Prophetic Elements in the *Divina Commedia* of Dante Alighieri

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a list and analysis of the prophecies in the *Commedia* of Dante Alighieri. The prophecies are then broadly considered under two headings, *ante eventum* and *post eventum*, although these elements are frequently mixed together. They are used by Dante for various purposes, including the reinterpretation of the meaning of his own exile, and different programmes of moral and political critique. The foresight shown by the inhabitants of the three parts of the after-life is also examined, and philosophical and literary explanations found. The prophetic ability of the souls in the *Inferno* especially is found to have an antecedent in classical literature, and in particular in Lucan's *Pharsalia.* The role of the *post eventum* and *ante eventum* prophecies in the truth claims of the *Commedia* is considered, and the meaning of Dante *poeta*'s silence on them is examined.

CONTENTS

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Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Glasgow. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Glasgow. The dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Signed: Robert Wilson .....

Date: 31.8.04 .....

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The theme of prophecy in relation to Dante and the *Commedia* is one which is important, and has been the subject of a great deal of critical interest and neglect at one and the same time. Critical interest in the question of prophecy can be divided immediately into three groups. The first group includes any study of Dante or his work, both general and specialised, which makes some mention of individual prophecies, prophecy, or some concept of Dante *profeta*, ranging in length from a few pages to a simple footnote.[1] These numerous references attest to a widespread recognition of the presence and importance of prophecy in Dante's work but we cannot regard them as studies of the subject itself.

The second group comprises studies which attempt to explain the significance of particular prophecies, generally those of the *veltro* and the *DXV*.[2] These studies tend to concentrate on the problem of the identity of those prophesied.

The third group is made up of studies which seek to examine the concept of prophecy in Dante's work, and in the person of Dante himself, sometimes described as Dante *profeta*. These address the issues examined by the second group only insofar as they relate to the more general theme of prophecy.

By far the greater critical interest and effort has been commanded by the obscure nature of the *veltro* and *DXV* predictions and attempts to propose a definitive reading of them have generated an enormous amount of critical material. Studies in the third group are few in number, and this area has received very little direct attention. It may, therefore, be described as relatively neglected in Dante studies generally; a fact disguised by the numerous passing references to prophecy found in the first of the three groupings, and the large number of studies on the *veltro* and related questions. This study belongs in this third

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[1] The index of any study of Dante will provide examples of this. The following is an interesting summary statement: 'È luogo comune affermare la valenza profetica della Commedia; tanto comune, che nell'ambito della dantologia è di un'evidenza anche troppo elementare. E perciò rischioso per chi osa riproporlo' (Giuliana Angiolillo, *Un'isola 'autobiografica': Viaggio nella medievalità di Dante* (Salerno: Edisud, 1994), p. 205).

[2] The term '*DXV*' is used here for brevity, not to preclude any discussion which disputes the use of this term.

group. Before continuing, I will give a short chronological survey of the main studies of prophecy in Dante.

We can begin with Vittorio Cian.[3] Although primarily concerned with the problem of the *veltro*, Cian's study addresses other questions on prophecy in Dante, and remains the only study which attempts to provide a full list of the prophecies in the *Commedia*, although it is incomplete.[4] Since his primary interest is in the *veltro* prophecy, which he interprets in political terms, his study is coloured by this assumption. This predominantly political approach to the issue casts Dante as the prophet of an imperial *veltro* (pp. 9-10, 55-62). Much of Cian's study is then concerned with examining Dante's political position (e.g. pp. 36-48). Despite some attention to the differences between the *Commedia* and the *Monarchia* in terms of genre (pp. 40-41), Cian does not really take sufficient account of the fact that the *Commedia* is much more than a piece of political propaganda (pp. 48-55). He does not consider the fact that Dante cannot, and does not, commit his text in the same way as the propaganda writers in order that the *Commedia* can survive beyond the achievement of shorter term political aims.

On another issue, Cian is rightly attentive to the importance of the distinction between the fictional time of the *Commedia* and the time of composition. This is how he describes Dante's attention to that distinction in his use of prophecies in the *Commedia*:

> Il poeta medesimo ha cura di osservare, per quanto era umanamente possibile, questa distinzione, comportandosi però in guisa che i riflessi inevitabili della mutata condizione dei tempi e delle cose e dell'animo suo allorquando scriveva, in confronto di quella del periodo immediatamente anteriore all'esilio, non rompessero l'incanto, non violassero le convenienze e le esigenze della sua finzione. Perciò appunto egli ricorse ad un espediente assai ingegnoso ed efficace, quello delle profezie, giustificato il più delle volte col dono della prescienza concesso agli spiriti d'oltretomba; ricorse a commenti e digressioni sue personali, che si riferiscono evidentemente a un tempo posteriore. Ma nell'usare di questo espediente, sovrattutto nel ricorrere alle profezie, egli rivela un senso finissimo della misura, sì da non tradire se stesso, da non isvelare troppo chiaramente il suo bell'artificio, da alimentare l'illusione nell'animo dei suoi lettori. (pp. 37-38)

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[3] Vittorio Cian, *Oltre l'enigma dantesco del veltro*, 2nd edn (Turin: Paravia, 1945). Cian notes in his dedication that the first version of this study, entitled *Sulle orme del veltro*, was published in 1897.

[4] Cian's list, pp. 119-32, is as follows: *Inf.*,I. 101-02; X. 79-81; XV. 61 ff.; XIX. 76 ff.; XXIV. 140 ff.; XXVI. 7-9; XXVIII. 55 ff.; XXVIII. 73 ff; *Pur.*, VI. 121 f.; VIII. 133 ff.; XI. 139 ff.; XIII. 151 ff.; XIV. 55 ff.; XX. 70 ff.; XXIII. 97 ff.; XXIV. 82 ff.; XXXII. 100 ff.; XXXII. 142 ff.; XXXIII. 8ff.; XXXIII. 34 ff.; *Par.*, VI. 103 ff.; VIII. 76-78; IX. 1-6; IX. 37-60; IX. 121 ff.; XII. 140-1.; XVII. 46 ff.; XVII. 124 ff.; XVIII. 124-36; XIX. 112-48; XXII. 14-18.; XXII. 73-96; XXVII. 61-3. Some of the problems with his list will be addressed in the course of the next three chapters of this thesis, which examine the individual prophecies in the *Commedia*.

Cian's readiness to consider the possibility that Dante might somehow deceive his readers through the use of *post eventum* prophecies is interesting. For Cian, this seems unproblematic in his presentation of Dante as a prophet. However, since it arises from a crossing of the boundaries between fact and fiction, it raises the question of which 'Dante' Cian is describing; the historical Dante Alighieri, or Dante as character, or Dante as narrator of the *Commedia*. I will return to this issue later. Also, despite his appreciation of Dante's *misura* in the handling of the *post eventum* prophecies, Cian's eagerness to resolve the *veltro* question means that he does not allow Dante a sense of *misura* in that prophecy too.

Ernesto Buonaiuti takes a religious approach instead, describing Dante in terms of Biblical prophecy: 'egli è, unicamente e integralmente, profeta, nel significato etimologico, classico, augusto della parola' (p. 12).[5] Buonaiuti treats the *Commedia* almost as a sacred text, certainly on a par with other Christian writing: 'Dante avrebbe dovuto figurare, con l'*Evangelo Eterno*, nel nuovo canone cristiano' (p. 12). His Dante is a religious reformer, linked with reforming movements of his time, and figures like Pietro Olivi, Remigio dei Girolami, and, especially, Joachim of Fiore (pp. 30-34, 63, 76-81, 111-61). In Buonaiuti's reading of the *Commedia* Dante's text becomes virtually autobiographical:

> La sua vita e la sua opera sono una trilogia sinfonica, i tempi successivi della quale scandiscono un'ascensione continua verso la visione più alta della capacità salutare della prova e del dolore, in zone sempre più intime e sacrali della spiritualità. (p. 56)

It is obvious, then, that Buonaiuti does not address the differences between Dante as author, narrator and character. Because he begins with this very strong sense of the historical Dante as a prophet, his reading of the *Commedia* is always directed by this premise. In an autobiographical reading, Dante's poetry is viewed simply as a means of expressing his prophetic mission. This insistence on Dante's mission leads Buonaiuti to state the importance of the passages of invective in Dante's writing, and illustrate how this is a feature of Biblical prophecy in particular (pp. 12, 86-87).

Buonaiuti's response to a fundamental question is an approach which we will see taken up in other studies. If Dante does regard himself as a prophet, why does he never use the term to describe himself? Buonaiuti answers this by suggesting that the prophet is also a type of poet, and vice versa:

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[5] Ernesto Buonaiuti, *Dante come profeta*, 2nd edn (Modena: Guanda, 1936).

> Anche il profeta è un poeta. E i grandi poeti sono anche profeti. Il profeta è il poeta della religiosità. I mezzi ordinari della sua espressione sono, anzichè idee astratte e categorie metafisiche, immagini sensibili e formule concrete. Gli elementi psicologici che reggono e alimentano la sua esperienza e il suo ideale sono la fantasia e il sentimento, a preferenza della speculazione e del razioncinio. (pp. 123-24)

Buonaiuti's study, then, is so concerned to demonstrate that Dante is a religious reformer similar to other religious reformers of his time, that it does not really engage with the issue of prophecy as it emerges from Dante's text. Instead, Buonaiuti concentrates on those areas of commonality shared by the *Commedia* and some of the religious texts and authors of Dante's time. This approach means that his study concentrates on political and religious invective, and, in particular, on eschatological imagery and ideas. Consequently, it is selective, rather than comprehensive, beginning, as it does, from a concept of Dante as prophet, rather than from Dante's text itself.

Bruno Nardi's study remains fundamental to the subject.[6] He interprets the scenes in the *Commedia* where the poet is charged to re-tell his vision as a manifestation of Dante's own consciousness of a duty to do so (p. 258).[7] Nardi also discusses the nature of the vision experienced by Dante, and tries to understand Dante's own thoughts about it (p. 281). He then includes Dante in a line of prophets stretching back to the Old Testament:

> Aperta coi profeti dell'Antico Testamento, la serie di coloro ai quali Dio ha largito il dono della profezia, non è ancor chiusa. Poichè la rivelazione profetica non ha avuto il solo scopo di annunciare la venuta di Cristo, ma anche quello di raddrizzare i costumi degli uomini e d'insegnar loro il rispetto della leggedivina. Anzi, secondo un detto del libro dei *Proverbi*, "cum prophetia defecerit, dissipabitur populus". Perciò, in ogni tempo, e prima e dopo Cristo, quando ve n'è stato bisogno, Dio ha suscitato uomini ai quali ha rivelato i suoi voleri e ha imposto di levare la loro voce 'in pro del mondo che mal vive'. (p. 293)

As we saw Buonaiuti do, Nardi equates poets and prophets, describing both as divinely inspired, and he notes the double significance of the term *vate* in this context (p. 295). Furthermore, he finds in Dante's religious and political critique the prophet's involvement with the historical situation of his people:

> Non artificio letterario, ma vera visione profetica ritenne Dante quella concessa a lui da Dio, per una grazia singolare, allo scopo preciso che egli, conosciuta la verità

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[6] Bruno Nardi, 'Dante Profeta', in his *Dante e la cultura medievale: Nuovi saggi di filosofia dantesca* (Bari: Laterza, 1942), pp. 258-334. 'In his capital and underutilized "Dante profeta" [...] Bruno Nardi threw down a critical gauntlet and challenged us to look at the Commedia not through a glass darkly but face to face' (Teodolinda Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 3).

[7] These are *Pur.*, XXXII. 103-05; XXXIII. 46-47. and *Par.*, XXVII. 61-66.

> sulla cagione che il mondo aveva fatto reo, la denunziasse agli uomini, manifestando ad essi tutto quello che aveva veduto e udito. (p. 296)

Nardi detects a continuation of the tradition and language of the Old Testament prophets in Dante, whilst positing that the Old Testament prophetic books were themselves poetry (pp. 311). In addition, he interprets Dante's own equation of his vision to those of Ezekiel and St. John (*Pur.*, XXIX. 100-05) as evidence of his prophetic character (pp. 325-26). Nardi concludes that Dante did think himself the recipient of a real vision, which leads him to ask: 'fu veramente un profeta Dante?' (p. 324). It is not the fulfilment of Dante's prophecies, but, rather, his commitment to an eternal ideal of justice which, for Nardi, makes him a true prophet (p. 333).

The question which Nardi seeks to answer in his study, concerns the historical Dante Alighieri. For this reason, he does not mention most of the prophetic passages in the *Commedia*, and concentrates instead on trying to determine Dante's ethical vision, which is then likened to that of the 'genuine' prophets of the Old Testament.

Niccolò Mineo's study is still the most comprehensive treatment of the theme.[8] His general approach begins with a survey of prophecy, classical and biblical, then he looks for similar elements in Dante's works, including elements of Apocalyptic literature (pp. 99-100). In an analysis of the vocational aspects of *Inferno* I and II, Mineo links the opening verses of the *Commedia*, the prophecy of the *veltro*, and other features, to a variety of texts, taken chiefly from the Old Testament prophets (pp. 168-201). This approach, one of correlating texts, means that Mineo's analyses tend to look for evidence of particular themes in Dante's text, rather than engaging in a fuller examination of what is predicted, how it is presented, and any questions that may arise from this.

In his conclusion Mineo seeks to examine the relationship between poetry and prophecy in Dante (pp. 297-354). He, too, asks if the poem is a complete fiction or if Dante really had some consciousness of being chosen? He brings examples of 'genuine' prophets to respond to objections that the *Commedia* is too structured to be a real vision, distinguishing between the moment of the vision and its subsequent re-telling (p. 298). Mineo, too, notes that Dante never describes himself as a prophet. However, he does

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[8] Niccolò Mineo, *Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante* (Catania: University of Catania, Facoltà di lettere e filosofia, 1968).

define himself as 'poeta', and Mineo proposes that 'poeta' and 'profeta' can be identified with each other, referring to the term 'vates', again (p. 303). Dante, then, is a divinely inspired 'poeta-vate' (pp. 325-26). Mineo posits two 'momenti' for the *Commedia*; one of inspiration and a subsequent one of elaboration. He then concludes:

> Come il Dante personaggio del poema viene presentato come l'eletto, predestinato alla missione profetica, così il Dante autore ci si rivela con una coscienza di poeta-profeta. (p. 348)

Mineo does not seek to present a comprehensive reading of the prophecies in the *Commedia*, nor does he discuss the issue of the *post eventum* prophecies. His treatment of the prophecies of exile, for example, is solely in terms of their portrayal of Dante as a sort of martyr, not in terms of their rationale or function in the text.

Raffaello Morghen takes a slightly different approach, concentrating on the religious and human aspects of Dante's message.[9] He regards Dante's contact with religious movements of his time as fundamental to his poetic inspiration, acknowledging his agreement with Buonaiuti on this point (Morghen, p. 141). The combination of religious and secular values in Dante is defined as his 'sincretismo culturale, il "laicismo"'(p. 148). For Morghen, the exaltation of the Empire is the central point of Dante's theology of history and earthly eschatology; the Empire as established by God for the guidance of all humanity. Morghen rejects the idea of some mystical experience behind Dante's writing, although he suggests that Dante's exile may have changed him in some way. He concludes: 'profeta volle dunque essere Dante come voce vivente della coscienza umana' (p. 156). For Morghen it is Dante's hope for the future that makes him a prophet. Again, the concentration for Morghen's study is on the figure of Dante as a prophet, rather than the prophetic moments in Dante's text.

Maurizio Palma di Cesnola's more recent study is primarily concerned with the *veltro* question, but includes some useful observations on prophecy in general, so that it can be included in this survey.[10] He seeks to clarify the problem in the *Commedia* of the distinction between author and narrator, and the differences between the time of writing, or

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[9] Raffaello Morghen, 'Dante Profeta', in his *Dante Profeta tra la storia e l'eterno* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1983), pp. 139-57. The article was first published in *Letture Classensi*, 3 (1970) 13-36.

[10] Maurizio Palma di Cesnola, *Semiotica dantesca: Profetismo e diacronia* (Ravenna: Longo, 1995).

narration, and the time of the events narrated (p. 8). He also discusses the issue of the fictional nature of the *Commedia*, suggesting that the question of Dante's self-perception as inspired, or not, is not central. He ends by adopting the position that the *Commedia* should be regarded as a fiction which is painstakingly depicted as real, following Auerbach and Singleton (Palma di Cesnola, p. 31). Although Palma di Cesnola's study includes a discussion of the *post eventum* prophecies, he draws some rather general conclusions on the basis of only two examples (pp. 51-52). He concludes his study by concentrating on the *veltro* and *DXV* prophecies. I will refer to some of his points in more detail in the course of this study.

This thesis belongs in this third group of studies; those concerned with the issue of prophecy in Dante. I am limiting the study to the *Commedia*, and my intention is first to list and describe the prophecies in the *Commedia*. This makes the starting point different from those studies we have seen above which begin outside the *Commedia* and bring a model of prophecy to it. Instead, I propose to begin from the text and find out what emerges from the prophecies.

Clearly some definition of prophecy is required to identify the relevant parts of the *Commedia*. For this study, prophecy will primarily be understood in the simple sense of prediction. I will attempt to describe in each case what Dante's text actually contains, including the most obvious allusions or intertextual references. Since prophecies by their nature refer to something else, I will try to ascertain as far as possible what that is, or can be, for each prophecy. This includes evaluating the intelligibility of the prophecies, how easily they can be understood, how equivocal they may be, and so on. It is important to distinguish always between what is present in Dante's text and what is not. I will also examine the mechanism whereby Dante receives these prophecies: how do the dead know the future? Then I will consider their function for the text as a whole. In other words, what does the presence of these prophetic elements bring to the *Commedia*?

Before I begin the examination of the individual prophecies, there is an important point on which we should be clear. Only Palma di Cesnola attempts to clarify the different presences of Dante inside and outside of the text. The other studies, in positing a Dante *profeta*, appear to move from character to narrative *persona*, to historical person without clear distinctions. Some clarification is required, therefore, before we proceed.

Although the distinctions between Dante as character, narrative *persona*, and historical person appear to be clear, they are frequently confused, as we can see from the following attempts to explain the differences.

> The reader must be careful from the beginning to distinguish between the two uses of the first person singular in the *Divine Comedy*: one designating Dante the Pilgrim, the other Dante the Poet. The first is a character in a story invented by the second.[11]

The first part of this statement is correct: that there are two uses of the first person singular. It isn't explained here, but, strictly speaking, any use of the first person singular by what is called Dante the Pilgrim, would obviously have to be in direct speech. The other first person singular verbs in the past tense, for example, which make up the narrative are actually uttered, or written, by Dante the Poet. The next statement is in fact mistaken. Dante the Pilgrim is not created by Dante the Poet, if Dante the Poet means the subject of those first person verbs whose subject is not Dante the Pilgrim. Both are the invention of the historical person Dante Alighieri. This distinction is important precisely because it can be so difficult to state clearly. Here is another example:

> The fact is [...] that there are *three* Dantes, all with an equal stake in the text we are reading. The historical Dante, the Florentine exile, urgently needs to demonstrate his virtues, and the truths in which he believes, to a hostile world. In response, Dante as poet creates a text which is no mere celebration of a distant ideal but rather a field of moral action: the protagonist - as Dante's own representation of himself - certainly can waver or prove obtuse; but since the difficulties he faces are all pitched on the plane of moral and intellectual purpose, we are bound to suppose that these vicissitudes identify the actual possibilities of error or success which the poet and exile are also likely to encounter in their own moral determination to save and be saved.[12]

Here we have the three Dantes, each correctly defined, except that 'Dante as poet' does not create a text. He is the creation of the first, historical, Dante. The area of difficulty appears to lie, not in the relationship between the character, or pilgrim as he is often called, and the poet, but between the poet and the historical individual.[13] Here is a third description:

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[11] Mark Musa, *Dante's Inferno: The Indiana Critical Edition*, ed. and trans. by Mark Musa (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1995), p. 23, on *Inf.*, I.1-10.
[12] Robin Kirkpatrick, *Dante's Inferno: Difficulty and Dead Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. xii.
[13] A classic discussion of this distinction is found in Gianfranco Contini, 'Dante come personaggio-poeta della Commedia', in his *Un'idea di Dante: Saggi danteschi*, (Turin: Einaudi, 1970), pp. 33-62 (first publ. in *Approdo letterario*, (Jan.-Mar. 1958)). However, Contini says little about the position of the historical Dante.

> We are mainly concerned with this fictive author, or, 'author's voice', or 'implied' author, Dante's 'second self' claiming to be Dante's first self, poet, narrator at his desk, working in a here and now and using the present tense, always conscious of the reader at his elbow or 'out there'.[14]

This explanation, in a study of Dante's addresses to the reader, is very clear about the difference between the 'real' Dante and the 'poet', which is a narrative *persona*. As the other examples show, however, it is very easy to confuse these different Dantes, so we shouldn't judge them too harshly. Not only that, but sometimes we have to allow for a blurring of the distinctions. Having clarified things a little, we may consider this statement:

> La distinzione tra Dante personaggio e Dante poeta è ormai un'idea ricevuta della critica. L'accettazione di questo acquisito non significa, certo, il rifiuto dell'osservazione del buonsenso, per cui si potrà sempre, fino a un certo punto, intravedere nel volto del Pellegrino tratti di un ritratto, per quanto stilizzato, dell'Alighieri.[15]

Apart from the possible merging of person and poet here, we should bear in mind the general observation that the historical Dante obviously shows through the fiction at different points, be it in his attitudes or autobiographical details. Thus, whilst the poet cannot be identified completely with the writer, neither is the poet, nor even the character, completely fictitious. Both poet and character may tell us something about the writer, or , to put it another way, he may be telling us things about himself through them. The difficulty is distinguishing fact and fiction.[16]

Dante's insistence that the *Commedia* is true is famously formulated by Charles Singleton: 'The fiction of the Divine Comedy is that it is not fiction'.[17] The *Commedia* does contain a mixture of the real and the imagined. Realism is found at the more obvious level of historical reality in the description and inclusion of real events and individuals, as well as at a psychological level and a metaphysical level. Dante *uomo*'s care to make his conception of the otherworld consonant with the cosmological and philosophical systems

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[14] Chandler S. Beall, 'Dante and his Reader', *Forum Italicum*, 13 (1979), 299-343 (p. 309).
[15] Tibor Wlassics, *Dante narratore: saggi sullo stile della Commedia* (Florence: Olschki, 1975), p. 113.
[16] Palma di Cesnola indeed speaks of 'eliminando il terzo incomodo, l'autore,' p. 27.
[17] Charles Singleton, 'The Irreducible Dove', *Comparative Literature*, 9 (1957), 129-35 (p. 129). This statement seems to regularly move in and out of vogue. More recently it has come under scrutiny again by Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, pp. 3-15.

of his day, to make it intelligible in the philosophical sense, makes it un-impossible so to speak. This credibility can cause problems, as described here by Teodolinda Barolini:

> ...Dante's realism causes critics to tend to 'believe' Dante without knowing that they believe him, i.e. to pose their critical questions and situate their critical debates within the very presuppositions of the fiction they are seeking to understand.[18]

Barolini then continues by criticizing what she calls the 'collocation fallacy', that is, using the fictional structure of the *Inferno* to infer things about the nature of the characters. However, she seems to go too far in rejecting the logic of the system which Dante has constructed. While this digresses slightly from the issue of separating the different levels of Dante, it does touch upon the question of how to approach Dante's text.

Another reason for the existence of confusion between *uomo* and *poeta* is the presence of the Augustinian tradition in the *Commedia.*[19] Although some critical approaches question or reject the notion, it is clear that in Augustine's *Confessions* the narrative voice is intended to be completely identified with the author.[20] In other words, it is deliberately autobiographical. The *Commedia*, on the other hand, is normally read as autobiographical fiction, defined like this:

> Autobiographical fiction, by contrast - despite its similarity to autobiography in terms of the diegetic world of the 'I' narrator - is read as disjoining the identity of the author from that of the protagonist or narrator.[21]

The term 'diegetic' used here is associated with certain theories of narratology, although it is originally used by Plato in his Republic to distinguish between narrated speech, *diegeseis*, and reported speech, *mimesis.*[22] Although the critical framework implied by this terminology may be useful for examining the *Commedia*, such an

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[18] Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, p. 15.
[19] See, for example, John Freccero, *Dante: the Poetics of Conversion*, ed. and intro. by Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 1-15.
[20] See Laurence de Looze, *Pseudo-autobiography in the Fourteenth Century: Juan Ruiz, Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Froissart, and Geoffrey Chaucer* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1997), p. 27.
[21] In de Looze, p. 29. Laurence de Looze also mentions Dante specifically as an example where 'readers have no hesitation about going beyond an author's express or expressed intentions and reading a work according to another mode of reception. In this case we regularly reascribe the *Commedia* to the category I would call autobiographical fiction - that is, we refuse to read it as an autobiography' (p. 28).
[22] *Republic* 392c-394c. See Plato, *Republic*, trans and intro. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 87-90. See also Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. by Jane E. Levin, foreword by Jonathan Culler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), pp. 25-32; 162-67.

undertaking is well outside the scope of this study.[23] The terminology itself is also problematic. We may locate Dante the character at the diegetic level, intradiegetic, or even hypodiegetic, whilst Dante the narrator could be described as extra-diegetic, or homodiegetic.[24]

For the sake of brevity, I propose to use the following forms to refer to these different 'Dantes': Dante *uomo*, to designate the historical person, Dante Alighieri, responsible for writing the *Commedia* and creator of the other two 'Dantes'; Dante *poeta*, to refer to the narrative voice assumed by Dante *uomo* in the *Commedia*, described in the quotation at note 14 above. The important distinction between these two has also been explained as follows:

> Quando il Fergusson osserva che 'the auctor when he reminds us of his existence is outside the fictive world of the poem' comprenda solo il mondo del 'personaggio'. Ma in verità il 'fictive world of the poem' è tutto il poema, inclusavi la 'voce fuori campo' del poeta, che, come tale, non si identifica affatto con l'autore, ma è anch'essa un elemento in giuoco, una 'parte', un 'personaggio': appunto il 'poeta -personaggio'.[25]

Finally, I will use Dante *personaggio* to refer to the character in the poem; the creation of Dante *uomo*. Dante *personaggio* represents the earlier stage of Dante *poeta*, and should not be regarded as the poetic creation of Dante *poeta*, since Dante *poeta* claims to be retelling a true experience, not creating a fiction. This is what is sometimes referred to as Dante pilgrim, though I prefer not to use that term as its use raises questions which cannot be examined here. I will not specify which Dante is intended every time he is named, but only when I think some clarification is needed. In general, the level of any discussion of Dante should be clear.

This study will be concerned, in the first place, with the *Commedia* itself and ask what the prophetic features of the text contribute to it. The reason I have drawn so much

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[23] Niccolò Mineo, 'Il "commento" come forma della narrazione', *Letture classensi*, 29 (2000), 131-41, is engaged in an analysis of the *Commedia*, to classify the different narrative forms under the headings 'diegesi o racconto, descrizione, mimesi, commento' (p. 131). He informs us, p. 132, 'A questo lavoro attendo da anni. Qui non posso fornire se non qualche essenziale indicazione teorica.'

[24] 'It is easy to confuse these various terms, and indeed they are more elastic than they seem, and require careful application in individual cases' (Martin Gray, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2nd edn (Harlow: Longman, 1995), p. 88).

[25] E. N. Girardi, 'Dante personaggio', in *Dante nella critica d'oggi: risultati e prospettive*, ed. by U. Bosco (Florence: Le Monnier, 1965), pp. 332-42, (pp. 341-42). Girardi is responding to Francis Fergusson, *Dante's Drama of the Mind: a Modern Reading of the Purgatorio* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 9-10.

attention to these different levels of Dante's presence is because this is particularly pertinent to an examination of the prophecies in the poem. For future reference, we may observe that, in general, the prophecies are delivered to Dante *personaggio* (at the diegetic level), usually reported *verbatim* (mimesis). They become prophecies, however, at the extradiegetic level, i.e. as reported by Dante *poeta*, that is to say, any prophetic identity pertains to the reporting of the prophecies by Dante *poeta*, not simply their reception by Dante *personaggio*. Finally, in the case of *post eventum* prophecies in particular, they reach out of the 'fictive world of the poem', to borrow Fergusson's phrase, into the real world, the world of Dante *uomo*. Except that they only pretend to do so, because they aren't real prophecies, but are part of the fiction. At this point we may recall both Singleton's observation, and Barolini's caveat.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROPHECIES I: *INFERNO*

In the next three chapters I will list and examine all of the prophecies in the *Commedia*. The reason for the division of this list into three chapters, one for each *cantica*, is simply because it is lengthy. It does not imply similarities shared by the prophecies in any one chapter nor differences between those in different chapters. These questions will be considered after the list has been completed, and the prophecies in it fully examined.

A distinction is also normally made between those prophecies sometimes described as *post eventum*, and those regarded as somehow 'genuine' or more serious.[1] This distinction has already been seen in the division of critical work on the *Commedia*, with most interest and energy directed towards the *veltro* and *DXV* prophecies. Although there are distinctions to be made, I propose to include these prophecies in their proper place within the list before deciding what, if anything, makes them different from the other prophecies.

Such a list is also timely, since the last attempt to provide one is over fifty-five years old and incomplete, as we have already seen.[2] This list is intended to be comprehensive so that any conclusions are based on a consideration of all the prophecies in the *Commedia*, rather than selective examples. For this list, my understanding of the term 'prophecy' concentrates simply on the predictive aspect; those passages which purport to tell the future are included. In attempting to determine their meaning, where possible, my preference is to refer to the fourteenth century commentators on the *Commedia* as a guide to the intelligibility of the prophecies to Dante's contemporaries.[3] This must obviously be

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[1] This statement is typical of that position, 'The prophecy of the 515, with that of the greyhound, should not therefore be associated with those pseudo-prophecies in the Comedy, of events which were still in the future in 1300 but had already taken place or were reasonably predictable by the time Dante wrote them' (Peter Armour, *Dante's Griffin and the History of the World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 248-49). See, too, Anthony K. Cassell, *Lectura Dantis Americana: Inferno I* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 94-95. Colin Hardie, 'Un cinquecento diece e cinque, Purg. 33, 43', *Deutches Dante Jahrbuch*, 51-52 (1976-7), 84-98 (pp. 85-86).

[2] Despite certain omissions Cassell still refers the reader to Cian for 'a list of all the prophetical passages in the Commedia' (Cassell, *Inferno I*, p. 178 n. 33). The note also refers to Mineo, *Profetismo*. Mineo, however, does not give a list of the prophecies.

[3] The editions consulted are listed in the bibliography. Unless otherwise indicated quotations from the early commentators come from the electronic texts on the CD ROM *I commenti danteschi dei secoli XIV, XV e XVI*, ed. by Paolo Procaccioli (Rome: Lexis

done carefully, since there are differences in approach and outlook between these commentators, and the historical and cultural context in which they wrote was also rapidly changing.[4] Nevertheless, they can still provide a good general indication as to the content and comprehensibility of the prophecies in the *Commedia*.[5]

1. *Inferno* I

The first prophecy in the *Commedia*, and one of the most problematic, comes in the very first canto of the *Inferno* and concerns the *veltro*. It is delivered to Dante *personaggio* by Virgil before they have entered the underworld proper. The choice of Virgil to deliver this prophecy may or may not be significant. Virgil himself needs no introduction, and in that respect is different, as we will see, from some of the lesser known souls who deliver some of the other prophecies. In some of the attempts to decipher the *veltro* prophecy, Dante's choice of Virgil is introduced as supporting evidence. For example, he may be interpreted as an 'imperial' figure, and thus indicative of an 'imperial' solution to the problem.[6] On the other hand, Virgil is famous in Dante's time as the unwitting pagan prophet of the birth of Christ; a tradition which Dante explicitly acknowledges in *Purgatorio* XXII. Thus a claim might equally be made that his presence favours a 'Christological' interpretation of the *veltro*. Since it is clear that Dante's choice of Virgil may be interpreted in different ways according to whatever solution to the *veltro* problem is being proposed, we should instead consider Dante's choice in the context of prophecy. Virgil is an authoritative figure with a history of prophecy in addition to his great fame as a poet.

The events leading to the delivery of the prophecy are full of symbolism and Virgil's explanation to Dante of the meaning of the *lupa* establishes a context of symbolic

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Progetti Editoriali, 1999) [on CD ROM]. I have also used the database of the *The Dartmouth Dante Project*, <http://dciswww.dartmouth.edu:50080/?&&&7&s> [Last accessed the 1st of June 2004]. Information on the *Dante Dartmouth Project* can be found in Robert Hollander, 'A Checklist of Commentaries on the *Commedia* (1322-1982)', *Dante Studies*, 101 (1983), 181-92; and in Robert, Hollander, 'Dante and his Commentators', in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 226-36.

[4] On differences between commentators and their changing times see Francesco Mazzoni, 'La critica dantesca del secolo XIV', in *Dante nella critica d'oggi: risultati e prospettive*, ed. by Umberto Bosco (Florence: Le Monnier, 1965), pp. 285-97; Aldo Vallone, *Storia della critica dantesca dal XIV al XX secolo*, 2 vols (Padua: La Nuova Libraria, 1981), I, pp. 67-190.

[5] Mazzoni, 'La critica dantesca', p. 292, cites Pietro Alighieri's information on Beatrice Portinari as an example of their usefulness in providing historical details.

[6] Palma di Cesnola, pp. 54-55, lists a number of features in *Inferno* I supporting this view.

representation for his subsequent prediction. The whole passage is as follows, with the prophecy of the *veltro* beginning in line 101:

'se vuo' campar d'esto loco selvaggio;
  ché questa bestia, per la qual tu gride,
non lascia altrui passar per la sua via,
ma tanto lo 'impedisce che l'uccide;
  e ha natura sì malvagia e ria,
che mai non empie la bramosa voglia,
e dopo 'l pasto ha più fame che pria.
  Molti son li animali a cui s'ammoglia,
e più saranno ancora, infin che 'l veltro
verrà, che la farà morir con doglia.
  Questi non ciberà terra né peltro,
ma sapïenza, amore e virtute,
e sua nazion sarà tra feltro e feltro
  Di quella umile Italia fia salute
per cui morì la vergine Cammilla,
Eurialo e Turno e Niso di ferute.
  Questi la caccerà per ogne villa,
fin che l'avrà rimessa ne lo 'nferno,
là onde 'nvidia prima dipartilla.'

(*Inf.*, I. 93-111)

Commentators and critics have failed to agree upon the identity of the *veltro*, or even whether or not it refers to a given individual. Since the text lends itself easily to different types of symbolic interpretation, studies of it can become excessively ingenious and elaborate.[7] Even the literal meanings of the actual terms used in the prediction are often disputed. For this reason, it is important from the outset to try to establish some semantic boundaries, as far as possible, for the terms used in the prophecy as it is given in the text.

The setting for the prophecy begins with the reference to the *bestia* (88-94), the *lupa* (49), which, along with two other wild beasts, blocked Dante's path. This is the animal which the *veltro* will kill (102). The *lupa* returns at the end of the prediction where Virgil states that the *veltro* will pursue it through every city or town until it is returned to Hell, whence *'nvidia*, envy, first set it free (109-11).[8] The literal meaning of this part is reasonably clear; however, to make any sense, the *lupa* must obviously be interpreted symbolically.

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[7] G. H. McWilliam's comment after a brief outline of some of the more extravagant theories is apt: 'As can be seen, we are no longer moving in the world of Dante, but in that of Conan Doyle' ('Dante's smooth beast: a commentary on the opening canto of the *Commedia*', *Hermathena*, 113 (1972), 15-33 (p. 28)).

[8] Jean Hein, *Enigmaticité et messianisme dans la 'Divine Comédie'* (Florence: Olschki, 1992), p. 16, sees a contradiction in the fate of the lupa 'Si la créature demoniaque est tuée, comment le chien sauveur peut-il la pourchasser et la refouler en enfer.' These two actions, however, do not seem necessarily mutually exclusive.

The correspondence between the group of three animals in which the *lupa* is found and a similar group in a verse from Jeremiah has been noted by many commentators and readers[9]:

> idcirco percussit eos leo de silva
> lupus ad vesperam vastavit eos
> pardus vigilans super civitates eorum
> omnis qui egressus fuerit ex eis capietur
> quia multiplicatae sunt praevaricationes eorum
> confortatae sunt aversiones eorum
>
> (Jer. 5. 6)[10]

In his commentary on Jeremiah, Jerome interprets this verse in a historical sense, seeing in the *lupus* a reference to the Medes or Persians.[11] By the time of Dante there was a strong tradition of associating the wolf with avarice.[12] This association is very clear in the *Commedia*, especially at *Inferno* VII. 8, and *Purgatorio* XX. 10-15, where *lupo* or *lupa* is used in this sense, and Dante's early commentators generally follow this tradition too.[13] What we do not find in the fourteenth century commentaries on the *Inferno* is any identification of the *lupa*, or the other two beasts, with historical individuals or political parties.[14]

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[9] Amongst others see Armour, *Dante's Griffin*, pp. 79-80; Freccero, pp. 49-52; Francesco Mazzoni, *Saggio di un nuovo commento alla 'Divina Commedia'* (Florence: Sansoni, 1967), p. 103; Mineo, *Profetismo*, pp. 173-74; Edward Moore, *Studies in Dante: First Series: Scripture and Classical Authors in Dante*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896, repr. with intro. by Colin Hardie, 1969), pp. 326, 359; P. Piehler, *The Visionary landscape* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1971), p. 113; Karl Vossler, *Mediaeval Culture: An Introduction to Dante and his Times*, trans. by William Cranston Lawton, 2 vols (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1929), II, p. 108; McWilliam, p. 23. Some also note the same three animals in Isaiah 11. 6.

[10] All scriptural texts are taken from *Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, ed. by Boniface Fischer, John Gribimont, H. F. D. Sparks, and W. Thiele, 4th. edn revised by Robert Weber, 2 vols (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994).

[11] 'Quia igitur ista fecerunt, percussit eos leo de silva, regnum videlicet Babylonium; lupus ad vesperam vastavit eos, Medos, Persasque significans' (*In Hieremiam* I. 95.3). The text is from *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera: Pars I, Opera Exegetica 3, In Hieremiam libri VI*, ed. by S. Reiter, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina LXXIV (Turnhaut: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1960), p. 53.

[12] Cassell, *Inferno I*, pp. 68-71, outlines this tradition with references to Augustine and Aquinas, as well as to Graziolo di Bambaglioli's commentary on *Inferno* I. 49-54.

[13] Jacopo Alighieri, Jacopo della Lana, Guido da Pisa, Pietro Alighieri, the *Ottimo commento*, Boccaccio, and Benvenuto da Imola all give this interpretation. Benvenuto's comment provides a suitable summary example: 'Hic autor describit tertiam feram, scilicet lupam, idest avaritiam, quam ultimo ponit, quia cum, adveniente senectute, cetera vitia senescant, sola avaritia juvenescit. Et merito figurat avaritiam per lupam, quae est animal vorax et rapax, et cujus ventris ingluvies est insatiabilis.' The association with old age is also made by Guido da Pisa and Pietro Alighieri.

[14] Cassell, *Inferno I*, pp. 46-47, notes some of the 19th century critics who proposed such interpretations. More recently Palma di Cesnola, p. 56, suggests a party political

The term *veltro* is generally agreed to refer to some sort of dog, possibly a greyhound or perhaps even some sort of sheep dog.[15] Whilst the literal sense of the word is uncontroversial then, if imprecise as to the species, it goes without saying that no one reads it literally. On this point, at least, all commentators, studies and interpreters agree: Virgil is not predicting the appearance of a dog.

Verrà clearly places the coming of the *veltro* in the future, but there is no time reference of any sort given, except that the appearance of the *veltro* will mean the death of the *lupa* (102). The description of the *veltro* first details that it will eat neither *terra*, land or earth, nor *peltro*, the literal meaning of which is less clear. The *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* under its first definition of *peltro* describes it as 'lega metallica composta in grande percentuale di stagno con piombo, antimonio e, anche, rame o argento in percentuale minima', suggesting pewter, or some form of base metal.[16] It then goes on to give a second definition, in which it refers to the use of the term in this line of the *Inferno*, with the explanation that here it is used figuratively to indicate 'richezza'. Early commentators are cited in support of this view, including this statement from Francesco da Buti's commentary: 'Per lo peltro che è una specie di metallo, s'intendano le richezze.' The definition then continues with an opposite meaning for *peltro*: 'cosa o opera di scarso pregio o valore' and quotes from the *Serventese romagnolo* as a source for this.[17] The *Serventese romagnolo* was composed around 1270 in honour of Guido da Montefeltro and is significant in that it contains the same three rhyming terms as are found in these lines of

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interpretation, but in a rather tenuous way, based on an interpretation of the *lupa* as a sort of anti-imperial cupidity.

[15] Guido Da Pisa calls it a *canis leporarius*, and describes its many admirable qualities, *Guido da Pisa's Expositiones et Glose super Comediam Dantis, or Commentary on Dante's Inferno*, ed. by V. Cioffari (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), p. 32. Jacopo della Lana also uses the term *levriero*. Cassell, *Inferno I*, p. 111 and p. 181 n. 54. notes that the *veltro*, a greyhound used as a hunting dog, is also found represented as a sheepdog, both in bestiaries and in artistic representations.

[16] *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, ed. by Salvatore Battaglia and Giorgio Barberi Squarotti, 21 vols (Turin: Unione tipografico editrice torinese, 1961-2002), XII (1984), 978-79.

[17] 'Fol ne stia en statu ched a lui è nula Feltro ! / en levere s'è avançatu e 'l leone asalì lu veltro / ché paragunato s'è loro e, peltru / del sapere...' *Serventese romagnolo* XXXV. 1. 181. The first published edition of the *Serventese* is that of Tommaso Casini, in his *Scritti danteschi* (Città di castello: S. Lapi, 1913), pp. 19-51. Casini notes, pp. 35-36, that Dante had probably at least heard the poem, and this may link Guido da Montefeltro with the prophecy, but recommends caution in using it to interpret Dante's text. Instead he states, p. 34, that 'La figura del veltro dovette essere molteplice e trasmutabile, incarnadosi via via in persone diverse secondo che gli avvenimenti suggerivano o le condizioni e vicende sue proprie consentivano.'

the *Inferno*.[18] Any attempt to ascertain whether *peltro* means something valuable or worthless through its association in the text with *terra* is equally inconclusive, since the literal sense of *terra* also allows contradictory interpretations: worthless dirt or valuable land.[19]

Since no one normally eats *terra* or *peltro*, and certainly not *sapienza, amore e virtute*, this confirms that the use of *ciberà* is metaphorical. The term itself is future; however, its literal sense has been interpreted as meaning both to eat and to give to eat, or to feed.[20]

The word *nazion* (105) has a number of possible literal meanings, ranging from country, nation, community or group of people through to the place or the circumstances of birth, or simply birth itself.[21] The *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* again refers directly to *Inferno* I in the conclusion to its entry: 'Luogo di nascita (in senso puramente territoriale) di una persona o di origine di una cosa'. It then quotes as follows: 'sua nazion sarà tra feltro e feltro'. This is interesting since the use of small case lettering for *feltro* suggests that it is not explicitly referring here to a place, although the definition of *nazion* given here would depend upon a geographical interpretation of the term *feltro*. The question of the capitalisation or not of the word *feltro* in Dante's text has been resolved by Petrocchi in his edition in favour of keeping *feltro* lower case, with the observation that to do so does not preclude interpreting it as signifying the name of a place:

> Prudenza vuole che si legga con le iniziali minuscole, le quali peraltro non impedirebbero che la dicitura volutamente ambigua d'ogni linguaggio profetico

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[18] For more detail see Palma di Cesnola, pp. 64-65; Cassell, *Inferno I*, p. 111.
[19] Hein, p. 17, n. 62, also gives a number of references for the meaning of *peltro* as something of little value, but contrasts it with *terra* meaning riches (see p.17 n. 61 for sources), noting rather strangely 'Au surplus, si l'on comprend sans peine que la louve insatiable se nourrisse de terre figure classique de la richesse, on s'interroge sur la raison pour laquelle elle s'alimente aussi de peautre, mélange d'étain et de plomb: donc, un vil alliage' (pp. 16-17). One solution to this perceived problem is suggested by the idea that the wolf's voracity led it to eat dirt (*terra*) found in authors from Pliny to Brunetto Latini, according to Cassell, *Inferno I*, p. 67.
[20] *Ciberà* meaning to eat is the more common understanding; to feed is the sense preferred by Roberto Wis, 'Ancora sul Veltro', *Neophilologica Fennica*, 45 (1987), 577-91 (p. 580), quoting Francesco da Buti's commentary: 'non ciberà - cioè in cibo non darà ad altrui.' Giuglielmo Zappacosta, 'Chiosa al veltro dantesco', *L'Alighieri*, 13.2 (1972), 68-70, reads *ciberà*, in the sense of giving food to, as a form of imperative.
[21] *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, XI (1981), 276-79. Definitions of *nazione* are given as (definition 8) a collection of people, (9) the connections between people, (10) 'discendenza', (11) 'nascita', 'momento o modalità della nascita', (12) the nature or character of a person, (13) community of people, or even breed of animals. See too Palma di Cesnola, p. 60.

> possa essere interpretata nel senso d'una determinazione geografica tra due luoghi diversi (*Feltre e Montefeltro*) espressi, comunque, con lo stesso nome di cosa; sostenitori della citazione topografica - in un certo modo più coerenti - che abbiano letto *tra Feltre e Feltro*, non sono mancati.[22]

The entry for *feltro* in the *Grande dizionario* does not include among the definitions any geographical meaning, despite quoting the same part of the *Inferno*. There appears, then, to be some incoherence in the understanding of the verses of *Inferno* I, where the entry for *nazion* implies a geographical meaning for *feltro*, whilst the entry for *feltro* does not allow that interpretation. Whatever *nazion* may refer to, it is unequivocally placed in the future by *sarà* (105).

The meaning of *feltro* and the expression *tra feltro e feltro* is the most problematic part of the prediction. In the *Grande dizionario*, *feltro* is defined as meaning a base sort of cloth, or felt, or caps made of such material. On its use in *Inferno* I the entry states:

> Tra feltro e feltro: espressione dantesca di significato molto controverso; la maggior parte dei commentatori antichi la interpreta in senso allegorico e simbolico, mentre i moderni preferiscono escludere ogni riferimento preciso e lasciare all'espressione un'indeterminatezza di significato, che in parte si addice al tono profetico.[23]

The literal sense of the term seems, then, to refer to some base or lowly form of cloth, possibly felt. It is the subsequent interpretation of its symbolic meaning that is less clearly defined. Some readings of the text in fact capitalise the word and read *Feltro* as the name of a place, or, more precisely, two places, although as Petrocchi notes, such a reading is still possible without capitalising the word. Still, at the literal level we find different meanings proposed by Dante's fourteenth-century commentators. Graziolo Bambaglioli, the *Ottimo commento*, and Boccaccio also understand *feltro* to mean a lowly type of cloth. Jacopo della Lana gives this meaning too, but adds an additional possibility:

> Questo si può intendere in due modi: tra feltro e feltro, cioè tra cielo e cielo, ciò vuol dire per constellazione. L'altro modo tra feltro e feltro, cioè che nascerà di assai vile nazione, chè feltro è vile panno.

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[22] *La commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi, 2nd edn (Florence: Le Lettere, 1994), II, p. 17.
[23] *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, V (1968), 803.

This second meaning, that it refers to stars or the heavens, is found in Jacopo Alighieri and Benvenuto da Imola. How this definition is reached is unclear, though it may be from a reading of *feltro* as *filtro*.[24] Francesco da Buti makes the following comment:

> Feltro è panno composto di lana compressa insieme, e non tessuto con fila; e per questo intende lo cielo che è di materia solida et intera, sì che significa che questo veltro nascerà tra cielo e cielo; cioè per virtù di corpi celesti.

which demonstrates one method of reaching an astronomical meaning; however, this is a symbolic interpretation and at the literal level he, too, accepts the definition of *feltro* as cloth. Guido da Pisa deserves some mention here for what is surely the most unusual literal understanding of *feltro*: 'Cor autem medium est inter duas subascellas. Abscella autem lingua hyspana *feltrum* vocatur.'[25]

Finally, Virgil concludes the prophecy by stating that the *veltro* will be the salvation of Italy, using the expression 'quella umile Italia' which recalls the description 'humilemque videmus Italiam' from *Aeneid* III. 522-23, as most commentaries note. This is followed with the reference to various characters from the *Aeneid* who died there, making up a balanced group of Trojans and native Italians. Does this mean that the activities of the *veltro* are limited to Italy, or that they begin in Italy, or that Italy alone will benefit, or that Italy will be saved along with the rest of the world? All of these questions are asked in his commentary by Guido da Pisa. Again, the literal sense is relatively clear, although *umile* may be understood in a geographical or a moral sense.

This concludes our look at the possible literal meanings for the terms used in the *veltro* prophecy. It is clear that even at this most basic level, there is a great deal of ambiguity. As we have seen, the *veltro*, the literal meaning of which is unambiguous, requires some form of symbolic interpretation in order to make sense. However, most of the crucial terms which would help identify it easily admit to two or more sometimes contradictory meanings even before any attempt at a more metaphorical understanding can begin.

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[24] This is examined by Cassell, who concludes '...the logic of the leap from "feltro" to "cielo" is otherwise by no means immediately apparent to the modern reader' (Cassell, *Inferno I*, p. 95).

[25] *Guido da Pisa's Expositiones*, p. 33. Cassell, *Inferno I*, p. 98, comments 'I have found no evidence that Guido's "armpits" founded any interpretative school.'

Over the last six hundred years or so, numerous solutions to the problem of the identity of the *veltro* have been proposed. Some commentators see the *veltro* as a new golden age, a group of reforming preachers, or as Dante's poem itself. Other theories identify the *veltro* as a person, sometimes a reforming pope or emperor, or an unspecified messianic figure, or Christ in his second coming, giving the prophecy an eschatological dimension. The identification of the *veltro* with an historical figure of Dante's time has seen the following candidates, among others, put forward: Henry VII; Can Grande della Scala; Uguccione della Faggiola; the grand Khan, leader of the Tartars; Pope Benedict XI, and even Dante himself.[26] There is no need to repeat in full here the very detailed, sometimes abstruse, reasoning behind the theories which lead to the identification of the *veltro* with the persons named. Instead, we can see from a couple of examples what the general problem is.

Giovanni Getto concludes, after proposing Dante as the *veltro*, that, 'Riferita a Dante la profezia del veltro scioglie abbastanza facilmente i suoi enigmi'.[27] Of course, many of the theories put forward come to a similar conclusion. The problem with this is that it is the answer which determines the meaning of the clues which lead to it. So the solution shows retrospectively how the problematic lines are to be read. It then becomes obvious for Getto that *feltro* works equally well whether it refers to the felt caps worn by the Dioscuri and symbolising the constellation of Gemini under which Dante was born, or to rough cloth as a sign of Dante's robust character. In this context Dante's *nazion* means simply his rebirth as a 'new man' in the future. This is fine until we decide to object and interpret *nazion* in a literal sense, which would then exclude Dante since he has already been born. This objection holds true for all those theories which propose a contemporary of Dante as the *veltro*. A strict reading of *nazion sarà* excludes anyone already born before 1300. We find the same objection in Boccaccio's commentary, this time to suggestions that the *veltro* is Christ: 'E, oltre a ciò, Cristo non dee mai più nascere, dove l'autor dice che questo veltro dee nascere'. On the other hand 'nazion sarà' could be interpreted in a

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[26] Fairly comprehensive surveys and bibliographies for all these theories can be found in Cassell, *Inferno I*, pp. 94-104; Charles T. Davis, 'veltro', *Enciclopedia dantesca*, ed. by Umberto Bosco, 6 vols (Rome: Istituto della enciclopedia italiana fondata da Giovanni Treccani, 1970-78), V, 908-12; Cian, pp. 85-117.

[27] Giovanni Getto, 'Canto I', *Lectura dantis scaligera: Inferno*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1967), 1-20 (p. 18).

much broader sense, as we saw above. Another suggestion is that it refers to Can Grande della Scala, whose name alone suggests an obvious identification with the *veltro*.[28] This requires the interpretation of *feltro* in a geographical sense as a reference to Montefeltro and Feltre, as humble origins obviously do not fit, and *nazion* must also then be a territorial reference. The possible objections are obvious. It is interesting that this interpretation is not found among the earlier commentators and Pietro Alighieri explicitly rejects the territorial definition of *feltro*.

At the risk of over-simplification, we can state that many approaches look for decisive additional material outside Dante's text. The following comment is particularly telling:

> Yet a survey of the massive bibliography surrounding Dante's DXV and Veltro produces the strong impression that no explanation proposed for either of them so far has won for itself any real core of acceptance. If this one-sentence summary of six hundred years' scholarship is accurate, it suggests that a fruitful approach is less likely to emerge from comparative re-assessments of the existing theories, than from an exploration of some of the all-but-forgotten corners of medieval Christian tradition, in search of an interpretation that will fit the two prophecies and their contexts more precisely.[29]

I would suggest that this sort of approach is, in itself, evidence that Dante's text does not contain a definitive solution to the question. The absence of clarity in the prophecy itself forces interpreters to look elsewhere, and in ever more obscure places. As we have seen, the literal meaning of the key terms is flexible, and the symbolic possibilities for interpreting them are almost limitless. Given this fact about the prophecy, it is hardly surprising that so many diverse solutions have been offered, or, to be more precise, that so many attempts to identify the *veltro* have been made, and it is no less surprising that no single theory has brought sufficiently compelling evidence forward to command widespread acknowledgement. It would be equally fair to say that many proposals, despite their failure definitively to convince other critics and commentators, nevertheless provide plausible and thought-provoking speculative theories in response to the prophecy, even though none of them can be considered conclusive. This, in itself, suggests the need, not for another attempt at identification, but for a reappraisal of that whole approach. One

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[28] Both Davis, 'veltro', p. 910, and Cassell, *Inferno I*, p. 100, cite the 16th century commentary of Vellutello as the origin of this theory.
[29] R. E. Kaske,'Dante's "DXV" and "Veltro"', *Traditio*, 17 (1961), 185-254 (pp. 185-6).

certain observation which can be made regarding the prophecy of the *veltro* is that the equivocal nature of the terms chosen by Dante in his composition of the passage admits, indeed invites, multiple interpretations, whilst precluding any single definitive answer to the question of the *veltro*'s identity. Boccaccio's confession of incomprehension in his comment on *Inf.*, I. 105, underlies his decision not to favour any single solution:

> E questa è quella parte dalla quale muove tutto il dubbio che nella presente discrizione si contiene: la qual parte io manifestamente confesso ch'io non intendo, e perciò in questo sarò più recitatore de' sentimenti altrui che esponitore de' miei.

Although Boccaccio does not go so far as to suggest that Dante's text may admit more than one interpretation, he is at least aware that none of those known to him is able to demand his full assent. Unable to choose any particular theory himself, then, he plans to list the theories of others. Dante's success in his invitation to his readers to treat the prophecy as real is illustrated by the readiness of generations of interpreters to accept his invitation and attempt to identify its fulfilment with some historical individual, object, or event. Their failure to do so conclusively illustrates further Dante's success in constructing a prophecy which is able to retain its openness and interest, whilst maintaining his unwillingness to associate the prophecy, and, consequently, his poem, with a particular historical individual.

Anthony Cassell's final comment suggests a convincing motive on the part of Dante for refusing to tie the *veltro* prophecy to one single solution:

> In conclusion, although some literary critics might argue that the question of referentiality and intention may, perhaps, lie outside the realm of textual criticism, some excursus on Dante's strategy seems unavoidable: perhaps, indeed, the poet's hopes, so often raised and dashed, may have led him to modify his expectations and perhaps he reflected these modifications darkly in the poem's various repeated prophecies of an earthly savior. Most probably he created a purposeful obscurity to give the widest possibility to some fulfilment of the record of these hopes preserved indelibly in his poem. We can be sure that he did not seek unplanned obsolescence for a work "to which both heaven and earth had set their hand".[30]

We may add a further observation in support of the view that Dante is intentionally obscure here. A simple comparison with virtually any of the *post eventum* prophecies, as we will see, shows clearly Dante's ability to provide sufficient definitive detail to avoid ambiguity in interpretation whilst still employing symbolic language and imagery. Some of the comments we have already seen regarding the enigmatic nature of prophetic language

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[30] Cassell, *Inferno I*, p. 110.

require clarification on this point.[31] The language of this particular prophecy is ambiguous, but this is not the case for all prophecies in the *Commedia*. The implication, therefore, is that it was not his intention to be unequivocal in this instance. What we are left with then is a prophecy which demands to be understood metaphorically, but is couched in terms which resist any single interpretation. It is definitely messianic in nature; foretelling, as it does, the appearance of (probably) an individual who will save Italy at least.

Inferno V

Before we look at the next prophecy, some clarification is needed regarding the statement of Francesca about the eventual fate of her husband Gianciotto in *Inferno* V, when she says: 'Caina attende chi a vita ci spense' (*Inf.*, V. 107).

The meaning is clear: that Gianciotto is expected either in *Caina*, the area in the ninth circle of Hell for traitors to family, or by the biblical Cain, depending on the reading of the text.[32] Some modern commentators have suggested that this line constitutes a prophecy.[33] Giorgio Padoan's comment on the line describes it as 'il preannunzio della dannazione che lo attende', noting also that 'le anime conoscono il futuro'. Although this last observation by Padoan is correct, the statement by Francesca is not definitive enough to be regarded as a prophecy. Normally Dante employs the future tense in prophecies, which is not the case here. We might also equally interpret this as wishful thinking on the part of Francesca.[34] In addition, there is the whole question of Francesca's trustworthiness, and some commentators have also noted that Gianciotto is actually the wronged party in the first

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[31] In comments quoted earlier in full from Petrocchi, *La commedia*, II, p. 17: 'la dicitura volutamente ambigua d'ogni linguaggio profetico', and the *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, V, 803, 'un'indeterminatezza di significato, che in parte si addice al tono profetico.'

[32] Petrocchi's edition prefers the reading 'Caina', but variants include 'Caino', 'Cain', 'Caym', *La commedia*, II, p. 90.

[33] 'Si ricordi che qui, secondo la profezia di Francesca, dovrà finire Gianciotto, uccisore a tradimento del fratello Paolo', is the comment on *Inf*, XXXII, 58. by Bosco and Reggio, *Dante Alighieri: La Divina Commedia*, ed. by Umberto Bosco and Giovanni Reggio, 3 vols (Florence: Le Monnier, 1988), I, p. 475.

[34] Charles Singleton, *The Divine Comedy*, ed. and trans. by Charles S. Singleton, 3 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970-75), I. 2, p. 91, comments 'Gianciotto is awaited in Caina (or so Francesca believes and even hopes), but the reader must wait to learn the meaning of that place in lower Hell.'

instance.[35] Although some prophecies do predict the future damnation or salvation of individuals, there is normally more to them than is found here, as we will see.

2. *Inferno* VI

The next prophecy in the *Commedia* is found in Canto VI of *Inferno*, in the third circle of Hell where the gluttonous are punished, and is the first of the *post eventum* prophecies. The prophecy is delivered by a soul who seems to be completely unknown. In fact it is he himself who raises the issue of his identity, ' "riconoscimi se sai: | tu fosti, prima ch'io disfatto, fatto" ' (*Inf.*, VI, 41-42). This concern with identity resurfaces at the end of his conversation with Dante, ' "Ma quando tu sarai nel dolce mondo, | priegoti ch'a la mente altrui mi rechi: ' (*Inf.*, VI, 88-89). Dante however fails to recognize him:

> E io a lui: 'L'angoscia che tu hai
> forse ti tira fuor de la mia mente,
> sì che non par ch'i' ti vedessi mai.
> Ma dimmi chi tu se' che 'n sì dolente
> loco se' messo,' [...]
>
> (*Inf.*, VI. 43-47)

In response to Dante's question, he identifies himself first as a Florentine, and then gives his name and reason for being found here:

> 'Voi cittadini mi chiamaste Ciacco:
> per la dannosa colpa della gola,
> come tu vedi, a la pioggia mi fiacco.'
>
> (*Inf.*, VI, 52-54)

The precise identity of this soul has eluded commentators.[36] The early commentaries propose a number of theories but aren't particularly enlightening. Some merely repeat the information given in the text that Ciacco is Florentine and a glutton (e.g. Graziolo Bambaglioli, Jacopo della Lana); others add that he is educated and eloquent, a 'uomo di corte' (The *Ottimo commento*, Boccaccio, Francesco da Buti). Guido da Pisa

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[35] Carroll and Mestica note that Gianciotto was betrayed. Vandelli suggests both parties were guilty. These commentaries were consulted on the database of the *Dartmouth Dante Project.*

[36] 'Di incerta identificazione [...]', begins the entry in Bernard Delmay, *I personaggi della Divina Commedia: classificazione e regesto* (Florence: Olschki, 1986), p. 78. That Ciacco is a proper name rather than a nickname or insult see Angelo Jacomuzzi, *'Inferno* VI: il *praesens aeternitatis* tra memoria e profezia', *Il contesto*, 4-5-6 (1982), 95-115 (p. 108), now in his *L'imago al cerchio e altri studi sulla "Divina Commedia"* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1995), pp. 171-89.

supplies us with an etymological explanation: 'Ciaccus, lingua tusca, "porcum" sonat.' If Ciacco had really been known to Dante we might hope for some hint from his sons. However, Jacopo's commentary appears to lack such personal details and simply describes Ciacco as 'alcuno fiorentino', whilst Pietro adds nothing new to what the other commentators have said.[37] We may conclude, therefore, that Ciacco is, if not entirely unknown, at least not someone immediately recognisable to Dante's early readers.

