

Dante *Praedicator*: Sermons and Preaching Culture in the *Commedia*

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Abstract

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Starting from the premise that Dante takes influence from the sermons and preaching culture of his time in his construction of a voice of authority, this dissertation tracks the poet's use of sermonic material and rhetoric, as well as more explicit discussions on preaching through his entire *corpus*.

Chapter One, "Dante *Praedicator*? Introduction to an Understudied Rhetorical Mode in the *Commedia*," elaborates on the argument that Dante the poet oftentimes acts as a preacher, and shows how this claim opens up new lines of inquiry into the poet's textuality. The first part of this chapter shows how the *Commedia*'s early reception practically takes for granted that the poem is a sort of sermon, and supporting evidence shows in detail how the poem and preaching share much of the same subject matter, and demonstrates how the poem and sermons answer generic and stylistic questions in much the same way. The second section of this chapter surveys

the last hundred years of Dante studies, to trace the roots of the recent critical prejudice against non-poetic influences on the poet's work – ranging from liturgy, Christian doctrine and preaching – and hypothesizes its source in Benedetto Croce's seminal 1921 essay, “La poesia di Dante,” which rejects the idea of a didactic and hortatory Dante in order to focus instead on the poet *qua* poet. This vision of a secularized and emphatically “poetic” Dante became the status quo in Dante scholarship (although not without a few dissenters). Finally, the chapter summarizes some of the more recent work discovering the predicatory in Dante, and hypothesizes new questions about this textual mode in the *Commedia*, which the following chapters of this dissertation will discuss.

Chapter Two, “Prohibition and Permission (with a Consideration of the Bolgia of Hypocrisy and Fra Dolcino),” explores the preaching of Dante's time. This chapter explains the social and historical circumstances around the 1214 legislation of Lateran IV, which ordered the ordainment of new preachers, and then recounts the thirteenth century renaissance of preaching as a means to propagate orthodoxy at a time when heresy threatened the Church's unity and stability. Because of this threat that heretical preaching had caused, the Church attempted to regulate preaching through prohibitions and permissions. The chapter then explores Dante's response to these legislative issues in the *Commedia* – specifically in his treatment of the hypocrites in *Inferno* 23, and of the schismatics and sowers of discord in *Inferno* 28. The chapter concludes by arguing that Dante responds to the mandates of church legislation with a considerable degree of indifference. On the one hand he highlights the failure of officials within the Church hierarchy who ought to preach, and on the other refuses to criticize the preaching of zealots that the Church censures as heretics on the other.

After the previous chapter's exploration of Dante's relationship to preaching legislation,

Chapter Three, “*Predicante Iustitiam: Dante the Self-Authorizing Poet*,” explores more deeply what the poet means when he talks about preaching. The first part of this tripartite chapter proceeds philologically, examining first how Dante's poem consistently refuses to associate anyone identified as a “cherco,” “prete,” “pastor” or “sacerdote” with preaching, choosing instead to generally highlight the misdeeds of such figures. In this way the poet clears the pulpit of competition, aiming to situate himself, eventually, in that same role. The second part follows philologically as well, to examining variations on the word “predicare” as it occurs in the literature of Dante's milieu and in his own writing, and revealing its unique power as a word used to declare objective truths, though not without unique rhetorical overtones. Finally, the third section shows how Dante's careful use of “predicare” in his letters establishes himself as a preaching figure *par excellence*, who draws from the apostolic precedents established in the New Testament, as well as the prophetic and apocalyptic Noahic precedent as theorized in II Peter 2:5-7.

Chapter Four, “*Dicitur predicatio quandoque prophetia*,” continues where the previous chapter left off, with the suggestion that preaching and prophecy are in many cases one and the same thing. Taking a step away from the common contemporary belief in Dante studies that prophecy is generally something oriented towards forecasting events, this chapter uses Scripture, Aquinas's theology and the *artes praedicandi* in circulation in Dante's time to show how prophecy and preaching were understood to go hand in hand, well into the Middle Ages. Once this theoretical framework is established, the chapter proceeds to re-evaluate some of Dante's discussions on prophets in *Paradiso*, namely Nathan of the Old Testament and the twelfth century prophet Joachim of Fiore, to show that what Dante values as “prophetic” in these figures is also closely linked to their status as interpreters and preachers of divine truth, rather than any

particular skills at forecasting (i.e. prophecy in the strict sense, according to contemporary standards).

Chapters Five and Six mark a transition to a more focused analysis of preaching in the *Commedia*, to investigate Dante's sustained, but more subtle, use of the rhetorical techniques of preaching. Chapter Five, "The Art of Preaching in the Sphere of the Sun," examines the sequence of canti in *Paradiso* 10-13, to show the influence of the *artes praedicandi* on the rhetoric of these canti, and particularly on the speech of Thomas Aquinas, as Dante represents him here. An in-depth discussion of a form of preaching gaining influence in the *duecento*, *sermo modernus*, explains what it is, its component parts, and the way that it was used in Dante's world, and how it propagates a certain logical modes of thinking. Finally, Aquinas's speech in *Paradiso* 10-13 is examined for traces of *sermo modernus*, demonstrating that the poet intended to inflect Aquinas's language with predicatory valences, in the pursuit of a moral and ethical message that can be considered "authoritative."

Chapter Six, "Beyond *Sermo Modernus*: Street Preaching in the Primum Mobile," turns to Beatrice's discourse in *Paradiso* 29, which combines complex theological discussion with a scabrous criticism of vainglorious street preaching. With language oscillating wildly between high and low registers, Beatrice rails against both the pseudoscience and philosophical ornament bogging down contemporary sermons, as well as the jests and buffooneries that less erudite street preachers employ to amuse their audience and extract favors and monetary compensation from them. It will be shown that here too the poet freely employs the language of the street, in echo of popular preachers of the time, and his willingness to embrace the physical and grotesque proves that his predicatory language is ultimately grounded in things, in the real. I will turn to examples from the life of St. Francis of Assisi to illustrate here his that his emphasis on things is

represented not only in the preacher's words but also in his body, his acts, his example.

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Chapter One

Dante Praedicator? Introduction to an Understudied Rhetorical Mode in the Divina Commedia

In 1329 the Dominican Guido Vernani wrote to Graziolo de' Bambaglioli, chancellor of the commune of Bologna, warning him of false doctrines hiding behind the superficially appealing writings of Dante Alighieri.¹ The Devil, Vernani said, possesses many vessels,

- 1 The complete incipit is: "Incipit tractatus fratris Guidonis Vernani ordinis predicatorum de reprobatione Monarchie composite a Dante." As the title suggests, the letter intends to debunk the claims Dante made in the *Monarchia*. However, Vernani begins with an indictment of all Dante's writings, and seems especially dedicated to vilifying his poetry. The dedication to Bambaglioli is not incidental, as he was a noted fan of the *Divina Commedia*, and wrote one of the earliest commentaries on the poem, in 1324. The general introduction that precedes Vernani's more specific challenge to the *Monarchia* is as follows:

Habet enim mendax et perniciosi pater mendacii sua vasa que, in exterioribus honestatis et veritatis figuris fallacibus et fucatis coloribus adornata, venenum continent tanto crudelius et pestilentius quanto rationalis anima, vita divine gratie illustrata a qua ille decidit qui cadens per superbiam in veritate non stetit, corruptibili corpori noscitur preminere. Inter alia vero talia sua vasa quidam fuit multa fantastice poetizans et sophista verbosus, verbis exterioribus in eloquentia multis gratus, qui suis poeticis fantasmatis et figmentis, iuxta verbum philosophie Boetium [a] consolantis, scenicas meretriculas adducendo, non solum egros animos, sed etiam studiosos dulcibus sirenarum cantibus conducit fraudulenter ad interitum salutifere veritatis.

(To be sure, the Liar and father of pernicious lies possesses his own vessels, which, tarted up on the outside with spurious colors and deceitful figures of truth and honesty, contain a poison more deadly and pestilential to that very degree that the rational soul [illuminated by the life of Divine

speciously masquerading as truth. These he adorns with vivid colors and false figures of truth (“veritatis figuris fallacibus et fucatis coloribus adornata”), aiming to poison human souls. Dante,² Vernani said, is one of these vessels, scribbling fantastical verse crowded with sophisms (“fantastice poetizans et sophista verbosus”), and seducing even the most “studiosus” with poetical phantasms and figments (“poeticis fantasmatis et figmentis”). These fantasies are dangerous, Vernani asserted, as dangerous as whores on the stage and the songs of the Sirens (“scenicis meretriculas adducendo [...] dulcibus sirenarum cantibus”).

The alarm that Vernani sounded over Dante's writing found echo elsewhere in Medieval ecclesiastical society, culminating in prohibitions and public demonstrations anathematizing the author. In 1329, the Cardinal of Bologna Bertrando di Poggetto publicly burned a copy of the *Monarchia*,³ and in September 8, 1335 at Santa Maria Novella, the provincial chapter of the

Grace, from which he fell—he who, falling through pride did not stand in the truth] is known to transcend the corruptible flesh. Among the devil's other vessels, there was, indeed, a certain individual who wrote many fantastic things in poetry, a palaverous sophist, pleasing many through his eloquence with its hollow words; one who, using his poetical phantasms and fictions and, in the words of Philosophy as she consoled Boethius, bringing whores onto the stage with their sweet, siren songs, fraudulently seduces not only sick minds, but even zealous ones, to the destruction of salutary truth.)

(Guido Vernani, *Il più antico oppositore politico di Dante: Guido Vernani da Rimini. Testo critico del “De reprobatione monarchiae,”* ed. Nevio Matteini, vol. 6, *Il pensiero medioevale; collana di storia della filosofia* [Padua: CEDAM, 1958], 93; translation is by Anthony Kimber Cassell, *The Monarchia Controversy: An Historical Study with Accompanying Translations of Dante Alighieri's Monarchia, Guido Vernani's Refutation of the “Monarchia” Composed by Dante and Pope John XXII's Bull, Si Fratrum* [CUA Press, 2004], 174–75).

While the above citation uses another's translation, in all further cases translations will be mine, except where indicated.

- 2 It should be noted that Vernani never calls Dante by his name, but uses vague circumlocutions that highlight his disdain for the poet: “quidam” here, but also “ille homo” meaning “that man,” or, even worse, “iste homo” meaning something similar to “that wretch.”
- 3 Carlo Delcorno, “Dante e il linguaggio dei predicatori,” *Lecture Classensi* 25 (1995): 52–53. The *Monarchia* in particular suffered a very checkered fortune, which Anthony Cassell covers in *The Monarchia Controversy: An*

Dominicans issued a blanket prohibition of all Dante's writings for all younger monks.⁴ In Bologna, Boccaccio testifies, an attempt was even made to burn Dante's bones along with a copy of the *Monarchia*, although this was fortunately prevented through the intervention of Pino della Tosa and Ostagio da Polenta.⁵

Dante's writings were eyed with suspicion not simply because they were fantasies, as Vernani claimed, but because there was something in that marvelous language that might persuade the reader to accept Dante's claims as truth. Herein lies the danger causing Vernani so much anxiety, of something “pestilentius,” some idea in Dante's assertions that could spread like a disease if not cordoned off by vigorous quarantine.⁶ If not defended against, Dante's ideas could initiate social and political upheaval serious enough to dramatically undermine the status quo. In other words, Dante's works were banned and burned not for their figments, but for the

Historical Study with Accompanying Translations of Dante Alighieri's Monarchia, Guido Vernani's Refutation of the “Monarchia” Composed by Dante and Pope John XXII's Bull, Si Fratrum, 41–43. Cassell's codicological examination of the earliest extant manuscript copy of the *Monarchia* suggests signs of a text under political fire, claiming that mention of the work's true title is scrupulously avoided in the incipit, though a slightly later hand pens in, somewhat obliquely, “Incipit Retorica Dantis.” Of the few extant MSS of Dante's *Monarchia*, many are “without the author's name, with false ascriptions, or with misleading titles, although, taking advantage of its brevity, scholars had copies bound with other works of a different kind to conceal it” Ibid., 42. The *Monarchia* suffered especially during the Counter Reformation, when it was banned several times and finally put on the Papal Index in 1564.

- 4 “[...]prohibetur universis junioribus lectio librorum poeticorum, seu libellos per illum qui *Dante* nominatur in vulgari compositos nec tenere vel eis studere audeant” (Pio Tomasso Masetti, *Monumenta et Antiquitates Veteris Disciplinae Ordinis Praedicatorum ab Anno 1216 ad 1348* [Rome: ex Typographia Rev. Cam. Apostolicae, 1864], 1: 128).
- 5 “Tratatello in laude di Dante” in Giovanni Boccaccio, *Tutte le opere*, ed. Vittore Branca, vol. 3 (Milan: Mondadori, 1974), 488. The second redaction of the “Tratatello” carries essentially the same information (ibid., 3:530).
- 6 In later years, the writings of Dante and other poets will be compared instead to poison. For example, in 1425, Bernardino da Siena warns his listeners to steer clear from poetry else they be touched by the poison behind these honeyed words: “E de' libri de' poeti ti separa che sotto quella coverta del mele v'è il veleno” (Bernardino da Siena, *Le prediche volgari: Quaresimale del 1425*, ed. Ciro Cannarozzi [Florence: Libreria editrice Fiorentina, 1940], 305).

dangerous ideas hidden within those figments, whose spread, if unchecked, could prove dangerously viral.

And yet, Vernani takes care to specify that the diabolical is in Dante *himself*, not merely his writings: “among the devil's other vessels,” Vernani specifies, “there was indeed a certain *one* who wrote many fantastic things in poetry” (“Inter alia vero talia sua vasa *quidam* fuit multa fantastice *poetizans*” [italics added]). Here Vernani is precise in his language; he identifies not the writings of the man, but the man himself (“quidam...poetizans”) as this vessel of the devil. The poison is not so much in the words as in the one speaking them.

Vernani's conflation of poem and poet is not an interpretive eccentricity, but a logical instinctual response to a design entirely of Dante's own engineering. As a reader, Dante found the living, breathing *auctor* within the lines of his most beloved books; this taught him that the great poet writes himself into the text, whether overtly or by subterfuge, and functions as mediator between the reader and the volume in his hands. Often Dante affirms this blurring of author and text in the *Divina Commedia*: “tu sei lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore” (“You are my teacher and my author”) (*Inf.* 1.85)⁷ Dante exclaims upon meeting Vergil, supplanting the texts that were his only mode of access to the writer with “tu,” the writer himself. In a sense, the poet eclipses the poem. And the epithet “maestro” is deployed here not merely in anticipation of the face-to-face master-student relationship to be played out between Dante and Vergil in the canti to follow, but already underscores a preexisting relationship of some sort between the pilgrim and the author, no less real than the one with Brunetto Latini, another figure he names as “maestro” (*Inf.* 15.85).

⁷ Citations of Dante's poem are from *La commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, ed. Giorgio Petrocchi, 4 vols. (Milano: Mondadori, 1967). Translations are from *The Divine Comedy*, ed. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander, 3 vols. (Anchor, 2008), except where otherwise indicated.

In this way, the authorial presence overshadows the book itself. The power afforded the author to mediate through his book is reaffirmed in Francesca da Rimini's famous lines: “galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse” (*Inf.* 5.137). The author of the story of Lancelot and Guinevere that seduced Paolo and Francesca is a Galahalt too, necessarily yoked to his book and shouldering equal responsibility for its effects.⁸

Dante's view on the “autore” reflects his more general concern regarding authorial validation, how an author acquires *auctoritas* to gain a reader's trust. Usually a poet will rely on strategies of verisimilitude (Vernani's “*verbis exterioribus in eloquentia*”) to encourage readers to suspend their disbelief. But Dante's stakes are higher, as he would seek to maintain that suspension far beyond the last lines of *Paradiso*. For this reason Dante looks not to the verisimilar but to the veridical. He ups the ante of credibility by instructing his reader to have faith in his vision. “Lì si vedrà ciò che tenem per fede,” he says from the spheres of heaven, witnessing and registering firsthand what his readers know only through catechism (*Par.* 2.43). The poet understands that faith can only be inspired when regarding the incredible, hence his explicit command for the reader to trust him when he sees Geryon, that “ver c'ha faccia di menzogna” (*Inf.* 16.24).⁹ This is not a strategy of poets, but of witnesses to miracles, of

8 In contrast to this, Dante also shows that sometimes the text can supplant the person voicing the text. While Vergil's unique status is affirmed by his role in Statius's conversion in *Purgatorio* 22, Christ's original apostles are represented as incidental to the Gospel message they disseminate. Statius calls them not “messaggeri,” but “messaggi de l'eterno regno” (*Purg.* 22.78). Much more about this passage and the rest of Statius's conversion will be discussed in the second chapter.

9 There is a recent history behind Dante's gamble with credibility in the figure of Geryon. Teodolinda Barolini explains Geryon as an “outrageously paradoxical authenticating device,” who occurs in tandem with the poet's claims that this poem is a “comedia,” which, she points out, is linked to its status as a “sacrato poema,” and ultimately “tëodia” (Teodolinda Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Dethologizing Dante* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992], 59). In other words, truth is secured not by introducing the plausible and credible, but by insisting on the implausible and incredible. For more on the strategy guiding the use of Geryon, see chapter 3 of *The Undivine Comedy*, especially 58-67; for a more comprehensive discussion on the important relationship

visionaries, mystics and prophets. But it is also the language of preachers, whose everyday speech is marked by such exhortations to believe the unbelievable, to provide evidence, through faith, of things unseen.¹⁰

Dante's close association of speech with the speaker coupled with the urgency of his claims to truth suggest the *Commedia's* incursion into the jurisdiction of preaching. Indeed preachers in the centuries to follow confirm this, consistently cribbing Dante's poem for sermon material, and in so doing strongly suggesting that they found a language cousin to their own within those pages.¹¹ There is ample documentary evidence to show that many sermons of the time bore traces of Dante's presence; passages, phrases, examples and ideas from the *Divina Commedia* permeate them. His poetry is also found scribbled into the marginalia and textual additions of manuscript sermon collections, suggesting that preachers dipped into Dante's verses to refresh the older sermons they reused.¹² Dante's poem had for all practical purposes become another source-book for preachers, alongside the usual hagiographies, *exempla* collections, and *artes praedicandi* normally used for constructing sermons. These uses assure the *Commedia's* status as an *auctoritas* in sermons, which certainly confirms the success of Dante's mission and

between "comedia," "sacrato poema" and "tëodia," and their role in defining a visionary and prophetic text, see pages 269-86 of Barolini's earlier work, *Dante's Poets* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

10 *Heb.* 11:1

11 Carlo Delcorno amply demonstrates this to be true. See pages 51-53 of "Dante e il linguaggio dei predicatori."

12 These are noted by Oriana Visani in her article "Citazioni di poeti nei sermonari medievali," in *Letteratura in forma di sermone: i rapporti tra predicazione e letteratura nei secoli XIII-XVI, atti del seminario di studi (Bologna 15-17 novembre 2001)*, ed. Carlo Delcorno, Ginetta Auzzas, and Giovanni Baffetti (Florence: Olschki, 2003). The appearance of these fragments of poetry in sermons and their commentary consolidates "l'affermarsi del gusto per la citazione poetica e il diffondersi, pur cautamente, di una cultura volgare anche tra i fruitori di quei testi, in genere, altri predicatori che utilizzano tali materiali come base per le loro prediche" (*ibid.*, 125). She adds that Dante, Petrarch and Jacopone were used most of all: "Questi poeti vengono usati principalmente come *auctoritates*, come repertorio cioè di massime autorevoli, adatte a suffragare argomentazioni teologiche e moralizzanti e quindi sempre in funzione del contesto in cui sono inseriti" (*ibid.*, 126).

strategies to secure the reader's faith (also confirming, incidentally, Vernani's fear of a pestilential text set on infecting the minds of the populace). Franciscan preachers were the first to mine the *Divina Commedia*. The sermons of Ruggero da Eraclea, dating to 1368, were crammed with citations of Dante. A Lenten sermon by Marco da Sommarina (1419) shows the preacher's transparent pride in his ample knowledge of Dante's poem.¹³ Dante's tremendous popularity among preachers certainly results from the expressly Christian subject matter and the ready-made *exempla* in his vignettes. Dante's appeal to later preachers appears so great that it influenced the stylistics of sermons.¹⁴ So strong and complete was Dante's influence that a scandalized Erasmus was finally piqued to write that preachers were treating the *Divina Commedia* as something even more sacred than the Gospel Scriptures themselves.¹⁵

As stated earlier, Dante's poem was influential to preachers because the poem had already incorporated the form and content of sermons into its own textuality. The niceness with which Dante's *Divina Commedia* dovetails with preaching is not accidental, nor is it an *ex post facto* formulation dependent on the readings of clergymen centuries later. The poem is very deliberately seeded with the cadences and figures similar to those in the sermons of Dante's time. Unfortunately, published documentation of sermons for the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century is slim when compared to, say, the proliferation of documents in the

13 "Citazioni di poeti nei sermonari medievali," 126.

14 Delcorno makes the striking claim that the *Commedia* sets in motion a "riscrittura dell'intero ventaglio stilistico della predicazione cristiana, da Agostino ai frati Mendicanti." In "Dante e il linguaggio dei predicatori," 53.

15 "Nonnulla pars dabatur Danti aut Petrarchae, quorum rythmi voce canora plenisque, ut aiunt, tibiis et insigni corporis gesticulatione pronunciabantur. Dixisses aliquid dici sacratius Euangelio. Huiusmodi commenticiis nouitatibus magis indulgent qui religionis titulo commendatur quam ii quos ideo seculares appellant, quod monachi non sint, nimirum gratificantes affectui multitudinis potius quam iudicio consulente." From: "Ecclesiastae sive de Ratione Concionandi," in *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami*, vol. 5, pt. 5 (Amsterdam: North-Holland Pub. Co, 1994), 14.

quattrocento. This is especially true for sermons in the vernacular; few sermons of this period are recorded by observers in their long form in *reportatio* collections (many sermon collections are only brief outlines in Latin). Fortunately, there is a wealth of vernacular sermons by Giordano da Pisa, a Dominican who preached in Florence in the first years of the fourteenth century.¹⁶

Although Giordano and Dante were contemporaries (the preacher was born a decade before Dante and died a decade before him), we have no proof that Dante ever heard Giordano preach, and all of Giordano's collected sermons were apparently preached after Dante's exile.

Nevertheless, scholars accept Giordano's sermons as the premier model for of good Dominican preaching of the time, and use them as exemplars in which they identify language that finds echo in Dante's poem, thereby showing that the *Commedia* definitely extracts phrasings from the rhetorical commons of vernacular preaching. Alfredo Galletti first mentioned such parallels in 1899, in a study devoted to Giordano da Pisa.¹⁷ His initial explorations were followed up by Francesco Maggini in 1922 and Aldo Vallone in 1966.¹⁸ Vallone's study contains eight pages of parallels between Giordano and Dante, some few dozen in total. All this before the publication of several of Giordano da Pisa's major sermon collections in the last few decades. More recent studies have unearthed even more substantial parallels between Giordano and Dante, which will be explored in depth later in this chapter. However, my study is not concerned with an isolated

16 For an overview, peruse Giordano da Pisa, *Avventuale fiorentino 1304*, ed. Silvia Serventi, Collana di studi della Fondazione Michele Pellegrino (Bologna: Il mulino, 2006); Giordano da Pisa, *Quaresimale fiorentino*, ed. Carlo Delcorno (Florence: Sansoni, 1974). There is also an earlier collection: Giordano da Pisa, *Prediche del Beato fra Giordano da Rivalto dell'ordine dei Predicatori, recitate in Firenze dal MCCCIII al MCCCVI, ed ora per la prima volta pubblicate*, 2 vols. (Florence: Magheri, 1831).

17 Alfredo Galletti, "Fra Giordano da Pisa predicatore del sec. XIV," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 33 (1899): 217.

18 Francesco Maggini, "Fra Giordano da Rivalto e Dante," *Giornale Dantesco* 25 (1922): 130–134; Aldo Vallone, "Dante e fra Giordano da Rivalto," *Giornale italiano di filologia* 19 (1966): 260–272.

case of influence, but with a more general tendency to employ a kind of language that is commonly understood as “preaching” language. In light of this, I uncover echoes of other sermons, such as those of Thomas Aquinas and the Franciscan Bernardino da Siena, to name just two.¹⁹ In the fifth chapter of this study, I will also show how the poet picks up on the deeper structure of sermons of his time, the way that *sermo modernus* informs the logic of his textuality.

Dante's apparent use of the preacher's strategies invites a critique that more deeply considers the use of the sermonic in his poetic, but to date few Dante scholars have adequately pursued this potentially rich thread. This is not for want of information on the topic; preaching is a large subfield in medieval history, and there are many historical studies examining numerous published primary sources: collections of sermons, compendia of distinctions, encyclopedias of *exempla*, and the various *artes praedicandi*.²⁰ Although Dante studies are to some degree ahead

19 Since Bernardino's sermons were delivered about a century after Dante, however, the scholar must to be careful not to overstate claims when discovering resonances between his sentences and those of Dante.

20 What follows is only a small sampling of recent historical studies on preaching. One of the best introductory works on preaching is Nicole Bériou, *l'Avènement des maîtres de la parole: la prédication à Paris au XIIIe siècle*, vol. 1, Collection des Études Augustiniennes: Série Moyen-Age et temps modernes 31 (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1998). For a more compressed summary, which also examines preaching as a tool for instruction see Bériou's “La prédication aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age,” *Communications* 72, no. 1 (2002): 113–127. In English, consult David L. D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). Bert Roest's books are rich sources of information on Franciscan preaching, and have extraordinarily comprehensive bibliographies. His first book, *A History of Franciscan Education* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), details preachers' education at the University of Paris. Also useful are Roest's *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction Before the Council of Trent* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); John Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and His Circle*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970). For an interestingly unorthodox comparative study of Franciscan and Dominican preaching in Medieval Florence, see Daniel R. Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence: The Social World of Franciscan and Dominican Spirituality* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989). In Italian, Carlo Delcorno is a foremost scholar, about whom more will be said later. He has a long essay translated into English, “Medieval Preaching in Italy (1200-1500),” in *The Sermon*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle, *Typologie Des Sources Du Moyen Age Occidental* 81-83 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 449–559; he has also written an introductory essay on Franciscan preaching, “Origini della predicazione francescana,” in *Francesco d'Assisi e francescanesimo. Atti del IV Convegno della Società internazionale di SF* (Assisi, 1977), 125–160. Delcorno has also recently published a book compiling several decades of his published research on preaching, *Quasi quidam cantus: studi sulla predicazione medievale*, *Biblioteca di lettere italiane* 71 (Firenze: Olschki, 2009).

The *artes praedicandi* were fundamental to sermon making in the Middle Ages, especially starting in the *duecento* when the “modern” sermon, rhetorically, thematically, and theologically more complex than the

of other fields of literary scholarship regarding this matter, critical engagement with the topic remains insufficient considering the sheer mass of primary sources and secondary scholarship available for study. Dante commentaries do at times note the preacher's language and the various themes and subjects common to sermons of the time, but these passing mentions do not

earlier homily, came into being. For an introduction in to *sermo modernus* and an overview of the various *artes*, see Chapter VI, "The Art of Preaching" in James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 269–355. See also Richard H Rouse and Mary A Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland*, Studies and Texts - Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies 47 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1979). On the the usefulness of *artes praedicandi*, and various other adjutory materials preachers used, see Phyllis B. Roberts, "The *Ars Praedicandi* and the Medieval Sermon," in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. Carolyn Muessig (Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill, 2002), 41–62.

The cultural and artistic influence of preaching was broad and deep. For an overview of preaching as seen through the eyes of Salimbene's chronicle, see Mariano D'Alatri, "Predicazione e predicatori francescani nella Cronica di fra Salimbene," *Collectanea Franciscana* 46 (1976): 63–91. For exploration into the intertextual relationships between preaching and literature, Delcorno also edited a collection of various scholars' studies, *Letteratura in forma di sermone: i rapporti tra predicazione e letteratura nei secoli XIII-XVI* (Florence: Olschki, 2003).

Primary sources are numerous, and only a handful of these will be cited here. The *Artes praedicandi* from this period are invaluable resources outlining theorists' synthetic understanding of the rhetorical forms that preaching uses. While less useful to understanding preaching in the Middle Ages, the pioneering works by Augustine and Gregory the Great are fundamental starting points for all discussion of preaching and sermons: Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. Mayer Cornelius, Saint Augustine: Opera Omnia: CAG. Electronic Edition. (Basel: Schwabe, 1995), http://library.nlx.com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/xtf/view?docId=augustine_la/augustine_la.02.xml;chunk.id=div.augl.v1.2551a;toc.depth=1;toc.id=div.augl.v1.1ab;brand=default; Gregory the Great, *B Gregorii Magni episcopi romani, De cura pastoralis*, ed. Jeremiah Stephens (London: Typis T. Harper, impensis Philemonis Stephens, & Chr. Meredith, 1629). Both have been translated into English in the following editions: Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997); Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*, Ancient Christian Writers 11 (New York: Newman Press, 1978). Important *artes* from the twelfth century are: Guibert de Nogent's *Quo ordine sermo fieri debeat* and Alain of Lille, "Summa de Arte Praedicatoria," in *Opera Omnia, vol. 210, Patrologiae Latinae, n.d., 111–198*. Alain's *Summa* can be found translation: *The Art of Preaching*, trans. and ed. Gillian R. Evans, Monastic Studies Series 28 (Piscataway NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010). In the thirteenth century, refer to the exhaustive and comprehensive manual by Thomas of Chobham, *Summa de Arte Praedicandi, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis. Vol. 82 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1988)*. See also English theologian Alexander of Ashby's "De Artificio Modo Predicandi: Versio Longior," in *Opera Theologica, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis 188 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 21–71*. A short treatise on preaching and its techniques attributed to William of Auvergne can be found in A. De Poorter's book "Un manuel de prédication médiévale. Le ms. 97 de Bruges," *Revue néo-scholastique de philosophie. 25e année, no. 98 (1923): 192–209*. See also: Humbert of Romans' *De eruditione praedicatorum* in *Opera de vita regulari 2. Expositio in constitutiones. Instructiones de officiis ordinis. De eruditione praedicatorum. Epistolae encyclicae*, ed. Joachim Joseph Berthier (Turin: Marietti, 1956). This was reprinted in Turin by the publisher Marietti in 1956. Humbert of Romans's work has been translated into English: *Humbert of Romans, Treatise on Preaching*, ed. Walter M.

sufficiently do justice to the subject.²¹

Perhaps preaching is understudied because Dante scholars accord it lesser status as an intertext than other works, considering it something of an outlier of the pantheon of textual influences as determined, if not by rough critical consensus, at least by critical habit.²² Dante scholarship has been attentive to the Scriptural, the patristic and “high” theological aspects in the *Divina Commedia*, but certain more everyday elements of religion and its expression are often left out of the conversation.²³ This is unfortunate because greater attention to these details could better contextualize Dante's use of the Christian quotidian in the poem, and provide deeper insight into the way Dante's poem functions within its specific historical and cultural context. Far too rarely do scholars sufficiently investigate aspects of Dante's religious everyday. For example, in his paper arguing that the pageant in Eden in *Purgatorio* takes influence from religious

Conlon O.P., trans. Dominican Students Province of St. Joseph (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1951). Of the *artes praedicandi* in the fourteenth century, Thomas Waley's *De modo componendi sermones* is one the most important. His work can be found in: *Artes Praedicandi; Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge, Publications de l'Institut d'études médiévales d'Ottawa VII (Paris: Vrin, 1936)*. The the other most important *ars* of this century is Robert of Basevorn's *Forma praedicandi*, which is also compiled in the same volume as Thomas Waley's work. Also not to be overlooked from the fourteenth century is a work by Ranulf Higden (1280-1364, an English Benedictine monk, Ranulf Higden, *Ars Componendi Sermones*, ed. Margaret Jennings, trans. Sally A. Wilson and Margaret Jennings (Peeters Publishers, 2003).

21 Carlo Delcorno, “Letteratura in forma di sermone. Introduzione,” in *Letteratura in forma di sermone: i rapporti tra predicazione e letteratura nei secoli XIII-XVI* (Florence: Olschki, 2003), 3.

22 Delcorno suspects Dantisti are bound not by habit but by textual snobbery. In exploring the *exemplum* of “buon Fabrizio” in *Purgatorio* 20.25-27, Delcorno says that Dante commentators habitually refer readers to the classical account of Fabricius by Valerius Maximus “solo perché sembra la fonte più probabile, e la più degna della cultura dantesca,” even though medieval *exempla* collections appear to be a more likely source. In: “Dante e l'*exemplum* medievale,” *Lecture Classensi* 12 (1982): 123. Delcorno's investigation does strongly suggest that often Dante's textuality is mediated through liturgical sources. This is no doubt true, and underscores the necessity of taking into account oral culture because it – not books – was the main mode of textual transmission in the Middle Ages. Most people's understanding of theology and Scripture was mediated by liturgical ritual and sermons, not by direct reading. See Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education*, 272.

23 Fortunately the popular in Dante is not altogether ignored. Teodolinda Barolini calls for a re-evaluation of popular textuality in her necessary essay “Medieval Multiculturalism and Dante's Theology of Hell,” (in *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture* (Fordham Univ Press, 2006), 102–121. since “Dante's uniquely rich and complex system is as indebted to popular culture as it is to high culture” (110).

processions (a claim so plausible as to appear banal), Ronald Martinez notes that the liturgical dimension in the *Commedia* “has been largely neglected even by recent students of the poem,” due to “the historically tepid interest in the relations of Dante's text to the liturgy itself.”²⁴ This critique is seconded by Erminia Ardissino, who notes that Dante criticism is “scarsamente occupata” with issues of liturgy in the *Divina Commedia*, however much to its detriment.²⁵ Baptism also gets short critical shrift, even though is firmly rooted in Dante's personal biography and it is a key factor in his definition of citizenship. In *Inferno*, the poet recounts with dramatic relish his smashing of the baptismal font of S. Giovanni in his hometown to save a child (*Inf.* 19.16-21), and in *Paradiso* he fantasizes a return to this point where he too was baptized, for a poetic coronation (*Par.* 25.1-2). And yet, the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* demonstrates slight critical interest in the topic, focusing on baptism primarily to address the problem of virtuous pagans, apparently concerned by Vergil's exclusion from heaven. The *Dante Encyclopedia* likewise devotes little text to baptism, offering in turn only a handful of articles primarily regarding

24 “The Poetics of Advent Liturgies: Dante’s ‘Vita Nova’ and ‘Purgatorio,’” in *Le culture di Dante: studi in onore di Robert Hollander (Atti del quarto Seminario dantesco internazionale, University of Notre Dame (Ind.), USA, 25-27 settembre 2003)*, ed. Michelangelo Picone, Theodore J. Cachey, and Margherita Mesirca (Florence: Franco Cesati, 2004), 275. Martinez does note a few scholars at work in this largely unpopulated field. See: John C. Barnes, “Vestiges of the Liturgy in Dante’s Verse,” in *Dante and the Middle ages* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995); Louis M La Favia, “... ch  quivi per canti ...’ (Purg., XII, 113), Dante’s Programmatic Use of Psalms and Hymns in the Purgatorio,” *Studies in Iconography* 10, no. 1984 (1984): 53-65; Erminia Ardissino, “I Canti liturgici nel Purgatorio dantesco,” *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, no. 108 (January 1, 1990): 39-65; Andrew McCracken, “‘In Omnibus Viis Tuis’: Compline in the Valley of the Rulers (Purg. VII-VIII),” *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, no. 111 (January 1, 1993): 119-129; Peter Armour, *The Door of Purgatory: A Study of the Multiple Symbolism in Dante’s Purgatorio* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1984); Ezio Raimondi, “Rito e storia nel canto I del ‘Purgatorio,’” in *Metafora e storia: Studi su Dante e Petrarca* (Turin: Einaudi, 1972), 65-94; Giovanni Fallani, “Liturgia e preghiera,” in *Poesia e teologia nella “Divina Commedia”*, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Milan: Marzatori, 1959), 15-28; Hans Rheinfelder, “Dante als Beter,” in *Serta romanica: Festschrift f r Gerhard Rohlfs*, ed. Rudolf Baehr and Kurt Wais (T bingen: Niemeyer, 1968); Olaf Graf, *Die Divina comedia als Zeugnis des Glaubens Dante und die Liturgie. Mit 5 Bildtafeln nach Mosaiken von Ravenna*. (Freiburg: Herder, 1965); Domenico De Robertis, *Il libro della “vita Nuova”* (Florence: Sansoni, 1970); Michelangelo Picone, “Rito e ‘narratio’ nella ‘Vita Nuova,’” in *Dal Medioevo al Petrarca. Miscellanea di studi in onore di Vittore Branca*, vol. 1 (Florence: Olschki, 1983), 141-57.

25 “I canti liturgici nel *Purgatorio* dantesco,” 39.

Vergil's condemnation. In these encyclopedias, preaching suffers an even greater fate of exclusion than do liturgies and baptism. There is no entry at all for preaching in the *Dante Encyclopedia*, and in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* one finds little more than a concordance-like list of the word's appearances across Dante's oeuvre.

The rejection of anything redolent of the liturgical or generally “churchly” in Dante's poetry has a considerable history, dating back at least to Benedetto Croce, whose splendid and necessary 1921 essay “La poesia di Dante” re-centered Dante studies away from theological/allegorical readings dominant at the time in order to focus again on the poetry *qua* poetry.²⁶ It was high time, Croce said, to study Dante “non più come insegnatore di dottrine e oratore di virtù o come dello letterato,” but first and foremost as a poet.²⁷ Croce emphasized that interpretation of the *Divina Commedia* should not reduce it to a travelogue of the afterlife, replete with allegories, prophecies and catechetical lessons larded with some smatterings of Aquinas, pre-digested for easy assimilation. Too much supine admiration of the poet, he said, left critics, “al pari delle femminette di Verona,” those ladies from Boccaccio's *Trattatello* who imagined Dante really went to Hell.²⁸ Croce's argument cast a long shadow through much of the 20th century; in many ways this was a good thing, since Croce's argument militated for a return to the poet in Dante. However, Croce's emphasis on this particular reading also perpetuated a misunderstanding of Dante's goals *qua* rhetorician and an underestimation of the stakes he claims

26 Carlo Delcorno critically revisits the Crocean reading in “Cadenze e figure della predicazione nel viaggio dantesco,” *Lecture Classensi* 15 (1985): 41.

27 *La poesia di Dante*, Scritti di storia letteraria e politica (Bari: Laterza, 1921), 29.

28 “Ci furono, tra i lettori e gli uditori alcuni che, presero per realtà le immaginazioni e tennero per certo l'esistenza delle varie Utopie o Icarie, e talvolta mossero il remo per raggiungere le terre promesse e le isole della felicità” (ibid., 61). Boccaccio's story of the women of Verona can be found in both the first and second versions of his “Trattatello in laude di Dante,” in *Tutte Le Opere*, 3:465, 512.

when arguing the truth of his text. Bruno Nardi makes this clear in his 1949 challenge to Croce's aesthetic critique in "Dante profeta," yet his attempt to deal the death blow to the thoughtless application of Crocean ideals did not immediately lead to a sea change in Dante studies.²⁹

Arguments countervailing those of Croce still needed several more decades to build up critical mass, culminating in Teodolinda Barolini's 1992 clarification that Dante's employment of religious matter – specifically his use of prophecy and the fourfold allegory of theologians – is subordinate to a supremely poetic goal: the conquering of the reader's belief in his journey and message.³⁰ Dynamically synthesizing the important research of Nardi, Charles Singleton, Erich Auerbach and others, Barolini succeeded in restoring the status of allegory and prophecy as literary, not theological (or worse, catechistic) strategies, which the poet employs to support his truth claims:

Any metatextual study of the *Commedia* has to come to terms with the poet's presentation of himself as truth-teller, and thus with "Dante profeta" in the larger sense. Indeed, one result of interrogating the *Commedia* regarding itself may be to collapse the distinctions between the "allegorical" and the "prophetic" approach by suggesting that, from Dante's perspective, they amount to the same thing. In other words, what one could call Dante's prophetic mode corresponds to Singleton's allegory of theologians or Auerbach's figural mode.

This discussion over Dante *profeta* and Dante *theologus/allegoricus* is important to repeat here because Dante's use of prophecy, theology and allegory are cousin to Dante's use of the language of preachers. It is a short walk from the theologian's study to the preacher's pulpit, as any parallel examination of Aquinas's *Summa* and his sermons will show. The same should be

29 "Dante profeta," in *Dante e la cultura medievale: nuovi saggi di filosofia dantesca*, 3rd ed. (Bari: Laterza, 1983), 265–326. A relic of Nardi's challenge is apparent in his recalling of Croce's vexingly pious "donnicciuole di Verona" who sincerely believed that Dante "scendesse davvero all'Inferno, e davvero salisse all'Empireo (308).

30 "Detheologizing Dante: Realism, Reception and the Resources of Narrative," in Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*, 3-20.

assumed of Dante's use of allegory, prophetic modes and sermonistic rhetorical structures; they are all quite closely related. Any attempt to make distinctions between these various roles will likely run aground in the face of documentary evidence that will not allow an easy distinction to be made.

Close ties between the language of preaching, theology, allegory and prophecy can be traced back to the New Testament, continuing through Dante's time. St Paul suggests these connections in his first letter to the Corinthians (chapters 12 and 14), which Aquinas confirms much later.³¹ (These arguments will be fully discussed in the fourth chapter of the dissertation.) St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*, the earliest manual on pastoral care, famously devotes its entire third chapter to the allegorical interpretation of signs. Preaching manuals closer to Dante's time go much further than Augustine in the discussion of allegory. Where Augustine presented allegory as a way to interpret Scriptural passages, Thomas of Chobham's *Summa de arte praedicandi* links preaching *in toto* to the quadripartite allegorical method. He asserts that preaching depends on allegory as Elijah's fiery chariot relied on its wheels to carry the prophet to Heaven.

Ut igitur grana verbi Dei in corde humano recte seminentur, considerandum est quod legitur in libro Regum, scilicet quod Helyas in curru igneo raptus est in celum. Currus iste sancta predicatio est, per quam fidelis anima, tamquam quatuor rotis, in celum transuehitur. Prima autem rota est hystoria, secunda tropologia, tertia allegoria, quarta anagoge. Tot enim modis littera sacre Scripture, a qua predicatio elicienda est, exponitur.

In order that the seeds of the word of God are rightly sowed in the human heart, one should ponder what is read in the book of Kings: that Elijah was carried away into Heaven in a chariot of fire. This chariot is divine preaching, by means of

31 For Aquinas's opinion, see sections 11-14 in the first volume of Thomas Aquinas, *In Omnes S. Pauli Apostoli Epistola Commentaria*, 2 vols. (Turin: Marietti, 1929). See also: Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching: A Search for the Origins of the Christian Homily*, vol. 59, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001), especially pp. 7-12, which directly address the passages in *I Corinthians*.

which the faithful soul, as if on four wheels, is carried into heaven. The first wheel is history, the second tropology, the third allegory, the fourth anagogy. Certainly in these many ways the letter of holy Scripture, from which preaching is meant to draw out meaning, is explained.³²

In asserting the essential role of allegory in preaching, Chobham nails the point home by using allegorical language to present his own argument. Not only does preaching depend on allegorical exposition, here he seems to suggest that the issue cannot even be discussed except in allegorical terms. Chobham's inclusion of Elijah in this image vividly clarifies that the Chariot of preaching carries the prophet to his destination. Thomas of Chobham's *Summa* clearly follows the Pauline/Aquinian precedent when it theorizes the close connections between prophecy and preaching: “dicitur etiam predicatio quandoque prophetia” (“it is also called preaching when it is a prophecy”).³³ Whatever theoretical distinctions that may have existed between these modes, if any existed at all, would have been rarely heeded in practice, as medieval sermons clearly demonstrate. The prophetic, the theological and the allegorical all undergird the sermonic in the Middle Ages, as well as they do Dante's poetic language which so transparently shares in these qualities.³⁴

32 Thomas of Chobham, *Summa De Arte Praedicandi*, 4.

33 *Summa De Arte Praedicandi*, 17. Chobham continues to specify that prophecy in preaching is above all an interpretive act, and does not involve forecasting future events: “Prophetare est ea que dicuntur ad populum exponere, et istud est utile, et secundum hoc prophetare est predicare. Vnde in libro Regum: *num est Saul inter prophetas*. Alio modo dicitur prophetare futura predicere, de quo hic non intendimus.” (“To prophesy is to explicate those things that are said to the people, and this is useful, and according to this to prophesy is to preach. Hence in the book of Kings 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' To predict the future is to prophesy in another way, about which we do not intend.”) (*Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, 17). By following Chobham's argument here, one can extrapolate a few interesting conclusions regarding the *Commedia*, for one would have to conclude that when Brunetto Latini tells the pilgrim that a later figure will gloss his prophecy (“serbolo a chiosar con altro testo / a donna che saprà” [*Inf.* 15.89-90]), he anticipates that the gloss will be in every sense a true and proper sermon, and by extension the glossator would be a preacher. Although the “chiosa” to this particular prophecy will be provided not by Beatrice --the “donna” he intends-- but by Cacciaguida, Brunetto's slip provides valuable insight into the status Dante would grant Beatrice when she acts as an explicator of divine mystery. This argument also applies to Vergil's announcement of Beatrice as the interpreter of prophecy in *Inf.* 10.130-32.

34 The same could be argued for elements of the didactic, oratorical and hortatory in Dante's poem, which are also important elements in the medieval sermon. These qualities, like allegory and prophecy, are also frequently

If preaching actively participates in these two of Dante's preferred discursive modes, it would appear sensible to closely investigate the poem with an eye to all things predicatory in Dante's language; and yet, scarce few critics have taken it upon themselves to excavate *Dante praedicator* from the rubble left after a century of Crocean iconoclasm. Carlo Delcorno is one of these few, who in the decades spent pursuing this thread has actively militated against the critical ignorance of preaching in Dante. Delcorno issues his first alert in 1982, noting that previous studies of Dante's employment of preachers' phrases and cadences were mere “osservazioni frammentarie,” doing little to explain Dante's intentions with any depth or comprehensiveness.³⁵ He more forcefully asserts the need to study this issue in 1993: “Il problema dei rapporti tra Dante e la retorica della predicazione non è ignoto alla critica; e tuttavia non ha avuto un'adeguata trattazione, mancando anche uno studio preliminare dello stile dell'oratoria sacra fra due e trecento.”³⁶ In 1995, Delcorno again exhorts scholars to study preaching in Dante because

misunderstood by Croce. Croce reveals a need to defend Dante's poetry in its more didactic or oratorical moments in *Paradiso*, admitting that it is “poesia didascalica, già si è detto, ma poesia.” Croce's “ma” alone already suggests a prejudice against these rhetorical modalities. In fairness to Croce, he does come close to identifying Dante's tactic for maintaining the reader's interest, which is his narration of a predicatory event in the act of explaining theology: “il motivo che vi domina non è l'indagare e l'insegnare che la mente opera, ma la rappresentazione dell'atto dell'indagare e insegnare...” (Croce, *La poesia di Dante*, 150). He demonstrates this in the following pages by noting discourses by Beatrice, Thomas Aquinas, Solomon, Peter Damian, and St. Bernard. But as can be seen by his emphasis on teaching, Croce misses the opportunity to identify these with preaching, opting instead to categorize them as discourses of the “docente” or “insegnante,” which he mistakenly lumps together with the more transparent “scena di scuola” when Dante is later interrogated by St. Peter on faith (ibid., 150, 153). Similarly, when Croce addresses the “poesia dell'oratoria” that likewise peppers *Paradiso*, he fails to adequately defend its rhetorical modalities because he undervalues the influences (which are for the most part sermons) that Dante draws from: “Perché tutto questo, che presso altri scrittori e verseggiatori è semplice oratoria, suona qui come poesia? Perché è la poesia del carattere di Dante, del suo disdegno, della sua amarezza, del suo disprezzo, dell'attesa di vendetta e di futuro bene, che, come stella in cielo, a lui scintilla nell'anima” (ibid., 154–155). In other words, oratory is generally not poetically interesting or valuable, but Dante renders it such through his masterful poetic skills. Croce devotes fewer pages to *Paradiso* than he does to *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* (26 pages, compared to 30 and 32 respectively); it could be argued that Croce's apparently less enthusiastic devotion to the third canticle derives from an inability to appreciate Dante's poetic language when it expresses “dottrina,” philosophy and theology, or “oratoria,” in other words, “predicatoria.”

35 “Cadenze e figure della predicazione nel viaggio dantesco,” 42.

36 “Schede su Dante e la retorica della predicazione,” in *Miscellanea di Studi Danteschi in memoria di Silvio Pasquazi*, vol. 1 (Naples: Federico & Ardia, 1993), 301. Delcorno reiterates this problem in his introductory

of its substantial influence on Dante's intertextuality. The poet's reception of primary sources, he says, is oftentimes colored by a "stratification" of medieval styles that should influence our perception of the original, and not infrequently those stratifying layers are sermonic:

Nel poema dantesco, che armonizza e unifica tutte le tradizioni retoriche medievali - qualcuno lo ha definito "plurality in oneness" - non poteva mancare lo stile della predicazione o meglio gli stili omiletici, poiché Dante avverte in tutta la sua importanza la novità della predicazione popolare dei frati Mendicanti, ma risale per le vene di una letteratura e di un linguaggio che si definisce essenzialmente nell'opera di Agostino, nella scrittura di s. Paolo. Quando, accanto alla storia della trasmissione dei classici, conosceremo più adeguatamente la complessa stratificazione degli stili ecclesiastici medievali, forse potremo cogliere nuove inflessioni e allusioni nei versi della *Commedia*, forse capiremo più a fondo la sublime antifrasi del famoso verso "io non Enëa, non Paulo sono."³⁷

As Ronald Martinez argued for liturgy, Delcorno does for preaching; both assert that Dante's relationship to ancient and contemporary writing is regularly mediated through texts from ecclesiastical culture. Here Delcorno argues that preaching is oftentimes the means of transmission and interpretation of Scripture and theology (and also, it must be added, classical texts) and in the service of mediation it often interferes with the original texts, like a colored transparency laid over them. To name only one example, the phrase "vinum non habent" uttered by the penitents in *Purgatorio* (13.28-30) was also used as a theme for a sermon delivered in Florence by Giordano da Pisa in January 1304. In one of his distinctions on "vinum" Giordano emphasizes its property "ad delectandum," which finds a casual echo in Pietro Alighieri's commentary on these lines in question, as he says that the wine at the wedding of Cana "ad dilectionem proximi fuit."³⁸ Dante knowingly operates through such transparencies of

essay: "Letteratura in forma di sermone. Introduzione," 1-2.

37 "Dante e il linguaggio dei predicatori," 74.

38 "Dartmouth Dante Project," n.d., s.v. vinum non habent, <http://dante.dartmouth.edu/search.php>.

transmission, at times confirming, querying, or even contradicting, the original source or the mediator of that source.³⁹ By highlighting this aspect of Dante's use of preaching, Delcorno suggests that the employment of predicatory language is not solely a facet of his poetics of authority; it is also a mitigating factor in his reception of the texts he employs, of which trace residues are left in his poem.

From the very first verses of the *Divina Commedia* Dante loads his language with tropes and images frequented by preachers. All of the elements in *Inferno* 1, the “selva oscura,” the valley, the deserted space, the mountain, the sun, the allegorical beasts, and other elements were commonplaces in sermons of this time: “tutto rinvia ad un discorso tradizionale, ad un tesoro di metafore depositate nella memoria collettiva, soprattutto dalla predicazione medievale.”⁴⁰

Delcorno says that the poet's use of Scriptural fragments and hymns in *Purgatorio* also recall the practices of preachers. Indeed, the structure of sermons finds echo in the structure of

Purgatorio's narrative. According to *sermo modernus* (which will be discussed at length in

39 As previously mentioned in an earlier note, Dante sidelines Valerius Maximus's account of “buon Fabrizio,” to take up John of Wales's more current *exemplum* from his *Communiloquium*: (Delcorno, “Dante e l'*exemplum* medievale,” 123). Delcorno continues, wondering if one should not: “infatti chiedersi se Dante, nella scelta e nella disposizione degli esempi, non tenesse conto di modelli noti ai suoi lettori perché diffusi dalla trattatistica morale e dalla predicazione” (ibid., 125). Deliberate selection from moral *exempla* would explain Dante's changing representation of Epicurus as well. Joseph Anthony Mazzeo shows that Dante deliberately prefers the reading of Epicurus as “stratified” through Christian moral texts to use for his representation of Epicureans in the *Inferno*, even though he relied on Cicero's *De finibus* in his praising description of Epicurus the *Convivio* (III, xiv, 14-15). Dante's sources for his *Inferno* representation were probably the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville or the *De universo* by Rabanus Maurus. It is telling that Dante favors strictly Christian *exempla* in the *Divina Commedia* when he could have availed himself of other texts. For more on Dante's “Christianized” take on Epicurus, see Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, “Dante and Epicurus,” *Comparative Literature* 10, no. 1958 (1958): 106–120.

40 Delcorno, “Cadenze e figure della predicazione nel viaggio dantesco,” 45. Incidentally, these factors are not at all appreciated by Benedetto Croce: “Specialmente il primo canto dà qualche impressione di stento: con quel 'mezzo del cammino' della vita, in cui ci si ritrova in una selva che non è selva, e si vede un colle che non è un colle, e si mira un sole che non è il sole, e s'incontrano tre fiere, che sono e non sono fiere, e la più minaccevole di esse è magra per le brame che la divorano, e non si sa come, 'fa vivere grame molte genti.’” (*La poesia di Dante*, 73–74).

Chapter Five), a popular compositional technique of the time, a sermon begins with a very small passage from the Bible, like the example by Giordano da Pisa, called a *thema*; this is followed by *tesserae* of arguments, sub arguments, *exempla* and further Scriptural commentary. *Purgatorio* follows a similar format; the terraces begin with a Bible passage, and this passage then becomes a focal point informing the narrative and moral arguments of that particular zone.⁴¹ Finally, the structure of Purgatory, with its elegant parallel negotiations between virtues and their opposite vices, reflects not only the ethical focus of preaching but also its rhetorical methodology – in keeping with the prescriptions of the *artes praedicandi* – that discussion of any particular vice must be followed by a discussion of its opposing virtue. Thomas of Chobham's manual on preaching, *Summa de arte praedicandi*, emphasizes that sermons must always be directed towards the extirpation of vice and the planting of virtue. In this way, both activities are seen as complements to one another:

Duobus enim modis predicatur: ad extirpanda uitia et ad inserendas uirtutes. Primo autem premitit de extirpatione uitiorum, et postea subiungit de plantatione uirtutum quia: *sincerum nisi vas, quodcumque infundis acescit*. Semper enim prius remouenda sunt nociua et postea semper seminanda salubria.

One preaches in two ways: for the extirpation of vices and the inserting of virtues. First one sets about to the extirpation of vices, and then afterwards adds the planting of virtues, since: *unless the vessel is clean, whatever you pour in turns sour*. Always, first the injurious must be removed and afterwards always the healthful must be sowed.⁴²

The themes and formats from preaching pervade not only the poet's language, but the

41 The practice of citing then commenting on Scripture “rimanda sia alla liturgia sia alla retorica del sermone 'moderno' o tematico, radicato nella citazione e nella glossa della Scrittura” (Delcorno, “Schede su Dante e la retorica della predicazione,” 301). These would not be missed by Dante's early readers.

42 *Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, 19–20. The citation (originally) italicized is from Horace (Ep. I, 2, v. 54), which confirms Chobham's facility and liberty with Classical pagan sources.

physical structure of the afterlife; yet these influences often go unnoticed by contemporary readers. Dante's explicit discussions on preaching, on the other hand, are quite hard to miss, since he asserts his understanding of its complexities and his concern for its correct practice in generally heated invective, railing against the Church's failures to supply Christendom with good preachers and sermons. His discussions of preaching in *Par.* 10-13 provide evocative insight into his notion of what constitutes a best practice of preaching and who its ideal practitioners should be. Beatrice's extended diatribe against bad preachers in *Paradiso* 29, on the other hand, is outright condemnatory in its skewering of bad delivered sermons by corrupt preachers. Here, she excoriates the preacher who out of vain pursuit of appearances will cook up new material while ignoring the Gospel (“per apparer ciascun s'ingegna e face / sue invenzioni; e quelle son trascorse / da' predicanti e 'l Vangelo si tace” [“Each strives to get attention by inventing new ideas, / expounded by the preachers at some length – / but the Gospel remains silent”] [94-96]).⁴³ Beatrice's heated invective culminates in a scabrously satirical portrait of a street preacher, described in nearly harlequin colors and presented as a sort of snake oil salesman bent on duping his listeners into stocking up on costly indulgences (“Ora si va con motti e iscede / a predicare, e pur che ben si rida, / gonfia il cappuccio e più non si richiede” [“Now preachers ply their trade with buffoonery and jokes, / their cowls inflating if they get a laugh, / and the people ask for nothing more”] [115-117]), and funneling those profits into a slush fund to support his greedy, gluttonous and licentious habits (“Di questo ingrassa il porco sant'Antonio, / e altri assai che sono ancora più porci / pagando di moneta senza conio” [“On this Saint Anthony fattens his swine, / along with many others who are still more swinish, / repaying them with unstamped

43 She also deplors “quando è posposta / la divina Scrittura o quando è torta” (89-90), and again notes the vanity of preachers who are motivated by “l'amor de l'apparenza e 'l suo pensiero” (87).

coin”] [*Par.* 29.124-26]).

These moments of critique against bad preaching are themselves inflected by some of the oral features of preaching, and in fact the poet's use of the vital cadences and exclamations that one might witness as a preacher declaimed from his pulpit or in the piazza. Both here in *Paradiso* 29 and elsewhere in the poem, Dante strategically employs trademark oral features that indicate not merely preaching, but specifically mendicant preaching.⁴⁴ The emphatic apostrophe “O Simon mago, o miseri seguaci” initiating *Inferno* 19, echoes a commonplace rhetorical fillip used in preaching for emphasis; Dante frequently uses this structure to those same ends.⁴⁵ There are also traces of the formulas used in catechistic preaching in *Inferno* 19, which Dante deploys with utmost irony in the pilgrim's conversation with Pope Nicholas III.⁴⁶ This is an informative

44 “Nel sistema retorico della *Commedia* agiscono i modelli retorici della predicazione,” he says, and later adds that these are “i moduli sintattici volgari resi familiari all'orecchio dei fiorentini dalla martellante pastorale degli ordini Mendicanti.” (“Schede su Dante e la retorica della predicazione,” 301). Delcorno's work centers on uncovering these “moduli” through meticulous textual investigation. He first shows awareness of this matter in his 1982 essay on *exempla* in Dante, and in several later essays more strictly limited to preaching: “Dante e l'*exemplum* medievale”; “Cadenze e figure della predicazione nel viaggio dantesco”; “Schede su Dante e la retorica della predicazione”; “Dante e il linguaggio dei predicatori.”

45 “Schede su Dante e la retorica della predicazione,” 302–303. Here, Delcorno also claims that the *exclamatio* of *Par.* 11 (1-12), beginning “O insensata cura de' mortali,” likewise intends to recall the emphatic exhortations heard from the pulpit. Delcorno admits that some of these apostrophes could be credited to Classical influence such as the satires of Persius, but he adds that this would not justify the complex of phrases following Aquinas's initial exclamation (“chi dietro a *iura* e chi ad amforismi / sen giva, e chi seguendo sacerdozio ...”) which he argues are more common to preaching. “All'esclamazione segue un ampio gioco di correlazioni 'a effetto descrittivo,' secondo un uso frequentissimo dell'oratoria sacra.” (ibid., 302). For an alternate opinion, see Luciano Rossi (“Canto XI,” in *Paradiso*, ed. Georges Güntert and Michelangelo Picone, *Lectura Dantis Turicensis* [Florence: Cesati, 2000]), who claims instead that “una simile *deploratio* fa parte della tradizione satirica medievale,” using *Carmina Burana* and *Roman de la Rose* as examples (ibid., 174–175). Also, see Lucia Battaglia Ricci, who in turn identifies traces of Persius and Boethius in Dante's exclamation (“Nel cielo del Sole -- *Paradiso* X-XI-XII,” in *Esperimenti Danteschi: Paradiso 2010*, ed. Tommaso Montorfano [Genoa-Milan: Marietti, 2010], 137).

46 “ironicamente modulato sulle formule catechistiche della predicazione.” (“Schede su Dante e la retorica della predicazione,” 304). Benedetto Croce also recognizes the “oratoria” in this canto (*La poesia di Dante*, 90–91). While Croce does not claim that Dante's speech is that of a preacher here, he does concede that the pilgrim functions as a proxy for divine justice, speaking “non solo da pubblico accusatore, ma da esecutore e giustiziere.” As a temporary human representative of divine justice, Dante, at least for this moment, appears to

find entirely in keeping with Dante's other evocations of pastoral care in the canto, which together serve to call attention to the failings of this *servus servorum Dei*. The poet front-loads the canto with nuances of the confessional long before the condemned pope is identified, and in so doing sets the stage – or pulpit, rather – from which the pilgrim issues his long invective, and which likewise shows the bold colors of a heated sermon.⁴⁷

Dante amplifies sections of his poem with preaching tactics to evoke a certain sense of dialogic immediacy and urgency, especially in his suggestion of a hypothetical verbal back-and-forth between the speaker and his listeners. One of these tactics is the instruction to open one's eyes before an in depth doctrinal occasion. Beatrice instructs the pilgrim: “apri la mente a quel ch'io ti paleso”; “or drizza il viso a quel ch'or si ragiona”; “ficca mo l'occhio per entro l'abisso” (5.40, 7.34, 7.94). In the sphere of the sun, Aquinas too will command the pilgrim: “or apri li occhi a quel ch'io ti rispondo” before his long excursus on the influence of the spheres on life on earth (13.49). Giordano da Pisa's sermons are full of such exclamations:

Aprite li occhi, ché non è alcuna criatura in del mondo che tanto dovesse schivare
la morte sua quanto la creatura rationabile

E però aprite li occhi qui

Onde aprite li occhi e pentetevi.”⁴⁸

The command “vedi,” also frequently appears:

take on the role of pope.

47 “Tutto il canto XIX può essere studiato come stilizzazione e a tratti parodia delle modalità di enunciazione del discorso dei predicatori, soprattutto i vv. 90-117, dove il poeta lancia la sua invettiva contro il papa simoniacò, che, confitto in uno dei fori della terza bolgia, può rispondere solo con i movimenti convulsi delle 'piote” (“Schede su Dante e la retorica della predicazione,” 303).

48 Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Aquisti e Doni 290, 43r-v, 45r, 63v, cit in Schede su Dante e la retorica della predicazione, 312

Vedi il micidio come è cosa tòrta, vedi come il dirizza! [...] Vedi la penitenza come questa tortura dirizza.

Vuoli vedere la virtù de la lacrima? Vedi virtù che ha.⁴⁹

Dante also picks up from preaching the habit of suggesting a hypothetical dialogue between the speaker and his listeners.⁵⁰ Following a stereotyped format, the preacher first announces a hypothetical question or objection which he situates in the listener's mouth ("Now you might say..."), to which he then comprehensively responds, punctuating his reply with interrogative phrases, negatives and imperatives.⁵¹ This method features in the pilgrim's rhetorical assault on Pope Nicholas III in *Inferno* 19, and can be found in other places, for example in Beatrice's discussion on various theological matters in *Paradiso* 7.124-132. Trajan uses it in *Paradiso* 19, first evoking Dante's question regarding virtuous pagans ("tu dicevi..." ["you have often asked"] [19.70]),⁵² and including in this objection a pointed interrogative: "ov'è questa giustizia che l'condanna?" ["Wherein lies the justice that condemns him?"] (19.76-77). Trajan answers by commenting on the failure of terrestrial reason to comprehend Divine justice:

Or tu chi se', che vuo' sedere a scranna,

49 *Quaresimale fiorentino*, 76, 198.

50 Lina Bolzoni identifies this practice as part of the inherent theatricality in medieval sermons. In her study of the sermons of Bernardino da Siena, she says: "La tecnica drammatica più ricorrente è la frantumazione del discorso dottrinale in un dialogo a botta e risposta. Il frate evoca cioè accanto a sé, a fargli da 'spalla,' una specie di ascoltatore medio, che fa domande o, più spesso, risponde alle domande, così da indirizzare lo sviluppo del discorso nella direzione voluta" (Lina Bolzoni, "Teatralità e tecniche della memoria in Bernardino da Siena," in *Il francescanesimo e il teatro medievale* [Castelfiorentino: Società Storica della Valdelsa, 1984], 186).

51 Delcorno, "Schede su Dante e la retorica della predicazione," 304. This formula is very common in medieval preaching; in the following pages Delcorno lists eighteen similar examples from contemporary sermons. For more of the same see also "Il parlato dei predicatori" in Delcorno's book *Quasi Quidam Cantus*, 43-84, especially page 80.

52 It might appear from the "dicevi" that Trajan notes a real dialogue, rather than hint at a hypothetical one, but the context makes clear that he is actually reading the pilgrim's mind. The same goes for Beatrice's speech in *Paradiso* 7 cited above.

per giudicar di lungi mille miglia
con la veduta corta d'una spanna?

Now who are you to sit upon the bench,
judging from a thousand miles away
with eyesight that is shorter than a span? (79-81)

Although it is not possible to claim that Dante ever took influence from Giordano da Pisa specifically, an example of this question and answer tactic in the Dominican's preaching is so similar to Trajan's words, it does add tinder to the fires of hypothesis:

Or tu diresti: ecco uno Saracino, non udi mai ricordare Cristo, fa tutto 'l bene che puote, e guardasi di male; che fia di costui? salverassi per queste virtudi? Frate, tu mi fai quistione impossibile.⁵³

Now you might say: here is a Saracen; he never heard tell of Christ; he does all the good he can, and he stays away from evil. What will become of him? Will he be saved on account of his virtues? Brother you pose an impossible question to me.

The transparent likeness between these two passages demonstrates Dante's interest in the preachers' subject matter, as well as his trademark stylistic methods. Again, I cannot claim with any assurance that one man influenced the other; however what clearly remains does suggest that both authors draw from the same cultural commons. While the subject matter under discussion is demonstrably commonplace among preachers, we need to register Dante's audacity in endowing a historically pagan emperor with the authority to preach on doctrinal matters, a privilege which in the real world is exclusive to highly educated and trained preachers like Giordano da Pisa, and jealously guarded by the Church. It was never any mystery that Dante challenges theological orthodoxy in this canto, but the poet goes one step further by couching that challenge in language that evokes the public event, the spectacle of piazza preaching, and then designating a historical

⁵³ Giordano da Pisa, *Prediche del Beato fra Giordano da Rivalto dell'ordine dei Predicatori, recitate in Firenze dal MCCCIII al MCCCVI, ed ora per la prima volta pubblicate*, 2, 54.

pagan as the preacher. By situating his ideas in a preaching *mise en scene*, the poet casts them as preachable dogma framed within a context as apparently orthodox as a sermon preached during Lent before the throngs in front of Sta. Maria Novella in Florence. In so doing the poet hijacks the audience and the bully pulpit that such a rhetorical strategy presumes, and redirects it into his own discussion.

The cantos that most consistently read like doctrinal sermons are probably 10-13 of *Paradiso*, in which both Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure speak at length. The language of these two is deeply engraved with the filigree of the preacher's speech. This fact alone highlights that in Dante's view theology, even at its most speculative and abstruse, is always, eventually, to be laid down at the feet of pastoral care. One of the formulae that Dante uses to highlight their occupations as preachers is a “non...ma” construction: a negation, or series of negations, followed by an affirmation, which is sometimes repeated several times in a row. In *Paradiso* (12.82-96), Bonaventure discusses the motives behind St. Dominic's mission and emphasizes the founder's sincerity and sanctity in a triple series of antitheses:

Non per lo mondo, per cui mo s'affanna
 di retro ad Ostiense e a Taddeo,
 ma per amor de la verace manna
 in picciol tempo gran dottor si feo;
 tal che si mise a circüir la vigna
 che tosto imbianca, se 'l vignaio è reo.
 E a la sedia che fu già benigna
 più a' poveri giusti, non per lei,
 ma per colui che siede, che traligna,
 non dispensare o due o tre per sei,
 non la fortuna di prima vacante,
 non *decimas, quae sunt pauperum Dei*,
 addimandò, ma contro al mondo errante
 licenza di combatter per lo seme
 del qual ti fascian ventiquattro piante.

Not for this world, for which men toil today,
 following the Taddeo and the Ostian,
 but for love of the true manna,
 he soon became a teacher so renowned
 that he began to travel through the vineyard,
 which quickly withers if the keeper is corrupt.
 And to the papal seat, not now as benevolent
 to the upright poor as it was once – not flawed in itself,
 but degenerate in its occupant – he made appeal,
 not to give away just two or three instead of six,
 not for his chance at the first vacancy,
 not for the *decimas, quae sunt pauperum Dei*,
 but for the privilege of fighting
 against the errors of the world, thus to preserve the seed
 of the twenty-four plants now wreathing you in light (*Par.* 12.82-96).

The first negation (82-85) is relatively simple: “non per lo mondo [...] ma per amor de la verace manna.” This in turn is followed by a mention of the “sedia,” the papal see, which was once “benigna” to the indigent but is no longer, not because of any deficiency in the institution (“non per lei”) but because of “colui che siede,” the illegitimate pope who occupies it. Finally in a striking daisy chain of negations, Bonaventure clarifies that Dominic's motivation was in no way to achieve material ends, but purely to fight heresy for the good of the faith: “non dispensare o due o tre per se, / non la fortuna di prima vacante / non *decimas quae sunt pauperum dei* / addimandò, ma contra al mondo errante / licenza di combatter...”⁵⁴ Through the use of “non” Dante defines a negative space around Dominic, demarcating the borders of his positive virtues – his purity of intention and his idealism – in dramatic chiaroscuro. Such antitheses have been commonly employed by preachers for a long time, a heritage tracing back to Augustine. Closer to Dante's time, the same formula of negation and antithesis can be found in the sermons of many: St. Bonaventure, Matteo d'Acquasparta, Giordano da Pisa, Luca da Bitonto, Aldobrandino

54 Antitheses are frequent in Dante. Here are a few examples: St. Peter in *Par.* 27.40-54, the panegyric of St. Francis in *Par.* 11.88-90, and Beatrice's invective against bad preachers in *Par.* 29.91-111.

da Toscanella, Remigio de' Girolami and others.⁵⁵

In their sermons preachers also strategically follow up an abstract theological discussion with an ethical coda, punctuating it with an imperative injunction to pursue or avoid certain behaviors. Dante uses the same tactic in *Paradiso* 5, where Beatrice ends her discussion on vows with an order for Christians to be slow to judgment:

Siate, Cristiani, a muovervi più gravi:
non siate come penna ad ogne vento
e non crediate ch'ogne acqua vi lavi.

Be more grave, Christians, in your endeavors.
Do not resemble feathers in the wind, nor think
all waters have the power to wash you clean (*Par.* 5.73-75).

This quick shift from the theoretical to the moral is also present in Thomas's treatment of Solomon's wisdom in *Paradiso* 13, which clarifies that his wisdom was unequaled only inasmuch as he used his wisdom to be a good king (“acciò che re sufficiente fosse” [13.96]).⁵⁶ Aquinas adds his own ethical coda, another admonishment against coming to hasty conclusions:

E questo ti sia sempre piombo a' piedi,
per farti mover lento com' uom lasso
e al sì e al no che tu non vedi...

And let this always be as lead upon your feet
to make you slow, just like a weary man, in moving,
whether to yes or no, unless you see both clearly (112-114).

These examples by Beatrice and Aquinas, both exhorting readers to slow and careful reckoning of facts before taking one decision or another, find echo in Giordano da Pisa, who in a sermon praising the healing powers of St. Barnabas likewise advises studied skepticism against talismans

⁵⁵ “Schede su Dante e la retorica della predicazione,” 308–310.

⁵⁶ Solomon's wisdom is also defined in the negative, through a sequence of “non” constructions (97-102).

of supposed magical properties:

Non crediate che nelle lettere o nelle figure o nelle immagini che fanno questi
maladetti in questi brevi, pognamo che vi si trovasse scritto alcuna
buona cosa, non crediate che in lettere sia virtù nulla, no; ma è nella devozione
del cuore, in ciò sta la virtù.⁵⁷

Do not believe in the letters or in figures or in images that such accursed types put
in these reliquaries; even supposing that one should find some good thing written
there, do not believe that there is any virtue in letters, no, but in the devotion of
the heart; there virtue lies.

Both Aquinas's speech and Giordano's sermon are front-loaded with more abstract theological matter, and both end with an emphasis on ethical behavior. In this way both follow the sermon's tendency to direct learning towards practical ends. These examples and many others in the *Divina Commedia* show how deeply Dante embeds the sermonic into the weft of his poem, revisiting the subject matter and oratorical techniques frequented by preachers in his time.

What are the motivations behind Dante's drive to echo the languages, cadences, structures and subject matter that people would encounter frequently in sermons heard in piazzas and in churches across Italy? In a poem frequently so literary and erudite, why the need to speak in this far more popular register? Delcorno's studies do not offer any macrostructural interpretations regarding Dante and his relationship to preaching; the critic appears more at home examining textual parallels in up-close and granular detail than in drawing grand conclusions. Tellingly, Delcorno's critical scope does not often venture into areas where the poet simply talks about preaching and preachers, areas that beg deeper critical analysis but offer little grist for Delcorno's chastely philological mill. Where Delcorno does sally into interpretive territory his claims are

⁵⁷ Giordano da Pisa, *Prediche del Beato fra Giordano da Rivalto dell'ordine dei Predicatori, recitate in Firenze dal MCCCIII al MCCCVI, ed ora per la prima volta pubblicate*, 1, 97.

conservative enough to discourage dispute, but such reluctance to hazard underserves a need to understand more fully Dante's ultimate intentions. For example, the critic says that Beatrice and Aquinas's ethical conclusions were included “per dare spicco ad una dimostrazione o per introdurre una tonalità scientifico-didascalica.”⁵⁸ In other words, Dante writes like a preacher in order to teach what preachers teach, a very sensible claim to make. But what of the deeper questions this inclusion suggests? If preaching language is used in these specific speeches, do these speeches contain or constitute sermons? And if so, where should one mark the beginning or the end of the “sermonic”? Should one then consider Beatrice a preacher through the entirety of the poem, or just here? And what of the specifically Dominican nature of these rhetorical tools (as both Aquinas, and Giordano da Pisa are Dominicans?) Furthermore, what to make of an author who doesn't exactly write sermons, but in a sense “transcribes” other people making sermons: Beatrice, Trajan and other people who are in no way authorizable by even the most liberal standards of the Church? And how, finally, does Dante negotiate the problem of pride, when he aligns his language with the will of God, designating himself as some sort of *scriba Dei*?⁵⁹ Delcorno's analysis does not address these more difficult questions, and his reluctance to do so leaves unsatisfied the reader's desire to understand; like the curious pilgrim in *Purgatorio* 22.3 exclaiming “trassi de l'acqua non sazia la spugna, ” we too draw our sponge from the water still thirsty.

All these issues seem to relate to Dante's poetics of authority. As previously discussed,

58 Delcorno, “Schede su Dante e la retorica della predicazione,” 311.

59 Preaching language is, after all, holy language, ideally inspired directly by God. Dante's quandary here is not dissimilar to his problem with his outpacing of nature on the terrace of pride. For more on Dante's careful negotiation of this issue in *Purgatorio*, see chapter 6, “Re-presenting What God Presented: The Arachnean Art of the Terrace of Pride” in Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*, 122–142.

Dante must speak in a familiar language of the trustworthy theological expert in order to conquer his reader's trust. The important ethical and spiritual matters at stake in the poem make this a necessity. But the *Divina Commedia* is never only one thing, and any interpretation attempting to bind the poem entirely to the strict generic, stylistic and theological requirements of medieval sermonics will be foiled by a text that consistently and everywhere exceeds any descriptive boundaries one may set for it. The *Divina Commedia*, with its omnivorous textuality, its manifold interests and intentions, and its near encyclopedic scope refuses containment by any one genre. Neither can it be concluded that by using the language of sermons Dante intends solely to stake his claim as an imitator of preachers, like Cappocchio merely a “buona scimia” (“good ape”) of a nature not his own (*Inf.* 29.139). It is obvious that Dante uses preaching language in order to reserve for himself some of its rhetorical power, but simple mimicry is not the limit of his aim, nor is any such behavior natural to his constitution. It is important to remember that the dominant spirit with which Dante cites other texts is in general one that problematizes those texts as much as it pays homage to them. Dante wears his *agon* on his sleeve, almost sportively so. His reading of Vergil's “auri sacra fames” (*Purg.* 22.40-41) turns its meaning inside-out in a dramatically obvious deliberate misreading; Vergil's discourse on the origins of Mantua is accompanied by his emphatic and blatant denunciation of his own earlier account in *Aeneid* 10 (*Inf.* 20.52-99); Dante's description of the transformation of the thieves into serpents in the seventh bolgia includes a dazzling command silencing both Lucan and Ovid, as their accounts achieve none of Dante's virtuosity (*Inf.* 24.95, 97); his rewriting of the Biblically-based *Pater Noster* in Purgatory 11.1-21 cuts the lines open and sutures into the gaps new explanations and commentary, creating a brand new prayer that presents its own exegesis as the penitent souls recite it. There is no good

reason to imagine that sermons would somehow evade the restlessly curious probing of Dante's interpretive scalpel, and his relentless drive to remake/remodel. And what of those occasions in which Dante's use or discussion of preaching intends not to honor it but to quarrel with it? The pilgrim's deployment of the preacher's language in his dialogue with Nicholas III illustrates an ironic role reversal between the quondam pope and Dante the plebe, suggesting a harsh critique of those who preach by profession. Can it be concluded then that in this passage Dante uses the structures of preaching to “authorize” his critical voice when that same critique casts doubt on the Church, the very institution that is the source of that authorization? Preaching, it must be remembered, was a privilege conferred by religious authorities, and was in effect never extended to laypersons.⁶⁰ Popes too are bound to preach, so what does it mean, then, when the pope is not the preacher but the one preached to?⁶¹ Does Dante-pilgrim speak sermonically to sound more credible, or does this use mean to question that very artifice to which listeners automatically accord such credibility?

