DANTE'S JOURNEY TO POLYPHONY

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Dante's Journey to Polyphony

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This book is dedicated to my parents, for all the years of love, patience, and support.

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Illustration Credits

1 Luca della Robbia, the Elder (1399/1400–82). Young musicians with portable organ, harp, and lute. Detail from the Cantoria (choir loft), 1431–38. Marble. Location: Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, Italy. Photo credit: Scala/Art Resource, New York. Image reference: ART5594.

2 Lute, back. Wood, reddish varnish (ca. 1520), from Bologna. Length 81.5 cm. Inv. 28-C 320. Obbizzi Collection. Location: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria. Photo credit: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York. Image reference: ART173942.

3 Sinon and Adam fighting, in MS. Holkham misc. 48, Bodleian Library Oxford, 47.

4 Apollo with a cithara. Roman statue. Location: Museo Pio Clementino, Vatican Museums, Vatican State. Photo Credit: Scala/Art Resource, New York. Image reference: ART84565.

5 Lute-shaped cithara from The Stuttgart Psalter, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart, Cod. bibl. 2° 23, 108r.

6 The current location of this twelfth-century psalter of German origin is unknown (until 1932 it belonged to the Western Manuscripts collection of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.) Every effort has been made to contact the present owner of this manuscript and copyright holder of this image. The image is available in E.G. Millar, *The Library of A. Chester Beatty: A Descriptive Catalogue of Western Manuscripts*, vol. 1, plate 83.

COVER IMAGE

Anonymous, fourteenth century. Musician angels. Detail of fresco of the Assumption of the Virgin. Chapel of the Virgin. Fourteenth century. Photo: G. Nimatallah. Location: Sacro Speco (S. Scolastica), Subiaco, Italy. Photo credit: © DeA Picture Library/Art Resource, New York. Image reference: ART355677.

A Note on Translations

The text of the *Commedia* is the one established by Giorgio Petrocchi. Translation of Dante's *Commedia* is by Jean and Robert Hollander (New York: Doubleday, 2000–07), also available online as part of the Princeton Dante Project (http://etcweb.princeton.edu/dante/pdpl), with just a few differences. Where such differences occur I have generally followed the printed version. (Commentaries on the *Commedia* cited in references without publication information are available online from the Dartmouth Dante Project, at http://dante.dartmouth.edu/.) Translation of Dante's *Convivio* is by Richard H. Lansing, *Dante's 'Il Convivio'* (New York: Garland, 1990) (also available online at http://dante.ilt.columbia.edu/books/convivi/). Translation of the Epistles is by Paget Toynbee, Dante: 'Epistles,' in The Letters of Dante (Oxford: Clarendon, 1920). The texts and translations of Dante's *Rime* are from *Dante's Lyric Poetry*, ed. and trans. K. Foster and P. Boyde, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

Texts from the Bible are from the Latin Vulgate and the Douay-Rheims translation, both available online at http://www.drbo.org/.

Translation of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* is from *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Second and Revised Edition, 1920, Literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Online Edition Copyright © 2008 by Kevin Knight, available online at http://www.newadvent.org/summa/.

Where no other indication is given, translations are my own.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations and short forms have been used in notes and in parenthetical references within the text:

Aen.	Virgil, *Aeneid* (e.g., *Aen.* VI.557–8)
Conf.	Augustine, *Confessiones* (e.g., *Conf.* X.xiii)
Conv.	Dante, *Convivio* (e.g., *Conv.* I.vii.15)
De consolatione phil.	Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae* (e.g., *De consolatione phil.* I.1)
De inst. mus.	Boethius, *De institutione musica* (e.g., *De inst. mus.* V.xii)
De musica	Augustine, *De musica* (e.g., *De musica* I.xii.22)
Inf.	Dante, *Inferno* (e.g., *Inf.* VI.94–9)
Par.	Dante, *Paradiso* (e.g., *Par.* XXIII.61–3)
PL	Migne, ed., *Patrologia latina* (e.g., *PL*, vol. 172, col. 1148)
Purg.	Dante, *Purgatorio* (e.g., *Purg.* VIII.1–18)
ST	Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (e.g., *ST*, I^{ae}-II^{ae} q.1 a.1 = *Summa theologiae*, pars prima secundae partis, quaestio 1, articulus 1)

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Introduction

> 'Once we have realized the importance of *musica mundana* for the medieval world, we should not allow ourselves to take lightly any allusions to music in the literary works of the Middle Ages ...'[1]

This book is concerned with sacred music in Dante's *Commedia*. From infernal cacophony, through purgatorial monophony, to paradisiacal polyphony, sacred songs constitute a thoroughly planned system accompanying the pilgrim's itinerary. Dante's poetry has inspired a number of musical compositions over time, such as Tchaikovsky's symphonic fantasy, or Rachmaninov's vibrant opera, both about Francesca Da Rimini. While this fascinating approach has elicited valuable syncretic results, such as the works of Michele Croese and Maria Ann Roglieri,[2] the perspectives of other artists on Dante's poem are extraneous to the structure and poetry of the *Commedia*. This research is not concerned with later music inspired by Dante's poetry, since – as Michele Barbi warned – 'All that is outside of the poet's awareness does not matter.'[3]

1 L. Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963), 169n14.

2 M. Croese, *La 'Commedia' come partitura bachiana:* O*sservazioni sul cielo del Sole e sul Sanctus della Messa in si minore* (Pisa: ETS, 2001); Maria Ann Roglieri, *Dante and Music: Musical Adaptations of the 'Commedia' from the Sixteenth Century to the Present* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001). See also, still by Roglieri: 'Twentieth-Century Musical Interpretations of the Anti-Music of Dante's *Inferno*,' *Italica* 79 (2002): 149–68; and 'From *le rime aspre e chiocce* to *la dolce sinfonia di Paradiso*: Musical Settings of Dante's *Commedia*,' *Dante Studies* 113 (1995): 175–208. See as well Guido Salvetti, ed., *Il mito di Dante nella musica della Nuova Italia, 1861–1914* (Milan: Guerini, 1994).

3 'Tutto ciò che è fuori della coscienza del poeta non può importare.' M. Barbi, *Studi danteschi* 17 (1938): 48.

The relation between musicality and poetry in Dante has become the object of a number of studies, among which one should bear in mind at least those of Zygmunt Barański, who focuses on the heritage of the Pythagorean and Boethian ideas of world harmony, and Mario Pazzaglia, who explores the connections among musical expression, metrics, and phonetics.[4] However, my own main focus is the manner and meaning of musical performance as represented in Dante's poem. The songs quoted in the *Commedia* and their modes of performance are described in detail and constitute a pattern that carries meaning. In this book I propose to analyse and unveil their significance. As for the actual music that Dante had in mind, remarkable essays by William P. Mahrt, Claudio Bacciagaluppi, and Amilcare Iannucci, drawing on *libri usuales* and graduals, pursue the identification of the melodies whose texts Dante quotes.[5]

Some scholars have downplayed the significance of the overarching musical discourse in Dante's *Commedia* and treated it as a primarily aesthetic device. In his *Enciclopedia dantesca* entry, Raffaello Monterosso presents a valuable preliminary approach to the study of music – in the

4 Z. Barański, '*Tu numeris elementa ligas*: Un appunto su musica e poetica in Dante,' *Rassegna europea di letteratura italiana* 8 (1996): 89–95. While acknowledging the importance of the musical passages in the poem, Barański favours the topic of the relations between the words *canto, cantica,* and *canzone,* and invites a turning of the attention towards links between the Song of Songs and the 'comic' tradition. He specifies, however, that Dante's poetic system finds its self-justification within the literary world, not needing to reference an external language in order to validate itself.

M. Pazzaglia: 'Musica e metrica nel pensiero di Dante,' in *La musica nel tempo di Dante*, ed. L. Pestalozza (Ravenna: Unicopli, 1986), 257–90; and 'L'universo metaforico della musica nella Commedia' *L'armonia come fine: Conferenze e studi danteschi* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1989). Noting Dante's attention to the sound and timbre of his lyric and consideration of earlier theoreticians, such as Boethius, Aurelian of Réôme, and John of Garland, Pazzaglia recognizes a twofold role of music for the poet: speculative and moral. He seems, however, more involved with the metrical and phonetic aspects of poetry, and with the identification of phonic-symbolical semantic fields, than with the interpretation of songs within the poem.

5 W.P. Mahrt, 'Dante's Musical Progress through the *Commedia*,' in *The Echo of Music: Essays in Honor of Marie Louise Gollner,* ed. Blair Sullivan (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2004). C. Bacciagaluppi. 'La "Dolce Sinfonia di Paradiso": Le funzioni delle immagini musicali nella *Commedia*,' *Rivista di studi danteschi* 2, no. 2 (July–December 2002): 279–333. Amilcare Iannucci also took steps toward identifying some chants; see: A. Iannucci: 'Musica e ordine nella *Divina Commedia*,' in *Studi americani su Dante* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1989), 87–111, especially p. 101.

broadest possible meaning – in the *Commedia*,[6] but elsewhere he propounds a strident advocacy of the preeminently lyric and decorative function of musical imagery in the poem: 'Music, which plays such a large part in the imagery of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, is intended as a subsidiary element, although one of great effect, for the sole end of the realization of a fuller lyrical vision.'[7]

One of the main reasons for critical resistance to an organic treatment of the musical material in the *Commedia* is the traditionally scant information about Dante's musical training and exposure. New musicological scholarship, however, now helps us place the debate within better-defined contours. Thanks to research by Franco Alberto Gallo, Galliano Ciliberti, Agostino Ziino, and others, it is now clear, for example, that polyphony was a widespread practice in Tuscany and Northern Italy during Dante's time. Mario Tubbini identified the ordinal book of Santa Reparata, the cathedral of Dante's day Florence, and Giulio Cattin assessed the musicological importance of this discovery. With this in mind, we shall reconsider the descriptions of singing in the *Commedia* and find that Dante's use of polyphony neatly distinguishes the musical environment of *Paradiso* from that of a monophonic *Purgatorio*.

Thus, moving from the philosophical groundings of music and from a study of the proliferation of polyphony in Tuscany during Dante's day, this book shows the intricate musical design in the texture of the poem. An analysis of the musical passages in the *Commedia* will show that, after the process of *emendatio musicalis* (to borrow a felicitous expression from Raffaele De Benedictis)[8] featuring simple musical structures (monophony) in Purgatory, Dante assigns to music in Paradise the character of a transcendental teleology, as it becomes the *medium* through which be-

6 *Enciclopedia dantesca* (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 1970–78), under entry for 'Musica,' 1061 ff.

7 'Nella *Commedia*, poi, la musica, la quale occupa sì larga parte nelle immagini del *Purgatorio* e del *Paradiso*, è intuita come elemento sussidiario, anche se spesso della più grande efficacia, al solo fine di realizzare più compiutamente la visione lirica.' R. Monterosso. 'Problemi musicali danteschi,' *Cultura e scuola*, 13–14 June 1965, 207–12, at p. 207.

8 R. De Benedictis, *Ordine e struttura musicale nella 'Divina Commedia'* (Fucecchio: European Press Academic Publishing, 2000), 99. De Benedictis calls the *Commedia* a 'musical macrosequence' and traces the implications of the Pythagorean legacy diffused via Plato and Boethius. He focuses on the speculative aspects of music and its mathematical characters in Dante's day, interpreting *musica mundana* as the constitutive element of Paradise's soundscape.

atitude is delivered. Far from being a merely decorative element, music in the *Commedia* can be construed as the necessary complement to the great liturgy of the sacred poem, in line with the medieval pining for a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, as Leo Spitzer observed.[9]

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the diffusion of polyphony in the thirteenth century. Recent scholarship has highlighted how an archaic, improvised polyphonic practice was common in the major churches of Tuscany, Veneto, and Umbria. Dante's exposure to polyphony must therefore have been quite extensive. This notion is essential for plumbing Dante's contacts with polyphony and lays the basis for critical discourse on polyphony in his work.

Chapter 2 examines infernal cacophony as an ironic reversal of the atoning chants of Purgatory and the beatifying songs of Paradise. God's perfect harmony was conceived of in Boethian terms as a *numerus numerans*, a mathematical ratio organizing the cosmos. A corrupted version of this orderly principle, the *musica diaboli* parodies the sacred songs of the higher realms.

Chapter 3 deals with the *Purgatorio*. The songs by Casella and the siren represent the deceptive and dangerous side of music, but the Psalms, all performed unisonally, offer a remedy to the sinners who must atone – an apposite *pharmakon* for the souls which springs from their own lips. Purgatory can be construed as a session of spiritual and musical training of the souls.

Chapter 4 deals with the allegorical meaning of polyphonic singing. Singing becomes an expressive tool in the poet's hands, used to try to circumvent the engulfment of language when describing the Supreme Entity.

Chapter 5 is devoted to Dante's treatment of the music of the spheres. This theory enjoyed great popularity in the early Middle Ages, inspiring philosophers and poets for centuries until its stern refutation by thirteenth-century Aristotelianism.

The evolution of the inherently musical discourse from cacophony in *Inferno*, through an essentially monophonic soundscape in *Purgatorio*, to a polyphonic environment in *Paradiso*, is effected on musical, rhetorical, and theological levels. While infernal music is cast as a parodic reversal of sacred songs, the purgatorial poetics of desire are associated with monophony. The plainsongs of the atoning souls, who are struggling

9 Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony*, 26, 46.

with pain or breaking into sobs, express the longing for the mathematical and musical harmony of the universe. This desire culminates and is fulfilled in the polyphonic performances in Heaven. The switch from monophony to polyphony, in accordance with the Boethian principle of 'dissimilium inter se vocum in unum redacta Concordia,'[10] signifies the spiritual accordance of the blessed with God and the reconciliation of the multiplicities within the One.

The role of musical performances in the *Commedia*, and more specifically how the *récit* of sacred music unfolds throughout the entire poem and constitutes a structural pillar of the narrative discourse, is the main object of discussion. I will adopt a musicological perspective to shed light on Dante's exposure to sacred music and will use a philological lens to analyse the musical passages in the *Commedia*. The inherently musical features of singing in the poem reach far beyond the decorative level, and constitute a great source for poetic *inventio*, as well as a systematic structure that carries meaning. In order to understand the system we must understand the elements compounding it.

10 'Agreement is achieved through different voices united in one.' See chap. 3, p. 92 and n. 3.

1 Music to Dante's Ears: Exposure to Polyphony

How can polyphony play such an important and systematic part in a poem written in a century in which the notated manuscripts are so scarce? John Stevens, as early as 1968, raised a doubt that has proved difficult to lay to rest, even in very recent years when Dante's contacts with polyphony have begun to be acknowledged:

> Music for Dante and his contemporaries was first and foremost *melody*; and they used the word *armonia* in quite un-harmonic senses ... [W]hen Dante thinks of music, he thinks of a single line of sound – elaborate in structure, maybe, and elaborate beyond the bounds of our innocent expectation – but still in essence a single melody.[1]

I shall challenge this view, based on recent research that has led musicologists to draw different conclusions with regard to the extent of the practice of polyphony in Dante's day. The word *polifonia* does not appear in the *Enciclopedia dantesca;*[2] however, *organum* does, because Dante uses

1 J. Stevens, 'Dante and Music,' *Italian Studies* 23 (1968): 11. More recently, Margaret Bent seems to express the same cautious attitude towards Dante's references to polyphony: 'There are very few places in the *Commedia* that can be construed as referring to polyphonic music ... Most of Dante's references to sounding music lend themselves most readily to interpretations either of monophonic music or, if polyphonic, in a relatively simple style, such as Dante doubtless heard in Tuscan churches.' M. Bent, 'Songs without Music in Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*: *Cantio* and Related Terms.' In *'Et facciam dolçi canti': Studi in onore di Agostino Ziino in occasione del suo 65° compleanno*, vol. 1, ed. Bianca Maria Antolini, Teresa M. Gialdroni, and Annunziato Pugliese (Lucca: LIM – Libreria Italiana Musicale, 2003), 161–82, at 161–2.

2 *Enciclopedia dantesca*, Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 1970–78.

it in the *Commedia*. In medieval musical treatises, the word *organum* indicates a type of multivocal composition that was already in use in twelfth-century France and flourished in the Notre Dame School (1180–1250).[3] The expression 'cantare cum organo' had become universally synonymous with singing polyphonically and was especially employed in liturgical documents or accounts describing improvised descant. Moreover, by Dante's time a new type of polyphonic composition – the motet – had come into fashion. The thirteenth-century motet was a complex polyphonic composition whose tenor was a pattern of a few repeated bars extracted from a Gregorian chant (although occasionally the tenor melody came from a secular song, dance, or street cry and could be played by an instrument). But the distinctive feature of the motet was that the duplum and the triplum each had their own lyrics, often in different languages. Thus it is not unusual to find a motet that has a vernacular love song for the duplum and a Latin hymn to the Virgin for the triplum! Motets were common in France,[4] as they were in other areas of Europe, and may have been known to Dante from his journey to Paris – if indeed he went there.

Dante's contacts with polyphony ought to be seen in the light of newly acquired evidence that polyphony was indeed a common practice in late thirteenth-century Tuscany. For many years, however, scholars were reluctant to acknowledge such a musical genre in Italy prior to Marchettus of Padua (fl. 1305–10). This led many Dante scholars to either downplay or rule out entirely the possibility that the poet might have referred to polyphonic performances in his oeuvre. Today new scholarship in the field of musicology allows us to reassess this judgment. Studies by Mario Tubbini and Giulio Cattin have brought to light the old ordinal book of Santa Reparata, the Florence Cathedral. In this church, a young Dante would attend most of the liturgical year's solemn celebrations – precisely the ones, as we shall see, that featured polyphonic settings. Thanks to

3 The musical instrument 'organ' was usually referred to in Latin treatises by the plural *organa*, and the singular *organum* conversely meant vocal polyphony. See my 'Dante's *Organa*: The *Comedy* from Unholy Racket to Sacred Music,' *Italian Quarterly* 43 (2006): 5–23.

4 For the diffusion of polyphony in France, the main source is the Montpellier manuscript (F-Mof H196), the single most important motet collection from the Middle Ages. Written in Paris by eleven to fourteen hands from 1280 to 1300, it contains 336 polyphonic compositions (324 of which are motets), and is thought to collect the entirety of thirteenth-century repertory. The authors of the music remain unknown, although Perotinus and Petrus de Cruce are likely to be among them.

the discovery of this *liber ordinalis* (and other *libri ordinales* from neighbouring cities) we have a clearer idea of the nature of liturgical music in Duecento Tuscany and northern Italy, and this calls for a reassessment of Dante's knowledge of such repertory. For example – and contrary to hitherto accepted convictions – it is now safe to assert that improvised polyphony was a widespread practice in central Italy, and particularly in Florence, during the thirteenth century.[5]

In the thirteenth century the word *organum* was also employed to refer to any form of polyphony. Ordinal books, Lives of the Saints, and *libri usuali* teem with expressions such as *cantare cum organo* and *discantare* With no need to point back directly to Masters Leoninus and Perotinus's Notre Dame repertory, – *formulae* which instructed skilled singers to improvise a second, a third, and, in some particularly solemn circumstances, even a fourth voice over the given chant – the presence of which makes it unnecessary for us to point back directly to the Notre Dame repertory of Masters Leoninus and Perotinus. After all, the term *organum* was already employed in the very influential ninth-century anonymous treatise *Musica enchiriadis* to denote an archaic form of polyphony. It had disappeared briefly in the tenth century only to resurface in Guido's eleventh-century *Micrologus* (1025/26), and documents of thirteenth-century central Italy containing the word *organum* admittedly referred to Guido's archaic descants rather than to the art of Leoninus.

The word *organum* appears twice in the *Commedia* in its musical meaning:

> Tale imagine a punto mi rendea
> ciò ch'io udiva, qual prender si suole
> quando a cantar con organi si stea;
> ch'or sì or no s'intendon le parole (*Purg.* IX.142–5)

('giving me the same impression / one has when listening to singers / accompanied by an organ and the words / are sometimes clear and sometimes lost');

5 The *libri ordinales* (ordinal books) were texts in use in every diocese and contained instructions on how to celebrate the mass, particularly masses of offices for Feast days. While these books did not usually contain any notated music, they did include directions on how the celebrant should move during each phase of the mass, how the singers were supposed to intone certain litanies, and how the processions were to be staged. Ordinal books can be considered a sort of 'script' for the mass.

> Da indi, sì come viene ad orecchia
> dolce armonia da organo, mi viene
> a vista il tempo che ti s'apparecchia. (*Par.* XVII.43–5)

('And thus, as harmony's sweet sound may rise / from mingled voices to the ear, so rises to my sight / a vision of the time that lies in store for you.')

Margaret Bent argues against an abundance of polyphony in the *Commedia*, but does concede that at least one passage refers to it: 'texts cited by Dante in connection with music, apart from one instance of his own verse, are confined to the monophonic repertories of Provençal troubadours, and so-called Gregorian chant, of which he names items with symbolic textual significance.'[6] I will contend that, on the contrary, Dante cites many polyphonic songs, and that their symbolic significance is not only textual but musical as well. The only passage that Bent actually quotes as an example of polyphony is *Purgatory* IX.144, although she admits that 'it is unclear whether this refers to vocal polyphony, to organ or to other instruments, but the fact that the words are obscured may suggest some kind of elaboration.'[7] In chapter 3, I will propose an interpretation of this mention of *organi* as a reference to musical instruments; it has a different meaning, therefore, from the occurrence in *Paradiso* XVII.44, which is a supremely important passage about polyphony (and about Dante's future political triumph) in the *Commedia*.

The following pages are dedicated to illustrating the musico-liturgical context in which Dante lived, both for what concerns his historically ascertained whereabouts and for his less than certain stay in Paris, where, as Nino Pirrotta hypothesizes,[8] he could have heard not only improvised *organa*, but also composed polyphony.

Historical and musicological evidence tells us that Dante's exposure to polyphony was such that we should actually be surprised if he had not made polyphonic songs an important element in his poem. Indeed, we see that polyphony is employed for the distribution of grace, as an

6 M. Bent: 'Songs without Music in Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*: *Cantio* and Related Terms,' in '*Et facciam dolçi canti*,' 161–82, at p. 162.

7 Ibid., 162.

8 'When we presume Dante visited Paris, the motet had ceased being a liturgical composition, although sacred motets could still be used in the liturgy.' N. Pirrotta, 'Dante "*Musicus*": Gothicism, Scholasticism, and Music,' *Speculum* 43 (1968): 251.

allegory of political peace, and as a complex symbol of the reconciliation between unity and multiplicity in the universe. Furthermore, we note a clear musical design by which Dante fashions the soundscape of the three otherworldly realms respectively structured by cacophony, monophony, and polyphony. We can now begin to answer the question as to what role liturgical music must have played in Dante's experience as a listener in order for the poet to endow it with such significance. As already indicated, for a long time this question proved quite challenging, because our knowledge of the musical aspects of liturgical life in Italy was for centuries limited and mostly conjectural. Only in the last few decades has a new interest arisen among musicologists and historians, resulting in recent studies of the ordinal book of Santa Reparata (Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana MS. 3005 or *Ritus in ecclesia servandi*) and another thirteenth-century manuscript (Archivio dell'Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore I.3.8 or *Mores et consuetudines canonice florentine*) which provide substantial evidence that a polyphonic tradition existed in Florence during and even before the thirteenth century.[9]

As to the origin of such polyphonic practices in central Italy, much is still to be ascertained.[10] According to F. Alberto Gallo, medieval repertories included only compositions of the current and the former generation, since older music would be considered obsolete: 'Medieval music is always only contemporary music: only newly composed music and music from the previous generation of musicians is known, performed and appreciated. That is the music on which musicians had formed their technique, the music of their masters.'[11] Because Magister Perotinus, the last and greatest Notre Dame composer, was active only up until circa 1225, the hypothesis of a survival of the Notre Dame repertory in late Duecento Tuscany might be expected to lose ground. Nevertheless, evidence

9 G. Cattin, 'Novità dalla cattedrale di Firenze: Polifonia, tropi, e sequenze nella seconda metà del XII secolo,' *Musica e storia* 6, no. 1 (June 1998): 7–36; see also by the same author: '"Secundare" e "Succinere": Polifonia a Padova e Pistoia nel Duecento,' *Musica e storia* 3 (1995): 41–120.

10 See C. Corsi and P. Petrobelli, eds., *Le polifonie primitive in Friuli e in Europa* (Rome: Torre d'Orfeo, 1989).

11 'La musica medievale è sempre solo musica contemporanea: si conosce, si utilizza, si apprezza esclusivamente la musica composta attualmente e quella composta dai musicisti della generazione precedente, cioè quella sulla quale si è cominciato ad apprendere la tecnica musicale, la musica dei propri maestri.' F. Alberto Gallo, *Musica e storia tra Medioevo e Età moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986), 22.

exists that other, simpler forms of liturgical and secular polyphony pervaded Italy, especially at important feasts and celebrations, and Dante's stature would have granted him participation in major ceremonies everywhere he visited. It is therefore very likely that the poet systematically used polyphony as a device to convey meaning in the *Commedia*.

One way of shedding light on the Florentine poet's contacts with polyphony is to trace the presence of books containing notated polyphony in places that Dante frequented. This type of source provides a considerable amount of information about the nature of the music that was being played. Although the mere presence of a book containing notated polyphonic music in a certain place and at a certain time does not unequivocally prove that Dante saw it or heard its music performed, it still represents strong circumstantial evidence that Dante had exposure to that repertory. More useful will prove, as we will see, descriptive sources regarding polyphony. Ordinal books, accounts of important feast days, chronicles, and other documents containing little or no notated music, but testifying to the existence of improvised polyphonic performance in places or areas frequented by Dante, are the smoking gun needed to prove that Dante's ears were indeed filled with polyphonic songs.

Notated Manuscripts

A two-voice setting of a trope called *Regi regum glorioso* has survived from the Lucca liturgical repertory, in the form of a twelfth-century antiphonary of the Biblioteca Capitolare Feliniana.[12] That polyphony was in use in the Lucca liturgy during the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries is further confirmed by the *Ordo officiorum* of the Cathedral of the city,[13] and by the presence of two additional manuscripts originating in Lucca, which contain theoretical treatises on *organum*.[14]

12 Lucca, Biblioteca Capitolare Feliniana MS. 603. The notated trope *Regi regum glorioso* is on f.256r of this quite old, but still beautifully illuminated antiphonary, which was made in the monastery of Santa Maria del Pontetetto.

13 See the section below on 'Descriptive Manuscripts'; and A. Ziino, 'Polifonia nella cattedrale di Lucca durante il XIII secolo,' *Acta musicologica* 47, no. 1 (1975): 16–30.

14 The first, by Guglielmo Roffredi, who was master at the School of S. Martino and then bishop of Lucca from 1170 to 1190, is *Summa artis musicae*, on ff. 211v–212r of the Lucca Biblioteca Capitolare MS. 614. The second, though written in Lucca in 1192, is preserved in Berlin (Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, thel. Lat. Quart. 261) and reports two versions (ff.48r-51v) of the famous treatise *Ad organum faciendi*.

Among the books of notated music that were certainly in existence in Florence, several may be found in the collection of the Medici family, whose story is closely associated with the development and dissemination of musical practice in Florence. Cosimo il Vecchio was probably the commissioner of the famous Dufay motet *Nuper rosarum flores*, with which the new Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore was inaugurated in 1436.[15] Lorenzo the Magnificent was among the strongest promoters of polyphony, inviting to Florence Flemish composers such as Heinrich Isaac, Alexander Agricola, Pietrequin Bonnel, and Iohannes Ghiselin.[16] Lorenzo died in 1492, leaving Florence in a state of political uncertainty, and his library was catalogued only in 1495, when his son Piero (suitably nicknamed *lo sfortunato*, 'the unlucky') was exiled from Florence and forced to pack and inventory all the books. It contained about a thousand volumes,[17] some twenty-five of which related to music, and three at least of which contained notated music. However, besides Lorenzo's library and a couple of speculative texts that had belonged to his grandfather Cosimo[18] (a Quintilian written in littera antiqua and a copy of Egidio Romano's *De regimine principum*), Piero Di Cosimo had a notable collection of music books in the fifteenth century. His name is reported on the last folio (476v) of a codex that collects the largest portion of the known Notre Dame repertory. This codex (Pluteus 29.1, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana) was produced in Paris in the mid-thirteenth century and appears for the first time in an inventory of the Medici library

15 See C.W. Warren, 'Brunelleschi's Dome and Dufay's Motet,' *Musical Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (January 1973): 92–105; C. Wright, 'Dufay's "Nuper rosarum flores": King Solomon's Temple and the Veneration of the Virgin,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 47, no. 3 (Autumn 1994): 395–441; M. Trachtenberg, 'Architecture and Music Reunited. A New Reading of Dufay's "Nuper rosarum flores" and the Cathedral of Florence,' *Musical Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 740–75.

16 See F.A. D'Accone, 'Lorenzo il Magnifico e la musica,' in *La musica al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico: Congresso internazionale di studi, Firenze, 15–17 Giugno 1992*, ed. P. Gargiulo (Florence: Olschki, 1993), 213–48; translated as 'Lorenzo the Magnificent and Music,' in *Lorenzo il Magnifico e il suo mondo*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini (Florence: Olschki, 1994), 259–90.

17 For a discussion of the music books of Lorenzo, see E. Pasquini, *Libri di musica a Firenze (*Florence: Olschki, 2000), 81–6. The catalogue is reported in G. Volpi, 'Una nota di libri posseduti da Lorenzo il Magnifico,' *Rivista delle biblioteche e degli archivi* 11 (1990): 89–90.

18 For an edition of Cosimo's catalogue, see F. Pintor, 'Per la storia della libreria medicea nel Rinascimento: Appunti d'archivio,' *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 3 (1960): 189–210.

of 1456.[19] The historical and musicological importance of Pluteus 29.1 can hardly be overestimated: it is the main codex that passed down to us the polyphonic repertory of Leoninus and Perotinus (masters of the Notre Dame chapel from 1160 to 1250), contained in 476 folios.[20] Recent scholarship has illuminated the circumstances under which this important book arrived in Florence, probably as a gift from King Louis XI to Florentine ruler Piero.[21]

More chronologically relevant evidence, however, is provided by a manuscript collecting *conductus* and motets in the manner of the Notre Dame School. It was found in the library of Pope Boniface VIII during the inventory of the Papal library of 1311, compiled upon the transferral of the Pope to Assisi. Two books, numbered 34 and 35, are described as follows:

> Item unum de conductis et prosis et motectis, notatum ad modum organi cum multis lineis et notis, qui incipit in primo folio: 'viderunt,' et finit in penultimo: 'glorie laus,' et est in tabulis ligneis sine copertura et clausoriis;
>
> Item unum modicum librum similem precedenti in cantu, qui incipit in secundo folio: 'minus' et finit in penultimo 'coraige.'[22]
>
> ('One item, on *conductus*, proses, and motets, is notated in the fashion of organs with many staves and notes, beginning on the first page with "viderunt"

19 See E. Pasquini, *Libri di musica a Firenze nel Tre-Quattrocento* (Florence: Olschki, 2000), 72–80. But for more details on the date of acquisition by the Medici, see also M. Masani Ricci, *Codice Pluteo 29.1 della Biblioteca Laurenziana di Firenze* (Pisa: ETS, 2002), 42. More bibliography on the Pluteus 29.1 includes: R. Baltzer, 'Notre Dame Manuscripts and Their Owners: Lost and Found,' *Journal of Musicology* 5 (1987): 380–99; and 'Thirteenth-Century Illuminated Manuscripts and the Date of the Florence Manuscript,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 25 (1972): 1–18; M. Everist, 'Polyphonic Music in Thirteenth-Century France: Aspects of Sources and Distribution,' 2 vols. (PhD diss., Oxford, 1985); L. Delisle, 'Discours prononcé à l'assemblée générale de la Société de l'histoire de la France,' *Annuaire-bulletin de la Societé de l'Histoire de France* 22 (1885): 82–139.

20 The other important manuscripts that have passed music of the School of Notre Dame down to us are: Wolfenbuttel 677, Wolfenbuttel 1206 Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España 20486. More sources exist, but they are of lesser importance.

21 See B. Haggh and M. Huglo, 'Magnus liber, maius munus: Origine et destinée du manuscrit F,' *Revue de musicologie* 90, no. 2 (2004): 193–230.

22 The inventories are published in Franz Ehrle, *Historia bibliothecae romanorum pontificum tum Bonifatianae tum Avenionensis*, 1 (Rome, 1890). These are items 34–35, on p. 29.

> and ending on the last with "glorie laus" ["praise of glory"]; it has a wood board binding without cover or clasps.
>
> One item is a small book similar to the former as to the singing, whose second page begins with "minus" and whose penultimate page ends with "coraige."')

Peter Jeffery has attempted to identify the Florence Manuscript belonging to Piero de' Medici (Pluteus 29.1) with one of these books of motets in the library catalogue of Boniface VIII.[23] Jeffery hypothesizes that the first of the two motet collections, beginning with 'viderunt' and ending on the second last folio with 'glorie laus,' could be the Pluteus 29.1 that subsequently ended up in the hands of Piero de' Medici. Regardless of whether the two manuscripts are the same or not, it is noteworthy that there were books containing polyphonic music in the library of Boniface VIII.[24] Dante was sent to the Papal Curia in October 1301 as a Florentine ambassador assigned the task of seeking aid for the White party, because Charles of Valois was descending on Florence to support the Black party. Boniface forcibly kept Dante at court until the end of 1301 or the beginning of 1302, probably because he considered him a potentially dangerous opponent and preferred to keep a close eye on him.[25] Although there is no evidence that Boniface actually had those *conductus* and motets performed, this coincidence of two manuscripts of polyphony in the same place and time shows a probable contact. If this repertory was indeed performed, it would be further evidence that Dante heard not only improvised polyphony, but also composed or 'artistic polyphony.' Traces of a probably improvisatory polyphonic practice in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries at the papal chapel also appear in the Ordinal book

23 P. Jeffery, 'Notre-Dame Polyphony in the Library of Pope Boniface VIII,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 32 (1979): 118–24.

24 Ziino underlines how much news this information is in the musical panorama of the thirteenth century. A. Ziino, 'Una ignota testimonianza sulla diffusione del mottetto in Italia durante il XIV secolo,' in *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 10 (1975): 20–31.

25 See M. Barbi, *Vita, opere, e fortuna: Con due saggi su Francesca e Farinata* (Florence: Sansoni, 1952), 21. See also G. Petrocchi, *Vita di Dante* (Bari: Laterza, 1983), 77–90. Petrocchi also mentions the possibility that Dante and the other two priors were actually received by Boniface VIII in Anagni, not in Rome (87–8), but this hypothesis is not too convincing.

of Innocent III (1198–1216), in which it is stated that the responsory *Domine tu es* was to be sung in *organo sectano*.[26]

Among the other cities that Dante visited, Padua stands out because of the remarkable amount of polyphonic production at its Cathedral: the music theorist Marchettus from Padua was active there from 1305 to 1309. Two processionals survive that testify to polyphony of the *Ars nova* in Padua. They contain several compositions for two voices and are dated to 1305–07.[27] Marchettus was the first *magister cantus* appointed at the Cathedral of Padua and his treatises *Lucidarium* and *Pomerium* offer a good overview of the rules of mensural notation and contemporary musical practice.[28] The Chapter Library of Padua preserves two early thirteenth-century manuscripts (signed C 55 and C 56) containing polyphonic motets in the style described by the treatises of Marchettus.[29]

Given the paucity of direct sources, it is much harder to find books containing notated polyphony in Florence during Dante's life. Marica Tacconi and Lorenzo Fabbri's *I libri del Duomo di Firenze*[30] collects all music breviaries, tonaries, and graduals at the Cathedral of Florence, going back to the time of Santa Reparata. When we leaf through the colour photographs of the lavishly decorated *codices*, we find none containing notated polyphony. This work is the first inventory of the *Opera del Duomo* collection and shows that no books containing notated polyphony were in use at S. Maria del Fiore prior to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. How, then, is it possible that polyphony could have been such

26 See S.J.P. Van Dijk and J. Hazelden Walker, *The Ordinal of the Papal Court from Innocent III to Boniface VIII and Related Documents* (Fribourg: Fribourg University Press, 1975), 408n7. As unusual as the definition *organo sectano* may appear, it is clarified by the eleventh century anonymous treatise *De organo*, which proposed to diffuse the theories of Guido d'Arezzo. The *De organo* explains that *sectano* is from *sectare*, that is, 'to follow,' because the second voice follows the first. For an edition of the *De organo*, see Joseph Smits van Waesberghe, *Codex Oxoniensis Bibl. Bodl. Rawl. C270*, Pars B: *XVII Tractatuli a quodam studioso peregrino ad annum MC collecti* (Buren: Frits Knuf 1980), 33 ff. (Divitiae Artis Musicae, A. Xb).

27 John George Constant, 'Renaissance Manuscripts of Polyphony at the Cathedral of Padua' (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1975), 26–7.

28 See N. Pirrotta, 'Marchettus de Padua and the Italian Ars Nova,' *Musica Disciplina* 9 (1955): 57–71, especially pp. 62–3.

29 These manuscripts were first studied by G. Vecchi, 'Uffici drammatici padovani,' (Florence: Olschki, 1954). But for a facsimile edition, see *I più antichi monumenti sacri italiani, I: Edizione fotografica*, ed. F.A. Gallo and G. Vecchi (Bologna: AMIS, 1968).

30 M.S. Tacconi and L. Fabbri, *I libri del Duomo di Firenze* (Florence: Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, 1997).

an important part of Florentine liturgical life? The answer lies, as recent discoveries show, in the mostly improvisatory nature of Italian pre–*Ars nova* polyphony. Performed according to fixed formulae, such as those collected in Franco of Cologne's *Ars cantus mensurabilis* (ca. 1260), this practice required no transcriptions of the *voces organales*[31] even though it was regularly performed at least on solemn occasions. We can indeed attain much better results by turning to another type of source: not manuscripts containing music, but documents that speak about the liturgy.

Descriptive Manuscripts

Thirteenth-century Italian manuscripts containing notated polyphony testify to a tradition of composed, i.e. written polyphony, one that is today usually considered to be more complex and artistic. Next to this activity, we find another that, although regarded as simpler, is of equal fascination, and that is the art of improvising *organum*. Although evidence exists that he was exposed to both kinds, it is especially this improvised polyphony that seems relevant to Dante's text. Documents containing improvised *organa* include ordinal books, chronicles, and Lives of Saints. These texts describe how liturgical songs were performed in the churches. Extremely helpful as indicators of their time's musical praxis, they provide the strongest evidence that two, three, and even four-voice songs were frequently performed during religious functions in Florence, as well as in Siena, Lucca, Pistoia, Padua, and some cities of Umbria.

Umbria was a region from which many liturgical innovations spread throughout the Catholic world, in consequence of the reformation of the Franciscan liturgy. Reforms of the Roman liturgy had already been brought forward by Gregory VII (1073–85) and Innocent III (1198–1216), but what happened during the course of the thirteenth century was a slower and more complex process, revolving around the changes in the Franciscan liturgy introduced by Haymo of Faversham, minister of the order from 1240 to 1244, upon commission of Gregory IX.[32] This

31 The *voces organales* are the melodic lines added above or below the tenor (which is usually drawn from a Gregorian chant). An *organum* was thus formed of one *vox principalis* and up to three *voces organales* singing the descant.

32 In 1240, Pope Gregory IX committed to Haymo the reordering of Franciscan liturgy, which was based on the rule established in 1230, not on the pontifical Ordinal. See F. Costa, 'La liturgia francescana,' in *Francesco d'Assisi: Documenti e archivi, codici e biblioteche, miniature* (Milan: Electa, 1982), 298–303; and S.J.P. van Dijk, *Sources of the Modern*

conversion from Roman liturgy to Franciscan liturgy took place over decades and, according to Giulio Cattin,

> we must not only think in terms of a shift from the Old Roman liturgical practices to the new Roman-Franciscan liturgy and the corpus of the Gregorian chant associated with it. During the thirteenth century, many liturgical communities, which had traditionally practiced some form of Roman chant, accepted the new codification propagated by the Franciscan order.[33]

The transition process was slow and also affected the liturgical habits of non-Franciscan communities around Europe; it might therefore have exported aspects of the musical practice, such as improvised and written polyphony, as well.

Much musical material is found in the *biblioteche capitolari* of Umbria. Evidence of polyphonic practice in the liturgy abounds in Assisi, Gubbio, Orvieto, Todi, and Perugia, as Galliano Ciliberti has shown in inventorying the oldest Umbrian musical manuscripts containing sacred polyphony.[34] To choose one that is contemporary with Dante, the Perugia Biblioteca Capitolare 15 is an antiphonary from the Cathedral of S. Lorenzo in Perugia dating from the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries. It contains four three-voice polyphonic settings of *Benedicamus Domino* in mensural notation and archaic motet style,[35] and one two-voice *Benedicamus Domino* in partially adiastematic notation.[36] Elementary as their

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Roman Liturgy: The Ordinal by Haymo of Faversham and Related Documents (1243–1307), 2 vols., Studia et documenta franciscana, 1. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963). See also A. Van Dijk, 'Il carattere della correzione liturgica di fra Aimone di Faversham, OFM (1243–1244),' *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 59 (London, 1960): 177–223.

33 G. Cattin, in the foreword to a doctoral dissertation by Morné P. Bezuidhenout, *An Italian Office Book of the Late Thirteenth Century* (South African Library Capetown, 1990).

34 G. Ciliberti, 'Atlante-repertorio dei più antichi monumenti musicali umbri di polifonia sacra,' in *Musica e liturgia nelle chiese e conventi dell'Umbria (secoli X–XV)*, ed. Ciliberti (Perugia: Quaderni di 'Esercizi, Musica e Spettacolo,' 1994), 129–35.

35 Perugia, Biblioteca capitolare, 15. For more information see K. von Fischer, *The Sacred Polyphony of the Italian Trecento*, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 100 (1973): 143–57.

36 Adiastematic notation does not provide precise indication for the pitch of the notes, but only relative directions, that is the pitch of every note is generically determined as 'higher' or 'lower' than the former, but it is not specified by how much. K. von Fischer and M. Lütolf, *Handschriften mit Mehrstimmiger Musik des 14., 15., und 16. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2 (*Répertoire International des Sources Musicales*, B, IV/4) (Munich-Duisburg: G. Henle, 1972), 1008. For information on the relation of the musical material of these

notation may be, these are among the earliest musical texts that testify to the use of polyphony in the liturgy of central Italy. The intense liturgical activity in Umbria has often been connected to the subsequent development of *Ars nova*,[37] but is important in its own right as it bears witness to early polyphonic practice in central Italy. Out of the seventeen manuscripts described by Ciliberti, eight are from the thirteenth century, two from the thirteenth–fourteenth, five from the fourteenth, and two from the fourteenth–fifteenth century. The texts most frequently set in two or three voices are *Credo*, *Sanctus*, *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Benedicamus Domino*, *Alleluja*, and *Amen*.

As can easily be seen even from this quick survey, documents abound in Umbria from the period of Dante's lifetime alone, and in this case we even have evidence that these chants were performed. We read, for example, in the proceedings of the canonization of St Clare of Assisi, that she had a vision on Christmas Day 1252. The Saint, who was constrained in bed by an illness, was miraculously allowed to hear the choir in the great Basilica of St Francis during a solemn mass in which *organi* were sung: 'Allora subitamente cominciò a udire li organi et responsorii et tucto lo offitio delli frati della Chiesia di Sancto Francesco, como si fusse stata lì presente.'[38] The same story, but with less technical accuracy, is related by Thomas of Celano in *Legenda sanctae Clarae virginis*: 'Ecce repente mirabilis ille concentus, qui in ecclesia Sancti Francisci fiebat, suis cepit auribus intonare. Audiebat iubilum fratruum psallentium, harmonias cantantium attendebat, ipsum etiam percipiebat sonitum organorum.'[39]

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manuscripts to Spanish sources, see G. Ciliberti, 'Trasmissione e diffusione del repertorio manoscritto di Las Huelgas nelle fonti di polifonia arcaica e retrospettiva italiana,' *Revista de musicologìa* 13 (1990): 563–76.

37 G. Ciliberti, 'I codici della biblioteca capitolare di Perugia,' in *Musica e liturgia nelle chiese e conventi dell'Umbria (secoli X–XV)* (Perugia, 1994), 30–1.

38 ['Then, all of a sudden she began to hear the *organa* and responsories and all the office of Saint Francis Church friars as if she had been present there.'] *Il processo di canonizzazione di Santa Chiara d'Assisi*, in *Fontes Franciscani*, ed. Enrico Menestò, Stefano Brufani et al. (S. Mario degli Angeli-Assisi: Porziuncola, 1995), 2453–2507, at p. 2474. Also found in Z. Lazzeri, 'Il processo di canonizzazione di S. Chiara,' in *Archivium franciscanum historicum* 13 (1920): 403–87, at p. 458.

39 ['And lo! That marvellous music which was made in the Church of St Francis, began to play in her ears. She heard the jubilee of the friars playing, she turned her attention to the harmony of the singers and even heard the sound of *organa*.'] Thomas of Celano, *Legenda sanctae Clarae virginis*, ed. S. Brufani, in *Fontes Franciscani*, ed. E. Menestò, S. Brufani et al. (Assisi: Porziuncola, 1995), 2432.

And in the *Actus beati Francisci* we read that St Clare on Christmas Eve heard 'tam cantum fratrum quam organa usque ad finem misse luculenter'[40] because she was ill and the Lord Jesus wanted to honour his faithful spouse with singing in matutins, masses, and '*omni festiva solemnitate* ["every festive solemnity"].' St Clare would later tell her sister nuns what she heard: 'corporalibus auris et mentalibus audivi cunctos cantus et organa.'[41] Thomas employs the term *organum* again when recounting Francis's beatification process in the Assisi Cathedral, a solemn occasion because the Pontiff attended it: 'Cantantur cantica nova, et in melodia spiritus iubilant servi Dei audiuntur ibi organa melliflua, et carmina spiritualia modulatis vocibus decantantur.'[42] The term *organa*, in association with *cantica nova*, leaves little doubt as to the polyphonic nature of the singing, and it is also found in the works of St Angela of Foligno, who, in a similar mystical reverie on 31 July 1300, saw herself in the Assisian Basilica, accompanied by 'organis cantantibus angelicum imnum.'[43] Another witness is Assisi Archivio della Cattedrale, codex no. 5. This manuscript dates from towards the end of the twelfth century, but the final section of it (folios 544–50) is a later addition, probably from the thirteenth century, and contains two two-voice pieces: *Virgo solamen desolatorum* and *Gloria Patri*.[44] The Franciscan liturgical books circulated widely,[45] especially after the reformation of the Franciscan liturgy wrought by Haymo of Faversham.

Another occasion on which polyphony may have been performed (and one which was influenced by the newly found spiritualism of the mendicant orders, especially the Franciscans) was during the celebrations of the *compagnie dei laudesi*. These religious societies would stage musical processions around the streets of the town. Among the most fa-

40 ['Both the friars singing and the *organa*, splendidly until the end of the mass.'] *Actus beati Francisci et sociis suis*, ed. P. Sabatier (Collection d'études et documents, 4) (Paris, 1902), 135 (cap. 42.5).

41 ['I heard all the songs and *organa* both with the ears of my body and of my mind.'] *Actus beati Francisci et sociis suis*, ed. P. Sabatier, 136 (cap. 42.8).

42 ['New songs were sung and spiritual poems were sung out with modulating voices.'] *Vita beati Francisci*, Opusculum tertium, 126.

43 ['*organa* singing an angelic hymn.'] Angela da Foligno, *L'autobiografia e gli scritti*, ed. Michele Faloci Pulignani (Città di Castello: Il Solco, 1932), 276.

44 See A. Ziino, 'Polifonia arcaica e retrospettiva in Italia centrale: Nuove testimonianze,' *Acta musicologica* 50 (1978): 193–207.

45 See G. Ciliberti, 'La biblioteca del Sacro Convento di Assisi,' in *Musica e liturgia nelle chiese e conventi dell'Umbria*, 73.

mous Florentine companies were the *Compagnia delle Laudi di Santa Maria Novella*, founded in 1244, the *Compagnia di Sant'Agnese* (also known as *Compagnia di Santa Maria del Carmine*), founded in 1280, and the *Compagnia di San Gilio*, founded in 1278.[46] Frank D'Accone has suggested that these companies might have been performing polyphony at least as early as 1325.[47] He would have backdated his conjectures by several decades had he known that the ordinals of Santa Reparata contained instructions about *cantare cum organo*.

Marica Tacconi's doctoral dissertation, which developed out of an inventory of the Florence Cathedral initially published in a collection of essays co-edited with Lorenzo Fabbri,[48] includes a useful timetable of the Cathedral's construction. Understanding the changes in the architecture of the church is a step towards understanding the modifications of the liturgy. The Cathedral of Florence underwent many changes over the centuries and I should like to recapitulate Tacconi's summary of its development:[49]

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46 On this topic see: F. Liuzzi, *La lauda e i primordi della melodia italiana*, 2 vols. (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1935); B. Wilson, *Music and Merchants: The Laudesi Companies of Republican Florence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); A. Ziino, 'Laudi e miniature fiorentine del primo Trecento,' *Studi musicali* 7 (1978): 39–84.

47 See F.A. D'Accone, 'Le compagnie dei Laudesi in Firenze durante l'Ars nova,' in *L'Ars nova italiana del Trecento*, vol. 3, ed. F. Alberto Gallo (Certaldo, 1970): 253–80.

48 Marica Susan Tacconi, 'Liturgy and Chant at the Cathedral of Florence' (PhD diss., Yale University, 1999). Tacconi's dissertation appears to have evolved out of an essay published initially in Marica S. Tacconi and Lorenzo Fabbri, eds., *I libri del Duomo di Firenze: Codici liturgici e Biblioteca di Santa Maria del Fiore (secoli XI–XVI)* (Florence: Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, 1997).

49 I am reporting here the detailed bibliography for this chronology's sources as presented in Marica Tacconi's PhD dissertation 'Liturgy and Chant at the Cathedral of Florence,' 5n11. The sources include: *Annali della scuola normale superiore di Pisa, classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, 3rd ser., 5, no. 2 (1975): 535–54; Franklin Toker, 'Early Medieval Florence between History and Archeology,' in *Medieval Archeology: Papers of the Seventeenth Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Charles Redman, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 60 (Binghamton: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1989), 261–83; Anna Benvenuti, 'Stratigrafie della memoria: Scritture agiografiche e mutamenti architettonici nella vicenda del "Complesso cattedrale" fiorentino,' in *Il Bel San Giovanni e Santa Maria del Fiore: Il centro religioso di Firenze dal tardo antico al Rinascimento*, ed. Domenico Cardini (Florence: Le Lettere, 1996), 95–127. Also helpful are Giuseppe Richa, *Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine*, vol. 6 (Florence, 1757); Giovanni Lami, *Sanctae ecclesiae florentinae monumenta*, vol. 2 (Florence, 1758); Francesco Guerrieri, ed., *La cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore a Firenze* (Florence: Cassa di Risparmio, 1994); Timothy Verdon, *Alla riscoperta di Piazza del Duomo in Firenze*, vol. 2: *La Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore* (Florence: Centro Di, 1997).

1 Fourth–fifth century: an early Christian church is founded and likely dedicated to the Holy Saviour (San Salvatore).
2 Late ninth century: the church is modified architecturally, receives the Episcopal seat, and is dedicated to St John the Baptist by bishop Andrea (869–93).
3 Late tenth century (ca. 987): the church is dedicated to Santa Reparata.
4 Mid-eleventh century (ca. 1055): the church is modified architecturally.
5 Early thirteenth century (ca. 1230): the church is modified and expanded architecturally.
6 8 September 1296: the cornerstone of a new, greatly expanded Cathedral is laid: the church is dedicated to St Mary 'of the Flower' (Santa Maria del Fiore)
7 1375: demolition of the early Cathedral of Santa Reparata is completed.
8 25 March 1436: with the completion of the dome by Filippo Brunelleschi and after a century and a half of labour, the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore is consecrated by Pope Eugene IV.

The first Cathedral of the city was the Basilica of San Lorenzo, consecrated by St Ambrose, who sojourned in Florence from 393 to 394. It has been argued that the Florentine ritual was particularly indebted to the Ambrosian in the hagiographical celebrations,[50] although critical debate on this influence is still open.[51] Of the seventy-six *codices* in the Cathedral's collection, none dates from any earlier than the twelfth century, making it scarcely possible to reconstruct the liturgy prior to that time.

In any case, the period most relevant to our study is the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The tides of political upheaval under the papacy of Clement V brought about the appointment of Antonio degli Orsi as bishop of Florence in 1310. A stout defender of the Guelph side, he published in 1310 the *Constitutiones episcoporum florentini*,[52] a series of pre-

50 Anna Benvenuti, 'San Lorenzo: La cattedrale negata,' in *Le radici cristiane di Firenze*, ed. A. Benvenuti, F. Cardini, and E. Giannelli (Florence: Alinea, 1994), 117–34.

51 See Mario Naldini, 'Attività pastorale di S. Ambrogio a Firenze e i codici della biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana,' in *La presenza di S. Ambrogio a Firenze: Convegno di studi ambrosiani* (Florence, 9 March 1994) (Florence: Il Ventilabro, 1994).

52 See Tacconi, *Liturgy and Chant*, 9. The text of the *Constitutiones* is transcribed by R. Trexler, *Synodal Law in Florence and Fiesole, 1306–1518* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1971).

scriptions meant to give unity to the different ways of celebrating the Office within the diocese. Antonio's main concern was to provide a model of the Calendar of Feast days that all the Florentine churches should follow,[53] whereas before his reformation the Florence hagiological program was strongly indebted to the rites in Pavia and especially in Lucca.[54] Now, among the manuscripts in the Florence capitol, we find two that date from the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. They are two ordinals for the Mass: the Florence Biblioteca Riccardiana MS. 3005 known as *Ritus in ecclesia servandi*, and Archivio dell'Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore I.3.8, known as *Mores et consuetudines canonice florentine*.

The distinctive trait of these ordinals is that 'while all other books of the Cathedral of Florence include the material for only a part of the liturgy – the texts or the music for either the Mass of Office (missal, gradual, breviary, antiphonary) or for a specific function (evangeliary for the Gospel readings, lectionary for the lessons of the Nocturns) – the *Ritus in ecclesia servanda* and the *Mores et consuetudines canonice florentine* provide a complete picture of late-twelfth- and early-thirteenth-century liturgical practice.'[55] The fact that they are datable to 1173–1205 (*Ritus*) and post-1228 (*Mores*) gives us a rather reliable idea of what Florentine liturgy must have been like during Dante's day. Although we do not know how long after their publication these ordinals were in use,[56] we do not know of any other ordinal book written between those two and the time of Dante's departure from Florence (1302). There is no substantial reason to believe that the rite in the years 1265–1302 was very different from how it appears in the two ordinal books, since we know that the great liturgical reformation took place in 1310, led by bishop Antonio degli Orsi. In 1996 a study by a canon of Santa Maria del Fiore[57] identified the *Ritus in ecclesia servanda* as a *Liber ordinarius* of

53 For a thorough exposition of the differences between pre- and post-1310 calendars, see chapter 2 of Tacconi, *Liturgy and Chant*.

54 Tacconi, *Liturgy and Chant*, 45–50.

55 Tacconi, *Liturgy and Chant*, 94.

56 An inventory of the sacristy library of 1418 labels ten more books as 'anticho,' but to a fifteenth-century compiler anything prior to the fifteenth century might have seemed 'anticho,' as rightly pointed out by Tacconi (*Liturgy and Chant*, 95).

57 Mario Tubbini, *Due significativi manoscritti della cattedrale di Firenze: Studio introduttivo e trascrizione*. Rome: Pontificium Athenaeum S. Anselmi de Urbe, Pontificium Institutum Liturgicum, Thesis ad Lauream no. 224, 1996.

Santa Reparata from the late twelfth century.[58] This identification ended a century-long mistake that considered another manuscript to be the only document on Florentine liturgy of the twelfth–thirteenth centuries. The importance of this philological discovery is still to be fully assessed by criticism; from the MS. 3005 (*Ritus*), however, Giulio Cattin was able to draw much information about tropes and sequences in the Florentine liturgy of the late twelfth century, and, above all, about the use of polyphony in the liturgy.[59] Tropes were used primarily in the introits of the solemnities of the Cathedral calendar, following the tendency of the Italian tradition. Relevant to our point is that these documents contain instructions on singing polyphonically. They prove that two-, three-, and four-voice singing was already considered regular practice in Florence in the thirteenth century. One difficulty that the MS. 3005 (*Ritus*) presents is a matter of terminology. If one is searching for specific words that indicate when a chant should be sung polyphonically, the result may be disappointing. Just a few generic indications are found, such as *sollepnis/ sollepniter* or *devotus/ devotissime*, or sometimes *tractim*, which means 'sweetly' or 'slowly.' Although occasions of joyful solemnity were usually associated with polyphonic performance, as is clear from other ordinal books and theoretical literature of the time, the above indications are too vague to provide evidence of polyphony. The term *organum* appears under two rubrics, which according to Cattin are 'la testimonianza più eloquente e sicura delle esecuzioni a più voci nel duomo di Firenze.'[60] These are the rubrics:

> EASTER THURSDAY: In isto triduo nichil cum organo cantetur, nisi in Missa episcopali.
>
> ('During this three day-period nothing is to be sung *cum organo*, except in the bishop's celebration.') (f.37v; Tubbini, 79)

58 Prior to Tubbini's work, the Ordinal of S. Reparata had been mistakenly identified with the MS. *Mores et consuetudines ecclesiae florentinae*, Archivio Santa Maria del Fiore 1.3.8 by Domenico Moreni in 1794. Cf. G. Cattin, 'Novità dalla cattedrale di Firenze: Polifonia, tropi, e sequenze nella seconda metà del XII secolo,' *Musica e storia* 6, no. 1 (June 1998): 7–36. I am drawing the information on this discovery from Cattin's article.

59 G. Cattin, 'Novità dalla cattedrale,' especially pp. 29–36.

60 'The most eloquent and certain testimony of multivocal performances at the Florence Cathedral.' G. Cattin, 'Novità dalla cattedrale,' 30.

FUNERAL RITE FOR THE CANONICS: Cum vero corpus defertur in ecclesiam vel in ecclesia[*m*] detinetur, nichil cantetur cum organo.

('While the body is carried into the church, or is kept in the church, nothing is to be sung *cum organo*') (f.115r; Tubbini, 229)

These two liturgies have in common the fact that they were both used for occasions of mourning. During mournful observances it was not allowed to sing *cum organo*, because the joyfulness of such practice was at odds with grief, unless, as is specified in the first case, the Bishop was attending the mass, in which case a more festive character of the solemnity could be restored. The Ordinal tells us that feasts, in the Florentine tradition, were divided in four categories: *Festa summa*, *precipua*, *popularia*, and *privata*. The highest solemnity was the preserve of the first two categories:

FESTA SUMMA: In his festis sollepnissime fiat officium et devotissime atque tractim cuncta cantetur atque legantur ... Ad introitum Misse et ad Kirie [*sic*] eleyson et ad Gloria in excelsis Deo et ad Sanctus sanctus et Agnus Dei, cantor cum competenti sociorum numero in medio c[*h*]ori ordinate maneat. Graduale vero in his festis a duobus tractim in pulpito cantetur cum versu, Alleluja quoque et sequentia in pulpito similiter a cantore et suis sociis sollepniter canitur.

('In these feast days, the office is to be celebrated most solemnly and devoutly and everything must be sung and read slowly ... At the introit, and *Kyrie eleison* and *Gloria* in *excelsis Deo* and *Sanctus sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*, the cantor and an adequate number of his colleagues will in orderly fashion remain in the middle of the choir. In such feast days the Gradual will be similarly sung by the singer and his colleagues on the pulpit, slowly.') (f.98v; Tubbini, 203)

FESTA PRECIPUA: In his festis sollepniter fiat officium, set [*sic*] non sicut in sum[*m*]is ... In precipuis et popularibus [festis] versus responsoriorium cantentur a duobus, nonum responsorium sollepniter cantetur.

('In these feast days, the office is to be celebrated most solemnly, although not as in the *Festa Summa* ... On special [*precipuis*] feast days and popular feast days the verse of the responsory is to be sung by two, the ninth responsory is to be sung solemnly.') (f. 9r; Tubbini, 204)

The Latin adverb *tractim* ('slowly,' or 'holding long notes') might actually suggest some sort of trope or *melisma* added to the original text, and it is probable that the reference to polyphonic singing hides behind the term *sollepnis/ sollepniter*, especially considering that the *introitum*, *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei* are the chants that most frequently must be sung *cum organo*, as we know from other Ordinals.

