CHAPTER 7

The Terrace of Avarice, and the Love of Children

Modern critics have been reluctant to contemplate the possibility that Dante might have represented himself as guilty of avarice, even though the early commentators held no such qualms.[1] After all, some of the most sustained invectives of the *Commedia* are against avarice, and, in his prose works, avarice is the great enemy of individual nobility and of society. But, as with *acedia*, we should not equate the strength of Dante's attack against a vice with the weakness of its hold on himself. Moreover, we should emphasise that sinning in avarice does not imply any legal wrongdoing such as the barratry, or corruption, of which Dante was unjustly accused. Given the breadth of medieval understandings of avarice – including a love of power as well as of wealth, and its opposing vice of prodigality – it would be impossible for any Christian, even in a better-governed world,

[1] Both the identification of the she-wolf of *Inferno* 1 as avarice and the autobiographical dimension are brought out strongly by the early commentators. See, for example, Jacopo Alighieri, gloss to *Inf.* 1, 49–54: 'Il terzo avarizia, formata in lupa, a significazione di sua bramosa e infinita voglia'; Pietro Alighieri [1], gloss to *Inf.* 1, 49: 'Tertio et fortius dicit se fuisse impeditum a quadam *bramosissima lupa,* idest ab avaritiae cupiditate'; Pietro Alighieri [3], gloss to *Inf.* 1, 49: 'Tertio fingit auctor vehementius ibi se impeditum a vitio avaritiae in forma lupae sibi occurrente, ut idem Boetius ibidem fingat hoc vitium ut insatiabile quid, in tantum, ut dicit textus, quod iterum ad statum infimum vitiosum mundanum recadebat ipse auctor'; Guido da Pisa, gloss to *Inf.* 1, 49–51: 'Non solum illa leonina effigies, quae superbiam prefigurat, me a bono proposito revocabat, sed etiam una lupa, quae propter sui ingluviem avaritiam praeostendit, tantum michi gravedinis irrogavit, quod ego perdidi spem ad celestia ascendendi'; L'Ottimo Commento, gloss to *Inf.* 1, 49–51: 'Onde dice l'auctore che elli fue di questo miserissimo vitio sì gravato che quasi desperoe del salire per la via de veritade e di vita. Avaritia è una infermitade de l'animo nata da cupidigia d'a[c]quistare o vero di ritenere ricchezze'; Graziolo Bambaglioli, gloss to *Inf.* 1, 49–54: 'Insuper dicit ipse auctor quod ex hoc miserimo vitio tantis fuerit curis et anxietatibus oneratus in monte, quod de ascensu ad viam veritatis et vitae quodamodo desperavit.' Of modern scholars, Barnes is typical in eliminating 'the misuse of wealth, comprising both avarice and prodigality' as one of Dante's sins: 'Although Dante does show a great deal of interest in other people's avarice, he never gives rise to the slightest suspicion that he might himself be guilty of either misuse of wealth – even though in his *Convivio* (1, ix, 2–5) he says that 99.9% of educated Italians are avaricious in that they acquire their education with the purpose of profiting from it' (Barnes, 'Deadly Sins', in Barnes and O'Connell, *Dante*, p. 324).

not to fall subject to it to some extent. Reflecting on himself at the height of his political power as one of the six priors of Florence in 1300, it is highly plausible that Dante might have acknowledged that, alongside having failed to enter fully the 'new life' of Christian penitence, he had also become seduced by the 'perilous sea' of wealth and power.

We should remember the venerable Christian adage that just as demons are fallen angels, so saints are converted sinners. Indeed, the greatest saint of Dante's age, St Francis (canonised in 1228), was a prodigal prior to his conversion.[2] On climbing to the sixth terrace of gluttony, Dante-character recognises how much lighter he is after the sin of avarice has been erased: 'E io più lieve che per l'altre foci / m'andava' [And I walked lighter than after the other outlets] (*Purg.* XXII, 7–8).[3] The obvious way to interpret this, as Benvenuto's gloss registers, is that Dante-character is acknowledging that he has been purged of a heavy sin (*gravissimum pondus*), while the next two sins – namely, gluttony and lust – are much lighter (he did not much sin in gluttony and lust), an implication which modern commentators appear to have ignored.[4] In this chapter, I argue that both the early commentators (in identifying avarice as Dante's sin in *Inferno* I) *and* the modern commentators (in eschewing such a connection) are right and wrong in different respects: the poet does imply that Dante-character, overthrown by the she-wolf, was guilty of avarice but, as we learn subsequently through Statius, he was guilty of its subspecies, and extreme opposing vice, of prodigality.

This chapter demonstrates, therefore, the significance of avarice in Dante's Christian ethics and in his own moral autobiography. Using Peraldus as a gloss, I draw out the spiritual dimension of Hugh Capet's speech, a speech typically read as political polemic. I suggest, by contrast, that Hugh is atoning in the afterlife for the particular nature of his sin (arguably the original sin of the Capetian line) in the occasion of *amor filiorum* [the love of children]. I argue that love of one's children, and its

[2] See, for example, 'The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano (1228–29)', in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. by Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, 3 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1999), III, pp. 180–408 (pp. 182–84).

[3] Francesco da Buti similarly connects Dante's acknowledgement of the sin of avarice here with the she-wolf that overthrows him in *Inferno* I: '*et io*; cioè Dante, *più lieve che per l'altre foci*; cioè più leggieri diventato, che per l'altre montate de' gironi; imperò che era purgato del peccato de l'avarizio lo quale li avea dato molto di gravessa, come appare nel primo canto de la prima cantica, quando dice: *Et una lupa*' (see Francesco da Buti, gloss to *Purg.* XXII, 1–9).

[4] Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg.* XXII, 7–9: 'Et subdit effectum suae purgationis, dicens: et io più lieve che per l'altre foci, idest, alios circulos, et merito, quia deposuerat quinque gravissima pondera a capite suo, et restabant sibi duo leviora.'

negative potential as an occasion to avarice, is an interpretative key to *Purgatorio* XX as a whole, which is structured around Hugh's confession at its centre (*Purg*. XX, 40–96). The innermost frame of the examples of poverty (16–33) and avarice (97–123) all concern the impact of poverty on family dependents. The further frame of the she-wolf (4–15) and the poor shepherds (124–41) highlights how Christ's contemporary pastors fail to protect His flock from avarice. The prologue (1–3) and epilogue (142–51) concern the extension of avarice to truth: the cupidinous desire for knowledge. For Dante, as for Peraldus, two opposing vices spring from the disordered love for wealth and power: avarice and prodigality. In the chiastic structure of the terrace as a whole, Hugh Capet (and *Purgatorio* XX) is framed by the figures of Pope Adrian V (*Purgatorio* XIX), an exemplar of avarice, and Statius (*Purgatorio* XXI–XXII), an exemplar of prodigality. I suggest that Dante sets up his own 'father-role' as a Christian poet within the genealogy of ethical poets, in contrast to the genealogy of popes and the genealogy of ancestral line highlighted by Pope Adrian V and Hugh Capet, respectively. In the fourth part, I argue that Statius is a poetic cypher for Dante in relation to the sin of prodigality as well as to the sin of sloth.

Hugh Capet and *Amor filiorum* (*Purg*. XX, 43–96)

In one sense, Hugh Capet is a vehicle for Dante's extremely partisan, and in places wildly inaccurate, view of the role of France in medieval European history. The canto (*Purgatorio* XX) and wider episode of which Hugh Capet is a central figure (the terrace of Avarice) are undoubtedly, at one level, political propaganda on Dante's part: the polemical message, in a nutshell, is that the greed of the French kings has destroyed the peace and balance of power, which only a universal emperor might justly enforce. What better spokesperson and other-worldly authority for such a biased, anti-French view of history than the very progenitor of the line of French kings from 987 to the time of Dante? It may seem cruel that Dante makes Hugh Capet call his father 'a butcher' – an impious insult and complete slander: his father was Hugh the Great, the duke of the French (*dux Francorum*), who for many years had been the power behind the French throne.[5] It may seem entirely inappropriate, moreover, that Hugh Capet

[5] See, for example, Georges Duby's admittedly Francophile *France in the Middle Ages 987–1460: From Hugh Capet to Joan of Arc*, trans. by Juliet Vale (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), which nonetheless provides a helpful, and more accurate, counterpart to Dante's presentation. See especially pp. 13–30:

should be forced utterly to condemn his own ancestral line: Robert Bartlett memorably compared Hugh Capet praying for the defeat of his descendants to Elizabeth I praying for the defeat of the English by Napoleon or Hitler.[6] But, at a political level, so be it: this all serves Dante's anti-French propaganda, and Hugh Capet can go to Hell.

Except, of course, that Hugh Capet is not in Hell but rather in Purgatory. Most readings of the Hugh Capet episode have focused, in one way or another, on its obvious political dimension, an approach recently exemplified by Prue Shaw: 'The energy of this sustained denunciation by the founding father of the French dynasty makes it unmatched as political invective. This is as close as Dante ever comes to using a character in the afterlife simply as a mouthpiece for his own views.'[7] But what happens if we think of Hugh Capet as *not* just an ironic mouthpiece for Dante's political programme? What happens when we consider the spiritual dimension of the episode? We should remember, after all, that the canto is also about the soul of Hugh Capet, and its process of penance and redemption. From such a perspective, Dante-poet may not seem as callous as on a narrowly political reading he might have at first appeared: less a political polemicist, perhaps, and more a confessor and counsellor. Even Hugh Capet's diatribe against his own descendants, in this spiritual sense, may actually begin to seem strangely appropriate. This is because love of one's children was seen in Dante's time as a particularly insidious occasion – hidden under a good intention – for the sin of avarice.

'When Louis IV died in 954, Hugh, then "duke of the Gauls" and "vice-regent of Francia", was asked for "aid and counsel", and summoned all the bishops, as well as the territorial princes who ruled Burgundy, Aquitaine, and even Gothis' (p. 19); 'Hugh Capet's father, Hugh the Great, had been the son of the kings of the Franks (Robert I) and the nephew of another (Odo) . . . Louis IV made this powerful relation [about Hugh the Great] "the second after himself in all kingdoms", a kind of super-prince; for he was the king's lieutenant in both Francia and all the old Carolingian imperial lands claimed by the king' (pp. 19–20). Duby comments that Hugh Capet's 'succession to the throne seemed entirely natural; there was no need to make great play of his (rather remote) Carolingian connections. Already duke of the Franks, Hugh now became their king and, with the crown, accepted responsibility for the various subordinate kingdoms, corresponding to the different "peoples" in West Francia' (pp. 20–21). Although the supporters of Louis V's uncle, Charles, continued to accuse Hugh of usurpation, no contemporary would have doubted his nobility or long-held political standing. Prue Shaw, noting Dante's apparent confusion as to the identity of Hugh Capet, adds that 'it was another Hugh Capet who was a butcher's son'. In reality, *no* Hugh Capet was a butcher's son! Rather, this was a slur on Dante's part, albeit current in some of the pro-Imperial and anti-French propaganda of his time. See Prue Shaw, *Reading Dante*: *From Here to Eternity* (London: Norton, 2014), p. 54.

[6] See Robert Bartlett, 'Purgatorio xx', Lectura Dantis Andreapolitana http://lecturadantisandreapolitana.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/video/purgatorio-canto-xx/.

[7] Shaw, *Reading Dante*, p. 56.

In *Moralia in Job*, Gregory the Great discusses *amor filiorum* to exemplify the way in which a vice may attack us by concealing itself beneath a virtue. Someone who seems well defended against avarice, Gregory suggests, may be attacked covertly by the apparently sound motivation of providing for his family so that, while his mind is directed with seeming piety to the care of providing for them, he may be secretly seduced and pushed into sin by seeking after wealth.[8] Gregory's emphasis is picked up by Peraldus, who devotes an entire section of his treatise on avarice to this danger.[9] Having treated all the different species of avarice in turn, Peraldus turns to the things which give occasion to avarice, affording the most space to *amor filiorum*:

> Quintum, est amor filiorum. Talibus, qui divitias amant, propter amorem filiorum, ostendendum esset in praedicatione, quod hoc non sit amare filium, sed potius odire, divitias ei male congregare.[10]
>
> [Fifthly, there is the love of one's children. To those who love riches because of their love for their children, it should be shown in preaching that evilly to gather riches for a child is not, in fact, to love him but rather to hate him].

To illustrate the avarice which may ensue upon love of one's children, Peraldus tells a story of a hermit who, guided to Hell in a vision, finds his avaricious father and brother cursing each other in a well of fire:

> Erat quidam usurarius habens duos filios, quorum alter nolens succedere patri in male acquisitis, factus est Eremita. Alius vero, volens succedere patri suo, remansit cum patre suo. Et mortuo patre, ei successit. Et post non multum tempus ipse etiam decessit. Cum autem nunciatum esset Eremitae de morte patris et fratris, doluit valde, credens eos damnatos esse. Et cum rogasset Dominum, ut revelaret ei statum eorum, raptus est, et in infernum ductus, et non inveniebat ibi eos. Sed ad ultimum exierunt de quodam puteo in flamma, primo, pater, deinde filius, mordentes se, et litigantes ad invicem, patre dicente filio: Maledictus sis tu, quia pro te usurarius fui; filius autem e contrario dicebat: imo maledictus sis tu, quia nisi iniuste acquisivisses, ego non retinuissem iniuste, nec damnatus fuissem.[11]

[8] Gregory, *Moralia in Job*, xxxi, 41, 81: 'Si autem fortasse validum contra avaritiam cernit, importune eius cogitationibus domesticorum suorum inopiam suggerit; ut dum mens ad provisionis curam quasi pie flectitur, seducta furtim in rerum ambitu inique rapiatur.' For the history of the sin of avarice prior to Dante, see Richard Newhauser, *The Early History of Greed: The Sin of Avarice in Early Medieval Thought and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[9] See Peraldus, 'De his, quae dant occasionem huic vitio', in Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. iv, pa. 3, pp. 157b–58a.