This is a sobering reminder of Dante's insistence on playing with opposing binaries, his attempt to explore both sides of the coin, both ends of the spectrum, in describing a picture that

60 This fact alone reminds us that it is virtually *impossible* for Dante to compose an out-and-out sermon. This is not a question about Dante's supposed orthodoxy or heterodoxy, but about his willingness to put himself in a seriously dangerous legal predicament. Preaching is strictly and explicitly forbidden to laypersons; Dante has neither the requisite university training nor the special episcopal *licet* to preach. Whether Dante wishes to usurp that role is open to discussion; however, it would not serve his interests to do so in any obvious way since in his time those who preached without authorization were punished severely. The most recalcitrant of these were ultimately lashed to the stake and burned alive as heretics.

61 It also bears mention that Nicholas III was especially concerned with preaching and its authorization. His 1279 bull *Exiit qui seminat*, which “redefined papal ownership of the ideal of apostolic poverty” also energetically reaffirms papal authority to determine where, when and how Franciscans may preach (George W. Dameron, *Florence and Its Church in the Age of Dante* [Princeton: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005], 214). For the full text of Nicholas III's bull, see Potthast 21628. *Exiit qui seminat* also appears in the modern edition of his papal registers: M. Jules Gay, ed., *Les Registres de Nicolas III*, vol. 14.3, 2 564 (Paris: Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 1916), 232–241.

comprehends all. His world has both a Heaven and a Hell, a virtue to counterbalance every vice, a Siger at the antipodes of every Aquinas, a miraculously saved Bonconte for every surprisingly condemned Guido. The same goes for preaching, which can range from the masterfully visionary and prophetic to the downright diabolical. Although Dante frequently adopts the language of the preacher to assume *ex cathedra* authority for himself, one must remember that the last preacher in the *Divina Commedia* is a whoremongering joker preaching “ciance,” and selling fraudulent indulgences to a gawping credulous mob (29.109, 106)

Just as often as not, Dante's dealings with preaching and preachers do not serve to pad his discourse with credibility and authority, but rather to question that same authority, to interrogate the validity of preaching's rhetorical modes, or to call into question the supposedly *de facto* moral authority of licensed preachers. Dante's relationship to preaching in the *Paradiso* 29 also suggests the following questions: Does theological training actually benefit the preacher, or does it vitiate transmission of the Gospel? Does official authorization to preach rest on any legitimate grounds, or is this imposition arbitrary and unnecessary? How much should the *popolo* trust the words of their preachers anyway? Who should decide whether a preacher speaks truth?

This dissertation aims then to discuss preaching from a more inclusive perspective than has been previously attempted. While Delcorno devotes himself to up close granular examinations of the cadences and figures of speech derived from preaching, this study will instead begin from a greater critical distance, using Delcorno's evidence as an invitation to examine the poem as a predicator text, and to investigate more broadly and deeply into the matter of preaching, sermonics and Dante's *Divina Commedia*. This more ecumenical mode of inquiry includes the historical and social contexts for preaching and documents how Dante

maneuvers through this terrain and exploits the cultural valences of preaching and sermons to realize his very specific poetic and political goals.

Chapter Two

Prohibition and Permission (With a Consideration of the Bolgia of Hypocrisy and fra Dolcino)

Although preaching was an omnipresent feature of the world that Dante was born into, it had not been for long. Only in the last quarter of the twelfth century did the Church come to realize that they needed more and more frequent preaching, especially in the battle against heresy. The proper training of preachers becomes a matter of paramount and lasting importance. As the Church's mouthpiece of orthodoxy and authority, the preacher had to be specially trained for this role, and his permission to preach was given only after episcopal scrutiny. Dante, by comparison, cares little or nothing for the regulation of preachers. Although he certainly defends good theology and righteous living in general, the poet is quite *laissez faire*, compared to the Church, when it comes to who may and who may not preach. His treatment of the Jovial Friars in *Inferno* 23 shows exasperation for a religious order that does not preach at all, while his treatment of fra Dolcino in *Inferno* 28 reveals a striking degree of tolerance preachers from outside the Church's system of permissions and prohibitions.

In the autumn of 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council convened to address important matters of Catholic dogma, including particulars regarding the propagation and enforcement of that dogma. One of the canons from this council ordered that Bishops appoint properly trained men to preach to the laity. The legislation was meant to promote preaching within the church, and to defend against unauthorized preaching from without:

Inter cetera quae ad salutem spectant populi Christiani, pabulum verbi Dei permaxime noscitur sibi esse necessarium, quia sicut corpus materiali, sic anima spirituali cibo nutritur, eo quod *non in solo panem vivit homo, sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei*. Unde cum saepe contingat, quod episcopi [...] per se ipsos non sufficiunt ministrare populo verbum Dei, maxime per amplas dioeceses et diffusas, generali constitutione sancimus, ut episcopi viros idoneos ad sanctae praedicationis officium salubriter exequendum assumant, potentes in opere et sermone, qui plebes sibi commissas vice ipsorum cum per se idem nequiverint sollicitate visitantes, eas verbo aedificent et exemplo.

Among the various things that are conducive to the salvation of the Christian people, the nourishment of God's word is recognized to be especially necessary, since just as the body is fed with material food so the soul is fed with spiritual food, according to the words, *man lives not by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*. It often happens that bishops by themselves are not sufficient to minister the word of God to the people, especially in large and scattered dioceses [...]. We therefore decree by this general constitution that bishops are to appoint suitable men to carry out with profit this duty of sacred preaching, men who are powerful in word and deed and who will visit with care the peoples entrusted to them in place of the bishops, since these by themselves are unable to do it, and will build them up by word and example.¹

In sum, this canon mandates that episcopal authorities determine who may and who may not preach. Anyone who attempts to preach without episcopal permission falls outside of the protection of the Church, and any rebel who persisted would likely find himself before the inquisitor, and even lashed to the stake and burnt.² A contemporary reader ignorant of medieval ecclesiastical history, and reasonably assuming that there were preachers all along, might ask

1 Text and translation in: Norman P. Tanner S.J., ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington D.C.: Sheed & Ward Limited, and Georgetown University Press, 1990), 239–240.

why now, in 1215, does the Church finally establish a precedent for promoting and supporting preaching. And, considering the ubiquity of preaching by Dante's time, he or she may wonder what caused this sudden explosion of preaching across Christendom as well.

Historically, the Church was not always so sensitive to the spiritual needs of its flock, and for a long time it had largely neglected its people's desire to understand the substance of their religion. Through most of the Middle Ages sermons were quite rare, something of an afterthought within the larger spectrum of the administration of Church institutions.³ This was not always so, for the preaching tradition reaches back to Jesus himself, and the Apostles were of course especially ardent evangelists. Preaching is later theorized by Augustine in *De Doctrina Christiana*, to which Gregory I gave substantial commentary in *De Cura Pastoralis* in the sixth century.⁴ Although the Carolingian renaissance showed heightened interest in preaching and preachers' training in the eighth and ninth centuries,⁵ by the end of the twelfth century preaching

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- 2 The Church's stance is uncompromising on permission. Elsewhere in the text of the third canon of the Fourth Lateran Ecumenical Council, Innocent III accompanies his blanket prohibition of unauthorized preaching with threats of excommunication for those who refuse to obey. See John Arnold, "The Preaching of the Cathars," in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. Carolyn Muessig (Brill, 1998), 185. The Church's historically vigorous response to such preaching, as will be shown at the end of this chapter, proves its actions are far graver than those words might suggest.
 - 3 For more on the early history of preaching, see Richard H Rouse and Mary A Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland*, Studies and Texts - Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies 47 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1979), 42ff.
 - 4 Augustine, "De Doctrina Christiana," in Opera: Part 2, ed. Mayer Cornelius, Saint Augustine: Opera Omnia: CAG. Electronic Edition. (Basel: Schwabe, 1995), http://library.nlx.com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/xtf/view?docId=augustine_la/augustine_la.02.xml;chunk.id=div.augl.v1.2551a;toc.depth=1;toc.id=div.augl.v1.1ab;brand=default; Gregory the Great, B. Gregorii Magni Episcopi Romani, De Cura Pastoralis Liber, ed. Jeremiah Stephens (London: Typis T. Harper, impensis Philemonis Stephens, & Chr. Meredith, 1629). Both have been translated into English in the following editions: Saint Augustine, On Christian Teaching, trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997); Gregory the Great, Pastoral Care, Ancient Christian Writers 11 (New York: Newman Press, 1978).
 - 5 Charlemagne clearly intended to revitalize preaching, although his actions appear motivated more by a desire to consolidate imperial power than a genuine concern for the cultivation of his subjects' spiritual life. Augustine

once again had become scarce, leaving most laypersons out of the reach of sermons entirely.⁶

Parish priests did not give sermons, and while there were itinerant preachers to fill the void, they were never enough. Only bishops were officially required to preach, but few of them regularly delivered their obligatory Sunday sermon; some bishops never preached at all.⁷ In August of 1304, The Dominican preacher Giordano da Pisa describes the situation of preaching around the time St. Dominic petitioned the Pope for license to preach. At Dominic's request, the Pope marveled,

perocchè a quel tempo non facean prediche se non i Vescovi; i monaci, i preti, i remiti non predicavano; non piaccia a Dio, ma i Vescovi. Questo era loro proprio officio; e questi erano già a tanto venuti, che non predicavano quasi di niuno tempo. Leggesi bene di Santo Augustino, e di Santo Jeronimo, che diceano alcun'otta al popolo certe omelie, e questo fecero rade volte; gli altri non si trova che quasi predicassero se non rade volte; quasi nella città in tutto l'anno facea una predica il Vescovo, sicchè non si sapea che si fosse predicare.

seeing that at that time no one gave sermons except Bishops; monks, priests, hermits did not preach; God forbid, but only bishops. This was their duty alone, and even these had come to such that they gave sermons hardly at all. One reads well of Saint Augustine, and Saint Jerome, that they delivered homilies to the people sometimes, but this they only did rarely; one finds that the rest almost didn't preach at all if not rarely; the Bishop maybe gave a sermon once in a year, such that nobody knew what preaching was.⁸

Thompson says that episcopal authorities were directly subordinate to the emperor's authority: "bishops were also agents of the imperial administration. This would change as the cities threw off imperial control" (*Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes 1125-1325* [University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005], 45). For a more detailed examination of the Carolingian emphasis on preaching and its underlying motives see Roberto Rusconi, *Predicazione e vita religiosa nella società italiana: da Carlo Magno alla controriforma*, Documenti della storia 30 (Torino: Loescher, 1981). especially the introduction (18-26) and a selection of primary source material from the period (27-35).

6 P.B. Roberts, "Preaching in/and the Medieval City," in *Medieval Sermons and Society: Cloister, City, University*, vol. 9, Textes et Études du Moyen Age (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 1998), 152.

7 Carlo Delcorno, "Medieval Preaching in Italy (1200-1500)," in *The Sermon*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle, Typologie Des Sources Du Moyen Age Occidental 81-83 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 450.

The great neglect of preaching until the dawn of the thirteenth century seems founded on an assumption that laypersons under the aegis of the Catholic Church would not wander from the confines of orthodoxy. Practice of the sacraments was considered enough to guarantee salvation, so why would anyone wish to investigate and question doctrinal matters?⁹ But in the second half of the twelfth century new ideologies began to sprout up here and there to fill the void, especially in the Languedoc and in northern Italy. These new sects, the Cathars, Waldensians and others, began to propagate new theological ideas, and they did so by preaching. The movements were met with an enthusiastic public response, and over time their increasing popularity began to challenge the Church's formerly absolute control over religious faith and its expression. By 1200, Jacques de Vitry expresses concern about such “pseudo or false preachers,” highlighting a new point of stress between popular religious expression and the institutional Church.¹⁰ Eventually the Church would have to respond to these challenges or else allow the integrity of the body of Christ to be compromised by the various sects that would inevitably ensue if these popular offshoots straying from the orthodox root were allowed to flourish.

The dilemma the Church faced at the turn of the thirteenth century was similar to that of any ruling hegemon needing to control and curtail any internal movement challenging its supremacy: those leaders of heresy must be suppressed, and those at risk of switching sides must be kept within the fold. Dual goals require dual tactics. To control those already organized in

8 *Prediche del Beato fra Giordano da Rivalto dell'ordine dei Predicatori, recitate in Firenze dal MCCCIII al MCCCVI, ed ora per la prima volta pubblicate* (Florence: Magheri, 1831), 235.

9 Rouse and Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland*, 43–44.

10 David L. D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 25.

opposition against it, the Church worked aggressively to extirpate entrenched heresy through various repressive measures: prohibitions, anathemas, inquisitorial processes, and the Albigensian Crusade, all aiming to strike at these resilient new sects.¹¹ The second demographic worthy of the Church's attention – those who had not yet crossed to the other side, but who were certainly at risk of drifting into heresy – needed a much gentler treatment.¹² For these, persuasion works better than pyres, hence the re-affirmation of preaching as an important rhetorical tool to gently prod the potentially errant back towards the *via recta*. The Church began to deploy preachers in zones troubled by heresy, but these first sallies only highlighted a need for better training to effectively counter the superior preaching of the heretics.¹³ This is the case for their negotiations with Cathar preachers in the Languedoc. These initial efforts marked a slight increase in preaching in the last quarter of the twelfth century, but they were halting and

11 While sometimes repression of heresy was extreme, as is the case for the Albigensian Crusade, some scholars say that much anti-heretical legislation was mostly bluster, at least until the end of the thirteenth century. "Extant communal legislation against heretics often looks pro forma. Cities inserted Frederick II's antiheresy decree into their statutes verbatim or pledged to obey it without any provisions for enforcement" (Thompson O. P., *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes 1125-1325*, 139–140). For more on inquisitorial aims and processes in the Middle Ages, and especially in the 13th century, see Franco Cardini and Marina Montesanto, *La lunga storia dell'Inquisizione: luci e ombre della "Leggenda Nera"* (Rome: Città Nuova, 2005). On episcopal repression of heresy at this time, see Grado Giovanni Merlo, "'Cura Animarum' ed eretici," in *Pievi e parrocchie in Italia nel Basso Medioevo (Sec. XIII-XV): Atti del VI Convegno di storia della Chiesa in Italia (Firenze, sett. 1981)* (Rome: Herder, 1984), 541–556.

12 This concern for reconciliation is clear in Innocent's emphasis on assimilating these new unorthodox orders popping up, like the Humiliati and the Waldensians. In 1199, he orders that laymen may read the Scripture in the vernacular, as it is better for them to know the true Scriptures "lest these simple people should be forced into heresy" (D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300*, 26). For Innocent's view on vernacularized Scripture, see also: Leonard Boyle, "Innocent III and Vernacular Versions of Scripture," in *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley*, ed. Katherine Walsh and Diana Wood, *Studies in Church History* 4 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985). And yet, history proves that access to Scripture does not keep heresy at bay. For example the Cathars had a strong book culture, and Scripture figured very strongly in their preaching practice. They often had the New Testament or the gospel of John to expound from, which one Cathar would read in Latin while a *perfectus* would expound on it in the common tongue. (Arnold, "The Preaching of the Cathars," 186–187).

13 See: Rouse and Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland*, 43–47.

sporadic, and preachers struggled under their poor preparation.¹⁴ Recognizing the deficiencies in preachers' training, Church thinkers proposed various vetting apparatuses to raise standards and keep preaching orthodox.¹⁵ This trend towards greater quality and control eventually led to Innocent III's legislation, the first universal attempt to address preaching and preachers seriously and systematically through prescription and proscription.¹⁶ These new regulatory measures, combined with a surge in volunteers for preaching, especially among Franciscans and Dominicans, were the main factors leading to the thirteenth century explosion of preaching.

The Church had always been the primary means through which people made sense of their spiritual and ethical lives, but the resurgence of preaching in Europe in the 13th century reaffirmed and amplified the church's central role in these matters. This is the century in which the great preaching orders, the Dominicans and Franciscans, were founded. Mendicants traveled across Europe preaching from town to town, and they sometimes even made forays into Muslim lands (as St. Francis's biography testifies). But the greatest effects of preaching were felt locally. On a nearly daily basis one could hear a sermon given in a church or piazza in the larger cities. Famous preachers like Giordano da Pisa would deliver hundreds of sermons in a year, sometimes as many as four per day. In a sense, preaching's omnipresence in *duecento* Europe might be compared to the pervasiveness of the evening news in our age (in fact, preaching actually *was*

14 Ibid., 47.

15 Odo of Sully, bishop of Paris from 1197-1208, was especially vocal about this, as was Robert Courson, who expressed his opinions in the councils of Paris in 1213 and Rouen in 1214 (John Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants: the Social Views of Peter the Chanter and his Circle* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970], 110).

16 Rouse and Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland*, 53.

news in some cases).¹⁷ Sermons were also often used to achieve specific propagandistic goals. For example, Federico Visconti was employed to speak in favor of Papal and Guelf interests in 1267, preaching for “peace” to the Ghibelline leaders of Poggibonsi during Carlo d'Anjou's siege of that city.¹⁸ During Frederick II's reign, many mendicants preached the emperor.¹⁹

Laypersons responded enthusiastically to mendicant preaching, raising the status of these orders in the church and assuring their central role in this period of revival. A frenzy of donations financed the construction of massive churches on the peripheries of the old town centers: Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella in Florence, San Domenico (the seat of the Dominicans and burial place of St. Dominic) and San Francesco in Bologna, and many other churches elsewhere.²⁰ Mendicant sermons were so popular that large piazzas were built or expanded to contain the growing crowds. For example Florence had to expand the piazza in front of Sta. Maria Novella when it proved far too small to accommodate the throngs coming to hear Pietro da Verona in 1244. The need for more and more space is a constant feature in medieval accounts of urban preaching.²¹

17 For an example of a medieval sermon that functions as news, see Rusconi, *Predicazione e vita religiosa nella società italiana: da Carlo Magno alla controriforma*, 152–53.

18 *Quasi quidam cantus: studi sulla predicazione medievale*, Biblioteca di lettere italiane 71 (Firenze: Olschki, 2009), 118.

19 *Ibid.*, 119.

20 These construction projects were so monumental that they entirely reshaped the cities in which they occurred. Residents were relocated, waterworks were developed or rebuilt to accommodate new needs. These large churches established on the outskirts of old city centers recentered, or rather “decentered” existing sacred spaces, eclipsing the duomo as the spiritual heart of many cities. Mercantile, industrial and real estate trends followed suit, further changing the economic geography of the city. For more, see Thompson, *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes 1125-1325*, 420–422; Delcorno, “Medieval Preaching in Italy (1200-1500),” 462.

21 “Alcune delle più belle piazze italiane vennero costruite per fare spazio alla predicazione dei mendicanti, i quali si insediarono nei nuclei cittadini e ne condizionarono lo sviluppo urbanistico. Il successo della predicazione di

These new public works projects to accommodate the learning of the word of God reflect the construction project undertaken in the hearts of Christians, beginning in the Lateran IV legislation, and operating at full tilt later in the century. In the words of Lateran IV, preachers are architects of the soul who must “build” (“aedificent”) the members of their flock through word and example. In this way, preaching can be seen as a kind of inner building (“in” + “struo”), promoting doctrinal understanding in addition to simple penitence.²² According to the canon, the project is one of nourishment as well; Christians need the “pabulum verbi Dei” because the soul is nourished by spiritual food, just as the body is by material food (“sicut corpus materiali sic anima spirituali cibo nutritur”), for, as Christ said in Matthew 4:4, “non in solo panem vivit homo” (“man does not live on bread alone”). In the wake of the spread of heresy over the last several decades, the Church realized that its flock needed spiritual nourishment to accompany the customary administration of the sacraments, which alone do not satisfy the need to understand faith. This yearning to investigate spiritual matters must be answered through discussion and oral explanation.²³ An understanding of preaching as such a teaching project dates back to Jesus's

Pietro da Verona è tale a Firenze nel 1244 da indurre il Comune all'ingrandimento della piazza antistante S. Maria Novella. Tutta la storia della predicazione cittadina è condizionata da un non mai pienamente risolto problema di spazi, capaci di contenere un pubblico nuovo, suscitato e raccolto dall'eloquenza popolare di Francescani e Domenicani.” (Carlo Delcorno, “Professionisti della parola: predicatori, giullari, concionatori,” in *Tra storia e simbolo: studi dedicati a Ezio Raimondi*, vol. 46, Biblioteca di “Lettere Italiane,” Studi e Testi [Florence: Olschki, 1994], 4. Repr. in *Quasi quidam cantus: studi sulla predicazione medievale*, 6).

22 Nicole Bériou, “La prédication aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age,” *Communications* 72, no. 1 (2002): 113–127. Bériou convincingly argues for a reconsideration of medieval preaching from a more strictly educational perspective, as a mode of communication that frequently expresses far more than mere exhortations to penitence and confession. Schools, though existent, were very rare in these times, thus “les premiers rôles en matière d'éducation revenaient alors au deux milieux structurants de la famille ed de l'Église” (Ibid., 113.).

23 Christine Thouzellier plainly states that in order to prevent heresy the Church must respond to people's powerful need to hear about and discuss their faith in order to understand it better. Regarding the problem of heresy in France, Innocent III's repressive measures must be accompanied by serious and sound instruction in the faith: “Toutes les mesures coercitives déjà prises resteront sans effet si, en premier, on ne s'avise pas d'instruire les fidèles, non par de simples prêches contre l'hérésie, mais par un enseignement fréquent et fécond, pain substantiel des âmes. Le pontife a pris conscience du besoin impérieux des êtres, à rechercher une vérité profonde dans l'explication orale et la discussion”(Christine Thouzellier, *Catharisme et Valdésisme en Languedoc*

Great Commission, which commands to “teach”²⁴: “Euntes ergo docete omnes gentes baptizantes eos in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.” (“Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost”).²⁵ In the fourth century, Augustine synthesizes Christian teaching with Ciceronian rhetoric in *De Doctrina Christiana*, which states that a sermon should teach listeners as well as delight and move them (“ut doceat, ut delectet, ut flectat”).²⁶ Preaching's doctrinal essence was always present to some degree in pastoral culture, even among those who rejected the rhetorical modalities of more didactic preaching. A notable example is in Francis, who, even though he avoided the doctrinal style of preaching in his time,²⁷ was still explicitly linked to a tradition of Church learning. Thomas of Celano, one of his early biographers, does not hesitate to call Francis a teacher, recounting the

à la fin du XIIIe et au début du XIIIe siècle: politique pontificale, controverses, 1st ed. [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966], 186).

- 24 There is persuasive evidence that Dante too sees preaching and teaching to be essentially the same, in Beatrice's liberal vernacularization of this Biblical passage in *Paradiso*. While Jesus specifies that his disciples teach (“docete”), in her rebuff of bad preachers in *Paradiso* 29, Beatrice easily substitutes that term with “predicate” in ironic recollection of Jesus's words: “Non disse Cristo al suo primo convento / andate e predicate al mondo ciance” (*Par.* 29.109-110).
- 25 Matt. 28:16-20. Bible citations are from the *Biblia Sacra: Vulgatae Editionis* (Milano: San Paolo, 1995). English translations are from *The Holy Bible, Douay-Rheims* (Rockford, Ill: Tan Books, 1971).
- 26 *De Doctrina Christiana*, 1995, 4, 27. The dryly doctrinal pedigree of Augustine's statement shows that from the outset preaching was never exclusively about driving listeners to tearful penitence. This is no surprise, as sacred rhetoric finds some of its structural roots in the secular rhetoric of the pagans. Augustine's words here are inspired by a passage from Cicero: “tribus, rebus homines ad nostram sententiam perducimus, aut docendo aut conciliando aut permovendo.” (Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Oratore* [Brepolis, n.d.], II, 310, <http://clt.brepolis.net.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/lita/pages/Toc.aspx>).
- 27 Francis's approach to preaching radically diverged from conventional practice, especially regarding the more technical aspects of sermon-making. For example, he refused to prepare sermons, depending instead on the inner voice of the Holy Spirit to guide him: “praedico eis sicut docuerit me Spiritus Sanctus” (“I preach to them as the Holy Spirit teaches me to”) (Anonymous, “Compilazione Assisiensi,” in *La Letteratura Franceseana*, vol. 2 [Mondadori, 2005], sec. 109.3, 480). Gregory IX confirms this report of Francis's method in the bull canonizing the saint, “Mira circa nos,” claiming that in his burning zeal (“spirituo fervoris”) Francis preached sermons whose force came not from the persuasive language of human knowledge (“nullis verborum persuasibilium humanae sapientiae coloribus adornata”) but instead from the power of God (“Dei virtuti potenti”) (“*Mira circa nos*,” in *La Letteratura francescana: Francesco e Chiara d'Assisi*, vol. 1 [Mondadori, 2004], sec. 9, 259).

saint's preaching in the church he attended as a youth: "Ubi didicit, ibi et docuit" ("where he once learned, there he also taught").²⁸

While Franciscans and Dominicans preached more than any other monastic order in the thirteenth century, this does not mean that other orders did not feel an obligation to preach. Even among the more contemplative sects the obligation of Jesus's apostolic command was palpably felt. Testimony of the pressure to preach is found in the Cistercians' gradual inching towards the pastoral ethos, as well as in St. Bernard's own complex reflections on the tensions between the active vs. the contemplative life.²⁹ It seems that the *duecento* and *trecento* preferred preaching figures to reclusive contemplatives, at least if Giordano da Pisa's words are representative of the zeitgeist:

Molto è maggior fatto quello di Santo Paolo, e d'Agustino, e di Jeronimo, e degli altri Dottori, c'hanno illuminata la Chiesa, che non fu il fatto di Maccario, e d'Antonio remiti; questi salvarono loro medesimi, ma queglii salvano tutte le genti; e però il lor merito è più senza fine.

A much greater deed, that of Saint Paul and of Augustine and of Jerome and of the other Doctors, who had illuminated the Church, than that of Macarius and Anthony the hermit; the latter saved themselves, but the former save all peoples; and for this reason their merit is more limitless.³⁰

In contrast to Giordano's model hermits Macarius and Anthony, even the most reclusive eremites of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries found it difficult to disregard the Great Commission; even they participated in sermonic instruction, at least when pursued by religious

28 Thomas of Celano, "Vita beati Francisci," in *La letteratura francescana*, vol. 2 (Mondadori, 2005), sec. X.23.2, 66.

29 Jessalyn Bird, "The Religious's Role in a Post-Fourth-Lateran World: Jacques de Vitry's *Sermones Ad Status and Historia Occidentalis*," in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, vol. 90, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 1998, 215.

30 Giordano da Pisa, *Prediche del Beato fra Giordano da Rivalto dell'ordine dei Predicatori, recitate in Firenze dal MCCCIII al MCCCVI, ed ora per la prima volta pubblicate*, 239 translation mine.

seekers.³¹ The hermit Pietro di Morrone, later known as Pope Celestine V, often received pilgrims at his mountaintop cell, whom he exhorted to penitence.³² Dante's representation of contemplatives in *Par* 21-22 shows his ambivalence towards pure contemplation, as he places comparatively active contemplatives in privileged roles. St. Peter Damian dominates canto 21. A sworn contemplative in life, Peter Damian pioneered contemplative practices within Benedictine monasteries, and was prior of the hermitage of Fonte Avellana, just southwest of Urbino in the mountains bordering Umbria and the Marches. And yet he was much more active *in saeculo* than this aspect of his biography might suggest. Dante only mentions his eremism in passing, noting his austere diet while at Fonte Avellana. The rest of the treatment instead highlights Damian's activism, and opinions on clerical wealth, which he sharply criticizes in his letters. In his denunciation of contemporary prelates, whose corruption stands in stark contrast to the purity and integrity of the Biblical apostles Peter and Paul, Dante's Peter Damian describes them as if they were mendicants, highlighting their itinerancy and their poverty. To contrast this ideal of unencumbered mobility, Damian describes the “moderni pastori” bogged down by the frippery and trappings of their unwarranted prosperity:

Venne Cefàs e venne il gran vasello
 de lo Spirito Santo, magri e scalzi,
 prendendo il cibo da qualunque ostello.
 Or voglion quinci e quindi chi i rinalzi
 li moderni pastori che li meni,
 tanto son gravi!, e chi di rietro li alzi.
 Cuopron d'i manti loro i palafreni
 sí che due bestie van sott'una pelle:
 oh pazienza che tanto sostieni!

31 George Ferzoco, “Preaching by Thirteenth-Century Italian Hermits,” in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, vol. 90, Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 1998), 145–159.

32 *Ibid.*, 154.

Cephas came, and the exalted vessel
of the Holy Spirit came, lean and barefoot,
receiving their food at any doorway.
Now our modern shepherds call for one on this side,
one on that, to support them, they are so bloated,
and one to go before, one to boost them from behind.
Their fur-lined mantles hang upon their horses' flanks
so that two beasts go underneath one skin.
O patience, what a heavy load you bear! (*Par.* 21.127-135)

Peter and Paul are “magri” from fasting, go shoeless (“scalzi”) and humbly take whatever food offered them from “qualunque ostello.” The representation recalls the Franciscan practice of going barefoot, which Dante utilizes as a trademark of their marriage to poverty in *Par* 11.79-84: “l venerabile Bernardo / si scalzò prima [...] Scalzasi Egidio, scalzasi Silvestro / dietro a lo sposo [...] (“Venerable Bernard was the first / to shed his shoes [...] Barefoot goes Giles / barefoot goes Sylvester / following the groom”). Damian's hint at a link between apostles and Franciscans underscores other implicit similarities, including their preaching of the gospel, which would have been the totality of material that the Apostles would have preached. Preaching is also implicit in Dante's choice of names for St. Paul, the “gran vasello / de lo Spirito Santo.” Paul is first called a “vas electionis” in the book of Acts, when Jesus announces that Saul (whose name will only later be changed to Paul) will bring His name before the gentiles, kings and the children of Israel (“vas electionis est mihi iste ut portet nomen meum coram gentibus et regibus et filiis Israhel” [9.15]).

Dante's emphasis on apostolic work in *Paradiso* 21 is entirely in keeping with Peter Damian's own writings; the description of fat prelates seem to echo Peter Damian's own description of ecclesiastical figures tricked out in the finest of garments, mounting only the

noblest and most ostentatiously ornamented horses.³³ But the emphasis on apostolic activity is also a constant in St. Peter Damian's letters. One of these exhorts another brother not to neglect his ministry in pursuit of contemplative seclusion:

Et quanquam diversis te negotiis cura regiminis opprimat, ad sinum tamen quietis intimae, cum poterit, mens recurat. Imitatus scilicet Moysen, qui tabernaculum foederis frequenter intrabat et exibat. Quid est enim quod ille crebro tabernaculum ingreditur et egreditur, nisi ut exemplum praebeat, quod is, qui intus in contemplationem rapitur, foris infirmantium negotiis frequenter urgetur, intus Dei arcana considerat, foris onera carnalium portat.

And even though you are burdened with various duties inherent in your office as abbot, let your soul retreat to the haven of solitary quiet whenever possible, imitating Moses who frequently paid short visits to the tabernacle of the covenant. What is meant by these frequent visits to the tabernacle but that we should be taught by this example: that he who in God's presence is carried away by contemplation should, upon leaving it, be constantly occupied with the affairs of his weaker brothers; that within that presence he should meditate on the high secrets of God, but when leaving it he should bear the burdens of others who are flesh and bone.³⁴

Peter Damian describes a Moses who went in and out of the tabernacle, now meditating, now guiding the people; this is the ideal model for the Christian monk. In the above passage Damian does not specify the particulars of involvement with the weaker brethren ("infirmantium negotiis"), but elsewhere in this same letter he is more emphatic in his claims that the ideal monk

33 His letters are full of emphasis on active pastoral care and criticism of those who abuse their powers and do not tend to their flock. Take for example, his excoriation of prelates who live in luxury, which may have inspired Dante's passage to follow. St. Peter Damian notes the: "papales scilicet infulas gemmis micantibus aureisque bracteolis per diversa loca corruptas. Imperiales equos, qui, dum pernices gressus arcuatis cervicibus glomerant, sessoris sui manus loris innexas indomita ferocitate fatigant. Ommito annulos enormibus adhibitos margaritis. Praetereo virgas, non jam auro gemissque conspicuas, sed sepultas" ("papal vestments sparkling with gems and cloth of gold, spoils from various lands, imperial horses which while prancing with nimble steps and arching necks, by their unbroken liveliness tire their riders tugging at the reins. I will say nothing of the rings set with enormous pearls, and will pass over their crosiers, not just conspicuous for their gold and gems, but actually buried in them") (J. P Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae* [Brepols: Turnhout, n.d.] 145, 538 D; St. Peter Damian, *Peter Damian: Letters*, trans by. Owen J. Blum [Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1989] vol. 5, 80.).

34 Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae*, 144, 282 A–B; *Peter Damian: Letters*, vol 3, 239–40.

leads by example and miraculous deeds, much like Moses, who “noctibus in monte orationibus vacat, die vero in urbibus per miraculorum signa coruscat, imitationis videlicet viam bonis rectoribus sternens” (“spent his nights in prayer in the mountains, but by day brilliantly performed miraculous deeds in the towns, thus showing the way that good leaders might imitate”).³⁵

St. Peter Damian is not the only figure whose contemplation is directed towards guiding others, in Dante's representation. In *Paradiso* 22, St. Benedict introduces Macarius, one of the old desert fathers, and Romuald, an eleventh century hermit and martyr: “Qui è Maccario, qui è Romoaldo, / qui son li frati miei che dentro ai chiostri / fermar li piedi e tennero il cor saldo” (“Here is Macarius, here is Romualdus, / here are my brothers whose feet never strayed / beyond the cloisters and whose hearts were firm”) [*Par.* 22.49-51]). Benedict's assertion that these two stayed in the cloister is partly false. While it is true that Macarius is not known for activity outside his hermit retreat (as Giordano notes in his sermon, excerpted above),³⁶ St. Romuald lived a life directed towards missionary activity to a degree equal to his eremism. Bruno of Querfurt's biography on Romuald, the *Vita quinque fratrum* (c. 1006), unceasingly emphasizes his frequent preaching. At one point, Bruno of Querfurt explains that for Romuald eremism is but one step in a spiritual itinerary that culminates in evangelical martyrdom:

[...] tripla commoda querentibus viam Domini, hoc est noviter venientibus de seculo desiderabile cenobium; maturis vero et Deum vivum sicientibus aurea solitudo, cupientibus dissolvi et esse cum Christo evangelium paganorum.

35 Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae*, 144, 282 C; *Peter Damian: Letters*, 240.

36 Little is known about Macarius, and it is not certain whether Dante refers to a Macarius of Alexandria, who was a follower of Saint Anthony, and lived as a hermit near the Red Sea, or to an Egyptian Macarius, who lived in solitude in the deserts of Egypt. Confusion of these figures was common at the time. In all likelihood Giordano da Pisa confuses the two as well.

[...] There is a triple opportunity for those seeking out the way of the Lord. This is sought-after cenobism for those recently arriving from the world, golden solitude for the more experienced and thirsting for the living God, and evangelism of the pagans for those longing to be dissolved and be with Christ.³⁷

Although for Romuald preaching is limited to missionary work and does not address the kind of domestic instruction that will become common in later centuries, his ideal model of monastic ascent envisions preaching as the last step in a long culmination of monastic practice: first cenobism, next eremism, and finally evangelism. The last step is reserved for those “cupientibus dissolvi,” which suggests a kind of missionary martyrdom that will finally bring the individual into union with God. By accentuating martyrdom, he highlights the importance of the preaching stage as the ultimate and total realization of one's identity as a perfected Christian. For Romuald, eremism is not a destination in and of itself, but rather just one rung on a ladder that leads to the final and glorious realization of the Christian mission, preaching.³⁸

Romuald's emphasis on evangelical speech echoes one of Dante's dominant criteria when judging religious figures: that their existence is justified only insofar as they speak the Gospel. Dante not only despises the silence of those commissioned to speak, but also finds in their silence a clarion call for someone else to fill the space. He states this plainly in his letter to the cardinals of Italy of 1315, clearly associating clergy with a duty to speak that far too often goes unheeded:

Nam etiam 'in ore lactentium et infantium' suonit iam Deo placita veritas, et cecus natus veritatem confessus est, quam Pharisei non modo tacebant, sed et maligne

37 *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, vol. 6, Monumenta Poloniae Historica. Pomniki Dziejowe Polski. (Krakow: Nakl. Akademii Umiejetnosci, 1893), 392–393.

38 Romuald's anticipation of evangelical dissolution was not an empty fantasy; he and several of his companions were killed far from their homes in Italy while on a missionary trip to Poland.

reflectere conabuntur. Hiis habeo persuasum quod audeo.”

For even in the mouth of the suckling and the infant has the truth pleasing to God resounded, and a blind newborn has confessed the truth which the Pharisees not only were silent about, but evilly tried to turn away. I am persuaded to dare on account of these examples. (*Ep.* 11.9)³⁹

This passage and others in his letters will be comprehensively treated in Chapter Three; however, a brief introduction to Dante's stance on speaking and silence deserves brief comment now. The cardinals to whom he addresses his letter are the foremost representatives of the faith, but Dante unflatteringly compares them to Pharisees. Worse than the silence of the Pharisees (“non modo tacebant”), Dante says, is their evil attempt to thwart the speech of others (“maligne reflectere conabuntur”), recalling the various occasions in the gospels when the high priests, scribes and pharisees attempted to suppress Jesus. In spite of – indeed because of – this oppressive atmosphere of censorship that Dante describes, truth must necessarily be spoken; but who is left to speak when the priests have abdicated their roles? For Dante, it takes a real miracle to produce the speech of truth, for the “infans” is by definition without language; he could speak only by Divine fiat. As for the infant so too for the suckling. Milk often represents both poetic and theological knowledge in Dante's symbolic economy⁴⁰; a baby still at its mother's teat, still

39 Citations of Dante's *Epistles* are from Dante Alighieri, *Opere minori*, ed. Domenico De Robertis and et al., vol. 3 t. 2, Letteratura italiana. Storia e testi; v. 5. (Milano; Napoli: Ricciardi, 1979).

40 Dante consistently associates milk with both poetic and divine speech in the *Commedia*. Here are a few examples: Homer is called the one “che le Muse lattar più ch'altri mai” (“whom the Muses suckled more than any other”) (*Purg.* 22.102); St. Thomas Aquinas remarks on those Dominican preachers who, not following the mandates of their order's founder, return to the sheepfold with no milk to give to the rest of the flock (“vagabunde più da esso vanno / più tornano a l'ovile di latte vòte” (“and the farther his sheep go wandering / from him, the emptier of milk / do they at last come back into the fold”) (*Par.* 11.128-129); Dante narrates something of an apotheosis of this symbolic relationship of milk to truth, comparing the angelic host extending its flames upwards towards Mary to an infant extending its arms to its mother after suckling (“E come fantolin ch' nver'la mamma / tende le braccia, poi che 'l latte prese, / per l'animo che 'nfin di fuor s'infiamma; ciascun di quei candori in sù si stese / con la sua cima, sì che l'alto affetto / ch'elli avieno a Maria mi fu palese” [“And, like a baby reaching out its arms / to mamma after it has drunk her milk, / its inner impulse kindled into outward flame, / all these white splendors were reaching upward / with their firey tips, so that their deep affection / for Mary was

ingesting milk, should not yet be capable of delivering it to others. In a similar way, the “cecus natus” (“blind newborn”) is suddenly endowed with sufficient vision to know and profess truth. For Dante, the speech of truth comes not from Ecclesiastical status, university training or natural skill but rather from some kind of inner vision that transcends any natural impediments. Among these various paradoxes of extreme *impossibilia* miraculously overcome, Dante finds the courage and claims the right to speak himself (“his habeo persuasum quod audeo”).

This passage from Dante's letter will function as an interpretive tool in our future explorations; when Dante discusses preachers and preaching we can read those occasions through the lens of these lines. Time and again Dante follows this scheme, in which an official exponent of the Church is the one silent or silencing, or in which an underdog is pushed into the spotlight as the preacher of truth. With rare exception, those who preach are not those officially permitted to do so. Their “sermons” are inspired by inner impulses and supplemented by Gospel Scriptures, rather than by the sort of professional instruction that officially-sanctioned preachers would have acquired in the theological centers of Paris or Bologna. In contrast to these spontaneous speakers that Dante advances, those with ecclesiastical sanction are generally represented disapprovingly; much in the same way that Dante presents the cardinals and pharisees in the above passage, these are the ones with every right and responsibility to speak, but they are silent, or even silence others.

I turn now to two extreme examples of speech and silence, both from *Inferno*, to demonstrate Dante's censure of those who officially ought to speak, but do not, and those who, again officially, ought not to speak, but do. I do not mean to claim that Dante assertively

made clear to me”] [*Par.* 23.212-125]).

challenges Church doctrine regarding permission to preach; rather, I map the broad and varied landscape of rhetoric that Dante would consider tolerable speech. On the one hand, he shows a remarkable indifference towards language that could be considered heretical or untrue (far more dangerous, as he asserts in *Paradiso* 29, is the folding of half-baked speculative theology into sermons that confuse and mislead the masses, as we will see in Chapter Six); on the other, he expresses an extraordinary intolerance for those clergy who are bound to speak according to Scriptural authority, but fail to break their silence. Between vociferous heretics and complacently mum Orthodoxy, Dante's spite for the latter far exceeds his concerns about the former.⁴¹

The first example, the sermon-shirking cleric, is found in the bolgia of the hypocrites in *Inferno* 23, where Dante meets two members of a religious order called the Jovial Friars, as well as the high priest Caiaphas from the New Testament who helped arrange Jesus's crucifixion. Dante focuses on silence in this canto to highlight its role in the sin of hypocrisy; after all, hypocrisy depends far more on what is withheld than than on what is spoken. The poet also employs silence to parody the pseudo-monasticism of the Jovial Friars and, in Caiaphas's case, to underline his role as an active silencer of others (that other ultimately being himself). Dante's take on unauthorized, and potentially heretical, speakers will use fra Dolcino in *Inferno* 28 as an example. I will show how Dante's concern about figures antagonistic to the Church rarely regards doctrinal heresy; far more important for Dante are real physical threats to the Church's integrity, which in Dolcino's case is eventually realized in the form of outright warfare.

41 Dante's ethics of commitment consistently favors the passionate and driven to the lukewarm in their beliefs, independently of what they are passionate or tepid about. We remember "l'anime triste di coloro / che visser senza 'nfamia e senza lode" ("the wretched souls of those who lived / without disgrace yet without praise") of *Inferno* 3.35-36, whose existence was so lackluster that they are rejected by both Heaven and Hell, and Vergil refuses to even discuss them at length: "non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa" ("Let us not speak of them – look and pass by") (51).

Inferno 23 begins on a subdued and silent note, compared to the preceding two canti. In the previous scene, barators are sunk in boiling pitch, poked and prodded on all sides by winged demons. It ends with the famous deception of the demons Alichino and Calcabrina, who end up tumbling into the boiling pitch after an escaped sinner, the unnamed figure from Navarre. The entire scene is marked by talking, wisecracking, gallows humor and extreme violence. The opening of *Inferno* 23, in contrast, is marked by a still and solemn atmosphere, in which only two figures, Dante-pilgrim and Vergil slowly and silently advance across a barren landscape:

Taciti, soli, senza compagnia
 n'andavam l'un dinanzi e l'altro dopo,
 come frati minor vanno per via.
 Vòlt' era in su la favola d'Isopo
 lo mio pensier per la presente rissa,
 dov' el parlò de la rana e del topo;
 ché più non si pareggia “mo” e “issa”
 che l'un con l'altro fa, se ben s'accoppia
 principio e fine con la mente fissa.

Silent, alone, and unescorted
 we went on, one in front, the other following,
 as Friars Minor walk along the roads.
 The brawl played out before our eyes
 put me in mind of Aesop's fable
 in which he told the tale of frog and mouse,
 for 'issa' and 'mo' are not more like in meaning
 than one case and the other, if we compare
 with circumspection their beginnings and their ends (23.1-9).

The canto is rife with overt suggestions of monasticism, as many scholars have noted.⁴²

42 Ezio Raimondi sees in the opening tercet a “grigia atmosfera ecclesiastica” and an “aria claustrale” that “si stende cauta ma prepotente dietro la trama di parole chiave quali 'monaci, Clugnì, manto, stola, collegio, cappe, frati' (Ezio Raimondi, “I canti bolognesi dell’*Inferno* dantesco,” in *Dante e Bologna nei tempi di Dante*, VII centenario della nascita di Dante 11 [Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1967], 239–240; reprinted as “Una città nell’inferno dantesco.” in *Metafora e storia: studi su Dante e Petrarca* [Turin: Einaudi, 1970], 51–52). Russo, more synthetically than most before and after him, notes the accumulation of different terms and adjectives to “rendere quell’atmosfera grave e conventuale che sembra incombere su questa bolgia” (Vittorio Russo, *Esperienze e/di letture dantesche: tra il 1966 e il 1970* [Naples: Liguori, 1971], 37–38). In 1979,

Dante and Vergil enter the space “taciti, soli, senza compagnia,” plodding in single file in the customary manner of traveling Franciscans (“come frati minor vanno per via”). This calm, this “pianissimo,”⁴³ establishes a gloomy silent tone that dominates most of the canto. However, the solemn and measured tempo is only briefly held: the fable that Dante recalls leads him to worry that the Malebranche will come after them (10-33). He barely has a chance to express his fear to Vergil when he discovers that the Malebranche are indeed in hot pursuit: “non molto lunci, per volerne prendere” (“closing in to catch us”) (36). Vergil responds swiftly by taking Dante into his arms and carrying him bodily down the slope into the fifth bolgia, saving them both (34-57).

Dante's comparison of the “presente rissa” from Canto 22 with Aesop's fable about the frog and the mouse has attracted much critical attention because it is not clear which figure in the story stands for whom, in spite of Dante's affirmation that the parallels are self-evident. To recap,

Pompeio Giannantonio confirms the emphasis Dante intends in these lines, noting the many instances in Franciscan literature that describe the silence and walking in pairs that Dante here highlights. This emphasis, Giannantonio says, means to direct us towards a certain interpretation for the whole canto: “ci induce a riflettere anche sulla commessa ispirazione claustrale dell'intera bolgia, ossia del 'collegio de l'ipocriti tristi' (vv. 92-2) che evoca cappe e stole, linguaggio biblico e casto sacerdotale, colpa clericale come l'ipocrisia e pena ricalcata su abiti conventuali” (Pompeio Giannantonio, “Il canto XXIII dell'*Inferno*,” *Critica Letteraria* 7, no. 23 [1979]: 212). Giannantonio reaffirms the importance of the monastic element in this canto when discussing the Jovial Friar's great lead capes (pp. 221–222). Catherine Keen also notes the monastic atmosphere of this canto, although her interpretation overlooks Dante's intended irony: for her, the “collegio / de l'ipocriti tristi” (*Inf.* 23.91-92) is not an opportunity to meditate on the obvious problem of Catalano and Loderingo's monastic fraudulence, but rather “an attempt to lend an air of familiarity, even dignity, to this assembly dressed in monastic style.” (“Fathers of Lies: (Mis)readings of Clerical and Civic Duty in *Inferno* XXIII,” in *Dante and the Church: Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Paolo Acquaviva and Jennifer Petrie [Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007], 183). Some critics pay little to no attention to the patently monastic elements in this canto, notably: Ettore Bonora, *Gli Ipocriti di Malebolge, e altri saggi di letteratura italiana e francese* (Milan-Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1953); Francesco Maggini, *Due letture dantesche inedite (Inf. XXIII e XXXII) e altri scritti poco noti*, ed. Antonio di Preta (Florence: Le Monnier, 1965); Guido di Pino, “Il canto XXIII,” *Italianistica* 8, no. 3 (1979): 499–513; Robert Hollander, “Virgil and Dante as Mind-Readers (*Inferno* XXI and XXIII),” *Medioevo Romanzo* 9 (1984): 85–100; Christopher Kleinhenz, “Deceivers Deceived: Devilish Doubletalk in *Inferno* 21-23,” ed. Amilcare A. Iannucci, *Quaderni D'italianistica* 10, no. 1–2 (1989): 133–156.

43 Ettore Bonora discusses the opening in terms of music: “nell'esordio del canto XXIII il lettore coglie istintivamente come prima nota di poesia il particolare accento musicale: quello della prima terzina è un 'pianissimo' di cui intende a pieno il significato chi abbia ancora nell'orecchio il movimento del canto precedente” (Bonora, *Gli Ipocriti di Malebolge, e altri saggi di letteratura italiana e francese*, 7).

the unnamed figure from Navarre (22.148), called Ciampolo by the early commentators, is being detained and mutilated by the Malebranche. He engineers an escape (121-123) and slips back into the boiling pitch, out of their reach. Calcabrina is enraged by this and attacks Alichino, and the both of them tumble into the pitch. In his recollection of the fable by Aesop, Dante does not specify which one of these protagonists identifies with what characters from the fable, the mouse, the frog, the bird of prey. Robert Hollander's study of the passage reports eleven different combinations generated by thirty different commentators and critics.⁴⁴ Considering the difficulty in identifying who is to be equated with what animal in Aesop's story, it may very well be that Dante deliberately intends this to be a difficult passage, impossible in the end to unravel and interpret unambiguously. If this is the case, the poet at least wants to give the illusion of easy interpretation by suggesting that the analogies are as easy as the comparison between the terms “mo” and “issa” (which mean “now” in the Lombard and Luccan dialects, respectively). In other words, they are practically identical. And yet, while “mo” and “issa” may mean the same thing, they could not be more different from a formally lexical perspective.⁴⁵ Signs, Dante implies, can be fraudulent, ultimately impossible to clarify,⁴⁶ as anyone who intelligently applies specific interpretive parameters and a dedicated intellectual effort (“se ben s'accoppia / principio e fine con la mente fissa”) will eventually find out here. The confounding of easy interpretation constitutes an invitation to look deeper into the meaning of things in the lines to follow.⁴⁷ Now predisposed to a critical and skeptical reading of canto 23, with an eye attentive to red herrings,

44 Hollander, “Virgil and Dante as Mind-Readers (Inferno XXI and XXIII),” 92–93, fn. 15.

45 Kleinhenz, “Deceivers Deceived: Devilish Doubletalk in *Inferno* 21-23,,” 147.

46 Teodolinda Barolini calls the confusion ensuing from Dante's purportedly clear analogy “part of Dante's point, which is the ambiguity – the Geryonesque fraudulence – of all signs, all representation” (*The Undivine Comedy: Dethologizing Dante* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992], 84).

and honed in on true symbolic indicators of deeper meaning, the reader is prepared to explore hypocrisy with a thorough and more penetrating analysis.

As noted before, Dante wishes to highlight monasticism in this canto. He does so in anticipation of the figures that Dante-pilgrim and Vergil will encounter, the hypocrites who slowly and endlessly trudge through the fifth bolgia. Here the poet returns to the language of the monastery that opened this canto, comparing the cloaks of the figures before him to the habits of cloistered monks:

Là giù trovammo una gente dipinta
 che giva intorno assai con lenti passi,
 piangendo e nel sembiante stanca e vinta.
 Elli avean cappe con cappucci bassi
 dinanzi a li occhi, fatte de la taglia
 che in Clugnì per li monaci fassi.
 Di fuor dorate son, sì ch'elli abbaglia;
 ma dentro tutte piombo, e gravi tanto,
 che Federigo le mettea di paglia.
 Oh in eterno faticoso manto!

Down there we came upon a lacquered people
 who made their round, in tears, with listless steps.
 They seemed both weary and defeated.
 The cloaks they wore, cut like the capes
 sewn for the monks at Cluny,
 had cowls that hung down past their eyes.
 Gilded and dazzling on the outside,
 within they are of lead, so ponderous
 that those imposed by Frederick would seem but straw.
 Oh what a toilsome cloak to wear forever! (*Inf.* 23.58-67)

The mention of these hooded cloaks of is not the only monastic reference to complement the opening of the canto. Later, one of these “gente dipinta,” Catalano de' Malavolti, refers to this

47 Keen, “Fathers of Lies: (Mis)readings of Clerical and Civic Duty in *Inferno* XXIII,” 179, note 2; Kleinhenz, “Deceivers Deceived: Devilish Doubletalk in *Inferno* 21-23,,” 146–148.

bolgia as a “collegio,” another term for “monastero” or “convento,” to which he immediately adds in a bitterly ironic turn “de l'ipocriti tristi” (of sad hypocrites”) (23.91-92).⁴⁸ If this place is a monastery, it is an infernal one. Such an absurd contradiction has not escaped the notice of critics. Ezio Raimondi calls it a “convento paradossale,” noting the strangeness of a monastery “proprio nel mezzo di Malebolge e sotto il controllo dei 'neri cherubini.’”⁴⁹ To add to this claustal atmosphere, the poet never refers to any figure here simply as “ombra” or “anima” as is his custom, but instead calls them “frati.” The pilgrim calls out “O frati,” (109), Catalano specifies himself and Loderingo as “frati godenti” (103), and in the narration, Catalano is repeatedly called “frate” (114, 127, 142).

It comes as no surprise, then, to find that the figures with whom Dante speaks in this canto are themselves members of a religious order. The *Ordo Militiae Beatae Mariae Virginis Gloriosae*, popularly called the *Fratres Gaudentes*⁵⁰ or Jovial Friars, was founded in Bologna

48 When referred to in the singular, “collegio” in Dante is almost always colored by monasticism. In *Purgatorio*, the spirit of Guido Guinizzelli refers to heaven as a monastery where Christ is abbot: “Or se tu hai sì ampio privilegio, / che licito ti sia l'andare al chiostro / nel quale è Cristo abate del collegio, / falli per me un dir d'un paternostro...” (“Now, if you possess such ample privilege / that you are allowed into the cloister / where Christ is abbot of the brothers, / say a Paternoster there for me”) (*Purg.* 26.127-130). In *Paradiso* after his speech to Dante, St. Benedict, founder of cenobitic monasticism, rejoins the other contemplative spirits, his “collegio” (“Così mi disse, e indi si raccolse / al suo collegio, e 'l collegio si strinse.” [“Thus he spoke, and then returned himself / to his cloister, and the cloister gathered itself together”] [*Par.* 22.97-98, translation mine]). In his prose works, Dante is less rigorous, using “collegio” also in a secular sense, for example: “lo collegio delli rettori fu detto Senato” (*Convivio*, ed. Franca Brambilla Ageno [Le Lettere, 1995], 4.27.10–11). It is also no accident that Catalano calls this place both a monastery and the domain of the “tristi.” It was commonplace knowledge in the Middle Ages that acedia was endemic to monasteries, a “species tristitiae” to which monks were extremely susceptible (See Aquinas *ST*, II, II, 35, 1-3).

49 “I canti bolognesi dell’*Inferno* dantesco,” 239–40.

50 Salimbene introduces them thus: “Isti a rusticis truffatorie et derisive appellantur Gaudentes, quasi dicant: ideo facti sunt fratres, quia nolunt communicare aliis bona sua, sed volunt tantummodo sibi habere” (“These men were jokingly and derisively called Godenti by the populace, as if to say: they have become brothers simply because they do not wish to share their goods with others but to have them wholly to themselves”) (*Salimbene De Adam Cronica*, ed. Giuseppe Scalia, vol. II, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 125/A [Turnhout: Brepols, 1998], 678; *The Chronicle of Salimbene de Adam* [Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts &

around 1260. Its rule, which followed the Augustinian model, was approved by Urban IV on December 23, 1261.⁵¹ Although the order was founded by several figures working together, sources confirm that Loderingo degli Andalò was its principal founder and first prior.⁵² The ostensible reason for this order's existence was to defend those who could not defend themselves; as Jacopo della Lana puts it: “il quale ordine sarebbe ad aiutare in ditto e in fatto, con arme e con cavalli, mettendo la vita per ogni vedova e ogni pupillo, ogni pellegrino e ogni povero *etc.*” (“the order would be to help in word and in deed, with arms and with horses, risking one's life for every widow and little child, every pilgrim and every pauper *etc.*”).⁵³ Although the order officially operated to pursue these noble goals, the Jovials were in effect little more than the police wing of the church, enforcing papal interests wherever their muscle was needed.⁵⁴ Hence the ruin that Catalano describes in the following lines:

Fрати godenti fummo, e bolognesi;
io Catalano e questi Loderingo
nomati, e da tua terra insieme presi
come suole esser tolto un uom solingo,
per conservar sua pace; e fummo tali,
ch'ancor si pare intorno dal Gardingo.

Studies, 1986], 477).

51 Antonino De Stefano, *Riformatori ed eretici del Medioevo* (Palermo: Società siciliana per la storia patria, 1990), 228–229; G.G. Meersseman, *Dossier de l'ordre de la pénitence au XIIIe siècle* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1961), 304.

52 De Stefano, *Riformatori ed eretici del Medioevo*, 228.

53 Jacopo della Lana, *Comedia di Dante degli Allighieri col Commento di Jacopo della Lana bolognese*, ed. Luciano Scarabelli (Bologna: Tipografia Regia, 1866), Inf. 23.103–108, <http://dante.dartmouth.edu/>. Much of Iacopo's statements is seconded by Francesco da Buti *Commento di Francesco da Buti sopra La Divina Commedia di Dante Allighieri*, ed. Crescentino Giannini (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858), Inf. 23.95–108, <http://dante.dartmouth.edu/>.

54 De Stefano, *Riformatori ed eretici del Medioevo*, 226.

We were Jovial Friars, born in Bologna.
 My name was Catalano, his Loderingo.
 Your city made the two of us a pair,
 where usually a single man was chosen,
 to keep the peace within, and we were such
 that all around Gardingo the ruins can be seen (*Inf.* 23.105-08).

Central to Catalano's confession is the joint taking of the podestà (at the Pope's behest) of Florence in cohort with Loderingo (“da tua terra insieme presi”), a position originally meant to go to “un uom solingo.” This led to social and political upset, and finally internecine local violence. Under pressure from Clement IV, Catalano and Loderingo allowed the Guelphs to return to the city, and this in turn led to the ouster of Guido Novello, head of the Ghibellines, from the city. A popular uprising followed, in which Ghibelline properties were destroyed, including the houses of the Uberti family, which Catalano obliquely mentions in “intorno dal Guardigno,” as the houses were located there.⁵⁵

Considering Dante's well-known dislike for the Church's involvement in temporal affairs, it seems clear why he would place these two ecclesiastical meddlers in secular politics in the bolgia of hypocrites. No doubt Catalano and Loderingo's activities in Florence would have been especially repugnant to the poet. This is a justifiable example of hypocrisy in the main, to be sure, but what about the particulars? What is the precise anatomy of this hypocrisy? How do the specific details of their punishment illuminate the essence of their hypocrisy?

55 For more on the political involvement of the Gaudentes and their two founders, see: *Ibid.*, 229–256; Meersseman, *Dossier de l'ordre de la pénitence au XIIIe siècle*, 304–305. For a more specific examination of their involvement in the political situation of Florence that Dante describes here, see Maggini, *Due lettere dantesche inedite (Inf. XXIII e XXXII) e altri scritti poco noti*, 14–16; Giannantonio, “Il canto XXIII dell’*Inferno*,” 223–226. Of the articles by Dante scholars, Giannantonio's is the most comprehensively researched work on the Jovials I have found, offering a wealth of extracts from numerous primary sources. Its utility cannot be overestimated. For more general information on the Gaudentes, see Domenico Maria Federici's classic study *Istoria de' Cavalieri Gaudenti*, 2 vols. (Venice: Coleti, 1787); G.G. Meersseman, *Dossier de l'ordre de la pénitence au XIIIe siècle* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1961), 295–307. Regarding Catalano and Loderingo as represented in Dante's *Inferno*, see Raimondi, “I canti bolognesi dell’*Inferno* dantesco.”

The early commentary tradition is nearly unanimous about some aspects of their hypocrisy. Some recollect the spurious Greek etymology popular at the time, which links “hipocrisia” to a word roughly meaning “overlaid with gold” (see, for example, Jacopo Alighieri's claim that “ipocrisia si chiama ab *ipos* quod e[st] supra et *crexis* quod e[st] aurum, cioè sopra dorata qualità non perfetta” (“it is called hypocrisy from *ipos* which means 'above,' and *crexis*, which means 'gold'”).⁵⁶ All the early commentators register the obvious two-faced falsity that Dante suggests in the thick lead cloaks thinly overlaid with gold; hypocrisy relies on splendid but superficial external semblances that hide dark and wicked truths. The image of an object thinly overlaid with lovely but false adornment calls to mind Vernani's words about Dante's writing cited at the beginning of Chapter One, calling the poet one of the Devil's “*vasa*,” adorned with “*veritatis figuris fallacibus et fucatis coloribus adornata*.” In other words, hypocrisy is perforce a sin of false rhetoric. Benvenuto's commentary to these lines echoes Vernani's principle, if not the object of his critique, as he highlights the performative and rhetorical aspects of hypocrisy, the way language is distorted to tell lies: he tells a colorful story about a church pastor who uses his drunkenness to his advantage. The preacher “*potavit se multa malvasia*” (“got drunk on much malvasia”) before delivering a sermon on the Passion of Christ. In his drunkenness he wept profusely during his sermon, which his listeners interpreted as sorrow at Christ's crucifixion. Overwhelmed by his emotional display of piety, the audience joined him in a chorus of weeping and emptied their purses in the alms box. Later, the preacher used these funds to buy himself an episcopate.⁵⁷ By presenting his drunkenness as holiness, and by swindling his

⁵⁶ Jacopo Alighieri, *Chiose alla Cantica dell'Inferno di Dante Alighieri scritte da Jacopo Alighieri*, ed. Giulio Piccini (Florence: Bemporad, 1915), Inf. 23.58–64, <http://dante.dartmouth.edu/>. Translation is mine.

⁵⁷ And thus, Benvenuto concludes, money turns hypocrisy into simony (“*ita quod lucrum hypocrisis convertit in simoniam*”) *Benvenuti da Rambaldis de Imola comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam, nunc primum integre in lucem editum.*, ed. Jacobo Philippo Lacaita (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1887), Inf. 23.58–60,

parishioners, the pastor succeeded in committing a double hypocrisy, Benvenuto says.

Others, like Pietro Alighieri, recall the Scriptural foundation for Dante's representation of hypocrisy, Matthew 23:27, in which Jesus calls the Pharisees and scribes “sepulchris dealbatis quae a foris parent hominibus speciosa intus vero plena sunt ossibus mortuorum et omni spurcitiū” (“whited sepulchers, which outwardly appear to men as beautiful but within are full of dead men's bones and of all filthiness”). Guido da Pisa and Pietro Alighieri find echoes of Matthew 7:15 in Dante's gold-plated capes. In the gospel passage, Jesus warns his followers of false prophets, who are wolves in sheep's clothing: “Attendite, inquit a falsis prophetis, qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium, intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces” (“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves”). Guido da Pisa goes on to associate these wolves in opposition to the good “pastor” who caringly guides his flock.⁵⁸ The “false prophet” is a familiar bugbear for a period so concerned with orthodoxy and correct preaching, used frequently in polemics against heretics.

Thomas Aquinas addresses precisely this theme in his sermon, “Attendite a falsis prophetis,” which discusses the problem of prophets, preachers and miracle workers that lead unsuspecting Christians astray.⁵⁹ In the *collatio* of this same sermon he ties false prophets and

<http://dante.dartmouth.edu/>.

58 Guido da Pisa, *Expositiones et Glose super Comediam Dantis, or Commentary on Dante's Inferno*, ed. Vincenzo Cioffari (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1974), Inf. 23.58, <http://dante.dartmouth.edu/>.

59 “Quatuor modis contingit esse falsam prophetiam. Primo ex falsitate doctrinae. Secundo ex falsitate inspirationis. Tertio ex falsitate intentionis. Et quarto ex falsitate vitae. Primo dicuntur aliqui falsi prophetae ex falsitate doctrinae, ut quando falsa annunciant et docent” (“there are four ways to be considered a false prophet. The first is through false teaching. The second by false inspiration, the third by false intention and the fourth is by false living”). In the following passage Aquinas equates teaching with preaching, inspiration with the source of that teaching (whether divine or diabolical), intention with the preacher's aims in his preaching, and living with the chastity and sanctity of his life. (Thomas Aquinas, *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Ordinis*

ravenous wolves directly to the hypocrite, identifying along the way the Pharisees as the supreme hypocrites. Overtones of heresy are implicit in Aquinas's comments, and certainly forthright when he directly equates the hypocrites with false prophets. Dante's description of hypocrisy might also intend to obliquely suggest heresy, evident in his reference to Frederick II's punishment for *lèse-majesté* in lines 66-67. Here, Dante compares the hypocrites' "faticoso manto" to the leaden tunics that Frederick designed for condemned men to wear, who were then tossed into a furnace, the metal melting to their bare skin. *Lèse-majesté* finds parallels in ecclesiastical legal theory. Starting with Innocent III's bull *Vergentis in Senium* (1199), the Church begins to describe heresy as a kind of *lèse-majesté* against the Divine.⁶⁰ As *lèse-majesté* was punished by fire in the secular sphere, so too would fire be used against heretics offending the rule of the Divine. In his gloss on Lucius III's bull *Ad Abolendam*, the canonist Enrico da Susa clarifies that the "deserved punishment is burning by fire."⁶¹ Drawing from Frederick's precedent, the leaden mantle is the garment per excellence, used to identify criminals against supreme authority. Hypocrisy, Dante seems to suggest, is a *lèse-majesté* against the Divine, and by implication, heresy.

In the main, the early commentators agree about the general meaning of hypocrisy and the punishment for hypocrites, employing Biblical language, citations of authorities and

Praedicatorum Opera Omnia: Secundum Impressionem Petri Fiaccadori Parmae 1852-1873 ; Photolithographice Reimpressa, vol. 24 [New York: Musurgia, 1948], 227: Sermon III: In III Dominica Post Festum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli ("Attendite a falsis").

60 Christine Caldwell Ames, *Righteous Persecution: Inquisition, Dominicans, and Christianity in the Middle Ages* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 184.

61 Ibid. Enrico da Susa, also known as "Hostiensis," is incidentally one of the decretalists that Dante variously mentions with disdain on account of the little heed they or their followers pay to the Gospels (see *Par.* 9.133-135; 12.82-84).

examples to show that hypocrisy is especially – perhaps even exclusively – endemic among clergymen. But none of this information coincides perfectly with the particular case in question, regarding Catalano and Loderingo. It is true that the Jovial Friars were a religious order, but, as I noted, their status as a non-preaching order was confirmed by papal decision; although there were clergymen in the order, there were also tertiaries and others who would not be expected to adhere to the same behavioral strictures as priests and monks. Furthermore, Catalano and Loderingo's confessed misdeeds do not appear to qualify as hypocrisy in the strict sense, nor do the early commentators agree on their sins. Their greatest malfeasance – their failure to repair the rift in Florentine society, indeed their worsening of it – suggest a sowing of discord more than anything else, something that Graziolo de' Bambaglioli's commentary explicitly invokes: “hoc est dicere quod in civitate Florentie non concordiam sed discordiam tractaverunt” (“this is to say that in the city of Florence they brought out not concord but discord”).⁶² The third Ottimo Commento finds something else, a hint of barratry in Catalano's self-identification as a Bolognese citizen (“et dice bolognesi a denotare che furono barattieri”).⁶³ Guido da Pisa and Francesco da Buti accuse the two of hypocrisy only in the broadest sense, considering hypocritical their desire for personal advancement under the false guise of peacemaking and altruism; Villani's chronicle seconds this opinion.⁶⁴ The matter is further complicated by more

62 Bambaglioli Graziolo, *Commento all'“Inferno” di Dante*, ed. Luca Carlo Rossi (Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 1998), Inf. 23.103–108, <http://dante.dartmouth.edu/>. Catherine Keen correctly, albeit vaguely, intuits this act of discord, but does not adequately clarify or substantiate her claim (“Fathers of Lies: (Mis)readings of Clerical and Civic Duty in *Inferno* XXIII,” 197–198).

63 Claudia Di Fonzo, ed., *L'ultima forma dell'«Ottimo commento». Chiose sopra la Comedia di Dante Allegieri fiorentino tracte da diversi ghiosatori* (Ravenna: Longo, 2008), Inf. 23.100–108.

64 Guido da Pisa, seems to equate these actions with hypocrisy, though not in explicit terms: “Nam sub specie sanctitatis opus diabolicum perpetrarunt.” (*Expositiones et Glose super Comediam Dantis, or Commentary on Dante's Inferno*, Inf. 23.103). Francesco da Buti is more straightforward “E perchè furono uomini ipocriti, che

recent scholarship, which finds that their actions in Florence had nothing to do with hypocrisy, as they were under Papal orders; in other words, Pope Clement IV made them an offer they could not refuse.⁶⁵

Is it possible that their hypocrisy is unspoken? Ulysses is condemned for his hand in the deception of the Trojan horse (“l'agguato del caval” [*Inf.* 26.59]), but he never talks about his sin, opting instead to discuss the enterprising sea voyage that ultimately overwhelmed him and his companions. This is not to say that Catalano and Loderingo's involvement in Florentine politics does not qualify them for the punishment here. It is rather a proposal to look deeper into this matter of hypocrisy. If hypocrisy is founded upon false speech, as many commentators and Aquinas agree, how should this affect our reception of Catalano and Loderingo's confession? What are they refusing to say and how does it amplify our understanding of their sin?⁶⁶ Dante makes it clear that their hypocrisy regards their failure specifically as religious figures. Now, if preaching is the only legitimate goal of a religious figure, and is even sought after by hermits like Romuald, how much more so should preaching, or at least some sort of Christian service, be for an order as immersed in the community as the Jovials are? And, as a matter of historical fact, the

mostravano buoni nelli atti di fuori; e d'entro furono con mala volontà e intenzione come fu l'effetto, però l'autore finge che fussono in questo luogo.”(*Commento di Francesco da Buti sopra La Divina Commedia di Dante Allighieri*, *Inf.* 23.95–108). Giovanni Villani says that “sotto coverta di falsa ipocrisia furono in concordia più al guadagno loro proprio che al bene comune” (Giovanni Villani, *Cronica di Giovanni Villani*, vol. 2 [Florence: Magheri, 1823], 7, 13, p. 161).

65 Gaetano Salvemini, *Magnati e popolani in Firenze dal 1280 al 1295* (Turin: Einaudi, 1960), 292–95.

66 Francesco da Buti notes that hypocrisy can take the form of a certain dissimulation in taciturnity, a withholding of information through enigmatic silence: “Et alcuni sono ipocriti per non parere ipocriti, come se tu domandassi a questi così fatti: Digiuni tu oggi? Et elli non digiunando, risponda: Idio il sa” (“Some are hypocrites to not seem hypocrites, as if you asked someone: are you fasting today? And he, not fasting, responds: God knows”) (Francesco da Buti, *Commento di Francesco da Buti sopra La Divina Commedia di Dante Allighieri*, *Inf.* 23.58–72).

chronicler Salimbene of Parma criticizes the Jovials precisely for their lack of any discernible Christian service or pastoral care. Salimbene, who expresses continued interest in the preaching of his confrères and other religious figures; sees no reason for the existence the Jovials, an order that does not preach.⁶⁷

Dante returns again and again to these hypocrites' status as religious figures in his descriptions. Their cloaks suggest not only monasticism but specifically the monasticism of Cluniac monks. Commentators note that in life the Jovials wore habits of a different design. According to Guido da Pisa, the Jovial Friars wore habits like those of the Dominicans: “Fratres Gaudentes sunt quidam homines penitentiae, qui gestant habitum correspondentem habitui fratrum predicatorum, sicut bizoci habitum fratrum minorum” (“The Jovial Friars are certain men of penitence, who wear a habit corresponding of the habits of the Friars Preachers, just as the Bizzochi wear the habit the Friars Minor”).⁶⁸ Benvenuto seconds this claim, adding that they wore a red cross on the front of their habit: “[eorum habitus] habet magnam similitudinem cum

67 Mariano D’Alatri, “Predicazione e predicatori francescani nella Cronica di fra Salimbene,” *Collectanea Franciscana* 46 (1976): 64. While Salimbene does not directly address preaching in his critique of the Jovials, he clearly and exhaustively criticizes their neglect of pastoral duties, in which preaching is always fundamental. The first four of his criticisms regard their lack of charity, their luxury and their greed, typical sins of bad clerics. The last more specifically addresses their shortcomings as spiritual “pastors”: “Quinto et ultimo, quia non video ad quid deserviant in Ecclesia Dei, id est ad quid utiles sint, nisi forte quia salvos faciunt semet ipsos; que a Ieronimo 'sancta rusticitas' appellatur, que 'solummodo sibi prodest, et quantum edificat ex vite merito Ecclesiam Christi, tantum nocet, si destruentibus non resistat.' Sed longe melius valet ille cui dici potest, Luc. XXIII: *Salvum fac te ipsum et nos*. Ita dumtaxat, quod ipse obtemperanter respondeat: 'Domine si adhuc populo tuo sum necessarius, non recuso laborem. *Fiat voluntas tua!*'” (“Fifth and last, I do not see what use they can be to the Church of God – save perhaps to save their own souls. And Jerome has commented on this: 'The holy solitary life is indeed profitable to a particular person alone, and insofar as the merit of his life helps to strengthen the Church it is a good, but where it fails to resist those bent on the Church's destruction, it is an evil.' But that man is worth much more to whom it can be said, Luke 23 [.39]: 'Save thyself and us.' Thus let the man answer obediently, 'Lord if I am necessary to your people, I will not refuse the labor. Thy will be done!'”) (*Salimbene De Adam Cronica*, 1998, II:680; *The Chronicle of Salimbene de Adam*, 478). We also remember from Giordano's words cited in the first chapter, in which he juxtaposes the hermit's goal of self-salvation against the infinitely nobler monastic who is motivated to preach and save others

68 Guido da Pisa, *Expositiones et Glose super Comediam Dantis, or Commentary on Dante's Inferno*, Inf. 23.103. A “Bizzocco” is a layperson in the tertiary order of Franciscans.

habitu praedicatorum; et pro insignio scutum albi coloris cum cruce rubea” (“[their habit] bears a great likeness with the habit of the Preachers, and as an insignia a shield of white colors with a red cross”).⁶⁹ Benvenuto's description, with the addition of the insignia, is in keeping with Salimbene's description in his chronicle.⁷⁰

If in life the Jovials wore a habit similar to that of the preaching orders and specifically of the Dominicans, Dante's decision to dress his hypocrites in leaden capes tailored after the Cluniac fashion must be regarded more critically. What is the motivation behind this “travesty,” this dressing of the Jovial Friars in habits not originally their own? Read at the most basic level, it highlights their status as pretenders, confirming by example the commonplace saying, that “l'abito non fa il monaco.” But why Cluniac in particular? Monastic orders are often differentiated by their degree of seclusion. On the one hand, there are cloistered orders like the Benedictines of Cluny, who generally eschew preaching for solitary contemplation in their cells. On the other hand, there are Franciscans and Dominicans, who wander from town to town to minister to the people. If we accept this binary distinguishing two opposing types of monasticism, we see that that the Jovials fit neither category perfectly; they live in the world like the great preaching orders, but they, like the cloistered orders, perform no pastoral duties for the populace. In addition, it is possible that Dante intends to communicate an even more dramatic distinction, as there is some editorial disagreement about whether the poet intended to evoke Cluniacs at all in his description. The majority of the early manuscripts do not identify the habits

69 *Benvenuti da Rambaldi de Imola comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam, nunc primum integre in lucem editum.*, Inf. 23.103.

70 *Salimbene De Adam Cronica*, 1998, II:679.

of the figures in this canto with “Clugni” but with a monastery in “Colonia.”⁷¹ The monks of Cologne at this time were most likely Carthusians (founded by St. Bruno of Cologne in 1084), an order extreme in its pursuit of silence and seclusion.⁷² Carthusians are famous for their discipline, which far outstrips that of most other orders; their particular trademark was a devotion to a silence so absolute that many other monks wrote about it in astonished superlatives.⁷³ If, then, Dante's autograph bears “Colonia,” as the majority of early manuscripts attest, it is possible that Dante meant to highlight the stark difference between the Jovial order and other forms of monasticism to an even greater degree; however, even if Dante's intended reading is “Clugni,” the binary between reclusive monks and preaching friars still stand.

