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Weeping and smiling in Dante's works

by

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Grahame Bondal". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G' and a long, sweeping tail.

Summary

This dissertation aims to create the first comprehensive and systematic analysis of the function and significance of tears and smiles in Dante's works, focusing on their literary representation and their role within the author's philosophical and theological thought. The study focuses on the *Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia*, observing the text not only as a documentary witness that reflects the philosophical, literary and cultural perception of smiling and weeping in medieval Italy, but also as a fundamental tool to trace the author's literary and theological contribution to the conception of smiling and weeping in the Middle Ages. Thus, while focusing on the critical interpretation and analysis of the text, I have carried out this investigation through a careful analysis of the commentaries on the *Commedia*, as well as through the study of theological and literary sources and of the secondary literature.

My examination of weeping and smiling in Dante's work shows their centrality in the development of Dante's poetics and his theological reflection from the *Vita Nuova* to the *Commedia*, underscoring correlations between Dante's works and within the three canticles of the *Commedia*.

Regarding weeping, I show that the representation of tears in the *Vita Nuova* marks the gradual passage from Dante's total adherence to the tradition of love poetry to his detachment from it, through the conversion of tears from a manifestation of lovesickness to a fundamental penitential tool for Christian salvation. This process reaches its fulfilment in the *Commedia*, where tears play a central role in Dante's journey of expiation, corresponding to a progression from tears to smiles – from sin to bliss - which defines the structure of the poem itself. My study shows that tears in *Inferno* are the primary means to characterize the damned and their punishments, observing Dante's reappropriation of earlier literary and theological concepts to create a primary poetic representation of infernal weeping, both in extent and value. Moreover, investigating the influence of Patristic writings on tears, I underscore the fundamental function of weeping as a means of salvation in *Purgatorio*, showing the role of tears in Dante's groundbreaking definition of Purgatory as an intermediary kingdom between Hell and Paradise: the tears of the penitents are the true sign of the pilgrim returning to the heavenly homeland, making Dante's Purgatory a middle kingdom of exile and transition.

Concerning smiles, I aim to demonstrate how Dante creates the first literary codification of the category of the smile in Italian literature, resolving the problematic nature of laughter in an expression that openly celebrates knowledge and divine love. I identify the first stage of this process in Beatrice's first smile in the *Vita Nuova*, which transforms the traditional laughter of the courtly lady into a smile that reveals the miraculous nature of woman. In terms of the

Commedia, I show how Dante accomplishes the creation of an afterlife structured around the smile as a reward of beatitude, observing the gradual transformation of the smile from an expression of wisdom in *Purgatorio* into the primary manifestation of the divine within the human in *Paradiso*. Indeed, it is my conviction that Dante develops a theology of the smile representing its progressive divinization, which can be observed first through the mediation of Beatrice's and the Virgin's smiles, and then in the extraordinary depiction of the smile of God concluding the third canticle, which reveals the relationship between creator and creation as a radiation of love and light; in short: a smile.

Therefore, this dissertation shows how the binary emotional system of weeping and smiling regulates and shapes the structure of Dante's works, revealing their theological and poetic foundations and suggesting, for the first time, the paramount role which Dante played within the history of emotions.

To Daniel, “il mio sorriso”

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Table of Contents

Summary	i
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	v
Introduction	1
I. <i>Vita Nuova</i>	
I. 1 The tears of the lover: from Cavalcanti to Dante	5
I. 2 Love's tears	29
II. <i>Inferno</i>	
II. 1 Dante's tears: the beginning of the penitential journey	38
II. 2 The Origin of Weeping and the Loss of Smile: the Tears of the Old Man of Crete (<i>Inf.</i> XIV)	56
II. 3 Representing Weeping in Hell: The Tears of the Damned	73
II. 4 Tears and Blood: Lucifer's Weeping (<i>Inf.</i> XXXIV)	104
III. <i>Purgatorio</i>	
III. 1 The Tears of Exile and the Definition of Purgatory	117
III. 2 From the Cry of Repentance to the Tears of Penitence	131
III. 3 Dante's last tears (<i>Purg.</i> XXX)	157
III. 4 The Smile of the Wiseman: Knowledge and Recognition in the <i>Purgatorio</i>	166

IV. *Paradiso*

IV. 1 The Smile of the Blessed and the Light of Divine *Caritas* 193

IV. 2 From the female *dolce riso* to the smile of Beatrice: the theology of the smile.....211

IV. 3 The divine smile: The Virgin Mary and the Trinity233

Conclusions**250**

Appendix

I. “Weeping”259

II. “Smiling”277

Bibliographical Note**288**

Bibliography**291**

Introduction

Scholarly interest in emotions and their expression has intensified over the last two decades: the ethical, medical and social role of emotions have been analysed and discussed in current historical debate, contributing to the growth of one of the most productive fields of interdisciplinary research in recent years: the history of emotions¹. Within this field, the medieval period is still rather unexplored; while the existing literature has underscored the strongly philosophical and theological nature of the medieval debate over emotions, there are still very few studies regarding the representation of emotions in medieval literature².

In particular, scholars have paid scarce attention to the representation of emotions in Italian medieval literature. Contributions instead focus their attention on the general understanding of emotions in a particular genre, or on the representation of a single emotion by a specific author, without claiming completeness. Such is the case for research on the expression of emotions in Dante's works, which are limited to a few analyses of single emotions or, more frequently, to individual episodes of the *Commedia*³.

Specifically, when considering the representation of smiles and tears in Dante's works, existing literature reveals its own inadequacy: regarding smiles, the contributions are limited to undetailed reviews of the types of smiles which occur in the *Commedia*, or they analyse individual episodes of Beatrice's smile. As for weeping, only one recent study on the topic has emerged⁴; in relation to single episodes in the *Commedia*, researchers have concentrated their investigation on Dante's tears in *Purg.* XXX and on Beatrice's weeping in *Inf.* II.

This dissertation offers the first comprehensive and systematic analysis of smiling and weeping in Dante's works. As such, two introductory remarks are necessary.

¹ Cf. Lucien Febvre, 'La sensibilité et l'histoire. Comment reconstituer la vie affective d'autrefois?', *Annales ESC*, 3 (1941), 221-38; Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions. The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional communities in the Early Middle Ages* (London: Ithaca, 2006).

² See especially *EMMA (Les Émotions au Moyen Âge)*, the project developed by Damien Boquet and Piroška Nagy in 2006, that has given important results (Damien Boquet and Piroška Nagy, *Medioevo sensibile. Una storia delle emozioni (secoli III-XV)* (Roma: Carocci, 2018) and Naama Cohen-Hanegbi and Piroška Nagy, *Pleasure in the Middle Ages*, (Turnhout, Brepols, 2018).

³ Existing studies focus in particular on fear and anger: Roberto Rea, 'Psicologia ed etica della Paura nel primo canto dell'Inferno: la compunctio timoris', *Dante Studies*, 130 (2012), 182-206; ---, 'L'ira: note sulla semantica di un'emozione complessa (e su alcune occorrenze dantesche)', in *A expresión das emocións na lírica románica medieval, Acti del convegno internacional de Santiago de Compostela, 10-12 marzo 2015*, ed. by M. Brea (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2015), pp. 161-176. See also the following recent contribution by John Alcorn, 'Suffering in Hell: The Psychology of Emotions in Dante's Inferno', *Pedagogy Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature Language Composition and Culture*, 13 (2013), 77-85.

⁴ Rosanna F. Barbera, *Dante's tears, the poetics of weeping from "Vita Nuova" to the "Commedia"* (Firenze: Olschki, 2017), which has the merit of having underlined the importance of a poetics of weeping in Dante's works, mostly basing the interpretation on the physiological aspect of tears.

The first regards the nature of the subject: indeed, smiling and weeping cannot be defined purely as emotions; rather, they are emotional expressions that imply and reveal a strong relationship between the body and the soul. In fact, on an anthropological level⁵, they are involuntary and uncontrollable manifestations of the soul in the body: the outward, bodily and physiological demonstration of a very wide range of emotions (pain, fear, compassion, superiority, joy, etc.). Thus, understanding the significance of tears and smiles in Dante's works involves an examination of the medieval Christian conception of the body, which is both problematic and paradoxical: if Christianity placed the theme of the body at the centre of the events surrounding the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection, and made it a means of salvation, monasticism later overturned this perspective by imposing a negative conception of the body, associating it with pleasure and sin. Therefore, its manifestations must be repressed, controlled and atoned through penance. Thus, tears and smiles, both of which involve the body directly, are subject to the contradictory position of medieval Christianity: on the one hand, tears fell within the range of those bodily liquids that had to be controlled, but at the same time, they were often used as a tool for the mortification of the flesh. On the other hand, the smile, particularly in its expression as laughter, was often condemned within in the monastic environment as a noisy bodily expression; at the same time, the possibility of laughter among the blessed souls was the subject of a fundamental thirteenth-century theological debate. Thus, the twofold nature of tears and smiles, dangerous bodily manifestations and means of salvation, must be taken into account when treating their representation in Dante's works.

The second remark concerns the nature and method of analysis: in order to analyse emotional expressions in Dante's works, one must also consider their literary representation. Indeed, while often drawing support from Dante's philosophical statements in his *Convivio*, this study focuses on two of Dante's literary works: the *Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia*. As Sarah McNamer has underscored in her contribution, imaginative literature has often been considered an untrustworthy source for the history of emotions⁶. However, I believe that literary representation constitutes a fundamental tool for a deeper understanding of emotions in the Middle Ages, especially that provided in Dante's works. On the one hand, Dante's text can be observed as a documentary witness reflecting the social and cultural perception of smiling and weeping in medieval Italy. Nevertheless, interest in the texts should not be only documentary: indeed, I argue that Dante's works play an active role in shaping the representation and the expression of emotions. In fact, through an analysis of the text we can observe and trace the author's literary and

⁵ Helmuth Plessner, *Il riso e il pianto. Una ricerca sui limiti del comportamento umano* (Milano: Bompiani, 2007), cf. especially p. 110.

⁶ Sarah McNamer, 'The Literariness of Literature and the History of Emotion', *PMLA* 130, 5 (2015), 1433-1442 (p. 1435).

theological contributions to the history of smiling and weeping, which contributed to a significant cultural shift. Thus, I believe that the textual dimension is fundamental to understanding and identifying this process: the text and the word here are the focus of critical analysis. Hence, my dissertation is the result of a preliminary analysis of the lexical fields of *ridere*, *sorridere*, *piangere*, *lagrimare* and *plorare*, the terms expressing smiling and weeping in Dante's works, and of the creation of a catalogue of their occurrences, which includes a thorough investigation of related commentaries. In this regard, a clarification about the vocabulary used to refer to laughter and smiles is necessary: the term *riso* in Dante's works does not correspond to the modern English translation of "laughter", but it is often semantically equivalent to *sorriso* ("smile"), meaning either a smile or a soft and subdued form of laughter. Thus, the term *riso* is used throughout the dissertation to denote this evolving category as it progressively acquires the modern meaning of "smile".

Chapter I treats the representation of tears in the *Vita Nuova*. The first section is dedicated to the analysis of Dante's weeping in interaction with the tradition of love poetry and, more specifically, with the poetics of Guido Cavalcanti, his 'first friend' and dedicatee of the *libello*. The second section proposes an interpretation of Love's tears within the two dreams which Dante recounts in the work, the obscure meaning of which continues to be the subject of critical discussion.

Chapter II explains the function and meaning of tears in Dante's infernal journey represented in the first canticle of the *Commedia*, beginning with the analysis of Dante's tears at the entrance and first sights of the lower world, and ending with the interpretation of Lucifer's horrid tears mixed with blood in the depths of Hell. The penitential quality of Dante's weeping stands in contrast to the vanity of the tears of the damned, on which focus the central sections of the chapter: the second section suggests a reading of the statue of the Old Man of Crete, the tearful source of Hell's waters, as a moral allegory for the history of humanity's corruption narrated through the loss of the smile and the origin of tears. The third section analyses the representation of the sinners' tears, demonstrating the reduction of Christian salvific weeping to a pure instrument of divine punishment through copious references to the visionary literature of the afterlife prior to Dante.

Chapter III focuses on the representation of tears and smiles in the second canticle, *Purgatorio*: the intermediary nature of the purgatorial realm is observed in the particular ability of its penitents to smile and to cry. The central part of the chapter concerns the tears of the penitents, interpreted as a fundamental symbol of progression towards God expressed in terms of exile and pilgrimage. Subsequently, the analysis distinguishes between two types of tears shed in

Purgatorio: tears of repentance and tears of penitence. This treatment of tears ends with the interpretation of Dante's most famous episode of weeping: his final tears in *Purg.* XXX, shed on the top of Mount Purgatory at the end of the pilgrim's journey toward repentance. Chapter III concludes with a section concerning the representation of the smile in *Purgatorio*, which identifies the smile's role as an expression of knowledge and wisdom in the narration of various encounters with the penitent souls, devoting particular attention to Dante's smiles and those of his guide, Virgil.

Finally, Chapter IV is dedicated entirely to the study of the representation and function of the smile in *Paradiso*. The smile is observed in its gradual process of divinization, achieved in the third canticle, in which it shifts from an attribute of the blessed souls to that of the divine itself, through the mediation of Beatrice's smile. Thus, the first section analyses the modalities of representation and motivations for the smile of the blessed, and then focuses on the interpretation of individual episodes. The following section investigates the role of Beatrice's smile and its theological implications, examining the cultural and literary background in which it evolved through an analysis of the poetry of the Sicilian and Tuscan schools. The process of deifying the female smile is then identified, in the last section, in the innovative representation of the Virgin Mary's smile in *Par.* XXXI, whose roots are researched in Dante's literary background and in European sacred sculptural representation. Finally, the dissertation explores the extraordinary introduction of the shining smile of the Trinity, which concludes the poem in *Par.* XXXIII.

My examination of weeping and smiling in Dante's works reveals their centrality in Dante's continuous search for new poetics and in the evolution of his theology from the *Vita Nuova* to the *Commedia*. As for weeping, I aim to demonstrate the influence of the Scriptures and Latin Patristic writings on Dante's thought, while I also explore his interaction with less canonical sources, such as *planctus Mariae* and *visiones animarum*, showing Dante's reappropriation of literary and theological concepts in the creation of what can be considered the first extensive literary representation of weeping. Concerning the smile, I intend to shed light on Dante's contribution to what can be defined the 'invention' of the smile: indeed, the representation of the smile in Dante's works not only constitutes an original aspect of the poet's contribution to the theological debate of the time, but it also consists in the first codification of the smile in Italian literature. Therefore, a full understanding of the history of emotions in the European Middle Ages cannot overlook the significance of smiling and weeping in Dante's works, which constitutes a fundamental step toward further understanding, not only of Dante and of the correlation between his works, but also of medieval culture and literature as a whole.

I. *Vita Nuova*

I. 1 The tears of the lover: from Cavalcanti to Dante

This analysis of the *Vita Nuova* constitutes the first and fundamental stage of an investigation that intends to explore Dante's conception of weeping and smiling, and the evolution of their representation in the *Commedia*. Broadly speaking, as a first-person narration of Dante's growing and ever-changing love for Beatrice, the *Vita Nuova* provides a privileged perspective on Dante's representation of emotions through its continuous reference to the effects of love on the poet and, therefore, to his emotional states. Within this context, smiles and tears are emotional manifestations aroused by love, and their representation in the *libello* takes on decidedly different modalities and characteristics.

In fact, the smile maintains a much smaller presence in the *Vita Nuova* than does the act of weeping; it only appears in two episodes within the *libello*: Beatrice's first smile (XXI. 4 [12.4])⁷ and that of Dante (IV. 3 [2.5]). Due to the small number of occurrences and their limited role, the smile in the *Vita Nuova* will be discussed in the sections dedicated respectively to Dante's and Beatrice's smiles in the *Commedia*⁸.

On the contrary, the frequent occurrences of weeping justify its analysis in this separate chapter: in fact, the *Vita Nuova* is remarkable for its high frequency of terms expressing tears⁹, for the most part in reference to Dante. While Beatrice is portrayed weeping only on the occasion of her father's death (XXII. 3 [13.3]), tears characterize the primary emotional state of the poet in love, who longs for his beloved to reciprocate his feelings, or mourns over her death. The constant flow of tears is interspersed with Love's own weeping: at times the latter merges with and accentuates the poet's laments, as will be seen in the second section treating in particular the two dreams that occur in the *libello*, while at other times it will increasingly assume a salvific and corrective function with respect to Dante's tears.

The purpose of this first section is to analyze the meaning of Dante's weeping in the *Vita Nuova*, in order to demonstrate how it constitutes an element through which the author dialogues with

⁷ I have used Barbi chaptering and edition throughout (Dante Alighieri, *Vita nuova*, ed. by Michele Barbi (Firenze: Società Dantesca Italiana, 1960)), while I indicated Gorni chaptering between brackets (Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nova*, ed. By Guglielmo Gorni (Turin: Einaudi, 1996)).

⁸ See Ch. III. 4, 170-171 and Ch. IV. 2, 203 and ff.

⁹ The occurrences of *piangere/piagnere* are 76 and are distributed in the following way: II. 6 (x2); III. 6 and 12; VIII. 1, 2, 3, 5 (x2), 7 (x2); XII. 4 (x2); XIII. 8; XIV. 9, 10; XXII.3 (x2), 6, 9, 10, 14 (x2), 15 (x2), 16, 17 (x2); XXIII. 3, 5 (x2), 6 (x3), 11 (x3), 12 (x2), 13, 18 (x2), 19, 22, 24, 25; XXXI. 5, 6 (x2), 10, 11, 12 (x2), 14, 15, 17; XXXII. 5 (x2); XXXIV. 4, 8, 10; XXXV. 3 and 8; XXXVI. 4 and 5; XXXVII. 2 (x2), 7; XXXIX. 4 (x2), 9; XL. 4 (x2), 9, 10; XLI. 10.

The term *lagrimare* occurs 23 times: VIII. 2; XII.1, 2 (x2); XIV. 9; XII.4 (x2); XXIII. 6 and 24; XXX. 1; XXXI. 1 and 8; XXXIV. 10; XXXV. 3 and 7; XXXVI. 5; XXXVII. 2, 3, 6 (x2); XXXIX. 4 and 9; XL. 10.

Finally, *plorare* appears just twice: VII. 6; VIII. 5.

the tradition of love poetry and, more specifically, with the poetics of Guido Cavalcanti, his 'first friend' and dedicatee of the *libello*. Through an analysis of the principal episodes of weeping, one can observe the passage from Dante's total adherence to Cavalcanti's poetic modes, to his detachment from them, thus providing an opportunity for conjecture on the rupture of this poetic partnership.

First, one can identify three phases of Dante's weeping in the *Vita Nuova*: 1) tears caused by his growing love for Beatrice; 2) tears for Beatrice's death (in which we must include, due to their similar typologies and methods, the tears shed for the death of her friend and father); 3) the cry of repentance that initiates his return to Beatrice after seeking the temporary consolation of the *donna gentile*, a kind woman. As can be seen, tears accompany and signal the evolution of Dante's love for Beatrice from the beginning to the end of the work.

In the first phase, Dante's tears appear to be aroused by the following causes: his first encounter with Beatrice (II. 6 [1.7]); the disappearance of the first screen lady (VII. 3-6 [2.14-17]); Beatrice's withheld greeting (XII. 1-2 [5.8-9] and XIII. 8-9 [6.8-9]); the mockery of Dante by Beatrice and other ladies (XIV. 9-10 [6.9-10]). Initially and in broad terms, Dante's weeping is a negative emotional response to episodes that generate suffering due to unrequited love.

The idea that the torments of love are the cause of weeping is rooted in the poetic tradition of courtly love. In the poems of the troubadours, weeping is described as an emotional manifestation of the lover's condition: through tears he demonstrates the sincerity of his love for his lady and requests her love in return¹⁰. In this case, however, tears function as a rhetorical tool of persuasion rather than a true expression of suffering.

Similar is the function which weeping performs in the poetry of the Sicilian School, especially that of the school's founder, Giacomo da Lentini, in which crying acts as a means of persuasion to soften and sweeten the beloved's heart¹¹. Weeping also appears to be the only means of catharsis through which to vent the weight of desire that oppresses the poet's heart¹². Moreover, among the Sicilian poets, weeping is one of the emotions alternating in the heart of the poet, often accompanied by and contrasted with laughter¹³, in a continuous oscillation of the lover's

¹⁰ See Catherine Léglu, 'Tearful performance: when troubadours weep', *Neophilologische Mitteilungen*, 101.4, *Modern Language Society* (2000), 495-504 (p. 495).

¹¹ Giacomo da Lentini, *Madonna mia, a voi mando* (13-16): 'und'eo prego l'Amore, / a cui prega ogni amanti, / li mei sospiri e pianti / vo pungano lo core'; ---. *Si alta amanza à pres'a lo me' core* (7-10): 'rompe a tutte l'ore / de lacreme lo molle sentimento. / Donqua, madonna, se lacreme e pianto / de lo diamante frange le durezza, [...]'. The poems of the Sicilian School are throughout cited from from *I poeti della Scuola siciliana*, ed. by Roberto Antonelli, 3 vols. (Milano: Mondadori, 2008).

¹² Giacomo da Lentini, *Madonna, dir vo voglio* (54-64): 'similmente eo getto/ a voi, bella, li mei sospiri e pianti./ Che s'eo no li gittasse/ parria che soffondasse,/ e bene soffondara,/ lo cor tanto gravara – in suo disio;/ che tanto frange a terra/ tempesta, che s'atterra,/ ed eo così rinfrango,/ quando sospiro e piango – posar crio'.

¹³ On the topic see Federica Anichini, 'Retorica del corpo nelle "Rime" di Guido Cavalcanti: il tema del pianto', in Maria L. Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti tra i suoi lettori* (Fiesole: Cadmo, 2003), pp. 103-118 (p. 108).

moods. In the poetry of Stefano Protonotaro in particular, tears are openly linked to the torments of lovesickness. When he finds himself before his beloved, who does not share his sentiments ('non cura niente' III. 35¹⁴), the poet weeps like an invalid¹⁵.

Tears also appear as an expression of amorous suffering within the lyrics of the Tuscan poet Chiaro Davanzati (thirteenth century): tears and sighs characterize the poet who does not receive his beloved's favor in exchange for his love service¹⁶, and they qualify the tormented condition of the lover, a condition from which he cannot escape¹⁷, finding himself reduced instead to a 'gravoso stato'¹⁸, to severe conditions.

But it is only in the *Rime* of Guido Cavalcanti that weeping truly finds its place as an essential and constant expression of the lover's pain: as has already been noted, he appropriates the Sicilian theme of tears and 'carries that simple allusion to the linguistic potentiality of tears all the way to its full conclusion, as a poetic language entirely based on tears, sighs, heaving sobs'¹⁹. The victim of a love that is expressed primarily as suffering and destruction, the poet characterizes himself as 'un che vo piangendo':

Vedete ch'i' son un che vo piangendo
e dimostrando – il *giudicio d'amore*
e già non trovo sì pietoso core
che, me guardando, – una volta *sospiri*.
Novella doglia m'è nel cor venuta,
la qual mi *fa doler e pianger forte*;
e spesse volte avèn, che mi saluta
tanto di presso l'angosciosa Morte [...].²⁰
(X. 1-8)

Weeping is a demonstration of 'Love's judgement', the external sign that manifests the amorous passion disturbing the poet's body and isolating him in his condition of suffering, devoid of

¹⁴ 'She does not care'.

¹⁵ III. 37-42: 'Piango per usaggio,/ come fa lo malato che si sente agravato / e dotta in suo coraggio / che per lamento li par spesse fiare / li passi parte di ria volontate'.

¹⁶ *Canz.* 21.44-48: 'Pensando li sembianti che mi face,/ tanto forte travaglio,/ sospiro, piango dico: "perché 'i face,/ già per lei ched io vaglio,/ e non mi dona quel ch'aggio servuto?'. The poems are quoted from Chiaro Davanzati, *Rime*, ed. by Aldo Menichetti (Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1965).

¹⁷ *Canz.* 47.17: 'S'io piango e mi lamento/ od ho vita dogliosa,/ non credo nulla cosa/ possami rallegrare/ ché 'l mio 'namoramento/ venne da l'amorosa [...]'.

¹⁸ *Son.* D. 11.5-8: 'ché sson per voi in sì gravoso stato,/ ch'apena posso vita sostenere;/ piango, sospiro, doglio e sto infiammato/ del vostro amor [...]'.

¹⁹ Anichini, p. 116.

²⁰ The reference edition is *Poeti del duecento*, ed. by Gianfranco Contini, 2 vols. (Napoli, Milano: Ricciardi, 1960). 'You see me as one who often weeps/ and shows for anyone to observe Love's lurid brand/ and yet I find no man to understand/ my suffering or condole with me at all./ Fresh grief comes to batter my heart with a bruise/ upon a bruise, and I weep bitterly/ in pain so sharp that I might not refuse/ the invitation Death extends to me' (*The Metabolism of Desire. The poetry of Guido Cavalcanti*, trans. by David R. Slavitt (Athabasca University: AU press, 2012), p. 25).

The italics used in the text and in the following quoted passages, are mine and intended to highlight fundamental concepts for interpretative purposes.

merciful consolation, hurtling him towards death. Weeping is associated with a series of physiological phenomena that express spiritual labor, including sighs, which are often referred to as the active subjects of tears, those which issue from the heart to unleash and manifest pain. This occurs in *S'io prego questa donna che pietate* (XVII. 9-14), where the release of weeping sighs follows a confused vision of the woman, which heralds the death of the poet:

L'anima mia dolente e paurosa
piange ne li sospir' che nel cor trova
sì, che bagnati di pianto escon fòre.
 Allora par che ne la mente piova
 una figura di donna pensosa,
 che vegna per veder morir lo core.²¹

The sigh that issues forth alongside tears is a recurrent theme²², often replaced by the spirit, an element delegated to the operations and vital functions of the soul, which issues forth from its seat in the poet's body precisely through tears. In *Era 'n penser d'amor quand'io trovai*, 'a spirit born of weeping' (XXX. 15-16) emerges from the wound which love has created in the poet's heart, while in Ballad *I' prego voi che di dolor parlate* (XIX. 17-24), the tears produced by the poet's mind in the presence of his beloved create a means through which a 'grieving spirit' may enter through the eyes:

Lagrima ascendon de la mente mia
 s' tosto come questa donna sente,
che van faccendo per li occhi una via,
per la qual passa spirito dolente,
 ch'entra per li miei s' debilmente,
 ch'oltra non puote color scoprire
 che 'l 'maginar vi si possa finire.²³

Paolo Falzone has emphasized that weeping here performs the function of impeding the sensory perception of the mind, weakened and flooded as it is with tears, thus causing a 'psychic impoverishment of the lover'²⁴. Tears impede the imaginative process of the mind, causing upset and visual incapacity. One notes Cavalcanti's use of a precise lexicon that describes amorous

²¹ 'I grieve for myself, of course, but for you as well,/ who are so different from what one might expect,/ and this gives a special bitterness to my tears./ One who would give comfort and protect/ those who suffer comes instead to dwell/ on my death throes and my amusing fears' (*The Metabolism of Desire. The poetry of Guido Cavalcanti*, p. 17).

²² *Se mercè fosse amica a' miei disiri*, XV. 5-10: 'd'angosciosi diletta miei sospiri,/ che nascon de la mente ov'è amore/ e vanno sol ragionando dolore/ e non trovan persona che li miri,/ giriano a gli occhi con tanta vertute/ che 'l forte e duro lagrimar che fanno'; *Li occhi di quella gentil foresetta*, XXXI. 11-12: 'I' sento pianger for li miei sospiri/ quando la mente di lei mi ragiona; [...]'; *Perch' i' no spero di tornar giammai*, XXXV. 36-38: 'Tu, voce sbigottita e deboletta,/ ch'esci piangendo de lo cor dolente,/ co' l' anima e con questa ballatetta [...]'

²³ 'My tears well up whenever I think of her/ and my grieving spirit pours out its distress./ You understand how suddenly this can occur./ I feel my very skeleton deliquesce/ and my eyes grow dim in moments of such duress,/ fading the vivid colors of nature's show/ to the grey blur of an ominous tableau' (*The Metabolism of Desire. The poetry of Guido Cavalcanti*, p. 43)

²⁴ Paolo Falzone, 'Sentimento d'angoscia e studio delle passioni in Cavalcanti', in *Les deux Guidi Guinizzelli et Cavalcanti: Mourir d'aimer et autres ruptures* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2016), pp. 181-197 (p. 192).

passion as a disease, which Bruno Nardi²⁵ recognized as belonging to the medical tradition and, in particular, to the *Canon* of Avicenna, in which weeping is indicated as a symptom of the melancholy produced by love²⁶. In particular, Federica Anichini has demonstrated through textual surveys that Cavalcanti treats the theme of weeping – which he borrowed from the previous poetic tradition – in an innovative way, reworking it in a scientific context and thus transforming it into ‘a mechanistic and occlusive phenomenon’²⁷ which manifests love as illness and suffering.

Returning to the *Vita Nuova*, the first part of the *libello* (I-XVI) is dominated by a Cavalcantian conception of love as pain and suffering, since the author’s amorous desire for Beatrice is, according to courtly forms, traditionally unrequited. In particular, the representation of Dante’s first tears demonstrates how the author resorts to the use of typically Cavalcantian modes and tones.

The first meeting with Beatrice is the occasion from which Dante’s first tears spring. The appearance of the lady is traumatic, provoking the reaction of the poet’s spirits: if the vital spirit trembles and the animal spirit is amazed, the natural spirit weeps: ‘In quello punto lo spirito naturale, lo quale dimora in quella parte ove si ministra lo nutrimento nostro, cominciò a piangere, e piangendo disse queste parole: ‘Heu miser, quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps!’” (*Vn.* II. 6 [1.7])²⁸. It is precisely this amorous melancholy that impedes the functions of Dante’s natural spirit²⁹, which represents the development of lovesickness, according to the dictates of the medical tradition of the time. In fact, as Rossana Fenu Barbera has aptly illustrated, love for Beatrice is described as a pathology that attacks the poet’s body and mind and has all the symptoms of melancholy according to medical tradition, including weeping³⁰. In this regard, the experience of Cavalcanti’s poetry must have constituted a fundamental and necessary point of reference for the poetic reappropriation of these aspects of lovesickness taken from the medical tradition, as the first and only precedent of this type. A clue to this relationship occurs,

²⁵ Bruno Nardi, *L’amore e i medici medievali. Saggi e note di critica dantesca* (Milano-Napoli: Ricciardi, 1966), pp. 238-267 (p. 250).

²⁶ The text is cited from Nardi, p. 253: ‘Et est spiritus eius plurimae interfectionis et reversionis, et sit multae elevationis, alteratur dispositio ipsius ad risum et laetitiam et ad tristitiam et fletum quum amoris cantilenas audit, et praecipue quum fit rememoratio repudii et elongationis [...]’.

²⁷ Anichini, p. 106.

²⁸ ‘At that point the natural spirit, the one dwelling in that part where our food is digested, began to weep, and weeping said these words: Heu miser, quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps!’ I use throughout the following edition for the English translation of the *Vita Nuova: Dante’s Vita Nuova*, trans. by Mark L. Musa (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1973).

²⁹ Cf. Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nova*, ed. by Luca C. Rossi (Milano: Mondadori, 2009), p. 11, n. 1.7: ‘[...]sarò spesso impedito nelle funzioni’ con conseguente debilitazione fisica e incremento della malinconia secondo la medicina del tempo, fortemente connessa con la riflessione filosofica’.

³⁰ Rosanna F. Barbera, *Dante’s tears, the poetics of weeping from “Vita Nuova” to the “Commedia”* (Firenze: Olschki, 2017), p. 16. See also the contribution of Natascia Tonelli, ‘Stilistica della malinconia: Vita Nova XXIII-XXV e un di si venne a me Malinconia’, *Tenzone*, 4 (2003), 241-263.

in the case of Dante's first tears, with the dramatization of the spirits, a typically Cavalcantian inventive device that, as we have seen, often appears in the poet's *Rime* as a weeping subject. One notes that wonder, trembling and tears constitute those same symptoms which Dante will manifest in his first encounter with Beatrice in the Earthly Paradise of *Purg.* XXX. 31-57: this first meeting of the *Vita Nuova* is evoked there through the image of the spirit, trembling and amazed in the presence of Beatrice. Later, Dante sheds his first tears (line 54) for the disappearance of Virgil, but will be reproached by Beatrice (lines 56-57), his weeping being judged inappropriate³¹. One observes that Dante's tears when he first meets Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova*, and those first shed before Beatrice in the *Purgatorio*, belong to the same genre: these are tears born from passion, from an earthly affection; in the first case they will flow freely again in various chapters of the *libello*, while in the second they are instead obstructed. In fact, as will be seen in the next chapter, Dante will utilize the tears shed during the otherworldly journey of the *Commedia* as a penitential tool to purify himself and gain access to Paradise. The tears which Dante sheds at the beginning of the *Vita Nuova*, like his weeping for Virgil, belong instead to that category which monastic culture and the Church Fathers described as sterile or vain, since they were not shed out of the desire for God. The monk Aelred of Rievaulx, for example, warns against tears shed for love and for those earthly affections that separate us from God:

Likewise, if by God's inscrutable design, someone who is tepid and debauched is touched with compunction because of some inward attachment, then goes back again to his empty, ludicrous and base former ways after those sterile tears and momentary attachments, it is certainly foolish, and even much more than that, it is insane, to come to this judgement about his love: that he is believed, because of these attachments, to love God more than someone who devotes himself so totally to God's service that he detests and has a deep horror of anything he knows to be contrary to God's will, and embraces with fervor any toil imposed on him in the Lord's name.³²

Treating tears in his *Liber de panibus*, Peter of Celle condemns as sterile any tears not shed for the kingdom of Heaven: 'Every weeping that is not shed for the sake of the kingdom of heaven is sterile. The tears that are wringed out of temporary losses and hardships are useless and vain'³³.

³¹ Cf. Ch. III. 4, 151 and ff.

³² Aelred of Rievaulx, *The mirror of charity* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications 1990), p. 199. Aelredus Rievallensis, *speculum caritatis*, II, 17.50 ed. by Hoste and others (1971), p. 90: 'Similis profecto ineptiae est, immo multo maioris insaniae, si quisquam luxuriosus aut tepidus, occulta Dei dispensatione ob quosdam internos compungatur affectus ad vana et ludicra et sordes et pristinas denuo reversurus secundum steriles has lacrimas ac momentaneos affectus, de eius dilectione ferre sententiam, ut hinc Deum plus illo credatur amare, qui adeo se divinae servituti subiecit, ut quidquid eius voluntati noverit esse contrarium, omni detestetur horrore, quidquid fuerit laboris impostum, pro eius nomine omni amplectatur fervore'.

³³ My own translation. Petrus Cellensis, *Liber de panibus*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1855), PL 202, 929-1043, (984D): 'sterilis est omnis effusio lacrymarum quae non effunditur propter regnum caelorum. Inanes sunt lacrymae, quas damnum vel incommodum extorquet temporale'.

Thus, the hypothesis that Dante's tears in the *Vita Nuova* perform the function of mortification and the repression of the poet's erotic impulses towards Beatrice³⁴ does not seem likely. Although it is true that in the early Middle Ages tears were considered an instrument of sexual mortification in the monastic context³⁵, it seems clear from the opening lines of the *Vita Nuova* that Dante, by shedding copious tears of passion and therefore following the dictates of the courtly love tradition, and even more precisely that of Cavalcantian poetry, is consciously obeying that tradition, at least initially. Indeed, in his first meeting with Beatrice there is no trace of the repression that will take place in *Purg.* XXX: in the latter case, both from a poetic and a theological point of view, Dante will openly condemn the vain tears of Cavalcantian love, ('do not weep, do not weep yet-- there is another sword to make you weep'³⁶, Beatrice admonishes in *Purg.* XXX. 56-57), from which he had already distanced himself in the episode of Paolo and Francesca in *Inferno* V, in which he contrasted the vain weeping of the lustful with the penitential tears of the pilgrim (V. 117)³⁷. At the beginning of his youthful *libello* there is no opposition between tears and earthly love; rather, the tears are a complete expression of amorous passion, narrated in the first part of the work in terms of its destructive and pathological effects and according to the *topoi* of courtly love.

One of these *topoi*, in particular, constitutes the reason for Dante's second episode of weeping in the *Vita Nuova*: the loss of the first screen lady, a woman who served to conceal the fact that Beatrice is the true object of his love, and who decided to move to a different city, thus leaving Dante defenseless (VII. 1-2 [2.12-13]). This episode becomes the occasion for the production of a sonnet, *O voi che per la via d'Amor passate*, in which the poet illustrates his own amorous pain and torment, concluding the final quatrain with an image that paints him in an attitude of apparent joy:

[...]
 Sì che volendo far come coloro
 che per vergogna celan lor mancanza,
 di fuor mostro allegrezza,
 e dentro da lo core struggo e ploro.³⁸
 (17-20)

³⁴ Interpretation provided in Barbera, pp. 24-32.

³⁵ On the topic see Piroška Nagy, *Le Don des larmes au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000) and Jacques Le Goff, 'Il dono delle lacrime', in *Il corpo nel medioevo*, trans. by Fausat Cataldi Villari (Bari: Laterza, 2017).

³⁶ I always refer to the following English translation of Dante's *Commedia: The Divine Comedy*, trans. by Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander (New York: Doubleday & co., 2000).

³⁷ See Ch. II. 3, 80 and ff.

³⁸ 'And so I try to imitate the man/ who covers up his poverty for shame:/ I wear the clothes of joy,/ but in my heart I weep and waste away'.

The contrast between his apparent external joy and internal weeping, expressed through the synonymic dittology ‘struggo e ploro’, derives from troubadour lyrics: Folquet de Marseille in *Amors*, *merce* prays to his beloved, affirming ‘que l cor plora quan vezes los hueilhs rire’ (19): that is, the heart weeps while the eyes appear to be laughing. If Folquet hides his pain for fear of annoying his lady (20)³⁹, Dante does so instead out of shame, to hide his weakness. The idea that crying is a private affair, considered inappropriate for public display, is a typical Florentine social *convention*, as Teodolinda Barolini has noted⁴⁰, especially in the case of women and men crying together⁴¹. A reference to this convention appears in *Vn*. XXII when, on the occasion of the death of Beatrice’s father, the lady’s tears provoke the compassion and tears of Dante, who tries to cover himself and even to hide from the women present:

Allora trapassaro queste donne; e io rimasi in tanta tristizia, che alcuna lagrima talora bagnava la mia faccia, onde io mi ricopria con porre le mani spesso a li miei occhi; e se non fosse ch’io attendea audire anche di lei, però ch’io era in luogo onde se ne giano la maggiore parte di quelle donne che da lei si partiano, io mi sarei nascoso incontanente che le lagrime m’aveano assalito. (XXII. 4 [13.4])⁴²

The theme of weeping in solitude characterizes the next two episodes that, due to the richness of their details, provide interesting elements for reflection. These tears are shed respectively after the denial of Beatrice’s greeting and during the episode of the *gabbo* – that is, the mockery of the poet’s amorous torment – by Beatrice and her female friends:

Ora, tornando al proposito, dico che poi che la mia beatitudine mi fue negata, mi giunse tanto dolore, che, partito me da le genti, *in solinga parte andai a bagnare la terra d’amarrissime lagrime*. E poi che alquanto mi fue sollenato questo *lagrimare*, *misimi ne la mia camera*, là ov’io potea *lamentarmi senza essere udito*; e quivi, chiamando misericordia a la donna de la cortesia, e dicendo ‘*Amore, aiuta lo tuo fedele*’, *m’addormentai come un paroletto battuto lagrimando*. (XII. 1-2 [5.8-9])⁴³

E partitomi da lui, mi ritornai ne la *camera de le lagrime*; ne la quale, *piangendo e vergognandomi*, fra me stesso dicea: ‘*Se questa donna sapesse la mia condizione, io non credo che così gabbasse la mia persona, anzi credo che molta pietade le ne verrebbe*’. E in questo *pianto stando, propuosi di dire parole*, ne le quali, parlando a lei, significasse la cagione

³⁹ ‘[...] mas per paor que no-us sembl’enoios’.

⁴⁰ Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante’s Lyric Poetry: Poems of Youth and of the Vita Nuova (1283-1292)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), p. 194.

⁴¹ On the theme see Judith Steinhoff, ‘Weeping Women: Social roles and Images in Fourteenth-Century Tuscany’, in *Crying in the Middle Ages. Tears of History*, ed. by Elina Gertsman (London, New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 35-52.

⁴² ‘Then these ladies passed by me, and I was left in such a sad state that tears kept running down my face so that I often had to cover my eyes with my hands. I would have hidden myself as soon as I felt the tears coming, but I hoped to hear more about her, since I was standing where most of those ladies would pass by me after taking leave of her’.

⁴³ ‘Now, returning to my subject, let me say that no sooner was my bliss denied me than I was so stricken with anguish that, withdrawing from all company, I went to a solitary place to bathe the earth with bitterest tears. After my sobbing had quieted down somewhat, I went to my bedroom where I could lament without being heard; and there, begging pity of the lady of courtesy, and saying, “Love, help your faithful one,” I fell asleep like a little boy crying from a spanking’.

del mio trasfiguramento, e dicesse che io so bene ch'ella non è saputa, e che se fosse saputa, io credo che pietà ne giugnerebbe altrui; [...]. (XIV. 9-10 [7.9-10])⁴⁴

In both cases, the weeping is provoked by a traditional situation of suffering caused by the beloved's refusal to reciprocate affection, expressed through denial and derision. Previously, in Giacomo da Lentini's lyrics, tears flow from the poet's eyes because he is denied a view of his lady's face⁴⁵, while Chiaro Davanzati wept at the lady's lack of reciprocation in exchange for his love service⁴⁶. Regarding the theme of derision, it is again Guido Cavalcanti who represents tears shed in a similar circumstance: in the previously cited *Era 'n penser d'amor quand'io trovai* (XXX. 13-20), the 'spirit born of weeping', issuing from love's wound in the poet's heart, causes him to show such astonishment that one of the female spectators reacts with laughter: 'Poi che mi vider cos' sbigottito,/ disse l'una, che rise:/ 'Guarda come conquise/ forza d'amor costui!'⁴⁷.

Even Dante's reflection on Beatrice's piety, which the lady would manifest if she had the opportunity to witness his weeping (XIV. 9 [7.9]), is an element belonging to the earlier tradition of love poetry, specifically that of the troubadours. In a poem attributed to Rigaut de Berbezilh, the hypothesis which the poet proposes is the same expounded by Dante: 'Si las lagremas qu'ieu plor/ visson cazer li vostr'uelh / ni vissetz, dona, cum muelh / de l'aigua cauda que.m corr / per la boca e per la cara, / no cug fossets tan avara'⁴⁸. Similarly, in Giacomo da Lentini, tears are the means to soften the hardness of the lady's heart, moving her to compassion ('Donqua, madonna, se lacrime e pianto / de lo diamante frange le durezze, vostre altezze poria isbasare / lo meo penar amoroso', XXX. 9⁴⁹), while they have no hope of arousing such pity in Cavalcanti's lyrics ('[...] e già non trovo sì pietoso core/ che, me guardando, una volta sospiri', X. 3-4⁵⁰).

In addition, both passages present the *topos* of crying in solitude: in the first, Dante cries 'in solinga parte' and then continues his tears and laments in the refuge of his own room; in the second, Dante escapes from the scene of the *gabbo* to unleash his tears in the 'camera de le

⁴⁴ 'And leaving him, I went back to my room of tears where, weeping in humiliation, I said to myself: "If this lady were aware of my condition, I do not believe she would ridicule my appearance but, on the contrary, would feel pity." In the midst of my tears I thought of writing a few words addressed to her, explaining the reason for the change in my appearance and saying that I was well aware that no one knew the reason and that, if it were known, I believed it would arouse everyone's compassion; [...]'.

⁴⁵*Disc.* XVII. 113-118 : '[...] e mandovi infratanto / saluti e dolze pianto; / e piango per usaggio, / giamai non rideraggio / mentre non vederaggio / lo vostro bel visaggio'.

⁴⁶*Canz.* 21, 44-48: 'Pensando li sembianti che mi face,/ tanto forte travaglio,/ sospiro, piango dico: "perché 'i face,/ già per lei ched io vaglio,/ e non mi dona quel ch'aggio servuto?'.

⁴⁷ 'One laughed, I think in wonderment, that I/ had been hurt so much/ by Cupid's brutal touch:/ it was an amazing thing' (*The Metabolism of Desire. The poetry of Guido Cavalcanti*, p. 69).

⁴⁸ 'If your eyes could see fall the tears I am weeping, or if you could see, lady, how I become wet from the hot water running all over my mouth and my face, I don't think you would be so ungenerous' (trans. by Léglu, p. 497).

⁴⁹ 'So, Lady, if my tears and plaint/ Can crack the diamond's stoniness, / The pain of love that burdens me / Might moderate your arrogance' (*The complete poetry of Giacomo da Lentini*, trans. by Richard Lansing (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), p. 12).

⁵⁰ 'I find no man to understand my suffering or condole with me at all'.

lagrime’, the room of tears. The isolation to which one is condemned when suffering amorous torments is a recurring theme in love poetry, in which the poet voluntarily isolates himself from the world, looking for a solitary place to suffer and craft his love story⁵¹. Once again, it is Cavalcanti who indicates that weeping is a direct cause of the poet’s isolation, becoming a ‘screen that, while altering the vision of the external world to the eyes of the lover, reciprocally renders this one almost invisible to the external world’⁵², as occurs in *Vedete ch’i’ son un che vo piangendo* and in *Se mercè fosse amica a’ miei disiri*⁵³.

The ‘camera’ as a place of weeping has been defined as ‘a particular room that offers the poet the comfort of solitude and meditation’⁵⁴. And yet, more than a physical place, the chamber of tears should be understood as a mental space, corresponding to the poet’s own heart. In fact, the same image of the chamber associated with weeping appears in a metaphorical way in the *Convivio* (I. II. 5), where Dante affirms that it is appropriate to ‘disparage oneself’ only when by oneself, and to weep alone, in the intimacy of one’s own thoughts: ‘onde nella camera de’ suoi pensieri se medesimo riprendere dee e piangere li suoi difetti, e non palese’⁵⁵. ‘Piangere’ is used here in the sense of ‘atonement’, ‘expiation’, a usage that will later become recurrent in the *Inferno*⁵⁶; it is still a solitary form of weeping ‘non palese’ (‘not open’), which, as in the *Vita Nuova*, must be done ‘sanza essere udito’ (‘without being heard’, XII. 2 [5.9]) in the chamber of thoughts. The chamber of tears is therefore the metaphorical place identified with the ‘secretissima camera de lo cuore’ (‘the most secret chamber of the heart’, *Vn.II. 4* [1.5]), which Dante identifies as the seat of the vital spirit, or the precursor of the god Love who rules over the poet from his very first encounter with Beatrice, and therefore the seat and residence of amorous suffering.

In the episode in which Beatrice refuses to greet the poet, Dante’s tears are associated with his request for help from Love, who in turn appears weeping in the second vision of the *libello* (XI. 4 [5.11]). We will investigate the meaning of this weeping in the next section; for the moment it suffices to note that Love’s cry causes amazement in Dante, who questions him about the reason for his tears (‘why do you weep?’) receiving an answer with an obscure meaning. This

⁵¹ See again Giacomo da Lentini, *Dal cor mi vene*, XVII. 141-45: ‘Cantanto in gioia vivo,/ or vivo pur pensivo/ e tutta gente ischivo,/ sì ch’io vo fugendo [...]’.

⁵² Anichini, p. 111.

⁵³ XV. 5-8: ‘[...] d’angosciosi diletta miei sospiri,/ che nascon de la mente ov’è amore/ e vanno sol ragionando dolore/ e non trovan persona che li miri’.

⁵⁴ Fernando Salsano, ‘Camera’ in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, (Roma: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia italiana, 1970), <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/elenco-opere/Enciclopedia_Dantesca> [accessed September 2021].

⁵⁵ From here forward, all quotations from the *Convivio* will refer to this edition: Dante Alighieri, *Convivio*, ed. by Franca Brambilla Ageno (Firenze: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1995). The English translations will be quoted from *Dante’s “Il Convivio”*, trans. by Richard Lansing (New York: Garland, 1990): ‘Therefore it is in the chamber of one’s thoughts that a person must reprimand himself and bemoan his faults, and not openly’.

⁵⁶ Cf. Ch. II. 3, 74.

question constitutes an important turning point, since it indicates a reflection on the motives and object of such weeping and, therefore, an interrogation of the very essence of the love poetry written up to that point. That Dante's weeping is the indication of a crisis is also suggested by the similarity of this passage with one from Augustine's *Confessions* in which the philosopher, torn between earthly frivolities and the virtue of continence, takes refuge in tears of solitude⁵⁷. In Dante's case, it is the beginning of the poetic and internal crisis caused by Beatrice's withheld greeting and, therefore, by the deprivation of the poetic object: if the subject of the poem is destined to change, the reasons for weeping and its representation must also change.

This crisis primarily concerns Dante's conception of Love, as shown by the following sonnet, which in the next chapter illustrates the diverse poetic and amorous conceptions among which Dante wavers, undecided on which to adopt (XIII. 8 [6.8]):

Tutti li miei penser parlan d'Amore;
 e hanno in lor sì gran varietate,
 ch'altro mi fa voler sua potestate,
 altro folle ragiona il suo valore,
 altro sperando m'apporta dolzore,
altro pianger mi fa spesse fiata;
 e sol s'accordano in cherer pietate,
 tremando di paura che è nel core.⁵⁸
 (1-8)

The different values attributed to Love correspond to different sorts of poetics⁵⁹: one notes that after courtly love ('ch'altro mi fa voler sua potestate' (3)), the negative conception of lovesickness ('altro folle ragiona il suo valore' (4)) and the sweetness of Guido Guinizzelli's lyrics ('altro sperando m'apporta dolzore' (5)), Guido Cavalcanti's poetics is openly identified with weeping ('altro pianger mi fa spesse fiata' (6)). At least initially, Dante's choice still seems to side with the Cavalcantian poetics of weeping: in fact, in XIV. 10 [4.10] it is precisely the weeping caused by the *gabbo* episode which elicits an occasion for poetic production ('E in questo pianto stando, propuosi di dire parole [...]'⁶⁰), justifying the inclusion of the sonnet *Con l'altre donne mia vista gabbate*.

⁵⁷ Augustinus Aurelius Hipponensis, *Confessiones*, ed. Martin by Skutella (Leipzig: 1934), VIII.12.28: 'Ubi vera a fundo arcano alta consideratio traxit et congescit totam miseriam meam in conspectu cordis mei, oborta est procella ingens ferens ingentem imbrem lacrimarum. Et ut totum effunderem cum vocibus suis, surrexi ab Alypio — solitudo mihi ad negotium flendi aptior — suggereretur — et secessi remotius'.

⁵⁸ 'All my thoughts speak to me concerning Love; / they have in them such great diversity / that one thought makes me welcome all Love's power, / another judges such a lordship folly, / another, with its hope, brings me delight, / another very often makes me weep; / only in craving pity all agree / as they tremble with the fear that grips my heart'.

⁵⁹ This is the interpretation provided by Rossi, p. 57.

⁶⁰ 'In the midst of my tears I thought of writing a few words [...]'

After the *gabbo* episode, however, Dante does not weep for several chapters: the poetic shift inaugurated by the canzone *Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore* (Chs. XVIII-XIX [10]) gives birth to the laudatory style: that is, the poetic celebration that focuses on unconditional love for a woman, in which the poet's true beatitude consists. In this poetic phase, there is no place for love understood as suffering: rather than weeping, Dante instead celebrates Beatrice's smile, which has become a miraculous revelation of the divine, the primary expression of *caritas*, of unconditional love for the subject of poetic praise⁶¹. In this phase, weeping ceases, since it is a characterizing element of the Cavalcantian poetics of painful love, from which Dante distances himself for the first time. As Manuele Gragnolati points out, through the previous episode of the *gabbo*, the author sets the stage for 'a Cavalcantian phase now in the past'⁶², that of painful love, which is thus presented as negative and erroneous with respect to the subsequent phase of praise. The shift from the representation of tears in the Cavalcantian phase of Dante's poetics to their total absence in the phase of laudatory poetry must therefore be considered as an important indication of this distancing, and of Dante's perception of weeping as a specifically Cavalcantian poetic element.

Weeping returns to the *Vita Nuova* only with the death of Beatrice, foreshadowed by the episodes of the death of her friend and her father, occasions in which tears are a stimulus for poetic production: in the first case, the poet openly indicates that his tears are the reason for the sonnet *Piangete, amanti, poi che piange Amore* ('piangendo mi propuosi di dicere alquante parole de la sua morte' VIII. 2 [3.2]⁶³); in the second case, mourning the death of Beatrice's father is the subject of two sonnets that treat the weeping of the *donne gentili* and that of Dante, the latter considered inappropriate by the women according to the social conventions of the time ('Lascia piangere noi e triste andare / (e fa peccato chi mai ne conforta), / che nel suo pianto l'udimmo parlare', *Se' tu colui c'hai trattato sovente*, XXII. 9-11⁶⁴). Beginning with the vision that heralds the death of Beatrice in Chapter XXIII [14], up to the appearance of the *donna gentile* (Ch. XXXV [24]), Dante's weeping will constitute the constant tone of the narration, appearing more frequently than in any other part of the *libello*.

Mourning the death of the beloved is a traditional subject of the poetic genre of the funeral dirge in troubadour and vernacular Italian poetry, whose influence on the section of the *Vita Nuova*

⁶¹ See Ch. VI. 2, 203 and ff.

⁶² Manuele Gragnolati, 'Trasformazioni e assenze: la performance della Vita nova e le figure di Dante e Cavalcanti', in *Dante the Lyric and Ethical Poet*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Baranski and Martin McLaughlin (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 74-91 (p. 81).

⁶³ 'Weeping, I resolved to say something about her death'.

⁶⁴ 'Leave grief to us; the path of tears is ours/ (to try to comfort us would be a sin),/ we are the ones who heard her sobbing words'.

treating Beatrice's death is widely recognized⁶⁵. In particular, one notes that the troubadour *planh*, originating in the Latin *planctus*, sings the death of the beloved woman through tears; such is the case with Lanfranco Cigala, an Italian troubadour who mixes poetry and tears, creating a *chan-plor*, a celebration of women through tears and song⁶⁶.

Regarding vernacular poetry, tears are one of the elements through which the poet expresses his personal sorrow for the death of his beloved: if Giacomino Pugliese cries in sorrow (*Morte, perchè m'ài fatta sì gran guerra* (46-48): 'Madonna de sta vita trapassao, / con gran tristanza / sospiri e pene e pianti mi lascio'⁶⁷), Lapo Gianni refers to death as 'fiume di lacrime e pianto'⁶⁸ (*O morte della vita privatrice* (33)), while Cino da Pistoia describes it as she who 'due fonti fatto ha di lagrimar gli occhi miei lassi'⁶⁹ (*Oimè, lasso, quelle trezza bionde* (38-39)).

Although the reason for tears is a traditional one, the resumption of weeping in the *Vita Nuova* upon Beatrice's death seems to take on different characteristics. In fact, it should be remembered that the event of Beatrice's death is different from any poetic precedent: as Charles Singleton has clearly indicated, the death of the beloved no longer coincides, as it does in the literary tradition, with the death of love, but instead initiates the unveiling of God's love within love for a woman, through her heavenly transfiguration⁷⁰. For this reason, the representation of tears is also necessarily transformed.

One observes, for example, the treatment of tears by the Tuscan poet Guittone D'Arezzo in his *Canzoniere*, during the poet's traditional disavowal of the lady, after which he returns, repentant, to God: in Canzone XXVI, Guittone claims to be ashamed of his past, dominated as it was by sinful love, now disavowed and expiated with tears of penance: 'Vergogna ho, lasso, ed ho me stesso ad ira/ e doveria via più, reconoscendo/ con' male usai la flor del tempo mio!/ Perché no lo cor meo sempre sospira,/ e li occhi perché mai finan piangendo,/ e la bocca di dir: 'Mercede, Dio!'' (XXVI. 1-6)⁷¹. In this context, as Michelangelo Picone comments, 'the eyes that

⁶⁵ See Dante Alighieri, 'Vita Nuova' in *Opere minori*, ed. by Domenico de Robertis and Gianfranco Contini (Milano, Ricciardi, 1979), pp. 56-58, pp. 201-03; Rinaldina Russell, 'Studio dei generi medievali italiani: Il Compianto per la morte dell'amata', *Italica*, 54.4 (1977), 449-467, 459-62.

⁶⁶ *Eu non chant ges per talan de chantar* (2-4): '[...] non chant, mas chantan pior, per c'aitai chan deu hom clamar chan-plor, car es mesclatz de chans ab lo plorar.'

⁶⁷ 'Lady, passed away from this life, you left me with a great grief, sighs, sorrows and tears'.

⁶⁸ 'A river of tears and weeping'.

⁶⁹ 'Made my poor eyes two fountains of weeping'.

⁷⁰ Charles S. Singleton, 'The Death of Beatrice' in *An Essay on the Vita nuova* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. 6-24.

⁷¹ 'I am ashamed, alas, an I am angry at myself;/ and I should be even more so, recognising/ how ill I used the flower of my time [youth]!/ Fir which my heart sighs ceaselessly/ and my eyes never finish weeping/ and my mouth never stops saying: "Mercy, oh God!"' (Davide Bowe, 'Frate Guittone's Faltering 'Now'' in *Medieval Temporalities: The Experience of Time in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Almut Suerbaum and Annie Sutherland (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2021), pp. 75-90 (p.80)).

have shed false tears in the game of seduction, now must shed true tears in the process of salvation'⁷², achieved through their conversion into penitential tears.

