off somewhat from the *canzone's* fifth stanza', Barolini, 'Dante and the Lyric Past', *Dante and the Origins*, p. 32.

ch'a Me conven le laude  
 e a la Reina del reame degno,  
 per cui cessa onne fraude'.  
 Dir Li porò: 'Tenne d'angel sembianza  
 che fosse del Tuo regno;  
 non me fu fallo, s'in lei posi amanza'.  
 ('Al cor gentil', 51-60)

The initial impression that Guinizelli is restating the conflict of 'Io m'aggio posto' is understandable, but it is my contention that we should still question whether the poet has actually abandoned the quest for resolution here.<sup>97</sup> It remains true that the defence mounted in the imagined dialogue between the poet and God belies an awareness on Guinizelli's part of the difficulties and potential criticisms of this portrayal of the *donna* as analogous with the Creator. However, the text of the *canzone* does also look to partially vindicate such an ambitious representation and indeed to somewhat defuse critiques in advance.<sup>98</sup> Through the re-evaluation of the analogy which had been presented in the preceding strophe and by offering an 'angel' as the new point of comparison for his lady, rather than God Himself, Guinizelli 'takes the possibility of similitude between the lady and the divine much more seriously than it has been taken heretofore',<sup>99</sup> attempting to establish 'that madonna belongs to the angelic order'.<sup>100</sup> This is not to say that Guinizelli has pursued the theologising of his lady in the manner that Dante will in the

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<sup>97</sup> Marti acknowledges Guinizelli's attempts to resolve 'l'ambiguità cortese, e senza dare il bando all'amore' and in so doing to reconcile it with morality and God, without conceding any particular success on this front; Mario Marti, *Storia dello Stil nuovo*, I (Lecce: Milella, 1973), p. 235.

<sup>98</sup> This confrontation of presumption in an attempt to anticipate and defuse criticism is not unlike the strategies that Dante will employ in the *Commedia*, particularly as regards the Ulyssean encounter and imagery in the *poema sacro* (see Teodolinda Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Dethologizing Dante*, [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992], pp. 51-2), and the pilgrim's acknowledgement of his own sin of Pride in *Purgatorio* XIII.

<sup>99</sup> Barolini, *Dante and the Origins*, p. 32; elsewhere, Barolini argues that in this *congedo* 'Guinizelli seems to forecast a new kind of writing, in which ladies are literally angelic, conductors to the divine', which is what Beatrice becomes for Dante; Barolini, 'Fathers and Sons: Guinizelli and Cavalcanti', in *Dante's Poets: textuality and truth in the Comedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 123-153 (132).

<sup>100</sup> Moleta, *Guinizelli in Dante*, p. 32.

presentation of Beatrice in the *Commedia*, but we should acknowledge that he never completely backs down from his identification of the lady with the divine, a stance which he defends to the end of his *canzone*. In fact, the presence of God as a speaking, criticising character in this *canzone* forms a key part of Guinizzelli's defence of his divinely sanctioned lady. While the all-powerful deity's initial intervention casts the poet's attempts in a negative light, with that stentorian 'Che presomisti?', the real importance of the divine voice in the text is the moment when it falls silent. God poses the question in order to critique the preceding statement the beloved's relationship to the lover is analogous with God's to relationship with his angels. So, Guinizzelli stages a dialogue in which God responds, and can therefore be expected to respond again, to statements which He finds objectionable, blasphemous, or theologically unsound. In creating such an expectation Guinizzelli gives himself the ability to implicitly sanction (and indeed sanctify) any statement which goes unchallenged, specifically his final defence:

Dir Li porò: 'Tenne d'angel sembianza  
che fosse del Tuo regno;  
non me fu fallo, s'in lei posi amanza'.  
(*'Al cor gentil'*), 51-60

The poet has the last word and that word is love: not love of God, but love of the lady, a love which is justified by her angelic semblance as created by God. That there is no rebuttal is hugely significant for the claims Guinizzelli is making, effectively allowing that his proposed solution for the personal conflict between love of God and the lady is theologically viable and divinely permitted. This in turn can be understood as a prime example of the kind of 'uptake' of a performance which we have witnessed Guittone attempting to guarantee for his performance of a converted self.<sup>101</sup> The process of explicit rebuke and implicit approbation can be

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<sup>101</sup> See for reference the definition of uptake in the introduction.

described in terms of a staged misfire and subsequent uptake. The initial analogy, which would render a divinely characterised beloved and establish a certain kind of lover-beloved relationship (*[i]ntelligenzia del cielo—Deo*), misfires in the face of the omnipotent audience (and what better audience to authorise or deny a performative speech act). Barolini, even in her assessment of Guinizzelli as ‘backing off’, feels compelled to acknowledge that he has found a way of ‘solidifying his gains, of sanctioning his boldness and concretising what could have seemed merely a whimsical conceit’ and ‘justifies himself with the same analogies that were his sin in the first place, transferring responsibility back to the original writer, God’.<sup>102</sup> This assessment draws on the image of God as writer of the two books — the world and the Bible — to explain Guinizzelli’s justifying tactics here, and it will be useful to extrapolate further from this image to consider the implications of the exchange between God and Guinizzelli as an exchange between two writers, a sort of staged *tenzone*. This narration of a debate between God and the poet is not presented in the formal shape of *tenzone* (as Guittone’s *tenzone fittizia* with the ‘villana donna’ was), but does draw on some of argumentative implications of the form. Following God’s critique, Guinizzelli’s final statement — that God made the lady this way, so loving her was inevitable — results in a performative reclassification of the beloved as angelic. The uptake of this performance is apparently provided by the divine audience, because God raises no objection. At this point the argumentative rules of the *tenzone* that we find theorised by Brunetto Latini intersect with the concept of performative speech. Thinking back to Latini’s definition of the *tenzone*, any argumentative text written to ‘muovere l’animo di colui [il lettore] a non negare’ can be considered as a ‘tencione tacita’;

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<sup>102</sup> Barolini, *Dante and the Origins of Literary Culture*, pp. 31-2.

the act of engaging in persuasive writing (especially poesis) generates a discursive, dialogic space which expects either disagreement or assent.<sup>103</sup> The implications of Latini's concept of *tenzone* are twofold: any text which seeks agreement is a *tenzone*; the absence of a response can be read as the result of a successful argument — the lack of an articulated denial represents tacit assent according to this model. This assent on the part of the other speaker (God in this case) functions like the assent of the witnesses to a wedding in the Austinian model. A couple becomes married because the authority of the words of marriage is accepted, those words do what they say. The lady becomes angelic and the poet's love justified because God, in his silence, accepts the validity of the poet's words, so they create the paradigm shift according to which Guinizzelli's love is justified. The *tenzone* aspect of this *canzone* is in fact rather explicit, in that it effectively sets the Almighty up as *co-tenzonante* with the poet seeking to and succeeding in precisely 'moving his mind not to deny', the writer-God's earlier objections in fact serving to highlight the absence of further protest. The rhetorical role of the voice of God is to raise objections so that objections may be countered and a new truth established, in this case regarding the validity of the poet's love for the lady. In this dialogue it is the absence of further denial, the silence of the second speaker, which is decisive.

This exchange naturally presents very interesting implications for Guinizzelli's *canzone* regarding the kind of Bakhtinian dialogic tensions which we have already witnessed at play in Guittone's *corpus*. As noted previously, according

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<sup>103</sup> I won't quote the whole passage here again as it can be found, along with further discussion in the introduction and relevant sections of the preceding chapter. The immediate context will, therefore suffice here: 'Ma quelli che manda la sua lettera guernisce di parole ornate e piene di sentenza e di fermi argomenti, sì come crede poter muovere l'animo di colui [a cui e'l manda] a non negare, e, s'elli avesse alcuna scusa, come la possa indebolire o instornare in tutto. Dunque è una tencione tacita intra loro', Latini (*Rettorica*, 16).

to the principles of Bakhtinian polyphony the speech of non-authorial characters in a polyphonic text ‘sound[s], as it were, alongside the author’s word and in a special way combines with it’.<sup>104</sup> The crux of the matter is the question of what happens when the poetic word (that of the author of the text) ventriloquises the divine Word (that of the Author of the two books, the Bible and the World). Who is the author, and who the disruptive, co-sounding voice? Ultimately the resolution comes in the mingling of voices which is understood, from a Bakhtinian standpoint, to take place within textual polyphony. Either the poet is a voice sounding alongside the Author-God’s word (and theologically this of course is the absolute truth) and expressing the validity of the angelic beloved within the Creator’s text, or God’s voice sounds in Guinizzelli’s text and after destabilising his position finally affirms and authorises it through his tacit agreement with Guinizzelli’s final self-justification. The boldness of Guinizzelli’s use of God as interlocutor clearly emerges in this analysis and cements a sense of the felicitous performance of a poetic resolution to the *donna-Dio* tension through the poet-God *tenzone*, which allows for a level of self-authorisation consistent with the trend in developments of lyric self-representation which are becoming apparent in this study thus far. Any perception of shying away is, if not completely dismissed, at the very least heavily problematised. Nevertheless, such a perception will render Guinizzelli a failure in terms of lyric conversion in Dante’s conception (as will be discussed in chapter 3) and has been dominant in interpretations of this *canzone* since.<sup>105</sup>

The debate with God is not, it must be noted, the sole theological feature of ‘Al cor gentil’. This aspect extends beyond the staged dialogue between God and

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<sup>104</sup> Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 7.

<sup>105</sup> See notes 7 and 8 above.

the poet, with its discussion and defence of the love afforded to the *donna-angelo*, to affect the lexical and intertextual register of the *canzone*. On a linguistic level, there are liturgical echoes in God's castigating reminder that 'a Me conven le laude e a la Reina del reame degno' ('Al cor gentil', 55-6), a line which closely recalls hymnal language like 'Gloria, laus et honor tibi sit, rex Christe redemptor' [Glory and laud and honour be yours, king Christ the redeemer].<sup>106</sup> In fact, God's voice at this point reminds me of nothing so much as Guittone's stentorian tones, criticising Guinizzelli's language of praise and prescribing proper love, echoes which may reinforce by the dialogic history of 'Al cor gentil' (to be explored in the next section of this discussion). Meanwhile, structurally, there is the adoption of a similetic strategy comparable to the *Canticum canticorum*, an element evident throughout Guinizzelli's poetry of praise (discussed at length below). Gorni also highlights one other scriptural correspondence: between the opening statement of 'Al cor gentil' and the beginning of John's Gospel.<sup>107</sup> A structural relationship is to be found between the chiasmus in Guinizzelli's lines — 'Al cor gentil rempaira sempre Amore / [...] né fe' amor anti che gentil core / né gentil core anti ch'amor, natura' ('Al cor gentil', 1-4) — and John 1.1 — 'In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum'. Thematically, 'l'azione creatrice della Natura (*né fe* [...] *Natura* ['Al cor gentil', 4]) è assimilata all'"Omnia per ipsum facta sunt et sine ipso factum est nihil, quod factum est" [John, 1: 3]'.<sup>108</sup> Gorni's

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<sup>106</sup> The traces of this triumphal hymn for Palm Sunday, along with two Franciscan hymns, *Laudes ad omnes horas dicendae* and *Laudes Creaturarum*, which share the formulation 'tue so' le laude, la gloria e l'onore et onne benedictione', are noted in Rossi ed., *Rime*, p. 37.

<sup>107</sup> Guglielmo Gorni, *Il nodo della lingua e il verbo d'amore: studi su Dante e altri duecentisti* (Florence: Olschki, 1981), pp. 41-2.

<sup>108</sup> Gorni, *Il nodo della lingua*, p. 43.

observations thus push this text into a realm of scriptural allusion,<sup>109</sup> while the Gospel text in question is highly significant to the questions of voice and authority discussed above. ‘In principio erat Verbum [...]’ *et cetera* as a model for Guinizzelli’s opening assertion of the *canzone* makes an intertextual statement which merges seamlessly with the exchange of words with God at the poem’s close, and with the focus on the mode in which the donna was created, with her angel’s semblance, and in fact the creative power of the poetic word which renders her thus in the context of the *canzone* (and more broadly in Guinizzelli’s love discourse). Furthermore it adds to our sense of the complicated relationship between Guinizzelli as writer of the text and God as writer of the two books, with the poet’s adoption of the textual form of the Johannine description of the Word as a powerful metatextual statement about the potential impact of vernacular poetry and its verbal authority. The particular moment in John’s Gospel alluded to in ‘Al cor gentil’ reinforces our sense of the performative power of language, the creation through the Word narrated in this scriptural source representing (as a synthesis of the full Genesis creation narrative) the single most impressive (and important) instance of a performative speech act in the Christian canon. In following the form of this moment to explain his concept of love (in and of itself not revolutionary) and to subsequently recreate the lady in the image of an angel, Guinizzelli performs his own poetic conversion through his scriptural register and his determination to accommodate his erotic love within a theologically validated poetics. This dimension of scriptural allusion (to which I will return below) is not lost on Bonagiunta, who seems to feel the need to object on God’s behalf and

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<sup>109</sup> Further scriptural allusions are to be found through Guinizzelli’s *corpus*, and references to other Gospels, Ecclesiastes and Revelations having been identified in his texts, forming part of a ‘reticolo di allusioni bibliche’; Carlo Paolazzi, *La maniera mutata: il ‘dolce stil novo’ tra Scrittura e ‘Ars poetica’* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1998), pp. 21-22. Further exploration of this phenomenon is undertaken in the third section of this discussion: ‘Biblically speaking’.

interject into the silence following Guinizzelli's final declaration of love. I concur with those who understand Bonagiunta's text as containing a reference to 'la "Sacra Scrittura"' and an attack on Guinizzelli's employment thereof.<sup>110</sup> Bonagiunta's critique of Guinizzelli's vernacular poetics is directed at a process by which Guinizzelli does more than transform 'la metafora cortese in metafora biblica'.<sup>111</sup> Guinizzelli's poetry adopts a consistently scriptural lexicon and stance in order to 'traier canson per forza di scrittura' ('Voi c'avete', 14), and it is this that Bonagiunta attacks.

## II. Guinizzelli vs. the critics

It is not only our understanding of the theologising aspects of this *canzone* which can be extended in this reading, but also the nature of its dialogic processes. We have already seen how the concept of Bakhtinian dialogism affords a valuable insight into the God-Poet relationship and the implications for textual authority and poetic justification coupled with staged dialogue within the text. Another of the dialogic processes,<sup>112</sup> that of inter-poetic *tenzone*, comes to the fore when we consider 'Al cor gentil' as a manifesto poem. A brief comparison with Frate Guittone's 'Ora parrà' will usefully inform our understanding of the intertextual development of Guinizzelli's stance which centres on 'Al cor gentil'. As we saw in chapter 1, 'Ora parrà' derives its performative textual force from an active and

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<sup>110</sup> For readings of Bonagiunta's 'scrittura' as signifying 'Sacra scrittura' see: Borsa, *La nuova poesia*, p. 107; Gorni, *Il nodo della lingua*, pp. 41-43; Paolazzi, *La maniera mutata*, p. 44; Picone, 'Guittone, Guinizzelli e Dante' in Luciano Rossi and Sara Alloatti Boller ed., *Intorno a Guido Guinizzelli* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2002), pp. 73-88 (81); and Barolini, *Dante and the Origins*, p. 30.

<sup>111</sup> Borsa, *La nuova poesia*, p. 107.

<sup>112</sup> There are, you will recall, four such processes with which I am concerned: direct dialogue between texts (*tenzoni*), staged dialogue within texts, intertextual dialogue and the dialogic co-existence of multiple forms of a poetic subjectivity. It is the first of these which is relevant here.

essentially palinodic engagement with the past 'erotic' poetry written under the sign of Guittone. The performance of conversion which takes place in Frate Guittone's *canzone* is accomplished through the acknowledgement and subsequent dismissal of past poetics. The status of the Frate's palinode, along with his other conversational texts, depends on a dialogic, inter- and intra-textual process. The manifestation of a new poetics in 'Al cor gentil' develops through a process which shares certain underlying characteristics with 'Ora parrà', but Guinizzelli's text is distinguished by its dependence on a more explicitly outward looking intertextuality, the dialogic model of the *tenzone*. This development of a manifesto through dialogue with other poets characterises 'Al cor gentil' as different sort of a manifesto, one which both emerges from and is reinforced through intertextual interactions and dialogic defence and associated redefinition. Guinizzelli's *canzone* represents a novel synthesis of theological, scriptural, and amorous material and language, which reflexively responds to its own dialogic roots. When Bonagiunta then recognises, foregrounds, and objects to the poetic change represented by 'Al cor gentil' in his sonnet 'Voi c'avete mutata la mainera', the dialogic status of Guinizzelli's *canzone* is reinforced and a further *tenzone* gets underway. In this *tenzone* Guinizzelli comes to the defence of his new 'mainera' with the sonnet, 'Omo ch' è saggio non corre leggero'. If Frate Guittone's 'Ora parrà' offers a vigorous palinode of his own earlier poetic production, Guinizzelli also actively distances himself from previous poetry, redefining (and refining) his poetics as something other than that which has gone before. Guinizzelli states his difference from the poetry of others, of Guittone and the *guittoniani*, and he attains that difference and makes that statement in dialogue with that same poetry. As hinted at above, the dialogic aspect of Al cor gentil does not merely depend on

Bonagiunta's critique in 'Voi c'avete' and Guinizelli's rebuttal of it. 'Al cor gentil' in fact has its genesis in the *tenzone*-process, representing Guinizelli's response to criticisms from another of his correspondent, Guittone.<sup>113</sup>

Moleta has highlighted the textual evidence of this dialogue between the two and demonstrated the manner in which 'Al cor gentil' represents Guinizelli's reply to Guittone's sonnet 'S'eo tale fosse'. In this text Guittone puts forward a critique of the 'laido errore' (11 — 'S'eo tale fosse', 4) allegedly inherent in Guinizelli's poetics of praise:

[...] quando vol la sua donna laudare,  
la dice ched è bella come fiore,  
e che di gemma o ver di stella pare,  
e che 'n viso di grana ave colore.  
(111 — 'S'eo tale fosse', 5-8)

Two of Guinizelli's praise sonnets come in for particular scrutiny in Guittone's poem: 'Vedut'ò la lucente stella diana' (describing the lady's 'viso de neve colorato in grana', 5) and 'Io voglio del ver la mia donna laudare' (comparing the lady to 'la rosa e lo giglio', 2; the 'stella diana', 3; 'tutti color' di fior", 6]; and 'oro ed azzurro', 7).<sup>114</sup> According to Guittone, Guinizelli's fundamental error in these poems is an ontological one. By comparing his lady to objects (stars, flowers, gems, etc.) which occupy a lower level in the order of creation, Guinizelli actually does a disservice to the beloved, rather than praising her:<sup>115</sup> 'ched a ragione maggio è d'ogni cosa / che l'omo pote vedere o toccare' ('S'eo tale fosse', 10-11). 'Al cor gentil', then, offers

<sup>113</sup> Moleta, *Guinizelli in Dante*, pp. 14-33. Moleta further develops this argument with relation to Boethian models of ontological hierarchy in 'Come l'ausello in selva a la verdura' *Studi Danteschi, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, 52 (1979-80), 1-67, reprinted in *Guinizelli in Dante*, pp. 51-127.

<sup>114</sup> This correspondence has been recognised at least since the second decade of the twentieth century, when it was noted in Francesco Torraca, 'Fra Guittone', in *Studi di storia letteraria* (Florence: Sansoni, 1923), pp. 108-52 (114-5), an observation reported in Contini, ed. *PD*, I, p. 255 and more recently in Bruni, 'Agonismo guittoniano', p. 91 n. 7, and Paolo Borsa, *La nuova poesia di Guido Guinizelli* (Fiesole [Florence]: Cadmo, 2007), pp. 61-3.

<sup>115</sup> Moleta, *Guinizelli in Dante*, p. 20; see also Borsa, *La nuova poesia*, p. 86.

a response to Guittone's critique by raising the ontological bar in order to compare the lady, first, to God Himself and then to a heavenly angel, a creature beyond the physical world and indisputably a rung above man in the ontological scale.<sup>116</sup> This responsive, intertextual aspect to 'Al cor gentil' serves to characterise it as a dialogic manifesto of poetic conversion; a text which is already dialogically active, already *tenzonante*, even before the subsequent back and forth between 'Voi c'avete' and 'Omo ch' è saggio'.

A brief aside is necessary at this point to deal with one attempt to supplant Guinizzelli's response from the *tenzone* with Bonagiunta. Giunta has argued that 'Omo ch' è saggio' is not, in fact, a response to 'Voi c'avete' and that any relationship between the two texts and indeed the evident allusion to another Bonagiuntan text ('Omo ch' è saggio ne lo cominciare') doesn't represent a specific allusion, but rather comes from a 'perfetta omogeneità degli stili'.<sup>117</sup> In support of his dismissal, Giunta supplies examples of several poems which contain similar 'omo che' addresses and other impersonal constructions, which he understands as mere common rhetorical markers.<sup>118</sup> This attempt to eradicate any intertextual relationship between Guinizzelli's sonnet and Bonagiunta's poetry by reclassifying allusions as mere products of a shared stylistic tendency remains highly problematic. We would do well to bear in mind throughout this discussion that 'Voi c'avete' and 'Omo ch' è saggio' are paired as a *tenzone* in our very earliest witnesses to them. In the MS Vaticano Latino 3793, for example, we find them grouped using the marginal note 'tenzone ij.' (i.e., a *tenzone* comprising two

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<sup>116</sup> Moleta, *Guinizzelli in Dante*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>117</sup> Claudio Giunta, *La poesia italiana nell'età di Dante: la linea Bonagiunta-Guinizzelli* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998), p. 124.

<sup>118</sup> Giunta, *La poesia italiana*, pp. 122-124.

parts),<sup>119</sup> with each text headed by the name of its author.<sup>120</sup> Given that the classification of these two sonnets as a *tenzone* has such early attestation, any endeavour to separate them would require strong evidence. Giunta's efforts, however, to reclassify Guinizzelli's text as generic and non-specific do not withstand a close reading. The particular use of the formulation 'Omo ch' è saggio' ('Omo ch' è saggio', 1) by Guinizzelli recalls Bonagiunta's 'Omo ch' è saggio ne lo cominciare' so precisely that 'non può non essere intenzionale'.<sup>121</sup> We cannot, in other words dismiss the correspondence as mere coincidence, but should read it as a strident response to the criticisms of Bonagiunta.<sup>122</sup> Let us now return to the specifics of the debate which flourished in the wake of 'Al cor gentil'. It will be useful to reproduce in full the two sonnets in question, before proceeding with further analysis. First, Bonagiunta's critique:

Voi c'avete mutata la mainera  
 de li piacenti ditti de l'amore  
 de la forma dell'esser là dov'era,  
 per avansare ogn'altro trovatore,  
 avete fatto como a lumera,  
 ch'a le scure partite dà sprendore,  
 ma non quine ove luce l'alta spera,  
 la quale avansa e passa di chiarore.  
 Così passate voi di sottigliansa,  
 e non si può trovar chi ben ispogna,  
 cotant'è iscura vostra parlatura.  
 Ed è tenuta grave 'nsomillianza,  
 ancor che 'l senno vegna da Bologna,

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<sup>119</sup> Vat. Lat. 3793, fol. 157. The pair is found among multiple consecutive folios of *tenzoni* classified in this manner (ff. 141-160), including the more common 'tenzone ij', but stretching to larger sequences, including Guittone's 'tenzone vj' — the 'donna villana' sonnets (f. 150-r-v) discussed in the previous chapter.

<sup>120</sup> I had the good fortune to be able to consult this MS — the 'Vatican Canzoniere' — at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana in September 2013 as part of a preliminary investigation into the textual history of Guittone d'Arezzo's poetry (and particularly of those texts contained only in Egidi's edition). It was during this work that I made the above observations about the disposition of *tenzoni* in the MS. I wish to acknowledge my thanks to Dott. Ambrogio Piazzoni, Vice Prefetto of the library, for his invaluable assistance in arranging the visit.

<sup>121</sup> Contini, *PD* II, p. 482.

<sup>122</sup> Picone, 'Guittone, Guinizzelli e Dante', pp. 81-83.

traier canson per forza di scrittura.

The principle contrast raised by Bonagiunta — between ‘piacenti ditti’ and ‘iscura paraltura’, ‘canson’ and ‘scrittura’ — has already been touched upon above, but it will become a focal point in the discussion to follow. Guinizzelli’s rebuttal to this attack reads as follows:

Omo ch’ è saggio non corre leggero,  
 ma a passo grada sí com’ vol misura:  
 quand’ à pensato, riten su’ pensiero  
 infin a tanto che ’l ver l’asigura.  
 Foll’ è chi crede sol veder lo vero  
 e non pensare che altri i ponga cura:  
 non se dev’ omo tener troppo altero,  
 ma dé guarda so stato e sua natura.  
 Volan ausel’ per air di straine guise  
 ed àn diversi loro operanti  
 né tutti d’ un volar né d’ un ardire.  
 Dëo natura e ’l mondo in grado mise,  
 e fe’ despari senni e intendimenti:  
 perzò ciò ch’ omo pensa non dé dire.

While the precision of Guinizzelli’s deconstruction of Bonagiunta’s critique may not immediately leap out at the reader, Guido in fact mounts an effective and excoriating counterattack against Bonagiunta’s stylistic conservatism. In Picone’s words, Guinizzelli’s sonnet may ‘sembra[r] pacato nel tono, ma è micidiale nella sostanza’<sup>123</sup> in its response to Bonagiunta’s claims for a sole poetic truth embodied in the ‘alta spera’ of Guittone and his *scola*, a truth which the novel Bolognese poet allegedly mars with his petty ‘lumera’. Guinizzelli’s statement that it is foolhardy to believe that one uniquely sees the truth (‘Foll’ è chi crede sol veder lo vero’, ‘Omo ch’ è saggio’, 8), coupled with his analogy of the valid variety of birds, for the valid variety of poets, which ‘han diversi loro operamenti, / né tutti d’ un volar né d’ un ardire’ (‘Omo ch’ è saggio’, 10-11), form part of his response to the attack of ‘Voi c’ avete’. What Picone seems to hint at but never explicitly discusses is the very

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

precise response of Guinizzelli's final tercet to Bonagiunta's own final lines. To illustrate the exactness of Guinizzelli's reply we should first turn to those critical final lines in 'Voi c'avete':

Ed è tenuta grave 'nsomillianza,  
ancor che 'l senno vegna da Bologna,  
traier canson per forza di scrittura.  
(‘Voi c'avete’, 12-14)

Bonagiunta's focus here on the 'senno' from Bologna and the production of verse, 'canson', with the weight of scripture, the word of God — i.e. in a manner that exceeds the Lucchese poet's sense of what is appropriate for lyric poetry ('li piacenti ditti de l'amore' of line 2) — is echoed and rebutted in Guinizzelli's closing tercet:

Dëo natura e 'l mondo in grado mise,  
e fe' despari senni e intendimenti:  
perzò ciò ch'omo pensa non dé dire.  
(‘Omo ch' è saggio’, 12-14)

It is evident from this tercet that Guinizzelli's mind is firmly on issues of sanctioned and sanctified poesis, appealing to God's natural order and the 'despari senni e intendimenti' therein. The implication here is that the 'senno' of Guinizzelli's poetry, 'da Bologna', is justified in the sight of God's natural order. This concept also recalls the history of the *tenzone* with Guittone, which raised the ontological stakes in the first place, resulting in 'Al cor gentil'. Indeed Guinizzelli's 'senno' may even be privileged over the writing of Bonagiunta and the *guittoniani* who, rather than alloying their poetry with scriptural textuality, are saying foolish things and would be better off remaining silent. Guinizzelli's text effectively offers a line for line treatment of the criticisms in Bonagiunta's final tercet, cementing the *tenzone* relationship between 'Omo ch' è saggio' and 'Voi c'avete'. This accumulation of factors should reinforce our sense that the opening of Guinizzelli's

sonnet is not an accidental echo of a Bonagiuntan text *à la* Giunta. Considered as a whole, the text of Guinizzelli's 'Omo ch' è saggio' represents a deliberate engagement with Bonagiunta's poetry more generally, and specifically a clear rebuttal of this latter's criticisms of 'Al cor gentil'.

Returning to Guinizzelli's past *tenzone* exchanges with Guittone, a tranche of which we have already seen, there is one more exchange of sonnets which must be accounted for, before moving on to other dialogic processes in the Bolognese Guido's *corpus*. I refer specifically to the *tenzone* comprising Guinizzelli's 'Caro padre mēo, de vostra laude' and Guittone's 'Figlio mio diletto, in faccia laude'. In this *tenzone* Guinizzelli recommends one of his *canzoni* (traditionally identified as 'Lo fin pregi' avanzato', though more recently considered to be 'Al cor gentil', of which, more later)<sup>124</sup> to the Aretine *caposcuola*. The apparently grovelling tone of Guinizzelli's opening salvo is evident from the outset:

Caro padre mēo, de vostra laude  
non bisogna ch'alcun omo se 'mbarchi:  
che 'n vostra mente intrar vizio non aude,  
che for de sé vostro saver non l'archi.  
(‘Caro padre mēo’, 1-4)

The declaration that any 'laude' is an unnecessary undertaking and that any vice is expelled by Guittone's wisdom, is the unctuous starting point of this cloyingly praise-laden little poem, but these opening lines also mark the starting point of Guinizzelli's ironic parody of the Frate. Addresses to 'frati', 'cari' or otherwise ('O cari Frati miei, con malamente'; 'O frati miei, voi che desiderate'), and a 'padre [...] e mio messere' ('Padre dei padri miei e mio messere')<sup>125</sup> are typical features of

<sup>124</sup> Rossi ed., *Rime*, p. 69; see also Picone, 'Guittone, Guinizzelli e Dante', pp. 75-80; and Steinberg, *Accounting for Dante*, pp. 38-40.

<sup>125</sup> For a few further examples of Guittone's vocative tendencies see 'O donne mie, leale e buono amore' (sonnet 151), 'Carissimi, più fiato, e or appare' (sonnet 199) and 'O carissimi miei, qual' è cagione' (sonnet 202).

Frate Guittone's religious production and so in adopting them wholesale, Guinizzelli mimics to ridicule. A more nuanced understanding of Guinizzelli's less than sincere stance here begins with Sanguinetti's analysis of the text in 1986 as 'un gesto di calcolatissima strategia',<sup>126</sup> while Rea notes the unlikelihood of any genuine praise of Guittone by Guinizzelli given the contentious context mapped out above.<sup>127</sup> The sense of this irony has developed through subsequent readings, most recently Steinberg's,<sup>128</sup> for whom 'Guinizzelli is poking fun at both the institution of the Jovial friars and the poetic style of Guittone',<sup>129</sup> as exemplified in the lines 'entr'a Gaudenti ben vostr'alma gaude, / ch'al me parer li gaudii han sovr'alarchi' ('Caro padre mèo', 7-8). The word play on 'gaudio' mocks Frate Guittone's own plays on the term, as in 'Vegna — vegna — chi vol giocundare' which contains six derivations of the lemma in eight lines.<sup>130</sup> This technical tendency is also manifest in Guittone's pre-conversion texts, particularly in the play on his lady's *senhal*, 'gioia'. The prime example of that tendency is his aforementioned thirty-first amorous sonnet, 'Tuttur ch'eo dirò gioi, gioiva cosa',

<sup>126</sup> For the relevant discussion see Edoardo Sanguinetti ed., Guido Guinizzelli, *Poesie* (Milan: Mondadori, 1986), pp. vii-xiii, quotation p. viii.

<sup>127</sup> Roberto Rea, 'Guinizzelli praised and explained', *The Italianist*, 30.1 (February 2010), pp. 1-17 (2-3).

<sup>128</sup> Steinberg, *Accounting For Dante*, pp. 36-40. See also: Antonello Borra who classifies Guinizzelli's text as 'un sonetto che, sotto le spoglie di una ambigua testimonianza di sottomissione artistica, nascondeva in realtà una irrispettosa parodia del suo stile', Borra, *Guittone d'Arezzo*, p. 10; and Borsa, 'La tenzone tra Guido Guinizzelli e Frate Guittone d'Arezzo', *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* 65 (2002), pp. 47-88, reprinted as chapter 1 of Borsa, *La nuova poesia*, pp. 13-60.

<sup>129</sup> Steinberg, *Accounting for Dante*, p. 37.

<sup>130</sup> Guittone's text continues:

[...] e *gaudio* per cui *gaudo* e son gioivo,  
for cui *gaudendo* onni dolor mi sorte,  
degn, — degna — la mia alma sponsare  
e farlaTe tutta degna.

O vero *gaudio* del mio spirito, *gauda*  
con tutto piacer di Te l'alma mia,  
sì che Tuo viso veggia e Tua voce auda  
loco 've *gaudio* tutto eternal sia.

(39 — 'Vegna — vegna — chi vole giocundare', 23-30)

which contains said *senhal* no fewer than twenty-five times in its fourteen lines! The obsessive redeployment of these two particular roots is not by chance, as ‘Fra Guittone replaces the *adnominatio* of *gioia* [...] with repetition of lexical forms of *gaudio*’,<sup>131</sup> and thus Guinizzelli effectively parodies this stylistic tic throughout Guittone’s *corpus* by means of his own *gaudio* variations. Having thus ridiculed Guittone’s lyric style, the tercets somewhat disingenuously request advice on one of Guinizzelli’s own poems:

Prendete la canzon, la qual io porgo  
al saver vostro, che l’aguinchi e cimi,  
ch’a voi ciò solo com’a maestr’accorgo,  
ch’ell’è congiunta certo a debel’ vimi:  
però mirate di lei ciascun borgo  
per vostra correzion lo vizio limi.  
(‘Caro padre mèo’, 9-14)

What, though, is this *canzone*? As noted above, it has been traditionally been identified as ‘Lo fin pregi’ avanzato’, described as characteristic of Guinizzelli’s ‘inizî [...] rigorosamente guittoniani’ by Contini,<sup>132</sup> and Rossi comes out in support of such an identification:

Che [questa] ipotesi sia il più probabile sembra tuttavia confermato dalla circostanza che proprio Guittone aveva aperto le ostilità, polemizzando col Bolognese, nel più volte citato sonetto *S’eo tale fosse, ch’io potesse*, in merito alla poetica della ‘lode’ dell’amata da quest’ultimo perseguita istituendo precise analogie col mondo naturale [...] Non solo Guido persevera impunemente nell’errore, ma provoca apertamente il proprio censore, sfidandolo a cimentarsi nell’esegesi della sua canzone più oscura.<sup>133</sup>

It is worth quoting this lengthy passage of Rossi’s introduction to ‘Caro padre mèo’, because, while aspects of its argument hold true, the conclusion fails to convince. The context of the ‘S’eo tale fosse’ exchange discussed above is certainly

<sup>131</sup> Steinberg, *Accounting for Dante*, p. 37. See also Sanguinetti on the transition from ‘gioia’ to ‘gaudio’ in Guittone’s poetry and the possible resonances in ‘Caro padre mèo’, Guinizzelli, *Poesie*, p. x.

<sup>132</sup> Contini, *PD*, II, p. 447.

<sup>133</sup> Rossi ed., *Rime*, p. 69.

the key to identifying the *canzone* being sent by Guinizzelli, whose response is impudent, but does not, as Rossi argues, consist in a persistence in past practices of praise with impunity. As we have seen, the *canzone* which responds to the Guittonian criticisms of ontologically lowly similes of ‘lode’ found in ‘S’eo tale fosse’ is most likely ‘Al cor gentil’. The ironic obeisance shown in Guinizzelli’s ‘Caro padre mèo’ fits far more readily with the supplication of such a *canzone*. The audacious, transcendent and transgressive comparative language of ‘Al cor gentil’ acts as a response to and rebuke of Guittone’s previous criticisms, which the accompanying sonnet directs to the newly converted Frate Guittone. This interpretation is reinforced by the relationship of rhymes in the *tenzone* with those in ‘Al cor gentil’, rhymes which not only connect these three texts, but mark them as a unique cluster, offering, ‘in the thirteenth century manuscripts of Italian poetry, the sole examples of the rhyme *-aude*’.<sup>134</sup> Guittone’s castigating response opens, as ironically as Guinizzelli’s sonnet, with the address to ‘Figlio mio diletto’ and offers a response *per le rime*, including those very *rime* which bind these sonnets to the last strophe of ‘Al cor gentil’, to the presumptuous Bolognese poet’s endeavour in ‘Al cor gentil’. The key to comprehending the relationship of this sonnet to ‘Al cor gentil’ comes in the final tercet:

La grazia tūa, che padre dicími  
che figlio tale, assai pago, corgo,  
pur che vera sapienza a poder cimi.  
(‘Figlio mio diletto’, 12-14)

Frate Guittone states that he is willing to accept Guinizzelli’s declaration of filial bond and deference, provided that he seeks, as far as it is within his power, true

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<sup>134</sup> Steinberg, *Accounting for Dante*, p. 40; Steinberg cites the entry for ‘aude’ in D’Arco Silvio Avalle, *Concordanze della lingua poetica italiana delle origini* (Milan; Naples: Ricciardi, 1977). The *-aude*, in the guise of ‘aude’/‘fraude’, will also appear as an internal rhyme in ‘Donna me prega’, which suggests that a more than glancing comparison between these two statements of erotic doctrine would be worthwhile.

wisdom. By maintaining the irony of the exchange and responding to Guinizzelli's surface meaning, the Frate makes a scathing statement about Guinizzelli's ability to attain proper understanding; 'vera sapienza' should here be understood within the context of the *vero-falso* dichotomy created by Frate Guittone throughout his religious texts,<sup>135</sup> i.e. as religious wisdom in opposition to secular or carnal knowledge. The appositeness of this criticism to 'Al cor gentil' is obvious. As noted above, that *canzone* contains discussions of Aristotelian philosophy as applied to erotic concerns and makes use of scriptural sources and divine voices to develop and justify mundane love (even if it is for a thoroughly angelic lady). This kind of erotic philosophy and rhetorical manoeuvring, all in the service of 'falso amore', is precisely the sort of 'sapienza' which we have seen Frate Guittone dismiss repeatedly and at length.

It makes sense then, that Guinizzelli, in responding to the critique in 'S'eo tale fosse' with the bold, borderline blasphemous, and avowedly presumptuous *canzone*, 'Al cor gentil', should attach said poem to a sonnet characterised by false deference to his critic, Frate Guittone. The still critical, similarly ironic response from the Aretine friar then takes stock of and aim at the *falsa sapienza* of the upstart from Bologna. This exchange completes an extended *tenzone*, the development of which has been traced above, and from which branched the head to head with Bonagiunta, an exchange that will resonate through the oeuvres of the poets still to be treated in this thesis.

### **III. Biblically speaking**

The dialogic processes set out in the previous section present us with part of

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<sup>135</sup> As treated fully in section III of chapter 1.

Guinizzelli's literary conversion, defining his difference from that which has gone before, and thus how and what he has changed in relation to the poetic tradition out of which he was born. This is not, however, the only aspect of Guinizzelli's poetics which marks him out as representative of a conversional transition. As noted in the discussion of 'scrittura' above, Guinizzelli makes use of a variety of biblical sources in his poetry and this represents a sort of linguistic conversion by which lyric language becomes insistently scripturally charged. This aspect of Guinizzelli's poetics has already been explored in a number of studies.<sup>136</sup> I will now extrapolate from these readings and, in so doing, account for the dialogic nature of this 'scriptural' praxis. The example of structural and thematic allusions to John's Gospel in 'Al cor gentil' has already shed light on Guinizzelli's potent use of scriptural imagery and language. This is by no means an isolated example; his poetry also incorporates allusions to the archetypal scriptural example of synthesised theological and erotic writing, the *Canticum canticorum*,<sup>137</sup> as well as drawing imagery from other biblical loci. This insistent process of scriptural allusion has important implications when we come to locate Guinizzelli's particular conversion poetics within the medieval Italian tradition, on a lexical level. Despite Guittone's critiques of the ontological ranking of Guinizzelli's similes, even Guido's apparently secular laudatory sonnets represent his lady after the fashion of Scripture, whether in the similetic model inherited from the *Canticum canticorum*

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<sup>136</sup> For examples of this tendency see: Gorni, *Il nodo della lingua*, pp. 41-43; Paolazzi, *La maniera mutata*, pp. 47-101 (Chapter 2); Pietro Pelosi, *Guido Guinizzelli: stilnovo inquieto* (Naples: Liguori Editore, 2000), pp. 8-11; Borsa, *La nuova poesia*, pp. 84-102 see also the notes in Rossi ed., *Rime*.

<sup>137</sup> Borsa, *La nuova poesia*, pp. 87-9.

and found in sonnets like ‘Io voglio del ver’,<sup>138</sup> or in a range of other biblical allusions. The opening of ‘Vedut’ò la lucente stella diana’ provides a prime example, presenting the beloved as the incarnation of the ‘lucente stella diana/ ch’apare anzi che ’l giorno rend’albore’.<sup>139</sup> This image is more than ‘just’ a star, offering us a range of scriptural biblical connotations and intertexts, from the morning star of Ecclesiastes 50: 6 to the star of Revelations 22: 16.<sup>140</sup> While astral bodies may not have impressed Frate Guittone as comparisons for a beloved, this particular one carries intertextual overtones which render it a somewhat more potent image than the critique made in ‘S’eo tale fosse’ would have us believe. Even when Guinizelli is not being quite so genteel and laudatory, he still draws on scriptural imagery as part of his descriptive strategies. In his jocosely treatment of ‘Lucia’ he describes her eyes thus: ‘occhi suoi, ch’ èn due fiamme de foco!’ (‘Chi vedesse a Lucia un var capuzzo’, 11). This particular formulation recalls Revelations 1: 14, ‘oculi eius velut flamma ignis’.<sup>141</sup> In this example from a ‘comic’ context, the effect of the poetic image is inversely proportional to the height of the allusive register. This biblical intertextuality serves not to highlight how worthy the beloved is of scripturally charged description, but rather to contrast the baseness of tone and lustful sentiment with the glory of the Christ figure of Revelations, an effect compounded

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<sup>138</sup> ‘La poetica dell’analogia fra oggetto amato e forme naturali s’ispira manifestamente al *Cantico dei Cantici*, come rivela anche il verbo (*r*)*assemblare* o *somigliare*, se accostato a I, 8 (“Equitatu meo in curribus Pharaonis, assimilavi te, amica mea”) (Contini, *PD II*, p. 472); Rossi ed., *Rime*, p. 30.