[10] Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. iv, pa. 3, pp. 157b.

[11] Ibid., t. iv, pa. 3, pp. 157b–58a.

> [There was a usurer who had two sons, one of whom became a hermit so as not to succeed his father in evilly-acquired riches. The other, instead, wanting to succeed his father, stayed with him and, on his death, inherited his wealth. Not long afterwards, he also died. When the hermit heard about the death of his father and brother, he was very upset, believing them both to be damned. And when he asked the Lord to reveal their state to him, he was seized and guided to Hell, and he did not find them there. But, finally, they emerged from a well of fire, first the father and then the son, biting each other and arguing in turn, the father saying to the son: 'Cursed be you, because for you I was a usurer'; the son, instead, said the opposite: 'No, cursed be you, because if you had not unjustly acquired your wealth, I would have not have kept it unjustly, nor would I be damned'].

Peraldus takes pains to stress the powerful pull of avarice: it is love, albeit misdirected, that binds sinners to it. He underlines avarice's long-lasting effect not just on an individual but on his or her children because possessions (unlike, say, food and drink) are durable and outlive us. Even on nearing death, then, we are enchained by avarice because we love possessions not just for ourselves but for our children. No other vice, therefore, is as potent as avarice in drowning souls in the deep sea of Hell.[12]

Avarice is the most serious spiritual illness, and the root of all others.[13] In teaching his children to love worldly things, Peraldus affirms, a father does to them what is commonly done to trap rats: covered with birdlime, rats move around in the straw and, by doing so, gather the material for their own burning. Likewise, the avaricious father ensnares his children with the love of temporal things (the birdlime of eternal torments) and, thus ensnared, they gather riches (the material of their own eternal burning).[14] Just as a burning coal lights up others, so a wealthy father

[12] Ibid., t. iv, pa. 1, c. vi, p. 63a: 'Potens etiam est avaritia, ad submergendum hominem in profundum inferni.'

[13] Ibid., t. iv, pa. 1, c. iii, p. 55a: 'Radix omnium malorum est avaritia. Ad avaritiam ergo, quasi ad radicem omnium malorum praecipui adhibenda esset securis praedicationis. Frustra laboratur in extirpatione malorum si rami amputantur, et radix ista relinquitur'; c. iv, p. 55a: 'inter infirmitates spirituales ipsa est pessima'.

[14] Ibid., t. iv, pa. 1, c. vii, pp. 74b–75a: 'Duodecimo, stultus est avarus circa sua, stultior circa suos, stultissimus circa sepisum . . . Valde etiam stultus est avarus circa suos. Facit enim avarus de filiis suis sicut solet fieri de muribus; qui sicut mures inviscantur, et inviscati per paleam incedendo materiam suae exustionis colligunt, quia paleae eis adhaerent. Sic avarus quodammodo inviscat filios suos, dum docet eos temporalia amare. Amor enim temporalium viscus est spiritualium poenarum sicut dicit Gloss. super Laetatus sum. Et filii sic inviscati ob amore temporalium, male congregant materiam sui aeterni incendii.'

aflame with the fire of cupidity inflames his family dependents and friends with the same.[15] We can summarise, then, four key points about this theoretical treatment of avarice. First, love of one's children was well known in the Christian tradition as a particularly insidious example of occasions to sin. Second, the good intention of love for one's children may lead not just the parent but also his or her children to avarice. Third, teaching a child to love worldly goods is, in fact, to condemn him or her to Hell. Fourth, avarice is the root of all evils and a very grave spiritual illness.

Let us consider, in this light, Hugh Capet's self-presentation. On Dante's account, Hugh Capet usurped the very kingdom of France to give to his son and heirs (*Purg*. XX, 52–60). Himself a son of a butcher ('Figliuol fu'io d'un beccaio di Parigi'; 52), Hugh promoted his son to the widowed crown of France. On the spurious (for Dante) basis that he was going on crusade and might be killed, Hugh Capet made his son king the very year of his own coronation to secure the succession of his line ('le sacrate ossa' [the consecrated bones]; 60).[16] Hugh's assumption of power is, then, the seed of the evil tree, the first drop of the blood which, in time, would be entirely sucked to the desires of the she-wolf of avarice. Hugh describes his own dynasty as the evil plant that overshadows all the Christian lands ('la mala pianta / che la terra cristiana tutta aduggia'; 43–44). Capetian ambition obstructs, and seeks to supplant, the Holy Roman Emperor who, for Dante, is the Divinely ordained minister of justice in the world. Consequently, Rome is widowed not just of the papacy (in Avignon, consumed by avarice), but of the Emperor as well.[17] In an apostrophe to avarice 'O avarizia', Hugh Capet concludes that his offspring are so possessed by

[15] This flame of a father's avarice is thus opposed to the 'divine flame' of Virgil's *Aeneid*: 'Al mio ardor fuor seme le faville, / che mi scaldar de la divina fiamma / onde sono allumati più di mille / de l'Eneïda, dico' [The seeds to my ardour were the sparks from which I took fire, of the divine flame that has kindled thousands: of the *Aeneid*, I mean] (*Purg*. XXI, 96–97).

[16] See, for contrast, Duby, *France in the Middle Ages*, p. 21: 'The election and consecration of his oldest son Robert on 30 December 987, just six months after his own coronation, should not be interpreted as a sign of insecurity. Lothar had done precisely the same eight years earlier. The count of Barcelona had asked for Hugh Capet's help against a Muslim invasion, and Hugh might well march south; it was therefore imperative that a substitute should be ready, imbued through unction with the necessary virtues. There is nothing to suggest that this was disputed, for by birth and by the blood of his royal father and great-grandfather (after whom he was named), Robert was destined to become leader of the Frankish people in his turn.'

[17] Although Dante particularly associates the sin of avarice with the Capetian dynasty, he also associates it with all those who oppose, or fail to fulfil, the Imperial mission. Thus, the 'cupidgia' of Albert and Rudolf of Habsburg, successive kings of the Romans in Dante's own time (1273–1308), distracts them from their imperial duties in the Italian peninsula, leaving the garden of Empire ('l giardin de lo 'mperio') deserted (*Purg*. VI, 103–5). Similarly, the avarice and cowardice ('l'avarizia e la viltate') of Frederick II of Aragon, King of Sicily, led him to desert the Imperial cause after the death of Henry VII in 1313, which Dante also implicitly connects with

avarice that they do not even care for their own flesh, trading their daughters for money (82–84). Where Ottobono dei Fieschi (Pope Adrian V) had embodied avarice pure and simple (*Purgatorio* XIX, 113–14), Hugh Capet embodies – in the most exemplary way – the love of children that can lead to avarice, with devasting social and political consequences.

With savage satire, Hugh Capet's triple use of the word 'ammenda' (in rhyme position), in *Purgatorio* XX, describes the diabolic anti-justice of his descendant Charles of Anjou:

> Lì cominciò con forza e con menzogna
> la sua rapina; e poscia, per ammenda,
> Pontì e Normandia prese e Guascogna.
> Carlo venne in Italia e, per ammenda,
> vittima fé di Curradino; e poi
> ripinse al ciel Tommaso, per ammenda.
> (*Purg.* XX, 64–69)

> [There with force and fraud it began its plundering, and then,
> to make amends, it took Ponthieu and Normandy and Gascony.
> Charles came into Italy, and, to make amends,
> made a victim of Conradino; and then he drove Thomas back to
> Heaven, to make amends].

The Capetian dynasty acts 'con forza e con menzogna' [with force and fraud], the means – as Virgil spells out in *Inferno* XI, 22–24 – of injustice. Charles of Anjou 'makes amends' by murdering Curradino, the grandson of Frederick II (the last Holy Roman Emperor) and the last of the Hohenstaufen bloodline. Dante even claims that Charles of Anjou murdered Thomas Aquinas while en route to the Council of Lyons (1264) as if, presumably, Thomas was to indict him there. The triple anti-justice of the Capetian rulers on Earth narrated by Hugh Capet in *Purgatorio* XX is corrected, as Pope Adrian V highlights in *Purgatorio* XIX, with the triple emphasis on God's justice ('giustizia . . . giustizia . . . del giusto Sire) in the afterlife:

> Sì come l'occhio nostro non s'aderse
> in alto, fisso a le cose terrene,
> così giustizia qui a terra il merse.
> Come avarizia spense a ciascun bene
> lo nostro amore, onde operar perdési,
> così giustizia qui stretti ne tene,
> ne' piedi e ne le man' legati e presi;

those Trojans who remained in Sicily with Anchises due to sloth, rather than helping to bring to fulfilment Aeneas's mission to found Rome (*Par.* XIX, 130–32).

e quanto fia piacer del giusto Sire,
tanto staremo immobili e distesi.
(*Purg.* XIX, 118–26)

[Since our eyes, fixed on Earthly things, were not raised up,
so here justice has sunk them to the Earth.
Since avarice extinguished our love for every good, so that our
power to act was lost, so justice keeps us fixed here,
bound and captive in feet and hands; and as long as it shall please
our just Lord, so long will we stay immobile and stretched out].

The justice of 'our just lord' – embodied in the syntactical balance of Adrian's speech ('sì come . . . così . . . come . . . così . . . quanto . . . tanto') – compensates in the afterlife for the avarice of the Capetian dynasty, and for the moral and spiritual abyss left by the eclipse of what were, for Dante, the two Divinely ordained institutions of Church and Empire.

In *Purgatorio* XIX, however, Ottobono dei Fieschi no longer speaks as Pope Adrian V (as *successor Petri*) but as an equal brother ('frate'; 133), a fellow servant ('conservo sono'; 134), seeking the heavenly kingdom. Likewise, Hugh Capet, the *progenitor regium Francorum*, is learning to strip himself of his Earthly and familial ties and to become, instead, an equal brother in a shared fraternity that strives to live in conformity with God's will. The words '*neque nubent*' [neither shall they marry] (*Purg.* XIX, 137) arguably apply, in this context, as much to Hugh Capet's relationship to his descendants as to a pope's pastoral relationship to his flock or to a man's marriage to his wife. Crucially, just as the Emperor Constantine is not punished for the consequence of his donation – the earthly corruption of the papacy from its primitive poverty (*Inf.* XIX, 115–17; *Par.* XX, 55–60) – so Hugh Capet is not punished for the consequence of his avarice: the Capetian line's disastrous impact, in Dante's view, on the political order of medieval Europe.[18] Rather, Hugh Capet is made to atone for the misdirected love of children which, according to Dante, led to his assumption of the French crown in the first place. Hugh's outward renunciation of his family line, in other words, is directly penitential: as the love of his family had spurred him to the avaricious assumption of ever-greater power, wealth, and prestige, so he must renounce these to embrace spiritual poverty.

In the moral scheme of Purgatory, the fact that Hugh Capet castigates his descendants' avarice to the extent that he desires their defeat in battle

[18] At *Par.* VI, 100–9, Dante condemns (through the Emperor Justinian) the Florentine Guelfs who seek to displace the Imperial eagle with the sign of the Capetian dynasty (golden lilies). However, he also condemns the Ghibellines, who appropriate the Imperial eagle for their own factional gain rather than for true universal justice.

does not mean that he does not still love them with the tenderness of a father. Nor, as is clear from Solomon's discourse on the resurrection of the body, does the kingdom of Heaven require a renunciation of family ties.[19] Nonetheless, from the other-worldly perspective of eternity, Hugh Capet's acquisition of material wealth and secular power for his son and descendants does not appear such a good thing. In Purgatory, Hugh Capet recovers the primary duty of a Christian father: to lead his children not to worldly wealth, power, and success, but rather to eternal beatitude. The point is made more strongly by a comparison with Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti's attitude to his son Guido in Hell: Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti, an Epicurean in death as in life, still only cares about his son's secular prowess and Earthly fame (*Inf.* x, 52–72).[20] By contrast, in attacking his descendants' avarice, and in even desiring their misfortune, Hugh Capet is urging them to live in accordance with God's will: in Dante's view, after all, the Capetian line's illegitimate temporal ambitions conflict with God's Divinely ordained Imperial order. As material misfortune was seen as a primary opportunity for spiritual conversion, Hugh Capet is also praying, at another level, for his descendants' salvation. In other words, Hugh desires his family, so converted from avarice like him, to join him in Heaven; Earthly fame or even defamation, by comparison with the eternal beatitude of Heaven, is of little consequence. Where the avaricious father and son in Peraldus's instructional novella on *amor filiorum* curse each other in Hell, the repentant Hugh Capet prays in Purgatory for his descendants' secular failure precisely because this may become an occasion for their salvation: only damnation – and not Earthly misfortune – implies true disaster for the human individual. In the language of Cacciaguida (Dante's own allotted ancestral father-figure), Hugh Capet's denunciation of his descendants, although 'painful at first taste' ('molesta nel primo gusto'), is actually the 'vital nourishment' ('vital nodrimento') that they need (*Par.* xvii, 131–32).

[19] Family ties are celebrated as a crowning fulfilment of the greatest of Christian mysteries: the resurrection of the body. In the heaven of the Sun, Solomon explains how the souls in Paradise actively desire their bodies. In response, the souls race to sing 'Amen', showing a craving not only for their own bodies but also for those of their mothers ('le mamme' [literally 'mummies']), their fathers ('li padri'), and those who were dear to them before they became sempiternal flames ('per li altri che fuor cari / anzi che fosser sempiterne fiamme'; *Par.* xiv, 65–66).