The taciturnity of Cologne Carthusians leads back to matters of silence in *Inferno* 23. On a superficial level, silence merely appears to contribute to the air of monasticism here; however, if Dante also means to highlight a contrast between different types of monasticism, its association with the Jovial Friars further highlights the ironic pointlessness of their very existence as an order. Their silence is decidedly not of the holy monastic sort. Compare to this the divinely sanctioned quiet of *Paradiso* 21 and 22, that heavenly cloister where Dante

71 Although he finally settles on “Clugni,” Petrocchi admits that “Lo schieramento dell'antica vulgata è quasi tutto a favore di *colonia* o *cologni*” (*La commedia secondo l'antica vulgata: Inferno*, ed. Giorgio Petrocchi, 1st ed. [Milano: Mondadori, 1966], 23.63, fn. While Petrocchi is to be commended for his editorial honesty, his scrupulous history reveals that the Cluny variant is not tenable from a philological standpoint. Among the early commentators there is not a word to suggest that perhaps Dante actually meant Cluny here. For them all, the monastery is Cologne. Among contemporary critics discussing these passages, some accept the original Cologne (Maggini, *Due letture dantesche inedite (Inf. XXIII e XXXII) e altri scritti poco noti*, 8).

72 Joseph R. Strayer, ed., *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (New York: Scribner, 1983), s.v. Carthusians.

73 Scott G. Bruce, *Silence and Sign Language in Medieval Monasticism: The Cluniac Tradition c. 900-1200* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 157–159.

encounters Saint Peter Damian, Benedict and the many others.⁷⁴ There in *Paradiso*, the “dolce sinfonia di paradiso” (“sweet symphony of silence”) ceases, leaving in its wake only a wondrous hush (*Par.* 21.59). But what sweet silence could ever follow Malacoda's clamorous assault of the Malebranche in the previous bolgia, whose leader sounds alarms with a butt-trumpet (*Inf.* 21.139)? And what serious monastic figures can be found in this “collegio de l'ipocriti tristi”? The answer for both is none.⁷⁵

In the same way, there is something imperfect about their silence, something skewed, unwarranted, wrong. Dante's own silence at the beginning of the canto already anticipates the problems resulting when things are left unspoken: the pilgrim and Vergil enter the space “Taciti, soli, senza compagnia,” their silence visually reflected by their two solitary figures who punctuate an otherwise entirely vacant landscape.⁷⁶ In the first twenty lines of the canto, the pilgrim begins to anxiously and silently ruminate. He thinks back to the previous bolgia, where

74 In fact, it is likely that *Par.* 21-22 were intended to contrast with this canto in the *Inferno*. Not only do both loci deal with monasticism and silence, they are also linked by the substance lead. Vergil says that he can reflect Dante's thoughts better than if he were a mirror, or in his words “piombato vetro” (*Inf.* 23.25). Beatrice tells the pilgrim in *Par.* 21 to make his eyes “specchi” to the external figure that his mind will soon comprehend; her image of the mirror recalls Vergil's earlier lead-backed glass. Moreover Saturn, traditionally associated with the contemplative personality and with the substance lead, is the planet ruling the contemplatives in *Paradiso*. Both the planet Saturn and the substance lead are associated with acedia, which as Aquinas notes, is particularly prevalent among monks (*ST*, 2-2, 35, 1). It is no coincidence that the “frati” of *Inf.* 23 wear cloaks leaved in gold, but substantially made of lead. Literally depressed by their leaden garments, the figures trudge forward, each bearing a telling “sembiante stanca e vinta” (60). Later, Catalano confirms that he and others are “ipocriti tristi,” their sadness symptomatic of acedia (92). “Tristizia” is Dante's synonym for acedia elsewhere in the *Commedia*: “Tristi fummo / ne l'aere dolce che dal sol s'allegra, / portando dentro accidioso fummo: / or ci attristiam ne la belletta negra” (7.121-124).

75 Even as claustal figures Catalano and Loderingo fare poorly. While true cloistered monks stayed put (“fermar li piedi”), the figures here fail even at standing still: one would expect them to not move at all, dragged down as they are by the “faticoso manto.” But forced to creep forward, one slow step eternally following another, they never achieve true immobility.

76 This wouldn't be the first time that Dante discusses silence in visual terms. In *Inferno* 1.60, the pilgrim is hounded by one of the beasts into a dell where shadows are described as the silence of the sun (“dove il sol tace”). Later in that same canto, Vergil appears somewhat faded by his many years of silence: “chi per lungo silenzio pareo fioco” (*Inf.* 1.63).

he witnessed the two demons grappling with one another and finally falling into the molten stream. The pilgrim begins to pile thought upon thought, imagining, with mounting dread, that the Malebranche would soon be coming after him: “E come l'un pensier de l'altro scoppia, così nacque di quello un altro poi, / che la prima paura mi fé doppia” (“just as one thought issues from another, / so, from the first, another was now born / that made me twice as fearful as before”) (*Inf.* 23.10-12). The redoubling of anxiety upon anxiety as the mind runs amok in grim contemplation eventually proves more than the pilgrim can sustain, for at long last he bursts out in panicked exclamation: “i' ho pavento / d'i Malebranche” (“I am in terror / of the Malebranche”) (23.22-23). His fear is indeed soon justified when he sees several demons in hot pursuit, “con l'ali tese [...] per volerne prendere.” (“wings outspread [...] closing in to catch us”) (23.35-36). To rescue the petrified pilgrim, Vergil sweeps him up and carries him down the bank into the sixth bolgia, out of the reach of tooth and talon. Silent contemplation, the scene would appear to tell us, does a soul little good when it leads only to anxious brooding and paralyzing fear. However, most silence in this canto is marked not by fearful reticence but by truncated statements, or the obstinate refusal to speak outright. Both of these appear when Dante prepares to launch into his invective against the Jovials, but suddenly stops when he sees a figure nailed to the ground, trampled by all the other hypocrites.

Io cominciai: 'O frati, i vostri mali...'
 ma più non dissi ch'a l'occhio mi corse
 un, crucifisso in terra con tre pali.

I began: 'O friars, your evil deeds...'
 but I said no more, for one there caught my eye,
 fixed cross-wise to the ground by three short stakes.
 (23.109-111)

The poet withholds information from his readers in the Pilgrim's unfinished accusation. At first

the pilgrim winds up for a diatribe, but is silenced by his own surprise when he discovers this other figure in torment, whose silence conspicuously echoes the pilgrim's sudden and surprised muteness.

The figure crucified to the ground is Caiaphas,⁷⁷ one of the New Testament priests who advised the Sanhedrin to crucify Christ, with the explanation that his preaching would eventually lead to riots and civic unrest. As has been shown in the brief analysis of Dante's eleventh epistle, the Pharisee is the corrupt ecclesiastical figure *par excellence*, whose trademark is silence and silencing. Here Caiaphas can be compared to those Pharisees, as he stubbornly demonstrates that the anatomy of hypocrisy is nourished with the blood of silence. For a brief moment, Dante-pilgrim and Caiaphas pause, each regarding the other, neither speaking. One looks down and regards the priest in astonishment, while the other glares back, writhing on the ground and huffing into his beard, as if refusing to even give voice to his pain, let alone speak words that would incriminate himself: “Quando mi vide, tutto si distorse, / soffiando ne la barba con sospiri” (“Seeing me, he writhed all over / blowing sighs in his beard”) (112-13). To “twist” in Dante's lexicon often signifies some kind of recalcitrance, frequently expressed as a specific refusal to speak: in the circle of the gluttons in *Inferno*, Ciaccio announces “più non ti dico e più non ti rispondo,” (“I say no more nor answer you again”), and then suddenly crosses his eyes (“Li diritti occhi torse allora in biechi” [“he cast his straight gaze askance”⁷⁸]) to mark the end of his speech (7.90-91). Later in the *Inferno*, Reginaldo degli Scrovegni commands Dante away,

77 It may be of some interest to recognize that Caiaphas's crucifixion on the ground may mean to recollect prayer positions pioneered by Dominic and other monastics, the *prostratio* and the *crux* (Delcorno, *Quasi quidam cantus: studi sulla predicazione medievale*, 134–35). Seen from this view, his crucifixion is a *contrappasso* for his involvement in the crucifixion of Christ, but it is also an ironic reminder of the true penitential duties of any prelate.

78 This is my rendition. Hollander translates this line liberally enough to change its original meaning altogether: “with that his clear eyes lost their focus.”

announcing “Che fai tu in questa fossa? / Or te ne va” (“what are you doing down there in this ditch? Now go”), and then grotesquely twists his mouth and sticks out his tongue: “Qui distorse la bocca e di fuor trasse / la lingua” (17.66-67,74).

If Dante intends to highlight silence as a bad thing in this canto, he does so with the support of a cohort of theorists and theologians. Contemporaneous manuals on preaching say that a prelate's failure to preach is not merely abject laziness but dangerous corruption. In his *Summa de arte praedicandi*, written in the early thirteenth century, Thomas of Chobham raises a red flag, calling prelates who refuse to preach “diabolical,” since they would reap the substantial material rewards of their position without sowing the spiritual seeds of preaching (“Sed hoc diabolicum est: carnalia metere et spiritualia non seminare”).⁷⁹ Chobham later specifies the base motivations keeping preachers out of the pulpit, either luxury, striving for power, or simple cowardice:

[...] scilicet propter explendas uoluptates uel propter ambitionem honorum uel maioris dignitatis, ut illi qui militant in curiis magnatum, uel forsitan quia nolunt sustinere timorem defendendi gregem suum, omnes tales inexcusabiles sunt

[...] whether because of pleasures they want to fulfill or because of ambition for honors or greater office, like those who are active in the court of nobles, or

79 Chobham clearly states that the preacher who fails to preach takes advantage of his church, and falls far short of his pastoral duties. “Sed hoc diabolicum est: carnalia metere et spiritualia non seminare, ecclesias parochiales habere et numquam in eis predicare, nec exemplo bone vite informare nec in necessariis pro posse subuenire. Vnde horrendum est quod quidam clerici multas ecclesias habent quas numquam uel raro uiderunt, nec umquam in eis predicauerunt, nec umquam elemosinas ibi dederunt, nec aliquod exemplum nisi malum per absentia suam ibi ostenderunt. Vnde potest ibi dicere populus gemens et plorans: *cur nos pastor deseris, aut cur nos desolatos relinquis? Inuadent gregem tuum lupi rapaces*. Quomodo possunt tales dicere quod dicit Dominus: *cognosco oves meas et cognoscunt me mee?* Et Gregorius ait: *nulla est excusatio pastoris si lupus deuorat gregem et pastor ignorat.*” (“But this is diabolical: to reap the carnal but not sow the spiritual, to have parochial churches and never preach in them, nor to inform with an example of good living nor to be able to assist them in their necessity. Thus, it is horrendous that certain clerics have many churches which they never or rarely see, nor ever preach in them, nor ever give alms there, nor do they show there any example except as an evil one by their absence. Therefore can the people say there with groans and weeping: ‘Why do you desert us, shepherd, and why do you leave us desolate? The rapacious wolves invade your flock.’ In what way can such (pastors) say what the Lord says: ‘I know my sheep and they know me’? For Gregory says: ‘There is no excuse for a shepherd if the wolf devours the flock and the shepherd does not notice.’”) (*Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medieualis 82 [Turnhout: Brepols, 1988], 55).

perhaps because they do not want to withstand the fear of defending their flock, all such reasons are inexcusable.⁸⁰

Chobham goes one step further; where here he notes only the negligence of the prelate who does not defend his flock, later he outright calls that figure a wolf rather than a pastor/shepherd (“lupus potius quam pastor”), citing Gregory the Great as his authority, and suggestively echoing the claims of Thomas Aquinas and Guido da Pisa discussed earlier.⁸¹

Without a doubt, the condemnation of Catalano and Loderingo in *Inferno* 23 relates to their participation in Clement VI's use of them to consolidate his power Florence and elsewhere. The Jovials helped promote Papal political interests while operating under the fig leaf of sacred ordination. But it is now equally clear that these religious figures distinguish themselves by speech; whether that speech be good, bad or withheld, speech signifies externally that which the hypocrites would keep hidden. If Dante means to highlight the failure of the Jovials through the optic of speech, the pungency of Catalano's ironic last comment is amplified even more so when Vergil expresses surprise at Malacoda's mendacity (“Mal contava la bisogna / colui che i peccator di qua uncina” [“he who rips the sinners in the other ditch / misled us in his picture of this place”] [23.140-141]), Catalano responds tartly with a cant statement, some generic theology cut and pasted perhaps from his catechistic lessons:

[...] Io udi' già dire a Bologna
del diavol vizi assai tra' quali udi'
ch'elli è bugiardo e padre di menzogna.

80 *Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, 56.

81 “Et Gregorius ait: nonne lupus est, potius quam pastor, qui ouiculum ecclesiastici pastoris tondet per rapinam, polluit per ebrietatem, rapit per fornicationem, deorat per adulterium?” (“And Gregory says: is he not a wolf, rather than a shepherd, who shears the lamb of the Church's shepherd through plunder, who defiles it through drunkenness, who violates it through fornication, who devours it through adultery?”) (ibid.).

[...] At one time in Bologna I heard tell
of the Devil's many vices, and I heard
he is a liar and the father of all lies.
(*Inf.* 23.142-144)

If the two Jovials are, as I have suggested, criticized for not operating as preachers in life, this offhanded bit of moral doctrine from Bologna could be interpreted as a final, though somewhat flaccid, gesture towards the preaching they never performed in life. It is a mockery of their office, as much as it is an insult to the pagan Vergil. Although Catalano's statement is by no means untrue, the words are utter banalities, known already by even the most ignorant child in Christendom. And they are spoken far too late, uttered by one damned man to another and ultimately serving no one any good. Of all the theological instruction a Jovial could have presumably communicated, had he ever risen to the apostolic challenge in life, Catalano summons only a lackluster and deliberately insulting claim any simpleton could make: that the Devil lies.⁸²

Dante agrees with an official church figure like Salimbene regarding the Jovials: that they would better serve God's agenda preaching in the pulpits and piazzas instead of hewing to the Pope's agenda in the courts. But when the issue turns to those whose preaching is not validated by ecclesiastical *licet*, as he shows in his representation of fra Dolcino, to whom we now turn, Dante departs from the Franciscan chronicler and the entire Church as well. The excerpt from his letter to the cardinals, it bears repeating, provided *in nuce* Dante's general stance towards both permitted and unpermitted speech about the Gospels. When he considers speech not sanctioned by the Church, he firmly maintains his stance, treating even the heretics with a great deal of

82 Teodolinda Barolini too sees Catalano's response as a deliberate insult to Vergil (*Dante's Poets* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984], 223).

license, even when he disapproves of their message. Dante's apparent *lassiez faire* attitude towards those who preach without securing official authorization is not to be taken lightly, considering the cultural context in which he expresses these opinions. The Church considered anybody who spoke without permission a *de facto* heretic, equally at risk of the inquisitors' interrogation. In more serious cases, simple questioning could lead to a trial, and a trial to execution. By Dante's time, preaching was categorically restricted from laypersons, and even among clerics this privilege was afforded only to those who passed muster under the bishop's scrutiny.⁸³ Thomas of Chobham says that the privilege of *predicatio*, the usual term for doctrinal preaching, is the exclusive privilege of only theologically-trained clergy. In his view laypersons may preach only in direst of circumstances when no qualified priests were available, and in these rare conditions they must restrict their sermons to elementary discussions on vices and virtues.⁸⁴

83 The first universal legislation against unauthorized preaching among laypersons was decreed by Lucius III at the diet of Verona in 1184 (Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae* 22.476, cit. in Rusconi, *Predicazione e vita religiosa nella società italiana: da Carlo Magno alla controriforma*, 91–92). The definitive prohibition of lay preaching *tout court* occurs in Gregory IX's letter to archbishop Enrico Settala in October 1228, in which the Pope orders a halt to preaching by the Umiliati, previously under his protection. This letter is later integrated into the *Corpus iuris canonici*, establishing it as a definitive and universal prohibition (ibid., 107–108).

84 “Generaliter autem, verum est quod nec laicus nec mulier predicare potest publice, scilicet in ecclesia.” (“in general, it is true that neither a layperson nor a woman may publicly preach, especially in church”) (Summa de arte praedicandi, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medieualis. Vol. 82 [Turnholt: Brepols, 1988], 57). (*Summa de arte praedicandi*, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medieualis. Vol. 82 [Turnholt: Brepols, 1988], 57). Chobham adds the allowance for lay preaching only in cases of dire necessity, “propter defectum autem sacerdotum” (ibid., 59). Chobham gives one example of a layperson preaching, but takes pains to show that this was an exception that proved the rule, for the man, Reginaldus by name, preached with the explicit permission of the Pope, and was allowed only to discuss vices and virtues. More serious doctrinal matters were forbidden: “Vidimus tamen Parisius quendam laicum Reginaldum nomine, qui auctoritate domini pape, in publicis congregationibus extra ecclesiam poterat vitia reprehendere et virtutes commendare. Sed sacram paginam non poterat exponere, nec ad hoc habuit licentiam domini pape” (“We see however, in Paris a certain layperson named Reginaldus, who with the authority of his lord the Pope, was allowed to reprehend vices and commend virtues, before a public crowd outside of the church. But he was not allowed to discuss the Sacred page, nor did he have permission for this by his lord the Pope”) (ibid., 57). Other examples of preaching by laypersons are quite rare. For instance, Albertano da Brescia, a notary and jurist, gave sermons to lawyers during Lent in 1250, but again the apparent unusualness of this occasion highlights the rarity of preaching by the laity (D’Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300*, 33).

My claim that Dante is liberal in his allowance for unauthorized preaching does not, however, suggest that he is insensitive to heresy. His tolerance for variation in religious expression may be greater than that of the Church's status quo, but when he identifies heresy he censures it with vigor. Those far from the path of Christianity receive the full force of his rhetorical assault. No amount of discretion, for example, bars him from praising the eradication of the Cathars, those “sterpi eretici,” that St. Dominic combats with sermons in *Par.* 12.100.⁸⁵ But when the matter of heresy strikes closer to home, the poet is far less enthusiastic to follow along with the status quo. For example, in the circle of heretics and Epicureans, the poet labels Farinata degli Uberti and Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti as Epicureans, those who negate the eternity of the human soul (which is in a sense a rejection of any religious credo entirely). Dante's identification of Farinata as an Epicurean is noteworthy since he was a known Cathar heretic, tried and condemned several times after his death, leading to the disinterment and burning of his bones.⁸⁶ Many of these postmortem trials were carried out in the 1280s, when Dante as a young adult would have seen how these accusations of impiety were falsely used as a figleaf to cover

85 Dominic's preaching war against heretics is actually licensed by the pope. This is the “officio apostolico” that he obtains from Innocent II (*Par.* 12.98). It may at first appear that Dante suggests the necessity to obtain preaching permission, but Dominic's assertive missionary work is a very particular kind of preaching. Dominic's specific commission here was of an unusual sort, as his preaching was intended to combat heresy where its threat was greatest. This is not normal preaching, but rhetorical war, and in this war Papal permission establishes Dominic's allegiance as squarely as does a flag in an actual war. Early commentators note Dominic's unique preaching status. Benvenuto da Imola states that the Saint needed Church support to keep others from thinking he was some sort of vigilante acting on his own accord: “ne videretur temerarius si auctoritate sua hoc faceret” (“so that he would not appear audacious as if he did so on his authority alone”) (*Benvenuti da Rambaldis de Imola comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam, nunc primum integre in lucem editum.*, Par. 12.97–102). Francesco da Buti specifies that the “officio” was not simply to preach, but more specifically was “collo officio de la inquisitoria” (“with the duty of inquisitor”) (*Commento di Francesco da Buti sopra La Divina Commedia di Dante Allighieri*, Par. 12.97–105). Buti's opinion is seconded by Cristoforo Landino.

86 (John N. Stephens, “Heresy in Medieval and Renaissance Florence,” *Past & Present* 54 [February 1, 1972]: 29–30).

much more elementary power struggles.⁸⁷

This same resistance to automatically applying the term “heresy” to any expression of faith that falls outside the Church's narrow definition of orthodoxy is apparent by his treatment of fra Dolcino and the other sowers of schism and discord in *Inferno* 28. Most if not all of the figures represented here would have been easily labeled heretics by an ideologically more conservative writer, but Dante cares little for supposed heterodoxies, opting instead to highlight the social and political consequences of these schismatics' actions.⁸⁸ A schismatic may very well be a heresiarch, but schism does not necessarily imply heresy; Muhammad's introduction of fra Dolcino illustrates this important distinction (schismatic ≠ heresiarch), which Dante scrupulously maintains by avoiding terms that would blur these boundaries.

In *Inferno* 28, fra Dolcino is mentioned only in passing; however, his treatment offers a unique opportunity to examine the contours of Dante's feeling about outliers of religious expression, those who find themselves on the outside of Church protection. As these figures were usually demonized by the Church and labeled heretics, Dante's treatment of Dolcino shows how far the poet is willing to go to avoid submitting to the dominant propaganda of the time. That said, Dante's representation of Dolcino does not begin auspiciously: in *Inferno* 28, the pilgrim and Vergil encounter the schismatics and sowers of discord, whose bodies are mutilated in various ways. One of these, Muhammad, mentions Dolcino by name:

87 Scholars have made clear that many actions against figures like Farinata were executed out of Guelf desire to secure their interests after the expulsion of the Ghibellines rather than from any genuine inclination to purge the populace of heterodox thought (George W. Dameron, *Florence and Its Church in the Age of Dante* [Princeton: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005], 231–232; Joan M Ferrante, *The Political Vision of the Divine Comedy* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984], 148).

88 Teodolinda Barolini, “Bertran De Born and Sordello: The Poetry of Politics in Dante's *Comedy*,” *PMLA* 94 (1979): 400.

Or di a fra Dolcin dunque che s'armi
 tu che forse vedra' il sole in breve,
 s'ello non vuol qui tosto seguitarmi,
 sì di vivanda, che stretta di neve
 non rechi la vittoria al Noarese,
 ch'altrimenti acquistar non saria leve.

You, who perhaps will shortly see the sun,
 warn fra Dolcino to provide himself –
 unless he'd like to join me here quite soon –
 with stocks of victuals, lest the siege of snow
 hand the Novarese the victory
 not otherwise easy to attain (*Inf.* 28.55-60).

In 1300, in Parma, fra Dolcino assumed leadership of an independent sect of Christian religious called the Apostolics. The order, which was never ordained or sanctioned by the Church, and which persisted in its practices long after it was given orders to cease and desist, found itself in continuous conflict with the authorities. Driven out of Parma, Dolcino and the Apostolics eventually settled in the hills of Piedmont where they forged alliances with local communities in opposition to the Pope.⁸⁹ Dante's Muhammad prophesies the ultimate defeat of Dolcino's Apostolics in the Val Sesia region between Novara and Vercelli. The Pope's armies laid siege to mount Zebello, where Dolcino and over three thousand followers were hiding. Over time many of Apostolics died or deserted; by 1307, exhausted by the snow and lack of resources, the remaining few submitted to defeat. Dolcino was tortured and burnt at the stake in Vercelli, in punishment for his resistance. Muhammad's speech above alludes to the siege and final defeat in his sympathetic advice that Dolcino stock up on resources in order to withstand the long winter atop the mountain that he and his followers are destined to suffer.

89 Raniero Orioli, *Venit perfidus heresiarcha: il movimento apostolico-dolciniano dal 1260 al 1307*, Studi storici (Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo), fasc. 193-196 (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1988), 87 ff. See also Mornese, *Eresia dolciniana e resistenza montanara*.

Dante's early commentators mostly agree about the basics of Dolcino's biography and history, but they differ on what exactly Dolcino's heresy was, or if he even was a heretic. Some of the commentaries to the *Commedia* accuse Dolcino of being a Patarine (Codice Cassinese, Pietro Alighieri), but Patarines are not heretics. Patarines were primarily a reform movement combating simony, concubinage, and marriage by priests, but they did not seriously challenge key doctrinal issues, as did Cathars.⁹⁰

Neither does Dolcino's history strike some as all bad, in spite of his taking up arms against the papacy as a schismatic. Benvenuto da Imola seems to admire and even romanticize some of Dolcino's outlaw traits in his commentary on these lines in *Inferno*. Perhaps this provides an interpretive key for the attenuated condemnation that Dolcino receives at Dante's hand. In an extended comment, which not once mentions heresy (though the word “scisma” is certainly present), Benvenuto recounts Dolcino's entire biography, beginning with his childhood in Prato (Lombardy) and Vercelli (Piedmont), continuing through his precipitous rise as the leader of the Apostolic sect, and finally concluding with a long and gruesomely detailed account of his capture, torture and final execution. Benvenuto emphasizes Dolcino's brilliance and irresistible speaking skills: “Dulcinus erat intelligens et eloquentissimus, adeo quod suavissima facundia sua ita ligabat auditores, quod nullus accedens ad eum semel, poterat unquam recedere” (“Dolcino was intelligent and wonderfully eloquent, of such delightful fluency that he bound his listeners so that no one upon hearing him once could ever escape”).⁹¹ He dramatizes Dolcino's bloody end at the hands of the secular arm, such that his execution seems more a martyrdom than

90 The *Catholic Encyclopedia* declines to label Patarines as heretics as well.

91 Benvenuto da Imola, commentary to *Inferno* 28.55–60.

a justifiable consequence to heresy. Benvenuto details Dolcino's resistance to torture minutely, perhaps even enthusiastically: while his flesh is torn from his body Dolcino never changes expression (“numquam mutasse faciem”); when his nose is lopped off, he only shrugs (“strinxit parum spatulas”); and even when his penis is cut off, he does not cry out but only sighs through the mutilated remains of his nose (“ubi traxit magnum suspirium contractione narium”). Benvenuto goes so far as to state that Dolcino's execution could be considered a martyrdom if it were not for his clear intentions against the Church (“Poterat martyr dici, si poena faceret martyrium, non voluntas”). Finally, in a touch of splendid melodrama, Benvenuto heralds the fidelity of Dolcino's consort Margherita. Even after his death she remains “constans,” refusing offers of marriage from many nobles (“numquam potuit flecti”). She finally meets her own bloody and fiery end, but even then she follows her Dolcino to Hell “courageously” (“illum audacter sequuta est ad inferos”). While Benvenuto carefully emphasizes that Dolcino and Margherita were enemies of the Church, it is impossible to miss his clear attraction to these two figures, his admiration for their tenacious fidelity to their beliefs in spite of the cruelest torture, and his romantic coloring of their mutual love and devotion.

If the evidence from the Dante commentaries alone provides little to qualify Dolcino as a heretic in the true and proper sense, neither does a persuasive case materialize in the opinions on him expressed by Church figures. From the Church's perspective Dolcino is clearly a heretic simply because of his rebellion – to disobey the church is a *de facto* heresy – but aside from this Dolcino's theology is rather conventional compared to that of the Cathars. Salimbene's chronicle presents valuable information about the birth and development of the Apostolic order in the period pre-dating Dolcino's involvement. Originating in Parma in the 1260s, the Apostolics were

not initially a militant sect. Nevertheless, Salimbene responds to them and their founder Gerard Segarelli with severe disapproval.⁹² It is hard to understand Salimbene's opprobrium, since under Segarelli's guiding hand the Apostolics were no more a threat to the Church than were any other assortment of passionate lay converts practicing piety and poverty, who enthusiastically followed the lead of the early Franciscans.⁹³ Decades later, the inquisitor Bernard Gui identifies the group as heretically preaching against the Church (“dogmatizans contra communem statum sancte romane ecclesie”) and introducing a “novam doctrinam” into the faith, but Salimbene does not support Gui's claims by detailing any of this new doctrine.⁹⁴ What he does provide is a slew of unfavorable descriptions. In his view, the Apostolics were a “congregationem illorum ribaldorum et porcariorum et stultorum et ignobilium qui se dicunt Apostolos esse et non sunt, sed sunt synagoga Sathane” (“that group of rascally and swinish men, those fools and base creatures who say they are Apostles and are not, but are the synagoga of Satan”).⁹⁵ Harsh words, but they do not constitute an accusation of heresy. Instead, Salimbene continues with *ad hominem* attacks identifying Segarelli as a poor preacher of pitiful intellectual and rhetorical skills, whose followers attended more to skirt-chasing than to Christian service.⁹⁶ Despite Salimbene's efforts,

92 Salimbene's discussion of Segarelli is largely limited to pages 250-292 in *Salimbene De Adam Cronica*, 1998.

93 Orioli, *Venit perfidus heresiarcha: il movimento apostolico-dolciniano dal 1260 al 1307*, 52. For more on Segarelli, Dolcino and the Apostolics, see Corrado Mornese and Gustavo Buratti, eds., *Fra Dolcino e gli apostolici tra eresia, rivolta e roghi* (Rome: Derive Approdi, 2000); Eugenio Anagnine, *Dolcino e il movimento ereticale all'inizio del Trecento* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1965); Mornese, *Eresia dolciniana e resistenza montanara*; Raniero Orioli, ed., *Nascita, vita e morte di un'eresia medievale* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1983).

94 Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, 17. Orioli does not find any credible accusation of heresy in Salimbene's account (Orioli, *Venit perfidus heresiarcha: il movimento apostolico-dolciniano dal 1260 al 1307*, 25).

95 *Salimbene De Adam Cronica*, 1998, II:369; *The Chronicle of Salimbene de Adam*, 249.

96 *Salimbene De Adam Cronica*, 1998, II:369; *The Chronicle of Salimbene de Adam*, 249. When Salimbene's criticism is specific, it hinges largely on matters of intellectual status rather than issues of orthodoxy or heterodoxy. A notable example is Salimbene's mention of Segarelli's somewhat macaronic rendering of familiar Latin phrases: “Verumtamen verbum Domini frequenter dicebat ‘Penitençagite!’ – nesciebat enim exprimere ut

support for Segarelli only increased among the Parma locals. Eventually his popularity grew enough to persuade the Franciscans to lobby for drastic measures to suppress him and his followers. In 1300, the local episcopate turned against Segarelli and his followers and had him burnt at the stake by the grand inquisitor of Parma. But Segarelli's execution could not stop the movement; it only increased in popularity and in militancy when fra Dolcino took leadership in that same year, setting in motion the seven-year journey towards their eventual grisly end at the hand of the Pope's armies.

Noting the difficulty in identifying any doctrinal heresy in Dolcino's opinions, historians generally agree that his persecution was politically motivated; in tandem with this, many Dante critics likewise conclude that Dante's punishment for Dolcino primarily (perhaps even exclusively) regards the political and social dimension of his action, rather than theological difference. Of the historians, Brian Carniello dismantles Salimbene's accusations of Apostolic heresy by exposing the rivalry going on between orders in Parma at the time.⁹⁷ Drawing from documentary evidence, Carniello shows that Segarelli had the ear of many prelates and bishops in Parma and in the Emilia-Romagna region and was gaining popularity, while the Franciscans were losing followers as they gradually strayed from their founder's austere practices. Carniello concludes that the reason for Salimbene's harsh invective “was mendicant rivalry, and not any heretical tendencies inherent in Segarelli's religious enthusiasm.”⁹⁸ Raniero Orioli likewise has

diceret: ‘Penitentiam agite’” (“And he frequently repeated the words of the Lord, 'Doyepenance!' For he was ignorant of the proper words, 'Do ye penance.’”) (*Salimbene De Adam Cronica*, 1998, II:372; *The Chronicle of Salimbene de Adam*, 252).

97 Brian R. Carniello, “Gerardo Segarelli as the Anti-Francis: Mendicant Rivalry and Heresy in Medieval Italy, 1260-1300,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 57, no. 2 (2006): 226–251.

98 *Ibid.*, 237.

little to say about Apostolic heterodoxy, instead identifying the Apostolics rebellion as the driving force behind their persecution. Their claim that Boniface VIII was the Antichrist could hardly have won them many friends in Rome, nor would have Dolcino's claim (as Bernard Gui puts it) that “nullus papa romane ecclesie potest aliquem absolvere vere a peccatis” (“no pope of the Roman church can truly absolve anyone from sin”).⁹⁹

This kind of anti-papal language, however finds echo in many places where Dante witheringly criticizes popes and other church figures that he finds failing in their sacred commission (though never the Ecclesiastical institutions itself, only its corrupt managers, as he makes clear in *Par.* 12.88-90¹⁰⁰), comes close in tenor to Dante's sentiments expressed across many of his works. In the previous canto, he strikes an ideological pose not dissimilar to Dolcino's when he too questions the Pope's ability to fully absolve sins. Pope Boniface VIII claims to absolve the Franciscan Guido da Montefeltro of his sin (“tuo cuor non sospetti; / finor t'assolvo [“Let not your heart mistrust / I absolve you here and now”] [*Inf.* 27.100-01]), but when he finally dies and Francis comes to take him to Heaven, a devil arrives and explains that the Pope's absolution was not valid (27.112-23). The poet challenges Papal supremacy elsewhere, assigning Boniface VIII to hell among the simonists, as noted in the last chapter. In *Paradiso*, he says that modern popes have turned Peter's see into a “cloaca del sangue e de la puzza” (“a sewer of blood and filth”) (27.25-26). In addition, fra Dolcino's eschatological vision differs from Dante's only in minor particulars. According to Dolcino, a new Holy Roman emperor would

99 Orioli, *Venit perfidus heresiarcha: il movimento apostolico-dolciniano dal 1260 al 1307*, 119–120. The Bernard Gui quote is from *De Secta Illorum*, 25, cit. in *Ibid.*, 170.

100 “...la sedia che fu già benigna / più a' poveri giusti, non per lei, / ma per colui che siede, che traligna...” (“... the papal seat, not now as benevolent / to the upright poor as it was once – not flawed in itself, / but degenerate in its occupant...”)

arise and eliminate the Pope, strip the church of its wealth and temporal power, and instate a “holy Pope,” ushering in a new era and a return to the virtues of the Early Church.¹⁰¹ Dolcino's apocalyptic prophecy of a secular leader (not a divine Pope, as Joachim of Fiore prophecies) recalls Dante's own prophecy of the “veltro” of *Inferno* 1, and the secular leader identified only as “DXV” in *Purgatorio* 33.43-44. These are only a few of the many examples showing Dante's extreme antipathy for the Church as an institution, an antipathy over which he and Dolcino find common ground.

Dante scholars see the sins of the schismatics – and by extension Dolcino's sin – as soundly contained within the domain of politics, not doctrine. By doing so they confirm the conclusions of the historians. Aside from Muhammad, all the other figures in this canto: Pier da Medicina, Gaius Scribonius Curio, Mosca de' Lamberti, and Bertran de Born are guilty of inciting exclusively political divisiveness, and it stands to reason that Dante would view Dolcino in the same light. In a similar vein, George Dameron highlights the danger that certain Catholics felt in the face of Dolcino's refusal to kowtow to ecclesiastical authority, noting Giordano da Pisa's sermon delivered on the feast of St. John in 1305, when Dante was still alive, which expresses horror at his rebellious refusal to align himself with Church interests. Dameron too argues that Dante was most concerned by the social division that these views and challenges to political authority would entail.¹⁰²

Preaching, as I discussed, had undergone a great renaissance in the *duecento*. Although never completely absent from the Christian scene, preaching had fallen into an unprecedented

101 Orioli, *Nascita, vita e morte di un'eresia medievale*, 98–99; Orioli, *Venit perfidus heresiarcha: il movimento apostolico-dolciniano dal 1260 al 1307*, 119–120.

102 *Florence and Its Church in the Age of Dante*, 232–233.

degree of neglect by the end of the twelfth century. This was at least partially responsible for the rise of grassroots preaching in the period, that the Church could not define as anything but heresy. This preaching filled a doctrinal gap that the Church had left open through its own neglect, and the sermons of the Cathars in the Languedoc and elsewhere proved far too irresistible for a populace already hungry to understand their religion. While the Church took violent measures like the Albigensian Crusade to repress heresy, leaders came to realize that they needed words as well as weapons to defend against heresy. Their duty to satisfy Christians' curiosity about spiritual experience was non-negotiable if the Church really meant to take seriously its need to maintain the orthodoxy of its fold. In this way, heretical preaching became the impetus for the rebirth of legitimate Church preaching in the thirteenth century. This was not a preaching free-for-all, but rather a practice subject to the authority of the Church, ensured on two fronts: first by developing the proper institutions for training preachers, and second by regulation, a vetting process requiring episcopal approval for anyone wanting to preach. Thus, the explosion of preaching in the thirteenth century was still very much under the Church's control.

Within this larger culture of restriction and regulation, Dante stands out for his striking liberality concerning preaching without official approval, and for his pessimism about whether good sermons could emanate from the official ecclesiastical culture. While figures such as Catalano and Loderingo in the *bolgia* of the hypocrites ought to preach as part of their devotion to pastoral care, Dante represents them as hopeless shirkers, totally unwilling and unable to rise to the apostolic challenge. At the opposite end of the rhetorical spectrum, Dante does not criticize those who preach without authorization, even when they challenge the Ecclesiastical party line.

Although his take on the schismatic fra Dolcino is hardly approving of his action, it is clear that Dante does not consider his crime related to heresy or its propagation. Instead, he identifies Dolcino's schism as a purely political act of real warfare against the Pope and his armies. Dante does not approve of heresy, but his threshold for unorthodox belief is far higher than the Church's.

In my next chapter I will show that Dante's tolerance for the unsanctioned preacher is not without a degree of self-interest. Indeed, the poet has a stake in this viewpoint, as he will advance himself as a voice from outside the official hierarchy, whose *licet* derives not from episcopal but from Divine authority.

Chapter Three

Predicante Iustitiam: Dante, the Self-Authorizing Preacher

The last two chapters explored preaching as a social phenomenon, noting its renaissance in the *duecento* and the complex relationship the Church had with this new surge of enthusiasm for preaching, as it strove on the one hand to encourage earnest faith and spiritual research, and on the other to curb those whose enthusiasm got the best of them and led them to begin preaching their own views without any direction or regulation from the Church. Dante, I have shown, does not appear to care much for the ecclesiastical regulation of preaching, if his treatment of certain figures in the *Commedia* is at all indicative of a larger theoretical standpoint.

This chapter investigates more minutely Dante's understanding of preaching, what it is, and who should participate in it. The investigation is tripartite. First it will further explore the poet's viewpoint on "pastori," "preti," "sacerdoti," in sum, the various titles used to identify Church figures who were duty bound to preach. These, he will show, neither feed nor edify their flocks as Innocent III had instructed them to do in the canons of Lateran IV. The poet describes a world of shepherds turned into wolves and the sheep, their parishioners, left starving or worse.

The second goal of this chapter is to explore the full meaning of “predicare” as Dante sees it. I will show how “predicare” is used in in the *Monarchia* and *Convivio* not for preaching *per se*, but for documenting objective truths, valences he will reserve for later use in his letters. Lastly, I will show how in his Eleventh and Twelfth Epistles Dante uses “predicare” to carefully advance his own case as a preacher, while simultaneously issuing counterclaims that he would neither desire nor ask for the privilege to preach, if not for the extraordinary circumstances that drive him to do so. In the face of strict regulation, Dante advances a new view of preaching based on necessity, not the permission of any bishop, cardinal or pope. His “predicare” as a kind of *cri de coeur* whose legitimacy is validated by its very expression under conditions hostile to it. This chapter is not a mere investigation of Dante's use of the word, but rather a record of his long term strategy to position himself as that preacher. He describes clergy as negligent in order to create a void that he will fill, and his use of “predicare” as a synonym for truth-telling confirms the gravity of the fierce message he will finally deliver in the *Commedia*.

“Di latte vòte”: Dante clears the pulpit

Chapter One outlined how the Church prohibited laypersons from preaching; it was an exercise exclusively limited to qualified clergy. However, some felt that in the case of great emergency, laypersons (indeed not just laymen but women as well) may step forward into the role. In his *Summa de arte praedicandi* Thomas of Chobham makes the startling admission that technically unqualified laypersons can preach when the absence of certified preachers is so great that it threatens to destabilize Christian and moral society:

Adiciendum est ad predicta, quod in tempore necessitatis scilicet cum imminet periculum fidei, potest et debet quilibet predicare, sine exceptione et conditionis et etatis et sexus.

It should be added to the aforementioned that in a time of need, for example in the threat of immediate peril to faith, that anyone can and ought to preach, with no exception to condition or age or sex.¹

Thus, when the true faith is in some way under threat, and there are no qualified clergy to defend it, laypersons may step into the breach. Chobham then enumerates important historical cases in which “unauthorized” preaching saved the faith: for example he notes St. Catherine's resolution to preach against paganism at the palace of Emperor Maxentius, even though she was called and driven to do so by no one (“non vocata, non compulsa venit ad palatium propter defensione fidei christianae”²). He also mentions Paul the Hermit who had neither erudition nor literary skill (“rusticus et fere illiteratus”³) but still preached, when Arians were threatening to change the face of Christianity with their heresy. Although the official stance on lay preaching by Dante's time is one of total prohibition, Chobham's words nevertheless demonstrate that views on lay preaching were not always in lockstep with Papal decisions, and helps to articulate what might be considered a crisis meriting the need for lay preachers. Dante understands perfectly this politics of crisis; with an eye to carving out a space he will later fill, he describes the clergy in the *Commedia* not in terms of their competence but in terms of their failure. Their rejection of pastoral care suggests a situation of grave “periculum fidei” in his times, a void in leadership that begs for one, neither “vocatus” or “compulsus” to step into the figurative pulpit, but who also is

1 *Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medieualis 82 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1988), 71.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

neither “rusticus” nor “illiteratus.”

An examination of the occurrences of “prete,” “sacerdote,” “pastor,” “prelato,” and “cherco” in the *Divina Commedia* reveals that Dante resolutely refuses to associate anyone identified under these monikers with preaching or any sort of pastoral care, preferring instead to describe the maliciousness, malfeasance and greed that vitiate their ability to do good. Of these, the cleric (“cherco”) is afforded the least favorable treatment. “Cherchi” feature only in the *Inferno*, and this alone is a provocatively telling datum. The cleric's most notable appearance is among the hordes of those dominated by avarice (“usa avarizia il suo soperchio” [7.48]), who are condemned to roll stones back and forth in the fourth circle of Hell. Also crowded with clerics is the circle of sodomites; Brunetto Latini tells the pilgrim “insomma sappi che tutti fur cheri / e litterati grandi e di gran fama” (“In sum, note that all of them were clerics / or great and famous scholars befouled”) (15.106-107). Later, in the bolgia of flatterers in canto 18, Dante does not identify any clerics by name, but he does allude to them when he attempts to discern the face of Alessandro Interminelli down in that stinking pit. Dante-pilgrim finds himself unable to distinguish Alessandro from a cleric, because his face is completely covered with human waste: “E mentre ch'io là giù con l'occhio cerco, / vidi un col capo sì di merda lordo, / che non parëa s'era laico o cherco (Searching the bottom with my eyes I saw / a man, his head so smeared with shit / one could not tell if he were priest or layman.) (18.115-117).

The “cherco” in the *Commedia* seems more of a generic stand-in for “bad priest,” as the name never singles out any specific figure. The “pastor,” on the other hand, is frequently

identified by name, and Dante details his crimes as well.⁴ Dante also takes advantage of the positive affiliations of “pastor” (Jesus’s “good shepherd”) to ironically highlight the evil deeds of these figures. Many of the “pastori” that Dante represents are high up on the clerical hierarchy – bishops and popes – and their failures are therefore all the more damaging to the flocks that they are commissioned to tend. In the *Inferno* the term “pastor” appears twice, both times to call out a pope: in the third bolgia, the simonist Nicholas III (1277-1280) calls pope Clement V (1305-1314) a “pastor senza legge” (“lawless shepherd”) (19.83). Several lines later, Dante-pilgrim refers to Nicholas and his cohorts as “pastors” (“voi pastor”) and links them all with the prostitute of St. John’s Apocalypse (19.106). In *Purgatorio*, the term is used four times, three of them very negative. Archbishop Bartolomeo Pignatelli, the “pastor di Cosenza,” hunts down Manfred like an animal (in Manfred’s words, “la caccia / di me” [“the hunt to take me down”]) on orders from Clement IV (3.124-125). The pope is called a “pastor che procede” (“pastor who precedes”) in Marco Lombardo’s discourse arguing for a separation between ecclesiastical and state powers (16.98).⁵ What seems at first a neutral observation is followed by a scathing accusation: the good example that this pastor ought to set is completely compromised by his bad behavior, and the whole population trails after him into perdition: “per che la gente, che sua guida vede / pur a quel ben fedire ond’ella è ghiotta, / di quel si pasce, e più oltre non chiede”

4 I omit occurrences of “pastore” in the *Divina Commedia* that refer to shepherds, or which do not intend pastors in a strictly clerical sense. The ambiguity inherent in certain passages, such as *Purg.* 27.76-87, in which Statius and Vergil are compared to shepherds guiding Dante-pilgrim suggests evocative comparison with the pastors under analysis, but such comparisons are outside the scope of this essay.

5 Marco Lombardo discusses the distinctions between civic duties metaphorically: “rugumar può, ma non ha l’unghie fesse” (16.98-99). The reference to rumination and cloven hooves comes from Medieval interpretations of kosher laws in Leviticus 11:3 and Deuteronomy 14:7, that argue for a separation between ecclesiastical and state powers.

(“The people, then, who see their leader lunge / only at the good for which they themselves are greedy, / graze on that and ask for nothing more”) (16.100-102). Dante's last negative example demonstrates the distortions that ensue when the secular sphere meddles in ecclesiastical matters. In canto 18, the abbot of San Zeno of Verona recounts how once Alberto della Scala (Cangrande's father) installed his bastard son Giuseppe as a false pastor “in loco di suo pastor vero” (“in the place of its true shepherd”) (18.126). The one putatively neutral use in *Purgatorio*, Adrian V's self-definition as a “pastore,” is tarred by the confession that he was converted only when made pope, in the last month of his life, uncovering a “life of lies”: “La mia conversione omè!, fu tarda; / ma, come fatto fui roman pastore / così scopersi la vita bugiarda” (“My conversion, alas, came late – / when I was made the Roman shepherd, / I discovered a life of lies”) (19.106-108). Furthermore, in clear rejection of the hierarchies that papacy implies, Adrian V refuses the pilgrim's attempt to bow to him, substituting in its place a horizontal relationship that raises the pilgrim's status as much as it lowers his own: “conservo sono teco (“I am a fellow-servant”) (19.134-135).

Dante mentions the “pastore” more often in *Paradiso*, in tandem with an increased emphasis on straight theology in this canticle. These parallel emphases are not accidental, for Dante intends theology – even at its most complex and abstruse – to edify and instruct the congregation, delivered by preachers who have predigested it for them. However nowhere, it seems, is such a competent pastor to be found in the textual landscape of *Paradiso*. Of the nine times “pastor” is used here, fully seven of these are negative. Sometimes Dante recounts pastors' extraordinary failures, or even their utter betrayal of their Christian following. There is the

bloody bishop of Feltre, Alessandro Novello di Treviso, who in 1314 facilitates the decapitation of four Ferrarese men at the hand of the Angevin Vicar in Ferrara Pino della Tosa (9.53).⁶ There are the pastors in Cacciaguida's speech who lose the Holy Lands through their own bumbling negligence (15.144). There is the pope who encourages Constantine's illegitimate abdication of Rome to the Church ("per cedere al pastor"), perpetuating an injustice that he should have known better than to commit (20.57). And then there are the ludicrous "moderni pastori" that St. Peter Damian describes, overfed and portly, who with the insult of their own weight demote their fine horses to simple beasts of burden:

Or voglion quinci e quindi chi i rincalzi
 li moderni pastori e chi li meni,
 tanto son gravi, e chi di retro li alzi.
 Cuopron d'i manti loro i palafreni,
 sì che due bestie van sott' una pelle:
 oh pazienza che tanto sostieni!

Now our modern shepherds call for one on this side,
 one on that, to support them, they are so bloated,
 and one to go before, one to boost them from behind.
 Their fur-lined mantles hang upon their horses' flanks
 so that two beasts go underneath one skin.
 O patience, what a heavy load you bear! (21.130-35)

These "modern shepherds" are so cocooned in their many layers of finery and so teeteringly corpulent that they need assistants to prop them up as they walk and others to boost them onto their fine palfreys from behind. St Peter Damian's extravagant description may provoke a laugh

6 Charles Singleton says that the Ferrarese four escaped from that city after their failed conspiracy against Pino della Tosa. Alessandro Novello had let them take refuge in Feltre under the Bishop's protection, but finally gave them up under pressure from the vicar, who promptly took them back to Ferrara and executed them. Commentaries are in disagreement about how many were decapitated. Bosco-Reggio and Hollander claim three, Torraca, Grandgent, Chiavacci-Leonardi, four; Giacalone, Pasquini/Quaglio, Singleton and several others only claim there were a few. Singleton comments on the fallout of this event: "By this act of treachery the bishop incurred such great odium that he was forced to quit Feltre and retire into a monastery, where he died in 1320" ("Dartmouth Dante Project," n.d., s.v. Alessandro Novello, <http://dante.dartmouth.edu/search.php>).

to ease our contempt, but the worst pastors in the *Paradiso* do not amuse. They terrify. These are the shepherds who have turned wolf, who turn on their followers to devour them: Folquet of Marseille describes one of these, a predator on his own flock because of his greater love for the Florin: “il maladetto fiore / c'ha disviate le pecore e li agni, / però che fatto ha lupo del pastore” (“the accursèd flower / that has led astray both sheep and lambs, / for it has made a wolf out of its shepherd”) (9.130-132). St. Peter – himself the first papal “pastor” – looks down on the fields of Christendom and finds them crowded with wolves: “in vesta di pastor lupi rapaci / si veggion di qua sù per tutti i paschi” (“Ravenous wolves in shepherds' clothing / can be seen, from here above, in every pasture”) (27.55-56).

There are good pastors in the *Paradiso* but they are far too rare to offset the imbalance between those good and those bad: there is the unnamed “pastor de la Chiesa che vi guida” (“the shepherd of the Church to guide you”) in 5.77, who ought to be a good example; however, like Marco Lombardo's unnamed “pastor che procede” (*Purg.* 3), this too is a hypothetical pastor, and does not mean to indicate any existing figure. Also hypothetical is the Dominican pastor that Thomas Aquinas describes, who is notable for his scant followers, such is the pitiful state of piety in his times: “Ben son di quelle che temono 'l danno / e stringonsi al pastor; ma son si poche, / che le cappe fornisce poco panno” (“There are some, indeed, who, fearing harm, / huddle near the shepherd, but these are so few / that a tiny piece of cloth can furnish all their cowls”) (11.130-132).

Only once in the *Commedia* does Dante identify a specific pastor in an unambiguously positive light: Pope Agapetus I, whom Justinian credits for his own conversion to orthodoxy. In *Paradiso* 6, the Byzantine Emperor says he was originally content in his monophysite heresy:

“una natura in Cristo esser, non piùe / credea, e di tal fede era contento” (“I believed Christ had but a single nature / and was content in that belief”) (6.14-15), but his satisfaction in his error did not last when pope Agapetus persuaded him that he had strayed from the true path:

ma 'l benedetto Agapito, che fue
 sommo pastore, a la fede sincera
 mi drizzò con le parole sue.
 Io li credetti; e ciò che 'n sua fede era,
 vegg'io or chiaro sì, come tu vedi
 ogne contradizione e falsa e vera.

But the blessèd Agapetus,
 the most exalted of our shepherds,
 brought me to the true faith with his words
 I believed him. What he held by faith
 I now see just as clearly as you understand
 that any contradiction is both false and true (6.16-21).

Dante summarizes his ideal vision of pastoral action in Agapetus's model; the good pastor is attentive to the guidance of souls and apparently negligent of any other activities, like political involvement. One is surprised to discover that the actual historical Agapetus did not go to Constantinople to correct the emperor's heresy, but to broker peace between the Byzantines and the Ostrogoths. Dante's Agapetus, in contrast, mediates not between opposing political forces, but between God and man. And his action is not one of reconciliation, but correction: “mi drizzò” emphasizes that Agapetus, in Justinian's words, “directed me,” or “sent me” to the true faith.⁷ Agapetus is not like Vergil in *Purg.* 22.67-69, a gentle guide holding aloft a light for those trailing behind him; he is in contrast a stern shepherd to the emperor, driving him into the light from behind.

⁷ These translations are my own, as the “brought me to” that Hollander proposes in his translation seems a bit attenuated.

Justinian makes plain that Agapetus's rectification “con le parole sue” involved not mere exhortations to repentance alone, but also included a deep theological discussion, as Justinian had to be persuaded with substantial argument to change his faith. The issue regards Justinian's monophysim, his faith that Christ had but “una natura.” Agapetus had to convince him that Jesus had indeed two natures, one entirely Divine, another equally human. In short, Agapetus had to argue the case for what would seem a patent absurdity to any terrestrial mode of inquiry, but which turns out a paradox that the transcendent can ultimately accommodate. Justinian's conversion seems engineered in terms of faith (“fede sincera,” “io li credetti,” “sua fede”). But here in heaven he makes clear that what he believed while alive is now obvious to his discernment (“vegg'io or chiaro si”) through transcendent Divine vision. From the celestial vantage point, Justinian demonstrates that what we consider *doxa* on Earth are ultimately frank *gnosis* for those minds able to understand with the help of revelation. This explains Justinian's comparison of his realization of Christ's dual nature to any observation that confirms Aristotle's principle of non-contradiction. While logic resolves contradictions on Earth, theology functions to resolve contradiction on an even higher level. In sum, Justinian suggests that theological truth *is* ultimately empirical as well. In this sense it surpasses the epistemological apparatus that philosophy – by comparison a meager earthbound thing – can offer. Justinian leaves unstated that the principle of Christ's dual nature is precisely the kind of claim that Aristotle's principle of non-contradiction refutes; however, this is the exact point he would wish to drive home: that theology ultimately upsets philosophy and surpasses it.

In addition to “cherco” and “pastore” Dante also uses – albeit rarely – the terms “prete” and “sacerdozio.” “Prete” appears only twice: once to point out Boniface, the “gran prete” who

tricks Guido da Montefeltro (*Inf* 27.70), and once to ironically title Alessandro Novello, that same “prete cortese” (*Par* 9:58), whom we have earlier heard about as the “pastor” who facilitated Pino della Tosa's decapitation of the four Ferrarese men. “Sacerdote” is absent from the *Divina Commedia*, although “sacerdozio” does occur in *Par* 11.5, as one of the “insensata cura de' mortali,” driving men to beat their wings down low (“che ti fanno in basso batter l'ali” [11.3]). In the passage “sacerdozio” is mentioned along with the study of law and rhetoric as an occupation that leads to material advancement (“Chi dietro a *iura* e chi ad amforismi / sen giva e chi seguendo sacerdozio” [11.1, 2-3]). Dante's use of “sacerdozio” is transparently ironic and polemical as it is etymologically bound by definition to giving (“sacerdos” = “sacer” + “dare” = giver of sacrifices) and not to the pursuit of personal getting. Perhaps in this way “sacerdozio” best and most concisely sums up Dante's view of the clerical professions; the role is turned inside-out, rendering it a disfiguration, an absurdity, an “insensata cura.”

In sum, in the world Dante describes in the *Commedia*, all those designated with clerical duties are not notable for their preaching, and are usually much more well known for their sometimes abominable misdeeds. It is not the intention of this section to prove Dante's anticlerical stance, which is already widely known. What I mean to demonstrate is that these figures rarely do anything that even remotely resembles pastoral work, and not one of them is seen preaching. Preaching does occur in the *Commedia*, as I will later show, but never in connection with any of these titles. This is a consequence of Dante's deliberate effort to separate the activity of preaching from those officially designated to do so.

“Predicare”: genesis of a verb of authority.

But what of this practice, preaching, that Dante would seek to keep every cleric, pastor and priest away from? What is its precise meaning in Dante's personal lexicon? An investigation into Dante's uses of “predicare” will confirm that he sees the verb as a close cousin to “verum dicere,” in addition to all its other more obvious pastoral functions. Truth-telling, it will be shown, is the rich humus in which all variant occurrences of the word root their power. This following investigation is historical and taxonomical, tracing instances of “predicare” and its many variants in Dante's writings and in those of his contemporaries, and organizing them together to see what kind of story they tell. The occurrences under investigation also point backwards to earlier occasions of “predicare” in its evolutionary history, specifically to its origins in early Latinity, as well as to its modified uses at the dawn of the Christian age. Employed in such radically different textual environments, these many different occasions of “predicare” are differently adapted to suit different niches, but their semantic commonalities become clear when they are considered as a group. In the *Monarchia* “predicare” functions as a technical term, linked to Aristotelian thought. In the *Convivio* it appears to echo the simple and secular declarative overtones of its early uses in Classical Latin, quite distant from the context of church preaching. In Dante's letters, “predicare” is distinctly Christian, but it recalls apostolic rather than clerical uses, as it seems to descend directly from its sinewy New Testament ancestor, the first “predicare” to point to spiritual and not secular truths. Liberated from the Classical taxonomy of declarative and mercantile contexts (I will soon show examples from Plautus illustrating these), “predicare” in the New Testament defines a new activity unique to the new religion. Dante's

rooting of his use of the term in New Testament meaning also suggests evocative links to prophecy, which will be borne out under further investigation in the next chapter. The “predicare” that Dante uses in his letters is this one, simplified and stripped to its bare prophetic/apostolic essential. As he echoes the words and sentiments of the evangelists, Dante also signals here a very important turning point in his self-description, an inching towards the prophetic status that he will more fully describe and embody in the *Commedia*.

Although in our own times, “to preach” and “praedicare” populate an almost exclusively ecclesiastical ecology, In Dante's time it was used in a variety of discursive environments. Employed in all sorts of secular contexts, it is mostly associated with the rhetorics of persuasion, often with a hint of religious use. Its earliest recorded uses in the Italian vernacular seem to exploit its liminal status as a word bridging the divide between the secular and the sacred. For example, one of the *Laude* of Jacopone da Todi narrates a psychomachia in which Discretion and Love battle for possession over the author's heart.⁸ Assailed by Love, the Flesh complains to Reason about his inability to resist the rhetorical charms of Love:

Endel celo piglia parte,
 poi con meco si commatte;
 enganname co la sua arte
 sì mi fa dolce predecare;
 ché parla sì dolce mente
 che me suttrâ de tutta gente [...]

He takes the side of heaven,
 then does combat against me,
 he deceives me with his art
 such sweet preaching does he make to me;
 for he speaks so sweetly

8 “L'amor 'n lo cor se vòl rennare” in *Laude* (Florence: Olschki, 2010), 35–37.

that he draws me from all the people [...] (60-64)

Jacopone's use of “predica” takes for granted that persuasion can be directed towards evil ends. Love preaches deceptively but sweetly, gently urging the flesh to give in to its requests. If Jacopone alludes to the rhetorical ingenuity of a good sermon in this passage, he does so ironically, describing the flesh as seduced by love rather than edified by it. Love's preaching, according to the Flesh's judgment, is something that leads one to perdition. At other times, “predicare” can be used to signify a simple testimony, such as in this excerpt from Bonvesin da la Riva's poem, “De la nasione de l'omo”:

La nostra vita misera, ke non permene in stato,
ne mostra e ne predica, ke l'omo ke in lo mondo è nato,
in questo peregrinagio non debia essere exaltato,
ma de' stare in penitentia sempremay umiliato.

Our poor little life, which does not remain in one state
nor does it demonstrate or declare, that man that is born into the world
must not be exalted in this pilgrimage,
but must remain in penitence, always humbled.⁹

Bonvesin's “predica” does not on its surface suggest so much the speech of persuasion as it registers the staking of a claim; however at the same time these claims need to be believed too. This use, a kind of declaration with persuasive overtones, is in close keeping with some of the earliest uses in Classical literature. In Plautus's *Amphitryon* (*The Two Bacchuses*), a figure named Sosia urgently emphasizes “me esse huius familiai familiarem praedico” (“I am a member of this household here, I do avow”), to avoid a beating from Mercury who takes him for an intruder.¹⁰

9 Lines 101-104 in Bonvesin da la Riva, *Il libro delle tre scritture e i volgari delle false scuse e delle vanità*, ed. Leandro Biadene (Pisa: Spoerri, 1902), 4.

10 *The Two Bacchuses*, trans. Paul Nixon, vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), v. 359.

Like Sosia, Bonvesin uses “predica” to make a statement of necessary truth; but he also must emphasize and assert that truth; thus a need to persuade overlays the apparently factual declaration. In Bonvesin's case there is also a slight air of the pulpit, in the moral exhortation “de' stare in penitentia sempremay umiliato.” Far more overtly Christian, on the other hand, is an example from Guittone d'Arezzo's thirteenth letter, in which he addresses the novices and religious of the Jovial Friars in Pisa, commenting on their excellent spiritual and moral preparation: “[...] in devozione e in timore divino e predicati e ammoniti siete meglio di vicini vostri [...]” (“[...] you are better preached and admonished than your neighbors in devotion and divine fear [...]”)¹¹ Here more familiar overtones of ethical instructions are apparent. These examples from Dante's time illustrate just a few of the meanings of “predicare,” but they highlight in their own way two major and somewhat contradictory senses that are constantly at play when the word is used to identify preaching. On the one hand “predicare” is a way to register apparent ontological truths, as seen in the passage from Bonvesin. On the other, it suggests a certain degree of rhetorical manipulation, of persuasive artistry, which is more easily seen in Jacopone.

An investigation into the etymological history of “predicare” shows these different and to some degree opposing values early on in Classical Latinity: Sosia in *Amphitryon* has already provided one example of this; a variant of this dynamic often appears in marketplace settings such as auctions, where the auctioneer (“praeco”) announces the existence of goods for sale, and then sets about persuading potential customers to buy those goods he sells. For example in Plautus's *Stichus* there is a parasite named Gelasimus who, bitten by hard times, realizes he must

¹¹ Guittone d'Arezzo, *Lettere*, ed. Claude Margueron (Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1990), 142.

advertise and “sell” himself to any patron who will take him: “ut faciam praeconis compendium / itaque auctionem praedicem, ipse ut venditem” (“I must dispense with an auctioneer and announce my own auction, and offer myself for sale”).¹² In this example, even a declaration of goods for sale carries within it a certain urgency to sway or otherwise convince the potential buyer, and Gelasimus's declaration that he dispenses with a “praeco” only highlights the importance of such a rhetor in the transaction.¹³

Although Dante clearly knew of Plautus by name,¹⁴ it does not seem likely that he had read his plays, and even less likely that he came across Plautus's use of “praedicare.”¹⁵ But this does not mean that plautine uses are unavailable to Dante, since words have their own independent genetic identities, allowing them to operate outside of the literary contexts that originally generated and cultivated them. Dante's “praedicare” will follow a similar binary pattern after the plautine model, displaying straightforward and disinterested declaration of truth on the

12 (Titus Maccius Plautus, *Stichus*, ed. Hubert Petersmann [Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1973], 1, 3, 41).

13 There are many examples of “praedicare” used in the mercantile sense. In the *Bacchides*, the character Chrysalus wryly notes to Nicobolus that he is being sold on the auction block unawares, while the auctioneer announces the sale: “in eopse adstas lapide, ut praeco praedicat” (“here you are standing on the very block with the crier crying you!”) (Plautus, *The Two Bacchuses*, vol. 1, v. 815). In these two examples, the commercial nuances in the word “praedicare” are evident from the context, and are further reinforced by the repetition of the prefix “prae” both in the conjugations of “praedicare” as well as in “praeco” (which means “auctioneer” as well as “crier” or “herald”) closely situated nearby. The mercantile use of “praedicare” is not limited to these early exemplars; it is also found in Cicero: “Si palam praeco iussu tuo praedicasset non decumas frumenti sed dimidias venire partes...” (“If the crier had announced publicly by your orders that the sale was not of one-tenth of the corn but of one half...”) (*The Verrine Orations*, trans. L. H. G. Greenwood, vol. 2, The Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978], 46–47).

14 *Purg.* 22.98 mentions Plautus by name. It's probable that Dante found his name in Horace's *Ars poetica* 54, which Pietro Alighieri mentions in his commentary on these lines.

15 Plautus's plays, for example, were not very well known until the Renaissance (Richard F Hardin, “Encountering Plautus in the Renaissance: A Humanist Debate on Comedy,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 60, no. 3 [September 2007]: 789–90, doi:10.1353/ren.2007.0276).

one hand and engaged language bent to persuade an audience on the other.

All his uses of “predicare” are calibrated to fit the contexts in which they occur. Like a traveler adjusting his approach to fit differing terrain, whether scaling a mountain path or strolling across a plain, Dante’s “predicare” must adapt to suit its changing environments. Here it is in a political or philosophical treatise, establishing facts. There it occurs in a letter, as an impassioned plea for others to listen. Or in his great poem, it appears as a signpost for transcendent truths too commonly ignored, but which nonetheless must be communicated at all costs.

“Predicare” appears late in Dante’s *oeuvre*. In his earlier works – the *Vita Nova* and his uncollected poetry – the absence of “predicare” reflects the poet’s lesser concern for establishing his status as an authoritative “preaching” figure. This is not to say that Dante’s early output is free of theological and moral content. The *Vita Nova* is full of initial gestures towards an idiosyncratic personal theology that will come to maturation in the *Commedia*, most notably in the introduction the sacred into a courtly love context in general, and, more specifically, in the final sonnet, “*Oltra la spera*,” which anticipates some of the theophantic issues that Dante will later develop in *Paradiso*.¹⁶ The absence of “predicare” in Dante’s uncollected verse shows that the poet is slow to develop his identity as a preacher, even though some of his poems pioneer major themes in Dante’s ethical rhetoric that will be more clearly manifest later in his career. Note, for example, the canzone “*Tre donne intorno al cor mi son venute*,” whose distinctions between categories of justice (divine, justice, and the law), personified by three ladies, anticipate

16 In her introduction to this poem, Teodolinda Barolini notes a kind of divinely sanctioned transgression, in both spiritual and poetic senses, that Dante implies in his use of “*oltra*,” such that it “*potrebbe sembrare l’abbozzo del Paradiso*” (*Rime Giovanili e Della Vita Nuova*, ed. Teodolinda Barolini [Milan: BUR Rizzoli, 2009], 515).

later discussions on justice in the *Commedia*. Later in this chapter we will discover a return to justice in his Twelfth Epistle to a Florentine friend, in which Dante identifies himself as a preacher of justice. The poet's reconciliation with exile in "Tre donne" as a cause for honor (l'essilio che m'è dato, onor mi tegno"¹⁷) also anticipates that same Epistle, in which he proudly rejects Florence's offer to repatriate him

In the *Monarchia* uses of "predicare" and its variants are strictly philosophical and technical, employed to identify objective facts and to make logical deductions; in sum "predicare" is used here as a way to establish truth. Dante frequently means to express something equivalent to "to predicate," or maybe "to presuppose," in English. To illustrate, Dante argues that the pope cannot be held subject to the emperor, nor vice versa: "Sed non potest dici quod alterum subalternetur alteri, quia sic alterum de altero predicaretur, quod est falsum" ("But it cannot be maintained that one is subordinated to the other, because if this were the case one would be predicated of the other; and this is false").¹⁸ Elsewhere "predicare" is a strictly technical term. Variations on the verb, such as "predicatum," "predicato" and "predicatur," imply the "predicates" of a logical syllogism.¹⁹ A noun variation of "praedicare," "predicamentum," is found in 3.12.5-6; and means not a sermon but an Aristotelian category.²⁰ This is transparent

17 "Tre donne" in *Le rime*, ed. Piero Cudini (Milan: Garzanti, 1979), vv. 73–76.

18 Dante Alighieri, *Monarchia*, ed. Prue Shaw, Cambridge Medieval Classics; 4 (Cambridge England, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.11.9. Translation here is Prue Shaw's (Ibid., 135.). Anthony Cassel's translation is nearly identical (*The Monarchia Controversy: An Historical Study with Accompanying Translations of Dante Alighieri's Monarchia, Guido Vernani's Refutation of the "Monarchia" Composed by Dante and Pope John XXII's Bull, Si Fratrum* [CUA Press, 2004], 167).

19 See 3.4.21-22; 3.5.3; and 3.7.3.

20 The use of "predicament" instead of "category" has a tradition in English, though the term is rarely employed in our time. See the entry for "predicament" in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, New York:

from the context, and is also confirmed by Dante's reference to Aristotle's work, the “Predicamentorum” (“Categories”) later in his treatise (3.15.9).

In the *Convivio* Dante does not employ “predicare” with the technical and philosophical overtones he intends in *Monarchia*, but the term is still redolent of a kind of declarative, indicative veridicality. To illustrate, Dante argues that nobility inheres in many things, not just men: “non pur dell'uomo è predicata.”²¹ In English, this could be rendered as either “is proclaimed not only of man,” or “is attributed not only to man.”²² Dante uses the word similarly in his claim that only higher creatures have mind: “solamente de l'uomo e delle divine sustanze questa mente si predica, sì come per Boezio si puote apertamente vedere, che prima la predica delli uomini [...] poi la predica di Dio” (“only to man and divine substances does one attribute the mind, as can be plainly seen in Boethius, for first he attributes it to men [...] and later attributes it to God”).²³ In another place Dante asserts the sanctity of Rome, saying: “Certo di

Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1989). One would wish that “predicament” were in greater currency today, since translators of *Monarchia* do not consistently indicate when their “category” is specifically Aristotelian or when it indicates an everyday sort of grouping of objects or persons. The result is a messy semantic farrago. The poet's use of “predicamentum” in 3.12.5-6 is rendered “category” in Prue Shaw's translation (*Monarchia*, 135).; this would be acceptable, however she also employs “category” indiscriminately in other places. Her rendering of “sunt etiam tertii [genera]” (3.3.9) is: “there is a third category” (ibid., 105). (The “genera” is implied by context, as Dante earlier identifies: “tria hominum genera,” [3.3.7], which Shaw innovatively turns into “three classes of people” [ibid., 103].). In another place, “huius termini 'homo” (3.8.5) becomes “the category 'man” (ibid., 105, 121). Anthony K. Cassell makes the identical mistake as Shaw in 3.3.9, but avoids it in 3.8.4, sensibly opting for “term” instead (*The Monarchia Controversy: An Historical Study with Accompanying Translations of Dante Alighieri's Monarchia, Guido Vernani's Refutation of the “Monarchia”* Composed by Dante and Pope John XXII's Bull, Si Fratrum, 152, 160). Italics of key terms here are all mine.

21 *Convivio*, ed. Franca Brambilla Ageno (Le Lettere, 1995), 4.16.5.

22 Cudini's pocket edition of the *Convivio* (Milan: Garzanti, 1980) paraphrases this passage as: “se ne parla non solo a proposito dell'uomo.” (293, fn 6). Neither Busnelli-Vandelli, (*Convivio*, ed. G. Busnelli and G. Vandelli, 2 vols., Il Convivio [Firenze: Le Monnier, 1964]), nor Vasoli (*Convivio*, ed. Domenico De Robertis and Cesare Vasoli, vol. I/2, 3 vols., Opere Minori [Milano; Napoli: Ricciardi, 1978]) have anything to say about the use of this term here.

23 Alighieri, *Convivio*, 1995, 3.2.17–18. “Attribute” is seconded by Cudini (*Convivio*, 1980, 148, fn. 41–42.). Busnelli-Vandelli take “si asserisce appartenente a loro” (*Convivio*, 1964, 278)., which to my judgment suggests

ferma sono opinione che le pietre che nelle mura sue stanno siano degne di reverenza, e lo suolo dov'ella siede sia degno oltre quello che per li uomini è predicato e approvato” (“I am without a doubt of the firm opinion that the stones in her walls are worthy of reverence, and the ground she rests on is more worthy than is proclaimed [“predicato”] and established among men”).²⁴ Here, Dante uses “predicato” in a more declarative sense, and underscores its truth-telling power by coupling it with “approvato.” “Approvato” finds its etymological roots in the verb “probo” which means to test, esteem, to declare a thing as fit or good.²⁵ In this example then, “approvato” sturdies the perception of truth implicit in “predicato” by suggesting the claim has been subjected to further assay and scrutiny, thus grounding it in a sense of consensus and orthodoxy. Working together, then, “predicato” and “approvato” indicate the sanctity of Rome as an established fact.

In the *Convivio* Dante uses “predicare” only once to suggest church preaching, an occasion that clearly distinguishes it from normal speech. In his discussion of angelic hierarchies, Dante states that the Holy Church says, believes and preaches that angels are as many as to seem innumerable: “dice, crede e predica quelle nobilissime creature quasi innumerabili.”²⁶ Elsewhere in his corpus, Dante continues to associate angelic hierarchies with

attribution. Vasoli takes a slightly different take, claiming “si afferma” (*Convivio*, 1978, 1/2:313).

24 Alighieri, *Convivio*, 1995, 4.5.20. Cudini: “più di quanto non sia comunemente detto e fatto” (*Convivio*, 1980, 246, fn 49.). This paraphrase appears to strike further from the mark. Commentary on this use is absent in Busnelli-Vandelli and Vasoli.

25 Carlton Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary Founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary / Revised, Enlarged and in Great Part Rewritten by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), *probo*, are. “Adprobo” does not occur in Classical Latin; however the prefix functions merely as an intensifier, and should not alter the meaning of the root in any dramatic way.

26 Alighieri, *Convivio*, 1995, 2.5.5. None of the commentaries explains the juxtaposition of “dice” with “predica.”

preaching. In *Paradiso* 28, the poet discusses the number and order of angels²⁷ (confirming *en passant* *Convivio's* above claim), in a discussion which appears at first to regard purely speculative theology. As the discussion continues through canto 29, however, it evolves into a screed against intellectually dishonest theologians who make claims that cannot be supported by Scripture, and finally attacks preachers who propagate their lies (29.85-126). (We will return to *Par.* 28 and 29 in the final chapter.) Here in *Convivio* Dante appears to anticipate this relationship, the dynamic transfer of knowledge from theologians to preachers (though without distortion) with the words “dice” and “predica.” Clearly Dante distinguishes between the speculative theological “dice” and the declarative “predica” that takes for granted the established and “approvato” truth of what it proclaims to the public.

In the preceding examples, I have shown how “predicare” is particularly suited for cases in which truth is registered and identified. I have also shown how this valence of disinterested reportage is still informed by the necessities of persuasion. In short the appearance of truth-telling in “predicare” is really a rhetorical strategy, propelled by a need to convince.

“Hiis habeo persuasum quod audeo”: the poet seizes the pulpit.

27 L'incendio suo seguiva ogne scintilla; / ed eran tante, che 'l numero loro / più che 'l doppio de li scacchi s'inmilla (Par 28.91-93). Both *Convivio* and *Paradiso* assertions find Scriptural and patristic grounding for their claims; Daniel 7:40 (“milia milium ministrabant ei, et decies milies centena milia adsistebant ei.”) and Apoc. 5:11 (“et erant numerus eorum milia milium.”) address the number of angels, as does Aquinas, who himself relies on Dionysius (“Sed Dionysius ponit, xiv cap. cael. hier., quod multitudo Angelorum transcendit omnem materialem multitudinem” [STI, q. 112, a. 4]) Other angelological claims in *Paradiso* find their support in texts ranging from Genesis 1:1, to Eccl. 18:1, to Dionysius. It should be noted that in the *Convivio* Dante uses the order established by Pope Gregory the Great. He corrects this in *Paradiso*, going back to the order established by Dionysius: “Ma Gregorio da lui poi si divide; / onde, si tosto come li occhi aperse / in questo ciel, di sé medesmo rise” (“But later Gregory took a different view, / so that, opening his eyes here in this heaven, / he saw his errors, laughing at himself”) (*Par.* 28.133-35).

If Dante outlines how “predicare” functions in the works we have already examined, he more assertively presses the term into service in his letters. Here the poet cashes in his chips, using “predicare” much more pointedly than before, strategically deploying the term to add gravity and ballast to his own arguments, and to preemptively hush the objections of those who might find cause for debate in his arguments. Here his use of the term also marks the moment when he begins to invest his own voice with the authority of the preacher. Dante's rhetorical game is at its most audacious when he takes on clerical authorities, and it is also the riskiest. In my second chapter, I explained how the Church jealously guarded preaching through prohibitions and permissions, and how it persecuted as heretics those who preached without the requisite license. In this restrictive environment, how then does Dante negotiate this tricky gamble, to stride forward as a *de facto* preacher, while protecting himself against accusations that he acts as one? How does he credibly speak against the critical condition of society in his time, while avoiding criticism that he expounds on topics beyond his jurisdiction as a private citizen? Although Dante's self-fashioning as an authoritative speaker is gutsy, he wisely qualifies his claim to preach with substantial caveats against his ability; still, he maintains that it is not his skill that matters, but the truth that he speaks, which exists indifferently to and independently of the speaker's qualifications.

Dante's eleventh Epistle, addressed to the Catholic Cardinals in the spring of 1315, showcases this dynamic: the advance and the retreat, the claim and the counterclaim, the statement and the caveat. By the time Dante penned this letter, Clement V was dead and the cardinals were assembled in conclave at Carpentras, far from the Roman See, to select a new pope. Dante's intention behind his letter is to criticize them for abandoning Rome for Avignon,

the new seat of the Church; but his letter soon begins to take on the form of a sermon, accusing the clergy of all varieties of wrongdoing, and couching its fiercely admonitory language in Scriptural and apostolic authorities.²⁸ Early on, the apostles are brought in as authorities, while Dante is still discussing the transfer of the Papal See:

Romam – cui, post tot triumphorum pompas, et verbo et opere Christus orbis confirmavit imperium, quam etiam ille Petrus, et Paulus gentium predicator, in apostolicam sedem aspergine proprii sanguinis consecravit – cum Ieremia, non lugenda prevenientes sed post ipsa dolentes, viduam et desertam lugere compellimur.