In the case of the *Vita Nuova*, Beatrice is no longer an obstacle to God's love. The poet's tears upon Beatrice's death do not, therefore, perform a properly penitential function, although they constitute a symptom of poetic and interior evolution: they are no longer a tool to express the dissatisfaction of a painful love, but are instead necessary for the revelation of the sacred and miraculous nature of Beatrice, revealed precisely through the central event of her death. It is an extraordinary death that cannot be mourned through the classical *topoi* of the funeral dirge; here instead these *topoi* must undergo modifications and innovations⁷³. This is evident from the poet's first episode of weeping at Beatrice's death, which actually takes place because of a premonitory vision of her death:

E quando ei pensato alquanto di lei, ed io ritornai pensando a la mia debilitata vita; e veg-
gendo come leggero era lo suo durare, ancora che sana fosse, si cominciai a piangere fra
me stesso di tanta miseria. Onde, sospirando forte, dicea fra me medesimo: "Di necessitate
convene che la gentilissima Beatrice alcuna volta si muoia". [...] Così cominciando ad
errare la mia fantasia, venni a quello ch'io non sapea ove io mi fosse; e vedere mi pareo
donne andare scapigliate piangendo per via, maravigliosamente triste; e pareami vedere lo
sole oscurare, sì che le stelle si mostravano di colore ch'elle mi facevano giudicare che
piangessero; e pareami che li uccelli volando per l'aria cadessero morti, e che fossero gran-
dissimi terremuoti.

E maravigliandomi in cotale fantasia, e paventando assai, imaginai alcuno amico che mi
venisse a dire: "Or non sai? la tua mirabile donna è partita di questo secolo". Allora comin-
ciai a piangere molto pietosamente; e non solamente piangea ne la imaginazione, ma pian-
gea con li occhi, bagnandoli di vere lagrime.⁷⁴

(XXIII. 3-5 [24.3-5])

The thought of Beatrice's transience provokes Dante to weep when, sighing and crying, in the grip of a feverish delirium, he witnesses a dream vision that foretells the lady's death. In general, one notes that tears are given special prominence, both in the prose describing the vision, and in the subsequent song, *Donna pietosa e di novella etate*, which elaborates on the narration: the tears characterize Dante before the vision (at the mere possibility of Beatrice's death), during it (at the announcement of Beatrice's death) and at the end of the vision (upon awakening before the kind women who assists him, Dante is ashamed of his own voice, 'rotta dal singulto

⁷² Michelangelo Picone, 'Guittone e i due tempi del Canzoniere' in *Percorsi della lirica duecentesca dai Siciliani alla Vita Nova* (Firenze: Cadmo, 2003), p. 115.

⁷³ Russell, p. 459.

⁷⁴ 'After thinking about her awhile, I returned to thoughts of my feeble condition and, realizing how short life is, even if one is healthy, I began to weep silently about the misery of life. Then, sighing deeply, I said to myself: "It is bound to happen that one day the most gracious Beatrice will die." [...] While my imagination was wandering like this, I came to the point that I no longer knew where I was. And I seemed to see ladies preternaturally sad, their hair dishevelled, weeping as they made their way down a street. And I seemed to see the sun grow dark, giving the stars a color that would have made me swear that they were weeping. And it seemed to me that the birds flying through the air fell to earth dead, and there were violent earthquakes.

Bewildered as I dreamed, and terrified, I imagined that a friend of mine came to tell me: "Then you don't know? Your miraculous lady has departed from this world." At that I began to weep most piteously, and I wept not only in my dream, I wept with my eyes, wet with real tears.'

del piangere⁷⁵). The premonition of his beloved's death holds a sense of sacredness, presenting the death of Beatrice as an analogy for that of Christ: the death of birds, the earthquake and the darkening of the sun are, in fact, the same apocalyptic signs that accompany the death of Christ in the Bible⁷⁶. If we consider, however, the tears that in the *Vita Nuova* characterize the women who pass by on the street, the stars, and Dante the spectator who witnesses this event, it is impossible to find these elements in the biblical model.

Similar episodes of weeping tied to the death of Christ appear, instead, in a different context: the *Liber de Passione Christi et Doloribus et Planctibus Matris Eius*, one of the most widely disseminated compositions in the Middle Ages, in which it circulated under the supposed authorship of Bernard of Clairvaux⁷⁷. It belongs to the genre of *planctus Mariae*, texts that flourished between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, notable for their narrative focused on Mary's weeping and pain at the death of crucified Christ, and proposing an alternative narrative to that of the Bible, in which there is no mention of the Virgin's suffering⁷⁸.

In the following passage of the *Liber de passione*, the Virgin is represented weeping before her Son on the Cross, whose death is narrated along with its disastrous effects, among which are the earthquake, the darkening of the sun and, most notably, the weeping of the stars:

Tunc tremuit terra, tunc sol sua lumina clausit,
Moerebant poli, moerebant sidera cuncta,
Omne suum jubar amisit sua lumina perdens,
Omnis plangendo recessit fulgor ab alto.
Scinduntur duri lapides, scinduntur culmina templi.⁷⁹

The weeping of the stars caused by Beatrice's death ('sì che le stelle si mostravano di colore ch'elle mi facevano giudicare che piangessero') has thus far been considered Dante's own invention or a reference to the biblical model of *Ezekiel* 32. 7-8⁸⁰, which speaks only of the darkening of the stars, the context of which is the divine punishment of Pharaoh, not the prodigiousness of a divine death. Therefore, it is interesting to note that the passage from the *Liber* instead uses this same metaphor, the weeping of the stars, to describe the extraordinary nature of Christ's death, the model for Beatrice's death in the *Vita Nuova*: a death that, in the Dantean

⁷⁵ 'Broken by my sobbing'.

⁷⁶ *Luke* 23. 4-45; *Mathew* 27. 45-31; *Revelation* 6. 12-14.

⁷⁷ Henri Barré identified the author with the monk Oglerius of Lucedio (1136-1214) (cf. Henri Barré, 'Le Planctus Mariae attribué à saint Bernard', *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, 28 (1952), 243-266).

⁷⁸ See Ch. II. 4, 104 and ff.

⁷⁹ Sancti Bernardi Abbatis Clarae-Vallensis [Oglerio da Lucedio], *Liber de Passione Christi et doloribus et planctibus matris ejus*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1854), PL 182, 1133-1142 (1137). 'Then the earth trembled, the sun shut off its light. And the heavens grieved, and all the stars mourned. The moon in sorrow lost all its light, and all brightness withdrew from the upper heavens. The hard stones were split apart; the pediments of the temple were broken' (Thomas H. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion, Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 1996), p. 177).

⁸⁰ The biblical reference is indicated in the commentaries of De Robertis, Gorni, and Stefano Carrai (*Vita Nova*, ed. by Stefano Carrai (Milano: Bur, 2009)).

libello, causes the weeping of women (XXIII. 5: ‘vedere mi pareo donne andare scapigliate piangendo per via’⁸¹), but also of travelers, of pilgrims who pass through Florence (‘che non piangete quando voi passate’⁸² and ‘che lagrimando n'uscireste pui’⁸³, in *Deh peregrini che pensosi andate*, XL. 4, 11). Similarly in the *Liber*, Mary’s weeping affects the women beside her as well as the wayfarers she meets on the street, creating a fully communal sense of suffering:

Accessit Joannes, cui eam commendaverat Christus, et lugens ipse eam levavit lugentem; nam cruciata gemitibus, fatigata dolore, afflicta plorationibus, pedibus stare fere nequibat, et tamen sic portatur, a mulieribus sanctis adjuta, a cunctis plorantibus simul, Jerusalem ingreditur [...] Plorantes plorabant, multaeque condolebant Mariae. Nam dolor ejus multos faciebat dolores. Vix poterat lacrymas continere quicumque videbat eam plorantem. Tam pie plorabat, et tam amare dolebat, quod ex pio suo ploratu multos etiam invitos trahebat ad luctum; planctus fiebant a quocumque transibat. Maria plorabat ipsa, plorabant ambulantes cum ipsa, plorabant multi venientes obviam ei, sic usque deducitur a plorantibus plorantes quousque perventum est ad domum Joannis.⁸⁴

The communal weeping that marks Beatrice’s death contributes, therefore, to her holy transformation, presenting her death as analogous to that of Christ; at the same time, Dante’s tears are, therefore, like those of the Virgin, inconsolable and characterized by a universal quality⁸⁵, but above all, a salvific and redeeming form of weeping.

One notes, in fact, that at the end of the vision, the poet insists on the actual reality of his tears (‘piangea con li occhi, bagnandoli di vere lagrime’), which begins the first book of the *Consolatio* by Severinus Boethius who, heartbroken by personal tragedies and old age, depicts himself with his face streaked with true tears (‘et veris elegi fletibus ora rigant’⁸⁶, *Liber* I. 4). In fact, As Ernesto Livorni notes, in the narration of Dante’s dream, ‘the act of weeping is the only true situation, which takes place both in the mind and in the body’⁸⁷; and it could indeed be the truth of these tears that verifies the truth of the dream’s content and, above all, its sacredness. In the

⁸¹ ‘And I seemed to see ladies preternaturally sad, their hair dishevelled, weeping as they made their way down a street’.

⁸² ‘You show no signs of grief as you pass through’.

⁸³ ‘You would be weeping when you leave this place’.

⁸⁴ *Liber de passione Christi*, p. 1140. Translation mine: ‘John came mourning, and raised up the one who mourned. For she was tortured with sobbing, worn out by pain, pained by weeping and was not able to stand on her feet. Yet, as she was able, she went toward Jerusalem helped by holy women, all of them weeping [...] Weeping, they wept, and many had compassion for her in marvellous sympathy. For her sorrow caused many sorrows. Anyone who saw her crying could hardly contain the tears [...] mourning took place wherever she passed. Mary herself wept, many wept walking with her, others cried meeting her, weeping until they came to the house of John’.

⁸⁵ Weeping, Dante heralds the death of Beatrice to the princes of the land (XXXX. 1): ‘Poi che fue partita da questo seculo, rimase tutta la sopradetta cittade quasi vedova dispogliata da ogni dignitade; onde io, ancora lagrimando in questa desolata cittade, scrissi a li principi de la terra alquanto de la sua condizione, pigliando quello cominciamento di Geremia profeta che dice: *Quomodo sedet sola civitas*’.

⁸⁶ My own translation: ‘And my mouth is wet with real tears’.

⁸⁷ Ernesto Livorni, ‘Sogno e visione nella Vita Nuova di Dante’, *Letteratura italiana antica: rivista annuale di testi e studi*, 22 (2021), 81-96 (p.88).

writings of the Church Fathers and within the classifications of the different types of tears catalogued in the medieval monastic context, ‘true tears’ were an outward sign that attested to the inner conversion of the sinner, the repentance that leads him to salvation. True tears are, therefore, a means that reveals the soul in the body, the *homo interior* within the *homo exterior*, communicating to God the sincerity and authenticity of man’s emotions⁸⁸.

In the case of *Vita Nuova*, the author’s emphasis on the sincerity of his own tears suggests that his weeping is a manifestation of an internal transformation caused by the salvific pain at Beatrice’s death, resembling for Dante the death of Christ himself, which accomplished the salvation of humanity. As in the aforementioned *canzone* by Guittone d’Arezzo, tears are therefore the sign of a spiritual conversion that no longer sacrifices the beloved woman, but on the contrary, through her heavenly ascension, makes her the indispensable medium of that conversion. The subsequent verses on Beatrice’s death are characterized by weeping, as the primary element through which the poet expresses his pain: it constantly accompanies the poetic word, as one can observe from the numerous *verbum dicendi* which his tears introduce or follow⁸⁹. An intense relationship of fusion is established between tears and words, which eventually become completely interchangeable: if weeping becomes the source and inspirations of poetry, then poetry assumes the same function as weeping: that of releasing pain, noted as the primary purpose at the heart of the *canzone* introducing the new phase of mourning for the death of Beatrice, *Li occhi dolenti per la pietà del core*: ‘Poi che li miei occhi ebbero per alquanto tempo lagrimato, e tanto affaticati erano che non poteano disfogare la mia tristizia, pensai di volere disfogarla con alquante parole dolorose; e però propuosi di fare una canzone [...]’ (XXXI. 1 [29.8])⁹⁰. In this *canzone*, tears translate into poetic words (‘e dicerò di lei piangendo’ (12)⁹¹), acting as the thematic-stylistic symbol of this new theme⁹², which continues to treat the effects of love, mixing the *topos* of praise for the beloved with that of the lover’s suffering. The description of this suffering, especially with regard to weeping, avails itself of the resumption of certain Cavalcantian mannerisms: the desire to cry oneself to death (‘ven tristizia e voglia di

⁸⁸ See Chs. II.1 and III.2.

⁸⁹ See the following examples: ‘sì cominciai a *piangere* fra me stesso di tanta miseria. Onde, *sospirando forte, dicea* fra me medesimo [...]’ (XXXIII. 3); ‘*E dicendo io* queste parole con doloroso *singulto di pianto*’ (XXXIII. 11); ‘ancora *lagrimando* in questa desolata cittade, *scrissi* a li principi de la terra’ (XXX. 1); ‘*e dicerò di lei piangendo*’ and ‘*Poscia piangendo, sol nel mio lamento/ chiamo Beatrice, e dico: [...]*’ (*Li occhi dolenti* (11, 13))

⁹⁰ ‘After my eyes had wept for some time and were so wept out that they could no longer relieve my sadness, I thought of trying to relieve it with some sorrowful words; and I decided to compose a *canzone* [...]’.

⁹¹ ‘My words will be a dirge’.

⁹² In the *Vita Nuova Li occhi dolenti* is the song with the highest presence of terms related to the semantic sphere of crying: ‘lagrimar’ (2), ‘sfogar lo dolore’ (4), ‘traendo guai’ (6), ‘piangendo’ (12) [I stanza]; ‘piange’ (32), ‘di pianger doglia’ (37), ‘tristizia’ (38), ‘voglia di sospirare e di morir di pianto’ (39) [III stanza]; ‘sospiri’ (43), ‘piangendo’ and ‘lamento’ (54) [IV stanza]; ‘pianger di doglia’ and ‘sospirar d’angoscia’ (57) [V stanza]; ‘piangendo’ (71), ‘tristizia’ (75) (*congedo*).

sospirare e di morir di pianto' (38-39)⁹³); the continuous alternation of tears with sighs; the isolation and loneliness to which weeping leads ('Poscia piangendo, sol nel mio lamento' (54)⁹⁴; 'Pianger di doglia e sospirar d'angoscia/ mi strugge 'l core ovunque sol mi trovo' (57-58)⁹⁵); the *congedo* that characterizes the song itself as being in tears, invited to share its weeping with the *donne gentili* ('Pietosa mia canzone, or va piangendo'⁹⁶ (71), which seems to reference the Cavalcantian ballad *Perch' i' no spero di tornar giammai*⁹⁷). Also traditional is the direct reproach of those who do not weep ('Chi no la piange, quando ne ragiona, core ha di pietra sì malvagio e vile' (32-33)⁹⁸), recurrent already among the Provençal poets⁹⁹.

Two other funereal poems are characterized by Cavalcantian tones. In *Venite a 'ntender li sospiri miei* (XXXII. 5-6 [21.5-6]), a sonnet commissioned for the death of a deceased loved one by a friend of Beatrice, sighs and tears are indicated as an outlet for pain so severe, it would otherwise cause the poet's own death.

Also, in the central portion of *Era venuta nella mente mia* (XXXIV. 7-11 [23.7-11]), a sonnet for the first anniversary of Beatrice's death, sighs perform a similar function:

Amor, che ne la mente la sentia,
s'era svegliato nel destrutto core,
e diceva a' sospiri: "Andate fore";
per che ciascun dolente si partia.
Piangendo uscivan for de lo mio petto
con una voce che sovente mena
*le lagrime dogliose a li occhi tristi.*¹⁰⁰

Here Dante resumes a form that, as we have seen, is recurrent in Cavalcanti: the sigh that, through weeping, issues from the poet's heart. The process appears extremely similar to that previously described in the Cavalcantian ballad *I' prego voi che di dolor parlate* (17-24), in which tears – products of the poet's mind – create a means by which a 'spirito dolente' may enter through his eyes; similarly, Dante's sighs lead his 'lagrime dogliose' to his 'occhi tristi'. The resumption of the Cavalcantian poetic mode is understandable when the poet turns his attention to the painful effects of love, of which crying is the main expression. At the same time, however, it should be remembered that the subject of these tears has clearly changed from the

⁹³ 'But grief comes and the wish/ to sigh and then to die a death of tears'.

⁹⁴ 'Then I weep alone in my lamenting'.

⁹⁵ 'Weeping and pain and many anguished sighs/ torment my heart each time I am alone'.

⁹⁶ 'Now go your way in tears, sad little song'.

⁹⁷ XXXV. 37-40: 'voce sbigottita e deboletta,/ ch'esci piangendo de lo cor dolente,/ co' l' anima e con questa ballatetta/ va' ragionando della strutta mente'.

⁹⁸ 'Who speaks of her and does not speak in tears/ has a vile heart, insensitive as stone'.

⁹⁹ Ronald Martinez, 'Mourning Beatrice: The Rhetoric of Threnody in the "Vita nuova"', *Italian Issue*, 1, 113 (1998), 1-29 (p. 8, n. 30).

¹⁰⁰ 'Love, who perceived her presence in my mind,/ and was aroused within my ravaged heart, / commanded all my sighs: "Go forth from here!"/ And each one started on his grieving way./ Lamenting, they came pouring from my heart,/ together in a single voice/ (that often brings painful tears to my melancholy eyes).'

first part of the *libello*, and the poet's love has matured as well: it is no longer a question of amorous suffering in vain, but of a salvific pain, as underscored by the tears in the dream of Chapter XXIII. As Paola Nasti has noted, in analyzing Dante's and Cavalcanti's very different treatments of the *Lamentations* of Jeremiah in their respective lyrics, Dante's funeral poems with Cavalcantian overtones are unfettered from the biblical context to which the prose of the *Vita Nuova* refers, 'for on the spiritual path followed by the soul that learns to love correctly, pain helps the *agens* to appreciate the mystery of the resurrection and salvation, and to ascend, in the end, to the third sphere'¹⁰¹.

The transfer of Cavalcantian tears to a new poetic subject, such as the death of the beloved, is the result of poetic reflection on weeping which first began with the episode of the denied salutation, highlighting a further stage in his distancing from the poetics of his first friend: Dante overturns the Cavalcantian tears, originally a symbol of destructive love, by employing them as an instrument of salvation and a means to approach the divine, now shed for the beloved who has ascended to Heaven.

A significant variation on the theme of weeping takes place with the appearance of the *donna gentile* (XXXV [24]), a female figure who shows pity for Dante's state of suffering. Initially ashamed of his own condition, he shuns her gaze and avoids crying in front of her (XXXV. 3 [24.3]: 'io senti' allora cominciare li miei occhi a volere piangere; e però, temendo di non mostrare la mia vile vita, mi partio dinanzi da li occhi di questa gentile'¹⁰²). And yet, the *donna gentile* seems to provoke Dante's tears, almost drawing them from his eyes by force ('io andava per vedere questa pietosa donna, la quale pareva che tirasse le lagrime fuori de li miei occhi per la sua vista' XXXVI. 2 [25.2]¹⁰³); a similar image will be used in the *Commedia* to describe Dante's tears of compassion for the envious in the *Purgatorio*¹⁰⁴, and taken to an extreme in the brutality with which the tears of the violent, immersed in the Phlegethon, are 'munto', 'wringed' from their eyes¹⁰⁵.

The presence of the *donna gentile* thus creates an emotional tension, as emphasized in the sonnet *Color d'amore e di pietà sembianti* (XXXVI. 5 [25.5]) in which the desire for weeping of the poet's eyes (line 11) clashes with the impossibility of revealing these tears to the woman ('ma lagrimar dinanzi a voi non sanno' (14))¹⁰⁶. This suffering is an expression of the psychological conflict which Dante narrates in the five sonnets dedicated to the *donna gentile*, which

¹⁰¹ Paola Nasti, 'Nozze e vedovanza: dinamiche dell'appropriazione biblica in Dante e Cavalcanti', *Tenzone*, 7 (2006), 71-110 (p. 91).

¹⁰² 'I immediately felt the tears start to come. Fearing that I was revealing all the wretchedness in my life, I turned away from her eyes and left that place'.

¹⁰³ 'I used to go to see this compassionate lady whose expression alone was able to bring tears to my eyes'.

¹⁰⁴ *Purg.* XIII. 57: 'per li occhi fui di grave dolor munto'. See Ch. III. 3, 149.

¹⁰⁵ *Inf.* XII. 135-36: 'in eterno munge le lacrime, che col bollor diserra [...]'. See Ch. II. 3, 88-89.

¹⁰⁶ 'In your presence, they cannot weep tears'.

see his faithfulness to the memory of Beatrice tested by the temptation represented by the new female figure.

As Manuele Gragnolati has observed, this phase corresponds to a 'Cavalcantian relapse'¹⁰⁷ in Dante's poetry, which returns once again to the effects of love on the poet and to the suffering and conflict it causes. This resumption of modes and themes typical of Cavalcanti's poetics includes a brief return to the use of tears as an expression of amorous suffering: if, as Leporatti has suggested¹⁰⁸, the use of the term 'pietà' to characterize the *donna gentile* is intended in its technical and poetic sense of 'amenability toward love', the poet's tears, unleashed by the 'pietà' of the kind woman, once again has as its subject the lover's painful condition. There is an allusion to this status in the first sonnet of the series, where the poet states that 'ben è con quella donna quello Amore/ lo qual mi face andar così piangendo' (XXXV. 13-14)¹⁰⁹, with a resumption of the Cavalcantian 'io son un che vo piangendo' (*Rime*, X.1).

Finally, the temptation of the *donna gentile* is so strong as to interfere with the poet's weeping for Beatrice's death: here we come to the *libello*'s second pause from weeping, the first being the phase of laudatory poetry. In this case, the absence is the subject of a true inner battle between the heart of the poet and his eyes, accused and reproached for no longer shedding tears, which is the theme of the sonnet *L'amaro lagrimar che voi faceste* and of its prose commentary (XXXVII. 2 [26.2]):

Onde più volte bestemmiava la vanitade de li occhi miei, e dicea loro nel mio pensiero: "Or voi solavate fare piangere chi vedea la vostra dolorosa condizione, e ora pare che vogliate dimenticarlo per questa donna che vi mira; che non mira voi, se non in quanto le pesa de la gloriosa donna di cui piangere solete; ma quanto potete fate, ché io la vi pur rimembrerò molto spesso, *maladetti occhi, ché mai, se non dopo la morte, non dovrebbero le vostre lagrime avere restate*".¹¹⁰

The theme of reproaching the eyes, considered guilty of vanity and a sensory desire to see the *donna gentile*, is thoroughly Cavalcantian¹¹¹. Specifically, the theme of reproach for eyes that refuse to cry already appears in Folquet de Marseille, who admonishes his own deceiving eyes

¹⁰⁷ Gragnolati, p. 85.

¹⁰⁸ Roberto Leporatti, 'Ipotesi sulla 'Vita Nuova' (con una postilla sul 'Convivio')', in *Studi italiani*, 7 (1992), 5-36.

¹⁰⁹ 'There must dwell with that lady that same Love/ that makes me go about like this in tears.'

¹¹⁰ 'So, many times I would curse the wantonness of my eyes, and in my thoughts I would say to them: "You used to make anyone weep who saw your sad state, and now it seems you want to forget about all that because of this lady who gazes at you, who gazes at you only because of her grief for the glorious lady whom you used to mourn. Do whatever you will, but I shall remind you of her many times, damned eyes, for never, before death comes, should your tears have ceased."

¹¹¹ Cf. Rossi, p. 194.

to weep, in order to atone for their gazing at the beloved ('Ben an mort mi e lor mei huel galiador, per que.s tanh qu'ab els plor, pos ylh so an merit'¹¹²), and who emphasizes the contrast between his weeping heart and his laughing eyes¹¹³. One notes, however, the shift in perspective which Dante employs in the *Vita Nuova*: the lack of tears which Dante laments are not the sobbing tears of painful love, nor those of the atonement for his attraction to the *donna gentile*; rather, they are the salvific tears which the death of Beatrice, analogy of Christ, has revealed as the right path to follow. Dante affirms that his weeping should not stop 'se non dopo la morte' (XXXVII. 2 [26.2]): according to the Bible, in fact, earthly life corresponds to the *tempus flendi* (*Eccl.* 3-4), in which weeping, a manifestation of the recognition of sin, appears to be the only means man has at his disposal to return to the heavenly homeland, where he will obtain true and eternal consolation and joy (*Luke* 6.21: 'blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh'; *Matthew* 5.5: 'blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted'¹¹⁴)¹¹⁵. One observes that in the *Commedia*, the absence of weeping will always be an indication of the persistence of sin: from the inability of the traitors in Cocytus to weep (*Inf.* XXXII. 94-99)¹¹⁶, to Ugolino's lack of tears (*Inf.* XXXIII. 49)¹¹⁷, to Dante himself at the peak Mount Purgatory (*Purg.* XXX. 91)¹¹⁸.

Within this context, the value attributed to the consolation of the *donna gentile* can be better understood through a reading of the second book of the *Convivio*. Here Dante provides an allegorical interpretation of the *donna gentile*, identifying her with Philosophy and naming her as a remedy for the tears shed over the death of Beatrice:

[...] non forse senza divino imperio, io, che cercava di consolar me, trovai non solamente alle mie lagrime rimedio, ma vocabuli d'autori e di scienze e di libri: li quali considerando, giudicava bene che la *filosofia*, che era donna di questi autori, di queste scienze e di questi libri, fosse somma cosa.¹¹⁹
(*Cv.* II. XII. 5)

The consolation offered by Philosophy can only refer to the role which Philosophy plays in the *Consolatione* of Boethius; Luca Lombardo points out that her appearance is characterized, as

¹¹² *Ben an mort mi e lor mei huel galiador* (1-4). Translation mine: 'They have indeed killed me and themselves, my deceiving weep with them, for they have deserved it.'

¹¹³ *Amors, merce* (19): 'que l cor plora quan vezes los hueilhs rire'.

¹¹⁴ The biblical passages in English translation are cited from *King James Bible*, <<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org>>, while the Latin passages are cited from *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam*, ed. by Alberto Colunga and Laurentio Turrado (Madrid: Editorial Catolica, 1977).

¹¹⁵ Cf. Ch. III. 1.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Ch. II. 3, 77 and ff.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 93 and ff.

¹¹⁸ Ch. III. 3.

¹¹⁹ '[...] perhaps not without divine ordinance, so I who sought to console myself found not only a remedy for my tears but also the words of authors, sciences, and books. Pondering these, I quickly determined that Philosophy, who was the lady of these authors, sciences, and books, was a great thing'.

in the *Vita Nuova*, by the use of a ‘tearful lexicon’¹²⁰ that connotes the painful state of the protagonist, for which Philosophy provides a remedy. Wisdom dries Dante’s tears in the *Convivio*, appearing victorious over the memory of a glorious and now blessed Beatrice: so the poet states in the canzone that introduces the second book of the treatise, *Voi ch’intendendo il terzo ciel movete*. Here the poet makes a final reference to the tears his soul still weeps for Beatrice (‘l’anima piange, sì ancor len dole’¹²¹(30)), a lamentation which the prose commentary explains in these terms:

[...] che non dee l'uomo, per maggiore amico, dimenticare li servigi ricevuti dal minore: ma se pur seguire si conviene l'uno e lasciare l'altro, lo migliore è da seguire, *con alcuna onesta lamentanza l'altro abandonando, nella quale dà cagione, a quello che segue, di più amore.*¹²²
(Cv. II. XV. 6)

The tears shed upon Beatrice’s death here are reduced to an ‘onesta lamentanza’ in recognition of the beloved’s value, now abandoned for the *donna gentile*, the object for greater love.

On the contrary, in the *Vita Nuova*, the consolation of the *donna gentile* is indicated as a temporary crisis that is resolved with the return of tears for Beatrice¹²³. In fact, following the vision of glorious Beatrice, her memory returns to Dante’s mind, causing pain and tears:

Allora cominciai a pensare di lei; e ricordandomi di lei secondo l'ordine del tempo passato, lo mio cuore cominciò dolorosamente a pentere de lo desiderio a cui sì vilmente s'avea lasciato possedere alquanti die contra la costanzia de la ragione: e discacciato questo cotale malvagio desiderio, sì si rivolsero tutti li miei pensamenti a la loro gentilissima Beatrice. E dico che d'allora innanzi cominciai a pensare di lei sì con tutto lo vergognoso cuore, che li sospiri manifestavano ciò molte volte; [...] Per questo raccendimento de' sospiri si raccese lo sollenato lagrimare in guisa che li miei occhi pareano due cose che disiderassero pur di piangere; e spesso avvenia che per lo lungo continuare del pianto, dintorno loro si faceva uno colore purpureo, lo quale suole apparire per alcuno martirio che altri riceva.¹²⁴
(XXXIX. 2-4 [28.2-4])

One notes that the tears Dante sheds here are extremely similar to those he will shed in the Earthly Paradise of *Purgatorio* XXX, when the poet must confront the reason he strayed away from Beatrice and God, acknowledging and repenting his sins through a tear-soaked confession. The episode will be analyzed in detail in Chapter III; for the moment, suffice it to note that in

¹²⁰ Luca Lombardo, ‘In margine all’edizione Carrai della Vita Nova’, *Lettere Italiane*, 2 (2011), 253-272 (p. 258).

¹²¹ ‘The soul cries out, for this still grieves her’.

¹²² ‘[...] that a man should not, for the sake of a greater friend, forget the services rendered by a lesser one; but if indeed he must follow the one and forsake the other, he should follow the better one, abandoning the other with some honest expression of regret, whereby he gives to the one he follows cause for greater love’.

¹²³ On the hypotheses about the contradiction between the two works see Peter Dronke, *Dante’s second love. The Originality and the Contexts of the Convivio* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 12.

¹²⁴ ‘Then I began to think about her and, remembering her in the sequence of past times, my heart began to repent painfully of the desire by which it so basely let itself be possessed for some time, contrary to the constancy of reason; and once I had discarded this evil desire, all my thoughts turned back to their most gracious Beatrice. Let me say that, from then on, I began to think of her so deeply with my whole shameful heart that my many sighs were proof of it [...] By this rekindling of sighs, the tears which had subsided began to flow again, so that my eyes seemed to be two objects whose only desire was to weep. And often it occurred that after continuous weeping a purplish color encircled my eyes, as often appears in one who has endured affliction’.

both cases, Dante sheds his tears in much the same way: initially, his total absence of tears ('così fui senza lagrime e sospiri' *Purg.* XXX. 91¹²⁵) combines with an oppressive feeling of shame for his own sin ('tanta vergogna mi gravò la fronte' *Purg.* XXX. 78¹²⁶), which then leads to sighs and tears ('spirito e acqua fessi, e con angoscia/ de la bocca e de li occhi uscì del petto' *Purg.* XXX. 98-99¹²⁷).

Dante's weeping in the *Vita Nuova* therefore appears to be a foreshadowing of those tears shed in the Earthly Paradise. It is, in fact, the first episode of penitential weeping in the *libello*: indeed, these tears stem from the pain caused by the repentance of the earthly and erroneous desire represented by the *donna gentile* ('lo mio cuore cominciò dolorosamente a pentere'); a torment identifiable in Christian terms with the compunction of the heart, or the painful contrition which the sinner experiences through the acknowledgement of his sins in the face of divine love¹²⁸. In this regard, commenting the episode, Enrico Fenzi recalls the tear shed for repentance by Saint Peter after having disavowed Jesus (*Luke* 22. 55-60)¹²⁹.

This weeping also causes marks on the poet's face: purplish circles around the eyes, a 'corona di martiri', a martyrdom's red crown (*Lasso! per forza di molti sospiri*, XXXI. 9 [28.9]), reminiscent of the appearance of the 'rosata' around the eyes of Giacomo da Lentini, a sign of copious weeping in the lover afflicted with the torments of love¹³⁰. In particular, these circles constitute a visible sign of his renewed weeping over the death of Beatrice: they are the same that had previously upset the *donna gentile* when she first caught sight of the afflicted Dante ('mosse de li occhi di quella pietosa/ che si turbava de' nostri martiri', XXXVIII.10 [27.10]¹³¹). It should also be noted that the author will use the term 'martirio' in *Purgatorio* to indicate the sufferings which penitents endure¹³²: the 'corona di martiri' therefore could be interpreted as the sign of penance, of the atonement that follows the contrition and repentance attained through weeping¹³³.

¹²⁵ 'So was I with neither tears nor sighs'.

¹²⁶ 'Such shame weighed on my brow'.

¹²⁷ '[...] was turned to breath and water and in anguish/ flowed from my breast through eyes and mouth'.

¹²⁸ See Ch. III. 2 and the following contribution: Biagio Amata, 'La compunzione del cuore e le lacrime in alcuni autori cristiani antichi', in *Lachrymae. Mito e metafora del pianto nel Medioevo, Atti delle III Giornate Internazionali Interdisciplinari di Studio sul Medioevo (Siena, 2-4 Novembre 2006)*, ed. by Francesco Mosetti Casaretto (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2011), pp.15-42.

¹²⁹ Enrico Fenzi, "Costanza de la ragione" e "malvagio desiderio" (V.N. XXXIX 2): Dante e la donna pietosa', in *"La gloriosa donna de la mente". A commentary on the Vita Nuova* (Firenze: Olschki, 1994), pp. 195-224 (p. 207).

¹³⁰ *Dal core mi vene* (1-8): 'Dal core mi vene/ che gli occhi mi tene – rosata;/ spesso m'adivene/ che la ciera ò bene – bagnata,/ quando mi sovene/ di mia bona spene, – c'ho data'.

¹³¹ '[...] have come from that compassionate one's eyes / who was distressed about our martyrdom'.

¹³² See the following occurrences in *Purgatorio*: 'non mi lascerebbe ire a' martiri / l'angel di Dio' (IV. 128); 'm'ha condotto / a ber lo dolce assenzo d'i martiri/ la Nella mia' (XXIII. 86); 'Non attender la forma del martire' (X. 109).

¹³³ Cf. Ch. III. 2.

Through a representation of weeping as a penitential tool that sanctions the return to Beatrice, the reappropriation of the Cavalcantian concept of weeping reaches its highest expression, resulting in a definitive departure from the poetics of his 'first friend'. The vain, fruitless tears, appearing in the first part of the *libello* as an expression of the negative conception of love as death and destruction, are in the end transformed into a salvific tool because they are finally directed towards the appropriate subject: Beatrice 'gloriosa', whose mediation is necessary in order to reach God.

Dante moves beyond Cavalcantian poetics with the victory of tears over the temptation represented by the consolation of the *donna gentile*, or by knowledge: through tears, he is able to recognize the limits of human knowledge, that same knowledge (the 'lofty genius' of *Inf.* X. 59) will not be enough for Guido Cavalcanti to undertake the same otherworldly journey as his friend. Already in the *Vita Nuova*, Dante contrasts Cavalcanti's 'disdegno', 'scorn' (X. 63), 'a form of unruly desire for knowledge'¹³⁴ which does not respect the limits imposed by the divine, with his awareness of the limitations of consolation offered by human knowledge and the need for grace and divine assistance to draw from the only true consolation in God¹³⁵. Dante, returning to his tears, therefore recognizes the need for Beatrice's love which, in the *Commedia*, will finally enable him to achieve the contemplation of God.

¹³⁴ Angelo Mangini, 'Pride and Friendship: Cavalcanti in the *Commedia*', in *Dante and the Seven Deadly Sins*, ed. by John Barnes and Daragh O'Connell (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2017), pp. 47-72 (p. 71).

¹³⁵ In *Inferno* X, Dante will assert: 'Da me stesso non vegno' (X. 61).

I. 2 Love's Tears

In Chapter XXV of the *Vita Nuova*, Dante defines the figure of Love as 'uno accidente in sostanza' (XXV. 1 [16.1])¹³⁶, or 'a mode of the substance'¹³⁷, incorporeal, but represented as a personification through the device of prosopopoeia and, therefore, endowed with a body¹³⁸. In fact, Love is credited with the ability to laugh¹³⁹, although he is never explicitly depicted doing so¹⁴⁰; rather, Love cries several times over the course of the *libello*, accompanying or responding variously to tears shed by the poet¹⁴¹.

In particular, Love's tears characterize the two *visiones in somniis* which Dante experiences in the *libello*, the obscure meaning of which has been and continues to be the subject of critical discussion. These visions take place respectively after Dante has received Beatrice's greeting (III. 7 [1.18]) and after she denies him this greeting (XII. 4 [5.11])¹⁴². Since Love's tears are a common element between the two dreams, understanding their function could provide a useful tool for their interpretation.

Within the first vision, Love, in the guise of 'uno signore di pauroso aspetto' (III. 3 [1.14])¹⁴³, after having nourished Beatrice with Dante's heart, shifts from his initially cheerful aspect into one of tears and, weeping, rises to heaven with the lady: 'Appresso ciò poco dimorava che la sua letizia si convertia in amarissimo pianto; e così piangendo, si ricogliea questa donna ne le sue braccia, e con essa mi pareva che si ne gisse verso lo cielo' (III. 7 [1.18])¹⁴⁴. Dante reworks the content of the vision in the following sonnet, *A ciascun'alma presa e gentil core*, in which the change in Love's features is portrayed once again:

[...]
Allegro mi sembrava Amor tenendo
meo core in mano, e ne le braccia avea
madonna involta in un drappo dormendo.
Poi la svegliava, e d'esto core ardendo
lei paventosa umilmente pascea:

¹³⁶ 'An accident in a substance'.

¹³⁷ Rossi, p. 134.

¹³⁸ *Vn.* XXV. 2 [16.2]: 'E che io dica di lui come se fosse corpo [...]'.
¹³⁹ *Ibidem*: 'Dico anche di lui che ridea e anche che parlava; [...]'.
¹⁴⁰ In the first *visio in somniis*, Amore seemed 'filled with joy' to Dante (III. 3 [1.14]) and 'joyous' (III. 12 [1.23]), but actually he is never explicitly credited with a laughter or a smile.
¹⁴¹ Amore weeps seven times: III. 7 [1.18]; VIII. 5 [3.5] XII. 4 [5.11]; XXII. 9 [13.9]; XXIII. 22 [14.22]; XXXIV. 8 [23.8]; XLI. 10 [30-10].
¹⁴² As Ignazio Baldelli has noted in 'Visione, immaginazione e fantasia nella Vita Nova', in *I sogni nel Medioevo, Seminario internazionale [Roma, 2-4 ottobre 1983]*, ed. by Tullio Gregory (Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985), pp. 1-10 (p. 5).
¹⁴³ 'A lordly man, frightening to behold'.
¹⁴⁴ 'A short time after this, his happiness gave way to bitterest weeping, and weeping he folded his arms around this lady, and together they seemed to ascend toward the heavens'.

*appresso gir lo ne vedea piangendo.*¹⁴⁵
(9-14)

As is well known, Dante addresses his sonnet to those faithful to love – that is, the vernacular poets – so that they may interpret his vision. It is interesting to observe the poets' reactions to Love's tears: if, according to Terino da Castelfiorentino (or Cino da Pistoia¹⁴⁶), Love's weeping is provoked by the amorous suffering of the lady¹⁴⁷, Cavalcanti claims that he weeps simply because the dream is over¹⁴⁸. The difficulty in interpreting Love's tears derives, at least for the poets of the time, from the representation of Love weeping in a new and different context compared to previous ones. In fact, both in the poems of Cino da Pistoia and, above all, in those of Guido Cavalcanti, weeping is always the means through which Love shares the pain and suffering of the lovestruck poet: Love weeps because he feels pity for the inner death of the poet¹⁴⁹, for his sore eyes¹⁵⁰ and for his suffering soul, whose weeping he shares in a demonstration of sighs¹⁵¹. In general, Love's tears in love poetry, like the weeping of the poet, express the suffering of amorous torment, its destructive component.

In the first vision of the *Vita Nuova*, Love's weeping does not appear to be associated with Dante's tears of suffering, and its meaning is obscure. The interpretation of the *visio in somniis* as a premonition of Beatrice's death has led scholars, beginning with Charles Singleton, to attribute the tears of Love to this mournful event¹⁵². On the one hand, it is certain that Love's weeping in the *Vita Nuova* is always, and in different ways, connected to Beatrice's death. Love weeps, in fact, both on the occasion of the death of Beatrice's friend ('Piangete, amanti, poi che piange Amore', VIII. 5 [3.5]¹⁵³) and that of her father ('Vedeste voi nostra donna gentile/ bagnan nel viso suo di pianto Amore?' XXII. 9 [13.9]¹⁵⁴), two events that foreshadow Beatrice's death. In addition, Love's weeping is explicitly attributed to the lady's death on three occasions: before her death, in the premonitory *Donna pietosa e di novella etate*, where the thought of Beatrice's

¹⁴⁵ 'Joyous, Love seemed to me, holding my heart/ within his hand, and in his arms he had / my lady, loosely wrapped in folds, asleep./ He woke her then, and gently fed to her / the burning heart; she ate it, terrified. / And then I saw him disappear in tears'.

¹⁴⁶ On the discussion on the authorship see Paolo Rigo, 'Il sonetto conteso: la storia di Naturalmente chere ogne amadore tra testo, contesto e finzione', *Cuadernos de Filologia Italiana*, 14 (2017), 115-130.

¹⁴⁷ *Naturalmente chere* (12-14): '[...] e ll' amorosa pena conoscendo / che ne la donna conceputo avea / per pietà di lei pianse partendo'.

¹⁴⁸ *Vedeste, al mio parere* (12-14): 'Quando v' apparve che se 'n gia dolendo, / fu 'l dolce sonno ch' allor si compiea, / chè 'l su' contrario lo venia vincendo'.

¹⁴⁹ Cavalcanti *Poi che di doglia cor conven ch' i' porti* (7-8): 'e se non fosse che 'l morir m'è gioco/ fare' ne di pietà pianger amore'.

¹⁵⁰ Cavalcanti, *Perchè non furo a me gli occhi dispeni* (9- 11): 'Tu gli ài fasciati sì, che venne Amore/ a pianger sovr'a lor pietosamente/ tanto, che 'l sente una profonda voce'.

¹⁵¹ Cino da Pistoia, *L'anima mia che va sì pellegrina* (9-10): 'Amor che 'l pianto suo doglioso vede, / parlando in un sospiro a lei si gira'.

¹⁵² Singleton, p. 13 ff.

¹⁵³ 'If Love himself weep, shall not lovers weep, [...]?'.

¹⁵⁴ 'Is it our gracious lady you have seen/ bathing with tears Love's image in her face?'.

transience provokes Love's tears in the poet's heart ('Mentr'io pensava la mia frale vita,/ e vedea 'l suo durar com'è leggiro,/ piansemi Amor nel core, ove dimora; [...]', XXIII. 22 (29-3) [14.22]¹⁵⁵); after the event occurred, in the memorial for the anniversary of her death in *Era venuta ne la mente mia* ('quella donna gentil cui piange Amore', XXXIV. 8 (2) [23.8]¹⁵⁶); and in the concluding sonnet of the *libello*, *Oltre la spera che più larga gira*, in which Love's weeping enables the poet's sighs to reach heaven, and thus the vision of Beatrice *gloriosa* (XLI. 10 [30-10]). In the latter case in particular, Love's tears, shed once again for the death of Beatrice after the temptation of the *donna gentile*, pushes the poet upwards to the Empyrean, in an ecstatic experience similar to that of St. Paul in the Second Letter to the Corinthians (12:2-4)¹⁵⁷:

Oltre la spera che più larga gira
 passa 'l sospiro ch'esce del mio core:
 intelligenza nova, *che l'Amore*
*piangendo mette in lui, pur su lo tira.*¹⁵⁸
 (1-4)

Love's weeping introduces into the poet's sigh a new intelligence, or 'a new capacity of understanding'¹⁵⁹, thus showing him the correct and just weeping that can lift man up toward God: tears shed for the death of the beloved, by now an obvious *figura Christi*. Love's final tears therefore resemble the first: Stefano Carrai had already realized that the 'piangendo' 'perhaps not by chance recalls the words and the final image of the first sonnet'¹⁶⁰; in both episodes, in fact, Love's weeping follows an upward trajectory, the ascent to heaven, the first time in the company of Beatrice, the second aiming toward the vision of the blessed lady.

In the case of the first *visio in somniis*, it is possible that Love's tears, accompanying Beatrice's ascent to heaven, constitute the prefiguration of Dante's weeping upon her death, anticipating her assumption into heaven. At the same time, the detail of the change from joy to tears could be the indicator of a further premonition, that of Dante losing his way after Beatrice's death. Igor Candido, demonstrating the strong influence of the *Apocalypse* on the first vision of the *libello*, has proposed that Love turns joy into sadness 'due to the possibility that Dante's soul could be lost as a result of the fall', allegorized by the *donna gentile* leading him astray¹⁶¹.

¹⁵⁵ 'While I was brooding on my languid life,/ and sensed how fleeting is our little day,/ Love wept within my heart, which is his home; [...]'.

¹⁵⁶ 'The gracious image of the lady for whom Love still sheds tears'.

¹⁵⁷ On Dante and Saint Paul and the influence of the Second Letter to the Corinthians on the *Vita Nuova* see Charles H. Grandgent, 'Dante and St. Paul', *Romania*, 31.121 (1902), 14-27 and Robert Hollander, "'Vita Nuova": Dante's Perceptions of Beatrice', *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, 92 (1974), 1-18.

¹⁵⁸ 'Beyond the sphere that makes the widest round,/ passes the sigh arisen from my heart;/ a new intelligence that Love in tears/ endowed it with is urging it on high.'

¹⁵⁹ Rossi, p. 217, n. 30.10.

¹⁶⁰ Carrai, n. 30.10.

¹⁶¹ Igor Candido, 'Per una rilettura della Vita Nova: la prima visio in somniis', *Lettere Italiane*, 71 (2019), 21-50 (p. 41).

Ronald Martinez, in view of the *Lamentationes* of Jeremiah, has also interpreted the change in Love's mood in terms of Dante's eschatological path, in which it would represent 'the first, negative step of a dialectic that Dante's hope would have complete itself positively in the patria, where tears are changed to laughter, woe into joy'¹⁶².

In this regard, it will be interesting to note that the change from joy to weeping is an element linked to the reproach of the sinner within the *Visio Pauli*, an apocryphal text that recounts the *raptus* of Saint Paul stemming from a reference in the Second Letter to the Corinthians, which Dante himself identified as one of the principal models for the *Commedia*. In the three long Latin redactions of the *Visio*¹⁶³ it is told how Paul, having arrived at the gates of Paradise, meets the righteous Enoch and then Elijah, who welcome him with smiling faces and then suddenly begin to cry:

Et cum ingressus fuisset interiora portae paradisi, exiuit in occursum mihi homo senior cuius uultus fulgebat sicut sol; et complexus est me et dixit: 'Aue, Paule, dilectissime Deo'. Et osculatus est me hilari uultu. Et postea coepit plorare, et dixi ei: 'Frater, quare ploras?' Et iterum suspirans et plorans dixit: 'Noceatur enim ab hominibus et contristant nos valde; multa sunt enim bona quae praeparauit Deus hominibus et magna repromissio est eius, sed multi non percipiunt eam'. Et interrogauit angelum et dixi: 'Quis est hic, domine?' Et dixit mihi: 'Hic est Enoch, scriba iustitiae'.

Et ingressus sum in interiora loci illius, et statim vidi Helyam, et ueniens salutauit me hilari uultu et gaudens. Cumque uidisset, auertit se et fleuit, et dixi mihi: 'Paule, utinam uel tu recipias <merces> laborum tuorum quos pateris in genere humano; quoniam quidem uidi magna et multa bona quae praeparauit Deus omnibus iustis, et magnae repromissiones sunt Dei, sed plures non percipiunt eas; et per multos latere uix unus et unus ingreditur in ea loca'¹⁶⁴.

Enoch is the prophet who, as narrated in the homonymous apocryphal text of Jewish origin, ascends to heaven while still alive and is named *scriba Dei*, the heavenly scribe destined to receive and transcribe eschatological visions and truths. In this passage, first Enoch and then

¹⁶² Martinez, p. 29.

¹⁶³ From the third century onward, the text was the subject of numerous translations and subsequent reworkings. We have three long Latin versions (L1, L2 and L3) and eight short Latin redactions. The versions are collected by Theodore Silverstein and Anthony Hilhorst in the following volumes: *Visio Sancti Pauli. The History of the Apocalypse in Latin together with nine Texts* (London: Christophers, 1935) and *Apocalypse of Paul. A New Critical Edition of Three Long Latin Versions* (Genève: Cramer, 1997). See also Maria P. Ciccarese, *Visioni dell'Aldilà in Occidente. Fonti modelli testi*, (EDB, 1987), p. 41-57.

¹⁶⁴ 'When I had entered the gate of paradise an old man came there to meet me. His face shone like the sun, and he embraced me and said, "Hail, Paul, dearly beloved of God." He kissed me with a joyful face, but he wept, and I said to him, "Brother, why do you weep?" Sighing again and weeping he said, "Because we are vexed by humanity, and they grieve us sorely, because many are the good things that the Lord has prepared, and great are his promises, but many do not receive them." I asked the angel and said, "Who is this, lord?" And he said to me, "This is Enoch, the scribe of righteousness." I entered that place, and straightway I saw Elias; and he came and saluted me with gladness and joy. When he had seen me he turned away and wept and said to me, "Paul, may you receive the reward for the labor that you have done among humanity. As for me, I have seen great and various good things that God has prepared for all the righteous, and great are the promises of God, but the greater part do not receive them; yet one and another hardly enters these places even with much toil.' (*Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante*, ed. by Eileen Gardiner (New York: Italica Press, 2019), pp. 36-37).

In the third long Latin version of the *Visio* (L3 Escorial) it is Salomon that first cries and then smiles (20): 'Et obsculatus me plorans. Et dixi ego: Quare ploras, pater? [...] ingressus autem interiora loci illius vidi Salomonem sapientem et beniens salutavit me ylaris et gaudens. Cumque cepisset loqui, auertit ad se, fleuit et dixit mihi [...]'.

Elijah explain to Paul that they weep because of men who sin and do not understand the many great rewards which God has promised them.

Analogously, Love's shift from smile to tears appears as the anticipatory sign of Dante going astray, a warning about the poet's weakness for the temptations of the *donna gentile*: Love, by converting his joy into tears, announces the future separation of Dante from his lord, a divine being who demands an exclusive relationship ('Ego dominus tuus')¹⁶⁵, and from Beatrice, the allegory of that divine *caritas* which Dante will abandon in order to follow – as he will confess in *Purgatorio* – 'false images of good' (*Purg.* XXX. 131). Love, in fact, knows and foresees the events of the book of Dante's memory, of which the poet, much like Enoch, will become the scribe, reading and interpreting the meaning of his own life¹⁶⁶.

It is possible, therefore, to identify two phases in Love's weeping: its onset ('la sua letizia si convertia in amarissimo pianto'), a manifestation of the righteous one who weeps for the sinner Dante; his continued ascent to heaven with Beatrice ('e così piangendo [...] si ne gisse verso lo cielo') is an indication of the path to salvation, which can only be achieved through redemptive weeping for the death of Beatrice and, therefore, through the recognition of Dante's own sins after he has gone astray.

Likewise, in the second *visio in somniis*, Love's tears could provide a salvific and corrective function with respect to Dante's own tears. Weeping over Beatrice's denied salutation, Dante implores Love for his divine assistance; the latter appears to him sighing, 'dressed in the whitest of garments', and then begins to weep:

Allora mi pareva che io lo conoscesse, però che mi chiamava così come assai fiato ne li miei sonni m'avea già chiamato: e riguardandolo, *parvemi che piangesse pietosamente*, e pareva che attendesse da me alcuna parola; ond'io, assicurandomi, cominciai a parlare così con esso: "Signore de la nobiltade, *e perché piangi tu?*". E quelli mi dicea queste parole: "*Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simili modo se habent circumferentie partes; tu autem non sic*".¹⁶⁷

(XII. 4 [5.11])

Love indicates the reason for these tears in a Latin phrase of obscure meaning, the interpretation of which remains controversial. Some scholars have identified the reason for these tears as Beatrice's denied greeting, the same that motivates Dante's own tears¹⁶⁸, while others believe

¹⁶⁵ Candido, p. 42.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. *Vn.* I. 1 [1.1]: 'In quella parte del libro de la mia memoria dinanzi a la quale poco si potrebbe leggere, si trova una rubrica la quale dice: Incipit vita nova. Sotto la quale rubrica io trovo scritte le parole le quali è mio intendimento d'assemblare in questo libello; e se non tutte, almeno la loro sentenza'.

¹⁶⁷ 'Then I seemed to know who he was, for he was calling me in the same way that many times before in my sleep he had called me; and as I watched him, it seemed to me that he was weeping piteously, and he seemed to be waiting for me to say something to him; so, gathering courage, I began to address him, saying: "Lord of all virtues, why do you weep?" And he said these words to me: Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simili modo se habent circumferentie partes; tu autem non sic'.

¹⁶⁸ James E. Shaw, "'Ego tanquam centrum circuli etc.'" *Vita nuova, XII*, *Italica*, 24, 2 (1947), 113-18 (p. 116).

instead that it is, as in the first vision, the premonition of Beatrice's future death that provokes Love's tears. In the latter case, the image in the circle's center where Love – not Dante – claims to be, has been interpreted both as a symbol of Love's omniscient awareness of future events¹⁶⁹, and of his self-sufficiency¹⁷⁰.

Still others, including De Robertis and Candido, have variously linked this weeping to Dante's temporary distancing from his love for Beatrice: if the first analysis interprets it as a reproach to Dante for not having understood the centrality of his love for Beatrice¹⁷¹, the second, using the source of the *Consolatione* of Boethius, explains how Dante's distance from the center of the circle can act as a symbol of his distance from the providential order leading to his exposure to fate and, thus, to the temptations of false earthly goods¹⁷².

I believe that it is important to note that Love's weeping is presented as the consequence of Dante's tearful request for help due to the denial of Beatrice's salutation: in fact, after imploring the lady for mercy, the poet invokes Love (“‘Amore, aiuta lo tuo fedele’”XII. 2 [5-9]¹⁷³) and then falls asleep ‘come un pargoletto battuto lagrimando’¹⁷⁴.

Here Dante's tears, for the first time, take the form of prayer to a divine being, through the use of penitential rhetoric. Indeed, in the Middle Ages, especially in the monastic sphere, tears were considered a fundamental element of prayer which, according to the *Rule* of St. Benedict, is more likely to be heard by God if accompanied by tears, a sign of the true and sincere repentance of sins¹⁷⁵. Troubadour poetry offered, once again, a precedent for the reworking of the theme of penitential tears into love poetry: as seen above, tears become a rhetorical tool of persuasion to obtain the favor of the beloved, and therefore used in prayers addressed to the lady, conceived as a miraculous and superior being¹⁷⁶.

In particular, Dante's weeping, as already noted by Guglielmo Gorni, recalls that of David in Psalm 6:7, who bathes his bed with tears while praying to God (‘lacrimis meis stratum meum rigabo’¹⁷⁷). One notes that even David's case represents an invocation of divine aid through the faithful believer's weeping, as is emphasized at the end of the psalm: ‘[...] exaudivit Dominus

¹⁶⁹ The concept is underlined in Singleton, p. 17. However, the concept of the Deity of Love has been first indicated by Friedrich Beck, ‘Die ratselhaften Worte in Dantes Vita nova’, in *Festschrift für Carl Appel, Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, 47 (1927), 1-27.

¹⁷⁰ Roberto Rea, ‘Ego tanquam centrum circuli’ (VN 5,11)’, in *La lirica romanza del Medioevo. Storia, tradizioni, interpretazioni, Atti del VI convegno triennale della Società Italiana di Filologia Romanza*, ed. by Furio Brugnolo and Francesca Gambino (Padova: Unipress, 2009), pp. 739-56.

¹⁷¹ De Robertis, pp. 73-74.

¹⁷² Candido, pp. 43-44.

¹⁷³ ‘Love, help your faithful one’,

¹⁷⁴ ‘Like a little boy crying from a spanking’.

¹⁷⁵ Amata, p. 26. On the relationship between tears and prayers see Ch. III.3.

¹⁷⁶ Léglu, p. 499.

¹⁷⁷ ‘I drench my couch with tears’.

vocem fletus mei./ Exaudivit Dominus deprecationem meam;/ Dominus orationem meam suscepit' (9-10)¹⁷⁸. Dante's tearful request for help is also heard: it is followed by the intervention of Love, who in turn appears weeping.

One can therefore observe that this situation in the *Vita Nuova* is similar to that of Dante presented at the beginning of the *Commedia*: as we will see, even in the latter case, Dante's initial tears and request for help will correspond to Beatrice's tears of salvation, necessary for the start of Dante's penitential journey into the afterlife¹⁷⁹. In the case of *Vita Nuova*, Love's weeping could, therefore, acquire a similar salvific value. Just as in the *Inferno*, here Dante is undergoing a poetic and existential crisis, provoked by the denial of Beatrice's salutation, which he believes to contain the uttermost bliss. To understand the salvific intention of Love's weeping, yet another episode may provide a useful tool: this time it is Dante's weeping in *Purg. XXX*, where the poet again appears to be in crisis because he is abandoned by Virgil, and his tearful attitude appears just as childish as it does in the *Vita Nuova*. If, in *Vn. XII. 2* [5.9], the poet, before Love's intervention, falls asleep 'come un pargoletto battuto lagrimando', in *Purgatorio*, just before his guide departs, Dante turns to Virgil 'col respiro col qual il fantolin corre a la mamma/ quando ha paura o quando elli è afflitto' (*XXX. 44-45*)¹⁸⁰. This behavior leads to Beatrice's reproach, indicating to Dante the new and proper reason why he must weep from now on: out of repentance for having gone astray ('ché pianger ti conven per altra spada', *XXX. 57*)¹⁸¹. In both cases, Dante's weeping is born out of loss: on the one hand, that of his guide Virgil, representative of that human wisdom which must now be abandoned and replaced by the new guide of Theology; on the other hand, Beatrice's greeting, a poetic subject that must disappear in order to leave room for the unconditional love of laudatory poetics. Dante's weeping in the two episodes does not have an ascensional function, which would lead to God; nor does it produce a progressive transformation: it is identified, rather, with the vain weeping of Cavalcantian love, shed out of passion or earthly affection that, as we have seen, must be abandoned both on the existential level, during the return of the soul to God, and on the poetic one, where it will be replaced first by the joy of the poetics of praise and then by tears for the death of Beatrice.

