

**Parallel *Exempla*: A Theological Reading of Dante's Terrace of Pride  
(*Purgatorio* x-xii).<sup>1</sup>**

The terrace of pride is framed by three examples of humility (*Pg.* x.34-93) and twelve (or thirteen) examples of pride (*Pg.* xii.25-63); its centrepiece is Dante-character's encounter with three prideful souls (*Pg.* xi.37-142). These three groups fall into three different cantos, and scholars have typically addressed them on their own.<sup>2</sup> With each group, questions have arisen about Dante's choice of *exempla*, and scholars have been particularly puzzled by Dante's list, and ordering, of the *exempla* of pride (which has become, indeed, a *crux* of its own).<sup>3</sup> In this article, I read these three groups together as a triptych, and propose that Dante's choice of *exempla* becomes understandable when we interpret them in relation to each other in terms of Dante's moral purpose for the terrace as a whole. I argue that Dante invites his reader to reflect upon the three prideful souls identified (Omberto, Oderisi and Salvani) and upon the three groups of prideful examples (delineated by the acrostic 'VOM') in counterposition with the three *exempla* of humility (Mary, King David and Trajan). By relating these three parts of the terrace and by drawing on a range of theological contexts, I show how Dante models, in this way, a spiritual exercise of conversion from pride to humility.

Through a parallel with Peraldus' *De vitiis*, the introductory section explores how the posture of the medieval preacher against vice suggests a productive paradigm for interpreting Dante's relationship with his reader in the terraces of Purgatory. More specifically, it suggests that

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Heather Webb and Vladimir Morodan for inviting me to consider these concerns, in seminal form, as part of an innovative conference *Visualising Posture in Dante's "Comedy": History, Theory, and Practice* (12-13 September, 2014), in CRASSH (Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Cambridge). I am especially grateful to Vittorio Montemaggi and Matthew Treherne with whom I shared a panel on 'Posture and Prayer on the Terrace of Pride', and to many of the delegates who encouraged me to develop the ideas I raised there. I would also like to thank the research community of ITIA (the Institute for Theology, Imagination and the Arts, the School of Divinity, University of St Andrews), for their helpful comments on an advanced version of the paper. Finally, I would like to thank Zygmunt G. Barański, Simon Gilson, and the three anonymous peer reviewers of *Le tre corone* for their further comments and suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> This tendency to treat the three groups separately is encouraged, of course, by the *lectura Dantis* format. There are nonetheless some studies which provide interpretations of the terrace of pride as a whole. See, for example, GIUSEPPE MAZZOTTA, *Theology of History and the Perspective of Art (Purgatorio X-XII)*, in *Image Makers and Image Breakers*, ed. by Jennifer A. Harris, Ottawa-New York, Legas, 2003, pp. 71-82; MICHELANGELO PICONE, *Dante nel girone dei superbi ("Purg." X-XII)*, «L'Alighieri», 46, xxvi, 2005, pp. 97-110; and GIUSEPPE POLIMENI, *Canti X-XI-XII. La "gloria della lingua": considerazioni di poetica nello snodo di "Purgatorio" X, XI, XII*, in *Esperimenti danteschi. Purgatorio 2009*, ed. by Benedetta Quadrio, Genova, Marietti, 2010, pp. 105-133. There are benefits and disadvantages to undertaking a reading of a section of the poem rather than of a single canto or, indeed, of a particular passage. For an example of the hermeneutic benefits of reading a sequence of cantos together, see ZYGMUNT G. BARAŃSKI, *Guido Cavalcanti tra le "cruces" di Inferno IX-XI, ovvero Dante e la storia della ragione*, in *Versi controversi, Letture dantesche*, ed. by Domenico Cofano and Sebastiano Valerio, Foggia, Edizione del Rosone, 2008, pp. 39-112. In defocusing the lens to encompass three cantos, we may perceive more clearly Dante's broader narrative strategy; but, as in the Barański reading cited, this perspective may also lead to new interpretative solutions to particular textual *cruces*.

<sup>3</sup> For a brief summary, see FIORENZO FORTI, *Pusillanimità e superbi*, in IDEM, *Magnanimitade*, Bologna, Pàtron, 1977, pp. 207-26 (pp. 222-25). For a more up-to-date survey, see NICOLA FOSCA, gloss to *Pg.* xii. 61-63. References to Dante commentaries in this form are to the *Dartmouth Dante Project* <<https://dante.dartmouth.edu/>>.

the setting of a medieval church is an implied backdrop to Dante's depiction of the terrace of pride. The first section argues that the theology of the Incarnation underscores Dante's depiction of the three examples of humility (Mary, King David, and Trajan), and shows how Dante invites his reader into an empathetic engagement with them such that he or she may become, like Mary, a *portatrix Christi* [a Christ-bearer]. The second section suggests that Dante sets up deliberate contrasts, and parallels, between Mary and Omberto; King David and Oderisi; and Trajan and Salvani. The third section argues that the three *exempla* of humility also provide counterfoils to the three groups of four prideful *exempla* and, indeed, that this organizational principle provides some possible interpretative solutions to Dante's ordering of these *exempla*.

*Introduction: The Poet-Preacher*

Alongside ornate blue and red filigree, the early-fourteenth-century Santa Maria Novella manuscript of William Peraldus' *De vitiis et virtutibus* contains three beautifully illustrated initials depicting one or more Dominicans.<sup>4</sup> The first shows a Dominican passing on the treatise to another, and this may reflect the treatise's primary purpose as a key resource for pastoral ethics.<sup>5</sup> The second (opening the treatise on the vices) shows a Dominican preaching against vice – his right index finger is raised in didactic pose, his eyes look down in stern admonition, and a red book is closed in his left hand – and this may reflect the treatise's oral diffusion to laymen as an instruction in morals and call to penance.<sup>6</sup> The third (opening the treatise on the virtues) shows a haloed Dominican unshadowed by the sun – with an open book in his right hand, his left beckons his audience to follow the virtuous path to heaven.<sup>7</sup> These three illuminations may illustrate, therefore, the scope of *De vitiis et virtutibus* as a whole: the treatise on the vices maps out man's journey from the perversion of sin; the treatise on the virtues, his path to his heavenly home. It is for this reason that, in another fourteenth-century manuscript, a later scribe has written (on the inside cover) that the treatise is, simply, a *summa theologiae*.<sup>8</sup>

The influence of Peraldus's *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus* on Dante has already been convincingly demonstrated.<sup>9</sup> Dante may even have seen this very manuscript with the three illustrations which I have described.<sup>10</sup> Beyond specific indications of influence, however, I would like to first draw an overarching parallel between Dante's approach to Christian ethics in the *Commedia* and Peraldus's approach in his *Summa*. The parallel is highlighted through a point of contrast with Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, IIaIIae, which – in the course of the fourteenth century – would supersede Peraldus' *Summa* as the moral handbook for Dominican moral theology.<sup>11</sup> In

<sup>4</sup> Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Conv. Soppr. G.4.856. (Santa Maria Novella manuscript), 1ra-359va. I came across these beautiful illustrations while doing an inventory of the Florentine manuscripts for the forthcoming critical edition of Peraldus' *Summa de vitiis* ed. by Richard Newhauser and Siegfried Wenzel.

<sup>5</sup> BNC, Conv. Soppr. G.4.856, 1ra.

<sup>6</sup> BNC, Conv. Soppr. G.4.856, 8ra.

<sup>7</sup> BNC, Conv. Soppr. G.4.856, 155ra.

<sup>8</sup> Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Conv. Soppr. E.1.1047, 1ra-282rb. Conv. Soppr. E.1.1047, 1ra-123rb.

<sup>9</sup> See SIEGFRIED WENZEL, *Dante's Rationale for the Seven Deadly Sins*, «Modern Language Review», 60, 1965, pp. 529-33. See also FRANCO MANCINI, *Un auctoritas di Dante*, «Studi danteschi», 45, 1968, pp. 95-119 (pp. 101-02); CARLO DELCORNO, *Dante e Peraldo*, in IDEM, *Exemplum e letteratura tra Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989), pp. 195-227; LUCA AZZETTA, *Vizi e virtù nella Firenze del Trecento (con un nuovo autografo del Lancia e una postilla sull'«Ottimo Commento»)*, «Rivista di Studi Danteschi», 8: 1, 2008, pp. 101-42.

<sup>10</sup> WENZEL, *Dante's Rationale*, cit., p. 532: Dante may even «have seen the *Summa* during his contacts with Dominican friars at Santa Maria Novella in Florence». For Dante to have seen the manuscript would have involved, however, a form of exceptional, privileged access as lay people were forbidden, as a rule, from consulting the mendicants' book collections.

<sup>11</sup> See JOHN INGLIS, *Aquinas's Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues: Rethinking the Standard Philosophical Interpretation of Moral Virtue in Aquinas*, «Journal of Religious Ethics» 27, 1999, pp. 3-27: «In the generation before the appearance of Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*, no treatise on moral virtue was as frequently used in Dominican circles as Peraldus's *Summa*» (p. 7). Indeed, as Leonard Boyle argues, Aquinas' «point of departure, and possibly the chief target of his strictures on works in this area, was, I suspect, the great and, by his time, hallowed *Summa de vitiis et*

Aquinas' *Summa*, the vices are incorporated into an ambitious and original synthesis as deviations from the true path of the virtues.<sup>12</sup> In Peraldus, by contrast, we have a two-stage journey: a journey from vice (with specific mirror virtues) followed by a journey to heaven (through the theological and cardinal virtues). Crucially, Dante turns, then, to the earlier tradition on the vices represented by Peraldus and not to Aquinas' influential reform of the vice tradition: the seven vices (with their corresponding remedial virtues, gifts of the holy spirit, and beatitudes) structure Peraldus' *De vitiis* and the seven terraces of Dante's Purgatory; the four cardinal virtues and the three theological virtues structure Peraldus's *De virtutibus* and Dante's Paradise.<sup>13</sup>

What I would like to suggest, however, is that – perhaps even more importantly – the parallel organisation of ethical content is matched by a parallel in terms of form: the contrasting postures of the Dominican preacher to his audience in *De vitiis* (the stern preacher against vice) and *De virtutibus* (the haloed Dominican welcoming his audience into the virtuous path to heaven) highlight an under-explored aspect about the relationship between the poet, Dante, and his intended audience in Purgatory and Paradise. Domenico di Michelino's *Dante e la Divina Commedia* (1465) depicts Dante in exactly the same pose as the saint in the third illustration (Peraldus's treatise on the virtues).<sup>14</sup> This posture might seem appropriate for Dante's *Paradiso* but, for the *Purgatorio*, we might better imagine Dante assuming the role of the vernacular preacher against vice.<sup>15</sup> The

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*virtutibus* of his senior colleague, William Peraldus or Peyraut» (LEONARD BOYLE, *The Setting of the Summa Theologiae of Saint Thomas*, in IDEM, *Facing History: A Different Thomas Aquinas*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Collège Cardinal Mercier, 2000, pp. 65-91 (p. 83). Boyle even suggests that Aquinas presents the second part of his *summa* as an improvement on, and corrective to, Peraldus' *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus*, in LEONARD BOYLE, *The Setting of the Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas - Revisited*, in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. by Stephen J. Pope, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002, pp. 1-16 (pp. 9-11). Boyle also argues that the subsequent dominance of Aquinas' *Secunda secundae* in Dominican moral theology was primarily due to the second-order influence of John of Freiburg's *Summa confessorum* (BOYLE, *Facing History*, cit., p. 93). See also LEONARD BOYLE *Notes on the Education of the Fratres Communes in the Dominican Order in the Thirteenth Century*, in IDEM, *Pastoral Care, Clerical Education and Canon Law, 1200-1400*, London, Variorum Reprints, 1981, VI, pp. 249-67; and M. MICHÈLE MULCHAHEY, *Aids to the Confessor: Manuals of Moral Theology*, in EADEM, "First the Bow is Bent to Study...": *Dominican Education before 1350*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998, pp. 527-52.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed comparison of the moral frameworks for the seven capital vices elaborated by Peraldus and Aquinas, see GEORGE CORBETT, *Peraldus and Aquinas: Two Dominican Approaches to the Seven Capital Vices in the Christian Moral Life*, «The Thomist», 79, 2015, pp. 383-406.