<sup>139</sup> The full quatrain reads:  
 Vedut’ò la lucente stella diana,  
 ch’apare anzi che ’l giorno rend’albore,  
 ch’è preso forma di figura umana;  
 sovr’ogn’altra me par che dea splendore.  
 (‘Vedut’ò la lucente stella diana’, 1-4)

<sup>140</sup> Paolazzi, *La maniera mutata*, pp. 71-72: Paolazzi’s full catalogue also includes Matthew 2: 7 Revelations 2: 28.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64-67; the eyes in this instance belonging to one like to the Son of Man (‘similem Filio hominis’, *Rev* 1:13).

by Lucia's ironically light-bearing name. Moments such as these demonstrate that that scriptural intertexts are consistently present in Guinizzelli's diction. His poetics mingles 'lowly' vernacular lyric — even the lowliest comic vein — with the most authoritative words available, those drawn from scripture. This persistent biblical lexicon is acknowledged in Bonagiunta's objection to Guinizzelli's poetics, criticising the 'grave 'nsomillianza' of 'traier canson per forza di scrittura' ('Voi c'avete', 12-14). Bonagiunta also notes the probable inspiration for this poetic transgression as the intellectual milieu of Guinizzelli's city and its university culture, the 'senno [...] da Bologna' ('Voi c'avete', 13).<sup>142</sup> But more than this 'senno', more even than Guinizzelli's oppositional relationship with Guittone (discussed above), Bonagiunta takes issue with vernacular poetry ('canson') written with recourse to biblical authority ('scrittura').<sup>143</sup> It is this stance, coupled with his status as *tenzonante*, which will influence Dante's later use of Bonagiunta as an interlocutor on the terrace of the gluttonous in *Purgatorio* XXVI, as I will discuss in the next chapter.<sup>144</sup> The criticisms expressed in Bonagiunta's sonnet actually furnish us with a useful interpretive reading of Guinizzelli's praxis. In reading with Bonagiunta the 'forza di scrittura' in Guinizzelli's poetry, we can identify that aspect of Guido's poetics which most effectively illustrates the presence and role of dialogic intertextuality in his writing. One dialogic process in Guinizzelli's poetic conversion sheds light on another: the *tenzone* with Bonagiunta (and with Guittone) illuminates the strategies of scriptural allusion which underpin Guinizzelli's praxis. In Guido's texts sacred, biblical language and intertexts can

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<sup>142</sup> See Roncaglia's discussion of the 'motivi ch'erano d'attualità nella Bologna del Guinizzelli, negli ambienti universitari e culturali ch'egli frequentò' and their influence on 'Al cor gentil'; Roncaglia, 'Precedenti e significato', p. 24.

<sup>143</sup> See above for the discussion of the reading of Bonagiunta's 'scrittura' as 'Sacra Scrittura'.

<sup>144</sup> See chapter 3, section I.

coexist and sound alongside the lexicon and forms of a profane lyric tradition. Guinizzelli thus maintains an insistent dialogic relationship with scripture, in both the Bakhtinian and intertextual senses, the implications of which will echo beyond his own *corpus*. The intertextual presence of biblical sources has a similar polyphonic resonance to the ventriloquising of the voice of God discussed in the first section of this chapter. When biblical language is co-opted for a lyric function a necessary dialogic tension develops. The Bakhtinian concept of non-authorial voices sounding alongside and mingling with authorial ones has a particular complexity when the voice of an *actor* — the Bible — is being quoted in the text of a poet. Guinizzelli's process of scriptural allusion raises the question of which of these voices is authorial, and which voice is secondary. The Bakhtinian model of polyphony, though, allows us to both pose the question and blur the distinction between 'author' and 'other voice'. The co-mingling of biblical intertexts with Guinizzelli's poetry and the co-sounding of scriptural and lyric lexicons allows the lyric voice to lay claim to scriptural authority merely through its co-presence with it. This co-present relationship, and the dialogic intertwining of an authoritative scriptural voice with Guinizzelli's own vernacular *detti*, will culminate in a textual legacy that will see him be named (however problematically) 'padre' to Dante's theologised poetics.<sup>145</sup> Other aspects of his writing, particularly his *Canticum canticorum*-inspired similetic method and his extra- and super-terrestrial imagery, will have a rather different impact on another Guido, Cavalcanti, as we shall see in the second part of this chapter.

Guinizzelli, then, does not present exactly the sort of straightforwardly programmatic conversion through poetic self-recreation and teleologising which

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<sup>145</sup> This naming in *Purgatorio* XXVI, is the last in a series of acknowledgements which begin in the sonnet 'Amor e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa' in the *Vita Nuova* (to be discussed further in the next chapter) and encompass citations in both *Convivio* and *De vulgari eloquentia*.

we witness in Guittone. Instead he develops a poetic conversion — and a significant performative erosion of the *donna-Deo* tension — through a dialogical self-redefinition in *tenzone* with others. He boldly stages the dispute with God in ‘Al cor gentil’ in order to justify this conversion in his poetics and its implications for his representations of love, a moment which we should take far more seriously than has heretofore been the case. Guinizzelli’s conversional strategy is both understood and criticised by Bonagiunta. The manifestation of a converted poetics comes to be established through the inter-poetic dialogues between Bonagiunta and Guinizzelli as well as those between Guinizzelli and Guittone. Guinizzelli’s responses to these two critical respondents define and realise his poetic conversion. He establishes and delineates his difference from the poetry which has preceded him, from his immediate literary context, and from the poets with whom he is in dialogue. He harnesses the performative weight of the generative Word, through his intertextual relationship with scripture, to create a new kind of love discourse and a new kind of lady. The central aspects of this difference are: dialogical interaction with scripture throughout Guinizzelli’s *corpus*; the representation of a lady who is both the object of praise (which goes beyond the bounds of courtly tradition) and the source of moral improvement (not just for the poet, but for all who encounter her); and a new performative confrontation, in ‘Al cor gentil’, of the traditional courtly impasse of loyalty divided between *donna* and *Dio*.

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## ***Part 2 – Guido Cavalcanti: Dialogic Disdain?***

The inclusion of Guido Cavalcanti (c.1255-1300), heretic and natural philosopher by repute, in a study which focusses on narratives of conversion may at first seem odd, but the reasons for his inclusion are threefold. Firstly, any discussion of lyric subjectivity in this period would be lacking without at least some consideration of Dante's 'primo amico'; secondly, he represents the other side of the coin, establishing a poetics and subjectivity which are explicitly opposed to any transcendental justification; and finally, the methods by which Cavalcanti enacts this self offer a striking example of the kinds of polyphony and other dialogic processes which form the methodological framework for this study in a stridently anti-theological context. In keeping with a cumulative and chronological approach to the poets under consideration,<sup>146</sup> the focus of the second half of this chapter will be on Cavalcanti's dialogic relationships with Guittone and Guinizelli as well as his own internalised polyphony, with any significant discussion of his relationship with Dante Alighieri being exiled to the remaining chapters.

### **I. Conversations with converts: Cavalcanti *tenzonante***

A fitting place to begin this discussion is Cavalcanti's disdainful sonnet, 'Da più a uno face un sollegismo',<sup>147</sup> addressed to Guittone, criticising his philosophical and poetic technique, thereby brutally deconstructing the friar's standpoint. Far from a generic attack on the Aretine poet's poetry and theology, this text is considered by

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<sup>146</sup> Chronological not in terms of birth, but of poetic production and renown, by which measure Guittone precedes Guinizelli as the latter clearly deferred (however ironically) to the former as 'caro padre' and sent texts for consideration to the Aretine poet, who had a sort *caposcuola* seniority and precedence.

<sup>147</sup> Texts of all of Cavalcanti's poems are drawn from Guido Cavalcanti, *Rime*, Roberto Rea and Giorgio Inglese ed. (Rome: Carocci, 2011).

most commentators to be directed at Guittone's *canzone* 'Poi male tutto è nulla inver peccato' (xxxii),<sup>148</sup> a text written to highlight the gravest error of 'non creder sia Deo, / né vita, appresso d'esta, a pena o merto' (xxxii — 'Poi male tutto', 4-5), the only text, according to De Robertis, 'che può aver provocato una così sprezzante reazione' from Cavalcanti.<sup>149</sup> It is easy to see how Guittone's text would infuriate Cavalcanti, with its claim that every tongue, every race and every person throws aside all other beliefs in favour of the true faith, and in particular that philosophers and other learned folk will join with the unschooled in this universal acclamation of the one God:

*Onni lingua, onni schiatta, e onni gente  
conferman lui, destrutte altre credenze;  
e non sol nescienti omin selvaggi,  
ma li più molto e maggi  
dei filosofi tutti e altri dotti.  
E ciò ch'afferman totti,  
come Tulio dice, è necessario;  
perché, sì com'el dice,  
non saggio alcun Dio isdice;  
e santi apresso, en cui non quasi conto,  
o filosofi manti e saggi fuoro,  
che con parole loro  
non solo già, ma per vita el testaro.  
Come dunque omo chiaro  
e saggio alcun contra parlar po ponto?  
(‘Poi male tutto’, 26-40)*

This *canzone*, in the terms of Latini's classification, presents a classic example of a *tenzone*. In 'Poi male tutto' Frate Guittone produces a text which he 'guernisce di parole ornate e piene di sentenza e di fermi argomenti, sì come crede poter muovere l'animo di colui [a cui e'la manda] a non negare', and so it follows that 'è una tencione tacita intra loro [cioè il scrittore e il lettore]' (Latini, *Rettorica*, 16).

<sup>148</sup> See the introductions to the sonnet in both Cavalcanti, *Rime*, Domenico de Robertis ed. (Turin: Einaudi, 1986), p. 184, and Guido Cavalcanti, *Rime*, Letterio Cassata ed. (Anzio: De Rubéis, 1993), p. 212.

<sup>149</sup> Cassata cites De Robertis in strongly approving tones in his later comment on the text (Cassata ed., *Rime*, p. 212).

While the other party in this instance, the audience for Frate Guittone's words, is ostensibly the 'Vescovo d'Arezzo', the text necessarily has a more public face and a broader predicatory intent which opens its dialogic aspect out to wider range of respondents, including Cavalcanti. In the canzone, Guittone offers an argument by *auctoritas* (God himself and also the dicta of Cicero, the 'Tulio' of 11) and *consensus omnium* (the universal acclamation of all peoples) for the truth of the Christian faith, reinforcing his stance with the rhetorical query as to how any clearheaded, learned man could possibly contradict such a weight of evidence. An argumentative structure of this nature runs stridently counter to the logical principles of Cavalcanti's philosophical poetry;<sup>150</sup> this is one 'filosofo' who will leave such acclamations to 'omin selvaggi', along with the sort of linguistic 'barbarismo' ('Da più a uno', 5) for which he attacks Guittone in his critical sonnet. More recently, however, Roberto Rea's commentary on Cavalcanti's 'Da più a uno' has suggested that:

senza escludere che tale canzone ['Poi male tutto'] potesse essere presente a Guido, almeno come emblematica dei fallaci procedimenti guittoniani (e anche per la rilevanza della materia trattata), [...] sembra che il sonetto cavalcantiano contenga puntuali riferimenti alla celebre e altezzosa dichiarazione di poetica che chiude la canzone guittoniana 'Altra fiata aggio già'.<sup>151</sup>

Rea's proposed change of primary intertext is supported by a variety of textual resonances, of which the most striking is the re-emergence of Guittone's lines 'E dice alcun ch'è duro / e aspro mio trovato a savorare; / e pote essere vero. Und'è cagione? / che m'abonda ragione' (xlix — 'Altra fiata aggio', 163-6) in Cavalcanti's

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<sup>150</sup> De Robertis ed., *Rime*, p. 184. For detailed discussion of aspects of Cavalcanti's logic, see Maria Luisa Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti: The Other Middle Ages* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2002), pp. 47-65, recapitulated in 'Logica e teoria della visione in 'Donna me prega'', in Maria Luisa Ardizzone ed., *Guido Cavalcanti tra i suoi lettori (Guido Cavalcanti: Proceedings of the International Symposium for the Seventh Centennial of his Death)* (Fiesole, FI: Cadmo., 2003), pp. 51-74. For an overview of the practice of logic in Cavalcanti's historical milieu, see Alfonso Maierù, 'La logica nell'età di Cavalcanti', also in Ardizzone ed., *Guido Cavalcanti tra i suoi lettori*, pp. 27-49.

<sup>151</sup> Rea and Inglese ed., *Rime*, p. 246.

*ragione—cagione* rhyme.<sup>152</sup> Even given the establishment of this new intertext, a non-reductive reading — according to which Cavalcanti criticises both the specific content of ‘Altra fiata aggio’ and the general argumentative mode exemplified in ‘Poi male tutto’ — is still both possible and helpful in analysing Cavalcanti’s anti-Guittonian tirade, as Rea concedes.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, there remain several points of more direct intertextual contact between ‘Da più a uno’ and ‘Poi male tutto’, to be brought to light over the course of this discussion, which encourage us to read ‘Poi male tutto’ and ‘Altra fiata aggio’ as simultaneous intertexts for Guido’s poem.<sup>154</sup> One such instance is the specific discourse of ‘saver’ brought to the fore in Cavalcanti’s sonnet, which provides an important locus for the polyvalence of his critique of Frate Guittone. The centrality of ‘saver’ to the friar-poet’s new project of moral ‘cantare’ was established in ‘Ora parrà’ — ‘Ma chi cantare vole e valer bene [...] orrato saver mette al timone’ (16-18) — and finds its most direct association with divine authority in ‘Poi male tutto’, as we shall see. As such, the proud poetics of Frate Guittone’s ‘Altra fiata aggio’ and the argumentation of his ‘Poi male tutto’ are both understood as offering points of contact for Guido’s critiques in ‘Da più a uno’. For reference, I will quote Cavalcanti’s poem in its entirety here, before considering the question of argumentation as foregrounded in a few key moments in its succinct demolition of Frate Guittone’s moralising.

Da più a uno face un sollegismo,  
 i maggiore e minor mezzo si pone,  
 che prova necessario, sansa rismo:  
 da ciò ti parti forse di ragione?  
 Nel profferer che cade ’n barbarismo  
 difeto di saver ti dà cagione;

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>154</sup> Such a reading is consistent with the multi-textual allusions and quotations to be seen in Cavalcanti’s ‘tenzone virtuale’ with Guinizelli (treated below) and Guinizelli’s repost to Bonagiunta’s ‘Voi c’avete’ (discussed above).

e come far poteresti un sofismo  
 per silabate carte, fra Guittone?  
 Per te non fu giammai una figura:  
 non fori' aposto il tuo argomento;  
 induri quando più dici; e pon' cura,  
 ché 'ntes' ho che compon' d'insegnamento  
 volume: e fòr principio ha da natura.  
 Fa' ch'om non rida il tuo proponimento!

First Cavalcanti describes the correct construction of a syllogism which requires that one thing is deduced from many — ‘Da più a uno face un sollegismo’ (1) — a process which he deems necessary even in defence of a belief in God. Guittone has failed to take this approach, beginning, as he does, from an understanding that he is not speaking on the authority of his wisdom alone, but rather on behalf of (and authorised by) a higher wisdom, the wisdom of God — ‘non del mio saver dico già farlo, / ma del suo, per cui parlo’ (xxxii — ‘Poi male tutto’, 16-17).<sup>155</sup> This statement on Guittone’s part renders Cavalcanti’s lines, ‘Nel profferer, che cade ’n barbarismo, / difetto di saver ti dà cagione’ (‘Da più a uno’, 5-6), even more heavily anti-theistic than has been noted in previous readings. If the ‘saver’ responsible for Frate Guittone’s speech in ‘Poi male tutto’ (and elsewhere in his moral writing) is God’s, then according to Cavalcanti’s critique the defect must also be related to God. While not quite making the sign of the figs and shouting “‘Togli, Dio, ch’a te le squadro!’” as Vanni Fucci will in *Inferno* XXV (1-3), Guido is at the very least criticising any recourse to divine revelation in lieu of strictly logical argumentation. This Cavalcantian adherence to argument justified by human thought makes him a natural opponent of a poet who, like Frate Guittone, considers wisdom without God to be ‘saver che disensegna / dritto’ (‘O cari frati miei’, 20-1) and a product of ‘malvagio ingegno’ (‘O cari frati miei’, 12). Without wanting to drift into Dantean statements on Guido’s ‘ingegno’, there does appear to be a crucial contrast between

<sup>155</sup> This association, as touched upon above, is already hinted at in ‘Ora parrà, when he who wishes to sing well and be worthy puts wisdom at the helm and makes God his navigational reference point, his star: ‘saver mette al timone, / Dio fa sua stella’. (‘Ora parrà, 17-18)

the poetic projects of Frate Guittone and Cavalcanti, even before taking into account the explicit critique set out ‘Da più a uno’. There is, then, a fundamental difference of opinion on the role of philosophy between the texts of Guittone and Cavalcanti, which Guido expresses dialogically, with recourse to the argumentative system of the *tenzone*. And this is not the end of Cavalcanti’s critique. Beyond the failure to construct syllogisms correctly, Cavalcanti accuses Guinizzelli of ‘sofismo’ in his ‘silabate carte’ (‘Da più a uno’, 7-8), attacking not just the manner in which Guittone’s arguments are constructed, but the very foundations on which they are built. The claim of sophism is a severe criticism to level against a poet whose religious identity, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is founded on a claim to speak truth. The ‘silabate carte’ also serve to recall Guittone’s lines:

Dio dimostrando, mostrerò primamente  
 che libri tutti quasi in tutte scienze,  
 provando lui, *son soie carte*, quando  
 parlan di lui, laudando  
 (xxxii — ‘Poi male tutto’, 21-4 [italics mine])

Cavalcanti’s break down of Frate Guittone’s argumentation takes aim at the appeal to authority, which is enshrined in the friar-poet’s text. In criticising the pages of Guittone’s own poetry Cavalcanti also questions the pages of those sources on which the friar depends. Implicit in this allusion and the accusation of specious sophism which it frames, is a questioning of the friar-poet’s claims that nearly every book in every discipline proves God’s existence, a claim unsupported by any proper logical demonstration. In undertaking this particular critique, Cavalcanti both undermines Frate Guittone’s argumentative process and, perhaps, reclaims those books for the realm of secular knowledge in which Guido himself operates. Similarly, as the rest of his sonnet demonstrates, Cavalcanti is certainly not willing to accept God’s proof of himself, a fact in keeping with his resistance to arguments

by *auctoritas*. Guido Cavalcanti is by no means unforthcoming in his dialogic critique of Frate Guittone in this carefully targeted sonnet, and he joins that other Guido, Guinizelli, in the undermining of Guittone's authoritative poetics. Cavalcanti, it must be said, advances on Guinizelli's ironic, satirising address to the Siculo-Tuscan *caposcuola* Guittone, and instead holds the Aretine up to full-throated ridicule.

Thanks to Michelangelo Picone's efforts we can now turn to examples of Cavalcanti in intertextual dialogue with the other poet discussed in this study thus far, namely 'l'altro Guido', Guinizelli, from whom, Dante will later inform us, Cavalcanti 'ha tolto la gloria della lingua'. For Picone, Cavalcanti is crucial as the poet who introduces Guinizelli's *mainera mutata* into Florentine literary circles and, in conjunction with the Bolognese Guido, kick-started the most fruitful period of Italian lyric development.<sup>156</sup> The significance of Picone's study for the present discussion lies in his identification of a 'tenzone virtuale' between the two Guidos, characterised by a 'dialogicità non forzata ma elettiva'.<sup>157</sup> Picone's analysis brings to the fore the idea of a direct effort on Cavalcanti's part to engage with and develop Guinizelli's particular poetics through a series of intertextual moments. This focus on a 'tenzone virtuale' usefully highlights an active process, as opposed to a simple echoing of the tradition. It is this active textual dialogue which underpins the understanding of *tenzone* relationship developing between Cavalcanti's poetry and Guinizelli's.<sup>158</sup> This dialogical relationship centres around

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<sup>156</sup> Michelangelo Picone, 'I due Guidi: una tenzone virtuale', Rossend Arqués ed., *Guido Cavalcanti laico e le origini della poesia europea, nel 7° centenario della morte Poesia, filosofia, scienza e ricezione: Atti del Convegno internazionale Barcellona, 16-20 ottobre 2001* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2004), pp. 9-26, reprinted in Picone, *Percorsi della lirica duecentesca*, pp. 185-204 (185-6).

<sup>157</sup> Picone, *Percorsi*, p. 186.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186-90.

the intertextual connections of certain of Cavalcanti's poems with two of Guinizzelli's sonnets, namely 'Io voglio del ver la mia donna laudare' and 'Vedut'ò la lucente stella diana'. For the purposes of this study I will restrict my attention principally to Cavalcanti's ballad, 'Fresca Rosa Novella', and the sonnet 'Chi è questa che vèn, ch'ogn'om la mira' as the starting point for a discussion of further interplays between the texts of the Bolognese and Florentine Guidos.<sup>159</sup> There are two reasons for this particular focus. Firstly, I wish to avoid following too closely *dietro il legno* of Picone's own study. Secondly, these texts amply demonstrate the dialogic relationship between the two poets and there remains more to be said about their intertextual interactions with each other and with other *tenzoni* discussed elsewhere in this thesis. Let me begin by saying that we should not be perturbed that, in this 'tenzone virtuale', a ballad is responding to sonnet. As we have seen in the example of 'Al cor gentil' and its genesis in and provocation of *tenzoni*, these exchanges are not limited to sonnets. Indeed, according to Brunetto's definition 'sono quasi tutte le lettere e canzoni d'amore in modo di tencione', if they seek to persuade, dispute or provoke a response (Latini, *Rettorica*, 16). On which note, let us turn to 'Fresca rosa novella', which shares a great deal of its core lexicon and apparent motivation with 'Io voglio del ver'. Both display the drive to sing their respective ladies' praises, whether in Cavalcanti's 'gaiamente cantando' ('Fresca rosa novella', 4) or Guinizzelli opening statement, 'Io voglio del ver la mia donna laudare' ('Io voglio del ver', 1), indeed, Christopher Kleinhenz characterises Cavalcanti's *ballata* as displaying an 'overt adherence to

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<sup>159</sup> Picone, *Percorsi*, pp. 187-92, 196-9. The other texts named by Picone are Cavalcanti's 'Avete 'n vo' li fior' e la verdura' and 'Biltà di donna e di saccente core', in dialogue with the same two Guinizzellian sonnets. For a full discussion of those two poems in particular see *Ibid.*, pp. 192-6, 199-203.

the “poetics of praise”<sup>160</sup>. Both use the terms ‘rosa’ (‘Fresca rosa novella’, 1; ‘Io voglio del ver’, 2) and ‘rivera’ (‘Fresca rosa novella’, 3; ‘Io voglio del ver’, 5), and both follow a transition to mundane to higher things — in Guinizzelli this is natural beauty to astronomical, the recurrent ‘stella diana’ (‘Io voglio del ver’, 3), in Cavalcanti it is natural to supernatural, the ‘fresca rosa’ becoming ‘angelicata criatura’ (‘Fresca rosa novella’, 18). Picone notes that the result of Cavalcanti’s transition to metaphor over simile, the development of the lady as Primavera personified and subsequently as angelic creature, is that ‘[la] donna bella non è più il complimento delle cose belle che si trovano in natura, ne è bensì la causa: la sua bellezza si irradia nella realtà circostante’. This we see in the lines:

e cantin[n]e gli auselli  
 ciascuno in suo latino  
 [...]
 Tutto lo mondo canti,  
 po’ che lo tempo vène,  
 sì come si convene,  
 vostr’altezza presiata:  
 ché siete angelicata — criatura.  
 (‘Fresca rosa novella’, 10-11, 14-18)

This moment, is of course, reminiscent of the tercets of Guinizzelli’s sonnet:

Passa per via adorna, e sì gentile  
 ch’abassa orgoglio a cui dona salute,  
 e fa ’l de nostra fè se non la crede;  
 e no-lle po’ apressare om che sia vile;  
 ancor ve dirò c’ha maggior vertute:  
 null’om po’ mal pensar fin che la vede.  
 (‘Io voglio del ver’, 9-14)

The shift in Guinizzelli is from praise of beauty with natural similes, to praise of virtuous effect on passers by. In Cavalcanti, this latter aspect becomes the sheer impact of the lady on the world surrounding her, which causes birds and people alike to sing.

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<sup>160</sup> Christopher Kleinhenz, ‘Tradition and Innovation in the Poetry of Guido Cavalcanti’ in Ardizzone ed., *Guido Cavalcanti tra i suoi lettori*, pp. 131-47 (139).

It is perhaps surprising that Picone's study does not connect the intertextual moment of this 'tenzone virtuale' to other, all too concrete *tenzoni*, namely those exchanges between Guittone, Guinizzelli and then Bonagiunta centred around 'Al cor gentil' and explored in the first half of this chapter. This particular relationship is a significant one in the development of a Cavalcantian identity as it demonstrates clearly where he stands on issues of poetic representation of the lady, poetic difference and on the *donna-Deo* tension. To trace the *tenzone* to its root, Cavalcanti's adoption of Guinizzellian nature imagery in 'Fresca rosa novella', particularly the floral, can be read a statement of support for a fellow Guido against Guittone's critique of the 'laido errore' ('S'eo tale fosse', 4) of praising the lady through similes such as 'è bella come fiore [...] o ver di stella pare' ('S'eo tale fosse', 6-7). This stance perhaps foreshadows the scathing anti-Guittonian attitudes displayed in 'Da più a uno' and discussed above. Passing to the next step of this exchange, Guinizzelli's raising of the comparative stakes in 'Al cor gentil' is also encompassed in the third strophe (lines 19-31) of Cavalcanti's poem, following with the statement to the lady that, 'siete angelicata criatura' ('Fresca rosa novella', 18). Two parts of this strophe illustrate the intertextual relationship most vividly, firstly:

Angelica sembranza  
in voi, donna riposa:  
Dio, quanto avventurosa  
fue la mia disianza!

('Fresca rosa novella', 19-22)

The resounding echo of Guinizzelli's defensive "Tenne d'angel sembianza / che fosse del Tuo regno; / non me fu fallo, s'in lei posi amanza" (Al cor gentil,

58-60)<sup>161</sup> necessitates a parallel understanding of these texts. Cavalcanti cites Guinizzelli at the height of the latter's descriptive boldness in the face of divine critique, a stance in keeping with Cavalcanti's metaphorical insistence on the lady's natural and supernatural qualities. As we are dealing with Cavalcanti, however, the insistence does not stop there; moving now to the end of the strophe:

Fra lor le donne dea  
vi chiaman, come sète;  
tanto adorna parete  
ch'eo non saccio contare;  
e chi poria pensare — oltra natura?  
(‘Fresca rosa novella’, 27-31)

We not only witness, in the last two of these lines, a milder foretaste of the *sbigottimento* which will render Cavalcantian love fundamentally inexpressible in future texts,<sup>162</sup> but also see the Florentine Guido remain steadfast where the Bolognese Guido changed tack, namely in the identification of the lady as a deity. Beginning from the acclaim of ‘le donne’ who ‘dea / vi chiaman’ (‘Fresca rosa novella’, 27-8) Cavalcanti then makes the blunt ontological statement ‘come sète’ (‘Fresca rosa novella’, 28). The absolute nomination of the lady as goddess pushes the envelope further even than Guinizzelli's bold defence of his own beloved's angelic nature, a sense that is cemented in the following strophe which continues the theme of the lady as ‘Oltra natura umana’ (‘Fresca rosa novella’, 32). Cavalcanti even weighs in on the post-‘Al cor gentil’ exchange between Guinizzelli

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<sup>161</sup> While the echo of Guinizzelli's ‘Tenne d'angel sembianza’ in line 19 of Cavalcanti's ballad is noted by editors (see Rea and Inglese, et al), nothing seems to have been made of the correspondence *per le rime* between these texts; nor indeed have I found any extensive reading of these texts in parallel.

<sup>162</sup> Elena Lombardi, in ‘The Grammar of Vision in Guido Cavalcanti’ in Ardizzone ed., *Guido Cavalcanti tra i suoi lettori*, pp. 83-92, traces the disruption of speech and ultimate aphasia which develops through the ‘painful amazement’ which affects Guido's poetic expression (pp. 89-90). In a related vein, Anichini identifies ‘the inability to articulate [...] explained by through the unattainable object of the telling, the woman who lies beyond the boundaries of his perceptions and therefore beyond his experience’ in these lines. Federica Anichini, *Voices of the Body: Liminal Grammar in Guido Cavalcanti's 'Rime' (Voci del corpo: Grammatica liminale nelle 'Rime' di Guido Cavalcanti)* (Munich: Martin Meidenbauer, 2009), p. 33.

and Bonagiunta, with an intertextual recollection of Guinizzelli's 'Omo ch' è saggio' to be found in lines 10-11: 'e cantin[n]e gli auselli / ciascuno in suo latino'. The echo of Guinizzelli's 'Volan ausel per air di straine guise / ed àn diversi loro operamenti' ('Omo ch' è saggio', 10-11) is apparent here and implies the recognition and support of an ally in anti-Guittonian sentiment.

Cavalcanti's *ballata*, indeed, seems to trace the whole debate, from the Guinizzellian sonnet which provoked Guittone's opening salvo, through to his final response to Bonagiunta's criticism of the *mainera mutata*, suggesting that Cavalcanti would support Vincent Moleta's reading of the *tenzone* between Guittone and Guinizzelli discussed above, as well as demonstrating an understanding of 'Omo ch' è saggio' as a response to Bonagiunta and part of the poetic debate surrounding 'Al cor gentil'. The vigorous metaphorical representation of the donna in Cavalcanti's text, however, does mark his approach out as different from Guinizzelli's, as has been touched upon above, and forms part of a continuous sense of going further than the limits of simile and of a beloved who can be described comparatively, or indeed described at all.<sup>163</sup>

Another instance of a Cavalcantian rewriting of a Guinizzellian text, another poem in Picone's 'tenzone virtuale', is 'Chi è questa che vèn'. This poem fulfils the typical expectations of a *tenzone*: it engages with the theme of the poem it answers — again Guinizzelli's 'Io voglio del ver' — in the treatment of the lady's effects on those she passes; and it shares the *-are* rhymes in the quatrains and the *-ute* rhymes in the tercets. Picone classifies this poem as 'una riscrittura altrettanto esemplare delle tematiche guinizzelliane'<sup>164</sup> and it is a rewriting in that it takes the

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<sup>163</sup> 'Fresca rosa novella', then can be marked as the site of greater innovation than sometimes credited to it. See for example Kleinhenz, 'Tradition and Innovation', p. 136, for the *ballata* as evidence of 'the more "traditional" Cavalcanti'.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

humbling and ennobling effect of the Guinizzellian donna who is ‘sì gentile / ch’abassa orgoglio a cui dona salute’ (‘Io voglio del ver’, 8-9) and is so infectiously virtuous that ‘null’om pò mal pensar fin che la vede’ (14) and renders it so potent as to be almost dangerous. Cavalcanti mimics Guinizzelli’s descriptive strategies in his opening, which alludes to the *Canticum canticorum* 6: 9 – ‘Quae est ista quae progreditur [...]’ – drawing on this scriptural source for the potent opening statement:

Chi è questa che ven, ch’ogn’om la mira,  
 che fa tremar di chiaritate l’âre  
 e mena seco Amor, sì che parlare  
 null’omo pote, ma ciascun sospira?  
 (‘Chi è questa che ven’, 1-4)

The moment in the *Canticum canticorum* alluded to here is itself quite ‘Cavalcantian’ in the manner in which it describes the lady in the text: ‘quae est ista quae progreditur quasi aurora consurgens pulchra ut luna electa ut sol terribilis ut acies ordinata’ [Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?]. The presence of images of great brightness – ‘electa’ recalled in the ‘chiaritate’ of Cavalcanti’s text – and beauty – ‘pulcher’ finding its match in ‘beltate’ late in the sonnet (‘Chi è questa che ven’, 11) – alongside the dreadful army is something we will come to recognise as typical in Cavalcanti’s later poems, while even in this sonnet the dumbfounding effect of the lady is akin in its vigour to the biblical image. On which note, as we have seen from ‘Fresca rosa novella’ there is, even in these less pessimistic poems (weightier moments of Cavalcantian despair will be explored later in this chapter), a tendency toward aphasia and this text is a stronger expression of such a tendency than the *ballata* discussed above. Guinizzelli’s bystanders may be rendered humble and virtuous by the lady’s presence and greeting, but Cavalcanti’s fellow

witnesses are dumbstruck. Furthermore, the Cavalcantian donna need do nothing more than come to affect her natural surroundings and the people who see her; no greeting is required, in fact this sonnet paints a silent moment from lady, lover and onlookers, the greatest sound that can be managed is a sigh. Cavalcanti then declares further difference from the Guinizzellian sonnet with which he is in dialogue in the declaration ‘Oh, *che sembra* quando li occhi gira! / dical’ Amor, *ch’i’ nol savria contare*’ (‘Chi è questa che ven’, 5-6) in contrast with Guinizzelli’s desire to ‘*assembrarli* la rosa e lo giglo’ (‘Io voglio del ver’, 2), a desire which he fulfils in uttering it and expands with the comparative strategies of that sonnet, as previously discussed.

This silence is part of Cavalcanti’s differentiation from Guinizzelli, highlighted through the former’s intertextual dialogue with the latter. Even Cavalcanti’s echo of the *Canticum canticorum*, a favourite Guinizzellian source text, serves to mark the shift undertaken by Cavalcanti away from the gentility of Guinizzelli’s poetics and towards a more violent love experience, which could aptly come to be described as *terribilis*. The difference articulated here should not be cast as the sort of outright disagreement demonstrated between Guinizzelli and Guittone or Bonagiunta, but rather as a statement of development from the Guinizzellian start point, aspects of which Cavalcanti defends (and critics of which he attacks). Cavalcanti pushes certain key tropes of Guinizzelli’s poetics further, internalising and literalising aspects of the Bolognese Guido’s verse — the floral imagery, the angelic lady — and giving them a different kind of potency. While the power of Guinizzelli’s lady is ennobling and her beauty is ultimately describable, Cavalcanti’s donna is ineffable, fundamentally uncontainable in the poetic text in the same manner that the erotic experience is uncontainable in the poet’s body (as

will be explored in the next section of this chapter). One additional aspect of difference between Guinizzelli's erotic verse and Cavalcanti's must be acknowledged: the absence of God already highlighted in the discussion of 'Da più a uno' above. Despite Guinizzelli's audacious move to dissolve the tensions between love for the *donna* and love for the deity, he did begin with the assumption that there was a tension which required solving. Cavalcanti makes no such assumption or admission during his attempts to narrate the experience of love and his failures to describe the ineffable lady. It is not, we should remember, only the poet who falls silent for Cavalcanti; God does not speak out against his claims for the deification of the lady as He did for Guinizzelli and He is certainly not channelled as an authority by Cavalcanti as He was by Frate Guittone.

## **II. Performing a polyphonic identity**

In his dialogues with the poets discussed above, then, Cavalcanti casts himself as anti-Guittonian and, when not actively atheistic, at least blithely unconcerned with the theological consequences of rendering the lady an angel or even a goddess, but as much as these dialogues with other poets, Cavalcanti is defined through dialogues with the disembodied parts of his self. The performance of Cavalcanti's subjectivity is in fact decidedly theatrical, with a full cast of interior concepts and mechanisms from soul to spirits, and as such represents an intentionally polyphonic expression of selfhood quite unlike Guittone's self-performance through stifling of past lyric identity, or Guinizzelli's entry into a dialogic relationship with the word of God to authorise his poetic identity.

This ruptured persona owes its development to the rhetorical figure of

personification, by which Marti characterises Cavalcanti's oeuvre as a whole,<sup>165</sup> and through which the various fragments of the self take on individuated speaking and addressed identities which array against the *io*:

Attraverso il procedimento di personificazione, il poeta vitalizza tutte le entità (fisiche o psicologiche o fantastiche) interessate alla passione amorosa, facendone gli *agenti* di una rappresentazione volutamente drammatizzata.<sup>166</sup>

That is to say, that Cavalcanti's personification is not exclusively, or even predominantly, of the sort which gives substance to abstract nouns, though Amore, of course, features heavily in his poetry.<sup>167</sup> Rather, Cavalcantian personification consists in the creation of separate, individuated actors and speakers from the body's constituent processes, parts and faculties. For example:

L'anima mia vilment'è sbigotita  
de la battaglia ch'e[ll]lave dal core [...]  
(‘L'anima mia’, 1-2)

E dico che' miei spiriti son morti,  
e 'l cor che tanto ha guerra e vita poco [...]  
(‘Poi che di doglia cor’, 5-6)

Davanti agli occhi miei vegg'io lo core  
e l'anima dolente che s'ancide,  
che mor d'un colpo che li diede Amore  
ed in quel punto che madonna vide.  
(‘I' prego voi che di dolor parlate’, 4-7)

Several of the key terms and images in the Cavalcanti's lexicon are evident here: the recurrent imagery of *battaglia* and *guerra*; the sensations of *sbigottimento* and *dolore*; the violent *colpo* which primes the love experience; the physiological elements of the *occhi*, *core*, *anima*, and *spiriti*. In Cavalcanti's poetry these

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<sup>165</sup> Mario Marti ed., *Poeti del Dolce stil novo* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1969), p. 157, see also Robert Harrison, *The Body of Beatrice* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 69-70 & 74-81, and subsequently ‘The Ghost of Guido Cavalcanti, Revisited’, in Ardizzone ed., *Guido Cavalcanti tra is suoi lettori*, pp. 119-130 (122-3).

<sup>166</sup> Corrado Calenda, *Per altezza d'ingegno: Saggio su Guido Cavalcanti* (Naples: Liguori, 1976), p. 17.

<sup>167</sup> See Harrison, *The Body of Beatrice*, pp. 79-80.

physiological terms belong to a technical, scientific lexicon,<sup>168</sup> and the parts which they play in the experience of love as passion are rigorously established in Cavalcanti's doctrinal *canzone*, 'Donna me prega'. The technical language of that poem is dependent on an Aristotelian natural philosophy, the importance of which for Cavalcanti's poetic 'phenomenology of love' has been carefully explored,<sup>169</sup> though their presence and role in his texts also go beyond the limits of their functions as described by natural philosophy.<sup>170</sup> The importance of this carefully enumerated physiology lies in its involvement with Cavalcanti's performance of subjectivity. In the personified physiology of these examples we begin to see the

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<sup>168</sup> Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti: The Other Middle Ages*, pp. 16-29. See also Anichini, *Voices of the Body*, pp. 39-47 on 'the alliance between natural philosophy and medicine' which characterised Cavalcanti's intellectual context and forms a necessary backdrop to our understanding of his physiological model.

<sup>169</sup> Ardizzone, *The Other Middle Ages*, pp. 16-40, Inglese, *L'intelletto e l'amore: studi sulla letteratura italiana del Due e Trecento* (La nuova Italia: Florence, 2000), pp. 13-47, Sonia Gentili, *L'uomo aristotelico: alle origini della letteratura italiana* (Carocci: Rome, 2005), pp. 187-191.

<sup>170</sup> Indeed, over the course of these readings it has become apparent that there may be broader Aristotelian and specifically Averroist implications for Cavalcanti's polyphonic subjectivity, relating to the physiology of passion. This physiology dictates the grounds on which the performance of polyphonic subjectivity through takes place. A strict delineation of the physical poetic space, derived from the Averroist understanding of the internalised, non-rational experience of passion, delimits the realm and mode of this performance. The removal of the personal experience of love from the realm of intellection to the physiological confines of the sensitive soul allows and necessitates the foregrounding of the bodily processes of that experience. The lover's 'pianto' ('Donna me prega', 46), the effects of the 'sguardo' (57) and the wounds inflicted by beautiful women whose 'bieltà son dardo' (60) are all tropes which we have seen throughout Cavalcanti's texts. In the context of 'Donna me prega', they are categorised and explained in terms of their natural philosophical causes and effects. Essentially, we see these processes explained in Cavalcanti's *canzone*, while we witness their implications for the poetic experience in the rest of his oeuvre. The individualised interiorities which speak and act elsewhere in Cavalcanti's poems are not personified in 'Donna me prega', but are given their precise physiological place and function. Sadly there will be neither time nor space within the unfolding of this thesis to enter fully into the analysis necessary to properly develop these initial observations, but they will hopefully provide fuel for fruitful future work. In lieu of further discussion I provide an overview bibliography on the issue of Cavalcanti's Averroism, which began with Dino del Garbo's almost contemporaneous commentary: Bruno Nardi, 'L'averroismo del "primo amico" di Dante', *Studi Danteschi*, 25 (1940), pp. 43-79, and 'Notarella polemica sull'averroismo di Guido Cavalcanti', *Rassegna di Filosofia*, 3 (1954), pp. 47-71; Maria Corti, 'La felicità mentale', in *Scritti su Cavalcanti e Dante: La felicità mentale, Percorsi dell'invenzione e altri saggi* (Turin: Einaudi, 2003), pp. 4-175; Maria Luisa Ardizzone, *The Other Middle Ages* (especially pp. 47-102); Anichini, 'Retorica del corpo nelle *Rime* di Guido Cavalcanti: il tema del pianto' in Ardizzone ed., *Guido Cavalcanti tra i suoi lettori*, pp. 103-118; Inglese's commentaries in *L'intelletto e l'amore*, pp. 3-56, and in Rea and Inglese ed., *Rime*, pp. 147-161; and, on correspondences between the positions of Cavalcanti and Averroes, Sonia Gentili, *L'uomo aristotelico*, pp. 187-196.

manner in which his *io* is merely one player on a populous interior stage. In the first two quotations the soul and heart have lives (and deaths) and struggles of their own and in the third the eyes — again a separated, personified entity — witness those selfsame battles and defeats. In these examples the Cavalcantian approach may still appear indebted to earlier lyric techniques, such as the treatment of the lover's treacherous eyes in an anonymous Sicilian text: 'Già non m'era mestiere / che gli oc[c]hi miei traditi la dovesser guardare' ('Già non m'era mestiere', 1-3).<sup>171</sup> Cavalcanti's fundamental divergence from such textual forerunners lies in the individual voices granted to his personified physiology, which have a vital bearing on his representation of subjectivity.