Dante then goes on to ask Ciacco some questions concerning Florence, following a brief *captatio benevolentiae* (*Inf.*, VI. 58-59):

> 'ma dimmi, se tu sai, a che verranno
> li cittadin de la città partita;
> s'alcun v'è giusto; e dimmi la cagione
> per che l'ha tanta discordia assalita.'
>
> (*Inf.*, VI. 60-63)

It is worth noting that the initiative here comes, not from Ciacco, but from Dante who expects Ciacco to be able to tell him about the future. Of course, Dante *uomo*, writing the *Commedia*, knows already that he is going to deliver a prediction through Ciacco, but for Dante *personaggio* to expect this is remarkable. Furthermore, the statement 'se tu sai' (*Inf.*, VI. 60) is too weak to suggest any real doubt on his part, particularly considering that he asks in the first place as part of a fairly specific three-part question; one which Dante *uomo* knows will receive a detailed reply. This may reveal a trace of contamination, so to speak, between *personaggio* and *uomo*. Why should Dante *personaggio* expect Ciacco to be able to tell him about the future, particularly when he purports not to have known the man? If Ciacco had some reputation for this sort of thing, then again there is inconsistency between Dante the author's knowledge and the professed ignorance of Dante *personaggio*. We might also expect some mention of this in the commentaries, and we should then expect to find Ciacco in *Inferno* XX, not here in VI. That Ciacco initially identifies himself by

[37] 'Chi crede di trovare in questo commento [...] cruciali rivelazioni trasmesse oralmente dal padre al figlio, dovrà ben presto ammettere non tanto di non poter riconoscere il genuino pensiero del poeta, quanto di non trovare nessun pensiero: vale a dire che l'opera appare sorprendentemente vuota di contenuto, non solo perché priva o quasi di informazioni storiche e biografiche su personaggi e vicende ricordate nel poema, ma anche di un commento di qualche utilità per la comprensione puntuale della lettera', is the disappointed judgement of Bellomo in his introduction to his edition of Jacopo's commentary, Jacopo Alighieri, *Chiose all'Inferno*, ed. by S. Bellomo (Padua: Antenore, 1990), p. 3.

referring to his and Dante's shared Florentine origin (*Inf.*, VI. 49-51) explains the subject matter of Dante's questions but not the expectation that Ciacco can foretell the future.

The subject matter of Ciacco's prediction, in response to Dante's questions, concerns the political vicissitudes of Florence over the next few years. The whole reply is as follows:

> E quelli a me: 'Dopo lunga tencione
> verranno al sangue, e la parte selvaggia
> caccerà l'altra con molta offensione.
> Poi appresso convien che questa caggia
> infra tre soli, e che l'altra sormonti
> con la forza di tal che testé piaggia.
> Alte terrà lungo tempo le fronti,
> tenendo l'altra sotto gravi pesi,
> come che di ciò pianga o che n'aonti.
> Giusti son due, e non vi sono intesi;
> superbia, invidia e avarizia sono
> le tre faville c'hanno i cuori accesi'.
>
> (*Inf.*, VI. 64-75)

The first part (64-65) refers to the events of Candlemas 1300 and after. However, the reference 'dopo lunga tencione' (64) is imprecise. It refers to the time leading up to Candlemas, which is future in relation to the fictional time of Dante's meeting with Ciacco.

It is only later, at *Inferno* XXI. 112-4, that we find a more precise indication of the time of Dante's journey. Here Dante and Virgil are informed by Malacoda that Christ died 1266 years earlier, on the day before but five hours after the time he is speaking. We recall that in the *Convivio* (IV. xxiii, 10-11) Dante states that Christ died aged 34. This gives a precise date for the year, 1300, as already suggested in the opening line of the *Inferno*. Whilst not conclusive, this explanation also appears to fix the day and time for Dante's journey. The day is evidently the day after Christ's death; Holy Saturday. Although Matthew (27. 45) and Mark (15. 33) place it at the ninth hour, the time of Christ's death according to Dante's reading of Luke's gospel (Luke 23. 44) occurs at the sixth hour, which is midday, making it seven in the morning for Dante and Virgil. There is disagreement about the precise date of Dante's journey, the 25th of March, or the 8th of April, due to the moveable nature of Holy Saturday.[38] In any case, both dates fall before

[38] Bosco and Reggio, I, p. 322, discuss the problem in their comments on *Inferno* XXI. 113-14. For a very full treatment see Edward Moore, 'The Date Assumed by Dante for the Vision of the *Divina Commedia*', in his *Studies in Dante: Third Series. Miscellaneous Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903, repr. 1968), pp. 144-77; 370-73. Moore favours the 8th of April, 1300.

May and, therefore, make no real difference as far as Ciacco's prophecy is concerned. The important detail is that the year is 1300.

This first section contains the prediction which responds to the first part of Dante's question (64-72). The language is oblique and no actual names are given. Instead, expressions such as 'la parte selvaggia' are used, giving an air of solemnity and mystery to the prophecy. Nevertheless, there is also precision; 'parte selvaggia' is clear enough to be recognised with the phrase 'città partita' (61) leading into it, and the apparent vagueness of 'Dopo lunga tencione' (64) is countered by the more precise 'infra tre soli' (68).[39]

Many of the early commentators are rather vague on what specifically is referred to by 'verranno al sangue' (65) and do not link it to any particular event. Modern commentators generally agree that this refers to the first of May, 1300. There had been a series of incidents and attacks leading up to this.[40] The particular incident was a violent clash between youths of the opposing Cerchi and Donati factions who turned up at a dance being held in piazza Santa Trinità. Ricoverino de Cerchi was injured, having his nose either cut or cut off. Of the early commentators, Boccaccio and Benvenuto, in fact, do give detailed descriptions of the event, as do the historians Giovanni Villani and Dino Compagni.[41] Villani characterises this incident as the beginning of the split in the Guelf party and the source of ruin for the city.[42] Compagni also makes this incident the starting point of fresh divisions in Florence, and goes so far as to begin his account by suggesting that the Devil is at the root of it.

Most of the early commentators are clear that 'la parte selvaggia' (65) refers to the White Guelfs, although Jacopo della Lana and Pietro Alighieri refer to parties of Guelfs and

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[39] Luigi Scorrano, 'Indeterminato dantesco', *L'Alighieri*, 12.1 (1971), 51-71 (pp. 64-65), contrasts this with other examples where Dante is being deliberately imprecise. Jacomuzzi, *'Inferno* VI', pp. 112-13, regards different periphrases in the passage as a conventional feature of prophetic speech.

[40] George Holmes, *Florence, Rome and the Origins of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1986), pp. 171-72, lists various incidents beginning in December 1296.

[41] The accounts are found in Villani's *Cronica*, IX. 39, and Compagni's *Cronica delle cose occorenti ne' tempi suoi*, I. 22. Editions of Villani differ in numeration. The edition used here is *Giovanni Villani: Nuova Cronica*, ed. by G. Porta, 3 vols (Parma: Guanda, 1991). Benvenuto and Villani have the nose cut off, Compagni and Boccaccio do not. See, too, Giorgio Petrocchi, *Vita di Dante* (Rome: Laterza, 1986).

[42] Robert Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze III. Le ultime lotte contro l'impero*, trans. by Giovanni Battista Klein, revised by Roberto Palmarocchi (Florence: Sansoni, 1960), pp. 145-46, suggests, instead, that this was merely one of many incidents and that the divisions ran much deeper over a longer period of time.

Ghibellines, rather than opposing Guelfs.[43] The expression 'selvaggia' is explained (by e.g. Guido da Pisa, Benvenuto) in terms of the extra-mural origins of the leaders of the White Guelfs, in particular the Cerchi. Although it has been suggested that it is almost a 'technical term' and therefore no criticism is implied, this doesn't prevent Boccaccio and Benvenuto from taking the opportunity to comment on the savage, uncivilised behaviour of the Cerchi in particular.[44]

Twentieth century commentators generally interpret 'caccerà l'altra' (66) as a reference to the exile of the leading Black Guelfs in June 1301, following the so-called Santa Trinità conspiracy against the Whites.[45] The earlier commentaries generally give little detail except to say that this party was expelled.

The next part of the prophecy contains a very specific and obvious time reference in 'Infra tre soli' (68), referring to the three year period during which the political situation will be reversed, culminating in the exile of the White Guelfs. So the period of three 'suns', taken as solar, or complete years, gives 1300, 1301, and 1302, and most of the early commentators are clear that this is what is meant.[46] This, then, covers the entry of Charles of Valois into Florence as papally appointed peacemaker on the first of November 1301, and the subsequent exile of the Whites.[47] The proscriptions against the Whites began in January and continued through to November, with at least six hundred exiled by

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[43] Guido da Pisa, the *Ottimo Commento*, Boccaccio, Benvenuto, Francesco da Buti, and Pietro Alighieri's 2nd and 3rd versions of his commentary all refer to the White Guelfs. On the differences in these versions see the editors' note in Pietro Alighieri, *Il "Commentarium" di Pietro Alighieri nelle redazioni ashburnhamiana e ottoboniana*, ed. by R. della Vedova and M. T. Silvotti, introductory note by Egidio Guidubaldi (Florence: Olschki, 1978), pp. XXI-XXV.

[44] Bosco and Reggio, I, p. 94, describe it as a 'termine tecnico', and point out that it was used in the statutes of the Comune at the time.

[45] See, for example, the commentary of Bosco & Reggio, and *letture* by Isidoro Del Lungo, 'Il canto VI dell'*Inferno*', in *Letture dantesche: Inferno*, ed. by Giovanni Getto (Florence: Sansoni, 1955), 93-112 (p. 105), and Bruno Maier, 'Il Canto VI dell'*Inferno*', *L'Alighieri*, 30 (1989), 3-31 (pp. 18-20). Compagni (I. 23-3) describes the meeting in Santa Trinità, which he says he attended.

[46] Moore notes this too in 'The Date Assumed by Dante', p. 371. There is also an odd discrepancy on p. 372, where he attributes the prophecy of Farinata, *Inf.*, X. 79-81 to Cavalcanti, although he correctly names Farinata on pp. 162-3.

[47] Compagni (II. 9) gives the date as the 4th of November, but is mistaken according to Del Lungo's notes to *Dino Compagni: La cronica e la canzone morale "del pregio"*, ed. and intro. by Isidoro Del Lungo (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1939), p. 80, n. 1, and Bornstein in *Dino Compagni's Chronicle of Florence*, ed. & trans. by Daniel E. Bornstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), p. 39, n. 11. Holmes, *Florence, Rome*, pp. 178-79, gives a translation of a contemporary description by a Florentine, written on the cover of an accounts book, also specifying the 1st of November.

March.[48] The precise date for Dante's exile is the 10th of March, 1302.[49] The story of Charles' entry into Florence is given in varying degrees of detail by Benvenuto, Pietro Alighieri, and Guido da Pisa. Boccaccio, in addition, refers his readers to the account in Villani.[50] Pietro Alighieri, Francesco da Buti and Boccaccio are all clear that 'tal che testé piaggia' (69) refers to Pope Boniface VIII, and that he deceived the Florentines by pretending to be impartial, a view shared by Villani and Compagni in their accounts.

In the next section there is another time reference ' lungo tempo' (70), this time more vague, with the future tense 'terrà' (70). Strictly speaking, this marks the end of the *post eventum* part of the prophecy, and, in fact, Boccaccio comments that the 'lungo tempo' has lasted until his own time.[51] The prophecy then takes on a rather biblical tone with the expression 'tenendo l'altra sotto gravi pesi' (71), which seems a very clear allusion to the criticism of the Pharisees in Matthew's Gospel : 'Alligant autem onera gravia et inportabilia et inponunt in umeros hominum digito autem suo nolunt ea movere' (in Mt. 23.4), although none of the early commentators refer to it.

This tone carries over into the next part of Ciacco's reply. After the strictly predictive part, he answers the two remaining points in three lines (73-75). The first line (73) most probably evokes a whole traditional biblical theme; the next two lines offer a theological interpretation of history and, therefore, of the future described in the prediction he has just given (future in dramatic terms, history at the time of writing). The prediction,

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[48] Compagni's description of the exile of the Whites and remaining Ghibellines(II. 25) gives a figure of six hundred. T. S. R. Boase, *Boniface VIII* (London: Constable, 1933), p. 277, gives the 18th of January as the formal beginning of the proscriptions against the Whites. Del Lungo, *Dino Compagni*, p. 112, n. 20, notes that the Libro del chiodo contains various condemnations dating from January through to November 1302. Holmes, *Florence, Rome*, p. 179, counts 108 men condemned to fines, 559 to death, which effectively means exile.

[49] The sentence from the *Libro del chiodo* is in Renato Piattoli, *Codice diplomatico dantesco*, 2nd edn (Florence: Gonnelli, 1950), as document 91, pp. 107-09. Piattoli also includes the first condemnation of the 27th of January 1302, document 90, pp. 103-07, and the condemnation of the 6th of November 1315, document 115, pp. 155-57. Randolph Starn, *Contrary Commonwealth. The Theme of Exile in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 67-76, gives a detailed description of the process of Dante's exile.

[50] 'Nondimeno chi questa istoria vuole pienamente sapere legga la Cronica di Giovanni Villani, per ciò che in essa distesamente si pone' writes Boccaccio, *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia*, ed. by Giorgio Padoan, 2 vols (Milan: Arnaldo Mondadori, 1965), I, p. 354. The reference is to Villani, IX. 49. There is also an account in Compagni, II. 9.

[51] Scorrano, pp. 65-66, notes that the precise time reference, 'infra tre soli', is sandwiched between two imprecise time periods: 'il quale 'lungo tempo' non è ancora venuto meno', Boccaccio observes, noted by Palma di Cesnola, p. 41.

strictly speaking, ended in line 72. However, the other points are linked, not only insofar as they answer Dante's question, but because they are placed in a causal relationship with those things yet to happen. The response of the early commentators to the statement 'giusti son due' (73), is either to interpret this in an abstract sense so that Jacopo della Lana, for example, explains that these are 'giustizia e ragione', as a sort of counterpoint to the three vices which follow; or they try to identify the two just men, with Dante and Guido Cavalcanti proving popular choices for Guido da Pisa and Francesco da Buti and reported as the opinion of others by Benvenuto and Boccaccio. Modern interpreters find the line more controversial, asking whether it refers to specific individuals or to the virtues which Lana gives. They question whether the number is to be taken literally or regarded as symbolic.[52] Despite no mention by the early readers, it is difficult to rule out some evocation here of the biblical motif of the just men for whose sake the city is spared. Although some commentators quote Ezekiel 14. 14: 'Et si fuerint tres viri isti in medio eius, Noe, Daniel et Iob, ipsi iustitia sua liberabunt animas suas ait Dominus exercituum', this seems less likely to be directly related.[53] What is more probable is some allusion to the conversation in Genesis 18. 22-33, when Abraham asks God to spare the city of Sodom for the sake of fifty just men, in the first instance, talking God down to ten in the end. This allusion to Sodom in the description of Florence is the beginning of an association which Dante creates between the two cities which will run through the *Commedia*.[54] In any event, we may recall that in the passage from Ezekiel the presence of the just among them is not going to save the unjust, whilst in the story of Sodom the just are required to quit the city before it is destroyed. Among the various suggestions as to why Dante chose the number two for his text, the implication that it illustrates Florence's inability even to reach the biblical minimum of three fits the condemnatory character of this final part of Ciacco's prophecy.[55]

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[52] The most detailed discussion of all these positions is found in Zygmunt Barański, *'Inferno* VI. 73: A Controversy re-examined', *Italian Studies*, 36 (1981), 1-26.
[53] Barański, *'Inferno* VI. 73', pp. 17-18, lists Gmelin, Sapegno, Singleton, Jacomuzzi as some of those making this connection. He also notes, p. 17, n. 37, that some have misread *isti* as *iusti*. There is a misprint in the quotation from Ezekiel in his article, p. 17, *vires* instead of *viri*, which he later quotes correctly. Maier, 'Il Canto VI dell'*Inferno*', pp. 20-21, also notes biblical parallels with the content of Ciacco's prophecy.
[54] Barański, *'Inferno* VI. 73', pp. 18-26.
[55] Barański, *'Inferno* VI. 73', pp. 18-26.

Ciacco then ends with the reasons for the bloodshed and violence to come, 'superbia, invidia e avarizia' (74), and the same phrase occurs in Villani's account of this period:

> E questa aversità e pericolo della nostra città non fu sanza giudicio di Dio, per molti peccati commessi per la superbia, invidia e avarizia de' nostri allora viventi cittadini, che allora guidavano la terra, e così di ribelli di quella come di coloro che·lla governavano, ch'assai erano peccatori; e non ebbe fine a questo, come innanzi per gli tempi si potrà trovare.
>
> (*Cronica* IX. 67)

The question of the relationship between the *Commedia* and Villani's history is a difficult one.[56] The most likely answer is that Villani was influenced by Dante, at least in the wording of a judgement he clearly shared with him despite their political differences.[57] Villani and Dante both show a willingness to apply a moral interpretation to historical events. This is not unusual in Christian writers of history in Villani's time and before, and the creation of a causal relationship between historical events and morality, or the relationship between God and human beings, has also been identified as a feature of Old Testament prophecy.[58]

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[56] Raffaello Morghen, 'Dante, il Villani e Ricordano Malispini', in his *Dante Profeta tra la storia e l'eterno* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1983), pp. 17-38, (first publ. in *Bulletino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo*, 40 (1920), 105-26) sees Dante as a possible source for Villani. Louis Green, *Chronicle into History: An Essay on the Interpretation of History in Florentine Fourteenth-Century Chronicles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), proposes a shared source for both, with perhaps some influence of the *Divine Comedy* on Villani's mode of expression, but not as a source for information or viewpoint. See especially pp. 15-18. On Villani's sources in general see pp. 155-64.

[57] Giovanni Aquilecchia discusses the problem in 'Scheda quarta. Dante and Florentine Chroniclers' and 'Appendice. Dante e i cronisti fiorentini' in his *Schede di italianistica* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), 45-72, 73-96. Both were originally published as one article in English in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 48, no.1 (1965), 30-55. He favours the view that Dante influenced Villani, but accepts that on the available evidence other possibilities cannot be completely ruled out.

[58] 'The genius of the classical prophets was to take the highly recalcitrant facts of history, whose religious and moral implications were in fact extremely ambiguous, and to give an account of these facts which would convince people not only that the hand of God could be seen in them, but that the operations of the divine hand were entirely comprehensible in human moral categories ... The prophets' task was to make these perfectly contingent political circumstances look like the most obvious and inevitable outcome of national sin: to create, in fact, exactly the impression which has been accepted for the truth by the English-speaking tradition of talking about the prophets as morally sensitive critics who felt that the sins of Israel cried out to heaven for vengeance. At the simplest level, the prophets do this by liberal use of words such as 'because' (*ki*) and 'therefore' (*laken*) to link denunciations of sin with predictions of disaster. But they are far from content merely to use such logical connectives to suggest causal connections that were in fact not at all evident. They manifest extreme ingenuity and resourcefulness in the way they present history as determined by moral forces' (John Barton, 'History and Rhetoric in the Prophets', in *The Bible as Rhetoric, Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility*, ed. by M. Warner (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 51-64 (pp. 5, 55-56)).

There follows a further exchange between Dante and Ciacco, which appears similar to the sort of prophecy commonly found in classical epic poetry, in which a prediction is delivered in order to be fulfilled later within the action of the poem, and so has a unifying function.[59] Dante asks Ciacco about the fate of some of the most famous Florentines of the recent past, are they saved or damned (77-84), only to learn that they are even deeper in Hell, and that he will meet them should he descend far enough. Since Ciacco states their fate as present fact, not future event, and Dante's meeting them is presented as conditional, ('se tanto ascendi, là i potrai vedere', VI. 87), though perhaps simply for dramatic purposes, this part is not easily classed as a prophecy. However, we may still see a unifying function in this section, since he will later meet these souls; Farinata in *Inf.*, X, where the next prophecy is delivered; Tegghiaio and Iacopo Rusticucci among the sodomites in *Inf.*, XVI, developing the Florence as Sodom theme; and Mosca dei Lamberti in *Inf.*, XXVIII.

Finally, the scene ends abruptly and with a request. Ciacco wishes to be remembered above, then says nothing more: 'più non ti dico e più non ti rispondo' (VI. 90), his final words before sinking back into the mire. Virgil then offers a very Christian explanation of the last judgement.

The most prominent features in this first *post eventum* prophecy are, first, the fact that it is delivered by someone practically unknown. Next, it concerns Florence, and the events leading to Dante's exile, and as such is the first of the series dealing with that theme. There is also an obvious connection between the speaker and his subject; the Florentine Ciacco and the fate of Florence. The prophecy gives the appearance of obscurity but, in fact, is easily understood, helped by the very precise time reference included in it. It also includes a moral judgement on the Florentines, whom it condemns, and relates this to the events it pretends to predict.

3. *Inferno* X

The next *post eventum* prophecy comes in *Inferno* X and is delivered by Farinata degli Uberti. Farinata was the leading Ghibelline of his time, and the character portrayed

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[59] See Clifford Herschel Moore, 'Prophecy in the Ancient Epic', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology,* 32 (1921), 100-68 (pp. 102, 108-09), and for a list of such prophecies in Virgil Lucan and Statius *passim.*

by Dante is certainly one of the most dramatic in the whole of the *Commedia*. In terms of his status and reputation, he is very different from the obscure figure of Ciacco. When Dante *personaggio* asked Ciacco about the famous Florentines of the previous generation, he began his list with Farinata (*Inf.*, VI. 79).[60] Dante also uses the term 'magnanimo' to refer to him (*Inf.*, X. 73), a term used on only one other occasion in the *Commedia*, and there to refer to Virgil (*Inf.*, II. 44).[61] These are just a couple of indications within the text itself of the fact that Farinata is an important figure with an air of authority.

Naturally the talk is of party politics, as both Dante and Farinata take their party's part in a quick review of past political strife, which forms the first part of their conversation (*Inf.*, X. 22-51). The second part follows after the interruption of Cavalcante (*Inf.*, X. 52-72), picking up exactly where their conversation had left off. It is at this point that Farinata delivers the prophecy regarding Dante's exile:

> 'Ma non cinquanta volte fia raccesa
> la faccia de la donna che qui regge,
> che tu saprai quanto quell'arte pesa.' 81
>
> (*Inf.*, X. 79-81)

The language gives the appearance of being rather oblique; however, it is, in fact, fairly clear. Line 80 is a periphrasis for Proserpina, a metonym for the moon, referring in turn to a month. The early commentators explain this, with varying degrees of detail regarding Proserpina, concluding that it refers to a period of months or years. Although Dante's text states '*non* cinquanta volte', this does not render it imprecise, but sets a precise limit on the time period within which the event predicted will occur.[62] Graziolo Bambaglioli, Jacopo della Lana, Pietro Alighieri, and Francesco da Buti all give the period as fifty months, whilst Guido da Pisa and Boccaccio translate this into four years.

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[60] Michele Barbi, 'Il Canto X dell'*Inferno*', *Letture dantesche: Inferno*, ed. by Giovanni Getto (Florence: Sansoni, 1955), 173-89 (p. 175), points this out but interprets it as a sign of sympathy for Farinata on the part of Dante *uomo*.

[61] In his famous analysis of the episode Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 181, suggests it is primarily to distinguish Farinata from Cavalcante. John Scott, '"Inferno" X: Farinata "magnanimo"', in his *Dante magnanimo: studi sulla "Commedia"* (Florence: Olschki, 1977), pp. 9-45, provides a very full discussion of the significance of the concept from Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* through to Dante. Scott (p. 44) concludes that Dante's response to the complex character of Farinata is a mixture of condemnation and admiration.

[62] Scorrano, p. 54, however, includes this among his examples of numerically indeterminate expressions.

Benvenuto da Imola gives both, interpreting fifty months as a way of saying no more than four years. The *Ottimo commento* takes a more complicated approach, going through a calculation based on the differences between lunar and solar years. The lunar year has about three hundred and fifty four days, based on a lunar month of twenty nine and a half days. Forty lunar months (I will come back to that shortly) gives one thousand one hundred and eighty days, which divided by three hundred and sixty five and a quarter, the days in a solar year, gives three years and eighty five days. The comment concludes: 'sicchè puoi comprendere il tempo di questo annunziato futuro danno'.[63] What is unclear is why the commentator made a calculation based on forty rather than fifty months, which, by a similar calculation, would give one thousand four hundred and seventy five days, or four solar years and fourteen days. Boccaccio also calculates on the basis of lunar months to arrive at his figure of just over four years.[64]

Despite correctly interpreting these lines as a time reference, and giving fairly precise figures, the early commentaries tend to be rather vague in interpreting the meaning of the prediction. Graziolo Bambaglioli, Jacopo della Lana, Francesco da Buti, Guido da Pisa and the *Ottimo commento* state simply that Dante will be exiled, whilst Benvenuto da Imola refers to Dante's being exiled in 1303. Even Boccaccio's comment is not as precise as it could be:

> E però vuol qui, vaticinando, dire messer Farinata: egli non saranno quatro anni *Che tu saprai*, per esperienza, *quanto quell'arte*, del tornare chi è cacciato, *pesa*, cioè è grave; volendo per queste parole anunziargli che, avanti che quatro anni fossero, esso sarebbe cacciato di Firenze: il che avvenne avanti che fossero i due, o poco più.[65]

He correctly notes that what Farinata is talking about is not simply exile but specifically the ability to return, but then concludes with the more general observation that he is simply referring to Dante's eventual exile. Closer attention to Farinata's words shows that he

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[63] *L'Ottimo commento della divina commedia, testo inedito d'un contemporaneo di Dante. Inferno*, ed. by Alessandro Torri, 3 vols (Pisa: Niccolò Capurro, 1827-29), anastatic reprint with an introduction by Francesco Mazzoni, 3 vols (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1995), I, p. 182. I have checked the calculations and the arithmetic is correct.

[64] '... e brievemente in CCCLIIII dì ella si raccende, cioè si vede tutta accesa dodici volte, per che possiam dire che in questro anni e pochi dì più, ella si raccenda cinquanta volte' (Boccaccio, *Esposizioni*, I, p. 528).

[65] Boccaccio, *Esposizioni*, I, p. 528.

refers specifically to 'quell'arte' (line 81), picking up Dante *personaggio*'s words (line 51) which referred to the return to Florence of the banished Guelfs in 1251 and 1267.

Whilst the prophecy can quite easily be read simply in a more general sense as predicting Dante's exile, the time reference, along with the concentration on the specific aspect of a failure to return from exile, suggests that it refers to something more particular. Fifty lunar months from the fictional time of the meeting with Farinata gives an approximate date of either the 8th or the 22nd of April 1304.[66] A calculation based simply on calendar months, however, translates to four years and two months, giving the 25th of May, or the 8th of June. By any reckoning, the most significant setback to the White Guelfs' attempts to re-enter Florence, in fact, occurred just outside this period. This is the assault on Florence led by Baschiera della Tosa on the 20th of July 1304, described in some detail by Compagni in his *Cronica*.[67] It is intriguing that Dante should have given a time scale in his prophecy which does not extend far enough to include such a striking event, and we may even be tempted to speculate whether this indicates that this part was written before July 1304. However, that question must remain outside the scope of this study. It also seems that although Dante had been involved in various failed attempts to re-enter the city in the years prior to 1304, by the time this attack took place he had left the exiled Whites and did not take part.[68]

An earlier significant setback for the Whites was the failure of the attempts of the Cardinal Niccolò degli Albertini da Prato, appointed as peacemaker by Benedict XI on the 31st of January 1304.[69] He arrived in Florence on the 10th of March 1304.[70] The hopes of the Whites in his efforts, and their agreement to follow his wishes, in particular to avoid aggression, are expressed in Dante's letter to him.[71] By June, however, it was clear to the

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[66] See note 38 above on the dates, and 63 and 64 above on the fifty-month period.
[67] Compagni, III. 10-11. Starn, p. 53, describes Compagni's account as a 'great moment in his chronicle', but dismisses the idea that Dante wrote this part of Compagni's chronicle as an 'exotic conclusion', p. 174, n. 75.
[68] Stephen Bemrose, *A New Life of Dante* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), p. 83. Leonardo Bruni, *Le vite di Dante e del Petrarca*. ed. by Antonio Lanza (Rome: Archivio Guido Izzi, 1987), pp. 42-43, is less clear about when Dante left.
[69] For details and dates see Bemrose, p. 81; *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*, ed. by Paget Toynbee, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 3-4; Davidsohn, p. 370; Holmes, *Florence, Rome*, pp. 180-81.
[70] Both Compagni, III. 4, and Villani, IX, 69, agree on this date.
[71] Epistola I in Toynbee's edition, *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*. Toynbee, p. 4, disagrees with Del Lungo's rejection of the letter as Dante's. Bemrose, pp. 81-2 agrees with Toynbee.

Cardinal that his efforts had failed and he urged any Ghibellines and White Guelfs to leave the city; probably on the 8th of June.[72] There is disagreement on the actual date of his final departure from Florence: the 9th of June according to Compagni (III. 7), the 4th of June in Villani's account (IX, 69). Robert Davidsohn has demonstrated from an independent source that it was more likely to have been the 10th of June.[73] Bearing in mind the discrepancies between Compagni and Villani, we may reasonably allow some leeway in Dante's timing and accept this event as the subject of Farinata's prediction. As we have seen, the early commentators are more general. The connection between the Cardinal's departure and these verses of the *Inferno* has been noted before.[74] Another possibility is that it refers specifically, not to the departure of the Cardinal, but to his urging the Whites to leave the city on the 8th of June, a clear admission of failure, and a date which corresponds precisely to the latest of the possible dates given by the prediction. This, of course, is all predicated on the assumption that Dante's arithmetic and information is all correct, and we must always keep in mind that there may be inaccuracies on his part too.[75]

Also evident in the text is the beginning of Dante's distancing himself from party politics, as a brief comparison of the two parts of the conversation with Farinata demonstrates. Farinata's prediction is delivered not in order to trouble Dante, but merely to inform. Dante concludes sympathetically: ' "Deh, se riposi mai vostra semenza " | prega' io lui, "solvetemi quel nodo..." '(*Inf.*, X. 95-96). This is clearly something more than simply a *captatio benevolentiae* preceding Dante's request, as a comparison with the more

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[72] Bemrose, p. 83, and Davidsohn, p. 385.

[73] Davidsohn, p. 386, n. 1, explains, 'Villani, VIII, 69 dà la partenza del legato il 4 giugno. Ma ciò è errato, poiché il 7 giugno saldò ancora a Firenze alla società dei Cerchi bianchi un pagamento di 4000 fiorini d'oro.' He verifies this from the bankers' records. The reference to Villani is based on a different edition as explained at note 41 above. Bemrose, p. 83, follows Davidsohn's dating.

[74] Wicksteed in *Villani's Chronicle, being selections from the First Nine Books of the Croniche Fiorentine of Giovanni Villani*, ed. by Philip H. Wicksteed, trans by Rose E. Selfe (London: Archibald Constable & Co Ltd. 1906), p. 359, notes 'Cf. Inf. X. 79-81' in the margin of the passage from Book VIII 69, where it reads 'The cardinal legate...suddenly departed from Florence on the 4th day of June, 1304.' Note the different numeration for Villani, Book VIII, which is IX in the edition used for this thesis, and the date, as mentioned in notes 41 and 73 above.

[75] We may note here the presence in current Dante studies of the notion that Dante makes deliberate errors in the *Commedia* for some deeper purpose. The fullest expression of it is probably in John Kleiner, *Mismapping the Underworld: Daring and Error in Dante's 'Comedy'* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994). See especially pp. 65-67 where he compares approaches to these problems in Dante. In the case of prophecies there is no discernible reason for deliberate errors on Dante's part.

general terms of the *captatio* he addressed to Ciacco shows.[76] Here, instead, Dante touches on the most personal concern of Farinata. Care is needed, however, in interpreting this in terms of sympathy on the part of Dante on account of a shared experience of exile. Whilst exiled White Guelfs and Ghibellines did make common cause, particularly in their attempts to return to Florence, this cannot be true of Dante *personaggio*, who is not yet an exile at the fictional time of the meeting.[77] Dante's curiosity about the foresight shown by the souls he has met so far (*Inf.*, X. 97-99), and Farinata's response (*Inf.*, X. 100-08).will be examined in detail later, in Chapter five.

The canto ends with Dante's concern over the prophecy ('...ripensando | a quel parlar che mi parea nemico', *Inf.*, X. 122-23), which can be understood in two different ways. In the first place, we can see that Dante *personaggio* is not sure what exactly the prophecy referred to: possibly exile, in which case the message would definitely be regarded as 'nemico', or perhaps not to exile, so that the area of uncertainty concerns the content of the prophecy. In another sense, however, the content is not disputed. It definitely refers to exile and the sense of 'parea' refers to the value, positive or negative, of that exile. For Dante *personaggio* there is clearly only one way to regard exile at this point of the poem, and that would be negatively. However, we may be able to detect the beginnings of a change of perception regarding the value and meaning of exile. Understood from the viewpoint of Dante *poeta*, the expression 'parea nemico' may in fact be stating the opposite and marking out a stage in the development of Dante *personaggio*. That is to say that Dante *poeta*, with his fuller understanding of the meaning of exile, knows that it is not completely negative. Dante *personaggio*, by contrast, is still in that situation of partial comprehension where exile can only be something wholly bad. The use of the term 'parea' indicates the full, later, knowledge of Dante *poeta* along with his understanding of the limitations of Dante *personaggio* in that moment.

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[76] Compare *Inf.*, XXIV. 151. Also significant is the fact that Farinata shares his tomb with the Guelf Cavalcante, and the mention of Cavalcante's son Guido draws attention to a connection between these two, as Guido is also Farinata's son-in-law. See Villani, VII, 15. See, too, John M. Najemy, 'Dante and Florence', in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 80-99 (p. 86).

[77] Consider this comment on Dante: 'che sente così vicino il caso suo personale a quello del magnanimo ghibellino' (Bosco and Reggio, I, p. 159).

In his response to Dante's anxiety, Virgil manages to encompass the whole journey of the *Commedia*. First his question to Dante, 'Perché se' tu sì smarrito?' (*Inf.*, X. 125) reprises *Inf.*, I. 3 and in so doing questions Dante *personaggio*'s current attitude towards exile. The use of 'smarrito' recalls Dante *personaggio*'s state at the beginning of the *Inferno*, not just physically lost, but morally in danger too. He then responds to Dante's fear by giving him instructions along with a brief promise:

> 'La mente tua conservi quel ch'udito
> hai contra te', mi comandò quel saggio;
> 'e ora attendi qui', e drizzò 'l dito:
> 'quando sarai dinanzi al dolce raggio
> di quella il cui bell' occhio tutto vede,
> da lei saprai di tua vita il vïaggio.'
>
> (*Inf.*, X. 127-32)

This looks forward to the *Purgatorio*, and on to the *Paradiso*, with the promise of a more complete explanation to come later. These verses also contain a well-known problem. It seems clear that 'lei' (132) refers to Beatrice, a point agreed by most commentators, including the early ones. The problem is that it is not Beatrice, but Cacciaguida who will deliver to Dante the culminating prophecy in the series regarding his exile in *Paradiso* XVII, as we will see below. Jacopo della Lana and the *Ottimo*, for example, simply name Beatrice and make no mention of the later meeting with Cacciaguida. Benvenuto da Imola alerts his readers to the fact that Dante appears to be in error here, but attempts to rescue him by explaining that it is through the mediation of Beatrice that Dante reaches Cacciaguida, and the lines should be interpreted in that way.[78] In the end, the reference seems simply to be inconsistent and probably evidence of a different plan in Dante's mind when he wrote this canto, and not what would eventually take place in the *Paradiso*.

4. *Inferno* XV

The next *post eventum* prophecy, also concerning Dante's exile, comes in *Inferno* XV, in the famous meeting with Brunetto Latini. Dante recalls the beginning of the *Inferno* and his finding himself lost in the wood (*Inf.*, XV. 46-51) before Brunetto delivers his prophecy. He begins first in rather vague terms:

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[78] 'Et adverte hic quod autor videtur hic dicere falsum, et contradicere sibi ipsi, quia non audiet ista a Beatrice, sed potius a Cacciaguida antiquo praedecessore suo, ut patet Paradisi capitulo XVII. Dicendum breviter, quod autor audiet ista a praedicto mediante Beatrice, quae ducet eum per Paradisum' (Benvenuto, *ad. loc.*).

Ed elli a me: 'Se tu segui tua stella,
non puoi fallire a glorïoso porto,
se ben m'accorsi ne la vita bella.' 55

(*Inf.*, XV. 55-57)

This passage certainly concerns Dante's future, but its meaning depends on the sense of the metaphor of the 'glorioso porto' used by Brunetto. The early commentators generally begin with an astrological interpretation of line 55, and interpret it as a reference to worldly fame.[79] This interpretation is strengthened by the later acknowledgement of Dante *personaggio* to Brunetto 'm'insegnavate come l'uom s'etterna' (*Inf.*, XV. 85), and Brunetto's observation that he still lives on in his book (*Inf.*, XV. 119-20); extremely ironic in the circumstances.[80] The condition which prefaces this promise and the phrasing of the promise itself, introducing the possibility of failure and so making success heavily dependent upon the condition, make this statement of Brunetto a strong piece of advice rather than a prophecy as such.

As Brunetto begins his prophecy the language becomes more oblique, though never completely incomprehensible, and some of the features found in previous prophecies begin to re-emerge. It runs as follows:

'Ma quello ingrato popolo maligno
che discese da Fiesole *ab* antico,
e tiene ancor del monte e del macigno, 63
ti si farà, per tuo ben far, nimico;
ed è ragion, ché tra li lazzi sorbi
si disconvien fruttare al dolce fico. 66
Vecchia fama nel mondo li chiama orbi;
gent' è avara, invidiosa e superba:
dai lor costumi fa che tu ti forbi. 69
La tua fortuna tanto onor ti serba,
che l'una parte e l'altra avranno fame
di te; ma lungi fia del becco l'erba.' 72

(*Inf.*, XV. 61-72)

First the 'parlar nemico' of *Inf.*, X. 123 is reprised at XV. 64, this time referring to Dante's position in the eyes of the Florentines, but the echo is unmistakable. The damning

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[79] This is found in the *Ottimo*, Boccaccio, Benvenuto, and Buti.

[80] The irony of Brunetto's short-sighted concern with worldly fame is noted by Thomas Nevin, 'Ser Brunetto's Immortality: *Inferno* XV', *Dante Studies*, 96 (1978), 21-37 (pp. 29-31). Lillian M. Bisson, 'Brunetto Latini as Failed Mentor', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, n.s. 18 (1992), 1-15 (pp. 10-12), interprets this as a sign of Brunetto's failure as a teacher. Umberto Bosco, 'Canto XV', *Lectura dantis scaligera:Inferno*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1967), 485-507 (p. 502), sees echoes of parts of the *Tresor* in *Inf.*, XV. 85.

characterisation of the Florentines in lines 67-8 virtually repeats Ciacco's comment on them at *Inf.*, VI. 74, thus linking the three exile prophecies Dante *personaggio* has so far received. The most obvious immediate difference, however, is that this prophecy contains no time references, such as we saw in the others. It concerns Dante's exile, and the cause is given both directly in line 64, then described metaphorically and re-interpreted in lines 65-66. It is also linked with moral judgements in lines 61, 64, 65-6, and 67-8. The conclusion is more advice than prophecy; advice which will later be repeated in the *Paradiso*.[81] The first part, then, refers to Dante's being exiled, however, Brunetto recasts this in terms of Dante's moral superiority over those who exile him. Then he states that they will desire Dante, at which point he changes his prophecy into advice. Dante should separate himself from the Florentines, even from their behaviour, 'costumi' (69). Brunetto then makes this clearer by specifying separation from 'l'una e l'altra parte'(71). Among the early commentators the *Ottimo*, Benvenuto, and Buti explain this as meaning the Black and White Guelfs, which seems the most obvious interpretation, especially if we recall the description of Florence in canto VI. 61 as the 'città partita'. It seems clear that Dante had distanced himself from the exiled Whites at least by July of 1304, and Brunetto's prophecy concerns this phase in his exile.[82] The famous description in the letter to Cangrande, 'Florentinus natione non moribus', surely carries echoes of Brunetto's talk of the Florentines' 'costumi'?[83] I mention this possibility simply for the sake of completeness; the questions surrounding the letter are so vexed that I don't propose to go into the matter any further here.[84] This effectively ends the predictive part of Brunetto's prophecy. The closing remarks (XV. 73-78) are still more obscure but refer to the past rather than to the future.

Brunetto's prophecy also marks a transition point in the changing value of exile begun in *Inferno* X. Exile is now becoming a morally superior position. A further connection with *Inferno* X is made later by Dante *personaggio* himself:

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[81] *Par.*, XVII. 68-69.
[82] Bemrose, pp. 82-83, links it with the appearance of the phrase 'exul immeritus' in Dante's letters, beginning with Epistola III (in the Toynbee edition). Bruni, p. 42, states that Dante remained with the exiled Whites until 1304.
[83] *Dantis Alagherii Epistola*, p. 166.
[84] The various positions are summarised in Robert Hollander, *Dante's Epistle to Cangrande* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), one of the latest treatments, but probably not the last word on the matter.

'Ciò che narrate di mio corso scrivo,
e serbolo a chiosar con altro testo
a donna che saprà, s'a lei arrivo.
Tanto vogl' io che vi sia manifesto,
pur che mia coscïenza non mi garra,
ch'a la Fortuna come vuol, son presto.
Non è nuova a li orecchi miei tal arra:
però giri Fortuna la sua rota
come le piace, e 'l villan la sua marra.'

(*Inf.*, XV. 88-96)

This suggests that Dante *personaggio* is at least beginning to accept his fate, if still regarding it as 'nemico'. There is resolution in 'son presto' (93) and 'non è nuova' (94), the latter supporting the second of the possibilities for understanding the 'nemico parlar' of Inf. X, whilst 'come vuol' (93) and 'come le piace'(96) retain an element of open-endedness and possible menace. This ambivalence which remains can be found in the references to 'la sua rota' (95) and "l villan' (96). One final point we may notice is the shadowy presence of the final judgement in the references to 'glorioso porto' (56), and Dante's expression 'di mio corso' combined with the final picture of Brunetto (*Inf.*, XV. 121-24). All of the fourteenth century commentators simply explain the 'palio' at Verona, mentioned in these lines. It is surprising that none of them mention what seems an obvious connection between this image of the racing Brunetto and the Pauline metaphor of the race used at 1 Cor. 9. 24-6, and again at Phil. 3. 12-14.[85] Seen in this light, the final 'perde' (124), the final word of the canto in fact, points up the reality of Brunetto's situation. He has lost the Pauline race, the true race. The 'parve' (123) reveals that his apparent victory is in fact illusory. We may consider here an echo of 'parea' in precisely the same line, 123, in canto X, also potentially illusory, but with an opposite conclusion. In this case, exile seems a 'parlar nemico' to Dante *personaggio*, but, in fact, is connected in Brunetto's prophecy with Dante's moral superiority and ultimate glory.

[85] The 20th century commentators on the Dartmouth Project database do not mention the Pauline image either. Thomas Werge, The Race to Death and the Race for Salvation in Dante's *Commedia*', *Dante Studies*, 97 (1979), 1-21, examines the image throughout the *Commedia*, including Brunetto's case (pp. 4-5). See, too, Marianne Shapiro, 'Brunetto's Race (*Inf.* XV)', *Dante Studies*, 95 (1977), 153-55. Both Shapiro (p. 153) and Werge (p. 17) note that André Pézard mentions the Pauline connection in his commentary, which is not in the Dartmouth database.

We should briefly note that line 90 appears to refer to a later meeting with Beatrice, although, as we have seen, it is Cacciaguida who will explain things to Dante. This is simply a similar reference to that at *Inf.*, X. 132, discussed above.

Attempts have been made to re-interpret the sin of which Brunetto Latini is guilty. Although the precise nature of his sin, and the arguments around this question are not generally relevant to this study of the prophecies in the *Commedia*, nevertheless, one point does need clarification.[86] Richard Kay, as part of his thesis that Brunetto's sin is a misuse of his intellectual position, posits a connection between Sodom and false prophecy.[87] In support of this he quotes Jeremiah's condemnations of false prophets, in particular Jer. 23. 14. which likens lying prophets to the inhabitants of Sodom.[88] He then quotes Jeremiah's criticisms of false prophets, and injunction not to listen to them, applying this to the situation of Brunetto:

> Next comes a solemn injunction: 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Hearken not to the words of the prophets that prophesy to you, and deceive you: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.' Such is the message, which can be accommodated all the more easily to Brunetto's band because Latini himself assumes the role of prophet (*vates*) in the action of the canto.[89]

The fundamental problem with this interpretation, of course, is that Brunetto cannot be described as a false prophet simply because of the fact that his prediction is true. We might also then ask whether he would be more properly located in the fourth *bolgia* of the eighth circle in Canto XX if he were a false prophet. Finally, the injunction to pay no attention to false prophets is almost in complete opposition to Dante's response, which we saw above (*Inf.*, XV 88-90). This consideration of Brunetto's prophetic status raises other problematic issues. If Brunetto is not a false prophet does this then mean that he is a 'true' prophet? How can a 'true' prophet, whatever that may mean, be found among the

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[86] Bisson, pp. 3-5, gives a short summary of the main interpretations and a bibliography for the question.
[87] Richard Kay, *Dante's Swift and Strong: Essays on Inferno XV* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1978), pp. 252-53.
[88] Kay, *Dante's Swift and Strong*, p. 252. The verse in Jeremiah runs 'et in prophetis Hierusalem vidi similitudinem adulterium et iter mendacii et confortaverunt manus pessimorum ut non converteretur unusquisque a malitia sua facti sunt mihi omnes Sodoma et habitatores eius quasi Gomorra' ('But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his wickedness; all of them have become like Sodom to me and its inhabitants like Gomorrah') (Jer. 23. 14). English text from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition* (London: The Catholic Truth Society, 1966).
[89] Kay, p. 253. The quotation from Jeremiah is Jer. 23. 16.

damned? This issue, as it applies to all the souls in the *Inferno* who deliver prophecies, will be fully discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis.

5. *Inferno* XIX

Canto XIX brings the next prophecy and for its subject moves to another sphere altogether, though not without some relation to the subject of exile. Here Dante *personaggio* is mistaken for Pope Boniface VIII by Pope Nicholas III:

> Ed el gridò: 'Se' tu già costì ritto,
> se' tu già costì ritto, Bonifazio?
> Di parecchi anni mi mentì lo scritto.
> Se' tu sì tosto di quell' aver sazio
> per lo qual non temesti tòrre a 'nganno
> la bella donna, e poi di farne strazio?'
>
> (*Inf.*, XIX. 52-57)

The prophecy here is almost accidental, resulting, in the first place, from a case of mistaken identity. Nicholas reveals that Boniface will die within 'parecchi anni' (54) and is bound for hell when he does. Notable features at this point are: that the subject of the prediction is actually named, albeit by mistake; and that some indication of time is given, although it is vague. We can work out how long this period of time is since it refers to the period between this meeting and the death of Boniface, which occurred on the 11th or the 12th of October 1303.[90] For reasons which are not clear, the *Ottimo* calculates the time from Dante's meeting with Nicholas, dated as the 25th of March, until the death of Boniface as a period of two years and seven months.[91] In fact the time from March, or April 1300 until the 11th or 12th of October 1303 would be three years and about six months.

Concerning the source of Nicholas' information, Benvenuto describes 'lo scritto' simply as being 'scriptura prophetiae' without explaining what that is. The other early

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[90] Villani, IX. 63, gives the 12th of October. Boase, p. 351, agrees, placing it in the early morning, and includes a brief discussion of differing accounts of the manner of Boniface's death. Davidsohn, p. 353, gives the 11th of October, as does Horace K. Mann, *The Lives of the Popes in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn, 18 vols (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1925-1932), XVIII (1932), p. 386. Mann, pp. 386-87, dismisses suggestions that Boniface's end was anything but Christian, having him fully confessed in preparation for his death.

[91] '... e sapea che in questo tempo, che l'Autore li parla, correva il MCCC, ed era circa dì XVI di Marzo; sì ch'erano già corsi delli VIIJ anni e mesi VIIIJ, che dovea stare Papa Bonifazio, anni VJ e mesi IJ. Dunque vedea che, al [conto] ch'avea fatto, restavano anni IJ, e mesi VIJ a vivere Bonifazio' (*L'Ottimo commento*, I, p. 348).

commentators offer no comment on 'lo scritto', although Guido da Pisa makes the odd assertion that Nicholas had this knowledge of the future whilst he was still alive.[92] There are no signs that it refers to anything in particular and it may simply be a reflection both of Nicholas' way of speaking and of the very heavy biblical presence found throughout the canto, both in direct references and various echoes and allusions to the Bible.[93]

The time reference, then, although it can be calculated with some precision on the basis of external information, is of itself rather vague. It is only because it refers to a specific event, namely Boniface's death, that the actual period of time can be determined, and not on the basis of any information given in Dante's text. This definite event is then linked with another event which cannot be verified from any external source: Boniface's eventual damnation. This second element introduces the dimension of moral judgement which has formed part of the *post eventum* prophecies noted so far, and once the two are so closely linked, the fact that the first is known to be true strengthens the claims to veracity of the second.

Nicholas mistakes Dante for Boniface and feels that 'lo scritto' has lied to him. As well as introducing an element of the ridiculous to the situation, this mistake also suggests that knowledge of the future is not granted as any special favour but is, rather, an attendant feature of the after-life state and able to be treated at times in a rather casual manner, as is found here.[94] Indeed, this prediction of Boniface's death and arrival in hell is presented in such an oblique manner that it actually lacks the most basic feature of prophecies; a verb in the future tense.

On learning of his error Nicholas identifies himself, albeit indirectly:

'sappi ch'i' fui vestito del gran manto; 69
e veramente fui figliuol de l'orsa,

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[92] 'Quasi dicat: Quomodo es tu iam ita cito mortuus? Certe quando ego in papatu vivebam, per prophetyas et oracula tunc prescrivi quod quasi decem annis in illa sede triumphare debebas. Et ecce fere completi sunt octo' (*Expositiones*, p. 361).

[93] In particular see Zygmunt Barański, *Dante e i segni: Saggi per una storia intellettuale di Dante Alighieri* (Naples: Liguori, 2000), pp. 147-72; V. Stanley Benfell, 'Prophetic Madness: The Bible in *Inferno XIX*', *Modern Language Notes*, 110 (1995), 145-63; Joan Ferrante, 'Usi e abusi della Bibbia nella letterature medievale', in *Dante e la Bibbia*, ed. by G. Barblan (Olschki: Florence, 1988), pp. 213-25 (pp. 223-24).

[94] Francesco D'Ovidio, 'Il Canto XIX dell'*Inferno*', *Letture dantesche: Inferno*, ed. by Giovanni Getto (Florence: Sansoni, 1955), 345-76 (p. 361), describes the character of Nicholas as 'tragicomico'; David Nolan, 'Inferno XIX' in *Dante Commentaries: Eight Studies of the Divine Comedy*, ed. by David Nolan (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1977), pp. 7-42 (pp. 23-25), examines the ironic humour of the episode.

cupido sì per avanzar li orsatti,
che sù l'avere e qui me misi in borsa.' 72

(*Inf.*, XIX. 69-72)

Dante learns then that he was a pope (69), an Orsini (70-71), and is now damned on account of the simony through which he funded his nepotism (71-72).[95] Then Nicholas returns to the question of Boniface, having first explained (XIX. 73-78) that each new arrival in this eighth circle of the *Inferno* pushes the latest incumbent farther down the hole in which he lies:

'Ma più è 'l tempo già che i piè mi cossi
e ch'i son stato così sottosopra,
ch'el non starà piantato coi piè rossi: 81
ché dopo lui verrà di più laida opra,
di ver' ponente, un pastor sanza legge,
tal che convien, che lui e me ricuopra. 84
Nuovo Iasón sarà, di cui si legge
ne' Maccabei; e come a quel fu molle
suo re, così fia lui chi Francia regge.' 87

(*Inf.*, XIX. 79-87)

There are in fact two very closely linked predictions here, times for both of which are indicated, but imprecisely and in a roundabout fashion which requires not a little unravelling. Nicholas states that he has already been here for longer than the time that Boniface will spend in his position. So, the period of time before Boniface in turn is pushed down by the next arrival will be less than this. Nicholas' death in August 1280, gives a period of time before Boniface is pushed down by the next arrival of about 19 years and 8 months.[96] This first prophecy then predicts the duration of Boniface's punishment, and therefore, indirectly, his death; his damnation is taken for granted by now. Although it appears to give dates, in fact the only reference to time actually given in connection with Boniface's death is the earlier 'parecchi anni' (XIX. 54). This period of just under twenty years is the maximum interval possible between the death of Boniface and the death of the 'pastor sanza legge' who is to follow him.

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[95] On Nicholas' election to the papacy in 1277 see Villani, VIII, 54; on simony related to nepotism see VIII, 56; for his death in 1280 see VIII, 58.

[96] Villani, VIII. 59, simply gives the month of August for Nicholas' death, though he does state that he was pope for three years, one month and twenty seven days. Holmes, *Florence, Rome,* p. 29, gives the 22nd of August, 1280.

The second prediction, then, really begins in line 81 although it follows from the first, and is based on the same time reference. Nicholas continues by first foretelling the death and damnation, ('verrà', 82), of the next pope condemned to follow Boniface down the hole, which will occur within nineteen years and eight months of his death, and, therefore, within twenty three years and a couple of months of these words of Nicholas. There is no doubt about the identity of the pope in question; the prophecy refers to Clement V. None of the early commentators fail to recognize him, and the later reference to the King of France (87) makes it still clearer. As in the case of Boniface, the prediction of Clement's death is linked with a description of his immorality leading ultimately to his damnation. Indeed 'ricuopra' (84) may be interpreted metaphorically, as well as literally, to mean that Clement is worse than both Nicholas and Boniface.

Although we could conceivably calculate a precise date, the wording of the prophecy clearly presents it simply as a *terminus ante quem*, which means that the predicted event, Clement's death, can occur sometime before that. In fact, it occurred quite some time before, in 1314, and, therefore, well within the period of time predicted.[97] If we were to classify this as a *post eventum* prophecy, then this would imply a very late date for the composition of the *Inferno*. Dante's interest in the papacy, so evident in this canto but less in evidence in the preceding canti, has been linked with his attitudes as found in the later *Monarchia* and parts of the *Purgatorio*.[98] It is also possible that the lines from 'Ma più' to 'regge' (lines 79-87) are a later addition to the canto.[99] The canto could still run smoothly in terms of content and development without it; line 88 could respond to line 75 or even 78 just as much as to line 87. The removal of these nine lines would require some readjustment of the terza rima, which would be possible, and this hypothesis would leave

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[97] Villani, X. 59, on the death of Clement, gives the date as the 20th of April 1314. Villani describes him as a 'simoniaco', and includes an odd story of his consulting a necromancer to find out about a dead nephew of his. Clement is shown his nephew, a cardinal, burning in Hell, and informed that a place is being prepared there for him too. The life of Clement by Ptolemy of Lucca, second in the collection of lives in the *Vitae paparum Avenionensium: hoc est historia pontificum Romanorum qui in Gallia sederunt ab anno Christi MCCCV usque ad annum MCCCXCIV*, ed. by Étienne Baluze, new edn by G. Mollat, 4 vols (Paris: Letouzey et Ani, 1914-27), I (1916), p. 52, has the same date as Villani; the first life, p.23, gives the 23rd of April 1314.

[98] George Holmes, *'Monarchia* and Dante's Attitude to the Popes', in *Dante and Governance*, ed. by J. R. Woodhouse (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 46-57 (pp. 49-50).

[99] George Holmes, 'Dante and the Popes', in *The World of Dante*, ed. by Cecil Grayson (Clarendon: Oxford, 1980), pp. 18-43 (p. 40), takes this view.

the original number of lines in the canto at 124, as in canto XV, but still more than the shortest canti, VI and XI at 115 lines each.[100]

Despite these suggestions, it is still difficult to classify this entirely as a *post eventum* prophecy. In constructing this prophecy, Dante has allowed for a period of twenty three years, which, ironically, extends beyond his own death. There is also the matter of Clement's death occurring so long before the end point of the prediction. We may suppose that, had Dante known the date, he would have given a more precise prediction. The absence of any reference to events like the move to Avignon has also been noted.[101] It is more likely, then, that Dante has constructed a prophecy with a mixture of fact and speculation. The death of Boniface had occurred by the time of writing, and it was unlikely that Clement would last more than twenty years from 1300, especially given his ill-health throughout his pontificate.[102] A further point for consideration is the suggestion that Dante has placed the prophecy in the mouth of an unreliable character, so that any eventual error may be attributed to the character, thereby safeguarding the integrity of the text.[103] This seems unlikely. Although Nicholas has already been in error, in mistaking Dante *personaggio* for Boniface, his error is corrected and the veracity of 'lo scritto' re-asserted. In addition, as we shall see, the prophecies in the *Commedia* are not unreliable, even when provided by extremely untrustworthy characters, so that the introduction here of a possibility of error would be contrary to Dante's normal compositional practice.

The final part of the prophecy describes Bertrand de Got's election to the Papacy and his relationship with Philip IV of France. This relationship is presented in terms of a parallel biblical example, the story of Jason (2 Macc 4. 7-17), who bought the position of high priest through promises made to King Antiochus. Villani, in fact, describes a secret meeting between Philip and Bertrand, stating that Philip sought six special favours from the

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[100] Canto lengths and similar information is examined in Joan Ferrante, 'A Poetics of Chaos and Harmony', in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 153-71.
[101] Antonino Pagliaro, 'Canto XIX', *Lectura dantis scaligera: Inferno*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1967), 619-68 (pp. 651-52), rejects this as evidence of a later date of composition, as does Paolo Brezzi, 'Il Canto XIX dell'*Inferno*', *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence, Le Monnier, 1970), II, 161-82 (pp. 174-75).
[102] Pagliaro, 'Canto XIX', p. 651; Brezzi, 'Il Canto XIX', p. 174; Palma di Cesnola, p. 48; G. Mollat, *Les Papes D'Avignon (1305-1378)*, 19th edn (Letouzy & Anes: Paris, 1964), pp. 31-32, describes the illness which led finally to Clement's death on the twenty second of April, 1314 as probably cancer of the intestine or stomach.
[103] Palma di Cesnola, pp. 49-50.

Cardinal in return for securing his election and that the Cardinal conceded.[104] The account in Maccabees condemns Jason's promotion of a Hellenized way of life amongst the Jews and in this respect seems particularly apt, not just as an example of simony in the first instance, but a direct criticism of the move to Avignon and increased French influence and habits at the Papal Court.[105] Indeed, it is to the book of Macabees that Dante turns again to describe the relationship of Philip and Clement in his letter to the Italian Cardinals in 1314.[106] Even so, the fact that Dante does not give a more precise indication of the date of Clement's death still remains a very strong reason for excluding this final part as *post eventum*, although the rest of the prophecy clearly is.[107]

This last section is also extremely interesting in the way that Nicholas phrases his prediction in the language and structures of the figural method often used to interpret scripture.[108] As one of the dead, he is already privy to the future; a point evident from the first prediction onward. This means that the figural method is not necessary here, even though Nicholas presents his prophecy in that manner. We may view this as an element of characterisation on Dante's part in his depiction of Nicholas, a cleric who prefers to speak in the mode of scriptural interpretation so familiar in an ecclesiastical context. Dante *personaggio* replies in kind, moving through a whole series of scriptural references to conclude with his own figural interpretation of John's Apocalypse 17.1-5., as fulfilled in

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[104] Villani, IX. 80. Guido Da Pisa, *Expositiones*, p. 363, gives a very similar account: 'Inter alia vero que sibi promisit fuerunt VII.' The lists overlap in some particulars.
[105] D'Ovidio, pp. 366-67.
[106] Epistola VIII in *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*. The reference to 1 Macabees chapters 7-9 is in section 4 of the letter, p. 131.
[107] Palma di Cesnola, after a detailed analysis, pp. 45-50, describes it as *ante eventum*.
[108] This method of scriptural interpretation is described and discussed in Erich Auerbach, 'Figura', in his *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, Foreword by Paolo Valesio (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 11-76; A. C. Charity, *Events and their After life: the Dialectics of Christian Typology in the Bible and Dante* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); Johannes Chydenius, 'The Typological Problem in Dante', *Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum*, 25.1 (1960), 1-159; Johannes Chydenius, 'The Theory of Medieval Symbolism', *Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum*, 27.2 (1960), 1-42; Henri De Lubac, *Exégèse Medieval, Les Quatres Sens de L'Écriture* (Paris: Aubier, 1964); Beryl Smalley, 'The Bible in the Medieval Schools' in *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Fathers to the Reformation*, ed. by G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 197-220; Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983). Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 152-57; 192-95, seeks to clarify certain differences between terms such as typology, allegory, and figural interpretation.