<sup>13</sup> With regard to the cardinal virtues, there seems little doubt about Dante's equation between prudence and the Christian philosophers (in the heaven of the Sun), between fortitude and the Christian martyrs (Mars); between justice and the just (Jupiter), and between temperance and the contemplatives (Saturn). Dante arguably treats the theological virtues twice in *Paradiso*. First, as tainted by some earthly concern in the three 'shadowed' planets: faith - inconstant in vows (Moon); hope - glorious in earthly fame (Mercury); charity - earthly lovers (Venus). Secondly, as perfect in the sphere of the fixed stars. For a fuller discussion see, for example, ERNESTO G. PARODI, *La costruzione e l'ordinamento del Paradiso dantesco*, in IDEM, *Poesia e storia nella "Divina Commedia"*, Venice, Neri Pozza, 1965, pp. 363-586.

<sup>14</sup> See DOMENICO DI MICHELINO, *La Divina Commedia di Dante*, tempora on panel. Florence, Santa Maria del Fiore. Photographs of the image are easily viewable online, for example: <<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Firenze.Duomo.Dante.JPG>>.

<sup>15</sup> As Carlo Delcorno has convincingly shown, Dante's poem is saturated with not only the content but also the rhetorical gestures of contemporary late-thirteenth-century preaching and, in turn, was immediately mined by fourteenth-century preachers for homily material. See CARLO DELCORNIO, *Dante e il linguaggio dei predicatori*, «Lecture Classensi», 25, 1996, pp. 51-74; and DELCORNIO, *Exemplum*, cit., pp. 195-227. Zane D.R. Mackin demonstrates that Dante's poem was influential to preachers' precisely «because the poem had already incorporated the form and content of sermons into its own textuality» (ZANE D.R. MACKIN, *Dante Praedicator: Sermons and Preaching*

corollary, of course, is that the reader of Dante's *Purgatorio* is envisaged in the posture of a Christian sinner.<sup>16</sup> There are obviously many other ways in which Dante's second canticle can be, and has been, read (and some of these approaches have even deliberately evaded the theological dimension *tout court*).<sup>17</sup> It seems compelling to explore, nonetheless, how the perspective of preacher-poet and sinner-reader, invited by the parallels with Peraldus, might affect our reading of *Purgatorio*. This article applies, therefore, this general approach to the first terrace of Purgatory. Our leading question becomes, then: How does Dante-poet, as a preacher, seek to convert his reader, a sinner, from pride to humility?

The terrace of pride is particularly interesting in this regard, because the medieval church arguably provides its implicit backdrop. This should not surprise us. Although medieval preaching did not occur exclusively within ecclesial walls, much of it did. Preachers used the church setting, liturgy and the congregation of sinners – and not only its architecture, wall-paintings and sculpture – to frame, support and structure their sermons. In the terrace of pride, Dante makes repeated references to church architecture and art. This is the terrace of «visibile parlare», a familiar trope in theological discussions about the power of religious art to effect moral conversion of the heart.<sup>18</sup> One thirteenth-century treatise emphasizes that «pictures and ornaments in churches are the lessons and the scriptures of the laity [...] paintings appear to move the mind more than [verbal]

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*Culture in the Commedia*, doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 2013, <<http://academiccommons.columbia.edu/item/ac:161421>>, p. 6.) MacKin does not, however, draw out the implications of this approach for a reading of *Purgatorio*. A recent study which does seek to explore the relationship between preaching and a small section of *Purgatorio* is NICOLÒ MALDINA, “L’oratio super pater noster”: di Dante: Tra esegesi e vocazione liturgica. *Per Purgatorio XI, 1-24*, «L’Alighieri», 40, 2012, pp. 89-108.

<sup>16</sup> In this way, I am reading Dante's Purgatory as contributing to a much broader context of preaching and confessional literature in the vernacular which, in part, sought to respond to the Church's emphasis on confession highlighted by the decree *Omnis utriusque sexus* of the Fourth Lateran Council. See, for example, LEONARD E. BOYLE, *The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology*, in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. by Thomas J. Heffernan, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1985, pp. 30-43; ROBERTO RUSCONI, *Ordinate confiteri: la confessione dei peccatori nelle summae de casibus e nei manuali per i confessori (metà XII – inizi XIV secolo)*, in *L'Aveu: antiquité et moyen âge. Actes de la table ronde organisée par l'École française de Rome avec le concours du CNRS et de l'Université de Trieste, Rome 28-30 mars 1984*, Rome, l'École française de Rome, 1986, pp. 297-313. For a useful recent survey, see *La Penitenza tra Gregorio VII e Bonifacio VIII: Teologia, Pastorale, Istituzioni*, ed. by Roberto Rusconi, Alessandro Saraco and Manlio Sodi, Rome, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Benedetto Croce is, of course, customarily taken as a reference point for those who seek to select, or salvage, the ‘poetic’ from the ‘doctrinal’ or ‘ethical’. As Patrick Boyde remarks, however, «Croce's attempt to banish content, structure and context from any discussion of the poem as poetry has only served to convince subsequent generations of their importance and indispensability» (PATRICK BOYDE, *Dante Philomythes and Philosopher: Man in the Cosmos*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 1). John Freccero also explicitly confronts the Crocean paradigm of separating the ‘aesthetic’ from the ‘theological’, and his readings seek to re-integrate the theological and the poetical in Dante's work. Noticeably absent, however, from Freccero's collection of essays is a treatment of Purgatory. I would suggest, however, that Purgatory, of all the regions of Dante's afterlife, most fully enacts Dante's poetics of conversion. See JOHN FRECCERO, *The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. and with an introduction by Rachel Jacoff, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1986. There is extensive study of *Inferno* (pp. 1-185), a couple of essays on Ante-Purgatory (pp. 186-208), and three essays on *Paradiso* (pp. 209-57).

<sup>18</sup> For example, Bede affirms, in *De Templo* (CCSL 119A, 212-13), that the etymology of ‘pictura’ in Greek is living writing: «Nam et picture Graece id est viva scriptura» (cited in PAUL MEYVAERT, *Bede and the church paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow*, «Anglo-Saxon England», 9, 1979, p. 69). As early as Gregory of Nyssa, moreover, the silent picture («pictura tacens in pariete») is seen not only to speak but to actively transform the viewer: «solet enim etiam pictura tacens in pariete loqui, maximeque prodesse». See LAWRENCE DUGGAN, *Was Art Really the the Book of the Illiterate?*, «Word and Image», 5, 1989, 227-61 (n. 7, pp. 229-30).

descriptions; for deeds are placed before the eyes [of the faithful] in paintings, and so they appear to be actually happening»; another, that religious images «excite feelings of devotion, these being aroused more effectively by things seen than by things heard».<sup>19</sup> We know that Franciscan and Dominican preachers drew upon the «emotional intensity of religious paintings» and, even, «used a repertoire of gestures known to their audience from paintings».<sup>20</sup> Dante exploits this visual evangelism to the full, explicitly highlighting the empathetic effect of visual art on the viewer: «la qual fa del non ver vera rancura / nascere 'n chi la vede» (Pg. x.133-34).

Dante not only stresses the power of ecclesial art in the terrace of pride, he also gives the terrace, I would suggest, an architectonic substructure. The poet first opens the door of Purgatory (like the door of a church) to his reader (Pg. ix.73-138). He then challenges him to imagine three carvings of humility on the cliff walls, carvings which evoke the sculptured reliefs of medieval churches (Pg. x.28-96). The group of penitents are compared to corbels holding up a church roof (Pg. x.130-39), and the group's posture is arguably related to church rites of public penance.<sup>21</sup> Within this liturgical space, the souls (and the reader with them) recite the *Pater noster* (Pg. xi.1-24) and, thereby, pray for others (whether in this life or in Purgatory). In the governing analogy, the three souls whom Dante-character encounters are like the church's congregation: they are *exempla* taken straight from life and immediate history (Pg. xi.58-142).<sup>22</sup> The examples of pride, moreover, are compared to sculptured tombstones in a church (Pg. xii.16-24).

As a medieval preacher would encourage the congregation to meditate on their own lives in relation to the lives of the saints, fellow Christians on earth and in Purgatory, and the damned in Hell, so – I would suggest – Dante encourages his reader to meditate upon his or her own life in relation to the reliefs of humility, the three penitent souls (near contemporaries of Dante) marked by pride, and the damned or demonic *exempla* of pride on the terrace floor. This parallel is further strengthened by two particular characteristics of the terrace of pride: first, it is the only terrace of Purgatory in which the pagan example of virtue turns out to be a saint (we meet Trajan again in heaven); secondly, Dante – as we shall see – deliberately excludes saved souls (such as Adam) from his examples of pride, all of whom are damned. Dante's vision of the terrace of pride models, in this

<sup>19</sup> DURANDUS OF MENDE, *Rationale divinarum officiorum* (c. 1286); GIOVANNI DA GENOVA, *Catholicon* (c. 1290); both cited in JOHN F. MOFFITT, *Painterly Perspective and Piety: Religious Uses of the Vanishing Point, from the 15th to the 18th Century*, Jefferson, N.C., McFarland & Co, 2008, p. 53.

<sup>20</sup> RICHARD A. JESNON, *Envisioning the Word: The Use of Visual Images in Preaching*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2005, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> The Romano-Germanic Pontifical *ordo* underlines that penitents must slowly process into the church repeatedly genuflecting, bending over and praying. It explicitly states that such actions and gestures are intended to «excite the movement toward repentance», and that the priest should further incite penitents to the sorrow, groans and tears born of true repentance by reading apt passages of Scripture. See RGP 99.226, p. 60 (cited in KAREN WAGNER, “*Cum aliquis venerit ad sacerdotem*”: Penitential Experience in the Central Middle Ages, in *A New History of Penance*, ed. by Abigail Firey, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2008, pp. 201-18 (p. 213)).

<sup>22</sup> Delcorno cites Servasanto da Faenza: «Sed quid per antiqua discurremus [...] non longe querantur exempla, quia cottidie sunt oculis patentia, et maxime in hac misera Italia» (DELCORNO, *Exemplum*, p. 197).

way, an exercise in spiritual conversion. This, again, should not surprise us. We know that medieval preachers spurred people to penance through visions of Purgatorial suffering.<sup>23</sup> And, although Dante's Purgatory literally depicts the punishment and purging of those dead souls who merit salvation, it figuratively embodies the penitential journey which every Christian should undergo in this life.

### 1. *The Incarnation: Carving Humility into the Human Heart*

Drawing upon familiar tropes in preaching and pastoral practice, Dante presents humility as the necessary gateway to the Christian moral life and to Purgatory-proper. Describing the mountain of pride («mons superbiae»), Peraldus cites Jesus' words to a humble man: «Behold, I have left an open door before you, which no one can close, because you have a little virtue».<sup>24</sup> Peraldus interprets man's little virtue («modica virtus») as humility («idest humilitatem»), and proceeds to imagine what Jesus might have said to a proud man: «By contrast, he could say to a proud man: "Behold, I have left a closed door before you, which no one can open, because you have the greatest vice", that is pride».<sup>25</sup> The Scriptural door of new life – which is closed to the proud but opened to those who humbly submit to Christ – is symbolically embodied by the literal door of a medieval church and, I would suggest, by the entrance to Dante's Purgatory. In medieval rituals of public penance, the church door could be literally closed to penitents: after a period of penance, they were

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<sup>23</sup> For example, Alain of Lille explicitly compares the suffering of earthly penitence to Purgatory as two kinds of purgatorial fire: «Est autem duplex ignis purgatorium, unus in via scilicet poenitentia, alius post vitam scilicet purgatoria poena» (ALAIN DE LILLE, *Summa de arte praedicatoria*, in *Opere*, in MIGNE, *PL*, CCX, p. 174 d [100]). As Mark Chinca argues, the doctrine of Purgatory foregrounds the «inner eschatological horizon of death and the Particular Judgment»; this «focus on the time immediately after death could only reinforce the program of practical moral education». I am grateful to Mark Chinca for showing me chapter 2 'Out of this world' of a forthcoming book, provisionally entitled *Remember your last end: the textualization of eschatology in western Christianity, ca.1200-1600*, prior to publication. For a more general study of the *ars moriendi*, see MARY CATHARINE O'CONNOR, *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars moriendi*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1942. For the development of the doctrine of Purgatory, see JACQUES LE GOFF, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984 and, more recently, WALKER BYNUM, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1995.

