Italian Readers of Ovid: From the Origins to Dante

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ABSTRACT

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“Italian Readers of Ovid: From the Origins to Dante” studies the reception of Ovid’s writings in medieval Italian prose and poetry, from the first vernacular poems composed in Sicily to Dante’s *Divina Commedia*. Starting from the very beginnings of a new literary culture, I show how the increasing availability of Ovid’s texts is mirrored in the increasing textual presence of Ovid in the vernacular writings of the period. Identifying the general traits common to this Ovid-inspired literature, I discuss how medieval Italian authors used Ovid’s works and his characters to address questions of poetics, openly debating the value of Ovid’s poetry for their own writings. I then illustrate how, in his lyric poetry and the *Commedia*, Dante inserts himself into this vernacular practice of discussing poetics through the medium of Ovid. Ultimately, I argue that Dante’s reading of Ovid in the *Commedia* is deeply rooted in his own lyric poetry and that of his predecessors.

Chapter 1, “Medieval Italian Readers of Ovid, Modern Readers of Reception,” describes the material and cultural contexts of the reception of Ovid during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries in Italy, challenging existing notions about Ovid’s reception in medieval Italian scholarship. Previous studies mostly treat Dante’s *Commedia* as the starting point of this reception history, neglecting the preceding and equally important lyric tradition. Questioning this approach, I reconstruct the increasing availability of Ovid’s works in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Italy and specify in which formats (commentaries, translations,
anthologies, mentions in treatises, other works of literature) and contexts (schools, universities, courts, monasteries) contemporary readers could have encountered Ovid’s works.

By outlining these texts and contexts, I depict a growing community of Italian readers of Ovid, many of whom not only read Ovid but also incorporated the Latin poet’s work in their writings.

Chapter 2, “Readers Turned Writers: From the Sicilian School to the dolce stil novo,” focuses on a first series of these Ovid-inspired Italian writings. This chapter explores the poetic implications of including Ovid in their works—a trait found in the poetry of Pier della Vigna, Guido Cavalcanti, and Guido Guinizzelli, among others. During this period, poets debate with their contemporaries about how to write poetry, openly addressing and even attacking fellow poets while defending their own poetics. The Italian poets explicitly evaluate their readings of Ovid’s love poetry in their poems and single out his poetry as an emblem of the kind of poetry they write, or no longer wish to write. The vernacular poets treat Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* similarly. By means of the simile, the Italian poets feature a select group of Ovidian characters to underline their own exceptionality: for example, the poet is similar to the male Ovidian character (but better), his lady to the female (but more beautiful).

The third chapter, “Readers Turned Writers: Dante Alighieri and Cino da Pistoia,” focuses on the exceptional position of Dante and Cino among this group of vernacular writers. Both Dante and Cino integrate Ovidian material in their poetry with more complexity. Including similes in their poetry, Dante and Cino radically revise this common practice by associating themselves with the female Ovidian character—a gender switch that later Petrarch will adopt. Both poets also go beyond comparing their world with that of the *Metamorphoses* (what all the vernacular poets discussed in Chapter 2 did), but truly integrate Ovidian material into their poetry, blending Ovid’s world into theirs. Furthermore, this chapter challenges the notion of two
phases of Dante’s writing posed in Dante scholarship: one phase when he is exclusively interested in vernacular poetry, and the second phase when he turns to classical literature. Finding Ovid featured in one of Dante’s earliest poem exchanges, I illustrate that it is precisely in his vernacular lyric poetry that Dante slowly starts to experiment with Ovidian material. The petrose, a series of four poems written around 1296, are central in this development. These poems test out some new techniques that Dante will use more frequently in the Commedia: the integration of both central and peripheral elements from a larger passage in Ovid’s text, and the combination of different Ovidian sources at the same time.

Chapters 4 and 5 trace the development of these techniques from Dante’s lyric poems to the Commedia, where for the first time we encounter Ovidian material in a Christian context. While it is not my aim to de-allegorize Dante’s reading of Ovid, I stress that the most radically allegorizing and Christianizing commentaries on Ovid are not part of the cultural context of Dante’s time and, instead, illustrate how much Dante’s reading of Ovid is rooted in the lyric tradition. Chapter 4, “Metapoetics in Ovid and Dante’s Commedia,” focuses on the role Ovid’s writings play in Dante’s definition of his poetics. Looking at metanarrative moments in the Commedia (Inf. 24-25, Purg. 24, the poetic invocations in Purg. 1 and Par. 1), I illustrate how Dante repeatedly discusses poetics through the medium of Ovid, just as the Italian lyric poets did.

Chapter 5, “Shifting Shapes of Ovidian Intertextuality: Ovid’s Influence in Purgatorio and Paradiso,” proposes to categorize Ovidian allusions in the Commedia by the kinds of elements Dante drew from his Ovidian sources. The primary method with which Dante incorporates Ovidian material in the Commedia is the rhetorical trope of the simile, which was also repeatedly used by the vernacular lyric poets. Focusing on the Purgatorio and Paradiso, the
two canticles where the poet compares himself most often with certain characters from the*
Metamorphoses,* I illustrate how Dante adopts and transforms this vernacular lyric practice. Of
these vernacular poets, Dante is certainly the Italian reader of Ovid who integrates Ovidian
material in his poetry most frequently and with the most complexity: he combines the methods of
the vernacular lyric poets with other classical or theological sources and conforms these methods
to the poetics of the *Commedia.* But this complexity, I ultimately argue, can only be fully
understood in connection within the cultural context of the reception of Ovid: an Italian literary
culture that from its very beginnings reflects on Ovid’s texts.
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My deepest thanks go to mijn lief Richard, my biggest supporter and best critic. He taught me to dream big, and his love and support made this dissertation, and everything else, so much better.
List of Primary Sources and Translations

This list provides the origin of all excerpts from primary sources and their English translations, organized by author. I followed the text and Roman or Arabic numbering of the listed editions (unless otherwise indicated), and used their English translations when available. For some texts, I have used free-standing English translations, and in those instances, I listed the translation together with the source text. All other translations are mine.

Abate di Tivoli

Albertano da Brescia

Anonymous, _Aissi m’ave cum a l’enfan petit_
_Ouvrées et Minnesänger_. _Recueil de textes_. Edited by Frank Istvan. 113-15. Saarbrücken:

Anonymous, _Guardando la fontana, il buon Narciso_

Arnaut Daniel

Arnaut de Mareuil

Azalaïs de Porcairagues

Bernard de Ventadour
Bertran Carbonel

Bonagiunta Orbicciani

Brunetto Latini

Chiaro Davanzati

Cino da Pistoia

Dante Alighieri


Rime. Edited by Domenico De Robertis. Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2005. (Except for the sonnet of uncertain authorship Nulla mi parve mai piú crudel cosa, which is quoted from Rime. Edited by Gianfranco Contini. 266-67. 1939. Reprint, Turin: Einaudi, 1995.) For Dante’s poems, I only give the incipits and not De Robertis’ or Contini’s numberings.


**Dante da Maiano**


**Disticha Catonis**


**Donatus**


**Giacomo da Lentini**


**Giovanni Boccaccio**


**Giraut de Salignac**


**Guido Cavalcanti**


**Guido Guinizelli**


**Guido Orlandi**


**Guiraut de Cabreira**


**Isarn and Rofian**


**Lucan**


**Il mare amoroso**


**Onesto da Bologna**


**Ovid**


Peirol

Petrarch

Piere Cardenal

Pier della Vigna

Proverbia quae dicuntur super natura feminarum

Richard of Saint Victor

Rigaut de Berbezilh

Rimbaut de Vaqueiras

Rinaldo d’Aquino

Rustico Filippi

Schiatta di Messer Albizo
Seneca

Servius

Storie de Troia e de Roma

Virgil
List of Manuscripts Cited

Arnulf of Orléans, Commentary on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*
Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, clm MS 7205. s. XII. Germany.

Brunetto Latini, *Tesoretto*
Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Strozzi MS 146. s. XIII/XIV. Italy.

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*
Austin, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas, HRC MS 34. s. XIII. France.
London, British Library, Burney MS 223. s. XIII. France.
Preface

In Ovid in the Middle Ages, the most recent publication on the topic (2011), two essays are dedicated to the reception of the Latin poet among medieval Italian writers. One offers a general overview, Robert Black’s “Ovid in medieval Italy,” and one focuses specifically on Dante’s reading of Ovid, Warren Ginsberg’s “Dante’s Ovids.”\(^1\) Both essays are informative about the ways in which the reception of Ovid in the Italian Middle Ages is traditionally studied. Black’s survey, for instance, discusses in detail the Ovidian readings of Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and later fourteenth-century writers. However, his essay includes only a few poets prior to Dante (Henry of Settimello and Albertino Mussato, who both wrote in Latin, and Brunetto Latini whose Italian poem Tesoretto is included).\(^2\) As is common in surveys on the topic, Black’s essay leaves out the vernacular lyric poets writing before Dante, even though their poetry also integrates and reflects on Ovid’s works.

With its specific focus on Dante’s reading of Ovid, Ginsberg’s essay is the latest in a series of articles, book chapters, and dictionary entries on the subject. By calling attention to the different phases in both Ovid’s and Dante’s literary careers, Ginsberg’s short piece begins to broaden the scope of a field that has traditionally focused mostly on two works: Ovid’s Metamorphoses and Dante’s Commedia.\(^3\) The scholarship on Dante’s Ovid is fragmented, consisting of short general overviews (such as Ginsberg’s) on the one hand, and close readings of

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2 To be complete, Black does include several thirteenth-century prose writers, more precisely teachers of grammar and rhetoric (one of his areas of research).

3 Previous studies on the reception of Ovid’s complete oeuvre in Dante’s other writings are listed in the notes on Chapter 3, sections 2 and 3.
specific passages on the other, lacking one comprehensive study on the topic.

All the general overview essays discuss, to varying degrees of explicitness, two central questions. The first question is which texts of the Ovidian corpus were most appealing to Dante and which of Dante’s works most express this appeal. Almost all of these essays identify Ovid’s Metamorphoses as Dante’s main source text and concur that Ovid’s influence is most felt in the Inferno. The second question regards Dante’s interpretation of Ovid’s works as evidenced by his writing: while each essay acknowledges that Dante recreates Ovid’s writings in the Commedia, some of them further define this kind of reconstruction, considering Dante’s use of Ovidian material to be in line with the general medieval trend of allegorizing the Metamorphoses, but others leave the question of allegory undiscussed.

Besides these short overviews that describe the general traits of Dante’s use of Ovid, the

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scholarship includes a much larger corpus of essays that break down this subject into very specific topics: for example, Dante’s use of a particular Ovidian myth, the influence of Ovid on a specific canto or series of cantos, or the interaction between Ovidian and other classical or sacred texts in the *Commedia*. At the beginning of the 1990s, two collected volumes of this kind of detailed intertextual readings were published and they both reflect new directions in thinking about Dante’s reading of Ovid. Mainly, these essays shift the focus from Ovidian intertextuality in Dante’s *Inferno* to the other two canticles, arguing that Ovid’s influence is equally present in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*—if not more. At the same time, scholars broaden the definition of “allusion” and now discuss the larger contexts of the Ovidian tales that Dante selected instead of describing only the parallel passages. However, with the exception of one, all essays of these two edited volumes still work exclusively with Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and Dante’s *Commedia*.

My dissertation addresses both the issues Black’s and Ginsberg’s essays raised. First, by including the vernacular lyric poets writing before Dante (previously overlooked as readers of Ovid), this study will provide that missing segment of the reception history of Ovid in the Italian Middle Ages. Instead of treating each author and work as a separate moment in the history of

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6 For instance, in the introduction to *The Poetry of Allusion*, the editors Jacoff and Schnapp interpret the term “allusion” in the broadest sense to include essays on phenomena “from explicit quotations of a predecessor text to ‘dialectal’ and ‘synecdochical’ cross-references, oblique echoes, and even ‘screened’ or suppressed allusions” (2).

7 The exception is Janet Levarie Smarr’s essay “Poets of Love and Exile” (Sowell, *Dante and Ovid*, 139-51), which discusses the influence of Ovid’s love and exile poetry on Dante’s *Commedia*. 

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Ovid’s reception, I underline how these moments are connected: medieval Italian readers of Ovid not only responded to the Latin poet’s works but also responded to the ways in which their Italian predecessors read and responded to Ovid. As we will see, these responses sometimes even literally take the form of response sonnets in which Italian poets discuss their readings of Ovid. At the same time, by studying Ovid as a poet of love, myth, and exile (and not only the Ovid of the *Metamorphoses*), this dissertation includes all of Ovid’s works known to Dante and the other medieval Italian readers of the Latin poet. With this all-encompassing approach, I illustrate the vernacular roots of Dante’s reading of Ovid in the *Commedia* by connecting this reading with Dante’s earlier lyric poems, as well as those of other Italian vernacular poets.
Chapter 1: Medieval Italian Readers of Ovid, Modern Readers of Reception

In the sonnet *Assai son certo che somenta in lidi*, the poet Onesto da Bologna laments the cruelty of his lady and calls his addressee, fellow poet Cino da Pistoia, inexperienced in this bitter aspect of love. In his response sonnet, Cino turns to Ovid: “Se mai leggesti versi de l’Ovidi, / so c’hai trovato, si come si dice, / che disdegnoso contra sdegnatrice / convien ch’Amore di mercede sfidi” (“If you ever read verses of Ovid, I know you found out that, as they say, Love inevitably takes away any hope for mercy to anyone who is haughty toward a haughty lady” [vv. 1-4]).\(^1\) In these verses, Cino appeals to Ovid’s authority to prove that Onesto only has himself to blame for his misfortune in love. At the same time, by mentioning Ovid as a shared point of reference, Cino also implicitly acknowledges the existence of a community of Italian readers of the Latin poet. But who were these readers? In which contexts (schools, universities, courts, monasteries) would they encounter Ovid’s writings? And in which formats (commentaries, translations, anthologies, mentions in treatises, other works of literature) did they read Ovid? This is the first series of questions this chapter sets out to answer.

The description of formats and contexts, however, is only one part of the answer to the question, “How did medieval Italians read Ovid?” The other part requires us to understand their reading methods and their modes of interpreting Ovid’s work. The most evident testimonies are medieval commentaries on Ovid’s works, which often explicitly indicate how to interpret what the Latin poet wrote. But these commentaries are not the only sources that define a mode of interpretation. Readers of Ovid testify to their interpretation of the Latin poet’s work any time they use or adapt Ovid’s writings in their own work—just as Cino did, appealing to Ovid’s authority in matters of love in his response sonnet to Onesto.

\(^1\) The source text of this and all following excerpts are found in the *List of Primary Sources and Translations* on pp. iv-ix.
Existing studies on the reception of Ovid in medieval Italian literature, which focus mostly on Dante’s reading of Ovid in the *Commedia*, all frame the use of Ovid as an act of rewriting, transformation, or metamorphosis. The common approaches to analyze this use are:

(1) concordances listing Ovid-inspired verses; (2) thematic discussions that focus on specific Ovidian stories and themes; (3) comparisons with the commentary tradition on Ovid’s works; and (4) applications of modern theories of allusion, intertextuality, and reception, sometimes developed for the literature of different literary periods, ranging from classical antiquity to the Renaissance. In this chapter, I evaluate these approaches in the light of our understanding of the texts and contexts in which Italian medieval readers encountered Ovid. In that way, I can propose the best approach to discuss the reception of Ovid’s works, not only in the *Commedia*, but also in the writings of the Italian readers of Ovid before Dante.

1.1 Texts and Contexts

Most historians studying the High and Late Middle Ages (from the tenth to the fifteenth century) agree that the study of classical authors steadily increased from the twelfth century on—a general trend, as they describe, characterized by regional differences and shifts in preferences for certain Latin authors and genres over time. The scholars who deny a continuously increasing interest in classical antiquity focus in particular on the thirteenth century in Italy, the century during which vernacular Italian poetry came into existence (and also the starting point of this dissertation). The socio-political changes in the Italian cities, these scholars argue, created an

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2 Robert Black’s *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) is the most recent publication on education in Italy during this period. Black, one of the scholars who argue for a declined interest in the classics during the thirteenth
increasing need for a faster, more practical method of teaching Latin to notaries, lawyers, and merchants—one that no longer required the study of Latin literature.\textsuperscript{3} Moreover, key figures in the study and teaching of rhetoric at the time at Bologna, such as Boncompagno da Signa (teacher of rhetoric around the beginning of the thirteenth century) and his successor Guido Faba, opposed the use of pagan authors in the study of rhetoric and removed Cicero from the syllabus.\textsuperscript{4} In the Italian schoolbook manuscripts of the thirteenth century fewer Latin authors (including Ovid) appear in comparison to the previous century,\textsuperscript{5} suggesting that the interest in classical literature had decreased during that period. But increasing or decreasing numbers of extant manuscripts do not reveal the complete picture, especially when these numbers only include a specific kind of manuscript, in this case schoolbooks. As we will see in this section, during the thirteenth century classical authors (Ovid not the least) were known and read both inside and outside the classroom (and not always in the format of the schoolbook). Therefore, to get a fuller understanding of the Italian readers’ knowledge of Ovid, we need to go beyond the school curriculum and look at all the possible sources that incorporated this classical author.


\textsuperscript{4} Wieruszowski, “Rhetoric and the Classics in Italian Education,” 593-97.

\textsuperscript{5} Black, \textit{Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy}, 192. Black defines his criteria to consider when manuscripts qualify as “schoolbooks” in \textit{Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy}, 3-6, 10-11.
Extant manuscripts of Ovid’s texts are the first and most obvious sources to consider.\(^6\) Looking at the numbers of all manuscripts (not only schoolbooks), the general trend in all of Europe (Italy being no exception) is an exponential increase in manuscripts of Ovid’s oeuvre in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries\(^7\)—a period the 19th-century German medievalist Ludwig Traube coined the “aetas ovidiana.”\(^8\) Throughout this period, the *Metamorphoses* remains the most popular text, but the manuscript numbers include almost all of Ovid’s works.\(^9\) Before 1200, Ovid’s *opera omnia* were rarely collected in one manuscript; the amatory works, on the other hand, would often appear together as the *carmina amatoria*.\(^10\) Moreover, the medieval conception of Ovid’s complete works included a few texts whose authorship was later questioned: spurious poems that are now considered the work of Ovid’s contemporaries (such as the *Ad Liviam de Morte Drusi*, *Nux*, and *Halieuticai*), and the pseudo-autobiographical *De

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\(^9\) To be precise: the data mention the *Metamorphoses*, *Fasti*, *Epistulae ex Ponto*, *Tristia*, *Heroides*, *Remedia amoris*, *Ars amatoria*, *Amores*. There is no mention of the *Ibis* and *Medicamina Faciei Femineae*.

\(^10\) Tilliette, “Savants et poètes du moyen âge face à Ovide,” 72.
vetula, which really is a mid-thirteenth century creation.\textsuperscript{11} Especially *De vetula*—the account of Ovid’s last love story which ends with the poet’s conversion to Christianity—circulated widely and attests to medieval interest in Ovid’s biography.

Parallel to the rising interest in the source texts, Ovid also became the main source of inspiration for translators, commentators, and writers of poetry and prose. This vast body of Ovid-inspired texts makes it easy to recognize the peak of Ovid’s popularity, but to understand the fascination with the poet we need to “anatomize” it— to use Ralph Hexter’s word—as there is not one, but several medieval Ovids.\textsuperscript{12} The complexity of Ovid’s influence in the Middle Ages is due in part to the complexity of his oeuvre: Ovid is at once a poet of love (*Amores, Ars amatoria, Remedia amoris, Heroides*), myth (*Metamorphoses, Fasti*), and exile (*Tristia, Epistulae ex Ponto, Ibis*), and the texts belonging to each aspect of Ovid’s poetic persona are often quite different.\textsuperscript{13} It cannot be a surprise then that Ovid’s work appealed to different readers in different ways. Ovid correctly predicted at the end of the *Metamorphoses* that he would be read through


all the ages (*Met.* 15.878) and, as it turned out, the reception of his work became governed by the very principle that ruled his epic: constant change.

This principle of constant change applies foremost to the commentary tradition of Ovid’s works. In the broadest sense, “commentary” includes all interlinear and marginal glosses; short summaries and outlines inserted in between Ovid’s texts or established as a separate text; and *accessus*, short introductions on the subject of the work, the life of its author, the work’s form, title, intention, and the branch of philosophy to which it belongs. As we will see in our discussion of specific commentaries, the nature of these comments ranges from grammatical explanations to literary analysis, notes on history, philosophy, and geography, and moral and allegorical interpretations. We might even say that the principle of change also applies to the interpretation of Ovid’s writings within the same work: a commentator often proposes different interpretations for one and the same story."^{14} Moreover, the copying of commentaries was treated differently than the copying of Ovid’s actual text: in contrast with the authoritative Latin text, the commentary format invited small corrections, updates, and further comments."^{15} Alison Cornish’s description of the relationship between classical Latin texts and their vernacular Italian translations holds for commentaries as well: commentaries too “adapt an unchanging authoritative text to changing circumstances.”^{16} In short, the commentaries on Ovid’s works are

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a varied and changing corpus of texts—an important characteristic to consider, for example, when discussing which specific manuscript of Ovid’s texts Dante consulted.

The commentary tradition remains the least explored aspect of Ovid’s reception, even though the works of Fausto Ghisalberti, Frank Coulson, and Ralph Hexter have made many medieval commentaries available to the contemporary scholar. Given that many other commentaries are still buried in unedited manuscripts, what follows offers merely a broad sketch, but nevertheless one that highlights the diversity of approaches that characterize the genre. Among the extant and established commentaries, the earliest commentary is Pseudo-Lactantius Placidus’ *Metamorphoseon narrationes*, traditionally datable to the fifth or sixth century. Similar to many modern translations of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, this commentary breaks down Ovid’s text into individual stories with titles (*tituli*) and opens each book with a list of all stories. The *narrationes* is not a free-standing text, but consists of short prose summaries (*argumenta*), which were inserted in between Ovid’s text. Brooks Otis identified three types of additional material in those *argumenta*: extra background information on the myths (sometimes contradicting Ovid’s version), quotations from other commentaries (e.g., on Statius’ *Thebais*), and scholastic material. That the exact dating of the commentary and its sources are still debated is of little importance for our discussion here; what is relevant is that this commentary survived in seven medieval manuscripts of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (dating from the ninth to the 

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twelfth century), the so-called “Lactantian” family of manuscripts.\textsuperscript{19} Three of these manuscripts were written in Italy (Marcianus 225, Neapolitanus IV, F, 3, and Mus. Brit. Add. 11967). As we will see later, Charles Alan Robson argues that one of these Lactantian manuscripts was Dante’s source for Ovid’s \textit{Metamorphoses}.

Arnulf of Orléans, a schoolmaster who in the second half of the twelfth century wrote commentaries on all of Ovid’s works, was familiar with the \textit{narrationes}.\textsuperscript{20} Working at Orléans, which was at the time a flourishing center of classical studies, Arnulf was not the first to comment on Ovid’s works, but the first to sign his commentary with his name.\textsuperscript{21} Arnulf’s commentary on the \textit{Metamorphoses} is often associated with its allegorizing readings of Ovid’s work. These readings are indeed Arnulf’s innovation, but his allegories are only one part of his commentary. In contrast with the Pseudo-Lactantius Placidus’ \textit{narrationes}, Arnulf’s commentary is a free-standing text and provides three sections for each book of the \textit{Metamorphoses}. The first is a lengthy section of \textit{glosulae}, and the second section lists all the \textit{mutationes} pertaining to that book, the feature that resembles the \textit{narrationes} the most. The third section consists of didactic,\textsuperscript{22}


\textsuperscript{21} In \textit{Ovid and Medieval Schooling}, Ralph Hexter describes the anonymous school commentaries on the amatory works. There (at p. 11) and also in his “Medieval Articulations of Ovid’s \textit{Metamorphoses},” he points out that “medieval Ovid commentaries were not by nature allegorizing or moralizing” (77).
allegorical, but not necessarily Christian explanations of the stories (some are just a few lines long, others thoroughly unpack the allegories). Arnulf’s other commentaries on Ovid’s works consist of only glosses.  

John of Garland’s *Integumenta Ovidii* responds to Arnulf’s innovative allegorical interpretations. Educated in England, John of Garland was teaching in France around 1230 when he composed a 520 verse-long Latin commentary on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. In his poem, John reveals the true discourse (“sermo verus”) for select stories, a discourse that was covered up under the veil (“integumentum”) of historical discourse (cf. vv. 57-62). These “true discourses” are short (about four verses dedicated to each selected story) and are comprised of straightforward allegorical explanations. For example, in the story of Narcissus and Echo, John simply explains that Narcissus is “an eager boy misled by the glory of material things” (vv. 163-64), while he describes Echo as the natural phenomenon where enclosed air repeats words (vv. 165-66). Like Arnulf, his allegories have mainly a moral tone; only in his description of the deification of Caesar (cf. *Met.* 15.745-842) at the very end of his poem is Christ mentioned (vv. 511-20).

Arnulf of Orléans’ and John of Garland’s allegorical readings of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* seem to suggest that allegory was the prevailing approach to Ovid’s work. While later in the fourteenth century commentators followed their example (cf. infra), the so-called “Vulgata” commentary on the *Metamorphoses* illustrates that the allegorical reading of the *Metamorphoses*

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22 For example, see his commentary on Ovid’s *Fasti, Arnulfi Aurelianensis Glosule Ovidii Fastorum*, ed. Jörg Rudolf Rieker (Florence: SISMEL, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2005).

was just one of many approaches to commenting on Ovid’s work. Created around 1250 in central France (perhaps at the school of Orléans), the anonymous Vulgate commentary consists of interlinear and marginal glosses to the text of the *Metamorphoses*. Like Arnulf’s, John’s, and those of other anonymous commentators, the Vulgate commentary was intended for use in the classroom. While the Vulgate adopts material from these earlier commentaries, its unique feature is the close attention to the literary qualities of Ovid’s work. In addition to grammatical and lexical notes, the anonymous Vulgate commentator frequently points out intratextual connections between stories of the *Metamorphoses*, and is also attentive to Ovid’s influence on contemporary medieval writers. In 2007, Frank T. Coulson counted twenty-two manuscripts of the Vulgate commentary, calling it the “single most important commentary on the *Metamorphoses* from the high Middle Ages.” These manuscripts circulated widely in France and Italy, and Fausto Ghisalberti believed the Vulgate to be the commentary that Dante consulted (cf. infra). The dating and the circulation of Arnulf’s, John of Garland’s, and the Vulgate commentaries make them all plausible sources for an Italian reader coming into contact with Ovid’s work in the thirteenth century.

The first commentaries of the fourteenth century—Giovanni del Virgilio’s *Expositio* and

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26 Coulson, “Ovid’s Transformations in Medieval France,” 42.
Allegorie—are both dated around 1321, the year of Dante’s death and the endpoint of this study. 1321 was also the year in which Giovanni del Virgilio, Dante’s correspondent in the Eclogues, was appointed to teach the first course dedicated to the classics (Virgil, Statius, Lucan, and Ovid) at the University of Bologna. These classical authors were not included into the university curriculum until the fifteenth century, which makes Giovanni del Virgilio’s two-year-long teachings “an uncharacteristic example in the Trecento.”

It is in this university context that we should understand del Virgilio’s two works on Ovid’s Metamorphoses: the Expositio and the Allegorie librorum Ovidii Metamorphoseos. The relationship between the two texts is not well-understood (the manuscript tradition mostly keeps the two works separated), but the Allegorie probably grew out of the Expositio. In the Allegorie, Giovanni follows the example of Arnulf of Orléans and John of Garland, often referring to their interpretations without mentioning their names (“dicunt”). Mostly interested in the moral or natural explanation of Ovid’s “transformationes,” as he calls them, Giovanni meticulously works his way through the entire Metamorphoses, book by book, story by story. Similar to the two French schoolmasters, the only transformation Giovanni understands in Christianizing terms is the deification of Caesar. Explaining Caesar’s deification as the “prenuntia Christi” (“foreteller of Christ” [v. 787]), Giovanni ends the Allegorie on a Christian note.

27 Black, Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy, 201.

28 Fausto Ghisalberti, Giovanni del Virgilio espositore delle “Metamorfosi” (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1933), which includes the accessus to the expositio (3-19) and the text of the allegorie (43-107).

29 On the manuscript tradition, see Ghisalberti, Giovanni del Virgilio, 39-42; Clark, Coulson, McKinley, Ovid in the Middle Ages, Appendix, 314.
The anonymous *Ovide moralisé* and Pierre Bersuire’s *Ovidius moralizatus* postdate the conclusion of the *Commedia*, but I include these commentaries because they are often discussed as reference points for Dante’s reading of Ovid in the *Commedia*. Composed between 1316 and 1328, the *Ovide moralisé* reworks the roughly 12,000 verses of the *Metamorphoses* into a 70,000 verse-long French text, adding extensive commentary to the translation. While the previous commentaries sporadically included Christianizing readings, the *Ovide moralisé* is the first work that offers this kind of reading in “a systematic and consistent fashion.” This explicitly Christianizing approach also characterizes the *Ovidius moralizatus*, a Latin commentary written in Avignon between 1337 and 1340 by the Benedictine prior Pierre Bersuire. Originally the fifteenth book of Bersuire’s *Reductorium morale* (an encyclopedic work on morality for preachers), the *Ovidius moralizatus* soon circulated as a free-standing text. Thus, around or after the time Dante finished the *Commedia*, two commentaries on the *Metamorphoses* offered for the first time consistently Christianizing readings of Ovid’s work. It seems quite impossible that Dante had direct contact with these commentaries.

Regardless of whether or not Ovid’s works were augmented by one of these commentaries, the manuscripts often also included *accessus Ovidii*: short introductions that

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covered the work’s subject, form, title, and intention, a biographical introduction on the author, and the branch of philosophy to which it belonged. These *accessus ad auctorem*, a practice used systematically from the twelfth century on, served pedagogical purposes, rendering Ovid accessible and acceptable in the school context. It was common to classify Ovid’s works under the branch of ethics (“ethicae supponitur”) and interpret their intention in terms of morality (as, in fact, most classical texts were categorized). For example, in his *accessus* introducing the *Metamorphoses*, Arnulf of Orléans describes the work’s intention and its philosophical approach as follows:

intencio est de mutacione diceret ut non intelligamus de mutacione que fit extrinsecus tantum in rebus corporeis bonis vel malis sed etiam de mutacione que fit intrinsecus ut in animam, ut reducat nos ab errore ad cognitionem veri creatoris. . . . Ethice supponitur quia docet nos ista temporalia, que transitoria et mutabilia, contempnere, quod pertinet ad moralitatem.

[Ovid’s intention is to describe transformation, not so that we may understand the change which takes place externally into good or bad corporal forms, but rather so that we may understand that which takes place internally, in the soul, to lead us back from error to the knowledge of the true creator. . . . This work is to be considered ethics because it teaches us to spurn these temporal things, which are transitory and mutable, a subject which relates to morality.]

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36 Elliot, “Accessus ad auctores,” 14-17. Arnulf’s section on Ovid’s life was long enough for Ghisalberti to consider it the “first true ‘life’” of Ovid. See Ghisalberti, “Mediaeval Biographies of Ovid,” 18.
Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine remark that Renaissance editions of classical authors, especially those used in classrooms, often do not incorporate moral instruction as thoroughly and consistently as their introductions may suggest.\(^{37}\) In his study of medieval and Renaissance Italian schoolbooks, Robert Black reaches the same conclusion. Calling the moralizing *accessus* “the ideal way to pay lip service to the moralistic arm of education,” Black explains that “having got through the moral conventions of the *accessus* and so fulfilling any formal requirement of providing good morals in the classroom, teachers then felt free to turn to their real business: teaching Latin in a philological manner.”\(^ {38}\) The example of Arnulf’s teachings on Ovid perfectly illustrates these scholars’ point: in the *accessus*, he emphasizes the moral reading of the *Metamorphoses*, while this is only one aspect of the actual commentary’s content.

Commentaries and *accessus* were also frequently added to the vernacular translations of Ovid’s works, but those translations appeared relatively late on the Italian literary map. At first, Italian translators made Latin works of history and rhetoric available to a broader public, and only later, toward the end of the Duecento, did they start translating poetry.\(^ {39}\) But among the Latin poets, Ovid was a favorite author for translators.\(^ {40}\) Between the end of the thirteenth and


\(^{38}\) Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, 315.

\(^{39}\) Cesare Segre, *Volgarizzamenti del Due e Trecento* (Turin: Unione tipografico-Editrice torinese, 1953), 14-16; Cornish, *Vernacular Translation in Dante’s Italy*, Chapter 1.

\(^{40}\) Segre, *Volgarizzamenti del Due e Trecento*, 19.
the beginning of the fourteenth century, Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris* were translated three times in Tuscan and were later accompanied by commentaries.\(^{41}\) Other translations postdate 1321, the year of Dante’s death. Between 1320 and 1330, Filippo Ceffi translated the *Heroides*, and the first Italian translation of the *Metamorphoses* by Arrigo Simintendi da Prato dates from 1333. When Italian readers of this period read Ovid’s work in their entirety, it was not in translation.

All of the texts we have discussed so far treat Ovid’s poetry in its entirety, but the Latin poet’s writings were also transmitted in indirect, fragmented ways. One form of indirect transmission of Ovid’s work is the transcription or translation of Ovidian quotes in the prose writings of the time. These quotes are found in Latin and Italian works on Roman history and moral treatises, and provide further insight on the circulation and interpretation of Ovid’s works.\(^ {42}\) A first example is taken from the *Storie de Troia e de Roma* (mid-thirteenth century), from the description of the Roman wars with Hannibal. There, an anonymous writer mentions the successful tactics of the Roman general Maximus Fabius: “E como trovamo in Ovidio De

\(^ {41}\) Vanna Lippi Bigazzi, *I volgarizzamenti trecenteschi dell’Ars amandi e dei Remedia amoris*, 2 vols. (Florence: Accademia della Crusca, 1987). In *Vernacular Translation in Dante’s Italy*, 222n3, Cornish points out that these commentaries contain many citations from Dante.

Ponto, Massimo restitugìo molto la republica in quella ora” (“and as we find in Ovid’s *Epistulae ex Ponto*, at that moment Maximus really restored the republic”). However, the Maximus who is frequently addressed in Ovid’s exile letters is Paullus Fabius Maximus: related to the general but a good two hundred years younger. Yet the word choice of the anonymous writer of the *Storie* reveals the knowledge of Ovid’s text—just not of the *Epistulae Ex Ponto*, but of the *Fasti*. There, the general is addressed in phrases that the writer of the *Storie* must have known: “scilicet ut posses olim tu, Maxime, nasci, / cui res cunctando restituenda foret” (“to the end, no doubt, that thou, Maximus, mightest one day be born to save the commonwealth by biding time” [*Fasti* 2.241-42]). This example combines the perfect knowledge of the Ovidian text with an incorrect attribution, which could indicate that the anonymous writer of the *Storie* knew this Ovidian quote from another indirect source; that is, out of the context of the Ovidian work from which the quote was excerpted.

Albertano da Brescia, a thirteenth-century notary and author of several treatises, displays a firmer command of Ovid’s work. The following examples are taken from his treatise *Liber consolationis et consilii* and its vernacular translations. Rather than a treatise, the *Liber* is a long-spun dialogue between Melibeus and his wife Prudentia, who discuss how to respond to an attack during Melibeus’ absence. In doing so, they cite many different sources, ranging from biblical wisdom literature to Cicero, Seneca, and more contemporary writers such as Hugh of

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45 For the vernacular translations of the treatise, see Segre, Marti, *La prosa del Duecento*, 203-04.
Saint Victor. Often, but not always, the characters mention the author or title of their source, or introduce a quote with the general statement, “it has been written.” From Ovid’s *Remedia amoris, Amores,* and *Heroides,* Albertano da Brescia selects only general truths, passages whose content does not directly touch on the works’ amatory themes. In the *Remedia amoris,* Ovid uses the example of a mother’s grieving process to illustrate the importance of timely reactions in dealing with lovesickness (*Rem. am.* 127-30); in Albertano’s treatise, this example becomes Prudentia’s reminder to be patient with a grieving Melibeus (caput 1.11-22). 46 Similarly, a line from Helen’s letter to Paris (*Her.* 17.98) becomes Ovid’s authoritative claim that it is virtuous to refrain from what is pleasing (caput 45.12-14). 47 Removing these quotes from their original amatory context and inserting them into a moral treatise lends an aphoristic quality to Ovid’s words.

In addition to this fragmentary and aphoristic use of Ovid’s work in prose writings, larger passages of the Latin poet’s oeuvre were included in widely circulating *florilegia* or

46 “Melibeus vero post modum reversus, hoc videns cœpit magno planctu flendo comas sibi dilaniare vestesque suas quasi more furiosi dilacerare. Uxor autem jam dicta, ut taceret, cœpit illum instanter ammonere. Ille vero semper plus clamabat; at illa distulit aliquantulum recordata de verbo Ovidii, De Remedio Amoris, qui dixit: ‘Quis matrem, nisi mentis inops, in funere nati Flere vetat? non hoc illa monenda loco est. / Cum dederit lacrimas animumque impleverit ægrum, / Ille dolor verbis emoderandus erit.’” (Yet when Melibeus returned shortly after and saw this, he started to cry and lament deeply and tear his hair and his clothes almost furiously. But his wife started to pressingly urge him to be silent. He, however, always complained more; and she backed off a bit when she remembered the words of Ovid in the *Remedia amoris,* where he said: “Who save a fool would forbid a mother to weep o’er the body of her son? not then must she be counseled. When she has shed tears and fulfilled her mind’s distress, then may words set a limit to that grief.”)

47 “Et Ovidius dixit: ‘Est virtus placidis abstinuisse bonis.’” (And Ovid said: “There is virtue in abstinence from what delights.”)
Mostly created with pedagogical purposes in mind, these anthologies collected excerpts from classical literature and organized them by genre, author, and work, sometimes introducing them by short summarizing titles, and always replicating the order in which the passages appeared in the original text. Their selections focused heavily on passages that offered *utilitas* to their medieval readers. The *Florilegium Angelicum* and *Florilegium Gallicum*, two twelfth-century anthologies that were probably produced in the Orléans region, included large sections of Ovid’s works. In fact, Ovid is the most cited author in the *Florilegium Gallicum*; many one- or two-verse-long quotations from the Latin poet’s works are complemented with longer passages up to twenty verses long. (Moreover, this anthology features some Ovidian texts that were rare at the time, such as the *Heroides* 15, 16, and 17.) It is quite likely that Albertano knew his Ovidian quotes from such sources: the Ovidian statement that “there is virtue in abstinence from what delights,” used by Albertano in the *Liber consolationis et consilii*, is one of the out-of-context verses that were included in the anthology’s section on the *Heroides*.

The content of these anthologies could easily change from manuscript to manuscript, and sometimes even entire texts were added. One of these additions was the *Liber catonianus*, a

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51 Burton, *Classical Poets in the “Florilegium Gallicum,”* 221.
collection of six Latin works used in elementary school education. The Liber catonianus contained Statius’ Achilleid; the late antiquity works Claudian’s De raptu Proserpinae, Arianus’ Fables, Maximian’s Elegies, and the Disticha Catonis; and the tenth-century Ecloga by Theodolus (Ovid’s Remedia amoris and the medieval plays Pamphilus and Geta were frequent substitutes). Thus, in addition to the anthologies that contained verses excerpted from Ovid’s works, at times also one entire Ovidian work was sometimes included in the Liber catonianus.

Three texts from the Liber catonianus are especially relevant to our discussion. The Disticha Catonis consisted of four books of proverbial knowledge written in the third or fourth century but was wrongly attributed to Cato the Elder during the Middle Ages. The original Latin text was sometimes accompanied by vernacular translations, while at other times these vernacular translations circulated independently. Ovid’s role in the Disticha is limited. However, in line with the content of Ovid’s Remedia amoris that was often included in the Liber catonianus, the Latin poet is presented as an authority in matters of love. In the preface to the second book, where the purpose of the work is explained most explicitly (vv. 7-10), Ovid’s work is listed among the reference works for other fields of expertise besides wisdom. For instance, Virgil is mentioned as source on how to work the earth, Macer to learn about the virtues of herbs, Lucan for understanding the Roman and African wars (vv. 1-5), but “if your fancy is to have a

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love-affair or by reading learn how to love,” it proclaims, “make for Ovid.”\textsuperscript{55} Thus, students using the \textit{Liber catonianus} are introduced to Ovid as a specific expert on matters of the heart.

The \textit{Liber catonianus’} other works of interest are the two Latin comedies, the \textit{Pamphilus} (tenth century) and \textit{Geta} (twelfth century).\textsuperscript{56} Both texts are good examples of a corpus of texts that I would call “filtered” Ovidian sources. Different from the indirect transmission of Ovid’s works, such sources do not literally transcribe or translate Ovidian verses but instead use Ovid’s words, themes, and style as a starting point for original creations.\textsuperscript{57} Their writers have a command of Ovid’s Latin texts (in the case of the \textit{Pamphilus} and \textit{Geta}, the Ovidian imitations are well-documented)\textsuperscript{58} but are often also familiar with other Ovid-inspired texts in Latin or the vernacular (in the case of the \textit{Pamphilus} and \textit{Geta}, other medieval Latin comedies). Indeed, with

\textsuperscript{55} “si quid amare libet vel discere amare legendo, / Nasonem petito” (\textit{Disticha Catonis} 2.6-7); “S’el plas a ti amar alguna causa, o enprendre amar leçando, damandaràs Ovidio” (Venetian translation in Segre, Marti, \textit{La Prosa del Duecento}, 189); “E se alcuna cosa ti piace amare uvero leggendo imparare ad amare, dimanda Ovidio se tu questa cura hai” (Tuscan translation in Segre, Marti, \textit{La Prosa del Duecento}, 192).


\textsuperscript{57} In \textit{Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Chapter 4, Rita Copeland considers the \textit{Ovide moralisé}, whose format was described earlier in this section, as an original creation in which its author wanted to highlight the status of vernacular writings compared to Latin.

the growing circulation of Ovid’s texts came the production of new works of literature inspired by the Latin poet. In these works, writers intertwined their readings of Ovid’s Latin texts with those of contemporary Latin or vernacular works that were similarly inspired by Ovid. The *Roman de la rose*, French romances, troubadour lyric poetry, Baudri of Bourgueil’s epistolary poems, Henry of Settimello’s *Elegia*, and Andreas Capellanus’ treatise *De amore* all fall under that category. Each of these “filtered” Ovidian texts tells a different story of how its author combined classical Latin and contemporary sources. As a result, readers of these works are exposed to Ovid not in literal word(ing) but in spirit. Both the authors and the readers of these “filtered” Ovidian sources could be very familiar with Ovidian themes or characters without possessing a thorough knowledge of the Latin text. For example, one does not need to know Ovid’s opening words to his story of Apollo and Daphne, “Primus amor Phoebi Daphne Peneia” (“Apollo’s first love was Daphne, the child of the river Penéüs” [*Met.* 1.452]), to be familiar with and refer to the story. Similarly, one does not need to know the Ovidian origin of Love’s double arrows (introduced in the Apollo and Daphne story [*Met.* 1.468–71]), to use it in one’s work.

Therefore, these “filtered” Ovidian sources add numerous possibilities for any reader to encounter the Latin poet’s works, albeit in derived forms.

In conclusion, the Italian thirteenth century may witness a drop in the number of schoolbook manuscripts of Ovid’s works, as Robert Black showed, but the Latin poet is still omnipresent in and outside the classroom. Foremost, the general manuscript numbers of all his

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works steadily increase from the twelfth century on. In the classroom, Ovid’s *Remedia amoris* was sometimes part of the *Liber catonianus*, a standard collection of Latin works used in elementary school education. While the origin of the Pseudo-Lactantius Placidus’ *Narrationes* (the oldest extant commentary on the *Metamorphoses*) is not well understood, the numerous twelfth- and thirteenth-century Latin commentaries all undoubtedly originated in the school context. (The context changes, however, for commentaries produced in the fourteenth century: Giovanni del Virgilio’s commentaries on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* were written for university students; the anonymous *Ovide moralisé* was a vernacular work and therefore appealed to a much broader public; Pierre Bersuire’s *Ovidius moralizatus* was originally intended for preachers.) While the *accessus* or introductions to these twelfth- and thirteenth-century commentaries indicate that all of Ovid’s works should be understood in terms of morality (“ethice supponitur”), the actual content of the commentaries focuses on many aspects besides allegory (e.g., grammar, history, geography, literature). Moreover, the allegorical readings included in these twelfth- and thirteenth-century commentaries only occasionally interpret Ovid’s writings in a Christian key.

In the classroom, students also encountered fragments from Ovid’s works in anthologies, where Ovidian quotes were taken out of context and took on an aphoristic quality. Stripped of their original contexts, quotations from Ovid’s works (with or without acknowledgment of the sources) were included in moral treatises and prose works on Roman history—works that circulated outside the classroom. When these Latin prose works were translated into the vernacular, as they often were, their reading public only broadened. (Italian translations of entire Ovidian works, on the other hand, were only produced approximately at the time Dante started to compose the *Commedia*, and thus were not sources for the authors under discussion.) Finally,
both Latin and vernacular literature, inspired by Ovid’s words, themes, and style, were not only part of the educational system (e.g., the medieval Latin comedies that were taken up in the Liber catonianus), but also circulated widely outside that context. In short, it is not an exaggeration to state that it was impossible for a literate person not to encounter Ovid’s works in some form. By virtue of having learned the Latin language, a student would have encountered Ovid’s works in either the original Latin (with or without accompanying commentary) or fragmented in anthologies; similarly, a reader of the vernacular would have been exposed to snippets from Ovid’s works within the prose works of the time or one of the many works of vernacular literature that were inspired by the work of the Latin poet.