[20] See Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus*, pp. 89–97: 'Cavalcante's earthly love for, and pride in, his son breathes through the dialogue. But, tragically, Cavalcante is exclusively concerned with his son's mortal destiny, a destiny which – as Cavalcante already knows his son to be dead by 1304 – could consist of a few more years of earthly life at most. This demonstrates – from Dante's Christian perspective – a terrible failure of pastoral responsibility. Instead of directing his son's spiritual life to his eternal beatitude (as his 'father in the faith'), Cavalcante has been, *and is still*, concerned only with his son's mortal destiny and intellectual renown' (p. 97).

From the perspective of *amor filiorum* as a key occasion for avarice, the psychological depth of Hugh Capet's first-person narrative thereby begins to surface. This, in turn, leads to a further consideration. Along with revealing Dante's political motivation for foregrounding Hugh Capet (his polemical anti-French propaganda), this spiritual perspective sheds light on a deeply personal rationale. Why does Dante make Hugh Capet the central figure of the terrace of avarice? Why does he highlight this particular aspect: love of children as an occasion to avarice? Surely because love of his own children would have presented Dante with a pressing occasion for, and temptation to, avarice.[21] We need only remember that Petrarch criticised Dante's refusal to accept the humiliating terms offered for his return to Florence precisely because of the effect of that refusal on the lives of his own children.[22] Seen from the perspective of *amor filiorum*, this episode takes on an intensely personal, autobiographical dimension: what better moral and spiritual counsel for Dante-character, at the height of political power during the time of his journey in 1300, than that warning him against this specific temptation to avarice, a temptation he would continue to experience, perhaps especially acutely, during his subsequent exile.

Poverty and the Family: Exemplars of Poverty (*Purg.* XX, 16–33) and Avarice (*Purg.* XX, 97–123)

In light of this emphasis on 'love of children' as the occasion of Hugh Capet's avarice, it is striking that the examples of poverty and liberality all concern their direct impact on family and children. The extreme poverty of Mary is highlighted at precisely the point that she gave birth: 'Povera fosti tanto / quanto veder si può per quello ospizio / dove sponesti il tuo portato santo' [How very poor you were we can see by the shelter where you laid down your holy burden] (*Purg.* XX, 22–24). When parents would naturally feel most strongly the need to have acquired material comfort for

[21] Although this is more speculative, perhaps Dante is also reflecting on his relationship with his own father Alighiero Bellincione, who died in 1283. Probably guilty of usury, Alighiero would have passed on ill-gotten wealth to his son. See Stephen Bembrose, *A New Life of Dante* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000): 'Certainly both his [Dante's] father and his grandfather had at one time acted as moneylenders (though this is something the poet is not keen to tell us about)' (p. 3).

[22] See Teodolinda Barolini, 'Dante's Ulysses: Narrative and Transgression', in *Dante: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Amilcare A. Iannucci (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 113–32: 'Dante's intransigence in not accepting Florentine terms for repatriation despite the suffering of his family elicited contrasting reactions from Boccaccio, who defended him, and Petrarch, whose criticism implicitly brands him a Ulysses' (p. 116).

their new child, the Christian archetypal family is presented as entirely poor, and wholly dependent upon the grace and mercy of God. The Christ child was born in a stable – a stark reality that had been recently emphasised in Franciscan spirituality (St Francis reportedly reconstructed the crib to underline the literal reality of the Holy Family's poverty).[23] The classical example of Fabricius, the incorruptible pagan Roman consul, further underlines poverty in relation to family. Fabricius preferred his poverty to riches, his virtue to vice. In the sources known to Dante, the emphasis of the *exemplar* is that Fabricius chose poverty despite its implications for his family and, in particular, despite the fate of his daughters left without dowries. His honourable example is presented, nonetheless, as a dowry greater than riches. Fabricius's supreme virtue ultimately led the Roman state to endow his daughters on his behalf as well as to pay the expenses of his funeral (normally the duty of a family). This implicit reference to Fabricius's daughters is made explicit in the Christian example of St Nicholas, who provided dowries for three impoverished sisters so that they might escape prostitution (*Purg*. XX, 31–33). Again, where providing for one's children would seem a primary duty of a father, Dante emphasises that it cannot excuse the injustice and moral corruption which proceed from avarice. Instead, the primary duty of a father is to lead his children, by his example, to the eternal riches of heaven.

Hugh Capet must learn this lesson painfully in the afterlife: because of the intensity of his cries, he is the only soul ('sola / tu'; 35–36) whom Dante hears crying out these examples of poverty.[24] By contrast, Dante

[23] Havely documents the strong Franciscan resonances of Dante's treatment. See Havely, *Dante and the Franciscans*, p. 105: 'The poverty of the Virgin and of the Nativity scene is also a theme that recurs in the *Sacrum commercium*, as well as other Franciscan texts from St Francis onwards.' See also Ibid., n. 53: 'the emphasis on the deliberate choice of poverty by Christ and the Virgin (despite the former being "rich beyond measure") can be found in St Francis's "Letter to All the Faithful" of 1224–26.'

[24] As it turns out (*Purg*. XX, 118–23), all the souls utter the *exempla* according to the affection that spurs them now to greater, now to lesser steps ('ch'ad ir ci sprona / ora a maggiore e ora a minor passo'; 119–20). Only Hugh Capet was raising his voice in that part of the terrace (122–23), which embodies the intensity of his sin as well as progress in its purgation. Indeed, Hugh is compared to a woman crying in the pains of labour, 'dolce Maria' [sweet Mary]. The analogy is clear: as the woman going through immense pain nonetheless experiences the joyful expectation of her baby, so the soul experiencing the bitterest pain of penance nonetheless joyfully hopes for the new life of future beatitude that awaits. Hugh Capet emphasises the increasing intensity of the souls' engagement with the *exempla* of avarice at night: repetition of *exempla* ('noi repetiam'; 103) leads to such a powerful recall ('si ricorda'; 109) of the folly of Achan that Joshua's anger seems still to bite him in Purgatory; the souls then accuse ('accusiam'; 112) Saffira and her husband, before praising ('lodiam'; 113) the very hooves ('i calci'; 113) which kick to death Heliodorus; finally, they cry out ('ci si grida'; 116) the vengeful words of Orodes, king of Persia, against Crassus. The heroes and villains of the micro-stories, in other words, are given new life in the souls' psychological

had been forced to learn the lesson painfully through experience in his own life. The temptation to have compromised his principles through his desire for his children's wellbeing must have been as strong, as Dante's inability to provide for them (living by others' bread) would have caused him (and them) suffering.[25] But, surely taking Fabricius as a model, Dante's epistles of the period present himself to be as morally upright and steadfast as he admonishes others to be in his verse. Dante refused the amnesty offered to him in 1315 despite knowing full well the consequences for his family (the sentence of exile and death was extended to them). How could a man familiar with philosophy (*vir phylosophiae domesticus*) and preaching justice (*praedicans iustitiam*) so abase himself as to present himself as a criminal and offer money to those who have so unjustly injured him? Only if a way could be found which would not detract from his good name and honour would Dante return, and willingly so, to his native Florence.[26] It is thus understandable that Dante-character should rejoice in the *exempla* of poverty – 'O anima che tanto ben favelle' [O soul who speaks of so much good] (34) – for he would certainly have needed such consolation in the years ahead.

Dante's programme for spiritual development in his vision of Purgatory directly mirrors and draws upon the kind of moral instruction which would have structured his own Christian life of penance. Peraldus's *De vitiis* is again a direct influence here. The preaching manual lists eight remedies against avarice.[27] To defend against an avaricious way of life, Peraldus writes, a person must reflect on death, the poverty of Jesus, the danger in which we live, and the misery connected with Earthly delights. To develop the correct Christian disposition towards material goods, a person must reflect on the eternal riches of heaven, associate with others who despise Earthly things, place faith in God, and obtain grace through

transformation: it is as if Polymnestor himself circles the mountain (although, of course, it is only his name cried out by the souls).

[25] Dowries in early-fourteenth-century Florence had risen to record highs, and Dante had a daughter (Antonia) as well as two or perhaps three sons (Pietro and Jacopo are, of course, well known to us through their respective commentaries on the *Commedia*). We do not know, for example, whether it was by force of circumstance or choice that his daughter became a nun. See Havely, *Dante*, p. 51: 'Antonia entered a convent there [in Ravenna], taking (as some kind of comment on her father's poetry?) the name of "Sister Beatrice"; and she is referred to as "daughter of the late Dante Alighieri" in a document of 1371, some time after her death.'

[26] See *Epistola*, XII, 3: 'Absit a viro phylosophie domestico temeraria tantum cordis humilitas, ut more cuiusdam Cioli et aliorum infamium quasi vinctus ipse se patiatur offerri! Absit a viro predicante iustitiam ut perpessus iniurias, iniuriam inferentibus, velut benemerentibus, pecuniam suam solvat!'

[27] Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. iv, pa. 4, pp. 158a–60a.

almsgiving and prayer. Dante foregrounds all these aspects in the terrace of avarice: the *meditatio mortis* and the shortness of life ('lo cammin corto / di quella vita ch' al termine vola' [the brief path of life that flies to its end]; *Purg*. XX, 38–39); the poverty of Jesus (XX, 19–24); the danger in which we live (XIX, 103–5); and the misery connected with Earthly delights (XIX, 108). Adrian V – who despises Earthly things after his late conversion (XIX, 109–11) – admonishes Dante-character to reflect on Jesus's parables about the eternal riches of heaven (XIX, 136–38); repeated invocations are made to God (XX, 13–15; 94–96) while the souls in Purgatory, unable to obtain grace by almsgiving, nonetheless are stripped of their wealth and pray incessantly for God's grace.

The penitent souls' attention to the passage of time and history is a particularly striking feature of the terrace of avarice. From a spiritual perspective, this underlines the brevity of an individual life and the vanity of Earthly possessions and power. The movement through medieval history in Hugh Capet's speech – from 941 to the present (1300), and then onwards into the future (perhaps as far as 1312 or 1314) – is reflected in the movement forwards and backwards across the sweep of providential history in Dante's *exempla* of avarice. Indeed, the first two *exempla* are pagan (Pygmalion and Midas), the third from the Old Testament (Achan), the fourth twin example is from the New Testament (Ananias and Saffira); the fifth from the Old Testament (Heliodorus), and the sixth and seventh are classical (Polymnestor and Crassus). The resultant pairings create a temporal chiasmus, a chronological order highlighted by the sequence of temporal adverbs: 'poi' (XX, 109), 'Indi' (112), and 'ultimamente' (116).[28] By repeating incessantly these examples of avarice, the souls must direct their gaze forwards and backwards across a vast stretch of time. The purpose of this spiritual exercise, then, is to free them from a narrow attachment to transitory worldly goods and power.

The key emphasis in Dante's examples of avarice is that the love of gold ('oro' is punned on throughout the sequence) leads people to a whole messy gamut of evils.[29] Thus Pygmalion's greediness for gold ('la voglia sua

[28] See Hollander, gloss to *Purg*. XX, 103. See also Umberto Bosco and Giovanni Reggio, gloss to *Purg*. XX, 97–123: 'Si osserva la studiata loro collocazione, come spesso in queste serie di essempi: nel primo gruppo, un esempio religioso (Maria), uno classico (Fabrizio), un terzo di nuovo religioso (San Niccolò); nel secondo, tre personaggi tratti della storia sacra (Acan, Anania e Safira, Eliodoro) sono inseriti tra due coppie di personaggi classici (Pigmalione e Mida, Polinestore e Crasso).'

[29] See Durling and Martinez, gloss to *Purg*. XX, 103–20: 'All but one of the sources of the examples include the Latin word for gold, *aurum*. Dante inserts a near-pun relating gold to avarice, It. *oro* to *avaro*, in lines 105–6, and threads the syllable *or* in the rhymes of 107–17, reserving *-oro* for the last set, and the full word itself for the last rhyme (line 117).' As Benvenuto comments, we are born

de l'oro ghiotta'; XX, 105) makes him a traitor, thief, and parricide ('traditore e ladro e paricida / fece'; 104–5); moreover, his sins involved at least violence and fraud.[30] Within the classical frame, the three Biblical examples (Achan, Ananias and Saffira, and Heliodorus) highlight that, although the love of gold is evil, gold itself is morally neutral. The three negative *exempla* throw into relief three Biblical figures who exemplify a correct use of money: Joshua had the soldier Achan stoned to death for theft, but saved the treasure to consecrate an altar to God (Joshua 6:17; 8:26); Onias, the high priest of the temple in Jerusalem, jealously guarded the temple's treasure against Heliodorus not for his own ends but to provide for widows and orphans (2 Maccabees)[31]; and St Peter upbraided Ananias and Saffira for defrauding the Holy Spirit by holding back money which should have served the poor (Acts V:1–11; Matthew 10:21).[32] In this way, Dante's three Biblical *exempla* not only underline the path to be avoided but, like the three *exempla* of poverty, point towards the path to pursue. The emphasis, in all the examples, is on chosen poverty and the avoidance of avarice even where this action may put a person's own family in apparent jeopardy: each Christian must place his or her faith in God who will provide.

Dante exerts particular rhetorical weight on Polymnestor, the penultimate *exemplar* of avarice, an example which reinforces Dante's special concern for the effect of avarice on family and on familial ties. The name

naked and needing many things. As all necessities can be possessed through money, we may be led to any means to acquire it; no other vice, therefore, leads men to ever more and greater evils (Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg*. XX, 1–9).