Love's weeping therefore assumes a function similar to that of Beatrice in *Purg. XXX*: weeping represents both a reproach and the indication of a new direction, as Dante's question ('e perché piangi tu?' *Vn. XII. 4*) makes explicit, suggesting that the reason for these tears is quite different from the one that inspired his own. Unlike Dante, Love cries because he is at the center of the circle: as Charles Singleton has explained, Love is a god, and therefore from the center of the

¹⁷⁸ '[...] for the Lord has heard my weeping./ The Lord has heard my cry for mercy;/ the Lord accepts my prayer'.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Ch. II.1.

¹⁸⁰ 'A child has running to his mamma/ when he is afraid or in distress'.

¹⁸¹ 'There is another sword to make you weep'.

circle ‘he is able to see all points on the line of time, past, present and future, as if they were points on the circumference of a circle and hence all equidistant from him’¹⁸²; he can see the future event of Beatrice’s death, still hidden from Dante. Moreover, the center of the circle to which Love alludes could be identified with the truth: in *Par.* XIII. 49-51, Thomas Aquinas clarifies one of Dante’s theological questions by arguing that the poet’s opinion and his discourse do not contradict each other; they are arranged within the truth as the center in a circle (‘nel vero farsi come centro in tondo’¹⁸³): they both are ‘perfectly true’¹⁸⁴. The idea is that of the perfection of the circle that results from the relationship between center and circumference, but also of the metaphor of the ‘true center’, a Neoplatonic *topos* which, as Marco Ariani has argued, represents the effort of Dante’s imagination in its progressive journey toward the truth, as represented by the center of the circle¹⁸⁵.

Love’s weeping, at the center of the circle, could therefore express the knowledge of truth: ‘knowledge befits those who weep’, as St. Augustine affirms¹⁸⁶. If Dante will discover over the course of the *Vita Nuova* that, in order to ascend to God, his weeping must be focused on the death of Beatrice as *figura Christi*, it follows that Love’s weeping, like all the other examples in the *libello*, will also focus on the death of Beatrice and the consequent revelation of her Christological value: a truth hidden, for the moment, from Dante¹⁸⁷. The Cavalcantian tears over the withheld greeting, which distance Dante from the center of the circle because they are shed for a vain and earthly desire, are therefore corrected through the example of Love’s salvific weeping, which shows Dante the path of divine truth in weeping for the death of Beatrice.

For the time being, Dante cannot understand Love’s directions, but, as we have seen previously, this vision will guide him to the crisis and to the reflection on the poetics of tears from which the poetry of praise will spring and, in turn, his mourning for the death of Beatrice.

It is only in the last sonnet (*Oltre la spera* (XLI [30])), which heralds the ‘miraculous vision’ at the conclusion of the poem, that the subject of Love’s weeping finally coincides with that of the poet’s tears: after the temptation of the *donna gentile*, Dante reorients the focus of his tears onto the death of Beatrice, but it is thanks to Love’s weeping, which ‘tira su’, lifts up the poet’s sigh, that he will be able to witness the lady’s glorious vision in the Empyrean. Similarly, at the beginning of the *Inferno*, Dante’s weeping will be necessary for the start of in his journey of redemption, but Beatrice’s tears will be needed to intercede for his salvation (*Inf.* II. 116)¹⁸⁸. In

¹⁸² Singleton, p. 17.

¹⁸³ ‘Meet at the truth as in the center of a circle’.

¹⁸⁴ Daniele Mattalia (Milano: A. Rizzoli, 1960).

¹⁸⁵ Marco Ariani, *Lux inaccessibilis. Metafore e teologia della luce nel ‘Paradiso’ di Dante* (Roma: Aracne Editrice, 2010), p. 228.

¹⁸⁶ *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, I. 4. 11: ‘scientia congruit lugentibus’.

¹⁸⁷ *Vn.* XII. 5 [5. 11]: ‘Non dimandare più che utile ti sia’.

¹⁸⁸ See Rachel Jacoff, ‘Le lacrime di Beatrice: Inferno II’, *Studi americani su Dante* (1989), pp. 23-36.

the *Vita Nuova*, Love's weeping therefore becomes the means by which the poet can ascend to God, who for the time can be known only by means of analogy: that is, through the mediation of the beloved, Beatrice. If, in the *Vita Nuova*, weeping leads Dante to the contemplation of Beatrice *gloriosa*, in the *Commedia* it will become the essential means through which to access Paradise and finally witness the vision of God's smile.

II. Inferno

II. 1 Dante's tears: the beginning of the penitential journey

Among the three canticles, Dante's *Inferno* is distinguished by a greater frequency of terms expressing tears¹, which constitute a fundamental element characterizing the damned and the infernal kingdom itself, but they also appear on Dante's face², playing a fundamental role in the poet's penitential path, from its beginning in Hell to its end in Purgatory.

Indeed, Dante's first tears are shed at the opening of the poem. At the beginning of the journey, Dante halts when the she-wolf appears, blocking his ability to proceed; the pilgrim's emotional reaction is described through a psychological simile:

Ed una lupa, che di tutte brame
sembiava carca ne la sua magrezza,
e molte genti fé già viver grame,
questa mi porse tanto di gravezza
con la paura ch'uscìa di sua vista,
ch'io perdei la speranza de l'altezza.
E qual è quei che volontieri acquista,
e giugne 'l tempo che perder lo face,
che 'n tutti suoi pensier piange e s'attrista;
tal mi fece la bestia senza pace,
che, venendomi 'ncontro, a poco a poco
mi ripigneva là dove 'l sol tace.³
(I. 49-60)

Much as the miser who accumulates riches, then loses what he has acquired, and so cries, Dante's tears are likewise provoked by the loss of something good: hope. Francesco Da Buti emphasizes this connection in his commentary, which indicates avarice as the metaphorical obstacle for which Dante loses his hope⁴. One notes that Dante, in fact, does not actually shed

¹ In the *Commedia* weeping is expressed through three terms, 'piangere/piagnere', 'lagrimare' and 'plorare'. The occurrences of *piangere* and *lagrimare* in *Inferno* are respectively 52 and 18, distributed in this way: - *piangere/piagnere*: 52 (I. 57; II. 106; III. 22, 107; IV. 26; V. 26, 107, 140; VI. 72; VIII. 36-37; IX. 45, 48; X. 58; XI. 45; XII. 106; XIII. 131; XIV. 20, 102; XV. 42; XVI. 75; XVII. 122; XVIII. 58; XIX. 45, 65; XX. 6, 23, 25; XXI. 5; XXIII. 60, 69; XXV. 151; XXVI. 61, 136; XXVII. 8; XXVIII. 32; XXIX. 3, 20, 92; XXXII. 79, 115, 136; XXXIII. 38, 42 (x2), 49, 50, 94 (x2), 114; XXXIV. 53-54); - *lagrimare*: 18 (I. 92; II. 116; III. 24, 68, 133; V. 117; VI. 59, 76; XII. 136; XIV. 113; XVIII. 84; XX. 8; XXIV. 110; XXXII. 48; XXXIII. 9, 52, 97, 128).

² Dante weeps ten times in the *Commedia* and the references to his tears occur eight in *Inferno* and eleven in *Purgatorio*: *Inf.*: I. 57; I. 92; II. 106; III. 24; V. 126; VI. 59; XX. 25; XXIX. 3. *Purg.*: I. 127; XXIII. 56; XXX. 54, 56-57, 91, 109; XXXI. 20, 34, 46.

³ 'And then a she-wolf who, all hide and bones,/ seemed charged with all the appetites—/ that hav /made many live in wretchedness/ so weighed my spirits down with terror,/ which welled up at the sight of her, / that I lost hope of making the ascent./And like one who rejoices in his gains/ but when the time comes and he loses,/ turns all his thought to sadness and lament,/ such did the restless beast make me—/ coming against me, step by step,/ it drove me down to where the sun is silent.'

⁴ Francesco da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'Pone prima l'autore nostro similitudine, che propriamente si conviene alli avari, che volentieri acquistano e mal volentieri perdano, intanto che, quanto sanno e possono, di ciò s'attristano. Ma per questo dimostra la grande affezione, che avea di salire al monte delle virtù, e che vedendosi ripignere a dietro dall'avarizia, piangea et attristavasi'.

tears at this first stage; tears, indeed, remains within the first term of comparison, within the psychological simile: thus, ‘piange’ should be understood as ‘an inner weeping of the soul’⁵. In the following verses, after meeting Virgil, Dante’s weeping is identified as a direct consequence of the she-wolf’s appearance:

Vedi la bestia per cu’io mi volsi;
 aiutami da lei, famoso saggio,
 ch’ella *mi fa tremar le vene e i polsi*”.
 "A te convien tenere altro viaggio",
 rispuose, poi che *lagrimar* mi vide,
 "se vuo' campar d'esto loco selvaggio; [...]"⁶
 (I. 88-93)

Even if located at such a strategic point of the poem, thus far Dante’s first tears have not received much critical attention. The essential elements to examine here are their reason and their function. First of all, I argue that the primary cause is fear, a passion clearly evoked in both passages as the root of Dante’s tears. In fact, at the appearance of the she-wolf, Dante is emotionally paralyzed by fear, which manifests itself in trembling and resolves in tears; as Giovanni Boccaccio observed, trembling is the natural consequence of fear, as the blood builds up around the heart and drains away from the rest of the body⁷. In fact, as scholars have already noted, fear already plays a fundamental role at the beginning of the poem, because ‘Dante’s salvific journey begins thanks to fear’⁸. Indeed, Dante attributes a particular significance to this emotion: firstly, through the urgency of communicating to the reader the fear he felt in the dark wood (‘che nel pensier rinnova la paura!’ I. 6⁹) defined by Roberto Mercuri as a ‘paura retrospettiva’, re-experienced in the memory¹⁰; secondly, in vv.14-15, which underscore the sorrow and anxiety caused by going astray (‘quella valle che m’avea di paura il cor compunto’, I. 15¹¹); finally, when he experiences fear first before the lion and then, with many more consequences, at the appearance of the she-wolf. In particular, according to Roberto Rea, in the first canto fear acquires a specific ethical and theological meaning: it does not constitute a negative

⁵ Enrico Mestica (Firenze: R. Bemporad, 1921-22): ‘nel senso in cui fu spesso adoperato dai poeti e da Dante: “Come l'anima trista pianse in lui”, cioè nel cuore (Canz. “Voi che, intendendo, il terzo ciel movete”); “L'anima mia dolente e paurosa Piange” *Cavalcanti*, Cino da Pistoia in *Lo fin piacer di quell'adorno viso* (‘Mi piange ogni pensiero Nella mente dogliosa’)

⁶ ‘See the beast that forced me to turn back./ Save me from her, famous sage –/ she makes my veins and pulses tremble./ ‘It is another path that you must follow,’/ he answered, when he saw me weeping./ ‘if you would flee this wild and savage place.’

⁷ Giovanni Boccaccio (Milano: Mondadori, 1965): ‘Triemano le vene e' polsi quando dal sangue abandonate sono; il che avviene quando il cuore ha paura, per ciò che allora tutto il sangue si ritrae a lui ad aiutarlo e riscaldarlo, e il rimanente di tutto l'altro corpo rimane vacuo di sangue e freddo e palido’.

⁸ Roberto Rea, ‘Psicologia ed etica della paura nel primo canto dell’Inferno: la compunctio timoris’, *Dante Studies*, 130 (2012), 182-206 (p. 183).

⁹ ‘The very thought of it renews my fear!’.

¹⁰ Roberto Mercuri, ‘Comedia’, in *Letteratura Italiana, Le Opere, I, Dalle Origini al Cinquecento*, ed. by A. Asor-Rosa (Torino: Einaudi, 1992), pp. 211-329, (p. 279).

¹¹ ‘The valley [...] that had pierced my heart with fear’.

feeling, but rather a positive one: it represents the ‘*compunctio timoris*, the sorrow for the committed sin, that, according to a tradition beginning with Augustine and ending with Thomas Aquinas, constitutes the first stage of the spiritual path towards Christian salvation’¹². Fear is therefore identified with *timor initialis*, through which Dante becomes aware of sin and starts his personal journey of atonement.

However, in the episode of the she-wolf, fear does not correspond to *timor initialis*: Dante’s fear here does not lead to progress, does not urge the pilgrim onto the path of salvation as happened at the beginning of the poem. In this case, fear is paralyzing and generates Dante’s weeping: this is an event to which particular attention should be drawn, as it will happen again only one more time in the *Commedia*, in Eden, when confronted with Beatrice’s accusation.

In the theological tradition, the connection between tears and fear is explained in *Scala Paradisi* by John Climacus, a Greek monk from the sixth to seventh century, who distinguishes between two kinds of tears, those produced by love and those caused by fear:

Or thus: mourning is a golden spur in a soul which is stripped of all attachment and of all ties, fixed by holy sorrow to watch over the heart. Compunction is a perennial testing of the conscience which brings about the cooling of the fire of the heart through spiritual confession. [...] Groanings and sorrows cry to the Lord. *Tears shed from fear intercede for us*; [...].¹³
(VII. 1-7)

According to Climacus, weeping is the main instrument of compunction, which is generated by the passion of *tristitia* and operates through fear. Tears are therefore seen as a stimulus that stings the heart, provoking a mortification of earthly vices thanks to fear and pushing man away from sin. Through this process, man becomes aware of his sins, and his tears show that he is finally ready to receive the divine grace: thus, fearful tears function as an intercession with God. A similar connection between tears and fear is also established by Thomas Aquinas, who states that the beatitude of weeping is attributed to fear - one of the Holy Ghost’s gifts:

[...] poverty and mourning [correspond] to the gift of fear, whereby man withdraws from the lusts and pleasures of the world. Secondly, we may consider the motives of the beatitudes: and, in this way, some of them will have to be assigned differently. [...] The chief motive for mourning is knowledge, whereby man knows his, failings and those of worldly things, according to Eccles. 1:18: "He that addeth knowledge, addeth also sorrow."¹⁴

¹² Rea, *Psicologia ed etica della paura*, p. 185.

¹³ John Climacus, *The ladder of divine ascent*, trans. by Archimandrite Lazarus Moore (Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 38.

¹⁴ I always use the following English translation: St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Benzinger Bros, 1947). All the passages from the *Summa Theologiae* are quoted from Tommaso d’Aquino, *La Somma Teologica*, latin text from the Edizione Leonina (Edizioni Studio domenicano, 1995): ‘paupertas vero et luctus ad donum timoris, quo homo se retrahit a cupiditatibus et delectationibus mundi. – Alio modo possumus in his beatitudinibus considerare motiva ipsarum, et sic, quantum ad aliqua eorum, oportet aliter attribuere. [...]. Ad lugendum autem movet praecipue scientia, per quam homo cognoscit defectus suos et rerum mundanarum; secundum illud Eccle.1 [18], qui addit scientiam, addit et dolorem’ (Ia IIae. q. 69, a. 3).

Once again, tears stem from fear, which represses flesh and earthly pleasures; at the same time, science, and thus knowledge, are identified as the main cause of weeping, having made man aware of the sin poisoning the world. These two concepts are strongly evident in the medieval understanding of weeping. Indeed, as Piroska Nagy¹⁵ and Jacques Le Goff¹⁶ have illustrated, tears were generally considered as a positive practice, as they represent an essential element in the mortification of the flesh: the first Christian ascetics cried in order to release their corporeal fluids, thus preventing them from being used in a sexual manner. Tears were therefore a constitutive element of penitence and atonement, thanks to their physiological component, as Thomas Aquinas noted: ‘[...] in like manner, penance is a passion accompanied by a bodily alteration, viz. tears, according to Gregory, who says (*Hom. xxxiv in Evang.*) that “penance consists in deploring past sins”’¹⁷. This positive recognition of tears was strictly connected to the problematic Christian conception of the human body, which oscillated between glorification of the body as a means of salvation, and its condemnation through the monastic association of pleasure with sin. Since tears, like smiles, are an emotional manifestation that directly involves the body and leads to social effects and implications, they were subject to the control and regulation of the Church. But, unlike the smile, which, as will be shown, suffered heavy monastic condemnation due to its corporeal aspect and to the theological archetype that Christ never laughed during his time on the Earth, tears maintained their positive value for precisely the opposite reason: being a tool for the mortification of the flesh and for facilitating the *imitatio Christi*. Christ, indeed, cried three times in the Gospels: the first time at the death of Lazarus (*John XI. 35*); the second when entering Jerusalem, the destruction of which Christ foresaw (*Luke XIX. 41-42*); and the third on the Mount of Olives (*Hebrews V. 7*) where Jesus, abandoned, cries for his own fate. It is thanks to Jesus’ example that passions acquired a new ethical function during the Middle Ages: as illustrated in Augustine’s *City of God*, passions became ‘a powerful and necessary means of salvation’¹⁸, a means to reach beatitude through proper control inspired by Christ, who in his human form experienced all the emotions to show man the criteria of their proper use.

Therefore, weeping in the Middle Ages became an extremely positive instrument of salvation, as Thomas Aquinas underscored in another passage, explaining in detail the connection between tears and knowledge as a gift of the Holy Ghost:

¹⁵ Piroska Nagy, *Le Don des larmes au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000).

¹⁶ Jacques Le Goff, ‘Il dono delle lacrime’, in *Il corpo nel medioevo*, trans. by Fausat Cataldi Villari (Bari: Laterza, 2017).

¹⁷ ‘[...] sed similiter poenitentia est quaedam passio habens corporalem immutationem, scilicet ploratum, sicut Gregorius dicit [In Ev. h. 2,34] quod poenitere est peccata praeterita plangere’ (*ST III. q. 85, a. 1*).

¹⁸ Carla Casagrande and Silvana Vecchio, *Passioni dell’anima. Teorie e uso degli affetti nella cultura medievale* (Firenze: Sismel, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2015), p. 8.

But to the gift of knowledge there corresponds, in the first place, sorrow for past errors, and, in consequence, consolation, since, by his right judgment, man directs creatures to the Divine good. For this reason sorrow is set forth in this beatitude, as the merit, and the resulting consolation, as the reward; which is begun in this life, and is perfected in the life to come. Man rejoices in the very consideration of truth; yet he may sometimes grieve for the thing, the truth of which he considers: it is thus that sorrow is ascribed to knowledge.¹⁹

Through science, and thus knowledge, the will reacquires its proper order and direction, re-orienting itself towards God, and this realization is marked by tears. The possession of truth can produce a condition of happiness, whose highest expression is realized in the smile of the blessed; or it may lead to the opposite, to tears that express the deepest possible knowledge which man can obtain during his earthly life and which will be rewarded with consolation. Hence, the passion of *tristitia*, which is the cause of tears, can also be a reason for pleasure, as Aquinas clarifies in the following commentary on the Beatitude enunciated by Christ:

But sorrow can be the cause of pleasure; for it is written (Mt. 5:5): "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Therefore they are not contrary to one another. [...] In one way, in so far as from sorrow at the absence of something, or at the presence of its contrary, one seeks the more eagerly for something pleasant: thus a thirsty man seeks more eagerly the pleasure of a drink, as a remedy for the pain he suffers. In another way, in so far as, from a strong desire for a certain pleasure, one does not shrink from undergoing pain, so as to obtain that pleasure. In each of these ways, the sorrows of the present life lead us to the comfort of the future life. Because by the mere fact that man mourns for his sins, or for the delay of glory, he merits the consolation of eternity. In like manner a man merits it when he shrinks not from hardships and straits in order to obtain it.²⁰

Tristitia, the passion that expresses sorrowful distress provoked by the lack of good, pushes man to search for good as a thirsty person looks desperately for water; thus, *tristitia* is a passion that initiates the desire to progress, and tears become the visible sign of what is lacking (which is represented by the postponement of Glory), but above all of the awareness of one's own sins, a first step which leads to the consolation of eternal life and thus to salvation. Moreover, as Thomas stated, *tristitia* can come from a fear and memory of evil²¹, which provokes the mortification of the flesh and its earthly bonds, and leads to an awareness of sin marked by tears.

¹⁹ 'Dono autem scientiae respondet quidem primo luctus de praeteritis erratis; et consequenter consolatio, dum homo per rectum iudicium scientiae creaturas ordinat in bonum divinum. Et ideo in hac beatitudine ponitur luctus pro merito, et consolatio consequens pro praemio. Quae quidem inchoatur in hac vita, perficitur autem in futura. Ad secundum dicendum quod de ipsa consideratione veritatis homo gaudet, sed de re circa quam considerat veritatem potest tristari quandoque. Et secundum hoc luctus scientiae attribuitur.' (*ST. IIa IIae* q. 1. 9, a. 4).

²⁰ 'Sed tristitia potest esse causa delectationis, dicitur enim Matth. 5 [5], beati qui lugent, quoniam ipsi consolabuntur. [...] Uno quidem modo, inquantum tristitia de absentia alicuius rei, vel de praesentia contrarii, vehementius quaerit id in quo delectetur, sicut sitiens vehementius quaerit delectationem potus, ut remedium contra tristitiam quam patitur. Alio modo, inquantum ex magno desiderio delectationis alicuius, non recusat aliquis tristitias perferre, ut ad illam delectationem perveniat. Et utroque modo luctus praesens ad consolationem futurae vitae perducit. Quia ex hoc ipso quod homo luget pro peccatis, vel pro dilatione gloriae, meretur consolationem aeternam. Similiter etiam meretur eam aliquis ex hoc quod, ad ipsam consequendam, non refugit labores et angustias propter ipsam sustinere' (*ST. Ia IIae* q. 35, a.3).

²¹ 'Ex metu et memoria malorum' (*ST. IIa IIae* q. 30, a. 1).

Therefore, I argue that the quality and cognitive function of tears urging man towards God are those which characterize Dante's tears at the beginning of the *Commedia*. The earthly bonds mortified by fearful tears consist, in this case, in the cupidity represented allegorically by the she-wolf. In this regard, Benvenuto Da Imola's related commentary is of interest, since he directly links the Dante's fearful reaction with the cupidity allegorized by the she-wolf and recognized as a personal sin of the author: 'And here the author rightly imagines that greed would frighten him; for he feared that, if he disdained riches, he would fall into misery and indigence, and consequently he would have been mocked'²². Moreover, it is not hard to recognize Climacus' 'all attachment and all ties' and especially Thomas Aquinas' 'the lusts and pleasures of the world' in what Dante defines as *cupidigia*, in the *Convivio*: indeed, in *Cv. IV. XII. 7* cupidity is a limitless and imperfect desire for earthly goods that cannot change the deeply unhappy condition of mankind and cannot stop the flow of tears: 'E a maggiore testimonianza di questa imperfezione, ecco Boezio in quello Di Consolazione dicente: 'Se quanta rena volve lo mare turbato dal vento, se quante stelle rilucono, la dea della ricchezza largisca, l'umana generazione non cesserà di piangere'²³.

Hence, the sin that provokes Dante's fear, which the pilgrim recognizes as his own, should be identified with cupidity. Whether it be a personal sin or a collective vice whose dramatic gravity is apparent (and will be underscored throughout the poem), Dante's weeping, caused by paralyzing fear of the she-wolf, expresses human awareness of the sin of cupidity and the beginning of the process of repentance for the sins that led the pilgrim and humankind away from God. In particular, Dante's first tears act as the first stage of the process of contrition, sorrow over the sin committed, also called attrition or contrition of fear; that is, the recognition of the negativity of sin and the fear of eternal damnation.

Thus, at the opening of the poem, weeping becomes the necessary redemptive tool that provokes Virgil's intervention, without which the poem would have never begun. Indeed, the importance of the first tears shed by Dante is underlined in the following canto, when Virgil quotes the words with which Saint Lucy begged Beatrice to rescue Dante (*Inf. II. 106-108*):

"Non odi tu la *pieta del suo pianto*,
non vedi tu la morte che 'l combatte
su la fiumana ove 'l mar non ha vanto?"²⁴

²² Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): 'Et hic nota quod autor proprie fingit quod avaritia daret sibi plus timoris; timebat enim, si dimittebat et spernebat divitias, cadere in inopiam et egestatem, et per consequens in irrisionem'.

²³ 'As further evidence of this imperfection, look at what Boethius says in his book *On Consolation*: "Even if the goddess of wealth were to lavish gifts as plentiful as the grains of sand rolled by a wind-tossed sea, or as the number of stars that shine, the human race would not cease to wail'.

²⁴ 'Do you not hear the anguish in his tears?/ Do you not see the death besetting him/ on the swollen river where the sea cannot prevail?'

Even if Beatrice's eyes 'bright with tears' (*Inf.* II. 116), concluding the chain of mercy inaugurated by Mary and mediated by Lucia, beseech and obtain the help of Virgil and thus Dante's salvation from the dark wood, the sinner's weeping and thus his personal awareness of sin, provokes and initiates his salvation through the intervention of Virgil, who assumes the role of Dante's guide in direct response to the pilgrim's weeping (I. 91-92).

The penitential meaning of Dante's first tears could be better understood if compared to a similar situation recurring at the beginning of a vision of the afterlife prior to the *Commedia*: that is, the *Vision of Tundale*, written in the twelfth century by the Irish monk Marcus, which narrates the vision of the knight Tundale who, during a near-death experience, has the opportunity to visit Hell and Paradise, accompanied, as usual, by an angel. Compared to previous *visiones animarum*, this work differs, as Jacques Le Goff recognized²⁵, for the complexity of the protagonist, who is involved emotionally and physically in the infernal torments. Therefore, unlike his antecedents, Tundale is distinguished by his emotional reactions, in particular by fear: as Maria Lecco observes, 'anguish animates him, pushes him beyond the limits of a moving abstraction, which characterizes the souls of travelers in the other *visiones animarum*'²⁶. The tears, which often flow from the knight's eyes, appear to be attributable to this emotion, qualifying as tears of compunction: the sinner Tundale is led to Hell to experience the torments personally and thus atone for his sins, the acknowledgement of which is marked by the terror and tears which these torments provoke²⁷.

In particular, like Dante, Tundale weeps for the first time at the very beginning of his journey. After his apparent passing, his soul leaves the body and, aware of his sins, begins to weep and tremble with fear:

²⁵ Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 191-193.

²⁶ Margherita Lecco, 'Introduzione', in *La visione di Tungdal* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), p. 26.

²⁷ In the first punishment for avarice, which Tundale is forced to endure inside the belly of the terrible beast Acheron, weeping is a further element in the list of different torments to which the soul is subjected: 'Passa est enim ibidem canum, ursorum, leonum [...] caliginem oculorum, fluxus lacrimarum ardentium, copiam tribulationum et stridorem dentium. His et similibus ibi compertis, quid aliud misera, nisi semet ipsam de preteris accusare et proprias genas pre nimia tristitia et desperatione potuit lacerare? Cumque misera reatum suum cognosceret et eternum pro suis meritis se pati supplicium pertimesceret, nescia, quo ordine exierat, se extra bestiam esse sentiebat.'. After suffering terrible torments, Tundale confesses and recognizes that he has committed the sin of avarice, in terror at the idea of eternal damnation. Tundale will be portrayed in the act of weeping three more times during his journey of redemption. The first occurs before and during his atonement through the punishment for thieves, which consists in walking barefoot across a bridge strewn with nails, with the constant risk of falling off and being devoured by ferocious beasts, all while carrying with them stolen goods – in the case of Tundale, a cow: 'Tunc anima plorans amare flevit et ad angelum dixit: Ve mihi, quare me creavit deus, ut talia paterer? Et quomodo ego misera potero transducere, cum ego ipsa in tali periculo, nisi divina subvenerit misericordia, non possim omnino stare? [...] Anima vero, cum vidisset se devitare non posse debitam penam, plorans reatum tenuit vaccam et secum quibuscumque poterat minis instigare conabatur as pontem. [...] Cumque diutius starent, et criminum reatu, ibi plangerent, nescientes quomodo, set una queque alteram pertransisse cognoscebat'. The second takes place before proceeding to the punishment of habitual sinners, in which devils prod them with iron forks and throw them into burning forges: 'Et anima: Numquid, ait, domine mi, ego ejus debeo pati supplicium? At ille: Debes, inquit. Et dicto hoc verbo precedebat eam, illa autem plorans sequebatur eum.'

Cum, inquit, anima mea corpus exueret et illud mortuum esse cognosceret, *reatus sui conscia cepit formidare* et quid faceret nesciebat [...]. Et sic miserrima volutabatur anima reatus sui conscia, in nullo confidens, nisi in dei misericordia. Dumque diutius se ita ageret et *flens et plorans tremebunda*, quid deberet facere, nesciret, tandem vidit ad se venientem tantam immundorum spirituum multitudinem [...].²⁸

Surrounded by a group of evil spirits who verbally attack him and accuse him of sins, Tundale's soul is in a state of paralysis, not knowing what to do except to trust in God's mercy. Then he turns his gaze to Heaven, where a very bright light appears, in which Tundale places all his hope: it is the angel who comes to his rescue and who presents himself as the guide who will show him the torments of Hell. Although it has been debated whether or not the *Visio Tnugdali* may be considered a source of the *Commedia*²⁹, this opening episode cannot fail to recall the beginning of the *Inferno* and Dante's first tears: as we have seen at the beginning of the journey, Dante halts at the appearance of the she-wolf, no longer able to proceed and emotionally paralyzed by a fear that, as in the case of Tundale, manifests itself in trembling and resolves in tears. Like those of Dante, Tundale's first tears are indeed produced by contrition through fear: that is, from the recognition of the negativity of sin and from the fear of eternal damnation, as consciously emphasized by the narrator himself ('reatus sui conscia cepit formidare'). Just as Virgil rescues Dante, who is about to turn back when faced with the she-wolf, and offers himself as Dante's *duce*, so the angel comes to save Tundale from the demons' aggression, presenting himself as the knight's guide. Dante's journey, like that of Tundale, is therefore identified from the beginning as a penitential journey, in which tears play a central role in the process of repentance and in the progression of his atonement.

Although it can be said that Dante weeps like Tundale, since both of their tears have an essentially penitential aim, the protagonist of the *Commedia* will not himself suffer the physical punishments of the damned, like Tundale. Indeed, in the *Visio Tnugdali*, the sinners and the protagonist do not appear so distant: the knight, despite making a progressive journey that finally leads him to a brief visit to Paradise, is characterized mainly by his role as a sinner and penitent. In fact, when Tundale suffers torments for the last time, in lower hell, where the souls already judged are burned for all eternity by a huge pillar of fire, the demons will thus incite him to weeping and pain: 'Dole, misera, dole, plora, clama et ulula, lugebis enim cum

²⁸ *Visio Tnugdali. Lateinisch und altdeutsch*, ed. by Albrecht Wagner, Erlangen Deichert (Hildesheim- Zurich New York: Olms, 1989), p. 9. *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante*, ed. by Eileen Gardiner (New York: Italica Press, 2019), p. 119: 'He said that when his soul left his body, and he knew he was dead, knowing he was guilty he grew terrified, and he did not know what he might do. [...] And so, this most miserable soul, knowing he was guilty, had no confidence except in the mercy of God. So finally he went on weeping and crying and trembling, since he did not know what he ought to do. Finally he saw a great multitude of unworldly spirits coming toward him [...]'.
²⁹ Lecco, pp. 26-27.

lugentibus, flebis cum flentibus et in eternum ardebis cum ardentibus'³⁰. 'Flebis cum flentibus': Tundale's cry is that of the damned; the physical suffering, the fire that devours him is one and the same.

However, the only tool through which Dante experiences the gravity of sin and completes his own process of contrition is the weeping and emotions connected to this manifestation. And it is precisely this cry that distinguishes and connotes the status of his character on the way to salvation, making him markedly different from the damned who surround him: while the damned's tears will be useless and vain, Dante's tears are a fundamental tool for the progression of his journey. Indeed, after the episode of the she-wolf, the poet will weep many times in Hell, but no longer because of fear. Just at the entrance of the lower world, in Canto III, Dante weeps moved by the shock of 'pianti ed alti guai' of the crowd of souls:

Quivi sospiri, pianti e alti guai
risonavan per l'aere senza stelle,
per ch'io al cominciar ne lagrimai.³¹
(III. 22-24)

As the early commentators pointed out³², Dante cries for compassion at the crying of the damned, which is perceived through its auditory component, separated into an ascending progression of sighs, sobs and loud wails of pain, to which racket the darkness provides greater emphasis and resonance. Specifically, with regard to the meaning attributed to the 'pianti', Giovanni Boccaccio explains that "'crying" is what one does when he speaks in protests, although commoners usually understand and use the term to refer to the type of crying that is done with tears'³³. In fact, the auditory impression represented by the sound of weeping constitutes a descriptive element which Dante employs several times and on specific occasions, during the liminal moments of passage and entry into new regions of Hell³⁴. The representation of the weeping of the damned in the passage into the infernal world is not a novelty: in the Gospel tradition, entry to Hell is marked by darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth, and the visions of the afterlife prior to Dante bear similar descriptions.

In fact, in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, the Trojan hero is welcomed into Hades with the terrifying sound of groans and clanking chains (*Aen.* VI. 559-61: 'Hinc exaudiri gemitus et

³⁰ *Visio Tnugdali*, p. 34. Gardiner, p. 135: 'Be sorrowful, miserable soul, be sorrowful, cry, complain and howl, for you will mourn with those who mourn, you will weep with those who weep, and forever you will burn with those who burn'.

³¹ 'Now sighs, loud wailing, lamentation/ resounded through the starless air,/ so that I too began to weep'.

³² Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): 'perch'io al cominciar ne lagrimai, scilicet ex compassione'; Francesco Da Buti, (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'perchè io non sapeva la cagione, al principio n'ebbi compassione'.

³³ Giovanni Boccaccio, *Boccaccio's Expositions on Dante's Comedy*, Trans. with introduction and notes by Micheal Papio (University of Toronto Press: 2009), pp. 147-148.

³⁴ See the following passages: V. 25-30; XVII. 121-123; XXI. 4-6.

saeva sonare / verbera, tum stridor ferri tractaeque catenae³⁵), a representation that, unlike Dante's realm, is devoid of the tragic theme of human suffering and the related sense of compassion. Indeed, despite Aeneas weeps several times during his descent to the Underworld³⁶, he does not weep entering Hell³⁷. However, tears of compassion characterize the protagonist of a work that Dante chose, together with the *Aeneid*, as a primary reference model³⁸: the *Visio Pauli*. Within this work, weeping takes on a new meaning and importance: not only do tears become a constitutive element of the story of infernal torments, since Paul is portrayed crying very frequently (sixteen times in all), but the episodes of weeping are generally motivated by the apostle's feelings of pity and compassion towards the damned. In fact, Paul's tears are concentrated in the section of the text dedicated to the narration of Hell and its minutely described sufferings, while the short part dedicated to Heaven is exempt from weeping. Within the many versions of the vision, Paul's weeping takes place on the following occasions and is distributed as follows: during the vision of the world from above³⁹; in pity for the proud⁴⁰; for the damned in the abyss⁴¹; for a corrupt priest and deacon⁴²; for the damned immersed in the fiery river⁴³; for fornicators⁴⁴; for those who have harmed orphans and widows⁴⁵; for false witnesses, the envious, and the proud⁴⁶; for women who have sinned against chastity⁴⁷; for those who have had an abortion⁴⁸; for sinful priests⁴⁹; for the sinful human race⁵⁰; for those who do not believe in the incarnation and resurrection⁵¹; to beg mercy for the damned⁵²; to remove his own parents from hell⁵³; out of emotion for a soul that goes to Heaven⁵⁴. Though not always

³⁵ The reference edition for the Latin text of the *Aeneid* is Virgilio, *Eneide*, trans. by Luca Canali and commented by Ettore Paratore (Milano: Mondadori, 2009). I refer to the following English translation: Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. by David West (London: Penguin Classics, 2003): 'They could hear the groans from the city, the cruel crack of the lash, the dragging and clanking of iron chains' (p.129).

³⁶ Aeneas weeps three times: for Dido (VI. 455 and 476), for the shades of the fallen warriors (VI. 483) and for his father Anchises (VI. 699).

³⁷ Daniele Mattalia (Milano: A. Rizzoli, 1960).

³⁸ In *Inf.* II. 13-33 Dante refers explicitly to his models: frightened by the prospect of the journey he is about to undertake, the pilgrim recalls that 'I am not Aeneas, nor am I Paul'.

³⁹ In L1 and L3 (long Latin versions).

⁴⁰ In L1 and L3.

⁴¹ In L1, L2, L3 and in the following short redactions: I, II, III, IV VII, VIII.

⁴² In L1, L2 and L3.

⁴³ In L1, F Vienna and in all the short redactions.

⁴⁴ In L1 e L3.

⁴⁵ In L1, L2, L3 and in the following short redactions: I, II, III.

⁴⁶ Only in the III and VII.

⁴⁷ In L1 and L3

⁴⁸ In L2.

⁴⁹ Only in the II and V.

⁵⁰ In L1, L2, L3 and in the following short redactions: I, II, III, V, VII, VIII.

⁵¹ In L2 and in VII.

⁵² In L1, L2, L3, and in the following short redactions: I, V, VII, VIII.

⁵³ Only in VI.

⁵⁴ Only in VII.

characterizing the same episodes, one can see that Paul's tears of compassion appear in all versions of the text.

In particular, like Dante, in the *Visio Pauli*, Paul describes the entrance to Hell as characterized by darkness, sadness and sighs⁵⁵. As in the *Aeneid*, it is not the tears themselves but the effect of crying that is represented here, through the sound of sighs caused by the sadness of the damned. It is interesting to underscore how this descriptive element appears in all versions of the Pauline Apocalypse, proving to be an essential ingredient of its infernal representation. In particular, in two of the long Latin versions, the initial weeping of the damned provokes Paul's pity and compassion, like that of Dante, with the former participating in those sighs of pain: 'asperi et non erat lumen in illo loco, sed tenebre et tristitia et mestice et suspiravi'⁵⁶. The type of tears which Paul sheds in this and in other episodes align with what John Cassian describes in this way: 'There is too another kind of tears, which are caused not by knowledge of one's self but by the hardness and sins of others'⁵⁷. Therefore, it is not the weeping itself that pertains to Paul's conscience, but rather his consideration for the suffering of others. Compassion is therefore the feeling that moves the apostle's tears. Thus, I believe that the source of Dante's tears of compassion at the entrance to Hell should be searched in the *Visio Pauli*.

In the following episodes of Cantos V and VI, Dante once again sheds tears of compassion, which are expressed in a similar structure:

Poi mi rivolsi a loro e parla' io,
e cominciai: 'Francesca, i tuoi martiri
a lagrimar mi fanno tristo e pio.'⁵⁸
(V. 115-117)

Io li rispuosi: "Ciaccio, il tuo affanno,

⁵⁵ See the following passages, quoted from Silverstein: L1.16 St Gall. 16: 'ibi est fletus et stridor dentium, et sit ibi usque in diem magnum iudicii'; L1. 31 Paris: 'asperi et non erat lumen in illo loco, sed tenebre et tristitia et mestice et suspiravi'; L2 Graz. 16: 'Ibi erit fletus et stridor dencium'; Red I. 1 'non erat lumen in illo, sed tenebre et mesticie et suspiria'; Red II. 1: 'et non erat lumen in illo loco, sed tenebre et tristicie'; Red. III. 2: 'Et uidit ibi locum terribilem ualde, ubi non erat lumen, sed tenebre et tristitia et suspiria'; Red. IV. 4-5: 'Et alii flent, alii ululant, alii gemunt, alii ardent et querunt mortem, quam non inveniunt, quia anime non possunt mori. Timendus est nobis locus inferni, in quo est tristicia sine leticia, in quo est dolor sempiternus, in quo est gemitus cordis, in quo est bargidium magnum, in quo est habundancia lacrimarum'; Red. V : 'Et ideo, fratres carissimi, timendus est nobis locus inferni, in quo est dolor et gemitus; in quo est ululatus et planctus, gemitus mortis et tristicia sine leticia, habundancia lacrimarum propter cruciacionem et dolorem animarum'; Red. VII: 'Et uidi ibi locum terribilem, in quo non erat lux, sed tenebre et suspiria et mesticia.'; Red. VIII, 'Alii flent, alii gemunt, alii ululant, alii ardent: querunt mortem et non inueniunt, quia nunquam morientur. Timendus ergo nobis locus infernalis, in quo tristicia sine leticia; [...] Et uidit ibi locum terribilem, et non erat lumen in illo, sed tenebre, mesticie et suspiria.'

⁵⁶ L1 Paris, 31 and L3 Arnheim, 31. 'There was no light in that place, only darkness and sorrow and sadness, and I sighed' (Gardiner, p. 42).

⁵⁷ John Cassian, *The Conferences*, Trans. and Notes by Edgar C.S. Gibson (New York: 1894), p. 166. 'Aliud lacrimarum genus, quod non pro sua conscentia, sed pro aliena durtia peccatis generator' (Iohannes Cassianus, *Collationes*, ed. by Michael Petschenig and Gottfried Kreuz (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), CSEL 13, IX. 29, p. 274).

⁵⁸ 'Then I turned to them again to speak / and I began: 'Francesca, your torments/ make me weep for grief and pity.'

mi pesa sì, *ch'a lagrimar mi 'nvita*; [...].⁵⁹
(VI. 58-59)

In the first episode, Francesca's account of her suffering provokes Dante's tears; in the second, the miserable condition of Ciaccio stimulates the pilgrim's desire to weep.

Francesca's case appears particularly interesting, as weeping is qualified by *tristitia* ('tristo'), 'ex dolore', and pity ('pio'), 'ex compassione'⁶⁰. As occurred at the beginning of the *Inferno*, *tristitia*, although associated with compassion instead of with fear, assumes a cognitive function, provoking Dante's tears of contrition and acknowledgement of his own sin of lust, as Baldassare Lombardi highlighted in his commentary⁶¹. Indeed, as the Venerable Bede stated, commenting *Matt. 5.5*, bliss can be obtained merely through certain forms of weeping, among which the tears shed for fear of eternal damnation or for compassion for one's neighbour⁶². Moreover, compassion acquires a cognitive function by virtue of *tristitia*; as Thomas Aquinas stated, compassion is a form of *tristitia* provoked by another's sin, which is recognized as one's own:

Since pity is grief for another's distress, as stated above (Article 1), from the very fact that a person takes pity on anyone, it follows that another's distress grieves him. And since sorrow or grief is about one's own ills, one grieves or sorrows for another's distress, in so far as one looks upon another's distress as one's own.⁶³

In Ciaccio's episode, Dante is unable to shed tears effectively, and this has important consequences for the quality of his compassion. Indeed, as Giovanni Boccaccio underscored, the incomplete process of weeping on the one hand signals that Dante is innocent of the sin of gluttony, and on the other it shows a certain inclination to the sin and, therefore, a partial compassion⁶⁴.

The final two episodes of Dante's weeping in the *Inferno* occur in the lowest section of Malebolge (XX. 25-27 and XXIX. 1-6) and, hence, their expression and function change. In both cases, tears are provoked, as in the third canto, by the appearance of a group of souls: in

⁵⁹ I answered him: 'Ciaccio, your distress so weighs/ on me it bids me weep. But tell me, / if you can, what shall be the fate'.

⁶⁰ Benvenuto Da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887).

⁶¹ Baldassarre Lombardi (Roma: A. Fulgoni, 1791-92): 'tristo pe 'l proprio rimorso di simili colpe, e conseguentemente pe 'l meritato ugal gastigo [...]'.
⁶² Beda Venerabilis, *In Matthei evangelium exposition*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1850), PL 92, 0009-0132C (24C-D): 'vel etiam aeternam damnationis metu' or 'seu per compassionem proximum'.

⁶³ '[...] cum misericordia sit compassio super miseria aliena, ut dictum est [a. 1], ex hoc contingit quod aliquis misereatur ex quo contingit quod de miseria aliena doleat. Quia autem tristitia seu dolor est de proprio malo, intantum aliquis de miseria aliena tristatur aut dolet inquantum miseriam alienam apprehendit ut suam' (IIa IIae. Q. 30, A. 2).

⁶⁴ Giovanni Boccaccio (Milano: Mondadori, 1965): '[...] e mostra qui l'autore d'aver compassione di lui, acciò che egli sel faccia benivolo a dovergli rispondere di ciò che intende di domandare. E nondimeno, quantunque dica: a lacrimar m'invita, non dice perciò che lacrimasse; volendo, per questo, mostrarne lui non essere stato di questo vizio maculato, ma pure alcuna volta essere stato da lui per appetito incitato, e perciò non piena, ma alcuna compassione in rimorsione del suo non pieno peccato ne dimostra.'

the first case, Dante cries after seeing the procession of the distorted figures of the soothsayers; in the second, he is moved by the desire to weep at the sight of the horribly wounded bodies of the sowers of discord:

*Certo io piangea, poggiato a un de' rocchi
del duro scoglio, sì che la mia scorta
mi disse: "Ancor se' tu de li altri sciocchi?"⁶⁵*

*La molta gente e le diverse piaghe
avean le luci mie sì inebriate,
che de lo stare a piangere eran vaghe.
Ma Virgilio mi disse: "Che pur guate?
perché la vista tua pur si soffolge
là giù tra l'ombre triste smozzicate?"⁶⁶*

In both episodes, it is the degradation of the human body which leads Dante to tears of compassion, for which Virgil reproaches the poet in both passages. Indeed, 'qui vive la pietà quand'è ben morta'⁶⁷ (XX. 28) and in Malebolge there is no longer any space for compassion or tears in the face of the indisputability of divine judgment, as Cristoforo Landino emphasizes in his commentary⁶⁸. Therefore, the way Dante lingers, crying or gazing insistently at the souls is considered inappropriate, especially because weeping no longer performs its correct and principal cognitive function of contrition. When Dante cries at the sight of the soothsayers, he is unaware of the sin being punished in that circle and, thus, he cannot identify himself with 'li altri sciocchi' and their deeds. For this reason, tears are not appropriate and, as Nicola Fosca notes, Virgil warns Dante not to get emotionally involved with these sinners⁶⁹.

As for the sowers of discord, Dante already has knowledge of their sin when he expresses his desire to weep; indeed, according to L'Ottimo Commento, Dante wishes to cry in the ninth bolgia in repentance for his own political activism as a White Guelf, and thus for his partiality in terms of civil discord and personal feelings of hatred⁷⁰. However, at the same time, as in Ciaccio's episode, Dante's weeping does not come to fruition, but remains suspended in the

⁶⁵ 'Yes, I wept, leaning against a spur/ of the rough crag, so that my escort said: / 'Are you still witless as the rest?'

⁶⁶ 'The many people and their ghastly wounds/ did so intoxicate my eyes/ that I was moved to linger there and weep./ But Virgil said: 'What are you staring at? / Why is your gaze so fixed upon the depths/ that hold those mournful, mutilated shades?'

⁶⁷ 'Here piety lives when pity is quite dead'.

⁶⁸ Cristoforo Landino (Firenze: Lexis Progetti Editoriali, 1999): 'Danthe piangea et Virgilio lo riprende, il che dinota che la parte sensitiva induce compassione d'ogni pena benchè sia giustamente data; ma la ragione proibisce che l'huomo si muovi a pietà ne' suplicii da Dio giustamente inferiti [...]'

⁶⁹ Nicola Fosca (The Dartmouth Dante Project, 2003-2015).

⁷⁰ L'Ottimo Commento (Pisa: ed. Alessandro Torri, N. Capurro, 1827-1829): 'e anche ci avea cagione di piangere, sì per lo conforto dello Autore, sì per se medesimo, che si punia di questo vizio, nel quale sì come uno delli autori di parte bianca fu maculato'.

moment in which his eyes are ‘inebriate’, impregnated with tears, as the biblical meaning suggests⁷¹. The tears are indeed interrupted by Virgil’s intervention, introduced by an adversative clause in the following verse, reproaching Dante in particular for his *concupiscentia oculorum*, his insistent gaze spurred by desire for knowledge and compassion. Dante’s tears of compassion in the two cantos appear to be interestingly similar to two episodes of the *Visio Pauli* in which Paul’s weeping is reproached by the angel, his guide.

Shortly after entering Hell, Paul finds himself before a series of very deep pits in which a group of the damned are punished: either those who did not believe in God, according to the long versions and redactions I, II, III and VIII, or the fornicators, adulterers and murderers, as reported instead by the redaction VII. While in the long versions Paul is portrayed in the act of weeping immediately after realizing the terrible depth of the abyss, the short redactions report a two-fold weeping: first at the sight of the sinners’ bodies piled up in the pits⁷² and then, as in the long versions, after becoming aware of the sin being punished and the depth of the abyss. What distinguishes this case of weeping from the others is the reaction of the angel, who reproaches Paul, asking him abruptly ‘Quare ploras?’:

Abissus mensuram non habet; feruet etiam sicut ignis; aut si forte quis accipiat lapidem et mittat in puteum ualde profundum et post multum orarum spatium perueniet ad terram, sic et abyssus. Cum enim mittuntur illic animae, uix post quingentis annis pertingunt in profundum.’ Ego uero *cum audissem plorauit et ingemui super genus hominum*. Et respondit angelus et dixit, ‘*Quare ploras? Numquid tu magis misericors es deo; bonus et sciens quoniam poene patiuntur genus hominum [sic], dimittens unumquemque propriam uoluntatem in tempore quo habitat in terram ?*’ (32-33)⁷³

The reproach is present in all versions except the second short redaction, where Paul weeps only at the sight of the damned and not at the explanation of their harsh punishment. The angel directly criticizes Paul’s mercy, which is deemed out of place here: the pinnacle of compassion has been reached by God, who, with his sacrifice, has endowed man with free will and the ability to redeem himself through repentance. It is therefore clear why mercy for those who could repent and did not do so, but instead continued not to believe in God, is a meaningless emotion, which indeed risks offending divine compassion.

⁷¹ Giacomo Poletto (Roma & Tournay: Desclée, Lefebvre, 1894). He refers to the following biblical passages: ‘inebriabo te lacryma mea’ (Is. 16. 9) and ‘ebrietate et dolore repleberis’ (Ez. 23. 33).

⁷² See red. III. 6: ‘Et uidit alium locum plenum uiris et mulieribus, et erat ibi fouea alta in profundum. Loca illius plena animabus, una super aliam, et serpentes linguas suas comedebant. Et erat profunditas quasi de terra ad celum. Et gementes flebant et clamabant, dicentes, ‘Miserere nostri, filii Dauid!’ Et fleuit Paulus et dixit, ‘Qui sunt hii, domine?’ Et dixit angelus, ‘Hii sunt qui non sperant in deum, nec credunt in illum, nec fidem nec caritatem habent nullum.’ [...].’

⁷³ Gardiner. p. 43: ‘The abyss has no no boundary, for beneath it there follows also what is beneath; and so if someone strong took a stone and threw it into a very deep well, after many hours it would reach the bottom. This abyss is also like that. For hen souls are thrown into it, they hardly come to the bottom after five hundred years.’ When I heard this, I mourned and lamented for the human race. The angel answered and said to me, ‘Why do you mourn? Are you more merciful than God? For since God is good and knows that there are torments, he bears patiently with humanity, leaving every one to do his or her own will for the time that he or she dwells on earth’.

A second episode of this type occurs later in the narrative and appears to be present in all versions, with the exception of the sixth short redaction (which, however, constitutes a complete revision of the Pauline Apocalypse, not an abbreviation like the others):

Et suspiravi et fleui, et dixi, 'Ve ue generi humano, ue peccatoribus; utquid nati sunt?' Et respondit angelus et dixit, 'Quare ploras? Numquid tu magis misericors potes esse ut deus est? Deus benignus est, et cognoscis quia rectum iudicium dimittit unumquemque qui Jacit propriam uoluntatem, quod eis placet constitutis in terris.' Et iterum ploravi ualdisime, et dixit mihi, '*Ploras, cum necdum uideris maiora supplicia? Sequere me, et uidebis his maiora septies.*' (40)⁷⁴

At the sight of the oppressors of orphans and widows, who are placed between ice and snow with their hands and feet sliced and devoured by worms⁷⁵, Paul's reaction is the typical one: his sigh is followed by tears and then words. In this case, however, it is not a question to the angel, but an invocation, unique within the *Visio*, which Paul addresses to the sinful human race, destined for unspeakable suffering in the afterlife. As in the previous episode, the angel rhetorically asks the reason for Paul's weeping and, again, emphasizes the unparalleled kindness and mercy of God towards man.

In the long versions of the text, however, the tears of the apostle do not cease this time⁷⁶; on the contrary, they fall even more copiously ('ualdisime'), so much so that the angel intervenes again and more hastily: Paul should stop crying, because he has not yet seen the worst torments. Despite the angel's words, Paul will weep many times between these two reproaches without any disappointment on the part of his guide. In fact, if we consider both of the analyzed passages, Paul's weeping appears to be characterized by a new element, not at all common among the other episodes: what provokes his compassionate weeping are not only the damned punished before his eyes, but the entire human race, first named as the reason for his tears ('ploravi et ingemui super genus hominum') and then addressed explicitly in his words of lament ('Ve ue generi humano, ue peccatoribus; utquid nati sunt?') The extension of compassion to a humanity with whom God has been merciful by offering it the possibility of repentance is a step too far, which the angel simply cannot allow: one cannot weep for someone whose destiny is or will be determined by his own choice and will. Paul's weeping in these two moments thus becomes an opportunity to emphasize the principle of free will, and the penitential purpose of the text is thus on open display: after showing the reader the gravity of the punishments that could await

⁷⁴ Gardiner, p. 46: 'I sighed and wept and said, "Woe to humanity! Woe to the sinners! To what end were they born?" And the angel answered and said to me, "Why do you weep? Are you more merciful than the Lord God who is blessed forever, who has established the judgment and left everyone to choose good or evil of their own will and to do as they please?" Still I wept again very pained; and he said to me, "Do you weep now, when you have still not seen the greater torments? Follow me, and you will see seven times worse than these."'

⁷⁵ In redactions I, II, III and VIII Paul's tears are provoked by the mothers who killed their own children, while in redactions IV, V and VII by the suffering of a negligent bishop.

⁷⁶ In the short redactions Paul weeps just once: I red.8: 'Paulus fleuit et dixit: "Ve, ve, ve, peccatoribus! Utquid nati sunt?". Et angelus: "Quidi ploras, Paule? Nondum vidisti maiora hiis supplicia species."'.

him in the afterlife, the author reminds him of the possibility of repentance and the total absence of compassion beyond this boundary drawn by God.

Returning to the *Commedia*, Virgil's two reproaches are similar to those of the angel in Paul's vision, with some notable differences. From a formal point of view, the two reproaches follow the structure of the angel's one in the *Visio*: an abrupt and brief question opens the discourse ('Ancor se' tu de li altri sciocchi?' (XX. 27), 'Che pur guate?' (XXIX. 4)) followed by another rhetorical and pressing question that defines the reason for the warning.

In particular, the reproach of Canto XXIX takes up and expands on the angel's second reproach: if the angel had criticized Paul's weeping as disproportionate to the occasion, especially when compared to the subsequent visions of even worse suffering, symmetrically Virgil does not understand Dante's behavior because, in the previous *bolge*, he had not displayed a similar reaction, and Virgil concludes the speech by referring to the future things he must show the pilgrim, which cannot wait.

In the reproach of canto XX, as in the Pauline vision, compassion is the feeling under scrutiny, although the focus of the discourse seems to have shifted to another aspect of the question: it is no longer an unprecedented comparison between the pity of the pilgrim and that of God, but the impossibility of pity in the face of the indisputability of divine judgment. In the *Commedia*, the complete acceptance of divine justice demands the absence of emotional reactions and above all of tears shed out of compassion: an inappropriate emotion at this point of the journey, because it can no longer perform any function of contrition for the pilgrim.

In fact, the difference between the roles of Dante and Paul can be measured on the basis of the value which their crying assumes. Paul, unlike Dante, never weeps for himself, but only by virtue of the compassion he feels for others. The possibility of such weeping is dependent on Paul's status as apostle and prophet and is comparable only to two other figures characterized by the same type of weeping: Christ and Muhammad. In the first case, Christ is portrayed in the Gospel of Luke shedding tears of mercy for the planned destruction of Jerusalem (*Luke* 19.41), which John Cassian himself uses as an example of tears of compassion for the suffering of others. Other than Paul, Muhammad is the only protagonist of a medieval vision of the afterlife who cries out of compassion for the damned. In fact, in the *Liber scalae Machometi* (thirteenth century), a work that narrates Muhammad's ascent to heaven and was perhaps known to Dante himself⁷⁷, the Islamic prophet weeps after the archangel Gabriel shows him the infernal torments of sinners, and his tears are explicitly ones of pity: 'Postquam ego Machometus, propheta et nuncius Dei, intellexi quod ichi Gabriel retulit de penis quas in inferno sustinebunt

⁷⁷ See Maria Corti, 'Dante e la cultura islamica', in *Il libro della scala di Maometto. Testo latino a fronte*, ed. by Anna Longoni (Milano: BUR Rizzoli, 2013), pp. 403-426.

peccatores, prout superius audivistis, tantam inde pietatem habui quod valde duriter plorare incepti' (LXXVIII.1)⁷⁸. Similarly, in the *Visio Pauli*, another prophet also weeps: Moses, whom the apostle encounters in Paradise, is represented weeping and mourning the people of Israel who did not follow in his footsteps, thus corrupting themselves in sin⁷⁹. Angels also shed tears of compassion in the Pauline Apocalypse: sharing the pain of the inhabitants of the earth who suffer and cry⁸⁰, weeping for the avarice that destroys the world⁸¹ and for the impossibility of saving a soul⁸².

Paul's tears, like those of Christ and Muhammad, are moved by the feeling of compassion, distinguishing and marking the holiness and prophetic role of those individuals who shed them. While Paul ascends to heaven as an apostle and prophet in order to bring his experience back to humanity, Dante's journey likewise performs this prophetic and testimonial function, but it is at the same time the journey of progression and redemption of a penitent, on both the personal and universal level. For this reason, unlike Paul, Dante rarely weeps with compassion in the sense which Cassian describes, by knowledge of oneself but by the hardness and sins of others: indeed, only his weeping at the entrance of Hell in Canto III can be considered as belonging to this category, while the other cases already analyzed instead treat the direct involvement of the pilgrim and his personal conscience; otherwise, the remaining attempts at weeping are repressed and frustrated. Compassion, therefore, is allowed as long as it plays an active role in the process of contrition (as in the case of Canto V, with Francesca), while outside this sphere, it is definitively denied.