1.2 The Italian Readers

The preceding sketch of the texts and contexts in which Italian readers could encounter Ovid’s work basically identifies any reader of Latin and the vernacular as being, in varying degrees, familiar with the Latin poet’s writings—a familiarity that ranges from being a regular reader of the Latin texts to one who merely happened upon Ovid’s characters or themes in the vernacular literature of the time. As a matter of fact, many of the Ovidian sources included in the previous section were written by readers of Ovid’s works (the commentaries, the translations, and the so-called “filtered” Ovidian sources). As we will see in the following chapters, many medieval Italian poets are readers-of-Ovid turned into writers-about-Ovid as well. The poets I refer to are Brunetto Latini, Pier della Vigna, Rinaldo d’Aquino, Schiatta di Messer Albizo, Chiaro Davanzati, Rustico Filippi, Onesto da Bologna, Dante da Maiano, Guido Cavalcanti, Guido Guinizelli, Guido Orlandi, Dante Alighieri, Cino da Pistoia, in addition to some anonymous poets. As we possess little specifics about the educational backgrounds of these poets,
in most cases we cannot identify the precise sources each Italian poet was using. Any attempt at identification is further complicated by a fact that anticipates the conclusions of Chapters 2 and 3: namely, that except for Dante and one anonymous poet, no Italian poet literally quotes or translates Ovid’s works. (A literal quotation or translation, to be sure, would provide the best evidence that the Italian poet was working with Ovid’s original Latin text and not with a “filtered” Ovidian source.) Nevertheless, it is possible to make general connections between certain groups of poets and their presumed sources.

The main reason we may make these general assumptions is the link between education and profession. In medieval Italy, holding a certain function implied certain language skills and educational preparation. For instance, most poets belonging to the Sicilian School occupied juridical and administrative positions at the court of Frederick II (judges, notaries, chancellors), which identifies them as educated laymen. These poets were working in an environment where the study of classical literature was not only possible but also encouraged.60 Poet and judge Pier della Vigna, for example, described himself as “fundatus” in “multa litteratura divina et humana et poetarum” (“grounded in divine and human literature and poetry”).61 Pier della Vigna’s description would also apply to Brunetto Latini, notary and teacher, and to Rustico Filippi, close friend of Latini’s and also teacher (of the jurist and poet Jacopo da Léona).62 Guido Guinizzelli was also a jurist. Yet another jurist, Cino da Pistoia, is known to have been a pupil of the


61 Quoted in Wieruszowski, “Rhetoric and the Classics in Italian Education,” 609.

grammarian Francesco da Colle who “provided excellent instruction in grammar and the classics.”

In his article on education in Dante’s Florence, Charles T. Davis notes that a widespread interest in the classics came late to the city but many classical authors were readily available at monastic schools and libraries and at private libraries. Dante was a reader of classical authors, as he tells us himself in the Convivio. After Beatrice’s death, he explains, he turned to Boethius and Cicero’s De amicitia, which at first he read with difficulty, but “finally penetrated it as deeply as [his] command of Latin and the small measure of [his] intellect enabled [him] to do” (“finalmente v’entrai tanto entro, quanto l’arte di gramatica ch’io avea e un poco di mio ingegno potea fare” [Conv. II, xii, 4]). This is all the information Dante provides about his education, so the references to classical literature in his works become the guidance. Reading Dante’s pre-exile writings from this perspective, Ronald Witt concludes that Dante’s knowledge of the Latin poets could not have been extensive. Witt is one of the scholars who divides Dante’s work and sources in two phases: one during which he was exclusively interested in vernacular poetry and the second during which he turns to classical literature. The turn to classical literature, according to these scholars, would coincide with Dante’s exile and his subsequent contact with

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63 Christopher Kleinhenz, s. v. “Cino da Pistoia,” in Kleinhenz, Medieval Italy, 1: 225.

64 Charles T. Davis, “Education in Dante’s Florence,” in Dante’s Italy, and Other Essays (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 137-65, at 141, 143, and 146.

65 Cf. Witt, “In the Footsteps of the Ancients,” 216.

the northern Italian world and its libraries. As we will see in Chapters 2 and 3, however, Dante’s engagement with classical literature goes back to his vernacular lyric poetry. There, Dante slowly starts to experiment with Ovidian material: first, we find Ovid featured in one of Dante’s earliest exchanges, but the petrose, a series of four poems written around 1296, are central to this development.

In the long history of discussing Ovid’s influence on Dante, only a few Dante scholars have taken up the question: In which format did Dante actually read Ovid’s texts? The first to propose an answer was Fausto Ghisalberti, editor of many Latin commentaries on Ovid’s works (cf. supra). In a 1966 article, Ghisalberti claims that at least in two instances, Dante “certainly” (“certamente”) used the so-called Vulgate commentary on the Metamorphoses, found in a thirteenth-century manuscript at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana (Ambros. P 43 sup.) and several other codices. These two instances are actually explained in more detail in two previous articles, “L’enigma delle Naiadi” and “La quadriga del sole nel ‘Convivio.’” In these articles, Ghisalberti argues that the mention of the riddle-solving Naiades (in Purg. 33.46-51) and the names of the four horses of the Sun (in Conv. IV, xxiii, 14) suggest that Dante used the Vulgate commentary on the Metamorphoses as his source.

In both cases, however, the treatment of Ovid’s passages in the Vulgate commentary neither suggests Dante’s actual use of the Vulgate, nor excludes the use of other commentaries. Nor does Ghisalberti’s evidence eliminate the possibility that Dante would have worked directly

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with the text of the *Metamorphoses*. The first case of the riddle-solving Naiades (*Purg.* 33.46-51) is an interesting one, because it offers an insight in both the commentary tradition on and the manuscript tradition of the *Metamorphoses*. For a long time, Dante scholars and commentators had been puzzled by Dante’s rendition of the Sphynx’s riddle where the Naiades (and not Oedipus) solve the riddle. The manuscript tradition of the *Metamorphoses* easily explains this choice: one of the passages in Ovid’s epic that mentions Oedipus solving the riddle was transmitted with the reading “Naiades” instead of the sixteenth-century correction “Laiades.”

From the sixteenth century on the text reads, “Carmina Laiades non intellecta priorum / soluerat ingeniis” (“Oéïpus, son of Láïus, had solved the riddle which baffled / the brains of others before him” [*Met.* 7.759-60]). Previous manuscripts, however, read, “Carmina *Naiades* non intellecta priorum / *solverant* ingeniis” (“The *Naiades* had solved the riddle which baffled / the brains of others before him”; my emphasis). Given that “Naiades . . . solverant” is the consensus reading of the oldest fragments and a series of twelve manuscripts dating from the tenth to the twelfth century, it is most likely that whatever text of the *Metamorphoses* Dante consulted contained the “Naiades” reading. Ghisalberti singles out the Vulgate commentary as Dante’s certain source for this passage because this commentary makes sense of the passage by discussing the Naiades’ prophetic powers.  

But as we have seen, “Naiades . . . solverant” was a widespread reading and therefore all commentaries commented on this reading.

In the case of the four names of the horses of the Sun (*Conv.* IV, xxiii, 14), Ghisalberti

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71 Ghisalberti, “Il commentario medioevale all’ ‘Ovidius maior,’” 269.
correctly excludes the sources suggested by H. Theodore Silverstein because they mention different names for the horses. Looking then at the Latin commentaries on the *Metamorphoses* that do maintain the same four names for the horses, Ghisalberti uses the interpretations for their names and the order in which they are mentioned to identify the Vulgate commentary as Dante’s source. In the *Convivio*, Dante switches the names of the first two horses in respect to Ovid’s original Latin: Ovid first names Pyrois and then Eous; Dante first mentions Eoo and then Pirroi. As the following chart illustrates, only Arnulf of Orléans’ commentary on the *Metamorphoses* could explain mentioning Eoo first:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Names and Order of Mentioning Horses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ovid, <em>Metamorphoses</em> 2.153-55</td>
<td>Pyrois Eous Aethon Phlegon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnulf of Orléans</td>
<td>Pirous Eous Ethon Flegon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Vulgate” commentary</td>
<td>Eous Ethon Lampas Philogeus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante, <em>Convivio</em> IV, xxiii, 14</td>
<td>Eoo Pirroi Eton Flegon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arnulf’s gloss on the horses contains two sets of names: the first lists the names as they appear in Ovid, the second list of alternative names starts with Eous. Ghisalberti’s insistence that the Vulgate was Dante’s source stems from the way the commentator explains the first horse’s name. Arnulf’s alternative explanation of Eous’ name is, “Eous id est rubeus propter auroram”

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72 In “Il commentario medioevale all’ ‘Ovidius maior,’” 269, Ghisalberti simply states this conclusion. In “La quadriga del sole nel ‘Convivio,’” the “Vulgate” is only mentioned in 75n1 and the focus on Arnulf of Orléans’ commentary.


74 Transcribed from Ambros. P 43 sup., f. 12v in Ghisalberti, “La quadriga del sole nel ‘Convivio,’” 75n3, and consulted in Mss. 5 (Δ.1.6), 19v at Sidney Sussex Library in Cambridge, UK.
(“Eous, or red, because of dawn”).\textsuperscript{75} The Vulgate commentator adopts this description, also calling Pirous “rubeus”: “Pirous . . . quia sol summo mane igneus et rubeus” (“Pirous . . . because the sun is fiery and red at the very early dawn”).\textsuperscript{76} Because Arnulf explains that Eous was the same horse as Pirous, Ghisalberti concludes that Dante worked with the Vulgate. But as we have seen, the switch of names occurs in Arnulf, not the Vulgate, which makes Arnulf’s commentary a more likely source. Then again, none of the sources has the four names in the exact order of the \textit{Convivio}; even when using Arnulf’s commentaries, Dante would have had to combine the names of Arnulf’s first set (Pirous, Eous, Ethon, Flegon) with the second list of names (Eous, Ethon, Lampas, Philogeus). This is no more probable than the possibility that Dante, instead of consulting commentaries or glosses, simply read the text of the \textit{Metamorphoses} and changed the sequence and names of Ovid’s horses. In fact, Dante explicitly called Ovid’s \textit{Metamorphoses} his source (“secondo che scrive Ovidio nel secondo del Metamorfoseos” [\textit{Conv.} IV, xxiii, 14]). In any case, this makes it difficult to call the Vulgate commentary the text Dante undoubtedly consulted.

A few years later, Ettore Paratore, without referencing Ghisalberti, names Laurentianus XXXVI.12 as the manuscript Dante might have consulted.\textsuperscript{77} To support this claim, he cites the opening comparison of \textit{Inferno} 30 (vv. 1-12) where Dante introduces the king Athamas. Turned

\textsuperscript{75} Ghisalberti, “Arnolfo d’Orléans,” 186.

\textsuperscript{76} “La quadriga del sole nel ‘Convivio,’” 75n3.

\textsuperscript{77} Paratore, “Ovidio e Dante,” 80. For a description of this manuscript, see Franco Munari, \textit{Catalogue of the MSS of Ovid’s Metamorphoses} (London: Institute of Classical Studies in Conjunction with the Warburg Institute, 1957), 30, no. 131. Munari notes that the manuscript contains “copious glosses and corrections.”
insane by Juno, Athamas killed his son Learchus; his wife saved their other son by jumping off a cliff while embracing him. Athamas’ words in *Metamorphoses* 4.513-14 are “io, comites, his retia tendite siluis! / hic modo cum gemina uisa est mihi prole leaena” (“Huntsmen, your nets! And spread them over these woods here! / Look! I’ve sighted a lioness, there with two of her cubs!”). These words are slightly modified in Laurentianus XXXVI.12 which reads “pandite” instead of “tendite.” According to Paratore, this alternative reading, found only in this manuscript, would explain Dante’s rendition of Athamas’ words: “Tendiam le reti, si ch’io pigli / la leonessa e leoncini al varco” (“Let’s spread the nets, to take the lioness / together with her cubs along the pass” [Inf. 30.7-8]). But Dante’s wording still includes “tendiam” following “tendite” (which all other manuscripts feature instead of “pandite”). Moreover, Laurentianus XXXVI.12, an eleventh- or twelfth-century manuscript, breaks off at *Metamorphoses* 12.298 and therefore could not have been Dante’s sole source, as Dante also inserts material from the last three books of the *Metamorphoses* in the *Commedia*. A fitting example here is the story of Hecuba, Polyxena, and Polydorus (*Met.* 13.429-575), which is the second comparison of the canto and immediately follows the Athamas story (Inf. 30.13-21).

Charles Alan Robson adds several more possible sources to the list in his 1980 article, “Dante’s Reading of the Latin Poets.” Robson introduces the possibility that Dante knew

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80 Charles Allan Robson, “Dante’s Reading of the Latin Poets,” in *The World of Dante: Essays on Dante and His Times*, ed. Cecil Grayson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 81-122. The article’s main focus, Dante’s intended expansions of *Paradiso*, is highly speculative in nature. Critical responses to this article are found in Robert Hollander, *Allegory and Dante’s Commedia*
quotations from Ovid and other Latin poets through intermediate sources: for example, Brunetto Latini’s *Tresor* or other works that compiled quotations from several sources (cf. the anthologies discussed in section 1 of this chapter). As for Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, he suggests three types of manuscripts which Dante might have known, based on the extant manuscripts now available at the Florentine Laurenziana and Riccardiana libraries. These include large manuscripts from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, some containing the prose summaries of Pseudo-Lactantius Placidus’ *Narrationes fabularum Ovidiarum*; smaller thirteenth-century copies with marginal notes; and manuscripts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries containing more advanced commentaries (e.g., Arnulf of Orléans’ or Giovanni del Virgilio’s commentaries).

Notwithstanding the different formats Robson lists, he seems fixated with the idea that Dante read the *Metamorphoses* in the Pseudo-Lactantian commentary and conjectures that Dante might even have made a “workbook of his own in which he noted passages of Ovid omitted by Lactantius,” because he quotes passages from Book 7 of the *Metamorphoses* which are absent in the Pseudo-Lactantius’ *Narrationes*. Concluding from that instance that Dante is eager to explain connections between passages that are absent in the *Narrationes*, Robson adds the example of Epistle III, the letter to Cino da Pistoia, where Dante indeed places the story of Leucothoë correctly within its context in Book 4 of the *Metamorphoses*. However, the Pseudo-

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81 Robson, “Dante’s Reading of the Latin Poets,” 84-85.


83 On this letter, see also Chapters 2, section 1, and Chapter 3, sections 1 and 3.
Lactantian commentary does not completely ignore the context to which Dante refers in his letter. Robson’s arguments that Dante was reading the Pseudo-Lactantian commentary and not another commentary or focusing solely on Ovid’s text are not convincing enough. It just seems more likely that Dante was actually interested in reading and mastering the text of the *Metamorphoses* than showing off that he noticed that the commentary he was consulting failed to make some connections between Ovid’s stories.

In the introduction to his 1993 article, “L’Ovidio di Dante,” Michelangelo Picone explicitly raises questions that have appeared in the previous discussion of Ghisalberti’s, Paratore’s, and Robson’s arguments: Did Dante read Ovid directly or through medieval commentaries? Did he read Ovid’s text in its entirety or as fragments and quotations in anthologies or other works? While the three previous scholars singled out one text as Dante’s source—a choice that in all cases was not irrefutable—Picone departs from them in two important ways. First, instead of indicating one specific commentary or manuscript that Dante must have consulted (as Ghisalberti, Paratore, and Robson did), Picone offers a more general discussion of the format in which Dante would have encountered Ovid’s writings. He states that Dante did not read in the modern way (with only the text of Ovid’s poem in front of him) but “in the only manner in which someone in the Middle Ages could read Ovid”: in a heavily annotated

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84 In Ep. III, Dante refers to the story of Leucothoë as one of the stories the daughters of Minyas told each other to entertain themselves while weaving, an activity they preferred to participating in the city’s festivities for Bacchus. The Pseudo-Lactantius commentary refers to this frame story in Magnus, *Narrationes fabularum Ovidianarum*, 646, lines 22-24–647, lines 1-6 and 649, lines 15-21.

85 Picone, “L’Ovidio di Dante,” 107-44.

manuscript that places the Latin text (“the expression of ancient wisdom”) in the center and fills the rest of the page with “the inveramento of the Christian sense which was only understood by the auctor.”\textsuperscript{87} While Picone’s general approach to the question of how Dante read Ovid is probably the most realistic one, at the same time, his description overlooks some of the features of Ovid’s reception discussed in the first section of this chapter. As we have seen, the manuscripts and the commentaries on the Metamorphoses take on very different formats: some commentaries contain only the Latin text with minimal interlinear glosses, some combine Ovid’s text with more extensive notes in the left and/or right margins, others have the notes as a separate text.\textsuperscript{88} In short, not every manuscript of the Metamorphoses is filled to the corners with

\begin{footnotes}
\item[87] Picone, “L’Ovidio di Dante,” 112: “Dante leggeva quindi Ovidio non in modo moderno, avendo davanti il solo testo poetico, ma nell’unico modo in cui poteva leggerlo un uomo del Medioevo: in un manoscritto cioè che disponeva al centro della pagina il testo poetico, l’espressione della sapienza antica, e che ammassava ai quattro margini, oltre che nell’interlinea, il testo prosastico, l’inveramento del senso cristiano solo intuito dall’auctor. In un siffatto manoscritto è da additare il modello letterario e l’archetipo culturale del prosimetrum dantesco” (Therefore, Dante did not read Ovid in the modern way, having only Ovid’s text in front of him, but in the only manner in which someone in the Middle Ages could read Ovid: that is, in a manuscript that placed the poetic text, the expression of ancient wisdom, in the center of the page, and filled the four margins and the space in between the lines with prose text, the inveramento of the Christian sense which was only understood by the auctor. In such a manuscript we find the literary model and the cultural archetype of the Dantean prosimetrum).

\item[88] For instance, Burney MS 223, a French manuscript of the Metamorphoses, dating from the first half of the thirteenth century, only contains minimal interlinear glosses (consulted at the British Library’s online catalogue of illuminated manuscripts, accessed November 11, 2012, http://bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&lllid=2391). On the other hand, HRC MS 34, dating from the second half of the thirteenth century, is a good example of a manuscript that holds the text of the Metamorphoses with interlinear glosses and is flanked by columns of commentary left and right (consulted at the Digital Collections of Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, Austin, accessed November 11, 2012, http://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/pubmnem/details.cfm?id=34; and the Digital Scriptorium: http://ucblibrary4.berkeley.edu:8088/xtf22/search?smode=basic;text=Ovid;rmode=digscript;docsPerPage=1;startDoc=1;fullview=yes). Clm MS 7205, a German manuscript from the twelfth century, illustrates how the commentary, in this case Arnulf’s, can appear separately from Ovid’s text (cf. Hexter, “Medieval Articulations of Ovid’s Metamorphoses,” 74, Plate 4).
\end{footnotes}
comments, as Picone presents. Moreover, the content of the commentaries varies greatly, ranging from notes on history, natural phenomena, literary references, to moral allegories of the stories, many of which are not overtly Christian. Therefore, not every commentary contains “the inveramento of the Christian sense which was only understood by the auctor,” as Picone puts in his description.

This mode of interpreting Ovid found in commentaries, Picone further explains, also applies to Dante’s own reading of Ovid. This is the second point of difference between Picone’s approach and that of Ghisalberti, Paratore, and Robson: Picone is the only one of these scholars who connects the format and the layout of Dante’s Ovidian source text with his mode of interpreting Ovid. The following section will focus entirely on the question how to interpret the use of Ovid’s writings in Dante’s *Commedia* specifically, and medieval Italian poetry in general. It suffices here to challenge Picone’s statement on one aspect: even if Dante read Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* alongside allegories of Ovid’s stories, that does not mean that Dante necessarily approaches Ovidian material in the same manner as the authors of these commentaries. Dante has proven himself to be a reader against the grain in many other cases, and, as the following chapters will illustrate, his reading of Ovid is equally unique.

### 1.3 Modern Readers of Reception

In *Dante’s Poets*, Teodolinda Barolini describes the presence of Ovid in the *Commedia* as elusive, capturing both Ovid’s minimal appearance as a character (two short mentions in *Inf.* 4 and *Inf.* 25) and the nature of Dante’s repeated use of Ovid’s language and stories. At times, 

89 Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante’s Poets. Textuality and Truth in the Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 196: “Ovid is one of the poets Dante most uses, but—with respect to other major poets—least acknowledges.”
Dante borrows Ovid’s language and characters in an explicit and straightforward manner, but far more often their use is ambiguous, tucked away into the text of the *Commedia*. Thus, students of Dante’s Ovid have often felt the need to organize and define this vast amount of Ovidian material. The most structured way to do so is in the form of a concordance: of which there are three, compiled by Gioachino Szombathely (1888), Edward Moore (1896), and Steno Vazzana (2002). Among these compilers, only Moore discusses the rationale behind his system of organization. In his introduction to *Scripture and Classical Authors in Dante*, he sets out to define the nature of intertextuality in Dante’s works, identifying three categories: “direct citations,” “obvious references or imitations,” and “allusions and reminiscences.” At the same time, Moore is also the first to temper the importance of this system of classification, admitting that he himself had often hesitated when classifying an entry. Indeed, the added value of these categories is limited in the case of Ovid: with hardly any direct citations, almost all Ovid-inspired lines in Moore’s concordance fall under the category of “obvious references or imitations,” a broad definition that covers many different uses of Ovid’s texts. The category “allusions and reminiscences” is the perfect label for cases of doubt, where Ovid’s text is but one of the sources that features a certain classical character or motif.

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93 Moreover, almost all of these “direct citations” are found in Dante’s Latin treatises (especially the *Convivio*). Moore only counts one direct citation in the *Commedia: Inf. 25.97-98 // Met. 5.572ff.* Chapter 4 discusses this passage in more detail.
Other scholars have organized the Ovidian material thematically: for example, Michelangelo Picone characterizes Ovidian myths in the *Commedia* as “objective” (i.e., explaining historical facts) or “subjective” (i.e., explaining the experience of the pilgrim); Madison U. Sowell separates Ovidian myths that run “horizontally” through the cantos and “vertically” through the canticas of the *Commedia.* Other scholars focus on the use of a particular Ovidian character or the influence of Ovid on a specific canto or series of cantos in the *Commedia.* These very specific topics, however, leave often little space to reflect on the general traits of Dante’s use of Ovid, and further testify to the fragmented state that characterizes the scholarship on Dante’s Ovid.

Articles that focus on the fortune of specific Ovidian stories or characters often compare them with allegorical readings in earlier commentaries on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses.* There are two reasons to be cautious about this approach. First, as we have seen in section 1 of this chapter, there is no such thing as “the allegorical reading of Ovid.” Instead, the approaches in these commentaries vary widely and while the *accessus* or introductions present all of Ovid’s works as “belonging to ethics” (“ethice supponitur,” all *accessus* conclude), in reality these remarks often do not correspond to the commentaries’ actual content. Moreover, some of the commentaries used as point of comparison in these articles are simply not part of the Italian cultural context at Dante’s time. For instance, Giovanni del Virgilio’s prose commentary and allegories, the

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anonymous *Ovide moralisé*, and Pierre Bersuire’s *Ovidius moralizatus* all postdate 1321, the year of Dante’s death. Nevertheless, these three later commentaries are a frequent point of comparison for the study of Dante’s Ovid, because they interpret the *Metamorphoses* in a Christian key—especially the *Ovide moralisé* which introduces this kind of reading for the first time in a consistent manner. But Dante could not have been a reader of the *Ovide moralisé* and the other commentaries (and neither could the authors writing before him). Excluding these three commentaries, in section 1 of this chapter I have discussed which earlier commentaries Dante could have encountered and offered many other Ovidian sources as possible reference points for comparison.

Lastly, scholars have applied ancient and modern theories of allusion, intertextuality, and reception in describing Ovid’s fortune. Before I turn to the discussion of these theories, I should acknowledge and explain the fact that up to this point, I have almost exclusively discussed approaches to the study of Dante’s Ovid, while it is ultimately the goal to formulate an approach for the study of Ovid in the Italian Middle Ages. This emphasis on Dante can be explained in two ways (building on the conclusions of the following chapters). First, Dante’s use of Ovid’s texts greatly exceeds that of any other medieval Italian poet. In fact, of all the vernacular Italian poets, Dante is the one who uses Ovid by far the most frequently. Not surprisingly, this resulted in more critical attention. Second, Dante uses Ovid’s writings in a manner unlike that of his fellow vernacular poets: in Dante’s treatises and letters we find citations from Ovid’s works and several Italian phrases from the *Commedia* come close to being literal translations of Ovid’s Latin—the strongest indication that he was working with the original Latin. With the exception of one anonymous Italian poem (*Nulla mi parve mai piú crudel cosa*), no other Italian poet works so closely with the Latin source text.
This last point of difference between Dante and the other Italian vernacular poets introduces important underlying questions in the discussion of intertextuality and reception in medieval Italian literature, arising from our discussion of the different texts and contexts in which Italian poets could have encountered Ovid’s writings. While we linked as much as possible the Italian authors with their Ovidian sources, this exercise was complicated by the always-changing nature of Ovid’s fortune: an Italian poet could be inspired both by Ovid’s Latin writings and the many Ovid-inspired works in Latin or in the vernacular, dating from Late Antiquity up to his own times. Thus, if we can say that the poet under discussion was working with Ovid’s original Latin text or determine what his precise sources were only to some degree of certainty, what is the added value of formulating precise definitions to explain the relationship between the source and target texts? And if there are different Ovidian sources in play, how can we determine which of these are more important or relevant than others?6

These questions were not of concern to Boccaccio in his Trattatello in laude di Dante, in which he clearly tells us that Dante’s education included the study of Ovid. At the same time, Boccaccio is one of the first to be interested in the relationship between Dante’s reading of classical authors and Dante’s own writings. Boccaccio describes this relationship as follows: “non solamente avendo caro il conoscergli, ma ancora, altamente cantando, s’ingegnò d’imitarli, come le sue opere mostrano” (“He not only enjoyed studying them, but he also struggled to

6 In “On the Shoulders of Giants: Intertextuality and Classical Studies,” Materiali e discussioni per l’analisi dei testi classici 39 (1997): 15-16, Don Fowler describes these two questions as traditional controversies in the study of allusion in classical literature. In general formulations, these questions are: How can one say that the author of text A when writing a passage of text A had text B in mind? And how can we determine whether in a particular passage source text A is more important than source text B?
imitate them with magnificent creations, as his works . . . reveal” [1.22]).

Interestingly, Boccaccio’s notion of “ingegnarsi di imitare” (“struggle to imitate”) reads as a definition of “aemulari,” used in classical Latin to describe when one poet strives to rival another and imitates him with the goal of excelling the original. Dante himself paired the Latin terms “imitari” and “aemulari” in his treatise De vulgari eloquentia. Comparing vernacular poets to their classical predecessors, Dante states that the more closely they imitate (“imitemur”) those great Latin poets, the more correctly they write poetry; we should emulate (“emulari oportet”) their learned poetics, he concludes (DVE II, iv, 3). Should we take Dante’s and Boccaccio’s statements on imitation as prescriptive? Not entirely: as Martin L. McLaughlin points out, the notions of imitation and emulation, as used by Dante and Boccaccio, are not as precisely defined as later in the Renaissance, and overall, Dante is not the kind of poet whose general theoretical reflections always apply to his own poetry. In any case, these two authors, much more practitioners than theorists of imitation, presented notions that are still central to modern scholars’ theoretical reflections on how to describe the relationship between two texts.

The first way in which “imitation” is used in modern theories is mainly to distinguish between different degrees of closeness between source and target texts. We already mentioned

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97 In the second redaction of the Trattatello, which was less favorable to Dante’s achievements in the vernacular, Boccaccio left out this sentence and only mentions that Dante was “very familiar” with Latin poetry [2.18].

one such system of categorization earlier in this section: Moore’s differentiation between citations, obvious references or imitations, and allusions and reminiscences. The classicist Giorgio Pasquali proposed another system: the “art of allusion” (“arte allusiva”), which distinguishes between allusions, imitations, and reminiscences.99 While not organizing their systems of categorization in the same manner, Moore’s and Pasquali’s systems share the same basic assumption. Both scholars assume that the citing, alluding, imitating, or reminiscing author of the target text possesses a thorough knowledge of the source text. To be fair, Pasquali wrote about classical, not medieval literature, and Moore developed his system specifically for Dante, for whom this assumption undoubtedly stands. But for many medieval poets included in this study, we do not possess the same certainty that they were working with Ovid’s Latin text. Moreover, this kind of approach does not take into consideration the possibility that all of them, including Dante, were working with additional “filtered” Ovidian sources as well.

Yet, defining the relationship between source and target texts as precisely as possible could turn the search for the source text into the ultimate goal of the research process instead of the starting point for further discussion. Opposing this detective-like approach to the study of imitation, the classicist Gian Biagio Conte proposes we consider instead how imitation of the source text creates new poetic meaning in the target text.100 Considering imitation to function as

99 Giorgio Pasquali, “Arte allusiva,” in Pagine stravaganti di un filologo, 2 vols. (Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1994), 2: 275-82. Pasquali defines these three notions as follows: “Le reminiscenze possono essere inconsapevoli; le imitazioni, il poeta può desiderare che sfuggano al pubblico; le allusione non producono l’effetto voluto che non su un lettore che si ricordi chiaramente del testo cui si riferiscono” (“Reminiscences could be unconscious, the poet could wish that imitations escape the reader’s notice, and allusions do not produce the desired effect unless the reader clearly remembers to which text they refer” [275]).

a rhetorical trope, Conte distinguishes two modes of imitation: integration, where the allusion to
the source text blends into the new text (imitation as a metaphor), and reflection, which instead
explicitly calls attention to the presence of the imitation (imitation as a simile). Conte’s
approach to imitation shifts the focus from the citing, alluding, or imitating author to the text.
The text, Conte explains, simply cannot be read outside the context of other texts (“poetic
memory,” as he calls it); its meaning can only be understood in reference to these other texts. In
short, intertextuality is an essential quality of literature. For Conte, this is a more helpful starting
point for discussion than the focus on the author, which for him depends too much on
reconstructing the intention of the author at the moment of writing. While mainly applied to
the study of classical literature, Conte’s approach should translate well to other literatures.
Applied to medieval literature, however, we encounter the same problem as with Moore’s and
Pasquali’s approaches. When attempting to reconstruct the previous texts that would create the

101 Conte, The Rhetoric of Imitation, 52-95.

102 Conte considers Harold Bloom’s theory of “anxiety of influence” an extreme example of such
an author-based interpretation (The Rhetoric of Imitation, 26-27; Bloom, The Anxiety of
influence, Bloom explains, is not the transmission of ideas and images—that is just something
that inevitably happens—but what occurs instead when a writer intentionally misreads his
predecessors’ work and offers a creative correction. While Bloom’s theory formally excludes
poets writing before the eighteenth century, some Dante scholars have explored whether canto 25
of the Inferno, where Dante explicitly silences his predecessors Ovid and Lucan, could be read as
an example of the literary “anxiety” Bloom describes (Cf. Robert J. Ellrich, “Envy, Identity, and
Creativity: Inferno XXIV-XXV,” Dante Studies 102 [1984]: 80n24; Caron Ann Cioffi,
“The Anxieties of Ovidian Influence: Theft in Inferno XXIV and XXV,” Dante Studies 112
[1994]: 77-100). In Chapter 4, I propose to look at this canto in a different way.
meaning for a classical Latin text, the scholar works with a well-defined corpus; the poetic memory of the medieval author, on the other hand, is not that easy to define and confine.\textsuperscript{103} As we have seen in the first section of this chapter, in the case of Ovid in medieval Italy, this is a rather complex and sometimes puzzling exercise.

Some medievalists have looked at Thomas M. Greene’s theory of imitation in an attempt to remedy the problem of uncertainty regarding sources.\textsuperscript{104} Taken at face value, Greene’s theory may not seem to lend itself to such end: it is developed for the study of Renaissance literature and clearly contrasts imitation in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Greene argues that while both the medieval and Renaissance authors imitate and change their classical sources, the medieval writer nevertheless considers himself part of an enduring community of writers. (One of his examples to illustrate this point is the episode in Dante’s \textit{Commedia} where the thirteenth-century poet Sordello, writing in Occitan and Italian but not in Latin, greets Virgilio as the “glory of the Latins” and talks with him about “our” language \textit{[Purg. 7.16-17].})\textsuperscript{105} The Renaissance author, on the other hand, is fully aware of the distance that separates him from his classical past and utilizes imitation as strategies to reflect on the rupture that the passing of time has created between himself and his predecessors. Greene divides these strategies into “reproductive or sacramental imitation” (i.e., reverent rewriting), “eclectic or exploitative imitation” (i.e., the


\textsuperscript{104} Greene, \textit{The Light in Troy}, 38-51.

\textsuperscript{105} Greene, \textit{The Light in Troy}, 28.
combination of heterogeneous allusions), “heuristic imitation” (i.e., when the Renaissance text defines itself through the rewriting of its source text), and “dialectical imitation” (i.e., the strongest expression of the conflict between the two “mundi significantes”).

Yet, some medievalists have argued that medieval poets also wanted to address the difference between themselves and their classical predecessors and applied Greene’s theory of imitation to do so. For instance, Leslie Cahoon argued that early troubadour poets engaged in dialectical imitation with Ovid. Her work offers a good example of how Greene’s notion can mediate the problem of uncertainty about sources—a problem central to our discussion. Uncertain whether troubadour poets knew the exact verses of Ovid’s Latin texts or not, Cahoon instead describes how distinct Ovidian themes and rhetorical strategies were used by three early troubadours. By focusing on larger themes and strategies and not on imitation at the sentence level, Cahoon offers a model for scholars to look at larger passages or even entire poems. In that way, scholars can avoid the analysis of isolated sentences—an exercise that promises little return, given the uncertainty about what the precise sources were—and instead develop a more general discussion on the medieval writers’ poetics and in what ways they depart from that of Ovid.

Alastair Minnis’ work on medieval authorship sets up an even clearer formulation of how the medieval author distinguishes himself from the texts of the past. First working with the

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commentary tradition on the Bible, Minnis illustrates how medieval commentators evolve into authors in their own right. Where commentators first establish themselves as authors in their writing on biblical texts, Minnis further explains, they later do the same for classical literature and eventually turn to writing about vernacular authors. Rita Copeland further developed this argument by looking specifically at medieval vernacular translation from Latin. Her Ovidian case study on the French *Ovide moralisé* (discussed above in section 1) describes but one of the instances where the vernacular author abandons the role of faithful translator and instead takes up the position of an author of a new literary creation. In doing so, the vernacular author places himself on the literary map, confirming the value of the vernacular over Latin. I have already anticipated that the Italian poets of the period discussed in this study hardly engage in translating Ovid (either with respect to the translation of Ovid’s works in their entirety or with respect to the isolated instances where Ovid’s Latin verses are translated into Italian). But the relationship between the vernacular poet and Latin literature should not be limited only to the act of translating Ovid. The vernacular poet can also mention Ovid or feature his stories as a way to clearly distinguish himself from his Latin predecessor, as I will show in this study.

The question remains: From which “Ovid” is the medieval author distinguishing himself? The Ovid of the Latin texts, the Ovid of one of the many commentaries, the Ovid of one of the “filtered” Ovidian sources, or a combination of all of the above? Why does reconstructing this “Ovid” matter? In a theoretical essay on the study of Ovid in the Middle Ages, the classicist

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108 Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages*.

109 Hexter, “Literary History as a Provocation to Reception Studies,” 23-31. Part of the collection of essays *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, Hexter’s article actually sets out to discuss the study of the afterlife of classical literature in general, but since all his examples and
Ralph Hexter argues that the intertextual study that compares one single Ovidian text and one single Ovid-inspired medieval text ignores the literary context in which the medieval text was created—a context that consisted of much more than only the direct encounter with the Latin text. To reconstruct the literary context, scholars need to consider the medieval author of the Ovid-inspired text as a reader and describe his “horizon of expectation.” This horizon of expectation (a term Hexter borrows from Hans Robert Jauss’ reception theory) consists of all his previous readings, everything the reader already understands about the literary tradition when he encounters a new text. When a reader then becomes a writer, his work in turn becomes part of the cultural context for future readers.

Having studied the fortune of Ovid in the Middle Ages himself, Hexter fully realizes the particular difficulties this approach poses. A first obstacle lies in determining how precise a description of the elements that make up a literary context should be. For example, each manuscript with its particular textual differences, small and large, creates a different instance of reception with potentially no end. How thick should the textual description be? Second, since these writers are reading and responding to several literary traditions at the same time, it is difficult to determine which elements of the literary context are most relevant. In addition to the challenges Hexter acknowledges, we are of course limited in how much of the reading history of each individual poet we can feasibly reconstruct. Thus, we must accept that our efforts will be inevitably incomplete, and, as Hexter puts it, we must “write despite the worries.”

To that end, the literary context established in this chapter will serve to inform my methodological reflections focus on the study of Ovid in the Middle Ages, I will treat it as an article on that topic.

discussion of the Italian readers of Ovid turned writers. I will use their writings as testimonies to
determine which elements of this literary context they thought were worth responding to. To
establish the most relevant points of intersection, I will look at the sentence level, rhetorical
strategies, and overall themes. My discussion starts from the very beginnings of Italian literary
culture and illustrates how the growing availability of Ovid’s texts is mirrored in the increasing
textual presence of Ovid in the vernacular literature of the period. Analyzing these Ovid-inspired
writings, I show that the Italian lyric poets initially respond to the ways in which the troubadours
mentioned Ovid and included his work in their writings. Both adopting and transforming the
example of the troubadours, the Italian poets integrate Ovid’s works into their own writings in
order to distance themselves from Ovidian poetics and replace them with their own. I then
illustrate the exceptional position of Dante Alighieri and Cino da Pistoia among these vernacular
poets. Both Dante and Cino integrate Ovidian material in their poetry with more complexity,
featuring themes and employing rhetorical strategies that were not previously found in Italian
vernacular poetry. It is in his vernacular lyric poetry that Dante slowly starts to experiment with
Ovidian material. The petrose, a series of four poems written around 1296, are central in this
development. In these poems, Dante tests some techniques that he will use more frequently in the
Commedia. Moreover, in the Commedia Dante discusses poetics through the medium of Ovid,
just as the Italian lyric poets did. The study of vernacular lyric poetry—a corpus of texts that
already receives much less critical attention in medieval Italian scholarship—has become crucial
in tracing Dante’s poetic development and in understanding how, in earlier work, Dante tests and
develops ideas and techniques that culminate in the Commedia. Ultimately, I argue that Dante’s
reading of Ovid in the Commedia is deeply rooted in his own lyric poetry and that of his
predecessors.
Chapter 2: Readers Turned Writers: From the Sicilian School to the *dolce stil novo*

Both this chapter and the next examine the integration of Ovidian material into the vernacular poetry written before the *Divina Commedia*. This chapter is organized according to the three themes of Ovid’s oeuvre: love (*Amores, Ars amatoria, Remedia amoris, Heroides*), myth (*Metamorphoses, Fasti*), and exile (*Tristia, Epistulae ex Ponto, Ibis*). The choice for this method of organization stems from the realization that most of the vernacular poetry of this period (discussed in this chapter) can be easily categorized according to this triple division, unlike the lyric poetry of Dante Alighieri and Cino da Pistoia (discussed in Chapter 3), which completely resists such categorization. Organizing the discussion in this way will then highlight two main developments in the ways these vernacular poets integrated Ovid in their poetry. First, it will illustrate that integrating Ovidian material is a feature that characterized Italian vernacular poetry from its very beginnings; Dante’s works are not the starting point of the reception of Ovid in the Italian Middle Ages. Second, this approach will underline how different Dante’s and Cino da Pistoia’s treatment of Ovidian material is compared to their contemporaries. As we will see, the poets discussed in this chapter mainly look at the example of the troubadours to integrate Ovidian material into their poetry. Dante and Cino, on the other hand, introduce several new techniques to feature Ovid’s works in their poems, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

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111 I found this approach applied in Ralph Hexter’s essay “Ovid in the Middle Ages: Exile, Mythographer, and Lover,” in Boyd, *Brill’s Companion to Ovid*, 413-42. Hexter later called this approach “prosaic” and “arbitrary,” but also “point[ing] to the flickering nature” of Ovid’s reception, “almost advertising it rather than attempting to conceal it” (“Literary History as a Provocation to Reception Studies,” 31).
2.1 Love

Ovid’s love poetry inspired many subsequent writers, including the Italian poets of the Middle Ages. The thickest description of the literary context in which these medieval Italian poems were created would have to include all the Latin and vernacular sources and their respective, often intertwined reception histories. My focus here is on the elements of that literary context that will inform our reading of both vernacular lyric poetry and Dante’s *Commedia*: the discussion of Ovid’s authority in matters of love and the relevance of troubadour poetry as source. As we will see in this section, the Italian vernacular poets adopted the troubadours’ practice of evaluating Ovid’s authority, while simultaneously transforming it. While the troubadours confirmed Ovid’s authority as teacher of love, the Italian poets break with this consistently positive view on Ovid’s work and explicitly question the value of Ovid’s writings in their debates on love and love poetry.

In troubadour poetry, the confirmation of Ovid’s authority is often constructed through the following pattern. First, the poems mention Ovid’s name (almost always as the first or second word of the verse), followed by a verb of affirmation (“retais” [“confirms”]; “dis” [“says”]; “declina” [“explains”]) and then a statement that can be traced back to Ovid’s *Amores, Ars amatoria, or Heroides*. In Bertran Carbonel’s canso *Aisi m’a dat fin’amor conoissensa* (VI), for example, the poet finds confirmation that not confessing his love to his lady is the right thing to do since he found “en l’escriptura / c’Ovidis dis qu’ieu feira desmezura” (“in the writings that

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112 I have broadly discussed this literary context in Chapter 1, section 1 (and see n. 59).

Ovid says that I would exaggerate” [vv. 29-30; cf. Her. 4.9-10]). But then Amor urges him to tell her anyway, which is also how the passage in Ovid’s Heroides continues (vv. 31-32; cf. Her. 4.11-14). Another example is found in Arnaut de Mareuil’s canso Mout eron doutz miei cossir (XXV, vv. 28-30) and Azalaïs de Porcairagues’ Ar em al freg temps vengut (vv. 21-22), which discuss love and nobility. In these works, both poets consider Ovid the authority who confirms that sincere love cannot accompany wealth (cf. Ars am. 2.161-65). Perhaps the strongest confirmation of Ovid’s authority is found in Rigaut de Berbezilh’s Tuit demandon qu’es devengud’Amors (IX): the poet writes that the lover should be patient and persevere, following

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114 Bertran Carbonel: “no·n parlera; qu’ieu truep en l’escriptura / c’Ovidis dis qu’ieu feira desmezura. / Pero ar vol qu’ieu vos o deya dir / e vos preguar qu’ieu vos dey’ abelir.” (“I would not speak, since I found in the writings that Ovid says that I would exaggerate; but now Love wants me to confess it to you and request that you would love to love me.”); Ovid: “qua licet et sequitur, pudor est miscendus amori; / dicere quae puduit, scribere iussit amor. / quidquid Amor iussit, non est contemnere tutum; / regnat et in dominos ius habet ille deos. / ille mihi primo dubitanti scribere dixit: / ‘scribe! Dabit victas ferreus ille manus.'” (“Wherever modesty may attend on love, love should not lack in it; with me, what modesty forbade to say, love has commanded me to write. Whatever Love commands, it is not safe to hold for naught; his throne and law are over even the gods who are lords of all. ’Twas he who spoke to me when first I doubted if to write or no: ‘Write; the iron-hearted one will yield his hand.’”)

115 Arnaut de Mareuil: “Mas Ovidis retrais / qu’entre·ls corals amadors / no paratgeia ricors.” (“But Ovid confirms that for true lovers wealth does not matter.”); Azalaïs de Porcairagues: “Que Ovidy o retrai / Qu’amors per ricor non vai.” (“That Ovid confirms that love does not work through wealth.”); Ovid: “Non ego divitibus venio praeceptor amandi: / Nil opus est illi, qui dabit, arte mea. / Secum habet ingenium, qui, cum libet, ‘accipe’ dicit; / Cedimus: inventis plus placet ille meis. / Pauperibus vates ego sum, quia pauper amavi.” (“I come not to teach the rich to love: he who will give has no need of my art; he who when he pleases says ‘Accept’ has wit enough of his own; I give place: my devices will not please so much as he. I am the poet of the poor, because I was poor when I loved.”)
Ovid’s advice in his “libre que no men” (“book that does not lie” [vv. 29-32; cf. Ars am. 2.177-78]).

Italian readers of Ovid, however, will find that Ovid’s books can indeed lie. In the poems that mention Ovid by name—Cino da Pistoia’s *Se mai leggesti versi de l’Ovidi*, Dante da Maiano’s *Amor mi fa si fedelmente amare*, Guido Orlandi’s *Per troppa sottiglianza il fil si rompe*, and Guido Cavalcanti’s *Di vil matera mi conven parlare*—we already find two traits distinctively different from what we found in troubadour poetry. First, in these Italian poems the emphasis is on the act of *reading* Ovid *in general*, more than on the specific content of his works that the troubadours repeatedly mentioned.

*Se mai leggesti versi de l’Ovidi . . .*

*[If you ever read verses of Ovid . . .]*

(Cino da Pistoia, *Se mai leggesti versi de l’Ovidi*, v. 1; my emphasis)

Ovidio *leggi*: piú di te ne vide!

*[Read Ovid: He understands it better than you!]*

(Guido Orlandi, *Per troppa sottiglianza il fil si rompe*, v. 11; my emphasis)

e certe fiate aggiate Ovidio *letto* . . .