Rome – to whom, after the pomps of so many triumphs, with word and deed Christ confirmed the empire of the world, and which also that illustrious Peter and Paul the preacher to the Gentiles consecrated in the apostolic seat by spilling their own blood – not anticipating the lamentable future like Jeremiah but sore at heart afterwards, we are driven to lament her, widowed and abandoned.²⁹

While he emphasizes those Biblical events establishing Rome as the center for the Catholic Church – Jesus's words³⁰ and Peter and Paul's martyrdoms – the poet identifies in passing the occupation of Paul as “preacher to the Gentiles.”³¹ This title comes from Paul's self descriptions

28 John Ahern calls this letter “more a lay sermon than a traditional missive.” See his essay, “Epistles” in Richard H. Lansing and Teodolinda Barolini, *The Dante Encyclopedia* (Taylor & Francis, 2000), s.v. Epistles.

29 My study of Dante's Epistles relies on the editions by Arsenio Frugoni and Giorgio Brugnoli's editions found in Dante Alighieri, *Opere Minori*, ed. Domenico De Robertis, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Milano; Napoli: Ricciardi, 1979). This citation is from page 580.

30 Dante probably had in mind Jesus's statement to Peter in Matthew 16:18-19: “Et ego dico tibi quia tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam et portae inferi non praevalent adversum eam. Et tibi dabo claves regni caelorum et quodcumque ligaveris super terram erit ligatum in caelis et quodcumque solveris super terram erit solutum in caelis” (“And I say to thee: that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven”). The Catholic argument for Papal authority, and the foundation of its See in Rome depends on these verses.

31 Scholars have studied the rhetoric of this Epistle, but usually do so assuming that it is a manifestation of Dante's self-construction as “profeta.” In his essay from 2008, “Modelli biblici e identità profetica nelle Epistole di Dante,” *Lettere Italiane*, no. 60 (2008), Giuseppe Ledda discusses Epistle 11 and its Biblical foundations without discussing Dante's explicit use of “predicator” in this

in his letters. In Romans 11:13, Paul calls himself a “gentium Apostolus.” (“Apostle to the Gentiles”). He amplifies the definition in I Timothy: “positus sum ego praedicator, et Apostolus, veritatem dico non mentior, doctor gentium in fide, et veritate” (I am appointed a preacher and an apostle [I say the truth, I lie not], a doctor of the Gentiles in faith and truth”) (2:7) and again in II Tim 1:11, with slight variations: “positus sum ego praedicator et apostolus et magister gentium” (“I am appointed a preacher and an apostle and teacher of the Gentiles”). Of Paul's manifold self-descriptions – apostle, preacher, doctor, teacher – Dante insistently simplifies to the descriptor he prefers, “predicator.”³² Dante's emphasis on this one word is an innovation on Scriptural convention, which uses it only a few times in both Testaments; “apostolus,” in comparison, occurs over eighty times in the New Testament alone. Dante also goes against his own habits as a writer by employing “predicator” here. Elsewhere in his prose the poet consistently identifies Paul as the “Apostolus” in much the same way he habitually applies the sobriquet “Phylosophus” to Aristotle, oftentimes leaving out the name because the man behind the title is so easily recognized.³³ Since these are the conventions that Dante usually follows, his

passage, which he too cites (33). I do not mean to say that Ledda is wrong when he discusses Dante's “identità profetica”; I only wish to call attention to his omission to emphasize that critics are quite comfortable applying the title “prophet” to Dante, while they simultaneously neglect to engage the descriptive terms actually present in the letter. Giorgio Petrocchi also refers to this specific passage in an essay on the Pauline influence in Dante's work (245), but does not attempt to explain the descriptor “Praedicator” (“San Paolo in Dante,” in *Dante e la Bibbia*, ed. Giovanni Barblan, vol. 210, Biblioteca dell’“Archivum Romanicum” 1 [Florence: Olschki, 1988], 235–248).

32 This is not the only time that Dante meddles with Scriptural precedent to specifically emphasize preaching. Jesus's Great Commission instructs his disciples to “teach ye all nations” (“docete omnes gentes”) (Matt. 28:19). This passage emerges transformed in *Paradiso*: “Non disse Cristo al suo primo convento / 'andate e predicate al mondo ciance” (Christ did not say to His first congregation: / ‘Go preach idle nonsense to the world”) (*Par.* 29.109-110, italics added). By altering Scripture, Dante indulges in a little ‘ciance’ himself; his white lie emphatically underscores the urgency that he discuss preaching *qua* preaching in this canto, and not allow any imprecise terminology – even if spoken by Christ Himself – to muddy the effectiveness of his cutting analysis.

33 The use of “Apostolus” to indicate Paul is very common in *Convivio* and *Monarchia* and also appears across Dante's Epistles. In his poetry the term is conspicuously absent.

startling break from habit here begs deeper consideration; why “predicator” instead of “apostolus” now?³⁴ The answer is because Dante chose the appropriate term for the appropriate audience in the appropriate place and time. Not one of the cardinals he addresses is an apostle, or ever would be; but every one of them is a preacher by definition, no matter how many of them shirked that duty in practice.³⁵ Thus Paul, the model, is presented as a preacher aggressively pursuing the evangelization of Christ, while his heirs, the cardinals, come up short. In sum, Dante's description of Paul as a “gentium predicator” is motivated by a strategy of clarification. By privileging terms more widespread in his contemporary milieu, Dante shows that the call to preaching applies to its saints and cardinals alike; St. Peter and Paul's occupations in essence differ little – if at all – from that of these Cardinals he writes, and who have wandered far from

34 In the Ricciardi-Mondadori critical edition of Dante's minor works, the difference that Dante highlights is unfortunately lost in translation, thus diminishing the precise evangelical and predicatorial valences that the poet intends to convey in his original Latin. Arsenio Frugoni renders “Paulus gentium predicator” as “Paolo, Apostolo delle genti” (*Opere Minori*, 2:581). There are two problems in Frugoni's translation. First is his decision to select “genti” (“people”) for “gentium,” when the Bible generally uses this term to indicate Gentiles. Paul, both Jew and Roman citizen, is one of the first to evangelize Christianity outside of Jewish circles. Evangelization, in fact, is the entire *raison d'être* of these letters to the church at Rome and to Timothy (whose church was in Ephesus). There is no Bible translation – including the King James, Douay-Rheims, and every Italian Bible in existence – that puts “people” or “genti” in the place of “gentium.” All of these use “gentiles” or a fair equivalent (for example “heathen” in the Wycliffe Bible and “stranieri” in the Nuova Riveduta). While Frugoni's translation of “gentium” effaces the Scriptural precedent that Dante means to highlight, his replacement of “predicator” with the Biblical “apostolo” in turn covers up Dante's emphatic swerve from his source text. Frugoni's translation here is doubly egregious since in this same sentence Dante uses the adjective “apostolicam,” suggestively highlighting his earlier refusal to write its cognate “apostolus” in favor of “praedicator.”

35 Robert of Basevorn in *Forma Praedicandi* says: “Praedicator ex officio est Papa, Cardinales, Episcopi et curam habentes animarum” (“A preacher *ex officio* is the Pope, cardinals, bishops and those attending to the care of souls”) (Thomas Marie Charland, ed., *Artes Praedicandi; Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge*, Publications de l'Institut d'études médiévales d'Ottawa VII [Paris: Vrin, 1936], 239). In this section of *Forma Praedicandi* Basevorn distinguishes between preachers “ex officio” (also known as “ex institutione ordinaria”) and those preachers “ex commissione.” The former group, obligated to preach because of their office; in fact, it is a mortal sin for these *not* to preach (“si non faciant, peccant mortaliter”) (ibid., 240). The latter category, “ex commissione” are those given permission to preach, such as certain clergy and friars, who are not otherwise required to preach. In spite of Basevorn's prescriptions, few educated clergy actually cared to fulfill their pastoral duties. On this point, see Neslihan Senoçak, *The Poor and the Perfect: The Rise of Learning in the Franciscan Order, 1209-1310* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 152–154. However, this demonstrable yawning chasm between what clerics ought to do and what they actually did do only justifies Dante's claim that the Church ignores its leadership role.

their apostolic commission.

Who then is left in Rome to assume the Pauline mantle? No one, when all the bishops are at Carpentras, and the new pope, in due time, in Avignon. In this preaching void, the early introduction of Paul as a “praedicator” serves not merely to suggest negative comparisons with contemporary clergy, for Dante also uses the term as a fulcrum for leveraging his own status as a preacher on the same level as Paul. The strategy is subtle but clear. By introducing and confirming the authority of Peter and Paul, Dante implicitly aligns himself with them as the third party in their company. In this way, Peter and Paul provide the entry point for Dante; he inscribes himself into this lineage of preachers, and indicates he is spiritual descendant of these greatest and most reverend of the original twelve disciples.³⁶ This maneuver is never explicit, but as the letter progresses it will become increasingly apparent that Dante pushes himself to the fore as a preacher in keeping with apostolic, not ecclesiastical, convention. From this he secures his position of unique authority.

Dante soon begins to advance his case as this credible new voice of denunciation, by appearing to deny that he strives to embody that voice at all.

Quippe de ovibus in pascuis Iesu Christi minima una sum; quippe nulla pastoralis auctoritate abutens, quoniam divitiae mecum non sunt.

I am certainly the least of the sheep in Christ's fields; certainly in no way do I abuse the authority of a pastor, for I have no riches.³⁷

36 Dante's subtle alignment of himself with Paul is also apparent in the *Commedia*. In *Inferno*, while the pilgrim protests to Virgilio, “Io non Enēa, non Paolo sono,” (“I am not Aeneas, nor am I Paul”) (2.32), it is clear that the poet would in fact be both Aeneas and Paul. Teodolinda Barolini notes that this passage from *Inferno* is a “supreme example of the double bind in which Dante is placed as the guarantor of his own prophetic status: the very act by which the pilgrim demonstrates humility serves the poet as a vehicle for recording his visionary models and for telling us, essentially, that ‘Io sì Enea, io sì Paolo sono’” (*The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992], 58).

Dante covertly asserts the authority he needs by manipulating three factors. First he claims (in an exhibition of frankly false modesty) that he is “minima”; second, he emphasizes his poverty as a factor deciding his credibility; third, in recalling the traditional sheep-shepherd binary and calling himself one of the sheep, he makes a gesture towards the inherent hierarchy of authority the binary implies, but which he will soon turn on its head. In sum, he is everything that the Cardinals are not. This emphasis on opposites paves the way for a critical intertext later in this letter, when Dante recalls the words of Christ in the temple, who lauds the virtue of the smallest and the least qualified in a direct challenge to the sacerdotal hierarchy of his time, the Pharisees.

Dante's minimization of his status may escape critical notice, since professions of inadequacy are commonplace among experts of rhetoric and oratory; the speeches of Cicero, for example, are full of these.³⁸ But Dante's understatement could just as easily take inspiration from the examples in manuals on preaching theory and in sermons. In the *De eruditione praedicatorum*, Humbert of Romans suggests that in a sermon's exordium preachers can call attention to their inexperience or insufficiency in order to gain the sympathy of their listeners.³⁹

37 Alighieri, *Opere Minori*, 2:584.

38 Cicero famously understates his own skill in the introduction of his defense of the poet Archias, for example: “Si quid est in me ingeni, iudices, quod sentio quam sit exiguum...”(Gentlemen of the jury: whatever talent I possess [and I realize its limitations]...)” (*The Speeches*, trans. N. H. Watts, vol. 11, The Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979], 6–7).

39 “Notandum vero quod prothema quandoque sumitur a persona praedicantis, ut quando aliquis ignotus praedicator de ordine Fratrum Praedicatorum, vel Minorum, vult praedicare in aliqua parochia, in qua est ignotus ipse et status ordinis sui, exponit in principio statum suum et ordinis sui, ne forte credatur esse quaestuarium praedicator, dicens illud Pauli, 2 *Cor.* 12: Non quaerimus quae vestra sunt, sed vos; vel quod insufficientiam suam cognoscens, ipsam praetendit exemplo Hieremiae, *Hier.* 1: A, a, a, Domine, quia puer ego sum, et ecce nescio loqui” (“The theme of the exordium may refer to the person of the preacher, for instance when the preacher is a religious of the Order of Friars Preachers or Friars Minor visiting a parish, where both he and his Order are unknown. He will make known, therefore, at the beginning, the spirit and the mission of his order, so that it will not be thought that he is preaching in order to collect money. He should therefore say with St. Paul: “I do not seek yours but you” [II *Cor.* 12:14]. And when he feels his own insufficiency, he shall say with Jeremias: ‘Ah, ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child’ [Jer 1:6].) “De Eruditione Praedicatorum,” in *Opera de*

An anecdote recorded by Rangerius, the late eleventh century bishop of Lucca, demonstrates this in action. In his verse *Vita* of St. Anselm of Lucca, Rangerius records a public speech by an anonymous monk against the simonist Pietro Mezzarba. The monk highlights his own moral simplicity, good faith and honesty, which far exceed – he claims – his skills at the rhetorical arts of persuasion. “Non sum doctus homo,” the monk says, “sed fretus simplicitate / Atque fide sana, si placet aspicere. / Ecce probo, non ambiguis, non arte dolosa, / sed rebus certis te male desipere” (“I am not a learned man, but rely on my guilelessness and pure faith, if it should please you to look. See here, I demonstrate – not with ambiguities, not with deceptive artifices, but rather with certain facts – that you act foolishly and wrongly”).⁴⁰

Dante's understatement could be influenced by a number of sources, but his word choice suggests a precise lineage. His claim to be specifically the “least” out of the flock most likely comes from St. Paul, who calls himself the “*minimus apostolorum*” (1 Cor. 15:9). The context of Paul's words makes clear that his own understatement is strategic too. As a newcomer to this radical messianic offshoot of Judaism not yet distinguished as a different religion, and lacking the authoritative status of the original disciples, some of whom were still alive, Paul faced special challenges to his promotion of a new faith accessible to Gentiles and liberated of Jewish purity laws.⁴¹ He overcomes his reputation as an *arriviste* by claiming special status through

Vita Regulari 2. Expositio in Constitutiones. Instructiones de Officiis Ordinis. De Eruditione Praedicatorum. Epistolae Encyclicae, ed. Joachim Joseph Berthier (Turin: Marietti, 1956), 481–482; *Treatise on Preaching*, ed. Walter M. Conlon O.P., trans. Dominican Students Province of St. Joseph (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1951), 119–120.

40 Rangerius, *Vita Anselmi Episcopi Lucensis*, ed. E. Sackur, G. Schwartz, and B. Schmeidler, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores* 30,2 (Hanover, 1934), 1264.

41 In Galatians 1-2 Paul recounts the initial conflict with Peter, James (Jesus's brother) and John in Jerusalem when he proposes a religion free of the law, especially of circumcision. Here Paul says that the authority of his visions trump the old law. For a brief but informative discussion on Paul's struggle for status within the old guard of

Divine revelation, but he also chooses to soften the brazenness of that claim through gestures of humility. He lists all the apostles that had seen Christ before him, first Peter (here called Cephas), then the five hundred brethren (“quinquegentos fratrum”) and finally James (15:5-7). Paul, the last to see the resurrected Christ, in a vision during a trip to Damascus, uses this vision to legitimize his authority to preach. Paul emphasizes neither the skill, natural talents or external authorization granting him legitimacy. It is only the revelation of Christ that renders any claims credible; under these conditions a preacher's identity is far less relevant: “sive enim ego, sive illi; sic praedicamus, et sic credidistis: (“For whether I or they, so we preach: and so you have believed”) (I Cor. 15:11). In light of this, to be “minimus” in Paul's mind may in some way suggest humble deference to his predecessors, but it by no means diminishes the authority of his message. It is clear that in St. Paul's timeline “minimus” is also “novissimus.” The last that is directly validated by Christ also holds the last word.

Dante grafts his own particulars onto Paul's precedent by specifying that he is not one of the apostles, but one of the flock, “de ovibus in pascuis.” The trope of the sheep and the shepherd is one of the most familiar commonplaces in Christian language, originating in the words of Christ, such as the following: “Ego sum pastor bonus. Bonus pastor animam suam dat pro ovibus” (“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep”) (John 10.11). However there are even earlier comparisons that situate the shepherd-sheep relationship as one based on preaching and teaching: “Et exiens vidit multam turbam Iesus et misertus est super eos quia erant sicut oves non habentes pastorem et coepit docere illos multa” (“And Jesus going out saw a great multitude: and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not

early followers of Jesus, and his use of claims to Divine revelation to secure his authority, see Elaine Pagels's *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, & Politics in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Viking, 2012), 43–45.

having a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things”) (Mark 6:34). As Jesus's example demonstrates, a “good shepherd” guides the flock by verbal instruction. Dante turns the tables on this sheep-shepherd binary to emphasize that the pastors have gone off track. They have abandoned their duties, and one of the primary causes of that abandonment is money. Under such conditions, one of the sheep, who unlike them is not corrupted by money, must move into the place that they have left derelict.

The next lines in Dante's letter continue to take the clergy to task, but now for their hypocrisy, as he compares them to the Pharisees who tried to silence Christ. At this point Dante employs not the speech of the apostles, but the words of Jesus himself, in a moment highlighting the Messiah's challenge to religious authorities.

Nam etiam 'in ore lactentium et infantium' sonuit iam Deo placita veritas, et cecus natus veritatem confessus est, quam Pharisei non modo tacebant, sed et maligne reflectere conabantur. Hiis habeo persuasum quod audeo.

For even in the mouth of the suckling and the infant has resounded the truth pleasing to God, and a blind newborn has confessed the truth which Pharisees not only were silent about, but evilly tried to turn away. I am persuaded to dare on account of these examples.⁴²

The reference to the suckling and the infant and the Pharisees means to recall the story found in all the Gospels of the cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus casts out the moneychangers and merchants from the temple, and then turns to heal the blind and lame, accompanied by a spontaneous chorus of children proclaiming that he is the son of David. This arouses the disgruntled opposition of the high priests and scribes, who are horrified at this irregular turn of events. “Utique numquam legis,” Jesus responds, “quia ex ore infantium et lactentium perfecisti laudem?” (“Yea, have you never read that out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings

42 *Opere Minori*, 2:584.

thou hast perfected praise?" (Matt. 21:16). The passage that Jesus ironically suggests they may have never read is from Psalms 8:3: "Ex ore infantium et lactentium perfecisti laudem propter inimicos tuos, ut destruas inimicum et ultorem" ("Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise, because of thy enemies, that thou mayst destroy the enemy and the avenger"). Although Jesus did not find it necessary to repeat the overtones of violence and conquest in the original, Dante, it seems, would return some of the assertiveness of the original Psalm to his citation, if not its violence. The children no longer speak "praise" in Dante's account, but "truth" ("veritatem"). For Jesus, the contention was over his divinity, thus praise was the battleground on which he fought for his legitimacy with the high priests. In Dante's argument, by comparison, the discussion is no longer about the divinity of Christ but about who has the sanction to speak in his name; hence the clear emphasis on truth. The importance of securing the proprietary rights to truth cannot be overestimated in a letter in which Dante challenges Church cardinals over the proper location of the See and later informs them of the correct texts that clergy should study.

Dante's second innovation is in switching out of "principes et sacerdotium scribae" for "Pharisei." In Jesus's time the Pharisees were just one sectarian group of many, but over the centuries they came to stand for all the oppressive clerical figures in the Jesus story, known for their legalism and their squelching of true spiritual expression. "Pharisee" is an epithet that Dante reserves for his worst enemies. Boniface is "lo principe d'i novi farisei" ("the prince of the latter-day Pharisees") in Guido da Montefeltro's account (*Inf.* 27.85). There is also the resolutely taciturn Caiaphas in *Inferno* explored in the first chapter, who is associated with silence and silencing, and a general refusal to minister to the flock. The Pharisee that silences others is also

found in the *De eruditione praedicatorum* by Humbert of Romans:

Alii sunt quos retrahit perversitas Ecclesiae rectorum, qui frequenter impediunt praedicationem, quam promovere deberent, similes Scribis et Phariseis inter Judaeos, et pontificibus templorum inter gentiles, qui semper studuerunt impedire praedicationem Christi: immo summe persecuti sunt praedicatores Christi, sicut patet ex *Actibus Apostolorum*, et *Legendis Sanctorum*.⁴³

Others, again are rebuffed by the unpleasant dispositions of certain pastors of the Church, who hinder rather than foster preaching. They are like the Scribes and Pharisees of the Jews, and the priests of the pagans, who sought to prevent Christ from preaching and violently persecuted those who proclaimed the Gospel, as we see in the Acts of the Apostles and the stories of the Saints.⁴⁴

Humbert recasts this in slightly different terms later:

Interdum ex eorum impedimento. Sunt enim multi praelati, qui non solum non praedicant, sed etiam ne alii, qui hoc laudabiliter possunt facere, faciunt impediunt. *Sap.* 18: Filios tuos custodiebant inclusos, per quos incipiebat incorruptum legis lumen saeculo dari. Includuntur siquidem praedicatores, cum non permittuntur libere praedicare.⁴⁵

Sometimes it will be the prelates themselves who place an obstacle to preaching; for there are some who not only do not preach, but even hinder those who could fruitfully do so in their place. “They kept thy children shut up, by whom the pure light of the law was to be given to the world” (*Wisd.* 18:4); in effect, to prevent preachers from freely preaching is to imprison them.⁴⁶

Humbert's precedent corroborates many of the words and phrases that Dante employs: the appearance of the Pharisee, the silencing of children, and the repeated emphasis that they do not preach or foster preaching, but only hinder the preaching of others. In the texts of both Dante and

43 “De Eruditione Praedicatorum,” 419.

44 Humbert of Romans, *Treatise on Preaching*, 51.

45 “De Eruditione Praedicatorum,” 435.

46 *Treatise on Preaching*, 68.

Humbert the speech of children is associated with some kind of spontaneous natural truth⁴⁷; however, where Humbert of Romans finds this an occasion to chastise others, Dante uses it as an impetus allowing him to “dare.” (“hiis habeo persuasum quod audeo”). The dare seizes authority for itself. In a crisis such as this there is no room for the petty legalities of authorization; to “dare” in the face of great oppression and in a circumstance of great urgency becomes the ultimate factor validating speech. In the wake of total clerical failure, Dante must step forward, regardless of official validation.

Dante continues to highlight Pharisaical legalism in his following sentences, as he takes the cardinals to task for their excessive study of canon law to the detriment of the classics of theology and pastoral care. In their pursuit of wealth and advancement these “archimandrites in name alone” have left the most important texts behind:⁴⁸

Iacet Gregorius tuus in telis aranearum; iacet Ambrosius in neglectis clericorum latibulis; iacet Augustinus abiectus, Dionysius, Damascenus et Beda; et nescio quod “Speculum,” Innocentium et Ostiensem declamant. Cur non? Illi Deum querebant, ut finem et optimum; isti census et beneficia consecuntur.

Your Gregory lies in spider webs; Ambrose in the forgotten hiding spots of clerics; Augustine lies forgotten, as well as Dionysius, Damascene and Bede; and they declaim some kind of “Speculum,” Innocent, and Hostiensis. And why not? The former used to seek after God as their end and highest good, but the latter follow after wealth and promotions.⁴⁹

47 “Vel quod insufficientiam suam cognoscens, ipsam praetendit exemplo Hieremiae, *Hier.* 1: A, a, a, Domine, quia puer ego sum, et ecce nescio loqui” (“And when he feels his own insufficiency, he shall say with Jeremias: 'Ah, ah, ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child' [Jer 1:6].) (“De Eruditione Praedicatorum,” 482; *Treatise on Preaching*, 120).

48 “nomine solo archimandritis,” Alighieri, *Opere minori*, 3:Epistle 11,13. “Archimandrite” is used only twice in Dante's work, the other occasion referring to St. Francis in *Paradiso* 11.99. If Dante indicates Francis as the “true” archimandrite, it goes to show how far these only nominal archimandrites will have to go to justify ownership of this title.

49 Alighieri, *Opere Minori*, 2:586.

Dante counterpoises the study of canon law against the “right” subjects of study, those volumes that promote pastoral care and preaching. The legacy that the Church Fathers left in writing is manifold, but their intellectual labors skew generally towards pastoral care: Gregory the Great wrote the *Regula Pastoralis*, a seminal manual of instruction on pastoral responsibilities. St. Ambrose produced works on a variety of theological and ecclesiastical matters, but he is especially remembered in the *Confessions* for his preaching that eventually led Augustine to conversion. Augustine, himself called “abiectus” in Dante's representation, wrote many works; however, his *De Doctrina Christiana* is regarded along with Gregory's *Regula Pastoralis* as the foundational patristic manual on preaching.⁵⁰ The latter group, in contrast, are all jurists, famous for their work in canon law. The “Speculum” intends the legal texts *Speculum Legatorum* and *Speculum Iudiciale* by Guglielmo Durante; “Innocent” stands in for Innocent IV's five book commentary on Gregory IX's decretals; and “Hostiensis” is an epithet for Enrico da Susa, the cardinal bishop of Ostia and one of the most brilliant scholars of canon law in his time. Dante's claim that today's spiritual leaders primarily study these texts is neither speculative nor exaggerated. The shelves of the *studium* of a mendicant monastery like Santa Croce in Florence

50 James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 275. The other figures mentioned are lesser lights in the constellation but still quite important in their own right. (Pseudo) Dionysus the Aeropagite was a seminal sixth century theologian, known for his mystical works *De divinis nominibus* and *Theologica mystica*; he also wrote *De caelesti hierarchia*, which was fundamental to Dante's vision of the order of the celestial spheres, and the angelic intelligences ruling them (*Par.* 28.130-135). (Originally written in Greek, Dionysius's text was probably available to Dante through Hugh of St. Victor's commentary. See: Charles T. Davis, “Education in Dante's Florence,” *Speculum* 40, no. 3 [July 1965]: 426. Dante seems to see angelology as an issue well suited for preaching, as the passage in *Convivio* and the discussion in *Par.* 28-29 – evolving as it does from a discussion on angels to a discussion about “true” preaching – attest. St. John of Damascus, also known as John Damascene, was considered the last of the Church Fathers and wrote many important works on Christian dogma. And finally there is the Venerable Bede, known especially for his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*. Bede also wrote commentaries for several books of the Bible and penned many educational works, most importantly the *De schematibus et tropis*, which discussed Biblical rhetoric and also argued for its consideration as the primary source for students of rhetoric and tropological language. Both Dionysus and Bede are identified in the corona of the wise spirits (*Par.* 10.115-117, 131).

were full of books on canon law; these were in fact some of the first books that the monks sought to acquire.⁵¹ In the *Commedia* too, Dante speaks against the obsessive study of canon law over patristic texts, clarifying through Folchetto that the “maladetto fiore,” the Florin, drives men to such studies. Like the “pastors” turned into wolves, these figures also neglect their flocks by chasing after lucre:

Per questo l'Evangelio e i dottor magni
son derelitti, e solo ai Decretali
si studia, sì che pare a' lor vivagni.
A questo intende il papa e ' cardinali [...]

For it the Gospels and the lofty doctors
are neglected and the Decretals alone are studied,
as is readily apparent from their margins.
To it the pope and his cardinals devote themselves [...] (9.133-136).

Dante is not fundamentally opposed to canon law (after all he includes Gratian, the author of the *Decretum* (“Decretali”) in Heaven [*Par.* 10:103-05]), but the single-minded study of law in order to get rich is clearly execrable in Dante's view.⁵² In *Paradiso* 12, this view is put in clear relief when Bonaventure explains why St. Dominic strove to become a great teacher:

Non per lo mondo, per cui mo s'affanna
di retro ad Ostiense e a Taddeo,
ma per amor de la verace manna
in picciol tempo gran dottor si feo;
tal che si mise a circüir la vigna
che tosto imbianca, se 'l vignaio è reo.

51 Davis, “Education in Dante’s Florence,” 423.

52 It would be an error to paint Dante as fundamentally opposed to canon law; even Saint Francis valued its study. Neslihan Şenocak says: “the way the Rule [of 1223] described the duties and responsibilities of the ministers required them to have at least some knowledge of canon law and theology” (*The Poor and the Perfect: The Rise of Learning in the Franciscan Order, 1209-1310*, 48). By 1241 knowledge of canon law becomes part of the requirements for entry into the Franciscan order in Todi, and the requirement goes universal within about a decade (*ibid.*, 77–78).

Not for this world, for which men toil today,
 following Taddeo and the Ostian,
 but for love of the true manna,
 he soon became a teacher so renowned
 that he began to travel through the vineyard,
 which quickly withers if the keeper is corrupt.
 12:82-87

Dominic leaves behind the canonists Enrico da Susa (the same “Ostiensem” mentioned in Dante's letter), and Thaddeus Pepoli in search of spiritual nourishment, the “true manna” of the Gospel. The manna, associated both with Christ's sacrificial body and with spiritual nourishment, is tantamount to the Gospel,⁵³ that same “Deo placita veritas” that the children in the temple proclaim, praising Jesus as he performs miracles. On this Dominic feeds the congregation, the “vigna” of the Lord.⁵⁴

What then is the ultimate question Dante addresses in this letter? Starting as a jeremiad specifically against the transfer of the Holy See from Rome to Avignon, and then running the gamut through varying accusations – the cupidity of the cardinals and their lust for power, their resemblance to Pharisees in silencing truth, their predilection for canon law at the expense of Scripture – the letter seems centered on no single issue, only the greater problem of clerical

53 “Amen amen dico vobis non Moses dedit vobis panem de caelo sed Pater meus dat vobis panem de caelo verum. Panis enim Dei est qui descendit de caelo et dat vitam mundo.” (“Amen amen I say to you, Moses did not give you bread from heaven but my Father gives you true bread from heaven. The bread of God is he who descended from heaven and gave life to the world” [John 6:31-33]). These associations are reused by later Christians. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul specifies that manna was spiritual food for the Jews in the wilderness: “Et omnes eandem escam spiritualem manducaverunt” (“and all ate the same spiritual food” [I Corinthians 10:3]). In the book of Revelation, John suggests manna might be some kind of esoteric mystical knowledge: “Qui habet aures, audiat quid Spiritus dicat ecclesiis: Vincenti dabo manna absconditum.” (“He who has ears, let him hear what the Spirit tells to the churches: I will give hidden manna to the victor” [Revelations 2:17]).

54 For associations of the congregation with vineyards, see Matt. 20:1-16 and Matt. 21:33-41. For Dante's association of manna with matters of fertility and barrenness, see *Purg.* 11, where the souls expiating the sin of pride pray for manna: (“Dà oggi a noi la cotidiana manna”) without which they are condemned to eternally wander through a merciless desert: “sanza la qual per questo aspro deserto / a retro va chi più di gir s'affanna” (“without which he who labors to advance / goes backward through this bitter wilderness”) (11.13-15).

corruption and the cardinals' negligence to tend to their congregations. Dante's daring in this case may not be properly estimated if the reader fails to register the full scope of what he is actually daring to say. To dispute the transfer of the See or to challenge cardinals regarding the texts they study constitutes a substantial attack; however, when Dante describes the great pastoral void in which the "Pharisees" are not only silent but try to silence others, and when he presumes to fill that void, first by cataloging himself alongside Peter and Paul, and then by registering his courage to "dare," he steps directly into the space reserved for the preacher. This letter is about much more than the location of the See and the negligence of patristic texts; it is about a poet arguing his right to a new kind of role. The *Artes praedicandi* show how a layperson can take on the preaching role in cases of pastoral crisis, and a great crisis is exactly what Dante is describing. At the end of his letter the poet emphasizes that he does not assume this role voluntarily but because of necessity. "Vos me coegistis," ("you have driven me to this"), he says, "pudeat ergo tam ab infra, non de celo ut absolvat, argui vel moneri" ("may it shame you to be admonished and reprov'd from so far below, and not from heaven so that it may absolve").⁵⁵ The least sheep of the flock pioneers his voice of dissent by affirming that he would not even be speaking these words if he were not driven by this state of emergency. But this very emergency in turn confirms his right to speak, as if that right were directly handed to him by "Paulus gentium praedicator."

If Dante's Eleventh Epistle shows the author arguing for the right to preach; his Twelfth Epistle assumes this right as a matter of fact. What Dante adds to his claim as a preacher involves "iustitia," a code word informed by uses of the term in the New Testament that freight it

⁵⁵ *Opere Minori*, 2:586–88.

with apocalyptic and prophetic overtones. This letter, probably dating to some time not long after May 19, 1315,⁵⁶ is addressed to a friend, one likely affiliated with the Church or a religious order in some way,⁵⁷ and it concerns the recent offer Florence had made to repatriate Dante, on the condition he pay certain fines and undergo public humiliation. This punishment is far lighter than the previous condemnation (May 10, 1302) to death by fire, but the poet still resolutely refuses to consider this concession, as it is an affront to his innocence and dignity. Dante tartly responds:

Absit a viro predicante iustitiam ut perpeusus inurias, iniuriam inferentibus, velut benemerentibus, pecuniam suam solvat!

Far be it from a man preaching justice, who having endured offense, to pay money to those doing him wrong as if they were well-deserving men!⁵⁸

At this point in his career Dante could have emphasized his many political or poetic accomplishments to highlight both his stature and the offensiveness of their offer. All of his work was by now in circulation, except perhaps *Purgatorio*, *Paradiso* and *Monarchia* (though they were likely soon to be concluded). But Dante relies neither on his status as an intellectual or as poet; instead he highlights his role as an agent of justice, or more precisely as one “preaching justice.”

As is the case in Epistle 11, Dante bases his words on Biblical precedent. However it is rare to find justice and preaching in combination in the Bible.⁵⁹ Throughout the Old Testament,

56 This was the date of the first letter of amnesty extended to Dante (ibid., 2:595, fn. 3). Another letter of amnesty was issued on June 2, 1316, so Dante's epistle could be responding to that later one instead.

57 Frugoni-Brugnoli note that the recipient was “un religioso, si è pensato, per l'apellativo di 'pater,’” in the introduction to this particular letter. (ibid., 2:594).

58 Ibid., 2:596.

59 My generalizations on justice are from an overview of Bible concordances. There is no space in this dissertation for a complete study of the uses of “iustitia” and its many variations in the Bible, but my cursory examinations

“justice” generally intends a kind of secular and ethical justice, although suggestions of a more Divine sort of justice begin to appear later in the prophetic books. In tandem with this, justice is rarely communicated through speech in the earlier parts of the Bible. In the Old Testament justice is most often “followed,” “kept” or “done,” frequently in formulaic combination with judgment; to “do justice and judgment” is commonplace in these books.⁶⁰ Only in more prophetic books does a reader find a justice that is spoken. This is also a point where justice is increasingly defined as secret and Divine, something not privy to human intellect.⁶¹ Specific kinds of speech, like “instruction” or “teaching” in justice, are also very rare in the Old Testament, though they do become more frequent in the prophetic books.⁶² Hosea foretells the arrival of one “qui docebit vos iustitiam” (“that shall teach you justice”), thus describing a kind of justice that is informed by futurity and revelation (10:12).⁶³ This prophetic, revelatory species of justice pioneered by the minor prophets finds its way into New Testament uses. This begins with Paul's letter to the

here clearly suggest the trends I outline. A browsing of the patristic texts likewise shows little regarding any preacher or preaching of justice. Paulinus of Nola mentions a “iustitiae praedicator,” but he appears to intend it in a completely different sense than Dante does. Paulinus uses the example of Job, who redeems himself by accusing his own iniquity: (“quia omnis, ut scriptum est, superbus immundus coram Deo; et ideo iustior apud deum ille accusator iniquitatis suae quam ille iustitiae praedicator. Ille laudando se accusavit, hic accusando defendit” (“for every haughty man is unclean before God, as it is written. And on that account the accuser of his own iniquity is more just before God than the preacher of justice. The one accuses himself by praising himself, the other defends himself by accusing”)) (Epistula 29 in Paulinus of Nola, *Sancti Pontii Meropii Paulini Nolani Epistulae*, ed. Wilhelm Hartel, vol. 29, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1894), 250).

60 These various uses are very frequent formulae in the Old Testament. For examples, see Prov. 21:21 on following justice, Ecc. 1:33 on keeping justice, and Jer. 22:15 on doing judgment and justice.

61 Speaking of justice begins in the Psalms. A few earlier examples of speaking and declaring justice: “iustitiam loquimini” (“ye speak justice”) (Ps. 57:2). For declaration: “annuntiaverunt caeli iustitiam eius” (“the heavens declared his justice,”) (Ps. 96:6); “qui annuntiat verbum suum Jacob, iustitias et iudicia sua Israel” (“who declareth his word to Jacob: his justices and his judgments to Israel”) (Ps. 147:19). God himself speaks justice in Isaiah: “Ego Dominus loquens iustitiam,” (“I am the lord that speak justice”) (Is. 45:19).

62 Although this use is not unheard of in Proverbs, which once mentions justice as among those things instructed: “the instruction of doctrine, justice, and judgment, and equity” (“eruditionem doctrinae iustitiam et iudicium et aequitatem”) (1:3).

Romans, which identifies two distinctly separate spheres of justice, the old justice of the Law given to Moses, and a new kind of justice revealed in the Gospels through faith: “Iustitia enim Dei in eo revelatur ex fide in fidem sicut scriptum est iustus autem ex fide vivit” (“For the justice of God is revealed therein [in the Gospels], from faith unto faith, as it is written: The just man liveth by faith”) (Rom. 1:17). Justice seems a particular concern for St. Paul, who mentions it thirty two times in the book of Romans. But again it is rarely taught or preached.⁶⁴ Only once in the Bible is justice associated with preaching proper, by St. Peter in his description of Noah in II Peter 2:5-7:

Et originali mundo non pepercit, sed octavum Noe iustitiae praeconem⁶⁵ custodivit, diluvium mundo impiorum inducens. Et civitates Sodomorum et Gomorrhaeorum in cinerem redigens, eversione damnavit: exemplum eorum, qui impie acturi sunt ponens: et iustum Lot oppressum a nefandorum iniuria, ac luxuriosa conversatione eripuit

And [God] spared not the original world, but preserved Noe, the eighth person, the preacher of justice, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly. And reducing the cities of the Sodomites and of the Gomorrhites into ashes, condemned them to be overthrown, making them an example to those that should after act wickedly. And delivered just Lot, oppressed by the injustice and lewd conversation of the wicked.

63 This prophetic use finds echo in Joel 2:23, where the acquisition of justice is accompanied by a return of plenty to a famished land: “Et, filii Sion, exsultate, et laetamini in Domino Deo vestro, quia dedit vobis doctorem iustitiae, et descendere faciet ad vos imbrem matutinum et serotinum in principio” (“And you, O children of Sion, rejoice, and be joyful in the Lord your God: because he hath given you a teacher of justice, and he will make the early and the latter rain to come down to you as in the beginning”).

64 In II Timothy, Paul notes the use of Scripture for teaching justice. Interestingly, here he differentiates between regular teaching and teaching in justice, highlighting the special nature of justice and its difference from other virtues: “Omnis scriptura divinitus inspirata utilis est ad docendum, ad arguendum, ad corripiendum, ad erudiendum in iustitia: ut perfectus sit homo Dei, ad omne opus bonum instructus” (“All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice: that the man of God may be perfect, furnished for every good work.”) (3:16-17).

65 It should be remembered that my etymological examination earlier in this chapter explains the similarities between “praeco” and “praedicare,” and thus “praeco” and “praedicator” can be considered near cognates.

At only three chapters long, II Peter is one of the briefest books of the Bible, and it is loaded end to end with a sense of apocalyptic urgency. Peter bolsters his readers' faith, encouraging them to remain steadfast as they await Christ's return, and to avoid the dangerous heresies of "pseudoprophetae" and "magistri mendaces" who "introducent sectas perditionis et [...] Dominum negant" ("bring in sects of perdition and deny the Lord) (2:1). Peter cites Lot and Noah as examples of men who survived disaster by right living and avoiding the "desideriis carnis luxuriae" (the desires of fleshly riotousness") (2:18). For Peter's readers awaiting the second coming, Lot and Noah function prefiguratively as archetypal survivors of apocalypse; they are examples for the early Church to follow while it awaits the end of days.⁶⁶ Justice is key to their survival; Lot is called "iustum" and Noah a preacher of justice ("iustitiae praeconem"). The original accounts in Genesis can attest to the righteousness of both Lot and Noah, but Peter's claim that Noah is a "preacher" finds no support in the original story. In Genesis he does not speak at all. Noah simply builds an ark, boards his family and hundreds of animals, and sets sail on the roiling tide, all civilization drowning in his wake. He warns none but his family. Unlike Lot, Noah does not even plead with the Lord to save his town on account of a few righteous stragglers. The waters rose and he entered with his family, and the Lord shut him in from the outside, a gesture of final exclusion to those left behind (Gen. 7:16).

In light of the Old Testament facts about Noah's story, one struggles to understand how Peter could claim that Noah preached justice in any way. Noting the discrepancy, the Venerable Bede situates Noah's preaching of justice in his actions rather than his words, that is to say in the

66 For a comprehensive discussion on the typological reading of Old Testament figures, see Auerbach's classic essay "Figura" rpt. in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

ark he built, looming in its dry dock while thunderheads mounted up on the horizon.⁶⁷ If Noah preaches, he does so with deeds, with “operibus” as the wording of the Lateran IV canon puts it. The practice of preaching with actions will reach a kind of apotheosis nearer to Dante's lifetime in the acts of St. Francis, which we will address at length in chapter 6. Here, Bede finds an ur-example in Noah, whose boat, built by him and engineered by God, stands as a kind of *in factis* declaration of justice. The justice it announces – sure annihilation of the world except for Noah and his family – is of the Divine type, not yet present but soon to come. Noah is a privileged beneficiary of this kind of justice, who is confirmed in the book of Hebrews as one “instituted heir to the justice which is by faith” (“iustitiae quae per fidem est heres et institutus”) (11:7). Faith, as we know, is the substance of things hoped for; justice bound by faith is likewise bound by that futurity. Perhaps this is the reason that Noah's justice helped rectify not one of his

Press, 1984), 11–78.

67 “Iustitiae autem praeconem Noe cognominat quia iustitiae opera faciens cunctis intuentibus qualiter coram domino uiuendum esset ostendit neque enim uerbo quempiam docere repperitur, quippe cuius nec unus sermo repperitur ad Deum prolatus uel hominem, sed quod maximae uirtutis est in tota archae fabrica, in aduentu diluuii, in sequentis aeuu primordiis, ore quidem silente sed cordis deuotione promptissima iussis obtemperare caelestibus” (“Noah is called a preacher of justice because, by doing works of justice before all those watching, he manifested how one should live before God. Nor indeed was it discovered that he taught anyone by word, this man of whom neither a single speech to God or man was spoken. But what is of greatest virtue is in the entire construction of the ark, in the coming of the deluge, in the following beginnings of an era, with a silent mouth but with a devoted heart ready to submit to Heavenly law”) (*In Epistulas Septem Catholicas*, ed. David Hurst O.S. B., Corpus Christianorum Series Latina [Turnhout: Brepols, 1983], 271).

This recognition of the obvious is missed on later commentators, such as Lawrence of Brindisi (1559-1619), who, very inventively, imagines scenes of Noah aggressively preaching and exhorting people to repent: “nam et Noe iustitiae praeconem habebant, qui ex Dei sententia diluuii diuinam interminationem praedicabat et ut poeniterent hortabatur omnes” (“for they considered Noah a preacher of justice, who preached the Divine threat of the deluge by God's judgment, and who exhorted everyone to repent”) (Laurentius a Brundusio, *Explanatio in Genesim exegetica*, caput: 7, pag.: 505, linea: 30, cit. in “Brepolis Library of Latin Texts, Series A,” n.d., <http://clt.brepolis.net.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/lta/Default.aspx>). While St. Lawrence is rather freewheeling in his elaborations on Noah's story, his take on Genesis 1-3 is rigorously literal, to such a degree that fundamentalist creationists rely on it to substantiate their claims about the origins of the Earth. So cherished is his literal reading of Genesis 1-3 that it is sold in translation on creationist websites (http://www.kolbecenter.org/index.php?page=shop.product_details&flypage=flypage.tpl&product_id=59&category_id=3&option=com_virtuemart&Itemid=94).

contemporaries, but was heard by following generations. In this way, Noah stands as an example for those embattled Christians of the early Church that formed Peter's audience, who were awaiting their own apocalypse and hoping to survive it by clinging to righteousness. Dante proves an apt pupil of Peter's rhetoric, positioning himself as a Noahic figure, a preacher of justice, whom his fellow Florentines would ignore at their peril. Using Noah as his exemplary model, Dante can accept Florence's refusal as a validation of his status as a true prophet. Rejection in this case is a badge of honor, aligning him with some of the greatest and earliest Biblical prophetic forebears, ignored or cast out by their societies.

Perhaps, in the last five or so years of his life, Dante was thinking about the conflation of these roles, the “praedicator,” the “praeco,” and the truths they bear, sometimes prophetic, sometimes arcane, when he set to writing the pilgrim's response to St. John in *Paradiso* 26. When John asks the pilgrim who directed him to love the Prime Mover of all things, he answers:

Sternilmi tu ancora, incominciando
l'alto preconio che grida l' arcano
di qua giù sopra ogni altro bando

You also set it forth to me in the beginning
of your great message, which, more than any other herald,
proclaims the mystery of this high place on earth (*Par* 26.43-45).

John's model, the fourth Gospel is called a preaching (“preconio”) loudly proclaimed (“grida”) to all. As Gospel, it is in many ways simple, and yet, what does it proclaim but the the mysterious (“l'arcano”)? In Dante's letter, his claim as a preacher is likewise simple and free of any mystification on the surface; but it looks forward to a deeper “arcano,” suggesting that the truth that can be preached is far deeper than one might at first imagine. What is such Gospel, if not a kind of prophecy?

The itinerary of “predicare” through history follows a molelike path, a burrowing beyond the shell of things deep into the core of their metaphysical essence. The “praeco,” at first merely announces (“praedicat”) the sale of items in Plautus's plays. Then later there appears the “iustitiae praeconem” in Peter's letter – recast as “viro predicante iustitiam” in Dante's letters – who offers not mercantile goods for sale but Divine justice. While justice is not a dry good to be marketed, the Classical precedent and its Christian descendant still deal in value, a certain *quantum* that must be negotiated, between man and man in one case, and between man and God in the other. Yet value established on Divine terms always exceeds any amount a human could ever comprehend; hence we find the subject expressed in *Paradiso* as “l'arcano.” In Latin, the “arcanum” is that which is closed up, concealed or secret. But the ultimate “thingness” of preachable truth is apparent when we dig deeper to find the etymological taproot of the term in question. The word finds a nominal correlative in “arx,” meaning a fortress or bulwark. Things worth defending generally have value, and are hidden from sight; hence one finds another cognate in “arca,” the Latin term used for a safe for money. “Arca” is also, incidentally, the Vulgate term for Noah's ark. The hidden treasure that Dante intends in this passage from the *Paradiso* is the fourth Gospel, different in so many ways from the synoptics, as it begins not with a man but with the *logos*, the word, the beginning of everything and therefore the ultimate value (“valore”⁶⁸) determining the value of everything else.

Dante argues in Epistle 11 that by speaking “veritatem” the children commit a

68 Not by accident does the pilgrim immediately precede this statement to John with a recollection of Jehovah, who before revealing his essential nature to Moses, declares: “Io ti farò vedere ogne valore” (*Par.* 26.42). “Valore” is frequently associated with God in the *Commedia*. See *Purg.* 11.4, *Par.* 10.3 and *Par.* 29.143 to name just a few of many examples.

self-justifying act; to utter necessary truth is all the permission one needs. This drives Dante's declaration "hiis habeo quod audeo." So too is the "grida" of St. John's "alto preconio." It is another speech act of truth that lays the foundation for the poet's own proclamation of his vision "in pro del mondo che mal vive" (*Purg.* 32.103-105).⁶⁹ Like his spiritual forebear Noah, Dante, the preacher of justice in Epistle 12, may speak but not be heard in his own time. Time will validate both. As the poet states elsewhere, the revolutions of the wheel and the swing of the mattock will finally come to their end ("Però giri fortuna la sua rota / come le piace, e 'l villan la sua marra." [*Inf.* 15.95-96]), and these prophecies too will eventually come to pass. He who listens well, heeds.⁷⁰

69 Dante's identification with John is not limited to speech, but also encompasses vision. In *Purg* 29.97-105, Dante compares his vision of the Griffin to the visions both of Ezechiel and John, telling the reader "leggi Ezechiele" for further description of his vision, and then later notes that – when his vision departs from that of Ezechiel – John's is in alignment with his ("Giovanni è meco"). Elsewhere in *Purgatory* (32.73-82), Dante compares himself to Peter, James, and John awakening after the transfiguration. For a discussion the larger implications of these comparisons to John and other visionaries, see the chapter: "Nonfalse Errors and the True Dreams of the Evangelist" in Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*, page 156 in particular.

70 This sentence is a paraphrase of Vergil's, who right after Dante reckons with Brunetto Latini's prophecy of his exile says: "Bene ascolta chi la nota" (*Inf.* 15.99). As will be shown in the next chapter, Vergil himself is better at issuing prophecy than he is at heeding it.

Chapter Four

“Dicitur predicatio quandoque prophetia”

Over the course of the last chapter, “predicare” has inched closer and closer to the prophetic. Are we ultimately talking only of “Dante profeta”? Is it moot to discuss a “Dante praedicator”? This chapter will summon evidence from Aquinas's writings as well as from a few theoretical manuals on preaching to show that the prophet and the preacher are twin fruits on the same branch, growing together through the course of Christian history, and mutually influencing one another through the centuries. Every prophet preaches, and every preacher can potentially prophesy. If Dante wishes to attain the status of “profeta,” he must first do so as an exceptional “praedicator.”

Prophecy, for Dante, is more a matter of reading, interpretation and speaking than it is about forecasting future events. Does the prophet forecast? Certainly; however, far more essential to his role is the study that generates that forecasting, and the construction and elocution of prophetic words. The substantial role that study and rhetorical assembly plays in prophecy persuasively argues a connection between it and preaching.

The first step in the process is to first explore what prophecy is *not*, in order to clear the air of misconceptions about prophecy and its significance to Dante. Only then can we engage in an honest comparison between the phenomena of preaching and prophecy. Dante's censorious stance in the *Inferno* regarding those who want to see too far into the future (Amphiaraus is introduced as one who “volsse veder troppo davante” [20.38]), complicates any critical discussion about the poet's own claims to prophecy. When those who tell the future are cast into Hell, how to reconcile them into a single comprehensive vision that can also accommodate a poet who on one occasion claims to possess a “presaga mens”¹ foretelling (“prenuntians”) future events, and who repeatedly suggests in the *Commedia* that his visionary experience is in some way prophetic?

Critics have addressed the way that *Inferno* 20 complicates Dante's own prophetic reputation.² But more could be said about the simple fact that the poet does not use the word “profeta” in this canto. While the figures in *Inferno* 20 are referred to as “diviners” and “soothsayers” in the critical tradition, the poet prefers instead to highlight what they *do* over what they presumably *are*, listing their various forecasting activities more often than their identities. Amphiaraus “volsse vede troppo davante” (38); Aruns happened to “guardar le stelle / e 'l mar” (50-51); Michael Scot was a master of “magiche frode” (117). The only ones identified as “diviners,” (the closest synonym to “profeta” that the canto allows), are several nameless female “ndivine” near the end, who would have done better to stay with the needle, spool and spindle

1 This is from Epistle 6, addressed to the Florentine people, in *Opere Minori*, ed. Domenico De Robertis, vol. 2 (Milano; Napoli: Ricciardi, 1979), 556.

2 See, for example Teodolinda Barolini, “True and False See-ers in *Inferno* 20,” *Lectura Dantis: A Forum for Dante Research and Interpretation* 4 (1989): 42–54.

than to try to work magic “con erbe e con imago” (122-123). Even here, the poet amplifies the identities of the diviners to highlight their specific activities – using herbal concoctions and poppets used in folk magic. This curious congeries of divinatory practices, magic and witchcraft, do not in any way suggest the great Biblical models that Dante intends to evoke when he uses the term “profeta,” figures like Jeremiah David, Isaiah and Nathan that he mentions in *Vita Nova*, *Convivio*, *Monarchia*, his Epistle to the Florentines and the *Commedia*. Is it possible, perhaps, that telling the future is not prophecy's main goal at all?

Although the conversation on Dante and prophecy is crowded with critics and their opinions, it seems that no one has attempted, in any sustained and serious way, to separate prophecy from forecasting. The problem is very old. Bruno Nardi's essay “Dante profeta” is a fundamental starting point for any historical review of this topic in Dante studies. And his study concerns itself less with a description of substance of a prophetic utterance *per se*, and more with matters of prophetic inspiration. Nardi discusses prophecy not in terms of technique, but in terms of influx³ and efflux, the pouring in of Divine knowledge followed by the poet's verbal expression of that knowledge, mediated by imagination and fantasy.⁴ To substantiate this, Nardi draws on sources both antique and contemporary to Dante, especially Albertus Magnus's writings on vision and divinatory dreams.⁵ This line of inquiry, casting prophecy exclusively in

3 “[...] influssi di superiori agenti naturali” (“Dante profeta,” in *Dante e la cultura medievale: nuovi saggi di filosofia dantesca*, 3rd ed. [Bari: Laterza, 1983], 288).

4 “Vi sono altri del pari i quali possiedono un ottimo organo della fantasia e dell'immaginazione, in qualità, in quantità, complessione, composizione, conformazione, e per tutto ciò che si richiede alla perfezione dell'organo della potenza immaginativa” (ibid., 289).

5 Ibid., 271. Nardi devotes pages 288-293 of this essay to discussion of Albertus Magnus's understanding of Divinely inspired visions. He relies to a degree on Aquinas as well, though not greatly. As will be shown,

terms of mystical vision, compels Nardi to ask, seriously, if Dante indeed was a “vero profeta.”⁶ From this Nardi finds himself having to reckon with ample evidence that Dante was, in fact, a false prophet, who, in spite of claims to a “diretta rivelazione di Dio,” ultimately failed in many of his predictions,⁷ and whose vision of a monarchy founded on reason and free of warfare and greed could never be realized.⁸ Nardi's final conclusion is that “Dante fu vero profeta,” not for the accuracy of his predictions, but “perché, come tutti i grandi profeti seppe levare lo sguardo oltre gli avvenimenti che si svolgevano sotto i suoi occhi, e additare un ideale eterno di giustizia come criterio per misurare la statura morale degli uomini e il valore delle loro azioni.”⁹ Although Nardi does not explain how the ability to “indicate an eternal idea of justice” distinguishes the prophet from, say, a simple pastor guiding Christian novitiates through a catechism, his claim does ultimately suggest that scholars of Dante's prophecy should look beyond forecasting when asking questions about “Dante profeta,” and think more specifically about the rhetoric of moral correction.

Instead, many critical discussions of Dante's prophecy are still held in the vice of the poet's claims to future vision. This is not to say that Dante scholars have advanced in lockstep;

Aquinas's understanding of prophecy, more humdrum in comparison to that of Albertus Magnus does not lend itself to a reading of the prophet as a wild-haired mystical prophet suffused with divine visions.

6 Ibid., 318–326.

7 “Si dirà appunto che in questo Dante, a differenza degli antichi veggenti, non è stato profeta, ma, se mai, falso profeta, poiché il suo sogno di restaurazione imperiale sveniva per sempre nel momento stesso in cui era annunciato, per il fallire dell'impresa d'Arrigo, e la chiesa continuava ancora per lungo tempo a trescare coi re della terra, facendosi nel Rinascimento perfino più mondana di quel che non fosse stata per l'innanzi” (ibid., 319–20).

8 Ibid., 321–25.

9 Ibid., 324.

for example, Nicolò Mineo did more amply discuss the many kinds of speech that can be defined as “prophecy,” and did not restrict himself to the simple telling of the future.¹⁰ But in spite of Mineo's deviation from the Nardian precedent, many scholars still revert to equating prophecy with forecasting, as if futurity were an immutable and primary parameter for all discussions on prophecy. The most recent monograph on Dante's prophecy (2008) asserts without discussion or explanation that “prophecy will be understood primarily in the simple sense of prediction.”¹¹ More than ten years earlier Maurizio Palma di Cesnola makes a nearly identical claim in his book on Dante's prophecy: “Nella semantica del termine 'profezia,' l'ottica da noi scelta si limita all'ambito eminentemente periferico e ben delimitato del profetismo vaticinante; delle predizioni dunque, vere o fittizie, di eventi a venire,” again, without explaining why this specific angle is taken to the exclusion of others.¹² Fortunately, there have been more recent rumblings against the purely forecasting aspect of prophecy, but these are still limited to scholars' marginalia, and are not found in their main text.¹³ If the most comprehensive and focused works on Dante's prophecy restrict their scope to future-telling – sometimes by neglect, sometimes by design, and leave

10 Mineo cites the authority of Aquinas in the *Summa* to argue that prophecy need not be bound by futurity: “La profezia pertanto, nella sua essenza, è una forma di conoscenza e si rivolge a realtà o ad eventi presenti, passati, o, più propriamente e comunemente, futuri” (*Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante: strutture e temi profetico-apocalittici in Dante: dalla Vita nuova alla Divina commedia* [Catania: Università di Catania, Facoltà di lettere e filosofia, 1968], 28). He also discusses the importance of *denuntiatio* as an essential ingredient in the language of prophecy, thus envisioning its rhetorical ends as above and beyond the telling of future events (ibid.).

11 Robert Wilson, *Prophecies and Prophecy in Dante's Commedia* (Florence: Olshki, 2008), 8.

12 *Semiotica dantesca: profetismo e diacronia* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1995), 35.

13 In endnote 73 to chapter 3, V. Stanley Benfell highlights this problem: “Biblical scholarship, however, has long questioned the notion that prophets are primarily predictors; rather than *foretelling* they *tell forth* – speaking forcefully and authoritatively to their contemporaries. [...] Prophecy as a discourse exists not to provide historical clues for later biblical literalists trying to peer into the future, but to urge action – specifically, repentance – in the present” (*The Biblical Dante* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011], 235).

aside the whole complex of rhetorical practices that contribute to the creation of this character called the prophet, then much more work can still be done in excavating a more complete picture of the prophet as Dante understood it.

This is not to say that the parameters that Nardi established have historically gone unchallenged. Teodolinda Barolini takes a firm stance that prophecy, along with other modalities of Dante's discourse, are all subservient to his larger need to establish poetic authority as a truth-teller.¹⁴ Dante's prophecy, in Barolini's view, is a rhetorical strategy, a way to shore up substantiation for his truth claims. In her essay "True and False See-ers in *Inferno* 20,"¹⁵ Barolini notes Dante's need to distance himself from the figures in *Inferno* 20 and in consequence his guide, Vergil, because he needs to secure his own prophetic status on different terms. In canto 20 he does this by linking Vergil's purported visionary, and thereby truth-telling, status with those of the other figures in this bolgia, thereby demoting the vision of a poet over whom he needs to secure his supremacy. She later argues that Dante's omission of terms like *vates* and *divinus poeta* in his references to Vergil in the *Commedia* are "related to the term's prophetic and divinatory connotations."¹⁶ Elsewhere she notes a "literary self-consciousness" that marks Dante's prophetic claims, but since these are found in visionary literature of the times as well, she concludes that "poetic self-consciousness [...] cannot be used as a litmus text to discriminate

14 Barolini situates her view of Dante's strategic use of prophecy within the larger context of Dante studies in the Chapter 1 of *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). She more comprehensively argues the issue in chapter 7 of that same book, "Nonfalse Errors and the True Dreams of the Evangelist" Ibid., 143–165. She also addresses this issue in "Why Did Dante Write the *Commedia*? Dante and the Visionary Tradition," in *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture* (Fordham Univ Press, 2006).

15 "True and False See-ers in *Inferno* 20."

16 Ibid., 28

between poets and prophets.”¹⁷

Barolini's comments suggest an important issue regarding our reception of prophecy in the *Commedia*: that one of the reasons we skew our understanding of the “prophetic” in Dante towards vision and forecasting is because the poet continually directs us to these loftier summits of the prophet's practice. Barolini analyses soothsayers elsewhere in her work and couples them with the bad preacher of *Paradiso* 29, as two groups of frauds from whom the poet distances himself. In so doing she highlights *en passant* a relationship between prophets and preachers that begs deeper investigation:

Dante is aware that he is only preserved from presumption by the divine investiture that he alone knows he received, and that only his ability to persuade us of this investiture's historicity (or of his sincerity in claiming its historicity) prevents us from considering him fraudulently self-deluded and self-promoting: as self-deluded and self-promoting as, for instance, the false prophets of *Inferno* 20, or the mendacious preachers of *Paradiso* 29. This awareness dictates both the connection between artistry and pride that runs through his work and the (defensive) aggression he directs at any others—like the false prophets and the lying preachers—whose art it also is to present themselves as tellers of truth.¹⁸

Thus, in Barolini's view, Dante's aggression aims to neutralize the credibility of both false prophets and preachers in order to challenge their monopoly on the language of truth, the kind of truth that is ultimately confirmed only by subjective Divine revelation, and no other demonstrable verifying criteria. Although the diviners, magi and witches in *Inferno* 20 and the public preachers in *Paradiso* 29 perform within very different spheres – social, rhetorical and geographical – Barolini shows that Dante nevertheless sees all of these as operating according to

¹⁷ *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture*, 126.

¹⁸ *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*, 116.

similar principles: a deeper vision into Divine truth which transcends the realm of the everyday

From the same root proceed different branches, different branches of the same tree

My last chapter showed how St. Peter's take on Noah as a "iustitiae praeconem" situates him within a New Testament understanding of preaching, and how this kind of preaching overlaps with prophecy. This chapter attempts to further explore the strong connections between prophecy and preaching, to hypothesize that it makes little sense to talk of one to the exclusion of the other. The first half of this chapter will examine prophecy as it was understood in the New Testament and by later theologians, especially Thomas Aquinas. I will show that, while issues of futurity are certainly relevant to prophecy, they are hardly its main focus. Instead, prophecy is primarily a communicative mode, engineered to compel listeners to penitence and moral rectification. Once it is shown that prophecy's goals are identical to those of preaching, it will be easier to understand that not only are prophecy and preaching very close kin, but that prophecy is always a kind of preaching.

While Dante's poem negotiates frequently – one might even claim constantly – in prophecy and prophecies in the *Commedia*, very rarely does he actually mention prophets as such explicitly. The second half of this chapter attempts to hypothesize a definition of prophecy from the example of those he identifies as prophets, most particularly Joachim of Fiore and the Biblical prophet Nathan, both found in the corona of the wise spirits. An examination of these figures precisely identifies those aspects of prophecy that he values, and shows how a "prophetic" act often uses the same tools and strives towards the same ends as preaching.

“Doctrinam quasi prophetiam effundam” (Sir. 24:46).

“Propheta” originally meant a mere soothsayer in Latin, but in the Apocalypse-minded Early Church the prophet comes to occupy a much more exalted place of privilege. The prophet's presence in the assembly and the words he (or she¹⁹) proclaims confirm the Church's entire existence; the prophet at once affirms the Church's eschatology, and orients it within more common everyday context of moral exhortation. In this way, St. Peter's letter (discussed in the last chapter) stands as a good example, tending as it does both to the end times and to the spiritual guidance of Church members.²⁰ This dynamic is not limited to Peter's letters. The New Testament often features prophets and preachers side by side: in the book of Acts “prophetae et doctores” jointly operate as clergy in the church at Antioch (13:1). I Corinthians clarifies that the prophet exists to both exhort and edify, performing services well within a preacher's jurisdiction: “nam qui prophetat hominibus loquitur aedificationem et exhortationem et consolationes” (“But he that prophesieth speaketh to men unto edification and exhortation and comfort”) (14:3).²¹ This view of the prophet as a preacher is not limited to the early Church; many important figures of Christian history from the time of the Fathers through the Middle Ages appear to assume as a

19 Paul mentions women prophets in I Cor. 11.5. The New Testament's relationship to women prophets is not uncomplicated, however. The author of the book of Revelation curses a female prophet in 2:20-23.

20 The understanding of prophets and preachers as functionally one and the same has strong support by scholars of the New Testament. See Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching: A Search for the Origins of the Christian Homily*, vol. 59, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001), especially pp. 7-12, which regard these references in *Acts* and *I Corinthians*.

21 Paul also discusses the many spiritual gifts, which include preaching and prophecy, in *I Corinthians*, saying that they all originate from the same source: “Divisiones vero gratiarum sunt idem autem Spiritus. Et divisiones ministracionum sunt idem autem Dominus. Et divisiones operationum sunt idem vero Deus qui operator omnia in omnibus.” (“Now there are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministries, but

matter of course that the prophet preaches. This is found in Augustine,²² Jerome,²³ Isidore,²⁴ Bede,²⁵ Gregory the Great,²⁶ St. Peter Damian,²⁷ to name just a few.

Thomas Aquinas confirms the synergy between preaching and prophecy in the *Summa Theologiae*, in his commentary on I Corinthians, and in a sermon, “Attendite a falsis prophetis.”²⁸ In the *Summa*, he suggests that prophecy does not solely regard future events, since prophetic knowledge regards events in all times, past, present and future (“cognitio autem prophetica est per lumen divinum, quo possunt omnia cognosci” [“prophetic knowledge is brought about by a divine light which makes possible the knowledge of all realities”]).²⁹ Admittedly, future contingencies are the most remote of these realities, and therefore the most “prophetic,” by

the same lord. And there are diversities of operations, but the same God, who worketh all in all.” (*I Cor* 12:4-6).

22 “Moyses et prophetae praedicaerunt” (*Quaestiones euangeliorum*. Cl. 0275, lib.: 2, quaestio: 38, linea: 86. Cit. in:

“Brepolis Library of Latin Texts, Series A”, n.d., Available: <http://clt.brepolis.net.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/llta/Default.aspx>); “ubi iam prophetae praedicaerant” (*In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*. Cl. 0278, tract.: 15, par.: 32, linea: 13. Cit. in: *Ibid.*).

23 “Propheta praedicat ciuitati” (*Commentarii in prophetas minores*. Cl. 0589, SL 76, “In Jonam,” cap. [s.s.]: 3, linea: 93. Cit. in: “Brepolis Library of Latin Texts, Series A.”).

24 “Propheta praedicans ait: et erit, omnis qui inuocauerit nomen domini saluus erit” (*De ecclesiasticis officiis*. Cl. 1207, lib.: 1, cap.: 15, linea: 33. Cit. in: *Ibid.*).

25 “Accepit propheta praedicandam ueri regis gloriam” (*In primam partem Samuhelis libri iv. Nomina locorum*. Cl. 1346, lib.: 3, cap.: 16, linea: 180. Cit. in: *Ibid.*).

26 “Et eum prophetando praedicat” (*Moralia in Iob* Cl. 1708, SL 143B, lib.: 27, par.: 1, linea: 27. Cit. in: *Ibid.*).

27 “Apostolorum namque doctrina quasi quibusdam basibus propheticae praedicationis” (*Sermones*. sermo: 57, linea: 163. Cit. in: *Ibid.*).

28 In the *Summa*, see II, II, 171-174. In his commentary on I Corinthians, see chapters 11.2, 12.3 and 14.1 in Thomas Aquinas, *In Omnes S. Pauli Apostoli Epistola Commentaria* (Turin: Marietti, 1929), 327–329, 355–360, 370–373. There is an English translation of Aquinas's commentary published online: *Commentary On the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. Fabian Larcher, O.P., n.d.,

Aquinas's definition; but this does not exclude the present in any way.³⁰ Neither is prophecy bound to tell only of things unknowable, for Aquinas differentiates between “prophetia praedestinationis” (“prophecy of predestination”) and “prophetia comminationis” (“denunciative prophecy”), and associates the latter with “ordo causae ad affectum” (“a relation of cause and effect”), in other words, ordinary causality.³¹

Aquinas provides much deeper analysis into the nature of the prophet in his commentary on II Corinthians, and offers a much more accommodating definition of prophecy. Here, Aquinas does not favor the visionary at all, but rather him who explains that vision, making it understandable to the church congregation:

Secundum ergo hos modos prophetiae, dicuntur aliqui diversis modis prophetae. Aliquando enim aliquis dicitur propheta, qui habet omnia ista quatuor, scilicet quod videt imaginarias visiones, et habet intelligentiam de eis, et audacter annuntiat aliis, et operatur miracula, et de hoc dicitur Num. XII, 6: *si quis fuerit inter vos propheta*, et cetera. Aliquando autem dicitur propheta ille, qui habet solas imaginarias visiones, sed tamen improprie et valde remote. Aliquando etiam dicitur propheta, qui habet intellectuale lumen ad explanandum etiam visiones imaginarias, sive sibi, sive alteri factas, vel ad exponendum dicta prophetarum, vel Scripturas apostolorum. Et sic dicitur propheta omnis qui discernit doctorum

<http://josephkenny.joyeurs.com/CDtexts/SS1Cor.htm>. The sermon in question is the third one, “In III Dominica Post Festum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli” (“Attendite a falsis”) found in Thomas Aquinas, *Opera Omnia. Opuscula Alia Dubia: Volumen Tertium.*, vol. 24 (Parma: Fiacadori, 1869), 227.

29 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Blackfriars (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), II, II, 171, 3. Mineo also discusses these passages from Aquinas in *Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante: strutture e temi profetico-apocalittici in Dante: dalla Vita nuova alla Divina commedia*, 26–28.

30 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II, II, 171, 3. For example, Aquinas notes that prophecy can regard things “quae sunt procul a cognitione hujus hominis sive secundum sensum, sive secundum intellectum, non autem a cognitione omnium hominum (“hidden from this or that individual, whether in sense or intellect, yet [...] not hidden from men in general”) (ibid.). Or it could regard truths “quae excedunt universaliter cognitionem omnium hominum, non quia secundum se non sint cognoscibilia, sed propter defectum cognitionis humanae” (“those truths which universally surpass the knowledge of all men, not because they are intrinsically unknowable, but because of a defect in human knowledge”) (ibid.).

31 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II, II, 174, 1.

Scripturas, quia eodem spiritu interpretatae sunt quo editae sunt. Et sic Salomon et David possunt dici prophetae, in quantum habuerunt lumen intellectuale, ad clare et subtiliter intuendum; nam visio David intellectualis tantum fuit. Dicitur etiam propheta aliquis solum ex hoc quod prophetarum dicta denuntiat, seu exponit, seu cantat in Ecclesia, et hoc modo dicitur I Reg. XIX, 24 quod Saul erat inter prophetas, id est, inter canentes dicta prophetarum. Dicitur etiam aliquis propheta ex miraculorum operatione, secundum illud Eccli. c. XLVIII, 14, quod *corpus Elisei mortuum prophetavit*, id est, miraculum fecit. Quod ergo dicit hic apostolus per totum caput de prophetis, intelligendum est de secundo modo, scilicet quod ille dicitur prophetare, qui per lumen intellectuale divinum, visiones sibi et aliis factas exponit. Et secundum hoc planum erit, quod hic dicitur de prophetis

Therefore according to these modes of prophecy, some are named prophets for different modes. Sometimes, for instance one is called a prophet who has all four of these, obviously that he sees imaginary visions, and has an intellectual understanding of them, and bravely announces them to others, and works miracles. Numbers 12:6 intends this: 'if there be among you a prophet' etcetera. Sometimes one is called a prophet who only has imaginary visions, but this is meant only in the improper sense and quite remotely. Sometimes indeed one is called a prophet, who has an intellectual light for explaining even imaginary visions (whether his own, or by others), or for explicating the sayings of the prophets, or the Scriptures of the apostles. And thus everyone who discerns the Scriptures of the doctors is called a prophet, for they have been interpreted in the same spirit in which they were edited. And thus Solomon and David can be called prophets, in that they had the intellectual light, for intuiting clearly and subtly; for the vision of David was only intellectual. One is also called a prophet merely who announces, explains or sings in Church the sayings of the prophets, and this mode is intended in I Kings [I Samuel] 19:24, that Saul was among the prophets, that is among those singing the sayings of the prophets. Also one is called a prophet by the working of miracles, according to this Sirach 48:14, that the dead body of Elisha prophesied, that is to say that it worked a miracle. Therefore what the apostle says here in the entire chapter on prophets is to be understood in the second mode, that is to say one is considered prophesying when he explains visions made to himself or to others by means of a divine intellectual light. And in this way it will be clear what is meant by prophets.³²

Aquinas's definition of prophecy here suggests a hierarchy. "Prophecy" involves four modes: imaginary visions, the intellectual understanding of those visions, the explanation of the visions

32 (*In Omnes S. Pauli Apostoli Epistola Commentaria*, 372; Aquinas, *Commentary On the First Epistle to the Corinthians*).

to others, and the working of miracles. Aquinas privileges before all prophets him who possesses all four of these; he denies, however that the simple visionary could be an even close second; the simple vision, unaccompanied by interpretation or public announcement, can be considered prophecy only “improprie et valde remote” (“in the improper sense and quite remotely”). The bulk of Aquinas's study is devoted to the third and fourth modes of prophecy, the “intellectuale lumen ad explanandum etiam visiones imaginarias.” (“intellectual light for explaining even imaginary visions”). Aquinas's syntax clearly links together both “lumen” and “explanandum,” suggesting that, while mystical vision and faith healing could be considered separate provinces in prophecy, intellectual discernment and speaking are inseparable from one another. Aquinas's elaboration on light and explanation comprehends a wide body of activities. The vision, the actual substance of the prophecy, need not even be his own; visions can be “alteri factas” (“had by others”), or they can be the sayings of Biblical prophets or the writings of the Apostles (“dicta prophetarum, vel Scripturas apostolorum”). Aquinas repeats this once again, as if nailing the point home: “Et sic dicitur propheta omnis qui discernit doctorum scripturas, quia eodem spiritu interpretatae sunt quo editae sunt” (“And thus everyone who discerns the Scriptures of the doctors is called a prophet, for they have been interpreted in the same spirit in which they were edited”). Both Solomon and David, he says, are prophets in this sense of interpretation, on account of their “lumen intellectuale ad clare et subtiliter intuendum,” (“intellectual light, for intuiting clearly and subtly”). Indeed he clarifies that David's vision “intellectualis tantum fuit” (“was only intellectual”). Aquinas goes even further in his assertions that comprehension and declaration are the central and most important features of prophecy, by arguing that one who only announces explains or sings the words of the prophets (“prophetarum dicta denuntiat, seu

exponit seu cantat in ecclesia”) is a prophet according to his criteria. Aquinas confirms this once again in his comment on I Cor. 11:2, saying that even the simple act of reciting a “lectionem, vel epistolam, vel Evangelium” (“lesson or an epistle or a gospel”) can be considered prophecy.³³ He later adds (concerning 12:3) that prophecy is not limited to Apostles but is well within the jurisdiction of people in this day and age, who may have visions or interpret them.³⁴ The demotion of the pure visionary is clear, considering Aquinas's conflation of prophecy and preaching, in terms of their identical goals: to speak to men's intellect, to edify beginners and to exhort those more advanced.³⁵ These goals cannot be accomplished by a mere vision of the future, if it is not explained and communicated properly. Aquinas reconfirms this conclusion more succinctly in his sermon “Attendite a falsis prophetis,” where, noting Paul's words in I Cor 4:29, he answers: “Vocat ibi doctores et praedicatores per prophetas” (“There he calls teachers

33 “Sed ille, qui sacram Scripturam in ecclesia recitat, puta legendo lectionem, vel epistolam, vel Evangelium, ex persona totius Ecclesiae loquitur. Et de tali prophetante intelligitur, quod hic Apostolus dicit” (“But one who recites holy Scripture in church, either reading a lesson, or an epistle, or the Gospel speaks on the part of the entire Church. And it's regarding this kind of prophesying that is understood, that the Apostle talks about here”) (Aquinas, *In Omnes S. Pauli Apostoli Epistola Commentaria*, 327; Aquinas, *Commentary On the First Epistle to the Corinthians*).

34 “Et quamvis ad apostolos praecipue pertineat doctrinae officium, quibus dictum est: *Euntes docete omnes gentes*; tamen alii in communionem hujus officii assumuntur, quorum quidam per seipsos revelationes a Deo accipiunt, qui dicuntur prophetae; quidam vero de his quae sunt aliis revelata populum instruunt, qui dicuntur doctores” (“And however much the office of teaching belongs primarily to the apostles, for whom it was said: 'going therefore teach ye all nations'; nevertheless, others in the communion can be taken up by this office, some of whom receive revelations from God on their own, who are called prophets; and indeed others instruct the people on those things which are revealed to others, who are called teachers”) (*In Omnes S. Pauli Apostoli Epistola Commentaria*, 359–60; Aquinas, *Commentary On the First Epistle to the Corinthians*).