[30] Some scholars have argued that the seven *exempla* of avarice in this canto correspond to the seven daughters of avarice listed by Gregory: treachery (Pygmalion), fraud (Achan), falsehood (Heliodorus), perjury (Ananias and Saffira), inquietude (Midas), violence (Crassus), and insensibility to mercy (Polymnestor). The parallel is found, for example, in Ernesto Trucchi, gloss to *Purg*. XX, 97–102. Only Midas's insatiable desire for gold, however, seems narrowed to one species or daughter of avarice: the inquietude or restlessness of the miser (a 'covetous man shall not be satisfied with money'; Ecclesiastes 5:9), while the most powerful image of such restlessness is arguably Florence herself (*Purg*. VI, 145–51). Although this first example is framed with the last, the *contrapasso* of Crasso – whose enemies poured molten gold into his mouth with the words 'aurum sitisti, aurem bibe' – clearly takes us back to the *exempla* of Midas (Dante's most likely source is Cicero's *De officiis*, I. 30).

[31] See Ernesto Trucchi, gloss to *Purg*. XX, 109–11. In addition, the Achan and Heliodorus episodes had common allegorical readings in the medieval period. Joshua, who led Israel to the peace of Canaan, is a type for Jesus, who opened the way to the eternal rest of heaven. Onias's resistance to the pagan plundering of Heliodorus foreshadows Jesus's reclaiming of the temple for God against the moneylenders (John 2:14–16).

[32] See, for example, Chiose ambrosiane, gloss to *Purg*. XX, 112: 'Ananias et Saphira moniti a Petro et Paulo ut omnia venderent pauperibus eroganda, defraudaverunt dimidium pretii et, mendaces, ad pedes apostolorum mortui ceciderunt.'

of Polymnestor, we learn, circles the whole mountain of Purgatory in infamy (xx, 114–15) due to his murder of Priam's youngest son, Polydorus. The latter's fate recalls, of course, Dante's transposition of this episode of the *Aeneid* onto the wood of the suicides in *Inferno* xiii. Polydorus echoes the figure of Pier della Vigna, who, like Dante, had been unjustly accused of corruption and embezzlement. But this example also highlights the errors of two fathers: Priam, who thought that a large sum of gold would protect his son (who, it turns out, would have been safer left in poverty), and Polymnestor, who betrayed Priam's trust by murdering his son out of greed. The example is, at once, further incitement to remorse and penance for Hugh Capet – who now sees that, by securing wealth and power for his descendants, he led them, evermore avaricious, to spiritual perdition – and further consolation for Dante – who, unable to provide materially for himself and his children, nonetheless teaches them, through his poem, the path of Christian virtue. Beyond the political polemic, it is this spiritual dimension – located in the correct love of children – which is the true heart of the episode. This dimension makes sense of Hugh Capet's especially intense suffering in the terrace of avarice, and also of the particular joy and consolation that Dante-character feels in response to the *exempla* of poverty.

The She-Wolf of Avarice (*Purg.* xx, 10–15) and the Poor Shepherds (*Purg.* xx, 124–44)

The moral *exempla* not only frame Hugh Capet's narrative, but derive their psychological depth from it. As we work outwards from the examples of poverty and avarice, however, it is clear from the apostrophe to the she-wolf of avarice (*Purg.* xx, 4–15) that Dante's contemporaries are not imbibing such necessary moral instruction and, from the implicit comparison with the poor shepherds (124–44), that the pastors of the Church are failing to live by or provide it. Where Dante had already described avarice as the bitterest vice on the mountain (xix, 117), he emphasises its ubiquity in *Purgatorio* xx: the terrace of avarice is so stricken with souls that Virgil and Dante-character must squeeze their way past them on the near side of the cliff (xx, 4–9).[33] Avarice is perhaps viewed as the root

[33] For his first readers, Dante's simile – they are like those walking under battlements – could only evoke images of dead corpses surrounding a besieged city, victims of the incessant wars in the Italian peninsula: 'non stanno sanza guerra / li vivi tuoi, e l'un l'altro si rode / di quei ch'un muro e una fossa serra' [the living are not without war, and of those whom one wall and one moat lock in, each gnaws the other] (*Purg.* vi, 82–84).

cause not only of the incessant wars in the Italian peninsula but also of the infernal City of Dis itself: the blood of the Capetian dynasty (which is synonymous with avarice; XX, 83) plunders 'con forza e con menzogna' (64), reflecting the twofold division of malice in the city of Dis by violence and by fraud ('o con forza o con frode'; *Inf.* XI, 24), while the lance of Judas (*Purg.* XX, 73–74) recalls the further division between simple and treacherous fraud in the Pit of Cocytus (*Inf.* XXXI–XXXIV).[34] In a rhetorical crescendo echoed even at a micro level – '*mal* pugna' (1); 'il *mal*' (8); '*mala*detta' (9) – the she-wolf of *Inferno* I returns in *Purgatorio* XX to be identified explicitly as avarice:[35]

> Maladetta sie tu, antica lupa,
> che più che tutte l'altre bestie hai preda
> per la tua fame sanza fine cupa!
> O ciel, nel cui girar par che si creda
> le condizion di qua giù trasmutarsi,
> quando verrà per cui questa disceda?
> (*Purg.* XX, 10–15)

[A curse be on you, ancient she-wolf, that more than any other beast find prey for your endlessly hollow hunger!
O heavens, whose turning, we believe, changes conditions down here, when will he come who will drive her away?]

The souls on the terrace must weep out 'a goccia a goccia' [drop by drop] the evil of avarice that, Dante emphasises, fills the world ('il mal che tutto 'l mondo occupa'; XX, 7–8).[36]

It is striking that the earthquake, representing an individual's purgation from avarice, should usher in Statius (as yet unidentified) as a 'figura Christi' (XX, 124–41). In the *Inferno*, Dante's Christian allegorical reading of the *Thebaid* represents Statius's Thebes as an embodiment of

[34] Dante's Statius will refer to the blood sold by Judas ('[i]l sangue per Giuda venduto'; *Purg.* XXI, 84). Barbara Reynolds claims that avarice, in one form or another, links all the ten *bolge* of fraud. See Barbara Reynolds, *Dante: The Poet, the Political Thinker, the Man* (London: Tauris, 2006), pp. 157–68 (p. 167).

[35] The '*antica* lupa' itself recalls, of course, '*antica* strega' which is also glossed as avarice in the previous canto (*Purg.* XIX, 58–63).

[36] Karen Wagner emphasises that 'divinely inspired contrition is both acknowledged and nourished by its physical expression through groans, sighs, and tears'. See Wagner, 'Cum Aliquis Venerit Ad Sacerdotum', pp. 201–18. 'Only when this sorrow is demonstrated physically can a verbal form of confession be accepted' (p. 208). In monasteries, penitence 'was understood to be unceasing – the perfect humility and satisfaction for sins could only be assured through tears, "by one who, by constantly continuing to groan and sigh sorrowfully, has removed every spot of his former stains"' (p. 211).

Augustine's corrupt Earthly city, with Florence and Pisa as its modern-day counterparts.[37] This may underpin the significance of the analogy to the shepherds who 'first heard the song' announcing the birth of Christ, and were entrusted by the angel as its messengers (xx, 139–42; Luke 2:8–18).[38] Here it is Dante and Virgil, who, standing 'immobile and in suspense' ('immobili e sospesi'; 139), are entrusted with the 'good news' of the Incarnation. And it lends credence to Benvenuto's interpretation of the Latona myth (130–32): the two brightest lights (the Sun and the Moon) that Delos sent into the sky may stand for Dante and Statius, the two renowned poets (one modern and one ancient), who, rising to Heaven, may guide the Christian flock.[39] On such a reading, Dante is establishing himself and Statius as Christian shepherds who will provide true ethical guidance against the she-wolf of avarice where the modern-day pastors of the Church (as exemplified by Pope Adrian V in the previous canto) have failed.[40] In precisely the canto in which 'love of children' is shown as a dangerous occasion for avarice, Dante dramatizes – through Statius and Virgil – his own vocation to assume, as poet, the mantle of pastor and 'father of faith', thereby helping to safeguard Christians from the she-wolf of avarice and to direct them to Heaven.

The Cupidity for Knowledge (*Purg.* xx, 1–3 and 142–51)

To be an ethical guide requires Dante to pass on to others the fruits of his own contemplation. Notably, Peraldus treats the avarice for knowledge

[37] See *Inf.* xxvi, 1–3: 'Godi, Fiorenza, poi che se' sì grande / che per mare e per terra batti l'ali, / e per lo 'nferno tuo nome si spande!' [Rejoice, Florence, since you are so great that on sea and land you beat your wings, and your name spreads through Hell!]; *Inf.* xxxiii, 89: 'novella Tebe' [O new Thebes]. For the allegorical reading of Statius, see, for example, Padoan, *Il pio Enea*, pp. 125–50.

[38] The shepherds are first sent to the 'infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger' (Luke 2:16) and, on finding him there, make 'known the message that had been told them about this child' (17). As scholars have highlighted, the Statius scene unfolds within the liturgical context of the Easter Vigil mass, with the singing of the 'Gloria' ending the period of Lent and ushering in Eastertide.

[39] Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg.* xx, 130–32: 'Et hic nota quantum comparatio est propriissima; sicut enim Delos insula clarissima emisit ibi duo clarissima lumina ad coelum; ita nunc mons purgatorii clarissimus emittebat ad coelum duos clarissimos poetas, unum antiquum, scilicet, Statium, alium modernum, scilicet, Dantem: de Virgilio non loquor, quia non ivit ad coelum.'

[40] In his epistle to the cardinals (1314), Dante defends his teaching mandate, sarcastically distancing himself from the clergy by highlighting his poverty: 'Nulla pastorali auctoritate abutens, quoniam divitie mecum non sunt' [I abuse no pastoral authority given that I possess no riches] (*Epist.* ii, 3). In his epistle to Cangrande, Dante explicitly underlines his pastoral role to guide the flock from error: 'Nos autem quibus optimum quod est in nobis noscere datum est, gregum vestigia sectari non decet, quin ymo suis erroribus obviare tenemur' (*Epist.* xiii, 2).

(*avaritia scientiae*) as the last species of avarice, worse even than the avarice for money.[41] Whereas the miser does not want to share the light of his candle, the miser of knowledge does not want to communicate the light of his wisdom.[42] As Delcorno has suggested, this may be the inspiration for Dante's metaphor for Virgil, who lit up the way for others but not for himself.[43] The other vice of knowledge strongly associated with avarice (as well as with sloth) is curiosity.[44] In the prologue and epilogue of *Purgatorio* XX, we witness Dante-character practising temperance not with respect to the cupidity for gold, but rather with respect to the cupidity for knowledge: the canto's opening (XX, 1–3) refers back to the closing dialogue of *Purgatorio* XIX, which had roused Dante-character's curiosity, while its ending (XX, 145–51) refers forward to *Purgatorio* XXI, 1–6 as, seemingly more 'desirous to know' ('desideroso di sapere') than at any other point in his life, Dante-character seeks to understand the earthquake event.

The metaphor underlining the first terzina is particularly significant: Dante's will is a sponge which is left unsatiated by the water (speech) of Adrian V (the well): 'trassi de l'acqua non sazia la spugna' [I drew my sponge unsated from the water] (XX, 3). If the water is a gloss on the reference to his niece Alagia (XIX, 142–45) and the evildoings of the Fieschi, the implication is that – like the Samaritan woman at the well (XXI, 1–6) – Dante must turn from Earthly matters to the spiritual nourishment of Christ. If the water is, instead, the very Holy Scripture to which Pope Adrian had also just alluded (the 'santo evangelico suono / che dice "*neque nubent*"'; XIX, 136–37), a further double priority is implied: for Adrian, penance trumps even his obligation to preach the Gospel; for Dante, charity trumps even his curiosity about spiritual matters (as St Gregory highlights: 'Non curiositatem acuit, sed charitatem

[41] See Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. 4, pa. 3, c. xiv, p. 151a: 'ultimo loco inter species avaritiae, quae pertinent ad ministros Ecclesiae Dei, dicendum est de avaritia scientiae, quae videtur deterior esse, quam avaritia pecuniae'.

[42] Ibid., t. 4, pa. 3, c. xiv, p. 151b: 'Et miser valde reputaretur, qui lumen candelae suae candelis aliorum nollet communicare. Cui similis est ille qui lumen sapientiae non vult aliis communicare.'

[43] See Delcorno, *Exemplum*, pp. 216–18. Statius compares Virgil to one who 'walks at night, who carries the light behind him and does not help himself, but instructs the persons coming after' ('Facesti come quei che va di notte, / che porta il lume dietro e sé non giova, / ma dopo sé fa le persone dote'; *Purg.* XXII, 67–69).