Nicholas and the other popes he has mentioned (*Inf.*, XIX. 106-08).[109] This is the conclusion of a particularly fierce attack on the corrupt popes, joining images of idolatry and adultery in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets.[110]

We should notice here that Dante illustrates his familiarity with the figural or typological method by apparently putting examples of it in the mouths of Nicholas and of Dante *personaggio*. This highlights the fact that he does not actually choose to use this method himself. None of the other prophecies we have seen so far rely on scripture, nor on any other text, for their information. Even in this example, Nicholas does not start from any biblical text, but uses it to express what he already knows. He does not discern the future through an act of scriptural interpretation. The figural method is being used here as a mode of expression rather than a method of interpretation.

6. *Inferno* XXIV

The next prophecy comes in canto XXIV, in the seventh bolgia, among the thieves. It is Virgil who first questions the soul who will prophesy here, and he identifies himself thus: 'son Vanni Fucci | bestia, e Pistoia mi fu degna tana' (*Inf.*, XXIV. 125-26). Dante directs his question to Virgil to ask but Fucci overhears and replies directly:

> poi disse: 'Più mi duol che tu m'hai colto
> ne la miseria dove tu mi vedi,
> che quando fui de l'altra vita tolto.
> Io non posso negar quel che tu chiedi;
> in giù son messo tanto perch'io fui
> ladro a la sagrestia d'i belli arredi,
> e falsamente già fu apposto altrui.
> Ma perché di tal vista tu non godi,
> se mai sarai di fuor da' luoghi bui,
> apri li orecchi al mio annunzio, e odi.
> Pistoia in pria d'i Neri si dimagra;
> poi Fiorenza rinova gente e modi.
> Tragge Marte vapor di Val di Magra
> ch'è di torbidi nuvoli involuto;
> e con tempesta impetüosa e agra
> sovra Campo Picen fia combattuto;
> ond'ei repente spezzerà la nebbia,
> sì ch'ogne Bianco ne sarà feruto.

[109] On the biblical presence in general see note 93 above. D'Ovidio, p. 368, observes that Dante *personaggio*, in his reply to Nicholas, moves from the Old to the New Testament, with his mention of Christ, St. Peter and St. John.

[110] 'It is within the fierce biblical tradition, descended from the prophets and sanctioned by Christ himself and all primitive Christianity, that we have to set Inferno XIX', Kenelm Foster, 'The Canto of the Damned Popes', in his *The Two Dantes and Other Studies* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977), pp. 87-106 (p. 106). D'Ovidio describes the passage as using 'linguaggio biblico, profetico, sacerdotale' (p. 372).

E detto l'ho perché doler ti debbia!'
(*Inf.*, XXIV. 133-51)

Dante *personaggio*, in fact, has asked nothing about the future; rather he wishes to know why Fucci, known for his violence, is to be found among the thieves. The first part of Fucci's reply (137-39) is in response to this question. Fucci would rather not answer, but he appears to have no choice (136). Why this should be so is not clear, since one of the damned whom Dante later encounters, Bocca degli Abati, actually refuses to reveal his identity (*Inf.*, XXXII. 100-02). In any case, the prophecy then follows, this time introduced by a rather different motive than to inform or assist Dante, as is clear from the introduction (140-41) and conclusion (151) of the prophecy and the canto. The condition 'se mai sarai di fuor da' luoghi bui' (141) is illuminating since Fucci, here, touches precisely upon the point when this information, almost incidental within the confines of the after-life, can actually take on a prophetic value. Only in the world of the living, 'fuor da' luoghi bui', and, therefore, only in the hands of Dante *poeta*, does it become privileged information.

Fucci returns the form of the prediction to the oral context (142), following the literary and scriptural forms introduced by Brunetto and Nicholas III. Although the early commentators do not mention it, the injunction to Dante to open his ears and hear (142), has a definite biblical ring to it. We may recall in particular the instruction, 'qui habet aures audiat' ('He who has ears, let him hear.') (Mt. 13. 9), which follows the parable of the sower.[111] This is appropriate, since, like the parables, the prophecy is couched in apparently obscure language, which needs to be interpreted correctly.[112] To read anything further into this, such as some form of identification between Fucci and Christ, the speaker of the verse in the Gospels, would, I think we can agree, be inappropriate. The message here is simply that Dante *personaggio*, and by extension the reader, must interpret

[111] The same verse follows the parable of the sower in the other synoptic gospels: at Mk. 4. 9, and Lk. 8. 8. The form 'qui habet aures audiendi audiat' is at Mt. 11. 15, and 13. 9.
[112] Giulio Marzot, *Il linguaggio biblico nella Divina Commedia* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1956), pp. 224-25, likens the language and style of this passage to that of the prophets and Sibyls. Patrick Boyde, *Dante, Philomythes and Philosopher: Man in the Cosmos* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 88, states: 'In the manner of prophecies and oracular utterances, Vanni's style is made deliberately elliptical, allusive and metaphorical', and he goes on to talk of 'oracular obscurity'.

attentively the words which follow. Despite the apparent obscurity of the prediction, commentators have generally had little trouble in interpreting the main points.[113]

Unlike some of the prophecies we have seen, no dates are given here; however the events are presented chronologically, which makes them fairly clear. The first line of the actual prophecy (143) refers to the chasing out of the Black Guelfs from Pistoia in May 1301, accomplished with the help of the Florentine Whites.[114] The next line (145) predicts the exile of the Whites from Florence in 1302.[115] By placing the two events in parallel like this, Dante implies some sort of connection between them.[116] Although it is the exiling of the Blacks and Whites from each city that is being predicted, we may recall that Villani puts the earlier split of the Guelf party in Pistoia at the root of the split in Florence.[117]

Most commentators have no difficulty in identifying the 'vapor' (145) as Moroello Malaspina of Lunigiana, which the geographical reference 'Val di Magra' (145) helps clarify. It is equally clear that the final part of the prediction foretells a disastrous defeat for the Whites by the forces of Moroello. At this point, however, there is a problem. We have been relying on the geographical references to allow us to interpret the content of the prophecy, but the meaning of 'Campo di Picen' (148), is imprecise.[118] It may either refer to the city of Pistoia itself, or Pistoian territory in some more generic sense. This lack of precision has resulted in two main suggestions for the event Fucci predicts.[119] The first

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[113] See, for example, Guido da Pisa, Benvenuto, and the *Ottimo ad. loc.* for very full accounts amongst the early commentaries. See too Aleardo Sacchetto, 'Il Canto XXIV dell'*Inferno*', *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence, Le Monnier, 1970), II, 257-79 (pp. 269-70); Bruno Maier, 'Canto XXIV', *Lectura dantis scaligera: Inferno*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1967), 833-84 (pp. 875-77).

[114] Very briefly recorded by Villani, IX, 45; Davidsohn, pp. 203-06 describes the events leading up to the exile of the Blacks on the 24th of May 1301; Compagni gives a description (I. 25) and laments the aftermath (I. 26). A much fuller account is in the *Storie pistoresi 1300-1348*, ed. by Silvio Adrasto Barbi, in the *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, new edn by G. Carducci and V. Fiorini, XI, 5 (Città del Castello: S. Lapi, 1907-27), pp. 17-19.

[115] See notes 47-50 above.

[116] Edoardo Sanguineti, *Interpretazione di Malebolge* (Florence: Olschki, 1961), p. 195, notes the interplay of parallel structures throughout this passage.

[117] Villani, IX, 38, describes the split in Pistoia, and, IX, 39, in Florence, commenting: '... nacque il superbio isdegno tra·lloro [the Florentines], e maggiormente si raccese per lo mal seme venuto di Pistoia di parte bianca e nera come nel lasciato capitolo facemmo menzione.'

[118] Graziolo Bambaglioli, *Commento all'"Inferno" di Dante*, ed. by Luca Carlo Rossi (Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 1998), p. 161, actually reads the text as 'Campo Pisan', and explains: 'Pisan est quedam porta civitatis Pistorii penes quam est campus ubi fuit exercitus et conflictus et expugnatio civitatis predicte, ex quo pars Blanca sive Ghibellina fuit ab eadem civitate depulsa.' Nevertheless, he still seems to understand the prediction.

[119] Villani, I. 32, mentions Campo di Piceno as the place where Pistoia is found. Barbi, *Storie pistoresi*, p. 26, n. 3, mentions the passage from Inferno and notes the same two

possibility is the siege of Serravalle, and so outside of Pistoia, which lasted from the 14th of June, 1302 until the 6th of September, at which Moroello commanded the Blacks from Lucca.[120] The second option is the siege of Pistoia itself, which ended on the 10th or 11th of April, 1306 with the surrender of the city.[121] Moroello was in command at this siege too, and became *capitano del popolo* of Pistoia on the 11th of April, after entering the defeated city .[122] The siege itself was extremely bloody according to Compagni (III. 14) who considers the fate of the besieged Pistoians worse than that suffered by the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, and we may interpret the penultimate line (150) of Fucci's prophecy as a reference to this.

It is not possible to determine, purely on the basis of the text, which event is intended here. We may speculate that the latter of the two is more likely as the passage was probably written after the fall of Pistoia. The meteorological metaphors used to describe Moroello and his military activities may reflect weather conditions in Lunigiana itself, thus relating the description to Dante's stay there.[123] Dante was in the service of one of the Malaspinas, at least from the 6th of October 1306.[124] It would also, therefore, be less personally painful for Dante to describe the ultimate defeat of the Whites, as he would have already separated himself from them by this time.[125] We may finally note that the description of Moroello is fairly neutral, although this could simply be explained by the fact that the speaker belongs to the Black faction.

The defeat of the Whites in Pistoia meant the end of the city as a haven for the Florentine Whites, so that Fucci is, in effect, predicting a sort of circular movement which sees the Whites, Dante's party, chased out from Florence, and then expelled from Pistoia. We may detect here a reprise of the theme of return from exile explored in Canto X, only

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possibilities. Of the early commentators Benvenuto notes the different options. Bosco and Reggio, I, p. 363 describe it as generic and note the two possibilities.

[120] *Storie pistoresi*, pp. 26-28. Villani, IX. 52, and Compagni, II. 27, describe the siege, but don't mention Moroello. Davidsohn, p. 316, quotes the lines from *Inf.*, XXIV in reference to the siege.

[121] *Storie pistoresi*, p. 41. Villani, IX. 82, and Compagni, III. 15, give the date as the 10th of April.

[122] *Storie pistoresi*, p. 41, n. 2.

[123] This point is made by Pompeo Giannantonio, 'Dante e la Lunigiana', in *Dante e le città dell'esilio*, ed. by Guido Di Pino (Ravenna: Longo, 1989), pp. 33-46 (p. 39).

[124] Piattoli, pp. 116-18, document 98, records the appointment of Dante as *procuratore* for Franceschino Malaspina.

[125] See note 68.

here the return of the Blacks to Pistoia means the end of the Whites. The beginning of the movement is the expulsion of the Blacks from Pistoia, so that Fucci's prophecy is adding details to both ends, so to speak, of the on-going revelation of his exile which Dante has already received. The conclusion (151) is particularly striking and reiterates the sentiment with which Fucci introduced the prediction. The fact that prophecies may be used by souls for such a negative purpose underscores the incidental nature of the foresight they enjoy. There is no indication that they are granted this knowledge as a special gift, or on a particular occasion, or for a specific purpose.

7. *Inferno* XXVI

Near the beginning of Canto XXVI comes a prophecy which is very different from the others we have seen so far. It is part of an apostrophe with which the canto begins.[126]

Godi, Fiorenza, poi che se' sì grande
che per mare e per terra batti l'ali,
e per lo 'nferno tuo nome si spande!
Tra li ladron trovai cinque cotali
tuoi cittadini onde mi ven vergogna,
e tu in grande orranza non ne sali.
Ma se presso al mattin del ver si sogna,
tu sentirai, di qua da picciol tempo,
di quel che Prato, non ch'altri, t'agogna.
E se già fosse, non saria per tempo.
Così foss' ei, da che pur esser dee!
ché più mi graverà, com' più m'attempo.

(*Inf.*, XXVI. 1-12)

Dante addresses Florence directly in the present, using an imperative, 'Godi', followed by three verbs in the present tense: 'se", 'batti' and 'si spande'; he places his journey through Hell in the past, 'trovai', with respect to the time of writing. This initial apostrophe is then followed by more verbs in the present tense: 'ven' and 'sali'. This sarcastic condemnation of Florence has been linked both with Isaiah, as well as with the following inscription of 1255 on the Florentine Palazzo della Podestà, in praise of the city:

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[126] One of the early commentators, Francesco da Buti, actually offers this explanation of the term in his comment on *Inf.*, XXVI. 1-12: 'In questi quattro ternari l'autor nostro, facendo digressione dalla materia sua, usa in verso la sua città uno colore retorico, che si chiama in lingua greca apostrofa, et in lingua latina si chiama esclamazione; e fassi quando li autori ànno parlato in terza persona, e poi divertono lo parlare in seconda persona, o a persona assente, o a luogo, come fa ora l'autor nostro, ch'avendo parlato di cinque cittadini fiorentini che à finto che siano nella settima bolgia, perchè commisono furto e ladroneccio, volge lo parlare suo alla sua città, usando colore sopraddetto in materia derisoria.'

'que mare, que terram, que totum possidet orbem.'[127] The time when it is delivered is not contemporaneous with the fictional date of 1300; Dante moves from the past, 'trovai', to the future, 'sentirai', but the midpoint, the 'present' at which he makes this address to Florence cannot be determined. We may note, at this point, that it is precisely this silence on Dante's part regarding the time of writing that gives the *post eventum* prophecies in particular the appearance of being open-ended.

The speaker, then, is Dante *poeta*, not Dante *personaggio*, nor any other character in the *Commedia*, and he is the recipient of a dream. The belief that early morning dreams are in some way prophetic is common in Dante's time.[128] The predictive part of the apostrophe lays down a condition before the prophecy is delivered. Dante *poeta* declares that his vision of the future has come to him in a dream of the sort commonly held to be prophetic. Guido da Pisa and Pietro Alighieri cite Ovid's *Heroides* at this point in their commentaries:

> namque sub aurora, iam dormitante lucerna,
> somnia quo cerni tempore vera solent
>
> (For, just before dawn, when my lamp was already dying down, at the time when dreams are wont to be true...)
>
> (*Heroides*, XIX. 195-96)[129]

Dante himself, of course, mentions this belief in the visionary power of early morning dreams three times in the *Purgatorio*, specifying in each instance that it is just before dawn.[130] Dante explains on the first occasion that this is the hour in which 'la mente nostra, peregrina | più da la carne e men da' pensier presa, | a le sue visïon quasi è divina' (*Pur.*, IX. 16-18). The idea of a gradual separation between body and mind, or soul, in

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[127] Palma di Cesnola, p. 37, n. 25, suggests similarities with Is. 14. 29. Antonino Pagliaro, 'Il Canto XXVI dell'*Inferno*', *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence, Le Monnier, 1969), III, 1-37 (p. 11).quotes the inscription.

[128] Mineo, *Profetismo*, pp. 60-63; Pagliaro, 'Il Canto XXVI', p. 11. Dino S. Cervigni, *Dante's Poetry of Dreams* (Florence: Olschki, 1986), pp. 13-25, gives a survey up to Dante's time.

[129] Latin text and translation from Ovid, *Heroides and Amores*, ed. and trans. by Grant Showerman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press and London: Heinemann, 1921, repr. 1947), pp. 272-273. Guido da Pisa, *Expositiones*, p. 516. Pietro Alighieri also cites a number of other examples, especially from the Bible, pp. 355-59. Pagliaro, 'Il Canto XXVI', p. 11, quotes the same lines but gives the reference as XIV, instead of XIX. This must be a misprint; apart from being the wrong poem, *Heroides* XIV is only 132 lines long.

[130] *Pur.*, IX. 13-18; XIX. 1-6; 94-96. Cervigni gives a very detailed analysis of the dreams in the *Purgatorio*, see especially pp. 25-37; 194.

the course of the night, and, therefore, reaching a peak just before waking, is also found in Macrobius' commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*.[131] This work was the principal medieval authority on the subject of dreams, and is also referred to by some of the commentators on the *Commedia*, although Dante's use of dreams in the *Purgatorio* is thought to go beyond the classifications of Macrobius.[132] In any case, this all suggests that the apparent condition (line 7) which introduces the prophecy does not call it into question, but implies that it is a true vision of the future. Having said that, it does not easily fit with the other prophecies which Dante *personaggio* has received as a consequence of his privileged position, since early morning dreams are available to anyone. In fact we might almost regard this dream as independent both of the other prophecies and of Dante's otherworld journey, even if it is linked to what he saw of Florence in Hell.

The prophecy itself is difficult to decipher.[133] It clearly promises that something is going to happen to Florence, but what and when is not specified. The only apparent time reference, 'da picciol tempo' (8), is imprecise, not only because it gives no definite period of time, but also because the time when the prophecy is delivered is left unspecified. In the case of the other predictions, the fictional time of the journey, and, therefore, the time of delivery, is at least known, but in this case there is no time framework at all. We can surmise from the preceding condemnation of Florence that what will happen is going to be bad, but why does he single out Prato in particular as desirous of this? And does Prato here refer to the city itself, or, as some readers have suggested, the Cardinal of Prato?[134]

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[131] Macrobius, *Macrobii Ambrosii Theodosii, Commentariorum in Somnium Scipionis Libri Duo*, ed. by L. Scarpa (Padua: Liviana Editrice, 1981), pp. 82-91, distinguishes between significant dreams, near dawn, and worthless ones, immediately after going to sleep and probably caused by the last thing the sleeper ate. The influence of Macrobius is also described by Alison M. Peden, 'Macrobius and Medieval Dream Literature', *Medium Aevum*, 54.1 (1985), 59-73, and Anthony C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 8-11; 25.

[132] Guido da Pisa, Pietro Alighieri, and Francesco da Buti refer to Macrobius in their comments on *Inf.* XXVI. 7. Guido explains: 'Tamen illa somnia que matutinali tempore, idest in aurora, videntur, veritatem continere dicuntur, quia illo tempore, cibo et potu digesto, anima corporis gravedine non gravatur' (*Expositiones*, p. 516). Cervigni, pp. 208-209, concludes that whilst Macrobius' third type of dream, *somnium*, could be applied to the dreams in *Purgatorio*, Dante's elaboration of these dreams creates something much greater than the Macrobian classification can describe.

[133] Pagliaro, 'Il Canto XXVI', pp. 11-12, recognises the problem and mentions different suggestions. Palma di Cesnola, p. 38, concludes that it is *ante eventum*, and in fact cannot be matched to any historical event.

[134] Guido da Pisa, *Expositiones*, p. 516, asks precisely that question: 'tertium, quare in desiderio destructionis Florentie ponitur singulariter Pratum, cum omnes alie gentes in circuitu habitantes ipsi civitati Florentie uniformiter id affectant.'

The early commentators generally interpret it to mean the city, whilst later interpretations tend to prefer the Cardinal.[135] The concluding lines add nothing to help us clarify our interpretation, except that they express the sentiments of Dante *poeta* that the punishment cannot come soon enough. The repetition of the subjunctive, 'fosse' (lines 10 and 11), in his strengthens the predicitive nature of the statement as it makes clear that what he has dreamt has not yet happened. At the same time he also states unequivocally that it must occur (11).

What exactly is predicted here remains unclear, which further hinders any attempt at guessing the time of writing by working back from the event, already made almost impossible by the vagueness of the time period 'picciol tempo'. In fact, a series of disastrous events occurred within the likely period of time, any one of which could be interpreted as the subject of the prophecy. Florence was excommunicated in 1304 by the Cardinal of Prato, and again in 1307 by Cardinal Orsini, although the excommunication was finally lifted in 1309.[136] On the 10th of June, 1304 a deliberate act of arson caused an enormous amount of damage to the city.[137] On the 6th of April, 1309 the Blacks were expelled from Prato, though Villani reports that the city was recovered for them the very next day, with Florentine help.[138] This would explain why Prato should desire some disaster for Florence, but it could not then be the event predicted as well.

We may speculate that the reference to Prato alludes to this event, and so the event predicted comes after 1309, although there is still no clear indication of what it might be.[139]

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[135] Pagliaro, 'Il Canto XXVI', pp. 11-12, says the early commentators are unanimous in this, but Benvenuto da Imola does not follow the others. Bambaglioli, Guido da Pisa, the *Ottimo*, and Pietro Alighieri all state that Prato means the city. Guido's explanation, however, differs quite radically. He likens the relationship between Florence and Prato to that of mother and daughter, suggesting that Florence is so bad that even Prato, which is like a daughter to it, wants to see it punished, whereas the others think it only natural that the city would resent Florentine control. Benvenuto refers to the Cardinal's excommunication of Florence in 1304, and a series of disasters which followed, to show doubters that Dante's prophecy did come true.

[136] Villani, IX. 69, quotes the Cardinal's words, giving the date of the 4th of June, 1304. Compagni, III. 22, seems to conflate a number of excommunications when reporting the lifting of the ban in 1309. Del Lungo, *Dino Compagni*, p. 172, n. 6, lists the excommunications of 1302, 1304, and 1307.

[137] Compagni, III. 8-9. Villani, IX. 71, suggests that God may have allowed it to happen as some sort of punishment for the sins of the Florentines. Both chroniclers name Neri Abbati as the firestarter.

[138] Villani, IX. 106, simply reports this without any details.

[139] Palma di Cesnola, pp. 37-38, accepts Parodi's suggestion to this effect. Ernesto Parodi, *Poesia e storia nella 'Divina Commedia'*, ed. by Gianfranco Folena and P. V. Mengaldo (Venice: Neri Pozza, 1965), pp. 238-39, in an attempt to date the composition of

In the end it is general enough to refer to almost anything, and we may assume that this is Dante's intention, as it avoids the risk of subsequently being rendered false by events.[140]

Finally, we may note that this prophecy stands apart from the others as it is delivered by Dante *poeta*, and may be regarded as extra-diegetic. It has been suggested that there are two other similar prophecies; however, this is not the case.[141] I do not propose to examine these in great detail here, but there are some points we can briefly notice. The first passage, *Pur.* VI. 97-102, certainly seems to refer to a specific event, namely the murder of Albert I of Austria in 1308 by his nephew John, and it is delivered by Dante *poeta* in the course of a lengthy apostrophe. The wording, however, means that it is not a prophecy as such, however much it may allude to this future event. Dante expresses his desire that this judgement should fall, with the subjunctive 'caggia' (100). He does not state that it will happen; there are no indicative, future tense verbs. We may compare the parts of the prophecy examined above where Dante *poeta* states that something will happen along with his wish that it happen soon. The second passage does contain a prophecy, but it is not completely extra-diegetic, and will be examined in more detail in Chapter four.

8. *Inferno* XXVIII

Two prophecies are given in canto XXVIII, in the ninth *bolgia*, among the sowers of discord. The first of these is delivered by Mohammed. Mohammed is obviously considered as a prophet in an Islamic context, but we should not regard this as a factor in Dante's use of him as a character delivering a prophecy.[142] The early commentators Jacopo Alighieri, Lana, and Francesco da Buti, give a number of unusual biographical accounts, but do not refer to Mohammed as a prophet, whilst those that do describe him as

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the poem, suggests that these verses allude to the rebellion of Prato in 1309. Parodi, p. 239, speculates that it may include events as late as 1312, but he bases this partly on the idea that the prophecy in *Inf.*, XIX of Clement's death in 1314 means a time of composition or later revision after 1314. However, as we have seen, this is neither necessary, nor likely, as the time allowed in the prophecy extends to after Dante's death.

[140] Benvenuto da Imola draws a similar conclusion: 'Et autor loquitur multum prudenter et caute, quia dat tempus incertum.'

[141] Palma di Cesnola includes *Pur.*, VI. 97-102, and *Par.*, IX. 106, in his 'trittico di vaticini del narratore' (pp. 37-40).

[142] Vincenzo Crescini, 'Il Canto XXVIII dell'*Inferno*', *Letture dantesche: Inferno*, ed. by Giovanni Getto (Florence: Sansoni, 1955), 549-81 (pp. 555-56) draws parallels, however, between Mohammed and Dolcino, describing both as self-professed prophets.

a false prophet.[143] All of the commentators concentrate on the schismatic nature of Mohammed's deeds, and this is the connection with Dolcino. There is even perhaps a sense that Mohammed feels some common cause with the fellow schismatic Dolcino.[144] Any sympathy for Dolcino should be limited to the character of Mohammed. There is no real sense that Dante is sympathetic, and, indeed, we should bear in mind that he is predicting his eventual damnation.[145] There is nothing in Dante's text to encourage us to regard Mohammed as a former prophet, and, as we have seen, the prophecies have not been delivered by characters associated with prophecy. The prophecy runs as follows:

> 'Or dì a fra Dolcin dunque che s'armi,
> tu che forse vedra' il sole in breve,
> s'ello non vuol qui tosto seguitarmi,
> sì di vivanda, che stretta di neve
> non rechi la vittoria al Noarese,
> ch'altrimenti acquistar non saria leve.'
>
> (*Inf.*, XXVIII. 55-60)

We may notice immediately that this prediction is given in the form of a piece of advice, or a warning, and so lacks the basic feature we have hitherto sought in the prophecies: a future tense verb. In this instance, however, it is so specific, and therefore clear, that we may reasonably include it as a prediction. The only time reference given is 'tosto' (57), and refers to the damnation, and therefore death of Dolcino, however, since the event predicted is so obvious, the lack of precise dating does not make the prophecy any less intelligible. The naming of the 'Noarese' (59) and Dolcino (55), as well as the mention of food and snow (58) and the victory of the Novaresi (59), leave no doubt that this passage foretells the siege and surrender of Dolcino and his followers in the mountains between Vercelli and Novara. In fact, compared with many of the other prophecies, the absence of metaphorical or allusive language is quite striking. The precise dating of the

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[143] These are in their comments on *Inf.*, XXVIII. 31, where Mohammed's name appears. Bambaglioli, p. 179, comments: 'duo dolosi prophete paganorum qui suis temporibus multas hereses produxerunt'; Guido da Pisa calls him a false prophet, and Pietro Alighieri says he is 'sic pseudopropheta' (p. 382).

[144] Benvenuto da Imola makes this point in his comment on *Inf.*, XXVIII. 55. So too does Fausto Montanari, 'Il Canto XXVIII dell'*Inferno*', *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence, Le Monnier, 1969), III, 39-50 (p. 45).

[145] Mario Fubini, 'Canto XXVIII', *Lectura dantis scaligera: Inferno*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1967), 999-1021 (p. 1015), states that some criticism of Dolcino's persecutors can be detected in Dante's verses, although he is careful to distinguish between Dante's possible sympathy for the plight of Dolcino's followers, and his disapproval of his heretical works.

event is difficult now since the sources differ, but it seems to have occurred in March 1307. Dolcino was sentenced and burned alive shortly afterwards; probably in June 1307.[146] Given that this means a period of around seven years between the fictional delivery of this prediction and the capture and death of Dolcino, Mohammed's choice of the term 'tosto' may seem misplaced. We might speculate that this term reflects not the immediacy of the events foretold from Mohammed's standpoint, but rather how recently they had occurred when Dante was writing this canto. In the end, however, we have simply a *terminus post quem* for the time of writing of these lines, and nothing more. Finally, we can see implicit in his condemnation of Dolcino an indication of Dante's respect for the Church as an institution. The fact that the persecution of Dolcino was called for by Clement V, whom Dante vehemently attacks for his corruption elsewhere in the *Commedia*, does not prevent him from concurring with the judgement of Dolcino's heresy.[147]

9. *Inferno* XXVIII

The next prophecy, still within the same canto, is given by Pier Da Medicina. This prophecy is problematic as it is the prediction by a man now virtually unknown, of an unknown event.[148] The early commentators give different pieces of information about

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[146] Villani, IX. 84, starts his account in 1305, but does not give the date of Dolcino's capture and death. He mentions the problems of hunger and the snow, possibly, in fact, echoing Dante in using the phrase 'sì di vivanda'. Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 243-47, gives a brief account of Dolcino, dating the attack on him and his followers to 1306. In their lives of Clement V, Ptolemy of Lucca and Bernard Gui each give accounts of the matter, but again with differing dates. These are collected in the *Vitae paparum Avenionensium,* pp. 24-53, and 59-80. Ptolemy, p. 27, dates the surrender to 1307. Gui, p. 63, seems to say 1308, and Mollat has added a note to confirm that it is 1308. Unfortunately, Dante's early commentators give no dates, but the moderns prefer 1307, e.g. Bosco and Reggio, I, p. 417, give March 1307 as the date of Dolcino's surrender. The *Historia Fratris Dulcini Heresiarche di Anonimo Sincrono*, ed. by Arnaldo Segarizzi, in the *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, new edn, IX, 5 (Città del Castello: S. Lapi, 1907) also has different dates. In his introduction, p. viii, Segarizzi quotes the verses from the *Inferno*. The *Historia* itself gives the 13th of March 1307, p. 11, and then the 23rd of March, p. 13, as the date of Dolcino's defeat by the Novaresi, whilst Segarizzi, p. xxxvi, gives the 26th of March. Dolcino's condemnation to death is dated the 1st of June, p. 13.

[147] See note 145 above. Segarizzi, *Historia Fratris Dulcini Heresiarche*, pp. vii-viii, notes that Dante does not mention any other sects, and suggests that this is a measure of the importance of Dolcino and his followers.

[148] 'Poco si sa di certo, o nulla, su questo personaggio' (Delmay, p. 287).

Pier, often little more than can be surmised from Dante's text.[149] The description of Pier prior to the prediction is as follows:

> Un altro, che forata avea la gola
> e tronco 'l naso infin sotto le ciglia,
> e non avea mai ch'una orecchia sola,
> ristato a riguardar per maraviglia
> con li altri, innanzi a li altri aprì la canna,
> ch'era di fuor d'ogne parte vermiglia.
>
> (*Inf.*, XXVIII. 64-69)

In the description of Pier, the attention drawn to his injured throat recalls the mention of 'la dannosa colpa della gola' in *Inferno* VI. 53. This is one of a number of cross references linking the two canti, both of which contain *post eventum* prophecies. Like Ciacco, Pier says that he has seen Dante before (71-72) and wants to be remembered to the living, beginning his prediction with that wish:

> 'rimembriti di Pier da Medicina,
> se mai torni a veder lo dolce piano
> che da Vercelli a Marcabò dichina.
> E fa sapere a' due miglior da Fano,
> a messer Guido e anco ad Angiolello,
> che, se l'antiveder qui non è vano,
> gittati saran fuor di lor vasello
> e mazzerati presso a la Cattolica
> per tradimento d'un tiranno fello.
> Tra l'isola di Cipri e di Maiolica
> non vide mai sì gran fallo Nettuno,
> non da pirate, non da gente argolica.
> Quel traditor che vede pur con l'uno,
> e tien la terra che tale qui meco
> vorrebbe di vedere esser digiuno,
> farà venirli a parlamento seco;
> poi farà sì, ch'al vento di Focara
> non sarà lor mestier voto né preco.'
>
> (*Inf.*, XXVIII. 73-90)

The opening of the passage contains, in addition to Pier's request to be remembered, the sort of hesitation regarding Dante's return to the world (74), noted elsewhere, which raises problems of inconsistency in the knowledge of the future shared by the dead. This particular passage is rather more specific in that it speaks not simply of a return to the living in general, but specifies a particular geographical area, and we may note in the mention of Vercelli a link with the prophecy of Mohammed. Pier's description of the

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[149] The *Anonimo fiorentino*, for example, comments: 'Questo Piero da Medicina fu uno grandissimo seminatore di scisma et di divisione, et fu al tempo dell'Auttore; et dicesi di lui ch'egli s'ingegnò di dividere.'

area is thought to contain information which may be useful for dating the writing of the passage, in particular its mention of Marcabò. The Romagnol Guelfs destroyed the castle in 1308.[150] Even with this date, Pier is still speaking in 1300 within the dramatic action of the poem, and speaks from his memory of the time before his death, so that the date of the castle's destruction could be considered irrelevant. It could, therefore, have already been destroyed at the time of writing without this necessarily being alluded to. On the other hand, any suggestion that this reference can supply a *terminus ante quem* for the time of composition, or later revision, of the canto would more likely come, not from the mention of Marcabò, but from the silence on its destruction.[151] The whole context here is one of prophecy and this would have been a perfect opportunity to include this detail, especially since it is named anyway. The absence of this information, then, rather than the passing mention of Marcabò, would suggest a date of composition before 1309.[152]

Like Mohammed, Pier delivers his prophecy in the form of a warning to be passed on, although it is stated more factually, with the repeated use of future tense verbs (79, 80, 88-90). He, too, names those he is seeking to warn, Guido del Cassero and Angiolello da Carignano (76-77), both of Fano (76).[153] The description of what will happen to these two is stated plainly (79-80), including the very clear geographical detail in the naming of Focara (89), located between Cattolica and Pesaro. The element of moral judgement is introduced in the references to the perpetrator, unnamed, of the crime which Pier predicts. Pier begins with a rather general description in 'tiranno fello' (81), which continues the condemnatory tone of 'tradimento' (81). The deed itself is again put within the moral context, but in rather more poetic terms (82-84), before more details are given about the 'tiranno', now called 'traditor' (85); he has one eye (85), and rules the area of Rimini (86-87). Finally the 'tradimento' itself is further expanded upon (88-90), ending with the

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[150] Benvenuto describes its destruction in 1308. Also John Larner, *The Lords of Romagna: Romagnol Society and the Origins of the Signorie* (London: MacMillan, 1965), p. 10. Bosco and Reggio, I, p. 419, give 1309 as the date, stating: 'la data della distruzione del castello viene usata come *terminus ante quem* per la datazione dell'Inferno, ma il dato è tutt' altro che sicuro.'

[151] Antonio Enzo Quaglio, 'Sulla cronologia e il testo della "Divina Commedia"', in *Dante nella critica d'oggi: risultati e prospettive*, ed. by U. Bosco (Florence: Le Monnier, 1965), pp. 241-53 (p. 244), notes the absence of any mention of significant events of the period 1307-1309 after the prophecy regarding Dolcino until the *Purgatorio*.

[152] Quaglio, p. 244, in fact describes this prophecy as 'ante factum'.

[153] Early commentators such as Lana, Guido da Pisa, Bambaglioli, Pietro Alighieri, and Benvenuto identify them simply as two leading citizens of Fano.

additional geographical detail that by the time they reach Focara both Guido and Angiolello will be dead (89).

The reference to a one-eyed ruler of Rimini is very clear; it can only be Malatestino, son of Malatesta di Verucchio.[154] This poses a minor problem, since Malatestino did not become ruler until after his father's death in 1312. However, this apparent difficulty can be resolved by interpreting 'tien' (86) simply to mean that he shares power with his father.[155]

A much greater problem with this passage is the fact that there is no other extant source for the event predicted here.[156] Is this a *post eventum* prophecy after all, or is Dante offering not merely a moral interpretation of an event, but his own version of it ? There is so much detail regarding the event, and the locations in particular, that we may suppose there to be some real basis to the story. Perhaps Dante is working from rumour or hearsay. Notably absent is any time reference which would certainly have helped settle the question, or at least given some direction in the search for an answer. Without external corroboration, no solid conclusion is possible one way or the other. However, in reinterpreting history Dante doesn't generally go so far as to write it for himself.[157] In the end, it means that we have no precise date for this event, since Dante's text has no time references.[158]

Finally, we can see a very significant feature in this passage: the first use in the *Commedia* of the term 'antiveder' (78) to describe the foresight which the dead experience. It is presented here using what has been described in classical literature as the 'si non vana'

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[154] Jacopo Alighieri, Bambaglioli, Lana, Guido da Pisa, the *Ottimo*, Pietro Alighieri, Benvenuto, Francesco da Buti, and the *Anonimo fiorentino* all identify him.

[155] This is the solution offered by Bosco and Reggio, I, p. 420.

[156] 'Il fatto, profetizzato da Pier da Medicina, è però sconosciuto ai cronisti e di esso, almeno per ora, non s'è trovato traccia nei documenti. Il Rossi (*Saggi e discorsi su Dante*, Firenze, 1930, pp. 166-68) pensa sia addirittura un'invenzione di Dante per la quale si caratterizza ancor meglio il personaggio: questi continuerebbe nell'Inferno la sua diabolica arte di seminar discordie; in questo caso tra i "due miglior di Fano" e Malatestino da Rimini. Ciò sembra però almeno strano e le parole della profezia hanno toni così aspri che è legittimo pensare che si riferiscano a un fatto esecrabile effettivamente avvenuto; gli stessi particolari, così netti e precisi, dell'efferato delitto, tradiscono la presenza di un grave fatto di cronaca' (Bosco and Reggio, I, p. 419). Delmay, pp. 19; 192; 228, notes this in his entries on these individuals.

[157] Larner, *The Lords of Romagna*, pp. 62-64, seems to have no difficulty in using Dante as a factual source here.

[158] Larner, *The Lords of Romagna*, p. 63, suggests 1306. Quaglio, p. 244, classifies it as *post factum*, implying it is at least after the death of Dolcino in 1307.

motif.[159] No explanation is given and the significance of Dante's use of this motif at this point is not entirely clear. In any case, the reader knows by now, from previous predictions, that 'l'antivedere qui' is in fact true. At the diegetic level, of course, this is consistent, perhaps over-consistent, since the dead cannot know for sure if what they see ahead will actually take place. We may recall Farinata's explanation of their ignorance of the present. Nor can Dante *personaggio* have any basis for believing that the dead truly see the future, when the proof of this can only come later.

This concludes the list of prophecies in the *Inferno*. We will continue in the next chapter with those in the *Purgatorio*.

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[159] This feature of prophecy 'prefaced by a disclaimer' has been noted as a frequent occurrence in classical literature, and in Virgil in particular, by James, J. O'Hara, *Death and the Optimistic Prophecy in Virgil's Aeneid* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 13-14. He gives a survey of it in Virgil and other Augustan poets pp. 55-56. He writes: In this study I shall show that this motif's effect in the Aeneid is best shown by the analysis of this line [Propertius 3. 6. 31] by the fourth-century commentator Servius: *per hoc decipere plerumque ostendit auguria.* The *si non vana* motif adds an element of doubt to many prophecy scenes' (p. 14). His interpretation of its function in Virgil, however, is not valid in the case of Dante's *post eventum* prophecies at the textual level, as these are manifestly true.

CHAPTER 3

THE PROPHECIES II: *PURGATORIO*

Purgatorio VI

Before examining the prophecies in the *Purgatorio*, we should consider the following verses, which some readers have classified as a prophecy:[1]

> O Alberto tedesco ch'abbandoni
> costei ch'è fatta indomita e selvaggia,
> e dovresti inforcar li suoi arcioni,
> giusto giudicio da le stelle caggia
> sovra 'l tuo sangue, e sia novo e aperto,
> tal che 'l tuo successor temenza n'aggia!
>
> (*Pur.*, VI. 97-102)

It is clear that this does seem to refer to some definite future event, and it can be interpreted in that way. The death of Albert I of Austria, who became emperor in 1298 and who was assassinated in May 1308, is mentioned by Benvenuto and Francesco da Buti, as well as by the modern commentators. An alternative suggestion is that the passage refers to the sudden death of his son Rudolph, on the 4th of June 1307, based on the understanding that 'sangue' (101) could not properly refer to Albert himself, but only to members of his family.[2] The interpretation of the reference to Albert as *post eventum* gives a date of composition which some critics regard as rather late; however this problem need not concern us. The classification of this passage as a prophecy really depends on how we regard the wording and the circumstances. First, there are no future tense verbs, and the expression itself is really couched in terms of an appeal for justice by Dante *poeta*. This brings us to the second point. Cian, in his list, describes this as 'Dante a Gesù Cristo'.[3] Although, strictly speaking, it is addressed in part to Albert himself, nevertheless Cian's description underlines a very strong reason why this should not be classified as a prophecy. I need hardly point out that the notion of Dante predicting the future to Christ is absurd. Dante may ask Christ, or God, for something, which is what his appeal (98) is doing, but he is hardly likely to inform him of the future. Most commentators interpret the

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[1] Palma di Cesnola, pp. 38-39, includes it as one of three 'profezie del narratore', and classifies it as *post eventum*; Cian, p. 121, includes it in his list too.
[2] Parodi, pp. 240-43, records this suggestion and attributes it to Max Rieger in 1898. See Parodi, p. 241, for bibliographical details. Noted also by Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 106.
[3] Cian, p. 121.

passage instead as some sort of invective or curse on Albert, coming, as it does, in the midst of a long passage of invective.[4] If we do accept this reference to Albert as *post eventum*, then the event alluded to would represent an answer to Dante's desire for justice, but it cannot be considered as a prediction *per se*.

10. *Purgatorio* VIII

The first prophecy of the *Purgatorio* comes in canto VIII, when Currado Malaspina predicts in fairly florid terms Dante's future association with his family. He begins with a request for news of the present circumstances of his homeland, and then identifies himself:

cominciò ella, 'se novella vera
di Val di Magra o di parte vicina
sai, dillo a me, che già grande là era.
Fui chiamato Currado Malaspina;
non son l'antico, ma di lui discesi;
a' miei portai l'amor che qui raffina'.

(*Pur.*, VIII. 115-20)

Currado clarifies that he is not the old Currado, and, in so doing, draws attention to his ancestry. We may interpret this expression of family pride, and his interest in earthly affairs as indicative of the fact that he is still very much at the beginning of the process of purgation. Despite these old habits, he is, naturally, very different from the souls in the *Inferno*, as are all the souls Dante will now encounter. We are aware, of course, of the differences between the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*. In the matter of prophecy, however, there are no very obvious distinctions to be made. The circumstances and motives of the souls in Hell may be very different from those in Purgatory, but their knowledge of the future is just as accurate. Here, Dante's response compliments Malaspina's family, whilst reinforcing the fictional dating of the poem's action:

'Oh', diss' io lui, 'per vostri paesi
già mai non fui; ma dove si dimora
per tutta Europa ch'ei non sien palesi?
La fama che la vostra casa onora,
grida i segnori e grida la contrada,
sì che ne sa chi non vi fu ancora;
e io vi giuro, s'io di sopra vada,
che vostra gente onrata non si sfregia
el pregio de la borsa e de la spada.
Uso e natura sì la privilegia,
che, perché il capo reo il mondo torca,

[4] Buti calls it: 'la sua invettiva contra Alberto'; Benvenuto: 'Hic poeta invehit contra Albertum.' Parodi, p. 243, calls it 'invettiva'.

sola va dritta e 'l mal cammin dispregia'. 132
(*Pur.*, VIII. 121-32)

Dante's reply brings different themes together, including his nostalgia for the values of the past, as well as his expression of gratitude for the hospitality which he has received from the Malaspina, still in the future at the fictional time of the meeting.[5] Twice in his reply, Dante *personaggio* stresses that he hasn't actually been to Lunigiana, once referring directly to himself (122), and then implying as much in more general terms (126), before going on to describe the present state of the area (127-32) in reply to Currado's question. We might detect in Dante's reply, even as it seeks to make clear that he has never been to Currado's home, and thus emphasising the fictional dating of the meeting, traces of contamination between Dante *uomo* and *personaggio* in the use of 'già' (122) and 'ancora' (126). The prophecy itself then follows in reply:

Ed elli: 'Or va; che 'l sol non si ricorca
sette volte nel letto che 'l Montone
con tutti e quattro i piè cuopre e inforca, 135
che cotesta cortese oppinïone
ti fia chiavata in mezzo de la testa
con maggior chiovi che d'altrui sermone, 138
se corso di giudicio non s'arresta'.
(*Pur.*, VIII. 133-39)

Currado's subsequent words recall the mood of Dante's earlier astronomical musings (VIII. 85-93) by starting with an astronomical time reference to the Sun and the constellation of Aries. Although this circumlocution appears rather strange, even obscure, to modern readers, the evidence of the early commentators suggests that it was accessible enough to Dante's contemporaries.[6] The prophecy includes a date reference by giving a precise number of years, 'sette' (134), given in the form of a time limit, as the expression 'non si ricorca...che...' (133-34) makes clear. The event itself is described in a fairly circuitous fashion, building upon what Dante himself has previously stated and concluding that his earlier opinion will be confirmed by first hand experience of the generosity of the Malaspina family. In 1306, within seven years of 1300 reckoned inclusively, Dante was in

[5] Giannantonio, p. 43, notes the mixture of themes.
[6] Lana, the *Ottimo*, Pietro Alighieri, Benvenuto, and Francesco da Buti are all clear on this.

fact a guest and in the employ of Franceschino Malaspina at Lunigiana.[7] This prophecy, then, is another reference to the period of Dante's exile, albeit more favourable, and to a time which Dante himself evidently looked upon more happily, as well as being a tribute to the Malaspinas. This prophecy is similar to some of the others we have seen in that the subject matter is related in some way to the speaker, though here it is particularly personal both to the Malaspina family and to Dante. We may also note another tribute, to Alagia Fieschi, the wife of Moroello Malaspina, later in the *Purgatorio*.[8]

The final line of the prediction, and of the canto, might appear at first sight to be a recurrence of the 'si non vana' motif but, in fact, is simply a kind of litotes in support of the veracity of the prediction since God's 'giudicio' (139) is obviously immutable.[9]

11. *Purgatorio* XI

Purgatorio XI concludes with a very brief reference to Dante's future exile. The soul of Provenzan Salvani has just been pointed out by Oderisi da Gubbio (*Pur.*, XI. 109-17) and Dante wonders (XI., 121-32) why such a proud man as this, who only repented at the very end of his life, is not still in the antepurgatory as he would have expected.[10] Oderisi then explains:

'Quando vivea più glorïoso' disse
'liberamente nel Campo di Siena,
ogne vergogna diposta, s'affisse;
e lì, per trar l'amico suo di pena,
ch'e' sostenea ne la prigion di Carlo,
si condusse a tremar per ogne vena
Più non dirò, e scuro so che parlo;
ma poco tempo andrà, che ' tuoi vicini
faranno sì che tu potrai chiosarlo.
Quest' opera li tolse quei confini'.

(*Pur.*, XI. 133-42)

As the final line explains, Provenzan's time in the antepurgatory was waived on account of a single act of humility. At the height of his glory (133) in order to ransom a friend imprisoned by Charles of Anjou, he humbled himself to beg in the very centre of

[7] Bemrose, pp. 88-89; Petrocchi, *Vita*, pp. 99-101. Dante's work for the Malaspina family in 1306 is documented in Piattoli, pp. 116-25, documents 98 and 99.
[8] *Pur.*, XIX. 142-145. Noted by Palma di Cesnola, p. 43, and John A. Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), p. 40.
[9] 'se il decreto divino (*giudicio*) non arresta il suo corso; cosa naturalmente impossibile perché i decreti di Dio non possono non avversarsi' (Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 144).
[10] Villani mentions Provenzan at VII, 77, and at VIII, 31, where he says of him 'era molto presuntuoso di sua volontà', using the same adjective as Dante uses at *Pur.*, XI, 122.

Siena. Jacopo della Lana and Benvenuto give full accounts of the story in their commentaries, and it has been suggested that the description of Salvani's putting shame aside is an echo of a description of the humility of St. Francis.[11]

The prediction regarding Dante (139-41) is vague and this is acknowledged in the words of Oderisi when he says that it is 'scuro' (139) and that he will add nothing to it.[12] Instead, he simply refers Dante *personaggio* back to the story of Salvani. He seems to focus, in particular, on the shame which Salvani experienced in having to beg (135), although the description 'scuro' may also look forward to the prediction as well.[13] Although no actual names are given, 'tuoi vicini' (140) clearly refers to the Florentines, who are still Dante's neighbours in 1300, and the early commentators easily identify them. In fact Oderisi has already described the Florentines in very unflattering terms: 'la rabbia fiorentina, che superba | fu a quel tempo sì com' ora è putta.' (*Pur.*, XI, 113-14), echoing the, by now, very familiar charges levelled against them in *Inferno* VI. This condemnation suggests that the prophecy is another in the series on Dante's exile; which is the opinion of the early commentators. Thus the imprecise time reference, 'poco tempo' (138), corresponds to the period specified by Ciacco in the first *post eventum* prophecy of the *Inferno*.[14] Oderisi's prophecy, however, concentrates on a particular aspect of exile, rather than simply the event itself, and that is the poverty, reliance on the charity of others, and shame which accompanies it. This aspect of exile is something which Dante describes in the *Convivio* and in his letters.[15]

The term 'chiosarlo' (141) reintroduces the imagery of writing previously found in the encounters with Brunetto Latini and Nicholas III. As in these earlier encounters, we

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[11] '...`e espresso con una frase che San Bonaventura applicò alla vita di San Francesco: 'omni deposita verecundia... mendicavit' (Aldo Vallone, 'Il Canto XI del *Purgatorio*', *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence, Le Monnier, 1970), IV, 81-103 (p. 102)).

[12] Vallone, 'Il Canto XI', p. 103, states: 'Non si hanno nomi, né date, come vuole il carattere della profezia.' As we have seen, however, this is emphatically not the case in many other prophecies in the *Commedia*.

[13] Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 139, apply it to line 136.

[14] Benvenuto, for example, comments: 'quia forte biennium transibit.'

[15] *Convivio* I. iii. 4-5; he also mentions 'inopina paupertas quam fecit exilium' ('the unlooked-for poverty brought about by exile) (*Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*, pp. 17-18). Pietro Alighieri also comments on this aspect of exile in his comment on this part of the *Purgatorio*: 'Praedicendo quod inde ad modicum vicini sui, idest Florentini, facient ita quod ipse Dantes experietur quid est petere, ut exsul, ab aliis, juxta illud: quam perfida conditio est mendicantis, quia si petit, necessitate compellitur, et dum petit, rubore compescitur, et si non petit, necessitate consumitur.'

may consider the image used as appropriate to the speaker; the miniaturist Oderisi, who would have been very familiar with the processes of book production of the time, particularly the practice of providing commentaries. The use of this term suggests something more than simply a similarity or common experience; it makes this event from Salvani's life into something which can be applied to Dante's own experience. As one text may be interpreted through the use of another text, so Dante *personaggio* is invited to interpret this episode from Salvani's life in the light of future events in his own life. We may see Provenzan then, in this particular instance, as a sort of figure of Dante in a sense generally applied to scripture at the time.

Through this form of figural interpretation, we may further consider that Dante the author is introducing a salvific aspect to his exile, thereby changing the true meaning of the humiliation associated with the experience. Salvani's humiliation in the story is not forced upon him, but chosen freely for the sake of his friend, and there may be an element of this in the message for Dante *personaggio*; that he should, in some way, make his exile his own choice.[16] This would certainly be perfectly consistent with the continuing re-evaluation of his exile which we have seen in some of the prophecies. We should recall, finally, that this prophecy is delivered in the first *cornice*, where pride is purged and worldly fame put into perspective, so that the precise point of the prophecy is consonant with Oderisi's repentance and with the general theme of the canto.

Purgatorio XIII

We should take note here of the request of Sapia to Dante *personaggio* to take news of her back to Siena (XIII. 148-54) so that she may benefit from the prayers of her relatives there. Although this is included by Cian in his list of prophecies, in fact any future visit to Siena on the part of Dante is presented conditionally: 'se mai calchi la terra di Toscana ... Tu li vedrai tra quella gente vana' (XIII. 149-51). For this reason Sapia's imprecation is not a prophecy.[17]

12. *Purgatorio* XIV

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[16] Rafaello Ramat, 'Purgatorio XI' in his *Il mito di Firenze, e altri saggi danteschi* (Florence: G. D'Anna, 1976), pp. 65-90 (p. 90).

[17] Cian, p. 122, in fact begins his quotation from verse 151, so that he has excluded the conditional part. Benvenuto explains it clearly: 'tu gli vedrai, idest, videre poteris.'

In canto XIV of the *Purgatorio*, Guido del Duca prefaces his prophecy by describing the corruption of the inhabitants of the Arno valley, and the canto continues with a condemnation of the Romagna of Dante's time, unfavourably compared with the past.[18] Guido, a politician, is portrayed favourably by Dante, his sin of envy notwithstanding, and his family had a reputation for nobility and courtesy.[19] Guido starts out in fine fashion, 'vertù così per nimica si fuga | da tutti come biscia' (lines 37-38), going on to describe the inhabitants of each city as different animals. Although the early commentators draw a number of different conclusions from the description, they all recognise the 'brutti porci' (43) as the Casentines. Similarly the 'botoli' (46) are the Aretines, 'lupi' (50) the Florentines, and the 'volpi sì piene di froda' (53) the Pisans. The moral implications of these metaphors are generally spelled out at each point, and a biblical tone has been noted in the passage.[20] It is from this opening that Guido goes on to deliver his prophecy:

'Né lascerò di dir perch' altri 'oda;
e buon sarà costui, s'ancor s'ammenta
di ciò che vero spirto mi disnoda.
Io veggio tuo nepote che diventa
cacciator di quei lupi in su la riva
del fiero fiume, e tutti li sgomenta.
Vende la carne loro essendo viva;
poscia li ancide come antica belva;
molti di vita e sé di pregio priva.
Sanguinoso esce de la triste selva;
lasciala tal, che di qui a mille anni
ne lo stato primaio non si rinselva.'

(*Pur.*, XIV. 55-66)

Despite the lack of precise time references, the meaning of this prophecy seems to be reasonably clear. The 'altri' (55) will later (88-89) be revealed as Rinieri da Calboli which subsequently helps identify the 'nipote' (58) of the prediction, and in fact the 'tuo' (58) means that Rinieri is being addressed at that point rather than just Dante alone. Rinieri's nephew was Fulcieri da Calboli, podestà of Florence in 1303.[21] This means that

[18] Larner, *The Lords of Romagna*, p. 64, summarizes: 'The sombre oration of Guido del Duca in the fourteenth canto of the Purgatorio is one of the greatest expressions of the political *laudator temporis acti*.'
[19] Nastagio degli Onesti, from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, V. 8, may have been a relative, and story 89 of the *Novellino*, on the subject of the 'gran cortesia de' gentili uomini di Brettinoro' is also associated with Guido according to Delmay, p. 193.
[20] Gianni Grana, 'Canto XIV', *Lectura dantis scaligera: Purgatorio*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1971), 481-532 (pp. 510, 512).
[21] Villani, IX. 59, gives 1302 as the year he became podestà, describing him as 'uomo feroce e crudele'. The early commentators Pietro Alighieri, Lana, the *Ottimo*, Benvenuto, and Buti agree on his identity, with varying amounts of additional information.

the events referred to are most probably those of 1302 when Fulcieri routed the White Guelfs. He then had some of those who had been captured, among them the prominent White Guelf Donato Alberti, tortured and beheaded. The sequence of events can thus be mapped more closely to the prediction. The initial defeat of the White Guelfs at Pulicciano (lines 58-60), agreeing prices for ransom (61), and then slaughtering them like animals (62-63). There are various accounts; Compagni's, which we should remember is not neutral, describes the executions as follows:

> Allora lo [Donato Alberti] pose alla colla, e accomandò la corda allo aspo, e così ve 'l lasciò stare: e fe' aprire le finestre e le porti del palagio, e fece richiedere molti cittadini sotto altre cagioni, perché vedessono lo strazio e la derisione facea di lui. E tanto procurò il podestà, che li fu conceduto di tagliarli la testa. E questo fece, perché la guerra gli era utile, e la pace dannosa: e così fece di tutti. E questa non fu giusta diliberazione: ma fu contro alle leggi comuni, però che i cittadini cacciati, volendo tornare in casa loro, non debbono esser a morte dannati; e contro all'uso della guerra, ché tenere li dovean presi.[22]

Finally, Guido notes that Florence (64) will not recover what it has lost. His metaphor, the forest which cannot be renewed even within a thousand years, is not so much a time reference here as a way of saying never.[23]

The introduction to the prophecy is very interesting, as Guido's mention of 'vero spirto' (57) appears to be a claim to divine inspiration of some sort. Although this line has been linked with the description of the Holy Spirit at John 16. 13: 'Spiritus veritatis', the early commentators offer no explanations as to its meaning.[24] If this is what is meant here, then it can hardly be the same as the experience of knowledge about the future found in the *Inferno*, yet later the term 'antiveder' will come to be used again with reference to prophecy in the *Purgatorio*. In addition, as the meeting with Currado Malaspina has shown, the ignorance of the present found in the *Inferno* would appear to be a feature of the *Purgatorio* as well.

The way in which this prophecy is presented has other new features. The beginning 'io veggio' has not previously been used in *post eventum* predictions, though the

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[22] Compagni, II. 30. Del Lungo, *Dino Compagni*, p. 120, gives March 1303 as the date. There is a brief account in the *Storie pistoresi,* p. 23, of the death of Donato Alberti, also dated as March 1303. The early commentators give slightly different versions of the story, with no precise dates. See too Davidsohn, pp. 338-42.

[23] Scorrano, p. 55, lists this among the indeterminate numbers.

[24] The connection is noted by Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 243; Grana, p. 516; Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 146.

visual context has. There is a certain irony in this too, since Guido's eyes are sewn up, implying, perhaps, that what he sees now is revealed by God.[25] The lack of any future tense verbs is also atypical. Instead, Guido presents his prophecy through a series of present tense verbs, beginning with the introductory 'disnoda' (57) and continuing 'veggio', 'diventa' (58), 'sgomenta' (60), 'vende' (61), 'ancide' (62), 'priva' (63), 'esce' (64), 'lasciala' (65), ending, finally, with 'non si rinselva' (66), which actually refers to events 'a mille anni' (65) in the future, whilst retaining the present tense used throughout. He has not previously seen these things so that he can subsequently report them, unlike, for example, the meeting with Nicholas III in *Inferno* XIX where the pope had evidently already seen what he was subsequently to reveal to Dante *personaggio*. Instead, we seem to find Guido in the very act of seeing the future, and the phrase 'io veggio' has echoes of John's Apocalypse.[26]

13. *Purgatorio* XX

Purgatorio XX contains a prophecy delivered by Hugh Capet. We should be aware, however, that some of the details Dante includes regarding this figure appear to be mistaken. Some commentators even express doubts about the identity of Hugh himself. Some modern commentators maintain that Dante has confused two different individuals in the character of Hugh: Hugh the Great, Duke of France, and his son Hugh Capet, who became King of France.[27] Dante appears to have erroneously assigned humble origins

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[25] This suggestion is made by Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 146.

[26] Grana, p. 515, compares the use of 'vidi' in the Apocalypse. There are, of course, many examples in the Old Testament prophets as well, e.g. Ezekiel 1.1; 2.9; Daniel 8.2. etc.

[27] The problem is discussed by Bosco and Reggio, II, pp. 334-35; 340-41; Mark Musa, *Dante's Purgatory: The Indiana Critical Edition*, trans. and ed. by Mark Musa (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1981), pp. 220-21; Ferruccio Ulivi, 'Canto XX', *Lectura dantis scaligera: Purgatorio*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1971), 763-85 (p. 772); Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, pp. 169-70. Delmay, on the other hand, p. 388, doesn't mention this in his entry for Ugo Capeto, simply accepting that it is Hugh Capet, son of Hugh the Great. On Hugh Capet, see Elizabeth M. Hallam, *Capetian France, 987-1328* (London & New York: Longman, 1980), pp. 67-69. Hallam concludes: 'Despite these advantages [the prestige of royal office and the backing of much of the French church] the first Capetian king emerges as an unimposing figure' (p. 69). She makes no reference to Dante's depiction of Hugh. Robert Fawtier, *The Capetian Kings of France, Monarchy and Nation 987-1328*, trans. by Lionel Butler and R. J. Adam (London: MacMillan, 1960), writes: 'Of the first Capet, king Hugh (987-96), the founder of the dynasty, next to nothing is known. ... To Achille Luchaire, another leading historian of the Capetian era, Hugh was no mediocrity. "He was able to take the place of the Carolingian kings, keep what he had taken, maintain his own dignity in his relations with Pope and

(*Pur.*, XX. 52) to Hugh Capet, when, in fact, this was a story attached to his father, Hugh the Great, and itself is thought to have had no basis in fact.[28] In fact, Dante's ignorance of tenth century French history is not especially relevant to this discussion, since the words with which Dante's Hugh introduces himself tell us what matters in Dante's text:[29]

> 'Chiamato fui di là Ugo Ciappetta;
> di me son nati i Filippi e i Luigi
> per cui novellamente è Francia retta.' 51
>
> (*Pur.*, XX. 49-51)

For Dante, Hugh is the origin of the line of French kings still ruling in 1300. This is the connection between the character and the subject matter of the prophecy which he will deliver. Hugh introduces the prophecy with a short historical outline of the French monarchy up to Dante's time (*Pur.*, XX. 43-69), a history which began with him and into which he inserts moral judgements from the outset: 'Io fui radice de la mala pianta' (43) at the beginning of the dynasty; 'Lì cominciò con forza e con menzogna | la sua rapina' (64-65) bringing it up to the present. We may briefly note here that Hugh, even with Dante's historical inaccuracy taken into consideration, has been dead for at least three hundred years, yet he shows a knowledge of the present which we have seen lacking elsewhere.