<sup>24</sup> PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 2 ch. 8, p. 227b: «dicit Dominus humili: "Ecce dedi coram te ostium apertum, quod nemo poterit claudere, quia modicam habes virtutem", id est humilitatem». As there is currently no critical edition, references to Peraldus' *De vitiis* are to WILLIAM PERALDUS, *Summae virtutum ac vitiorum*, ed. by Rodolpus Clutius, Paris, s.e., 1629, 2 vols (which is conveniently available online via Google books). In this edition, the treatise on the virtues is printed first (as volume 1) and the treatise on the vices second (as volume 2) whereas, in thirteenth-century manuscripts, the order is the reverse. I refer simply to PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, and page references will be to the second volume of the Clutius edition. For ease of reference to other editions, I give references to the treatise [t.], part [pa.], and, where applicable, chapter [c.] of *De vitiis*, as well as to the pagination in this edition. See also Rev. 3:8: «Scio opera tua - ecce dedi coram te ostium apertum, quod nemo potest claudere - quia modicam habes virtutem, et servasti verbum meum et non negasti nomen meum». Biblical references are to the Vulgate Bible, in the *Nova Vulgata* edition available online via the Vatican website: <[http://www.vatican.va/archive/bible/nova\\_vulgata/documents/nova-vulgata\\_index\\_lt.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/bible/nova_vulgata/documents/nova-vulgata_index_lt.html)>.

<sup>25</sup> PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 2 ch. 8, pp. 227b-228a «Sic e contrario dicere potest superbo: Ecce dedi coram te ostium clausum, quod nemo potest aperire: quia maximum habes vitium, scilicet superbiam».

forced to prostrate themselves before the church door as the bishop prayed over them and, only then, were given absolution and allowed to enter.<sup>26</sup> In Dante's Purgatory, the door first appears as just a crack (*Pg.* ix.74: «un fesso»), and Dante-character must ask humbly for it to be unlocked (*Pg.* ix.107-08: «Chiedi / umilmente che'l serrame scioglia»).<sup>27</sup> Where St Peter's representative should err in opening rather than closing, a physical gesture of humility is underlined as the criterion *sine qua non*: «pur che la gente a' piedi mi s'atterri» (*Pg.* ix.129).<sup>28</sup> In a thinly-veiled allegory, Dante-character – like a penitent entering a church in rituals of penance – undergoes the sacrament of penance and, on absolution, enters through the door of Purgatory to begin his satisfaction for his sins (the ritually marked seven *peccata*).<sup>29</sup>

Ascending to the terrace of pride itself, Dante-character immediately sees examples of humility carved onto the marble inner-bank of the cliff which, as Pietro Alighieri's gloss suggests, bring to mind the reliefs on church walls. Dante is inviting the reader, in this way, to engage in a spiritual practice: the reader must bring to his mind or memory (as to a wall) an image of humility; the prayerful meditation upon the example of humility may become, then, an antidote or remedy to the wound of pride.<sup>30</sup> Before turning to the moral and spiritual content of these *exempla* of humility, however, we should note that the very divine art itself is meant to inculcate in the souls of the terrace of pride, and imaginatively in Dante's reader, a disposition of humility.

Both the three carvings of humility (*Pg.* x.34-69) and the twelve carvings of pride (*Pg.* xii.25-63) are framed by references to the disparity between the works of man, nature and God: not

<sup>26</sup> See WAGNER, *Cum aliquis venerit*, in *Penance*, cit., pp. 201-18. In public penance, the «penitents, clothed in distinctive garments, were met at the door of the church, where they lay prostrate while the bishop prayed over them. The Penitents then disappear from the liturgical documents until Holy Thursday, when they once again prostrated themselves before the church doors as the bishop prayed over them; they were given absolution and were admonished not to return to their sinful ways» (pp. 205-06).

<sup>27</sup> There is a strong allusion to MATTHEW 18: 3: «Nisi conversi fueritis et efficiamini parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum caelorum».

<sup>28</sup> The second implication of perseverance, however, is equally important. Purgatory's gatekeeper opens the Christian path of penance with a clear warning: «Intrate; ma facciovi accorti / che di fuor torna chi 'n dietro si guata» (*Pg.* ix.131-32). And Dante-character's subsequent lack of excuse only serves to highlight his temptation to turn back on entering: «e s'io avesse li occhi vòlti ad essa, / qual fora stata al fallo degna scusa?» (*Pg.* x.5-6). Leaving the world of the dead, Orpheus lost his wife Eurydice forever by looking back. Leaving the world of spiritual death (sin), the sinner will lose his soul forever by turning back to sin, as the further Scriptural allusion to Jesus' harsh words to a potential disciple highlight: «Nemo mittens manum suam in aratrum et aspiciens retro, aptus est regno Dei» (LUKE 9: 62).

<sup>29</sup> This entry rite (*Pg.* ix.76-132) is, of course, complex but the early commentators all interpret it, although with different theological nuances, in terms of a penitential ritual. More recently, this interpretation has been challenged – most notably by PETER ARMOUR, *The Door of Purgatory. A Study of Multiple Symbolism in Dantes 'Purgatorio'*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1983. Armour's reinterpretation of the meaning of Purgatory's door, as of the Griffin, forms part of an overarching interpretation of Dante's Purgatory in terms of man's secular this-worldly happiness. For arguments against this interpretative turn, see GEORGE CORBETT, *The Christian Ethics of Dante's Purgatory*, «Medium Ævum», 83: 2, 2014, pp. 265-86 (esp. pp. 268-69).

<sup>30</sup> PIETRO ALIGHIERI (1), gloss to *Pg.* x.28-33: «Nam volendo nos, ut dixi, bene a superioribus purgare, debemus in mente nostra recurrere ad parietem, idest ad memoriam operum humilitatis tamquam ad remedium». Medieval viewers were «practised in spiritual exercises that demanded a high level of visualization of, at least, the central episodes of the lives of Christ and Mary. To adapt a theological distinction, the painter's were exterior visualizations, the public's interior visualizations». See MICHAEL BAXANDALL, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, 2nd edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 45-56 (p. 45).

only the greatest sculptor of antiquity, Polyclitus, but even Nature would be put to scorn (*Pg.* x.32-33); no human artist could match these shadings and outlines which would cause even the most subtle mind to wonder (*Pg.* xii.64-66); the dead seem truly dead, the living truly living (*Pg.* xii.67).<sup>31</sup> At one level, Dante is clearly alluding to the remarkable realism achieved by his contemporaries: the pulpits of Nicola and Giovanni Pisano, the frescoes of Cimabue and Giotto, or the illustrated miniatures of Oderisi or Franco Bolognese.<sup>32</sup> Like the poetry of Dante itself, the works of these artists may still provoke a sense of awe and attendant humility before human greatness.<sup>33</sup> At a deeper level, Dante is emphasizing that even the most sublime, novel, and wondrous of human accomplishments is effortlessly surpassed by He for whom nothing is new («colui che mai non vide cosa nova» (*Pg.* x.94)). Thus earthly pride is shown to be foolish not only through comparison to human greatness but, primarily, through comparison to the power and majesty of God.<sup>34</sup> The works of creation and of divine artifice on the mount of Purgatory should cause man to wonder at the greatness of the Creator: this sense of marvelling, in turn, should lead to a disposition of chosen subjection to God rather than, as is the case with pride, man (the created being) rebelling against God, the Creator (*Inf.* xxxiv.35). It is in this sense that Dante, with Baudelarian sarcasm, challenges his reader to bloat himself with pride after seeing the power and artistry of God: «Or superbite, e via col viso altero, / figliuli d'Eva» (*Pg.* xii.70-71).

This framing focus on the supreme artistry of God adds, then, the key theological dimension to the examples of humility. For the Annunciation (the first example) is the site not only of Mary's humility but also of God's paradigmatic humility.<sup>35</sup> As Beatrice explains to Dante-character in Paradise, man could not descend with humble obedience so low as, disobeying, he had sought to rise upwards: «per non poter ir giusto / con umiltate obediendo poi / quanto disobediendo intese ir

<sup>31</sup> PIETRO ALIGHIERI (1), gloss to *Pg.* x.28-33: «Dicendo hic figura attenda quod vidit ibi in dicto pariete marmoreo, hoc est sibi ad memoriam reduxit sculpta proprius quam natura posset, nedum ille subtilissimus sculptor Policretus, de quo Tullius in secundo Rethoricae».

<sup>32</sup> With regard to «visibile parlare», John Scott refers convincingly to Giovanni Pisano's extraordinary pulpit in the church of S.Andrea, Pistoia (sculptured between 1298-1301). See JOHN A. SCOTT, *Canto XII*, in *Lectura Dantis Turicensis: Purgatorio*, ed. by Georges Güntert and Michelangelo Picone, Florence, Cesati, 2001, pp. 173-97 (pp. 190-91): «Nella figura di Gabriele, scolpita da Giovanni Pisano, direi che sia possibile scoprire un *visibile parlare*; inoltre, possiamo immaginare che nel vedere nel 1301 per la prima volta questa scena, un fedele abituato alle figure statiche di tanta arte bizantina e romanica, abbia esclamato: "Giurato si saria ch'el dicesse "Ave!"».

<sup>33</sup> Barolini suggests, indeed, that the consequence of Dante's exaltation of divine art is precisely to exalt the achievements of human art (including his own). See TEODOLINDA BAROLINI, *Dante's Poets, Textuality and Truth in the Comedy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 274: «although Dante is here dedicated to showing that God's art is greater than that of any other artist, the result is an enhancement of his own art, which dares to imitate the divine mimesis. The exaltation of divine art at the expense of human art paradoxically leads to the exaltation of that human artist who most closely imitates divine art, who writes a poem to which heaven and earth contribute, and who by way of being only a scribe becomes the greatest of poets».

<sup>34</sup> This highlights, therefore, the quiddity of pride in its general sense, which is setting oneself up above God and one's neighbour. As Marco Lombardo's speech puts it, man is freely subject to a greater power and to a greater nature: «A maggior forza e a miglior natura / liberi soggiacete» (*Pg.* xvi.79-80).

<sup>35</sup> As Matthew Treherne highlights, God's paradigmatic humility at the Incarnation persists through His continued presence in the Eucharistic host. See MATTHEW TREHERNE, *Ekphrasis and Eucharist: the poetics of seeing God's art in 'Purgatorio' X*, «The Italianist», xxvi, 2006, 2, pp. 177-96 (esp. pp. 186-87).

suso» (*Par.* vii.98-99). Therefore, God (the highest rational being) became man (the lowest), humbling himself to take on flesh: «e tutti li altri modi erano scarsi / alla giustizia, se 'l Figliuol di Dio / non fosse umiliato ad incarnarsi» (vv. 118-20). Through the Incarnation, God – the Creator – chose to become a small part of His creation: «il suo Fattore / non disdegnò di farsi sua fattura» (*Par.* xxxiii.5-6). In his depiction of the *Annunciation*, indeed, Dante allots as much space to the message of God's humility in redeeming man through the Incarnation (*Pg.* x.34-39) as to Mary's humility in response (*Pg.* x.40-45).