[44] Peraldus lists 'curiositas' as one of three obstacles to diligence in study. See Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. v, pa. 2 ch. 7, pp. 200a–b: 'Secondo impedit diligentiam studii, curiositas, quae vult videre omnia quae sequuntur. Contra quam remedium est, animo velut quoddam frenum imponere, et non permittere vagari illum ad sequentia . . . oculus cordis semper nova videre appetit, sicut et oculus corporis.'

accendit').[45] Dante-character's internal spiritual battle with curiosity is underlined even at a micro level by the opening chiasmus, with three verbal pairs in just two lines: 'Contra miglior voler voler mal pugna; / onde contra 'l piacer mio, per piacerli' (*Purg.* XX, 1–2). Dante's own will ('voler') and pleasure ('il piacer mio') are framed by the better will ('miglior voler') of his neighbour, Ottobono dei Fieschi, whom Dante pleases ('per piacerli') by leaving to continue his penance.[46] As Francesco da Buti's gloss on this passage suggests, alongside the chiastic outwards movement from the self ('my pleasure') to the neighbour ('pleasing him'), the metaphor of the sponge seems to anticipate the perfect accord of the individual will in God's will reflected by Piccarda's 'E 'n la sua volontade è nostra pace' (*Par.* III, 85).[47]

Significantly, Dante-character's desire at the close of *Purgatorio* XX is framed with regard to Christian wisdom rather than to worldly knowledge. At this point, Dante unmistakably calques the book of Wisdom – 'in magno viventes inscientiae bello' [they live in a great war of ignorance] – to identify his desire: 'Nulla ignoranza mai con tanta guerra / mi fé desideroso di sapere' [No ignorance ever assailed me with so much desire to know] (*Purg.* XX, 145–46; Wisdom 14:22). As we discover, his natural thirst ('la sete natural'; *Purg.* XXI, 1) is satisfied only by the wisdom of Christ: 'con l'acqua onde la femminetta / samaritana domandò la grazia' [with the water of which the poor Samaritan woman begged the gift] (XXI, 1–6; John 4: 5–15).

Framing Conversions: Pope Adrian V (*Purg.* XIX) and Statius (*Purg.* XXI–XXII)

Dante frames the canto of Hugh Capet (*Purg.* XX) with his encounter with Pope Adrian V (*Purg.* XIX, 97–114) and with Statius's encounter with Virgil (*Purg.* XXI–XXII), a narrative sequence highlighted by Priamo della

[45] Cited in Gabrielle Rossetti, gloss to *Purg.* XX, 1–3.

[46] See Giuseppe Giancalone, gloss to *Purg.* XX, 2–3: 'Questo inizio retorico e sentenzioso ha la funzione che i retori del tempo gli assegnavano "è un avviamento attraverso una verità d'ordine generale al caso particolare che vuol essere trattato, un punto di passaggio tra l'incontro improvvisamente interrotto con Adriano V e la nuova materia che D. si accinge a svolgere in uno stile che sacrifica la forma narrativa e drammatica per puntare su vistosi effetti d'eloquenza."'

[47] Francesco da Buti, gloss to *Purg.* XX, 1–15: 'Fa qui similitudine, cioè che la volontà sua era come una spugna, e che li desidèri, ch'elli avea di sapere altre cose da quello spirito, rimaseno non sazi, come rimane la spugna quando si cava dall'acqua, inanti che sia tutta piena.'

Quercia in his single illustration of the three episodes.[48] However surprising such a pairing of encounters might initially appear, Dante deliberately presents them in antithesis through precise textual and narrative parallels. Virgil cannot believe that avarice could have found a place within Statius's breast (XXII, 23–25). As matters turn out, it did not: Statius was subject to its opposite extreme, prodigality. Crucially, Dante uses the same triple rhyme set in exactly the same order ('vita / partita / punita') to describe Pope Adrian V's avarice ('del tutto avara; / or, come vedi, qui ne son punita'; XIX, 113–14) and Statius's prodigality ('Or sappi ch'avarizia fu partita / troppo da me'; XXII, 34–35). At a narrative level, Dante represents Statius's conversion as the mirror image of Pope Adrian V's conversion: where everyone might suppose that Ottobono dei Fieschi, because of his outward ecclesiastical career culminating as a '*successor Petri*', would be one of the elect (the 'eletti di Dio'), it turns out that he is saved in a last-month conversion despite being a cleric and despite having been pope. Whereas Statius gave no ostensible indication that he was anything other than a pagan, Dante presents him as a secret convert to Christianity. Dante invites us to read these two conversion narratives, therefore, in counterpoint as two moral *exempla*.

Born in the second decade of the thirteenth century when the papacy was consolidating its temporal power under Pope Innocent III, Ottobono dei Fieschi rose quickly through the clerical ranks due, in no small part, to family connections (his uncle was Pope Innocent IV).[49] Under the influence of Hugh Capet's descendant Charles of Anjou, Ottobono became the third pope elected in 1276, the year of the four popes; he lasted just over a month ('un mese e poco più'; XIX, 103), from 12 July to 18 August. In Dante's polemical account, Ottobono's end of life is presented in polarised terms as a dramatic psychological conversion from love of temporal power and wealth to love of God:

> La mia conversïone, omè! fu tarda;
> ma, come fatto fui roman pastore,
> così scopersi la vita bugiarda.
> Vidi che lì non s'acquetava il core,
> né più salir potiesi in quella vita;
> per che di questa in me s'accese amore.

[48] Priamo della Quercia (1444–c. 1450), 'Detail of a Miniature of Dante and Virgil with Pope Adrian V, Hugh Capet, and Statius, in Purgatory', in Yates Thompson 36, f. 100, British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts.

[49] For a useful historical discussion of Ottobono, see Clotilde Soave-Bowe, '*Purgatorio* XIX: Adrian V', in *Dante Readings*, ed. by Eric Haywood (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1987), pp. 123–42 (pp. 135–40).

Fino a quel punto misera e partita
da Dio anima fui, del tutto avara;
or, come vedi, qui ne son punita.
(*Purg.* XIX,106–14)

[My conversion, alas! was late, but, when I became
the Roman shepherd, then I discovered life to be deceptive.
I saw that my heart was not quieted there, nor could
I rise any higher in that life: thus was kindled in me the love
of this one.
Until that point I was a wretched soul separated from God,
entirely greedy; now, as you see, I am punished for it here].

For the entirety of his ecclesiastical career ('fino a quel punto'; 112), Ottobono had served not God but unrelenting avarice: he had been 'misera' [wretched], 'partita / da Dio' [separated from God], and 'del tutto avara' [entirely avaricious]. Only upon reaching the highest possible station attainable in the medieval world did Ottobono recognise the vanity of temporal goods and begin to love the heavenly city.[50] A good argument for the failure of temporal things to satisfy human desire, in other words, is to have them. Thus, the Latinism of Ottobono's speech 'non s'acquetava il core' echoes the famous opening of Augustine's *Confessions*: 'inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te' [my soul is restless until it rests in you]. The moral lesson of his *exemplum* for the ordinary Christian is clear: even the highest power, wealth, and prestige (as achieved by a medieval pope) will not fulfil your desire. Speaking to Ottobono at the height of his own political career as one of the six priors of Florence, this is surely a lesson that Dante-character knows from his own experience. Like Ottobono, he has also discovered on his journey through the afterlife (the prophecies of *Inferno* VI, X, and XV) how short-lived and potentially destructive such power can be.

Ottobono dei Fieschi's conversion from the sin of avarice (*Purg.* XIX) is mirrored, then, by Statius's conversion from prodigality (*Purg.* XXI). Where Dante had some historical evidence for Ottobono's avarice,

[50] Soave-Bowe is, in my view, overly generous to Dante in concluding that 'the historical evidence [about Adrian V], even if it only indirectly applies to the character as he appears in Dante, nonetheless confirms the poet's judgement'. Even if one takes at face value the accusations of the English chronicler Thomas Wykes (namely, that Ottobono, on leaving his mission in England as papal legate, took gold and silver by the sackful), Dante's charge that he was entirely avaricious until assuming the papal crown seems difficult to sustain. As the historian F. M. Powicke's conclusion, approvingly cited by Soave-Bowe, states: 'The legation of the Cardinal brought peace, his constitutions ... breathed a new life into the ecclesiastical body. In contemporary eyes his mission was not an invasion but a work of healing' (Soave-Bowe, *Purgatorio* XIX, p. 141). See also F. M. Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), pp. 527–28.

however, the same can barely be said of Statius's prodigality. In the *accessus* to the commentaries on Statius's *Thebaid* circulating in Dante's time, a passage from Juvenal's seventh satire introduced (and was the key source for) his biography:[51]

> currītur ad vocem iucundam et carmen amicae
> Thebaidos, laetam cum fecit Statius Urbem
> promisitque diem: tanta dulcedine captos
> adficit ille animos tantaque libidine volgi
> auditur. sed cum fregit subsellia versu
> esurit, intactam Paridi nisi vendit Agaven.
> (Juvenal, Satire 7:82–87)[52]
>
> [When Statius has made Rome happy by fixing a day, everyone rushes to hear his gorgeous voice and the poetry of his darling *Thebaid*. Their hearts are captivated by the sheer lusciousness he inspires and the crowd listens in sheer ecstasy. But when he's broken the benches with his poetry, he'll go hungry unless he sells his virgin *Agave* to Paris].

Juvenal seems to be implying that Statius, needing money, prostituted his poetic talent to write a pantomime for an actor, Paris, the one-time favourite of the Emperor Domitian. Dante would have been loath to follow such an insinuation about Statius's character, given his conviction that all those who write for money are not even *litterati* at all.[53] By contrast, Dante seems to have inferred that Statius's prodigality reduced him to the misery and humiliation of going hungry (*esurit*; 87).[54]

[51] See Harold Anderson, *The Manuscripts of Statius: Volume III, Reception: The Vitae and Accessus* (Arlington, 2009).The *accessus* introductions in the commentaries give invaluable insights into the context of Dante's own treatment. Most notably, Statius is presented as a *poeta doctus*, 'whose wisdom is recognised through his poetry', and who wrote the *Thebaid* as a specific response to the Emperor Domitian's philosophical question about whether one could escape one's fate: 'In *accessus* to the *Thebaid*, he [Statius] is in a position to chastise or instruct the emperor; here, the emperor turns to him for philosophical advice' (p. 37). This is, of course, the role Dante envisaged for himself as philosopher guide to the Holy Roman Emperor. See also Ruth Parkes, 'Reading Statius through a Biographical Lens', in *Brill's Companion to Statius*, ed. by W. J. Dominiak, C. E. Newlands, and K. Gervais (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 465–80 (especially pp. 466–67).

[52] The Latin text and English translation are taken from the Loeb classical library series: *Juvenal and Persius*, ed. and trans. by Susanna Morton Braund (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[53] *Conv.* I, ix, 3: 'E a vituperio di loro dico che non si deono chiamare litterati, però che non acquistano la lettera per lo suo uso, ma in quanto per quella guadagnano denari o dignitate; sì come non si dèe chiamare citarista chi tiene la cetera in casa per prestarla per prezzo, e non per usarla per sonare' [And to their disgrace I say that they should not even be called learned, since they do not acquire learning for its own sake but for the sake of gaining money or position; just as one should not be called a lutist who keeps his lute at home to loan it out for money and not to play it].

[54] See, for example, Paratore, 'Stazio', pp. 419–20.

It is important to emphasise that Dante had no more evidence that Statius was a prodigal than that he was a secret convert to Christianity. Indeed, Dante entirely invents the story of Statius's conversion from prodigality – namely, that, after reading a passage of Virgil, he realised the error of his ways:

> E se non fosse ch'io drizzai mia cura
> quand'io intesi là dove tu chiame,
> crucciato quasi a l'umana natura:
> 'Perché non reggi tu, o sacra fame
> de l'oro, l'appetito de' mortali?'
> voltando sentirei le giostre grame.
> Allor m'accorsi che troppo aprir l'ali
> potean le mani a spendere, e pente' mi
> così di quel come de li altri mali.
> (*Purg.* XXII, 37–45)

[And had it not been that I straightened out my desires, when I understood the place where you cry out, almost angry at human nature:
'Why do you, O accursed hunger for gold, not govern the appetite of mortals?' I would be turning about, feeling the grim jousts.
Then I perceived that one's hands can open their wings too much in spending, and I repented of that as of my other vices].

Statius understands the Virgilian *dictum* to entail a condemnation of both prodigality and avarice. In my view, this is because Dante considered that sinners may hunger for gold either to give it away (the vice of prodigality) or to retain it (the vice of avarice) but, in both cases, he perceived this craving to be accursed (*sacer*) and detestable (*execrabilis*).[55] For Dante,

[55] This interpretation of the Virgilian *dictum* (which I find most convincing) was first proffered by Benvenuto da Imola. See Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg.* XXII, 37–55: 'hic Statius largius interpretatur istud dictum, et dicit quod Virgilius arguit intemperantiam divitiarum tam in dando quam in retinendo . . . *o sacra fame dell'oro*, idest, o execrabilis cupiditas auri, *perchè non reggi tu l'appetito de' mortali*? quia alii appetunt immoderate propter dare, alii propter retinere.' I realise, of course, that this interpretation implies that Dante is using 'sacra' as an explicit Latinism here, and that it runs counter to those who see in this episode an affirmation of the principle of the Aristotelian golden mean in the appetite. However, as I argued in Chapter 3, Dante is not encouraging a moderate appetite for gold or wealth on the terrace of avarice; rather, he is opposing that hunger for wealth (whether to retain it or to give it away) with the evangelical virtues of poverty and charity (through almsgiving). See, for opposing standpoints, Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, pp. 256–68 (especially 259–60); R.A. Shoaf, '"Auri sacra fames" and the Age of God (*Purg.* XII, 40–41 and 148–50)', *Dante Studies*, 96 (1978), 195–99. Heslin rightly recognises that such perspectives involve 'very strange mistranslations or misinterpretations of Virgil', which are rather implausible to attribute either to Statius or to Dante: 'Statius' freakishly bizarre misreading of Polydorus' words is impossible to justify on an intellectual basis, as Dante surely knew.' See Peter Heslin, 'Statius', pp. 512–26 (p. 515). However, Heslin's 'resolution' is unsatisfactory and, in my view, equally implausible: 'What justifies it is the crucial result that it produced in the internal reader, Dante's

indeed, the hunger for gold is always an evil, even though he considered gold itself to be morally neutral.[56]

Moral and Spiritual Fatherhood: Pope Adrian V (*Purg.* XIX) and Virgil (*Purg.* XXI)

Just as Dante sets up a counter-position between the twin conversion narratives of Pope Adrian V (from avarice) and Statius (from prodigality) through a precise textual correspondence (the triple rhyme), so he sets up a juxtaposition between two father figures, Pope Adrian V and Virgil, through parallel genuflections.[57] In terms of posture, Dante-character's mistaken genuflection before Ottobono at the close of *Purgatorio* XIX clearly parallels Statius's correct genuflection before Virgil at the close of *Purgatorio* XXI. Dante kneels before Ottobono not because he has led him to God, but simply to show reverence to the papal office ('per vostra dignitate'; XIX, 131). Addressing Dante as 'frate', Ottobono tells him to rise up ('lèvati sù, frate'; 133), explaining that temporal hierarchies and Earthly dignities no longer apply in the afterlife. He then fulfils the role he should have performed as pope (the Earthly leader of the Christian

Statius, who was thereby saved from an eternity in Hell. The point is that the reading of pagan Latin poetry must answer to higher purposes for Dante than literal accuracy' (Heslin, 'Statius', pp. 515–16).