The archetype of this new Cavalcantian personification is the sonnet which comes sixth in the received order of his *corpus*:

Deh, spiriti miei, quando mi vedete  
 con tanta pena come non mandate  
 fuor della mente parole adornate  
 di pianto, doloroso e sbigottite?  
 ('Deh spiriti miei', 1-4)

The opening quatrain establishes the distinct identities of the *spiriti* and the *mente*, which the poetic *io* addresses in the opening apostrophe. The poet appeals to the spirits, those 'hybrid entities that bridge the gap between the corporeal and incorporeal',<sup>172</sup> who witness his 'tanta pena' and yet still fail to fulfil their physiological function of 'mand[are] / fuor della mente parole'. This fracture of the self 'in una miriade di autonomie parziali' is identified by Calenda as the starting point from which 'si sviluppa lo sbigottimento più volte dichiarato all'interno dei

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<sup>171</sup> Stewart discusses 'the fracturing of the lyric persona' in this text as emblematic of the lyric tradition; Dana E. Stewart, *The Arrow of Love: Optics, Gender and Subjectivity Medieval Love Poetry* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003), pp. 61-8.

<sup>172</sup> Heather Webb, *The Medieval Heart* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 13. For a specific treatment of *spiriti* in Cavalcanti see chapter 4 of Anichini, *Voices of the Body*, pp. 87-114, and Stewart, *The Arrow of Love*, pp. 89-92.

versi'.<sup>173</sup> This is also the point from which the polyphonic performance of Cavalcanti's self emerges.<sup>174</sup> The *io*'s address to the 'spiriti' is repeated in the second quatrain and again in the second tercet to create an internalised dialogue which will emerge repeatedly throughout Cavalcanti's *corpus*. The proliferation of participants in this sonnet represents both a staged dialogue and a Bakhtinian dialogism, the polyphony which renders this performance of subjectivity so innovative. To return to the sonnet under discussion, the second quatrain develops the dialogue and identities of the self and the personified physiology, as the appeal to the *spiriti* is renewed:

Deh, voi vedete che 'l core ha ferite  
di sguardo e di piacer e d'umiltate:  
deh, i' vi priego che voi consoliate  
che son da lui le sue vertù partite.  
(‘Deh spiriti miei’, 5-8)

The *spiriti* here go beyond the threefold definition found in the sonnet ‘Pegli occhi fere un spirito sottile’: ‘as the subtle matter circulating in the human body, as sigh, and as image’.<sup>175</sup> Although, on a purely physiological level, they do fulfil this role, the *spiriti* being addressed in Cavalcanti's ‘Deh spirit miei’ also act as voices, witnesses, seeing subjects, and thus they are imbued with a level of awareness at least equal to the *io*. They are also, as will become apparent, both ‘tools of vocal

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<sup>173</sup> Calenda, *Per altezza d'ingegno*, p. 24.

<sup>174</sup> To avoid any clouding of the waters with a confusion of terminology, given the already noted tendency to describe Cavalcanti's lyric as dramatic and the appearance of related theatrical language, I will here reiterate that ‘performance’, ‘performative’ and ‘performativity’ are used exclusively in the sense derived from Austin, rather than with any theatrical implications, even in the presence of other theatrical language. On this definition, see the introduction.

<sup>175</sup> Anichini, *Voices of the Body*, p. 108; see also *Ibid.*, pp. 108-14 for a full reading of ‘pneumatic circulation and syntax’ in ‘Pegli occhi fere’. See also Rea and Inglese ed. *Rime*, p. 162, for a corresponding classification of this text as ‘una rigorosa trasposizione in termini spirituali delle operazioni psicologiche relative alla passione’ influenced treatise such as Avicenna's *De anima*, and Stewart, *The Arrow of Love*, p. 156 n. 40, on the “interconnectedness” of spirits’ for Cavalcanti.

communication<sup>176</sup> and individuated speakers. The witness role of the *spiriti* is couched in the same terms as appeals to the reader elsewhere in Cavalcanti's poetry, for example the opening apostrophe of the ballad 'Vedete ch'i son un che vo piangendo', confirming an apparent equality between the viewership of these physiological phenomena and the potential readers of Cavalcanti's texts. What they are called to witness here is no longer the suffering *io*, but yet another player, the heart wounded by the lady's 'sguardo' and loveliness and humility, and whom the *spiriti* are begged to comfort 'che son da lui le sue virtù partite'. The *spiriti*, then, are imbued with the kind of active and sensory ability which allows them not only to be appealed to, but to hear those appeals, potentially to act upon them and to confirm the voice which makes them, just as the appealing voice creates *their* subjective identity. This constitutes the sort of self-contained performance-uptake structure we have already witnessed to a much lesser extent in the lyric examples of Guittone and Guinizelli, both of whom invoke forces and voices outside themselves in order to stage the uptake for their models of subjectivity. Cavalcanti's performance-uptake is played out within a closed circuit, with all parties encompassed within the bounds of the poet's own body. In positing the self-sufficiency of the bodily space I would like to further develop the concept that 'the inclusion of the audience [i.e. the readers of Cavalcanti's poetry] in the scene finally turns the scene into a self-sufficient one, blurring the distinction between

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<sup>176</sup> Anichini, *Voices of the Body*, p. 79. For Federica Anichini, the 'voices of the body' relate to the natural philosophical aspect of communicative physiology. She uses this descriptor to describe a physical rhetoric in which categories of language derived from Roger Bacon's *De signis* are used to define 'a language that [...] does not result from an intellectual process but strictly from sensations', concluding, 'Cavalcanti's language is assembled using either *voces mediae* only partially processed by the mind, such as interjections, or "naturally signifying" signs, such as cries and moans, according to Roger Bacon's classification', *Ibid.*, pp. 61-76 (quotations p. 76). This reading offers a useful background to my own, which will investigate additional aspects of the speaking roles of these physiological entities.

audience and actors'.<sup>177</sup> In Cavalcanti's texts the boundary between external and internal is blurred to the extent that the 'audience' for his polyphonic performance of subjectivity comes to include his internalised personifications, as well as any exterior reader figure. The linguistic identification between the witness-function of the *spiriti* noted above and the audience-function of the reader as emphasised by Anichini (she makes use of the same example, 'Vedete ch'i' son', quoted above, among others),<sup>178</sup> allows us to pursue the blurring she proposes a step further. The scene of Cavalcanti's performance is already self-sufficient. His body, the realm in which the performance of subjectivity takes place, represents the unifying feature for an apparently fragmented selfhood. This encompassing unity is sufficient for the generation of a polyphonic subject, in which *io*, the author-voice, sounds alongside and equally with the voices of the *spiriti*, the *core*, the *anima*, the *occhi* and any other personified part of Cavalcanti's populous internal existence. The *volta* displayed in the first tercet of 'Deh spiriti miei' comprises the transition of the spectating function from the *spiriti* to the *io*, granting it the function of an eye as well as an I:

I' veggo a lui spirito apparire  
alto e gentile e di tanto valore,  
che fa le sue vertù tutte fuggire.  
('Deh spiriti miei', 9-11)

This movement is to allow a little exterior influence into the sonnet's proceedings (beyond the mere recollection of the 'sguardo' attested in the heart's wounds in the second quatrain), through the *io*'s witnessing of the apparition of the high, noble and worthy 'spirito' to the heart whose potency is dissipated in the face of such penetrating value. What the poem portrays here is either the event which leaves

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<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84-5.

the wounds described earlier taking place, or a repetition of just such a harrowing, another interaction in the course of ‘a potentially uninterrupted intercorporeal circulation’,<sup>179</sup> the ‘spirito’ being connected to and transmitted through the ‘sguardo’ in the physiology of amorous interaction.<sup>180</sup> This serves to highlight the repetitiveness of the Cavalcantian experience of love, something which is reflected in the similar repetition of his restricted lexicon, and to further demonstrate the distance of the *io* from aspects of the body’s internal life, and subsequently the complexity of Cavalcanti’s polyphonic subjectivity. The final tercet returns to the *io*’s appeal, launching with the anaphoric ‘Deh’, and giving the first instance in this text of the other sort of personification, of an abstract concept with the late arrival on the scene of Amore:

Deh, i’ vi priego che deggiate dire  
a l’alma trista, che parl’ in dolore,  
com’ ella fu e fie sempre d’Amore.  
(‘Deh spiriti miei’, 12-14)

In these last lines we are introduced to one last character in the Cavalcantian interior life, ‘l’alma trista’, residing in but not identical with the *core*.<sup>181</sup> Most importantly, though, this tercet emphatically states the role of all the interior personifications as speaking subjects; the *io* begs the *spiriti* to speak to the soul, who in turn talks in his pain. These speakers, in contrast with the dumbfounded

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<sup>179</sup> Webb, *The Medieval Heart*, p. 63, in the context of her discussion of the ‘Porous Heart’ and the circulatory, as opposed to impression, model of sensory perception.

<sup>180</sup> ‘[T]he perceptual encounter [of seeing] could be conceptualised as a entering-into, a transformative commingling of two reciprocal entities [...] The end result of vision conceived in this way does not produce similarity or likeness, but rather, in a generative mode, creates something new’, Webb, *The Medieval Heart*, pp. 62-3; the something new in this case being the ‘ferite’ experienced by the Cavalcantian heart.

<sup>181</sup> In her chapter on ‘the Sovereign Heart’, Webb sums up the medieval view on the matter thus: ‘the soul was responsible for movement and intellectual capacity. Aristotle stated that the heart was the principle of movement and of sensation. As both these tenets were held as truth, the heart had to be the dwelling place of the soul’ (Webb, *The Medieval Heart*, p. 21, see also pp. 30-31); she cites as example Florentine physician Pietro Torrigiani’s *Plusquam commentum*, which states that ‘the soul must be united with the body through the heart because the heart is the principle of all the faculties and the source of pneuma’ (*Ibid*, p. 21 and note 16).

'mente' of the first quatrain, are on the verge of cacophony, though even that personified part is portrayed as a speaker *in potentia*, albeit one who has been stymied by the weight of his *dolore*, much like the 'omo' unable to 'parlare' whom we saw in 'Chi è questa che vèn' (3-4).

These personifications are all, then, speakers, and their voices sound alongside the authorial, poetic I, necessitating a consideration of them as part of a subjectivity which exceeds the bounds of the speaker named *io* and is generated precisely through the multiplicity of speaking subjects which are contained in the poet's body and in the bounds of the text, a dual *corpus*, in which subjectivity plays out. The *canzone* 'Io non pensava che lo cor giammai' gives further weight to this model of subjectivity as the *io* makes an appeal not, on this occasion, directly to the *spiriti*, but to the *canzone* itself, as is to be expected in the *congedo*. This being a Cavalcantian *congedo*, however, it is unsurprising that the nature of the appeal regards the mission, not just of the text, but also of the *spiriti*:

e prego umilmente a lei tu guidi  
li spiriti fuggiti del mio core,  
che per soverchio de lo su' valore  
eran distrutti, se non fosser vòliti [...]  
(*'Io non pensava'*, 47-50)

This appeal to the poem, then, is to aid the *spiriti* in escaping the internal circulation of the body and to enter properly into the circulatory relationship with the beloved, by means of the textual *corpus*. This imbuing of the text with physiological function is striking and further reinforces the sense of a double body, poetic and physical, in which Cavalcantian subjectivity plays out and in both of which the personified physiological elements form part of a polyphonic subjectivity, expressed and expressing through poetry. The message with which Cavalcanti ultimately entrusts the *canzone*, "Questi sono in figura / d'un che si

more sbigottitamente”, acts as a knowing nod to the rhetorical *figura* of personification through which Cavalcanti is expressing his subjectivity and as a potent statement of the roles of the *spiriti* in performing the polyphonic Cavalcantian subject and therefore as textual as well as physiological substances. Related to this binding up of subject-personifications with textuality is a sonnet in which the *io* gives way entirely to personifications, the speaking voices of writing implements, which in turn report the faltering voices of other, physiological, personifications:

Noi siàn le triste penne isbigotite,  
 le cesoiuzze e 'l coltellin dolente,  
 ch'avemo scritte dolorosamente  
 quelle parole che vo' avete udite.  
 Or vi diciàn perché noi siàn partite  
 e siàn venute a voi qui di presente:  
 la man che ci movea dice che sente  
 cose dubbiose nel core apparite;  
     le quali hanno destrutto sì costui  
 ed hannol posto sì presso a la morte,  
 ch'altro non n'è rimaso che sospiri.  
 ('Noi siàn le triste penne', 1-11)

The speaking *io* is only, if at all present, through the mediation of 'la man', the hand personified as speaker and perceiver. It is 'la man' that 'dice', 'la man [...] che sente' and the same which moves the pens. This particular personification comes as close to a part-for-whole synecdoche of the self as we have perhaps seen in Cavalcanti's poetry, but given the adamant consistency of his personifying poetics it would be foolhardy to brand it as anything but another individuated personification in the physico-poetic *corpus*. This sonnet, then, offers an example of 'exacerbated prosopopoeia',<sup>182</sup> which, through its polyphonic selfhood, precludes all attempts to reduce it to any kind of straightforward unity. This

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<sup>182</sup> Harrison, *The Body of Beatrice*, p. 81. Harrison reads this process as entirely destructive, whereas I am inclined to view it also as part of the constructive process which lies at the heart of the polyphonic performance of subjectivity.

doubled body (and those polyphonic speakers which it contains) represents an ‘inward space opened up, and visited by personifications that embody elements from nature and physiology’,<sup>183</sup> but this space and its visitors also form part of the circulatory system in which that body participates. The inherence of these voices in the processes of Cavalcanti’s physico-poetic body should inform our understanding of his polyphonic performance of subjectivity. Returning to the text in hand:

Or vi preghiàn quanto possiàn più forte  
che non sdegniate di tenerci noi,  
tanto ch’un poco di pietà vi miri.  
(‘Noi siàn le triste penne’, 12-14)

What the sonnet fundamentally does, as is confirmed in this final tercet, is to illustrate the possibility, in Cavalcanti’s poetics, for a model of subjectivity to be expressed in a text without the necessity of the *io* as voice. Even as the poet-as-speaker dwindles into aphasic silence,<sup>184</sup> the materials of writing take up the challenge of voicing the destructive experience of love. These final three lines explicitly confer on the tools of writing — the pens, clippers and knife which have been relating the sorry state of the poet — a speaking role, encompassed in the verb *pregare* (in the first person plural ‘preghiàn’, 12), which we have seen is typical of the *io* and of course applies to the donna on one famous occasion, albeit not redolent of Cavalcantian desperation. The identity between the speech of these implements and the speech of the *io* is further supported by the manner of their appeal for ‘pietà’, which echoes the *io*’s addresses to the *spiriti* and to readers treated above. There is, then, no privileged speaker; even the inanimate objects of the writing process become entangled in the physico-poetic body through

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<sup>183</sup> Anichini, *Voices of the Body*, p. 85.

<sup>184</sup> See Lombardi, ‘The Grammar of Vision in Guido Cavalcanti’, pp. 89-90.

Cavalcanti's persistent personification and thus take on the role of speaking subjects, undertaking 'le stesse azioni che si sono viste compiute dall'anima, dal cuore, dagli spiriti'.<sup>185</sup> This is not to say that this sonnet simply effaces the self, or that the writing implements take the place of the poet. Rather than an either/or dichotomy, we are presented with a further instance of polyphony, of co-sounding voices. In fact, we can readily consider these apparently external aspects — the pen, knife and clippers — within the physiological chain of events we witness throughout Cavalcanti's poetic process. The poems we have encountered so far attest to circulatory amorous experience: the influx of the experience of the lady (by way of the 'sguardo' and the entry of a 'spirito [...] alto e gentile', 'Deh spiriti miei', 6 & 9-10) through the eyes, via the brain to the heart, stimulating the poet's own *spiriti* and soul; and the subsequent outward movement of the *spiriti*, the *sospiri* and the text, a text which is imbued with the power to transfer *spiriti*. Thus if the text can carry the substance of spirit, surely the tools with which the text are created also carry that substance; they become literally incorporated in the poet's twofold *corpus* and so enjoy an equal role in the performance of the polyphonic subjectivity expressed in Cavalcanti's poems. The intricacy and encompassing nature of this body-poetic is an extreme example of the sort of porousness of the heart and body which has been elucidated above, and provides the defining topography in which Cavalcantian subjectivity plays out. 'Guido is the poet of the membrane',<sup>186</sup> yes, but this membrane extends to the very textuality of his performance of self. It is this radical internalism which characterises Cavalcanti's representation of 'una soggettività corporea',<sup>187</sup> allowing the personification of

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<sup>185</sup> Corti, 'La felicità mentale', p. 44-5.

<sup>186</sup> Harrison, 'The Ghost of Guido', p. 124.

<sup>187</sup> Gentili, *L'uomo aristotelico*, p. 17, in relation to the 'anima sensitiva cavalcantiana'.

physiological and psychological entities and extending the internal realm into the textual one. Cavalcanti's model even incorporates the tools of writing and the text itself into the ranks of personified entities and, indeed, the circulatory relationship with the lady.

In Cavalcanti's poetry, then, we witness the polyphonic performance of subjectivity in which multiple speaking personifications generate a poetic identity. In the case of Guittone we saw the attempt to guarantee the uptake of the performance of a converted subjectivity with a retrofitted teleological biography through addresses and admonitions to specified types of reader. In Guinizzelli's poetry we witnessed the staging of uptake for the performance of a new poetics through the poet's ventriloquism of the Word and words of God. In Cavalcanti's poetics, however, this process is played out within the enclosed space of the poet's double *corpus*, removed from the interference of any outside audience. The interactions between *io*-voice and the voices of the multiple physiological personifications simultaneously perform an irreducibly polyphonic subjectivity and reinforce the performance. In turn, the subjectivity status of *io* is confirmed through its own interactions with those same personified speakers. These personifications, whether strictly internal (*core*, *anima*, *mente* or *occhi*, for example), transitional (the communicative *spiriti* and *sospiri*),<sup>188</sup> or apparently external elements incorporated in the body-poetic (namely the tools of writing and the text itself), bear an equal speaking weight to the *io* and, as we have seen, can even be entirely substituted for it in a text. Personification may fulfil the communicative function of

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<sup>188</sup> For an example of 'sospiro' as personification, not merely utterance, see the sonnet 'Dante, un sospiro messenger del core', in which the sigh is given the role of messenger who 'subitamente m'asalì in dormendo' (2). Cavalcanti's correspondence with Dante will be discussed further in the following chapter.

subjectivity and perform identities to the reader, while asserting the identity of the body for which they speak (as in the ‘penne’, ‘cesoiuzze’ and ‘coltellin’ reporting the speech of ‘la man che ci movea’, ‘Noi siàn le triste penne’, 1-2, 6). The performance of subjectivity, then, takes place through the speech acts of these multiple voices. Guittone’s conversion provided the structure for a performance of subjectivity in relation to (and residual tension with) a pre-conversion subjectivity, which depended on a unifying of two different voices. Guinizelli’s poetic conversion was stated and reinforced through dialogues with other voices, both real (in his *tenzoni*) and staged (in his debate with God), which also aimed at establishing a single consistent self and poetics. Cavalcanti, however, removes the poetic discourse from any involvement with God in a sort of lyric anti-conversion and simultaneously abandons any attempt or desire at teleology or unification of self. There is none of that concern with the tension between *donna* and *Deo* which prompted both Guittone’s and Guinizelli’s poetic paradigm shifts. In Cavalcanti’s anthropocentric model, however, the lover’s physiology (and emphatically not his rationality) is foregrounded as sole locus of the love experience and source of the performance of subjectivity. The voices of the *io* and the voices of personified *spiriti*, *occhi*, *core*, *anima*, and so on interact within a single physical and poetic space to generate a different, circulatory and dialogic subjectivity. All three of these models will be examined, critiqued, and, to differing extents absorbed by the author of the *Vita Nuova*, *Convivio* and *Commedia*. As we shall see over the course of the next two chapters, Dante’s poetics draw on the same processes as both Guidos and even (perhaps especially) Guittone in the service of a project of self-representation that will attempt to eclipse all of these poets.

## Chapter 3: Dante in Dialogue

### *Part 1 – Dialogic Dismissal: the Two Guidos Censured and Superseded; Guittone Erased*

Dante's contempt for Guittone d'Arezzo is no secret (see *Purg.* XXVI, 124-6) and his admiration (even if somewhat qualified) for Guido Guinizzelli is similarly well-established.<sup>189</sup> The nomination of Guido as 'padre' is read as the crux of Dante's interaction with the poet, marking the pinnacle of an acknowledgement of the former's influence and the latter's indebtedness. While scholarship acknowledges the ambivalence of certain interactions with Guinizzelli's poetry in the *Commedia*, particularly in the meditation on love poetry encompassed in *Inferno* V,<sup>190</sup> the ironic undercutting of his poetic authority in *Purgatorio* XXVI has not been noted. This undercutting plays out in an intertextual dialogue which incorporates Guittonian allusions into Dante's staged interaction with Guinizzelli in *Purgatorio* and forms part of a narrative of supersession which encompasses both the Bolognese Guido and the Florentine Guido Cavalcanti. The treatment of these two Guidos is, in fact intertwined throughout Dante's oeuvre and plays a significant role in the poetic self-definition and indeed the conversion performed by Dante through his texts.

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<sup>189</sup> Wilkins, 'Guinizzelli praised and corrected', in *The Invention of the Sonnet and Other Studies in Italian Literature* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1959), pp. 111-3, Rea, 'Guinizzelli praised and explained'.

<sup>190</sup> Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante's Poets: textuality and truth in the Comedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 7; Elena Lombardi, *The Wings of the Doves: Love and Desire in Dante and Medieval Culture* (Montreal & Kingston; London; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), especially chapter 3, 'Love', pp. 132-74.

### I. *Vita Nuova*: from ‘paura che è nel cor’ to ‘Amor e ’l cor gentil’

The history of Dante’s intertextual relationship with Guinizelli can be traced back to the *Vita Nuova*, in which the Bolognese Guido is cast as the ‘saggio’, a new mentor to replace the ousted ‘primo amico’ in the poetic development away from a overwhelming erotic experience. The Cavalcantian portion of the *Vita Nuova* is characterised by unsettled poetry reminiscent of many texts analysed in the last chapter. One potent example is found in the disquiet generated in the sonnet ‘Tutti li miei penser parlan d’Amore’ by a multiplicity of thoughts contesting for Dante’s attention with ‘sì gran varietate, / ch’altro mi fa voler sua potestate, / altro folle ragiona il suo valore’ (‘Tutti li miei penser’, 2-4). This list continues, ‘altro sperando m’apporta dolzore, / altro pianger mi fa spesse fiata’ (5-6), with these fragmentary voices united only in the common call for pity and the heart’s fear in which all the speaking thoughts share: ‘e sol s’accordano in cherer pietate, / tremando di paura che è nel core’ (7-8). This polyphony of personifications clearly demonstrates the influence of the ‘primo amico’, whose own fragmentary subjectivity is a force for dialogic destabilisation of the love discourse. Dante, here, expresses a similar instability stemming from the multiple speaking thoughts within him:

Ond’io non so da qual matera prenda;  
 e vorrei dire, e non so ch’io mi dica:  
 così mi trovo in amorosa erranza!  
 E se con tutti voi fare accordanza,  
 convenemi chiamar la mia nemica,  
 madonna la Pietà, che mi difenda.

(‘Tutti li miei pensier’, 9-14)

The tone characterising this ‘amorosa erranza’ and the ‘nemica / madonna la Pietà’, coupled with the babble of speaking thoughts and the trembling, fearful heart recalls nothing so much as poems like Cavalcanti’s ‘Deh spiriti miei’, which

found Guido in conversation with his own personifications. ‘Se Mercé fosse amica a’ miei disiri’ is also a relevant Cavalcantian intertext as it expresses a sentiment of pity-as-adversary echoed in the final lines of Dante’s sonnet here. This sonnet, in preceding the assault on Dante’s *spiriti*, his associated uncontrollable weeping and the *gabbo* episode in chapter XIV, prefixes the apex of the phase of destructive Cavalcantian passion re-enacted in the *Vita Nuova*.<sup>191</sup> It also marks a moment of Cavalcanti-like fragmented subjectivity.

The transition from the Cavalcantian phase to the Guinizzellian comes as Dante refocusses his poetics on “quelle parole che lodano la donna mia” (V. N., XVIII, 6), taking his cue from texts such as the Bolognese Guido’s ‘Io voglio del ver la mia donna laudare’, in which *loda* is explicitly the aim, as opposed to the “altro intendimento” of which the ‘gentili donne’ accuse Dante in “quelle parole che tu n’hai dette in notificando la tua condizione” (V.N., XVIII, 7). This suspect other intention seems laden with the history of courtly complaints, seeking the lady’s sympathy and the solaces of love which such sympathy might draw forth. Having copied ‘Donne ch’avete intelletto d’amore’, the *canzone* which is to be imbued with so much canonical significance in *Purgatorio* XXIV, from the archetype of his memory, Dante then actively stages the transfer of influence from one to another Guido:

Apresso che questa canzone fue alquanto divulgata tra le genti, con ciò fosse cosa che alcuno amico l’udisse, volontade lo mosse a pregare me che io li dovesse dire che è Amore, avendo forse per l’udite parole speranza di me oltre che degna.

(VN, XX, 1)

The loaded reference to an ‘amico’ and the presence of key terminology such as ‘volontade’ and ‘pregare’, together with the question of the nature of love,

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<sup>191</sup> John Took, *Dante: Lyric Poet and Philosopher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 49-50.

necessarily recalls the ‘primo amico’ and his *canzone*, ‘Donna me prega, perch’eo voglio dire’. There has been much debate over the timetable of composition for ‘Donne ch’avete’, ‘Donna me prega’ and the *Vita Nuova*,<sup>192</sup> and little can be absolutely certain: ‘gli argomenti “interni”, riguardo alla cronologia relativa dei due testi, s[o]no reversibili, non conclusivi’.<sup>193</sup> What we are certainly left with though is a dialogic relationship between Cavalcanti’s text and this moment in the libello which stages the removal of Dante’s poetics from the modes of his first friend invoked in the preceding chapters of the *Vita Nuova*. This dialogue, once it has been interrogated and redirected by the *donne* with whom Dante converses in chapter XVIII, will in turn give birth to an intertextual dialogue with Guinizelli.<sup>194</sup> The movement from ‘udire parole’ to ‘dire sonetto’ is the movement from ‘amico’ to ‘saggio’, from Cavalcanti to Guinizelli and the affirmation of one sort of love over another. The opening quatrain of the sonnet framed in chapter XX of the *libello* cements and reiterates this transition:

Amore e ’l cor gentil sono una cosa,  
 sì come il saggio in suo dittare pone,  
 e così esser l’una sanza l’altro osa  
 com’alma razional sanza ragione.  
 (‘Amore e ’l cor gentil’, 1-4)

Here, Dante expresses the model of love propounded in Guinizelli’s ‘Al cor gentil’, reinforcing his intertextual agreement through his use of the same comparative

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<sup>192</sup> For an overview of recent critical positions and developments see Inglese’s introduction to the *canzone* in Rea and Inglese ed., *Rime*, p. 148.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148. Inglese is referring in particular to Giuliano T. Tantarli’s hypothesis (dependent in part on a reading of ‘Donne ch’avete’ as straightforwardly resultant from ‘un elemento programmatico della “nuova matera” [of the *Vita Nuova*]’) that ‘Donna me prega’ marks a response to the *Vita Nuova*, refuting the arguments in ‘Donne ch’avete’; Tantarli, ‘Guido Cavalcanti contro Dante’, in Franco Gavezani and Giuglielmo Gorni ed., *Le tradizioni del testo: Studi di letteratura italiana offerti a Domenico de Robertis* (Milan; Naples: Ricciardi, 1993), pp. 3-13 (quotation p. 9). For the inherent problems in such assumptions see Gagnolati, ‘Trasformazioni e assenze’ and Barolini ed., *Rime giovanili*.

<sup>194</sup> See de Robertis on the presence of ‘il Cavalcanti della canzone (di cui è ancora mutata la frase dell’incipit “me prega, perch’eo voglio dire”)’ in this passage; *Opere Minori*, I, pt. 1, pp. 3-250 (133, note 1).

strategies found in the Bolognese Guido's *canzone*. The simile comes to the fore as the means of poetic expression and indeed argumentation, and with it Dante illustrates the collocation and inseparability of love and the noble heart. Indeed, there is a certain similetic quality even in the second line of the text, 'sì come il saggio in suo dittar pone', which signals not only a deference to Guinizzelli, but also a precise comparison between the manner of expression in Dante's sonnet and the Bolognese Guido's *canzone*: Dante will lay out his argument in just the way that Guinizzelli put his forth in 'Al cor gentil'. Furthermore Dante here dismisses Cavalcanti's version of passionate, irrational love and his associated natural philosophy through his choice of simile. In comparing the identification of the 'cor gentil' and 'amore' with the 'alma razional' and 'ragione' we are faced with more than a 'possibil riferimento (e opposizione) all'irrazionalità predicata d'amore da Cavalcanti';<sup>195</sup> in this brief simile Dante does not only argue against Cavalcantian irrationality, but also refutes the radical Aristotelian model of a universal possible intellect from which the individual becomes severed by the love experience in Cavalcanti's model.

## II. *Purgatorio*: Guido, Guido, Guittone

The *Vita Nuova*'s staging of a transition from Cavalcantian to Guinizzellian influence does not, of course, reflect the chronology of their output or periods of fame, a fact that Dante himself acknowledges in *Purgatorio* XI:

'Così ha tolto l'uno a l'altro Guido  
la gloria de la lingua; e forse è nato  
chi l'uno e l'altro caccerà del nido.'

(*Purg.* XI, 97-99)

This naming of the two Guidos and the implication of Dante as the new contender

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<sup>195</sup> de Robertis ed., *Vita Nuova*, p. 134, n. 3.

for 'la gloria della lingua' forms part of a narrative of supersession which defines Dante's dialogic relationship with both Cavalcanti and Guinizelli in his *Commedia*.

This *terzina* is spoken on the terrace where pride is corrected, the same terrace on which Dante declares 'io varcai Virgilio' (*Purg. X*, 53), a line which first establishes the theme of poetic surpassing in this canto.<sup>196</sup> This theme relates to passing of worldly fame narrated by Oderisi, the figure deployed here to offer a barely disguised prophecy of Dante's rise to glory in the poetic sphere, seizing fame from both Cavalcanti and Guinizelli. In Barolini's reading this moment represents the completion of a supersession narrative which Dante set in motion in chapter XXIV of the *Vita Nuova*. In this chapter he narrates Beatrice's approach, preceded by Cavalcanti's one-time lady ('e fue già molto donna di questo primo mio amico' *Vita Nuova* XXIV, 3), Giovanna, known also as Primavera. Cavalcanti's lady becomes analogous to John the Baptist preceding Beatrice as Christ, both in the correspondence of Giovanna-Giovanni and in her *senhal* Primavera 'cioè prima verrà' (as Love explains to Dante, *Vita Nuova* XXIV, 4). This relationship is then applicable to Cavalcanti's poetic relationship with Dante, creating a sense of the latter's superiority to his first friend.<sup>197</sup> This model of necessary precedence and subsequent supersession is clearly contained within Oderisi's analysis of the 'gloria della lingua', but, within the confines of the *Commedia*, I read it as more than just a culmination of this pre-existent narrative of surpassing. These lines act as the re-activation of just such a narrative through the recollection of previous versions of

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<sup>196</sup> For a reading of this line as carrying more than choreographic weight, see Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, pp. 278-279.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139. See also Alberto Gessani, *Dante, Guido Cavalcanti e l' 'amoroso regno'* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2004), pp. 99-103, Gragnolati, 'Trasformazioni e assenze', pp. 77-86. This moment also offers precedent for stage-direction as statement of poetic supersession.

it; a narrative which will unfold anew through the *Purgatorio*. After all, Dante's developments in the *Vita Nuova* are explicitly recalled in canto XXIV, Cavalcanti's poetry is alluded to and criticised in Statius's embryology lecture in XXV,<sup>198</sup> Guinizzelli is, of course, encountered in XXVI (echoing the aforementioned progression from Cavalcantian to Guinizzellian poetics in the *Vita Nuova*) and Beatrice resumes her Christological role in XXIX to XXXI.

Before continuing with this discussion, though, it should be noted that not every critic considers these two Guidos to be Cavalcanti and Guinizzelli. Another Guido, the scholar Guido Di Pino, argues for Guittone d'Arezzo and Guinizzelli as a more likely pairing, as do Michelangelo Picone and Giuglielmo Gorni.<sup>199</sup> One principle aspect of Dante's treatment of the three poets in contention for this 'gloria della lingua' can be highlighted to defend the reading of Guinizzelli and Cavalcanti, rather than Guittone, as the poets intended in these lines.<sup>200</sup> While the new Guido is described as already having 'tolto [...] la gloria' from the other, the first Guido, who was formerly pre-eminent, is still portrayed as somehow

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<sup>198</sup> Barański points to an intertextual engagement with 'Donna me prega' through echoes of its rhyme scheme and words in Canto XXV, and points to his correction of Cavalcanti's *canzone* through the words of Statius as evidence for the presence of the 'first friend' at this point in the *Commedia* Zygmunt Barański, "Per similitudine di abito scientifico": Dante, Cavalcanti, and the Sources of Medieval "Philosophical" Poetry', in *Science and Literature in Italian Culture: from Dante to Calvino: a festschrift for Patrick Boyde*, Pierpaolo Antonello and Simon A. Gilson ed., [Oxford: Legenda, 2004], pp. 14-52 (pp. 29-39).

<sup>199</sup> Guido di Pino, 'Così ha tolto l'uno a l'altro Guido', in *Temi di critica dantesca* (Bari: Adriatica, 1973), pp. 110-22; see also Picone, 'Guittone, Guinizzelli e Dante', pp. 83-4, and '*Vita Nuova*' e tradizione romanza (Padova: Liviana, 1979), Giuglielmo Gorni, 'Guittone e Dante', in Picone ed., *Guittone d'Arezzo*, pp. 309-35 (322-55).

<sup>200</sup> I am far from alone in this reading, which is shared by a goodly number of commentators: Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, p. 129; Shaw, 'A Note on *Purgatory* XXVI, 126', pp. 615-620; and H. Marks, 'Hollowed Names: Vox and Vanitas in the *Purgatorio*', *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, 110 (1992), pp. 135-178 (pp. 137-138). Francesco Petrarca also appears to be in agreement with this particular reading, as evident from his *Triumphus Cupidinis*:

Ecco Dante e Beatrice, ecco Selvaggia,  
 ecco Cin da Pistoia, Guittone d'Arezzo,  
 che di non esser primo par ch'ira aggia;  
 ecco i duo Guidi che già fur in prezzo [...]

(*Triumphus Cupidinis* IV, 31-4)

renowned, as still also occupying the ‘nido’, from which both Guidos will be chased by the unnamed newcomer. While Dante consistently (as will be discussed below) attempts to erase Guittone from any sort of canonical poetic lineage, the mentor-roles of both Cavalcanti and Guinizelli have been attested in the *Vita Nuova* (and Cavalcanti’s ‘altezza d’ingegno’ is still credited even as he is criticised for his ‘disdegno’ in *Inf.* X, 61-63).<sup>201</sup> Those two Guidos, then, are already associated in Dante’s *oeuvre* and there is also a strong sense of Guinizelli’s continued poetic influence elsewhere in the *Commedia*, as shown in Dante’s description of him as ‘padre’ in Canto XXVI (even with all the complications in this nomination, which I will elucidate shortly). This sort of lasting influence is one which Dante refuses to grant Guittone and in *Purgatorio* XXVI we find him ‘ascribing Guittone’s erstwhile pre-eminence to outmoded tastes’,<sup>202</sup> situating his fame firmly among ‘antichi’ (*Purg.* XXVI, 124), temporally distant from Dante’s literary present. The subsequent overthrow of Guittone’s ‘false’ reputation, is declared by the figure of Guinizelli in the words, “fin che l’ha vinto il ver con piú persone” (*Purg.* XXVI, 126). Furthermore, Bonagiunta numbers Guittone among those separated from Dante’s new praxis by the ‘nodo’ (*Purg.* XXVI, 55-7),<sup>203</sup> along with himself and Giacomo Da Lentini, a status which has an antiquating effect similar to that of Guinizelli’s attack in canto XXVI.

These distancing strategies, of separation by time and by the ‘nodo’, put Guittone well out of contention for a place in the ‘nido’, while Guinizelli’s is still a presence to be contended with and actively surpassed by Dante. Clearly,

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<sup>201</sup> Gessani acknowledges this during a discussion of the Giovanna episode in *VN* XXIV, Gessani, *Dante, Cavalcanti*, p. 102, n. 25.

<sup>202</sup> Barolini, *Dante and the Origins*, p. 36.

<sup>203</sup> “O frate, issa vegg’ io” diss’ elli, “il nodo / che ’l Notaro e Guittone e me ritenne / di qua dal dolce stil novo ch’i’ odo!”.

identifying Guinizzelli as 'l'altro Guido' allows us to read the later Cavalcanti as 'l'uno' who has snatched fame from his predecessor. Picone, though, would make the counterargument that Cavalcanti occupies the position of a condemned poet, whose allusive (and certainly not elusive) presence in *Inferno* X bars him from any place in this purgatorial discourse.<sup>204</sup> To take such a position, however, is to ignore the location of Guinizzelli's poetry ('l'altro Guido' in this reading) in the *Commedia*. We encounter the intertextual presence of the Bolognese Guido's poetry in hell with Francesca (particularly in her line, 'Amor, ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende', *Inf.* V, 100, echoing line 11 of Guinizzelli's 'Al cor gentil': 'Foco d'amore in gentil cor s'apprende'), while the penitent Guinizzelli undergoes the cleansing of his sin in purgatory ('già mi purgo', *Purg.* XXVI, 92). In fact Francesca's speech is another instance of the allusive pairing of our two Guidos, as, shortly before her Guinizzellian moment she bemoans God's antipathy to herself and Paolo. Francesca's plaint consists of the words 'se fosse amico il re de l'universo' (line 91), thus recalling Cavalcanti's sonnet 'Se Mercé fosse amica a' miei disiri', which we have already seen acting as an intertext for Dante's sonnet, 'Tutti li miei penisier', in the *Vita Nuova*.<sup>205</sup> Such an insulation of the poet from his sinful poetics in Guinizzelli's case implies that condemnation and praise of the same individual can take place in different realms. Cavalcanti is also, according to Barański's aforementioned reading of *Purgatorio* XXV, still a literary presence in

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<sup>204</sup> Picone, 'Guittone, Guinizzelli e Dante', p. 83.

<sup>205</sup> We must also acknowledge a much richer intertextual and intellectual engagement with Cavalcanti's poetry in *Inferno* V in the wake of Barolini, 'Dante and Cavalcanti (On Making Distinctions in Matters of Love): *Inferno* V in Its Lyric Context', *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, 116 (1998), pp. 31-63, reprinted as 'Dante and Cavalcanti (On Making Distinctions in Matters of Love): *Inferno* V in Its Lyric and Autobiographical Context' in *Dante and the Origins*, pp. 70-101. This reading sees Dante critiquing the *Amore-morte* pairing at the heart of his first friend's poetics and more specifically condemning those who submit reason to desire ('che la ragion sommettono al talento', *Inf.* V, 39) in a manner recalling 'Donna me prega' ('ché la 'ntenzione per ragione vale', 'Donna me prega', 33); *Ibid.*, pp. 78-9.

the second realm.<sup>206</sup> This first Purgatorial manifestation of ‘l’uno [...] Guido’ on the terrace of the Proud, as one who has attained earthly glory, also offers a fitting parallel for Cavalcanti’s association with the proud Heretics of *Inferno* X (as well as being consistent with Dante’s propensity for the perpendicular ordering of thematic concerns through the *Canticas*). There is perhaps also a poignancy in these lines when related to Cavalcanti, whose exile from Florence had been overseen by Dante, characterised as ‘il nido di malizia tanta’ by another of Dante’s condemned mentors, Brunetto Latini (*Inf.* XV, 78). The other significant ‘nido’ for this discussion is “questo luogo eletto / a l’umana natura per suo nido” (*Purg.* XXVII, 77-78), the *paradiso terrestre*; significant because Dante enters into dialogue with both Cavalcanti (intertextually in canto XXV)<sup>207</sup> and Guinizzelli (as a character in canto XXVI), surpassing them both philosophically and poetically, before proceeding through the flames of the final terrace to arrive at the earthly paradise. This Edenic garden is also a space in which Dante will appropriate the language of these two poets, but only to correct their ideologies by re-contextualising their words in the theologised context of the garden. Having passed through the fire which purifies the lustful penitents, Dante will reconfigure Cavalcanti’s ballata ‘In un boschetto trova’ pasturella’ from a narrative of fulfilled lust to a story of holy assistance in the encounter with Matelda.<sup>208</sup> He will also redeploy Guinizzellian comparative tropes in the encounter with that same

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<sup>206</sup> Barański, “Per similitudine di abito scientifico”, pp. 29-39: Such a treatment of the ‘primo amico’ is consistent with the correction of poetic predecessors in cantos XXIV and XXVI, and with the narrative of supersession being established from cantos XI to XXVI.

