CHAPTER 5

The Terrace of Pride, and the Poet As Preacher

As we argued in Chapter 4, Dante does not just adopt ethical content from Peraldus's *De vitiis* for his poetic treatment of Purgatory, but also appears to assume the role of vernacular preacher against vice. Approaching the first terrace of Purgatory with this context in mind, then, our leading question becomes: How does Dante-poet, as preacher, seek to convert his reader, a sinner, from pride to humility? The terrace of pride is particularly interesting in this regard, because the medieval Church arguably provides its implicit backdrop. This should not surprise us. Although medieval preaching did not occur exclusively within ecclesial walls, much of it did. Preachers used the church setting, liturgy, and the congregation of sinners – and not just the church's architecture, wall paintings, and sculpture – to frame, support, and structure their sermons.

In the terrace of pride, Dante makes repeated references to church architecture and art. This is the terrace of 'visibile parlare' [visible speech], a familiar trope in theological discussions about the power of religious art to effect moral conversion of the heart.[1] One thirteenth-century treatise emphasises that 'pictures and ornaments in churches are the lessons and the scriptures of the laity . . . paintings appear to move the mind more than [verbal] descriptions; for deeds are placed before the eyes [of the faithful] in paintings, and so they appear to be actually happening'; another affirms that religious images 'excite feelings of devotion, these being aroused more

[1] For example, Bede affirms, in *De Templo* (CCSL 119A, 212–13), that the etymology of 'pictura' in Greek is living writing: 'Nam et pictura Graece id est viva scriptura' [cited in Paul Meyvaert, 'Bede and the Church Paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow', *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1979), 63–77 (p. 69)]. As early as Gregory of Nyssa, moreover, the silent picture ('pictura tacens in pariete') is seen not just to speak but to actively transform the viewer: 'solet enim etiam pictura tacens in pariete loqui, maximeque prodesse'. See Lawrence Duggan, 'Was Art Really the Book of the Illiterate?', *Word and Image* 5 (1989), 227–61 (n. 7, pp. 229–30).

effectively by things seen than by things heard'.[2] We know that Franciscan and Dominican preachers drew upon the 'emotional intensity of religious paintings' and even 'used a repertoire of gestures known to their audience from paintings'.[3] Dante exploits this visual evangelism to the full, explicitly highlighting the empathetic effects of visual art on the viewer: 'la qual fa del non ver vera rancura / nascere 'n chi la vede' [so that what is not real causes real discomfort to be born in whoever sees it] (*Purg*. x, 133–34).

Dante not only stresses the power of ecclesial art in the terrace of pride, but also gives the terrace an architectonic substructure. The poet first opens the door of Purgatory (like the door of a church) to his reader (*Purg*. ix, 73–138). He then challenges his reader to imagine three carvings of humility on the cliff walls, carvings which evoke the sculptured reliefs of medieval churches (*Purg*. x, 28–96). The group of penitents are compared to corbels holding up a church roof (130–39), and the group's posture is related to church rites of public penance.[4] Within this liturgical space, the souls (and the reader with them) recite the *Pater noster* (*Purg*. xi, 1–24), thereby praying for others (whether in this life or in Purgatory). In the governing analogy, the three souls whom Dante-character encounters are like the church's congregation: they are *exempla* taken straight from life and immediate history (58–142).[5] The examples of pride, moreover, are compared to sculptured tombstones in a church (*Purg*. xii, 16–24).

Much as a medieval preacher would encourage the congregation to meditate on their own lives in relation to the lives of the saints, to fellow Christians on Earth and in Purgatory, and to the damned in Hell, so Dante encourages his readers to meditate upon their own lives in relation to the reliefs of humility, to the three penitent souls (near contemporaries of Dante) marked by pride, and to the damned or demonic *exempla* of

[2] Durandus of Mende, *Rationale divinorum officiorum* (c. 1286); Giovanni da Genoa, *Catholicon* (c. 1290); both cited in John F. Moffitt, *Painterly Perspective and Piety: Religious Uses of the Vanishing Point, from the 15th to the 18th Century* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008), p. 53.

[3] Richard A. Jensen, *Envisioning the Word: The Use of Visual Images in Preaching* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), p. 27.

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

[5] Delcorno cites Servasanto da Faenza: 'Sed quid per antiqua discurrimus … non longe querantur exempla, quia cottidie sunt oculis patentia, et maxime in hac misera Italia' (Delcorno, *Exemplum*, p. 197).

pride on the terrace floor. This parallel is further strengthened by two particular characteristics of the terrace of pride. First, it is the only terrace of Purgatory in which the pagan example of virtue turns out to be a saint (we meet Trajan again in heaven). Second, Dante – as we shall see – deliberately excludes saved souls (such as Adam) from his examples of pride, all of whom are damned. In this way, Dante's vision of the terrace of pride models an exercise in spiritual conversion. This, again, should not surprise us, as medieval preachers commonly spurred people to penance through visions of Purgatorial suffering.[6]

The terrace of pride is framed by three examples of humility (*Purg.* X, 34–93) and twelve (or thirteen) examples of pride (*Purg.* XII, 25–63); its centrepiece is Dante-character's encounter with three prideful souls (*Purg.* XI, 37–142). These three groups fall into three different cantos, and scholars have typically addressed them on their own.[7] With each group, questions have arisen about Dante's choice of *exempla*, and scholars have been particularly puzzled by Dante's list, and ordering, of the *exempla* of pride (which has become recognised as a *crux* of its own). In this chapter, I read these three groups together as a triptych, and propose that Dante's choice of *exempla* becomes understandable when we interpret them in relation to Dante's moral purpose for the terrace as a whole. I argue that Dante invites his reader to reflect upon the three prideful souls identified (Omberto, Oderisi, and Salvani) and upon the three groups of

[6] As Mark Chinca argues, the doctrine of Purgatory foregrounds the 'inner eschatological horizon of death and the Particular Judgment'; this 'focus on the time immediately after death could only reinforce the program of practical moral education'. I am grateful to Mark Chinca for showing me the chapter 'Out of This World' of a forthcoming book, provisionally entitled *Remember Your Last End: Meditating on Death and the Afterlife in Western Christianity, from Bonaventure to Luther*, prior to publication. For the doctrine of the Particular Judgement, see 'Judgement', *DTC* 8: 1721–1832. For a more general study of the *ars moriendi*, see Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars moriendi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942).

[7] This tendency to treat the three groups separately is encouraged by the *lectura Dantis* format. Nonetheless, some studies provide interpretations of the terrace of pride as a whole. See, for example, Giuseppe Mazzotta, 'Theology of History and the Perspective of Art (*Purgatorio* X–XII)', in *Image Makers and Image Breakers*, ed. by Jennifer A. Harris (Ottawa/New York: Legas, 2003), pp. 71–82; Michelangelo Picone, 'Dante nel girone dei superbi (*Purg.* X–XII)', *L'Alighieri*, 46 (2005), 97–110; and Giuseppe Polimeni, 'Canti X–XI–XII. La "gloria della lingua": considerazioni di poetica nello snodo di "Purgatorio" X, XI, XII', in *Esperimenti danteschi: Purgatorio 2009*, ed. by Benedetta Quadrio (Genoa: Marietti, 2010), pp. 105–33. There are both benefits and disadvantages to undertaking a reading of a section of the poem rather than of a single canto or, indeed, of a particular passage. For an example of the hermeneutic benefits of reading a sequence of cantos together, see Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Guido Cavalcanti tra le "cruces" di *Inferno* IX–XI, ovvero Dante e la storia della ragione', in *Versi controversi*, *Letture dantesche*, ed. by Domenico Cofano and Sebastiano Valerio (Foggia: Edizione del Rosone, 2008), pp. 39–112. In defocusing the lens to encompass three cantos, we may perceive more clearly Dante's broader narrative strategy; however, as in the Barański reading cited, this perspective may also lead to new interpretative solutions to particular textual *cruces*.

prideful examples (delineated by the acrostic 'VOM') in counter-position to the three *exempla* of humility (Mary, King David, and Trajan). By relating these three parts of the terrace and by drawing on a range of theological contexts, I show how Dante models a spiritual exercise of conversion from pride to humility.