[56] See, for example, *Conv.* IV, x–xii: 'E però dice Tulio in quello Di Paradosso, abominando le ricchezze: "Io in nullo tempo per fermo né le pecunie di costoro, né le magioni magnifiche né le ricchezze né le segnorie né l'allegrezze delle quali massimamente sono astretti, tra cose buone o desiderabili essere dissi"' [And so Tully says in *On Paradox*, castigating riches 'At no time, certainly, have I ever said that either the money of these people, or their magnificent homes, or their riches, or their political power, or the enjoyments on which they are most intent of all are among the things which are good or desirable'] (IV, xii, 6). By contrast, Martinez argues that Statius's understanding (*Purg.* XXII, 38) regards Virgil's use of the term 'sacra' (40), where the Latin 'sacra' [feminine singular of *sacer*] may translate as 'accursed' or as 'sacred'. This ambiguity was already highlighted, for example, in Servius's late-fourth-century commentary on Virgil: the hunger for gold is 'accursed' insofar as it leads to the kind of terrible evils committed by Polymnestor (treachery and murder), but it is also 'sacred' insofar as riches may be used to good purposes, such as to worship God or to provide for widows and orphans. See Ronald Martinez, 'La "sacra fame dell'oro" (*Purgatorio* XXI, 41) tra Virgilio e Stazio: Dal testo all'interpretazione', *Letture Classensi* 18 (1989), 177–93; Ronald Martinez, 'Dante and the Two Canons: Statius in Virgil's Footsteps', *Comparative Literature Studies* 32 (1995), 151–75. See also Servius, gloss to *Aeneid* III, 57, in Maurus Servius Honoratus, *Commentary on the Aeneid of Virgil*, ed. by Georgius Thilo (Leipzig, 1881), in *Perseus Digital Library* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/: '*auri sacra fames* sacra execrabilis, ut "sacrae panduntur portae". alii "sacra" devota accipiunt, unde et ver sacrum. alii sacrum pro scelestum, vel sacrilegum'.

[57] Virgil is as much the protagonist of *Purgatorio* XXI–XXII as his poetic disciple. See also Giorgio Padoan, 'Il canto XXI', p. 353: 'Questo e il canto seguente [*Purg.* XXI–XXII] sono, per antonomasia, i canti di Stazio. Ma il personaggio centrale non è Stazio, è Virgilio. Questa celebrazione dei poeti e della poesia è la celebrazione anzitutto di Virgilio.'

faithful) by directing Dante-character to the 'santo evangelico suono' [the holy sound of the Divine Scriptures] (136), a sound explicitly contrasted with the Siren's song ('al canto mio'; 23). By contrast, Statius kneels to show reverence to Virgil precisely because it was through him – through a pagan poet – that he became a Christian ('Per te poeta fui, per te cristiano'; XXII, 73).[58] Likewise addressing him as 'frate', Virgil does not, however, correct Statius (the reverence is not wrong), but simply says that such reverence is in vain ('ché tu se' ombra e ombra vedi'; XXI, 132).

It is difficult to imagine a more powerful indictment of the medieval papacy's failure to fulfil its Divinely ordained role to lead men to God than that Statius's moral conversion from prodigality, and his secret conversion to Christianity, should have been brought about by the poet Virgil – by a pagan, and by a pagan (although, for Dante, prophetic) text, the *Aeneid*. Moreover, Dante's idiosyncratic invention of both Statius's prodigality and his hidden Christianity strongly suggests autobiographical projection: Dante-character, confronted by the she-wolf of avarice in *Inferno* I, was similarly answered not by a priest or by a pope, but by the same pagan Virgil. An autobiographical motivation, in my view, also lies behind Dante's presentation of three different kinds of paternal love, and three different species of genealogy, in the terrace of avarice. Ottobono identifies himself within a spiritual line of papal succession as the successor of Peter ('*Scias quod ego fui successor Petri*'; XIX, 99); Hugh Capet is the root of the Capetian line, a genealogical or familial bloodline ('Io fui radice de la mala pianta'; XX, 43); and finally Statius identifies himself within a poetical line, with Virgil ('la divina fiamma'; XXI, 95) as the 'mother' and 'nurse' of his poetry (97–98). Although Dante cannot pass temporal goods to his children, he can, following Virgil, assume the most important paternal role in passing on moral and spiritual wisdom not only to his children, but to all through his poetry.[59]

[58] Harald Anderson claims that scholars have searched in vain for a medieval tradition for Dante's interpretation of Statius as a closet Christian (Anderson, *The Manuscripts of Statius: Volume III*, pp. 65–73).

[59] Both Virgil and Statius were read through the medieval commentaries as ethical poets who taught the wisdom necessary for human flourishing. See Wilson, p. 53: 'Bernard [Silvester] believed that Virgil had interwoven into the fabric of the *Aeneid* the riches of classical (actually medieval) knowledge structured around a scheme of the ages of man. Such an assumption allowed Bernard to exhibit his philosophical knowledge but also allowed him to present a *schema* of education – modified from Fulgentius' *Virgiliana continentia* – in the broadest psychological as well as philosophical terms, from infant to mature adult.' See also Sebastiano Italia, *Dante e l'esegesi virgiliana: Tra Servio, Fulgenzio e Bernardo Silvestre* (Rome: Bonanno Editore, 2013). Medieval commentators also associate the *Achilleid* with the raising of children: 'As a teacher, Statius the poet had the authority to write about the raising and education of children, and the *Achilleid*, under this

Prodigality As Dante's Florentine Sin

By having Virgil claim that he learned about Statius through Juvenal (*Purg.* XXII, 10–24), Dante provides, as Peter Heslin points out, 'an explicit footnote for the reader: for information about Statius life's, cf. Juvenal'. Moreover, Dante's Statius introduces himself with the words 'tanto fu dolce mio vocale spirto' (*Purg.* XXI, 88), directly alluding to Juvenal's 'tanta dulcedine' and 'ad vocem iucundam' (Satire 7:84, 2).[60] Why, then, does Dante explicitly signpost Juvenal in this way?[61] The theme of Juvenal's seventh satire is the woeful predicament of poets in the absence of aristocratic patronage.[62] Juvenal satirises the distinguished and well-known poets ('celebres notique poetae') who, lacking patronage, now lease a bathhouse or a bakehouse; even the muse Clio, in her hunger (*esuriens*; 7), has deserted the springs and moved to the salesroom (3–7). Juvenal goes on to ask how we can expect great poetry from the poverty-stricken poets of today (59–65). The poets are victims of the avaricious rich (*dives avarus*; 30), who, giving praise and nothing more (*tantum laudare*; 31), nonetheless spend extravagantly in prodigal Rome (*prodiga Roma*; 138). In addition, Juvenal claims that in such a corrupt city, prodigality is ironically necessary to get commissions ('et tamen est illis hoc utile'; 135). By signposting Juvenal, therefore, Dante is perhaps underlining the mitigating

interpretation, was seen partially as a treatise on the raising of children' (Anderson, *The Manuscripts of Statius: Volume III*, p. 22); Anderson notes that 'we have much indirect evidence for the *Achilleid* being read in such a manner' (p. 22, n. 61).

[60] Heslin, 'Statius', p. 515.

[61] Scholars have disputed the extent of Dante's knowledge of Juvenal's satires. See Edward Moore, *Studies in Dante: First Series* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), pp. 255–58 (especially pp. 256–57), and p. 353 (for a list of possible direct citations). Giorgio Padoan insists that Dante had direct knowledge of Juvenal's satires: 'le cui *Satirae* furono certamente note a Dante'. See Padoan, 'Il canto XXI', p. 347. For a more recent argument in favour of Dante's direct knowledge of Juvenal's satires, see Robert Black, 'Classical Antiquity', in *Dante in Context*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Lino Pertile (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 297–318: 'The frequency of his references, the ease with which he makes Juvenalian citations in different locations, the precision with which he identifies the location where he took the citation – such considerations suggest that Dante knew Juvenal directly' (p. 312).

[62] The satire begins: 'Et spes et ratio studiorum in Caesare tantum; / solus enim tristes hac tempestate Camenas / respexit' [The hopes and incentives of literature depend upon Caesar alone. He's the only one these days to have given a second glance to the despondent Camenae] (Satire, 7:1–3). See Edward Courtney, *A Commentary on the Satires of Juvenal* (London: Athlone Press, 1980), pp. 334–76 (p. 349): 'We may ask why, if one can look to the emperor for patronage, those who might expect to receive it are in such a miserable state of poverty. The obvious answer is that the emperor in question has not yet had time to do anything about it (c.f. 20–1; the hope expressed is in the future, *posthac* 18, a word suggesting a new departure) . . . It should also be noted that the hope expressed is remote and impersonal; there is no hint that Juvenal expects anything for himself or his kind of poetry.'

circumstances of Statius's alleged prodigality: Statius was in good company in going hungry – Statius's *esurit* (87) echoing Clio's *esuriens* (7) – while he suffered from bad company in Rome, in which prodigality had become a virtue, and ostentatious display necessary for advancement in a career.[63] Just as Statius's post-conversion sin of *acedia* is understandable in light of Domitian's persecutions (an open faith would have demanded the extreme vigour of martyrdom), so his pre-conversion prodigality is understandable in the context of a prodigal Rome (*prodiga Roma*) characterised by avaricious rich (*dives avarus*) and impoverished poets.

Dante's castigation of modern Florence in relation to the old Florence of Cacciaguida ('Fiorenza dentro de la cerchia antica'; *Par*. XV, 97) strongly echoes Juvenal's pejorative comparison throughout the satires between the new and ancient Rome.[64] If 'prodigal Rome' might be in part to blame for Statius having fallen prey to the 'sacra *fame* de l'oro' [accursed hunger of gold], might a corrupt Florence be a mitigating circumstance for Dante-character having been overthrown by the she-wolf, whose hunger is without end ('la tua *fame* sanza fine'; *Purg*. XX, 12) and who, after feeding, is hungrier than before ('e dopo 'l pasto ha più *fame* che pria'; *Inf*. I, 99)?

If we bear in mind that all the early commentators understood Dante-character's first sin (represented by the she-wolf in *Inferno* I) to have been avarice, Virgil's perplexity with regard to Statius's avarice would also represent, at a meta-poetical level, a reader's potential perplexity with regard to the avarice of Dante-character[65]:

[63] Padoan draws attention to a medieval commentary tradition on Juvenal, which further emphasises the extreme poverty of the poet Statius. See Padoan, 'Il canto XXI', p. 347 (especially p. 347, n. 1). Clio is directly referenced as Statius's muse at *Purg*. XXII, 58: 'per quello che Clïò teco lì tasta' [by what Clio touches on with you there].

[64] Edward Walton gives an effective summary of the object of Juvenal's satire: 'The avarice and venality everywhere rampant at Rome – the influx of new customs and of new religions – the deterioration of the old Roman type of character, and the substitution for it of an insidious compound of refinement and hypocrisy, of mental culture combined with moral degradation – the sudden rise of low-born foreigners to the highest places in the Empire through a vile pandering to the appetites of the rulers – the growth of a spurious philosophy, which, under a special show of morality, tended to obliterate the eternal distinctions between right and wrong, – such are some of the main faults of his age which it was Juvenal's self-appointed task to lash with no sparing hand' (Edward Walton, *Juvenal* [Edinburg: Blackwood and Sons, 1872], p. 65). See also Gilbert Highet, *Juvenal the Satirist: A Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 205: 'Dante often wrote with Juvenal's bitterness and rancour. Like Juvenal, he was an exile. Like Juvenal, he was an Italian who loved his country and was embittered by its corruption.'

[65] See, for example, Jacopo Alighieri, gloss to *Inf*. I, 49–54; Pietro Alighieri [3], gloss to *Inf*. I, 49; Guido da Pisa, gloss to *Inf*. I, 49–51; L'Ottimo Commento, gloss to *Inf*. I, 49–51; Graziolo Bambaglioli, gloss to *Inf*. I, 49–54. I find it unlikely that, on such an important point, such consistency in the early commentators would be simply a 'routine case of borrowing' (Cassell,

'come poté trovar dentro al tuo seno
loco avarizia, tra cotanto senno
di quanto per tua cura fosti pièno?'
Queste parole Stazio mover fenno
un poco a riso pria; poscia rispuose:
'Ogne tuo dir d'amor m'è caro cenno.'
(*Purg.* XXII, 21–27)

['how could avarice find a place within your breast, among such wisdom with which your studies had filled you?'
These words moved Statius to smile a little at first; then he replied:
'Every word of yours is a dear sign of love to me'].