Cattin draws the conclusion that if the author of the Ordinal book felt the need to specify twice when and why it was not permitted to *cantare cum organo*, it is because polyphonic singing was the habitual usage on all other occasions: 'The occasions for singing polyphonically in Florence had to be so usual that it was more convenient and clear to specify under what circumstances it was prohibited.'[61] The *Ritus* manuscript was compiled around 1180, a century before Dante's life, but as no newer ordinal book is known prior to Antonio degli Orsi's reformation, there is no reason to believe that the liturgical uses were different in the poet's day. In fact, we should remember that this manuscript dates from the very same time as the above-mentioned ordinal of Innocent III, from which we learn that polyphony was used, at least sporadically, even in the papal chapel in Rome.[62] What is more, the general history of musical practice was for the use of polyphony to steadily increase in liturgical services over time; thus, if we can make a case for its use in 1180, it appears all the more probable that polyphony was employed in the liturgy a century later.

Cattin's observations on the *Ritus ecclesiae servandi* (Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana 3005) are extremely important for an understanding of how far-reaching the practice of polyphony in Dante's time was. Moreover, according to both the *Ritus* and the *Mores*, it was a recurrent practice in thirteenth-century Florence to involve the people in religious life as much as possible, and that was achieved through the display of relics, processions that ran all around the city, and the performing of masses specifically directed towards the populace (*missae populi*). The ordinals also provide detailed information about the paths the processions followed. Given the frequency of these events, where such music was performed daily in the church and even brought through the streets during

61 'A Firenze le evenienze per cantare a più voci dovevano essere talmente usuali, che era più comodo e chiaro precisare in quali circostanze era proibito.' Cattin, 'Novità dalla cattedrale,' 32.

62 See p. 17 nn. 26, 29, above.

processions and public liturgical events, it must have been virtually impossible for the citizens of the city to escape exposure to the processions and their chants.

The fact that musical performance, and specifically polyphonic settings, in thirteenth-century Florence had a mainly oral and improvisatory character means that – except for the *clausulae* – the singers had to commit to memory much of the repertory. Even the audience would need to make an effort of memory to recall such complex chants, or they would forget the words, lost in the polyvocal layout, as happens to Dante in his attempt to recall the spirits in the eagle's eye song: 'canti / da mia memoria labili e caduci' ('their songs / that slip, and fade, and fall from memory') (*Par.* XX.11–12).

Four thirteenth-century codices in Orvieto also corroborate the presence of improvised polyphony.[63] Galliano Ciliberti has illustrated how these antiphonaries, containing mensural notation, were used with several forms of *discantus* sung simultaneously over the *tenor*; but because the second voice was not written, it must have been improvised. Ciliberti shows how many compositions found in one of these manuscripts (Corali 189) are rigidly based on the technique of *cantus planus binatim*. One composition in particular, a *credus festivus*, even has a written second voice and was probably meant to be sung in three voices.[64]

Cattin's conclusions are supported and confirmed by a large number of testimonies, recently brought to light, to similar polyphonic practices in other cities of Tuscany and Italy, such as Siena, Lucca, Pistoia, and Padua. Franco Alberto Gallo had already intuited in 1966 that a simple polyphonic practice existed in Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that preceded the rise of the *Ars nova*, and used the expression *cantus planus binatim*[65] to describe it. For Alberto Gallo, this amen-

63 These are the signatures of the codices: Orvieto, Archivio dell'Opera del Duomo, Corali 187; Corali 188; Corali 189; Corali 190. G. Ciliberti: 'Polifonia improvvisata e scritta nei libri liturgico-musicali duecenteschi del convento di S. Domenico di Orvieto,' in *Musica e liturgia nelle chiese e conventi dell'Umbria (secoli X–XV)* (Perugia, 1994), 39–46.

64 G. Ciliberti: 'Polifonia improvvisata e scritta,' 45–6.

65 Alberto Gallo took the expression from Prosdocimus de Beldomandis, *Expositiones tractatus pratice cantus mensurabilis magistri Johannis de Muris*, ed. F. Alberto Gallo (Bologna: Antiquae Musicae Italicae Studiosi, 1966), 163. See also F. Alberto Gallo, '*Cantus planus binatim*: Polifonia in fonti tardive,' *Quadrivium* 7 (1966): 79–89; and 'The Practice of *cantus planus binatim* in Italy from the Beginning of the XIVth to the Beginning of the XVIth Century,' in *Le polifonie primitive in Friuli e in Europa* (Rome: Torre d'Orfeo, 1989), 13–30. See as well G. Cattin, 'Oltre il canto *binatim*: Il bicinio

sural, unwritten two-voice chant consisted 'in the realization (perhaps by means of given *formulae*), together with the liturgical melody, of a second voice which accompanied it, following in its free rhythm.'[66] Investigations in this field had been conducted before by Ziino and Levi,[67] and the type of polyphony they found was labelled 'archaic,' 'retrospective,' or 'primitive.' They conjectured that a polyphonic oral tradition existed, but not until the identification of the *Ritus* was it possible to reconstruct the liturgical customs of thirteenth-century Florence.

In fact, although the existence of some form of polyphonic practice before the *Ars nova* in Italy has been known about for some time,[68] abundant evidence of it in central Italy and academic interest in it are more recent. Other than from theoretical works, we have information about singing practices from Buoncompagno da Signa, a *magister* at the *Studium* of Bologna, who, in his *De cantoribus*, tells about singers excusing their mistakes:

> Ceterum in hoc debent placere cantores, quod ad invicem se contempnunt et semper unus errorem suum per alienum excusat et dicit: 'Organum il-

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dicant nunc Iudei nel codice della Fava,' in *Trent'anni di ricerche musicologiche*, ed. P. Della Vecchia and D. Restani (Rome: Torre d'Orfeo, 1996), 49–62.

66 F. Alberto Gallo, 'The Practice of *cantus planus binatim*,' 14.

67 K.J. Levy, 'Italian Duecento Polyphony: Observations on an Umbrian Fragment,' in *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 10 (1975): 10–19; A. Ziino, 'Polifonia 'arcaica' e 'retrospettiva' in Italia centrale: Nuove testimonianze,' *Acta musicologica* 50 (1978): 193–207.

68 See H. Angles, 'La musica sacra medievale in Sicilia,' in *Atti del Congresso internazionale di musica mediterranea e del Congresso bibliotecari musicali* (Palermo 26–30 Giugno 1954) (Palermo 1959), 205–14; K. Von Fischer, 'Die Rolle der Mehrstimmigkeit am Dome von Siena Zu Beginn des 13. Jahrhunderts,' *Archiv fur Musik Wissenschaft* 18, no. 3/4 (1961): 167–82; G.Vecchi, 'Teoresi e prassi del canto a due voci in Italia nel Duecento e nel primo Trecento,' in *L'Ars nova italiana del Trecento*, vol. 3, Atti del Convegno Internazionale 17–22 Luglio 1969 sotto il patrocinio della società Internazionale di Musicologia, ed. F. Alberto Gallo (Certaldo 1970), 203–14; G. Vecchi, 'Tra monodia e polifonia: Appunti da servire alla storia della melica sacra in Italia nel secolo XIII e al principio del XIV,' *Collectanea historiae musicae* 2 (1957): 447–64; F. Alberto Gallo, '*Cantus planus binatim*: Polifonia in fonti tardive,' *Quadrivium* 7 (1966): 79–89; F. Alberto Gallo, 'Esempi dell' "Organum" dei "Lumbardi" nel XII secolo,' *Quadrivium* 8 (1967): 23–6; *I più antichi monumenti sacri italiani* 1: *Edizione fotografica*, Monumenta lyrica medii aevii italica III: Mensurabilia, I, ed. F. Alberto Gallo and G. Vecchi (Bologna, AMIS, 1968); *Le polifonie primitive in Friuli e in Europa*, Atti del congresso internazionale (Cividale del Friuli 22–24 Agosto 1980), Miscellanea musicologica 4, ed. C. Corsi and P. Petrobelli (Rome: Torre d'Orfeo, 1989).

> lius non dimisit me perficere melodiam.' Frequenter enim insufficientiam sui cantus imputat voci vel dissuetudini. Et est notandum, quod cantores omnes volunt de ordinata positione vocum laudari.[69]
>
> ('Another thing that makes singers funny is that they despise one another and everyone blames his own mistake on another's, and says: 'His *organum* did not allow me to conclude the melody.' Actually they frequently ascribe a flaw in their singing to the condition of their voice or their lack of training. And it must be noted that all singers want to be praised for the quality of their voices!')

Besides the character of the singer, who blames his mistake on lack of training or the condition of his voice, we find, in this passage, a testimony to the practice of singing *organum* in early thirteenth century Bologna, and, more significantly yet, it is a Tuscan who uses the term with no feeling of a need to explain it further.

The *Ordo officiorum Ecclesie Senensis*, which dates from1215 and has been known since 1766,[70] provides much detailed information on the use of music in the liturgy and indicates which of the pieces were to be sung *cum organo*. Among the pieces to be sung polyphonically were *Alleluja*, *Kyrie*, *Sanctus*, *Agnus Dei*, *Gloria*, several antiphons, *Invitatoria*, and *Introits* of important feast days such as Christmas, Easter, and Palm Sunday. The indication *cum organo* usually appears associated with the adverb *solemniter*. The same organal practice as that of Siena was used in Lucca, the city thought by scholars to be the place of composition of the *Inferno*.[71] This is proved by the *Ordo officiorum* of the Lucca Cathedral (Biblioteca Capitolare Feliniana MS. 608),[72] a late thirteenth–early fourteenth-century book that also indicates what musical intonation is supposed to sound

69 Boncompagno da Signa, *De cantoribus*, 1.19.3. The text of Boncompagno's *De cantoribus* is edited by D. Goldin: *B. come Boncompagno: Tradizione e invenzione in Boncompagno da Signa* (Padua: Centrostampa, Palazzo Maldura, 1988). The *De cantoribus* is part of his *Rota Veneris* and dates prior to 1215.

70 Siena, Biblioteca Comunale G.V.8. The first edition is by G.C. Trombelli (Bologna, 1766). But see K. von Fischer, 'Die Rolle der Mehrstimmigkeit am Dome von Siena zu Beginn des 13. Jahrhunderts,' *Archiv für Musikwissenchaft* 18, no. 3/4 (1961): 167–82; and 'Das Kantorenamt am Dome von Siena zu Beginn des 13. Jahrhunderts,' in *Festschrift Karl Gustav Fellerer* (Regensburg: Bosse, 1962).

71 Petrocchi, *Vita*, 102 and 155.

72 See A. Ziino, 'Polifonia nella cattedrale di Lucca durante il XIII secolo,' *Acta musicologica* 47 (1975): 16–30.

like, and offers an abundance of expressive instructions such as: 'cantent excelsa voce' (29r, 31r, 39v), 'alta voce' (31r), 'mediocri voce' (31r), 'vespere dicantur submissa voce' (30r), 'cum cordi modulatione cantetur' (32r) 'exultanter decantant' (32v) 'suaviter cantent' (28r) 'a quatuor, cum organo festive cantantur' (33r-v)' 'sollempniter cum organo' (41v). The latter, 'cum organo,' concerns a very broad repertory of seventy-two different pieces and is clearly the most relevant for the polyphonic practice. The instructions in MS. 608 are not limited to musical style, but also include ceremonial details, processional paths, and the songs to be performed at every step. On 41v, in particular, we find 'cum organo seu discantu' (*discantus* was a term in use at Notre Dame, along with *organum*). Moreover, on the same page it is stated that a Lamentation of Jeremiah must be sung by three or four clerics 'qui optime sciant organum.' What does 'scire organum' mean? Very probably it refers to an improvisatory technique of given formulas that allowed even four-voice polyphony to be performed without written notation!

Although I have mentioned the School of Notre Dame, we must be aware, as Kurt von Fischer and Agostino Ziino warn, that the vastness and variety of the Siena and Lucca repertories

> differentiate the Tuscan repertory considerably from the Notre Dame repertory that was contemporary with it. We must, however, consider that artistic polyphony from Notre Dame, or related to Notre Dame, very likely represents, even in the milieu of French polyphony, the product of a musical elite. This elite places itself at the centre of an *avant-garde* cultural movement, inspired by a high appreciation of music and its values. The 'normal' practice, shared by the majority of churches and monasteries of Europe, was probably of a simpler and more extemporaneous type, stylistically far from the artifices of 'artistic' polyphony.[73]

73 '... differenziano notevolmente il repertorio toscano da quello, contemporaneo, di Notre Dame. A tale proposito però bisogna considerare che la polifonia artistica di Notre Dame o ad essa collegata rappresenta molto probabilmente, anche nell'ambito della musica polifonica francese, il prodotto di una *élite* musicale che si pone al centro di un movimento culturale di avanguardia, improntato a un alto senso dell'arte e dei suoi valori. La pratica "normale," comune alla maggior parte delle chiese e dei conventi d'Europa, sarà stata presumibilmente di tipo più semplice ed estemporaneo, lontana nello stile, dagli artifici della polifonia "artistica."' A. Ziino, 'Polifonia nella cattedrale di Lucca durante il XIII secolo' in Acta musicologica 47 (1975): 26; For the distinction between 'artistic' and 'simple' polyphony, cf. also K. von Fischer, 'Die Rolle der Mehrstimmigkeit am Dome von Siena Zu Beginn des 13. Jahrhunderts,' *Archiv für Musik Wissenschaft* 18, no. 3/4 (1961): 178.

This distinction becomes important when we consider the type of polyphony that was prominent in Duecento Tuscan churches. Improvised *organum* was a quite widespread practice, one that even illiterate singers could perform, as long as they knew the plainchant and a couple of 'tricks.' There were, of course varying degrees of improvisatory abilities, but even humble churches would be able to manage some rudimentary polyphony. Artistic (or composed, or notated) polyphony, on the other hand, employed a variety of harmonic intervals, often rejecting homorythmic patterns. Most of the written polyphonic repertory is from the Parisian Notre Dame collection, or from the Trecento *Ars nova*. While there is evidence that Dante was exposed to both, he was certainly more familiar with the improvised *organum*.

Presumably the *voces organales* improvised in Lucca were not very different from the music described in the treatises from Siena, although the *Ordo officiorum* of Lucca seems to mention three- and four-part polyphony, whereas all of the examples of notated polyphony in Italy prior to the fourteenth century are two-voice settings. Ziino, however, explains that four-voice polyphony could be obtained in a simple way by doubling the octave and the fifth. Such improvised practice could therefore reach a certain level of complexity in spite of the definition that labels it 'polifonia semplice.'

The terminology used in the Lucca and Siena ordinals is quite clear: it is the standard lexicon in use in medieval treatises on polyphony, *cantare cum organo* and *discantus* or *discantare* being common phrases in early polyphony. Elsewhere, however, it takes some philological consideration to understand the exact meaning of the expressions. Giulio Cattin shows in an article published in 1995 how archaic polyphony was in liturgical use in Padua and Pistoia.[74] The relevance of these two cities in the itineraries of the Florentine poet is well known, in particular for Padua and the Veneto in the years 1304–06.[75] The *Liber Ordinarius* of the Cathedral of Padua (Padua, Biblioteca Capitolare MS. E57) uses the term *secundare* to indicate (as Giulio Cattin's authority grants there is no doubt) when a *vox organalis* should double the *principalis*. The chants designated as *secundati* in the Padua ordinal book are as follows:

74 G. Cattin, '"Secundare" e "Succinere": Polifonia a Padova e Pistoia nel Duecento,' *Musica e storia* 3 (1995): 41–120.

75 See Petrocchi, *Vita*, 98–9.

Office:
a) hymns for Advent and Christmas, Lent, and the Holy Week;
b) *Benedicamus Domino*, especially in conjunctions of tropes or sequences on important feast days (on Christmas and Easter the *Benedicamus Domino* was prescribed for four voices);
c) the *versus* of some responsories (some of which are known, from other sources, to have been set polyphonically);
d) the song of the Sibyl in the sixth reading of the Matin of Christmas Eve;
e) the antiphon *Tribus miraculis* in the Epiphany office;
f) the *versus* of some processional songs;
g) the versicles *Kyrie Eleison* and *Domine Miserere*, sung by four groups of singers;
h) the *Pater noster* sung while the procession goes back to the Cathedral on the eve of Ascension day.

Mass:
(Proprium)
a) The *Alleluja* was sung by three clerics;
b) The *tractus* and their *versus* whenever they replace the gradual on penitential days;

(Ordinarium)
c) *Kyrie, Sanctus, Agnus Dei.*

Cattin illustrates how *secundare* actually means 'to sing a second voice' or 'an organal voice,' and in this process quotes a passage from Giacomino da Verona's *De Ierusalem celesti et de pulcritudine eius et beatitudine et gaudia sanctorum* in which the verb 'segundare' appears in the description of a four-voice *organum*:

Lì fa tante alegreçe — queste çente bïae
De canti e de favele, — le quale e' v'o' cuitae,
Ke'l par ke tutto 'l celo — e l'aere e le contrae
Sia plene de strumenti — cun vox melodïae

Ke su boche mai — per nessun tempo cessa
De laudar la sancta — Trinità, vera maiesta,
Cantando çascaun — ad alta vox de testa
'*Sanctus sanctus sanctus*' — façando grande festa

Mai no fò veçu nemai no se verà,
De nexun om teren sì gran solempnità
Cum fa quigi cantator suso en quella cità
Davanço el Re de Gloria e la Soa maiestà

Ke le soe voxe è tante e de gran concordança
Ke l'una ascendo octava e l'altra en quinta canta,
E l'altra ge segunda con tanta deletança
Ke mai oldia non fò sì dolcissima dança.[76] (ll. 149–64)

('There these blessed people rejoice with songs and tales, as I have told you, so that all the heavens and the air and the countries are filled with instruments and melodious voices. Their mouths never cease to praise the holy Trinity, true majesty, everyone singing with high-pitched head voice: '*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus*,' with great jubilation. Such a great solemnity was never seen nor will be seen as the one that the singers are producing in that city before the King of Glory and His majesty. Their voices are so many and so concordant that one goes up an octave, another sings the fifth, and the other follows with so much delight that such a sweet dance was never heard.')

What is described in this passage is a so-called *organum quadruplum*, in which the *vox principalis* is accompanied by three more voices: one at the octave, one at the fifth, and one that follows the 'segunda.' Contini reads 'tien dietro,' while Cattin adds 'canta sotto,' interpreting that voice as a melodic line singing a fourth lower than the *principalis* – medieval theorists would call it *diatessaron*. Giacomino presents an array of keywords commonly employed in describing polyphony: besides the already mentioned octave, fifth, and *solempnità*, he adds *concordança* and *segunda*.

Certainly the use of the term *segundare* associated with polyphonic singing is the evidence Cattin was looking for, and it is all the more reliable because it is found in Veronese vernacular – that is, in a language and area close to Padua. After all, polyphony is attested in Padua by direct sources as early as 1307, and the activity of Marchettus had probably sprung out of the terrain of the improvisatory tradition.

For our research on the possible contacts of Dante and polyphony,

76 Giacomino da Verona, *De Ierusalem celesti*, quoted from *I poeti del Duecento*, 1, *La letteratura italiana: Storia e Testi*, 2/1, ed. Gianfranco Contini (Milan: Ricciardi, 1960), 633 (vv. 150–64).

finding such a meticulous description of a *quadruplum organum* in one of his predecessors provides a very telling clue.[77] We can acknowledge two things: first that singing in Paradise, and polyphonic singing specifically associated with solemnity (l. 158), appears before Dante's invention; second, that if a Veronese at the end of the 1200s could describe an *organum quadruplum*, such music was available to be heard in Verona or the northeast of Italy, and Dante may have listened to it during his numerous stays in Verona, Forlì, Treviso, Padua, and Ferrara.[78]

Cattin devotes a great deal of space to the Ordinal of the Cathedral of Pistoia.[79] Pistoia, Biblioteca Capitolare C114 is a manuscript dating from the beginning of the thirteenth century, and C102 is from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. These two documents appear very similar, and one is almost certainly a copy of the other. The term *succinere*, employed in both texts, appears for the first time in Regino of Prüm's *Epistola de harmonica institutione*, but is also found in Guido d'Arezzo's *Micrologus*,[80] and in both cases it means, once again, to sing the *organum*. Polyphonic singing was thus prescribed for Epiphany (the last of the five antiphons of Vespers), for Matin and Lauds (Antiphons and some responsories), for Mass (*Kyrie eleision*, *Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei*), and for the Feast of St Agata (Vespers, Matins, Lauds, some processional responsories, *Kyrie eleision*, *Sanctus*, *Agnus Dei*, and *Alleluja* of the Mass and Vespers). Throughout Cattin's long essay, much of the author's effort is devoted to studying what he calls, using the technical terminology, 'policromia linguistica,' and to clarifying the meaning of the terms *secundare* and *succinere*. Confirmation that *succentus* and *succinere* indeed mean polyphony is provided by a manuscript containing the text of Guido d'Arezzo's *Micrologus*,[81] compiled in the Dominican friary of Santa

77 D'Ancona argues against Dante reading Giacomino and his predecessors (A. D'Ancona, *I precursori di Dante* [Florence: Sansoni, 1874]); however, for a different and more recent opinion, see M. Gragnolati, *Experiencing the Afterlife: Soul and Body in Dante and Medieval Culture* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

78 For a thorough discussion of the whereabouts of Dante in Veneto, see Petrocchi's *Vita*, in particular 91–103 and 147–56.

79 G. Cattin, '"Secundare" et "Succinere."'

80 For a satisfactory discussion of the terminological matter see Cattin, '"Secundare" et "Succidere, "' 77 ff.

81 Firenze Biblioteca Nazionale, Conventi soppressi, F III 565. Guido wrote the *Micrologus* around 1030 and his treatise was held in the highest regard in the Middle Ages. Chapter 18 deals with *diaphonia*, that is, polyphony. See Guido d'Arezzo, *Micrologus*, ed.

Maria Novella shortly after the year 1000. At the first occurrence of the term *succentus* (XVIII.14) a glosser wrote, just above the word *succentus*, the word *organum*. The subject of terminology, therefore, is of considerable significance, not only for understanding whether and how *diaphonia*, *succentus*, and *secundatio* were different, but also because, despite the pre-existence of archaic polyphony, the word *organum*, used by Guido d'Arezzo and then employed by the Schools of Chartres and Notre Dame, spread throughout Tuscany and Italy and overlapped with other terms, often generating confusion as to what exactly it meant.

The spread of polyphonic practice in its various genres (*organum*, *conductus*, sometimes performed with the hocket)[82] caused differing reactions within the church. Although some pontiffs seemed favourably disposed towards musical innovations in the liturgy, others regarded them with suspicion because they felt that the interweaving and overlapping of melodic lines and, as in the case of the motet, of different literary texts denatured the liturgical function of Gregorian chant:

> Nonnulli novellae scholae discipuli, dum temporibus mensurandis invigilant, novis notis intendunt, fingere suas quam antiquas cantare malunt. In semibreves et minimas ecclesiastica cantantur, notulis percutiuntur. Nam melodias hoquetis intersecant, discantibus lubricant, triplis et motetis vulgaribus nonnumquam inculcant, adeo ut interdum Antiphonarii et Gradualis fundamenta despiciant, ignorent super quo aedificant, tonos nesciant, quos non discernunt, imo confundunt, cum ex earum multitudine notarum ascensiones pudicae discensiones moderatae plani cantus, quibus toni ipsi discernuntur invicem, offuscentur. Currunt enim et non quiescunt, aures inebriant et non medentur, gestis simulant quod depromunt, quibus devotio quaerenda contemnitur, vitanda lascivia propalatur.[83]
>
> ('Some disciples of the new school, while keeping the vigil to measure the

Joseph Smits van Waesberghe (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1955). The manuscript also contains, on folio 27v, an anonymous *Tractatulus de organo*.

82 'Hocket' was a rhythmic technique involving the quick and sudden alternation of sound and silence. This rhythmic device, widely employed both in *Ars antiqua* and *Ars nova*, fragmented the syllables of the text, thus making it hard to understand.

83 Quoted from K.G. Fellerer, 'La *Constitutio docta sanctorum patrum* di Giovanni XXII e la musica nuova del suo tempo,' in *L'Ars nova italiana del Trecento*, vol. 3, ed. F. Alberto Gallo (Certaldo, 1970), 9–17.

> hours, occupy themselves with new songs. They prefer inventing theirs than singing the old ones. They sing church songs in semibreves and minims and sing on short notes. They cut the melodies of hockets, slide on the descants; sometimes they intercalate them with *triplum* and vulgar motets. We are at the point where they sometimes despise the fundamentals of antiphonals and graduals, ignore what they build upon, do not know the melodies, do not recognize them, and even confuse them. The decorous ascents and moderate descents of plainchant, which distinguish the very melodies, are obfuscated by the multitude of those notes. In fact, they run and never stop. These disciples inebriate the ears and do not heal; they simulate with gestures what they express; they neglect the devotion they ought to seek; the wantonness they should avoid is propagated.')

These words are from the bull *Docta sanctorum patrum*, published by John XXII in 1324–25. The Pope realized that the proliferation of polyphony and other musical novelties had reached the point where the original 'healing' (*non medentur*) function of Gregorian chant had been obscured. John XXII criticized all kinds of artistic activity in the church, from dances to juggling to polyphonic performance, in the hope of restoring more austere customs in the liturgy. This document testifies to a large dissemination of such practices as hockets and motets: polyphonic singing had to be widely spread in Italy, if the Pope himself had to publish a ban against it.

Polyphony in Paris

The long debated matter of whether Dante visited Paris becomes relevant to our research as one more possible occasion on which Dante may have heard vocal polyphony. The topic has been open since the earliest commentaries, as is well known: Boccaccio shows no doubt about a conspicuous Parisian stay of the poet. In the *Trattatello in laude di Dante* he asserts that Dante 'già vicino alla sua vecchiezza n'andò a Parigi.'[84] Old age, according to Dante himself,[85] begins at forty-six years, so the poet

84 '[He] went to Paris when he was already close to old age.' G. Boccaccio, *Opere in versi, Corbaccio, In laude di Dante, Prose Latine, Epistole*, vol. 9 (Milan: Ricciardi, 1965), 575–6. But the news of Dante going to Paris is also repeated in *Genealogia deorum gentilium* (15.6).

85 *Conv.* IV.xxiv.4.

would have been in Paris shortly before 1311. Besides Boccaccio, the early commentators and biographers (Villani, Pucci, Buti, Benvenuto, and Serravalle) all support a Parisian sojourn of Dante, but Pietro di Dante in his commentary and Leonardo Bruni in his biography of Dante do not mention it.

Among modern scholars, Pio Rajna, Michele Barbi, and Giorgio Petrocchi believe it probable that Dante was in Paris around the years 1309–11.[86] Ernst H. Curtius has no doubt, basing his certainty on Robert Davidsohn, while Giuseppe Mazzotta remains cautious.[87] Whether Dante was in Paris or not, however, the teaching of music in Paris during the thirteenth century had a paramount influence on education in Italy. Bologna, for one – where Dante certainly spent time – had a respectable tradition of philosophical teaching and many teachers at Bologna had studied in Paris.

If Dante did go to Paris, how and where might he have listened to polyphony? It has recently been suggested that the subjects of the quadrivium were taught to students in Paris at an earlier stage of their education, between seven and fourteen years of age – that is, before they entered the University.[88] If that were true, it would mean two things: first, that Music, as a science of the quadrivium, was not a subject studied at the University of Paris; second, that the dignity of all the quadrivial sciences in Paris should be reassessed. Furthermore, in the case of Dante going to Paris, it would be less probable that he learned music theory there, because he would probably attend university circles. However he might still have heard polyphony performed during religious celebrations, for example at the Cathedral of Notre Dame. In fact, as we need not be

86 P. Rajna, 'Per l'andata di Dante a Parigi,' *Studi Danteschi* 2 (1920); M. Barbi, *Dante: Vita, opere, e fortuna* (Florence: Sansoni, 1940); G. Petrocchi, *Vita di Dante* (Bari: Laterza, 1983), 102–3, 148–9, and 'Biografia, Attività politica e letteraria,' in *Enciclopedia dantesca* (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 1970–78), 6:1–53, in particular p. 36.

87 E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 352 (translation of *Europaische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* [Bern: A. Franke A.G. Verlag, 1948]); R. Davidsohn, *Geschichte von Florenz* (Berlin: Mittler, 1896–1927), 140 (vol. 4, pt. 3); G. Mazzotta, 'Life of Dante,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1–13.

88 Max Haas, 'Les Sciences mathématiques (astronomie, géométrie, arithmétique, musique),' in *L'enseignement de la philosophie au XIIIe siècle: Autour du 'Guide de l'étudiant,' du ms. Ripoll 109*, ed. C. Lafleur et J. Carrier (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 95–102.

reminded, the Boethian dichotomy between *cantor* and *musicus*[89] had become a kind of trademark of the medieval set of values: the former was a mere performer, a craftsman, not an artist in the modern sense; the latter was able to understand a system and attribute to it the meaningfulness and complexity it embodied. This motto, attributed to Guido of Arezzo, is telling of the cultural distance between the two roles.

> Musicorum et cantorum magna est distantia,
> Isti dicunt, illi sciunt, quae componit Musica,
> Nam qui facit, quod non sapit, diffinitur bestia
> unde versus:
> Bestia non cantor qui non canit arte sed usu.
> Non vox cantorem facit artis sed documentum.[90]

89 'Nunc illud est intuendum, quod omnis ars omnisque etiam disciplina honorabiliorem naturaliter habeat rationem quam artificium, quod manu atque opere exercetur artificis. Multo enim est maius atque auctius scire, quod quisque faciat, quam ipsum illud efficere, quod sciat; etenim artificium corporale quasi serviens famulatur, ratio vero quasi domina imperat. Et nisi manus secundum id, quod ratio sancit, efficiat, frustra sit. Quanto igitur praeclarior est scientia musicae in cognitione rationis quam in opere efficiendi atque actu! Tantum scilicet, quantum corpus mente superatur; quod scilicet rationis expers servitio degit. Illa vero imperat atque ad rectum deducit. Quod nisi eius pareatur imperio, expers opus rationis titubavit.' ('Now one should bear in mind that every art and also every discipline considers reason inherently more honorable than a skill which is practiced by the hand and the labor of an artisan. For it is much better and nobler to know about what someone else fashions than to execute that about which someone else knows; in fact, physical skill serves as a slave, while reason rules like a mistress. Unless the hand acts according to the will of reason, it acts in vain. How much nobler, then, is the study of music as a rational discipline than as composition and performance! It is as much nobler as the mind is superior to the body; for devoid of reason, one remains in servitude. Reason exercises authority and leads to what is right; for unless the authority is obeyed, an act, lacking a rational basis, will falter.') Boethius, *De institutione musica* (Fundamentals of Music), ed. Claude V. Palisca, trans. Calvin M. Bower (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), I.xxxiv. See C. Page, 'Musicus and Cantor,' in *Companion to Medieval and Renaissance Music*, ed. T. Knighton and D. Fallows (New York: Schirmer, 1992), 74

90 Quoted from: Anonymous: 'Quatuor Principalia,' I.ix, in *Scriptorum de musica medii aevi nova series a Gerbertina altera*, 4 vols., ed. Edmond de Coussemaker (Paris: Durand, 1864–76; reprint ed., Hildesheim: Olms, 1963), 4:200–6. The same motto is attributed to Guido, also by Anonymous: *Ars musice*, quoted in Karl-Werner Gümpel, 'Zur Frühgeschichte der vulgärsprachlichen spanischen und katalanischen Musiktheorie,' in *Spanische Forschungen der Görresgesellschaft, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kulturgeschichte Spaniens*, 1/24, ed. Johannes Vincke (Münster: Aschendorff, 1968), 326–9.

> ('There is a great difference between musicians and singers. / The latter perform, the former know what music is composed of. / Because indeed, he who does without knowing what he does can be defined a beast. / Whence the verse: / He who sings not by art but by habit is a beast. / It is not the voice that makes an artful singer, but the education.')

And the concept also found a philosophical buttress in Thomas Aquinas's assertion that the mechanical arts, among which is practical music, were servile,[91] because these arts are dedicated to works done by the body. Arts that are not thus ordained are instead loftier because they depend directly on the rational soul.

As great as the distance was between *cantor* and *musicus*, however, Olga Weijers[92] brings evidence that Music and the entire quadrivium were bona fide subjects at the university.[93] For example, two textbooks frequently used as introductions to philosophy were the *Accessus philosophorum septem artium liberalium*,[94] referred to as the *De institutione musica*, of Boethius, and Plato's *Timaeus*. Michel Huglo has shown that Boethius's treatise, Plato's *Timaeus*, Augustine's *De musica*, and the third book of Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* were among the books in the university library.[95] Christopher Page, however, notes that a document that represents a sort of 'student's guide' to the School of Arts, cites only one text for the study of Music, and that is Boethius's *De institutione musica*.[96]

Central though the University of Paris has been to the European Middle Ages, complete light has not been shed about what was taught within

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91 *ST*, I^{a}-II^{ae} q.57 a.3.

92 O. Weijers, 'La place de la musique à la faculté des arts de Paris,' in *La musica nel pensiero medievale*, ed. Letterio Mauro (Ravenna: Longo, 2001), 245–62.

93 Weijers brings as evidence collections of exam questions, such as *Quedam communia artium liberalium* (contained in the MS Paris, BnF lat. 15121), *Questiones mathematicae* (MS Paris, BnF lat. 16390), and *De communibus artium liberalium* (MS Paris, BnF lat. 16390).

94 C. Lafleur, ed., *Quatre introductions à la philosophie au XIIIe siècle* (Montreal/Paris: Institut d'études médiévales/Vrin, 1988), 177–253.

95 M. Huglo, 'The Study of Ancient Sources of Music Theory in the Medieval Universities,' in *Music Theory and Its Sources: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Barbera, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 150–72.

96 Ms. Ripoll 109, Barcelona, Archivio de la Corona de Aragona, f. 135.This is an important manuscript written in Paris in 1230–1240/45. It contains specimen questions and guidance on the content of the courses of the School of Arts. Page's considerations are on p. 141 of his *The Owl and the Nightingale* (London: Dent, 1989).

it and how. There exists a statute written by Robert de Courçon[97] dating to 1215, but this document is of little aid in determining the exact content of the courses. Scholarship is divided as to whether to accept that practical music (and specifically polyphony) was part of the university curriculum.[98] Finn Mathiassen takes a passage of Jerome of Moravia's *Tractatus de musica* to mean that music treatises from the thirteenth century were the subject of university lectures,[99] and Nan Cooke Carpenter speaks of 'overwhelming evidence ... for the study, cultivation and practice of music as science and art at the great French university.'[100] But Page counters these theories on the basis of the lack of evidence, which he refers to as 'silence': 'the silence of the university curriculum, as far as we know it, which makes no mention of polyphony, or the silence, for example, of the *quodlibete* and other records of university disputations, none of which has yet been found to mention polyphony.'[101]

This, obviously, does not mean that the polyphonic art was no longer taught in Paris: the Cathedral of Notre Dame remained the cradle of polyphony and practical music was better learned there than anywhere else. If something is to be agreed on, it is that a great deal of polyphony was sung in Paris during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Perhaps it was not the *Ars antiqua* repertory anymore, as Alberto Gallo suggests,[102] but polyphony was certainly not abandoned all of a sudden. The question, among such scholars as Finn Mathiassen, Nan Cooke Carpenter, and Christopher Page, has been, not to establish *whether* polyphony was taught, composed, and performed in thirteenth century Paris, but rather *where* it was taught, composed, and performed. Whether polyphony had its main arena at the university or in churches, its import, stretch-

97 *Chartularium Universitatis parisiensis*, ed. H. Denifle and A. Chatelain (Paris, 1889–97). Robert de Courçon was Magister at the University and Papal legate.

98 See on this topic N. Van Deusen, *Theology and Music at the Early University*, (New York: Brill, 1995).

99 The passage from Jerome's *Tractatus de musica* is at Caput XXVI, available in Coussemaker, *Scriptores de musica Medii Aevii* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1963), 1: 94a. Mathiassen's observation is on p. 35 of his *The Style of the Early Motet* (Copenhagen: Dan Fog Musikforlag, 1966). But see Christopher Page, *The Owl and the Nightingale* (London: Dent, 1989), 238n18 for a different view.

100 N.C. Carpenter, *Music in Medieval and Renaissance Universities* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 48.

101 Christopher Page, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, 138.

102 See Alberto Gallo's observation cited at the beginning of this chapter, p. 12, n. 11.

ing well into the early fourteenth century, provides a significant occasion for Dante's exposure to it, if we do accept as a fact the poet's stay in the French capital.

Uncertain as Dante's journey to Paris remains, some French polyphonists were certainly known to him, such as, for example, Adam de la Halle (b. Arras, 1245–50; d. Naples 1288 or England 1306). Adam travelled through Italy and was in the entourage of Charles of Anjou in Naples from 1283 to 1285.[103] One of the most versatile composers of his time – and one of the few medieval artists who wrote both monophonic and polyphonic music – Adam produced *jeux parties*, the most famous being *Le jeu de Robin et Marion*, chansons, and some very celebrated motets and rondeaux, such as 'Dame, or sui traïs' (3 voices), and 'Diex, comment porroie.' Adam was, however, a composer of secular music rather than liturgical music.

The abundance of evidence that polyphony – of all different styles, spanning from rudimentary to very complex forms – was regularly performed in the liturgy of the major Tuscan cities in the second half of the thirteenth century, as well as in other towns that Dante certainly visited, places in a new perspective the controversy with regard to the representation and use of the musical message in the *Commedia*. Now that the liturgical-musical *substratus* in which Dante grew up appears clearer we know that the faithful had frequent exposure to polyphony in the church. Suspicious and sceptical eyebrows about Dante's exposure to polyphony should therefore be dropped and the resulting reticence of much criticism in this regard should be reconsidered. This will pave the way for the construing of monophony and polyphony in the *Commedia* as pivotal elements in a systematic process of movement from penance to grace and provides the basis for the discussion of a musical dialectic in the *Commedia*.

103 See F. Ghisi, 'Dante e la musica del suo tempo,' *Miscellanea storica della Valdelsa* 71, no. 1/2 (January–August 1965): 42–9. Ghisi gives an overview of the salient musicians and genres of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, from Provençal songs to the Tuscan Bonaiutus de Casentino, from Adam de la Halle to the *Roman de Fauvel*. The main point of his essays is that music and poetry held equal dignity for Dante and need to be studied in tandem as equally important means of expression in the poet's production.

2 *Inferno*'s Unholy Racket

> 'Do the jongleurs have any hope? None. Because they are from the bottom of their hearts the ministers of Satan.'[1]

Unlike the other two canticas, *Inferno* does not ostensibly show a musical design, its anguished wailings continuously filling the air. Critics have sometimes encountered difficulties in defining the boundaries of their investigation, due to the arduousness of historical reconstruction of the period, or to structural reasons. For example, some fail to identify a systematic use of music in the entirety of the *Commedia* because they found no music in the first cantica. Indeed, how is one to treat the musical landscape in the *Inferno*, if chaos and noise dominate those murky depths? Among the modern readers of the poem who have – if only briefly – engaged this topic, Francesco De Sanctis states:

> La comune anima ha la sua espressione nel canto. Nell'*Inferno* non ci sono i cori, perché non vi è unità nell'amore. L'odio è solitario; l'amore è simpatia e armonia ... Nel *Purgatorio*, invece, le anime sono esseri musicali, che escono dalla loro coscienza individuale, assorte in uno stesso spirito di carità ... Sono i salmi e gli inni della Chiesa, cantati secondo le varie occasioni, e di cui il poeta dice le prime parole. Ti par d'essere in Chiesa e udir cantare i fedeli. Quei canti latini erano allora sulla bocca di tutti, erano cantati da tutti in Chiesa; il primo verso bastava a ricordarli.[2]

('The common soul has its own expression in singing. In the *Inferno* there

1 Honorius of Autun, *Elucidarium*, in *Patrologia latina* (henceforth *PL*), vol. 172, col. 1148.
2 F. De Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura italiana* (Bari: Laterza, 1958), 1:211.

> are no choruses because there is no unity in love. Hatred is solitary; love is sympathy and harmony ... In the *Purgatorio*, on the contrary, the souls are musical beings, who go beyond their individual consciousness and are absorbed in a unified spirit of charity ... there are the Psalms and hymns of the Church, sung according to the various occasions, of which the poet reports the first words. You have the feeling you are in church and hear the faithful sing. Back then, those Latin songs were on everyone's lips, they were sung by everyone in the church. The first line was enough to recall them.')

The obvious implications of disorder and discord in the underworld have engendered a persisting idea of Dante's *Inferno* as the aural embodiment of chaos and racket, not the place in which to look for musical material.[3] However, if we look carefully we will spot another much more orderly structure there: the poet's design of a systematic reversal of sacred music. Music carries meaning, and such meaning can only be understood through a systematic analysis of all music in the poem. By doing so, we will find elements disproving De Sanctis's claim that there are no choruses in the *Inferno*. Through the frequent quotations of, and hints at, liturgical songs, Dante constructs the first cantica as a musical parody of the other two. We must therefore look beyond the cacophony of the wailings, lest we miss the many musical references found among the smoke and cries of Dante's dark world. A clear musical layout will then start to appear.

In Dante's time certain parts of the sacred scriptures were commonly understood as inherently musical. Everybody, for example, would think of a hymn or a Psalm in conjunction with its manner of intonation. Antonio Lovato, who co-edited the thirteenth-century ordinal book of the

3 For example, N. Pirrotta: 'unfortunately the *Comedy* is not the best place to seek evidence for [a structural musical meaning]: not in *Inferno*, as it is the kingdom of all discord; nor in *Paradise*, where idealized dances and songs replace the notion of the harmony of the spheres, which Dante as a philosopher rejected; nor in *Purgatory*, where melodies frequently resound, but they are prevalently liturgical melodies, of which the poet wants to stress the words of penance and hope much more than the musical sound.' Nino Pirrotta, 'Ars nova and Stil novo,' in *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 1 (1966): 13. Camille Bellaigue and Arrigo Boito seemed to anticipate this position. See C. Bellaigue, 'Dante et la Musique,' *Revue des deux mondes* (January 1903): 67–86, in particular p. 72; and A. Boito, *Tutti gli scritti*, ed. Piero Nardi, (Milan: Mondadori, 1942), in particular pp. 1219–1332. See also Luigi Scorrano, 'Dante, Boito (Bellaigue) la musica,' *L'Alighieri* 18, no. 2 (July–December) (1977): 9–25.

Padua Cathedral, asserts: 'singing represented a constitutive element, not an optional one, of Christian liturgy from its origins to our day. Singing, by its own very nature, exerts the power to amplify the declamation of the divine word, filling in the expressive limits of the human word.'[4]

We must therefore rethink the mentions of liturgical moments in all of the *Commedia*, including the first cantica, as intrinsically musical experiences. If we consider that some form of chant or cantillation[5] was inseparable from salvific rituals, it will then be clear that the *Inferno* could not remain without its own, perverted, form of music, as the cantica represents the negation of that salvation which is, in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, glossed with abundant musical comments.

The elements of musical discourse found in the *Commedia* often respond to one another. A feeling of symmetry is suggested, for example, at the beginning and end of the *Inferno*, in two episodes of indubitable musical nature. The ante-Inferno is presented with a group of people, a parody of the angelic choirs, chasing a banner. A banner is also evoked at the very bottom of the pit, when Virgil announces the impending encounter with Satan, the supreme parody of the Crucifixion, in the reversal of a well-known hymn by Venantius Fortunatus (530–609): 'Vexilla regis prodeunt Inferni' ('The banners of the king of Hell are coming forward') (*Inf.* XXXIV.1). The cantica therefore closes with yet another musical example that points to the conclusion, as Edoardo Sanguineti notes, that Dante is 'a wayfarer who explores with the ear more than with the eye, and with the ear before he explores with the eye; a wayfarer who generally favours what is perceived "as far as listening goes" in the first contact.'[6] Sanguineti also states that the soundscape of Dante's *Inferno*

4 'Il canto rappresentava un elemento costitutivo e non opzionale della liturgia cristiana, dalle sue origini ai giorni nostri, poiché per sua stessa natura esercita il potere di amplificare la declamazione della parola divina, colmando i limiti espressivi di quella umana.' A. Lovato, 'Musica e liturgia nella canonica Sanctae Mariae Patavensis Ecclesiae,' in *Canonici delle cattedrali del medioevo*, Quaderni di storia religiosa, 10 (Verona: Cierre Edizioni, 2003): 95–128, at p. 95.

5 Cantillation is 'the musical or semi-musical chanting of sacred texts, prayers and so on by a solo singer in a liturgical context. The term primarily refers to such chanting in the Jewish Synagogue, but is used also for the comparable public recitation of lessons and so on in the various Christian traditions' (*New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*).

6 'Un itinerante ... che esplora con l'orecchio non meno, e spesso prima che con l'occhio e che privilegia, di norma, quanto affiora 'secondo che per ascoltare,' al primo impatto.' E. Sanguineti 'Canzone sacra e canzone profana,' in *La musica al tempo di*

echoes the lines of the apparition of Dis in the *Aeneid*, where the auditory sense is also dominant: 'From it are heard the groans and the sound of the savage lash.'[7] The Florentine poet's emulation, however, takes on a complexity and grandeur that go far beyond the Latin model. By presenting auditory material first, the author stimulates the reader's *virtù imaginativa*, forcing him or her to create a disembodied mental image, made of sounds and thus ghostly.

As anticipated by Virgil, the epiphany of the first souls of Inferno – indeed the first perception the pilgrim and the reader are offered – is presented through sounds, not images.[8] And hearing, not sight, is what drives the pilgrim literally out of Inferno to the shore of Purgatory when he has climbed down Lucifer's body:

> Luogo è là giù da Belzebù remoto
> tanto quanto la tomba si distende,
> che non per vista, ma per suono è noto
> d'un ruscelletto che quivi discende
> per la buca d'un sasso, ch'elli ha roso ... (*Inf.* XXXIV.127–31)
>
> ('As far as one can get from Beelzebub, / in the remotest corner of this cavern, / there is a place one cannot find by sight, / but by the sound of a narrow stream that trickles / through a channel it has cut into the rock ...')

The sound of a stream, not the sight of it, guides the pilgrim out of the tunnel that connects the Inferno to the shores of Purgatory, the same way as, in *Purgatorio* XXVII, the song of the guardian angel of Eden will lead a blinded Dante through the thick wall of flames into the Earthly Paradise.

Dante, ed. Luigi Pestalozza (Milan: Unicopli, 1986), 206–21, at p. 210; 'Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare, / non avea pianto mai che di sospiri /che l'aura etterna facevan tremare' (*Inf.* IV.25–7).

7 'hinc exaudiri gemitus et saeva sonare / verbera ...' (*Aen.* VI.557–8). *Virgil: Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

8 *Inf.* I.113–15: 'e io sarò tua guida, / e trarrotti di qui per loco etterno; / ove udirai le disperate strida' ('I will be your guide, / leading you, from here, through an eternal place / where you shall hear despairing cries'). For an analysis of Dante's procedure of anticipation, see J. Freccero, 'The Prologue Scene,' in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. R. Jacoff (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1986), 1–28.

> Guidavaci una voce che cantava
> di là; e noi, attenti pur a lei,
> venimmo fuor là ove si montava. (*Purg.* XXVII.55–7)

('Guiding us was a voice that sang beyond the flame. / We gave it our rapt attention, / and came forth from the fire where the ascent began.')

'Venite benedicti Patris mei' calls the last angel's song of the *Purgatorio*. With these words in the Gospel of Matthew, God invites the saved into his Realm.[9] The song, used in the Introit on the Easter Wednesday, is therefore perfectly fitted to lead Dante through the opaque flames out to the last and most glorious phase of his voyage.

But the Inferno is above all the seat of a tragic liturgical reversal, where the metaphysical attributes of music are employed to plunge the damned into eternal desperation. The next sections illustrate how the musical elements of this cantica, be they instruments, perverted sacred songs, or secular songs, are part of a thoroughly planned design that encompasses all the poem.

Musical Instruments

Dante's art not only shows itself in allegory and structure, *pace* Benedetto Croce, but has a realistic tinge in *Inferno*, especially in the use of imagery based on musical instruments. The Boethian distinction of *musica humana* and *musica instrumentalis* (equivalent to Regino of Prüm's *musica naturalis* and *musica artificialis*) corresponds to a clear scale of values in which the latter holds a distinctly lower place than the former.

> Humanam vero musicam quisquis in sese ipsum descendit intellegit. Quid est enim quod illam incorpoream rationis vivacitatem corpori misceat, nisi quaedam coaptatio et veluti gravium leviumque vocum quasi unam consonantiam efficiens temperatio? Quid est aliud quod ipsius inter se partes animae coniungat, quae, ut Aristoteli placet, ex rationabili inrationabilique

9 Matthew 25:34: 'Tunc dicet rex his qui a dextris eius erunt venite benedicti Patris mei possidete paratum vobis regnum a constitutione mundi' ('Then shall the king say to them that shall be on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world').

> coniuncta est? Quid vero, quod corporis elementa permiscet, aut partes sibimet rata coaptatione contineat?[10]
>
> ('Whoever penetrates into his own self perceives human music. For what unites the incorporeal nature of reason with the body if not a certain harmony and, as it were, a careful tuning of low and high pitches as though producing one consonance? What other than this unites the parts of the soul, which, according to Aristotle, is composed of the rational and the irrational? What is it that intermingles the elements of the body or holds together the parts of the body in an established order?')

Such a distinction shaped the medieval conception of the musician, canonized by Guido of Arezzo around the year 1000 in his *Micrologus*. The distance between musician and singer became proverbial after Guido's expression of contempt for the singer – 'he who does without knowing what he does can be defined a beast' (see p. 40, above).

The murky depths of Hell reverberate not only with wailing and cries but also with the sounds of musical instruments. In contrast with the other two canticas, where only an organ, a *sampogna*, a *cetra*, and a lyre – all instruments with liturgical implications – are evoked by the poet's rhetorical art,[11] *Inferno* features a great number and variety of instruments. In general, such a greater presence of instruments in the realm of damnation follows the principle that instrumental music has a lowly connotation; thus, we find vocal performances increasingly important in Purgatory and Paradise. Although instruments often appear in similes or metaphors, they embody the first of Boethius's three categories: *musica instrumentalis*, *musica humana* and *musica mundana*.[12]

> ... 'Più non si desta
> di qua dal suon de l'angelica tromba,
> quando verrà la nemica podesta:
> ciascun rivederà la trista tomba,
> ripiglierà sua carne e sua figura,
> udirà quel ch'in etterno rimbomba.' (*Inf.* VI.94–9)

10 Boethius, *De inst. mus.* I.ii. In the same chapter, Boethius defines *musica mundana* and *musica instrumentalis* as well.

11 Cf. *Purg.* IX.144 and *Par.* XV.4; *Par.* XX.22–4.

12 The only real instrument in the poem is Nimrod's horn (*Inf.* XXXI.12), all others appearing as figures of speech.

('He wakes no more / until angelic trumpets sound / the advent of the hostile Power. / Then each shall find again his miserable tomb, / shall take again his flesh and form, / and hear the judgment that eternally resounds.')

The reference to the trumpet of the Apocalypse gives us a preview of Judgment Day and the terrible sounds announcing the voice of God.[13] The alliterative rhymes *tromba / tomba / rimbomba* sanction the musical nature of the divine verdict that will condemn the sinners: the history of the earth will conclude as it had started, with the sound of the voice of God. Not always, however, is the trumpet used in such a terrifyingly sacred context; it appears again, further down in the lightless world, with quite different connotations.

O Simon mago, o miseri seguaci
che le cose di Dio, che di bontate
deon essere spose, voi rapaci
per oro e per argento avolterate,
or convien che per voi suoni la tromba,
però che ne la terza bolgia state. (*Inf.* XIX.1–6)

('O Simon Magus! O wretches of his kind, / greedy for gold and silver, / who prostitute the things of God / that should be brides of goodness! / Now must the trumpet sound for you, / because your place is there in that third ditch.')

The *tromba* invoked by Dante for the simoniacs could be a metaphor for the voice of the poet who inscribes in his poem the condemnation of those who sold indulgences, according to the majority of the ancient commentators. Or, as Guglielmo Maramauro[14] argues, the trum-

13 Besides the blasts of the trumpet in the Apocalypse, the reference here is to St Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:52: 'In momento in ictu oculi in novissima tuba: canet enim, et mortui resurgent incorrupti: et nos immutabimur' ('In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible, and we shall be changed').

14 Many old commentators interpret this trumpet as the poet's denunciation of the sinners' faults: Jacopo della Lana: 'dice tromba al parlare poetico, sicome è in Arrighetto in uno volume che fece, che volendo recitare dell'ovra di Lucano, dice: *si tuba Lucano* etc.' ('He means the trumpet of poetical discourse, as Arrighetto does in a volume he

pet underscores the sentences read by the criers to the people in the streets. Indeed it was the custom of thirteenth-century Florence to have civic *bannitori* assemble the citizens before reading a sentence or an announcement precisely by playing a fanfare on the trumpet, which was often made of silver, a metal explicitly mentioned in these lines.[15] In any case, Dante's intent is to expose the shame of the clergy by 'trumpeting' their guilt, perhaps because they did not receive appropriate punishment in life.

The last recurrence of this instrument in the *Inferno*, the scurrilous 'trumpet' with which Malacoda marshals his rowdy squad, reveals all the squalor of this travesty of a regular army. The scene continues with a structural *enjambement* to the next canto:

> Per l'argine sinistro volta dienno;
> ma prima avea ciascun la lingua stretta
> coi denti, verso lor duca, per cenno;
> ed elli avea del cul fatto trombetta. (*Inf.* XXI.136–9)

('Off they set along the left-hand bank, / but first each pressed his tongue between his teeth / to blow a signal to their leader, / and he had made a trumpet of his asshole.')

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wrote about Lucan's work where he says "this is how Lucan blows his trumpet" etc.'); Ottimo: 'dice, che conviene che per loro suoni la tromba, cioè questa Commedia, con boce di versi musichi' ('He says that the trumpet sounds for them, that is his *Commedia*, with the voice of different musicians'); Guido da Pisa: 'Quasi dicat: Propter sacrilegia que in bonis spiritualibus commisistis convenit ut tuba, idest vox – subaudi poetica – intonet contra vos' ('As if he said: the trumpet – that is the poetic trumpet – will sound against you because of the sacrileges you committed against the spiritual goods'); Benvenuto da Imola: 'Or conven che la tromba suoni per voi, idest nunc expedit, quia ordo exigit, quod vox poetica alta proclamet et praeconizet vestra vitia et supplitia; et certe nulla est tuba viventis quae ita fecisset nota mala istorum' ('The trumpet will now sound for you, that is, the poetic voice will proclaim out loud and announce your vices and punishment; and certainly no trumpet of the living made known the evil of these sinners'); Francesco Buti: 'or convien che per voi suoni la tromba della mia poesia.' ('Now must the trumpet of my poetry sound for you.') Guglielmo Maramauro: '*idest* a dir che publicamente li pone in bando como se sòl sonare quando alcuno malfatore si condanna' ('That is to say [the trumpet] banishes them the way it sounds when a wrongdoer is condemned').

15 See Timothy McGee, 'In the Service of the Commune: The Changing Role of Florentine Civic Musicians, 1450–1532,' *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30, no. 2 (Autumn 1999): 727–43, at p. 729.

Io vidi già cavalier muover campo,
e cominciare stormo e far lor mostra,
e talvolta partir per loro scampo;
corridor vidi per la terra vostra,
o Aretini, e vidi gir gualdane,
fedir torneamenti e correr giostra;
quando con trombe, e quando con campane,
con tamburi e con cenni di castella,
e con cose nostrali e con istrane;
né già con sì diversa cennamella
cavalier vidi muover né pedoni,
né nave a segno di terra o di stella. (*Inf.* XXII.1–12)

('I have seen the cavalry break camp, / prepare for an attack, make their muster / and at times fall back to save themselves. / I have seen outriders in your land, / O Aretines. I have seen raiding-parties, / tournaments of teams, hand-to-hand jousts / begun with bells, trumpets, or drums, / with signals from the castle, / with summons of our own and those from foreign lands. / But truly never to such outlandish fanfare / have I seen horsemen move, or infantry, / or ship set sail at sign from land or star.')

The poet stages the military parade of the devils' motley army by evoking the movements and sounds of real armies and contrasting them with the feckless gang cobbled together by Malacoda: his signal in XXI.139 – an 'outlandish fanfare' (XXII.10) – is the degraded imitation of the proper military trumpet of XXII.7; the devils' *cenno* of XXI.138, a raspberry performed resoundingly with the tongue between the teeth, corresponds to the *cenni di castella* of XXII.8, but because of the assonance, *cenno* cannot fail to also recall the *cennamella* of XXII.10.[16] The entire scene employs

16 *Cennamella*, from the Latin *calamus*, and translated by Hollander as 'fanfare,' was a double-reed instrument, now usually referred to as a shawm. The cennamella was employed both as a military pipe, as here, and as a civic instrument. The civic musical ensemble of Florence – first recorded in 1294, but undoubtedly established at least as early as the beginning of the Republic (1282) – lists it as one of the instruments used. Likewise, the *cennamella* was a member of the ensembles in many other cities, and is often mentioned as being performed to accompany dancing. All of the instruments in the quoted passage – trumpets, drums, and *cennamella* – were commonly found in all cities, where they functioned not only as martial signals but also in processions, jousts, etc. See Timothy McGee, 'In the Service of the Commune,' 729n8.

musical and military elements to build a perfect mockery of a regular army: trumpets, drums, bells, local and foreign customs, even the strangest behaviours to which the poet testified on real battle grounds are not as ridiculous as this team of improvised soldiers. And they will indeed prove incapable of discharging a soldier's most elementary duty when they disobey orders and start a fight among themselves (XXII.91–151). Ciampolo di Navarra, the damned soul that the devils are supposed to be guarding, manages to break loose for a while, wreaking havoc (*Inf.* XXII.118–23). Dante uses the words 'nuovo ludo' ('strange sport') for Ciampolo's bravado (which he will of course pay for with a still fiercer castigation). The term has strongly musical implications (one needs only think of the *Ludus Danielis*) and reappears only once in Dante's oeuvre – precisely in the description of the angelic choirs. Gian Roberto Sarolli has therefore sensibly linked these two episodes and labelled the devils' *secularis representatio* as a *jeu* intended to offer a reversed *récit* of the 'angelici ludi' of *Paradiso* XXVIII.126.[17]

Elsewhere in the *Commedia*, the trumpet appears with its Latin name, *tuba*. The stylistic choice fits in with the loftier environment of *Paradiso* in recalling the military trumpet of Pompey's army, attacked by Caesar in Spain (*vostro occidente*) for the sake of the Roman Empire:

> Da indi scese folgorando a Iuba;
> onde si volse nel vostro occidente,
> ove sentia la pompeiana tuba. (*Par.* VI.70–2)

('From there it fell like lightning on Juba, / then turned toward the region to your west, / where it heard the sound of Pompey's trumpet.')

The last mention of the *tuba* is, as in *Inferno* XIX.5 above, a metaphor of the poetic voice.

> Cotal qual io la lascio a maggior bando
> che quel de la mia tuba, che deduce
> l'ardüa sua matera terminando ... (*Par.* XXX.34–6)

('Thus I leave her to more glorious trumpeting / than that of my own music, as, laboring on, / I bring my difficult subject toward its close.')

17 Gian Roberto Sarolli, 'Musical Symbolism: *Inferno* XXI,' in *Prolegomena alla 'Divina Commedia'* (Florence: Olschki, 1971), 363–80, at p. 373.

The fact that the metaphor of the poetic voice may be expressed indifferently by the form *tromba* or *tuba* confirms that the alternation Italian/Latin is one of a primarily stylistic nature.

The scatological quality of the devils' trumpet and raspberries constitutes the climax of the comic in the episode. These most improper 'wind' instruments are a hybrid of *musica artificialis* and *musica naturalis*, as theorized by tenth-century chronicler Regino of Prüm:

> Artificialis musica dicitur quae arte et ingenio humano escogitata est, et inventa, quae in quibusdam consistit intrumentis ... Naturalis itaque musica est quae nullo instrumento musico, nullo tactu digitorum, nullo humano inpulsu aut tactu resonat, sed divinitus aspirata sola natura docente dulces modulantur modos: quae fit aut in coeli motu aut in humana voce.
>
> ('Artificial music is that which is devised by art and invented by the human mind, and which exists in some instruments ... Thus, natural music is that which resounds in no musical instrument, no touch of fingers, no human stroke, but divinely modulates sweet tunes, with nature as its sole teacher: which happens in the motion of the heavens or in the human voice.')[18]

Regino mentions precisely the motion of the heavens and the human voice, of which latter Malacoda's signal is a most degraded version. A perverted quality of both types, *artificialis* and *naturalis*, this 'music' is the reversal of the breath employed in real singing and stands in sharp contrast to the melodious vocal harmony of heavenly music. As Gian Roberto Sarolli suggests, this episode should be considered from a structural standpoint: the music of the devil stands in opposition to the music of God. In this construction Dante is the architect who uses musical rhetoric and songs as his building blocks. Dante provides such a musically dialectic framework from the beginning of the first cantica and brings it forward through the entire poem. Although it may appear under many different guises, the musical discourse has a precise function in the distribution and conveyance of beatitude throughout the poem and Dante's Universe. If, as John Stevens puts it, the 'experience of music is not just

18 Regino of Prüm, *De harmonica institutione*, in *Scriptores ecclesiastici de musica sacra potissimum*, 3 vols. (Blaise: Typis San-Blasianis, 1784; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1963), ed. Martin Gerbert, I.233b, 236b; also available in *PL*, vol. 132, col. 491. Translation from *History of Aesthetics*, ed. Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz and Cyril Barrett, 3 vols. (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), 2:134.

an intellectual analogy in this context, but an actual part, the medium in fact, of spiritual experience,'[19] the devils' degraded forms of musical production represent the absence of any spiritual experience as well as a mortifying punishment *per se*.