35 “Secundo probat id quod dicit, quod prophetia est ad honorem Dei et utilitatem proximorum. Unde dicit *nam qui prophetat*, etc., id est explanat visiones seu Scripturas, *loquitur hominibus*, id est ad intellectum hominum, et hoc *ad aedificationem* incipientium, et ad *exhortationem* proficientium. [...] Ad haec enim tria inducunt praedicantes divinam Scripturam” (“Secondly he proves that which he says, that prophecy is for the honor of God and for the use of his neighbors. Where he says 'but he that prophesieth' etc., i.e. he explains visions or Scriptures, “speaketh to men,” that is to the intellect of men, and this 'unto edification' to beginners to 'exhortation' of the more advanced. [...] Those who preach divine Scripture leads others to these three things”) (Aquinas, *In Omnes S. Pauli Apostoli Epistola Commentaria*, 373; Aquinas, *Commentary On the First Epistle to the Corinthians*).

and preachers prophets), and cites for support a key Biblical passage: “doctrinam quasi profetiam effundam” (“I will yet pour out doctrine as prophecy”).³⁶

The equation of prophecy with preaching does not begin with Aquinas's authoritative and extensive treatment of the issue. Manuals on preaching going as far back as Augustine consider preaching a kind of prophecy.³⁷ In Chapter 4 of *De Doctrina Christiana*, which deals specifically with predicatory speech, Augustine includes a section on prophecy.³⁸ Gregory the Great associates prophets with teaching in his *Regula Pastoralis*: “Prophetae quippe in sacro eloquio nonnumquam doctores vocantur” (“Prophets are sometimes called teachers in the Holy Scripture”).³⁹ Alexander of Ashby (sometimes referred to as Alexander Essebiensis, he flourished around 1220) does not differentiate at all between preachers, prophets and teachers within the Church: “Tales debent esse prelati ecclesie prophete, id est predicatores, ut populum Dei instruant verbo” (“Such prelates must be prophets of the Church, that is to say preachers, so that they may instruct the people of God with their word”).⁴⁰ Nor does Thomas of Chobham (d.

36 Aquinas, *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis ... Opera Omnia*. 24, *Opuscula Alia Dubia*, 24:227. The passage is Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 24:46.

37 The discussion was not without its dissenters, however. Alan of Lille considers preaching as fundamentally different from other forms of discourse: “Ea enim differentia est inter praedicationem, et doctrinam, et prophetiam, et concionationem.” (“There is a difference between preaching, teaching, prophecy and a public discourse”) (Alan of Lille, “Summa de Arte Praedicatoria,” in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 210, *Patrologiae Latinae*, n.d., 111). Alan goes on to describe preaching as an instruction in morals delivered to many (“instructio quae pluribus fit [...] ad morum instructionem”), and prophecy as an admonition by means of revelation of future events (“admonitio quae fit per revelationem futurorum”) (ibid.). For those less skilled in Latin, there is an English translation: *The Art of Preaching*, trans. Gillian R. Evans (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications (Cistercian Studies, 23), 1981).

38 This is in section 4, 7. See especially p. 127 in: *De Doctrina Christiana*, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 32 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962).

39 *Règle Pastorale*, Sources Chrétiennes 381 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1992), II, 4, 25.

40 Alexander Essebiensis (Alexander of Ashby), “De Artificio Modo Predicandi: Versio Longior,” in *Opera Theologica*, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis* 188 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), II, 496.

1233-36), who unambiguously says that prophecy is preaching: “dicitur etiam predicatio quandoque prophetia” (“it is also called preaching when it is a prophecy.”),⁴¹ Thomas of Chobham anticipates Aquinas's analysis in his clarification that prophecy involves the interpretive reading of the Bible and explanation to the congregation: “Prophetare vocat apostolus scire mentem sacre lectionis et eam populis exponere. Et hoc pertinet ad maiores in ecclesia” (“the Apostle considers it prophecy to know the intention of Holy Scripture and explain it to the people. And this is the responsibility of the higher members in the Church”).⁴² Chobham summarizes this claim more plainly elsewhere, tying together prophecy, preaching and Scriptural interpretation and explanation, again in anticipation of Aquinas's elaborations: “Prophetare est ea que dicuntur ad populum exponere, et istud est utile, et secundum hoc prophetare est predicare. Vnde in libro Regum: *num est Saul inter prophetas.*” (“To prophesy is to explicate those things that are said to the people, and this is useful, and according to this to prophesy is to preach. Hence in the book of Kings: 'Is Saul also among the prophets?'”).⁴³ Chobham also notes that an understanding of prophecy should be accommodating and not limit itself to merely prophecy that foretells: “Alio modo dicitur prophetare futura predicere, de quo hic non intendimus” (“To predict the future is to prophesy in another way, about which we do not intend.”).⁴⁴ Anticipating the bulk of Aquinas's arguments by at least a few decades (Aquinas died in the spring of 1274), Chobham not only clearly identifies prophecy as a kind of preaching, he also unambiguously

41 *Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medieualis 82 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1988), 17.

42 *Ibid.*, 3, 145.

43 *Ibid.*, 17.

44 *Ibid.*

associates it with Biblical exegesis.

Denuntiatio and *Concordiae*: the message in the methods.

Dante's poem includes a variety of occasions and figures that can be labeled “prophetic”; this includes the narrator's own speech⁴⁵ And yet, for a poem so steeped in prophetic vision, there are few characters in the *Commedia* that are specifically called “profeta.” This is not to say that there were no candidates in the running. Outside of the *Commedia*, David is Dante's Biblical prophet *par excellence*.⁴⁶ But inside the poem David is never called a prophet in those explicit terms. He is called a “cantor” or an “umile salmista.”⁴⁷ There is no doubt that Dante considers David a prophet; David's function as a type after which Dante models himself has been noted and extensively discussed.⁴⁸ And, as has been seen in the exploration of Aquinas's commentary on II Corinthians, to claim David as a prophet is neither unorthodox nor even out of the ordinary.

45 Dante's claims to direct vision in the poem are quite explicit: “Nel ciel che più de la sua luce prende / fu' io, e vidi cose che ridire / né sa né può chi di là sù discende” (“I was in that heaven which receives / more of His light. He who comes down from there / can neither know nor tell what he has seen”) (*Par.* 1.4-6). He further drives the point home by suggesting that he may even have gone there with his physical body: “S'i' era sol di me quel che creasti / novellamente, amor che 'l ciel governi, / tu 'l sai, che col tuo lume mi levasti” (Whether I was there in that part only which you / created last is known to you alone, O Love who rule / the heavens and drew me up there with your light”) (73-75). This ambiguity does not attenuate the “truth” of his claim (is it a physical journey or it just a vision?), but actually serves to corroborate the credibility of his voyage, by echoing the language of St. Paul (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Barolini has noted how this ambiguity is used to substantiate Dante's truth claims (*The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*, 148).

46 Dante refers to David as “the Prophet” as easily as he calls Aristotle “the Philosopher” or Paul “the Apostle.” For example in *Convivio*, David's Psalm “In exitu” is called “quello canto del Profeta” (II, i, 6).

47 He is called the “umile salmista” in *Purg.* 10.65, “cantor de lo Spirito Santo” in *Par.* 20.38, and “sommo cantor del sommo duce” in *Par.* 25.72.

48 Teodolinda Barolini has fully explored David as Dante's poetic/prophetic model in *Dante's Poets* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 275–279.

Simply put, the Psalms are prophetic; ergo their author is a prophet.⁴⁹ David is a necessary referent in Dante's own self-construction as a prophetic poet, and yet Dante never calls the Israelite King a “profeta” in the *Commedia*. I have shown in my last chapter that Dante's decision not to call Paul an “apostolus,” but “predicator,” is crucial to a proper understanding of Dante's aims in his eleventh Epistle; here too, the omission of “profeta” in descriptions of David in the *Commedia* are conspicuously suggestive. If David is not explicitly identified as a prophet in the *Commedia*, perhaps specific intentions drive Dante's identification of others as prophets.

In the *Commedia* “profeta” is mentioned twice, “profeti” once, and “profetico” once. Three of these are in *Paradiso* 12: once it is used to identify St. Dominic's mother, who is made “profeta” merely by being pregnant with him; once to indicate “Natàn profeta”; and, finally, once to identify Joachim of Fiore “di spirito profetico dotato” (60, 136, 141). The third occasion is in *Paradiso* 24.136, when the pilgrim claims his faith is inspired by the “verità che quinci piove / per Moïse, per profeti e per salmi” (“by the truth that pours like rain from here / through Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms”).⁵⁰ Two of these occasions are of particular importance, as they

49 Dante often associates Psalms and prophecy. In *Paradiso* 24.136, Psalms are mentioned in the same breath as the Pentateuch and the books of the prophets, as texts confirming the validity of Christianity (“la verità per quinci piove / per Moïse, per profeti e per salmi”). The new arrivals at the base of Purgatory sing a psalm: ‘In exitu Israel de Aegypto’ / cantavan tutti insieme ad una voce / con quanto di quel salmo è poscia scripto” (*Purgatorio* 2.46-48). The “In exitu” (Ps. 113) is a text of inherent prophetic value as it is Dante's exemplar per excellence for demonstrating the quadripartite allegorical method (cf. *Epistola* 13.7 and *Convivio* II, i, 6-7. In the latter, David is also referred to as the “Profeta.”). An evocative demonstration of the prophetic Psalm is found in the example of Nimrod in *Inferno* 31, whose speech is figured as a kind of *in malo* psalmody: “cominciò a gridar la fiera bocca, / cui non si convenia più dolci salmi” (“the savage mouth, for which no sweeter / psalms were fit, began to shout”) (*Inf* 31.68-69). As Christ was foretold by David's Psalms, Satan, the Antichrist, can be seen as that anti-Christ foreshadowed in the the diabolical Psalm that Nimrod commences (“*Raphèl mài amècche zabì almi*”), and which Dante immediately intercepts in the same sentence.

50 Barolini also notes two more moments of prophecy in *Par* 12: “Canto 12 also contains another prophetic term, ‘presago,’ used only here (‘e fanno qui la gente esser presaga’ [16]). We should not forget the prophecy of the *loglio* in *Par*. 12.118-20” *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*, 339, n. 36.

refer to figures who were well known in their lifetimes as prophets. Nathan was an Old Testament prophet, who makes appearances in the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. Joachim of Fiore (1135-1302) was a Calabrian abbot, known and sometimes admired for his prophetic writings, especially his two great works the *Liber Concordiae* and the *Expositio in Apocalypsim*.⁵¹ Nathan is one of the oldest prophets in the Bible, and Joachim is one of the most recent major prophetic figures in Dante's world. Bookended between the two figures, then, spreads practically the entire continuum of prophetic history.

Dante's choice to highlight these two is unusual, and the selection of Joachim of Fiore raises important questions about heterodoxy and false prophecy; and yet Dante critics afford them relatively little attention. In the last century, neither of these figures has elicited much critical discussion in the "Dante profeta" argument initiated by Bruno Nardi.⁵² Although things have tilted towards Joachim's favor in the past few decades,⁵³ Nathan, on the other hand, is still generally excluded from the discussion. Several critics⁵⁴ note Nathan's role in correcting David after his sin with Bathsheba, but they do little more than mention this datum in passing, as if

51 Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 6.

52 More concerned with Dante's self-definition as a prophet rather than the figures he modeled himself after, Nardi's "Dante Profeta" only mentions Joachim in passing ("Dante profeta," 293–295). Mineo's book is likewise missing any section investigating Joachim and Nathan in detail (Mineo, *Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante: strutture e temi profetico-apocalittici in Dante: dalla Vita nuova alla Divina commedia*).

53 Marjorie Reeves has two essays on Dante and Joachim that are the foundation of any study in this field: "Dante and the Prophetic View of History," in *The World of Dante: Essays on Dante and His Times*, ed. Cecil Grayson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 44–60; "The Third Age: Dante's Debt to Gioacchino da Fiore," in *L'età dello Spirito e la fine dei tempi in Gioacchino da Fiore e nel gioachimismo medievale*, ed. Antonio Crocco (San Giovanni in Fiore: Centro Internazionale di Studi Gioachimiti, 1986), 125–139. As Reeves is a premier scholar on Joachim of Fiore, her two monographs on Joachim and Joachimism are also very useful: *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism*; *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London: Soc. for Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1976). For further understanding of the radical innovativeness in Joachim's sense of history as something legible, in comparison to the Augustinian idea that the age of prophecy had ended once and for all see "The Abbot Joachim's Sense of History," in *The Prophetic Sense of History in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1999), 782–796.

unable to accommodate for prophecy that is not oriented towards future events. Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi says that Nathan's appearance in *Par.* 12 as “propheta” would necessarily be limited to his prophecy of David's lineage, which casts prognostications about the lengthy rule of his bloodline, eventually linking the Davidic line to Christ (II Sam. 7:4-17).⁵⁵ Other critics do not explore Nathan at all. In his otherwise detailed book, *Prophecies and Prophecy in Dante's Commedia*, Robert Wilson, in a surprising betrayal of his book's *raison d'être*, summarizes the figure of Nathan as “virtually formulaic in the Middle Ages, so its inclusion by Dante may not necessarily imply any particular emphasis.”⁵⁶

There are several reasons to disagree with Wilson. First of these is Nathan's social status as a prophet, a status that Dante himself would certainly like to share. As an official advisor to King David and later to his son Solomon, Nathan had a certain amount of sway among those in

54 Chimenz, Fallani, Singleton, Hollander to name a few. The least taciturn of these commentaries, Bosco-Reggio notes: “lo spirito profetico [lo] permise di rimproverare e cercar di correggere i peccati di Re David.” (“Dartmouth Dante Project,” n.d., v. 136, <http://dante.dartmouth.edu/search.php>). Bibliography on Nathan is nearly nonexistent. The *Enciclopedia Dantesca* lists only one article, and there is nothing in the *Dante Encyclopedia*.

55 This is not to say that Chiavacci Leonardi is wrong, just that her reading of Nathan is unnecessarily limited. In her note to verse 136, Chiavacci Leonardi notes both Nathan's rebuke of David after his dalliance with Bathsheba, and his prophecy of David's lineage. But she disqualifies the former as indicative of Nathan's status as prophet in Dante's eyes: “sembra probabile che per questa seconda ragione Dante lo abbia posto in questo cielo (chiamandolo appunto *profeta*).” (*Paradiso*, ed. Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, vol. 3, 1. ed. I Meridiani [Milan: Mondadori, 1991], 352). Chiavacci Leonardi's comment is problematic, however, because Samuel actually *does* issue predictive prophecy in his rebuke of David as well (II Sam. 12:10-12). Even if one accepts the restrictive definition of prophecy that limits it to forecasting, which I consider wrong, Nathan still qualifies as a prophet in both passages.

56 Wilson, *Prophecies and Prophecy in Dante's Commedia*, 161. Wilson accords little importance to Nathan, he says, because the figure does not actually speak any prophecy; this same explanation is also used to excuse his only cursory dealings with Joachim. But it is not at all a good idea to disregard figures in the *Divina Commedia* who do not speak. There are supremely important nonspeaking characters in this poem, too many to enumerate here. To name just one example, St. Augustine is given very little explicit credit in the *Commedia* nor does Dante's *en passant* mention of him in the “candida rosa” (*Par.* 32.35) suggest even to the slightest degree the primary role he nevertheless plays in Dante's theological formation. Yet the fact remains that Dante's understanding of desire as expressed in *Convivio* (4.12.14-16) and *Purgatory* (16.85-96) is heavily indebted to Augustine. Dante's slight of Augustine might be his most egregious, but it should not lead one to assume that this is an isolated case.

power, like many old Testament prophets who were advisors to kings and other figures of authority. For example, Samuel, the advisor to Saul, David's predecessor, maintained a certain degree of authority throughout this lifetime. Years later Elijah played the role of gadfly to king Ahab, in constant direct conflict with the king and his queen Jezebel. Although disliked by both Ahab and Jezebel, Elijah still maintained a considerable degree of prominence, and was still allowed to directly confront the king. While there are other prophets from both Testaments that Dante cites more frequently, namely Jeremiah, Ezechiel, Paul and John, these do not have the same degree of status in their own times as did figures like Samuel, Nathan and Elijah, who directly advised, and frequently challenged, kings.

Nathan is remembered for two speeches: his prophecy of the Davidic line (II Sam. 7:2-17), and his rebuke of David for his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband Uriah (II Kings 12:1-25). The second of these speeches suggestively echoes some of Dante's own practices as poet of ethics; both Samuel and Dante rebuke figures of power, and issue judgments against them. Nathan's correction of David, however, is no invective, but rather a little story about a sheep. In this tale there are two men: one, a rich man who had many sheep, and another, a poor man who had only a single ewe which he cared for like one of his own children. The rich man, not wanting to use one of his own sheep in a feast he is preparing for a visiting traveler, decides to steal the poor man's ewe. This story angers David, and he declares that the perpetrator will be executed. At this point, Nathan reveals that the tale is really about King David himself ("tu est ille vir" [7]), the king who has everything but stoops to rob a man of his one wife and then kill him to cover the sin. In consequence of this, Nathan says that his house will be riven with violence (12:10), his wives will be taken by his neighbors in the open (12:11), and the child

he is expecting from Bathsheba will not live (12:14). This curse drives David to penitence.

Nathan's speech to David is one of the earliest examples of what scholars of prophecy call a "judgment speech," a prophetic mode that criticizes no less than it predicts.⁵⁷ Much of Dante's speech in the *Commedia* could be considered a prophetic judgment speech, although critics do not often register them as proper prophecies. The long "serva Italia" digression in *Purgatorio* 6.76-151, for example, with its citation of Jeremiah in the *Lamentations*,⁵⁸ clearly inscribes itself stylistically into the Old Testament prophetic lineage; and yet, critics resort to calling a speech like this an "invective" (as do Chiavacci Leonardi and Nicola Fosca in their commentary to these lines),⁵⁹ or a jeremiad, or tie it to the prescriptions found in grammatical manuals of the time.⁶⁰

Nathan's status as a firm rebuker of David is firmly established among the early commentators of the *Commedia*. He is considered a necessary corrector of those who have gone astray. Benvenuto da Imola's comment probably best summarizes best Nathan's reputation in Dante's world: "Fuit Nathan predicator et reprehensor" ("Nathan was a preacher and a

57 For an overview on judgment speech, see Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1991), 129–136. Later in pages 139-140, Westermann directly addresses Nathan's judgment speech against David.

58 Dante's phrase "non donna di provincie, ma bordello" ("no mistress over provinces but a harlot!") is a clear echo of Jeremiah's opening to *Lamentations*: "facta est quasi vidua domina Gentium: *princeps provinciarum* facta est sub tributo" ("how is the mistress of the Gentiles become as a widow: the princes of provinces made tributary") (Lam. 1.1)

59 In fairness to Chiavacci-Leonardi, it should be noted that she also calls this speech Dante's "solenne e profetico ammonimento" ("Dartmouth Dante Project" Purg. 6.76).

60 Maurizio Perugi associates the "serva Italia" with the rhetorical prescriptions of Geoffrey of Vinsauf in his *Poetria nova*, specifically the *amplificatio*: "Tutta l' invettiva, poi si deve considerare un saggio esemplare di *amplificatio*, secondo la tecnica che meglio di ogni altro illustra Geoffroi de Vinsauf" ("Il Sordello di Dante e la tradizione dell'invettiva," *Studi Danteschi* 55 [1983]: 81). That Dante's digression would seek to follow certain rhetorical conventions as determined by grammarians in his time is no surprise, nor does it necessarily

reprehender”).⁶¹ Benvenuto's opinion of Nathan as a preacher finds echoes in the preaching manuals, suggesting that Nathan's status as a preacher was commonplace. Thomas of Chobham notes his brave rebuke of the wayward king,⁶² as does Robert of Basevorn.⁶³ Nathan's speech, however, is no jeremiad, but rather a nuanced exercise in symbolic language to compel David to repentance. Gregory the Great praises Nathan in the *Regula Pastoralis* for his exemplary ability to correct the rich and powerful by eschewing direct confrontation for a more clever and effective storytelling approach

Hinc est enim quod Nathan propheta arguere regem venerat, et quasi de causa pauperis contra divitiem iudicium quaerebat, ut prius rex sententiam diceret, et reatum suum postmodum audiret, quatinus nequaquam iustitiae contradiceret, quam in se ipse protulisset.

Thus this is the reason that the prophet Nathan had come to the king to censure him, and did so as if he were seeking out a judgment in the case of a poor man against a rich man. So that first the king would proclaim a sentence, and then after hear his own crime, in such a manner that he could in no way contradict his own judgment which he had brought upon himself.⁶⁴

Nathan's speech, then, does not simply consist of unmitigated criticism, but cleverly uses

“secularize” Dante's language, to the exclusion of prophetic influences like the ones I suggest here.

61 Both the *Ottimo Commento* and Boccaccio have rather long narratives of Nathan's rebuke of King David. The story is also noted more briefly by Jacopo della Lana, Francesco da Buti and the Anonimo Fiorentino (“Dartmouth Dante Project,” s.v. Natàn).

62 “Similiter, postquam David commiserat adulterium cum Bersabee, Nathan propheta audacter introivit ad eum et proposuit ei paradigma de paupere qui non habuit nisi unicam ovem et de divitie qui multas habuit, et tamen abstulit illi pauperi oviculam suam. (“In the same way after David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan bravely came into his house and presented him with a parable about a poor man who had but one sheep, and of a rich man who had many, yet nevertheless snatched the little sheep from that poor man”) (*Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, 87).

63 Thomas Marie Charland, ed., *Artes Praedicandi; Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge*, Publications de l'Institut d'études médiévales d'Ottawa VII (Paris: Vrin, 1936), 293.

64 *Règle Pastorale*, 3, 2, 67.

symbolic language, a parable essentially, to help the king see the mechanics of the injustice he perpetuates before Nathan reveals that it also applies to him.

Nathan also figures into Dante's self-construction as a prophet because the Nathan-David binary stands as a figural type anticipating the Dante-Vergil antitype. The relationship between Nathan and David in many ways reflects the poet's fraught relationship with his poetic/prophetic forebear Vergil. In *Inferno* 1, the pilgrim calls out to the figure that will soon reveal himself as Vergil: “*Miserere di me,*’ gridai a lui, / ‘qual che tu sii, od ombra od omo certo!’” (“Have mercy on me, whatever you are, / I cried, ‘whether shade or living man!’”) (1.65-66). The verse that the pilgrim quotes is from the famous penitential Psalm, number 50, that David composed after Nathan's rebuke for his sin with Bathsheba (“*cum venisset ad eum Nathan propheta quando ingressus est ad Bethsabee*” [When Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had sinned with Bathsheba] [Ps. 50:2]). Elsewhere, Dante highlights not only this Psalm, but the conditions leading up to it in *Paradiso* 32, when pointing out Ruth, the “*bisava al cantor che per doglia / del fallo disse 'Miserere mei'*” (“great-grandmother of that singer who, / grieving for his sin, cried: ‘*Miserere mei*’”) (32.11-12). If Dante plays the part of David at the beginning of the *Commedia*,⁶⁵ then it logically follows that Vergil must be his Nathan, his prophet and correcter. This is a relationship that Dante will spend much of the *Commedia* working to overturn, as he tries to assert his voice as the ultimate voice of truth-telling authority, outpacing the poet he once called “*lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore*” (*Inf.* 1.85).⁶⁶ If Vergil plays Nathan to Dante's David, then

65 Nicolò Mineo has noted this dynamic (*Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante: strutture e temi profetico-apocalittici in Dante: dalla Vita nuova alla Divina commedia* 176–178), as has Stanley V. Benfell III, who concludes that, like David “Dante, too, may be a ‘singer of the Holy spirit’” (*The Biblical Dante*, 57).

66 Teodolinda Barolini examines this *agon* between the poet and his *maestro* in detail in *Dante's Poets*, 188–256.

Nathan is also in turn a kind of Vergil, a master and author of the psalmist-prophet called David. For if Nathan is the author of David's compunction, then he is also the first cause, in a sense, of his Psalm. In this view, then, the prophet's main view is not just to rectify the wayward soul but also to inspire his subject to greater deeds, to become, in David's case, both more and less than king ("e più e men che re") (10.66). Dante's own relationship to Vergil follows this scheme, and there is evidence that he will himself one day play the role of Nathan/Vergil to others after him. Although Dante elsewhere claims to write the definitive account of the afterworld, "per modo fuor del moderno uso" (*Purg.* 16.42),⁶⁷ he still leaves space for those to follow after him, who can fill in what he has left unsaid, even when regarding his most personal subject, Beatrice: "Cotal qual io la lascio a maggior bando / che quel de la mia tuba, che deduce / l'ardüa sua matera terminando" ("thus I leave her to more glorious trumpeting / than that of my own music, as, laboring on, / I bring my difficult subject toward its close") (*Par.* 3034-36).

While Nathan is one of the earliest prophets of Biblical history, the next prophet introduced in *Paradiso* 12 is one of the most recent in Dante's time, and his modes of prophecy differ substantially from those of the Biblical ancestor. Joachim of Fiore, the twelfth century (c. 1135-1302) Calabrian abbot, was a controversial figure known for his prophetic writings, most notably the *Liber Concordiae* and the *Expositio in Apocalypsim*.⁶⁸ These writings are consummately exegetical as they mine both the New and the Old Testaments for parallel patterns, which Joachim then attempts to apply to both the present and to the future. In sum, it is

67 Teodolinda Barolini argues that, since the Medieval visionary tradition inextricably links vision with the writing of that vision, Dante's "modo" intends his poem as much as it does his vision of the afterlife ("Dante and the Visionary Tradition," *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture*, 131).

68 Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism*, 6.

a method of exegesis applicable to the Bible as well as to events to come.

Joachim establishes the fundamentals of his thought in the *Liber Concordiae*, which narrates a Trinitarian view of history, three *status* bound by historical parameters, corresponding with the three figures of the Godhead.⁶⁹ The age of the Father corresponds to the period spanning from the time of Adam to the arrival of Christ. From this proceeds the age of the Son, which extends from Christ until the Middle Ages. The third *status*, that of the Holy Spirit, was in Joachim's view yet to arrive. The whole reading of history is worked out in elaborate parallels of twos and threes.

As can be seen, Joachim's manner of prophecy has little to do with *ex nihilo* utterances of Old Testament prophets like Nathan, Ezechiel, Jeremiah and others, among whose ranks he would never have seriously considered himself a member.⁷⁰ Instead he is a reader of history, an interpreter of figures and events. Marjorie Reeves compares early Joachite Franciscans to Marxists in the twentieth century, who think they possess a certain scientific knowledge about the direction of history.⁷¹ Also, much like Marx, Joachim seems to have had a similarly successful but complicated fate among the intelligentsia of his time. Intellectuals could not resist the allure of the elegant structure of his thought, and saw truth in his reading of history. But they were less comfortable assuming his prognostications for the future wholeheartedly and without

69 For a clear discussion of the basics of Joachim's analysis, see "Joachim's view of History," chapter two in *Ibid.*, 16–27.

70 "Joachim would never have called himself a prophet in the sense of one who foretells the future according to the revelations given directly and instantly to him" (*ibid.*, 16).

71 Reeves suggests this comparison when regarding the understanding and use of Joachim among the "Spiritual" Franciscans: "A Joachimist view of history produced a mood somewhat akin to that of an early Marxist, a mood

criticism.⁷²

Joachim's reputation came under criticism when some of his most important prophecies did not come to pass as planned. Among these were Joachim's predictions that Frederick II was to live much longer than his actual death in 1250 allowed, and that 1260 would be the year of the apocalypse. These two (non)happenings led many believers to abandon their Joachism, and to conclude that he was not a true prophet. Salimbene recounts that he too was once inveigled by Joachite prophecies, but had rejected them completely when these prophecies did not come to pass.⁷³ This does not mean that Joachim was completely repudiated by all; however, the stories of those that adhered to his teachings highlight the growing controversy surrounding Joachim's prophetic conclusions. For example, Salimbene says that John of Parma, Minister General of the Friars Minor (1247-1257), adamantly persevered in his faith in the Joachite interpretation of history, which put him at odds with the Church hierarchy and finally cost him his position as Minister General.⁷⁴ Joachim also experienced continuing popularity among dissenters within the

of certainty and urgency. The Spiritual Franciscan knew he was right because he had the clue to history; he could expect the imminent crisis confidently, since history was on his side" (ibid., 175).

72 For example, Reeves's account of Agostino Trionfo's careful use of Joachim and his reworking of his methods conjures images of a college professor in the time of McCarthy, eager to perform a "Marxian" reading of a text while anxious about the political implications of assuming the hypotheses of the controversial thinker: "Trionfo, one guesses, was well aware of the dangers of Joachim's Trinitarian view of history, yet found him such an acceptable exegete in other respects that he could not resist using him, although in a highly selective way. He was fascinated by Joachim's patterns of history, but set strict limits past which he would not stray into the expectation of a third *status*. His citations from Joachim are tame but safe" (ibid., 89).

73 Salimbene details his disillusionment in his conversation with brother Bartolomeo Calaroso of Mantua: "Audiens hec omnia frater Bartholomeus dixit michi: 'Et tu similiter Ioachita fuisti.' Cui dixi: 'Verum dicitis. Sed postquam mortuus est Fridericus, qui imperator iam fuit, et annus millesimus ducentesimus sexagesimus est elapsus, dimisi totaliter istam doctrinam et dispono non credere nisi que videro.'" ("Hearing all of this brother Bartholomew said to me: 'And you too were also a Joachite.' I responded to him: 'You tell the truth. But after Frederic II died, who was emperor at that time, and the year 1260 passed by, I completely laid aside that teaching, and now I resolve not to believe anything except what I see'") (*Cronica*, ed. Giuseppe Scalia [Bari: Laterza, 1966], 441).

74 Ibid., 439–441.

Franciscan ranks, the so-called “Spiritual Franciscans”; but these too came into frequent and harsh conflict with more moderate Franciscans as well as the Papacy.⁷⁵ Joachim was also influential among popular religious movements, like the Apostolics under fra Dolcino,⁷⁶ who freely reworked his prophecies to their own ends and whose conflicts with the Church and whose ultimate bloody demise we have explored in the second chapter of this dissertation. In short, Joachim's ideas were always controversial to varying degrees; they were more so in the second half of the *duecento*, and by the turn of the fourteenth century they had been largely abandoned by the mainstream, but were still being used and reworked by some of the most radical figures of the times. Among theologians, Joachim's reception was mixed at first, and became more negative as the years passed. Aquinas opposed Joachim's prophecy without qualification, arguing that the abbot misunderstood his Scripture, and he attacked Joachim's main interpretive methodology of accords, the practice of excavating from the Old and New Testaments to find events that parallel contemporary events and deriving from this some sort of narrative master pattern.⁷⁷ In the *Paradiso*, Dante has Bonaventure introduce the abbot gladly; however the real saint had a conflicted relationship to Joachim's thought. The historical Bonaventure did hold an abiding curiosity in Joachim, but he nevertheless adamantly opposed his doctrine on the Trinity, upon

75 For more on the use of the prophecies of Joachim of Fiore by different factions within Franciscanism, see “Early Franciscans,” and “Spiritual Franciscans and Fraticelli,” in Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism*, 175–228. See also: “Protospirituals,” chapter 1 in: David Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century after Saint Francis* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 11–42. Neslihan Şenocak also discusses the influence of Joachim on Franciscans, in *The Poor and the Perfect: The Rise of Learning in the Franciscan Order, 1209-1310* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 135–143. Note that Şenocak's recent book has called into question the historiographic accuracy of referring to any grouping of people within the Franciscans as “Spiritual”; her introduction to this book provides details about this controversy and should qualify any heedless use of the term “Spiritual” to categorize Franciscans.

76 Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism*, 243–248.

77 *Ibid.*, 67–69.

which the whole Joachite apocalyptic reading of history depends.⁷⁸

Dante's inclusion of Joachim could thus be seen as a challenge to the mainstream theologians of his time. But it also resonates strangely with his condemnation of the soothsayers and diviners who tried to see “troppo davante” (“too far ahead”) (*Inf.* 20.38), specifically of Asdente of Parma, the “calzolaio”⁷⁹ who should have stuck to cobbling shoes: “ch'avere inteso al cuoio e a lo spago / ora vorebbe, ma tardi si pente” (“who now regrets / not having worked his leather and his thread – / but he repents too late”) (*Inf.* 20.19-20). Asdente's inclusion is ironic; first of all, his “prophecies” consisted of simply understanding the prophecies written by others, thus he was neither a soothsayer nor a diviner in the proper sense,⁸⁰ It is doubly ironic because one of those prophets that Asdente studied was Joachim himself.⁸¹ Irony increases exponentially at the news that Asdente was a “true” prophet, if Salimbene's account is to be believed: “Et multa

78 *Ibid.*, 179. While Bonaventure appears firmly anti-Joachite here, Reeves uncovers inconsistencies in Bonaventure's thought, calling him “a Joachite *malgré lui*,” in consideration of all the overlaps between his and Joachim's thought (*ibid.*, 181). She details Bonaventure's stance in a hypothesis suggesting that Bonaventure was more subject to the apocalyptic zeitgeist of his times than his explicit denunciations of Joachim would suggest: “Bonaventure, it would seem, while reacting intellectually against the clear dangers of Joachim's system, was gripped emotionally by a belief in a culminating period of spiritual illumination when the Scriptures would be fully opened” (*ibid.*, 180).

79 *Convivio*, ed. Domenico De Robertis and Cesare Vasoli, vol. 1/2, *Opere Minori* (Milano; Napoli: Ricciardi, 1978), IV, xvi, 6.

80 Vasoli ventures to say that he was “non un *indovino* e forse neppure un “profeta,” (note to IV, xvii, 6 in *ibid.*, 1/2:714).

81 Salimbene describes Asdente quite favorably, calling him “*purus et simplex ac timens Deum et curialis, id est urbanitatem habens, et illiteratus, sed illuminatum valde intellectum habebat, in tantum ut intelligeret scripturas illorum qui de futuris predixerunt, scilicet abbas Joachim, Merlini, Methodii et Sibille, Ysaiae, Ieremie, Osee, Danielis et Apocalipsis nec non et Michaelis Scoti, qui fuit astrologus Friderici secundi imperatoris condam*” (“pure and simple and fearing God, and courtly – that is to say having refined manners. He was illiterate but had a wonderfully brilliant intellect, such that he understood the writings of those predicted future events, for example Joachim, Merlin, Methodius, the Sibyls, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Daniel, and the Apocalypse. He also understood Michael Scot, who was the astrologer of Frederick II, emperor at that time) (*Cronica*, 749).

audivi ab eo que postea evenerunt, videlicet quod papa Nicholaus tertius in mense Augusti mori debebat, et quod papa Martinus erat futurus. Et multa alia que expectamus videre, si fuerit vita comes. Nam: 'ratio preteriti scire futura facit'" ("and I heard many things from him that afterwards came to pass, for example that Pope Nicholas III would die, and that pope Martin was to come. And many other things that we expect to see, if 'life accompany,' for: 'knowledge of the past helps to know the future'").⁸² Spectacularly, Salimbene's citation of the maxim "ratio preteriti scire futura facit," distills to its most basic element Joachim of Fiore's methodology, as it involves reading concords in the past to hypothesize patterns for future events.

What then to make of this curious discrepancy? On the one hand, Dante casts a "true" prophet (if one can even call him a prophet)⁸³ in Hell, and and situates a "false" prophet – who, by the way is also a very controversial and polarizing⁸⁴ figure – among the wise spirits in *Paradiso*? Can it be that Salimbene is really more more skeptical and moderate than Dante is? Although the monk from Parma initially believed Joachim's prophecies, he nevertheless puts Joachimism aside after the events of 1250 and 1260 proved the abbot's prophecies untenable. But Dante, writing a half-decade after these failed prophecies, considers Joachim a paragon of the

82 Ibid., 749–50. Salimbene, elsewhere says that Asdente predicted the death of Martin IV, the destruction of Modena and Pisa's wars with Genoa.

83 Salimbene suggests he was more good reader than he was a prophet in the proper sense: "nec est aliter iste propheta, nisi quia illuminatum intellectum habet ad intelligendum dicta Merlini et Sibille et abbatis Ioachym et omnium qui de futuris aliquid predixerunt." ("nor is he a prophet in any other way except in that he has a brilliant intellect for understanding the writings of Merlin, the Sibyls, Abbot Joachim and all who predicted something about things to come" (ibid., 777).

84 Şenocak says that the persistent intellectual study of Joachim was devastating to the basic creeds of Franciscanism: "However it was their intellectual interests that let loose the Joachimist prophecies on to the impressionable minds of the young Franciscan scholars, something that did more harm than anything else to the Order's creed of humility" (*The Poor and the Perfect: The Rise of Learning in the Franciscan Order, 1209-1310*, 247).

prophetic spirit. Some scholars conclude that Dante inserts Joachim in Heaven because certain of his prophecies were commonly understood to foretell the advent of the Dominican and Franciscan orders.⁸⁵ This is certainly a tenable hypothesis, considering that cantos 10-13 are dedicated to Francis, Dominic and the orders they founded, and here the pilgrim also encounters Bonaventure and Aquinas, second in stature only to their orders' founders. An emphasis on “mendicant” issues would also resonate favorably with the third “profeta” in this section of the poem: Dominic's mother, who in pregnancy dreamed she gave birth to a dog of God (“domini canes”) bearing a torch in his mouth that set the world afire (12.60). This explanation may be likely but it is not sufficient, for it does not account for Joachim's spectacular failures as a predictor, most importantly his prediction about the end of the world. If we rule out the possibility that Dante is simply credulous, which we must, we have to at least seriously consider the possibility that prediction is not Dante's main concern here.

If Dante cares little for the actual result of both Joachite (and Asdentian) prophecies, what then compels him to situate Joachim so prominently in Heaven, among Hugh of St. Victor, Anselm, Donatus and others of such status? Marjorie Reeves provides perhaps the best answer, explaining that Dante – like Bonaventure and other intellectuals of his time – cannot resist the appeal of his elegant patterning of history, as well as his arresting imagery regardless of its conclusions. She says that Joachim's tripartite view of history, in which the third phase, or *status*, heralds a new spiritual millennium, resonates with Dante's own eschatology.⁸⁶ She also says that Dante employs images from Joachim's *Liber Figurarum*, which were intended to illustrate the

85 Early on, Franciscans and Dominicans saw the rise of their orders as fulfillment of Joachim's prophecies (Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism*, 72–73). Many mendicants also saw Francis as the Sixth angel of the Apocalypse predicted by Joachim. See chp. 3 of Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism*, especially p. 176.

concordances between Biblical and contemporary history. The most evident of these is the interlocking triple circle representing the Trinity in Joachim's work, of which Reeves finds an echo in Dante's vision of the Godhead in *Paradiso*. 33.⁸⁷ Another of these is the M-shaped eagle figure, repurposed by Dante in the sphere of Jupiter.⁸⁸ In a later article Reeves ventures (though not conclusively) that Dante's DXV prophecy in *Purgatorio* 33.43 was influenced by Joachim's prophecy of a *novus dux* who was to save Christian civilization.⁸⁹ But even after detailing these parallels, Reeves still cannot claim that Dante took his Joachim wholesale. His uses of Joachim's *figurae* are all idiosyncratic, and they appear to signify in ways different from the Abbot's original intention.⁹⁰ And finally, and quite importantly, Dante's vision of a Roman Empire led by a divinely-inspired secular leader is fundamentally opposed to Joachim's insistence that "Babylon" must completely fall before spiritual renewal can take occur.⁹¹

Dante's idiosyncratic and heterogeneous employment of various elements in Joachim's prophecies suggests that the poet is interested more in Joachim's prophetic method than in the

86 "Dante and the Prophetic View of History," 54. Reeves also Dante's recycling of Joachim's figures in: "The Third Age: Dante's Debt to Gioacchino da Fiore," 130.

87 "Dante and the Prophetic View of History," 55.

88 Ibid.

89 "In short, there seems to be a reasonable case for suggesting that Dante's prophecy of the coming DXV was based on Joachim's prophecy of the *novus dux* who, in concord with the Zorobabel of 515 B.C. would appear in the near future to rebuilt [sic] Christian society" ("The Third Age: Dante's Debt to Gioacchino da Fiore," 138).

90 "Dante and the Prophetic View of History," 55.

91 Ibid., 56. Reeves concludes: "There are difficulties, in particular, their diametrically opposed views on the Empire, which prevent one from calling Dante in any sense a Joachite, and there is no proof that Dante knew any of Joachim's works except the *Liber Figurarum*. All we can safely say is that a certain ambiance of prophetic expectation within history had been created in the thirteenth century by Joachim's disciples and was prevalent in Dante's lifetime. Dante's prophetic vision seems to belong to this mode of thought" (ibid., 57).

actual predictions that his method generates. The Calabrian abbot developed a sophisticated system for making sense out of historical events, which generated many results that were not congenial to Dante's vision of history. But this is not important. Dante views Joachism as a complex mechanical apparatus, whose various heuristic devices and figural models are organized within it to generate certain interpretations of events. If they are organized differently, one can get different results. Whatever the results may be, they all have a certain appeal for their elegance and refined appearance, for their semblance of truth. And this is ultimately what is compelling to the poet. And thus Dante, the consummate tinkerer with other people's texts, harvests the Joachite apparatus for the parts that serve him and leaves the rest of the hulk behind.

One of the core principles that Dante lifts from Joachim is faith in a legible providential vision for history, which can be discerned by employing symbolic (“figural” in Joachim's language) interpretive tools. This belief that the age of prophecy is not closed, that history is still legible, is Joachim's innovation. It is also a radical departure from the heretofore reigning Augustinian assumption that humankind was in the post-prophetic stage of history, and that there was nothing left to do but wait it out until the return of Christ.⁹² This perspective continued through most of the Middle Ages until the arrival of Joachim's “revolutionary doctrine of history.”⁹³ Dante too is an anti-Augustinian in this sense, not only for his optimistic view of history but also for his belief that a good government can bring about justice. Augustine has a much more pessimistic view of government's ability to lead to any significant degree civic

92 *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, 1–2. Reeves cites Augustine: “The world is passing away, the world is losing its grip, the world is short of breath. Do not fear, Thy youth shall be renewed as an eagle”(St. Augustine, Sermon 81,8, trs. P.R. Brown, Augustine of Hippo (Faber, London, 1967), p. 298. qtd in Reeves, 2).

93 *Ibid.*, 2.

happiness.⁹⁴ Dante confesses himself a convert from that view: he at first thought that the Roman claim to rule was insured only by force: “tantum superficialiter intuens, illum nullo iure sed armorum tantummodo violentia obtinuisse arbitrabar” (“looking only superficially, I figured that they obtained it not by right but only by the violence of arms”) (*Mon.* II, i, 2). But now, “medullitus oculos mentis infixi et per efficacissima signa divinam providentiam hoc effecisse cognovi” (“with the eyes of my mind fixed on the inmost part and by means of powerful signs, I understood that this was accomplished by divine providence”) (II, i, 3).⁹⁵ As this confession makes plain, Dante's newfound faith in the promise of history is directly tied to claims to possess a supernatural inner vision for discerning its signs, a method of reading that history. Although Joachim's prophetic methods did not always historically lead to accurate conclusions, this is no matter. One begins with faith, then extrapolates meaning from that initial starting point. Firmly grounded on the bedrock of faith, Joachim reads Scripture with one eye, and reads present events with the other, divining parallels and overlaps, and deriving a patterned reading of the development of history from which he can develop well-informed conclusions about future

94 Reeves summarizes Augustine's view: “even at its highest there can be no real fulfillment. No state of justice is possible on earth and therefore no realization of human potentiality” (“Dante and the Prophetic View of History,” 45).

95 An examination of Augustine's pessimism about history reveals that the saint's stance was in reaction to precisely the kind of optimism that Dante demonstrates in *Monarchia*. The Visigothic invasion of Rome in 410 had completely upset people's understanding about the permanence of Rome. On the one hand, there were the Pagans, whose vision of history was cyclical and repetitive. On the other there were the Christian theologians, who had sutured Jewish eschatology into their own Christian worldview, coming to see Rome as the “fourth monarchy,” whose dissolution would usher in the end of the world. As neither of these visions of history could account for a disruption like the Visigothic invasions, Augustine set about to developing a new view of history that progressed steadily towards an endpoint, but which was also resistant to any attempts to draw conclusions about that trajectory. For more, see: Theodor E. Mommsen, “St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress: the Background of the City of God,” in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Eugene F. Rice, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959), 265–298.

events. Such a method proves irresistible to Dante.

In this sense, Joachim's is a consummately scholarly methodology, reading the world according to well-established hermeneutic practices taught in the Universities and the cathedral schools. Regarded from a distance Joachim's methods appear nothing but another manifestation of the medieval symbolist mindset,⁹⁶ and an elaboration on the anagogical and eschatological readings of Biblical texts that are part and parcel to allegorical reading.⁹⁷ Joachim's innovation subsists in the projection of this interpretive key onto the world around him, finally liberating the allegorical reading method from the Scriptural boundaries established by its designers. In so doing, Joachim finds creation imbued with meaning, and the Bible becomes a typological allegory for both present and future events played out in this world. Reeves emphasizes this aspect of enhanced reading and interpretation when explaining the nature of the prophet's labor in Joachim's view: "the urgent task was to break through the hard surface of the Letter to the Spirit within. This required long and arduous study and mediation. Often the mind came up against immovable obstacles. Then what Joachim calls the *exercitium lectionis* was no use:

96 M.D. Chenu finds that even now we moderns are unable to completely comprehend the unifying "symbolist" manner of viewing the world peculiar to Medieval culture: "This later discredit of symbolic modes of thought obscures for us even today the extent and quality of that immense field within which, in the twelfth century, symbolism progressed without any break with earlier centuries from childish utilization of a rudimentary knowledge of nature, to the valid poetico-theological 'demonstrations' of Hugh of Saint-Victor; from idealization of the "lady" in courtly love, to the metaphors with a liturgical reference found in the quest for the Grail; from the eschatological imagery of Joachim of Floris, to the evangelical world of the first Franciscans (Marie-Dominique Chenu, "The Symbolist Mentality," in *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, ed. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968], 103–104).

97 For a profound and nuanced examination of the Medieval practice of scrutinizing the literal sense of the text, with the aim of divining the deeper allegorical sense beneath, see "Dante's Idea of the Bible," the first chapter in Benfell, *The Biblical Dante*. See too Erich Auerbach's fundamental essay "Figura" in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 11–76. Also noteworthy is Charles S.

repentance, prayer, recitation of psalms and waiting constituted the only approach.”⁹⁸ The similarity between Joachim's study of history and Dante's own scrutinizing of the meaning behind Rome's rule, accomplished “medullitus oculos mentis infixi et per efficacissima signa” is apparent. So too is Dante's emphasis on penitential practices that accompany his prophetic creation, such as his description of the afterlife as that “trïunfo per lo quale io piango spesso / le mie peccata e 'l petto mi percuoto” (that holy triumph for whose sake / I frequently bewail my sins and beat my breast”) (*Par.* 22.107-08), or the association of the composition of his “poema sacro” with fasting (“sì che m'ha fatto per molti anni macro” [“so that it has made me lean for many years”] [25.1-3])

Although this exercise is a technical labor best suited for the scholar's arduous excogitations, intellectual labors do not always suffice. As Reeves outlines, the reader must rely also on Divine aid. But this does not mean that the prophet was given to mystical visions or ecstasies. There is nothing in Joachim's writings that suggests he gets his visions from the supernatural realm. He did claim to have been visited by the spirit on occasion, but these visitations only meant to inspire him to continue his task, and did not account for any of the specifics in his prophecies. For example, in his *Expositio in Apocalypsim* Joachim says he was blocked in his reading on the evening before Easter. Suddenly, the Lion of Judah came from the

Singleton, “Dante’s Allegory,” *Speculum* 25 (1950): 78–86. Less read by Dante scholars (at least to my knowledge) but nevertheless important to the discussion is M.D. Chenu's essay mentioned above, “The Symbolist Mentality.”

98 *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, 4. Reeves elaborates on this elsewhere: “The *spiritualis intellectus* or *intelligentia* with which he [Joachim] believed he had been endowed was indeed a gift from on high, but it was poured out only on those who wrestled and agonized over the hard, external realities of the letter. The two Testaments are the indispensable framework of spiritual understanding and no one can reach it by a short cut: only to those who have disciplined themselves by long study, meditation, and prayer upon the Letter of the scriptures will the Book be opened, the secrets revealed, and full illumination given” (*The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism*, 16).

tomb and rolled away the stone from his mind; only then could he see and understand the concords in the Scriptures. At another occasion he had a vision of a ten-stringed psaltery, which clarified his doubts about the Trinity. While this may seem proof positive of a prophetic vision, Reeves explains that these constitute “not a specific answer to a specific question, but an inspiration which freed his mind to work out the problems.”⁹⁹ Dante's *Commedia* too is rife with claims to a transcendent vision; however the details hint at an intellectual process articulating it, through his many references to his “*imaginativa*” (*Purg.* 17.13), or his “*fantasia*” (*Par.* 24.24, 33.142).

The itinerary of the pilgrim too is marked by his gradual learning to penetrate the marrow of things with the eyes of his mind. Dante's experience in the *Inferno* narrates the training of his vision and his discernment, as sights – at first dim and hard to make out – become clearer with progressive examination. Through the dark fog covering Cocytus the pilgrim discerns a form that he at first imagines to be a windmill; only by traversing the ice and gradually advancing towards it does he begin to see in particular detail the complete and complex horror of the “*imperator del doloroso regno*” (34.28). By that same token, thought does not suffice without the adequate use of vision. While Vergil stares into the dirt excogitating a strategy for ascending the mountain in *Purgatorio*, Dante lifts up his eyes and discovers a crowd that will assist them in their climb (3.55-63). One of the more obvious proofs of Dante's prophecy as a reading act, however, is in a well-known passage his Epistle to the people of Florence, in which he announces the inauspicious fate of the city, guaranteed by his mind and the legibility of signs: “*si presaga mens mea non fallitur, sic signis veridicis sicut inexpugnabilis argumentis instructa prenuntians*” (“if

⁹⁹ *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, 5.

my prophetic mind does not fail, announcing those things taught to it with veridical signs as well as incontrovertible arguments”) (*Ep* 6,17). The reference to his keenly predictive mind (“presagament”) and to the signs that point to the truth (“signis veridicis”) all suggest a prophecy that is an act of intellectual discernment, an exercise in reading.

Dante's ultimate goal, however, is rhetorical, not predictive. He has a vision for society and an eschatology that he urgently needs to communicate. The mission is to contextualize it within a credible form. In Dante's time, preaching dealt extensively with the end times,¹⁰⁰ aiming to drive listeners to repentance and confession.¹⁰¹ Joachim's figures and concords give a believable shape to his message and lend it an acute sense of urgency that must be communicated at all costs. Yet, while it is clear that Dante works with Joachimist tools in the *Commedia*, the point that Bonaventure praises Joachim for is not his prophetic techniques, but his prophetic *spirit*, that mysterious unknown quantity that separates the true visionary from ordinary people. In the next chapter, we will dig more deeply into technique, exploring the nuts and bolts of medieval sermon-making, to show exactly what it takes to create a veridical speech in Dante's time, to detail in full the *ars* of preaching that Dante will use to add body to the “spirito” of prophecy he highlights here.

100“A continually re-emerging theme in medieval spirituality and preaching is eschatology and apocalyptic, linked to the myths of millenarianism and the *renovatio*, and to the crisis of the late medieval church.” (Carlo Delcorno, “Medieval Preaching in Italy [1200-1500],” in *The Sermon*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle, Typologie des sources du Moyen Age Occidental 81-83 [Turnhout: Brepols, 2000] 457).

101“Popular preachers like Hugues de Digne and Berthold von Regensburg did have a tendency to preach about the ‘novissimi’: the coming last judgment, the tortures of hell and the rewards in heaven [...] this was part of an overall programme to steer the people towards repentance, so that they would be willing to receive the doctrinal and moral instruction necessary to strengthen their faith and be ready to shed their sins in the act of confession” (Bert Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction Before the Council of Trent* [Leiden: Brill, 2004], 18).

Chapter Five

The Art of Preaching in the Sphere of the Sun

The sequence of *Paradiso* 10-13 has enjoyed some of the greatest critical attention over the years. The beginning two *terzine* alone of canto 10 have been called one of the greatest monuments of theology and trinitarian mysticism of all time, not just the Middle Ages.¹ This “liturgia trasferita in cielo,”² marked by a “tono fortemente didascalico e cattedratico,”³ initiates the pilgrim, and by extension the reader, into the some of the mysteries of speculative theology, and eventually, as canto 13 draws to a close, reveals to both pilgrim and reader that such theology can also serve practical and ethical ends. The instructors are many: both Dante as narrator and the figures he represents in these *canti* ascend into the pulpit to deliver their

1 “uno dei maggiori monumenti della teologia e della mistica trinitaria, non soltanto del Medioevo,” (Vincenzo Placella, “Canto X,” in *Paradiso*, ed. Pompeo Giannantonio, *Lectura Dantis Neapolitana* [Naples: Loffredo, 2000], 209).

2 Ettore Bonora, cited in: Enzo Esposito, “Il canto XIIIV del *Paradiso*,” in *Paradiso: Letture degli anni 1979-’81* (Rome: Bonacci, 1989), 388.

3 This description of canto 13 by Ruggiero Stefanelli could easily apply to the entire sequence (“Canto XIII,” in *Paradiso*, ed. Pompeo Giannantonio, *Lectura Dantis Neapolitana* [Naples: Loffredo, 2000], 281).

messages. I have already noted in my first chapter how the poet assumes the role of preacher through his appeals to the reader. Other critics have noted the emphatic uses of apostrophes in these canti, which the poet uses in continuation to emphasize his role as guide and teacher: Lucia Battaglia Ricci notes how Dante signals his new role by calling out to the reader in the opening of canto 10: “lo scrittore si fa qui maestro, e guida il suo lettore nella decrittazione del mondo fisico, alla scoperta dell'ordine sapientissimo del creato testimoniato dalla *ratio* che ne ha determinato la struttura.”⁴ This “decryption” is accomplished not by the force of the poet alone, but also by a variety of theologians and church intellectuals that he employs to assist him. Most apparent of these are Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, who both speak at length. They, in turn, introduce twenty-two non-speaking characters, masters of theology and spirituality mostly, who by their presence function as authorities to validate the poet's claims.⁵ In addition, Aquinas and Bonaventure narrate the lives of Francis and Dominic, whose stories serve as *exempla*. In this way, the poet deputizes Aquinas and Bonaventure as guides for the pilgrim, and by proxy the reader. Critics have recognized this role that the two mendicants play, and link it to their Franciscan and Dominican duties in life as pastoral guides and preachers. Ettore Bonora imagines Aquinas's speech as a “predica tenuta da un pulpito altissimo,” which Bonora says, explains the heavy larding of Aquinas's speech with expressions from the Gospels and the

4 Lucia Battaglia Ricci, “Nel cielo del Sole -- *Paradiso* X-XI-XII,” in *Esperimenti Danteschi: Paradiso 2010*, ed. Tommaso Montorfano (Genoa-Milan: Marietti, 2010), 120.

5 Although *what* is validated, as I will shortly show, is not so much an intellectual concord, but a kind of harmony arising from the counterpoint inherent in intellectual discord. It may seem impossible that conflict can produce consonance, but this is the entire point that Dante argues here. Kenelm Foster, aligning himself with Etienne Gilson, says “I am persuaded that Etienne Gilson is right, and that Dante intended his twenty-four sages to represent a harmony *not* of doctrinal agreement, but of diverse aspects and functions reflecting the various ways in which mankind may participate in the one divine Wisdom; and that he wrote this vision out, like everything

Acts of the Apostles.⁶

If what Aquinas says is a “predica,” then he employs one of the most textually-conscious forms of orality (or, conversely, one of the most orally-conscious forms of textuality) known in the Middle Ages. The location of a sermon, after all, is both in the preacher's voice and in the notes in his hand.⁷ Thus to discuss a “predica” in Dante's textuality is already to implicitly call attention to the fraught relationship between the lived and the literary in the *Commedia*. Dante's deployment of preachers in these canti means to highlight their speech as *text*, to facilitate his pursuit of a deeper meditation on textuality and its relationship to the real world it attempts to describe. This is especially important in the case of Thomas Aquinas, who speaks for the poet within the narrative, and whose speech parallels that of the master narrative voice. Bonaventure's formula for aligning Francis and Dominic, “dov'è l'un, l'altro s'induca,” could just as well be applied to Aquinas and the poet here, for they are twinned figures, each speaking in the language

else in the *Comedy*, 'in pro del mondo che mal vive,' as a sign and model for Christian society on earth” (“The Celebration of Order: *Paradiso X*,” *Dante Studies* no. 90 [1972]: 121).

6 “perciò nel suo discorso entrano, adatte all'argomento specifico, espressioni prese dai Vangeli e dagli Atti degli Apostoli” (Ettore Bonora, “Canto XI,” in *Paradiso*, ed. Pompeo Giannantonio, *Lectura Dantis Neapolitana* [Naples: Loffredo, 2000], 248).

7 The hybrid textuality of sermons, in fact, continues to puzzle historians of the Middle Ages. Carolyn Muessig confirms that it is very difficult to define preaching, since any simple definition of preaching “obscures its multifaceted character” (“What Is Medieval Monastic Preaching? An Introduction,” in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 90 [Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1998], 4). She adds that “there is also a similar problem in defining sermons. This is greatly owing to the situation of studying a written genre which is supposed to represent an oral event” (*ibid.*). One notable example of this difficulty in differentiating between written and oral events can be found in Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the Song of Songs; scholars have still not been able to determine whether they were meant to be preached aloud or read silently. See: Christopher Holdsworth, “Were the Sermons of St. Bernard on the Song of Songs Ever Preached?,” in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, vol. 90, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 1998), 295–318. The preaching “event” has been the focus of recent studies in preaching. See: Augustine Thompson, “From Texts to Preaching: Retrieving the Medieval Sermon as an Event,” in *Preacher, Sermon, and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, vol. 3, *A New History of the Sermon* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2002), 13–37.

of the other, each working towards the same end.

In her book *The Undivine Comedy*, Teodolinda Barolini notes the parallels between the speech of Dante and Aquinas.⁸ She accurately indicates an unusually acute hyper-awareness of speech as textuality in this canto, and of the nesting of one's textuality within the textuality of another:

Having chosen two saints whose lives had already occasioned complex narrative traditions, Dante responds to this previous textuality not with the usual fictive reality of an imagined encounter – his own textuality posing as reality – but with an explicitly narrative construct: his own textuality posing as someone else's textuality.⁹

The argument of the *Undivine Comedy* centers around the poet's consciousness of his poem *qua* text, in its attempts to represent the real. According to Barolini's reading, Dante's innovation in these canti is to bring the figures he represents into this game of self-aware representation; Aquinas's own discourse is conscious of the gap between the real and the words used to describe it. His speech is thus nested, matrioshka-like, inside that of the poet, echoing the same themes of the larger frame narrative.¹⁰

My argument takes as givens both that Aquinas's speech is meant to be understood as a “predica” and that his words involve a high level of textual self-awareness, which he shares with the poet and which deliberately echoes the poet's own textuality. Over the next several pages, I

8 “[Aquinas's] exhortation to the pilgrim that mimics the poet's own exhortation to the reader” (Teodolinda Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Dethologizing Dante* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992], 198).

9 “The Heaven of the Sun as a Meditation on Narrative,” in *Ibid.*, 195.

10 Mario Scotti also recognizes the incessant doubling in these canti, but he does not take it as far as it needs to be taken: “La serie di particolari a coppie, che costituisce una delle costanti del suo sviluppo, sembra riproporre in varie guise una dualità unitaria o una unità binata, come emanazione o riflesso del motivo di fondo: la simultanea e concorde presenza dei due Santi sulla terra.” (“Canto XII,” in *Paradiso*, ed. Pompeo Giannantonio, *Lectura Dantis Neapolitana* [Naples: Loffredo, 2000], 269).

will explore these readings from a historically-minded standpoint, in order to show how the rhetorical strategies and the logical organizational principles that guide elite preaching in the Middle Ages are redeployed in Dante's poetry to accord it the same gravitas that a highly erudite sermon might bear. Our itinerary will not be straight; in the first third of this chapter I will more fully explain some of the interpretive parameters that Dante establishes in the first several lines of *Paradiso* 10. This will lead organically to a second large section, dedicated entirely to the medieval sermon. I will discuss the invention and development of a new and erudite form called *sermo modernus*, focusing especially on its use of *divisiones* and *distinctiones*, which organize and parse not only the structure of the sermonic text but also the structure of medieval thought. In short, I will show that *sermo modernus* is not just a rhetorical genre, but also an epistemology. After this lesson on medieval sermonics, my third section returns to Dante's poem furnished with new tools for interpreting the particulars of Dante's textuality in *Paradiso* 10-13. I will show how Dante at once pays homage to the structure of *sermo modernus* – especially its insistent equation of the world with the text used to describe it, and will finally show how Dante's poem simultaneously struggles against the confines of *sermo modernus*, as it progresses towards the latter regions of *Paradiso*, where it ultimately comes up against the completely ineffable.

.....

The first six lines of canto 10, the lines in which Dante-poet reiterates his status as guide for his readers, also establish a relationship of perfect balance and order between the three persons of the one God.

Guardando nel suo Figlio con l'Amore
 che l' uno e l'altro eternalmente spira,
 lo primo e ineffabile Valore
 quanto per mente e per loco si gira
 con tant' ordine fé, ch'esser non puote
 senza gustar di lui chi ciò rimira

Gazing on His Son with the Love
 the One and the Other eternally breathe forth,
 the inexpressible and primal Power
 made with such order all things that revolve
 that he who studies it, in mind and in space,
 cannot but taste of Him (*Par.* 10.1-6).

The “Valore” creates the world with perfect order by gazing at the “Figlio” with the “Amore” that circulates between them. The relationship is one of gazes and breaths exchanged between the figures of the Godhead, a give-and-take relationship that is implicitly dialogic. The result of this conversation is the creation of everything, both the terrestrial and astral worlds (“quanto per mente e per loco si gira”), constructed with perfect order (“con tant' ordine”).

With this observation of the ultimate interlocking and interdependent unity between the figures of the Godhead, Dante initiates a sequence of canti whose structure mimics that unity in its textual and thematic parallels and overlaps, which do not allow for them to be read in isolation from one another, as critics have noted. Luciano Rossi says that these canti constitute “un complesso impianto strutturale, ideologico e narrativo, che non consente di analizzarli singolarmente, senza perdere di vista gli elementi che ne fanno un unico agglomerato testuale.”¹¹ Lucia Battaglia Ricci also notes this unity: “I canti X, XI, e XII del Paradiso compongono con i due successivi un microsistema di canti dedicati agli spiriti sapienti, che sarebbe bene poter

11 “Canto XI,” in *Paradiso*, ed. Georges Güntert and Michelangelo Picone, *Lectura Dantis Turicensis* (Florence: Cesati, 2000), 167.

leggere in modo continuo.”¹² Light is a unifying principle in these canti; as Carlo Sini notes: “La dottrina della luce è il luogo nel quale un'unica grandiosa visione fiammeggiante, esaltante e moralmente edificante lega in un unico senso e fine l'universo tutto e le sue creature.”¹³ Light is associated with the unified truth, as well as the intellect used to understand that truth.¹⁴ Unity is also represented by some of the figures that Aquinas and Bonaventure announce, whose acts of reconciliation in life stand out as emblematic of the greater themes of unity and unifying in these canti.¹⁵ Most notable of these are Francis and Dominic, who are represented in parallel, and who – it is emphasized again and again – pursue identical spiritual ends.

In spite of the poet's broad claim to oneness, he nevertheless guides us into a world of particulars here, which instead testify to multiplicity, complexity, elliptical relationships and sometime outright opposition. The perfect balance and harmony of the first six verses of canto 10 is complicated by the skewed orbits of planets that the Poet describes to his reader:

Leva dunque, lettore, a l'alte rote
 meco la vista, diritto a quella parte
 dove l'un moto e l'altro si percuote;
 e lì comincia a vagheggiare ne l'arte
 di quel maestro che dentro a sé l'ama,
 tanto che mai da lei l'occhio non parte.

12 Battaglia Ricci, “Nel cielo del Sole -- *Paradiso* X-XI-XII,” 113.

13 Carlo Sini, “Salomone e il cielo della luce,” in *Esperimenti Danteschi: Paradiso 2010*, ed. Tommaso Montorfano (Genoa-Milan: Marietti, 2010), 160.

14 See John Anthony Mazzeo's essay: John Anthony Mazzeo, “Dante's Sun Symbolism,” *Italica* 33.4 (1956): 243–251, which is entirely dedicated to this matter of light and unity.

15 Emerico Giachery, “Il canto X del *Paradiso*,” in *Paradiso: Letture degli anni 1979-'81* (Rome: Bonacci, 1989), 308–09.

Vedi come da indi si dirama
 l'oblico cerchio che i pianeti porta
 per sodisfare al mondo che li chiama.
 Che se la strada lor non fosse torta,
 molta virtù nel ciel sarebbe in vano,
 e quasi ogne potenza qua giù morta;
 e se dal dritto più o men lontano
 fosse 'l partire, assai sarebbe manco
 e giù e sù de l'ordine mondano.

With me, then, reader, raise your eyes
 up to the lofty wheels, directly to that part
 where the one motion and the other intersect,
 and from that point begin to gaze in rapture
 at the Master's work. He so loves it in Himself
 that never does His eye depart from it.
 See how from there the oblique circle
 that bears the planets on it branches off
 to satisfy the world that calls for them.
 And if their pathway were not thus deflected,
 many powers in the heavens would be vain
 and quite dead almost every potency on earth.
 And, if it slanted farther or less far
 in the upper or the lower hemisphere,
 much would be lacking in the order of the world (*Par.* 10.7-21).

The first thing to notice is that Dante's discussion of difference is emphatically contextualized within his self-representation as our *magister*, as he speak to us, his readers, with sure authority. While the first nine lines are grandiose in scope, embracing both the natural and supernatural worlds, the universe and its creator, here in the seventh line the poet dramatically shifts his focus, drawing it tightly around himself and his reader. Although a critic might call this address to the reader “one of the most imperious”¹⁶ it is also one of the most intimate. Dante entreats his reader to lift up his eyes with him (“leva [...] meco la vista”), so they may regard these marvels together. Dante's “meco” highlights an air of familiarity and confidence, suggesting a scene of

16 John Freccero, “*Paradiso X: The Dance of the Stars*,” *Dante Studies* 86 (1968): 91.

him and his reader standing side by side, gazing at the stars together. If here Dante assumes the “*veste di maestro e di sapiente*,”¹⁷ he does so gently, nudgingly, first inviting the reader to sidle up next to him, and then tracing the points in the night sky with his finger, expecting his reader's gaze to follow. While the complex and opposing orbits in the sky might seem disastrously chaotic to his hypothetical reader, somewhat ignorant of natural sciences, the poet stands with us, to help make sense of what is superficially beyond our ken.

As the poet points out the stars in the night sky for his readers to see, he introduces a push-and-pull dynamic, which turns out to be an important interpretive key. He calls attention to astral orbits, “*dove l'un moto e l'altro si percuote*” (“where the one motion and the other collide”¹⁸), whose ecliptic orbits, the “*oblico cerchio*,” (“oblique circle”), are admittedly a “*strada [...] torta*” (“road [...] twisted”),¹⁹ but which ultimately serve the world's benefit (“*per sodisfare al mondo*”). “*Torto*” is Dante's *parola chiave* here. In my review of *Inferno 23* in chapter 2, I demonstrated how Dante associates “twisting” with a refusal to heed God's commands, and specifically with a refusal to speak and spread the Gospel; here in the realm of the transcendent, however, values are reversed and what is apparently “twisted” or even “wrong,” is in the end no such thing at all. This is of great significance in a poem obsessed from the outset with the correct and the straight (let us remember, *Inferno 1* begins with the pilgrim in a wood, having lost the “*dritta via*,” the *straight path*.) Here, paradoxically, the “wrong” and the “right” exchange places

17 Battaglia Ricci, “Nel cielo del Sole -- *Paradiso* X-XI-XII,” 122.

18 Here I take issue with Hollander's translation: “where the one motion and the other intersect,” as it does not do justice to Dante's very deliberate suggestion of violence and conflict in “*percuotere*,” a verb more commonly found in accounts of fights (A demon struck [“*percosse*”] Venedico Caccianemico in *Inf.* 18.64), boulders crashing into each other (*Inf.* 7.28), arrows hitting targets (*Par.* 5.92, 13.105) and lightning strikes (Capaneus is “*percosso*” by lightning in *Inf.* 14.53-54).

19 Translation mine.

– or more precisely, they resolve each other – for in the sphere of the Sun, opposites are reconciled by means of their own opposition. The ecliptic and conflicting rotations of the spheres provides a large scale objective correlative to this dynamic, but it is also represented in the small, the “tira e urge” between opposing gears in a clock that leads to ultimate harmony, a “tin tin sonando con sì dolce nota.” (“chiming its ting-ting with notes so sweet”) (142-143). The conflict between two opposing agents leads to something greater; what seems a contradiction when examined up close is revealed to work harmonically when seen from the long view.²⁰ The relationship is ultimately agonistic in the classic sense of the term: mutual competition leading to mutual betterment (not for nothing is the preacher Dominic called an “atleta” in the *vita* that Bonaventure recounts). This explains Aquinas's introduction of his philosophical nemesis, Siger of Brabant of the “invidiosi veri” in canto 10, and Bonaventure's introduction of Joachim in canto 12.

The sequence of canti is built on multiples, full of doubling and tripling of figures, reflecting one another. Aquinas and Bonaventure are introduced in cantos 10 and 12, respectively, and each is accompanied by several companions, who together form a corona around the pilgrim and Beatrice. These coronas are peopled with the “wise spirits,”²¹ historical figures that were instrumental in some essential way to the forwarding of Christian knowledge.²²

20 Dante had already sown *Paradiso* with a foretaste of this dynamic. We remember Justinian's account of his conversion from the Monophysite heresy, discussed in Chapter 3. The emperor explains that Jesus's dual nature, a strident contradiction according to human logical systems, is self-apparent from the Heavenly perspective.

21 While it is commonplace to refer to these as “spiriti sapienti,” Vincenzo Placella points out that the term is a post-facto imposition that does not come from Dante. In fact the poet does not use the term “sapiente” at all in the *Commedia* (Placella, “Canto X,” 204).

22 “In effetti, gli spiriti che Dante incontra nel cielo del Sole, sia quelli della prima che della seconda ghirlanda, sono, se non tutti di Dottori della Chiesa, di persone che hanno portato un contributo, col loro sapere, alla

The first group, of which Thomas Aquinas is a member, is generally considered by Dante scholars to contain the more “philosophical” of these, while the second, introduced by Bonaventure, is seen as more “mystical.” Later (14.67), a third corona will join the other two, likely representing the third figure in the Trinity, the Holy Spirit (although no one in this group is indicated by name).²³ The representation of St. Francis of Assisi in canto 11, and St. Dominic in canto 12 function like a “dittico,” each *vita* narrated complementing the other.²⁴ Francis is presented by a Dominican, Thomas Aquinas, and Dominic by Bonaventure, a Franciscan; this is a chiasmus – the first of many – highlighting the identities of the narrators in juxtaposition to the biographies narrated.

Curious elements of difference show through the biographies of Saints Francis and Dominic, perpetuating the “twisted road” view of balance outlined earlier. It seems that Aquinas and Bonaventure seek to debate obvious difference by arguing sameness in their narrations of Francis and Dominic. Aquinas says: “de l'un dirò, però che d'amendue / si dice l'un pregiando, qual ch'om prende, / perch' ad un fine fur l'opere sue” (“I shall speak of one, since praising one, / whichever one we choose, is to speak of both, / for they labored to a single end”) (11.40-42). These words are later confirmed by Bonaventure in 12.34-36: “Degno è che, dov' è l'un, l'altro s'induca: / sì che, com'elli ad una militaro, così la gloria loro insieme luca” (“It is fitting that, in

dottrina della Fede (soltanto Sigieri merita discorso a parte)” (ibid., 230). Placella's exception of Sigieri can be juxtaposed to the opinion of Bruno Nardi, who appreciates Dante's inclusion of Sigieri; he points out that although the pilgrim might have “arricciato il naso al suono alquanto stridulo” of Aquinas's phrase “u' ben s'impingua se non si vaneggia” and also his statement on Solomon's wisdom, “invece, Dante non solleva alcuna difficoltà sull'elogio che il domenicano fa del maestro del 'vico de li strami!” (“Il canto di S. Francesco (Paradiso, XI),” in *Lecturae e altri studi danteschi* [Florence: Le Lettere, 1990], 174).

23 Placella, “Canto X,” 210.

24 Raimondo Spiazzi, “Il canto XII del Paradiso,” in *Paradiso: Letture degli anni 1979-'81* (Rome: Bonacci, 1989), 331.

naming one, we name the other / so that, just as they were joined as one in combat / with a single goal, their fame should shine as one”).²⁵ In spite of these claims to sameness, the actual narratives describing Francis and Dominic are full of quirks and curiosities that set them apart not only from one another but even from themselves. The story of Francis is stripped down to its bare essentials: Francis is presented first and foremost as a husband to Poverty, to the exclusion of most of the other canonical details of his biography;²⁶ even the episode of stigmata is dealt with only briefly when compared to the marriage to Poverty, occupying a mere two lines of the account (11.107-108). While Francis is considered one notable for his action (“fare” [12.44]), Dante incongruously allocates space for his preaching to the Sultan al-Malik al-Kâmil in Egypt, which, the poet also takes care to note, fails to convert him (11.105). Furthermore, the context in which the Francis story is narrated strikes some critics as peculiar. Erich Auerbach very rightly points out that Francis would have had little enthusiasm for the overtly academic and intellectualizing frame in which his story is told.²⁷ While Francis's biography selectively highlights his marriage to poverty, the story of the great preacher Dominic is crowded with metaphors emphasizing action over words; he is alternately represented as a lover of the Faith

25 Ruggiero Stefanelli confirms the pastoral ends of Francis and Dominic's work in Dante's view: “lo sfondo è la gente, il popolo” (“Canto XIII,” 294–95). Stefanelli notes that Francis is granted an order by Honorius “poi che la gente poverella crebbe / dietro a costui”; Dominic, in turn, is elected by Christ to help tend his garden – which metaphorically represents the Christian population: “elesse a l'orto suo per aiutarlo” (11.95, 12.72).

26 As far as I have been able to discover, Ettore Bonora is the first to recognize this, though he suggests Dante's omission of the famous scenes of preaching to the birds and the story of Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio was a question of space constraints (“Nel canto del *Paradiso* non c'è spazio [...]”) and does not analyze the poet's deliberate foregrounding of other aspects of the Saint's life (“Canto XI,” 242). I owe a debt to Professor Neslihan Şenocak who alerted me to a defect in Bonora's analysis; she points out that the Wolf of Gubbio scene that Bonora mentions, and claims that Dante omits, originates in the *Fioretti*, which was not in circulation until after Dante's death. So, to correct Bonora, Dante's omission might not be a question of authorial exclusion, but of simple ignorance.

27 “Non poteva trovare una cornice meno didascalica, meno scolastica? (*Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984], 229).

(“l'amoroso drudo / de la fede cristiana,”), a farmer (“agricola”) and an ambassador and servant of Christ (“Ben parve messo e famigliar di Cristo”) (55, 71, 73). Most memorable are those metaphors that describe Dominic as the warrior for the faith, a “santo atleta / benigno a' suoi e a' nemici crudo” (56-57).²⁸ Later in the canto, Dominic transcends the human and enters the elemental, described simply as a crashing force of nature:

[...] si mosse
 quasi torrente ch'alta vena preme;
 e ne li sterpi eretici percosse
 l'impeto suo, più vivamente quivi
 dove le resistenze eran più grosse.

[...] he went forth,
 like a torrent gushing from its lofty source,
 and fell upon the tangled weeds of heresy,
 attacking with his overwhelming force
 wherever resistance was most stubborn (98-102)

In these lines we see the biography of Dominic outlined in “tinte crude, tratti forti,” designing an “epopea della fede”²⁹; and yet, no *duecento* documents support a reading of Dominic as an aggressive warrior or inquisitor.³⁰ Although Dante represents Dominic as a combatant, as a pugnacious antagonist to heresy, the majority critical consensus among Dante scholars is that the

28 The epithets used to describe Dominic, it should be noted, are inspired by phrases in the Dominican liturgy and hagiography, which were almost certainly first heard in the Dominican preachers' sermons and recited rites (Carlo Delcorno, “Cadenze e figure della predicazione nel viaggio dantesco,” *Lecture Classensi* 15 [1985]: 53).

29 Spiazzi, “Il canto XII del Paradiso,” 334, 339.

30 Franco Cardini and Marina Montesanto, *La lunga storia dell'Inquisizione: luci e ombre della “Leggenda Nera”* (Rome: Città Nuova, 2005), 34–35. No *duecento* documents say that Dominic was an inquisitor, and for good reason, since he died in 1221, twelve years before the Inquisition even started. In the *trecento* Bernard Gui did try to associate Dominic with the inquisitor's role, but that is the only attestation in Dante's lifetime (Bernard of Gui, *Bernardi Guidonis Legenda Sancti Dominici*, ed. Simon Tugwell, vol. 27, Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica [Rome, 1988], 272). In his biography on St. Dominic, Michel Roquebert adamantly rejects any attempt to associate Dominic with the Inquisition. He argues that the birth of this “leggenda” is not in the Middle Ages at all, but in late Renaissance Spain, part of Torquemada's plot to build an origin myth for the Spanish Inquisition (Michel Roquebert, *San Domenico. Contro la leggenda nera*, trans. Enrica Zaira Merlo [Cinisello Balsamo (Milan): San Paolo, 2005], 6).

Dominic represented here is no inquisitor. Mario Scotti notes that hagiographies instead emphasize Dominic's "mitezza" and "sete del martirio" in his mission against heresy; while Spiazzi simply says that Dante's Dominic had nothing to do with the Inquisition.³¹ The interpretive key in Dante's description of Dominic lies in his use of "percosse." As we remember, Dante's discussion of the contrary orbits of planets ("dove l'un moto e l'altro si percuote") highlights that what appears incorrect ("torto") to us humans really isn't from the perspective of the Divine which reconciles all conflicting forces within itself. The difference between Dominic's historical existence and Dante's account of it is ultimately a difference between actions and words. Dominic was a paragon of "mitezza" in his actions, but his words were a violent force of nature, a flood crashing into the scrub brush of heresy and flushing it from the Catholic garden.