The prophecy itself is lengthy (70-96) and covers a number of different events. The purely predictive part is split into two sections by an apostrophe in which Hugh breaks off from describing his prophetic vision to lament the effects of avarice on his line (82-84), appropriate for the *cornice* where avarice is purged.

In similar fashion to Guido del Duca, Hugh begins his delivery 'vegg'io' (70), repeating this formula throughout ('veggio', 80, 86, 89, 91; 'veggiolo', 88), so that events are subsequently described in the present tense, except for 'guadagnerà' (77), although, as 'quindi' (76) indicates, this refers to events subsequent to what is given as being present. The indication of the time period being described is given straight away, 'non molto dopo ancoi' (70) though no precise times are given. The actual events, however, are clear and

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Emperor, and hand on his crown, unopposed, to his son. Not all of this was mere luck"' (pp. 13-14).

[28] Villani, V. 4, mentions this legend. Its inaccuracy is noted by Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 340; Musa, *Dante's Purgatory*, p. 221; Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 169.

[29] 'Dante non è uno storico: è un poeta e un uomo di parte' (Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 334). Paolo Brezzi, *Letture dantesche di argomento storico-politico* (Naples: Ferraro, 1983), p. 47, suggests a poetic rather than historical approach to this canto.

names are also clearly stated, 'un altro Carlo' (71), 'Fiorenza' (75), 'Alagna' (86), as well as some easily identifiable references, 'l'altro' (79), evidently another Carlo, 'sua figlia' (80) the daughter of the same, 'lo fiordaliso' (86), 'vicario suo' (87), 'il novo Pilato' (91), and 'il Tempio' (93). The first section of the prophecy is as follows:

> 'Tempo vegg'io, non molto dopo ancoi,
> che tragge un altro Carlo fuor di Francia,
> per far conoscer meglio e sé e' suoi.
> Sanz' arme n'esce e solo con la lancia
> con la qual giostrò Giuda, e quella ponta
> sì, ch'a Fiorenza fa scoppiar la pancia.
> Quindi non terra, ma peccato e onta
> guadagnerà, per sé tanto più grave,
> quanto più lieve simil danno conta.
> L'altro, che già uscì preso di nave,
> veggio vender sua figlia e patteggiarne
> come fanno i corsar de l'altre schiave.'
>
> (*Pur.*, XX. 70-81)

This passage foretells the entry of Charles of Valois into Florence in 1301 as peacemaker (71-75).[30] Hugh describes Charles' motives (72) and his betrayal of the White Guelfs in his mention of the lance of Judas (75). Although this has been linked with a description of Judas being disembowelled (Acts 1. 17-19), and thus is similar to the image used of Charles' effects on Florence, the New Testament text mentions no weapons.[31] The mention of Judas here introduces an allusion to Christ's betrayal and capture, which will be used more fully later in the prophecy. The mention of Charles' failure to gain land echoes the epithet, *senzaterra*, which became attached to him.[32] The judgement that he gained only shame, reflects contemporary descriptions, such as this from Villani (IX. 50):

> così per contradio si disse per motto: 'Messer Carlo venne in Toscana per paciaro, e lasciòe il paese in guerra; e andòe in Cicilia per fare guerra, e reconne vergognosa pace'. Il quale il novembre vegnente si tornò in Francia, scemata e consumata sua gente e con poco onore.

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[30] See chapter 2 note 47 above for details of the date. For accounts of the whole episode see Compagni, II, *passim*; Villani, IX. 43, 48-49; *Storie pistoresi*, pp. 20-24; Davidsohn, pp. 238-44.

[31] Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 343, refer to Raoul Manselli's article in the *Enciclopedia dantesca*, I, 839-40, in which he quotes the lines from Acts.

[32] The early commentators mention it, e.g. Lana, the *Ottimo*, Buti.

Although the reference to Charles' time in Florence can be dated to his entry in November 1301 until his departure for Puglia in April 1302, the judgement on his failure implies the whole period up until he leaves Italy at the end of 1302.[33]

The next part of the prediction deals with Charles II. It begins with a reference to a past event (79), when he was captured following a naval defeat in the Gulf of Naples in 1284, which helps clarify who he is.[34] What Hugh sees happening in the future is the marriage of Charles's daughter Beatrice by him to Azzo VIII d'Este in April 1305, for motives of financial gain. Charles received Modena and Reggio in return for her, so that she was, in effect, sold by him. Compagni considers the matter, but from the point of view of Azzo, saying: 'Perché avea tolto per moglie la figliuola del re Carlo di Puglia; e perché condiscendesse a dargliele, la comperò, oltre al comune uso, e fecele di dota Modona e Reggio: (Compagni, III. 16), meaning that this situation is the reverse of the normal custom of giving a dowry with, rather than for, the bride. This prompts Hugh's exasperated apostrophe on avarice:

> 'O avarizia, che puoi tu più farne,
> poscia c'ha' il mio sangue a te sì tratto,
> che non si cura de la propria carne?' 84
>
> (*Pur.*, XX. 82-84)

Even worse is to follow, however, and indeed Hugh introduces the concluding part of his prophecy by acknowledging that fact (85). He takes up his vision of the future again, with an account of the attack and capture of Boniface VIII:

> 'Perché men paia il mal futuro e 'l fatto,
> veggio in Alagna intrar lo fiordaliso,
> e nel vicario suo Cristo esser catto. 87
> Veggiolo un'altra volta esser deriso;
> veggio rinovellar l'aceto e 'l fiele,
> e tra vivi ladroni esser anciso. 90
> Veggio il novo Pilato sì crudele,
> che ciò nol sazia, ma sanza decreto
> portar nel Tempio le cupide vele. 93
> O Segnor mio, quando sarò io lieto
> a veder la vendetta che, nascosa,
> fa dolce l'ira tua nel tuo secreto?' 96
>
> (*Pur.*, XX. 85-96)

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[33] Compagni, II. 28. Villani, IX. 50, has him leaving in November. See, too, Joseph R. Strayer, *The Reign of Philip the Fair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 370-71.

[34] Villani, VIII, 93-94, gives an account of the incident. Lana, the *Ottimo*, Benvenuto, and Buti easily identify Charles, and give versions of the story.

The 'fiordaliso' (86) may refer either to France in a general sense, or, specifically, to William of Nogaret, who entered Anagni on the 7th of September and held Boniface captive for two days. This part of the prophecy takes the form of a sort of figural presentation again, which appears quite bold in its identification of Boniface with Christ. In Villani's account, in fact, Boniface casts himself in the role of Christ:

> Papa Bonifazio sentendo il romore, e veggendosi abandonato da tutti i cardinali, fuggiti e nascosi per paura o chi da mala parte, e quasi da' più de' suoi famigliari, e veggendo che' suoi nimici aveano presa la terra e il palazzo ove egli era, si cusò morto, ma come magnanimo e valente, disse: 'Da che per tradimento, come Gesù Cristo, voglio esser preso e mi conviene morire, almeno voglio morire come papa'; e di presente si fece parare dell'amanto di san Piero, e colla corona di Gostantino in capo, e colle chiavi e croce in mano, in su la sedia papale si puose a sedere. E giunto a·llui Sciarra e gli altri suoi nimici, con villane parole lo scherniro, e arrestarono lui e la sua famiglia, che co·llui erano rimasi...
>
> (*Cronica* IX. 63)[35]

It has been suggested that Dante uses the description 'vicario suo' (87) specifically to avoid mention of Boniface by name.[36] This may show Dante's care in distinguishing between the office of the pope and the individual who holds that office, a man roundly condemned by Dante, as we have seen.[37] The description of Boniface as the vicar of Christ echoes his own statement to that effect in the Bull of November 1301, 'Unam Sanctam'.[38] Boniface's description of the pope as vicar of Christ rather than vicar of St. Peter has been interpreted as a step in the on-going propaganda battle between him and Philip.[39] This makes Dante's use of it here all the more intriguing, and is perhaps a

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[35] There are various other accounts of this. The *Storie pistoresi* has an account attached to the end of the book, pp. 238-39, but there is no mention of Christ's passion in it. See, too, Mann, pp. 371-73; Boase, pp. 341-51; Strayer, pp. 278-79; Duc de Lévis Mirepoix, *L'attentat D'Anagni: Le conflit entre la Papauté et le Roi de France, 7 Septembre 1303* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), pp. 187-98; Davidsohn, pp. 348-53.

[36] Raoul Manselli, 'Il Canto XX del *Purgatorio*', *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence, Le Monnier, 1970), IV, 307-25 (p. 318).

[37] Cf. *Inferno* XIX. Manselli, p. 318, notes the subtlety too. Villani, IX, 64, also distinguishes between Boniface the man and the dignity of his position as pope. The distinction in the Middle Ages between offices and the individuals holding them is examined in Ernst. H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

[38] 'Igitur Ecclesiae unius et unicae unum corpus, unum caput, non duo capita quasi monstrum, Christus videlicet et Christi vicarius Petrus Petrique successor...' (*Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, ed. by H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, 36th edn (Freiburg: Herder, 1976), art. 872).

[39] John A. F. Thomson, *The Western Church in the Middle Ages* (London, Arnold, 1998), pp. 168-70.

reminder that Dante, unlike many of his contemporaries, did not entertain either challenges to the legitimacy of Boniface's election or accusations of heretical beliefs.[40]

We notice here the very flexible nature of this sort of figural interpretation; the freedom of application which it displays on the one hand, yet its specificity, which allows such freedom in the first place. Whilst Boniface might appropriately be seen as Christ in this instance, there is no suggestion or even possibility that this identification with Christ should, or could be extended beyond this single application. Figures or types are applicable not in the whole of their existence to the whole existence of another, but rather in very specific circumstances.

This strong figural application continues with Boniface's treatment described as a sort of second crucifixion, as the phrase 'un'altra volta' (88) reveals, yet the person who is actually seen by Hugh must be Boniface, not Christ, though he speaks as if the two were synonymous. The picture then jumps from the death of Christ to that of Boniface, the reference to '*vivi* ladroni' (90), as opposed to those who died with Christ, bringing the scene back to Boniface. These two 'ladroni' must be William of Nogart and Sciarra della Colonna, and although he was indeed survived by the 'vivi ladroni', Boniface did not die at this time, but returned to Rome, fell ill, and died there.[41]

The figural mode continues with the reference to Philip as 'il novo Pilato' (91), strictly speaking, more applicable in the case of his treatment of Boniface than with regard to what is to follow. Evidently, Dante rejects Philip's claims of innocence in the matter; describing him as the new Pilate.[42] The reference to the 'Tempio' (93) retains the

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[40] Some of these accusations came from France, and some from extreme spiritual groups in Italy. See, e.g., Manselli, p. 318; Thomson, pp. 168-69, Strayer, pp. 275-79. Charles T. Davis, 'Poverty and Eschatology in the *Commedia*', *Yearbook of Italian Studies*, 4 (1980), 59-86; now in his *Dante's Italy and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), pp. 42-70 (pp. 64-65), notes the difference on this point between Dante and Ubertino da Casale, where both refer to this same incident. So, too, Niccolò Mineo, 'Dante: un sogno di armonia terreno', *Letture classensi*, 29 (2000), 191-237 (p. 204); Richard K. Emerson and Ronald B. Herzman, *The Apocalyptic Imagination in Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), p. 130, note Dante's criticism of extremes at *Par.*, XII. 121-126 with its allusion to Ubertino in the mention of Casale (*Par.*, XII. 124).

[41] Villani, IX. 63. For further references see chapter 2, note 90 above.

[42] Villani, IX. 63, is in no doubt that Philip was behind the attack on Boniface. Paolo Brezzi, 'Dante e la chiesa del suo tempo', in *Dante e Roma: Atti del Convegno di Studi,* ed. by Casa di Dante in Rome (Florence: Le Monnier, 1965), pp. 97-113 (p. 103), notes that Benedict XI had used the image of the new Pilate in a speech in Perugia in 1304, and that Dante may have heard or read this.

scriptural flavour, whilst clearly referring to the attack on the Templars; Philip had almost all of the Order arrested on the 13th of October 1307.[43] We may recall that, according to some accounts, the elimination of the Templars was one of the things Philip wanted from Bertrand de Got in return for making him pope.[44] When Hugh says that Philip enters the Temple 'ma sanza decreto' (92), this may allude to the decree of 1312, which suppressed the Templars.[45] It may, however, simply be a more general statement that he acted unlawfully, and there could even be an echo of the earlier description of Clement, the 'pastor sanza legge' (*Inf.*, XIX. 83), questioning Clement's authority to grant Philip his wish in the first place. In fact, the intervention of Clement appears to have been intended to curb Philip's activities, and he did not destroy the Templars as Philip desired.[46] The reference to 1307 is obvious, but the allusion to 1312 is no more than that, since Hugh is not directly predicting the end of the Templars but rather Philip's attack on them and, more to the point, his being motivated by avarice.[47] We may note the recurrence here of this feature of the prophecies, the tying together of moral judgements and historical events.

The form taken by the figural elements in this prediction is of particular interest. The interplay of figural interpretation with foresight *in actu*, so to speak, marries visionary and exegetical traditions. When Hugh uses 'veggio', which he does repeatedly, he purports to describe a vision at that moment, yet his description of what he sees is immediately subjected to interpretation. He may actually see a 'fiordaliso' enter Anagni (86), but he then sees either Christ or Boniface (87). Finding both is the work of figural exegesis, and to see a 'novo Pilato' (91) is impossible; either he sees Philip, who is not in fact Pilate, or he sees Pilate who is not then 'novo'. Hugh says 'veggio' but communicates the content in the language of figural exegetical interpretation, not of physical description. Here Dante presents us with a self-contained example of what *his* account of his own

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[43] Villani, IX. 92. See too Strayer, pp. 285-95; Lévis Mirepoix, pp. 258-92. Manselli, pp. 320-22.
[44] Villani, IX. 80. Guido Da Pisa, *Expositiones*, p. 363. Benvenuto shares this view. See also chapter 2, note 104 above.
[45] This is the view of Brezzi, *Letture dantesche di argomento storico-politico*, p. 59, and Bosco and Reggio, II, pp. 345-46.
[46] Villani, X. 22. Strayer, p. 286, interprets suppression, rather than condemnation, as a concession achieved by Clement. Hallam comments: 'In March 1312 he [Clement V] issued the bull Vox *in excelso*, which stated that the Order of the Temple was being suppressed, not as the result of a judicial sentence, but because the accusations against it endangered the Christian life and Christian souls' (p. 319).
[47] Strayer, pp. 287-88, does indeed argue that Philip was motivated by a need for money.

vision is not. This suggests, first, that Dante understood this method of prophecy, based on the interpretation and application of texts; and, second, that he chose not to use this method in the *Commedia.* This contrast places Dante *personaggio* and *poeta* in the company of the visionaries and prophets and not with the commentators and exegetes.[48]

The prophecy concludes with Hugh's wish to see justice done (94-96), an instantly recognizable scriptural motif, which brings the prediction to a fitting close. The notion that God will somehow repay Philip for his evil deeds, not only through punishment after death, is not unusual. Historians in Dante's time and before are comfortable with this concept of imminent divine justice, and Compagni even interprets the election of Clement V as a punishment from God.[49]

Some final remarks, albeit tentative, may serve to explain why such a long prophecy should be found here. There is also the matter of Dante the author's sin of omission to consider, so to speak. The prophecy is delivered in the fifth *cornice*, where the sin being purged is avarice; a recurrent theme within this prophecy and throughout the *Commedia* itself. In addition, the twentieth canto as the location for a lengthy prediction gives the veracity of Hugh's vision support from a structural point of view through a rather pointed contrast with the same canto of the *Inferno*, which not only lacks any such prophecy but is filled with false seers, all of whom remain silent throughout the episode.[50]

Finally, Dante's sin of omission lies in Hugh's passing so briefly over his better descendants, in particular the canonized Louis IX.[51] There is a suggestion that Dante was

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[48] Margaret Mills Chiarenza, 'The Imageless Vision and Dante's Paradiso', *Dante Studies*, 90 (1972), 77-92, discusses whether Dante's vision is in some way mediated.

[49] 'La divina giustizia, la quale molte volte punisce nascosamente, e toglie i buoni pastori a' popoli rei che non ne sono degni, e dà loro quello che meritano alla loro malizia, tolse loro papa Benedetto. I cardinali, per volontà del re di Francia e per industria de' Colonnesi, elessono messer Ramondo dal Gotto, arcivescovo di Bordea di Guascognia, di giugno 1305, il quale si chiamò papa Clemente V', Compagni, III, 12. See too III, 12, 37. Green, pp. 33-40, discusses Villani's view that God's punishment could be manifested on earth.

[50] 'chi è più scellerato che colui | che al giudicio divin passion comporta?' (*Inf.*, XX, 29-30) 'perché volse veder troppo davante, | di retro guarda e fa retroso calle' (*Inf.*, XX, 38-39). See also Robert Hollander, 'The tragedy of divination in *Inferno* XX', in his *Studies in Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 1980), pp. 131-218.

[51] All that Louis receives is inclusion, not even a separate mention, at *Pur*, XX, 50. Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 254, n. 35, suggests that attention to Louis would contradict the judgement at *Pur.*, XX. 63. 'Louis IX's qualifications for canonisation were excellent, and miracles were reported at his tomb soon after his burial. Yet it was twenty-seven years before he was actually proclaimed a saint ... although the weight of evidence about the sanctity and miracles of the late king was overwhelming, the pope's motives in pronouncing him a saint seem to have been mainly political' (Hallam, p. 312). On Louis in

not convinced by the canonization. However, if this were so, it would surely have merited more attention here than the silence of Hugh.[52] This willingness to reorganize historical facts is significant, particularly in the context of *post eventum* prophecy, since the beginnings of such a reinterpretation has already emerged in ever increasing degrees in the prophecies touching upon Dante's own exile. This passage shows that Dante is prepared to re-emphasize not simply on the personal level but at the level of international history and politics too.

14. *Purgatorio* XXIII

The next prophecy, in canto XXIII, is delivered to Dante on the sixth *cornice* of Purgatory. Here he meets Forese Donati, a friend from his youth, who explains :

> 'Tutta esta gente che piangendo canta
> per seguitar la gola oltra misura,
> in fame e 'n sete qui si rifà santa.' 66
>
> (*Pur.*, XXIII. 64-66)

The use of the word 'gola' (65), the fact that this meeting takes place on the sixth terrace, and is a prelude to a prediction on the subject of Florence, are details which combine to recall the very first *post eventum* prophecy in *Inf.*, VI. Dante is surprised to find Forese at this advanced stage in Purgatory so soon (79-82), since he has been dead for less than five years (76-78).[53] Forese explains that his rapid progress is due to the 'prieghi devoti' (88) of his widow, Nella.

There is a background to this praise for Nella, which we should remember. The young Dante and Forese had exchanged *tenzoni* insulting each other, and one of Dante's had included derisive remarks about Forese's wife.[54] Although the trading of insults, often quite vulgar, may be regarded as a conventional feature of the *tenzone*, some readers

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general see Hallam, pp. 204-72. Fawtier remarks: 'But, on 11 August 1297, a letter of Pope Boniface VIII placed King Louis of France amongst the ranks of the saints whom the church is bound to venerate. The canonization was no doubt a recognition of the dead king's unique qualities, but it was also the result of the diplomatic pressure exercised by his grandson. There is no mention, neither in the letter of canonisation, nor in the sermon preached by the pope on the occasion of the act of canonisation itself, of any miracles of the type which Gregory VII had reserved to churchmen' (p. 59).

[52] Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 334.

[53] He died on the 28th of July, 1296.

[54] Bemrose, pp. 31-32, dates these poems between 1293 and 1296.

find those between Dante and Forese too harsh to be completely in jest.[55] Against this backdrop, the unequivocal praise heaped on Nella by Dante through the speech of Forese takes on a palinodic quality.[56] Although not part of the prophecy itself, we may note at least some similarity in Dante's use of his text here and in praise of the Malaspinas in canto VIII.

Forese's praise for his wife then provides the setting for the prophecy:

'O dolce frate, che vuo' tu ch'io dica?
Tempo futuro m'è già nel cospetto,
cui non sarà quest' ora molto antica,
nel qual sarà in pergamo interdetto
a le sfacciate donne fiorentine
l'andar mostrando con le poppe il petto.
Quai barbare fuor mai, quai saracine,
cui bisognasse, per farle ir coperte,
o spiritali o altre discipline?
Ma se le svergognate fosser certe
di quel che 'l ciel veloce loro ammanna,
già per urlare avrian le bocche aperte;
ché, se l'antiveder qui non m'inganna,
prima fien triste che le guance impeli
colui che mo si consola con nanna.'

(*Pur.*, XXIII. 97-111)

As with Guido in canto XIV and Hugh in XX, Forese appears to be experiencing his vision of the future at that very moment, and the language is of sight, 'cospetto' (98), although in this prophecy events are then placed in the future, 'sarà' (99, 100), 'fien' (110), rather than described as seen actually occurring.

The prophecy is in two parts separated by an apostrophe (103-05) in the form of a rhetorical question, comparing the morals of the Florentine women unfavourably with those of the 'saracine' (103). The first part begins with an indication of time (99), not absolutely specific but not too wide-ranging either. What it refers to is the Florentine women being forbidden, in some way, by the Church from baring their breasts in public. Although 'in pergamo interdetto' (100) could simply mean a sermon, the later addition of 'spiritali e altre discipline' (105) suggests something more than that, perhaps some sort of

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[55] Adolfo Jenni, 'Il Canto XIII del *Purgatorio*', *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence, Le Monnier, 1972), V, 1-31 (pp. 17-19). Umberto Bosco, 'Nostalgia di Dante', in his *Dante vicino: contributi e letture* (Caltanisetta and Rome: Salvatore Sciascia, 1966), pp. 77-171, sees it instead purely as a literary exercise.

[56] Jenni, p. 21. Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante's Poets: Textuality and Truth in the 'Comedy'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) pp. 47-49, interprets the whole meeting with Forese as redemptive of the period in Dante's life when he wrote the *tenzoni*.

ecclesiastical sanction.[57] No Florentine fashion for going bare-breasted is recorded by the historians, although Villani (X. 245) records the introduction in April, 1324, of laws concerning the dress of women specifically. However, even if this weren't too late, this was a sumptuary law prohibiting ostentation, not partial nudity.[58] The *Ottimo*, commenting on this verse, informs us that a prohibition such as that described did indeed happen: 'E così fue, che fu nel MCCCLI, essendo Vescovo uno messer Agnolo Acciaioli.' We may, however, reasonably exclude events which occurred after Dante's death as the subject of his prophecies.[59] The failure of the early commentaries to come up with anything earlier than 1351 is not encouraging, although similar sumptuary laws were passed between 1279 and 1332 in other Northern Italian cities.[60] Closer to 1300, however, are the ecclesiastical Constitutions of Florence of 1310, drawn up by the new Bishop.[61] The relevant section reads: 'Indumentorum omnium capizalia sic sint modestia quod, preter gulam integram, de corpore nichil ostendant' ('The necklines of all articles of clothing shall be of such modesty that they show nothing of the body except the throat proper'); and the punishment for transgression was excommunication.[62] Since the prediction is also fairly specific in its content we may regard it as *post eventum*, and speculate that it refers to this constitution.[63] This would mean a period of about ten years for the first part of the prediction.

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[57] Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 403, and Sapegno, II, p. 258, among others, take this view.
[58] Delmay, in his entry on Forese, p. 150, concludes 'Quindi le Florentine, sec. questa precisa testimonianza, avevano fatto del topless in anteprima mondiale, nei primi anni del Trecento, all'incirca fra il 1305 (v. 99) ed il 1312 o 1313 (vv. 110-11).' It is not clear how he arrives at these dates, and we probably cannot take this seriously at any level.
[59] This may be doubly-prophetic so to speak, as the editor comments on this comment: 'Anche da questo passo é forza conchiudere, che altra mano abbia fatto delle aggiunte al lavoro dell'*Ottimo Comentatore*, il quale deve averlo finito assai prima dell'epoca qui citata...' (*L'Ottimo Commento*, II, p. 441).
[60] Anthony K. Cassell, '"Mostrando con le poppe il petto" (*Purg.* XXIII. 102)', Dante Studies, 96 (1978), 75-81, (p. 76) lists them.
[61] Cassel, 'Mostrando', p. 79, introduces and quotes from this document. Noted again at Cassell, *Inferno*, pp. 94, 175, n. 2.
[62] Text from Richard C. Trexler, *Synodal Law in Florence and Fiesole* (The Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1971), p. 229. Translation from Cassell, 'Mostrando', pp. 79, 81.
[63] Cassell is convinced, and the discovery of the document remarkable, but the evidence is still not overwhelming. Trexler, p. 116, interprets the rule on dress to mean nothing below the neck, which is rather different from what Dante's text describes. The section of the constitution itself, entitled *De consuetudine*, also contains many prohibitions of ostentation similar to sumptuary regulations; whilst this detail on modesty in dress is only a couple of lines. The section *De consuetudine* can be found in Trexler, pp, 129-30.

Following the apostrophe, the next part of the prophecy continues with the language of moral condemnation, 'svergognate' (106), and predicts simply that something will come from heaven to make them howl. There is another indication of time, again somewhat vague but not completely open-ended (110-11), within which this event will occur. The actual event is virtually impossible to ascertain for sure since 'quel che 'l ciel veloce loro ammanna' (107) could be virtually anything, and 'fien triste' (110) adds only the information that whatever it is will be unwelcome to the women of Florence. The time period could be anything from 13 to 17 years.[64] The suggestion that it may be punishments following the ban on immodest dress is possible, but doesn't definitively rule out other alternatives.[65] Forese never actually reveals what this 'quel che' is, and his prediction dwells mainly upon the reaction of the Florentine women to it. The expression of the time reference through this picture of children implies by association that the women are mothers, and therefore wives, so that the cause of their howling could be some disaster affecting their husbands, the men of Florence. One popular suggestion is that it refers to the battle of Montecatini in 1315.[66] Any number of events which occurred during the period in question, 1300-15, could have caused the Florentine women to howl. Benvenuto, the *Ottimo*, and Francesco da Buti give a list of calamities, any one of which could be the subject of the prophecy.[67] The idea that this prophecy is not *post eventum* but

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[64] Umberto Bosco, 'Canto XXIII', *Lectura dantis scaligera: Purgatorio*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1971), 865-85 (p. 881), states that 1315 is too late, even if Dante had intended a newly born child. Lana, however, simply explains that it means a period of 20 years.

[65] Cassell, 'Mostrando', pp. 78-79, suggests that the calamity must refer to the women, but overlooks the fact that it is their reaction which is described. The time reference is flexible enough, as he points out. Nevertheless, the suggestion for the first part of the prophecy is still quite likely.

[66] Described by Villani, X, 81-82. Jenni, p. 14, accepts this but allows other possibilities too. Bosco, 'Canto XXIII', p. 881, takes the view that Montecatini is too late according to the time reference.

[67] The *Ottimo* has this: 'Qui annunzia, che per li peccati di quelle femine dileggiate, e delli loro mariti che a ciò assentono, Iddio manderà loro guerra, e le divisioni nella cittade, il cacciare de' cittadini, l'uccisioni de' loro mariti, fratelli, padri, figliuoli, e il disfacimento de' loro beni, e li essilii, e vitiperosi avolterii, e li avenimenti de' Signori della Magna e di Francia, l'arsura, e le colte, e l'altre tempeste da Cielo e da terra.' Benvenuto's list goes up to Montecatini: 'Et hic nota, lector, quod audivi aliquos temere dicentes, quod istud prognosticum est vituperium poetae, quia jam transiverant tot tempora, quod non evenerunt ea, quae praesagire videtur in tam brevi spatio. Ad quod respondeo, quod autor loquitur hic de praeteritis et jam factis, non de futuris modo fiendis. Sed videtur prophetare, quia respicit ad tempus suae visionis, quae fuit in MCCC, sicut jam totiens dictum est. Magna etenim mala secuta sunt post istud tempus, sicut intestina discordia, civile bellum et expulsio partium, quae fuerunt secundo et tertio anno sequenti; et anno quarto venerunt de

is delivered as a hopeful, open-ended speculation is implausible in view of Dante's willingness to include time limits in the prediction, and the wording which suggests some single event.[68] Some modern commentators have seen a clue to the meaning of the prediction in the phrase 'se l'antiveder qui non m'inganna', which is close to the phrase 'si praesaga mens mea non fallitur' in Dante's letter of 1311.[69] In the letter, this statement precedes a prediction of disaster for Florence:

> ...urbem diutino moerore confectam in manus alienorum tradi finaliter, plurima vestri parte seu nece seu captivitate deperdita, perpessuri exilium pauci cum fletu cernetis.
>
> (...your city, worn out with ceaseless mourning, shall be delivered at the last into the hands of the stranger, after the greatest part of you has been destroyed in death or captivity; and the few that shall be left to endure exile shall witness her downfall with tears and lamentation.)[70]

The similarity in the description of mourning in both texts is evident. The letter predicts the imminent attack on Florence by Henry VII, so that, in this instance, Dante's prediction in his letter was not realised, as Henry ended his six week siege of the city in October 1312 and withdrew his army, never to return.[71] We may note that Compagni ended his *Cronica* (III. 42) with a similar warning to Florence that it was about to be seized by Henry. As the lists of the early commentators show, however, Forese's prophecy in the *Purgatorio* could be applied to any number of events, and did not become obsolete with the failure of Henry.

Finally, we may note the reintroduction of the term 'antiveder' to describe the knowledge of the future which the dead have. As noted earlier, this line virtually repeats

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novo ad arma Albi et Nigri. Et flagrante furore belli, accensus est ignis, sive casualis, vel artificialis, ut multi dixerunt, opera cuiusdam presbyteri Nerii de Abbatibus, qui ipsum primum immisit in domum suam: et breviter cremata est melior pars civitatis, plusquam duo millia domus cum damno inaestimabili. Nec interim cessatum est ab armis, sed continuo factae sunt magnae praedae. Et anno quintodecimo receperunt illam terribilem stragem apud Montem Catinum ab Uguccione de Fagiola'. Francesco da Buti has a shorter list: 'Questo forse dice l'autore: imperò che nel 1302 fu una grande divisione in Fiorensa tra i Bianchi e Neri, e mandòvi papa Benedetto frate Nicolao da Prato cardinale ostiense legato, perchè mettesse tra Fiorentini concordia; e fu sì poco creduto, che li lassò in peggiore stato che nolli trovò. E nel 1304 fu messo fuoco in Calumala, et arse gran parte di Fiorensa e li Bianchi se ne uscitteno fuora, e così poi successivamente vi funno molti travalli in breve tempo.'

[68] Bosco, 'Canto XXIII', p. 882, is sure that it refers to a definite event.

[69] Epistola VI in *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*, pp. 71-72. The connection is noted by Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 403 and Sapegno, II, p. 258, amongst others.

[70] Text and translation from *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*, pp. 71-72; 80.

[71] See Bemrose, pp. 181-86; Holmes, *Florence, Rome*, p. 191; Villani, X. 29.

that in the *Inferno*, suggesting that there may be some similarities in the knowledge of the future which the dead of both realms exhibit.

15 *Purgatorio* XXIV

The very next canto brings further predictions, the first of which is delivered by the poet Bonagiunta of Lucca, named at *Pur.*, XXIV. 19-20, who is keen to speak to Dante:

> Ma come fa chi guarda e poi s'aprezza
> più d'un che d'altro, fei a quel da Lucca,
> che più parea di me aver contezza.
> El mormorava; e non so che 'Gentucca'
> sentiv' io là, ov' el sentia la piaga
> de la giustizia che sì li pilucca.
> 'O anima', diss'io, 'che par sì vaga
> di parlar meco, fa sì ch'io t'intenda,
> e te e me col tuo parlare appaga'.
> 'Femmina è nata, e non porta ancor benda',
> cominciò el, 'che ti farà piacere
> la mia città, come ch'om la riprenda.
> Tu te n'andrai con questo antivedere;
> se nel mio mormorar prendesti errore,
> dichiareranti ancor le cose vere'.
>
> (*Pur.*, XXIV. 37-48)

Bonagiunta begins by murmuring a name which Dante has difficulty hearing; 'Gentucca'. Lana, Benvenuto and the *Ottimo* all interpret this as some pejorative form of *gente*; only Francesco da Buti explains it as the name of the woman in the later part of the prediction, which is the position generally accepted since.[72] If there is any doubt about this, then the repetition of the verb 'mormorar' (50) links the prophecy to the earlier use of 'mormorava' (40) where Bonagiunta spoke of 'Gentucca'.

The prediction itself is actually clear enough in what it says, that a woman already born in 1300 but still young (46) will give Dante cause to regard Lucca favourably. The problem in trying to interpret this is what it doesn't say; who she is, how she will do this, and when, and even where, are all unspecified. The vagueness of it all seems to be acknowledged by Bonagiunta himself (50) who leaves Dante with the assurance that all will become clear at the time (51).

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[72] Giorgio Varanini, 'Dante e Lucca', in *Dante e le città dell'esilio*, ed. by Guido Di Pino (Ravenna: Longo, 1989), pp. 91-114 (pp. 105-06; 108-10), examines some of the proposed solutions to the identity of this woman, and offers one of his own. Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 410, note that the name is not unusual in records from this time; we may note Bemrose's wry observation, p. 111, that Gentucca is 'highly convenient as a rhyme with Lucca'.

There are some indications as to when it would have been possible for Dante to have been in Lucca. First, his documented work for the Malaspinas provides a *terminus post quem* of at least October 1306.[73] Then, the edict of the Comune of Lucca of the 31st of March 1309, which officially banned Florentine exiles, of any political complexion, from the city, provides an effective *terminus ante quem.*[74] Although the city was controlled by the Black Guelfs prior to the total ban on Florentines, Dante's good standing with the Malaspinas, who were held in high regard in Lucca at this time, and his distance from the exiled White Guelfs, would have made a stay in Lucca perfectly possible. Finally, there is documentary evidence of the presence of a 'Giovanni di Dante Alighieri da Firenze' in Lucca on the 21st of October 1308.[75] It is conjectured, although it is not certain, that this was one of Dante's sons, and so the document provides a date when Dante could have been in Lucca.[76] Another argument in support of Dante's having spent time in Lucca, is the demonstration of his detailed knowledge of the city and its inhabitants, in evidence throughout the *Commedia.*[77] Having said all this, we do have to acknowledge that, although the prediction is normally thought to refer to a period of Dante's exile spent in Lucca, it doesn't actually say that. It simply says that this unspecified woman is from Lucca and will change Dante's opinion of the city.

It has been suggested that this prediction is a palinode, which would explain why it is difficult to understand now.[78] Such an interpretation would certainly be consonant with the praise of Forese's wife which introduced the prophecy in the previous canto. In the context of the on-going series of prophecies related to Dante's exile, this may signal another stage in Dante's move away from the divisive milieu of party politics and from his own Florentine nationalism. A corrective to any earlier anti-Lucca stance on Dante's part,

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[73] See note 3 above, and Giorgio Padoan, *Introduzione a Dante* (Milan: Sansoni, 1995), p. 62; Varanini, p. 92.
[74] This is noted by Bemrose, p. 111; Padoan, p. 63; Varanini, p. 92.
[75] The document, a record of a sale, is in Piattoli, pp. 325-26.
[76] Varanini, p. 91, n. 1, n. 2, gives a bibliography for this question. He interprets Piattoli's inclusion of the document in the appendix as a sign of caution regarding the identity of this Giovanni. He notes, too, the appearance of this Giovanni in two other documents of the 27th of August 1306 and the 4th of October 1308. Bemrose, p. 111, points out that this would give Dante three sons named after the apostles who were present at the Transfiguration, and who would later become Dante's examiners in the *Paradiso.* Noted also by Padoan, p. 42.
[77] Presented very fully by Varanini, pp. 93-104.
[78] Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 410.

suggested by Bonagiunta (47-48), would be all the more appropriate in the context of Purgatory. In the end, however, we are left with a prophecy which gives the impression of precision, but lacks the details necessary to allow us to decipher it. We may speculate that it is an expression of gratitude by Dante in a similar vein to Currado Malaspina's prophecy, and is probably a *post eventum* prophecy, but one intelligible only to the 'femmina' herself.

Finally, we can notice that the term 'antivedere' is used again; this time as a noun, and the conclusion assures Dante *personaggio* that events will prove the truth of what Bonagiunta has told him (47-48). Although 'antivedere' implies some form of vision, it is communicated by Bonagiunta in the form of a message, rather than something which he is seeing as he speaks, as we have seen in some other prophecies in the *Purgatorio*.

16. *Purgatorio* XXIV

In the same canto, Forese Donati then delivers a prediction of his brother's death following an exchange between the two friends in which Forese asks when they will meet again (75), to which Dante replies:

> 'Non so', rispuos'io lui, 'quant' io mi viva;
> ma già non fia il tornar mio tantosto,
> ch'io non sia col voler prima a la riva;
> però che 'l loco u' fui a viver posto,
> di giorno in giorno più di ben si spolpa,
> e a trista ruina par disposto'.
>
> (*Pur.*, XXIV. 76-81)

We may note that, whilst Dante *personaggio* does not know when his death will be (76), he does imply that he will return to Purgatory. It would be an exaggeration to suggest that Dante *personaggio* is prophesying his own salvation, after a suitable period in Purgatory, though we will see that he is the recipient of such a prophecy later.[79]

In fact, Dante *personaggio* never prophesies, nor should he be expected to have any knowledge of the future. Bearing this in mind, we can see that his observation on Florence's moral decline is carefully worded: 'a trista ruina *par* disposto'. Dante *personaggio* can only guess at the future, and, of course, his guess is right. There is a sign here of some crossover between the knowledge of Dante *uomo* and the statement of Dante *personaggio*, though Dante *uomo* is careful to retain the boundary between the two in this

[79] There are hints of this earlier at *Pur.*, VIII. 58-60 and XIII. 136-38.

instance. Nevertheless, we might well wonder whether Dante's real situation, and that of Florence, was as bleak as he suggests in 1300. Forese takes up the theme of Florence's moral decline as the starting point for his prophecy, which concerns the culprit:

> 'Or va', diss' el; 'che quei che più n'ha colpa,
> vegg' ïo a coda d'una bestia tratto
> inver' la valle ove mai non si scolpa.
> La bestia ad ogne passo va più ratto,
> crescendo sempre, fin ch'ella il percuote,
> e lascia il corpo vilmente disfatto.
> Non hanno molto a volger quelle ruote',
> e drizzò li occhi al ciel, 'che ti fia chiaro
> ciò che 'l mio dir più dichiarar non puote'.
>
> (*Pur.*, XXIV. 82-90)

Forese goes on to describe how 'quei che più n'ha colpa' (82) will be killed by falling from a horse and then being dragged after it (83; 85-87). Although he does not name his brother, Corso Donati, the manner of his death is described so precisely that his identity is obvious.[80] Accounts of Corso's death differ; Compagni (III. 21) has him killed by a Catalan mercenary and assures his readers that he has checked the truth of this.[81] Villani (IX. 96) also mentions the Catalan mercenaries, but adds the detail that Corso had fallen from his horse, although we may suppose that a lance in the throat contributed more to his demise than the initial fall.[82] Benvenuto provides a fuller picture, and the fact that he gives two versions of how Corso came to fall from his horse suggests that he is using some other source rather than simply paraphrasing Dante's version.[83]

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[80] The early commentators all identify him.

[81] 'Messer Corso, infermo per le gotti, fuggìa verso la badìa di San Salvi, dove già molti mali avea fatti e fatti fare. Gli sgarigli il presono, e riconobberlo: e volendolne menare, si difendeva con belle parole, sì come savio cavaliere. Intanto sopravenne uno giovane cognato del mariscalco. Stimolato da altri d'ucciderlo, nol volle fare; e ritornandosi indietro, vi fu rimandato: il quale la seconda volta li dié d'una lancia catelanesca nella gola, e uno altro colpo nel fianco; e cadde in terra. Alcuni monaci ne 'l portorono alla badia; e quivi morì, a dì [...] di settembre 1307, e fu sepulto.' Del Lungo, *Dino Compagni*, p. 170, n. 10, corrects the mistaken date given by Compagni; Corso died on the 6th of October, 1308.

[82] 'Messer Corso tutto solo andandosene, fue giunto e preso sopra a Rovezzano da certi Catalani a cavallo, e menandolne preso a Firenze, come fue di costa a San Salvi, pregando quegli che'l menavano e promettendo loro molta moneta se lo scampassono, i detti volendolo pure menare a Firenze sì com'era loro imposto da' signori, messer Corso per paura di venire alle mani de' suoi nemici e d'essere giustiziato dal popolo, essendo compreso forte di gotte nelle mani e ne' piedi, si lasciò cadere da cavallo. I detti Catalani veggendolo in terra, l'uno di loro gli diede d'una lancia per la gola d'uno colpo mortale, e lasciaronlo per morto.'

[83] Benvenuto, on *Pur.*, XXIV. 82-87: 'Et fugiens solus, cum non posset flectere precibus vel promissis milites catalanos persequentes eum, timens fieri ludibrium hostium, cum esset podagricus, permisit sponte se cadere ab equo, vel casu cecidit, ut aliqui volunt. Et cum equus traheret eum retento pede in stapite, percussus est lethaliter in gutture ab uno

The prophecy includes a time reference; there is no precise figure but the mode of expression makes clear that the time period is one of years (88). Since the event predicted is known, we are able to calculate the period of time at about eight years and six months, which makes 'non hanno molto' (88) seem perhaps a little understated. The ending is similar to that of Bonagiunta's prophecy with Forese stating that the event itself will say what he cannot, so that attention is drawn away from the prophecy itself and focused on its fulfilment. This close link with fulfilment has the effect of legitimising not only the prophecy, but the moral interpretations and judgements contained within it.

The judgement that Corso Donati is 'quei che più n'ha colpa' (82) is confirmed by the fact that he is bound for Hell. Corso was one of the leading Black Guelfs, and emerges in Compagni and Villani as responsible for much of the strife in Florence.[84] This prophecy joins Corso's death and damnation in a description which invites figural interpretation. Corso's literal death, and being dragged by the horse to Florence, can also be a pre-figuring of his damnation, dragged by a demon into Hell.[85] Finally, we may consider these last three prophecies as a sort of group, where Forese twice prophesies punishment for wickedness in Florence, framing a prophecy of kindness in Lucca. The subject matter of each prophecy is clearly linked to the speaker, particularly in the last one, where Forese predicts the death of his own brother.[86]

17. *Purgatorio* XXXII

This canto contains a prophecy communicated to Dante *personaggio* by Beatrice. It is followed by a longer vision which Dante *personaggio* witnesses, but for which no explanation is offered by the text. Beatrice's prophecy to Dante is quite simple:

> 'Qui sarai tu poco tempo silvano;
> e sarai meco sanza fine cive
> di quella Roma onde Cristo è romano.' 102
>
> (*Pur.*, XXXII., 100-02)

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milite.' The first version coincides with Villani, but he mentions alternative versions too, 'ut aliqui volunt'.

[84] Villani, IX. 8; 39; 41-43; 49; 68; 71-72; 96. Corso features throughout Compagni's *Cronica*. Holmes, *Florence, Rome*, pp. 171-72; 178-79, describes Corso's character and activites. See, too, Davidsohn, pp. 485-94.

[85] Alberto Del Monte, 'Forese', in *Dante nella critica d'oggi: risultati e prospettive*, ed. by U. Bosco (Florence: Le Monnier, 1965), pp. 572-89 (p. 589), offers this interpretation. Benvenuto also interprets 'bestia' in both senses.

[86] Del Monte, p. 588-89, interprets this as indicative of the prevalence of justice in this canto.

Dante will be with Beatrice in heaven forever, an interpretation on which the early commentators are all agreed.[87] This prophecy may be seen as similar to those where Dante has predicted damnation for various individuals. Their damnation, however, is often linked with *post eventum* prophecies of their deaths, we may recall, in particular, Boniface VIII in *Inferno* XIX, or Corso Donati, in *Purgatorio* XXIV. We can see, then, that Dante's prediction of his own salvation is quite different, not only in his destination, but in the lack of any sort of verifiable *post eventum* reference closely linked with it here.

18. *Purgatorio* XXXII

The next prophecy follows directly, and Beatrice prepares Dante *personaggio* in the very next verses, for what he is about to see:

> 'Però, in pro del mondo che mal vive,
> al carro tieni or li occhi, e quel che vedi,
> ritornato di là, fa che tu scrive'. 105
>
> (*Pur.*, XXXII., 103-05)

The echo of John's Apocalypse, when he is told 'quod vides scribe in libro' (Apoc. 1. 11) is unmistakable here, and consonant with the apocalyptic imagery used throughout these canti.[88] This was introduced with the appearance of the procession at *Purgatorio* XXIX, and there is no need to repeat the details here.[89]

We may note at this point Dante's assertion as he describes the four winged creatures in the procession and compares them to descriptions in the Bible: 'Giovanni è meco e da lui si disparte' (*Pur.*, XXIX. 105). Dante explains that John's description of the creatures (Apoc. 4. 6-9) agrees with his, specifically on the detail that the creatures have six wings; whereas Ezekiel (Ezek. 1. 5-14) differs, his creatures having four wings. The early

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[87] Francesco da Buti simply states: 'ecco che li predice la sua salvazione'.
[88] John repeatedly receives instructions to write: Apoc. 1. 19; 2. 1, 8, 12, 18; 3. 1, 7, 14; 14. 13; 19. 9. Bosco and Reggio, II, pp. 548-49 and Sapegno, II, p. 357, among others, note the connection. Also, Giovanni Fallani, 'Canto XXXII', *Lectura dantis scaligera: Purgatorio*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1971), 1191-1206 (p. 1200).
[89] The features in common with John's Apocalypse are analysed in detail by, amongst others, Edward Moore, 'Symbolism and Prophecy in *Purg.* xxviii-xxxiii', in his *Studies in Dante: Third Series. Miscellaneous Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903, repr. 1968), pp. 178-283; 373-74 (pp. 178-220); Peter Dronke, *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 55-73; Peter Dronke, 'L'Apocalisse negli ultimi canti del "Purgatorio"', in *Dante e la Bibbia*, ed. by G. Barblan (Olschki: Florence, 1988), pp. 81-94; Peter Armour, 'L'Apocalisse Nel Canto XXIX del "Purgatorio"', in *Dante e la Bibbia*, ed. by G. Barblan (Olschki: Florence, 1988), pp. 145-49.

commentators do not remark on something here which modern readers find very remarkable; the wording of the verse places Dante's account in a primary position with respect to the scriptural accounts. They agree or disagree with him, not vice-versa, so that his account becomes the measure of veracity.[90] In addition, Dante begins to introduce his own symbols into the scene, in particular, the chariot and the griffin.[91] We may note, perhaps with some sympathy, the observation with which Francesco Da Buti concludes his comments on *Purgatorio* XXXII:

> Queste figurazioni àe l'autore finto da sè seguitando l'Apocalissi di santo Iovanni, trasmutando et arrecando a suo proposito come mellio li è paruto, e però è faticoso ad intenderlo.[92]

The prophecy in this canto is not presented discretely as such, but instead, forms the concluding part of a complete vision seen by Dante *personaggio*, and then written down as he has been instructed to do. According to the commentators, early and modern, it is a representation of the history of the Church, and it passes at one point from history to prophecy, as it moves on to events after 1300. In this sense it is a *post eventum* prophecy, but it is unlike the others we have seen, as there are no specific time references nor details such as names or geographical locations. We may speculate that this is in some way similar to the visions experienced by the other characters who have prophesied to Dante earlier in the *Purgatorio*, however, unlike them, he is unable to explain or gloss in any way what he sees. His account of his vision is completely devoid of any interpretative additions.[93]

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[90] Many critics comment on this. More recently, see Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy*, pp. 155-56; Peter S. Hawkins, *Dante's Testaments: Essays in Scriptural Imagination* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 64-68. Hawkins, p. 64, observes: 'This means that when it comes to the correct number of wings, the truth of the matter rests with his [Dante's] own eyewitness. He confirms John's vision on Patmos by squaring it with his own: final authority on the matter rests with him.'

[91] Peter Armour quotes Lana's commentary as follows: 'E nota che fino quie sieno queste metafore invente per altri, cioè per Ezechiel profeta e per san Giovanni Evangelista. Alla ottava cosa è da sapere che l'autore metaforizza per propria intenzione in questa parte' (,'L'Apocalisse', p. 146). See, too, Armour, *Dante's Griffin*, pp. 3; 54; Dronke, *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions*, p. 71.

[92] *Commento sopra la Divina Commedia di Dante Allighieri*, ed. by C. Giannini, 3 vols (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62), anastatic reprint with an introduction by Francesco Mazzoni, 3 vols (Pisa: Nistri Lischi, 1989), II, p. 802.

[93] Antonio Piromalli, 'Messaggi politici, simboli, profezie nella *Commedia*' *Letture classensi*, 16 (1987), 29-50 (p. 47) commenting on *Pur.*, XXXII. 52; 55-57, states: 'Beatrice spiega, corregge, chiarisce, interpreta la visione, profetizza l'avvento del riformatore.' This is inaccurate. Beatrice only prophesies, and possibly corrects Dante

In the first part of the vision Dante *personaggio* sees an eagle swoop down and strike the tree under which the chariot had been left. His description is as follows:

> Non scese mai con sì veloce moto
> foco di spessa nube, quando piove
> da quel confine che più va remoto,
> com' io vidi calar l'uccel di Giove
> per l'alber giù, rompendo de la scorza,
> non che d'i fiori e de le foglie nove;
>
> (*Pur.*, XXXII., 109-14)

Although this is not the prophetic part of the vision, it is interesting to note, at this point, how Dante carries out Beatrice's instructions. The first terzina is an extended simile, and the eagle is indicated by a metonym 'l'uccel di Giove' (112). This is not what Dante *personaggio* sees, but is the elaboration of Dante *poeta*, particularly the classicizing reference to 'Giove'. The vision, therefore, has the appearance of being mediated poetically. If we compare this with John's Apocalypse, which is presented as an unmediated direct account of what John sees, then the difference becomes obvious. John does not elaborate or use metaphorical language to describe what he sees. Although this observation is digressing from our principal concern at this point, which is the individual prophecy, it touches upon questions which we will see later. We may also notice that, with this presentation of the vision, what was previously communicated to Dante *personaggio* verbally, by other characters, now becomes visual, but is then verbalised by him as Dante *poeta*. So far in the *Purgatorio* Dante *personaggio* has had visions of the future reported to him, without himself ever being directly privy to them. Here the experience changes from a verbal and aural mode to a visual setting where Dante himself sees the vision, though without understanding its meaning. The vision itself is entirely allegorical, so that it requires interpretation, but no pointers are supplied in the text, as was the case in the earlier prophecies. This is one of the features which marks the change to a more apocalyptic type of prophecy. There is, however, an important difference between Dante's vision and that of John. All of the images in John refer to the future, whereas Dante's vision begins in the past and moves ahead to include future events.[94]

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personaggio's way of thinking. She definitely does not explain, clarify, or interpret anything.

[94] Peter Armour makes this point, 'L'Apocalisse', pp. 146-47.

The most common interpretation of the attack of the eagle on the chariot is that it represents the early persecutions of the Church by the Roman emperors. Lana, the *Ottimo*, Pietro Alighieri, Benvenuto and Francesco da Buti, all agree that this is what is meant, and some include a chronological list of the emperors responsible.[95]

The chariot is damaged (115-17), and the next scene describes the appearance of a starving fox, which settles in the chariot (118-20) but is chased away by Beatrice (121-23). The early commentators state that the fox represents heresy in general; some equate it specifically with Mohammed.[96] All five commentators state that Beatrice represents theology in general, or theologians, who defended the Church against erroneous doctrines.

The eagle then swoops down again, as it did before, and this time leaves some of its feathers in the chariot (124-26). In response to this, a voice from heaven cries: 'O navicella mia, com' mal se' carca!' (129). The early commentators are again in agreement that this symbolises the donation of Constantine. The *Ottimo* simply attributes the voice from heaven to God. Francesco da Buti says that it is St. Peter, which 'navicella *mia*' might suggest is most likely. Lana, Pietro Alighieri, and Benvenuto all explain the voice as a sort of repetition of a voice supposedly heard at the time of the donation, which said: 'hodie diffusum est venenum in ecclesia Dei.'[97]

Next, the earth opens between the wheels of the chariot and a dragon appears and attacks it with its tail, tearing off part of the bottom, then goes off (130-35). The dragon is interpreted in different ways: Lana simply identifies it as Mohammed, as do Benvenutio and Da Buti, with the addition of rather unusual biographical information. The *Ottimo* explains that it is the greatest persecutor that the Church has ever had, and quotes the lines from John's Apocalypse (12. 3-4) which describe the red dragon, but gives no names or other details. Pietro Alighieri states: 'Draco figurat, ut dixi, Antichristum', so that he describes the dragon as pre-figuring the Antichrist, which would also make this part of the vision prophetic. The fact that three commentators agree on Mohammed suggests that this

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[95] See Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, pp. 199-201, and Fallani, pp. 1201-02, for summaries of the different episodes. Dronke, *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions*, p. 61, argues for a more complex understanding than simply equating the chariot with the Church.
[96] Lana, the *Ottimo*, Pietro Alighieri, Benvenuto, and Buti interpret it as heresy. The *Ottimo* adds that some specifically interpret it as Mohammed, and Pietro takes that view.
[97] This is according to a legend in circulation at least as early as the 13th century. Fallani, p. 1202, mentions it. Details are given by Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, pp. 199; 262-63, n. 69. See too Moore, 'Symbolism and Prophecy', p. 203.

is the most likely interpretation, whilst Pietro's suggestion would break up what has so far been a chronological order of presentation.[98] His taking away part of the church also ties in with the view that Mohammed was a schismatic heretic, and this, of course, is how he is punished in the *Inferno*.[99] Other interpretations see the dragon in a more general sense as avarice or some other vice, or simply as Satan, especially when linked to the Johannine text.[100]

The chariot itself then undergoes a strange transformation. First, in the space of a sigh, it grows a covering of feathers (136-41). Then seven heads grow from it, three on the pole, and one at each corner (142-44). The three heads on the pole of the chariot each sprout two horns, and the four others one horn each. (145-47). Lana, Benvenuto and Buti all interpret this first part as a description of the immediate desire for wealth by the leaders of the Church following the Donation of Constantine. The appearance of the heads and horns has an unmistakable Johannine resonance, as the red dragon also had seven heads and ten horns (Apoc. 12. 3). The heads represent the seven capital sins for Lana, Benvenuto and Buti, and in fact Buti's commentary includes a complex diagram of the chariot, detailing the vices and corresponding virtues, along with the ten commandments, seven sacraments, and seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.[101] The explanation for the horns is either that the sins represented by the heads on the pole offend both God and neighbour, whilst those on the corners offend only God, or that those on the pole are more serious and, therefore, more harmful. Modern commentators generally tend to follow this interpretation of the horns as the seven sins.[102] Dante says of this transformed chariot: 'simile mostro visto ancor non fue' (147), and, as we have noted, he is now creating his own images, albeit incorporating elements from the vision of St. John.

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[98] Mohammed is named at this point in the *Chiose ambrosiane* also.
[99] See chapter 2, notes 142-43 above.
[100] Dronke, for example, *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions*, pp. 70-71.
[101] See Buti, II, p. 800, for this numerological and theological *tour de force*.
[102] Amongst others, Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 552. The early commentators differ, however, regarding the vices which offend doubly; Benvenuto: 'superbia, invidia et ira', which is the same as the *Ottimo*; Lana: 'superbia, ira, avarizia'; Buti: la superbia...la invidia... l'avarizia.'

The account of the vision simply continues as before, with no indication of any change; however, the events it is generally thought to symbolize from this point on occurred after 1300, and, therefore, in the future from the point of the fictional date.[103]

Sicura, quasi rocca in alto monte,
seder sovresso una puttana sciolta
m'apparve con le ciglia intorno pronte;
e come perché non li fosse tolta,
vidi di costa a lei dritto un gigante;
e basciavansi insieme alcuna volta.
Ma perché l'occhio cupido e vagante
a me rivolse, quel feroce drudo
la flagellò dal capo infin le piante;
poi, di sospetto pieno e d'ira crudo,
disciolse il mostro, e trassel per la selva,
tanto che sol di lei mi fece scudo
a la puttana e a la nova belva.

(*Pur.*, XXXII. 148-60)

The prostitute which Dante sees next, seated securely on the chariot is interpreted in slightly different ways by the early commentators to begin with: Lana simply says it is the pope, but not which one; the *Ottimo* has the Court of Rome, but appends a story about Boniface VIII; Buti also has the court; Pietro Alighieri interprets it more generally as signifying the corruption of the 'shepherds' of the Church; Benvenuto names Boniface VIII himself. The giant represents the royal line of France for Lana, the King of France for Buti, and Philip IV for Benvenuto.

The *Ottimo* and Buti interpret the prostitute and the giant kissing by using Dante's own text. Both commentators refer to, and Buti quotes these lines from canto XIX of the *Inferno*:

'Di voi pastor s'accorse il Vangelista,
quando colei che siede sopra l'acque
puttaneggiar coi regi a lui fu vista;
quella che con le sette teste nacque,
e da le diece corna ebbe argomento,
fin che virtute al suo marito piacque.'

(*Inf.*, XIX. 106-11)

This is part of Dante *personaggio*'s condemnation of the corrupt popes after he has listened to the prophecy of Nicholas III which we saw before.[104] In this instance, Dante uses the

[103] Benvenuto comments on line 148: 'Nunc ultimo poeta describit novissimam persecutionem ecclesiae, quam viderat tempore suo, qua nulla videtur fuisse turpior quamvis maior, scilicet, mortem Bonifacii, de qua jam saepe dictum est.'
[104] See again chapter 2, notes 109-10 above.

image from John's Apocalypse, with some changes, to describe the corrupt relationship between the papacy and kings.[105] We can note the presence of the seven heads and ten horns here, already changed from the version in the Apocalypse, then changed again in Dante's purgatorial vision.[106] Since the explanation in the *Inferno* is unequivocal, Dante is addressing Nicholas, and refers the Apocalypse text to him, and to the future popes Nicholas has described to him, it provides a strong reason for interpreting this part of the vision in the *Purgatorio* in a similar way. Although the identification of the giant with the French Kings, and Philip in particular, is also apt, strictly speaking Dante *personaggio* speaking in *Inferno* XIX would have no knowledge of the events to follow 1300. Although the reference to the prostituting with kings (108) is rather general, we may speculate that it more appropriately describes the later relationship of Clement V with Philip rather than that of Boniface VIII, and there are, therefore, hints of Dante *uomo*'s knowledge of events creeping into the words of Dante *personaggio*. The prophecy in *Inferno* XIX, as we have seen, was certainly written after the death of Boniface and the election of Clement. In any event, this passage does clearly identify the prostitute with the papacy, or to be more precise, certain popes, and provides a convincing key to the imagery of *Purgatorio* XXXII.[107] We should recall here Dante's care in distinguishing between the institution of the papacy and the individuals occupying that position, since, as we have just seen above, his commentators are not all so discriminating.[108] Finally, we may note that some readers see the reference to Goliath in Dante's Epistola VII as a figure of Philip IV, although others interpret it as Florence, or Robert of Anjou.[109]

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[105] Benfell, pp. 154-57, notes Dante's miscitation of John, lists some of the changes, and gives other examples of the conflation of details from the Apocalypse in other texts of Dante's time.

[106] Benfell, p. 158.

[107] Dronke, however, is not convinced, *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions*, pp. 71-72. Palma di Cesnola, p. 85, describes the passage in *Inferno* as a 'chiosa anticipatrice', although that must be a retrospective judgement. Lino Pertile, *La puttana e il gigante* (Ravenna: Longo, 1998), pp. 213-14, points out additional intertextual links between the two episodes and insists that the verses from *Inferno* XIX are essential to an understanding of *Purgatorio* XXXII.

[108] See notes 37 and 40 above on the discussion of *Inferno* XX.

[109] For the letter, see *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*, p. 100. Domenico Consoli, 'Il Canto XXXII del *Purgatorio*', *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence, Le Monnier, 1972), V, 207-33 (p. 229), interprets it as Philip. Pertile, pp. 224-25, gives other references for critic who identify Goliath in the letter as Philip, but rejects this interpretation himself.

Since the kissing of the giant and the prostitute (*Pur.*, XX. 153) comes before the giant attacks her (156), the chronological order of presentation would suggest that these lines in the *Purgatorio* refer to a period in the relation between the French monarchy and the popes before the attack on Boniface.[110] Benevenuto in his comment distinguishes a period prior to the breakdown of relations between France and the pope, when Philip and Boniface did favour each other.[111]

Dante *personaggio* becomes part of the vision himself in the next terzina. At this point I should clarify that I have been using the term 'vision' to refer to the events which Dante *personaggio* is observing. These events are, in some way, taking place before his eyes; that is how he describes them, and not in the form of a dream or some sort of purely mental apparition. We need only compare the other prophecies in the *Purgatorio* which have been communicated to him as they have been witnessed by the souls who see them. Dante *personaggio* cannot see what they describe and, as we have noted, interpret; it is not present to him. The vision ends when the giant and the prostitute move out of Dante *personaggio*'s line of sight. They do not just vanish as if part of a dream.