*[And though you’ve sometimes read Ovid . . .]*

(Guido Cavalcanti, *Di vil matera mi conven parlare*, v. 7; my emphasis)

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116 Rigaut de Berbezilh: “C’Ovidis dis el libre que non men / que per soffrir a hom d’amor son grat, / e per soffrir son maint tort perdonat / e sofrirs fai maint amoros iausen.” (“Ovid says in the book that does not lie that through suffering one reaches his goal, and through suffering many mistakes are forgiven, and suffering made many lovers happy.”); Ovid: “Si nec blanda satis, nec erit tibi comis amanti, / Perfer et obstura: postmodo mitis erit.” (“Should she be neither kindly nor courteous to your wooing, persist and steel your resolve; one day she will be kind.”)

117 Ramiro Ortiz takes the same approach of studying the occurrences of Ovid’s name in “La materia epica di cielo classico nella lirica italiana delle origini (Quarta ed ultima parte),” *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 85 (1925): 73-78, but he fails to mention Dante da Maiano’s sonnet.
D’Ovidio ciò mi son miso a provare (...)
E ben conosco omi veracemente
che ’nverso Amor non val forza ned arte,
ingegno né leggenda ch’omo trovi.

[I have set myself to test what Ovid prescribed (... ) And now I know it for a fact that neither strength nor skills avails against Love, neither natural wit nor any available teaching.]

(Dante da Maiano, Amor mi fa si fedelmente amare, vv. 5-11; my emphasis)

Second, these Italian poets no longer consistently accept the authority of Ovid’s works.

Both the general approach to Ovid’s writings and the open questioning of their worth is connected to the form in which the Italian poets make these statements. All four sonnets that mention Ovid by name are part of sonnet exchanges between poets, written in a period during which writers debated with their contemporaries on how to write poetry. In verse, they openly addressed and attacked fellow poets while defending their own poetics. Ovid is the only non-contemporary author who is mentioned in these discussions. In these sonnet exchanges the Italian poets explicitly evaluate the worth of Ovid’s love poetry, turning his poetry into an emblem of either the kind of love poetry they write, or no longer wish to write.

Cino da Pistoia’s sonnet Se mai leggesti versi de l’Ovidi (CXXXV) still draws on the troubadours’ approach to Ovid’s work. Cino writes this sonnet in response to Onesto da Bologna’s Assai son certo che somenta in lidi (CXXXVa), where Onesto depicts Love’s cruelty and calls Cino inexperienced in this bitter aspect of love.

Assai son certo che somenta in lidi
e pon lo so color senza vernice
qualunque credo che la calcatrice
prendi si possa dentro in le miei redi;
e già non son si nato infra gli abidi,
che mai la pensi trovare amatrice,
quella ch’è stata di me traditrice,
né spero ’l di veder, sol ch’è m’affidi;
merzé d’Amor, che sotterra Rachele,
non già Martino, Giovanni né parte,
c’ha del servire prescrizione e carte;

Se mai leggesti versi de l’Ovidi,
so c’hai trovato, si come si dice,
che disdegnoso contra sdegnatrice
convien ch’Amore di mercede sfidi;
però tu stesso, amico, ti conquidi,
che mai la pensi trovare amatrice,
non già Martino, Giovanni né parte,
c’ha del servire prescrizione e carte;

D’Amor puoi dire, se lo ver non cele,
ch’egli è di nobil core dottrina ed arte
e sue virtù son con le tue scomparte.
né te, che non conosci acqua di fele
nel mar dove ha’ tutte allegrezze parte,
che val ciascuna più ch’amore di parte.
(Onesto da Bologna)\textsuperscript{118}

Io sol conosco lo contrar del mele,
che l’assaporo ed hone pien le quarte:
così stess’io con Martino in disparte!
(Cino da Pistoia)\textsuperscript{119}

Cino’s sonnet corrects Onesto on the basis of Ovid’s work, thus confirming Ovid’s authority in these matters: “Se mai leggesti versi de l’Ovidi,” he writes, “so c’hai trovato, si come si dice, / che disdegnoso contra sdegnatrice / convien ch’Amore di mercede sfidi” (vv. 1-4). Indeed, in the first two books of the \textit{Ars amatoria}, Ovid advises his reader to remain friendly and compliant with an arrogant woman (1.715-16; 2.145-46; 2.177-96).\textsuperscript{120} Like the troubadours, Cino points to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{118} “I am quite sure that everyone who believes that the crocodile can be caught in my nets, sows on the shores and adds color without varnish; and I wasn’t born between the pine trees so that I would ever think to find a lover who has betrayed me; nor do I fear to see her every day: only I have the strength to do that, by the mercy of Love, who buried Rachel, but not yet Martino, and in part Giovanni, who knows the rules of the service well, and not you, who doesn’t know the water of bile in the sea where you have all pleasures available and each of them is worth more than love in part.”

\item \textsuperscript{119} “If you ever read verses of Ovid, I know you found out that, as they say, Love inevitably takes away any hope for mercy to anyone who is haughty toward a haughty lady. Therefore, my friend, it is you who destroys yourself, and the crow stands on the ledge, the tall, gentle, and beautiful keeper of her honor: may whoever wants it, be in flames. Of Love you can say, if you don’t hide the truth, that he possesses a noble heart, teachings, and skill, and his virtues are quite different from yours. I alone know the opposite of honey because I have tasted it and had plenty of it. Therefore may I disagree with Martino.”

\item \textsuperscript{120} “Si tamen a precibus tumidos accedere fastus / senseris, incepto parce referque pedem.” (“Yet if you find that your prayers cause swollen pride, stop what you have begun, draw back a pace.”); “Dextera praecipue capiti indulgentia mentes; / Asperitas odium saevaque bella movet.” (“Chief above all does tactful indulgence win the mind; harshness causes hatred and angry wars.”); “Si nec blanda satis, nec erit tibi comis amanti, / Perfer et obscura: postmodus mitis erit. / Flectitur obsequio curvatus ab arbore ramus: / Frangis, si vires experiere tuas. / Obsequium trananter aequae: nec vincere possis / Flumina, si contra, quam rapit unda, nates. / Obsequium tigresque domat Numidosque leones; / Rustica paulatim taurus aratra subit. / Quid fuit asperius Nonacrina Atalanta? / Succubuit meritis trux tamen illa viri. / Saepe suos casus nec mitia facta puellae / Flesse sub arboribus Milaniona ferunt; / Saepe tulit iusso fallacia retia collo, / Saepe fera torvos cuspide fixit apros: / Sensit et Hylaei contentum saucius arcum: / Sed tamen hoc arcu notior alter erat. / Non te Maenalias armatum scandere silvas, / Nec iubeo collo retia ferre tuo: /
specific content of Ovid’s works. He further praises Love’s virtues (vv. 9-11), but since he did experience love’s bitterness, he hopes not to be wounded by Love (vv. 12-14). That Cino da Pistoia demonstrates precise knowledge of Ovid’s works and accepts their worth should not be a surprise: as we will see in Chapter 3, Cino is the poet who integrates Ovidian characters into his poetry most frequently and in the most complex manner after Dante.

Despite Cino’s concluding wish not to be wounded by Love, the poet nevertheless considers the lover possessed of his own free will in the face of Love: the lover can decide how to respond to the haughty lady. If he (against Ovid’s advice) opts to act “disdegnoso contra sdegnatrice” (v. 3), then let him be in flames, if that is what he wants: “chi vòle, in foco sidi” (v. 8; my emphasis). Dante da Maiano puts forward the opposite opinion in his sonnet Amor mi fa sì fedelmente amare (LI), sent to Dante Alighieri.

Amor mi fa sì fedelmente amare e si distretto m’ave en suo disire, che solo un’ora non porria partire lo meo coraggio da lo suo pensare. D’Ovidio ciò mi son miso a provare che disse per lo mal d’Amor guarire, Savere e cortesia, ingegno ed arte, nobilitate, bellezza e riccore, fortezza e umilitate e largo core, prodezza ed eccellenza, giunte e parte, este grazie e vertuti in onne parte con lo piacer di lor vincono Amore:

Pectora nec missis iubo praebere sagittis; / Artis erunt cauto mollia iussa meae.” (“Should she be neither kindly nor courteous to your wooing, persist and steel your resolve; one day she will be kind. By compliance is the curved bough bent away from the tree; you will break it if you try your strength. By compliance are waters swum; nor can you conquer rivers if you swim against the current’s flow. Compliance tames tigers and Numidian lions; little by little the bull submits to the rustic plough. What could be more stern than Nonacrian Atalanta? yet stubborn as she was she yielded to a hero’s prowess. Often, they say, beneath the trees Milanion bewailed his lot and the maiden’s cruelty; often did he bear the crafty nets on his obedient neck, often with ruthless spear transfixed the grisly boars; from the bow too that Hylaeus strung did he feel the wound—and yet another bow was still more known than this. I do not bid you arm and climb the forests of Maenalus, nor carry nets upon your neck; nor do I bid you offer your breast to flying arrows; a cautious lover will find the precepts of my art easy.”) Mario Marti refers to Ars am. 2.109-250 or the twelfth-century comedy Pamphilus in Poeti del Dolce stil nuovo (Florence: Le Monnier, 1969), 762n1.

121 Cf. Marti, Poeti del Dolce stil nuovo, 762n5.
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In Dante da Maiano’s sonnet, Love is the agent who makes the lover love—“fa . . . amare” (v. 1)—and has him bound—“distretto” (v. 2)—at his desire. Nothing is of use against Love: not “forza ned arte, / ingegno né leggenda” (vv. 10-11). Dante Alighieri’s response sonnet Savere e cortesia, ingegno ed arte reaches the same conclusion: “nulla cosa gli è incontro possente, / volendo prender om con lui battaglia” (vv. 13-14). Dante Alighieri, however, claims that

122 “Love makes me love so constantly and he has so bound me in his will that not even for one hour could my heart leave thinking of him. I have set myself to test what Ovid prescribed as remedy for lovesickness; but so far as I’m concerned it is simply a lie: hence I resign myself to begging for pity. And now I know it for a fact that neither strength nor skills avails against Love, neither natural wit nor any available teaching: nothing but pity and patience and loyal service; such is the way to have dealings with him. Give this, my intelligent friend, your attention and tell me whether you agree.”

123 “Knowledge and courtesy; natural wit and acquired skill; nobility, beauty, wealth; strength and gentleness and generosity; valour and high distinction—these gifts and virtues, combined or separate, in all cases win love over with their attraction: one may have more power with him than another, but each has a share in it. Therefore, my friend, if you want natural virtue or any added quality to be of use to you, set them to work faithfully to do Love’s will, and not to oppose his gracious working. For nothing avails against Love, supposing one chooses to fight him.”

124 For the development of Dante Alighieri’s thinking on the lover’s free will, see Teodolinda Barolini’s discussion on Savere e cortesia in Dante Alighieri, Rime giovanili e della “Vita Nuova,” ed. and comm. Teodolinda Barolini (Milan: Rizzoli, 2009), 73-75. For a discussion of this theme in Dante’s later sonnet Io sono stato con Amore insieme, see Chapter 3, section 1.
certain graces and virtues can win Love over, or better, conquer the lady’s love (vv. 1-11).\textsuperscript{125}

Among these “grazie e vertuti” (v. 5), we find, only slightly reformulated, the same four weapons Dante da Maiano considered worthless against Love:

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<tr>
<th>Dante da Maiano</th>
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<th>Dante Alighieri</th>
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<tr>
<td>“forza” (v. 10)</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>“fortezza” (v. 3)</td>
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<td>“arte” (v. 10)</td>
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<td>“arte” (v. 1)</td>
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<td>“ingegno” (v. 11)</td>
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<td>“ingegno” (v. 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“leggenda” (v. 11)</td>
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<td>“savere” (v. 1)</td>
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Of these parallel terms, only Dante Alighieri’s “savere” does not entirely correspond with Dante da Maiano’s “leggenda.” Da Maiano’s “leggenda” indicates literally things to be read, or knowledge coming from books.\textsuperscript{126} The mention of Ovid earlier in his sonnet clarifies which precise book and knowledge da Maiano had in mind when he declared “leggenda” useless against Love (vv. 5-8):

D’Ovidio ciò mi son miso a provare
che disse per lo mal d’Amor guarire,
e ciò ver’ me non val mai che mentire:
per ch’eo mi rendo a sol mercé chiamare.

The reference is clearly to Ovid’s \textit{Remedia amoris} and contains certain traits we found in troubadour poetry: the mention of Ovid at the beginning of the verse (v. 5) and the use of the verb of affirmation “disse” (v. 6). At the same time, Dante da Maiano’s break with the troubadours is just as clear. He does not simply accept what Ovid says: da Maiano puts the validity of Ovid’s writings to the test—“mi son miso a provare” (v. 5)—and concludes from his

\textsuperscript{125} Cf. Barolini, \textit{Rime giovanili}, 79n.

\textsuperscript{126} Cf. Dante Alighieri, \textit{Rime della “Vita Nuova” e della giovinezza}, eds. Michele Barbi and Francesco Maggini (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1956), 171n11. The editors do not exclude “leggenda” might also mean “spells,” but I believe the sonnet’s mention of Ovid favors their first interpretation.
own experience—“ver’ me” (v. 7)—that they are lies. His conclusion “non val mai che mentire” (v. 7) is exactly the opposite of the troubadour Rigaut de Berbezilh’s description of Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* as “el libre que no men.”

The type of knowledge Dante Alighieri intends with the term “savere,” on the other hand, remains unspecified. But given the close parallels Dante Alighieri sets up between Dante da Maiano’s worthless weapons and his own poem’s mention of the virtues and graces that can win Love over, we can at least surmise that Dante Alighieri would include Ovid’s writings in this general category of “knowledge.” With the help of the Latin poet’s writings, Dante’s poem suggests, he might be able to conquer his lady’s love.

Guido Cavalcanti follows Dante da Maiano’s example of rejecting Ovid’s writings. But as expressed in the exchange with Guido Orlandi, his rejection concerns the poetics of love rather than the experience of the lover. The exchange between the two Guidos contains three poems: Guido Orlandi’s twelve-verse poem, *Per troppa sottiglianza il fil si rompe* (La); Guido Cavalcanti’s response sonnet with coda or *sonetto caudato, Di vil matera mi conven parlare* (Lb); and Orlandi’s response *sonetto caudato, Amico, i’ saccio ben che sa’ limare* (Lc).127 The first two poems in particular discuss Ovidian poetics.128 In the opening poem of the exchange, Orlandi’s language is boastful:

\[\text{\textsuperscript{127}}\text{For a discussion of the formal aspects of these three poems, see Corrado Calenda, “Di vil matera: ipotesi esplicativa di una ipertrofia strutturale,” Strumenti critici 47-48 (1982): 139-47.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{128}}\text{Most editions only include the second (Cavalcanti’s *Di vil matera mi conven parlare*) and third poem (Orlandi’s *Amico, i’ saccio ben che sa’ limare*) of the exchange, as both poems have the same *sonetto caudato* form and a similar rhyme scheme with many identical rhyme words. The opening poem, Orlandi’s *Per troppa sottiglianza il fil si rompe*, on the other hand, is shorter (even shorter than the regular fourteen-verse long sonnet) and has a different rhyme scheme with no rhyme words matching with the second and third poems.}\]
Guido Orlandi attacks poetry that is too subtle—that possesses “troppa sottiglianza” (v. 1) and is “non . . . intero” (v. 6)—and uses the language of archery to express his viewpoints. His aggressive language culminates in the last tercet, which addresses Cavalcanti personally with two imperatives. The first is a command to read Ovid, who is said to understand love better than

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129 “When a thread is too thin, it breaks, and a thick thread blocks the bow at the grip, and if you don’t aim at the right target, the arrow might turn toward you, whatever you do to reload the bow; and one who does not put his feet straight, often wobbles, leaving his speech incomplete; because true love does not cry or laugh (it often makes men or women cry or laugh): as a master it brings people together and divides them. And you say that you wounded Love and we see no scars on him? Read Ovid: he understands this better than you. Be aware of my bow and be afraid.”

130 “Since I must speak of what is low, and waste / Rhyme, syllable and sonnet, I declare / This solemn promise to myself and swear / That I’ll impose some laws in such a case. / Though you can string a crossbow in a trice / And hit the nearest barn door fair and square, / Though you can make false rhymes and throw a spear, / And though you’ve looked at Ovid once or twice, / The one place that can’t get into your mind / Is where Love comes, subtle and clear, to teach / Men how to speak of him. They understand / It’s not a simple thing that comes to hand; / Whoever you may be, you’re not Love’s kind, / Whom we know only through their manner of speech. / The sonnet I first sent you failed to move: / The one I polish now was made by Love.”
Cavalcanti does; the second translates the previously used imagery of archery into a concrete threat to watch out for his bow.

Guido Cavalcanti responds to both imperatives in *Di vil matera mi conven parlare*. But first he sets out the two fronts on which he will attack Orlandi: he will attack him on content—“vil matera” (v. 1)—and on style—“rime, silabe e sonetto” (v. 2). Then referring to the concluding imperatives of *Per troppa sottiglìanza*, Cavalcanti counters Orlandi; his skills in archery and his readings of Ovid (vv. 5-8) do not render Orlandi the kind of poet who can be receptive to Amor’s teachings: for Amor is “sottile e piano” (v. 10) and “d’un’altra gente” (v. 13) than Orlandi. These teachings, Cavalcanti specifies, regard both the style—“sua manera” (v. 11)—and content—“su’ stato” (v. 11)—of poetry. Concretely, Cavalcanti rejects the use of false rhymes (v. 8) and the content of Ovid’s writings.

The exchange between the two Guidos then reads as an attack and subsequent defense of poetics. Guido Orlandi, representing the old Siculo-Tuscan tradition, considers Ovid a point of reference; Guido Cavalcanti, rehearsing key terms of the *dolce stil novo*, makes Ovid the emblem of the themes his own poetry does not treat. This reading may seem at first to overemphasize the weight of the mention of Ovid in Cavalcanti’s poem. Then again, *Di vil matera* is undeniably metapoetic and resembles another exchange between two poets which explicitly

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131 Gianfranco Contini, who reads the text slightly differently at verses 5, 8, and 10, lists Orlandi’s rhymes “rompe” (v. 1) / “ripompe” (v. 4) / “sompe” (v. 5) and “femma” (v. 8) / “semma” (v. 10) / “tema” (v. 12) as examples of the “false rime” in *Poeti del Duecento* (Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1965), 2: 563n8.


addresses differences in poetics. In *Voi c’avete mutata la mainera* (14a), the Tuscan poet Bonagiunta Orbicciani attacks Guido Guinizzelli’s poetic inventions; Guido responds in the sonnet *Omo ch’è saggio non corre leggero* (14). Besides the shared metapoetic subject-matter of both the Orlandi-Cavalcanti and the Bonagiunta-Guinizzelli exchanges, the connection between the two sets of exchanges is further strengthened by the repeated use of the term “sottigianza”/“sottigliansa.” As we saw before, Orlandi opens his attack on Cavalcanti’s poetics with the image of a thread breaking “per troppa sottiglianza” (v. 1); in doing so, he adopts Bonagiunta’s term “sottigliansa,” which was one aspect of Guido Guinizzelli’s poetry he attacked in *Voi c’avete mutata la mainera* (v. 9).134

As all these examples show, the sonnet exchange becomes the Italian lyric poets’ favored format to discuss Ovid’s authority in matters of love. In some cases, their discussion focuses on the question of whether or not Ovid’s writings are still of use for the contemporary lover (the exchanges between Onesto da Bologna and Cino da Pistoia, and between Dante da Maiano and Dante Alighieri); in another case, the Italian poets debate whether or not Ovid’s poetry should be an example for their own (the exchange between Guido Orlandi and Guido Cavalcanti). In all cases, the Italian poets appropriate the example of the troubadours and transform their predecessors’ repeated confirmation of Ovid’s authority into a two-way conversation that debates the value of the Latin poet’s writings. Even though the Italian lyric poetry of the period furnishes only a few examples of this practice, it is important to underline two traits of these examples that make them stand out within this corpus of texts: first, the sonnet exchange is the only form of lyric poetry in which Ovid is mentioned; and second, Ovid is the only non-

contemporary author who is mentioned in these discussions held in sonnet exchanges. In Chapter 4, we will see how Dante in the *Commedia* continues this vernacular lyric practice of discussing love and love poetry through Ovid.

Beside these sonnet exchanges in which poets talk about Ovid, Brunetto Latini’s *Tesoretto* is the one Italian work of this period wherein Ovid is featured as a speaking character. The encounter between the Latin poet and the protagonist of the poem, “burnetto latino” (v. 70), is brief but significant, both for the work as a whole and the ongoing discussion of Ovid’s authority in matters of love. In the only illuminated manuscript of the *Tesoretto* (Strozzi MS 146), the illumination of the Latin poet is accompanied by the caption “Ovidio filosofo,” which is indicative of the positive reading that Ovid receives in Latini’s work. The encounter with the Latin “philosopher” occurs near the end of the protagonist’s long journey. Lost in a “selva diversa” (“strange wood” [v. 190]), Latini had met and received extensive lessons from the personified Nature and the Virtues (vv. 191-2170). When he searched to see “Fortune” and “Love” as well (v. 2180), he entered an ever-changing meadow, inhabited by large crowds, four ladies called “Fear,” “Desire,” “Love,” and “Hope” (vv. 2281-82), and the winged god of love (vv. 2261-72), who chased him (vv. 2343-51). While trying to escape the god, Latini encounters Ovid (vv. 2358-62):

E in un ricco manto  
Vidi ovidio maggiore,  
Chelgli atti del amore,  
Che son così diversi,  
Rassembra e mette in versi.

[And in a rich mantle / I saw great Ovid, / Who collected and put into verse / The acts of love, / Which are so diverse.]

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Latini asks Ovid for advice about “il convenente, / E lo bene e lo male / Del fante e dell’ale” (“the workings, / Both the good and the evil, / Of this child with wings” [vv. 2366-68]). Latini’s Ovidio replies in Italian—“mi rispuose in volgare” (v. 2373)—that the power of Love remains unknown to those who do not try it and advises him to look inside his heart for both the good and evil stemming from love (vv. 2374-80). When the winged god of love then hits Latini, it is Ovid’s “art” that guides him back to the straight path (vv. 2390-93):

. . . ovidio per arte
Mi diele maestria,
Si ch’io trovai la via
Ond’io mi traffugai.

[Ovid through artistry / Gave me the mastery, / So that I found the way / From which I had strayed.]

In this passage, Ovid appears as the sixth teacher of the Tesoretto (after Nature and the Virtues), and as the first historical character after a series of personifications. In the Tesoretto, Ovid holds a position of authority in matters of love: he is clad in a rich mantle, he possesses artistry, and relates his mastery. However, his teachings are much briefer than those of his predecessors in the poem: they consist of general advice for self-reflection (vv. 2374-80) or are not disclosed at all (vv. 2390-91). However short or general or unrevealed, Ovid’s teachings are positive and defining, as the protagonist returns to the straight path and confesses his sins (vv. 2402-06), which concludes the poem:

A dio e a li santi
Tornar devotamente,
E molto humilemente
Confessar li peccati
A’ preti e a li frati.

[. . . returning devoutly / To God and the saints, / And very humbly / Confessing my sins / To the priests and the friars.]
Critical interpretations of this passage connect Ovid’s role in the *Tesoretto* to Latini’s use of the title “ovidio maggiore” (v. 2359), a title used in the Middle Ages (with its Latin variant “Ovidius maior”) to indicate the *Metamorphoses*.\(^{136}\) However, the themes about which Latini’s Ovid advises are much closer to those of Ovid’s love poetry. Therefore, the use of “ovidio maggiore” in this poem appears to be the exception to this common label for the *Metamorphoses* and to grant authority to Ovid’s amatory works.\(^{137}\) In that vein, Kevin Brownlee and Olivia Holmes argue that the title “ovidio maggiore” actually refers to Ovid’s *Remedia amoris*.\(^{138}\) However, the language used to characterize Ovid’s teachings alludes rather to the *Ars amatoria*. In fact, the two nouns used to describe Ovid’s intervention in the *Tesoretto*—“arte” (v. 2390) and “maestria” (v. 2391)—are key terms of Ovid’s project in the *Ars amatoria*. (The *Remedia amoris*...)

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\(^{137}\) Costa and Picone nevertheless searched for ways to defend the reference to the *Metamorphoses*. Costa attempts to reconcile the use of “Ovidio maggiore” with the content of the *Tesoretto* by interpreting the title as an equivalent of “Ovidio moralizzato,” or an allegorizing reading of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* ("Il *Tesoretto* di Brunetto Latini,” 50). Picone suggests that Latini’s choice for “Ovidio maggiore” would recognize that the *Metamorphoses* contains a more complete treatment of love than the canonical *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris* (“L’Ovidio di Dante,” 117).

\(^{138}\) Brownlee reads the tag as a strategic choice that attributes the prestige of the *Metamorphoses* to the *Remedia amoris* (“The Practice of Cultural Authority,” 260-61). Holmes more cautiously suggests Ovid’s “maestria” probably alludes to the *Remedia amoris* (*Dante’s Two Beloveds*, 54).
constitutes a teaching project as well, but Ovid does not present himself explicitly as a teacher in this work.) The opening distich of Book 1 of the *Ars amatoria* reads: “Siquis in hoc artem populo non novit amandi, / Hoc legat et lecto carmine doctus amet” (“If anyone among this people knows not the *art* of loving, let him read my poem, and having read be skilled in love” [*Ars am. 1.1-2; my emphasis*]). Further on, Ovid presents himself as Love’s teacher: “ego sum praegerector Amoris” (*Ars am. 1.17*). This notion of mastery is repeated at the end of the sections dedicated to the teachings for men and women, respectively:

Sed quicumque meo superarit Amazona ferro,  
Inscribat spoliis “NASO MAGISTER ERAT.”

[But whosoever shall by my steel lay low the Amazon, let him inscribe upon his spoils “NASO WAS MY MASTER.”]  
(*Ars am. 2.743-44; my emphasis*)

Ut quondam iuvenes, ita nunc, mea turba, puellae  
Inscribant spoliis “NASO MAGISTER ERAT.”

[As once the youths, so now let the women, my votaries, write upon their spoils, NASO WAS OUR MASTER.]  
(*Ars am. 3.811-12; my emphasis*)

My preference for the *Ars amatoria* over the *Remedia amoris* as a source also holds in respect to the content of the passage in the *Tesoretto*. In his initial question to Ovid, Latini had already made the distinction between good and evil stemming from Love (vv. 2366-68); indeed, instead of curing the protagonist from love altogether (a *Remedia amoris*-like undertaking), Latini’s Ovid teaches him the art of good love. Of course, Latini’s understanding of good love is quite different from the love Ovid preaches and teaches in the *Ars amatoria*; it is much closer to the concept of good and evil love later found in Dante’s *Commedia*, most explicitly at the entrance of *Purgatorio*, “al soglio de la porta / che ’l mal amor de l’anime disusa, / perché fa parer dritta la via torta” (“the threshold of the gate / that-since the soul’s aberrant love would
make / the crooked way seem straight—is seldom used” [Purg. 10.1-3]). At the same time, Latini’s positive characterization of Ovid as philosopher of love and his redefinition of the common label “ovidio maggiore” turn the Tesoretto into the first work of poetry that approaches Ovid’s love poetry in a similar way as some prose works. Moral treatises such as Albertano da Brescia’s Liber consolationis et consilii (and its vernacular translations) also found general truths and words of wisdom in Ovid’s amatory works (cf. Chapter 1).

2.2 Myth

In addition to evaluating Ovid’s love poetry, the Italian vernacular poets also include characters from the Metamorphoses in their poems. Their choice of characters is mainly inspired by those Ovidian characters who were in vogue in the Latin and vernacular literature of the time: Narcissus and Pyramus and Thisbe. The fortune of these Ovidian stories is long and well documented. For example, in the twelfth century interest in all of Ovid’s work flourished and the Narcissus theme began to appear more frequently in literature. The French poems Roman de Troie and Roman d’Alexandre feature the Ovidian character, as well as several troubadour poems of the twelfth century. Pyramus and Thisbe were also the subject of several vernacular and Latin texts, ranging from the French poem Piramus et Tisbé—which circulated independently in the thirteenth century before it was included in its entirety in the Ovide moralisé—to short Latin poems which were mainly used in medieval classrooms.

139 Cf. Vinge, The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature and Knoespel, Narcissus and the Invention of Personal History.

140 For the French poem, see Piramus et Tisbé, ed. and trans. Penny Eley, Liverpool Online Series, Critical Editions of French Texts 5 (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 2001); for the short Latin poems, see Robert Glendinning, “Pyramus and Thisbe in the Medieval Classroom,”
With all this Ovid-inspired literature circulating, however, Italian vernacular poets mainly looked at the example of the troubadours for their treatment of Ovidian characters. Besides drawing upon the same Ovidian characters, the Italian poets also adopt the troubadours’ repeated use of the simile to feature these characters in their poetry, focus on the same aspects of Ovid’s stories the troubadours focused on, and, at times, even take over the troubadours’ phrasing. While elements of the comparisons with Ovidian characters can be easily traced back to verbal affinities with Ovid’s Latin text, these affinities are so general that the Latin text of the *Metamorphoses* should not necessarily be the source of these characteristics. On the contrary, the specifics of the troubadours’ treatment of these Ovidian characters do form a close connection between the troubadours’ works and Italian lyric poetry.

The influence of the troubadour lyrics becomes apparent in the representation of Narcissus. Both Chiaro Davanzati and an anonymous poet construct an entire sonnet around a comparison with Narcissus.

Come Narcissi, in sua spera mirando,
s’inamorao per ombra a la fontana;
veggendo se medesimo pensando,
ferissi il core e la sua mente vana;
gittovisi entro per l’ombria pigliando,

Guardando la fontana, il buon Narciso
de lo suo viso forte namorao,
e ’n tanto che lo vide, fue conquiso,
pensando che ’nfra l’aqua foss’asiso
ed incarnato ciò c’alora mirao;

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Eley included a bibliography on the afterlife of the Pyramus and Thisbe story in *Piramus et Tisbé*, 80-83.

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141 Ortiz, “La materia epica di ciclo classico,” 1-40 studies Ovidian echoes in the poetry of this period, identifying the stories of Pyramus and Thisbe, Narcissus and Echo, and Daedalus and Icarus as the three Ovidian stories that inspired the Italian poets. As we will see in chapter 3, more Ovidian stories can be added. For the figure of Narcissus, I here follow Ortiz in his references to troubadour poetry, but not his analysis. On Narcissus, see also Roberto Crespo, “Narciso nella lirica italiana del Duecento,” *Studi di filologia italiana* 47 (1989): 5-10. Eugenio Savona lists the stilnovisti’s references to the classical world in *Repertorio tematico del Dolce stil nuovo* (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1973), 398-401.
di quello amor lo prese morte strana;  e dismarito sí, che s’oblidao
ed io, vostra bielta[te] rimembrando  vogliendolo tenere, fue diviso.
l’ora ch’io vidi voi, donna sovrana, Cosí cred’eo finire similemente,
inamorato son sì feramente  da tutte gioie, e sua vita finao.
che, poi ch’io voglia, non poria partire, poi son venuto a la dolze fontana,
si m’ha l’amor compreso strettamente; dov’è la spera di tutte belleze:
tormentami lo giorno e fa languire: volendol’ abrazare trovo neiente;
com’a Narcis[s]i, parámi piagente, piango e sospiro la fresca cera umana,
veg[g]endo voi, la morte soferire. per cui follezó e pero in gran mateze.
(Chiaro Davanzati)142 (anonymous poet)143

Davanzati and the anonymous poet both attribute to Narcissus several qualities that stand
out in Ovid’s text and had become emblematic of the young boy. Davanzati’s Narcissi and the
anonymous poet’s Narciso stare at their reflection—“in sua spera mirando” (v. 1) / “guardando la
fontana” (v. 1)—just as Ovid’s Narcissus did: while alive, Narcissus “cunctaque miratur, quibus
est mirabilis ipse” (“all that his lovers adored he worshipped in self-adoration” [Met. 3.424; my
emphasis]), and in the Underworld “quoque se . . . in Stygia spectabat aqua” (“he gazed at
himself in the river [Styx]” [Met. 3.504-05; my emphasis]). Both Narcissi and Narciso fall in love
with their own “ombra” (v. 2) / “viso” (v. 2) and try to seize it (v. 5 / v. 7), while Narcissus
“uisae correptus imagine formae / spem sine corpore amat, corpus putat esse quod umbra est”
(“was suddenly overwhelmed / by a vision of beauty. He fell in love with an empty hope, / a

142 “As Narcissus, gazing in his mirror, / came to love through the shadow in the fountain, / and,
seeing himself in the midst of regretting – / his heart and vain mind smitten – / plunged in, to
catch a shadow, / and then strange death embraced him with that love, / so I, remembering how
beautiful you were / when I saw you, sovereign lady, / fall in love so wildly / I could not, though
I might want to, part from you, / love holds me in its grip so tightly. / Day torments me, draws
off my strength, / and, like Narcissus, to me it looks like pleasure, / as I gaze on you, to suffer
death.”

143 “Looking at the fountain, good Narcissus fell deeply in love with his own face and while he
looked at it, he became so won over that he lost himself, thinking that what he saw in the water
was a person. Wanting to hold this person, he shied away from all other joys of life and his own
life ended. I believe I will end in the same manner, when I come to the sweet fountain where
there is the mirror of all beauty. Wanting to embrace it, I find nothing; I weep and long for her
fresh human face, for which I go crazy and suffer in great madness.”
shadow mistaken for substance” [Met. 3.416-17]). The dismay and the death that this love eventually caused (v. 6 / vv. 6-7) is described at length in Metamorphoses 3.437-510.

Ramiro Ortiz claims that Davanzati’s description of the torment and languish the poet believes he shares with Narcissus (vv. 12-14) contains an Ovidian echo of the verses “nec mihi mors grauis est, posituro morte dolores; / hic qui diligitur uellem diuturnior esset. / nunc duo concordes anima moriemur in una” (“Death will be easy to bear, since dying will cure my heartache. / Better indeed if the one I love could have lived for longer, / but now, two soulmates in one, we shall face our ending together” [Met. 3.471-73]).

144 But these rather general affinities between the Latin text of the Metamorphoses and the Italian poem do not necessarily lead to Ortiz’s conclusion that Davanzati had direct knowledge of the Latin source. As we have seen, by this time Narcissus had become a popular character in vernacular and Latin literature. However, the troubadour poems that include Narcissus all contain a specific feature that more concretely demonstrates their influence on both Italian poets. Bernard de Ventadour’s Can vei la lauzeta mover (31), Peirol’s Mout m’entremis de chantar voluntiers (XV), and the anonymous Aissi m’ave cum a l’enfan petit (17b) introduce the character of Narcissus by means of a simile: each lover compares his situation with that of the young boy.

Miralhs, pus me mirei en te,
m’an mort li sospir de preon,
c’aiissi·m perdei com perdet se
lo bels Narcisus en l’a fon.

[Mirror, since I stared at myself in you, deep sighs have caused my death, so that I lost myself just as beautiful Narcissus did in the fountain.]

(Bernard de Ventadour, Can vei la lauzeta mover, vv. 21-24)

Mal o ai dig, ans folley follamen,
quar anc Narcis, qu’amet l’ombra de se,
si be·s mori, non fo plus fols de me.

[But, nay, wrongly do I speak thus, on the contrary I am foolishly foolish, for never indeed was Narcissus, who loved his own reflection, more foolish than I, even though he died in consequence.]

(Peirol, *Mout m'entremis de chantar voluntiers*, vv. 19-21)

car la bela tan m’a vencut e·m lia
que per mos olhs tem que perda la via
com Narcisi, que dedins lo potz cler
vi sa ombra e l’amet tot entier
e per fol’ amor mori d’aital guia.

[For the fair lady has so defeated me and fettered me that I fear to lose my life through my eyes, just like Narcissus, who saw his shadow in the limpid well and loved it to the utmost, and died from the madness of love.]

(anonymous, *Aissi m’ave cum a l’enfan petit*, vv. 12-16)

The troubadours’ repeated use of the simile to feature Narcissus connects their poems with those of Davanzati and the anonymous Italian poet.\(^{145}\) A Sicilian intermediary poem, Rinaldo d’Aquino’s canzone *Poi li piace ch’avanzi suo valore* (3), completes the intertextual picture (vv. 32-36):\(^{146}\)

altresi finamente
come Narciso in sua spera vedere
per sé s’innamorao
quando in l’aigua isguardao,
cosi poss’io ben dire
di che eo son preso de la più avenente.

[just as Narcissus, when he looked at the water and saw himself in the mirror, fell deeply in love with himself, I am sure that I am overwhelmed by the most beautiful woman.]

“Come Narcissi, in sua spera mirando,” the opening verse of Chiaro Davanzati’s sonnet, seems modeled on Rinaldo d’Aquino’s short Narcissus comparison (v. 33). Moreover, besides the shared use of the simile to draw comparisons between Narcissus and themselves, the troubadours

\(^{145}\) Davanzati frequently used comparisons between the lover and animals: for this aspect of Davanzati’s poetry, see Aldo Menichetti’s introduction in Chiaro Davanzati, *Rime* (Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1965), xlv-lxi.

\(^{146}\) Cf. Ortiz, “La materia epica di ciclo classico,” 26, 29.
and Italian poets also focus on the same aspects of the Narcissus story: the moment when the gazing Narcissus falls in love with his own reflection in the fountain, his ensuing madness, and his death.

It is only in the 334-verse long Tuscan poem *Il mare amoroso* (1270-80), a poetic form much longer than the sonnets and canzoni we have discussed so far, that we find Narcissus featured in a different way. The anonymous poet of *Il mare amoroso* often uses the simile—the main rhetorical device in which Ovidian characters are included in troubadour and Italian lyric poems—to narrate his unrequited love for a beautiful lady. But that is not the way in which Narcissus appears: the poet abandons the use of the simile in favor of a counterfactual conditional and highlights an aspect of the story that was not covered in troubadour and Italian lyric poetry. In *Metamorphoses* 3.353-55, Ovid narrates how Narcissus only loved himself and therefore categorically rejected all his suitors; the anonymous poet of *Il mare amoroso*, however, believes that if Narcissus were still alive, he would have fallen for his lady (vv. 87-89):

ch’io penso, se Narcisso fosse vivo,  
sì ‘ntenderebbe in voi, a mia credenza,  
e non in sé medesmo come fece.

[so that I think, if Narcissus were alive, he would be in love with you, in my opinion, and not with himself, as he was.]

While Narcissus is the Ovidian character featured most prominently, the lovers Pyramus and Thisbe are the characters who appear most frequently. Both the troubadours and the Italian lyric poets favor Pyramus and Thisbe most often, mentioning them six and nine times,

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147 The poet draws mostly on comparison with animals, Arthurian characters, and the classical characters Peleus (v. 103), Cicero and Orpheus (v. 152), and Daedalus (v. 236).
respectively. In *Metamorphoses* 4.55-166, Ovid tells the story of two young lovers who communicate through a crack in the wall because their parents prohibited their love. Their plan for a secret nighttime meeting leads to their deaths: Pyramus believes Thisbe was killed by a lion and commits suicide; Thisbe, who was actually hiding in a cave, finds her lover’s lifeless body and also kills herself. In their poetry, the vernacular poets highlight different aspects of this tragic love story.

A first point of focus is the depth of Pyramus and Thisbe’s love, which several troubadours and Italian poets compare to their own love for their lady. In Giraut de Salignac’s canso *En atretal esperansa* (1), the poet declares to love his lady “miels e may / No fes Piramus Tibe” (“better and more than Pyramus loved Thisbe” [vv. 26-27]). Rimbaut de Vaqueiras’ canso *Eram requier sa costim’ e son us* (X) adopts the same tone (vv. 9-12):

Anc non amet tan aut cum eu negus
ni tant pro dompn’, e car no·i trob pareill
m’enten en liës e l’am al sieu conseill
mais que Tisbe non amet Pyramus.

[Never did any man love in such an exalted region or such an excellent lady as I, because I find her peerless, I set my mind on her and love her, following her counsel, more than Pyramus loved Thisbe.]

In the canzone *Amor, in cui disio ed è speranza* (2), the Sicilian poet Pier della Vigna also claims to outdo Pyramus and Thisbe. Even though the actual comparison with the Ovidian lovers is limited to two verses, characteristics of Ovid’s story make their presence felt in the entire stanza (vv. 9-16):

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148 I base my discussion of troubadour poetry on the list provided in Chambers, *Proper Names*, 253. For the Italian poets, I follow the examples from Ortiz, “La materia epica di ciclo classico,” but not his analysis. A similar list of examples is also found in Gianfranco Contini, “Alcuni appunti su ‘Purgatorio’ XXVII,” in *Un’idea di Dante: Saggi danteschi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), 185-86.
Or potess’eo venire a voi, amorosa,
com’ lo larone ascoso, e non paresse:
be’l mi teria in gioia aventurusa,
se l’Amor tanto ben mi facesse.
Si bel parlante, donna, con voi fora,
e direi como v’amai lungiamente,
più ca Prïamo Tisbia dolzemente,
ed ameraggio infin ch’eo vivo ancora.

[If only I could come to you now, lovely lady, / like a thief hidden, without being seen! / I would truly consider it a stroke of good fortune, / if Love granted me so great a favor. / I would be so eloquent with you, oh lady, / and I would tell you how I have loved you a long time, / more tenderly than Piramus loved Tisbe, / and how I shall love you as long as I live.]

The poet’s wish to approach his lady unseen—“like a thief hidden”—resembles Pyramus and Thisbe’s plan to sneak past the guards at nighttime for a secret meeting (Met. 4.83-92). The actual comparison between the poet’s love for his lady and Pyramus’ love for Thisbe is somewhat clumsily modified by two adverbs: “lungiamente” (v. 14) and “dolzemente” (v. 15). Pier could of course not apply “lungiamente,” the adverb he used to qualify his own love, to Pyramus, who died young and tragically; to describe Pyramus’ love for Thisbe, Pier uses “dolzemente” instead. In addition, the last verse of the stanza, in which the poet claims he will love his lady all the while he lives (v. 16), can easily be read with the tragic end of the Ovidian lovers in mind. Later, Rustico Filippi will repeat the same notion of surpassing Pyramus and Thisbe’s deep love in Oi amoroso e mio fedele amante (XVII), the first sonnet in a series of imagined exchanges between the poet and his lady. In the lady’s declaration that she loves the poet more than Thisbe loved Pyramus, Rustico replaces Pier’s two separate adverbs with one “coralmente” (vv. 9-11):

149 In Poeti del Duecento, 1: 121n10, Contini considers the biblical verse “Dies Domini, sicut fur in nocte, ita veniet” (“the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” [1 Thess. 5:2]) a source for these verses. Contini further refers to Giacomo da Lentini’s Dal core mi vene (1.5) where the poet expresses a similar wish to come to his lady, this time “come romeo / . . . ascoso” (“as a pilgrim . . . hidden” [vv. 29-30]). Contini suggests that this could be a reference to Tristan, who disguised as a pilgrim met Isolde (Poeti del Duecento, 1: 69nn29-30).
Amore meo, cui più coralmente amo
ch’amasse già mai donna suo servente,
e che non fece Tisbïa Prïamo.

[My love, whom I love more deeply than ever a lady loved her servant and Thisbe loved Pyramus.]

Chiaro Davanzati highlights another aspect of the story, Thisbe’s beauty (Met. 4.56), which he compares to his lady’s beauty in five different poems. In these brief comparisons, Davanzati pairs Thisbe with other women from the classical world and Arthurian legends: Thisbe is paired with Morgana in Ringrazzo amore de l’aventurosa (2, v. 4) and Madonna, lungiamente ag<g>-io portato (XXXIX, v. 8); mentioned with both Morgana and Helen in the canzone Di lontana riviera (LVII, vv. 20-21); and linked with Isolde in Lo disïoso core e la speranza (13, v. 7). In Davanzati’s poems, these comparisons serve the purpose of highlighting his lady’s (or the poet’s) exceptionality; Thisbe and these other women may be classical examples of great beauty, but Davanzati’s lady surpasses all.

The sonnet Disidero lo pome ne lo fiore (D. 1), whose authorship is uncertain but attributed to Davazanti, features a more elaborate discussion of Pyramus and Thisbe. This sonnet, part of a tenzone with two unnamed correspondents, responds to the opening sonnet Chi giudica lo pome ne lo fiore (D. 1a). The inexperienced lover would think “amore” (“love”) is sweet, this opening sonnet states, but he will soon discover it really is “amarore” (“bitterness” [vv. 9-14])—a point illustrated with examples from the natural world where danger also often hides under a pleasant appearance. Refuting these statements and examples in Disidero lo pome (vv. 1-8), Davanzati (or the anonymous poet) evokes the Ovidian lovers to settle the matter (vv. 9-14):

Chi nonn-ha de l’amore ’sperïenza,
già de l’amore briga non si dea
e con fini amador’ nonn-ag<g>-ia intenza,
ché ’n tut<te parti il piato perderia
e non poria apellar de la sentenza,
se ne domandi Príamo e Tisbia.

[Who does not understand love, does not take the trouble to experience it, and he does not have a case against fine lovers, because in every respect he would lose the dispute and would not be able to appeal the decision, if Pyramus and Thisbe were interrogated on the matter.]

Neglecting the tragic outcome of the story in Ovid, Davanzati features Pyramus and Thisbe here as judges who make the case for a positive view of love. Davanzati teams up the Ovidian lovers with the “fini amadori” (v. 11)—a combination earlier found in the troubadour Peire Cardenal’s didactic poem Sel que fest tot cant és (LXXI). In Cardenal’s poem, the Babylonian lovers are the first to be named in a list of “li fin aimadór” (vv. 83-84).