This comparison is authorially invited through unmistakable cross-references back to the moment in limbo where Homer, Horace, Ovid, Lucan, and Virgil make Dante-character the sixth in their company: 'sì ch'io fui sesto tra cotanto senno' [so that I was sixth among such wisdom] (*Inf.* IV, 102):

Da ch'ebber ragionato insieme alquanto,
volsersi a me con salutevol cenno,
e 'l mio maestro sorrise di tanto;
e più d'onore ancora assai mi fenno,
ch' e' sì mi fecer de la loro schiera,
sì ch'io fui sesto tra cotanto senno.
(*Inf.* IV, 97–102)

[When they had spoken together for a time they turned to me
with sign of greeting, and my master smiled at that:
and they did me an even greater honour, for they made me
one of their band, so that I was sixth among such wisdom].

The correspondences are striking: the same triple rhyme in reverse order ('cenno / fenno / senno'); Statius's smile (*Purg.* XXII, 26) paralleling Virgil's smile (*Inf.* IV, 99); the 'caro cenno' of Virgil (*Purg.* XXII, 27) paralleling the 'salutevol cenno' of Virgil's company (*Inf.* IV, 98); and, most importantly, the displacement of 'sì ch'io fui sesto' [so that I was sixth] (*Inf.* IV, 102) with 'loco avarizia' [avarice a place] (*Purg.* XXII, 22) before 'tra cotanto senno' [among such wisdom]. Moreover, Dante frames the whole discussion of Statius's prodigality in *Purgatorio* XXII by making two explicit references to Limbo: 'nel limbo de lo 'nferno' [in the Limbo of

Inferno 1, p. 46), and there are sound contextual reasons, as Cassell himself acknowledges, for holding to this interpretation.

Hell] (*Purg.* XXII, 14) and 'nel primo cinghio del carcere cieco' [in the first circle of the blind prison] (103). Although overlooked by scholars, the implication is, I think, clear: just as Virgil is surprised that avarice could have had a place in Statius 'tra cotanto senno' (*Purg.* XXII, 22), so Dante expects his reader to be surprised that he (apparently guilty of the sin of avarice) should have been welcomed in Limbo 'tra cotanto senno' (*Inf.* IV, 102).

Statius's explanation for being on the terrace of avarice, therefore, also serves as Dante's explanation for being overthrown by the she-wolf in *Inferno* I:

> 'La tua dimanda tuo creder m'avvera
> esser ch'i' fossi avaro in l'altra vita,
> forse per quella cerchia dov'io era.
> Or sappi ch'avarizia fu partita
> troppo da me, e questa dismisura
> migliaia di lunari hanno punita.'
> (*Purg.* XXII, 31–36)

> [Your question shows me that you believe that I was avaricious in the other life, perhaps because of that circle where I was.
> Know then that avarice was too distant from me, and thousands of months have punished this lack of measure.]

The key point is that neither Statius nor Dante was guilty of the genus of avarice after all; instead, they were guilty of its species, and opposite vice, prodigality. Dante clearly had a horror of avarice – but in reacting excessively against a vice, it was a commonplace that one was liable to fall prey to its opposite (as we saw with regard to tepidity and indiscreet fervour on the terrace of sloth).[66] But just as 'over-eagerness' seems less ignoble than tepidity, so prodigality (as an excess in liberality) indicates a more generous disposition than avarice.[67] Most importantly, the sin of prodigality associates Statius and Dante with the conversion

[66] Fosca, gloss to *Purg.* XXII, 31–33, cites *dicta* from Horace and Augustine to this effect: 'dum vitant stulti vitia, in contraria currunt' (Horace, *Satire* 1.2.24); Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, IX, viii, 13: 'Difficile est namque, ut dum perverse homines vitia devitant, non in eorum contraria perniciter currant. Etenim sicut exhorrens avaritiam, fit profusus; aut exhorrens luxuriam, fit avarus.'

[67] In his translation of Aristotle's *Ethics*, Brunetto Latini highlights prodigality as his example of a vice that is close to the 'via media' of virtue (liberality) in relation to the very wide distance between two opposing vices (prodigality and avarice). See 'Appendix II: *Ethica*', in Julia Bolton Holloway, *Twice-Told Tales: Brunetto Latino and Dante Alighieri* (New York/Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993), pp. 429–74 (p. 439).

story of the most celebrated saint (the '*alter Christus*') of Dante's time, St Francis.[68]

In the lives of St Francis of Assisi, he is described, prior to his conversion, as 'very rich and prodigal. He was a squanderer of his possessions, a cautious businessman, but a very unreliable steward.'[69] Seeking to cultivate the aristocratic virtues of courtesy and liberality, Francis 'was neither avaricious nor a hoarder of money; he was a very kindly person, easy and affable'.[70] As Michael Robson notes, Thomas of Celano's whole biography of the saint is shaped by the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32). Forgetting his Divine father, Francis sought to accomplish 'great deeds of worldly glory and vanity'.[71] Francis's tendency to prodigality, nonetheless, disposed him to his Christian conversion: 'He [Francis] came to realise that generosity to friends was not enough but that, out of love for God, he should be generous to the poor.'[72] In embracing voluntary poverty following his conversion, St Francis came to exhibit a 'noble prodigality':

[68] Scholars do not seem to have explored this connection with St Francis's pre-conversion prodigality. Thus even Havely passes over Statius's prodigality, noting only the 'apostolic role of the pagan poet Statius'. See *Dante and the Franciscans*, pp. 106–7.

[69] See Michael Robson, *St Francis of Assisi: The Legends and the Life* (London: Chapman, 1997), p. 17. Notably, Francis's prodigality is blamed, in part, on the bad parenting of 'all those who bear the name of Christians': 'it demands that parents raise their children, from cradle onward, in luxury and pleasure'. See also Robson, pp. 17–18: 'His faults were attributed to his parents, who were given none of the credit for his attractive qualities.' Alongside prodigality, Francis is accused, in particular, of pride and tepidity: 'Proud and high-minded, he [Francis] walked about the streets of Babylon until God rescued him. After his early diffidence and loss of nerve Francis became a prophetical voice to a society that had deviated from the teaching of the Gospel' (Robson, *St Francis*, p. 18). See also 'The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano (1228–1229)', in *Francis of Assisi,* III, pp. 180–408 (pp. 182–84).

[70] Robson, *St Francis*, p. 18. See also Chiara Frugoni, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. by John Bowden (Turin: Einaudi, 1998), pp. 7–17: 'When his [Francis's] mother heard the comments of her astonished neighbours, amazed at such prodigality, she defended him, albeit with some annoyance, since he was her favourite son. Courtesy and liberality, the virtues *par excellence* of the aristocracy, are the values which Francis planned to cultivate and take as a model, adopting the ideology of chivalry' (p. 8).

[71] Robson, *St Francis*, pp. 16–18.

[72] See Ivan Gobry, *Saint Francis of Assisi*, trans. by Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), who cites *The Legend of the Three Companions*: 'In his expenditures he was so liberal that he wasted on parties and other merrymaking everything that he might own or acquire … Always generous, even prodigal, he also lacked moderation in the way that he dressed … wealthy but prodigal, he squandered his fortune instead of hoarding it' (pp. 27–28); 'He [Francis] realized that if the poor man had asked him for something in the name of a great man, a count, or a baron, he would have responded to the request favorably. Should he not have done it for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?! Henceforth he decided never to refuse anything to someone who asked in the name of God. Saint Bonaventure, echoing this little incident reported by other witnesses, adds that Francis, in his shame for having refused the alms requested for the love of God, ran after the poor man and pressed into his hand an unusual sum for a beggar … When his father was away, the young prodigal [Francis] would have an abundant table prepared, as though his father and even

> Talem pro eleemosynis censum [amorem Dei] offerre nobilem prodigalitatem dicebat, et eos qui minus ipsum quam denarios reputarent, esse stultissimos, pro eo quod solius divini amoris impretiabile pretium ad regnum caelorum sufficiat comparandum, et eius qui nos multum amavit multum sit amor amandus. (Bonaventure, Legenda Maior, ix, 1)
>
> [He used to say that to offer such a payment [the love of God] in exchange for alms was a noble prodigality, and that those who valued it less than money were very stupid, because the inestimable value of divine love alone suffices to purchase the kingdom of heaven, and the love of the man who has loved us much is much to be loved].

In making Statius, his autobiographical cypher, a prodigal, Dante is arguably associating his own conversion story with that of St Francis. However, whereas St Francis was led to almsgiving and, subsequently, to the 'noble prodigality' of a holy beggar, the implication is that both Statius and Dante were guilty of his pre-conversion prodigality (a vice). Nonetheless, and crucially, this pre-conversion vice is still seen – through the lives of St Francis – as an excess in the chivalric virtues of courtesy and liberality, and as evidence of a benign, generous nature, itself potentially disposing a person to Christian conversion.

If we turn to Peraldus, it is similarly apparent that 'prodigality' had a much broader meaning in Dante's immediate context than simply a wastefulness with money. Peraldus considers that prodigality leads to a disdain for spiritual goods.[73] He also sees prodigality as a symptom of pride or vainglory. Indeed, Peraldus begins his discussion of prodigality by affirming that the prodigal does not give things away; rather, the wind of vainglory (*ventus vanitatis*) takes them away.[74] Moreover, he explicitly counterpoises the prodigal life with the life of preaching: where the prodigal son feeds pigs, glossed by Peraldus as the gluttonous and the luxuriant ('porcos: id est, homines gulosos et luxuriosos'), preachers feed human souls, following the example of the Son of God Himself.[75] It is

invited guests were going to take part in the meal. But these dishes were intended quite simply for the hungry, who did not fail to hammer on the door at mealtime' (pp. 28–29).

[73] Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. 4, pa. 5, c. xii, p. 161a: 'Sequitur etiam inde contemptus bonorum spiritualium.'

[74] Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. 4, pa. 5, c. i, p. 160a: 'Primo, in hoc, quod prodigus sua non confert, sed ventus vanitatis ei aufert.' See also p. 160b: 'Prodigus etiam pro nihilo rem suam dat, quando dat eam pro vana gloria, quae nihil est in valore. Unde Ioan. 8. "Si ergo glorificabo meipsum, gloria mea nihil est".'

[75] Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. 4, pa. 5, c. xii, p. 161a–b: 'Prodigus adeo spiritualia contemnit, ut magnum reputet ventres parcere, et opprobrium credat esse animas parcere, cum tamen dicat Augustinus: Non est magnum parcere ventros morientes: sed magnum est parcere animas in aeternum victuras.'

especially noteworthy, in this context, that Statius, clearly not indifferent to the wind of worldly fame (*Purg.* XI, 100–1) in presenting himself as 'very famous' ('famoso assai'; *Purg.* XXI, 87), says that he would prefer to be on Earth again with Virgil than to be on his way to Heaven:

> E per esser vivuto di là quando
> visse Virgilio, assentirei un sole
> più che non deggio al mio uscir di bando.
> (*Purg.* XXI, 100–2)
>
> [And to have lived back there while Virgil was alive, I would agree to a sun more than I owe for my release from exile].

Where Christians should give money (a temporal good) in alms as an indulgence to reduce the time of a soul's suffering in Purgatory (a spiritual good), Statius says he would be willing to increase his time of suffering in Purgatory, in exchange for a temporal good (time with Virgil on Earth). Statius thereby exhibits a love for Virgil, even over and above the spiritual good, that Dante-character himself would memorably echo in the Earthly Paradise, when even the recovery of Eden does not prevent him from weeping at the departure of his 'dolcissimo patre' [most sweet father] (*Purg.* XXX, 43–75; 50). As I argued in Chapter 6, Dante appears to confess, in this way, an excessive love for Virgil, even to the neglect of spiritual wisdom.[76]

Furthermore, it seems plausible that Dante may have associated his own pre-exile life with the prodigality of late-thirteenth-century Florence. Although emphasising that he was not guilty of the miserly sin of avarice, he may be confessing through Statius to having neither lived the life of sobriety apparently characteristic of ancient Rome or Cacciaguida's Florence nor exhibited the exemplary almsgiving of St Francis.[77] One need

Glossing the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15), he emphasises the consequences of prodigality, with the son left to the mercy of usurers who, instead, eat him up. See p. 161a: 'Mala vero, quae sequuntur ex prodigalitate haec sunt, scilicet paupertas usque ad mendicitatem, Lucae decimo quinto, de illo filio prodigo . . . Sequitur etiam inde, quod prodigus incidit in manus usurariorum, qui totum eum comedunt.'

[76] See also Winthrop Wetherbee, *The Ancient Flame: Dante and the Poets* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), pp. 197: 'The sentiment here expressed is of course utterly implausible: subject to the spiritual psychology of Purgatory, Statius could hardly deny in himself the aspiration that he is now fully ready to pursue, let along consign himself to the darkness of pre-Christian paganism. But Statius' sin had been prodigality, and there is something wonderfully prodigal about a wish whose realization would effectively defer spiritual growth in favour of the fullest possible experience of artistic discipleship.'