It is clear that as Dante penetrates deeper into Hell, he sheds fewer tears and the process of weeping, and therefore contrition, becomes gradually more difficult: from his full acknowledgement of the sin of cupidity and that of lust, to the partial one of gluttony, from his inappropriate weeping in front of the soothsayers, to his unshed tears at the sight of the sowers of discord, the process of contrition continues to lose its power until it stops working completely. Indeed, what is progressively lacking is compassion and pity, the causes that triggered tears and consequently the recognition of sin. Dante no longer needs to cry in Hell because the first stage of his contrition appears to be complete: he has contemplated and recognized the punishments

⁷⁸ Ibidem, p. 294. Translation mine: 'After that I, Muhammad, prophet and messenger of God, had heard what Gabriel had told me about the punishments that sinners will suffer in hell, I felt so much pity that I began to cry desperately'.

⁷⁹ 'Hic est Moyses legis dator, cui deus legem dedit. Et iuxta me factus statim flevit et post aec salutavit me. Et dixi ei: Quid ploras? Audivi enim quia tu superas omnem hominem in mansuetudinem. Et respondit dicens: Fleveo ego pro his de quibus plantavi cum labore, quia fructum non adtulerunt nec aliquis proficit de eis.' (L1.45-48, Paris)

⁸⁰ 'Nos venimus ab illis qui abrenunciaverunt mundo huic propter nomen sanctum tuum, oberrantes peregrini et ins spelunca petrarum flentes omnibus horis quibus inhabitant terram [...] pre ceteris qui abitant in terram flentes et lugentes. Et nos quidem angeli eorum conlugemus eos.' (L1. 9, Paris).

⁸¹ '[...] ecce angeli alii venerunt adorare in conspectu honores in occursionem, qui flebant' (L1. 10, Paris)

⁸² 'Flete mecum, mei dilectissimi, requiem enim non inveni in hac anima' (L1.9, Paris).

of sins and, learning the limits of compassion, he has finally accepted the fulfilment of the divine justice.

At the same time, Dante's tears in *Inferno* highlight the exceptional quality of the poet's pilgrimage towards salvation, and therefore prove to be completely different from those continuously shed by the damned surrounding Dante in Hell. In fact, the tears that connote the damned's condition - from the first group of souls met on the shore of Acheron, to the traitors in Cocytus - are completely lacking in function and purpose. They become the proper punishment for those who laughed when they should have cried ('woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep!' *Luke* 6.21). Dante, on the other hand, manages in the course of the poem to maintain that double status of sinner and prophet, of everyman and elect, achieving this result through the distinctive and exclusive weeping that allows him to atone for his personal sins, while at the same time carrying out his universal mission. Indeed, it is possible to understand the importance of the universal function of the tears shed by Dante in Hell, who, unlike the sinners, re-orient his will towards God through his proper penitential attitude of weeping, as the Christian doctrine requires. A function which ends as soon as the poet leaves Hell: indeed, after overcoming Lucifer by upending himself and re-establishing the universal order, at the entrance of Purgatory Dante sees his 'guance lagrimose' being washed by Virgil (II. 127).

II. 2 The Origin of Weeping and the Loss of Smile: the Tears of the Old Man of Crete (*Inf.* XIV)

Tears, together with darkness, play a fundamental role in the characterization of the geography of Dante's infernal kingdom, first and foremost as a physical element. As noted, in fact, the four rivers that flow through Hell—the Acheron, Styx, Phlegethon, and Cocytus—are generated by the tears of the Old Man of Crete, the statue which Virgil describes in *Inf.* XIV. 103-114:

Dentro dal monte sta dritto un gran veglio,
che tien volte le spalle inver' Dammiata
e Roma guarda come s'io specchio.
La sua testa è di fin oro formata,
e puro argento son le braccia e 'l petto,
poi è di rame infino a la forcata;
da indi in giuso è tutto ferro eletto,
salvo che 'l destro piede è terra cotta;
e sta 'n su quel, più che 'n su l'altro, eretto.
Ciascuna parte, fuor che l'oro, è rotta
d'una fessura che lagrime goccia,
le quali, accolte, fóran quella grotta.
Lor corso in questa valle si diroccia;
fanno Acheronte, Stige e Flegetonta;
poi sen van giù per questa stretta doccia,
infin, là ove più non si dismonta,
fanno Cocito; e qual sia quello stagno
tu lo vedrai, però qui non si conta".⁸³

The statue of the Old Man of Crete is generally recognized as an allegory for the moral history of humanity corrupted by original sin, as represented by the fissure through various parts of the statue, which depicts the different ages of human civilization, except for the golden head which represents the Golden Age, or Eden in Christian terms. The sources commonly indicated for this figure are the dream of Nebuchadnezzar narrated in the book of Daniel and the Ovidian description of the various ages of human history⁸⁴. However, the detail of the tears would seem to constitute a new element, introduced by Dante himself, since it is not present in the above-mentioned examples. Thus, the origin of the tears of the Old Man of Crete is still the subject of discussion⁸⁵.

⁸³ "Within the mountain stands a huge old man./ He keeps his back turned on Damietta,/ gazing on Rome as in his mirror./ His head is fashioned of fine gold./ his breast and arms of purest silver./ then to the fork he's made of brass./ and from there down he is all iron./ but for his right foot of baked clay./ and he rests more on this than on the other./ Every part except the gold is rent/ by a crack that drips with tears, which, running down,/ collect to force a passage through that cavern, 'taking their course from rock to rock into this depth,/ where they form Acheron, Styx, and Phlegethon./ then, going down this narrow channel./ 'down to where there is no more descent./ they form Cocytus: what kind of pond that is/ you shall see in time -- here I say no more.'

⁸⁴ These sources are already indicated by Guido da Pisa (New York: State University of New York Press, 1974) and Pietro Alighieri (Firenze: G. Piatti, 1845).

⁸⁵ Nicola Gardini indicates a possible source for the tears of the Old Man of Crete in the Book IX of Lucan's *Pharsalia* ('Umanesimo e lacrime di sangue. Una lettura di Inferno XIV', *L'Alighieri, Rassegna dantesca*, 38 (2011), pp. 57-76).

In particular, some scholars agree in recognizing in Dante's Old Man as a allegoric representation of Adam⁸⁶, the first man: in fact, according to Giovanni Busnelli's reading, the cracks in the statue represent the *vulneratio naturae*, the wound, the effects of original sin, and therefore the Old Man could be identified with the Pauline *vetus homo*, the old man, who stands in opposition to the new man reborn in Christ, because he represents the old life, driven down by the sin in which he lives because of Adam⁸⁷. The analogy between the two figures shows further traces in the gigantic dimensions that characterize the Old Man, with which the first man was often represented as well⁸⁸. In the context of this interpretation, the hypothesis of a connection between Adam and the Old Man based on weeping has at times been suggested⁸⁹, but without any attempt at further, necessary investigation. Nevertheless, weeping certainly plays a primary role in the relationship between Dante's statue and the progenitor of mankind. In fact, I believe the statue can be interpreted as a moral allegory for the history of humanity's corruption, narrated through those emotive tools which original sin deprived from and gave to the first man: the smile and tears, respectively.

First of all, we must begin our analysis at the head of the statue: as noted, the golden head of the Old Man symbolizes the Golden Age, which in classical mythology was identified with the kingdom of Saturn, king of Crete, to whom Dante refers in v. 96 of *Inf.* XIV, and which in the Christian narrative coincided with the joyful state of innocence in which man lived in Eden before the Fall.

To understand why the Old Man's golden head is the only part of the statue to remain intact, one must review *Purgatorio* XXVIII. 94-96, a canto in which Dante provides fundamental information on his vision of Adamic history⁹⁰. The locus of the canto is Eden, and before providing Dante with explanations on the meteorological particulars of the place, Matelda, the woman who resides in the Earthly Paradise, tells how the sin of the first man radically altered the sense of happiness that characterized the Earthly Paradise:

Per sua difalta qui dimorò poco;
per sua difalta in pianto e in affanno

⁸⁶ See Giovanni Busnelli, *L'Etica Nicomachea e l'ordinamento morale dell'Inferno di Dante. Con un'appendice: la Concezione dantesca del gran veglio di Creta* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1907), pp. 159-191; Robert Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 250-51.

⁸⁷ Busnelli, p. 173.

⁸⁸ On the topic see James M. Dean, *The World Grown Old in Later Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: Mass., Medieval Academy of America, 1997), p. 186.

⁸⁹ See Theodore Silverstein, 'The weeping statue and Dante's Gran Veglio', in *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*, 13 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), 165-184, (p. 168-169) and Vittorio Capetti, *Illustrazioni al poema di Dante* (Città di Castello: Casa Editrice S. Lapi, 1914), pp. 38-39.

⁹⁰ The importance of the connection between the two cantos has been already understood by Ambrogio Camozzi in 'Il Veglio di Creta alla luce di Matelda: Una lettura comparativa di Inferno XIV e Purgatorio XXVIII', *The Italianist*, 29, 3-49.

*cambiò onesto riso e dolce gioco.*⁹¹

In these verses, Dante affirms how the Adamic Fall deliberately deprived man of joy, which instead turned to tears. In order to understand the full meaning of this transformation, it will be necessary, first of all, to observe the altered condition, namely what Dante calls ‘onesto riso e dolce gioco’. This syntagm represents a recurring expression within the tradition of love poetry, often used to describe both the happy condition of falling in love⁹², and the loss of this condition, now changed into grief and tears⁹³. Its use certainly falls within the stylistic register that characterizes the entire episode of Matelda, but Dante transfers this use from the realm of earthly love to a celestial context, in order to describe the loss of the original joy of Eden’s inhabitants, expressed essentially through the act of smiling. That same *riso* now appears on the face of Matelda, a symbol of the human condition prior to original sin: in fact, Matelda ‘ridea da l’altra riva dritta’⁹⁴ (*Purg.* XXVIII. 67), with a smile that is a sign ‘of heavenly joy’⁹⁵. Dante seems, therefore, to affirm the pre-existence of smiling with respect to weeping and its presence in Eden before original sin, both through the above-mentioned affirmation and through the representation of Matelda herself.

The woman’s smile seems, however, to cause amazement in her interlocutors—Dante, Virgil and Statius—as Matelda herself points out (*Purg.* XXVIII. 76-81):

"Voi siete nuovi, e forse *perch'io rido*",
cominciò ella, "*in questo luogo eletto*
a l'umana natura per suo nido,
maravigliando tienvi alcun sospetto;
ma luce rende il salmo Delectasti,
che potete disnebbiar vostro intelletto."⁹⁶

The cause of their amazement was the subject of much investigation within the commentary: the earliest commentators dwelt on the appropriacy of Matelda’s *riso*, as ‘laughter is not commendable in a perfect woman and in a perfect place’⁹⁷; modern commentary, on the other

⁹¹ ‘Through his own fault his sojourn here was brief./ Through his own fault he changed lighthearted frolic/ and unblemished joy for toil and tears.’

⁹² Bonagiunta Orbicciani, *Donna, vostre belleze* (9): ‘gioco, solazo e riso’; Dante da Maiano, *Se l'avvenente che m'ave in balia* (13): ‘sovente - aver sollazzo, gioco e riso’; Iacopone da Todi, *O Amor, devino Amore* (24): ‘Amor de riso e ioco’; Cino da Pistoia, *Se voi udiste la voce dolente* (13): ‘per che m'incontra ciò che riso e gioco’. In particular Giacomo da Lentini in *Io m'aggio posto in core*, defines its paradise with earthly feature as a place where ‘si mantien sollazzo, gioco e riso’.

⁹³ See Rinaldo d'Aquino, *Amorosa donna fina* (12): ‘levatemi gioco e riso’; Bartolino Palmieri, *O voi ch'alegri gite, e me dolore* (5): ‘Riso, gioia de meo canto e d'Amore, gioco’; Iacopone da Todi, *O frate, guarda 'l Viso, se voi ben reguarire*, (42): ‘perdut'à riso e ioco e onne alerezza avire’.

⁹⁴ ‘Smiled from the other shore’.

⁹⁵ Giovanni A. Scartazzini (Milano: U. Hoepli, 1929).

⁹⁶ ‘You are new here,’ she began, ‘and,/ perhaps because I’m smiling in this place/ chosen for mankind as its nest,/ you are perplexed and filled with wonder,/ but the psalm Delectasti offers light/ that may disperse the clouds within your minds.’

⁹⁷ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887).

hand, has attributed this amazement to the fact that Matelda smiles precisely in the locus of Adam's sin, an event that should 'generate woefulness and tears rather than joyfulness and smiles'⁹⁸. Both explanations capture only one aspect of the issue, which is of broader scope and concerns the very legitimacy of the act of smiling as represented in Eden.

In the Middle Ages in general, the fact that Eden was identifiable as a place of earthly happiness was a commonly held idea, as St. Augustine emphasizes:

Now let us look at man's happiness which is signified by the name of paradise. [...] We should understand that our spiritual joys are signified by every tree beautiful to the gaze of the intelligence and good for the food which is not corrupted and by which the happy souls are fed [...]. He set the light of wisdom to the east in Eden, that is in immortal and intelligible delights. For this word is said to signify delights, or pleasures, or a feast if it is translated from Hebrew to Latin. It is set down this way without translation so that it seems to signify a particular place and to make the expression more figurative. We take every tree that the earth produced as every spiritual joy; for such joys rise above the earth and are not caught and overwhelmed by the tangles of earthly desires.⁹⁹

Augustine recalls how the word Eden, in its Latin translation, means joy, delight, pleasure, and the trees growing there are but a symbol of this spiritual joy. Matelda appears to reiterate this concept, citing *Psalms* 91.5 to justify her smile: if in the psalm man rejoices and exults in the beauty of creation, likewise Matelda is happy for her knowledge of the Lord's work, represented by the wonders of the Edenic garden and, in particular, by that 'divina foresta' (*Purg.* XXVIII. 2), an Augustinian symbol of spiritual joy uncontaminated by earthly passions. As can be observed, however, this joy is expressed, in Dante's representation, through her smile, an element not legitimized by any biblical or theological source¹⁰⁰.

On the other hand, the possible presence of the smile in Eden could, however, find its justification in the theses of Augustine and later Thomas Aquinas, concerning the bodily physicality of the inhabitants of Earthly Paradise. According to Augustine of Hippo, Adam in fact possessed a real and material body and, at the same time, an immortal and perfect one¹⁰¹.

⁹⁸ Scartazzini (Milano: U. Hoepli, 1929).

⁹⁹ St. Augustine, *On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*, trans. by R. J. Teske, (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 1990), pp. 107-108.

'Nunc iam videamus ipsam beatitudinem hominis, quae paradisi nomine significatur [...]. Intellegamus autem nostra gaudia spiritalia significare omne lignum formosum ad aspectum intellegentiae, et bonum ad escam quae non corrumpitur, qua beatae animae pascuntur: [...]. Ad orientem, lucem sapientiae in Eden, id est in deliciis immortalibus et intellegibilibus. Nam deliciae, vel voluptas, vel epulum hoc verbo significari dicitur, si ex hebraeo in latinum interpretetur. Positum est autem sic sine interpretatione, ut aliquem locum significare videatur, magisque figuratam faciat locutionem. Productum autem ex terra omne illud lignum accipimus omne illud gaudium spiritale; id est, supereminere terrae, et non involvi atque obrui terrenarum cupiditatum implicamentis' (*De Genesi contra Manicheos*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1841), PL 44, 173-230, II. 9-12).

¹⁰⁰ As suggested by Peter Dronke, the source of Matelda's *riso* could be secular and could be identified with the personification of Nature in Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus* ('Dante's Earthly paradise' in *The Medieval Poet and his World* (Roma: Storia e Letteratura, 1984), pp. 387-405 (pp. 392-393)).

¹⁰¹ Augustinus Aurelius Hipponiensis, *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecimo*, ed. by Jacques Migne (Paris: 1850), PL 34, 246-486, VIII, 1.1. On the topic see Alessandro Scafi, 'Onesto riso e dolce gioco: Dante, l'Eden e la

Thomas Aquinas took up this idea, also defining the terms of human knowledge in the Garden of Eden: he affirmed that Adam was in possession of an intermediary knowledge of God, between that of men after original sin and that possible only in heavenly bliss, which is contemplation of the divine¹⁰². As noted¹⁰³, all of Dante's references to Adam and Eve in the *Commedia* confirm his reappropriation of the Augustinian and Thomistic conception of Adam's natural perfection. The presence of the smile in Eden before the Fall appears, therefore, a natural consequence of this perfection.

In the first place, because Adam, Eve and Matelda, as bodily human beings, smile. Indeed, in the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Vita Nuova*, Dante clarifies how the corporal and human nature of Amore is legitimised through the ability to laugh, a typically human attribute¹⁰⁴. Such a concept will be restated later in *Epistola XIII*, where the author affirms that 'si homo est, est risibile'¹⁰⁵. As has been already observed¹⁰⁶, here Dante shares the Aristotelian statement reintroduced and diffused by the Scholastic philosophy, according to which 'among the living beings man is the only one to be able to laugh'¹⁰⁷.

Secondly, the *riso* of Matelda is an explicit expression of the degree of her knowledge of God, as Matelda clarifies by quoting *Psalms* 91.5. If we consider, therefore, the novelty of this representation, we will understand why Dante dedicates verses to the explanation of Matelda's *riso* and thus prevents the possibility of doubt and amazement among the pilgrims, the same reaction which he expects from his readers. In fact, the introduction of the smile into Eden needs clarification since, as both an unexpected and a problematic act, it raises the following questions: first, the issue of the appropriacy of smiling or laughter, phenomena often condemned as rude and corporeal in the Middle Ages and, therefore, unsuitable for a place such as the Earthly Paradise; moreover, as we will see, the birth of the laughter was considered a consequence of the Adamic fall and, therefore, its presence in Eden would be out of place, if not impossible.

cartografia medievale', *Lecture Classensi: Dante e l'arte*, ed. by Claudia Giuliani (Ravenna: Longo, 2007), 59-82 (pp. 62-65).

¹⁰² 'Nevertheless he knew God with a more perfect knowledge than we do now. Thus in a sense his knowledge was midway between our knowledge in the present state, and the knowledge we shall have in heaven, when we see God through His Essence. To make this clear, we must consider that the vision of God through His Essence is contradistinguished from the vision of God through His creatures. Now the higher the creature is, and the more like it is to God, the more clearly is God seen in it; for instance, a man is seen more clearly through a mirror in which his image is the more clearly expressed.' (*ST*, Ia, Q. 94, A. 1).

¹⁰³ Scafi, p. 65.

¹⁰⁴ *Vn.* XXV.2: '[...] appare che io ponga Amore essere corpo. Dico anche di lui che ridea, e anche che parlava; le quali cose paiono essere proprie dell'uomo, e spezialmente essere risibile; e però appare ch'io ponga lui essere uomo'.

¹⁰⁵ Dante Alighieri, *Convivio; Monarchia; Epistole; Egloge*, ed. by Gianfranco Fioravanti (Milano, Mondadori, 2014), 2, p. 343. Trans.: 'if he is a man, he is able to laugh'.

¹⁰⁶ Renè Stella, 'Dante et le rire', *Italies. Littérature Civilisation Société*, 4 (2000), 689-704.

¹⁰⁷ Aristotle, *On the parts of animals*, III, 10, trans. by William Ogle (<<https://penelope.uchicago.edu/ari-stotle/parts1.html>> [accessed February 2022]).

Regarding the first point, it explains why Matelda feels the need to clarify the quality of her smile, calling it 'honest': in fact, as Benvenuto says, 'joy does not proceed from vanity as in the women living in the earthly world, but from honesty'¹⁰⁸. Matelda's honest *riso* is therefore not a corporal laughter nor does it correspond to the *exsultatio*, the eschatological smile reserved for the blessed, since the knowledge of God to which Matelda has access is more limited than the beatific knowledge of the blessed. Hers is a human, honest and moderate smile, the expression of divine knowledge in Edenic man, through which Dante introduces his personal interpretation of the human condition in Eden.

If, therefore, it is the smile that characterizes the condition of man before the Adamic Fall, the second obstacle is a false problem: in fact, the laughter produced by original sin is not the smile of Matelda, but the false *risus*, the sinful and unhinged laughter of men 'intimately linked to the event of an ancient fall, of a physical and moral degradation'¹⁰⁹. In fact, as the theologian Hildegard of Bingen writes, providing a theological and biological explanation of laughter: 'just as Adam's fall the pure, holy form of begetting offspring was transformed into carnal desire, so also the voice full of heavenly joy that Adam possessed changed into the opposite sound of hilarity and resounding laughter'¹¹⁰. As Laurence Moulinier notes in his comment on the passage, the change in the nature of man resulting from the Fall and original sin implied a physiological mutation, a transformation of fluids that provoked both noisy and sinful laughter, and the feelings of melancholy and *tristitia*, and therefore, weeping¹¹¹. In sum, the Fall of Adam, according to Dante's narration, on the one hand deprived mankind of the smile, the highest expression of the Edenic knowledge of God, and on the other endowed it with a new emotional manifestation: weeping.

Returning to *Inf.* XIV, the structure of the Old Man of Crete could depict this transition from smile to tears precisely in the notable difference between its golden head and its other corrupt and lachrymose sections. In fact, the classical myth of the Golden Age is explicitly connected to that of the Earthly Paradise in *Purg.* XXVIII. 139-44, where reference is made to the divinatory intuition of Eden that the ancient poets had, singing the 'age of gold' and 'its happy state' (140) This ancient happiness finds an almost immediate correspondence in the reaction of the two poets, Virgil and Statius, who 'con riso udito avēan l'ultimo costrutto' (*Purg.* XXVIII.146-47)¹¹². Therefore, the golden head of the Old Man is the only part of the statue to

¹⁰⁸ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887).

¹⁰⁹ Charles Baudelaire, *Dell'essenza del riso e in generale del comico nelle arti plastiche* (Torino: Einaudi, 1992), p. 141.

¹¹⁰ Hildegard of Bingen, *Holistic Healing*, trans. by M. Pawlik and others (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1994), p. 132.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 473-474.

¹¹² 'Had listened to her final utterance with a smile'

remain intact, without cracks that produce tears, precisely because it symbolizes not only an uncorrupted age in which happiness reigned, but above all an age of man in which tears simply did not exist; a period in which, on the contrary, according to Dante, the smile was possible, acting as an emotional manifestation suitable for expressing the knowledge of God.

The rest of the Old Man's body is, instead, pierced by fissures from which tears constantly stream, flowing down to form the four infernal rivers. The reason why Dante chose to represent the corruption of man through such tears should once again be found in the connection of the statue with the figure of Adam.

The question of Adam's weeping appears as interesting as that concerning his ability to smile: in fact, while in the Bible Adam is never represented in the act of weeping, other sources, both written and iconographic, instead provide this information.

As has been noted, tears appear on Adam's face in some Arabic legends¹¹³, and they figure prominently in an apocryphal text of considerable importance and influence in the Middle Ages, the so-called *Apocalypse of Moses*. This legend of Jewish origin, which has come down to us in Greek and dates to the first century AD, narrates the story of the life of Adam and Eve after their expulsion from the Earthly Paradise, and was subject of numerous translations and subsequent adaptations. In particular, in the *Vita latina Adae et Evae*, the Latin version of this legend, the first reaction and consequence of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden is indeed their constant weeping over the course of seven days: 'Quando expulsi sunt de paradiso, fecerunt sibi tabernaculum et fuerunt VII dies lugentes et lamentantes in magna tristitia' (*Vita* 1. 1)¹¹⁴.

It is interesting to note how this moment of weeping, while not stemming from the canonical source of the Bible, has influenced the iconographical representation of the progenitors: in fact, it is possible to observe portrayals of Adam and Eve in a state of weeping both in manuscript examples and in monumental sculptures and frescoes. One case is a Byzantine ivory box in the Cleveland Museum, on which Adam and Eve are represented weeping after their expulsion (fig. 1)¹¹⁵. The influence of the textual *Vita* on this depiction has been acknowledged¹¹⁶, and likewise

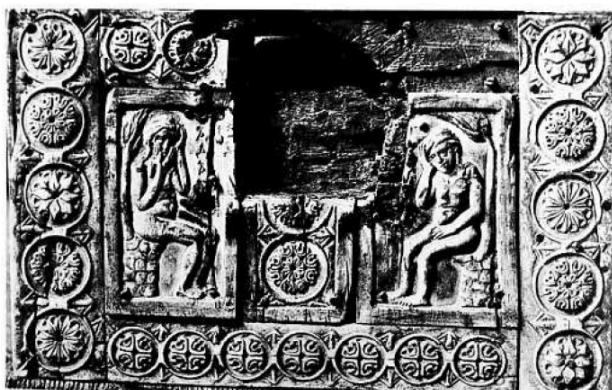
¹¹³ See Silverstein, 'The weeping statue and Dante's Gran Veglio', p. 168 and Capetti, pp. 38-39.

¹¹⁴ Wilhelm Meyer, *Vita Adae et Evae* (Verlag d. Bayer: Akad. der Wiss, 1878), p. 221. Translation mine: 'When Adam and Eve were expelled from paradise they made for themselves a tent and spent seven days mourning and lamenting in great sadness'. See also M. E. B. Halford, 'The apocryphal "Vita Adae et Evae". Some Comments on the Manuscript Tradition', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 82, 4 (1981), 417-427.

¹¹⁵ Ivory box, *The lament of the progenitors after the expulsion*, (Cleveland, Museum), in Massimo Bernabò, *La cacciata dal Paradiso e il lavoro dei progenitori in alcune miniature medievali* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1979), p. 274.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

in the case of the Byzantine Octateuch, *The Expulsion of Paradise*, where Adam and Eve weep alongside a child—likely Seth, according to the *Vita* (fig. 2)¹¹⁷.



(Fig. 1)



(Fig. 2)

A similar image occurs in the bas-relief by Wiligelmo on the façade of the Modena cathedral, depicting various moments in the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Earthly Paradise, including the weeping which results from God’s reproach and expulsion (fig. 3)¹¹⁸.

In the late medieval mural, *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Earthly Paradise*, within the Church of S. Maria in Vescovio (XIII/ XIV century), the progenitors of mankind appear once again in a similar posture (fig.4)¹¹⁹: arm bent, hand covering the face in an expression of weeping and despair.

¹¹⁷ Octateuch, *The Expulsion of Paradise* (Roma, Biblioteca Vaticana, cod. gr. 746, c. 44r), in Bernabò, p. 275.

¹¹⁸ Wiligelmo, *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Earthly Paradise*, Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta in Cielo, Modena (1090- 1120), <<https://fototeca.fondazioneeragghianti.it/>> [accessed February 2021].

¹¹⁹ Anonimo Romano, *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Earthly Paradise*, Church of S. Maria in Vescovio, Torri in Sabina, Lazio, Italy (XIII/ XIV sec.), <<https://fondazionezeri.unibo.it/it/>> [accessed February 2021].



(Fig. 3); (Fig. 4)

Adam's weeping will then find the peak of its figurative expression in Masaccio's fresco, *The Expulsion of the Progenitors from Eden*, decorating the Brancacci Chapel in the church of Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence (1424-1425) (fig. 5)¹²⁰.



(Fig. 5)

As in *Purgatorio* XXVIII, following the narration of the *Vita*, the expulsion from Eden is the cause of Adam and Eve's weeping, and therefore of man's first tears. In this regard, two

¹²⁰ Detail of Masaccio, *Cacciata di Adamo ed Eva* (1424-25), fresco (208 x 88 cm), Firenze, Santa Maria del Carmine, Cappella Brancacci, <<https://www.frammentiarte.it/2016/44-la-cacciata-dei-progenitori/>> [accessed February 2021].

passages taken from Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, commenting on v. 6 of Psalm 29, provide interesting information:

In the evening weeping will tarry. Evening began, when the light of wisdom withdrew from sinful man, when he was condemned to death: from this evening weeping will tarry, as long as God's people are, amid labours and temptations, awaiting the day of the Lord. And exultation in the morning. Even to the morning, when there will be the exultation of the resurrection, which has shone forth by anticipation in the morning resurrection of the Lord.¹²¹

Weeping will linger in the evening: what does that mean? The evening is when the sun sets. Now the sun, which means the light of righteousness and the presence of God, set on the human race; for what does Genesis tell us about the time when Adam was driven out of the garden? It was when God was taking a walk in paradise, and he was walking about there toward evening. The sinner had already hidden himself among the trees; he did not want to see God's face, though that had formerly been his delight, for the sun of righteousness had set for him and he no longer found any joy in the presence of God. From that point the whole of this mortal life was launched. *Weeping will linger in the evening*. You will be in tears for a long time, humankind, for you were born from Adam. We too are from Adam, and as many as have procreated offspring, and will do so in the future, procreate children who, just like their parents, are descendants of Adam. *Weeping will linger in the evening, but toward morning there will be rejoicing*, when the sun which had set on sinners has begun to dawn on the faithful. This is why the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the tomb in the morning, to promise to the whole house what he has already dedicated in the foundation. [...] You must look forward in hope to the morning, and be joyful in it; but for the present you have to grit your teeth and lament.¹²²

As can be observed, Augustine affirms that the weeping of mankind began in the evening, both metaphorically and literally: on the one hand, when Adam committed the original sin, he turned away from the light of God; on the other, according to Genesis, it was evening when Adam was expelled from Eden. Since then, mankind has been condemned from birth to a state of tears, waiting for the arrival of the morning and, therefore, for the Resurrection of the Lord:

¹²¹ Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms*, 29. I. 6, <<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1801030.htm>> [accessed February 2021]. 'Vespere demorabitur fletus: vespere coepit, ubi sapientiae lumen recessit a peccante homine, quando morte damnatus est; ab ipso vespere moras habebit fletus, quamdiu in laboribus et tentationibus populus Dei exspectat diem Domini. Et in matutinum exsultatio: usque in matutinum, quo exsultatio resurrectionis futura est, quae in matutina Domini resurrectione prae floruit' (Augustinus Aurelius Hipponiensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1845) PL 36, 67 – 1026, 29. I. 6).

¹²² Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms 1-32*, in *The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st century* (ed. by Edmund Hill and others (New York: New City Press, 1990-2019)), III/15, trans. by Maria Boulding (New York: New City Press, 2000), p. 312. 'Vespere demorabitur fletus. Quid est: Vespere demorabitur fletus? Vespera fit quando sol occidit. Occidit sol ab homine, id est lux illa iustitiae, praesentia Dei. Ideo quando expulsus est Adam, quid dictum est in Genesi? Cum deambulet Deus in paradiso; ad vesperam deambulabat Deus: iam ille peccator texerat se intra lignum, nolebat videre faciem Dei, ad quam gaudere consueverat: occiderat illi sol iustitiae, non gaudebat ad praesentiam Dei. Inde inchoata est omnis vita ista mortalis. Vespere demorabitur fletus. Diu eris in fletu, o genus humanum: nasceris enim de Adam, et sic est factum; et nos ex Adam sumus, et quotquot crearentur filios, et creaturi sunt, ex Adam sunt, ex quo et ipsi creati sunt. Vespere demorabitur fletus: et in matutinum exsultatio: quando coeperit oriri fidelibus lux, quae occiderat peccatoribus. Nam ideo et Dominus Iesus Christus in matutino resurrexit de sepulcro, ut quod dedicavit in fundamento, hoc promitteret domui. [...] In matutino sperandum est, laetandum est; sed perferendum est modo, et gemendum' (Augustinus Aurelius Hipponiensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 29. II. 16).

From the very moment Adam fell, and was driven out of paradise, there have never been any days that weren't evil. Let's question the very babies as they are born, why they begin by crying, though they are also capable of laughing. It's born, and straightaway it cries; after I don't know how many days it laughs. When it started crying at birth, it was a prophet of its own misfortunes; tears, after all, bear witness to misery.¹²³

Therefore, in these passages, not only does Augustine confirm the birth of weeping after the expulsion of the progenitors from Eden, but he also establishes a close relationship between *homo vetus* and *homo novus*, between Adam and Christ, by virtue of the antithesis between weeping and laughter: the former who initiated weeping and the exile of the human race is contrasted with the latter who will reinitiate the *exsultatio*, laughter and the possibility of return to the heavenly homeland. The phrase with which Augustine concludes his commentary ('You must look forward in hope to the morning, and be joyful in it; but for the present you have to grit your teeth and lament') appears to be nothing more than a reworking and re-proposal of the concept affirmed in the beatitude of Luke: 'blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh' (6. 21). The present time is, therefore, *tempus flendi*, in which weeping has become a sign of exile from the heavenly homeland and a necessary tool of redemption from original sin, and therefore of access to the *tempus ridendi*, to the lost smile, to the age of the *exsultatio* reserved for the blessed. In fact, as Charles Baudelaire writes on the subject of Eden, 'with tears man washes away the sufferings of man, sometimes softening his own heart and entrancing himself with laughter; for the phenomena produced by the Fall shall become the means of redemption'¹²⁴. Adam himself understands the redemptive function of weeping in the *Vita latina*: in fact, after searching for food and finding nothing like what he had in Earthly Paradise, Adam understands that the only way of communication with God is through weeping and, therefore, through penance: 'But justly and worthily do we lament before the face of God who made us. Let us perform a great penitence. Perhaps the Lord God will yield and have mercy on us and give us something by which we might live'¹²⁵. This penitential function, as we have seen, is well represented in the *Commedia*, from Dante's weeping and Beatrice's tears at the opening of the *Inferno*, it will find its complete realization in the *Purgatorio*.

¹²³ *Sermons III*, in *The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. by Edmund Hill (1992), p. 211. 'Ex quo enim lapsus est Adam, et de paradiso expulsus, numquam fuerunt dies, nisi mali. Istos pueros qui nascuntur, interrogemus, quare a ploratu incipiunt, qui et ridere possunt. Nascitur, et statim plorat; post nescio quot dies ridet. Quando plorabat nascens, propheta suae calamitatis erat; lacrimae enim testes sunt miseriae' (Augustinus, *Sermones* 167. 1, PL 38 (Migne: 1845-49)). This concept is again underscored in *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 125. X.4 and in *Sermones* 293.10.

¹²⁴ My own translation. The passage is cited in Benedetto Clausi, 'Il contrastato riso', in *Riso e comicità nel cristianesimo antico. Atti del Convegno (Torino, 14-16 febbraio 2005). E altri studi*, ed. by Clementina Mazzucco (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2007), pp. 3-46 (p. 17).

¹²⁵ *Electronic Edition of the "Life of Adam and Eve"*, translated into English by B. Custis and others, <<http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/anderson/vita/english/vita.lat.html>> [accessed January 2022]. 'Sed iuste et digne plangimus ante cospicuum dei, qui fecit nos. Peniteamus penitentiam magnam; forsitan indulgeat et miserebitur nostri domus deus et disponet nobis, unde vivamus' (*Vita Adae et Evae*, p. 222).

However, weeping produced by the Fall expresses, at the same time, a detachment from God, in the form of exile and regret for what is lost: like laughter, weeping results from the degradation of the human condition and, as such, if done in vain, can even lead to damnation. In this regard, once again it is Augustine who provides a clear explanation. Commenting on a verse from Psalm 125, *Qui seminant in lacrymis in gaudio metent*, the theologian makes a distinction between the tears shed in prayer by saints and the faithful, and those who weep in vain:

There are tears of the pious, there are tears of the saints, which are indicated by their prayers. He does a good deed, and is cheerful about it. [...] But now take those who cry here pointlessly, who laugh pointlessly, tossed this way and that by their lusts; when they are cheated they cry, when they cheat successfully they make merry. They too cry along this road, they too cry – but not with merry-making. But coming they will with merry-making, carrying their sheaves. What sheaves can they bind, though, if they haven't sown anything? Though in fact they do bind and gather something, but it's what they have sown. Because they have sown thistles, they bind and gather fire, and they go not from weeping to laughter like saints – Going they were going and weeping, casting their seed, but coming they shall come with merry-making-no, but they go from weeping to weeping, from weeping together with laughter to weeping without laughter. What, after all, is going to happen to them? Where are they going when they rise from the dead? Can it be anything else but what the Lord said, Bind them hand and foot and cast them forth into the outer darkness (Mt 22:13)? Come on then, what next? Shall there be darkness, and shall there be no pain? They will grope around, perhaps, but not feel any pain? They won't be able to see, but won't be tormented? Don't you believe it! There won't be only darkness, they won't only have the sights they used to enjoy taken away from them, they will also be given something to groan about for ever. [...] What will it be like, though? There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt 22:13). Tormented without sagging. The torturer never tires, the one tortured never dies. So there will be everlasting tears for those who have lived like that.¹²⁶

The tears of the saints, of those who pray while carrying out good works, are keys to the smile, to future bliss. On the other hand, vain weeping, like laughter, leads man to a very different fate: those who have laughed rudely, laughing and rejoicing at having committed sin, will be punished with weeping, according to the principle of the Gospel ('Woe to you who now laugh, for you will mourn and weep!' *Luke* 6.25). Furthermore, those who have wept vainly for their greed and for their earthly desires, mixing weeping with laughter (*fletu cum risu*), will be

¹²⁶ *Sermons on the Old Testament, 20-50*, in *The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. by Edmund Hill (1990), pp. 134-35. 'Sunt lacrymae piorum, sunt lacrymae sanctorum, quas indicant orationes eorum. Bene operatur, et hilaris est. [...] Porro autem illi qui hic inaniter plorant, inaniter rident, cupiditatibus suis dissipati, quando fraudantur gemunt, quando fraudant exsultant. Plorant et ipsi in via ista, plorant et ipsi, sed non in exsultatione. Venientes autem venient in exsultatione, portantes manipulos suos. Quid colligunt, qui nihil seminaverunt? Immo colligunt, sed quod seminaverunt. Quia spinas seminaverunt, ignem colligunt, et eunt non de fletu ad risum sicut sancti: Euntes ibant et flebant, mittentes semina sua, venientes autem venient in exsultatione, illi a fletu ad fletum, a fletu cum risu ad fletum sine risu. Quid enim illis fiet? Quo eunt quando resurrexerint? Quid nisi quod Dominus dixit: Ligat illis manus et pedes, et proicite illos in tenebras exteriores? Age, quid postea? Tenebrae erunt et dolor non erit? Forte palpabunt, sed non dolebunt? Non videbunt, sed non cruciabantur? Absit. Non solae tenebrae erunt, non eis sola tollitur species qua gaudebant, sed datur etiam quod in aeternum gemant. [...] Sed quomodo erunt? Ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium. Tortor sine defectu, tortus sine defectu. Nec qui torquet fatigatur, nec qui torquetur morietur. Erunt ergo aeternae lacrymae illis qui sic vixerunt' (*Sermones*, 31. 6).

condemned to weep *sine risu*; that is, without any hope of heavenly joy. Augustine emphasizes the eternal nature of such punishment: not only will sinners be punished with eternal darkness, but they will be condemned to spill *aeternae lacrymae*, eternal tears. Therefore weeping, born of original sin, is a divine gift granted to man as a means of redemption, though if used incorrectly, it becomes an expression of degradation and sin and, therefore, a *contrappasso*, an instrument of divine punishment.

This therefore, is the nature of the tears that drip from the fissures in the Old Man of Crete: as a symbol of Adam, the tears depict the history of human corruption through the loss of the smile and the origin of sinful and vain weeping, of the tears born from *cupiditas*, from the excessive and earthly desire for false goods. It is weeping that expresses the very essence of the sin that derives from free will, from the possibility of moving away from the knowledge of God, of Adam's rebellion against Him. In fact, to weep in vain means not to use weeping as a penitential instrument and, therefore, to make a conscious choice to refuse the path back to the heavenly homeland offered by God. Weeping in Hell becomes, *tout court*, a symbol of this digression, of eternal exile. The Old Man of Crete, therefore, weeps for humanity corrupted by sin, for a humanity that has wept in vain or laughed inappropriately and that, therefore, will weep with equally vain tears, without hope of redemption, for all eternity.

It is this same humanity for which Adam himself weeps in the *Visio Thurkilli*, a vision of the afterlife written by the Cistercian friar Ralph of Coggeshall in the county of Essex at the beginning of the thirteenth century. During his vision, the monk Thurkill arrives in Paradise, where he meets Adam, whose representation appears similar in several aspects to that of Dante's Old Man:

[...] arborum et fructuum redolentia referto conspicatus est fontem lucidissimum, qui ex se quatuor rivulos diversi liquoris et coloris scaturiebat, qui tandem in unum fluvium coierunt. super hunc fontem extitit arbor pulcherrima *mire magnitudinis*, immense proceritatis, que omnigenum fructuum abundantia ac specierum redolentia ubertim affluebat. sub hac arbore prope fontem requiescebat homo quidam venuste forme ac gigantei corporis, eratque a pedibus usque ad pectus quodam vestimento varii coloris mirabili pulchritudine intexto indutus. *ex uno oculo videbatur ridere et altero lugere*. 'Hic' inquit sanctus Michael 'est primus parens humani generis, scilicet Adam, *qui per unum oculum ridentem innuit letitiam, quam habet de filiorum suorum salvandorum ineffabili glorificatione; et per alium lacrimantem protendit tristitiam de filiorum suorum dampnandorum reprobatione*. vestimentum, quo tegitur, sed nondum ex toto, est stola immortalitatis et vestis glorie, qua spoliatus fuit in primaria prevaricatione.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ *Visio Thurkilli* "relatore, ut videtur, Radulpho de Coggeshall, ed. by Paul G. Schmidt (Leipzig: 1978), p. 35. "There the man saw a very clear spring that sent forth four streams of different colored water. Over this fountain there was a beautiful tree of wonderful size and immense height that abounded in all kinds of fruits and the sweet smell of spices. Under this tree near the fountain a large and handsome man rested. He was clothed from his feet to his breast in a garment of of various colors and of wonderfully beautiful texture. This man seemed to be smiling in one eye and weeping from the other. "This," said St. Michael, "is the first parent of the human race, Adam. By the smiling eye he indicates the joy that he feels in the glorification of his children who are to be saved. By the weeping eye, he expresses the sorrow he feels for the punishment and just judgment of God on his children who

In fact, not only is Adam characterized here as having gigantic dimensions (*gigantei corporis*), but he is described as crying and laughing at the same time, through each of his two eyes: if with laughter he expresses joy for the salvation of the blessed, with tears he shows sadness for the reprobation of his condemned descendants. Like the Old Man, Adam's body is depicted in a composite manner, with an incomplete garment made from various fabrics and colors which, unlike Dante's statue, does not represent loss and degradation, but the gradual recovery of the glory and immortality lost through original sin, to be obtained only at the end of the world, thanks to the actions of righteous men. If Dante's Old Man, as an allegorical Adam, narrates the story of man before the redemption of Christ¹²⁸, the Adam of the *Visio Thurkilli* depicts the moral history of man after the advent of Christ up to the end of the world.

Moreover, in this passage, the figure of Adam appears at rest under a tree rising above a spring, from which flow four streams of different liquids and colors: these are identifiable with the tree of life and the four rivers of Eden narrated in *Genesis* II. 8-15. Interestingly, the association between Adam's tears and the four rivers appears explicit in an Islamic legend which Jacques Paul Migne cites in his *Dictionnaire des Apocryphes*:

A Muslim legend tells that Adam resisted his partner's entreaties for eighty years. He shed so many tears after his expulsion from Paradise, that the birds and the quadrupeds were watered by them: out of his left eye came the source of the Tigris, and out of his right eye the Euphrates. The tears of Eve which fell on your land gave birth to rubies, and those which rolled into the sea were transformed into pearls.¹²⁹

According to this legend, the tears which Adam sheds after expulsion from Eden generate two of the Edenic rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, while Eve's weeping forms rubies on the earth and pearls in the sea; these latter tears, according to the interpretation of Vittorio Capetti, teach 'what the riches of the land and the sea, man's insatiable craving, had cost in terms of pain and remorse'¹³⁰.

are to be condemned. The garment that covers him, not quite entirely, is the robe of immortality and the garment of glory. He was deprived of it for his first transgression' (Gardiner, p.174).

¹²⁸ '[...] he is historically all those since Adam and before Christ who are without the Christian dispensation' (Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia*, p. 251). Indeed, the Old man of Crete, according to Anthony K. Cassell (*Dante's Fearful Art of Justice* (Toronto-Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1984, p. 64), 'the Veglio represents not only original sin in Adam but the sins of the saeculum, the pride and vainglory of the present world'.

¹²⁹ Translation mine. 'La légende musulmane raconte qu'Adam résista pendant quatre-vingts ans aux instances de sa compagne. Il versa tant de larmes après son expulsion du paradis, que les oiseaux et les quadrupèdes en étaient abreuvés : de son œil gauche sortit la source du Tigre, et de son œil droit l'Euphrate. Les larmes d'Eve qui tombaient sur ta terre enfantaient des rubis, et celles qui roulaient dans la mer se transformaient en perles' (Jean Paul Migne, *Dictionnaire des Apocryphes*, in *Collection de tous les livres apocryphes relatifs à l'Ancien et au Nouveau Testament*, vol. 1 (Harvard University: 1855), p. 391).

¹³⁰ Capetti, *Illustrazioni al poema di Dante*, p. 39.

Therefore, the link between Adam's tears and those of the Old Man concretizes the link, already identified by Busnelli¹³¹, between the four infernal rivers generated by the tears of the Old Man and the four rivers of Eden, despite the inversion in terms of otherworldly realms¹³². In fact, if the Tigris and the Euphrates, together with the Pishon and the Gihon, were generally interpreted as allegories for the four cardinal virtues, (prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice)¹³³, the four infernal rivers can be seen as allegories for disordered impulses of a lustful or irascible appetite, will and intellect¹³⁴, which leads to sin. In addition, the rivers in Dante's Hell also perform the essential function of instruments of divine punishment.

In fact, if on the one hand the Old Man represents corrupt humanity, on the other it is itself the source of the *contrappasso* chosen by God for the vanity of his weeping: through the action of the same infernal rivers that torture sinners with their muddy, burning or frozen waters, and through the actual shedding of tears by the damned, a sign of their eternal exile and exclusion from heavenly bliss and happiness. As we have seen, the idea of crying as punishment already appears in the Bible, but in the *Inferno* it is applied in a systematic way, afflicting all sinners from beginning to end.

In addition, one should consider that the genesis of the infernal rivers was interpreted by the early commentators as an emotional and psychological history of the sinner: according to this view, the first river, Acheron, is the 'sine gaudio'¹³⁵, and represents the first consequence of sin: that is, 'losing the happiness of the eternal beatitude'¹³⁶. The second, Styx, depicts the 'tristitia'¹³⁷, and thus what the sinner acquires because of his iniquity¹³⁸. The third river, Phlegethon, is 'ardens'¹³⁹, so that the sinner is burned by the fire of the tortures¹⁴⁰. Finally, the fourth, Cocytus, is 'luctus'¹⁴¹, or weeping, because the sinners weep and gnash their teeth for the great

¹³¹ Giovanni Busnelli, *Il Virgilio dantesco e il Gran Veglio di Creta* (Roma: Indagine e Critica, 1919), p. 95.

¹³² We should note that in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Amorosa Visione* ("*Amorosa Visione di Giovanni Boccaccio*", *Opere volgari di Giovanni Boccaccio corrette sei testi a penna*, vol. XIV, ed. by I. Moutier (Firenze: Magheri, 1833), the fountain placed at the centre of the garden in ch. XXXIX, could represent a similar inversion. Indeed, its four statues seem to generate Edenic rivers; however the third statute is as infernal as the Old Man of Crete: it is similarly oriented to the West ('e 'n ver ponente' (32)) and shows a transition from smile to tears ('ridendo pareo che lagrimasse' (23-24)), generating a river made of tears ('poich'adunato era/ suo lagrimar nel vaso, che scendesse/ per una testa ancora che quivi era [...]') (25-27)).

¹³³ Augustinus Aurelius Hipponensis, *De Genesi contra Manicheos*, II. 1, 10-13.

¹³⁴ Busnelli, *Il Virgilio dantesco*, p. 101.

¹³⁵ Guido da Pisa (New York: New York Press, 1974).

¹³⁶ Giovanni Boccaccio (Milano: Mondadori, 1965).

¹³⁷ Guido da Pisa.

¹³⁸ Boccaccio: 'quello che il misero peccatore, avendo per le sue iniquità perduta l'allegrezza di vita eterna, abbia acquistato, che è tristizia perpetua'.

¹³⁹ Guido da Pisa.

¹⁴⁰ Boccaccio: 'incontanente diviene nell'ardore della gravità de' supplici; li quali con tanta angoscia il cuocono e cruciano e faticano'.

¹⁴¹ Guido da Pisa.

cold¹⁴², but also for the eternal punishments¹⁴³. This weeping, however, is not useful for repentance and, precisely for this reason, it is eternal¹⁴⁴. It is an act of weeping which finds its conclusion and ideal figure in the tears eternally and vainly shed by Lucifer, trapped in the center of the frozen lake of Cocytus.

It is evident, therefore, how the flow of the infernal rivers depicts the personal and emotional level of the sinner, the same universal and emotional history represented by their source, the Old Man of Crete: that is, the gradual loss of happiness due to sin and its degeneration into weeping. In this sense, the Old Man could truly represent what Robert Hollander called 'the type of every sinner in Hell'¹⁴⁵.

Therefore, the four rivers are born from the weeping of Dante's statue, from the moral degradation of original sin, and they conclude their spiral course in the eternal weeping represented by Cocytus. The eternal nature of this weeping coincides with and feeds upon the very impossibility of its realization: in fact, through the freezing of the '*nvetriate lacrime* of the traitors, Dante emphasizes the eternal denial of the possibility of repentance, once accessible through weeping. This image assumes even greater importance when compared with that of Dante's tears of contrition in *Purg. XXX*, which mark the poet's repentance and purification and which are compared precisely to the melting of the ice of his heart (85-99)¹⁴⁶.

Indeed, the negative and parodic quality of the infernal tears originating from the Old Man has already been emphasized through their binary relationship with the redeeming blood of Christ¹⁴⁷; the baptismal and eschatological implications of this relationship were examined in detail by Anthony K. Cassell, who came to the conclusion that 'the Veglio and the rivers can be understood darkly as the earthly and infernal, figural, perversion of these truths'¹⁴⁸. So, if it is true that the weeping of *homo vetus*, the Old Adam, is antithetical to that of *homo novus*, Christ, it must be added that it also stands in contrast with the tears of Dante himself.

In fact, if the Old Man of Crete represents the loss of the smile and the origin of vain and eternal weeping, the tears of the pilgrim, from the beginning of hell to the summit of Mount Purgatory, have a reparative and redemptive function: through weeping, Dante restores the correct penitential use of the divine gift of tears which God offered to Adam, and thanks to this action

¹⁴² Ibidem: 'ex maximo frigore anime damnatorum dentibus strident et oculis lacrimant [...]: Ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium'.

¹⁴³ Boccaccio: 'l'ardore delle pene eternali alcuno, esso incontanente comincia a piagnersi e a dolersi e a ramaricarsi'.

¹⁴⁴ Ibidem: 'non è a tempo, anzi, sì come lo stagno mai non si muove, così questo pianto infernale mai non si muove, sì come quello che dee in perpetuo perseverare'.

¹⁴⁵ Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Comedy*, p. 251.

¹⁴⁶ See Ch. III., 152 and ff.

¹⁴⁷ Silverstein, 'The weeping statue and Dante's Gran Veglio', pp. 182-184.

¹⁴⁸ Cassell, p. 59.

he will gain access to Paradise and, therefore, to the smile. With his tears, in fact, Dante atones for that same *cupiditas* at the root of the sin of those who have wept in vain and, therefore, will weep eternally. The pilgrim will complete his penitential journey in Eden, the place of loss and the origin of weeping, with his final tears shed before Beatrice, but thanks as well to the purifying waters of two new rivers, the Lethe and the Eunoe¹⁴⁹, explicitly linked to the Adamic Tigris and Euphrates¹⁵⁰. Unlike the tears of the Old Man which form the infernal rivers, the waters of the Lethe soothe the memory of sin, predisposing man to the ascent to God and, therefore, to the transition from weeping to laughter. The journey of Dante, the new Adam, is portrayed, therefore, as a journey whose goal is the gradual recovery of the smile, the original, distinctive sign of divine knowledge and the new reward of the promise of bliss, on a path precisely opposite to that of the Old Man of Crete. Dante's statue instead remains motionless on Mount Ida, as a divine, eternal warning to remind sinful man of those tears of repentance which he did not shed and which have, therefore, transformed into vanity and eternal punishment. Like Eve's tears, they are rubies and pearls wasted, inverted and deformed into bloody, disgusting and useless weeping.

¹⁴⁹ On Dante's hydrography of the *Commedia* see Donato Pirovano, 'Idrografia dantesca: dalla livida palude al fiume di luce', *Rivista di letteratura italiana*, 38, 2 (2020), 9-25.

¹⁵⁰ *Purg.* XXXIII. 112: 'Dinanzi ad esse Eufratès e Togri/ veder mi parve uscir d'una fontana [...]'.

II. 3 Representing Weeping in Hell: The Tears of the Damned

With the creation of the Old Man of Crete, tears permeate the infernal kingdom, becoming the primary, shared tool of *contrappasso* for the damned, through the passive action of the infernal waters as well as the active means of the tears shed by the sinners themselves. The result is the invention of a kingdom whose identity coincides with weeping itself: not surprisingly, Dante will define Hell first as ‘terra lagrimosa’¹⁵¹ (III. 133) and then as ‘eterno pianto’¹⁵² (IX. 44), appropriating Augustine’s *aeternae lacrymae* as well as the ‘eterno dolore’¹⁵³ (III. 2) promised and announced by the inscription on the gates of Hell itself.

In the *Inferno*, the weeping of the damned is, therefore, a constant and ubiquitous presence, which accompanies the reader, as we have seen, right from the pilgrim’s entrance into the underworld. In fact, from the first group of souls whom Dante meets on the banks of the Acheron to the traitors in the lowest reaches of the underworld, tears symbolize the condition of the damned.

Already in the *Visio Pauli*, Paul defines Hell as a place of weeping, often during an encounter with a new group of damned souls: at the sight of sinners burning in a furnace at the entrance to Hell¹⁵⁴; upon witnessing a devil condemn a soul to Hell, this time by quoting the Gospel¹⁵⁵; while drawing attention to the tears of the proud at the gates of the heavenly city¹⁵⁶ and of those who do not believe in God¹⁵⁷; and, finally, representing the cry of the damned, similar to thunder, as it emanates from a very deep abyss¹⁵⁸.

In the most medieval visions of the afterlife analyzed here, episodes of the crying of the damned are quite specific and limited to the traditional element of the sound of weeping coming from an often dark and invisible abyss¹⁵⁹.

¹⁵¹ ‘Weeping ground’.

¹⁵² ‘Endless lamentation’.

¹⁵³ ‘Eternal pain’.

¹⁵⁴ ‘Alii flent, alii ardent, alii querunt mortem et non inueniunt, quia anima nunquam morietur’ (3). The passage appears in the following Redactions: II, III, IV, V, VII.

¹⁵⁵ ‘ibi est fletus et stridor dentium, et sit ibi usque in diem magnum iudicii’ (16). In L1, L2, L3 and Red. III, V, VIII.

¹⁵⁶ ‘Et uidi paucos uiros dispersos in medio arborum illarum qui plorabant ualde cum uiderent ingredi aliquem in ciuitatem’ (24). In L1, L2 e L3.

¹⁵⁷ ‘Et uidi eas gementes et flentes et clamantes, ‘Miserere nobis’’ (32). In L1, L3, Red. I, II, III.

¹⁵⁸ ‘Et audiebant eos gementes et flentes quasi tonitruum’ (16). In Red. V, VII, VIII.

¹⁵⁹ In Gregory of Tours’ *Historiarum Francorum* the monk Suniulfus sees and hears the sinners weeping while they are submerged in a river of fire: ‘Ipse quoque referre erat solitus, ductum se per visum ad quoddam flumen igneum, in quo ab una parte litoris concurrentes populi ceu apes ad alvearia mergebantur; et erant alii usque ad cingulum, alii uero usque ad ascellas, nonnulli usque ad mentum, clamantes cum fletu se uehementer aduri’ (IV. 33, Ciccarese, p. 55).

In the *Visio Baronti* the damned are represented just “gementes”, lamenting, while they never cry. However, in the *Dicta beati Valeri ad beatum Donadeum scripta*, the monk Maximus hears the sound of weeping coming from the abyss ‘Intendens igitur deorsum, auscultabam et nichil aliud audivi nisi ululatum gemitum, lamentum et luctum, atque stridorem dentium, et fetor qui ascendebat intolerabilis et horrendus’ (2, Ciccarese, p. 28).

In particular, the idea of crying as a punishment of the damned has its first literary representation in the *Visio Tnugdali*. The biblical principle is faithfully applied here: unbridled laughter, which should not have occurred in the earthly life, *tempus flendi*, is now replaced in the afterlife with its opposite, weeping, which appears to be a further punishment:

Venientes autem venient non cum exultatione portantes manipulos suos, set de illis, quibus alibi scriptura minatur: Ve vobis, qui nunc ridetis, quia plorabitis et flebitis. Sic enim flentes et plorantes obviaverunt sibi non sicut misericordia et veritas neque sicut justitia et pax, que osculate sunt se (1-5)¹⁶⁰.