Yet the tragic outcome of Pyramus and Thisbe’s story is not entirely neglected. Giraut de Cabreira’s Cabra joglar describes the pain of the separated lovers: “De Piramus / qui for lo murs / sofri per Tibes passion” (“of Pyramus who through the wall suffers in passion for Thisbe” [vv. 166-68]). In Vos qe amatz cuenda donn’e plazen (PC 425.1), the troubadours Isarn and Rofian discuss the fate of Jaufre Rudel who died, like Pyramus, out of love for his lady. Rofian claims that Pyramus, just as Jaufre, acted “with great bravery” when he killed himself for Thisbe’s sake (vv. 39-40). Isarn counters that his love was madness: a more patient Pyramus would have enjoyed a happy life with his Thisbe (vv. 41-48):

Vencutz seres qe res no·us en defen,
En Rofian, qar greu han sospeisso
d’annar a mort cels qe bon ni pro so:
chascuns hi fug mout voluntieremen;
e qar s’aucis En Piramus le tos

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150 In “La materia epica di ciclo classico,” 9n1, Ortiz points out the legal language in the last tercet—“il piato perderia” (v. 11) and “non poria apellar de la sentenza” (v. 12)—which responds to the legal language used in the opening verse of Chi giudica lo pome ne lo fiore.

fo failhimens aitals, ço sabem nos,
qar si fos vius jauçira l'oi jauzen
qant venc Tibes, don l’amors fon follaje.

[You will be defeated without a leg to stand on, Sir Rofian, for the expectation of meeting one’s death is hardly taken into consideration by those who are virtuous or noble—even everyone is most desirous of avoiding death; and insofar as the youthful Sir Pyramus killed himself it was an ill-judged act, as we know, for if he had lived he would have enjoyed the joy of joys when Thisbe arrived, for whom his love was madness.]

And, even though Schiatta di Messer Albizo’s sonnet *Poi che vi piacie* includes almost unrecognizable names (“Ania” and “Priamo”), the mentions of suicide and “follia” strongly suggest that also this sonnet is shaped by the tragic outcome of Pyramus and Thisbe’s story (vv. 9-11):

Chè ’l vano dir mi mise ’n esta via
si come Ania a Priamo laudato
c’aucise lui, per sè fecie follia.

[So my vain speech led me this way, just as Ania was praised by Priamo, and he killed himself out of madness, as his love was madness.]

So when Dante features Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Commedia*, he is inscribing himself into a wide-spread vernacular lyric practice of discussing these two Ovidian characters (cf. Chapter 5).

So far, we have seen that Italian lyric poets limit their inclusion of Ovidian characters to Narcissus and Pyramus and Thisbe. Only in the *Proverbia quae dicuntur super natura feminarum*, a poem with a completely different poetic form and content, do we find a wider range of Ovidian characters. The anonymous *Proverbia* contains over one hundred four-verse stanzas of misogynist proverbs and was written between 1152 and 1160, which makes it the oldest misogynist text written in Italian. The poet names Ovid as one of the sources for the many examples that illustrate the mischievous character traits of women, together with Cato (as the supposed writer of the *Disticha Catonis*), Panfilo (after the twelfth-century comedy *Pamphilus*), and Cicero (vv. 69-72). Instead of launching immediately into the actual proverbs, the poet first
justifies his misogynist stance by listing the examples of wicked biblical, classical, historical, and contemporary women of which he had heard (e.g., “audito avé contare” [v. 133]) or read (e.g., “en scrito trovato l’ aio” [v. 105]).

Several of the mentioned Ovidian characters are carefully linked to Ovid. For example, “La fii[ol]a d’un re, c’Amirai l’ om apela, / ço q’ ela fe’ al pare, Ovidio ne favela” (“Ovid narrates what the daughter of a king, named Myrrha, did to her father” [vv. 169-70]). Referring to what seems to be a familiar story to his readers, the writer of the Proverbia finds it unnecessary to specify the girl’s actions (i.e., pretending to be a concubine in order to sleep with her father) or even the precise Ovidian text where this story is told (i.e., the Metamorphoses at 10.298-502). He applies a similar approach when he mentions Tiresias: “Lo fato de le femene volì saver qual este? / Demandai ’nde Terrisia, qé quela sì ’nd’è teste, / qé fo masclo e femena, com’ se truova en le geste” (“You want to know the nature of women? Ask Tiresias, since she can testify, having been both a man and a woman, as we find in the books” [vv. 345-47]). In this instance, besides omitting the story’s source (Met. 3.316-38) the poet does not even mention Ovid’s name.

152 The majority of the references is to written sources: fourteen references to books (vv. 69-72, 86, 98, 105, 126, 129, 145, 149-52, 161-62, 169-70, 197, 245, 269-76, 347) against only three instances of oral transmission (vv. 133, 157, 243). The writer’s justification of his misogyny on the basis of these sources is most explicit in verses 269-76:

“Asai son qe reprendem e dis c’ai vilanato
perq’eu quisti proverbb de femen’ ai trovato.
S’eu a lo dì çudisio stëa dal destro lato,
çascun d’isti proverbb en libri ai trovato.
En libri ancïani, qu li poeti fese,
stratute ’ste paravole ò trovate et entese:
cui à empresso en scola, se ad altri mostra e dise,
non li pò dar reproço vilano ni cortese.”

(“Many of those who reproach me say that I was rude to recount these proverbs about women. May I sit on the right side at Judgment Day, because I have found each of these proverbs in books. In old books, written by poets, I have found and understood all these parables: you cannot reproach, rudely or politely, someone who learnt in school and shows and tells to others.”)
The *Proverbia* mentions both Ovid’s name and the title of his work only in one instance: “La raina Trësta como lo fiio aucise, / Ovidio ['n]dele Pistole ben lo conta e 'l dise” (“Ovid tells in great detail in his Letters how the queen Triësta killed her son” [vv. 161-62]). Unfortunately, in this case the given source and content are difficult to combine. Adolf Tobler reads “the queen Triësta” as Procne, who killed her son Itys and served him to her husband Tereus to revenge the rape of her sister Philomela. But, as Gianfranco Contini points out, there is no mention of the sisters in Ovid’s *Heroides*. Instead, Contini suggests the alternative reading “Tieste” or Thyestes, whose sons got served to him in a dish by his brother Atreus as revenge for Thyestes’ affair with Atreus’ wife. That story, however, is not a part of the *Heroides* either. Moreover, in contrast to the Procne story that is narrated at great length in *Metamorphoses* 6.424-674, the Tyestes tale can hardly be called an Ovidian story at all, as it gets only the briefest mention at the end of the *Metamorphoses* (15.462). Cono A. Mangieri reads the line alternatively as “la raina trista” (“the wicked queen”) and identifies her as Phaedra—the queen who falsely accuses her stepson Hippolytus of raping her, which leads to the boy’s death. Phaedra is indeed one of the letter writers of the *Heroides* (*Her.* 4), but her letter is a declaration of love to Hippolytus and does not contain the detailed account of his death to which the writer of the *Proverbia* refers (“Ovidio . . . ben lo conta e ‘l dise” [v. 162]). Therefore, I believe that the Thracian Procne is intended here (as

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the murder of the son is described at great length in *Met.* 6.619-49) and that the writer seems to confuse sources.

Even with this confusion of sources, the *Proverbia* testifies to a greater basic knowledge of Ovid’s complete oeuvre than the previously discussed Ovid-inspired sonnets and canzoni would suggest. As we have seen, the *Proverbia* includes a variety of Ovidian characters wider than the three characters most common to the vernacular poets. In that sense, the *Proverbia* is much more in line with the prose works’ treatment of Ovid’s work (discussed in Chapter 1), reminding us that Ovid’s entire oeuvre was available and known. It is important, however, not to forget that the learned poets who only feature the Narcissus and Pyramus and Thisbe stories most likely also possessed this knowledge. Therefore, the fact that they feature only a restricted number of Ovidian characters should not be understood as a limited knowledge of Ovid’s works, but rather as an artistic choice to follow the literary example of the troubadours.

### 2.3 Exile

Ovid’s exile poetry “spoke” to medieval poets for various reasons, but three aspects were particularly influential to the Italian poetry of the period 1230-1321: (1) Ovid’s expression of despair about his exile; (2) Ovid’s repeated anthropomorphisms of his books and elegies, sent to Rome with specific orders about whom to meet and what to say; and (3) Ovid’s self-identifications with the characters of the *Metamorphoses* in his exile letters. Although Dante most explicitly adapts these aspects of Ovid’s exile poetry, there are a few other vernacular poets whose appropriation of this theme has been overlooked.

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The first example is found in Guido Guinizzelli’s sonnet *Sí sono angostíoso e pien di doglia* (8), where the Italian poet reuses Ovid’s desperate laments about the cruel conditions of his exile to voice similar feelings about his own exile. In the sonnet, Guinizzelli sounds as distressed about his exile to Monselice and his future as Ovid in one of the *Ex Ponto* letters.157

“Sí sono angostíoso e pien di doglia / e di molti sospiri e di rancura” (“I am so tormented and full of pain / and many sighs and sorrows”), Guinizzelli opens the poem, “che non posso saver quel che mi voglia / <né> qual poss’esser mai la mia ventura” (“that I can’t know what my fortune intends / for me or what it can ever be” [vv. 1-4]). In these verses, the Italian poet echoes Ovid’s lament “nec quid agam invenio, nec quid nolimve velimve” (“I find nothing to do or to wish or not wish” [*Ex Ponto* 4.12.45]).

The second example comes from Guido Cavalcanti’s exile poetry and adopts Ovid’s practice of anthropomorphizing his work. Ovid repeatedly attributes human characteristics to his poems and books which are instructed to travel to Rome, to walk around in the city, and talk to people. While not the first to directly address his books, Ovid is the Latin poet who does this most frequently.158 The most explicit example is found in the first letter of the first book of the


158 Cf. Green, *The Poems of Exile*, 203. Not referring to the Ovidian origin of the practice, Joan H. Levin discusses in “Sweet, New Endings: A Look at the Tornada in the Stilnovistic and Petrarchan Canzone,” *Italica* 61, no. 4 (1984): 297-311, the evolution of the poet’s address to his poem: where the troubadours send their poems to a literal messenger, the Italians address their compositions as if they were intermediaries. Within the different Italian schools, the tornada evolves from the formulaic ending in the Sicilians and the experimentation with form and content in the Siculo-Tuscan poets to the anthropomorphizing of (sometimes) the (entire) poem in the stilnovisti.
Tristia, which is entirely dedicated to his text.\textsuperscript{159} Cavalcanti reprises one element from this letter: the command to avoid conversation with anyone who attacked him (Tristia 1.1.25-26). In the envoy of Perch’i’ no spero di tornar giammai (XXXV), Cavalcanti adopts this concept (vv. 7-16):

Tu porterai novelle di sospiri
piene di dogli’ e di molta paura;
ma guarda che persona non ti miri
che sia nemica di gentil natura:
ché certo per la mia disaventura
tu saresti contesa,
tanto da lei ripresa
che mi sarebbe angoscia;
dopo la morte, poscia,
pianto e novo dolore.

[You will take news to her of how I sigh / In overwhelming grief and growing fear; / But yet take heed that no base enemy / To noble nature looks upon you there: / For, in my sad misfortune, none will spare / To hinder your approach, / And she herself reproach / And cause me bitter pain: / Then, after death, again / Fresh tears and further sorrow.]

While a few, disjointed examples are found in the exile poetry of Guinizzelli and Cavalcanti, it is Dante who adopts most extensively and frequently the Ovidian language of lament, the anthropomorphizing of the book in his rime (discussed in Chapter 3), and the self-identification with Ovidian exile characters in the Commedia (discussed in Chapter 5).

Chapter 3: Readers Turned Writers: Dante Alighieri and Cino da Pistoia

Chapter 2 categorized Ovid-inspired vernacular poetry according to the themes of love, myth, and exile. This method highlighted that most medieval Italian poets more or less follow the same approach to integrating Ovidian material into their poetry: they discuss Ovid’s authority in matters of love in similar ways, they all feature the same Ovidian characters from the *Metamorphoses*, and they limit Ovidian material when writing about exile. Only the vernacular poems that were significantly longer than the sonnet or canzone form (Brunetto Latini’s *Tesoretto, Il mare amoroso*, and the *Proverbia quae dicuntur super natura feminarum*) deviate from this general approach. The majority of the sonnets and canzoni written by Dante Alighieri and Cino da Pistoia, however, draw on Ovidian material in rather different ways. To be complete, Dante’s *Savere e cortesia, ingegno ed arte* and Cino’s *Se mai leggesti versi de l’Ovidi* are two sonnets that do conform to the lyric poets’ practice of discussing Ovid’s authority in matters of love in sonnet exchanges. (For that reason, these sonnets were included in Chapter 2.) But the rest of their Ovid-inspired poems introduce new techniques and in general work much more closely with Ovid’s Latin texts than the sonnets and canzoni of their fellow vernacular poets.

This chapter is organized in three sections and presents a thematic rather than a chronological trajectory. Section 1 focuses on a first set of innovations that characterize the poetry of Dante and Cino, and the anonymous sonnet *Nulla mi parve mai piú crudel cosa*. Compared to the poetry discussed in Chapter 2, these poems feature different Ovidian characters and use rhetorical strategies that were novel to Italian vernacular poetry. This section introduces these new features by discussing three of Cino’s “Ovidian” sonnets, a sonnet and letter exchange between Cino and Dante, and the anonymous sonnet *Nulla mi parve mai piú crudel cosa*. These
features are also found in Dante’s *rime petrose* (the focus of section 2), but in these longer poetic forms (three canzoni and one sestina, instead of the sonnets of section 1), Dante also tests some other ways of incorporating Ovid’s writings that he will use more frequently in the *Commedia.*

The third section looks at Dante’s use of Ovidian material in poems, letters, and treatises written in exile and shows how through Ovid’s poetry, Dante creates a shared experience of exile. In general, the Ovidian influence on Dante’s poems, letters, and treatises, and the Ovid-inspired poetry of Cino da Pistoia mediate between other Italian lyrics poets’ treatment of Ovid (discussed in Chapter 2) and Dante’s reading of Ovid in the *Commedia* (discussed in Chapters 4 and 5). At the same time, this chapter suggests a prehistory to Petrarch’s “Ovidian” poems. This is a topic I hope to address at greater length in the future, but will only treat briefly here.

### 3.1 New Ways of Reading Ovid: Cino da Pistoia’s “Ovidian” Sonnets, the Sonnet and Letter Exchange between Cino and Dante, and the Anonymous Sonnet *Nulla mi parve mai piú crudel cosa*

Cino da Pistoia integrates Ovidian material in three sonnets: *Amor, che viene armato a doppio dardo,* *Se conceduto mi fosse da Giove,* and *Dante, quando per caso s’abbandona,* which is part of a sonnet and letter exchange with Dante Alighieri.¹⁶⁰ In these three “Ovidian” sonnets,

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¹⁶⁰ These sonnets have received minimal scholarly attention, with the small exception of Cino and Dante’s sonnet and letter exchange (see notes 169-70). The following studies focus specifically on the relationship between Dante and Cino: Domenico De Robertis, “Cino e le ‘imitazioni’ dalle rime di Dante,” *Studi Danteschi* 29 (1950): 103-76; Guglielmo Gorni, “Cino ‘Vil ladro’: Parola data e parola rubata,” in *Il nodo della lingua e il verbo d’amore. Studi su Dante e altri duecentisti* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1981), 125-39; Robert Hollander, “Dante and Cino da Pistoia,” *Dante Studies* 110 (1992): 201-31; Furio Brugnolo, “Cino (e Onesto) dentro e fuori la ‘Commedia,’” in *Omaggio a Gianfranco Folena* (Padova: Editoriale Programma, 1993), 1: 369-86; and Michelangelo Picone, “Dante e Cino: Una lunga amicizia. Prima parte: I tempi della *Vita Nova,*” *Dante* 1 (2004): 39-53. While De Robertis argued that the inspiration only went one way with Cino imitating Dante’s poetry, more recent studies have redefined the poets’ relationship as one of reciprocity. Picone looks at the reciprocal influence in
Cino features Ovid’s works differently from the vernacular lyric poets of his day. He does not include the commonly featured Narcissus and Pyramus and Thisbe, but instead introduces new characters and finds ways to associate himself with both male and female Ovidian characters. Just as in the lyric poetry discussed in Chapter 2, Ovidian characters appear only sporadically in Cino’s poems, but these occasional moments surpass the exemplary use of Thisbe, the brief mentions of Narcissus, Pyramus, and Thisbe, or even Davanzati’s and the anonymous poet’s sonnet-long comparisons with Narcissus. In those poems, the Ovidian characters serve as an external reference point and the second element of the comparison; in Cino’s “Ovidian” sonnets, these characters are at the same level of the poet, and the world of the *Metamorphoses* is part of the poet’s world—or at least a world he imagines to recreate. For example, we can see the interaction of the poet and Ovid’s characters in Cino’s sonnet *Amor, che viene armato a doppio dardo* (CXLVI).

*Amor, che viene armato a doppio dardo*  
del più levato monte che sì’ al mondo,  
e de l’auro ferio il nostro, Gherardo,  
e ’l bel soggetto del piombo ritondo.  
Fu, quel che fece così duro e tardo  
lo core a quella di Peneo, il secondo,  
del qual poscia che fue il dolce sguardo,  
in lei trasmutò sè. Si ti rispondo:  
che dé da noi ricever onor degno  
per l’imagine sua, ch’ancor dimora  
lo spirto intorno a lei, come a suo segno.

Both poets’ poetry written around the time of the *Vita nuova*; Gorni, Hollander, and Brugnolo find echoes from Cino’s *rime* in the *Commedia* and vice versa. (But, just as Robson’s essay “Dante’s Reading of the Latin Poets,” the second part of Hollander’s essay is highly speculative in nature, suggesting Dante’s intention to first feature Cino in *Paradiso* and later cancel his appearance—something that cannot be documented, as even Hollander has to admit himself.) In “Cino da Pistoia and Dante Alighieri,” John A. Scott summarizes the main arguments of these studies (*Flinders Dante Conferences 2002-2004*, eds. Margaret Baker, Flavia Coassin, and Diana Glenn [Adelaide: Lythrum Press, 2005], 26-37).
E se d’Amor non semo amanti, fôra
come Dafne del Sol: esser benegno
così vuol questo; onde perciò l’onora.\textsuperscript{161}

In Cino’s sonnet, Love is armed with two kinds of arrows: he wounds the poet and the addressee Gherardo da Reggio (named in v. 3) with his golden arrow, and wounds their ladies with an arrow of lead (vv. 1-4). The origin of Love’s double ammunition goes back to the myth of Apollo and Daphne, the first love story in the \textit{Metamorphoses} (\textit{Met.} 1.468-71). There, Ovid explains that the golden pointed arrow induces love, something that goes without saying in Cino’s sonnet. On the other hand, the round arrow of lead (an Ovidian invention)\textsuperscript{162} drives love away, as Cino explains in verses 5-8 by means of its first victim, “quella di Peneo” (v. 6), or the later named Daphne (v. 13). Italian poets have been wounded many times before by Love’s arrow (for example, in Guinizzelli’s sonnet \textit{Lo vostro bel saluto e ’l gentil sguardo} [1, vv. 5-8]).

Even the double arrow had made its appearance in Italian poetry before Cino (for example, in the Sicilian poet Abate di Tivoli’s \textit{Ai deo d’amore, a te faccio preghera} [1.18a, vv. 9-14], and in Cavalcanti’s sonnet \textit{O tu, che porti nelli occhi sovente} [XX], where the second arrow would make the enamored poet desirous of a third arrow that cures love).

\textsuperscript{161} \textquotedblleft Love, armed with two arrows, arrives from the highest mountain that exists in the world and wounds us, Gherardo, with the golden arrow, and our beautiful ladies with the rounded lead one. The second arrow was the one that rendered the heart of Peneus’ daughter harsh and stern. After she gave her father a sweet look, he transformed her in a laurel. Such answer I give you: that she deserves to receive from us the honor worthy of her image, since her spirit still moves around her, as around her sign. And if we are no lovers of Love, what happened to Apollo’s Daphne will happen to us. Only if we are, Love wants to be gentle with us; therefore honor your lady.”

\textsuperscript{162} Cf. Ovidio. \textit{Metamorfosi: Volume I (Libri I-II)}, ed. Alessandro Barchiesi, trans. Ludovica Koch (Milan: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 2005), 207. In his notes to Cino’s sonnet, Mario Marti is puzzled by the arrow “ritondo” (\textit{Poeti del Dolce stil nuovo}, 798n3), while Cino is simply following Ovid’s text: “quod facit [amorem], auratum est et cuspide fulget acuta; / quod fugat obtusum est et habet sub harundine plumbum” (“The [one for rousing passion] is made of gold, and its head has a sharp, bright point, / while the [one meant to repeal it] is blunt and weighted with lead one side of the reed shaft” [\textit{Met.} 1.470-71]).
While these poets focused on the arrow’s effect on themselves, Cino focuses the arrow (and therefore the sonnet) around Daphne, the first woman ever hurt by the arrow of lead. After explaining the effect of the arrow (vv. 5-6), Cino’s attention shifts to Daphne’s transformation in the last line of the *fronte* (v. 8). In the first tercet of the *sirma*, Cino gives us a quick lesson in Ovidian metamorphosis: yes, Daphne’s form has altered, but her spirit still lives on (vv. 9-11). This quality can also be seen in Ovid’s text when the laurel tree refuses Apollo’s embraces and the tree waves and nods her branches (*Met.* 1.553-56; 566-67). In line with the end of Ovid’s story (*Met.* 1.565), the laurel also becomes the sign to be honored (vv. 9-11) in Cino’s sonnet. In an alternative reading of the same tercet (vv. 9-11), the poet returns his focus to his and Gherardo’s lady. The tercet then states that even though their ladies are driven away from love, some residue—“lo spirto” of Love (v. 11)—remained and therefore they should be treated with respect, or “onor” (v. 9). My translation follows the first interpretation, and while it is unclear whether this tercet (vv. 9-11) focuses on the Ovidian or contemporary lovers, the sonnet’s concluding tercet (vv. 12-14) unambiguously features both. In these last verses, the world of Apollo and Daphne and that of Cino and Gherardo clearly coincide: what happened in the world of the *Metamorphoses* to Daphne, can also happen to them.

Besides the conflation of the contemporary world with the world of the *Metamorphoses*, Cino’s sonnet differs from the poems discussed in Chapter 2 in another aspect as well. In those poems, the poet is always likened to a male Ovidian character and the woman to a female character: the poet is more in love than Narcissus ever was, the poet loves his lady more than Pyramus loved Thisbe; the poet’s lady is more beautiful than Thisbe. In *Amor, che viene armato a doppio dardo*, Cino revises this common lyric practice by reversing the comparison by gender within the same poem. In the *fronte*, Cino still respects the gender roles: Cino and Gherardo were
hit by Love’s golden arrow just as Apollo, and their ladies were wounded by the arrow of lead just as Daphne. In the *sirma*, on the other hand, the male poets Cino and Gherardo should avoid becoming like Daphne. Since Cino applies the gender reversal to the Apollo (Sol) and Daphne story, *Amor, che viene armato a doppio dardo* becomes an important intertext for Petrarch’s identification with Ovidian characters in the *Canzoniere*. Not only is the story of Apollo and Daphne the most featured Ovidian myth in the *Canzoniere*, Petrarch follows Cino’s example and switches the gender roles within his poems. For example, Petrarch associates Laura with Daphne in *RVF* 6 but identifies himself with Daphne in *RVF* 23 (v. 39).163

In *Amor, che viene armato a doppio dardo* Cino, Gherardo, and their ladies actually dwell in the world of the *Metamorphoses*; in *Se conceduto mi fosse da Giove* (LXII), Cino’s second “Ovidian” poem, the poet only imagines himself part of that world.

Se conceduto mi fosse da Giove,
io non potrei vestir quel[la] figura
che questa bel[la] donna freda e dura
mutar facesse de l’usate prove.
Adunque, ’l pianto che dagli occhi piove,
e ’l continuo sospiro e la rancura,
con la pietà de la mia vita oscura,
nient’è da mirar se lei non move.
Ma s’io potesse far come quel dio,
’sta donna muterei in bella faggia,
e vi farei un’el[la] era d’intorno;
ed un ch’io taccio, per simil de
muterei in uccel ched onni giorno

cantereb[b]e sull’el[ll]era salvaggia.\textsuperscript{164} 

The sonnet expresses in Ovidian language (“mutar facesse” [v. 4] and “nient’è da mirar” [v. 8]) that nothing could change the lady’s harshness and usual resistance: not his tears (v. 5), not his constant sighing or worrying (v. 6), not even Jupiter’s permission to take up a shape like his (v. 2). But if the poet had the god’s powers, the sirma contrasts, he would then change her (“muterei” [v. 10]) into a beech, surrounded by ivy, and change himself (“un ch’i’ taccio” [v. 11]) into a bird that would sing every day on that ivy. The sonnet thus shifts from the reality of the lady’s immutability in the fronte to Cino’s imagination in the sirma: there the poet imagines himself in the role of a god, creating outward change.

Because of the transformation theme in the sirma, critics identified it with precise Ovidian stories. In particular, Gianfranco Contini, Mario Marti, and Eugenio Savona reference the story of Philemon and Baucis, and Philomela and Procne. While these critics identify the Ovidian stories, they do not further elaborate on the reasons for the connections. However, it seems that Contini, Marti, and Savona are connecting the lady’s change into a “bella faggia” (v. 10) to the mention of a beech in the story of Philemon and Baucis (Met. 8.669) and their metamorphosis into a linden and an oak (Met. 8.620-21) in Ovid.\textsuperscript{165} Likewise, the poet’s change into a singing “uccel” (v. 13) would parallel the presence of transformed birds in the story of

\textsuperscript{164} “Even if Jupiter allowed it, I could not put on a shape that would make this beautiful, cold, and harsh lady alter her usual resistance. Therefore, it is no surprise that the tears that stream from my eyes and my continuous sighing and pain, with compassion for my hidden life, do not move her. But if I could act like that god, I would change that lady into a beautiful beech and I would add ivy around it, and, by the same token, I would change one whose name I do not mention into a bird and every day it would sing on the wild ivy.”

\textsuperscript{165} Cf. Contini, Poeti del Duecento, 2: 666n9; Marti, Poeti del Dolce stil nuovo, 571n1; Savona, Repertorio tematico del Dolce stil nuovo, 399.
Philomela and Procne (Met. 6.667-70). Yet in this sonnet of transformation there is nothing that links it directly to Ovid’s text: no names of Ovidian characters are mentioned, no words match: no one is changed into a beech in the Metamorphoses, no transformed Ovidian bird sings in the trees. Rather than recreating certain Ovidian stories, I suggest, in this sonnet Cino imagines a re-creation of the world of the Metamorphoses: his transformations refer to no specific Ovidian stories but could nevertheless fit perfectly in the world Ovid created. These transformations, moreover, are influenced by Ovid but also undeniably Cino’s: the poet would change himself into a bird singing on the “el[ll]era salvaggia” (v. 14)—an obvious reference to Selvaggia, his lady’s name.

“Trasmutò” was the verb Cino used in Amor, che viene armato a doppio dardo to describe Daphne’s metamorphosis (v. 8), and interestingly “trasmutare” is a hapax in his poetry. While it is not clear whether Cino was thinking of the Latin poet of change when he used the similar “trasformar” (also a hapax) in Dante, quando per caso s’abbandona (CXXVIII, v. 8), his addressee Dante Alighieri surely made the connection. Here is Cino’s poem and Dante’s subsequent response:

Dante, quando per caso s’abbandona
lo disio amoroso de la speme
che nascer fanno gli occhi del bel seme
di quel piacer che dentro si ragiona,
i’ dico, poi se morte le perdona
e Amore tiela più de le due estreme,
che l’alma sola, la qual più non teme,
si può ben trasformar d’altra persona.
E ciò mi fa dir quella ch’è maestra
di tutte cose, per quel ch’i’ sent’anco
entrato, lasso, per la mia fenestra.
Ma prima che m’uccida il nero e il bianco,
da te che sei stato dentro ed extra,

Io sono stato con Amore insieme
dalla circulazion del sol mia nona,
e so com’egli afrena e come sprona
chi ragione o virtù contra gli sprieme
fa com’ che [‘n] la tempesta suona
credendo far colà dove si tuona
esser le guerre de’ vapori sceme.
Però nel cerchio della sua palestra
liber arbitrio già mai non fu franco,
si che consiglio invan vi si bilestra.
Ben può co’ nuovi spron punger lo fianco;
e qual che sia ’l piacer ch’ora n’adestra,

166 Cf. Marti, Poeti del Dolce stil nuovo, 571n4; Savona, Repertorio tematico del Dolce stil nuovo, 399.
In his sonnet to Dante, Cino wonders whether the soul can transform love by moving from one person to another. In a letter that accompanied his response sonnet, Dante similarly asks “utrum de passione in passionem possit anima transformari” (“whether the soul can pass from passion to passion” [Ep. III, 2]). In Dante’s sonnet Io sono stato con Amore insieme, this transformation is not explained in Ovidian language: his discourse is rather one of “liber arbitrio” (v. 10), the lack of free will that one has in the face of Love’s power, as Love can change one’s love’s interest.169

In the letter that accompanies the sonnet, however, Dante approaches the matter differently. The obvious connection between the letter and the sonnet is the notion of experience. In the letter, Dante offers “experientia” (“experience” [Ep. III, 5]) as the first proof that leads him to accept Cino’s claim. In the sonnet, the fronte narrates the poet’s personal experience with

167 “Dante, when by chance it happens that the love-desire despair of that hope which the eyes cause to grow from the fair seed of beauty revolved in the mind, then I say that—if death reprieves her, and if Love controls her more than the two extremes—the soul, left to herself and fearing nothing more now, is fully at liberty to change to another person. And I’m led to say this by her who is mistress in all things, because of him who I feel has entered once more, alas, at my window. But before the black and the white kill me, I should like to hear from you—who have been both inside and out—whether my opinion is ill founded.”

168 “I have been together with Love since my ninth revolution of the sun, and I know how he curbs and spurs, and how under his sway one laughs and groans. He who urges reason or virtue against him acts like one who raises his voice in a storm, thinking so to lessen the conflict of the clouds, where the thunder rolls. Thus within his arena’s bounds free will was never free, so that counsel looses its shafts in vain there. Love can indeed prick the flank with new spurs; and whatever the attraction may be that is now leading us, follow we must, if the other is outworn.”

169 For the discussion of the powerlessness against Love in the sonnet exchange between Dante Alighieri and Dante da Maiano (which also featured a reference to Ovid), see Chapter 2, section 1.
Love: the long time the poet spent with Love has made him an experienced lover—or at least an expert in Love’s powers. But the rest of Dante’s argument in the letter is built on “ratio” and “auctoritas” (“reason” and “authority” [Ep. III, 5]).¹⁷⁰ The reason Dante cites to accept Cino’s claim is that “every faculty (“potentia”) not destroyed after consummation is naturally reserved for another.” Therefore, also the seat of love (“potentia concupiscibilis” [Ep. III, 5]) could be receptive to another passion. As authority Dante cites Ovid, more precisely a passage that “directly and literally” regards the matter and is located in the fourth book of the Metamorphoses or as Dante calls it, “De Rerum Transformatione” (Ep. III, 7):

equidem in fabula trium sororum contentricum in semine Semeles, ad Solem loquens, qui, nymphis alis derelictis atque neglectis in quas prius exarserat, noviter Leucothonen diligebat: ‘Quid nunc, Hyperione nate’, et reliqua.

[in the story of the three sisters who were contemptuous of the son of Semele, addressing the Sun, who after he had deserted and neglected other nymphs of whom he had previously been enamoured, was newly in love with Leucothoë, ‘What now, Son of Hyperion,’ and what follows.]

Before discussing the relevance of the Ovidian story of Leucothoë, Dante first locates it within the frame story of the Metamorphoses: the three daughters of Minyas refuse to participate in the festivities for Bacchus and pass their time telling each other stories. Leucippe, the second storyteller, narrates the story of Sol, who often changes his love interest. This reference to the storytelling sisters is perhaps the earliest clear indication that the poet is really familiar with the structural organization of Ovid’s epic. Furthermore, Dante also explicitly refers to the text of the Metamorphoses: he quotes the half verse “quid nunc, Hyperione nate” (“What use to Hypérion’s son” [Met. 4.192]), assuming Cino knows where to find the rest of the passage. And indeed in what follows in the Metamorphoses, we read what Dante summarized in the letter:

¹⁷⁰ For a detailed reading of the letter that focuses on the notion of authority, see Albert R. Ascoli, Dante and the Making of a Modern Author (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 122-29.
ureris igno nouo

[you were burning . . . with a strange new flame]

(Met. 4.195)

diligis hanc uniam, nec te Clymeneque Rhodosque
nec tenet Aeaeæ genetrix pulcherrima Circes,
quaeque tuos Clytie quamuis despecta petebat
cconcubitus ipsoque illo graue uulnus habebat
tempore; Leucothoe multarum obliuia fecit.

[None but Leucothoë drew him. Clymene, Rhodos and Perse, / Aeaean Circe’s beautiful mother,
were all forgotten – / and Clytië too; although he has scorned her, she still was eager / to lie in
his arms, and this new turn of events had wounded her / deeply. Leucothoë made him forget
many earlier passions.]

(Met. 4.204-08)

This explicit reference to and the rare quotation from the story of Sol and Leucothoë in
Dante’s letter has been used as an argument to accept the Dantcean authorship of the sonnet Nulla
mi parve mai più crudel cosa. (After its exclusion from the De Robertis edition of 2002,
however, we can consider the matter of attribution closed.)

Nulla mi parve mai più crudel cosa
di lei per cui servir la vita lago,
ché ’l suo desio nel congelato lago,
ed in foco d’amore il mio si posa.
Di cosi dispietata e disdegnosa
la gran bellezza di veder m’appago;
e tanto son del mio tormento vago
ch’altro piacere a li occhi miei non osa.
Né quella ch’a veder lo sol si gira,
e ’l non mutato amor mutata serba,
ebbe quant’io già mai fortuna acerba.
Dunque, Giannin, quando questa superba
convegno amar fin che la vita spira,

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171 Domenico De Robertis discusses the exclusion of the sonnet in Dante Alighieri, Rime, in Le
Opere di Dante Alighieri, Edizione Nazionale a cura della Società Dantesca Italiana, ed.
Domenico De Robertis, 3 vols. (Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 2002), 2: 949, 954, 1112,
1116, 1120, 1130-31, 1138, 1190. Gianfranco Contini summarizes the earlier discussions on the
sonnet’s authorship in Dante Alighieri, Rime (Turin: Einaudi, 1939; rpt. 1995), 266.
This sonnet stands out within the corpus of medieval Italian lyric poetry for several reasons. First, just like Cino, the poet abandons the other lyric poets’ preference for a limited group of Ovidian characters and introduces a different Ovidian story. Concretely, in this sonnet, the poet laments the lady’s extreme harshness and believes himself suffering more than “that girl who turns herself toward the sun and in her changed form maintains her unchanged love” (vv. 9-10). That girl is Clytie, who, abandoned by Sol for Leucothoë, fails to win her lover back and languishes away as a heliotrope (Met. 4.234-70)—one of the “deserted and neglected” nymphs Dante mentioned in his letter to Cino (Ep. III, 7). Also similar to Cino, the poet reverses gender roles, comparing himself with the female victim of the cruel male Sol. But unlike the transformations in Cino’s sonnet Se conceduto mi fosse da Giove, here the identification with the Ovidian character is explicitly related to the text of the Metamorphoses. The verses “Né quella ch’a veder lo sol si gira, / e ’l non mutato amor mutata serba” (vv. 9-10) bear an undeniable resemblance to Ovid’s words “uertitur ad Solem mutataque seruat amorem” (“[the heliotrope] turns / on its stem to its lover the Sun, still keeping faith in its new form” [Met. 4.270]).

A sonnet that translates so literally a line from Ovid’s epic in Italian is exceptional in the lyric poetry of this period. It is tempting to consider it Dante’s, since Dante employs the story of Sol and Clytie in his sestina Al poco giorno ed al gran cerchio d’ombra (see section 2) and returns more than once to its surrounding stories in the Metamorphoses (the stories of Pyramus

172 “Nothing seems to be more cruel to me than the lady for whose service I abandon life, since her desire rests in a frozen lake, and mine in fire of love. I am pleased to see the great beauty of such a cruel and scornful woman; and I am so much yearning for my agony, that nothing else dares to be pleasing to my eyes. The girl who turns herself toward the sun and in her changed form maintains her unchanged love, had not a more bitter fortune than me. Therefore, Giannin, since I have to love this arrogant woman until the end of my life, have some pity on me.”
and Thisbe, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, and Cadmus in the *Commedia*, and the story of Sol and Leucothoë in the letter to Cino da Pistoia). However, for its un-Dantean rhyme scheme and its placement in a separate folio, *Nulla mi parve mai piú crudel cosa* is rightly excluded from Dante’s canon; the thematic connection with other Dantesque texts is compelling but far from sufficient. Moreover, the use of Ovidian material from the *Metamorphoses* is quite limited in Dante’s *rime*. Not even one Ovidian character is named in his *rime*; the only mention of a classical figure is that of the Virgilian character Dido in the canzone *Così nel mio parlar vogli’esser aspro*. Therefore, it is precisely with Dante’s *rime petrose*, the series of four poems to which this canzone belongs, that a discussion of Dante’s interest in Ovid’s works should start.

### 3.2 Dante’s *petrose*: Testing Out New Techniques

The *rime petrose* stand out in Dante’s lyric oeuvre because of their return to the *trobar clus*, the experimentation with form, and the presence of the “donna Petra.” But the series of four poems also marks the turn of the lyric poet Dante toward classic literature as a new source of literary influence. This moment can even be traced precisely in time, as the astronomic periphrasis from the opening stanza of *Io son venuto al punto della rota* dates the canzone to

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173 In both Moore’s and Vazzana’s concordances, Book 4 of the *Metamorphoses*—the book to which all these stories belong—is the most frequently mentioned (eleven times): cf. Moore, *Studies in Dante*, 349 and Vazzana, *Dante e “la bella scola,”* 149.

December 1296. Dante’s interest in the classics, and in Ovid in particular, also emerges explicitly from prose writings from around that period: in the prose commentary in the *Vita nuova*, Dante mentions examples from the “litterati poete” (XXV, 3) Virgil, Lucan, Horace, and Ovid, and quotes the first two lines of Ovid’s *Remedia amoris* (XXV, 9). In the *petrose*, we do not find such direct quotations as in his prose work. Instead, Dante incorporates all the innovations identified in the first section of this chapter: the re-creation of the world of the *Metamorphoses*, gender reversal in comparisons with Ovidian characters, and the introduction of new Ovidian myths besides the stories of Narcissus and Pyramus and Thisbe. Moreover, Dante finds other ways to include elements from the stories of named (Dido) and unnamed (Medusa and Clytie) classical characters, testing out some of the techniques he will use more frequently to integrate Ovidian material in the *Commedia*. In these poems, Dante integrates both central and peripheral elements from Ovidian stories, and combines several different Ovidian sources at once—traits that also characterize his reading of Ovid in the *Commedia*.

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175 This precise dating places the *petrose* earlier than probably most of the sonnets discussed in section 1 of this chapter. Cino’s *Dante, quando per caso s’abbandona* is dated by the letter exchange with Dante written during his exile, and in general Cino was writing later than Dante. I started with Cino’s poems and the sonnet *Nulla mi parve mai piú crudel cosa* because they all adopt a similar set of clearly recognizable Ovidian features, while Dante’s *petrose* are more complex, as we will see in this section.

176 Dante’s first, indirect expression of interest in Ovid is found in the early sonnet *Savere e cortesia, ingegno ed arte*, which responds to Dante da Maiano’s *Amor mi fa si fedelmente amare*. As I discussed in Chapter 2, Dante da Maiano considers the knowledge (“leggenda” [v. 11]) from Ovid’s work useless against the power of love. Dante Alighieri indirectly discusses the value of this kind of knowledge when he includes “savere” (v. 1) as one of the graces and virtues that can win over the lady’s heart.
One of the petrose’s “basic ideas,” as Robert Durling and Ronald Martinez call it, is the figure of Medusa.\footnote{Durling, Martinez, Time and the Crystal, 105.} Never mentioned by name, the Gorgon with the petrifying glance indeed oversees all four petrose. Dante does not strictly replicate the story as he without doubt knew it from Lucan’s Pharsalia (9.619-99) and Ovid’s Metamorphoses (4.612-20; 772-803). Instead, he combines his classical sources and selects both central and peripheral elements from the stories, scattering them throughout the poems—techniques new to Dante’s work. In the canzone Io son venuto al punto della rota, for example, the description of the winds rising from the sand of Ethiopia (vv. 14-16) recalls details from Lucan’s description of the Libyan desert lands (Phars. 9.338-40; 488-89), leading up to the story of Medusa in the Pharsalia.\footnote{Dante: “Lèvasi della rena d’Etïopia / il vento peregrin che l’aere turba, / per la spera del sol ch’ora la scalda.” (“The pilgrim wind that darkens the air rises from the sands of Ethiopia, now heated by the sun’s sphere.”); Lucan: “tum magis impactis breuius mare terraque saepe / obuia consurgens: quamuis elisus ab Austro, / saepe tamen cumulos fluctus non uincit harenae.” (“Then as the ships were driven further aground, the sea became more shallow / and the land rose up to meet them often: although the waves are struck / by the Auster, yet often they do not surmount the mounds of sand.”); “alligat et stantis adfusae magnus harenæ / agger, et inmoti terra surgente tenentur.” (“A great rampart of piled-up sand fettered even / those still standing, and they were held immobile as the ground rose.”) The canzone’s mention of the “rena d’Etiopia” (“sands of Ethiopia” [v. 14]) becomes “Libia con sua rena” (“Libya . . . [with] her sands”) in Inf. 24.85 in a larger passage (Inf. 24.85-90) that is also inspired by the same book of the Pharsalia.} Ovid’s version in the Metamorphoses mentions the “Libycas . . . harenas” (“the Libyan desert” [Met. 4.617]), turned into a snake pit by the blood dripping from Medusa’s cut off head (Met. 4.618-20). This passage in Ovid is immediately followed by a description of Perseus’ travel (Met. 4.621-26) that will share several meteorological elements with the second stanza of Io son venuto. For instance, Dante mentions the clashing winds (vv. 14-15), comparing them to a raincloud (v. 21) that
crosses the sea (v. 17) and passes several times the extremities of the world (v. 19)—the northern hemisphere represented by the Bear constellations, the southern by the Crab constellation. All these elements mirror elements of the description of Perseus’ journey in the *Metamorphoses*. Furthermore, Ovid’s “gelidas Arctos” (“the Bears in the north” [*Met. 4.625*], or the seven-star constellation Ursa Major) is later taken up in the third stanza of *Io son venuto* in “le sette stelle gelide” (“the seven freezing stars” [v. 29]). A third classical source for the description is found in Seneca’s *Quaestiones naturales*, in the passage where the philosopher discusses the winds (*Quaest. Nat. 5.18.2*).

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179 Dante: “Lèvasi della rena d’Etïopia / il vento peregrin che l’aere turba, / . . . / e passa ’l mare . . . / . . . / questo emisferio chiude e tutto salda; / . . . e cade in bianca falda / di fredda neve ed i noiosa pioggia.” (“The pilgrim wind that darkens the air rises from the sands of Ethiopia . . . and crossing the sea, . . . [it] encloses and blocks up all our hemisphere . . . and falls in white flakes of chill snow and dreary rain.”); Ovid: “Inde per immensumuentis discordibus actus / nunc huc, nunc illuc exemplo nubis aquosae / fertur et ex alto seductas aequore longe / despectat terras totumque superuolat orbem. / ter gelidas Arctos, ter Cancri brachia uidit, / saepe sub occasus, saepe est ablatus in ortus.” (“Driven from there by the warring winds through the vast empyrean, / Perseus was wafted this way and that, like a scudding raincloud. / Poised high in the ether he looked right down to the earth / such a distance below, as he traversed the whole of the world in his flight. / Three times he sighted the Bears in the north and the great-clawed Crab / in the south; he would often be swept to the west, then back to the east.”)

180 “deinde ut imbres terris subministrarent idemque nimios compescerent. Nam modo adducunt nubes, modo deducunt, ut per totum orbem pluviae dividi possint. In Italian auster impellit; aquilo in African reicit; etesiae non patiuntur apud nos nubes consistere; idem totam Indian et Aethiopiam continuis per id tempus aquis irrigant.” (“Second, to supply rain for the earth while checking excessive moisture, for the winds collect clouds in one place, scatter them in another, in order that precipitation may be distributed all over the world. The Auster drives rainfall to Italy; the Aquilo sends it back to Africa. The Etesian winds do not permit rain clouds to stay in our part of the world, yet during their season they irrigate all India and Ethiopia with continuous rain.”) Cf. Kenelm Foster, Patrick Boyde, *Dante’s Lyric Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 2: 262nn14-16. See also Fenzi, “Le rime per la donna Pietra,” 301nn77-80. For a more detailed discussion of the connections between Seneca’s *Naturales Quaestiones* and Dante’s *Io son venuto*, see Robert M. Durling, “‘Io son venuto’: Seneca, Plato, and the Microcosm,” *Dante Studies* 93 (1975): 95-129.
In these few verses, Dante thus combines elements from different classical sources in a highly selective manner. Both Lucan and Ovid, for example, describe the desert sands of Libya, not Ethiopia as Dante does. But Ethiopia is mentioned in the surrounding passages: in Ovid it is Perseus’ next stop (Met. 4.668-69) and the place where Perseus narrates how he decapitated Medusa; Lucan describes Medusa’s petrification of entire Ethiopian tribes (Phars. 9.650-51). Dante’s technique here consists in selecting peripheral and descriptive elements from precisely those stories whose essential traits he incorporates as well.