The humility of Mary and, also, of King David and Trajan, is therefore set within the context of God's exemplary humility in condescending to become man.<sup>36</sup> The angel informs Mary that she is the highest in the order of grace («gratia plena»), that the Lord is with her («Dominus tecum»), and that he will be called the son of the most high («filius altissimi vocabitur»). And yet, she responds in utmost humility, as the servant of God («Ecce ancilla Dei [...] fiat mihi secundum voluntatem tuam»)<sup>37</sup> At the height of his regal and spiritual power, King David dances before the arc of the covenant.<sup>38</sup> He is the humble psalmist («umile salmista» (*Pg.* x.65)) who sets himself in contempt before men – his wife, Micòl, looks down disdainfully and sadly from the grand palace – in order to submit himself to God: he is more than a king in the eyes of faith but less than King in the eyes of men («e più e men che re era in quel caso» (*Pg.* x.66)).<sup>39</sup> At the height of Imperial power and pomp, Trajan condescends to do the will of the least of his subjects («la miserella»)<sup>40</sup> His dual motive for her redemption – justice and compassion («giustizia vuole, e pietà mi ritene») – echoes in the political sphere God's motives for man's redemption in the spiritual sphere. Where, therefore, proud men vaunt their excellence, Dante shows that those who were greatest in the order of grace (Mary), of regal and spiritual kingship (David), and of nature (Trajan) humbly put themselves at the service of others and of God.

At this stage in the narrative, we are thereby shown examples of humility without, explicitly, humility's reward: 'the humble shall be exalted'. Gregory the Great, however, had already provided

<sup>36</sup> See DANTE ISELLA, *Gli "exempla" del canto X del Purgatorio*, «Studi Danteschi», 45, 1968, pp. 145-56: «i tre episodi di umiltà del Purgatorio vengono a celebrare tutti un'umiltà più alta, l'incarnazione di Dio» (p. 152).

<sup>37</sup> As Peraldus notes, Mary does not glory in her exalted status but is disturbed by it: «Unde Beata Virgo cum dixisset eam angelus gratia plenam, & benedictam in mulieribus, turbata est in eius sermone» (PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 3, p. 339a).

<sup>38</sup> See DURLING AND MARTINEZ, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, II, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 168: «King David's transporting of the Arc of the Covenant to Jerusalem sealed the union of the northern and southern tribes under the single monarchy. The founding of the unified kingdom was in Dante's eyes parallel to the founding of Rome».

<sup>39</sup> See AUGUSTINE, *De doctrina Christiana*, I. xiv. Reference is to the Latin edition available online via <<http://www.augustinus.it>>: «Quia ergo per superbiam homo lapsus est, humilitatem adhibuit ad sanandum. Serpentis sapientia decepti sumus, Dei stultitia liberamur. Quemadmodum autem illa Sapientia vocabatur, erat autem stultitia contemnentibus Deum, sic ista quae vocatur stultitia, Sapientia est vincentibus diabolum».

<sup>40</sup> See BENVENUTO DA IMOLA, gloss to *Pg.* x. 91-93: «Certe maxima humiliatio fuit quod altissimus princeps ita inclinaret imperatoriam maiestatem ad audiendam mulierculam plorantem sub superbis signis in Campo Martio superbo, inter equites superbos».

an interpretation of Mary, King David and Trajan that anticipated the reward for their humility. Dante, in turn, arguably embodies this Gregorian reading in *Paradiso*. In *Moralia*. 27, Gregory admires King David more for his humble dancing than for his military prowess in battle because, in the former, he defeats himself, in the latter only his enemies.<sup>41</sup> Having great cause for self-glory and pride, King David resisted, in other words, this primordial temptation. In the Heaven of Jupiter, Dante seems to have Gregory's gloss in mind: David «il cantor del lo Spirito Santo / che l'arca traslatò di villa in villa / ora conosce il merito del suo canto» (*Par.* xx.38-40). In *Purgatorio* x.73-75, Dante explicitly identifies Gregory's reading of Trajan's act of humility. According to the popular tradition, Gregory was so moved by Trajan that he prayed fervently for his redemption.<sup>42</sup> Gregory reads Trajan's humility as foreshadowing the Incarnation and as reflecting a disposition to Christian faith. As we discover in *Paradiso*, Gregory's prayers of living hope («di viva spene») bring about, then, a miracle: Trajan is brought back to life temporarily and, believing in Christ, he experiences the true love («vero amor») for Christ meriting, thereby, Paradise: «fu degna di venire a questo gioco» (*Par.* xx.117).<sup>43</sup> Dante's description of the ascent and apotheosis of Mary is also, arguably, mediated through Gregory. In popular tradition, Gregory – meditating in procession upon an icon of the Virgin – heard the first three lines of the *Regina coeli* chanted by angels, to which he appended the fourth line.<sup>44</sup> In *Paradiso* xxiii, the ascent and assumption of Mary as the queen of Heaven is seen as fulfilling the work begun at the Annunciation. As the *portatrix* of Christ («quia quem meruisti portare»), she merits her exalted status.

<sup>41</sup> See GIOVANNI FALLANI, gloss to *Pg.* x.66: «S. Gregorio nel XXVII cap. dei *Morali* affermò di ammirare più Davide per le sue danze che per le sue battaglie: in queste vinse i nemici, in quelle se stesso». It is, indeed, David's humble joy before the arc of the covenant, rather than his military victories, which identifies him again in the heaven of Justice (*Par.* xx.37-42): «Colui [...] che l'arca traslatò di villa in villa» (vv.37-39).

<sup>42</sup> Dante could have found the story in the *Golden Legend*, and in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* as well as in vernacular renderings such as the *Fiore e vita di filosofafi*, a translation of sections of Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum historiale*. For a discussion of these sources, see MICHELE BARBI, *La leggenda di Traiano nei volgarizzamenti del Breviloquio di virtù di Fra' Giovanni Gallese*, Florence, Nozze Flamini-Fanelli, 1895. Nancy Vickers identifies a scene on Trajan's column as the source for the story of Trajan and the widow, and also interprets Dante's presentation in light of the analogy with the biblical parable of the widow and the wicked judge (Luke 18: 1-6). See NANCY VICKERS, *Seeing is Believing: Gregory, Trajan, and Dante's Art*, «Dante Studies», 101, 1983, pp. 67-85. Contextualising Dante's treatment within a much wider survey, Gordon Whatley highlights Dante's sympathy with the humanist conception of the Gregory / Trajan legend epitomised by John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*: «John of Salisbury celebrates Trajan as the exemplary just ruler who had first learned to rule himself. The ground of his good government was his own virtue as a human being». See GORDON WHATLEY, *The Uses of Hagiography: The Legend of Pope Gregory and the Emperor Trajan in the Middle Ages*, «Viator», 15, 1984, pp. 22-63 (p. 46). The images of the Roman Empire as a riderless horse (*Pg.* vi.88-102) and of Rome as a widow (*Pg.* vi.112-15) are, for Whatley, fused in the scene of «Trajan on horseback, with the imperial eagles and Roman cavalry behind him, yielding to justice and "pieta" and to the importuning of the tearful widow who stands at the bridle» (p. 45). For a reading of this episode as part of a much wider, and invaluable reappraisal of Dante's reception of Gregory the Great, see VITTORIO MONTEMAGGI, *Dante and Gregory the Great*, in *Reviewing Dante's Theology*, I, ed. by Claire E. Honess and Matthew Treherne, Bern, Peter Lang, 2013, pp. 209-62.

<sup>43</sup> Trajan's salvation through Gregory's intervention had become a commonplace. See, for example, AQUINAS, *ST.*, III. Supp., q. 71, a. 5, ob. 5.

<sup>44</sup> JACOBUS DE VORAGINE, *The Golden Legend*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, with an introduction by Eamon Duffy, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2012, pp. 173-74: «We are told that the voices of angels were heard around the image, singing *Regina coeli laetare, alleluia, / Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia, / Resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluia!* to which Gregory promptly added: *Ora pro nobis, Deum rogamus, alleluia!*» (p. 174).

Mary's role as *portatrix Christi* also highlights the way in which Dante encourages his reader to meditate empathetically on these examples of humility. In the tradition of the pseudo-Bonaventuran fourteenth-century *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, the reader-viewer is invited into a spiritual exercise: inhabiting imaginatively the role of Mary, he may become – like her – a vessel of Christ.<sup>45</sup> As Conrad of Saxony highlights, Mary is the mirror through which the Christian sees the true image of God in himself.<sup>46</sup> For Augustine, Mary's Annunciation is a paradigm for each soul who conceives Christ in spirit as the seed of salvation: «just as the blessed virgin conceived Christ corporeally, so every holy soul conceives him spiritually».<sup>47</sup> Augustine, indeed, contrasts the stubborn pride of the pagan philosophers with the humility of heart, piety and fear of God which are the first steps on the Christian journey to perfection.<sup>48</sup> Mary's Annunciation embodies the humility through which she, in spirit and in flesh, and man, in spirit, may receive Christ and enter the path to salvation and the new life in Christ. By empathetic meditation on Mary's humility, therefore, sinners may become partakers in the fruit of the Incarnation.

As Gregory's reading of the glorifications of the three *exempla* of humility – Mary, King David, and Trajan – is embodied through Dante's depictions in *Paradiso*, so the glory of the reader-sinner who takes Mary as his model is also represented in the heavenly rose. Thus, in *Paradiso*, Beatrice directs Dante-character to Mary as the rose in which the divine Logos took flesh and, also, to the lillies, the human souls who *through* Mary became spiritual vessels of Christ:

“Perché la faccia mia sì t'innamora  
che tu non ti rivolgi al bel giardino  
che sotto i raggi di Cristo s'infiora?  
Quivi è la rosa in che 'l Verbo divino

<sup>45</sup> Since the eighteenth century, the *Meditationes vitae Christi* has been attributed to the fourteenth-century Franciscan John of Caulibus (see 'Introduction', in JOHN OF CAULIBUS, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, ed. and trans. by Francis X. Taney, Anne Miller, and C. Mary Stallings-Taney, Asheville, N.C., Pegasus Press, 2000, pp. xiii-xxx. Sarah McNamer, however, has more recently contested this. McNamer posits that the original was not the Latin version but a much shorter Italian text which, she speculates, may have been written by a Franciscan nun, attributing the other two-thirds of the text to a «male redactor» and claiming «affective dissonance» between different sections (see SARAH MACNAMER, *The Origins of the "Meditationes vitae Christi"*, «Speculum», 84, 2009, pp. 905-55; EADEM, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). Whatever the exact date or authorship of the original treatise, however, the Latin and Italian versions give an invaluable insight into the modes of imaginative engagement with Scripture practised by the Franciscan order from the thirteenth century onwards. On the role of the viewer's imagination, see also JEFFREY HAMBURGER, *The Visual and the Visionary*, «Viator», 20, 1989, pp. 161-82.

<sup>46</sup> In this sense, it is particularly significant that Dante's counterposition of each capital vice with a virtue and an episode in the life of Mary ultimately derives, almost certainly, from Conrad of Saxony (pseudo-Bonaventure), *Speculum Beatae Mariae Virginis*. See DELCORNO, *Exemplum*, cit., p. 199: «L'idea di contrapporre ad ogni vizio capitale una virtù ed un fatto della vita di Maria deriva certamente dallo *Speculum Beatae Mariae Virginis* di Corrado di Sassonia, un tempo attribuito a S. Bonaventura; ma il gusto di queste corrispondenze, condificato da Ugo di S. Vittore nel *De quique septenis seu septenariis*, era divulgato dalle *summae* per i confessori».

<sup>47</sup> AQUINAS, *ST.*, IIIa. q.30, a.1, arg. 3: «sicut beata virgo corporaliter Christum concepit, ita quaelibet sancta anima concipit ipsum spiritualiter, unde apostolus dicit, Galat. IV, filioli mei, quos iterum parturio, donec formetur Christus in vobis».

<sup>48</sup> AUGUSTINE, *De doctrina Christiana*, II. vii. 9-11.

carne si fece, quivi son li gigli  
al cui odor si prese il buon cammino”.

(*Par.* xxiii.70-75)

Dante’s image of human souls flowering in heaven is taken directly from the mosaics of the Florentine baptistry (where Dante had begun his own life of faith in baptism). This autobiographical resonance underscores the power of religious art imprinting itself on the viewer, and the resonance is reinforced immediately following this passage as Dante highlights his morning and evening devotion to Mary: «Il nome del bel fior ch’io sempre invoco / e mane e sera» (*Par.* xxiii.88-89).