The universe of the Irish vision therefore appears to be built – like that of Dante’s poem – on the biblical contrast between weeping and laughter, but with a fundamental difference: if laughter in Dante’s poem will constitute the reward of the blessed who have properly wept during their earthly life, here it is considered only as a sin that deserves weeping as punishment. Similarly, in the thirteenth-century eschatological poem, *Libro delle tre scritture*, by Bonvesin de la Riva, tears from the damned play a more important role in the representation of the infernal punishments presented in the first section of the book, *De Scriptura Nigra*. The clear intent of the poem is to cause the reader himself to sigh and cry (‘sospirar e planzer’)¹⁶¹, inducing him to repentance and redemption, and this goal is achieved through descriptions of the suffering of the damned, who often present their condition as irreparably marked by an eternal weeping¹⁶². This constitutes a true punishment both in an active and passive sense, as in the case of the sinner condemned to listen to the terrible weeping of others¹⁶³. In particular, three passages merit attention for their content: the first of the damned to speak, who burns for having

In Venerable Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, the lamentation of the damned mixes with the laughing of the devils: ‘[...] audio subitum post terga sonitum immanissimi fletus ac miserrimi, simul et cachinnum crepitantem quasi vulgi indocti captis hostibus insultantis [...] cum longius subeuntibus eis fletum hominum et risum daemoniorum clare discernere nequirem, sonum tamen adhuc promiscuum in auribus haberem.’ (V.12, Ciccacese, p. 312).

In the *Letters of Saint Boniface*, the tremendous and unspeakable weeping of souls in distress comes again from the abyss: ‘miserorum hominum spiritus in similitudine nigrarum avium per flammam plorantes et ululantes et voce humana stridentes et lugentes propria merita et praesens supplicium [...]. [...] quasi in inferno inferiori, audivit horrendum et tremendum et dictu difficilem gemitum et fletum lugentium animarum. Et dixit ei angelus: “Murmur et fletus, quem in inferioribus audis, illarum est animarum, ad quas numquam pia miseratio Domini perveniet; sed aeterna illas flamma sine fine cruciabit’ (Ciccacese, p. 384).

¹⁶⁰ *Visio Tnugdali*, pp. 21-22. ‘Coming, however, they came not with exultation carrying their burdens,’ but of those whom scripture warns elsewhere, “Woe to you who now smile since you will cry and weep.” For thus weeping and crying they meet each other but neither in mercy and truth, nor in peace and justice, which are themselves prized’ (Gardiner, p. 127).

¹⁶¹ *Visioni dell’Aldilà prima di Dante: testi di Bonvesin de la Riva, Giacomino da Verona, Ugucione da Lodi, Pietro da Barsegapè* (Milano: Mondadori, 2017), p. 8.

¹⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 31: ‘Con plang e con dolor lo miser prend a dir’; p. 35: ‘I plang e i tormenti, oi, quant eo sont crecto’; p. 45: ‘Illò ‘g n’è senza numero ke crian tug insem: li peccaor sì planzeno e tut lo cor ge trema’; p. 47: ‘mo no poss odir se no crior e plangio’; p. 65: ‘Dentro in quest pestilentie lo miser prend a planze’; p. 67: ‘el planz e sì sospira; com fo el mat e zanio/ tard è ‘l aregordao a planzer lo so dagno’; p. 73: ‘que debio far, mi lasso, ke zamai in eterno / in plang e in angustie quilà far l’inverno?’.

¹⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 47: ‘Eo olz li plang dri miseri e li ghign del foletto: com quist en soz lamenti, k’em fan star gram e breto’.

committing the sins of lust and avarice, states that ‘lo me’ ris è stravolto in plang perpetual’¹⁶⁴; later, the glutton complains that he can no longer find joy or beauty because of his sins, so much so that ‘lo ris m’è volt in plangio, lo zog in grand tristeza’¹⁶⁵; finally, the damned of the eleventh punishment is condemned to perpetual regret for the bounty of heaven which he has lost, and therefore weeps, ‘a lu no ven za riso’¹⁶⁶. Bonvesin de la Riva is the only one among the authors of otherworldly visions prior to Dante who constructs a relationship between the two sections of the poem, *De Scriptura Nigra* and *De Scriptura Aurea*, treating Hell and Heaven respectively, on the opposition between laughter and weeping, in a strictly biblical sense, emphasizing the reversal and the movement from one to the other and vice versa¹⁶⁷. Despite this, such statements do not translate into concrete representations: while the damned are represented as crying, the blessed do not laugh, as will occur in the *Commedia*.

The weeping of the damned is not, therefore, Dante’s invention. Rather, Dante’s project in the *Commedia* is to employ and rework elements offered by the visionary tradition, such as the idea of weeping as punishment and the correlation between darkness and tears, which in the poem will not only become structural and will make weeping a true counterpoint to smile, but will become part of a poetic development never before achieved. If, in medieval visions of the afterlife, crying remains a generic or common characteristic of the damned, in Dante’s Hell crying will function as a fundamental tool for characterizing the sinners.

This weeping can be divided into two categories: collective weeping, which characterizes entire groups of sinners, and the individual weeping of the characters whom Dante meets on his journey. The analysis carried out in this section, which investigates the ways in which weeping is represented, will evidence the progressive act of reducing Christian salvific weeping to a pure instrument of divine punishment, achieved both through a demonstration of the vanity of the divine gift of tears in Hell, and through the deformed and altered representation of the tears of the damned. In addition, this process will be examined in its most obvious manifestation: the gradual loss of power to engender compassion through the tears of the damned.

Collective weeping characterizes the representation of the following groups of sinners: the pusillanimous (III. 107), the lustful (V. 27), the violent against God (XIV. 20), the soothsayers

¹⁶⁴ Ibidem, p. 31. ‘My laughter is turned into eternal tears’.

¹⁶⁵ Ibidem, p. 44. ‘My laughter is turned into weeping, my joy into great sadness’.

¹⁶⁶ Ibidem, p. 66. ‘Nothing makes him laugh’.

¹⁶⁷ On the relationship between the two sections of the *Libro delle Tre Scritture* and the correlations with the *Commedia* see Manuele Gragnolati, *Experiencing the Afterlife. Soul and body in Dante and medieval culture*, (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2005), pp. 89-136.

(XX. 6, 8 and 24), the hypocrites (XXIII. 60, 69 and 98) and the traitors (XXXII. 48; XXXIII. 94).

Since the next section of this chapter will present an analysis of the first case of weeping in Hell—that of the pusillanimous—here it will suffice to note that in the third canto there is another representation of weeping, that of the anonymous host of souls gathered on the shore of the river Acheron, awaiting their eternal damnation (III. 106-108):

Poi si ritrasser tutte quante insieme,
forte *piangendo*, a la riva malvagia
ch'attende *ciascun uom che Dio non teme*.¹⁶⁸

For the first time Dante uses the gerund 'piangendo', which here, as on other occasions¹⁶⁹, is emphasized with a caesura and used to describe the flow of the souls' tears which accompanies and qualifies their movement, whether it marks a sudden withdrawal, as in this case, or a slow procession, as will be the case for the soothsayers and hypocrites. In representing the damned on the 'accursed shore' of Acheron, the 'sine gaudio'¹⁷⁰, Dante depicts the first and most evident effect of sin in the souls' desperate weeping, which manifests the definitive loss of the 'allegrezza dell'eterna beatitudine'¹⁷¹. Weeping is thus introduced as a structural and characterizing element of the damned, who have deliberately chosen not to fear God ('ciascun uom che Dio non teme' (108)) and, therefore, must weep eternally. Indeed, one recalls that it is precisely through the fear of eternal damnation that the process of contrition begins, eventually resolving itself in tears, as occurs with Dante's repentance. The weeping of repentance which leads to eternal joy for those who have feared God is replaced in Hell by eternal weeping, the punishment for those who have not feared God and, therefore, have never repented. Crying is thus identified from the very beginning of the *Inferno* as the primary tool of *contrappasso* against the damned.

The sound of the tears of the damned characterizes the entrance into the circle of the lustful, where Dante changes the tone of the narrative and captures the reader's attention with the following verses (V. 25-30):

Or incomincian *le dolenti note*
a farmisi sentire; or son venuto
là dove molto pianto mi percuote.
Io venni in *loco d'ogne luce muto*,
che muggia come fa mar per tempesta,

¹⁶⁸ 'Then, weeping bitterly, they drew together/ to the accursèd shore that waits / for every man who fears not God.'

¹⁶⁹ *If.* XV. 42: '[...]va piangendo i suoi eterni danni'; *If.* XXVIII. 32: 'Dinanzi a me sen va piangendo Ali'; *If.* XX. 7-8: '[...] e vidi gente per lo vallon tondo/ venir, tacendo e lagrimando'; *If.* XXIII. 6: '[...] che giva intorno assai con lenti passi,/ piangendo e nel sembiante stanca e vinta'.

¹⁷⁰ Guido da Pisa (New York: New York Press, 1974).

¹⁷¹ Giovanni Boccaccio (Milano: Mondadori, 1965).

se da contrari venti è combattuto.¹⁷²

As in Canto III, in this case as well the auditory perception of the ‘dolenti note’—in other words, the weeping voices, considering that ‘according to Aristotle, voices are the notes of the soul’s passions’¹⁷³—precedes the visual perception of darkness (the ‘aere senza stelle’, ‘the starless air’ in III. 25 here becomes the synesthesia ‘loco d’ogne luce muto’, ‘the place mute of all light’). One may note how the darkness is evoked, in both cases, through the absence of light, highlighting the condition of the damned, who are deprived of God’s light and truth. Darkness appears, therefore, to be closely linked with weeping which, rather than fulfilling its salvific function of washing the penitents’ eyes, here instead obscures the sinners’ ability to see and, therefore, to know; as we will see, the light instead will symbolize the smile that illuminates the eyes of the blessed souls with wisdom. It can be said that this second circle represents the true entrance to Hell—Dante’s first direct encounter with sin, which is emphasized in particular by the amount of tears it provokes. In fact, as Benvenuto da Imola notes, ‘weeping is typical of lovers’¹⁷⁴, their laughter quickly turning to tears. Not only that, as we have seen, Dante seems personally struck by those tears, heralding a strong emotional involvement in the episode which results in the pilgrim’s own weeping. Therefore, the collective weeping of the lustful assume setting the canto’s tragic tone acquiring a compassionate quality, generating pity in Dante and in the reader.

A similarly tragic quality also characterizes the tears of the violent against God in Canto XIV, where the various ranks of souls (blasphemers, usurers and sodomites), while subjected to different punishments, appear united by a single contrappasso, that of weeping (19-21):

D’anime nude vidi molte gregge
che *piangean tutte assai miseramente*,
e pareva posta lor diversa legge.¹⁷⁵

Boccaccio himself notes that weeping here represents a common contrappasso¹⁷⁶. Moreover, even in this case, weeping is depicted with compassion: the adverb ‘miseramente’, which extends along the verse, could be intended to characterize the despair of the damned who can no

¹⁷² ‘Now I can hear the screams / of agony. Now I have come /where a great wailing beats upon me./ I reached a place mute of all light,/ which bellows as the sea in tempest/ tossed by conflicting winds.’

¹⁷³ Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62).

¹⁷⁴ Benvenuto da Imola (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1887).

¹⁷⁵ ‘I saw many a herd of naked souls,/ all crying out in equal misery,/ though each seemed subject to a different law: [...]’

¹⁷⁶ Giovanni Boccaccio (Milano: Mondadori, 1965) defines it as ‘la general pena di tutte [le anime]’.

longer repent¹⁷⁷, as well as to arouse compassion through what Momigliano calls ‘representative piety’¹⁷⁸. In fact, the weeping of the violent against God, as in the episode of the lustful, inaugurates a series of cantos in which Dante’s emotional involvement is again very strong, both towards the great Florentines of *Inf.* XVI, but above all towards master Brunetto Latini in the following canto, where the pity and pain of seeing ‘la cara e buona imagine paterna’ (XV. 83) distorted, ‘or m’accora’ (82)¹⁷⁹. Therefore, the weeping of the violent sets the tone for the atmosphere of pity and pain which characterizes Dante’s encounter with Brunetto, forced to serve his sentence, like the group of sodomites to whom he belongs, who ‘va piangendo i suoi eterni danni’ (XV. 42)¹⁸⁰. In the latter case, one may note the particular value assigned to the term ‘piangere’: when used in the transitive sense¹⁸¹, as in this case, or in the absolute¹⁸², it can be translated as ‘to expiate’, ‘to atone’. In this way, the weeping of the damned can be identified with the punishment itself, the primary means by which to atone for one’s sins.

The representation of weeping in Hell undergoes a significant change when one enters the Malebolge, the deep part of Hell where the gravity of sin committed with the concurrence of reason and maximum human degradation are expressed through comic and brutal language. As a result, even the sinners’ tears, which until this point have expressed despair and were meant to arouse pity and emotional engagement, gradually turn into a fluid whose vanity becomes more and more manifest, and which imposes itself as an increasingly clear sign of the deprivation of divine knowledge and exile from the heavenly homeland. Not by chance, the passage to this new region of Hell is marked by the sound of the tears of the damned (XVII. 121-123):

Allor fu’ io più timido a lo stoscio,
però ch’i’ *vidi fuochi e senti’ pianti*;
*ond’io tremando tutto mi raccoscio.*¹⁸³

As Dante enters Malebolge riding on the back of the monster Geryon, his first impression of the new region is one of terror: fires appear before his eyes and his ears are once again struck by the wailing manifestation of suffering. Francesco da Buti provides an allegorical

¹⁷⁷ Francesco Da Buti, (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): ‘e che piangono miseramente, e questo si dee intendere per la pena e non per lo dolor del peccato: imperò che sono ostinati e non si possono pentere, e che sono morti nell’ira di Dio’.

¹⁷⁸ Attilio Momigliano (Firenze: G. C. Sansoni, 1979).

¹⁷⁹ ‘I lament [...] the paternal image of You’.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Who go lamenting thier eternal pain’.

¹⁸¹ See the following occurrences of “piangere i danni/la colpa”: *If.* XII. 106 ‘Quivi si piangon li spietati danni’; *If.* XXIX. 20: ‘[...] un spirto del mio sangue/ pianga la colpa [...]’; *If.* XXXII. 82: ‘El piange qui l’argento de’ Franceschi’.

¹⁸² *If.* XVI, 75 ‘[...] Fiorenza, in te, sì che tu già ten piagni’; *If.* XVIII, 58, ‘E non pur io qui piango bolognese’; *If.* XXVI, 61 ‘Piangevisi entro l’arte’; *If.* XXVIII, 32: ‘Dinanzi a me sen va piangendo Ali’. In particular, see the case of Filippo Argenti, who defines himself as ‘[...] un che piango’ (VIII, 36): ‘un che piango: vuol dire semplicemente: “uno dei dannati che qui pagano il fio della loro colpa”’ (Natalino Sapegno (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1955-57)).

¹⁸³ ‘Then I was even more afraid of being dropped,/ for I saw fire and heard wailing,/ and so, trembling, I hold on tighter with my legs.’

interpretation, recognizing the fire as a symbol of cunning—the erroneous use of ingenuity by those sinners of *bolge*—and the weeping as their suffering of punishment¹⁸⁴.

The entrance into the fifth *bolgia*—that of the *barattieri* or fraudulent businessmen, who make illicit gains by conning the public—is also characterized by the tears of this group of damned (XXI. 4-6):

[...] restammo per veder l'altra fessura
di Malebolge e li altri pianti vani;
e vidila mirabilmente oscura.¹⁸⁵

Once again, the place is characterized by darkness, which here becomes even deeper, as noted with the adverb 'mirabilmente': in fact, the *bolgia* of the *barattieri* is dark due to the black pitch that boils over it, as will be explained in the following verses, and because of the shadiness with which their sin is carried out. Within the darkness resound the cries of the damned, defined, for the first time, as 'vani' and thus useless, without purpose: redemption and repentance through weeping are, in fact, denied in Hell, where punishment is eternal and immutable.

The uselessness and frustration of weeping in Malebolge appears evident in two cantos where the damned are characterized by a particular insistence on tears: these are Cantos XX and XXIII, in which the soothsayers of the fourth *bolgia*, and the hypocrites of the sixth, are represented as shedding copious tears.

Io era già disposto tutto quanto
a riguardar ne lo scoperto fondo,
che si bagnava d'angoscioso pianto;
e vidi gente per lo vallon tondo
venir, tacendo e lagrimando, al passo
che fanno le letane in questo mondo.
[...] quando la nostra imagine di presso
vidi sì torta, che 'l pianto de li occhi
le natiche bagnava per lo fesso.¹⁸⁶
(XX. 4-9; 22-24)

Là giù trovammo una gente dipinta
che giva intorno assai con lenti passi,
piangendo e nel sembiante stanca e vinta.
[...] Oh in eterno faticoso manto!
Noi ci volgemmo ancor pur a man manca

¹⁸⁴ Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): '*sentì' pianti*; di coloro che sono puniti; e secondo l'allegorico intelletto, perch'elli vide li mali; cioè l'arsione, li pianti e li dolori che induce l'astuzia contra chi ella s'usa e in chi l'usa'.

¹⁸⁵ 'We stopped to look into the next crevasse/ of Malebolge and heard more useless weeping./ All I could see was an astounding darkness.'

¹⁸⁶ 'By now I was all eagerness to see/ what sights the chasm, bathed in tears/ of anguish, would disclose./ I saw people come along that curving canyon/ in silence, weeping, their pace the pace of slow/ processions chanting litanies in the world./ [...] when I saw, up close, our human likeness/ so contorted that tears from their eyes/ ran down their buttocks, down into the cleft.'

con loro insieme, intenti al *tristo pianto*;
 [...] Ma voi chi siete, a cui tanto distilla
 quant'ì veggio *dolor giù per le guance?*
 e che pena è in voi che sì sfavilla?¹⁸⁷
 (XXIII. 58-60; 67-69; 97-99)

As can be observed, the similarities between the two representations are manifold: both groups of sinners advance slowly, the former because of their bodily deformations, the latter because of the heavy hoods that weigh them down; in both cases, the silent and tearful atmosphere is that of a funeral procession, as Benvenuto da Imola recalls, where one weeps for the memory of the dead and repentance of sins committed. Here, however, that weeping is transformed into a useless act¹⁸⁸; the weeping of the two groups is expressed through gerunds ('lagrimando' and 'piangendo'), which accompany the movement of the sinners, emphasizing their slow and anguished rhythm. Moreover, in the former case the first element which Dante notices in the *bolgia* is the 'angoscioso pianto' that bathes the space, thus strongly emphasizing the presence of tears; similarly, in the second episode, when the pilgrim and his guide follow the throng of hypocrites, the author still insists on their tears, placing the 'tristo pianto' at the end of the rhyming verse (69).

Thus far, the representation of weeping does not seem to have changed with respect to the other sections of Hell: indeed, here the emphasis placed on the tears of the damned once again is intended to generate compassion. This time, however, as we have already seen, the mechanism of piety malfunctions: in Canto XX, Virgil reproaches Dante's tearful response, since it is not aimed at contrition. In fact, the very tears of the damned represent the impossibility of pity, as their nature, after a compassionate introduction, suddenly turns out to be vain and fallacious.

In the case of soothsayers, because of the disfiguration of their bodies, tears that flow from the eyes end up in their buttocks (XX. 23-24): the divine gift of weeping, which had initially been evoked through the image of the procession in its penitential sense, now appears in all its vanity and uselessness. The preciousness of tears which, as will be seen in *Purgatorio*, is an essential key to eternal joy and to the smile, here is inverted and parodied in a depiction that manifests the impossibility of repentance through deformation and degradation. The tears of the soothsayers contribute, therefore, to the overturning of the human image that, as Carlo Grabher observes, appears 'as an insult [...] even in its expression of pain'¹⁸⁹. The tears spilling into the

¹⁸⁷ 'Down there we came upon a lacquered people/ who made their round, in tears, with listless steps./ They seemed both weary and defeated./ [...] Oh what a toilsome cloak to wear forever!/ Once more we turned to the left, then went along/ beside them, intent upon their wretched wailing./ [...] 'But who are you in whom I see distilled/ the misery running down your cheeks in tears?/And what is the grief you bear that glitters so?'

¹⁸⁸ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): 'qui enim vadunt in letaniis ambulantes lente, tacite, sicut isti incedebant nunc, et aliquae vetulae lacrymantur ex compassione cordis vel devotione, habentes memoriam peccatorum suorum, sicut isti vagi nunc agunt poenitentiam, quamvis inutilem, de erroribus magnis eorum.'

¹⁸⁹ Carlo Grabher (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1934-36).

crack of the buttocks become, moreover, an additional *contrappasso* in that they are a sign of the deprivation of divine knowledge: those who pretended to see the future are now condemned to look backward, and therefore are deprived of any form of knowledge, and above all of divine knowledge, the lack of which is marked by tears, a symbol of digression and eternal exile.

As for the weeping of the hypocrites, the insistence on their tears is a signal to which attention must be paid, especially when in v. 98 Dante asks for more information on the identity of the damned, defining them as those to whom ‘tanto distilla quant’i’ veggio dolor giù per le guance’, where the term ‘dolore’ signifies tears¹⁹⁰. Such insistence could give rise to doubts about the sincerity of the hypocrites’ weeping, which, as the early commentators often note, is traditionally characterized by falsehood: Benvenuto recalls how, in life, hypocrites cheat others out of their money, convincing them with their tearful appearance¹⁹¹; Cristoforo Landino notes that the weeping of the hypocrites is defined as ‘tristo’ in v. 68 because ‘the nature of the hypocrite is to show *tristitia*’, therefore they use ‘their crying and sad face to hide their deceitful desires’¹⁹². Finally, Francesco da Buti identifies in their tears a *contrappasso* to the false tears they had shed in life¹⁹³.

In this sense, the weeping of the hypocrites in Hell could constitute the *contrappasso* for those who, as Augustine writes, cry pointlessly¹⁹⁴, and are thus condemned to eternal tears. Moreover, it should be added that this additional *contrappasso* may derive from a passage in *Matthew* (24. 50-51), which tells of the punishment given to the hypocritical servant who does not respect the will of the master when he is not present, a metaphor for the hypocrite who does not respect God: ‘the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of. And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth’¹⁹⁵. Weeping therefore is the punishment for men who act falsely, betraying the will of God.

In the tears of the soothsayers, as in those of the hypocrites, it is possible to recognize the transition from the feeling of compassion which characterized the tears of the damned in upper

¹⁹⁰ Daniele Mattalia (Milano: A. Rizzoli, 1960): ‘la causa per l’effetto’.

¹⁹¹ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): ‘piangendo, scilicet de poena eorum, vel moraliter, quia hypocrita plorat amarissime de industria more mulierculae, ut ostendat se pium et sanctum coram populo quem decipit. Sicut ego vidi de facto nobilem hypocritam, qui praedicaturus passionem Domini de mane, potavit se multa malvasia; et sic planctu et lacrymis fundebat malignitatem suae mentis, et multa millia hominum provocavit ad plorandum secum; nec fuit aliquis ita durus, qui non sociaret eum in plangendo passionem Domini; et talibus insidiis extirpavit in brevi pecunias multas, quibus postea emit unum bonum episcopatum, ita quod lucrum hypocrisis convertit in simoniam.’

¹⁹² Cristoforo Landino (Firenze: Lexis Progetti Editoriali, 1999).

¹⁹³ Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): ‘di qua alcuna volta piansono simulatamente per mostrarsi compassivi; così veramente piangono di là per le pene e per li tormenti’.

¹⁹⁴ *Sermones*, 31. 61.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Veniet dominus servi illius in die, qua non sperat, et in hora, qua ignorat, et dividet eum partemque eius ponet cum hypocritis; illic erit fletus et stridor dentium’.

Hell, to the harsh application of divine justice, for which weeping functions solely as an instrument of punishment, and should be perceived and accepted as such, from here forward, by the pilgrim Dante himself, who can no longer be brought to pity by the tears of the damned.

The final stage of this process is evident in the final episode of collective weeping in the *Inferno*, those who have betrayed their guests and are punished in Tolomea, the third level of Cocytus. Here sinners are condemned to keep their heads tilted back, so that the flow of their tears is totally prevented, since, as soon as they cry, tears freeze in the cavities of their eyes forming a sort of icy screen that prevents them from venting their pain. The freezing of tears, as we will later see, characterizes not only the betrayers of guests, but all the traitors of Cocytus, although, in the former case, it achieves its most successful result, given the posture of the damned (XXXIII. 94-99):

*Lo pianto stesso li pianger non lascia,
e 'l duol che truova in su li occhi rintoppo,
si volge in entro a far crescer l'ambascia;
ché le lagrime prime fanno groppo,
e s'è come visiere di cristallo,
riempion sotto 'l ciglio tutto il coppo.*¹⁹⁶

One notes, first of all, the meticulous description of the freezing tears, which uses a precise and objective language, expressing detachment. The representation of weeping appears, therefore, very different from that of the first circles of Hell, where the description was often suffused with pity. The punishment of eternal weeping reaches its maximum expression here, becoming pure *contrappasso* in the impossibility of its realization, as the early commentators have already indicated. According to Francesco da Buti¹⁹⁷, it is a *contrappasso* of analogy, since traitors are now forced not to show pain, as in life they hid their hatred towards the victims of their actions. The Anonymous Florentine, on the other hand, connects the freezing of tears to the moral hardness of the traitors' hearts¹⁹⁸.

The correlation between ice and sin is a concept already present in the Bible: *Isaiah* 14.13-14 speaks of the pride of Lucifer, who wants to make himself equal to God by placing his throne among the reaches of Aquilone¹⁹⁹, the icy north wind which, in *Sirach* 43.22-24, expresses

¹⁹⁶ 'The very weeping there prevents their weeping,/ for the grief that meets a barrier at the eyelids/ turns inward to augment their anguish,/ since their first tears become a crust/ that like a crystal visor fills/ the cups beneath the eyebrows.'

¹⁹⁷ Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'in vendetta della simulazione ch'anno usato nel mondo che, come anno simulato di voler bene altrui per poter meglio tradire; così pone che quivi abbino d'entro il dolore e nol possono dimandare di fuori, sì come nel mondo anno portato l'odio d'entro, e di fuori un pezzo anno mostrato amore tanto, che possino ingannare.'

¹⁹⁸ Anonimo Fiorentino (Bologna: G. Romagnoli, 1866-74): 'qui si può intendere moralmente che, quando gli uomini sono indurati nel loro cuore per gran tradimento ch'egli abbino fatto, la gravezza del peccato gl'indura tanto, che poi di veruno male che veggiono incresce loro, o pare loro di veruna gravezza'.

¹⁹⁹ 'Ponam sedem aquilonem, et ero similis altissimo'.

divine power²⁰⁰. The two biblical passages are sometimes quoted by the early commentators²⁰¹ in reference to the icy wind emanating from Lucifer, which has caused Cocytus to freeze. But even more than the biblical passage, what may have influenced Dante's representation is the interpretation of the Aquilone provided by the Church Fathers, and by Augustine in particular. Already in the *Enarrationes* of Psalm 47, Augustine quotes the passage from Isaiah to describe the devil's actions in this world as that of making humanity into the icy wind, Aquilone²⁰². But it is in a passage of *Epistle 140*, where he discusses ice as a symbol of the devil, that he expands this concept:

The devil and his angels, then, having turned away from the light and warmth of love and having entered into proud hatred, have become frozen, as it were, with icy hardness. And for this reason they are located figuratively in the north wind [...] Turn back, *O Lord, our captivity like a torrent in the south* (Ps 126:4), that is the captivity by which we were held under the devil as if under the north wind where, as sinfulness abounded, they became cold and in a sense froze. For this reason the gospel also says, *Because sinfulness will abound, the love will grow cold* (Mt 24:12). But when the south wind blows, the ice is melted, and the torrents flow, that is, when the sins of the people are forgiven, they run to Christ out of love. For this reason it is also written elsewhere, *Like ice in fair weather, your sins will melt away* (Sir 3:17).²⁰³

Sinful men, submissive to the devil-Aquilone under his icy breath, freeze because of their excess of iniquity, just as the traitors of Cocytus freeze due to the wind which Lucifer produces through an excess of hatred. The freezing of sinners is a symbol of the hardening of their hearts, which only a gust from Austro, or divine charity, can dissolve, making the previously frozen waters flow. André Pézard has noted how this element is also present in a passage from a sermon by St. Anthony of Padua, which discusses the ability of the Aquilone/devil to freeze the hearts of sinners, preventing them from shedding tears of compunction and, indeed, repentance²⁰⁴.

²⁰⁰ 'Frigidus ventus aquilo flavit, et gelavit crystallus ab aqua: super omnem congregationem aquarum requiescet, et sicut lorica induet se aquis'.

²⁰¹ See L'Ottimo Commento, Benvenuto da Imola and Francesco Da Buti.

²⁰² *Enarrationes in Psalmum 47*, 3: "Quis est iste aquilo, nisi qui dixit: Ponam sedem meam ad aquilonem, et ero similis Altissimo 19? Tenuerat regnum diabolus impiorum, et possederat Gentes servientes simulacris, adorantes daemona: et totum quidquid generis humani erat ubique per mundum, inhaerendo illi aquilo factum erat'.

²⁰³ *Letters 100-155*, in *The Works of Saint Augustine*, vol. 2, trans. by John E. Rotelle (New York: New City Press, 2003), pp. 271-72. 'Diabolus igitur et angeli eius a luce atque fervore caritatis aversi, et nimis in superbiam invidiamque progressi, velut glaciali duritia torpuerunt. Et ideo per figuram tamquam in aquilone ponuntur: [...] Convertite, Domine, captivitatem nostram, sicut torrens in austro: captivitatem scilicet, qua sub diabolo tamquam sub aquilone tenebantur, ubi abundante iniquitate frigerant, et quodam modo congelaverant. Hinc enim et Evangelium dicit: Quoniam abundabit iniquitas, refrigescet caritas multorum. At vero flante austro, glacies resolvitur, et torrentes fluunt, id est peccatis remissis, populi ad Christum caritate concurrunt. Hinc et alibi scriptum est: Sicut glacies in sereno, ita solventur peccata tua'. (*Epistolae, De gratia Novi Testamenti liber*, 140, 22.55)

²⁰⁴ André Pézard, 'Le dernier chant de l'Enfer', in *Lecture dell' "Inferno"* ed. by Vittorio Vettori (Milano, Marzorati, 1963), p. 404: 'Aquila dictus est quasi ligans aquas; diabolus significat, qui malitiae frigore restringit aquas compunctionis in corde peccatoris'.

Dante will utilize the image of a frozen heart thawing in the famous weeping of *Purg.* XXX. 85-99, where frozen snow is a term of comparison to express Dante's initial emotional stage: that is, the total absence of tears ('così fui senza lagrime e sospiri' (91))²⁰⁵. Dante's condition will be, therefore, initially comparable to that of the worst sinners punished in Hell, but the outcome of the scene highlights its radical divergence: if the ice of the pilgrim's heart shatters with his tears of contrition, the traitors' tears remain in an eternally frozen state and, therefore, are unable to perform their characteristic penitential function. The frozen tears, at the bottom of Hell, become a symbol of the possibility of repentance which sinful man has not embraced, and now this possibility is transformed into eternal torment and punishment. These tears represent the terrible risk which humanity—including Dante himself—can run by refusing to open the heart to divine love: the eternal deprivation of the possibility to return to the heavenly homeland, to God.

It is possible to trace this same path of the gradual degradation of weeping, of the progressive loss of its compassionate reception through its definitive conversion into a means of punishment, through an analysis of the individual cases of weeping by the sinners whom Dante encounters. In this case, tears are used as a tool for characterizing individual figures, at times as an element that augments the tragedy of their stories, and then, more and more frequently, as the representation of their degraded condition.

The first case of an individual weeping is that of the lustful Paolo in *Inf.* V. 140 ('Mentre che l'uno spirto questo disse, / l'altro piangëa'²⁰⁶), represented through and by virtue of his own tears, which constitute the character's only action within the infernal circle. Paolo's tears are, like Dante's one, the reaction to the sorrowful tale of Francesca, who sets the tone for her own tragic love story through the use of tears (V. 124-26):

Ma s'a conoscer la prima radice
del nostro amor tu hai cotanto affetto,
dirò come colui che piange e dice.²⁰⁷

One should note that Francesca does not shed tears, but she tells her story like 'one who weeps in telling'. Traditionally commentators, beginning with the early commentary of Guido da Pisa, recognize in this passage a reference to the *Aeneid* II, 10-12, in which Aeneas is about to tell Dido the sad story of Troy: 'Sed si tantus amor casus cognoscere nostros / Et breviter Troye supremum audire laborem, / Quamquam animus meminisse horret luctuque refugit'²⁰⁸.

²⁰⁵ 'Just so was I with neither tears nor sighs'.

²⁰⁶ 'While the one spirit said this the other wept'.

²⁰⁷ 'But if you feel such longing / to know the first root of our love, / I shall tell as one who weeps in telling.'

²⁰⁸ 'But if you have such a great desire to know what we suffered, to hear in brief about the last agony of Troy, although my mind recoiled in anguish when you asked and I shudder to remember'.

To this reference, it would seem appropriate to add the possible suggestion of another passage, taken from the sixth book of *Aeneid*, namely the first time that Aeneas is portrayed in the act of shedding tears in Tartarus. Among the dark shadows consumed by love and wandering through a great forest, the Trojan hero recognizes Dido, queen of Carthage, who fell in love with Aeneas and killed herself due to his abandonment. Aeneas' weeping is divided into two moments. The first, at the beginning of their meeting, represents an emotional reaction to his recognition of the queen (VI. 450-66):

Inter quas Phoenissa recens a vulnere Dido
errabat silva in magna; quam Troius heros
ut primum iuxta stetit agnovitque per umbras
obscuram, qualem primo qui surgere mense
aut videt aut vidisse putat per nubila lunam,
demisit lacrimas dulcique adfatus amore est:
“infelix Dido, verus mihi nuntius ergo
venerat extinctam ferroque extrema secutam?
funeris heu tibi causa fui? per sidera iuro,
per superos et si qua fides tellure sub ima est,
invitus, regina, tuo de litore cessi.
sed me iussa deum, quae nunc has ire per umbras,
per loca senta situ cogunt noctemque profundam,
imperii egere suis; nec credere quiui
hunc tantum tibi me discessu ferre dolorem.
siste gradum teque aspectu ne subtrahe nostro.
quem fugis? extremum fato quod te adloquor hoc est”.²⁰⁹

At the end of Aeneas' speech, Virgil emphasizes the desired function and effect of his words, namely to relieve pain and *movere*; that is, to move the interlocutor to tears (VI. 466-67): ‘Talibus Aeneas ardentem et torva tuentem/ lenibat dictis animum lacrimasque ciebat’²¹⁰. Dido's response is instead a silence full of indignation and resentment.

The second instance of Aeneas' weeping thus comes at the end of the sequence, after the Phoenician queen has left and all that remains for the Trojan hero is to weep with compassion for the woman's unhappy fate (VI. 475-76): ‘Nec minus Aeneas casu percussus iniquo/ prosequitur lacrimis longe et miseratur euntem’²¹¹. In this passage, crying appears to perform a particular rhetorical function: from the beginning, the union of words and tears characterizes

²⁰⁹ ‘Wandering among them in that great wood was Phoenician Dido with her wound still fresh. When the Trojan hero stopped beside her, recognizing her dim form in the darkness, like a man who sees or thinks he has seen the new moon rising through the clouds at the beginning of the month, in that instant he wept and spoke sweet words of love to her: ‘So the news they brought me was true, unhappy Dido? They told me you were dead and had ended your life with the sword. Alas! Alas! Was I the cause of your dying? I swear by the stars, by the gods above, by whatever there is to swear by in the depths of the earth, it was against my will, O queen, that I left your shore. It was the stern authority of the commands of the gods that drove me on, as it drives me now through the shades of this dark night in this foul and mouldering place. I could not have believed that my leaving would cause you such sorrow. Do not move away. Do not leave my sight. Who are you running from? Fate has decreed that I shall not speak to you again.’

²¹⁰ ‘With these words Aeneas, shedding tears, tried to comfort that burning spirit’.

²¹¹ ‘Aeneas was no less stricken by the injustice of her fate and long did he gaze after her with tears, pitying her as she went.’

what is configured as a prayer that aims to convince Dido of the blamelessness and unawareness of Aeneas, who justifies his behavior by indicating the orders of the gods as the main cause of his action. Aeneas weeps to provoke the tears of his interlocutor, as stated in v. 476, utilizing his tears as a rhetorical tool of persuasion, in the manner of the best Latin oratory. In fact, as Alfredo Casamento recalls, the speaker's weeping was a codified and habitual practice in Roman trials, because tears provoke further tears, and it is in this emotive participation that persuasion is achieved: those who cry do so 'in order that another individual observing those tears will soften his judgment'²¹². This situation occurs in the episode of the *Aeneid* in which Sinon's weeping convinced the Trojans to let the horse enter the city²¹³; I believe that weeping functions similarly in the episode of Aeneas and Dido, in order to move the queen so that she will soften her judgment of the Trojan hero. This goal is not achieved, however; it is not Dido who weeps, but Aeneas, and this time with tears of compassion. Licinia Ricottilli has illustrated how Aeneas' tears can be interpreted as 'a debt to the beloved woman'²¹⁴, a true gift that compensates for the absence of tears and emotional involvement which the hero had shown in their previous encounter in the fourth book, where Dido, weeping, complained precisely of her beloved's lack of tears (*Aen.* IV. 369 'num fletu ingemuit nostro? num lumina flexit? / num lacrimas victus dedit aut miseratus amantem est?'²¹⁵). The roles appear reversed in Book VI and, while in Aeneas' attitude one can recognize a compensation for his previous behavior, the 'contagiousness of tears'²¹⁶ between the two lovers does not function this time either, as the mechanism of reciprocity is blocked.

I argue that tears take on a similar rhetorical value in Canto V of the *Commedia*, where the episode of the lovers Paolo and Francesca is framed under the name of Dido. The Phoenician queen is in fact evoked twice: first in the list of names belonging to the ranks of the lustful ('colei che s'ancise amorosa, / e ruppe fede al cener di Sicheo' (61-62)²¹⁷), and then again to distinguish and denominate that same host from which the pair of lovers detaches ('cotali uscir de la schiera ov'è Dido' (85-87)²¹⁸). Giorgio Padoan recalled how the same circle of the lustful

²¹² Alfredo Casamento, 'Parlare e lagrimare vedrai insieme'. Le lacrime dell'oratore', in *Le passioni della retorica*, ed. by Giovanna Petrone (Palermo: Flaccovio Editore, 2008), pp. 41-62 (p. 43).

²¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 44.

²¹⁴ Licinia Ricottilli, *Gesto e parola nell'Eneide, Testi e Manuali per l'Insegnamento Universitario del Latino* (Bologna: Patron, 2000), see especially Chapter 5, 'Il coinvolgimento emotivo e la gestualità delle lacrime', pp. 183-208 (p. 111).

²¹⁵ 'He did not even look at me. Was he overcome and brought to tears? Had he any pity for the woman who loves him?'

²¹⁶ Ricottilli, p. 192.

²¹⁷ 'Here is she who broke faith with the ashes of Sichaecus and slew herself for love'.

²¹⁸ 'So did these leave the troop where Dido is'.

is identified with ‘the Virgilian “Campi lugentes” (*Aen.* VI. 441), in which the medieval exegesis of the *Aeneid* recognized the *errores luxuriae*²¹⁹, characterized precisely by weeping. The rhetorical value of weeping is underscored by the link established by Francesca between speaking and crying, words and tears, which will be repeated quite notably in the episode of Ugolino in *Inf.* XXXIII (‘Parlare e lagrimar mi vedra’ insieme’ (9)²²⁰). The words-tears dynamic originates in the Homeric poems²²¹, and it is interesting to remember that the verb *flere* in Latin contains the ‘idea of crying with argumentation, making certain that the tears are explained – so to speak accompanied – by words’²²².

From a philosophical point of view, the ‘interchangeability of tears and words’²²³ is based on the essential link between the mouth and eyes which founds and distinguishes the identity and unity of the human being. In the Latin language, as is well illustrated in a study by Maurizio Bettini, *os*, signifying face/mouth, identifies the individual together with *vultus*, indicating face/eyes²²⁴. This bond, which often slides into a concurrence of the two elements, is appropriated by Dante himself in *Conv.* III. VIII. 8, where the eyes and mouth become the main locations where the soul is revealed:

E però che *nella faccia massimamente in due luoghi opera l’anima* - però che in quelli due luoghi quasi tutte e tre le nature dell’anima hanno giurisdizione - *cioè nelli occhi e nella bocca* quelli massimamente adorna e quivi pone lo ‘ntento tutto a fare bello, se puote. E in questi due luoghi dico io che appariscono questi piaceri dicendo: "nelli occhi e nel suo dolce riso".²²⁵

In *Conv.* III. XV. 2 the pleasures of Paradise appear in the eyes and smile of the *Donna Gentile*, the demonstrations and persuasions, respectively, of Wisdom, in which ‘is given of that most sublime of pleasures, happiness, which is the greatest good enjoyed in Paradise’. One should note that the same smile will often be expressed in the *Commedia* through brightness in the eyes of the blessed and the mouth’s laughter will continually fade into the eyes’ smile. Crying and smiling therefore appear inextricably linked in oscillation between the two main parts of man’s face, between the eyes and the mouth, between the gaze through which reality is known and the word through which it is expressed. In this way, smile and tears become the emotional

²¹⁹ Giorgio Padoan (Firenze: Felice Le Monnier, 1967).

²²⁰ ‘You will see me speak and weep together’.

²²¹ Dominique Arnould, *Le rire et les larmes dans le littérature grecque de Homère à Platon* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990), pp. 207–211.

²²² Casamento, p. 42.

²²³ Ricottilli, p. 189.

²²⁴ Maurizio Bettini, *Le orecchie di Hermes* (Torino: Einaudi, 2000).

²²⁵ ‘And since in the face the soul is most fully active in two places because all three natures of the soul have a certain function to perform in those two places – that is, in the eyes and in the mouth – it especially adorns those, and there strives with all its power to create something beautiful, if possible. I say that it is in these two places that these pleasures appear, at the words: in her eyes and in her sweet smile.’

manifestations characterizing the human being, since, unlike the case of animals that are unable to laugh or cry, in these the soul is revealed and the cognitive capacity of man unfolds.

From a rhetorical point of view, weeping accompanies the word and directs the discourse towards its goal, that of persuasion. Such was the intent of Aeneas' words and such is the aim of Francesca who, by telling her version of the facts, justifies her actions, attributing responsibility to the power of love and literature. The rhetorical tool of weeping will play the same role, quite notably, in Ugolino's prayer. But, unlike Aeneas and Ugolino, who do not obtain the emotional involvement of the interlocutor, Francesca's tears and words achieve their effect, as Dante cries with compassion and Paolo, unlike Dido, reacts to the words of his beloved Francesca with tears, provoking a further, powerful sensation of pity in Dante, who faints (V. 139-41). The correspondence between the two lovers is revealed in their com-*passion*, in the emotional sharing of tears, which reinforces and emphasizes the tragedy of their narrated story. Herein the circle closes: the tears which Francesca awaits at the beginning correspond to Paolo's final tears, and Dante's fainting is but the natural consequence of a crescendo of emotional involvement and pity.

Moreover, the rhetorical relationship established between words and tears could express the causal link between sin and punishment: in fact, if Francesca's speech narrates the burgeoning love that led her and her lover to damnation, Paolo's weeping could constitute the effect, the divine punishment resulting from this act. In Francesca's narration, the climactic moment is represented by the kiss between the two lovers, inspired by reading of the kiss between Guinevere and Lancelot (V. 133-135):

Quando leggemmo *il disiato riso*
esser baciato da cotanto amante,
questi, che mai da me non fia diviso [...].²²⁶

I argue that 'il disiato riso', which is the second reference to smile in the *Inferno*²²⁷, should be understood not only as 'mouth'²²⁸, but indeed as a 'smiling mouth', according to the tradition

²²⁶ "When we read how the longed-for smile/ was kissed by so renowned a lover, this man,/ who never shall be parted from me [...]'.

²²⁷ The first reference to smile is *Inf.* IV. 99.

²²⁸ As understood by Bernardino Daniello (1547-68), Giacomo Poletto (1894) and Nicola Fosca (2003-2015).

of love poetry²²⁹ and the interpretation of the early commentators. In fact, in the Cassinese codex the gloss refers to Guinevere's smile²³⁰, along with the comments of Benvenuto da Imola (where Guinevere is defined as a 'smiling queen'²³¹) and Francesco da Buti, who translates the 'disiato riso' with 'the cheerful face of queen Guinevere'²³².

The kiss which Lancelot gives to Guinevere has been the subject of much discussion, since the *Lancelot del Lac*, the Arthurian romance which Francesca would have read, tells that it was Guinevere who kissed Lancelot, and not the other way around as is claimed by Francesca²³³.

In this regard, one should note that the *Ottimo Commento*, in commenting on the verses, reports the original story, in which not only the kiss, but also the particular element of smile is attributed to Lancelot, rather than to Guinevere: '[...] Galeotto pushed the Queen to kiss a smiling Lancelot'²³⁴.

If, in the Arthurian romance, it is Lancelot who is smiling, this element also appears in the twelfth-century Italian anonymous version reported in Baldassarre Lombardi's commentary on the *Commedia*, in which the smile spreads from Lancelot to Galeotto and Guinevere, the trio whose encounter will lead to the kiss:

Non pertanto, se voi il volete, *io lo bacerò volentieri. E Lanciotto ne fu sì allegro*, che non potè risponder, se non che dire: *Dama, gran mercè. E Galeotto: o Donna, del suo volere non dubitate, perchè è già vostro; e sappiate bene che niuno se ne accorgerà. Noi tre saremo insieme come se noi consultassimo. [...] Allora si traggono da parte sorridendo, e fanno sembiante di consigliare. E la Reina vede che il Cavaliere non ardisce, e lo prende, e lo bacia avanti Galeotto assai lungamente. E la Dama di Malheault seppe di vero ch'ella lo baciò...[...]*.²³⁵

²²⁹ See the woman's *riso* in the following contexts, where it appears, in the list of attributes of the beloved woman, as a distinct element from the mouth: Giacomo da Lentini, *Lo viso mi fa andare alegramente* (11): 'Chi vide mai così begli occhi in viso, / né sì amorosi fare li sembianti, / né boca con cotanto dolce riso?'; Giacomino Pugliese, *Morte, perchè m'ài fatta sì gran guerra* (11): 'Ov'è madonna e lo suo insegnamento, la sua bellezza e la gran canoscianza, / lo dolce riso e lo bel portamento, / gli oc[c]hi e la boc[c]a e la bella sembianza [...]'. The woman's *riso* is also often cited as a movement of the mouth and, therefore, the cause of the uncovering of the beloved's teeth: Cino da Pistoia, *Oimè, lasso, quelle trezze bionde* (9): 'oimè, 'l fresco ed adorno e rilucente viso, / oimè, lo dolce riso / per lo qual si vedea la bianca neve / fra le rose vermiglie d'ogni tempo'; Giovanni Boccaccio, *Candide perle, orientali et nuove*, IX. 1-3: 'Candide perle orientali et nuove / Sotto vivi rubin chiari et vermigli, / Da' quali un riso angelico si muove,'). Finally, the woman's *riso* is celebrated as it brings joy to the poet: Cino da Pistoia, *Fa' de la mente tua specchio sovente*, (3): 'se vuoi campar, guardando 'l dolce viso, / lo qual so che v'è pinto il suo bel riso, / che fa tornar gioioso 'l cor dolente'.

²³⁰ *Il codice cassinese della Divina commedia* (Monte Cassino: Tipografia di Monte Cassino, 1865): 'genevre qui pro riso ponitur in quo risus. aparet'.

²³¹ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): 'reginam ridentem'.

²³² Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'allegro volto della reina Ginevra'.

²³³ For an account of the matter, please refer to Anna Hatcher and M. Musa, 'The Kiss: Inferno V and the Old French Prose Lancelot', *Comparative Literature*, 20, 2, Duke University Press (1968), 97-109.

²³⁴ L'Ottimo Commento (Pisa: ed. Alessandro Torri, N. Capurro, 1827-1829): 'Qui pone una de quelle cose che dà materia alla luxuria, cioè lectioni di luxuria. Et tocca una hystoria della Tavola Ritonda: Lancialotto amava la regina Ginevra. Uno die essendo in una pratara la decta regina et la donna de Maloalto d'una parte e d'altra Lancialotto et il suo secretario amico Galeotto di lontane ysole, la cosa venne a tanto che Galeotto sospinse la regina a basciare Lancialotto ridente.'

²³⁵ *La divina commedia di Dante Alighieri col commento del P. Baldassarre Lombardi* (Padova: Tipografia della Minerva, 1822), pp. 135-136. My own translation: 'Therefore, if you wish, I will gladly kiss him. And Lancelot was so happy about this that he could not reply except to say: Thank you very much, Dame. And Galeotto: O Lady, do not doubt his will, for it is already yours; and know well that no one will notice it. The three of us will be

Like the kiss, the attribution of smile in Dante's poem also moves from Lancelot to Guinevere: if in the Arthurian story Lancelot smiles and Guinevere kisses him, in Dante's Canto it is Guinevere/Francesca who smiles and is kissed by Lancelot/Paolo, who weeps instead of smiling. The shared smile in the Arthurian text is resolved in Dante's poem through an inversion: Lancelot's smile is transformed into Paul's weeping, which comes to represent the direct consequence and punishment of the sinful laughter that led the two lovers to damnation. With its attribution to Francesca, the 'disiato riso' becomes an emblem of courtly love, and rather than generating more smile, and therefore reciprocity, as it does in the Arthurian text, it transforms into tears that seal the episode and thus sanction the definitive recognition of the sinful nature of love literature. These tears are meant to arouse Dante's compassion and, therefore, the contrition of the pilgrim. We will then observe the process of transformation and divinization to which the 'disiato riso' will be subjected in *Paradiso* XVI. 13-15, through the representation of Beatrice's smile²³⁶.

The next episode which references the weeping of a sinner is that of Filippo Argenti, one of the wrathful immersed in the Stygian swamp, who exchanges a series of caustic quips with the pilgrim Dante (VII. 34-39):

E io a lui: "S'i' vegno, non rimango;
 ma tu chi se', che sì se' fatto brutto?".
 Rispuose: "Vedi che *son un che piango*".
 E io a lui: "*Con piangere e con lutto,*
 spirito maladetto, ti rimani;
 ch'i' ti conosco, ancor sie lordo tutto".²³⁷

In these verses the function of weeping as the main and shared infernal *contrappasso* clearly emerges: in fact, the sinner tries to hide his identity by presenting himself generically as 'un che piango'; that is, as 'one of the damned who atone for their own sins', thus establishing an equivalence between punishment and weeping. Filippo Argenti's answer, as Grabher notes, is hasty and contemptuous, 'as if he were saying: you see well that I am a sinner; there is no need to bother me with so many questions'²³⁸. I believe that the following verse confirms the meaning of the sinner's words. Indeed, in the style of a *tenzone*, Dante takes up the verb 'piangere', augmenting the aggressiveness of his response with the addition of 'lutto': this term, while more

together as if we were consulting. [...] Then they stood apart smiling, and pretend to gather for consulting. And the Queen sees that the Knight does not dare, and takes him, and kisses him before Galeotto for a very long time. And the Lady of Malheault knew indeed that she kissed him...[...].'

²³⁶ See Ch. IV. 2.

²³⁷ 'And I to him: 'If I come, I do not stay./ But you, who are you, now become so foul?' He answered: 'As you can see, I am one who weeps./And I to him: 'In weeping and in misery,/ accursed spirit, may you remain. /I know you, for all your filth.'

²³⁸ Carlo Grabher (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1934-36).

generally signifying ‘pain’²³⁹, could be read in Latin as a synonym for ‘weeping’²⁴⁰, and therefore, in this case, as a ‘punishment/torment’. This interpretation is supported by the other occurrences of the term ‘lutto’ in the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, where it acquires the same meaning as ‘punishment’²⁴¹.

In this way, Dante’s response is part of the process of prophetic investiture which he assumes in this episode, further validated by Virgil’s embrace and words (VII. 43-45): by placing emphasis on the weeping and, therefore, on the punishment of the damned, Dante’s words acquire the tones of prophetic condemnation, anticipating the rhetorical use of weeping as an instrument of prophetic admonition and the promise of punishment, which will occur above all in the *Paradiso*²⁴².

One can observe that the difference in tone here from the representation of Paul’s weeping is remarkable. In this verbal exchange there is no trace of compassion or sympathetic pain; rather, the tones are those of offense and condemnation, the same used to characterize the treatment of traitors in lowest Hell and, first and foremost, of political traitor, Bocca degli Abati, in *Inf.* XXXII. 77-81:

[...] ma, passeggiando tra le teste,
forte percossi ‘l piè nel viso ad una.
Piangendo mi sgridò: "Perché mi peste?
se tu non vieni a crescer la vendetta
di Montaperti, perché mi moleste?"²⁴³

As noted, the equivalences between the two episodes are numerous: the place of punishment in which sinners are immersed—Argenti in the Stygian swamp and Bocca in the lake of Cocytus; the exchange of repartees characterized by an aggressive and plebeian language, centered on the revelation of the sinner’s identity; the absence of pity and the violent gestures of Dante, who “douses” Argenti and takes Bocca by the neck; the civic guilt staining the sinners, both Florentines—one an arrogant provocateur of civil discord, and the other a traitor during the battle of Montaperti. One must add that weeping is yet another element paralleling the two episodes: if, in the case of Filippo Argenti, weeping is used to define his identity in generic terms, thus hiding it, in the episode involving Bocca degli Abati weeping is, instead, an instrument of identity revelation. In fact, Dante’s violent kick provokes a reaction from Bocca, who is immediately painted as a troublemaker through his weeping, a whiny cry of protest; his spiteful outburst

²³⁹ Antonio Lanci, ‘Lutto’ in *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (Roma: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia italiana, 1970), <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/elenco-opere/Enciclopedia_Dantesca> [accessed January 2022].

²⁴⁰ Natalino Sapegno (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1955-57).

²⁴¹ *If.* XIII. 69; *If.* XXXIV. 36; *Purg.* III. 42 and *Purg.* XVI. 72.

²⁴² See the following cases, where ‘pianto’ acquires the same meaning as ‘punishment’: *Purg.* XVIII. 122; *Par.* VI. 109; *Par.* IX. 52; *Par.* XI. 7, 52. *Par.* XVI. 150.

²⁴³ “[...] I do not know, but, walking among the heads,/ I struck my foot hard in the face of one./ Wailing, he cried out: ‘Why trample me?/ Unless you come to add to the revenge/ for Montaperti, why pick on me?’”

fails to hide clues about his identity, revealing fundamental details (81) that cause the pilgrim to stop and investigate further. In both episodes the weeping completely lacks any pitiful or compassionate component, identifying two sinners whose crimes have important political consequences and thus are extremely serious from Dante's point of view. In the weeping of Filippo Argenti it is possible, therefore, to identify a first trace of the eventual degradation of the divine gift of weeping which will reach its completion in lowest Hell.

A totally different tone, more in line with Paolo's weeping, permeates the representation of another sinner, Cavalcante Cavalcanti, who is punished among the heretics in the sixth circle, at the entrance of the city of Dis. When his hope of seeing his son Guido with Dante is dashed, Cavalcante bursts into passionate tears, pressing Dante with heartfelt questions about the fate of his son (X. 55-60):

Dintorno mi guardò, come talento
 avesse di veder s'altri era meco;
 e poi che 'l sospecciar fu tutto spento,
piangendo disse: "Se per questo cieco
 carcere vai per altezza d'ingegno,
mio figlio ov'è? e perché non è teco?"²⁴⁴

Although this passage is often seen in reference to the third book of the *Aeneid*, where Andromache addresses similar words to Aeneas, asking why Hector is not with him ('Hector ubi est?': *Aen.* III. 312)²⁴⁵, the tragic significance of the passage may have been influenced by another episode from the Virgilian poem, also marked by tears. It is another father-son meeting, between Anchises and Aeneas in the sixth book of the *Aeneid* (684-89):

isque ubi tendentem adversum per gramina vidit
 Aenean, alacris palmas utrasque tetendit,
effusaeque genis lacrimae et vox excidit ore:
 'venisti tandem, tuaque exspectata parenti
 vicit iter durum pietas? datur ora tueri,
 nate, tua et notas audire et reddere voces?'²⁴⁶

The words and tears of Anchises during his meeting with his beloved Aeneas display the same affection and a sense of surprise similar to that characterizing the representation of Cavalcante, but in a more positive light: in fact, while Cavalcante cries desperately for the absence of his son, Anchises weeps for joy at seeing Aeneas, who, unlike Guido, has descended into the oth-

²⁴⁴ 'He looked around me as though he wished to see/ if someone else were with me,/ and when his hesitant hopes were crushed,/ weeping, he said: 'If you pass through this dark/ prison by virtue of your lofty genius, / where is my son and why is he not with you?''

²⁴⁵ Bernardino Daniello (1547-68).

²⁴⁶ 'When he saw Aeneas coming towards him over the grass, he stretched out both hands in eager welcome, with the tears streaming down his cheeks, and these were the words that broke from his mouth: 'You have come at last,' he cried. 'I knew your devotion would prevail over all the rigour of the journey and bring you to your father.'

erworld. Anchises' tears, just like those of Cavalcante, are immediately followed by two questions suffused with amazement—joyful for the former, painful for the latter—which note respectively the presence and absence of their children. Aeneas, unlike Guido and like Dante, can access the afterlife because his journey is predetermined by Providence: as Dante will recall, in response to Cavalcante (X. 61-63), his coming is, in fact, willed by God and not by virtue of the intellectual qualities which Cavalcante identifies as the primary reason for this extraordinary journey.

The blindness that characterizes these sinners, who, as Farinata degli Uberti will later explain, are unable to know and see the present, is expressed above all in Cavalcante as the anguished cry of a father: his tears manifest the earthly attachment that prevents him from understanding the divine purpose of Dante's journey—and, therefore, the absence of his son—and from knowing the truth about Guido's fate. Once again, weeping here denounces man's choice to distance himself from God, the conscious deviation of his will in an erroneous direction. Thus, Cavalcante's tears, instead of washing his eyes clean and making the truth accessible to him, become a symbol of his blindness and perpetual ignorance of the divine things, the fate to which he is condemned. Cavalcante stubbornly cries for the wrong object, not only because it is earthly, but because his desire is in vain, since the height of Guido's ingenuity will never suffice to make such a journey. Similarly, in *Inf.* XXVI, the will and abilities of Ulysses will not suffice for him to reach Mount Purgatory, where joy at the sight of the distant goal soon transforms into tears ('Noi ci allegrammo, e tosto tornò in pianto' (136)²⁴⁷), according to the topos already present in the Epistle of James 4.9 ('Let your laughter to be turned into mourning, and your joy into gloom'²⁴⁸) and in the Gospels ('woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep', *Luke* 6.25).