Medusa’s essential trait is of course her petrifying glance. The poet oscillates between the fear of being turned into stone (e.g., Io son venuto, vv. 71-72) and the painful realization that he was already petrified (e.g., Amor, tu vedi ben che questa donna, v. 18). Enrico Fenzi lists numerous lines from the Medusa tale and other stories in the *Metamorphoses* that could have inspired several verses of the four petrose. Indeed, petrification is one of the most common transformations in the *Metamorphoses* and Ovid’s text offers a comprehensive lexicon to describe this kind of metamorphosis: the sensation of cold and frost; the setting in winter; the comparison with marble, stones, and rocks; the person’s paleness and stony veins. Yet, it has not been previously noted that Ovid’s exile poetry even more closely conforms to the images of the

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181 Ovid: “gentibus innumeris circumque infraque relictis / Aethiopum populos Cepheaque conspicit arua” (“. . . passing an infinite number of countries around and below him. / He finally sighted the realm of Ethiopian Cépheus.”); Lucan: “. . . uicina coletones / Aethiopum totae riguerunt marmore gentes.” (“entire tribes / of Ethiopians, living near, grew stiff in marble.”)


183 Gilles Tronchet lists all thirty-five instances in *La métamorphose à l’oeuvre: recherches sur la poétique d’Ovide dans les Métamorphoses* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 578.
petrose. For instance, the following passage from the *Epistulae ex Ponto* (1.2.23-36) sounds like a miniature *petrosa*:

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adde loci faciem nec fronde nec arbore tecti,
et quod iners hiemi continuatur hiems.
hic me pugnantem cum frigore cumque sagittis
   cumque meo fato quarta fatigat hiems.
fine carent lacrimae, nisi cum stupor obstitit illis:
et similis morti pectora torpor habet.
felicem Nioben, quamvis tot funera vidit,
quae posuit sensum saxea facta mali!
vos quoque felices, quarum clamantia fratrem
cortice velavit populus ora novo!
ille ego sum, lignum qui non admitt
o in ullum:
ille ego sum, frustra qui lapis esse velim.
ipsa Medusa oculis veniat licet obvia nostris,
amittet vires ipsa Medusa suas.184
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Written in the first person, this fragment from the *Epistulae ex Ponto* shares with the *petrose* the personal tone that is absent from the *Metamorphoses* fragments. These fourteen verses unite the very basic ideas of the *petrose*—only the amorous aspect is missing. First, the passage describes the harsh climate and the barren winter (one of Ovid’s main complaints about his place of exile), and its effects on both the landscape and the poet’s mood. In that sense, the external “frigor” (v. 25) leads to the internal experience of “stupor” (v. 27) and “torpor” (v. 28). The poet of change is stuck in an unchangeable world where the finality of metamorphosis seems the only imaginable escape. He considers his own characters from the *Metamorphoses* fortunate (the named Niobe in vv. 29-30 and the unnamed sisters of Phaeton in vv. 31-32) and hopes in

184 “Add to this the aspect of a land protected by neither leaf nor tree, and that lifeless winter without break runs into winter. Here am I fighting with cold, with arrows, with my own fate, in the weariness of the fourth winter. My tears are limitless save when a lethargy checks them, and a deathlike stupor possesses my breast. Happy Niobe, though she saw so many deaths, for she lost the ability to feel pain when she was turned to stone. Happy you also whose lips, in the act of calling upon your brother, the poplar clothed with new bark. I am one who am transformed into no wood, I am one who in vain wish to be a stone. Should Medusa herself come before my eyes, even Medusa will lose her power.”
vain to be the inanimate objects they had become (vv. 33-34). The futile desire to be a stone, the
second of those objects, refers back to Niobe’s metamorphosis (vv. 29-30) and also anticipates
the mention of Medusa (vv. 35-36): the poet imagines himself to be the only person who would
remain unaffected by Medusa’s powers. This fragment from Ovid’s exile letters thus combines
several motifs, starting with the winter weather and ending with Medusa, going from winter and
external cold to internal cold, from external freezing to petrification and Medusa. As these same
motifs are fundamental to the petrose, this connection marks the beginning of Dante’s interest in
Ovid’s exile poetry.

While Medusa’s presence is felt in the four petrose, in the sestina Al poco giorno ed al
gran cerchio d’ombra, the central classical figure is the unnamed Clytie: the nymph abandoned
by Sol who was also featured in Nulla mi parve mai piú crudel cosa. Vanni Bartolozzi points out
how in the fourth stanza the lover’s flight “per piani e per colli” (“over plains and hills” [v. 21])
recalls Perseus’ flight to Medusa’s dwelling place “per agros / perque uias” (“through the fields
and along the ways” [Met. 4.779-80]). The majority of references, however, come from the story
of Clytie.185 Already in the first stanza, for example, the description of the poet’s desire that is
“barbato nella dura pietra” (“rooted in the hard stone” [v. 5]) recalls the description of how
Clytie slowly becomes rooted in the ground (Met. 4.266; 4.269).186 The mention in the same

185 For a short discussion of Medusa, see Bartolozzi, “Ambiguità e metamorfosi,” 11; for a more
detailed examination of the Clytie passage (Met. 4.256-70), see 15-16.

186 “membra ferunt haesisse solo.” (“They say that her limbs caught fast in the ground.”); “illa . . .
quamuis radice tenetur.” (“. . . [the heliotrope], which is firmly rooted.”) In Rime, 158n5,
Contini notes that the word “barbato” is used in one of Guittone’s letters and in Brunetto Latini’s
Tesoretto. I add the later occurrence in “ellera abbarbicata” (“ivy . . . gripped”) in Inf. 25.58, in
my understanding a connection unnoted in the commentary tradition; see also Sara Storm-
Maddox, “The ‘Rime Petrose’ and the Purgatorial Palinode,” Studies in Philology 84, no. 2
stanza that “si perde lo color nell’ erba” (“the grass loses its colour” [v. 3]) recalls how Clytie’s limbs lose color and change into bloodless “herbas” (Met. 4.266-67). Just as the poet of Nulla mi parve mai piú crudel cosa, Dante identifies with the female character of the story.

Durling and Martinez revisit Bartolozzi’s reading of the connections between the Ovidian Clytie and the poet of Al poco giorno, and make the flower in which she changes the emblem for the sestina, calling both Ovid’s story and Dante’s sestina “heliotropic in structure and theme.” Indeed, in the Metamorphoses Ovid sometimes mimics the kind of metamorphosis a character undergoes in the structural aspects of his text. For instance, in the story of Narcissus and Echo (Met. 3.339-510), the nymph Echo’s transformation consists of losing her voice and being turned into an echo. Ovid cleverly applies the principle of echo to the passage’s metrical scheme: when talking to her love interest Narcissus, Echo just repeats the last word(s) of his sentences, which are so well-chosen that her “answers” create different sentences in their own

187 “. . . partemque coloris / luridus exsangues pallor conuertit in herbas.” (“. . . a bloodless pallor / changed her complexion in part to leaves of a yellowish green.”) Besides these two instances, Bartolozzi (“Ambiguità e metamorfosi,” 15-16) singles out five more Ovidian verses he considers of particular interest for Al poco giorno: Met. 4.260 // Al poco giorno, vv. 35-36; Met. 4.264 // Al poco giorno, v. 17; Met. 4.264-65, 260 // Al poco giorno, v. 14; Met. 4.265 // Al poco giorno, v. 23. I do not exclude that these verses might have contributed in conceptualizing certain images of the sestina, but I fail to find substantial overlap in the language, or even the content of the passages. Furthermore, Bartolozzi at no point indicates from which edition of the Metamorphoses he is quoting, which is problematic for Met. 4.260: Bartolozzi reads “nympharum impatiens” and connects it with “trae de la mente nostra ogn’altra donna” (“she takes every other woman from our mind” [v. 14]), while “impatiens” is a later correction of the reading “patiens” that most manuscripts have. The most recent Tarrant edition (2004) has the Bentley correction “nimborum patiens.”

188 Durling, Martinez, Time and the Crystal, 121.

189 Durling, Martinez, Time and the Crystal, 113.
right. Durling and Martinez identify a similar mimetic practice in the story of Sol and Clytie, viewing the structure of the passage to be like that of the sunflower. But applied to Dante’s sestina, the notions of heliotropic structure and theme pose some problems. Starting with the structure of the poem, what does it really mean that this sestina’s “formal principles . . . follow the movement and tropic turns of the sun”? The organization of the sestina’s rhyme-words, the 
retrogradatio cruciata, is indeed undeniably cyclic, but this formal aspect is typical of every sestina. Even when combining the formal and thematic aspects of this sestina, Al poco giorno does not demonstrate a consistent connection to the movement of the sun. Out of the six words that are shuffled around in the sestina’s fixed rhyme scheme, “ombra” is the only rhyme-word that is related to the movement of the sun. In that respect, Petrarch’s first sestina A qualunque animale alberga in terra (RVF 22) is far more “heliotropic” with the rhyme-words “sole” (“sun”), “giorno” (“day”), “stelle” (“stars”), and “alba” (“dawn”).

The movements of the sun are not completely absent from this sestina, but their importance is not felt over the entire poem. Doubling in Ovid’s story as both star and god in love, in Al poco giorno, the sun is initially the star whose light is seen more or less over the course of the seasons. Especially in the first two stanzas of the sestina, it is through the sun that the cycle of seasons is described: the lack of sunlight in the winter in the first stanza—“Al poco giorno ed al gran cerchio d’ombra” (“To the short day and the great circle of shadow” [v. 1])—and the sunrays in the spring in the second—“il dolce tempo che riscalda i colli” (“the season that warms the hills” [v. 10]). Moreover, the movement from winter (vv. 1-3) to spring (vv. 10-

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190 For example, when the nymph Echo only repeats the last words of Narcissus’ sentence “ante . . . emoriar, quam sit tibi copia nostri” (“May I die before / you enjoy my body” [Met. 3.391]), her reply “sit tibi copia nostri!” actually means “enjoy my body” (Met. 3.392).

191 Durling, Martinez, Time and the Crystal, 113.
12) at the extremities of the first two stanzas encircles verses that describe the unchangeability of the poet’s desire (vv. 4-6) and the immovability of the lady (vv. 7-9). But the rest of the sestina stays set in the spring and the attention shifts almost entirely to the poet and the lady, with nature figuring in the background. Except for the rhyme-word “ombra,” the sun almost entirely disappears from the sestina.

Only in one instance does the sun reappear in its double Ovidian meaning of star and lover. As pointed out before, the poet identifies with the female character Clytie whose love for Sol remains unaltered, even though it is unrequited. This renders the lady of the sestina the counterpart of the Ovidian Sol: it is in this respect that we should read the verse “dal suo lume non mi può far ombra” (“from her light I can find no shadow” [v. 23; my emphasis]), where the lady is also both star and lover. Moreover, a previous verse from the same stanza seems to indicate that Ovid was on Dante’s mind as well. Describing the lady’s incurable wounds, Dante writes that “l colpo suo non può sanar per erba” (“nor can her blows be healed by grass” [v. 20]). This description reprises “quod nullis amor est sanabilis herbis” (“no herbs have the power

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192 I propose the following breakdown:

Stanza 1: vv.1-3: nature  
vv. 4-6: poet  
Stanza 2: vv. 7-9: donna  
v. 10-12: nature  
Stanza 3: poet and donna  
Stanza 4: poet and donna  
Stanza 5: poet and donna  
Stanza 6: vv. 31-33: nature  
vv. 34-36: poet  
Envoy: v. 37: nature  
vv. 38-39: donna and poet
to cure the disease of . . . love” [Met. 1.523]), taken from the story of Apollo and Daphne, the first love story starring Sol and also the very first love story of the whole Metamorphoses.¹⁹³

Taking all these elements into account, I thus temper Durling and Martinez’s “heliotropic” reading of Al poco giorno, because the formal argument is based on features that are present in every sestina. Moreover, some of the Ovidian motifs or thematic connections that Durling and Martinez and Bartolozzi establish between Ovid’s story of Clytie and Dante’s sestina are by no means only present in Ovid’s work. (For instance, the theme of unaltered love after rejection is not exclusively found in Ovid’s story of Sol and Clytie.) At the same time, these critics identified textual connections between Ovid and Dante, which again illustrate Dante’s technique of incorporating central and peripheral elements from different sources, in this case from the stories of Sol and Clytie, and Apollo and Daphne.

The third classical character of importance in the petrose is Dido. As the only classical character mentioned in all of Dante’s rime, she appears in the canzone Così nel mio parlar vogli’esser aspro, where Love threatens the poet “con quella spada ond’elli ancise Dido” (“with the sword with which he slew Dido” [v. 36]). Dido is mainly a Virgilian character and, as Durling and Martinez show, the structure of the canzone parallels somewhat the narrative line of Book 4 of the Aeneid.¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, Virgil’s opening description of the night in which Dido

¹⁹³ Cf. Durling, Martinez, Time and the Crystal, 120.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Durling, Martinez, Time and the Crystal, 183.
dies (Aen. 4.522-32) contains the same contrast between the external tranquility of nature and the internal agitation of the lover found in the opening stanza of Io son venuto.\footnote{195}

Dido, however, is also an Ovidian character, one of the letter-writing heroines of the \textit{Heroides}. (In the \textit{Metamorphoses}, her story is reduced to four verses [14.78-81] and instead of Dido she is called obscurely the “Sidonian” [14.80].) Small but distinct elements from Dido’s letter to Aeneas (Her. 7) are found in the petrose. In Così nel mio parlar, Love attacks with the sword that killed Dido (v. 36), which is essentially a rewriting of the letter’s epitaph “PRAEBUIT AENEAS ET CAUSAM MORTIS ET ENSEM; / IPSA SUA DIDO CONCIDIT USA MANU” (“FROM AENEAS CAME THE CAUSE OF HER DEATH, AND FROM HIM THE BLADE; FROM THE HAND OF DIDO HERSELF THE STROKE BY WHICH SHE FELL” [Her. 7.195-96]).\footnote{196} In her letter, Dido accuses Aeneas of stony-heartedness, as if he were brought up by wild animals: “te saevae progenuere ferae” (“you [were] begotten . . . of savage wild beasts” [Her. 7.38]). In the canzone \textit{Amor, tu vedi ben che questa donna}, the poet attributes a similar origin to the lady’s harsh behavior: “si che non par ch’ell’abbia cuor di donna, / ma di qual fiera l’ha d’amor più freddo” (“so that she seems to have a heart, not of a lady, but of whatever wild beast has its heart most cold to love” [vv. 7-8]).\footnote{197} This third and last example


\footnote{196} Cf. Durling, Martinez, \textit{Time and the Crystal}, 182, 407n69.

\footnote{197} In her accusations in the \textit{Heroides}, Dido includes rocks, mountains, and oaks in Aeneas’ birthplace (Her. 7.37). In Aen. 4.365-67, she explains Aeneas’ harsh character as the result of an upbringing by wild animals in a harsh natural setting. In the Tristia, Ovid attacks friends and
from the *petrose* combines the innovations identified in the first section of this chapter with other ways of incorporating Ovid’s writings that are distinctively Dantean. Just as with respect to the central and peripheral elements from the Medusa and Clytie stories, Dido’s presence is composed of a patchwork of different sources scattered throughout the *petrose*: demonstrated most explicitly in her mention by name in *Così nel mio parlar*, but also distinctly present in *Amor, tu vedi ben* and *Io son venuto*. Also in this Ovidian story, Dante reverses the gender roles and associates himself with the female character.

### 3.3 The Shared Experience of Exile: Ovid in Dante’s Exile Works

Several medieval Italian poets were exiled and wrote poems about that experience. In Chapter 2, we found only a few, disjointed examples where Ovid’s exile poetry inspired medieval Italian exile poetry, especially in the works of Guido Guinizzelli and Guido Cavalcanti. Dante, on the other hand, often turns to the language of the exiled Ovid to talk about his own exile.\(^{198}\) The *Tristia* and the *Epistulae ex Ponto* are the main Ovidian works Dante uses to address the theme of exile, but he draws upon passages from the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti* that explicitly deal with the theme as well. Examples of this influence are found in Dante’s lyric poems written in exile, his treatises and letters, and in the *Divina Commedia*.

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\(^{198}\) For an overview of all instances in Dante’s oeuvre where he refers to his exile, see Giuseppe De Marco, “L’esperienza di Dante *exul immeritus* quale autobiografia universale,” *Annali d’Italianistica* 20 (2002): 21-44.
Featuring other exiles as a way to address one’s own is a technique Ovid himself practiced. In the story of the Greek hero Evander, narrated in the Fasti and considered one of the passages Ovid reworked during his exile, the goddess Carmentis’ words of consolation to her exiled son seem directed to the exiled poet as well (Fasti 1.479-96). Dante inserts a verse from this consolation speech in the first of two reflections on his exile in the De vulgari eloquentia. In his discussion of the origin of language, Dante mentions the town of Pietramala whose inhabitants believe they speak the language Adam spoke. Referring to people’s tendency to consider their hometown the birthplace of everything good, Dante is determined not to fall into that chauvinistic trap (

Nos autem, cui mundus est patria velut piscibus equor, quanquam Sarnum biberimus ante dentes et Florentiam adeo diligamus ut, quia dileximus, exilium patiamur iniuste, rationi magis quam sensui spatulas nostri iudicii podiamus.

[But I, who have the world as my fatherland just as the fish the sea, although I drank at the Arno before I cut my teeth and love Florence so much that for that love I suffer unjust exile, I brace the shoulders of my judgment on reason rather than the senses.]


200 Even though, as Elaine Fantham notices in “The Role of Evander in Ovid’s Fasti,” Arethusa 25 (1992): 168, “Ovid in exile exploits for Evander the topoi which his personal poems admit to be no comfort.” The most direct commentary on Ovid’s own exile in the Evander episode is the interjection “felix, exilium cui locus ille fuit!” (“fortunate indeed to have that ground for place of exile!” [Fasti 1.540]): in his letters, Ovid greatly complaints about the location of his exile and repeatedly requests to be at least relocated, if he cannot return to Rome.

Dante’s feelings about his hometown are strong—so strong they led to his “exilium . . . iniuste” (“unjust exile”)—but he suggests that reason rather than emotional attachment should prevail in serious matters such as the origin of language. In this context, the reprise of Carmentis’ words that “omne solum forti patria est, ut piscibus aequor” (“Every land is to the brave his country, as to the fish the sea” [Fasti 1.493]) seems to rationalize the emotional experience of exile as well.

In Dante’s poetry written in exile, however, the emotional power of Ovid’s language prevails over reason. The canzone Amor, da che convien pur ch’io mi doglia contains several verses formulated with the exile letters clearly in mind. The desperation of not knowing what to do, the feeling of being dead and alive at the same time, the absence of intelligent interlocutors: all these sentiments expressed in Amor, da che convien can be traced back to the Tristia and the Epistulae ex Ponto.\(^{202}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ma più non posso} & \quad \text{sed nunc quid faciam?} \\
\text{(but I can do nothing else)} & \quad \text{[But now, what am I to do?]}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(Amor, da che convien, v. 38)} & \quad \text{(Tristia 4.1.29)}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{qui vivo e morto, come vuoi mi palpi} & \quad \text{non aliter stupui, quam qui Iovis ignibus ictus vivit et est vitae nescius ipse suae.} \\
\text{[here, just as you will, you knead me,} & \quad \text{[I was as dazed as one who, smitten by the} \\
\text{both alive and dead]} & \quad \text{fire of Jove, still lives and knows not that he} \\
\text{(Amor, da che convien, v. 64)} & \quad \text{lives.]} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(Amor, da che convien, v. 64)} & \quad \text{(Tristia 1.3.11-12)}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{202}\) The first and third examples are also found in Paola Allegretti’s edition of the Canzone montanina (Verbania: Tararà, 2001), 33n38, 41-42n68. For verses 67-68 of the canzone, Allegretti also adds Tristia 3.11.9 and Tristia 3.11.13-14. She lists several more intertextual connections between Amor, da che convien and Ovid’s works (17-18n3, 18n4, 19-20n7, 21-22n11, 28-29n28, 30-31n32, 32-33n37, 42-43n73, 46-47n83, 47-48n84) which I find unconvincing for the same reason cited in the discussion of Bartolozzi’s, Durling’s, and Martinez’s reading of the petrose: the mentioned thematic or verbal connections are found in Ovid, but not exclusively linked to his poetry.
Moreover, in the letter to Moroello Malaspina that accompanies the canzone *Amor, da che convien* (Ep. IV), Dante highlights the canzone’s theme of exile even further. Introducing the canzone in the letter, Dante describes his reunion with Love after he left Moroello’s court and arrived at the banks of the Arno. Although he was “enrolled in the service of liberty” (Ep. IV, 2) and had resolved to “stay away from women and songs about women” (Ep. IV, 4), he finds himself nevertheless again powerless against Love’s attack. In this description, Dante does not

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203 On the dating of the letter, see Foster, Boyde, *Dante’s Lyric Poetry*, 2: 330, which briefly discusses the generally accepted 1307-08 dating in favor of the alternative 1310-11 dating, suggested by Francesco Torraca, review of *Dante e Firenze. Prose antiche con note illustrative ed appendici* by Oddone Zenatti, *Bullettino della Società Dantesca Italiana*, n.s. 10 (1903): 139-60.
emphasize his own exile but explicitly casts Love as the exile. He involves himself only implicitly by describing Love’s act of exiling his own free will (Ep. IV, 3-4).

Atque hic [Amor] ferox, tanquam dominus pulsus a patria post longum exilium sola in sua repatrians, quicquid eius contrarium fuerat intra me, vel occidit vel expulit vel ligavit. Occidit ergo propositum illud laudabile quo a mulieribus suisque cantibus abstinebam; ac meditationes assiduas, quibus tam celestia quam terrestria intuebar, quasi suspectas, impie relegavit; et denique, ne contra se amplius anima rebellaret, liberum meum ligavit arbitrium, ut non quo ego, sed quo ille vult, me verti oporteat. (my emphasis)

[And he [Love], raging like a despot expelled from his fatherland, who returns to his native soil after long exile, slew or expelled or fettered whatsoever within me was opposed to him. He slew, then, that praiseworthy resolve which held me aloof from women and from songs about women; and he pitilessly banished as suspect those unceasing meditations wherein I used to ponder the things of heaven and of earth; and, finally, that my soul might never again rebel against him, he fettered my free will, so that it behoves me to turn me not whither I will, but whither he wills.] (my emphasis)

This letter’s treatment of the theme of exile is characteristic of the exile letters as a whole. There are several moments where Dante explicitly addresses his exile: in the salutations of Epistles III, V, VI, and VII where he calls himself a “(Florentinus) exul immeritus”

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204 Michelangelo Picone and Paola Allegretti both discuss Love’s appearance as exile in the letter: see Picone, “Sulla canzone ‘montanina’ di Dante,” L’Alighieri 42 (2002): 111-12 and Allegretti, “La canzone ‘montanina’: Dante tra Ovidio e Melibeo,” Dante Studies 124 (2006): 126. Picone focuses in particular on Dante’s use of “relegavit” (v. 24) in reference to his “unceasing meditations” on “the things of heaven and of earth” (vv. 22-23), which Picone takes as a clear allusion to the Commedia. A classical Latin judicial term, “relegare” indicates the sending away of a person to a place relatively close to Rome for a limited period of time without the loss of citizenship (cf. Oxford Latin Dictionary, s. v. “relegare”), which was a less serious and definite punishment than “exilium.” As Picone correctly points out, Dante could have encountered this distinction in Ovid’s exile letters, where Ovid indeed repeatedly stresses that he was not an “exul” but a “relegatus” (e.g., Tristia 2.137, 5.11.21-22). According to Picone, Dante then implies that his “unceasing meditations” were only temporarily sent away, not definitely exiled, which would offer an interesting insight into the genesis of the Commedia. However, strictly adhering to the different meanings of “exul” and “relegatus,” one would have to go as far as to state that Dante had already given up the hope of ever returning to Florence, since in the letters, Dante presents himself explicitly as an “exul” and never a “relegatus” (see the salutations of Epp. III, V, VI, and VII, where Dante calls himself an “[Florentinus] exul immeritus” and Ep. II, 4 where he repeats the same formulation)—a statement that does not conform with the content of these letters. In “Dante’s ‘canzone montanina,’” The Modern Language Review 55 (1960): 359-70, Colin G. Hardie argues that the donna of the canzone is Beatrice, but that hypothesis is convincingly refuted by Foster and Boyde in Dante’s Lyric Poetry, 2: 338-40.
(“[Florentine] undeservedly in exile”); in his lament on his poverty in exile in Ep. II (4, 7-8); in his words of consolation directed to Cino da Pistoia, but also to himself, in Ep. III (5); and in the most personal letter to a friend in Florence where he rejects the conditions for his return (Ep. IX).

At the same time, Dante also addresses his personal experience indirectly through a more general discussion of the effects of exile. The letter to Moroello furnished an example of this practice.

Another comment on exile is found in Dante’s letter to the princes and peoples of Italy (Ep. V), where he compares the state in which Italy finds itself to the oppression of the tribe of Judah in Egypt. But the “lamentations of the multitudes in captivity” (“ullulatum universalis captivitatis” [Ep. V, 4]) are heard, and a hopeful Dante announces to the people of Italy the arrival of “another Moses” (“Moysen alium” [Ep. V, 4]), who will “lead them to a land flowing with milk and honey” (“ad terram lacte ac melle manantem perducens” [Ep. V, 4]). Dante repeats this biblical exile narrative in the letter to the Emperor Henry VII (Ep. VII)—the other Moses of Ep. V—concluding his plea to the emperor with a comparison between the current state of the Italian people and the Babylonian captivity: “remembering the most holy Jerusalem, we mourn as exiles in Babylon” (“sacrosancte Ierusalem memores, exules in Babilone gemiscimus” [Ep. VII, 30]). In these two instances, Dante attributes to the people of Italy a metaphorical state of exile, thus including his own literal experience of exile in all of Italy’s figurative one.

205 In Dantis Alagherii Epistolae. The Letters of Dante (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), 48n5, Paget Toynbee suggests that this clause echoes a verse from Jeremiah, “a voce captivitatis Babylonis commota est” (50:46). I would add the second half of the verse, “et clamor inter gentes auditus est” (“At the sound of the capture of Babylon the earth shall tremble, and her cry shall be heard among the nations”). In that sense, Dante further emphasizes his discussion of exile with a verse from biblical exile literature.

206 In this passage, Dante again emphasizes the theme of exile with echoes from biblical exile poetry: “super flumina Babylonis ibi sedimus et flevimus cum recordaremur Sion . . .” (“By the
Dante also applies the same language of exclusion, captivity, and exile to his discussion of love. His letters to Cino da Pistoia (Ep. III) and Moroello Malaspina (Ep. IV) both introduce and comment on a love poem (Io sono stato con Amore insieme and Amor, da che convien pur ch’io mi doglia, respectively), suggesting a parallel reading in which matters of love also become reflections on Dante’s exile. Dante sets up this parallel in the letter to Moroello by repeatedly using exile as a metaphor and switching roles between the one who exiles and the one who is exiled. On the figurative level, the explicit comparison of Love with an exile returning to his homeland (Ep. IV, 3) implies that Dante actually exiled Love, since Dante was determined to cease writing love poetry but instead write about matters of heaven and of earth (Ep. IV, 4). Love, the returned exile, then becomes the one who exiles, explicitly banishing Dante’s serious meditations (Ep. IV, 4). In short, once-exiled Love in turn “exiles” the thoughts of Dante, the one who exiled him.

The importance of this figurative exile narrative becomes clear when comparing it with one of the moments where Dante talks about his actual exile. In the letter to Moroello, Dante

rivers of Babylon / there we sat down and there we wept / when we remembered Zion . . .” [Ps. 137:1-3]). Cf. Toynbee, *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*, 100n6.


These two poems (and letters) are also connected by their shared discussion and vision of the theme of free will: both present a lover who seems powerless against Love (cf. Foster, Boyd, *Dante’s Lyric Poetry*, 2: 331).
describes Love with the apposition “pulsus a patria” (Ep. IV, 3), which is almost identical to the apposition he used to describe himself in his letter to the counts Oberto and Guido da Romena (“a patria pulsus” [Ep. II, 3]). By paralleling his actual exile so explicitly with Love’s figurative exile, he strengthens the connection between the figurative and literal level and sets up his own expectations that one day, just as Love in the figurative narrative, he too will “return to his native soil after long exile” (“post longum exilium sola in sua repatrians” [Ep. IV, 3]).

This connection between love and exile is even more apparent in Dante’s letter to Cino da Pistoia (Ep. III).\textsuperscript{209} In this letter, Dante explicitly addresses the theme of exile in his concluding words of consolation to his fellow exile Cino (Ep. III, 8), but the preceding discussion of love (Ep. III, 2-7) can be read through the lens of exile as well. In his opening words to Cino, Dante draws upon Ovid’s first, programmatic letter of the Tristia, which immediately puts the discussion in a broader perspective than one simply concerning love. Thanking Cino for making him the arbiter in the question as to whether the soul can pass from passion to passion (Ep. III, 2), Dante foresees how his answer could enhance “the renown of [his] name” (“titulum mei nominis” [Ep. III, 2]). In those words, he echoes two Ovidian distiches:\textsuperscript{210}

donec eram sospes, tituli tangebar amore,
quae rendreque mihi nominis ardor erat. (. . .)
clam tamen intrato, ne te mea carmina laedant;
non sunt ut quondam plena favoris erant.

\textsuperscript{209} In our previous discussion of this letter and the accompanying sonnets in section 1 of this chapter, we have focused on Cino’s and Dante’s Ovidian language of transformation and Dante’s quotation from the Metamorphoses.

[In the time of my security I was touched by the love of renown, and I burned to win a name. . . .
[To his book:] And yet enter secretly, that my verses may not harm you; they are not popular as once they were.]
(Tristia 1.1.53-54, 63-64; my emphasis)

The phrase “titulum mei nominis” seems particularly well-chosen, given Ovid’s further reflections on “titulus” in this opening letter of the Tristia. Ovid explains how he has moved away from one genre (love poetry as the “praecceptor amoris”) to another (the current exile letters): “‘inspice . . . titulum: non sum praecceptor Amoris; / quas meruit, poenas iam dedit illud opus’” (“Examine the title [Tristia]. I am not Love’s teacher; that work has already paid its deserved penalty” [1.1.67-68]). By that token, the central question of Dante’s letter—whether the soul can pass from one passion to another—can be extended beyond the realm of love. The loss of a beloved woman, as Albert R. Ascoli suggested, can be understood as the loss of a beloved city, or even, I would add, the loss of a public. By referencing Ovid’s first exile letter, Dante connects his concerns about his waning fame with those of Ovid and thus again creates a shared experience of exile—similar to the way he included his own exile into the figurative state of exile he created for Italy in Epistles V and VII. Moreover, in exile Dante was exploring how to successfully move from the passion for one genre to that for another. Or in his own words from his letter to Moroello: how to move from “women and the songs about women” to “unceasing meditations” about “the things of heaven and of earth” (Ep. IV, 4)—a transition, as the lyrics from this time show, that was not an easy one.

The opening letter of the first book of the Tristia inspires Dante in another way as well. In Chapter 2, we discussed how in that letter Ovid attributes several human qualities to his book. For instance, Guido Cavalcanti followed Ovid’s example and also gave his personified canzone

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211 Ascoli, Dante and the Making of a Modern Author, 126.
Perch’i’ no spero di tornar giammai instructions on avoiding enemies. In the envoy of Amor, da che convien, Dante reprises two other elements from Ovid’s letter: (1) both Ovid and Dante send their book / canzone off to the city from where they were exiled; and (2) both poets call their poetry little and unpolished. Ovid calls his book “parve” (“little” [v. 1]), “incultus” (“unadorned” [v. 3]), with literally rough edges (vv. 11-12). Dante comprises all this information in the adjective “montanina” (v. 76), literally “little mountain dweller.”

Parve—nec invideo—sine me, liber, ibis in urbem, ei mihi, quo domino non licet ire tuo!
 vade, sed incultus, qualem decet exulis esse; infelix habitum temporis huius habe. ( . . . )
 nec fragili geminae poliantur pumice frantes, hirsutus passis ut videare comis.

[Little book, you will go without me—and I grudge it not—to the city, whither alas your master is not allowed to go! Go, but go unadorned, as becomes the book of an exile: in your misfortune wear the garb that befits these days of mine. . . . Let no brittle pumice polish your two edges; I would have you appear with locks all rough and disordered.]

(Tristia 1.1.1-4, 11-12)

O montanina mia canzon, tu, vai:
forse vedrai Fiorenza, la mia terra, che fuor di sé mi serra, vota d’amore e nuda di pietate.
Se vi vai dentro, va’ dicendo . . .

[My mountain song, go your way. Perhaps you will see Florence, my city, that shuts me out from her, void of love and stripped of compassion. If you should enter, say . . .]

(Amor, da che convien, vv. 76-80)

In the envoy of Io sento sì d’Amor la gran possanza, another canzone written in exile, Dante also addresses and sends off his canzone. This time, he gives specific instructions about whom to greet (vv. 97-100):

Canzone, a’ tre men rei di nostra terra

212 Cf. Allegretti, Canzone montanina, 43-44n76. For a discussion of the appearance of Ovid’s books and its poetic implications, see Williams, “Representations of the Book-Roll in Latin Poetry.”
te n’anderai prima che vadi altrove:
li due saluta, e ’l terzo fa’ che prove
di trarlo fuor di mala setta in pria.

[My song, before you go anywhere else, go to the three least vicious in our city. Greet two of them; but as for the third, I want you first to try to draw him away from bad company.]

Not only does the mention of the “tre men rei” and “li due . . . e ’l terzo” anticipates Ciacco’s prophecy in the *Commedia*, where he mentions the remaining two “giusti” (“just men”) in Florence (*Inf. 6.73*), it also reprises a passage from Ovid’s *Tristia* (1.5.33-34):

vix duo tresve mihi de tot superestis amici:
cetera Fortunae, non mea turba fuit.

[Scarce two or three of you, my friends, once so many, remain to me; the rest were Fortune’s following, not mine.]

In Dante’s poetry, letters, and treatises written in exile, the language of Ovid’s exile poetry becomes an important means to address his own exile and create a shared experience of exile. And, as this last example from the envoy of *Io sento sì* indicates, Dante continues this practice in the *Divina Commedia.*

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Chapter 4: Metapoetics in Ovid and Dante’s *Commedia*

In the introduction to *Dante and Ovid: Essays in Intertextuality*, Madison U. Sowell notes that “Ovid’s appeal to Dante is . . . one of style, not simply one of subject.”²¹⁵ Dante’s debt to Ovid, he suggests, goes beyond placing the classical myths in Christian contexts, but instead “reaches to the core of Dante’s poetics—to how and why he creates poetry.”²¹⁶ Sowell does not further elaborate on this suggestion, but nevertheless touches on the issue central to my discussion in this chapter: the role Ovid plays in Dante’s definition of his poetics. It is indeed common to describe Dante’s relationship with the Latin poet in terms of rewriting, reinventing, or even correcting the pagan stories within the Christian context of the *Commedia*. This chapter, however, focuses on a different, unexplored aspect of that relationship: I will look at how Ovid’s reflections on poetics in his own writings inform Dante’s metapoetic musings. I will illustrate that these metapoetic reflections systematically provide Dante with the language and imagery to describe his own poetic method. Looking at metapoetic moments in Ovid’s writings and in the *Commedia*, I will first discuss how in *Inferno* 24 and 25 Dante works with metanarrative passages from the *Metamorphoses* to formulate his own vision on change and novelty (section 1). Next, I will show how Dante’s poetic statements on writing vernacular love poetry in *Purgatorio* 24 have Ovidian roots (section 2), and lastly, I will discuss how Dante’s selection of Ovidian material reveals the poetic tone he wants to set in the opening cantos of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* (section 3).

²¹⁵ Sowell, “Dante and Ovid,” 11.

4.1 How to Tell a Novel Story about Change: Poetic Authority and Innovation in *Inferno* 24 and 25

In Chapter 2, we saw that Italian lyric poets explicitly evaluated their readings of Ovid’s love poetry in their poems and openly questioned the worth of the Latin poet’s work for their own writing. Dante was one of the vernacular poets engaged in such discussions and he continues this practice in the *Commedia*. What characterizes Dante’s version of this practice in the *Commedia* is that besides talking about Ovid to address poetics, Dante also talks directly to Ovid and uses his words to formulate poetic statements. Already in Ovid’s first appearance (his mention as third member of the “bella scola” of poets in *Inf.* 4.94) all these characteristics are present. In this episode, the guide Virgilio introduces the pilgrim to the classical poets Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan, who welcome the pilgrim as one of their own. Even though Dante deliberately withholds the content of their conversation—they were “parlando cose che ’l tacere è bello” (“talking of things about which silence here is . . . seemly” [*Inf.* 4.104])—it is hard to imagine these poets discussing anything else than poetry. Besides featuring Ovid and other poets talking about their art, Dante also models this encounter and his inclusion into a group of poets after a passage in Ovid. In his autobiography in *Tristia* 4.10, Ovid describes his poetic friendships (4.10.41-52) and his place among love poets (4.10.51-58):

Vergilium vidi tantum: nec avara Tibullo
tempus amicitiae fata dedere meae.
(successor fuit hic tibi, Galle, Propertius illi;
quartus ab his serie temporis ipse fui).
utque ego maiores, sic me coluere minores,
notaque non tarde facta Thalia mea est.

[Vergil I only saw, and to Tibullus greedy fate gave no time for friendship with me (Tibullus was thy successor, Gallus, and Propertius his; after them came I, fourth in order of time). And as I reverenced older poets so was I reverenced by the younger, for my Thalia was not slow to become renowned.]
Both Ovid and Dante self-consciously include themselves in a group of poets with which they identify, respectively calling themselves its fourth (*Tristia* 4.10.54) and sixth member (*Inf.* 4.102) in order of time.¹¹⁷

Dante negates this identification with Ovid in the Latin poet’s second mention in the *Commedia*. Whereas he was silent about the content of his conversation with Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan (*Inf.* 4.104), in *Inferno* 25 Dante gives us the precise topics about which Ovid and Lucan should be silent (*Inf.* 25.94-102):

Taccia Lucano omai là dov’ e’ tocca
del misero Sabello e di Nasidio,
e attenda a udir quel ch’or si scocca.
Taccia di Cadmo e d’Arethusa Ovidio,
ché se quello in serpente e quella in fonte
converte poetando, io non lo ’nvidio;
ché due nature mai a fronte a fronte
non trasmutò si ch’amendue le forme
a cambiar lor matera fosser pronte.²¹⁸

In these three tercets, Dante silences Ovid and Lucan and claims to outdo them with an innovative double metamorphosis. These verses are taken from the ditch of theft (*Inf.* 24.61–25.151) where three metamorphoses occur: the death and resurrection of the Pistoian thief Vanni Fucci (*Inf.* 24.97-111), the union of a man and a snake (*Inf.* 25.49-93), and the interchange between a man and a snake (*Inf.* 25.103-41). Dante juxtaposes the first two metamorphoses

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¹¹⁷ David Wallace discusses the sixth of six topos, found also in Jean de Meun, Boccaccio, and Chaucer, in “Chaucer and Boccaccio’s Early Writings,” in *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento*, ed. Piero Boitani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 150-151 and *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 80-82.

²¹⁸ “Let Lucan now be silent, where he sings / of sad Sabellus and Nasidius, / and wait to hear what flies off from my bow. / Let Ovid now be silent, where he tells / of Cadmus, Arethusa; if his verse / has made of one a serpent, one a fountain, / I do not envy him; he never did / transmute two natures, face to face, so that / both forms were ready to exchange their matter.”
against that third metamorphosis: the Vanni Fucci episode and the man-snake union are presented as familiar and common metamorphoses, such as the ones found in Lucan’s story of Sabellus and Nasidius and Ovid’s stories of Cadmus and Arethusa. These stories are the benchmarks against which Dante deems his third metamorphosis to be an original transformation, superior to any metamorphosis described by Lucan and Ovid.

As every study of these cantos points out, these pagan stories are—together with the unnamed Ovidian stories of the phoenix and of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus—important intertexts that shape the metamorphoses in these cantos. At first sight, Dante’s borrowings from Lucan and Ovid seem to create tensions with his claims of originality and authority over these authors—tensions that are further enhanced by the fact that the very sin this ditch punishes is theft. However, it is precisely by rewriting these pagan metamorphosis stories in the Commedia that Dante clarifies his distinctive vision on change and novelty, both in the poetic and metaphysical sense. The pagan metamorphosis stories he selected as a medium to illustrate that vision in Inferno 24 and 25 are carefully chosen. In the first place, these stories are unified thematically, all featuring images of snake transformations. At the same time, all the Ovidian source texts for these cantos are structurally connected, belonging to the same cycle of stories or structural unit within the Metamorphoses. And, most importantly, in these larger structural units, Ovid explicitly addresses the themes of change and poetic novelty, which offers Dante the starting point to express his own view on these topics.

The three main Ovidian source stories for Inferno 24 and 25 are the transformation of the phoenix (source for the first metamorphosis in Dante), the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus

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219 The exception is the Ovidian story of Arethusa.

220 On this tension, see especially Cioffi, “The Anxieties of Ovidian Influence,” 77-100.
(source for the second metamorphosis), and the story of Cadmus (source for the third metamorphosis)—three stories that are interconnected within the structure of the *Metamorphoses* and all part of theoretical reflections on change. First, the transformation of the phoenix (*Met.* 15.391-407) and a brief version of the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (*Met.* 15.317-20) are both part of Pythagoras’ speech in the last book of the *Metamorphoses* (*Met.* 15.60-478), a speech that theorizes change. The extended version of the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (*Met.* 4.274-388) and the story of Cadmus (*Met.* 4.563-603) both pertain to the Theban cycle, a series of stories dedicated to the family of Cadmus, the founder of Thebes.

The story of Cadmus obviously belongs to this cycle, which starts with the foundation of Thebes (*Met.* 3.1-142) and ends with the metamorphosis of Cadmus and his wife Harmonia into snakes (*Met.* 4.563-603). But more explanation is required to place the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus within this cycle.

Within the Theban cycle, the misadventures of Cadmus’ offspring are interrupted two times: first by the story of Tiresias (*Met.* 3.316-38) which introduces his prophecy on

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222 After disturbing the mating of serpents, Tiresias was turned into a woman and seven years later again into a man. For that reason, Juno and Jupiter made him the guide in their discussion whether men or women enjoy sex the most. Juno was not pleased with his answer (men) and blinded him; Jupiter gave him the gift of prophecy as compensation. This short episode did not escape Dante’s attention: in the ditch of sorcery, the poet retells the Ovidian passage with precision: “Vedi Tiresia, che mutò sembiante / quando di maschio femmina divenne, / cangiandosi le membra tutte quante; / e prima, poi, ribatter lì convenne / li duo serpenti avvolti, con la verga, / che riavesse le maschili penne” (“And see Tiresias, who changed his mien / when from a man he turned into a woman, / so totally transforming all his limbs / that then he had to strike once more upon / the two entwining serpents with his wand / before he had his manly plumes again” [*Inf.* 20.40-45]). Because of his sex change, the character of Tiresias is often mentioned in discussions on Hermaphroditus, see Mario Labate, “Storie di instabilità: l’episodio
Narcissus and Echo (*Met.* 3.339-510), and then by the three stories told by the daughters of Minyas (*Met.* 4.1-415). The last of these three stories is the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (*Met.* 4.274-388). However, the long episode of the Minyades is not completely detached from the Theban cycle: Book 3 ends with the worship of Cadmus’ grandchild Bacchus in Thebes (*Met.* 3.732-33); Book 4 opens with the refusal of Minyas’ daughters to participate in his cult. While the Theban women hail the god Bacchus on the streets, the three sisters remain inside the house to spin wool, telling stories to lighten their task. The connection between the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (one of the Minyades’ stories) and the story of Cadmus may seem to be a stretch, but Dante was perfectly aware of this structural connection. In fact, in his letter to Cino da Pistoia (previously discussed in Chapter 3), Dante confirms his understanding of the complicated structure of Books 3 and 4 of the *Metamorphoses*. Introducing the Ovidian story of Sol and Clytie, he correctly identifies how this episode belongs to the larger frame story of the storytelling daughters of Minyas. At the same time, he underlines this story’s connection to the *Metamorphoses’* Theban cycle by mentioning “the son of Semele,” Cadmus’ grandson Bacchus (Ep. III, 7):

equidem in fabula trium sororum contemptricum in semine Semeles, ad Solem loquens, qui nymphis alis derelictis atque neglectis in quas prius exarserat, noviter Leucothoë diligebat: ‘Quid nunc, Hyperione nate’, et reliqua.

[in the story of the three sisters who were contemptuous of the son of Semele, addressing the Sun, who after he had deserted and neglected other nymphs of whom he had previously been enamoured, was newly in love with Leucothoë, ‘What now, Son of Hyperion,’ and what follows.]

It is in this frame story of the weaving and storytelling sisters that Ovid introduces the themes of change and poetic novelty whose influence is felt in Dante’s cantos. In the frame story, the

Metamorphoses’ first with several narrators, Ovid had already set up the metanarrative tone by combining the activities of weaving and storytelling, two activities that are traditionally used as each other’s proxies. But the passage becomes an explicit metanarrative reflection when, before telling their tales, the Minyades openly discuss the requirements of a good story. Defining what constitutes good storytelling in the Metamorphoses, the sisters repeatedly stress the importance of originality. The first sister (who is unnamed) goes through a list of possible stories she could tell (Met. 4.43-52) and eventually picks the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, “quoniam uulgaris fabula non est” (Met. 4.53), because it is not well-known. Similarly, the other sister Alcithoë rejects “uulgatos” or “common” stories (Met. 4.276) and selects the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus based on the criterion of novelty (Met. 4.276-84). In these passages, Ovid is obviously alluding to the Callimachean trope of novelty—the view that the poet should always walk untrodden paths. According to Callimachus, short writings should strive for innovation;


224 In contrast to these two sisters, Leuconoë simply announces the topic of her story and starts narrating (Met. 4.169-70).