Also rich with symbolical implications is the episode of Master Adam, the counterfeiter of the gold florin, punished in the tenth and last pouch of *Malebolge* in the eighth circle. The Anonymous Florentine relates that Adam, abetted by Aghinolfo, Guido, and Alessandro of Romena, produced replicas of gold coins that lacked three of the necessary carats. In the underworld, he is placed next to three other types of falsifiers: impersonators, alchemists, and falsifiers of words, or liars. Affected by dropsy, an undying thirst tantalizing him with the perennial thought of the roaring water of Casentino pouring into the Arno, Adam pays for altering metals and coins with the grotesque alteration of his body, which is swollen to resemble a lute:

> Io vidi un, fatto a guisa di lëuto,
> pur ch'elli avesse avuta l'anguinaia
> tronca da l'altro che l'uomo ha forcuto. (*Inf.* XXX.49–51)

> ('One I saw, fashioned like a lute – / had he been sundered at the groin / from the joining where a man goes forked.')

His head tilted up like the bent pegbox of a lute, Adam's sight is hindered by his obscenely bloated abdomen. Wondering resentfully why the wayfarers are not subject to any pain, he calls the newcomers' attention to his miserable condition. When the pilgrim asks the wretched individual about the two souls lying next to him, Adam describes them as 'la falsa ch'accusò Gioseppo' ('The woman who lied accusing Joseph') and ''l falso Sinon greco di Troia' ('False Sinon, the lying Greek from Troy') (*Inf.* XXX.97–8). Potifar's wife falsely accused Joseph of attempting to rape her, while the story of Sinon is told in the *Aeneid*:[20] a falsely renegade Greek, he cajoled Priam into harbouring him, only to trick the Trojans into introducing the horse into the city. Sinon does not appreciate Adam's perpetuating the ill fame of the Greeks as traitors and even

19 J.E. Stevens, 'Dante and Music,' in *Italian Studies* 23 (1968): 5.
20 *Aen.* II.57–194.

Figure 1. Luca della Robbia, the Elder (1399/1400–82). Young musicians with portable organ, harp, and lute. Detail from the Cantoria (choir loft) (1431–38). Marble. Location: Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, Italy.

less being named 'the false Greek of Troy.' His reaction is sudden and violent: when he hits Adam's belly it resounds like a drum.

E l'un di lor, che si recò a noia
forse d'esser nomato sì oscuro,

Figure 2. This wooden lute dates from around 1520. While images of lutes closer to Dante's time do exist, this picture offers a very clear sight of the instrument's body and pegbox. Bologna, Obbizzi Collection. Location: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.

Figure 3. Sinon and Adam fighting, in MS. Holkham misc. 48, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 47.

col pugno li percosse l'epa croia.
Quella sonò come fosse un tamburo;
e mastro Adamo li percosse il volto
col braccio suo, che non parve men duro ... (*Inf.* XXX.100–5)

('And one of them, who took offense, perhaps / at being named so vilely, hit him / with a fist right on his rigid paunch. / It boomed out like a drum. Then Master Adam, / whose arm seemed just as sturdy, / used it, striking Sinon in the face ...')

Some readers equate the lute with the lyre,[21] but the two instruments look quite different: the lute is a stringed instrument of Arabic origin (*al 'ūd*), probably brought to Europe during the Moorish occupation of Spain,[22] with an oval, vaulted sound box, a short fretted neck, and a

21 Sally Mussetter: '*Inferno* XXX: Dante's Counterfeit Adam,' *Traditio* 34 (1978): 427–35; Leo Spitzer, *Christian and Classical Ideas of World Harmony* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963), 8, 15.

22 D. Heilbronn, 'Master Adam and the Fat-Bellied Lute,' *Dante Studies* 101 (1983): 51–65, reports that the earliest testimony is an ivory pyxis from Cordova, dated 968, but Curt Sachs (*The History of Musical Instruments* [New York: W.W. Norton, ca. 1940], 273) mentions an illustration in the *Utrecht Psalter, Codex* 32, University Library, Utrecht, around the year 832. However, more pictorial representations exist in a Spanish manuscript from ca. 1260, containing the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (Escorial MS j.b.2). The lute is mentioned in Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*, line 21,031 (ca. 1275–80), where it is said to be among the many instruments played at Pygmalion's wedding, and in Adenet Le Roi's *Cléomadès*, line 17,274 (ca. 1285). More information

back-bent pegbox. In Dante's day lutes were already in use, if we may believe the Florentine Anonymous, who informs us that the idle Belacqua (*Purg.* IV.123) was a lute maker. The lyre is different: it has a flat sound box, is not belly-shaped and does not have a neck, and its strings are instead attached to a crossbar stretched over two arching arms.

Even on the level of symbolic value, the equation lute–lyre would not have stood in Dante's time, as the lute was employed in popular dances and performed lowly social functions, while the lyre, as Apollo's favourite and therefore the noblest of instruments, was associated with poetic production. Denise Heilbronn proposes a more complex motivation for the musical imagery of the lute, since 'Dante's similes do not merely create a strong visual image, but serve a cognitive purpose as well,'[23] and suggests instead another relationship, although one of opposition: between lute and cithara. The description of the biblical cithara found in some texts of the Fathers of the Church may actually recall the shape of the lute because of its vaulted sound box. These writers often described the psaltery and cithara as two very similar instruments, only distinguishing them for the different positions of their sound boxes: in the psaltery the sound box was in the upper part of the instrument, while in the cithara it was in the lower. The authority that Heilbronn invokes for the association between lute and cithara is Cassiodorus, who compares the psaltery's (and therefore the cithara's) sound box to an *obesus venter*,[24] an image also found in Raban Maur and Bede.[25] The lute simile must have impressed contemporary readers of the poem, as that instrument was still comparatively new in Europe during Dante's time, its use becoming

on the lute is available in D. Munrow, *Instruments of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 25, 75; and in Sybil Marcuse: *A Survey of Musical Instruments* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 406–64; Curt Sachs, *The History of Musical Instruments*, 273–4; Karl Geiringer, 'Vorgeschichte und Geschichte der Europaeischen Laute bis zum Beginn der Neuzeit,' *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 10 (1927–28): 560–603; Karl Geiringer, *Instruments in the History of Western Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 51–2.

23 D. Heilbronn: 'Master Adam and the Fat-Bellied Lute,' 54.

24 D. Heilbronn: 'Master Adam and the Fat-Bellied Lute,' 57. The other authorities invoked by Heilbronn – Augustine, Isidore, and Jerome – although not explicitly describing the psaltery or the cithara as a vaulted-body instrument, do use words such as *cavamen*, *lignum concavus*, and *sonora concavitas* to refer to the hollow part of the instrument, which is present in all string instruments, with the purpose of amplifying the sound.

25 *Commentarium in Paralipomena Liber I*, *PL*, vol. 109, col. 346.

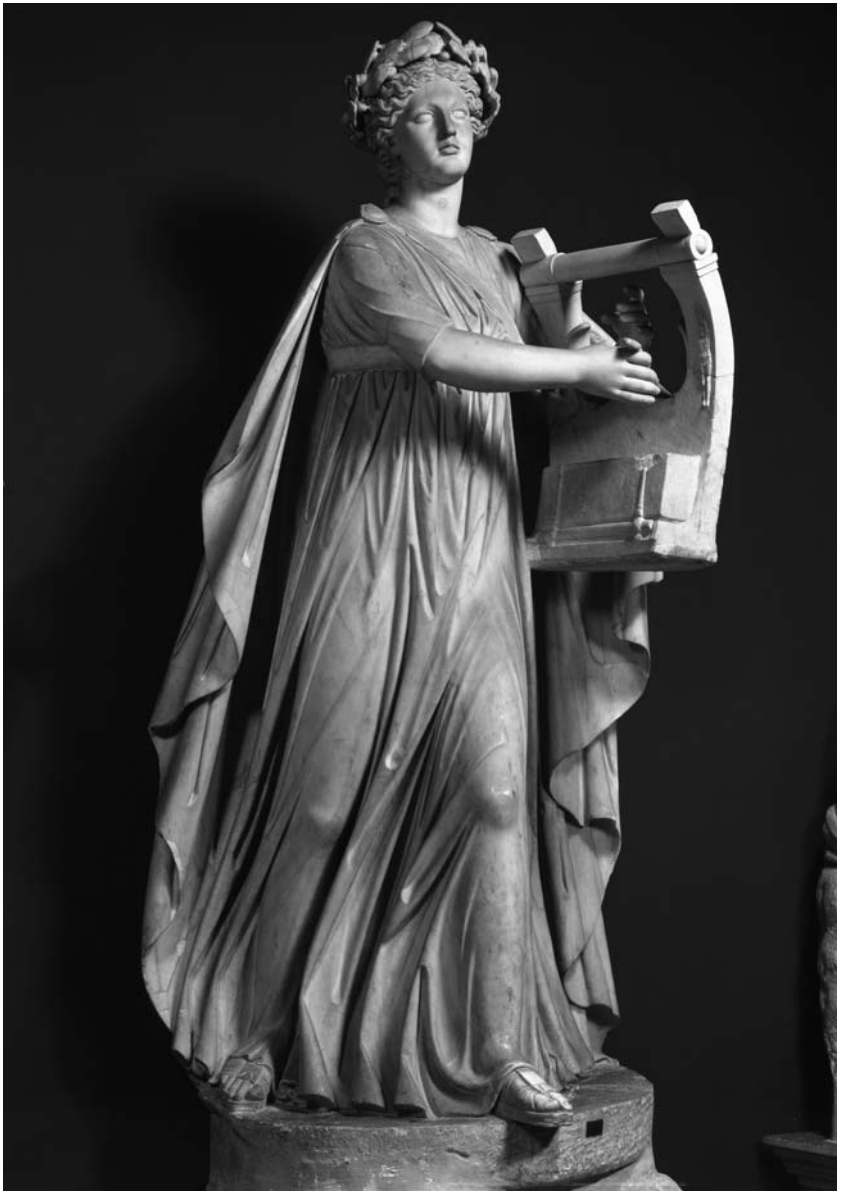

Figure 4. Apollo with a cithara. Roman statue. Location: Museo Pio Clementino, Vatican Museums, Vatican State.

widespread only after the mid-thirteenth century.[26] Although it became an object of great consideration around the mid-fifteenth century, even viewed as the king of chamber music, the lute was, during the Middle Ages, still used in popular entertainment such as music for dance or dance-like secular songs. To complicate matters, musical instruments in the Middle Ages existed in different versions from one area to another and often even underwent name changes. Indeed, Heilbronn's analysis hinges precisely on the confusion between cithara and lute found in a text by Cassiodorus that might have influenced Dante.[27] Other than in texts such as Cassiodorus's, cithara and lute actually look different: the cithara is distinguished by its arms supporting a crossbar to which the strings are attached. It has no neck and its sound box is flat, not vaulted, as are the lyre's and the psaltery's. While Heilbronn's hypothesis that Dante might have thought of lute and cithara as having a similar shape is plausible, it is not as likely that he confused their allegorical attributes. In fact, Dante himself describes the *cetra* as having a neck,[28] thus differentiating it from the many pictorial and sculptural representations of citharae found in many illuminated psalteries and on Church facades. There is evidence of citharae shaped like a lute, that is with a neck and an elongated body, even before the twelfth century:[29] the *Golden Psalter*

26 A manuscript dating from ca. 1260 (Escorial MS j.b.2) included in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* is the first containing several images of lutes, testifying to a wide diffusion of the instrument.

27 'Psalterium est, ut Hyeronimus ait, in modum deltae litterae formati ligni. Sonora concavitas, obesum ventrem in superibus habens, ubi chordarum fila religata disciplinabiter plectro percussa suavissimam dicuntur reddere cantilenam. Huic citharae positio esse videtur contraria, dum quod ista in imo continet, illud conversa vice gestat in capite.' ('The psaltery is, as Jerome says, a sounding cavity of wood shaped like a delta letter and has an obese belly in the top part, where the strings, attached in orderly manner, are said to give out a sweetest song if plucked with a plectrum. This position seems opposite to that of the cithara, in that what the psaltery has in the top part, the cithara has in the bottom.') (Cassiodorus *Prefatio in Psalterium* 4, in *PL*, vol. 70, col. 15). This passage is also quoted by Bede, *Interpretatio psalterii artis cantilenae (Opera dubia et spuria)*, in *PL*, vol. 93, cols. 1099–1100; and Raban Maur in his *Commentaria in Libros Paralipomenon*, in *PL*, vol. 109, col. 346, has a very similar description of the psaltery and the cithara.

28 *Par.* XX.22–3: 'E come suono al collo de la cetra / prende sua froma...' ('And as a sound is given shape / at the neck of the cithara or by the wind ...'). Note that Jean and Robert Hollander translate 'cetra' as 'lute.' I have emended their translation here.

29 For more examples of necked cithara, see Emanuel Winternitz, *Musical Instruments and Their Symbolism in Western Art* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), esp. 57–65.

of St Gall depicts King David wielding an instrument that has a broad neck, a circular pegbox (without pegs depicted), and three strings, and whose total length is three times as long as its body, which is of a circular shape.[30] This instrument resembles a lute more than a cithara, but it is associated with David. Further evidence appears in *The Stuttgart Psalter* (Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek Biblia Folio 23), which originated in the ninth century in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, France. This psalter contains several images of an instrument having a long neck and a narrow body with parallel sides, sloping shoulders, and a pear-shaped pegbox.[31] In the text, next to all of these miniatures, the instrument is called a cithara. This seems a good basis for the hypothesis that Dante considered the lute as having a similar shape to the cithara. He therefore probably employed the lute in Inferno as a perverted equivalent of the cithara he places in Paradise. Given the salvific associations of the cithara with David's psaltery, the lute fittingly plays its comic dark-world counterpart. Heilbronn's argument that Dante had confused the two instruments only seems acceptable as far as the shapes of the two instruments go: the poet might have thought of the *cetra* (cithara) and lute as resembling one another, but he certainly attributed different values to them.

The rest of Heilbronn's richly documented essay capitalizes on the superimposition of the cithara on the lute and construes the lute as a negative figure of Christ's cross.[32] Heilbronn also sees a baptismal allusion in the end of the episode,[33] thereby viewing Master Adam as a negative figure of the Old Adam who cannot be purified and saved by Baptism. Thus, the comparison with the lute replaces the cithara as 'a contrafact

30 The Golden Psalter of St Gall is from the ninth century. I am drawing this description from Sachs's *History of Musical Instruments*, 273, since no edition of this psalter is available.

31 Ernest T. DeWald, ed., *The Stuttgart Psalter: Biblia Folio 23*, published for the Dept. of Art and Archaeology of Princeton University, 1930. The cithara appears on 55r, 83r, 98v, 108r, 112r, 125r, 155v, 161r, 163v.

32 Heilbronn relies on the commentary by Niceta of Remesiana (whom historians identify with Nicetius of Triers). Niceta, followed by Bede and Hugh of St Victor, recounts the episode of David healing Saul's madness with the cithara (and by singing), not because the cithara had special properties, but because it is a *figura crucis Christi*. Niceta, *De psalmodiae bono*, *PL*, vol. 68, col. 371c–d; Bede, *Allegoriae in Samuel* III, in *PL*, vol. 91, col. 609; Hugh of St Victor, *Allegoriae in vetus testamentum*, *PL*, vol. 175, col. 692a.

33 In the image of the water of Casentino and in the words 'maggior difetto men vergogna lava' (line 142), with which Virgil 'forgives' Dante after rebuking him for dwelling too long and absorbedly looking at Adam and Sinon's fight.

Figure 5. Lute-shaped cithara from *The Stuttgart Psalter*, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart, Biblia Folio 23, 108r. The word 'cithara' appears in the text right before the illumination.

sign of salvation,'[34] a cross with no salvific powers upon which Adam is tied forever.

This fascinating interpretation seems to lack the support of textual evidence, although external elements (not included in Heilbronn's discussion) seem to support a tie between the body of Adam and the body of Christ. Indeed, Master Adam lies flat, but nowhere are strings mentioned, nor does his position particularly remind the reader of the Crucifixion. The description of Master Adam insists on his legs (if he did not have them, his body really would look like a lute) and his lips, open and distorted like a consumptive's. Furthermore, a few cantos earlier, Dante did explicitly portray a scene of crucifixion: 'a l'occhio mi corse / un, crucifisso in terra con tre pali' ('for one there caught my eye, / fixed cross-wise to the ground by three short stakes') (*Inf.* XXIII.110–11). Caiaphas's eternal punishment repays him with the same coin he used against Christ: his responsibility for Jesus' Crucifixion is requited with his own horizontal crucifixion, in which the changed position denies the sinner the elevating, salvific function of the sacrifice of Christ by nailing him to the earth instead.[35] Also, the representation of Satan, planted in

34 D. Heilbronn, 'Master Adam,' 60.

35 Caiaphas's punishment does not end with his crucifixion: everyone who passes by

the centre of the planet, spreading three sets of wings, and weeping from three faces, is clear enough to be taken as the squalid reproduction of a crucified body. These correlations are overt, and there are close historical and theological connections both between Caiaphas and Jesus and between Satan and Jesus. These connections provide the poetic grounds for representing the Jewish high priest and the king of Hell as suffering the degradations of crucifixions.

There would apparently be insufficient textual grounds to warrant reading the Master Adam episode as yet another mockery of the Crucifixion, and what is more, the real Adam is saved: the pilgrim meets him in *Par*adiso XXVI. There is, however, a striking similarity of conception between Dante's representation of an instrument-shaped body and the miniature of another Psalter, found in southern Germany, which seems to corroborate Heilbronn's reading of Master Adam as representing a perverted crucifixion. A twelfth-century Psalter from Munich reproduced in an article by Eleanor Greenhill includes a plate portraying David's body holding a psaltery with wooden bars and strings.[36] The body of David seems to be part and parcel with his instrument: the sound box represents his belly and the cross bar is placed across David's chest, recalling Christ's Cross. This identification of the human body with the Cross underscores the salvific properties traditionally attributed to the psaltery, but the most striking coincidence (if a coincidence indeed it is!) with Heilbronn's discourse, is one of the inscriptions on the sound box saying 'Ecclesia Venter.'

While there is no evidence that Dante saw this Psalter, this iconogra-

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steps on him: 'Attraversato è, nudo, ne la via, / come tu vedi, ed è mestier ch'el senta / qualunque passa, come pesa, pria' ('He is stretched out naked, as you see, / across the path and he must feel / the weight of each who passes' *Inf.* XXIII.118–20). The episode is reminiscent of Isaiah 26:5–7: 'quia incurvabit habitantes in excelso; civitatem sublimem humiliabit: humiliabit eam usque ad terram, detrahet eam usque ad pulverem. *Conculcabit eam pes pedes pauperis* gressus egenorum. Semita justi recta est rectus callis justi ad ambulandum' (my emphasis) ('For he shall bring down them that dwell on high, the high city he shall lay low. He shall bring it down even to the ground, he shall pull it down even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, the feet of the poor, the steps of the needy. The way of the just is right, the path of the just is right to walk in'); and 51:23: 'posuisti ut terram corpus tuum et quasi viam transeuntibus' ('and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as a way to them that went over').

36 Eleanor S. Greenhill, 'The Child in the Tree,' *Traditio* 10 (1954): 323–71, at pp. 361–3. The manuscript in question is described in Alfred Chester Beatty and Eric George Millar, *The Library of A. Chester Beatty: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927–30), 110–11 (plate 83).

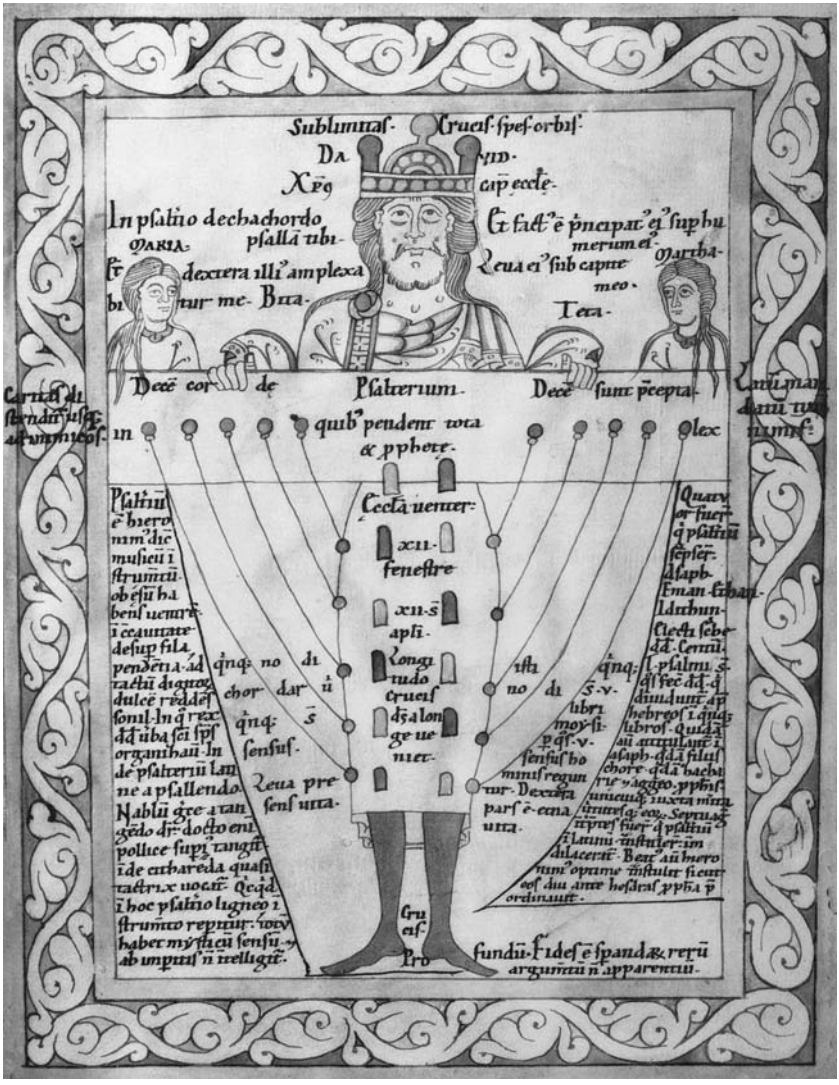

Figure 6. The current location of this manuscript (formerly in the Chester Beatty collection of Western Manuscripts in Dublin, Ireland) is unknown.

phy points to an existing tradition that compares the human body (and the belly in particular!) to musical instruments and allegorizes the two. If, then, the body of David, crossed with a psaltery is a Typus Christi, or type of Christ, the lute-deformed Master Adam can be construed as a perverted representation of the crucified Christ.[37]

Thus, returning to the transfer of symbolic values from the cithara/psaltery to the lute, the symbolism of the simile can be explained in terms of parodic reversal. The lute, a humble instrument of Arab provenance, signifies the opposition to other nobler cordophones from the classical and biblical tradition found in the *Commedia*, such as the *cetra* and the lyre. If it is possible that Cassiodorus's description of the cithara influenced Dante's choice of words in the Master Adam episode, and even if Dante thought of the *cetra* as an instrument with a neck, he could not have confused the symbolical implications of the lute with those of the cithara.[38] Without a doubt, the poet assigns to the latter a markedly higher status by evoking it in *Paradiso* XX to describe the voice of the eagle formed by the blessed.[39] What we are concerned with here is the associations that Dante created with different musical instruments, which indeed he uses toward a symbolic end. Rather than projecting the cithara's symbolism onto the lute, the poet simply used a different instrument, one that is inherently corporeal. The lute was an instrument of late import and a novelty at this time, and the poet employs it in a simile with debasing purposes, thus producing a deliberate subversion fitting into the complex design of musical symbolism in the *Inferno*.

Furthermore, the musical symbolism in this episode does not end with the lute but continues during Adam and Sinon's exchange of blows with the evocation of the drum, and it is no accident that a martial instrument

37 Joseph Chierici took steps in this direction in his 'Il "buon citarista" e il "soave medico,"' *L'Alighieri* 22 (August–December 1981): 12–30. Chierici collects passages from Vincent of Beauvais, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, Paulinus of Nola, and Augustine about the mystical body of Christ and its representations as musical instruments. Chierici's main contention is that the associations of Christ and the musical instruments function as *medicamentum* for the Christian.

38 The psaltery and the cithara are referred to very frequently by biblical commentators, always with a positive function. For example, even in the passage of St Augustine's *Enarrationes in psalmos* that Heilbronn refers to, the two instruments are read as metaphors of two different modes of serving God: 'We serve God in the mode of the cithara when suffering ensues and in the mode of psaltery when no pain follows' (Psalm 42, in *PL*, vol. 36, col. 479).

39 'E come suono al collo de la cetra / prende sua forma, e sì com' al pertugio / de la sampogna vento che penètra, / così, rimosso d'aspettare indugio, / quel mormorar

underscores the fight. The dull sound is synaesthetically rendered by the rhymes *tamburo / duro*, all dark vowels, and, above all, by the word *oscuro*, in which the signifier itself expresses the acoustic obscurity of the signified. Thus, Master Adam's body undergoes a change in the rhetorical unfolding of the canto, and what was initially presented as resembling a lute gives out a much duller drum sound instead. This alteration of the musical rhetoric is yet another facet of the symbolical retribution applied to a counterfeiter. Not only is Adam's body altered to look like a lute, as repayment for altering coins, but its sound is altered as well! When hit, his body resonates like something else, the way a counterfeit coin would ring differently from an authentic one.

Another musical aspect of this episode, the 'amoebaean character' of Master Adam and Sinon's altercation, reveals itself in their heated repartees.[40] Amoebaean chant is a subgenre of pastoral poetry in which two contestants answer each other alternately in prosody, as appears in Virgil's *Seventh Eclogue*, in which Thyrsis and Corydon vie for the title of best poet among the shepherds, or in Cielo d'Alcamo's *Contrasto*, where an insistent lover overcomes his lady's resistance after a *tenson* of alternating stanzas: the man attempts to circumvent the woman and she defends herself until he pledges to marry her and she gives in. In their grotesque fight, Master Adam and Sinon hit and insult each other, a tit-for-tat episode in which they expend the little energy their maladies have left them.

Perversion of Sacred Chants

Even though much of the infernal acoustics is a display of similes and metaphors based on lowly, cacophonic instruments, such imagery is far from exhausting the musical message of the cantica: references to sacred music are plentiful. Sacred chants, however, are presented in reversal and with a parodic tinge. Erminia Ardissino has explored the parodic contours of infernal liturgy, showing how the cantica is interspersed with liturgical tiles, 'scattered reminiscences of a religiosity fraught with errors, distorted rites, wrongly interpreted symbols, mysteries deviated

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de l'aguglia salissi / su per lo collo, come fosse bugio.' ('And as a sound is given shape / at the neck of the lute or by the wind / forced through the vent-holes of a bagpipe, / so, holding me no longer in suspense, / the murmur of the eagle issued through its neck / as though it had been hollowed out') *(Par.* XX.22–7).

40 Edoardo Sanguineti made this observation during a convention on 'Dante Studies in the Nineteen Hundreds,' held in Turin on 18 May 2004.

from their true end.'[41] Sacred songs are evoked in a distorted manner or paraphrased and therefore denote a mockery of the healing or sanctifying singing of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, a sign that the beneficial effect of music is forever denied to the damned. It is no accident, then, that the first grieving appeal of the lost pilgrim to Virgil (when he does not yet know it is Virgil) is a *miserere*.[42] This psalmodic invocation at such a programmatic point in the *Commedia* indeed merits attention, especially because it resonates in the two other canticas: on the lips of purging souls, who raise their singing as a token of penitence (*Purg.* V.22–4; see p. 116, below), and in the words of St Bernard, as he shows to the pilgrim the blessed of the Old Testament. When he comes to Ruth, he does not mention her, but indicates her as

> ... colei
> che fu bisava al cantor che per doglia
> del fallo disse *'Miserere mei ...'* (*Par.* XXXII.10–12)

> ('... she – / great-grandmother of that singer who, / grieving for his sin, cried: "*Miserere mei ...*"'

Ruth was the great-grandmother of David, who composed Psalm 50 in repentance (*doglia*) for his assassination of Uriah and adultery with Bathsheba. But the drama of the Old Testament is resolved and surpassed, and at this point in Paradise, of course, a new song of repentance would be completely out of place, so the poet just has Bernard quote the title of it.

In the *Inferno*, on the contrary, there is good reason for it not to be set to music: there is a defect of pilgrim's state that prevents him from singing it. The invocation *miserere*, as Sapegno warns, was used in its original Latin form even by the common people in everyday situations, but in the Psalms it recurs in specific association with the recognition of the

41 ('Sparse reminiscenze di una religiosità costellata di errori, di riti distorti, di simboli mal interpretati, di misteri deviati dal loro vero fine.') E. Ardissino, 'Parodie liturgiche nell'*Inferno*,' *Annali d'Italianistica* (2007): 217–32, at p. 217. See also E. Ardissino, *Tempo liturgico e tempo storico nella 'Commedia' di Dante* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009).

42 '"*Miserere* di me," gridai a lui, / "qual che tu sii, od ombra od omo certo!"' ('"Have mercy on me, whatever you are," / I cried, "whether shade or living man!"') (*Inf.* I.65–6). Robert Hollander has devoted remarkable pages to these cantos in *Il Virgilio dantesco: Tragedia nella 'Commedia*,' Biblioteca di lettere italiane, 28 (Florence: Olschki, 1983); and in 'Dante's Use of the Fiftieth Psalm,' *Dante Studies* 91 (1973): 145–50.

condition of sinfulness and the plea for divine help.[43] It is an *invocatio peccatorum*, a desperate cry for help in the darkest time of trouble when the soul is so burdened with sin that it cannot be lifted without God's merciful intervention. It is a request to heal the soul and create a clean

43 Psalm 50 (Vulgate/Douay-Rheims) is the prominent one in this sense, and it is generally referred to as *Miserere*. The word *Miserere*, however, appears elsewhere in the Psalms, almost invariably associated with the recognition of sin and the beginning of the process of cleansing: 'Miserere mei, Domine, quoniam infirmus sum' ('Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak') (Psalm 6:3); 'Respice in me, et miserere mei, / quia unicus et pauper sum ego. Tribulations cordis mei multiplicatæ sunt:/ de necessitatibus meis erue me. / Vide humilitatem meam et laborem meum, / et dimitte universa delicta mea.' ('Look thou upon me, and have mercy on me; for I am alone and poor. The troubles of my heart are multiplied: deliver me from my necessities. See my abjection and my labour; and forgive me all my sins) (Psalm 24:16–18); 'Ego dixi: Domine, miserere mei; sana animam meam, quia peccavi tibi' ('I said: 0 Lord, be thou merciful to me: heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee') (Psalm 40:5); 'Tu autem, Domine, miserere mei, et resuscita me.' ('But thou, 0 Lord, have mercy on me, and raise me up again.') (Psalm 40:11); 'Miserere mei, Deus, miserere mei, quoniam in te confidit anima mea.' ('Have mercy on me, 0 God, have mercy on me: for my soul trusteth in thee.') (Psalm 56:2); 'Inclina, Domine, aurem tuam et exaudi me, quoniam inops et pauper sum ego. / Custodi animam meam, quoniam sanctus sum; salvum fac servum tuum, Deus meus, sperantem in te. / Miserere mei, Domine, quoniam ad te clamavi tota die; / lætifica animam servi tui, / quoniam ad te, Domine, animam meam levavi. / Quoniam tu, Domine, suavis et mitis, et multæ misericordiæ omnibus invocantibus te. / Auribus percipe, Domine, orationem meam, et intende voci deprecationis meæ. / In die tribulationis meæ clamavi ad te, quia exaudisti me' ('Incline thy ear, 0 Lord, and hear me: for I am needy and poor. / Preserve my soul, for I am holy: save thy servant, 0 my God, that trusteth in thee. / Have mercy on me, 0 Lord, for I have cried to thee all the day. / Give joy to the soul of thy servant, for to thee, 0 Lord, I have lifted up my soul. / For thou, 0 Lord, art sweet and mild: and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee. / Give ear, 0 Lord, to my prayer: and attend to the voice of my petition. / I have called upon thee in the day of my trouble: because thou hast heard me') (Psalm 85:1–7).

The list could continue with quotations from many Fathers of the Church: 'Offensam fateor, errorem confiteor, culpam agnosco, vocem confessionis aperio. Suscipe, quaeso, clamorem confitentis; attende, Domine, vocem deprecantis. Audi vocem peccatoris clamantis' ('I confess the offense, I confess the mistake, I recognize the fault, I open the voice of confession. Accept, I beg you, the prayer of a confessing man; O Lord, listen to a praying man's voice') (Isidore of Seville, *De lamentatione animae peccatricis*, PL, vol. 83, col. 845); 'Domine, qui es salus; et qui non vis mortem peccatoris, miserere peccatrici animae meae, solve vincula ejus, sana vulnera ejus' ('O Lord who are salvation and do not want the death of the sinner, have mercy of my sinful soul, break its bonds, heal its wounds'); 'Parce peccatrici animae meae, Deus. In te pono spem meam, et tibi committo animam meam. Custodi eam dum dormio, serva eam dum aliud facio, et vide eam; memento ejus dum ego obliviscor. Sum peccator, sum miser; sed peccasse me doleo, et cognosco me miserum. Misericors Deus, miserere

heart in the sinner.[44] Such supplication for help can obviously only take place once the sinner has become aware of his desperate condition and is alone before his sin, as in Psalm 50, known as *Miserere*:

> Miserere mei Deus secundum magnam misericordiam; tuam et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum dele iniquitatem meam / Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea, et a peccato meo munda me / Quoniam iniquitatem meam ego cognosco, et peccatum meum contra me est semper.[45]
>
> ('Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love; according to thy abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. / Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.')

Dante, in the initial lines of the *Commedia*, finds himself in exactly this position: he recognizes his condition of wretchedness, and his sins – embodied in the three beasts – indeed stand before him, obstructing the way to the sunlit hilltop. Psalm 50 was employed in many ceremonial occasions, but according to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, it figured prominently in the ceremony of the Reconciliation of Penitents on Maundy Thursday, precisely the time at which Dante's journey begins. *Miserere* is the formula invoked at the time of the recognition of the status of sinfulness; it is associated with the sinner's dismay and constitutes a confession and the beginning of the redemption process. Dante's cry for help is placed there for good reason: it is the pilgrim's admission of guilt and plea for help.

Yet the mere recognition of one's sins can by no means purge the sinner. In Augustine's *Sermones de diversis*, the author explains that confession, which is acknowledgment of sin, is necessary to obtain forgiveness through the punishment of the sin: 'confessio peccati necessaria,

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mei humilis' ('Spare my sinful soul, O God. I place my hopes in you, and commit my soul to you. Guard it while I sleep, keep it while I do other things, and watch it; remember it while I forget it. I am a sinner, a miserable; but I repent my sinning and recognize to be miserable. Merciful God, have mercy of humble me.') (Anselm of Canterbury, Oration V. Available in *Patrologia latina* as Augustine, *De contritione cordis liber unus*, Caput V and Caput XI [PL, vol. 40, cols. 946b and 950]).

44 These are words from Psalm 50: 'Cor mundum crea in me Deus: et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis.' ('Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me') (Psalm 50:12).

45 Psalm 50:1–3. This is one of the seven Penitential Psalms: it is the supplication for forgiveness of David for sinning with Bathsheba. The other penitential psalms are 6, 31, 37, 101, 129, 142.

ut venia impetretur. Puniendum peccatum, aut ab ipso peccatore, aut a Deo.'[46] He then highlights the insufficiency of the sinner's forces alone to lift himself from error, and he quotes the Psalm *Miserere* (50:12) – 'Peccator non potest resurgere per se a peccato absque gratia. Voce consona, corde concordi, pro ipso corde nostro Dominum deprecantes diximus: Cor mundum crea in me Deus et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis.'[47] – and Psalm 40:5: 'Ego dixi Domine miserere mei sana animam meam quoniam peccavi tibi.'[48] In other words, the supplication *miserere* is, in the Psalms as well as in Augustine, the first step to redemption.

Thus, '*Miserere* di me ... / qual che tu sii, od ombra od omo certo' (*Inf.* I.65–6) is the pilgrim's heartfelt plee for God's mercy in the hour of his perdition: the crucial moment which decides the destiny of the soul. Until this time in the story of the *Commedia*, Dante's soul is indeed in mortal sin, more likely headed for eternal damnation than for the *lieve legno* predicted by Charon two cantos later.[49] What, then, has caused this sudden and momentous shift from darkness to light? Scholastic philosophy glossed and systematized the Pauline[50] relationship between human initiative, or free will, and grace, concluding that both are important forces in the process of salvation. Thomas distinguishes two aspects of grace that dramatize these forces: *gratia operans* and *gratia cooperans*.[51] Man can accomplish meritorious deeds but he cannot, by his mere will, be saved:

> Homo sua voluntate facit opera meritoria vitae aeternae, sed, sicut Augustinus in eodem libro dicit, ad hoc exigitur quod voluntas hominis praeparetur a Deo per gratiam. (*ST*, I^{a}-II^{ae} q.109 a.5)

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46 'The confession of the sin is necessary to obtain forgiveness. The sin shall be punished by the sinner himself or by God.' (*Sermo* XX.ii, in *PL*, vol. 38, col. 138). The *Sermones de diversis* are of dubious attribution.

47 'The sinner cannot raise himself from sin without grace. With appropriate voice, a concordant heart, beseeching the Lord for our own heart, we said: 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.'

48 'I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.' (Psalm 40:5, quoted in *Sermo* XX.i, in *PL*, vol. 38, col. 137).

49 'lighter ship' (*Inf.* III.93).

50 'Gratia estis salvati per fidem: et hoc non ex vobis. Dei enim donus est.' ('For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God') (Ephesians 2:8). For this notion see also John 6:44: 'nemo potest venire ad me, nisi pater, qui misit me, traxerit eum' ('no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father'). Quoted from Thomas: *ST*, I^{a}-II^{ae} q.109 a.6.

51 *ST*, I^{a}-II^{ae} q.111 a.2.

('Man, by his will, does works meritorious of everlasting life; but, as Augustine says in the same book, for this it is necessary that the will of man should be prepared with grace by God.')

Sed in statu naturae corruptae non potest homo implere omnia mandata divina sine gratia sanante. (*ST*, I^{a}-II^{ae} q.109 a.4)

('But in the state of corrupted nature man cannot fulfil all the Divine commandments without healing grace.')

John Freccero, with the clarity of his beautiful style, helps us understand the dynamic of the fall backwards when man attempts to ascend solely by his own powers.[52] In this way we realize that, with a neat break from Socratic ethics, Pauline ethics focus not on the object of our moral search, but on the means of it:

Quod enim operor, non intelligo: non enim quod volo bonum, hoc ago: sed quod odi malum, illud facio. (Romans 7:15)

('For that which I work, I understand not. For I do not that good which I will; but the evil which I hate, that I do.')

From the moment the pilgrim sets his eyes on the sunlit hill, he knows what he should do, but does not know *how* to do it. This is of paramount importance for our musical discussion, because, as we shall see, the *Miserere* of *Inferno* I.65–6, as a musicless utterance, stands in opposition to the same prayer being performed musically in Purgatory (*Purg.* V.22–4). Already Augustine, whom Thomas quotes in the above section of the *Summa*, states the same principle, insisting that 'operating grace' (*gratia operans*) is necessary, not only for man to know what course of action to take in order to be free from sin, but also to actually set events into motion:

Intelligenda est enim gratia Dei per Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum, qua sola homines liberantur a malo, et sine qua nullum prorsus sive cogitando, sive volendo et amando, sive agendo faciunt bonum: non solum ut

52 J. Freccero, 'Dante's Firm Foot,' in *Harvard Theological Review* 53 (1959): 245–81; repr. in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 29–54.

> monstrante ipsa quid faciendum sit sciant, verum etiam ut praestante ipsa faciant cum dilectione quod sciunt.[53]
>
> ('The grace of God is to be understood through Jesus Christ our Lord. Only by his grace are men delivered from evil, and without it they can attain no good at all, with their meditation, their will, and their love: grace not only shows them what to do to, but it also grants that they do lovingly what they should do.')

Man's role in this process is auxiliary: his mind can only decide on exterior acts, because even the mind is moved by God. But in those operations in which our mind both moves and is moved, the human mind has a part. Thomas terms this complex cooperation of man's and God's merits 'cooperating grace' (*gratia cooperans*.) It is a force that concerns man's mind in its twofold role of mover and moved object. This is the only active role of the human soul in salvation, but he states that the action of 'cooperating grace' is especially relevant to the soul that is passing from willing evil to willing good. It is precisely in the process of repentance and salvation of sinners that such grace enters into the picture.[54]

Thus what is left for man to do appears to be just an inner motion of

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53 Augustine, *De Correptione et Gratia*, in *PL*, vol. 44, col. 917.

54 *ST*, I^{a}-II^{ae} q.111 a.2: 'Est autem in nobis duplex actus. Primus quidem, interior voluntatis. Et quantum ad istum actum, voluntas se habet ut mota, Deus autem ut movens, et praesertim cum voluntas incipit bonum velle quae prius malum volebat. Et ideo secundum quod Deus movet humanam mentem ad hunc actum, dicitur gratia operans. Alius autem actus est exterior; qui cum a voluntate imperetur, ut supra habitum est, consequens est ut ad hunc actum operatio attribuatur voluntati. Et quia etiam ad hunc actum Deus nos adiuvat, et interius confirmando voluntatem ut ad actum perveniat, et exterius facultatem operandi praebendo; respectu huius actus dicitur gratia cooperans. Unde post praemissa verba subdit Augustinus, *ut autem velimus operatur, cum autem volumus, ut perficiamus nobis cooperatur*. Sic igitur si gratia accipiatur pro gratuita Dei motione qua movet nos ad bonum meritorium, convenienter dividitur gratia per operantem et cooperantem.' ('Now there is a double act in us. First, there is the interior act of the will, and with regard to this act the will is a thing moved, and God is the mover; and especially when the will, which hitherto willed evil, begins to will good. And hence, inasmuch as God moves the human mind to this act, we speak of operating grace. But there is another, exterior act; and since it is commanded by the will, as was shown above [q.7 a.9] the operation of this act is attributed to the will. And because God assists us in this act, both by strengthening our will interiorly so as to attain to the act, and by granting outwardly the capability of operating, it is with respect to this that we speak of cooperating grace. Hence after the aforesaid words Augustine subjoins: "He operates that we may will; and when we will, He cooperates

the will that directs the exterior acts. Even this motion, however, would not be possible without God's grace. As we know, Dante is saved not only by his repentance, but by the intervention of a female figure who, in the allegory of the poem, signifies grace. Beatrice is said to be moved by love, but it is, of course, a love that comes from high above.[55] Beatrice is moved by God and moves Virgil to help Dante, thus acting as cooperating grace, without which man can accomplish but little. Dante's part in all this process is recognizing his sins, and – after the fleeting boldness inspired by the hour of the day and the 'sweet season' (*Inf.* I.43) – he proclaims his desperation by crying 'Miserere.'

Dante's utterance contributes to his salvation, and it is no coincidence that he chooses a psalmodic formula that suits the act of admission of sin. But why is this Psalm not sung? Why does the pilgrim *cry* for help, instead of singing? The answer to this question appears clear when considering the entire musical discourse of the *Commedia*: the same Psalm is performed in its full musical setting only at the beginning of the next cantica, in *Purgatorio* V.24, by purging souls, while the damned are denied proper liturgical songs. The poet constantly reminds us of this by comparing their utterances to evil psalms and hymns.[56] Similarly, the sinful pilgrim, just one step away from perdition, is too shattered and oppressed by his condition to enjoy the purging function of liturgical chant. He clings to the first friendly figure he sees, to whom he addresses a cry for help. At the beginning of the poem, Dante's spoken word of desperation is a musicless anticipation of the reversal of sacred chants we shall find later on, a 'zero-point' of musical discourse in the *Commedia*.[57] He, however, has an unquestionable advantage over the damned: he is still alive and can be saved by cooperating grace – if he disposes himself

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that we may perfect." And thus if grace is taken for God's gratuitous motion whereby He moves us to meritorious good, it is fittingly divided into operating and cooperating grace.')

55 'Amor mi mosse, che mi fa parlare' ('The love that moved me makes me speak') (*Inf.* II.72). Such is the standard interpretation of this line; see, for example, the commentaries by Sapegno and Singleton. The latter defines it 'a love *de sursum descendens*.' (*Inferno*, Commentary [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970], 1:32).

56 See, for example, the gurgled hymn of the gluttonous (*Inf.* VII.125–6) and Nimrod's parody of a psalm (*Inf.* XXXI.67–9).

57 Freccero in 'The Sign of Satan,' *MLN* 80 (1965): 11–26, at p. 12 places what he calls the zero-point of the pilgrim's conversion in the encounter with Satan, but Singleton (*Journey to Beatrice,* Dante Studies, 2 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958], chap. 4, 'Justification') seems to locate this crucial turning point precisely in this initial encounter with Virgil.

to receive it. Small though man's role may be in the distribution of grace, there still is an action for man to take: Dante, while he still capable of sin, turns to God.[58] In terms of Singletonian allegory, if Dante still cannot go to grace, grace – in the form of Beatrice – comes to Dante, leaving 'her song of hallelujah' (*Inf.* XII.88) to send a glimmer of her music to the musicless pilgrim.

However, according to Thomas, man can achieve on his own some ends connatural to him, such as establishing friendships. Thomas quotes Aristotle and Augustine[59]as his authorities, and admits that such things are good for what pertains to man. Naturally, these ends are outside of the divine sphere and can be pursued without God, as Augustine specifies.

The word *amico* (*Inf.* II.61) seems to acquire a particular value within this picture when Beatrice calls Dante 'l'amico mio, e non de la ventura,'

58 Cf. *Purg.* XI.90: 'che, possendo peccar, mi volsi a Dio' ('and, with the means to sin, I turned to God'), words pronounced by Oderisi of Gubbio.

59 'Et ideo homo per sua naturalia non potest producere opera meritoria proportionata vitae aeternae; sed ad hoc exigitur altior virtus, quae est virtus gratiae. Et ideo sine gratia homo non potest mereri vitam aeternam. Potest tamen facere opera perducentia ad aliquod bonum homini connaturale, sicut laborare in agro, bibere, manducare, et habere amicum, et alia huiusmodi; ut Augustinus dicit, in tertia responsione contra Pelagianos.' ('Hence man, by his natural endowments, cannot produce meritorious works proportionate to everlasting life; and for this a higher force is needed, viz., the force of grace. And thus without grace man cannot merit everlasting life; yet he can perform works conducive to a good which is natural to man, as "to toil in the fields, to drink, to eat, or to have friends, and the like, as Augustine says in his third Reply to the Pelagians"') (*ST*, I^a-II^{ae} q.109 a.5). A little earlier Thomas had quoted Aristotle's third book of the *Nichomachaean Ethics*: 'quae per amicos possumus, aliqualiter per nos possumus' (*ST*, I^a-II^{ae} q.109 a.4); 'Est, fatemur, liberum arbitrium omnibus hominibus, habens quidem judicium rationis, non per quod sit idoneum quae ad Deum pertinent, sine Deo aut inchoare aut certe peragere: sed tantum in operibus vitae praesentis, tam bonis, quam etiam malis. Bonis dico, quae de bono naturae oriuntur, id est, velle laborare in agro, velle manducare et bibere, velle habere amicum, velle habere indumenta, velle fabricare domum, uxorem velle ducere, pecora nutrire, artem discere diversarum rerum bonarum, velle quidquid bonum ad praesentem pertinet vitam.' ('We admit that all men possess free will, everyone having judgment of reason, but it is not proper to undertake or bring forward with such judgment and without God what pertains to God: I mean the good things which are born out of the good of nature, that is to work in the fields, to eat, to drink, to establish friendships, to possess clothes, to build a house, to marry a woman, to pasture one's flock, learn the ropes of various good activities, or anything that is good in this present life.') (Augustine, *Contra Pelagianos et Coelestianos Vulgo Libri Hypognosticon* III, IV, in *PL*, vol. 45, col. 1623).

('my friend, who is no friend of Fortune') – the same *ventura* against which the pilgrim feels 'prepared foursquare' in his later conversation with Cacciaguida (*Par.* XVII.23–4). Buti reads Dante's friendship with Beatrice allegorically as the blessed woman's recognition of Dante's disinterested devotion to divine wisdom: 'many love the doctrine of divine things not for itself but to gain worldly fame and reputation, riches and dignity.'[60] *Inferno* II contains the first mention of Beatrice, and is loaded with allegorical meaning as it expounds the role of Lucia and the Virgin and the mechanism that sent Beatrice to seek Virgil. If the allegorical direction is the one to follow, then 'l'amico mio, e non de la ventura' is meant to underscore Dante's genuine love for divine wisdom – a love, or better, a friendship, which definitely has a part in the salvation of the pilgrim,[61] who is thus characterized as someone who has sinned but who

60 'Molti amano la dottrina delle cose divine, non per lei, ma per acquistarne fama e reputazione mondana e ricchezze e dignità.' The reading of this line is controversial. Sapegno offers first what he calls the 'standard reading' of this line: 'he who loves me, and is loved back by me, but not by fortune.' But he does not seem totally satisfied with this interpretation and proposes Buti's, supported by Mario Casella ('L'amico mio e non della ventura,' Studi danteschi 27 [1943]: 117–34); F. Mazzoni, *Saggio di un nuovo commento alla 'Divina Commedia'* (Florence: Sansoni, 1967), 256–68: 'Dante is a real friend and not one of those that come and go according to fortune' (quoted from Sapegno's note to *Inferno* II.61).

61 Although this is not the place for an in-depth discussion of the value of friendship in Dante's work, friendship in the *Commedia* has a salvific function in several passages. Moreover, how is such declaration of friendship, placed at the beginning of the poem, to be interpreted in the light of the analogous declaration of friendship in *Vita nova* I.iii? 'Primo de li miei amici' is believed to refer to Guido Cavalcanti, who in the *Commedia* is made the emblem of a sterile poetic and intellectual research (cf. *Inf.* X.63). Can, then, Beatrice's declaration of friendship with Dante represent the supersession of the sterile friendship with Guido Cavalcanti, who disdained Beatrice?

Among the occurrences of the *salvific function of friendship* are the following passages: 'e lì, per trar l'amico suo di pena, / ch'e' sostenea ne la prigion di Carlo, / si condusse a tremar per ogne vena' ('And there, to redeem his friend /from the torment he endured in Charles's prison, / he was reduced to trembling in every vein.') (*Purg.* XI.136–8); 'Ma dimmi, e come amico mi perdona / se troppo sicurtà m'allarga il freno, / e come amico omai meco ragiona.' (But tell me, and as a friend forgive me, / if with too much assurance I relax the reins, / and as a friend speak with me now) (*Purg.* XXII.19–21); *Inferno* V, 91–3 'se fosse amico il re de l'universo,/ noi pregheremmo lui de la tua pace, / poi c'hai pietà del nostro mal perverso' ('if the King of the universe were our friend / we would pray that He might give you peace, / since you show pity for our grievous plight.') (*Inf.* V.91–3).

A number of occurrences of the lemma indicate *friendship with God*, and therefore

nurtures love for the true doctrine, which allows Beatrice to respond to his invocation of *Inferno* I.65: *miserere*.

Such a subtly anti-musical beginning is soon followed by strictly musical references. In fact, music is programmatically made the herald of infernal reality because it introduces the landscape and character of Hell before images are added. Teodolinda Barolini[62] observed how the first cantica continually offers new incipits for the pilgrim. One of them is the entrance of Inferno proper, where the first perception of the environment for the pilgrim is of an auditory nature:

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likewise have a salvific function: 'E io: "Le nove e le scritture antiche / pongon lo segno, ed esso lo mi addita, / de l'anime che Dio s'ha fatte amiche"' ('And I: "The new and the ancient Scriptures / set forth the goal for souls that God has made his friends / and this directs me to that promise."') (*Par.* XXV.88–90); 'Ma dimmi: voi che siete qui felici, / disiderate voi più alto loco / per più vedere e per più farvi amici?' ('But tell me, do you, who are here content, / desire to achieve a higher place, where you / might see still more and make yourselves more dear?') (*Par.* III.64–6); 'Illuminato e Augustin son quici, / che fuor de' primi scalzi poverelli / che nel capestro a Dio si fero amici' ('Here are Illuminato and Augustine, /among the first brothers barefoot in poverty, / who, with the cord, became God's friends.') (*Par.* XII.130–2).

Friend with the meaning of 'lover' occurs in: 'Ed elli a me: "Quell' è l'anima antica / di Mirra scellerata, che divenne / al padre, fuor del dritto amore, amica."' ('And he answered: "That is the ancient soul / of wicked Myrrha, who became enamored / of her father with more than lawful love."') (*Inf.* XXX.37–9); 'La concubina di Titone antico / già s'imbiancava al balco d'orïente, / fuor de le braccia del suo dolce amico.' ('The concubine of old Tithonus, / fresh from her doting lover's arms, / was glowing white at the window of the east.') (*Purg.* IX.1–3).

Other occurrences of the lemma: 'Da indi in qua mi fuor le serpi amiche, / perch' una li s'avvolse allora al collo,/ come dicesse "Non vo' che più diche"' ('From that time on the serpents were my friends, / for one of them coiled itself around his neck / as if to say, "Now you shall speak no more."') (*Inf.* XXV.4–6); 'Era già l'ora che volge il disio / ai navicanti e 'ntenerisce il core / lo dì c'han detto ai dolci amici addio.' ('It was now the hour that melts a sailor's heart /and saddens him with longing on the day / he's said farewell to his belovèd friends.') (*Purg.* VIII.1–3); 'e s'io al vero son timido amico, / temo di perder viver tra coloro / che questo tempo chiameranno antico.' ('Yet, should I be a timid friend to truth, / I fear that I shall not live on for those / to whom our times shall be the ancient days.') (*Par.* XVII.118–20); 'Tosto che parton l'accoglienza amica / prima che 'l primo passo lì trascorra, / sopragridar ciascuna s'affatica.' ('When they have ceased their friendly greeting, / before they take a new step to continue / each one makes an effort to outshout the rest.') (*Purg.* XXVI.37–9).

62 T. Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, ca. 1992), in particular pp. 21–47 (chapter 2: 'Infernal Incipits: The Poetics of the New').

Quivi sospiri, pianti e alti guai
risonavan per l'aere sanza stelle,
per ch'io al cominciar ne lagrimai.
Diverse lingue, orribili favelle,
parole di dolore, accenti d'ira,
voci alte e fioche, e suon di man con elle
facevano un tumulto, il qual s'aggira
sempre in quell'aura sanza tempo tinta,
come la rena quando turbo spira. (*Inf.* III.22–30)

('Now sighs, loud wailing, lamentation / resounded through the starless air, / so that I too began to weep. / Unfamiliar tongues, horrendous accents, / words of suffering, cries of rage, voices / loud and faint, the sound of slapping hands – / all these made a tumult, always whirling / in that black and timeless air, / as sand is swirled in a whirlwind.')

This horde of souls is composed of the neutrals, whose physical appearance is omitted because they must remain anonymous, even to the reader's perception. Instead of the plastic physicality to which Dante will accustom us in subsequent cantos, here he offers us only the sinners' disembodied voices and a handful of whirling sand. We are, therefore, presented with an array of ghosts. The circular motion is rendered, not by a physical description, but by the mention of the racket they produce: '... un tumulto, il qual *s'aggira*.' It is the racket that whirls around, rather than their bodies. Dante uses the word *spira t*o the same effect in line 30, where it is employed as a verb ('to blow') but evokes, by aural counterpoint, the word *spera*, 'sphere.'[63] Thus, the primacy of sound over image is not a mere inadequacy of Dante's sight in the ambient darkness, as Robert Hollander has suggested, but a meaningful element in an elaborate design.[64] A closer reading will reveal that this episode is interspersed with intra-textual references of a musical quality.

63 Elsewhere *spire* is used with the meaning of 'wheel': 'Con quella parte che sù si rammenta / congiunto, si girava per le spire / in che più tosto ognora s'appresenta' ('In conjunction with the place I note above, / was wheeling through those spirals / in which he comes forth earlier each day.') (*Par.* X.31–3).

64 'This first sense impression of the underworld is exclusively aural. We are probably meant to assume that Dante's eyes are not yet accustomed to the darkness of Hell.' R. Hollander, commentary, *Inf.* III.22–7.

Cacophony is a primary element of the landscape and an instrument of punishment. Dante invites us to look for more signals of a musical and anti-musical nature. These signals are clear if we keep in mind that infernal music and sounds are a parody of paradisiacal singing: among the neutrals being punished are the angels who, at the time of Lucifer's rebellion, did not take any side. The poet identifies them as a 'wicked choir':

> Mischiate sono a quel cattivo coro
> de li angeli che non furon ribelli
> né fur fedeli a Dio, ma per sé fuoro. (*Inf.* III.37–9)
>
> ('They intermingle with that wicked choir / of angels, not rebellious and not faithful / to God, who held themselves apart.')[65]

The neutral angels' circular motion[66] and shrill cries mock the *circulata melodia* of the choirs of angelic hosts. In this caricature of the heavenly choirs the angels who did not choose either side at the time of Lucifer's rebellion are indistinctly mixed with the neutral sinners. A fitting form of symbolic retribution, their punishment is a lowly imitation of the angelic wheels: they are arrayed in a circle and must forever spin, fixing their attention on a meaningless and yet unreachable banner ('una 'nsegna / che girando correva tanto ratta') (*Inf.* III.52–3), instead of looking to God in whom all truth lies. Their song is a loud choral wailing – 'E io: "Maestro, che è tanto greve / a lor, che lamentar li fa sì forte?"' ('And I: "Master, what is so grievous to them, / that they lament so bitterly?"') (*Inf.* III.43–4) – impossible to distinguish from the rest of the horde, a mockery of the neat, harmonious voices of their celestial brethren. But the hidden musical datum of this passage is revealed in all its technical implications if we skip ahead to *Paradiso* X.139, which stresses the importance of measuring time for polyphonic singing by envisioning a clock made of singing souls, one of Dante's most superb similes.[67] The infernal mockery of angelic music has no rhythm, no accordance of tempo: 'un

65 Hollander actually has 'wicked band.' I have emended his translation.

66 '... un tumulto il qual *s'aggira*' again – the circular motion is rendered not by a physical description, but by the mention of the racket they produce. It is the cacophony that whirls around, rather than their bodies.

67 See John Freccero, 'The Dance of the Stars,' *Dante Studies* 86 (1968): 85–111.

tumulto, il qual s'aggira / sempre in quell'aura *sanza tempo* tinta' ('a tumult, always whirling / in the black and timeless air') (*Inf.* III.28–9). The lack of a musical and rhythmic structure suggests that this choir is a parodic version of the perfectly attuned choirs of heaven. Jacopo della Lana, the most musically accomplished of early commentators, remarks upon the musical meaning of *sanza tempo*:

> E questo dice elli perché ogni suono attemperato per ragion di musica rende all'udire alcun diletto, ché il tempo è in musica uno ordine, il quale fa consonare le voci insieme con aria di dolcezza. Or dunque se quel romore è senza tempo, seguesi che è senza ordine, e *per consequens*, senza alcun diletto.[68]

> ('He says this because every sound that is musically attuned produces pleasure to the hearing, that *tempo* is the order in music, making the voices resound sweetly together. If that noise is without *tempo*, it means it lacks order, and, consequently, does not give any pleasure.')

The neutral angels lack the plenitude and tone of celestial performances because their voices are shrill, faint, and in complete discord ('Diverse lingue, orribili favelle'), not only linguistically, but musically as well: 'if there is no time, there is no music, inasmuch as the proportional spacing of notes, governed by numbers, is expressed ... in time.'[69]

Towards the end of the poem the denouement of the musical narrative of *Paradiso* envisions the entire angelic hierarchy singing *'Osanna'* together (*Par.* XXVIII.118) and anticipating Gabriel's *'Ave Maria'* (*Par.* XXXII.94–8) before continuing with the words of one of the most sublime prayers of Christianity. With a sense of symmetry with the aural beginning of the otherworldly voyage, the neutral angels in *Inferno* are presented in a position that forms a mirror image of the angels at the end of the poem, where Dante employs the same rhyme words '(co)loro' / 'coro' / 'fuoro' (*Inf.* III.35–9; *Par.* XXVIII.92–6).