Human pride, the presumption of those who believe they can overcome human limits through their 'altezza d'ingegno' [lofty genius] (X. 59) or 'virtute e canoscenza' [virtue and knowledge] (XXVI. 120), is manifested in the two episodes through the vanity of weeping and the vanity of laughter, which are punished equally, according to the Gospels and then Augustine, with eternal weeping. The failed journey of Ulysses and the impossible journey of Guido stand in contrast to the journey of Dante who, unlike his alter egos, has wept justly, recognizing the limits of human knowledge and receiving divine grace²⁴⁹. Therefore, he will be able to undertake his journey into the afterlife and ultimately will be able to access divine truth.

²⁴⁷ 'We rejoiced, but joy soon turned to grief'.

²⁴⁸ 'Risus vester in luctum convertatur, et gaudium in moerorem'. The passage is quoted in John A. Scott, *Dante magnanimo* (Firenze: Olschki, 1977), p. 131

²⁴⁹ See John Freccero, 'Dante's Ulysses: from epic to novel' in *The poetics of conversion* (Harvard University Press: 1986), pp. 136-151.

Following this theme, in the circle of the violent, tears characterize two particular categories of sinners: the violent against others, through the figures of Rinieri da Corneto and Rinier Pazzo (XII. 133-138), and the violent against themselves, with the representation of the anonymous Florentine suicide (XIII. 130-132).

*La divina giustizia di qua punge
quell'Attila che fu flagello in terra,
e Pirro e Sesto; e in eterno munge
le lagrime, che col bollor diserra,
a Rinier da Corneto, a Rinier Pazzo,
che fecero a le strade tanta guerra".*²⁵⁰

*Presemi allor la mia scorta per mano,
e menommi al cespuglio che piangea
per le rotture sanguinenti in vano.*²⁵¹

In the first case, divine justice is the cause of the thieves' eternal tears: the violence of this justice is expressed through the verb 'mungere', that is, 'to milk' the tears of the damned with the terrible pain caused by the boiling river of blood in which they are immersed; in fact, as Niccolò Tommaseo observed, in the *Inferno* 'the boiling blood almost widens the opening for tears, while the ice narrows it'²⁵². The violence with which the tears are squeezed from the two thieves could be seen as proportional to the violence they exercised in life and, therefore, as an additional *contrappasso* for their punishment. In fact, already for Francesco da Buti, the tears of the violent represent a *contrappasso* to counter their lack of compassion in life²⁵³. Here the tears of the damned no longer appear to be aimed at arousing compassion, but at clarifying more explicitly their punitive function.

In the second case, the tears of the anonymous suicide, who has been transformed into a bush, are provoked by snarling hounds that have torn its branches while chasing the wastrels who gambled away their belongings. Tears are the first element through which the character is introduced and characterized: as Pier delle Vigne emits blood and words from the 'broken splinter' (43-44), in this case as well the plant's wound is the only means through which the sinner can express himself, this time through the shedding of tears. On the one hand, crying in this case contributes to the tragic and compassionate tone that colors the episode; in fact, the story of the suicidal Florentine will be followed, at the beginning of the subsequent canto, by the merciful gesture of Dante who, motivated by 'carità' (XIV. 1), collects the fronds scattered by

²⁵⁰ "There divine justice stings Attila,/ who was a scourge on earth, and Pyrrhus,/ and Sextus, and eternally wrings/
'tears, loosed by the boiling,/ from Rinier of Corneto and Rinier Pazzo,/ who on the highways made such strife.'

²⁵¹ 'And then my leader took me by the hand./ He led me to the bush,/ which wept in vain lament from bleeding wounds.'

²⁵² Niccolò Tommaseo, (Torino: Utet, 1927), .

²⁵³ Francesco Da Buti, (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'per mostrare la crudeltà delli infrascritti che furono crudelissimi sì, che mai per compassione non piansono, sì che giusta cosa è che ora sieno costretti a piagnere per le loro pene'.

the hounds and returns them to their owner. Nevertheless, the poet emphasizes the fact that the bush cries ‘in vano’, or uselessly, as Benvenuto da Imola understands it, ‘because he cannot atone for his sins with his tears’²⁵⁴. The true tragedy of the sinners’ weeping consists in its uselessness: the divine gift of weeping, useful for repentance, in Hell has transformed into vanity²⁵⁵, a meaningless outburst, useless even to mitigate the punishment²⁵⁶.

If the individual weeping of the damned of the city of Dis functions to underscore the sinners’ condition, slowly revealing itself as an instrument of punishment or demonstrating the complete vanity of the act, in the Malebolge this representation is further accentuated in a comic and sarcastic tone.

A prime example is the weeping of the simoniac pope, Nicholas III, in *Inferno* XIX:

Lo buon maestro ancor de la sua anca
 non mi dipuose, sì mi giunse al rotto
 di *quel che si piangeva con la zanca*.
 [...]
 Per che lo spirto tutti storse i piedi;
 poi, *sospirando e con voce di pianto*,
 mi disse: "Dunque che a me richiedi?"²⁵⁷
 (43-45; 64-66)

At first the pope, lodged upside down in a stone hole, expresses his pain through the only visible part of his body: the legs, since, as Daniele Mattalia notes, normally ‘we cry with the head, here the head is the shank’²⁵⁸. In this regard, the gloss of Baldassarre Lombardi contains a useful clarification²⁵⁹: according to the commentator, *piangere* acquires the meaning of the Latin *plangere*, “to hit, to beat”. It is, therefore, a cry of figurative pain, translated cowardly from the eyes to the legs, no longer expressed through tears, but through an uncoordinated and comic movement; a cry that evokes and anticipates the tears of soothsayers, also distorted and associated with a vile part of the human body. It should also be noted that ‘zanca’ is a term of popular and vulgar origin, which makes all the more sarcastic the expression ‘piangere con la zanca’ foreshadowed in vv. 31-32 with ‘si cruccia / guizzando’²⁶⁰. This cry, therefore, contributes to the

²⁵⁴ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): ‘Quia ex planctu non resartiebat damna sua’.

²⁵⁵ See the ‘pianti vani’ in *Inf.*, XXI. 5.

²⁵⁶ Giovanni Boccaccio (Milano: Mondadori, 1965): ‘per ciò che non dovea per lo pianto suo minuirgli la pena’.

²⁵⁷ ‘The good master clasped me to his side/ and did not set me down until we came/ to the pit of one lamenting with his shanks. [...] / At that the spirit's feet began to writhe./ Then, sighing , with a plaintive voice, he said: / 'What is it then you want from me?’

²⁵⁸ Daniele Mattalia (Milano: A. Rizzoli, 1960).

²⁵⁹ Baldassarre Lombardi (Roma: A. Fulgoni, 1791-92): ‘*Piangere* dee quì Dante avere adoprato o nel medesimo proprio senso del Latino *plangere*, che significa *battere*, o allusivamente all’originaria cagione per cui si fa esso *plangere* sinonimo di *lugere*, [...] onde vedesi che non tanto esso verbo significa *lagrimare* quanto *dar segno di dolore*. Nel primo senso piangea con la zanca varrà quanto *batteva*, o *sbatteva con le zanche*: nell’altro vorrà dire che *dava segno di dolore col dibattimento delle zanche*. Nè, per fine, appar ragione che non potesse l’acutissimo nostro poeta usare cotal verbo colla mira insieme ad amendue i detti sensi’.

²⁶⁰ ‘who in his torment wriggles’.

sarcastic tone that characterizes the entire episode, achieved through the use of the rhetorical tools of comic language, from harsh rhymes to a common and realistic lexicon.

In a second moment (64-66), however, the figurative cry of Nicholas III transforms into real tears: after realizing that Dante is not Boniface VIII, who is destined to replace him, (and to disrupt at the very least the pain of the fire that burns the soles of his feet), the pope twists his feet in a sign of anger, once again expressing his feelings by means of his legs. He follows this first reaction with tears and sighs, which some commentators have interpreted as a signaled change of tone from the comic to the tragic²⁶¹; others instead see in the cry of Nicholas III a manifestation of anger rather than pain²⁶².

Concerning this cry, it is interesting to note that in the *Visio Pauli*, on only two cases does weeping characterize the individual representation of the damned, and both are figures belonging to the ecclesiastical community, a bishop and a deacon, respectively:

[35] Et vidi non longe alium sene, quem adducebant currentes cum festinacione quatuor angeli maligni et dimiserunt eu musque in genua in flumine igneo et lapidibus percuebant eum et vulnerabant faciem eius sicut picella. Et non permiserunt eum dicere : Miserere mei. Et interrogavi angelum et dixit mihi : Hunc quem vides *episcopus fuit et non bene consumavit episcopatum suum*. Quicquid est, nomen accepit magnum, sed non est ingressus in sanctitatem eius qui donavit ei nomen in omni vita sua, quodam non fecit iudicium iustum et viduae et orfanos non est misertus. Nunca autem retributum est ei secundum iniquitatem et operam suam.²⁶³

[36] Et uidi alium hominem a latere eius in flumine igneo usque ad enua. Erant autem manus eius extense et coinquinatae in sanguinem, et uermes comedebant et exhibant de ore eius et de naribus. *Erat gemens et plorans et clamans, et dicebat, 'Miserere mei, quoniam ego notior pre ceteris qui sunt in poena.'* Et interrogavi, 'Que est ista, et quis est, domine, hic?' Dixit mihi, 'Istum quem uides *diaconus fuit qui edebat oblationes, et fornicator, et rectum non fecit in conspectum dei*. Propterea incessabiliter persoluit penam istam'.²⁶⁴

One can observe that the bishop and the deacon both weep and groan, one surrounded by devils, the other immersed in the river of fire, and both are accused of having sinned against God in various ways, including avarice (in the second Latin redaction, the bishop is defined as 'avarus

²⁶¹ Francesco Torraca (Roma-Napoli: Albrighi, 1905) and Attilio Momigliano (Firenze: Sansoni 1979).

²⁶² Luigi Pietrobono (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1982) and Charles S. Singleton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970-75).

²⁶³ 'I saw another old man not far off. Running quickly, four evil angels brought him, and they sank him up to his knees in the river of fire and struck him with stones and wounded his face like a tempest and did not allow him to say, "Have mercy on me." I asked the angel and he said to me, "He was a bishop, and he did not fulfill his episcopal office well, for indeed he received a great name, but he did not enter into the holiness of him who gave him that name all his life. He did not give righteous judgment and did not have compassion for widows and orphans. But now he is recompensed according to his iniquity and his actions' (Gardiner, p. 44).

²⁶⁴ 'I saw another man in the river of fire sunk up to the knees, and his hands were stretched out and bloody, and worms came out of his mouth and his nostrils, and he was groaning and lamenting and crying out and said, "Have mercy on me for I suffer more harm than the rest who are in this torment." I asked, "Who is this, lord?" And he said to me, "He was a deacon who devoured the offerings and committed fornication and did not do right in the sight of God; therefore he pays the penalty without ceasing' (Gardiner, p. 45). The two weeping appear in: L1, L2, L3 and in Red. II, V, IV VII.

et superbus'), and simony ('eдебat oblations'), the same sin for which Pope Nicholas III suffers in Hell. In addition, the deacon in the *Visio*, when asking for mercy, emphasizes that he suffers more than all the others who are undergoing that torment ('ego notior pre ceteris qui sunt in poena'); similarly, Dante, at the first sight of Nicholas III, describes him as the one 'who in his torment wriggles more than any of his fellows' (31-32). Finally, both encounters elicit the indignant reaction of the traveler: at the end of Canto XIX, Dante explodes in an aggressive invective against the corrupt Church (90-117), while Paul concludes his meeting with the bishop by weeping and bitterly railing against corrupt priests ('Inde fleuit Paulus et dixit, 'Ve, ue uobis sacerdotibus qui preestis aliis, quare legem dei non predicatis populo!''²⁶⁵). The Pauline depiction of weeping among the condemned clergy might well have influenced Dante's representation of Nicholas III.

The final episode of weeping which still retains a sense of pity in lower Hell is that of the alchemist Griffolino d'Arezzo, punished in the tenth *bolgia*, that of the falsifiers (XXIX. 91-93):

"Latin siam noi, che tu vedi sì guasti
qui ambedue", rispuose *l'un piangendo*;
"ma tu chi se' che di noi dimandasti?"²⁶⁶

Virgil asks the sinner, who is intent on scratching at the scabs caused by leprosy, a punishment reserved for alchemists, if there are any Latins—that is, Italians—in his ranks. The sinner's affirmative answer provokes his tears for two reasons: both 'per la miseria d'esser sì guasto'²⁶⁷, but also, perhaps, for the memory of their earthly life and their homeland²⁶⁸. One can contrast this weeping with that of Paolo in *Inf.* V: although Griffolino's tears inject a note of compassion into the canto, which is otherwise dominated by a comic and strongly realistic tone, Dante's reaction is completely different, lacking any trace of compassion. The pilgrim has in fact learned, thanks to Virgil's reproach at the beginning of the same canto (XXIX. 1-6), that compassion has no place in lower Hell, where tears of pity are no longer useful for any penitential purpose.

At the bottom of Hell, the freezing of tears characterizes, in particular, the representation of the two Alberti brothers, who killed one another and are now condemned among the traitors to family in Caina, the first region of Cocytus (XXXII. 45-51):

[...] e poi ch'ebber li visi a me eretti,

²⁶⁵ 'Woe to you priests who preside over others, because you do not preach the law of God to the people?'

²⁶⁶ 'We whom you see so blasted are Italian,'/ answered one of them, through his tears,/ 'but who are you, that you inquire of us?'

²⁶⁷ Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Mondadori, 2009).

²⁶⁸ Scartazzini (Milano: U. Hoepli, 1929).

li occhi lor, ch'eran pria pur dentro molli,
 gocciar su per le labbra, e 'l gelo strinse
 le lagrime tra essi e riserrolli.
 Con legno legno spranga mai non cinse
 forte così; ond'ei come due becchi
 cozzaro insieme, tanta ira li vinse.²⁶⁹

The two brothers raise their faces to look at Dante, and the change of position causes their tears to freeze, according to the principle noted previously. Scholars have discussed the modalities and effects of the freezing of tears, identifying three possible interpretations: if 'essi' refers to the eyes, then the tears would freeze the eyes, clamping them tight like a metal hoop around pieces of wood²⁷⁰; if, on the other hand, 'essi' refers to the sinners, then the freezing tears would join them; others understand, finally, that the frozen tears would unite the two brothers by the lips, in a sort of parodic kiss²⁷¹. I argue that the first interpretation is preferable, given the explanation that Dante himself provides in *Inf.* XXXIII. 94-99.

In any case, crying is represented here, through freezing, as a punishment that increases the anger of the sinners and thus the discord which already characterizes them, ending in a physical altercation. In this regard, a passage from Augustine's first treatise of *De Utilitate Ieiunii* could be useful for reading Dante's passage, as it creates a relation between discord and ice:

With all our energy, with all our toil, with pious affection towards God, towards them, among ourselves, let us not to be idle, lest, while wishing to still their old dispute, we begin new quarrels among ourselves; and, above all, let us be careful to maintain the strongest love among ourselves. They have frozen in their own iniquities. How will you melt the ice of iniquity in them, if you do not burn with the flame of charity?²⁷²

The passage exhorts Christians to unite against schisms and quarrels that create fights and struggles between brothers, urging them to maintain among themselves 'strongest love', charity, the fundamental weapons to melt the ice of iniquity of those who cause discord, who froze themselves in their iniquity. The icy tears of the discordant brothers are, therefore, the effect of the iniquity and hatred that animated them in life and that continues to torment them in Hell.

The last great encounter in the *Inferno*, in which Dante meets Ugolino della Gherardesca, is bathed in tears: in fact, Canto XXXIII is distinguished by the frequency with which appears the

²⁶⁹ '[...] and, when they had raised their faces,/ their eyes, till then moist only to the rims,/ dripped tears down to their lips, and icy air/ then froze those tears -- and them to one another./ Clamp never gripped together board to board / so tight, at which such anger overcame them/ they butted at each other like two rams.'

²⁷⁰ Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Mondadori, 2009).

²⁷¹ Hollander (New York: Doubleday, 2000)

²⁷² Sancti Aurelii Augustini, *De Utilitate Ieiunii*. A text with translation, introduction and commentary by Brother S. Dominic Ruegg (Washington D.C.: University of America Press, 1951), p. 85 'Laboremus, fratres, non cessemus, omni opere, omni sudore, affectu pio ad Deum, ad illos, inter nos, ne illorum veterem litem sopire volentes, inter nos ipsos novas rixas faciamus; et ante omnia cauti simus inter nos ipsos tenere firmissimam dilectionem. Illi gelaverunt in iniquitatibus suis. Quomodo in eis tu solves glaciem iniquitatis, si non ardes flamma caritatis?' (*De Utilitate Ieiunii*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1887), PL 40, 707-716, IX.11).

verb *piangere* and its synonym *lacrimare*, highest among all the infernal cantos²⁷³. The first reference to weeping appears already at the end of Canto XXXII, in Ugolino's introduction (136-138):

[...] che se tu a ragion di lui ti *piangi*,
sappiendo chi voi siete e la sua pecca,
nel mondo suso ancora io te ne cangi [...]²⁷⁴.

Here the verb *piangere* is used in its reflexive form, as in *Inf.* XVI. 75, ('Fiorenza, in te, sì che tu già ten piagni'), thus acquiring, according to a common interpretation, the meaning of "to gripe", "to whine". It is precisely this pain, and its righteous reason, that justifies Ugolino's account in the next canto, which from the very beginning evokes a constant image of weeping (XXXIII. 4-9):

Poi cominciò: "Tu vuo' ch'io rinovelli
disperato dolor che 'l cor mi preme
già pur pensando, pria ch'io ne favelli.
Ma se le mie parole esser dien seme
che frutti infamia al traditor ch'i' rodo,
parlare e lagrimar vedrai insieme."²⁷⁵

As is well known, the first and last encounter of Hell are connected by the dittology of weeping and words, when Francesca, in Canto V, introduces her discourse in a very similar fashion ('dirò come colui che piange e dice' (V. 126)). Between these two episodes there is, therefore, what has been recognized as a 'tonal affinity'²⁷⁶, an elegiac register, underscored by the Virgilian and Ovidian echoes present in both cantos. Just as with Francesca, Ugolino's speech echoes the second book of the *Aeneid*, especially *Aen.* II. 3, taken from the beginning of the oration to v. 4.

The rhetorical function of Ugolino's tears, similarly to *Inf.* V., could evoke the tears that characterize the dynamics of Aeneas' encounter with Dido in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*. In fact, the purpose of weeping is the same for Aeneas, Francesca and Ugolino: to move the interlocutor to compassion²⁷⁷, thus convincing him of their own innocence and ignorance. If, as we have seen, this goal is achieved in the case of Francesca, thus diverging from the Virgilian

²⁷³ There are 7 occurrences of 'piangere' (v. 38, v. 42, v. 49, v. 50, v. 94x2, v. 114) and 3 of 'lagrimare' (v. 9, v. 52, v. 97).

²⁷⁴ '[...] if you can give just cause for your complaint,/ then I, knowing who you are and what his sin is,/ may yet requite you in the world above [...]'.

²⁷⁵ 'Then he began: 'You ask me to revive/ the desperate grief that racks my heart / even in thought, before I tell it./ 'But if my words shall be the seeds that bear/ infamous fruit to the traitor I am gnawing,/ then you will see me speak and weep together.'

²⁷⁶ Stefano Carrai, *Dante e l'antico. L'emulazione dei classici nella 'Commedia'* (Firenze: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2012), p. 25.

²⁷⁷ On the topic see Giovanni Barberi Squarotti, 'The Rhetoric of Compassion: from Francesca to Ugolino', *Rivista internazionale di studi su Dante Alighieri*, 15 (2018), 85-93.

episode, Ugolino's weeping instead parallels that of Aeneas, both in its development and in the result.

First of all, Ugolino begins his prayer in tears, like Aeneas ('demisit lacrimas dulcique adfatus amore est' (VI. 455)²⁷⁸) and openly seeks the tears of his interlocutor ('e se non piangi, di che pianger suoli?' (42)²⁷⁹), just like the Trojan hero ('talibus Aeneas [...] lacrimasque ciebat' (VI. 468)²⁸⁰). In both cases, their aim is to use tears to exonerate themselves from the accusation of involvement in the death of people dear to them: Ugolino with hatred indicates Archbishop Ruggieri as the person responsible for his own cruel death and that of his children, thus concealing his own traitorous acts that led to such tragic consequences; Aeneas responds to the accusation that he was the cause of Dido's suicide ('funeris heu tibi causa fui?' (VI. 458)²⁸¹) by blaming the gods whose orders forced him into such behavior.

Moreover, in both episodes, tears assume a relational significance, expressing the affective bond between the figures which, however, appears to be characterized by a lack of reciprocity: between the "victim" and "executioner" there is no correspondence of tears, and the affective relationship takes the forms of a contrast. In Ugolino's narration of the death of his children, crying becomes the determining factor whose presence/absence describes the relationship Ugolino establishes with his children:

Quando fui desto innanzi la dimane,
pianger senti' fra 'l sonno i miei figliuoli
ch'eran con meco, e dimandar del pane.
[...]
Io non piangëa, sì dentro impetrai:
piangevan elli; e Anselmuccio mio
disse: "Tu guardi sì, padre! che hai?"
Perciò *non lagrimai né rispuos'io*
tutto quel giorno né la notte appresso,
infin che l'altro sol nel mondo uscìo.²⁸²
(37-39; 49-54)

The count's sons cry desperately at the beginning of the story, during the premonitory dream of their death by starvation (38), and then immediately after the prison door is definitively nailed shut (50). One may note how tears often characterize visions and dreams, even as early as the *Vita Nuova*, and especially in the premonitory vision of Beatrice's death (Ch. XXIII): in that case, during his "fantasy", Dante begins to weep once he understands the omens foretelling the

²⁷⁸ 'He wept and spoke sweet words of love to her'.

²⁷⁹ '[...] and if you weep not, what can make you weep?'

²⁸⁰ 'With these words Aeneas, shedding tears, tried to comfort that burning spirit'.

²⁸¹ 'Alas, was I the cause of your dying?'

²⁸² 'When I awoke before the dawn of day/ I heard my children, in that prison with me,/ weep in their sleep and ask for bread.[...] I was so turned to stone inside I did not weep./ But they were weeping, and my little Anselm/ said: "You look so strange, father, what's wrong?"/ 'Even then I shed no tear, and made no answer / all that day, and all the night that followed/ until the next day's sun came forth upon the world.'

death of his beloved, and his weeping also causes the tears of the woman who assists him²⁸³. On the contrary, in Ugolino's account, the desperate cry of the children contrasts, instead, with their father's complete inability to shed tears, which is highlighted several times (vv. 49 and 52). Between them is created what has been called a 'psychological contrast [...] a moral and emotional chiaroscuro'²⁸⁴, which sets them in opposition on the basis of weeping. Similarly, Aeneas' actions do not correspond to Dido's desperate weeping in the fourth book of the *Aeneid*, (*Aen.* IV. 369 'num fletu ingemuit nostro? num lumina flexit? / num lacrimas victus dedit aut miseratus amantem est?'²⁸⁵); he instead shows total impassiveness. When, on the other hand, Aeneas meets Dido in the afterlife, as we have seen, the roles appear to have been reversed: it is Aeneas who sheds tears repeatedly, seeking an affective relationship, but arousing only coldness in Dido (VI. 469-471):

Talibus Aeneas ardentem et torva tuentem
lenibat dictis animum *lacrimasque ciebat*.
illa solo fixos oculos aversa tenebat
nec magis incepto vultum sermone movetur
*quam si dura silex aut stet Marpesia cautes.*²⁸⁶

Dido's lack of emotional reaction is expressed by the fixed gaze and is compared to the hardness of flint or the Rock of Marpesia; similarly, Ugolino stares at his children without uttering a word, almost petrified: that is, turned to stone²⁸⁷. Aeneas's weeping in the afterlife comes too late, although it can be seen as an act through which the hero repays his debt of tears to Dido, whose gift of tears presupposes a reciprocation on the part of Aeneas²⁸⁸. Moreover, the tears which Aeneas sheds could be seen as the 'highly ritualized gift of tears, dedicated to loved ones who have died'²⁸⁹.

Ugolino's weeping in Hell could likewise be seen as compensation for the tears he could not shed in the most tragic moment of his life, namely at the death of his children, failing to respond to their tears. The count now appears almost obsessed with his lack of tears, and his apostrophe

²⁸³ *Vn.* XXXIII. 3-5: 'E maravigliandomi in cotale fantasia, e paventando assai, imaginai alcuno amico che mi venisse a dire: "Or non sai? la tua mirabile donna è partita di questo secolo". Allora cominciai a piangere molto pietosamente; e non solamente piangea ne la imaginazione, ma piangea con li occhi, bagnandoli di vere lagrime [...] E dicendo io queste parole con doloroso singulto di pianto, e chiamando la Morte che venisse a me, una donna giovane e gentile, la quale era lungo lo mio letto, credendo che lo mio piangere e le mie parole fossero solamente per lo dolore de la mia infermitade, con grande paura cominciò a piangere.'

²⁸⁴ Giuseppe Giacalone (Roma: A. Signorelli, 1968).

²⁸⁵ 'Was he overcome and brought to tears? Had he any pity for the woman who loves him?'

²⁸⁶ 'With these words Aeneas, shedding tears, tried to comfort that burning spirit, but grim-faced she kept her eyes upon the ground and did not look at him. Her features moved no more when he began to speak than if she had been a block of flint or Parian marble quarried on Mount Marpeesus'.

²⁸⁷ Vincenzo Di Benedetto has recognized the possible influence of poetic laments of mothers who have lost their children, including Hecuba who, distraught over the loss of her son, almost turns to stone (Vincenzo Di Benedetto, 'Intersezione di registri espressivi nell'episodio di Ugolino', *Rivista di letteratura italiana*, 12 (1994), 9-41, (pp. 22, 24).

²⁸⁸ Ricottilli, pp. 109-110.

²⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 111.

to Dante in v. 42 ('e se non piangi, di che pianger suoli?'²⁹⁰) takes the tone of an imploration or, rather, a self-reproach: he did not cry at the time, and now is condemned, by analogy, to shed tears destined to freeze, which cannot arouse compassion. In fact, like Aeneas, Ugolino's weeping comes too late and fails to provoke Dante's tears of compassion. In lowest Hell, the feeling of pity is indeed annulled, and so the mechanism of compassion through tears is definitively interrupted: Ugolino's prayer, therefore, is a rhetorical demonstration of how even the most tragic of stories, the one most full of tears, no longer arouses pity for the damned in the lowest depths of Hell.

Ugolino's obsession with tears, those which he did not shed and which he now sheds with difficulty, is an effect of the denial of weeping which characterizes the sinners of Cocytus: the tears of pain and pity, which assume so much importance in the Christian universe as a means to reach God, are converted here into a psychological torture, into the eternal denial of a second chance, into a punishment that is a sign of their refusal to repent and their rejection of God.

Through the character of Ugolino, the representation of weeping as pure punishment is expressed in all its tragedy. This tragedy, however, has no place in the *Inferno's* final representation of a weeping sinner: Friar Alberigo, a traitor of guests, is punished in Tolomea where, as we have seen, tears freeze inside the eyes of the damned. The sinner appears, addressing Dante and asking him to remove the veils of frozen tears, in order to release his repressed pain (XXXIII. 109-114):

E un de' tristi de la fredda crosta
gridò a noi: "O anime crudeli
tanto che data v'è l'ultima posta,
levatemi dal viso i duri veli,
si ch'io sfoghi 'l duol che 'l cor m'impregna,
un poco, pria che 'l pianto si raggeli".²⁹¹

Dante promises to do so in exchange for information on the sinner's identity, basing the agreement on a false premise ('then, if I do not relieve you, may I have to travel to the bottom of the ice' (117-118)); indeed, once he gets what he wants, Dante does not keep his promise (148-150):

"Ma distendi oggimai in qua la mano;
aprimi li occhi". *E io non gliel'apersi;*
*e cortesia fu lui esser villano.*²⁹²

²⁹⁰ 'And if you weep not, what can make you weep?'

²⁹¹ 'And one of the wretches in the icy crust/ cried out: 'O souls, so hard of heart/ you are assigned the lowest station,/ 'lift from my face these rigid veils/ so I can vent a while the grief that swells/ my heart, until my tears freeze up again.'

²⁹² 'But now extend your hand and open/ my eyes for me.' I did not open them./ And to be rude to him was courtesy.'

Dante's attitude is completely different with respect to the weeping of the damned of upper Hell: if before their tears aroused compassion, moving Dante himself to tears, not only have they now become a cold bargaining chip to obtain information, but they fail to provoke any mercy in the pilgrim. Dante's cruel behavior recalls the episodes of Filippo Argenti and Bocca degli Abati, in which weeping already seemed to lack its sympathetic component. In this case, the text also offers clarification to explain Dante's behavior: in v. 150, Dante emphasizes that helping the traitor would be an act against divine justice since, as Guido Da Pisa notes in his comment on the verse, 'who honors a boor, offends God'²⁹³. The absence of emotion is a consequence, as we have seen, of the completion of the first phase of Dante's contrition; he is now able to understand the limits of compassion and, above all, to accept divine justice. This acceptance emerges clearly in his recognition of the sinners' weeping as an instrument of divine punishment: the cruel act of not removing the frozen tears from the eyes of Friar Alberigo is, therefore, a manifest sign of this recognition.

The long transformation of the tears of the damned, from the wailing of souls on the banks of the Acheron to the tears that remain in Friar Alberigo's eyes, shows the gradual mutation of the divine gift of weeping, eventually turned into a divine *contrappasso*: in Hell, a kingdom with an inverted structure, the tears of repentance that have not been shed in life become the main instrument of punishment and the characterization of the condition of the damned, an emblem of their rejection and ignorance of God. Moreover, the tears shed by the damned, like their stories and punishments, take on a didactic function for the pilgrim Dante: some stimulate him to weep and facilitate his contrition; others show him the power of divine justice. The tears of the damned teach Dante the importance of weeping in life and, therefore, the risk of failure to repent. It is through these episodes that Dante fully learns the value of tears, a fundamental tool for the progression of his journey to the peak of Purgatory where, with the help of penitential tears, he will finally be able to access Paradise.

²⁹³ Guido da pisa (New York: New York Press, 1974): 'chi fa honore al villano fa onta a Dio'.

II. 4 Tears and Blood: An Interpretation of Lucifer's Weeping (*Inf.* XXXIV)

The gradual degradation of the divine gift of weeping in Hell finds its climax and its maximum expression in the final tears shed in the first canticle, those of Lucifer, frozen into the center of the icy lake Cocytus (*Inf.* XXXIV. 49-54), depicted as weeping monstrously from his six eyes:

Non avean penne, ma di vispistrello
era lor modo; e quelle svolazzava,
sì che tre venti si movean da ello:
quindi Cocito tutto s'aggelava.
*Con sei occhi piangēa, e per tre menti
gocciava 'l pianto e sanguinosa bava.*²⁹⁴

The reason for this weeping has long been discussed by commentators, who have offered various resolutions to the issue. The first interpretation, dating back to the early commentators, is allegorical: if, according to Francesco da Buti, Lucifer's tears represent the consequence of the sins symbolized by his three faces (anger, avarice and sloth), which lead to tears or to fear of eternal punishment²⁹⁵, Cristoforo Landino believes that Lucifer's tears show repentance²⁹⁶; that is, after the sin committed. Modern criticism has not pursued this interpretation, since tears of contrition are perceived as out of place in lowest Hell, where any possibility of repentance is completely denied.

A more successful reading was introduced by the early commentator Benvenuto da Imola, and later reiterated by modern critics Giuseppe Giacalone, Umberto Bosco and Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi: it attributes an emotional value to Lucifer's tears, which would therefore be shed 'ex ira et odio'²⁹⁷, for the anger and pain caused by the recognition of the impotence and defeat of the first among the proud angels to rebel against God. Therefore, according to this interpretation, Lucifer would be in possession of an inner life, of feelings that would give his figure a 'superhuman sense of tragedy'²⁹⁸ and even a 'memory of grandeur now lost'²⁹⁹. Attilio Momigliano, Natalino Sapegno and Charles Singleton assert that Lucifer's weeping has no human aspect to it, but is rather 'a purely physical phenomenon'³⁰⁰ that is grotesque, monstrous and mechanical, in that the tears flow from six eyes, and because they are mixed with bloody

²⁹⁴ 'They were featherless and fashioned/ like a bat's wings. When he flapped them,/ he sent forth three separate winds,/ the sources of the ice upon Cocytus./ Out of six eyes he wept and his three chins/ dripped tears and drooled blood-red saliva.'

²⁹⁵ Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'o a pianto o ad angoscia di penitenzia o di punizione eterna'.

²⁹⁶ Cristoforo Landino (Firenze: Lexis Progetti Editoriali, 1999): 'Le lacrime in sul mento significano el pentimento nel fine et dopo el facto'.

²⁹⁷ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887).

²⁹⁸ Umberto Bosco e Giovanni Reggio (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1979).

²⁹⁹ Vittorio Rossi, *Commento alla 'Divina Commedia'* (Roma: Salerno editrice, 2008), p. 445.

³⁰⁰ Charles S. Singleton (Princeton: University Press, 1970-75).

drool. These details, according to Momigliano, convey ‘a contaminated and wicked appearance’³⁰¹ to Lucifer’s tears, which closely resemble those shed by the soothsayers in *Inf.* XX, dripping grotesquely into the crack of their buttocks. Finally, a different reading, proposed by Ernesto Trucchi, attributes Lucifer’s weeping not to a moral but to a physical cause, to an irritation caused by the cold or to his constant chewing³⁰².

As can be seen, the question of Lucifer’s weeping remains unresolved and its problematic nature depends on the fact that in medieval representations of Lucifer prior to Dante, tears are a highly uncommon element.

While tears are completely absent from the figurative repertoire that influenced Dante’s conception of Lucifer³⁰³, in the literary and more specifically the visionary tradition³⁰⁴, tears sometimes characterize the depiction of devils, although these are isolated episodes. In these cases, the devils, having been defeated by angels or saints in the struggle for possession of a soul, are represented mourning their ineptitude and helplessness³⁰⁵. On the contrary, devils are typically described in visionary texts as laughing, and their grins are often contrasted with the desperate cries of the damned³⁰⁶.

Particularly relevant in this regard is the representation of Lucifer in the *Visio Tnugdali*, whose influence on Dante’s own depiction has been widely recognized³⁰⁷. To the already noted list of elements that make the prince of darkness in the *visio* similar to Dante’s Lucifer, such as his gigantic size, his inability to move and his bestial characteristics, add the fact that he is portrayed ‘quasi suspirans’, sighing and groaning, while he scatters souls throughout Hell with his

³⁰¹ Attilio Momigliano (Firenze: G. C. Sansoni, 1979).

³⁰² Ernesto Trucchi (Milano: L. Toffaloni, 1936): ‘a irritazione di agenti esterni, come è il freddo, o, forse meglio, a eccessivo spostamento delle mascelle e tensione di tutti i muscoli della faccia nell’espressione d’infernale ingordigia’.

³⁰³ On the iconographic representation of Lucifer and the devils, see the following contributions: Laura Pasquini, ‘La rappresentazione di Lucifero in Dante e nell’iconografia medievale’, in *‘Il mondo errante’. Dante fra letteratura, eresia e storia, Atti del Convegno internazionale di studio Bertinoro 13-16 settembre 2010* (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, 2013), pp. 267-288; Laura Pasquini, *Diavoli e inferni nel Medioevo. Origine e sviluppo delle immagini dal VI al XV secolo* (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2015), pp. 49-57; Eugene P. Nassar, ‘The Iconography of Hell: From the Baptistery Mosaic to the Michelangelo Fresco’, in *Dante Studies*, 111 (1993), 53-105.

³⁰⁴ For the depiction of Satan in the visionary literature see Alison Morgan, *Dante e l’aldilà medievale* (Roma: Salerno Editrice, 2012), pp. 49-51.

³⁰⁵ See for example, the following passage of the *Letters of Saint Boniface* (Ciccarese, p. 354): ‘[...] illico maligni spiritus levaverunt fletum et ululatum magnum’. In the *Visio sancti Guthlaci* (VIII sec.), the devils weep being defeated by Saint Bartholomew: ‘a sinistra stantes duos satellites lugentes [...] conspicit; quos cum interrogasset quid plorassent, responderunt: “Vires nostras ubique per te fractas lugemus, et inertiam nostram adversus valetudinem tuam ploramus [...]”’.

³⁰⁶ In Venerable Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* the lamentation of the damned mixes with the laughing of the devils: ‘[...] audio subitum post terga sonitum immanissimi fletus ac miserrimi, simul et cachinnum crepitantem quasi vulgi indocti captis hostibus insultantis [...] cum longius subeuntibus eis fletum hominum et risum daemoniorum clare discernere nequirem, sonum tamen adhuc promiscum in auribus haberem.’ (Ciccarese, p. 312). In Bonvesin de la Riva’s *De scriptura nigra*, the devils’ grin is one of the punishments of the damned, who cry in response: ‘e mo no poss odir se no crior e plangio/ e li ghign dri demonij donde o sont mo afrangio’ (*Visioni dell’Aldilà prima di Dante: testi di Bonvesin de la Riva*, p. 46).

³⁰⁷ Morgan, p. 44.

breath³⁰⁸. Although these are not true tears, the suffering expressed by Satan in the *Visio Tnugdali* could constitute a first precedent in the visionary literature for the weeping of Dante's Lucifer³⁰⁹.

Along with the unusual character of Lucifer's tears, it is necessary to take into account a further element: in Dante's *Inferno*, Lucifer is the only traitor permitted to cry in the center of Cocytus, a place where, as we have seen, the damned are unable to shed tears, due precisely to the icy wind created by the wings of the gigantic bat. Dante emphasizes the extraordinary nature of Lucifer's weeping through the repetition of the verb 'piangea' (53), which in the next verse becomes 'gocciava pianto' (54); in this way, Satan's tears come to the fore, along with the 'sanguinosa bava' with which they are mixed.

It is necessary to focus our investigation on this particular mixture of tears and blood, since it enables us to understand the meaning of Lucifer's weeping: as we shall see, the mixture of Lucifer's tears and the blood of traitors can be interpreted as part of the process of parodic inversion to which the figure of Lucifer is subjected, representing, in particular, a reversal of the process of redemption jointly enacted by the Virgin Mary and Christ.

In the Middle Ages, tears and blood generally fell within the range of those bodily liquids that had to be controlled and dominated. Tears were often used as an instrument of mortification of the flesh, in order to reduce the liquids that might otherwise be emitted during sexual acts. With regard to blood, however, as illustrated by Jacques Le Goff³¹⁰, the attitude of medieval society was contradictory and paradoxical: on the one hand it was condemned: monks were forbidden to fight, since Christ in the New Testament had explicitly forbidden the shedding of blood; on the other hand, it is on blood that the Christian religion is founded. In fact, the blood of Christ, as the supreme instrument of sacrifice and redemption, possesses an absolute centrality in the economy of salvation and liberation from sin through sacrifice, continually renewed by the Eucharistic rite after the Last Supper ('This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins', *Matthew* 26.28). In the New Testament, and then in the patristic texts, the blood shed by Christ is described as a symbol of love, an offering of the divine gift of salvation³¹¹.

³⁰⁸ *Visio Tnugdali*. p. 37: 'tunc etiam quasi suspirans sufflat et spargit omnes animas in diversas gehenne partes, [...]'.
³⁰⁹ Massimo Chiariglione indicates another possible precedent in Saint Jerome who, in the *Commentariorum in Isaiam prophetam*, defines Lucifer as the noblest angel who, now fallen, can only grieve and weep for his condition (*Ei quod flere debeat et lugere*) (Massimo Chiariglione, *Lucifero 'Vispistrello'. Manifestazioni diaboliche dell' 'Inferno' dantesco* (Napoli: Liguori Editore, 2016), p. 169).

³¹⁰ Jacques Le Goff, 'Il tabù dello sperma e del sangue' in *Il corpo nel medioevo*, pp. 27-28.
³¹¹ On Christ's blood as symbol of love see Roberto Pacillo, 'Lo sviluppo del simbolismo del Sangue: dalla vita all'amore', in *Il Sangue che rivela l'amore. Miscellanea di studi*, vol. 2 (Roma: Ed. Pia Unione Preziosissimo Sangue, 1987), pp. 261-270.

In particular, the water and blood that flow from the wound in Christ's side according to the Gospel of John (19.34) have the specific function of washing away human sin, as St. Augustine declares: 'when his body was pierced by the lance, it poured forth the water and the blood by which he cancelled our sins'³¹². In this regard, some scholars³¹³ have proposed an interpretation according to which the tears and bloody slime of Dante's Lucifer would constitute a parody of Christ's fluid and blood, mentioned, as Pasquale Sabbatino observes³¹⁴, in the third stanza of the same hymn by Venanzio Fortunato which opens Canto XXXIV of the *Inferno*.

Indeed, on the one hand, there is no doubt that the bloody froth constitutes a perversion of the blood shed by Christ, within the general process of parodying Christ's crucifixion which the *crux diaboli* depicts³¹⁵. The inversion of Christ's blood sacrifice appears particularly evident when considering the avian symbolism with which the figures of Christ and Lucifer are described.

In the third canticle, the image of Christ's sacrifice on the cross is compared to a pelican (*Par.* XXV. 113), a bird that, as narrated by medieval bestiaries, kills its young and then pierces its chest with its beak and sheds its blood on the dead chicks, thus restoring them to life. The pelican was, therefore, 'a recognized symbol of Christ, who shed his blood to save his children and resurrect them to eternal life'³¹⁶. One notes that, at the same time, the text refers to Lucifer as an 'uccello' (*Inf.* XXXIV. 47), a bird, though with parodic intent: he is, in fact, a bird without feathers, a bat that, rather than sacrificing its own blood, spills that of the three traitors whom he chews in his mouths³¹⁷, in an eternal and deformed parody of Christ's sacrifice. In fact, within this image, the 'chewing' of the bat who 'dirompea co' denti un peccatore, a guisa di maciulla'³¹⁸ (55-56) becomes a parody of the salvific bite of the pelican: in *Par.* XXVI, the

³¹² 'Nam percussus lancea corpus eius aquam et sanguinem emisit, quo peccata nostra dimisit' (*Sermones*, 228 B. 2).

³¹³ The hypothesis has been suggested by Jeffrey B. Russell, *Lucifer: the Devil in the Middle Ages* (London: Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1984), p. 232 and it has been put forth again by Pasquale Sabbatino in 'La metamorfosi di Lucifero e la 'conversio' di Dante', in *Bibliologia e critica dantesca. Saggi dedicati a Enzo Esposito*, vol. 2, ed. by Vincenzo De Gregorio (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1997), pp. 151-178.

³¹⁴ Sabbatino, *La metamorfosi di Lucifero e la 'conversio' di Dante*, p. 173.

³¹⁵ On this interpretation see Charles S. Singleton, *Dante Studies I: Commedia, Elements of Structure* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), pp. 33 and ff., and John Freccero, 'The Sign of Satan', *Modern Language Notes*, 80, 1 (1965), 11-26 (pp. 11-12).

³¹⁶ Giuseppe Ledda, *Il Bestiario dell'aldilà. Gli animali nella Commedia di Dante* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2019), pp. 252-256. On the symbolism of the pelican in the patristic tradition see Maria L. Coletti, 'Il pellicano nella tradizione letteraria e nell'esegesi patristica (Sal 101, 7)', in *Atti della settimana. Sangue e antropologia nella letteratura cristiana*, ed. by Francesco Vattioni (Roma: Edizioni Pia Unione Preziosissimo sangue, 1983), pp. 449-48 and Maria Ciccacese, *Animali simbolici. Alle origini del bestiario cristiano II* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2007), pp. 163-177.

³¹⁷ Anthony K. Cassell has already noted that Lucifer does not shed his own blood, but that of the three traitors, and he interprets this representation as a parody of the Eucharistic rite (*Satan*, in *Dante's Fearful Art of Justice*, p. 113).

³¹⁸ 'With his teeth, just like a hackle/ pounding flax, he champed a sinner'.

sacrifice of Christ-pelican on the cross is a ‘bite’ (‘con quanti denti questo amor ti morde’³¹⁹ (51)) that expresses and instills divine love, while Lucifer’s bite is reduced to a material instrument for punishing traitors, which manifests nothing but hatred.

Moreover, it should be noted that, in various parts of the New Testament, the blood of Christ is often viewed in relation to the Trinity, representing, in particular, the revelation of love within the Trinity, and thus becoming the ‘definitive point of all divine salvific activity’³²⁰. First, the blood of Christ is an expression of his historical personhood³²¹; secondly, it is a symbol of love and gratification of the Father, who gave life to the Son for his redemption³²²; finally, the Holy Spirit constitutes the promise of redemption in the blood of Christ³²³. As noted, according to a widely shared interpretation, the three faces of Lucifer represent the antithesis of the Trinity, in the reversal of the three colors that characterize them³²⁴, while the icy wind of hatred produced by the demon’s wings constitutes a parody of the fire of love of the Holy Spirit. Even the bloody drool, therefore, could belong to the list of elements that make Lucifer a fraudulent version of the Trinity. Dante emphasizes, in fact, how the blood of the traitors drips ‘per tre menti’³²⁵ (54), revealing not the love of the three divine figures, but the sin of those who betrayed that same love and are now condemned for eternity to shed their own blood and, therefore, to repeat, in contrapasso, that supreme gesture of love, now deprived of all salvific purpose.

Regarding the relationship between the water flowing from Christ’s side and Lucifer’s tears, the inversion is opaquer. This water, a symbol of the sacrament of baptism³²⁶ and source of the four rivers of Paradise, appears more directly connected in an oppositional manner to the rivers created by the Old Man of Crete³²⁷, while it bears little comparison to the tears of Lucifer, which do not generate any water source³²⁸, nor do they issue from a wound. Moreover, one should remember that while Christ wept at different moments of his earthly life, he is never portrayed

³¹⁹ ‘The many teeth with which this love does bite’.

³²⁰ John Sagi, ‘Il sangue di Cristo e la SS. Trinità (Ef 1, 3-14)’, in *Il mistero del sangue di Cristo e l’esperienza cristiana*, ed. by Achille M. Triacca (Roma: Centro studi Sangue Christi, 1987), pp. 39-98, (p. 89).

³²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 65.

³²² *Epistle to Romans* 3.25.

³²³ *Epistle to Hebrews* 9.14.

³²⁴ For a summary of the issue see Chiariglione, p. 10.

³²⁵ ‘His three chins’.

³²⁶ John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions. The Works of the Fathers in translation*, 31, ed. by Johannes Quasten and Walter J. Burghardt (New York: Paulist Press, 1962), p. 62, ‘There came out from His side water and blood. [...] I said that there was a symbol of baptism and the mysteries in that blood and water. It is form both of these that the Church is sprung [...]’ (III. 17).

³²⁷ Silverstein, *The weeping statue and Dante’s Gran Veglio*, pp. 165-184, (p. 175 and ff.).

³²⁸ On the contrary, according to Silvio Pasquazi (‘Il Lucifero dantesco’, in *Lectura Dantis Modenese. Inferno* (Modena: Comitato Provinciale Dante Alighieri, 1984), 211-232, (pp. 223-224)), Lucifer absorbs the waters of the Lethe, laden with the sins washed in the Earthly Paradise and carried by the ‘narrow stream’ (*Inf.* XXXIV. 130), returning them in the form of tears that feed the lake of Cocytus. Recently, Fenu Barbera has proposed a similar reading (*Dante’s tears*, p. 103), comparing Lucifer to the Old Man of Crete, ‘stuck in the middle of a lake of tears that he himself caused’. However, nowhere in the poem Dante mentions that Lucifer’s tears create Cocytus, while in *Inf.* XIV.119-120 the author openly states that the lake is formed by the tears shed by the Old Man of Crete.

as weeping on the cross. Another figure, however, is often represented as weeping on this occasion: the Virgin Mary.

Between the end of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth, one finds both within narrative texts and theological discussions a keen awareness of and interest in the suffering of Christ and the compassion of Mary. Reflection on these themes was encouraged through a form of affective participation based on identification with the sufferings of Christ and the sorrow of Mary at the crucifixion³²⁹. In particular, the Virgin's grief finds its full representation first in the *Planctus Mariae* (twelfth century) and then in the *Stabat Mater* (thirteenth century), texts that variously express the lamentations and sufferings of Mary at the foot of the Cross³³⁰.

Among the Virgin's expressions of sorrow, weeping is the most recurrent within these texts, although it finds no evidence in the Bible, which barely mentions the presence of Mary at the Cross³³¹. Mary's tears derive from the tradition of the Eastern Church³³² which discarded the composed and austere image of the Virgin, proposed in the first centuries of Christian reflection, emphasizing instead her maternal instinct, her tearful and desperate appearance in reaction to the Crucifixion. Already in this tradition, the weeping Virgin becomes one of the most common images used to express Mary's active participation in the Passion of her son, fully sharing in his pain and suffering.

In particular, in the *Life of the Virgin*, a seventh-century biography of Mary attributed to Maximus the Confessor, in which 'the tradition of Mary's compassionate sorrows at the foot of the cross first emerged, already in its mature medieval form'³³³, it is possible to trace a first correspondence between the blood of Christ and the tears of Mary: 'And the abundance of the sufferings and the wounds pierced your heart: streams of blood came down from his incorruptible wounds, but fountains of tears came down from your eyes'³³⁴. As can be seen, the text compares and assimilates Mary's suffering, expressed through tears, to that of Christ, realized in the shedding of blood; Mary's shared participation in the Passion is manifested through tears, through an exact identification with the blood of Christ.

³²⁹ Claire L. Sahlin, 'Tears and weeping in the Spirituality of St. Brigitta of Sweden', in *Tears, sighs and laughter. Expressions of emotions in the Middle Ages* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 2017), pp. 239-254, (p. 246).

³³⁰ On the topic and for the texts see Peter Dronke, 'Laments of the Maries: From the Beginnings to the Mystery Plays', in *Intellectuals and Poets in Medieval Europe* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1999), pp. 457-89 and Sandro Sticca, *Il 'Planctus Mariae' nella tradizione drammatica del Medio Evo* (Binghamton: Global Academic Publishing, 2002).

³³¹ The only reference is in *Gv.* 19. 25: 'Stabant iuxta Crucem Iesu mater eius, et soror matris eius Maria Cléophae, et Salóme, et María Magdaléne'.

³³² Sticca, p. 43. On the influence of the tradition of the Eastern Church over the representation of Mary's tears see Stephen J. Shoemaker, 'Mary at the Cross, East and West: Maternal Compassion and Affective Piety in the Earliest Life of the Virgin and the High Middle Ages', *The Journal of Theological Studies* 62, 2 (2011), 570-606 (p. 603).

³³³ Shoemaker, p. 573.

³³⁴ The passage is cited in Shoemaker, p. 580.

Evidently, such an identification could not fail to generate debate on the issue of Marian co-redemption: that is, the question of Mary's role in the redemption of the human race. In the West, as Sandro Sticca points out³³⁵, Arnold of Bonneval is the first to elucidate the idea of Marian co-redemption, a theory that would later become quite popular in the Marian studies of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: 'there was only one will of Christ and Mary, one holocaust that both offered to God: one in Mary, in the blood of her heart; one in Jesus, in the blood of his flesh'³³⁶. Thus, according to Arnold, Mary participates in Christ's redemptive work through his interior martyrdom, symbolically realized in the blood of her own heart and manifested through tears of compassion and suffering, analogous to the salvific blood of her own Son. Maximus the Confessor had previously noted how the spear that pierced Christ also pierced Mary and 'made streams of tears flow from her eyes and made blood drip into her heart'³³⁷. Later, St. Bridget of Sweden, in her *Revelations*, would recall through the mouth of the Virgin herself the importance of Mary's tears mingled with the blood of Jesus, which together have the ability to reverse the effects of the Fall of Adam and Eve³³⁸. In summary, the cooperation of Christ and Mary to bring about humanity's salvation is therefore based on the correspondence and redemptive action of two elements: the blood of the Son and the tears of the mother.

This conception was widely accepted, developed and transmitted through the current of Marian devotion and piety introduced by Anselm and Bernard of Clairvaux in the twelfth century, both of whom emphasized in their writings the theme of compassion, the role of the Virgin's maternal suffering and the affective correspondence between mother and Son during the Passion.

This conception is likewise present in the *Commedia*. In fact, although the image of Mary in the three canticles is often thought to be based on the biblical account alone³³⁹, one can find at least two passages in Dante's poem which refer to the moment of the Crucifixion and whose inspiration can be traced back to the Mariological tradition mentioned above. These are two passages in which Mary's suffering functions as an absolute term of comparison to express another type of pain.

The first passage is *Par. XI. 71-72*, where Dante, speaking of the Poverty that 'wept with Christ upon the Cross', feels the need to specify 'dove Maria rimase giuso'³⁴⁰, echoing John 19.25 and

³³⁵ Sticca, p. 33.

³³⁶ My own translation. 'Movebat enim eum Matris affectio, et omnino tunc erat una Christi et Mariae voluntas, unumque holocaustum ambo pariter offerebant Deo: haec in sanguine cordis, hic in sanguine carnis' (Arnaldo di Bonneval, *De septem verbis Domini in cruce*, ed. by Jean P. Migne, PL 189 (1854), 1694-1695).

³³⁷ The passage is cited in Shoemaker, p. 582.

³³⁸ Sahlin, pp. 246-248.

³³⁹ See Steven Botterill, 'Dante, Bernard and the Virgin Mary', in *Dante and the Mystical Tradition: Bernard of Clairvaux in the "Commedia."* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 148-193, (p. 158).

³⁴⁰ 'While Mary stayed below'.

recalling not only the presence of the Virgin in this episode, but also, as Jacopo della Lana emphasizes³⁴¹, the pain she shared with her Son through her weeping. Nicola Fosca³⁴² identified the source of this comparison between the suffering of Poverty and that of the Virgin as the *Arbor vitae crucifixae* by Ubertino da Casale, a fundamental fourteenth-century text on Marian spirituality, in which the Virgin's compassion achieves its maximum expression, acquiring the significance of mediation and reconciliation: her pain and tears embody humanity's pain, thus cooperating in its redemption through a correspondence with the sufferings of Christ³⁴³.

At the beginning of Canto XXXIII of the *Purgatorio*, it is also possible to find a representation of the suffering of the Virgin at the Cross: after witnessing the scene in which the gifts of the Church are prostituted, Beatrice, while listening to the cries of the female virtues, appears 'so-spirosa e pia'³⁴⁴ (4) 'che poco più a la croce si cambiò Maria'³⁴⁵ (6): Dante also records the change in Mary's face, transfigured by pain, as the maximum example of 'human and religious grief'³⁴⁶ to which he compares Beatrice's suffering. Benvenuto da Imola's commentary on the purgatorial passage highlights the fully shared suffering on the part of the Virgin in her role as co-redeemer, in a language typical of Marian devotion³⁴⁷; a role that is attributed to Mary by Dante himself at the end of *Paradiso*, where the Virgin is indicated as the one who closed up and anointed the wound of the original sin that was opened by Eve (*Par.* XXXII. 4-6: 'La piaga che Maria richiuse e unse,/ quella ch'è tanto bella da' suoi piedi / è colei che l'aperse e che la punse'³⁴⁸).

A detailed description of the change in the Virgin's facial expression can be found in the *Liber de Passione Christi et Doloribus et Planctibus Matris Eius*, a work that, as we have seen regarding the Chapter XXIII of the *Vita Nuova*, was likely to be known to Dante³⁴⁹. The importance and notoriety of this work is due to its innovative character within the framework of medieval dramaturgy of the Passion³⁵⁰, since the only perspective representing the entire Passion of Christ is precisely that of Mary's weeping and suffering. In the following passage, the Virgin is depicted as pallid and sighing at the sight of her Son's death on the Cross, and her

³⁴¹ Jacopo della Lana (Bologna: Tipografia Regia, 1866-67): 'essa povertade è rimasa per vestigia di Cristo sì come rimase nostra donna dietro al suo figliuolo piangendolo e vedendolo suso lo legno della croce essere passionato'.

³⁴² Nicola Fosca (The Dartmouth Dante Project, 2003-2015).

³⁴³ Sticca, p. 142.

³⁴⁴ 'Sighing and compassionate'.

³⁴⁵ 'that Mary's, at the cross, was hardly more transformed'.

³⁴⁶ Daniele Mattalia (Milano: A. Rizzoli, 1960).

³⁴⁷ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): 'Christus enim in ara crucis immolabat carnem, Maria vero animam; ille patiebatur in corpore, Maria in corde; ipsa ad sanguinem filii sui optabat addere sanguinem carnis suae'.

³⁴⁸ 'The wound that Mary closed up and anointed/ was opened and inflicted/ by the lovely woman now at Mary's feet'.

³⁴⁹ See Ch. I.1, 18-19.

³⁵⁰ Carla Bino, *Dal trionfo al pianto. La fondazione del 'teatro della misericordia' nel Medioevo (V-XIII secolo)* (Milano, Vita e pensiero, 2008), p. 312.

immense pain is chosen, as in Dante's text, to be the maximum term of comparison. Indeed, it is compared to the disastrous effects of Christ's death:

*Cogitare libet quantus dolor interfuit matri, cum sic dolebat, quae ita sensibilis erat. Non lingua loqui, nec mens cogitare valebat quanto dolore anima tunc tenebatur Mariae. Juxta crucem Christi stabat emortua Virgo, quae illum concepit virgo de sancto Spiritu; vox non erat ulla, dolor abstulerat vires. Imo strata jacens pallebat quasi mortua, vivens vivebat, moriens vivensque moriebatur, nec poterat mori, quia vivens mortua erat; [...].*³⁵¹

This text could therefore have been an important reference for Dante, especially if we consider that, at the time, it was considered to be the work of St. Bernard, Dante's third guide in the poem to whom, by virtue of his devotion, the prayer to the Virgin is entrusted at the end of the *Paradiso*.