In the first part of this chapter, I argue that the theology of the Incarnation underscores Dante's depiction of the three examples of humility (Mary, King David, and Trajan), and I show how Dante invites his reader into an empathetic engagement with them such that he may become, like Mary, a *portatrix Christi* [a Christ-bearer]. In the second part, I suggest that Dante sets up deliberate contrasts, and parallels, between Mary and Omberto; King David and Oderisi; and Trajan and Salvani.[8] In the third part, I argue that the three *exempla* of humility also provide counterfoils to the three groups of four prideful *exempla* and, indeed, that this organisational principle provides some possible interpretative solutions to Dante's ordering of these *exempla*.

The Incarnation: Carving Humility into the Human Heart

Drawing upon familiar tropes in preaching and pastoral practice, Dante presents humility as the necessary gateway to the Christian moral life and to Purgatory proper. Describing the mountain of pride ('mons superbiae'), Peraldus cites Jesus's words to a humble man: 'Behold, I have left an open door before you, which no one can close, because you have a little virtue.'[9] Peraldus interprets man's little virtue ('modica virtus') as humility ('idest humilitatem'), and proceeds to imagine what Jesus might have said to a proud man: 'By contrast, he could say to a proud man: "Behold, I have left a closed door before you, which no one can open, because you have the greatest vice", that is pride.'[10] The Scriptural door of new life – which is closed to the proud but opened to those who humbly submit to Christ – is

[8] In an earlier version of this argument, I also explored how a 'parallel reading' may inflect our appreciation of the literal purgation of the souls on the terrace. See George Corbett, 'Parallel *Exempla*: A Theological Reading of the Terrace of Pride (*Purgatorio* x–xii)', *Le Tre Corone: Revista internazionale di studi su Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio* (2017), 73–96 (pp. 94–95).

[9] Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 2 ch. 8, p. 227b: 'dicit Dominus humili: "Ecce dedi coram te ostium apertum, quod nemo poterit claudere, quia modicam habes virtutem", id est humilitatem.' See also Rev. 3:8: 'Scio opera tua – ecce dedi coram te ostium apertum, quod nemo potest claudere – quia modicam habes virtutem, et servasti verbum meum et non negasti nomen meum.'

[10] Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 2 ch. 8, pp. 227b–228a: 'Sic e contrario dicere potest superbo: Ecce dedi coram te ostium clausum, quod nemo potest aperire: quia maximum habes vitium, scilicet superbiam.'

embodied symbolically by the literal door of a medieval church and, I would suggest, by the entrance to Dante's Purgatory. In medieval rituals of public penance, the church door could be literally closed to penitents: after a period of penance, they were forced to prostrate themselves before the church door as the bishop prayed over them and, only then, were given absolution and allowed to enter.[11] In Dante's Purgatory, the door first appears as just a crack (*Purg.* IX, 74: 'un fesso'), and Dante-character must ask humbly for it to be unlocked ('Chiedi / umilemente che 'l serrame scioglia'; 107–8).[12] Where St Peter's representative should err in opening rather than closing, a physical gesture of humility is underlined as the criterion *sine qua non*: 'pur che la gente a' piedi mi s'atterri' (129).[13] In a thinly veiled allegory, Dante-character – like a penitent entering a church in rituals of penance – undergoes the sacrament of penance and, on absolution, enters through the door of Purgatory to begin his satisfaction for his sins (the ritually marked seven *peccata*).[14]

Ascending to the terrace of pride itself, Dante-character immediately sees examples of humility carved onto the marble inner-bank of the cliff which, as Pietro Alighieri's gloss suggests, bring to mind the reliefs on church walls. Dante is inviting the reader, in this way, to engage in a spiritual practice. The reader must bring to mind or memory (as to a wall) an image of humility. By prayerfully meditating upon the example of humility, it may become an antidote or remedy to the wound

[11] See Wagner, pp. 201–18. In public penance, the 'penitents, clothed in distinctive garments, were met at the door of the church, where they lay prostrate while the bishop prayed over them. The Penitents then disappear from the liturgical documents until Holy Thursday, when they once again prostrated themselves before the church doors as the bishop prayed over them; they were given absolution and were admonished not to return to their sinful ways' (pp. 205–6).

[12] There is a strong allusion to Matthew 18:3: 'Nisi conversi fueritis et efficiamini parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum caelorum.'

[13] The second implication of perseverance is equally important. Purgatory's gatekeeper opens the Christian path of penance with a clear warning: 'Intrate; ma facciovi accorti / che di fuor torna chi 'n dietro si guata' [Enter; but I warn you that whoever looks back must return outside] (*Purg.* IX, 131–32). Dante-character's subsequent lack of excuse only serves to highlight his temptation to turn back on entering: 'e s'io avesse li occhi vòlti ad essa, / qual fora stata al fallo degna scusa?' [and if I had turned back my eyes to it, what would have been a worthy excuse for the fault?] (*Purg.* X, 5–6). Leaving the world of the dead, Orpheus lost his wife Eurydice forever by looking back. Leaving the world of spiritual death (sin), the sinner will lose his soul forever by turning back to sin, as the further Scriptural allusion to Jesus's harsh words to a potential disciple highlight: 'Nemo mittens manum suam in aratrum et aspiciens retro, aptus est regno Dei' (Luke 9:62).

[14] This entry rite (*Purg.* IX, 76–132) is complex, but all of the early commentators interpret it, albeit with different theological nuances, in terms of a penitential ritual. More recently, this interpretation has been challenged – most notably by Armour, *The Door of Purgatory*; however, as I argued in Chapter 3, Armour's reinterpretation of the meaning of Purgatory's door, as of the Griffin, forms part of a mistaken reading of Dante's Purgatory as a whole in terms of man's secular this-worldly happiness.

of pride.[15] Before turning to the moral and spiritual content of these *exempla* of humility, we should note that the very divine art itself is meant to inculcate in the souls of the terrace of pride, and imaginatively in Dante's reader, a disposition of humility.

Both the three carvings of humility (*Purg.* x, 34–69) and the twelve carvings of pride (*Purg.* xii, 25–63) are framed by references to the disparity between the works of man, nature, and God: not only the greatest sculptor of antiquity, Polyclitus, but even Nature would be put to scorn (*Purg.* x, 32–33); no human artist could match these shadings and outlines which would cause even the most subtle mind to wonder (*Purg.* xii, 64–66); the dead seem truly dead, the living truly living (67).[16] At one level, Dante is alluding to the remarkable realism achieved by his contemporaries – the pulpits of Nicola and Giovanni Pisano, the frescoes of Cimabue and Giotto, and the illustrated miniatures of Oderisi or Franco Bolognese.[17] Like the poetry of Dante itself, the works of these artists may still provoke a sense of awe and attendant humility before human greatness.[18] At a deeper level, Dante is emphasising that even the most sublime, novel, and wondrous of human accomplishments is effortlessly surpassed by He for whom nothing is new ('colui che mai non vide cosa nova'; *Purg.* x, 94). Thus earthly pride is shown to be foolish not

[15] Pietro Alighieri [1], gloss to *Purg.* x, 28–33: 'Nam volendo nos, ut dixi, bene a superioribus purgare, debemus in mente nostra recurrere ad parietem, idest ad memoriam operum humilitatis tamquam ad remedium.' Medieval viewers were 'practised in spiritual exercises that demanded a high level of visualization of, at least, the central episodes of the lives of Christ and Mary. To adapt a theological distinction, the painter's were exterior visualizations, the public's interior visualizations.' See Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 45–56 (p. 45).

[16] Pietro Alighieri [1], gloss to *Purg.* x, 28–33: 'Dicendo hic figura attenta quod vidit ibi in dicto pariete marmoreo, hoc est sibi ad memoriam reduxit sculpta proprius quam natura posset, nedum ille subtillissimus sculptor Policretus, de quo Tullius in secundo Rethoricae.'