225 Compare Ovid’s language here with, for example, Virgil’s Georgics 3.3-4: “cetera, quae uacuas tenuissent carmine mentes, / omnia iam uulgata” (“Other themes, which else had charmed
Ovid, however, applies Callimachus’ principle in a fifteen book-long epic composed of more than one hundred stories skillfully woven together. As scholarship on Ovid has shown, in each of the stories of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid works with existing material that he reinvents by focusing on new angles, adding different voices, and introducing structural changes. In short, Ovid metamorphosizes metamorphosis. The passage of the storytelling Minyades is one of the metanarrative moments in the *Metamorphoses* where Ovid through the voice of his characters addresses this poetics of novelty. The metanarrative tone of this passage resonated with Dante. This becomes most apparent when juxtaposing Alcithoë’s introduction to the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (Met. 4.276-84) with Dante’s address to Lucan and Ovid (Inf. 25.94-102).

In Alcithoë’s introduction, she defends her choice for poetic novelty and against familiarity; Dante’s address adopts the same poetic concepts and keywords:

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‘uulgatos taceo’ dixit ‘pastoris amores
Daphnidis Idaei, quem nympe paelicis ira
contulit in saxum (tactus dolor urit amantes);
non loquor ut quondam naturae iure nouato
ambiguus fuerit modo uir, modo femina Sithon.
te quoque, nunc adamas, quondam fidissime paruo,
Celmì, Ioui largoque satos Curetas ab imbri
et Crocon in paruus uersum cum Smilace flores
praetereo dulcique animos nouitate tenebo.226
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Taccia Lucano omai là dov’ e’ tocca
del misero Sabello e di Nasidio,
e attenda a udir quel ch’or sì scocca.
Taccia di Cadmo e d’Aretusa Ovidio,
ché se quello in serpente e quella in fonte
converte poetando, io non lo ’nvidio;
ché due nature mai a fronte a fronte
non trasmutò si ch’ amendue le forme
a cambiar lor mater fosser pronte.
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226 “No more of the loves – they are too well known – of the shepherd / of Ida, Daphnis, turned to a rock by a nymph’s proud anger / against her rival - lovers can be so wickedly jealous! Nor shall I tell how once, in breach of the laws of nature, / Sithon’s gender could alternate between male and female. / How about Celmis, who once looked after the baby Jupiter, / now transformed into steel? The Curétes, born of the rain-shower? / Or Crocus and Smilax, his loved one, changed into tiny flowers? / No, I shall charm your ears with a tale that’s completely new.”
The connection between these two passages manifests itself also on the level of word choice. Alcithoë promises a story with “dulci nouitate” (Met. 4.284), just as Dante at the end of canto 25 calls in “newness” as excuse if his pen has gone astray: “qui mi scusi / la novità se fior la penna abborra” (Inf. 25.143-44; my emphasis). Another verbal connection between Ovid’s and Dante’s texts is the use of the verb to silence: “taceo” in Alcithoë’s introduction (Met. 4.276); “taccia” in Dante’s address to Lucan and Ovid (Inf. 4.94, 97). There is of course a grammatical difference between Alcithoë’s simple present “I keep silent” and Dante’s exhortative subjunctive “let [Lucan / Ovid] keep silent.” At a first reading, each passage represents a different rhetorical trope: the Ovidian “taceo” together with “non loquor” (Met. 4.279) and “praetero” (Met. 4.284) turn Alcithoë’s introduction into a praeteritio, the rhetorical trope of mentioning without mentioning. And Dante’s repeated “taccia” is the Italian version of the Latin taceat topos, a formula used to express poetic superiority over predecessors. Dante’s passage, however, functions exactly like Alcithoë’s praeteritio. By mentioning the stories she will not discuss, Alcithoë actually gives a short outline of each of these stories. Similarly, by silencing the poets and their characters he will surpass, Dante names precisely the very stories


228 Note that in the list of the stories Alcithoë will not tell because of their lack of novelty, there is the otherwise unknown story of Sithon, who had been “ambiguus,” once a man, once a woman, in breach of the laws of nature (“naturae iure nouato” [Met. 4.279-80]). While this metamorphosis is considered an innovation, the figure of Sithon was probably too similar to Hermaphroditus to be considered truly “new.”

and authors that turn out to be fundamental to the shaping of his own metamorphoses in the
*Commedia.*

The ways in which Dante transforms these pagan source stories exemplify what the
“novità” he advocates in these cantos really means: in the three metamorphoses of *Inferno* 24
and 25, Dante shows how to tell a new story about change. For Dante, just as for Ovid, the novel
poetic creation is the result of the metamorphosis of existing material. Dante rightfully claims
that his third metamorphosis in *Inferno* 25 is innovative, as is the subject matter: neither in Lucan
nor Ovid we find the kind of two-dimensional metamorphosis Dante features. However, I will
show that to describe his metamorphosis Dante’s starting point remains the language and
imagery of pagan metamorphosis stories (as was the case for his first two familiar
metamorphoses). The three new metamorphoses Dante creates from pagan sources also address
the nature of novelty and change on the metaphysical level. In *Inferno* 24 and 25, Dante outdoes
Lucan and Ovid by turning their pagan stories of change into vignettes on the impossibility of
change for the damned souls in *Inferno.* Dante replaces the serene tone of the pagan sources with
violence and Christian parody in his new creations.

Dante addresses novelty and change not only in his descriptions of metamorphosis, but
also in the passages that surround them. In this way, he acknowledges the influence of Lucan and
Ovid, and reflects on his own poetic authority. Dante links Lucan to metamorphosis through the
episode of the soldiers Sabellus and Nasidius in his epic poem, the *Pharsalia.* In Book 9, Lucan
describes the march of Cato’s soldiers through the Libyan desert, or the “arua Medusae” (“fields
of Medusa” [*Phars.* 9.626]), a “loca serpentum” (“lands of snakes” [*Phars.* 9.859]). After a
lengthy excursus on the powers and death of the snaky-haired Medusa (*Phars.* 9.619-99), the

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230 Daniela Baroncini calls the passage “un esempio straordinario di citazione al negativo” in
The poet inserts a learned mini-catalogue of the different Libyan snakes and their distinguishing features (*Phars.* 9.700-33). Seven different snakes from that list cause the cruel and awful deaths of seven soldiers, depicted in a horribly explicit way (*Phars.* 9.734-838). Starting from the opening of the ditch of theft, Dante makes use of this classical material in verses that are constructed in a manner similar to the address to the poets in canto 25 (*Inf.* 24.85-90).

Più non si vanti Libia con sua rena; ché se chelidri, iaculi e faree produce, e cencri con anfisibena, né tante pestilenzie né si ree mostrò già mai con tutta l’Etìopia né con ciò che di sopra al Mar Rosso èe.

[Let Libya boast no more about her sands; / for if she breeds chelydri, jaculi, / cenchres with amphisbaena, / she never showed-with all of Ethiopia / or all the land that borders the Red Sea- / so many, such malignant, pestilences.]


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231 Cioffi called this passage “another *taceat nunc* proclamation” in “The Anxieties of Ovidian Influence,” 79.

232 In “The Anxieties of Ovidian Influence,” 80, Cioffi also insists on another Ovidian intertext for this passage. In *Metamorphoses* 4.615-20, Ovid narrates how drops of blood from Medusa’s decapitated head in contact with the Libyan earth turned into snakes. This passage, however, lacks the learned and exotic snake names we find in Lucan, a critically important consideration.
boasting that the throng of snakes he saw in this ditch surpasses the amount and diversity of serpents in Lucan’s Libyan desert. But when the poet begins to describe the specificity of *Inferno*’s snakes, he still turns to the vocabulary of the *Pharsalia*: “pestilenzie” (*Inf.* 24.88) picks up “pestis,” a word that frequently and almost exclusively appears in Book 9 of the *Pharsalia.* Dante, as we see here, creates the new from elements of the old, even as he simultaneously claims to outdo it.

This practice of building new poetic creations from pagan sources also characterizes the first of the three metamorphoses that follow: the death and resurrection of a soul who later will identify himself as the Pistoian thief Vanni Fucci (*Inf.* 24.97-111). Similes clarify the transformation of Vanni who is bitten in the neck by a snake, set aflame, dissolved into ashes, and finally returned to himself again. The first simile “[n]é O or i has ever been transcribed / so quickly” (*Inf.* 24.100) underlines the speed of the transformation. Critics have reversed the letters and interpreted the simile as a reference to the Ovidian Io, the girl turned heifer who writes words in the sand with her hoof in an attempt to give a sign to her father (*Met.* 1.649-50). But we should also consider how Dante here once again appropriates the passage on Sabellus and Nasidius. The death of the unfortunate Sabellus (“miseri . . . Sabelli” in *Phars.* 9.763; “misero Sabello” in *Inf.* 25.95) should be read together with Dante’s first metamorphosis. In the *Pharsalia*, Sabellus is attacked by a “tiny Seps” (“seps exiguis” [*Phars.* 9.764]) that bites him in the leg. This particular type of snake (as Lucan’s preceding snake catalogue indicated) was deadly (“tabificus”) and destroyed its victim’s bones

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233 “Pestis” in various derivations is found in *Pharsalia* 9.615, 620, 631, 725, 735, 745, 780, 788, 806, 845, 923, 927, 931.

and body (“ossa . . . dissoluens cum corpore” [Phars. 9.723]). Like Lucan’s soldier Sabellus, Dante’s Vanni Fucci completely dissolves. And, like Lucan, Dante inserts a simile to underscore the speed of the event.\footnote{In the Pharsalia, Lucan compares the speed of Sabellus’ transformation to fast-melting snow (Phars. 9.781-82). Lucan’s image could be read in connection with the opening simile of Inferno 24 where the “villanello” sees the world change face “in poca d’ora” (“in so few hours” [Inf. 24.14]) when the snow-like hoarfrost disappears.}

Moreover, Dante continues where Lucan leaves off (the dissolution of Sabellus) by adding the immediate resurrection of the dissolved soul. He compares Vanni Fucci’s transformation to the death and rebirth of the phoenix (Inf. 24.97-111) as asserted by the “gran savi” (Inf. 24.106). Ovid is clearly one of these great sages, as the details of Dante’s verses—such as the life span of the phoenix \footnote{“just so, it is asserted by great sages, / that, when it reaches its five-hundredth year \[1\], / the phoenix dies and then is born again; / lifelong it never feeds on grass or grain, / only on drops of incense and amomum \[2\]; / its final winding sheets are nard and myrrh \[3\].” (my emphasis)} such as the life span of the phoenix \footnote{“All these creatures can trace their beginnings to alien forms. / There’s one, however, which seeds and produces itself – the bird / the Assyrians call the phoenix. He doesn’t depend on the grass / or the grain, but lives on teardrops of incense and juice of amomum \[2\]. / Once his allotted span, five hundred years \[1\], is completed, / he promptly uses his talons and unsoiled beak to construct / a nest in the branches high at the top of a quivering palm-tree. / As soon as his}—derive from the last book of the Metamorphoses (Met. 15.391-400):

Haec tamen ex aliis generis primordia ducunt; una est quae reparet seque ipsa resemnet ales, Assyrii Phoenica uocant. non fruge neque herbis, sed turis lacrimis et suco uiuuiam amom [2]. haec ubi quinque suae compleuuit saeacula uitae [1], ilicis in ramis tremulaeae caccumine palmae ungubius et puro nidum sibi construit ore; quo simul ac casias et nardi lenis aristas quassaque cum fulva substra sui cinnama murra [3], se super inponit finitque in odoribus aeuuum.\footnote{“just so, it is asserted by great sages, / that, when it reaches its five-hundredth year \[1\], / the phoenix dies and then is born again; / lifelong it never feeds on grass or grain, / only on drops of incense and amomum \[2\]; / its final winding sheets are nard and myrrh \[3\].” (my emphasis)}
The details above draw attention to other aspects of the Ovidian source. In the *Metamorphoses*, the Greek philosopher Pythagoras mentions the phoenix as the only creature that renews itself ("reparat") and reproduces from itself ("sequipseresimet" [Met. 15.392]), in contrast with all other creatures that originate from others (Met. 15.391). Pythagoras’ description of the phoenix’s resurrection has a tender tone: a “paruumpheonica” ("a baby phoenix") is reborn from its father’s body (Met. 15.402). Dante turns this intimate vignette into a violent scene in the *Commedia*. After his resurrection, Vanni Fucci is still a “bestia” (Inf. 24.126), extremely vile in words (Inf. 24.122-51) and deeds (Inf. 25.1-3). As the phoenix is a symbol of the death and resurrection of Christ, the resurrection of the unchanged “bestia” Vanni grotesquely re-enacts this Christian truth.

The description of the phoenix is just a short episode in Pythagoras’ theoretical speech on change (Met. 15.60-478)—the longest passage in the *Metamorphoses* to address this theme explicitly. In this speech, Pythagoras illustrates that everything constantly changes—time, the seasons, our bodies, the elements, our cities, nations, the earth: “nihil est toto quod perstet in orbe; / cuncta fluunt, omnisque uagans formatur imago” ("In the whole of the world there is nothing that stays unchanged. / All is in flux. Any shape that is formed is constantly shifting" [Met. 15.177-78]). In the speech, strategically placed toward the end of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid’s Pythagoras understands change as an omnipresent force as much in the metaphysical

nест has been lined with spikes of the mildest nard, / with grated cinnamom, red-gold myrrh [3] and cassia bark, / he rests his body upon them and ends his life in their fragrance.” (my emphasis)

sense as in the poetic sense. Ovid’s reflection on the poetic meaning of change is best seen in Pythagoras’ speech, when he reprises several stories that were included in previous books of the Metamorphoses. These repeated stories are, as Karl Galinsky noted, “a constant reminder of how differently stories such as these could be told.”

Ovid’s yoking of the metaphysical and poetic meanings of change appealed to Dante, who also features change and novelty in these two senses in Inferno 24 and 25. Most explicitly, Dante combines both meanings in the address to Ovid, where he unites the semantically rich “converting” and the “writing of poetry” in “converte poetando” (Inf. 25.99). What “converte poetando” means to Dante, we see exemplified in the metamorphosis of Vanni Fucci: poetic change is created by turning a pagan metamorphosis story into a Christian parody; metaphysical change, on the other hand, is impossible in the first canticle, as the unchanged appearance and nature of Vanni Fucci shows.

Dante “poetically converts” his pagan sources in the same way in the second metamorphosis. But also in the prelude to this second metamorphosis, he addresses the notions


241 Other passages where Ovid yokes the philosophical/metaphysical and the poetic senses of change are the opening verses of the Metamorphoses, “In noua fera animus mutatas dicere formas / corpora” (“Changes of shape, new forms, are the theme which my spirit impels me / now to recite” [Met. 1.1-2]). In these verses, change—the “new forms”—also should be understood both in the metaphysical and poetic sense. In addition, in the description of the cosmogony (which immediately follows the opening verses) Ovid imagines the creator and the creation of the world as an artist creating a work of art (Met. 1.5-75). On the connections between the opening verses of the Metamorphoses and Pythagoras’ speech, see Barchiesi, Ovidio. Metamorfosi. Volume I, 136-37; on the creator/artist in Ovid’s cosmogony, see Stephen M. Wheeler, “Imago Mundi: Another View of the Creation in Ovid’s Metamorphoses,” The American Journal of Philology 116 (1995): 95-121.
of poetic authority and poetic influence through his choice of pagan sources. Before his outburst to Lucan and Ovid at the end of Inferno 25, Dante inserts the act of silencing into the action and interaction of the characters of the poem. After their encounter with the Pistoian thief Vanni Fucci (Inf. 24.97–25.16), the pilgrim and Virgilio see a furious centaur entangled in snakes. The pilgrim’s guide clarifies that this centaur is Caco and explains his presence in the ditch of theft (Inf. 25.17-33). His description is interrupted by the arrival of three more souls; one of them asks what has become of a certain Cianfa (Inf. 25.34-43). The pilgrim responds by silencing his guide (Inf. 25.44-45):

per ch’io, acciò che ’l duca stesse attento,
mi puosi ’l dito su dal mento al naso.

[At this, so that my guide might be alert, / I raised my finger up from chin to nose.]

This first act of silencing has been glossed by Madison U. Sowell who pointed out the double layer of the word “naso,” both as the actual body part and a pun on the cognomen of the poet Publius Ovidius Naso.\(^{242}\) In that sense, this gesture represents a switch in poetic influence that occurs precisely at that moment in the canto. Virgilio’s speech on Caco could have been an outspoken “Virgilian” moment, since the character is described at length in Virgil’s Aeneid (8.184-305). Instead, when the pilgrim silences his guide Virgilio, Dante silences Virgil’s Aeneid as the guiding text and turns to Ovid, featuring his version of Caco’s death (Fasti 1.575-78).\(^{243}\)

Dante immediately reinforces his choice for Ovid. After the pilgrim silences his guide


\(^{243}\) Cf. Barolini, Dante’s Poets, 226. Umberto Bosco lists the Virgilian and Ovidian elements of the characterization and points out Dante’s own striking additions. See his essay “La gara coi classici latini (canti XXIV – XXV dell’«Inferno»),” in Altre pagine dantesche (Caltanissetta-Rome: Salvatore Sciascia Editore, 1987), 104-05. Bosco, however, described the choice for the Ovidian version of Cacus’ death only as “curioso (ma non più che curioso).”
Virgilio and his Aeneid, the poet of the Commedia steps in and addresses the reader (Inf. 25.46-48):

Se tu se’ or, lettore, a creder lento
ciò ch’io dirò, non sarà maraviglia,
ché io che ’l vidi, a pena il mi consento.

[If, reader, you are slow now to believe / what I shall tell, that is no cause for wonder, / for I who saw it hardly can accept it.]

“Maraviglia” is the Ovidian catchword in this tercet. In the Metamorphoses, the Latin equivalents of “maraviglia”—in the form of the adjectives “mirum” and “(ad)mirabilis,” the noun “miraculum,” and the verb “(ad)miror”—are often used to describe the actual metamorphosis or the reaction of those who witness it. For example, metamorphosis is called a “factum mirabile” (“wonderful tale” [Met. 4.271]). A “mirabile!” is interjected in the middle of the description of a transformation (Met. 3.326). And those who witness a metamorphosis are often astonished (“admirantibus” [Met. 1.644]). Therefore, when Dante writes that it will be no “maraviglia” if the reader will have some difficulty at first to believe what he is about to read, it is no surprise that metamorphosis scenes follow. All these elements—the pilgrim silencing Virgilio after his speech on a more Ovidian than Virgilian character, the pun on Ovid’s cognomen, the use of the Ovidian word “maraviglia” just before a metamorphosis—render this first silencing gesture a cleverly constructed passage that in subtle ways addresses the issues of poetic influence.

The Ovidian intertext for the announced second metamorphosis (Inf. 25.49-93)—the union between a man and the snake—is the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (Met. 4.274-

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In this story, Ovid tells how the water nymph Salmacis desperately falls in love with the uninterested young boy Hermaphroditus and, attacking him underwater, transforms together with the boy into an androgynous being. In the description of his second metamorphosis, Dante includes elements from this Ovidian story in almost exactly the same order of the Latin source. Just like Ovid describes the snake-like entanglement of the nymph and the boy, Dante narrates how a snake attacks the man and attaches itself to him (Met. 4.362, 364 // Inf. 25.51 [1]). Like Ovid, Dante compares the entanglement to clinging ivy fixing itself upon a tree (Met. 4.365 // Inf. 25.58-59 [2]) and describes how the two creatures clung together (Met. 4.370 // Inf. 25.61 [3]). Both texts depict how the two merged into one body with one face, featuring “one face” at the beginning of the verse (Met. 4.373-75 // Inf. 25.71-72 [4]). And both Ovid’s transformed Hermaphroditus and Dante’s snake-man hybrid seemed “both two and none” at the same time (Met. 4.378-79 // Inf. 25.77-78 [5]).

implicat, ut serpens [1], quam regia sustinet ales sublimemque rapid (pendens caput illa pedesque alligat et cauda spatiantes implicat alas [1]), utue solent hederae longos intexere trucos [2], utque sub aequoribus deprensum polypus hostem continet ex omni dimissis parte flagellis. Perstat Atlantiades sperataque gaudia nymphae denegat; illa premit commissaque corpore toto sicut inhaerebat [3], “pugnes licet, improbe,” dixit, “non tamen effugies. ita diu ab eis istum nulla dies a me nec me diducat ab isto.” utu e solent hederae longos intexere truncos [2], Co’ piè di mezzo li avvinse la pancia e con l’altrui braccia prese; poi li addentò e l’una e l’altra guancia; li diretani a le cosce distese, e miseli la coda tra ’mbeducco e dietro per le ren sù la ritese. Ellera abbarbicata mai non fue ad alber si [2], come l’orribil fiera per l’altrui membra avviticchiò le sue. Poi s’appiccar [3], come di calda cera fossero stati, e mischiar lor colore, né l’un né l’altro già parea quel ch’era [5]: come procede innanzi da l’ardore.

245 Ettore Paratore reads “e tutto a lui s’appiglia” together with a verse that describes Sabellus’ death in the Pharsalia: “... miserì... in crure Sabelli / seps stetit exiguis; quem flexo dente...” (“a tiny Seps was fastened to / the leg of the miserable Sabellus; as it clung with cunning fang” [Phars. 9.763-64]). See “Lucano e Dante” in Antico e nuovo (Rome: S. Sciascia, 1965), 196. Also the later Dantesian verse “poi li addentò” (“and then it sank its teeth” [Inf. 25.54]) contains this image.
nec duo sunt sed forma duplex [5], nec femina dici nec puer ut possit, neutrumque et utrumque uidentur.246 per lo papiro suso, un color bruno che non è nero ancora e 'l bianco more. Li altri due 'l riguardavano, e ciascuno gridava: “Omè, Agnel, come ti muti! Vedi che già non se’ né due né uno.” Già eran li due capi un divenuti, quando n’apparver due figure miste in una faccìa, ov’eran due perduti [4]. Fersi le braccia due di quattro liste; le cosce con le gambe e ’l ventre e ’l cassò divenner membra che non fuor mai viste. Ogne primaio aspetto ivi era cassò: due e nessun l’imagine perversa parea [5]; e tal sen gio con lento passo.247

246 “She finally / held him tight in her coils, like a huge snake carried aloft / in an eagle’s talons, forming knots round the head and the feet / of the royal bird and entangling the flapping wings in its tail [1]; / or like the ivy which weaves its way round the length of a tree-trunk [2], / or else an octopus shooting all its tentacles out / to pounce on its prey and maintain its grip in the depths of the sea. / The boy held out like a hero, refusing the nymph the delights / that she craved for. Salmacis squeezed still harder, then pinning the whole / of her body against him, she clung [3] there and cried: “You may fight as you will, / you wretch, but you shan’t escape me. Gods, I pray you, decree / that the day never comes when the two of us here shall be riven asunder!” / Her prayer found gods to fulfill it. The bodies of boy and girl / were merged and melded in one. The two of them showed but a single / face [4]. You know, when a twig is grafted on to a tree, / the stock and branch will join as they grow and mature together; / so, when those bodies united at last in that clinging embrace, / they were two no more but of double aspect [5], which couldn’t be fairly / described as male or as female. They seemed to be neither and both.” (my emphasis)

247 “As I kept my eyes fixed upon those sinners, / a serpent with six feet springs out against / one of the three, and clutches him completely [1]. / It gripped his belly with its middle feet, / and with its forefeet grappled his two arms; / and then it sank its teeth in both his cheeks; / it stretched its rear feet out along his thighs / and ran its tail along between the two, / then straightened it again behind his loins. / No ivy ever gripped a tree so fast [2] / as when that horrifying monster clasped / and intertwined the other’s limbs with its. / Then just as if their substance were warm wax, / they stuck together [3] and they mixed their colors, / so neither seemed what he had been before [5]; / just as, when paper’s kindled, where it still / has not caught flame in full, its color’s dark / though not yet black, while white is dying off. / The other two souls stared, and each one cried: / “Ah me, Agnello, how you change! Just see, / you are already neither two nor one!” / Then two heads were already joined in one, / when in one face where two had been dissolved, / two intermingled shapes appeared to us [4]. / Two arms came into being from four lengths; / the thighs and legs, the belly and the chest / became such limbs as never had been seen. / And every former shape was canceled there: / that perverse image seemed to share in both- /and none [5]; / and so, and slowly, it moved on.” (my emphasis)
As in the first Dantean metamorphosis, Dante transforms Ovid’s pagan story into a parody of Christ’s double nature. When he creates an “imagine perversa” that seemed both two and none (Inf. 25.77-78), he is applying this Christian truth to two souls condemned to eternity in hell. This unnatural and perverse image is the result of Dante’s re-imagining the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus: in Ovid the actual union of the nymph and the boy is free from any sexual pleasure. Ovid’s Salmacis is only sexually violent in her words (Met. 4.320-28, 356, 370-72); before the union she can only steal kisses and touch the chest of Hermaphroditus who tries to escape (Met. 4.358-59). In Dante, however, the union of the man and the snake is explicit and sexual: the snake stretches out its feet toward the man’s thighs, moves his tail between them, and pulls it up behind the loins (Inf. 25.55-57). The poetic conversion occurring in this passage is one where Dante creates a caricature of Christ’s double nature by re-imagining the pagan transformation of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus.

In this novel poetic creation, Dante also contrasts his view on metaphysical change with that of his pagan source. As pointed out before, Ovid reprises the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in Pythagoras’ speech in Book 15 of the Metamorphoses—a speech to which the story of the phoenix, used in Dante’s first metamorphosis, also belonged. In theorizing how water can cause change, Pythagoras mentions Salmacis again (Met. 15.317-20):

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248 Cf. Barolini, Dante’s Poets, 224.

249 Barchiesi and Rosati compare the actual union to “una tranquilla tecnica botanica come l’innesto” (“a simple botanical technique like grafting”) referring to the verses “si quis conduceat cortice ramos, / crescendo iungi pariterque adolescere cernit” (“when a twig is grafted on to a tree, / the stock and branch will join as they grow and mature together” [Met. 4.375-76]). See Barchiesi, Rosati, Ovidio. Metamorfosi: Volume II, 269.
[And more astonishing still, there are waters with power to change / not only our bodies but even our minds. You must have heard of Sálmacis’ pool, whose waves emasculate men who have bathed there; / the Ethiopian lake.]

In this short reprise of the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, Ovid’s Pythagoras reflects on the metaphysical aspect of metamorphosis, making the interesting distinction between change of body (“corpora”) and mind (“animos”). This double change is not obvious even in the

Metamorphoses; for example, we just have to think of the previously mentioned story of Io: the girl’s body changed (from a girl into a heifer), but her mind did not (she still recognized and loved her family). But in Pythagoras’ speech, Ovid at least allows for the possibility of the mind to change—something that would be impossible in Dante’s Inferno, where there is no place for self-improvement. Therefore, Dante’s first metamorphosis, modeled after the death and resurrection of the Ovidian phoenix, actually demonstrates a striking lack of change in both body and mind. And the metamorphosis of the hybrid man-snake, modeled after the union of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, consists merely of a change to the outside, not the inside.

Dante still appeals to pagan metamorphosis stories in his third metamorphosis of the ditch of theft, the immediate interchange between a man and a snake (Inf. 25.103-41). In the address to Lucan and Ovid (Inf. 25.94-102), Dante announces this third metamorphosis as an innovative achievement compared with the two previous “uulgatos” transformations—to use the

\[250\] Dante might echo the “obscenae” waters of the spring Salmacis in “l’imagine perversa” (“perverse image” [Inf. 25.77]). The adjective “perversa” Dante uses to describe the union between snake and man is the same effect the spring will have on anyone entering its waters, as also explained at the end of the actual story in Book 4: “motus uterque parens nati rata uerba biformis / fecit et incesto fontem medicamine tinxit” (“Venus and Mercury both were moved and fulfilled the prayer / of their androgyne son by infecting the pool with a neutering tincture” [Met. 4.387-88]).
keyword of Alcithoë’s metapoetic reflection in the *Metamorphoses* (*Met.* 4.276). Describing this kind of metamorphosis is indeed Dante’s “novità” (*Inf.* 25.144): neither Ovid nor Lucan features a metamorphosis that consists of an immediate interchange between man and animal.\(^{251}\)

However, the way in which Dante works with his pagan sources and transforms this Latin source material in the *Commedia* is identical to what he did in the first two metamorphoses. Also in this third metamorphosis, he uses the language and the imagery of his pagan source to create a violent Christian parody.

That Latin source is Ovid’s story of the transformation of Cadmus, the founder of Thebes, and his wife Harmonia (*Met.* 4.563-603). Cadmus is one of the characters Dante orders Ovid to be silent about in the verses immediately preceding this metamorphosis—“Taccia di Cadmo . . . Ovidio” (*Inf.* 25.97)—but Dante builds his last metamorphosis in the ditch of theft on elements in Ovid’s description of Cadmus. In the *Metamorphoses*, Cadmus’ story starts with his battle with a snake. When after a long fight Cadmus kills the snake, a voice states that Cadmus will also become a serpent (*Met.* 3.98). And indeed, at the end of his life, he and his wife are changed into snakes by the gods. In the *Commedia*, Dante depicts the immediate interchange between a man and a snake by listing the man’s and snake’s gradual changes, working by opposites: what the man loses, the snake gains; what the snake loses, the man gains. To describe the transformation from man to snake, Dante follows in broad lines the sequence of Cadmus’ and Harmonia’s metamorphoses, from the changes of skin (*Met.* 4.577 // *Inf.* 25.111 [1]), to posture (*Met.* 4.579 // *Inf.* 25.121 [2]), to finally the tongue (*Met.* 4.586-89 // *Inf.* 25.133-34 [3]).

bracchia iam restant; quae restant bracchia tendit, et lacrimis per adhuc humana fluentibus ora ‘accede, o coniux, accede, miserrima’ dixit, ‘dumque aliquid superest de me, me tange manumque accipe, dum manus est, dum non totum occupat anguis.’

ille quidem uult plura loquii, sed lingua repente in partes est fissa duas, nec uerba volenti sufficiunt, quotiensque aliquos parat edere questus, sibilat; hanc illi uocem natura reliquit [3].

In this passage, Dante is once more playing on the double nature of Christ by featuring two different creatures (a man and a snake) that take over each other’s natures. Just as in the two previous metamorphoses in the ditch of theft, the tone is violent, presenting the transformation as an attack and battle. This violent tone is in sharp contrast with the serene mode in Ovid’s description of the transformed Cadmus and Harmonia: the two become harmless snakes (“placidi...”)

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252 “... his form was changed to a long-bellied serpent. / He felt his skin growing hard [1] and gaining a layer of scales; / his body was turning black and speckled with bluish spots. / Then down he fell on his front [2]. His two legs melded to one / and little by little thinned down to a sinuous, slithery tail. / He still had his arms and, while they remained, he stretched them out, / as the tears streamed down the cheeks which still were a man’s. ‘Come close to me, / please!’ he appealed to his wife. ‘Come close, poor darling, and touch me / while something of mine is left. Please take my hand while it’s there / to be taken, before the snake has enveloped the whole of my body.’ / Cadmus wanted to say much more, but his tongue was suddenly / split into two like a fork. The words he wanted to utter / failed to come out. Whenever he tried to express his sorrow, / he hissed, for this was the only voice which nature had left him [3].” (my emphasis)

253 “Meanwhile the cleft tail took upon itself / the form the other gradually lost; / its skin grew soft, the other’s skin grew hard [1]. / I saw the arms that drew in at his armpits / and also saw the monster’s two short feet / grow long for just as much as those were shortened. / ... / And while the smoke veils each with a new color, / and now breeds hair upon the skin of one, / just as it strips the hair from off the other, / the one rose up, the other fell [2]; and yet / they never turned aside their impious eyelamps, / beneath which each of them transformed his snout: / ... / He who was lying down thrust out his snout; / and even as the snail hauls in its horns, / he drew his ears straight back into his head; / his tongue, which had before been whole and fit / for speech, now cleaves [3]; the other’s tongue, which had / been forked, now closes up; and the smoke stops.” (my emphasis)
. . . dracones” [Met. 4.603]) that “neither avoid nor attack human beings” (“nec fugiunt hominem nec uulnere laedunt” [Met. 4.602]). In this third metamorphosis, Dante introduces a new type of transformation, no longer adopting kinds of transformations found in Lucan or Ovid, as he did in the first two metamorphoses in the ditch of theft. But just as in the first two metamorphoses, Dante has constructed this technically innovative metamorphosis from the language and imagery of a pagan Latin source: the “novità” is also here created from the old.

Dante does not limit his use of this classical material to the Inferno. Both at the end of Purgatorio and the opening of Paradiso, he works with the same Ovidian sources. In the first instance, as Teodolinda Barolini noted, Dante replaces the violent tone of metamorphosis in Inferno with a positive reading of Christ’s double nature. In the Garden of Eden, the final cantos of Purgatorio, the pilgrim and his guide Beatrice observe a mystic procession in which a griffin (symbolizing Christ) draws a chariot (symbolizing the Church). After the conclusion of the procession, the pilgrim stares at Beatrice whose eyes are fixed on the griffin. In her eyes, he witnesses the griffin’s changing nature, which symbolizes Christ’s human and divine natures (Purg. 31.118-26):

Mille disiri più che fiamma caldi
strinsermi li occhi a li occhi rilucenti,
che pur 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.
Pensa, lettor, s’io mi maravigliava,
quando vedea la cosa in sé star queta,
e ne l’idolo suo si trasmutava.

254 Barolini, Dante’s Poets, 224.

255 “A thousand longings burning more than flames / compelled my eyes to watch the radiant eyes / that, motionless, were still fixed on the griffin. / Just like the sun within a mirror, so / the double-natured creature gleamed within, / now showing one, and now the other guise. / Consider,
Facing this mystery of faith, the pilgrim responds to the spectacle as many characters respond to transformation in Ovid’s epic: with “maraviglia” (the same Ovidian catchword used to announce the first metamorphosis in *Inf.* 25.47). Moreover, Dante inserts a simile taken from the Salmacis and Hermaphroditus story, one of his main Ovidian sources in *Inferno* 25. Dante’s comparison between the sun shining in a mirror and Beatrice’s reflecting eyes is modeled after a similar comparison in Ovid (*Met.* 4.347-49):  

\[ \text{tum uero placuit, nudaeque cupidine formae} \]
\[ \text{Salmacis exarsit; flagrant quoque lumina nymphae,} \]
\[ \text{non alter quam cum puro nitidissimus orbe} \]
\[ \text{opposita speculi referitur imagine Phoebus.} \]

[Salmacis now was wildly excited. The sight of him naked / fired her desire to new heights. Her eyes were also on fire, / like the dazzling light of the sun’s reflected rays, when a mirror / is raised to capture its shining disc at its brightest and clearest.]

(my emphasis)

By recasting Salmacis’ burning desire to see Hermaphroditus naked as the pilgrim’s desire (“mille disiri” [*Purg.* 31.118]) to turn his eyes to the changing nature of the griffin or Christ, Dante now finds in the Ovidian imagery a means to verbalize a Christian truth.

In *Paradiso*, Dante returns to the Ovidian images of snakes and blending bodies created in the ditch of theft to clarify his understanding of change in the third cantica. In Dante’s first attempt to describe his transition from *Purgatorio*’s Garden of Eden to *Paradiso*, he uses the neologism “trasumanar” (*Par.* 1.70) and refers to the Ovidian story of Glaucus, the human turned sea-god (*Par.* 1.67-69 // *Met.* 13.898-968). In *Paradiso* 2.37-42, Dante re-describes “trasumanar,” now returning to images from the metamorphoses in *Inferno* (*Par.* 2.37-42):

\[ \text{S’io era corpo, e qui non si concepe} \]

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256 A connection only noted in Vazzana’s concordance, *Dante e “la bella scola,”* 142.
com’una dimensione altra patio,
ch’esser convien se corpo in corpo repe,
accender ne dovria piú il disio
di veder quella essenza in che si vede
come nostra natura e Dio s’unio.

[If I was body (and on earth we can / not see how things material can share / one space-the case, when body enters body), / then should our longing be still more inflamed / to see that Essence in which we discern / how God and human nature were made one.]

To explain how the mortal pilgrim, as “corpo,” could enter another “corpo” (the sphere of the Moon), the poet uses the hapax “repe” (Par. 2.39), a Latinism from the verb “repere” (to crawl)—precisely what snakes do. Whereas in Inferno the union of man and snake and the interchange between them was characterized by violence and negativity, in this passage in Paradiso the image is used in a positive way to render this amazing coexisting of “dimensione” (Par. 2.38) that cannot be conceived of “qui” on earth (Par. 2.37). The connection with the metamorphosis cantos becomes even stronger when the poet adds that this mystery would kindle an even bigger “disio” (Par. 2.40) to see the double nature of Christ, which was precisely what Dante suggested in the three metamorphoses of Inferno 24 and 25. In the Inferno, Dante rewrote the pagan metamorphoses in a parodic Christian mode; here in Paradiso, the poet employs the images of reptile-like crawling and the double nature, and uses them to clarify change in a true Christian context. Ovid’s metamorphosis stories provide Dante with the language to address larger themes of poetic novelty and authority and the images to construct his own metamorphoses and define change.
4.2 Discussing Ovidian Poetics of Genre: From Sonnet Exchanges to Dante and Bonagiunta’s Exchange in *Purgatorio* 24.34-63

In *Inferno* 24 and 25, Dante uses Ovid’s metapoetic reflections on novelty in the *Metamorphoses* as the starting point to discuss his own views on change and novelty in the poetic and metaphysical sense. In *Purgatorio* 24, Dante relies in similar ways on Ovidian material in another metapoetic moment: the conversation between two vernacular poets, the pilgrim and Bonagiunta Orbicciani. In Chapter 2, we saw that Italian vernacular poets openly debated the value of Ovid’s work in sonnet exchanges. The exchange between Guido Orlandi (*Per troppa sottiglianza il fil si rompe*) and Guido Cavalcanti (*Di vil matera mi conven parlare*), I argued, explicitly negotiates the worth of the Latin poet’s oeuvre. Guido Orlandi finds Ovid’s work a point of reference, while for Guido Cavalcanti, Ovid represents the themes his own poetry does not treat. I read the exchange as an attack on and defense of poetics, with Guido Orlandi representing the old Siculo-Tuscan tradition and Guido Cavalcanti representing the *dolce stil novo*, by aligning this exchange with a similar one between Bonagiunta Orbicciani (Siculo-Tuscan tradition) and Guido Guinizelli (*dolce stil novo*). In this section, I want to look at another, much more subtle role that Ovid plays in Cavalcanti’s *Di vil matera mi conven parlare*—one that connects Dante’s reading of Ovid in the *Commedia* to these previous debates about Ovid in Italian sonnet exchanges.

The last verse of Cavalcanti’s *Di vil matera* reads “Amor ha fabricato ciò ch’io limo” (“Love made the sonnet that I polish now” [v. 16]). This line, together with Arnaut Daniel’s “obre e lim / motz de valor / ab art d’Amor” (“I work and polish words of worth with art of Love” [*Chanson do·ill mot son plan e prim*, vv. 12-14]), is considered the vernacular source for Dante’s statement to Bonagiunta Orbicciani in *Purgatorio* 24.52-54:
I am one who, when Love breathes / in me, takes note; what he, within, dictates, / I, in that way, without, would speak and shape.]

For both Italian poets, Love is the starting point of their poetry: Cavalcanti calls it an “Amor” who creates—“ha fabricato” (v. 16)—and teaches—“insegna” (v. 10); Dante’s “Amor” inspires—“spira” (Purg. 24.53)—and dictates—“ditta” (Purg. 24.54). The theologically charged “spira” has raised the question whether or not to interpret Love as God, as in Paradiso 10.27 where the poet declares himself God’s “scriba.” The two passages, however, refer to different kinds of writing (the verse in Paradiso to the writing of the Commedia, the tercet in Purgatorio to the writing of lyric poetry). Whereas the verse in Paradiso leaves no doubt that it is God who inspires and dictates, the tercet in Purgatorio is constructed in a more complex manner.

In the long debate on this tercet, most critics interpret the “Amor” of Purgatorio 24.53 as the god of love from the lyrical tradition; others do not separate this statement from the passage in Paradiso 10.27 and read the tercet in Purgatorio 24 in exclusively theological terms. Defenders of the exclusively theological reading, such as Robert Hollander in his essay “Dante’s ‘dolce stil novo’ and the Comedy,” like to refer to Richard of Saint Victor’s line “qui secundum quod cor dictat verba componit” (“one who writes words according to what the heart dictates”) from the Tractatus de gradibus charitatis (col. 1195B), where indeed dictation is placed in a religious context. Yet the tercet’s often-discussed connection with the vernacular tradition (Arnaut Daniel, Cavalcanti) and the often-unnoticed classical connection with Ovid (discussed in the following paragraph) complicate this exclusively theological reading.

257 For a recent bibliography of the former point of view, see Robert Hollander, “Dante’s ‘dolce stil novo’ and the Comedy,” in Picone, Crivelli, Dante: Mito e poesia, 265-66n6. For a reading that unites both points, see Barolini, Dante’s Poets, 90.
So far, the existing scholarship has only discussed and weighed the importance of the vernacular and theological intertextual layers of Dante’s statement in *Purgatorio* 24.52-54. As critics have shown, the concept of inspiration by Love and the image of the polishing poet were previously found in the vernacular poets Arnaut Daniel and Guido Cavalcanti. Moreover, Dante’s use of “spira” adds a divine connotation to the statement. But this tercet should also be read from a classical intertextual angle. First, Dante’s Love who dictates derives from a Latin source: the poetry of Ovid. More precisely, “ditta” leads to the programmatic opening poem of Book 2 of the *Amores*, in which Ovid announces his writing of a different genre. The poem does not include the conventional classical apology for not writing the more acclaimed genre of epic (as found, for example, in Virgil’s *Eclogue* 6.3ff. or Propertius’ elegy 3.3), but instead praises love poetry and its superiority.258 In the final verses of this poem, Love, as few have noted,259 dictates poems to the Latin poet as well (2.1.37-38):

ad mea formosos vultus adhibete, puellae, carmina, purpureus quae mihi dictat Amor!

[And fair ones, turn hither your beauteous faces as I sing the songs which rosy Love dictates to me!]

Second, the tercet’s connection with classical love poetry is reinforced by Dante’s use of “I’ mi son un che” (*Purg.* 24.52), a translation of the Latin idiom “ille ego (qui)” (“I am the one

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who”), often used in poetic statements.\textsuperscript{260} Dante could have known this idiom from Servius’ commentary to the \textit{Aeneid (praefatio)} or Donatus’ \textit{Vita Vergili}: both quote “ille ego qui quondam gracili modulatus avena” (“I am the one who once played songs on a slender reed”) as the first of four lines that originally constituted—according to Servius and Donatus—the \textit{Aeneid’s} opening lines, but were later deleted.\textsuperscript{261} The idiom is not found elsewhere in Virgil, but it appears several times in reflections on poetic genre in Ovid’s work: in the \textit{Amores} (2.1.2; 3.8.23) and in the exile poetry (\textit{Tristia} 4.10.1; 5.7.55; \textit{Ex Ponto} 1.2.34, 35, 129, 131; 4.3.11, 13, 15, 17). Most importantly, the idiom’s first occurrence in the \textit{Amores} belongs to the same poem from which the image of the dictating Love is taken (2.1.1-4):

Hoc quoque conposui Paelignis natus aquosis,  
ille ego nequitiae Naso poeta meae.  
hoc quoque iussit Amor—procul hinc, procul este, severae!  
non estis teneris apta theatra modis.

[This, too, is the work of my pen—mine, Naso’s, born among the humid Paeligni, the well-known singer of my own worthless ways. This, too, have I wrought at the bidding of Love—away from me, far away, ye austere fair! Ye are no fit audience for my tender strains.]

Dante’s statement in \textit{Purgatorio} 24.52-54 thus shows remarkable parallels with Ovid’s \textit{Amores} 2.1: both passages start with the formula “I am one who” to make a strong poetic statement

\textsuperscript{260} Joseph Farrell calls the idiom “a marker of posthumous literary fame” in “Ovid’s Virgilian Career,” \textit{Materiali e discussioni per l’analisi dei testi classici} 52 (2004): 51. The connection between Dante’s use of “I’ mi son un che” and the Latin idiom “ille ego (qui)” has, to my knowledge, gone unnoticed so far.

By detecting references to Ovid—or even Virgil—in verses that are conventionally read from an exclusively vernacular and theological angle, I demonstrate the purposeful appropriation of classical poetics in Italian lyric poetry. This tercet is but one of many examples in the *Commedia* where classical, theological, and vernacular sources are combined. Moreover, these references reinforce the connection between vernacular poetry and its classical predecessors: Dante inserts himself into the vernacular tradition of discussing love poetry through Ovid’s work. Instead of formulating viewpoints in sonnet exchanges, Dante stages an actual encounter and exchanges his views on poetics directly with Bonagiunta Orbicciani, a fellow vernacular poet, who praises Dante’s “nove rime” (“new rhymes” [*Purg.* 24.50]) and “dolce stil novo” (“sweet new manner” [*Purg.* 24.57]). The role of Ovid in this poetic debate is more subtle than the vernacular lyric poets’ sonnet exchanges which mentioned Ovid openly by name—this is not the canto where Dante explicitly silences Ovid (*Inf.* 25.97). But while Dante’s poetics of love poetry are far from Ovid’s self-declared “nequitiae” (“worthless ways” [*Am.* 2.1.2]), the Latin poet’s strong programmatic statements on the value of writing love poetry in *Amores* 2.1 offer Dante the imagery to formulate his own.