## 2. *Three Living Confessions: Reading One’s Sin in the Mirror of Virtue*

The centrepiece of the terrace of pride is Dante-character’s encounter with three prideful souls. In the governing analogy between souls in Purgatory and the penitential community on earth, these Purgatorial souls might be compared to a church’s congregation. As a medieval preacher would encourage his congregation to meditate on their own lives in relation to the lives of the saints, so – I believe – Dante intends that we should meditate on the three prideful souls in relation to the three *exempla* of humility inscribed on the cliff.

A counterposition between the Virgin Mary (the first example of humility) and Omberto Aldobrandeso (the first soul stamped with pride) might seem, at first sight, strange. However, it was a commonplace of medieval preaching to attack the folly of taking pride in one’s noble lineage by reference to Eve and Mary. For example, Peraldus highlights that God did not make one Adam of silver (from whom all nobles descend), and another Adam of mud (from whom all ignoble people descend) but, rather, he made one man of mud from whom all descend. Therefore, either everyone is noble because of his blood or everyone is base.<sup>49</sup> Did not God create each one of us? Therefore our father is God, our mother Eve («Pater noster Deus est, mater nostra Eva»). How, then, can someone despise his brother?<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Peraldus emphasizes that – in the time of grace – God specifically chose persons who were ignoble and contemptible to the world.<sup>51</sup> The second Eve, Mary – although least in the eyes of the world – becomes the mother of God and the queen of Heaven. In this vein, Dante characterizes Omberto’s pride in his lineage as a denial, or neglect, of this shared ancestry. In a *captatio benevolentiae* addressed to Omberto, Virgil refers to Dante-

<sup>49</sup> PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 3, c. 28, p. 290b: «omnes sumus ex eodem patre, & ex eadem matre: non legitur Dominum fecisse unum Adam argenteum, unde essent nobiles, & unum luteum, ex quo essent ignobiles: sed unicum de luto plasmavit, ex quo omnes exivimus. Unde si aliquis ex hoc solo nobilis est, quia ex nobili patre, aut nobili matre: aut omnes erimus nobiles, aut omnes ignobiles: quia aut parentes primi fuerunt nobiles, aut ignobiles».

<sup>50</sup> PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 3, c. 28, p. 290b: «Nunquid non Deus unus creavit nos? Quare ergo despicit fratrem suum unusquisque vestrum?».

<sup>51</sup> PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 3, c. 28, p. 290b: «In tempore enim gratiae potius voluit ignobiles eligere, quam nobiles. 1. Corinth. 1: “Ignobilia & contemptibilia mundi eligit Deus”».

character's body as the burden of Adam's flesh («lo 'ncarco / de la carne d'Adamo, onde si veste» (Pg. xi.43-44)). Umberto proceeds to define his prideful disdain – «Ogn'uomo ebbero in despetto» (Pg. xi.64) – as a failure to think of Eve, our shared mother: «non pensando a la commune madre» (Pg. xi.63).

There is here, furthermore, a note of contemporary polemic. The object of Umberto's arrogance – «L'antico sangue e l'opere leggiadre / d'i miei maggior» – bears a close resemblance to Frederick II's definition of nobility – «antica possession d'avere / Con reggimenti belli» – a definition Dante had sought to confute in the thirty chapters of *Convivio* IV. Notably, in the relevant *canzone* («Le dolci rime d'amor») – as in *Purgatorio* xi – Dante draws on Peraldus's argument of common ancestry.<sup>52</sup> However, he recognizes in the *Convivio* that this depends upon a view – that there was a beginning to the human race – which is held by Christians but not necessarily by philosophers and gentiles: «e dice cristiani, e non filosofi, ovvero gentili, [delli quali] le sentenze anco sono in contro» (*Conv.*, IV.3.9). Aristotle arguably held, after all, that the world (and each of the species including man) is eternal. As Umberto intimates, his arrogance – «non pensando a la comune madre» – may thereby register an implicit scepticism, or at least indifference, towards Christianity. Dante underlines in «Le dolci rime d'amor» that Christians simply cannot hold this genealogical view of nobility: «Ma ciò io non consento / Nè eglino altresì, se son Cristiani» (*Conv.*, IV, canz. iii.72-73). Although Dante employs this *auctoritas fidei* in the *canzone*, in *Convivio* IV itself he confutes Frederick's genealogical definition of nobility on purely philosophical grounds. He argues that true nobility consists in the excellence of the soul, and that while a virtuous person may ennoble a family tree, a person cannot derive nobility from his lineage.

It is surely significant, therefore, that the second prideful soul, Oderisi, conjurs up the elevated world of Paris and Bologna (both referenced indirectly) in which honour (a term repeated three times in five lines), glory and fame were apportioned according to intellectual and artistic excellence.<sup>53</sup> Oderisi refers to the arts of illumination, painting, and poetry and, specifically, to Dante's direct contemporaries (and, most probably, to Dante himself (Pg. xi.99)). These are

<sup>52</sup> The dependence of Dante's account of nobility in *Convivio* IV on Peraldus' treatise on *Superbia* has been convincingly argued in MARIA CORTI, *Le fonti del 'Fiore di Virtù' e la teoria della 'nobiltà' nel Duecento*, in EADEM, *Storia della lingua e storia dei testi*, Milan-Naples, Ricciardi, 1989, pp. 45-121 (pp. 104-121).

<sup>53</sup> Giovanni Fallani and Stefano Bottari both argue that the Oderisi-Franco pairing throws into relief two contrasting styles of miniature epitomised by the respective stylistic traditions in Bologna and Paris. See GIOVANNI FALLANI, *Ricerca sui protagonisti della miniatura dugentesca; Oderisi da Gubbio e Franco Bolognese*, «Studi danteschi», 48, 1971, pp. 137-51: «Oderisi, nel celebrare così altamente il rivale, fa capire che [...] egli aveva seguito una scuola di tradizione bizantina e si era mantenuto fedele ai canoni della miniatura bolognese, senza le ulteriori ricerche sui modi della cultura francese» (p. 143); STEFANO BOTTARI, *Per la cultura di Oderisi da Gubbio e di Franco Bolognese*, in *Dante e Bologna nei tempi di Dante*, a cura della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Bologna, Bologna: Commissione per i Testi di Lingua, 1967, pp. 53-59: «Dante individua così due modi di essere della miniatura bolognese sul finire del secolo: il primo, per quanto di grande efficacia, legato ancora alla più antica tradizione; l'altro più vario, ricco e felice, più scopertamente improntato agli umori gotici e più intimamente legato alla cultura francese» (p. 56).

excellences of soul which Dante advocates, celebrates, and exhibits in his writings.<sup>54</sup> In Purgatory, Dante nonetheless registers that, from a Christian perspective, there is a grave spiritual danger of pride in pursuing excellence of soul (true nobility), man's *this-worldly* felicity. As Oderisi confesses, the great desire of excellence («lo gran disio / de l'eccellenza») impeded him during his life from being courteous to another miniaturist whom he desired to surpass (*Pg.* xi.85-87): «di tal superbia [...] si paga il fio» (v. 88). From the perspective of eternity, Oderisi now recognizes his pursuit of honour and glory as entirely vain: «Oh vana gloria de l'umane posse! / com' poco verde in su la cima dura» (*Pg.* xi.91-92).<sup>55</sup> It is folly to prefer vainglory (which lasts an instant) to the eternal glory of Heaven, or to seek a transitory thing when we can have eternal beatitude.<sup>56</sup> As Dante's treatment of the virtuous pagans eloquently testifies, excellence of soul has no salvific merit if it is not directed to the glory of God. Thus Oderisi confesses that had he not turned to God, he would be in Hell and not in Purgatory (*Pg.* xi.89-90).

The example of King David, the «umile psalmista», may provide a mirror through which the distortion of Oderisi's pursuit of artistic excellence may be correctly understood. It is in virtue of David's humility, and his acknowledgment of his own sinfulness, that he becomes the *vox Dei*. In the penultimate canto of the *Commedia*, Dante refers to King David, the purported author of the Psalms, as «[il] cantor che per doglia / del fallo disse “Miserere mei”» (*Par.* xxxii.11-12). Oderisi's pride in artistic excellence (an excellence of the soul) is reflected, therefore, in the true mirror of Christian virtue by King David, who puts his art at the service of God.

It is also in the context of King David that, I believe, the tacit allusion to Dante's own poetic supremacy over Guido Guinizelli and Guido Cavalcanti becomes clear<sup>57</sup>:

Così ha tolto l'uno a l'altro Guido  
la gloria della lingua; e forse è nato  
chi l'uno e l'altro cacerà del nido.                      (*Pg.* xi.97-99)

In contrast to the intellectual disdain of Guido Cavalcanti («ebbe a disdegno» (*Inf.* x.63)), Dante's starting point here is not self-regarding vanity but rather an awareness of his own sin and the need

<sup>54</sup> For Dante, excellence of soul is demonstrated especially through excellence in knowledge and language. See, for example, *DVE*, II.i. 8: «Sed optime conceptiones non possunt esse nisi ubi scientia et ingenium est: ergo optima loquela non convenit nisi illis in quibus ingenium et scientia est».

<sup>55</sup> Dante's metaphors for vainglory can also be found in Peraldus. Thus, for example, vainglory is compared to a breath of wind at *Pg.* xi.100-01 («Non è il mondan romore altro ch'un fiato / di vento») and at PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 3, p. 337b: «Vocatur etiam vana gloria ventus, ut insinuetur fatuos esse qui eam esuriunt, ventus enim hominem inflando et nocet, potius quam prosit».

<sup>56</sup> PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 3, p. 335b: «Secunda fatuitas est, quod vanam gloriam, quae est ad instar puncti, gloriae aeternae praeposit; unde Gregorius; “Stultum est inde transitoria quaerere, unde aeterna possumus habere”».

<sup>57</sup> Durling corroborates the scholarly consensus which implicitly identifies Dante as he «chi l'una e l'altro cacerà del nido». See DURLING, “mio figlio ov'è” (*Inf.* x. 60), in *Dante da Firenze all'aldilà*, ed. by Michelangelo Picone, Florence, Cesati, 2000, pp. 303-29. Furthermore, as Durling adds, «il nome di Guido [...] evoca sempre l'ombra del Cavalcanti», confirming his conclusion that the three poets are Guinizelli, Cavalcanti (the two Guidos), and Dante himself (note. 44, p. 320).

for God's aid. In other words, Dante-character becomes, like King David, a sinner turned singer. Dante-character's first words in the poem – in a strange conflation of vulgate Latin («*Miserere*») and vernacular Italian («di me») – fittingly echo the opening of King David's penitential psalm. And Dante further asserts his credentials as a new David, a *scriba Dei*, through his vernacularization of the Lord's prayer in this terrace (Pg. xi.1-24).

The third juxtaposition, then, is between the Emperor Trajan and Provenzan Salvani. In contrast to the ideal of universal empire, Salvani had sought to wield complete political power in Siena for his own ends: «fu presuntüoso / a recar Siena tutta a le sue mani» (Pg. xi.122-23). Where Trajan, at the height of his military power, had sought justice and mercy, it was Salvani who, leading the imperial faction at Montaperti, sought to raze Florence to the ground. Like Farinata, who saved Florence on that occasion, he embodies the self-serving internecine power struggles of Ghibellines and Guelfs which Dante will castigate – to the full – in *Paradiso* vi.97-111. But, unlike Farinata, Salvani – late in his life – was moved through love for a friend to put aside his pride:

“Quando vivea più glorioso,” disse  
 “liberamente nel Campo di Siena,  
 ogne vergogna diposta, s'affisse;  
     e li, per trar l'amico suo di pena  
 ch'e' sostenea ne la prigion di Carlo  
 si condusse a tremar per ogne vena”

(Pg. xi.133-38)

As Trajan's pity for the widow's plight leads him to fulfil his imperial mandate of Justice for all, so Salvani – in *imitatio Christi* – sacrifices his pride and station, undergoing the suffering and humiliation of beggary, in order to pay the ransom for his friend.