<sup>207</sup> See Barański, “Per similitudine di abito scientifico”, pp. 29-39.

<sup>208</sup> This text will also be well as in the dream of Leah before entering the garden; see discussion below. See also: Scartazzini’s commentary to *Purg.* XIX, 133-134, *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri riveduta nel testo e commentata da G. A. Scartazzini*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1900), Dartmouth Dante Project <<http://dante.dartmouth.edu>> [accessed 12 November 2012], hereafter *DDP*); Charles Singleton, *Journey to Beatrice* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press), pp. 214-216; Barolini, *Dante’s Poets*, pp. 149-152; Hollander *Purgatorio*, pp. 633-4.

Matelda who, Dante informs us, ‘volsesi in su i vermigli e in su i gialli / fioretti verso me’ (*Purg.* XXVIII, 55-6). The yellow and vermilion flowers are removed from Guinizzelli’s praise of the lady — ‘tutti color di fior’, giano e vermiglio’ (‘Io voglio del ver’, 6) — and rendered as part of the physical space of Dante’s Eden.<sup>209</sup> The earthly paradise, then, is a ‘nido’ from which he excludes the poetic ethos of his two predecessors, having still acknowledged their poetic stature in the vernacular canon.

This canon is, of course, teleologically structured to culminate in he who is born to chase his forebears from the nest (in Oderisi’s assessment) and so any recognition of other poets as canonical by Dante is laden with ulterior motives. In fact, any recognition of his poetic precedents (where it occurs)<sup>210</sup> is often rendered heavily ambivalent, and not only in the casting of them as penitent souls with damnable poetics. I refer here to Dante’s undermining of Guinizzelli at the encounter with his soul in canto XXVI:

‘Farotti ben di me volere scemo:  
son Guido Guinizzelli, e già mi purgo  
per ben dolermi prima ch’a lo stremo.’  
(*Purg.* XXVI, 91-93)

quand’ io odo nomar sé stesso il padre  
mio e de li altri miei miglior che mai  
rime d’amor usar dolci e leggiadre [...]  
(*Purg.* XXVI, 97-99)

The potency of Dante’s nomination of Guinizzelli as ‘padre’ is here mitigated by one intertextual and two contextual factors. The first of the contextual considerations is enunciated by Guinizzelli, “Or sai nostri atti e di che fummo

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<sup>209</sup> This echo was first noted by Francesco Torraca, commentary on *Purg.* XXVIII, 52-57, *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri nuovamente commentata da Francesco Torraca*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Milan; Rome; Naples: Albrighi, Segati & co., 1920), DDP [accessed 18 March 2014].

<sup>210</sup> My discussion, below, of Guittone in (or out of) the *Commedia* will deal with the issue of Dante’s erasure of one significant precedent.

rei” (*Purg.* XXVI, 89); we, along with the pilgrim, are made aware of Guinizzelli’s sinfulness by his own admission as well as his location among the penitent lustful purging their sin. In Guinizzelli’s case (and Arnaut’s to come)<sup>211</sup> this sin is perforce related to his erotic poetry, which we have seen situated firmly in hell. The second such factor is that any deference made by Dante here is made against the backdrop of those lines in *Purgatorio* XI which have just been discussed. Thus, even in naming Guinizzelli as ‘padre’, Dante is acknowledging poetic paternity in the awareness that his father’s patrimony has already been disbursed; the ‘gloria della lingua’ has already been taken by Cavalcanti and is soon to be seized by the pilgrim himself (the poet narrating this episode is, of course, in the active process of seizing it). In fact, Dante reinforces the content of Oderisi’s speech when praising Guinizzelli’s “dolci detti” (*Purg.* XXVI, 112). The pilgrim states that these verses, “quanto durerà l’uso moderno, / faranno cari ancora i loro incostri” (*Purg.* XXVI, 113-4); these ‘detti’ will be valued for as long as contemporary language and taste, ‘uso moderno’, endure. This is high praise, yes, but it is tinged with the same sense of the passing of fame over time which Oderisi articulated in the phrase ‘com’ poco

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<sup>211</sup> It is worth noting at this point that, although it is not included in *Inferno* V’s more explicit meditations on love lyric, Arnaut’s poetry is cited immediately afterwards, during the encounter with Cerberus in canto VI: ‘Quando ci scorse Cerbero, il gran vermo, / le bocche aperse e mostrocci le sanne; / non avea membro che tenesse fermo’ (*Inf.* VI, 22-4). The final line of this *terzina* rewrites Arnaut Daniel’s ‘*Lo ferm voler*’ (‘non ai membre non fremisca, neis l’ongla’) in an infernal context, transposing the tremblings of love experienced by a poet into the quivering ire of the hell hound. Torraca again appears to have been the first commentator, since followed by many others, to have noticed the intertext; Torraca, commentary on *Inf.* IV, 23-4, *DDP* [accessed 24 March 2014]. This re-purposing of Arnaut’s verse, coupled with his situation among the penitent lustful, would be enough to classify it as subject to a critique not dissimilar to that levelled at the poetry of the two Guidos a canto earlier. The appropriation of a lyric description of the lover’s state for the representation of Cerberus perhaps indicates that Arnaut’s words were better suited to this raging beast, a figure for incontinent sin, than to any poetic interaction with a lady. This sense of critique is only reinforced when we consider these lines and the passage that follows it as an engagement with (and implicit disapprobation of) aspects of Dante’s own *rime petrose* (engaged as they were with Arnaut’s *sestina*), as noted in a number of commentaries and first indicated in the conclusion to Francesco Mazzoni, *Il canto VI dell’Inferno*, [Florence: Le Monnier, 1967], *DDP* [accessed 24 March 2014]. See also: Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, commentary to *Inf.* VI, 24, *Commedia: Inferno* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1991), *DDP* [accessed 24 March 2014]; Nicola Fosca, commentary to *Inf.* VI, 22-4, 2003, *DDP* [accessed 24 March 2014].

verde in su la cima dura' (*Purg.* XI, 92) below on that first terrace. This of course is presented in contrast with Guinizzelli's description of Dante's impression on him: "tal vestigio, / per quel ch'i' odo, in me, e tanto chiaro, / "che Leté nol può tòrre né far bigio'" (*Purg.* XXVI, 106-8).<sup>212</sup> While commentators have tended to read 'quel ch'i' odo' as referring exclusively to one aspect of Dante's conversation with Guinizzelli (the fact of Dante's embodied pilgrimage) or another (the love which Dante professes for his 'padre') these lines seem to hint at something else, implying a transcendence for Dante's poetry which his own has clearly failed to achieve, but more of this later.

Returning to the initial identification of the penitent Guinizzelli, when he introduces himself and Dante hears 'nomar sé stesso il padre / mio' the poet of the *Commedia* describes the poet of 'Al cor gentil' in terms recalling the sonnet 'Caro padre mèo', a text sent by Guinizzelli to Guittone d'Arezzo. That exchange is further recalled in two the rhyme words from 'Caro padre mèo' — 'imbarchi'/'marchi'<sup>213</sup> — which find themselves echoed in the lines leading up to Guinizzelli's identification: "Beato te, che de le nostre *marche*", / ricominciò colei

<sup>212</sup> The function of Lethe in the *paradiso terrestre* is to remove all memory of sin from purged souls:

'Asperges me' sì dolcemente udissi,  
che nol so rimembrar, non ch'io lo scriva.  
(*Purg.* XXXI, 98-99)

and clarified in canto XXXIII:

Ond' io rispuosi lei: 'Non mi ricorda  
ch'i' straniasse me già mai da voi,  
né honne coscienza che rimorda'.  
'E se tu ricordar non te ne puoi',  
sorridente rispuose, 'or ti rammenta  
ome bevesti di Leté ancoi'.

(*Purg.* XXXIII, 91-96)

This oblivion is achieved before memories of good are secured by Eunoë, as illustrated when Matelda receives the injunction, "la tramortita sua virtù ravniva" (*Purg.* XXXIII, 129). The significance of the forward glance to Lethe at this point should therefore be clear: it implies that Dante's poetics are sanctioned and sinless and do not need to be cleansed.

<sup>213</sup> The rhyme words appear in Guinizzelli's quatrains: 'Caro padre mèo, de vostra laude / non bisogna ch'alcun omo se 'mbarchi: / [...] / A ciascun reo sì la porta clauda, / che, sembr', ha più via che Venezia' ha *marchi*' ('Caro padre mèo', 1-2, 5-6). Guittone, in turn builds his entire *-archi* rhyme scheme on a repetitious play on 'm'archi/marchi'.

che pria m'inchiese, / “per morir meglio, esperienza imbarche!” (*Purg.* XXVI, 73-75). The rare verb ‘imbarcare’ appearing as a rhyme word in both the sonnet exchange and the purgatorial lines bears a particular intertextual weight.<sup>214</sup> In recalling the *tenzone* between Guinizzelli and Guittone, Dante recalls Guido’s own words so as to reinforce the characterisation of him as a historical figure in purgatory. Dante’s intertextual move also recalls that original irony with which Guinizzelli uttered those words in order to undercut their original speaker, the Bolognese Guido, Dante’s ‘caro padre’. As has been established, Guinizzelli’s sonnet was not the expression of face value deference to a poetic superior, but rather the harshly ironic criticism of Guittone’s poetic style and output.<sup>215</sup> The presence of this irony suggests an intertextual process which goes beyond both Wilkins’ reading of ‘Guinizzelli praised and corrected’ and Roberto Rea’s valuable contribution according to which Dante ‘non mistifica affatto le opinioni e la funzione storica del poeta bolognese, bensì le ribadisce in modo inequivocabile’.<sup>216</sup> Certainly, this allusion demonstrates that Dante comprehended Guinizzelli’s ironic stance, but, by alluding to that exchange at the meeting with his soul, the poet of the *Commedia* appropriates that very irony. This ironic intertextuality serves to subtly undermine the Bolognese poet who, though apparently deferred to as ‘padre’, nonetheless is only undergoing purgation on the way to Paradise “per ben dolermi prima ch’ all’ estremo” (*Purg.* XXVI, 93). The very necessity of Guinizzelli’s purgation, for the poetry which finds its way into the *Inferno*, already brings an equivocal tone to Dante’s praise, a fact from which even the solemn oath

<sup>214</sup> See Rea, ‘Guinizzelli Praised and Explained’, p. 4, who reports the initial observation to this end from Contini, ‘Dante come personaggio-poeta’, *Un’idea di Dante* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), pp. 33-62 (59-60); Contini repeats the assertion in *PD* II, pp. 447-8. See also Wilkins, ‘Guinizzelli Praised and Corrected’, pp. 111-113, and Barolini, *Dante’s Poets*, p. 98.

<sup>215</sup> See the discussion in part I of the previous chapter.

<sup>216</sup> Rea, ‘Guinizzelli Praised and Explained’, p. 13.

of service — ‘tutto m’offersi pronto al suo servizio, / con l’affermar che fa credere altrui’ (*Purg.* XXVI, 104-6) — cannot distract.

In fact, if anything, Dante’s obsequiousness seems to re-echo Guinizelli’s own overblown deference in the *tenzone* with Guittone, reinforcing the allusive irony in this purgatorial encounter.<sup>217</sup> The recollection of Guittone at this point will have a double effect, both problematising the representation of Guinizelli and completely side-lining the Aretine friar-poet. Indeed, there seems to be an additional Guittonian intertext at play in this moment; namely the moralising sonnet ‘A te, Montuccio, ed agli altri cui nomo’, which is recalled in Dante’s wording at lines ninety-seven and eight, ‘odo nomar sé stesso il padre / mio e de li altri miei miglior’. The reiteration of the verb ‘nomar’ combined with the concern with ‘li altri’ — a group defined by their engagement with erotic poetry — and a context which is already recalling Guinizelli’s dialogic relationship with Guittone, furnishes us with this second Guittonian resonance. This text, as I have already demonstrated, is a key moment in Guittone’s performance of converted subjectivity, but why is it alluded to in this purgatorial encounter? Dante, like Guittone is addressing those who write love poetry and is doing so within a newly theologised context. Guittone is warning his equivalent of the ‘fedeli d’amore’ that their old matter (both reading and writing) and his own old poetry are in fact poisonous and that moral verse of the sort Frate Guittone is now producing is the

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<sup>217</sup> In Roberto Antonelli’s reading of the encounter with Guinizelli the ingratiating tone of the pilgrim comes to the fore. Antonelli firmly associates the ‘miglior’ of ‘de li altri miei miglior che mai / rime d’amor usar’ with Guinizelli:

*Miglior*, singolare infatti va riferito al “padre” Guinizelli e non agli “altri poeti” (“miglior di me”), come tutti i commentatori: lo dimostra del resto, oltre che la logica interna [...] anche la ripresa, poco più innanzi, da parte di Guido, dello stesso lemma, a correzione [...] di funzionale (purgatoriale) modestia, della precedente dichiarazione di eccellenza formulata dal personaggio-Dante: “O frate”, disse, “questi ch’io ti cerno / col dito”, e additò un spirito innanzi, / “fu *miglior* fabbro del parlar materno” (ovvero: “migliore di me che tu hai dichiarato migliore”).

Roberto Antonelli, ‘Cavalcanti e Dante: al di qua del Paradiso’ in *Dante: da Firenze all’aldilà. Atti del terzo seminario dantesco internazionale (Firenze, 9-11 giugno 2000)*, Michelangelo Picone ed. (Florence: Franco Cesati editore, 2001), pp. 289-302 (296).

only way to eternal life: ‘ma quelli, che triaca io so verace, / contra essi e contr’  
 ogni veleno usato / a ciò che 'n vita siate eternali’ (‘A te, Montuccio’, 12-14). Dante  
 here is establishing a community of writers comprising himself and “li altri miei  
 miglior che mai / rime d’amor usar dolci e leggiadre” (*Purg.* XXVI, 98-99), i.e.  
 those who write the kind of ‘dolci detti’ for which Guinizzelli is praised and which  
 Guittone disavows. It is this position for which he is, in turn, disavowed by Dante  
 during a ‘poderosa legittimazione della poesia d’amore laica’ in this canto.<sup>218</sup>

If, however, Guinizzelli’s poetry, which has ended up in *Inferno* and landed  
 him in *Purgatorio* for his sins of lust, provides a model for these other lyric poets,  
 then is there not an implicit warning here too? Indeed, Dante does not shirk from  
 including his own early verse in hell, a gesture which encompasses his  
 Cavalcantian poetry,<sup>219</sup> aspects of the *petrose*,<sup>220</sup> and also includes his most  
 explicitly Guinizzellian text. The citation of Guinizzelli’s ‘Al cor gentil’ necessarily  
 points readers towards Dante’s sonnet ‘Amor e ’l cor gentil son una cosa’, written  
 under the sign of ‘il saggio’ Guinizzelli. In addition, the style of his *rime petrose* is  
 implicitly called to mind by the recollection of Arnaut Daniel’s verse in *Inferno* VI  
 (see note 210 above). The difference between that damned discourse and Dante’s  
 transcendent poetry lies in the ‘two possible outcomes for courtly literature’ which

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<sup>218</sup> Giunta, *La poesia italiana*, p. 56, as cited in Kay, ‘Redefining the “matera amorosa”’, pp. 372.

<sup>219</sup> For an expansive overview of the Cavalcantian influence in Dante’s early lyric and its semantic and ideological anticipation of the experiences and descriptions of the lustful in hell see Barolini, *Dante and the Origins*, pp. 82-7.

<sup>220</sup> More generally in the meteorology of the fifth canto of *Inferno*: ‘wind and storm as erotic passion, related especially to mouth and eyes, cries and weeping—and to lyric poetry (Canto 5, stanza 2 [of “Io son venuto”]); Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez, *Time and the Crystal: Studies in Dante’s Rime Petrose* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), p. 224 — this view finds support in Barolini, *Dante and the Origins*, pp. 87-8. Also more specifically in the image of birds in flight, recalled from ‘Io son venuto’ in the context of the canto of the carnal sinners: Stanza 3, describing the flight and silence of birds, is echoed three times in the *Commedia*, in *Inferno* 5 and in *Purgatorio* 24 and 26, each case treating of migratory birds. In the first instance, migrating cranes are compared to the group of damned lovers, including Paolo and Francesca (“cantando lor lai / [...] traendo guai,” *Inferno* 5.46–48; cf. “Io son venuto,” 6–7: *guai gai*); and Martinez, *Time and the Crystal*, p. 202.

Barolini identifies in her comparative treatment of Cantos II and V of *Inferno*.<sup>221</sup> We must recognise, however, that a defining characteristic of the positive lyric outcome, even in the infernal context raised by Barolini, is Beatrice. In contrast to the irrational erotic focal point of *Inferno* V's Francesca and the lyric world she represents, *Inferno* II offers the reader (and the pilgrim) salvific lyric in as far as it pertains to Beatrice. The courtliness in that second canto is represented by Virgil's stilnovistic recollection of Beatrice,<sup>222</sup> while Beatrice will be the more-than-courtly lady who remains present after Dante has drunk of Lethe in the *paradiso terrestre*. While Guinizzelli's speech (and the evidence of the *Commedia*) implies that Dante's poetry can transcend the bounds of mortal erotic lyric to survive Lethe's cleansing of the memory of sin, Guinizzelli's verse does not and could not. Surely, then, Guinizzelli's followers in love poetry must take heed of his fate and repent the lustful aspects of their poetics 'prima ch'a lo stremo' and before they find themselves in the circle of the carnal damned, with nothing left to them but pretty words carried on a 'bufera infernal'. It seems that, having recalled Guinizzelli's sonnet to Guittone in order to ironically undermine Guido, Dante goes on to appropriate the language of Guittone (of which more shortly), whom he simultaneously deprecates through Guinizzelli's speech, both to implicitly warn other love lyricists of their sinful potential and further elevate his own poetic achievement in the 'nove rime' and subsequently the *Commedia*. Unlike Guittone,

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<sup>221</sup> Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, pp. 6-11 (quotation p. 11).

<sup>222</sup> Virgil's courtliness is most evident in his introduction to Beatrice in terms saturated with stilnovist (and even Guinizzellian) diction:

Io era tra color che son sospesi,  
e donna mi chiamò beata e bella,  
tal che di comandare io la richiesi.  
Lucevan li occhi suoi più che la stella;  
e cominciommi a dir soave e piana,  
con angelica voce, in sua favella [...]  
(*Inf.* II, 52-7)

and unlike his followers, Dante is simultaneously speaking of love and gaining poetic salvation.<sup>223</sup> There are further Guittonian appropriations in the encounter with Guinizzelli, notably in Guido's critique of Guittone's baseless fame, a criticism touched upon in the discussion of the 'nodo' above. Guinizzelli's dismissal of Guittone's reputation is based on the the victory of truth over falsehood:

‘Così fer molti antichi di Guittone,  
di grido in grido pur lui dando pregio,  
fin che l’ha vinto il ver con più persone.’

(*Purg.* XXVI, 124-6)

The 'ver' in this *terzina* echoes the occurrence of the term, 'A voce più ch'al ver drizzan li volti' (*Purg.* XXVI, 121) and Barolini reiterates Wilkins' reading of this repetitive insistence as an echo of Guinizzelli's response to Bonagiunta in 'Omo ch'è saggio non corre leggero', in which the actual Guinizzelli had twice appealed to truth:<sup>224</sup> 'riten su' pensero / in fin a tanto ch 'l ver l'asigura' ('Omo ch'è saggio', 3-4) and 'Foll' è chi crede sol veder lo vero' ('Omo ch'è saggio', 5). The syntactical echoes of the first of these formulations in line 126 above are, indeed striking. Also, the fifth line of Guinizzelli's sonnet and the second quatrain as a whole give good reason for Guinizzelli's own self-effacement and deference to Arnaut in *Purgatorio*, as his text goes on to say 'non se dev' omo tener troppo altero, / ma de guardar so stato e sua natura' ('Omo ch'è saggio', 7-8). Guinizzelli in purgatory seems to display the humility that Guinizzelli the poet demanded of Bonagiunta on earth, his sin of lust does not appear to have been compounded by the sin of pride (despite the audacity of his debate with God). While he may not be proud, and while he may defer to Arnaut, the purgatorial Guinizzelli's trouncing of Guittone's

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<sup>223</sup> Kay, 'Redefining the "matera amorosa"', pp. 372-3.

<sup>224</sup> See Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, p. 98, Wilkins, 'Guinizzelli Praised and Corrected', pp. 111-3.

reputation remains and it hinges on that self-same insistence on ‘il ver’ in lines 121 and 126 of *Purgatorio*. While this repetitive recourse to ‘truth’ is used in Dante’s text to establish the falsehood of Guittone’s reputation, it also activates a second intertextual voice, Guittone’s own. In these lines, as in the echo of ‘A te, Montuccio’, Dante appears to appropriate a fundamental element of Guittone’s poetic conversion, the dichotomy ‘vero’/‘falso’ which we have already seen in the Frate’s own division of ‘erotic’ past from religious present in texts such as ‘O vera virtù, vero amore’.<sup>225</sup> Truth — of love, of esteem, of virtue — is the vital qualifier for the converted poetics of Frate Guittone, and he frequently insists upon the value of his didactic work as lying in its truth, which stems from its religious legitimacy. In co-opting the notion of ‘ver’ and setting it to work against any worthiness on Guittone’s part, Dante turns Guittone’s own measure of value against him in order to erase his worth as a moral-poetic precedent from the genealogy of the *Commedia*. These are powerful examples of the seesaw of poetic worthiness which Dante repeatedly manipulates through intertextual dialogue to pivot himself higher through the downward trajectory of others.

Indeed, even having recruited Guinizzelli as a co-critic of Guittone and praiser of the *Commedia*, Dante does not stop at ironically undercutting his forbear in *lo stilo della loda*, granting a place to Guinizzelli’s critic, Bonagiunta, two cantos and one terrace earlier. Guinizzelli’s exchanges with Bonagiunta have already been discussed in the previous chapter, so I won’t recapitulate that analysis here; suffice to recall that Bonagiunta’s position as the author of ‘Voi ch’avete mutata la mainera’ gives him a threefold significance when encountered by Dante on the terrace where gluttony is purged. He is present, of course, to

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<sup>225</sup> As covered in my first chapter.

emblematised the sin of his terrace and to reinforce its relationship to poetry,<sup>226</sup> he also serves to affirm Dante's poetics and, finally, he is deployed to undercut Guinizelli in the forthcoming encounter with him. Just as we have seen Guinizelli characterised by association with his own poetic vocabulary, so Dante also characterises Bonagiunta by having him speak in his own words in the *Commedia*:

‘Ma di s’i’veggio qui colui che fore  
trasse le nove rime, cominciando  
“Donne ch’avete intelletto d’amore”’.  
(*Purg.* XXIV, 49-51)

These lines are of course interesting for their strident endorsement of Dante's poetic innovations, a discussion of which will follow, but they are specifically interesting at this point for the formulation ‘colui che fore / trasse le nove rime’. These words should remind us of ‘traier canson per forza di scrittura’ (‘Voi ch’avete’, 14), the line with which Bonagiunta ultimately condemns Guinizelli's *mainera mutata* in his critical sonnet. The appearance of a reformulation of that line at this moment in *Purgatorio* serves to give the character Bonagiunta an authentic voice and to stage approbation of Dante's poetry, certainly, but it also reminds us that the poet Bonagiunta did not approve of Guinizelli's ‘nove rime’ in the same way. As we have seen, ‘Donne ch’avete’ marks the beginning of the Guinizellian phase in the *Vita Nuova*.

The *canzone* is introduced as the first poem written solely to praise Beatrice

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<sup>226</sup> Fabian Alfie has convincingly demonstrated the logic of this association, which is figured also in the encounter with Forese in cantos XXIII and XXIV. He traces the correlation of the sins of the lips with those of the throat (i.e. the negative *tenzone* with gluttony) through the works of various medieval moralists, including Alan de Lille, Guillaume Peyrault and Domenico Cavalca, as well as the status of *contentio* (the etymon for *tenzone*) as sinful. He also notes the choice of ‘Labia mea, Domine’ as the sinners’ song as strong evidence for the interconnection of the purgation of gluttony and the purgation of dispraise through the enactment of its opposite (the full psalm verse reads ‘Domine, labia mea aperies et os meum adnuntiabit laudem tuam’). Fabian Alfie, *The Dante's Tenzone with Forese Donati: Reprehension of Vice* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: Toronto University Press, 2011), pp. 83-5.

(following the model of ‘Io voglio del ver la mia donna laudare’ along with Guinizzelli’s other laudatory verse), and is followed immediately by the sonnet beginning ‘Amor e ’l cor gentil son una cosa’. The latter text goes on to say ‘sì come il saggio in suo dittare pone’, acknowledging Guinizzelli’s wisdom and its poetic influence on Dante (and not coincidentally recalling the opening salvo of Guinizzelli’s defence against Bonagiunta ‘Omo che saggio non corre leggiere’). Bonagiunta, however, does not recognise the Guinizzellian influence on this New Poetry, instead crediting Dante with initiating a single-handed poetic revolution, beginning with his ‘Donne ch’avete’. Dante goes on to accept this credit, declaring:

[...] ‘I’ mi son un che, quando  
Amor mi spira, noto, e a quel modo  
ch’e’ ditta dentro vo significando’.  
(*Purg.* XXIV, 52-54)

In this statement, that his own difference lies predominantly if not only in the fact of his direct inspiration by Amor, Barolini reads an assertion on Dante’s part that ‘he has learned to bypass the traditional line of authority – the “saggio” of his earlier sonnet – in order to draw his inspiration directly from the source’.<sup>227</sup> This reading goes a little way down the path which I am keen to follow here, in as far as it notes the role of Bonagiunta in the *Commedia* as one who says something about Guinizzelli as well as Dante in this encounter. More specifically, he says something about the phase of the *Vita Nuova* composed under Guinizzelli’s shadow, beginning with ‘Donne ch’avete’ and including ‘Amor e ’l cor gentil’. Furthermore, this statement regards the transcendence of models of authority, as a ‘saggio’ is no longer required to sanction new poetry. Beyond these considerations lies an affirmation on Dante’s part that Guinizzelli, though soon to be named father (or, indeed, in preparation for the intertextual irony in that very naming), can be to an

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<sup>227</sup> Barolini, *Dante’s Poets*, p. 90.

extent discounted in the very moment he is elevated. Guinizzelli's paternal authority is not a prerequisite for Dante's ultimate (and unique) role as authoritative, vernacular 'poeta'. In fact, this transcendence of a vernacular canon (a canon which Dante himself is generating) is an important aspect of Dante's apparently successful transcendence of the poetry of carnal sin. The distinction of the 'nove rime' even from the 'dolce stil novo' and definitively from the period of 'uso moderno' (which limits the value in Guinizzelli's 'rime d'amor') is a vital part of the expression of Dante's movement beyond the limits of the vernacular past. In the same breath Dante casts the sinful poetry which he has surpassed as Guinizzelli's lot and by extension the lot of 'li altri miei miglior' who are both acknowledged and undercut by Dante.

So, the meeting with Guinizzelli should be reappraised in light of this transcendence of poetic authorities, and in particular we should pay more attention to the naming of Guinizzelli as 'padre'. While this appellation is given by the Dante-poet, it is portrayed as something which Dante-pilgrim witnesses but does not partake in: 'odo nomar sé stesso il padre / mio'. While these lines are literally referring to Guinizzelli's introduction of himself by name, the structure of the lines and the fact that Dante-poet avoids having his pilgrim self utter the term 'padre mio' suggests a disassociation building upon the transcendence of authority implied in his exchange with the figure of Bonagiunta. Dante here seems to be having his cake and eating it, simultaneously undercutting Guinizzelli through the allusive irony of 'Caro padre mēo' and allowing himself a discursive distance from the acknowledgement of Guinizzelli as even ironically father-like. Inheritance, then, is to be avoided. We should not be surprised to find Dante bypassing any poetic genealogy here; we have already witnessed his transcendence of Virgil,

whose original epithet — ‘lo mio maestro e ‘l mio autore’ (*Inf.* I, 85) — does not prevent the poet from writing the aforementioned ‘io varcai Virgilio’ (*Purg.* X, 53) in the context of the first terrace of Purgatory. Barolini’s reading of this line — superficially a mere stage-direction — as another statement of the transcendence of authority remains the most convincing interpretation,<sup>228</sup> especially given the micro-context of the first terrace, in which earthly reputation is envisaged as passing, and the macro-context of Dante’s second realm, in which poetic forebears are repeatedly met and surpassed. Guinizzelli (along with his terrace-mate Arnaut Daniel) represents another instance of Dante’s physical and metaphorical overtaking of poetic forebears as witnessed in the case of Virgil.

When Dante moves through the refining fire (*Purg.* XXVII, 46-57) his specially ordained pilgrimage takes him, living, beyond the souls who spend years purging sin on the mountain, and beyond the love poets whom he leaves behind to complete their penitence in the flames. This is the ultimate supersession, a transcendence achieved uniquely by Dante and when, prior to receding into the flames, Guinizzelli asks Dante to say a ‘paternostro’ for him in paradise (*Purg.* XXVI, 130), we are prompted to recall Dante’s rendition of the prayer in a translated form in *Purgatorio* XI.<sup>229</sup> Dante’s vernacular version offers us the only complete prayer not of Dante’s invention to be recited in the poem,<sup>230</sup> and is the first instance of a process of self-authorisation through scriptural appropriation

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<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 278-279.

<sup>229</sup> It begins, “O padre nostro, che ne’ cieli sati, / non circunsritto, ma per più amore / ch’ai primi effetti di là sù tu hai [...]” (*Purg.* XI, 1-3) and comes to an end in a cleverly reconstructed plea for the living, on earth, not to be led into temptation, a prayer which ‘già non si fa per noi, ché non bisogna’ (*Purg.* XI, 23).

<sup>230</sup> Charles Singleton, note to *Purg.* XI, in *Purgatorio*, translated and with a commentary by C. Singleton, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 220. Bernard’s prayer to the Virgin, which opens the thirty-third canto of *Paradiso*, has a different presence in the text as it is not a translation of existing liturgy, but rather a new text by the poet, though based on the writings of St. Bernard; see Hollander, note to *Par.* XXXIII, pp. 917-8.

and translation which Dante undertakes in the *Commedia*.<sup>231</sup> Returning to the significance of Guinizzelli's plea, the fact that he requests a 'paternostro' cannot be considered incidental: Dante represents his physical and poetic supersession of the Bolognese Guido by means of the language of fatherhood. Not only does the character of Guinizzelli efface himself with reference to the 'miglior fabbro' Arnaut, but he also indicates a higher father to whom Dante must defer. This reassignment of the paternal role both reinforces the intertextual undermining of Guinizzelli played out through the citation of 'Caro padre mèo' and implicitly acknowledges the authority of Dante's scriptural and liturgical poetics. Guido's request reminds us of Dante's translation of the prayer in canto XI, perhaps recognising it as a *tour de force*, and certainly affirming its value as Guinizzelli essentially requests a repeat performance. One last facet of this particular of Guinizzelli's deference should be acknowledged here, as suggested in the thirties by Ernesto Trucchi's commentary, in which he reminds us that a conversation with God has already been vividly represented, precisely in Guinizzelli's 'Al cor gentil'. This observation should further highlight Dante's staged surpassing of Guido, whose debate with the divine failed to justify his poetics (in Dante's narrative) and brought him to his current, penitent condition, while Dante's poetic progress leads him on to paradise. This brings us to the structural aspect of this paternity text: Dante's 'padre nostro' and Guinizzelli's request for the paternoster to be said occur in the context of discussions of poetic fame and value at the beginning and end of purgatory proper (on the first and the last terraces of purgation). The vernacular

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<sup>231</sup> As Stanley Benfell puts it: 'by fusing the bible and his poem [...] Dante presents himself as an inspired writer, both more and less than poet. Less because he relies on the bible, but more because he rewrites it in his poem, laying claim to the inspiration that animated the biblical prophets', V. Stanley Benfell, *The Biblical Dante* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 117-9 (quotation p. 119). For a discussion which relates the discourse of scriptural appropriation and citation to the establishment of poetic authority see Kevin Brownlee, 'Why the Angels Speak Italian: Dante as Vernacular Poeta in Paradiso XXV', *Poetics Today*, 5.3 (1984), pp. 597-610.

rendering of the prayer comes in the same canto as Oderisi's pronouncements on the two Guidos, while the 'paternostro' request from Guinizzelli comes towards the end of Dante's encounters with poets and theorising of poetry in cantos XXIV-XXVI. In this bracketing we witness an aspect of the fulfilment of Oderisi's prophecy, 'forse è nato / chi l'uno e l'altro caccerà del nido' (*Purg.* XI, 97-99); Dante has come to claim that title as he is on the verge of entering "questo luogo eletto / a l'umana natura per suo nido" (*Purg.* XXVII, 77-78), the earthly paradise which can be identified as a reward for his transcendent, religiously vindicated poetry. This particular 'nido' is also the site of the approaching encounter with Beatrice, whose inspiration and influence have led to the 'nove rime' and the escape from the 'selva oscura'. Before Dante's entry into the garden he will have to undergo a laureation at the hands of Virgil, but more of that later. For now, let us acknowledge the culmination of a narrative of supersession in which Dante transcends the genealogy of the lyric canon in preparation for a poetic encounter with the divine.

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## ***Part 2 – Dialogic Disassociation: Cavalcanti, Ulisse, and the Siren***

Having demonstrated the association of Guido Cavalcanti with Guido Guinizzelli in a narrative of supersession through which Dante incorporates and stages the transcendence of his lyric genealogy, it is worth spending a few more words on the treatment of Cavalcanti on his own terms. Dante's (often fraught) interactions with Cavalcanti in the *Commedia* have been much discussed over the years. Particular attention has been paid recently to the polemical allusions to 'Donna me prega' and Cavalcanti's Averroist philosophy in *Purgatorio* XXV,<sup>232</sup> as well as to the similarly corrective intertextual presences of his poetry to the heights of *Paradiso* XXX.<sup>233</sup> The apparent, implied damnation of Dante's first friend (still living at the date on which the narrative of the *Commedia* begins) in *Inferno* X, through the presence of his father among the heretics and those references to his philosophical poetry has especially been documented.<sup>234</sup> In this section, however, I wish to point to another key, yet heretofore un-noted reference at the very beginning of *Purgatorio*, which recalls Cavalcanti's poetry and philosophy and through which Dante attempts to confirm Guido's exclusion from the ranks of the saved.

### **I. Cavalcanti recalled**

The intertextual moment to which I am referring comes in the very first lines of the first canto of *Purgatorio*:

Per correr miglior acque alza le vele

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<sup>232</sup> Barański, "Per similitudine di abito scientifico", pp. 29-39.

<sup>233</sup> Daniele Bonnanno, *La perdita e il ritorno: presenze cavalcantiane nell'ultimo Dante* (Pisa: ETS, 1999); on other Cavalcantianisms in the heights of the *Paradiso* see Domenico de Robertis, 'Un altro Cavalcanti?' in Ardizzone ed., *Guido Cavalcanti tra i suoi lettori*, pp. 13-25.

<sup>234</sup> Barolini, *Dante's Poets*; Barański, "Per similitudine di abito scientifico"; and John Freccero, 'Epitaph for Guido: *Inferno* X', *Religion and Literature*, 39.3 (Autumn, 2007), pp. 1-29 (22-25).

la navicella del mio ingegno,  
 che lascia dietro a sé mar sì crudele;  
 e canterò di quel secondo regno  
 dove l'umano spirito si purga  
 e di salire al ciel diventa degno.

(*Purg.* I, 1-6)

Here, even before Dante invokes the muses to deliver the poetry of his second realm, he evokes his first friend and the early *tenzone* comprised of Dante's:<sup>235</sup>

Guido, i' vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io  
 fossimo presi per incantamento  
 e messi in un vassel, ch'ad ogni vento  
 per mare andasse al voler vostro e mio;  
 sì che fortuna od altro tempo rio  
 non ci potesse dare impedimento,  
 anzi, vivendo sempre in un talento,  
 di stare insieme crescesse 'l disio.  
 E monna Vanna e monna Lagia poi  
 con quella ch'è sul numer de le trenta  
 con noi ponesse il buono incantatore:  
 e quivi ragionar sempre d'amore,  
 e ciascuna di lor fosse contenta,  
 sì come i' credo che sarémo noi.<sup>236</sup>

and Cavalcanti's response:

S'io fosse quelli che d'amor fu degno,  
 del qual non trovo sol che rimembranza,  
 e la donna tenesse altra sembianza,  
 assai mi piacereia sì fatto legno.  
 E tu, che se' de l'amoroso regno  
 là onde di merzé nasce speranza,  
 riguarda se 'l mio spirito ha pesanza:  
 ch'un prest'arcier di lui ha fatto segno  
 e tragge l'arco che li tese Amore,  
 sì lietamente, che la sua persona

<sup>235</sup> Elizabeth Coggeshall, in a paper given at the 2014 MLA convention in Chicago has recently drawn attention to the presence of this sonnet in another corrective episode: the encounter with Forese Donati on the terrace of the gluttonous. In a paper given at the MLA convention, Coggeshall noted that the image of the ship driven by good winds 'Né 'l dir, né 'l andar lui più lento / facea, ma ragionando andavam forte, / sì come nave pinta da buon vento' *Purg* XXIV, 1-3, which serves as a simile for friendly impetus on the purgatorial journey, appears to owe its provenance to 'Guido i' vorrei' and the 'vassel, ch'ad ogni vento / per mare andasse al voler vostro e mio;' (3-4). The association of sailing with friendship, 'ragionare', and the '-ento' rhyme all serve to cast the meeting with Forese (and the peace made between them) as a positive model of friendship, correcting the problematic aspects of the exchange with Cavalcanti (to be discussed below).

<sup>236</sup> Text drawn from Dante Alighieri, *Rime: giovanili, e della Vita nuova*, Teodolinda Barolini ed., notes by Manuele Gragnolati (Milan: BUR Rizzoli, 2009).

par che di gioco porti signoria.  
 Or odi maraviglia ch'el disia:  
 lo spirito fedito li perdona,  
 vedendo che li strugge il suo valore.

A number of elements in the lines from *Purgatorio* should draw our attention to this early exchange: firstly, the recurrent rhyme sound ‘-egno’ which the lines of *Purgatorio* recall from Cavalcanti’s sonnet, and indeed the sharing of two rhyme words, ‘degno’ and ‘regno’. The third of these ‘-egno’ words in Dante’s *terza rima* also carries a Cavalcantian charge in the *Commedia*. We have only to recall Cavalcante de’ Cavalcanti’s question in *Inferno* X, “Se per questo cieco / carcere vai per altezza d’ingegno, / mio figlio ov’ è? E perché non è teco?” (58-60), in which Guido, son of the infernal heretic, is characterised by an ‘altezza d’ingegno’ akin to Dante’s own, here figured as the ‘navicella’. We have, then, in this rhyme alone a strong resonance with this sonnet exchange between the former friends. This noted, we must surely acknowledge the allusion when faced with the maritime imagery deployed in the *tenzone*: the ‘vasel, ch’ad ogni vento / per mare andasse al voler vostro e mio’ (‘Guido, i’ vorrei’) or ‘sifatto legno’ (‘S’io fosse quelli’) is recalled in the aforementioned ‘navicella del mio ingegno’.

Let us linger on the image of the boat shared between the sonnet exchange and the opening of *Purgatorio*: Dante, by intertextually absorbing the earlier sonnet exchange with Cavalcanti is imbuing his youthful invitation to a dream voyage aboard the ‘vasel’ with a weightier charge, a retroactive metaphorisation in line with the program of the *Commedia* and in light of his own new poetics. Here, expressed in opposition to old styles, and to the failed, tragic lyric of his first friend,<sup>237</sup> Dante recasts ‘Guido, i’ vorrei’ as continuous with his new model of

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<sup>237</sup> On the tragedy of Cavalcanti’s poetics see, among others, Calenda, *Per altezza d’ingegno*, pp. 92-93.

poetic creation — the marine voyage — through the repeated recollections of the *tenzone* of which it forms a part. Such recollections are present both here in *Purgatorio* I's intertextual operation and in the reprised allusion to this particular text in the 'legno che cantando varca' of *Paradiso* II, not to mention the Ulyssean imagery which pervades the *Commedia*. This is an instance of the kind of intertextual performance which we have seen in Frate Guittone's palinodic redefinition of his subjectivity and which Gragnolati has pointed out in the performance of the author in *Vita Nuova*.<sup>238</sup> In this process, past poetry is placed within a new textual framework, and is thus imbued with new significance. Though, as has been noted, the image of the boat as metaphor for poetic creation is firmly rooted in a classical legacy,<sup>239</sup> it takes on a particular charge in Dante's *Commedia* as *the* governing metaphor for the production of the *poema sacro*, first named in this 'navicella' in *Purgatorio*, and developing further in *Paradiso*, where we encounter this address to the reader:

O voi che siete in piccioletta barca,  
 desiderosi d'ascoltar, sequiti  
 dietro al mio legno che cantando varca,  
 tornate a riveder li vostri liti:  
 non vi mettete in pelago, ché forse,  
 perdendo me, rimarreste smarriti.  
 L'acqua ch'io prendo già mai non si corse;  
 Minerva spira, e conducemi Appollo,  
 e nove Muse mi dimostran l'Orse.