As this episode in *Purgatorio* 24 illustrates, the focus on the vernacular lyric poets’ treatment of Ovidian material offers new ways of looking at Dante’s reading of Ovid in the *Commedia*. Dante is clearly adopting and transforming the vernacular lyric practice of including Ovid in poetic debates. Of these vernacular poets, Dante is certainly the reader of Ovid who integrates Ovidian material with the most complexity, combining the methods of the vernacular lyric poets with classical or theological sources, and conforming these methods to the poetics of the *Commedia*. Looking at these preceding vernacular writings as part of an Italian literary
culture that from its very beginnings reflects on Ovid’s texts helps us to fully understand the complexity of Dante’s reading of Ovid in the Commedia.

4.3 Invocation and Poetic Identification

Dante is drawn to other programmatic statements in Ovid’s writings to express poetic self-consciousness in his own. It is in that light that we should understand Dante’s choice to include Ovidian poetic contests in the opening cantos of both Purgatorio and Paradiso. In these two cantos, Dante layers metapoetic stories from the Metamorphoses into the invocations that introduce the second and third canticle: the poetic competition between the Pierides and the Muses (Met. 5.294-678) in Purgatorio 1, and the artistic battle between Marsyas and Apollo (Met. 6.382-400) in Paradiso 1. Ovid scholarship has long recognized and described the stories’ metapoetic programs, questioning what the Ovidian contenders on both sides really represent poetically.262 Is Ovid siding with the winners or the losers of the battle? Does he equate himself with the artists in his stories? And how do the subject matter and style of the stories relate to the structure and style of the Metamorphoses? Similar questions are at stake in the Commedia. Reading the two Ovid-inspired invocations in Purgatorio 1 and Paradiso 1, I explore here what kind of poetry both camps of Ovidian artists represent in Dante’s text; if Dante is identifying himself with any Ovidian characters; and more specifically, since both stories in the Metamorphoses feature human and divine artists, how the choice for this Ovidian material informs our understanding of Dante’s self-presentation as poet of the Commedia.

262 For the bibliography on both stories, see the most recent commentary on Books 5 and 6: Ovidio. Metamorfosi: Volume III (Libri V-VI), ed. Gianpiero Rosati (Milan: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 2009), 178, 308.
Invoking the gods is a traditional feature in classical epics and such invocations are included in the opening of each canticle in the *Commedia*. In the *Inferno*, Dante briefly invokes the Muses together with “genius” and “memory” as aids to his writing, keeping the invocation short after the long introductory canto (*Inf.* 1): “O muse, o alto ingegno, or m’aiutate; / o mente che scrivesti ciò ch’io vidi, / qui si parrà la tua nobilitate” (“O Muses, o high genius, help me now; / o memory that set down what I saw, / here shall your excellence reveal itself!” [*Inf.* 2.7-9]). In both *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, on the other hand, the invocations serve as the introduction and are more elaborate (four tercets in *Purg.* 1.1-12; seven tercets in *Par.* 1.13-36). Moreover, the gods (Muses) are only mentioned briefly in *Inferno*; on the other hand, in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* they are described in more detail by means of references to stories from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. As we will see, Dante’s selection of Ovidian material reveals the poetic tone he wants to set at the opening of the new canticles.

Invocation and poetic identification go hand in hand for Dante. Even the short invocation to the Muses in *Inferno* 2 is later accompanied with the pilgrim’s, albeit negated, identification with Aeneas and Paul: “Io non Enèa, io non Paulo sono” (“I am not Aeneas, am not Paul” [*Inf.* 2.32]). But again, in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, Dante develops this combination of invocation and poetic identification in more detail.

Ma qui la morta poesì resurga,
o sante Muse, poi che vostro sono;
e qui Calìopè alquanto surga,
seguitando il mio canto con quel suono
di cui le Piche misere sentiro
lo colpo tal, che disperar perdono.

[But here, since I am yours, o holy Muses, / may this poem rise again from Hell’s dead realm; / and may Calliope rise somewhat here, / accompanying my singing with that music / whose

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263 Robert Hollander lists all the invocations in “The Invocations of the *Commedia*,” *Yearbook of Italian Studies* 3-5 (1973-75): 236-40.
power struck the poor Pierides / so forcefully that they despaired of pardon.]

In this invocation to the Muses in *Purgatorio* 1.7-12, Dante includes himself directly in the company of the Muses; he is “theirs” (*Purg.* 1.8). As all commentaries note, the way Dante describes the goddesses connects this passage to the story of the poetic competition between the Muses and the Pierides in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* 5.294-678. In that passage, one of the Muses tells Minerva about this contest in which the Muse Calliope represents all Muses, in which an unnamed daughter of Pierus stands for her sisters (the Pierides), and the nymphs act as judges. The narrating Muse briefly summarizes the story of the Pierides, an episode from the *gigantomachy* (*Met.* 5.321-31), but retells verbatim Calliope’s long song, the rape of Ceres’ daughter Persephone (*Met.* 5.341-661). At the end, the nymphs declare the Muses winners and the losing Pierides are turned into magpies (*Met.* 5.662-78). In *Purgatorio*, Dante reprises two details from Ovid’s story: the Muse Calliope preparing to sing (*Met.* 5.338-40 // *Purg.* 1.9-10) and the Pierides’ transformation into magpies (*Met.* 5.669-78 // *Purg.* 1.11-12).²⁶⁴

Critical readings of Dante’s reprise of Ovid’s story primarily focus on the content of the

²⁶⁴ The passages in Ovid are: “surgit et immissos hedera collecta capillos / Calliope querulas praetemptat police chordas / atque haec percussis subiungit carmina neruis” (“[Calliope], with her flowing hair in an ivy wreath, / rose up and strummed a few plangent chords to test her lyre strings, / then firmly plucked them to launch at once on the following lay”); “rident Emathides spernuntque minacia uerba; / conataeque loqui et magno clamore proteruas / intentare manus, pennas exire per ungues, operiri bracchia plumis, / alteraque alterius rigido concrecere rostro / ora uidet volucreisque nouas accedere siluis; / dumque uolunt plangi, per bracchia mota leuatae / aere pendebant, nemorum conuicia, picae. / nunc quoque in alitibus facundia prisca remanisit / raucaque garrulitas studiumque immane loquendi” (“All that the nine Piérides did was to laugh and make light / of my threatening words. As they tried to continue their shouting and screaming / and brandished their fists, they suddenly noticed that feathers were sprouting / out of their nails and their arms were growing a cover of plumage. / Looking at one another, they saw hard beaks stiffen out / of their faces. A novel species of bird was joining the forest. / Wanting to beat their breasts, they flapped their arms and were lifted / into the air, where they hovered, the scolds of the woodlands, magpies. / Even today they preserve their original gift of the gab / as raucous, chattering birds with a limitless passion for talking.”)
songs and the identity of their singers. Calliope, the goddess singer, triumphs with a story that describes the temporary disruption of political power and social order among the gods and its ultimate restoration. In this story, Jupiter resolves the conflict between the goddess Ceres and Dis, god of the underworld, who abducted her daughter Persephone, by making Persephone divide her time between earth and the underworld. On the other hand, the human challengers the Pierides believe that their version of the gigantomachy—which presents the Olympian gods trembling with fear for the giants—is more deserving of victory than Calliope’s story. The Pierides are swollen with pride (“intumuit” [Met. 5.305]) and loudly protest when the nymphs declare the Muses the winners of the contest (“conuicia uictae / . . . iacerent” [Met. 5.665-66]).

Eleanor Winsor Leach included the Pierides among the Metamorphoses’ many human artists who fail in their struggle to achieve artistic autonomy. Ovid presents these human artists, Leach explains, as “pretentious rebel[s] pointlessly mocking and vilifying [their] betters while they boast of themselves as proprietors of a divine art that embodies a truly superior and authoritative vision of the world.” (Among such artists, Leach also counts the storytelling daughters of Minyas, whom we discussed earlier in relation to Inferno 25, and Marsyas, whose appearance in the Commedia we will discuss later in this section.) In featuring this Ovidian story

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265 Identifying the themes of loss and recovery in Persephone’s story, Giuseppe Mazzotta thematically connects Ovid’s story to the transition from Inferno to Purgatorio in Dante, Poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in the ‘Divine Comedy’ (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 45.


267 Leach, “Ekphrasis and the Theme of Artistic Failure,” 111.
at the opening of *Purgatorio*, the prevalent interpretation of this passage goes, Dante recognizes the dangers of describing a divine subject matter as a human poet and invokes the victorious Muses for aid in this undertaking.

I propose here that Dante also notices the strong stylistic and narratological differences in the conflict between the Muses and Pierides. Modern scholars have carefully described this passage’s attention to style and form. In his commentary to Book 5 of the *Metamorphoses*, Gianpiero Rosati called the entire passage “un saggio di tecnica della narrazione, il più complesso del poema, e probabilmente dell’intera letteratura greco-latina” (“an essay on narrative technique, the most complex of the poem and probably of all classical literature”).

The structure of the episode in the *Metamorphoses* is indeed complex: an unnamed Muse narrates the contest to Minerva in an outside frame story, Calliope’s long song provides a second frame story, which contains several more stories-within-stories. Moreover, the song moves between the generic conventions of elegy and epic and offers new perspectives on existing narrative material (the rape of Persephone, for instance, is a theme well-treated before Ovid).

In short, Calliope’s song is multilayered, imaginative, and innovative.

While Calliope’s story runs over more than three hundred verses (*Met. 5.341-661*), the Pierides’ story is only briefly summarized (*Met. 5.321-31*). Their narrative style is not captured in those eleven verses, but becomes apparent from Ovid’s description of their punishment (*Met. 5.669-78*). As often in the *Metamorphoses*, the Pierides maintain defining character traits even

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after their transformation into magpies. In the description of their metamorphosis, Ovid reveals
the kind of storytellers the sisters were: “nunc quoque in alitibus facundia prisca remansit /
raucaque garrulitas studiumque immane loquendi” (“Even today they preserve their original gift
of the gab / as raucous, chattering birds with a limitless passion for talking” [Met. 5.677-78]).
This continuity between the sisters before and after the metamorphosis informs us about their
narrative style: we already know they mimic the Muses in number (there are nine Muses and
nine sisters) and even copy their names (the Pierides is another name for the Muses).270
Therefore, when after the transformation the Pierides are described as birds that imitate
everything (“imitantes omnia” [Met. 5.299]), it goes without saying that before the
transformation the sisters also were unimaginative, slavish imitators.271

Dante was surely aware of this feature of the Pierides’ style. In his treatise De vulgari
eloquentia, he refers to Ovid’s tale of the Pierides and their transformation into magpies as part
of his discussion of speech as the distinguishing trait of men. Also there, he presents the talking
magpies as imitators: their speech, Dante explains, is “quedam imitatio soni nostre vocis” (“some
imitation of the sound of our voices” [DVE I, ii, 7]). By including this Ovidian tale at the
opening of Purgatorio, Dante stylistically opposes the Pierides and Muses as mere imitators
versus innovative artists. Always underlining the innovative nature of his undertaking in the
Commedia, Dante of course aligns himself with the Muses. This association with Calliope does
not mean that Dante “surrenders” himself to “the translating powers of her song,” as Pamela


Royston Macfie suggests in an article on this invocation and its Ovidian intertext. His precise use of Ovid’s text clarifies that the Italian poet envisions this relationship differently. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid’s Calliope rises up (“surgit . . . Calliope” [*Met. 5.338-39*]) to sing her long story, accompanying herself on a string instrument (*Met. 5.339-40*). Literally translating Ovid’s words, Dante’s Calliope also rises up (“Calïopè . . . surga” [*Purg. 1.9*]), but just somewhat (“alquanto”). Playing second fiddle to the poet, Dante’s Calliope merely accompanies Dante’s song (“seguitando il mio canto” [*Purg. 1.10*]). The Muse’s multilayered, imaginative, and innovative way to discuss divine matters has set the example, and now it is Dante’s turn.

Many of the features of this invocation in *Purgatorio* are found in the opening canto of *Paradiso* as well. Here, Dante also selects a poetic contest between human and divine artists from the *Metamorphoses* that invites comparison with his own situation. Dante addresses “buono Apollo” (“good Apollo” [*Par. 1.13*]) and evokes the god’s contest with the Ovidian satyr Marsyas (*Met. 6.382-400*). In the *Metamorphoses*, this poetic battle is but a brief episode, the last in a series of four clashes between gods and humans, in which the first three stories the humans (Arachne, Niobe, and the Lycian peasants) suffer harsh punishments for scorning the gods. In the Marsyas episode, Ovid only briefly mentions that Marsyas lost a music contest to Apollo (*Met. 6.382-84*), and instead focuses on the flaying of the satyr (Marsyas’ punishment), which he describes in graphic details (*Met. 6.385-91*). He further explains that the tears of Marsyas’ sympathizers eventually create a stream named in his memory (*Met. 6.392-400*).

In the opening canto of *Paradiso*, Dante rewrites the Ovidian story of Apollo and Marsyas as a request from the poet to the god (*Par. 1.19-21*):

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Entra nel petto mio, e spira tue
si come quando Marsia traesti
de la vagina de le membra sue.

[Enter into my breast; within me breathe / the very power you made manifest / when you drew Marsyas out from his limbs’ sheath.]

Compared with the invocation in Purgatorio 1, where Dante asked the Muse Calliope to merely accompany his song, this invocation at the opening of the third canticle contains an explicit request to Apollo for divine inspiration. In addition, while in Purgatorio 1 Dante rejects the losing Pierides as mere imitators, Dante here identifies with the loser of the contest Marsyas. However, Dante does not seem to consider himself the loser of any battle: for Marsyas to become a character with which he can identify himself, the poet needed to transform the Ovidian satyr. As Jessica Levenstein illustrated most recently, Dante turns Ovid’s rendition of Marsyas’ punishment into an act of inspiration in the Commedia.²⁷³ Ovid’s Marsyas is skinned alive—most pungently expressed in his cry “quid me mihi detrahis?” (“Don’t rip me away from myself!” [Met. 6.385])—; Dante’s Marsía is removed from his skin to become a vessel of divine inspiration. Only in that sense, by transforming the Ovidian satyr, can Marsyas become the figure for the poet’s own transformation at the opening of Paradiso. As Kevin Brownlee pointed out in his article on the opening canto of Paradiso, the third canticle poses the poet with the challenge to put into words experiences that are beyond the capacity of the human faculties.²⁷⁴ Successfully finding that language to write the last cantica is then the transformation the poet needs to undergo.


All these features taken together, this invocation at the opening of *Paradiso* includes a much stronger identification with the Ovidian source than the similar passage in *Purgatorio* 1. Here, Dante overtly identifies himself with the Ovidian character Marsyas and explicitly requests assistance from Apollo. Moreover, Dante implicitly revisits his negated identification with Paul in *Inferno* (“io non Paulo sono” [*Inf.* 2.32]) in this opening canto of *Paradiso*. Dante works with two elements from Paul’s biography. First, the Lord calls Paul the chosen instrument (“vas electionis”) to carry out his name (*Acts* 9:15), and second, Paul visited paradise, where he heard “inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell” (“arcana verba quae non licet homini loqui” [*2 Corinthians* 12:4]). In both *Inferno* and *Paradiso*, Dante reuses the Pauline label “vas electionis”: in *Inferno* 2.28, Dante translates it into Italian to describe Paul as the “Vas d’elezione” (“Chosen Vessel”). In the opening canto of *Paradiso*, Dante applies the same label to describe himself in his request to Apollo for help to embark upon the same journey Paul undertook: “fammi del tuo valor si fatto vaso” (“make me the vessel of your excellence” [*Par.* 1.14]).

Dante’s need to identify himself with others in this opening canto is not limited to Marsyas and Paul. Further in *Paradiso* 1, Dante uses the Ovidian story of Glaucus, the human turned sea-god among the sea-gods (*Met.* 13.898-968), as an example to clarify the transformation the pilgrim underwent going from *Purgatorio*’s Garden of Eden to *Paradiso*. He defines this transformation with the neologism “transumanar” (*Par.* 1.70), and explains (*Par.* 1.67-69):

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275 Cf. Brownlee, “Pauline Vision and Ovidian Speech,” 209. Brownlee sums up his argument in the statement that “Dante’s Ovid allows Paul’s celestial vision to be articulated by a poet in the vernacular” (213).
Nel suo aspetto tal dentro mi fei,  
qual si fé Glauco nel gustar de l’erba  
che ’l fé consorto in mar de li altri dèi.

[In watching her, within me I was changed / as Glaucus changed, tasting the herb that made / him a companion of the other sea gods.]

Here Dante again works with an Ovidian story to explicitly draw a parallel with his own situation. As we have already seen in section 1 of this chapter, Dante returns to the concept of “transumanar” in the second canto of Paradiso. There, Dante explains his own transformation with reference to the Ovid-inspired snake imagery that prevailed in cantos 24 and 25 of the Inferno. Starting once again with himself (“S’io era corpo” [Par. 2.37; my emphasis]), he clarifies the concept by describing how “one body crawled into another body” (Par. 2.39; my translation and emphasis). The importance of Ovid in this introduction to Paradiso is further enhanced by Dante’s use of Ovidian keywords throughout the canto—the same keywords that characterized his most Ovidian canto, canto 25 of the Inferno: newness and marvel. More precisely, Dante describes his body as the part that God created last (“creasti / novellamente” [Par. 1.73-74]) and notes the newness (“novità” [Par. 1.82]) of the sounds he hears in paradise. And when his guide Beatrice answers his questions about his transformation, she acknowledges his amazement and marvel (“ammirar” [Par. 1.136]; “maraviglia” [Par. 1.139]) about the change.

Given the presence of these Ovidian keywords and the strong connections Dante sets up in this canto between his own experiences and those of Ovidian characters, the question whether he identifies himself with Ovid becomes more pressing. After all, this question of identification starts in Ovid’s writings: contemporary Ovid scholarship frequently explores the relationship between the author of the Metamorphoses and his portrayal of fellow artists as
characters in his work. By repeatedly referring to the Ovidian artist stories at metapoetic moments in the *Commedia*, Dante reveals himself as aware of this connection centuries earlier. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, Dante features the storytelling Minyades in *Inferno* 25, the Pierides and the Muses in the opening canto of *Purgatorio*, and Marsyas and Apollo at the opening of *Paradiso*. Dante becomes increasingly closer to the Ovidian artists he includes in the *Commedia*. In *Inferno* 25, the Minyades are not mentioned by name, but Dante takes over their reflections on poetic novelty that introduce their stories. In *Purgatorio* 1, he aligns himself with the narrative style of the Muses, but they are requested to merely accompany his writing. And in *Paradiso* 1, he compares himself with Marsyas and directly asks Apollo for help.

By gradually identifying himself more closely with Ovidian artists in these metapoetic passages in the *Commedia*, Dante also becomes closer to how Ovid sees himself as an artist in the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid’s human artists—the Minyades, the Pierides, and Marsyas—all fail in their artistic undertakings, ending up transformed as punishment. Ovid considers himself the exception to that rule: at the end of the *Metamorphoses*, he specifies how his art instead will be successful. The last book of the *Metamorphoses* opens with Pythagoras’ speech, which lists example after example of how everything inevitably changes (cf. section 1 of this chapter). But

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277 To this list also belongs the Ovidian character Arachne, featured on the terrace of pride in *Purgatorio*. On Dante’s Arachne, see Teodolinda Barolini, “Arachne, Argus, and St. John: Transgressive Art in Dante and Ovid,” in *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 158-74. On the failing Ovidian artists, see in particular Leach, “Ekphrasis and the Theme of Artistic Failure.”

278 In “The Speech of Pythagoras,” 326, Galinksy makes this connection between Pythagoras’ speech and the ending of the *Metamorphoses*. 
at the very end of the work, Ovid exempts himself from that general principle—his physical body will disappear, but through his writings he will live forever (*Met. 15.871-79*):

*Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iouis ira nec ignis nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere uetustas. cum uolet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius ius habet, incerti spatiun mihi finiat aeu; parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum; quaue patet domitis Romana potentia terris ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama (si quid habent ueri uatum praesagia) uiuam.*

These verses are especially relevant to Dante in *Paradiso* 1, the canto in which he is so invested in describing his physical transformation from the Garden of Eden to paradise. “Transumanar” then does not only mean passing beyond the human body, but also becoming the kind of poet whose writings pass beyond human time, as described by Ovid in these closing verses of the *Metamorphoses*. *Paradiso* was Dante’s last and most difficult canticle to write: as noted before, it is hard to describe experiences that are beyond the capacity of the human faculties. For that reason, Dante keeps Ovid close, closer than in the two preceding canticles: Ovid’s Glaucus is Dante’s explicit example to explain his physical change in paradise, Ovid’s Marsyas is the starting point to create Marsïa, a human vessel for divine inspiration, and the poet Ovid his guide to write a timeless work of poetry under that inspiration. And this is just canto 1 of *Paradiso*; as

279 “Now I have finished my work, which nothing can ever destroy - / not Jupiter’s wrath, nor fire or sword, nor devouring time. / That day which has power over nothing except this body of mine / may come when it will and end the uncertain span of my life. / But the finer part of myself shall sweep me into eternity, / higher than all the stars. My name shall be never forgotten. / Wherever the might of Rome extends in the lands she has conquered, / the people shall read and recite my words. Throughout all ages, / if poets have vision to prophesy truth, I shall live in my fame.”
we will see in the next chapter, the Latin poet’s presence only increases over the course of the last canticle.
Chapter 5: Shifting Shapes of Ovidian Intertextuality: Ovid’s Influence in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*

In Chapter 4, we saw that in the *Commedia* Dante draws upon a long vernacular tradition of referring to Ovid to discuss poetics. While the vernacular lyric poets mentioned Ovid in their sonnet exchanges and evaluated the relevance of Ovid’s example to their own poetry, Dante mainly includes metapoetic passages from Ovid’s writings in the *Commedia*. Dante inserts Ovid’s passages in all three canticles, but the further along in the *Commedia* that one reads, one finds that Dante aligns himself with the featured Ovidian stories more explicitly. Students of Dante’s Ovid have always been interested in the distribution of Ovidian material between the three canticles. As we have seen in the preface, more recent scholarship on Dante and Ovid has looked beyond the traditional focus on the presence of Ovid in *Inferno* and argued for Ovid’s increasing influence on *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. Attentive to the comparisons between the three canticles, this chapter proposes to define more clearly how Ovid’s influence changes throughout the poem. The first section of this chapter starts by acknowledging the frequency of Ovidian allusions in *Inferno*, but also introduces a system to categorize these allusions, illustrating how in some respect Ovid becomes more present in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. The second section of the chapter focuses on the simile, and describes how in *Purgatorio* Dante conforms the common lyric practice of including Ovidian characters in similes to the poetics of the *Commedia*. The third section further studies the simile, now in *Paradiso*, and describes how Dante combines Ovidian stories of love, myth, and exile in the last canticle.

5.1 Comparing Ovidian Allusions in the *Commedia*

The presence of Ovid in the *Commedia* is most obvious in *Inferno*: it is the only canticle where the Latin poet appears as a character (*Inf.* 4.90) and is mentioned by name (*Inf.* 25.97). In
addition, many of the souls that the pilgrim encounters are shaped after Ovid’s descriptions. Most concordances of the *Commedia* confirm this observation with numbers: the compilers Gioachino Szombathely and Steno Vazzana all count more allusions to Ovid’s works in *Inferno* than in the other two canticles. Yet, not all allusions are created equal; sheer numbers easily mask significant differences among them. As we have seen in Chapter 1, only Moore’s concordance classifies its entries by indicating the level of allusion: “certain” (direct quotations), “almost certain” (obvious references or imitations), and “probable but not beyond doubt” (allusions and reminiscences). However, Ovidian references are just a small part of Moore’s concordance, as it covers all of Dante’s sources. Furthermore, this classification offers little additional information about the Ovidian entries, since most of them fall under the same category of “obvious references or imitations.”

Attentive to Dante’s specific use of Ovid’s works, Kevin Brownlee divided the allusions in a different way, distinguishing between Ovid-inspired characters, similes, and similes regarding the pilgrim. In my own concordance or maps (included in appendix), I followed Brownlee’s categories of Ovidian intertextuality, slightly restructuring and expanding them. For these maps, I worked with three main categories of intertextuality: word choice, characters/places/events, and similes. Language, however, is the overarching criterion: I establish all Ovidian intertextuality in the *Commedia* based on the verbal similarities between the source

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280 In Szombathely’s *Dante e Ovidio*, the instances amount to 43 in *Inferno*, 39 in *Purgatorio*, and 20 in *Paradiso*. Vazzana’s concordance in *Dante e “la bella scola”* lists 63 instances in *Inferno*, 43 in *Purgatorio*, and 26 in *Paradiso*. On the other hand, in *Studies in Dante*, Edward Moore counts the most instances *Purgatorio*: 35, opposed to 22 in *Inferno* and 18 in *Paradiso*.

and target texts.\(^{282}\) (In that respect, this approach does not differ from Moore’s, which indicates how certain it is that Dante had Ovid on his mind.) Whereas the more obvious references to Ovid’s works include names of characters, places, or events, the “word choice” category contains the more obscure references—allusions that are tucked away into the text of Dante’s *Commedia.* In most cases, there are at least two verbal connections (literal translations or synonyms in Italian) between Ovid’s and Dante’s texts, but sometimes it can be just one word that establishes the connection. However, my concordance does not include the literal translation of one Latin word into Dante’s Italian, if that word is found in other Latin authors besides Ovid. For instance, when Dante writes, “Si come neve tra le vive travi / per lo dosso d’Italia si congela” (“Even as snow among the sap-filled trees / along the spine of Italy will freeze” [*Purg.* 30.85-86]), his use of the word “travi” stands out because it is a *hapax* in the *Commedia* and clearly a Latinism. But these verses should not be included in a concordance merely because Ovid uses the original Latin word “trabs” in a passage for which no connection to Dante is found—especially since the word is found in other Latin writers.\(^{283}\)

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\(^{282}\) This is a different approach to intertextuality in medieval texts than the general one I proposed in Chapter 1. There, I cautioned against close comparisons with Ovid’s Latin texts, since we do not always know in which formats the medieval Italian reader read the Latin poet. However, in the case of Dante, we do know that he possessed a close familiarity with Ovid’s Latin texts (as illustrated in Chapters 3 and 4).

\(^{283}\) For other instances where the word is used in Latin literature, see Oxford Latin Dictionary, s. v. “trabs,” which includes passages by Virgil, Statius, and Valerius Flaccus, among others. For these lines in *Purgatorio,* Szombathely lists a parallel passage from the transformation of Picus in the *Metamorphoses:* “dixit, et effigiem nullo cum corpore falsi / fingit apri praeterque oculos transcurrere regis / iussit et in densum trabibus nemus ire uideri, / plurima qua silua est et equo loca peruia non sunt” (“So saying, she conjured up an illusion, a phantom boar, / which she ordered to scamper across the trail in the king’s full view / and appear to enter the wood where the trees were thickest, the ground / was cluttered with fallen trunks and a horse couldn’t possibly pass through” [*Met.* 14.358-61]). Natalino Sapegno notes another Ovidian parallel in his commentary (*La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio* [Milan: La Nuova Italia, 2001], 340n85), but
Characters/events/places is the second category. The criteria for inclusion are the same as for the word choice category: for instance, the shared mention of a classical character’s name is not sufficient to establish a connection between Ovid’s and Dante’s texts; Dante needs to include particular words or details to indicate that Ovid’s Latin text, and not another version of the story, was his source of inspiration. For example, despite the fact that the giant Cacus is mentioned in texts by Livy, Horace, Virgil, and Ovid, Dante includes particular details about Cacus’ death (Inf. 25.19-33) that allow us to identify Ovid’s Fasti as his source text. Of course Dante often combines different sources in a single passage; but at this point, the concordance only indicates his Ovidian sources.

Similes are the third and last category. Once all Ovid-inspired similes in the Commedia were collected, further subdivisions were determined by the features they shared—thus identifying the peculiarities of Dante’s use of Ovid. My concordance distinguishes between regular similes, similes that regard the pilgrim (two of Brownlee’s categories), and similes regarding other characters in the Commedia (e.g., Dante comparing Matelda to Proserpina in Purg. 28.49-51). Another subdivision focuses on Ovid’s use of the simile, indicating whether or not the Dantean simile takes over the simile in Ovid’s work. Combining all this information results in the following charts:

also in this passage, taken from the story of the Calydonian boar hunt, the only connection between Ovid’s and Dante’s texts is the shared use of the word “trabibus” / “travi”; “Silua frequens trabibus, quam nulla ceciderat aetas, / incipit a plano deuexaque prospicit arua” (“a dense primeval forest, untouched by the axe; / it starts on a level plateau and looks out over the sloping country below” [Met. 8.329-30]).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>INFERNO</th>
<th>PURGATORIO</th>
<th>PARADISO</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WORD CHOICE</strong></td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58</td>
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<tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SIMILES</strong></td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALL</strong></td>
<td>82</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>169</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Fig. 1:* Ovidian Intertextuality in the *Commedia*

<table>
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<th>PURGATORIO</th>
<th>PARADISO</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHARACTERS/EVENTS/PLACES</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>events and places</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fig. 2:* Subdivisions “Characters/Events/Places” category

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<th>PURGATORIO</th>
<th>PARADISO</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SIMILES</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>similes regarding pilgrim</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>similes regarding character</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>similes (rest)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fig. 3:* Subdivision of Ovid-inspired similes by tenor

Looking at these charts, we can make the following observations. First, the general numbers (*Fig. 1*) confirm what Szombathely’s and Vazzana’s concordances say: the strongest presence of Ovid’s texts is found in *Inferno*, which contains more than double the instances of *Paradiso*. A few factors contribute to the numerical dominance of the first canticle. As we see in Figure 2, most Ovidian characters appear in *Inferno*, which is the expected location for pagan figures. Also, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is an obvious source to describe the sometimes grotesque transformations the punished souls undergo in *Inferno*. Thus, in the word choice and
characters/places/events categories, *Inferno* not surprisingly dominates. But the numbers for the simile, a distinguishing feature of Dante’s writing, tell a different story. In this category, the most prominent of the three, we see that Dante uses Ovid-inspired similes constantly throughout the *Commedia*, inserting a similar amount of similes in all three canticles (*Fig. 3*). When looking specifically at those similes where the pilgrim is compared to an Ovidian character, *Paradiso* has the highest amount, followed by *Purgatorio* and then *Inferno*. These are the kind of nuances that are lost when we just look at the general numbers. Moreover, this different way of organizing the instances of Ovidian intertextuality makes a strong case for focusing on the simile and presence of Ovid in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, which will be discussed further in the next sections.

5.2 Similes in Vernacular Lyric Poetry, Similes in the *Commedia*

In Chapters 2 and 3 we identified the simile as the rhetorical trope that the vernacular lyric poets used the most to feature a selected group of Ovidian characters (mainly Narcissus and Pyramus and Thisbe). Thus, when Dante sets up comparisons with the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Commedia*, he is inscribing himself into a vernacular lyric tradition that focuses on these Ovidian characters. The choice for this very common lyric material is especially interesting given the context in which Dante uses it. This material appears in the last cantos of *Purgatorio* where the guide Virgilio prepares the arrival of Beatrice before he disappears, and where Beatrice rebukes the pilgrim for his vain love. References to this common lyric material

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284 On the presence of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in *Purgatorio*, see Christian Moevs’ thorough analysis in “Pyramus at the Mulberry: De-petrifying Dante’s Tinted Mind” in *Imagining Heaven in the Middle Ages*, eds. Jan Swango Emerson and Hugh Feiss, O.S.B. (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 211-44. While not neglecting the vernacular sources, Moevs emphasizes the theological sources and medieval allegorizations of the *Metamorphoses*. My focus here is precisely on those vernacular sources and how they informed Dante’s reading of the Pyramus and Thisbe story.
accompany the pilgrim’s salute to his guide Virgilio and his regret for his wrong ways of loving.

In the first mention on the terrace of Lust, Virgilio sets up the comparison by describing the flames that separate the pilgrim and Beatrice as “questo muro” (“this wall” [Purg. 27.36])—a reference to the wall that separated the two Ovidian lovers: “inuide . . . paries,” Pyramus and Thisbe whispered through the crack in the wall, “quid amantibus obstas?” (“You spitefull wall! . . . Why stand in the way of poor lovers?” [Met. 4.73]). This one element of the story immediately leads to another: the moment the dying Pyramus lifts his eyes when Thisbe calls him (Met. 4.142-46). Dante introduces this material in a simile, comparing his reaction to Beatrice’s name to Pyramus’ reaction when he heard Thisbe’s (Purg. 27.37-42):

Come al nome di Tisbe aperse il ciglio
Piramo in su la morte, e riguardolla,
alor che ’l gelso diventò vermiglio;
cosi, la mia durezza fatta solla,
mi volsi al savio duca, udendo il nome
che ne la mente sempre mi rampolla.

[As, at the name of Thisbe, Pyramus, / about to die, opened his eyes, and saw her / (when then the mulberry became bloodred), / so, when my stubbornness had softened, I, / hearing the name that’s always flowering / within my mind, turned to my knowing guide.]

By likening himself to Pyramus, Dante adopts a very common lyric simile—a simile, as we have seen in Chapter 2, used in the poetry of Giraut de Salignac, Rimbaut de Vaqueiras, Pier della Vigna, Rustico Filippi, and Schiatta di Messer Albizo. Dante’s choice to feature this specific moment (Pyramus’ reaction to Thisbe’s name) becomes especially meaningful when reading this passage as the first step toward the pilgrim’s reunion with Beatrice and Virgilio’s disappearance. More precisely, the emphasis on calling out names connects the Pyramus simile in Purgatorio 27.37-42 to the moment when Beatrice first speaks to the pilgrim. Between those two moments, the pilgrim crosses the wall of flames, the last obstacle between him and Beatrice, enters Eden and meets Matelda (Purg. 28), then witnesses the mystic procession (Purg. 29).
Gazing at Beatrice, the pilgrim turns to Virgilio only to find out that his guide has disappeared
(Purg. 30.40-54); at this moment, Beatrice addresses him for the first time. As her first word is
the name (mentioned for the only time in the Commedia) “Dante” (Purg. 30.55), the poet
restages for a second time the Ovidian scene where Thisbe calls her lover Pyramus.

We can detect further influence of the Pyramus and Thisbe story on this passage when we
look at the verses in which Dante laments the disappearance of his guide Virgilio (Purg. 30.49-
51):

Ma Virgilio n’avea lasciati scemi
di sé, Virgilio dolcissimo patre,
Virgilio a cui per mia salute die’mi.

[But Virgil had deprived us of himself, / Virgil, the gentlest father, Virgil, he / to whom I gave
my self for my salvation.]

These verses are traditionally considered to be modeled after the description of Eurydice’s
disappearance in the fourth book of Virgil’s Georgics (4.525-27):

. . . Eurydicen uox ipsa et frigida lingua,
a miseram Eurydicen! anima fugiente uocabat:
Eurydicen toto referebant flumine ripae.

[. . . the bare voice and death-cold tongue, with fleeting breath, called Eurydice—ah, hapless
Eurydice! ‘Eurydice’ the banks re-echoed, all adown the stream.]

The connection with Virgil’s text is indeed strong: Dante’s triple repetition of the name
“Virgilio” more or less corresponds to the position of Eurydice’s name in the Latin. Both

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285 There is another possible Ovidian source for Purg. 30.49-51: Ovid’s rendition of the Orpheus
story in the Metamorphoses (Met. 10.1-85–11.1-66). Ovid imitates his Virgilian source similarly
to the triple name repetition in the Pyramus and Thisbe story. This time, Ovid repeats the word
“flebile” three times to describe Orpheus’ mourning after Eurydice’s disappearance:
“. . . et (mirum!) medio dum labitur amne, / flebile nescioquid queritur lyra, flebile lingua /
murmurat exanimis, respondent flebile ripae” (“Afloat mid-stream – oh wonder! – / the
instrument uttered a plaintive moan, the lifeless tongue / emitted a feeble dirge and the banks re-
echoed in sorrow” [Met. 11.51-53]). Most recently, Simone Marchesi stated that this Ovidian
passage complements the Virgilian echo in Dante’s goodbye to his guide. Marchesi, Dante and
passages describe an emotional goodbye, and Dante is using Virgil’s words to salute his guide Virgilio. At the same time, I believe that Ovid’s rendition of Pyramus and Thisbe’s farewell (Met. 4.142-46) is the extra source of these lines in Purgatorio:

‘Pyrame,’ clamauit, ‘quis te mihi casus ademit? / Pyrame, responde! tua te, carissima, Thisbe nominat; exaudi uultusque attolle iacentes.’ 
ad nomen Thisbes oculos a morte grauatos
Pyramus erexit uisaque recondidit illa.

[“Pyramus! What dread change has taken you from me?” she wailed, / “Pyramus, answer! It’s Thisbe, your dearest beloved, calling / your dear name. Listen, please, and raise your head from the ground!” / Pyramus’ eyes were heavy with death, but they flickered at Thisbe’s / name. He looked once more at his love, then closed them for ever.]

The similarities between the passages in Ovid and Dante are striking—not surprisingly, given that Ovid’s rendition of Pyramus and Thisbe’s farewell is modeled after Virgil’s verses in the Georgics. But the connection between Ovid’s and Dante’s verses goes beyond the triple repetition of Pyramus’ name. As we have seen above, these verses from the Metamorphoses were already important in describing the transition from Virgilio to Beatrice as the pilgrim’s guide. Dante explicitly referred to these verses in Purgatorio 27.36-42 when Virgilio mentions the name Beatrice to convince the pilgrim to cross the fire and enter the Garden of Eden. Later Dante implicitly restages this Ovidian scene when Beatrice addresses the pilgrim with the name Dante (Purg. 30.55). To summarize, these are the two re-enactments of Pyramus and Thisbe naming episode at the conclusion to the Purgatorio:

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287 Cf. Barchiesi, Metamorfosi: Volume II (Libri III-IV), 267-68.
1. Virgilio and the pilgrim with Beatrice absent (Purg. 27):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dante</th>
<th>//</th>
<th>Ovid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purg. 27.36</strong>&lt;br&gt;Virgilio: “questo muro” of flames separates you from Beatrice</td>
<td>//</td>
<td><strong>Met. 4.73</strong>&lt;br&gt;Met. 4.73&lt;br&gt;wall separates Pyramus and Thisbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purg. 27.37-42</strong>&lt;br&gt;pilgrim’s strong reaction when he hears Virgilio saying Beatrice’s name</td>
<td>//</td>
<td><strong>Met. 4.145-46</strong>&lt;br&gt;Pyramus’ reaction when he hears Thisbe saying his name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Beatrice and the pilgrim with Virgilio absent (Purg. 30):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dante</th>
<th>//</th>
<th>Ovid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purg. 30.49-51</strong>&lt;br&gt;pilgrim laments Virgilio’s disappearance by repeating his name three times</td>
<td>//</td>
<td><strong>Met. 4.142-46</strong>&lt;br&gt;Pyramus’ reaction when he hears Thisbe saying his name three times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purg. 30.55</strong>&lt;br&gt;Beatrice calling “Dante”</td>
<td>//</td>
<td><strong>Met. 4.145-46</strong>&lt;br&gt;Pyramus’ reaction when he hears Thisbe saying his name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The transition from one guide to another is also marked by the change in who takes up the role of the calling Thisbe: the first time it is Virgil who calls out the name, the second time Beatrice.

The importance of this Ovidian story is highlighted by the fact that the salute to the disappeared guide Virgil immediately precedes Beatrice’s calling Dante’s name, and that this salute is also modeled after the same verses in Ovid.

Repeatedly, Dante introduces elements from an Ovidian story favored by the vernacular lyric poets in order to highlight the significance of these cantos. They represent a turning point in the *Commedia*: in order to move on to *Paradiso*, the pilgrim needs to leave his guide Virgil behind, break with his past, confess his wrong ways of loving, and repent. The last reference to the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Commedia* further confirms this reading. Dante creates a metaphor to stress how vain thoughts prevented the pilgrim from understanding that God’s justice keeps him from the Tree of Knowledge (Purg. 33.67-72):
E se stati non fossero acqua d’Elsa
li pensier vani intorno a la tua mente,
e l’piacier loro un Piramo a la gelsa,
per tante circostanze solamente
la giustizia di Dio, ne l’interdetto,
conosceresti a l’arbor moralmente.

[And if, like waters of the Elsa, your / vain thoughts did not encrust your mind; if your / delight
in them were not like Pyramus / staining the mulberry, you’d recognize / in that tree’s form and
height the moral sense / God’s justice had when He forbade trespass.]

In just a few words, Beatrice evokes the ending of the Pyramus and Thisbe story in the

Metamorphoses, in which the gods grant Thisbe’s request to turn the white mulberry fruits into
red berries as a memorial to both lovers (Met. 4.147–66). To explain to the pilgrim one last time
how far he was removed from God, Beatrice features Pyramus’ death as an extreme example of
false love—in which the “delight in vain thoughts” distracts from God. In these cantos where the
emphasis is on correcting the pilgrim to love in a different way and to write poetry in a different
way, Dante could not have chosen a better Ovidian character to make this point than the one the
vernacular poets favored so much.

The other Ovidian myth favored by medieval vernacular poets is the story of Narcissus,
whose vain self-love is often compared to their own futile quest for their ladies’ love. Poets
repeatedly represent the moment when Narcissus gazes at his own reflection in the water and, to
a lesser extent, include elements of Narcissus’ following madness and eventual death. However,
as we have seen in Chapter 2, nothing about the way in which these vernacular poets include the
boy’s story into their poetry revealed their actual knowledge of Ovid’s Latin text. Narcissus’
story circulated widely for centuries in both Latin and vernacular rewritings. Dante also favored
the story and featured it prominently in the Commedia. Students of Dante’s Ovid have paid
careful attention to the presence of Narcissus in the Commedia, focusing mostly on the
fragmentation of the myth over the three canticles. Here, I will instead focus on the vernacular roots of Dante’s reading of Narcissus, illustrating the connections between the vernacular poets’ treatment of the myth and Dante’s.

Glimpses of Ovid’s Narcissus first appear in the concluding cantos of the Inferno. In Dante’s description of Satan in Lake Cocytus, the shiny surface of the icy lake (Inf. 32.22-24, 34.52) and Satan’s stare (Inf. 34.53-54), as Robert McMahon illustrates, reprise the reflecting surface of the pool in which Ovid’s Narcissus admires himself (Met. 3.424, 504-05)—called “lo specchio di Narcisso” (“the mirror of Narcissus”) in Inferno 30.128.289 Dante thus immediately works with the main features of the vernacular lyric poets’ version of the myth: the mirror-like water, the fixed look, and the use of analogy. While in the Inferno Dante finds similarities between Narcissus and Satan, in Purgatorio and Paradiso he draws upon the most characteristic aspect of the vernacular poets’ use of the Narcissus story: the comparison of the poet to Narcissus. The first instance of this practice is particularly interesting in light of our previous discussion of Dante’s use of the Pyramus and Thisbe myth in the Garden of Eden. In these cantos, where the pilgrim leaves his guide Virgilio behind and is reunited with his new guide Beatrice, the transition from one guide to another is marked by Beatrice’s rebuke of the pilgrim’s old ways of loving and writing. The Pyramus and Thisbe story, highly popular in the vernacular love poetry of the time, represented the old choices the pilgrim had to denounce before entering

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paradise. Dante completes his salute to vernacular love poetry with references to the Narcissus story, that other favorite of the lyric poets. In *Purgatorio* 30, the canto where we found the second re-enactment of Thisbe’s calling out of Pyramus’ name, Dante also inserts some details from Narcissus’ story. For instance, he describes the river Lethe as a “chiaro fonte” (“clear stream” [*Purg.* 30.76])—a phrase found in Ovid’s Latin and vernacular love poetry to indicate the setting of the Narcissus tale. The effect of Beatrice’s harsh words on the pilgrim is described as follows, “lo gel che m’era intorno al cor ristretto” (“the ice that had restrained my heart” [*Purg.* 30.97]), which is the opposite reaction of Narcissus in the *Metamorphoses*, who melted away in his transformation (*Met.* 3.486-90). In a short essay on this specific passage, Kevin Brownlee describes how Dante’s text presents the pilgrim as a reversed Narcissus. While the vernacular poets included Narcissus to point out the similarities between his situation and theirs, Dante uses Narcissus quite differently—distinguishing himself from the character. In *Purgatorio*, the difference between the pilgrim and Narcissus is subtle; in *Paradiso*, on the other hand, Dante marks this difference explicitly. There, when the pilgrim mistakes the saints for souls, he explains he is making the opposite “error” the unnamed Narcissus once made: “per ch’io dentro a l’error contrario corsi / a quel ch’accese amor tra l’omo e ’l fonte” (“my mistake was contrary / to that which led the man to love the fountain” [*Par.* 3.17-18]). In disassociating himself from Narcissus, Dante also distinguishes himself from the ways in which his predecessors featured this quintessential vernacular figure.

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5.3 Love, Myth, and Exile in *Paradiso*

The pilgrim’s encounter with his ancestor Cacciaguida in *Paradiso* features two more similes that compare the pilgrim with Ovidian characters. In this narrative unit that runs over four cantos (*Par.* 15.13–18.51), Dante combines references to Ovid’s works of love, myth, and exile—the three aspects of the Latin poet’s oeuvre that other medieval Italian poets mostly treated separately (cf. Chapter 2). In this passage in *Paradiso*, Dante works with both central and peripheral elements from the Ovidian stories he selected, perfecting a technique he first started to explore in the petrose (cf. Chapter 3).