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

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

only through comparison to human greatness, but also, and primarily, through comparison to the power and majesty of God.[19] The works of Creation and of Divine artifice on mount Purgatory should cause man to wonder at the greatness of the Creator: this sense of marvelling, in turn, should lead to a disposition of chosen subjection to God rather than, as is the case with pride, the created being rebelling against the Creator (*Inf.* XXXIV, 35). It is in this sense that Dante, with Baudelarian sarcasm, challenges his readers to bloat themselves with pride after seeing the power and artistry of God: 'Or superbite, e via col viso altero, / figliuoli d'Eva' (*Purg.* XII, 70–71).

This framing focus on the supreme artistry of God adds the key theological dimension to the examples of humility. Thus, the Annunciation (the first example) is the site of not only Mary's humility but also God's paradigmatic humility.[20] As Beatrice explains to Dante-character in Paradise, man could not descend with humble obedience so low as, disobeying, he had sought to rise upwards: 'per non poter ir giuso / con umiltate obedïendo poi / quanto disobediendo intese ir suso' (*Par.* VII, 98–100). Therefore, God (the highest rational being) became man (the lowest), humbling himself to take on flesh: 'e tutti li altri modi erano scarsi / a la giustizia, se 'l Figliuol di Dio / non fosse umilïato ad incarnarsi' (118–20). Through the Incarnation, God – the Creator – chose to become a small part of His creation: 'il suo Fattore / non disdegnò di farsi sua fattura' (*Par.* XXXIII, 5–6). In his depiction of the *Annunciation*, indeed, Dante allots as much space to the message of God's humility in redeeming man through the Incarnation (*Purg.* X, 34–39) as to Mary's humility in response (40–45).

The humility of Mary, as well as that of King David and Trajan, is therefore set within the context of God's exemplary humility in condescending to become man.[21] The angel informs Mary that she is the highest in the order of grace ('gratia plena'), that the Lord is with her ('Dominus tecum'), and that he will be called the son of the most high ('filius altissimi

[19] This highlights the quiddity of pride in its general sense, which is setting oneself up above God and one's neighbour. As Marco Lombardo's speech puts it, man is freely subject to a greater power and to a greater nature: 'A maggior forza e a miglior natura / liberi soggiacete' (*Purg.* XVI, 79–80).

[20] As Matthew Treherne highlights, God's paradigmatic humility at the Incarnation persists through His continued presence in the Eucharistic host. See Matthew Treherne, 'Ekphrasis and Eucharist: The Poetics of Seeing God's Art in *Purgatorio* X', *The Italianist*, XXVI (2006), 2, 177–96 (pp. 186–87).

[21] See Dante Isella, 'Gli "exempla" del canto X del *Purgatorio*', *Studi Danteschi*, 45 (1968), 145–56: 'i tre episodi di umiltà del *Purgatorio* vengono a celebrare tutti un'umiltà più alta, l'incarnazione di Dio' (p. 152).

vocabitur'). And yet, Mary responds in utmost humility, as the servant of God ('Ecce ancilla Deï . . . fiat mihi secundum voluntatem tuam').[22] At the height of his regal and spiritual power, King David dances before the Ark of the Covenant.[23] He is the humble psalmist (l'umile salmista'; *Purg*. x, 65) who sets himself in contempt before men – his wife, Micòl, looks down disdainfully and sadly from the grand palace – so as to submit himself to God: he is more than a king in the eyes of faith but less than King in the eyes of men ('e più e men che re era in quel caso'; 66).[24] At the height of Imperial power and pomp, Trajan condescends to do the will of the least of his subjects ('la miserella'; 82).[25] His dual motive for her redemption – justice and compassion ('giustizia vuole, e pietà mi ritene'; 93) – echoes in the political sphere God's motives for man's redemption in the spiritual sphere. Whereas proud men vaunt their excellence, Dante shows that those who were greatest in the order of grace (Mary), of regal and spiritual kingship (David), and of nature (Trajan) humbly put themselves at the service of others and of God.

At this stage in the narrative, we are shown examples of humility without, explicitly, humility's reward: 'the humble shall be exalted'. Gregory the Great, however, had already provided an interpretation of Mary, King David, and Trajan that anticipated the reward for their humility. Dante, in turn, arguably embodies this Gregorian reading in *Paradiso*. In *Moralia*. 27, Gregory admires King David more for his humble dancing than for his military prowess in battle because, in the former, he defeats himself; in the latter, he conquers only his enemies.[26] Having great cause for self-glory and pride, King David resisted, in other

[22] As Peraldus notes, Mary does not glory in her exalted status but is disturbed by it ('Unde Beata Virgo cum dixisset eam angelus gratia plenam, et benedictam in mulieribus, turbata est in eius sermone'; Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 3, p. 339a).

[23] See Durling and Martinez, *The Divine Comedy*, p. 168: 'King David's transporting of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem sealed the union of the northern and southern tribes under the single monarchy. The founding of the unified kingdom was in Dante's eyes parallel to the founding of Rome.'

[24] See Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* I, xiv: 'Quia ergo per superbiam homo lapsus est, humilitatem adhibuit ad sanandum. Serpentis sapientia decepti sumus, Dei stultitia liberamur. Quemadmodum autem illa Sapientia vocabatur, erat autem stultitia contemnentibus Deum, sic ista quae vocatur stultitia, Sapientia est vincentibus diabolum.'

[25] See Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg*. x, 91–93: 'Certe maxima humiliatio fuit quod altissimus princeps ita inclinaret imperatoriam maiestatem ad audiendam mulierculam plorantem sub superbis signis in Campo Martio superbo, inter equites superbos.'

[26] See Giovanni Fallani, gloss to *Purg*. x, 66: 'S. Gregorio nel XXVII cap. dei *Morali* affermò di ammirare più Davide per le sue danze che per le sue battaglie: in queste vinse i nemici, in quelle se stesso.' It is, indeed, David's humble joy before the Ark of the Covenant, rather than his military victories, which identifies him again in the heaven of Justice (*Par*. xx, 37–42): 'Colui . . . che l'arca traslatò di villa in villa' (37–39).

words, this primordial temptation. In the Heaven of Jupiter, Dante seems to have Gregory's gloss in mind: David 'il cantor de lo Spirito Santo / che l'arca traslatò di villa in villa: / ora conosce il merto del suo canto' [the singer of the Holy Spirit who transferred the Ark from city to city: now he knows the merit of his singing] (*Par*. XX, 38–40). In *Purgatorio* X, 73–75, Dante explicitly identifies Gregory's reading of Trajan's act of humility. According to the popular tradition, Gregory was so moved by Trajan that he prayed fervently for his redemption.[27] Gregory reads Trajan's humility as foreshadowing the Incarnation and as reflecting a disposition to Christian faith. As we discover in *Paradiso*, Gregory's prayers of living hope ('di viva spene') led to a miracle: Trajan is brought back to life temporarily and, believing in Christ, he experiences the true love ('vero amor') for Christ, such that he merits entry into Paradise: 'fu degna di venire a questo gioco' [he was worthy to come to this joy] (*Par*. XX, 117).[28] Dante's description of the ascent and apotheosis of Mary is also mediated through Gregory. In popular tradition, Gregory – meditating in procession upon an icon of the Virgin – heard the first three lines of the *Regina coeli* chanted by angels, to which he appended the fourth line.[29] In *Paradiso* XXIII, the ascent and assumption of Mary as the queen of Heaven is seen

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

[28] Trajan's salvation through Gregory's intervention had become a commonplace. See, for example, Aquinas, *STh*., IIIa. Supp., q. 71, a. 5, ob. 5.

[29] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, with an introduction by Eamon Duffy (Princeton, NJ/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 173–74: 'We are told that the voices of angels were heard around the image, singing *Regina coeli laetare, alleluia, / Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia, / Resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluia!* to which Gregory promptly added: *Ora pro nobis, Deum rogamus, alleluia!*' (p. 174).

as fulfilling the work begun at the Annunciation. As the *portatrix* of Christ ('quia quem meruisti portare'), she merits her exalted status.