(*Par.* II, 1-9)

In this reassertion and expansion of the metaphor of the ship the boat is now the poem, 'che cantando varca'. The image of the boat thus gathers greater significance, the 'navicella del mio ingegno' replaced, absorbed as is the 'piccioletta

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<sup>238</sup> See chapter 1 and Gragnolati, 'Trasformazioni e assenze' and 'Authorship and Performance'.

<sup>239</sup> See note 35 in chapter 1. Of particular relevance to the Dantean context, perhaps are the occurrences of this imagery in the texts of Cicero, Virgil, and Statius; Curtius, *European Literature*, pp. 128-130.

barca' of the reader. 'Ingegno' is side-lined in place of pure inspiration, direct intervention from a (Christian re-rendering of) Apollo and Minerva, figures for God and poetic inspiration. Faith not wit is key here, a message alien to Cavalcanti, a sense perhaps reinforced by the reference to the 'legno che cantando varca' recalling again the 'sifatto legno' of 'S'io fosse quelli'. This transcendence of *ingegno* can be read as running parallel with the overcoming of poetic genealogy which we have seen taking place throughout *Purgatorio*, as Dante's transition from the mountain to the heavens was predicated on these dual processes.

This 'legno' will have wider resonances within the *Commedia* than just this 'navicella del mio ingegno' and these will be discussed below, but let us begin with the reader's first encounter with the image. In the opening lines of *Purgatorio* Dante's tenzone with Cavalcanti is recalled in the reappearance of the boat coupled with a linguistic overlap between Dante's purgatorial lines and that earlier exchange. That there are striking echoes in vocabulary, rhyme and imagery should be evident and leave us with the task of elucidating the thematic relationship between these texts. First, however, in order to engage in an effective analysis of the intertextual relationship, we must engage with the significance of this sonnet exchange.

The scene which Dante conjures up in 'Guido, i' vorrei' is one of a daydream idyll, a 'sogno dell'amicizia' which pertains to 'una dimensione che è consapevolmente irreale'.<sup>240</sup> This vision is characterised by the enchantment desired by the poet, and by the magic boat guided by the prospective sailors' wills (an image most likely drawn from the anonymous twelfth century Tuscan poem, the *Mare amoroso*).<sup>241</sup> He invites Cavalcanti to partake in this magical scene, its

<sup>240</sup> Barolini ed., *Rime giovanili*, p. 188.

<sup>241</sup> As noted by de Robertis in his introduction to Dante's text in Guido Cavalcanti, *Rime*, p. 148.

happy setting the ideal ground for fruitful discussions of love in the presence of the ladies who inspire such fine feeling. Guido's reply ruptures the 'dolcezza di bel sogno' set out by Dante.<sup>242</sup> In 'S'io fosse quelli' Cavalcanti declines the younger poet's invitation, responding with a statement of unworthiness, unsuitability to commune with him in a dream-space (characterised as 'l'amoroso regno') such as the one proposed by Dante. He further cites a lack of his lady's favour, and a soul sapped of valour, worth and power as preventing him from entering into Dante's utopian of discourse on love. The perceived realities of Cavalcanti's position are presented as contrary to the lovers' ideal proposed by Dante.<sup>243</sup> We may detect more than a hint of irony here. In other words the desperate, destructive experience of Cavalcanti is utterly incompatible with the oneiric pleasantness and rational discourse ('ragionar') of Dante's invitation.

Tone aside, it is the content of Cavalcanti's refusal with which Dante will attempt to damn him. The firmly material and disruptive nature of his theory of love, as will later be expressed in his doctrinal *canzone* 'Donna me prega',<sup>244</sup> may be called to mind in the key term 'spirito' (13), which, even at this earlier stage in Cavalcanti's poetic career, represents a topos of his physiological poetics. Here the 'spirito' is wounded at the desire of the beloved, and the imagery of militaristically destructive Love is restated in the 'prest' arcier' (8). This wounding, damaging, cruel love has no place in the idyllic dream-space of Dante's 'Guido, i' vorrei', and is even less fitting for his *Purgatorio*, especially in the light of Guido's self-decreed removal from the 'amoroso regno' ('S'io fosse quelli', 4), which, in the purgatorial

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<sup>242</sup> Gessani, *Dante, Guido Cavalcanti*, p. 25.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-30.

<sup>244</sup> Edoardo Savona, *Per un Commento a 'Donna me prega' di Guido Cavalcanti* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Atlanteo, 1989); more recently restated by Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti*.

recollection of this *tenzone*, must surely be correlated with Dante's 'secondo regno' (*Purg.* I, 4). This correlation is not merely one of linguistic similarity, but based in Virgil's classification of the fundamental principles of Purgatory's structure in canto XVII:

'Né creator né creatura mai',  
Cominciò el, 'figliuol, fu senza amore,  
o naturale o d'animo: e tu 'l sai.  
Lo naturale è sempre senza errore,  
ma l'altro puote errar per malo obietto  
o per troppo o per poco di vigore'.  
(*Purg.* XVII, 91-96)

'[...] [il] mal che s'ama è del prossimo; ed esso  
Amor nasce in tre modi in vostro limo'.  
(*Purg.* XVII, 113-114)

'Questo triforme amor qua giù di sotto  
si piange [...]'  
(*Purg.* XVII, 124-125)

'Se lento amore a lui veder vi tira  
o a lui acquistiar, questa cornice,  
dopo giusto pentir, ve ne martira'.  
(*Purg.* XVII, 130-132)

'L'amor ch'ad esso troppo s'abbandona,  
di sovr' a noi si piange per tre cerchi [...]'  
(*Purg.* XVII, 136-137)

This division of Purgatory shows the centrality of love to its architecture, the correction of erring love, and inspiration of correct love, the love for God who is himself love. This conclusion is reinforced when we consider that the passage through Purgatory corrects the will, redirects love to God and is characterised by the attainment of right love which Dante will achieve in the Edenic reunion with Beatrice. The treatment and correction of love central to *Purgatorio* is, it must be stressed, a unique experience for each soul dependent on their unique sinfulness, as each will is but imperfectly corrected and indeed in the process of correction until the ascent is complete and therefore lacks the complete freedom of the will

which results in the sort of communality only attained on ascending to paradise.<sup>245</sup> This is not to say that the souls of *Paradiso* have lost their identity, or indeed their individuality, but rather to acknowledge that those souls in their heavens share a unity of will, a unity of love, which is the shared will and experience of the love of God as reflected in the unifying configuration of the ‘candida rosa’ (*Par.* XXXI, 1), towards which those in *Purgatorio* are still progressing, bearing the hallmarks of their distinct, sinful lives. This purgatorial distinctness is evident even within the communal punishments on each terrace. One has only to recall the souls of the penitent proud, ‘disparmente angosciate’ (*Purg.* XI, 29) by the varied weights they carry to atone for their varied sins, to realise the residual detachment which still pervades each soul’s experience here. It is this detachment which must be gradually broken down as the community of souls is gradually reconstructed in a

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<sup>245</sup> See *Monarchia* I.xii.4-6: ‘Si ergo iudicium moveat omnino appetitum et nullu modo preveniatur ab eo, liberum est; si vero ab appetitu quocunque modo preveniente iudicium moveatur, liberum esse non potest, quia non a se, sed ab alio captivum trahitur. Et hinc est quod bruta iudicium liberum habere non possunt, quia eorum iudicia semper ab appetitu preveniuntur. Et hinc etiam patere potest quod substantie intellectuales, quarum sunt inmutabiles voluntates, necnon anime separate bene hinc abeuntes, libertatem arbitrii ob inmutabilitatem voluntatis non amittunt, sed perfectissime atque potissime hoc retinent. Hoc viso, iterum manifestum esse potest quod hec libertas sive principium hoc totius nostre libertatis est maximum donum humane nature a Deo collatum — sicut in *Paradiso Comedie* iam dixi — quia per ipsum hic felicitamur ut homines, per ipsum alibi felicitamur ut dii’ [Now if judgment controls desire completely and is in no way pre-empted by it, it is free; but if judgment is in any way at all pre-empted and thus controlled by desire, it cannot be free, because it does not act under its own power, but is dragged along in the power of something else. And that is why the lower animals cannot have free will, because their judgments are always pre-empted by desire. And from this it is also clear that non-material beings, whose wills are unchangeable, as well as human souls who leave this world of ours in a state of grace, do not lose free will on account of the fact that their wills are unchangeable; in fact they retain it in its most perfect and true form. When this has been grasped, it can also be seen that this freedom (or this principle of all our freedom) is the greatest gift given by God to human nature - as I have already said in the *Paradiso* of the *Comedy* - since by virtue of it we become happy here as men, by virtue of it we become happy elsewhere as gods.] (*Monarchia*, P. G. Ricci ed., [Milan: A. Mondadori, 1965], pp. 157-159; translation from Prue Shaw, trans., *Dante: “Monarchia”* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995]). This passage is cited by Gragnolati as part of his demonstration that ‘it is precisely because the saintly souls cannot alter their permanent control over their appetites that they enjoy the maximum and most perfect freedom’ (*Experiencing the Afterlife: Soul and body in Dante and Medieval Culture*, The William and Katherine Devers Series in Dante Studies [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005], p. 83), a control and a freedom which are universal, but individual (‘The presence of each soul’s human features [as insisted upon by the episodes of Piccarda and Justinian] expresses the individuality that is a fundamental component even of heavenly experience’; *Ibid.*, p. 86).

process which marks the poem's transition from the monomania,<sup>246</sup> that 'sheer preoccupation with the self',<sup>247</sup> of the souls encountered in *Inferno* to the full communion of saints which populates *Paradiso*, a process staged in *Purgatorio*.<sup>248</sup> This not yet fully communal experience is the defining factor in distinguishing the love of Purgatory from the love of Paradise and while, as has been noted, the experience in Paradise is emphatically individualised, it is usefully understood in terms of Bakhtin's conception of 'the formally polyphonic world of Dante'.<sup>249</sup> It is in comparing this world with the multiplicity of consciousnesses in Dostoevsky's novels that Bakhtin notes:

the souls [...] do not merge [...] At best each could form [...] a static figure, one that did not lose its individuality and that linked together rather than merged with other figures — but this static figure would resemble a congealed event, similar to Dante's image of the cross (the souls of the crusaders), the eagle (the souls of the emperors), or the mystical rose (the souls of the blessed).<sup>250</sup>

Purgatory on the other hand is a non-static realm of varied individual experiences of love, which is purged and corrected; it is a realm which affects and provokes right love. Paradise, meanwhile, is a realm of universal love in which each *inmutabilis* individual is in perfected communion with God's love. Purgatory, characterised by the definition and refining of love, is an 'amoroso regno' in the sense that the very process of purgation depends on the reconfiguration of human love so that it accords with the love of God, that 'amor che move il sole e l'altre

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<sup>246</sup> The use of this term in an infernal context should be credited to by Peter S. Hawkins, *Undiscovered Country: Imagining the World To Come* (New York, NY: Church Publishing, Inc., 2009), p. 23.

<sup>247</sup> Winthrop Wetherbee, *The Ancient Flame: Dante and the Poets*, The William and Katherine Devers Series in Dante Studies (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), p. 92.

<sup>248</sup> On the importance and mechanics of this process see the first chapter of Jennifer Rushworth, 'Discourses of Mourning in Dante, Petrarch, and Proust' (DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 2013).

<sup>249</sup> Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 26.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

stelle'. Both realms are 'amoroso' in different manners, but it is the amorous voyage which Dante draws attention to by recalling the *tenzone* with Cavalcanti and this voyage defined by love is particularly purgatorial.

We should recall also the express purpose of Dante's proposed voyage in the *tenzone*, which was that, 'vivendo sempre in un talento, / di stare insieme crescesse 'l disio' ('S'io fosse quelli', 7-8). Barolini's introduction to the sonnet in her recent edition of the *Rime giovanili* notes the project of Dante's invitation as 'quella di eliminare le differenti volontà dei tre protagonisti', predicated on the realisation that 'i desideri individuali sono all'origine dei conflitti che diminuiscono il desiderio di stare insieme'.<sup>251</sup> This acknowledgement of the problems caused by divided desire and self-interest finds a strong echo in Virgil's discourse on sins of erring love in *Purgatorio*. While it would be foolhardy to contend that Dante was considering this second canto at the time of writing those lines to Guido, the re-engagement with the earlier *tenzone* in the purgatorial context allows the prospective boat trip described in that exchange to be recast as a foreshadowing of the journey to and up the mountain 'dove l'umano spirito si purge' and the communal correction of love which takes place during that progress. Not only, as we have seen, is the pilgrimage up Purgatory characterised by nautical imagery, but the arrival to its shores takes place by sea, either the *mar sì crudele* (for Dante) or the waters so unnavigable to man, so lightly navigated by the angel who steers the saved souls to the *lito deserto*. The subsequent associations of the nautical with the amorous and of the amorous with the construction of community recall and reconfigure the 'sogno della perfetta unità'<sup>252</sup> from the *tenzone* with Cavalcanti. Dante remakes this earlier exchange into a

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<sup>251</sup> Barolini ed., *Rime giovanili*, p. 187.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

proto-pilgrimage in the purgatorial style and retroactively imbues it with the weight of this later project, his *sacrato poema*. This recasting of the *tenzone* as somehow ‘proto-purgatorial’ also carries with it the theological ramifications concomitant with Dante’s model of poetic salvation. In fact, the recollection of the *tenzone* is another instance of corrective intertextuality. While Dante’s ‘sogno di evasione sa di non poter evadere la sua stessa evanescenza’,<sup>253</sup> its enchanter representing an unreliable fiction, the voyage of *Purgatorio* has recourse to God, greater by far than any Merlin, who can ensure the validity and the reality of the community created in the poetry and in the journey of the second canto. Thus Dante’s own recourse to the ‘incantatore’ is corrected and his scenario is theologised and realised. As a result, Cavalcanti’s answer now assumes repercussions on a truly otherworldly level.

Guido, in excluding himself from Love’s kingdom and service, in excluding himself also from a proposed communion of poets aiming to establish and reinforce a sense of community through their *ragionar d’amore*, also excludes himself – in Dante’s retrospective appraisal – from the experience of the second realm, from the process of reconstructing a community through the instigation of perfectly shared, rightly directed love as it takes place in Dante’s *Purgatorio*.

Another aspect of this exclusion revolves around a discourse of worthiness; is Guido ‘degn’ of love (whether the experience or the personification), or of the realm of love, which we have seen can be equated with Purgatory in Dante’s re-deployment of the *tenzone* with Cavalcanti here? At this point it would be useful to revisit the first quatrain of Cavalcanti’s response to Dante:

S’io fosse quelli che d’Amor fu degno,  
del qual non trovo sol che rimembranza,

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<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

e la donna tenesse altra sembianza,  
 assai mi piacerea siffatto legno.  
 ('S'io fosse quelli', 1-4)

It is Cavalcanti's lack of worth which he states as the first reason for his exclusion from the realm in which Dante invites him to sail, discussing love and navigating their magic vessel by will alone. Dante's use of the term *degno*, set in the context of his reprisal of Cavalcanti's rhymes in the opening lines of *Purgatorio* and the revisiting of the image of a boat, 'la navicella del mio ingegno', a metaphor for the poetic enterprise of the *Commedia* first introduced here, all evoke the earlier exchange and especially these lines. The process of correction of the will, of erring love, is undertaken in 'quel secondo regno / dove l'umano spirito si purge / e di salire al ciel diventa degno' (*Purg.* I, 4-6, also re-echoed in *Purg.* VII, 5: 'anime degne di salire a Dio'). As we have seen in his reply to Dante's invitation, Cavalcanti rules out worthiness as something past and irretrievable, the past historic 'fu' severing all ties between his present being and any past status as *degno*. We may also detect some 'disdegno' in this response by Cavalcanti, his words are self-deprecating, but stemming from a certainty in his own poetic principles (and poetic supremacy) which at this stage were more established and renowned than those of his young correspondent. We should also note that Cavalcanti's attitude of *disdegno* is that which sees his potential damnation first implied in *Inferno* X ('colui ch'attende là per qui mi mena / forse cui Guido vostro ebbe a disdegno', 62-63),<sup>254</sup> another possible allusion to this sonnet exchange, so Dante at least seems to have interpreted his attitude as such.<sup>255</sup> The final tercet of

<sup>254</sup> I follow here the reading of 'cui' as meaning 'a cui', 'to Beatrice' as signifier of (and the next guide to) God, as propounded by Barolini (*Dante's Poets*, p. 144-146), and Hollander (*Inf.*, p. 189 & 198-9) among others.

<sup>255</sup> The discussion of Cavalcanti's *degnità* and *disdegno* calls to mind the treatment of 'l'uno e l'altro Guido' named by Oderisi on the Terrace of Pride whom *someone* 'cacerà dal nido', beginning a narrative of poetic supersession which will be played out over *Purg.* XI and XXIV-XXVII, and which I will discuss in the final chapter.

Cavalcanti's sonnet cements his irreconcilability with Dante's model of salvation:

Or odi meraviglia ch' el disia:  
 lo spirito fedito li perdona,  
 vedendo che li strugge il suo valore.  
 ('S'io fosse quelli', 12-14)

In these lines Cavalcanti presents the personified spirit, wounded, bereft of the beloved, forgiving its own destroyer and almost revelling in its loss of any remaining potency. This closing tercet offers an example of the sort of speaking personifications we have seen in Cavalcanti's polyphonic subjectivity, as the 'spirito li perdona', forgiving its wounding in an exemplary performative speech act (pardon offering a clear instance of an utterance which, when felicitous, enacts that which is uttered). The human spirit of *Purgatorio* (and it seems significant that Dante should choose just the very term 'spirito', such a key word in Cavalcanti's poetics,<sup>256</sup> at this juncture) must purge itself to attain worthiness and corrected love of God. Cavalcanti, already distanced from worthiness, does not allow for this purgation, but rather permits the destruction of his 'wounded spirit' by the fluctuations of the relationship with the lady who inspires his dangerous earthly passion. A detached Cavalcantian 'io' watches the devaluing of another aspect of the polyphonic subjectivity, the mortal spirit (consistent with his Averroist natural philosophy), while a fully engaged and incorporated Dante-self presents and undertakes the re-endowing with value of an immortal spirit once unworthy. The incompatibility of the Dantean and Cavalcantian models of the spirit is highlighted; for Dante the term 'spirito' comes to mean soul, while Cavalcanti's

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<sup>256</sup> Though meaning of the 'umano spirito' is, of course, different from Cavalcanti's technical use of the term; a usage which is also found in the pre-*Commedia* works of Dante. In this new context, Dante is referring to the soul (as he does elsewhere, for example: the 'spirito maladetto' of *Inf.* VIII, 38; the 'spirito eletto' of *Purg.* XIII, 143; and the 'ben creato spirito' of *Par.* III, 37). The choice of terminology in this passage, in the context of the wider intertextual relationship between the lines of *Purgatorio* and the *tenzone* with Cavalcanti chimes with the language of Guido's natural philosophy.

‘spiriti’ remain resolutely detached from any salvageable immortal *pars*, maintaining their role as physiological agents of sensation and passion. This divergence of the language of ‘spirito’, along with attitudes to worthiness, is recalled from the *tenzone* as another aspect proscribing the first friend from the mountain of Purgatory.

## II. Dialogic dreams: Cavalcanti discounted

Having previously indicated the nature of the ‘secondo regno’ from which Guido is proscribed as ‘amoroso’, I would like to bring to the fore another element which characterises both *Purgatorio* and the *tenzone* being recalled in its opening lines. I am talking of dreams. Barolini has already characterised *Purgatorio* as the ‘canticle of dreams’ in her discussion of the visionary nature of the *Commedia* as a whole,<sup>257</sup> while Cervigni’s work on ‘Dante’s poetry of dreams’ provides some important insights into relationship between dreams and poetics in the ‘poema sacro’ (and *Vita nova*) and especially its second Cantica.<sup>258</sup> Purgatory is the only realm in which Dante could conceivably dream. It is the only realm in which time flows, night follows day and sleep follows waking. Dreams can and do populate that sleep. The three purgatorial dreams have been subject to a good deal of commentary,<sup>259</sup> so I will restrict myself to some brief general points, and then some fuller analysis of their significance for Dante’s treatment of Cavalcanti, and

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<sup>257</sup> Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, pp. 143-165, quotation p. 150.

<sup>258</sup> Dino. S. Cervigni, *Dante’s Poetry of Dreams* (Florence: Olschki, 1986): for the specific discussion of *Purgatorio* see pp. 71-180.

<sup>259</sup> Beyond the exegetic efforts of the commentary tradition, Cervigni (in *Dante’s Poetry of Dreams*) provides the first comprehensive (though by no means flawless) attempt at a discussion of all the purgatorial dreams within a wider understanding of Dante’s poetics. In so doing he touches on some useful bibliography on the subject. More recently Barolini’s *The Undivine Comedy* has discussed the significance of the dreams and visions for the *Commedia* as vision literature (in the chapter, ‘Nonfalse Errors and the True Dreams of the Evangelist’, pp. 143-65).

for his conception of (and seeking after) poetic authority. The first of these dreams is recounted in Canto IX (13-33) and draws on classical tales, including Virgilian sources, of Jove as eagle carrying off Ganymede or seizing prey (as in the omen of *Aeneid* XII). Despite its apparently sinister portents, it most immediately relates the carriage of the sleeping Dante to the gates of Purgatory proper by St. Lucy, one of his three intercessors in *Inferno* I (along with Beatrice and Mary), another of the *donne scese del ciel* who will lead or carry him further on in his journey. The moment of dreaming is set under an erotically charged celestial body ‘La concubina di Titone antico’ who ‘già s’imbiancava al balco d’oriente, / fuor de le braccia del suo dolce amico’ (*Purg.* IX, 1-3) and Dante is very specific about the timing of his dream. This oneiric vision occurs in that hour before waking when ‘la mente nostra, peregrina / più da la carne e men da’ pensier presa, / a le sue vision quasi è divina’ (*Purg.* IX, 16-18), which renders a clear sense of the potential truth, or prophecy of the dream.<sup>260</sup> That sense is fulfilled when, waking, Dante finds that his vision told a sort of truth — as an image of Lucy carrying him up the mountain (it will also come to ring true as a prefiguration of the transit up mount Purgatory to the refining fire). Indeed in a discussion of these very lines, Barolini, having argued for just such a presentation of truthful visions in the vein of the Thomist explanation of St. Paul’s vision of heaven (the *raptus* recounted in II Corinthians, xii),<sup>261</sup> notes:

The pilgrimage of Dante’s *mente peregrina* is a pilgrimage in the footsteps of St. Paul, of St. John: the pilgrimage of a prophetic voyeur bent on recounting in pellucid verse the nonfalse errors of his divine imaginings.<sup>262</sup>

<sup>260</sup> Speroni offers a concise treatment of the ancient and medieval genealogy of Dante’s true, divine morning dreams; Charles Speroni, ‘Dante’s Prophetic Morning-Dreams’, in *Studies in Philology*, 45.1 (January 1948), pp. 50-59.

<sup>261</sup> Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, pp. 152-153.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

Barolini's analysis contributes to a sense of Dante as establishing a theological authority, which may in turn develop the sense of dreams as a source of poetic *auctoritas* (these are dreams, after all, within the *poema sacro*). Returning to the content of this dream, the adoption of the Ganymede myth as a simile recalls an erotic, albeit frightening situation, creating an analogy with a far gentler reality in which the bearer's motivation is not Jove's lust, but Lucy's *caritas*. This begins to construct the association of dreams and love (both *eros* and *caritas*), which is developed through this Cantica, and has a bearing on the purgatorial treatment of Cavalcanti begun in its opening lines.

This first purgatorial dream has set the tone for those to come, the main characteristics of which will be that: they take place in a transitional space (this first set before the entry into Purgatory proper); they figure (or prefigure) the arrival into that new space (here the carriage upwards by the eagle/Lucy); they make reference to the erotic (here the simile of Ganymede); their timing is uniformly pre-dawn (with all its prophetic implications) and each dream is preceded by a 'clear reference to the Orient — a symbol of Christ', which he deems 'worth emphasising as one seeks to determine the overall significance of the three nocturnal visions'.<sup>263</sup>

The second purgatorial dream and its immediate context offer a linguistic and semantic anchorage for the discussion of dream voyages like that proposed in Dante's sonnet of invitation to Cavalcanti. The context is of course the terrace of Sloth to which, as night approaches, Dante and Virgil ascend after their encounter with the penitent wrathful. The pilgrim and his guide climb the stair to their new location and rest a moment, 'come nave ch'a la spiaggia arriva' (*Purg.* XVII, 76-78).

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<sup>263</sup> Cervigni, *Dante's Poetry of Dreams*, p. 33.

Cervigni notes the reinstatement here of nautical imagery reminiscent of *Purgatorio* I's *navicella d'ingegno* as preparing the semantic way for the forthcoming dream of the 'hag-siren' which is to take place at the other end of the journey along this very terrace:<sup>264</sup>

mi venne in sogno una femmina balba,  
ne li occhi guercia, e sopra i piè distorta,  
con le man monche, e di colore scialba.

[...]

'Io son', cantava, 'io son dolce serena,  
che ' marinari in mezzo mar dismago;  
tanto son di piacere a sentir piena!'

[...]

Ancor non era sua bocca richiusa,  
quand'una donna apparve santa e presta  
lunghezzo me per far colei confusa.

'O Virgilio, Virgilio, chi è questa?',  
fieramente dicea; ed el venìa  
con li occhi fitti pur in quella onesta.

(*Purg.* XIX, 7-9, 19-21, 25-30)

This episode, of which I have quoted only those elements relevant to the immediate discussion, contains those characteristic attributes previously noted, occurring in the transitional space between those lower terraces which purge love of a neighbour's misfortune and slow love of good, and the upper terraces which purge ardently misplaced love ('l'amor ch'ad esso [altro ben] troppo s'abbandonare', *Purg.* XXVII, 136). This particular vision prefigures the overcoming of sins of lust and resultant infidelity to Beatrice and I will further discuss its implications for Dante's dialogue with his own textual history in the following chapter.

In the context of Dante's treatment of Cavalcanti through interactions with the early *tenzone*, this dream could be seen to cast a somewhat dubious light on 'Guido, i' vorrei', or rather to foretell the manner in which the vision presented

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<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

therein is apt to go awry. The boat guided by will alone here goes astray, lured by a siren ‘in mezzo mar’ into praising a false love by means of (false) poetry. Misplaced erotic desire, figured as Dante’s enthusiastically amorous response to the Siren, necessitates the corrective intervention and love of the ‘*donna [...] santa e presta*’, who intercedes with Virgil to intervene, expose the siren and thus disenchant Dante of his error. The re-focussing on the nautical semantic field in the presentation of this central vision (which in some readings offers a summary of the whole purgatorial journey,<sup>265</sup> and at the very least re-enacts the moment of Dante’s setting forth on his guided voyage at the start of *Inferno*), has the effect of recalling the theme of sea voyage which, in Dante’s poetry, first appears in ‘Guido, i’ vorrei’. The resurrection and subsequent pursuit of this image in *Purgatorio* (and later in *Paradiso*) is undertaken in dialogue with that first appearance of the poetic boat recalled in the *Cantica*’s opening lines, a reference which, in turn, recalls the textual forebear of the *tenzone* with Guido.

In representing the errors and dangers of the voyage, though, Dante is still moving beyond the realm occupied by the Guido of ‘S’io fosse quelli’, as they are perils and sins only encountered once one has embarked on the voyage. Cavalcanti’s errors precluded the voyage, precluded the intervention of divine assistance once on that voyage, and thus precluded any ascension to communion of blessed souls. This dream, then, recalls once more the intertextual presence of the sonnet exchange encountered in *Purgatorio* I and reaffirms Dante’s surpassing of Cavalcanti, as well as his attempt to undertake Cavalcanti’s proscription from the second realm and the ranks of the saved through intertextual dialogue. The success of this undertaking, though, should ultimately be left in doubt, as in theory

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<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

souls can be saved by even the most last minute of repentances, as we see in the example of the Manfred's tears:<sup>266</sup>

Poscia ch'io ebbi rotta la persona  
di due punte mortali, io mi rendei,  
piangendo, a quei che volontier perdona.  
(*Purg.* III, 118-120)<sup>267</sup>

Two considerations, however, rally behind Dante's attempted proscription of his erstwhile friend though, one drawing on the *Commedia's* internal logic, the other on Cavalcanti's own texts. The first of these is Dante's willingness to condemn pope Boniface VIII through the words of Nicholas, who is encountered among the Simonist sinners ('se' tu già costì ritto, Bonifazio?', *Inf.* XIX, 53). Boniface, like Cavalcanti, had died before the writing of the *Commedia* but after the dates of the narrative, but Dante's antipathy towards him was such that usual rules of condemnation are suspended. Arguably, the mindset of Boniface while alive was so belligerently sinful that salvation was unlikely enough to justify a predicted damnation, or perhaps this moment forms part of the matrix of prophecy in the *Commedia*, though Dante's vendetta against the pope is obviously the overriding factor here. In the case of Cavalcanti within the *Commedia*, then, implied damnation is not inconsistent with Dante's treatment of other souls and, given Cavalcanti's firm establishment, as discussed in the previous chapter, of a heretical, Averroist position in his own writing (a philosophical stance which would see him rightly placed in one of the tombs of the sixth infernal circle), the assumption of damnation is perhaps not such a huge leap, even if it remains a theologically problematic one. Cavalcanti, it could be argued, performs his own

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<sup>266</sup> As an aside it is interesting to note that Manfred's wounds provide the basis for a poetics in which 'the seal of reality is stamped upon the dreamlike medium of the *Purgatorio*' in Freccero's reading, which reinforces our sense of the 'nonfalse' dream-space of this second realm.

<sup>267</sup> Bonconte da Montefeltro is similarly saved 'per una lagrimetta' (*Purg.* V, 107), as the demon trying to claim his soul complains.

damnation by way of the radical Aristotelianism expressed in his poetry, just as others perform their conversion. Dante, perhaps, merely stages the uptake for Cavalcanti's performance, providing the conditions for the 'felicitous' damnation of his first friend.

### III. Cavalcanti's 'Pasturella' in Dante's Dreams of Authority

Having navigated the mountain in *Purgatorio*, Dante finally passes through the refining fire and, on the very threshold of Eden, dreams his dream of Leah and Rachel:

Ne l'ora, credo, che de l'oriente  
 prima raggiò nel monte Citerea,  
 che di foco d'amor par sempre ardente,  
 giovane e bella in sogno mi pareo  
 donna vedere andar per una landa  
 cogliendo fiori; e cantando dicea:  
 'Sappia qualunque il mio nome dimanda  
 ch'ì mi son Lia, e vo movendo intorno  
 le belle mani a farmi una ghirlanda.  
 Per piacermi a lo specchio, qui m'addorno;  
 ma mia suora Rachel mai non si smaga  
 dal suo miraglio, e siede tutto giorno.  
 Ell' è d'i suoi belli occhi veder vaga  
 Com' io de l'addornarmi con le mani;  
 lei lo vedere, e me l'ovrare appaga.'

(*Purg.* XXVII, 94-108)

This vision in sleep, as it is characterised, appears to the dreamer under the light of Venus ('Citerea / che di foco d'amor par sempre ardente', 95-96), and is couched in the terminology of erotic lyric — the 'giovane e bella...donna', the star of love, Leah's 'belle mani' gathering flowers — and these combined with the forwardness of Leah's address, her openness to (social) intercourse all suggest echoes of a *pasturella*. Particular echoes are found in Dante's formulation 'bella in sogno mi pareo', recalling Cavalcanti's description of the moment of encounter with the young shepherdess, 'bella, al mi' parere' ('In un boschetto trova' pasturella', 2).

Both Leah and the shepherdess also appear singing (respectively ‘cantando’ and ‘cantava’, ‘In un boschetto’, 7) and begin their addresses to any listening bystander who would care to know about them; Leah’s ‘Sappia qualunque il mio nome dimanda’ and the shepherdess’s ‘Sacci, quando l’augel pia’ / allor disia — ‘l me’ cor drudo avere’ (‘In un boschetto’, 13-14) both freely offer information to any listening ear. The purpose of this information is obviously very different. Leah offers her name to identify herself as an exemplar of godly behaviour, the shepherdess offers her information to announce her sexual availability. These echoes prefigure the allusions to Cavalcanti’s *ballata* in the forthcoming encounter with Matelda in the earthly paradise,<sup>268</sup> doubling the corrective intertextuality of the latter episode in this pre-Edenic, oneiric context. In this instance, the corrective intertextual process treats the text of another poet, rather than staging the auto-correction of Dante’s own past textuality. The adumbration of the corrected Cavalcantian *pasturella* in the figure of Leah would be fitting given the role of this dream in prefiguring the encounter with, and roles of Matelda and Beatrice in the garden.<sup>269</sup> I would argue that this dream’s prediction of events in the Garden of Eden plays a part in the strategy of alignment with classical poetic *auctores* during the approach to the earthly paradise, which in turn falls into a wider strategy played out over the

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<sup>268</sup> Scartazzini was the first to note the presence of Cavalcanti’s *ballata* in *Purgatorio* (Commentary to *Purg.* XXX, 133-134), while Singleton was the first to explore its implications for the episode; Charles Singleton, *Journey to Beatrice* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press), pp. 214-216. Barolini, has taken the discussion further in *Dante’s Poets*, pp. 149-152. See Hollander’s commentary to *Purg.* XXVIII for the critical fortunes of the Cavalcantian intertext; Hollander, *Purgatorio*, pp. 633-4.

<sup>269</sup> As discussed, among others, by Paola Pacchioni, ‘Lia e Rachele, Matelda e Beatrice’, in *L’Alighieri*, 18 (2001), 47-74; Pacchioni actually notes a greater subtlety at play, with Beatrice surpassing the mere contemplation of the image of the divine as enjoyed by Rachel and passing into an enjoyment of full, unmediated contemplation of the God, but nevertheless points to a certain parallelism in the levels of divine involvement portrayed in the dream and the encounter with the Edenic ladies (69-72); Ascoli has more recently proffered a reading of Leah and Rachel as part of Dante’s discourse of twinned guides (such as Matelda and Beatrice will be; such as Holy Roman Emperor and Pope should be). In this reading they sit comfortably as pre-figures for the two ladies to be encountered in the ‘paradiso terrestre’; Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, pp. 352-353.

*Commedia* as a whole. In the canto following this dream Dante, Virgil and Statius enter Eden, and Matelda, in introducing the newcomers to their environment, posits:

‘Quelli ch’anticamente poetaro  
 l’età d’oro e suo stato felice,  
 forse in Parnaso esto loco sognaro.  
 Qui fu innocente l’uman radice;  
 qui primavera sempre e ogne frutto;  
 nettare è questo di che ciascun dice.’  
 Io mi rivolsi’n dietro allora tutto  
 a’ miei poeti e vidi che con riso  
 udito avëan l’ultimo costrutto;  
 poi a la bella donna torna’ il viso.

(*Purg.* XXVIII, 139-148)

In placing these words in Matelda’s mouth Dante-poet associates the mountain of Purgatory, on which he has dreamed, with Parnassus, on which the ancient Poets — a term reserved for poetic authorities, such as Virgil and Statius here — dreamed and were inspired, thus associating himself with those *auctores*.<sup>270</sup> He also connects Eden with dreams, rendering it an almost dream-space, a place that has been dreamed both by those Poets on Parnassus (or indeed as Parnassus),<sup>271</sup> and also by Dante in the predictive dream on the night prior to his entry into the Garden, reinforcing that connection between himself and the poetic *auctores*. Poetry, authority and dreams are interwoven in this moment of implicit self-

<sup>270</sup> This exclusivity of the term ‘poeta’ in the *Commedia* marks a contrast to the attitude expressed in the *Vita Nuova*: ‘E non è molto numero d’anni passati, che appariro prima questi poete volgari; ché dire per rima in volgare tanto è quanto dire per versi in latino, secondo alcuna proporzione.’ (VN, XXV, 4). The only vernacular *poeta* of the *Commedia* will be Dante, perhaps offering a solution to the problem that ‘alquanti grossi ebbero fama di sapere dire, è che quasi fuoro li primi che dissero in lingua di sì’ (VN, XXV, 5), strictly limiting his own application of the term as an antidote to this perceived ill-gotten fame.

<sup>271</sup> It is Ascoli who suggests a second, parallel meaning to the line ‘forse in Parnaso esto loco sognaro’ (141) in which ‘in Parnaso’ signifies also ‘under the figure of Parnassus’, implying that ‘Eden is not only the reality concealed in the myth of the “age of gold”, it is also the Christian truth behind the myth of Mount. Parnassus becomes the home of the Muses and the scene of poetic inspiration: the earthly paradise is, in other words, the place in which poets and poetry, or, more accurately, a poet and his “poema sacro,” achieve a perfected state.’ (*Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, pp. 359-60). Ascoli’s position is apparently shared by Antonelli who takes it as read that Matelda ‘propone l’Eden come Parnaso sognato dagli antichi’, Antonelli, ‘Cavalcanti e Dante’, p. 297.

definition, which is further cemented in the responses of Dante and ‘his poets’ to Matelda’s pronouncement. In fact Dante goes further than merely associating himself with the classical *poeti*, implicitly superseding them; as Ascoli has it:

by doubly stressing the role of ancient poets in representing the ‘golden age’ (‘poetaro’; ‘in Parnaso’) [...] the passage also anticipates the new poetic representation of this place that Dante *poeta* will later provide — is providing, even as we read — grounded not in an evanescent dream, but rather in the *personaggio*’s unique empirical experience.<sup>272</sup>

So, while Virgil, Statius and the other ancients dreamed of Eden ‘in Parnaso’ and mis-sang it as the Golden Age, Dante experiences Eden on Purgatory and sings it truly as the earthly paradise. Acknowledging Ascoli’s discussion of this episode as part of the process of self-authorisation in the *Commedia*, I would adjust the focus here onto the dream aspects as indicators of poetic authority: ‘quelli ch’anticamente poetaro’ necessarily ‘sognaro’,<sup>273</sup> just as Dante dreamt on the night before entering the ‘paradiso terrestre’, indeed dreamed throughout *Purgatorio*, and therefore associated his own poetic process with ‘poetare’, the verb of authoritative poetic creation.<sup>274</sup> Indeed the whole project of Dantean poetics began with dreaming (and indeed in dialogue with Cavalcanti) in ‘A ciascun alma presa’ and its subsequent (transformative) analysis in the *Vita Nuova*.<sup>275</sup> That Virgil’s

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<sup>272</sup> Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, p. 359.

<sup>273</sup> I believe that there may be some interesting intersections between this discussion and the work on ‘arbitrium’ and poetic creation in Justin Steinberg’s latest book (published last December), especially in its treatment of the coronation scene and its complications of Ascoli’s model of Dantean *auctoritas*, but there will not be space in the present thesis to enter in a fuller analysis. See Steinberg, *Dante and the Limits of the Law* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013), especially pp. 53-88.

<sup>274</sup> *Inf.* XXV, 99 (with reference to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*); *Purg.* XXI, 98 (Statius referring to his poetry); XXII, 89 (Statius on his own production again); XXII, 129 (Dante learning ‘poetar’ from the discussion between Statius and Virgil); *Par.* XXX, 32 — ‘ma or convien che mio seguir desista / più dietro a sua bellezza, poetando, / come a l’ultimo suo ciascuno artista’ (*Par* XXX, 31-33). These last lines represent the only occasion on which Dante applies the verb to his own creative process).

<sup>275</sup> For the role of the *Vita Nuova* as transforming pre-existent lyrics see Gragnolati, ‘Authorship and Performance’, pp. 125-41, for a discussion of ‘A ciascun’alma presa’ see in particular pp. 132-4.

coronation of Dante over himself ('te sovra te corono e mitrio' *Purg.* XXVII, 142), which Ascoli singles out as 'the moment in which Dante-*personaggio* becomes Dante-*poeta*, or rather, in which it becomes most evident that the two Dantes are simultaneous',<sup>276</sup> should immediately follow the dream that predicts the *paradiso terrestre* is clearly no coincidence. Dante here receives as much authority as Virgil can grant him; an authority equal with that possessed by the poets of old who dreamt of a pre-Christian figure for the earthly paradise, rather than the thing itself. In the same way Dante here dreams of pre-Christian (pre)figures — the Old Testament Leah and Rachel, rather than Mary and Martha, their Gospel equivalents — for the ladies he will encounter and the space in which he will encounter them. The crowning and mitring at the hands of his 'maestro' and 'autore' (*Inf.* I, 85) must of course be acknowledged as a key event in the discourse of Dante's authorisation, but not without reference to the dream which immediately proceeds it, the third and final pre-Edenic dream. The experience of dreaming of Leah (and Rachel) in a pastoral space serves as the necessary precursor for Dante experiencing Matelda (and subsequently Beatrice) in the *paradiso terrestre*. The coronation by Virgil which follows Dante's predictive, preparatory dream is similarly a necessary precursor to the poesis which he must undertake to narrate these encounters and his journey more broadly.

The events which are to unfold in the earthly paradise after this episode will further establish the importance of dreams in Dante's poetics, most explicitly the encounter (finally) with Beatrice, and her dressing down of Dante-pilgrim. In her chastisement of our protagonist after the reunion in the Garden, Beatrice states that following her death, when Dante veered from the true path:

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<sup>276</sup> Ascoli, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*, p. 357.

‘Nè l’impetrare ispirazion mi valse,  
con le quali e in sogno e altrimenti  
lo rivocai: sí poco a lui ne calse!’