One more beginning is set in canto V when, just as the pilgrim leaves Minos behind, he prepares to enter the first section of hell proper and meet the first truly damned souls. Here, too, the mark of hell manifests aurally instead of visually.

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68 Jacopo della Lana, *Inf.* III.25–30.

69 A. Iannucci, 'Casella's Song and the Tuning of the Soul,' *Thought* 65 (1990): 27–46, at p. 32.

Ora incomincian le dolenti note
a farmisi sentire; or son venuto
là dove molto pianto mi percuote. (*Inf.* V.25–7)

('Now I can hear the screams / of agony. Now I have come / where a great wailing beats upon me.')

Previously I described how Dante employs the narrative technique of opening windows on future or past sections of the otherworldly voyage by evoking the trumpet of apocalypse. The poet uses this device again when, deeper down, the wayfarers are 'pulled over' by mounted 'Hell troopers': the Centaurs. When they realize that Dante is a living person, and the situation gets troubled, Virgil admonishes them that their mission was devised in heaven: 'Tal si partì dal cantare alleluia / che mi commise quest'officio novo' ('One briefly left her song of hallelujah / and came to charge me with this novel task') (*Inf.* XII.88–9). Singing is here made the seal of divine authority, the safe conduct for the pilgrim through the dark world.

Elsewhere Dante draws from communitarian religious practices of his day. The punishment of the fortune-tellers consists in having their heads unnaturally turned around so that they are forced to look back as they walk forward. The poet compares these sinners to priests leading the faithful during processions, in the same way as they attempted to guide people's lives with their illegitimate and untruthful revelations:

e vidi gente per lo vallon tondo
venir, tacendo e lagrimando, al passo
che fanno le letane in questo mondo. (*Inf.* XX.7–9)

('I saw people come along that curving canyon / in silence, weeping, their pace the pace of slow / processions chanting litanies in the world.')

Letane are properly the supplications and chanted litanies intoned by the priests and the congregation during slow-paced processions.[70] The Anonymous Florentine explains how the choreographic datum is here

70 Cf. the commentaries by Singleton and by Bosco and Reggio (1979), who follow Buti and Benvenuto da Imola.

employed to portray the retribution of the fortune-tellers: 'questo loro andare piccino ch'è per opposito del trascorrere ch'egliono feciono collo intelletto in giudicare le cose di lungi et lontane, et in questo modo perderono et non seppono le presenti' ('their short procession is the opposite of what they did with their intellects by judging things far away and remote, and by so doing they do not know and forget the present ones').[71] Their heads are turned backwards so that they are forced to look back, as in life they had tried to look forward beyond what it was legitimate for them to see in the present. Their punishments befit their sin not only in this, but also in that they must now slow down and keep quiet, as in life they ran forward with their minds to foretell that which is not permitted to be known.

Infernal cacophony is the thoroughly planned parody of celestial harmony. The noises made by the wrathful and the slothful in the murky, black mud of Phlegethon, for example, are ironically described as a hymn:

> Quest' inno si gorgoglian ne la strozza,
> ché dir nol posson con parola integra. (*Inf.* VII.125–6)
>
> ('This hymn they gurgle in their gullets, / for they cannot get a word out whole.')

This improper hymn appears shortly after the 'ontoso metro'[72] shouted by the spendthrifts and the misers at each other during their jittery dance,[73] an insulting remark in the form of a rigmarole in rhyme, which Sapegno glosses as a 'cantilena, ritornello ingiurioso.' But what counts here, besides the inability of the damned to articulate their words, is that

71 Anonimo Fiorentino, commentary to *Inferno* XX.7–9. Available from the Dartmouth Dante Project at http://dante.dartmouth.edu/.

72 Allen Mandelbaum translates 'chant of scorn' (*Inferno* [New York: Bantam, 1980]), which here seems to work better than Hollander's 'same refrain' (*Inf.* VII.33).

73 'Così convien che qui la gente riddi' ('so here the souls move in their necessary dance') (*Inf.* VII.24). Singleton tells us that the *ridda* was 'a popular dance in which the linked participants reverse the direction of their circling movement with the playing and singing of each new strophe.' Dante makes use of dances in hell with a sarcastic, ridiculing intent, as happens also for the *tresca* of *Inf.* XIV.40 danced by blasphemers, sodomites, and usurers.

their gargle is compared to a hymn: a hymn that enacts a reversal of the liturgy that cannot be performed in Hell but will be properly celebrated in Purgatory by the penitents. The plural verb tells us that more than one of the damned – possibly a great multitude – is performing the degenerate song, thus producing a poly-cacophony of choked attempts at a sacred song, a perversion of the blessed souls' celestial descant. The *Inferno* being the kingdom of noise and racket, one could easily conclude that no music is possible in such a distorted world. Rather we should speak of a reversal of sacred music, or a demonic parody, as it were. Hell is the abode of chaos, while music, in Boethian principles, is the quintessence of the orderly universe; thus it is not surprising that the pilgrim, at the very beginning of the poem, is pushed back by the three beasts 'là dove 'l sol tace' ('down to where the sun is silent') (*Inf.* I.60), and then has to venture to a 'loco d'ogne luce muto' ('a place mute of all light') (*Inf.* V.28). Even Virgil's first appearance is marked by an adjective, *fioco*, that can be interpreted as 'pale' or 'inaudible' (*Inf.* I.63). To fully understand these lines in which the synaesthesia of darkness and muted sound is not merely decorative, one needs – again – to leap forward to canto I of the *Paradiso*:

> Quando la rota che tu sempiterni
> desiderato, a sé mi fece atteso
> con l'armonia che temperi e discerni,
> parvemi tanto allor del cielo acceso
> de la fiamma del sol, che pioggia o fiume
> lago non fece alcun tanto disteso. (*Par.* I.76–81)

> ('When the heavens you made eternal, / wheeling in desire, caught my attention / with the harmony you temper and attune, / then so much of the sky seemed set on fire / by the flaming sun that neither rain nor river / ever fed a lake so vast.')

Here, too, sunlight is associated with music, but unlike the dim, mute sun of *Inferno* I and V, an explosion of radiant daylight illuminates the sky, accompanied by the tempered harmony of heaven. Amilcare Iannucci sees in this harmony the music of the spheres, or the *musica mundana* of which Boethius spoke: 'The stilnovistic conception of love harmonizes with the orderly principle that shapes the universe and makes it so that the spheres produce their sound with their perpetual, circular motion. The new, extraordinary sound the pilgrim hears is the music

of the spheres.'[74] While Dante's complex treatment of this conception will be the subject matter of the last chapter, here we can safely say that a conjunction of sweet harmony and light does underscore the ascent.

Thus, as the orderly structure of the heavens is expressed in musical terms by the choirs of the blessed, so the chaos of hell produces a cacophonic mockery of the sacred songs. Such mockery, however, turns uniquely against the wretched and reminds them that their eternal damnation cannot be alleviated. More hints of this can be found in *Inferno*. In canto XXXI Nimrod announces his apparition with the loudest horn to be heard since the one sounded by Roland at Roncesvalles. But this must be a hunting horn, one that can produce only one note, thus it is unfit for any melodic use![75] Such melodic inability amplifies the incomprehensible verbal message the giant is about to deliver: the only real musical instrument we find in the entire *Commedia* (all others are evoked in similes or metaphors), the giant's horn preludes the psalm horribly babbled by Nimrod:

> 'Raphèl maì amècche zabì almi'
> cominciò a gridar la fiera bocca,
> cui non si convenia più dolci salmi. (*Inf.* XXXI.67–9)

('"*Raphèl maì amècche zabì almi*," / the savage mouth, for which no sweeter / psalms were fit, began to shout.')

It is significant that Dante uses the word 'salmi' for Nimrod's gibbering because the giant embodies moral as well as physical and spiritual disproportion, and his drivel reminds us that the restorative quality of music is constantly denied to the damned. Not only does the parody of a psalm in the *Inferno* have a musical relevance, but, by paralleling the above-cited gargled hymn of the wrathful, it also prepares us to hear the actual Psalms and hymns in the higher kingdoms, as the Psalter provides

74 'Il concetto stilnovistico di amore si armonizza col principio di ordine che informa l'universo e fa in modo che le sfere producano il loro suono con il loro perpetuo movimento rotatorio ... Il nuovo, straordinario suono, che il pellegrino percepisce è la musica delle sfere.' A. Iannucci, 'Musica e ordine nella *Divina Commedia* (*Purgatorio* II),' *Studi americani su Dante* (1989): 87–111, at pp. 88–9.

75 As Claudio Bacciagaluppi pointedly observes. 'La "dolce sinfonia di paradiso": Le funzioni delle immagini musicali nella *Commedia*,' *Rivista di studi danteschi* 2, no 2 (July–December 2002): 279–333, at p. 298.

the majority of the sacred texts we will find in the second cantica. The perverted music of *Inferno* is a reversal of *Paradiso*'s harmony, in keeping with the orderly structure of the entire poem. Sarolli's reflections help us to realize that Dante must have thought of the musical landscape of the dark world in relation to its physical and metaphysical meaning: '... even the lowest words or ugliest lines, not ugly anymore but tragic, are indispensable and even central to the gigantic structure of the *Divina Commedia*, since they clearly belong to the Inferno as *musica diaboli*, to the tragic and disharmonic anti-Trinitarian kingdom of Lucifer, where everything is antithesis, reversed and opposed to the Summum Bonum and Summam Pulchritudinem, to the Triune God.'[76]

The character of parodic reversal is artfully exemplified in the use of Venantius Fortunatus's hymn *Vexilla regis prodeunt* ('The banners of the King advance') (*Inf.* XXXIV.1). Composed by Fortunatus in 569 for the celebration of the arrival of the True Cross in the town of Poitiers, France, this song was very well known in the Middle Ages, and it was sung on special occasions, such as feast days, or for the visit to the town of an important person. In Dante's version, the intrusion of the word *inferni* perverts the originally celebratory significance, and the resulting hymn is thus cast as an imitation of the original one, as the forthcoming epiphany of Lucifer represents a perverted *imitatio Christi*, the greatest of parodies. Lucifer's threefold nature, his being stuck and planted at the middle of the earth, even his winged form with a disproportionate three-headed body, are the constitutive elements of a tragic parody of the Crucifixion as well as a parody of the Trinity. His tears, streaming down his three chins, and the dribble mixed with blood are a perpetual, distorted version of the weeping and bleeding of Christ on the cross.

Lucifer's three mouths are busy chewing three sinners, and are therefore unfit for singing. Thus the hymn, here evoked in a merely verbal guise, marks the frustrated desire for the liturgical songs that will appear in the following cantica. The monstrous hymns and psalms anticipate them and at the same time frustrate the desire for the atoning power of music, forthcoming in the next section of the poem. Edoardo Sanguineti's reading of the passage corroborates the interpretation of the *Commedia* as a musical macro-sequence with a character of musical

76 G.R. Sarolli, 'Musical Symbolism: *Inferno* XXI.136–139, Exemplum of *musica Diaboli* versus *musica Dei*,' in Sarolli's *Prolegomena alla 'Divina Commedia'* (Florence: Olschki, 1971), 363–80.

responsiveness: 'We can say that the exordium in which the incipit resounds, strongly parodied, in Virgil's mouth, implies a melodic link ... to the incipit of the renowned hymn by Venanzio Fortunato, "*Vexilla regis prodeunt*," bent to Lucifer's supreme epiphany.'[77]

Thus, the last of the songs of Hell, a fine example of *musica diaboli*, crowns the underworld's unholy racket with a reversal of the kingly song of the Holy Cross, adapted to the depraved realm of Satan, and shows the structural relevance of the musical element in the *Commedia*.

Secular Music in *Inferno*: The Crane's *Lai*

One cry breaks the darkness at the outset of the *Inferno* when the pilgrim walks through the first circle of sinners. It is a musical lament, which should point the consummate reader's attention to a literary ambience: the word *lai* in *Inferno* V.46 contains a reference to the musical genre of *lai*.[78]

> E come i gru van cantando lor lai,
> faccendo in aere di sé lunga riga,
> così vid' io venir, traendo guai,
> ombre portate da la detta briga ... (*Inf.* V.46–9)

('Just as cranes chant their mournful songs, / making a long line in the air, / thus I saw approach, heaving plaintive sighs, / shades lifted on that turbulence ...')

The Paolo and Francesca episode can be read as a condemnation of a literary genre, the courtly romance, and the *mise en abîme* of certain love poetry to which Dante himself had felt close. The subject of the courtly romance was the Arthurian cycle as exemplified by the characters of the book that Paolo and Francesca were reading: Ginevra and Lancillotto. Michelangelo Picone has studied the elements of the Arthurian tradition in the *Commedia*, arguing that *Inferno* V represents a rewriting and an ab-

77 E. Sanguineti, 'Canzone sacra e canzone profana,' in *La musica nel tempo di Dante*, ed. Luigi Pestalozza (Ravenna: Unicopli, 1981), 206–221, at p. 211.

78 The only other occurrence of the word *lai* in Dante's works is in *Purg.* IX.13; see p. 89, below.

juration of the Arthurian romances and their language of desire.[79] This canto provides a particularly fertile terrain in which to look for textual support, and the single most significant piece of evidence is Dante's recurring use of the verb *menare*, which was a keyword of Breton Romances. The whirlwind sweeps and drives (*mena*) the lustful, as carnal passion had driven them (*li menò*) during their lives on earth. The episode, Picone argues, is built as a recantation of the type of love celebrated in the Breton *matière*, and it constitutes a condemnation of that literature and of the *langue d'oïl* as well as a consecration of the 'vernacular of *sì*,' the truthfulness of its subject, and Dante as its highest poet.

The *Commedia* indeed presents a situation modelled on the narrative structure of the Arthurian *queste*, but at the same time it renews it and endows it with an altogether different meaning.[80] The similarities with the Arthurian Romance include the initial situation of the hero who gets lost in a forest and the necessity of overcoming a number of tests in order to find the way and rediscover oneself, although there are obvious dissimilarities as well, such as the Christian nature of Dante's voyage and the fact that Dante's *queste* therefore claims to be the only true *queste*, the search for ultimate truth. Indeed, 'the Pilgrim of the *Commedia* enters into competition with the Arthurian knights. He is in fact the true Perceval, the true Galahad, to whom is granted the sublime privilege of directly contemplating the Being of which the sought-after Grail is merely a symbol: God.'[81]

Among the elements that link Dante's adventure to the Breton cycle, the word *lai*, which denotes an extremely popular form of love lyric for music in the thirteenth century, carries strong musical implications. As Boccaccio reminds us 'this term "lai" is borrowed from the French language, in which "lai" are certain verses in the form of lamentations composed in the vernacular.'[82] Other early commentators of the *Commedia* show some hesitation as to the meaning of *lai*, limiting themselves to in-

79 M. Picone, 'Dante e la tradizione arturiana,' *Romanische Forschungen* 94, no. 1 (1982): 1–18.

80 M. Picone, 'Dante e la tradizione arturiana,' 7.

81 M. Picone, 'Poetic Discourse and Courtly Love: An Intertextual Analysis of *Inferno* 5,' *Lectura Dantis Newberryana*, ed. P. Cherchi and A.C. Mastrobuono (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 2:173–86, at p. 174.

82 Boccaccio, Commentary on *Inf.* V.46–9: 'è questo vocabolo preso, cioè lai, dal parlar francesco, nel quale si chiamano "lai" certi versi in forma di lamentazione nel lor volgare composti.'

terpreting it as 'suono' (Jacopo Della Lana), 'canti' (Ottimo), and 'versi franceschi et rammarichevoli' (Anonymous Florentine).

Originated in Britain, the subject of the *lai* was largely based on the Arthurian cycle,[83] and some texts for French *lais* were drawn, during the thirteenth century, from *Roman de Tristan en prose*, also of Breton origin. The episode of Paolo and Francesca is built on the opposition of a strictly erotic vision of love, or *fol'amor*, and true love, or *charitas*. Thus, the lustfuls' *lai* comes to be not merely the sinners' wail for their condition, but also the poet's reference to the literary and musical erotic genre he is critiquing. Surprisingly, scholarship has never expressly linked *Inferno* V to the *lais* of Marie of France, ignoring some significant textual hints.

Picone himself identifies a clear influence of the *lais* of Marie of France, in particular of *Deus amanz* and *Chievrefoil*, on Boccaccio's tale of Ghismonda and Tancredi.[84] He contends that Boccaccio's treatment of the Breton ambience incorporates Dante's critique in *Inferno* V,[85] especially for what concerns the narrative scheme and keywords referring to the Breton cycle's *locus amoenus*, the place in which love will be consummated: 'camera,' 'letto,' 'finestra.' Moreover, the most studied theme of *fol'amor* literature, the eating out of the heart, also passes from the *lai* to Boccaccio through the Dantean treatment of the *Vita nova*.[86]

In point of fact, the word *lai* in old Italian indicated first and foremost the lyric genre for music, as it does in the French language of the Arthurian Romances.[87] It was only after Dante's time that it came to be employed primarily as 'wailing' or 'lament.'[88] The reason for this change of meaning seems to have been the Italian vulgarizers' preference for

83 See *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, entry for *Lai*, '1. Terminology and Origins,' 118.

84 M. Picone, 'Dal *lai* alla novella: Il caso di Ghismonda (*Decameron* IV, 1),' *Filologia e critica* 16, no. 3 (1991): 325–43.

85 M. Picone, 'Dal *lai* alla novella,' 332.

86 See L. Rossi's substantial study, 'Il cuore, mistico pasto d'amore: Dal "Lai Guirun" al Decameron,' *Studi Provenzali e Francesi* 82 (1983): 28–128.

87 See F. Neri, 'La voce *lai* nei testi italiani,' *Atti dell'accademia delle scienze di Torino* 72 (1936–37): 105–19. Neri bases his considerations of the meaning of *lai* in French on E. Löseth, *Le roman en prose de Tristan, le roman de Palamède et la compilation de Rusticien de Pise: Analyse critique d'après les manuscrits de Paris*, Bibliothèque de l'école des hautes études: Sciences philologiques et historiques, 82 (Paris: Bouillon, 1890 ; repr. New York: Burt Franklin, 1970).

88 F. Neri, 'La voce *lai* nei testi italiani,' *Atti dell'accademia delle scienze di Torino* 72 (1936–37): 105–19.

translating the French *lai* with words such as *soneto*, *lemento/lamento*, or *cançon* instead of keeping the Italian *lai*, as Dante does. The oldest attestation of *lai* as lyrical-musical composition in an Italian text seems to be in an anonymous poem of the late thirteenth century titled *L'intelligenza*, whose subject is also the Arthurian cycle:

> Quiv'era una donzella ch'organava
> ismisurate, dolzi melodie,
> co le squillanti boci che sonava
> angelicali, dilettose e pie;
> audi' sonar un'arpa, e smisurava,
> cantand'un lai onde Tristan morìe.
>
> ('There was a damsel who was forming / endless sweet melodies, / with the ringing words that she sang, / angelical, delightful, tender; / I heard a harp sound, with free measures, as she sang a lai of how Tristan died.')[89]

The subject of this genre is what Dante resolutely condemns in *Inferno* V, and the same characters – Tristano, Isotta, Lancillotto, and Ginevra – people both Dante's first circle and the songs of this genre, including Marie of France's songs. *Equitan* and *Deus amanz* are probably the two *lais* by Marie of France whose stories bear most similarities with *Inferno* V. However the erotic adventures of King Arthur's knights are the overarching theme that is critiqued by Dante, who includes Tristano among the damned even before referring to Lancillotto and Ginevra. The Arthurian subject was popular in thirteenth-century Florence, as is attested by a *Lamento di Tristano* found in a Florentine codex collecting songs by various authors of the Italian Trecento,[90] and a further confirmation that

89 Quoted from F. Neri, 'La voce *lai* nei testi italiani,' 105. The full text is available in '*L'intelligenza': Poemetto anonimo del secolo XIII*, ed. M. Berisso (Parma: Fondazione Pietro Bembo/Ugo Guanda Editore, 2000). The text is on pp. 3–126; these are lines 2638–44. Another occurrence of *lai* with a musical meaning is in the *Tristano* of the Codex Panciatichi 33, dating from the first half of the fourteenth century, but *lai* appears here in alternation with *lamento*. F. Neri, 'La voce *lai* nei testi italiani,' 108–9. Translation by Edmund Garratt Gardner, *Arthurian Legend in Italian Literature* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2003), 110.

90 British Library Additional 29987, dated to 1386. See M. Gozzi, 'La notazione del codice add.29987 di Londra,' in *'Et facciam dolçi canti': Studi in onore di Agostino Ziino in occasione del suo 65° compleanno,* ed. Bianca Maria Antolini, Teresa M. Gialdroni, and Annunziato Pugliese, vol. 1 (Lucca: LIM – Libreria Italiana Musicale, 2003), 207–61.

Dante intends to introduce us to exactly that literature is that Semiramis – mentioned in *Inferno* V.58 – also appears in Marie of France's *Lanval*.[91]

The word *lai* recurs in another scene of Dante's *Commedia*, one that interestingly also has erotic overtones:

> Ne l'ora che comincia i tristi lai
> la rondinella presso a la mattina,
> forse a memoria de' suo' primi guai,
> e che la mente nostra peregrina
> più da la carne e men da' pensier presa,
> a le sue visïon quasi è divina ... (*Purg.* IX.13–18)

> ('At the hour near the verge of morning, / when the swallow begins her plaintive song, / remembering, perhaps, her woes of long ago, / and when our mind, more / from the flesh and less caught up in thoughts, / is more prophetic in its visions ...')

The subtext for this image is Ovid's story of Procne, who took vengeance on her husband Tereus after he raped her sister Philomela. Procne killed and cooked her son Itys, then served his limbs to his father Tereus. As a result Procne was turned into a swallow, Philomela into a nightingale, Tereus into a hoopoe, and the body of Itys into a pheasant. The lustful tinge of the story, the elements of aviary zoology, and the reference to the flesh in line 17 represent a thematic link to *Inferno* V.

According to Ferdinando Neri, however, every *lai* we encounter in Italian texts after Dante only means 'wailings,'[92] the memory of a lyrical poem for music having disappeared. Dante certainly knew the *lai* as a popular musical genre in French literature. By portraying the cranes while they are 'cantando lor lai,' Dante introduces a musical element into his critique of French love lyrics. There is singing in this canto, the only secular song of the entire *Inferno*, a music of amorous nature that suits the circle in which the sin of love is punished. The reference to the amorous lyric genre of the *lai*, which belongs to the same cultural environment and area of provenance of the courtly romance, foreshadows the cultural ambience of Francesca's account and prepares for the con-

91 *The Lais of Marie de France*, ed. G.S. Burgess and K. Busby, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 1999), 74 (lines 77–106).

92 O.M. Johnston, 'Italian lai,' *Studi medievali* 2 (1907): 554n1.

nection to Lancelot and Guinevere's story. The richly metaliterary quality of this canto, acknowledged by many readers, thus acquires further complexity.

To recapitulate, through the use of perverted liturgical songs, Dante constructs the first cantica as a musical parody of the second, where the penitent expiate their sins by singing psalms, and of the third, where the angelic choirs and harmonies of the blessed signify the reconciliation of human multiplicity into the oneness of God. Even the hints at secular songs find their place in Dante's critique of the musical genres and values of his time, by embodying a superseded – although to his mind still very dangerous – form of musical art.

The poet's use of musical rhetoric, his references to sacred chants, and his allusions to musical canons and genres are skilfully deployed throughout the first cantica as key tools of divine retribution. These musical elements function as important symbols and supporting pillars of infernal dialectic. Dante uses them to stage the denial of beatitude and the eternal condemnation that takes place in hell, and their presence lays the foundations for further musical discourse in the next two canticas. Within this context, Evelyn Birge-Vitz rightly sees in the sounds of hell 'the inversions of the beautiful sounds of liturgical songs whose fullest and purest expression is to be found not on earth but in heaven.'[93]

In the *Inferno* cacophonous music expresses the perversion of the human dimension and of the cosmic order, which dominate respectively in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. The distortion of the musical order itself becomes a means of punishment for the souls: *instrumentum musicalis punitionis*. Thus, from the choice of musical instruments – compounding an infernal ensemble which always beats the same bodily note – to the performance of distorted sacred songs, the musical layout of this cantica appears in its meticulous design. This design seems to have escaped generations of critics, who had intuited that music was a structuring principle of the other canticas, but did not value the role of chants in Hell, because 'in Hell ... all is chaos.'[94]

93 E. Birge-Vitz, 'The Liturgy and Vernacular Literature,' in *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church*, ed. Thomas Heffernan and Ann Matter (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2001), 551–618, at p. 585.

94 'dans l'Enfer ... tout est désordre.' C. Bellaigue, 'Dante et la Musique,' *Revue des deux mondes* (January 1903): 67–86, at p. 72. At the turn of the twentieth century, Bellaigue, corresponding with Arrigo Boito, correctly saw the link between music and order, but

Instead, references to sacred music are plentiful and far from coincidental, all pointing toward the isolation of the souls: while the Gregorian repertory unites a group of devotees in the communal effort of singing together, and while polyphonic performance is based on the coordination and combination of different pitches in one grandiose sound, the depraved 'rites of Dante's *Inferno* negate the essence of liturgy as a communal event,' as liturgy should be even according to its etymology (*leitourgíā* = public service).[95] As is now clear, infernal cacophony is the untuned, out-of-tempo, but poetically perfect and appropriate prelude to Purgatory's monophony and Paradise's polyphony.

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disregarded hellish music: 'Élément de paix et non de passion, la musique agit sur Dante et ne l'agite point. Des deux principles opposés que les anciens distinguaient en elle, venant un d'Apollon et l'autre de Bacchus, il ne reconnait et ne subit que le principe apollinien. Sensible au bienfait, il échappe au maléfice. Qu'ils soient d'amour divin ou profane, tous les chants, pour lui, sont d'amour.' ('An element of peace, not of passion, music acts upon Dante and does not agitate him. Of the two opposed principles that the ancients distinguished in it, one deriving from Apollo, the other from Bacchus, he only acknowledges and is subject to the Apollonian. While affected by the good, he escapes the evil side. For him, all singing, be it about divine or profane love, is of love.') C. Bellaigue, 'Dante et la Musique,' 81. See also A. Boito, *Tutti gli scritti*, ed. Piero Nardi (Milan: Mondadori, 1942), in particular 1219–1332; and Luigi Scorrano, 'Dante, Boito (Bellaigue) la musica,' in *L'Alighieri* 18, no. 2 (July–December 1977): 9–25.

95 'I riti dell'*Inferno* dantesco negano l'essenza della liturgia come evento comunitario,' E. Ardissino, 'Parodie liturgiche,' *Annali d'italianistica* (2007): 217–32, at p. 218. Thomas Aquinas stresses the communal function of prayer: 'Duplex est oratio, communis, et singularis. Communis quidem oratio est quae per ministros Ecclesiae in persona totius fidelis populi Deo offertur. Et ideo oportet quod talis oratio innotescat toti populo, pro quo profertur. Quod non posset fieri nisi esset vocalis. Et ideo rationabiliter institutum est ut ministri Ecclesiae huiusmodi orationes etiam alta voce pronuntient, ut ad notitiam omnium possit pervenire.' ('Prayer is twofold, common and individual. Common prayer is that which is offered to God by the ministers of the Church representing the body of the faithful: wherefore such like prayer should come to the knowledge of the whole people for whom it is offered: and this would not be possible unless it were vocal prayer. Therefore it is reasonably ordained that the ministers of the Church should say these prayers even in a loud voice, so that they may come to the knowledge of all.') (*ST*, II^{a}-II^{ae} q.83 a.12). See next chapter for a more thorough investigation of this issue.

3 *Purgatorio*: Musical Liturgy as *Pharmakon*

'Ita fluctuo inter periculum voluptatis et experimentum salubritatis.'[1]

The relationship between soul and body is a central element of *Purgatorio*'s poetics. As Manuele Gragnolati has shown, the cantica represents an ideal of reconciliation of the spirit with the flesh.[2] According to medieval music therapy, a healthy relation between one's body and soul is governed by a musical balance between the parts, a physiological *harmonia* binding flesh and spirit in one musical friendship:

> Musica inter corpus et animam est illa naturalis amicitia qua anima corpori non corporeis vinculis, sed affectibus quibusdam colligatur, ad movendum et sensificandum ipsum corpus, secundum quam amicitiam nemo carnem suam odio habuit. Musica haec est, ut ametur caro, sed plus spiritus, ut foveatur corpus, non perimatur virtus.[3]
>
> ('Music is that natural friendship between the body and the soul by which the soul is leagued to the body, not in physical bonds, but in certain sympathetic relationships for the purpose of imparting motion and sensation to the body. Because of this friendship it is written: "no man hates his flesh."

1 'Thus I vacillate between dangerous pleasure and healthful exercise.' Augustine, *Conf.* X.xxxiii, trans. Albert C. Outler (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955).

2 M. Gragnolati, *Experiencing the Afterlife: Soul and Body in Dante and Medieval Culture* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

3 Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon*, II.12, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

> This music consists of loving one's flesh, but one's spirit more; in cherishing one's body, but not in destroying one's virtue.')

As we shall see, when this balance is altered a musical medicine is needed to restore it. The music of Dante's *Purgatorio* is essentially monophonic and its function is meant to be an integral part of the penitential rites of the souls. This music – whether sung out confusedly amidst sobs and sighs or, in the most orderly performances, in unison – has a healing power for the soul. Polyphony will first appear only at the end of the cantica, in the Garden of Eden, outside of the world of penance, and will find its full realization in Paradise. Here in Purgatory there is no time or place for joyful celebrations; all the musical effort is aimed at purging sins and repairing the dead poetry and the dead songs of Hell.[4] Prayer is, in the *Purgatorio*, regularly performed by means of singing, and, as Zygmunt Barański reminds us, we should make a connection between music and the spiritual and aesthetic aspects of the praise of God (*laus Dei*), as found in medieval exegeses of the Psalms and the Song of Songs.[5] Thomas Aquinas, rely-

4 Gianni Vinciguerra identifies such a principle of musical compensation in the sign of the cross performed by the helmsman angel of *Purg.* II: 'La croce e la cithara: note sulla musicalità del *Venerabile Signum* in *Purg.* 2': 'la musicalità che risuona dal segno di croce eseguito dall'angelo nocchiero dinanzi alle anime che di lì a poco intraprenderanno la *peregrinatio* purgatoriale, oltre a consuonare con la ritrovata armonia dal canto e della Voce, risarcisce della distonia anche la citazione infernale dell'incipit dell'inno alla croce di Venanzio Fortunato, *Vexilla regis prodeunt.*' ('The musicality resounding in the sign of the cross performed by the helmsman angel before the souls who are about to undertake their purgatorial peregrination, besides resonating with the newly found harmony of singing and Voice, compensates for even the infernal quotation of Venantius Fortunatus's song *Vexilla regis prodeunt.*') See Vinciguerra, 12 March 1999, available at Http://www.princeton.edu/~dante/ebdsa/gv99.htm#N_2(accessed 21 December 2008).

5 Z. Barański, '*Tu numeris elementa ligas*: Un appunto su musica e poetica in Dante,' in *Rassegna europea di letteratura italiana* 8 (1996): 89–95. Barański (p. 94, nn. 15–19) quotes Augustine's *Enarrratio in Psalmos*, XXXII.ii; Bernard's *Sermones super Canticum Canticorum*, in *Opera*, ed. J. Leclerq, C.H. Talbot, and H.M. Rochais, 8 vols. (Rome: Editiones Cistercenses, 1955–77), 1:5–7 (I.iv.7 and I.v.9); and *Expositio in Canticum Canticorum*, in *Thomae Aquinatis opera omnia*, 25 vols. (Parma: P. Fiaccadori, 1852–73), 14:387–8 (Prologus). To these sources I would add a maxim by Cassiodorus (quoted in Pietro Alighieri's commentary on *Purgatorio* XXXI.49–51, and allegedly taken from *Decretis super Psalterio*), for whom all the beauty of poetry and rhetoric took its origin from the Scriptures: 'omnis splendor et rhetorice eloquentiae omnis modus poeticae locutionis a divinis scripturis sumpsit exordium' ('all the splendor of rhetorical eloquence and all the expression of poetic discourse took its origin from the divine scriptures').

ing on a long tradition of music defenders from Ambrose to Augustine and Boethius, explicitly recommends that prayer be performed vocally and by singing: 'salubriter fuit institutum ut in divinas laudes cantus assumerentur' ('the use of music in the divine praises is a salutary institution') (*ST*, II^{a}-II^{ae} q.91 a.2), because 'necessaria est laus oris, non quidem propter Deum, sed propter ipsum laudantem, cuius affectus excitatur in Deum ex laude ipsius' ('We need to praise God with our lips, not indeed for His sake, but for our own sake; since by praising Him our devotion is aroused towards Him') (*ST*, II^{a}-II^{ae} q.91 a.1). In these articles Thomas debates whether lauds should be performed in music, and we should note that lauds are by definition joyful outpourings to God, corresponding certainly to the mood of the songs of the Earthly Paradise, but not to the penitents' expiatory chants. But because 'secundum diversas melodias sonorum animi hominum diversimode disponuntur' ('the human soul is moved in various ways according to various melodies of sound') (*ST*, I^{a}-II^{ae} q.91 a.2), we will find that there are also songs, especially the Psalms, that marvellously fit the mood of repentance. The best piece of Christian literature in which to look for this type of song is perhaps the *Confessions*: Augustine recounts his tearful but liberating experience of the singing during the ceremony of his baptism, by means of which he purged his original sin and left his old life behind:

> Quantum flevi in hymnis et canticis Tuis suave sonantis ecclesiae Tuae vocibus commotus acriter! Voces illae influebant auribus meis et eliquabatur veritas in cor meum et exaestuabat inde affectus pietatis, et currebant lacrimae, et bene mihi erat cum eis.[6]
>
> ('How freely did I weep during thy hymns and canticles; how deeply was I moved by the voices of thy sweet-speaking Church! The voices flowed into my ears; and the truth was poured forth into my heart, where the tide of my devotion overflowed, and my tears ran down, and I was happy in all these things.')

Once we realize that oral performance – and especially singing – is necessary to the execution of prayers (the link between *orare* and *os, oris* meant much more than mere consonance to the medieval mind), we

6 Augustine, *Conf.* IX.vi.14, trans. Albert C. Outler (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955); also in *PL*, vol. 32, cols. 769–70.

will comprehend how this medicine functions not only for the living but also for the dead. As a force that can unite and rebalance body and soul, singing is invaluable to the living, such as Dante and the readers.[7] As a means of spiritual purification for the inhabitants of Purgatory (who also need the living to pray so that their purification can be sped up),[8] singing washes away their sins with their own tears. As Louis M. La Favia has acutely observed, 'it is really prayer that unites through a bond of *charitas* the world of the living and the world of the penitents in Dante's Purgatory.'[9] This is what Dante and the penitents most intimately share – the need to pray, the need to sing – and is perhaps what makes the *Purgatorio* the most movingly human cantica.

The notion that music has the power to affect the mind and even to heal the soul is well grounded in theoretical literature. One of the oft-cited 'clinical' cases is that of David liberating Saul from a demon.[10] Music is

7 'Vocalis oratio quasi ad redditionem debiti, ut scilicet homo Deo serviat secundum totum illud quod ex Deo habet, idest non solum mente, sed etiam corpore' ('the voice is used in praying as though to pay a debt, so that man may serve God with all that he has from God, that is to say, not only with his mind, but also with his body') (*ST*, II^{a}-II^{ae} q.83 a.12).

8 'ché qui per quei di là molto s'avanza' ('for here much can be gained from those on earth') (*Purg.* III.144).

9 L.M. La Favia '... "Che Quivi per Canti ..." (*Purg.* XII.113): Dante's Programmatic Use of Psalms and Hymns in the *Purgatorio*,' *Studies in Iconography* 10 (1986): 53–65, at p. 54.

10 1 Kings 16:23. For music's power to affect the human mind, see Boethius, *De inst. mus.* I.i (*PL*, vol. 63, col. 1170a–b): 'Vulgatum quippe est, quam saepe iracundias cantilena represserit, quam multa vel in corporum, vel in animorum affectionibus miranda perfecerit. Cui enim est illud ignotum, quod Pythagoras ebrium adolescentem Tauro-minitanum sub Phrygii modi sono incitatum, spondeo succinente reddiderit mitiorem et sui compotem' ('It is told that music often soothed anger, and that it performed wonders for the afflictions of both the body and the soul. Indeed, who does not know that Pythagoras first excited a youth from Taormina and then calmed him by singing a spondaic rhythm?'); and col. 1171c: 'ut ... appareat ita quidem nobis musicam naturaliter esse conjunctam, ut ea ne si velimus quidem carere possimus. Quocirca intendenda vis mentis est, ut id quod natura est insitum, scientia quoque possit comprehensum teneri.' ('It is clear that music is naturally conjoined with us, so that we could not be without music even if we wanted to be. Thus, the power of our minds is such that we can understand scientifically what is inbred in nature.') Further examples are provided by, Isidore of Seville: 'Musica movet affectus, provocat in diversum habitum sensus. In praeliis quoque tubae concentus pugnantes accendit; et quanto vehementior fuerit clangor, tanto fit fortior ad certamen animus. Siquidem et remiges cantus hortatur.

medicine for the soul and Dante here envisions it as plainchant – the individual act of singing, accompanied by crying and weeping – which allegorizes the effort of penitence. The blending of several voices into a unison serves as an exercise in the musical and spiritual discipline that must be achieved before the gifts and songs of Paradise can be enjoyed. The spiritual tension in *Purgatorio* shows itself not only in the physical efforts of the souls but also in their chants, painfully pushed out through tears and sobs. This strain produces a structural opposition of two functions of music. One is to deceive, to ravish with the pleasure of its beauty and lead to folly. It is the musical complement to the Ulyssean paradigm

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Ad tolerandos quoque labores musica animum mulcet, et singulorum operum fatigationem modulatio vocis solatur. Excitos quoque animos musica sedat, sicut legitur de David, qui a spiritu immundo Saulem arte modulationis eripuit. Ipsas quoque bestias, necnon et serpentes, volucres, atque delphinas, ad auditum suae modulationis musica provocat. Sed et quidquid loquimur, vel intrinsecus venarum pulsibus commovemur, per musicos rhythmos harmoniae virtutibus probatu esse sociatum.' ('Music stirs the emotions; it rouses and transforms our feelings. In battle the resounding trumpet fires the soldiers, and the louder its blare the more are their hearts strengthened for the strife. So, too, singing encourages oarsmen, lessening their toil. Music soothes the soul and the melody of song lightens the weariness of every kind of work. Music also calms the passions. Scripture says that David delivered Saul from an unclean spirit with the art of melody. Music also stirs the very beasts, even serpents and birds and dolphins, to want to hear its melody. But further, whatever we say or how we are inwardly moved, as seen in the beating of our hearts, is proved to be by the virtues of harmony through musical rhythms') (*Etymologiae*, III.17, in *PL*, vol. 82, col. 164 a–b, trans. Helen Dill Goode and Gertrudes C. Drake [Colorado Springs: Colorado College Music Press, 1980]); and Cassiodorus: 'Nam ut Orphei lyram, Sirenarum cantus, tanquam fabulosa taceamus: quid de David dicimus, qui ab spiritu immundo Saulem disciplina saluberrimae modulationis eripuit, novoque modo per auditum sanititatem contulit regi, quam medici non poterant herbarum potestatibus operari? Asclepiades quoque medicus, majorum attestatione doctissimus, phreneticum quemdam per symphoniam naturae suae reddidisse memoratur. Multa sunt autem in aegris hominibus per hanc disciplinam facta miracula.' ('I shall not discuss Orpheus' lyre and the singing of the Sirens because they belong to fable. Nor shall I mention David, who snatched Saul away from a foul spirit by his skillful use of therapeutic music, and by this unusual method through the sense of hearing restored to the king his sanity, which doctors could effect with potent herbs. Also, Asclepiades, according to tradition the most learned of all physicians, is recorded as having restored a madman to himself through music. Many miracles of healing have been performed through this art.') (*De artibus ac disciplinis liberalium litterarum*, *De musica* V, in *PL*, vol. 70, col. 1212a–b, trans. Helen Dill Goode and Gertrude C. Drake, in *Cassiodorus – Institutiones, II.5; Isidore of Seville – Etymologiae, III.15–23* [Colorado Springs: Colorado College Music Press, 1980], 9.)

resurfacing in Purgatory, as is made clear in the episode of the Siren (XIX, 1–33). The other is expiatory, cathartic, and represented by the sacred chants, the musical component of the liturgy of this cantica. Music is made a *pharmakon* for the penitents and contributes to their purification, as is foretold at the inception of the cantica:[11]

> Ma qui la morta poesì resurga,
> o sante Muse, poi che vostro sono;
> e qui Calïopè alquanto surga,
> seguitando il mio canto con quel suono
> di cui le Piche misere sentiro
> lo colpo tal, che disperar perdono. (*Purg.* I.7–12)

> ('Here from the dead let poetry rise up, / O sacred Muses, since I am yours. / Here let Calliope arise / to accompany my song with those same chords / whose force so struck the miserable magpies / that, hearing it, they lost all hope of pardon.')

This invocation interweaves the notions of fault and punishment with the singing. We read in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that the Pierides, daughters of King Pierus of Thessaly, having challenged the Muses to a singing contest, were defeated by Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry, whose name means 'beautiful voice,' and were turned into magpies.[12] Two types of singing are presented in this quotation, the Pierides' and Calliope's. The poet invokes the Muse and prays that she will accompany his song. Programmatically placed at the beginning of the cantica, the Pierides simile, with its reference to the resurrection of poetry, is more than a mere show of learnedness. It announces that throughout the *Purgatorio* the music of the dead (*morta poesì*), or infernal cacophony, will be replaced by a vivifying music of higher spiritual content – the liturgical chants resounding all around the mountain from the mouths of the penitents.

This simile foreshadows the twofold role of music in this cantica, the deceptive (the Pierides were deceived into believing that they could prove themselves to be better musicians than Calliope), and the salvific

11 For the notion of music as *pharmakon*, see: *Music as Medicine*, ed. Peregrine Horden (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000). Of particular interest for the medieval reception of the Pythagorean are Horden's 'Commentary on Part II,'103–8, and Christopher Page's 'Music and Medicine in the Thirteenth Century,' 109–19.

12 Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, V.302–408.

(the dead poetry is resurrected). The impossible forgiveness mentioned in line 12 restates that the dead poetry and infernal cacophony of the Pierides will receive no clemency. Such music and poetry are here superseded. But, by contrast, the mention of forgiveness also foreshadows musical liturgy and the end of the atonement process, by anticipating the achievement of purity and the passage to Paradise. Dante here employs the same technique as in *Inferno* I, when the lost pilgrim is presented with the image of the sunlit hill, the end of his peregrinations.[13] The allusion to forgiveness endows the wayfarer with a foretaste of paradisiacal sweetness, while the negative, deceptive root of music in the *Purgatorio* still persists. The passage from one music to the other is presented as a dialectical contrast, as is appropriate to the penitential subject of the cantica. A third group of chants includes the beatitudes sung by angels and the songs performed in the Garden of Eden. These songs are obviously monophonic, because the angels sing one at a time; their function is to endorse the pilgrim's passage to the next terrace. Therefore, the rich musical material found in *Purgatorio* can be grouped into three main categories:

1 *Deceptive songs.* Examples of this type are the much-debated song of Casella, about which criticism has not yet reached a consensus, and the dream-song of the *femmina balba.* They represent a threat of returning evil and temptation in the guise of a sweet, seducing melody that can lead the listener astray, but Cato and the mysterious woman who chases the siren in Dante's dream vanquish the power of these songs. These deceptive images, then, only act as a reminder of the corruptive faculty of certain music.
2 *Healing songs, or music as pharmakon.* The healing power of music is amply attested to by the Psalms and by Augustine's *Enarrationes*; put in active voice, the chants invoke what Augustine calls *Gratia medicinalis*, by which Christ remedies our sins.[14] Evidence that singing was supposed to effect purification is provided by the bull of John XXII,

13 Dante uses this anticipatory technique in *Inf.* I to show us the macrocosm inside the microcosm, the great design of his poem in a small element of it. I must once again refer the reader to the most significant work on this subject: J. Freccero: 'The Prologue Scene,' in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. R. Jacoff (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1986), 1–28.

14 *Index in omnia opera Sancti Augustini. Prior Romana arithmetica nota, tomum designat, posterior arabica, columnam* (*PL*, vol. 46, col. 318).

Docta sanctorum patrum, in which he warns against rushing over the notes and thereby diminishing their ability to heal: 'Currunt enim et non quiescunt, aures inebriant et non medentur.'[15]

3 *Songs of the angels.* Cases in point are the beatitudes and the singing in the Earthly Paradise. Every time the pilgrim goes up a terrace, an angel gently grazes his forehead and sings words from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Dante alternately employs the verbs *cantare* and *dire* for the angels' quotations from the Gospel of Matthew, but the verb *dire* was apparently commonly employed as a synonym of *cantare*,[16] and Dante scholars and musicologists seem to agree on the equivalence of the two terms.[17] As for the music of the complex pageant in the Earthly Paradise, it is, unsurprisingly, music of an entirely different nature from the suffering performance of the penitents' plainchant. The pain is gone, and the air is filled with sweetness and serenity and rings with the promise of the new songs of Heaven.

Deceptive Songs

The *Purgatorio* presents two passages in which music is the figure of a dangerous distraction or evokes reminiscences of sin. One is the well-known episode of Casella singing *'Amor che nella mente mi ragiona'* in *Purgatorio* II.112. The matter has been debated as to whether the self-quotation of the Convivial ode is the occasion for an innocent pastime, a slightly inappropriate amusement, or a perverse song that is far from a harmless recreation among old friends. The main reason for this uncertainty is its very author. How can it be a siren-song if Dante himself wrote it and Casella's voice's 'sweetness still resounds within [his] soul?' Thus, while many readers of the *Commedia* go no further than identifying *'Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona'* as a *canzone* of the *Convivio* and *De vulgari eloquentia*, others even praise the song, and deny that Dante would attach to it a

15 'These disciples inebriate the ears and do not heal.' *Docta Santorum Patrum*, published in 1324–25. Quoted from G. Fellerer, 'La *Constitutio docta sanctorum patrum* di Giovanni XXII e la musica nuova del suo tempo,' in *L'Ars nova italiana del Trecento*, vol. 3, ed. F. Alberto Gallo (Certaldo: Centro Studi sull'Ars nova italiana del Trecento, 1970), 9–17.

16 See Guido of Arezzo: 'ad cantum redigitur omne quod dicitur' (*Micrologus*, XVII).

17 Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, ed. Natalino Sapegno (Florence: La nuova Italia, 1957), note to *Purg.* XII.110; Timothy McGee's argument is in chapter 3 of his *The Ceremonial Musicians of Late Medieval Florence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

negative connotation.[18] Still another group construes the episode as a distraction, but explains Cato's rebuke by blaming the faltering souls who pause in their rituals of purification, rather than the song itself.[19] However, we should discard this prejudice and think of the episode of Casella's song as a palinode of Dante's former philosophical learning. In fact, it is all the more meaningful precisely because Dante is its author.

The *Commedia* in many ways represents a recantation of doctrines and ideas formerly expounded by Dante – particularly in the *Convivio* – which are rectified or even completely subverted on the basis of the deeper theological understanding that he acquired later. The groundbreaking study of John Freccero was the first to make lucidly clear the palinodic quality of the episode and to abandon the notion that it functions merely as a 'recreational interlude.'[20] After all, if Dante chose a poem his own to cause the rebuke of so reverend a figure as Cato, something important must be at stake. Indeed, the author of the *Commedia* is in this episode

18 I am following the bibliography of R. Hollander ('*Purgatorio II*: Cato's Rebuke and Dante's "Scoglio,"' *Italica* 52, no. 3 (1975): 348–63) for this list, with only a few changes. In the stream of Neoplatonic appreciation of musical aesthetics, Cristoforo Landino (Brescia, 1481) and Alessandro Vellutello (Venice, 1544) praise Dante's *canzone* and Casella's music; a similar opinion is shared by Pompeo Venturi (Lucca, 1732), Bonaventura Lombardi (Florence, 1838), Giosafatte Biagioli (Paris/Milan, 1818–19), Paolo Costa (Bologna, 1819–21), Pietro Fraticelli (Florence, 1864), Brunone Bianchi (Florence, 1868), Raffaele Andreoli (Florence, 1856), Francesco Torraca (Milan, 1905), Carlo Steiner (Turin, 1921), Giovanni Federzoni, (Bologna, 1919), Attilio Momigliano (Florence, 1965), Alberto Chiari in *L'Alighieri* 3, no. 2 (1965), and K. Foster and P. Boyde, *Dante's Lyric Poetry*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 174. More recently Amilcare Iannucci stressed the twofold recantation of the episode: Casella's song appears in the *Convivio* and the *De vulgari eloquentia*, which means that not only philosophical issues are at stake in *Purg.* II, but aesthetic ones as well (A. Iannucci, 'Casella's Song and the Tuning of the Soul,' *Thought* 65 (1990): 27–46, in particular p. 42); and Alessandra Fiori studied this episode's reception among the old commentators, noting how music's capability to draw on the darkest depths of the human soul was acknowledged by early readers (A. Fiori, 'Il canto di Casella: Esegesi dantesche a confronto,' in *Trent'anni di ricerche musicologiche: Studi in onore di F. Alberto Gallo*, ed. P. Della Vecchia and D. Restani [Rome: Torre D'Orfeo, 1996], 283–9).

19 Among these: Jacopo della Lana, Piero Bargellini (Florence, 1868), Charles Hall Grandgent (Boston, 1909), Enrico Mestica (Florence, 1921–22), Dino Provenzal, (Milan, 1938), Hermann Gmelin (Stuttgart, 1954–57), André Pézard (Paris, 1965), Mario Marti, *Lectura Dantis Scaligera* (Florence, 1967), 59, Giuseppe Giacalone (Rome, 1968).

20 J. Freccero, 'Casella's Song (*Purg.* II, 112),' *Dante Studies* 91 (1973): 73–80; also in J. Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 186–94.

refuting the author of the *Convivio*, and he does so by use of imagery drawn from Psalm 54:7: 'Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?' Freccero points to the poetics of *dolce stil novo and* to the Psalter – another musical text, but a sacred one – to explain the meaning of doves and wings as representations of human desire relevant to the episode of Francesca. But, more importantly, he places '*Amor che nella mente mi ragiona*' against the backdrop of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, showing that philosophy itself (destitute of divine guidance) is the object of the recantation. Freccero makes it very clear that the female figure of '*Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona*' is to be interpreted – albeit perhaps as an afterthought – as Lady Philosophy, since the pilgrim asks the musician to 'consolare alquanto / l'anima mia' (*Purg.* II.109–10), in an evident allusion to Boethius's work.

While it is true that we do not possess the melody of Casella's song, Freccero's suggestion[21] that we should ignore the music in this episode risks making us miss the relevance of the fact that, whatever melody '*Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona*' is sung to, it *is* indeed sung! It would not have been sufficient for Dante to have just any character – he could have chosen Guido Guinizzelli, for example, as perfectly fitted to the themes of *stilnovo* and human desire – merely recite the poem; and the Anonimous Florentine reminds us that philosophical songs as conceptually dense as this simply 'non era usanza d'intonarle' ('were usually not set to music'), so the poet's choice of setting it to music appears all the more deliberate. Further, when Dante's model prince Charles Martel quotes – this time unsolicited – another of Dante's canzoni, '*Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete*' (*Par.* VIII.37), he merely recites it; Dante does not turn this canzone of his own into a musical event. Why, then, did Dante stage a musical performance around the '*Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona*' canzone in *Purgatorio* II?

The reasons are manifold, but are based mainly on the power that music has over the human spirit, as will be discussed in greater detail a little later in this chapter. Dante discusses the absorbing power of music in the *Convivio*, the same work whose core contention he recants in this episode. This adds irony to irony, for in the same way that 'the imagery of the *dolce stil novo* is used to undercut its theory of love,' and 'Boethius'

21 J. Freccero, 'Casella's Song: *Purgatorio* II, 112,' in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, 189: 'In Casella's song our attention must be fixed on the *words*, for we have nothing else.'

bird simile is used against him in the *Purgatorio*,'[22] Dante uses the musical theory he expounded in the *Convivio* to disavow the *Convivio*'s epistemological theory. This, we must bear in mind, would not have been possible without resorting to musical performance. An example of misleading music had to be chosen from the secular repertory, especially to signify that a search for knowledge unaccompanied by divine inspiration (or, we could say, sacred music) is doomed to fail.[23]

But there are additional reasons for a musical performance at this point of the voyage. After the corruption of liturgical chants in Inferno, as soon as the pilgrim sets foot on the safe ground of Purgatory, in the very same canto he is presented with two different, indeed opposed, musical alternatives: Psalm 113 and Casella's song. While the former is a splendid example of the salvific function music holds in this cantica, the latter is an apparently innocent, but intrinsically deceptive, first step in an escalation of a musical straying from the correct path culminating with the siren's song.

Robert Hollander has argued most persuasively the point that the use of *'Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona'* in *Purgatorio* II is in itself deceptive. He states rather bluntly, in the very first line of his article, that 'Casella's song is a Siren's song.'[24] There is indeed, as the pilgrim suspects, a 'new law' forbidding the musician to sing secular songs, the law of Grace and freedom proclaimed by Psalm 113, '*In exitu Isräel de Aegypto*' (*Purg.* II.46). The newly acquired freedom of the hopeful penitents who sing it, though, carries with it the responsibility to comply with the rules of Purgatory and initiate the purification rites. The effect of Casella's song is to make the pilgrim relax and suspend his ascent instead, and the reason for Dante's choice of one of his own philosophical songs is, arguably, that Lady Philosophy, celebrated in that *canzone*, had led Dante himself astray, at the end of the *Vita nova*.[25] In fact, Beatrice's severe reprimand in the

22 Freccero, 'Casella's Song,' in *The Poetics of Conversion*, 193.

23 'In the commentaries inspired by [Casella's song], we find all the prejudices and contradictions that medieval thought had against an art so capable of elevating our mind as well as of drawing from its darkest regions. Earthly music ... must go through a sort of purification ... and liberate itself from all that still denotes it as material.' (A. Fiori, 'Il canto di Casella,' 289; my translation.)

24 R. Hollander, '*Purgatorio II*: Cato's Rebuke,' 348.

25 For the question of the identification of the merciful woman appearing near the end of the *Vita nuova* as Philosophy, see Maria Corti's introduction to Dante's *Vita nova*, ed. Manuela Colombo (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1993).

Garden of Eden warns the pilgrim precisely against the sirens ('perché altra volta, / udendo le serene, sie più forte' ('the shame of your straying and, the next time / that you hear the Sirens' call, be stronger') (*Purg.* XXXI.44–5). Thus, the allure of this song bears a similarity to the allure of Siren's song in that the mysterious woman who comes to unmask the fallaciousness of the Siren-Philosophy is to be identified with Divine Wisdom, that is to say, with Beatrice. This interpretation also fits in with the reading of Ulysses as the paradigm of the pursuer of erroneous knowledge, an explorer who is led astray by the mesmerizing promises of false lore: 'Io volsi Ulisse del suo cammin vago' ('I drew Ulysses, eager for the journey') (*Purg.* XIX.22–3).[26] Dante too has suffered the same seduction, as Beatrice reproachfully remarks in the Earthly Paradise:

> e volse i passi suoi per via non vera,
> imagini di ver seguendo false,
> che nulla promession rendono intera. (*Purg.* XXX.130–32)
>
> ('He set his steps upon an untrue way, / pursuing those false images of good / that bring no promise to fulfillment.')

Dante uses his subtle art of emulation to make the Siren a symbol of dangerous philosophy – a philosophy which, instead of being ancillary to theology, claims its own autonomy – by fashioning Beatrice's long-desired apparition in *Purgatorio* in such a manner as to call to mind the famous opening of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* in which Lady Philosophy introduces the Christian muses to oust the pagan ones, which she calls contemptuously by the name of Sirens.[27]

It should now be clear how this episode is linked to the siren's song in Dante's dream (*Purg.* XIX.19–24). The two deceptive musical episodes of the cantica are connected not only by their function, but also

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26 For the interpretation of Ulysses as a symbol of the fountainhead of radical Aristotelianism, see M. Corti, 'Tre versioni dell'aristotelismo radicale nella *Commedia*,' in *Scritti su Cavalcanti e Dante* (Turin: Einaudi, 2003), 327–47, in particular pp. 336–7.

27 'Sed abite potius Sirenes usque in exitium dulces meisque eum Musis curandum sanadumque relinquite.' ('But rather get you gone, you Sirens pleasant even to destruction and leave him to my Muses to be cured and healed') (Boethius, *De consolatione phil.* I.1; trans. William Anderson, *The Consolation of Philosophy* [Arundel: Centaur Press, 1963]).

by their artful construction of common subtexts. While Casella's song was offered upon request, at the inception of the purging process, the stuttering woman in Dante's dream occupies a mid-journey position in the space of the cantica. This woman is a receptacle of all imaginable ugliness; nonetheless her squinted eyes, crippled feet, maimed hands, and sallow aspect suddenly flourish into sexual beauty under the gaze of the pilgrim. Not only this, even her tongue becomes ready, and her song sounds beautiful to the ears.

Nancy A. Jones has linked the mesmerizing siren to the singing of Angelic Love in *Paradiso* XXIII, showing the relation of extreme opposition between 'song as a provider of false plenitude and song as an instrument of spiritual growth.'[28] In the stuttering woman episode Dante incorporates Cicero's warning against the sirens, possibly believing – on the basis of the account contained in *De finibus bonorum et malorum* – that the sirens lured Ulysses to sea, away from his family, with their false promises of knowledge:

> Vidit Homerus probari fabulam non posse si cantiunculis tantus irretitus vir teneretur; scientiam pollicentur, quam non erat mirum sapientiae cupido patria esse cariorem.[29]
>
> ('Homer was aware that this story would not sound plausible if the magic that held his hero enmeshed was the charm of mere melody! It is knowledge that the Sirens offer, and it was no marvel if a lover of wisdom held this dearer than his home.')

That music can occasion debauchery is a direct consequence of the remedial powers that Christianity grants it. As with all other manifestations of the human spirit, music has both a healing and a corrupting nature. Augustine was the first to distinguish this twofold nature, and to emphasize the importance of the style of performance over intervals:

> Etenim a nimio fulgore aversamur, et nimis obscura nolumus cernere, sicut

28 Nancy A. Jones, 'Music and the Maternal Voice in *Purgatorio* XIX,' in *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture*, ed. Leslie C. Dunn, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 41.

29 Cicero, *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, V.xviii, trans. H. Rackham (London: William Heinemann, 1921), 48–9.

> etiam in sonis et a nimium sonantibus abhorremus, et quasi susurrantia non amamus. Quod non in temporum intervallis est, sed in ipso sono.[30]
>
> ('I in fact eschew exceeding pleasure and yet do not want to choose exceedingly demure things. Also in music I abhor the exceedingly beautiful songs and do not like almost whispered songs. This difference is not in the distance of intervals, but in the performance.')

The manner of performance can make an aesthetic difference, and excessive aesthetic enjoyment can be dangerous, as Augustine states in the *Confessions*.[31] The song of the stuttering woman is therefore a perfect example of the seductive music opposed by Augustine, as she appears in a dream assuming the guise of a siren and sings out sweetly:

> 'Io son,' cantava, 'io son dolce serena,
> che ' marinari in mezzo mar dismago;
> tanto son di piacere a sentir piena!
> Io volsi Ulisse del suo cammin vago
> al canto mio; e qual meco s'ausa
> rado sen parte; sì tutto l'appago!' (*Purg.* XIX.19–24)
>
> ('"I am," she sang, "I am the sweet siren / who beguiles mariners on distant seas / so great is their delight in hearing me. / I drew Ulysses, eager for the journey, / with my song. And those who dwell with me / rarely depart, so much do I content them."')

The sensuous, beguiling, and deceptive nature of this music is made even clearer by the association with Ulysses' journey. An archetype of the errant journeyer, the Greek leader is alluded to throughout the entire

30 Augustine, *De musica* VI.xiii.39.

31 Augustine, *Conf.* X.xiii; see below for quotations of the passage. Elsewhere, Dante asserts that after the translation from the original Hebrew, there is no musicality in the verses of the Psaltery: 'li versi del Salterio sono sanza dolcezza di musica e d'armonia: ché essi furono transmutati d'ebreo in greco e di greco in latino, e nella prima transmutazione tutta quella dolcezza venne meno' ('And this is the reason why the verses of the Psalter lack the sweetness of music and harmony; for they were translated from Hebrew into Greek and from Greek into Latin, and in the first translation all their sweetness was lost') (*Conv.* I.vii.15; trans. R. Lansing).