As the prostitute looks with desire at Dante *personaggio*, he then enters the action of the vision, and we may therefore suppose that he takes on some symbolic significance.[112] Within the context of an interpretation which casts Boniface and Philip as the prostitute and the giant, the interest of Boniface in Dante, or what he represents, rather than Philip, is then easily translated into an interest in Italy, or Florence. That is how Benvenuto and Buti interpret Dante *personaggio*; as an image for Italy or the Italians, whilst Lana and Buti state

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[110] Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 201, suggests that it may apply to the whole period from Pope Urban IV in 1261 up to Boniface VIII and Clement V.

[111] On more positive relations between the two, see Mann, pp. 275; 309-10; Strayer, pp. 254-56; 259.

[112] Dronke, *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions*, pp. 71-73, argues instead that the abandonment of Johannine images for personal ones in these last verses of the canto indicates a change to a more personal focus, and then interprets the scene as a revelation to Dante of his own personal erotic feelings. This seems unlikely since Dante had introduced his own personal imagery prior to these verses, and the prostitute is Johannine, so that there is no complete departure at this point. It would also then be completely divorced from the rest of the vision. Armour, *Dante's Griffin*, p. 223, argues that the interest of the prostitute in Dante means it cannot represent Boniface who, in Dante's view, had no benevolent interest in him. The problem with this idea, however, is that it mixes symbols and what they symbolize. Boniface, symbolized by the harlot, may have had no interest in Dante himself, but could easily have desired whatever it is that Dante is intended to symbolize.

that he symbolizes all Christians.[113] Equally plausible would be the interpretation of Dante as representing Florence, in view of Boniface's political interest in the city, an interest of which Dante was only too painfully aware.[114]

The response of the giant, to beat the prostitute from head to foot (156), symbolizes for Benvenuto and da Buti the attack on Boniface at Anagni.[115] Although it has been objected that interpreting the giant as Philip in this particular line would be, at least in part, incompatible with his being called a new Pilate in *Purgatorio* XX, we may recall Dante's flexibility in the images applied to Boniface himself, who can be symbolised by an avaricious shepherd, a prostitute, and Christ, at different times.[116]

The conclusion to the vision has the giant dragging the chariot, now a monster (158), off into the woods, so that Dante can no longer see it or the prostitute (159-60). Benvenuto and Buti have no doubt that this removal symbolises the transfer of the papacy to Avignon.[117] Both commentators note that, at this point, the 'puttana' (160) now stands for a different pope; 'l'altro papa', states Buti, whilst Benvenuto comments that the chariot was given to Philip by another prostitute: 'alia meretrice, scilicet pastore Clemente.' In fact, Benvenuto's comment is imprecise; there is a different pope, but there is not another prostitute. Dante's text simply speaks of 'la puttana', which we can only assume is the same one as before, but now symbolizing a different individual. This illustrates the flexibility of this sort of allegory, which also makes it difficult to interpret.[118]

In conclusion, we can say that this is a *post eventum* prophecy, predicting the reign of Boniface, the attack on him at Anagni on the 7th of September 1303, and the move to Avignon of the papal court in 1309, if we accept that this is what the verses in question

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[113] Buti, II, p. 802, comments: 'e per sé intende ogni cristiano, ovvero tutti l' Italiani.' The *Ottimo*, II, p. 577, has a very curious cryptic comment on 148: 'E di questo fece l'Autore sperienzia al tempo di Bonifazio papa VIII, quando v'andò per ambasciadore del suo Comune; chè sa con che occhi ella il guatòe, e quale era il suo drudo Bonifazio, e non ligittimo sposo, secondo l'oppinione di molti. Dio sa il vero.'

[114] We may recall, for example, the prophecy of *Inferno* VI. Holmes, 'Dante and the Popes', pp. 23-26, outlines Boniface's financial and political interest in Florence in 1300.

[115] Many modern commentators accept this interpretation, or see a more general reference to the break between Boniface and Philip; e.g. Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 553; Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 201.

[116] The objection is made by Armour, *Dante's Griffin*, pp. 222-23.

[117] So too Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 553; Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 201.

[118] Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 200, states the problem very succinctly and clearly: 'Since it is impossible to prove that any interpretation is exclusively correct, the episode of the serpent's theft merely goes to show both the wealth and the weakness of this type of allegory.'

stand for. On the other hand, they could as easily be interpreted in other ways.[119] One such interpretation sees the giant as one of the future persecutors of the church such as the giant prince Gog (Ezek. 38. 2-3); thought to be the Antichrist according to some medieval eschatological theories.[120] This would seem appropriate, as it would mean that Dante's purgatorial vision would then represent the complete history of the Church, from beginning to end, passing from past to future, an eschatological prophecy. Furthermore, it is possible to combine both visions, so that the symbolic figures of the prostitute and the giant can be applied and re-applied. We saw the readiness of Benvenuto to accept that the prostitute could represent Boniface VIII at one moment, then Clement V at another. So, too, the giant could ultimately represent the antichrist, but also Philip IV in the interim, as what has been termed a 'typus Antichristi'.[121]

19. *Purgatorio* XXXIII

The final prophecy of the *Purgatorio* is delivered to Dante *personaggio* by Beatrice. Dante *personaggio* is unable to ask what he wants to know and so tells her that she already knows what he needs (25-30). In response to this Beatrice begins:

> Ed ella a me: 'Da tema e da vergogna
> voglio che tu omai ti disviluppe,
> sì che non parli più com' om che sogna.
> Sappi che 'l vaso che 'l serpente ruppe,
> fu e non è; ma chi n'ha colpa, creda
> che vendetta di Dio non teme suppe.
> Non sarà tutto tempo sanza reda
> l'aguglia che lasciò le penne al carro,
> per che divenne mostro e poscia preda;
> ch'io veggio certamente, e però il narro,
> a darne tempo già stelle propinque,
> secure d'ogn' intoppo e d'ogne sbarro,
> nel quale un cinquecento diece e cinque,
> messo di Dio, anciderà la fuia
> con quel gigante che con lei delinque'.
>
> (*Pur.*, XXXIII. 31-45)

Like the prophecy of the *veltro*, with which it is frequently associated, the prophecy of the five hundred and fifteen, or *DXV*, has engendered a great deal of ingenuity in attempts to solve the 'enigma forte'. Like the prophecy of the *veltro*, it is clear that it is

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[119] Again Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, pp. 201-02, is clear and succinct: 'The polysemy of Dante's allegory, however, justifies other interpretations.'
[120] See Armour, *Dante's Griffin*, pp. 228-31, for a summary of some of these theories. See too Pertile, pp. 205-13.
[121] Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 202, uses the term to describe Philip.

symbolic, and, therefore, must be interpreted in order to have any meaning. Unlike the *veltro* prophecy, however, the literal meaning of this prophecy is clear as the language used is unambiguous at that basic level.

Beatrice instructs Dante to prepare himself by freeing himself from his feelings of fear and shame so that he will no longer speak like someone asleep or dreaming (31-33). She then begins the prophecy with a statement and a warning. The vessel which the serpent broke is normally understood to refer to the chariot attacked by the dragon, part of the vision which Dante saw in the previous canto. This verse echoes a similar verse in John's Apocalypse: 'bestia quae vidisti fuit et non est' (Apoc. 17. 8), as most commentators note.[122] As we have seen, however, Dante conflates various details taken from the Apocalypse, and just as he transferred the head and the horns from the beast in John's text, to the chariot in his own, so are Beatrice's words applied to the chariot, now called a vessel.[123] The one who is to blame for this should know that God's vengeance cannot be appeased. The general meaning of the expression 'non teme suppe', is reasonably clear, although its precise meaning is debated. The soup mentioned is understood by some commentators to refer to a superstitious belief at the time that if a murderer ate soup on the tomb of his victim for nine consecutive days this would free him from the vendetta of the deceased's family.[124] Whatever the origin of the expression, we may note that Dante chooses to use a term of a low register, even in solemn moments such as this, and this is a feature of passages of invective in the *Commedia.*[125]

The next terzina (37-39) appears to move now to the future as Beatrice explains that the eagle which left its feathers in the chariot, causing it to become a monster, then prey, will not be without an heir for all time. The time reference is not entirely open-ended,

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[122] The editors of the *Biblia Sacra*, II, p. 1898, prefer the reading 'bestiam', but also give 'bestia'. Note, too, 'bestia quae erat et non est' (Apoc. 17: 11). Dronke, 'L'Apocalisse', pp. 89-90, notes both references.

[123] See notes 100-101 above.

[124] Lana and Pietro Alighieri mention this. See, too, Arsenio Frugoni, 'Il Canto XXXIII del *Purgatorio*', *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence, Le Monnier, 1972), V, 235-53 (p. 239); Franco Lanza, 'Canto XXXIII', *Lectura dantis scaligera: Purgatorio*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1971), 1215-34 (pp. 1220-21). Bosco and Reggio, II, pp. 559-60, examine other theories too.

[125] '..."suppe" è parola certo plebea, espressiva di rifiuto e distacco e disprezzo, come le frasi dove è "rogna" e "cloaca" di Cacciaguida (*Par.*, XVII, 129) e di San Pietro (*Par.*, XXVIII)', is how Frugoni, p. 239, summarizes this point, which he attributes to Lanza, p. 1221.

however, since the end point will come when the event referred to occurs, which will be at some point in the future.[126] Beatrice then interrupts the content of her prophecy to assure Dante that it will happen (40-43). She uses the term 'veggio' (40), as in the other prophecies of the *Purgatorio*, and adds that the stars are favourable, and that nothing can prevent what she is about to recount. Although it seems to be the stars that she sees, rather than the subject of the prophecy, these are a certain sign of the time in which the five hundred and fifteen will appear. The fact that she can already, 'già' (41), see these stars suggests, then, that the time may be near.

The literal meaning of the next part of the prophecy is clear. In this time to come, a five hundred, ten, and five, as expressed here, sent by God, will kill the thief, along with the giant who is sinning with her. The use of a mysterious number by Dante here brings to mind the infamous six hundred and sixty-six of John's Apocalypse (Apoc. 13. 18), as almost any commentary will note. As with the other Johannine elements, Dante has adapted this too, changing the number and switching sides from evil to good. He gives very little explanation of the meaning of the number, however, except for the fact that it is someone or something sent by God. We saw that in the *veltro* prophecy, the literal meaning of the term *veltro* was clear, but demanded interpretation, and the same is true here. What is actually represented by the five hundred and fifteen, the thief, the giant, and what is meant by killing?

If we understand the eagle (38), as in *Purgatorio* XXXII, to be a symbol for the Roman Empire, then the first part of the prophecy refers to an emperor, the heir to the eagle. For Dante, in 1300, the heir to the Empire was absent, since he regarded Frederick II as the last legitimate Roman emperor.[127] It is possible, then, that this refers to the coronation of Henry VII in Rome on the 29th of June, 1312.[128] The early commentators do not make any specific suggestions here, except Benvenuto, who explains that there was no emperor at the time of Boniface VIII, and recalls the criticism of Albert I in *Purgatorio*

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[126] Armour, *Dante's Griffin*, p. 264, interprets the phrase as litotes and therefore meaning 'very soon'. This is a possible interpretation, but not a definitive one.
[127] This view is expressed in *Convivio* IV. 3. It is noted by, amongst others, Frugoni, p. 240, and Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, p. 203.
[128] For a brief account see William M. Bowsky, *Henry VII in Italy: The Conflict of Empire and City-State, 1310-1313* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), pp. 166-67.

VI. We may even speculate that the period following the death of Henry VII on the 24th of August 1313, is adumbrated here.[129] There are three possible ways of considering the prophecy. First, if it foretells the coronation of Henry, it is *post eventum*, but most likely to have been written before his death. Second, if it refers to Henry's coronation, but is written shortly before it, then it is *ante eventum*, but predicting an event very likely to occur imminently. Third, if it foretells the coming of another emperor after his death then it is *ante eventum*, and expresses Dante's hopes rather than any known event.[130] The interesting thing that we can notice here, however, is that the wording of the prophecy keeps it open. Even if Dante, and here we are speculating, had in mind Henry's coronation, he has formulated the prophecy in such a way that the time within which the emperor's heir will appear stretches until the time when he does appear. Thus the prophecy can cover all three eventualities, but is immune to being rendered obsolete should Henry fail to be crowned emperor, which didn't happen, or die before resolving the problems of Italy, which did happen. In fact, this is essentially what Beatrice tells Dante (49-51); that the prophecy will be explained by its own fulfilment.

The second part of the prophecy contains the mysterious *DXV*.[131] Although it seems to refer to the same individual as the first part, and, therefore, the heir to the eagle, both parts of the prophecy are not always taken as a single prediction.[132] Even if both are taken to refer to the same period in time, however, that does not necessarily mean that they refer to the same individual. The early commentators show a remarkable similarity of approach to the problem. All of them translate the letters into Roman numerals and re-arrange them to form the Latin word *dux*, which they then interpret in slightly different ways. Lana and Pietro Alighieri, simply give *dux*, with no further elaboration; Francesco da Buti's comment is as follows: 'sì che per questo e 3 lettere DV et X intende questo nome

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[129] Bowsky, pp. 203-04, 271, n.111.
[130] Armour, *Dante's Griffin*, pp. 242-43, thinks this the most likely, and suggests it is precisely that which explains the intentional obscurity of the *DXV* reference.
[131] Surveys of the variety of interpretations and history of this problem are provided by Pietro Mazzamuto, 'cinquecento diece e cinque', *Enciclopedia dantesca*, II, 10-14; Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, pp. 203-07; Palma di Cesnola, pp. 90-92.
[132] 'The two parts of the prophecy [...] are indissolubly and syntactically linked by the conjunction che. It may therefore seem strange, not to say perverse, to discover that scholars have not unanimously associated the "Five Hundred and Ten and Five", sent by Heaven, with the eagle's heir, in other words, an Emperor' (Scott, *Dante's Political Purgatory*, pp. 203-04).

DVX; sicchè per questo intende: Nel quale tempo uno duca, et uno signore, *Messo*; cioè mandato, *da Dio* '. Benvenuto connects the *DXV* with the *veltro*: 'et istae tres literae constituunt istud nomen dux, *messo di Dio*, hic est ille veltrus sapiens justus, de quo tanta dixi primo capitulo Inferni'. The *Ottimo* has this lengthy comment:

> Questo testo spone alcuno così: Per cinquecento fa D, per dieci X, per cinque V; sì che dicono che in questo tempo verrà uno Duca messagiere da Dio, che tutto il mondo riducerà a Dio. E vogliono credere, che fia circa la fine del mondo, ed allegano l'Autore medesimo - *Questi la caccerà per ogni villa ec.* Altri dice, ch'elli vuole dire d'uno Imperadore, che fia in quello tempo, del quale parla Daniello quivi: *Beatus qui expectabit, et pervenerit usque ad MCCCXXXV dies.* Ma secondo li chiosatori di Daniello, quelli MCCCXXXV sono dì e non anni, li quali sono circa la fine del secolo: e però non hae luogo chi dice nel MCCCXXXV anni; ma l' Autore vuole dire d'alcuna grande revoluzione del Cielo significatrice d'alcuno giustissimo e santissimo principe, il quale reformerà lo stato della Chiesa, e de' fedeli Cristiani.

The *Ottimo* reports different interpretations, rejecting the suggestion that the *DXV* is a period of time based on a passage in Daniel and in favour of the explanation that it refers to the appearance of a reforming Prince. He also rejects the more eschatological interpretations, which interestingly refer to the *veltro* in support of their view.

The thief (44) and the giant (45) are identified by Benvenuto and Buti as the Roman court, or popes, and the King of France, which is problematic, since it is much more specific than their interpretations of the *DXV*. It does suggest, at least, that they interpret the prophecy in much more immediate terms, and not in an eschatological perspective.

As we have seen, the early commentators all read the number in Roman numerals, then re-arrange these to form the word *DVX*, 'dux', and many modern interpreters follow this practice. There is an objection, however, that any decision to re-write Dante's words in this form is purely arbitrary.[133] The basic question is: why didn't Dante write the words in this order if he intended them to be read that way? In addition, this rhyme in 'cinque' occurs only on this one occasion in the whole of the *Commedia*, prompting the view that it is particularly significant, and should not be changed arbitrarily.[134] We can see straight away, however, that this argument could as easily be applied in the opposite way; namely, that Dante did not write 'cinque e diece' precisely because he wished to keep the rhyme in 'cinque', not because he wanted to keep the numbers in that order. As for the change to

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[133] The objection is made by, amongst others, Antonio C. Mastrobuono, 'The Powerful Enigma', *Lectura Dantis Newberryana*, 1 (1988), 153-98, pp. 162-64; Wis, p. 586; Moore, 'Symbolism and Prophecy', p. 257.

[134] Mastrobuono, pp. 164, following Moore, 'Symbolism and Prophecy', pp. 263-83.

Roman numerals, and then letters, there is sufficient evidence in the *Commedia* of Dante's familiarity with numerology and willingness to play with numbers, letters and shapes to make this plausible.[135] The re-arrangement and re-interpretation of letters and numbers can become extremely abstruse, however, such as in the application of the cabbalistic process known as 'gematria' whereby numbers can yield corresponding letters of the Hebrew alphabet in order to spell out words or names.[136] In the end, we can agree with Lana's observation on flexibility in this matter:

> ...e perchè nel verso elle siano altramente ordinate, cioè in prima D, secondo X, terzo V, non è forza chè li è conceduta di licenzia poetica a potersi trasportare le dizioni.

One numerical approach, similar to that rejected by the *Ottimo*, interprets the number as a period of years, then dates it from the coronation of Charlemagne, to arrive at the year 1315 for the arrival of the one sent by God.[137] This is very straightforward, but in real terms would mean that the prophecy was a failure, since none of what it would then predict happened in that year. It seems unlikely that Dante would risk an *ante eventum* prophecy with such a short time span. Indeed, the time reference, as we have seen, can stretch almost infinitely, and we may recall the leeway he allowed in his prediction of the death of Clement V in *Inferno* XIX. Another simple suggestion is that the numbers refer to lines in the *Aeneid*, but that is rather implausible.[138]

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[135] E.g. the acrostics in *Purgatorio* XII, 25-58, spelling out VOM, and *Paradiso* XIX. 115-139, forming LVE; the reading of the word 'omo' in the faces of the gluttonous in *Purgatorio* XXIII. 31-33; the spirits forming letters and words, then the letter 'm' changed into the shape of an eagle in *Paradiso* XVIII.

[136] Moore, 'Symbolism and Prophecy', pp. 253-83. Armour, *Dante's Griffin*, pp. 247-48, presents some other methods of interpreting and calculating letters and numbers to illustrate his conclusion that: 'However interpreted, these letters add further suppositions without solving the puzzle.' Parodi, p. 252, n. 1, described this theory as a 'bizarra e certo erronea congettura.' Milo E. Kearney and Mimosa S. Schraer, 'Dante's *Cinquecento Diece e Cinque*', *Italica*, 59 (1982), 32-40, resurrected the 'gematria' approach, correcting some of Moore's errors in its application, and concluded that the number represents the Hebrew letters for the word for a trumpet blast as written, probably, by the Jewish Italian community of Dante's time. This is the same trumpet blast which heralds the day of Judgement in Joel 2. 1-2. This article ignores completely the other verses around this one, and is implausible in other respects too; e.g. Dante's supposed knowledge of Hebrew, and 'gematria'. It is, perhaps, best viewed as another example of how far some readers are prepared to go in pursuit of a solution to this problem.

[137] First advanced by Robert Davidsohn, 'Il "cinquecento diece e cinque"del *Purgatorio*', *Bullettino della Società Dantesca Italiana*, 9 (1902), 129-31: 209. Noted by Mazzamuto, p. 12.

[138] John Stark, 'Once Again, Dante's Five Hundred, Ten and Five', *Romance Quarterly*, 44.2 (1997), 99-106, suggests that the numbers refer to lines from Virgil's *Aeneid*, but ignores the fact that *Pur.*, XXXIII. 49 is a reference to Ovid, *Met.* VII. 759f. which Dante has probably misread. See Bosco and Reggio, II, pp. 561-62 for discussion.

What many of the theories about the *DXV* have in common is that their approach is generally to seek out untried connections with texts outside the *Commedia*, and all are attempts to solve the puzzle. Within the text, immediately after the prophecy, Dante *personaggio* receives the following explanation and instruction from Beatrice:

> 'E forse che la mia narrazion buia,
> qual Temi e Sfinge, men ti persuade,
> perch' a lor modo lo 'ntelletto attuia;
> ma tosto fier li fatti le Naiade,
> che solveranno questo enigma forte
> sanza danno di pecore o di biade.
> Tu nota; e sì come da me son porte,
> così queste parole segna a' vivi
> del viver ch'è un correre a la morte.'
>
> (*Pur.*, XXXIII. 46-54)

Beatrice describes her prophecy as a 'narrazion buia', and refers to the legends of Themis and of the Sphinx. This marks quite a sudden change from the scriptural, apocalyptic imagery and language of the prophecy, to these classical examples, both most likely known to Dante from Ovid. Beatrice stays with the Sphinx story to inform Dante that events will soon, 'tosto' (49), become like Naiads and solve the enigma. The classical reference appears to be mistaken, since it was Oedipus and not the Naiads who solved the riddle of the Sphinx. One explanation is that Dante's Ovidian text had 'Naiades' instead of 'Laiades', the son of Laius; namely Oedipus.[139] The early commentators tend to simply explain the references separately, although Lana includes the rather strange story of some mystery-solving young women, the Naiades, who solved all the secret predictions of the two fates, Temis and Sfinge. Beatrice then instructs Dante to note her words and take them back to the living.

By telling Dante *personaggio* that her prophecy is an enigma to be solved only by its realisation, Beatrice is encouraging him to wait, and almost suggesting that it is useless to try and unravel its meaning in advance; this is an unsolvable enigma. We may notice the absence at this point of the sort of interventions we have seen before from Dante *poeta*, encouraging us to pay particular attention and try to understand difficult parts of the text.[140] The message to the reader, if any, seems to be to wait and all will be revealed.

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[139] Bosco and Reggio, II, p. 562 explain that some medieval codices have this error. See too Frugoni, p. 205. The line in Ovid is *Met.* VII. 759.

[140] E.g.'O voi ch'avete li 'ntelletti sani, |mirate la dottrina che s'asconde | sotto 'l velame de li versi strani' (*Inf.*, IX. 61-63). 'Aguzza qui, lettor, ben li occhi al vero, | ché 'l velo è ora

Many have reached similar conclusions to that which Peter Armour expresses so fully, following his detailed examination of the prophecy and proposed solutions:

> All this confirms the sense that there is no real solution to Beatrice's 'dark narration' and powerful 'enigma', rather that there is a solution but only the facts themselves will 'solve' it. The whole passage, a number-prophecy arising out of an ornithological image, is expressed in the difficult rhymes in *-inque* and *-uia* and contains obscure allusions to St. John's phrase 'was and is not' and to the legends of Themis and the Sphinx. ... Neither Dante nor any other human being can understand this message ... In other words, Dante the poet has deliberately created an insoluble enigma which only the events themselves will explain.'[141]

Accepting this is not an abdication of critical responsibility, or failure as a reader. On the contrary, it is a recognition and understanding of what Dante is doing with this prophecy. A very different approach is expressed by one of the main theorists on the *DXV* problem:

> The simple fact to keep in mind is that Dante himself has explicitly put these "prophecies" in the text, and until they are solved, his vision of history, as expressed in the *Comedy*, remains necessarily incomplete.[142]

The problem with Mastrobuono's objection is that he does not appear to allow for the possibility that Dante wishes the *Commedia* to remain in some way incomplete, or, perhaps, unfulfilled would be a better description. It is necessarily the case that all prophecies are open, since they describe events yet to take place from the point of view of the drama of the poem, at the diegetic level. The *DXV* prophecy is significant in the poem not for what it *does* mean, which cannot be ascertained from the text alone, and we must suppose that this is Dante *uomo*'s intention, but for what it *can* mean. It is capable of being interpreted in different ways, or, to be more precise, of being applied to different situations or individuals, at least in a figural sense, without being exhausted, or proven to be false.

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ben tanto sottile, | certo che 'l trapassar dentro è leggero' (*Pur.* VIII. 19-21). These are categorised as 'admonitions to the reader' by Beall, p. 319; See also Leo Spitzer, 'The Addresses to the Reader in the "Commedia"', *Italica*, 32 (1955), 143-65 (p. 149).

[141] Armour, *Dante's Griffin*, p. 248.

[142] Mastrobuono, p. 153. This statement is made in direct response to the assertion of Curtius about the *veltro* and *DXV*, quoted by Mastrobuono, that 'The deciphering of these hieroglyphics is irrelevant to an appreciation and comprehension of Dante's poetry' (Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 375). Mastrobuono is perhaps harsh, however, as Curtius, p. 377, does also state: 'Even if we could interpret his prophecy, that would give it no meaning for us. What Dante hid, Dante scholarship need not now unriddle. But it must take seriously the fact that Dante believed that he had an apocalyptic mission. This must be taken into consideration in interpreting him.' We cannot agree completely with Curtius but he is not as dismissive of interpretation as Mastrobuono's opposition might suggest.

Dante has created a prophecy which is open-ended yet eschatologically certain, capable of being applied to different individuals in the interim.

This concludes the list of prophecies in the *Purgatorio*. We will continue in the next chapter with those in the *Paradiso*.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROPHECIES III: *PARADISO*

Paradiso VI

In the sphere of Mercury, the emperor Justinian presents a lengthy historical survey of the Roman Empire, concluding with a warning for Dante *personaggio*'s contemporaries:

> 'Faccian li Ghibellin, faccian lor arte
> sott' altro segno, ché mal segue quello
> sempre chi la giustizia e lui diparte;
> e non l'abbatta esto Carlo novello
> coi Guelfi suoi, ma tema de li artigli
> ch'a più alto leon trasser lo vello.
> Molte fïate già pianser li figli
> per la colpa del padre, e non si creda
> che Dio trasmuti l'armi per suoi gigli!'
>
> (*Par.*, VI. 103-11)

First, the Ghibellines are told to continue under a different sign; a criticism of their appropriation of the imperial sign of the eagle because, as Justinian makes clear, they do not act according to justice, which is what the sign of the eagle implies (105). Then he admonishes Charles II of Anjou and the Guelfs, who are described as being his (107), warning him not to oppose the eagle or he will suffer (107-08). Finally, he warns Charles not to think that the Empire could pass to France (111). This Charles has already been the subject of a *post eventum* prophecy, as we have seen: he is 'l'altro' of *Purgatorio* XX. 79. This mention of Guelfs and Ghibellines is one of a number of features connecting this canto with the corresponding canto of the *Inferno*.[1] Other than a general warning, however, it is difficult to find any reference in these words to any specific event. This makes it difficult to classify as a prophecy.[2] The early commentators do not describe it as a prophecy; Benvenuto only refers in very general terms to the events alluded to and the *Ottimo* avoids these verses completely.[3] Francesco da Buti, however, in his comment on

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[1] Parallels are shown by Francesco Mazzoni, 'Il Canto VI del *Paradiso*', *Letture classensi*, 9/10 (1982), 118-59 (pp. 120-22).

[2] Cian, p. 124, includes it in his list, but states: 'è implicita la profezia minacciosa.' According to Paolo Brezzi the speech of Justinian 'assume il tono di un minaccioso, profetico ammonimento' ('Canto VI', *Lectura dantis scaligera: Paradiso*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1968), 175-212 (p. 201); now in his *Letture dantesche*, pp. 121-52 (p. 140)).

[3] The commentary skips from verse 97 to verse 112, with no mention of this section. *L'Ottimo commento*, III, pp. 171-72.

verse 106, does outline Charles' activities in Italy up to his death in 1309, including the fact that he sent his son Robert to assist the Florentine Guelfs at the siege of Pistoia.[4] Commenting on lines 109-111, Buti explains that the punishment threatened by Justinian fell, not on Charles, but on his son Philip, who was captured and held prisoner by the King of Aragon. We may speculate that the message is intended for Charles' son Robert, King of Naples after Charles' death in 1309, a focal figure for the Guelfs, and a leading opponent of Henry VII.[5] The basic problem, however, is that there is nothing in the wording of the warning itself to indicate any particular event. From the standpoint of Dante *personaggio* it could simply be a warning about the consequences of any future transgression, in which case it would simply be a reference to the fictional present of 1300, rather than the fictional future to come.[6] Since there is no clear reference either to times or events, this passage cannot properly be regarded as a prophecy, despite signs that it contains *post eventum* allusions to the future.

20. *Paradiso* VIII

The first prophecy in the *Paradiso* comes in canto VIII, in the third sphere of heaven, the sphere of Venus, and is delivered by Charles Martel. Dante asks Charles who he is (44) and the prophecy comes at the end of Charles' fairly lengthy reply. Early in the speech there is a hint of prediction when Charles begins:

> Così fatta, mi disse: 'Il mondo m'ebbe
> giù poco tempo; e se più fosse stato,
> molto sarà di mal, che non sarebbe.' 51
>
> (*Par.*, VIII. 49-51)

Charles first draws attention to the brevity of his life.[7] The mixture of future and conditional tenses in the second part of his statement already gives an indication of the

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[4] This was in 1305-6, see *Storie pistoresi*, pp. 38-41.
[5] See Bowsky, pp. 161-65; 169-77; 180; 184-92; Émile G. Léonard, *Les Angevins de Naples* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), pp. 214-32.
[6] '... il racconto giustinianeo del viaggio dell'Aquila romana dalle origini a Cesare, da Augusto a Carlo magno e poi al tempo di Dante; l'excursus storico a questo punto termina anche se non finisce il discorso dell'imperatore' (Brezzi, 'Canto VI', p. 202 (*Letture dantesche*, p. 141)).
[7] Charles died in 1295, according to Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 123; Richard Cooper, 'The French Dimension in Dante's Politics', in *Dante and Governance*, ed. by J. R. Woodhouse (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 58-84 (p. 62); Delmay, p. 68; John Larner, *Culture and Society in Italy 1290-1420* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1971), p. 209. Singleton, III.2, pp. 152-53, notes a letter of Boniface VIII, dated the 30th of August 1295, appointing Charles' mother regent of Naples on his death.

future. Had he lived, then that evil which will definitely occur would not come about. This is a definite prediction of future evil then, but extremely general, and we can only suppose that it concerns his brother Robert, later to become King of Naples. It sets a tone of expectation for the apparent prediction which follows later in his speech.

Charles then explains to Dante that his happiness conceals him from Dante's sight (52-54); and that had he lived longer he would have rewarded the love Dante had shown him (55-57).[8] He then tells Dante that he would have been the ruler of Provence (58-59), and of the kingdom of Naples (61-63), and was already King of Hungary (64-66). The Kings of Sicily would have been descended from him too (67-72), except for misrule which led to the so-called 'Sicilian Vespers' of 1282, when the crown of Sicily passed to Peter of Aragon.

It is on the same note, considering, for a third time now, how things might have been different had he lived longer, that he delivers an apparent prophecy:

> 'E se mio frate questo antivedesse,
> l'avara povertà di Catalogna
> già fuggeria, perché non li offendesse;
> ché veramente proveder bisogna
> per lui, o per altrui, sì ch'a sua barca
> carcata più d'incarico non si pogna.'
>
> (*Par.*, VIII. 76-81)

The phrasing of the prophecy is quite complicated in its use of conditional clauses, so that the future is communicated as a fixed event, a *fait accompli* which *could* have been different (even though it has not yet occurred) but *will not* be different. If Charles' brother Robert had foreseen the events which caused the Sicilian vespers, (described by Charles at 73-5; referred to as 'questo' 76), the result of 'mala signoria' (73), he would already be fleeing 'l'avara povertà di Catalogna' (77). Charles then offers advice for Robert, but useful for anyone else too, using the metaphor of the ship for the State, and warning against avarice.

This passage presents a number of difficulties, not least the fact that it does not seem to refer to any particular event, but to a general state of affairs, and even this is

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[8] It is thought that they met when Charles visited Florence in 1294. Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 123, give 1294, and refer to the account in Villani, but Villani, IX. 13, gives a date of 1295. Larner, *Culture and Society*, p. 209, gives 1294; Cooper, p. 62, gives 1293/4; Delmay, p. 68, notes that the visit lasted 'dal 2 al 15 marzo del 1293 (stile fiorentino; 1294, stile comune).'

unclear. There seems to be a hint of something specific in the expression 'perché non li offendesse' (78), but nothing is immediately obvious. The first part (76-78) seems to refer to Robert's stay in Catalonia until 1295 as a hostage, yet 'già' (78) must apply to the fictional time of speaking in 1300. For many commentators 'l'avara povertà di Catalogna' (77) refers to Robert's Catalonian advisers.[9] This is problematic, however, since it could only refer to the later period when Robert became King.[10] Another suggestion is that it refers to Robert's own avarice, a vice supposedly picked up from his stay in Catalonia.[11] Of course, Charles' words could easily be interpreted to mean that Robert would change his ways now, in 1300, before becoming King, were he to foresee the Sicilian Vespers. This is the next problem, since Charles appears to be saying that Robert would change if he were to foresee something which has already occurred. This can only work if 'questo' (76) refers to the lesson from the Sicilian vespers. Francesco da Buti, in fact, interprets it like this: '*questo*: cioè che detto è di sopra, cioè che mala et iniusta signoria fa ardire li popoli sudditi di ribellarsi da' suoi signori.' The possible loss of a Kingdom only makes sense if it refers to the period after Robert had become King of Naples, so after 1309.

In fact, this rather vague prophecy was not fulfilled. Since it is phrased as a warning to Robert to change his ways, coupled with the very general statement that bad things will happen, it is safeguarded against being proven false. We may speculate that Dante imagined the possible loss of Robert's kingdom when Henry VII was preparing to attack him. Obviously this has to be before Henry's death, so probably sometime in 1312 or 1313. The contorted way in which this is expressed has the feeling of an *ante eventum* statement about it; nor is it strictly predictive, since, theoretically Robert could mend his ways, in spite of the strong suggestions to the contrary in the subjunctives and conditional used. The first part, referring to future evils as a result of the premature death of Charles Martel, is a definite but imprecise prediction, and could apply to any of Robert's activities after 1300 from Dante's political point of view.

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[9] This is the case for Benvenuto, the *Ottimo*, and Buti. Also Cooper, p. 75.

[10] 'Al momento della visione, nel 1300, Roberto non potrebbe fuggire l'avarizia di ministri e funzionari di cui egli si sarebbe circondato nove anni dopo, a meno di ammettere che egli avesse già con sé degli amici, che egli avrebbe poi innalzato a cariche e uffici dopo la sua assunzione al trono: il che è perlomeno assai dubbio, perché costringe a troppe illazioni che il testo non consente' (Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 127).

[11] Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 126; Sapegno, III, p. 103, also prefers this interpretation. Lana describes it as a habit of the Catalans, rather than a reference to any Catalan advisers.

21. *Paradiso* IX

Paradiso IX begins with the information that Charles Martel has prophesied to Dante personaggio that something bad will happen to his family, but the one responsible for it will be punished. However, he has also bound Dante not to tell of it. So, whilst it is Dante *poeta* who speaks here, he is communicating a prediction given to him by Charles Martel, and which he does not report in full, in accordance with Charles' instructions. Since the origin of the prophecy is not a vision or dream experienced by Dante *poeta*, it is, therefore, the same sort of prophecy as the others related to him by the souls in the afterlife, and not like the dream prophecy of *Inferno* XXVI.[12] Dante *poeta*, then, reports the existence of this prophecy and its general sense. There is some debate over the identity of Clemenza, since this is the name of both Charles' wife and daughter.[13] Since his wife was dead before 1300, it seems more likely that Dante is addressing the daughter. The prophecy is as follows:

> Da poi che Carlo tuo, bella Clemenza,
> m'ebbe chiarito, mi narrò li 'nganni
> che ricever dovea la sua semenza;
> ma disse: 'Taci e lascia muover li anni';
> sì ch'io non posso dir se non che pianto
> giusto verrà di retro ai vostri danni.
>
> (*Par.*, IX. 1-6)

Dante tells her that deceptions await Charles' offspring (2-3), but cannot say what they are (4); he may only reveal that just punishment awaits their ill-doing (5-6). There is the slightest time reference, the period will be one of years (4). The singular 'pianto giusto verrà' (5-6) suggests some single event, but Dante follows Charles' injunction and gives no indication of what will happen. Lana, Benvenuto and Buti identify the deception as

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[12] Palma di Cesnola, p. 40, in fact acknowledges this: 'Come appare chiaramente, il narratore, non essendone all'origine, è soltanto in parte responsabile del vaticinio.' Nevertheless, he includes it in his list of three prophecies of Dante *poeta*. A more precise explanation of Dante *poeta*'s role here is that he is responsible for the transmission of the prophecy, or more precisely still, its non-transmission. See chapter 3 above on *Purg.*, VI.

[13] Aldo Vallone, 'Il Canto IX del *Paradiso*', *Nuove letture dantesche*, VI (Florence, Le Monnier, 1973), VI, 45-68 (p. 49), simply notes it could be either. Fernando Coletti, 'Canto IX', *Lectura dantis scaligera: Paradiso*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1968), 299-344 (pp. 302-03, n. 1) discusses both views. Palma di Cesnola, pp. 39-40, thinks the daughter the more likely. He states that she is Queen of France at that moment, but in fact the moment at which Dante *poeta* speaks is unknown. Singleton, III.2, pp. 161-62, notes the lack of conclusive proof but seems to prefer to identify Clemenza as the wife rather than the daughter, one reason being the intimacy implied in 'tuo'; this is despite some serious objections. Of the early commentators Lana, the *Chiose ambrosiane*, and Buti cite the daughter; Benvenuto and Pietro Alighieri say it is his wife.

whereby Charles' son and heir was cheated out of his kingdom by Charles' brother, Robert.[14] Robert's plans for this began at the time of Charles' death but came to fruition finally in June 1309 when he was crowned King of Sicily and Apulia by Clement V in Avignon.[15]

If we accept this as the deception, then we can expect the 'pianto giusto' to refer to the perpetrator, namely Robert. Furthermore, there is a slight indication in 'verrà di retro' (6) that it will follow quickly. Although the early commentators offer no interpretations for this, it is thought by modern commentators to refer to the battle of Montecatini in August 1315.[16] This certainly gave Robert cause to weep, as the Guelfs were defeated, and he personally lost a brother and nephew in the battle.[17]

There is no question that this passage is a prophecy, but it can only be regarded as *post eventum* on the assumption that Dante *uomo* had some specific event in mind. Charles' instruction to Dante to be silent and let time run its course might refer more to the deceptions, than to the punishment, and Dante *poeta* certainly allows himself a degree of flexibility in holding his peace. The prophecy itself exhibits some of the features of *post eventum* prophecies, such as an indication of time, and the fusion of historical events and moral judgements. Nevertheless, it is still left to the reader to supply the missing parts, although a willingness to do so by the later commentators may encourage us to regard this prophecy as *post eventum,* if only speculatively.

22. *Paradiso* IX

Later in the same canto, Dante meets the soul of Cunizza who anticipates his unasked questions (*Par.*, IX. 19-21) by identifying herself. First, she gives her place of origin in the 'terra prava | italica' (25-26), an expression which introduces straight away the tone of the moral judgement which will run through her prophecy. Then she gives the location of her family castle at Romano (25-29), and refers to her brother (29-31), the

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[14] So, too, Coletti, pp. 304-05.
[15] Villani, IX. 112, has a brief account. Charles' son, Charles Robert, became King of Hungary at the same time, but lost Naples.
[16] Since Robert died in 1343 we can probably disregard Benvenuto's suggestion: 'et forte hoc dicit, quia Robertus mortuus est sine prole mascula, cui successit eius nepotis filia Veneris, quae tamen magnifice gubernavit regnum.' Palma di Cesnola, p. 40, is convinced; Coletti, p. 305, is more cautious.
[17] Villani, X. 71-72, has an account of the battle and its aftermath.

violent Ghibelline leader Ezzelino III da Romano, as 'una facella' (29). This is thought to refer to a popular story about the birth of Ezzelino: that his mother dreamt that she was giving birth to a burning torch.[18] Ezzelino himself is among the violent in Hell (*Inf.*, XII. 109-10), so that we have another example of family members occupying different areas of the afterlife. The mention of Ezzelino here has been interpreted as a corrective to stories that he was born of a demon.[19] Cunizza's mention of Ezzelino, however, foreshadows the violent events which she is going to predict.[20] She then gives her own name (32) and an allusion to the events of her life.[21] Before delivering her prophecy to Dante, she points out one of the souls beside her:

> 'Di questa luculenta e cara gioia
> del nostro cielo che più m'è propinqua,
> grande fama rimase; e pria che moia,
> questo centesimo anno ancor s'incinqua:
> vedi se far si dee l'omo eccelente,
> sì ch'altra vita la prima relinqua.'
>
> (*Par.*, IX. 37-42)

Cunizza refers to the fame of this spirit, who will later be revealed as Folco of Marseilles, and will in fact be the next soul to address Dante *personaggio*. Whilst the figure given at this point (40) for a time reference is very precise, five hundred years, it is not intended as to be prophetic. The reference to Folco's fame is to set the moral tone for his later pronouncements, which suggests that it refers to his reputation as a religious man rather than as a poet.[22] Cunizza then delivers her prophecy to Dante:

> 'E ciò non pensa la turba presente
> che Tagliamento e Adice richiude,
> né per esser battuta ancor si pente;
> ma tosto fia che Padova al palude
> cangerà l'acqua che Vincenza bagna,
> per essere al dover le genti crude;

[18] Pietro Alighieri recounts the story. Vallone, 'Il Canto IX', pp. 53-54, quotes Pietro. The story is also mentioned by Coletti, p. 314. Coletti, p. 314, n. 3, has a misprint for the date of Ezzelino's death, giving 1359 instead of 1259.

[19] Bosco and Reggio, I, p. 184.

[20] Vallone, 'Il Canto IX', p. 53, describes the 'facella' as an emblem of war.

[21] For details see Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 142, and Singleton, III.2, p. 164. Richard Kay, *Dante's Christian Astrology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), p. 90, suggests that the firebrand is reflective of the Venusian qualities of Cunizza herself. Coletti, p. 315, notes the emphasis on the violent and passionate origin which Cunizza and her brother share. He also notes, pp. 321-22, that Dante has Cunizza communicate virtually nothing of herself.

[22] Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 143, note that an interest in literary fame would be inappropriate in heaven. It is interesting that the *Ottimo* should devote more space to the details of Folco's illicit love affair than to his conversion and reformed life.

e dove Sile e Cagnan s'accompagna,
tal signoreggia e va con la testa alta,
che già per lui carpir si fa la ragna.
Piangerà Feltro ancora la difalta
de l'empio suo pastor, che sarà sconcia
sì, che per simil non s'entrò in malta.
Troppo sarebbe larga la bigoncia
che ricevesse il sangue ferrarese,
e stanco chi 'l pesasse a oncia a oncia,
che donerà questo prete cortese
per mostrarsi di parte; e cotai doni
conformi fieno al viver del paese.
Sù sono specchi, voi dicete Troni,
onde refulge a noi Dio giudicante;
sì che questi parlar ne paion buoni.'
Qui si tacette; [...]

(*Par.*, IX. 43-64)

She specifies that her words concern the inhabitants of the Marca Trevigiana (41-42), who, in contrast to Folco, have no interest in leaving behind a good reputation (41), not even when punished (45). Cunizza's prophecy concerns her own geographical area; which is a feature we have seen in other predictions.[23] Her moral judgement precedes the actual prediction, strongly emphasizing the divine, providential origin of the events to follow; again, as we have seen, another frequent feature in the prophecies.

In the prediction, although the time frame is indicated imprecisely, 'tosto' (56), place names are given, 'Padova' (46), 'Vincenza (47). The event itself is also fairly clear, albeit phrased in slightly oblique terms. Padua will change the colour of the water of the swamp, the Bacchiglione, at Vicenza with its blood. This is how Buti and Pietro Alighieri understand this part of the prophecy. The other early commentators don't spell it out, but Benvenuto is clear that it refers to the defeat of the Paduan Guelfs in 1314 by Cangrande della Scala, assisted by the Ghibellines of Vicenza.[24] This part concludes on a moral and political note; the 'dover' (48) of the people should have been their submission to imperial authority, the legitimacy of which is underlined by the moral, theological interpretation of the episode. It is made explicit in the causal relation which 'per' (48) posits between the

[23] Coletti, pp. 317-18, rejects the suggestion of Foscolo that this geographical connection is the likely reason why Cunizza is in the *Paradiso*; this is separate from our observation.
[24] Villani, X, 63, gives the 18th of September as the date. We may enjoy this excerpt from Benvenuto's account of Cangrande's part in the battle: 'Canis velut lupus inter oves, omnes dispersit cum parva caede...' (The Dog, like a wolf among sheep, scattered them all with little slaughter), my translation.

refusal of the Paduans to submit to Cangrande, who represents imperial authority, and the defeat which they were to suffer at his hands.

The next part of the prophecy predicts another event and specifies another area: 'Treviso' (49). Although he is not actually named, it is very clear that this refers to the ruler of Treviso, Rizzardo da Camino (52).[25] In fact, Rizzardo was not the ruler until 1306; at the time of Cunizza's delivery of the prediction his father Gherardo still ruled. This is a relatively small detail, however, which the wording of her prophecy may accommodate.[26] The death of Rizzardo is described metaphorically, 'si fa la ragna' (51), which is particularly appropriate since he seems to have been tricked or ambushed.[27] A moral perspective is introduced with the description of his 'testa alta' (52), an image of pride which echoes earlier passages in the *Commedia* and in Scripture.[28] The time reference given in 'già' (51) and the present tenses used suggest that the events leading up to his death are already in motion in 1300, and adds to the conspiratorial atmosphere being evoked. Because the identification of the subject of the prediction is straightforward, the content of the prophecy, his death in 1312, is easily determined. The unanimity of the early commentaries on this point should encourage us to regard this as *post eventum*.[29]

Cunizza then moves on to predict another event. Details are given in the prophecy; Feltre is named (52), and the bishop, 'l'empio suo pastor' (53), is specified. His future act of betrayal is described within a moral context (53-54). Despite a problem with the reference to 'malta' (54), the general meaning is clear enough: that his deed is the worst sort of crime.[30] The violent result, the execution of the Ferrarese Ghibellines, is presented in graphic terms (55-57) along with the public revulsion it provoked; 'piangerà Feltro'

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[25] His name is given by Lana, the *Ottimo*, Pietro Alighieri, the *Chiose ambrosiane*, Benvenuto, and Buti.

[26] The discrepancy is noted by Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 144; however, Singleton, III.2, p. 166, and Delmay, p. 317, note that Gherardo shared power with his son Rizzardo. We can also bear in mind the possibility that Dante has simply not accounted for this, especially as he is probably writing at least some fourteen years after the fictional date.

[27] Versions of the story differ slightly; the *Ottimo* gives two possibilities, both conspiracies; Benvenuto's version has him playing chess at the time he is attacked.

[28] E.g. *Inf.*, VI. 70, and Mt. 23. 4.

[29] Buti, III, p. 287, comments: 'e però finge l'autore che madonna Cunisa lo dica innanti; ma l'autore l'avea veduto innanti che venisse a questo punto.'

[30] The first problem is whether to read 'malta' or 'Malta'. Petrocchi, *La commedia*, III, p. 142, has this note: 'Ovvero Malta (nella '21), se la si vuol identificare con la torre nell'isola di Bolsena o con la prigione viterbese'. He then gives references for 'il generico riferimento a 'prigione'. The early commentators identify a variety of prisons with this name, so the general sense is evident. Coletti, p. 327, also discusses the problem.

(52). Finally, Cunizza explains the bishop's motives for the betrayal (59), describing the act itself with mordant sarcasm; 'donerà questo prete cortese' (58) and 'cotai doni' (59). This describes the betrayal in 1314 of certain Ghibellines who had fled Ferrara after a failed conspiracy, and placed themselves under the protection of the bishop of Feltre, Alessandro Novello. He then handed them over to Pino della Tosa, the vicar of King Robert at Ferrara, who had them publicly executed. Cunizza describes this with the gruesome image of weighing out meat. Benvenuto provides the fullest account, but all the early commentaries identify the subject of the prediction, so that we may reasonably describe this part as *post eventum* too.

The meaning of the opening words of this third part of Cunizza's long prophecy is a little equivocal. Why will Feltre weep? Is this describing a reaction of horror on the part of the citizens to the Bishop's act of betrayal?[31] Or, is this to be taken as a prediction of some sort of punishment on the city which will cause it to weep?[32] In any case, the main part of the prophecy is clear. She concludes with a general moral judgement on the whole area (59-60), perhaps a little unfair in view of what may be the reaction in Feltre.[33]

Cunizza concludes her lengthy prophecy by explaining that the reflection of God's judgement which the souls in Paradise see justifies her words (61-63). This is not so much an attempt to claim divine authority for the veracity of her prophecy, though obviously this is implicit, but rather it seeks to justify what might be seen as an excessively harsh mode of expression. Her focus on the terms 'giudicante' (64) and 'buoni' (63) demonstrate this. She is not addressing the question of the source or the trustworthiness of her predictions, which in the *Paradiso* should need no justification.[34]

This last section is of particular interest as it posits an explanation for the knowledge of the future enjoyed by the souls in the *Paradiso*. This appears to be quite different from the 'antiveder' of those in the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*. According to this explanation, which Cunizza offers to excuse her apparently bitter tone, the souls of the

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[31] Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 144, discuss the problem, and reject the notion of a future punishment for the city.
[32] Lana and Buti take this view.
[33] 'By this act of treachery the bishop incurred such great odium that he was forced to quit Feltre and retire into a monastery, where he died in 1320' (Singleton, III.2, p. 166).
[34] Bosco and Reggio, III, pp. 145-46, note the emphasis.

blessed are privy to the workings of God. This will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

23. *Paradiso* IX

The canto ends with a condemnation of Florence and of Rome, delivered to Dante *personaggio* by Folco of Marseilles. The end of Folco's speech, and of the canto, contains a very short prediction of change for the papacy. The condemnation begins with Florence:

'La tua città che di colui è pianta
che pria volse le spalle al suo fattore
e di cui è la 'nvidia tanto pianta,
produce e spande il maladetto fiore
c'ha disvïate le pecore e li agni,
però che fatto ha lupo del pastore.
Per questo l'Evangelio e i dottor magni
son derelitti, e solo ai Decretali
si studia, sì che pare a' lor vivagni.
A questo intende il papa e ' cardinali;
non vanno i lor pensieri a Nazarette,
là dove Gabrïello aperse l'ali.'

(*Par.*, IX. 127-38)

This judgement brings together themes and images which echo other passages of moral condemnation elsewhere in the *Commedia*. The introduction of Florence with 'la tua città' (127) repeats the opening phrase in Ciacco's description of the moral ills of Dante's city (*Inf.*, VI. 49). This is the second, and only other occurrence in this form, of 'spande', applied previously to Florence by Dante *poeta* in his invective on the city following the discovery of so many Florentines among the thieves in Hell (Inf., XXVI. 3). Cantos XIX of *Inferno* and XX of *Purgatorio* are reprised in Folco's attack (131-32) on the negligent pope and cardinals (136). All of which leads to his final observation about the future:

'Ma Vaticano e l'altre parti elette
di Roma che son state cimitero
a la malizia che Pietro seguette,
tosto libere fien de l'avoltero.'

(*Par.*, IX. 139-42)

The reference in the final line to adultery recalls the image we have seen used to refer to the papacy in other parts of the *Commedia*, so explains at least what that part refers to. The early commentators, almost unanimously, see this as a direct reference to Boniface VIII, and some interpret the reference to adultery as implying a doubt about the legitimacy

of his election.[35] Dante himself, as we have noted, appears to have had no quarrel with the legitimacy of Boniface's election and no sympathy for Celestine, if that is who is intended by the famous verse at *Inf.*, III. 60.[36] Clement V was to follow, whom Dante regarded as even worse (*Inf.*, XIX, 79-87), so that Folco's prediction could refer to the death of Clement. However, given that the papacy was still in Avignon at this time, the prophecy would be geographically incorrect. The geographical opening might even invite us to consider that it refers to the transfer to Avignon, though that seems a rather poor return for such a grandiloquent finish. The time reference 'tosto' is not especially helpful either, since, as we have seen, this term is increasingly flexible, covering periods from three years to any time in the future.[37] Despite the agreement of the early commentators, it seems unlikely that Dante *uomo*, knowing what was to follow the death of Boniface, could have intended this prediction to refer to those years. In addition, the passage itself is simply not specific enough. There is no detail to help differentiate it from a general statement of future improvement. Folco's prophecy might be best regarded as an open prediction, expressing Dante's hopes for the future.[38]

24. *Paradiso* XVII

Canto XVII contains an extensive prophecy regarding Dante's exile, delivered to him at his own request by the soul of his illustrious ancestor, Cacciaguida. The meeting with Cacciaguida begins in canto XV and continues to canto XVII, so that Cacciaguida

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[35] Benvenuto has this: 'Hic ultimo ostendit quomodo cito ad culpam sequitur vindicta, et praedicit mortem miserandam ipsius Bonifacii: [...] dell'adultèro, idest, ab ipso Bonifacio adultero, qui non legitime accepit sponsam Christi, scilicet Ecclesiam, ut alibi saepe dictum est; quando enim accepit sponsam vivebat eius legitimus vir Caelestinus; vel dicas ab adulterio Bonifacii quod commisit cum sponsa, idest Ecclesia Dei, quae habebat Caelestinum in suum verum pontificem. Et in hoc praedicit mortem Bonifacii, qui tertio anno postea captus est et turpiter mortuus.' The *Ottimo*, III, 237, also recalls the story of Boniface tricking Celestine out of the papacy, referring readers also to *Inferno* XIX.

[36] In an interesting discussion Carlo Cuini, *Qualche Novità nella Divina Commedia: Il Veltro, "il gran rifiuto", ed altro* (Ancona: Bagaloni, 1986), pp. 43-60, argues the case, after narrowing the options down to Celestine or Pontius Pilate in favour of the latter. Robert Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 73-74, argues for both, and a few others besides, on the basis that 'seen with the eye of historical figuralism, each act in universal history has its past or future counterparts in other acts' (p. 74).

[37] It refers to periods of three years at *Inf.*, XIX. 55; seven years at *Inf.*, XXVIII. 57; fourteen years at *Par.*, IX. 46; and any amount of time at *Pur.*, XXXIII. 49.

[38] Coletti, p. 343, sees it not as *post eventum*, but as an open hope for the future.

speaks more than any other soul with the exception of Dante's guides.[39] The meeting parallels that between Aeneas and Anchises in Book VI of the *Aeneid*, and there is an explicit reference to this parallel from the outset.[40] Their conversation revolves around Florence, moving from the past, to the present, and then the future; a pattern also to be found in the episode in the *Aeneid*.[41]

In canto XVII Dante *personaggio* asks Cacciaguida (*Par.*, XVII. 19-24) to clarify the 'parole gravi' (23) he has received thus far in the series of predictions regarding his own future. Dante *personaggio* introduces his question by acknowledging that Cacciaguida is able to know the future since he is in Heaven (13-18). This is something quite different from the 'antiveder' of the previous two canticas, and Cacciaguida offers further clarification on the matter (31-45). This issue will be examined in more detail in the next chapter. We should note that Dante *personaggio* had been informed already that this meeting was to take place, but he was told that it would be with Beatrice.[42] Cacciaguida states in his introduction to the prophecy that he will speak clearly, and explains how it is that the blessed know the future (31-45). Then comes the very lengthy prophecy, which we will examine in sections. The first part simply states that Dante will leave Florence:

> 'Qual si partio Ipolito d'Atene
> per la spietata e perfida noverca
> tal di Fiorenza partir ti convene.
> Questo si vuole e questo già si cerca,
> e tosto verrà fatto a chi ciò pensa

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[39] Kay, *Dante's Christian Astrology*, p. 166, explains that this is because loquaciousness is a characteristic of Mars, the heaven in which Dante meets Cacciaguida.

[40] 'Sì pïa l'ombra d'Anchise si porse, | se fede merta nostra maggior musa, | quando in Eliso del figlio s'accorse' (*Par.*, XV. 25-27). Francesco Maggini, 'La profezia dell'esilio del "Paradiso" nel canto XVII', *La Rassegna della Letteratura Italiana*, 65.2 (1961), 219-22, (pp. 220-21), lists a series of parallels. Ferdinando Figurelli, 'I canti di Cacciaguida' in *Dante nella critica d'oggi: risultati e prospettive*, ed. by U. Bosco (Florence: Le Monnier, 1965), pp. 634-61 (p. 643), sees in this an analogy between the mission of Aeneas and that of Dante, as does Nereo Vianello, 'Canto XVII', *Lectura dantis scaligera: Paradiso*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1968), 581-622 (p. 583). Jeffrey, T. Schnapp, *The Transfiguration of History at the Center of Dante's* Paradise (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), studies the episode in some depth, positing a Christian re-writing of the Virgilian episode by Dante.

[41] Bortolo Martinelli, 'Cacciaguida oracolo di Dio ("Paradiso" XV-XVII)', *Italianistica*, 8 (1979), 569-94 (p. 573).

[42] 'quando sarai dinanzi al dolce raggio | di quella il cui bell' occhio tutto vede, | da lei saprai di tua vita il vïaggio' (*Inf.*, X. 130-32), 'Ciò che narrate di mio corso scrivo, | e serbolo a chiosar con altro testo | a donna che saprà, s'a lei arrivo' (*Inf.*, XV. 88-90). See Chapter 2, note 78 above. It would be harsh, I think, to classify this as a failed prediction. Rather we might paraphrase Horace: 'Quandoque bonus dormitat *Dantes*.' More seriously, Martinelli, p. 571, sees an indication in these verses of a time of composition when Dante had a different plan in mind.

là dove Cristo tutto dì si merca.
La colpa seguirà la parte offensa
in grido, come suol; ma la vendetta
fia testimonio la ver che la dispensa.'

(*Par.*, XVII. 46-54)

The comparison with Hippolytus, falsely accused and unjustly exiled, casts Dante as the innocent victim from the outset. Casting Florence in the role of Phaedra, the stepmother and not the real mother of Hippolytus, may be an additional bitter reproach aimed at his native city.[43] We may note, too, that Dante draws his comparison from the classical world. The terzina ends with the unequivocal statement that Dante will have to leave Florence (48).

The next part describes events in the fictional present, 1300, which will lead to Dante's exile. We may note, once more, the different nature of the knowledge which the blessed exhibit; they are not in ignorance of the present. Dante's exile is already being plotted, and will also occur 'tosto' (50); the flexibility of this term has already been noted. The early commentators, and most modern commentaries identify the 'place where Christ is sold' as the Roman Curia, and agree on the identity of the person seeking Dante's exile (50) as Boniface VIII. The present tense verbs ending each line of the terzina state that it is all happening now, that is in 1300. These verses spell out what was hinted in the prediction in *Inferno* VI: the secret involvement of Boniface in the events leading to the exile of the Whites from Florence.[44]

The next section again protests Dante's innocence. Cacciaguida first predicts that the losing party in the coming conflict will be blamed, which is normal (53), but he then seeks to turn this apparent moral condemnation back upon itself. It is the victors who will be punished, and this vengeance, presumably God's, will be the proof of who is really at fault. This is rather cryptic insofar as it does not specify what this vendetta will be; so suggestions vary. Lana states quite simply that it will be some act of divine justice on the

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[43] Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 286. Schnapp, pp. 55, 225.

[44] Benvenuto gives the most detailed account. Holmes, *'Monarchia* and Dante's Attitude to the Popes', pp. 54-55, states: 'It is not clear who is intended here. The most obvious plotters of Dante's exile in the Spring of 1300 - of course no one had actually thought of it at that time - were the Spini company, active as bankers of the papacy in Rome.' He refers the reader to his *Florence, Rome*, pp. 167 ff, for details. In fact, we are not trying to analyse the historical situation but understand Dante's text, and the majority of commentators have done so by interpreting this as a reference to Boniface. Compagni, II. 11, describes Boniface conspiring with the Florentine Black Guelfs.

Curia. Francesco da Buti offers a list of calamities in Florence, including the collapse of the Ponte Carrai and the fire in 1304, as well as other unspecified disasters.[45] Benvenuto interprets it as a reference to the death of Corso Donati, but also adds a very interesting comment to correct opinions that Dante was predicting his own return to Florence.[46] The fact that Buti chose to list a series of possibilities demonstrates the rather general nature of the statement. It could, therefore, simply be an open expectation rather than a *post eventum* prediction. Despite the willingness of Compagni and Villani to interpret Boniface's death as a divine punishment, the idea that it refers to this is difficult in view of Dante's strong condemnation of his attackers in *Purgatorio* XX.[47] Yes, he has shown that he can distinguish between the man and the office, but the death of Boniface is still the result of a physical assault on the pope himself.