These many wrinkles in the putatively smooth surface of an apparently unified and unifying text beg to be examined more deeply, but critics far too often accept without further investigation the poet's authoritative claims to ultimate unity and harmony.³² They are certainly correct in seeing that unity is the ultimate goal, but they resolve the wrinkles by ignoring them. A minority has sufficiently grappled with the unusual task that Dante sets up for himself, of making order out of chaos. Kenelm Foster comes close, by identifying the "profoundly polemical" nature of these saints' biographies, as their example stands as an implicit criticism of contemporary

31 Spiazzi, "Il canto XII del Paradiso," 340; Scotti, "Canto XII," 276. Teodolinda Barolini finds Dominic's essentially nonmilitant nature within the text of the poem itself, locating it within the subtle parallels and juxtapositions between the representation of him and Francis: "Although we think of Dominic as the more military, and of Francis as the more loving, in fact Francis is a *campione* as well as Dominic, and Dominic is a lover as well as Francis" (*The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*, 199).

32 In these parallels between Francis and Dominic Mario Scotti finds an expression of Dante's inexhaustible unifying intellect: "Inoltre questi particolari, che pure di per sé colpiscono per la loro forza evocativa e,

mendicants who fail to fulfill their founders' intentions.³³ So too does Bruno Nardi, in his reading of Dante's Francis as a militant for the poor, pitched against the ruling elites of his time.³⁴ Nardi and Foster are two of the few who see the struggle, the friction, the *agon* in Dante's poem. The universe may ultimately be a perfectly balanced thing, but the “strada” to arrive at that balance is still astoundingly “torta,” and will always be so. If the twisted road is true for what is narrated, what about the actual mode of narration? Here too one finds various different and multiplicitous energies that need to be reconciled into one. This logical dilemma did not miss Barolini's critical eye; she notes that Thomas Aquinas' statement equating Francis and Dominic, “d'amendue / si dice l'un pregiando,” should be taken

not simply as courteous hyperbole but as a bold attempt to deny the Aristotelian precept that “to be diverse necessarily means to be unequal”: if to speak to one saint is to speak of both, then the two saints are one, are equal.³⁵

And this is the narrative rub: that there is no humanly possible way to reconcile the two into the one.

Dante courses headlong and unflinchingly towards this impossibility, to emphasize that what we would call a contradiction operating on human terms is truly a *mysterium* in Divine

considerati nel loro corrispondersi e concatenarsi, offrono l'immagine di una creatività poetica dominata da una armonica coerenza, incarnano della loro fisica concretezza il dipanarsi di un pensiero spesso arduo e rarefatto” (“Canto XII,” 269).

33 Foster, “The Celebration of Order: *Paradiso* X,” 117.

34 Nardi forcefully argues that Dante's representation of Francis highlights a figure implicitly opposed to the forces of power in his world, and identifying with those in most need: “E del resto Dante, come abbiamo visto, spiega il successo di Francesco nell'attirare a sé i primi compagni con la sincerità e con l'impeto del suo fervore religioso. A questa ragione certo fondamentale io oserei aggiungere un'altra, quella di essersi egli rivolto agli umili e ai sofferenti schiacciati dallo strapotere della feudalità laica ed ecclesiastica e abbandonati alla loro miseria. Elevare spiritualmente gli oppressi era un muto rimprovero agli oppressori e un'accusa rivolta ad essi d'irreligiosità” (Nardi, “Il canto di S. Francesco (*Paradiso*, XI),” 181).

35 Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*, 195.

discourse. The paradox is expressed, as Barolini rightly argues, within the language of the distinction and the division. These distinctions regard Aquinas's resolution of two of his claims, both in canto 10, that perplexed the pilgrim. The first regards Aquinas's introduction of himself as a member of the fold of Dominicans:

Io fui de li agni de la santa greggia
che Domenico mena per cammino
u'ben s'impingua se non si vaneggia.

I was a lamb among the holy flock
led by Dominic along the road
where sheep are fattened if they do not stray (10.94-96).

The second regards Aquinas's identification of Solomon the wisest of all men:

entro v'è l'alta mente u' sì profondo
saver fu messo, che, se 'l vero è vero,
a veder tanto non surse il secondo.

Within his light there dwells a lofty mind,
its wisdom so profound, if truth is true,
there never rose another of such vision (10.112-14).

In canto 11, Aquinas addresses two doubts he perceives in the pilgrim's mind:

Tu dubbi, e hai voler che si ricerna
in sì aperta e 'n sì distesa lingua
lo dicer mio, 'ch al tuo sentir si sterna,
ove dinanzi dissi: "U' ben s'impingua,"
e là u' dissi: "Non nacque il secondo";
e qui è uopo che ben si distingua.

You are in doubt and would have me restate
my words, to make them clear and plain,
matching the level of your understanding
as when I said, "Where sheep are fattened,"
as well as, "Nor was there ever born another."
And here one needs to make a clear distinction (22-27).

The pilgrim, of course, does not speak a word here, but Aquinas's voicing of his unspoken

objections establishes that the scene is a dialogue.³⁶

As I mentioned in chapter 1, these false dialogues mean to evoke the feeling of a preacher navigating an argument before his audience, tacking and jibing in response to their apparent questions and occasional doubts. “Tu dubbi,” Aquinas says, his discourse swerving towards the dialogic, and then elaborates with the addition “e hai voler che si ricerna,” enunciating not only the pilgrim's doubt and desires, but also the specifics of that desire. “Cerno,” the Latin root for the word “ricerna,” literally means to sift, as one does with grain, separating it from its chaff.³⁷ By extension, “cerno” means to distinguish any one thing from another, to separate according to difference. But here there are divisions to make on the divisions themselves, for Aquinas voices Dante's desire that he not just sift but that he “sift *again*” (“ricerna”); in this way, the Saint anticipates that his own speech will be defined by ramification, a spreading, like a great tree, of many limbs, branches, sprigs, twigs and sprays, leading, eventually to the fruit of his argument. Hence the necessity, as Aquinas himself finally says, of the “distinzion.”³⁸

Thomas's announcement of a “distinzion” has attracted a great degree of critical attention

36 Aquinas creates the illusion of dialogue in canto 13 as well: “Or s' i' non procedesse avanti piùe, / 'Dunque, come costui fu sanza pare?' / comincerebber le parole tue” (“Now, if I went no farther, / 'How, then, was that other without equal?' / would be the first words from your mouth”) (13.88-90).

37 Carlton Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary Founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary / Revised, Enlarged and in Great Part Rewritten by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), s.v. cerno.

38 Aquinas resolves the first question by narrating the life of St. Francis (11.39-117), whose love for poverty he later juxtaposes against the Dominican's greed for new foods (“Ma 'l suo pecuglio di nova vivanda / è fatto ghiotto”), that leave them returning to the sheepfold without any milk (“tornano a l'ovil di latte vòte”) (124-139). This, he finally explains, is the rebuke (“corregger”) to the first distinction, “U' ben s'impingua.” The second distinction (“non nacque il secondo”), he answers in canto 13 by stating that Solomon's wisdom was considered supreme not in the absolute sense, but only inasmuch as it concerned the office of ruling: “Onde, se ciò ch'io dissi e questo note, / regal prudenza è quel vedere impari / in che lo stral di mia intenzion percuote” (“Therefore, if you reflect on this and what I said, / kingly prudence is that peerless vision / on which the arrow of my purpose strikes”) (13.103-105). These points will be discussed at length later in the chapter.

over the years, much of which intuitively and rightly contextualizes it within Aquinas's role as a teacher; however few venture to explore this issue more than superficially. When they do probe deeper, critics associate Aquinas with scholastic philosophy, and note the use of distinctions in philosophical works like Aquinas's own *Summa Theologiae*.³⁹ Others associate Aquinas's language with the *quaestio* and *responsio* of scholastic dialectics.⁴⁰ Of these, Ettore Bonora goes one step further to posit a curious reading, associating “distinzion” with “discrezion”: “L'atto del distinguere si fondava sulla *discrezione*, la facoltà intellettuale che Dante apprezzava in sommo grado nell'Aquinate, e che si sforzava di fare sua.”⁴¹ This hypothesis compels, especially since Bonora notes Dante's association of “discrezione” with the “ordine d'una cosa,” in the *Convivio*, which, tantalizingly, also happens to be accompanied by a citation from Aquinas.⁴² In her book on medieval memory, Mary Carruthers confirms that “discretio” is part of the meta-rhetoric regarding the organization and division of arguments in medieval prose, however she notes that it is usually considered synonymous with “divisio” rather than “distinctio,” which implicitly raises the question of why Dante would use the less precise “distinzion,” when he could easily used “discrezion” in its stead.⁴³ Francesco Maggini is the first to highlight that Aquinas's “distinzion”

39 Mario Scotti: “Tommaso d'Aquino introduce e conclude il panegirico di san Francesco con stilemi propri della sua filosofia scolastica e nel distacco di un procedimento per distinzioni logiche.” (“Canto XII,” 263).

40 Ruggiero Stefanelli calls Aquinas's speech a “susseguirsi di arsi e tesi nell'equilibrio dialettico di *quaestio* e *responsio*.” (“Canto XIII,” 238).

41 Bonora, “Canto XI,” 240.

42 “Lo più bello ramo che de la radice razionale consurga si è la discrezione, ché, si come dice Tommaso sopra lo prologo dell'Etica, 'conoscere l'ordine d'una cosa ad altra è proprio atto di ragione': e è questa discrezione” (*Convivio*, ed. Domenico De Robertis and Cesare Vasoli, vol. 1/2, Opere Minori [Milano; Napoli: Ricciardi, 1978], 4, 8, 1).

43 *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 107–109. On page 109, Carruthers associates the “divisio” or “discrezio” with the art of preaching, tellingly

is a clear Latinism, and therefore belongs to a higher register, befitting such a great theologian.⁴⁴ Ettore Bonora agrees that the Latinism is a “strumento di quella nobilitazione stilistica che Dante perseguì nella terza cantica,” which is employed liberally in Aquinas's discourse (“i latinismi trapuntano tutto il discorso di Tommaso”⁴⁵).

A “scholastic” reading of Aquinas, one that considers him a predominantly philosophical figure who speaks in elevated Latinisms, prevails among critics; this is not necessarily a misguided critical angle, but it runs the risk of seeing Aquinas's function in these canti too narrowly. To associate his “distinzion” with scholastic theology alone is to rightly recognize it as a technical term, but to associate it with the wrong technique. It also over-values philosophy in the same moment that Dante highlights its limitations. The problems are transparent in a contextual reading: Aquinas's “distinzion” occurs shortly after the poet denounces the syllogism (“quanto son difettivi silogismi” [“how flawed / are all the arguments”]), and only a little further from Aquinas's introduction of Siger of Brabant, the Averroist philosopher and his philosophical nemesis, who “silogizzò invidiosi veri” (“syllogized envious truths”) (10.138, 11.2).⁴⁶ Regarding

foreshadowing our argument later in this chapter.

44 Francesco Maggini summarizes: “*distinto* è un latinismo elegante, degno dello stile del *Paradiso*.” (“*Distinto*’ e ‘*costellato*’ in Dante (*Paradiso* c. XIV vv. 97-102),” *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 136:416 [1959]: 556).

45 Bonora, “Canto XI,” 245. Many of these Latinisms are hapaces, he notes, and lists them across several pages (*ibid.*, 245–247).

46 The introduction of Siger of Brabant in *Par.* 10 is generally viewed as a conciliatory gesture between the Christianizing Aristotelian Thomas, and the determined Averroist Siger of Brabant, since St. Thomas's 1270 treatise *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas* was especially against Siger (A. Maurer, “Averroism, Latin,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. [Detroit: Gale, 2003], 936). In the circle of the sages, however, Aquinas says that Siger “silogizzò invidiosi veri,” which somewhat overturns the logic by means of which Aquinas found himself at odds with Siger (*Par.* 10.138). Incidentally, in their lives, both Aquinas and Siger found themselves facing trouble regarding their Aristotelianism. Siger was condemned in 1277, but fled Paris, eventually settling in Orvieto, where he was stabbed to death by his clerk (Calvin G. Normore, “Siger of Brabant,” in *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audi, 2nd ed. [Cambridge, United Kingdom:

critics' claims to *quaestio* and *responsio*, I have already shown that these occasions are more likely indicative of preaching. Concerning Latinisms, critics are right to infer an elevated diction; however, Dante does not use such diction in order to highlight the kind of philosophy, theology and dialectic modes of inquiry going on in the universities – which at any rate were less familiar to most of his readers, as Dante's *Convivio* testifies, a book he explicitly positions as a vernacular popularization of philosophy to those who don't know Latin (I.vii.11-13). The strategy is one precisely tailored to the fundamental needs of the poem's popular reception. Why would he wish to call attention to scholastic dialectical methods, with which his readers would have had little, if any, familiarity? On the contrary, he means to call attention to a kind of didactic discourse far more familiar to all of his readers, the *praedicatio*.

Of the criticism dedicated to Aquinas's rhetoric, Teodolinda Barolini's succeeds in looking beyond Aquinas's towering reputation as a philosopher in life to recognize that Dante's narrative reconstruction of him uses the “distinzion” to participate in Dante's subtle but insistent emphasis on rhetoric over philosophy, as “part of the narrative self-consciousness that permeates this heaven.”⁴⁷ “Discourse,” Barolini says, “is presented as a system of *distinzioni*, a system of differences.”⁴⁸ She adds that Aquinas relentlessly signposts “his discourse as a verbal artifact,” to clarify the precedence of language, discourse, narrative. He continually associates listening with reading (and, by implication, speech with writing), telling the pilgrim to follow with his eyes

Cambridge University Press, 1999], 844). Thomas Aquinas too ran afoul of the Church regarding his Aristotelianism; the Ecclesiastical condemnations of 1277 outlawed 219 Aristotelian propositions, some of which were held up by Aquinas (Maurer, “Averroism, Latin,” 937).

47 *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*, 204.

48 *Ibid.*, 205.

behind his speech (“di retro al mio parlar ten vien col viso”) (*Par.* 10.100-102).⁴⁹ Elsewhere, and in a similar vein, Barolini notes Aquinas's interest in ordinal numbers and his penchant for regarding things in terms of before and after – in other words, in terms of diegesis.⁵⁰

In sum, Dante's use of the “distinzion” is not meant to highlight philosophy and dialectics, but to highlight the *speech itself*. My aim in this chapter is to build on Barolini's reading of the poet's narrative strategies by contextualizing it within the dominant trends of sermonic rhetoric in Dante's time, especially with respect to *sermo modernus*, a new form of preaching pioneered in the thirteenth century, to show how Dante uses and alludes to the logical and rhetorical structures that *sermo modernus* is built on.

Medieval sermonics are a vast and complex topic, and need full exposition so that one may understand clearly and comprehensively the many ways in which Dante's textuality intersects with the medieval preacher's sermon. In light of this, I am compelled by necessity to discuss sermonics at considerable length. I beg the reader's forbearance. If Dante's poem appears to shrink off on the horizon as we plow the *mare magnum* of medieval preaching; know that we will come back into port in due time.

.....

49 Ibid., 197.

50 Ibid., 205.

As I noted in my first chapter, the thirteenth century was marked by a dramatic increase in preaching, which was met with an equally enthusiastic reception by the populace. The primary protagonists of this preaching renaissance were the Franciscans and Dominicans, whose founders were major evangelical forces in their lifetimes.⁵¹ The Dominicans were preaching powerhouses. By the turn of the fourteenth century, the average Dominican church delivered 240-250 sermons in a year. Some superstar preachers delivered many sermons; the famous Dominican preacher Giordano da Pisa sometimes preached as many as five sermons in a single day.⁵² In Dante's poem one finds confirmation that the mendicant orders are new forces in the church for the guidance of the people. As Dante's Bonaventure sees it, Francis and Dominic are “due campioni, al cui fare, al cui dire / lo popol disviato si raccorse” (two champions / whose deeds and words brought together the scattered people”) (12.44-45). His language echoes the Lateran IV legislation calling for men “potentes in opere et sermone qui plebes [...] verbo aedificent et exemplo” (“powerful in word and deed [...] who will build up the people by word and example”).⁵³

Alain of Lille's definition of preaching in his *Summa de arte praedicatoria* is the first formal definition of preaching in the history of Christianity,⁵⁴ and one of the most influential:⁵⁵

51 For example Jacques de Vitry wrote about the two mendicant orders as those best suited for preaching, and considered them a fundamental part of the solution to pastoral care (Jessalyn Bird, “The Religious’s Role in a Post-Fourth-Lateran World: Jacques de Vitry’s *Sermones Ad Status and Historia Occidentalis*,” in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, vol. 90, Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History, 1998, 227).

52 Carlo Delcorno, “Medieval Preaching in Italy (1200-1500),” in *The Sermon*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle, Typologie Des Sources Du Moyen Age Occidental 81-83 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 465.

53 Text and translation in: Norman P. Tanner S.J., ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington D.C.: Shed & Ward Limited, and Georgetown University Press, 1990), 239–240. Carlo Delcorno notes that preaching is “in large measure linked to the Mendicants, whom the tenth canon of the Fourth Lateran Council commends to the bishops as 'coadjutors' or 'substitutes'” (“Medieval Preaching in Italy (1200-1500),” 459).

54 James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 307.

55 Muessig, “What Is Medieval Monastic Preaching? An Introduction,” 4.

Praedicatio est, manifesta et publica instructio morum et fidei, informationi hominum deserviens, ex rationum semita, et auctoritatum fonte proveniens.

Preaching is an open and public instruction in faith and morals, whose purpose is the forming of men; it derives from the path of rational argument and from the fountainhead of the “authorities.”⁵⁶

Thomas of Chobham, a theologian at the Paris *studium* in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, ventures a similar definition:

Est igitur predicatio divini verbi ad informationem fidei et morum nuntiatio.

Therefore preaching is the announcement of the Sacred word for the forming of faith and behavior.⁵⁷

These particular descriptions are important because they are from two of the earliest *artes praedicandi* of the period. Alain of Lille's *Summa* is one of the first to discuss the sermonic *distinctio*, thus initiating a debate on a new sermon style (what we today call *sermo modernus*) that defines the late Middle Ages.⁵⁸ Thomas of Chobham's work is an early and important treatise on preaching, the first in which this new sermonic form is comprehensively considered and articulated.⁵⁹ Alain's description highlights the intellectual and educative function of preaching, its dedication to the building (“instructio”) and shaping (“informatio”) of men, by means of authorities and rational argument.⁶⁰ Thomas of Chobham follows suit, emphasizing the

56 “Summa de Arte Praedicatoria,” in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 210, Patrologiae Latinae, n.d., 111; Alain of Lille, *The Art of Preaching*, trans. and ed. Gillian R. Evans, Monastic Studies Series 28 (Piscataway NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 16–17.

57 *Summa de Arte Praedicandi, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis 82 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1988), 15.*

58 Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance*, 311.

59 *Ibid.*, 318.

60 Although descriptions in these *artes* tell much about the form and content of preaching, they do not comprehensively define the whole spectrum of what can be considered *praedicatio* in these times. In this sense,

importance of “informatio,” but slightly downplaying Alain's highly intellectualizing bent, as he focuses less on “rationes” and more on orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

Alain and Thomas's emphasis on learning⁶¹ can be seen in historians' examinations of actual sermons. For example, Silvana Vecchio sees in the sermon collections of Thomas Aquinas, Aldobrandino da Toscanella and Ugo do Prato evidence of systematic theological instruction; she

they are only partially useful for a historian trying to positively identify a text as “predicatory.” Leo Carruthers offers a sufficiently broad definition containing “many types of text and discourse,” and helps us to understand preaching in its most inclusive sense. He associates preaching with the Pauline *kerygma*, which serves four functions: “to proclaim (*kerussein*), to witness (*marturien*), to evangelize (*evangelizein*), and to teach (*didaskein*)” (“*The Word Made Flesh: Preaching and Community from the Apostolic to the Late Middle Ages*,” in *Speculum Sermonis: Interdisciplinary Reflections on the Medieval Sermon*, ed. Georgiana Donavin, Cary J. Nederman, and Richard Utz [Turnhout: Brepols, 2004], 25). Beverly Mayne Kienzle, on the other hand, has a more material approach, presenting a seven-point outline to help scholars determine whether found texts are sermons or not. I paraphrase her points here:

1. The sermon is a written text.
2. A preacher addresses an audience to instruct and exhort them.
3. The topic regards faith and morals, and is in some way relevant to the audience.
4. The preacher employs a sacred text (usually Scripture) as point of departure for discussion.
5. Sermons are transmitted in collections of all sorts: summary reports, *reportationes*, outlines and models. In the later thirteenth century collections of sermons meant to be read privately begin to appear as well.
6. The sermon is generically fluid, related to the letter, treatise, commentary, as well as the speech, *vitae*, and *principia* of university masters.
7. The relationship between the written text and the actual preaching event is never exact. Oftentimes a sermon is merely an outline for performances, or a *post facto* recording of the event by a scribe. Furthermore, many sermons handed down to us are in Latin, while they were almost definitely preached in the vernacular.

(Beverly Mayne Kienzle, “The Typology of the Medieval Sermon and its Development in the Middle Ages: Report on Work in Progress,” in *De l’Homélie au Sermon: Histoire de la prédication médiévale. Actes du colloque international de Louvain-la-Neuve, 9-11 juillet 1992*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse and Xavier Hermand [Louvain-la-Neuve, 1994], 84–88).

The sixth and seventh points are particularly important for consideration alongside the definitions of medieval theoreticians like Alan of Lille and Thomas of Chobham, in that they clarify some of the generic problems of sermons. While in its strictest sense a sermon is meant to be spoken to an audience, this does not mean that it cannot inhabit other textual forms. Kienzle takes care to note that sermons are transmitted in collections of all sorts: summary reports, *reportationes*, outlines and models. All sermons handed down to us are adulterated in one form or another, as transcription, even in the best of circumstances, does not exactly replicate the sermon as *performance*, the preaching event. Notwithstanding the difficulty in resurrecting the sermon as event, scholars like Carlo Delcorno have been able to reconstruct some of the oral aspects of the sermons of Giordano da Pisa, as I have noted in my first chapter.

61 Nicole Bériou persuasively argues for a reconsideration of medieval preaching from a more strictly educational perspective, as a mode of communication that frequently expresses far more than exhortations to penitence and

notes that these build their messages accretively from sermon to sermon: “Si tratta in tutti e tre i casi di un programma omiletico che si propone come un vero e proprio *curriculum* di istruzione religiosa che abbraccia tutto quello che il cristiano deve conoscere ai fini della salvezza.”⁶² In this sense, a single preacher's sermons – when considered in sequence – could be considered a true and proper *course*. The doctrinal aspect of preaching is transparent in Domenico Cavalca's comparison of Christ to a teacher in *Specchio della croce*: “ed è in croce, quasi come maestro in cattedra, che insegna, a qualunque vi pone la mente, ogni perfetta dottrina.”⁶³ Carlo Delcorno confirms the educative mission of preaching, as it “sembra quasi un rimedio all'insufficiente alfabetizzazione dei laici,” and cites an unedited sermon of Ambrogio Sansedoni: “Sed diceris: 'Nescio nec habeo libros Dei!' Respondeo et dico quod tuum legere sit tuum audire et ad predicationem frequenter venire” (“But you might say: 'I don't know or have the books of God!' I respond and tell you that for you to read *is* to hear and to come often to preaching”)⁶⁴

But what of the formal aspects of preaching? What did a sermon look like? Until the end of the twelfth century, “*praedicatio*” usually meant the homily, a form that remained virtually

confession. Schools, though existent, were very rare in these times, thus “les premiers rôles en matière d'éducation revenaient alors au deux milieux structurants de la famille et de l'Église” (Nicole Bériou, “La prédication aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age,” *Communications* 72, no. 1 (2002): 113.). This is confirmed by Bert Roest: “Throughout the high and later Middle Ages, the sermon was by far the most important instrument for religious instruction. It was the main vehicle for educating the populace at large, but also for instructing clerics, friars and other religious groups on a day to day basis” (Roest, *A history of Franciscan Education [c. 1210-1517]* 272).

62 Silvana Vecchio, “Le prediche e l'istruzione religiosa,” in *La predicazione dei frati dalla metà del 200 alla fine del 300, Atti del XXII Convegno internazionale Assisi, 13-15 ottobre 1994* (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1994), 306.

63 *Lo Specchio della croce: testo originale e versione in italiano* (Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 1992), 26. Cavalca restates this particular formula numerous times in the work (viz. 98, 314, 408, to name a few).

64 *Quasi quidam cantus: studi sulla predicazione medievale*, Biblioteca di lettere italiane 71 (Firenze: Olschki, 2009), 93. Italics added.

unchanged since the early days of Christianity. In his *Forma praedicandi* Robert of Basevorn associates the homily with figures as early as Christ and as late as Gregory and St. Bernard.⁶⁵ The homily has few generic features, except that it begins with a Biblical passage of considerable length, and is followed by a discussion of that same text. Since the homily privileged fidelity to Scripture over rhetoric, its substance is far and away more important than any stylistic features.⁶⁶ The homily remained unchanged and its form undiscussed for centuries, until a new form for composing sermons, now generally called *sermo modernus*, began to emerge in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, as can be seen in the *artes praedicandi* by the likes of Alain of Lille and Thomas of Chobham.⁶⁷ *Sermo modernus* is substantially different from the homily; it does not use large portions of Biblical text as a starting point but rather a small passage, which will then be divided and subdivided, and commented upon piecemeal; these “divisiones” and “distinctiones” are *sermo modernus*'s trademark features. I will discuss its formal particulars shortly.

The demands of these new preaching techniques highlighted the need for greater

65 “Et iterum post Christum, surrexerunt Apostoli et discipuli, inter quos beatus Paulus primatum tenet, et postea diversi confessores et doctores, inter quos mihi videntur insuper Augustinus, Gregorius et Bernardus singulares, quorum sermones solemniores et homeliae usque hodie frequentantur. Unde, ut mihi videtur, quod si aliquis niteretur imitari aliquem modorum quem aliquis istorum quinque praedictorum qui sunt Christus, Paulus, Augustinus, Gregorius et Bernardus tenuit, hoc esset magis laudabile” (Thomas Marie Charland, ed., *Artes Praedicandi; Contribution à l’histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge*, Publications de l’Institut d’études médiévales d’Ottawa VII [Paris: Vrin, 1936], 244).

66 For a good summary of the homily, see Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance*, 290–300. Regarding the apparent “non form” of the homily, Murphy, using John Chrysostom's sermons as an example, notes that “the homilies are remarkable for their purposeful lack of organization” (ibid., 299). This, Murphy says, is a consequence of a form that “avoided the usual arrangement and style recommended by contemporary rhetoric, in favor of Scriptural closeness.” (ibid.).

67 Evidence of *sermo modernus* bubbles to the surface at this point in history, but it isn't until the first decades of the fourteenth century that this form begins to be called by that proper name. Until then, it is often merely called *predicatio*, leading to inevitable confusion between more and less erudite sermonic registers (Delcorno, *Quasi quidam cantus: studi sulla predicazione medievale*, 172).

theological training among the mendicant orders. Because of this, the techniques of *sermo modernus* came to be associated with training centers, like the *studia generalia* of universities and in the religious schools across Europe.⁶⁸ In addition, this particular form became associated with the Franciscans and Dominicans especially, and the Dominicans above all.⁶⁹ *Sermo modernus* is heavily doctrinal and much less given to appeals to the emotions than are simpler forms of preaching, the *exhortatio* or *concionatio* frequently – though not exclusively – practiced by Franciscans.⁷⁰ Although preaching was not all didactic argument and did sometimes contain narrative portions and exempla, those parts of the sermon were regarded as subordinate to the

68 Many clerics were trained in preaching in the great theological centers of Europe, such as the university of Paris. Theological training there was tripartite, including *lectio*, *disputatio*, and *predicatio*; Peter the Chanter calls the first two of these the foundation and the walls of theological learning, and, preaching the roof (cited in: John Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and His Circle* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970], 90–116). See also Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education*, 293. Sermons permeated every aspect of university life: all students of theology were required to attend sermons on Sundays and obligatory feast days. Sermons always preceded lectures on the Bible. During Lent and Pentecost, universities held *collationes*, multi-day conferences consisting entirely of sermons (Bert Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction Before the Council of Trent* [Leiden: Brill, 2004], 7; Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education*, 295–97). Since sermons were a part of theological training, all students and teachers in the theology faculty listened to and gave sermons frequently (Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction Before the Council of Trent*, 8). Preaching was also a central component of training not only in the *studia generalia* but also in custodial schools. (Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education*, 293). The diffusion of *florilegia*, diverse compendia of distinctions and authorities, commentaries and glosses of the Bible and *artes praedicandi* document a continent-wide increase of interest in preaching in the late Middle Ages (*ibid.*, 287). But however much preaching was a part of university life, Neslihan Şenocak says that this did not always translate to preaching to the laity in the first several decades of the *duecento*, “the educated clergy were frequently unwilling to perform pastoral duties, and often studying or being part of the schools was far more preferable” (*The Poor and the Perfect: The Rise of Learning in the Franciscan Order, 1209-1310* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012], 153).

69 Marian Michèle Mulchahey, “*First the Bow Is Bent in Study...*”: *Dominican Education Before 1350*, *Studies and Texts* 132 (Toronto, Ontario: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998), 400–401. See also Chapter 6 in Daniel R. Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence: the Social World of Franciscan and Dominican Spirituality*, vols. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), especially pages 96-100. Dominicans were also enthusiastic compilers of the various *artes praedicandi*, which discuss elements of *sermo modernus*. See, for example Humbert of Romans, who writes the *Liber de eruditione praedicatorum* before his death in 1277, and Thomas Waleys, who wrote the *De modo componendi sermones*, in the first decades of the fourteenth century (Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance*, 333, 341).

70 The Franciscan *exhortatio* and *concionatio* will be further discussed in my final chapter.

argumentation that constituted the bulk of the text.⁷¹ It can be taken for granted that audiences of *sermo modernus* would have to be well enough educated to understand its relatively complex form and content, but this does not mean that laypersons did not hear sermons styled after this model. While there is some critical discussion about when the form began to trickle down to the laity, documentary evidence shows that by the 1260s *sermo modernus* was being preached to the laity in the French vernacular (“in gallico”) in Paris,⁷² and by the fourteenth century, it was the preacher's favorite form,⁷³ as can be seen in the Florentine sermons of Giordano da Pisa, delivered around 1304-1305.⁷⁴ Florence, however, is a special case, as it was a major center of

71 Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, 97.

72 Nicole Bériou, *l'Avènement des maîtres de la parole: la prédication à Paris au XIII^e siècle*, vol. 1, Collection des Études Augustiniennes: Série Moyen-Âge et temps modernes 31 (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1998), 126. Most scholars agree that all sermons to the laity were spoken in the vernacular. Bert Roest provides an interesting twist on this, arguing that a sermon “would not necessarily have been a completely vernacular affair,” and could exist in some kind of macaronic middle ground if directed towards the more educated of laypersons, employing Latin at least occasionally, to flatter the audience's intellectual self-regard. Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education*, 312. Carlo Delcorno would temper Roest's claim slightly, admitting that most Italian sermons in the *duecento* were delivered in the vernacular, and used Latin mostly in their distinctions and when a technical were necessary, but adding Latin was not employed frequently enough to consider sermons truly “macaronic” (“Tra latino e volgare” in *Quasi quidam cantus: studi sulla predicazione medievale*, 23–41). Delcorno does, however, highlight a notable exception in the sermons of Angelo da Porta Sole, which are crammed with enough unusual Latin terms that the sermon seems to occupy both Latin and Italian simultaneously (ibid., 33–34).

73 “By the fourteenth century, when Robert of Basevorn wrote his *Forma praedicandi*, the thematic sermon had become the favored form of preaching” (Phyllis B. Roberts, “The *Ars Praedicandi* and the Medieval Sermon,” in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. Carolyn Muessig [Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill, 2002], 49–50).

74 Carlo Delcorno calls Giordano's corpus “the oldest and perhaps the most significant document of vernacular preaching in Italy, and well reflects common usages in the whole of this literary genre up until the fifteenth century” (Delcorno, “Medieval Preaching in Italy (1200-1500),” 471). Giordano's sermons very clearly use the structures of *sermo modernus*, as can be seen by studying any sermon from any of the following volumes: *Quaresimale fiorentino*, ed. Carlo Delcorno (Florence: Sansoni, 1974); *Avventuale fiorentino 1304*, ed. Silvia Serventi, Collana di studi della Fondazione Michele Pellegrino (Bologna: Il mulino, 2006); *Prediche del Beato fra Giordano da Rivalto dell'ordine dei Predicatori, recitate in Firenze dal MCCCIII al MCCCVI, ed ora per la prima volta pubblicate*, 2 vols. (Florence: Magheri, 1831).

this new sophisticated and intellectual preaching culture, second only to Paris.⁷⁵ A preacher there could also expect a relatively high percentage of his lay audience to be not only learned but also literate.⁷⁶

Because these sophisticated new sermon techniques were an important part of university theological programs in Paris and elsewhere, some historians have suggested a symbiosis between preaching and scholastic philosophy, especially regarding the similarities of terminology used in both *praedicatio* and *disputatio*. Others rebut this claim by noting the contentious relationship between theology and philosophy from the second half of the twelfth century on, and especially in the wake of the severe conflicts between theology and Aristotelian scholasticism that culminate in the 1210 ban of Aristotle in Paris.⁷⁷ In this way *praedicatio* and philosophy find themselves at ideological loggerheads.⁷⁸ The historian David d'Avray says that preaching must be considered separately from the rest of university learning because their respective rhetorics were directed towards different ends: “The rhetoric of the *artes praedicandi* was derived neither from the dialectic of Aristotle nor the rhetorical techniques of Cicero. The function was not to silence an opponent or to win a legal case, but to save souls, and to achieve

75 David L. D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 156–160.

76 C.T. Davis relies on Giovanni Villani's claim to ten percent literacy in Florence, shared by both men and women, and extraordinary percentage for the time (“Education in Dante's Florence,” *Speculum* 40, no. 3 [July 1965]: 415). Daniel Waley concurs that the literacy rate was very high, but hesitates to speculate about percentages (*The Italian City Republics*, 3rd ed. [Essex, England: Longman, 1988], 64). D'Avray also takes a degree of literacy in Florence as a given (*The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300*, 34).

77 For a brief overview of the relationship between theology and philosophy, see Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and His Circle*, 102–107.

78 D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300*, 167.

this end a new method had to be invented.”⁷⁹ D'Avray concludes by explaining that the comparison is between apples and oranges:

The use of the word 'scholastic' to describe thirteenth-century preaching blurs some fundamental differences between it and the disputations, *summas*, and Sentence commentaries of thirteenth-century masters, and, indeed, the treatises of Abelard or Anselm. If thirteenth-century preaching is to be called scholastic, then we would need to find another word for the intellectual phenomenon which everyone has hitherto called by that name.⁸⁰

Any apparent similarity between preaching and scholastic philosophy is thus only cosmetic detail, in d'Avray's view.⁸¹ If the point of the sermon is not to convince by reason but to move the heart, features reminiscent of scholastic philosophy are either not central to the sermon itself, or they are used to serve different ends altogether. The focus on persuasion over philosophical discussion can be confirmed by statements in the *artes praedicandi*, such as this one from

Thomas of Chobham:

Est Evangelium potius persuasio quam probatio. Unde, potius pertinet ad rethoricam quam ad logicam. Est enim rethorica ars dicendi apposite ad persuadendum.

79 (ibid., 167–68). d'Avray finds his argument on an essay by Etienne Gilson: “Michel Menot et la technique du sermon médiévale,” *Revue d'Histoire Franciscaine* 2 (1925).

80 *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300*, 169. As a matter of fact, in the years since the publication of d'Avray's book, scholasticism has been redefined – by one historian, at least – in a way that more easily accommodates *sermo modernus* within it. Ulrich Leinsle's recent book, *Introduction to Scholastic Theology*, jettisons older, more restrictive definitions of scholasticism to allow for a more accommodating view; scholasticism, he says, is “a collective name for the theology that was developed along various lines in medieval schools and universities” and not “a uniform structure, the essence of which can be summed up in a definition” (*Introduction to Scholastic Theology*, trans. Michael Miller [Catholic University of America Press, 2010], 15). Leinsle includes *sermo modernus* in his definition, and discusses it on pp. 68-72. A redefinition of scholasticism, however, does not challenge the fundamentals of d'Avray's argument, which means to separate sermonic modes of discourse from philosophical ones.

81 D'Avray explains the reasons: “One is that sermons did not normally proceed by raising problems, the other is that formal logical argument (when we meet it at all) is in a manner of speaking the icing on the cake, and not mixed into the batter as it is in Sentence commentaries, *summas* and disputed questions.” (*The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300*, 170).

The Gospel is persuasion rather than proof. Hence, it regards rhetoric rather than logic. Rhetoric is the art of speaking for the sake of persuasion.⁸²

While Thomas's reference to rhetoric poses a challenge to d'Avray's absolute claim for a “new method” liberated from the Classical influences of Aristotle and Cicero, the argument still stands for a technique at least partially independent of the particular modes of reasoning peculiar to scholasticism. An exploration of the *artes* show that the component features in *sermo modernus* – for example, divisions, distinctions and authorities – are used in radically different ways than they are in scholastic thought (even though superficial resemblances may seduce the inattentive scholar). A sermon will begin by announcing its distinctions, then will support each distinction by some Biblical or patristic authority. scholastic dialectics, on the other hand, start with conflicting opinions between authorities, and then uses distinctions to reconcile the apparent conflict.⁸³ While both methods share in what d'Avray calls a “subdividing mentality,” this says more about an overarching medieval *forma mentis* than it does the influence of one practice over another.⁸⁴ D'Avray's claims can be confirmed by a careful reading of some of the *artes praedicandi* of the time, which insistently hammer home the value of rhetoric for the preacher, but leave dialectic essentially undiscussed.⁸⁵

82 *Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, 123.

83 D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300*, 73–76.

84 *Ibid.*, 179. And thus when Irwin Panofsky calls a *collatio* by Pope Clement VI on the approbation day of Charles IV (6 Nov. 1346) “a “characteristic masterpiece of scholastic eulogy,” he does not take scholasticism in a strictly philosophical sense as does d'Avray (*Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* [New American Library, 1976], 97). The structure of the speech Panofsky cites, with all its parallel constructions and rhyming distinctions, bears the marks of *sermo modernus*, not those of scholastic philosophy. See: Clement VI, “100 Collatio Papae Cum Approbatione - Nov. 6.” in *Acta Regni Karoli IV*, vol. 8, Monumenta Germaniae Historica Legum Sectio 4 (Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1910), 142–163.

85 Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance*, 320–321.

In short, although the two practices, scholasticism and preaching, sometimes use similar terminologies, the different ways those terminologies are employed show two entirely different systems of reasoning.

The structure of *sermo modernus*.

In light of the insistent claims about the nature of *sermo modernus* by a scholar like d'Avray, it comes as a surprise to find that there is no simple formula prescribing what such a sermon actually *is*. To date the discussion is – to put it bluntly – a morass, due to the lack of clear parameters defining the form and its intended audience; there isn't even a good consensus on what to properly call it. The term itself is a *post hoc* fabrication; the *modernus* part of its name made its debut some time in the fourteenth century, at least a hundred years after theologians and preachers first began to discuss and write about the form (when *sermo* was tacked on is anybody's guess).⁸⁶ Until then, the new form was simply called “praedicatio,” with no name to distinguish it from other kinds of preaching.⁸⁷ Among current scholars the situation is no clearer, although in contrast to the tersely vague nomenclature of the Middle Ages, contemporary naming tends to prefer a more completist approach to naming: it is called a “university sermon,”⁸⁸

86 Thomas Waleys, writing in the first half of the fourteenth century, is apparently the first to begin to refer to a “modern” style in his preaching manual *De modo componendi sermones*. Waleys first suggests a “consuetudinem modernam,” or a “modus iste modernus,” distinct from the homily used “aliquo tempore” (in Charland, *Artes Praedicandi; Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge*, 343, 347). He uses the descriptive adjective “modernus” at several other points in his treatise.

87 Thomas of Chobham, *Summa de Arte Praedicandi*.

88 Perhaps anticipating this great confusion, Bataillon warned that “We ought to use the expression 'University Sermon' with some care and restrict it to the official sermons *coram universitate*, delivered by Masters or

“school sermon”⁸⁹ “scholastic sermon,”⁹⁰ “thematic sermon”⁹¹ “doctrinal preaching,”⁹² and “proper sermon,”⁹³ to name just a few popular terms. It appears that some of the best scholars flat-out avoid calling this kind of sermon anything whatsoever; the famed late Dominican scholar Louis-Jacques Bataillon – a paragon among historians of medieval sermonics – refers to this form in a remarkable periphrasis (in a fitting alloy of a good historian's caution and a good Christian's humility): “le genre littéraire avec lequel nous avons été familiarisés par les travaux de Th. Charland.”⁹⁴ Turning to Thomas Marie Charland, the first editor (1936) of two of the most important *artes praedicandi* of the High Middle Ages – Robert Basevorn's *Forma praedicandi* and Thomas Waleys' *De modo componendi sermones* – one finds that he, at the prompting of Waleys, identifies a new “art de prêcher” and qualifies it – only adjectivally however – as “moderne.”⁹⁵ A true and proper *sermo modernus* this is not (although Charland does cautiously rub up against the concept of an official term in his next paragraph, describing it as “cette

Bachelors of Theology, which students and probably also masters were compelled to attend. Of course there was only one such preaching, with morning Mass sermon and evening Vespers collation in one day. But too often the appellation 'University sermon' has been given to sermons delivered by masters to an audience outside the University, and sometimes to sermons which have merely been preserved with true University sermons. Such mistaken usages can be very misleading” (Louis-Jacques Bataillon, *La prédication au XIIIe siècle en France et Italie* [Brookfield: Variorum, 1993], 24–25).

89 Senoçak, *The Poor and the Perfect: The Rise of Learning in the Franciscan Order, 1209-1310*, 150.

90 Leinsle, *Introduction to Scholastic Theology*, 68; Mulchahey, *First the Bow Is Bent in Study--*, 401.

91 Roberts, “The *Ars Praedicandi* and the Medieval Sermon,” 49–50.

92 Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education*, 274.

93 Bataillon, *La prédication au XIIIe siècle en France et Italie*, 28.

94 (*ibid.*, 458).

95 Charland, *Artes Praedicandi; Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge*, 9.

rhétorique 'moderne'⁹⁶).

It is equally hard to identify the typical features that constitute *sermo modernus* beyond a simple list of its most common generic features. While different *artes praedicandi* present different formulae for the general shape and substance of sermons, what was actually preached could be quite different from the prescriptions informing it. In the absence of any precise definition of *sermo modernus*'s features, it is also difficult to be able to tell which sermons were preached to the clergy, and which to the laity, as the line of demarcation between the two theoretically ought to be determined on stylistic grounds. However, a sermon is by nature a fluid form resistant to absolute generic boundaries and, predictably, little consensus can be found among historians regarding sermon styles and the audiences they are intended for.⁹⁷ Nicole Bériou also notes the impossibility of delineating the precise formal differences between lay sermons and those intended for a clerical audience, a problem that substantially undercuts claims that *sermo modernus* was intended exclusively for the clergy: “En définitive, du point de vue formel, la ligne de partage entre sermons aux clercs et aux simples gens était extrêmement ténue, et bien souvent inexistante.”⁹⁸ In addition to this, genre concerns complicate our understanding of the medieval sermon, as many texts presumably meant for study or devotional reading are

96 Ibid.

97 Bert Roest highlights this difficulty at definitively pinning down the *sermo modernus* form and its audience. At one point he argues that Dominican documents of the time distinguish between two sermonic styles – the older homiletic form and *sermo modernus* – and reserve the clergy for the latter, the laity for the former. The basic homily, he says, was intended for those *rusticos* – ordinary people with little training in theology and Latin – while *sermo modernus* was reserved for only the most educated (*A History of Franciscan Education*, 282). Franciscans, he adds, follow the same general division between the two forms. However, only a few pages later Roest admits that “in many cases, this division is difficult to maintain, and is based more on the structure and the character of surviving (abbreviated) model sermons and the rules from the *Ars Praedicandi* than on an insight into medieval homiletic practice.” (ibid., 290).

98 *L'avènement des maîtres de la parole*, 1:151.

formally structured like *sermo modernus* either entirely or in part. Jacopo da Varazze's *Golden Legend* (c. 1260), for example, is highly sermonic in character, and his article on marriage is full of distinctions.⁹⁹ Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* contains an elaborate array of divisions and distinctions.¹⁰⁰ Were such texts meant for silent reading, or to be read aloud? Preached? One cannot know for sure. Furthermore, it turns out that the style of *sermo modernus* is found in texts that are not sermons at all: among the laity, Francis Accursius, son of the famous Bolognese glossator of Justinian's *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, fills his letter to Pope Nicholas III with distinctions and authorities, as if the epistle were a sermon.¹⁰¹ What, then, actually is *sermo modernus*, and whom it is intended for are still questions quite open to debate.

What we have inherited is a jalopy propped up on cinderblocks, a hodgepodge of different parts thrown under the same hood. I will leave the restoration of this vehicle to the historians; I only ask for the permission to call this sermon form as I have been calling it – *sermo modernus* – and to define it according to the following simple and conservative parameters that I have gleaned from a handful of *artes praedicandi* and scholarly sources. Because there is no uniform prescription for *sermo modernus*, my own outline of its form must be considered a

99 D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300*, 72.

100 Note for example, his discussion on the six stages of contemplative ascent, which represent the six faculties of the soul. Even for one who does not understand Latin, the rhyme and rhythm of Bonaventure's distinctions are transparent: "Iuxta igitur sex gradus ascensionis in Deum sex sunt gradus per quos ascendimus *ab imis ad summa, ab exterioribus ad intima, a temporalibus conscendimus ad aeterna*, scilicet sensus, imaginatio, ratio, intellectus, intelligentia et apex mentis seu synderesis scintilla. Hos gradus in nobis habemus *plantatos per naturam, deformatos per culpam, reformatos per gratiam, purgandos per iustitiam, exercendos per scientiam, perficiendos per sapientiam.*" (*Itinerario Dell'anima a Dio*, ed. Letterio Mauro [Milano: Bompiani, 2002], sec. 1.6, italics added).

101 D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300*, 32. See also: George L. Haskins and Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "A Diplomatic Mission of Francis Accursius and His Oration before Pope Nicholas III," *The English Historical Review* 58, no. 232 (October 1, 1943): 424–427.

model in progress. My approach attempts to be more accommodating than restrictive, as I collect together what to my knowledge are only the most general and least controversial aspects of the form.

The features of the *sermo modernus*¹⁰² can be divided into five parts: *thema*, *prothema*, *introductio*, *divisio* and *clausio*. Of these five, the *thema*, *introductio* and *divisio* are the most important and characteristic of the form.¹⁰³ And of these three, the *thema* is the first thing to consider when trying to identify a *sermo as modernus*, as it is the departure point for the entire sermon, and also often the first phrase spoken by the preacher. A *thema* must be a passage from the Bible,¹⁰⁴ and it must be short. Thomas Waleys, in his fourteenth century *De modo componendi sermones* considers a short *thema* the *sine qua non* of the *sermo modernus* style, setting it apart from the homily, which is marked by a longer Biblical passage:

Quartum documentum est iuxta consuetudinem modernam, ut, quando praedicatur clero, thema non sit multum prolixum. Verum est tamen quod aliquo tempore consueverunt accipi themata ita longa quod continebant duas vel tres vel quattor clausulas. Modo autem sic accipitur quod non continet integre unam clausuam, si fuerit clausula multum longa; sed accipitur aliqua pars clausulae, si sit clausula

102See Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance*, 269–355; Delcorno, “Medieval Preaching in Italy (1200-1500),” 470–478; Mulchahey, *First the Bow Is Bent in Study--*, 401–419; Leinsle, *Introduction to Scholastic Theology*, 68–73. For a more detailed and source-heavy discussion of the development of *sermo modernus*, see “Une parole nouvelle,” Chapter 3 in Bériou, *L'avènement des maîtres de la parole*, 1:133–214.

103Carlo Delcorno, *L'exemplum nella predicazione volgare di Giordano da Pisa.*, Memorie/Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, Classe die Scienze Morali e Lettere 36, 1 (Venezia, 1972), 1. D'Avray calls divisions and authorities “the really essential features of thirteenth-century mendicant sermons” (*The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300*, 172).

104In the *Forma Praedicandi* Basevorn is adamant that the *thema* can only be a verse from the Bible (and not, for example, a patristic source), and it must be cited exactly without embellishment or omission. See chapter sixteen of his work, in Charland, *Artes Praedicandi; Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge*, 250–251. While there are no examples of a theme that is not derived from Scripture, the first *ars* to discuss the *thema*, Alexander of Ashby's *De modo praedicandi*, does not specify whether it must perforce be Scripture (Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance*, 316–317).

longa, vel aliqua clausula parva vel duo brevissimae ad plus.

The fourth document is near the modern custom, that the theme should not be very prolix when preached by a cleric. It is of course true that at one time it was customary to take up long themes comprised of two or three sentences. These days, however it is taken up in such a way that it does not entirely comprise a sentence, if that sentence should be very long; instead some part of the sentence is taken up if it is long, or instead a small sentence, or two very short ones at the most.¹⁰⁵

The short *thema* serves as the foundation for the entire sermon. It will be divided and then commented upon piecemeal.¹⁰⁶ Because of the way the *thema* is divided, Simon Tugwell calls it “a row of pegs on which to hang the preacher's message, rather than the actual material of the sermon.”¹⁰⁷

The *thema* is sometimes followed by a *prothema*.¹⁰⁸ In general the *prothema* serves as an interpretive key for the *thema*, relating to it in some logical or verbal way.¹⁰⁹ It sometimes

105(*De modo componendi sermones*, in Thomas Marie Charland O.P., ed., *Artes Praedicandi; Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge*, Publications de l'Institut d'études médiévales d'Ottawa VII [Paris: Vrin, 1936] 343).

106“The most common feature to sermons is that it begins with a Bible passage, the *thema*. Usually key words are selected out, and are used to develop a motif or theme” (Kienzle, “The Typology of the Medieval Sermon and its Development in the Middle Ages: Report on Work in Progress,” 93).

107Simon Tugwell, “De Huiusmodi Sermonibus Textur Omnis Recta Predicatio: Changing Attitudes Towards the Word of God,” in *De l'Homélie au Sermon: Histoire de la prédication médiévale. Actes du colloque international de Louvain-la-Neuve, 9-11 juillet 1992*, ed. Jaqueline Hamesse and Xavier Hermand (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1994), 161. For a good summary about the rhetoric of medieval sermons, particularly the matters of dividing and distinguishing, see: Bériou, *L'avènement des maîtres de la parole*, 1:147–157.

108Nicole Bériou credits Thomas of Chobham for bringing the prothema into the world (Bériou, *L'avènement des maîtres de la parole*, 1:141–143). Humbert of Romans elaborates on it, noting that the prothema is the place where a new preacher might state his insufficiency for the task at hand. This keeps to a degree with the practice in the *ars dictandi* of front loading a letter with counterclaims by the writer of his insufficiency (Humbert of Romans, “De Eruditione Praedicatorum,” in *Opera de Vita Regulari 2. Expositio in Constitutiones. Instructiones de Officiis Ordinis. De Eruditione Praedicatorum. Epistolae Encyclicae*, ed. Joachim Joseph Berthier [Turin: Marietti, 1956], 481–83).

109Richard H Rouse and Mary A Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland*, Studies and Texts - Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies 47 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute

contextualizes the *thema* within a conceptual framework, or situates it within a larger topical context, such as the time of the liturgical year or the specific audience being addressed;

alternately, a *prothema* could introduce the preacher, who may not be known to his auditors.

Next, the *introductio* explains the *thema* itself, using similes or aspects of the liturgy to amplify it.¹¹⁰

The *thema* is then divided into its constituent parts;¹¹¹ this is called the *divisio*. Oftentimes a *divisio* comprehends only a single word.¹¹² Any one *divisio* will be then subdivided by a *distinctio*.¹¹³ This mode of reasoning, employing ramifications followed by further ramifications can be compared to a tree; in fact, in many *artes praedicandi* the rhetoric of *sermo modernus* is

of Mediaeval Studies, 1979), 73; Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, 99.

110Delcorno, “Medieval Preaching in Italy (1200-1500),” 471.

111Bériou, *L'avènement des maîtres de la parole*, 1:148.

112Thomas of Chobham provides an illustrating example of the division of the *thema*. “Videns Dominus civitatem flevit super illam,” is divided into three parts. The first examines only the “videns Dominum,” exploring the nature of the divine and his omniscience; the second part examines the meaning behind the term “civitatem”; the third part discusses “quomodo debeat intelligi quod Dominus fleuit” (*Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, 284). It is worth noting that “Dominus” is Thomas's addition, which does not occur in the original passage (Luke 19:41). Writing about a century before Robert Basevorn, Thomas did not get the memo that the *thema* ought not to make any innovation on Holy Scripture at all (Charland, *Artes Praedicandi; Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge*, 250–251). A final word of caution when using Thomas of Chobham: preaching manuals after him note a difference between *divisio* discussed here, and *distinctio*, about which more will be said shortly. While both of these demarcate modes of dividing language, they are fundamentally different, both in their ontology and function. Thomas subsumes both of these under a single term: *divisio*. His reluctance to distinguish *distinctio* from *divisio* can potentially baffle the unprepared scholar.

For more information on the concept of *divisio* see Charland in: Ibid., 150–152. See also Carlo Delcorno, *Giordano da Pisa e l'antica predicazione volgare*, Biblioteca di “Lettere italiane” 14 (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1975), 89.

113The concept of dividing and distinguishing antedates *sermo modernus* as a whole, but it has always been associated with religious textuality. Richard and Mary Rouse say: “The earliest and best-known example of the focus on chapter structure is the new division of the scriptures into chapters, attributed to Langton, which was in existence by 1203 and which was popularized in the biblical tools produced by the Dominicans,” (*Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland*, 39). Admittedly, the kinds of divisions discussed here regard the separation of texts into chapters and paragraphs and the like, but this is not unrelated to the later use of divisions in predicatory discourse.

visualized by tree illustrations.¹¹⁴ The *thema*, *introductio* and *prothema* form the trunk, while divisions and distinctions constitute the branches and leaves. The divisions and subdivisions of the theme, along with the remaining discussion on each of these divisions, constitute the true and proper *dilatatio* of the sermon. Finally, the *clausio* restates and summarizes all these divisions and distinctions, and a short prayer closes the entire sermon.

As a side note, a good modern sermon will feature many *auctoritates* and *exempla*, to underscore the claims that the preacher makes in his sermon. These will frequently be employed in the sermon's *dilatatio*. An *auctoritas*, as it is to this day, is a citation from an authoritative source. For sermons, this can mean either the Bible or a patristic source. However, authorities need not always be Christian; as Thomas of Chobham notes in his *Summa*, an authority could also in theory be a contemporary or even a pagan.¹¹⁵ However, the most cited *auctoritas* is consistently the Bible itself, cited much more than even the most notable patristic sources. An *exemplum* is an anecdotal story, which the preacher employs to illustrate a point. They can derive from practically anywhere: a story in the Bible, the life of a saint, or an anecdotal account from everyday life, describing protagonists from milieux quite similar to that of their listenership.¹¹⁶ *Exempla* are powerful persuasive devices, as they vividly recount a story in its particulars, rendering palpably present whatever abstract point the preacher seeks to communicate.

114An example of this illustration can be found in the frontispiece of Charland's book cited above.

115Thomas of Chobham equates the citation of Pagan authorities with robbing gold from the Egyptians: “quamuis liceat furari aurum ab Egyptiis [...] et assumere philosophicas auctoritates in subsidium sacre pagine” (Thomas of Chobham, *Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, 89). He takes the image of robbing from Egyptians from Augustine in *De Doctrina Christiana* (II.xi).

116Rouse and Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland*, 81.

Sermo modernus continued: divisions and distinctions

The methodological heart of *sermo modernus* is in the *divisiones* of the *thema*, and the further *distinctiones* of each *divisio*. These will also prove the most important for our later discussion on Dante. In the *divisio* thought is parsed according to grammatical or syntactical principles first, semantic principles second. For example, Giordano da Pisa delivers a sermon in front of the Sta. Maria Novella church on 17 January 1304;¹¹⁷ the chosen *thema* is Mary's words to Jesus from John 2:3: “vinum non habent.” Giordano divides his *thema* into three parts, one part for each word. The division is accompanied by an explanation, which signposts the interpretive principles of his analysis of the passage. Since the passage he cites relates to Jesus's first miracle, a gift at the wedding of Cana, Giordano discusses gifts and the three things to consider regarding them (“tre cose sono che abisognano di considerare in ogni petizione”).¹¹⁸ He lists these: “l'utilitate e la bontà del dono,” (“the utility and the goodness of the gift”), “se tu ti ne senti vòto di quella cosa,” (“if you feel a lack of that thing”), and “la necessità e 'l bisogno che nne fa” (“the necessity and the need that there is”).¹¹⁹ This informal division is then recast in proper *sermo modernus* form, in rhyming Latin:

Prima *doni nobilitatem*, in ciò che dice *vinum*; secondo *mundanorum vacuitatem*, in ciò che dice *non*; tertio *propter necessitatem* in ciò che dice *habent*.

First the *doni nobilitatem*, in which it is said *vinum*; second, the *mundanorum vacuitatem*, in which it is said *non*; third, *propter necessitatem* in which it is said *habent*¹²⁰

117 *Avventuale fiorentino 1304*, 477–499.

118 *Ibid.*, 492.

119 *Ibid.*, 493.

The divisions are constructed specifically to rhyme, creating parallel cadenzas that suggest an inherent logic behind them. Each of these *divisiones* (*vinum qua* gift, *non qua* lack of a thing, and *habent qua* degree of need) are then addressed separately and in order. Next comes a *distinctio* for the first *divisio*, which extracts meaning from *vinum*.¹²¹ What, Giordano asks, is wine good for?

IV proprietadi àe il vino, le quali sono propriamente ne l'amore celeste, per le quali è dirittamente assimigliato a vino. La prima però che 'l vino *habet ad nutriendum, ad delectandum, ad satiandum, ad inebriandum*, e sono queste bellissime cose.

Wine has four properties, which are also proper to heavenly love (for which it is rightly compared to wine). The first because wine *habet ad nutriendum, ad delectandum, ad satiandum, ad inebriandum*, and these are most beautiful things.¹²²

The *distinctio* too follows a parallel scheme in cadence and rhyme. In an unusual *tour de force*, Giordano sub-distinguishes the *distinctio* once again:

Dico prima che 'l vino *habet ad nutriendum*, cioè a nutrire, e questo fa in IV modi, *vegetat, auget, generat, confortat vel sanat*. Tutte queste proprietadi àe in sé l'amore celeste.¹²³

I say first that wine *habet ad nutriendum*, that is for nourishment, and it does this in four ways, *vegetat, auget, generat, confortat vel sanat*. All of these properties are also in heavenly love.

Giordano devotes the rest of his sermon to the “vegetable” (“vegetat”) qualities of wine, is nutritive properties that establish it as superior to water, which “non da sustancia nulla al corpo”

120Ibid.

121Traditionally, *distinctiones* are founded solely on quadripartite allegorical readings of Scripture. Giordano, instead, innovatively uses natural philosophy to articulate his distinctions here.

122Giordano da Pisa, *Avventuale fiorentino 1304*, 493.

123Ibid., 493–94.

(“gives no sustenance to the body”).¹²⁴

The trademark of the distinction, as Giordano shows, is an emphasis on rhyme and meter. Here is another example, in which Alain of Lille divides the different sorts of *obedientia*. I will cite without translation in order to focus on the pure sound and meter that identify the distinctions

“Prima est meritoria, secunda introductoria, tertia questuosa, quarta perniciosa.
Prima est efficiens, secunda faciens, tertia deficiens, quarta interficiens.”¹²⁵

Bonaventure, in turn, vaunts an even more refined use of the *distinctio*; he is known to divide his sermons into three parts, establishing three *distinctiones* for each *divisio*, and citing an *auctoritas* for each heading.¹²⁶ Here, his distinction on the Epiphany not only rhymes, but features internal rhymes as well, creating an effect of triple crescendos that roll and crash like waves on the shore:

dulcedo benignae allocutionis, amaritudo magnae tribulationis, sollicitudo
discretæ inquisitionis.¹²⁷

The stylishly constructed cadences and rhymes of these examples show how the division and the distinction can provide ornament, refinement and equipoise to sermons. They are, in short, the flowers of an elegant sermon.

Though these are not flowers alone, as form and content are tightly linked in the medieval

¹²⁴Ibid., 494.

¹²⁵ Alain of Lille, *Summa de arte praedicatoria*, in *PL* 210:145.

¹²⁶Rouse and Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland*, 76.

¹²⁷Bonaventure, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 9, 171. Cit. in: Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons*, 77.

sermo modernus. The divisions and distinctions by Giordano are founded on descriptions of the physical properties of wine, proclaiming their establishment by the logic of the natural sciences. In this way, a link between poetic truth and ontological truth is suggested. The divisions of a preacher like Bonaventure, in turn, rigorously found themselves on Biblical or patristic authority. In this way, they manifest themselves as encrypted missives from the core of theological truth. Each division and subdivision, it seems, intends to extract as much meaning from words as possible, to perform the most exhaustive investigation of the *signum*, which, when done correctly, always and inevitably leads back to the *res* itself. The project, in sum, begins with faith in the medieval commonplace that *nomina sunt consequentia rerum*; however it accomplishes its aims by reversing the passive syntax of that statement, setting the *nomen* off to sniff out and pursue (*con-sequor*) its own true *res*.

This deep reading of the function of the distinction is more apparent through an examination of its history. The distinction was originally employed as an exegetical tool, a critical method for extracting meaning from the Bible.¹²⁸ These earliest books of *distinctiones*, such as those of Peter Comestor or Alain of Lille, are lists of Bible terms, organized like dictionaries.¹²⁹ The epistemological method is simple: if the same word occurs in different contexts in the Bible, and thus has different meanings depending on the context, why not look at all those meanings together in the quest for truth? In the words of an early manual on preaching, attributed to William of Auvergne, “Est autem distinctio diversarum acceptionum eiusdem dictionis ostensio.”¹³⁰ In short, a *distinctio* consists of little more than different meanings

¹²⁸Bériou, *L'avènement des maîtres de la parole*, 1:86.

¹²⁹Delcorno, “Medieval Preaching in Italy (1200-1500),” 471.

¹³⁰(A. De Poorter, “Un manuel de prédication médiévale. Le ms. 97 de Bruges,” *Revue néo-scholastique de philosophie*. 25e année, no. 98 [1923]: 203). James Murphy says that “there is no strong reason to disbelieve the attribution to William of Auvergne (*Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance*, 331).

(“diversarum acceptionum”) for the same word (“dictionis”). From this perspective it becomes easy to see how the *distinctio* finds itself connected to quadripartite allegorical exegesis.¹³¹ An example will render the connection clearly enough:

Si occurrat mihi in sermone hoc nomen: *Pax* vel *Gratia*, pluribus et diversis modis accipiam et ita distinguam. Est pax peccatoris, pax precatoris, pax temporis, pax eternitatis. Pax peccatoris, unde in Ps: “Quia zelavi super iniquos, pacem peccatorum videns.” Hanc pacem non venit Dominus mittere in terram, sed magis gladium, id est huius male pacis destructionem. Pax precatoris, unde in Evangelio: “Pacem relinquo vobis,” etc. Pax temporis, unde in libro Reg. Ezechias: tantum sit pax in diebus nostris. Pax eternitatis, unde: “In pace in idipsum dormiam,” etc.¹³²

If this noun should occur to me in a sermon: *Peace* or *Grace*, I can take and distinguish it in many and different ways. There is the peace of the sinner, the peace of one who prays, the peace of time, the peace of eternity. The peace of the sinner, as in Psalms: “Because I had zeal over the wicked, seeing the peace of sinners.” The Lord did not come to put this peace on the earth, but rather the sword, in other words the destruction of this wicked peace. The peace of one who prays, such as in the Gospel: “I bring you peace,” etc. The peace of time, as in the book of King Hezekiah: “such be the peace in our days.” The peace of eternity, as in: “In peace in the same will I sleep,” etc.

This excerpt from an *ars* distinguishes an abstraction, *peace*; however, the distinction is employed to find meaning in far more concrete words as well. Take, for example, the distinction on “*equus*,” that Richard and Mary Rouse discovered on the flyleaf of a manuscript from Rouen:

Equus: Predicator. Iob XXXIX.e, “Numquid prebebis equo fortitudinem, aut circumdabis collo eius hinnitum?” Glosa Gregorii hoc loco equi nomine sanctus predicator accipitur, cui dominus se dare prius fortitudinem et postmodum hinnitum asserit. Nam predicator ante fortitudinem accipit, vicia in se

131Bériou explains the function of the distinction in its earliest occurrences in sermons at the beginning of the thirteenth century: “À leur époque, cette technique consiste à distinguer, pour un mot de la Bible, les interprétations possibles en passant du sens littéral aux sens allégorique, moral et anagogique” (*L’avènement des maîtres de la parole*, 1:138–39).

132De Poorter, “Un manuel de prédication médiévale. Le ms. 97 de Bruges,” 203–04. The Scriptural passages are from Psalm 72:3, 2 Kings 20:9, Psalm 4:9, respectively. Translations of Scripture here are mine, since William’s paraphrases the Bible, and does not cite it directly.

extinguendo; demum pro erudiendis aliis vocem predicationis emmittit. – Dignitas temporalis. De quo Ecclesiaste X^oc, “Vidi servos in equis ambulantes...” – Lubrica vita. Unde in psalmo, “Nolite fieri sicut equus et mulus quibus non est intellectus.” – Presens seculum. gen. XLIX.e, “Fiat Dan coluber in via ... mordens ungulas equi, ut cadet ascensor eius retro.”

Horse = Preacher. Job 39: “Hast thou given the horse strength, or encircled his neck with whinnying?” Gregory's gloss on this says that the horse means a [holy] preacher, to whom God [says he] first gives strength to conquer his own vices, and then a whinny – a voice to preach to others. Horse = Temporal dignity, as in Ecclesiastes 10: “I have seen servants upon horses...” Horse = The easy life; thus in the Psalm: “Be ye not yet as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding.” Horse = The present age; Genesis 49: “Dan shall be a serpent by the way ... that biteth the horse's heels so that his rider shall fall backward.”¹³³

This example is important, for it lays bare the original role of a *distinctio* as one of the earliest of all alphabetical tools, aside from dictionaries. Unlike dictionaries, however, the distinction frequently ventures into symbolic and allegorical territory. A distinction can be a simple comparing and contrasting of varieties of meanings of terms. This process might seem arbitrary to us today, but at the time it was one that proclaimed that the truth on which people founded their knowledge was a faith in the overall harmony between multiplicities of things, of meanings, and of the relationships between them.

Divisions and distinctions thus mark not only a particular preaching style, but also propagate what d'Avray identifies as a certain kind of “subdividing mentality”¹³⁴ characteristic of the Middle Ages. Divisions are “precisely the distinctive features of the new sermon form which crystallized in the thirteenth century and which is itself a way of thinking rather than a simple

133Rouse and Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland*, 7–8. Here the translation belongs to Rouse and Rouse. The words in brackets are my additions to their translation, as they missed a couple words in the Latin they cite. Their omissions are not egregious in any way.

134D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300*, 169.

matter of literary presentation.”¹³⁵ The distinguishing mentality is thus one that regards the world as something legible, something that can be parsed, like grammar, to reveal its constituent features. Indeed, the dividing and subdividing of a *thema* may seem, by our contemporary standards, to take a sermon's discussion very far from the original intent of its Biblical context. But a preacher using this technique reveals his gutsy trust in the natural inborn meaning of things and the words used to represent them. Those meanings can never be lost under greater the scrutiny; on the contrary, they are only amplified. The working principle behind the techniques of *divisio* and *distinctio* tells potential preachers not that we should have so little faith in the meaning of Scripture, but that we should have so very much; we cannot undermine the meaning of a text, but only tease out hidden esoteric meanings, which might not have been available through a straight reading.

When so many divisions and distinctions were expertly bound together within a single sermon, the compounded rhetorical effect delighted the medieval audience. David d'Avray's summary of the “calculus of thought” guiding the principles of *sermo modernus* presents an unparalleled description of its operating principles and its effect on listeners. He adequately emphasizes both the intellectual and aesthetic foundations for the medieval *distinctio*. I can do no better than to quote it extensively:

The sermons of the friars start from a single text, but fan out from it. Although the whole sermon may be based on one sentence or phrase of Scripture, or often on one word or image, we seem, in many cases at least, to be taken far afield and in many directions from this point of departure. The text is in fact not so much an idea as a matrix of ideas.

¹³⁵Ibid., 129. For more on the rhetoric of medieval sermons, and the use of divisions, distinctions and authorities, see: “L'épanouissement du nouvel art de prêcher au XIIIe siècle,” in: Bériou, *L'avènement des maîtres de la parole*, 1:147–157. See also Rouse and Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland*, 68–90.

[...]

One could call it a tendency to turn each sermon into an artistically constructed microcosm of Christian doctrine.

[...]

For aficionados of Hermann Hesse, there is something reminiscent of the glass bead game about the way they arrange their ideas into patterns. The often numerically symmetrical divisions and distinctions can be a means of achieving, and an outward expression of, an elegant parallelism of thought. Another analogy – which fits sermons much better than the scholastic genres for which it has sometimes been used – would be with the iconography and layout of a Gothic cathedral, in which theological ideas are expressed in stone within a symmetrical aesthetic scheme. Or again (for the similitude habit is infectious), the preaching of the friars operated rather like a kaleidoscope: the patterns of dogmatic and moral ideas were continually being shaken up, from sermon to sermon, to make new combinations, equally symmetrical. Content and form are almost inextricably linked in this calculus of thought. It would be hard to read any social meaning into it, except by the most far-fetched of analogies. It is not at all like our own pattern of thought, but until we learn to appreciate it, as a form of thought which was also a form of art, the sermons of the friars will continue to seem strange.

[...]

There is an affinity between the tendency to turn each sermon into a symmetrical artistic synthesis and the habit of distinguishing different senses of a word or applications of an image. (The “four senses of Scripture” topos could be regarded as a special case of this habit.) If the Scriptural text at the beginning of a sermon was the matrix of ideas to be symmetrically deployed, the distinguishing habit served as midwife. It could perform the same function with a Scriptural text in a subdivision of the sermon. Indeed, a Scriptural text was not required, for distinctions could open up in different directions a word or image not taken from Scripture. We may suppose that this way of playing different motifs on the same word or image had retained in the age of the friars the aesthetic attraction which Gilbert Foliot exercised when he used the *distinctio* method in a synodal sermon in the late twelfth century: “The whole sermon was varied with certain *distinctiones*” wrote one of those who heard him, “adorned with flowers of words and sentences and supported by a copious array of authorities. It ran backwards and forwards on its path from its starting-point back to the same starting point.” There were many different sorts of *distinctiones*, but an aesthetic element, not separable from the content, may turn out to be a factor common to most. The tendency to formulate distinctions and divisions in what is not far from being a rhymed verse metre is a more extrinsic manifestation of the aesthetic element in sermons.¹³⁶

136 *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300*, 246–248.

.....

Cantos 10-13 of *Paradiso* show many similarities to the techniques of *sermo modernus*, if d'Avray's account is to be taken seriously. Dante's language loops and folds back on itself; it is self-reflective, as if the text were in conversation with itself, working and reworking ideas, announcing issues, dropping them, picking them up later on to refine claims and tie up loose ends. Reflecting the complex and recursive itinerary of the arguments in discussion, the surface of Dante's text is fretted with elaborate ornament – doubling and tripling, parallels and juxtapositions, chiasmi, and a sustained tension between opposing forces that the untrained eye might fear would yank the entire machine off track, but which ultimately lead to a perfect balance governing all these irregular individual oscillations. The subject matter too recalls the sermon: the large cast of characters functioning as authorities; the *exempla* of Francis and Dominic; the complicated philosophical and theological questions. The total effect of this is a sustained crescendo whose aftereffects linger well into the fourteenth canto.

Returning all the way back to the first few dozen lines of canto 10 that introduced this chapter, we find that d'Avray's equating of preaching with a kaleidoscope could just as well apply here.¹³⁷ The three figures of the Trinity – like a kaleidoscope's three mirrors – regard one another (“Guardando nel suo Figlio con l'Amore / che l'uno e l'altro eternalmente spira, / lo primo e ineffabile Valore”) as much as they regard the material they refract, generating an infinitely complex and infinitely shifting patterned perspective out of what from the outside of the mechanism appears only a chaos of colored chunks of glass. This tripartite gaze is witnessed by a

¹³⁷John Freccero too cannot but compare the structure of *Paradiso* to a kaleidoscope (“*Paradiso* X: The Dance of the Stars,” 86).

fourth figure, not without pleasure: “ch' esser non puote / senza gustar di lui chi ciò rimira” (10.6). This “chi” is the poet himself, who invites us too to look into this marvelous astrological machine: “Leva dunque, lettore, a l'alte rote / meco la vista, dritto a quella parte / dove 'lun moto e l'altro si percuote” (10.7). We remember this image of the poet as guide in the introductory pages of this chapter, standing by our side on some knoll, tracing star patterns in the night sky with his finger for our eyes to follow. His hand does not linger in the sky for long, but returns, like a rubricated index in a manuscript, to identify not stars, but text. He sends us, his “lettor,” to the bench after stargazing, to ruminate on this foretaste we have been provided (“dietro pensando a ciò che si preliba” [“thinking of the joy you have but tasted”] [23]). Here at the opening of canto 10, and continuing through the next few canti, the poet explores the outer limits of his capabilities when they are at their strongest; and not without a heads-up to the reader (“a sé torce tutta la mia cura / quella materia ond' io son fatto scriba” [“that matter for which I have been made scribe / twists all my attention towards it] [10.25-27]).¹³⁸

After the exordium to this canto, in which the poet establishes his relationship to the reader, Dante returns to the proper narration of the poem, taking up once more the theme of the Trinity and its effects on creation. We are in the heaven of the Sun, in which God, the true sun, expresses his triune nature.

Tal era quivi la quarta famiglia
de l' alto Padre, che sempre la sazia,
mostrando come spira e come figlia.

So brilliant the fourth family of the highest Father,
who forever gives it satisfaction, shone,
revealing how He breathes and how begets (10.49-51).

¹³⁸Translation mine

This breathing, “offspringing” Godhead becomes the object of the pilgrim's gratitude and affection, which penetrates so deeply into God that he loses sight of his traveling companion,

Beatrice:

Cor di mortal non fu mai sì digesto
 a divozione e a rendersi a Dio
 con tutto 'l suo gradir cotanto presto,
 come a quelle parole mi fec' io;
 e sì tutto 'l mio amore in lui si mise,
 che Bēatrice eclissò ne l'oblio

Never was mortal heart so well prepared
 for worship, nor so swift to yield itself
 to God with absolute assent
 as was mine when I heard those words,
 and all my love was so set on Him
 that it eclipsed Beatrice in forgetfulness (10.55-60).

The deep meditation pleases Beatrice (“non le dispiacque, ma sì se ne rise” [61]), and her smiling eyes shatter the pilgrim's ecstatic contemplation into fragments:

che lo splendor de li occhi suoi ridenti
 mia mente unita in più cose divise

such that the splendor of her smiling eyes
 divided my unified mind into many things (62-63).¹³⁹

Some critics have puzzled over this division of Dante's mind, as it appears to violate some principle of unity that the poet promotes in the canto, and undercut some fundamental principle the poem is founded upon. One of the most vocal of these, Luca Curti, wonders how the pilgrim's mind could be divided by Beatrice's smile if he is truly lost in “oblio,” his energies directed away from Beatrice's figure. Another problem for Curti is the division of his mind into

¹³⁹Translation mine.

“più cose,” an apparent impossibility, when there is nothing else in the scene except for God and Beatrice. How to calculate “più cose” from only “due cose” to start with?¹⁴⁰ Critics who associate this division with something outside of the literal narration of the dramatic action are on the right track. Vincenzo Placella, for example, associates it with contemplation vis à vis Richard of St. Victor's *Benjamin Minor*.¹⁴¹ But such a reasoning does not satisfactorily reckon with Beatrice's clear role as an embodiment of theological principles guiding the pilgrim to greater understanding. This would not be the first time that her eyes are recruited as tools for theological division, rendering Divine mysteries more legible. In *Purgatorio* 31, Dante is able to see the dual nature of Christ reflected in Beatrice's eyes:

Mille disiri più che fiamma caldi
 strinsermi li occhi al li occhi rilucenti,
 che pure sopra 'l grifone stavan saldi.
 Come in lo specchio il sol, non altrimenti
 la doppia fiera dentro vi raggiava,
 or con altri, or con altri reggimenti

A thousand desires hotter than any flame
 bound my eyes to those shining eyes,
 which still remained fixed on the griffin.