Commedia as a symbol of human folly.[32] His *folle volo* standing in eschatological terms as the opposite of Dante's journey, Ulysses transgresses the boundaries set by God for the investigations of human reason. A new Adam, he defies God's knowledge and ends in a tragic shipwreck with his companions. Ulysses' journey proceeds in a downwards direction, whereas Dante's is authorized by Heaven – 'vuolsi così colà dove si puote / ciò che si vuole' ('It is so willed where will and power are one') (*Inf.* III.95–6) – and is therefore eventually turned upwards. The song of the siren is the most clear and wicked example of the devious danger of music, with a power to please – 'sì tutto l'appago!' ('so much do I content them') (*Purg.* XIX.24) – against which Augustine had also warned in his *Confessions*:

> Nunc in sonis quos animant eloquia tua, cum suavi et artificiosa voce cantantur, fateor, aliquantulum acquiesco; non quidem ut haeream, sed ut surgam cum volo ... Aliquando enim plus mihi videor honoris eis tribuere quam decet, dum ipsis sanctis dictis religiosius et ardentius sentio moveri animos nostros in flammam pietatis, cum ita cantantur, quam si non ita cantarentur; et omnes affectus spiritus nostri pro sui diversitate habere proprios modos in voce atque cantu, quorum nescio qua occulta familiaritate excitentur.[33]
>
> ('In those melodies which thy words inspire when sung with a sweet and trained voice, I still find repose; yet not so as to cling to them, but always so as to be able to free myself as I wish ... Sometimes, I seem to myself to give them more respect than is fitting, when I see that our minds are more devoutly and earnestly inflamed in piety by the holy words when they are sung than when they are not. And I recognize that all the diverse affections of our spirits have their appropriate measures in the voice and song, to which they are stimulated by I know not what secret correlation.')

Singing is fine, says Augustine, so long as it does not fill the ears with excessive pleasure (*oblectamenta*, in the next quotation). It is the excessive

32 See B. Nardi, *La tragedia di Ulisse* (1937), repr. in *Dante e la cultura medievale*, 2nd ed. (Bari: Laterza, 1949), 153–65; see also A. Iannucci, 'Ulysses' "folle volo": The Burden of History,' *Medioevo romanzo* 3 (1976): 410–45.

33 Augustine, *Conf.* X.xxxiii, trans. Albert C. Outler (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955).

pleasure taken in music that represents a danger insofar as it drives the mind away from the words:

> magisque adducor, non quidem irretractabilem sententiam proferens, cantandi consuetudinem approbare in Ecclesia; ut per oblectamenta aurium infirmior animus in affectum pietatis assurgat. Tamen, cum mihi accidit ut me amplius cantus, quam res quae canitur, moveat; poenaliter me peccare confiteor, et tunc mallem non audire cantantem.[34]

> ('I am inclined – though I pronounce no irrevocable opinion on the subject – to approve of the use of singing in the church, so that by the delights of the ear the weaker minds may be stimulated to a devotional mood. Yet when it happens that I am more moved by the singing than by what is sung, I confess myself to have sinned wickedly, and then I would rather not have heard the singing.')

Such power had already been exerted by Casella's song in *Purgatorio* II, although with no malevolent intention. The pilgrim, having recognized his musician friend among the souls who had just landed on the shore, asks him to sing. Casella regales his unusual audience with one of Dante's own *canzoni*, but the entertainment is interrupting the rite of purification and brings down Cato's reproach upon the dismayed listeners, who are said to flee like a flock of doves abandoning grain (*Purg.* II.125) as they leave the song, in a fine image that is reminiscent of the flight of the lustful in *Inferno* V.

The notion that 'the musical experience, however beautiful, can induce spiritual inattention and weakness,' presented 'with delicacy and firmness'[35] in the episode of the Florentine musician, finds theorization in Dante's philosophical work:

> La Musica trae a sé li spiriti umani, che quasi sono principalmente vapori del cuore, sì che quasi cessano da ogni operazione: sì e l'anima intera, quando l'ode e la virtù di tutti quasi corre allo spirito sensibile che riceve lo suono.[36]

> ('Music attracts to itself human spirits, which are, as it were, principally

34 *Conf.* X.xxxiii, trans. Albert C. Outler.
35 J. Stevens, 'Dante and Music,' *Italian Studies* 23 (1968): 7.
36 *Conv.* II.xiii.24.

vapours of the heart, so that they almost completely cease their activity; this happens likewise to the entire soul when it hears music, and the virtue of all of them, as it were, runs to the spirit of sense which receives the sound.')

In the *Convivio*, the author associates each of the liberal arts with one planet and its powers. Music is assigned to Mars, for two reasons: its beautiful proportions (Mars is the fifth planet and has the middle orbit, equidistant from the Earth and the Empyrean), and its ability to desiccate and burn up objects.[37] Because of its fiery nature, Mars can appear red-hot and surrounded by vapours[38] and signifies – Dante leans here on Albumasar's authority – the death of kings and the changing of kingdoms.[39] Indeed, continues Dante, a cross made up of Martian vapours was sighted in the sky over Florence at the beginning of the city's ruin.[40]

All of these elements reappear in the powerful imagery at the beginning of *Purgatorio* II. The pilot-angel dashing across the sea is compared to Mars for the reddish glow of his vapours, his open-winged silhouette portrayed in the fashion of a red and white cross floating in the sky:

Ed ecco, qual, sorpreso dal mattino,
per li grossi vapor Marte rosseggia
giù nel ponente sovra 'l suol marino,
cotal m'apparve, s'io ancor lo veggia,
un lume per lo mar venir sì ratto,
che 'l muover suo nessun volar pareggia.
...
Poi d'ogne lato ad esso m'appario
un non sapea che bianco e di sotto
a poco a poco un altro a lui uscìo. (*Purg.* II.13–18, 22–4)

('And now, as in the haze of morning, / Mars, low on the western stretch of ocean, / sheds reddish light through those thick vapors, / there appeared

37 'dissecca e arde le cose' (*Conv.* II.xiii.24).

38 'esso pare affocato di colore, quando più e quando meno, secondo la spessezza e raritade de li vapori che 'l seguono' (*Conv.* II.xiii.24).

39 'l'accendimento di questi vapori significa morte di regi e transmutamento di regni; però che sono effetti de la segnoria di Marte' (*Conv.* II.xiii.24).

40 'In Fiorenza, nel principio de la sua destruzione, veduta fu ne l'aere, in figura d'una croce, grande quantità di questi vapori seguaci de la stella di Marte' (*Conv.* II.xiii.24, trans. Albert C. Outler).

> to me – may I see it again! – / a light advancing swiftly on the sea: / no flight can match its rapid motion ... Then on either side of it appeared / a whiteness – I knew not what – and just below, / little by little, another showed there too.')

All the elements of the *Convivio* passage reappear: the fiery vapours, the red-hot planet, the sign of the cross made by the angel – 'Poi fece il segno lor di santa croce' ('Then he blessed them with the sign of Holy Cross') (*Purg.* II.49). The interpretation of the symbolism as signifying the changing of kingdoms that Dante proposes in the *Convivio* is here left unspoken, but it is clear that we are at a crucial time of change, in which the dead kingdom is being left behind. While the poet presents the death of dead poetry, the pilgrim takes his first steps in a new kingdom and the new penitents are about to start their purification. It is the celestial pilot who himself confirms his function of *figura crucis* by moving his hand in the sacred gesture just before the souls disembark. Thus, the figure of the cross, represented also by the fiery-faced angel with his spread wings and red vapours, looms over this scene of regeneration like the fiery cross, herald of destruction, seen over Florence.

Dante prepares the atmosphere for Casella's song by introducing all the elements that link music, as is spoken of in the *Convivio*, to Mars's power to attract and distract the soul, as is stated in the passage quoted above.

Healing Songs: Music as *Pharmakon*

The second cantica presents a great quantity of liturgical texts, hymns, and prayers sung by the souls. It is the 'good' aspect of music with which we are concerned here. Cristina Santarelli has collected all the quotations from the Holy Scriptures in the *Commedia*[41] in an article published under the title 'La musica nella *Commedia* dantesca.'[42] Following her compilation, we can begin to spot a clear design in the musical texture of these chants and, further on, of the paradisiacal music. The preponderantly monophonic character of music in *Purgatorio* reflects the struggle of the atoning souls who have not yet reached a state of harmony with the uni-

41 All but 'Labia mea, Domine' (*Purg.* XXIII.11, taken from Psalm 51), which is strangely left out.

42 C. Santarelli, 'La musica nella *Commedia* dantesca,' *Levia gravia* 2 (2000): 145–64.

verse and with God. The completion of the purification and attainment of harmonious accord will result in the consistent display of polyphony offered in Paradise. Erminia Ardissino brings our attention to the liturgical aspect of the matter by identifying two groups of purgatorial chants: the penitential, from the Easter liturgy, and those with a celebratory or exalting character. [43] Ardissino focuses on the first group, and places the musical episodes in their liturgical context, observing that 'the souls sing together in unison, realizing a perfect unity of purposes.'[44] Here one finds the cohesion of the church in the struggle against temptation and towards the invocation of forgiveness. The meaning of Purgatory is, in other words, a social one: the penitents must re-learn to act *a tempo* with a *communitas* of other human beings before they can reach beatitude, and what musical practice could attain this better than monophony, if indeed 'unison singing is a communal act that binds the singers in a common enterprise; because it is unison, the bond is most intimate, as Dante suggests in the *Purgatorio*. In unison the singers can perfect elements of tuning, timbre, diction, rhythm, and expression in common.'[45]

Among the sacred texts, Dante assigns a privileged place to the Book of Psalms, the only biblical text for which – according to Harold Bloom – Dante recognizes a pragmatic value.[46] Many of the songs of *Purgatorio* are Psalms, and this is a particularly fitting aesthetic choice since the Book of Psalms has an inherently penitential connotation. The strong ties between the Psalms and music have, of course, very ancient roots, since David is attributed with composing these texts as musical lyrics. The Book of Psalms is the most inherently musical of the Bible and, one could argue, of all literature. The Psalms (ten references – plus three hymns – in *Purgatorio*, compared to only two in *Paradiso*) were typically

43 E. Ardissino, 'I canti liturgici nel Purgatorio dantesco,' *Dante Studies* 108 (1990): 39–65. See also E. Ardissino, *Tempo liturgico e tempo storico nella 'Commedia' di Dante* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009).

44 'le anime cantano in coro in unisono realizzando una perfetta unità d'intendimenti.' E. Ardissino, 'I canti liturgici,' 43.

45 W.P. Mahrt, 'Chant,' in *A Performer's Guide to Medieval Music*, ed. Ross W. Duffin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 1–22, at p. 2.

46 Bloom displays radical views on the relationship that Dante held with the poetic tradition: 'Dante has nothing positive to say about any of his poetic precursors or contemporaries and remarkably little pragmatic use for the Bible, except for the Psalms. It is as though he felt King David, ancestor of Christ, was the only forerunner worthy of him, the only other poet consistently able to express the truth.' H. Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 78.

sung to Gregorian chant,[47] and were hardly ever used in the liturgy without some form of psalmody or cantillation. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that other texts sung in *Purgatorio* are not included in the Bible, such as the '*Gloria in excelsis Deo*' and the '*Te Deum*.' These texts, Gallican rather than Roman, are in the style of psalms and are referred to as *psalmi idiotici*.[48] All of the *psalmi idiotici*, except for these two, were expunged from the liturgy in the early Middle Ages and were later reinstated in the Gregorian repertory, which resulted from the contamination of the Gallican and Roman rites in the seventh century. The '*Gloria*' was used in Matins and later added to the Mass. The '*Te Deum*' was sung at the end of Matins and on special occasions such as consecrations and ordinations. The '*Te Deum*' is today attributed to Nicetas Ramesianus, although it was traditionally thought to have been composed by St Ambrose.[49] It is worth noting the different origins of these hymns, because they did not belong to the original biblical Psalter; this shows that Dante

47 By 'Gregorian chant' is meant a repertory of liturgical songs, many of which are psalms, codified in 794 by King Pippin III and Pope Stephen II to make the Gallican and Roman rites uniform. Since the earliest notated manuscript collections of the Gregorian repertory date to 900, significant alterations of the songs may have occurred, and even the traditional eponymous attribution to Gregory the Great (590–604) is probably mistaken: the Frankish copied Mass chants from now lost Roman exemplars, which contained a preface beginning with the words 'Gregorius presul composuit hunc libellum musicae artis.' While the Romans who wrote this were probably referring to Gregory II (715–31), the Frankish interpreted it as Gregory I, the Great.

48 *Psalmi idiotici* means 'private psalms,' because they were composed by an individual instead of belonging to the Psalter of David. Most of these compositions became increasingly popular in the third century, but were wiped out of the canon in the fourth because they were regarded as potentially heretical. The *Gloria in excelsis* and *Te Deum* (which was probably composed later) were the only two *psalmi idiotici* that survived through the Middle Ages. On the *psalmi idiotici*, see Ron Jeffers, *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire*, vol. 1: *Sacred Latin Texts* (Corvallis, OR: Earthsongs, 1988), 46.

49 According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, the following points are admitted by all history of liturgy critics: (1) The *Te Deum* was composed at the beginning of the fifth century; (2) It is an original Latin composition, not a translation of a hymn written in Greek (as several German scholars have maintained since the seventeenth century); the Greek text of the *Te Deum* is actually a translation from the original made in the West in the ninth century; (3) Liturgical use of the *Te Deum*, first noticed in southeastern Gaul, in Milan, and in central Italy, leads one to seek the author in these regions. Among traditional assumptions regarding authorship Nicetas of Remesiana apparently best answers the demands of the critics. M. Huglo, '*Te Deum*,' in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., 15 vols. (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 13:771–3.

had the Gregorian repertory in mind, rather than the biblical Psalter, thus proving the liturgical origin of his quotations. The *psalmi idiotici* are not employed in a penitential way, but to celebrate an achievement, that is, the opening of the gate and Statius's ascent (cf. the '*Gloria*' of *Purg.* XX.136). In a sense, though, they *are* part of the purification process insofar as they represent different phases of it.

In the second cantica the souls purge their sins; in order to accomplish the purification, they must endure a punishment. But why is the punishment always accompanied by chants? The penitents invoke God's help, without which no sin can be washed away. A metaphysical medicine is necessary to heal the metaphysical wound which man has brought upon himself and the music they sing achieves the dispensing of the medication through the call to God. Commenting on the Psalms in his *Sermones ad populum*, Augustine speaks of the condition of sinfulness using precisely this medical metaphor, and explains in what manner the sinners should invoke the Healer:

> Voce consona, corde concordi, pro ipso corde nostro Dominum deprecantes ... Ut autem sanetur, medicum quaerimus; nec ita nostra potestate salvamur, ut nostra potestate sauciamur: ita ad peccandum anima sibi ipsa sufficit; ad sanandum quod peccatum laeserit, Dei medicinalem dexteram implorat. Unde dicit in alio psalmo: *Ego dixi, Domine, miserere mei; sana animam meam, quia peccavi tibi.*[50]
>
> ('With an appropriate voice and harmony in our hearts we seek a physician so as to be healed. Our salvation is not within our power, though it is within our power to wound ourselves. Our soul alone is capable of sinning, but we must pray for God's healing hand to cure the wound of sin. Whence it is said, in another Psalm: 'I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.')

Significantly, Augustine stresses that the request for metaphysical help should be put forth with *voce consona*, where the adjective *consona* refers to both the appropriateness and the musicality of the plea. The singing, then, is for Augustine the medium by which to invoke God's help, and he quotes Psalm 41:5 because the Psalter is the musical sacred text *par*

50 Psalm 40:5. Augustine, *Sermones ad populum, classis prima: Sermo* XX.1 (PL, vol. 38, col. 137).

excellence. The function of the Psalms as medicine for the soul finds explicit realization also in numerous passages of Augustine's *Enarrationes in psalmos*, one of whose refrains sounds: 'Clamat aeger ad medicum.' The healer is God and the psalms are a cry for help.[51]

The notion of sin as sickness and the need for a spiritual medicine is already present in the text of the Psalms, but Augustine proposes the Psalter as a way of treating the soul's sickness by invoking the help of Christ, because he associates healing with the Psalms as the most musical texts in the Bible. It is this repertory that purifies the souls of Dante's *Purgatorio*.

A short review of the liturgical songs in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* will tell us how to 'hear' this music; Dante often gives hints as to how the music is performed. In the *Purgatorio* these songs have the function of stressing the penitential moment. An example of this is Psalm 113 (AV, 114), sung by the newly arrived souls on the shores of Purgatory. This text alludes to the liberation of the Israelites from captivity in Egypt, signifying liberation from a state of sin. This is explicitly explained in the letter to Cangrande della Scala: ('if [we consider] the allegory, our redemption through Christ is signified; if the moral sense, the conversion of the soul from the sorrow and misery of sin to a state of grace is signified; if the anagogical, the passing of the sanctified soul from the bondage of the corruption of this world to the liberty of everlasting glory is signified.'[52]

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51 ('The sick invokes the physician.') See, for example, *Enarratio in psalmum* 31 (*PL*, vol. 36, col. 268). See also *Enarratio in psalmum* 138, in which Augustine explains Psalm 6:3–4, 'Miserere mei, Domine, quoniam infirmus sum: sana me, Domine, quoniam conturbata sunt ossa mea,' with the words, 'quis non intelligat significari animam luctantem cum morbis suis, diu autem dilatam a medico' ('who would fail to understand that it refers to the soul struggling against its illness until a physician heals it?') (*PL*, vol. 36, col. 92); and *Enarratio in psalmum* 7: 'Duo sunt officia medicinae; unum quo sanatur infirmitas, alterum quo sanitas custoditur ... enim ut a morbo evadat, remedium, hic autem ne in morbum recidat, tuitionem petit.' ('Medicine has two goals. One is to heal the illness, the other is to preserve health ... so in order to get out of the illness, it seeks a remedy, and not to fall back into illness it seeks protection.') (*PL*, vol. 36, col. 104).

52 'Si ad allegoriam [inspiciamus], nobis significatur nostra redemptio facta per Christum; si ad moralem sensum, significatur nobis conversio anime de luctu et miseria peccati ad statum gratiae; si ad anagogicum, significatur exitus anime sancte ab huius corruptionis servitute ad eterne glorie libertatem.' Dante, *Epistole*, XIII.21, in *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. Gianfranco Contini (Milan: Ricciardi, 1995), trans. Princeton Dante Project, available online at http://etcweb.princeton.edu/dante/

Dante states explicitly that '*In exitu Isräel de Aegypto*' is sung *ad una voce*, that is, in unison.

> '*In exitu Isräel de Aegypto*'
> cantavan tutti insieme ad una voce
> con quanto di quel salmo è poscia scripto. (*Purg.* II.46–8)

('"*In exitu Isräel de Aegypto*" / they sang together with one voice, / and went on, singing the entire psalm.')

The entire Psalm is performed, although the poet only quotes the first line.[53] This song should be connected to the four levels of exegesis of the

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pdp/. The question of the authenticity of this epistle is still debated. Against Dante's authorship are Z. Barański ('Comedìa: Dante, l'epistola a Cangrande, e la commedia medievale,' in *Chiosar con altro testo* [Florence: Cadmo, 2001], 41–76); P. Dronke (*Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986]); G. Brugnoli (*Epistola XIII, Introduzione*, in *Dante Alighieri: Opere minori*, vol. 2, ed. Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo et al. [Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1979], 598–643); and H.A. Kelly (*Tragedy and Comedy from Dante to Pseudo-Dante* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989]). B. Nardi ('Il punto sull'epistola a Cangrande,' in *Lectura Dantis Scaligera* [Florence: Le Monnier, 1960], argued for only a partial attribution.

Among those in favour are J. Freccero (*Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. R. Jacoff [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986]); G. Contini (review of C.S. Singleton, *Dante's 'Commedia': Elements of Structure*, Dante Studies I, in *Romance Philology* 9, no. 4 [1956]: 463–7), also reprinted in G. Contini, *Un'idea di Dante: Saggi danteschi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), 217–24; J.A. Mazzeo (*Structure and Thought in the Paradiso* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1958]); F. Fergusson, *Dante's Drama of the Mind* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953]); M. Hatzfeld ('Modern Literary Scholarship as Reflected in Dante Criticism,' *Comparative Literature* 3, no. 4 [1951]: 289–309); R. Hollander (*Allegory in Dante's 'Commedia'* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969], and *Dante's Epistle to Cangrande* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993]); T.E. Hart ('The *Cristo*-Rhymes and Polyvalence as a Principle of Structure in Dante's *Commedia*,' *Dante Studies* 105 [1987]: 1–42); M.M. Chiarenza ('*The Divine Comedy': Tracing God's Art* [Boston: Twayne, 1989]); R. Jacoff (Introduction to *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*); A.R. Ascoli ('Access to Authority: Dante in the Epistle to Cangrande,' in *International Dante Seminar 1*, ed. Z. Barański [Florence: Le Lettere, 1997], 309–52); Luis Jenaro-MacLennan (*The Trecento Commentaries on the 'Divina Commedia' and the 'Epistle to Cangrande'* [Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1974]); and F. Mazzoni ('Dante e l'epistola a Cangrande,' in *Atti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* [classe di scienze morali storiche e filologiche], s. 8°, 10 [1955]: 157–98.)

53 'In exitu Israël de Aegypto domus Iacob de populo barbaro / facta est Iudaea sanctificatio eius Israël potestas eius / mare vidit, et fugit Iordanis conversus est retrorsum / montes exultaverunt ut arietes colles sicut agni ovium / quid est tibi mare quod

text. But the text quoted here also evokes a melody, and this melody carries meaning insofar as it expresses chorally the yearning for the shores

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fugisti? et tu Iordanis quia conversus es retrorsum? / montes exultastis sicut arietes? et colles sicut agni ovium? / A facie Domini mota est terra a facie Dei Iacob / qui convertit petram in stagna aquarum et rupem in fontes aquarum. / Non nobis Domine non nobis sed nomini tuo da gloriam / super misericordia tua et veritate tua nequando dicant gentes ubi est Deus eorum? / Deus autem noster in caelo omnia quaecumque voluit fecit / simulacra gentium argentum et aurum opera manuum hominum. / Os habent et non loquentur oculos habent et non videbunt / aures habent et non audient nares habent et non odorabuntur / manus habent et non palpabunt pedes habent et non ambulabunt; non clamabunt in gutture suo. / Similes illis fiant qui faciunt ea et omnes qui confidunt in eis. / Domus Israël speravit in Domino adiutor eorum et protector eorum est / domus Aaron speravit in Domino; adiutor eorum et protector eorum est / qui timent Dominum speraverunt in Domino adiutor eorum et protector eorum est. / Dominus memor fuit nostri et benedixit nobis benedixit domui Israël benedixit domui Aaron. / Benedixit omnibus qui timent Dominum pusillis cum maioribus / adiciat Dominus super vos super vos et super filios vestros. / Benedicti vos a Domino qui fecit caelum et terram / caelum caeli. Domino terram autem dedit filiis hominum. / Non mortui laudabunt te Domine neque omnes qui descendunt in infernum / sed nos qui vivimus benedicimus Domino ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum.' ('When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a barbarous people: / Judea made his sanctuary, Israel his dominion. / The sea saw and fled: Jordan was turned back. / The mountains skipped like rams, and the hills like the lambs of the flock. / What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou didst flee: and thou, O Jordan, that thou wast turned back? / Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams, and ye hills, like lambs of the flock? / At the presence of the Lord the earth was moved, at the presence of the God of Jacob: / Who turned the rock into pools of water, and the stony hill into fountains of waters. / Not to us, O Lord, not to us; but to thy name give glory. / For thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake: lest the gentiles should say: Where is their God? / But our God is in heaven: he hath done all things whatsoever he would. / The idols of the gentiles are silver and gold, the works of the hands of men. / They have mouths and speak not: they have eyes and see not. / They have ears and hear not: they have noses and smell not. / They have hands and feel not: they have feet and walk not: neither shall they cry out through their throat. / Let them that make them become like unto them: and all such as trust in them. / The house of Israel hath hoped in the Lord: he is their helper and their protector. / The house of Aaron hath hoped in the Lord: he is their helper and their protector. / They that fear the Lord hath hoped in the Lord: he is their helper and their protector. / The Lord hath been mindful of us, and hath blessed us. He hath blessed the house/ Israel: he hath blessed the house of Aaron. / He hath blessed all that fear the Lord, both little and great. / May the Lord add blessings upon you: upon you, and upon your children. / Blessed be you of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. / The heaven of heaven is the Lord's: but the earth he has given to the children of men. / The dead shall not praise thee, O Lord: nor any of them that go down to hell. / But we that live bless the Lord: from this time now and for ever.')

of Purgatory where the penitential process will begin. And it is a song of particular interest to Dante because, if we are to believe Charon's words in *Inf*erno III.91–3,[54] Dante, too, will sing it when his time comes. In a beautiful essay he has bequeathed to us, Charles Singleton[55] shows the symbolical value of this Psalm, placed as it is at the beginning of the cantica. A figure of the Exodus, the penitential phase on the shore of Ante-Purgatory represents the transition from the age of darkness to the age of light. In fact, '*In exitu Isräel de Aegypto*' was sung in the Proprium for the Nativity, announcing the liberation of humankind from the captivity of sin. The atmosphere of rebirth pervades also the Dantesque scene, as the newcomers intone this Psalm, which in the Middle Ages enjoyed great popularity, and a quantity of different musical settings. Whatever the actual melody Dante had in mind, the one thing we know for certain is that in Dante's poem it is sung *ad una voce*, that is, in unison.[56]

Another case in which we can infer the monophonic quality of the singing occurs with the negligent. They approach singing Psalm 50, '*Miserere*,' but when they realize that Dante casts a shadow, they soon break into an exclamation of surprise:

> E 'ntanto per la costa di traverso
> venivan genti innanzi a noi un poco,
> cantando '*Miserere*' a verso a verso.
> Quando s'accorser ch'i' non dava loco
> per lo mio corpo al trapassar d'i raggi
> mutar lor canto in un 'Oh!' lungo e roco ... (*Purg.* V.22–7)

('And all this time in front of us / a group of shades advanced across the

54 'Per altra via, per altri porti / verrai a piaggia, non qui, per passare: / più lieve legno convien che ti porti.' ('By another way, another port, / not here, you'll come to shore and cross. / A lighter ship must carry you.')

55 C.S. Singleton, 'In exitu Israel de Aegypto,' *Annual Report of the Dante Society of America* 78 (1960): 1–24.

56 To identify the melodies with which Dante meant these texts to be associated is a task that goes beyond this work's purpose and would represent a thorny matter for musicologists. However, Raffaello Monterosso and more recently William P. Mahrt have identified some of the tunes in Dante's work on the basis of extant manuscripts of Graduales and Antiphonarii. See R. Monterosso, 'Musica,' in *Enciclopedia dantesca*, 3:1065; and W.P. Mahrt, 'Dante's Musical Progress through the *Commedia*,' in *The Echo of Music: Essays in Honor of Marie Louise Gollner*, ed. Blair Sullivan (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2004), 63–73.

> slope / chanting '*Miserere*' in alternation. / When they perceived my body stopped / the rays of the sun from shining through, / their voices faded to a hoarse and drawn-out "Oh!"')

If the expression 'verso a verso' means simply 'line by line,' as suggested by Benvenuto and the Anonymous Florentine, it would hardly be telling of the way this Psalm is intoned. Buti proposes 'as clerics in the choir' but, surprisingly, greater illumination is provided by a remark about different passage made by Ottimo: '*Deus, venerunt gentes* ec. E dice, che 'l diceano a verso a verso, però che le tre diceano l'uno verso, e le IIIJ [quattro] diceano l'altro verso con pianto e con canto.'[57] Ottimo interprets 'verso a verso' as one verse after the other, with reference to responsorial singing. The common practice of monastic psalm singing was for two halves of the choir to alternate singing the verses in monophony, a practice called '*alternatim*.' Other chants that had many verses were also performed this way, for the sake of variation and inclusion. At a later stage on festive occasions this practice incorporated the alternation of monophonic and polyphonic verses, with the polyphony sung by soloists, and sometimes monophonic verses alternating with polyphonic verses that were played on the organ.[58] However, the most frequent practice was just two half-choirs singing monophonically in alternation. During masses and public celebrations the polyphonic part was usually in the response, sung by professional choristers. The monophonic verses were left to the congregation to sing. Thus all the evidence points toward 'a verso a verso' as meaning that these souls, as they wait to enter the Purgatory, only sing the verses of the Psalm, the monophonic parts that were sung by the crowd of faithful in the church. This reading also respects the liturgical setting of the cantica, with the newcomers in the position of learners, as the congregation would be at mass.

We are left with apparently even fewer clues as to how to 'hear' the prayer '*Salve, Regina*' in the valley of the princes:

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57 'God, people came etc. The author says that they sang it "verse by verse," because the three sang the first verse and the other four sang the next with weeping and singing.' (Ottimo, *Purg.* XXXIII.1–3). Sapegno interprets 'verso a verso' in the same way, but does not quote Ottimo.

58 Responsories, in thirteenth-century ordinals, are often mentioned among the sections containing polyphony; see, for example, the ordinal of S. Maria Patavensis, of which some antiphons with directions are reported in A. Lovato, 'Musica e liturgia nella canonica sanctae Mariae Patavenis ecclesiae,' *Canonici delle cattedrali del moedioevo,* Quaderni di storia religiosa, 10 (Verona: Cierre Edizioni, 2003): 95–128, esp. pp. 112–20.

> '*Salve, Regina*' in sul verde e 'n su' fiori
> quindi seder cantando anime vidi,
> che per la valle non parean di fuori. (*Purg.* VII.82–4)

('Seated in the grass and flowers, I saw / souls not visible from beyond the sunken valley. / "*Salve Regina*" was the song they sang.')

However, textual indications are scattered through the subsequent portion of the canto, describing this song. A close reading of these lines will provide some evidence that this is once again a monophonic performance. Rudolph of Absburg sits in silence and 'non move bocca a li altrui canti' (VII.93); Peter III of Aragon 's'accorda, cantando' (VII.112–13) with Charles I of Anjou, while Henry III of England sits alone apart from the others. The general impression is of a Babel of different performances, in which each soul is singing on his own, or, as is the case with Peter and Charles, in small groups. The '*Salve, Regina*' prayer was adopted by the Cistercians as a daily processional chant as early as 1218, and, shortly after, it became the ending hymn of Compline.[59] At the time the pilgrim hears this hymn, it is Sunday evening and he has not slept since Thursday night, if we do not count the two faintings of *Inferno* II and V, so it is the first true repose he takes in his journey.

The Valley of the Princes is a place of rest and peacefulness passed through before the pilgrim enters the gates of Purgatory and the greater part of his purification takes place, a happier mirror-image of *limbo*. '*Te lucis ante*,' the Ambrosian hymn to invoke divine help against nightly temptations, is sung here by one soul only, but soon many others join in following the same tune.

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59 It was Pope Gregory IX who ordered the universal use of '*Salve Regina*' at Compline, although the practice already existed among Cistercians, Dominicans, Franciscans, and Carmelites. See *The Catholic Encyclopedia*'s entry for *'Salve, Regina.'* 'Salve Regina, Mater misericordiae, / Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve. / Ad te clamamus, exsules filii Hevae. / Ad te suspiramus gementes et flentes, / in hac lacrimarum valle. / Eja ergo advocata nostra, / illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte. / Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui, / nobis post hoc exsilium ostende. / O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria.' ('Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, / Hail our life, our sweetness and our hope. / To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. / To you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping / in this valley of tears. / Turn then, most gracious advocate / your eyes of mercy toward us. / And after this, our exile, / Show us the fruit of your womb, Jesus. / O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.')

Era già l'ora che volge il disio
ai navicanti e 'ntenerisce il core
lo dì c'han detto ai dolci amici addio;
e che lo novo peregrin d'amore
punge, se ode squilla di lontano
che paia il giorno pianger che si more;
quand' io cominciai a render vano
l'udire e a mirare una de l'alme
surta, che l'ascoltar chiedea con mano.
Ella giunse e levò ambo le palme,
facendo li occhi verso l'orïente,
come dicesse a Dio: 'D'altro non calme.'
'*Te lucis ante*' sì devotamente
le uscìo di bocca e con sì dolci note,
che fece me a me uscir di mente;
e l'altre poi dolcemente e devote
seguitar lei per tutto l'inno intero,
avendo li occhi a le superne rote. (*Purg.* VIII.1–18)

('It was now the hour that melts a sailor's heart / and saddens him with longing on the day / he's said farewell to his belovèd friends, / and when a traveler, starting out, / is pierced with love if far away he hears / a bell that seems to mourn the dying light, / and I began to listen less and fix my gaze, / intent upon a soul who suddenly stood up / and signaled for attention with his hand. / He lifted his clasped palms and fixed his eyes /upon the east as if he said to God: / "For nothing else do I have any care." / "*Te lucis ante*" came forth from his lips / with such devotion and with notes so sweet / it drew me out from all thoughts of myself. / The others joined him then and sang / the whole hymn through with sweet devotion, / keeping their eyes upon the heavenly wheels.')

The elegiac tone of this incipit serves as a preparation for the prediction of the pilgrim's exile at the end of the canto. Through the encounter with Nino Visconti and Corrado Malaspina, two noblemen from Pisa and Villafranca, Dante stages his reception among the aristocracy of Tuscany in the Valley of the Princes. In a reconciling climate that reminds us of the meeting with the Wise Men of limbo, their courteous conversation is intermingled with scenes from a full-fledged liturgical drama. The action of the play takes its direction from the inherently visual, theatrical nature of the gestures, as was the custom of the time in many areas of

Italy. Historian of liturgy Antonio Lovato notes how a 'strong dramatization of liturgy'[60] characterized the celebrations of an 'ecclesiastical community which continuously prays through singing, accompanied by definite stage-direction.'[61]

The switch from the aural mode to the visual pivots on lines 7–9: 'render vano l'udire,' 'mirare' and 'ascoltar chiedea con mano.' In this latter act, the gesture silences the voices and the drama begins, with all the ritual details of a performed celebration. The soul stands up ('surta'), calls for silence, and sets itself in the position of a celebrant. The recitation is then accompanied again by singing when the souls begin '*Te lucis ante*,' and the author explicitly states that they sing the entire Compline hymn:

> Te lucis ante terminum, / Rerum Creator, poscimus, / Ut pro tua clementia, / Sis praesul et custodia. / Procul recedant somnia, / Et noctium phantasmata: / Hostemque nostrum comprime, / Ne polluantur corpora. / Praesta, Pater piissime, / Patrique compar Unice, / Cum Spiritu Paraclito / Regnans per omne saeculum.
>
> ('Before the ending of the day, / Creator of the world, we pray / That Thou with wonted love wouldst keep / Thy watch around us while we sleep / O let no evil dreams be near, / Nor phantoms of the night appear; / Our ghostly enemy restrain, / Lest aught of sin our bodies stain. / Almighty Father, hear our cry / Through Jesus Christ our Lord most high, / Who with the Holy Ghost and Thee / Doth live and reign eternally.')[62]

The prayer to God to vanquish the enemy and keep away the nightly

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60 'marcata drammatizzazione della liturgia ... una comunità ecclesiale che prega continuamente in canto, accompagnata da una precisa regia ... La regia degli spostamenti, che risponde alla necessità di tradurre in rappresentazione visiva i contenuti teologici dei riti, prevede che i movimenti dei ministri siano sempre accompagnati dal canto.'A. Lovato, 'Musica e liturgia nella canonica Sanctae Mariae Patavensis Ecclesiae,' in *Canonici delle cattedrali del medioevo*, 99. Lovato bases his reflections on the thirteenth-century Ordinal Book of the Chapter of Padua (Padua, Biblioteca capitolare MS. E57).

61 A. Lovato: 'Musica e liturgia,' 122. Although his study is on the ordinal book of the Padua Chapter, Lovato presents evidence that the division into *lectio*, *actio*, and *cantus* held true for all the dioceses of northwestern Italy (121).

62 *Sequentiae ex Missalibus Germanicis, Anglicis, Gallicis, aliisque medii aevi collectae* (London: J. Parker, 1852); *Hymnal Noted: Parts I & II*, trans. John Mason Neale (London: J.A. Novello, Ewer and Co., 1851), 28.

ghosts links the hymn to the content of the liturgical drama in which two angels descend to chase away the serpent and allow the souls a safe rest for the night. The visual and the musical elements are thus knit together in Dante's poetical dramatization because they coexisted and completed one another in the religious ceremonies of his day, the constituent parts of which were '*lectio, actio* e *cantus*.'[63]

As for the musical aspect, the *Commedia* contains another occurrence of 'seguitare' with an evident musical meaning: 'E come a buon cantor buon citarista / fa seguitar lo guizzo de la corda, / in che più di piacer lo canto acquista' ('And, as a practiced cithara player will follow / a practiced singer with his quivering cords, / giving the song a sweeter sound') (*Par.* XX.142–4).[64] Here the good *citarista* accompanies the singer on his instrument, and in *Purgatorio* VIII.17, the princely choir shows the capacity of following in unanimous (and unisonal) concord, a quality all earthly rulers ought to have in their relations among themselves. Lana interprets 'seguitar' in this passage as meaning 'to follow'; 'seguitar lei' must therefore mean that the princes who join the celebrant in the singing of the hymn follow in unison along the same melody, raising their musical effort to the heavens with sweetness and devotion, but without the joyfulness or the chords of the blessed souls who sing in harmony in Paradise.

'*Te lucis ante*' and '*Salve, Regina*' mark a musical break from the penitential tone of the Psalms. The Valley of the Princes is a place for regeneration and the practice of political concord, where the plea for divine assistance against the fears and terrors of the night resonates with and anticipates a truly disconcerting apparition in Dante's journey – the stuttering woman, or siren, of canto XIX, who constitutes the last serious danger in the pilgrim's path. This image of perversion materializes in Dante's dream as he sleeps on the fourth ledge, but her deceiving song is soon stopped by another woman (probably to be identified with Beatrice), and might very well be the objective (though oneiric) correlative of the serpent that the angels chase with fiery swords in *Purgatorio* VIII.25–38. If this is so, then '*Te lucis ante terminum*' comes to be a

63 A. Lovato, 'Musica e liturgia,' 99.

64 Hollander translates 'citarista' as 'lute player.' I have changed this to 'cithara player.' The occurrence in *Purg.* I.10–12: 'seguitando il mio canto con quel suono / di cui le Piche misere sentiro / lo colpo tal, che disperar perdono' also contains a musical meaning, although in a non-technical sense.

preemptive musical antidote to the highly deceptive and allegorical song of the siren.

A more complex interpretation is required for a liminal episode at the end of *Purgatorio* IX. As Dante and Virgil set out to cross the threshold of Purgatory proper (Canto IX of *Inferno* is also a liminal one, the wall of Dis marking the entrance into the inner circles of Hell), the screech of the gates' hinges is a remnant of cacophony, significantly situated at the entrance to Purgatory proper:

> E quando fuor ne' cardini distorti
> li spigoli di quella regge sacra,
> che di metallo son sonanti e forti,
> non rugghiò sì né si mostrò sì acra
> Tarpëa, come tolto le fu il buono
> Metello, per che poi rimase macra.
> Io mi rivolsi attento al primo tuono
> e "*Te Deum laudamus*" mi parea
> udire in voce mista al dolce suono.
> Tale imagine a punto mi rendea
> ciò ch'io udiva, qual prender si suole
> quando a cantar con organi si stea;
> ch'or sì or no s'intendon le parole. (*Purg.* IX.133–45)

> ('And when the linchpins of that sacred door, / which are of heavy and resounding metal, / were turning on their hinges, / the Tarpeian rock roared not so loud / nor proved so strident when good Metellus / was drawn away and it was then left bare. / I turned, intent on a new resonance, / and thought I heard "*Te Deum laudamus*" / in voices mingled with the sweet sound, / giving me the same impression / one has when listening to singers / accompanied by an organ and the words / are sometimes clear and sometimes lost.')

The meaning of this harsh sound is different from the examples of cacophony found in hell. Barbi maintains that *primo tuono* and *dolce suono* represent the sound of the opening of a door; if this is so, then, since the door is said to roar loudly, this thundering and screeching (*acra*) sound is at the same time also a sweet one (the '*Te Deum*' is mingled with a *dolce suono*).[65] Denise Heilbronn explains this only apparent contradic-

65 M. Barbi, *Problemi di critica dantesca*, 1 (Florence: Sansoni, 1893–1918), 223, 247–8.

tion further and demonstrates, on the basis of evidence from Isidore and Cassiodorus, that *rugghìo acre* and *primo tuono* were experienced as musical sounds in the Middle Ages.[66] Her view could be supported by the observation that, because the souls achieve purification through penance, harshness as a means of catharsis is a hallmark of Purgatory. For example, for Forese 'lo dolce assenzio de' martiri' ('the sweet wormwood in the torments') (*Purg.* XXIII.87) is sweet to drink because he will thereby be purified and able to ascend; therefore his pain is actually his solace: 'io dico pena, e dovria dir sollazzo' ('I speak of pain but should say solace') (*Purg.* XXIII.72). And indeed, Virgil had anticipated this concept at the very beginning, in his brief preview of the otherworldly voyage:

> e vederai color che son contenti
> nel foco, perché speran di venire
> quando che sia a le beate genti. (*Inf.* I.118–20)

> ('Then you will see the ones who are content / to burn because they hope to come, / whenever it may be, among the blessed.')

If the souls of the *Purgatorio* are happy to undergo fiery tortures because they are thereby purified, it is not inconceivable that a harsh sound is oxymoronically perceived as sweet: the creaking of the gate opens the way of suffering but also of hope, as the *Te Deum* announces: 'aperuisti credentibus regna caelorum' ('You have opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers'). The Bosco-Reggio and Fosca commentaries recall an early practice of ending liturgical dramas with this song, which signified the entrance of a new acolyte into the church, and Francesco Buti (1385–95) observes that the *Te Deum* was the prayer that accompanied the ceremony of ordination: 'si suole cantare dai chierici quando uno omo esce dal mondo e va alla religione' ('The clerics sing it when a man leaves the secular world and enters religious life'). A tradition, now rejected, but still in currency in Dante's time, had it that the hymn, performed at the end of Matins, was spontaneously composed and sung *alternatim* by St Ambrose and St Augustine on the night that Augustine received his baptism.[67] And indeed this is the meaning of the song's lyrics.

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66 D. Heilbronn, '*Concentus Musicus*: The Creaking Hinges of Dante's Gate of Purgatory,' *Rivista di studi italiani* 2, no.1 (1984): 1–15.

67 This tradition is found, for example, in Hincmar of Reims's *De praedestinatione* (*PL*, vol. 125, col. 290), but see *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, under the entry for '*alternatim*.' Robert Hollander in his seminal *Allegory in Dante's Commedia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton

How, then are we to imagine the sounds of the hinges and the mighty '*Te Deum*' that the pilgrim hears? The hermeneutic conundrum of these lines lies in the meaning of the word *organi*: does it mean the instrument or the vocal composition? There are three possible interpretations of *Purgatorio* IX.144. The first is that *cantar con organi* means vocal polyphony; the second is that the '*Te Deum*' is being sung *alternatim*[68] with an organ; and the third is that some songs have sections of voice singing above the sound of the opening door, which to the pilgrim resembles the sound of an organ.

Among the elements supporting the reading of *organi* as polyphony is that the *Te Deum* was among the chants that were most often arranged in organal setting. This explanation, however, seems unsatisfactory when we consider Dante's own description of the sounds he hears: everywhere else he describes polyphony as sweet and harmonious, so how can this thundering blast accompanied by screeches be interpreted as polyphonic? Moreover, unlike the occurrences of polyphony in the *Commedia*, there is no explicit indication here that allows us to read this song as polyphonic.

If, then, we are to opt for an instrumental interpretation of *organi*, let us consider medieval organ making. Organ-making methods in Europe remained primitive in many ways until the fifteenth century, and the sound of these instruments was more disconcerting than uplifting. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the most common type of organ was a hand-held, portable one, more often used as a melodic instrument and as a substitute for the human voice than accompanying the voice.[69] There were, however, exceptionally large and majestic organs, with pipes made of metal, which were built for the purpose of grandiosity. Kimberly Marshall relates that two eleventh-century treatises state that an organ's pipes were made of very thin beaten copper and rolled around an iron

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University Press, 1969) suggests that Dante here intends to compare his own entrance into the reign of salvation to Augustine's, as both have to free themselves from the shackles of lust and Neo-Platonism (165). Hollander is indebted to John Freccero's 'Dante's Prologue Scene,' *Dante Studies* 84 (1966): 1–25.

68 See Giovanni Pozzi, *Alternatim* (Adelphi: Collana Collezione Il ramo d'oro 29, 1996).

69 Corrado Moretti notes that the first church organ was brought to the Florence church of Ss. Annunziata in 1299. See *L'organo italiano* (Milan: Casa musicale Eco, 1973), 51–2. Moretti takes this information from A.M. Vicentini, 'Memorie di musicisti dell'Ordine dei Servi di Maria,' *Note di Archivio* (Rome) 8 (1931): 35.

mandrel before their long edges were soldered together.[70] Copper pipes resonate with the metal hinges of Dante's simile, establishing also a metonymic link: the screeching of the hinges of the gate resounds like an organ's metal pipes.

A very common practice was to have the choir sing a verse in unison and then leave the next one for the organ, thus alternating voices alone with organ alone. This interpretation would meet the favour of many musicologists[71] who argue that the practice of singing over a playing organ was not in use until the fifteenth century. Musicologists explain that in the late Middle Ages the church organ, playing alone, usually functioned in two ways: it substituted for the choir by playing complete hymns, or it alternated with the choir in performing verses of Psalms. Performances of *alternatim* – in which the faithful sang out a line of melody and the response was played by the organ – were widespread in the late Middle Ages. A reading of the '*Te Deum*' alternating with an organ playing, however, seems to clash with the letter of the text, since the pilgrim hears the song *mingled* with the sweet sound ('voci *miste* al dolce suono'), not in alternation to it. Furthermore, it would hardly account for his failure to understand the song's words: in Dante's simile there must

70 The two treatises are 'Bern Anonymous' and the monk Theophilus's 'De diversis artibus,' quoted in K. Marshall, 'Organ,' in *A Performer's Guide to Medieval Music*, ed. Ross Duffin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 414–15. This winding system is also pictured in twelfth- and thirteenth-century iconographical sources: the Harding Bible, the Cambridge Psalter, and the St Elizabeth Psalter, the latter being from Cividale in Friuli and dating from the early thirteenth century, so possibly available to Dante.

71 David Hiley, 'Chant,' in *Performance Practice: Music before 1600*, ed. Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie (New York: Norton/Grove, 1989), 50; Alejandro Enrique Planchart, 'Polyphonic Mass Ordinary,' in *A Performer's Guide to Medieval Music*, ed. Ross W. Duffin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 96–7; and Timothy J. McGee, 'Introduction' to *Instruments and Their Music in the Middle Ages*, ed. Timothy J. McGee (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). I wish to thank Dr McGee for his invaluable feedback on this matter. This passage has traditionally divided musicologists and Dante scholars, the former sceptical about reading in it a vocal performance over organ playing, the latter accepting such a performance. While musicological scholarship is illuminating and essential to our critical discourse, adopting an entirely technical and historical perspective would be limiting, to say the least: Dante's poetic invention might very well have envisioned an unusual performance just from listening to it once, or reading about it.

therefore be something that prevents the listener from making out the lyrics.[72]

While the *alternatim* practice was the most widespread in the Middle Ages, evidence exists that singing over the organ was not at all out of the question. Edmund A. Bowles provides evidence, in an old but authoritative essay, that the practice of singing over an organ playing was indeed an existing one, though perhaps not the most common one, in medieval Italy and Europe. Bowles asserts that 'even when the organ was substituted for the voices, the text was recited *sotto voce*,' and quotes the Easter office at the Turin basilica of S. Salvatore (demolished in 1490 to make room for the Cathedral of S. Giovanni), Wace's 1155 *Roman de Brut*, and a 1365 document revealing that at the Abbey of St Stephen in Vienna the entire office was performed with voices over an organ on feast days.[73] Even more significant is a report that, in 1377, a reception in honour of Charles IV of Germany featured the '*Te Deum*' in just such a vocal-instrumental setting.[74]

The most revealing piece of evidence that Dante had in mind a large organ, however, comes from a description of a medieval organ by the St Gall monk Notker Balbulus (ca. 840–87), whose words are astonishingly similar to Dante's, and who gives us an idea of how overwhelming a large organ could sound:

organum praestantissimus, quod doliis ex *aere* conflatis follibusque taurinis

72 Benvenuto of Imola (1375–80) glosses these lines showing an understanding of the word *organi* as the instrument: 'it is like singing along with an organ playing, in which one grasps some words and not others,' and his wording *simul cum sono organi* seems to refer clearly to a church organ being played over the singing voice.

73 E.A. Bowles, 'Were Musical Instruments Used in the Liturgical Service during the Middle Ages?' *The Galpin Society Journal* 10 (May 1957): 40–56, especially p. 51. The passage from Wace's *Roman de Brut* is also quoted in Christopher Page's *Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages: Instrumental Practice and Songs in France, 1100–1300* (London: Dent, 1987), 121–2. I thank Dr McGee for bringing this passage to my attention. Wace's description of a liturgical celebration at King Arthur's court of Caerleon features precisely chants and *organa* performed over the sound of organs: ' Mult oissiez orgues suner e clercs chanter e organer, voiz abassier et voz lever ...' ('You might have heard much noise of organs and clerics *chanter e organer*, voices raised and lowered ...') Page acknowledges that monophony and polyphony (*chanter e organe*) were heard over the sound of the instrument (*orgue*), thus producing a similar effect to *Purg.* IX.144.

74 Gotthold Frotscher, *Geschichte des Orgelspiel und der Orgelkomposition* (Berlin, 1935), 1:48.

> per *fistulas aereas* mire perflanctibus *rugitum* quidem *tonitrui* boatu, garrulitatem vero lyrae, vel cymbali *dulcedine*[*m*] coaequabat. (Notkerus Balbulus, *De gestis Caroli Magni*, II.x)
>
> ('An outstanding organum of the musicians which with vessels cast in bronze and bellows of bullhide blowing magnificently through the *bronze pipes*, matched the very *roar of the crash of thunder*, the chattering of the lyre, or the sweetness of bells.')[75]

What makes such a report even more noteworthy is its indication that 'the reference to thunder, lyre and bells is formulaic,' appearing also in other contemporary documents.[76] The correspondence of terms ('fistulas aereas' / 'cardini ... metallo'; 'rugitum' / 'rugghiò'; 'tonitrui' / 'tuono') appears, to say the least, remarkable, and given that Notker's description is formulaic, it is probable that Dante based his description of an organ on such a cliché. Large, thundering organs were not the norm, but rather the exception: Notker's stately instrument was a gift to Charlemagne brought to Aachen by a Byzantine delegation in 812, and it certainly must have been unique. It seems reasonable, however, that the organ evoked at the gate of Purgatory should be exceptionally large and majestic, rather than ordinary. The literary convention of describing organs as loud and roaring must have endured beyond the reality of small, perhaps portable, church-organs of the weekly liturgy. When we consider that often 'the portrayal of numerous and varied instruments was founded upon psychological, not practical, considerations,' we can understand how the cliché description must have impressed readers.[77] But there is more that brings Nokter's description close to *Purgatorio* IX,

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75 Quoted from P. Williams, *The Organ in Western Culture, 750–1250* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 142–3; translation from the same book; my emphasis. The anonymous Epistola ad Dardanum (wrongly attributed in the Middle Ages to St Jerome), contains a similar description: 'Primo omnium ad organum ... veniam ... Per XII cicutas aereas in sonitum nimium quasi in modum tonitrui concitatur' ('At first I shall speak of the organ ... through twelve brazen pipes it emits a great sound, like a thunder.') Latin quoted from Reinhold Hammerstein, 'Instrumenta Hieronymi,' *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 16 (1959): 117–34, at p. 121; translation from W. Apel, 'Early History of the Organ,' *Speculum* 23, no. 2 (April 1948): 191–216, at p. 202.

76 Such as a letter of the Bishop of Dol. See P. Williams, *The Organ in Western Culture*, 213 ff.

77 E.A. Bowles, 'Were Musical Instruments Used in the Liturgical Service during the Middle Ages?' 44.

for it is precisely the sweetness (*dulcedine*) of the bells, which is echoed in Dante's *dolce suono*, that makes the sound of the organ, as it was conventionally portrayed in medieval accounts, the oxymoronic combination of harshness and delight that is most fitting to the purgatorial spirit.

The '*Te Deum*' appears again, though quoted in Italian, in *Paradiso* XXIV.113–14 – 'risonò per le spere un "Dio laudamo" / ne la melode che là sù si canta' ('resounded / through all its starry spheres with "Lord, we praise you" / with such melody as is only sung above') – when the heavenly host gives its seals of approval, even before St Peter does, to the pilgrim's answer on faith. I believe it is significant that Dante specifies that the same text is performed to different music in Paradise: Dante is telling us that, unlike the '*Te Deum*' of Purgatory, the 'Dio laudamo' of Paradise is sung to a polyphonic music.

The majority of the modern commentaries (Torraca, Del Lungo, Sapegno, Hollander) agree that the *dolce suono* mixed with the voice must be the sound of the organ, the musical instrument, and Nino Pirrotta and Denise Heilbronn are both adamant that the word *organi* refers to the musical instrument rather than to polyphonic performance.[78]

In the *Commedia*, and indeed in the entire *oeuvre* of Dante, the one other occurrence of the word *organo* in its musical meaning (the numerous other attestations have the meaning of 'body organ') is in *Par*adiso XVII.44: 'dolce armonia da organo.' That these two occurrences refer to music, and that they are the only two that do, is unanimously accepted.[79] Why, then, would Dante use the same word first in the plural, and then in the singular? In medieval treatises, the word usually meant the instrument (organ) only when in the plural, while in the singular it was regularly employed in the meaning of polyphonic composition.[80] This suggests that *organi* in *Purgatorio* IX.144 ('cantar con organi') be read

78 N. Pirrotta, '"Dante *Musicus*": Gothicism, Scholasticism and Music,' in *Speculum* 43, no. 2 (1968): 245–57, at p. 248n11; D. Heilbronn, '*Concentus Musicus*,' *Rivista di studii italiani* 2, no. 1 (1984): 1–15.

79 On possible musical associations of the word *organi* in *Par.* II.121 – 'Questi organi del mondo così vanno, / come tu vedi omai, di grado in grado, / che di sù prendono e di sotto fanno' ('Thus do these organs of the universe proceed, / as now you see, step by step, / rendering below what they take from above') – with the musical instrument (organ), see Thomas H. Connolly, 'The Antiphon *Cantantibus organis* and Dante's *Organi del mondo*,' in *Essays on Medieval Music in Honor of David H. Hughes*, ed. Graeme M. Boone (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 57–75. The primary meaning of *organi* in *Par.* II.121, however, is that of 'parts,' 'sections.'

80 See the entry for *organo* in the *Enciclopedia dantesca* (Rome, 1970), 4:193–4.

as the sound of the instrument, and the opinion that it means vocal polyphony loses ground.[81] The passage, however, still remains problematic: Dante explicitly says that he heard the song 'mingled' (*mista*) with the sweet (but also harsh) sound of the linchpins of the gate (IX.141), and that the difficulty of discerning the song's words is comparable to the difficulty of hearing the text 'when listening to singers / accompanied by an organ' (IX.143–4). And who is singing, anyway? Dante does not say. Is it one voice or a choir? All we can garner is that the letter of the text has a singular voice ('in voce / mista'), but that most commentators seem to prefer a choral performance. The aura of mystery cannot be easily lifted. One thing, however, is worth pointing out: if the polyphonic reading of *organi* is to be rejected, Dante's own words lead us to explain the hymn's barely discernable lyrics with the fact that the song is performed over ('voce mista') the groaning of the hinges, which sound like an organ.

Clearly monophonic, the singing of the wrathful, whose quotation from the Gospel of John (1:29 and 36)[82] is a perfect example of the law of symbolic retribution, contrasts the lamb, epitome of humility and peacefulness, to their sin:

> Pur '*Agnus Dei*' eran le loro essordia;
> una parola in tutte era e un modo,
> sì che parea tra esse ogne concordia. (*Purg.* XVI.19–21)
>
> ('They all began with *"Agnus Dei*," / and with one voice and intonation sang the words / so that they seemed to share complete accord.')

As Sapegno points out, 'modo' refers to the *way* they sing and therefore means 'intonazione,' 'pitch' or 'intonation.'[83] Hence Every soul is sing-

81 For a different opinion, see Giovanni Fallani's commentary: 'It is not organs that sing here, but voices, and up until the Cinquecento, the organ was never used to accompany the voice' ('Gli organi non cantano, ma le voci, e sino al Cinquecento l'organo non fu mai strumento per accompagnare le voci'). Fallani, who restates his opinion in *Lectura Dantis Scaligera* (1963): 291–307, follows R. Casimiri, 'Quando a cantar con organi si stea ...,' in *Profilo dell'organo attraverso i secoli*, ed. Psalterium (Rome, 1925), 123–57.

82 The *'Agnus Dei'* was added to the Roman Liturgy by Pope Sergius I (d. 701) and constitutes the fifth section of the *ordinarium missae*, following Kyrie, Gloria, Alleluja, and Credo.

83 N. Sapegno, *Divina Commedia*, note to *Purg.* XVI.20.

ing the same words and the same melody. Spitzer focuses his analysis on the word *concordia* instead, and illustrates its ample range of meanings:

> Here, the choir described by Dante is, not 'monotonous,' as Scartazzini would interpret, but rather 'in unison' – or, perhaps, because of the *ogni*, 'possessed of every harmony,' a harmony achieved by the chord, which acts upon the listener as a unit (*in unum redacta, unisona*), as, according to Augustine, does all beauty which proceeds from the feeling for the unification of the diverse. Here we have illustrated one of the feelings which the Middle Ages has expressed the most convincingly: the feeling of the group, of being united in one *concordia* or world harmony. Which extends from angel to star to man to bird. This is the same feeling which informs so many medieval pictures and sculptures: the union of hearts and minds, reflected in their relatively non-individualistic attitudes which reveal only *one* direction of thought, a subordination to the meaning of the Whole. Thus, we see a perfect identity between Eng *chords* (< Lat *cordae*, 'harmonious [string of a] lute'); and *concord* (< Lat *concordia*, 'harmony,' 'harmony of chords'); we can surmise that *chord* = 'pleasing combination of tones' is the result of a telescoping similar to the one which we realized in **accordare*, a telescoping possible because of the phonetic and semantic closeness of the two word families.[84]

Spitzer argues for the notion of *harmonia mundi*, and the contradiction between 'unison' and '"possessed of every harmony," a harmony achieved by the chord,' is only apparent, as he is not glossing the specifically musical quality of the song of the wrathful, but is rather trying to provide as complete a picture as possible of *Stimmung* in this passage of *Purgatorio*; the word *Stimmung* itself, untranslatable by a single word ('atmosphere,' 'mood,' 'state of mind,' '*bonne* or *mauvaise humeur*'), is the object of his semantic research. Thus, when Spitzer speaks of 'unison,' he is referring to the musical fact; when he speaks of 'harmony' or 'accord,' he is referring to the *Stimmung*.

But why does Dante so often feel the need to specify the 'modo,' the modality of performance, if not because he is weaving a complex musical plot into his poem? That the penitents are all singing isorhythmically ('una parola' must refer to the rhythmic syllabification) and with the same melody expresses their endeavour to reach toward the concord

84 L. Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony*, 89.

they did not attain in life. This passage clearly shows how the law of retribution is effected in verbal as well as musical terms, anticipating in the *Purgatorio* the function of sacred music as the medium of a spiritual experience that will be fully revealed only at the journey's completion.[85]

Similarly, the broken voices of the gluttonous emit a song mixed with sobs:

> Ed ecco piangere e cantar s'udìe
> '*Labïa mëa, Domine*,' per modo
> tal, che diletto e doglia parturìe. (*Purg.* XXIII.10–12)
>
> ('when with weeping we heard voices sing / "*Labïa mëa, Domine*" in tones / that brought at once delight and grief.')

'Domine, labia mea aperies et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam,'[86] reads Psalm 50:17, also known as '*Miserere*.' The insistence on lips and mouth as the means by which the praise is performed punishes these sinners for the excess they committed by a wrongful use of the very same organ that they now use to be purified. Whereas in *Inferno* the souls frequently wept while speaking – 'dirò come colui che piange e dice' ('I shall tell as one who weeps in telling') (*Inf.* V.126); 'parlare e lagrimar vedrai insieme' ('then you will see me speak and weep together') (*Inf.* XXXIII.9) – here the weeping is accompanied by the singing, in their effort toward concord.