What does emerge very strongly is the idea that the events which are predicted will have the function, when they happen, of 'testimonio' (54). This is the first explicit statement of this idea in the *Commedia*.[48] It is not simply that the fulfilment of these predictions will prove that their communicators spoke the truth, but that the whole moral interpretation of the events predicted is justified.[49] Cacciaguida then continues with a description of the much more personal aspects of exile:

> 'Tu lascerai ogne cosa diletta
> più caramente; e questo è quello strale
> che l'arco de lo essilio pria saetta.
> Tu proverai sì come sa di sale
> lo pane altrui, e come è duro calle
> lo scendere e 'l salir per l'altrui scale.'
>
> (*Par.*, XVII. 55-60)

[45] On the fire, see Chapter 2, note 137.

[46] 'Et subdit: ma la vendetta, quae postea sequetur, fia testimonio al ver che la dispensa id est, justitiae divinae, quae vera est, et quae dispensat ipsam vindictam. Et dicunt aliqui quod autor credidit per divinam vindictam redire in patriam, quod tamen non fuit. Sed certe non oportet hic facere autorem mendacem, quia nihil dicit hic de reditu, sed de vindicta; et respicit ad mortem acerbam domini Cursii de Donatis praedicti.'

[47] See Villani, IX. 64; Compagni, II. 35. Compagni, III. 12, we may recall, also regards the removal of good popes as a punishment from God.

[48] Despite a hint of this in the earlier predictions regarding Corso Donati and the woman of Lucca, in these cases Dante is simply told that all will become clear when the predicted event occurs, but not that this will then serve to legitimize the words of Forese and Bonagiunta.

[49] See chapter 2, note 58 above.

The metaphor of the arrow is in direct response to Dante's own wish to know the worst so that he might be prepared.[50] Cacciaguida then moves on to describe the greatest of the troubles Dante will experience in exile: his relationship with the other Florentine exiles:

> 'E quel che più ti graverà le spalle,
> sarà la compagnia malvagia e scempia
> con la qual tu cadrai in questa valle;
> che tutta ingrata, tutta matta ed empia
> si farà contr' a te; ma, poco appresso,
> ella, non tu, n'avrà rossa la tempia.
> Di sua bestialitate il suo processo
> farà la prova; sì ch'a te fia bello
> averti fatta parte per te stesso.'
>
> (*Par.*, XVII. 61-69)

Cacciaguida's description of the company in which Dante will find himself provides a succinct picture of the sort of desperate and conspiratorial atmosphere created when these groups of exiles set up together and tried to find ways to return to their city.[51] This company will turn on him, but it is they, and not Dante, who will suffer. There is a hint of bloodshed in the expression 'avrà rossa la tempia' (66), and, although the early commentators interpret this line in a rather general way, we might reasonably see here a reference to the disastrous attempt of the Whites to return to the city on the 20th of July 1304.[52] This would fit as it is 'poco appresso' (65) in relation to 1300, but after Dante has separated himself from them. As we saw, that was most likely to have been at least by July 1304.[53] Cacciaguida assures him that this will be proof of their brutish, immoral nature (64), and of his virtue in separating himself from them. This will lead Dante out of party divisions altogether (69), as was already adumbrated in the rather cryptic conclusion to the prophecy of Brunetto Latini (*Inf.*, XV. 70-72). This part, then, obviously covers the earliest years of Dante's exile, up to the actual point of separation from the other Whites. Cacciaguida then moves on to describe the next stage in Dante's exile:

> 'Lo primo tuo refugio e 'l primo ostello
> sarà la cortesia del gran Lombardo
> che 'n su la scala porta il santo uccello;
> ch'in te avrà sì benigno riguardo,

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[50] Dante asks: 'per che la voglia mia saria contenta | d'intender qual fortuna mi s'appresa: | ché saetta previsa vien più lenta' (*Par.*, XVII, 25-7).
[51] Starn, pp. 40-54, describes the typical situation of the *fuorusciti* at this time. See, too, Bemrose, pp. 81-83.
[52] See chapter 2, note 67 above for details.
[53] See chapter 2, notes 67 and 68 above on Dante's separation from the Whites. Also Vianello, pp. 604-06.

che del fare e del chieder, tra voi due,
fia primo quel che tra li altri è più tardo.' 75

(*Par.*, XVII. 70-75)

The early commentators all explain that the 'gran Lombardo' (71) refers to Bartolomeo della Scala, one of the Scaligers of Verona, who has the emblem of the eagle as part of his insignia. There may be some contamination on the part of Dante *uomo* in this detail, as there is some doubt as to whether this crest was already in use by the Scaligers in 1300, though this is not a barrier to understanding the reference.[54] Since Bartolomeo died on the 7th of March 1304, this would refer to Dante's first visit to Verona in 1303-1304, which fits well with the description of this as his 'primo ostello' (70). This would also render more poignant the emphasis on the speed with which Dante and the 'gran lombardo' became friends, since Bartolomeo would soon be dead. Of course, hindsight on the part of Dante *uomo* may have prompted this speeding up of their intimacy, and some commentators are sceptical about Dante's account of their friendship.[55] There is also a retrospective element in Dante's description of this first visit as his 'primo ostello' since, in fact, he did not stay, and was still something of a wanderer during this early period of exile.[56] Nevertheless, it is easy to see in this description an expression of gratitude by Dante for his later stay in Verona. Cacciaguida then tells Dante *personaggio* that it is during this first visit that he will see Cangrande della Scala, the younger brother of Bartolomeo:

'Con lui vedrai colui che 'mpresso fue,
nascendo, sì da questa stella forte,
che notabili fier l'opere sue. 78
Non se ne son le genti ancora accorte
per la novella età, ché pur nove anni
son queste rote intorno di lui torte; 81
ma pria che 'l Guasco l'alto Arrigo inganni,
parran faville de la sua virtute
in non curar d'argento né d'affani. 84
Le sue magnificenze conosciute
saranno ancora, sì che ' suoi nemici
non ne potran tener le lingue mute. 87
A lui t'aspetta e a' suoi benefici;

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[54] The problem is discussed by Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 289; Singleton, III.2, p. 295, explains the reference to the eagle as a mistake by Dante. Colin Hardie, 'Cacciaguida's Prophecy on "Paradiso" 17', *Traditio*, 19 (1963), 267-94, supports the idea that it is Cangrande instead. Girolamo Arnaldi, 'Della Scala', *Enciclopedia dantesca*, II, 351-54, (p. 353), notes that although the crest was granted after March 1311, there is a record of its use in 1310. He favours Bartolomeo as the 'gran lombardo'.

[55] Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 289, cite *Pur.*, XVIII. 121-26, as evidence that relations may have been cooler during this first visit to Verona.

[56] See Hardie, 'Cacciaguida's Prophecy', pp. 272-74.

per lui fia trasmutata molta gente,
cambiando condizion ricchi e mendici;
e portera'ne scritto ne la mente
di lui, e nol dirai'; e disse cose
incredibili a quei che fier presente.

(*Par.*, XVII. 76-93)

There is no doubt that this refers to Cangrande della Scala, who was nine years old in 1300 (80-81), and the remainder of the prophecy consists largely in a panegyric on his future deeds. It begins with a general prediction about their greatness (78), which, when linked with the mention of Mars (77), may indicate military achievements. Then a time reference follows in the form of a limit within which something will occur (82). This event is the betrayal of Henry VII, 'l'alto Arrigo (82) by Pope Clement V, ' 'l Guasco' (82).[57] Clement had called on the Italians to support Henry in his bull *Exultet in Gloria* of the 1st of September 1310. [58] In March, Henry was about to enter Rome for his coronation, but was prevented by Angevin troops, who held the city. Henry wrote to Clement requesting that he order the troops to leave the city, but Clement refused to do so. Cacciaguida may be referring to this particular act of betrayal, or he could simply mean Clement's opposition in a more general sense.[59] In any case, it gives a *terminus ante quem* of around 1312, within which time Cangrande's virtues will begin to manifest themselves.

What precisely Cangrande will be famous for is noted (83-85), but nothing specific can be determined. The mention of Henry is suggestive, and if we take the reference to 1312 to mean shortly before the betrayal of Clement, rather than meaning at some time during the period up until, then some more obvious possibilities present themselves. His military exploits, in the years 1311-12 could all be seen as signs of the virtues associated with Mars, and the fact that he acts as Imperial Vicar in Verona, and then Vicenza, means that he is not fighting for personal gain.[60]. Echoes of the *veltro* have been noted by some readers, and whilst we may consider the suggestion that Cangrande exhibits some of the charactersitics of the *veltro*, he can hardly represent the ultimate fulfilment of that

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[57] Palma di Cesnola, p. 46, cites a description of Clement at Villani, IX. 80, where 'Guascone' is used almost as an epithet, with overtones of cupidity; a characteristic of the Gascons according to Villani.
[58] Holmes, *Florence, Rome*, pp. 190-91.
[59] Details are given by Bowsky, pp. 154-57. Also Villani, X. 22. Holmes, 'Dante's Attitude to the Popes', p. 55, calls this line in the *Paradiso* 'the most specific reference to Clement's betrayal of Henry in 1312.'
[60] Villani X. 20; 32. Bowsky, pp. 149-50; 154-55.

prophecy.[61] In the next terzina the praise of Cangrande becomes even more extravagant, with a paraphrase of the lines from the Magnificat in Luke's gospel.[62]

The conclusion of the prophecy is an instruction to Dante *personaggio* not to reveal what he has been told. Then Dante *poeta* notes that he was told other incredible things, we presume relating to the future. This injunction, to remain silent about a revelation of the future, has biblical precedents.[63] We may also recall the earlier mention in *Par.*, IX. 1-6, of prophecies which Dante *personaggio* was prohibited from passing on. Cacciaguida then finally adds:

> Poi giunse: 'Figlio, queste son le chiose
> di quel che ti fu detto; ecco le 'nsidie
> che dietro a pochi giri son nascose.
> Non vo' però ch'a' tuoi vicini invidie,
> poscia che s'infutura la tua vita
> via più là che 'l punir di lor perfidie' .
> Poi che, tacendo, si mostrò spedita
> l'anima santa di metter la trama
> in quella tela ch'io le porsi ordita.
>
> (*Par.*, XVII. 94-102)

The conclusion is very interesting for the use of literary terminology once more, reprising the language found in earlier predictions of Dante's exile.[64] There is a time reference which, although imprecise, gives some indication that these events will begin within a few years (96). Dante is basically told that he willl live to see his jealous neighbours punished (98). The term 'chiose' (95) takes us back to the prophecy in the *Purgatorio* (*Pur.*, XI. 141) which also mentions Dante's 'vicini' (*Pur.*, XI. 140), so that this clearly refers to the Florentines before his exile. As we have seen, Florence suffered a number of misfortunes between 1300 and, presumably, 1312 or 1313, so it could refer to any of these. As with other prophecies the ending is silence, 'tacendo' (100).

The details about Cangrande, Henry VII, Clement V, and Dante's own exile clearly show that this is a *post eventum* prophecy. It also contains, however, other more general

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[61] Palma di Cesnola, pp. 115-16, notes similarities. In particular with 'Questi non ciberà terra né peltro,' *Inf.*, I. 93. However, as we saw, the meaning of that is not clear. Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 290, sum up the problem: 'Cangrande non potrebbe mai essere considerato da Dante come un salvatore dell'umanità.'

[62] 'Fecit potentiam in brachio suo dispersit superbos mente cordis sui | deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles | esurienetes implevit bonis et divites dimisit inanes' (Lk. 1. 51-53).

[63] Dan. 8. 26; 12. 4, both noted by Mineo, *Profetismo*, p. 260.

[64] *Inf.*, XV. 88-89; *Pur.*, XI. 141.

references which could be applied to different events; the punishment of the Florentines; the exploits of Cangrande, and so on. It continues, too, the reinterpretation of the value of exile begun back in *Inferno* X, and effectively concludes the series of prophecies on that subject. Dante began with a pessimistic view which Cacciaguida did nothing to dispel immediately, but he did confirm Dante's moral justification, explicitly in places. He added condemnations of Dante's enemies and the promise that they would be punished, and that Dante would live to see that punishment. In the next canto, following the words of Cacciaguida, Dante *personaggio* describes his new attitude to his coming exile.[65]

25. *Paradiso* XIX

The prophecy in *Paradiso* XIX is the most unusual in the whole of the *Commedia* in terms of its delivery, and the framework within which it is presented, yet in terms of the subject matter it is easily one of the most straightforward. Dante *personaggio* is addressed by the single, united voice (*Par.*, XIX. 7-12) of the eagle, a shape formed from the letter *M* by the souls of the just rulers in the previous canto. The eagle sets the prophecy within a description of the Final Judgement:

> esso ricominciò: 'A questo regno
> non salì mai chi non credette 'n Cristo,
> né pria né poi ch'el si chiavasse al legno.
> Ma vedi: molti gridan 'Cristo, Cristo!',
> che saranno in giudicio assai men *prope*
> a lui, che tal che non conosce Cristo;
> e tai Cristian dannerà l'Etïòpe,
> quando si partiranno i due collegi,
> l'uno in etterno ricco e l'altro inòpe.
> Che potran dir li Perse a' vostri regi,
> come vedranno quel volume aperto
> nel qual si scrivon tutti suoi dispregi?'
>
> (*Par.*, XIX. 103-14)

Although the verbs are future tense, this is almost a hypothetical presentation of what could happen at the Last Judgement. The description of those who call on Christ by name recalls Matthew's Gospel, and the eagle states that the Ethiopian, representing the unbaptised, will condemn such Christians at the Final Judgement.[66] Then it asks what the Persians, i.e. the

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[65] 'Già si godeva solo del suo verbo | quello specchio beato, e io gustava | lo mio, temprando col dolce l'acerbo' (Par., XVIII. 1-3).
[66] 'Non omnis qui dicit mihi "Domine, Domine" intrabit in regnum caelorum' (Mt. 7.21).

pagans, will say when they see what is in the book where faults are recorded.[67] A list of misdeeds by Christian rulers then follows, but some of these are in fact future actions, so that they may be counted as prophecies. As a result, the framework is a little convoluted; in the book, in the future, the 'Persians' will read a record of deeds which have actually not yet occurred. The eagle refers in places to the act of writing (116), and the form taken by the writing on the page (128-29; 134-35) in the course of describing this record of misdeeds. Through the use of anaphora over nine *terzine* (115-41) Dante produces an acrostic which reads 'Lue', meaning that these kings are a pestilence. Although there is a strong eschatological atmosphere, we should note that this harsh critique seems to be directed against rulers who were all still alive in 1300.[68] So, here we have the foretelling of the hypothetical reading of an account of events which will have happened and been recorded, but haven't happened yet. In spite of this, the actual events which occur after 1300 are easily recognizable, and so can be included as a prophecy.[69] These are the verses which definitely refer to the future:

> 'Lì si vedrà, tra l'opere d'Alberto,
> quella che tosto moverà la penna,
> per che 'l regno di Praga fia diserto.
> Lì si vedrà il duol che sovra Senna
> induce, falseggiando la moneta,
> quel che morrà di colpo di cotenna.
> Lì si vedrà la superbia ch'asseta,
> che fa lo Scotto e l'Inghilese folle,
> sì che non può soffrir dentro a sua meta.'
>
> (*Par.*, XIX. 115-23)

In each terzina 'Lì' refers to the book where the record of deeds will be shown. The first prediction is clear, as it names Albert and Prague, and the term 'tosto', albeit flexible, suggests it will happen soon. The early commentators easily identify the reference to Albert I's invasion of the kingdom of Wenceslaus II of Bohemia in 1304, and Buti, commenting on verse 116, explains: 'per questo finge l'autore che nel 1300 non fusse anco fatta', thereby clarifying for his readers that this is *post eventum*.

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[67] Benvenuto describes it as: 'librum Dei in quo descripta sunt omnia delicta hominum'. Singleton, III.2, p. 324, notes that the open books mentioned at Apoc. 20. 12.

[68] Ettore Mazalli, 'Canto XIX', *Lectura dantis scaligera: Paradiso*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1968), 665-79 (p. 678). Although, see note 72 below.

[69] '(...) the vision of judgement turns into the series of prophecies of obloquy which make up the diatribe itself' (Kenelm Foster, 'The Son's Eagle: Paradiso XIX', in his *The Two Dantes and Other Studies* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977), pp. 137-55 (p. 155)).

The next king is Philip IV of France, as the mention of the Seine, the circumstances of his death, and his debasement of currency all make clear. Again, the early commentators understand the prediction; Benvenuto includes a note to explain that 'cotenna' is a Florentine term for the skin or rind of a pig.[70] Philip's devaluation of French currency in the early 1300s prompted calls by the clergy in 1303 and 1304 to be paid in 'good money'. He had been manipulating currency over the years, but particularly in 1303, following the French defeat at Courtrai.[71] Philip's death can obviously be dated much more precisely, to November 1314, and the curious detail of the pig's hide (120) is, in fact, apt when we read in Villani that his death was caused by a fall from his horse after a boar ran through its legs.[72]

The early commentators are rather vague about events in Scotland and England, as, we might observe, is Dante himself. Since the other rulers are all alive in 1300, the English King is probably Edward I. However, it has been noted that he has already received a favourable mention in the *Purgatorio*, so that Dante may have had Edward II in mind.[73] Edward I and Edward II certainly had many financial dealings with Florence before and after 1300, and this may have prompted the inclusion of England here.[74] Following the mention of Philip IV's death in 1314, there may even be some hint of the battle of

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[70] Pietro Alighieri sums it up succinctly in his comment on this part of the *Paradiso*: 'Item dolus Philippi regis Franciae, qui supra flumen Sennae, idest Parisiis, ubi currit per medium tale flumen, monetam fecit falsificari, et mortuus estab apro in venatione.'

[71] 'Lo re di Francia, passato il dolore, fece come valente signore, che incontanente fece bandire oste generale per tutto il reame; e per fornire sua guerra sì fece falsificare le sue monete; e la buona moneta del tornese grosso, ch'era a XI once e mezzo di fine, tanto il fece peggiorare, che tornò quasi a metade, e simile la moneta prima; e così quelle dell'oro, che di XXIII e mezzo carati le recò a men di XX, faccendole correre per più assai che non valeano: onde il re avanzava ogni dì libbre VIm di parigini e più, ma guastò e disertò il paese, che la sua moneta non tornò a la valuta del terzo' (Villani, IX. 58). Villani states that this was in 1302 following Coutrai; Buti, III, p. 551, also refers to Philip's monetary changes after Coutrai in his comment. See, too, Strayer, pp. 394-96. Palma di Cesnola, pp. 69-70, interprets it as a reference to this period and quotes Villani.

[72] 'Nel detto anno MCCCXIIII, del mese di novembre, il re Filippo re di Francia, il quale avea regnato XXVIIII anni, morì disaventuratamente, che essendo a una caccia, uno porco salvatico gli s'atraversò tra gambe al cavallo in su ch'era, e fecelne cadere, e poco appresso morì' (Villani, X. 66).

[73] Bosco and Reggio, III, pp. 328-29, mention *Pur.*, VII. 132, but reject the suggestion that it is Edward II on the grounds that the eagle is not prophesying. Villani, IX. 40, is positive, although, as we know, Dante doesn't always share Villani's views.

[74] See Holmes, *Florence, Rome*, pp. 40; 196-97.

Bannockburn in the same year, although silence about it in the early commentaries is not encouraging.[75]

The remaining verses in the list concentrate on the vices of the other rulers of Europe, rather than detailing any specific actions, and need not be included here. The list moves further afield, to include Bohemia (5), Jerusalem (127), Portugal (139), Norway (139), Serbia (140), and Hungary (142). There are no further obvious future events described, so that the predictive part effectively ends at line 123. The framing of the moral condemnations obviously carries implicitly the idea that future deeds are included in the accounts of the lives of these rulers, but nothing specific is described. The predictions of Philip's death and Albert's invasion are clearly *post eventum*, the rest refers to the future in a much more allusive way.

26. *Paradiso* XXII

In canto XXII Dante turns to Beatrice in fear, is terrified by the shout that followed St. Peter Damian's invective on the avarice of monks at the end of the previous canto. Beatrice reminds Dante that he is in heaven and therefore safe (*Par.*, XXII. 7). She then explains the meaning of their prayers (13)

> '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.
> La spada di qua sù non taglia in fretta
> né tardo, ma' ch'al parer di colui
> che disïando o temendo l'aspetta.'
>
> (*Par.*, XXII. 10-18)

As a prophecy the delivery is unusual, since we find Dante hearing something which he cannot understand, and Beatrice explaining that if he could understand their prayers, for vengeance, then he would know of the vengeance which is to come (13-14). There are really two references to time here. God's vengeance always comes at the right moment (15-16), even though those on opposite ends of it, so to speak, think it either too quick or

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[75] Although the first life of John XXII, in the *Vitae paparum Avenionensium*, p. 108, does manage to report: 'Hoc anno etiam rex Angliae et Scoti conflictum durissimum habuerunt in crastino sancti Johannis Baptiste [25 junii 1314] in quo Anglici sunt turpiter devicti et paucis remanentibus interfecti. Rex etiam fuit in periculo mortis, nisi per quemdam militem Francorum fuisset a periculo liberatus; et fugerunt pariter peditando.'

too slow (17-18).[76] The other is that it will happen before Dante dies (15). Since this is so general, it is difficult to know, first of all, whether it is *post eventum* or a more open type of prediction.[77] Lana and the *Ottimo* interpret the prediction in a rather general way.[78] However, whilst there are no indications in the words of Beatrice about the event itself, the fact that it will happen before Dante's death makes it seem more likely to be *post eventum.* Certainly Benvenuto and da Buti are convinced that it refers to the death of Boniface VIII, and this is consonant with the attack on corrupt clergy in the previous canto. We may speculate that Dante has deliberately set it in such a way that it could apply to something he knows has already occurred, so *post eventum* and certain; but he has left it open to the possibility of other signs of God's vengeance appearing later. So, the death of Boniface until something better comes along? As it is God's vengeance, which is always just at the right time, it at least has the air of certainty, for all its openness.[79]

27. *Paradiso* XXVII

In canto XXVII Dante puts a blistering attack on the popes of his time in the mouth of the first pope, St. Peter, who ends his speech with a prediction. St. Peter begins:

> 'Quelli ch'usurpa in terra il luogo mio,
> il luogo mio, il luogo mio, che vaca
> ne la presenza del Figliuol di Dio,
> fatt' ha del cimitero mio cloaca
> del sangue e de la puzza; onde 'l perverso
> che cadde di qua sù, là giù si placa.'
>
> (*Par.*, XXVII. 22-27)

Peter's condemnation is obviously directed towards Boniface VIII, since he is pope in 1300. However, we may suppose that the plural form 'quelli' takes in the future popes who will follow Boniface, and who are mentioned later in Peter's speech. The repetition of 'il luogo mio' echoes the prophet Jeremiah: 'Nolite confidere in verbis mendacii dicentes: templum domini, templum domini, templum domini est' (Jer. 7. 4), underlining the fact

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[76] Although the *Chiose ambrosiane* states: 'Ma Dio non misura con tempo comprensibile a noi.'
[77] Euralio De Michelis, 'Il Canto XXII del *Paradiso*', *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence, Le Monnier, 1974), VII, 35-66 (p. 39) also sees this as the basic problem.
[78] So, too, Singleton, III.2, p. 358, 'The prediction is deliberately obscure, and no specific event can be singled out as its fulfilment.'
[79] Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 370, mention different options, including the death of Clement V, but prefer the idea that it is open but certain.

that Peter's office has been usurped.[80] The imagery and language is of a low register, all the more striking given the speaker and the location.[81] This is a feature of invective, in particular, which we have already seen in the *Commedia.*

After a short interruption St. Peter continues, detailing the departure of the popes of Dante's time from the practices of the early Church. He concludes as follows:

> 'In vesta di pastor lupi rapaci
> si veggion di qua sù per tutti i paschi:
> o difesa di Dio, perché pur giaci?
> Del sangue nostro Caorsini e Guaschi
> s'apparecchian di bere: o buon principio,
> a che vil fine convien che tu caschi!
> Ma l'alta provedenza, che con Scipio
> difese a Roma la gloria del mondo,
> soccorrà tosto, sì com' io concipio;
> e tu, figliuol, che per lo mortal pondo
> ancor giù tornerai, apri la bocca,
> e non asconder quel ch'io non ascondo'.
>
> (*Par.*, XXVII. 55-66)

The depiction of the 'pastori' as wolves is familiar from the other passages on the papacy we have seen, as well as echoing biblical warnings against false prophets, and links all of these in this culminating criticism by the original pope.[82] Then Peter's speech moves on to the future with its reference to 'Caorsini' and 'Guaschi'. Some of the early commentators interpret these in a general sense, but Bevenuto and the *Chiose ambrosiane* take them as referring to John XXII and Clement V, as do most modern commentaries.[83] In the earlier part of his polemic Peter mentions the first three popes: himself, Linus and Cletus (*Par.*, XXVII. 40), then four more early popes: Sixtus, Pius, Callixtus and Urban (*Par.*, XXVII. 40); all of whom were martyrs. Like the mention of 'Caorsini' and

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[80] Noted by Domenico Consoli, 'Il Canto XXVII del *Paradiso*', *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence, Le Monnier, 1974), VII, 151-73 (p. 157); Steno Vazzana, 'Il canto XXVII del "Paradiso"', *L'Alighieri*, 27.1 (1986), 44-64 (p. 52); Rachel Jacoff, 'Dante, Geremia e la problematica profetica' in *Dante e la Bibbia*, ed. by G. Barblan (Olschki: Florence, 1988), pp. 113-23 (pp. 114-16).

[81] Noted by Consoli, 'Il Canto XXVII', pp. 158-60; Vazzana, p. 52.

[82] E.g. Mt. 7. 15; Jer. 23. 1.

[83] There is an interesting note at the end of the comment in the *Chiose ambrosiane*: '58 *Caorsini* - Hic quasi pronosticatus est de papa Iohanne XXII quia fuit Iacobus de Caturco, scilicet de Caorsa, electus in papam MCCCXIIII. *Guaschi* - Hic de Clemente quinto qui fuit de Guasconia, predecessor dicti Iohannis. Quorum tempore hec *Comedia* composita fuit et pupplicata, licet poeta supra finxerat se eam composuisse in MCCC, anno scilicet iubilei' (*Le chiose ambrosiane alla "Commedia"*, ed. by Luca Carlo Rossi (Pisa : Scuola normale superiore, 1990), p. 270). Rossi, p. 270, n. 58, corrects the dating of John's election, which was 1316. Also, Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 449; Singleton, III.2, pp. 432-33; Consoli, 'Il Canto XXVII', p. 156; Brezzi, *Letture dantesche*, p. 157; Antionietta Bufano, 'La polemica religiosa di Dante', *Letture classensi*, 11 (1982), 25-46 (p. 38).

'Guaschi', the names are given together in a single verse. This sequence makes the final references more likely to refer to individuals, and we can consider them as concluding the list of individual popes whom Peter has named. Perhaps this is a condensed line of Petrine succession gone awry. Finally, we may also recall that Clement V has already been referred to as "l Guasco' (Par. XVII. 82), whilst Cahors has been criticized (*Inf.*, XI. 50) as a centre of usury. What St. Peter is foretelling precisely, is the election of Clement, and then John, to the papacy, so that the death of Clement is also predicted, though indirectly. This all lies ahead from the point of view of 1300, but clearly the elections of both popes, and Clement's death, are *post eventum* predictions.

St. Peter then seems to guarantee a change to come soon, 'soccorà tosto' (61); however, as we must appreciate by now, 'tosto' is a term of almost infinite elasticity.[84] The mention of Scipio (61) has prompted commentators to interpret this as some form of imperial intervention. The death of Henry VII in 1313 preceded that of Clement V in 1314, so Dante clearly cannot intend any allusion to Henry.[85] The mention of Clement V and John XXII would logically place the coming of 'l'alta provedenza' (61) at least after the death of John XXII, who outlived Dante.[86] This means that this part clearly cannot be *post eventum*.. In fact, Benvenuto, and many modern commentators after him have linked it with the prophecy of the *veltro*.[87] If it is a reprise of the *veltro* prophecy, then this strongly suggests that the *veltro* prophecy was not attached to any historical individual, or, to be more precise, that it is constructed in such a way that it may be re-applied should any suitable individual ultimately disappoint. We can only speculate as to whether or not Dante had some specific person in mind when he wrote the *veltro* prophecy, but what is clear is that it is not unequivocally attached to any person or event, as is shown by the willingness of commentators to revive it here. In any event, it may be regarded as an expression of Dante's hope for the future, endorsed with the certainty of a *post eventum* prophecy by St. Peter.[88]

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[84] Brezzi, *Letture dantesche*, pp. 157-58, suggests it promises a 'pronto intervento provvidenziale', but is difficult to see how.

[85] Bowsky, pp. 203-04, 271, n. 111, gives a brief account of Henry's death on the 24th of August 1313. On Clement's death see Chapter 2, note 97 above.

[86] John died in December 1334. See Mollatt, p. 57.

[87] Benvenuto simply states: '*soccorrà tosto*, scilicet, mittendo veltrum.'

[88] 'Perciò la profezia è da tenere come espressione di un'altissima fede nel destino dell'umanità, ribadita dall'imminenza e perentorietà della certezza, fuori di ogni indicazione

St. Peter concludes by instructing Dante *personaggio* not to hide what he has not hidden (66) once he has returned to the world, and the detail, 'apri la bocca' (65) brings a series of scriptural texts to the scene.[89] Here Dante is instructed to reveal what has been revealed to him, in contrast to earlier instructions he has had to keep certain revelations to himself.[90] This is also the last of a series of injunctions Dante has received, charging him to reveal what he has seen and heard.[91]

28. *Paradiso* XXVII

Later in the same canto, Beatrice concludes a diatribe against cupidity and its effects with another prophecy:

> 'Tu, perché non ti facci maraviglia,
> pensa che 'n terra non è chi governi;
> onde sì svïa l'umana famiglia.
> Ma prima che gennaio tutto si sverni
> per la centesma ch'è là giù negletta,
> raggeran sì questi cerchi superni,
> che la fortuna che tanto s'aspetta,
> le poppe volgerà u' son le prore,
> sì che la classe correrà diretta;
> e vero frutto verrà dopo 'l fiore.'
>
> (*Par.*, XXVII. 139-48)

She specifies the cause of the moral decline she has described as the lack of good government on earth (139-41). Then the prophecy follows. There is a rather obscure time reference derived from the fact that the Julian calendar, by neglecting to account for a 'centesma' (143) was actually shifting every year in relation to the seasons. The result was that at some point January would no longer be in winter (142). This is the sort of thing which the early commentators relish, and they supply copious calculations, with diagrams. The result, in summary form, is that Lana, Benvenuto and the *Ottimo* all arrive at a figure of 4,500 years.[92] The phrasing of the prediction positions this as a *terminus ante quem*, a

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specifica' (Mario Sansone, 'Canto XXVII', *Lectura dantis scaligera: Paradiso*, ed. by M. Marcazzan (Florence: Le Monnier, 1968), 963-94 (pp. 979-80)). This is the final prophecy on Cian's list, p. 131.

[89] E.g., Ezek. 2. 4; 3. 1-3; Apoc. 10. 9-10. These are noted by Mineo, *Profetismo*, pp. 258-59; Giuseppe Mazzotta, 'Teologia ed esegesi biblica', in *Dante e la Bibbia*, ed. by G. Barblan (Olschki: Florence, 1988), pp. 95-112 (p. 100).

[90] E.g. *Par.*, IX. 4-5; XVII. 92-93.

[91] *Pur.* XXII. 103-05; *Par.*, XVII. 127-29.

[92] Although Bosco and Reggio, III. p. 456, and Singleton, III.2, p. 445, calculate 9000.

rather long one, we may observe. It could, alternatively, be taken as an example of litotes so that actually a brief period of time is intended, so there is even some ambiguity[93]

The meaning of the naval metaphor is absolutely clear in one respect; it describes a complete change of direction, a reversal in fact. What the metaphor represents is less obvious, and the early commentators range from general interpretations: humanity, to more specific ones: the Church and the Empire as two ships making up a fleet. In the end, the prediction is too imprecise, and its conclusion is unfulfilled before Dante's death, so that it cannot be interpreted as in any way *post eventum.* It is another of the prophecies which are mainly an expression of Dante's hopes.

29. *Paradiso* XXX

In *Paradiso* XXX Dante *personaggio*, whilst experiencing the vision of the heavenly rose, sees the ranks of the blessed assembled in their resurrected form as they will be at the Final Judgement (44-45). Beatrice notices that his attention is held by an empty throne with a crown set over it and answers Dante's unasked question with a prophecy:

'E 'n quel gran seggio a che tu li occhi tieni
per la corona che già v'è sù posta,
prima che tu a queste nozze ceni,
  sederà l'alma, che fia giù agosta,
de l'alto Arrigo, ch'a drizzare Italia
verrà in prima ch'ella sia disposta.
  La cieca cupidigia che v'ammalia
simili fatti v'ha al fantolino
che muor per fame e caccia via la balia.
  E fia prefetto nel foro divino
allora tal, che palese e coverto
non anderà con lui per un cammino.
  Ma poco poi sarà da Dio sofferto
nel santo officio; ch'el sarà detruso
là dove Simon mago è per suo merto,
  e farà quel d'Alagna intrar più giuso.'

(*Par.*, XXX. 133-48)

All the individuals and events are absolutely clear in this prophecy. The first section concerns Henry VII, who is named (137) and reference is made to his Italian

[93] Benvenuto's comment on this is interesting: 'Sed hic oritur dubitatio quod autor videtur contradicere sibi ipsi ponens tam longum spatium annorum, cum tamen dixerit finali capitulo Purgatorii hoc futurum in brevi, ubi dicit: *ch'io veggio certamente* etc. Dicendum breviter quod est usitatissimus modus loquendi, nam tota die saepe dicimus: antequam transeant mille anni vel decem millia annorum ego faciam vindictam de tali; et tamen per istum numerum magnum ego intelligo et do aliis intelligi valde parvum; et sic tollitur dubitatio.'

expedition (137-38). Blind cupidity is the reason for Henry's failure, so we see again the moral interpretation of historical events found in so many of the other prophecies. We may note that the only two prophecies of entry to Heaven in the *Commedia* are for Dante *personaggio*, the exiled poet, and Henry VII, the failed emperor. This suggests that Dante is re-interpreting the value of these events and transforming them ultimately from failure in the eyes of the world, to success in the eyes of God. This is a familiar concept in the context of Christianity, and is exemplified in the Crucifixion. We may also recall that all the early popes named by St. Peter in *Paradiso* XXVII were martyrs.

Henry's entry to heaven is predicted, and therefore his death, which will occur before Dante reaches heaven (135-36). The Italian expedition of 1310-13 is also prophesied, and the future tense 'verrà' (138) is chronologically accurate from the 1300 perspective. Italy's unwillingness to accept Henry is expressed with the rather domestic image of the child refusing to suckle. As we have already noted, the language and imagery of the *Paradiso* is often of a low register, particularly in passages of moral condemnation.

Beatrice's tone becomes sharper as she then predicts, quite clearly, the papacy of Clement V (142-43), and his betrayal of Henry VII, previously predicted at *Par.*, XVII. 82. Clement's death will follow after a short time 'poco', and then he will be cast into Hell, there to push Boniface VIII further down, so that Boniface's death and damnation are also predicted, if indirectly. This is all a fairly direct reprise of *Inferno* XIX. The details of these events are all noted in the earlier predictions.

This is the final prophecy of the *Commedia*, and after this canto Dante's interest is all, quite properly, other worldly. There is an impression that Dante is tying things up here. His many prophecies condemning Boniface and Clement, are brought together. Apart from the ultimate salvation of Henry and damnation of the popes, everything here is *post eventum*. The absence of any reference to John XXII is noticeable, especially after the mention of him at *Par.*, XXVII. 58. This may simply be because he was not pope while Henry was alive. However, since any predictions about him would almost certainly have to be *ante eventum* at least in part, we may speculate that Dante has decided to exclude any uncertainty from this final prophecy. The prediction of Henry's death, too, perhaps clarifies finally that he was not *the veltro*, even if he may have been *a veltro*.

This concludes the list of prophecies in the *Paradiso*, and the *Commedia*.

I have postponed any discussion of the prophecies as a group until the completion of my examination of each individual prophecy. I will now make a few general observations, before considering in more detail, in the next three chapters, some of the questions which have emerged.

The division of the prophecies which I have made has, in some ways, been fairly arbitrary and they could probably be divided and re-arranged into different groupings. I have simply counted each continuous block delivered by one speaker as one prophecy, even if it may refer to a series of events. Apart from the usual sorts of correspondences across similarly numbered cantos in some cases, and thematic groupings, or series, no suggestive organisational patterns have emerged such as might lead me to propose any particular structural arrangement of the prophecies. I regard prophecy no. 7 in my list (*Inf.*, XXVI. 7-12) as anomalous since it is so unlike all the others. It is included solely because it seeks to predicts the future, but in fact it is independent of the experience of Dante *personaggio*, who is the recipient of all the other prophecies. In addition, as a dream vision, it has no special connection with Dante's otherworld journey, since anyone could have a prophetic morning dream.

My first aim, then, was to arrive at a reasonably comprehensive list, and attempt to ascertain the nature of each individual prediction. I have measured their comprehensibility against the readings of the commentators in order to develop some idea of how far Dante might reasonably expect his readers to interpret them. This has identified the extent to which each prophecy might be described as *ante eventum* or *post eventum*. It has become clear that these elements are frequently mixed together in the prophecies.

The *ante eventum* elements can be further divided, There are those which predict historical events that have probably not yet occurred but are likely to do so. An obvious example is the prediction of the death of Clement V in *Inferno* XIX (no. 5), where it is the time period which is guessed at, as the generous margin of error demonstrates. Then, there are those events which definitely cannot be known. These generally concern the salvation or damnation of individuals. These are really neither *post eventum* nor *ante eventum*, although they are often linked with a prediction of death which can be *post eventum*. The third type of *ante eventum* prophecy is that which expresses some hope of Dante *uomo* for

the future, and this would include the *veltro* and *DXV* prophecies as well as the others of this type which we have seen. I will return to this in more detail in chapters 6 and 7 below.

The prophecies can also be grouped in terms of subject matter; although again there is some crossover. These fall into prophecies of exile; prophecies on Florence; prophecies on the papacy; political prophecies; personal prophecies which concern individuals known to Dante, such as those which appear to be expressions of gratitude. Once more, the groupings are not sharply divided, as a single prophecy may link various themes.

A related feature is that the prophecies often, but not always, have some connection with the speaker. Prophecies about Florence are delivered by Ciacco and Forese Donati; about exile by Farinata degli Uberti; Nicholas III predicts the death and damnation of his successors; Hugh Capet foretells the evils of the French Royal House, and so on. This doesn't always apply strictly, but it is common enough to bear in mind when we interpret some of the predictions.

Finally, there is a very obvious feature to be examined. With the exception of the anomalous prophecy number 7, all of the prophecies are delivered to Dante *personaggio* by the souls of the dead. As we saw, many of the studies surveyed in chapter 1 of this thesis begin with the figure of Dante as a prophet, and are unconcerned with the differences between Dante *poeta*, *personaggio*, and *uomo*. For this reason, they have not considered what is behind the delivery of prophecies at the diegetic level, to Dante *personaggio* How is it that the dead know the future? What is Dante's basis for this? These are the questions which I will consider in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

PROPHECY BY THE DEAD IN THE *COMMEDIA*

As we saw in Chapter 2 above, the first *post eventum* prophecy in the *Inferno* comes in canto VI, and is delivered to Dante by the unknown Ciacco. As previously noted, one of the strangest features about this meeting is that Dante *personaggio* asks Ciacco about the future, as if he expected him to be able to prophesy. Why should Dante have expected a soul whom he encounters among the damned to have powers of prediction? Prophecy, in fact, was generally regarded as a charism in the theological thinking of the time. Thomas Aquinas places his discussion of prophecy in the *Summa* among the questions concerning charisms, as his introduction makes clear:

> Est autem attendendum circa gratias gratis datas, de quibus occurrit consideratio prima, quod quaedam earum pertinent ad cognitionem, quaedam vero ad locutionem, quaedam vero ad operationem. Omnia vero quae ad cognitionem pertinent, sub *prophetia* comprehendi possunt. Nam prophetica revelatio se extendit non solum ad futuros hominum eventus, sed etiam ad res divinas.
>
> (Charisms or gratuitous graces are our present concern. Some of these relate to knowledge, others to speech, others again to action. All the gifts relating to knowledge can be listed under the heading of *prophecy*. Prophetic revelation not only ranges out to future happenings among men, but also to divine realities.)
>
> (*Summa Theologiae*, 2a 2ae, 171, intr.)[1]

This expectation on the part of Dante *personaggio* becomes even more puzzling when we recall that Ciacco asks Dante if he recognized him (*Inf.* VI. 41-42); to which Dante replied in the negative (*Inf.* VI. 43-47). Dante's claim, then, that Ciacco is completely unknown to him makes his subsequent request for information about the future all the more puzzling. It can be argued that Dante failed to recognize him because of the fact that Ciacco is covered with mud; however, the revelation of his name and identity does not then lead to recognition on the part of Dante *personaggio* . The use of Ciacco's name by Dante is simply part of the *captatio benevolentiae* which prefaces his questions, as comparison with recognition scenes such as those with Brunetto Latini or Forese Donati

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[1] Text and translation from Thomas Aquinas, *St Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologiae*, ed. by Thomas Gilby and Thomas C. O'Brien, 60 vols (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964-76), XLV: *2a 2ae. 171-178*, ed. and trans. by Roland Potter (1970), p. 2. For references to the *Summa Theologia* I follow the method of citation described in the above edition, p. xi. Where I quote references to the *Summa Theologia* by others I have retained their method of citation in the quotation, so that they sometimes differ.

easily bears out.[2] Why should Dante *personaggio* expect a prophecy from an unknown soul in Hell ?

The strange circumstances surrounding this, the first of the *post eventum* prophecies, immediately draw attention to the first significant fact about the prophecies in the *Commedia* : that on the narrative level they are communicated to Dante by the dead.[3] This may seem to be stating the obvious, but the grotesque and unknown soul named Ciacco brings to the fore the fact that the only pre-requisite for being able to prophesy in the *Commedia* is to be dead. Precisely how the dead can know the future is never adequately explained, at least for those in the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, as we shall see.

I propose, then, to examine possible sources for this aspect of the *Commedia*. The most immediately obvious source is in the *nekuia*, or underworld scenes, of classical epic poetry. After the *Odyssey*, any serious epic poem had to include a *nekuia* which could either be a *nekuomanteia*, in which souls are called up for the purpose of divining the future, or a *katabasis*, where the questioner goes down to the underworld to speak to the shades there.

The earliest of the classical *nekuia* is in *Odyssey* XI. Here Odysseus wishes to speak with the dead seer Tiresias in order to ask about the future. The form appears to be that of a *nekuomanteia*, rather than a *katabasis*, although there is evidence of the conflation of both types.[4]

The scene opens with preparations for a blood sacrifice (XI. 23-50), following the instructions given to him earlier by Circe (X. 503-40) on how to go about the *nekuomanteia*. The blood is important since to drink from it gives the dead the power of speech, as Tiresias later clarifies (XI. 146-49). This is why Odysseus refuses to allow any other shade access before Tiresias, including his mother:

> 'Next came the soul of my dead mother, Anticleia, the daughter of the great Autolycus, who had still been alive when I said farewell and sailed for sacred Ilium. My eyes filled with tears when I saw her there, and I was stirred to

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[2] See Francesco Mazzoni, 'Il Canto VI dell'*Inferno*', in *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1967), I, 133-81, (p. 160).

[3] I exclude from this discussion the prophecy by Dante *poeta*, number 7 in list.

[4] Details of the debate are given in *Omero: Odissea, libri IX-XII*, ed. by Alfred Heubeck, trans. by G. Aurelio Privitera (Vicenza: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, Mondadori, 1983), pp. 259-62. Heubeck classifies the episode as *nekuomanteia* . See, too, Raymond J. Clark, *Catabasis: Vergil and the Wisdom Tradition* (Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner, 1979), pp. 37-46; 74-78.

compassion. Yet, deeply moved though I was, I would not allow her to approach the blood out of turn, before I had had speech with Teiresias. And the soul of the Theban prophet now came up, with a gold rod in his hand, saw who I was, and saluted me.

"Royal son of Laertes, Odysseus of the nimble wits, what has brought you, the man of misfortune, to forsake the sunlight and to visit the dead in this mirthless place? Step back now from the trench and hold your sword aside, so that I can drink the blood and prophesy the truth to you."

I backed away, driving my sword home in its silver scabbard. And when Teiresias spoke, after drinking the dark blood, it was the voice of the authentic seer that I heard.'

(*Odyssey* XI. 84-99)[5]

Tiresias comes and is permitted to drink from the blood, whereupon he prophesies to Odysseus regarding his future (XI. 100-37). The phrase 'τοι νημερτεα ειπω' is used twice by Tiresias (XI. 96, 137); 'νημερτεα ειπειν' is translated as 'to speak *infallible* truths', and after the prophecy the expression 'επει κατα θεσφατ' ελεξεν' (he had spoken his prophecies) (XI. 151) concludes the scene with Tiresias; 'θεσφατα' are oracles, 'spoken by god' according to the etymological root.[6] Odysseus later explains to his mother why he has come to Hades and uses the the expression 'ψυχη χρησομενον Θηβαιου Τειρασιαο,' (XI. 165), translated as 'to *consult* the shade of the Theban Tiresias', the verb 'χραω' normally being used in the sense of consulting oracles.[7] This is why Odysseus sought contact in the first place, to learn about the future; and with Tiresias in particular, on account of his status as a seer while he was alive.[8]

This brief examination of the Homeric account provides us with a fixed point in the development of the classical *nekuia*. It is clear that Tiresias's knowledge of the future

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[5] Translation from Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by E. V. Rieu (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1946, repr. 1971), p. 173.

[6] *Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. by Liddell and Scott, abridged edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), νημερτεα ειπειν (p. 464); θεσφατα (p. 317). [Note: the word-processor cannot produce accents and breathings for the Greek text, but these are not essential here.]

[7] Liddell and Scott, p. 787.

[8] 'Prophecy, the foretelling of events, must carry the warrant of its validity with it to gain attention. It may be given by a god or by one who is divinely endowed with an understanding of signs and portents, with a knowledge of fate and the future; if it be spoken by a mortal who has received no special inspiration, the character and the circumstances under which he speaks must be such as to carry conviction, or the effect is lost, (Moore, 'Prophecy in the Ancient Epic', p. 100). 'To achieve the highest level of credibility, the epic prophecy should be delivered, if not by a deity or shade, then by a seer who is thoroughly conversant with his particular sphere of manticism' (Bernard F. Dick,'The Technique of Prophecy in Lucan', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 94 (1963), 37-49 (p. 37)). On the Homeric scene Clark concludes: 'Teiresias in the *Nekyia* in effect has two functions, he is both prophet and guide' (p. 46). See, too, pp. 39-40.

derives from his status as a seer whilst alive, not from his being dead. This, at least, is Odysseus' (and Circe's) perception of the matter, and presumably reflects the author's view too. Finally, the information imparted seems to be reliable, though again this most likely derives from Tiresias's particular status rather than from his being in the underworld.

Virgil's *nekuia* in *Aeneid* VI is very clearly a *katabasis*; however, Aeneas receives prophecies from the Sibyl prior to his descent into the underworld (*Aen.* VI. 93-97). Although not part of the *nekuia* proper, there are some contrasting features in comparison with the accuracy and detail in prophecies delivered by the dead. The Sibyl's prophecy is typical of the riddle-like quality of classical oracular utterances, so much so that it occasions this comment by the poet:[9]

> Talibus ex adyto dictis Cumaea Sibylla
> horrendas canit ambages antroque remugit,
> obscuris uera inuoluens [...].
>
> (In such words the Cumaean Sibyl chants from the shrine her dread enigmas and echoes from the cavern, wrapping truth in darkness)
>
> (*Aen.* VI. 98-100)[10]

These verses focus on the obscurity of the message, obviously from Aeneas' point of view, as the reader is expected to be able to make sense of the content with hindsight. The term 'ambages' is introduced so that whilst the prophecy of the Sibyl is true, 'vera' (100), this truth is wrapped in obscurity of expression.[11]

Aeneas then asks to visit the underworld with the specific intention of speaking with his father (106-23). His first sight of Anchises has some points of interest:

> At pater Anchises penitus conualle uirenti
> inclusas animas superumque ad lumen ituras
> lustrabat studio recolens, omnemque suorum
> forte recensebat numerum, carosque nepotes
> fataque fortunasque uirum moresque manusque.

---

[9] 'Many ancient oracles seem designed less to reveal than to conceal the will of the gods. In [...] literary settings oracles have two primary characteristics: they are *always* fulfilled, no matter how the characters try to circumvent their fulfilment, and they are often couched in the form of riddles which cannot be easily understood' (David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and The Ancient Mediterranean World* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 51). See also pp. 50-52, 61.

[10] Text from *P. Vergili Maronis: Aeneidos Liber Sextus*, ed. by R. G. Austin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977). Translation from Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid*, ed. and trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough, revised edn, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1935, repr. 1978).

[11] See note 8 above on the need for a suitably qualified seer, and 9 on oracular obscurity.

> (But, deep in a green vale, father Anchises was surveying with earnest thought the imprisoned souls that were to pass to the light above, and, as it chanced, was telling the full tale of his people and beloved children, their fates and fortunes, their works and ways.)
>
> (*Aen.* VI. 679-83)

Anchises is pictured surveying the souls who will be reborn (680) so that the future seems to be present to him through them. As he watches them, however, he is informing them of their own future, so that it now appears that the future is known to him rather than to them. Their presence alone is insufficient basis for prophecy, evidenced by the later ignorance of 'inscius Aeneas' (711), who also sees the various souls waiting to be born.

Anchises also shows evidence of a knowledge of the future from the time before his death. His greeting Aeneas with the words 'venisti tandem' (687) suggests a period of expectation at least since his entry to the underworld.[12] During his presentation of the souls of future great Romans, he seems to say that he has often spoken of them to Aeneas, and of Augustus in particular: 'hic uir, hic est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis' ('This, this is he, whom thou so oft hearest promised to thee.') (*Aen.* VI. 791).[13] Obviously this would refer to the time when Anchises was still alive. Finally, of course, the whole reason for Aeneas' visit in the first place is Anchises' earlier prophecy, which Aeneas himself acknowledges: '"tua me, genitor, tua tristis imago,| saepius occurens haec limina tendere adegit"' ('"Thy shade, father, thy sad shade, meeting me so oft, drove me to seek these portals"') (*Aen.* VI. 695-96).[14] The prophecy itself and Aeneas' subsequent visit to Hades, in fact, respond to the earlier prediction made to him in a vision of Anchises.[15] These instances, of course, relate to the period after Anchises' death, not to his lifetime.

The prophecy given to Aeneas here takes the form of an expository demonstration of the souls waiting to be reborn. Before moving on to the particular details, Anchises first

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[12] 'Anchises had been waiting so long (but he took Aeneas' coming for granted)' (Austin, p. 214).

[13] 'Curiously circumstantial, as if Anchises had had many conversations with his son on the subject' (Austin, p. 243).

[14] 'The explicit reference is to the ghostly instructions of Anchises in 5. 731 ff., but that he had appeared in other visions is also suggested by 4. 351 ff.', Austin, p. 215. On prophecy as a unifying device see Moore, 'Prophecy in the Ancient Epic', pp. 102, 108-09. For the events predicted, see Austin, pp. 68-72.

[15] '[...] Ditis tamen ante | infernas accede domos et Averna per alta | congressus pete, nate, meos. non me impia namque | Tartara habent, tristes umbrae, sed amoena piorum | concilia Elysiumque colo. huc casta Sibylla | nigrarum multo pecudum te sanguine ducet. | tum genus omne tuum et quae dentur moenia disces' (*Aen.*, V. 731-37).

explains the process of reincarnation which is the basis of what is to follow.[16] He then declares that he will show Aeneas his future destiny by pointing out to him the future rulers of Rome (VI. 756-59). In the long exposition which follows (VI. 760-885), many names are given, both of people and places, and some historical details are presented, obviously all in the future from the point of view of Anchises and Aeneas. The scene ends with Anchises instructing Aeneas about what he must do in the future (VI. 888-92).

This conclusion is the key to the function of the scenes. Aeneas receives a vision of the future greatness of his own people which will encourage him in the future actions that he must carry out. Anchises, however, does not present this as a foregone conclusion, as what will necessarily happen, otherwise there would be no need to instruct Aeneas ('docet', 891). Aeneas is not simply shown what will happen, but is given instructions about what he should do so that the greatness foreseen for Rome can come about; we may note that this is not strictly a prediction that this will happen.

The contrast between Virgil and Lucan is well known, not least through the differing approaches to divine machinery in their epics, and Lucan's *nekuia* in the *Pharsalia* contrasts strongly with Virgil's. Lucan's epic has been called an anti-*Aeneid*, and his *nekuia* has been referred to as an anti-*nekuia*.[17] This observation has some foundation since, as we will see, there is no *katabasis*, and, in the *nekuomanteia*, the shade does not speak directly, but rather through the gruesome medium of a reanimated corpse.

The scene opens correspondingly, we may note, in the sixth book of the *Pharsalia*, with Sextus, the son of Pompey, seeking information about the future:

> Hac ubi damnata fatis tellure locarunt
> Castra duces, cunctos belli praesaga futuri
> Mens agitat, summique gravem discriminis horam
> Adventare palam est, propius iam fata moveri.

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[16] On the philosophical problems posed see Austin, p. 220; Clark, pp. 177-83; Friedrich Solmsen, 'The World of the Dead in *Aeneid* Book 6', in *Oxford Readings in Virgil's Aeneid*, ed. by S. J. Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 208-23.

[17] 'Recently scholars have rightly underlined Lucan's conscious anti-Vergilianism. If his poem is an *anti-Aeneid*, the Erichtho episode is an anti-*nekuia*' (Charles A. Martindale, 'Lucan's Nekuia', in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, ed. by C. Deroux, 4 vols (Brussels: Latomus, 1979-86), II (1980), pp. 367-77 (pp. 373-74)). See, too, Frederick *Lucan: An Introduction* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 138-45; Jamie Masters, *Poetry and Civil War in Lucan's Bellum Civile* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 179-96; Emanuele Narducci, *La Provvidenza Crudele: Lucano e la Distruzione dei Miti Augustei* (Pisa: Giardini Editori, 1979), pp. 54-65 and *passim*; David Vessey, *Statius and the Thebaid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 243.

(When the leaders had pitched their camps in this land
doomed by the Fates, each mind is troubled by a sense
of future war, and it is clear that the hideous hour of greatest
crisis is approaching, that now the Fates draw ever nearer.)

(*Phars.* VI. 413-16)[18]

Sextus' motive is fear occasioned by the approach of a decisive battle. There follows a list of the various traditional, and legal, methods of divination, which he rejects (425-30) in favour of more sinister means (430-34). This sets the scene for his decision to consult the witch Erichtho. Following a lengthy description of the horrors of Thessaly and its witches (VI. 435-506), and Erichtho in particular (VI. 507-78), Sextus approaches her to ask that she reveal the future to him:

'Te precor, ut certum liceat mihi noscere finem
Quem belli fortuna paret. Non ultima turbae
Pars ego Romanae, Magni clarissima proles,
Vel dominus rerum vel tanti funeris heres.
Mens dubiis perculsa pavet rursusque parata est
Certos ferre metus: hoc casibus eripe iuris,
Ne subiti caecique ruant. Vel numina torque
Vel tu parce deis et manibus exprime verum.
Elysias resera sedes ipsamque vocatam,
Quos petat e nobis, Mortem mihi coge fateri.'

('I beg that I may know for sure the end
prepared by the fortune of war. Not the lowest part
of the Roman multitude am I, Magnus' most illustrious son
either master of the world or heir to ruin so immense.
Struck by doubts, my mind is frightened, but again is ready
to endure inevitable terrors. Take from events the power
to swoop down suddenly unseen. Either rack the deities
or spare the gods and from the shades extort the truth yourself.
Unbar the Elysian abodes and summon Death
herself; make her confess to me which ones of us she seeks.')

(*Phars.* VI. 591-601)

Sextus wishes to know the future in order to be prepared for it (596-97) and in a *captatio benevolentiae* acknowledges the renown of the witch's power in these matters (589), power even to change the course of events (590). Although both characters and setting are very different, we may recall Dante *personaggio*'s similar wish to be prepared for the future in his converstion with Cacciaguida in *Paradiso* XVII. In the *Pharsalia* Erichtho herself points out, however, the limitations of the Thessalian witches in this area

[18] Latin text from Lucan, *The Civil War (Pharsalia)*, ed. and trans. by J. D. Duff, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1928, repr. 1988). Translation from Lucan, *Civil War*, trans. and intro. by Susan H. Braund (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

(605-15). His desire is for certain knowledge (591, 596), and we may note that he proposes *nekuomanteia* as the surest way of proceeding (599-601), with the emphasis strongly on 'verum' (599). She too prefers the option of *nekuomanteia*, but not of the usual kind:

> Sed pronum, cum tanta novae sit copia mortis,
> Emathiis unum campis attollere corpus,
> Ut modo defuncti tepidique cadaveris ora
> Plena voce sonent nec membris sole perustis
> Auribus incertum feralis strideat umbra.
>
> (But it is simple, in such abundance of fresh death,
> to raise a single body from Emathian plains,
> so the lips of a corpse just dead and warm
> can speak out loud and clear, and no gloomy ghost
> with sun-scorched limbs hiss indistinctly to our ears.)
>
> (*Phars.* VI. 619-23)

As we see here, Erichtho proposes a rather more gruesome procedure, and rejects the normal form of communication with the shades (623) as unsuitable for what is wanted. This is shown in the contrast between the 'incertum' (623) of that method and the request of Sextus ('certum', 591; 'certos', 596). She begins as she has suggested, by picking out a corpse:

> [...] dum Thessala vatem
> Eligit et gelidas leto scrutata medullas
> Pulmonis rigidi stantes sine volnere fibras
> Invenit et vocem defuncto in corpore quaerit. [...]
> Electum tandem traiecto gutture corpus
> Ducit, et inserto laques feralibus unco
> Per scopulos miserum trahitur, per saxa, cadaver
> Victurum [...].
>
> (...while the witch of Thessaly
> selects her prophet, and by examining innards chill
> with death she finds a stiff lung's lobes, entire
> without a wound, and in a corpse she seeks a voice. [...]
> The corpse at last is chosen, one with pierced breast,
> and is dragged along; a hook sunk in the dead man's rope,
> the poor cadaver over rocks and stones is hauled to live
> again...)
>
> (*Phars.* VI. 628-31, 637-40)

The irony in the use of the term 'vatem' in this context highlights a major departure from the earlier *nekuia* we saw in Homer and Virgil. Homer's Tiresias was a prophet in life, and Anchises, whilst not explicitly termed a prophet, is certainly an authoritative figure in the *Aeneid*. His prophetic knowledge whilst alive is at least hinted at, prior to its full

manifestation in the underworld. Lucan, by contrast, not only has Erichtho pick out any corpse whatsoever, but does not even give it a name; the bearer of the prophecy here is simply termed 'corpus' (637), and 'cadaver | victurum' (639-40). She takes the corpse to a suitable place (638-51) and here goes through the elaborate and grisly rites necessary to recall its ghost (651 f.).[19]

The corpse is that of a Pompeian soldier, not long dead as her request confirms (712-14). The shade appears by the body, afraid to enter it. In an apostrophe Lucan raises the question of death, touched upon previously when the corpse was described as 'victurum' (640):

> A miser, extremum cui mortis munus inique
> Eripitur, non posse mori [...].
>
> (What misery! The final gift of death is snatched from him unfairly
> - to be beyond the reach of death.[...])
>
> (*Phars.* VI. 724-25)

Erichtho then calls upon, and indeed threatens, the various deities of the underworld to do her bidding, finally threatening to call upon a mysterious, unnamed power whom the others seem to fear.[20] This has the desired effect, and she can now question the corpse:

> [...] 'Dic' inquit Thessala 'magna,
> Quod iubeo, mercede mihi; nam vera locutum
> Inmunem toto mundi praestabimus aevo
> Artibus Haemoniis; tali tua membra sepulchro,
> Talibus exuram Stygio cum carmine silvis,
> Ut nullos cantata magos exaudiat umbra.
> Sit tanti vixisse iterum: nec verba nec herbae
> Audebunt longae somnum tibi solvere Lethes
> A me morte data. Tripodas vatesque deorum
> Sors obscura decet: certus discedat, ab umbris
> Quisquis vera petit duraeque oracula mortis
> Fortis adit. Ne parce, precor: da nomina rebus,
> Da loca; da vocem, qua mecum fata loquantur'.
>
> ([...] 'Speak' says the Thessalian witch,

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[19] On the place topos see Martindale, pp. 370-73; M. P. O. Morford, *The Poet Lucan: Studies in Rhetorical Epic* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1967), pp. 67-72; Narducci, p. 56; Vessey, pp. 237 f. (where a survey of various *nekuia* is given). Masters, pp. 179-215, provides a close analysis of the whole Erichtho episode.