140“C'è qualche problema (non sono il primo a notarlo); e forse c'è un'altra possibile lettura (*mente* soggetto e *splendore* oggetto). I problemi che vedo possono essere esposti schematicamente così: a) se *unita* vuole dire 'concentrata' che senso ha pensare a una mente 'divisa' proprio mentre sta pensando a Dio? se poi Dante volesse dire che la sua mente è contemporaneamente concentrata, e però divisa (e cioè bi-concentrata, concentrata su due distinti “fuochi”), e non commentasse questa idea retorica neppure con una parola, sorvolerebbe in modo non usuale nel suo dettato; b) gli eventuali 'fuochi' della concentrazione sarebbero, comunque, Beatrice e niente meno che Dio, e non sembra del tutto congruo che vengano indicati con l'espressione 'più cose,' inspiegabilmente generica ('quante' saranno queste cose?) e troppo discorsiva in relazione ai referenti” (Luca Curti, “Canto X,” in *Paradiso*, ed. Georges Güntert and Michelangelo Picone, *Lectura Dantis Turicensis* [Florence: Cesati, 2000], 151). Curti's dramatic solution to this problem involves the reversing of the syntax, such that Dante's mind is the subject that divides Beatrice's “splendor” into “più cose” as if they were some kind of reflection of that smile: “L'altra lettura che mi sembra possibile, e che fonde senza contraddizione gli eventi di fronte ai quali ci troviamo, consiste nel vedere le luci dei sapienti scaturire, agli occhi di Dante (agli occhi della mente di Dante) dalla luce stessa del sorriso di Beatrice” (ibid.).

141Vincenzo Placella's solution is to associate “divise” with the contemplation of Richard St. Victor (Placella, “Canto X,” 223).

Even as the sun in a mirror, not otherwise
 the twofold beast shone forth in them,
 now with the one, now with its other nature (*Purg.* 31.118-123).

The pilgrim gazes into Beatrice's eyes in the terrestrial paradise, seeing reflected in them the two “reggimenti” of the Griffin, representing Christ, at once entirely human and entirely divine. What Dante needs to proclaim explicitly in *Purgatorio* (while still establishing Beatrice's status as an instrument of theological discernment) needs only allusion in *Paradiso*: the light (“splendor”) of her eyes, echoing the “occhi rilucenti” of *Purgatorio*, is the principle by which the unified mind is divided, and truth is rendered comprehensible on human terms.

In this sense, the division here can be read not merely as a literal division of the mind, but as a rhetorical division of a Divine theme. We have seen how a *thema* in modern preaching is a short excerpt from Scripture, which is divided syntactically. Here, the *thema* is the mystery of God itself, divided by an exegetical principle, Beatrice's smiling eyes, and thus rendered comprehensible.

To truly solve Luca Curti's question about how “più cose” result from only two, we need to closely examine the logic guiding the following two lines, in which the vision follows a division:

Io vidi più folgór vivi e vincenti
 far di noi centro e di sé far corona

I saw many living lights of blinding brightness
 make of us a center and of themselves a crown (63-64).

The links between the “più cose” of line 62 and the “più folgor” of 63 have been noted by critics. Not yet discussed, however, is the link by assonance between “divise” and “vidi” which accompany the two “più” in these same lines. In this way, *visio* is extracted from *divisio*, both

textually and literally.

From the beginning of this canto, the poet has emphasized the link between looking, knowledge and division. The poet refers his reader to the natural world, to scrutinize and understand it in its many divisions (“vedi da indi come si dirama”); we are called on to “decrittare” (as we remember Battaglia-Ricci saying) the many in order to arrive at the truth of the One. Here the poet reverses this process, beginning with the “unified mind,” which cannot, one imagines, be comprehended until it becomes “più cose,” “più folgor,” by means of division.

This is not the inductive logic of observation seen in the first verses of the canto, but the grammatical/syntactical logic of the *divisio* in the theological and *sermo modernus* sense. The following narration supports this reading. The “più folgor” find themselves arrayed in a circle surrounding Beatrice and the pilgrim, who stand at the center. The circle with a dot in the center is a commonly understood symbol for the sun. By representing his meditation on the real Sun, God (“il Sol de li angeli”) with a symbol, the poet marks a passage from the *res* to the *signum*, from the real thing to the words used to describe that thing. Each figure here is a “star” (10.78) too. In Dante's symbolic language, stars are words, as he makes clear in *Convivio* 2: “onde in ciascuna scienza la scrittura è stella piena di luce” (2.15.1-2). The association becomes all the more fitting when it is finally revealed that the word-stars here are important figures in Christian learning: Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Richard of St. Victor and others. Since each one of these figures operates as a division on the theme that Dante suggests in “mente unita,” it is only fitting that each division is “self-authorizing.” In other words, each figure is both a *divisio* and an *auctoritas*. The substantiating of each division by an authority is in keeping with the practice of preachers; we recall from earlier pages Bonaventure's habit of heading off his distinctions with

an *auctoritas* for each.

With such a suggestive reading of Dante's divisions, one ventures more confidently towards a claim that his distinctions are also meant to recall *sermo modernus*. These are all found in the speech of Thomas Aquinas in *Paradiso* 11, who announces that he will resolve the pilgrim's questions regarding “U' ben s' impingua” (11.25), and “Non nacque il secondo” (11.26) with a distinction: “e qui è uopo che ben si distingua” (11.25-27). The first of these distinctions will be negotiated through his narration of the *vita* of St. Francis, which Aquinas establishes as an equally good model for Dominicans as well (11.40-42, 118-121). He follows Francis's *vita* with an excoriation of those Dominicans that stray from the path established by their founder:

Ma 'l suo pecuglio di nova vivanda
 è fatto ghiotto, sì ch'esser non puote
 che per diversi salti non si spanda;
 e quanto le sue pecore remote
 e vagabunde più da esso vanno,
 più tornano a l'ovile di latte vòte.
 Ben son di quelle che temono 'l danno
 e stringonsi al pastor; ma son sì poche
 che le cappe fornisce poco panno.
 Or, se le mie parole non son fioche,
 se la tua audienza è stata attenta,
 se ciò ch'è detto a la mente revoche,
 in parte fia la tua voglia contenta,
 perché vedrai la pianta onde si scheggia,
 e vedra' il corrègger che argomenta
 “U'ben s'impingua, se non si vaneggia.”

But his flock has grown so greedy
 for new sustenance that it is forced
 to scatter through remote and distant pastures,
 and the farther his sheep go wandering off
 from him, the emptier of milk
 do they at last come back into the fold
 There are some, indeed, who, fearing harm,
 huddle near the shepherd, but these are so few
 that a tiny piece of cloth can furnish all their cows.

And so, if my words are not too dark,
 and if your ears have been intent,
 and if you can recall exactly what was said,
 then shall your wish be in part fulfilled
 and you shall see the reason why the plant is cleft
 and what is meant by the rebuke
 “where sheep are fattened if they do not stray” (11.124-139).

“Ma 'l suo pecuglio di nova vivanda / è fatto ghiotto.” Opinions differ as to exactly what this “nova vivanda” is. For some, it is material gain (Ottimo, Benevenuto, Casini-Barbi, Sapegno, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Chiavacci Leonardi), others see theology supplanted by wordly learning (Buti, Bosco-Reggio, Chiavacci Leonardi), for one it is even literal meat (Serravalle). But whatever “the nova vivanda” might be has less bearing on our study than its function as the material on which the bad friar “vaneggia.” To hammer this point home, Aquinas repeats his formula for a third time: “vedra' il corrègger che argomenta / 'U ben s'impingua, se non si vaneggia,” ([you shall see] what is meant by the rebuke / where sheep are fattened if they do not stray.”) (11.138-139). In this sense, Aquinas uses his distinction as a bookmark to clarify the exact beginning and ending to this particular sub-argument (*dilatatio*).

In light of the “nova vivanda” described here, I'd like to suggest that the poet's condemnation of vain intellectual pursuits at the beginning of this canto, the many “difettivi silogismi,” “*iura*,” “amphorismi,” “sofismi,” that make one beat one's wings down low (“che ti fanno in basso batter l'ali”), functions something like a *prothema* introducing the argument that is the subject of the canto, and which in *sermo modernus* functions as an interpretive key for the *thema*, relating to it in some logical or verbal way.

After Bonaventure discusses Dominic in canto 12, Aquinas returns one more time to address his second distinction. The resonant “quando” of 13.34 establishes that he returns to the

mode of reasoning he used in his first speech, which is also announced by a “quando” (10.82). He resolves Dante's query about his second statement, (“a veder tanto non surse il secondo” in 10.114, recast as “non ebbe il secondo” [13.47], in reference to Solomon as the wisest man who ever lived. The essence of the problem, Aquinas notes, is that Dante thinks that such a claim is not theologically sustainable, since only Adam and Jesus were made perfect, and therefore capable of perfect wisdom that surpasses all others:

Tu credi che nel petto onde la costa
 si trasse per formar la bella guancia
 il cui palato a tutto 'l mondo costa,
 e in quel che, forato da la lancia,
 e prima e poscia tanto sodisfece,
 che d'ogne colpa vince la bilancia,
 quantunque a la natura umana lece
 aver di lume, tutto fosse infuso
 da quel valore che l'uno e l'altro fece;
 e però miri a ciò chi'io dissi suso,
 quando narrai che non ebbe 'l secondo
 lo ben che ne la quinta luce è chiuso.
 Or apri li occhi a quel ch'io ti rispondo
 e vedrài il tuo credere e 'l mio dire
 nel vero farsi come centro in tondo.

You believe that, into the side from which
 the rib was drawn to form the lovely features
 of her whose palate costs the world so dear,
 and into His, pierced by the spear, which gave
 such satisfaction for sins, both done or yet to be,
 as outweighs any fault found in the balance,
 all the light that is allowed to human nature
 was infused by the very Power
 which made the one and made the other
 And thus you marvel at what I said before,
 when I told you that the goodness
 contained in the fifth light never had an equal.
 Open your eyes to the answer I shall give
 and you shall find your thoughts and what I say
 meet at the truth as in the center of a circle (13.37-51).

Aquinas begins with an explanation of what Dante thinks (“tu credi”), still consistently in keeping with the preacher's habit of calling out the unspoken thoughts of audience members. Also typical of the preacher is his didactic framing, the announcement of his explanation, foregrounded by the announcement “or apri li occhi a quel ch'io ti rispondo” at its beginning. Finally, his repetition “non ebbe il secondo,” varies slightly from the original (“non surse il secondo” [10.114])), and its first repetition (“non nacque il secondo” [11.26]). The slight variations suggest the dynamics of orality in preaching, which repeats phrases, but not always verbatim.

Aquinas's long explanation begins with the basics of Trinitarian creation (13.52-54). There is a first order of creation – those things generated directly by God – and there is a second order – “contingenze” – which Aquinas clarifies are things produced not by God the creator but creation itself (“e queste contingenze essere intendo / le cose generate, che produce con seme e senza seme il ciel movendo” [64-66]). The discussion means to clarify that Adam and Jesus were created by direct influence of the Divine, and were therefore far more perfect than any other ordinary humans, created secondarily (“con seme”) as noted above. This fact would appear to confirm the importance of the pilgrim's question, and severely challenge Aquinas's claim about Solomon. In fact Aquinas agrees with Dante (“sì ch'io commendo tua oppinione” [“thus do I agree with your opinion” [85]]), although only so far, as he will soon clarify.

Aquinas introduces a new subsection in his discussion, with another announcement of another yet unspoken question: “Or s' i' non procedesse avanti piùè, / 'Dunque, come costui fu senza pare?' / comincerebber le parole tue” (“Now if I went no farther, / 'How, then, was that other without equal?' / would be the first words from your mouth”) (88-90). He then explains that

Solomon asked for wisdom only in the quantity and quality befitting a ruler, and not to excel all fields of inquiry. Aquinas lists these in a series of emphatic negatives:

Non ho parlato sì, che tu non posse
ben veder ch'el fu re, che chiese senno
acciò che re sufficiente fosse;
non per sapere il numero in che enno
li motor di qua sù, o se *necesse*
con contingente mai *necesse* fenno;
non *si est dare primum motum esse*,
o se del mezzo cerchio far si puote
triangol sì, ch'un retto non avesse.

I did not speak so darkly that you cannot see
he was a king and asked for wisdom
that he might become a worthy king.
He did not ask to know the number of the angels
here above, nor if *necesse*
with a congingent ever made *necesse*,
nor *si est dare primum motum esse*,
nor if in a semicircle a triangle can be formed
without its having one right angle (94-102).

The reason, Aquinas clarifies, both before this statement and after (“regal prudenza è quel vedere” [104]), is that Solomon wanted only as much of wisdom as was necessary to be a perfect king, no more. This, it is revealed, is the distinction Aquinas intends: “Con questa distinzion prendi 'l mio detto” (109).

The entire monologue courses towards a moral finish, an admonishment to the pilgrim and us the readers to avoid drawing conclusions too hastily, before adequate evidence is furnished for intelligent and informed decision making:

E questo ti sia sempre piombo a' piedi
per farti mover lento com' uom lasso
e al sì e al no che tu non vedi
ché quelli è tra li stolti bene a basso,

che senza distinzione afferma e nega
 ne l'un così come ne l'altro passo;
 perch' elli 'ncontra che più volte piega
 l'opinïon corrente in falsa parte,
 e poi l'affetto l'intelletto lega.

And let this always be as lead upon your feet
 to make you slow, just like a weary man, in moving,
 whether to yes or no, unless you see both clearly.
 For he ranks low among the fools
 who, without making clear distinctions
 affirms or denies in one case or another,
 since it often happens that a hasty opinion
 inclines one to the erring side, and then
 fondness for it fetters the working of the mind (112-120).

This is a sharp turn in his discourse, this migration from speculative theology into the realm of ethics; Aquinas advises the pilgrim to have leaden feet in judgment: “E questo ti sia sempre piombo a' piedi,” and to avoid being like those who too quickly decide without making clear distinctions (“ché quelli è tra li stolti bene a basso, / che senza distinzione afferma e nega / ne l'un così come ne l'altro passo”). He emphasizes a second time the wisdom of slow judgment, this time explaining that things do not always turn out as expected, and are subjected to the vicissitudes of fortune (130-142). Several lines later, Aquinas criticizes “donna Berta e ser Martino” (13.139) – a hypothetical Joe Schmo and his wife – who think they can see into Divine Will (“vederli dentro al consiglio divino” [141]) with only a minimum of information and no intellectual discretion necessary to draw sound conclusions. Aquinas's final use of the distinction in this practical context of everyday people in need of correction (“li stolti” “donna Berta e ser Martino”) confirms that the epistemological principles operating in *sermo modernus* serve ultimately useful ends; they are intended for the benefit of the congregation, not just the intellectual satisfaction of educated clergy or theologians.

Aquinas's final affirmation of the distinction as an intellectual tool available to all may perhaps appear a jarring descent in register, both in language and subject matter.¹⁴² I would like to counter that this final meditation on practical morality might be the entire point of all the speculative theology that preceded it. Good sermons always point to practical ethical ends. Alain of Lille says that preachers should always end their sermons with instructions to good behavior, using lives of the Saints.¹⁴³ Although Aquinas's sermon concludes instead with negative examples, perhaps this too is in keeping with the twisted road logic that runs through these canti; the making of affirmations by negating opposites and contradictions. At any rate, Aquinas makes clear that the distinction is not merely a principle for organizing rhetoric, but also one that can be used to make sense out of life. In this way he confirms d'Avray's claim that the structures in *sermo modernus* are more than rhetorical devices, but constitute a “calculus of thought” that links form to content, and that a sermon, cast in words, is also “an artistically constructed microcosm of Christian doctrine.” For Aquinas, and for Dante, ultimately, the medium is the message.

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142Although some critics enjoy it, like Remo Fasani: “Segue l'ultima parte del canto, nella quale Tommaso, sullo slancio del suo ragionamento, prorompe in una lunga esortazione; e soprattutto su questa parte, che è tipica di tante pagine della *Commedia*, e forse la più bella di esse, io vorrei soffermarmi. Si tratta di definire, per dirla in breve, il suo stile esortativo o ammonitorio, stile in cui risiede uno dei massimi acquisti della poesia dantesca.” (“Canto XIII,” in *Paradiso*, ed. Georges Güntert and Michelangelo Picone, *Lectura Dantis Turicensis* [Florence: Cesati, 2000], 201).

143“Enfin, une conclusion récapitule l'enseignement et recommande de vivre conformément aux préceptes qui ont été formulés, avant l'oraison finale. Alain de Lille recommande aussi de donner les exemples de bon comportement à la fin, en utilisant des vies de saints, pour montrer concrètement les bienfaits qui résultent de la mise en oeuvre des préceptes” (Bériou, *L'avènement des maîtres de la parole*, 1:142).

Is it far-fetched to claim that poet uses *distinctiones* in echo of the techniques of the preachers?¹⁴⁴ A historical analysis of poetry of his time suggests that it is not at all. Jacopone da Todi uses the distinction in a clearly sermonic sense, for example, in his twenty-fifth *lauda*, “Sapete vui novelle de l'Amore.” In verse 37 he writes: “Desténguese l'Amore en terzo stato: / bono, meglio, summo sullimato” (“we distinguish Love in a third state / good, better and supremely sublime”).¹⁴⁵ Not only is a distinction posted, but it is constructed to harmonize in rhyme and rhythm, in keeping with the preaching of the time. One looks to his seventy-seventh *lauda*, “Omo che pò la sua lengua domare,” and finds in line 132 : “La seconda ierarchia, co'a me pare, / che en tre destenzione è ordenata.” (“The second hierarchy, as it appears to me, / that is ordered in three distinctions”) (132).¹⁴⁶ Or, finally, one finds Jacopone providing a verse commentary on the *Paternoster* (*lauda* 22), which begins the discussion with an announcement of the *paternoster's* seven distinctions: “En sette modi, co' a mme pare, / destent'è orazione” (“the prayer is distinguished in seven ways, as it appears to me”).¹⁴⁷

In Dante's early works, divisions and distinctions are also found. The most well-known and puzzled-over of these are those of the *Vita Nova*, where he “divides” all of his poems into

144 Dante's mining of distinction collections is not unknown to Dante studies, so his awareness of them can be safely posited. Violeta Díaz-Corralejó refers to Alain of Lille's *Distinctiones dictionum theologialium* (PL 210, 687-1012) for explaining the relentless scratching of Cerberus in *Inferno*. (Violeta Díaz-Corralejó, “Uno spazio critico inesplorato: i gesti nella Commedia,” in “*Per correr miglior acque*”: bilanci e prospettive degli studi danteschi alle soglie del nuovo millennio, ed. Lucia Battaglia Ricci [Roma: Salerno, 2001], 870). One could counter that Alain of Lille's volume was not intended for use by preachers; however, historians have confirmed that by the mid *duecento* these texts were being transformed into Biblical and theological dictionaries specifically for preachers composing sermons (Delcorno, *Quasi quidam cantus: studi sulla predicazione medievale*, 93).

145 Jacopone da Todi, *Laude* (Florence: Olschki, 2010), 52.

146 *Ibid.*, 163.

147 *Ibid.*, 22.

separate parts, sometimes with commentary, sometimes without. For example, immediately after transcribing his sonnet “Spesse fiate vegnonmi a la mente,” he appends:

Questo sonetto si divide in quattro parti, secondo che quattro cose sono in esso narrate; e però che sono di sopra ragionate, non m'intrametto se non di distinguere le parti per li loro cominciamenti: onde dico che la seconda parte comincia quivi: *ch'Amor*; la terza quivi: *Poscia mi sforzo*; la quarta quivi: *e se io levo* (14.11).

In the *Vita Nova*, Dante uses the word “dividere” with great frequency, “distinguere” only twice (his second use of “distinguere,” in 22.17 follows a nearly identical scheme to the occurrence cited here). If these early uses do not unambiguously point to the sermonic use of divisions and distinctions they nevertheless show the poet engaging in the same “calculus of thought” as the preachers. Dante edges closer to a more expressly sermonic distinction in the *Inferno*. While Dante himself points to Aristotelian logic behind his organization of the moral geography of the afterlife, the sermonic pedigree is apparent in the flourishes with which he marks his distinctions. In *Inferno* 11, Vergil describes all the different circles and *bolge* of Hell with divisions and subdivisions: “D'ogne malizia, ch'odio in cielo acquista, / ingiuria è l'fine, ed ogne fin cotale / o con forza o con frode altrui contrista” (Every evil deed despised in Heaven / has at its end injustice. Each such end / harms someone either through force or fraud”) (11.21-23). One notices the alliteration in “forza” and “frode,” which perhaps means to echo the rhyming distinctions in sermons. Elsewhere, rhyming distinctions are even more salient: “Puossi far forza ne la deïtade, / col cor *negando e bestemmiando* quella, e *spregiando* natura e sua bontade” (“Violence may be committed against God / when we deny and curse Him in our hearts, or when we scorn nature and here bounty”) (11.46-48, italics added). These distinctions are also named, as Vergil explains in the circle of the violent:

Di vïolenti il primo cerchio è tutto;
 ma perché si fa forza a tre persone,
 in tre gironi è distinto e costruito.
 A Dio, a sé, al prossimo si pòne
 far forza, dico in loro e in lor cose,
 come udirai con aperta ragione.

The first circle holds the violent
 but is divided and constructed in three rings,
 since violence takes three different forms.
 Violence may be aimed at God, oneself,
 or at one's neighbor – thus against all three
 or their possessions – as I shall now explain (11.28-33).

The first circle of Hell is thus both distinguished and constructed (“distinto e costruito”) according to a tripartite principle, which Vergil loads with enough *cantilena* (“A Dio, a sé, al prossimo si pone”) to recollect the poetic principles informing the aesthetics of divisions and distinctions. Later, the pilgrim commends the excellence of Vergil's distinctions: “Ed io: 'Maestro, assai chiara procede / la tua ragione, e assai ben distingue / questo baràtro e 'l popol ch'e' possiede” (“And I: 'Master, your account is clear / and clearly designates the nature / of this abyss and its inhabitants”) (11.67-69). The pilgrim's praise of Vergil's *ratio* (“la tua ragione”) stands to further suggest that these uses are meant to evoke the *praedicatio* of his time; as we remember from Alain of Lille's description of preaching, the *ratio* is a primary discursive mode of preaching. Vergil, in turn, cites his own *auctoritates* to substantiate these divisions, namely Aristotle's “Etica,” (80) and his “Fisica” (101) and, finally, “Genesi” (107). Dante also uses the distinction when listing and describing the ten valleys of Malebolge: “e ha distinto in dieci valli il fondo” (“its sides descending in ten ditches”) (18.9).

Dante ultimately moves beyond any overly simplistic reliance on distinctions. While he

hews closely to appearances in *Inferno*, distinguishing minutely the Hell-space there, by *Paradiso* he has ventured far beyond rhyming schematic distinctions, and the somewhat arid divisions he engineers for his poetry in the *Vita Nova*. He must, ultimately, supersede this language as he progresses towards the closure of *Paradiso*. Hence we find Beatrice describing to the pilgrim the Divine itself, in his own act of *inventio*:

E come in vetro, in ambra o in cristallo
 raggio resplende sì, che dal venire
 a l'esser tutto non è intervallo,
 così 'l triforme effetto del suo sire
 ne l'esser suo raggiò insieme tutto
 senza distinzione in essordire.

And, as a ray shines right through glass, amber,
 or crystal, so that between its presence
 and its shining there is no lapse of time,
 just so did the threefold creation flash –
 with no intervals in its beginning –
 from its Lord into being, all at once (29.26-30).

God is described “*senza distinzione in essordire*,” presumably founding the *thema* of all creation without using the human apparatus for discerning the knowable. In this sense, God's creation, then is the ultimate sermon *in factis*.

In a way, canto 29 of *Paradiso* functions as an answer to the question posed in canti 10-13 regarding the rhetoric of unity and multiplicity. While humans might require divisions and distinctions for making sense of that unified Divine *esse* that inheres in all creation and in all Scripture, the Divine itself can easily do without it, since it is a perfectly all-knowing consciousness. The world resulting from this undifferentiated consciousness is, however, ordered and constructed (“*ordine e costruito*” [29.31]), in other words, distinguished, all the way down to the fool who refuses to recognize those distinctions (“*senza distinzione afferma e nega*”) that

regulate his life. By expressing a reality that affirms apparent logical contradictions by means of the “strada torta,” by revealing that a Divine mystery underlies what appears illogical on the surface, the poet prepares his reader for his final statement on the *distinctio*, which, paradoxically refutes it and affirms it at the same time. The human who operates without distinctions is a fool; but the Divine, by confounding the *distinctio* altogether, reveals its ultimate ineffable and inscrutable nature.

It would appear that the poet endeavors to out-sermon his masters. By using the distinction, he nods to the *sermo modernus* that informs the language and logic of his verses, but he uses it in anticipation of its final transcendence. The distinction is necessary in the description of certain lower realms of the *Commedia* (Inf/Purg), while here in *Paradiso* its artifice is called attention to at the same time as its utility is emphasized; if time and again it is made clear that the representation of Heaven as a place limited by constraints of space and time, and thereby a fiction for the pilgrim's mortal eyes, then what else can a distinction be but merely a way to understand that fiction? It will be necessary to interrogate and ultimately transcend the distinction in a canticle that so assertively denies hierarchies and multiplicities while still needing to represent them. In a final transcendent twist, the poet shows in *Paradiso* 29 that the distinction, part of human *ratio*, is yet still only another of the many shadowy prefaces of a reality that cannot, ultimately, be represented.

Chapter Six

Beyond *Sermo Modernus*: Street Preaching in the Primum Mobile

Theologia enim scientia est rerum non verborum, unde in Actibus Apostolorum [1:1]: cepit Iesus facere et docere.

Theology truly is the science of things not words, hence in the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus began to do and teach.¹

This dissertation began with the Dominican Guido Vernani, Dante's earliest outspoken opponent, who called Dante a vessel of the Devil, painted up in poetic figments (“veritatis figuris fallacibus et fucatis coloribus adornata”), and angling to seduce good Christians with poetical phantasms and figments (“poeticis fantasmatis et figmentis”). Elsewhere, he compares Dante's seductive rhetoric with the false appeal of a prostitute. In his view, Dante is one who:

1 Peter the Chanter, *Verbum Abbreviatum*, MS V, fol. 6ra, cit. in John Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and His Circle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), n. 134 to p. 107. Baldwin also references Peter the Chanter's *Verbum Abbreviatum* in the *Patrologiae*; however, Peter's text there is not as succinct: “Vita enim bona, scientia, non dico verborum, sed rerum praecedit. Unde per vitam, et not aliter, pervenies ad scientium, scilicet operum. Haec est scientia rerum: qui autem diligit, illa non caret.” (J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae* [Brepols: Turnhout, n.d.], 205, 36D).

scenicas meretriculas adducendo, non solum egros animos, sed etiam studiosos
dulcibus sirenarum cantibus conducit fraudulenter ad interitum salutifere veritatis.

bringing whores onto the stage with their sweet, siren songs, fraudulently seduces
not only sick minds, but even zealous ones, to the destruction of salutary truth.²

The previous chapter's discussion of *sermo modernus*, which noted the distinctively
erudite tenor of this form, and its aesthetic appeal to medieval listeners, informs our
understanding of Vernani's words. Interestingly, the kind of language Vernani uses to criticize
Dante finds echo in thirteenth and fourteenth centuries writings against preachers that used
sermo modernus to excess, or merely to satisfy their own vanity. Humbert of Romans, a
Dominican³ like Vernani, criticizes the pompous pseudo-intellectual who stuffs his sermons
indiscriminately with too many of the components of *sermo modernus*:

Sunt alii qui student ad dicendum multa: multiplicantes modo membra sermonum,
modo distinctiones, modo auctoritates, modo rationes, modo exempla, modo
verba idem significantia, modo eandem multoties repetentes, modo proluxa
prothemata facientes, modo idem verbum multipliciter exponentes: quae valde
vitiosa sunt in sermonibus.

There are others who zealously strive to say many things: multiplying the parts of
sermons, now the distinctions, now the authorities, now the reasoned arguments,
now examples, now words signifying the same thing, now using the same one
again and again, now engineering prolix prothemes, now explaining the same
word too many times; which are all serious vices in sermons.⁴

2 Guido Vernani, *Il più antico oppositore politico di Dante: Guido Vernani da Rimini. Testo critico del "De reprobatione monarchiae,"* ed. Nevio Matteini, vol. 6, *Il pensiero medioevale*; collana di storia della filosofia (Padua: CEDAM, 1958), 93. Translation by Anthony Kimber Cassell, *The Monarchia Controversy: an historical study with accompanying translations of Dante Alighieri's Monarchia, Guido Vernani's Refutation of the Monarchia composed by Dante and Pope John XXII's bull, Si fratrum* [CUA Press, 2004], 174–75.

3 The critique of *sermo modernus* is not limited to Dominicans and clergy. The Franciscans Roger Bacon and Ubertino da Casale both criticized the excessive use of *sermo modernus*, and called for a return to simplicity in sermon making (Bert Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education* [Leiden: Brill, 2000], 282).

4 Humbert of Romans, "De Eruditione Praedicatorum," in *Opera de Vita Regulari 2. Expositio in Constitutiones. Instructiones de Officiis Ordinis. De Eruditione Praedicatorum. Epistolae Encyclicae*, ed. Joachim Joseph Berthier (Turin: Marietti, 1956), 395.

For Humbert of Romans, the problem lies not so much with the theoretical underpinnings of the modern sermon as with its poor implementation: a pretentious overuse of its formal aspects, and a repetitive prattling on. Others take issue with the seductive potential of rhetoric,⁵ such as Thomas of Chobham, who asks what practical benefits, what fruit, the decorated sermon bears forth.

Odiosi enim sunt purpurati et colorati sermones. Dominus enim fructum querit, non flores, sicut ipse ait Mathei VIIIo capitulo: *a fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos, non dixit a floribus.*

The gussied-up and colored sermons are to be hated. The Lord asks for fruits not flowers, for he says himself in the eighth chapter of Matthew: “you will know them by their fruits.” He did not say by flowers.”⁶

Thomas shows relative restraint in his description of regally dressed-up (“purpurati”) and colored sermons compared, for example, to Peter the Chanter, who explicitly warns against textual lasciviousness and sensual rhetoric, comparing adorned words to painted prostitutes and even to Jezebel herself:

Non ita est de coelesti philosophia ut de humana, quae meretrix improba sibi non sufficit, nisi coloribus adulterinis et stibio Jezebel coloretur et depingatur (IV Reg. ix), scilicet flosculis et phaleris verborum, ut potius appareat quam existat sapientia.

It is neither proper to heavenly philosophy nor of the human, as a cheap prostitute is not enough on her own unless she be colored and painted up with false colors and with the mascara of a Jezebel, such is it with flowers of rhetoric and ornament

5 Bériou traces this concern back to Augustine in *De Doctrina Christiana* (Nicole Bériou, *l'Avènement des maîtres de la parole: la prédication à Paris au XIIIe siècle*, vol. 1, Collection des Études Augustiniennes: Série Moyen-Age et temps modernes 31 [Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1998], 146).

6 Thomas of Chobham, *Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis 82 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1988), 91.

of words, such that wisdom may appear to be there, but does not truly exist.⁷

Variations on Peter the Chanter's language are common in these critiques of preaching; Jacques de Vitry closely echoes Peter.⁸

Taking a somewhat different critical position from the previous three, William of Auvergne leaves aside the language of prostitution to argue against a sermon that alienates listeners. Delivered without true *caritas*, the technically ambitious sermon often falls short of the apostolic ideal:

Inclito huic doctori et beato Paulo non sunt similes illi qui tanto studio seipsos eviscerant ut mira et nova et quasi inaudita dicant, qui verbis faleratis nudam veritatem odumbrant, difficiles questiones et parum utiles enodare laborant, ut de ipsis dicatur: Nunquam locutus est sic homo. Huiusmodi predicatio sine affectu et caritate procedens, que ut quedam firmata et continua lectio recitatur, amplius ad dormiendum quam ad dolendum provocat et magis pulchrum nichil ex tali sermone quam aliquid utile acquiretur.

They are not like this noteworthy doctor and the Blessed Paul, those who exhaust themselves in so much labor in order to say marvelous, novel and almost unheard of things; who obscure the bare truth with decorated words; who strive to unravel difficult questions of minimal utility, so that it may be said of them: "Never has a man spoken like this." This kind of preaching, carrying on without good will or charity, recited after the manner of a fixed and uninterrupted reading, provokes one more to sleep than sorrow, and more often a beautiful nothing is obtained from such a sermon than something useful.⁹

7 Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae*, vol. 205, 41 b–c.

8 "Verba coelestis Philosophica non ornatum quaerunt, sed profectum. E contra verba sapientiae secularis velut meretrix ornata et improba non sibi sufficiunt nisi coloribus adulterinis depingantur" ("The words of Heavenly philosophy do not require ornament, but effectiveness. But in contrast, the words of secular wisdom, like a decorated and squalid prostitute, do not suffice on their own unless they be painted in adulterous colors") (Carlo Delcorno, *Quasi quidam cantus: studi sulla predicazione medievale*, Biblioteca di lettere italiane 71 [Firenze: Olschki, 2009], 92). Delcorno cites a sixteenth century volume for de Vitry's statement, which to date I have not been able to access.

9 A. De Poorter, "Un manuel de prédication médiévale. Le ms. 97 de Bruges," *Revue néo-scholastique de philosophie*. 25e année, no. 98 (1923): 202.

William of Auvergne's preacher strives to be nonpareil in his art, but in so doing he undercuts his own efforts, as his listeners nod off in boredom. "Nunquam locutus est sic homo," this self-important preacher would have people say; indeed they probably do, but perhaps not with the same meaning the preacher envisioned. The exclamation is a direct quotation of the Book of John, a scene where Jesus preaches to crowds in Jerusalem, who marvel at his words and begin to murmur among themselves that he is a true prophet ("hic est vere propheta") and the Christ ("hic est Christus") (John 7:40-41). There were ministers present who could have seized Jesus on accusation of false doctrine, but did not. Later, when queried by the Pharisees about their failure to seize Jesus, they simply responded, astonished: "Numquam sic locutus est homo, sicut hic homo" (7:46). Clearly, William of Auvergne's comparison is ironic, as his preacher does not strike wonder in his listeners' hearts as Christ does, but drives them instead into a numbing stupor. However, the alarm is sounded all the same, that the real problem at the root of ambitious preaching is this desire to be equal to Christ, rather than his faithful and humble apostle. This is ultimately not just a problem of prideful showiness, but one of heresy. No wonder, then, that Pope Innocent III in a Lenten sermon associates heresy with both prostitution and the flowers of rhetoric, with those many lovely words used to occlude or distort truth.¹⁰

10 "Meretrix enim, id est haeretica pravitas, intexit lectulum suum, id est doctrinam suam confinxit funibus, id est deceptionibus subtilibus quidem, sed tortis: ut ejus castigato sit quasi funiculus triplex qui difficile rumpitur, contextus de theologicis auctoritatibus, de rhetoricis floribus et de dialecticis argumentis. Sacras autem auctoritates pervertit, sophisticas argumentationes inducit, rhetoricos sermones exornat; simplices fallit, ut vagos alliciat, ut incautos seducat" (The prostitute, that is heretical depravity, covered her bed, that is to say that fabricated a doctrine with ropes, that is to say with subtle but wrong deceptions: such that her punishment is like a triple cord that is difficult to break, made of theological authority, the flowers of rhetoric and dialectical arguments. He perverts the Sacred authorities, he brings in sophisticated arguments, and decks out rhetorical sermons; he deceives the simple, so that he may tie up the doubtful and seduce the heedless" (Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae*, 217, 367).

Turning back to Guido Vernani's screed against Dante, one sees that the Dominican recycles language commonly used to criticize preaching, thereby aligning the poet with vain, ineffective, and very likely heretical, preachers. Inasmuch as Dante performs as a preacher in his texts, Vernani's claim is dead-on. But little else of the mud that Vernani slings – accusations of vanity and potential heresy – actually sticks. Another question one might ask Vernani is whether he might be telling only half the story about Dante's rhetoric. If the poet seduced many through an eloquence of hollow words (“*verbis exterioribus in eloquentia multis gratus*”),¹¹ how to explain all the places in the *Commedia* where the poem is in no way delightful or eloquent, but quite the opposite, deliberately harsh, squalid, ugly? Any naïve reader prepared by Vernani's admonitions might reasonably expect the higher echelons of Heaven to be stocked only with pearly Latinate periods and seductive arguments; instead, he or she comes across literary gargoyles everywhere. A passage from *Paradiso* 29 exemplifies the poet's embracing of a register far lower than the Dominican openly admits.

Ora si va con motti e con iscede
 a predicare, e pur ben si rida,
 gonfia il cappuccio e più non richiede.
 Ma tale uccel nel becchetto s'annida,
 che se' 'l vulgo il vedesse, vederebbe
 la perdonanza di ch'el si confida:
 per cui tanta stoltezza in terra crebbe,
 che, senza prova d'alcun testimonio,
 ad ogni promession si correrebbe.
 Di questo ingrassa il porco sant' Antonio,
 e altri assai che sono ancor più porci,
 pagando di moneta senza conio

Now preachers ply their trade with buffoonery and jokes,

11 Vernani, *Il più antico oppositore politico di Dante: Guido Vernani da Rimini. Testo critico del “De reprobatione monarchiae,”* 6:93; Cassell, *The Monarchia Controversy: An Historical Study with Accompanying Translations of Dante Alighieri's Monarchia, Guido Vernani's Refutation of the “Monarchia”* Composed by Dante and Pope John XXII's Bull, Si Fratrum, 174–75.

their cowls inflating if they get a laugh,
 and the people ask for nothing more.
 But such a bird nests in their hoods
 that, if the people saw it, they would see
 the kind of pardoning to which they give their trust.
 Because of these such foolishness has grown on earth
 that, with no warrant vouching for its truth,
 they still would flock to any promise.
 On this Saint Anthony fattens his swine,
 along with many others who are still more swinish,
 repaying them with unstamped coin (29.115-126).

In this passage, Beatrice preaches against preachers, in language that recalls nothing of the artificial diction decried in those critiques of erudite preaching. In fact, if this is a sermon (and I will later show how it in fact is), the language is surprisingly coarse. Beatrice describes a preacher puffing up his cowl, a devilish “uccel” hiding in the hood, and monks of St. Anthony¹² fattening their pigs in addition to “many others who are still more swinish” (“e altri assai che sono ancor più porci”). Although Beatrice modestly evades specifying who these are, who out-swine the swine themselves, Dante's commentators have no trouble identifying them as prostitutes. None does so more colorfully than the cardinal bishop of Fano and Fermo, Giovanni da Serravalle: “and thus they fatten up their prostitutes and sluts” (“et sic impinguant meretrices suas et bagasias”)¹³ Beatrice later adds that the prostitutes are bankrolled with the sale of indulgences and pardons (“promession”) sold to the gawping credulous mob. Such words –

12 Dante most likely intends to identify the monks of the order of St. Anthony the Abbot (also known as Anthony the Great), who tended pigs in honor of their founder. St. Anthony the Abbot is the third century father of Monasticism, and is often represented dressed in black with a black pig at his feet, a sign of temptation vanquished. This is first attested to by Francesco da Buti (1385-95) (“Dartmouth Dante Project”, n.d. *Par.* 29.118–129, Available: <http://dante.dartmouth.edu/search.php>). While it may be tempting to think that Dante refers to the famous Franciscan preacher, St. Anthony of Padua, the universal silence in the critical tradition suggests that this is not likely.

13 *Ibid.*, *Par.* 29.124–126. Benvenuto da Imola was the first to see prostitutes alluded to here: “porcis, scilicet, meretrices” (“to pigs, that is, prostitutes”) (*ibid.*, *Par.* 29.121–126). Many others have followed suit. See, for example Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi’s comment to line 125 in her edition of *Paradiso*.

colloquial, vernacular, quotidian, mercantile – sprout up like weeds through the pavement everywhere in the *Commedia*. The poet uses dialect words like “sipa” (*Inf.* 18.61) and “introcque” (*Inf.* 20.130), he deploys lowly words of the hearth like “pappo' e 'l 'dindi” (*Purg.* 11.105) and frequents similes that evoke the *bottega* and the marketplace. Note, for example, the comparison of the falsifiers in *Inf.* 29 to stableboys brushing horses (“non vidi già mai menare stregghia / a ragazzo aspettato dal signorso”), or to fishmongers scaling their catch (“e si traevan giù l'unghie la scabbia, / come coltel di scardova le scaglie / o d'altro pesce che più larghe l'abbia”) (*Inf.* 29.76-77, 82-84).

Surprise for our imaginary novice at this kind of language translates into dismay and exasperation for experts. Many scholars who know these passages well have had little to say that is not censorious, especially in previous centuries.¹⁴ Niccolò Tommaseo remarks that while the “motti e iscede” that Beatrice accuses preachers of using in *Par.* 29 hardly befit them, “neanco il cenno de' porci era cosa degna di Beatrice e del Paradiso.”¹⁵ Giuseppe Giacalone concurs: “indubbiamente la parola di D. è scesa ad un livello troppo terreno e *comico* (nel senso dantesco).”¹⁶ Pietro Bembo, the father of all censure of Dante's heterogeneous use of language and register, compares Dante's liberal textuality to an untended agricultural field choked with weeds and overgrowth:

Conciosia cosa che a ffine di poter di qualunque cosa scrivere, che ad animo gli
veniva, quantunque poco acconcia et malagevole a caper nel verso; egli molto

14 In the introduction to canto 29, which is the subject of this chapter's study, Chiavacci Leonardi notes a “disparità violenta del linguaggio, da molti critici rimproverata a Dante” (Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, ed. Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, vol. 3, 1. ed. I Meridiani [Milan: Mondadori, 1991], 789–790).

15 “Dartmouth Dante Project,” Conclusion.

16 *Ibid.*, *Paradiso* 29.124–126.

spesso hora le Latine voci, hora le straniere, che non sono state dalla Thoscana ricevute; hora le vecche del tutto et tralasciate, hora le non usate et rozze, hora le immonde et brutte, hore le durissime usando; et allo'ncontro le pure et gentili alcuna volta mutando et guastando; et talhora senza alcuna scielta o regola da se formandone et fingendone ha in maniera operato; che si può la sua *Comedia* giustamente rassomigliare ad un bello et spatioso campo di grano; che sia tutto d'avena et di logli et d'herbe sterili et dannose mescolato: o ad alcuna non potata vite al suo tempo: la quale si vede essere poscia la state sì di foglie et di pampani et di viticci ripiena; che se ne offendono le belle uve.

Considering that he has operated with the aim of being able to write about anything that came to mind, no matter how unbecoming and uncomfortable to set in rhyme – using now Latin words, now foreign words not derived from Tuscan, now old and forgotten words, now the unused and uncouth words, now unclean and ugly words, now very hard-sounding words; and in turn on occasion changing and ruining pure and choice words – and he has sometimes operated without any selective criteria or rule for forming and making up words on his own, then one can justly compare his *Commedia* to a beautiful and spacious field of grain that is altogether mixed in with oats and rye and with sterile and damaging grasses, or to some kind of vine not pruned in time: which one finds at the end of summer so full of leaves and tendrils that the good grapes are damaged.¹⁷

The kind of language raising Bembo's hackles is found all over the *Commedia*, as we have already seen, but Dante reserves some of his most vivid “low” language for clergy that have ignored their obligation to pastoral care. In *Par.* 12, St. Bonaventure compares his decadent Franciscan companions to mold growing along the walls of a wine cask: “è la muffa dov'era la gromma” (“where once was crust, there now is mold”) (12.114). In *Par.* 21, St. Peter Damian describes contemporary pastors grown so fat they appear melded into one with the horses that carry them (“Cuopron d'i manti loro i palafreni, / sì che due bestie van sott'una pelle” [Their fur-lined mantles hang upon their horses' flanks / so that two beasts go underneath one skin] [21.133-134]). And St. Peter, in what is perhaps the most fierce invective of the entire *Divina Commedia*, says that Boniface VIII has turned the Papal See into a squalid sewer: “fatt'ha del

¹⁷ *Prose della volgar lingua*, ed. Claudio Vela (Bologna: CLUEB, 2001), II, xx, 20–21.

cimiterio mio cloaca / del sangue e de la puzza” (“[he] has made my tomb a sewer of blood and filth”) (27.25-26).¹⁸

The question that remains is: what to make of this varied critical response to Dante and his free relationship to register? How can we reconcile into one reading those who would accuse him of too much eloquence on the one hand (Vernani) and those who would accuse him of too little on the other (Bembo and his disciples)? Ultimately what Bembo and Vernani both address as a question of style also raises the question of genre: what kind of literature accommodates both kinds of language? On one hand, Vernani is a better craftsman of invective than he is a literary critic, given that he ignores all that is not “sweet siren songs” in the poem in his campaign to demonize the poet. But even so, his reading of Dante as *praedicator* does not go away, and the problem that Bembo highlights still remains. How to accommodate his critique, how to forward a reading of *Dante praedicator*, when that *praedicator's* language indeed at times stinks of the wine cellar, the stable, the fishmonger, the brothel and the shithouse? The answer is that the shithouse and the pulpit can exist side by side, and medieval preaching had no problem accommodating varied linguistic registers.

The staging ground for medieval sermons was oftentimes not in the church, but out in the piazza. The piazza was the place where the city's linguistic and literary cultures flowed together. Here, the citizenry customarily met to discuss current events. Here vendors came to hawk their

18 These scenes may be read as even more grotesque, since certain key words recall specific, sometimes exceptionally disgusting, passages in the *Inferno*. St. Peter's “cloaca,” along with St. Bonaventure's “gromma” and “muffa,” call to mind the open sewers within which swim the flatterers in *Inferno* 18, the walls of which were encrusted with foul mold and worse (“Le ripe eran grommate di una muffa”) (*Inf.* 18.106). (Furthermore, “gromma” and “muffa” appear nowhere in the *Commedia* outside of these two loci.) The image of two beasts

wares. Here singers, poets, and *cantastorie* frequently performed before attentive audiences.¹⁹

Here also, many preachers, both Franciscan and Dominican, came to preach. Many of these capitalized on the varied speech of the piazza, especially that of the street performers, in search for an engaging language familiar to listeners.²⁰ Carlo Delcorno says that in the piazza,

[...] si mescolavano e si scontravano diverse culture, che potremmo definire alta e bassa, clericale e laica o folclorica, salvo poi a precisare il senso dei termini con più esatto riferimento alla varietà delle situazioni storiche. Al di là delle distinzioni e delle contrapposizioni ideologiche e nonostante i dislivelli della preparazione professionale, gli interpreti delle diverse culture si trovavano di fatto a parlare, ad agire negli stessi spazi, dinanzi ad un pubblico definito dall'appassionata ricerca di una sua identità linguistica e ideologica; e ricorrevano a procedimenti espressivi analoghi, ad una tecnica della parola e del gesto che era patrimonio comune.²¹

With so many voices competing for an audience, the public square was a ground for competition between the sacred word and the profane, and at the same time it was a center of cross-pollination. Although jongleurs were generally prohibited from performing during sermons,²² they and other public performers still influenced preaching more than the preachers might freely admit. Preaching, Delcorno adds,

under one skin in Peter Damian's speech also recalls many bestial hybrids in the *Inferno*, for example, the Minotaur, the Centaurs, the Harpies of the seventh circle (*Inf.* 12-13), Geryon, and the thieves who suffer serpentine transformations in the seventh bolgia (*Inf.* 25).

19 Carlo Delcorno, "Professionisti della parola: predicatori, giullari, concionatori," in *Tra storia e simbolo: studi dedicati a Ezio Raimondi*, vol. 46, Biblioteca di "Lettere Italiane," Studi e Testi (Florence: Olschki, 1994), 3.

20 The linguistic and stylistic sharing between minstrels and preachers is well-documented. In addition to Delcorno's article cited above, see Vittorio Dornetti, "Sulla predicazione popolare francescana: la parodia di Zaffarino da Firenze," *Cristianesimo nella storia* 3, no. 1 (1982): 83–102.

21 Delcorno, "Professionisti della parola: predicatori, giullari, concionatori," 4–5. Lina Bolzoni seconds Delcorno, saying: "È noto infatti che i francescani – riprendendo del resto, con maggiore o minore fedeltà – una componente essenziale dell'insegnamento del loro fondatore – caratterizzano il loro modo di predicare con una larga utilizzazione degli espedienti propri dei giullari, del teatro popolare, di tutte quelle tecniche che sono legate al linguaggio del corpo, della musica, della danza, che puntano sull'immediata efficacia comunicativa della messa in scena, dell'esempio visualizzato" ("Teatralità e tecniche della memoria in Bernardino da Siena," in *Il francescanesimo e il teatro medievale* [Castelfiorentino: Società Storica della Valdelsa, 1984], 179).

si arricchisce nelle sue capacità retoriche al confronto con le forme della cultura laica comunale e nello scontro con il più antico rivale, la recitazione giullaresca. In questa tensione creativa, e nel tentativo di ricomporre le voci molteplici, i discorsi divaricati, dentro l'orizzonte della Scrittura, risiede la grandezza e l'ambiguità della predicazione medievale.²³

In sum, preaching did not necessarily have to be the boring and alienating kind of dogmatic discourse that the theologians warned about at the beginning of this chapter. When necessary, preaching was an engaging and engaged form, one that borrowed dynamism and performative cues from some of the most dramatic entertainers of the day. This would explain why preaching is sometimes described as a kind of song, “quasi quidam cantus,” as Humbert of Romans calls it.²⁴

Because the piazza was a convergence space for so many different registers, popular preaching frequently engaged in the everyday, and sometimes scurrilous and grotesque, of common life in the Middle Ages. Lina Bolzoni notes that:

Accanto ai richiami alle esperienze cittadine e artigiane, troviamo una vastissima presenza del mondo animale, che da un lato deve molto ai bestiari moralizzati del Medioevo, dall'altro viene messo in scena con vivace realismo fonico e visivo; metafore legate al mondo del cibo, della cucina, dei bisogni fisiologici, vengono disinvoltamente usate anche in contesti la cui natura teologica e morale raddoppia l'effetto di “abbassamento.”²⁵

22 Delcorno notes the 1288 statues of Faenza prohibiting minstrels from singing under the porticoes while a sermon is being delivered in the piazza (“Professionisti della parola: predicatori, giullari, concionatori,” 7).

23 Ibid., 5.

24 “Deinde ad sciendum quantum acceptum sit istud officium coram Deo, notandum quod praedicatio est quasi quidam cantus; *Nehem. 7*: Habitaverunt cantores in civitatibus suis. *Glossa*: Cantores sunt qui dulcedinem coelestis patriae pia voce praedicant.” (“So, to understand how much this office is pleasing to God it needs to be recognized that preaching is like a kind of song; Nehemiah 7(73): ‘the singing men dwelt in the cities.’ *Glossa*: The singers are those who preach the sweetness of the heavenly home with a pious voice”) (*Opera de vita regulari 2. Expositio in constitutiones. Instructiones de officiis ordinis. De eruditione praedicatorum. Epistolae encyclicae*, ed. Joachim Joseph Berthier [Turin: Marietti, 1956], 380). Delcorno cites this passage, and also notes that Salimbene praises preachers' singing (“Professionisti della parola: predicatori, giullari, concionatori,” 10).

Bolzoni cites an example from Bernardino da Siena, which describes God the Father and Jesus sitting at home in heaven, discussing the many sins they need to punish in Siena, a task they analogize to the removal of scum from their pot of boiling meat.²⁶ Another of Bernardino's sermons includes several stories and analogies packed with vivid domestic detail: he describes the excessive attentiveness of a man for his slave girl, while his wife burns in jealousy; elsewhere, he tells of a woman *in flagrante* with her lover while the husband bangs on the locked door. This same sermon is also inflected with mercantile language: at one point, he compares confession and forgiveness to a Saturday market filled with goods. Later, he compares sins to eggs that the devil lays²⁷ in the nest of the soul, which are erased by confession. The Devil, chagrined at his lack of success, moves on, in the same way a bird abandons her nest if “your servant boy” (“uno de' tuoi fanciulli”) keeps stealing her eggs.²⁸ Giordano da Pisa's sermons are also full of examples from everyday life; he is known to discuss the robbery of horses, ships embarking on voyages and folkloristic elements like fictional rivers of wine.²⁹

25 “Teatralità e tecniche della memoria in Bernardino da Siena,” 188.

26 “Idio è nel suo santo tempio – O quando esce di questo suo tempio? Sai quando? Quando il figlio si consiglia col padre dicendoli: – o padre mio, parti: elli è anco tempo di dare una trita a Siena per le tante dissoluzioni che vi si fa, sì per le usure, sì per le vanità delle donne, sì per i mali guadagni e inleciti contratti e per molti peccati sterminati. Parti; anco è tempo di schiumare il pignatto” (“God in his holy temple – And when does he leave his temple? Do you know when? When the son counsels his father, saying: ‘O, my father, go: there is still enough time to rake Siena over the coals for its dissolution, for its usury, for the vanity of its women, for all of its unjust earnings and illicit contracts and for its many and endless sins. Go, there is still time to scrape the scum from the pot” (Bernardino da Siena, *Le prediche volgari di San Bernardino da Siena*, ed. Luciano Banchi [Siena: Tip. edit all’inseg. di S. Bernardino, 1880], vol. 1, p. 318). Lina Bolzoni cites this passage in part in “Teatralità e tecniche della memoria in Bernardino da Siena,” 188.

27 Bernardino's comparison of the Devil to a bird echoes Beatrice's metaphor, cited above, “ma tale uccel nel becchetto s'annida,” (*Par.* 29.119).

28 Roberto Rusconi, *Predicazione e vita religiosa nella società italiana: da Carlo Magno alla controriforma*, Documenti della storia 30 (Torino: Loescher, 1981), 183. Rusconi reprints the sermon on pp. 177-85.

29 Carlo Delcorno, *L'exemplum nella predicazione volgare di Giordano da Pisa.*, Memorie/Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, Classe die Scienze Morali e Lettere 36, 1 (Venezia, 1972), 16–19.

All this to say that the aim of this chapter is less to prove that Dante is a sort of *praedicator* in his poem than it is to show the many registers, and the many kinds of preaching, his poem's textuality encompasses. Dante's fluid relationship to register demonstrates that he, like these preachers above described, is also a poet of the street and the piazza, and not exclusively one of the *aula* or *studium*. His stylistically and lexically heterogeneous approach, however, does not pursue the same aim as the *giullari* and *cantastorie*, but is instead hedged in by the same necessities that shape effective sermon making; his message may entertain and delight as a matter of course, but his ultimate goal is to teach and enlighten.

While the last chapter, on *Par.* 10-13, showed Dante's somewhat uncritical relationship to the textuality of sermons, specifically *sermo modernus*, *Par.* 28-29 are instead notable for a slow descent in register as the poet dismantles the whole preaching edifice, arriving at a kind of ground zero of honest, but decidedly *humilis* predicatory discourse, based less on words and more on works. If Peter the Chanter works in analogies, comparing vain eloquence in sermons to prostitution, Dante's Beatrice in canto 29 literalizes that analogy by simply depositing an actual prostitute in the preaching scene (“*ancor più porci*”). Beatrice's work in real things highlights an essential truth about Dante the poet and thinker: that he is ultimately directed towards the real, not the ideal, in his pursuit of a renewed moral vision for society. Dante's Beatrice perhaps does Peter the Chanter one better by turning his prostitute of rhetoric into a real prostitute; however, she does so in perfect keeping with his description of theology that heads off this chapter: “*Theologia enim scientia est rerum et non verborum.*”

.....

If the poet looks to a preaching model centered on works more than words, it seems fitting that cantos 28 and 29 find their thematic center in issues of language and its ultimate inability to fully reflect reality. The poet expresses this problem in terms of time, the difference between events as they occur and events, as they are told. The opening of canto 28 puts this lie in relief, showing how the ordering of events can be undone in the retelling:

Poscia che 'ncontro a la vita presente

After which against the present life (28.1).³⁰

Dante's opening to canto 28 uses syntax to tell in reverse the natural order of experiential reality. The poet precedes that which is present ("presente") by that which naturally should come after it ("poscia"), showing how quickly representation can go off the rails. The pilgrim is at a crucial turning point here; he has just entered the *Primum Mobile*. Here, as Beatrice has already warned him, is the point where physical space is supplanted by metaphysical space (27.106-120). The geocentric universe that he has been traversing is turned inside out to reveal a different, theocentric, order. No longer do the planets circle the Earth, driven by angelic intelligences. Now, the angels revolve around their axis, God. The pilgrim will soon see this new order reflected in her eyes and will be astonished. He will represent his astonishment in a pair of similes that fit uncomfortably with the reality they attempt to describe. If the simile is a mirror, this reflection is slightly off. It wavers, it falters:

come in lo specchio fiamma di doppiero
vede colui che se n'alluma retro,
prima che l'abbia in vista o in pensiero,

30 Translation here is mine.

e sé rivolge per veder se 'l vetro
 li dice il vero, e vede ch'el s'accorda
 con esso come nota con suo metro;
 così la mia memoria si ricorda
 ch'io feci riguardando ne' belli occhi
 onde a pigliarmi fece Amor la corda.
 E com' io mi rivolsi e furon tocchi
 li miei da ciò che pare in quel volume,
 quandunque nel suo giro ben s'adocchi,
 un punto vidi che raggiava lume
 acuto sì, che 'l viso ch'elli affoca
 chiuder conviensi per lo forte acume;
 e quale stella par quinci più poca,
 parrebbe luna, locata con esso
 come stella con stella si collòca.

then, as one whose way is lit by a double-candled lamp
 held at his back, who suddenly in a mirror sees
 the flame before he has seen or even thought of it
 and turns to see if the glass is telling him the truth,
 and then sees that it reflects things as they are –
 as notes reflect the score when they are sung –
 just so do I remember having done,
 gazing into the beautiful eyes
 which Love had made into the snare that caught me.
 When I turned back and my eyes were struck
 by what appears on that revolving sphere –
 if one but contemplates its circling –
 I saw a point that flashed a beam of light
 so sharp the eye on which it burns
 must close against its piercing brightness.
 The star that, seen from here below, seems smallest
 would seem a moon if put beside it,
 as when one star is set beside another (28.4-21).

Odd similes explain the reality that Dante sees reflected in Beatrice's eyes. The scene developing behind his back, an intolerably bright light encircled by seven rotating flaming rings of angels (16-18), is compared to a simple and comparatively dim candle reflected in a mirror.³¹ The

31 My discussion of angels and their natures will be brief and cursory, as it is not my intention to enter into a very serious argument about Dante's angelology, in which some notable protagonists hold sway. See, for example the most recent monographs on Dante and angels, Stephen Bemrose, *Dante's angelic intelligences: their importance*

curiously incongruous comparison seems to scratch a deeper itch than perfect parallelism, aiming to show, perhaps, the ultimate weakness of language when it attempts to deal in analogies. The “punto,” we must remember, is God, and there is none like God,³² no successful comparison can be made. To drive the point home, the poet nails another simile atop the first; he compares the confirmation that the glass tells the truth (“se 'l vetro / li dice il vero”) to the accord of music with meter (“vede ch'el s'accorda / con esso come nota con suo metro”). Truth and its representation is still bound by analogies. A reflection is not the thing, merely its analogue. And a visual reflection in a mirror – which is at least a visual simulacrum – is now compared to the reflection of notes to meter, which are two distinctly different things, no matter how much they agree with one another. One might argue that this simile is more about transcription and punctuation than it is about performance. “Nota,” after all, could mean a sign or a letter used for comprehending text,³³ while “metro,” originally, means a poetic measure. Such a reading would also accord with the poet's selective use of “volume” to describe the space he is in, suggesting the universe is a kind of book (the universe as a “volume” will reach its apotheosis in *Par.* 33.86), at the center of which is a “punto,” a period, the omega point of the real. In this multiplication of textual signs, the difference between experience and text becomes increasingly

in the cosmos and in pre-Christian religion, *Lecture di pensiero e d'arte* 62 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1983), especially chapter 3; and Susanna Barsella, *In the Light of the Angels: Angelology and Cosmology in Dante's Divina Commedia*, Biblioteca dell'Archivum Romanicum. Serie 1, Storia, Letteratura, Paleografia v. 370 (Florence: Olschki, 2010) and chapter 1 in particular.

32 Psalms 112:5: “Quis ut Dominus Deus noster?”

33 *Notaria* are not only useful for punctuation, they are important mnemonic devices too, Mary Carruthers demonstrates (Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008], 135–43). Carruthers includes an enticing citation in which John of Salisbury compares the *notae* in text, used for comprehension and retention, to the notes in music, in which are encoded precise instructions on how to play; John of Salisbury calls these the “musicae clauae” (*Metalogicon* 1.20.15-28, cit in *ibid.*, 142, f.n. 125). Petrarch also uses the word “notae” in the mnemonic sense in his *Secretum* (*ibid.*, 204).

hard to distinguish. When Dante-pilgrim is told that the angelic orders here are situated in reverse to the order they occurred in as intelligences attached to planets circling the Earth, (40-45), he is confused, and asks how “l'esempio / e l'esemplare non vanno d'un modo” (55-56), how the physical world, the *exemplum*, manifests so poorly the *exemplar*, the Divine world after which it is modeled as analogue. The great deal of critical disagreement regarding what “esempio” and “esemplare” stand for³⁴ suggest that his is not a textual crux, as some critics seem to think, but a deliberate meditation on the ambiguities of analogy, the always problematic relationship between the *res* and its *signum*.

Canto 29 continues the discussion that canto 28 initiates. But instead of calling attention to the problems of analogy, here the focus is on the insufficiency of human discourse when compared to that of the Divine. In verses 10-30, Beatrice describes the creation of the universe as a narrative act, but one that God executes without himself being subject to time. This is evident

34 Earlier commentators do not hesitate to equate “esempio” with the Earth, the inferior copy, and “esemplare” with God, the superior original. Pietro Alighieri says: “superior mundus ut exemplar non conformabatur cum inferiori, ut cum eius exemplo.” Pietro is even more explicit about this association later, in his introduction to canto 29: “ipse est Deus exemplar et materia.” Benvenuto is of the same opinion, and clarifies that the *exemplum* necessarily derives from its *exemplar*: “exemplar enim appellatur illud a quo trahitur exemplum.” Even earlier in time before both of these, the *Ottimo Commento* (albeit in the introduction to canto 33) clarifies: “l'esemplare di tutto il mondo essere in Dio.” The Anonimo Fiorentino, Alessandro Velutello and Bernardino Daniello follow suit (“Dartmouth Dante Project,” s.vv. *esemplare*, *exemplar*).

However, in spite of this strong early consensus that “esempio” is the world and “esemplar” is God, critics in the nineteenth century began to question these designations and, founding their arguments on readings of Boethius, began to suggest a reversal of these terms: the “esempio” the true original and the “esemplare” now the copy. I trace this shift in critical opinion back to the commentary to these lines by Giacomo Poletto (1894) who notes first of all that there is functionally no difference between the two terms, “esempio” and “esemplare,” (which other critics have confirmed). Poletto then comments that Boethius's use of “*exemplum*” (in v. 9 of the poem initiating Book 3 of the *Consolation*) intends to refer to the original, not its copy, and adds that this is the sense that Dante gives in translating Boethius's words in *Convivio* 3, 2. Many critics take up Poletto's lead, most without comment: Enrico Mestica (1909), Sapegno (1955-57) and Giuseppe Giacalone (1968). Singleton is one of these, as he sees the “esempio” as God and “esemplare” as the “copy,” the “physical universe bounded by the Empyrean.” Other critics have taken care to call attention to the confusion: Daniele Mattalia (1960) and Bosco/Reggio, who, incidentally, choose to align themselves with the earliest commentators. By virtue of her syntax, Chiavacci Leonardi appears to revert to the earliest reading as well: “la copia e il modello (*l'esempio e l'esemplare*), cioè il *mondo sensibile* e quello *intelligibile*” (ibid.).

in her first sentence, which announces that she does not need to ask the pilgrim what he wants to know, since she sees into the essence of God, outside of space and time.

Poi cominciò: “Io dico, e non dimando,
 quel che tu vuoi udir, perch' io l'ho visto
 là 've s'appunta ogne ubi e ogne quando.”

Then she began: “I tell, I do not ask,
 what you would like to hear. For I have seen it there
 where every ubi and every quando has its center (10-12).

She then explains that the motivation behind creation was pure pleasure (“come i piacque [17]), a joyful act of multiplication (“s'aperse in nuovi amori l'eterno amore” [18]). Beatrice then clarifies that there was no time before God created the world, no time in which God lay inactive; there was no such thing as “before” and “after” preceding God's move across the waters (“né prima né poscia procedette / lo discorrer di Dio sopra quest'acque” [20-21]). The introduction of “discorrer” constitutes the introduction of narrative into the act of Creation, the *fiat lux* of God speaking things into existence. Teodolinda Barolini notes how God's “discorrer” “raises a mirror to the discursive act that creates the poem,” confirming Dante's conscious comparison of the art of creation to the art of poetry in this canto.³⁵ In his 2002 essay on this canto, Piero Boitani nudges the discussion towards more rhetorical and oratory language, noting that this “discorrer” suggests not only physical motion but also the “ramificarsi della mente e lo spaziare, proprio dell'oratore, su un qualche argomento.”³⁶ In this sense, the act of creation is figured as a kind of cogitative, discursive, act of exposition, or perhaps a sort of elaboration on an argument as God opens himself into new loves (“s'aperse in nuovi amori”), producing multiplicities from his

35 Teodolinda Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 237.

36 “Canto XXIX,” in *Paradiso*, vol. 3, *Lectura Dantis Turicensis* (Firenze: F. Cesati, 2002), 445.

Divine unity. And yet, while God originates all this “discourse,” he is by nature beyond it. Unlike human discourse, his begins the beginning with no distinctions:

così 'l triforme effetto del suo sire
ne l'esser suo raggiò insieme tutto
sanza distinzione in essordire.

just so did the threefold creation flash –
with no intervals in its beginning –
from its Lord into being, all at once (29.28-30).

The distinction, as I have demonstrated in the last chapter, is part of intelligent human discourse. According to Aquinas in *Par* 14, only fools, the Donna Bertas and Ser Martinos of the world, venture forth without establishing distinctions. Here, instead, Beatrice highlights a paradox: that the Divine is so far beyond those ratiocinations that help us make sense of things, that he operates without them. The distinction is also a time-bound and language-bound thing, and as such it can never represent the synchronic and omnipresent Divine reality; the language we use in attempt to describe the Transcendent is hamstrung by the limitations of narrative, the limitations of the “distinzion,” of before and after.³⁷

The revelation of God's distinctionless discourse leads directly into a discussion about the shortcomings in human modes of thought. Beatrice's speech seems to attempt to replicate this Divine “distinctionlessness,” inasmuch as her syntax begins to refute any sort of predictable division, by means of a kind of *legato* and *tempo rubato* in her speech, a smoothing out of the verse breaks with enjambment, and a delaying of subjects and main clauses until the last possible

37 Teodolinda Barolini discerns the same essential truth in these lines, explaining: “God, who existed before 'prima e poscia,' may both create difference and be without it in his essence” (*The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*, 212).

moment.³⁸ In this way, the statement refutes distinction not only explicitly but also in its grammatical structure:

Ma perché 'n terra per le vostre scole
 si legge che l'angelica natura
 è tal, che 'ntende e si ricorda e vole,
 ancor dirò, perché tu veggi pura
 la verità che là giù si confonde,
 equivocando in sì fatta lettura.
 Queste sustanze, poi che fur gioconde
 de la faccia di Dio, non volser viso
 da essa, da cui nulla si nasconde:
 però non hanno vedere interciso
 da novo obietto, e però non bisogna
 rememorar per concetto diviso;
 sì che là giù, non dormendo, si sogna,
 credendo e non credendo dicer vero;
 ma ne l'uno è più colpa e più vergogna.
 Voi non andate giù per un sentiero
 filosofando: tanto vi trasporta
 l'amor de l'apparenza e 'l suo pensiero!
 E ancor questo qua sù si comporta
 con men disdegno che quando è posposta
 la divina Scrittura o quando è torta.
 Non vi si pensa quanto sangue costa
 seminarla nel mondo e quanto piace
 chi umilmente con essa s'accosta.
 Per apparer ciascun s'ingegna e face
 sue invenzioni; e quelle son trascorse
 da' predicanti e 'l Vangelio si tace

But since in schools on earth you still are taught
 that the angelic nature is possessed
 of understanding, memory, and will,
 I will continue, so that you clearly see
 how truth is made unclear down there
 by such equivocation in its teaching.
 These angelic beings, since they first rejoiced
 in the face of God, from which nothing may be hidden,

38 Teodolinda Barolini also discusses issues of jammed syntax and its consequences for poetic representation in her tenth and final chapter, "The sacred poem is forced to jump: closure and the poetics of enjambment," in *Ibid.*, 218–56. As it is elsewhere, my work is inspired by her precedent.

have never turned their eyes away from it,
 so that their sight is never interrupted
 by some new object. And thus they have no need
 to search the past for some forgotten construct.
 Thus down there men are dreaming while they wake,
 believing that they speak the truth. And those
 who don't believe so share the greater guilt and shame.
 Down there, when you philosophize, you fail
 to follow one true path, so does the love of show
 preoccupy your mind and carry you away,
 and even this is tolerated here
 with less wrath than when holy Scripture
 is neglected or its doctrines are mistaught.
 There is no thought among you of the blood it costs
 to sow the world with it, or how acceptable he is
 who humbly makes his way to it.
 Each strives to gain attention by inventing new ideas,
 expounded by the preachers at some length –
 but the Gospel remains silent (29.70-96).

It is of crucial importance to take a close look at the syntactical structures here, since Beatrice's negation of the angelic need to remember by divided concept (“per concetto diviso”) is structured in a way that it exceeds the syntactical divisions generally enforced by the hendecasyllabic line and the *terzina*. Dante's lines and *terzine* often function as discrete grammatical units; oftentimes a sentence fits neatly into a *terzina*, and clauses are generally contained within a single line. Although the poet often freely breaks from this structure elsewhere in the poem when necessary, the above passage is extraordinary in its insistent divergence from the norm. Its clauses refuse to be contained by end-stopped lines, and main clauses are delayed until the very last possible moment. In lines 70-75, Beatrice announces – in a single sentence – that she will refute the assumption of scholars, that an angel “intende e si ricorda e vole.” She begins with a subordinate clause, “ma perché,” and follows with several enjambments until the main clause in line 73 (“ancor dirò”). While the length of the sentence and

the frequency of enjambments are noteworthy, they are nothing compared to the complexity of the following three *terzine* (76-84). Here, a single sentence is stretched over nine lines. It contains four independent clauses and several very abruptly enjambed lines. The violence of these enjambments is highlighted by a breaking of the line, right before the prepositional phrases that the statements depend on, hence: “gioconde / de la faccia,” “non volser viso / da essa.” Verses 79-81 contain two result clauses, marked by “però.” Although both of these are relatively short, and could in theory be contained to a single line, they are instead situated so as to spill over into the next lines at strategically calculated places in the sentence's development. The first of these enjambments, like those that preceded it, cuts the word before a preposition: “interciso / da novo obietto.” (Note too the evocative cut after an equally cutting participle, “interciso”; this is an interruption of an interruption.) The second of these enjambed “però” result clauses also cuts in a key place, separating a lack of need (“non bisogna”) from the object it rejects (“rememorar”). The next *terzina* (82-84) is singularly strange. Although it has no violent enjambments like the previous lines, its structure is somewhat topsy-turvy and *staccato*. It begins with a result clause resolving the six lines preceding it, but then resolutely shifts the argument's direction at the end, introducing a new subject, and a new direction for the discussion to follow: the preacher to blame (“ma ne l'uno è più colpa e più vergogna”) for spreading lies about Divine Scripture.

This discussion of memory, dividing by memory, and the interrupted vision is at root a discussion of narrative.³⁹ Because it orders reality in terms of before and after, and is limited by

39 Teodolinda Barolini recognizes “the narrativity inherent in remembering,” and adds that Dante emphasizes this since practically the beginning of his career, when he refers to the “libro de la mia memoria” at the beginning of *Vita Nova* Ibid., 23.

the physical and the emotional perspective of the narrator, memory is inherently diegetic and consummately subjective. The Aristotelians of the Middle Ages understood this. They knew that memory is a story we tell ourselves about past events, and as such is not an accurate representation of reality.⁴⁰ In this way, Beatrice's refutation of distinctions and divisions as necessary components of the angelic understanding of reality implicitly refutes human memory as an insufficient faculty as well, inflected as it is by time and personal impressions. In this way, Beatrice's critique is about more than just misreading Scripture; it is about human interpretive principles, it is about how our brains work.⁴¹

If the best rational thought falters in the face of the Divine, how much more so ought the sophistry of pompous and self-interested preachers who often compromise reason in the pursuit of exciting new arguments? These become the new subject of Beatrice's speech. She assails those

40 Mary Carruthers discusses at length the medieval understanding that memory is supremely diegetic, bound as it is by time, narrative, and personal perspectives. Summarizing the arguments of Aristotle and the many Aristotelians of the Middle Ages, Carruthers says that memory "is 'affective' in nature – that is, it is sensorily derived and emotionally charged. It is not simply an abstraction or a mental ghost, despite its critical usefulness to all rational processes [...] Successful recollection requires that one recognize that every kind of mental representation, including those in memory, is in its composition sensory and emotional (*The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 75). On memory as temporal, she cites Aristotle: "Aristotle says that 'memory is of the past,' and 'all memory involves time,'" and adds that "memory's re-presentation is less importantly mimetic, or objectively reiterative of the original perception, than it is temporal, because it makes the past perception present" (ibid., 76). As an "affectus," memory is also "fundamental for understanding the crucial role memory was thought to have in the shaping of moral judgment and excellence of character" (ibid., 85). For a more comprehensive picture, see "Descriptions of the neuropsychology of memory," the second chapter in this seminal book Ibid., 56–98.

41 Memory, as purely subjective storytelling, fascinates contemporary psychologists and neuroscientists as well. During the final draft of this chapter, I came across these words by Oliver Sacks on memory: "There is no way by which the events of the world can be directly transmitted or recorded in our brains; they are experienced and constructed in a highly subjective way, which is different in every individual to begin with, and differently reinterpreted or reexperienced whenever they are recollected. (The neuroscientist Gerald M. Edelman often speaks of perceiving as 'creating,' and remembering as 'recreating' or 'recategorizing.')

Frequently, our only truth is narrative truth, the stories we tell each other, and ourselves—the stories we continually recategorize and refine. Such subjectivity is built into the very nature of memory, and follows from its basis and mechanisms in the human brain" (Oliver Sacks, "Speak, Memory," *The New York Review of Books*, February 21, 2013, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2013/feb/21/speak-memory/>).

preachers delighted by their own cleverness, those same over-educated and pretentious figures that our theologians spoke against at the beginning of this chapter. Moving her criticism from “vostre scole” (70), she shifts her rhetorical direction to directly address with a booming “voi” all those preachers who ignore or distort Scripture by “filosofando,” and who lose the one path (“un sentiero”), motivated by love for appearances (“l'amor de l'apparenza e l suo pensiero”). Worse than the vain and negligent preacher, however, is he who sets aside Scripture or distorts its meaning in the search for something novel to say (“questo qua sù si comporta / con men disdegno che quando è posposta / la divina Scrittura o quando è torta”). Unlike the Apostles, who spoke only Gospel truth, these make up whatever arguments their fancy requires, for appearance alone: “per apparer ciascun s'ingegna e face / sue invenzioni.” Here is the vain inventor of new ideas that William of Auvergne critiqued earlier, who racks his brains to come up with novel things to say (“qui tanto studio seipsos eviscerant ut mira et nova et quasi inaudita dicant”). Additionally, one can almost hear the ominous echo of “Nunquam locutus est sic homo,” hinting perhaps at a graver accusation still to come.

Beatrice progresses from these presumably more elite generators of new and unheard-of inventions to the preachers who pore over the latest trendy new philosophies and stuff them into their sermons (“e quelle son trascorse / da' predicanti e l Vangelo si tace” [95-96]), eager to fret out their words with some specious new ornament. “Trascorse” is a well-selected term, since it echoes the “discorrere” of God earlier the canto, and shows the ultimate fallenness of human modes of reasoning compared to Divine “discourse.” The many arguments invented in search of novelty are revealed as pitiful facsimiles compared to God's effortless expatiation and multiplication of his love in the creation of the angels. The “transcourse” of such preachers

seduces them from “un sentiero,” creating not unity but Babelic confusion. While God's discourse is over the pure and primeval waters of creation, these preachers, instead, survey the false waters of human invention, which poorly reflect divine intention, if they reflect at all.

Beatrice has definitively exited her speculative discourse on angelic memory by this point, for she now allows her discussion to focus exclusively on those preachers who distort or sideline the Gospel, with a register that becomes increasingly “popular” with every line:

Un dice che la luna si ritorse
 ne la passion di Cristo e s'interpuose,
 per che 'l lume del sol giù non si porse;
 e mente, ché la luce si nascose
 da sé; però a li Spani e a l'Indi
 come a'Giudei tale eclissi rispuose.
 Non ha Fiorenza tanti Lapi e Bindi
 quante sì fatte favole per anno
 in pergamo si gridan quinci e quindi:
 sì che le pecorelle, che non sanno,
 tornan del pasco pasciute di vento,
 e non le scusa non veder lo danno.