Many of the songs of *Purgatorio* are taken from the Psalms, such as '*Adhaesit pavimento anima mea*' (Psalm 118:25),[87] which is sung by the avaricious. As Pope Adrian V explains to the pilgrim (*Purg.* XIX.118–26), these sinners have their hands and feet tied and are forced to stare at the ground as a punishment for not lifting their eyes to lofty matters during their lives on earth. Their weeping and sighing make the text of the Psalm barely understandable: '"*Adhaesit pavimento anima mea*" / sentìa dir lor con sì alti sospiri, / che la parola a pena s'intendea' ('"*Adhaesit pavimento anima mea*" / I heard them say with such deep sighs / the words could hardly be distinguished') (*Purg.* XIX.73–5). This Psalm is one of

85 See J. Stevens, 'Dante and Music,' *Italian Studies* 23 (1968): 5.

86 'O Lord, thou wilt open my lips; and my mouth shall declare thy praise.'

87 Psalm 118:25 ('My soul hath cleaved to the pavement').

the longest in the Psalter, and is fittingly chosen by the poet to suit this particular fault, as the sin of avarice is explicitly confessed in the text of the Psalm, followed by the sinner's request that – in marked contrast to the way in which the eyes of the avaricious are turned to the ground – he be enabled to turn his eyes away from vanity:

> Inclina cor meum in testimonia tua et non in avaritiam: Averte oculos meos ne videant vanitatem in via tua vivifica me.[88]
>
> ('Incline my heart into thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity.')

In Dante's representation, all the elements of the castigation of avarice are derived from the text of this Psalm. We find the cords with which the sinners' limbs are bound, symbolizing the shackles of greed that restricted their liberty in life – 'Funes peccatorum circumplexi sunt me et legem tuam non sum oblitus' ('The cords of the wicked have encompassed me: but I have not forgotten thy law'), and the abundant weeping – 'Exitus aquarum deduxerunt oculi mei quia non custodierunt legem tuam' ('My eyes have sent forth springs of water: because they have not kept thy law').[89] Even the mode of performance seems to be inspired by the Psalm, the words nearly inaudible and lost in the sighs, as is clear by the correspondence of *sospiri* and *adtraxi spiritum*: **'**Os meum aperui et adtraxi spiritum quia mandata tua desiderabam' ('I opened my mouth and panted: because I longed for thy commandments').[90]

Once again, Dante's rendition of the Psalm takes into consideration textual as well as extra-textual elements, (i.e., the performance of the Psalm). In setting this scene, the poet is concerned with evoking not only the same situation and the same words as in the source, but also with elements extraneous to the words themselves, that is, the way in which they are uttered, in the same way as Augustine had attached the highest importance to the mood of musical performance (see p. 105, above).

The gluttonous expiate their fault by singing '*Labia mëa, Domine*' (Purg. XXIII.10), which we should 'hear' as a confusedly choral lamentation sung by each individual soul without a significant degree of accordance

88 Psalm 118:36–7.
89 Psalm 118:61 and Psalm 118:136.
90 Psalm 118:131.

of *tempo* or melody. The penitents are bursting into sobs while singing, which makes singing in tempo, an essential requirement for polyphony, impossible. Certainly no concord is attainable here in the context of such a struggle. This sighing style might perhaps recall some medieval hockets, in which the imitation of cries and sighs broke the melodic lines of the various parts.[91] Although polyphonic, this technique of some hockets expresses uneasiness and pain, rather than concord and harmony, precisely because it fragments the performance. Theorists such as Franco of Cologne, Lamertus, and the anonymous author of the St Emmeram treatise on measured music (all active in the latter portion of the thirteenth century) described the hocket as a set of truncated melodies possibly without a text and represented only by a long, intermittent sigh of two or three voices chasing each other.[92] The visage of the gluttonous, resembling two gemless rings, is so emaciated that the word OMO, that is, human – the same word that some preachers and theologians claimed to read on every human face, is discernible in the features (*Purg.* XXXIII.31–3). Their visage is so wizened and distorted that the pilgrim will recognize his friend Forese only by his voice. But the cause of the souls' sharpest frustration is the proximity of the topsy-turvy tree whose sweet-scented hanging fruits tantalize them:

> un alber che trovammo in mezza strada,
> con pomi a odorar soavi e buoni;
> e come abete in alto si digrada
> di ramo in ramo, così quello in giuso,
> cred' io perché persona sù non vada. (*Purg.* XXII.131–5)

> ('a tree found in the middle of the path, / with fruits that smelled both savory and good, / and, as a fir tree narrows as it branches upward, / this one tapered down from branch to branch, / so that, I think, no one can climb it.')

The unavoidable sight of the very object of their physical desire is accompanied not only by their own singing, but by background voices speaking of examples of moderation. Every element in this sequence – the

91 Y. Rokseth, 'Il mottetto latino del XIII secolo,' in *Musica e storia tra Medioevo e Età moderna*, ed. F. Alberto Gallo (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986), 82–3.

92 See the entry for 'Hocket,' in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians.*

singing, the words of the Psalm insisting on the mouth (*labia*, *os*), the edifying models – illustrates the proper use of the organ by which the sin was committed. Dante utilizes imagery of eating and drinking on many occasions in the *Commedia*, as well as in the *Convivio*. In the *Commedia*, food and water are an allegory of divine Wisdom, the nourishment for our souls and for our minds, and it is no coincidence that we should ingest them through our mouth, as in the Eucharist, because of the way in which Jesus ate and shared bread and wine with the Apostles. The very blood and flesh of Christ – crucified to rectify the sin of Adam and Eve, which was committed via the mouth – are transubstantiated in the holy wafer and wine, which are also consumed through the mouth. Thus, the *pomi* of the strange tree of *Purgatorio* XXII are an instrument of symbolical retribution, while the '*Labia mëa, Domine*' sung in *Purgatorio* XXIII suggests another, oral, way to purge the sin: singing.

The connection between eating the divine food and singing – stated in a prolepsis by the angel of the terrace who sings, 'beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt iustitiam, quoniam ipsi saturabantur' ('Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness') (*Purg.* XXII.4–6) – appears all the more clearly during the apotheosis of the pilgrim in the Earthly Paradise, where Dante speaks of the harmonic qualities of Beatrice's smile.[93] The theological virtues entreat Beatrice to turn her holy eyes to Dante and then to unveil her mouth, so that he can discern 'la seconda bellezza che tu cele' ('the second beauty that you still conceal') (*Purg.* XXXI.138). This second, hidden beauty is her smile, as is suggested by a passage of the *Convivio*: 'li occhi de la Sapienza sono le sue dimostrazioni, con le quali si vede la veritade certissimamente; e lo suo riso sono le sue persuasioni, ne le quali si dimostra la luce interiore de la Sapienza

93 Dante addresses the difficulty of describing poetically Beatrice's smile as it manifests, surrounded by harmony: 'O isplendor di viva luce etterna, / chi palido si fece sotto l'ombra / sì di Parnaso, o bevve in sua cisterna, / che non paresse aver la mente ingombra / tentando a render te qual tu paresti / là dove armonizando il ciel t'adombra, / quando ne l'aere aperto ti solvesti.' ('O splendor of eternal living light – / even he who has grown pale in the shadow of Parnassus / or has drunk deeply from its well, / would not even he appear to have his mind confounded, / attempting to describe you as you looked.') (*Purg.* XXXI.139–43). On the contrast between *bocca* and *riso*, see Mary Ann Roglieri, 'Dante's Imagery: 'Bocca' and 'Riso' in the *Commedia*,' in *Essays in Honor of Nicolae Iliescu*, ed. Emanuela Bertone (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Department of Romance Languages, 1989), 11–24. Roglieri identifies the opposition between the words *bocca* and *riso* throughout the *Commedia*.

sotto alcuno *velamento*.'[94] The metonymic shift between *riso* and *bocca* is justified by *Purgatorio* XXXII.5 where Beatrice's 'holy smile' (*santo riso*) is so intense that Dante is momentarily blinded. Beatrice's smile *unveiled* quenches Dante's 'decennial thirst' ('decenne sete') (*Purg.* XXXII.2) and appeases his hunger for salvific food: 'Mentre che piena di stupore e lieta / l'anima mia gustava di quel cibo / che, saziando di sé, di sé asseta' ('While my soul, filled with wonder and with joy, / tasted the food that, satisfying in itself / yet for itself creates a greater craving') (*Purg.* XXXI.127–9). Thus the salvific food is delivered, in a novel form of Eucharist, by means of a most harmonious smile going from Beatrice's mouth to the mouth of Dante: a transfiguration of the courtly kiss that damned Paolo and Francesca.

At this point of the pageant, the Theological Virtues direct Dante's gaze upon the Griffin, who has just descended in the form of a *doppia fiera* (*Purg.* XXXI.122). The twofold nature of the creature reflects the human and divine nature of Christ, defeating and overriding the threat of the *fiere* in *Inferno* I. The earthly voyage of the pilgrim is concluded with his liberation from the three beasts and the achievement of a much higher sun-lit hilltop than the one he had tried to climb in *Inferno* I.16–17.

The last song performed by the penitent souls appears at the boundary of Purgatory just before the entrance to the Garden of Eden:

> '*Summae Deus clementïae*' nel seno
> al grande ardore allora udì' cantando,
> che di volger mi fé caler non meno ... (*Purg.* XXV.121–3)
>
> ('"*Summae Deus clementiae*" I then heard sung / in the heart of that great burning / which made me no less eager to turn back ...')

It is the incipit of a hymn sung in the Matin of the Saturday, whose text, later on, continues: 'Lumbus iecurque morbidum / Flammis adure congruis / Accinti ut artus excubent / Luxu remoto pessimo.'[95] The author

94 'The eyes of wisdom are her demonstrations, by which truth is seen with the greatest certainty, and her smiles are her persuasions, in which the inner light of wisdom is revealed behind a kind of veil' (*Conv.* III.xv.2).

95 'Our [loins] and hearts in pity heal, / and with Thy chastening fire anneal; / [burn] Thou our loins, each passion quell, / and every harmful lust expel.' In 1632 Urban VIII modified this hymn; its original version, however, was as follows: 'Summae Deus

is unknown, but it was probably composed in the seventh century and added to the liturgy with the Gallican contamination. Once again, the appropriateness of the choice is evident: the chastening fire (whose intimidating flames crackle just in front of Dante) is the instrument for the purification of the lustful fire with which the sinners burned in life. Not only this, but the prayer contains an explicit request to put the effect of the chastening fire on the genitals ('lumbos'), in retribution for the sinners' wrongful use of these organs. The hymn also contained allusions to singing ('Nostros piis cum *canticis* / fletus benigne suscipe ... Ut, quique horas noctium / nunc *concinendo* rumpimus, donis beatae patriae / ditemur omnes affatim') as the tool with which to break through the darkness of night into a new dawn and attain the gifts of the heavenly regions. This can hardly be coincidental given that the episode takes place just before the pilgrim is required to pass through the wall of flames in order to leave his now purged sins behind and enter Eden. But the lustful penitents are also right there, just a step away from eternal happiness, tantalized by the very awareness of its proximity, and singing is part of the process of expiating their sins that will eventually release them from punishment and grant them beatitude. Although little information is provided in the above-quoted lines, shortly afterwards Dante adds:

> Appresso il fine ch'a quell' inno fassi,
> gridavano alto: '*Virum non cognosco*';
> indi ricominciavan l'inno bassi.

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clementiae / mundique factor machinae, / qui trinus almo numine / unusque firmas omnia, / Nostros piis cum canticis / fletus benigne suscipe, / quo corde puro sordibus / te perfruamur largius. / Lumbos adure congruis / tu caritatis ignibus, / accincti ut adsint perpetim / tuisque prompti adventibus. / Ut, quique horas noctium / nunc concinendo rumpimus, / donis beatae patriae / ditemur omnes affatim. / Praesta, Pater piissime, / Patrique compar Unice, / cum Spiritu Paraclito / regnans per omne saeculum. Amen.' ('God of great mercy, creator of the world's machine, you who as three persons and one God make everything strong by your nurturing will, / receive in kindness our tears and pious prayers, so that with hearts free from impurity we may the more fully enjoy you./ With the proper flames of charity set our loins on fire so that they may be girt up at all times and ready for your coming, / so that we who interrupt the hours of the night with singing may all be made utterly rich with the gifts of our blessed heavenly home. / Grant this, most merciful Father and Only Son, the Father's equal, together with the Spirit, the Comforter, reigning for ever and ever. Amen.' Translation by David Kovacs. Quoted from http://www.worldofdante.org/docs/chanttexts_translations.pdf.

Finitolo, anco gridavano: 'Al bosco
si tenne Diana, ed Elice caccionne
che di Venere avea sentito il tòsco.'
Indi al cantar tornavano ... (*Purg.* XXV.127–33)

('After the hymn was sung through to its end / they cried aloud: "*Virum non cognosco*," / then, in softer tones, began the hymn again. / When it was finished, next they cried: / 'Diana kept to the woods and drove Callisto out / for having felt the poisoned sting of Venus.' / Then they again began to sing ...')

The words *alto* and *bassi* are probably to be understood as dynamic indications, that is, loud and soft, rather than indicating the pitch: this is the meaning of the same words in *Paradiso* XXI (140, 108), when the angelic voices thunder into a glorious hymn, and this is how Thomas Aquinas recommends lauds be sung if they are to be shared by the congregation.[96] The souls all cry out loudly after finishing the hymn, then they start together afresh in a *sotto voce*. This homogeneity of loudness or softness suggests a particular attention to dynamic performance, an attempt at a musical concord, although this concord is reached only in the volume of the singing. Moreover, only one tense is used for the actions of all the souls (*gridavano*, *ricominciavan*, *tornavano*), and this too suggests that they all perform the same song at the same time, with no variations of rhythm or intonation. Their performance is accompanied by shouts and cried-out words, a clear sign that this cannot be polyphonic music. It is, instead, one more instance of penitential singing, performed by many, but by each individually and monophonically.

Beatitudes and the Songs of the Earthly Paradise

Each time the pilgrim reaches a new level on his way up the mountain, the guardian angel of that terrace gently erases one of the seven 'P's that the gatekeeper had inscribed on his forehead, and accompanies that gesture by chanting one of the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the

96 'Ministri Ecclesiae huiusmodi orationes etiam alta voce pronuntient, ut ad notitiam omnium possint pervenire' ('The ministers of the Church should say these prayers even in a loud voice, so that they may come to the knowledge of all') (*ST*, II^{a}-II^{ae} q.83 a.12).

Mount (Matthew 5). As they are performed by angels, these Beatitudes obviously do not serve an atoning function, but they do all have musical settings, and these settings are undoubtedly monophonic because each one is sung by one angel.

The Beatitudes contained in the Gospel of Matthew were already an object of theological discussion in Augustine; later on, such scholastic thinkers as Hugh of St Victor, Conrad of Saxony, and Aquinas devoted attention to them.[97] The Beatitudes are Jesus' precepts or guiding principles for attaining the Kingdom of Heaven. Although in Matthew 5 there are nine verses beginning with the word 'Beati' (these are verses 3–11), Augustine only considered eight of them, and the scholastics only seven, drawing a parallel with the seven deadly sins. According to Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, Conrad of Saxony should be considered the most important authority for Dante's conception of seven Beatitudes, complementing seven virtues.

Chiavacci Leonardi argues convincingly that Purgatory is structured according to seven biblical Beatitudes.[98] This marks a neat separation from the structuring principle of Inferno, which is ordered according to Aristotle's *Nichomachaean Ethics*, as expounded by Virgil in Canto XI. For the count of the Beatitudes, Dante seems to follow the scholastic approach, which usually omits the last paragraph, 'Beati estis cum maledixerint vobis' ('Blessed are ye when they shall revile you'), and brings the number to seven: the same number of the spiritual gifts, the deadly sins, and the virtues. Hugh of St Victor, as one would expect, associates the Beatitudes with seven virtues that are not the cardinal, as well as with the theological virtues: 'paupertas spiritus, id est humilitas; mansuetudo sive benignitas; compunctio sive dolor; essuries justitiae sive desiderium

97 Augustine, *De sermone Domini*, I.1–4, and *Sermo* 347; Hugh of St Victor, *De quinque septenis* (*PL*, vol. 175, cols. 405–41); Conrad of Saxony, OFM, *Speculum seu salutatio beatae Mariae Virginis ac sermones mariani*, ed. P. de Alcantara Martinez, OFM (Grottaferrata: Ad Claras Aquas, 1975); and Aquinas, *ST*, I^a-II^{ae} q.69. For an orientation on the use of the beatitudes in the *Commedia*, see A.M. Chiavacci Leonardi, 'Le beatitudini e la struttura poetica del *Purgatorio*,' *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 161, no. 513 (1984): 1–29. See also E. Moore, *Studies in Dante*, 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), 152–208, 246–68. No attention seems to have been devoted by theologians to the beatitudes in the Gospel according to Luke, who only lists four.

98 With respect to scholastic ordering, Dante omits *Beati mites* ('Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth'), but splits in two *Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt* ('Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled').

bonum; misericordia; cordis munditia; pax' ('poverty of spirit, that is humility; meekness or benignity; sting of conscience, or pain; thirst for justice, or desire for the good; mercy; pureness of heart; peace'). These seven virtues, with the exception of 'mansuetudo,' Chiavacci Leonardi compares to the examples of virtue in the *Purgatorio*.

The musical and liturgical facets of the Beatitudes are less easy to evaluate than might be expected. All we know is that three of them were employed in the communion antiphon on All Saints' Day. There was probably no tune specifically associated with any of them, but they must have been chanted on a psalm tone.[99] This means that no universal musical intertext would have sprung up in readers' minds when encountering them in Dante's poem, but their performance would be to the readers a beautiful chant of known texts. We can certainly trust Dante that these chants are marvellous and the voices most melodious:

'*Beati pauperes spiritu*!' voci
cantaron sì, che nol diria sermone.
Ahi quanto son diverse quelle foci
da l'infernali! ché quivi per canti
s'entra, e là giù per lamenti feroci. (*Purg.* XII.110–14)

('"*Beati pauperes spiritu*" a voice was singing / in tones that speech could not express / Ah, how different these entrances from those of Hell / for here one's coming in is met with songs / but there with savage lamentation!')[100]

The performance of the first Beatitude is one of sublime quality, which marks a radical difference from the ferocious cries of Inferno. The voices of these songs are often described as *dolci* or *soavi*, the same word used for Matelda's song and for the song of the angels in the Earthly Para-

99 Cf. E. Birge-Vitz, 'The Liturgy and Vernacular Literature,' in *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church*, ed. Thomas Heffernan and Ann Matter (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2001), 551–618, at p. 592.

100 Even though the Italian text has 'voci,' in the plural, Hollander's translation in the singular appears more sensible: indeed, a later beatitude is also grammatically described as sung by 'le sue voci' (*Purg.* XXII.5), but it is clearly stated that only one angel sings, and this must be the case of Canto XII as well. The Sapegno and Pasquini-Quaglio commentaries read 'voci' as 'words.'

dise.[101] We should note, however, that the sweet music of the Beatitudes also stands in sharp contrast with the penitents' singing: while their song is broken by sobs and must express penance, the Beatitudes seal the pilgrim's ascent to the next ledge and accompany the removal of a 'P' from his forehead. It is thus by means of music that the mark of freedom from sin is bestowed in the *Purgatorio*.

In the transition from the second to the third ledge, a celestial minister helps the pilgrim up a new flight of stairs as he sings out his song of liberation from envy:

> Noi montavam, già partiti di linci,
> e '*Beati misericordes!*' fue
> cantato retro, e 'Godi tu che vinci!' (*Purg.* XV.37–9)

> ('As we ascended, moving on from there, / we heard "*Beati misericordes*" sung behind us / and "Rejoice, you who conquer."')

Dante and Virgil leave behind the circle of the envious and enter that of the wrathful on the notes of this Beatitude, while not only the Beatitude is sung behind them, but also the words 'Godi tu che vinci.' Because no such words are found in the Scriptures, and because they are spoken in Italian rather than Latin, they have long puzzled critics, and several interpretations have been proposed. Some commentators explain this Italian sentence with the final words of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew (5:12): those who are true to Him should 'rejoice [gaudete] and be glad, for very great is [their] reward in heaven.'

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101 '"*Te lucis ante*" ... / e l'altre poi dolcemente e devote / seguitar lei per tutto l'inno intero' ('"*Te lucis ante*" came forth from his lips ... The others joined him then and sang / the whole hymn through with sweet devotion') (*Purg.* VIII.13, 16–17); '... che 'l dolce suono / veniva a me co' suoi intendimenti' ('so that the sound of her sweet song / reached me together with its meaning') (*Purg.* XXVIII.59–60); 'E una melodia dolce correva / per l'aere luminoso' ('Through the luminous air there came a melody / so sweet ...') (*Purg.* XXIX.22–3); 'e 'l dolce suon per canti era già inteso' (*Purg.* XXIX.36); '"*Asperges me*" sì dolcemente udissi' ('"*Asperges me*" so sweetly sung') (*Purg.* XXXI.98); 'alternando ... dolce salmodia' ('in alternation sang ... their sweet psalmody') (*Purg.* XXXIII.1–2); 'parlare in modo soave e benigno' ('spoken in such gentle, gracious tones') (*Purg.* XIX.44). I discussed above how the hinges of the doors of Purgatory, too, were considered to make a *dolce suono*, and we should not marvel that even Casella's song is described as *dolce*: it certainly must have sounded so to the pilgrim just resurfaced from the labours of hell.

Others refer to Paul's words in Romans 12:21: 'Be not overcome by evil, but *overcome* [*vince*] evil with good.' Another group connects the sentence with *Revelation* (*Apocalypse*) 2:7: '*To him who overcometh* [*vincenti*] will I give to eat of the tree of life.' While no easy solution is possible, I believe Hollander is right in crediting the explanation based on Matthew, since it is the most relevant to the beatific context.

Be that as it may, in this Beatitude scene (as well as in the last, where, again, a quotation in Latin is followed by an addition in Italian) there is no 'specific reference to the angel's wings erasing a 'P' from Dante's forehead, thus leading us to speculate that the angel's Italian utterance is probably meant to coincide with the erasure.'[102] If this is so, the linguistic sign accompanying the undescribed act of absolution is to be considered a musical act: once again, singing is the mark of absolution from sin.

The Italian language is also resorted to by the angel of mercy when he delivers the pilgrim from the 'P' of wrath and adds the important specification that it is only *ira mala* that one should avoid:

> senti'mi presso quasi un muover d'ala
> e ventarmi nel viso e dir: '*Beati*
> *pacifici*, che son sanz' ira mala!' (*Purg.* XVII.67–9)
>
> ('I sensed beside me something like the motion / of a wing that fanned my face. I heard the words: / "*Beati pacifici*, those untouched by sinful wrath."')

Dante suggests – more explicitly yet – that a righteous anger should be used in certain situations when in *Inferno* VIII, 38–60 he and Virgil forcefully fend off Filippo Argenti's attempt to climb into their boat. Dante the theologian must have had in mind Aquinas's distinction between good and bad anger, and the angel of mercy quotes Jesus' words in confirmation that peacemakers should not be week, but direct their legitimate anger against sin![103]

The next Beatitude accompanies the passage from the terrace of the slothful to that of the avaricious:

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102 R. Hollander, commentary, *Purg.* XV.38. See also E. Esposito, 'Il canto XV del *Purgatorio*,' *Nuove letture dantesche*, 4 (Florence: Le Monnier, 1969), 181, quoted by Hollander.

103 For a scholastic discussion of anger, see *ST*, II^{a}-II^{ae} q.158 a.1–3.

> Mosse le penne poi e ventilonne,
> '*Qui lugent*' affermando esser beati,
> ch'avran di consolar l'anime donne. (*Purg.* XIX.49–51)

('and, stirring his feathers, gently fanned us, / declaring those *qui lugent* to be blessed, / for their souls shall be comforted.')

Some questions have arisen about the relevance of the words 'Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted' to the slothful. The words do not seem to fit the situation, but Federigo Tollemache proposes a justification of the use of this Beatitude based once more on Thomas Aquinas's definition (*ST*, II^{a}-II^{ae} q.35 a.2) of *accidia* as *tristitia de spirituali bono* ('dejection over one's spiritual health'). The phrase '*qui lugent*' would then appropriately express the feeling of dejection.[104]

There is more that can be unearthed in this regard: Nicola Fosca points to the Augustinian and Thomistic explanations of this Beatitude, linking knowledge and weeping: [105]

> Scientia congruit lugentibus, qui iam cognoverunt in Scripturis, quibus malis vincti teneantur, quae tamquam bona et utilia ignorantes appetiverunt, de quibus hic dicitur: *Beati qui lugent.* (Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte*, I.iv.11; also in *PL*, vol. 34, cols. 1229–31)

('Knowledge befits the mourner, who has discovered that he has been mastered by the evil which he coveted as though it were good. Therefore it says, "Blessed are they that mourn.")

Aquinas confirms that 'beatitudo luctus ponitur respondere dono scientiae' ('the beatitude of sorrow is said to correspond to the gift of knowledge') (*ST*, II^{a}-II^{ae} q.9 a.4). The final step towards connecting weeping with sloth is that 'omnia peccata quae ex ignorantia proveniunt, possunt reduci ad acediam' ('all the sins that are due to ignorance can be reduced to sloth') (*ST*, I^{a}-II^{ae} q.84 a.4). The reasoning has thus come full circle: those who weep will be comforted because their tears signify liberation from sloth.

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104 *Enciclopedia dantesca*, 1:540b, under the entry for 'beatitudini evangeliche.'

105 Nicola Fosca, 'Beatitudini e processo di purgazione,' Turin, 2002, available at http://www.princeton.edu/~dante/ebdsa/fosca020502.html.

The Beatitude about thirst and hunger, 'Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt quoniam ipsi saturabuntur' *(*'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled'), appears to be split in two in Dante's text, serving as an example for both the avaricious and the gluttonous.

> e quei c'hanno a giustizia lor disiro
> detto n'avea beati, le sue voci
> con '*sitiunt*,' sanz' altro, ciò forniro. (*Purg.* XXII.4–6)

('as he declared that those who long for righteousness / are blessed, ending on *sitiunt* / without the other words he might have said.')

> E senti' dir: 'Beati cui alluma
> tanto di grazia, che l'amor del gusto
> nel petto lor troppo disir non fuma,
> esurïendo sempre quanto è giusto!' (*Purg.* XXIV.151–4)

('I heard the words: "Blessèd are they / whom grace so much enlightens that appetite / fills not their breasts with gross desires, / but leaves them hungering for what is just."')

Thirst for justice is an exemplary virtue that the angel points to for those who must unshackle themselves from the thirst for gold and earthly wealth. Dante specifies that the angel stops reciting Jesus' words after 'sitiunt.' This division corresponds to the different levels of signification attributed to the two parts: the 'sitiunt' portion of the beatitude is to be understood metaphorically, as in Jesus' speech: it is for justice that we should thirst. The remainder of the beatitude (actually constituting the first portion of it in Matthew's Gospel), 'Beati qui esuriunt,' is to be understood in a more literal way, as a promise of reward for those who on earth did not hunger for more food than was necessary for their survival.

The last Beatitude is sung by the angel of chastity at the border of Eden, from which Dante is separated by a frightening wall of fire. As a test of faith, the pilgrim must plunge into this fiery obstacle with only a song, performed by the angel on the other side, to lead him through.

> Fuor de la fiamma stava in su la riva,
> e cantava '*Beati mundo corde!*'
> in voce assai più che la nostra viva. (*Purg.* XXVII.7–9)

('He stood beyond the flames there on the terrace / and sang "*Beati mundo corde!*" / with a voice more radiant than ours.')

The angel reminds the wayfarers that only the pure at heart – those, that is, who have purified themselves of lust – can access the kingdom of heaven, and finishes his short speech by warning them that, since their eyes will be of no use in the opacity of the fire, they must follow the music: 'do not stop your ears against the distant song' (XXVII.12).

This sentence grafts together the penitential section of Purgatory and the Earthly Paradise, because the song it anticipates is performed by another angel standing on the other side of the wall. This song is what guides Dante out of the flames, and its content is once more from the Gospel of Matthew:

> Guidavaci una voce che cantava
> di là; e noi, attenti pur a lei,
> venimmo fuor là ove si montava.
> '*Venite, benedicti Patris mei*,'
> sonò dentro a un lume che lì era ... (*Purg.* XXVII.55–9)

('Guiding us was a voice that sang beyond the flame / We gave it our rapt attention, / and came forth from the fire where the ascent began. / "*Venite, benedicti Patris mei*" resounded / from a dazzling light that blinded me.')

With these words the angel welcomes those who have completed the rite of purification, but it is only by fully concentrating on this song that the pilgrims can reach the other side, thus receiving the last promise of beatitude: 'Venite, benedicti Patris mei possidete paratum vobis regnum a constitutione mundi' ('Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world') (Matthew 25:34). These words are inscribed in a mosaic in the Florence Baptistry, portraying an angel guarding a closed gate, while another angel escorts a group of purified souls and holds a banner with the inscription: 'Venite beneditti Patris mei possidete preparatum.'[106] Accompanied by this melodious evangelical call, we have, finally, entered the kingdom of Heaven.

We are, therefore, in the presence of a different type of music. Po-

106 See E.A. Wilkins, 'Dante and the Mosaics of his *Bel San Giovanni*,' *Speculum* 2, no. 1 (January 1927): 1–10, at p. 5.

lyphony is foreshadowed by the rustle of the leaves in the wood of Eden, which plays the drone to the warbles of the birds:

> Un'aura dolce, sanza mutamento
> avere in sé, mi ferìa per la fronte
> non di più colpo che soave vento;
> per cui le fronde, tremolando, pronte
> tutte quante piegavano a la parte
> u' la prim' ombra gitta il santo monte;
> non però dal loro esser dritto sparte
> tanto, che li augelletti per le cime
> lasciasser d'operare ogne lor arte;
> ma con piena letizia l'ore prime,
> cantando, ricevieno intra le foglie,
> che tenevan bordone a le sue rime ... (*Purg.* XXVIII.7–18)

('A steady gentle breeze, / no stronger than the softest wind, / caressed and fanned my brow. / It made the trembling boughs / bend eagerly toward the shade / the holy mountain casts at dawn, / yet they were not so much bent down / that small birds in the highest branches / were not still practicing their every craft, / meeting the morning breeze / with songs of joy among the leaves, / which rustled such accompaniment to their rhymes ...')

It seems almost as though Leo Spitzer had this scene in mind when he wrote the following passage about the musical meaning of the word *Stimmung* in his work on the concept of world harmony:

> The potential musicality in the word family is like a *basso ostinato* accompanying the intellectual connotation of 'unity of the landscape and feelings prompted by it.'[107]

107 L. Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony*, 6–7. The concert of trees and birds finds an unexpected precedent in Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, IX.924: 'Denique benignitate largissima sensim ipsa notionem meae obiectationis aperui. nam fides apud Delphos per Deliacam citharam demonstravi; tibiae per Tritonidam nostri comitem Marsyamque Lydium sonuerunt; calamos Mariandyni et Aones in laudes inflavere caelestium; panduram Aegyptios attemptare permisi ipsisque me pastoralibus fistulis *vel cantus avium vel arborum crepitus vel susurros fluminum* imitantibus non negavi.' ('At last, with a generous outpouring of my favor, I revealed the concepts of my art to men, in a manner which they could understand.

The vernacular poet initiates here a narrative sequence that prepares for the disappearance of his Latin guide, Virgil, to whom he pays homage by recalling his verses in the rustling of the leaves.[108] It is probable, however, that Dante took an additional leaf from the Book of Kings, where we find the story of how Elijah, ascending a mountain in search of God, was hit by a powerful storm, but God was not in the storm; after the storm there was an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake; after storm and earthquake there came a big fire, but God was not in the fire; finally, after the fire, a gentle breeze brings him the 'still small voice' of God.[109]

Although the drone has never been considered to be polyphony, it consists of a steady note over which a tune is developed, and it prepares us for the advent of polyphony and of Beatrice. The technical word *bordone* (drone) was interpreted by all early commentators as the *cantus firmus* or *tenor* on which the various *descants* were developed.[110] It is Dante's signal that a momentous change is occurring, and this bucolic polyphony marks the beginning of a different section of the Purgatory. The allegorical scenes that follow celebrate a liturgy whose musical component is integrated with the textual, the visual, and the gestural. Leah's apparition in a dream, symbolizing – according to the majority of scholars – contemplative life and intellectual happiness, represents a musical continuation of the dream-like, ecstatic amazement that Dante

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For I demonstrated the use of stringed instruments at Delphi, through the Delian's cithara; flutes were blown by my companion the Tritonian and by the Lydian Marsyas; the Mariandynians and Aonians blew upon reed pipes their hymns to the heavenly deities; I permitted the Egyptians to try their skill with the pandura; and I did not deny myself to shepherds imitating on their pipes the *calls of birds or the rustling of trees or the gurgling of rivers*.') (Trans. William Harris Stahl and Richard Johnson with E.L. Burge [New York: Columbia University Press, 1977], 357; my emphases). As far as I am aware, the concert of birds and trees is not a topos at this point of Italian literature, so the rustle of trees, the birds singing, and the murmuring water seem to all be idyllic elements pointing at the conclusion of a direct debt of Dante to Martianus Capella.

108 'Ilice, sic leni crepitabat brattea vento.' ('The leaves there rustled to the light breeze.') (*Aen.* VI.209). At this point in Virgil's poem, Aeneas is preparing to descend into Hell and meet his long lost wife Creusa. The pilgrim of the *Commedia* is, therefore, in a similarly liminal position, about to cross the threshold that will reveal to him his dead lover.

109 'Et post ignem sibilus aurae tenuis' (3 *Kings* 19:12). See A.M. Chiavacci Leonardi, 'Le beatitudini e la struttura poetica del *Purgatorio*,' *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 161, no. 513 (1984): 1–29, at p. 19.

110 Lana, Pietro di Dante, Buti, Anonimous Florentine.

experiences at this point of his journey. For the first time his eyes behold no pain or punishments; he experiences no fear and is in no hurry. In the following canto, Matelda symbolizes earthly happiness and her joyful song pervades the entire atmosphere. Matelda's songs are also from the Psalms, but Psalm 91:5, 'Delectasti me, Domine' ('For thou hast given me, O Lord, a delight in thy doings'), is one of thankfulness, and Psalm 31:1, 'Beati quorum remissae sunt iniquitates et quorum tecta sunt peccata' ('Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered.'), is a prayer of trust in God. These two Psalms, taken from the office for Easter Saturday, both convey a feeling of joy rather than of penitence, and Dante's abridged quotation 'Beati quorum tecta sunt peccata,' with its use of the participle *tecta* ('covered'), anticipates his immersion in the river Lethe.[111]

The long procession featuring the seven chandeliers (an allegory of the gifts of the Holy Spirit), the elderly each representing one book of the Old and New Testaments, as well as the chariot of the Church drawn by the Christ-griffin and the seven women signifying the cardinal and theological virtues in their natural state, as Singleton has so elegantly

111 Although the text of the *Commedia* does not explicitly state that Matelda sings Psalm 92, the one containing *delectasti*, Vincent Truijen (*Enciclopedia dantesca*, under the entry for 'delectasti,' 1:346) and Chiara Cappuccio ('Gli effetti psicologici della musica sui personaggi del *Purgatorio*,' *Tenzone* 6 [2005]: 35–80n16) argue convincingly that the content of Matelda's song in canto XXVIII must be that Psalm; however, because the Psalm did not begin with the word *delectasti*, Dante must also have referred to a liturgical song that did begin with that word.

As a final note on this purging wash, it is worth mentioning a medieval tradition that associated music with water on the basis of a curious etymological derivation from *moys*, that is, 'water.' Since for the medieval mind the name of an object was linked to its essence, in Dante we find an interesting convergence of music and water as a means of purgation. This tradition was picked up by important thinkers such Hugh of St Victor, who states that without water no good sound is possible: 'Musica ab aqua vocabulum sumpsit, eo quod nulla euphonia, id est, bona sonoritas, sine humore fieri possit.' ('"Music" takes its name from the word "water," or *aqua*, because no euphony, that is, pleasant sound, is possible without moisture.') (Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon*, trans. Jerome Taylor [New York: Columbia University Press, 1961], II.8.) See Noel Swerdlow's study 'Musica Dicitur A Moys, Quod Est Aqua,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1967): 3–9. See also the passage from *Liber de musica Iohannis Vetuli de Anagnia*, ed. Frederick Hammond, *Corpus scriptorum de musica*, 27 (n.p.: American Institute of Musicology, 1977), 26–97, at p. 26, quoted in chapter 4, n. 27 (pp. 168–9), below.

shown,[112] constitute a glorious pageant resounding with *hosannas*, quotations from the Song of Songs, and other solemn prayers. The entire canto is a preparation for the mystical motifs that are fused in the complex liturgy of the following *cantos*, and, as we shall see, the performance by the elderly of Psalm 30, '*In te Domine speravi*' ('In thee, Lord, I have hoped'), in *Purgatorio* XXX.83–4, represents the first occurrence of polyphony. This Psalm is of great importance because, as Hollander notes, it serves as a prelude to the appearance of Beatrice in canto XXX. Appropriately, the elderly do not sing past '*pedes meos*' ('my feet'), that is, they sing only the first nine verses, in a numerological scheme that is apt to signify 'quella ch'è sul numer delle trenta.'[113] The death of Beatrice in the *Vita nova*, as Charles Singleton observes, was underscored by a host of angels solemnly singing Hosanna:[114]

> A me parea che questi angeli cantassero gloriosamente, e le parole del loro canto mi parea udire che fossero queste: *Osanna in excelsis* ... (*Vita nova*, XXIII.7)
>
> ('It seemed to me that these angels were singing in glory, and the words of their song seemed to be: Osanna in excelsis ...')

112 C.S. Singleton, *Journey to Beatrice*, Dante Studies 2, reprint ed. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977). But Dronke calls for caution when it comes to interpreting metaphors in poetry and warns against univocal interpretations: 'the question "What do the gryphon and the chariot mean?" cannot be resolved by naively equating the gryphon with Christ and the chariot with the Church ... The chariot, I suggested, must first and foremost be linked with an image that was dear to Dante from Boethius' hymn *O qui perpetua*, where the Creator sets souls upon light chariots, shows them in heaven and on earth, and lets them turn and make their way back to the divine. The chariot that is here tied to the tree by the gryphon, is the vehicle of Dante's soul, a vehicle that, in the procession, fittingly came bearing Beatrice. The chariot also has connotations – at different moments, as poetically appropriate – of Dante's ideals, regarding both imperial Rome and the Christian Church.' P. Dronke, *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 61.

113 R. Hollander, 'Dante's Use of the Fiftieth Psalm,' *Dante Studies* 91 (1973): 145–50, at p. 145. Hollander notes how Trinitarian numerology is in play here: in canto XXX nine verses of Psalm 30 are referenced, just as upon the return of Beatrice 'who stands on number thirty' in Dante's poem no. *52* (*Dante's Lyric Poetry*, ed. and trans. K. Foster and P. Boyde, 2 vols. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967]).

114 C. Singleton, *Dante's 'Commedia': Elements of Structure*, Dante Studies, 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954 ; repr. 1977), 57.

This jubilation from the Gospel of Mark[115] is the very same song that the elderly perform in *Purg*atorio XXIX.51, in expectation and annunciation of the return of the blessed lady who saves Dante's soul:

> la virtù ch'a ragion discorso ammanna,
> sì com' elli eran candelabri apprese,
> e ne le voci del cantare '*Osanna*.' (*Purg.* XXIX.49–51)

> ('The faculty that readies reason for its matter / knew them as candelabra, which indeed they were, / and in the voices of the chant I heard 'Hosanna.')

In *Purgatorio* XXX the penitential strain is over, and although a new, extreme moment of contrition lies ahead for the pilgrim – 'scotto di pentimento' ('payment of some fee') (XXX.144–5) – in Beatrice's reproof, here, at the very return of she who had died in the *Vita nova*, it is time for joy; thus the poet's puzzling remark that the entire Psalm is not performed can be explained by looking at the next words of Psalm, 'Miserere mei.' As Hollander puts it, 'the angels celebrate only hope rewarded and thus will not continue to the words "Miserere mei Domine, quoniam tribulor." For here Dante should not be troubled, should not, for he is rewarded for his hope, require mercy.'[116]

The joyfulness and uniqueness of the occasion also call for a grand musical performance, and, as we realize a few lines after the quotation of the Psalm, this piece is set polyphonically; indeed, the elderly/angels sing sweet harmonies in tune with the revolving motion of the heavens:

> così fui sanza lagrime e sospiri
> anzi 'l cantar di quei che notan sempre
> dietro a le note de li etterni giri;
> ma poi che 'ntesi ne le dolci tempre ... (*Purg.* XXX.91–4)

115 'et qui praeibant et qui sequebantur clamabant dicentes osanna benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini / benedictum quod venit regnum patris nostri David osanna in excelsis.' ('And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: / Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.') (Mark 11:9–10).

116 R. Hollander, 'Dante's Use of the Fiftieth Psalm,' 148.

> ('Just so was I with neither tears nor sighs / before they sang who always are in tune / with notes set down in the eternal spheres, / but, when their lovely harmonies revealed ...)

We must not be surprised that the Psalm is sung polyphonically, since the Gregorian chant was often used as the *tenor* of polyphonic compositions. From the earliest days of polyphony the liturgy was embellished in a number of ways, with sequences and tropes being added to the singing of both the Office and the Mass.

The angels' function is to mediate for Dante, who had frozen after Beatrice's rebuke, and to melt his tension away like snow in the Appennines. The mediating position of the singing is stressed by the contrasting use of the prepositions *anzi* and *dietro* at the beginning of the lines; thus music has – for the first time – the power of setting into motion the pilgrim's contrition and of delivering absolution. According to the *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*, the first meaning of the word *tempre* is 'mélanger, mêler, combiner, allier.' This etymology indicates the mixture, the combination of different elements, and not only that, but an *alliance* or an *alloy of them*. That is, it contains the idea that there is a certain order – a *harmony*, as it were – to this combination. It is easy, then, to understand how it came to mean 'chords,' and it appears with that meaning also in *Purgatorio* XXXII.33 and in *Paradiso* X.146. Leo Spitzer illustrated in his *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony* the numerous semantic associations contained in the English word 'chord,' and in the *temperare* and *tempra* used by early Christian writers.[117] In the lines quoted, however, Dante refers to the music of the spheres as an example of polyphony, as found, for example, in the *Dream of Scipio*. While Dante's treatment of this Platonic myth is the subject of this book's last chapter, it should be noted here that to Dante it is the angels who sing, not the spheres that produce a sound. These angels *always* sing in tune with the eternal spheres ('notan sempre / dietro a le note de li etterni giri'). They systematically sing in harmony, marking a clear difference from all the other music that has been performed so far. Moreover, between the songs accompanying the procession and this first appearance of *organum*, a crucial liminal event has taken place: the disappearance of Virgil. The transfer of authority from Virgil to Beatrice coincides with a change of the matter of the *Commedia* and with the pilgrim's achievement of the

117 L. Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas*, 80 ff.

state of justice and free will.[118] This change parallels the passage from monophony to polyphony and the fact that the pilgrim is now ready to enter the realm of Divine Grace, of which music is the medium. The Theological Virtues can then draw near to Dante, singing, dancing, and praying Beatrice to unveil the second beauty that she conceals:

> ... l'altre tre si fero avanti,
> danzando al loro angelico caribo.
> 'Volgi Beatrice, volgi gli occhi santi,'
> era la sua canzone, 'al tuo fedele
> che, per vederti, ha mossi passi tanti!
> Per grazia fa noi grazia che disvele
> a lui la bocca tua, sì che discerna
> la seconda bellezza che tu cele.' (*Purg.* XXXI.131–8)

> ('The other three, who by their bearing / showed themselves of a higher order, moved forward, / dancing to their angelic roundelay. / "Turn, Beatrice, turn your holy eyes/ upon your faithful one" – thus ran their song – / "who, to see you, now has come so far. / Of your grace do us a grace: unveil / your mouth to him so that he may observe / the second beauty that you still conceal."')

This calls to mind the early Christians' practice of combining dancing and singing in order to fully and solemnly praise God;[119] after all, to borrow Beckett's words, 'when the sense is dancing, the words dance.'[120] Such an association of dance and liturgy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance was considered less unseemly than it would be in more recent

118 It is in the words of Virgil himself that we find the coronation of the pilgrim as *compos sui*, as the man who has full power over himself again, whose will is now completely oriented to the good: 'Non aspettar mio dir più né mio cenno; / libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio, / e fallo fora non fare a suo senno: / per ch'io te sovra te corono e mitrio.' ('No longer wait for word or sign from me. / Your will is free, upright, and sound. / Not to act as it chooses is unworthy: / over yourself I crown and miter you.') (*Purg.* XXVII.139–42).

119 L. Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas*, 26–7. On the combination of dance with the other arts, see Susan Watkins, 'Dance in the Arts of the Middle Ages' (PhD diss., Florida State University, 1992); and Timothy McGee, *Medieval Instrumental Dances* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

120 S. Beckett, 'Dante ... Bruno .... Vico .. Joyce,' in *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. Ruby Cohn (London: John Calder, 1983), 19–33.

times. The above-quoted Florence codex Pluteus 29 contains a fascicle (ff. 463–76) collecting sixty monophonic Latin *rondeaux*, and the opening page of the section displays an illustration of a group of clerics performing a *rondeau*.[121] Divine Grace is thus anticipated in that 'grace' twice invoked by the women-virtues (line 136).

When the allegorical chariot representing the Church becomes corrupt a disdainful song rises from the heavenly procession. It is Psalm 78, '*Deus venerunt gentes*,' one of invocation of righteous vengeance and contempt against those who have defiled the temple of God. This Psalm is performed 'verso a verso,' that is, *alternatim*, as explained above. The relevance of this Psalm here is evident: whatever the specific interpretation of the mysterious *cinquecento diece e cinque* of *Purgatorio* XXXIII.43, this song expresses a unanimous request for God's intervention, a performance that is aptly divided between two half-choirs: one half composed by the Theological Virtues, the other by the Cardinal Virtues ('or tre or quattro'). 'Cantum psalmi dulcem, licet esset de materia amara' ('A sweet psalm melody can have a bitter subject'), comments Benvenuto da Imola.

> '*Deus, venerunt gentes*,' alternando
> or tre or quattro dolce salmodia,
> le donne incominciaro, e lagrimando ... (*Purg.* XXXIII.1–3)

('"*Deus, venerunt gentes*," the ladies, / now three, now four, in alternation sang, / beginning their sweet psalmody in tears ...')

Oxymoronically expressing both sweetness and bitterness, this song seems to sum up the penitential mood that the pilgrim has just left behind, but to which he must return when he goes back to earth. The way this song is introduced connects back to the last song of Hell, the perverted version of '*Vexilla regis*': not only do both songs appear in the very first line of the last canto of their canticas, but they were both designated for the liturgy of Good Friday. A confirmation that we must read the song announcing God's retribution against the backdrop of and as a correction to the song announcing Satan is provided a few lines before the

121 On liturgical dance in the late Middle Ages, see Y. Rokseth, 'Danses cléricales du xiiie siècle,' in *Mélanges 1945 des Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de Strasbourg* (Paris 1947), 93–126.

intonation of '*Deus venerunt gentes*,' where the chariot of the church is described as ''l dificio santo' ('the holy edifice') (*Purg.* XXXII.142), which immediately makes our minds fly back to the only other occurrence of that word in the *Commedia*: the 'tal dificio' for which Dante mistakes the king of Hell in *Inferno* XXXIV.7.

The hymn sung by the entire procession, when the chariot of the Church rejuvenates the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, is a music that goes beyond mortal understanding. Indeed, music is also an embodiment of the figure of speech *reticentia*, expressing the unintelligible.

> Io non lo 'ntesi, né qui non si canta
> l'inno che quella gente allor cantaro,
> né la nota soffersi tutta quanta. (*Purg.* XXXII.61–3)

> ('The hymn that company then chanted / is not sung on earth nor could I make it out, / nor bear to hear that music to its end.')

Thus, the music of *Paradiso* is anticipated by the departing procession. Alessandro Picchi speaks of an 'incomparable sweetness and unintelligibility of the musical discourse: there is already an intuition of *Paradise*'; and indeed Dante specifies that it is the music (*nota*) that he could not understand.[122] The procession then leaves Eden and ascends back up to Heaven while singing, but not without Dante explicitly announcing the different nature of the music we are about to enjoy in Paradise:

> li altri dopo 'l grifon sen vanno suso
> con più dolce canzone e più profonda. (*Purg.* XXXII.89–90)

> ('The others all ascend behind the griffin / with a song more sweet and more profound.')

122 A. Picchi, 'Musicalità dantesca e metodologie filosofiche medievali,' in *Annali dell'Istituto di Studi Danteschi*, 1 (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1967), 155–94, at p. 179.

4 *Paradiso*: The Attuning of the Sky

Words move, music moves
Only in time; but that which is only living
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness ... (T. S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*)[1]

John Hollander in *The Untuning of the Sky*[2] studies the evolution and involution of the notion of heavenly harmony in the context of English poetry. After enjoying great popularity in the early Middle Ages, the Pythagorean myth was the object of stern rejection by Aristotelian thinkers. Hollander shows how it lost currency among sixteenth-century English poets, because of the changing scientific climate and because the theory, though appealing to poets, never entered into post-medieval Christian doctrine. The myth of the harmony of the spheres, Hollander tells us, underwent a trivialization in the poets' references and became ever less popular. The sky was thus eventually *untuned*, the heavens silenced.

Despite the complexity of Dante's philosophical stance on the harmony of the spheres, the medieval literary scholar will find in the *Paradiso* a multitude of musical passages, all converging toward the concord of different elements – indeed, an *attuning* of the sky. In these pages I will examine the use of polyphonic performance and its allegorical sig-

1 T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, I.V.1–6.

2 John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500–1700* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961).

nificance in political, theological, and poetic terms. After the brutal cacophony of *Inferno* and the painful penitential monophony of *Purgatorio*, the novel music of *Paradiso* restores to the pilgrim a sense of sweetness and spiritual balance. The polyphonic singing in the eternal wheels compensates for the satanic perversion of the devils' music, such as '*Vexilla regi prodeunt inferni*,' and rewards the wayfarer for the penance he has endured.

Here, too, musical metaphors are not employed merely to embellish the versification, but act as a symbolic allegory of the reconciliation of the multiplicity of human nature in the unity of God, a reconciliation that is represented by polyphonic performance. The first section of this chapter shows the polyphonic textures of paradisiacal music.

Polyphony becomes an allegory of political harmony, providing a figure for the balance of powers in the State and in the Church, the attuning of all voices in heavenly concord. Such balance, realized *ab aeternum* in the heavenly Jerusalem and celebrated in the harmony of its inhabitants, must be learned and reproduced, or at least imitated, by men on earth. Moreover, on a theological level, the blending of voices symbolizes the reconciliation of the manifold universe under a unitarian orderly principle.

Lastly, as an expressive means of low semanticity, music is employed to accompany the more mystical and mysterious steps of the pilgrim's ascent. Indeed the exact meaning of the songs' words becomes incomprehensible to the pilgrim, who is more and more often left with a sweet lingering feeling of the extraordinary spiritual experience, but is incapable of recollecting it rationally or transcribing it. Such impenetrable songs carry out the mystical component of Dante's own *itinerarium mentis in Deum*. Music becomes the tightrope by means of which the poet attempts to bridge the gap between the physical plane of his mortal limitedness and the metaphysical plane of his vision's subject. Like a rain pervading the entire universe, Grace is delivered through music.

This chapter's final section deals with the allegorical symbolism of musical instruments, while the matter of the harmony of the spheres is left for the next chapter.

Polyphony in Paradise

At the beginning of the *Paradiso*, Dante explains how he felt changed when, having fixed his eyes on the eyes of Beatrice, he soared up into the sky and became able to sustain the sunlight beyond normal human lim-

its. Dante's own transfiguration is paralleled by one drawn from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Glaucus, a Boeotian fisherman, ate a weed which transformed him, by divine intervention, into a sea-god. Oceanus and Tethys welcome Glaucus among the sea deities, and purify him of whatever earthly links he may still have by singing nine times a song that washes away all impurity.[3] Thus, for Dante, looking into Beatrice's face is like eating Glaucus's weed:

> Nel suo aspetto tal dentro mi fei,
> qual si fé Glauco nel gustar de l'erba
> che 'l fé consorto in mar de li altri dèi.
> Trasumanar significar *per verba*
> non si poria; però l'essemplo basti
> a cui esperïenza grazia serba. *Par.* I.67–72)

('As I gazed on her, I was changed within, / as Glaucus was on tasting of the grass / that made him consort of the gods in the sea./ To soar beyond the human cannot be described / in words. Let the example be enough to one / for whom grace holds this experience in store.')

A few lines later, Dante hints for the first time at the celestial harmony modulated by God, which is ninefold because it is produced by nine heavens. As in the Ovidian story, a supernatural, ninefold music accompanies Dante in his voyage to heaven and completes the first step of the pilgrim's transfiguration.

The *novità del suono e 'l grande lume* ('the newness of the sound and the bright light') (*Par.* I.82) are hinted at before the pilgrim is transfigured, and this novelty of sound consists in the accord of different sounds together. Concordance and harmony of the voices are mirrored by the music of the heavens – 'Quando la rota che tu sempiterni / desiderato, a sé mi fece atteso / con *l'armonia* che temperi e discerni' ('When the heavens you made eternal, / wheeling in desire, caught my attention / with the harmony you temper and attune') (*Par.* I.76–8) – and, in strictly musical terms, this is expressed by the polyphonic texture, which is exclusive to the music sung by the souls of Paradise.

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3 'Oceanum Tethynque rogant ego lustror ab illis, / et purgante nefas noviens mihi carmine dicto / pectora fluminibus iubeor supponere centum' ('They prayed Oceanus and Tethys both to take from me such mortal essence as might yet remain'). Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* trans. Brookes More (Boston: Cornhill, 1922), XIII.951–3.

When Justinian answers Dante's questions, he uses a musical example to signify the harmony that reigns among the different levels of beatitude:

> Ma nel commensurar d'i nostri gaggi
> col merto è parte di nostra letizia,
> perché non li vedem minor né maggi.
> Quindi addolcisce la viva giustizia
> in noi l'affetto sì, che non si puote
> torcer già mai ad alcuna nequizia.
> Diverse voci fanno dolci note;
> così diversi scanni in nostra vita
> rendon dolce armonia tra queste rote. (*Par.* VI.118–26)

('But noting how our merit equals our reward / is part of our happiness, / because we see them being neither less nor more. / So much does living justice sweeten our affection / we cannot ever then take on / the warp of wickedness. / Differing voices make sweet music. / Just so our differing ranks in this our life / create sweet harmony among these wheels.')

The different voices, the sweet harmony, and the verb *rendere* – in its implication of 'to respond,' 'to sing against,' contrapuntally, also appearing in *Paradiso* X.146 – are all elements that suggest polyphony, while in the latter passage the glorious wheel of the wise men is seen 'muoversi e render voce a voce in tempra' ('in motion, / matching voice to voice in harmony').[4] It is not accidental that the notion of a diversity of voices resounding in one mighty chord finds its collocation in a political canto (all the *scanni*, 'ranks,' find their appropriate place in the harmonious order of the *rote*, 'wheels'), and on the lips of no less a personage than the Emperor Justinian, the exemplar of justice and author of the codex of laws. Indeed, the sky is the city of God, in which justice reigns, according to right measure (*commisurar*) and harmony. It is the same justice that the *sancti Dei*, 'the just of God,' will celebrate in songs on Doomsday, as foretold by Augustine apropos of Psalm 150:

> Habebunt enim etiam tunc sancti Dei differentias suas consonantes, non

4 Cf. also *Purg.* XXVIII.79–81: 'maravigliando tienvi alcun sospetto; / ma luce *rende* il salmo *Delectasti,* / che puote disnebbiar vostro intelletto.'

> dissonantes, id est consentientes, non dissentients: sicut fit suavissimus concentus ex diversis quidem, sed non inter se adversis sonis.[5]
>
> ('Even then the just of God will have their differences, accordant, not discordant, that is, agreeing, not disagreeing, just as sweetest harmony arises from sounds differing indeed, but not opposing one another.')

The justice already ruling the Heavens will one day rule the earth, and the political accord will be expressed in a diversity of sounds that blend with one another.

Even more technical is the auditory simile that Dante uses to describe the dance of lights in the sphere of Venus:

> E come in fiamma favilla si vede,
> e come in voce voce si discerne,
> quand' una è ferma e altra va e riede ... (*Par.* VIII.16–18)
>
> ('And, as one sees a spark within a flame / or hears, within a song, a second voice, / holding its note while the other comes and goes ...')

Dante here refers to the technique of the *organum melismaticus*, in which the organal voices move up and down on the *cantus firmus*. There is little doubt that these lines refer to a two-voice *organum*, even if he does not use the term here. The capillary diffusion of church polyphony (if only in improvisatory or archaic forms) in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italy[6]

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5 Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, 150. Translation found in Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms (*Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1857), 456.

6 See chapter 1, above; and also in particular Giulio Cattin: '"Secundare" e "Succinere": Polifonia a Padova e Pistoia nel Duecento,' in *Musica e storia* 3 (1995): 41–120; F. Alberto Gallo, '*Cantus planus binatim*: Polifonia in fonti tardive,' in *Quadrivium* 7 (1966): 79–89; G. Cattin, 'Novità dalla cattedrale di Firenze: Polifonia, tropi, e sequenze nella seconda metà del XII secolo,' *Musica e storia* 6, no. 1 (June 1998): 7–36; G. Ciliberti, ed., *Musica e liturgia nelle chiese e nei conventi dell'Umbria (secoli X–XV)* (Perugia: Quaderni di 'Esercizi, Musica e Spettacolo,' 1994); K. Levy, 'Italian Duecento Polyphony,' *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 10 (1975): 10–19; K. Von Fischer, 'Die Rolle der Mehrstimmigkeit am Dome von Siena Zu Beginn des 13. Jahrhunderts,' *Archiv fur Musikwissenschaft* 18, no. 3/4 (1961): 167–82; A. Ziino, 'Una ignota testimonianza sulla diffusione del mottetto in Italia durante il XIV secolo,' *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 10 (1975): 20–31; A. Ziino, 'Polifonia "arcaica" e "retrospettiva" in Italia centrale: Nuove testimonianze,' *Acta musicologica* 50 (1978): 193–207; A. Ziino, 'Polifonia nella cattedrale di Lucca durante il XIII secolo,' *Acta musicologica* 47, no. 1 (1975): 16–30.

offered Dante many occasions to listen to the organal settings of the liturgical repertory. By the same token, Dante takes a cue from the Boethian principle of 'dissimilium inter se vocum in unum redacta Concordia'[7] for the idea that these woven sounds relate to a superior metaphysical order. The expressive potential of this musical technique and its poetic employments must have appealed profoundly to Dante, as he seems to foreshadow a polyphonic fusion of voices into a unity, found also in the mystery of the Trinity, which is composed of different entities as different musical parts blend into one song:

> Lì si cantò non Bacco, non Peana,
> ma tre persone in divina natura,
> e in una persona essa e l'umana. (*Par.* XIII.25–7)

('There they sang the praises not of Bacchus nor of Paean / but praised the divine nature in three Persons, / and in one Person sang that nature joined with man.')

The three-part *organum*, for example, provides the cue for a marvellous metaphor of God's tripartite and yet unitarian essence, an intrinsically polyphonic rendering of the mystery of the Trinity expressed musically by the wise who are feasting in a double garland around Dante and Beatrice:

> Quell' uno e due e tre che sempre vive
> e regna sempre in tre e 'n due e 'n uno,
> non circunscritto, e tutto circunscrive,
> tre volte era cantato da ciascuno
> di quelli spirti con tal melodia,
> ch'ad ogni merto saria giusto muno. (*Par.* XIV.28–33)

('That ever-living One and Two and Three / who reigns forever in Three and Two and One, / uncircumscribed and circumscribing all, / was sung three times by each and every one / of these spirits, and with such melody / as would be fit reward for any merit.')

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7 Boethius, *De inst. mus.* I.iii: 'agreement is achieved through different voices united in one.' On the orderly universe of Dante in relation to numbers and music, see A. Picchi, 'Musicalità dantesca e metodologie filosofiche medievali,' in *Annali dell'Istituto di Studi Danteschi*, 1 (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1967), 155–94.