Mary's role as *portatrix Christi* also highlights the way in which Dante encourages his reader to meditate empathetically on these examples of humility. In the tradition of the pseudo-Bonventurean fourteenth-century *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, the Christian is invited into a spiritual exercise: inhabiting imaginatively the role of Mary, the reader-viewer may become – like her – a vessel of Christ.[30] As Conrad of Saxony highlights, Mary is the mirror through which Christians see the true image of God in themselves.[31] For Augustine, Mary's Annunciation is a paradigm for each soul who conceives Christ in spirit as the seed of salvation: 'just as the blessed virgin conceived Christ corporeally, so every holy soul conceives him spiritually'.[32] Indeed, Augustine contrasts the stubborn pride of the pagan philosophers with the humility of heart, piety, and fear of God, which are the first steps on the Christian journey to perfection.[33] Mary's Annunciation embodies the humility through which she, in spirit and in flesh, and man, in spirit, may receive Christ and enter the path to salvation and the new life in Christ. By empathetic meditation on Mary's humility, therefore, sinners may become partakers in the fruit of the Incarnation.

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

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

[32] *STh.*, IIIa. q.30, a.1, arg. 3: 'sicut beata virgo corporaliter Christum concepit, ita quaelibet sancta anima concipit ipsum spiritualiter, unde apostolus dicit, Galat. IV, filioli mei, quos iterum parturio, donec formetur Christus in vobis'.

[33] Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, II, vii, 9–11.

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

> Perché la faccia mia sì t'innamora
> che tu non ti rivolgi al bel giardino
> che sotto i raggi di Cristo s'infiora?
> Quivi è la rosa in che 'l Verbo divino
> carne si fece, quivi son li gigli
> al cui odor si prese il buon cammino.
> (*Par.* XXIII, 70–75)

> [Why does my face so enamour you that you do not turn to the lovely garden blooming under the rays of Christ?
> There is the rose in which the divine Word was made flesh; there are the lilies whose perfume won people to the good path.]

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

Three Living Confessions: Reading One's Sin in the Mirror of Virtue

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

A counter-position between the Virgin Mary (the first example of humility) and Omberto Aldobrandesco (the first soul stamped with pride) might seem, at first sight, strange. However, medieval preachers commonly attacked the folly of taking pride in one's noble lineage by making

reference to Eve and Mary. For example, Peraldus highlights that God did not make one Adam of silver (from whom all nobles descend), and another Adam of mud (from whom all ignoble people descend); instead, he made one man of mud from whom all descend. Therefore, either everyone is noble because of his blood, or everyone is base.[34] Did not God create each one of us? Therefore our father is God, our mother Eve ('Pater noster Deus est, mater nostra Eva'). How, then, can someone despise his brother?[35] Moreover, Peraldus emphasises that – in the time of grace – God specifically chose persons who were ignoble and contemptible to the world.[36] The second Eve, Mary – although least in the eyes of the world – becomes the mother of God and the queen of Heaven.

In this vein, Dante characterises Omberto's pride in his lineage as a denial, or neglect, of this shared ancestry. In a *captatio benevolentiae* addressed to Omberto, Virgil refers to Dante-character's body as the burden of Adam's flesh ('lo 'ncarco / de la carne d'Adamo onde si veste'; *Purg.* XI, 43–44). Omberto proceeds to define his prideful disdain – 'Ogn'uomo ebbi in despetto' (64) – as a failure to think of Eve, our shared mother: 'non pensando a la comune madre' (63).

A note of contemporary polemic can be detected here. The object of Omberto's arrogance – 'L'antico sangue e l'opere leggiadre / d'i miei maggior' [the ancient blood and noble works of my ancestors] (*Purg.* XI, 61) – bears a close resemblance to Frederick II's definition of nobility – 'antica possession d'avere / Con reggimenti belli' [the ancient possession of wealth with pleasing manners] – a definition Dante had sought to confute in the thirty chapters of *Convivio* IV. Notably, in the relevant *canzone* ('Le dolci rime d'amor') – as in *Purgatorio* XI – Dante draws on Peraldus's argument of common ancestry.[37] However, he recognises in the *Convivio* that this argument depends upon a view – that there was a beginning to the human race – which is held by Christians but not necessarily by

[34] Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. VI, pa. 3, c. 28, p. 290b: 'omnes sumus ex eodem patre, et ex eadem matre: non legitur Dominum fecisse unum Adam argenteum, unde essent nobiles, et unum luteum, ex quo essent ignobiles: sed unicum de luto plasmavit, ex quo omnes eximus. Unde si aliquis ex hoc solo nobilis est, quia ex nobili patre, aut nobili matre: aut omnes erimus nobiles, aut omnes ignobiles: quia aut parentes primi fuerunt nobiles, aut ignobiles.'

[35] Ibid.: 'Nunquid non Deus unus creavit nos? Quare ergo despicit fratrem suum unusquisque vestrum?'

[36] Ibid.: 'In tempore enim gratiae potius voluit ignobiles eligere, quam nobiles. 1. Corinth. 1: "Ignobilia et contemptibilia mundi eligit Deus".'

[37] The dependence of Dante's account of nobility in *Convivio* IV on Peraldus's treatise on *Superbia* has been convincingly argued in Maria Corti, 'Le fonti del "Fiore di Virtù" e la teoria della "nobiltà" nel Duecento', in Maria Corti, *Storia della lingua e storia dei testi* (Milan/Naples: Ricciardi, 1989), pp. 45–121 (pp. 104–21).

philosophers and gentiles ('e dice cristiani, e non filosofi, ovvero gentili, [delli quali] le sentenze anco sono in contro'; *Conv.* IV, xv, 9). Aristotle posited, after all, that the world (and each of the species including man) is eternal. As Omberto intimates, his arrogance – 'non pensando a la comune madre' [forgetting our common mother] (63) – may thereby register an implicit scepticism, or at least indifference, towards Christianity. As Dante underlines in 'Le dolci rime d'amor', Christians simply cannot hold this genealogical view of nobility ('Ma ciò io non consento / Nè eglino altresì, se son Cristiani'; *Conv.* IV, canz. iii, 72–73). Although Dante employs this *auctoritas fidei* in the *canzone*, in *Convivio* IV itself he confutes Frederick's genealogical definition of nobility on purely philosophical grounds. He argues that true nobility consists in the excellence of the soul, and that while a virtuous person may ennoble a family tree, a person cannot derive nobility from his lineage.

It is surely significant, then, that the second prideful soul, Oderisi da Gubbio, conjures up the elevated world of Paris and Bologna (both referenced indirectly) in which honour (a term repeated three times in five lines), glory, and fame were apportioned according to intellectual and artistic excellence.[38] Oderisi refers to the arts of illumination, painting, and poetry and, specifically, to Dante's direct contemporaries (and, most probably, to Dante himself; *Purg.* XI, 99). These are excellences of soul which Dante advocates, celebrates, and exhibits in his writings.[39] In Purgatory, Dante nonetheless registers that, from a Christian perspective, a grave spiritual danger of pride arises from pursuing excellence of soul (true nobility), man's *this-worldly* felicity. As Oderisi confesses, the great desire of excellence ('lo gran disio / de l'eccellenza') impeded him during his life from being courteous to another miniaturist whom he desired to

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

[39] For Dante, excellence of soul is demonstrated especially through excellence in knowledge and language. See, for example, *DVE* II, i, 8: 'Sed optime conceptiones non possunt esse nisi ubi scientia et ingenium est: ergo optima loquela non convenit nisi illis in quibus ingenium et scientia est.'

surpass: 'di tal superbia qui si paga il fio' [Here we pay the toll for such pride] (88). From the perspective of eternity, Oderisi now recognises his pursuit of honour and glory as entirely vain: 'Oh vana gloria de l'umane posse! / com' poco verde in su la cima dura' [Oh vain glory of human powers! how briefly it stays green at the summit] (91–92).[40] It is folly to prefer vainglory (which lasts for only an instant) to the eternal glory of Heaven, or to seek a transitory thing when we can have eternal beatitude.[41] As Dante's treatment of the virtuous pagans eloquently testifies, excellence of soul has no salvific merit if it is not directed to the glory of God. Thus Oderisi confesses that had he not turned to God, he would be in Hell and not in Purgatory (89–90).