The three souls stamped by pride in Purgatory – Omberto, Oderisi and Salvani – may be read, therefore, in light of the *exempla* of humility – Mary, King David, and Trajan. Omberto's pride in his family line (an excellence, essentially, of the body) is contrasted with Eve, the communal mother, and Mary, of humble birth. Oderisi's pride in artistic excellence (an excellence of the soul) is compared to King David, the model of the Christian sinner-singer who puts his art at the service of God. Salvani's pride in political power (an external excellence) is contrasted with Trajan who puts his universal power at the service of the powerless in the cause of justice.<sup>58</sup> Crucially, we encounter Omberto, Oderisi and Salvani in a state of conversion: towards the ends of their lives, they did turn away from sin, and now – in Purgatory – they are still in a process of spiritual transformation. Most noticeably, perhaps, they begin to recognize the good in each other. Where Omberto and Oderisi confess their pride in their own voice, Oderisi speaks for Salvani. Oderisi's newfound courtesy to Franco of Bologna (Pg. xi.82-87) is thus seconded by his praise of

<sup>58</sup> See also FORTI, *Pusillanimi e superbi*, cit., pp. 223-24.

Salvani. As Peraldus emphasizes, praising others is a key remedy to vainglory. In nature, after all, the beholder takes delight in what is seen (as sight takes pleasure in a beautiful colour) and not *vice versa* (the beautiful colour does not taken pleasure in being seen!). So, in human relations, a person should take pleasure from the good in others and not from the praise of others.<sup>59</sup>

The confessions of these souls in Purgatory are also spiritually productive for Dante-character. He recognizes in each of them an aspect of pride or vainglory in himself. In this way, Dante models in his own person a spiritual exercise for his reader. In response to Umberto's speech, Dante-character humbly acknowledges this prideful tendency: «Ascoltando chinai in giù la faccia» (*Pg.* xi.73). As Beatrice's indulgent smile suggests, Dante-character will display not only filial reverence, but a latent pride in family lineage, when he encounters Cacciaguida in Paradise (*Par.* xvi.1-27).<sup>60</sup> And, indeed, Cacciaguida strongly suggests that pride runs in the Alighieri blood: Dante's great-grandfather has already spent over one hundred years on the terrace of pride (*Par.* xv.91-93). Dante's pride in his own nobility of soul and excellence in poetry is even more pronounced. Dante-character explicitly acknowledges how Oderisi's confession and discourse on the vanity of pride have reduced his pride and instilled in its place good humility: «E io a lui: "Tuo vero dir m'incora / bona umiltà, e gran tumor m'appiani"» (*Pg.* xi.118-19). Moreover, Dante-character – rising to the apex of political power in Florence at the time of his journey through Purgatory (he would hold office as one of the six priors of Florence from 15th June to 15th August 1300) – learns through Oderisi's prophecy that he will be able to gloss Salvani's humiliation with his own future experience of exile (*Pg.* xi.139-42). These souls – as part of the *ecclesia* of Purgatory – thus become living sermons for Dante-character: they lead him to become self-conscious of his own pride and to adopt, therefore, the posture of humility. At the close of the dramatic sequence, Dante-character is described as side-by-side with Oderisi, like an oxen under a yoke: «Di pari, come buoi, che vanno a giogo / m'andava io con quell'anima carca» (*Pg.* xii.1-2).<sup>61</sup> Even when Virgil commands him to rise up, his mind remains humbled and bowed down in thought (*Pg.* xii.8-9).

### 3. *Pride and Spiritual Death*

<sup>59</sup> PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 3, p. 335a: «Naturale autem est, quod apprehendens in re apprehensa delectetur, & non e converso: ut visus delectatur in viridi colore, & non color viridis delectatur ex eo quod videtur: si videtur, quod aliquis non debeat delectari ex eo quod creditur talis vel talis, sed potius illi qui vident eum bonum, debent in eo delectari».

<sup>60</sup> Dante does insist, nonetheless, that love of ancestors may be a stimulus to virtuous activity (*Par.* xvi.7-9).

<sup>61</sup> See BENVENUTO DA IMOLA, gloss to *Pg.* xii.1-3: «sicut enim taurus superbus ponitur sub jugum ut dometur et fiat humilis et mansuetus, ita quod discit non ferire amplius cornu vel pede; ita nunc Odorisius superbus positus erat sub saxo, ut domaretur et efficeretur humilis et mansuetus, et oblivisceretur non ferire alios lingua: et Dantes qui similiter fuerat superbus ibat par cum illo, ut habilis loqueretur secum, et disceret inclinari et humiliari». See also SCOTT, *Canto XII*, cit., p. 176.

Dante's reader, like the souls in Purgatory, voices the Lord's Prayer in its entirety in the opening of *Purgatorio* xi. Through the acrostic VOM opening *Purgatorio* xii, the reader, like Dante-character, is also made to turn his eyes downwards – «Volgi li occhi in giù» (*Pg.* xii.13) – as his eye scrolls down the page (rather than from left to right).<sup>62</sup> The final stage of the conversion from pride to humility is, then, this meditation upon the twelve *exempla* of pride, carved on the path under the souls' feet. Dante-author reinforces the overarching architectonic analogy of the episode by comparing these carvings to tombstones in a medieval church. As the first remedy to vainglory is the *meditatio mortis*, so the comparison to tombstones (like the infernal graveyard of *Inferno* x) sets into relief the perspective of eternity as a correlative to this-worldly pride. But, through the architectural analogy, Dante also indicates how his reader should engage with these *exempla* of pride. Alluding once more to the realism of late-thirteenth-century sculpture, Dante highlights that the effigies carved on tombstones may bear the exact resemblance of the dead person buried: «le tombe terragne / portan segnato quel ch'elli eran pria» (*Pg.* xii.17-18).<sup>63</sup> However, it is only those who recognize the soul («per la puntura de la rimembranza» (*Pg.* xii.20)) who feel renewed sorrow for his or her death. Similarly, the *exempla* of pride may only provoke sorrow in the reader who recognizes in the *exempla*'s lives (and spiritual death) a sinful tendency of his own. As Pietro Alighieri comments, the twelve *exempla* display the tragic end of such pride, and thus should move men to purge themselves of this vice and adhere to its curative virtue, humility.<sup>64</sup>

What, then, of these twelve examples of pride? Although it would be a forced reading to simply impose the prevailing scheme – of parallel *exempla* – onto these examples of pride, such an interpretation, I would suggest, actually evolves naturally from the passage's contextual background. Peraldus, again, is important here. Of the twelve examples of pride that Dante gives as warnings to sinners, all six Scriptural *exempla* except for Nimrod (who replaces Adam) are found in the first seven examples listed by Peraldus: Lucifer, Adam, Saul, Rehoboan, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Holofernes.<sup>65</sup> Whereas Peraldus's list also includes *exempla* of pride who are

<sup>62</sup> On the acrostic, see Robert Hollander's survey in HOLLANDER, gloss to *Pg.* xii.25-63.

<sup>63</sup> Durling notes that «tomb sculpture portraying the buried was a relatively recent phenomenon in Italy (since 1272), although common in northern Europe for at least a century and a half» (DURLING AND MARTINEZ, *op. cit.*, p. 197).

<sup>64</sup> PIETRO ALIGHIERI (3), gloss to *Pg.* xii. 1-72: «quomodo vidit in solo et pavimento huius primi circuli sculptum, ad quem exitum venit superbia nostra ut plurimum in hoc mundo infimum et depressum, ut sub allegorico sensu moveat homines ad removendum se ab ipso vitio et adherere virtuti humilitatis sibi in bon contrarie».

<sup>65</sup> PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 2 ch. 6, p. 221a-222b. I refer to 'twelve examples' by not including Troy in the list; following Delcorno, I consider the list as '12+1' rather than as '13': twelve is the common number in the *artes praedicandi* and the example of Troy (with its own acrostic condensed into three lines) serves as a paradigmatic, summative example. See DELCORNO, *Exemplum*, *cit.*, pp. 207-10. I do not find convincing the attempt to reduce the list including Troy to twelve by counting Briareus and the giants as one example. Two key arguments in favour are that, by so doing, one maintains the order of Christian followed by pagan examples throughout the series and that there are, in this way, an equal number of Christian and pagan *exempla* (see F. FORTI, *Superbia e superbi*, in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, v., pp. 484-87; and SCOTT, *Canto XIII*, *cit.*, p. 178). Equally valid opposing arguments in terms of consistency and balance are, however, that, in reading Briareus and the giants as two *exempla*, a *terzina* is allotted to each example

nonetheless saved such as Adam (the father of faith) and Peter (Christ's vicar), Dante chooses, instead, purely negative *exempla* from classical history and mythology: all Dante's *exempla* thus came to a bad end (they are represented here, but inhabit Hell).<sup>66</sup> The structure of Dante's list of *exempla* has, however, puzzled critics and many attempts have been made to find a symmetry or organizing principle.<sup>67</sup> It does seem convincing to me that Dante's acrostic – the first four *terzina* begin with *Vedea*; the second quartet with *O*; the third with *Mostrava* – divides the list of twelve examples naturally into three groups of four.<sup>68</sup> The same acrostic technique in the following *terzina* (the three lines spell VOM) naturally makes of Troy a separate, paradigmatic example. Delcorno has provided a further contextual rationale based upon Dominican preaching manuals for dividing the list of twelve into three groups of four.<sup>69</sup> Those scholars who have accepted this division have attempted, then, to provide a theme, or aspect of pride, which might unify each group of *exempla*.<sup>70</sup> But they have not considered whether Dante might have set these three groups of prideful *exempla* in counterpoint with the three *exempla* of humility. Given the acrostic, the preaching context, and these implicit thematic schema, it seems likely that Dante intended these cantos to be read in parallel.

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(consistency); moreover, the figure of Eve (*Pg.* xii.70-72), the first woman, arguably counterpoises Troy, the primeval city (balance). Delcorno also points out that the list in John of Wales' *Summa virtutum et vitiorum* includes four of Dante's six Scriptural *exempla*: Saul, Rehoboan, Nebuchadnezzar, Holofernes (DEL CORNO, *Dante e Peraldo*, cit., n. 66, p. 224). I am grateful to Filippo Gianferrari for sharing with me his work on the parallel examples of pride in John of Salisbury as this article was going to press. Gianferrari argues convincingly that John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* may be another possible source of inspiration for Dante's selection of examples of pride. As Gianferrari points out, 'John includes the biblical examples of Nimrod, Saul, Holofernes, Sennacherib, and the non-biblical one of Cyrus' to support his argument in favour of the lawful duty to kill a tyrant. See Filippo Gianferrari, *Pride and Tyranny: An Unnoted Parallel between Purgatorio 12 and Policraticus 8.20-21*, «Dante Notes», May 12, 2016, <<https://dantesociety.org/node/104>>, n.n.

<sup>66</sup> Delcorno argues that Dante may have drawn many of his pagan *exempla* indirectly through medieval compilations. He gives the example of John of Wales's *Communiloquium* with its abundance of *auctoritates* and *exempla* taken from theologians («divini doctores») but also from classical literature («libri gentilium philosophorum»). See DEL CORNO, *Exemplum*, cit., pp. 203-05 (p. 205). It seems likely that the pagan *exempla* of pride were mediated, moreover, through medieval allegorical readings. For Ovid, Delcorno cites the *Allegoriae* of Arnulph of Orleans, of Giovanni del Virgilio, and the *Integumenta Ovidii* of John of Garlandi (DEL CORNO, *Exemplum*, cit., p. 214).

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, NICOLA FOSCA, gloss to *Pg.* xii.61-63.

<sup>68</sup> It is noticeable that the three anaphora (*vedea*, *O*, *mostrava*) seem to allude to three senses: sight, hearing, and touch; to seeing, speaking and showing.

<sup>69</sup> Twelve is the *numerus abundans*, and four allegorically symbolises bestiality and, on this reading, would represent the «history of sinful humanity» (DEL CORNO, *Exemplum*, cit., pp. 209-10): «Vi è un'indubbia analogia tra la distribuzione degli esempi di superbia e gli schemi compositivi in uso nella predicazione del tempo di Dante, descritti con molta precisione nelle *artes praedicandi*: uno dei più comuni tracciava una divisione a tre membri, ognuno dei quali veniva poi dilatato con quattro distinzioni, così da ottenere un organismo di dodici elementi» (p. 209).