On the perfection of the number three, as composed by the sum of one and two, which also are the numbers that precede it, Augustine had already commented:

> MAGISTER: Subtilius ista quaeruntur atque abstrusius in ea disciplina quae est de numeris: hic autem nos ad institutum opus quanto citius possumus reamus. Quocirca quaero, uno duo juncta quid faciunt?
> DISCIPULUS: Tria.
> MAGISTER: Ergo haec duo principia numerorum sibimet copulata, totum numerum faciunt atque perfectum.
> DISCIPULUS: Ita est.
> MAGISTER: Quid? in numerando post unum et duo quem numerum ponimus?
> DISCIPULUS: Eadem tria.
> MAGISTER: Idem igitur numerus, qui fit ex uno et duobus, post utrumque in ordine collocatur, ita ut nullus alius interponi queat.[8]

> ('MASTER: Such things are more subtly and abstrusely examined in the discipline which concerns numbers. But here let us return as quickly as we can to the task in hand. And so, I ask, what does two added to one make? DISCIPLE: Three. MASTER: So the two beginnings of numbers added together make the whole and perfect number. DISCIPLE: So it is. MASTER: And in counting, what number do we place after two? DISCIPLE: The same three. MASTER: And so the same number made out of one and two is placed after both of them as regards order, in such a way no other can be interposed.')

Medieval numerology thus expressed the Trinity by means of prime numbers. Prime numbers are natural numbers that can only be divided by one or by themselves, so one, two, and three are the first three of an infinite series of prime numbers. But one, two, and three are also the compounding elements, so to speak, of every other number. Christian Moevs has recently published a richly documented study that helps us to understand the notion of harmony in relation to numbers: 'prime numbers have no attributes except for those they display in generating other numbers, that is, except for the logical potential or implications intrinsic

8 Augustine, *De musica* I.xii.22, trans. R. Catesby Taliaferro (Portsmouth, RI: Portsmouth Priory School, 1939).

to their nature, to the concept of number itself.'[9] Prime numbers, in other words, are constitutive elements of other numbers as the Trinity is the constitutive principle of the universe, which is harmonic (*armòtto* in Greek means 'to put together') in a musical, astronomic, and metaphysical way. Numbers also serve the purpose of measuring the tempo, because indeed paradisiacal music accords with truth as notes with their rhythm ('il vero ... s'accorda / con esso come nota con suo metro' (*Par.* XXVIII.8–9). The insistence on mensural music reflects the accordance with the music of God: 'rhythm constitutes their being ... notes have no existence apart for rhythm.'[10]

Singing in Paradise is essentially polyphonic, that is, a composition of different elements in a harmonic unity, and this musical quality of the text affects the meaning of the episodes. In the heaven of Mars, for example, Dante's future life is foretold by Cacciaguida:

> Da indi, sì come viene ad orecchia
> dolce armonia da organo, mi viene
> a vista il tempo che ti s'apparecchia. (*Par.* XVII.43–5)
>
> ('And thus, as harmony's sweet sound may rise / from mingled voices to the ear, so rises to my sight / a vision of the time that lies in store for you.')

As discussed previously, in contemporary theoretical literature the word *organo*, in the singular form, indicated vocal *organum*, while the plural *organi* was used to refer to the instrument, as in *Purgatorio* IX.144;[11] however, another important indicator points to interpreting *Paradiso* XVII.44 as a polyphonic *organum*:[12] Dante here describes this music as a sweet harmony, employing the same words as in *Paradiso* VI.124–6, where the

9 C. Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 137. Moevs also points out that Beatrice teaches Dante in *Par.* XXVIII.22–42 how space and time arise from conscious being with a numerical sequence that encompasses the entire universe. See *The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy*, 142.

10 C. Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy*, 141.

11 See the entry for *organo* in the *Enciclopedia dantesca*, and pp. 122–4, above.

12 The reading of *Par.* XVII.44 as polyphony is also supported by musicologist Nino Pirrotta ('"Dante *Musicus*": Gothicism, Scholasticism and Music,' *Speculum* 43, no. 2 (1968): 245–57, at p. 248n11); but for a different opinion, see Raffaello Monterosso, 'Problemi musicali danteschi,' *Cultura e scuola*, 13–14 (June 1965): 207–12, at p. 207.

music is undoubtedly polyphonic, because 'diverse voci ... rendon *dolce armonia*' ('Differing voices ... create sweet harmony'). By comparing his ancestor's prophecy to the sweet harmony of a vocal *organum*, Dante underscores the solemnity of his poetic pronouncement. In fact, it is in Cacciaguida's words that the purpose of Dante's mission is foretold: he is to go back to earth to denounce the evil he has encountered as well as testify to the marvels of Heaven, and to gain fame and honour from doing so.[13] Because *organum* was a musical genre regularly used for the sake of solemnity on liturgical occasions, its reference places the entire prophecy of Dante's ancestor in a specifically liturgical context, bestowing upon his words the highest of authorities.

Perhaps one of the clearest references to polyphony is expressed in the episode of the dance of the wise men, who 'rend[*on*] voce a voce in tempra' ('matching voice to voice in harmony') (*Par.* X.146). The key word *tempra* and the repetition of *voce* leave little room for reading this music as anything other than a polyphonic setting, as happens also in *Paradiso* VIII.17–18: 'E come in voce voce si discerne, / quand' una è ferma e altra va e riede' ('And, as one ... / ... hears, within a song, a second voice, / holding its note while the other comes and goes'). In fact, according to the *Enciclopedia dantesca*, the word *tempra* means 'fusione di suoni con riferimento alle voci degli angeli che cantano insieme. Nel significato estensivo di "accordo," "struttura composita coordinata all'armonia di un tutto" riferito a strumento musicale in *Pd.* XIV.118.'[14] And the verb *temperare* also is 'da avvicinare ad "armonizzare," "accordare."'[15] But the polyphonic nature of this song is already clear from *render voce a voce*, as is also noted by Leo Spitzer.[16] Something new begins to emerge at this juncture of the poem: 'here we have a bold attempt to find expression for the inexpressible, in which the "chiastic" formality of the terms sug-

13 'Ché se la voce tua sarà molesta / nel primo gusto, vital nodrimento / lascerà poi, quando sarà digesta. / Questo tuo grido farà come vento, / che le più alte cime più percuote; / e ciò non fa d'onor poco argomento' ('For, if your voice is bitter at first taste, / it will later furnish vital nourishment / once it has been swallowed and digested. / This cry of yours shall do as does the wind / that strikes the highest peaks with greater force – / this loftiness no little sign of honor' (*Par.* XVII.130–5).

14 'A blend of sounds, especially the voices of the angels singing together. In the inclusive meaning of "chord," "composite structure, coordinated with the harmony of the whole" with reference to a musical instrument in *Pd.* XIV, 118.'

15 'To be understood as "to harmonize," "to accord."'

16 L. Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony*, 93–5.

gests the eternal oneness and with that the eternal diversity of God in His being and working which *seem* to alternate and *are* simultaneous and unchanging.'[17] From this point onwards, music, in its polyphonic variety, is employed to signify what is inexpressible with words. It is a notion that had already been announced in the heaven of the sun, when the souls of the wise start a dance that resembles the opposite rotations in the mechanism of a clock. Likewise, their singing is governed by a concord harmony:

> Indi, come orologio che ne chiami
> ne l'ora che la sposa di Dio surge
> a mattinar lo sposo perché l'ami,
> che l'una parte e l'altra tira e urge,
> tin tin sonando con sì dolce nota,
> che 'l ben disposto spirto d'amor turge;
> così vid'ïo la gloriosa rota
> muoversi e render voce a voce in tempra
> e in dolcezza ch'esser non pò nota
> se non colà dove gioir s'insempra. (*Par.* X.139–48)

> ('Then, like a clock that calls us at the hour / when the bride of God gets up to sing / matins to her bridegroom, that he should love her still, / when a cog pulls one wheel and drives another, / chiming its ting-ting with notes so sweet / that the willing spirit swells with love, / thus I saw that glorious wheel in motion, / matching voice to voice in harmony / and with sweetness that cannot be known / except where joy becomes eternal.')

I should like to emphasize the critical importance of the fact that music is produced by the clock or – as elsewhere – the planets: they are both mechanisms whose function is to measure time, which is also a constitutive element of music.[18] But the connection between the combination of different cogs, as in a clock, or heavens into a system that rotates according to one rhythm, and the various musical parts of an *organum*, was less obvious than it may appear today: new ways of organizing and codifying the mensural system, especially employed in polyphonic performances,

17 J.D. Sinclair, *Divine Comedy*, *Paradise*, note to canto XIV.118.

18 Cf. J. Freccero: 'The Dance of the Stars,' *Dante Studies* 86 (1968): 85–111; repr. in J. Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, 221–44.

were theorized in the second half of the thirteenth century.[19] Dante weaves this technical novelty of musical language within his poetry in the picture of a Troubadour *aubade*. The theme of the *aubes* is recurrent in Troubadour poetics, but those who connect Dante's lofty conception solely to that repertory fail to understand its real significance. In fact, the archetype of this genre for the Troubadours themselves is the Song of Songs.[20] The kind of love that is recalled here is therefore not the earthly feeling of courtly ambience of the Provençal lyric, but the Love of God. In the 'amorous harmony'[21] of the image of the clock are woven together harmony (both as musical quality and *Stimmung*), Christian Love, and the measure of time – a powerful triad that shows how metaphor and musical imagery are necessary to comprehend, if not the mystery of Trinity, at least its visual/acoustic representation. The fusion of Love and song confirms that music is the means through which Grace is delivered; St Paul had already bound Christian Love and Music in an indivisible σύνολον: 'Si linguis hominum loquar, et Angelorum caritatem autem non habear, factus sum velut aes sonans, aut cymablum tinniens.'[22]

Certainly not noisy or clanging, Dante's martyrs and crusaders are portrayed as wondrous musicians forming a fiery cross in the heaven of Mars. With a simile inspired by polyphonic performances, the sweet mingling of viol and harp notes rises from the fiery cross, whose tightened strings form a tinkling chord (*tempra*). However, Dante cannot make out the words of this engaging hymn:

> E come giga e arpa, in tempra tesa
> di molte corde, fa dolce tintinno
> a tal da cui la nota non è intesa,
> così da' lumi che lì m'apparinno
> s'accogliea per la croce una melode
> che mi rapiva, sanza intender l'inno. (*Par.* XIV.118–23)

19 Franco of Cologne, the outstanding music theorist of his time, produced his *Ars cantus mensurabilis* around 1260, and John of Garland's *De musica mensurabili* was composed only in the 1280s.

20 See P. Dronke, 'The Song of Songs and Medieval Love-Lyric,' in his *The Medieval Poet and His World* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1984), 209–36.

21 This revealing observation was first made by P. Dronke, 'The Song of Songs and Medieval Love-Lyric,' 154

22 1 Corinthians 13:1: 'If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.'

('And as viol and harp strung with many strings / in their harmony will sound sweet / even to one who fails to catch their tune, / so from the lights that there appeared to me / a melody gathered and came from the cross, / enchanting me, though I could not make out the hymn.')

We should note how *tempra* is again a keyword for polyphony, indicating a chord in Dante's language. Thus the question remains to be asked whether the chord results from two melodic lines, one played by a viola and the other by a harp, or from several notes played on each instrument. Since the text states that 'many strings' tinkle in sweet harmony, I suggest we imagine this song (it is in fact a vocal song, whose lyrics are incomprehensible to Dante) as having several notes played together simultaneously. However, I will show below that sometimes the mingling of voices in a chord is implied intratextually – by reference, that is, to previous passages of the poem.

In the scholastic-tinged section of cantos XXIV–XXVI, Dante represents himself as a disciple before his teacher, employing the language of Scholasticism and staging a real theological examination in which St Peter, St James, and St John probe his theoretical and practical knowledge of the three theological virtues. The poet identifies the source of his hope in the reading of the Psalms, recognizing in their *teodìa* the power to inspire hope. The word *teodìa* is a neologism of Dante's, created on the pattern of *salmodìa*, and refers to the Psalms' theological significance as well as their performable quality. To the psaltery Dante attributes a specifically musical capacity to restore hope. Canto XXV expresses Dante's wish for a homecoming after the hardships of his exile.

Se mai continga che 'l poema sacro
al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra,
sì che m'ha fatto per molti anni macro,
vinca la crudeltà che fuor mi serra
del bello ovile ov' io dormi' agnello,
nimico ai lupi che li danno guerra;
con altra voce omai, con altro vello
ritornerò poeta, e in sul fonte
del mio battesmo prenderò 'l cappello ... (*Par.* XXV.1–9)

('Should it ever come to pass that this sacred poem, / to which both Heaven and earth have set their hand / so that it has made me lean for many

> years, / should overcome the cruelty that locks me out / of the fair sheepfold where I slept as a lamb, / foe of the wolves at war with it, / with another voice then, with another fleece, / shall I return a poet and, at the font / where I was baptized, take the laurel crown.')

St James, who questions Dante on hope the way a Parisian teacher would a theology student, was the author of an inspiring letter to which the poet pays his debt of gratitude by remembering it in the sacred poem. The allusion to coronation in James's letter ('Beatus vir qui suffert tentationem, cum probatus fuerit, accipiet coronam vitae')[23] would incline the medieval reader to think that the poet, who wished a poetic coronation for himself at the beginning of the canto (line 9: 'cappello'), merits that recognition. The heavenly court immediately endorses the response of the pupil with a majestic chant:

> E prima, appresso al fin d'este parole,
> '*Sperent in te*' di sopr' a noi s'udì;
> a che rispuoser tutte le carole. (*Par.* XXV.97–9)

> ('At once, as soon as these words ended, / *Sperent in te* was heard above us, / to which all circles of the blessed responded.')

Once again, we need to skip ahead in order to discover more details regarding the nature of this performance: a sweet blend of sounds ('dolce mischio'), it is produced by the united voices of the three saints – Peter, James, and John ('trino spiro') – which all end in perfect accordance at a common signal: 'tutti si posano al sonar d'un fischio' ('stop all at once when the whistle sounds') (*Par.* XXV.131, 132, 135). The solemnity of the song underscores the heavenly court's approval of the student's answers. Dante's successful exam and theological coronation point to his coronation as a poet (which, unlike Petrarch, he will never achieve) and sanctions the consecration of his poetic message.

At this point Dante is blinded from staring into the light of St John, in an attempt to fathom the mysterious legend according to which the Apostle was accepted into Heaven with his body. His sight is restored when he hears the *Sanctus* (*Par.* XXVI.69) being liturgically repeated

23 James 1:12: 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive a crown of life.'

three times, with Beatrice herself joining in the singing. At the end of this song, the manifestation of Adam, in his restored beatitude and perfection, ideally closes the cycle of human evolution: the first man has been saved after the Fall and placed among the highest seats of Paradise. Adam's reference to Nimrod (XXVI.126), when treating the subject of his language, cannot fail to recall the gibberish of the giant mangling a psalm in *Inferno* XXXI.67–9, but the hymn to the Trinity following the inception of the next canto compensates, in retrospect, for the giant's musical blunder.

Finally, the glorious *Osanna* produced by the second triad of angels – and anticipated at line 94: 'Io sentiva osannar di coro in coro' ('From choir to choir I heard *Hosanna* sung') – is presented, again, as the interweaving of three melodic lines:

> L'altro ternaro ...
> perpetüalemente '*Osanna*' sberna
> con tre melode, che suonano in tree
> ordini di letizia onde s'interna. (*Par.* XXVIII.115, 118–20)

> ('The second triad ... / ever sings hosannas, the threefold [melodies] / resounding in the threefold ranks / of bliss by which they are intrined.')

Modern commentators display substantial indifference towards this song, with the exception of Ernesto Turchi, who follows an ill-ventured interpretation of it by Arnaldo Bonaventura as a nine-part *organum*.[24] Nine-part polyphony was hardly conceivable in Dante's day, and the text explicitly states that it is the second triad, not all the triads, that sings; in addition, the vocal parts are three (*tre melode*), not nine. However, if there are three different melodic lines and they are sung perpetually, there will necessarily result a polyphonic performance! In fact, some early commentators understood these three melodies as a tripartite song that recalls a three-voice *organum*. Benvenuto of Imola expresses it in the clearest way: the angels sing 'a threefold song, because every triad makes its own distinct song according to their different offices, and still they all resound and harmonize in magnificent intervals.'[25] Hosanna is a

24 Arnaldo Bonaventura, *Dante e la musica* (Livorno: Giusti, 1904). Ottimo, Benvenuto of Imola, and John of Serravalle acknowledge instead the threefold quality of this song.

25 'Trium cantuum, quia omnis ordo facit suum cantum distinctum secundum diversitatem officiorum, qui tamen omnes mirabili proportione conveniunt et consonant.'

prayer of salvation, in Hebrew meaning 'please save': the angels' solemn song perpetually entreats salvation for men; however, the fact that Dante places this song precisely here is meaningful (after all, the whole of the *Paradiso* is but a demonstration specifically staged to suit the pilgrim's – and thus the reader's – cognitive needs). After his examination on the theological virtues the angels solemnly sing a prayer that is only the first step in the escalation to the vision of God, via the successive intercessions of St Bernard and the Virgin. Furthermore, this polyphonic Hosanna mirrors the musicless 'Miserere' uttered by an almost lost Dante in *Inferno* I.65, superseding it and overwriting it. The musical journey of the pilgrim thus comes full circle, starting with the first unsung chant, in obedience to infernal musical laws, continuing with the unisonal '*Miserere*' of the penitents in *Purgatorio* V.24, and culminating with the last song of the poem, set to a stately performance by the second triad of angels.

The occurrences of polyphony in Paradise express the attainment of complete harmony and concord, on both musical and spiritual levels. References to polyphonic performance constitute a complex architecture, whose inherently musical meaning mirrors the reconciliation of multiplicity and unity. Boethius's words can now be enriched with a second, deeper meaning.[26] It is Dante's solution to the age-old problem of reconciling the multiplicity of individuals with the unity of the Creator. The switch from monophony to polyphony coincides with a cathartic progress toward spiritual union with the Creator. There is a specifically musical quality to this purification process. For the penitents, monophonic singing is the tool of purification as the individual struggles for harmony.[27] Harmony with the Supreme Being is attained, spiritually as

26 See p. 159 and n. 7, above.

27 Dante's conception of music as a means of catharsis is not only his own: in the *Liber de musica* of Johannes Vetulus de Anagna, an author of treatises who lived between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, the following passage is found: 'Primo videndum est quid sit musica, quid sit subiectum in ea, unde dicatur et ad quem finem tendat. Est enim musica scientia mollificans duritiem et pravitatem cordis humani corporis ad caelestia contemplandum ... Subiectum est quod agitur per totam scientiam, videlicet sonoritas vocum et ipsarum melodia. Et dicitur musica a moys graece quod est aqua et logos quod est scientia alias sermo quia talis scientia inventa fuit iuxta aquas, et merito. Nam sicut aqua abluit sordes et reficit corpora, sic ista scientia diluit merores mentis et erigit ipsam ad iocunditatem. Finis ad quem tendit est tota laus dei.' ('First one must establish what music is, what its subject matter, what it is named after, and what its goal is. Indeed, music is a science that loosens up the hardness and evilness of the human heart to the contemplation of celestial things ... The subject of

well as musically, through the polyphonic resonance of the souls within the music of God.

The use of corporeal deformation in association with musical instruments is a recurring rhetorical device in the *Inferno*. Ciacco's fleshly body reawakened by the Judgment Day trumpet, Master Adam's lute and drum, the devil sounding an indecent trumpet, are all perverted deteriorations of the heavenly lyre, tuned directly by God, the *cetra* and the *sampogna* composed by the bodies of light of the blessed. With a parallel design to the perversion sacred hymns, the distorted representation of musical instruments in Inferno takes a specifically corporeal character. This rhetorical choice reflects a theoretical set of values, as found in music treatises by Boethius and Regino of Prüm. They all assign to artificial instrumental music – the music produced by instruments – the lowliest place in the concert of the universe. Once again Dante's art reaches beyond merely aesthetic boundaries and employs parody in order to incorporate musical discourse into the metaphysical and moral worlds of the *Commedia*.

Polyphony as Political Harmony

After the homage to the glory of the Prime Mover, which in various measures permeates the whole universe, the cantica opens, according to the canon of medieval rhetoric, with the invocation to a poetic authority to grant inspiration. The summons – this time addressed to Apollo, god of beauty and music – complements and completes that of the invocation to the Muses of *Purgatorio* I.8–9, responding to it with an *exemplum* of yet crueller revenge: there, the Pierides were turned into magpies by their

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this science is the sonority of voices and melody itself, and it is called music from the Greek '*moys*,' that is, 'water,' and '*logos*,' that is, science and discourse, because this science was invented near the water, and for good reason: in fact as water washes away filth and restores the body, so this science cleanses the afflictions of the mind and raises it to cheerfulness. The goal to which it tends is the complete praise of God.') *Liber de musica Iohannis Vetuli de Anagnia*, ed. Frederick Hammond, in *Corpus scriptorum de musica*, vol. 27, general editor J. Smits van Waesbergh (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1977), 26. Leaving aside the bizarre – to say the least – etymology, it is pertinent to note the cathartic role attributed to music by Dante's contemporary and its complementary value in the praise of God: its end is *tota laus Dei*: the praise of God would not be entire or complete without music.

rival Calliope; here there is the recollection of the martyrdom of Marsyas, who was skinned alive in retribution for his foolish pride. Both stories are taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and both are about personages who believed themselves to be better musicians than their divine rivals.

Thus, with both peaks of Mount Parnassus – Cyrrha, sacred to Apollo, and Nyssa or Nisa, sacred to the Muses – guiding the poet's pen, Dante sets about the most arduous of tasks: that of representing in words the heavens and God, despite the fact that 'cose che ridire / né sa né può chi di là sù discende' ('He who comes down from there / can neither know nor tell what he has seen') (*Par.* I.5–6). The twin summits of Parnassus are symbols of divine wisdom and human knowledge, the two guides by means of which the poet will fulfil his theological and poetic mission, without vying with a god for supremacy in either of these fields, but rather by setting an example for politicians and writers and thereby proving himself deserving of the laurel:

O divina virtù, se mi ti presti
tanto che l'ombra del beato regno
segnata nel mio capo io manifesti,
vedra'mi al piè del tuo diletto legno
venire, e coronarmi de le foglie
che la materia e tu mi farai degno.
Sì rade volte, padre, se ne coglie
per trïunfare o cesare o poeta,
colpa e vergogna de l'umane voglie,
che parturir letizia in su la lieta
delfica deïtà dovria la fronda
peneia, quando alcun di sé asseta.
Poca *favilla* gran *fiamma* seconda:
forse di retro a me con miglior *voci*
si pregherà perché Cirra risponda.
Surge ai *mortali* per diverse foci
la *lucerna* del mondo; ma da quella
che quattro cerchi giugne con tre croci,
con miglior corso e con migliore stella
esce congiunta, e la *mondana cera*
più a suo modo *tempera* e *suggella.* (*Par.* I.22–42; my emphasis)

('O holy Power, if you but lend me of yourself / enough that I may show the merest shadow / of the blessèd kingdom stamped within my mind, / you

> shall find me at the foot of your belovèd tree, / crowning myself with the very leaves / of which my theme and you will make me worthy. / So rarely, father, are they gathered / to mark the triumph of a Caesar or a poet – / fault and shame of human wishes – / that anyone's even longing for them, / those leaves on the Peneian bough, should make / the joyous Delphic god give birth to joy. / Great *fire* leaps from the smallest *spark*. / Perhaps, in my wake, prayer will be shaped / with better words so Cyrrha may respond. / The *lamp* of the world rises on us *mortals* / at different points. But, by the one that joins / four circles with three crossings, it comes forth / on a better course and in conjunction / with a better sign. Then it *tempers* and *imprints* / the *wax of the world* more to its own fashion.')

This opening, perhaps better than any other in the *Commedia*, weaves together the theological, the political, and the ethical components that Croce identifies in the sacred poem.[28] Dante tells us, in a few, scintillating lines, that he aspires to the highest poetical recognition for this work, which will be about Christian poetry ('O divina virtù,' 'la materia e tu mi farai degno'), politics ('Sì rade volte, padre, se ne coglie / per trïunfare o cesare o poeta'), and morals ('colpa e vergogna de l'umane voglie'). As he wishes for poets and rulers to pray with *better voices* than they have – evidently – done so far, he uses a language that goes beyond the blatantly musical character of the reference to Cyrrha-Apollo. Although it may appear difficult, at a first glance, to identify the musical nature of the imagery employed in the above lines, here Dante uses a compact lexical cluster which he re-proposes several cantos later, in one of the most musically striking similes of the poem. It behoves us, therefore, to jump forward in the poem and look at a later passage in order to better understand these lines. In the heaven of Venus, the *descant* of the blessed is evoked with the synaesthetic effect of a spark discernible within a flame, like two singers' overlapping voices, one holding a note, the other moving:

> E come in *fiamma favilla* si vede,
> e come in *voce voce* si discerne,
> quand' una è ferma e altra va e riede,
> vid' io in essa luce altre *lucerne* ... (*Par.* VIII.16–19; my emphasis)

28 B. Croce, *La poesia di Dante* (Bari: Laterza, 1921).

('And, as one sees a *spark* within a *flame* / or hears, within a song, a second *voice*, / holding its note while the other comes and goes / so I saw within that light still other *lights* ...')

In this other passage, the words *fiamma* and *favilla* resurface in conjunction with *voce*, in the singular but reiterated, so as to express graphically and phonetically the plurality of voices. We are about to meet Charles Martel, son of Charles II of Anjou and Mary of Hungary. Crowned king of Hungary in 1292, he was going to legitimately become lord of Provence and King of Naples, when death found him. Certainly this unfulfilled sovereign won Dante's sympathy, probably during an encounter in Florence in 1294. Had Charles Martel lived, the house of Anjou's dastardly Pope-supported plans of controlling Florence would have failed and the world would have seen 'more than the first leaves of his love' ('di mio amor più oltre che le fronde') (*Par.* VIII.57) – that is, not only words, but deeds. The textual correspondences of Charles Martel's episode with *Paradiso* I.34–6 come to the fore when we look at the recurrence of *fiamma*, *favilla*, *voci*, *tempera*, *cera*, *suggella*, and *lucerna* in both passages. It is an intratextual link that Dante opens to implicitly compare Charles to the sun, the beacon of the world, which has the power to shape and give form to the earthly wax. I have shown above the musical implications of the word *temperare*, which indicates not only the combining and shaping but also the tuning of the different elements into a harmonic unity. Charles would have been the moulder of 'cera mortal' (cf. 'mondana cera' also in conjunction with 'suggella' in *Par.* I.41–2, above) capable of fusing in a harmonious political body the strident voices of earth:

La circular natura, ch'è *suggello*
a la *cera mortal*, fa ben sua arte (*Par.* VIII, 127–8)

('Circling nature, which sets its seal / on mortal *wax*, *plies* its craft with skill.')

The recurrence of *fiamma* and *favilla*, the power of infinite replication of fire, symbolizes the power of the poetic word, which, like the *logos*, is a mirror image of the divine word *verbum*. The spark sown by poets can kindle a great flame in the hearts of rulers, inspiring them to govern righteously.

Polyphony, like politics, brings together different voices, and it is no

coincidence that Charles Martel, the exemplar of the good ruler, is introduced by a simile based on an *organum*. In fact, Charles's words, after a survey of the geography of the kingdom, focus on what was technically called an *organum duplum*, a type of polyphonic setting that was widespread in the Middle Ages, sung on the word *Osanna* by the rest of the blessed. Among these spirits are the lights of Cunizza of Romano, Folquet of Marseille, and Raab, singing:

> e dentro a quei che più innanzi appariro
> sonava '*Osanna*' sì, che unque poi
> di rïudir non fui sanza disiro. (*Par.* VIII.28–30)

('And from among the closest that appeared / rang out *Hosanna* so that ever since / I have not been without the wish to hear it.')

As we have seen, sometimes, Dante's compositional technique forces us to leap forward in the poem, searching for meaning in a canto far ahead, and then go back and illuminate the former verses with the help of latter. The reader must consider the poem as a whole to understand the single tercets. It is a backward procedure, a hysteron proteron similar to what happens in *Paradiso* II.22–5:

> Beatrice in suso, e io in lei guardava;
> e forse in tanto in quanto un quadrel posa
> e vola e da la noce si dischiava,
> giunto mi vidi ...

('Beatrice was gazing upward, my gaze fixed on her, / when, perhaps as quickly as a bolt strikes, / flies, and releases from its catch, / suddenly I found myself there ...')

The trajectory of the quarrel is shown – as in a reverse videotape – from its hitting of the target, flying backwards through the air, and back into the bow's notch, just like Dante's perception of his flight to the Heaven of the Moon: the rise is so instantaneous that the pilgrim realizes what is going on only when he is already up and retraces in his mind the incredible velocity of the ascent. Poetry and politics thus meet at the crossroad of musical imagery: the acoustic simile makes us realize that the blend of voices means a blend of good wills, a harmonious cohabitation of individuals in a homogeneous unity.

The Boethian notion of a concord of different voices runs along the same lines of the celebrated Ciceronian passage that seems to underlie the very structure of *Paradiso* as the city whose order is perfectly proportioned to musical ratio and justice:

> Ut enim in fidibus aut tibias atque ut in canto ipso ac vocibus, concentus est quidam tenendus ex distinctis sonis, quem immutatum ac discrepantem aures eruditae ferre non possunt; isque concentus ex dissimilarum vocum moderatione concors tamen efficitur et congruens; sic e summis et infimis et mediis et interiectis ordinibus, ut sonis moderata ratione civitas consensus dissimilorum concinit; et *quae harmonia a musicus dicitur in cantu, ea est in civitate Concordia*, altissimum atque optimum in omni republica vinculum incolumitatis, eaque sine iustitia nullo pacto esse potest.[29]

> ('For just as in the music of harps and flutes or in the voices of singers a certain harmony of the different tones must be preserved, the interruption or violation of which is intolerable to trained ears, and as this perfect agreement and harmony is produced by the proportionate blending of unlike tones, so also is a State made harmonious by agreement among dissimilar elements, brought about by a fair and reasonable blending together of the upper, middle and lower classes, just as if they were musical tones. *What the musicians call harmony in song is concord in a State*, the strongest and best bond of permanent union in any commonwealth; and such concord can never be brought about without the aid of justice.')

In these lines, the musical metaphor is explicit, and although Dante must not have known more of Cicero's *Republic* than the excerpt of the *Dream of Scipio*, the notion of musical harmony as political allegory is also found in an author very dear to Dante, Hugh of St Victor, who in the *Allegoriae in Vetus Testamentum* interprets the accordance of different sounds as the solid unity of the various but concordant parts of the Church:

> Diversorum sonorum rationabilis moderatusque concentus concordi varietate compactam ordinatae Ecclesiae significat unitatem, quae variis modis quotidie resonat, et suavitate mystica modulatur.[30]

29 Cicero, *De republica*, trans. Clinton Walker Keyes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), II.42; my emphasis.

30 *PL*, vol. 175, col. 691.

('The rational and measured harmony of different sounds in a concordant variety signifies the compact unity of the orderly Church, which in various modes resounds every day, and is modulated with mystic sweetness.')

Hugh's simile connects the earthly to the theological: the Church here appears as a complex structure whose many parts form a compact unity. It is not quite the Church of Dante's invectives. Nevertheless the poet employs exactly the same musical rhetoric to signify theological peace among the Doctors of the Church, only with much more magnificent and stunning poetic results.

According to a principle of higher reconciliation, the rhetorical structure of the sequence of *Paradiso* XI–XII begins with a Dominican introducing the Franciscan monks and ends with a Franciscan presenting the Dominicans. As Siger of Brabant stands by the side of his theological opponent (Thomas), so does Joachim of Fiore stand next to Bonaventure, the fierce adversary of Joachimism. All theological divergences here subside and recompose in the joyful peace of the choirs, perfectly attuned to one another. The artful chiastic construction of the double eulogy of St Francis and St Dominic, founders of the two most influential mendicant orders of the late Middle Ages, assigned respectively to the most eminent character of the other order, is filled with musical elements. The polyphonic game of canon-imitations and responses resolves, repays, and dissolves all doctrinal frictions and divergences that, on earth, were frequent between the two orders. It is not coincidence that Dante stages the political and theological reconciliation of Dominicans and Franciscans in musical terms: a tradition existed according to which in 1225 Francis, though already ill, helped pacify a feud between the Bishop and the *podestà* of Assisi by composing a song and having it performed before them.[31]

31 The song is the stanza about forgiveness in the Canticle of the Creatures: 'Laudato si', mi Signore, per quelli che perdonano per lo Tuo amore / et sostengono infirmitate et tribulatione. / Beati quelli ke 'l sosterranno in pace, / ka da Te, Altissimo, sirano incoronati' ('Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love, / and bear infirmity and tribulation. / Blessed are those who endure in peace / for by You, most high, they shall be crowned.') (trans. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short). I am drawing this information from W.R. Cook and R.B. Herzman, 'What Dante Learned from Francis,' in *Dante and the Franciscans*, ed. S. Casciani (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 123–4. For more information see W.R. Cook, '*Beatus Pacificus*: Saint Francis of Assisi as Peacemaker,' *The Cord* 33 (1983): 130–6. The source of the account, however, is the *Assisi Compilation* 84, available in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. Regis J.

The second crown of spirits joins the circular dance singing in a marvellous double merry-go-round of rainbows, which departs as soon as the last word of Thomas's tribute to Francis is completed. The polyphonic quality of this event, already signalled in 'render voce a voce in tempra,' acquires now an enhanced resonance, amplified and multiplied by the spirits in the second crown.

> Come si volgon per tenera nube
> due archi paralleli e concolori,
> quando Iunone a sua ancella iube,
> nascendo di quel d'entro quel di fori,
> a guisa del parlar di quella vaga
> ch'amor consunse come sol vapori,
> e fanno qui la gente esser presaga,
> per lo patto che Dio con Noè puose,
> del mondo che già mai più non s'allaga:
> così di quelle sempiterne rose
> volgiensi circa noi le due ghirlande,
> e sì l'estrema a l'intima rispuose. (*Par.* XII.10–21)

> ('As twin rainbows, parallel in shape and color, / arc in their pathway through translucent clouds / when Juno gives the order to her handmaid – / the outer one born of the inner, / like the voice of that wandering nymph / whom love consumed as the sun does vapors – / and allow the people here on earth to know the future / because of the covenant God made with Noah, / that the world would not again be flooded / so the two wreaths of those eternal roses / circled all around us and, thus reflected, / the outer circle shone in answer to the inner.')

The doubling of the voices is not in unison, as Sapegno correctly suggests, because it is a mirror image, generated in the same way as a rainbow reflects sunbeams, or as an echo ('quella vaga / ch'amor consunse') returns to us: the echo is an imitation of our voice, but with a slight delay. The type of imitation that Dante describes to us is therefore not a simple monophony, as in *Purgatorio*, but something more complex, in which a

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Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short, 3 vols. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 3:187–8. Also available in P. Sabatier, *Mirror of Perfection* (London: David Nutt, 1900), 101.

second voice is extracted from the principal voice at a specified distance of tempo and/or pitch. This musical texture is specifically defined as a strict 'imitation,' and is very fittingly recalled here, as imitation is, according to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 'sometimes used to describe echoing or dialogue-like repetitions among parts.' In the thirteenth century the terminology in use to indicate the repetition of one part by another included such terms as 'rondellus,' 'chace,' 'caccia,' and 'caça,' all of which point to musical imitations of voices. This imitative practice was known very early, and there are examples in *organa* of the Notre Dame school, such as Perotinus's *Sederunt*, in *conductus* (*Procurans odium*, by an anonymous thirteenth-century author), and in motets (*S'on me regarde / Prenez en garde / Hé mi enfant*, also anonymous). In these lines depicting the twofold garland of spirits joyfully dancing around the pilgrim, Dante creates his own poetic imitation, having the double rainbow reverberated acoustically by the myth of Echo consumed by love, and evokes the technique of musical imitation, a widespread and relatively simple form of polyphony.

Just before the above quotation, the rhetorical edifice has already been founded on a system of verbal repetitions and assonances:

> e *moto* a *moto* e *canto* a *canto* colse;
> *canto* che *tanto* vince nostre muse,
> nostre serene in quelle dolci tube,
> *quanto* primo splendor quell ch'e refuse. (*Par.* XII.6–9; my emphasis)

> ('matching it *motion* for *motion* and *song* for *song*, / *song* that, heard from such sweet instruments, / *as far* excels our muses and our sirens / *as a* first shining its reflected rays.')

The play of internal rhymes and homoeoteleuta reproduces the effect of the echo. Not only that, the reflected splendour of line 9 suggests – albeit visually – the same concept. By uniting in one the visual and auditory effects, the simile of Echo's voice fading like sun-consumed dew (coming immediately after, in lines 14–15) also confirms the poetically compact unity of this passage. It is a clause within a clause, and a short simile within the ampler simile of the rainbow, all subservient to the rhetorical design of the biblical reference to Noah's covenant. The use of the biblical simile is also far from being merely an embellishment: the agreement between God and Noah turns our minds back to the newly established concord in Paradise between Dominicans and Franciscans, in a

canto which pays a reciprocal homage to the two orders. Before leaving the floor to Bonaventure's panegyric to St Dominic, the two garlands of spirits respond to one another – 'così ... / l'estrema a l'intima rispuose' ('so ... / the outer circle shone in answer to the inner') (lines 19, 21) – in singing and in motion, with the natural and instantaneous precision of blinking eyes:

> Poi che 'l tripudio e l'altra festa grande,
> sì del cantare e sì del fiammeggiarsi
> luce con luce gaudïose e blande,
> insieme a *punto* e a voler quetarsi,
> pur come li occhi ch'al piacer che i move
> conviene insieme chiudere e levarsi ... (*Par.* XII.22–7; my emphasis)
>
> ('When the dance and all the other celebration – / the singing and the brilliant blaze of flames, / light with light blent in ardent joy – / came to a stop together and of one accord, / as eyes, when beauty moves them, / must open wide or close as one ...')

The musical, contrapuntal valence of 'punto' is self-evident and climactic, happening as is does at the cadence. This 'point,' or 'instant,' symbolizes the exactness of celestial harmony, the accordance, the union of many wills in a musical performance, and makes us think of another spiritual union, the pilgrim's supreme spiritual moment, when another 'punto' flashes in the pilgrim's mind and shows the universal form of the knot that binds the human with the divine:[32]

32 The value of Dante's *punto* as the metaphysical centre of the universe recurs also in: 'si tacque Bëatrice, riguardando / fiso nel *punto* che m'avëa vinto' ('Beatrice was silent, staring intently /at the point that overcame me') (*Par.* XXIX.8–9); 'Non altrimenti il trïunfo che lude / sempre dintorno al *punto* che mi vinse, / parendo inchiuso da quel ch'elli 'nchiude' ('Not otherwise the victory that revels / in eternal joy around the point that overcame me / and seems enclosed by that which it encloses') (*Par.* XXX.10–12); 'Da questo passo vinto mi concedo / più che già mai da *punto* di suo tema / soprato fosse comico o tragedo' ('I declare myself defeated at this point / more than any poet, whether comic or tragic, / was ever thwarted by a topic in his theme') (*Par.* XXX.22–4); 'Dentro a l'ampiezza di questo reame / casüal *punto* non puote aver sito, / se non come tristizia o sete o fame' ('In all the ample range of this domain / no trace of chance can find a place – / no more than sorrow, thirst, or hunger') (*Par.* XXXII.52–4). It is this all-containing and yet inconsistent point that represents Bonaventure's *apex mentis*, Eckhart's 'uncreated spark.' See C. Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's 'Comedy*,' 142.

La forma universal di questo nodo
credo ch'i' vidi, perché più di largo,
dicendo questo, mi sento ch'i' godo.
Un *punto* solo m'è maggior letargo
che venticinque secoli a la 'mpresa
che fé Nettuno ammirar l'ombra d'Argo. (*Par.* XXXIII.91–6)

('I believe I understood the universal form / of this dense knot because I feel my joy expand, / rejoicing as I speak of it. / My memory of that moment is more lost / than five and twenty centuries make dim that enterprise / when, in wonder, Neptune at the *Argo*'s shadow stared.')

Thus, the double rainbow points ahead to Dante's 'forma universal,' the three circles of changing colours, as a symbol of perfect harmony. The point that stuns Dante is more overwhelming than the shadow of the keel of the Argo, the first ship to ever plough the sea, was to Neptune, because it is the moment in which the human nature of the pilgrim makes contact and resonates with that of the Supreme Entity: for a fleeting moment (an indefinable point) man sees all and knows all, in a flashing revelation. Then it is all too soon gone: the memory cannot recall it, the pen cannot write it.

The Impenetrable Song

A distinctive character of purgatorial chant was its intelligibility. When Matelda speaks while singing and dancing toward the pilgrim, the poet can state that ''l dolce suono / veniva a me co' suoi intendimenti' ('The sound of her sweet song / reached me together with its meaning') (*Purg.* XXVIII.59–60). The essence of purgatorial music resides precisely in the quality of its push toward collectivity: by quoting just a few words of a song, Dante recalls to our minds the entire multimedial text of words and music. Music is the implied subtext known to all readers.

In the realm of Heaven, music instead acquires a different quality, often one that goes beyond the pilgrim's (and the reader's) rational understanding. The *Paradiso* opens with a declaration of his mind's inability to grasp and articulate the visions the pilgrim has had during his ascent into heaven:

... e vidi cose che ridire
né sa né può chi di là sù discende;

perché appressando sé al suo disire,
nostro intelletto si profonda tanto,
che dietro la memoria non può ire (*Par.* I.5–9)

('He who comes down from there / can neither know nor tell what he has seen, / for, drawing near to its desire, / so deeply is our intellect immersed / that memory cannot follow after it.')

Dante uses the rhetorical device of *reticentia* to speak of the mysteries of faith and leaves to music the responsibility of conveying the mystical meaning. After a few lines Dante paraphrases Bonaventure's warning that trans-humanizing cannot be put down in words, and says that he will therefore resort to examples instead:

Trasumanar significar *per verba*
non si poria; però l'essemplo basti
a cui esperïenza grazia serba. (*Par.* I.70–2)

('To soar beyond the human cannot be described / in words. Let the example be enough to one / for whom grace holds this experience in store.')

This tercet would definitely trigger, in the mind of a learned fourteenth-century reader, a line from Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*: 'transitum et mentis excessum magis exemplo quam verbo.'[33] Dante will provide us examples of his 'excess of the mind,' because description in words will fail him, as Bonaventure had foretold: 'In hoc autem transitu, si sit perfectus, oportet quod relinquantur omnes intellectuales operations.'[34]

What means are left, then, when words prove insufficient to predicate infinity? Dante tries to provide a solution to this problem by committing to music what intellectual means alone cannot achieve. Because God cannot be entirely known, let alone described, according to human categories, God can only be predicated in a negative way, stressing the inadequacy of the human mind and language for this task.

33 'This passage and excess of the mind take place much more by example than by words.' Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deo*, VII.3, in *Opera omnia S. Bonaventurae*, vol. 5 (Quaracchi: Collegio San Bonaventura, 1891), 312.

34 'Moreover in this passage, if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities should be left behind' (Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deo*, VII.4, in *Opera omnia S. Bonaventurae*, 312).

The *via negativa* (negative reasoning) found its way from Byzantine modalities of thinking into medieval Christian thought through Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite and Gregory of Nissa, and Dante shows confidence in this method of treating the ineffable already in the *Convivio*. Of such unspeakable matters, he says:

> Poi, quando si dice: Elle soverchian lo nostro intelletto, escuso me di ciò, che poco parlar posso di quelle per la loro soperchianza. Dove è da sapere che in alcuno modo queste cose nostro intelletto abbagliano, in quanto certe cose [si] affermano essere, che lo 'ntelletto nostro guardare non può, cioè Dio e la etternitate e la prima materia: che certissimamente si veggiono e con tutta fede si credono essere, e pur quello che sono intender noi non potemo, se non cose negando si può apressare alla sua conoscenza, e non altrimenti. (*Conv.* III.xv.6)

> ('Then, when it says: They overwhelm our intellect, I excuse myself by saying that I can say little about these things because of their transcendency. Here we must observe that in a certain way these things dazzle our intellect, insofar as certain things are affirmed to exist which our intellect cannot perceive (namely God, eternity, and primal matter), things which most certainly are known to exist and are with full faith believed to exist. But given the nature of their essence we cannot understand them: only by negative reasoning can we approach an understanding of these things, and not otherwise.')

Alessandro Vettori has penned some remarkable pages on apophatic theology in the *Laude* of Iacopone da Todi, arguing that, when rational language fails, the poet chooses to stress the signifier rather than the signified, invents original words for the sake of assonance and rhythm, and brings the phonetic level to the fore, producing 'a quasi-hypnotic rhythm.'[35] Vettori shows how Franciscan poets gladly resort to a musical

35 A. Vettori, *Poets of Divine Love* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 188. See also Claudia Elisabeth Schurr, who proposes that music – in the *Paradiso* – be seen as a possible answer to the problem of poetic ineffability. C.E. Schurr, *Dante e la musica: Dimensione, contenuto e finalità del messaggio musicale nella 'Divina Commedia'* (Perugia: Cattedra di Storia della Musica dell'Università degli studi di Perugia, 1994), 27. The notion of apophatic discourse, while deriving from Aristotle's *Analitica priora*, I.i.24a, 19, was theologically elaborated by Dionysius the Areopagyte. Cf. Dionigi Areopagita, *Teologia Mistica*, in *Tutte le Opere*, vol. 3, ed. Piero Scazzoso (Milan: Rusconi, 1994), 412 (1033c).

language in the attempt to overcome the ineffability of the content of their visions: 'The prevalence of sound over meaning places Iacopone's poetic rhetoric closer to singing, which favors agreeable melody over semantics. The harmony resulting in such poetic texts, where the sounds surmount the literal or even the metaphorical significance of words, mirrors the harmony of the mystical union it portrays.'[36]

Dante uses a similar strategy, only he represents the singing and exploits a particular technical feature of it: the incomprehensibility of the words in the fragmented rhythm of polyphonic performance – the very flaw for which John XXII condemned *descant* in his *Docta sanctorum patrum*.[37]

Some Dante scholars have commented, though briefly, on this property of music. Alessandro Picchi, for example, writes that 'in the *Paradiso*, and particularly in cantos XIX and XX, which show so many truths, the revelations are always underlined by singing, in which the truths themselves are always echoed: the music reaches there where the intellect cannot reach.'[38] This shows the existence of two different attitudes towards polyphonic settings of the liturgical repertory: one traditional and tied to the power of the verbal content of the Gregorian chants; the other valuing the most exquisitely musical and mystical – Bonaventurian, one could say – aspect of singing. The exuberant liveliness of the dances is accompanied by songs whose literary texts become more and more impenetrable to the pilgrim, who is left with only some recollection of the sound. The music that, Dante says, 'mi rapiva, sanza intender l'inno' ('enchant[*ed]* me, though I could not make out the hymn') (*Par.* XIV.123), becomes the mode of mystical revelation. The further the pilgrim goes into the mysteries, the more the poet needs a means with a low level of semanticity to represent those mysteries, because the intellect cannot attain the level of abstraction necessary to fully understand the inscrutable, and the language becomes *corta favella*, failing to communicate the vision that the mind of the poet can hardly even retain. Thus music becomes 'the language of the spirit,' the means by which beatitude is delivered.[39] Reinhold Hammerstein underscores the link be-

36 A. Vettori, *Poets of Divine Love*, 187.

37 K.G. Fellerer, 'La *Constitutio docta sanctorum patrum* di Giovanni XXII e la musica nuova del suo tempo,' in *L'Ars nova italiana del Trecento*, vol. 3, ed. F. Alberto Gallo (Certaldo: Centro Studi sull'Ars nova italiana del Trecento, 1970), 9–17.

38 A. Picchi, 'Musicalità dantesca,' 185.

39 A. Picchi, 'Musicalità dantesca,' 194.

tween music and dance and their role as substitutes for verbal language in Paradise, where verbal language is unable to express the loftiness of the pilgrim's vision.[40] It is a consequence, on the poetic level, of the lofty, ineffable subject of the poem, and, indeed, the music sung from here on does not contain understandable text. This approaches Schopenhauer's notion of music as a privileged medium of expression: 'The composer reveals the innermost essence of the world and expresses the deepest wisdom of a language which his reason cannot comprehend.'[41] Dronke notes that metaphors, in the *Commedia*, are 'used in order to say things that Dante could not say in other ways,'[42] and quotes in support of this view the following excerpt from the letter to Cangrande:

> Multa namque per intellectum videmus quibus signa vocalia desunt: quod satis Plato insinuat in suis libris per assumptionem metaphorismorum; multa enim per lumen intellectuale vidit que sermone proprio nequivit exprimere.[43]
>
> ('For we perceive many things by the intellect for which language has no terms – a fact which Plato indicates plainly enough in his books by his employment of metaphors; for he perceived many things by the light of the intellect which his everyday language was inadequate to express.')

Thus musical metaphors and imagery supply a vital alternative source for poetic invention. In the heaven of Saturn, in which the contemplative spirits manifest themselves, Beatrice warns Dante that she will not smile, because her smile, as they soar, gains such splendour that Dante would be shattered and destroyed like Semele at the manifestation of Jove's full power.[44] The pilgrim is not yet ready to contemplate Beatrice's smile in its bursting radiance.

> E quella non ridea; ma 'S'io ridessi,'

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40 Reinhold Hammerstein, *Die Musik der Engel: Untersuchungen zur Musikanschauung des Mittelalters* (Bern: Francke, 1962), 198.

41 'Der Komponist offenbart das innerste Wesen der Welt und spricht die tiefste Weisheit aus, in einer Sprache, die seine Vernunft nicht versteht.' A. Schopenauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (Munich, 1911), 1:307 .

42 P. Dronke, *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 14.

43 Dante, *Epistles*, XIII.84.

44 Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III.256–309.

mi cominciò, 'tu ti faresti quale
fu Semelè quando di cener fessi:
ché la bellezza mia, che per le scale
de l'etterno palazzo più s'accende,
com' hai veduto, quanto più si sale,
se non si temperasse, tanto splende,
che 'l tuo mortal podere, al suo fulgore,
sarebbe fronda che trono scoscende.' (*Par.* XXI.4–12)

('She was not smiling. "If I smiled," / she said, "you would become what Semele became / when she was turned to ashes, / for my beauty, which you have seen / flame up more brilliantly the higher we ascend / the stairs of this eternal palace, / is so resplendent that, were it not tempered / in its blazing, your mortal powers would be / like tree limbs rent and scorched by lightning."')

Along with Beatrice's smile, in this sphere Heaven's sweet symphony also becomes quiet (*Par.* XXI.58).[45] The reason for this twofold silence is one and the same: this musical rest is part of a process of tempering or attuning (*temperasse*, line 10, above), as the musical fabric of the universe accommodates itself to the weakened pilgrim's senses. According to Pseudo-Dionysius, silence is also the condition for the highest contemplation; however, as Peter Damian explains, both Beatrice's smile and the singing are held back because the pilgrim is not ready to withstand them.[46]

So powerful, in fact, is the shout of the blessed at the end of the canto, that Dante is shaken and left without understanding of it:

45 Dante had hinted at the musical quality of Beatrice's smile in *Purg.* XXXI.136–8: 'Per grazia fa noi grazia che disvele / a lui la bocca tua, sì che discerna / la seconda bellezza che tu cele.' ('Of your grace do us a grace: unveil / your mouth to him so that he may observe / the second beauty that you still conceal.') The poet explains that 'within this wheel / the sweet symphony of Paradise falls silent' ('si tace in questa rota / la dolce sinfonia di paradiso') (*Par.* XXI.58–9). The meaning of *sinfonia* is to be traced back to Isidore of Seville: 'Symphonia est modulationis temperamentum ex gravi et acuto concordantibus sonis, sive in voce, sive in flatu, sive in pulsu' ('Symphony is a mix of low and high pitches produced by the voice or a musical instrument') (*Etymologiae*, III.xx). Trans. Helen Dill Goode and Gertrudes C. Drake (Colorado Springs: Colorado College Music Press, 1980).

46 G. Busnelli, *Il concetto e l'ordine del 'Paradiso' dantesco: Indagini e studii, preceduti da una lettera di Francesco Flamini*, 2 (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1911–12), 105–113, 91.

Dintorno a questa vennero e fermarsi,
e fero un grido di sì alto suono,
che non potrebbe qui assomigliarsi;
né io lo 'ntesi, sì mi vinse il tuono. (*Par.* XXI.139–42)

('They thronged around him and then stopped and raised / a cry so loud that nothing here / could be compared to it – nor could I make it out, / so did its thunder overwhelm me.')

Dante's mortal senses prove insufficient not only to comprehend the words, but even to withstand the musical message of this heaven. What is, then, the role of singing in this section of *Paradiso*? In fact, what Dante cannot grasp is the meaning of the words, about which Beatrice nonetheless discloses some information at the beginning of the following canto :

Come t'avrebbe trasmutato il canto,
e io ridendo, mo pensar lo puoi,
poscia che 'l grido t'ha mosso cotanto;
nel qual, se 'nteso avessi i prieghi suoi,
già ti sarebbe nota la vendetta
che tu vedrai innanzi che tu muoi. (*Par.* XXII.10–15)

('It should be clear to you just how their song, / and then my smile, would have confused you, / since you were so startled by their cry. / In it, had you understood their prayers, / you would already recognize / the vengeance you shall see before you die.')

The pilgrim's failure to understand the verbal content of the revelations signals the approach of a radical turn in the development of the poem and its rhetorical strategies. The ascent to the sphere of the fixed stars hurls Dante into the sector of Gemini, under which he was born. Symbolizing a rebirth, this jump will enable the pilgrim to receive new powers: the dispensation of grace (*Par.* XXII.118–26) finally grants him the strength to sustain the light of the sun. But the first use of this enhanced sight is turned towards the Earth, with its paltry appearance, in compliance with Beatrice's direction, and contrary to the law that ruled Purgatory: 'di fuor torna chi 'n dietro si guata' ('he who looks back must then return outside') (*Purg.* IX.132). The pilgrim, moving his gaze from the Earth through the seven heavens of the planets, acquires the detachment necessary for contemplation and prepares for the *excessus mentis*:

la mente mia così, tra quelle dape
fatta più grande, di sé stessa uscìo ... (*Par.* XXIII.43–4)

('Just so my mind, grown greater at that feast, / burst forth, transported from itself, /and now cannot recall what it became.')

Now he is ready to bear Beatrice's smile, but this gift cannot be shared with the reader, its unspeakable beauty defeating the writer's poetic ability. As it omits the Triumph of Christ because it is inexpressible – 'così ... / convien saltar lo sacrato poema' ('so ... / the sacred poem must make its leap across') (*Par.* XXIII.61–2) – so the sacred poem 'skips' the representation of Beatrice's holy smile, initiating a series of lapses caused by the ineffability of the subject matter. The highest point of this ineffable *crescendo* will be the failing, and yet nonetheless absorbing, attempt to describe the vision of God. But this is exactly what Dante employs music for: where words fail, the poet resorts to musical language to deliver at least the sensation of the vision he had, as happens also in the song of the Apostles around Beatrice:

e tre fïate intorno di Beatrice
si volse con un canto tanto divo,
che la mia fantasia nol mi ridice.
Però salta la penna e non lo scrivo ... (*Par.* XXIV.22–5)

('Three times it circled Beatrice, / its song so filled with heavenly delight / my phantasy cannot repeat it. / And so my pen skips and I do not write it ...')

The ecstatic experience is so intense that the memory of it vanishes from his mind and the only thing the poet retains is a feeling of the music. Of this music he is able to recollect more precise aspects than the words that he is unable to remember, such as the music's polyphonic texture and the precision of its rhythm:

E come cerchi in tempra d'orïuoli
si giran sì, che 'l primo a chi pon mente
quïeto pare, e l'ultimo che voli;
così quelle carole, differentemente danzando, de la sua ricchezza
mi facieno stimar, veloci e lente. (*Par.* XXIV.13–18)

('And as wheels in the movements of a clock / turn in such a way that, to an observer, / the innermost seems standing still, the outermost to fly, / just so those dancers in their circling, / moving to a different measure, fast or slow, / let me gauge their wealth of gladness.')

In *Paradiso* X.139–44, the dance of the theologians is portrayed as perfectly timed cogs in a clock, rendering 'voce a voce in tempra.' Here, once more, Dante uses the word *tempra* to reference the clock's synchronized movement, and the ear of the reader runs back to the flawless polyphonic blend of those voices.

A similar procedure is employed for the Triumph of the Virgin, which is accompanied by the sweetest music:

> Qualunque melodia più dolce suona
> qua giù e più a sé l'anima tira,
> parrebbe nube che squarciata tona,
> comparata al sonar di quella lira
> onde si coronava il bel zaffiro
> del quale il ciel più chiaro s'inzaffira. (*Par.* XXIII.97–102)

('The sweetest melody, heard here below, / that most attracts our souls, / would seem a burst of cloud-torn thunder / compared with the reverberation of that lyre / with which the lovely sapphire that so ensapphires / the brightest heaven was encrowned.')

Although no explicit reference appears to polyphony, this 'circular melody' (line 109), to which all other lights respond by singing the name of Mary, is compared to the music of a lyre, whose polyphonic implications are discussed a propos of *Paradiso* XV.4 (pp. 191–2, below), and the music culminates in a choral '*Regina coeli*.' The comparison with the 'sweetest melody' that 'most attracts our souls' resonates with and compensates for the musical digression of Casella's song: this is the righteous music to which the pilgrim can finally safely abandon his soul.

Even the '*Te Deum*' with which the heavens endorse Dante's answers to Peter's questions on the matter of faith resounds through the heavens 'ne la melode che la sù si canta' ('with such melody as is only sung above') (*Par.* XXIV.113–14) to mark the different nature of this performance from that of the same hymn in *Purgatory* IX.140–1.

The musical experience becomes an attempt to circumvent the engulfment of language before the necessary jumps of the cut-off path: 'e

così, figurando il paradiso, / convien saltar lo sacrato poema, / come chi trova suo cammin riciso' ('And so, in representing Paradise, / the sacred poem must make its leap across, / as does a man who finds his path cut off') *(Par.* XXIII.61–3). Teodolinda Barolini, in her argument for a 'jumping' mode of the last section of the *Paradiso*, describes the passing from the *disagguaglianza* of earthly things to the *uguaglianza* of God in the narrative of the *Commedia* as a spate of stuttering points in the narrative, a progressive lapse into stillness that takes place through several leaps. The dénouement of the poem coincides with all elements finding rest in God's *equality*; therefore the path from mortality to eternity is a voyage from the *inequality* of life to the *equality* of death. But because the poet is so unequal to the subject of his poem, there are breaks in the narrative, shady zones which cannot but go unspoken, and Dante warns us that he is about to skip over these points because of the limitations of his mortal status.

A musical correlative of the textual abeyance and stuttering that begin in *Paradiso* XXIII, the lull in the symphony of Paradise accompanies the rhythm of the narrative and the insufficiency of the language with a rest, or pause, caused by the insufficiency of the pilgrim's senses. All these hints in the narrative and the musical texture point to the message writ large that canto XXIII marks a new beginning in the structure of the *Paradiso*, a transition to the final stretch in preparation for the supreme finale: 'these verses make explicit Dante's pursuit of a new kind of discourse; they express the concerted attempt to abandon straightforward narrativity for a more fractured, less discursive, less linear, ultimately more "equalized" or "unified" textuality.'[47]

The rhetorical fabric of the canto, which jumps from plot to invocation to apostrophe to simile to plot again, is also expressed in the syntactic fractures of enjambements, which are 'a rupture that unifies: the rupture of the syntax engenders the unifying of the verse, the *circulata melodia*.'[48] And this circulated melody, Barolini adds, is a hallmark of the entire canto in that it unifies what syntax disrupts. Music, in other words, tries to *fill in* the gaps left by the insufficiency of logical discourse and linguistic tools.

47 T. Barolini, 'The Sacred Poem Is Forced to Jump,' in *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 226.

48 T. Barolini, 'The Sacred Poem Is Forced to Jump,' 228.

Musical Instruments as Allegory

The display of musical instruments in Paradise includes the lyre, the cithara, the harp, the *giga*, and the *sampogna*. Except for the last two, these are all variants of the most sacred instrument of all: David's psaltery, whose salvific importance was such that it even lent its name to a book of the Bible. The cithara, in particular, is attributed with metaphysical powers. Nicetius, the sixth-century bishop of Triers, sees in David's cithara a figure of Christ:[49] the instrument is made of wood and strings, just like the cross, and this granted David the power to defeat the demon in Saul's body. But Nicetius's reading gave birth to an exegetic tradition followed by Bede, Hugh of St Victor, and the unknown author of the *Vitis mystica*. Hugh quotes Nicetius and also likens the cithara to the cross, attributing its powers solely to its resemblance to the cross:

> David adhuc puer in cithara suaviter, imo fortiter canens, malignum spiritum qui exagitabat Saulem compescebat: non quod eius cithara tantam virtutem haberet, sed figura crucis Christi, per lignum et chordarum extensionem mysticae gerebat, quae tunc daemones effugebat.[50]
>
> ('David, as a child, sang with the cithara now sweetly, now loudly, and forced out an evil spirit oppressing Saul, not because his cithara had such power, but because he used it as a figure of Christ, with the wood and the tension of the strings: he was thus able to drive out the demon.')