The example of King David, the 'umile psalmista', may provide a mirror through which the distortion of Oderisi's pursuit of artistic excellence may be correctly perceived. It is in virtue of David's humility, and his acknowledgement of his own sinfulness, that he becomes the *vox Dei*. Dante refers to King David, the purported author of the Psalms, as '[il] cantor che per doglia / del fallo disse "*Miserere mei*"' [the singer who, grieving at his sin, said '*Miserere mei*'] (*Par*. XXXII, 11–12). Oderisi's pride in artistic excellence (an excellence of the soul) is reflected, therefore, in the true mirror of Christian virtue by King David, who devotes his art to the service of God. It is also in the context of King David that the tacit allusion to Dante's own poetic supremacy over Guido Guinizelli and Guido Cavalcanti becomes clear[42]:

> Così ha tolto l'uno a l'altro Guido
> la gloria de la lingua; e forse è nato
> chi l'uno e l'altro caccerà del nido.
> (*Purg*. XI, 97–99)

> [Just so, one Guido has taken from the other the glory of the language, and perhaps he is born who will drive both of them from the nest.]

[40] Dante's metaphors for vainglory can also be found in Peraldus. For example, vainglory is compared to a breath of wind at *Purg*. XI, 100–1 ('Non è il mondan romore altro ch'un fiato / di vento') and at Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 3, p. 337b ('Vocatur etiam vana gloria ventus, ut insinuetur fatuos esse qui eam esuriunt, ventus enim hominem inflando ei nocet, potius quam prosit').

[41] Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 3, p. 335b: 'Secunda fatuitas est, quod vanam gloriam, quae est ad instar puncti, gloriae aeternae praeponit; unde Gregorius; "Stultum est inde transitoria quaerere, unde aeterna possumus habere."'

[42] Durling corroborates the scholarly consensus which implicitly identifies Dante as he 'chi l'una e l'altro caccerà del nido'. See Durling, '"Mio figlio ov'è" (*Inferno*. X, 60)', in *Dante da Firenze all'aldilà*, ed. by Michelangelo Picone (Florence: Cesati, 2000), pp. 303–29. Furthermore, as Durling adds, 'il nome di *Guido* … evoca sempre l'ombra del Cavalcanti', confirming his conclusion that the three poets are Guinizelli, Cavalcanti (the two Guidos), and Dante himself (n. 44, p. 320).

In contrast to the intellectual disdain of Guido Cavalcanti ('ebbe a disdegno'; *Inf.* x, 63), Dante's starting point here is not self-regarding vanity, but rather an awareness of his own sin and the need for God's aid. In other words, Dante-character becomes, like King David, a sinner turned singer. Dante-character's first words in the poem – in a strange conflation of vulgate Latin ('*Miserere*') and vernacular Italian ('di me') – fittingly echo the opening of King David's penitential psalm. And Dante further asserts his credentials as a new David, a *scriba Dei*, through his vernacularisation of the Lord's prayer in this terrace.

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

> 'Quando vivea più glorïoso,' disse
> 'liberamente nel Campo di Siena,
> ogne vergogna diposta, s'affisse;
> e lì, per trar l'amico suo di pena
> ch'e' sostenea ne la prigion di Carlo
> si condusse a tremar per ogne vena.
> (*Purg.* xi, 133–38)

> ['When he was living in greatest glory,' he replied, 'freely, in the Campo at Siena, laying aside all shame, he took his stand;
> and there, to free his friend from the punishment he was suffering in Charles's prison, he brought himself to tremble in every vein.']

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

Thus, the three souls stamped by pride in Purgatory – Omberto, Oderisi, and Salvani – may be read in light of the *exempla* of humility – Mary, King David, and Trajan. Omberto's pride in his family line (an excellence, essentially, of the body) is contrasted with Eve, the communal mother, and Mary, of humble birth. Oderisi's pride in artistic excellence

(an excellence of the soul) is compared to King David, the model of the Christian sinner-singer who puts his art at the service of God. Salvani's pride in political power (an external excellence) is contrasted with Trajan, who puts his universal power at the service of the powerless in the cause of justice.[43] Crucially, we encounter Omberto, Oderisi, and Salvani in a state of conversion: towards the ends of their lives, they did turn away from sin, and now – in Purgatory – they are still in a process of spiritual transformation. Most noticeably, perhaps, they begin to recognise the good in each other. Where Omberto and Oderisi confess their pride in their own voice, Oderisi speaks for Salvani. Oderisi's newfound courtesy to Franco of Bologna (*Purg*. XI, 82–87) is thus seconded by his praise of Salvani. As Peraldus emphasises, praising others is a key remedy to vainglory. In nature, after all, the beholder takes delight in what is seen (as sight takes pleasure in a beautiful colour), but not vice versa (the beautiful colour does not taken pleasure in being seen). So, in human relations, a person should take pleasure from the good in others and not from the praise of others.[44]

Pride As Dante's Sin

The confessions of Omberto Aldobrandesco, Oderisi da Gubbio, and Provenzan Salvani in Purgatory are also spiritually productive for Dante-character. He recognises in each of them an aspect of pride or vainglory in himself. In this way, Dante models in his own person a spiritual exercise for his reader. In response to Omberto's speech, Dante-character humbly acknowledges this prideful tendency: 'Ascoltando chinai in giù la faccia' [Listening, I bent down my face] (*Purg*. XI, 73). Dante-character will display not only filial reverence, but a latent pride in family lineage, when he encounters Cacciaguida in Paradise (*Par*. XVI, 1–27). Moreover, it is clear that pride runs in the Alighieri blood: Dante's great-grandfather has already spent more than one hundred years on the terrace of pride (*Par*. XV, 91–93).[45] Dante's pride in his own nobility of soul and excellence in poetry is even more pronounced. Dante-character acknowledges how Oderisi's confession and discourse on vainglory have reduced his

[43] See also Forti, 'Pusillanimi e superbi', pp. 223–24.

[44] Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 3, p. 335a: 'Naturale autem est, quod apprehendens in re apprehensa delectetur, et non e converso: ut visus delectatur in viridi colore, et non color viridis delectatur ex eo quod videtur: sic videtur, quod aliquis non debeat delectari ex eo quod creditur talis vel talis, sed potius illi qui vident eum bonum, debent in eo delectari.'

[45] Dante does insist, nonetheless, that love of ancestors may be a stimulus to virtuous activity (*Par*. XVI, 7–9).

pride and instilled in its place good humility: 'E io a lui: "Tuo vero dir m'incora / bona umiltà, e gran tumor m'appiani"'[And I to him: 'Your true words instil good humility in my heart, and you reduce a great swelling in me'] (*Purg.* XI, 118–19). Rising to the apex of political power in Florence at the time of his journey through Purgatory (he would hold office as one of the six priors of Florence from 15 June to 15 August 1300), Dante-character learns through Oderisi's prophecy that he will be able to gloss Salvani's humiliation with his own future experience of exile (XI, 139–42).

These three souls – as part of the *ecclesia* of Purgatory – essentially function as living sermons for Dante-character: they lead him to become self-conscious of his own pride and to adopt, in response, the posture of humility. At the close of the dramatic sequence, Dante-character is described as side-by-side with Oderisi, like an oxen under a yoke: 'Di pari, come buoi, che vanno a giogo / m'andava io con quell' anima carca' (*Purg.* XII, 1–2).[46] Even when Virgil commands him to rise up, his mind remains humbled and bowed down in thought (8–9). Dante's acute awareness of his own sinful pride, indeed, spills over into the next terrace of envy:

> 'Li occhi', diss' io, 'mi fieno ancor qui tolti,
> ma picciol tempo, ché poca è l'offesa
> fatta per esser con invidia vòlti.
> Troppa è più la paura ond' è sospesa
> l'anima mia del tormento di sotto,
> che già lo 'ncarco di là giù mi pesa.'
> (*Purg.* XIII, 133–38)

['My eyes,' I said, 'will be taken from me here, but for a short time only, for they have offended little by being turned with envy.