(*Purg.* XXX, 133-135)

In this rebuke (which will have greater bearing in the next chapter), Beatrice emphasises the importance of dreams as a source of true inspiration and the invalidity of poetry that refuses the invitations of dream. Guido Cavalcanti, having refused Dante’s invitation to share in the visionary discourse of love laid out in ‘Guido, i’ vorrei’ and instead chosen to pursue his path of internalised conflict (emblematised by the ‘prest’arcier’ of ‘S’io fosse quelli’, 8) and destructive earthly passion (‘lo spirito fedito li perdona, / vedendo che li struggle il suo valore’, 13-14), could not consistently pursue the path to salvation in Dante’s eschatology. In *Inferno* X Dante declared to Cavalcante de Cavalcanti, ‘Da me stesso non vegno’, and in *Purgatorio* I, when he and Virgil are asked by Cato, ‘Chi v’ha guidati’ (*Purg.* I, 43), the guide replies ‘Da me non venni: / donna scese del ciel, per li cui prieghi de la mia compagnia costui sovvenni’ (*Purg.* I, 52-4), a ‘donna santa’ who we see descend again into Dante’s perilous siren dream to save him from distraction. Our pilgrim makes no claim to autonomy on his journey through the afterlife, but acknowledges that it only began when he accepted the grace of Beatrice’s intervention noted in *Inferno* II and recalled again in the ‘donna scese del ciel’ acknowledged in *Purgatorio* I. Cavalcanti declined Dante’s invitation to the dream-voyage of ‘Guido, i’ vorrei’, saying he would if he were worthy of the realm of Love (1), and if ‘la donna tenesse altra sembianza’ (2). Guido thus lacks the personal will to seek salvation (as did Dante before his moment of crisis) and also the singular miracle of a Beatrice to intercede before it is too late. Dante thus recasts Cavalcanti’s refusal to embark on the journey of ‘Guido io vorrei’ as a refusal to embark on the salvific journey to and through *Purgatorio*.

The pilgrim's ascent from the terraces of purgatory to the interim grace of the earthly paradise marks the enactment of a poetic trajectory which claims to transcend and transform the lyric tradition which preceded Dante. The intertextual appropriation and 'correction' of others' texts, the development of a vernacular canon and the ventriloquising of two of its key actors — Guido Guinizzelli and Guido Cavalcanti — as well as the thoroughgoing dismissal of one of its most significant voices — Guittone — are all part of process of self-representation. This process will, in turn, feed into the narrative of conversion which will be traced in the next chapter. The absorption of these poets and poetries into a Dantean literary historiography is generally received as such a successful enterprise that it provides a lens for critical treatments of these poets and their texts (take for example the adoption of 'dolce stil novo' as an enduring literary category). An enduring recourse to the poetry of these writers on its own terms needs must, however, continue to complicate our acceptance of Dante's literary teleology and enrich our reading of him as the product of a dialogic context. And, as I will explore in the next chapter, even Dante's own texts contribute to the destabilisation of his self-representation and authorisation, and an understanding of the dialogic processes explored thus far will, I hope allow new questions to be asked of the *Commedia*.

## Chapter 4: Dialogic Dante

### The Many Faces of the *Poeta*

Thus far, I have demonstrated the models of dialogic subjectivity represented in the works of (Frate) Guittone d'Arezzo, Guido Guinizzelli and Guido Cavalcanti. In so doing I have established the cumulative effect of the dialogic interactions between these poets and subsequently of Dante with each of them (often in complexly interlaced intertextual moments like those in *Purgatorio* XI and XXVI). This accretion of intra- and inter-textual dialogic processes represents the context for Dante's own performance of authoritative subjectivity over the course of his works, a subjectivity authorised through its narrative of conversion and associated auto-corrections. This chapter will focus primarily on the metapoetic and intertextual strategies through which Dante performs and re-performs his subjectivity from the *Vita Nuova* to the *Commedia* by way of intertextual dialogues with his own former work. This line of inquiry will shed further light on both the resiliently polyphonic subjectivity which is represented by Dante's oeuvre and the teleologically unified subjectivity which he attempts to construct. In treating the subject of 'Dante on Dante' my focus will largely rest on cantos I, II and XIX of *Purgatorio* as loci of auto-citation and moments of corrective intertextuality at play between Dante's own works. The role of Dante's practice of auto-exegesis in pre-*Commedia* texts will also have significant bearing on the course of this discussion, as I scrutinise the changing metapoetic methods by which the poet attempts to rein in his textual history, and posit the inherent dialogic resistance of the works of which that history is comprised.

## I. *Vita Nuova* di nuovo

Having already briefly discussed the dream of the Siren in the previous chapter in relation to Dante's treatment of Cavalcanti, I want to return to that particular episode, in conjunction with the opening cantos of *Purgatorio*, as the site of the full gamut of dialogic processes which I have been considering thus far.<sup>277</sup> The vision of the *femmina balba* represents a significant moment of interaction with the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio* — in terms of textuality, ideology and praxis — as well as providing the space in which a consciously failed Austinian performance plays out. That linguistic performance is in turn staged by means of the intervention of characters within the text, a feature which means that this one dense moment accounts for all four types of dialogic process.

This time I shall quote the vision in full before embarking on my analysis:

[...] mi venne in sogno una femmina balba,  
 ne li occhi guercia, e sovra i piè distorta,  
 con le man monche, e di colore scialba.  
 Io la mirava; e come 'l sol conforta  
 le fredde membra che la notte aggrava,  
 così lo sguardo mio le facea scorta  
 la lingua, e poscia tutta la drizzava  
 in poco d'ora, e lo smarrito volto,  
 com'amor vuol, così le colorava.  
 Poi ch'ell'avea 'l parlar così disciolto,  
 cominciava a cantar sì, che con pena  
 da lei avrei mio intento rivolto.  
 'Io son', cantava, 'io son dolce serena,  
 che ' marinari in mezzo mar dismago;  
 tanto son di piacere a sentir piena!  
 Io volsi Ulisse del suo cammin vago  
 al canto mio; e qual meco s'ausa,  
 rado sen parte; sì tutto l'appago!'.  
 Ancor non era sua bocca richiusa,  
 quand'una donna apparve santa e presta  
 lunghesso me per far colei confusa.  
 'O Virgilio, Virgilio, chi è questa?',  
 fieramente dicea; ed el venia

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<sup>277</sup> That is: direct dialogue (established with texts or addressees), staged dialogue within texts, intertextual dialogue, and the dialogic co-presence of multiple versions of poetic subjectivity.

con li occhi fitti pur in quella onesta.  
 L'altra prendea, e dinanzi l'apria  
 fendendo i drappi, e mostravami 'l ventre;  
 quel mi svegliò col puzzo che n'uscita.

(*Purg.* XIX, 7-33)

This dream raises several important issues for the pilgrim, the poet, and the reader with regard to the following: the nature of the Siren and her nemesis the *donna santa*; the role of the lover's gaze (and the poet's pen) in fashioning desired figures; and Dante's textual history as author of both the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio*. This last consideration brings to the fore Dante's career-spanning effort of interpretive control and specifically the construction of a literary teleology which he undertakes (in a manner not dissimilar to Frate Guittone) in his *Commedia*.<sup>278</sup>

The context of misplaced erotic desire figures the erring desire of Dante and the corrective intervention and love of the 'donna [...] santa e presta' who is also 'onesta', who intercedes with Virgil to intervene, expose the Siren and thus disenchant Dante of his error. Despite debates over the identity of this lady,<sup>279</sup> she can be acknowledged as an image of Beatrice and we should not be surprised that

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<sup>278</sup> Tristan Kay has noted Dante's pre-*Commedia* teleology building tendencies in the *Convivio*, and the parallels with the construction of Guittone's conversion narrative. He observes this particularly in the privileging of 'weightier, more ethical themes' than erotic love in the temperate later years of a man's life. This is expressed in the Convivial *canzone* 'Le dolci rime d'amor ch'ì solia' and exemplified in the prose discussion of Aeneas as a model of the proper concerns of the advancing ages of man, as he 'abandoned the siren call of Dido to follow his public and transhistorical vocation of founding Rome: "E così infrenato mostra Virgilio, lo maggiore nostro poeta, che fosse Enea, nella parte dello Eneida ove questa etade si figura: la qual parte comprende lo quarto, lo quinto e lo sesto libro dello Eneida. E quanto raffrenare fu quello, quando, avendo ricevuto da Dido tanto di piacere [...], e usando con essa tanto di dilettazone, elli si partio, per seguire onesta e laudabile via e fruttuosa, come nel quarto dell'Eneida scritto è!", Kay, 'Desire, Subjectivity, and Lyric Poetry', in Manuele Gagnolati, Tristan Kay, Elena Lombardi and Francesca Southerden ed., *Desire in Dante and the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Legenda, 2012), pp. 164-184 (169-171, quotation from 171). While the concerns of the Dantean and Guittonian conversions diverge in the *Commedia*, the construction of a teleology of literary-personal development still follows a method, if not a programme, which bears powerful resemblance to Fra Guittone's model.

<sup>279</sup> For the lady as Lucy, see Patrick Boyde, *Human Vices and Human Worth in Dante's 'Comedy'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 163; for the lady as Beatrice and a brief summary of some aspects of the debate, see Hollander, *Purgatorio*, p. 424; and Fosca, commentary on *Purg.* XIX, 34-6, *DDP* [accessed 28 March 2014], for a fuller survey of the multiple critical positions on the issue.

Dante does not name her, or indeed recognise her as such; she herself notes his failure to be called back when she reached out through dreams: “e in sogno e altrimenti / lo rivocai: sì poco a lui ne calse!” (*Purg.* XXX, 134-135). These lines of Beatrice’s reproof in the *paradiso terrestre*, like so many others in the *poema*, are polyvalent and Scartazzini noted one of their significances when he commented that ‘il Poeta allude [...] senza dubbio alle visioni da lui raccontate nella *Vita Nuova*’.<sup>280</sup> This chastisement, however, also encompasses the pre-Edenic experiences of the pilgrim in Purgatorio. In this latter context Dante is more specifically criticised for his inability to recognise his saviour as Beatrice, even as she effectively re-enacts the corrective role that she fulfilled in the visions of the *libello*. This failure may be less severe than the turnings away from Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio*, but it does recall them and remind us of the pilgrim’s still imperfect desires. The retrospectively ordained insufficiency of the pre-*Commedia* visions, in particular the last two visions of the *libello*, will also be recalled in the purgatorial context — a fact which I will revisit later.

While the focus of commentators on the visions of chapters XXXIX and XLII of the *Vita Nuova* is of course valid and useful in considering the retroactive presentation of the *Commedia* as taking up the gauntlet of ‘più degnamente trattare di lei [...] di dicer di lei quello che mai non fue detto d’alcuna’ (*VN*, XLII, 1-2),<sup>281</sup> we should widen our gaze to also consider the first vision of the *libello*. This dream of the ‘donna de la salute’ in her ‘drappo sanguigno’, recounted in the sonnet ‘A ciascun’alma presa e gentil core’ and its framing prose (*VN*, III.3-4), explicitly echoes and advances upon the first encounter with the nine year old

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<sup>280</sup> Scartazzini, commentary to *Purg.* XXX, 133-134.

<sup>281</sup> Hollander, *Purgatorio*, pp. 686-7; Scartazzini, commentary to *Purg.* XXX, 133-134.

Beatrice ‘vestita di nobilissimo colore, umile e onesto, sanguigno’ (VN, II, 3). In the prose description of that first meeting the ‘real life’ encounter itself is barely distinguished from a vision as regards the terminology with which it is narrated:

[...] quando a li miei occhi apparve prima la gloriosa donna de la mia mente, la quale fu chiamata da molti Beatrice li quali non sapeano che si chiamare.

(VN, II, 1)

The arrival of the *donna de la mente* is described in visionary language (particularly in the verb ‘apparve’) akin to that later used in the dream of the Siren (‘una donna apparve, santa e presta’) and in those visions, both of Beatrice and Amor, reported elsewhere in the *libello* (respectively: ‘m’apparve una maravigliosa visione’, VN, III, 3; ‘ed omo apparve scolorito e fioco’, in the sonnet ‘Donna pietosa e di novella etate’, 44, VN, XXIII, 24).

The visionary language and narrative in the first moments of the *libello* form a neat diptych with the miraculous vision recounted in the prose of the closing chapters.<sup>282</sup> The narration of these twinned visionary experiences is linguistically and thematically linked to bracket the interim events of the *Vita Nuova*:

Contra questo avversario de la ragione si levoe un die, quasi ne l’ora de la nona, una forte imaginazione in me, che mi parve vedere questa gloriosa Beatrice con quelle vestimenta sanguigne co le quali apparve prima a li occhi miei; e pareami giovane in simile etade in quale io prima la vidi.

(VN, XXXIX, 1)

The appearance of the glorious lady is re-echoed from the first meeting as are the red robes, which also serve to recall the bonds between the first meeting and the first vision, with its redeployment of the key traits of that initial, youthful

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<sup>282</sup> See Peter Dronke, *Verse with Prose from Petronius to Dante: The Art and Scope of the Mixed Form* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), on the similarity-but-difference of this pair of vision moments that ‘[bring] the *Vita Nuova* full circle’, particularly as regards the status of the ‘mirabile visione’: ‘it is what it is. Every previous vision has been given in “sleep” or “in imagination”; the final vision is real’, p. 113.

encounter. Aspects of both the first vision and the latter come to be revisited in the dream of the *femmina balba*. I shall begin with the re-emergence of the vision of ‘A ciascun’alma presa’ in the purgatorial episode in question.

‘A ciascun’alma presa’ does of course have a textual history prior to and independent of the *Vita Nuova*, with a circulation traceable through the responses it solicited, corroborating Dante’s claims of a readership comprised of the ‘fedeli d’amore’.<sup>283</sup> In this instance, though, I am particularly interested in the poem as it is (re)presented by the exegetical prose, for reasons which will become evident over the course of this discussion. In so doing, however, I do not wish to brush off the import or impact of this re-presentation, this transformative redeployment and ‘active revision’ of a previously stand-alone *rima* within the new framework of the *Vita Nuova*.<sup>284</sup> As noted in the opening stages of this thesis, and revisited in the last chapter, this process of re-presentation (in which auto-exegesis plays a key role) is vital to my understanding of the teleologising accounts of self given by both Guittone d’Arezzo and Dante. Indeed, it is precisely this effort to (re)appropriate past texts (their own and others) which underpins the self-constructing poetics of these authors. Indeed, the recollection of the dreams of the *libello* offers an example of just such an appropriation and re-presentation of past texts in the service of a new models of subjectivity and poesis. There are several aspects we should consider in support of reading the vision of *Purgatorio* XIX as a re-staging of aspects of the sonnet in its *libello* context and these are: the framing of the two visions within their macrottexts; the presentation of the focal women of each dream; the role of an additional character in the discomfiting and waking of the

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<sup>283</sup> See Gragnolati, *Amor che move*, pp. 23-6; Steinberg, *Accounting for Dante*, p. 1-2, Barolini ed. *Rime giovanili*, p. 83-4.

<sup>284</sup> Noted in Barolini, *Dante’s Poets*, pp. 14-6 (quotation, p. 15), comprehensively developed in Gragnolati, *L’Amor che move*, pp. 17-34, and ‘Authorship and Performance’.

dreaming poet.

As regards the framing of the visions, Dante the purgatorial pilgrim describes how, having parted from the souls of the penitent slothful:

tanto d'uno in altro [pensiero] vaneggiar,  
che li occhi per vaghezza ricopersi,  
e 'l pensamento in sogno trasmutai.

(*Purg.* XVIII 143-5)

The power of pre-somnial thought to provoke vision dreaming which introduces the dream of the *femmina balba* also figures in the *Vita Nuova*'s presentation of 'A ciascun'alma presa':

[..] e puosimi a pensare di questa cortesissima. E pensando di lei, mi sopraggiunse uno soave sonno, ne lo quale m'apparve una maravigliosa visione.

(*VN*, III.2-3)

In both of these visions a 'pensiero' 'in sogno trasmut[ò]'; a notable difference, however, is the single mindedness of the protagonist of the *libello* as compared to the confusion of the pilgrim of the *Commedia*. The former, though reeling like a drunkard ('come inebriato', *VN*, III, 2) from the effects of Beatrice's sweet greeting, still retains a singular fixation on the beloved, while the latter is befuddled, perhaps by the experiences the last terrace, and these contrasting stances are reflected in the vision then recounted. The vision of the *Vita Nuova*, is in fact, presented twice — once in the prose, and once in the verse of the sonnet:<sup>285</sup>

[...] m'apparve una maravigliosa visione: che me pareva vedere ne la mia camera una nebula di colore di fuoco, dentro a la quale io discerneva una figura d'uno signore di pauroso aspetto a chi la guardasse; e pareami con tanta letizia, quanto a sé, che mirabile cosa era; e ne le sue parole dicea molte cose, le quali io non intendea se non poche; tra le quali intendea queste: 'Ego dominus tuus'.

Ne le sue braccia mi pareva vedere una persona dormire nuda, salvo che involta mi pareva in uno drappo sanguigno leggermente; la quale io

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<sup>285</sup> Despite the pre-*libello* life of Dante's sonnet noted above, I am, in this instance, solely treating 'A ciascun'alma presa' in and with its prosimetrum context, as it is specifically this staging of the sonnet in the *Vita Nuova* which I believe is being alluded to at this point in the *Commedia*.

riguardando molto intentivamente, conobbi ch'era la donna de la salute,  
la quale m'avea lo giorno dinanzi degnato di salutare.

(VN, III, 3-4)

This introduction of the *donna de la salute* held in the arms of the Lord Love offers two particular contrastive relationships with the introduction of the *femmina balba*, the first of which is the immediacy of her association with love. This is not an after the fact 'com'amor vuol, così le colorava'; instead this lady is presented by Amor, she is already established as the 'cortesissima' and Dante's thoughts of her have become vision. The pilgrim's lack of focus in purgatory, though, has become the dream of the *femmina balba*, whose mutability reflects Dante's shifting thoughts ('novo pensiero dentro a me si mise, / del qual più altri nacquero e diversi', *Purg.* XVIII, 141-2). Before continuing to compare these two ladies, it is worth lingering briefly on these mechanics of dreaming, sleeping and waking in these texts.<sup>286</sup> The transition of wakeful thinking to sleep and dreaming in both instances is followed by a vision, the concluding moments of which actively wake the sleeper. In the *Vita Nuova* the dreaming Dante witnesses his heart fed to the lady by Amor, which she consumes (VN, III.6), after which Amor begins to weep and, enfolding the lady in his arms 'ne gisse verso lo cielo; onde io sostenea sì grande angoscia, che lo mio deboletto sonno non poteo sostenere, anzi si ruppe e fui disvegliato' (VN, III.7). This last aspect, the pained waking of the dreamer, is featured in the prose, but not in the sonnet which ends simply:

Poi la svegliava, e d'esto core ardendo  
lei paventosa umilmente pascea:  
appresso gir lo ne vedea piangendo.

(‘A ciascun'alma presa’, 12-14)

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<sup>286</sup> For a brief overview of medieval categories of dream derived from Macrobius' commentary on the *Dream of Scipio* and as represented in the narrative of the *Commedia*, see Patrick Boyde, *Perception and Passion in Dante's 'Comedy'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 130-9. See also Barański, 'Dante's Three Reflective Dreams', *Quaderni d'Italianistica*, 10 (1989), pp. 213-36 (214-5), for a brief, yet broad reaching account of Dante's concept of the dream.

The waking is left outside the bounds of the sonnet, but explicitly included in the framing of it; a factor which forms part of the argument for the purgatorial vision as specifically alluding to the dream sonnet *within* the *Vita Nuova*. The waking from the purgatorial dream is similarly provoked by the discomfort of the sleeping Dante, in this instance by the ‘puzzo’ which emanates from the revealed belly of the *femmina balba*. This waking is also provoked by the actions of a second party, the *donna santa* assailing the Siren.

And here we should return to the female figures in the visions. The two dreaming Dantes both witness a central woman who has a powerful effect on the sleeper, an effect that is poetic as well as physiological (not to mention fundamentally erotic), and it is worth considering these effects in parallel. In the sonnet, Dante recounts a vision of ‘madonna involta in un drappo dormendo’ (‘A ciascun’alma presa’, 11; the ‘drappo sanguigno’ of the prose), while in the dream of the *femmina balba* we are told that she is revealed when the *donna santa* intervenes ‘fendendo i drappi’ that cover her revolting body. The women’s two bodies are similarly covered by *drappi*, the beauty of the ‘donna della salute’ is thinly veiled while the hideousness of the *femmina balba* becomes thoroughly concealed from the dreamer, characteristics which have implications for the truthfulness of the visions in ways which will be discussed in part two of this chapter.

The distracted pilgrim who dreams of the Siren also recalls the distractions of the Dante of the *Vita Nuova* in the narrative surrounding that other vision, of the gloriously red-bedecked Beatrice, returning to the mind of the amorously misdirected protagonist:

[...] e discacciato questo cotale malvagio desiderio, sì si rivolsero tutti li miei pensamenti a la loro gentilissima Beatrice. [...] E dissi allora:

‘Lasso! per forza di molti sospiri’; e dissi ‘lasso’ in quanto mi vergognava di ciò che li miei occhi aveano così vaneggiato.

(VN, XXXIX, 3-6)

In the time prior to the vision of Beatrice-ascendant, the *occhi* have ‘vaneggiato’ in their lustful interest in the *donna gentile*, just as the pilgrim ‘vaneggi[ò]’ in his thoughts, leading to the dream of erroneously erotic encounter with the *femmina balba*. Also, in both cases, Beatrice reasserts herself through oneiric visions to prod the wandering Dante back onto the path towards her, appearing as she ‘apparve prima’ in the *Vita Nuova*, and as a ‘*donna santa*’ in the *Commedia*.

Clearly, from the perspective of the *Commedia*’s teleology, the visions of the *libello* failed to do the trick, even if the final vision and Dante’s accompanying desire ‘di dicer di lei quello che mai non fue detto d’alcuna’ (VN, XLII, 2) offer the promise of a successful return to Beatrice. This promise is in truth merely a hope: the narrator’s words are prefaced with ‘io spero’, and while it is easy to read this as a stronger utterance with the teleological hindsight encouraged by the *sacrato poema*, it is a hope which manifestly falters in the *Convivio*. That treatise, with its own *donna gentile* — a reconfiguration and allegorisation of the *Vita Nuova*’s own erring love — offers evidence of a failure to turn to Beatrice and the brief triumph of the other lady, a failure which represents an error of judgement on Dante’s part (as I will discuss below). In the purgatorial dream, the pilgrim Dante’s erring provokes the *donna santa*’s appeal, “‘O Virgilio, Virgilio, chi è questa?’”; the Mantuan poet is again exhorted to intervene in a moment which recalls Virgil’s own account of his enlistment to aid the pilgrim Dante in *Inferno* II. This is an

echo which serves to reinforce the reading of the 'donna' here as Beatrice.<sup>287</sup> Virgil, however, is not able to save Dante from this new distraction on his own; the limits of his capabilities as guide are foregrounded here as they are on multiple other occasions.<sup>288</sup> Part of that which Virgil fails to overcome is Dante's continued status as a sinner; the pilgrim still literally bears the traces of earthly sin in the remaining Ps on his forehead because he has three terraces of Purgatory yet to traverse. In particular, we should bear in mind that he has not passed through the fire on the

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<sup>287</sup> Cervigni ties this moment to Virgil's intervention when Dante faces the three beasts (Cervigni, *Dante's Poetry of Dreams*, p. 123) while Hollander sees it as more specifically relevant to the 'lupa', embodying sins of incontinence, which is set to impede (or even mate with, 'ammogliare') Dante just as the 'femmina balba' appears about to impede (probably sexually) the pilgrim here (Hollander, *Purgatorio*, p. 424). Regardless of how many of the beasts this woman recalls, the central point of a re-enactment of *Inferno* I and II and the intervention of Virgil to overcome the threat to Dante and his progression stands.

<sup>288</sup> Wetherbee's discussion of 'what Virgil knows' (*The Ancient Flame*, pp. 45-60) offers a useful overview and analysis of the limitations and 'limited perspective' (p. 57) of Dante's sometimes 'uncertain and misleading guide' (p. 59) at multiple key moments in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. See also Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, pp. 278-281, in which she explores some of the implications of Dante's line 'io varcai Virgilio' (*Purg.* X, 53).

final terrace which purges lust,<sup>289</sup> his second particular fault (along with pride).<sup>290</sup> This sin is firmly associated with the erotic lyric tradition, a tradition which is to a great degree represented in the language by which the Siren is described (and generated) and by which she describes herself. Indeed, just as the Siren will become a figure of beautiful poetic ornament (see part III below), the *femmina balba*'s defects can largely be equated with aspects of the art of poetry:

Her stammering [...] hints at poor fluency; her squinting [...] targets the eyes, the main engine of the process of love and the chief image of love poetry; her limping on crooked feet [...] could allude to unstable metrical feet; and her pale complexion [...] conveys the lack of rhetorical colour.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Pertile discusses Dante's repentance for private faults, namely his infidelities to Beatrice, as opposed to the complete lack of change in public attitudes (for example his frequently expressed political attitudes), positing that the only conversion undertaken is one from amorous fault, lust, to a corrected love for Beatrice; Lino Pertile, "Trasmutabile per tutte le guise": Dante in the Comedy', in Sara Fortuna, Manuele Gragnolati and Jürgen Trabant ed., *Dante's Plurilingualism* (London: Legenda, 2010) pp. 164-178 [see especially pp. 168-175]. This is a stance not unlike that taken by Fra Guittone, who enacts a penitence for erotic folly while never recanting his political poetry, as established in Chapter 1. While some elements of Pertile's reading remain problematic (see note 355 below) it is clear that Dante's errors of love are highly pertinent in the episode of the Siren. We must also glance forward to Beatrice's admonitions of the pilgrim, which continue the erotic characterisation of Dante's failings:

‘Sì tosto come in su la soglia fui  
di mia seconda etade e mutai vita,  
questi si tolse a me, e diessi altrui.  
Quando di carne a spirto era salita,  
e bellezza e virtù cresciuta m'era,  
fu'io a lui men cara e men gradita [...]'  
(*Purg.* XXX, 124-129)

‘E quali agevolezze o quali avanzi  
ne la fronte de li altri si mostraro,  
per che dovessi lor passeggiare anzi?’  
(*Purg.* XXXI, 28-30)

‘Non ti doveva gravar le penne in guiso,  
ad aspettar più colpo, o pargoletta  
o altra novità con sì breve uso’.  
(*Purg.* XXXI, 58-60)

Hollander notes that in the last of these statements (as in the prior two) of Dante's sins 'the sexual note is struck again' (Hollander, *Purgatorio*, p. 705).

<sup>290</sup> As he retrospectively admits on the second terrace: "Troppa è più la paura ond' è sospesa / l'anima mia del tormento di sotto, / che già lo 'ncarco di là giù mi pesa." (*Purg.* XIII, 136-8).

<sup>291</sup> See Lombardi, *The Wings of the Doves*, p. 243, and the discussion of denuding, interpretation and meaning below.

It is worth quoting again the metamorphosis of her ‘smarrito volto’ and how, ‘com’amor vuol, così le colorava’ in support of this observation. The *femmina* is subject of a rhetorical re-colouring, from object of grotesque description to object of courtly verse and generator of enchanting song. This process forms part of a network of erotic lyric and metrical imagery brought to bear in the characterisation of the pilgrim’s interaction with her. The tensions between the poetical repugnance of the *femmina balba* and the musical allure of the Siren should provoke caution in the Siren’s readers, a caution which Dante-pilgrim clearly lacks at this juncture. The language of this rhetorical metamorphosis also harks back to the description of the *donna gentile* in the distracted phase of the *libello*:

Avvenne poi che là ovunque questa donna mi vedea, sì si facea d’una vista pietosa e d’un colore palido quasi come d’amore [...] E però mi venne volontade di dire anche parole, parlando a lei, e dissi questo sonetto, lo quale comincia ‘Color d’amore’ [...]

(VN, XXXVI 1-3)

That sonnet goes on to read ‘Color d’amore e di pietà sembianti / non preser mai così mirabilmente / viso di donna’ (VN, XXXVI, 4, 1-3), raising obvious parallels with the *donna gentile*, the broader ramifications of which will emerge over the course of this chapter. The suspect Siren re-enacts the dangers of beautiful, but sinful poetics, like that witnessed in the *donna gentile* phase of the *Vita Nuova* and in the *Convivio*. As such we should also bear in mind the contrastive parallel which Lombardi draws between the Siren as a figure of problematic poetry and Matelda as positive poetry. In her analysis, these two women, and thus the two types of poetry they represent, bookend the cantos of the poets (*Purg.* XXI-XXVI) in *Purgatorio*.<sup>292</sup> Matelda’s role as a figuration of positive, purged poetics, it should

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<sup>292</sup> Lombardi, *The Wings of the Doves*, pp. 242-4. Lombardi also draws on Patrizia Pittorno’s reading of Matelda — ‘Matelda’s Dance and the Smile of the Poets’, *Dante Studies* 112 (1994), pp. 115-32 — which suggests that she personifies the lyrical canzone as discussed in *DVE*, II; as cited in *The Wings of Doves*, p. 243.

be recalled, includes the staging of an intertextual correction of Cavalcanti's 'In un boschetto trova' pasturella' during Dante's initial encounter with her. Given the argument laid out in part III of the last chapter, the bracketing and meta-poetic function ascribed to Matelda as corrected poetry should be extended to include the dream of Rachel and Leah. To briefly recapitulate: the significant linguistic echoes and the morally corrective restaging of Cavalcanti's poem in the dream of Leah and Rachel serve both to distinguish Dante from his erstwhile *amico* and to adumbrate the meeting with Matelda which follows.

Those connections, and the extension of the feminine figuration of good poetry to include the dream of Leah and Rachel, offer an even more powerful sense of the parenthetical parallelism asserted by Lombardi, this time between two poetic dreams. This bracketing underscores the pilgrim Dante's own transition from dwelling on the poetics of erotic and interpretive error under the sign of the Siren to his attainment of the sort of self-control and access to inspiration which is only available to the post-purgatorial poet.<sup>293</sup> Furthermore, the 'antica strega', as will be revisited below, offers the unifying figure for these terraces of poetic vice, while the manifestation of the Siren through poetic language invokes the sense of sinful poetics as the principle impediment to salvation which she represents. We cannot expect Dante-pilgrim to be a properly reformed character, or indeed a purified *poeta sacro* at this point, as he is yet to be confessed by Beatrice or even crowned and mitred by Virgil (after the dream of Leah); his dream of erotic, lyric error is consistent with his current state.

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<sup>293</sup> As dramatised in his passage through the refining fire on the last purgatorial terrace and his subsequent laureation by Virgil (see the discussion in chapter 3, part III above).

## II. Recalling *Inferno*, restaging *Convivio*

Let us turn away from the *libello*, but remain with the theme of Dante's failings as exposed in *Purgatorio* XIX. It is essential, for an accurate reading of this episode, to keep in mind the pilgrim's agency in the transformation of the 'femmina balba' into the 'dolce serena'. The *femmina balba*, characterised by her ugliness and, first and foremost by her stutter and her resultant 'parlar disciolto', sings part of her metamorphosis, the linguistic part, with the pilgrim as witness. When the metamorphosing *femmina/serena* sings 'io son, [...] io son la dolce serena' we experience, together with the pilgrim, the eradication of her stutter; the sibilance here representing not simply 'the seductive euphony of her song',<sup>294</sup> but rather phonically betraying the menace of its inherent falsehood. This initial moment of stuttering, the repetitious stumbling over her introductory statement, gives way to a sweet flow of music and the performance of a new identity. She is, however, certainly not solely responsible for this metamorphosis. Even before the evidence of her stutter, her former self, has been eradicated, the poet *describes* the sweetness of the singing that the pilgrim is about to hear and how 'con pena / da lei avrei mio intento rivolto', belying his own role in writing her transformation. In fact, his misinterpretation, a sort of performative misreading of the *femmina balba*, has begun moments after seeing her, before even that pre-emptive description of her song, when his gaze touches her and renders her beautiful:

Io la mirava; e come'l sol conforta  
Le fredde membra che la notte aggrava,  
così so sguardo mio le facea scorta  
la lingua, e poscia tutta la drizzava  
in poco d'ora, e lo smarrito volto,  
com'amor vuol, così le colorava.  
(*Purg.* XIX, 10-15)

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<sup>294</sup> Giuseppe Mazzotta, *Dante's Vision and the Circle of Knowledge* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 141.

It is Dante's active looking, his extramissive gaze, which, like the sun's active rays effect a change, in this case on the *femmina balba*.<sup>295</sup> The medieval gaze could be either extramissive or intromissive,<sup>296</sup> depending on which model one subscribed to: it could reach out and touch an object in order to bring its image back to the viewer as posited by Plato in the *Timaeus*;<sup>297</sup> or, according to the Aristotelian model, it could absorb or take on the image emitted from the object.<sup>298</sup> Dante uses both models at different moments and for different reasons in his writing. Here extramission is clearly at play, the gaze is active, transformative and performative in a manner not uncommon to a stilnovistic poet.<sup>299</sup> The pilgrim's visual faculties, in the simile of the sun's rays warming limbs after a cold night, are explicitly

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<sup>295</sup> This seems to offer a negative precursor to the positive active gazing of Dante and Beatrice, the empowering of Dante's gaze in relation to Beatrice's which allows him to more fully experience paradise. This concept is explored through a discussion of 'aspetto' in lines 64-72 of *Paradiso I* in Sara Fortuna and Manuele Gragnolati, 'Dante after Wittgenstein: "Aspetto", Language, and Subjectivity from *Convivio* to *Paradiso*', *Dante's Plurilingualism*, pp. 223-247 (234-6).

<sup>296</sup> For an extensive discussion the history of these two terms, their transmission into medieval intellectual culture and their appearance in Dante's writing, see 'Part One: Optical Science in Dante's Thought and Poetry' in Simon A. Gilson, *Medieval Optics and Theories of Light in the Works of Dante* (Lewiston; Queenston; Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), pp. 1-150.

<sup>297</sup> The relevant section of Plato's work was initially made available through a Latin translation and commentary by Chalcidius; the text can be found in J. H. Wasznik and P. J. Jensen ed., *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus* (London & Leiden: Warburg Institute, 1962), pp. 41-3, as cited in Gilson, *Medieval Optics*, pp. 14-5, and Stewart, *The Arrow of Love*, pp. 14-6 & 116-7 (in relation to *Convivio*). See also Sturges account: 'From this [model of extramission], which dates back to Plato and Neo-platonists, and was transmitted to the medieval period by St. Augustine, among others, the senses of sight and touch are closely related: to see something is to touch it with the rays emitted from the observer's eyes', Robert S. Sturges, 'Desire and Devotion, Vision and Touch in the *Vita Nuova*', in *Desire in Dante and the Middle Ages*, pp. 101-113 (102).

<sup>298</sup> The theory was put forward in Aristotle's *De anima* and *De sensu et sensatu* and was coming to displace the platonic model by the latter half of the duecento; Gilson, *Medieval Optics*, pp. 15-6, and Stewart, *The Arrow of Love*, pp. 16-18. For an example of the poet writing in favour of intromission, see his *Convivio*, in which he appeals to the *De sensu* to argue against the model of extramission: 'e questa oppinione è riprovata per falsa dal Filosofo in quello del Senso e Sensato' (*Conv.* III, ix, 10). Its important to note, however, that (as argued by Boyde, Stewart and Sturges) 'Dante may believe in the scientific truth of intromission and yet still make use of the psychological implications of extramission' (quotation from Sturges, 'Desire and Devotion', pp. 103-4; see also Boyde, *Perception and Passion*, p. 106, and Stewart, *The Arrow of Love*, pp. 109-17); see also Gilson, *Medieval Optics*, p. 69 & n. 70, for some uses of extramissive imagery in Dante's poetry up to and including the *Commedia*.

<sup>299</sup> For a broader discussion of this gaze, and its presence within the stilnovistic tradition see the discussion in Heather Webb, *The Medieval Heart*, pp. 61-72.

situated within this theory of sight and we need merely glance back at Guinizzelli's 'Al cor gentil' to realise the potency, history and erotic valency of such transformative solar imagery:

Foco d'amore in gentil cor s'apprende  
 come vertute in pietra preziosa,  
 che da la stella valor no i discende  
 anti che 'l sol la faccia gentil cosa;  
 poi che n'ha tratto fòre  
 per sua forza lo sol ciò che li è vile,  
 stella li dà valore:  
 così lo cor ch'è fatto da natura  
 asletto, pur, gentile,  
 donna a guisa di stella lo 'nnamora.

(‘Al cor gentil’ 11-20)

While Dante limits himself to the warming of cold limbs, Guinizzelli delved into a mineralogical simile reliant on the potential virtues of gemstones (which are only imbued by the stars after the sun has purified them).<sup>300</sup> The essence of Guinizzelli's simile, though, is that the transformative powers of the sun are like nature's creative powers, which render the 'gentil core' pure so that it can be filled with the virtues of love through its enamourment for the lady. Dante draws on this imagery, but twists it so that the pilgrim's gaze takes on the role of love/the sun, which then falsely '[trae] fòre, per sua forza [...] ciò che li è vile' from the *femmina balba*, allowing lust disguised as love ('lo smarrito volto, / com'amor vuol, così le colorava') to render the base as noble, the hideous as beautiful. A variation on this comparative strategy has already appeared in that same second canto of *Inferno* which is re-enacted toward the end of this purgatorial dream:

Quali fioretti dal notturno gelo  
 chinati e chiusi, poi che 'l sol li 'mbianca,  
 si drizzan tutti aperti in loro stelo,

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<sup>300</sup> These lines are also notably relevant to another moment of erotic folly and misreading: the episode of Paolo and Francesca. It is specifically Guinizzelli's formulation, 'Foco d'amore in gentil cor s'apprende' which is recalled in Francesca 'Amor, ch'al or gentil ratto s'apprende' (*Inf.* V, 100).

tal mi fec' io di mia virtude stanca [...]
   
(*Inf.* II, 127-130)

This simile describes the fearful pilgrim's new hope and motivation upon discovering that it is the heavenly concatenation of ladies ending in Beatrice which has prompted Virgil to come to his aid (*Inf.* II, 49-138). The chill of night, the use of 'drizzare' to describe the straightening out of crooked things (of flowers in the infernal simile, of limbs in *Purgatorio*) and the transformative role of the sunlight connect these two moments across the gulf of intervening cantos to remind us of the pilgrim's setting forth and of what is at stake in the dream of the Siren. In these textual echoes, the imagery of the sun establishes the pilgrim's active role in the transformation of the femmina balba (a reversal of his passive receipt of the sun-like warmth of Beatrice's love communicated by Virgil) and it does so within the linguistic context of Guinizzelli's model of love. This second allusion to 'Al cor gentil' as a perilous text (following the near direct quotation in *Inferno* V) serves to reinforce the allegedly problematic nature of the pre-Dantean erotic discourse into which the pilgrim erroneously slips at this point. The dreaming Dante's Guinizzelli-inflected error manifests a misuse of poetic art and the adoption of a faulty hermeneutic. Indeed, it is not the case that our protagonist 'is momentarily incapable of repelling the loathsome woman and unwilling to do so' and neither is it simply that 'in consequence of his weakened physical and moral condition, the loathsome woman becomes briefly transformed into a seductress' (Cervigni's words are representative of numerous readings of this episode).<sup>301</sup> Yes, Dante's moral condition is called into question here (aptly as he has not yet finished his ascent of Purgatory), but there is no sense of his role being passive, he does not merely witness the becoming of the Siren, but rather makes it take place, a fact

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<sup>301</sup> Cervigni, *Dante's Poetry of Dreams*, pp. 135-136.

which I wish to emphasise, and the implications of which have been under-explored in readings of this passage to date.<sup>302</sup>

There is one more performative aspect to consider here, that of the authorial performance of this moment. Dante the poet, in relating this episode, does not mitigate or distance himself or us from the Siren's becoming. He is complicit in the performance of the Siren's transformative song, expressing its metamorphic qualities fully. It is, after all, his language which is recording the performance, his language which transmits the performativity of the utterance to the reader. Such is the risk staged by Dante of a felicitous performance, of the Siren becoming completely and irreversibly metamorphosed and disrupting the pilgrim's voyage (and therefore the production of the *Commedia*) that an intervention is required to prevent its uptake. A key distinction between the poet narrating and the pilgrim experiencing, however, is that the poet also narrates this necessary intervention that disrupts the performance of the song and the poetic error which it embodies. Cue the 'donna [...] santa e presta', who arrives to expose the Siren and thus disenchant Dante of his error. Rather than dwelling again on her appeal to Virgil, which I have dealt with above, I would like to focus on the corrective intertextual moment in which she plays a key role.

This intertextual correction is in large part dependent on our understanding

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<sup>302</sup> While often noted, Dante's transformative gaze has, to my knowledge, only been more extensively discussed by Olivia Holmes, particularly as it relates to an intertextual relationship with Boethius' *Consolatio* (Olivia Holmes, *Dante's Two Beloveds: Ethics and Erotics in the Divine Comedy*, [New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2008], pp. 69-61). My analysis is not pitted against hers, but seeks to draw out and emphasise different strands of this important attribute. For other readings which note this active gaze, see: Mazzotta, *Dante's Vision*, p. 140-141; Boyde, *Human Vices and Human Worth*, p. 163; Maria Cristina Fumigalli, *The Flight of the Vernacular: Seamus Heaney, Derek Walcott and the Impress of Dante* (Amsterdam; New York, NY: Rodopi, 2001), p. 29; in Durling and Martinez's commentary of *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri volume 2: Purgatorio*, Robert Durling ed. and trans., notes by Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez, illustrated by Robert Turner (New York, NY; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 318; and most recently Elena Lombardi's observation that: '[the Siren's] deceptive nature is a making of the dreamer/ beholder/lover/ poet', *The Wings of Doves*, p. 242.

of the siren-sins expressed in the pilgrim's dream. At the most superficial level they are interpreted by Virgil, within this same canto, as those faults punished in the final three terraces of purgatory:

‘Vedesti’, disse, ‘quell’antica strega  
che sola sovr’ a noi omai si piagne;  
vedesti come l’uom da lei si slega.  
Bastiti. [...]’