[20] '[...] Paretis? an ille | Conpellandus erit, quo numquam terra vocato | Non concussa tremit, [...]', *Phars*, VI, 744-6. 'ILLE Demogorgon, qui fuit pater Omagionis, Omagion Celi[i], Cel[i]us Saturni, Saturnus Iovis' (*Arnulfi Aurelianensis: Glosule super Lucanum*, ed. by Berthe M. Marti (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1958), p. 350). This text is referred to in the context of a discussion of Boccaccio's comments on *Inferno* IX by David Quint, 'Epic Tradition and Inferno IX', *Dante Studies*, 93 (1975), 201-07 (pp. 202-04).

'what I command and great will be your reward; for if you speak
the truth, I shall make you safe for all the world's eternity
from Haemonian craft; on such a pyre and with such wood
will I burn your limbs with Stygian spell
that no magicians will bewitch and make your ghost obey.
Think this worth the cost of second life: neither words nor drugs
will dare destroy your sleep of lengthy Lethe, once death
is given by me. The tripods and the prophets of the gods
are graced with obscure answers; he who seeks the truth
from ghosts and approaches bravely the oracles of relentless death,
let him leave certain. Do not hold back, I pray: give events their names,
give the places, give a voice through which the Fates can talk to me.')

(*Phars.* VI. 762-74)

She stresses from the outset that his information must be true (763). In return she will reward him with immunity from any future necromantic disturbances (764-70). She is dismissive of the other means of divination, this time more explicitly critical of the quality of their information, and, indeed, uses terms reminiscent of the description of the Sibyl's prophecy in *Aeneid* VI. We can compare, for instance, 'sors obscura ' (771) with 'obscuris uera inuoluens' (*Aen.* VI. 100). There also seems to be a reference to the earlier passage in *Pharsalia* I, when Arruns, the Etruscan haruspex divines the future but prefers to conceal rather than reveal his findings. Lucan apostrophizes: 'Flexa sic omina Tuscus | Involvens multaque tegens ambage canebat' ('So the Etruscan prophesied, and wrapped | and veiled the omens in obscure ambiguity') (*Phars.* I. 637-38). The language here is even more reminiscent of the *Aeneid* (VI. 99-100) so that Lucan appears to reject the Virgilian version both directly, and indirectly, by rejecting an episode of his own which resembles Virgil's version. By contrast, what Erichtho requires from the corpse is detailed and precise information (771-74). The reply which she receives, however, is disappointing and apologetic:

...Maestum fletu manante cadaver
'Tristia non equidem Parcarum stamina' dixit
'Aspexi tacitae revocatus ab aggere ripae;
Quod tamen e cunctis mihi noscere contigit umbris,
Effera Romanos agitat discordia manes,
Inpiaque inferam ruperunt arma quietem;
Elysas Latii sedes ac Tartara maesta
Diversi liquere duces. Quid fata pararent,
Hi fecere palam. Tristis felicibus umbris
Voltus erat' [...].

(...With flowing tears the mournful corpse
said: 'Recalled from the silent river-bank,
myself I have not seen the grim threads of the Parcae
yet this from all the ghosts I learnt,

that wild discord disturbs the Roman shades
and wicked war has shattered the underworld's repose.
Latian generals variously have left the Elysian abodes
and gloomy Tartarus: these have made plain
the intentions of the Fates. Grim were the faces
of the blessed ghosts' [...].)

(*Phars.* VI. 776-84)

In excusing his ignorance of future events, the corpse picks up on the reference to the Fates in Erichtho's command (774), and so appears to pinpoint the root of the notion that all the dead know the future. We may note that it is by virtue of their proximity to the Fates, as they are spinning the future destinies of the living, that the dead are privy to the future. We can see, then, that the possibility of prophecy is no longer bound up with prophetic ability in life, but in Lucan's epic, is available to any shade that has entered the underworld; death is the only necessary pre-requisite.

Since he has not yet crossed the Styx (777-78) the shade of the dead soldier does not yet have this knowledge. All that he can offer, then, is as much as he could make out from the opposite bank of the river (779), thus introducing a lengthy description of the Roman souls in the underworld. We can see this as an obvious response to the Virgilian account of the illustrious Romans of the future. By contrast, those listed in *Pharsalia* VI are all dead figures of the past, and a struggle mirroring the civil war has broken out among them too.

As predictions go, we might feel that the corpse has good reason to be apologetic, since there is very little specific information given, although there is some news for Sextus. First, he is informed that a place of punishment in Tartarus is being prepared by Pluto for Caesar (801-02).[21] He then learns that a place in Elysium is being prepared for his father (802-05) but no details of time are given. He is told nothing that can help him directly, except that his father will later speak to him in Sicily (812-13), though Pompey will not know how best to advise his son. This is a prophecy of the type which are fulfilled later in the dramatic action of the poem. The events it describes do not follow, however, since, we

[21] There is also a reference to Caesar's future assassination by Brutus: 'Solum te, consul depulsis prime tyrannis | Brute, pias inter gaudentem vidimus umbras' (*Phars.* VI. 791-92). This is the ancestor of the Brutus who was later to kill Caesar. Arnulf of Orleans in his commentary says: 'Brutus siste Tarquinium et filios eius eiecit, et ideo factus est consul, iste modo gaudebat de imitatione Bruti sui nepotis qui habebat Cesarem interficere' (p. 352).

may recall, the projected twelve books of the *Pharsalia* were not completed.[22] Nonetheless, names and places are given as requested, in particular Pharsalia is named; 'Emathia' (820). Despite references to the Tiber and the Nile (810), we may notice that the central question, the outcome of the civil war, is still apparently unanswered. Perhaps it was an oversight on Lucan's part, too eager in condemning Caesar, but the information that the victor is doomed to Tartarus, whilst Pompey's place in Elysium is being prepared for him renders the answer to Sextus's query deducible, despite the corpse's apologetic profession of ignorance.[23] If we may digress for a moment, there are again, perhaps, similarities with Dante's crowned throne awaiting Henry VII in *Paradiso* XXX, another defeated ruler, though on the imperial side this time. In any case, Sextus does not seem able to work out the meaning of this rather bleak message. The corpse then ends in silence, and, we are told, seeks death a second time (821).

Before passing to Statius' *nekuia* there is a passage in Pliny's *Natural History* which is regarded by some as the source for the *nekuomanteia* in Lucan:[24]

> Plena praeterea vita est his vaticiniis, sed non conferenda, cum saepius falsa sint, sicut ingenti exemplo docebimus. Bello Siculo Gabienus Caesaris classiarius fortissimus captus a Sex. Pompeio, iussu eius incisa cervice, et vix cohaerente, iacuit in littore toto die. Deinde, cum advesperavisset, cum gemitu precibusque congregata multitudine petiit, uti Pompeius ad se veniret aut aliquem ex arcanis mitteret: se enim ab inferis remissum, habere quae nuntiaret. Misit plures Pompeius ex amicis, quibus Gabienus dixit: inferis diis placere Pompeii causas et partes pias: proinde eventum futurum, quem optaret: hoc se nuntiare iussum: argumentum fore veritatis, quod peractis mandatis, protinus exspiraturus esset: idque ita evenit.
>
> (But throughout the whole of our lives we are perpetually hearing of such predictions as these; they are not, however, worth collecting, seeing that they are almost always false, as we shall illustrate by the following remarkable instance.
>
> In the Sicilian war, Gabienus, the bravest of all Caesar's naval commanders, was taken prisoner by Sextus Pompeius, who ordered his throat to be cut; after which, his head almost severed from his body, he lay the whole of the day upon the seashore. Towards evening, with groans and entreaties, he begged the crowds of people who had assembled, that they would prevail upon Pompeius to come to him, or else send one of his most confidential friends, as he had just returned from the shades below, and had some important news to communicate. Pompeius accordingly sent several of his friends, to whom Gabienus stated that the good cause and virtuous partisans of Pompeius were well pleasing to the infernal deities, and that the event would shortly prove as he wished: that he had been ordered to announce to this effect, and that, as proof of its truthfulness, he himself should expire the very moment he had fulfilled his commission; and his death actually did take place.)

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[22] On the incomplete nature of the *Pharsalia* see, among others, Narducci, p. 54.
[23] 'VICTORI Cesarem innuit' is Arnulfus's succinct comment, *Glosule* p. 352.
[24] Ahl, pp. 134-35; Martindale, p. 368.

(*Nat. Hist.* VII. 53)[25]

There are many differences from Lucan's version. The name of the man concerned is given, Gabienus; he is not a Pompeian but one of Caesar's men; he is not sought out by Sextus but has in fact been killed on his orders; he requests a hearing from the Pompeians; Sextus does not come in person but sends others to hear the message; and, finally, the message itself is patently untrue.[26] Pliny, in fact, includes the story as an example of a false prediction, as his introduction to it states. Nevertheless, there is a similarity both in the general circumstances and in the description of Gabienus as 'incisa cervice' corresponding to the 'traiecto gutture' (*Phars.*, VI. 637) of Erichtho's 'vates'.

The final *nekuia* relevant to this discussion is found in book four of Statius' *Thebaid.* This *nekuomanteia* is carried out by the seer Tiresias, assisted by his daughter Manto. The first approach to Tiresias for information is made by the king of Thebes (*Theb.* IV. 406-14) and, as with Sextus, this desire to know the future is born of fear (406, 408). Tiresias' authority as a prophet is stated from the outset (406), and it is he who, in a list reminiscent of that in *Pharsalia* VI, rejects other forms of divination in favour of necromancy, claiming that this is more reliable (409-15).

The usual scene is set with the rites described in detail (415-72). In his lengthy invocation of the necessary spirits, Tiresias, rather more ambitiously than Erichtho, seeks to summon up all the shades of the dead (473-87). Despite the king's growing terror (488-99), nothing actually happens. So Tiresias speaks again, and this time the references to the Erichtho episode are much more in evidence:

> 'iam nequeo tolerare moram. cassusne sacerdos
> audior? an, rabido iubeat si Thessala cantu,
> ibitis et Scythicis quotiens medicata venenis
> Colchis aget, trepido pallebunt Tartara motu:
> nostri cura minor, si non attollere bustis
> corpora nec plenas antiquis ossibus urnas
> egerere et mixtos caelique Erebique sub unum
> funestare deos libet aut exsanguina ferro
> ora sequi atque aegras functorum carpere fibras?
> ne tenues annos nubemque hanc frontis opacae
> spernite, ne, moneo; et nobis saevire facultas.
> novimus et quidquid dici noscique timetis,

---

[25] Text from *C. Plinii Secundi, Naturalis Historiae Libri*, ed. by Gabriel Brotier (London: A.J. Valpy, 1826). Translation from *The Natural History of Pliny*, trans. by John Bostock and H. T. Riley (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855), II, p. 213.

[26] On the differences, see Ahl, pp. 134-37; Martindale, p. 368.

et turbare Hecaten, ni te, Thymbraee, vererer
et triplicis mundi summum, quem scire nefastum.
illum - sed taceo: prohibet tranquilla senectus.
iamque ego vos' - avide subicit Phoebeia Manto:
'audiris, genitor, vulgusque exsangue propinquat'.

('I can endure delay no further. Am I heard in vain, priest though I be? Or, if a hag of Thessaly bid you with her frenzied chant, will ye then go, or so often as a Colchian witch drives you with Scythian drugs and poisons, will Tartarus grow pale and stir affrighted: but of me have ye less regard, if I care not to raise bodies from the tomb, and bring forth urns crammed with ancient bones, and profane the gods of heaven and Erebus alike, or hunt with the sword the bloodless faces of the dead and pluck out their sickly tissues? Despise not these frail years nor the cloud that is upon my darkened brow, despise it not, I warn you! I, too, can vent my wrath. I know the name whose knowing and whose speaking ye so dread, even Hecate I can confound, feared I not thee, O Thymbraean, and the high lord of the triple world, who may not be known. Him - but I am silent; peaceful old age forbids. Now will I - ' but Manto, votary of Phoebus, eagerly cries: 'Thou art heard O father, the pale host draws nigh.')[27]

(*Theb.* IV. 503-19)

The 'rabido Thessala' (504) allusion is obvious, and we may note the descriptions of the various misdeeds from which Tiresias disassociates himself. Even he, however, is prepared to call upon 'quem scire nefastum' (516), but stops himself (517). He begins to do so again (518) but is prevented this time by his daughter Manto, who informs him that he has been successful. This willingness to call upon what is, most likely, the demigorgon mentioned in *Pharsalia* VI, but is here, as there, left unspecified, seems to be another point of contact with Lucan. In the end it proves unnecessary, though we may speculate as to whether this challenges Erichtho's use of it as illicit, or supports it as effective. In both instances it is actually used only as a threat, and one which works. One difference is that here it is introduced as a last resort, whereas in *Pharsalia* VI it is invoked fairly quickly.

A description of the various ghosts follows (520-91). Then Tiresias, whose sight has been mysteriously restored, delivers a prophecy (584-92). He describes this return of his sight, using the term 'spiritus' (587) to refer to the power of prophecy which it allows him, although the origin of this restoration remains unknown (586-87). He then describes the facial expressions of the shades whom he can now see, in particular the sadness of the Argives (587-91), on the basis of which he predicts success for Thebes in the coming

[27] The text used is Statius, *Silvae, Thebaid, Achilleid*, ed. and trans. by J.H. Mozley, 2 vols (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons; London: William Heinemann, 1928).

conflict (592). Again, we may note the similarity with Lucan's *Pharsalia*, where it is the expressions of the dead which indicate the victorious side in the coming conflict.

Tiresias next urges Laius's shade to drink of the blood so that he may speak (619-24). As in Lucan's scene, Tiresias here promises the shade its rest in the underworld, though the tone is very different, and it is not framed as a threat. Laius obeys and speaks:

> 'cur tibi versanti manes, aequaeve sacerdos,
> lectus ego augurio tantisque potissimus umbris,
> qui ventura loquar? satis est meminisse priorum. [...]
> et nunc ille deos Furiarumque atra fatigat
> concilia et nostros rogat haec in proelia manes.
> quodsi adeo placui deflenda in tempora vates,
> dicam equidem, quo me Lachesis, quo torva Megaera
> usque sinunt: bellum, innumero venit undique bellum
> agmine, Lernaeosque trahit fatalis alumnos
> Gradivus stimulis; hos terrae monstra deumque
> tela manent pulchrique obitus et ab igne supremo
> sontes lege morae. certa est victoria Thebis,
> ne trepida, nec regna ferox germanus habebit,
> sed Furiae geminumque nefas, miserosque per enses,
> ei mihi! crudelis vincit pater.' haec ubi fatus,
> labitur et flexa dubios ambage relinquit.

> ('Why, when thou wert marshalling the spirits, O prophet [*sacerdos* is not best translated *prophet* here, *priest* would be better] equal to me in years, why was I chosen, first out of so many shades, to speak augury and to foretell what shall befall? 'Tis enough to have remembrance of the past. ...\
> ... And now he wearies the gods and the dark councils of the Furies, and supplicates my shade for the coming strife. But if I have found such favour as a prophet of these times of woe, I will speak, so far as Lachesis and grim Megaera suffer me: War cometh from every side, war of countless hosts, Gradivus sweeps on the sons of Lerna before the goads of fate; them there await portents of the earth, and weapons of heaven, and glorious deaths, and unlawful withholdings from the final fire. Victory is sure for Thebes, doubt it not, nor shall thy fierce kinsman have thy realm; but Furies shall possess it, and twofold impious crime, and alas, in your unhappy swords your cruel father triumphs.' So speaking he faded from their sight, and left them in doubt at his mazy riddling words.)
>
> (*Theb.* IV. 626-28, 633-45)

Laius' initial query, despite being left unanswered, in fact provides some information by implication. He states that any of the spirits might have performed this function ('tantisque...umbris' 627), and we may note that Laius has no particular claim to expertise in the area of prophecy. Indeed, the fact that Tiresias is able to predict victory for Thebes simply by looking at the downcast aspect of the Argives is evidence that all the shades already know the future turn of events.

The connection between this knowledge and the Fates is re-affirmed with the naming of Lachesis (636). Laius assumes the role of 'vates' (635) and the prophecy which

he delivers confirms what Tiresias has said; however, he then continues with rather more obscure messages and we may notice that Statius' concluding remark recalls Virgil's comments on the Sibyl's prophecy with the recurrence of the term 'ambage' (645).

In the person of Tiresias, and Laius to some extent, Statius' *nekuia* re-introduces the authoritative figure found in Homer, and in Virgil's Sibyl and Anchises, yet also presents the position taken by Lucan, that any shade, simply through being dead, has knowledge of the future. Despite the insistence of Tiresias that consultation of the dead is more certain than other forms of divination, it is Laius's prophecy, not Tiresias's, which ends in 'ambage', a reversal of the Virgilian position. Nor should we regard his choice of *nekuomanteia* rather than *katabasis* as a preference for Lucan's method, since we have already seen that Tiresias explicitly distances himself from such practices.[28]

Dante's other major source, of course, is the Bible, and we have noted echoes of the Prophets and the Apocalypse in some of his prophecies. On the issue of knowledge of the future among the dead, however, there is only one scriptural text of importance:

> Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had put the mediums and wizards out of the land. [...]
>
> When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets.
>
> Then Saul said to his servants, 'Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.' And his servants said to him, 'Behold, there is a medium at Endor.'
>
> So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments, and went, he and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said, 'Divine for me by a spirit, and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you.' The woman said to him, 'Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the wizards from the land. Why then are you laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?'
>
> But Saul swore to her by the Lord, 'As the Lord lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.' Then the woman said, 'Whom shall I bring up for you?' He said, 'Bring up Samuel for me.' When the woman saw Samuel she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman said to Saul, 'Why have you deceived me? You are Saul.' The king said to her, 'Have no fear; what do you see?' And the woman said to Saul, 'I see a god coming up out of the earth.' He said to her, 'What is his appearance?' And she said, 'An old man is coming up; and he is wrapped in a robe.' And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed his face to the ground and did obeisance.
>
> Then Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?' Saul answered, 'I am in great distress; for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams; therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do.' And Samuel

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[28] See Martindale, pp. 375-76; Vessey, pp. 237 f. There is also a *katabasis* without prophecy later in *Thebaid* VI.

said, 'Why then do you ask me, since the Lord has turned from you and become your enemy?'

(I Sam. 28. 3, 5-17)[29]

In common with Lucan and Statius, this account has the king motivated by apprehension at a time of impending conflict, a common occasion for consultations.[30] Here it is Samuel who is sought out, and this is precisely because he was a prophet in life. The attitude towards the practice of necromancy in the Bible is unequivocal, it is strictly forbidden.[31] This is attested elsewhere when Manasseh is described as having some involvement in necromancy, one of the practices which occasioned his destruction.[32] This aspect of the account in I Samuel overshadowed the rest, so that the passage carried a history of controversy with it into the Middle Ages. The debate concerned the identity of the spirit which appeared to Saul, whether it was really Samuel or some demon posing as the prophet.[33] In his commentary on the passage Bede writes:

'Si quem vero movet quomodo mulier arte daemonica prophetam post mortem inquietare et suscitare potuerit, sciat pro certo aut falsam tunc umbram quaerentibus ostendisse diabolum aut, si vere Samuhel extitit, tantum in his agendis licere diabolo quantum dominus permiserit. [...] Neque aliquid vetat intellegere, si haec a diabolo fantastice dicta et ostensa crediderimus, voluisse malignum inter vera quae diceret permiscere fallacia dicentemque sub persona Samuhelis ad impium, tu et filii tui mecum eritis, latenter persuadere peccantibus quia sopitis dimissisque post mortem etiam maioribus peccatis et ipsi cum eis qui bene ante mortem vixerant beate tunc vivere possint.'

(Should anyone wish to know how the woman was able to disturb and raise the prophet after his death, let them know that either the devil showed a false shade to those who sought it, or, if it truly was Samuel, the devil is permitted to do only as much as the Lord allows. [...] Nor would it be wrong to think, if we believe that

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[29] The text is from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition.*

[30] See Martindale, p. 369 and Aune, pp. 53, 57, and especially p. 84, n. 24 and n. 25, which give instances from the Old Testament of unsolicited oracles delivered to kings by prophets at a time of impending war and of kings seeking out oracles at such times.

[31] 'From the references to necromancy in the Old Testament, one gains the impression that it was practised commonly in other Near Eastern cultures, whilst it was anathaema in Israel' (Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 167).

[32] 'et transduxit filium suum per ignem et ariolatus est et observavit auguria et fecit pythones et aruspices multiplicavit ut faceret malum coram Domino et inritaret eum' ('And he burned his son as an offering, and practised soothsaying and augury, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger') (II Kings 21. 6). Luck, p. 167, also refers to this text.

[33] 'Christian interpreters as early as Hippolytus (ca. 170 - ca. 236) were sure that the spirit who appeared to Saul was not really the ghost of Samuel, but merely a demon posing as the prophet' (R. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 33). An account of the contrasting opinions can be found in Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923-58), I (1923, repr. 1947), pp. 416, 448 and especially 469-70, 509-10, 629, II (1923, repr. 1947), pp. 167-68.

> this was stated and revealed in a ghostly way by the devil, that the evil one wanted to mix lies in with the truth which he spoke; and that, under the appearance of Samuel, he said to that blasphemous man 'you and your sons will be with me'; and that he secretly wished to persuade those sinners that their sins would be absolved after death, even their greater sins, and that they would then be able to live as the blessed, with those who had lived just lives before death.)
>
> (*In Regum Librum XXX Quaest.*)[34]

Some of Dante's early commentators also express an opinion on the matter. Guido da Pisa, in his introduction to *Inferno* XX, takes a rather tentative approach: perhaps it was Samuel or maybe just a trick of the devil.[35] Lana mentions the text almost in passing during an epistemological discussion, and accepts without any hint of doubt that the spirit was that of Samuel.[36] Boccaccio mentions the story of Samuel when commenting on *Inf.*, IX. 25-7, and relies on unnamed authorities for the opposite view.[37] The comment in the *Ottimo* is virtually identical to that of Lana, and both follow closely part of Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*, quoting the same sources and argument. Aquinas puts the matter like this:

> Praeterea, frequenter mortui vivis apparent, vel dormientibus vel vigilantibus, et eos admonent de iis quae hic aguntur; sicut Samuel apparuit Sauli. Sed hoc non esset, si ea quae hic sunt non cognoscerent.
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> (Again, the dead frequently appear to the living, whether asleep or awake, to advise them about things that are happening here: Samuel, for instance, appeared to Saul. But this would not be so if they did not know things that exist here.)

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[34] *Bedae Venerabilis Opera: Pars II, Opera Exegetica 2, In primam partem Samuhelis libri III, In Regum Librum XXX Quaestiones*, ed. by D. Hurst, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina CXIX (Turnhaut: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1962), pp. 256-57. Translation is mine.

[35] 'Quid plura? Si credere fas est de Pythonissa, de qua habetur in primo libro Regum, ut prophete Samuelis animam de Inferni abditis evocaret et vivo tum conspectibus presentaret, si tamen animam Samuelis fuisse putamus et non aliqua fantasmatica illusione Sathane fallaciam factam' (*Expositiones*, p. 381).

[36] 'Ancora molte fiate si trova che sono appariti morti a corregger li vivi d'alcuni peccati che comessono: sicome fu Samuel che apparve a Saulle, e molti altri, e ciò non sarebbe s'elli ignorasseno quel che si fa per li vivi più inanzi le anime cognoscono e sanno quello che apresso loro si fa: s'elli non sapessono quel che si fa per li vivi, non sarebbe altro ch'essere impacciati per distanzia locale, cioè per spazio di luogo, lo quale impedimento non è, secondo che mostra in la prima parte san Tomaso, questione Gregorius, cap. 7. Siché per li sopradetti argomenti apparirebbe che l'anime sapesseno quel che è presente. In contrario è san Tomaso in la preditta questione, articolo VIII in la responsion sua che tolle un detto di san Gregorio 12 Moralium, che dice: mortui vitam in carnem viventium post eos qualiter disponatur nesciunt,quia vita spiritus longe est a vita carnis: corporea atque incorporea diversa sunt genera, ita sunt distincta coniunctione.'

[37] '...dico questo essere del tutto falso, per ciò che i santi tengono quello non essere stato Samuèl, ma alcuno spirito immondo' (*Esposizioni*, I, pp. 475-76).

(*Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 89, 8, 2)[38]

Aquinas, too, mentions the story in the context of an epistemological discussion, and he includes it in the first part of the question among the points to be argued against. In his response to the question he states:

> Unde et de Samuele dici potest quod ipse apparuit per revelationem divinam; secundum hoc quod dicitur: *dormivit, et notum fecit regi finem vitae suae*. Vel illa apparitio fuit procurata per daemones: si tamen *Ecclesiastici* auctoritas non recipiatur, propter hoc quod inter canonicas scripturas apud Hebraeos non habetur.
>
> (Thus with respect to Samuel it can be said that he appeared through divine revelation, according to the saying, that after he fell asleep he prophesied again, warning the king of his death. Or else - if the authority of Ecclesiasticus is not accepted because it was not included among the canonical Scriptures by the Hebrews - that the apparition was brought about by demons.)
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> (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 89, 8, ad 2)[39]

Aquinas' conclusion is not included by the commentators on Dante who quote this section of the *Summa*. We may find it illuminating on the question of Aquinas' approach to the literal interpretation of Scripture, and the theological issue of canonicity, but it leaves the question about necromancy unresolved.

The common medieval view of necromancy held it to be not only immoral, but actually impossible. Since the dead could not be raised, the customary explanation offered was that demons assumed their form and appeared in their place. In this way necromancy became classified as demonic magic.[40] In attributing the apparition of Samuel to demonic powers, commentators hint that a man such as Samuel would not be party to such a practice, even if it were possible. This, we can see, implies some degree of culpability on

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[38] Text and translation from *St Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologiae*, ed. by Thomas Gilby and Thomas C. O'Brien, 60 vols (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964-76), XII: *Ia. 84-89*, ed. and trans. by Paul T. Durbin (1968), pp. 160-61.

[39] *Summa Theologiae*, XII, pp. 164-65.

[40] 'Originally the word had meant divination (mantia) by conjuring the spirits of the dead (*nekroi*). Circe was the classical necromancer of Graeco-Roman tradition, and the witch of Endor was the archetypal necromancer of the Bible. When medieval writers interpreted such stories, however, they assumed that the dead could not in fact be brought to life but that demons took on the appearance of deceased persons and pretended to be those persons. By extension, then, the conjuring of demons came to be known as necromancy; this was the ordinary meaning of the term in later medieval Europe. Necromancy was explicitly demonic magic' (Kieckhefer, p. 152). See also Kieckhefer, pp. 10-11. Guido da Pisa, listing the *speties* of *Mantica* in his comment on *Inferno* XX, explains, 'Quinta, secundum Herebum, dicitur Nigromantia, a nigros quod est "mortuus" et mantia, sive Manto; ista ars exercetur homine mortuo suscitato: non quod mortui suscitentur, sed demones adiurati ingrediuntur in corpora defuntorum et ad interrogata respondent' (*Expositiones*, p. 380). For references to Hippolytus, Augustine, Isidore of Seville, and Thomas Aquinas on this subject, see Thorndike, I, pp. 506-10, 628-29 and II, p. 605.

the part of the conjured spirit. Finally, the reliability of the information given by demons contacted through necromancy was invariably suspect and frequently had harmful consequences. This became a common motif in necromantic *exempla*, particularly in sermons warning the faithful to avoid such practices.[41]

The *Commedia*, of course, in taking the form of a *katabasis*, at least initially, does not attract a charge of necromancy. Nevertheless, we find that a number of the medieval notions pertaining to necromancy are re-formulated, often with a re-statement of the classical tradition on the matter.

First of all, the belief that necromancy can work, and raise souls rather than conjure demons, is supported by Virgil's explanation of his own experience of having been forced, by Erichtho, no less, to go to the bottom of hell and bring back a soul from there:

> 'Ver è ch'altra fïata qua giù fui,
> congiurato da quella Eritón cruda
> che richiamava l'ombre a' corpi sui.
> Di poco era di me la carne nuda,
> ch'ella mi fece intrar dentr'a quel muro,
> per trarne un spirto del cerchio di Giuda.'
>
> (*Inf.*, IX. 22-27)

The identity of this 'spirto' is not stated, although it has been conjectured that it refers to Pompey.[42] In fact the idea of raising Pompey's spirit forms the subject matter of a first century poem in the *Anthologia Latina*, although the sympathies of the anonymous author are more in line with those of Lucan (both locate Pompey in Elysium) than those which would be Dante's in placing Pompey at the bottom of the *Inferno*.[43] Dante's attitude to Pompey is not entirely clear; the references in *Paradiso*VI, the description of Caesar in *Inferno* IV, and the presence of Curio in *Inferno* XXVIII, bear closer examination. The choice of the 'cerchio di Giuda' for Virgil's mission to fetch a spirit probably has more to

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[41] Kieckhefer, p. 174, has one such tale as recounted by John of Frankfurt. The *Fiorentino* commentary gives a similar type of story in its comment on *Pur.*, XI. 109-14. Hollander, 'The Tragedy of Divination', p. 157, states: 'The sin of the diviners has two major components, according to Augustine, for they deceive others but are themselves deceived.' Hollander, p. 157, n. 65, refers to the title of the sixth chapter of Augustine's *De divinatione daemonum*, which is 'Daemones fallunt et falluntur'.

[42] Hollander, 'The Tragedy of Divination', pp. 178-79.

[43] Fata per humanas solitus praenoscere fibras | impius infandae religionis apex | pectoris ingenui salientia viscera flammis | imposuit, magico carmine rupit humum, | ausus ab Elysiis Pompeium ducere campis, | pro pudor, hoc sacrum Magnus ut aspiceret! | stulte, quid infernis Pompeium quaeris in umbris? | Non potuit terris spiritus ille premi' (*Anthologia Latina I, Carmina in codicibus scripta, Fasc. I, libri Salmasiani aliorumque carmina*, ed. by D. R. Shackleton-Bailey (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1982), p. 312).

do with establishing the extent of Virgil's knowledge of Hell than with the identity of the 'spirto'. In fact, the anonymity of this individual squares with the facts of *Pharsalia* VI just as Virgil's description of Erichtho's method does, although we may regard this as simply coincidental. In any case, it is interesting that the idea of recalling Pompey's shade has previously been proposed, and so long ago.

In addition, Virgil takes pains to explain in *Inferno* IX that he had no choice in this matter. This suggests that Dante was at least aware of the view that the souls consulted incurred some blame, even as he presented a different version of this in his text. This revelation by Virgil certainly seems to have been wholly Dante's invention, but why invent such a tale?[44] It may, in some way, form part of the on-going apologetic for Virgil which is presented in the *Commedia.* It may be an attempt to clear away any dubious charges of necromancy adhering to Virgil, by portraying him as an innocent victim.[45] That Dante is attempting an apologetic for Virgil at this point, however, can suggest to us a solution to another problem arising later in *Inferno* XX: Virgil's apparently excessive criticism of Dante.[46] The point of Virgil's vehemence towards Dante here may not be what it says about Dante *personaggio*, or even about the diviners, but rather what it reveals about Virgil himself in his relation to them and their practices. If there is ambiguity, it might be found in the view that Virgil protests too much. The absence of Erichtho in *Inferno* XX avoids either uncomfortable questions or deafening silence. This apologetic may also lie behind the choice of Michael the Scot for inclusion in *Inferno* XX, since he appears to have subscribed to the view that Virgil was involved in necromancy. Despite his fascination with magic, however, Michael was careful to condemn these practices.[47] Perhaps Dante

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[44] This opinion is shared by Ahl, p. 131; Hollander, pp. 178-80; Quint, pp. 202-04.

[45] 'Virgil both as character and as a textual presence, is subject to continual subversion and revisionary rewriting' (Rachel Jacoff and Jeffrey T. Schnapp, 'Introduction' in *The Poetry of Allusion: Virgil and Ovid in Dante's Commedia*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff and Jeffrey T. Schnapp (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 1-15 (p. 2)). Hollander, 'The Tragedy of Divination', pp. 179-83, rejects this idea (which he attributes to D'Ovidio, 'Dante e la magìa', in *Studii sulla Divina Commedia*) in favour of a more ambiguous portrayal of Virgil by Dante.

[46] Hollander, 'The Tragedy of Divination', pp. 166-69, discusses the problem, concluding, p. 169: 'Yet why should he [Dante] accuse himself of divination? And why should it be here that Virgil loses all patience with his charge?'

[47] On Michael the Scot's account of Virgil as a magician see John Webster Spargo, *Virgil The Necromancer: Studies in Virgilian Legends* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), pp. 19, 61. Spargo, p. 25, names Jansen Enikel, writing c. 1280, as 'the first individual to attempt a sustained account of the legends or a consistent characterisation of Virgil the necromancer.' See also pp. 23-24, 62. 'Michael condemns magic and

has been harsh in his eagerness to absolve Virgil by placing Michael here on reputation alone.

Returning to the issue of demonic duplicity, we should recall that the crucial feature of the prophecies of the *Commedia* is, of course, the fact that they are true; the *post eventum* ones demonstrably so, the others by association, avoiding any commitment to detail that might undo them. They are very often communicated unambiguously. Their obscurity at times may be puzzling but it is not misleading or inviting misinterpretation. Where the prophecies are deliberately obscure, this tends to be to safeguard their continued validity. They are never of the ambiguous sort which may be interpreted in two, often contradictory ways, such as are found in connection with ancient oracles. Nor are they generally prophecies of the sort which are given in the form of advice to be acted upon, frequent in classical literature and in the various stories of demonic consultation; instead they are predictive.[48]

Dante, contrary to the general opinion of his time, seems, at least, to admit the possibility of calling up the souls of the dead. Leaving aside the moral objections for now, we should stress that this does not necessarily mean a rejection of the notion that demons may come to the living, and, in fact, *Inferno* XXXIII contains souls whose bodies are inhabited by demons, yet still appear as if alive on earth. Alberigo explains to Dante how it is that his soul and that of Branca D'Oria, amongst others, are here whilst their bodies continue to live:

'Cotal vantaggio ha questa Tolomea,
che spesse volte l'anima ci cade
innanzi ch'Atropòs mossa le dea.
E perché tu più volontier mi rade
le 'nvetrïate lagrime dal volto,
sappie che, tosto che l'anima trade
come fec' ïo, il corpo suo l'è tolto
da un demonio, che poscia il governa
mentre che 'l tempo suo tutto sia vòlto.'

(*Inf.* XXXIII. 124-32)

necromancy but takes evident joy in telling stories of magicians and necromancers [...] Michael lists 28 varieties or methods of divination. He believes that they are all true [...] But they are forbidden as infamous and evil' (Thorndike, I, p. 319).

[48] Mohammed's prophecy was discussed at prophecy 8 in Chapter 2 above.

Alberigo was still alive in 1300 at the time of the vision, and Branca D'Oria in fact outlived Dante, dying in 1324.[49] We may note the mention here of Atropos, one of the Fates of classical mythology.

A final point we should notice in connection with these comments is the description of the gods of classical mythology as 'li dèi falsi e bugiardi' (*Inf.* I. 72). This can be seen to reflect the common medieval perception that these gods were, in fact, demons, which would render this epithet still more apposite.[50] The absence of such beings, the deities of the classical world, from Lucan's *Pharsalia* was one of the features which helped it find its place in the Christian culture of the Middle Ages.[51]

The presence of *Aeneid* VI as a subtext for the *Commedia*, and especially for *Inferno* VI, is well noted. What has been overlooked, however, is the presence of Lucan's *nekuia* in *Inferno* VI and elsewhere in the *Commedia*. In accepting the textual parallelism of *Aeneid* VI and *Inferno* VI, it would be inappropriate to extend this so far as to equate Ciacco in some way with Anchises, yet it is Ciacco who foretells the future. On the other hand, it would have been incongruous to locate an Anchises type figure in *Inferno* VI, though perhaps he could have been found in *Inferno* IV, dispensing with the parallelism. In any case, we have already noted the parallels between Anchises and Cacciaguida. Alternatively, some other character of equivalent *gravitas* could have been found to deliver the first *post eventum* prophecy, such as Farinata, for example, who delivers a prophecy of his own in *Inferno* X. Dante's decision, however, was to introduce Ciacco. We may observe that there is a shared detail of description between Ciacco and the corpse in *Pharsalia* VI. with the references to 'la gola' (*Inf.* VI. 53) and 'gutture' (*Phars.* VI. 637).

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[49] See *Inf.*, XXXIII. 109-50. For historical details see Larner, *The Lords of Romagna*, pp. 61-62; Delmay, pp. 48, 153-54; Bosco and Reggio, I, pp. 496-98.

[50] Boccaccio says, on *Inf.*, I. 72: 'Sono falsi, non veri idii, "quia dii gentium demonia"; bugiardi gli chiama, per ciò che il demonio, sì come e' medesimo [Augustine] in altra parte dice, è padre di menzogne' (*Esposizioni*, I, p. 33). The *Otttimo* comments on *Par.*, XVII. 31: 'Onde nota, che innanzi dello avvenimento del nostro Signore in carne umana, tutto il mondo era pieno d'idoli e d'indovinamenti e risponsi diabolichi, come appare per tutti li libri delle Scritture sacre, e delli storiografi, e de' poeti. Li quali demoni con parole tronche e doppie sodducevano le genti, e menavano in ruina d'anima e di corpo; e, secondo che nella storia scolastica [si] testimonia, molte statue dell'idoli caddero nella natività di Cristo, segnale che la coltura dell'idoli per l'avenimento di Dio andava in ruina' (III, p. 394).

[51] 'The approval of the Church was facilitated in Lucan's case by the fact that he was a nephew of Seneca the Philosopher, and that he had taken up an unsympathetic, even hostile attitude to the Roman gods' (O. S. Due, 'An Essay on Lucan', *Classica et Medievalia*, 23 (1962), 68-113 (p. 78)). See, too, Enrica Malcovati, *Lucano* (Brescia: La Scuola Editrice, 1947), pp. 113-19.

This reference accompanies later prophecies by Pier da Medicina (*Inf.* XXVIII. 64) and Forese Donati (*Pur.* XXIII. 65), and we may also recall Gabienus's 'incisa cervice' in the story from Pliny.

The issue of identity is of particular importance. By having an unnamed corpse as a prophet, Lucan presents a position where all the dead have knowledge of the future, not just those with particular claims to prophetic authority in life. The anonymity of Ciacco, whose attempts to elicit recognition from Dante *personaggio* are in vain, underlines Dante's position that foresight among the dead is a feature of their existence, not a privilege, nor a consequence of some ability during their life. By poignant contrast, it is precisely in *Inferno* XX, filled with seers, that no soul speaks to Dante. The condemnation of these souls is not on the basis of the veracity or otherwise of their predictions; rather, their guilt appears to lie in a misuse of their ability, that ability itself is not called into question.[52] This is placed in still greater relief by the very lengthy prophecy given to Hugh Capet to deliver in the corresponding canto XX of *Purgatorio* .[53]

Conversely, we find that the authentic prophets encountered in the *Paradiso* are extremely tight lipped. Dante meets David, regarded in the Middle Ages as the author of the book of Psalms and a prophet, in *Paradiso* XX, where he is described as 'il cantor de lo Spirito Santo' (XX, 38). Nathan in *Paradiso* XII is specifically referred to as 'Natàn profeta' (XII, 136). Although this description of Nathan was virtually formulaic in the Middle Ages, so that its inclusion by Dante does not necessarily imply a particular emphasis, nevertheless he is a genuine prophet.[54] The choice of Nathan, rather than one of the greater biblical prophets, is intriguing and it has been suggested that the emphasis is on challenging the misuse of authority. Nathan represents this in his criticism of King David's actions towards Uriah the Hittite and his wife Bathsheba (II Samuel 11. 2- 12. 15).[55] Despite their credentials, neither of these 'prophets' speaks, let alone prophesies. It is in

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[52] 'chi è più scellerato che colui | che al giudicio divin passion comporta?' (*Inf.* XX. 29-30); 'perché volse veder troppo davante, | di retro guarda e fa retroso calle' (*Inf.* XX. 38-39). See also Hollander, pp. 131-218.

[53] See prophecy 13 in chapter 3 above.

[54] Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 205. This description of Nathan also has scriptural precedents which, presumably, are the source of the medieval formula; see II Samuel 7. 2; I Kings 1. 10, 22-23, 32, 34, 38, 44-45.

[55] Manfred Weidhorn, 'Why Does Dante Cite Nathan in the *Paradiso*?', *Philological Quarterly*, 61 (1982), 90-91.

Paradiso XII that Dante also encounters the celebrated Joachim of Fiore, who, despite the well-known epithet 'di spirito profetico dotato' (*Par*, XII, 141), says nothing about the future.[56] As with Nathan, this description of Joachim need not imply any particular emphasis, nor even interest, on the part of Dante, even if its meaning does give Joachim the necessary credentials, so to speak.[57]

We saw in *Inferno* XIX that Dante *personaggio* received a prophecy indirectly, as a result of being mistaken for Boniface VIII (*Inf.*, XIX. 52-57). And again, in *Inferno* XXIV, Vanni Fucci informed Dante *personaggio* of the future with the explicit intention of causing him pain (*Inf.*, XXIV. 151). To regard such knowledge, then, as any sort of charism would be utterly inappropriate in this context.[58] We may briefly consider the question of God's use of those who are not good to accomplish good. In the course of his discussion of prophecy, Aquinas states:

> Ad primum ergo dicendum quod prophetae daemonum non semper loquuntur ex daemonum revelatione, sed interdum inspiratione divina; sicut manifeste legitur de Balaam, cui dicitur Dominus esse locutus licet esset propheta daemonum, quia Deus utitur etiam malis ad utilitatem bonorum. Unde et per prophetas daemonum aliqua vera praenuntiat.
>
> (Hence: Demonic prophets do not always speak from a demonic revelation, but sometimes by divine inspiration, as is clearly stated of Balaam, to whom it is said the Lord spoke, although he was a prophet of demons. Because God uses even the wicked for the benefit of the good.)
>
> (*Summa Theologiae*, 2a 2ae. 172, 6, ad 1)[59]

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[56] There has been a great deal written on Joachim of Fiore in relation to Dante. More recently see Marjorie Reeves, 'The Bible and Literary Authorship in the Middle Ages', in *Reading The Text: Biblical Criticism and Literary Theory*, ed. by Stephen Prickett (London: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 12-63 (pp. 19-50). The fact that Joachim is silent in *Paradiso* is generally not commented on. That the epithet attached to Joachim is taken precisely from the Vespers antiphon used on Joachim's feast by his monks is noted in almost any commentary. Bosco, and Reggio, III, p. 206, quote it: 'Beatus Joachim, spiritu dotatus prophetico, decoratus intelligentia; errore procul haeretico, dixit futura ut praesentia.'

[57] The antiphon and Dante's connections with Joachim are also discussed by Guglielmo Gorni, 'Spirito profetico duecentesco e Dante', *Letture Classensi*,13 (1984), 49-68. He includes this attractive story giving another point of view on Joachim's renown: 'Salimbene de Adam, nella sua *Cronica*, racconta questo sapidissimo anedotto "de duobus aliis Ioachitis, qui incitaverunt fratrem Hugonem ut cum quodam Predicatore disputaret de doctrina abbatis Ioachym": "Frater Petre, quid vobis videtur de doctrina abbatis Ioachim?" Respondit frater Petrus: "Tantum curo de Ioachym, quantum de quinta rota plaustri".' (pp. 54-5) ('Concerning two other Joachimites, who goaded brother Hugh so that he would argue about the teaching of Abbot Joachim with a certain Preacher: "Brother Peter, what do you think about the teaching of Abbot Jochim?" Brother Peter replied: I am as concerned about Joachim as I am about the fifth wheel of a cart.") my translation.

[58] See text quoted above at note 1 above.

[59] Text and translation from *Summa Theologiae*, XLV, pp. 46-47, and for the next quotation from the *Summa Theologia* pp. 38-39. Also, in response to the related question 'utrum boni angeli habeant praelationem super malos', Aquinas states: 'Ad primum ergo

This concept could seem relevant for the whole *Inferno* experience and may certainly shed light on Dante's reference to 'del ben ch'i vi trovai' (*Inf.* I. 8), but it still need not entail granting the charisms of the Holy Spirit to the damned. Whilst God gives prophecy to those he judges best suited (*Summa Theologiae*, 2a 2ae. 4, ad 4), according to the benefit of others (*Summa Theologiae*, 2a 2ae. 4, ad 3), nevertheless, there can be certain impediments:

> Ad tertium dicendum quod aliqua naturalis indispositio, si non removetur, impedire potest prophetalem revelationem, puta si aliquis esset totaliter sensu naturali destitutus; sicut etiam impeditur aliquis ab actu prophetandi per aliquem vehementem passionem, vel irae, vel concupiscentiae, qualis est in coitu, vel per quamcumque aliam passionem.
>
> Sed talem indispositionem naturalem removet virtus divina, quae est prophetiae causa.
>
> (Some natural indispositions, if not removed, could hinder prophetic revelation, e.g. if one were totally destitute of natural perception. So too one can be impeded from actively prophesying by some vehement passion, whether of wrath, or of concupiscence, as in the marriage act, or in any other violent passions.
>
> But the divine power, the cause of prophecy, remedies all such unhelpful dispositions.)
>
> (*Summa Theologiae*, 2a 2ae. 172. 3, ad 3)

Thomas Aquinas then ends with a reminder that the power of God cannot be bound by any system. Bearing this caveat in mind, and the fact that this analysis of prophecy is given with reference to the living rather than the dead, we may consider the issue of impediments. The concluding remark in Fucci's prophecy to Dante *personaggio* must surely exemplify an unremedied 'vehementem passionem irae'.

I would like to return to the classical sources and propose that there are indications of closer links between the *Commedia* and the *Pharsalia*, in particular between cantos VI, XXIV, and XXVIII of the *Inferno* and *Pharsalia* VI. Both Ciacco and Fucci raise the issue of recognition, albeit with opposing wishes; Ciacco to be recognised, Fucci to escape

identification.[60] Ciacco's insistence on being remembered is interesting, and we may even like to imagine that here Dante is trying to do justice by the unnamed corpse of *Pharsalia*. Perhaps Pliny's Gabienus is even hinted at; however, this is speculative.

The same wish is expressed in *Inferno* XXVIII by Pier Da Medicina (*Inf.*, XXVIII. 73-75), of whom we now know almost nothing.[61] Pier has his throat cut open, so that there is another reference to 'la gola' (*Inf.*, XXVIII. 64-65). Lucan's *Pharsalia* is also present in the figure of Curio and reference is made to the episode when he advised Caesar to cross the Rubicon, thus precipitating civil war. This is found in *Pharsalia* I, where Curio is described in this way: 'Audax venali comitatur Curio lingua' ('With them came Curio of the reckless heart and venal tongue') (*Phars.* I. 269). This mention of the tongue finds its way into Dante's description.[62] It is here, too, that Dante *personaggio* encounters Mosca dei Lamberti, as Ciacco in *Inferno* VI had informed him that he would. In his question about the fate of a number of Florentine notables (*Inf.*, VI. 77-84), Dante mentioned Mosca by name (*Inf.* VI. 80). Ciacco replied that he would meet Mosca and the others in the depths of Hell, should he descend so far (*Inf.*,VI. 85-87). This follows immediately after Pier's introduction of Curio. Like Ciacco, Pier wants to be remembered among the living and, as we saw, begins his prediction with the request that Dante do so (*Inf.*, XXVIII. 73).

The most significant feature of all in this passage, we may recall, is that it is the first time in the *Commedia* that the term 'l'antiveder' (78) is used. It describes the foresight which the dead experience and, as we saw, it is used again in a virtually identical

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dicendum quod per sanctos angelos multa de divinis mysteriis daemonibus revelantur, cum divina justitia exigit ut per daemones aliqua fiant vel ad punitionem malorum vel ad exercitationem bonorum; sicut in rebus humanis assessores judiciis revelant tortoribus ejus sententiam' ('Hence: 1. The holy angels reveal many things concerning divine mysteries to the devils whenever God's justice dictates the activity of the devils, whether for the punishing of the wicked or for the testing of the good; it is like the case in human affairs when the judge's assistants inform the executioner of the judge's sentence.') (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 109, 4, ad 1). Text and translation from *St Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologiae*, ed. by Thomas Gilby and Thomas C. O'Brien, 60 vols (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964-76), XIV: *1a. 103-109*, ed. and trans. by Thomas C. O'Brien (1975), pp. 166-67).

[60] We may also recall that Lucan's *Pharsalia* is also at the basis of the description of the snakes at *Inf.*, XXIV. 85-90. The passages in Lucan are *Phars.* IX. 710 f.; 805.

[61] See chapter 2, notes 148-49 above.

[62] '"Questi, scacciato, il dubitar sommerse | in Cesare, affermando che 'l fornito | sempre con danno l'attender sofferse." | Oh quanto mi pareva sbigottito | con la lingua tagliata ne la strozza | Curïo, ch'a dir fu così ardito!' (*Inf.*, XXVIII. 97-102); Curio's infamous advice to Caesar is at *Phars.* I. 280-82.

expression in *Purgatorio* XXIII. We may recall that the meeting between Dante and Forese Donati in Purgatorio XXIII echoed some of the aspects of Dante's meeting with Ciacco in Inferno VI.[63] The re-appearance of the term 'l'antiveder' suggests at least some similarity between the *Purgatorio* and the *Inferno* as regards the knowledge of the future shown by the dead. As we have seen, the line virtually repeats 'che, se l'antiveder qui non è vano' (*Inf.* XXVIII. 78.). We also noted that it is remarkably close in form to a statement in Dante's famous letter '*scelestissimis Florentinis intrinsecis* ': 'Et si praesaga mens mea non fallitur.'[64] The slight change in the *Commedia*, from 'è vano', to 'm'inganna', makes the line from *Purgatorio* closer to the form in the Epistle. Furthermore, the letter contains a prophecy close in content to that delivered here by Forese Donati, and both *Purgatorio* and the letter echo a text in Isaiah.[65] The expression itself, however, is of classical provenance and has no scriptural equivalent; this particular use of the term 'praesaga' is not found in the *Vulgate*.[66] There is one instance in the *Vulgate*, in the story of Joseph, where the term is used with reference to a dream.[67] This is not comparable to the classical usage or to Dante's adoption of this. In some patristic *loci* these terms are used in quotations from scripture where, in fact, the *Vulgate* either does not use the term or uses another. There are three instances where cognate terms are used in the *Vetus Latina*, but not the Vulgate: 'praesagium' (Is. 2. 6); 'praesago' (Jud. 8. 29); 'praesagus' (Wis. 8. 8). In classical epic, on the other hand, the term is found frequently.[68] The phrase 'praesaga mali mens' (*Aen.*,

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[63] See the comments on prophecy 14 in Chapter 3 above.
[64] See Chapter 3 note 69 above.
[65] Is. 3. 16-17, as most commentaries on the *Commedia* note.
[66] The *Novae Concordantiae Bibliorum Sacrorum, iuxta Vulgatam versionem critice editam*, ed. by B. Fischer, 5 vols (Tübingen: Fromann-holzboog, 1977), has no entry for the term 'praesaga'. The term can be found at Gen. 41. 11 in the form *praesagium*, to describe dreams; it is not applied to any person, or human faculty.
[67] 'iratus rex servis suis me et magistrum pistorum retrudi iussit in carcerem principis militum | ubi una nocte uterque vidimus somnium praesagum futurorum' ('The king (Pharaoah) angry with his servants commanded that I and the chief baker be placed in the prison of the captain of the guard, where one night we both had a dream foreseeing the future' my translation) (Gen. 41. 10-11)
[68] The *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, 10 vols (Stuttgart and Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1900-) X. 2, fasc. VI (1991), cols 811-15, gives numerous classical and patristic *loci* for the terms 'praesagium', 'praesagare', 'praesagus'. Classical *loci* of interest are *Aen.* X. 177, 843; *Phars.* II. 121; VI. 414; VII. 186, 197, 331. Mineo, *Profetismo*, pp. 143-60, sees a divinatory meaning in Dante's use of the term in the Epistles. This makes sense when taken together with the reference to 'signis veridicis' found in the epistle, but this cannot be carried over to 'l'antiveder'. Mineo, *Profetismo*, pp. 78-80, links a Pauline text, Rom. 1. 18.f., in his discussion of *Inferno* XX. However, the term 'praesaga' does not occur

X. 843) has been singled out in connection with the line from Dante's epistle.[69] Arguably closer still, both in form and sentiment, and surely an echo of Virgil's line, is Lucan's 'praesaga malorum si data mens homini est' (*Phars.* VII. 186); also *Phars.*, VI. 414. seen above). Furthermore, the form of expression is common in classical literature as a preface to a prediction, and as we saw, has been identified as the 'si non vana' motif.[70] It is this characteristic of the expression in the epistle, the form, which has carried over to the lines in the *Commedia*. Its function in the *Aeneid*, however, has been interpreted as undermining the prophecy which follows it.[71] This obviously does not carry over to the *Commedia*, since the *post eventum* prophecies are manifestly true, and the others clearly aspire to be.

All of this strongly suggests a classical literary model rather than a scriptural or philosophical basis for the mechanism of prophecy in the *Commedia* ; at least in the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, as the qualification 'qui' which is attached to 'l'antiveder' in both instances may indicate. The absence of an explanation of the matter further suggests that efforts to find a coherent framework are likely to go unrewarded. The whole system, if there is a system, is incoherent and *Inferno* X serves as a particularly good demonstration of this.

At the end of his conversation with Farinata degli Uberti, Dante *personaggio* seeks clarification from him about the apparent foresight enjoyed by the dead. Consonant with his assumption in *Inferno* VI that Ciacco did know the future, here, too, this basic premise is never called into question:

> 'El par che voi veggiate, se ben odo,
> dinanzi quel che 'l tempo seco adduce,
> e nel presente tenete altro modo.' 99
>
> (*Inf.*, VI. 95-99)

The nub of the question lies in the third line (99) on the ignorance of the present which the dead manifest. It is precisely because of his acceptance of their capacity to see the future, that Dante finds this so puzzling. It is Cavalcante's wish to know whether his son Guido is still alive in the present, rather than Farinata's prophecy of exile, which has

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there, and Paul's text is concerned with reading signs in the world, something clearly not applicable to the souls of the dead.

[69] Toynbee, *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*, p. 71, n. 6.

[70] O'Hara, pp. 13-14.

[71] O'Hara, p. 14. See Chapter 2, note 159 above.

prompted Dante's question.[72] We may notice here an interesting problem on the compositional level. Cavalcante's question about Dante *personaggio*'s use of the past tense in reference to Guido (*Inf.*, X 67-69), is never answered. Guido, dead at the time of writing and in the world of Dante *uomo*, is still alive at the fictional date of this meeting, as Dante *personaggio* later reveals (110-11). It would appear that, in a strange way, Cavalcante has asked Dante *personaggio* why he is referring to Guido from the viewpoint of Dante *uomo*, so to speak.

The language at this point is all of sight, and this capacity of the dead for seeing the future will later be termed 'l'antiveder', as we have seen above. In fact, in the Middle Ages 'prophetia' was often, mistakenly, etymologically linked with seeing [73] It is clear that Dante identifies with this visual aspect. The response which Farinata gives to Dante's query is equally unconcerned with how, or why, the dead see the future. It seeks, rather, to illustrate how it is that, for all their foresight, they are still ignorant of the present.[74]

'Noi veggiam, come quei c'ha mala luce,
le cose', disse, 'che ne son lontano;
cotanto ancor ne splende il sommo duce.
Quando s'appressano o son, tutto è vano
nostro intelletto; e s'altri non ci apporta,
nulla sapem di vostro stato umano.
Però comprender puoi che tutta morta
fia nostra conoscenza da quel punto

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[72] *Inf.*, X. 111-14. Bosco and Reggio, I, p. 160, clarify this point.

[73] 'Unde possunt dici prophetae a *pro*, quod est *procul*, *phanos* quod est *apparitio*, quia scilicet eis aliqua quae sunt procul apparent. Et propter hoc, ut Isidorus dicit, in libro Etymol, *in veteri Testamento appellabantur Videntes, quia videbant ea quae caeteri non videbant, et prospiciebant quae in mysterio abscondita erant*' ('Wherefore they may be said to take their name from {phanos}, "apparition," because things appear to them from afar. Wherefore, as Isidore states (Etym. vii, 8), "in the Old Testament, they were called Seers, because they saw what others saw not, and surveyed things hidden in mystery') (*Summa Theologiae*, 2a 2ae. 171, ad 1) Text and translation in *Summa Theologiae*, XLV, pp. 4-5. Potter adds in a note: 'St. Thomas borrows his definition from Isidore of Seville, but is misled by his authority, and makes the word prophetes derive from a Greek *porro* which is impossible. The real derivation is from *pro* in place of, instead of, etc; and the rest of the word is not from *phainein* = appear, but from *phemi*, *phanai* = speak or say. The prophet is one who speaks on behalf of or for another. Etymologically there is no suggestion of futurity; and in fact a prophet does not necessarily predict the future. He is more often 'man of God' revealing God's very present will for the people of God' (pp. 6-7). On medieval ideas about prophecy, see Mineo, *Profetismo*, pp. 19-44.

[74] A question arises: does this apply only to those in this part of the *Inferno* or to all the dead? 'Ma poiché non mancano altri casi di dannati che sembra non abbiano conoscenza del presente, la legge può valere per tutto l'*Inferno*. Comunque, si ricordi che le leggi della poesia prevalgono sempre su quelle della ragione, se troveremo addirittura un'anima del *Purgatorio* (Corrado Malaspina, in *Pg* VIII 115-17) che chiede notizie del suo paese' (Bosco and Reggio, I, p. 160). In other words, there is a lot of inconsistency around this point. A similar conclusion is reached by Fernando Salsano, 'prescienza', *Enciclopedia dantesca*, IV, 650-52.

che del futuro fia chiusa la porta.' 108

(*Inf.*, X. 100-08)

The simile introducing the reply to Dante's question reveals little of how this foresight functions, concentrating, in fact, on the point that the present remains unknown, so that as future events come closer, they pass into oblivion.

This raises another problem; how it is that when an event becomes present, and so is no longer visible as future, the knowledge of what has already been seen, when the event was in the more distant future, also seems to be lost. For instance, Cavalcante does not know whether his son Guido is alive or dead. Guido's death occurred in August 1300, so that at the fictional dating of the encounter between Cavalcante and Dante he was still alive by a matter of months. Cavalcante himself died around 1280, allowing for a period of about twenty years between his own death and that of his son. The events predicted by Farinata, and therefore still visible to him, lay four years away. Given Farinata's knowledge of future events four years away and his explanation of ignorance of the present by the dead, consistency demands that Cavalcante, with a twenty year gap, should have foreseen Guido's death. His subsequent ignorance of what he should already have known, simply because the time for it to occur has drawn nearer, remains unexplained.

In addition, Cavalcante's ignorance does not square with Farinata's apparent knowledge of the present state of his own relatives (*Inf.*, X. 82-84), not to mention the fact that others throughout the *Commedia* show varying degrees of awareness of the present and future.[75] At this point, we may remind ourselves that the *Commedia* is poetry first and sometimes the dramatic requirements may take precedence. There is a very interesting question here, which I would like to note, although there is no space to examine it further in this thesis. The apparent inconsistency in this episode in *Inferno* X reveals a tension between what we may term 'structure' and 'moment'. Is Dante willing to abandon, albeit temporarily, the structural elements of the *Commedia* which he has put in place, for the sake of achieving certain effects within individual episodes? This is an important question, but one which we will have to leave for the time being.

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[75] Delmay, pp. 73-74, attributes Gramsci with first noticing this problem. The article on *Inferno* X is now in Antonio Gramsci, *Letteratura e vita nazionale* (Turin: Editori riuniti, 1991), pp. 45-47.

The explanation of Farinata does provide an end point for this foresight, coinciding logically enough with the end of history (*Inf.*, X. 106-08), which takes up again the theme introduced earlier in the canto.[76] As well as being directly related to the sin punished in this sixth circle of *Inferno*, this reference to the Last Judgement also recalls the ending of the scene in *Inferno* VI when Virgil introduces the subject following Ciacco's prophecy, and like Ciacco, Farinata ends with a refusal to speak further. This awaiting 'la seconda morte' by both shades, and their falling back down after their conversation with Dante echoes *Pharsalia* VI in the descent of the shade in search of death a second time following his prediction.[77]

Despite this, these lines are frequently taken for an explanation of how the souls of the damned see the future. Some commentators seem unwittingly to acknowledge the absence of any clarification by choosing this as the point at which they seek to provide a full philosophical explanation, almost as if to compensate for the absence of one in the text.[78] These expositions generally draw upon Aquinas and concentrate on questions of epistemology, since, as we have seen, he discusses prophecy in the context of charisms relating to knowledge.[79] This approach still has to deal with the problem of prophetic knowledge among the damned, and an interesting solution is proposed: that the damned learn of the future from demons whom they overhear.[80] Bearing in mind the syncretism

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[76] 'E quelli a me: "Tutti saran serrati | quando di Iosafàt qui torneranno | coi corpi che là sù hanno lasciati"' (*Inf.*, X. 10-12).