Much greater is the fear that holds my soul in suspense for the torment below, and already the burden down there weighs on me'].

This is the only place in the poem that Dante explicitly identifies his own sins in this way: namely, he has sinned gravely in pride, and only lightly in envy. Indeed, he fears his future punishment for pride (when he returns to Purgatory after his death) so strongly that he can already feel the weight of the boulders. The relative gravity of his pride is also signalled when he ascends, much lighter, from the terrace of pride:

[46] See Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg.* XII, 1–3: 'sicut enim taurus superbus ponitur sub jugum ut dometur et fiat humilis et mansuetus, ita quod discit non ferire amplius cornu vel pede; ita nunc Odorisius superbus positus erat sub saxo, ut domaretur et efficeretur humilis et mansuetus, et oblivisceretur non ferire alios lingua: et Dantes qui similiter fuerat superbus ibat par cum illo, ut habilius loqueretur secum, et disceret inclinari et humiliari.' See also John Scott, 'Canto XII', p. 176.

Già montavam su per li scaglion santi
ed esser mi parea troppo più lieve
che per lo pian non mi parea davanti.
Ond' io: 'Maestro, dì, qual cosa greve
levata s'è da me, che nulla quasi
per me fatica, andando, si riceve?'
(*Purg.* XII, 115–20)

[Already we were mounting the sacred steps, and I seemed to be much lighter than I had been before, on level ground.
So I: 'Master, say, what heavy thing has been lifted from me,
so that while going up I feel almost no exertion?']

This passage further confirms pride as one of Dante's gravest sins. At the same time, it makes a straightforward allusion to the structuring principle of the seven capital vices – namely, that pride is the source sin from which all the others flow. As Francesco da Buti emphasises, when a person in the humble state of penitence overcomes the great weight of pride, he or she may more easily defeat all the other sins.[47] Or, in Velutello's analogy, if one destroys the roots of a tree, all the branches, now dried of sap, are more easily broken.[48]

Pride and Spiritual Death

Like the souls in Purgatory, Dante's reader, in the opening of *Purgatorio* XI, voices the Lord's Prayer in its entirety. Through the acrostic VOM opening *Purgatorio* XII, the reader is also made to turn his eyes downwards – 'Volgi li occhi in giuè' (*Purg.* XII, 13) – as his eye scrolls down the page (rather than from left to right).[49] The final stage of the conversion from pride to humility is, then, this meditation upon the twelve *exempla* of pride, carved on the path under the souls' feet. Dante-author reinforces the overarching architectonic analogy of the episode by comparing these carvings to tombstones in a medieval church. As the first remedy to vainglory is the *meditatio mortis*, so the comparison to tombstones (evoking the infernal graveyard of *Inferno* X) sets into relief the perspective of eternity as a correlative to this-worldly pride. But, through the architectural analogy, Dante also indicates how his reader should engage with these *exempla* of pride. Alluding once more to the realism of late-thirteenth-century sculpture, Dante highlights that the effigies carved on tombstones

[47] Francesco da Buti, gloss to *Purg.* XII, 118–26.
[48] Alessandro Vellutello, gloss to *Purg.* XII, 115–26.
[49] On the acrostic, see Robert Hollander's survey in Hollander, gloss to *Purg.* XII, 25–63.

may bear the exact resemblances of the dead persons buried: 'le tombe terragne / portan segnato quel ch'elli eran pria' (*Purg.* XII, 17–18).[50] However, only those who recognise the souls ('per la puntura de la rimembranza'; 20) truly feel renewed sorrow for their deaths. Similarly, the *exempla* of pride may provoke sorrow only in those readers who recognise in the *exempla*'s lives (and spiritual death) a sinful tendency of their own. As Pietro Alighieri comments, the twelve *exempla* display the tragic end of such pride, and so should move men to purge themselves of this vice and adhere to its curative virtue, humility.[51]

Although it would be a forced reading to simply impose the prevailing scheme – of parallel *exempla* – onto these examples of pride, such an interpretation actually evolves naturally from the passage's contextual background. Once again, Peraldus is important here. Of the twelve examples of pride that Dante gives as warnings to sinners, all six Scriptural *exempla* except for Nimrod (who replaces Adam) are found in the first seven examples listed by Peraldus: Lucifer, Adam, Saul, Rehoboam, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and Holofernes.[52] Whereas Peraldus's list also includes *exempla* of pride who are nonetheless saved, such as Adam and St Peter, Dante chooses purely negative *exempla* from classical history and mythology: all Dante's *exempla* came to a bad end (they are represented here, but inhabit Hell).[53] The structure of Dante's list of *exempla*

[50] Durling notes that 'tomb sculpture portraying the buried was a relatively recent phenomenon in Italy (since 1272), although common in northern Europe for at least a century and a half' (Durling and Martinez, *The Divine Comedy*, p. 197).

[51] Pietro Alighieri [3], gloss to *Purg.* XII, 1–72: 'quomodo vidit in solo et pavimento huius primi circuli sculptum, ad quem exitum venit superbia nostra ut plurimum in hoc mundo infimum et depressum, ut sub allegorico sensu moveat homines ad removendum se ab ipso vitio et adherere virtuti humilitatis sibi in bono contrarie'.

[52] Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. vi, pa. 2 ch. 6, pp. 221a–222b. I refer to 'twelve examples' by not including Troy in the list; following Delcorno, I consider the list as '12 + 1' rather than as '13': twelve is the common number in the *artes praedicandi*, while the example of Troy (with its own acrostic condensed into three lines) serves as a paradigmatic, summative example. See Delcorno, *Exemplum*, pp. 207–10. I do not find convincing the attempt to reduce the list including Troy to twelve by counting Briareus and the giants as one example. Two key arguments in favour of this position are that, by so doing, one maintains the order of Christian followed by pagan examples throughout the series, and that there are, in this way, an equal number of Christian and pagan *exempla* (see Forti, 'Superbia e superbi', in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, v., pp. 484–87; and Scott, 'Canto XII', p. 178). Equally valid opposing arguments in terms of consistency and balance suggest that, in reading Briareus and the giants as two *exempla*, a terzina is allotted to each example (consistency); moreover, the figure of Eve (*Purg.* XII, 70–72), the first woman, counterpoises Troy, the primeval city (balance). Delcorno also points out that the list in John of Wales's *Summa virtutum et vitiorum* includes four of Dante's six Scriptural *exempla*: Saul, Rehoboam, Nebuchadnezzar, and Holofernes (Delcorno, 'Dante e Peraldo', n. 66, p. 224).

[53] Delcorno argues that Dante may have drawn many of his pagan *exempla* indirectly from medieval compilations. He gives the example of John of Wales's *Communiloquium* with its abundance of

has puzzled critics, with many attempts being made to find a symmetry or organising principle.[54] It seems to me that Dante's acrostic – the first four terzine begin with *Vedea*; the second quartet with *O*; the third with *Mostrava* – divides the list of twelve examples naturally into three groups of four.[55] The same acrostic technique in the following terzina (the three lines spell VOM) naturally makes of Troy a separate, paradigmatic example. Delcorno has provided a further contextual rationale based on Dominican preaching manuals for dividing the list of twelve into three groups of four.[56] Those scholars who have accepted this division have attempted to provide a theme, or aspect of pride, which might unify each group of exempla.[57] However, they have not considered whether Dante might have set these three groups of prideful *exempla* in counterpoint with the three *exempla* of humility. Given the acrostic, the preaching context, and these implicit thematic schema, it seems likely that Dante intended these cantos to be read in parallel.

The emblematic contrast between Lucifer, the first example of pride, and Mary, the first example of humility, is reinforced through the figures of Briareus, the giants, and Nimrod. Whereas Lucifer, who raised himself above the Creator (*Inf.* XXXIV, 35), descended from the noblest to the least (*Purg.* XII, 25–26), Mary, who became the humble vessel of the Creator,

auctoritates and *exempla* taken both from theologians ('divini doctores') and from classical literature ('libri gentilium philosophorum'). See Delcorno, *Exemplum*, pp. 203–5 (p. 205). It also seems likely that the pagan *exempla* of pride were mediated through medieval allegorical readings. For Ovid, Delcorno cites the *Allegoriae* of Arnulph of Orleans, of Giovanni del Virgilio, and the *Integumenta Ovidii* of John of Garland (Ibid., p. 214).