(*Purg.* XIX 58-61)

These three sins — avarice, gluttony and lust — are traditionally bracketed together as *cupiditas*<sup>303</sup> and it has already been noted that one of Dante's especial sins is lust (the sin pertaining to the great love poets of canto XXVI), which is apparent from the amorous nature of his interaction with the Siren in this dream.

Despite Virgil's 'Bastiti', however, this analysis is insufficient: the facts of the episode point to something beyond what we might initially understand by this simple threefold division of cupidity, towards a literary and intellectual folly. A key aspect prompting us to look past these descriptors is the nature of the last three terraces as a domain of poetry. In this space errors in writing are corrected almost as much as the sins by which each terrace is classified (as discussed with relation to Guinizzelli in the last chapter) and Dante blurs the 'sharp distinction between

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<sup>303</sup> The earliest instance of this kind of grouping in the commentary tradition is to be found in the use of the related term 'concupiscentia' to define the 'strega' in the mid-fourteenth century *Chiose Ambrosiane* (cited from the commentary to *Purg.*, XIX, 58 in *Le Chiose Ambrosiane alla "Commedia," edizione e saggio di commento*, Luca Carlo Rossi ed., [Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 1990], *DDP* [accessed 16 December 2013]). One of the first uses of the specific term 'cupidigia' by a commentator appearing in Giacomo Poletto's commentary to *Purg.* XIX, 58-60 (*La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri con commento del Prof. Giacomo Poletto*. [Rome; Tournay: Desclée, Lefebvre, 1894], *DDP* [accessed 16 December 2013]) For a useful treatment of the semantic overlap between *cupiditas* and *concupiscentia* in an Augustinian context see Timo Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscentia* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 35-41. Subsequent commentaries make similar collective categorisations of the three sins as sins of 'sensualità' (commentary to *Purg.*, XIX, 52-63, by Francesco da Buti in *Commento di Francesco da Buti sopra La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, Crescentino Giannini ed., [Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62], *DDP* [accessed 16 December 2013]).

material and intellectual cupidity' which had existed in the *Convivio*.<sup>304</sup> The encounters with Statius, Forese Donati, Bonagiunta, Guinizzelli and Arnaut, as well as the allusive presence of Cavalcanti in canto XXV,<sup>305</sup> all contribute to a strategy of association between those sins of over-strong, misplaced desire and sins of poetic craft, a craft which cannot be removed from the realm of intellectual pursuit. Fabian Alfie's recent work on the tenzone between Dante and Forese Donati has cast some much-needed light on the significance of that exchange in accounting for Forese's (as well as Bonagiunta's) significance among the penitent gluttonous and indeed on the logic of the terrace on which they are placed. As touched upon in the previous chapter, Alfie draws our attention beyond the content of the vitriolic exchange between the two in-laws to include the very form of the tenzone as a key aspect in determining the location of the two poet-sinners on their terrace. In recognising a fundamental connection between sins of the throat (gluttony) and the sins of the lips (speaking ill), the roles of both Forese and Bonagiunta as ill speakers are foregrounded. This link is cemented by the choice of 'Domine, labia mea aperies' as the psalm sung by the penitent gluttons: the opening of the lips for praise being contrasted with the opening of the lips for consumption, but also necessarily being opposed to the opening of the lips in

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<sup>304</sup> Barolini relates this 'blurring' as a symptom of 'Dante's mature conviction that the desire for knowledge can become immoderate in ways that are not so different from other forms of immoderate desire [which] leads him to invoke Ulysses the threshold of the sins of incontinence, in Purgatorio 19', Barolini, 'Guittone, Dante and the Anatomy of Desire' in *Dante and the Origins*, p. 67.

<sup>305</sup> See Barański, "Per similitudine di abito scientifico", pp. 29-39.

dispraise.<sup>306</sup> The correction of Forese's and Bonagiunta's ill speaking is a correction of their poetry, a correction of their *tenzoni* with Dante and Guinizelli respectively, and thus an intellectual fault is brought to light, a fault in their poesis. Similarly, the failings of the erotic poetry of both Guinizelli and Arnaut are established through their presence among the penitent lustful. As already noted, the position of the sort of erotic poetry which they favoured is in hell with Francesca and the intellectual, poetic side to their sin is clear. Statius too, when he declares his Christian faith, has his poetics called into question by Virgil: "per quello che Clìò teco lì tasta, / non par che ti facesse ancor fedele / la fede, senza qual ben far non basta" (*Purg.* XXII, 58-60). Virgil's words bring the discussion of Statius' faith and fate firmly into the realm of poetics; his writing is expected to act as testament to his belief, not to contradict it. Even after Statius goes on to explain his inspiration by Virgil's own fourth Eclogue to adhere to the Christian faith (54-73), the fact of his failure to express that faith remains:

[...] pria ch'io conducessi i Greci a' fiumi  
di Tebe poetando, ebb' io battesimo;  
ma per paura chiuso cristian fu'mi,  
lungamente mostrando paganesmo;  
(*Purg.* XXII, 88-91)

Much as Guinizelli's salvation is portrayed as occurring despite his poetics ("per ben dolermi prima ch'a lo stremo." *Purg.* XXVI, 93), so Statius' entry into Purgatory is contrasted with his seemingly pagan literary output. Indeed, in the cases of both Statius and Guinizelli the problematic nature of their poetry has

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<sup>306</sup> Indeed, having asserted that 'Dante suggests that praise, the opposite of invective, can only be uttered when the speaker's mind is unclouded by other intentions. Otherwise it is most appropriate to hold one's tongue', Alfie continues to note some auto-correction in the encounter with Forese. Dante repudiates the aspersions he had previously cast on the fidelity of Forese's wife, Nella, by praising her faithfulness in the purgatorial passage, thereby attacking 'false' criticism and reinforcing 'true' critique (Alfie, *Dante's tenzone with Forese Donati*, pp. 82-9, quotation 87). This is consistent with the tendencies demonstrated in this and the previous chapter of the present thesis.

direct implications for their purgatorial sentences, as the erotic poet is purged of lust and, prior to his progress to the fifth terrace, Statius had been confined to the terrace of the slothful for over four centuries as a result of failing to display his faith (“e questa tepidezza il quarto cerchio / cerchiar mi fé più che ’l quarto centesimo”, *Purg.* XXII 92-93). However, while no explicit connection is drawn between his poetry and his sin of prodigality (in contrast to the cases of the two pairings of Forese/Bonagiunta and Guinizzelli/Arnaut),<sup>307</sup> the use of Statius as emblematic of this fault, coupled with the lengthy discourse on his pagan poetics and resultant stint among the slothful, represents the first step in a programmatic association of the sins of *cupiditas* and the intellectual pursuit of writing poetry.

This general discussion of the interrelation between poetics and *cupiditas*, of intellectual pursuits and misguided desire serves as a vital backdrop to my analysis of the vision of the *femmina balba*. This forward glance to the terraces of avarice, gluttony and lust allows us to identify the false Siren of Dante’s dream as standing for an intellectual aspect to his erotic fault, one closely connected to both the reading and writing of poetry. The error of the pilgrim here is specifically figured as an act of misreading, while Dante the poet undertakes to narrate the *femmina balba*’s transformation in a sweet lyric style which mirrors the folly of misguided writing in need of correction. In considering the pilgrim’s misreading, the gaze as *lectura* comes into play: Dante’s active looking shapes what it reads in a (mis)interpretative process. And, while the model of vision adopted for the

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<sup>307</sup> While it is not within the purview of this thesis to venture further into the case of Statius, there may yet be a more direct connection between his poetry and his purgation on the first terrace of *cupiditas*. Although the late-antique poet denies any avarice and instead confesses to prodigality as the reason for his time on the fifth terrace, Statius’ failure to share the Christian message which he derived from Virgil in his poetry, instead hoarding it for his own salvation, seems to represent a sort of literary avarice. This poetic miserliness chimes equally well with his location among the penitent avaricious, doubling the significance of his poetic, intellectual error and aligning it more thoroughly with sins of *cupiditas*.

transformative gaze in this dream may owe its origins to Plato, its intellectual implications are most certainly Aristotelian. According to the Aristotelian theories of sensation and intellection which Dante frequently endorsed, the abstraction of sensory experience was the starting point of conceptual thought. Thus if one were to engage in erroneous seeing, ‘the formation of concepts would be undermined’, resulting in false perception and intellectual faultiness.<sup>308</sup> The Siren, as a false creation of Dante’s vision, is necessarily related to a discourse of errors of intellect. Another form of reading, ‘that reading which took place through the ears as well as with the eyes’,<sup>309</sup> is also important here. According to this model, as theorised by medieval writers like Peter Abelard and Hugh of St. Victor, we may distinguish three methods by which one may read, described by Hugh as: a teacher reading to a student (‘lego librum illi’, [I read the book to him]); a student ‘reading’ by listening to a teacher (‘lego librum ab illo’, [I read the book from him]); and an individual reading to himself (‘lego librum’ [I read the book]).<sup>310</sup> David Green extrapolates from these classifications to state that ‘the teacher can be replaced by someone reading out a text on occasion outside the classroom, and the pupil by any listener’.<sup>311</sup> His view accords with that of Mary Carruthers, who reminds us of ‘the fact that most ordinary social reading, at least, was done aloud by someone to

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<sup>308</sup> Gilson, *Medieval Optics*, pp. 93-6. Gilson is primarily concerned with optical illusions and shortcomings of sight, but his discussion of the related failures of sight and intellect become pertinent to the dream of the Siren when we consider the interpretive role of the gaze in this episode.

<sup>309</sup> Lombardi, *The Wings of Doves*, p. 213. Lombardi also gives a helpful bibliography on medieval reading practices in pp. 328-9, note 1.

<sup>310</sup> David H. Green, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 6.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

a group of listeners, throughout antiquity and the Middle Ages',<sup>312</sup> but also makes clear that, despite this norm, reading was still a strongly visual undertaking and 'whatever enters the mind changes into a 'see-able form for storing in memory'.<sup>313</sup> As a form of medieval reading engendered by the performance of a text (reading aloud), but which is nevertheless participatory and image generating, this aural reading practice should cement our sense of Dante-listener (as well as spectator) as a reader of the Siren in this context.

This issue of reading remains inextricable from the problems of poetics and a single figure or episode can, and frequently does, act as locus for a synthetic discussion of both concerns. In *Inferno* V the encounter with Francesca, whose reading habits are emphasised in the same moment that she rehearses the language of Stil novist poetry, provides one such, much commented example of just such a discussion.<sup>314</sup> We also see this phenomenon manifested in the forthcoming meeting with Statius, whose successful interpretive reading practice — his divining of a Christian message in Virgil's fourth *Eclogue* — is contrasted with a failure to write successfully, i.e., faithfully, as a Christian. And so, in the Siren, Dante's misreading becomes part of a broader matrix of faults which lead to intellectual and poetic errors. And it is apt that the problem of a sinful poetics or a

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<sup>312</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 20. Carruthers later notes that convergence of adjectives used in Augustine's *Confessions* to describe Ambrose reading quietly to himself and describe those who would have listened, had he been reading aloud. In both instances 'intentus' describes the state of those readers — aural or visual — accounted for by Augustine, thus associating these two methods of textual absorption; *Confessions*, VI, iii, quoted in Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 213-4.

<sup>313</sup> Carruthers makes reference to Jerome's commentary on Ezekiel 40:4 in support of her argument, quoting his statement that 'nothing that you have seen or heard is useful, however, unless you deposit what you should see and hear in the treasury of your memory', and its emphasis on role of the 'eyes of the heart' in fixing images in the memory. Jerome, *Commentari in Hiezechielem* XII, quoted in Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 20.

<sup>314</sup> For a recent discussion concerned with precisely these issues, see the chapter on 'Reading' in Lombardi, *The Wings of the Doves*, pp. 212-247.

poetics distracted by sin is played out here according to the creative metaphors of nautical poesis in this second purgatorial dream, as we are located once again within the imagery of sea voyages. This rich vein of metaphor is one through which Dante has already explored a changing relationship with his past poetry, as we have seen in the discussion of the intertextual relationship between *Purgatorio* I and the *tenzone* comprising ‘Guido, I’ vorrei’ and ‘Si’o fossi quelli’ in the previous chapter. Indeed, there are ready analogues to be drawn between the figure of Dante and those sailors who came to be undone by sirens ‘in mezzo mar’. Were the pilgrim to be seduced by his Siren at this point in proceedings, he could find his *navicella d’ingegno* sent off course and the ‘legno che cantando varca’, the very poem, wrecked, unable to complete its voyage. This realisation, this staged peril, also serves to recall the relationship between Dante and Ulysses, between the *folle volo* of the condemned seafarer and the sin which Dante must overcome so that his voyage may be safely completed.

The parallel between Dante and Ulysses, as initially established in *Inferno*, is evoked again (for the first time in a post-infernal context) in the aforementioned opening canto of *Purgatorio*. The image is called up not only through the inevitable charge of the Ulyssean anti-type carried by sea voyage and its vessels within the *Commedia*, but also through certain specific linguistic resonances. To illustrate these I will turn briefly to Ulysses’ speech in *Inferno* XXVI:

‘Noi chi allegrammo, e tosto tornò in pianto;  
ché de la nova terra un turbo nacque  
e percosse del legno il primo canto.  
Tre volte il fé girar con tutte l’acque;  
a la quarta levar la poppa in suso  
e la prora ire in giù, com’altrui piacque,  
infin che ‘l mar fu sovra noi richiuso.’

(*Inf.* XXVI, 136-142)

While ‘primo canto’ here refers to the head-on nature of the water’s impact with

Ulysses' vessel, the verse context along reinforced by the subsequent deployment of the boat as figure for poetic creation retrospectively imbues this choice of words, in the reminiscences of *Purgatorio* I and *Paradiso* II,<sup>315</sup> with the literary significance of a poetic unit. And it seems no mere coincidence that the 'primo canto' of *Purgatorio* furnishes the moment in which Dante first mentions the *navicella* of his *ingegno* and contrasts his divinely ordained journey with Ulysses' doomed venture, the 'folle volo' (*Inf.* XXVI, 125).<sup>316</sup> Dante's own *folia* is also recalled here; his is a folly which was almost his undoing, but which is undergoing the correction of a divinely ordained journey, rather than leading him on a doomed, blasphemous one. In Ulysses' narrative the boat is struck and sunk 'com'altrui piacque' to prevent its arrival on the shores of Purgatory, whereas Dante, carried on the small boat of his genius, is to prepare himself for the ascent through that very realm, girding himself 'com'altrui piacque' (*Purg.* I, 133).<sup>317</sup> This little formulation is part of the recollection of Ulysses at this moment which serves to compare and contrast the humbled Dante with the great, yet condemned, voyager of *Inferno* XXVI, a parallelism noted as far back as Benvenuto da Imola's commentary.<sup>318</sup> The pilgrim Dante is adamantly not wrecked and the poet Dante realises his text as sea voyage (just as he survives the threat of wreckage in the

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<sup>315</sup> Wilkins, 'Reminiscence and Anticipation in the *Divine Comedy*', *The Invention of the Sonnet*, pp. 77-83.

<sup>316</sup> Hollander, *Purgatorio*, p. 20.

<sup>317</sup> As discussed by Hollander (*Purgatorio*, p. 24).

<sup>318</sup> Benvenuto da Imola's commentary on *Purgatorio* I, 131-132 states, 'ideo dicit: *che mai non vide uom navicar sue acque, che sia poscia esperto di tornare*. Per hoc vult dicere quod nulli possunt accedere ad antipodes, si tamen sunt, sicut negat Augustinus libro de Civitate Dei: *Nullus ergo vivens ivit, qui unquam reverteretur*. Hoc dicit pro Ulyxe, qui tentavit illuc accedere secundum fictionem poetae, sed cito ipsum poenituit', cited from *Benevenuti de Rambaldis de Imola Comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam, nunc primum integre in lucem editum sumptibus Guilielmi Warren Vernon, curante Jacobo Philippo Lacaita* (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1887), DDP [accessed 6 May 2013].

second dream). A reading in which Ulysses embodies an element of Dante's own sin is not an uncommon one,<sup>319</sup> and so equally Dante in some aspects reflects Ulysses. Both are presented as seafarers and both are led by sin to the point of drowning. Only Dante, through divine grace, is saved:

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 già mai persona viva.

(*Inf.* I, 22-27)

The pilgrim's first passing through the first of these (previously) impassable waters which punctuate his journey is recalled and re-emphasised in the arrival on the shores of purgatory. The voyagers have passed through the figurative 'mar sì crudele' (*Purg.* I, 3) of hell, out of which no soul (save, presumably, Cato) and no living man has passed, to arrive 'in sul lito deserto, / che mai non vide navicar sue acque / omo, che di tornar sia poscia esperto' (*Purg.* I, 130-132). The reassertion of Dante's journey as unique is couched in maritime terms. Even his journey through hell is recast as a sea voyage and the process of its poetic recreation is

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<sup>319</sup> John Freccero has written significantly on Dante's relationship with Ulysses in the essay 'Dante's Ulysses: From Epic to Novel' in Norman T. Burns and Christopher J. Reagan ed., *Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and Renaissance (Papers of the Fourth and Fifth Annual Conferences of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, State University of New York at Binghamton)* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975), pp. 101-119, reprinted in Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, Rachel Jacoff ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 136-51. See also Freccero, 'Dante's Prologue Scene', *Dante Studies*, 84 (1966), pp. 1-25, reprinted in Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, pp. 1-28 (discussion of Ulysses, pp. 15-24). Some decades later we find Barolini mapping the history of interpretations of Ulysses (*The Undivine Comedy*, pp. 49-51). She in turn convincingly posits his role as a 'thematic pillar of the poem' (*Ibid.*, p. 51) and characterises Ulysses as the document of Dante's 'self awareness', acting as 'the lightning rod Dante places in the poem to attract and defuse his own consciousness of the presumption involved in anointing oneself God's scribe' (*Ibid.*, p. 52). For other pertinent discussions see, on the nature of Ulysses sin as an 'abuse of talent', Anna Hatcher, 'Dante's Ulysses and Guido da Montefeltro', in *Dante Studies*, 88 (1970), 109-17 and, on Ulysses as representing 'one aspect of Dante's pre-conversion self, David Thompson, 'Dante's Ulysses and the Allegorical Journey', *Dante Studies*, 85 (1967), 33-58.

retrospectively included in the metaphor of the *navicella d'ingegno*.<sup>320</sup> Dante escapes a Ulyssean fate by means of his journey through the afterlife. His voyage is led not merely by skilled navigation, but instead by divine grace. The skill of navigation is characterised as the desire for and pursuit of earthly knowledge without knowledge of or desire for God, while the voyage assisted and directed by grace is characterised by the repeated intervention of guides and gracious ladies. These associations provide the backdrop for the entanglement of Dantean sin with Ulyssean folly in the dream of the Siren. The siren-sin of Dante, interpreted in the key of the sins of *cupiditas* as an erotic error should, like the sins of the other poets to be encountered in the coming terraces, also be considered as an intellectual failing. The intratextual association with Ulysses offers evidence of an auto-critique for the pursuit of earthly knowledge (over or without the divine understanding which Dante should know to privilege)<sup>321</sup> and this internal allusion is bolstered when we consider the revelation in relation to two intertexts.

The first is Cicero's *De finibus malorum et bonorum*, which translates the siren song comprising lines 184-191 from book XII of the *Odyssey* (but nothing else of the Homeric episode):

O decus Argolicum, quin puppim flectis, Ulixes,  
Auribus ut nostros possis agnoscere cantus!  
Nam nemo haec umquam est transvectus caerulea cursu,

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<sup>320</sup> Hollander, *Purgatorio*, p. 14.

<sup>321</sup> Perhaps this can be read under the sign of Hatcher's *vana curiositas*, a label posited for the underlying motivation for all Ulysses' sins in her reading of the 8th *malebolgia*, and certainly fitting for Dante's intellectual and erotic misadventures, 'Dante's Ulysses and Guido da Montefeltro', p. 117. Mark Musa later argues along related lines for a sin characterised by a more general abuse of intellect than by any 'fraudulent counsel', Musa ed. and trans., *Dante's Inferno: The Indiana Critical Edition* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 202. The developments in this discussion and the disruption of 'consiglio frodolente' as a category see, Michael Papio, 'Fraudulent Counsel' in Richard Lansing ed., *The Dante Encyclopedia* (Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), pp. 422-3. See also Freccero on the significance of the Dante's encounter with Ulysses, particularly as it is recalled in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, as marking 'the contrast between [Ulysses'] abortive journey and that of the pilgrim', p. 15.

Quin prius adstiterit vocum dulcedine captus,  
 Post variis avido satiatus pectore musis  
 Doctior ad patrias lapsus pervenerit oras.  
 Nos grave certamen belli clademque tenemus,  
 Graecia quam Troiae divino numine vexit,  
 Omniaque e latis rerum vestigia terris.<sup>322</sup>  
 (*De finibus*, V, xviii, 49)

This text is a front-running candidate (along with Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiarum*) for source material for Dante's indirect version of the Homeric siren story.<sup>323</sup> Cicero provides these lines within the context of a discussion of 'cupiditas scientiae' and 'curiositas', glossing the song as the kind of temptation which would appeal to passionately inquiring minds like that of Ulysses. It is worth

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<sup>322</sup> [Ulysses, pride of Argos, turn thy bark / And listen to our music. Never yet / Did voyager sail these waters blue, but stayed / His course, enchanted by our voices sweet, / And having filled his soul with harmony, / Went on his homeward way a wiser man. / We know the direful strife and clash of war / That Greece by Heaven's mandate bore to Troy, / And whatsoever on the wide earth befalls]. All quotations and translations are drawn from Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De finibus malorum et bonorum*, 2nd ed., H. Harris Rackham trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931); this passage is found on p. 451.

<sup>323</sup> An aside on the nature of Dante's Siren: I find it hard to agree with those who read Dante's particular Siren as Circe (a recurrent view in some readings, more recently Durling and Martinez (*The Divine Comedy*, p. ) or Fumigalli who posits, in a footnote, that Dante may be 'confusing the Sirens with Circe, to whom Ulysses yields', Fumigalli, *The Flight of the Vernacular*, p. 29, note 23), despite such a reading in some early commentaries (for example, the *Ottimo Commento*, Iacopo della Lana's, or Benvenuto da Imola's glosses: 'Dici potest quod poeta loquitur de Circe et Calypso, quae verae sirenes detinuerunt Ulyxem, Circe per annum, Calypso per multos', *Purg.* XIX, 19, *Comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam*, DDP, [accessed 18 July, 2013]). My objection stems from an acceptance of these lines from Cicero as a principle source for Dante's version of the Siren for a number of reasons. Cicero's text gives nothing but the Sirens' song, with its promises of new knowledge. There are several key facts to consider. Firstly, there is no evidence in Dante's texts that he was aware of Ulysses' having ordered his crews to plug their ears and then endured the song himself while they navigated unswervingly past, information which is not given in Cicero's text, as he gives no more of the Siren story than that which he translates and glosses in the quoted passage. This aspect should caution us against arguments for sources like Seneca's *Epistulae morales*, which explicitly recalls the stopping of the sailors ears by their captain (*Epistulae morales* 31.2-3 is suggested as an intertext in Holmes, *Dante's Two Beloveds*, pp. 44-5). Furthermore, Cicero glosses the episode as indicative of a *cupiditas scientiae*, a lust for knowledge which overcomes even love for the homeland ('scientiam pollicentur, quam non erat mirum sapientiae cupido patria esse cariorem' [It is knowledge that the Sirens offer, and it was no marvel if a lover of wisdom held this dearer than his home]) consistent with Dante's presentation of Ulysses as one who valued the pursuit of knowledge above all other ties ("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'ì' ebbi a divenir del mondo esperto"). Given these facts, the boast of Dante's Siren, 'Io volsi Ulisse del suo cammin vago', may not strike us as quite so strange. The lines which were made available by Cicero's text, coupled with their prose context, could readily lead to a belief that Ulysses heeded, after a fashion, the Siren's song and was distracted by it. In other words the desire for knowledge overcame his ties to his homeland and off he sailed. There is no evidence in the Ciceronian text to contradict such a reading. This is not to completely dismiss other possible sources for the myth, but rather to privilege Cicero's *De finibus* as fundamental to the portrayal of both the Siren and Ulysses in the *Commedia*.

noting that ‘*cupiditas scientiae*’ is deemed positive by Cicero, and while ‘*curiositas*’ can be an ambivalent term it is spun into a virtuous light by association with the worthy love of knowledge:

Vidit Homerus probari fabulam non posse, si cantiunculis tantus irretitus vir teneretur; scientiam pollicentur, quam non erat mirum sapientiae cupido patria esse cariorem. Atque omnia quidem scire, cuiuscumque modi sint, cupere curiosorum, duci vero maiorum rerum contemplatione ad cupiditatem scientiae summorum virorum est putandum.<sup>324</sup>

(*De finibus*, V, xviii, 49)

While ‘*curiositas*’, may be rendered positively for Cicero, it remains straightforwardly negative in Aquinas’ analysis, acting as the opposing vice to ‘*studiositas*’.<sup>325</sup> Indeed, given the role of the ‘*antica strega*’ as signifier of those sins which can be collectively defined as *cupiditas*, the other key term in Cicero’s gloss, *cupiditas scientiae*, should be understood as equally negative in a Christian reading, representing the lust for knowing which led to that final, fatal ‘*folle vollo*’ undertaken by Dante’s Ulysses. From the Christian perspective, Freccero reminds us that Dante uses his encounters with medieval Ulyssean mythology to recall ‘Augustine’s distinction between philosophical presumption and Christian conversion’.<sup>326</sup> This reading is also consistent with the Augustinian description of ‘*concupiscentia oculorum*’ ([concupiscence of the eyes])<sup>327</sup> which consists in ‘*experiendi per carnem vana et curiosa cupiditas, nomine cognitionis et scientiae*

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<sup>324</sup> [Homer was aware that his story would not sound plausible if the magic that held his hero immeshed was merely an idle song! It is knowledge that the Sirens offer, and it was no marvel if a lover of wisdom held this dearer than his home. A passion for miscellaneous omniscience no doubt stamps a man as a mere dilettante; but it must be deemed the mark of a superior mind to be led on by the contemplation of high matters to a passionate love of knowledge]; Cicero, *De finibus*, p. 451.

<sup>325</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2a-2ae, 160, 2 and 167, 1, as quoted and discussed in Boyde, *Human Vices and Human Worth*, pp. 255-6).

<sup>326</sup> Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, p. 15.

<sup>327</sup> Text of *Confessions* from O’Donnell ed., *The ‘Confessions’ of Augustine: An Electronic Edition*, <<http://www.stoa.org/hippo/>> [accessed 04 June 2013]; translations mine.

palliata' ([things experienced through vain flesh and curious cupidity, under the guise of learning and knowledge], *Confessions* X, 35). While Augustine may abandon the Johannine structure of 'cupiditates triplices' ([threefold cupidity], *Confessions* X, 41) in later works,<sup>328</sup> it is extensively discussed in chapter X of his *Confessions* and bears that same striking amalgamation of sins of the flesh and intellectual sins (or rather, the lust of the eyes under the cloak of intellectual pursuits) which we find in Dante. The triple cupidity of the *Confessions* is also consonant with the threefold identification of the serena-strega by Virgil. Pressed upon by the disapproving Christian context, the Ciceronian passage provides a model for the merging of the erotic and intellectual and reinforces our sense of why the pursuit of both follies is treated in the same terms and under the same category of sin.<sup>329</sup> The amorous-erotic conflation in the figure of the Siren should prompt us to further consider her in relation to Dante's most Ulyssean 'de-theologised' work,

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<sup>328</sup> Albert E. Wingell, 'The Forested Mountaintop in Augustine and Dante', *Dante Studies*, 99 (1981), pp. 9-48 (14).

<sup>329</sup> Joseph Anthony Mazzeo draws on the passage from Cicero's *De finibus bonorum et malorum* (V, xviii-xix, 48-50), parts of which are quoted above. Cicero quotes and translates the description of the sirens from *Odyssey* 12 (184 ff.) and focusses on the sirens' claims to make men wiser, which Cicero glosses as a parable of the quest (virtuous) quest for knowledge. As Mazzeo has it, 'a passion for miscellaneous omniscience no doubt stamps a man as a mere dilettante; but it must be deemed the mark of a superior mind to be led on by the contemplation of high matters to a passionate love of knowledge' (discussion and quotation, Mazzeo, 'The "Sirens" of *Purgatorio* XXXI, 45', in *Medieval Cultural Tradition in Dante's Comedy*, pp. 205-12 [209-11]). Mazzeo reads this passage in relation to *Convivio*, III, xiv and concludes, 'could the sirens of knowledge, the temptation for this kind of overweening desire for philosophical truth, have lured Dante to a betrayal of the bond with Beatrice? This interpretation seems to me both plausible and, if we take the *pargoletta* as both the "Lady Philosophy" and the *donna gentile*, then the interpretation of the sirens as simultaneously sins of the flesh and a misuse of knowledge would permit us a more consistent interpretation of the passage along the lines suggested by Grandgent'. (*Ibid.*, p. 212); cf. C. H. Grandgent ed., *Dante's Divina Commedia* (New York, NY: D. C. Heath, 1933), pp. 613-4.

the *Convivio*,<sup>330</sup> a relationship which will be explored below. I am not attempting to establish a dichotomous relationship between the erotic and the intellectual here, or to supplant one with the other, but rather to demonstrate their inextricability within Dante's oeuvre, which is reasserted in the structures of *Purgatorio*.

Indeed, the correlation of intellectual sin with erotic sin is introduced in the rich discursive context of *Purgatorio*'s opening cantos through Casella's song:

‘Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona’  
cominciò elli allor sì dolcemente,  
che la dolcezza ancor dentro mi suona.  
(*Purg.* II, 112-114)

I side with those who interpret this palinodic moment as a distracting siren song in the wake of two simultaneous critical revelations in the mid-1970s, when both Robert Hollander and John Freccero independently reached some very similar conclusions on the role of the song and Cato's rebuke of its audience. Both scholars have noted that Casella's song and the Siren's distracting 'cantar' of canto XIX share sufficient characteristics that they may be classified as parallel events. Each of the episodes is a pleasant musical interlude which slows and distracts from the pilgrim's progress until interrupted by a righteous outside force (Cato and the 'donna santa' respectively).<sup>331</sup> Recently, Francesco Ciabattini reasserted the

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<sup>330</sup> Took succinctly describes the *Convivio*'s process of 'de-theologisation' in terms of its 'periodisation of human experience such that each successive phase of that experience has about its own finality and sufficiency', a model which will be disrupted by the *Commedia*'s eschatological concerns; Took, 'Dante, Conversion, and Homecoming', in Vittorio Montemaggi and Matthew Treherne ed., *Dante's Commedia: Theology as Poetry* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), pp. 308-17 (308-9). See also Freccero's report of Bruno Nardi's suggestion that the encounter with Ulysses 'implies a retrospective view of Dante himself both as poet and as man, when with confidence and *ingegno* he embarked upon the writing of the *Convivio*, [...] which began by stating that all men desire to know and that ultimate happiness resides in the pursuit of knowledge'; Freccero, *The Poetics of Conversion*, p. 146.

<sup>331</sup> Hollander, 'Purgatorio II: Cato's Rebuke and Dante's "scoglio"', *Italica*, 52.3 (Autumn, 1975), pp. 348-363; Freccero, 'Casella's Song', *Dante Studies*, XCI (1973), pp. 73-80, reprinted in *The Poetics of Conversion*, pp. 186-194.

correlation between Casella's singing and the Siren's, classifying both as 'deceptive songs', one of his three categories for music in purgatory.<sup>332</sup> This kind of deceptive music, designed to distract from the proper path, 'is the musical complement to the Ulyssean paradigm',<sup>333</sup> and while, as we have seen, the figure of Ulysses is more explicitly evident in the *femmina balba* episode, the context of Casella's song is heavily charged with Ulyssean allusions and overtones. Casella has just recounted his own sea voyage and the reason for his delay in coming to the shore of purgatory:

Ed elli a me: 'Nessun m'è fatto oltraggio,  
se quei che leva quando e cui li piace,  
più volte m'ha negato esto passaggio [...]'  
(*Purg.* II, 94-6)

In these words, Casella, like Dante, is contrasted with Ulysses; the acceptance that the crossing to this holy realm is dependent on the whims of divine grace forms the necessary basis for the successful undertaking of the voyage. Casella reinforces the fact that neither he nor any soul comes here under their own volition, but must travel, essentially, 'com' altrui piacque'. Casella's experience can even be admitted to have a broader resonance than Dante's for our general understanding of the experience of purgatory; as an emblematic new arrival to the mountain he represents the ideal voyage of the Christian soul after death in a way that Dante's remarkable, unique pilgrimage cannot. That Casella should then sing a song which has a negative impact on the progress of souls through purgatory, and is worthy of Cato's rebuke, should not be seen to cast aspersions on Casella's acceptance of purgation. Rather, this dangerous distraction should be understood as

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<sup>332</sup> Francesco Ciabattone, *Dante's Journey to Polyphony* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p. 98. 'Polyphony' in this title refers strictly to musical polyphony as distinct from Bakhtinian polyphony as theorised in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and *The Dialogic Imagination*.

<sup>333</sup> Ciabattone, *Dante's Journey to Polyphony*, p. 96.

representative of the ignorance of Casella and all souls coming to purgatory of the new rules which govern them. This ignorance is coupled with and compounded by the continued attachment of these souls to earthly desires prior to the commencement of their purgation. This attachment and the ignorance it accompanies are both shared by the pilgrim Dante:<sup>334</sup>

E io: ‘Se nuova legge non ti toglie  
memoria o uso a l’amoroso canto  
che mi solea quetar tutte mie doglie,  
di ciò ti piaccia consolare alquanto  
l’anima mia, che, con la sua persona  
venendo qui, è affannata tanto!’  
(*Purg.* II, 106-111)

It becomes clear that no new law prevents Casella from singing, as is shown by his performance of Dante’s *canzone*. The new rules of purgatory do, however, ‘take away the rightness of singing such songs as the second ode of *Convivio*’.<sup>335</sup> In this regard, Cato’s reproof will be a valuable lesson. But what of the *dolcezza* of Casella’s singing, which, Dante the poet reports ‘ancor dentro mi suona’ (*Purg* II, 114)? Most straightforwardly, ‘*dolcezza*’ fulfils the role of its lemma, the poetic ‘code word’ *dolce*, and signifies that Casella has sung a song which conforms to Dante’s definitions of ‘*amoroso*’,<sup>336</sup> i.e. that it represents lyric which takes love as its subject matter. Indeed Casella’s singing provides a *mise-en-scène* of the first

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<sup>334</sup> The still earthly sentimentality of Dante has, of course, been amply demonstrated in the infernal realm, as in the encounter with Francesca in *Inferno* V, or the admiration for Ulysses in *Inferno* XXVI.

<sup>335</sup> Hollander, ‘Purgatorio II: Cato’s Rebuke and Dante’s “scoglio”’, p. 350. On a similar note, if not quite such stern one, Freccero argues that ‘Casella’s song was a respite, as was the *Convivio*; both had to be interrupted for the long journey that lay ahead’ (*Poetics of Conversion*, p. 194). The new rules of purgatory also have implications for other aspects of the Casella episode, especially regarding the friendship between the singer and the pilgrim. For a discussion of these see Barolini, *Dante’s Poets*, pp. 34-5.

<sup>336</sup> Barolini, *Dante’s Poets*, p. 33

stanza of the very canzone being performed.<sup>337</sup> In addition, Hollander identifies this resounding nostalgia with the same sort of inappropriate emotional after effects seen in Dante's continued grief provoked by Ulysses ('Allor mi dolsi, e ora mi ridoglio', *Inf.* XXVI, 19) and classes it as a 're-experiencing of temptation' of the sort 'commonly reported to underline the severity of the temptation'.<sup>338</sup> There is certainly something to be said for this reading, and it would relate well to the poet's re-performance of the transformative song of the Siren in canto XIX. In that later instance, the narration of the near-completed metamorphosis of the *femmina balba* is so beautifully, lyrically expressed that the interruption of the *donna santa* seems almost as necessary for the poet and reader as it does for the pilgrim! We should remain aware, however, that the sweetness of Casella's singing can be remembered fondly without a recapitulation of the problematic content. A useful contrast in this regard can be drawn between Casella's song and the singing of 'Hosanna' by the Seraphim — prefacing the other direct quotation from Dante's *Convivio* — at that moment in the third heavenly sphere when the souls descend to greet the pilgrim:

[...] lasciando il giro  
pria cominciato in li alti Serafini;  
e dentro a quei che più innanzi appariro  
sonava "*Osanna*" sì, che unque poi  
di rüdir non fui senza disiro.

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<sup>337</sup> Barolini makes this argument highlighting in particular the fourth and fifth lines which are closely echoed in the text of the Casella episode (the lines are reproduced here with her italics):

Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona  
de la mia donna disiosamente,  
move cose di lei meco sovente,  
*che lo 'ntelletto sovr' esse disvia.*  
*Lo suo parlar sì dolcemente sona,*  
che l'anima ch'ascolta e che lo sente  
dice: 'Oh me lassa, ch'io non so possente  
di dir quel ch'odo de la donna mia!'

('Amore che nella mente', 1-8)

The focus on the sweetness of the song and its power to distract are brought to the fore through the discussion which can be found in Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, pp. 38-9.

<sup>338</sup> Hollander, 'Purgatorio II: Cato's Rebuke and Dante's "scoglio"', p. 351.

(Par. VIII, 26-30)

These lines are shortly followed by the quotation and correction, of ‘Voi che ’ntendendo il terzo ciel movete’, the first Convivial ode.<sup>339</sup> In narrating this scene, the poet again emphasises a sense of nostalgia as he expresses his desire to ‘riudir’ the heavenly cry. There is a crucial difference between these two instances of nostalgic recollection of singing: in the case of Casella’s song, the author expresses no desire to hear the song again, but merely recalls its sweetness; in the case of the heavenly hosanna, the poet expresses the lasting desire to hear the performance again. Dante distances himself from the content of the songs of *Convivio*, but not the sweetness of Casella’s delivery, while, in direct contrast, he still desires to listen again to the holy song he hears among the angels. Drawing this distinction makes it quite clear that Dante need not repudiate the mode of Casella’s song, but merely its sense. The conventions of the ‘amoroso canto’ and the language of the dolce stil novo still have their place in the text of the *Commedia*,<sup>340</sup> just not when they operate to the exclusion of progress toward the divine.<sup>341</sup> And of course, on a human level, Casella is portrayed as the pilgrim’s dear friend and his singing as something missed after his passing; we should not, perhaps, be so churlish as to begrudge the poet a fond memory of a lost companion.

It is also worth noting a further intertext at play here: the sonnet ‘Gentil pensero che parla di vui’ and its prose frame in the thirty-eighth chapter of the *Vita*

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<sup>339</sup> ‘Voi che ’ntendendo’ is ostensibly corrected on a point of angelology, namely that Principalities, not Thrones as claimed in the *canzone*, are the movers of the third heaven. There is, however, clearly more at stake here, as Hollander notes in his commentary to the episode: Dante is again engaging in palinodic writing to distance himself from his previous declarations of the supremacy of Lady Philosophy over Beatrice, thus reclaiming the centrality of his beloved, celestial guide; Hollander, *Paradiso*, pp. 213-4.

<sup>340</sup> See in the discussion of positive lyric outcomes in part II of the previous chapter.

<sup>341</sup> The lyric sweetness in the descriptions of Beatrice discussed in chapter 3 is acceptable in as far as it marks or prompts movement onward, as opposed to the stasis induced by Casella’s singing.

*Nuova*. ‘Amor che ne la mente’ itself re-stages the sonnet, which describes a triumph of the thoughts about the *donna gentile* (before her Convivial allegorisation) over Dante’s better judgement and the memory of Beatrice:

Gentil pensiero che parla di vui  
sen vene a dimorar meco sovente,  
e ragiona d’amor sì dolcemente,  
che face consentir lo core in lui.  
(VN, XXXVIII, 8, 1-4)

It is intriguing to note and (briefly) to trace the lines of a residual Cavalcantianism in this sonnet's internal discussions between subdivided *personae* within the self;<sup>342</sup> the *pensero* overcomes the *anima*, which in turn talks to the *core* (line 9), and receives a response from that same organ. We also find a more specific Cavalcantian intertext, namely ‘Chi è questa che ven, ch’ogn’om la mira’, evident in the soul’s address to the heart “‘Chi è costui, / che vene” (5-6), which serves to reinforce a briefly reinstated influence from Dante’s first friend within the narrative of the *libello*. This turn away from Beatrice, in the economy of the *Vita Nuova*, apparently signifies a half-turn back towards the Cavalcantian stance which ignores rational, salvific love and enacts the temporary triumph of irrationality and the internalisation of an outward love-stimulus (even if this particular sonnet is more optimistic, albeit misguided).<sup>343</sup> The after-image of Cavalcanti dissolves in the transition to the *Commedia* via the *Convivio* through a series of re-stagings of this textual moment: the distraction from Beatrice by the *donna gentile* is achieved because the personified thought of the latter ‘ragiona sì dolcemente d’amore’; in the same way, in ‘Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona’, the

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<sup>342</sup> See chapter 2 for the full discussion of Cavalcanti’s polyphonic selfhood.