The following passage of the *Liber* in particular describes the suffering of the Virgin, prostrate at the foot of the Cross, with a wealth of details and vividly depicts the interplay between Mary's tears and the blood of Christ:

*Ibi stabat dolens, confecta saevo dolore, exspectans Christi corpus deponi de cruce; haec plorabat, dicens, atque plorando dicebat: Laedite mihi miserae, vel corpus exanime. [...] tamque mortis pallor ejus perfuderat mentem, vultu tamen perfuderat, et genis, et ore rubra erat Christi cruore. Cadentes guttas sanguinis ore tangebatur, terram deosculans, quam cruoris unda rigabat.*³⁵²

The Virgin is described here as she weeps desperately and, in the throes of anguish, kisses the earth bathed in the blood of Christ, staining her mouth and bathing the earth in turn with tears of blood. In this image, the synthesis between the two liquids reaches its maximum expression: the drips of the Son's blood mix with the mother's tears, in an image of extraordinarily tragic gravity which becomes a symbol of the fusion between the two figures and of the shared suffering on which the co-redemption is based.

I believe that the representation of Mary in this passage, which will be reiterated both by Ubertino da Casale and by Bernardino da Siena³⁵³, may likely have exerted influence on Dante's

³⁵¹ *Liber de passione Christi*, PL 182, 1133-1142 (1137). 'It is agreeable to imagine how great was the mother's sorrow, when insensible things sorrowed in such a way. The tongue cannot speak, nor the mind conceive, the extent of the sorrow which affected the pious innards of Mary. The dead mother stood near the cross of Christ. And she who had conceived by the holy spirit had no voice. Sorrow truly had carried off her strength. Rather, her living soul grew pale as she lay prostrate. Dying she lived; and living, she died. Nor could she die, who was a living dead person; [...]' (Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, p. 177).

³⁵² *Liber de passione Christi*, p. 1138. 'There she stood wounded with cruel pain, waiting for the body of Christ to be taken down from the cross; she wept, while saying, and weeping she said: "O me! O me! Now return his lifeless body to me his wretched mother. [...] The pallor of his death had filled her mind, but her face, her cheeks and her mouth grow red with the gore of Christ. She touched the falling drops of blood with the mouth, kissing the ground which the stream of blood watered.'

³⁵³ In Ubertino of Casale's *Arbor vitae crucifixae Jesu* (1259-1329) the face of Mary appears to be wet with blood and tears: 'Nec non et ipsam faciem pallidam et quasi sine morte mortuam: et tui sanguinis aspersione manibus et vestibus et faciem cruentatam gemitibus anxiam: voce raucam lachrymis perflusam [...]' (*Ubertinus de Casali Arbor Vitae Crucifixae Jesu*, ed. by Charles T. Davis (Torino: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1961), p. 321). Bernardino of Siena represents the Virgin with a face stained with blood and tears, but in the moment of Christ's burial: 'quando

depiction of Lucifer weeping in *Inf.* XXXIV: Lucifer's tears and bloody froth, consisting of the blood of traitors, could be interpreted as a parody of the tears of Mary and the blood of Christ. Indeed, when comparing the passage from Bernard's *Liber* with the verses 53-54 of *Inf.* XXXIV, the following similarities may be noted.

First, both texts are characterized by an insistence on the image of the mouth: in the *Liber* it is the red mouth of Mary, kissing the blood of Christ, a symbol of shared participation and an iteration of the Eucharistic sacrifice; in the *Inferno* it is the horrid 'tre menti' of Satan, dripping with blood and tears (54), emphasized in the next verse with 'ogne bocca' (XXXIV. 55), an instrument of punishment for the three traitors through which the perversion of the Eucharistic sacrament is enacted.

Secondly, in both passages the blood is represented as dripping: the *cadentes guttas sanguinis* of Christ, a sign of the preciousness of that blood which Mary seeks with her lips, collecting it with her kisses so as not to spill even a drop; in Lucifer's representation they are transformed into a dripping and disgusting drool (54), the useless blood of traitors, shed by Satan's own chewing and allowed to flow freely from his three mouths.

Finally, the *unda cruoris* with which the Virgin bathes the earth, adding her co-redemptive tears to the redeeming blood of Christ, is parodied by Lucifer's tears, futile and far from salvific, which are mixed with the equally useless blood of the traitors. Thus, Lucifer's tears forever mimic redemptive tears: like the eternal weeping of every sinner in Hell who is condemned to a futile reproduction of his own lack of repentance, Lucifer's weeping is that of the rebel who wished to resemble God and who is now punished and forced to mimic for all eternity the redemptive act of weeping which, along with the sacrifice of blood, was the cause of his own defeat.

As can be observed within the two passages, among both pairs one figure weeps over the blood shed on the other: in the first case the co-redemptive mother sheds tears on the blood of the Son; in the second the traitor to God, Lucifer, weeps over the blood of Judas, a traitor to Christ. The relationship established between blood and tears implies and illustrates the close link between the two figures who spill their respective fluids, highlighting the individual purpose of each.

If, in fact, the joint action of the Virgin and Christ had redemption as its ultimate goal, the purpose of the cooperation between Lucifer and Judas was betrayal: as Chiariglione recalls³⁵⁴, Satan betrays Jesus through Judas: that is, by entering the apostle's body with the Eucharistic morsel which Jesus had offered him, a gesture repeated in the same 'demonic Eucharist'³⁵⁵

a sepulcro filii dolorose avulsa, pallens facie, aspersa sanguine, cum anhelosis suspiriis et gemitibus interruptisset fletibus lacrimosis versus reducitur [...]' (the passage is cited in Sticca, p. 150).

³⁵⁴ Chiariglione, pp. 50-51.

³⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

staged by Dante. The close relationship between Lucifer and Judas is represented visually in the *Last Judgment* of the Scrovegni Chapel, where Judas is placed at the right hand of the devil; it is interesting to note that the Virgin Mary is often depicted in the same position: that is, on the right hand of the Savior³⁵⁶.

In sum, in Dante's representation, how the sacrifice of Christ's blood on the cross appears upside down in the torture of the blood of Judas, by that gigantic one *crux diaboli* represented by Lucifer, so the parallel sacrifice of the Virgin's tears of pain is reversed in the punishment of Satan's eternal tears. The representation of Lucifer's weeping constitutes, therefore, a real parody of redemption through the blood of Christ and the tears of Mary.

Interestingly, there is another episode within the *Commedia* in which tears and blood merge, with an equally negative and grotesque result. This episode occurs the beginning of the *Inferno*, in the anti-Hell, where the pusillanimous who are constantly bitten and harassed by flies and wasps shed both blood and tears, which feed the worms at their feet (*Inf.* III. 67-69):

*Elle rigavan lor di sangue il volto,
che, mischiato di lagrime, a' lor piedi
da fastidiosi vermi era ricolto.*³⁵⁷

Nicola Fosca points out that the tears and blood of the pusillanimous make up a part of their contrapasso for, though 'never shed for any cause, they now feed those animals considered most repugnant, the worms'³⁵⁸. Furthermore, Eugenio Frongia notes that the blood of the damned in anti-Hell can be contrasted with that of the martyrs: if the former nourishes the worms, the latter, as the liturgical hymns say, 'has made the garden of the Church bloom with new saints'³⁵⁹. This hypothesis seems well-founded, given that the blood of the martyrs was often seen as having a great capacity for fecundity, especially in the texts of Augustine, where it is often depicted as a fertilizer for the Church³⁶⁰, or as grains of wheat that generate an abundant harvest³⁶¹.

In this regard, it should be noted that the tears of the martyrs also possess the same power. One finds an illustration of this concept in the following commentary, again by Augustine, on Psalm 125, *Qui seminant in lacrymis in gaudio metent*:

³⁵⁶ See Lucia Travaini, 'Maria', in *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Medievale*, (Roma: 1997), <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/maria_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27-Arte-Medievale%29/> [accessed January 2022].

³⁵⁷ '[...] that made their faces stream with blood,/ which, mingled with their tears,/ was gathered at their feet by loathsome worms.'

³⁵⁸ Nicola Fosca (The Dartmouth Dante Project, 2003-2015).

³⁵⁹ Eugenio N. Frongia, *Canto III: the Gates of Hell* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 45.

³⁶⁰ *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 8.3.

³⁶¹ *Ibidem*, 69.1.

This psalm, being sung to the Lord, seems to fit the holy martyrs; [...] So why then "in tears," since all our good works should be marked by cheerfulness? About the martyrs indeed it can be said that they sowed in tears. They fought bravely and endured great tribulation. And in order to console their tears Christ transferred or transposed their situation to himself, and said, My soul is sorrowful to death [...] There is being kept for me, he says, the crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will render to me on that day. As though to say, "He will render me the harvest, for whom I am spending myself in sowing."³⁶²

The action of martyrdom is considered here to be the highest expression of the sowing of tears, through which bliss is obtained: the sacrifice of the martyr, his tribulations, are fulfilled and "sown" with tears that subsequently produce a harvest of eternal joy. Augustine also explains how these tears establish Christ's identification with the martyrs through their shared sorrow, which will eventually bring joy: indeed, the Redeemer, through his sacrifice on the cross, has in turn sowed the seeds for the salvation of man.

In fact, the Church fathers generally considered martyrdom to be an imitation and continuation of Christ's sacrifice, so much so that the same image of the immolation of the lamb was often used to describe it³⁶³. The sowing of tears, however, is compared primarily to Christ's blood: St. Ambrose affirms that 'Christ is where the blood of the martyrs is'³⁶⁴ (*Exposition of the Gospel of Luke*, VII. 128), while John Chrysostom observes that even Satan himself has noted and fears the equivalence between the blood of Christ and that of the martyrs³⁶⁵. Consequently, the blood of the martyrs, like that of Jesus, assumes a redemptive value, a remission of sins and a purification of the Church, since the martyr, like Christ, becomes a victim of atonement for the sins of man³⁶⁶.

The connection between the tears and blood of the pusillanimous and those of the martyrs, thus, appears extremely relevant if we consider that among this group of sinners are the so-called "neutral angels": those who 'not rebellious and not faithful to God, who held themselves apart' (*Inf.* III. 38-39) during Lucifer's rebellion, and for this reason were rejected both by heaven and by lower Hell. Canto III and Canto XXXIV are therefore, firmly linked. The pride of the Seraphim who rebelled against God and the pusillanimity of the angels who did nothing to stop

³⁶² Saint Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons on the Old Testament (20-50)*, p. 132. 'Psalmus qui cantatur Domino videtur sanctis martyribus convenire [...]. Quare ergo in lacrymis, cum omnia bona opera nostra habere debeant hilaritatem? Et quidem de martyribus dici potest quia cum lacrymis seminaverunt. Fortiter enim certaverunt, et in magnis tribulationibus fuerunt. Nam ut eorum lacrymas Christus consolaretur, transtulit eos et transfiguravit eos in se et dixit: Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem [...] Superest, inquit, mihi corona iustitiae, quam reddet mihi Dominus in illa die iustus iudex. Quasi diceret: Reddet mihi messem, cui me ipsum impendo sementem.' (*Sermones* 31. 1-15).

³⁶³ Pacillo, 'Il mistero del sangue di Cristo e l'esperienza cristiana', in *Il Sangue che rivela l'amore*, pp. 149-220, (p. 184).

³⁶⁴ The passage is cited in Pacillo, p. 166.

³⁶⁵ *De Sanctis martyribus*, 50. 709: 'the devil saw this blood and was horrified; he remembered the other blood, that of the Lord: through that blood he saw this blood' (translation mine).

³⁶⁶ On the topic we refer again to Pacillo, pp. 194-196.

Lucifer are also punished by means of a parody of the tears and blood, respectively of the martyrs and of Christ, which establishes a proportional relationship between the two sins and their symbolic meaning: the neutrality of the angels signifies Lucifer's betrayal, while the sacrifice of the martyrs symbolizes Christ's own sacrifice.

Inferno begins and ends with weeping and blood, sacred instruments of redemption and salvation, which appear overturned, inverted and deformed at the gates and in the depths of the infernal kingdom, marking with precision the boundaries of a world without Christ, where every possibility of repentance and liberation from sin is denied. Redemption, obtained through the greatest acts of suffering and sacrifice offered by Christ, Mary and the martyrs, is therefore imitated and repeated in vain, and its ineffectiveness is transformed into eternal punishment.

The weeping of Lucifer, defeated and mired in the depths of Hell, stands in contrast to the suffering and compassion of the Virgin Mary who opens the first canticle: the gentle woman who in Paradise 'si compiangi', 'moved by pity' (II. 94) initiates that chain of succor that will lead to Beatrice's intervention in aid of Dante, mediating the process of the pilgrim's salvation precisely through the 'compianto'. Beatrice's shining eyes (*Inf.* II. 116), her tears, are therefore associated with Mary's salvific weeping, which will allow the pilgrim Dante to ascend to Paradise, surpassing Lucifer both physically and spiritually, and to witness the vision of God's smile; on the contrary, Lucifer, prince of darkness, will remain condemned to a perpetual blindness and ignorance of the divine light, a rebellious angel forced to shed tears and blood for all eternity.

III. *Purgatorio*

III. 1 The Tears of Exile and the Definition of Purgatory

When considered in terms of frequency and quantity, the tears shed by penitent souls in the *Purgatorio* are not so different from those of the damned in the *Inferno*¹. Yet, the characteristics and function of weeping undergo a strong shift from the first to the second realm of Dante's afterlife: at first eternal and static, the weeping of souls becomes temporary and ascensional; from painful punishment to pleasant pain; from a useless outburst and sign of God's distance to the key needed to access Heaven. To understand this transformation it is necessary, first of all, to reflect on the nature of the purgatorial kingdom and on the state of the penitents.

If we examine medieval visions of the afterlife before Dante, we will observe that weeping in the *Purgatorio* is by no means a constant element in representations of the kingdom. In this regard, however, it is appropriate to clarify: in such visions, the purgatorial kingdom long remained a vague place, both in character and location; its distinction from Hell is often blurred, and purgatorial torments are confused and identified with infernal punishments². As Le Goff states, in visions of the afterlife up to the thirteenth century, Purgatory was not considered 'anything other than a shallow region of Hell'³, where the only difference is the duration of the sentences, which are temporary rather than eternal.

With regard to tears, they are generally absent from these representations in which Purgatory is defined to a greater or lesser extent, and when the tears of souls are mentioned, their depiction does not undergo significant variations compared to that of the weeping of the damned in infernal visions. We can consider, for example, two Irish visions in which tears make frequent appearances: the *Visio Tnugdali* and *Saint Patrick's Purgatory*. If, in the first vision, the distinction between the different areas of the afterlife is not yet clear, the second was considered 'the doctrine's literary birth certificate'⁴. While differing in their level of definition of the purgatorial realm, in both visions tears still appear to possess infernal connotations.

¹ There is a slight difference between the 52 occurrences of *piangere/piagnere* in the *Inferno*, and the 35 of the *Purgatorio* (III. 120; VI. 112; VII. 136; VIII. 6; X. 139; XIV. 103, 125; XV. 48; XVI. 87; XVII. 35, 125, 137; XVIII. 97, 122; XIX. 59, 71, 91, 140; XX. 18, 20, 144; XXI. 106; XXII. 53, 84; XXIII. 56, 64, 87; XXVIII. 95; XXX, 56 (x2), 57, 107, 141; XXXI. 34, 46). The frequency of the occurrences of *lagrimare* is equal: 18 in the *Inferno* and 16 in the *Purgatorio* (I. 127; V. 107; X. 35, 78; XIII. 108; XXII. 84; XXIII. 55; XXIV. 114; XXV. 104; XXVI. 4; XXVII. 137; XXX. 54, 91, 145; XXXI. 20; XXXIII. 3).

² For an overview of the representation of Purgatory before Dante see Alison Morgan, 'La montagna del Purgatorio', in *Dante e l'aldilà medievale* (Roma: Salerno Editrice, 2012), pp. 184-211.

³ Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 204.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 181.

In the *Visio Tnugdali*, the purgatorial region would correspond to the so-called upper hell, hosting sinners who await judgment and are subjected to torments that could decree their liberation or their eternal damnation. Some of these groups of souls are depicted weeping; one should note, however, that weeping is a classic element of the infernal realm, characterizing the dark abyss of the proud⁵, or biblically associated with the “gnashing of teeth” in the case of the sin of avarice⁶. The only episode in which crying serves a purpose other than the expression of pain and the arousal of fear in the reader, is that of the thief who, atoning for his theft by crossing a spiked bridge while burdened with a load of wheat, weeps for his sins in an act of penitence (‘idebat quoque in ipso ponte unam animam valde plorantem et se multis criminibus accusantem’⁷).

Different is the case of the *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii*, a twelfth-century vision written by the monk H. of Saltrey, particularly significant since in it ‘Purgatory is named as a place for the first time in visionary literature’⁸. Within the kingdom described, penance not completed in life must be served in the afterlife, with the duration of the punishment being proportional to the gravity of the sin. In the first homily at the end of the vision, the monk, warning the reader not to forget to atone for even the slightest of sins, cites the passage in which St. Anselm incites the sinner to do penance with tears of blood while he is alive; otherwise, his sins will be punished with weeping after death⁹.

Indeed, in the vision, the weeping of penitent souls takes on the quality of infernal punishment, along with the terrible tortures represented such as flames, glacial winds, fetid odors, and the devils that accompany the knight throughout his journey. As in the visions of Hell, here too the anguished sound of weeping greets the visionary at the entrance to the kingdom¹⁰ or when switching to a new region¹¹, and it characterizes nearly all the groups of penitents: tears flow over the faces of souls nailed to the ground, weeping in pain and at the merciless rage of the devils¹²; the souls in the second field also weep, forced to the ground and tortured by dragons

⁵ *Visio Tnugdali*, p. 15: ‘ad vallem valde profundam, putridam nimis ac tenebrosam, cujus profunditatem ipsa quidem anima videre non poterat, sonitum autem sulphurei fluminis et ululatus multitudinis in imis patienti audire valebat.’

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 18: ‘fluxus lacrimarum ardentium, copiam tribulationum et stridorem dentium’.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 20. ‘On this bridge Tundale saw one soul bitterly crying and accusing himself of many crimes’ (Gardiner, p. 126).

⁸ Morgan, p. 199.

⁹ *L’aldilà nel Medioevo. Il Purgatorio di san Patrizio*, ed. by Giovanni P. Maggioni and others (Firenze: Sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2018), p. 42: ‘Hic, hic cogitemus que gessimus, et que in futuro pro hiis accepturi sumus. Si multa bona, pauca mala: multum gaudeamus. Si multa mala, pauca bona: multum lugeamus. O peccator inutilis, nonne hec tibi sufficiunt ad immanem rugitum; ad eliciendum sanguinem et medullas in lacrimas?’.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 26: ‘Illucque diuertendo cepit quasi uulgi tocius terre miserrimos clamore et eiulatus et fletus audire, et quo magis appropiauit, eo clarius clamores eorum et fletus audiuit’.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 32: ‘Ceperunt autem de domo illa miserrimi fletus et planctus audiri.’

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 27: ‘autem cum fletu et eiulatu miserabiliter clamare: ‘Parce! Parce!’ uel ‘Miserere! Miserere!’.

and toads¹³; in the fourth field, dedicated to the most atrocious and frightening tortures, the cry of the tormented is inexpressible¹⁴; cries of pain then escape from souls who are immersed in vats of differing depths filled with molten metals¹⁵; finally, at the top of the mountain, an icy wind sweeps away a crowd of screaming and crying penitents¹⁶.

Dante, as Le Goff again points out¹⁷, removes the “infernalization” to which Purgatory was subjected in the thirteenth century: in the *Commedia* it remains a place of penance and, at the same time, of hope, sweetness and promised joy. With Dante, Purgatory becomes an intermediate kingdom in all respects, between Hell and Paradise, and I argue that tears play a fundamental role in this process: no longer associated with the fear of torture, in Purgatory the souls’ tears become a gentle tool to mortify earthly bonds. This process takes place along a path of purification that is an extension of the earthly penitential pilgrimage and at the same time an ascension to God, symbolized through the image of the mountain¹⁸, the locus which Dante chose for this transitional realm.

The situation of the purgatorial penitents is, in fact, characterized by transience and subject to continuous evolution and improvement, a progression towards God expressed in terms of exile and pilgrimage¹⁹. At the beginning of the *Purgatorio*, the souls who arrive on the shores of the kingdom, on a ‘a boat so swift and light’ (II. 41), intone Psalm 113, *In exitu Israel de Aegypto* (46), celebrating the liberation of the Israelites from exile in Egypt. As is well known, the exile of the people of Israel in Egypt or Babylon was interpreted allegorically in the Christian Middle Ages as a symbol of the earthly exile of man, subjected to the slavery of sin; consequently, the liberation of the Jewish people was considered a symbol of the liberation of the soul from sin and its return to the true homeland, God. In the *Purgatorio*, the purifying path of souls along the mountain is thus presented as a *peregrinatio sacra*, the pilgrimage made by the soul as it frees itself from the slavery of sin and returns to the heavenly Jerusalem. Furthermore, Virgil himself defined the penitent souls as pilgrims (‘ma noi siam peregrin come voi siete’, II. 63²⁰). Dante refers once again to the exile of the Jews, this time in Babylon, in *Paradiso* XXIII. 133-

¹³ Ibidem, p. 28: ‘Qui ita fixi et afflicti a fletu et eiulatu nunquam cessabant’.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 30: ‘Eiulatus et clamores miserorum et fletus quos audiuit nulla sufficit hominum exprimere lingua’.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 34: ‘Omnes pariter pre dolore plangentes clamabant et flebant’.

¹⁶ Ibidem: ‘Vix demon uerba finierat, et ecce ab aquilone uentus turbinis ueniebat, qui et ipsos demones et quem duxerunt militem totumque populum illum arripuit et in quoddam flumen fetidum ac frigidissimum flentem ac miserabiliter eiulantem longe in aliammontis partem proiecit, in quo inestimabili frigore uexabantur.’

¹⁷ Le Goff, p. 346.

¹⁸ On the image of the mountain in Dante’s *Purgatorio* cf. Morgan, pp. 203-207.

¹⁹ On the topic see Carlo Ossola, ‘Esilio e peregrinatio nel Purgatorio’, in *Dante poeta cristiano* (Firenze: Polistampa, 2001), pp. 85-97 and Giuseppe Ledda, ‘Immagine di pellegrinaggio e di esilio nella *Commedia* di Dante’, *Annali Online di Ferrara – Lettere*, 1 (2012), 295-308.

²⁰ ‘We are strangers like yourself’.

135, where the joy of bliss is described as a treasure obtained through weeping in the exile of earthly life:

Quivi si vive e gode del tesoro
che s'acquistò piangendo ne lo essilio
di Babillòn, ove si lasciò l'oro.²¹

Weeping here is a necessary and universal instrument of salvation and return to God, the main means by which man may earn beatitude during his earthly exile, allegorized by captivity in Babylon. Dante reiterates the same concept in *Epistle VII*. 30: 'Tunc hereditas nostra, quam sine intermissione deflemus ablatam, nobis erit in integrum restituta; ac quemadmodum, sacrosancte Ierusalem memores, exules in Babilone gemiscimus, ita tunc cives et respirantes in pace, confusionis miserias in gaudio recolemus'²². The reference is to Psalm 136. 1, in which the citizens of Jerusalem, prisoners of Babylon, weep by the rivers of Babylon, remembering their homeland, Zion ('Upon the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept: when we remembered Zion'). In patristic interpretations, these rivers were generally considered symbols of sin and worldly objects; of particular relevance is St. Augustine's commentary on Psalm 136:

Humbled in our captivity, let us sit above the rivers of Babylon and not dare to throw ourselves into them nor let us ever be so bold as to stand up straight and proud amid the evil and woe of our captivity; but let us sit down and weep thus. But let sit above the rivers of Babylon, not under them; let our humility be such that it does not submerge us. Sit above the river. Not in the river and not under it; but all the same, sit humbly. Do not talk as you would in Ierusalem. [...] There you will stand tall, if you have humbled yourself in repentance and confession here. [...] above the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept, as we remembered Zion. This is what must draw forth your tears: your memory of Zion.²³

Humiliation and penitence, according to Augustine, expressed through weeping by the rivers of sin, manifest the awareness of exile, necessary for a return to God. Thus, the righteous man must humbly sit and cry, rather than stand proudly or throw himself into the river.

As we have seen, the idea that sin is the source of rivers is elaborated in the *Commedia* through the figure of the Old Man of Crete, whose tears form the infernal rivers in which the damned are tortured: the sinner, in fact, does not weep for his sins, choosing instead to throw himself

²¹ 'There they live, rejoicing in the treasure/ they gained with tears of exile,/ in Babylon, where they spurned the gold.'

²² 'Then our heritage which was taken away, and for which we lament without ceasing, shall be restored to us whole again. But even as now, remembering the most holy Jerusalem, we mourn as exiles in Babylon, so then as citizens, and breathing in peace, we shall think with joy on the miseries of Confusion.'

²³ Saint Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms 121-15*, vol. 5, trans. by Maria Boulding (New York: New City Press, 1990), p. 326: 'Humiliati ergo in captivitate nostra sedeamus super flumina Babylonis, non nos audeamus in illis fluminibus praecipitare; nec nos audeamus in nostrae captivitatis malo atque tristitia superbe erigere, sed sedeamus, et sic fleamus. Sedeamus super flumina Babylonis, non infra flumina Babylonis: talis sit humilitas nostra, ut nos non mergat. Sede super flumen, noli in flumine, noli sub flumine: sed tamen sede humilis, loquere non quomodo in Ierusalem. [...] Ibi erigeris, si te hic poenitendo et confitendo humiliaveris. [...] Super flumina vero Babylonis sedimus et flevimus, cum recordaremur Sion. Inde oportet ut fleas, recordando Sion' (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 136. 4).

into the rivers of Babylon, and is now condemned to be immersed in them forever and thus to remain in perennial exile. For this reason, the Old Man of Crete does not weep by the infernal rivers, but generates them through its own tears, the tears of sin.

On the contrary, the tears of the penitents in Purgatory will be characterized by a humility and a penitential attitude similar to those described by Augustine. In this regard, it should be noted that, in particular, the theologian Hugh of St. Victor, in his *De quinque septenis* – a text certainly known to Dante – considers the seven deadly vices to be the sources of the Babylonian rivers that spread iniquity in the world and for which it is necessary to weep²⁴. The structure of Dante's Purgatory is founded precisely on these seven deadly vices, constituting the sins for which souls must atone on the terraces of the mountain: penitent and weeping souls are identified, therefore, with the pilgrims who have wept in memory of Zion, as they have become aware of their condition of exile from God, and continue to shed tears for their deadly sins, as did the Israelites by the rivers of Babylon. In this way, the tears of the souls in Purgatory emerge as a proper example of weeping for a return to God, as opposed to the vain tears shed for earthly things.

Even this weeping can become a river, as noted in the pseudo-Augustinian *De Lacrymis, compunctione et poenitentia*²⁵, which considers tears to be an attribute of man exiled from the heavenly homeland²⁶. The author distinguishes between three types of tears: those shed for the sins of one's soul²⁷, for humanity²⁸, and for separation from the heavenly realm²⁹. The three types of weeping form three 'fluctus', fluxes, waves, which lead pilgrims from exile in Egypt to the promised land, from sin to the heavenly Jerusalem³⁰: a return celebrated through joyful song raised to God, as those souls just arrived on the shore of Dante's Purgatory will sing.

Dante reaffirms the concept of returning to God through weeping in *Paradiso* XXII. 106-108, this time on a more personal level. In fact, in the final appeal to the reader of the poem, Dante treats the role of weeping within his usual penitential practice:

²⁴ Hugo de Sancto Victore, *De quinque septenis*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1854), PL 175, 405-414, II. 403-404: 'Sunt ergo septem vitia capitalia, sive principalia, et ex his universa mala oriuntur. Illi sunt fontes et abyssi tenebrosae, de quibus flumina Babylonis exeunt, et in omnem terram deducta, stillicidia iniquitatis diffundunt'.

²⁵ Pseudo-Augustinus, *Sermones ad fratres in eremo*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1887), PL 40, 1233-1235 (1253).

²⁶ 'Sic ergo, o monache, hic gaudere cupis, scias jam te exsulem esse patriae: sed si hic ploraveris, patriae coelestis civis constitueris. Beati, inquit, qui lugent, quoniam ipsi consolabuntur (*Matthew* V. 5).'

²⁷ *Sermones ad fratres in eremo*, 1253: 'Sed dicet quis, Quid flere oportet, et quare flere debemus? Ego autem, filioli et fratres, dico quod flere debemus peccata quae commisimus. Iste fletus sit panis noster, quem quotidie comedere debemus die ac nocte'.

²⁸ *Ibidem*: 'Flere etiam debemus populorum peccata, quasi nostra sint vulnera'.

²⁹ *Ibidem*: '[...] Flere etiam debemus de dilatione regno aeterni; Istae enim sunt tres miseriae, quibus, textitur liber Jeremiae, quibus plangit peccata animae, insultum miseriae, et dilationem patriae'.

³⁰ *Ibidem*: 'Horum fletuum imbribus debemus irrigare terram mentis nostrae, ut pariat fructus bonorum operum diversosque flores virtutum. Isti quoque fletus sunt tres fluctus, per quos filii Israel transierunt ad terram promissionis. Vere peccatores de Aegypto vitiorum exeunt, mare Rubrum transeuntes, dum eorum hostes submerguntur, et vitia suffocantur. Vere cantant Domino gloriose, dum intrantes coelestem Jerusalem, deposita corruptibili veste, sanctis Angelis sociati'.

*S'io torni mai, lettore, a quel divoto
trionfo per lo quale io piango spesso
le mie peccata e 'l petto mi percuoto, [...].*³¹

Ardently expressing his desire to be saved, Dante indicates that weeping, together with the penitential act of beating one's chest, is an active part of the expiatory process, essential to reunion with God and to accessing the joy of bliss: indeed, the early commentators³² translate 'devoto trionfo' as 'joy of Paradise'³³, since the triumph of the blessed over the devil is the joy of the victory over his enemy. The verb 'piangere' is used here, as we saw very often in the *Inferno*, in the sense of 'atoning for sin': the act of weeping replaces and is identified with penance itself. Moreover, in claiming to weep often, Dante reiterates a principle made popular thanks to the *De vera et falsa poenitentia* (XI-XII), a work that had great resonance in the construction of the system of Purgatory³⁴: the principle that, during life on earth, one should not do penance just once, but several times, and above all through tears³⁵.

The fact that weeping performs a salvific function during the period of earthly exile is an idea formulated in the Beatitudes ('blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted', *Matthew* 5.4) and expressed previously in Psalm 125, in which the liberation of Zion from captivity elicits the smile and joy of man ('then was our mouth filled with gladness; and our tongue with joy' (2)), a precious harvest obtained by sowing tears ('they that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Going they went and wept, casting their seeds. But coming they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves' (5-7)). In this regard, the commentary of St. Augustine on Psalm 125 is notable for the importance attributed to tears on the path of liberation of the exiled soul:

But they will come with merry-making, carrying their sheaves. So do you see how the just man is cheerful when he does a good deed? Oh certainly, he grows cheerful, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor 9:7). So when does he cry? When he commends his good deeds to God in his prayers. The psalm wished to commend the prayers of the saints, the prayers of exiles, the prayers of those who are toiling along this road, the prayers of those who love, the prayers of those who groan, the prayers of those who are sighing for their eternal home, until those who are now in a situation of grief are eventually satisfied with the sight of it. After all, my brothers, as long as we are in the body we are exiles from the Lord (2 Cor 5:6). Exile doesn't long for home without tears. If you long for what you haven't got, shed tears. Why else are you going to say to God, You have placed my tears in your sight (Ps 56:8)? Why else are you going to say to God, My tears have become my bread day and night (Ps42:3)? They have become my bread; they have solaced my groans, they have fed my hunger. My tears have become my bread day and night. Why? While it is said to me every day: Where is your God? (Ps 42:3). Is there any just man who hasn't known these

³¹ 'So may I, reader, once again return/ there to that holy triumph for whose sake/ I frequently bewail my sins and beat my breast, [...].'

³² Jacopo della Lana (1324-28), Anonimo fiorentino (1400).

³³ Francesco Da Buti, (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'allegrezza di Paradiso'.

³⁴ Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, p. 214-5.

³⁵ *De vera et falsa poenitentia*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1887), PL 40, XIII. 1227-28, 'Nam si Apostolus etiam peccata per Baptismum dimissa continue plorat; nobis etiam super fundamentum Apostolorum positus, quid praeter plorare restat? [...] Tamdiu enim gaudeat et speret de gratia, quandiu sustentatur a poenitentia'.

tears? Whoever hasn't known them hasn't been grieved at being in exile. How can anyone have the cheek to come home, if they haven't been sighing for it while they were away?³⁶

Because of his distance from God, man here is defined as a pilgrim whose distinctive sign is that of tears, expressing the strong desire to return to the heavenly homeland: those who wish to return to their homeland cannot but weep; weeping offers God a visible manifestation of the desire that urges man to reunite with him. Augustine quotes Psalm 41, in which tears are defined as the 'bread' that continually nourishes the soul that thirsts for God: this thirst is manifested and at the same time satisfied by weeping, a food that provides wisdom to nourish man, thus expressing the self-awareness of his condition as a sinner and, consequently, the loss of and desire for God. The same concept appears again in the *Confessions*³⁷ and in the *City of God*, where it is stated that the sanctity of desire is proportional to the quantity of tears shed³⁸.

This image is central to the *Liber de panibus* by Peter of Celle, who takes up the alimentary metaphor of tears associated with man's condition of exile:

The bread of the mourners is an abundance of tears: as bread heals the hungry, the tears heal the grieving soul; [...] Adam ate this bread of tears in exile; [...] the people ate it in the desert; [...] Peter in his denial of Christ; Mary Magdalen in the prostitution of her body; [...] Why? To renew their soul [...].³⁹

Peter of Celle emphasizes the healing quality of tears: the spiritual renewal of the soul occurs through weeping, which washes away sin, according to an idea already present in the Old Testament⁴⁰. The first tears of this kind were shed by Adam, as the Benedictine monk states, concretizing the condition of exile in which man finds himself due to Adam's original sin while

³⁶ *The Works of Saint Augustine: v. 2. Sermons on the Old Testament*, pp. 133-34. 'Sed venient cum exultatione, portantes manipulos suos. Vides ergo hominem iustum, cum facit opus bonum, hilarem esse. Ita plane hilarescit. Hilarem enim datorem diligit Deus. Quando ergo plorat? Quando bona opera sua orando commendat. Orationes: sanctorum voluit commendare psalmus, orationes peregrinantium. orationes in hac via laborantium, orationes amantium, orationes gementium, orationes aeternae patriae suspirantium donec ea visa satientur qui nunc in maerore sunt constituti. Etenim, Fratres mei, quamdiu sumus in corpore, peregrinamur a Domino. Non desiderat patriam peregrinatio sine lacryma. Si desideras quod non habes, funde lacrymas. Nam unde dicturus es Deo: Posuisti lacrymas meas in conspectu tuo? Unde dicturus es Deo: Factae sunt mihi lacrymae meae panis die ac nocte? Panis mihi factae sunt: consolatae sunt gementem, paverunt esurientem. Factae sunt mihi lacrymae meae panis die ac nocte. Unde? Dum dicitur mihi quotidie: Ubi est Deus tuus? Quis iustus non habuit istas lacrymas? Qui non habuit, peregrinum se esse non doluit. Qua fronte ad patriam venit qui non absens suspiravit?' (*Sermones de novo testamento*, PL 38, 31. 5).

³⁷ Augustinus Aurelius Hipponensis, *Confessiones*, XII. 11: 'Unde intellegat anima, cuius peregrinatio longinqua facta est, si iam sitit tibi, si iam factae sunt ei lacrimae suae panis, dum dicitur ei per singulos dies: ubi est Deus tuus?'

³⁸ Augustinus Aurelius Hipponensis, *De civitate Dei contra paganos libri XII*, ed. by Jacques Migne (Paris: 1878-1890), PL 41, 0487, XX. 17: 'cum potius quanto est quisque sanctior et desiderii sancti plenior, tanto sit eius in orando fletus uberior?'

³⁹ Petrus Cellensis, *Liber de panibus*, 12 *de pane lugentium*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1855), PL 202, 929-1043 (983A-C): 'Panis itaque lugentium, abundantia est lacrymarum: sicut enim panis esurientem, sic lacryma reficit animam dolentem: deficit esuriens sine pane, lacerata languet anima sine lacrymarum effusione. [...] Hunc panem lacrymarum Adam comedit in exilio; [...] populus in deserto; [...] Petrus in negatione; Maria Magdalena in corporis sui prostitutione; [...] Quare? Ut anima renovetur [...].'

⁴⁰ Piroška Nagy, 'Lacrimas quia doloris, suaves quia amoris', in *Piacere e dolore. Materiali per una storia delle passioni nel Medioevo*, ed. by Carla Casagrande and Silavana Vecchio (Firenze: Sismel, 2009), pp. 49-65 (p. 50).

acting as a divine gift conferred to man so that, through the pain of penance and loss, he may be saved and return to his heavenly homeland. These tears, according to Pietro di Celle, saved both the people of Israel and St. Peter, who repented and wept after betraying Jesus (*Matthew* 26.75)⁴¹, and restored Mary Magdalene, who wept at the feet of Christ (*John* 1133), thus becoming, in the eyes of the Church Fathers, ‘the true saint of tears’⁴² and a model of the sinner weeping for his sins, a model that must be imitated to gain God’s forgiveness. Tears are, therefore, the instrument through which the pilgrim, immersed in his earthly life, communicates with God in a sort of current, a flux that, while flowing downwards towards the ground, pushes man upwards towards God⁴³.

According to the research of Piroska Nagy, this sort of communication with God through the bodily sign of tears⁴⁴ is the result of historical changes that took place between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, with the increased control of the Church over the spiritual and private lives of believers and the consequent flourishing of reformist monastic movements, in which the need to communicate with God on a personal and interior level became increasingly pressing. Within this context, the relationship which man has with his sins and the way in which he perceives them undergo a simultaneous change: Jacques Le Goff points out how ‘the pursuit of sin became part of ‘an internalization and personalization’ of moral life, which called for new penitential practices. What was now sought more than internal proof was confession; what counted more than punishment was contrition’⁴⁵. If, therefore, the soul’s repentance, manifested through tears, is put in the foreground, since through it forgiveness from sin is obtained, penitence assumes the function of erasing the punishment, which ‘must be completed in the purgatorial fire, i.e., from the end of the century onward, in Purgatory’⁴⁶. In fact, according to Le Goff, it is precisely this change of perspective, along with a different perception of the earthly world and of death, that contributed to the creation of the intermediate kingdom of Purgatory, which the historian dates to the end of the twelfth century.

As can be observed, the progressive centrality assumed by penitential tears and the conception of Purgatory result from the same process of interiorization of the spiritual life, of which they become complementary and interdependent tools: if tears are the main means of repentance and

⁴¹ As Augustine stated in *Sermones* 351, 5.12: ‘Et Petrus iam erat fidelis, iam in Christo et alios baptizaverat. Intuere ergo Petrum praesumentem accusatum, timentem vulneratum, flentem sanatum’.

⁴² Carlo Donà, ‘Il pianto che redime. Le lacrime ne ‘Le chevalier au barisel’ e in altri racconti devoti medievali’, in *Lachrymae*. *Mito e metafora del pianto nel Medioevo*, *Atti delle III Giornate Internazionale Interdisciplinare di Studio sul Medioevo (Siena, 2-4 Novembre 2006)*, ed. by Francesco Mosetti Casaretto (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso 2011), pp. 207-243 (p. 212).

⁴³ See Piroska Nagy, ‘Religious weeping as ritual in the Medieval West’, *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology*, 48, 2 (2004), 119-137 (p. 124).

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 131.

⁴⁵ Le Goff, p. 214.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

remission of sin in life, Purgatory is the realm of penance that, if not accomplished before death, must necessarily occur in the afterlife. Consequently, without the contrition manifested by tears, one cannot, in fact, enter Purgatory; as is well illustrated once again in the pseudo-Augustinian *De Lacrymis*, tears begin the purification process, becoming a means of and metaphor for the very same journey of purgation, the boat through which the shipwrecked and exiled man can return to the salvific port of God⁴⁷.

In the *Commedia*, Dante's penitential journey, like that of the souls in Purgatory, cannot begin without tears, the motor of that 'vasello' (*Purg.* II. 41), the 'small bark' by which penitents arrive on the shores of Purgatory, and the means by which Dante escapes the state of shipwreck at the beginning of Hell (*Inf.* I. 22-24). Unlike Dante, who will complete his process of contrition by weeping at the summit of Earthly Paradise, the penitential souls have reached Purgatory because their repentance has already occurred, as is proven by the outward manifestation of tears⁴⁸ which they spill onto the earth, illustrated for example by the cases of Manfredi (III. 119-120) and Buonconte da Montefeltro (V. 107). If tears of repentance are required to enter Purgatory⁴⁹, they continue to be necessary to reach Paradise; indeed, penitents will continue to weep profusely along almost all the terraces of the mountain. Therefore, in the creation of his Purgatory, Dante not only imposes an unprecedented definition on the realm, specifying both its location and its purely penitential nature; he also makes tears – already recognized as an instrument of earthly penance – central to his penitents' journey of purgation. According to Thomas Aquinas, such weeping, unlike its earthly counterpart, can no longer be considered contrition, since contrition is no longer effective in the purgatorial realm:

Accordingly, after this life, those souls which dwell in the heavenly country, cannot have contrition, because they are void of sorrow by reason of the fulness of their joy: those which are in hell, have no contrition, for although they have sorrow, they lack the grace which quickens sorrow; while those which are in purgatory have a sorrow for their sins, that is quickened by grace; yet it is not meritorious, for they are not in the state of meriting.⁵⁰

I answer that from the conclusions we have drawn above it is sufficiently clear that there is a Purgatory after this life. For if the debt of punishment is not paid in full after the stain of sin has been washed away by contrition, nor again are venial sins always removed when moral sins are remitted, and if justice demands that sin be set in order by due punishment,

⁴⁷ *Sermones ad fratres in eremo*, 1254: 'O felix lavacrum poenitentiae lacrymarum, quod toties valet ad purgandum, quoties purgatione indiget cor humanum! O felix tabula, o vitalis navicula, per quam naufragus redire potest ad portum salutis!'

⁴⁸ On the importance of tears as an outward sign of inner contrition in medieval culture cf. Piroška Nagy, *Le don des larmes au Moyen Âge: un instrument spirituel en quête d'institution (5e-13e siècle)* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000).

⁴⁹ This concept is already underscored by Giuseppe Ledda ('Sulla soglia del Purgatorio: peccato, penitenza, resurrezione. Per una lettura di Purgatorio IX', *Lettere Italiane*, 66, 1 (2014), 3-36, (p. 24).

⁵⁰ 'Anima igitur post hanc vitam quae in patria sunt, contritionem habere non possunt: quia carent dolore, propter gaudii plenitudinem. Illae vero quae sunt in inferno, carent contritione: quia, etsi dolorem habent, deficit tamen eis gratia dolorem informans. Sed illi qui in purgatorio sunt, habent dolorem de peccatis gratia informatum, sed non meritorium: quia non sunt in statu merendi' (*ST III Suppl.* q. 4, a. 3).

it follows that one who after contrition for his fault and after being absolved, dies before making due satisfaction, is punished after this life.⁵¹

The affliction of the penitential souls is, according to Thomas, the effect of *satisfactio operis*, understood as the acceptance of punishment for sins, here specifically venial, which were not expiated in life and for which Purgatory appeared the most appropriate penitential destination⁵². One notes, however, that in the *Purgatorio*, the classification of venial and deadly sins is abandoned in favor of a ranking of sins based on love, perhaps founded on the Beatitudes⁵³, ‘a text filled with hope for those who long for their homeland’⁵⁴: in other words, exiles aspiring to return to God.

The penitent represented by Dante is the one who, in many cases, has repented *in extremis*, rendering himself to God through tears, and therefore has experienced the gratuitousness of divine forgiveness. The penitent no longer fears eternal torture, but is filled with hope of seeing God again soon. As Thomas himself writes, hope belongs to the wayfarer, in earthly life and in Purgatory:

It is, therefore, evident that they cannot apprehend happiness as a possible good, as neither can the blessed apprehend it as a future good. Consequently there is no hope either in the blessed or in the damned. On the other hand, hope can be in wayfarers, whether of this life or in purgatory, because in either case they apprehend happiness as a future possible thing.⁵⁵

Thus, the penitent souls, prolonging their earthly exile in the afterlife, continue to weep as they had in life: as a penitential act, expressing the atonement of punishments, a *satisfactio operis* in the Thomistic sense; and as an expression of the desire to return to God. The penitential aspect of weeping during the souls’ pilgrimage is particularly evident in two episodes.

The first is that of the lush valley where Dante meets the princes who were negligent in their Christianity, in the area of Antipurgatory. Here the souls sing, among other prayers, the *Salve Regina* (VII. 82): as Giuseppe Ledda emphasized in his analysis⁵⁶, throughout this song ‘those engaged in prayer [...] call themselves “exsules filii Hevae”’; they conclude by asking Mary to

⁵¹ Translation by John Took in *Dante* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020), p. 449. ‘Respondeo dicendum quod ex illis quae supra determinata sunt, satis potest constare purgatorium esse post hanc vitam. Si enim, per contritionem deleta culpa, non tollitur ex toto reatus poenae; nec etiam semper venialia, dimissis mortalibus, tolluntur; et iustitia Dei hoc exigit ut peccatum per poenam debitam ordinetur: oportet quod ille qui post contritionem de peccato decedit et absolutionem, ante satisfactionem debitam, quod post hanc vitam puniatur’ (*ST* III App. I Suppl., *Quaestio de Purgatorio*, a. 1).

⁵² Le Goff, pp. 218-220.

⁵³ As argued by Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi, ‘Le beatitudini e la struttura poetica del ‘Purgatorio’, *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 161 (1984), 1-29.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

⁵⁵ ‘Unde patet quod non possunt apprehendere beatitudinem ut bonum possibile, sicut nec beati ut bonum futurum. Et ideo neque in beatis neque in damnatis est spes. Sed in viatoribus sive sint in vita ista sive in Purgatorio, potest esse spes, quia utrobique apprehendunt beatitudinem ut futurum possibile’ (*ST*, IIa IIa q. 18 a. 3).

⁵⁶ Giuseppe Ledda, ‘Canti VII-VIII-IX. Esilio, penitenza, resurrezione’, in *Esperimenti danteschi. Purgatorio 2009*, ed. by Benedetta Quadrio (Genova-Milano: Marietti 2010), 71-104.

show them, “post hoc exilium”, “Iesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui”⁵⁷, thus expressing the particular condition that unites the souls of Antipurgatory, still in exile and anxiously waiting to begin their journey back to God. One may note that, within the Marian prayer, there is a reference to the ‘valley of tears’ in which the weeping exiles are located (‘To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To you we sigh, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears’⁵⁸). The valley of tears is a metaphor for earthly life, as indicated in Psalm 83. 6-7: ‘Blessed is the man whose help is from thee: in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps, In valle lacrimarum in the place which be hath set. For the lawgiver shall give a blessing, [...]’⁵⁹. In this regard, one might note Augustine’s commentary on the psalm in his Sermon 351, dedicated to the value of penitence:

Blessed is the man whose upholding is from you Lord, he went on to tie the thing up and show the spiritual loftiness of his being taken up: He has arranged, he said, ascends in his heart in the vale of weeping, into the place which he has arranged. So where has he arranged ascents? In the heart, that is in the vale of weeping. That’s the equivalent of Whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. Just as ascent, after all, signifies exaltation, so the valley indicates humility, and the vale weeping. I mean, just as sorrow is the companion of repentance, so tears are witnesses to sorrow. [...] Why the law was given was to make known to the proud their weakness, and to persuade the weak to repent. Why the law was given was that we might say in the vale of weeping [...] and so that we should cry out in our very weeping, Unhappy man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?⁶⁰

The valley of tears is a symbol of the pilgrim’s heart: the tears at the bottom of the heart’s valley constitute the stages of ascension towards God, achieved through humiliation and penance, in which pain and weeping are inseparable and necessary elements for the purification and healing of the *vulnera peccatorum*. If Dante’s Valley of the Princes assumes the characteristics of the earthly valley of tears, the weeping of the exiles in Antipurgatory comes to possess a function and effect similar to that of the exiles of earthly life: one of penitential purification.

The penitential function of weeping, however, characterizes not only the penitents of Antipurgatory. One notes, in fact, how the passage from this region to true Purgatory, a passage

⁵⁷ Ibidem, p. 89.

⁵⁸ ‘Ad te clamamus, exsules filii Evae. Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle’.

⁵⁹ ‘beatus vir cui est auxilium abs te: / ascensiones in corde suo disposuit. / In valle lacrimarum in loco quem posuit. Etenim benedictiones dabit legis dator [...]’.

⁶⁰ *The Works of Saint Augustine: v. 3. Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 130. ‘Beatus vir, cuius est susceptio eius abs te, Domine; consequenter annexit et ostendit eiusdem susceptionis celsitudinem spiritalem: Ascensus, inquit, in corde eius disposuit in convalle plorationis, in locum quem disposuit. Ubi ergo disposuit ascensus? In corde, in convalle scilicet plorationis. Hoc est: Qui se humiliat, exaltabitur. Sicut enim ascensus exaltationem indicat; ita vallis humilitatem, et convallis plorationes. Sicut enim comes paenitentiae dolor est; ita lacrimae sunt testes doloris. [...] Ad hoc enim lex data est, ut vulnera ostenderet peccatorum, quae gratiae benedictio sanaret. Ad hoc lex data est, ut superbo infirmitatem suam notam faceret, infirmo paenitentiam suaderet. Ad hoc lex data est, ut diceremus in convalle plorationis: [...]: et cum ipso ploratu clamaremus: Infelix ego homo! quis me liberabit de corpore mortis huius?’ (*Sermones*, 135. 1).

that is ‘conceived as a penitential act’⁶¹, is introduced through a particularly representative image: the ‘rondinella’, the swallow that opens *Purg.* IX by singing his ‘tristi lai [...] forse a memoria de’ suo’ primi guai’ (13-15)⁶². As has been noted, in medieval culture ‘the swallow symbolizes the penitent who weeps for his sins’⁶³, an interpretation based on the biblical verse ‘sicut pullus hirundinis sic clamabo’ (*Is.* 38.14), ‘I cried like a swift’, a possible point of reference for the sad laments of Dante’s swallow. In addition, a fifth-century text of uncertain authorship, *De xlii mansionibus filiorum Israel*⁶⁴, notes that the swallow represents the journey of the people of Israel from Egypt to the promised land, and therefore the journey of the soul towards God, in which the years spent in slavery allegorize the time of penance in which it is necessary to weep. Here, again, the term of comparison is the swallow⁶⁵; furthermore, according to Isidore of Seville, the swallow, feeding while in flight and singing sorrowfully, is a symbol of the penitent who rises to God, feeding on the bread of tears while desiring heavenly food⁶⁶. Therefore, the swallow’s ‘tristi lai’ in *Purgatorio* IX, at the entrance to the true Purgatory, become a symbol of the weeping that will characterize the souls of each circle, emphasizing once again the peregrine nature of their upward journey, the penitential function of their tears and, through them, the firm link between the purgatorial realm and earthly life. As mentioned, the tears of penitents also express the desire for God, as is evident from the words with which the envious Sapia Salvani presents herself to Dante (*Purg.* XIII. 106-108):

“Io fui sanese”, rispuose, "e con questi
altri rimendo qui la vita ria,
lagrimando a colui che sé ne presti.”⁶⁷

Sapia ‘rimenda’ – that is, she cleanses herself, purifies herself – through weeping, ‘beseeching God with tears which He has given us; that is, which He gives us in order to contemplate Him

⁶¹ Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi, ‘Introduzione al canto IX’, in *La Divina Commedia. Purgatorio* (Milano: Mondadori, 2010), p. 255.

⁶² ‘Her plaintive song, remembering, perhaps, her woes of long ago’.

⁶³ Ledda, *Canti VII-VIII-IX*, p. 93.

⁶⁴ The text is cited in Alessandra Di Pilla, ‘La rondine nella letteratura cristiana greca e latina di epoca patristica’, in *Curiositas. Scritti di cultura classica e medievale in onore di Ubaldo Pizzani*, ed. by Antonino Isola and Enrico Menestò (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2002), pp. 423-459 (p. 433).

⁶⁵ ‘Quia poenitenti dicitur quod debeat sicut hirundo clamare, et sicut columba meditari annos eius in amaritudine animae suae’.

⁶⁶ Rabanus Maurus, *De Universo*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1859), PL 111, 9-614 (251D-252A): ‘Hirundo autem poenitentium pro peccatis suis typum tenet, quae stridore vocis ploratum magis quam melodiam sonat, et pro cantu gemitus edere solet, sicut et columba. Unde Ezechias in oratione sua ait: Sicut pullus hirundinis, sic clamabo: meditabor ut columba. Lacrimis ergo suis poenitens pascitur, et ad superna cor elevans coelestis cibi pabulum sibi quaerit. Unde et Propheta ait: Fuerunt mihi lacrymae meae panes die ac nocte, dum dicitur mihi quotidie: ubi est Deus tuus? Et iterum, Sicut cinerem, inquiens, manducabam panem meum: et potum cum fletu temperabam a facie irae et indignationis tuae; quia elevans elisisti me.’

⁶⁷ ‘I was of Siena,’ replied the shade, / ‘and with these others here I mend my sinful life, / weeping to Him that He may lend Himself to us.’

in Heaven⁶⁸. Her tears manifest the loss of, the nostalgia for the heavenly homeland, but also the hope of returning to see God again.

These tears constitute a well-defined category among the different types of weeping classified in the monastic context. In a list composed by an anonymous second-century author commenting on Psalm 126.6, there are two types of tears that characterize righteous men: the *lacrimae peregrinationis*, or the tears shed for the tedium caused by the lengthy exile of earthly life, compared to well water⁶⁹ and *lacrimae contemplationis*, spilled out of the desire for Heaven⁷⁰, described as dew drops that draws man's gaze upward⁷¹.

An important analysis in this regard is that of Gregory the Great who, in discussing the process of compunction, distinguishes between an initial stage, the *compunctio formidinis*, in which the fear of eternal torture generates the weeping of repentance; and a final stage, the *compunctio dilectionis*, which expresses desire and heavenly love through the tears of the exile:

But speaking more properly, there be especially two kinds of compunction: for the soul that thirsteth after God is first sorrowful in heart for fear, and afterward upon love. For first it is grieved and weepeth, because, calling to mind former sins committed, it feareth to endure for punishment of them everlasting torments: but when long anxiety and sorrow hath banished away that fear, then a certain security of the hope of pardon doth follow: and so the soul is inflamed with the love of heavenly delights, and whereas before it did weep for fear of eternal pain, afterward it poureth out tears, that it is kept from everlasting joys.⁷²

The pilgrim who has repented and has been forgiven still weeps, thirsting for knowledge of God, anxious to return to his homeland; he sheds tears because he is touched by the flame of divine love, which ignites the desire in his heart. The penitents of the Dantean Purgatory weep primarily out of love, that same love which they have misdirected and distorted through sin and for which they must now serve their penance; the love that impels them to make this pilgrimage of purification and to bathe it with holy tears, animated and moved by the desire for God. In fact, in the description of the structure of Purgatory provided in Canto XVII, Virgil will explain how love – the perverted kind punished in the terraces below (pride, envy and anger), and the

⁶⁸ Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991-97).

⁶⁹The text is published in *Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, ed. by Richard Morris (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), XVII, 155–158: 'aquae fontis, quia sicut haec ebullit de terra, ita illa de cordis angustia'.

⁷⁰ Ibidem: 'Justus autem cum languet pro desiderio coelestis patrie fundit lacrimas contemplationis'.

⁷¹ Ibidem: 'quia sicut aqua illa nutu dei trahitur ab imo in altum, ita illa emanat per alti desiderium'.

⁷² Translation by Roberto Rea in 'Psicologia ed etica della Paura nel primo canto dell'Inferno: la compunctio timoris', *Dante Studies*, 130 (2012), 182-206 (p. 200). 'Principaliter vero compunctionis genera duo sunt, quia Deum sitiens anima prius timore compungitur, post amore. Prius enim sese in lacrymis afficit, quia dum malorum suorum recolitur, pro his perpeti aeterna supplicia pertimescit. At vero cum longa maeroris anxietudine fuerit formido consumpta, quaedam iam de praesumptione veniae securitas nascitur et in amore caelestium gaudiorum animus inflammatur, et qui prius flebat ne duceretur ad supplicium, postmodum flere amarissime incipit quia differtur regno' (Gregorius Magnus, *Dialogorum libri Dialogi*, ed. by Adalbert De Vogué (Roma: Città Nuova 2000), III. 34. 1-3, p. 307).

excessive kind expiated in the upper area of the mountain (avarice, gluttony and lust) – is purged through weeping:

*Questo triforme amor qua giù di sotto
si piange: or vo' che tu de l'altro intende,
che corre al ben con ordine corrotto.
[...] L'amor ch'ad esso troppo s'abbandona,
di sovr'a noi si piange per tre cerchi; [...].⁷³
(XVII. 124-26; 136-37)*

Weeping in the second canticle is therefore the means by which that 'integration of the desire for God with the desire for suffering' is accomplished⁷⁴, as Lino Pertile has identified as the characterizing theme of Purgatory.

The tears of penitents, earthly and holy, make Dante's Purgatory a true middle kingdom of exile and transition, putting earth and heaven in communication, both through the weeping of atonement and the desire of the pilgrims, and through the mediating tears shed by their loved ones still on earth, who, as we will see, move the grace of God. Dante's Purgatory is, therefore, the true and proper celebration of a new sensibility, of an interior communication with God that, for Dante, must always pass through tears, the true sign of the pilgrim returning to the heavenly homeland.

⁷³ 'All these three forms of love cause weeping down below/ Now I would have you consider yet another, / which pursues the good in faulty measure./ [...] 'The excessive love which gives itself to that/ is mourned above us in three circles.'