[54] See, for example, Nicola Fosca, gloss to *Purg.* XII, 61–63.

[55] The three anaphora (vedea, O, mostrava) seem to allude to three senses: sight, hearing, and touch – that is, to seeing, speaking, and showing.

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

[57] Parodi, for example, argues that these three groups represent presumption (a violence against God), vainglory (a violence against oneself), and ambition (a violence against others). See E. G. Parodi, 'Gli esempi di superbia punita e il "bello stile" di Dante', in E. G. Parodi, *Poesia e storia nella Divina Commedia* (Venice: Neri Pozza, 1965), pp. 233–52: 'la prima serie è tutta di violenti contro la divinitá, la seconda sembra piú modestamente di vanagloriosi, che furono la rovina di sé stessi, e la terza di violenti contro il prossimo' (pp. 240–41). See also Scott, 'Canto XII', p. 176: 'Notiamo che le prime quattro terzine iniziano con la parola "Vedea" e contengono esempi di ribellione o violenza contro la divinità; il secondo gruppo (di vanagloriosi, che furono causa della propria rovina) è anche esso composto da quattro terzine inizianti con la particella vocativa "O"; mentre il terzo gruppo (di tirani superbi, bramosi di primeggiare) comprende quattro terzine, ciascuna introdotta dalla parola "Mostrava".'

ascended from the least to the most noble (*Par.* XXXIII, 4–7).[58] In the works of Virgil, Statius, and Lucan, Briareus – a monstrous giant – presumes to challenge Jove, and Dante presents Jove as a pagan analogue to Lucifer.[59] Heard of but not seen among the giants guarding the pit of Cocytus, 'lo smisurato Brïareo' (*Inf.* XXXI, 98) prefigures the appearance of Lucifer at the Earth's centre (*Inf.* XXXIV, 28–57). By extension, the mythical battle between the Roman gods and the giants depicted in Purgatory may represent analogically the cosmic battle between the good and the bad angels (*Purg.* XII, 31–33). It also prefigures the attempt of King Nimrod to build a tower to heaven. Dante underscores this syncretism by presenting Nimrod, the king of Babylon (Gen. 10. 9–10), as a giant (*Inf.* XXXI, 67–81). The pride of Lucifer and the angels in their cosmic battle with God, and man's prideful attempt to resist the will of God, therefore, find their inverse parallel in the humility and subjection of Mary.[60] The drama of man's mad attempt to become like God – to bridge the infinite gap between creature and Creator – is thus dramatized in the first quartet of examples.[61] The fact that all four examples date from before the coming of Christ highlights, once more, God's humility at the Incarnation: it takes us back to the Annunciation, where Mary's 'AVE' literally reverses, in a playful wordplay, the human pride of Eve ('EVA').[62]

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

[59] See *Aeneid* X, 565–66; *Thebaid* II, 596; *Pharsalia* IV, 596. Dante's reference to Apollo, Minerva, and Mars follows closely Statius, *Thebaid* II, 595–99.

[60] As Pietro d'Alighieri notes, Nimrod's purpose in building the tower was also to protect himself and his people from a second flood (God's punishment for sin). See Pietro Alighieri [3], gloss to *Purg.* XII, 1–72: 'Nembroth cepit facere turrim quandam ascensuram usque ad caelum ne iterum diluvium eos offenderet; ex quo Deus descendit ibi confundens linguam eorum ita quod nullus alium intelligebat.'

[61] See also *Purg.* III, 34–36: 'Matto è chi spera che nostra ragione / possa trascorrer la infinita via / che tiene una sustanza in tre persone' [He is mad who hopes that our reason can traverse the infinite way taken by one Substance in three Persons].

[62] See Scott, 'Canto XII', p. 177: 'Dante intendeva sottolineare l'importanza centrale della venuta del Redentore, il quale con un atto di suprema umiltà (virtú ignota all'antichità pagana), riaprì all'umanità peccatrice le porte del cielo chiese dal primo atto di superbia.'

Whereas the first quartet of *exempla* directly rebel against God, the principal fault of the second group is indifference or impiety towards God. Nïobe, Saul, Arachne, and Rehoboam fail to recognise that their own excellences – in beauty and fertility, political power, artistic ability, and dynastic line, respectively – are dependent on God. Saul and Rehoboam, the two Scriptural *exempla*, clearly counterpoise King David, the second example of humility. Saul loses kingship of Israel to David because he ignored the word of God: 'quia proiecisti sermonem Domini, proiecit te Deus ne sis rex super Israel' (1 Samuel 15:24–26). Rehoboam is King David's successor and loses the inheritance of Israel: 'recessit Israel a domo David' (2 Kings 12:10–11). Rehoboam's dynastic pride serves to accentuate the disparity with his own life and actions: Dante scornfully highlights Rehoboam's baseless fear as he flees without being pursued (*Purg*. XII, 46–48). Saul, by contrast, serves as a particular warning to souls at the beginning of their Christian life (just as his *exemplum* is introduced here in the first terrace of Dante's Purgatory). When he was humble, Saul was made a king; when he became proud, he was ejected from his throne.[63] The mountain of Gilboa upon which Saul kills himself may be interpreted allegorically as the mountain of pride upon which the soul is damned.[64] In such allegorical readings, Saul is the Old Adam, David the New; Saul is the *Synagoga*, David is the *Ecclesia*.[65] Samuel's words upbraiding Saul become, then, the words of a spiritual master to a backsliding Christian.[66] On this

[63] Saul killed himself in indignation and pride. See Pietro Alighieri [1], gloss to *Purg*. XII, 40–42: 'et ibi indignatione et superbia in propriam spatham irruit'.

[64] See Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. VI, pa. 2 ch. 6, p. 228a–b: 'Est enim mons Gelboe, in quo nec ros nec pluvia descendit. Si omnes montes, qui sunt in circuitu eius visitaret Dominus, a monte tamen superbi transiret. De super non recipit mons iste, nec rorem gratiae, nequi pluvium interioris doctrinae. Fluvius etiam humanae doctrinae non potest ad eum ascendere … In isto monte Saul daemoniacus sive arreptitius factus est.' Delcorno, who also cites this passage, highlights that Dante draws again on this very image in his epistle to the Florentines (Delcorno, "Dante', p. 213). Opposing the Holy Roman Emperor, the Florentines oppose the very will of God: 'Sin prorsus arrogantia vestra insolens adeo roris altissimi, ceu cacumina Gelboe, vos fecit exsortes' (Dante, *Epistola* VI, 11 [3]).

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

[66] Bede, *Glossa Ordinaria*, P.L. 113, 601 (cited in Matarasso, n. 6, p. 117): 'Nonne cum humilitatus in animo tuo pro vita praeterita, quae erat sine Deo, ad Ecclesiam venisses, accepta jam fidei et baptismi gratia, caput in exercendis Spiritus fructibus factus es? … Quare ergo, contempta evangelica et apostolica voce, aliam tibi vivendi regulam condere, ac vitiorum spolia congregare maluisti?'

allegorical reading, Israel signifies a man seeing God; he who neglects to live the Gospel, by contrast, is banished from God's face.[67]

Whereas Saul and Rehoboam, in salvation history, counterpoise King David as just king of Israel, Nïobe and Arachne, from classical mythology, counterpoise King David as the humble cantor of the psalms. On account of her irreligion and impiety, Nïobe's seven male and seven female offspring (the object of her presumptuous boasting) were annihilated by the goddess Latona's two children (Apollo and Artemis).[68] Arachne, in her self-conceit, sets up her artistry against God, disowning its Divine origin. Both inversely mirror King David, the 'umile salmista', who, acknowledging his sin and unworthiness, becomes the mouthpiece of God.[69] By approaching these four examples as a group, the intended moral import of these stories on the reader also becomes clear. Ovid emphasises that Nïobe knew Arachne's story and her fate, but she failed to imbibe the moral lesson. Now, the story of Arachne has become 'true' in her own life (*Metamorphoses* VI, 146–52). Similarly, Rehoboam failed to learn the appropriate moral lesson from Saul's fate in the history of Israel. These failures of reading in the two Scriptural and the two pagan *exempla* reveal at the microlevel the danger for Dante's readers if they do not relate the *exempla* to their own lives. Dante's readers, like the people of Thebes after the annihilation of Nïobe's children, must learn the moral lesson and be moved to religion and piety (*Met.* VI, 396–99).