[77] This is perhaps a further reason for Statius accompanying Dante-character into the terrace of gluttony. Dante's first example of temperance is taken from Juvenal's sixth satire. See *Purg.* XXII,

only consider that the next person whom Dante-character encounters after, and with, Statius is Forese Donati. In that encounter, he similarly looks back to his Florentine years with profound regret:

> Per ch'io a lui: 'Se tu riduci a mente
> qual fosti meco, e qual io teco fui,
> ancor fia grave il memorar presente.
> Di quella vita mi volse costui
> che mi va innanzi'.
>
> (*Purg.* XXIII, 115–19)

[Therefore I to him: 'If you call back to mind what you used to be with me, and I with you, the present memory will still be heavy.
From that life I was turned away by the one who goes ahead to be with me'].

Dante's Florentine vices are amply glossed by the early commentators in terms of the worldly life of a lay citizen.[78] If we read his confession in light of the conversion narrative of St Francis and the biblical *topos* of the prodigal son, this 'worldliness' is embodied in the sin of prodigality. In this respect, it is notable that Dante-character highlights Statius's conversion (from prodigality) to Forese at the conclusion of the canto (*Purg.* XXIII, 131–33).[79] Moreover, most scholars interpret this passage as also a refutation of the *tenzone*, with Dante making up, in the afterlife, for his scurrilous insinuations in the poems about Forese's wife Nella.[80] But, as Fabian Alfie rightly insists, Dante's terrace of gluttony is certainly not a wholesale retraction of the content of the *tenzone*: the mutual insinuations about gluttony, prodigality, and poverty still stand.[81] Dante claims in the

145–46: 'E le Romane antiche per lor bere / contente furon d'acqua' [And the ancient Roman women were content with water for their drink]. And see also Juvenal, Satire 6:1–20; 286–319.

[78] See, for example, L'Ottimo Commento, gloss to *Purg.* XXIII, 114–16: 'se tu ti ricordi dell'abito mio leggiadro, e delli altieri e laicali costumi ch'io aveva, quando usavamo tu ed io insieme, grave ti sarà a credere quello che io ti dirò immantanente; tanto fia diverso questo da quello'. See also Benvenuto, gloss to Purg. XXIII, 115–17: 'si tu ricordaris modo eorum quae dicebamus et faciebamus vane vacando lascivilis, emoribus, et aliis rebus vanis, sequentes delectabilia non honesta; certe talis memoria erit amara tibi'.

[79] As Benvenuto suggests, Dante-character is implying that he has changed more (in the state of his soul) since his Florentine years than even Forese, with his emaciated appearance, is changed (in the state of his body) on the terrace of gluttony. See Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg.* XXIII, 115–17: 'et sententialiter vult dicere, quod Foresius non est tantum mutatus in corpore, posquam mortuus est, quantum ipse mutatus est animo'.

[80] On the disputed authenticity of the *tenzone*, see also, for example, Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, pp. 48–49, n. 36. For a full-length study of the *tenzone*, see Fabian Alfie, *Dante's Tenzone with Forese Donati: The Reprehension of Vice* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2011).

[81] Alfie argues against the hermeneutics of palinode as a blanket description of this episode: 'It is true that Dante takes the opportunity in *Purgatorio* to correct misstatements made in the *tenzone* with Donati, particularly his slander against Forese's wife. But he does not repudiate the poetics of

tenzone that Forese's fondness for delicacies ('petti delle starne' [partridge breasts]) will lead him to penury; Forese, in response, 'insinuates that Dante had foolishly squandered his own finances', leading to his own involuntary poverty.[82] It is this 'ugly truth', in Alfie's words, which makes Dante's memory of his former times heavy ('grave'). Just as Dante identifies two distinct stages in Statius's moral life – the prodigality of his pre-conversion years, and the tepidity of his post-conversion years – so he associates the sin of prodigality with his Florentine years and the sin of tepidity, in particular, with his years as a poet-scholar in exile.

Juvenal As Ethical Model for the Exiled Poet

Although critics cite *Satire* 7:82–87 for Dante's presentation of Statius, the lines immediately following draw attention to another poet who lived in 'prodigal Rome' at the time of Statius but apparently did not fall prey to prodigality – namely, the satirist Juvenal himself:

> ille et militiae multis largitur honorem.
> semenstri vatum digitos circumligat auro.
> quod non dant proceres, dabit histrio. tu Camerinos
> et Baream, tu nobilium magna atria curas?
> praefactos Pelopea facit, Philomela tribunos.
>
> (Satire, 7. 88–92)
>
> [He's [Paris's] the one who generously hands out positions in the army and puts the gold ring on the fingers of bards after just six months. A dancer gives what the great men won't. Do you frequent the grand halls of the aristocracy, the Camerini and Barea? It's *Pelopea* that appoints prefects and *Philomela* tribunes].

The medieval lives of Juvenal (in the *accessus* commentaries) located in these very lines Juvenal's reason for writing the Satires at all – with their subject matter ('the vices of the Romans') and their purpose ('to draw his reader from the clutches of the vices') – as well as the very cause of Juvenal's subsequent exile from Rome:[83]

improperium in these cantos ... The palinode of the terrace of gluttony appears limited to the falsehoods Dante and Forese had written; the ugly truth they had presented, however, is allowed to stand' (pp. 98–99).

[82] For this interpretation of the *tenzone*, see Alfie, *Dante's Tenzone*, pp. 33–59 (p. 48). Alfie sees Peraldus as the key influence for the association between gluttony and sins of the tongue (p. 83).

[83] See School of William of Conches, 'Commentary on Juvenal', in *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100–c. 1375: The Commentary Tradition*, ed. by A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 134–38 (p. 135). In relation to this commentary, see also *Guillaume de Conches: Glosae in Iuvenalem*, ed. by Bradford Wilson (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1989): 'William believes, though, that Juvenal attacks not only particular men and customs but also moral

> Causa vero compositionis huius operis talis est: Iuvenalis iste natus de Aquinate opido, tempore Neronis Romam venit, videnque Paridem panthominum ita familiarem imperatori ut nihil unquam nisi eius nutu ageret, ex indignatione prorupit in hos versus:
>
> Quod non dant proceres, dabit histrio; tu Cameninos
> Tu Bareas, tu nobilium magna astria curas?
>
> Tandem ut eos sufficientius reprehenderet, ad satiram scribendam se transtulit, nec in Neronem et Paridem tantum, sed in alios viciose agentes reprehensio eius redundavit. Nero vero comperto, quod in eum Iuvenalis dixerat, non est ausus aperte eum exilio damnare, sed prefectum cuidam exercitui misit eum in Egiptum, pre ea exercitum sed sine ipso redire iussit. Et ita in Egipto exul mortuus est.[84]
>
> [The reason for his [Juvenal] having written this work is as follows. This Juvenal, a native of the town of Aquinas, came to Rome in Nero's time. Observing that the mimic actor Paris was on such close terms with the emperor that Nero never did anything except with his approval, he burst out into the following verse, moved by a sense of outrage: 'That which men of rank do not give, an actor will give. Do you still bother with the waiting-rooms of influential nobles?' Eventually, in order that he might reprehend them more adequately, he turned to writing satire, and not only against Nero and Paris, but his reprehension spilt over to include others who were leading wicked lives. When Nero learned of Juvenal's attack on himself, he did not dare to condemn him to exile openly, but sent him to Egypt as commander of an army, and moreover ordered the army to return but without Juvenal. So he died in Egypt].[85]

This episode provides, through Juvenal, a counter-example to Statius. Although not a Christian and therefore not (like Statius) in Purgatory,

vices – say, gluttony – by vivid description of the character and consequences of the moral sin in which the character indulged – for example, death from inability to digest an undercooked peacock. Indirect attack is, for William, the essence of the art of the satires' (p. 12); 'Satire is primarily attack, but for William that attack finds its purpose in providing moral order and attempting to draw men back from evil' (p. 53).

[84] 'Accessus ab actore incerto', in Wilson (ed.), *Glosae in Iuvenalem*, p. 89.

[85] The English translation is taken from 'Commentary on Juvenal', in Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 135. Other *accessus* lives of Juvenal, albeit with variations, attest to the same tradition. See, for example, 'Accessus and Excerpts from Oxford Bodleian Auct F. 6.9 Commentarium in Juvenalem', in Wilson (ed.), *Glosae in Iuvenalem*, p. 44: 'Et primum contra Paridem pantominum ispius imperatoris exclamando hos versus edidit: "Quid non dant proceres dabit histrio" (Iuv. 7. 91) et reliqua. Quapropter ipse Iuvenalis cum imperator non auderet eum publice dagnare expulsus Roma.' I leave to one side the problematic issue of the commentator's identification of the emperor as Nero (and not Domitian). But see Wilson (ed.), *Glosae in Iuvenalem*, pp. 37–38. For Wilson's discussion of the *causa compositionis*, see pp. 54–63.

Juvenal, as we learn from Virgil, was a virtuous pagan and thus *not* guilty of avarice or prodigality (*Purg.* XXII, 10–18).[86]

Juvenal's seventh satire gives an ideal poetic model for Dante:

> Sed vatem egregium, cui non sit publica vena
> qui nihil expositum soleat deducere, nec qui
> communi feriat carmen triviale moneta,
> hunc, qualem nequeo monstrare et sentio tantum.
> (Satire 7:53–56)

[But the outstanding bard – the one with no common vein of talent, the one who generally spins nothing trite, the one who coins no ordinary song from the public mint, the likes of whom I cannot point out, but can only imagine].

But Juvenal also underlines in his satire that Virgil could not have written the *Aeneid* without his patron, Augustus:

> . . . nec enim cantare sub antro
> Pierio thyrsumque potest contingere maesta
> paupertas atque aeris inops, quo nocte dieque
> corpus eget . . .
> nam si Vergilio puer et tolerabile desset
> hospitium, caderent omnes a crinibus hydri,
> surda nihil gemeret grave bucina.
> (Satire 7:59–71)

[Unhappy poverty, you see, cannot sing inside the Pierian cavern or grasp the thyrsus: it lacks the cash which the body needs, night and day . . . After all, if Virgil hadn't had a slave boy and decent lodgings, all the snakes would have fallen from the Fury's hair and no terrifying blast would have sounded from her silent war trumpet].

It is not difficult to see how Juvenal's satire would have rung true for the author of *De vulgari eloquentia*, bewailing the absence of an Imperial court, and struggling to find patronage. In his letters, as well as in the poem itself (notably the Cacciaguida episode), Dante makes reference to the anxiety

[86] In *Convivio* IV, xii, 8, Dante references Juvenal alongside Seneca and Horace as a moral authority in the condemnation of the riches that corrupt the spirit. Dante's specific reference to Seneca's epistles is notable, with their praise of poverty as true wealth. See, for example, *Epistle* IV, 10: '"Magnae divitiae sunt lege naturae composita paupertas." Lex autem illa naturae scis quos nobis terminos statuat? Non esurire, non sitire, non algere. Ut famem sitimque depellas, non est necesse superbis adsidere liminibus nec supercilium grave et contemeliosam etiam humanitatem pati' ['Poverty, brought into conformity with the law of nature, is great wealth.' Do you know what limits that law of nature ordains for us? Merely to avert hunger, thirst, and cold. In order to banish hunger and thirst, it is not necessary for you to pay court at the doors of the purse-proud, or to submit to the stern frown, or to the kindness that humiliates]; IV, 11: 'Cui cum paupertate bene convenit, dives est' [He who has made a fair compact with poverty is rich].

caused by his poverty in exile. It is, he writes, his poverty that prevented him from attending the funeral of Count Alessandro in 1304: 'Nec negligentia neve ingratitudo me tenuit, sed inopina paupertas quam fecit exilium' (*Epist.* II, 3). Moreover, Dante pointedly interrupts his gloss on *Paradiso* I in the dedication letter to his patron Cangrande to highlight the urgency of his poverty, as well as his anxiety about his domestic affairs: 'urget enim me rei familiaris angustia' (*Epist.* XIII, 32). Arguably associating his pre-exile life in Florence with the 'prodigality' of Statius, Dante-character could perhaps find in Juvenal comfort for the poverty, and struggle for adequate patronage, that he subsequently had to endure in exile.

By depicting Statius's prodigality through Juvenal's seventh satire (concerning the misery of authors in 'prodigal Rome'), Dante is reflecting both on his worldly life pre-exile and on his predicament as an impoverished poet in exile, struggling to provide for his own needs and those of his family. Dante-character, however, clearly takes comfort from the exemplum of Hugh Capet, the terrace of avarice's central protagonist. Although 'love of one's children' is natural and good, it is also a dangerous occasion to avarice. In Hugh Capet's case, it led to the spiritual perdition of his descendants and, indeed, to a whole gamut of political evils for society as a whole. In antithesis to this *exemplar*, Dante constructs through the examples of poverty and liberality a parental identity that, in imitation of Fabricius, prefers honourable poverty to corrupt riches (despite the suffering that this may cause one's family) and, in imitation of Mary, trusts in God's provision. Moreover, Dante establishes his own primary role, as parent and 'father in faith', to pass on true riches – namely, Christian wisdom and holiness – to his children and, within the genealogy of poets, to society at large. These are the spiritual riches that Ottobono dei Fieschi neglected and that, in Dante's view, the contemporary Church – espoused to 'cupidity' and not to 'poverty' – fails to communicate to her flock. Dante's conviction that a lukewarm love for God leads inexorably to a disordered attachment to the world does not just underpin his critique of the clergy, however; rather, as I have argued, Dante understood the pivotal dynamic between sloth and avarice as lying at the heart of the Christian moral life in general. In his own life and in his Christian ethics, Dante saw sloth and avarice as the two cardinal vices. It is therefore no accident that sloth and prodigality (the extreme opposing vice of avarice) are the two principal vices of Statius, Dante's poetic cypher.