One says that at Christ's passion the moon turned back
 and interposed itself in such a way
 the sun's light did not reach below.
 He lies, for the light chose to hide itself.
 And therefore Spaniards and Indians,
 as well as Jews, could all see that eclipse take place.
 Florence has not as many named Lapo and Bindo
 as it has tales like these that are proclaimed
 from the pulpit, here and there, throughout the year,
 so that the ignorant flocks return from feeding
 fed on wind. And that they fail
 to see their loss does not excuse them (29.97-108).

The passage begins with an image of a preacher who says that the darkening of the sky at the moment of crucifixion was the result of an eclipse. This man is a liar (“e mente”). Historically, this hypothesis is not so much a fanciful invention as it is the opinion of some of the most

well-known theologians of the time, names such as Thomas Aquinas,⁴² Peter Lombard, Bonaventure and Albertus Magnus.⁴³ Clearly, the problem of “transcourse” affects us all in our research for the new, not just reprehensibly self-interested preachers. One notes that Beatrice's register has descended to accompany the migration of her discussion from angelology to bad preachers. She dismisses their faulty theology as mere fables or yarns (“sì fatte favole”), proclaimed from pulpits here and there, such that these confabulations exceed the number of Lapos and Bindos (and they are legion) in Florence, leaving the “pecorelle, che non sanno” merely fed on wind (“pasciute di vento”), a flawed theology cooked up by pastors more interested in their own vain glory than in feeding their flock.

After describing all this confusion and babble, the many astronomical theories and fables muddying up Sacred discourse, Beatrice re-centers her conversation on the Gospel, upon which all preaching necessarily depends, but she does so in a distinctively popular key:

Non disse Cristo al suo primo convento:
 'Andate e predicate al mondo ciance';
 ma diede lor verace fondamento;
 e quel tanto sonò ne le sue guance,
 sì che a pagnar per accender la fede
 de l'Evangelio fero scudo e lance.

Christ did not say to his first congregation:
 “Go and preach idle nonsense to the world,”
 but gave to them a sound foundation.
 And that alone sounded from their lips,
 so that, in their warfare to ignite the faith,
 they used the Gospel as their shield and lance (29.109-114).

42 “Forse Dante pensava a qualche predicante da lui udito; ma questa volta chi mentiva era proprio frate Tommaso, il quale nella *Summa Theol* (III, q. 44, a. 2, ad 2um) complica il miracolo evangelico mettendo a soqquadro tutto il sistema aristotelico-tolomaico” (Bruno Nardi, “Il Canto XXIX del ‘Paradiso’,” in *“Lecturae” e altri studi danteschi* [Florence: Le Lettere, 1990], 200).

43 *Paradiso*, ed. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 806, note 100.

Beatrice's rendering of the words of Christ⁴⁴ in the vernacular, and the ironic suggestion that he would use the word “ciance,” they contribute to an increasingly popular feel of her speech. Her emphasis on the Gospel here likewise points towards a much simpler sermonics not based on speculative theology but on the “real” (“verace fondamento”), the shield and the lance. While the passage explicitly refers to the original apostles, Dante's period was not entirely devoid of optimum preaching models, and those closest to the Apostolic ideal were in the mendicant orders. The martial terms may recall Dominic in *Par.* 12, but I think that Beatrice's emphasis on the gospel might intend to remind readers of St. Francis most of all. “Eamus ergo per mundum,” he once told his brothers, echoing Jesus's Great Commission, “exhortantes et docentes homines et mulieres uerbo et exemplo” (“exhorting and teaching men and women with word and example”).⁴⁵ Francis is Dante's lodestone in pursuit of the real. His biography testifies to a kind of preaching that is dramatically different from *sermo modernus*, and certainly also in direct opposition to the kind of preaching that Beatrice here lampoons. In addition to this, he is the protagonist *par excellence* of the “theology of things” that Peter the Chanter asserts. To adequately discuss Francis's preaching will require an excursus of some several pages. We will soon return to the final part of Beatrice's critique of preaching (29.115-126), in which she describes a jester-like preacher, whose antics suggests he is the diabolical inversion of all that Francis stood for.

44 “Euntes in mundum universum praedicate evangelium omni creature” [“go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature”] (Mark 16:15).

45 Anonymous Peruginan, “De inceptione vel fundamento ordinis et actibus illorum fratrum minorum qui fuerunt primi in religione et socii beati francisci,” in Claudio Leonardi, ed., *Letteratura Franceseana*, vol. 2 (Mondadori, 2005), 18.4, p. 350.

Francis's preaching differs dramatically from any preaching heretofore discussed. It was not even “preaching” in the strict technical sense. Francis's “Regula non bullata” (1221) warns against friars who assume the duty to preach without the proper authorization, but takes care to emphasize that all friars, not just ordained preachers, must preach with their works (“operibus praedicient”).⁴⁶ Initially, Franciscan preaching was limited to “exhortatio,” which primarily regarded penitence but did not discuss doctrinal matters.⁴⁷ In time, Franciscans were given permission to practice true “predicatio” (which some scholars will identify with *sermo modernus*⁴⁸), but the “Regula Bullata” (1223) takes care to establish a strict distinction between “praedicatio,” reserved for a select few preachers, and “exhortatio,” which was allowed even to

46 “Nullus frater praedicet contra formam et institutionem sanctae Ecclesiae et nisi concessimi sibi fuerit a ministro suo. Et caueat sibi minister ne alicui indiscrete concedat. Omnes tamen fratres operibus praedicient” (“May no friar preach against the form and institutions of the Holy Church, and without the permission of his minister. And let the minister be wary of giving this permission incautiously. However all friars must preach with their works”) (Chapter 17.13 of the “Regula Non Bullata,” in *La Letteratura Franciscana: Francesco e Chiara d'Assisi*, vol. 1 [Mondadori, 2004], 35).

47 Mariano D'Alatri, “Predicazione e predicatori francescani nella Cronica di fra Salimbene,” *Collectanea Franciscana* 46 (1976): 87; Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education*, 273.

48 Bert Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction Before the Council of Trent* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 4; Carlo Delcorno, “Medieval Preaching in Italy (1200-1500),” in *The Sermon*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle, *Typologie Des Sources Du Moyen Age Occidental* 81-83 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 478. This reading is not uncontested; Neslihan Şenocak criticizes such claims, saying that one cannot verify that Franciscans knew about *sermo modernus* at this time, or, if they did know it, that they would naturally want to employ it in sermons to the laity (*The Poor and the Perfect: The Rise of Learning in the Franciscan Order, 1209-1310* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012], 151).

lay brothers.⁴⁹ The “Regula bullata” also emphasizes simplicity and brevity for all.⁵⁰ In sum, although some Franciscans did preach complex sermons on doctrinal matters, the simple exhortation and the sermon of works remained the trademark Franciscan style, in keeping with the example set by the order's founder.

The various hagiographic sources on Francis's preaching attest to a simple style, stripped of rhetorical ornament, and showing none of the features of the more sophisticated *praedicatio*.⁵¹ According to Thomas of Celano's testimony, Francis's simple sermons nevertheless communicated the deepest theological truths:

Licet autem evangelista Franciscus per materialia et rudia rudibus praedicaret, utpote qui sciebat plus opus esse virtute quam verbis, tamen inter spirituales magisque capaces vivifica et profunda parturiebat eloquia. Brevibus innuebat quod erat ineffabile, et ignitos interserens gestus et nutus, totos rapiebat auditores ad caelica. Non distinctionum clavibus utebatur, quia quos ipse non inveniebat, non ordinabat sermones. *Dabat voci suae vocem virtutis, vera virtus et sapientia*

49 Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education*, 274. Pertaining to the distinction between *exhortatio* and *praedicatio*, Roest points to the following sources: J.M. Powell, “The Papacy and the Early Franciscans,” *Franciscan Studies* 36 (1976): 248–262; J.M. Powell, “The Prefatory Letters to the Sermons of Pope Honorius III, and the Reform of Preaching,” *Rivista Di Storia Della Chiesa in Italia* 33 (1979): 96; Michel Lauwers, “Praedicatio-Exhortatio: L’Église, la réforme et les laïcs (XIe-XIIIe siècles),” in *La parole du prédicateur, Ve-XVe siècle* (Nice: Centre d’études médiévales, 1997), 187–231.

50 “Moneo quoque et exhorto eosdem fratres ut in praedicatione quam faciunt sint *examinata et casta* eorum *eloquia*, ad utilitatem et aedificationem populi, annuntiando eis vitia et virtutes, poenam et gloriam cum breuitate sermonis; *quia uerbum abbreviatum fecit Dominus super terram*” (“I also admonish and exhort those same brothers that in their preaching their discourse be carefully considered and pure, to the use and edification of the people, announcing to them vices and virtues, punishment and the glory with brief speech; for on earth the Lord spoke in brief words”) (“Regula Bullata,” in *La Letteratura Francescana: Francesco e Chiara d’Assisi*, vol. 1 [Mondadori, 2004], 9.4–5, p. 118).

51 While the hagiographic sources I use cannot be verified as historical accounts, I side with Vittorio Dornetti, who in his study of Franciscan popular preaching defends his own use of the *Fioretti* by arguing that even if any one account therein is not true, the collection nevertheless effectively communicates the general spirit of Franciscan predicatory discourse: “Non c’è ragione di negare valore di documento a questi testi, se non altro come testimonianza indiretta di un linguaggio o di costume abituali ai predicatori francescani; anche se il nucleo di veridicità di tali composizioni si stempera nella volontà di celebrare l’Ordine assumendo un’ottica religiosa e metastorica che garantisca comunque il successo dei frati minori, perché, appunto, l’Ordine è *buono*, è *santo*” (“Sulla predicazione popolare francescana: la parodia di Zaffarino da Firenze,” 86).

Christus.

Although Francis the Evangelist preached to the simple through material and simple things, inasmuch as he knew that a deed bore more power than words, nevertheless among spiritual and more capable men he gave birth to enlivening and profound words. In a few short words he would hint at the ineffable, and seeding his speech with fervent gestures and nods, he completely swept away his listeners to heavenly things. He made no use of the keys of distinctions,⁵² and he did not order his sermons, as he did not compose them. Behold he will give to his voice the voice of power, the true power and wisdom, Christ.⁵³

In this account, Francis dispenses with all that is “rhetorical” and intellectualized and embraces the real, the physical, the embodied. He speaks in simple words and things, to simple people,⁵⁴ refusing the “*distinctionum clavibus*” of the sermon, and installing in their place “*gestus et nutus*,” which far better communicate what cannot be expressed in words (“*quod erat ineffabile*”). Through suggestive use of Scripture, Celano emphasizes the prophetic power of Francis's message. Celano's last sentence in this passage echoes Psalm 67:34: “*Qui ascendit super caelum caeli ad orientem. Ecce dabit voci suae vocem virtutis*” (“who mounteth above the heaven of heavens, to the east. Behold he will give to his voice the voice of power”). The passage's reference to the “*orientem*” recalls a commonplace in medieval prophetic thought,

52 For Francis's deliberate refutation of *sermo modernus* rhetoric, see Delcorno, *Quasi quidam cantus: studi sulla predicazione medievale*, 173–74. Delcorno makes the interesting hypothesis that Francis indeed *did* use *distinctiones* at other points in his career, notably in his preaching that Thomas of Split witnessed at Bologna in 1222 (*ibid.*, 173–174). See also Ulrich Leinsle, *Introduction to Scholastic Theology*, trans. Michael Miller (Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 72. Leinsle translates this term as “academic hair-splitting,” but the reference occurs in a section explicitly treating the scholastic sermon and all of its component features, so the conclusion is the same (*ibid.*, 68–73).

53 Enrico Menestò and Stefano Brufani, eds., *Fontes Franciscani* (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1995), LXXIII, 107, p. 541.

54 Dornetti compares this passage's “*rudia rudibus*” to Jacques de Vitry's statement on Francis's preaching, calling it “*quasi corporalia et palpabilia*,” directed towards the “*edificacionem rudium et agrestium*” (cit. in Dornetti, “*Sulla predicazione popolare francescana: la parodia di Zaffarino da Firenze*,” 88).

which sees Francis as one of the two figures of apocalyptic renewal⁵⁵ (Dante also knew these prophetic readings⁵⁶).

The mystical, and sometimes prophetic power of Francis's superficially elementary sermons is well documented. Gregory IX confirms Francis's simple style in his bull of canonization "Mira circa nos," which says the saint preached through spiritual ardor and the power of God, and did not adorn his words with specious adornment or displays of knowledge.⁵⁷ The depth of Franciscan teaching – derived from spiritual contemplation rather than academic knowledge – is highlighted in another anecdote by Thomas of Celano, in which Francis interprets Scripture to a well-educated Dominican who, stupefied by Francis's words, remarks: "My brothers, the theology of this man, based on purity and contemplation, is like an eagle in flight, while our knowledge progresses across the ground on its belly."⁵⁸ The Scriptures that Celano's

55 Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London: Soc. for Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1976), 27; Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*, Records of Civilization, Sources and Studies; No. 96 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 160. Francis is also associated with the angel of the apocalypse in Revelations 7:2, which also rises from the "Orient": "et vidi alterum angelum ascendentem ab ortu solis habentem signum Dei vivi" ("And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the sign of the living God"). Giuseppe Mazzotta notes this influential Biblical text, and says that Bonaventure uses it in the preface of his *Legenda Maior*, and *De reductione artium ad theologiam* (Giuseppe Mazzotta, "Dante's Franciscanism," in *Dante and the Franciscans* [Leiden: Brill, 2006], 177). The reader should be aware that Mazzotta claims the verse is in Revelations 7:12, when the true location is in fact 7:2. Furthermore, the translation Mazzotta cites appears to be the *God's Word Translation*, an idiosyncratic choice that does not reflect the Vulgate accurately.

56 "Però chi d'esso loco fa parole, / non dica Asceti, ché direbbe corto, / ma Oriente, se proprio dir vuole." ("Therefore, let anyone who would speak of this place / not say *Asceti*, which would convey too little, / but call it *Orient*, to sound its proper worth") (*Par.* 11.52-54).

57 "et spirituo feruoris concepto *asinique arrepta mandibula*, praedicatione siquidem simplici, nullis uerborum *persuasibilium humanae sapientiae* coloribus adornata, sed tamen Dei uirtuti potenti" (Gregory IX, "Mira circa nos," in *La Letteratura francescana: Francesco e Chiara d'Assisi*, vol. 1 [Mondadori, 2004], sec. 9. p. 259 [italics are original, identifying Judges 15:15 and I Cor 2:4]).

58 "Fratres mei, teologia uiri huius, puritate et contemplatione subnixta, *est aquila uolans*; nostra uero scientia *uentre graditur super terram*." (Thomas of Celano, "Ex 'Memoriali in desiderio animae di gestis et uerbis sanctissimi patris nostri Francisci'," in *La letteratura francescana*, vol. 2 [Mondadori, 2005], 103.10, p.

unnamed Dominican weaves into his statement function as a surprisingly unsubtle dig against his own order (and likely its more frequent use of the tools of *sermo modernus*). The image of the flying eagle used to describe Francis's theology derives from Deuteronomy 28:49, in which Moses prophesies the disaster impending upon the Children of Israel if they do not heed the word of God. One of the manifold punishments to be leveled against them is an invasion by a foreign people of different language, who will swoop down on them “in similitudinem aquilae volantis cum impetu.”⁵⁹ Thus Francis, in his unlearned and rudimentary but spiritually-inspired language, lays waste to Dominican ratiocination and eloquence, which, the intertext suggests, has wandered away from God's will. The Dominican monk's comparison of his order's theology to the serpent in Genesis (1:20,22; 3:14) is self-explanatory.

Francis' s preaching “art” (if it can be even called that), draws from a deeply spiritual, not intellectual, place. According to an anonymous contemporary, Francis did not prepare his sermons in any way, but only waited for instruction from the Holy Spirit (“*praedico eis sicut docuerit me Spiritus Sanctus*”).⁶⁰ In Celano there is a scene in which Francis explains to his brothers his mystical method of preparing for sermons, revealing his apparent neglect of technique and greater concern to find words prompted by Divine inspiration: “*Dicebat autem: 'Prius praedicator haurire secretis orationibus debet quod postea sacris effundat sermonibus; prius intus calefcere quam foris frigida uerba proferre'*” (“He then said: 'the preacher must first

414–416).

59 The editor of the text in *La letteratura francescana* suggests Job 9:26 as a likely intertext: “*sicut aquila volans ad escam*” (“as an eagle flying to the prey”). The image of a raptor devastating its prey still remains, however.

60 Anonymous, “*Compilazione Assisiensi*,” in *La Letteratura Francescana*, vol. 2 (Mondadori, 2005), sec. 109.3, p. 480.

draw in during his secret prayers that which afterwards he will pour forth in his sermons; he must heat up within before bringing forth cold words”).⁶¹ Francis speaks of spiritual truth in deep metaphors; the terms “haurire” and “effundat,” suggest the drawing of water from a well. Perhaps he alludes to the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well from John 4:4-44, and the “aquam vivam” he offers to her (4:10). This anecdote testifies to Francis's conviction that good preaching hews closely to the Gospel message, and does not require any degree of intellectual sophistication or book learning. The discovery of God's will results not from anything to be found outside of the self, but from a dedicated meditative process, the reaching deep into the well of the soul through spiritual introspection. This is a private process as well, for truth is attained only in private prayer (“secretis orationibus”).

One of the most extraordinary aspects of Francis's preaching is that *what* is said appears to take a backseat to *how* it is said. St. Francis was known for having a powerful “stage presence” and his sermons were dramatic, physical affairs. Eyewitness accounts confirm Francis's trademark hortatory and admonitory style had a powerful effect on its listeners. Thomas of Split saw Francis preaching in the central piazza of Bologna, and remarked that he spoke less after the manner of preachers (“modum predicantis”) and more like one delivering a harangue (“modum [...] concionantis.”)⁶² A *concionatio* is the speech of one in a medieval public assembly

61 Thomas of Celano, “Ex ‘Memoriali in desiderio animae di gestis et verbis sanctissimi patris nostri Francisci’,” 163.3, p. 428.

62 Thomas of Split's account so evocatively describes Francis's style, I quote it in its entirety: “...cum essem Bononie in studio, vidi sanctum Franciscum predicantem in platea ante palacium publicum, ubi tota pene civitas convenerat. Fuit autem exordium sermonis eius: 'Angeli, homines, demones,' de his enim tribus spiritibus racionalibus ita bene et discrete proposuit, ut multis literatis, qui aderant, fieret admiracioni non modice sermo hominis ydiote; nec tamen ipse modum predicantis tenuit, sed quasi concionantis. Tota vero verborum eius discurebat materies ad extinguendas inimicicias et ad pacis federa reformanda; sordidus erat habitus, persona

during deliberations over the most important decisions regarding their community.⁶³ A good *concionatio* rouses crowds to action, and the expert *concionator* understands the best use of gesture, as well as the right words to achieve the intended effect. The *ars concionandi* was theorized by scholars of rhetoric, most notably the Bolognese professor Buoncompagno da Signa in his *Rhetorica novissima*,⁶⁴ who claims it is used to incite the passions and persuade the citizenry to audacious enterprises like warfare.⁶⁵ It is argued that Francis had experience with this kind of language during the politically tumultuous years in Assisi before his conversion, for example in the period leading up to the battle against Perugia, in which he fought.⁶⁶ Hence, if there is an “ars” in Francis' s preaching, it takes influence from political speech rather than

contemptibilis et facies indecora, sed tantam Deus verbis illius contulit efficaciam, ut multe tribus nobilium, inter quas antiquarum inimiciciarum furor immanis multa sanguinis effusione fuerat debachatus, ad pacis consilium reducerentur. Erga ipsum vero tam magna erat reverencia hominum et devocio, ut viri et mulieres in eum catervatim ruerent, satagantes vel fimbriam eius tangere aut aliquid de paniculis eius auferre.” (“When I was studying in Bologna, I saw Saint Francis preaching in the piazza before the palazzo del popolo, where nearly the whole city had gathered. The exordium of his sermon was: “Angels, men, demons,” and he spoke so well and clearly of these three rational spirits that the sermon of this uncultivated man was a marvel to many of the most well-educated who were present. And yet he did not have the bearing of a preacher, but rather that of a haranguer ('concionator'). The entirety of his speech covered material towards extinguishing enmities and restoring treaties of peace; his habit was filthy, his appearance contemptible and his face unlovely, but God united such efficacy to his words that many clans of nobles, among whom the great anger of old enmities had been corrupted by the spilling of much blood, were compelled to negotiations of peace. Towards this man there was such great reverence and devotion that both men and women mobbed him, bustling about him either to touch the fringe of his garment or to carry off some tuft of fabric.”) (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptorum* [Hanover: Impensis bibliopolii Hahniani, 1826], 29.580).

63 Raoul Manselli, “Il gesto come predicazione per San Francesco d’Assisi,” *Collectanea Franciscana* no. 51 (1981): 6.

64 The *Rhetorica novissima* can be found in: Augusto Gaudenzi, ed., *Bibliotheca Juridica Medii Aevi*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Turin: Bottega d’Erasmus, 1962), 249–297. For more on *concionatio* in preaching see Delcorno, “Professionisti della parola: predicatori, giullari, concionatori,” 16.

65 Raoul Manselli, *San Francesco d’Assisi: Editio Maior* (Cinisello Balsamo (Milan): Edizioni San Paolo, 2002), 267–268.

66 Manselli, “Il gesto come predicazione per San Francesco d’Assisi,” 7.

traditional sermons. Francis grafts the Sacred message onto profane articulation.⁶⁷ Thomas of Split's account testifies to the efficacy of this technique, and it is no surprise that many of Francis's followers copied his style. Take, for example, Gherardo da Modena, a preacher in Parma during the Alleluia of 1233, whom Salimbene paints in terms reminiscent of Francis himself. Salimbene notes approvingly that while Gherardo was relatively uneducated, he was nevertheless a “magnus concionator” in addition to being an excellent “praedicator.”⁶⁸

An important part of the *ars concionandi* regarded not only knowing what and how to speak, but also how to accompany speech with gesture, and to persuade the crowd with imaginative performance, with “qualche atto che colpisse l'attenzione o la fantasia.”⁶⁹ And in fact, Francis's power as a preacher derived especially from his understanding of nonverbal communication, and the symbolic value coded into the gesture. We are already familiar from my second chapter with the idea of preaching by “example” from Innocent III's words in the 1215 Lateran Council, regarding men strong in works and speech (“potentes in opere et sermone”) who edify with word and example (“verbo aedificent et exemplo”). Francis too is equally emphatic about “opera” and “exempla”: Jacques de Vitry in his *Historia Occidentalis* notes how the friars communicate their message not only with their preaching but with the example of a holy life (“non solum autem predicatione sed exemplo uite sancte et conuersationis perfecte”).⁷⁰

However other testimonies show that to preach with “opera” means far more to the Franciscan

67 Carlo Delcorno notes in Franciscan preaching a “distacco dai modelli del sermone scolastico e dall'adattamento di procedimenti espressivi proprii della concione politica e dello spettacolo di strada. Vi è in questa scelta una logica evidente: i *Minores* si devono esprimere adottando i modelli più bassi dell'eloquenza, quelli seguiti dai laici: uomini politici o giullari” (“Professionisti della parola: predicatori, giullari, concionatori,” 12). (12).

68 “Parve litterature fuit, magnus concionator, optimus et gratus predicator” (*Salimbene De Adam Cronica*, II [1250-1287]:106.18).

69 Manselli, “Il gesto come predicazione per San Francesco d'Assisi,” 6.

than simply living the holy life. The earlier example from Celano emphasizing Francis's preaching “per materialia et rudia” evokes something materially grounded in the nonverbal communicative act, a “science of things, not words.” Many write about the effectiveness of a much more physical form of preaching, a bodily sermon. Roger Bacon writes: “non solum consistunt haec praedicandi argumenta in pulchritudine sermonis, nec in magnitudine divinae sapientiae, sed in affectibus et gestu et debito corporis et membrorum motu proportionato” (“The arguments of the preachers do not consist in beauty of the sermon, nor in the greatness of Divine wisdom, but in emotional disposition, gesture and appropriate and proportioned motion of the body and limbs”).⁷¹ In the prologue of his preaching guide *Tractatus de diversis materiis predicabilibus*, the Dominican Stephan of Bourbon (d. 1260) insisted that listeners far more quickly absorb the message of a “sermo corporeus,” his definition of an *exemplum*.⁷²

Francis takes the sermonic principle of *exemplum* and makes it literal, turning his own body into that *exemplum* through ritualized, but acts.⁷³ Thomas of Celano describes Francis's body as a “tongue,” as he edified his listeners with his example no less than with his word (“non minus exemplo quam uerbo aedificans audientes, de toto corpore fecerat linguam”⁷⁴). St. Francis's biography is full of accounts of him turning his body and gesture into a communicative

70 “Historia Occidentalis,” in *La Letteratura Francescana: Francesco e Chiara d'Assisi*, vol. 1 (Mondadori, 2004), 19, p. 242.

71 cit. in Delcorno, “Professionisti della parola: predicatori, giullari, concionatori,” 14.

72 Carlo Delcorno, “Dante e l'*exemplum* medievale,” *Lecture Classensi* 12 (1982): 115.

73 Per Francesco d'Assisi, invece, l'*exemplum* non doveva ridursi alla parola, al racconto, più o meno ben congegnato, più o meno nuovo, più o meno tradizionale, ma doveva realizzarsi attraverso e mediante la vita dei frati” (Raoul Manselli, “Il Francescanesimo come momento di predicazione e di espressione drammatica,” in *Il Francescanesimo e il teatro medievale* [Castelfiorentino: Società Storica della Valdelsa, 1984], 123).

74 “Vita beati Francisci,” in *La letteratura francescana*, vol. 2 (Mondadori, 2005), 97.4, p. 182.

tool of extraordinary eloquence. A notable example is from one of his most famous events in his life: his stripping before his father and the bishop of Assisi, to dedicate himself to the Church and to God. This gesture is charged with symbolic value, as it represents Francis's rejection of his previous secular life and his conversion to the apostolic life of poverty and faith. But it is also backed by Scriptural authority. The *topos* of nudity recalls Job's rejection of the ultimate worth of earthly wealth ("nudus egressus sum," Job 1:21). Francis's rejection of his father echoes Jesus's instructions that his followers must reject their parents before they can follow him (Luke 14:26, Matt. 10:37).⁷⁵ In Celano's account of this story, the bishop of Assisi understood the complex meaning of this action as a "mysterium."⁷⁶ The word has a strong Biblical and liturgical pedigree.⁷⁷ It perhaps means to recollect the "mysterium fidei" of the Eucharist as well, for Francis undergoes a kind of transubstantiation, exiting the world of everyday use and sacralizing

75 Critics do not universally agree that one can read Francis's gestural "sermons" as engaging intertextually with Scripture. Vittorio Dornetti sees merely rude theatricality in such scenes, meant to be understood by the simplest of intellects: "l'effetto degli episodi esemplari di cui è costellata la sua biografia [a cominciare proprio dalla spogliazione rituale davanti al Vescovo di Assisi] sembrano escogitati proprio per la sensibilità cruda, per la mentalità rude e ardente dell'uomo medioevale" (Dornetti, "Sulla predicazione popolare francescana: la parodia di Zaffarino da Firenze," 87). However I side with Raoul Manselli, who sees in these gestural episodes an "interpretazione drammatica" of Scripture and liturgy ("Il Francescanesimo come momento di predicazione e di espressione drammatica," 124). Here is Manselli on another episode, in which Francis responds to a complaint by the Clarisses that he was neglecting to preach to them. Francis enters the church of St. Damian with a handful of ashes, which he first sprinkles around him, and then sprinkles on his head in sign of penitence. "Al gesto magico che si perde nella notte dei tempi, aggiunse un gesto biblico. Spargersi il capo come segno di umiltà abbezzione e penitenza" (ibid.). Carlo Delcorno also discusses the Scriptural intertexts in gesture. In a study on the ritualized aspects of prayer, he registers how genuflections and prostrations are meant to recall various Biblical passages (Delcorno, *Quasi quidam cantus: studi sulla predicazione medievale*, 135).

76 "Intellexit aperte diuinum esse consilium, et facta uiri Dei quae praesentialiter uiderat, cognouit mysterium continere" ("He clearly understood that this was divine will, and recognized that the deeds of the man of God which he had just seen contained mystery") (Thomas of Celano, "Vita beati Francisci," 15.4, p. 54).

77 "Mysterium" is used to indicate Divine truths unfathomable to mortal intellect. To name one of many examples: after explaining the parable of the sower to his disciples, Jesus adds that they are allowed to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, while the masses were to be left perplexed by parables: "Vobis datum est mysterium regni Dei illis autem qui foris sunt in parabolis omnia fiunt" (Mark 4:11). "Vobis datum est nosse mysterium regni Dei

himself for a holy purpose.⁷⁸ In another example, from the *Legend of Perugia*, Francis's sermon takes such a performative turn that it becomes nothing short of a pantomime. To demonstrate his penitence for having eaten meat and stew during a long sickness, Francis suddenly breaks off his sermon and enters a church, whereupon he strips himself of his tunic and orders a friar to lead him out before the crowd with a rope around his neck like an animal. He orders another friar to sprinkle ashes on his head as he stands before the crowd. Only after this dramatic and highly ritualized act does he confess to his sin of eating.⁷⁹

Through such extraordinary, even bizarre, behavior, Francis came to be known as the *ioculator Dei*. A final example from Celano's first *Vita* highlights his jester-like preaching before the court of Honorius III, which moves listeners not to laughter but to tears:

Et quidem cum tanto fervore spiritus loquebatur, quod non se capiens prae laetitia, cum ex ore verbum proferret, pedes quasi saliendo movebat, non ut lasciviens, sed ut igne divini amoris ardens, non ad risum movens sed planctum doloris extorquens.

And with such fervor of spirit did he speak that, no longer containing himself on account of his joy, as he bore forth word from his mouth, he moved his feet as if

ceteris autem in parabolis ut videntes non videant et audientes non intellegant" (Luke 8:10). The term "mysterium" is not limited to Jesus; Paul uses it in his letters, and it is also found occasionally in the Apocalypse of St. John.

78 The transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is a sacralizing gesture in that it removes these foods from everyday alimentary use and reserves them for a mystical purpose. Francis proves an adept scholar of the magical in this performative ritual when he strips himself naked before his biological father and his bishop; by this action he performs something of a Eucharistic ritual on his own body, forever removing it from the world of everyday use, and devoting it to a more sacred end. For the Franciscans, every act is meant to be read and interpreted like a statement in language. And at its best, by bridging the gap between the everyday and the divine as it does here, it can perform true and proper "mysterium." Giuseppe Mazzotta also appears to recognize this act of self-sacralization that involves a removal from the sphere of the everyday: "The representation shows Francis, in other words, moving at the edges of social structures and involved in a ritual where the boundaries between the physical and the spiritual are deliberately blurred and confused" ("Dante's Franciscanism," 183).

79 Legend of Perugia, chp. 39, in Marion Alphonse Habig, *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies; English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), 1016–18.

jumping, not sportively but burning with the fire of divine love, not moving them to laughter, but wrenching forth tears of sorrow.⁸⁰

The response of Francis's listeners in Honorius III's court epitomizes the ultimate aim of Franciscan popular preaching: to move hearts to sorrowful repentance.⁸¹ Many great Franciscans followed this lead, preaching only repentance and confession.⁸²

Julian of Speyer's rhymed office of St. Francis perhaps communicates most clearly the communicative act encoded in the exemplary gesture:

Linguae manus praeambula
Verbo parauit semitam,
et amplectuntur saecula
doctrinam facto proditam.

His hand preceding the tongue,
He prepared the way for the Word
And the world embraces

80 *Letteratura Francescana*, 2:144. The effectiveness of a sermon through earnest emotional appeal, and not words, is a touchstone in accounts of preaching. Peter the Chanter tells of a sermon preached by St. Bernard, to German laypersons, whom he moved to tears without speaking their language, through example alone (“commoventis eos ad fletum, quem tamen non intelligebant”). A monk was present to translate his sermon for the audience, but the listeners were now not moved in any way (“nihil moti sunt”) when the sermon was recast in their own language. “Qui enim non ardet,” Peter the Chanter concludes, “non accendit” (Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae*, 205, 37).

81 “the utility of Franciscan preaching, as well as its legitimacy, rested in its ability to move souls toward that end. Franciscan preaching had to be affective and moralistic, aimed at the heart and the amending of life rather than the head and the teaching of knowledge. Preachers intended to stir up sorrow and compunction in the crowds, after which they provided relief in confession.” Norman Corrie, “The Franciscan Preaching Tradition and Its Sixteenth-Century Legacy: The Case of Cornelio Musso,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 85, no. 2 (April 1999): 213. See also Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction Before the Council of Trent*, 18; Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education*, 315.

82 The sermons of St. Anthony of Padua are noted for their emphasis on penitence and conversion (Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction Before the Council of Trent*, 24). Popular preachers like the Provençal Franciscan Hugh of Digne (d. 1254) and Berthold von Regensburg preached about the end times, the torments of Hell and heavenly rewards, all as part of a program to encourage people to repentance (ibid., 18). Franciscan theoretical writing confirms this a continual high value placed on preaching that makes appeals to the emotions. Hugh of Digne says that preaching must be “of vices and virtues because in these ways are men best instructed...and of punishment and glory which...move men’s hearts.” (David Flood, *Hugh of Digne’s Rule Commentary*, Spicilegium Bonaventurianum 14 [Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras

the doctrine revealed by deed.⁸³

The doctrine revealed by deed. The science of things, not words. For the only word, the ultimate word, is Christ himself, for whom one can do no more than prepare the way.

In spite of this precedent set by Francis, the material, visceral, *ioculator*-like preaching that he pioneered was not always appreciated by the orthodoxy.⁸⁴ Thomas of Chobham is scandalized by the preachers who gesticulate too much: “*stulti reputantur, et magis videntur esse histriones quam predicatores,*”⁸⁵ and Jacopo Passavanti also comes down hard on his fellow preachers who model themselves after minstrels and jesters.⁸⁶ If only superficially considering Beatrice's severe words on buffoonish preaching, one might easily assume that she is one of their party.

Ora si va con motti e con iscede
a predicare, e pur ben si rida,
gonfia il cappuccio e più non richiede.
Ma tale uccel nel becchetto s'annida,
che se' 'l vulgo il vedesse, vederebbe
la perdonanza di ch'el si confida:
per cui tanta stoltezza in terra crebbe,

Aquas, 1979], 175–177.).

83 Julian of Speyer, “*Officium Rhythmicum Sancti Francisci,*” in *La Letteratura Francescana*, vol. 2 (Mondadori, 2005), 8.5, p. 286.

84 Delcorno, “*Professionisti della parola: predicatori, giullari, concionatori,*” 7.

85 *Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, 303. Chobham is no friend to actors at all. Elsewhere in his *Summa* he goes so far as to say that actors should not be given alms, “*nisi in extrema necessitate,*” (“unless in extreme necessity”) and cites a Canon that says that giving to an actor “*nichil aliud est quam demonibus sacrificare*” (“is nothing other than sacrificing to demons”). In his own words, he adds that “*talibus subuenire peccatum est*” (it is a sin to assist these”) (ibid., 192–93).

86 Delcorno, “*Professionisti della parola: predicatori, giullari, concionatori,*” 11.

che, senza prova d'alcun testimonio,
 ad ogne promession si correrebbe.
 Di questo ingrassa il porco sant' Antonio,
 e altri assai che sono ancor più porci,
 pagando di moneta senza conio

Now preachers ply their trade with buffoonery and jokes,
 their cowls inflating if they get a laugh,
 and the people ask for nothing more.
 But such a bird nests in their hoods
 that, if the people saw it, they would see
 the kind of pardoning to which they give their trust.
 Because of these such foolishness has grown on earth
 that, with no warrant vouching for its truth,
 they still would flock to any promise.
 On this Saint Anthony fattens his swine,
 along with many others who are still more swinish,
 repaying them with unstamped coin (115-126).

Beatrice describes a scene that is nothing if not a sarcastic description of the kind of preacher whose *operes* and *exempla* only mock the original intentions of Francis. The previous lines described the first preachers of Christianity as solemn warriors, prepared to “pugnar per accender la fede,” and bearing the Gospel as their sword and shield (“de l'Evangelio fero scudo e lance”). They are described as rooted in the true foundation (“verace fondamento”), and speak nothing if not solely Gospel truth (“quel tanto sonò ne le sue guance”). The preacher that Beatrice lampoons is in all ways at the antipodes of these. Unlike the Apostles, he has no foundation, no stable point; instead he is marked by motion (“or si va”). Also unlike the Apostles, he relies on no true Gospel; instead he uses many and various rhetorical strategies – witticisms and jokes (“con motti e con iscede”) – aiming to generate laughter, rather than those tears of repentance that St. Francis was so skilled at eliciting.⁸⁷ Much like the speculative theologians who fail to

87 Francesco da Buti recognized this association of movement with the preacher's error: “si va con motti; cioè da' predicatori ad insegnare la dottrina evangelica co li motti che sono detti iocosi, li quali perchè muovano a gioco si chiamano motti, quasi movimenti” (“Paradiso 29.109-117,” *Dartmouth Dante Project*, accessed March 21,

follow “un sentiero” and thus lose themselves in so many innumerable “si fatte favole,” none of them true, the preacher's many witty turns of speech and varied low humor create only cacophony, confusion and stupidity (“tanta stoltezza in terra crebbe”).

The image of the harlequin street preacher who misleads his listeners is a common touchstone in the writings of Dante's contemporaries. This figure serves a wide variety of expressive goals, ranging from the butt of modest and good-natured ridicule to the object of serious scorn and fear. A humorous and famous example from literature is Boccaccio's Frate Cipolla whose long, witty and variegated sermon belies the ultimate emptiness and lack of substance under all his rhetorical gloss. Cipolla says much but means nothing. Like the onion his name alludes to, Cipolla has no center under his layers. While Boccaccio's aims are primarily humorous, others, who take preaching more seriously, express serious scorn. In his *Verbum Abbreviatum*, Peter the Chanter criticizes the preacher that works his audience into laughter, and praises instead the sober sermon:

Talis debet oratio sapientis, qualis et vita ejus, non polita, non fucata, non plausibilis movens homines ad risum, et ad hujusmodi, sed tantum sensus sine ornatibus verborum explicans simplici sermone.

The speech of the wise man must be as his life, not polished, not dressed up, not applause-worthy and moving men to laughter, and the like, but only sense without the ornament of words, explaining in a simple sermon.⁸⁸

Other see the jester-like sermon in an even more more dangerous light than does Peter the Chanter. Gerard Segarelli, whom we encountered several chapters ago, is described as a joker in Salimbene's account not only to discredit his preaching, but also to clarify that he is a dangerous

2011, <http://dante.dartmouth.edu/search.php>).

88 Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae*, 205, 43.

heretic. Salimbene does not call Segarelli a “religiosus,” instead opting to describe him as a coarse and stupid joker, a “ioculator.”⁸⁹

When Beatrice's invective is compared to the above scandal that theologians express upon witnessing performative, gesticulating, sometimes jester-like preachers, such a juxtaposition would seem to suggest that she and the author brook no drama, no comedy, in a sermon. However this is not the case at all, for Beatrice's scandal is expressed in the same gritty, realistic speech that popular preaching is known for. She describes the jester-like mannerisms of the street preacher in colorful language that borders on the grotesque, and indubitably engineered to make the audience laugh (as will shortly be shown). We have already seen how Beatrice codes her critique in the actual structure of her language, refusing distinction and division by speaking herself in distinctionless, divisionless sentences. Here, her technique is not one of refutation, but of identification. She criticizes laughter with laughter. Like Salimbene and Peter the Chanter, Beatrice certainly means to discredit her preacher, but her colorful description of his buffoonery seems intent on engineering a response of amused contempt rather than aghast scandal. The goal may be moral, but Beatrice uses humor, to achieve it.

In spite of the censure of humor by some figures, as noted above, Beatrice's strategy of laughter is not unheard of in sacred discourse. While it is clear that the use of humor was controversial in a church setting, it was also accepted as a necessary part of preaching, provided that the sermon's ultimate aim was to further the Gospel.⁹⁰ Beatrice's tactic is grounded by great

⁸⁹ “potius ioculator videbatur esse quam religiosus” (Salimbene de Adam, *Salimbene De Adam Cronica*, ed. Giuseppe Scalia, vol. I, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 125/A [Turnhout: Brepols, 1998], 383).

⁹⁰ Delcorno, *Quasi quidam cantus: studi sulla predicazione medievale*, 205–207.

authority; from Thomas Aquinas to St. Bernard, key theologians came to the defense of laughter and humor in sermons, knowing that such laughter could achieve good ends.⁹¹ Furthermore, humor commonly accompanies accusations of frivolity. Especially among Franciscans, sermons sometimes inveigh against the language and subject matter of the *ioculatores* in precisely the same sort of language they appear to criticize.⁹² It would seem that some of those censoring are less keen on expressing an ideological stance than they are in policing the use of certain kinds of rhetoric. This may explain why the Franciscan Salimbene so witheringly describes Gerard Segarelli as a “ioculator,” a term once used to describe his order's founder, without irony.

The primary characteristic that Beatrice criticizes is the preacher's pride, expressing it in the queer image of his cowl, inflated with his grandiloquence and vaingloriousness: “gonfia il cappuccio e più non si richiede.” The inclusion of “cappuccio” implies that the progenitor of all this hot air and vanity is a cowled mendicant preacher.⁹³ But the cowl's customized details show that this preacher does not take his vows of poverty and humility very seriously, and does not heed the counsel of any of the many *artes praedicandi* that advise discretion in dress.⁹⁴ The

91 Ibid., 206–207.

92 Dornetti, “Sulla predicazione popolare francescana: la parodia di Zaffarino da Firenze” especially pp. 91 and 102.

93 Benvenuto da Imola's commentary is the first to note this: “Unde dicit: et il cappuccio, scilicet, fratris praedicantis” (“Dartmouth Dante Project,” Par. 29.115–117). Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi seconds this: “s'intende il cappuccio proprio dell'abito dei frati” (Alighieri, *Paradiso*, 1991, 3:116–7). It is not without interest that some scholars claim that the Franciscan habit was deliberately modeled after that of the minstrel/jester: “Francesco non eludeva affatto la presenza di questo modello, ma cercava di trasferire la sua giocosità e il suo particolare linguaggio in un ambito religioso, giungendo fino ad adottare il nome di *joculator* e ad imitarne l'abbigliamento tradizionale, l'abito pezzato e il cappuccio a punta” (Dornetti, “Sulla predicazione popolare francescana: la parodia di Zaffarino da Firenze,” 91). Carlo Delcorno seconds this, adding that “L'asceta predicatore non prende soltanto la veste del mimo, ma ne usurpa l'arte, mosso da una profonda motivazione cristiana, la stessa che determinava gli atteggiamenti sorprendenti dei 'folli di Dio' del primitivo monachesimo orientale” (*Quasi quidam cantus: studi sulla predicazione medievale*, 181).

94 For example, Humbert of Romans, on dress and manner: “Unde necesse est ut concordet in ipso vita et doctrina, ne quod per unam manum aedificat, per aliam destruat. Praetendat itaque praedicator in habitu humilitatem, in

“becchetto,” called a liripipe in English, is a long tail extending the point of the hood, sometimes to several feet in length.⁹⁵ This is an elegant detail indicating his great wealth. (One recalls Folgore da San Gimignano's auguries of well-being to his elegantly dressed “brigata” in his *plazer* “di dicembre,” wishing them “cappucci fini e smisurati.”⁹⁶) This purely decorative detail suggests the wealth of the wearer, and not inconspicuously so, as people in the Middle Ages signified their status especially by the hats they wore.⁹⁷ This hat is a conspicuously pure signifier of being quite well off, far more so than other more functional indicators of wealth, such as a fine set of horses. The practical uselessness of the becchetto puts it on a level with meat spiced with cloves (which custom was discovered by Niccolò dei Salimbeni [*Inf.* 29.127-28], who incidentally might be one of the *brigata spendereccia* praised in Folgore's recently mentioned “corona” of sonnets). The cowl with a *becchetto*, in all its purely decorative finery, is a very elegant cowl, and one unaffordable to a monk sworn to poverty. In a single sartorial detail, Dante encapsulates the preacher's vain interest in wealth, useless status symbols and worldly acclaim.⁹⁸

moribus honestatem, in verbis discretionem, in zelo animarum charitatem, in cibo et potu sobrietatem, in agendis maturitatem.” (“[...] it is important that that his life and doctrine are in agreement, so that he doesn't destroy with one hand what he builds with the other. Thus the preacher must show humility in dress, honesty in behavior, discretion in his words, zeal in his love of souls, sobriety in his food and drink and maturity in his acts”) (*Opera de vita regulari 2. Expositio in constitutiones. Instructiones de officiis ordinis. De eruditione praedicatorum. Epistolae encyclicae*, 369).

95 Valerie Steele, ed., *Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion* (Farmington Hills, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2005), 177–78.

96 Gianfranco Contini, ed., *Poeti del Duecento*, vol. 1 and 2 (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1995), 418.

97 Joseph R. Strayer, ed., *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (New York: Scribner, 1983), Costume, Western European.

98 In his eighteenth century commentary to this line, Baldassare Lombardi was also perplexed by the opulent liripipes of this preacher. He, instead, comes to a different conclusion, that Dante's criticism was intended for priests, who might be more likely to wear a hood with liripipes: “Non convenendo adunque il descritto becchetto al cappuccio de' Frati, come l'antiche sculture e pitture ne accertano, resta che piuttosto agli oratori Preti tirasse Dante questa sferzata” (“Dartmouth Dante Project,” Par. 29.117).

But what is so humorous about this particular cowl is that it is inflated like a great balloon over the preacher's head, on account of all the hot air he is expelling (“*gonfia il cappuccio*”). This inflation is certainly a play on the “puffing up” of pride and vaingloriousness of the preacher.⁹⁹ One of the only two other occurrences of “gonfiare” in the *Commedia*, in fact, describes the “deflating” of Plutus's prideful rage, after Vergil takes him down a notch: “quale dal vento le gonfiate vele / caggiono avvolte, poi che l'alber fiacca, / tal cadde a terra la fiera crudele” (“As sails, swollen by the wind, / fall into a tangle when the mainmast snaps, / so fell that cruel beast to the ground”) (*Inf.* 7.13). “Gonfiare” might also suggest gluttony, capitalizing on the ingestive/digestive meanings the word is employed to signify, the cramming of one's stomach beyond its natural limits. Benvenuto da Imola certainly sees gluttony in this “gonfia” here, imagining that the preacher pursues not the fruit of souls but a sumptuous meal of capon, a pike, wine and a fruit pie: “e più non si richede, scilicet, per praedicatorem, quia non quaerit facere alium fructum animarum, sed habere caponem, lucium, vinum vel turtam.”¹⁰⁰ The character swollen by rich and plentiful food is a touchstone in Dante's more grotesquely humorous passages, for example in the glutton Ciaccio (6.34-75) (whom Buti calls “porco,” revealing a term that suggestively anticipates other pigs yet to be encountered in *Par.* 29).¹⁰¹ Other inflated folk abound in the *Divina Commedia*. There is the obese priest tottering atop his horse in *Par.* 21.130-134, who has metastasized to outrageous proportions after neglecting his vows to

99 The term “gonfiare il cappuccio” turned out seminal, entering the Italian lexicon as a proverbial way to describe an act of self-aggrandizement: “*Gonfiare il cappuccio*: inorgogliersi o rendere altri orgoglioso” (*Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* [Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1961], s.v. gonfiare).

100“Dartmouth Dante Project,” *Par.* 29.115–117. “turta” in medieval Latin intends some kind of sweet and sour fruit or vegetable pie, not cake, as the modern Italian “torta” usually intends (Oretta Zanini De Vita, *Encyclopedia of Pasta*, trans. Maureen B. Fant [Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009], 289).

101Buti's comment: “Ciaccio dicono alcquanti, che è nome di porco onde; costui era così chiamato, per la golosità sua” (Francesco da Buti, *Commento di Francesco da Buti sopra La Divina Commedia di Dante Allighieri*, ed. Crescentino Giannini [Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858], <http://dante.dartmouth.edu/>).

alimentary restraint. Or, there is the bloated and lute-like form of Mastro Adamo, who is dragged down into gutter comedy when reduced to a sedentary fist fight, his enlarged gut rendering a proper standing fight impossible (*Inf.* 30.46-90). At one point the Greek Sinon punches him in his swollen belly, and the poet notes it rings out like a drum: “col pugno li percosse l'epa croia. / Quella sonò come fosse un tamburo” (102-03).¹⁰² It is also possible that Dante meant to equate “gonfiare” with the empty air of praise, echoing Oderisi da Gubbio's biblically-based discussion on the vanity of fame: “non è il mondan rumore altro ch'un fiato / di vento” (*Purg.* 11.100-101). À propos of wind, perhaps Dante intended also to associate the preacher's windy speech with the more overtly flatulent semantics of Barbariccia's stentorian fart communicating marching orders to his fellow Malebranche (“ed elli avea del cul fatto trombetta” [*Inf.* 21.139]). Barbariccia's heraldic fanfare at the end of *Inferno* 21 neatly frames the canto with gas. Of the two other occurrences of “gonfiare” in the entire *Commedia*, one of these is used to describe the bubbling pitch at the canto's beginning.¹⁰³

If the poet covertly suggests the Malebranche in the preacher's puffed-up cowl, the allusion is just one of many; these demons, in their grotesque violence, horror, and humor are a strong subtext in *Paradiso* 29. It is no casual accident that a diabolical bird (“tale uccel”) has built its nest in his liripipe (“nel becchetto s'annida”). If idle hands are the devil's workshop, it would appear that nonfunctional frippery are his living quarters. The devil's appearance in this unused corner of the preacher's *becchetto* is surprising and surprisingly funny. This should not be

102À propos of expanded bellies, “Gonfia” might also be a vulgar subterranean suggestion of pregnancy, recalling the seminary power of rhetoric as seen in *Purgatorio*: Statius tells of his own conversion, which happened when the world was already “tutto quanto pregno / de la vera credenza,” and “seminata” by the Apostles (*Purg.* 22.76-77). In contrast to the rich true faith the Apostles sow in Purgatory, here the preacher's message is an empty one; it is a false positive, a fake pregnancy mocking the true Gospel.

103After executing his famous simile of the Arsenal of Venice and its shipwrights, describes the roiling pitch of the fifth bolgia: “I' vedea lei, ma non vedea in essa / mai che le bolle, che 'l bollor levava, / e gonfiar tutta, e riseder compressa” (*Inf.* 21.19-21).

so, one might imagine, since in the *Commedia* the “uccello” is often associated with Satan,¹⁰⁴ the unforgettable evil seraph in Hell (“sotto ciascuna [testa] uscivan due grand' ali, / quanto si convenia a tanto uccello”), who parts the air and stirs up icy winds with his six great wings, pitch black and fleshy like a bat's (“non avean penne, ma di vipistrello / era lor modo; e quelle svolazzava, sì che tre venti si movean da ello: / quindi Cocito tutto s'aggelava” [*Inf.* 34.46-52]). Since this image is deliberately recalled earlier in canto 29, when Beatrice reminds Dante of “colui che tu vedesti / da tutti i pesi del mondo costretto” 29.55-57), it would appear that perhaps this bird (“tale uccello”) in the preacher's cowl were Satan himself (“tanto uccello”). But there remains a notable difference between the two birds: while Dante is left half dead from fear upon seeing Satan (“Io non mori' e non rimasi vivo”), the surprise bird popping up in the preacher's cowl intrudes into the scene to laughter rather than horror. Part of the humor results from the suddenness of his appearance. Like a smiling gargoyle squatting under the eaves of a Gothic church, gone unseen for years then suddenly noticed by the startled passerby, this bird is a grinning devil, materializing out of nowhere, generating shock, which is quickly replaced by laughter. The commentator Benvenuto da Imola recognizes this with amusing irony, describing a preacher in all his vainglory, while a devil laughs behind his back: “Vult dicere autor quod quando praedicator ita laetatur et gloriatur, ridente populo, diabolus latet a tergo *ridens* fortiter, et tenens eum per crines, dicens: habeo te.”¹⁰⁵

104It is possible that the image of a bird in the *Commedia* more frequently represent good things, the Divine and Empire (*Purg.* 2.38, 17.20, 29.113, 32.112; *Par* 6.4, 17.72), although in this particular passage there is no question about the evil of the “uccel.”

105“Dartmouth Dante Project,” *Par* 29.118–120. Italics added. Francesco Torraca appears to find Benvenuto's comment important enough to translate it practically verbatim: “Bisogna immaginarsi il predicatore, che se ne va tutto tronfio, mentre, in fondo al cappuccio, dietro la sua testa, *standogli a' crini* (*Inf.*, XXVII, 117), ride malignamente il diavolo” (ibid., *Par.* 29.118–120).

The amusing tenor of the scene was easily understood by Giovanni di Paolo in his illustration of this scene in the Yates Thompson 36 manuscript (see figure 1 in the appendix): on the left side of the scene an impish little black devil clings to the back of the preacher, hanging onto his hood with his right hand (illustrating Benvenuto's "tenens eum per crines"), and keeping his left hand hidden behind the preacher's head, as if he were a puppeteer shoving his hand into the head of a mannequin. The arm positions of the devil mirror exactly those of a swineherd – clad in black, and thus very likely representing St. Anthony the Abbot himself – to the right of the scene. The swineherd holds his staff in the upper hand, and the hind leg of the "porco sant'Antonio" with the other. If these two figures are meant to mirror one another, the devil commands the pastoral staff (the preacher) in one hand, and the pig, the sign of temptation (the *becchetto*) with the other.

This is not the only occasion in which Dante blurs the boundary between horror and comedy. In the boiling pitch of the fifth bolgia, the poet describes the antics of the Malebranche and their victims, forging together dark humor and Grand Guignol imagery, and hammering out an alloy of bloody terror, cut through with a thick vein of comic burlesque.¹⁰⁶ It is no surprise, then, that the order Malacoda barks to Farfarello, "fatti 'n costà, malvagio uccello," is called to mind here in *Par.* 29, when "tale uccello" is revealed under the preacher's hood. These two loci are suggested not by wings alone but also by their tails. The preacher has his own devil's tail, the "becchetto" which dangles down his back, an insidious coda to the seemingly innocuous sermon

¹⁰⁶The dark humor of the Malebranche is noted by John Augustine Wilstach as far back as 1888. Wallace Fowlie suggests a comparison to the over the top grotesque of the films of Federico Fellini in the Malebranche episode (Wallace Fowlie, *A Reading of Dante's Inferno* [University of Chicago Press, 1981], 145). Christopher Kleinhenz specifically points out that here "grotesque and comic elements come to the fore and medieval theater intrudes into the fabric of Dante's *Commedia*" Richard H. Lansing, ed., *The Dante Encyclopedia* (Taylor & Francis, 2000), s.v. Devils. More recently Mark Musa has noted their "flippant language and keystone-cop-like actions" (*Dante's Inferno: The Indiana Critical Edition*, trans. Mark Musa [Indiana University Press, 1995], 173).

he preaches up front. The tail is part of stereotypical descriptions of demons. The Malebranche have tails, and their leader's name "Malacoda" means "Evil Tail." In Hell the tail is not limited to the Malebranche; Minos's tail is noteworthy, for example, but even more striking is that of Geryon, the "sozza imagine di froda" whose tail is an object of fixation for Dante (*Inf.* 17.7). First described as the "fiera con la coda aguzza," (*Inf.* 17. 1), Geryon is noted for his tail twice in association with danger and deceptiveness (17.9, 25-27), and its perils are made literal when Vergil places himself between Dante and it to protect him from the sting (17.83-84). By prosthesis Beatrice's preacher in *Paradiso* is made cousin to these figures of the *Inferno*, and his pedigree, rooted in the demonic and fraudulent, is laid bare.

Although Beatrice's representation of the Devil may seem scurrilous, it is in fact quite restrained, compared to the language of popular preachers in the Middle Ages. For example, Bernardino da Siena once preached against political factions who would carry their insignia in church. He said he even once saw a faction's insignia affixed to a crucifix, and he equated this with the Devil urinating on Christ's head: "Talvolta l'ho veduto insino a capo al crocifisso. Allora quando io l'ho veduto, io ho detto: – 'o Signore Dio, oh, tu hai il diavolo sopra di te, il quale si può dire che ti piscia in capo! – Basta; basta."¹⁰⁷

I have already shown how pretentious preachers and jesting preachers are often equated with heresy, as seen in William of Auvergne and in Salimbene. Devils too figure frequently in discussions of heresy. Caesarius von Heisterbach in "De Daemonibus," the fifth distinction of *Dialogus Miracolorum*, provides an apt description of the activities of demons in everyday life,

¹⁰⁷*Le prediche volgari di San Bernardino da Siena*, ed. Luciano Banchi, vol. 2 (Siena: Tip. edit all'inseg. di S. Bernardino, 1880), 15.

where good and bad angels tussle over a man's fate ("Daemones esse, multos esse, malos esse, plurimis tibi exemplis potero probare").¹⁰⁸ Demons, like the bird hiding in the preacher's liripipe, lurk behind every corner, lying in ambush to pull the innocent down into the depths. For Caesarius, heretics are important agents in the fulfillment of Satan's will, since they function as his arms and legs ("membra Diaboli"). Caesarius later specifies that heretics work like the Devil's clergy, establishing that heresy is not only an erroneous doctrine, but part of Satan's Church, in a very significant way; they are his ministers ("ministri Diaboli") and preachers ("nuncii Diaboli").¹⁰⁹ If there is an Antichrist, he must also have his anti-priests and anti-apostles.¹¹⁰

If there is one point on which Dante will agree with the censure by clerical figures, it is in the association of dangerous theology with devils. We are already seeing how Dante is not disturbed by the silly or jolly behavior of preachers; it is when that preacher disarms his listeners with humor in order to take advantage of them. By equating the preacher's joking and superficial sermonic techniques with a lurking diabolical menace of indulgences, Dante turns the tables on standard assumptions of orthodoxy versus heresy. He questions the reputations of licensed preachers and casts a black pall on their claims to true theology. Dante exposes the indulgence as a heresy hiding within the shell of orthodoxy, a parallel to the "uccello" hiding inside the preacher's liripipe. "Se 'l vulgo il vedesse," Beatrice says of that devil, "vederebbe / la

108Grado Giovanni Merlo, *Contro gli eretici* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), 51–56. Initially found in: Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Caesarii Heisterbacensis Monachi Ordinis Cisterciensis Dialogus Miraculorum*, ed. J. Strange (Cologne, Bonn, Brussels, 1851), 276.

109Caesarii Heisterbacensis Monachi Ordinis Cisterciensis Dialogus Miraculorum, 276.

110Such language on heresy in the Middle Ages is not an example of mere color or capricious rhetorical flourishes; these are serious accusations with serious legal consequences; heretics were declared demons, a condemnation which usually justified a painful and bloody death sentence (Merlo, *Contro gli eretici*, 72–73).

perdonanza di ch'el si confida.” The equation is simple: if the public could see the bird (“il”), they would also see the “perdonanza.” The indulgence is not something that comes from the Devil, it *is* the very Devil himself. Satan is not the father of lies; he *is* the lie.

The deception at the bottom of this preacher's argument echoes the recurring theme of lying in this canto. Earlier in Beatrice's speech there were theologians distorting Scriptural truth in spite of “non credendo.” These are soon replaced by other figures, who suggest eclipses at the moment of crucifixion but lie (“e mente”). The final culprit is the preacher, who sells snake oil to the masses in the form of indulgences. The very materiality of an indulgence (it is, after all, sold for hard cash) highlights Dante's constant concern over the material consequences of sin. In the discussion in the previous chapter, I showed how the good theology that Aquinas expounds on necessarily leads to good ethical lessons that can be employed in the here and now. At this point in *Paradiso* 29, this same dynamic is at work, of theology progressing from the abstract and theoretical to the concrete and useful. The poet takes pains to emphasize the terrestrial results of the preacher's swindle: “Di questo ingrassa il porco sant'Antonio.” Every bad preacher, Dante emphasizes, is at root nothing more than a con artist, a simple fraudster uttering silky assurances while picking the pockets of the faithful. And to reap material goods but sow no spiritual goods is nothing short of diabolical.¹¹¹ The wealth subtracted from believers is used to fatten not just the “porco sant' Antonio,” but also “altri assai,” who are “ancor più porci,” the preacher's concubines and his bastard children, who are greedily gobbling up all of the resources accumulated by the Church. With this final, and very earthy, analogy, the poet brings home the soundly material nature of moral error and mortal consequence; the preacher, in contrast, seems to dissipate into

¹¹¹Or at least so says Thomas of Chobham: “diabolicum est: carnalia metere et spiritualia non seminare” (*Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, 55).

thin air, paying off coins of no value (“pagando di moneta senza conio”).

The poet's critique of monetary value returns the discussion back to problems of representation, the great gap between the “esempio” and the “esemplare.” A coin is real enough as a physical object, but there is no value that inheres in it, no truth, so long as it has no “conio.” Without some kind of institutional or authoritative promise, it is worthless. It is dead. Much like the baseless *ratio* of preachers earlier in this canto, who create “favole” about eclipses for their own amusement, the “moneta” here is unmoored from the ultimate denominator of value, the Divine. Indeed, here too, the exemplum and the exemplar “non vanno d'un modo.” By the double use of “sanza” in lines 122 and 126, and by the rhyme on “testimonio” and “conio,” Dante ties Scriptural invalidity to real economic loss. The people, in their ignorance and credulousness give real money for these indulgences which in the end are documents of no real Spiritual worth; they are neither supported by Scripture nor underwritten by God. Gulled by this *de facto* heresy, the public slips deeper and deeper into mindless and ovine stupidity, as they chase after every fantastic claim and promise that preachers offer before them (“per cui tanta stoltezza in terra crebbe, / che, sanza prova d'alcun testimonio, / ad ogni promession si correrebbe”).¹¹² False rhetoric can lead to real consequences.

¹¹²Perhaps it is more than a coincidence that the interests of *Paradiso* 29, summed up in “moneta senza conio” echo those of *Inferno* 29, the tenth bolgia, punishing counterfeiters and the like.

Conclusion

In his 1637 elegy “Lycidas,” Milton highlights the critical state of pastoral clergy in his own time:

Of other care they little reck'ning make,
Then how to scramble at the shearers feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouthes! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A Sheep-hook, or have learn'd ought els the least
That to the faithfull Herdmans art belongs! (116-21)

The preachers are depicted as gluttonous beasts, elbowing their way past others to gorge their “blind mouthes,” and abusing their pastoral authority. In spite of their pastoral privilege, which allows them to relentlessly sate their gluttony, they nevertheless have little inkling of the basic duties “That to the faithfull Herdmans art belongs.” In their ignorance, they deliver horrid sermons, and their flock, as a consequence, starves and rots from the inside out:

And when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel Pipes of wretched straw,
The hungry Sheep look up, and are not fed,
But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread (123-27).

From Milton's critique of clerical self-interest, to his indictment of bad preaching, to his

extended pastoral imagery, the language closely echoes that of Dante in his many anti-clerical screeds. His mention of “flashy songs” that “Grate,” as well as the unfed sheep “swoln with wind” appear to respond specifically to lines in *Paradiso* discussed in the preceding chapter:

Non ha Fiorenza tanti Lapi e Bindi
 quante sì fatte favole per anno
 in pergamo sì gridan quinci e quindi:
 sì che le pecorelle, che non sanno,
 tornan del pasco pasciute di vento,
 e non le scusa non veder lo danno.

Florence has not as many named Lapo and Bindo
 as it has tales like these that are proclaimed
 from the pulpit, here and there, throughout the year,
 so that the ignorant flocks return from feeding
 fed on wind. And that they fail
 to see their loss does not excuse them (29.103-08).

In Dante's lines, preachers everywhere yell (“gridan quinci e quindi”) mere fables (“favole”), leaving their ignorant flocks, the “pecorelle, che non sanno,” fed on wind (“tornan del pasco pasciute di vento”).

Milton's pastor/sheep binary certainly originates in Jesus's language in the Gospels, as does Dante's, but the specifically Dantean influence cannot be denied. More subtly, Milton's lines reveal another debt to Dante, his subtle blurring of the boundaries between the one who preaches and those who receive his preaching. Milton's show-stopping “blind mouthes,” representing the Pantagruelike appetites of these pastors, contrast sharply with the eyes of “the hungry Sheep,” who, seeing only their deprivation, “look up, and are not fed.” And yet, the sheep see clearly, unlike their leaders. They may starve, but they also know they starve. In Milton's picture, the eyes and mouths of those commissioned to see and speak are obstructed; nothing occludes, in

contrast, the sheep's eyes and mouths; they only stand attentively, and wait. Such imagery implicitly asks: who here should really lead, and who should follow?

I have argued at various points in this dissertation that Dante too rejects clear divisions between who may preach and those who may not. Although over the course of the *duecento* the Church had developed systems for training and for vetting preachers, Dante, as I have shown, expresses little concern over these permissions and prohibitions. The poet makes clear that his greater social concern lies with the ethical dimension of preaching, the ultimately apostolic and evangelical motives behind “the faithfull Herdmans art,” rather than with any technical matter behind this art, and least of all who is licensed to employ it.

In Dante's view, the the problem is absolutely ethical. It is the pastors' bad conduct that has misled their flock:

la gente, che sua guida vede
pur a quel ben fedire ond' ella è ghiotta,
di quel si pasce, e più oltre non chiede

The people, then, who see their leader lunge
only at the good for which they themselves are greedy,
graze on that and ask for nothing more (*Purgatorio* 16.98-102).

Although later in canto 16 the poet notes that learned bad behavior (“mala condotta,”) and not some inherent tendency to evil (“non natura”) drives the flock astray (103-05), he elsewhere asserts that Christians' inability to distinguish good from evil does not exculpate them from the responsibility to find and pursue right doctrine and practice. Unlike Milton's sheep who “look up, and are not fed,” Dante's sheep do not see; nevertheless, see they must, because, as the poet notes, “non le scusa non veder lo danno,”

Dante's conclusion that Christian laypersons must shoulder full responsibility for their

behavior would seem mere victim blaming, were it not for his insistent and repeated advocacy for a theology of enfranchisement. Dante's symbolic economy identifies both preachers and audience as sheep, a logic that blurs distinctions between social roles. While in real life the roles of preacher and audience are distinguished by legislation, in Dante's writings these roles are much more fluid. In *Paradiso* 10 Thomas Aquinas, ordained as one of the Friars Preacher, calls himself not a pastor, but a sheep:

Io fui de li agni de la santa greggia
che Domenico mena per cammino
u'ben s'impingua se non si vaneggia.

I was a lamb among the holy flock
led by Dominic along the road
where sheep are fattened if they do not stray (10.94-96).

Here, the greatest Dominican after Dominic himself calls himself a lamb. Others in the Dominican “santa greggia,” much like the ignorant sheep in *Paradiso* 29 grazing on “vento,” also feed on mere emptiness (“si vaneggia”). Later, Aquinas glosses these lines, noting that many of his fellow Dominicans who ought to be fattened on the true Gospel now seek only spiritual junk food: “ma 'l suo pecuglio di nova vivanda / è fatto ghiotto.” (“But his flock has grown so greedy / for new sustenance”) (*Par.* 12.124-25). The one difference that Aquinas establishes between the sheep he describes and Dante's ignorant sheep of *Paradiso* 29, is that, had these nourished themselves on their traditional food, they would have borne good milk to offer. Instead, stuffed with this spiritually jejune “nova vivanda,” members of the Dominican “greggia” return to the fold, completely void of milk: “vagabunde più da esso vanno / più tornano a l'ovil di latte vòte” (“and the farther his sheep go wandering / from him, the emptier of milk / do they at last come back into the fold”) (*Par.* 11.123-129).

We remember from Chapter Two that the Lateran IV legislation ordering the ordainment of preachers employs food imagery to represent spiritual instruction: “anima spirituali cibo nutritur” (“the soul is fed with spiritual food”). Dante too uses such terms, and often identifies this spiritual food not only as bread or manna (the most common representatives of spiritual nourishment), but also as milk.¹ Milk imagery reaches its dramatic climax when the poet describes the angelic host extending its flames upwards towards Mary, and he compares this motion to an infant extending its arms to its mother after suckling:

E come fantolin ch 'nver'la mamma
 tende le braccia, poi che 'l latte prese,
 per l'animo che 'nfin di fuor s'infiamma;
 ciascun di quei candori in sù si stese
 con la sua cima, sì che l'alto affetto
 ch'elli avieno a Maria mi fu palese.

And, like a baby reaching out its arms
 to mamma after it has drunk her milk,
 its inner impulse kindled into outward flame,
 all these white splendors were reaching upward
 with their firey tips, so that their deep affection
 for Mary was made clear to me (*Par.* 23.212-125).

As happens in the image of Mary and the angels, maternal images will be naturally followed by images of filiation, infancy and suckling. Earlier in this dissertation we discussed Dante's Eleventh Epistle, in which the poet uses images of both sheep and babies. At one point, he calls himself the least of the sheep:

Quippe de ovibus in pascuis Iesu Christi minima una sum; quippe nulla pastoralis
 auctoritate abutens, quoniam divitie mecum non sunt.

I am certainly the least of the sheep in Christ's fields; certainly in no way do I

¹ Milk may be Divine, but it is not always strictly Christian. Elsewhere, Dante describes Homer as one who was suckled more than any other, not at the teats of Mary, but of the Muses: “che le Muse lattar più ch'altri mai”

abuse the authority of a pastor, for I have no riches.²

Here Dante engineers what is perhaps his most aggressive flipping of roles between pastors and sheep. He, the least of the sheep, asserts his right to speak precisely because he is *not* a pastor (“nulla pastorali auctoritate abutens”). And that which qualifies the pastor, he takes care to detail, is not any official ordainment, or even the skills that pertain to it, but – Dante makes this clear – his wealth. Dante expresses this in the negative: Dante explains that he himself cannot be seen as a pastor abusing his authority because he has no wealth (“divitie mecum non sunt”). By rejecting the right to the pastoral role by legislation, and by identifying it instead with what the pastor in his time actually *does*, Dante completely inverts the hierarchy implicit in the sheep/shepherd binary by grounding it in the real. Later, he highlights other speakers, not sheep but babies, who miraculously utter Divine truth:

Nam etiam 'in ore lactentium et infantium' suonit iam Deo placita veritas, et cecus natus veritatem confessus est

For even in the mouth of the suckling and the infant has the truth pleasing to God resounded, and a blind newborn has confessed the truth

Babies that suckle, babies that are “infans,” babies that are blind newborns; all these utter “veritas.” As noted in Chapter Three, “veritas” is essential to the definition of “predicare,” a word employed for identifying and declaring objective truths. In light of this, how else to understand the speech of these babies but as preaching?

The problem remains, however, of missing or malign pastoral guidance in the here and

(*Purg.* 22.102).

2 Dante Alighieri, *Opere Minori*, ed. Domenico De Robertis, vol. 2 (Milano; Napoli: Ricciardi, 1979), 584. Dante Alighieri, *Opere Minori*, ed. Domenico De Robertis, vol. 2 (Milano; Napoli: Ricciardi, 1979), 584.

now; one cannot so easily forget the “non le scusa lor non veder lo danno,” that Beatrice uttered in *Paradiso* 29. Earlier in that canticle Beatrice had already addressed this issue, with a sound and specific solution to this problem: good knowledge of Scripture.

Siate, Christiani, a muovervi più gravi:
 non siate come penna ad ogni vento,
 e non crediate ch'ogne acqua vi lavi.
 Avete il novo e 'l vecchio Testamento,
 e 'l pastor de la Chiesa che vi guida:
 questo vi basti a vostro salvamento.
 Se mala cupidigia altro vi grida,
 uomini siate, e non pecore matte,
 sì che 'l Giudeo di voi tra voi non rida!
 Non fate com'agnel che lascia il latte
 de la sua madre, e semplice e lascivo
 seco medesimo a suo piacer combatte!

Be more grave, Christians, in your endeavors.
 Do not resemble feathers in the wind, nor think
 all waters have the power to wash you clean.
 You have the Testaments, both New and Old,
 and the shepherd of the Church to guide you.
 Let these suffice for your salvation.
 If wicked greed should call you elsewhere,
 be men, not maddened sheep, lest the Jew
 there in your midst make mock of you.
 Be not like the lamb that leaves
 its mother's milk and, silly and wanton,
 pretends to battle with itself in play (*Par.* 5.73-84).

The complex of images and intratextual references confirms that Beatrice's advice here belongs with the the other canti devoted to preaching that we have studied in this dissertation. Advice to Christians to be “più gravi,” and to not like a feather susceptible to “ogne vento,” echoes Thomas Aquinas's “vaneggia” in canto 10, and more closely, his admonition to the pilgrim to keep “piombo a' piedi” (“lead upon your feet”) and to move slowly “al sì e al no” before he should attempt to judge (*Par.* 13.112-14). Beatrice's “vento” also links to the windy rhetoric of the

preachers in canto 29, that leaves sheep “pasciute di vento.” Seeing that the pastor is either conspicuously absent in the *Commedia*, or outright malicious, the good sheep must turn then to Scripture, the “novo e 'l vecchio Testamento.” Knowledge of Scripture may be a final resort, but it is an unfailing bulwark against bad theology. This explains Beatrice's reference to the laughing “Giudeo,” in verse 81: the Jew, known to cleave faithfully to the mandates of the Old Testament, looks unfavorably on Christians, who have much to learn from that older faith about knowledge of and fidelity to Scripture and its precepts. The Jew knows his Bible; certainly *he* sees “tale uccel” hiding in the preacher's cowl at the end of *Paradiso* 29. Until Christians can see it for themselves, he has good reason to laugh at their innocence and gullibility.

In the final *terzina* from *Paradiso* 5, Beatrice brings together the images of herd animals and suckling infants. Christians, she says, should not be like the capering “agnel” that abandons the milk of its mother (tellingly a sheep, not a shepherd) and wanders off to do battle against itself (“seco medesimo a suo piacer combatte”). The abandonment of spiritual food leads always to self-defeating actions, which are highlighted by their contrary motion and reversal of direction. This is seen in earlier canticle, *Purgatorio*, in which the sinners on the terrace of pride pray for spiritual food, to give them guidance:

Dà oggi a noi la cotidiana manna,
 senza la qual per questo aspro deserto
 a retro va chi più di gir s'affanna.

Give us this day the daily manna
 without which he who labors to advance
 goes backward through this bitter wilderness (*Purg.* 11.13-15).

The spiritual food³ that is manna, one and the same as the body of Christ,⁴ keeps these souls from reversing direction and proceeding backwards through the “aspro deserto.” The phrase recalls the wilderness that the Jews abandoned themselves to for forty years.⁵ The figures on the terrace of pride refuse the contrary direction that the lamb and the Jews of Exodus pursue. The request of these souls on the terrace of pride is contextualized within a prayer to “padre nostro,” which, as the name implies, takes its form and much of its content from the Lord's Prayer. The difference between it and the prayer that Jesus prescribed in the New Testament is one of amplification; as the above excerpt shows, the spirit of the text is fleshed out, exegetically, with cross-references to the Exodus story, known to stand typologically for the liberation of the soul from sin. Absent from the scene are pastors.⁶ And yet, the people, independently of their pastors, synthesize their Scriptural knowledge well enough that we may consider their words as a kind of preaching among themselves. These souls present a real solution for the wayward flock on earth, informed by Scriptural study, intelligent analysis, and sharing with others in the community. If as they say,

3 “Et omnes eandem escam spiritualem manducaverunt” (“and all ate the same spiritual food”) (I Cor.10:3); “Qui habet aures, audiat quid Spiritus dicat ecclesiis: Vincenti dabo manna absconditum” (“He who has ears, let him hear what the Spirit tells to the churches: I will give hidden manna to the victor”) (Apoc. 2:17).

4 “Patres nostri manna manducaverunt in deserto sicut scriptum est: panem de caelo dedit eis manducare.’ Dixit ergo eis Iesus, ‘Amen amen dico vobis non Moses dedit vobis panem de caelo sed Pater meus dat vobis panem de caelo verum. Panis enim Dei est qui descendit de caelo et dat vitam mundo” (“Our fathers ate manna in the desert as it is written: he gave them bread from heaven to eat,’ Jesus said to them, ‘Amen amen I say to you, Moses did not give you bread from heaven but my Father gives you true bread from heaven. The bread of God is he who descended from heaven and gave life to the world””) (John 6:31-33).

5 Dante anticipates this theme of walking backwards in *Purgatorio* 10, when he accuses “superbi cristian,” who because they are so infirm both in vision and mind that “fidanza avete ne’ retrosi passi” (“you put your trust in backward steps”) (10.121-23). Backwards walking also occurs in *Paradiso* 12, when the soul of Bonaventure notes that more recent Franciscans have so strayed from the founder's intention for the order that they walk in his footsteps, but in the opposite direction: “La sua famiglia, che si mosse dritta / coi piedi a le sue orme, è tanto volta / che quel dinanzi a quel di retro gitta” (“his family, which once started out setting their feet / upon his footprints, is now turned backward / setting their toes where once they placed their heels”) (*Par.* 12.15-17).

6 Dante's later encounters with the souls on the terrace feature figures like Umberto Aldobrandeschi, lord of Campagnatico, Oderisi da Gubbio, a manuscript illustrator, and Provenzan Salvani, a well-known Ghibelline.

they perform this not for themselves, they certainly do so as a testimony to the living they have left behind, “per coloro che dietro a noi restaro” (*Purg.* 11.24).

Appendix



Fig. 1

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