Bede, too, follows the same interpretive trend in his *Allegoriae in Samuel*:

> Neque enim putandum est, citharam illam, quamvis dulcissime resonantem, tantae potuisse virtutis existere, quae spiritus pelleret immundos: sed figura sanctae crucis, et ipsa quae canebatur passio dominica, jam tunc diaboli refringebat audaciam.[51]
>
> ('In fact, we must not think that, although resounding most sweetly, the ci-

49 'figura crucis Christi, quae in ligno et extensione nervorum mystice gerebatur' (*De psalmodiae bono*, *PL*, vol. 68, col. 371). Nicetius is today thought of as being the same as Niceta of Remesiana; however, he is listed as Nicetius Trevirensis in Migne's collection.

50 *Allegoriae in Vetus Testamentum* (*PL*, vol. 175, col. 692a).

51 *Allegoriae in Samuel*, III (*PL*, vol. 91, col. 609a–b).

thara had such a great virtue as to expel evil spirits: but because it is a figure of the holy cross and because of the Sunday Passion liturgy which was sung, the cithara could break the devil's strength.')

The high regard in which these Christian authors were held was reason enough for Dante to conceive of the *cetra/cithara* as a particularly noble instrument, as is proven not only by the simile in Paradise –

E come suono al collo de la cetra
prende sua forma, e sì com' al pertugio
de la sampogna vento che penètra ... (*Par.* XX.22–4)

('And as a sound is given shape / at the neck of the cithara[52] or by the wind / forced through the vent-holes of a bagpipe ...')

– but also by the *Convivio*, where the *cithara* is considered too lofty for musicians to lend it for money:

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 dee chiamare citarista chi tiene la cetera in casa per prestarla per prezzo, e non per usarla per sonare. (*Conv.* I.ix.3)

('To their shame I say that they should not be called learned, because they do not acquire learning for its own use but only insofar as through it they may gain money or honor; just as we should not call a cithara-player someone who keeps a cithara in his house for the purpose of renting it out, as opposed to playing on it.')

Emanuel Winternitz suggests that Dante here actually means, not David's cithara, but the cittern, a necked instrument that became very popular in the Quattrocento.[53] While this is possible, early commentators gloss *Paradiso* XX.22 using words such as 'cetera,' 'chitarra,' 'liuto' (Pietro di Dante and Ottimo), 'cithara' (Benvenuto of Imola), 'citra/chitarra' (Buti). They do not feel the need to specify that a medieval *cetra* or *cithara*

52 The Hollander translation has 'lute.'

53 Emanuel Winternitz, *Musical Instruments and Their Symbolism in Western Art* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), 57–8.

looked different from David's, which suggests a semantic and symbolical continuity of the aspects and virtues attributed to the biblical instrument. We should not forget, moreover, that if Dante in *Paradiso* XX uses *cetra* and *sampogna* as musical metaphors, what the pilgrim actually hears are the voices of five souls blended together and speaking in a harmony that is not only musical, but also spiritual, syntactical, and political. But what about the *sampogna*? How did it make it into the refined musical ambience of Dante's *Paradiso*? *Sampogna* is a vulgarization of *symphonia*, a term which was used in the Middle Ages to describe various instruments (including a kind of drum, as referred to by Isidore of Seville),[54] but in particular instruments capable of producing more than one sound simultaneously. The *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* suggests a bagpipe-like instrument (possibly deriving from *sumpōnyā* in the Book of Daniel 3:5, 10), or the hurdy-gurdy. Since the instrument evoked in Dante's text works with wind forced through the vent-holes, it must be a bagpipe, and indeed both Francesco Buti and Benvenuto of Imola, two commentators who are chronologically close to the poet's lifetime, regard it as such. The very etymology of *symphonia* points to its ability to produce multiple sounds – both drone and melody – and the word also meant, more generally, harmony.[55] Moreover, the association with the neck of the *cetra* – once again, David's instrument – anticipates the neck of the eagle mentioned in XX.27, through which the words of the five souls flow out in perfect accordance.[56] It is clear, then, what Dante's rationale must have been for this choice: the *sampogna* being an instrument able to produce harmony, he thought it fit for a polyphonic context, the same as the *giga* (an early version of the viola) and the *arpa* of *Paradiso* XIV.118–20 ('E come giga e arpa, in tempra tesa / di molte corde, fa dolce tintinno'), whose strings are tensed into a sweet chord, and the lyre of *Paradiso* XV.1–6.

> Benigna volontade in che si liqua
> sempre l'amor che drittamente spira,

54 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum libri*, III.xxii.14.

55 Medieval theoreticians such as Aurelian of Réôme and Cassiodorus define the term as follows: 'Symphonia est suavis copulatio vocum' ('Symphonia is a sweet union of voices'); 'Symphonia est dulcis concentus' ('Symphonia is a sweet blend of voices'). I quote from Hans Peter Gysin, *Studien zum Vokabular der Musiktheorie im Mittelalter* (PhD diss., Basel, 1958; Zurich: A Kohler Ruti, 1959), 17.

56 David, Ripheus, William II of Sicily, and the emperors Constantine and Trajan.

come cupidità fa nella iniqua,
  silenzio puose a quella dolce lira,
e fece quïetar le sante corde
che la destra del cielo allenta e tira. (*Par.* XV.1–6)

('Benevolent will, in which a righteous love / whose breath is true must always show itself, / as does cupidity within an evil will, / had silenced the sweet-sounding lyre / and hushed the sacred strings that Heaven's right hand / loosens and draws taut.')

In these lines a *Deus musicus*, as Iannucci tells us, acts directly upon the strings of a lyre, a metaphor of the perfectly synchronized voices of the theologians, who follow a superior musical design, their wills attuned to one other because they are attuned to the One will of God.[57] The notion of God as musician came to Dante from St Augustine, who in an epistle to his friend Marcellinus describes the unfolding of human history as the performance of a marvellous song composed by the Supreme Artificer.[58]

Now that the musical contours and soundscape of Heaven have been drawn, it remains to see how such a concert resonates *in aeterno* around Dante's universe and how the theological frame of Dante's Paradise makes room for the music of the spheres.

57 A. Iannucci, 'Musica e ordine nella *Divina Commedia* (*Purgatorio* II),' in *Studi americani su Dante*, ed. G.C. Alessio and R. Hollander (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1989), 87–111.

58 'Velut magnum carmen cuiusdam ineffabilis modulatoris' ('Like the marvelous song of an unspeakable artist') (Augusine, *Epistles*, CXXXVIII.i.5; also available in *PL*, vol. 33.)

5 The Music of the Spheres

> 'As Pythagoras proves, this world was formed by music and is governed by it.'[1]

The tradition of the Church Fathers had inherited from the classical world a beautiful notion of a universe in which musical and cosmic structures express the same mathematical ratios and are bound by the sounds that the celestial bodies emit in a harmonious blend as they revolve around one another. The etymology of the word 'harmony' derives from the Greek ἁρμόττω, 'to assemble,' 'to put together.' More than merely a musical term, harmony had thus become a way of conceiving the universe and Creation. Originally formulated by Pythagoras, this view of the cosmos was transmitted through many writers before its adoption in the Christian Middle Ages.[2]

The concept of the harmony of the spheres has never ceased to appeal to philosophers and poets, and some critics have attempted to identify indisputable references to it in Dante's representation of Heaven. Only a few scholars have raised doubts that the poet had embraced this theory. In truth, however, Dante's treatment of this subject is more complex than has hitherto been acknowledged, and there are major obstacles to

1 Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*, trans. H. Dill Good and Gertrude C. Drake (Colorado Springs: Colorado College Music Press, 1980), II.ii.

2 The most important of these authors are Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, II.xxi–xxii.83–4; Iginus, *De astronomia*, IV.xiv.4; Aristides Quintilianus, *De musica libri tres*, III.20; Ptolomaeus, *Harmonicorum*, III.3–4, 8–16; Censorinus, *De die natali*, XIII; Favonius, *Disputatio de Somnio Scipionis*, II; Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, I; and Macrobius, *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis*, II.i.4–25; ii.1–24.

dismissing the question outright, as if Dante firmly believed in the music of the spheres: there is simply no textual evidence that he did, as not a word is devoted to this philosophical issue in any of Dante's works. Moreover, he must have been aware of Aristotle's opposition to the conception as reported by Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great, and the fact that all Aristotelianism resolutely rejected the harmony of the spheres poses a quandary. The following pages recapitulate the diffusion of the theory in the Christian world, analyse the position of Dante scholars, and scrutinize the Dantean passages that have been thought to refer to the harmony of the spheres.

The Fathers of the Church

Pythagoras (569–475 B.C.) first theorized the mathematical structure that ruled the system of consonances and dissonances. For the Greek mathematician, numbers were the key to establishing a harmonious-sounding melody: good music was about order and proportion, and the universe was organized in an orderly fashion in accordance with such mathematical ratios. He theorized that the motion of the planets travelling through the universe created sounds perceptible only to those trained to hear them, and he replicated such astronomical-musical ratios on a single-stringed instrument called a monochord, which was still in use in the Middle Ages. Dante cites Pythagoras in the *Convivio*, on the basis of secondary sources, at precisely the point when he speaks about the structure of the universe, but nowhere does he say anything about the harmony of the spheres.[3]

Although there are no extant writings by Pythagoras,[4] his views are reported by many later philosophers, including Plato, in whose *Republic* (ca. 360 B.C.) the music of the spheres found a magnificent representation. In the tenth book, the famous myth of Er associates a singing Siren with each of the eight heavens:

3 *Conv.* II.xiii–xviii. See Paget Toynbee's 'Dante's References to Pythagoras,' *Romania* 24 (1895): 376–84.

4 The account of Pythagoras hearing a blacksmith strike his anvil and noticing that hammers of different weights produced notes of different pitches is found in Nichomacus, *Manuale harmonicus*, VI; Iamblichus, *De vita Pythagorica*, XXVI; Gaudentius, *Harmonica introductio*, XI; Macrobius, *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis*, II.i.9–12. Pythagoras also found that different musical modes have different effects on the people's minds: they can excite or soothe.

> The largest (of fixed stars) is spangled, and the seventh (or sun) is brightest; the eighth (or moon) coloured by the reflected light of the seventh; the second and fifth (Saturn and Mercury) are in colour like one another, and yellower than the preceding; the third (Venus) has the whitest light; the fourth (Mars) is reddish; the sixth (Jupiter) is in whiteness second. Now the whole spindle has the same motion; but, as the whole revolves in one direction, the seven inner circles move slowly in the other, and of these the swiftest is the eighth; next in swiftness are the seventh, sixth, and fifth, which move together; third in swiftness appeared to move according to the law of this reversed motion the fourth; the third appeared fourth and the second fifth. The spindle turns on the knees of Necessity; and on the upper surface of each circle is a siren, who goes round with them, hymning a single tone or note. The eight together form one harmony; and round about, at equal intervals, there is another band, three in number, each sitting upon her throne: these are the Fates, daughters of Necessity, who are clothed in white robes and have chaplets upon their heads, Lachesis and Clotho and Atropos, who accompany with their voices the harmony of the sirens.[5]

Plato's representation enjoyed a great popularity and seems to have inspired Cicero's celebrated *Somnium Scipionis*, or *The Dream of Scipio*, which was widely circulated in the Middle Ages together with Macrobius's commentary on it, and was probably the only portion of the great Latin orator's *Republic* known to Dante:

> '... quid? hic' – inquam – 'quis est, qui complet aures meas tantus et tam dulcis sonus?' 'Hic est' – inquit – 'ille, qui intervallis coniunctus inparibus, sed tamen pro rata parte ratione distinctis, inpulsu et motu ipsorum orbium efficitur et acuta cum gravibus temperans varios aequabiliter concentus efficit; nec enim silentio tanti motus incitari possunt, et natura fert, ut extrema ex altera parte graviter, ex altera autem acute sonent.'[6]

('"Pray, what is this sound that strikes my ears in so loud and agreeable

5 Plato, *Republic*, 617b, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Collier, 1901). See also the reference to this myth and the tone scale of the universe in the *Timaeus* in G. de Conches, *Glosae super Platonem*, ed. É. Jeauneau, Texts philosophiques du Moyen Age, 13 (reprint ed., Paris: Vrin, 2005; orig. pub. 1965), 186.

6 Cicero, *De re publica*, VI.18, in *The Library of Original Sources*, trans. and ed. Oliver J. Thatcher, vol. 3: *The Roman World* (Milwaukee: University Research Extension Co., 1907).

> a manner?" I asked. To which he replied, "It is that which is called the music of the spheres, being produced by their motion and impulse; and being formed by unequal intervals, but such as are divided according to the most just proportion, it produces, by duly tempering acute with grave sounds, various concerts of harmony. For it is impossible that motions so great should be performed without any noise; and it is agreeable to nature that the extremes on one side should produce sharp, and on the other flat sounds."')

The popularity of the *Dream of Scipio* over the centuries and its import for the formation of the early Christian and medieval vision of the cosmos were such that many Fathers of the Church had to contend with the notion of the harmony of the spheres, either subsuming the Pythagorean and Platonic views into their doctrine – perhaps with a certain latitude of interpretation in order to make them congruent with Christian beliefs – or rejecting them as a pagan fancy.

The Church Fathers' attitudes can be said to reflect an acceptance of some general aspects of Pythagorean cosmic harmony, such as the notion of an orderly structured universe. Some authors – for example, Clement of Alexandria – embraced the doctrine of the harmony of the spheres without any particular objections, but other early Doctors looked askance at a literal musical reading. In addition to this, because Gnostic thinkers accepted the theory, it became a hot discussion point and was frequently contested.[7] The Christian Fathers often rejected the notion that the planets produce sounds, but agreed to some form of music in the heavens as produced by the angels. Indeed, the Preface to the Canon of the Mass in the Roman rite still contains many references to singing angels.[8]

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7 See J. Haar, '*Musica mundana*: Variations on a Pythagorean Theme' (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1960), 213 ff. I am following Haar's guidelines for this survey and using his translations unless noted otherwise. Valentinian Gnostic Marcus (second century A.D.) had each planet utter a sound on a different Greek vowel, in praise of the divinity, but Greek letters were known to be used in prayers and rituals alien to Christian orthodoxy and Marcus was for this reason refuted by Irenaeus (*Adversus haereses libri quinque*, ed. Ubaldo Mannucci [Rome, 1907], I.xiv.7 [pp. 194–5]. Patristic literature in Greek was obviously not directly available to Dante, but it is still worth mentioning because of its influence on Latin patristic literature.

8 'Et ideo cum angelis et archangelis, cum thronis et dominationibus, cumque omni militia caelestis exercitus, hymnum gloriae tuae canimus, sine fine dicentes: Sanctus'; 'cumque omni militia caelestis exercitus, hymnum gloriae tuae concinunt, sine fine

Among the detractors of the harmony of the spheres, St Basil shows disparagement and condescendence, to the point of believing that confuting the Pythagoreans 'is not worthwhile for a man who knows the value of time or the intelligence of his hearers.'[9] Basil does, however, concede that a 'harmonious chorus' exists among the four elements compounding the universe, thus recognizing a cosmic harmony in a general, though in a non-musical sense.[10] What is noteworthy is that Basil deploys Aristotelian arguments and quotes *De caelo*, II.ix to counter the Pythagoreans, in an early preview of the thirteenth-century scholastic debate around this theme.

James Haar presents Ambrose's and Basil's positions as both showing a certain degree of inconsistency in their critique of the harmony of the spheres. In the *Hexaemeron*, Ambrose posits as undeniable the chorus of the heavens because David avers to it in the Psalms:[11]

> Itaque nos non solum secundum, sed etiam tertium coelum esse negare non possumus, cum Apostolus raptum se ad tertium coelum scriptorum suorum testificatione confirmet. David etiam coelos coelorum in illo laudantium Dominum constituit choro. Quem imitantes philosophi quinque stellarum et solis et lunae, globorum consonum motum introduxerunt, quorum orbibus vel potius globis connexa memorant omnia, quos sibi innexos et velut insertos versari retro et contrario caeteris motu ferri arbitrantur, eoque impulsu et *motu ipsorum orbium* dulcem quemdam et plenum suavitatis atque artis et gratissimi modulaminis sonum reddi, quoniam scissus aer tam artifici motu, et *acuta cum gravibus temperante, ita varios aequabiliter concentus efficiat*, ut omnem supergrediatur musici carminis suavitatem.[12]
>
> ('Therefore we are unable to deny not only the second but even the third heaven, since the Apostle confirms by the testimony of his own writings

dicentes. Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.' ('And thus we sing our praise with angels and archangels, with Thrones and Dominations, with all the host of the heavenly army, saying endlessly: Holy, Holy, Holy'; 'With the heavenly army they sing a hymn to Your glory, endlessly saying Holy, Holy, Holy.') See J. Haar, *Musica mundana*, 242.

9 Basil the Great, *Homiliae in hexaemeron*, III.3 (*Patrologia Greca*, vol. 29, col. 57); quoted from J. Haar, *Musica mundana*, 200.

10 *Homiliae in hexaemeron*, IV.5 (*Patrologia Greca*, vol. 29, cols. 89–92); quoted from J. Haar, *Musica mundana*, 201.

11 Psalm 148:4: 'Laudate eum caeli caelorum et aquae quae super caelos sunt' ('Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens').

12 Ambrose, *Hexaemeron*, II.ii.6 (*PL*, vol. 14, col. 147; my emphasis).

that he was carried up into the third heaven. Moreover, David constituted the heaven of heavens in that chorus of beings praising the Lord. Imitating David, the philosophers have introduced an harmonious motion of the orbs of the sun, the moon and the five stars; they recount that all things are linked in the orbs or rather globes of these planets, which, linked, as it were, inserted inside each other, turn one way and are judged to be moved by the contrary motion of the other. They are further thought to give out a certain sweet sound full of suavity, art and most pleasing modulation; because the air, cut by such skillful motion, thus *produces harmonies equably varied, the low tempered with the high, and exceeds every sweetness of musical song.*')

If we compare this passage with the text of the *Somnium Scipionis* quoted above, we notice that Ambrose used the very same words: 'motu ipsorum orbium efficitur et acuta cum gravibus temperans varios aequabiliter concentus efficit.'[13] Although he does not mention his name, Ambrose is quoting Cicero, and it is to Cicero that the words 'imitantes philosophi' refer. Ambrose is defending Christianity, and he does so by attacking the pagan authorities, accusing them of being simple imitators of the true prophets of Christianity. Therefore, in his view, the odd theories of the philosophers who, imitating David, postulated a harmony of the planets, should be rejected, again, on Aristotelian basis:

Sed facile his ipsa respondet veritas. Nam qui tonitrua audimus nubium collisione generata, tantorum orbium conversiones, qui majori utique sicut motu ferri aestimantur, ita vehementiores sonitus excitarent, non audiremus? Addunt praeterea, ideo sonum hunc non pervenire ad terras, ne capti homines per suavitatem ejus atque dulcedinem, quam celerrimus ille coelorum effecit motus, ab orientalibus partibus usque in occasum, propria negotia atque opera derelinquerent, et omnia hic otiosa remanerent, quodam humanae ad coelestes sonos mentis excessu. Sed ea quae sunt aliena a studio nostro, et a divinae lectionis serie, iis qui foris sunt, relinquamus: nos inhaereamus Scripturarum coelestium magisterio.[14]

('But the truth answers easily to these things. For if we hear thunder, which is generated by the collision of clouds, should we not hear the revolution of such great spheres, which, as they are judged to be moved by greater force,

13 'It produces, by duly tempering acute with grave sounds, various concerts of harmony.' Cicero, *De re publica*, trans. and ed. Oliver J. Thatcher, VI.18.

14 Ambrose, *Hexaemeron*, II.ii.7 (*PL*, vol. 14, cols. 147d–148a).

> should excite louder sounds? They then add that this sound does not reach the earth lest men, seized by its smoothness and sweetness [which that most rapid motion of the heavens from east to west effects], should neglect their own business and work, and leave all things here in idleness, through a certain unbalance of the mind, for the celestial sounds. But let us relinquish those things which are foreign to our study, and to the progress of divine reading; let us adhere to Scripture for judgment on the heavens.')

And although Ambrose recognizes a certain grace and sweetness to the theory of the music of the spheres, he hastens to add that it cannot be literally believed.[15] Haar identifies an inconsistency of Ambrose's position in his admission that angels do sing in heaven:

> Laudant Angeli Dominum, psallunt ei Potestates coelorum, et ante ipsum initium mundi Cherubim et Seraphim cum suavitate canorae vocis suae dicunt: *Sanctus*, *sanctus*, *sanctus*. Innumera angelorum millia assistunt, et seniores et turba magna sicut voces aquarum multarum concinunt Alleluia. Ipsum axem coeli fert expressior sermo cum quadam perpetui concentus suavitate versari, ut sonus ejus extremis terrarum partibus audiretur, ubi sunt quaedam secreta naturae.[16]
>
> ('The angels praise the Lord. Even before the world began the powers of Heaven sang psalms to his name; and with sweet, sonorous voice Cherubim and Seraphim cried out: "Holy, holy, holy !" Millions of angels without count wait upon him; elders and the great multitude sing together – like the sound of mighty waters: "Alleluja!"')

Haar feels that this admission constitutes a concession to the Pythagorean myth, which Ambrose had twice confuted. And on the basis of the same excerpt Leo Spitzer even calls Ambrose a strenuous advocate of the Pythagorean theme of the harmony of the spheres.[17]

Instead, there is no contradiction, for nowhere does Ambrose assert that the sound of heaven is the sound of the planets. Ambrose was very subtle in dealing with a problematic issue, constrained as he was by a double difficulty. He could not deny the existence of some form of *cho-*

15 Ambrose, *De Isaac et anima*, VII (*PL*, vol. 14, col. 552).

16 Ambrose, *Enarrationes in XII psalmos Davidicos*, psalmum primum, praefatio, II, (*PL*, vol. 14, cols. 921–2), trans. Íde M. Ní Riain (Dublin: Halcyon Press, 2000).

17 L. Spitzer, 'Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony: Prolegomena to an Interpretation of the Word "Stimmung,"' *Traditio* 2 (1944): 427.

rus in the heavens, unquestionably attested to by Psalm 148 and by a mistranslation by Jerome of a passage of Job,[18] nor could he refute the notion of cosmic harmony in a general sense, lest he diminish the craftsmanship of the Creator. He thus has the angels perform the music, and in so doing counters the pagan theory that the revolving planets produce a sound.

Ambrose's greatest pupil, Augustine, shows fewer concerns about Pythagorean structures, which he mentions only in passing, and declares that what the Greeks called ἁρμονία, and in particular the interval of the octave (the 2:1 ratio), is healthy for man's soul and can contribute to his redemption:

> Merito quippe mors peccatoris veniens ex damnationis necessitate, soluta est per mortem justi venientem ex misericordiae voluntate, dum simplum ejus congruit duplo nostro. Haec enim congruentia, sive convenientia, vel concinentia, vel consonantia, vel si quid commodius dicitur, quod unum est ad duo, in omni compaginatione. Vel, si melius dicitur, coaptatione creaturae, valet plurimum. Hanc enim coaptationem, sicut mihi nunc occurrit, dicere volui, quam Graeci ἁρμονίαν vocant. Neque nunc locus est, ut ostendam quantum valeat consonantia simpli ad duplum ... Una ergo mors nostri salvatoris duabus mortibus nostris saluti fuit. Et una eius resurrectio duas nobis resurrectiones praestitit ... Verum quod instat in praesentia quantum donat Deus, edisserendum est quemadmodum simplum Domini et Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi duplo nostro congruat, et quodam modo concinat ad salutem.'[19]
>
> ('It was surely right that the death of the sinner issuing from the stern necessity of condemnation should be undone by the death of the just man issuing from the voluntary freedom of mercy, his single matching our double. This match – or agreement or concord or consonance or whatever the

18 'Quis enarravit caelorum rationem et concentum caeli quis dormire faciet?' ('Who will calculate the ratios of the heavens and who will silence the sound of heaven?') (Job 38:37). Jerome translated this passage as referring to the harmony of the heavens but it is a gross mistranslation from the Greek, its original meaning being: 'Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven?' (AV), or 'Who has the wisdom to number the clouds? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens?' (NRSV).

19 Augustine, *De trinitate*, IV.ii–iii (*PL*, vol. 42, col. 889). Here I follow Edmund Hill's translation (*The Trinity* [New York: New City Press, 1991]), with some emendations.

> right word is for the proportion of one to two – is of enormous importance in every construction or interlock – that is the word I want – of creation. What I mean by this interlock, it has just occurred to me, is what the Greeks call *harmonia*. This is not the place to show the far-reaching importance of the single to the double [the octave] ... Jesus' single death remedied our double death. His single resurrection gave us the resurrection of the body and the salvation of our soul. What has to be explained, as far as God permits, is how the single of Lord Jesus Christ matches our double, and in some fashion resonates with it for our salvation.')

However, it was only when paganism was ultimately defeated and its philosophy came to be valued again that Boethius, Cassiodorus, and Isidore could espouse the harmony of the spheres, no longer fearing its heretical connotations. Their works, forgetful of Aristotle's opposition, laid the ground for its dissemination in the Christian Middle Ages. Boethius opens his treatise on music by addressing precisely this issue of whether the heavens make a sound as they revolve, and enthusiastically defending the opinion that they do:

> Qui enim fieri potest, ut tam velox caeli machina taciti silentisque cursu moveatur? ... non poterit tamen motus tam velocissimus ita magnorum corporum nullo omnino sonos ciere, cum praesertim tanta sint stellarum cursus coaptatione coniuncti, ut nihil aeque compaginatum, nihil ita commissum possit intellegit.[20]

> ('For how can it happen that so swift a heavenly machine moves on a mute and silent course? ... it is nevertheless impossible that such extremely fast motion of such large bodies should produce absolutely no sound, especially since the courses of the stars are joined by such harmonious union that nothing so perfectly united, nothing so perfectly fitted together, can be realized.')

This conviction was shared by Cassiodorus, who, in expounding the powers of music, hastens to condemn as false the myth of Orpheus's lyre and the sirens' song. He then counterpoises to these pagan fables the truth of the Bible, in which David exorcized Saul with his cithara, and, finally, propounds cosmic harmony as a commonly accepted principle:

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20 Boethius, *De inst. mus.*, I.ii, trans. Calvin Bower.

> Coelum ipsum, sicut supra memoravimus, dicitur sub harmoniae dulcedine revolvi. Et ut breviter cuncta complectar, quidquid in supernis sive terrenis rebus convenienter secundum auctoris sui dispositionem geritur, ab hac disciplina non refertur exceptum.[21]
>
> ('As we have mentioned above, it is said that the heavens themselves rotate in accord with the sweetness of music. In short, whatever design there is in the heavens and on earth which accords with the governance of the Creator Himself occurs only through this discipline.')

Isidore of Seville, too, displays an explicit acceptance, using wording similar to that of Cassiodorus:

> Nam et ipse mundus quadam harmonia sonorum fertur esse compositus, et coelum ipsum sub harmoniae modulatione revolvitur.[22]
>
> ('Even the cosmos itself is said to have been set in order by a harmony of sounds, and melody governs the revolution of the very heavens.')

For centuries, Isidore's *Etymologiae* remained the standard treatment of the harmony of the spheres, one used as a reference and taught in schools, while Martianus Capella's fifth-century *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* presented a complex tonal scale of the planets' sounds. Other authors mention the theme in passing: Alcuin of York (735–804) tells of his teacher Egbert of York explaining the 'harmoniam coeli'; Scotus Erigena (812–77) speaks of the Pythagorean myth in his *De divisione naturae* and in his letters to Charles the Bald (although scholars believe Scotus's understanding to have been strictly metaphoric and contend that he rejected the literal interpretation of the sounding spheres);[23] and

21 Cassiodorus, *De artibus ac disciplinis liberalium litterarum* (*PL*, vol. 70, col. 1212b), trans. Helen Dill Goode and Gertrude C. Drake, in *Cassiodorus – Institutiones, II.5; Isidore of Seville – Etymologiae, III.15–23* (Colorado Springs: Colorado College Music Press, 1980), 9.

22 *Etymologiae*, III.17 (*PL*, vol. 82, col. 133), trans. Helen Dill Goode and Gertrude C. Drake, in *Cassiodorus – Institutiones, II.5; Isidore of Seville – Etymologiae, III.15–23*, 14.

23 See Jacques Handschin, 'Die Musikanschauung des Johannes Scotus Erigena,' *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenchaft und Geistesgeschichte* 5 (1927): 316–41. Scotus Erigena's passages referring to the harmony of the spheres are in *PL*, vol. 122 cols. 1232–40.

in *Musica theoretica*, at one time attributed to Bede but now held to be a spurious work, there is a paragraph devoted to celestial harmony based on accounts by Pliny and Cicero.[24]

Aurelian of Réôme, in his *Musica disciplina*, found biblical evidence for the harmony of the spheres, as Ambrose had done before him, in Jerome's mistranslation of Job 38:37 as *concentus coeli* (see n. 18, above). Writing in the first half of the ninth century, Aurelian adhered to the Boethian threefold classification of music into *mundana*, *humana*, and *instrumentalis* (found in *De institutione musica*, I.ii, quoted on pp. 47–8, above) as sufficient to prove true the harmony of the spheres.[25] He is a good example of how the weight of early Christian authorities influenced later thinkers to such an extent that their acceptance of sphere harmony became regarded as incontestable proof of its veracity. But the most complete treatise on the music of the spheres since Boethius's time is Regino of Prüm's *De harmonica institutione*, written in the latter part of the ninth century. Regino does not comment on the reference in Job, but rather invokes the authority of Boethius – whom he quotes verbatim – as evidence for a literal interpretation of cosmic music.[26] Regino also displays interest in Macrobius's translation of the *Somnium Scipionis* and in Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis* as additional sources for the theory of celestial harmony,[27] and the most original feature of *De harmonica institutione* is the development of a cosmic polyphony patterned on Martianus's *De nuptiis*. To Regino, the word *succentus* – in contrast with *concentus*, or unisonal singing – indicates an astrological form of *organum*; thus, he applies the technical innovations of his time to the old Pythagorean theme.[28]

By the end of the first millennium, therefore, the harmony of the spheres was regarded as a veracious doctrine suitable for teaching in schools along with the tonal scale of sounds actually produced by the planets. Twelfth-century Platonism incorporated cosmic music, though

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24 *PL*, vol. 90, cols. 909–20. See J. Haar, *Musica mundana*, 248.

25 *Scriptores ecclesiastici de musica sacra potissimum*, 1, ed. Martin Gerbert (St Blaise: Typis San-Blasianis, 1784; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1963), 32–40.

26 *Scriptores ecclesiastici de musica sacra potissimum*, 233.

27 *Scriptores ecclesiastici de musica sacra potissimum*, 234.

28 Regino is not the only who recognizes such opposition in *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*: Scotus Erigena does the same and a gloss in a Munich manuscript of Martianus's *De nuptiis* explains 'duplis succentibus' as 'duplis organis.' See J. Haar, *Musica mundana*, 258–61.

without the scientific interest of previous philosophers. Mention of sounding planets is found in the works of Bernard Sylvester and Alain de Lille, who display a heavy influence of Martianus Capella as well as elements derived from Plato's myth of Er,[29] and Peter Abelard, another Platonizing Christian author, re-proposes the notion of the sounding heavens in a manner reminiscent of Ambrose:

> Quis etiam, si diligenter attenderit, non animadvertat quid de coelesti dixerunt harmonia, quae in superioribus mundi partibus incessanter resonat, cum coelestes videlicet spiritus ex assidua divinae Majestatis visione, et summa invicem concordia ligentur, et in ejus quem conspiciunt laudes jugi et ineffabili exsultatione illud decantent quod juxta Isaiam seraphim die ac nocte conclamare non cessant: *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth.*[30]

> ('Who, then, reflecting attentively, will not realize that they – the philosophers – talked about celestial harmony, which resounds incessantly in the higher parts of the universe, since the celestial spirits, in the constant vision of divine Majesty, are both bound together by the highest harmony, and, in conjoined and ineffable exaltation of Him whom they behold, sing praises, those which according to Isaiah the Seraphim sing incessantly night and day; Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, God almighty.')

Abelard reintroduces the angels singing, thus moving back to a non-literal interpretation of heavenly music and foreshadowing the eclipse brought upon cosmic music by Aristotelianism.

Aristotelianism, or the Silent Cosmos

While Platonic philosophy was dominant, the Pythagorean-Platonic theory of the *musica mundana* thrived and saw its heyday in the School of Chartres.[31] With the arrival of Aristotle in Europe, however, things

29 Bernard Sylvester, *De mundi universitate sive Megacosmus et Microcosmus*, I.i, and Alain of Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, in *PL*, vol. 210, col. 517. See J. Haar, *Musica mundana*, 291–6.

30 Petrus Abelardus, *Theologia christiana*, I.v, in *PL*, vol. 178, cols. 1148d–1149a.

31 J. James, *The Music of the Spheres: Music, Science, and the Natural Order of the Universe* (New York, Grove Press, 1993); J.L. Miller, *Measures of Wisdom: The Cosmic Dance in Classical and Christian Antiquity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986); B. Munxelhaus, *Pythagoras musicus* (Bonn: Verlag fur Systematische Musikwissenschaft, 1976).

began to change. At the turn of the thirteenth century a radical shift in the philosophical balance of Europe took place, as Aristotelian philosophy was introduced throughout Spain[32] and Platonism started to lose currency. On the theological level, this resulted in a series of different responses, ranging from Aquinas's moderate critique of Aristotle to the extremist views attributed to Boethius of Dacia and Siger of Brabant. Some critical knots of Aristotelianism and the influence of Averroistic thought brought the Parisian School of Theology to the brink of a crisis, culminating in 1277 with Bishop of Paris Étienne Tempier's condemnation of 219 radical resolutions.[33] The consequences of Aristotelianism for the reception of the idea of cosmic harmony can hardly be underestimated. Michel Huglo saw in the shift from Platonic to Aristotelian philosophy the origin of the decline of the relevance of music in medieval culture.[34]

In the scholastic environment, many began to criticize and reject the notion of music produced by the planets. Numerous authoritative voices shared Aristotle's opinion that if the planets did produce a sound, such sound would be so loud as to kill all living creatures:

> Quaecumque quidem enim secundum se ipsa feruntur, faciunt sonum et plagam. Quaecumque autem in lato infixa sunt, aut existunt, quemadmodum in navi partes, non possibile est sonare: neque rursus navi, si feratur in fluvio ... Quare hic dicendum quod, si quidem ferebantur corpora horum, sive in aeris multitudine expansa per totum, sive ignis, quemadmodum

32 Under Alfonso El Sabio the court of Castilla was a place of the highest cultural *mélange*. There, Latin versions of Averroes' commentary were written and diffused. In 1260 Dante's friend and teacher Brunetto Latini was ambassador of Florence in Spain. From Spain also comes the *Liber scalae Machometi*, which was translated into Latin and French by the notary Bonaventura da Siena and represented a not indifferent source for the *Commedia*. See Miguel Asin Palacios, *La escatologia musulmana en la 'Divina Comedia'* (Madrid: Granada, 1943); and Enrico Cerulli, *Il 'Libro della Scala' e le fonti arabo-spagnole della 'Divina Commedia'* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1949).

33 Dante's relationship with the extreme Aristotelian views such as the negation of the Creation and the notion of the rational intellect as a separated substance have been researched by É. Gilson, *Dante et la philosophie* (Paris, Librairie philosphique J. Vrin, 1972); B. Nardi: *Saggi di filosofia dantesca* (Florence: La nuova Italia, 1967), and *Dante e la cultura medievale* (Bari: Laterza, 1949); and M. Corti, *La felicità mentale: Nuove prospettive per Cavalcanti e Dante* (Turin: Einaudi, ca. 1983).

34 M. Huglo, 'The Study of Ancient Sources of Music Theory in the Medieval University,' in *Music Theory and Its Sources*, ed. André Barbera (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 150–72.

> omnes dicunt necessarium facere super naturalem magnitudinem sonum; hoc autem facto et huc pertingere et perimere.[35]
>
> ('All that moves against something else produces a friction and a sound and all that is fixed, such as the parts of a ship, cannot possibly sound: like a ship sailing a river ... Therefore if the celestial bodies were moving, either through air or fire, as everyone says, they should produce a sound of enormous loudness. But this would destroy everything.')

The terrible sound caused by such large bodies would definitely destroy the life on earth. Instead, because life goes on and men do not hear that sound, the perfectly logical conclusion for an intellect which 'solo da sensato apprende'[36] is that there *is* no such sound. Thomas Aquinas, Averroës, Albert the Great, Roger Bacon, Ristoro d'Arezzo, Nicholas Oresmes, and Vincent of Beauvais all discard cosmic harmony as a foolish idea, and even among thirteenth-century music theorists *musica mundana* was not uncritically accepted, a circumstance made clear by the refutation of the concept by Jacques de Lièges (1266–1325).[37] Aquinas, for Dante the most representative Aristotelian authority, dealing with the conciliatory views of Simplicius's commentary on *De caelo*, refutes him with the tools of scholastic analysis and reconfirms the condemnation of Pythagoras's cosmic music.

The Music of the Spheres and Dante's Works

Having shown the vicissitudes of fortune of the notion of cosmic harmony, it will be appropriate to reconsider Dante's position, bearing in mind what constraints the tradition had bequeathed to him. Many critics

35 Thomas Aquinas, *In Aristotelis libros de caelo et mundo expositio* (Turin: Maietti, 1952), II, Lect. 14.

36 'Only in perceiving through the senses can *it* grasp' (*Par.* IV.41).

37 Thomas Aquinas, *In libros Aristotelis De caelo et mundo expositio*, II, Lect. 14.429; Averroes, *Commentary on De caelo et mundo*, II.52–6; Albert the Great, *Commentary on De caelo et mundo*, II.3.10; Roger Bacon, *De caelestibus*, IV.9; Ristoro D'Arezzo, *La composizione del mondo con le sue cagioni*, VIII, XIX; Nicholas Oresme, *Quaestiones de anima*, II.9, and *Le livre du ciel et du monde*, II.18. Among music theorists the *musica mundana* was denied by Jacques de Lièges, *Speculum musicae*, I.13, and by Vincent of Beauvais, whose *Speculum maius* (chapter 23 bears the title 'Falsa opinio de concentu coeli') was a work of great resonance.

display certainty that Dante accepted or overtly referenced the theory of the music of the spheres on the basis of the famous opening of the *Paradiso*, in which the pilgrim, upon entering the first heaven, perceives a sweet harmony:

> Quando la rota che tu sempiterni
> desiderato, a sé mi fece atteso
> con l'armonia che temperi e discerni,
> parvemi tanto allor del cielo acceso
> de la fiamma del sol, che pioggia o fiume
> lago non fece alcun tanto disteso.
> La novità del suono e 'l grande lume
> di lor cagion m'accesero un disio
> mai non sentito di cotanto acume. (*Par.* I.76–84)

('When the heavens you made eternal, / wheeling in desire, caught my attention / with the harmony you temper and attune, / then so much of the sky seemed set on fire / by the flaming sun that neither rain nor river / ever fed a lake so vast. / The newness of the sound and the bright light / lit in me such keen desire to know their cause / as I had never with such sharpness felt before.')

With this majestic display of harmony and light begins the pilgrim's ascent to the heavens, presenting two elements already here so bound together as to always remain paired in the course of the third cantica. Music and light are revealed, or better, manifest themselves, as inextricably conjoined.[38] Creations of light are produced by the souls dancing and arranging themselves to form a series of concentric rings, a cross, and an eagle, in much the same way as their voices combine to compose mighty chords. Thus, if we look at the letter of the text, in this 'magnifica sinestesia di *sons et lumières*'[39] we do not find a clear statement that entitles us to claim that Dante accepted the harmony of the spheres as a philosophical theory. What seems more likely, therefore, is that he found himself in a position similar to that of Ambrose, who had to reject

38 See G. Contini, *Un'idea di Dante* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), 20, for the meaning of the verb *parere* as 'to reveal' or 'to manifest the real appearance' in *Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare* (*Vita nova*, Sonnet 15).

39 V. Sermonti, *Il Paradiso di Dante* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1993), 18.

Cicero without contradicting the biblical passages on heavenly music. Dante never speaks explicitly of sounds produced by the revolution of celestial bodies, but rather of a harmony tempered and tuned by God. Although the wheel indeed attracts the pilgrim by means of such music, nowhere does Dante say that harmony is produced by the sphere or by the planet itself: it could very well be the harmony sung by the blessed souls, as is made clear in the encounter with Justinian:

> Diverse voci fanno dolci note;
> così diversi scanni in nostra vita
> rendon dolce armonia tra queste rote. (*Par.* VI.124–6)

> ('Differing voices make sweet music. / Just so our differing ranks in this our life / create sweet harmony among these wheels.')

Again, the *rote* appear in conjunction with *armonia*, as in *Paradiso* I.76–8, making Justinian's words sound like a gloss of what had been said five cantos earlier. Here the *scanni* are said to make harmony, but what are these *scanni*? 'Scanno' means *sedile*, *seggio* ('seat'), or, according to the *Dizionario Garzanti della lingua italiana* (1987), which cites the above-quoted tercet as an example, *grado*, *condizione* ('rank'). Either way, whether *scanno* means 'seat' or 'rank,' it refers metonymically to the souls, the holders, as it were, of the seats or ranks, and it is they who make harmony through 'different voices.' Thus, whichever is actually meant, it is not the sphere that produces the sound with its movement, but the voices of the blessed – and yet once again we find voices, harmony, and wheels disposed in a manner that suggests the music-making spheres. Dante's poetic skill succeeds in suggesting implicitly what he did not want to state explicitly, his imagery intended to be poetically evocative of the music of the spheres but not a factual designation of it.

There is another passage that could be taken to refer to the music of the spheres. The angels singing in the Earthly Paradise are said to follow the 'eternal spheres':[40]

> così fui sanza lagrime e sospiri
> anzi 'l cantar di quei che notan sempre

40 Mark Musa actually translates, 'I heard the song of those attuned / forever to the music of the spheres.' Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. M. Musa (Penguin, 1984–86).

dietro alle note de li etterni giri;
ma poi che 'ntesi ne le dolci tempre ... (*Purg.* XXX.91–4)

('Just so was I with neither tears nor sighs / before they sang who always are in tune / with notes set down in the eternal spheres, / but, when their lovely harmonies revealed ...')

The interpretive conundrum here consists in what meaning is given to the word *giri*: does it designate the harmoniously revolving planets or the angelic orders? Dante does not say.

Interpretations of Dante decidedly accepting or rejecting the theory of the harmony of the spheres do not do justice to the subtlety of his poetic treatment of it, for he neither avers nor denies that the heavens revolve resoundingly, but rather merely creates a musical ambience which induces the reader to think in terms of cosmic harmony. And yet, when we look for a clear avowal of such theory, we do not find it.

It seems as though Dante scholars have experienced the same fascination that Dante felt for the theory of cosmic harmony, but have allowed themselves get carried away with radical stances on an issue that calls for hermeneutic caution. That Dante himself shows caution with regard to the stern Aristotelian rejection of cosmic music can be explained by the tremendous influence that this belief exerted on Christian thinkers for centuries, and that still held fascination for the minds of poets. Dante wants to assign to celestial harmony a beatifying role, and does so by avoiding confrontation with this set of ideas of Platonic ascent.[41]

Nino Pirrotta[42] pokes holes in the certainty that Dante accepted the cosmic harmony theory, observing that Dante mentions it in the *Commedia* only once, and that is in the above-quoted lines of *Paradiso* I.76–84. Elsewhere, Pirrotta firmly states his conviction that Dante the philosopher rejected the theory: 'idealized dances and songs replace the notion of the harmony of the spheres, which Dante as a philosopher rejected.'[43]

41 See Bruno Nardi, 'La novità del suono e il grande lume,' in *Saggi di filosofia dantesca* (Florence: La nuova Italia, 1967), 73–88.

42 N. Pirrotta, 'Dante "*Musicus*": Gothicism, Scholasticism, and Music,' *Speculum* 43, no. 2 (1968): 245–57.

43 'Danze e canti idealizzati sostituiscono il concetto, respinto da Dante come filosofo, della musica delle sfere celesti.' N. Pirrotta, 'Ars nova e Stil novo,' *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 1 (1966): 13.

Pirrotta is right: nowhere does Dante assert that the heavens produce sounds by revolving around one another. The reference of *Paradiso* I.78 – 'con l'armonia che temperi e discerni' ('with the harmony you temper and attune') – is quite vague because the subject of *temperi* and *discerni* is, implicitly, God. In other words, Dante avoids a compromisingly explicit assertion that the planets or the spheres produce sounds by revolving, and merely places this harmony within the celestial wheels.

A Swiss scholar, Reinhold Hammerstein, lists a number of causes as originating the music of Heaven:[44] planets, angels, and blessed souls come together to create a blend of melodious sounds. Hammerstein thus marries Dante's philosophical-astronomical notions to the theological-liturgical theories of music. Mario Pazzaglia judges the mention of harmony of *Paradiso* I.78 to be too isolated to capitalize on it and make Dante a follower of the theory, and more recently Claudio Bacciagaluppi identifies a split between Dante's poetic and philosophical positions.[45] The music of the spheres, he asserts, is a beautiful lie (*Conv.* II.i.3) invented to delight the reader, – a subtle observation, although again it must be repeated that the poet never embraces the theory of the sphere harmony and never refutes it either. He in fact leaves us with no certain indication as to how to interpret his position on this question. Vittorio Sermonti assists us here with a very helpful perspective on the matter, astutely noting that the doctrine is not homogeneous with Dante's thought, but is rather *tangential* to it.[46]

The majority of scholars, however, still rule in favour of Dante embracing the theory of the harmony of the spheres. Among these are Natalino Sapegno, and Umberto Bosco and Giovanni Reggio, who note how Dante seems to distance himself from Aristotle and align himself with Cicero:

> Non è questo l'unico caso in cui in Dante la ragion poetica ha il sopravvento sulla scientifica: per esempio, in *Paradiso* I, afferma che le sfere celesti emanano, girando, un armonioso suono: questo contro l'opinione di Ari-

44 Reinhold Hammerstein, *Die Musik der Engel: Untersuchungen zur Musikanschauung des Mittelalters* (Bern: Francke, 1962), 178.

45 M. Pazzaglia, 'L'universo metaforico della musica nella *Commedia*,' *Letture classensi* 15 (1986): 79–97, at p. 85; Claudio Bacciagaluppi, 'La "dolce sinfonia di paradiso": Le funzioni delle immagini musicali nella *Commedia*,' *Rivista di studi danteschi* 2, no. 2 (July–December 2002): 54.

46 Vittorio Sermonti, *Il Paradiso di Dante* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2001), 18.

> stotele e della filosofia scolastica, ma secondo proprio un passo dello stesso *Somnium Scipionis*.[47]
>
> ('This is not the only case in which the poetic intention takes over the scientific. For example, in *Paradiso* I, Dante states that the celestial spheres emanate, by revolving, a harmonious sound: this is against the opinion of Aristotle and Scholastic philosophy, but in accordance with a passage of the *Dream of Scipio*.')

The lines to which Bosco and Reggio refer (*Par.* I.76–8, quoted above) do not state that the spheres generate a sound; nevertheless, Dante's treatment of the harmony of the spheres is indeed a case in which the poetic drive is stronger than the philosophical foundation.

Following the same line of thought, Alessandro Picchi and John Stevens assert that the music heard by the pilgrim is most definitely the harmony of the spheres;[48] Amilcare Iannucci shows no doubts that 'the new, extraordinary sound which the pilgrim perceives is the mythical harmony of the spheres,'[49] usually inaudible to mortal ears, but which the transhumanized pilgrim's finer hearing is enabled to perceive; and Antonella Puca takes the same reference in *Paradiso* I to be an unmistakable avowal of the music of the spheres and a programmatic indication of the vivifying function that music bears in the cantica.[50] Bruno Nardi recapitulates some of the most influential authorities on the subject before taking a stance in favour of Dante accepting the harmony of the spheres:

> Non l'udirono, quel divino concento delle sfere, Aristotele e Tommaso, perché troppo la loro mente giudicò 'ex apparentibus secundum sensum';

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47 Dante, *Paradiso*, ed. Umberto Bosco and Giovanni Reggio (Florence: Le Monnier, 1988), 363 ff.

48 Alessandro Picchi, 'Musicalità dantesca e metodologie filosofiche medievali,' in *Annali dell'Istituto di Studi Danteschi*, 1 (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1967), 182n69; John Stevens 'Dante and Music,' *Italian Studies* 23 (1968): 3.

49 Amilcare Iannucci, 'Musica e ordine nella *Divina Commedia* (*Purgatorio* II),' in *Studi americani su Dante* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1989), 89. Elsewhere he asserts that Aristotle 'refined' Plato's theory of the music of the spheres, when in fact Aristotle refuted it entirely: see A. Iannucci, 'Casella's Song and the Tuning of the Soul,' *Thought* 65 (1990): 27–46, at p. 29.

50 See A. Puca: 'Astronomia e "musica mundana" nella *Commedia* di Dante,' in *La musica nel pensiero medievale*, ed. Letterio Mauro (Ravenna: Longo, 2001), 217–43.

> l'udirono invece Pitagora e Dante, che seppero innalzarsi sopra il mondo terrestre dei sensi.[51]
>
> ('Aristotle and Thomas could not hear that divine symphony because they judged *from what is manifest to the senses*. But Pythagoras and Dante, who were able to soar higher than the earthly world of the senses, heard it.')

And, finally, James Haar sees in Dante's *Paradiso* 'perhaps the greatest triumph of *musica mundana* over Aristotelian objections.'[52]

It is not my intention to discount the possibility that Dante was attracted to the theory of the harmony of the spheres. After all, the standard text for musical learning in use in schools was Boethius's *De institutione musica*, which accepts the theory. However, what I have tried to argue is that, having had to take into consideration the enormously influential opinion of Aristotelian scholars, the Florentine's position is less straightforward than it initially appears, and that he has contended with the controversy by contriving to evoke the music of the spheres and suggest its resonance without overtly taking a stance in its favour. It would have been extremely risky, both intellectually and doctrinally, to wholeheartedly embrace a theory to which the best of contemporary theologians were opposed. Dante therefore stages music in Paradise by having the blessed and the angels perform it. The *Convivio* follows the order of angelic hierarchy given by Gregory the Great, but the *Commedia* recants this earlier statement, and Dante accepts Dionysius's ordering, implicitly admitting his mistake and comparing his error to Gregory's.[53] Within this discussion of the angelic choirs, Dante certainly had the opportunity to expound his philosophical ideas on the music of the spheres and make his position clear, as he had done, for example, with regard to lunar spots. But he did not. Instead, Dante chose to leave this matter unexplicated so that he could exploit a philosophical ambiguity to his poetic advantage.

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51 B. Nardi, 'La novità del suono e 'l grande lume,' in *Saggi di filosofia dantesca* (Florence: La nuova Italia, 1967), 73–88, at p. 76.

52 J. Haar, *Musica mundana*, 322.

53 Gregory the Great, *Moralia*, XXXII.48 follows this order: Seraphim, Cherubim, Powers, Principalities, Virtues, Dominations, Thrones, Archangels, Angels; while Dionysius the Aeropagyte gives this: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominations, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels, Angels. See G. Busnelli, 'L'ordine dei cori angelici nel *Convivio* e nel *Paradiso*,' *Bullettino della società dantesca italiana*, new series, 18 (1911): 127–8.

The complexity of astrological, choreographic, and musical elements has been amply illustrated by John Freccero,[54] who showed how symbolical imagery in *Paradiso* X connects the dance of the twelve theologians to the Apostles and the Zodiac. Freccero establishes a connection to the *Timaeus*, in particular for the image of the clock.

> Indi, come orologio che ne chiami
> ne l'ora che la sposa di Dio surge
> a mattinar lo sposo perché l'ami,
> che l'una parte e l'altra tira e urge,
> tin tin sonando con sì dolce nota,
> che 'l ben disposto spirto d'amor turge;
> così vid' ïo la gloriosa rota
> muoversi e render voce a voce in tempra
> e in dolcezza ch'esser non po' nota
> se non colà dove gioir s'insempra. (*Par.* X.139–48)

> ('Then, like a clock that calls us at the hour / when the bride of God gets up to sing / matins to her bridegroom, that he should love her still, / when a cog pulls one wheel and drives another, / chiming its ting-ting with notes so sweet / that the willing spirit swells with love, / thus I saw that glorious wheel in motion, / matching voice to voice in harmony / and with sweetness that cannot be known / except where joy becomes eternal.')

Several levels of meaning are attributed to the imagery of the dance. In particular, the circular motion of the blessed mirrors the revolution of the zodiacal signs around the sun. The revolution of the twelve signs of the zodiac around the sun measures the time in the same way that a clock does:[55] 'Because the Sun measures both the day and the year, ... in its path, the Zodiac, may be said to mark both the hours and the months.'[56] The twelve blessed souls are thus in many ways a symbol of the time that passes. But the most relevant aspect of Freccero's reflec-

54 J. Freccero, 'Paradiso X: The Dance of the Stars,' *Dante Studies* 86 (1968): 87–111; repr. in J. Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, 221–44.

55 For the novelty of the device, see Lynn Thorndike, 'The Invention of the Mechanical Clock about 1271 A.D.,' *Speculum* 16, no. 2 (1942): 242.

56 Freccero, 'Paradiso X: The Dance of the Stars,' 95.

tion for the purposes of the present analysis is that the circular motion is the mode of the Platonic emanation of Love: 'Dante intends here to set forth the motions of the Trinity or, as he puts it, in v. [line] 51, "mostrando come *spira* e come *figlia*" ["revealing how he breathes and how he begets"]. These two motions, intellectual generation and the spiration of Love, volition, are the two motions in the Trinity which find their counterpart in the cosmos –"dove l'un moto e l'altro si percuote" ("where the one motion and the other intersect") (*Par.* X.9) – insofar as the cosmos can reflect the inner life of the Trinity.'[57]

In other words, Freccero stresses the Platonic roots of Dante's representation of the theologians' dance, envisioning the *Paradiso* as a system of musical emanation, in which music is the 'wave' that carries grace. Certainly music is presented as generating Love, or expanding God's Love throughout the universe. For Aristotle the music of the spheres – had it existed –would have had a devastating effect on everything that is on earth; for Dante, it had instead highly positive effects, even drawing men closer to the heavens: 'chi non s'impenna sì che là sù voli, / dal muto aspetti quindi le novelle' ('He who fails to wing himself to fly there / might as well await the dumb to tell the news') (*Par.* X.74–5).

Another source for the music of the spheres, Guillaume de Conches's commentary on the *Timaeus* (Dante refers to Plato's work in *Paradiso* IV.49 ff.), offers a version of the phenomenon that combines the astronomical aspect with the theological:

> Et est chorea circularis motus cum concordi sono. Inde dicunt philosphi stellas facere choream quia circulariter moventur et ex motum concordem reddunt sonum.[58]
>
> ('There is a circular chorus that moves with a concord sound. Whence the philosophers say that the stars sing as though in a choir, because they move in a circle and by this concord motion make a sound.')

The stars are arranged in a choir, as if they were singers, not celestial bodies. This original vision may well have influenced Dante in his setting of the theologians' choirs in *Paradiso* X, where circular dance accompanies the singing. In addition to its occurrence in the above-quoted

57 Freccero, 'Paradiso X: The Dance of the Stars,' 104.

58 G. de Conches, *Glosae super Platonem*, ed. É. Jeauneau, 186.

lines 139–48, this imitation of planetary motion appears at several other points in the same canto:

> Io vidi più folgór vivi e vincenti
> far di noi centro e di sé far corona,
> più dolci in voce che in vista lucenti ... (*Par.* X.64–6)

('I saw many flashing lights of blinding brightness / make of us a center and of themselves a crown, / their voices sweeter than the radiance of their faces.')

> Ne la corte del cielo, ond' io rivegno,
> si trovan molte gioie care e belle
> tanto che non si posson trar del regno;
> e 'l canto di quei lumi era di quelle ... (*Par.* X.70–3)

('In the court of Heaven, from which I have returned, / there are many precious gems of such worth and beauty / that they may not be taken from the realm. / These lights were singing of those gems.')

> Poi, sì cantando, quelli ardenti soli
> si fuor girati intorno a noi tre volte,
> come stelle vicine a' fermi poli,
> donne mi parver, non da ballo sciolte,
> ma che s'arrestin tacite, ascoltando
> fin che le nove note hanno ricolte. (*Par.* X.76–81)

('When, with just such songs, those blazing suns / had three times made their way around us, / like stars right near the still and steady poles, / they seemed to me like ladies, poised to dance, / pausing, silent, as they listen, / until they have made out the new refrain.')

Freccero identifies the song of the blessed with the music of the spheres: 'The song produced by the stellar dance is of course the music of the spheres, the music produced by the varying of the heavenly bodies, inaudible to mortal ears.'[59] While the reader is definitely brought to hear in these lines what Freccero suggests, nowhere do we find a statement

59 Freccero, 'Paradiso X: The Dance of the Stars,' 100.

that the spheres make sounds. Dante's subtlety in dealing with the Platonic and Aristotelian legacies consists in not taking the harmony of the spheres literally, but nevertheless salvaging it by representing it in the revolving garlands of the souls. If we look at the letter of the text, it is clearly stated (lines 66, 73, 76, 146) that the music is produced by the singing souls, not by the planets, but how could the reader not think of such a famous myth? This artifice also allows the poet the liberty of silencing the sky when, in the heaven of Saturn, the music takes a rest out of consideration for the pilgrim's inadequate hearing:

> Benigna volontade ...
> silenzio puose a quella dolce lira,
> e fece quïetar le sante corde
> che la destra del cielo allenta e tira. (*Par.* XV.1, 4–6)

('Benevolent will ... had silenced the sweet-sounding lyre / and hushed the sacred strings that Heaven's right hand / loosens and draws taut.')

It would have been much harder to explain a musical rest in the revolution of the sounding celestial bodies. By tampering with the boundary between direct reference and hint, the poet can draw from mythical material without compromising his philosophical stances.

In the *Commedia*, Dante's interest in the speculative side of musical thought yields to poetic invention. Far from the technicalities of a Martianus Capella, the poet constructs a musical edifice of the sounding universe based on the model of the harmonious cosmos envisioned by Pythagoras, Plato, and Cicero, and transmitted by Boethius, Cassiodorus, and Isidore. In so doing, however, he skilfully avoids taking an overt stance against the current theological and philosophical authorities, and at the same time does not renounce a rich source of poetic inspiration.

Conclusions

For many years scholars have looked askance at the hypothesis that the passages of Dante's *Commedia* that refer to music could represent more than a beautiful ornament to the poetry. Some critics have tried to assess the role of music in Dante's work, but a homogeneous work on the subject had yet to be written. In recent years, however, new musicological findings have provided evidence that singing polyphony in liturgy – if only in a simple, improvisational form – was a widespread practice on feast days during the thirteenth century in all of central and northern Italy, and particularly in the cities in which Dante had his cultural formation, including Florence.

In the light of these findings, it becomes much clearer that when Dante insists on describing the quality of the musical performances of damned, penitent, and blessed souls, he does not do so out of mere aesthetic interest. Music is an agent of divine grace and its use is consistent: Dante employs music in *Paradiso* as a rain to bless the souls and as a mystical means of expression in order to circumvent the engulfment of poetic language, while in *Purgatorio* plainchant provides a means for purging sins. By the same token, music in *Inferno* mocks the damned and reminds them of the salvation they will never reach, in a consistent parody of sacred music. Ironically, the same tool is therefore employed both to fulfil the desire of eternal happiness and to frustrate it.

Dante introduces into his poem the different styles of music of his time, showing an impressive knowledge, if not of the compositional techniques, at least of the repertory and its liturgical uses. He makes music the language of the spirit and incorporates this art into the monumental construction of his other world. References to polyphony are neither accidental nor decorative, but constitute a complex architecture, whose in-

herently musical meaning mirrors the reconciliation of multiplicity and unity. It is Dante's solution to the age-old problem of reconciling the multiplicity of individuals with the unity of the Creator. The chants of the *Commedia* are therefore not a mere accompaniment to the pilgrim's voyage, but an essential component of it. Harmony, in a political, spiritual and musical sense, becomes the end of Dante's journey to polyphony.

The transition from monophony to polyphony accompanies a cathartic progress toward the spiritual union with the Creator. There is a specifically musical quality to this purification process: for the penitents, monophonic singing is the tool of purification as the individual struggles for harmony. The songs in *Purgatorio* therefore constitute a *pharmakon*, a remedy to heal the soul from sin, which seems to revive the Pythagorean notion of music as medicine. The change to polyphony in *Paradiso* reflects the harmony with the Supreme Being, realized, spiritually as well as musically, through the simultaneous resonance of the souls' melodies within the music of God.

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