<sup>70</sup> Parodi, for example, argues that these three groups represent presumption (a violence against God), vainglory (a violence against oneself), and ambition (a violence against others). See E.G. PARODI, *Gli esempi di superbia punita e il "bello stile" di Dante*, in IDEM, *Poesia e storia nella Divina Commedia*, Naples, F. Perrella, 1920, pp. 233-52: «la prima serie è tutta di violenti contro la divinità, la seconda sembra più modestamente di vanagloriosi, che furono la rovina di sé stessi, e la terza di violenti contro il prossimo» (pp. 240-41). See also SCOTT, *Canto XII*, cit., p. 176: «Notiamo che le prime quattro *terzine* iniziano con la parola "Vedea" e contengono esempi di ribellione o violenza contro la divinità; il secondo gruppo (di vanagloriosi, che furono causa della propria rovina) è anche esso composto da quattro *terzine* inizianti con la particella vocativa "O"; mentre il terzo gruppo (di tirani superbi, bramosi di primeggiare) comprende quattro *terzine*, ciascuna introdotta dalla parola "Mostrava"».

The emblematic contrast between Lucifer, the first example of pride, and Mary, the first example of humility, is reinforced through the figures of Briareus, the giants and Nimrod. Where Lucifer, who raised himself above the Creator (*Inf.* xxxiv.35), descended from the noblest to the least (*Pg.* xii.25-26), Mary, who became the humble vessel of the Creator, ascends from the least to the most noble (*Par.* xxxiii.4-7).<sup>71</sup> In Virgil, Statius and Lucan, Briareus – a monstrous giant – presumes to challenge Jove, and Dante presents Jove as a pagan analogue to Lucifer.<sup>72</sup> Heard of but not seen among the giants guarding the pit of Cocytus, «lo smisurato Briareo» (*Inf.* xxxi.98) prefigures the appearance of Lucifer at the earth's centre (*Inf.* xxxiv.28-57). By extension, the mythical battle between the Roman gods and the giants depicted in Purgatory may represent analogically the cosmic battle between good and bad angels (*Pg.* xii.31-33). It also prefigures the attempt of King Nimrod to build a tower to heaven. Dante underscores this syncretism by presenting Nimrod, the king of Babylon (Gen. 10. 9-10), as a giant (*Inf.* xxxi.67-81). The pride of Lucifer and the angels in their cosmic battle with God, and man's prideful attempt to resist the will of God, therefore, find their inverse parallel in the humility and subjection of Mary.<sup>73</sup> The first quartet of examples thus dramatise man's mad attempt to become like God – to bridge the infinite gap between creature and Creator.<sup>74</sup> The fact that all four examples are before the coming of Christ highlights, once more, God's humility at the Incarnation: it takes us back to the Annunciation where Mary's 'AVE' literally reverses, in a playful wordplay, the human pride of Eve ('EVA').<sup>75</sup>

Whereas the first quartet of *exempla* directly rebel against God, the principal fault of the second group is indifference or impiety towards God. Niobe, Saul, Arachne, and Rehoboam fail to recognize that their own excellences – in beauty and fertility; political power; artistic ability; and dynastic line – are dependent on God. Saul and Rehoboam, the two Scriptural *exempla*, clearly counterpoise King David, the second example of humility. Saul loses kingship of Israel to David

<sup>71</sup> Dante's description of Lucifer's fall («vedea colui [...] giù dal cielo / folgoreggiando scender») renders the Vulgate: «Videbam Satanam sicut fulgur de caelo cadentem» (LUKE 10:18). In this way, Dante underlines the danger of spiritual or intellectual arrogance. Jesus' words, as Peraldus's gloss on this biblical passage highlights, need to be seen in their context as a reprimand to his disciples for rejoicing in their spiritual power: «in hoc nolite gaudere» (LUKE 10:20). See PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 3, p. 334b-335a: «Et eiusdem 14. ubi miraculo facto de quinque panibus & duobus piscibus, compulit discipulos statim ascendere naviculam, ne vanam gloriam haberent de aliquibus quae audierant de miraculo. illo & Luc. 10 ubi reprehendit discipulos suos, qui gloriabantur de miraculis factis. Videbam, inquit, Satanam sicut fulgor de caelo cadentem». See also PIETRO D'ALIGHIERI, gloss to *Pg.* xii.1-72. Pietro d'Alighieri draws directly on Peraldus in his gloss to this episode with a series of precise textual parallels.

<sup>72</sup> See *Aeneid* X. 565-66; *Thebaid*, II. 596; *Pharsalia* IV. 596. Dante's reference to Apollo, Minerva and Mars follows closely Statius, *Thebaid*. II. 595-99.

<sup>73</sup> As Pietro Alighieri notes, Nimrod's purpose in building the tower was also to protect himself and his people from a second flood (God's punishment for sin). See PIETRO ALIGHIERI (3), gloss to *Pg.* xii.1-72: «Nembroth cepit facere turrim quandam ascensuram usque ad celum ne iterum diluvium eos offenderet; ex quo Deus descendit ibi confundens linguam eorum ita quod nullus alium intelligebat».

<sup>74</sup> See also *Pg.* iii.34-36: «Matto è chi spera che nostra ragione / possa trascorrer la infinita via / che tiene una sustanza in tre persone».

<sup>75</sup> See SCOTT, *Canto XII*, cit., p. 177: «Dante intendeva sottolineare l'importanza centrale della venuta del Redentore, il quale con un atto di suprema umiltà (virtù ignota all'antichità pagana), riapri all'umanità peccatrice le porte del cielo chiese dal primo atto di superbia».

because he ignored the word of God: «quia proiecisti sermonem Domini, proiecit te Deus ne sis rex super Israel» (1 Samuel: 24-26). Rehoboam is King David's successor and loses the inheritance of Israel: «recessit Israel a domo David» (2 Kings 12. 10-11). Rehoboam's dynastic pride only serves to accentuate the disparity with his own life and actions: Dante scornfully highlights Rehoboam's baseless fear as he flees without being pursued (*Pg.* xii.46-48). Saul, by contrast, serves as a particular warning to souls at the beginning of their Christian life (just as his *exemplum* is introduced here in the first terrace of Dante's Purgatory). When he was humble, Saul was made a king; when he became proud, he was ejected from his throne.<sup>76</sup> The mountain of Gilboa upon which Saul kills himself may be interpreted allegorically as the mountain of pride upon which the soul is damned.<sup>77</sup> In such allegorical readings, Saul is the Old Adam, David the new; Saul is the *Synagoga*, David is the *Ecclesia*.<sup>78</sup> Samuel's words upbraiding Saul become, then, the words of a spiritual master to a backsliding Christian.<sup>79</sup> On this allegorical reading, Israel signifies a man seeing God; he who neglects to live the gospel, by contrast, is banished from God's face.<sup>80</sup>

As Saul and Rehoboam, in salvation history, counterpoise King David as just king of Israel so Niobe and Arachne, from classical mythology, counterpoise King David as the humble cantor of the psalms. On account of her irreligion and impiety, Niobe's seven male and seven female offspring (the object of her presumptuous boasting) were annihilated by the goddess Latona's two children (Apollo and Artemis).<sup>81</sup> Arachne, in her self conceit, sets up her artistry against God disowning its divine origin. They both inversely mirror, therefore, King David, the «umile

<sup>76</sup> Saul killed himself in indignation and pride. See PIETRO ALIGHIERI, gloss to *Pg.* xii.40-42: «et ibi indignatione et superbia in propriam spatham irruit».

<sup>77</sup> See PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 2 ch. 6, p. 228a-228b: «Secunda ratio est, quia fere omnia bona fugiūt montem superbiae. Est enim mons Gelboe, in quo nec ros nec pluvia descendit. Si omnes montes, qui sunt in circuitu eius visitaret Dominus, a monte tamen superbi transiret. De super non recipit mons iste, nec rorem gratiae, nequi pluvium interioris doctrinae. Fluvius etiam humanae doctrinae non potest an aeum ascendere. [...] August. super Psal. *Superbia angelum fecit diabolum, humilitas hominem Deum*. In isto mōte Saul daemoneiacus sive arreptitius factus est. Unde 1. Reg. 16. *Ecce spiritus Domini malus exagitat te*. Delcorno, who also cites this passage, highlights that Dante draws again on this very image in his epistle to the Florentines (DELCORNO, *Exemplum*, cit., p. 213). Opposing the Holy Roman Emperor, the Florentines oppose the very will of God: «Sin prorsus arrogancia vestra insolens adeo roris altissimi, ceu cacumina Gelboe, vos fecit exsortes [...]» (DANTE, *Epistola VI*. 11 [3]).

<sup>78</sup> See PAULINE MAUD MATARASSO, *The Redemption of Chivalry: A Study of the Queste De Saint Graal*, Geneva, Librairie Droz, 1979, n. 6, p. 116: «In the earlier chapters of 1 Samuel, Saul is seen as a type of Christ (Bede, In *Samuelam prophetam allegorica expositio*, P.L. 91, 553D and passim; also *Glossa Ordinaria*, P.L. 113, 552C), while in his relationship with David he becomes of course Synogoga over against Ecclesia (Bede, *Ibid.*, 557; in the *Glossa Ordinaria* the Jews are opposed to Christ), and thus the figure of the first-born who has forfeited his heritage (Gen. 25: 30-34), of the Old Adam versus the New».

<sup>79</sup> BEDE, *Glossa Ordinaria*, P.L. 113, 601 (cited in MATARASSO, *op. cit.*, n. 6, p. 117): «Nonne cum humilitatis in animo tuo pro vita praeterita, quae erat sine Deo, ad Ecclesiam venisses, accepta jam fidei et baptismi gratia, caput in exercendis Spiritus fructibus factus es? [...] Quare ergo, contempta evangelica et apostolica voce, aliam tibi vivendi regulam condere, ac vitiorum spolia congregare maluisti?».

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*: «Israel namque vir videns Deum interpretatur».

<sup>81</sup> Pietro Alighieri interprets her example allegorically: Niobe is the irreligion of pride; her seven sons and daughters the seven acts of pride in men and women. See PIETRO ALIGHIERI (1), gloss to *Pg.* xii.37-39: «Et ideo allegorizatur Niobe, idest superbia: Latona, religio: Diana, castitas. Septem filii Niobis sunt septem actus superbiae in mare, et septem filiae ejus septem actus superbiae in femina; scilicet superbus pedum incessus, pectoris supinatio, manuum gestus, linguae verbalis indignatio, nasi frontatio, supercilii elevatio, oculorum semipotentia. Et sic in proposito religio creat sapientiam et castitatem, quae superbos actus habent occidere».

salmista», who, acknowledging his sin and unworthiness, becomes the mouthpiece of God.<sup>82</sup> By approaching these four examples as a group, the intended moral import of these stories on the reader also becomes clear. Ovid emphasizes that Nīobe knew Arachne's story and her fate, but she failed to imbibe the moral lesson. Now, the story of Arachne has become 'true' in her own life (*Metamorphoses*, VI. 146-52). Similarly, Rehoboam failed to learn the appropriate moral lesson from Saul's fate in the history of Israel. These failures of reading in the two Scriptural and the two pagan *exempla* reveal at the microlevel, therefore, the danger for Dante's reader if he does not relate the *exempla* to his own life. Dante's reader must, like the people of Thebes after the annihilation of Nīobe's children, learn the moral lesson and be moved to religion and piety (*Met.*, VI. 396-399).