<sup>343</sup> See the discussion of sonnet ‘Tutti li miei penser parlan d’Amore’ in part I of the previous chapter. On the issue of Cavalcanti’s turning away from a specifically salvific lady, see Lloyd Howard, ‘Giovanna as John the Baptist and the “disdegno” of Guido’, *Quaderni d’italianistica*, 2.1 (1981), pp. 63-70; see also Gessani’s acknowledgement of Giovanna’s ‘maraviglia’ status, even as she is subjugated to Beatrice, Gessani, *Dante, Guido Cavalcanti*, p. 94.

intellect's 'parlar sì dolcemente sona'; and finally Casella 'cominciò [...] sì dolcemente' in *Purgatorio*. This additional erasure of Cavalcantian poetics follows on from the intertextual proscription of Cavalcanti explored in chapter 3. The resonance of this intertextual echo is rendered unavoidable when we read the second quatrain of the sonnet, in which 'l'anima dice al cor: "Chi è costui, / che vene a *consolar* la nostra mente"' ('Gentil pensiero', 5-6, italics mine).<sup>344</sup> The language of consolation establishes the relevance of these lines to the encounter with Casella, and is only reinforced in the remainder of the soul's query, "'ed è la sua virtù tanto possente, / ch'altro penser non lascia star con nui?"' (7-8). The overpowering of any other thought in the sonnet prefigures the contented obliviousness of the souls on the shore of purgatory who 'parevan sì contenti / come a nessun toccasse altro la mente' (*Purg.* II, 115-6). And, ultimately, is the sweetness of Casella's song not like the *gentilezza* of the *donna*? The poet reports the desire to write more of that lady and then introduces the treacherous sonnet with the following prose:

[...] e però che la battaglia de' pensieri vinceano coloro che per lei parlavano, mi parve che si convenisse di parlare a lei; e dissi questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Gentil pensiero*; e dico 'gentile' in quanto ragionava di gentile donna, ché per altro era vilissimo.

(VN, XXXVIII, 4)

The baseness of *Vita Nuova's* sonnet does not detract from the nobility of its

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<sup>344</sup> It should be noted that this is term does not already carry a Boethian force in the *Vita Nuova*, its force is decidedly negative in the *Vita Nuova*, but not in the later *Convivio*. Indeed, as Barolini observes, it is not even uniquely Boethian in the latter work; the verb is used to describe Beatrice, 'questo piatoso che m'ha consolata' ('Voi che 'ntendendo', 32) in one of the Convivial *canzoni*. In this light 'The strenuous attachment of *consolare* to the *donna gentile* in the allegorical gloss of *Convivio* II, xii almost seems [...] like a cover-up', Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, pp. 36, 36-7 n. All this, in conjunction with my own reading of Dante's changing treatment of the *donna gentile* laid out in this chapter, argues against any interpretation of that lady as already representative of philosophy in the *Vita Nuova* (for an example of this view see Bruno Nardi, *Dal Convivio alla Commedia [sei saggi danteschi]*, [Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano Per Il Medio Evo, 1960] p. 130: 'l'amoroso "libello" si chiudeva con l'accenno all'apparizione della donna gentile, dopo la morte di Beatrice, e al divampare nell'animo di Dante del nuovo amore per la filosofia, e preparava, quasi preludio, alle rime filosofiche e al *Convivio*').

provocatrix, while, similarly, the problematic content of ‘Amor che ne la mente’ does not reduce the sweetness of its delivery. Casella’s singing does remain in error, though, and it is an error which also displays the still sin-tainted state of all souls before their purgation has begun (much as, at the moment of the Siren dream, Dante still bears the mark of the sin of lust amongst the three remaining Ps on his forehead).

Casella and the Siren, the singing distractions, are therefore connected through Ulyssean allusions and deceptive music, so it shouldn’t be surprising that Casella’s particular song is also relevant to the episode of the Siren. The choice of Dante’s ‘Amor, che nella mente mi ragiona’, a *Convivio* canzone directed at the Lady Philosophy, is significant as it stages the rejection of the misguided path of the pursuit of earthly knowledge without God and without Beatrice as intercessor. It is Dante’s former pursuit of earthly knowledge which has been cause for his comparison with Ulysses, but the wording of the pilgrim’s entreaty to Casella casts that Convivial phase as ‘amoroso’ by association with the ‘amoroso canto’ which itself begins with the word ‘Amor’.<sup>345</sup> There are a number of important aspects to consider in this insistence on the amorous nature of Dante’s philosophical ‘folle volo’.

Firstly, we are faced with sin as we have seen it categorised by Virgil in cantos XVII and XVIII: all sins purged in this realm are manifestations of a failure to love properly in one way or another: loving too little, or loving the wrong thing too much. In considering any form of sin, therefore, we must consider first and foremost how it represents mis-loving. This sin, surely represents too much love

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<sup>345</sup> Indeed, Barolini insists that, ‘vis-à-vis Casella, a musician who died before the composition of the *Convivio* [...], the canzone “Amor che ne la mente” functions according to its literal sense in the *Convivio* gloss, as a love poem’, *Dante’s Poets*, p. 32.

given to the consolations of earthly philosophy.<sup>346</sup> In fact Virgil's opening gambit in that mid-canto lecture — “Né creator né creatura mai [...] fu senza amore” (*Purg.* XVII, 91-2) — acts as a valuable contrast to the *Convivio*'s opening quotation from Aristotle — ‘tutti li uomini naturalmente desiderano di sapere’ (*Conv.* I, i, 1). The language of desire, specifically that highly prized desire for the knowledge which has the power to perfect the soul in the *Convivio* (*Conv.* I, i, 1), morphs in the moral world of the *Commedia* into a misplaced desire in need of correction, the *cupiditas scientiae* that will be embodied in the Siren. This change is only reinforced by the recollection of Boethius's *Consolatio philosophiae*, the key source text for Dante's treatise, in the pilgrim's request for a song to ‘consolare alquanto / l'anima mia’,<sup>347</sup> in order to assert that, and I quote Ciabattoni here, ‘philosophy itself (destitute of divine guidance) is the object of the recantation’ in this episode.<sup>348</sup>

Secondly, this misdirected love is figured as the love for a lady, Lady Philosophy, recalling Boethius' own representation of that Lady in the treatise alluded to in these lines.<sup>349</sup> Mazzeo comes to some similar conclusions when discussing the ‘pargoletta’ and the ‘serene’ of Beatrice's rebuke as it extends into *Purgatorio* XXXI, finding ample evidence in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiarum* and Cicero's aforementioned *De finibus* for the figure of the Siren as a figure of

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<sup>346</sup> Or, in Barolini's formulation, ‘excessive adoration for Lady Philosophy’, Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, p. 58.

<sup>347</sup> This is noted (and Dante's use of the term over the course of his works thoroughly explored) in Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, p. 36-7, with reference to the observations of Freccero, ‘Casella's Song’, Hollander, ‘Purgatorio II: Cato's Rebuke and Dante's “scoglio”’, and Moleta, ‘Come l'ausello in selva a la verdura’.

<sup>348</sup> Ciabattoni, *Dante's Journey to Polyphony*, p. 101.

<sup>349</sup> Freccero, ‘Casella's song’, *Poetics of Conversion*, p. 189.

both erotically and intellectually charged waywardness.<sup>350</sup> Oddly, however, he shows no inclination to extend this reading to the ‘serena’ of the dream of *Purgatorio* XIX and neither does he draw the connection between the sirens of Cicero, the meretrix sirens of Isidore and the muses of Boethius’ *Consolatio*.<sup>351</sup> Those muses of poetry, who feign to comfort Boethius in his hour of downfall at the beginning of the treatise, are scolded as ‘meretricula[e]’ (‘harlots’) by Lady Philosophy (*Cons. Phil.*, I, p. i, 8) and subsequently dismissed and branded ‘Sirenes usque in exitium dulces’ (‘Sirens, seductive to the point of destruction’, *Cons. Phil.*, I, p. i, 11).<sup>352</sup> While this textual scene of Lady Philosophy shooing away the siren-muses of poetry may superficially seem to undermine the reading of Dante’s serena as representing his *donna gentile* in both her fleshly and philosophical guises, we must remember that *Purgatorio*’s attitude to Dante’s philosophical past is a problematising one. Lady Philosophy’s transit from the *Convivio* to the *Commedia* is marked by what Olivia Holmes has termed a ‘slippage

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<sup>350</sup> For Cicero’s text as representative of sirens as emblematic of an eroticised intellectual pursuit, see the discussion above. For evidence of the sirens as simply erotic Mazzeo quotes Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum*, XI, xiv, 30-31: ‘Sirenas tres fingunt fuisse ex parte virgines, ex parte volucres, habentes alas et unguulas: quarum una voce, altera tibiis, tertia lyra canebant. Quae inlectos navigantes sub cantu in naufragium trahebant. Secundum veritatem autem meretrices fuerunt, quae transeuntes quoniam deducebant ad egestatem, his fictae sunt inferre naufragia’ [‘People imagine three Sirens who were part maidens, part birds, having wings and talons; one of them would make music with her voice, the second with a flute, and the third with a lyre. They would draw sailors, enticed by the song, into shipwreck. In truth, however, they were harlots, who, because they would seduce passers-by into destitution, were imagined as bringing shipwreck upon them’]; Mazzeo, ‘The “Sirens” of *Purgatorio* XXXI, 45’, p. 254, note 6. The text of the *Etymologiarum* is taken from Wallace M. Lindsay ed., *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi Etymologiarum sive originum libri xx* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), with revisions by Bill Thayer, <<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Isidore/home.html>> [accessed 11 April 2013] and the translation is from *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and Oliver Berghof trans., with the collaboration of Muriel Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 245.

<sup>351</sup> I am indebted to Elizabeth Eva Leech who pointed me in the direction of the meretricious muses in her response to my paper, ‘Who performs the Siren’s song’, given at the *Performing Medieval Text* conference at Merton College, Oxford on 11 May, 2013.

<sup>352</sup> The text of the *Consolatio Philosophiae* is taken from Boethius, *Boethius’ Consolatio Philosophiae*, ed., with commentary, by James J. O’Donnell, 2nd ed., Bryn Mawr Latin Commentaries, ed. by Julia Haig Gaisser and James J. O’Donnell (Bryn Mawr, PA: Thomas Library, Bryn Mawr College, 1990).

from the role of *Sapientia* to that of the *meretrix*.<sup>353</sup> The consolations of philosophy are not sufficient nor indeed admissible in *Purgatorio*, as we have seen in the example of Casella, so even when alluding to the Boethius' text Dante is doing so through the prism of his *Convivio* and doing so to acknowledge the Ulyssean dangers of his own treatise.<sup>354</sup> Furthermore, as we shall see, the textual reinterpretation by which philosophy becomes the Siren is consistent with Dante's corrective intertextual tendencies. The *dolce serena* of Dante's purgatorial dream owes her identity to the conflation in the *Commedia* of the consoling philosophy and the distracting poetic muses encountered in *Consolatio*. This interpenetration of the metamorphosing *femmina* is consistent with the Siren's role as textual and figural locus for the merging of *curiositas* and *cupiditas* into the Ulyssean lust for knowledge of which Dante accuses himself.

Drawing on these same sources then, we find further evidence that Dante's sin is characterised in language that is both erotic and philosophical, his error is truly *cupiditas scientiae*, the terminology of Cicero's pagan virtue subjected to Christian codes of sin. Indeed, our poet's own gloss of 'Amor che ne la mente' in the *Convivio* establishes the sense that intellectual pursuit can take an erotic shape: 'Filosofia per subietto materiale qui ha la sapienza, e per forma ha amore, e per composto dell'uno e dell'altro l'uso di speculazione' (*Conv.* III, xiv, 1). Once removed from the justifications of a worldly philosophical treatise this 'uso di speculazione', with its marked similarity to Cicero's 'lust for knowledge' and

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<sup>353</sup> Holmes lucidly traces the images of *Sapientia* and the influence of the sapiential tradition through Dante's works up to and including the *Commedia* (*Dante's Two Beloveds*, pp. 57-67) and suggests the pivotal image of 'Philosophy's tattered dress torn by human hands' as opening the way for the *Convivio*'s *Donna Gentile* to become the *Commedia*'s Siren, *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>354</sup> Indeed Holmes has also noted, in the course of arguing for Lady Philosophy as the 'pargoletta', that even as Beatrice takes on that same Lady's figural form (and draws more generally on the sapiential tradition), 'Dante makes use of the archetypal forms provided by Boethius, while simultaneously refusing their content', *Ibid.*, pp. 46-7, quotation, p. 47.

Augustine's 'curious cupidity, under the guise of learning', transmutes into the error staged in *Purgatorio* II.<sup>355</sup> The intellectual sin is an amorous one and an amorous sin is intellectual; when we acknowledge this as a lesson of Casella's song as well, the error represented in the Siren's singing needs must be considered on a jointly intellectual and erotic plane. The intellectual failure is errant love for Lady Philosophy and, just as Dante had misread philosophy as a sufficient guide for men on earth and misplaced his love in the *donna gentile* of *Convivio*, so he also misreads the 'femmina balba' and her words as beautiful. This misreading renders the *femmina balba* as a siren until she is correctly reinterpreted, and thus displaced, by the 'donna santa', who stands in opposition to the combination of unsanctified philosophy and erotic-poetic error.

### III. Poesis and exegesis from the *Convivio* to the *Commedia*

The reinterpretation of the Siren in the purgatorial dream is itself founded in an intertextual relationship with the prose of *Convivio*. This relationship depends on the discussion of meaning and poetry in first book of Dante's philosophical treatise, to which I will now turn:

[...] la gran bontade del volgare di sì [si vedrà]; però che si vedrà la sua vertù, sì com'è per esso altissimi e novissimi concetti convenevolmente, sufficientemente e aconciamente, quasi come per

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<sup>355</sup> A proper understanding of these twin errors should partially counteract recent assertions that the *Commedia* 'affirms implicitly Dante's correctness in his practice as a citizen of Florence, political militant and thinker, Christian soul, intellectual, and poet: it concedes no "traviamento" whatsoever in the sphere of public life. The only area in which Dante openly confesses and wants us to imagine some major indiscretion is his private life, and in particular his relation to Beatrice' (Pertile, "Trasmutabile per tutte guise", p. 171). While Pertile's statement holds true for the majority of Dante's 'public life', the interweaving of the intellectual and amorous evident throughout Dante's work, and particularly vividly in the encounter with Casella and the dream of the Siren, prevent any straightforward acceptance of his intellectual life as divorced from his erotic poetry. Furthermore, to separate his role as poet from his relation to Beatrice seems counter-intuitive and deeply problematic, as the latter is completely dependent on expression through the former. These three aspects — the erotically framed intellectual discourses of the *Convivio*, the necessary role of poetry in all of Dante's erotic output (including the Convivial canzoni) and the admission of infidelity to Beatrice — bar the way to any such dismissal of a conversion narrative in the *Commedia*.

esso latino, manifestare; [la quale non si potea bene manifestare] nelle cose rimate per le accidentali adornezze che quivi sono connesse, cioè la rima e lo tempo e lo numero regolato: sì come non si può bene manifestare la bellezza d'una donna, quando li adornamenti dell'azzimare e delle vestimenta la fanno più ammirare che essa medesima.

(*Conv.* I, x, 12)

In theorising the role of poetry as a tool for expression, Dante calls upon the image of a woman (as meaning or 'concetti', concepts) adorned with beautiful clothes (poetic form, 'cioè la rima e lo tempo e lo numero regolato'). In this image, the woman's appearance is obscured by those very clothes as they cover her body, just as poetry (for the Dante of *Convivio*) can obscure thought, thus requiring the sort of prose explanation undertaken in the treatise. This figure is not new in the *Convivio* as it appears once in the *Vita Nuova* in a similarly pertinent passage:

[...] vergogna sarebbe a colui che rimasse 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.

(*VN*, XXV, 10)

The parallels between this passage and the refiguration of the femmina balba into the Siren are striking; the colouring, the dressing and the denuding are all echoed from this theoretical aside in the *Vita Nuova* as well as in the more extended discussion in the *Convivio*.<sup>356</sup> The Convivial discussion continues in the text immediately following on from the passage quoted above, as Dante further asserts the semantics of the linguistic body:

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<sup>356</sup> These pronouncements can be related to the Aristotelian discourse, developed by medieval writers including Augustine and Bonaventure, of beauty (and the pleasure of contemplating it) as a way to knowledge and the related problem of the 'simulation' beauty expressed in Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the *Canticum canticorum*. This model is itself founded on the conception of thought as 'a process of abstraction based on sensory images', as reported in Gilson, *Medieval Optics*, p. 16, and p. 93 (specifically in relation to the *Commedia*). For an extensive discussion of these discourses in relation to the dream of the Siren, see Lombardi, *The Wings of the Doves*, pp. 142-155. Additionally, in the Convivial expansion on both the theory and practice of glossing initially traced in the *Vita Nuova* we see something of Sherry Roush's contention that 'it is precisely in the conceptualisation of the self-commentary that Dante comes to bridge, the autobiographical setting of early love lyrics and the *Divine Comedy*', Roush, *Hermes' Lyre: Italian Poetic Self-Commentary from Dante to Tommaso Campanella* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 47.

Onde chi vuole bene giudicare d'una donna, guardi quella quando solo sua naturale bellezza si sta con lei, da tutto accidentale adornamento discompagnata: sì come sarà questo comento, nel quale si vedrà l'agevolezza delle sue sillabe, le proprietadi delle sue costruzioni e le soavi orazioni che di lui si fanno; le quali chi bene aguarnerà, vedrà essere piene di dolcissima e d'amabilissima bellezza.

(*Conv.* I, x, 13)

This insistence on the adorned female figure as poetry to be denuded by exegetic prose, is surely recalled in the Siren, whose own body is 'covered' by something akin to the poet's allegoresis, dressing her in the garb of sweet Siren as pleasing to the eye as the *donna gentile* who has become Philosophy. Indeed the transition from undisguised meaning (however foul) to beautifully ornamented poetry (however misleading) is expressed in the transition from the *femmina balba's* 'parlar così disciolto', her broken speech, to the Siren's sweet singing, her 'cantar'. A useful counterpoint to this sort of deceptive overdressing in Dante's pre-*Commedia* texts comes in the vision of Beatrice in 'A ciascun alma presa', which is discussed at greater length in part one of this chapter. In that vision, the beautiful body of Beatrice is barely covered, the prose introducing the sonnet describes her as 'una persona [...] nuda, salvo che involta mi pareva in uno drappo sanguigno leggermente' (VN, III, 4). The lightness of the covering, according to the theories of poesis and exegesis expressed in Dante's prosimetrum works, would be indicative of the truth and worth of the meaning; the beautiful body gives shape to the beautiful clothing as the shape of the beautiful poetry echoes the value of its underlying meaning. This relationship, though, still maintains a tension between verse and prose in which the former has the upper hand in delivering beauty, the latter in delivering meaning. Even before the dream of the Siren the erosion of this two-part interpretive structure is indicated, in the appeal to the reader in the eighth canto of *Purgatorio*:

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, 19-21)

This explicit embedding of the image of the interpretively penetrable veil within the *Commedia's* poetry, the rhyming of 'vero' with 'leggero', indeed the very *leggerezza* of the act of understanding, recall the exegetical provisions of Dante's prosimetra and the example of 'A ciascun'alma presa'. The key difference is, of course, the situation of this injunction within the verse and the necessary assumption that all the necessary information is provided. The reader of the *Commedia* is effectively told, at this point, that they should be able to understand the goings on of the *sacrato poema* with the tools they have to hand — the text and their eyes. It is this message which is staged and thus reinforced in the dream of the Siren in canto XIX.

The implication of the corrective purgatorial episode — of the Siren, covered and uncovered — in the economy of the *Commedia* is, therefore, to render the poetic text as the sole necessary font of meaning, free from any external mediation or explanation. The actions of the *donna santa* are central to this process:

L'altra prendea, e dinanzi l'apria  
fendendo i drappi, e mostravami 'l ventre;  
quel mi svegliò col puzzo che n'uscita.  
(Purg. XIX, 28-33)

This violent (though just) and physical unmasking of the Siren as monstrous at the hands of the unrecognised Beatrice becomes a key part of the poetic text's self-explanation and its correction of both the *Convivio's* and the *Vita Nuova's* approaches to the 'clothing' of meaning with verse and the image of exegesis as denuding. The act of removing misleading clothes is the act of interpretation according to Dante's own theories and in the dream of the Siren this act is

absorbed into the poetic text itself. This metapoetic absorption, the removal of the ‘drappi’ staged within the poem, shifts the locus of ‘unadorned’ meaning out of exegetic prose and into expressive verse in a *coup de théâtre* which sees the poem privileged as deliverer of truth, as self-explanatory and as able to unmask deceptions without the extra-textual assistance offered by prosimetrum.

In the corrective intertextual process played out here, we are faced with a phenomenon not dissimilar to that which is noted by Fumigalli in her discussion of Dante’s encounter with another metapoetic figure, Geryon.<sup>357</sup> She draws the orthodox comparison between the infernal creature (‘sozza imagine di froda’, *Inf.* XVII, 7) and the *femmina balba/serena*, and notes particularly the emphasis on stench in the encounters with both. Geryon, and the fraud he represents, ‘tutto ’l mondo appuzza’ (*Inf.* XVII, 3), while we have already seen the description of the ‘puzzo’ which emanates from the unmasked Siren. More recently, Elena Lombardi has emphasised the correspondence of the two figures as images of a fraudulent and meta-poetic attraction, both imbued with ‘beauty that hides ugliness’; a beauty which is characterised as textuality.<sup>358</sup> I should also add that, like the *femmina balba*, Geryon is introduced as a dream-creature:

El disse a me: ‘Tosto verrà di sovra  
ciò ch’io attendo e che il tuo pensier sogna;  
tosto convien ch’al tuo viso si scovra’.  
(*Inf.* XVI, 121-3)

This parallel with the oneiric arrival of the *femmina balba* serves to reinforce the vertical connection between these two figures of problematic textuality with their faces of false beauty. This perpendicular relationship is also evident in the broader representative roles of both Geryon and the *femmina balba*: both are synecdoches

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<sup>357</sup> Fumigalli, *The Flight of the Vernacular*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>358</sup> Lombardi, *The Wings of Doves*, pp. 242-3 (quotation p. 243).

for a series of sins punished or purged below and above them, respectively. Geryon is the very image of the fraud punished in the malebolge, while the *femmina balba* represents every sin purged in the top three terraces of purgatory; so as well as being vertically related they have a vertical, classifying function. With all these associations in mind, let us turn back to Fumigalli's reading of Geryon's arrival, which hinges on Dante's definition of the content of his 'comedia' in that moment as 'quel ver c'ha faccia di menzogna' (*Inf.* XVI, 128). The incredibility of the approaching monster becomes the basis for an audacious claim of absolute poetic truth.<sup>359</sup> This stance and the particular terminology of truth and falsehood "correct" [Dante's] definition of poetry in the *Convivio*, which casts poetic allegory as 'una veritade ascosa sotto bella menzogna' (*Conv.* II, 1, 3).<sup>360</sup>

Like the infernal reassessment of poetic truth before it, the purgatorial encounter with the *femmina balba* redeploys the language of the *Convivio* along with that of the *Vita Nuova* in order to correct their theoretical or formal stances. The dream of *Purgatorio* XIX turns the metaphors of Dante's prosimetra texts back on those very texts, giving the power to denude, and therefore deliver true meaning, to poetry *in se*, stripped of the interference of prose exegesis or division. While the 'appropriation of hermeneutic idioms and techniques may be identified as a strategy for the *translatio* of literary *auctoritatis* from Latin into the vernacular' in the exegetical practices of Dante's earlier works,<sup>361</sup> the interpretive

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<sup>359</sup> As has been elucidated in Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, p. 59: '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 [...]. By explicitly confronting the inauthenticity inherent in all narrative, Dante attempts to neutralize it with respect to his own narrative truth claims'.

<sup>360</sup> Fumigalli, *The Flight of the Vernacular*, p. 30.

<sup>361</sup> Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), xxxiii.

strategies and expectations of the *Commedia* aspire to a self-sufficiency belied by the weight of the Dante-commentary tradition. In fact, the contrast between these two periods of poetic signification is highlighted by the distance between Dante's exegesis of his own poems in the *Vita Nuova* and *Convivio* and the commentaries by others which his *Commedia* prompted. By provoking the reader to look under the veil of the poem and by staging just such an exegetical practice — 'fendendo i drappi' — within it, the new model of poesis and interpretation codified in the *Commedia* expects its future exegesis, but not at the hands of its author. Explanation and interpretation are left to the readership (glossing, after all, is the manifestation of readerly interpretation). The kinds of auto-exegesis practised in both the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio* are rendered obsolete as the poetic text becomes the sufficient and indeed the only viable means of communicating the kind of truth with which the *Commedia*, the *sacrato poema*, is concerned.

The role of *Convivio*'s prose in justifying and explaining its *canzoni* ('questo comento, nel quale si vedrà l'agevolezza delle sue sillabe') is deconstructed even as it is recalled in the smoothness of the Siren's transformed speech. The *donna santa* — Beatrice as messenger of God — intervenes to denude and reveal the hideous body of the *femmina balba*, thus exposing Dante's failing in dressing and addressing a false lady in beautiful garb. In the transition from *Convivio* to *Commedia*, Dante undertakes to highlight the perils of his exegetical practice in the *Convivio* and to imbue poetry with the power to deliver knowledge without recourse to any external prose framework. The assertions of the *Convivio* and the *Vita Nuova* about the inherent dangers of poetic ornamentation disguising ugly or empty meanings are revisited, reassessed and undercut by the fresh claims of revealed truth enacted within the text of the poem. The author gives the stage

directions for another sort of performance: the embodiment and playing out of an interpretive process.<sup>362</sup> The metaphors of poesis and exegesis which have been established through the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio* are made literal and incarnate in the text of the *Commedia* through the transformation of the *femmina balba*, the rending of the Siren's *drappi* and the (re)exposure of her monstrous body. This sequence of events acts as a dramatisation of exegetical writing as practiced in the pre-*Commedia* prosimetra and also as an antidote to it. The self-sufficiency of the *Commedia*'s poetry marks it as a converted text, complete in its meaning, as opposed to the perceived insufficiency of the lyrics in both the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio*. The performative rewriting of the *libello*'s verse components and the exegetical veneer laid on the *Convivio*'s *canzoni* come to be presented as indicators of a poetic shortcoming which only the *Commedia*, with its truer inspiration and figuratively and literally ascendant Beatrice can overcome. It is absolutely apt, within the context of Dante's own oeuvre, that during this enactment of literary conversion the pilgrim is forced to 'to judge a woman well'. Dante, in a prime example of the corrective intertextuality we have seen in the works of his lyric forebears (and particularly those of his spurned precedent, Fra Guittone), adopts the terminology of his *Convivio* (and perhaps the most Convivial moment of the *Vita Nuova*) in order to recant its errant, earthly ideology. Philosophy without divine guidance, the lust for knowledge, is eschewed in favour of holy inspiration. the intervention of a celestial lady frees the pilgrim from the trap of misreading and miswriting. *Sententia*, true meaning, becomes the purview of the poetic text, not merely something veiled in pretty verse.

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<sup>362</sup> This staging may be a contribution to 'the pilgrimage of language and the hardship of interpretation' represented in *Purgatorio*; Elena Lombardi, 'Augustine and Dante', in Claire Honess and Matthew Treherne ed., *Reviewing Dante's Theology*, 2 vols (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), I, pp. 175-208 (205).

The power of Dante's recantation is only amplified when we realise that the Siren is very much offered as an anti-Beatrice (or that in Eden Beatrice will be offered again as antidote to the Siren):

‘Io son’, cantava, ‘io son dolce serena,  
che ’ marinari in mezzo mar dismago;  
tanto son di piacere a sentir piena!’  
(*Purg.* XIX 19-21)

This woman's phrasing pre-figures and contrasts with Beatrice's self-disclosure in the *paradiso terrestre*:

‘Guardaci ben! Ben son, ben son Beatrice.  
Come degnasti d’accedere al monte?  
Non sapei tu che qui è l’uom felice?’  
(*Purg.* XXX, 73-75)

This shared introductory structure, with its insistent ‘son [...] son’,<sup>363</sup> reveals these two women as flip-sides of the same coin, the ‘guardaci ben’, look well, also showing Beatrice to be a *donna ben giudicata*, a well judged woman, in contrast with the misjudged *serena/balba*. Beatrice's insistent self-naming acts as the establishment of a truth which needs must be revealed (with the injunction to look well), while the Siren's insistence is in contradiction to the actual truth (which has been lost precisely because of a failure on Dante's part to look well, instead misreading her, allowing his gaze to generate false features). The Siren's ‘balbuzie’ is concealed allowing her to point to a deadly ‘piacer’, akin to that of misled sailors. Beatrice's speech, which is naturally ‘soave e piana’,<sup>364</sup> instead leads the way to

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<sup>363</sup> Mazzotta remarks on this, and finds for the *donna santa* as Beatrice. His reading hinges on the drama of waking (and accompanying self-analysis) in the encounters with Beatrice in cantos XIX, XXX and XXI of *Purgatorio*. Durling and Martinez also note the parallel in their commentary, reading the Siren as ‘illusion, non-being, an anti-Beatrice’, *Purgatorio*, p. 318.

<sup>364</sup> In further support of this Beatrice-Siren binary, a clutch of commentators, beginning with Mattalia, have noted that we find the term “balbus”, in latino, e il suo contrario è “planus”: Beatrice, in *Inf.*, II, 56, parla *soave e piana*. Si tenga poi presente il significato metaforico di balbuzie e balbettare (“balbutire” in lat.), usati a indicare (così in Cicerone) difettoso o cattivo o elementare addottrinamento; note to *Purgatorio* XIX in Daniele Mattalia ed., *Purgatorio* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1960).

true happiness on the mountain where ‘è l’uom felice’.

Having been revealed to the pilgrim, Beatrice will also explicitly recall the Siren danger from which she protects Dante:

‘Tuttavia, perché mo vergogna porte  
del tuo errore, e perché altra volta,  
udendo le serene, sie più forte’.  
(*Purg.* XXXI, 43-45)

Beatrice’s use of the particular image of the Siren, combined with the intratextual mirroring noted above, reinforces the argument for the *donna santa* as an image of Beatrice. Before her revelation in Eden she remains anonymous to the still errant Dante, who failed to look well upon her and identify her clearly. These lines also remind us that there have been multiple siren songs on the pilgrims journey to the earthly paradise, and while their ‘dolcezza’ may still ‘risuona’ and indeed be absorbed by Dante the poet, their content must be resisted as he writes and rewrites his literary teleology. Given the equation of the Siren with sins both of lust and knowledge — of the desire which misleads both the body and the intellect — the role of Beatrice as antidote to the Siren reminds us of her position as both object of desire and fount of knowledge. When Barolini discusses Beatrice’s hybrid status as a ‘quintessential courtly *donna*’ who also exerts a ‘masculine authority [...] in language’,<sup>365</sup> she might as easily refer to her as a nexus of love and knowledge — the embodiment of a coalescence of positively directed desires to counterpoint the distorted desires reflected in the Siren.

Throughout this analysis we must keep in mind that it is never the *donna gentile* — whether in her fleshly guise of the *libello* or the allegorical drapery of the *Convivio* — who requires correction in this episode, but rather the attitude of Dante towards her. It is not simply the object of desire which is being critiqued,

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<sup>365</sup> Barolini, *Dante and the Origins*, pp. 367-8.

but rather Dante's misdirected, over-vigorous desire for it. It is Dante as reader, Dante as desiring, interpretive viewer who must be chided and corrected. The Siren may be the product of his solar gaze, but the *femmina balba* is a product of his errant imaginings. Within the economy of the *Vita Nuova*, as we have seen, the *donna gentile* herself remains noble and worthy,<sup>366</sup> a lady who would be fit for love and praise by anyone who was not Dante, by anyone who was not already dedicated to the particular and salvific praise of Beatrice. Meanwhile, we find Boethius — whose *Consolatio* is aped by Dante's *Convivio* and recalled in the pilgrim's encounter with Casella — sitting among the blessed (*Par.* X, 121-9), described as 'l'anima santa che 'l mondo fallace / fa manifesto a chi di lei ben ode' (125-6). That Boethius' writings, taken on their own terms, rather than mediated through Dante's work, are imbued with the power to expose falsehood, is suggestive. The pursuit of philosophy, as has already been emphasised, is not a path to hell in and of itself; only when philosophy absorbs a practitioner to the point of distraction from God (and in Dante's case Beatrice) does it become destructive.

In the *Vita Nuova* Dante's 'occhi' had 'vaneggiato', seeking solace in the fleshly *donna gentile*, until reminded of Beatrice and shamed into swearing allegiance to her once more. In the *Convivio* that *donna gentile* is re-dressed as philosophy and triumphs over Beatrice once again. Dante, having proposed to 'terminare lo parlare di quella Beatrice beata' (*Conv.* II, viii, 7), launches, in the following book, into the canzone 'Amor che ne la mente', completing the 'transfer

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<sup>366</sup> We need only recall again the *pensiero* of 'Gentil pensiero che parla di vui', which Dante describes as "gentile" in quanto ragionava di gentile donna, ché per altro era vilissimo', *VN*, XXXVIII, 4) in support of this point.

of allegiance from Beatrice to the *donna gentile*.<sup>367</sup> In the *Commedia* as a whole, and microcosmically in the encounter with the *femmina balba*, this tussle is resolved in preparation for Dante's arrival in the earthly paradise, as the *femmina balba*, the falsely figured Siren of Dante's misguided love for a lady/philosophy, is dismissed (to be later replaced) by Beatrice in her guise as *donna santa* and the pilgrim's wandering thoughts and eyes are brought into line through his corrected vision. This correction is then cemented in his subsequent meeting with his personal saviour, his *donna scese del ciel*, and his mountaintop confession to her. The pilgrim Dante undertakes a significant conversion with erotic, philosophical, spiritual and of course literary ramifications. This conversion doesn't render him free of humanity, mortality or mutability; the pilgrim remains embodied and prone to future temptation (the 'serene' of Beatrice's admonition, against whom he will be stronger in future, *Par. XXI*, 43-5). Nonetheless he represents himself as converted and set on a better path. Conversion on the earthly plane should not be read as signifying perfection and neither does Dante claim as much; it merely signifies the moment of decision to resist temptation in the name of God (and Beatrice) and the redirection of the pilgrim's desire along the appropriate, upward axis occupied by the aligned love-objects of the deity and Dante's singular lady.<sup>368</sup> The *Commedia* is itself figured as a converted text and, through the dream of the

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<sup>367</sup> Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, p. 18.

<sup>368</sup> And here I must take issue with one last aspect of Pertile's dismissal of any proper conversion of Dante in the *Commedia*: 'Has Dante learned anything? Isn't he as uncertain and subject to change now as he was at the beginning of the journey?' (Pertile, "Trasmutabile per tutte guise", pp. 164-178). My answers to Pertile's questions, as expressed through this chapter as a whole, are yes and a qualified yes, respectively. Clearly he has learned the proper relationship with knowledge and poetry, but in so doing he has not overcome his humanity, which leaves him mutable. The qualification is this: his new knowledge and experience bolster his will not to renege on his love for Beatrice and God and give him a new understanding of the stakes. The Siren dream, as a moment of corrective intertextuality, is central to this education which leads to the conversion narrative of the redirection of desire enacted in the return to Beatrice realised in the earthly paradise.

Siren, it stages a supersession of the need for auto-exegesis, even dramatising the dangers of any such self-commentary. This is transcendence and critique of the prosimetrum form — a conversion on the level of the text — represents a part of the vast effort of intertextual correction undertaken by Dante, a process which nonetheless leaves his teleological narrative of personal and poetic conversion open to critical questioning. There is a tension between Dante's new version of his own literary development (the *Commedia's* auto-citations) and his actual literary history (the pre-existent texts as they come down to us) which remains available to his readers. Past poetry and past prosimetra continue to sound alongside the new authorial voice of Dante as the endeavour to erase and reorder pre-*Commedia* textual history ultimately fails due to the very attempt at erasure. Just as Dante's dialogic attempts to efface Guittone, or bring Guinizzelli and Cavalcanti into line may be prompt a reinforcing their textual independence, so his efforts to impose a unitary teleological narrative of self are also complicated by the persistence of the book of memory and the *Convivio*. It is the dialogical persistence of these works which reopens the apparent closure of Dante's narrative of a converted literary self and oeuvre, allowing us to displace the individual texts from Dante's proposed teleology and re-examine them on their own merits.

## Conclusion

Dialogue plays an absolutely fundamental role in the poetic climate of late medieval Italy. The poets studied within the bounds of this thesis engaged in multiple forms of dialogic engagement with one another and within their own oeuvres. The dialogic processes which have formed the methodological backbone of my readings allow us to undertake a reconstruction of certain key literary contextual factors which contributed to the creation of some of the most influential works of the latter half of the 13th and beginning of the 14th centuries. An understanding of these processes, which highlight the inter- and intratextual relationships and tensions at play in the works here considered, also allows us to ask new questions of these texts and to reopen old ones. While the theoretical framework of performance fruitfully exposes some of those poetic mechanisms by which authors like Dante generated self, authority and a revised textual history, the concept of dialogism and the inherent tensions of dialogue allow us to unpick those very performances.

When Frate Guittone claims his new way of singing in ‘Ora parrà’, when Guinizelli argues with God in ‘Al cor gentil’, when Cavalcanti removes the ‘I’ from lyric entirely in ‘Noi siàn le triste penne’ and when Dante establishes and aims to transcend a vernacular canon, a series of shifts are inflicted on the lyric discourse. By focussing on tensions and dialogues, by reading intertexts on their own terms before reading them as sources, and by questioning the performative processes of these different poetics we can both destabilise literary teleologies and also enrich our readings of each of these literary *corpora*. A seed for aspects of this approach was sown when Barolini argued that ‘textually, the governing principle of the

*Inferno* is misuse'.<sup>369</sup> In my discussion of Dante's auto-citations and his citations of others I have demonstrated that this is a principle which can be extended to the *Commedia* more broadly, especially as regards Dante's attitudes to other lyric poets. Indeed, the idea of misuse, or more particularly (mis)appropriation, is central to the attempts to construct teleologies throughout Dante's organisational and literary historiographical works as well as in the post-conversion poetry of Frate Guittone. The similarities between the praxes of these two poets, among the principal movers and shakers in the context of late medieval Italian lyric, have been a focal point in this thesis, and it was Dante's attempt to strike Guittone from the vernacular canon which led me to investigate them. This inclination was not the result of sheer critical obstreperousness on my part, but rather a necessary result of Dante's assault on the Aretine friar-poet. In his heavy handed critiques and intertextual echoes of Guittone's verse, Dante foregrounds that same verse to his audience. As such, Guittone can loom large in the imagination of readers of Dante as a poetic bogeyman, symbol of all that was wrong in Italian poetry before the 'dolce stil novo', but this straw man status also redirects us to Guittone's own texts. These poems, when read for their own sake, interpreted at arms length from their status as 'context' for the *Commedia*, reveal an independent poetic voice, a performative, revisionist conversion poetics, and richly dialogical interactions with other poets, with the discourse of *fin'amors* poetry and within the Guittonian *corpus* itself. Dante's attempted erasure has the opposite effect, it establishes a poetic afterlife for Guittone, predicated largely on his 'usefulness' to Dante studies, but which also opens the door to studies of Guittone like those produced by

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<sup>369</sup> Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, p. 10.

Vincent Moleta and Antonello Borra, as well as more actively comparative analyses like Teodolinda Barolini's and Tristan Kay's.<sup>370</sup>

The re-emergence of the *Commedia's* 'erased' or 'surpassed' poets is not restricted to Guittone. Cavalcanti's conspicuous absence, his 'disdegno' coupled with his allusive presence throughout *Purgatorio*, highlights his poetry even as it is dismissed as lacking. Meanwhile the 'veneration' of Guinizzelli in *Purgatorio* XXVI would seem more straightforwardly to recommend a re-reading of his poetry. In the complex ironies and narrative of surpassing present in that episode, though, Dante offers a particular and restrictive hermeneutic for any interpretation of Guinizzelli's verse. A careful reading of the *padre's* texts needs must resist the Dantean narrative, however, and such an engagement with Guinizzelli's own *corpus* reveals a more audacious and radical poetics than Dante was willing to admit within the economy of the *Commedia*. Yet Dante doesn't reserve this attempted erasure or absorption of the lyric past to the works of others. The stances of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio* — two already revisionary texts — are re-presented in the *Commedia* as stepping-stones and missteps within a teleological, textual progression towards converted subjectivity and textuality. The Dante-poet of the *Commedia* is characterised as the product of unitary narrative of personal development which seeks to align the variety of his previous textual output, lyric and exegetical, in a monolithic account of subjective and literary experience. However, the continued presence of these works as differentiated texts, voices sounding alongside the authorial tones of the *Commedia*, functions much like the oeuvres of Guittone, Guinizzelli and Cavalcanti. All of these texts dialogically destabilise the unity of Dante's narratives and call us, as readers, to

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<sup>370</sup> Moleta, *The Early Poetry*, Borra, *Guittone d'Arezzo*, Barolini, Guittone's "Ora parrà", Dante's "Doglia mi reca", and the *Commedia's* Anatomy of Desire' or "'Sotto benda": Gender in the Lyrics of Dante and Guittone d'Arezzo', Kay, 'Redefining the "matera amorosa"', respectively.

approach them for what they are — products and producers of a polyphonous network of dialogic processes.

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