[77] 'Suo cimitero da questa parte hanno | con Epicuro tutti suoi seguaci, | che l'anima col corpo morta fanno' (*Inf.*, X., 13-15). Compare 'e de li altri mi taccio' (*Inf.*, X. 120) and 'più non ti dico e più non ti rispondo' (*Inf.*, VI. 90). Also 'cadde con essa a par de li altri ciechi' (*Inf.*, VI. 93); 'Indi s'ascose...' (*Inf.*, X. 121). Masters, p. 195, interprets the return of the shade to the underworld in Lucan's scene as an inversion of Aeneas' and the Sibyl's return to the earth above in Virgil. '... Sic postquam fata peregit, | Stat voltu maestus tacito mortemque reposcit.' (*Phars.* VI. 820-21).

[78] Lana, the *Ottimo*, Pietro, and Benvenuto all do so. Salsano, pp. 651-52, also follows this approach.

[79] In their explanations Lana, the *Ottimo*, Pietro, and Benvenuto all refer to the *Summa Theologiae* 1a. 77, 8 and 1a. 89, 6-7. Other texts mentioned include Gregory's *Moralium*, 12, Aristotle's *De Anima*, 3, and various biblical references. Salsano also refers to the *Summa Theologiae* 1a. 89.

[80] The *Ottimo* has this: 'Il sapere delle cose future è in due modi: l'uno modo è sapere quello che dee venire in quello medesimo; l'altro saperlo per le sue cause. Per lo primo modo nol sa se none Idio, al quale è presente il passato, lo istante, e 'l futuro, avegnaché ne l'ordine della natura l'uno si è innanzi de l'altro; e però di questo così fatto modo non si può sapere se non per relazione di Dio, [il quale] lo manifesti alli Angioli, e li Angioli poi alli demoni, e all'anime; e questo modo di manifestare si fa spesso, come dice frate Tomaso nella prima parte, quistione CVJ, capitolo IIIJ'; Pietro Alighieri has: 'et sic adhuc dicte anime dampnate habent tantum a Deo, referentibus angelis mali subaudi, quod prevident et sciunt de futuris et non de presentibus. [...] Subdens ibi Thomas quod dicte tales anime,

which translated the various deities of classical tradition into the demons of the Middle Ages, this explanation posits a mechanism remarkably similar to that in some of the classical *nekuia*, in which the Fates are observed by the dead. Despite its attractions, we must reject that theory since the introduction of demons into the equation is the introduction of uncertainty, obscurity and mendacity, which consequently destroys the reliability of the prophecies. Ciacco's prophecy sets the tone for those which will follow with its full exploitation of the primary advantage of *post eventum* prophecy: the opportunity to predict reliably and with detail.

Dante offers no real philosophical or theological explanation for foresight in the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. The mechanism, as it presents itself, does not stand up to close scrutiny; it is not, nor is it intended to be, situated within a philosophical or theological system. Dante himself does not introduce any sort of philosophical rationale for prophecy at this or any other point in the *Inferno* or the *Purgatorio*. There can be no doubt that had he intended to situate 'l'antiveder qui' within such a tradition, he would have done so clearly and without hesitation; as we will see him do in the *Paradiso*.

The knowledge of the future enjoyed by the souls in the *Paradiso* is of another type altogether, and is predicated on their being in the presence of God. The first indications of this, as we have seen, come in the meeting with Cunizza, whose prophecy concludes:

'Sù sono specchi, voi dicete Troni,

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licet per se scire talia non possunt, possunt tamen per animas que hinc ad eas vadunt id scire; vel per angelos vel demones; vel etiam Spiritu Dei revelante, sicut etiam Augustinus in predicto libro [De agenda cura pro mortuis] tenet. Et per hoc etiam patet quod vult Dantes dicere de alio passu dum dicit quod dicte anime, licet non de presentibus, tamen aliqua de futuris sciunt. Et sic bene sequitur tertium dictum auctoris, dum dicit quod post diem iudicii omne tale scire erit dictis animalibus ablatum. Nam dicit Thomas in dicta Prima Parte questione centesima XXVIo capitulo VIIIo: Usque ad diem iudici semper nova aliqua suppremis angelis divinitus revelantur de hiis que pertinent ad dispositionem mundi. Unde Augustinus in libro Retractationum inquit: Futura enim prescire solius Dei est, qui in sua contemplatione etiam angelos illa prescire facit. Et in VIIIIo De civitate Dei ait: Demones non eternas causas temporum in Dei contemplatione et sapientia contemplantur; sed ut maiore experientia futura presciunt et suas dispositiones quandoque prenuntiant. Et hoc non gratia, sed natura sui, quod quidem recipiunt a bonis angelis et recipient usque ad diem iudicii. Et sic, per consequens, anime predicte dampnate a dictis demonibus dicta futura scire possunt ... De animabus vero beatis non est dubium quod cognoscunt et sciunt predicta presentia et ventura. Unde Gregorius in supradicto capitulo subdit: Quod de animabus sanctis sentiendum est, scilicet quod ignorent ea que hic aguntur, quia que intus omnipotentis Dei claritatem vident nullo modo credendum est quod sit foris aliquid quod ignorent. Et alibi ait: Quid est quod non sciant qui videntes omnia vident?... De animabus existentibus in Purgatorio quid dicemus? Glosator Decreti videtur tenere quod nesciant predicta cum nondum fruantur visione Dei. Tamen iste auctor sentit contrarium per ea que scribit infra in Purgatorio, scilicet quod presciant futura, et hoc forte revelatione bonorum angelorum, quos dicit ibi preesse.'

onde refulge a noi Dio giudicante;
sì che questi parlar ne paion buoni.'
Qui si tacette [...].

(*Par.*, IX. 61-64)

These verses posit an explanation for the blessed souls' knowledge of the future which is quite different from 'l'antiveder' of those in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. According to this explanation the souls of the blessed see God, and, as we already noted, this is simply mentioned as a premise to the main point which is being made. Cunizza's use of the term 'Troni' moves the discussion into the area of scholastic metaphysics.[81]

In *Paradiso* XVII Dante *personaggio* prefaces his request to Cacciaguida for information about the future with a statement about how his ancestor has such knowledge:

'O cara piota mia che sì t'insusi,
che, come veggion le terrene menti
non capere in trïangol due ottusi,
così vedi le cose contingenti
anzi che sieno in sé, mirando il punto
a cui tutti li tempi son presenti.'

(*Par.*, XVII. 13-18)

We can note the language of scholastic metaphysics immediately, with the talk of 'cose contingenti' (16).[82] Furthermore, the sort of knowledge of the future enjoyed by the blessed is precisely that which is reserved for God, and shared by them through the beatific vision they experience (16-18). Cacciaguida then explains how different his method of prophecy will be:

Né per ambage, in che la gente folle
già s'inviscava pria che fosse anciso
l'Agnel di Dio che le peccata tolle,
ma per chiare parole e con preciso
latin rispuose quelo amor paterno,
chiuso e parvente del suo proprio riso:
'La contingenza che fuor del quaderno
de la vostra matera non si stende,
tutta è dipinta nel cospetto etterno;
necessità però quindi non prende

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[81] Singleton, III.2, pp. 166-67, quotes Aquinas in connection with this: 'Thomas Aquinas (*Summa theol.* I, q. 108, a. 6, resp.) notes:"*Throni* dicuntur secundum Gregorium ... *per quos Deus sua iudicia exercet*".' Bosco and Reggio, III, pp.145-46, quote Isidore of Seville on the same subject.

[82] Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 284, explain 'Dio, per il quale non esiste passato o futuro, ma che vede ogni cosa come eterno presente. Cfr. S. Tommaso, *Summa theol.* II-IIae, q. CLXXII, a. 1: "Praecognoscere autem futura [...]est proprium divini intellectus, cuius aeternitati sunt omnia praesentia".' Singleton, III.2, pp. 287-88, also refers to Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I. 14. a. 13, resp.

se non come dal viso in che si specchia
nave che per torrente giù discende.
Da indi, sì come viene ad orecchia
dolce armonia da organo, mi viene
a vista il tempo che ti s'apparecchia.'

(*Par.*, XVII. 31-45)

Following Dante personaggio's own suggestion, Cacciaguida offers here an epistemological explanation of how the blessed can know the future, whilst at the same time clarifying the distinction between knowledge of future events and predestination (especially at 40). The description here situates the knowledge of the future which souls in the *Paradiso* enjoy firmly in the omniscience of God, to whom the blessed are ever present.[83] This is very different, then, from 'l'antiveder' of the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*, and significantly, the term is used in a quite different way in the *Paradiso*.[84] We may note, too, that whilst Bonagiunta in the *Purgatorio* tells Dante *personaggio* to take 'questo antivedere' (*Pur.*, XXIV. 37) with him, the prophecy he takes away from Cacciaguida is referred to as a 'provedenza' (*Par.*, XVII. 109).

Although the foresight of the blessed rests firmly on theological concepts, and these are explicitly signalled in Dante's text, there is, nevertheless, a continuing classical presence in the *Paradiso* too. We saw the comparison of Dante to Hippolytus in the opening lines of Cacciaguida's prophecy. Dante would have known the account in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* XV. Furthermore this book of Ovid ends the *Metamorphoses* with a prophecy containing another example of the 'si non vana' motif:[85]

quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam.

(Wherever Rome's power extends over the conquered world, I shall have mention on men's lips, and, if the prophecies of bards have any truth, through all the ages shall I live in fame.)

(*Metam.* XV. 877-79)[86]

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[83] Again the ideas can be found in Aquinas. Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 286, refer to *Summa theol.* I. 14. a. 13 (and Boethius, *Cons. Ph.* V, pr. 4); Singleton, III.2, pp. 291-92, refers to (and quotes) the *Summa Theologiae*.

[84] It was used at *Par.* VII. 76-81, to refer to someone still alive, as we have seen.

[85] O'Hara, p. 56, lists this along with several other examples from Ovid. See, too, Bosco and Reggio, III, p. 286.

[86] Text and translation from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. by Frank Justus Miller, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1916, repr. 1946).

There are even traces of the *Pharsalia* in this section of the *Paradiso*. The beginning of Cacciaguida's prophecy contains a very pointed rejection of the classical 'ambage' (31), a rejection found earlier in the figure of Arruns in *Inf.* XX.[87] This takes up Lucan's rejection of 'ambages', both by Erichtho (*Phars.* VI. 770-71), and by the poet Lucan himself, in the Arruns episode. The type of prophecy characterized by Dante's introduction of Cacciaguida's words is like that desired by Erichtho in *Pharsalia* VI. Plain talking is the order of the day and this is what Dante *personaggio* receives in the *post eventum* prophecies, where names, places, and dates are given. In the polemic between the epics of Virgil and Lucan over methods of prophecy, the *Commedia* seems to be in accord with Lucan, and Erichtho, even in the *Paradiso*. Precision, clarity, and authenticity remain the hallmarks of prophecy by the dead.

Part of Cacciaguida's prophecy actually concerns events in the present which will lead to Dante's exile. This, too, underlines the different nature of the knowledge of the blessed, who are not in ignorance of the present. The other principal difference, if the doubts expressed in the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio* are taken at face value, is that the souls of the *Paradiso* appear to know that their prophecies are true, whilst some of the others seem less sure. This difference, however, has to do with the rationale behind the prophecies, not their content or reliability. The philosophical explanation is inappropriate for the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*, not just for reasons of metaphysical impropriety, but primarily, and simply, because Dante himself did not choose to use it at this point. Nor does its introduction in the *Paradiso* necessarily mean a rejection of the classical literary tradition. 'Né per ambage' rejects classical divination and, in doing so, echoes Lucan's rejection of Arruns, of the Sibyl, of the 'dei falsi e bugiardi' (the demons, in Christian

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[87] Although 'ambage' (31) is a *hapax*, the presence of Arruns in *Inf.* XX suggests an rejection of 'ambages' in view of his connection with it in Lucan: '...Flexa sic omina Tuscus [Arruns] | Involvens multaque tegens ambage canebat' (*Phars.* I. 637-38). Here he decides to conceal the coming disaster which he has foreseen. 'Why does he include him [Arruns] among the exemplary figures of divination? He is [...] something of a "bit player" in the epic that contains him' (Hollander, 'The Tragedy of Divination', p. 185). Hollander, p. 187, concludes: 'Thus I would argue that Dante's treatment of Arruns, while it may distort a few of the facts in Lucan's text, is extremely close to Lucan's intention. A true prophet, as perhaps Lucan himself wished to be considered (and as Dante surely considered him, his Cato seen as a pagan Moses / Christ in his adherence to guiding men to liberty, even unto death), should not bother with the cancerous entrails of animals, but should tell the story of Cato.' The importance of the term 'ambages' in the Virgil-Lucan polemic, and taken up in *Par.* XXVII, is crucial to the discussion and may in part explain Dante's choice of Arruns for *Inf.* XX.

terms).[88] Dante thus re-establishes the classical literary model of true prophecy by the dead, not only that of Homer, or even Virgil, but in particular that of Lucan. What is presented is the revival of a literary tradition, rather than the exposition of a philosophical system.

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[88] 'Here in capsule form are stated the terms of the supplanting of Classical by Christian prophecy. On the one side stands the madness, the sense of paralysis, the semiotic disorder of Sibylline (and Anchisean) *ambages*; on the other, the unimpaired clarity of Cacciaguida's prophetic disclosures' (Schnapp, p. 140). This statement by Schnapp might at first appear acceptable as a general statement on Dante's Christian re-working of *Aeneid* VI, but there are problems with certain details. The term *ambages*, as we have seen, is applied to the Sybil by Virgil, so that the inclusion, even parenthesised, of Anchises in this statment is a mis-reading of *Aeneid* VI, in my opinion. Nor does Schnapp mention Lucan, or the anti-Virgilian polemic evident in the *Pharsalia*.

CHAPTER 6

POST EVENTUM PROPHECIES

The very obvious nature of the literary device employed by Dante in the *post eventum* prophecies has tended to overshadow all other considerations in critical approaches to them. Even those studies dealing precisely with prophecy in relation to Dante have referred to individual *post eventum* prophecies only insofar as their content relates to Dante's life and possible sense of mission; or else they have ignored them altogether.[1] Putting that issue to one side for the moment, we should consider what the inclusion and use of these prophecies brings to the text as a whole.

Some further clarification is needed before we continue. The prophecies which can be described as *post eventum* typically also have *ante eventum* predictions joined to them, most often of the unverifiable type. The most obvious example is the linking of death, *post eventum*, with damnation, unverifiable. Clear instances of this are the prophecies about Boniface VIII (no. 5), or Corso Donati (no. 16). Another feature of *post eventum* prophecies is that they can appear to be more obscure than they actually are. Two things follow from this. First, the reader should be able to recognise what they are pretending to predict, whilst Dante *personaggio* is unable to, thus maintaining the diegetic fiction. Second, this apparent obscurity means that they appear similar to the *ante eventum* prophecies, which cannot afford to be as precise. These stylistic similarities mean that the *ante eventum* prophecies can appear to share in the veracity of the *post eventum* prophecies. The prediction of the deaths of Boniface and Clement can serve as an an example (no. 5). These different elements are difficult to disentangle. Here, I will be considering some of *post eventum* prophecies individually, but also as a sort of general category.

It has been suggested, generally implicitly, that Dante employed the device of *post eventum* prophecy as the result of a literary problem; namely, that once the fictional date of 1300 had been set for the story, the only way to include events occurring after that time

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[1] In general see Chapter 1 of this thesis. Mineo, *Profetismo*, pp. 210-22, refers to the prophecies in a discussion of Dante's exile without commenting on the fact that they are *post eventum*. Despite including some of them in his list, Cian does not really discuss them, apart from his caveat to readers (pp. 37-38) quoted in chapter 1 of this thesis (p. 2). As we saw, Buonaiuti, Nardi, and Morghen, 'Dante Profeta', do not discuss them.

was to present them in the form of future events, i.e. prophecies.[2] Thus the prophecies become a compositional solution to constraints imposed by the temporal structure of the poem. This explanation does seem adequate for certain of the *post eventum* prophecies, since they appear to be little more than the mention of events which cannot otherwise form part of the narrative. Certain prophecies, such as that of Currado Malaspina (no. 10) or Bonagiunta (no. 15), are little more than expressions of thanks on the part of Dante *uomo* for kindnesses shown to him after 1300. These exemplify Dante's use of prophecy as a compositional solution. However, these prophecies contain other significant elements beyond simple reference to isolated historical events, and this suggests that they have an additional function. This explanation, then, can only be regarded as partial, and we may speculate that these prophecies began in that way, but were subsequently given a wider scope. It has also been suggested that the fictional date given to the narrative was chosen with the purpose of providing precisely this opportunity.[3] Perhaps the clearest indication of an answer to that question lies in the first of the *post eventum* prophecies. The prophecy of Ciacco (no. 2) contains elements which suggest that, from the beginning, Dante may have envisioned a greater purpose for them than simply to allow him to refer to events after 1300. This prophecy sees the beginning of two of the thematic series, the treatment of his exile, and the moral condemnation of Florence, which will run through the *Commedia.*

The number of *post eventum* prophecies, and their distribution throughout the *Commedia*, indicates that they do more than simply provide a means of addressing events subsequent to the narrative action of the poem. The content of the prophecies further underlines their general importance. Whilst some refer to single and apparently isolated events, many deal with matters of personal significance for Dante, and of wider importance for the society of his time. Dante's own exile is gradually revealed but also its meaning is

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[2] 'Dante himself contributes to interpretations along these lines by making his alienation from Florence an essential element of the dramatic structure of the *Commedia.* The journey to the three realms of the afterlife is given the precise historical moment of Holy Week in the year 1300. By setting the action of the poem a year and a half before the political crisis that resulted in his banishment, and in fact at the beginning of his own period of intensive involvement in politics, Dante has his pilgrim learn through a series of prophetic utterances, culminating in *Paradiso* 17, that exile awaits him' (John M. Najemy, 'Dante and Florence', p. 86).

[3] This point is made explicitly by Colin Hardie, 'The Veltres in the Chanson de Roland and Dante's Veltro', *Deutches Dante Jahrbuch*, 41-42 (1964), pp. 163-64, and implied by John Najemy (see note 2 above).

re-interpreted in a series of at least six predictions culminating in the lengthy prophecy of Cacciaguida.[4] There are prophecies concerning Florence (e.g. nos 2, 3,4, 12), international politics (nos 5, 13 18, 21, 22, 25, 27, 29), and religious corruption (5, 13, 18, 27, 29), insofar as that can be distinguished from politics during this period. Where there is some overlap, the prophecies contain separate references to both subjects. There is also some overlap between these and those on Dante's exile, placing his exile within the larger political context from which it resulted. In terms of content, then, these prophecies deal with matters of some importance, but they do more than simply state what will occur.

A common feature of the *post eventum* prophecies is the element of moral interpretation, involving the application of moral judgements to historical circumstances. Even those prophecies which appear simply to predict isolated events have this aspect to them. So the death of Corso Donati (no. 16) is an implicit indictment of factional violence in Florence, and can be incorporated within Dante's programme of moral judgement. The moral interpretation of historical events is a commonplace in historiography up to and including the time of Dante.[5] A similar interpretative practice can be found in Villani; indeed, his and Dante's judgements concur on occasion.[6] There are obvious similarities between this historiographical tradition and Dante's practice in the *Commedia*. This linking of the historical and moral is, of course, found very clearly in the Old Testament Prophets, although they are rarely able to be as specific as Dante.[7]

What Dante offers is his own reinterpretation of history, except that instead of writing in the past tense, he presents 'history in the future tense'.[8] He re-writes recent

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[4] Prophecies 2, 3, 4, 6, 11, and 24. Others touch upon it but do not really fit into the sequence.

[5] See Green, *passim*; Denys Hay, *Annalists and Historians: Western Historiography from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 19, 31; J. K. Hyde, 'Contemporary Views on Faction and Civil Strife in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Italy' in *Violence and Disorder in Italian Cities 1200-1500*, ed. by Lauro Martines (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 237-307 (pp. 275-77, 299); C. A. Patrides, *The Grand Design of God: The Literary Form of the Christian View of History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 19-20, 26, 39, 46.

[6] 'Il peccato della ingratitudine, col susidio del nimico dell'umana generazione, della detta grassezza fece partorire superba corruzzione, per la quale furono finite le feste e l'alegrezze de' Fiorentini' (Villani, IX. 39). For some examples of differences of opinion between Dante and Villani see Green, pp. 21 and pp. 16-17.

[7] See Chapter 2 note 58 above.

[8] The expression comes from Sara Mack, *Patterns of Time in Virgil's Aeneid* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1978), p. 55, who quotes it from W. H. Auden, 'Secondary Epic', in *Homage to Clio* (New York, 1960), line 3.

events, not by changing history, but by changing its meaning; the value of events is re-formulated from the prophetic perspective. It is significant that most of the *post eventum* prophecies revolve around politics in the Church, in France, and in Florence, as well as Dante's own exile. His exile in particular, whilst it cannot be denied as historical fact, is transformed in terms of its value.[9] The exchange between Dante and Farinata in *Inf.* X gives us some idea of the moral and social degradation normally associated with exile.[10] It is this sort of judgement which Dante, through the series of *post eventum* prophecies, challenges directly. As moral interpretation is linked with historical events in a causal relationship, so the verification provided by fulfilment confirms, by implication, the moral judgement which Dante has linked to the event. This is most explicit, for example, in the various prophecies relating to Boniface VIII, or to Florence.

The main feature of all *post eventum* prophecies, of course, is that they come true - or at least appear to do so. Thus our attention is drawn more explicitly to the question of fulfilment than it is in other prophecies. The matter of fulfilment is extremely important for prophecy in the Middle Ages.[11] There are also Biblical texts which state that the fulfilment of a prophecy is proof of the prophet's divine mandate.[12] This means that the status of the prophecies in the *Commedia* is important for the credibility of the text as a whole. Cacciaguida, we may recall, informs Dante *personaggio* that events will bear witness to

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[9] 'The role of Cacciaguida is thus to insist upon the meaningfulness of the sacrifice the poet-pilgrim shall be called upon to make, and not, as is the case with Anchises and Africanus, to promise a simple escape from the prison of history' (Schnapp, p. 13).

[10] 'E puossi notare in questa cacciata de' Ghibellini che fu in quello medesimo dì di Pasqua di Risoresso ch'eglino aveano commesso il micidio di messere Bondelmonte de' Bondelmonti, onde si scoprirono le parti in Firenze, e se ne guastò la città; e parve che fosse giudicio d'Iddio, che mai poi non tornarono inn-istato' (Villani, VIII. 15). In fact the exile is one of the first to be discussed by Bronislaw Geremek in his study 'The Marginal Man', in *The Medieval World*, ed. by Jacques Le Goff, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (London: Collins & Brown, 1990), pp. 347-73.

[11] Hugh of St. Cher writes: 'Dicimus quod veri prophete per tria discernebantur ab aliis: primum est bona vita; secundum quia prophetata ab eis frequencius eveniebant' (*De Prophetia*, in *Théorie de la Prophétie et Philosophie de la Connaissance aux environs de 1230: La Contribution d'Hugues De Saint-Cher*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Torrell (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1977), p. 52). For a survey of other medieval writers on the subject, though Hugh is not mentioned, see Mineo, *Profetismo*, pp. 19-44.

[12] E.g. 'Et cum venerit quod praedictum est, ecce enim venit, tunc scient quod prophetes fuerit inter eos' (Ezek. 33. 33). 'Propheta qui vaticinatus est pacem, cum venerit verbum eius, scietur propheta quem misit dominus in veritate' (Jer. 28. 9). 'There is no need to emphasize the extent to which the prophets are influenced by secret experiences, in which they become aware of God's own voice. ... The interesting thing is that the legitimation of the secret experience should occasionally be tested against the general experience of the people, (Jer. 28. 7-9)' (Klaus Koch, *The Prophets*, trans. by M. Kohl, 2 vols (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1983), II, p. 194).

truth of his prediction (*Par.*, XVII. 54).[13] By including history in the form of already fulfilled prophecies, Dante not only claims the legitimization of the prophecies themselves, but lays claim to divine confirmation of the moral interpretations and judgements which accompany them. The importance of their being fulfilled is also evident in this fascinating comment made by Benvenuto da Imola on the prophecy of Forese Donati (*Pur.*, XXIII. 106-11):

> Et hic nota, lector, quod audivi aliquos temere dicentes, quod istud prognosticum est vituperium poetae, quia jam transiverant tot tempora, quod non evenerunt ea, quae praesagire videtur in tam brevi spatio. Ad quod respondeo, quod autor loquitur hic de praeteritis et jam factis, non de futuris modo fiendis. Sed videtur prophetare, quia respicit ad tempus suae visionis, quae fuit in MCCC, sicut jam totiens dictum est.
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> (And take note here, reader, that I have heard some people rashly say that the poet should be criticized for that prediction, since so much time has already passed, and those things haven't happened, which he seemed to foresee in so short a space of time. To which I answer, that the author is speaking here of things in the past which have already happened, and not in the future and going to happen soon. But he seems to prophesy, because he looks back to the time of his vision, which was in 1300, as has already been said so many times.)[14]

Although it is now all too obvious, Benvenuto evidently felt it incumbent upon himself to explain the workings of the compositional practice of *post eventum* prophecy to readers who appear to have been unaware, not only of the textual device, but of the occurrence of the events which were prophesied whilst already history. The identity of these 'aliquos' would be interesting to learn, since they appear to have taken the *post eventum* prophecies at face value, and then gone on to criticize the failure of Dante's predictions on the basis of their own ignorance of earlier political events. It is ironic that Benvenuto has to fully expose the method whereby the *Commedia* appears to prophesy, in order to exonerate Dante; Benvenuto might be considered the herald of the critical disdain which this feature of the poem appears to attract.

The *post eventum* prophecies, as we have seen, deserve examination on account of their number and content, both historical and ideological. They also respond to a fundamental requirement of prophecy for the medieval reader; that of fulfilment. This does not remove, however, the problem of the mechanism itself. The device employed by Dante

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[13] See also Chapter 4, note 48 above.
[14] This comment is quoted more fully in Chapter 3, note 67 above in another context. We might sympathize with his rather weary sounding 'totiens'.

may seem even more problematic to us now that we are aware of the importance of the content entrusted to it. However, it is not simply the facile nature of what we might even describe as a piece of literary trickery, or deception, on the part of Dante, that makes these prophecies difficult to explain. The problem arises from the fact that they demand a crossing of narrative boundaries, as I mentioned at the conclusion of Chapter 1 above.

These narrative boundaries are evident from the first verses of the *Commedia*. The past tense of 'mi ritrovai', (*Inf.*, I. 2.) places Dante *personaggio* in the past, which, together with the present tenses in 'Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura ... che nel pensier rinova la paura' (*Inf.* I., 4. 6.) indicates the space within which Dante *poeta* writes. This temporal space posits a time of composition which can, but need not, be equated with the actual times of composition by Dante *uomo*, or could be at any time immediately following the conclusion of the journey of Dante *personaggio* at Easter 1300. Dante *poeta* never tells us when that compositional present is. The various addresses to the reader throughout the *Commedia* demonstrate that Dante *poeta*, or more properly, Dante *uomo*, can exploit this space whenever he wishes.[15] Dante, then, could have used this space which he had already established, and, writing as *poeta*, included the verification of each of the *post eventum* prophecies within the text. We can see how this might work in the following example from the Old Testament, which concerns the very issue of truth in prophecy:

> Et dixit Jeremias propheta ad Hananiam prophetam: Audi, Hanania; non misit te Dominus, et tu confidere fecisti populum istum in mendacio. Idcirco haec dicit Dominus: Ecce ego mittam te a facie terrae, hoc anno morieris, adversum enim Dominum locutus es. Et mortuus est Hananias propheta in anno illo, mense septimo.
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> (And Jeremiah the prophet said to the prophet Hananiah, 'Listen Hananiah, the Lord has not sent you, and you have made this people trust in a lie. Therefore thus says the Lord: "Behold I will remove you from the face of the earth. This very year you shall die, because you have uttered rebellion against the Lord."'
> In that same year, in the seventh month, the prophet Hananiah died.)
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> (Jer. 28. 15-17)

Here we can see that the fulfilment of the prophecy is included as part of the textual narrative. We find something similar, although in reverse, in the Gospels of Matthew and John. The narrative is interrupted to inform us that what has just happened was in order

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[15] See Beall, pp. 299-343; Spitzer, *passim*; Niccolò Mineo, 'Il 'commento' come forma della narrazione', *passim*. See too Chapter 2 note 126 above for Buti's explanation of one way in which this is employed by Dante.

that a prophecy should be fulfilled.[16] Dante, however, did not choose this option. A well-known and probably apocryphal story from Boccaccio's life of Dante provides a surprisingly appropriate paradigm for his literary practice in respect of the *post eventum* prophecies:

> Per la qual cosa avvenne un giorno in Verona, essendo già divulgata per tutto la fama delle sue opere, e massimamente quella parte della sua Comedia, la quale si intitola Inferno, e esso conosciuto da molti e uomini e donne, che passando egli davanti ad una porta dove più donne sedevano, una di quelle pianamente, non però tanto che bene e da chi con lui era non fosse udita, disse a l'altre: - Donne, vedete colui che va ne l'inferno, e torna quando gli piace, e qua su reca novelle di coloro che là giù sono? - Alla quale una dell'altre rispose semplicemente: - In verità tu dèi dir vero: non vedi tu come egli ha la barba crespa e il color bruno per lo caldo e per lo fummo che è là giù? - Le quali parole udendo egli dir dietro a sé, e conoscendo che da pura credenza delle donne venivano, piacendogli, e quasi contento che esse in cotale oppinione fossero, sorridendo alquanto, passò avanti.'[17]

In this story Dante, having overheard the women's statement, chooses to continue on his way. He does not offer these readers of his poem any clarification or explanation which would correct their mistake. This reaction is revealing. Dante chooses to let them take the text at face value and passes in silence, smiling indeed. His compositional refusal to use the option available to him as Dante *poeta* similarly leaves the reader to accept the *post eventum* prophecies as genuine. (We shouldn't force the Boccaccian analogy; the subject matter of the *post eventum* prophecies is very rarely something for Dante to smile about.) If he had chosen to include the fulfilment of the prophecies as part of the text, this would have placed the temporal space in which Dante *poeta* writes within a determined point - after the occurrence of the events which were prophesied to Dante *personaggio*. This, in turn, would have reduced these events to the status of history, and Dante *poeta* would simply have been a reporter of the past. The reader would be at liberty to believe, or

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[16] 'Hoc autem totum factum est, ut adimpleretur id quod dictum est a Domino per prophetam dicentem' ('All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet') (Mt. 1. 22). Other examples are Mt. 2. 15; 8. 17; Jn. 12. 38; 17. 12.

[17] *Vita di Dante*, ed. by Paolo Baldan (Bergamo: Moretti & Vitali editori, 1991), p. 124. The text here is from the first redaction, section 113. In the second redaction the story is in section 69 and the ending is slightly different but with essentially the same conclusion: 'non vedi tu come egli ha la barba crespa e il color bruno per lo caldo e per lo fummo che è la giù? - Di che Dante, perché da pura credenza venir lo sentia, sorridendo passò avanti' (pp. 226-27). We may note, too, this comment of Wlassics, pp. 173-74, taking to task some objections to aspects of *Inferno* X: 'Chi si pone il quesito delle "contraddizioni" della Commedia non fa della critica, bensì solo attesta il completo successo della finzione dantesca, confondendo la creazione di Dante con le creazioni della natura che sole sono coerenti a se stesse. Nulla di male, beninteso; ma quelle femminucce che secondo la leggiadra leggenda additavano l'Alighieri per strada, divisando i bagliori dell'inferno sul suo viso bruno, certo non pretendevano alla critica letteraria.'

not, Dante's assertion that he received these prophecies and that they came true. By remaining silent, however, Dante retains an element of possibility; it is possible that the events predicted have yet to occur when Dante *poeta* writes, his temporal space is left undefined for the reader. There is an additional, more fundamental consideration; one consequence of confirming the fulfilment of *post eventum* predictions in the text would be to separate them from the others. If Dante had done this he would have exposed the *ante eventum* prophecies as unfulfilled. As we have seen, he has chosen instead to merge *ante* and *post eventum* elements along with moral interpretations, and even eschatological expectations in different prophecies.

By indulging Dante, however briefly, and accepting the *post eventum* prophecies as if genuine, we can appreciate the advantages of retaining this element of possibility. It is now incumbent upon the reader to verify the prophecies and complete the text. More than simply asking for extra-textual verification, this method of presenting the future asks readers to verify it with their own knowledge of the world. The completion of the narrative with the real events of history breaks down the boundaries and draws the text into the world of reality. This externally corroborated truth claim can take on the appearance of evidence of the truth of the whole poem, and confirm the status of Dante *poeta* as recipient of a divine mandate. Dante places the reader in the position of drawing his narrative into an intertextual relationship with history, and therefore with God's text, since medieval scriptural exegesis in particular had identified God as the supreme author who wrote with things as human writers do with words.[18] Furthermore, by presenting history as if it had not yet occurred, particularly his own personal history, Dante *poeta* becomes both the communicator and part of the message of God's writing.

There is another way of looking at this, which we may consider. It is extremely speculative and I mention it here simply as a possibility rather than even a suggestion. The fulfilment of Dante's prophecies represents the completion of his text. As it is fulfilled, or completed by history, which is a form of 'writing' available only to God, do the

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[18] This idea has its roots partly in the literal interpretation of the Bible expounded by Aquinas. On this see Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, pp. 300 f.; Alistair J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 2nd edn (Aldershot: Wildwood House Ltd, 1988), pp. 73f.; Tibor Fabiny, *The Lion and the Lamb*, (Hampshire & London: MacMillan, 1992), p. 111. Minnis, p. 247, n. 1, and Fabiny, p. 111, refer to Hugh of St. Victor's *Didascalicon* as a source text for this idea.

prophecies, particularly those which come true, represent a collaboration with God? Is this another way of interpreting the famous description of the 'poema sacro | al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra' (*Par.*, XXV. 1-2)? To be even more precise, is God collaborating with Dante? Such a claim may seem less extravagant if we recall Dante's words in *Purgatorio* XIX. 105, placing the biblical vision accounts of John and Ezekiel in a subordinate position to his own vision.[19] Understood in this way, the *post eventum* prophecies extend Dante's fiction, so that God now provides journey, inspiration, and 'post textual' conclusion.

Whilst this is not the place to discuss the issue of Dante *uomo*'s views on the reality or otherwise of the experiences described in his narrative, there are some points which we may consider. If Dante *uomo* had regarded the vision, and the prophecies delivered to him in the course of that vision, as genuine, would he have risked their credibility by entrusting the truth to a means of transmission which involves an element of falsehood? Even to ask such a question is to begin to blur the distinctions between Dante *uomo*, Dante *poeta*, and Dante *personaggio*; and to respond to the text as if it were true, or even sincerely claiming to be, rather than appearing to do so.[20] The fact that the actual mechanism at the narrative level whereby the dead know the future is derived from, and indeed revives, a classical literary tradition, is a reminder of the literary nature of the *Commedia.* The following comment by Guido Da Pisa on *Inf.*, XXIV. 151, following Vanni Fucci's prediction, is interesting:

> Istud vero factum non predixit autor ante quam esset, sed more poetarum, qui ea que facta sunt ponunt in suis operibus quasi antequam fiant: simili modo fingit. Et isto modo poeta dicitur vates, idest propheta, nam vates a vi mentis; dicitur, ut ait Varro. Non enim futura predicunt, sed ea que iam evenerunt quasi ventura confingunt.
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> (In fact the author did not foretell this before it happened, but in the custom of poets, who put things which have happened in their works as if they were still to happen: he is writing in the same way. And thus a poet is called a 'vates', that is prophet, as the word 'vates' comes from 'by power of the mind'; it is said, according to Varro. For they do not predict things that are going to be, but write as fiction things which have happened as if they were going to happen.) [21]

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[19] See Chapter 3, note 90 above.

[20] See the end of Chapter 1 above.

[21] *Expositiones*, p. 485, (my translation). The same etymology for *vates* is found in Aquinas, though the source given is Isidore of Seville's Etymologies: 'Et propter hoc, ut Isidorus dicit, in libro Etymol, *in veteri Testamento appellabantur Videntes, quia videbant ea quae caeteri non videbant, et prospiciebant quae in mysterio abscondita erant*' ('Wherefore, as Isidore states (Etym. vii, 8), "in the Old Testament, they were called

Guido is indulgent enough of Dante's writing 'more poetarum', and does not question that the delivery of the prophecies must finally be regarded as part of the fiction. He may even seem to us to question the whole notion of inspired poetry, as the precise status of his 'vates' is unclear.

In conclusion, we may say that *post eventum* prophecy as a mechanism is only false to those readers who approach it as if it were true.[22] Within that fiction, it provides authentication for the text, thereby responding to one of the principal requirements for genuine prophecy: fulfilment. In their blurring of the boundaries between the worlds of Dante *uomo* and *poeta*, we might also view these prophecies as participating, indirectly, in the truth claims of Dante *poeta* evident in his appeals to the reader.[23]

Seers, because they saw what others saw not, and surveyed things hidden in mystery." Hence among heathen nations they were known as "vates, on account of their power of mind [vi mentis]"') (*Summa Theologiae*, 2a 2ae, 171, ad 1). Text and translation in *Summa Theologiae*, XLV, pp. 4-5. See. too, chapter 5, note 73 above.

[22] Which leads us back to the observations of Singleton and Barolini, see Chapter 1, note 17 above.

[23] 'Ma qui tacer nol posso; e per le note | di questa comedía lettor ti giuro | s'elle non sien di lunga grazia vòte' (*Inf.*, XVI. 127-29). Beall, p. 328, interprets this as an expression of Dante's belief that his poem will last for posterity. Some of the early commentators, however, explain that Dante is asking that the *Commedia* be lost if his words aren't true. In any case it is a very striking way of guaranteeing the truth, and, we may notice, textually self-contained.

CHAPTER 7

ANTE EVENTUM PROPHECIES

In the concluding remarks to Chapter 4 above, I divided *ante eventum* prophecies into three types. First, there are those which genuinely precede some event which is highly probable but has not yet actually occurred. This type can take two forms: either specifying the event but being vague about the time, as in the death of Clement V in prophecy no. 5; or being imprecise about a type of event which is likely to occur, such as some disaster for Florence, as in prophecy no. 14, or no. 24. These are similar in form to *post eventum* prophecies and frequently accompany them.

The second type of *ante eventum* prophecy is unverifiable, so that the event cannot be known and may not even occur. The most obvious examples of these are the predictions related to damnation or salvation. Again, they frequently accompany *post eventum* predictions, though not always. The prophecy concerning Dante's own salvation, no. 17, is a free-standing prediction of this kind, independent of any *post eventum* element.

Finally, there are those prophecies which express Dante's hopes for the future. The final prophecy of the *Commedia* (no. 29) links one such prediction with *post eventum* elements in a highly effective way. Although they may appear to be completely open ended, in fact, Dante's certainty about the future gives them a strong feeling of certainty, even if they cannot give the sort of detail associated with the *post eventum* type. The main reason for this is the Christian context in which Dante writes. From an eschatological point of view, the ultimate return and triumph of Christ is a certain event in the future; the question is not *if*, but *when* this will happen.

The most significant *ante eventum* prophecies are, we can acknowledge, those of the *veltro* and the *DXV*, simply because of the amount of attention they have received. These two prophecies are of a messianic type, and I would like to consider briefly some possible antecedents or analogues for these prophecies; classical, biblical, and medieval.

Virgil's credentials in the Christian era as an unwitting prophet of Christ rest on the fourth *Eclogue*.[1] This view is based on the similarity of certain passages in this poem with passages from the book of Isaiah, prompting speculation, indeed, that Virgil may have read Isaiah; though that issue does not concern this study.[2] Dante's awareness of Virgil's unknowing prophecy of Christ is expressed, with sensitivity to its painful irony, in the famous description of Virgil by Statius:

> Facesti come quei che va di notte,
> che porta il lume dietro e sé non giova,
> ma dopo sé fa le persone dotte,
> quando dicesti: 'Secol si rinova;
> torna giustizia e primo tempo umano,
> e progenïe scende da ciel nova'
> Per te poeta fui, per te cristiano:
>
> (*Pur.*, XXII. 67-73)

Statius is quoting Virgil's *Eclogue* and attributes his conversion in part to this poem, whilst noting, with sadness, that Virgil himself derived no benefit from his own prophecy of the birth of Christ.[3] Virgil's *Eclogue* IV describes the birth of a child which marks the return of the age of Saturn, and Dante's verse (*Pur.*, XXII. 72) reproduces the line from Virgil's poem (*Buc.* IV. 7). It was interpreted by Christian commentators as a direct reference to the birth of Christ, particularly in the mention of a virgin birth (*Buc.* IV. 6-7).[4] It was compared with this text from Isaiah:

> propter hoc dabit Dominus ipse vobis signum ecce virgo concipiet et pariet filium et vocabitis nomen eius Emmanuhel
> butyrum et mel comedet ut sciat reprobare malum et eligere bonum
>
> (Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign. Behold a virgin will conceive and bear a son and you will call his name Emmanuel. He shall eat curds and honey so that he will know how to refuse evil and choose good.)[5]
>
> (Is. 7. 14-15)

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[1] For a comprehensive history of this see Stephen Benko, 'Virgil's Fourth Eclogue in Christian Interpretation' *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Romischen Welt,* ed. by Wolfgang Hause, (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), II, 31.1, 646-705.

[2] On this theory see Joseph B. Mayor, 'Sources of the Fourth Eclogue', in J. B. Mayor, W. W. Fowler, and R. S. Conway, *Virgil's Messianic Eclogue: Its Meaning Occasion and Sources. Three Studies* (London: J. Murray, 1907), pp. 87-138 (pp. 103-32). Benko, however, pp. 700-02, discusses it and finds it improbable. The passages in Isaiah are Is. 9. 6; 11. 6.

[3] Virgil, *Buc.* IV. 5-7.

[4] For a very full survey of Christian interpretations of Virgil's text see Benko pp. 670-82.

[5] The translation here is partly mine, as the text in *The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*, is slightly different from the Vulgate version.

Although Dante is clearly aware of the tradition, he does not draw on the *Eclogue*, neither explicitly, nor in any noticeable allusions, in his prophecies of the *veltro* and *DXV*. The animal imagery and number symbolism found in them are quite alien to the picture of Saturn presented in Virgil's poem. We may wish to note, however, that it is Virgil, the unconscious prophet of Christ's first coming, who is assigned the task of communicating the *veltro* prophecy, and some interpreters have cited this fact in favour of a Christological solution to the *veltro* riddle.

Since these prophecies are messianic in style, we might reasonably expect more scriptural resonance in them. Virgil says of the *veltro*: 'Questi non ciberà terra né peltro, | ma sapïenza, amore e virtute' (*Inf.*, I. 103-04), which, we can see, has similarities with the text from Isaiah quoted above.[6] In addition, the reference to the she wolf which the *veltro* will destroy recalls a text from Jeremiah.[7] The Biblical texts most present in these prophecies, however, are apocalyptic, as we have already seen.[8] The imagery of the final cantos of the *Purgatorio* begins from Biblical texts, but Dante soon departs to create his own imagery.[9] Similarly, in the case of the *DXV* in particular, Dante creates a prophecy which imitates the imagery and language of the Bible, but is independent of it. The phrasing of his correction of Ezekiel at the expense of John (*Pur.*, XXIX. 105) is the most striking indication of this independence.[10] We can see this more clearly by considering Dante's practice in his letter of 1311 to Henry VII.[11] In the letter, Dante quotes the Bible directly at least nine times, applying scripture directly to Henry and his situation.[12] We may note that Dante also quotes Virgil's *Eclogue* here.[13] A comparison with the letter illustrates the difference in the *Commedia*, where Dante's prophecies are his own creation, and do not derive their authority from any other text, not even the Bible.

The final possible influence on Dante which I wish to consider is that of apocalyptic writing of his time. This is an enormous area and, in fact, there appear to be many points

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[6]The similarity is noted by Mineo, *Profetismo*, pp. 179-180.
[7] See Chapter 2, notes 10-12 above.
[8] See Chapter 3, notes 88-92 above.
[9] See Chapter 3, notes 91 and 94-95 above.
[10] See Chapter 3, note 90 above.
[11] Epistola VII in *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*, pp, 82-105.
[12] Moore, *Studies in Dante: First Series: Scripture and Classical Authors in Dante*, p. 392, counts nine direct quotations, and seven certain references.
[13] *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*, p. 90; the quotation is *Buc.* IV. 6.

of contact with the *Commedia*, particularly in imagery in common such as the tree and the eagle.[14] Dante's relationship with these groups is also very keenly debated, perhaps precisely because he tells us nothing about them. Dolcino is bound for Hell, and Joachim is already in Heaven; the rest are absent from the *Commedia*.[15] Since the subject is so vast, I intend to focus rather narrowly on Joachim of Fiore, and, in particular, on his method of prophecy as an example. The description of Joachim in the *Paradiso* speaks of his 'spirito profetico', as we have seen.[16] There is a description by Joachim of how this prophetic spirit came to him one night:

> Cum ergo in supra scripta nocte simile aliquid contigisset, circa medium (ut opinor) noctis silentium et horam qua leo noster de tribu Iuda resurrexisse extimatur a mortuis subito mihi meditanti aliquid, quadam mentis oculis intelligentie claritate percepta de plenitudine libri huius et tota veteris ac novi testamenti facta est...
>
> (Upon this particular night, about the middle of it, I think, or about the hour at which our Lion from the tribe of Judah is thought to have risen from the dead, suddenly when I was meditating something, I perceived a certain clarity of understanding before the eyes of my mind which revealed to me the fullness of this book of the Apocalypse and the whole *concordia* of the Old and New Testaments.)[17]

This spirit which Joachim is describing is a spirit of interpretation. Joachim is an exegete, so that his gift of prophecy is predicated on a primary text; the Bible.[18] Although the *Liber Figurarum* is a slightly different form of interpretation, it is still basically rooted in this idea. By contrast, the *Commedia* is not an interpretative text, and depends on no other text

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[14] The letter M in the shape of an eagle is a striking example. See also Marjorie Reeves and Beatrice Hirsch-Reich, *The* Figurae *of Joachim of Fiore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 317-29; Marjorie Reeves, 'Dante and the Prophetic view of History' in *The World of Dante*, ed. by Cecil Grayson (Clarendon: Oxford, 1980), pp. 44-60 (p. 55); Leone Tondelli, *Il Libro delle Figure dell'Abate Gioacchino Da Fiore*, 2 vols (Turin: SEI, 1940), I pp. 217-40; Carmelo Ciccia, *Dante e Gioacchino Da Fiore* (Cosenza: Luigi Pellegrini, 1997), pp. 51-106.

[15] See Chapter 2 above, notes 145-46 and, especially, 147.

[16] See Chapter 5, notes 56 and 57 above.

[17] This is from Joachim's *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, quoted here from Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 27. The translation is from the introduction to Joachim of Fiore, *Liber de Concordia Novi ac Veteris Testamenti*, trans. and intro. by E. Randolph Daniel, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1983), pp. xvii-xviii.

[18] 'Possibly the first person to work out the full implications of the figural interpretation of history was Joachim of Fiore. ... Joachim was essentially a biblical exegete who believed that by divine illumination the three-fold work of the trinity in history could be revealed to the student who pondered on the scriptures long and prayerfully. He called this divine illumination the *spiritualis intellectus*' (Reeves, 'The Bible and Literary Authorship in the Middle Ages', p. 19).

for its authority, but rather presents itself as a primary text which its readers must then interpret.[19]

There is little doubt about the proximity of certain of the images in the *Commedia* to images found in Joachim's works. In the actual area of prophecy, however, they are very different. Joachim sincerely attempts to understand the future, whilst Dante pretends to receive prophecies in the first instance from the souls of the dead. This might be more simply put by recognising that Dante is writing poetry, whilst Joachim is commenting on Scripture.

In addition, the world of classical literature and mythology which pervades the *Commedia* is alien to the work of Joachim. Even the mysterious apocalyptic prophecies of the *veltro* and *DXV* include classical references, as we have seen. The *veltro* will come to save 'quella umile Italia ...| per cui morì la vergine Cammilla, | Eurialo e Turno e Niso di ferute (*Inf.*, I. 106-08), and the *DXV* is an enigma worthy of the sphinx.[20] In addition, we have seen that the very means by which Dante *personaggio* receives prophecies is based on the long *nekuia* tradition of classical epic. These are fundamental differences, then, between the prophetic practice of the *Commedia*, and that of Joachim of Fiore.

Finally, I would like to consider what the presence of these prophecies brings to the *Commedia*. They are unable to be deciphered, as we discovered, on the basis of the text alone. It seems that Dante has intentionally created prophecies which appear to be specific in their subject; they definitely foretell the arrival of someone, but are not framed in such a way that this individual can be identified. It has been suggested that, in fact, they are capable of referring to the Last Judgement and the Second Coming of Christ, yet able to be applied to individuals in the interim who display the qualities described in them, and so themselves pre-figure Christ:

> However, and here again figuralism is of use to Dante and to his reader, the bifocal vision of Scripture could have taught Dante to see the great leaders of this world as figures of Christ. One need only think of the examples of Moses and David. And so if the two great prophecies foretell the coming of a temporal leader, they both also foretell, easily and naturally, a second future event which will be the fulfillment

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[19] This is a well-known view about the *Commedia*. Palma di Cesnola, p. 15, puts it like this: '...come il Dante esegeta decodificava il testo sacro, il Dante autore codificherà il sacro poema che, a sua volta, il lettore modello, secondo le regole del gioco da lui dettate, dovrà interpretare come se si trattasse di un nuovo capitolo della Bibbia.'

[20] See Chapter 3, note 139 above.

> of the figura which that temporal savior is; that is, each prophecy foretells the Second Coming of Christ [...].[21]

Although there is a tendency in dealing with these prophecies to start from an answer then work back, this approach to them is different and fruitful. The advantage of an eschatological prophecy in a Christian context such as Dante's, is that it is guaranteed to come true at some point in the future. This is consistent with the fact that Dante has been so careful with the other types of prophecies, the *post eventum*, and the other *ante eventum* prophecies. By creating flexible predictions, Dante maintains the veracity of his text and keeps it open to historical possibilities, instead of risking its obsolescence by attaching it too clearly to any individual or time scale.[22]

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[21] Hollander, *Allegory*, pp. 182-83.

[22] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millenium*, rev. edn (London: Temple Smith, 1970), pp. 108-13, describes the movement after Joachim which prophesied the Second Coming for 1260, and Frederick II as the Last Emperor. Frederick's death in 1250 undermined this somewhat, and, as we know, the world did not end in 1260.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The conclusions which I have reached in the course of this study have already been presented, in the main, in the previous three chapters. Here I will draw some of those points together, and offer some thoughts on areas related to the theme of prophecy which it has not been possible to examine in detail. Whilst I have situated this study among those which take the subject of prophecy in Dante's *Commedia* as their main focus, I believe that my approach to the issue has been different from most others, and this has consequently brought a slightly different perspective to the question. My initial interest in the theme of prophecy in Dante was primarily in the figure of Dante as a prophet, particularly in the Old Testament mode, and how this emerged from the text of the *Commedia*. In that respect, I first envisaged a study quite similar to those which we saw in chapter 1 above. Before looking at this question, I judged it necessary to establish a solid base of information on the prophecies themselves, and this took my investigation in a different direction from the one I had expected. This led to a focus on the predictive aspect of the prophecies, and issues around the mechanism of *post eventum* prophecy in particular. As we saw in chapter 1 of the thesis, these prophecies are not generally considered in much detail, or as a complete group, and they are not what I initially expected to examine either.

In addition, the importance of attention to the differences between Dante as *personaggio*, *poeta*, and *uomo*, became very clear. With the exception of the 'morning dream' of *Inferno* XXVI (no. 7), all of the prophecies are communicated to Dante *personaggio*, so that they are present, in the first instance, at the diegetic level. At the same time, they reach out of the poem and into the historical world of Dante *uomo*. This is especially true of the *post eventum* elements of the prophecies, which describe actual, historical events. They deliberately blur the boundaries between Dante *personaggio*, *poeta* and *uomo*, claiming to be true and threatening to deceive the unwary reader.[1]

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[1] We may recall that commentators from Benvenuto da Imola, to Vittorio Cian have felt the need to alert unwary readers. See quotations at chapter 1, note; chapter 4, note 48; and chapter 6, note 13 above.

We also find that Dante has used these prophecies for serious purposes. He has entrusted a programme of moral and political critique, as well as the moral re-interpretation of his personal history, especially his exile, to these predictions. Dante's presentation of history in the *Commedia* stretches from the past into the future. As it is communicated through these prophecies, so its validity is dependent on their veracity.

Dante's concern to maintain the validity of his text, and guard it against obsolescence, is evident in the care with which he meshes *post eventum* and *ante eventum* elements. A close examination of the *veltro* and *DXV* prophecies in the context of the *post eventum* predictions immediately makes clear the fact that the former are deliberately enigmatic; Dante has not risked mapping them too closely to any particular individual. At the same time, the eschatological dimension of these messianic type prophecies, as well as others which look ahead to the realisation of God's justice (e.g. nos. 27 and 28), makes their ultimate fulfilment a normal expectation of Christian faith. There is no space here to elaborate fully Dante's views on history, but we can at least observe that through the mechanism of prophecy he is able to situate historical events within a divine perspective.[2] Seen from this viewpoint, the meaning of Dante's personal history is also transformed. Furthermore, Dante's prophecies are not predicated on any other text, but rather on his own (fictional) otherworldly experience, as the comparison with Joachim's practice showed. The prophecies thus contribute to the status of the *Commedia* as a primary text, both in their independence from other texts, and in their invitation to commentary and interpretation.

The earlier studies considered in chapter 1 tended to present Dante as a prophetic figure similar to the Old Testament prophets, or to prophetic figures of his own era, such as Joachim of Fiore. One of the most basic requirements for Dante to be considered as a prophet, is that he delivers prophecies. As I have already stated, the prophecies in the *Commedia*, with one exception, begin at the diegetic level; they are communicated to Dante

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[2] I would echo this sentiment: 'Dante's conception of "history" is so complex as to require a separate study well beyond the scope of the present investigation' (Schnapp, p. 11). Reeves, 'Dante and the Prophetic view of History', pp. 44-60, sees direct influences of Joachim's theory of three ages in history on Dante's thought. Charles T. Davis, 'Dante's Vision of History', *Dante Studies*, 93 (1975), 143-60; now in his *Dante's Italy and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), pp. 23-41, examines Dante's 'coherent conception of what he took to be God's providential plan' (p. 23).

personaggio by other characters at that level of narrative. In examining this 'mechanism' of delivery, so to speak, I found that one of Dante's primary artistic points of reference was classical, rather than Biblical. There is the presence of a tradition from classical literature at the basis of the initial delivery of the prophecies in the *Inferno* and, probably, the *Purgatorio*.

Once more, the distinction between Dante *personaggio* and *poeta* is crucial, since it is only at the level of *poeta*, not *personaggio*, that Dante can be described as a prophet. Although his journey takes place at a very precise historical moment, with time and date given, it is still within the 'immortale secolo' (*Inf.*, II. 14-15). As is well known, Dante's mission to return to the living and reveal what he has seen, is certainly made explicit in the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*.[3] This insistence on taking what he has learned among the dead, whose existence may be regarded as outside of time, back to the world of the living, is actually in evidence in the prophecies in the *Inferno*.[4] The souls who give their predictions to Dante *personaggio* often include some reference to his return to the 'dolce mondo'.[5] From the outset, there is a consciousness that the prophecies can only take on a truly prophetic value at the extra-diegetic level, that is, when communicated by Dante *poeta*. Indeed, this is what he is charged to do in the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*. As we have seen, Dante chooses to maintain the fiction of prophecy through his silence on the 'present moment' in which Dante *poeta* writes.

This method of presenting the *post eventum* prophecies in particular, touches upon one of the central issues for the *Commedia*; the nature of its truth claims. I would suggest that this is problematic for those studies of prophecy which move beyond the text and seek to portray Dante *uomo* as a 'genuine' prophet. In crude terms we may describe the *post eventum* prophecies as a deception, and ask whether the use of such a device is consonant with a genuine prophetic self-consciousness. Less crudely, we might consider the complexity of Dante's fiction in the *Commedia*, although there is only space here to signal the issue.

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[3] See especially *Pur.*, XXXII. 103-05, quoted on p. 91 above; *Pur.*, XXXIII. 52-54, p. 106 above; Par., XXVII. 64-66, p. 133 above.

[4] The passage of time in the otherworld is a complicated question, again outside the scope of this study.

[5] Ciacco asks: 'ma quando tu sarai al dolce mondo | priegoti ch'a la mente altrui mi rechi' (*Inf.*, VI, 88-89). See, too, *Inf.*, XXXIV. 141; XXVIII. 55-56, 73-74.

I have not looked in detail at Dante as a prophet, and I would like to conclude with some preliminary observations on this. First, there is the question of a prophetic calling, or vocation. This is a standard feature in the Old Testament prophetic books, where the prophet's initial response to God's call is one of fear and feelings of inability and unworthiness.[6] These features are also present in what has commonly been recognised as Dante's 'vocation text', in *Inferno* II.[7] This is an important element in any consideration of Dante as a prophet; his calling. It includes one of the most famous parts of the *Commedia*:

> 'Ma io, perché venirvi? o chi 'l concede?
> Io non Enëa, io non Paulo sono;
> Me degno a ciò né io né altri 'l crede.' 33
>
> (*Inf.*, II. 31-33)

It is obvious that, despite his protestations, Dante is equating himself with Aeneas and Paul, since he does go on to repeat their journeys. The expression of his unworthiness is the clearest link with the Old Testament vocation texts. However, I would like to suggest that there is a strong classical connection here, deeper than the very obvious reference to the *Aeneid*. The simple fact that Dante names others who have preceded him already marks a departure from the Old Testament model. None of the vocation texts in the Old Testament prophets name other individuals. For that we must go to the *Aeneid*. There we find the following example: 'Quid Thesea magnum | quid memorem Alciden?' (*Aen.* VI. 122-23). These are the words of Aeneas to the Sibyl, and the meaning is the opposite of what Dante *personaggio* is ostensibly saying to Virgil. Aeneas names Theseus and Hercules as examples of individuals who have visited the underworld before him. For Aeneas this is a firm statement that he is their equal, and they are cited as precedents for the journey which he wishes to make, and states firmly that he is their equal. Although the expressions from the *Inferno* and *Aeneid* are structurally very similar, there is almost no mention of the Virgilian text in relation to this part of the *Commedia*.[8] The reason for this, I suggest, is that prophecy in the *Commedia* is primarily viewed according to a Biblical model. There

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[6] E.g. Is. 6. 5-7; Jer. 1. 6-8; Ezek. 2. 6; Dan. 10. 11.

[7] This is a standard view. See, amongst others, Mineo, *Profetismo*, pp. 168-81; Marzot, pp. 220-24.

[8] The only commentator in the *Dartmouth Dante Project* database to mention this line from Virgil is Singleton, who states in his comment on the lines from *Inferno* II: 'Aeneas at the start of his journey to Hades also names two who had been there: "Quid Thesea magnum, / quid memorem Alciden?" ("Why speak of great Theseus, why of Alcides?").'

is, however, an indication of a classical presence, not only in the area of prophecy by the dead, as we have seen, but even in the Dantean prophetic 'vocation' text.

The final area which I would like to comment upon is what are termed 'judgement speeches' in biblical criticism. The 'judgement speech' is regarded as the literary form which is most characteristic of Old Testament prophecy.[9] Although prophecy tended to be associated more with prediction in the Middle Ages, there is also evidence of an appreciation of its role in religious and social critique.[10] The 'prophetic tone' of Dante's invective in the *Commedia* is commonly acknowledged.[11] As we have seen, there is a moral critique running through the prophecies. Many of the predictions are accompanied by invective; St. Peter's condemnation of the popes of Dante's time is one of the most striking examples (prophecy no. 27). Dante *personaggio* manages to indulge in some invective of his own in his encounter with Nicholas III (*Inf.*, XIX. 106-11). Like the prophecies, it is at the level of Dante *poeta* that this aspect of Dante's prophetic function properly operates.[12] The passages of invective delivered by Dante *poeta* are where the Old Testament prophetic voice is to be found. In keeping with the positioning of the *Commedia* as a primary text, this voice is elaborated by Dante without direct recourse to the Bible. The prophecies accompany this, not only in a verifying function, but also as part of the same moral programme. The prophecies do not just describe how things will be, but also how things ought to be and the consequences of moral disorder.

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[9] See Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, trans. by H. C. White (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), pp. 95, 129-366, 169.
[10] See chapter 5, note 73 above, on the false etymology of *prophetia* which emphasised the element of foresight.
[11] E.g. Jacoff,'Dante, Geremia e la problematica profetica'.
[12] In fact, the text quoted for prophecy no. 7, p. 55 above, is a good example of this.

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