Dante’s first Ovidian source in the Cacciaguida episode is a passage from the amatory works. In the part of Cacciaguida’s speech that laments the current decay of Florence, Dante reuses a passage from Ovid’s *Remedia amoris*. During his lifetime, Cacciaguida explains, the city “si stava in pace, sobria e pudica” (“dwelled then in peace, temperate and chaste” [*Par.* 15.99]). To illustrate the difference between past and present, he inserts a series of negations: a list of all the awful things that did not exist when he was alive. When discussing women’s appearance, he notes that during his lifetime (*Par.* 15.100-02):

> Non avea catenella, non corona, 
> non gonne contigiate, non cintura 
> che fosse a veder piú che la persona.

*[No necklace and no coronal were there, / and no embroidered gowns; there was no girdle / that caught the eye more than the one who wore it.]*

Similar to contemporary writers of moral treatises and compilers of anthologies, Dante here takes a statement from Ovid’s *Remedia amoris* out of its amatory context and attributes a moral quality to Ovid’s words (cf. Chapter 1). In the passage in the *Remedia amoris*, Ovid addresses the heartbroken lover, warning him not to be by impressed by a girl’s appearance: clothing makes her more beautiful than she really is (vv. 343-44):
Auferimur cultu; gemmis auroque teguntur
Omnia; pars minima est ipsa puella sui.

[We are won by dress; all is concealed by gems and gold; a woman is the least part of herself.]

Dante thus reuses Ovid’s language of love to write a moralizing discourse that criticizes the abundance of women’s finery.

Further on in the episode, Dante turns several times to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. In the first occurrence, he revisits Pythagoras’ speech on change—an Ovidian passage that already inspired Dante’s writing of *Inferno* 25 (cf. Chapter 4). Here in *Paradiso*, Dante again echoes Pythagoras’ mantra that “nihil est tot quod perstet in orbe” (“In the whole of the world there is nothing that stays unchanged” [*Met.* 15.177]), applying it to the inevitable extinction of cities and races (*Met.* 15.287-306; 418-52). Dante’s Cacciaguida explains to the pilgrim that the noble Florentine families will eventually become extinct, in the same way that cities disappear. We mortals just do not live long enough to perceive this inescapable change (*Par.* 16.79-81):

Le vostre cose tutte hanno lor morte,
si come voi; ma celasi in alcuna
che dura molto, e le vite son corte.

[All things that you possess, possess their death, / just as you do; but in some things that last / long, death can hide from you whose lives are short.]

Pythagoras’ lengthy speech (*Met.* 15.60-478) illustrates the constant change with many examples; from those examples, Dante chooses the two most relevant to the pilgrim: family and city, both of which his exile forced him to abandon.

Dante continues to weave Ovidian language into his discussion of family in these cantos. For instance, to express the pilgrim’s curiosity to hear his future from Cacciaguida, Dante inserts an episode from the story of Phaeton (*Met.* 1.746-79–2.1-400). Cacciaguida compares the pilgrim with the equally curious Phaeton who wants his mother to finally identify his father (*Par.*
17.1-3 // Met. 1.746-79). This simile is but one of many instances in the *Commedia* where the
Phaeton story appears; here Dante works with Phaeton’s search for family and identity.291

In the central part of Cacciaguida’s speech—the prophecy of the pilgrim’s exile—Dante
inserts one more simile between the pilgrim and an Ovidian character. Cacciaguida compares the
pilgrim with Hippolytus, who also suffered an undeserved exile. The young prince was forced to
leave his home when his stepmother Phaedra falsely accused him of rape as punishment for
refusing her advances (*Met. 15.497-546*). In Cacciaguida’s words, the comparison between the
two exiles goes as follows (*Par. 17.46-48*):

Qual si partio Ipolito d’Atene
per la spietata e perfida noverca,
tal di Fiorenza partir ti convene.

[Hippolytus was forced to leave his Athens / because of his stepmother, faithless, fierce; / and so
must you depart from Florence.]

Dante’s “spietata e perfida noverca” (*Par. 17.47*) almost literally translates Ovid’s “sceleratae . .
. novercae” (*Met. 15.498*). This close verbal connection confirms that Dante was reading Ovid’s
version of the Hippolytus story.292 It is a small step, then, to move from an exile narrative in
Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* to the poetry Ovid wrote during his own exile. As Michelangelo Picone

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291 On Dante’s use of the Phaeton myth throughout the *Commedia*, see Kevin Brownlee,
“Phaeton’s Fall and Dante’s Ascent,” *Dante Studies* 102 (1984): 135-44, and Jeffrey T. Schnapp,
218-20.

292 On the Hippolytus myth in the *Commedia*, see also Schnapp, “Dante’s Ovidian Self-
Correction,” and Michelangelo Picone, “Ovid and the *Exul Immeritus*,” in Barolini, Storey,
*Dante for the New Millennium*, 389-407.
first noted, Dante echoes the language of one of Ovid’s own exile letters in a key passage of Cacciaguida’s prophecy (Par. 17.55-57):\footnote{Cf. Picone, “Ovid and the Exul Immeritus,” 404.}

Tu lascerai ogne cosa diletta
più caramente; e questo è quello strale
che l’arco de lo essilio pria saetta.

[You shall leave everything you love most dearly: / this is the arrow that the bow of exile / shoots first.]

The language Cacciaguida uses to describe the pilgrim’s future (Dante’s present reality) almost literally translates a half-verse from Ovid’s letter that recounts in detail the night the poet was forced to leave his city and abandon his family (Tristia 1.3). In the opening of that letter, Ovid describes that night as the moment “qua tot mihi cara reliqui” (“I left so many things dear to me” [v. 3]).

Dante thus turns to Ovid’s writing in two main ways in order to reinforce the theme of exile: first, by drawing upon Ovid’s own letters about his exile, and second, by adopting his exile narratives in the Metamorphoses. The presence of some of these passages from the Metamorphoses is obvious (i.e., Dante mentions the name of an Ovidian character); the Ovidian origin of other passages is more subtle. For instance, to describe the light that Cacciaguida eradiates, Dante adds the following Ovid-inspired comparison (Par. 16.28-30):

Come s’avviva a lo spirar d’i venti
carbone in fiamma, così vid’ io quella
luce risplendere a’ miei blandimenti . . .

[As at the breathing of the winds, a coal / will quicken into flame, so I saw that / light glow at words that were affectionate.]

Most commentaries refer to the following simile in a corresponding passage in the Metamorphoses (Met. 7.79-81):

\begin{quote}
\textit{Tu lascerai ogne cosa diletta} \\
\textit{più caramente; e questo è quello strale} \\
\textit{che l’arco de lo essilio pria saetta.}
\end{quote}
utque solet uentis alimenta adsumere quaeque
parua sub inducta latuit scintilla fauilla
crescere et in ueteres agitata resurgere uires . . .

[As a tiny spark that is hidden under a pile of ashes / is fanned and fed once again by the wind
and grows to recover / its earlier strength . . .]

However, most commentaries only point to the authors’ similarities at the sentence level: both
passages describe how winds spark flames. This approach leaves out the broader context from
which the Ovidian simile is taken: Ovid compares the growing spark to the passion Medea felt
for Jason (Met. 7.82-83). In that sense, this passage is another instance where Dante strips Ovid’s
language of the carnal desire found in the original context, and instead uses Ovid’s language to
describe the light the saints spread out in Paradiso. Moreover, Dante selects an Ovidian simile
from a passage whose broader context also fits the themes of Cacciaguida episode: separation
from one’s family and hometown. In the Metamorphoses, the description of Medea’s growing
passion for Jason immediately follows her monologue (Met. 7.11-71). In that monologue, she is
torn between staying with her family or leaving her hometown to follow Jason (Met. 7.22, 39,
53, 90)—a thought that both excites and horrifies her. In the most subtle of the Ovidian
references in the Cacciaguida episode, Dante carefully chooses a simile taken from a larger
passage in the Metamorphoses that addresses the same themes as the episode in the Commedia.

The Cacciaguida episode is illustrative of the ways in which Dante worked with his
Ovidian sources in the Commedia. While this episode takes place in Paradiso, the canticle with
the lowest number of Ovidian references, Dante still incorporates passages from Ovid’s complete
oeuvre: he covers the Latin poet’s works of love (Remedia amoris), myth (Metamorphoses), and
exile (Tristia and exile narratives in the Metamorphoses), all in the same narrative episode.

While most other vernacular Italian poets focused on one specific Ovidian source (cf. Chapter 2),
Dante combines his Ovidian sources, working with both central and peripheral elements of the
stories he chooses to include. He turns passages with a distinct amorous tone, befitting Ovid’s writings on love, into moralistic statements. For example, Ovid’s words from the Remedia amoris, consoling the heartbroken lover that a girl’s splendid dress is mere appearance, become Cacciaguida’s moral disapproval of contemporary excessive dress in Florence. Descriptions of Medea’s passionate desire for Jason become the brilliance of the light the saints send out. When he includes a less identifiable passage from Ovid’s writings, such as the growing spark simile from the Medea story, it is taken from a larger passage that addresses themes relevant to the passage in the Commedia. Separation from family and city are those themes in the Cacciaguida episode and they characterize each story Dante includes: it is found in Phaeton’s search for his lost father, Hippolytus’ forced departure from his family and lands, and Medea’s attachment to her familiar home and fear for a foreign love. Ovid is also present in Cacciaguida’s crudest description of Dante’s departure from Florence, “Tu lascerai ogne cosa diletta / più caramente” (Par. 17.55-56), a sentence modeled on the Latin poet’s description of his own exit from Rome. In all these ways Dante connects his own fate with that of the fellow exiled writer Ovid. We identify all this in the least “Ovidian” canticle when considering the sheer numbers of references to the Latin poet’s work, but, as we have seen before in Figure 1, the category of Ovid-inspired similes levels the field, as these similes appear in roughly equal numbers in each canticle. And when looking at the instances of similes that regard the pilgrim—the strongest association that Dante can establish with Ovid’s characters—then nowhere is Dante closer to Ovid than in the last canticle, where Dante turns to this rhetorical device not less than seven times (two of which in the Cacciaguida episode). That episode is truly where love, myth, and exile are strongly connected, in both the pilgrim’s narrative and in Dante’s experience.
Conclusion

This study has contextualized Dante’s reading of Ovid in two distinct ways. First, it has placed Dante within a community of medieval Italian readers of Ovid who both read and wrote about the Latin poet. These vernacular poets responded to Ovid in their works, discussing his authority in matters of love among one another in sonnet exchanges and creating similes that adapted Ovidian characters. The ways in which these early medieval poets borrowed the Latin poet’s characters and motifs are crucial to our understanding of how Dante works with Ovidian material in the Commedia. Throughout the Commedia, Dante both adopts and transforms the common techniques of the vernacular tradition: as much as the Latin texts of “Ovidius” were Dante’s sources for writing the Commedia, so was the “Ovidio” constructed by the vernacular poets. In the Commedia, Dante often combines classical, theological, and vernacular sources. In the case of Ovid, he simultaneously works with the Latin source texts and Ovidian elements filtered through vernacular poetry.

Just as we cannot separate Dante’s reading of Ovid from its literary-historical context, we should pay close attention to the broader textual context of the Latin passages Dante selected in the Commedia, just as Dante himself did. Throughout his works, Dante reveals himself to be a very attentive reader of the Latin poet: we can characterize his drawing upon Ovid not as an act of anthology—plucking meaningful but isolated passages and phrases—but rather, a careful process of echoing and responding to Ovid’s text as a whole. A simple comparison between the obviously parallel passages in Ovid and Dante is thus not sufficient to describe Dante’s close engagement with Ovidian material. “Context is an important clue to Ovid’s mood and
meaning,” the Ovid scholar Charles Segal wrote—something Dante realized centuries earlier. Even when Dante only paraphrases one verse from Ovid or translates just a few words from the Latin into Italian, these passages are always taken from a specific textual context with which Dante was particularly familiar. For instance, we saw that in the petrose, Dante prominently featured Medusa—a classical character described by Ovid—but also included other seemingly unimportant details from Ovid’s rendition of the Medusa story in his poems. And in our discussion of the Commedia, we have repeatedly seen that Dante choses to include certain Ovidian stories (e.g., the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in Inf. 25) that were taken from larger narrative units in Ovid’s works that addressed precisely the themes Dante wanted to discuss in the Commedia (e.g., the theme of poetic novelty that Ovid’s narrator introduces before telling the story, which is central to Dante’s canto as well).

To supplement the contextualized reading of Dante’s Ovidian allusions, my dissertation includes a concordance, a list that shows the verbal similarities between passages from Ovid’s Latin texts and Dante’s Commedia (included in the Appendix). This concordance differs from the existing concordances of Szombathely, Moore, and Vazzana in the way it lists the allusions: Szombathely, Moore, and Vazzana all start with Ovid’s texts and give the corresponding verses in Dante’s works; my concordance, on the other hand, follows the chronology of the Commedia and refers back to Ovid’s works. By organizing the material in this way, I offer a novel view of distribution of Ovidian material in the Commedia. But regardless of the starting point of the concordance, any paper version is limited in that it can only highlight one direction of the intertextuality. In conclusion, I want to discuss the future of this project, which will address this

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limitation and offer a new way of reading a highly allusive text such as the *Commedia*.

I intend to use the concordance included in this dissertation as the starting point for a digital concordance and create the *Intertextual Digital Dante*, a digital edition of the *Commedia* that in its first phase will highlight Ovidian intertextuality. I want to rethink the current concordance as a digital research tool available for a larger scholarly community. Users of this digital concordance will be able to compare Dante’s text directly with its Ovidian sources, allowing them to see the Italian and Latin passages face-to-face. Moreover, the user will decide on the starting point of his or her search: one can start with the text of the *Commedia* and click through to Ovid’s works or vice versa.

With this digital solution, the distribution of Ovidian material in the *Commedia* will become strikingly visible and understandable: when beginning from Dante’s text, it will become immediately apparent which are the “Ovidian” cantos in the *Commedia*; when starting from Ovid’s texts, the reader will suddenly understand which stories appealed the most to Dante. Moreover, readers of both poems will also be able to search for specific stories, characters, motifs, etc., from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and visualize where they reappear in Dante’s *Commedia*. I envision this first phase of the website as a digital research tool allowing anyone to move efficiently back and forth between the two texts and combine the information of the one-dimensional concordances.

This project can later be expanded in two ways. A first project will add more authors as intertextual sources of the *Commedia*; the second will document Ovidian intertextuality in other Italian literature other than the *Commedia*. For instance, a site focusing on Ovid will allow the reader to trace the development of particular Ovidian verses or stories throughout Italian literature. And in the extended version of the *Intertextual Digital Dante*, which will include all of
Dante’s sources, one will be able to look up all allusions to one source (say, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, or even just Book 4), or find all the allusions in a specific canto of the *Commedia* (with the possibility of grouping the theological, classical, and vernacular sources). In this dissertation, I have shown how medieval Italian readers of Ovid transformed their readings of the Latin poet’s works in their writings. Digital projects such as the *Intertextual Digital Dante* will in turn make Ovid’s and Dante’s texts—which have been read for centuries—available in new ways to future readers.
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Appendix: Ovidian Allusions in the Commedia

The following charts list all the Ovidian allusions in the order they appear in the Commedia.

Building on the work by Szombathely (Dante e Ovidio), Moore (Scripture and Classical Authors in Dante), and Vazzana (Dante e la “bella scola”), this concordance divides the entries into the categories of “word choice,” “characters/events/places,” and “similes” (cf. Chapter 5). For each allusion, I briefly describe the context of the listed passages in both Ovid’s and Dante’s writings, using “P” and “V” as abbreviations for the pilgrim and Virgilio.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dante</th>
<th>Ovid</th>
<th>category</th>
<th>context Ovid</th>
<th>context Dante</th>
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<td>despair Ovid in exile</td>
<td>despair pilgrim</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Met. 13.406</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Hecuba at fall of Troy (trembling air)</td>
<td>description lion (trembling air)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Inf. 1.98-99</td>
<td>Met. 8.837; 834</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Erysichthon visited by Fames</td>
<td>description bestia to V</td>
</tr>
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<td>Met. 15.622</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>address to Muses</td>
<td>address to Muses</td>
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<td>Tr. 5.14.36-37</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Penelope's name praised, never dies</td>
<td>pilgrim on V's fame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 2.61</td>
<td>Tr. 1.5.32-34</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>on loss of friends; few remained, rest are &quot;Fortune's following&quot; on loyalty deceased friend</td>
<td>pilgrim on V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 3.27</td>
<td>Tr. 1.3.77-78</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>reaction family and friends at night of his departure</td>
<td>description ignavi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 3.67</td>
<td>A.A. 1.532</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Ariadne's tears for Theseus praises friend's tears for him in exile</td>
<td>description ignavi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 4.27</td>
<td>Met. 13.406</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Hecuba at fall of Troy (trembling air)</td>
<td>description trembling air Limbo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 4.90</td>
<td>Ovid's name</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Ovid as character</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 4.102</td>
<td>Tr. 4.10.54</td>
<td>word choice</td>
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<td>Dante 6th among &quot;bella scola&quot;</td>
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<td>Orfeo &lt; filosofica famiglia</td>
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<td>place</td>
<td>description many gates of Dis</td>
<td>Minos on large seize entrance of Dis</td>
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<td>Inf. 5.58</td>
<td>Am. 1.5.11-12</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>comparison Corinna // Semiramis story set in the city of Semiramis</td>
<td>Semiramis &lt; lussuriosi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 5.65</td>
<td>Met. 13.448ff. A.A. 2.711-12</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>appearance Achilles' ghost Achilles' burning love for Polyxena</td>
<td>Achilles &lt; lussuriosi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 5.131</td>
<td>A.A. 1.729</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>every lover is pale; that color fits him</td>
<td>Francesca: our faces turned pale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 5.142</td>
<td>Met. 11.460</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Alcyone faints when Ceyx leaves</td>
<td>pilgrim: I fainted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 6.1</td>
<td>Met. 6.531</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Philomela returns to her senses after rape Laodamia recovers after fainting</td>
<td>pilgrim: my senses returned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 6.13</td>
<td>Met. 4.450-51</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>description Cerberus</td>
<td>Cerberus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 7.22</td>
<td>Met. 7.63ff.</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Medea: Jason will protect me against waves of Scylla and Charybdis</td>
<td>movement souls // breaking waves above Charybdis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Ovid</td>
<td>category</td>
<td>context Ovid</td>
<td>context Dante</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 7.61-96</td>
<td>Met. 6.299-300</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Niobe: Fortuna can take away a lot</td>
<td>V's speech on Fortuna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 8.73</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scylla: Fortuna resists half-hearted prayers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 8.13-14</td>
<td>Met. 7.776-78</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>speed Cephalus' dog Laelaps // swiftness arrow</td>
<td>quick arrival of small boat // swiftness release arrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 8.68</td>
<td>Met. 4.438</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>mention palace of Dis</td>
<td>V to P: we're close to the city of Dis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 9.38-42</td>
<td>Met. 4.451-54</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Juno summons the Furies</td>
<td>the three Furies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 4.481-96</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tisiphone sent to madden Athamas &amp; Ino</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 5.202</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medusa turns men into stone</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 10.349</td>
<td></td>
<td>Myrrha: don't you fear the Furies?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 9.76-77</td>
<td>Met. 6.370-81</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Latona turns Lycians into frogs in water</td>
<td>fleeing souls // frogs escaping a snake in the water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 9.89-90</td>
<td>Met. 2.819</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Mercury opens the door of Aglauros' sister's house with heavenly wand</td>
<td>angel sent from heaven opens gate Dis with wand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 12.66-69</td>
<td>Met. 9.101-02</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Nessus tries to rape Deianeira; is killed</td>
<td>Nessus, one of the centaurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 9.127-33</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nessus takes revenge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 12.72</td>
<td>Met. 12.210ff.</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Centaurs at the wedding</td>
<td>Pholus, one of the centaurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 12.306</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pholus mentioned by name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 14.58</td>
<td>Met. 1.151-62</td>
<td>event</td>
<td>Gigantomachy</td>
<td>Capaneo: Jove overthrew the giants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 14.94-120</td>
<td>Met. 1.106ff.</td>
<td>event</td>
<td>decline since golden age</td>
<td>V about Old Man of Crete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 15.12</td>
<td>Met. 1.32</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>world created by whichever of the gods</td>
<td>whoever the architect was of the dikes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 17.1</td>
<td>Her. 9.91-92</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>the killing of Geryon</td>
<td>Geryon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 17.18</td>
<td>Met. 6.5-145</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>vibrant colors of Arachne's loom</td>
<td>colors Geryon // colors Arachne's loom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 17.106-08</td>
<td>Met. 2.200</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Phaeton lets go of the reins</td>
<td>P on Geryon's back is afraid // fear of Phaeton when he let go of the reins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 17.109-11</td>
<td>Met. 8.223-33</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Icarus' wax wings melt; father Daedalus is desperate</td>
<td>P's fear // Icarus' fear when wax melted and heard Daedalus screaming &quot;wrong way&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A.A. 2.21-98</td>
<td></td>
<td>Icarus' fears and screaming Daedalus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Ovid</td>
<td>category</td>
<td>context Ovid</td>
<td>context Dante</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 18.83-96</td>
<td>Met. 7.118-19</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>dragon teeth in field with Medea's help mention Lemnos, Hypsipyle's island Hypsipyle mentions Medea</td>
<td>Jason &lt; seducers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 20.21</td>
<td>Her. 11.10</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Canace to Macareus: he would look &quot;with dry cheeks&quot; at my wounds</td>
<td>address to reader: how could I not cry seeing the diviners?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 20.40-45</td>
<td>Met. 3.324-31</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>sex change Tiresias; his prophetic powers</td>
<td>Tiresias &lt; diviners (sex change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 20.55-99</td>
<td>Met. 6.157-59</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Manto the prophetess</td>
<td>Manto &lt; diviners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 21.27</td>
<td>Her. 14.132</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Hypermnestra to Lynceus: fear takes away my strength (to write more)</td>
<td>pilgrim's reaction // man &quot;undone by sudden fear&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 22.19-20</td>
<td>Met. 2.265-66</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>after Phaeton's fall rivers dry up, dolphins don't dare to show their backs</td>
<td>sinners showing backs // dolphins showing back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 23.19</td>
<td>Fasti 1.97</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Janus appears to poet, who felt his hair stiffen with fear</td>
<td>P: my hair raised out of fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 24.85</td>
<td>Met. 4.620</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>blood Medusa created snakes Libya</td>
<td>Let Libya no longer boast about snakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 24.106-11</td>
<td>Met. 15.392-402</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Pythagoras' speech: only phoienx renews himself</td>
<td>transformation Vanni Fucci // resurrection phoenix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 24.106-11</td>
<td>Met. 15.392-402</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>description diet and habits of phoenix</td>
<td>description diet and habits of phoenix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 25.32</td>
<td>Fasti 1.549-50 Fasti 1.575-76</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>description death Cacus</td>
<td>Cacus, who was killed by Hercules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 25.50-57</td>
<td>Met. 4.357-64</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Salmacis attacks Hermaphroditus as a snake</td>
<td>reptile attacks one of the thieves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 25.58-60</td>
<td>Met. 4.365</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Salmacis clinging to Hermaphroditus // ivy clinging to tree</td>
<td>snake clinging to thief's limbs // ivy clinging to tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 25.69-78</td>
<td>Met. 4.373-79</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Salmacis and Hermaphroditus mixed</td>
<td>four limbs turned into two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 25.97-99</td>
<td>Met. 4.575-76</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Cadmus' transformation</td>
<td>Let Ovid be silent about Cadmus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 25.97-99</td>
<td>Met. 5.572ff.</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Arethusa's transformation</td>
<td>Let Ovid be silent about Arethusa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 25.106-08</td>
<td>Met. 4.579-80</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Cadmus' legs molding together</td>
<td>thief's legs knit together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 25.110-11</td>
<td>Met. 4.577</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Cadmus' skin hardening</td>
<td>thief's skin hardening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 25.112-14</td>
<td>Met. 4.581-85</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Cadmus' arms shrinking</td>
<td>thief's arms shrinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Ovid</td>
<td>category</td>
<td>context Ovid</td>
<td>context Dante</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 25.121</td>
<td>Met. 4.576, 579</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Cadmus falls on the ground</td>
<td>one thief rises up, other falls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 25.133-37</td>
<td>Met. 4.586-89</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Cadmus' tongue splits</td>
<td>thief's tongue splits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 25.143-44</td>
<td>Met. 4.284</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Alcithoë decides to tell novel story</td>
<td>address to reader: sorry if my pen went astray, it is the newness of the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 26.7</td>
<td>Her. 19.195-96</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Hero to Leander: before dawn dreams are true</td>
<td>we dream the truth when morning nears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 26.91-92</td>
<td>Met. 14.308</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Macareus: Ulysses and I stayed a year with Circe</td>
<td>Ulysses: I left Circe after a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 14.438</td>
<td></td>
<td>Macareus: Circe warned us about the vast, dangerous waters</td>
<td>Ulysses: I set forth for the open sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 14.436-39</td>
<td></td>
<td>Macareus: Ulysses and I were old and slow</td>
<td>Ulysses: companions and I were old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 26.118</td>
<td>Met. 3.543</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Bacchus: &quot;est pecor memores qua sitis stirpe creati&quot;</td>
<td>Ulysses: &quot;considerate la vostra semenza&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 27.7-12</td>
<td>A.A. 1.652-56</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>deceivers deceived: example of Phalaris &amp; Perillus</td>
<td>confused sound double flame // sound from Sicilian bull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tr. 3.11.41-54</td>
<td></td>
<td>poet to enemy: you are more cruel than Perillus (Sicilian bull explained)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 27.60</td>
<td>Met. 9.584</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Byblis' difficulty to speak and catch a breath</td>
<td>Guido's flame moves and finally set free his breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 28.1</td>
<td>Tr. 4.10.24</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Ovid in exile: wrote in verse even I tried to write &quot;verba soluta modis&quot;</td>
<td>P: who could tell what I saw, even in &quot;parole sciolte&quot;…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 28.103-06</td>
<td>Met. 3.723-25</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Maenads shows Pentheus mangled stomps</td>
<td>Mosca with his hands chopped off reveals himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 28.125</td>
<td>Met. 4.378-79</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Salmacis and Hermaphroditus are not two, not one</td>
<td>Bertran de Born makes a lamp out of his head: two in one, one in two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 29.58-69</td>
<td>Met. 7.523-660</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>description plague Aegina</td>
<td>sorrow to see souls // sorrow caused by plague in Aegina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Ovid</td>
<td>category</td>
<td>context Ovid</td>
<td>context Dante</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 30.1-12</td>
<td>Met. 4.470-71</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Juno wishes fall of Cadmus' family, Furies drive Athamas insane</td>
<td>rage witnessed // rage Athamasruished by Juno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 4.512-19</td>
<td></td>
<td>start hunt, Athamas is furious</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Met. 4.521</td>
<td></td>
<td>mother is fleeing</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Met. 4.529-30</td>
<td></td>
<td>mother and child leap to escape father</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 30.13-21</td>
<td>Met. 13.404</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Troy and Priam fall</td>
<td>rage witnessed // rage Hecuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 13.405-06</td>
<td></td>
<td>transformation Hecuba, strange barking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 30.37-41</td>
<td>Met. 10.298ff.</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Myrrha's story</td>
<td>Myrrha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 30.52-54</td>
<td>Fasti 1.215-16</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>arrogant Romans // one whose belly is swollen with dropsy</td>
<td>punishment: heavy dropsy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 30.124-25</td>
<td>Met. 6.378</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>transformed frogs quarrel constantly, which distends their wide jaws</td>
<td>Master Adam to Sinon: your mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>gapes open from fever</td>
<td>gapes open from fever</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 30.127-29</td>
<td>Met. 3.407-510</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Narcissus story</td>
<td>Master Adam to Sinon: you lick</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Narcissus' mirror</td>
<td>Narcissus' mirror</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 31.4</td>
<td>Met. 13.171-72</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Achilles' spear mentioned by Ulysses</td>
<td>V's words first bring shame,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rem. Am. 47-48</td>
<td></td>
<td>goal work: after wound now help //</td>
<td>then cure</td>
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<td>Tr. 5.2.15-16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Achilles' spear</td>
<td>Achilles' spear brought first</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>poet to wife: example of what first hurts, then heals</td>
<td>pain, later a welcome gift</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 31.95</td>
<td>Met. 1.51-55</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Gigantomachy</td>
<td>giant Ephialtes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 31.100</td>
<td>Met. 1.51-55</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Gigantomachy</td>
<td>giant Antaeus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 31.106</td>
<td>Met. 5.354-56</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Typhoeus causing earthquakes</td>
<td>Ephialtes' shaking // earthquake of</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unerseen magnitude</td>
<td>unseen magnitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 31.124</td>
<td>Met. 4.457ff.</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>description Tityus</td>
<td>V to Antaeus: don’t send us to</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tityus or Typhon</td>
<td>Tityus or Typhon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 32.31</td>
<td>Met. 6.375-78</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Lycians transformed into frogs: sound</td>
<td>grieving souls in cold // sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 6.372</td>
<td></td>
<td>frogs with head out of the water</td>
<td>frogs souls // frogs with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sound clapping teeth souls // bills of</td>
<td>snouts out of water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 32.36</td>
<td>Met. 6.97</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>stork with rattling bill on Athena's tapestry</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Ovid</td>
<td>category</td>
<td>context Ovid</td>
<td>context Dante</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf. 34.22</td>
<td>Fasti 1.98</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Janus appeared to poet, poet froze</td>
<td>pilgrim: I became faint and frozen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 34.25</td>
<td>Tr. 1.3.13</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>while leaving Rome, exiled poet was alive without knowing it</td>
<td>pilgrim: I didn't die nor stay alive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf. 34.133-39</td>
<td>Met. 5.501-03</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Ceres trying to find Persephone</td>
<td>trying to find the exit from hell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 1.7-12</td>
<td>Met. 5.298ff. Met. 5.662</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>contest between Pierides and Muses &quot;surgit ... Calliope&quot;</td>
<td>invocation Muses; Piche struck down &quot;e qui Calliope aiquanto surga&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 1.115-16</td>
<td>Met. 8.1-2</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>fleeing night, Lucifer arrives</td>
<td>description dawn, fleeing darkness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 1.117</td>
<td>Her. 11.75</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>&lt; Canace to Macareus: father Aeolus punishes me, sea is trembling</td>
<td>at shore: the trembling of the sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 2.7-9</td>
<td>Met. 6.47-49</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>face Aurora lights up (Athena's tapestry)</td>
<td>description Aurora's rosy and golden cheeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 2.12</td>
<td>Her. 18.30</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>&lt; Leander to Hero: look at the shore, travel in thoughts to that place where he couldn't go physically</td>
<td>pilgrim lingering at shore // travellers who think about journey without moving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 2.79</td>
<td>Met. 4.443</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>shades in underworld &quot;bloodless without body and bone&quot;</td>
<td>description shades: empty except for appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 2.132</td>
<td>Fasti 5.3</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>poet clueless about origin name month of May // wayfarer who doesn't know where to go</td>
<td>newly arrived souls // those who go without knowing where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 3.78</td>
<td>Tr. 2.484</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>&lt; Poet's Plea: discussion loss of precious time</td>
<td>V: the more we know, the more we hate time's waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 4.72</td>
<td>Met. 2.148</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Sun to Phaeton: the car you wrongly chose to drive</td>
<td>V describes path of the sun as the street that Phaeton failed to drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 2.200, 204-05</td>
<td></td>
<td>moment Phaeton loses reins and falls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 5.99</td>
<td>Met. 12.301</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>centaur Rhoetus fled hurt, drenched with his own blood</td>
<td>Buonconte fleeing, dripping blood across the plain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Ovid</td>
<td>category</td>
<td>context Ovid</td>
<td>context Dante</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purg. 9.1-3</td>
<td>Her. 18.111-12</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Aurora, wife of Tithonus, is ready to chase the night away</td>
<td>description time: Aurora leaves the arms of her old lover Tithonus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 9.6</td>
<td>Met. 15.371 Fasti 4.163-64</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>description scorpion with hooked tail</td>
<td>description time: cold-blooded creature (scorpion) that strikes men with its tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 9.13-18</td>
<td>Her. 19.195-96</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>&lt;Hero to Leander: I had a dream at the time when dreams are true</td>
<td>time when dreams become almost divine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 9.19-24</td>
<td>Met. 10.155-61, Met. 11.756</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Jove in love with Ganymedes, eagle (Jove) abducts Ganymedes</td>
<td>description raptus in dream // eagle abducting Ganymedes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 12.5-6</td>
<td>Her. 13.101</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>&lt;Laodamia to Protesilaus: when you come, speed your keel with oar and sail</td>
<td>V to P: hurry up // one on a ship with wings and oars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 12.28-33</td>
<td>Met. 10.150-51</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Gigantomachy</td>
<td>Briareus as example of pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 12.37-39</td>
<td>Met. 6.146-312</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Niobe story</td>
<td>Niobe as example of pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 12.43-45</td>
<td>Met. 6.5-145</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Arachne story</td>
<td>Arachne as example of pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 12.50-51</td>
<td>Met. 9.407-08</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Alcmacon story</td>
<td>Alcmacon as example of pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 13.105</td>
<td>Met. 4.680</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Perseus to Andromeda: what is your country's name, what is your name?</td>
<td>P to Sapia: identify yourself by city or name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 14.139</td>
<td>Met. 2.708-832, Met. 2.827, 830-31</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Mercury and Agleuros story</td>
<td>Agleuros turns into a stone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 15.13-14</td>
<td>Met. 2.276</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>after Phaeton sets world on fire, Tellus raises hand above her brow to protect herself from the heat</td>
<td>pilgrim raises hand above his brow to block the light of the setting sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 15.98</td>
<td>Met. 6.70-82</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>fight between Athena and Mars about naming Athens on Athena's tapestry</td>
<td>example meekness: mention Athens, the city whose naming caused a fight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 15.109-10</td>
<td>Met. 4.145</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Pyramus' eyes heavy with death</td>
<td>death is heavy on martyr Stephen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 16.136</td>
<td>Met. 1.607</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Juno when she can't find Jove: I am mistaken or being wronged</td>
<td>Marco to P: your speech deceives me or tests me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 17.19-20</td>
<td>Met. 6.412-674</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Philomela and Proce model story</td>
<td>Proce as example of wrath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 20.103-05</td>
<td>Met. 10.243-97</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Pygmalion story</td>
<td>Pygmalion as example of avarice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Ovid</td>
<td>category</td>
<td>context Ovid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purg. 20.106-08</td>
<td>Met. 11.85-145</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Midas story</td>
<td>Midas as example of avarice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 20.114-15</td>
<td>Met. 13.429-575</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Polynnesstor &amp; Polydorus story</td>
<td>Polynnesstor &amp; Polydorus as example of avarice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 22.148-50</td>
<td>Met. 1.103-12</td>
<td>event</td>
<td>description golden age</td>
<td>mention golden age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 23.22-27</td>
<td>Met. 8.801-08 Met. 8.827-28 Met. 8.875-78</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Erysichthon story</td>
<td>gluttons more consumed // Erysichthon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 24.52</td>
<td>Am. 2.1.2</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>poet announces writing of different genre (love poetry)</td>
<td>P explains to Bonagiunta how he writes poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 25.22-24</td>
<td>Met. 8.260-546</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>Meleager story</td>
<td>V to pilgrim: think of Meleager to understand how souls grow lean without nourishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 25.130-32</td>
<td>Met. 2.401-530</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Callisto story</td>
<td>Diana &amp; Callisto as example of chastity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 26.34-36</td>
<td>Met. 7.624-26 A.A. 1.93</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>long columns of ants (later the Myrmidons) women crowded together at theater // ants in long columns with mouths full of food</td>
<td>souls hurrying to kiss one another // ants putting faces together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 26.87</td>
<td>Met. 8.132</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Pasiphae enters in wooden shape</td>
<td>souls scream the name of she who turned herself into a wooden beast (Pasiphae)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 27.37-39</td>
<td>Met. 4.143-46</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>dying Pyramus responds when Thisbe calls him</td>
<td>P's reaction to Beatrice's name // Pyramus' reaction when Thisbe called him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 27.130</td>
<td>Tr. 5.1.27</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>&lt; proemium: mention intellect and skill</td>
<td>V's last instructions: &quot;I have brought you here with intellect and skill&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 28.46-51</td>
<td>Met. 5.385-408</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Proserpina story, mention of spring</td>
<td>P to Matelda: you remind me of Proserpina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Ovid</td>
<td>category</td>
<td>context Ovid</td>
<td>context Dante</td>
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<td>Purg. 28.63-66</td>
<td>Met. 10.525-28</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Adonis wounds Venus with his arrow</td>
<td>Matelda lifting her eyes // Venus' light when her son pierced her with his arrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 28.68-69</td>
<td>Met. 1.101-12</td>
<td>event</td>
<td>description golden age</td>
<td>smiling Matelda arranges multi-colored flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 28.73-74</td>
<td>Her. 18.173-74</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>&lt;Leander to Hero: water described as obstacle between lovers</td>
<td>hatred for river that kept pilgrim and Matelda apart // Leander hating the waves that kept him from Hero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 28.116-17</td>
<td>Met. 1.108</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>flower sprang unplanted (&quot;sine semine&quot;)</td>
<td>Matelda explains that plant takes root without being seeded (&quot;sanza seme&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 28.139-44</td>
<td>Met. 1.101-12</td>
<td>event</td>
<td>description golden age</td>
<td>Matelda: this is the golden age described by ancient poets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 29.40-42</td>
<td>Met. 2.219</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>mention Helicon in Phaeton story contest takes place on Helicon</td>
<td>invocation to Helicon and Urania for inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 29.94-96</td>
<td>Met. 1.625-27</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>number eyes Argus</td>
<td>procession: four creatures with wings full of eyes // eyes of Argus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 29.117-20</td>
<td>Met. 2.107ff.</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>description chariot Sun</td>
<td>carro of the procession // carro of Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 29.126</td>
<td>Am. 3.5.11</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>dream poet: heifer (lady) more white than freshly fallen snow</td>
<td>description one of three ladies: she is white // new-fallen snow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 30.22-23</td>
<td>Met. 2.112-14</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>mention Aurora opening purple gates and letting purple light out in Phaeton story</td>
<td>description time: rosy air in the east indicates start of the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 31.121-22</td>
<td>Met. 4.347-49</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Salmacis gazing at Hermaphroditus' naked body // sun reflected on surface of glass</td>
<td>Beatrice's shining eyes fixed on griffin // sun shining in mirror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 32.64-69</td>
<td>Met. 1.625</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Argus' many eyes</td>
<td>P almost fell asleep hearing a hymn // Argus' eyes closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purg. 33.46-51</td>
<td>Met. 1.379-87</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>address to Themis, answer oracle son of Laius solved riddle sphinx prophetic powers Themis</td>
<td>Beatrice's prophecy: obscure words, but will become clear // Themis, Sphinx clarify obscure oracles, riddles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Ovid</td>
<td>category</td>
<td>context Ovid</td>
<td>context Dante</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purg. 33.69</td>
<td>Met. 4.158-66</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>address Thisbe to change color mulberry</td>
<td>Beatrice to P: your wair thoughts // Pyrram by the mulberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 1.13-18</td>
<td>Met. 1.316</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>mention mountain Parnassus</td>
<td>invocation to Apollo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 1.558-59</td>
<td></td>
<td>Daphne becomes the laurel, Apollo's tree</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Par. 1.19-21</td>
<td>Met. 6.382-400</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Marsyas story</td>
<td>to Apollo: enter my breast //</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 6.383-91</td>
<td></td>
<td>description punishment</td>
<td>you drew out Marsyas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 1.64-69</td>
<td>Met. 13.940-49</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>transformation Glaucus</td>
<td>P: gazing at Beatrice I was changed //</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Glaucus changed into god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 2.1</td>
<td>Tr. 2.329-30</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>&lt; Poet's Plea: discussion genres: a skiff</td>
<td>address to reader: mention small boat</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>couldn't go to the sea because it can only handle a small pool</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Par. 2.16-18</td>
<td>Met. 7.118-22</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Jason's test: plowing a field with fire-breathing oxen</td>
<td>readers surprised about P's course // argonauts surprised to see Jason as ploughman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 2.102</td>
<td>Met. 2.110</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>light reflects on Phaeton's chariot</td>
<td>3 mirrors experiment: 1 reflects the light of all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 3.17-18</td>
<td>Met. 3.416-17</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Narcissus falls in love with reflection</td>
<td>mistake pilgrim // opposite mistake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met. 3.426-27</td>
<td></td>
<td>Narcissus kisses the fountain</td>
<td>Narcissus in love with the fountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 4.6</td>
<td>Met. 5.164-67</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Perseus hesitant to go left or right // tigress hearing bellowing from 2 herds, difficult which to pick</td>
<td>P torn between two questions // hound tomt between two does</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 4.103-05</td>
<td>Met. 9.407-15</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Alcmaeon story</td>
<td>Beatrice about Piccarda: often one acts stupidly when trying to escape harm // Alcmaeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 6.141-42</td>
<td>Tr. 5.8.14</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>poet to detractor: fortune changes: one who denied cheap food now eats food of beggar</td>
<td>Romeo da Villanova's exile: begging for bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 8.67-70</td>
<td>Met. 5.346-53</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>description Sicily in Calliope's song</td>
<td>description Sicily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Par. 8.125-26</td>
<td>Met. 8.83-235</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Daedalus and Icarus story</td>
<td>Daedalus &lt; souls on Venus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Ovid</td>
<td>category</td>
<td>context Ovid</td>
<td>context Dante</td>
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<tr>
<td>Par. 9.100-02</td>
<td>Met. 9.140</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Hercules falling in love with Iole Phyllis to Demophoon Deianira to Hercules</td>
<td>Folco di Marsiglia's aptness for love // Dido's, Phyllis', Hercules' aptness for love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 9.114</td>
<td>A.A. 2.722</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>eyes of lady gleaming // sun glittering in clear water</td>
<td>soul shining // sunbeam gleaming in clear water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 12.12</td>
<td>Met. 1.270-71</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Ino, Juno's &quot;nuntia&quot;</td>
<td>two circles of souls // two rainbows arcing at Juno's orders to her &quot;ancella&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 12.14-15</td>
<td>Met. 3.396-98</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>nymph Echo turned into a voice</td>
<td>rainbows echoing each other // nymph Echo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 13.13-15</td>
<td>Met. 8.174-82</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>description Ariadne's crown</td>
<td>stars whirl around P // shape Ariadne's crown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 15.13-16</td>
<td>Met. 2.320-22</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>falling Phaeton // shooting star</td>
<td>star escaping from the cross // shooting star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 15.102</td>
<td>Rem. Am. 343-44</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>women covering up with gems and gold</td>
<td>Cacciaiguada: during my life time women didn't wear excessive jewelry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 16.28</td>
<td>Met. 7.79-81</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Medea falling in love with Jason // tiny spark fed by wind</td>
<td>light soul becoming more resplendent // embers leaping to flame on a puff of wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 17.1-4</td>
<td>Met. 2.19-20, 2.38; 44-45</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Phaeton asks mother about identity father</td>
<td>pilgrim curious // Phaeton curious about identity father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 17.46-47</td>
<td>Met. 15.493-505</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Hippolytus laments his exile</td>
<td>pilgrim forced to leave Florence // Hippolytus forced to flee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 18.64-66</td>
<td>Met. 6.46-49</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Arachne blushes and turns pale again // red sky at dawn turns white</td>
<td>change red color of Mars to white of Jupiter // blush leaving face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 19.35</td>
<td>Met. 8.238, 14.507</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>perdix (transformed Daedalus) clapped its wings Alcmon turned into bird with flapping wings</td>
<td>banner of praises moves // falcon flapping its wings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Ovid</td>
<td>category</td>
<td>context Ovid</td>
<td>context Dante</td>
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<td>Par. 21.4-6</td>
<td>Met. 3.308-09</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>burning Semele</td>
<td>Beatrice to P: if I would smile you would burn // Semele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 22.142</td>
<td>Met. 4.192, Met. 4.241</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Apollo called son of Hyperion in Leucothoë story</td>
<td>pilgrim: I endured the vision of the son of Hyperion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 23.55-60</td>
<td>Met. 8.532-34</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>even if I had 100 mouths and was inspired by the Muses, I couldn't describe prayers of the sisters after Meleager's death</td>
<td>difficulty singing about Beatrice's holy smile // even when Polyhymnia nurtures all the tongues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 26.119</td>
<td>Met. 2.71</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>&quot;volumen&quot; used in story of Phaeton, son of the Sun</td>
<td>Adam: I longed for this assembly more than 4302 returnings of the sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 27.84</td>
<td>Met. 2.832-75</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Europa story</td>
<td>pilgrim: I saw the shore where Europa became a sweet burden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 30.35-36</td>
<td>Met. 1.4</td>
<td>word choice</td>
<td>prologue &quot;Metamorphoses&quot;: &quot;gods, bring down (&quot;deducere&quot;) my song&quot;</td>
<td>Beatrice's farewell: my trumpet nears the end (&quot;deduce&quot;) of its hard theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 31.31-36</td>
<td>Met. 2.506-07</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Jove turns Callisto and son into constellations</td>
<td>amazement pilgrim // amazement barbarians from region covered by Helice about Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 31.121-22</td>
<td>Met. 4.347</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Salmacis' eyes shine like reflected sunlight</td>
<td>furthest part of the Rose brighter than others // climbing with eyes from valley to mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 31.124-25</td>
<td>Met. 2.148, Met. 2.318</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Phaeton's foolish desire to drive his father's car fragments scattered car</td>
<td>darker space to either side of Mary // shade on the sides when Phaeton's chariot is most on fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par. 33.96</td>
<td>Met. 6.720-21</td>
<td>simile</td>
<td>Argonauts sailing in first ship</td>
<td>forgetfulness pilgrim vision // Neptune viewing the Argo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>