The third quartet of *exempla* highlights the effect of an individual's pride on society as a whole. The folly of vanity in corporeal beauty and possessions is embodied by the first sinner of Dante's third group, Eriphyle, who betrayed her husband, sending him to a certain death, to gain a necklace intended for a goddess ('lo sventurato addornamento'). Eriphyle's vanity also causes, albeit indirectly, the Theban war, just as Helen's vanity had led, ultimately, to the destruction of Troy. The contrast

[67] Ibid.: 'Israel namque vir videns Deum interpretatur.'

[68] Pietro Alighieri interprets her example allegorically: Nïobe is the irreligion of pride; her seven sons and daughters the seven acts of pride in men and women. See Pietro Alighieri [1], gloss to *Purg.* XII, 37–39: 'Et ideo allegorizatur Niobe, idest superbia: Latona, religio: Diana, castitas. Septem filii Niobis sunt septem actus superbiae in mare, et septem filiae ejus septem actus superbiae in femina; scilicet superbus pedum incessus, pectoris supinatio, manuum gestus, linguae verbalis indignatio, nasi frontatio, supercilii elevatio, oculorum semipatentia. Et sic in proposito religio creat sapientiam et castitatem, quae superbos actus habent occidere.'

[69] As the Oderisi episode has clear autobiographical implications, so, from its earliest readers, the story of Arachne has been seen as a negative image, or dangerous tendency, of Dante's verse. See, for example, Pamela Royston Macfie, 'Ovid, Arachne and the Poetics of Paradise', in *The Poetry of Allusion*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff and Jeffrey Schnapp (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 159–72.

with Trajan is, in this context, striking: Trajan prefers the administration of justice on behalf of a poor widow to the vanity of Imperial pomp. Moreover, the widow who demands justice for her son's death inverts the story of Eriphyle, whose son, avenging his father's death, made his mother's necklace truly dear ('caro') by taking her life (*Purg.* XII, 49–51).[70] The three Imperial and military leaders who follow – Sennacherib (king of Assyria), Cyrus (emperor of Persia), and Holofernes (Assyrian general) – also provide clear counter-examples to the just Emperor Trajan. Gregory the Great emphasises that a king's pride leads to the destruction of his people.[71] A scourge of God's providence (2 Kings 19:25), Sennacherib and his army are miraculously annihilated because of his presumption against the God of Israel. Just as Eriphyle's betrayal led to the destruction of Thebes, so Sennacherib sought to destroy the city of Jerusalem. Also like Eriphyle (his pagan foil), Sennacherib is murdered by his sons.[72] The matricide of Eriphyle and the patricide of Sennacherib are immediately followed by the twin decapitations of Cyrus and Holofernes. Cyrus is another failed emperor: his conquests for Persia are presented as entirely bloodthirsty.[73] Most significantly, Cyrus's savage decapitation serves as the pagan analogue to the decapitation of the Assyrian general Holofernes by the Jewish widow Judith.[74] Whereas Israel is saved from Sennacherib's army by God's direct intervention, Israel is saved from Holofernes by the virtue and courage of Judith.

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

[71] See Lellia Cracco Ruggini and Giorio Cracco, 'Gregorio Magno e i "Libri dei Re"', in *Transformations of Late Antiquity: Essays for Peter Brown*, ed. by Philip Rousseau and Manolis Papoutsakis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), vol. 2, pp. 223–58: 'Il tema della superbia dei re, che porta alla rovina loro e i loro popoli è ricorrente in Gregorio, sopratutto nei *Moralia* (22.35), . . . ma a maggior ragione nella *Expositio*, dove riporta e commenta il rimprovero di Dio a Saul: *Nonne, cum parvulus esses in oculis tuis, caput in tribubus Israel factus es?*' (p. 241, n. 73).

[72] Building upon the drama of the Scriptural source also quoted by Peraldus ('filii eius percusserunt eum gladio'), Dante has Sennacherib's sons literally throw themselves on top of their father ('i figli si gittaro / sovra Sennacherib'; *Purg.* XII, 53). See Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. VI, pa. 2 ch. 6, pp. 221b–222a.

[73] Whereas Trajan enacts justice for the death of the widow's son, Thamyis, the queen of the Scythians, exacted her own justice for the murder of her son by Cyrus. Murdering him, she cast his head in a bladder full of blood with the words: 'Sangue sitisti, e io di sangue t'empio' (*Purg.* XII, 57).

[74] Peraldus devotes particular attention to Holofernes, who is naturally paired with Nabuchadnezzar. Holofernes, like Sennacherib, had defied the 'god of Israel' and had claimed that there was no God other than Nabuchadnezzar: 'ostendam tibi, quod non est Deus nisi Nabuchodonosor' (Peraldus, *De vitiis*, t. VI, pa. 2 ch. 6, p. 222a). His murder leads, then, to the flight of the Assyrians: 'come in rotta si fuggiro / li Assiri' (*Purg.* XII, 58–59).

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

> Vedeva Troia in cenere e in caverne:
> o Ilïon, come te basso e vile
> mostrava il segno che lì si discerne!
> (*Purg.* XII, 61–63)
>
> [I saw Troy in ashes and cavernous ruins: O Ilion, how long
> and vile the carving seen there showed you to be!]

Troy's prideful fall leads to the foundation of the Roman *imperium* by Aeneas, whose arrival in Italy – in Dante's syncretic view of global history – coincides with the birth of King David (*Conv.* IV, v, 6). The temporal power of Israel, however, is ultimately subjected to the Roman Empire because, in the Christian era, the true Jerusalem is in Heaven. The final image of the city of Troy in ashes and ruins is, therefore, also a pagan analogue for the earthly Jerusalem which – for its proud rejection of Christ and its continued belligerence against Rome – was destroyed by Titus (*Par.* VI, 82–93).[75]

These parallels between the three 'quartets' of prideful examples and the three *exempla* of humility are striking and, in each case, illustrate both sides of the comparison. We better understand King David as a model of humility in kingship (*Purg.* X, 49–72) in relation to his predecessor Saul and successor Rehoboam, and as a model of humble artistry in relation to Nïobe and Arachne (*Purg.* XII, 37–48). The same is true for the counterpoint between Mary and Omberto, King David and Oderisi, and Trajan and Salvani. In this way, medieval preachers used *exempla* to articulate the true path of the Christian moral life, as well as the potential stumbling blocks along the way. Reading *Purgatorio* X–XII as a triptych does not just provide possible interpretative solutions to particular hermeneutic *cruces* in individual cantos, then. Instead, from the perspective of penitence, this 'parallel reading' illustrates how a sinner (Omberto, Oderisi, and Salvani were Dante's near contemporaries) might reflect upon his or her own life in relation to models of virtue. Dante-character embodies this process for the reader, recognising aspects of his own pride through the lives of the

[75] Trajan's justice in retribution for the murder of the widow's son may reflect, from the perspective of Dante's view of providential history, Titus's justice in retribution for the murder of Mary's son, Jesus.

three souls he encounters. As we see Dante adopting in Purgatory the role of a vernacular preacher against vice, it is clear that Dante does not intend that we, as readers, simply provide a detached theological reading of the terrace of pride. Rather, at every point in the narrative, Dante seeks to engage his readers directly, to provoke the prick of conscience that might lead to conversion. Auerbach was surely right, then, when he saw in the opening poem of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* an echo of Dante's address to his reader as 'hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère'.[76]

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