The third quartet of *exempla* highlights the effect of an individual's pride on society as a whole. The folly of vanity in corporeal beauty and possessions is embodied by the first sinner of Dante's third group, Eriphyle, who betrayed her husband to a certain death for a necklace intended for a goddess («lo sventurato adornamento»). Eriphyle's vanity also causes, albeit indirectly, the Theban war, just as Helen's vanity had led, ultimately, to the destruction of Troy. The contrast with Trajan is, in this context, striking: Trajan prefers the administration of justice on behalf of a poor widow to the vanity of imperial pomp. Moreover, the widow who demands justice for her son's death inverts the story of Eriphyle whose son, avenging his father's death, made his mother's necklace truly dear («caro») by taking her life (*Pg.* xii.49-51).<sup>83</sup> The three imperial and military leaders who follow – Sennacherib (king of Assyria), Cyrus (emperor of Persia) and Holofernes (Assyrian general) – also provide clear counter-examples to the just Emperor Trajan. Gregory the Great emphasizes that a king's pride leads to the destruction of his people.<sup>84</sup> A scourge of God's providence (2 Kings 19: 25), Sennacherib and his army are miraculously annihilated because of his presumption against the God of Israel. As Eriphyle's betrayal led to the destruction of Thebes, so Sennacherib sought to destroy the city of Jerusalem. Like Eriphyle (his pagan foil), Sennacherib is

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<sup>82</sup> As the Oderisi episode has clear autobiographical implications so, from its earliest readers, the story of Arachne has been seen as a negative image, or dangerous tendency, of Dante's verse. See, for example, PAMELA ROYSTON MACFIE, *Ovid, Arachne and the Poetics of Paradise*, in *The Poetry of Allusion*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff and Jeffrey Schnapp, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1991, pp. 159-72.

<sup>83</sup> The first pair of examples – Saul and Arachne – highlight the self-destructiveness of denying the supernatural origin of their power or talent. Their suicides (attempted only in Arachne's case as her noose becomes a spider's thread) are but extensions of this pride: their last means to destroy their dependence on God is to destroy themselves as images of God.

<sup>84</sup> See LELLIA CRACCO RUGGINI and GIORIO CRACCO, *Gregorio Magno e i "Libri dei Re"*, in *Transformations of Late Antiquity: Essays for Peter Brown*, II, ed. by Philip Rousseau and Manolis Papoutsakis, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009, pp. 223-58: «Il tema della superbia dei re, che porta alla rovina loro e i loro popoli è ricorrente in Gregorio, soprattutto nei *Moralia* (22.35), [...] ma a maggior ragione nella *Expositio*, dove riporta a commenta il rimprovero di Dio a Saul: *Nonne, cum parvulus esses in oculis tuis, caput in tribus Israel factus es?*» (n. 73, p. 241). Filippo Gianferrari claims that John of Salisbury is the first to use the biblical stories of Holofernes and Sennacherib as 'examples of the tyrant's ill end'. Gianferrari emphasizes, then, 'a political dimension of Dante's illustration of pride that has been largely overlooked – with the exception of mythological giants and female characters, all of his examples of pride are tyrants'. See Gianferrari, *art. cit.* n.n.

murdered by his sons.<sup>85</sup> The matricide of Eriphyle and the patricide Sennacherib are immediately followed by the twin decapitations of Cyrus and Holofernes. Cyrus is another failed emperor: his conquests for Persia are presented as entirely bloodthirsty.<sup>86</sup> Most significantly, Cyrus' savage decapitation serves as the pagan analogue to the decapitation of the Assyrian general Holofernes by the Jewish widow, Judith.<sup>87</sup> Where Israel is saved from Sennacherib's army by God's direct intervention, Israel is saved from Holofernes by the virtue and courage of Judith.

The two outside enemies of Israel (Sennacherib and Holofernes) thus balance the two failed leaders of Israel (Saul and Rehoboam). The backdrop to these four Scriptural examples is, in other words, Jerusalem. And, I believe, this is particularly significant given the climax to the sequence of *exempla*, Troy:

Vedeva Troia in cenere e in caverne  
o Ilion, come te basso e vile  
mostrava il segno che li si discerne! (Pg. xii.61-63)

Troy's proud fall leads to the foundation of the Roman *imperium* by Aeneas whose arrival in Italy – in Dante's syncretic view of global history – coincides with the birth of King David (*Conv.*, IV.5.6). The temporal power of Israel is, however, ultimately subjected to the Roman Empire because, in the Christian era, the true Jerusalem is in Heaven. The final image of the city of Troy in ashes and ruins is, therefore, also a pagan analogue for the earthly Jerusalem which – for its proud rejection of Christ and its continued belligerence against Rome – was destroyed by Titus (*Par.* vi.82-93).<sup>88</sup>

This article has analysed as a triptych the three groups of *exempla* which make up the terrace of pride: the three examples of humility (Pg. x.34-93); the three prideful (or vainglorious) souls encountered (Pg. xi.37-142); and the three 'quartets' of prideful *exempla* (Pg. xii.25-63). With its focus on parallel *exempla*, this reading has paid comparatively little attention, however, to the group of souls out of which the three prideful souls identified (Omberto, Oderisi, and Salvani) emerge. Privileging the figurative sense – Purgatory as embodying a moral and spiritual practice – may also suggest, nonetheless, a revised account of how Dante-poet structures the literal process of the souls'

<sup>85</sup> Building upon the drama of the Scriptural source also quoted by Peraldus («filii eius percusserunt eum gladio»), Dante has Sennacherib's sons literally throw themselves on top of their father, Sennacherib («i figli si gittaro / sovra Sennacherib» (Pg. xii.53)). See PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 2 ch. 6, pp. 221b-222a.

<sup>86</sup> Where Trajan enacts justice for the death of the widow's son, Thamyris, the queen of the Scythians, exacted her own justice for the murder of her son by Cyrus. Murdering him, she cast his head in a bladder full of blood with the words: «Sangue sitisti, e io di sangue t'empio» (Pg. xii.57).

<sup>87</sup> PERALDUS, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 2 ch. 6, p. 222b. Peraldus devotes particular attention to Holofernes who is naturally paired with Nabuchadnezzar. Holofernes, like Sennacherib, had defied the «god of Israel», and claimed that there is no God other than Nabuchadnezzar: «ostendam tibi, quod non est Deus nisi Nabuchodonosor». His murder leads, then, to the flight of the Assyrians: «come in rotta si fuggiro / li Assiri» (Pg. xii.58-59).

<sup>88</sup> In this way, Trajan's justice in retribution for the murder of the widow's son may arguably reflect, from the perspective of Dante's view of Providential history, Titus' justice in retribution for the murder of Mary's son, Jesus.

purgation on the terrace of pride. Although Dante-character is first confronted by sculptured reliefs of humility and only subsequently by the reliefs of pride, critics have argued that this is not, in fact, the order experienced by the penitent souls on their entrance to Purgatory.<sup>89</sup> According to a standard interpretation, the souls entering Purgatory are immediately bent down (as we later encounter them (Pg. x.112-14)).<sup>90</sup> They first view, thereby, the *exempla* of pride (sculptured below their feet). Only after having being cured of pride, do they return upright enabling them to view the *exempla* of humility (sculptured on the inner bank of the cliff). The triptych reading, by contrast, might suggest that the souls of Purgatory first view the *exempla* of humility. The spiritual meditation on humility leads, then, to the Purgatorial souls' consciousness of the burden of their pride and, hence, their subsequent prostration under the boulders and, finally, their viewing of the *exempla* of pride. Such a reading has three distinct advantages. First, it is more coherent because the souls in Purgatory view the *exempla* in the same order as Dante-character and the reader (humility then pride). Secondly, it is more psychologically compelling in light of the preaching context of Christian medicinal ethics (humility as an antidote to pride). Thirdly, it reinforces the mode of parallel reading which this article has advocated for Dante's reader: the souls in Purgatory would reflect both on their own sins and on the *exempla* of pride in relation to the three *exempla* of humility.

This reappraisal of Dante's terrace of pride thereby has implications for how we might imagine the Purgatorial souls' actual experience of their purification from pride. The article's primary purpose, however, is to present a new way to read Dante's terrace of pride in terms of three sets of parallel *exempla*. The preaching context, I have argued, gives clear contextual reasons for reading the episode in this way. Whether or not critics find 'parallel *exempla*' a convincing interpretation of Dante's authorial strategy, I hope that they may find the hermeneutic fruitfulness of this mode of reading compelling.<sup>91</sup> The counterpoint between Mary and Omberto, King David and Oderisi, and Trajan and Salvani illuminates, as I have shown, both sides of the comparison. The analysis of these three cantos as a triptych (*Purgatorio* x-xii), furthermore, offers possible interpretative solutions to particular hermeneutic *crucis* in individual cantos, most notably with regard to Dante's organisation of the list of twelve prideful *exempla* in *Purgatorio* xii. The parallels

<sup>89</sup> The issue of how, in this case, the souls on the terrace may see the *exempla* of humility has even led critics into a dispute about the angle of the wall of Purgatory: could it be sufficiently obtuse (rather than at a right angle) and thus enable the penitents to partially see the *exempla*? See, for example, TOBIA TOSCANO, *Canto X*, in *Lectura Dantis Neapolitana: "Purgatorio"*, ed. by Pompeo Giannantonio, Naples, Loffredo, 1989, pp. 205-225: «le anime dei superbi [...] potranno apprendere gli ammonimenti all'umiltà contenuti nelle immagini proprio in virtù di questo minor "dritto di salita" della parete rocciosa» (p. 208). See also Ivi, n. 11, p. 208.

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, ROBERT DURLING *The Terrace of Pride: i. Structure and Rationale*, in DURLING AND MARTINEZ, *op. cit.*, pp. 603-06 (p. 605): «those in the initial stages of the process are not able to see the examples of humility; they must gaze at the ground, able to contemplate only the examples of pride punished that are visible there (xii.16-69): when the weight of their pride has lightened sufficiently, they can contemplate the examples of humility as they pass them, as well as see and identify others near them (as in xi.109-226)».

<sup>91</sup> Authorial intention is not, therefore, decisive here. In this respect, the 'parallel reading' approach is similar to the hermeneutical method of vertical reading. See 'Introduction', in *Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy*, ed. by George Corbett and Heather Webb, Cambridge, Open Book Publishers, 2015, pp. 1- 12 (esp., pp. 6-8).

between the three ‘quartets’ of prideful examples and the three *exempla* of humility are, indeed, striking. Once again, this mode of parallel reading also refines our interpretation of each group on its own: thus, for example, our understanding of King David as a model of humility in kingship (Pg. x.49-72) is greatly enhanced in relation to his predecessor Saul and successor Rehoboam, and as a model of humble artistry in relation to Niobe and Arachne (Pg. xii.37-48).

By exploring the theological contexts of these *exempla* (particularly in preaching practice), furthermore, we have also shown how these models, and anti-models, were used by preachers to articulate the path and stumbling blocks in the Christian moral life. From a perspective of penitence, this mode of reading illustrates how a sinner (Omberto, Oderisi and Salvani were Dante’s near contemporaries) might reflect upon his or her own life in relation to models of virtue. And, as I have argued, Dante-character embodies this process for the reader, recognising aspects of his own pride through the lives of the three souls he encounters. If we see Dante adopting in Purgatory the role of a vernacular preacher against vice, moreover, it is clear that Dante does not intend that we, as readers, simply provide a detached theological reading of the terrace of pride. Rather, at every point in the narrative, Dante is seeking to engage his reader directly, to provoke the prick of conscience that might lead to conversion. Auerbach was surely right, then, when he saw in the opening poem of Baudelaire’s *les Fleur du mal* an echo of Dante’s address to his reader as «hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère».<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> See ERICH AUERBACH, *Literary Language & Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Ralph Manheim, London, Routledge, 1965, p. 298: «[...] in the Christian era a new relationship had developed between the speaker or writer and his audience: the author no longer curried favor, but admonished, preached, and instructed. This form of address to the reader has two special characteristics: in principle the author directed his criticism not at any specific vice or section of society but at the corruption of fallen man as such; and the second characteristic, which follows from the first but requires special mention, is that the writer or speaker identified himself with those he was addressing. The consequence is an interweaving of accusation and self-accusation, earnestness and humility, the superiority of the teacher and brotherly love». Auerbach notes (*Ibidem*, n. 116): «As so often Baudelaire at once echoes and caricatures a Christian theme: *Hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère...*».