⁷⁴ Lino Pertile, *La punta del disio. Semantica del desiderio nella 'Commedia'* (Firenze: Cadmo, 2005), p. 36.

III. 2 From the Cry of Repentance to the Tears of Penitence

As in the *Inferno*, within our analysis of the weeping of souls in the *Purgatorio* it is necessary to distinguish between communal tears, characterizing entire categories of penitents, and individual tears, shed by the solitary souls whom Dante meets along his ascent of the mountain.

Considering the tears of the individual, a further distinction must be made, between the tears of contrition and repentance shed during life, fundamental to access Purgatory, and the tears of penitence through which atonement is achieved in the afterlife. As we will see, Dante emphasizes both types of weeping, equally necessary to salvation: weeping underscores and sanctions the continuity of man's condition of exile, first on earth and then in the purgatorial realm, imposing itself as an essential salvific instrument along the path back to God, from the first step of conversion to the end of the penitential journey on the mountaintop of Earthly Paradise.

The first type of tears, those of repentance, is illustrated by the cases of Manfredi di Svevia and Buonconte da Montefeltro, respectively in Cantos III and V: both belong to the region of Antipurgatory, a place where souls who were slow to repent in life must wait for a period of time before starting their path of purgation. It is understandable, therefore, that the reflection on repentance assumes greater importance in this context, as does the weeping of repentance, an act of contrition from which the conversion of the sinner begins.

One observes, first of all, the conversion account of the excommunicated Manfredi, unexpectedly saved:

Poscia ch'io ebbi rotta la persona
di due punte mortali, *io mi rendei,*
*piangendo, a quei che volontier perdona.*⁷⁵
(III. 118-120)

Manfredi's repentance in *articulo mortis* (at the point of death), during the battle of Benevento in which he was killed, is marked by tears. The early commentators note the function of weeping within the process of contrition⁷⁶; in particular, Cristoforo Landino underlines the salvific function of the tears that are able to wash and clean the soul stained by the sin⁷⁷. As has already been seen in Dante's case, weeping plays a salvific role if tears are shed in the moment of repentance: tears constitute the physical and external sign of abandonment to God's mercy, witnesses of the sincerity of the heart's repentance and of the acknowledgement of sin. Just as weeping is necessary in order for Dante to embark on his journey into the afterlife, so the souls

⁷⁵ 'After my body was riven/ by two mortal blows, I turned/ in tears to Him who freely pardons.'

⁷⁶ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): 'Io mi rendei piangendo, ex contritione cordis'.

⁷⁷ Cristoforo Landino (Firenze: Lexis Progetti Editoriali, 1999): 'piangendo per contritione de' suoi peccati si rende a Dio, si può salvare. Imperochè noi riceviamo l'anima da Dio pura, et immacolata, et dobbialla mantenere in tale stato in sino alla morte, et chosi renderglene. Et se pure l'habbiamo maculata, la confessione, et la contritione, la lavi'.

of Antipurgatory celebrate their tears as the start of their journey of salvation. If Manfredi's conversion is a fact transmitted by the historical chronicles⁷⁸, the element of tears appears to be Dante's invention. In this regard, Louis La Favia has put forward an interesting proposal, identifying a dense web of echoes of the penitential psalms in the presentation of the character of Manfredi⁷⁹, and evoking the weeping of King David (Psalm 6.9), a sign of the contrition of the repentant man and of the continuous atonement which man must undergo.

I believe that the context in which the figure of Manfredi is introduced can provide useful information for the interpretation of his tears. Manfredi belongs to the first group of souls whom Dante and Virgil meet in Purgatory, those of the excommunicated, whose behavior is compared to that of a flock of sheep 'timid', 'simple and quiet' (III. 79-87). The humility and simplicity of these animals was seen as a reversal of the 'presumption of rebellion against the Church which characterized these souls in life [...] and confirms the final moment of repentance and humble submission to God'⁸⁰. Moreover, this similitude shows the influence of popular biblical images, according to which the flock of sheep is a symbol of the people of God: for Christian exegetes, the flock represents both the ancient people of Israel and the Christian people⁸¹, chosen and destined for salvation, just as the souls of penitents will be saved as a result of purgatorial penance.

Of particular relevance is a passage from Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermones super cantica canticorum* in which the author addresses the soul, urging it to imitate the example of the holy sinner who repents and returns to God:

It is up to you, wretched sinner, to humble yourself as this happy penitent did so that you may be rid of your wretchedness. Prostrate yourself on the ground, take hold of his feet, soothe them with kisses, sprinkle them with your tears and so wash not them but yourself. Thus you will become one of the "flock of shorn ewes as they come up from the washing." But even then you may not dare to lift up a face suffused with shame and grief, until you hear the sentence: "Your sins are forgiven," to be followed by the summons: "Awake, awake, captive daughter of Sion, awake, shake off the dust."⁸²

⁷⁸ Cf. Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991-97) and Anonimo Fiorentino (Bologna: G. Romagnoli, 1866-74).

⁷⁹ Louis M. La Favia, 'Per una reinterpretazione dell'episodio di Manfredi', *Dante Studies*, 91, (The Johns Hopkins University Press: 1973), 81-100.

⁸⁰ Giuseppe Ledda, *Il Bestiario dell'aldilà. Gli animali nella Commedia di Dante* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2019), p. 199.

⁸¹ Maria Ciccicarese, *Animali simbolici. Alle origini del bestiario cristiano II* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2007), p. 148

⁸² *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux, Song of Songs I*, vol. 2, ed. by Kilian Walsh (Kalamazoo, MI: Kalamazoo Publications Inc., 1981), p. 349. 'Huius ergo beatae poenitentis exemplo prosternere et tu, o misera, ut desinas esse misera; prosternere et tu in terram; amplectere pedes, placa osculis, riga lacrymis, quibus tamen non illum laves, sed te, ei fias una de grege tonsarum quae ascendunt de lavacro [Cant. IV, 2]; ita sane tu suffusum pudore ac moerore vultum non ante sustollere audeas quam audias, et ipsa: Dimittuntur tibi peccata tua [Luc. VII, 37-48]; quam audias: Consurge, consurge, captiva filia Sion; consurge, excutere de pulvere' (*Sermones super cantica canticorum* ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1854), PL 183, 785-1198, III. 1).

The soul, ‘captive daughter of Sion’, can free itself and return to God only through prostration and humiliation, in which weeping performs the essential function of washing away the stains of sin; the soul is compared to the humble sheep that rises from the bath, washed clean and thus repented.

The symbol of the soul as God’s sheep that must weep for its sins is also present in Augustine’s commentary on the biblical passage from Ezekiel (34.17-31), in which the Church father depicts the image of Christ the Shepherd surrounded by the flock of faithful (*Sermones* 47.1):

The words we have sung contain our acknowledgment that we are God's sheep. Nor are we being importunate when we demand with tears the mercy of him whose sheep we are. What we said was, Let us weep before the Lord who made us, for he is the Lord our God (Ps 95:6-7). In case anyone weeping should despair of being listened to, God is reminded of a reason why in a sense he has got to listen to us: for he is the Lord our God, who made us. He is our God; we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hands (Ps 95:7). [...] So let us weep before him. And you know, we are not in a good way while we are in this world. When we please the Lord in the region of the living, that is when our tears shall be wiped away, and we shall sing the praises of him who has delivered us from the bonds of death, our feet from slipping, our eyes from tears, that we may please the Lord in the region of the living, because it is difficult to please him in the region of the dead. Even here, though, there are ways of pleasing him, by begging him to have mercy on us, by abstaining as far as we can from sins, and in so far as we can't, by confessing and lamenting them. In this way we go through this life hoping for that other life, weeping in hope — or rather weeping now as we try to cope, rejoicing as we look forward in hope.⁸³

It is precisely the acknowledgement of man as a sheep in God’s flock that necessitates his weeping: the pilgrim who becomes aware of belonging to the People of God, and therefore, of being exiled from the true homeland, must shed tears of humiliation and hope, the only means through which a return to God is possible.

And by weeping for one’s sins, the tears will be wiped away and replaced by the joy of eternal salvation. Thus, Manfredi tells of having wept at the point of death, and now he smiles in Purgatory (III. 112). Manfredi, in fact, belongs to the flock of God’s saved people, those who washed away the stains of his ‘horrible sins’ (III. 121) by humbling themselves and weeping, and now they can enjoy the salvation that awaits them. As it occurs at the start of the *Purgatorio*, Manfredi’s weeping possesses a strong emblematic value, showing the power of the divine gift

⁸³*Sermons on the Old Testament, 20-50*, p. 298. ‘Verba quae cantavimus continent professionem nostram quia oves Dei sumus. Nec importune poscimus cum lacrymis eius misericordiam cuius oves sumus. Diximus enim: *Ploremus ante Dominum qui fecit nos, quoniam ipse est Dominus Deus noster*. Ne quisquam plorans se exaudiri posse desperet, commemorata est necessitudo quaedam exaudiendi nos Deo: *Quoniam ipse est Dominus Deus noster, qui fecit nos*. Ille Deus noster; *nos populus pascuae eius et oves manuum eius*. [...] Ploremus ergo ante illum. Neque enim in bono sumus, cum in hoc saeculo sumus. Cum enim placebimus Domino in regione vivorum, tunc detergentur lacrymae nostrae, et dicemus ei laudes, qui nos exemit de vinculis mortis, pedes nostros a lapsu, oculos nostros a lacrymis, ut placeamus Domino in regione vivorum, quia difficile est ut ei placeatur in regione mortuorum. Est autem et hic unde illi placeamus, eius misericordiam in nos deprecando, a peccatis nos quantum possumus abstinendo, in quantum autem non possumus confitendo atque plangendo. Ita sumus in hac vita sperantes aliam vitam plorantes in spe, immo plorantes in re, gaudentes in spe.’

of tears, a distinctive sign of the souls of penitents which distinguishes them from the damned of the previous kingdom.

Similar is the function of the 'lagrimetta' which Buonconte da Montefeltro shed as he repented in the moments before his violent death, as he himself narrates in Canto V. 100-109:

Quivi perdei la vista e la parola;
nel nome di Maria fini', e quivi
caddi, e rimase la mia carne sola.
Io dirò vero, e tu 'l ridi tra ' vivi:
l'angel di Dio mi prese, e quel d'inferno
gridava: "O tu del ciel, perché mi privi?
Tu te ne porti di costui l'eterno
per una lagrimetta che 'l mi toglie;
ma io farò de l'altro altro governo!"⁸⁴

Buonconte's salvation is the positive outcome of the traditional battle between the devil and the angel over the soul of man: in this case, the angel has the upper hand thanks to what the devil defines as 'lagrimetta', using a diminutive to devalue its importance; it is in fact central to Buonconte's conversion. As the early commentators already point out, tears are indeed shed for contrition⁸⁵: in fact, the Church measured the sincerity of contrition through tears, as Lyn A. Blanchfield notes: 'the internal transformation of contrition required some visible and physical sign that the sinner had repented sincerely'⁸⁶; in other words: tears, an outward sign of an inner and personal relationship with God.

Niccolò Tommaseo was the first to make this connection, commenting on the passage with reference to the story of the *Visio Alberici*, which is worth reporting in full due to the similar iconic importance held by tears:

[...] quod angelus Domini lacrimas, quas dives olim pro captione viri mulieris illius ac pro suis delictis fuderat, in ampulla teneret ac partem lacrimarum in librum proiceret. Angelus autem Domini dum hoc fecisset, demoni, ut librum clauderet et reseraret, imperat. Quem demon dum clausisset et aperuisset, invenit tertiam partem peccatorum deletam. Hoc autem ter actum est, et sic omnia peccata deleta sunt, et hac ex causa vite eterne destinatus est.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ "There I lost sight and speech./ I ended on the name of Mary and there I fell./ and only my flesh remained./ 'I will tell the truth--you tell it to the living./ God's angel took me, and he from Hell cried out:/ "O you from Heaven, why do you rob me?/"You carry off with you this man's eternal part./ For a little tear he's taken from me./ but with the remains I'll deal in my own way."

⁸⁵ Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'per una picciola contrizione, che àe avuto a la fine de la sua vita *ch'el mi tollie*; cioè la quale contrizione mel tollie: ecco che s'accorda l'autore co la sentenza de' Teologi; che chi si pente al fine de la sua vita, Dio è tanto misericordioso che lo riceve'.

⁸⁶ Lyn A. Blanchfield, 'Considerations of Weeping and Sincerity in the Middle Ages', in *Crying in the Middle Ages. Tears of History*, ed. by Elina Gertsman (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 21-30 (p. 23).

⁸⁷ *La visione di Alberico, ristampata tradotta e comparata con la Divina Commedia*, ed. by Catello De Vivo (Ariano: Appulo - Irpino, 1899), p. 73. My own translation : '[...] the angel of God kept in an ampoule the tears that the rich man had once shed for the imprisonment of that woman's husband, and he poured part of those tears on the book. As soon as he had done this, the angel of God ordered the devil to close the book and to reopen it. By closing it and reopening it, the devil found out that a third of the sins were erased. This was done three times, and so all the sins were deleted, and because of this reason he was destined to eternal life.'

Like Buonconte, the wealthy sinner is saved thanks to his own tears, which an angel collected in an ampoule and poured over the book where the devil recorded his sins: tears have the effect of erasing these sins and returning the sinner's soul to God.

Buonconte's tears appear to possess a similarly purifying and specifically baptismal quality. In this regard, it has been noted⁸⁸ that Psalm 50, sung by the group of the dead to which Buonconte necessarily belongs (V. 24), contains a reference to the rite of sprinkling Holy Water ('Asperges me hyssopo, et mundabor; / lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor'⁸⁹), a purifying rite that symbolically re-enacts baptism. One may also note that in *Purg.* XXXI. 98 angels sing this verse ('*Asperges me*') on the occasion of Dante's immersion in the river Lethe, the final act of his penitential journey, consisting in the cancellation of his sins after he weeps in Earthly Paradise. In the case of Buonconte, the baptismal function appears to be entrusted entirely to his tears, considered a way to rebaptize the soul stained by sin: 'a corrupted conscience, baptized with tears, is renewed', states Gregory the Great⁹⁰. On the contrary, the river in Buonconte's story is far from positive in its meaning: the devil, enraged by the defeat, orders the river and the rain to overwhelm Buonconte's body, now devoid of the soul. According to Francesco Mosetti Casaretto, a symbolic opposition is thus established between the tears and the rain/water of the river: 'the demonization of water as a kind of underground vortex, which sucks and pulls down angrily; the sanctification, on the other hand, of weeping as a sign of ascensional conversion capable of moving God'⁹¹. In fact, as Pietro Alighieri recalls, quoting Augustine, 'the demons have no difficulty in scattering any waters more widely (Aug., *Civ. Dei* XVIII 9)'⁹². Once again, the river – here the Arno and the Archiano – is associated with sin, as were the Babylonian rivers of Psalm 136: just as the exiled must weep by the rivers of sin in order to return to God, Buonconte gives his soul to God through tears, while the river of sin vainly overwhelms his earthly remains, 'la mia carne sola' (102)⁹³.

Moreover, a further detail of the conversion episode sheds new light on the meaning to be attributed to Buonconte's 'lagrimetta': the invocation of the Virgin Mary (V.101).

Tears were generally considered a fundamental element of prayer which, according to the *Regula* of St. Benedict, God is more likely to hear if accompanied by tears⁹⁴. Likewise, the monk

⁸⁸ Domenico Pietropaolo, 'The Figural Context of Buonconte's Salvation', *Dante Studies*, 102 (The Johns Hopkins University Press: 1984), 123-134 (p. 128).

⁸⁹ 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow'.

⁹⁰ 'Polluta dudum conscientia lacrymis baptizata renovatur' (*Hom. in Ev.* 10.7).

⁹¹ Francesco Mosetti Casaretto, *Ad domum lugentis*, in *Lachrymae. Mito e metafora del pianto nel Medioevo*, pp. 6-17 (p. 8).

⁹² Pietro Alighieri (Firenze: G. Piatti, 1845): 'spargere aquas altius difficile demonibus non est'.

⁹³ 'Only my flesh'.

⁹⁴ See Biagio Amata, 'La compunzione del cuore e le lacrime in alcuni autori cristiani antichi', in *Lachrymae*. pp. 15-42 (p. 26).

John Climacus not only considered prayer ‘the mother and also daughter of tears’⁹⁵; it is the mother and also the daughter of tears, believed that one should pray to the point of weeping, in order to atone for one’s sins while one is alive: ‘Do not abandon prayer until you see that, by divine providence, the fire and water have fallen off. For you will not have such a moment for the remission of your sins again in all your life perhaps’⁹⁶. Thus, the tears of Buonconte are first and foremost a necessary outcome and fulfillment of his prayer addressed to the Virgin.

In particular, Francesco Torraca⁹⁷ observes that beseeching the Virgin at the moment of death is a constant in a group of medieval tales, the so-called *Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, in which the soul of the sinner, the object of dispute between an angel and devil, is often saved through the help of the Madonna. In fact, the Virgin’s compassion is what Barbara Newman calls ‘the supreme hope of souls in purgatory and those that would otherwise be damned’⁹⁸, and the Madonna herself is the greatest example of mercy and mother mediatrix of salvation. She was afforded this role by virtue of the tears she shed during the Passion of Christ, which, as we have seen, assume a co-redemptive value⁹⁹.

Of particular note are the following excerpts from a *planctus Mariae* written in the twelfth century and attributed to Goffredo da San Vittore (1125), the *Planctus ante nescia*, which was quite popular in its genre:

Gens caeca, gens flebilis,
age poenitentiam,
 dum tibi flexibilis
 Jesus est ad veniam.
Quos fecisti, fontium
prosint tibi flumina,
sitim sedant omnium,
cuncta lavant crimina.[...]
Flete, Sion filiae,
tantae gratae gratiae
muneris, angustiae
 sibi sunt deliciae
 pro vestris offensis. [...]
 In hoc solo gaudeo,
 quod pro vobis doleo,
 vicem, quaeso, *reddite,*
*matris damnum plangite.*¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ John Climacus, *The ladder of divine ascent*, trans. by Archimandrite Lazarus Moore (Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 193.

⁹⁶ Ibidem, p. 199.

⁹⁷ Francesco Torraca (Roma-Napoli: Albrighi, 1905).

⁹⁸ Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to Woman Christ: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 112.

⁹⁹ Cf. Ch. II. 4.

¹⁰⁰ *Analecta Hymnica*, vol. 20, ed. by Guido M. Dreves (Leipzig : O. R. Reisland, 1895), p. 156. ‘Blind people, lamentable people,/ do penance/ while Jesus is inclined/ to forgive you./ Those fountains that you made/ — may their streams benefit you./ May they quench everyone’s thirst,/ and wash away all crimes./ Weep, daughters of Zion,/ for so much grace so freely given!/ The young man’s anguish/ is a delight to him/ for the sake of your offenses. [...]/ I take joy only in this,/ that I am grieving on your behalf./ I pray you,/ repay the favor:/ Weep for a

Mary, weeping before the suffering Christ, asks men to weep in turn: the Virgin incites Christ's tormentors to repentance and tears, reminding them of their condition as exiles, children of Zion, who in order to obtain divine grace must become fountains of tears (through a shared imaginary, already present, as we have seen, in the pseudo-Augustinian *De Lacrymis*) whose currents will satisfy their thirst for God and wash away their sins. Once again, man's weeping has a purifying effect and manifests the desire to return to God, adding to and, in this case, corresponding to the tears and suffering through which Mary participates in the sacrifice of her Son and carries out her co-redeeming and mediating act of salvation: in fact, the weeping of men should be understood as compensation for the tears shed by the Virgin. As Carla Bino notes in her comment on the *planctus*, through compassion, the Virgin becomes the mediator of salvation, 'linking her tears with those shed from the eyes of humans who, after washing away their sins, are only able to access the loving forgiveness of the Father through her means'¹⁰¹. The tears of repentance therefore reflect and replicate the co-redemptive tears of Mary, constituting the means of exchange through which the compassion and mediating act of the Virgin can lead to God.

Therefore, the conversion of Buonconte da Montefeltro, through tears shed in the name of Mary, can be interpreted as an expression of the Virgin's mediation to obtain the grace of God through the salvific power of tears, a distinctive sign of the exiled soul that returns to the heavenly homeland. Not surprisingly, the story of Buonconte has been interpreted in an allegorical sense, as the culminating episode of Exodus in which man's return to the promised land, to the heavenly Jerusalem, occurs through a symbolic correspondence between Buonconte and Joshua¹⁰².

In two additional episodes within the *Purgatorio*, the Virgin is invoked through tears, this time shed not during the stage of repentance, but during the expiatory process:

Tosto fur sovr'a noi, perché correndo
 si movea tutta quella turba magna;
 e due dinanzi gridavan piangendo:
 "Maria corse con fretta a la montagna" [...].¹⁰³
 (XVIII. 97-100)

mother's loss' (*The French of Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Jocelyn Wogan-Browne*, ed. by Thelma Fenster and Carolyn P. Collette (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017), pp. 75-76).

¹⁰¹ Carla Bino, *Dal trionfo al pianto. La fondazione del 'teatro della misericordia' nel Medioevo (V-XIII secolo)* (Milano: Vita e pensiero, 2008), p. 243.

¹⁰² Pietropaolo, p. 127.

¹⁰³ 'Soon they were upon us,/ for the whole turbulent mob was running,/ while two in front, weeping, cried out:/ 'Mary ran with haste into the mountains''.

Noi andavam con passi lenti e scarsi,
 e io attento a l'ombra, ch'i' sentia
pietosamente piangere e lagnarsi;
 e per ventura udi "*Dolce Maria!*"
dinanzi a noi chiamar così nel pianto
*come fa donna che in parturir sia; [...].*¹⁰⁴
 (XX. 16-21)

In the first case, the slothful, atoning for their sin through a relentless race, weep and proclaim the example of Mary's solicitude when, in the Gospel of Luke (1.39), having learned of the pregnancy of her relative Elizabeth in old age, Mary went to her in haste. According to Chiavacci Leonardi, this trait accords with Mary's charitable role as 'she who gives succor gratuitously'¹⁰⁵. Therefore, through tears, the slothful not only satisfy their own penance, but invoke the Virgin who offered this purification by saving them with solicitude.

In the second passage, as Benvenuto da Imola recalls, the communal weeping of the avaricious raises a cry of invocation to Mary as an example of poverty¹⁰⁶. The tearful invocation could, however, have further implications. It is described through a simile comparing it to the cry of a woman giving birth (XX. 20-21). Commentators have noted the recurrence in scripture of the image of the pregnant woman as a means to indicate intense pain¹⁰⁷, and they have recalled that Dante himself documents the invocation of Mary by the pregnant woman as a popular custom of the time in *Par.* XV. 133. Moreover, the theme of childbirth continues its presence in the following verses, in which the penitent recalls Mary's poverty when she gave birth to her son in a stable in Bethlehem (22-24). The point that remains unclear is the reason why the cry of penitents is compared precisely to the cry of a pregnant woman.

The reason may be found once again in the figure of Mary and in her birthing of Jesus: if Jesus's birth was traditionally considered to be totally painless and devoid of suffering for Mary, there was a second birth which was instead very painful, one that took place beneath the cross. In fact, Mary's weeping and sorrow beneath the cross, starting with Rupert of Deutz's commentary on the Gospel of John, would often be described as a painful birth. In the passage of the Benedictine monk, the Virgin is represented as sorrowful and weeping, in the act of giving birth to the new humanity saved by Christ:

¹⁰⁴ 'We made our way with scant, slow steps,/ my attention fixed upon those weeping shades / as I listened to their piteous lamentations,/ when by chance I heard one up ahead call out / 'Sweet Mary!' through his tears, / even as a woman does in labor, [...]'.

¹⁰⁵ Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991-97).

¹⁰⁶ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): 'Et subdit quid dicebant in planctu, quia decantabant sanctam paupertatem Mariae'.

¹⁰⁷ P. Pompeo Venturi (Firenze: L. Ciardetti, 1821).

Mary stands at the foot of the Son's cross, truly suffering the pains of childbirth. [...] When [Jesus] was born, she did not suffer the pains like other mothers: now, however, when standing next to the Cross, she gives birth with great pain [...] she is tormented and full of sorrow and sufferance [...] in the Passion of her only Son, the Blessed Virgin gave birth to the salvation of all mankind: in effect, she is the mother of all mankind.¹⁰⁸

This concept was later taken up by Albertus Magnus who, in considering Mary's collaborative role in the Redemption, describes Mary's suffering as a painful birth through which the Virgin facilitates the regeneration of man: 'not without the pain of the childbirth, she has called and regenerated all of us to the eternal life, in the Son and through the Son'¹⁰⁹. Mary's participation in the Redemption takes place through a sharing of Christ's suffering, which occurs, as we have seen, through the correspondence between the tears of the mother and the blood of the Son; from Mary's compassion, from her painful participation in the Passion, as in a very painful birth, the new man is born, regenerated through the mercy and sacrifice of Christ and the Virgin. This weeping, through which the Virgin pays her debt for the pain spared her during the birth of Jesus, should be shared by man, according to the *Moestae parentis Christi*, the *planctus Mariae* attributed to Adam of Saint Victor (1190):

Et non simul *condolere*
In hoc planctu virgíneo?
[...] *Des ut tecum hic ploremus,*
Et cor nostrum perforemus
Compassionis gladio.
Sic ô virgo gloriosa,
Fac nos tecum lachrymosa
Sentire suspiria.
Ut post vitam infelicem,
Habeamus te ductricem
*Ad aeterna gaudia.*¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Translation mine. Rupertus Tuitiensis *Commentaria in Evangelium S. Iohannis*, ed. by R. Haacke (Turnhout: 1969), pp. 743-744. 'Stabat, inquit, mater iuxta Filii crucem, sine dubio dolens, et dolores tanquam parturientis habens. [...] Eo videlicet, quia salutis omnium causam et tunc sine dolore peperit, quando Deum hominem factum de carne sua genuit; et nunc magno dolore parturiebat, quando, ut praedictum est, iuxta crucem ejus stabat. [...] sed nunc dolet, cruciatur, et tristitiam habet, [...] Proinde quia vere ibi dolores ut parturientis, in passione unigeniti omnium nostrum salutem beata Virgo peperit, plane omnium nostrum mater est'.

¹⁰⁹ Albertus Magnus, *Opera omnia: ex editione lugdunensi religiose castigata* (Parisiis: Apud Ludovicum Vivès: 1890),

q. 29, p. 69: 'non sine parturitione doloris omnes nos in vitam aeternam in Filio et per Filium vocavit et regeneravit'. 'Ergo aliquando peperit gentem simul, et cum parturitione et dolore: ergo peperit Filium suum primogenotum sine dolore in sua nativitate, postea peperit totam gentem simul in Filii passione, ubi facta fuit ei in adiutorium simile sibi, ubi ipsa mater misericordiae Patriem misericordiarum in summo opere misericordiae adjuvit, et una secum omnes homines regeneravit. Et haec regeneratio cum summo dolore utriusque fuit. (Albertus Magnus, *Mariale*, q. 42, p. 214).

¹¹⁰ The text is cited from Bino, *Dal trionfo al pianto*, p. 244 and ff. Translation mine: 'And we should not weep with you in this virginal mourning? Let us cry with you, let our hearts to be pierced by the sword of compassion. O glorious Virgin, let us feel the tearful sighs with you, so that, after the infelicitous life, we will have you as a guide to the everlasting joys.'

Man must share in Mary's pain and tears, repeating her sacrifice beneath the cross, in order to be heard and saved by God. Man must also be pierced by the same sword that pierced Christ physically and Mary spiritually, and only then can the Virgin finally guide him to eternal bliss. Indeed, through his own weeping, man gains the possibility of being regenerated and reborn, just as the new human race redeemed by Christ was born from Mary's tears.

The tears of the avaricious, like those of the slothful and of Buonconte, are a symbol of the birth of the new man, who is reborn painfully through repentance and penitence, giving himself to God; this rebirth is only possible thanks to the mediating and co-redemptive act which the Virgin carried out, in turn, through weeping.

In the *Commedia*, this role is already entrusted to the Virgin in the first canticle and is essential for the salvation of Dante himself: the kind woman who 'si compiange' (II. 94)¹¹¹ in Heaven, sending Beatrice to assist Dante, mediates the process of the pilgrim's salvation precisely through her 'compianto', her compassion for the tears which Dante shed in *Inf.* I. In fact, Dante's penitential tears, like Buonconte da Montefeltro's 'lagrimetta', are the first step to gain God's forgiveness, which can only be accessed fully through the mediation of Mary's tears and compassion. Indeed, this creates a chain of tears which, in a circular way, Mary initially shed for the redemption of man, and which then return to Mary through the weeping of repentant man: in this way, the debt of weeping is finally compensated, and salvation obtained.

In general, weeping as a tool of intercession with God on behalf of third parties constituted, at the end of the thirteenth century, a common practice and a fundamental element of the prayers of the living for the dead, with the aim of changing their fate, as occurs in some of the medieval *visiones animarum*. In the *Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, Perpetua weeps and intercedes on behalf of her dead brother, obtaining his remediation¹¹², while Gregory the Great in his *Dialogues* tells of the tears of Severus for a sinner who did not have time to repent at the moment of death, and who returns to life thanks to those tears¹¹³, following the example of Jesus' weeping that brought Lazarus back to life (John 11.35). In particular, in the *Visio Pauli*, Paul's weeping of intercession constitutes a fundamental example, because of its uniqueness: Paul's tears have the power to effectuate God's mercy and alleviate the pain of the damned, obtaining for the souls who denied the resurrection and are punished in an eternally frozen area,

¹¹¹ 'Moved by pity'.

¹¹² Ciccacese, *Visioni dell'Aldilà in Occidente*, p. 74: 'Et feci pro illo orationem die et nocte gemens et lacrimans ut mihi donaretur.'

¹¹³ Gregorius Magnus, *Dialogi*, I. 12. 2: 'Flens itaque pervenit ad corpus defuncti, seque coram lecto illius cum lacrimis in terram dedit. Cumque vehementer fleret, in terram caput tunderet, se reum mortis illius clamaret, repente is qui defunctus fuerat animam recepit. [...] "Reducite illum, quia Severus presbiter plangit. Eius enim aum lacrimis Dominus donavit"'

a weekly respite from the cold every Sunday¹¹⁴. In the Pauline example, the apostle's weeping is not for a penitent, but for the damned who, in Dante's Christian conception, belong to an eternal and immobile infernal kingdom, in which mercy has no means by which to act. The apocalyptic text belongs instead to the earliest Christian eschatology, in which 'there was no clear distinction, of the sort developed by Gregory the Great, between Hell and Purgatory'¹¹⁵, and therefore Hell was 'the abode not only of sinners who were to remain there forever, but of others who were to be saved, either at the Day of Doom or, through the intervention and prayers of the righteous on earth, at some earlier time'¹¹⁶.

With the creation of the purgatorial realm, the prayer of the living assumes ever greater importance, by virtue of a strengthened earthly bond with the afterlife; preachers encourage the living to pray and thus alleviate the purgatorial pains of the dead or to speed up their passage to Paradise¹¹⁷, with the idea of obtaining, in return, a prayer from the dead themselves once they are in a blessed state. Intercession, seasoned with tears and prayers, appears to be entrusted above all to women, whose spiritual activity can be interpreted as a form of *imitatio Mariae*¹¹⁸, an emulation of the compassion that characterizes the Virgin. The tears of women, starting with the weeping of the Virgin beneath Christ's cross, allow communication between heaven and earth and, therefore, assume a fundamental role in the middle kingdom of Purgatory.

In fact, in Dante's *Purgatorio*, the function of mediation carried out by the tears of the Virgin is replicated and imitated by other women within Dante's poem: it can be said that the salvation of others entrusted to tears is, in the *Commedia*, exclusively the purview of women. Beatrice, of course, is the prime example, as Virgil recalls her shining eyes (*Inf.* II. 116) in *Purg.* XXVII. 137-139:

¹¹⁴ 'Hii sunt qui dicunt quia Christus non resurrexit a mortuis et quoniam hec caro non resurget.' Et interrogavi, 'Domine, non est ignis neque calor in eo loco?' Et dixit mihi, 'In hunc locum nihil est nisi frigus et nix.' Et iterum dixit, 'Si sol oritur super eos, non calefaciunt illius loci propter superhabundans frigus [sic]'. Haec autem audiens extendi manus meas et fleui et suspirans dixi, 'Melius erat si nati non fuisset nos peccatores.' Omnes autem qui erant in eodem loco uiderunt me flentem cum angelo, et ipsi exclamauerunt et fleuerunt. Et post hec uidi celum apertum et Michaelem angelum testamenti descendentem de celo et cum eo omnis exercitus angelorum, et descenderunt ad omnes qui erant in suppliciis constituti; et uidentes eos iterum iterum exclamauerunt dicentes, 'Miserere nobis, angele Michahel testamenti misericors. Tu enim testimonium es ferens pro genere humano, et propter tuas orationes adhuc terram istam uidemus. Nunc iudicium cognouimus, quia possibile fuit filio dei ante occurrere nobis quam incideremus in hunc locum. [...]Nunc autem flete, et ego flebo uobiscum et qui mecum sunt sancti angeli cum dilectissimo Paulo, forte miseretur misericors deus et uobis refrigerium prestat.' Audientes autem uerba hec exclamauerunt et fleuerunt ualde, et dixerunt omnes una uoce, 'Miserere nostri, filius dei' (42-43).

¹¹⁵ Silverstein, *Visio Sancti Pauli*, p. 87.

¹¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹¹⁷ Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, p. 331.

¹¹⁸ Newman, p. 112. For a general account of the power and the role of women's tears see the contributions of Henry Maguire, 'Women Mourners in Byzantine Art, Literature, and Society' and of Judith Steinhoff, 'Weeping Women: Social Roles and Images in Fourteenth-Century Tuscany' in *Crying in the Middle Ages. Tears of History*, pp. 3-15 and pp. 35-52.

Mentre che vegnan *lieti li occhi belli*
che, lagrimando, a te venir mi fenno,
*seder ti puoi e puoi andar tra elli.*¹¹⁹

Just as Mary's weeping had provoked the intervention of Saint Lucia, Beatrice's tears urge Virgil to Dante's rescue. Virgil announces that Beatrice's eyes will now appear 'lieti', 'fair', to Dante, since previously they wept for his sins and now they rejoice for his conversion¹²⁰. Although Beatrice's appearance to Dante will be anything but happy, her 'santo riso' (*Purg.* XXXII. 50) will shine forth at the top of Purgatory, as promised, to sanction Dante's conversion. Thus, Beatrice's tears carry out a salvific action that is linked to and replicates its Marian counterpart: it is no coincidence that, in symmetry with Beatrice, the initial image of the Virgin's mourning for Dante's destiny will correspond to the heavenly representation of the Madonna's smile in the Empyrean (*Par.* XXXI. 134).

An additional case is that of the widow in *Purg.* X. 73-78, among the examples of humility carved along the rock wall of the first terrace, that of the proud:

Quiv'era storiata l'alta gloria
del roman principato, *il cui valore*
mosse Gregorio a la sua gran vittoria;
i' dico di Traiano imperadore;
e una vedovella li era al freno,
*di lagrime atteggiata e di dolore.*¹²¹

In the narrated episode, the emperor Trajan, moved with compassion by the tears of a humble widow who implores justice for her dead son, shows clemency and justice by satisfying the request. The piety shown by Trajan convinced Pope Gregory to alter the fate of the emperor's soul, which had been destined for hell, through weeping and praying, thus obtaining its salvation. This legend, as known, is present in two versions of the *Vita* of Gregory the Great, authored by Paul the Deacon and by John Hymmonides (VIII-IX century) and is retold in various texts, including the *Policraticus* by John of Salisbury (XII century), *Speculum historiale* by Vincent of Beauvais (XIII century), in the corresponding Tuscan vernacularization by the name of *Fiore e vita di filosofi*, and in the *Novellino*. The detail of the widow's tears is present in all versions

¹¹⁹ 'You may sit down or move among these/ until the fair eyes come, rejoicing,/ which weeping bid me come to you.'

¹²⁰ Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'piangono e dolliansi de lo errore dei peccatori; così si rallegrano de la conversione; e però ritorneranno a Dante lieti, perchè ora convertito è uscito per la purgazione de la immundizia dei peccati'.

¹²¹ 'Depicted there was the glorious act/ of the Roman prince whose worth/ urged Gregory on to his great victory- / I speak of the emperor Trajan,/ with the poor widow at his bridle, weeping,/ in a pose of grief-'

of the story¹²² except the *Novellino*, and thus does not constitute an element of Dante's invention¹²³. At the same time, however, Dante's verses ignore another detail to which all other versions give particular importance: the tears of Pope Gregory, which played a decisive role in interceding with God for the salvation of Trajan's soul. In *Purg.* X, Dante instead focuses the narrative on the widow's sorrowful attitude, on those tears that compelled Trajan to the merciful action that moved the pope and, therefore, allowed him to be saved. As John of Salisbury recalls in the version from the *Policraticus*: '[...] it is read that his virtues were commended by the most holy Pope Gregory and that the pope, shedding tears for the emperor, held him back from the fires of hell; the Lord in His rich mercy rewarded the justice which Trajan had displayed towards the crying widow'¹²⁴. For Dante as well, a woman is the source of the chain of tears and, therefore, of salvation.

Finally, the third female mediatrix of grace in the *Purgatory* is Nella, the wife of Forese Donati, a friend of Dante and comic poet, a penitent in the circle of the gluttonous (XXIII. 85-87):

Ond'elli a me: "Sì tosto m' ha condotto
a ber lo dolce assenzo d'i martiri
la Nella mia con suo pianger dritto."¹²⁵

Nella represents a perfect example of that 'purgatorial piety'¹²⁶ which in the Middle Ages characterized women and, above all, wives, who were responsible for praying and weeping for their husbands so that they might spend as little time as possible inside the prison of purgatorial penance¹²⁷. In fact, Nella with her weeping, like a salvific guide, led her husband to the upper circles of the purgatorial mountain, shortening the time of his penance in Antipurgatory and in the lower circles. It should be noted that, in the following verses, Nella is defined through the same diminutive used to describe the widow in *Purg.* X and again later in *Par.* XX. 45, 'vedovella' (92): according to Chiavacci Leonardi, this diminutive expresses in both cases 'the

¹²²*Sancti Gregorii Magni Vita, auctore Paolo Diacono, monacho Cassinensi*, ed. by J. P. Migne (Paris: 1849). PL 75, 56-57 (57): '[...] ibidem obviam habuerit vetustissimam viduam, senio simulque dolore ac paupertate confectam, cujus lacrymis atque vocibus sic compellatur [...]'.

John of Salisbury, *Ioannis Saresberiensis episcopi Carnotensis Policratici sive De nugis curialium et vestigiis philosophorum libri VIII*, ed. by Clement C. J. Webb (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 559: '[...] Cum enim memoratus imperator iam equum ascendisset ad bellum profecturus, vidua, apprehenso pede illius, miserabiliter lugens sibi iustitiam fieri petiit[...]'

Brunetto Latini, Antonio Cappelli, *Fiore di filosofi e molti savi* (Bologna: G. Romagnoli, 1865), p. 59: '[...] una femina vedova se gli fece dinanzi e prese gli il piede piangendo molto teneramente'.

¹²³ As is, on the contrary, argued in the contribution of Fenu Barbera, *Dante's tears*, p. 152.

¹²⁴ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. by Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 80.

¹²⁵ 'And he replied: 'It is my Nella/ whose flooding tears so quickly brought me / to drink sweet wormwood in the torments.'

¹²⁶ Newman, p. 119.

¹²⁷ On the topic see Steinhoff, p. 36.

weakness and smallness of the human being, who is only powerful with God'¹²⁸; it should be added that this is a purely feminine weakness. The compassion and tears of women, from Mary to Beatrice, from the widow to Nella, are, for Dante, necessary for the salvation of man: Manfredi invokes his daughter Costanza (III. 145); Buonconte would like to have the attention and prayers of his wife Giovanna (V. 89); and Nino Visconti asks Dante to solicit his daughter Giovanna (VIII. 71). The tears of women inaugurate and accelerate the process of salvation, acquiring a primordial value that precedes and allows for the tears of repentance with which man can return to God: in fact, in every tear women shed for salvation, the fruitfulness of Mary's tears is renewed, through the emulation of the sacrifice and purification which then led to the regeneration of the human race, and which now make possible the rebirth of the individual, redeemed and ready to return to the heavenly homeland.

The first true weeping that occurs in the purgatorial kingdom is that of the envious Sapia Salvani (*Purg.* XIII. 106-108) who, as we have mentioned, purifies herself through tears and thus manifests her desire to approach God. This is the first penitential weeping of the second canticle: through tears and pain, the penitent pilgrim can advance towards the heavenly homeland, effectuating the *satisfactio operis* with the atonement of his mortal sins. It is this state which Manuel Gragnolati defines as 'productive pain'¹²⁹, the pain of purgatorial atonement which allows the soul to return to God, of which tears are an inseparable element. This connection is emphasized by Thomas Aquinas, who, in treating the notion of penance, cites Gregory the Great when he affirms: 'penance is a passion accompanied by a bodily alteration, viz. tears, according to Gregory, who says (Hom. xxxiv in Evang.) that "penance consists in deploring past sins"¹³⁰. Weeping is a physiological alteration that, precisely by virtue of its corporeality, can become a means of purification and mortification of earthly vices.

The penitential function of weeping is particularly evident in the case of Guido del Duca, the noble penitent of Romagna in the circle of the envious:

Non ti maravigliar s'io *piango*, Tosco,
quando rimembro, con Guido da Prata,
Ugolin d'Azzo che vivette nosco, [...].
Ma va via, Tosco, omai; ch'or *mi diletta*
troppo di pianger più che di parlare,
sì m' ha nostra ragion la mente stretta".¹³¹

¹²⁸ Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991-97).

¹²⁹ Manuele Gragnolati, *Experiencing the Afterlife, Soul and body in Dante and medieval culture* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), p. 122.

¹³⁰ 'Sed similiter poenitentia est quaedam passio habens corporalem immutationem, scilicet ploratum, sicut Gregorius dicit [In Ev. h. 2,34] quod poenitere est peccata praeterita plangere' (*ST* III, Q. 85, A. 1).

¹³¹ 'Do not marvel, Tuscan, if I weep/ when, along with Guido da Prata, I recall/ Ugolin d'Azzo, who lived among us, [...] 'But now, Tuscan, be on your way,/ for I would rather weep than speak,/ so has our discourse wrung my mind.'

Guido del Duca's weeping appears to be provoked by nostalgia and regret for the glorious past of the nobility of Romagna, which the soul, during the course of his political denunciation, describes as once liberal and courteous, and now corrupt and unjust. Tears accompany Guido's speech and demarcate its conclusion: Guido, overwhelmed by the desire to weep rather than to continue discussing the misfortunes of his land, dismisses Dante. Although his tears appear to have arisen from the pain of regret, several clues qualify them as penitential.

First of all, the verb 'dilettare' (124) means "to enjoy", "to feel pleasure"¹³², thus indicating not only the desire but the pleasure caused by crying; in the thirteenth century there were several sources treating the 'corporeal and sensual pleasure of tears'¹³³, through which the penitent enjoys union with God. In particular, Thomas Aquinas, again discussing penance, recalls how the pleasure of pain amplifies its perception:

The joy which a penitent has for his sorrow does not lessen his displeasure (for it is not contrary to it), but increases it, according as every operation is increased by the delight which it causes, as stated in *Ethic. x, 5*. Thus he who delights in learning a science, learns the better, and, in like manner, he who rejoices in his displeasure, is the more intensely displeased. But it may well happen that this joy tempers the sorrow that results from the reason in the sensitive part.¹³⁴

Guido del Duca's pleasurable weeping is therefore a desire to perceive pain more thoroughly through tears. The question remains as to which sort of pain he is perceiving. If Benvenuto da Imola recognizes the penitential quality of Guido's tears¹³⁵, he separates the reasons for weeping from the content of the speech that preceded it, attributing to it a general expiatory value; Francesco da Buti, on the other hand, connects these tears to Guido's inner transformation from a previously envious sinner, 'feeling grief for his neighbor's good and joy for his troubles'¹³⁶. In fact, the question is clarified by Virgil's words in the next canto, within his broader explanation of Guido's prophetic speech (XV. 46-48):

Per ch'elli a me: "*Di sua maggior magagna
conosce il danno; e però non s'ammiri
se ne riprende perché men si piagna.*"¹³⁷

¹³² Lucia Onder, 'Dilettare' in *Enciclopedia dantesca*, (Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 1970), <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/elenco-opere/Enciclopedia_Dantesca> [accessed January 2022].

¹³³ Nagy, *Lacrimas quia doloris, suaves quia amoris*, p. 61.

¹³⁴ '[...] quod gaudium illud quod poenitens de dolore habet, non minuit displicentiam, quia ei non contrariatur, sed auget: secundum quod omnis operatio augetur per propriam delectationem, ut dicitur in X *Ethic.*; sicut qui delectatur in addiscendo aliquam scientiam, melius addiscit. Et similiter qui gaudet de displicentia, vehementius displicentiam habet. Sed bene potest esse quod illum gaudium temperat dolorem ex ratione in partem sensitivam resultantem' (S.T., III, Suppl., q. 3 a. 1).

¹³⁵ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): 'quasi dicat: quia volo potius redire ad plorandum peccata mea, quam deplorare peccata viventium, quia justius est; unde dicit: sì m'ha nostra ragion, idest, justitia, stretta la mente, quam nimis largaveram ad loquendum de factis alienis, cum mea strictius tangant me.'

¹³⁶ Francesco Da Buti Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'dolente del bene altrui e lieto del male'.

¹³⁷ 'He replied: 'Of his worst fault he knows the cost./ Thus it is no wonder he condemns it, in the hope/ that fewer souls will have a reason to lament.'

Virgil emphasizes how Guido now understands, through his torment, the harm caused by envy; his admonition is therefore meant to diminish the future weeping of those who have listened to him. In this case ‘piangere’, beyond its proper meaning, can be understood – as it is already intended in Hell – as ‘atonement’, ‘sorrow’, indicating the sufferings of purgatorial penance¹³⁸. The cry of Guido del Duca is a sign of his awareness of the sin of envy for which he is now atoning, the same sin which Dante recognizes at the origin of civil discord: Guido therefore weeps while denouncing the political deterioration of his region, since he himself, through his sin of envy, has allowed and encouraged such corruption.

Similarly, in the circle of the avaricious in Canto XIX, Pope Adrian V is characterized by the penance of weeping:

[...] dicendo: "*Spirto in cui pianger matura
 quel sanza 'l quale a Dio tornar non pòssi,
 sosta un poco per me tua maggior cura. [...]*
*Vattene omai: non vo' che più t'arresti;
 ché la tua stanza mio pianger disagia,
 col qual maturo ciò che tu dicesti.*"¹³⁹
 (XIX. 91-93, 139-141)

The episode of Adrian V opens and closes with tears, an element that, as we will later see, is particularly common in the cantos dedicated to avarice: Dante addresses the soul due to his weeping, emphasizing its necessity for a return to God, while Adrian V restates the same concept at the end of his speech, asking Dante to leave because, as in the case of Guido del Duca, the pilgrim’s presence prevents him from crying.

In these verses, tears are defined as an instrument of maturation: the commentators, on the one hand, have understood the notion of maturing as “accomplishing”, “completing” the purification necessary for the ascent to God; on the other, they attributed to it the Latin sense of ‘accelerating’¹⁴⁰. In the latter case, therefore, crying ‘hastens the penance and the purgation’¹⁴¹ to return to God.

It should be noted that, in order to describe the function of weeping, Dante speaks of maturation using a botanical language already present in the biblical texts: in Psalm 125 tears are the fertile soil that, if sown, produces the harvest of eternal joy. It is this same harvest that Augustine, commenting on the Gospel of John, defines as mature, since it is sown with tears:

Therefore was the harvest now ready in Judea. Justly was the grain there said to be as it were ripe, when so many thousands of men brought the price of their goods, and, laying

¹³⁸ ‘Si piange’ acquires the same meaning in *Purg.* XVII. 125 and 137 and in *Purg.* XIX. 59.

¹³⁹ [...] saying: ‘Spirit in whom weeping ripens/ that without which there is no return to God, / for my sake just a while neglect your greater care. [...]’ Now go your way. I would not keep you longer, / for your being here impedes the tears / with which I ripen that of which you spoke.’

¹⁴⁰ *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, ‘maturare’ (Roma: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia italiana, 1970), <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/maturare_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/> [accessed June 2021].

¹⁴¹ Cristoforo Landino (Firenze: Lexis Progetti Editoriali, 1999): ‘affrecta, quello, cioè la penitentia et la purgatione’

them at the apostles' feet, having eased their shoulders of this worldly baggage, began to follow the Lord Christ. Verily the harvest was ripe. What was made of it? Of that harvest a few grains were thrown out, and sowed the whole world; and another harvest is rising which is to be reaped in the end of the world. Of that harvest it is said, They that sow in tears shall reap with joy.¹⁴²

According to Augustine, the sign and proof of the harvest's maturation are linked with the abandonment of earthly goods, the burden of which men must free themselves in order to follow Christ.

One should recall that the weeping of Adrian V is that of the avaricious soul who must pay for his sin, forced to turn away from that land to which, in life, he devoted all his attention; his tears are therefore the penitential means through which he expiates his attachment to earthly goods, moving away from them and thus progressively bringing to maturity the harvest of eternal joy. One may consider, finally, the difference between the weeping of Pope Nicholas III in *Inf.* XIX and that of Adrian V, the former a simoniac and the latter avaricious, who share between their two episodes numerous and notable similarities, from the means of punishment to the characteristics of their dialogue. While the weeping of Nicholas III is treated sarcastically as a vain and useless outburst¹⁴³, the case of Adrian V, on the contrary, underscores the purifying and ascensional power of tears. The fundamental difference between the two types of tears consists in repentance and, therefore, in the different ways in which each pope makes use of the divine gift of weeping: as Augustine again recalls in the *Sermones* 31. 6, the vain tears of those who uselessly weep or laugh, will reap nothing but *aeternae lacrymae* in Hell; on the contrary, those who use weeping as a means of repentance will reap the ripe harvest of beatitude. The two popes therefore share a relationship similar to that between Guido da Montefeltro (*Inf.* XXVII) and his son Buonconte (*Purg.* V)¹⁴⁴: the one is damned because, while acquitted by Boniface VIII, he was not repentant; the other was saved thanks to the sincerity of his repentance expressed by tears. In the same way, the difference between the tears shed by the two popes is a new opportunity for Dante to reaffirm the importance of tears for man's salvation: in particular, if Buonconte's tears illustrate the need for contrition, the weeping of Adrian V demonstrates the need for penance and atonement in order to return to God.

¹⁴² Translation by NewAdvent, <<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1701015.htm>> [accessed February 2022]. 'Ergo iam in Iudaea messis parata erat. Merito ibi tamquam matura seges fuit, quando tot hominum millia pretia rerum suarum afferebant, et ad pedes Apostolorum ponentes, expeditis humeris a sarcinis saecularibus, Christum Dominum sequebantur: vere matura messis. Quid inde factum est? De ipsa messe eiecta sunt pauca grana, et seminaverunt orbem terrarum, et surgit alia messis quae in fine saeculi metenda est. De ista messe dicitur: *Qui seminant in lacrymis, in gaudio metent.*' (*In Ioannis Evangelium, tractatus XV*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1845), PL 35, 1379 – 1976, XV. 32).

¹⁴³ See Ch. II. 3, 90 and ff.

¹⁴⁴ For the interpretation of *Inf.* XXVII and *Purg.* V as a pair of mirrored cantos see Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991-97).

The final example of individual weeping in the *Purgatorio* coincides with Dante's last encounter with a penitent soul: Arnaut Daniel, the Provençal poet punished among the lustful in the mountain's last circle (XXVI. 142-144):

Ieu sui Arnaut, *que plor e vau cantan*;
consiros vei la passada folor,
e vei jausen lo joi qu' esper, denan.¹⁴⁵

As Francesco da Buti notes, Arnaut's weeping expresses the awareness of sin, and thus contrition¹⁴⁶. If the poet's tears are those of atonement, they also manifest the desire to attain divine joy ('*vei jausen lo joi qu' esper*' (144)), now not so distant. Concluding the purgatorial encounters, these verses assigned to a love poet are a perfect gloss and summary of what weeping represents in Purgatory: penance and atonement on the one hand, desire and hope for God on the other. The tears of the penitent in Purgatory are those of the exile who weeps, denouncing the love that was so misguided in life, and desiring the one true love, the divine love of one's heavenly homeland.

If we consider the communal tears shed by the groups of souls whom Dante meets along his ascent, we will notice that tears characterize all the circles except that of the wrathful who, immersed in a thick smoke, make their presence known to the pilgrim only through the singing of their prayers (XVI. 16-21). In all cases, weeping takes on a penitential quality, contributing to the *satisfactio operis* which the penitents achieve, and assisting their ascent to God.

The first example of communal weeping is that of the proud who purify themselves in the first terrace, proceeding slowly under the weight of boulders that force them into a humble, bent posture. Even those among them who show great resignation are intent on weeping, thus expressing that they are at the limits of their endurance (X. 136-9):

Vero è che più e meno eran contratti
secondo ch'avien più e meno a dosso;
e qual più pazienza avea ne li atti
piangendo pareva dicer: 'Più non posso'.¹⁴⁷

The weeping of penitents is the direct effect of the pain and suffering caused by the penance to which souls are subjected. Specifically, weeping is the means by which the proud can approach God, through the virtue that opposes their sin: humility. When discussing the tears of the Valley

¹⁴⁵ 'I am Arnaut, weeping and singing as I make my way./ I see with grief past follies and I see, / rejoicing, the joy I hope is coming.'

¹⁴⁶ Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): et assegna la cagione perchè piange, quando dice: *Consiros*; cioè considero io, *vei la passata folor*; cioè lo vecchio passato fallo, nel quale io caddi nel mondo, e però piango io per contrizione del mio peccato'.

¹⁴⁷ 'They were indeed hunched over more or less,/ depending on the burdens on their backs,/ and even he that showed the greatest patience,/ weeping, seemed to say: 'I can no more'.

of the Heart as a means of humiliation in preparation for the ascent to God, Saint Augustine primarily addresses the proud who, in order to draw closer to the Lord, need to exercise humility, bowing and weeping, asking for liberation from the imprisonment of the body:

So any who refuse to humble themselves in repentance, should not think they can draw near to God. It's one thing, after all, to raise oneself up to God; another thing to raise oneself up against God. Those who throw themselves down before him are raised up by him.¹⁴⁸

The idea of bodily imprisonment already appears to be a reason for weeping in Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, where he expresses through tears and sighs the desire to rid himself of the carnal garment in order to return to God:

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.¹⁴⁹

One notes how the bodily garment is compared to a weight under which man weeps, waiting to be clothed with the first garment: that is, the incorruptibility which he had lost with original sin. In *City of God*, Augustine cites the passage of St. Paul in order to describe the holy posture of the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem who, while in exile, express the desire to return to their homeland through weeping, groaning under the weight of their corporeality:

Are not these the utterances of a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem: My tears have been my meat day and night; and Every night shall I make my bed to swim; with my tears shall I water my couch; and My groaning is not hid from You; and My sorrow was renewed? Or are not those God's children who groan, being burdened, not that they wish to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life?¹⁵⁰

As Lino Pertile has observed¹⁵¹, the pilgrimage undertaken by penitents in the *Purgatorio* is configured as a progressive shedding of the 'scoglio' (*Purg.* II. 122), the 'slough', or the tunic that has covered man since the Fall, marking him inexorably as a pilgrim exiled on earth. This

¹⁴⁸ 'Quisquis itaque paenitentiae recusat humilitatem, Deo propinquare non cogitat. Aliud est enim levare se ad Deum; aliud est levare se contra Deum. Qui ante illum se proicit, ab illo erigitur: qui adversus illum se erigit, ab illo proicitur.' (*Sermones*, 351. 1.1).

¹⁴⁹ Augustine, *The City of God*, XX, < <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120120.htm> > [accessed January 2022]. 'Scimus enim quoniam si terrestris domus nostra hujus habitationis dissolvatur, quod aedificationem ex Deo habemus, domum non manufactam, aeternam in caelis. Nam et in hoc ingemiscimus, habitationem nostram, quae de caelo est, superindui cupientes: si tamen vestiti, non nudi inveniamur. Nam et qui sumus in hoc tabernaculo, ingemiscimus gravati: eo quod nolumus expoliari, sed supervestiri, ut absorbeatur quod mortale est, a vita' (V. 1-4).

¹⁵⁰ 'An non est vox civis supernae Hierusalem: Factae sunt mihi lacrimae meae panis die ac nocte; et: Lavabo per singulas noctes lectum meum, in lacrimis meis stratum meum rigabo; et: Gemitus meus non est absconditus a te, et Dolor meus renovatus est? Aut vero non eius filii sunt, qui ingemescunt gravati, in quo nolunt spoliari, sed supervestiri, ut absorbeatur mortale hoc a vita?' (*De civitate Dei Contra Paganos Libri XXII*, XX. 17).

¹⁵¹ Lino Pertile, *La punta del disio. Semantica del desiderio nella 'Commedia'* (Firenze: Cadmo, 2005), pp. 59-84.

garment is a symbol of all mundane, worldly desires, of passions and, therefore, of the deadly sins which man must renounce by purifying himself through penance, thus coming to resemble God once more: “stripping off the *scoglio* means freeing within us the image and likeness of the divine craftsman, which dead flesh covers up”¹⁵².

The role played by tears in this disrobing is particularly evident in the case of the proud, which becomes emblematic for the entire canticle: the weight of the boulders they carry on their shoulders is a symbol of the weight of their pride, which on earth lifted them excessively from the earth and now pushes them against it, humiliating them; in this process of humiliation, tears manifest the desire of the exiled soul to return to God, to make itself holy by abandoning its earthly desires and progressively freeing itself from that ‘scoglio’ which prevents the soul from reaching the top of the mountain.

The expiatory function of tears is particularly manifest in the case of the envious of the second round, who must struggle to push their tears out from the terrible seam that cinches their eyelids shut (XIII. 82-84):

[...] da l'altra parte m'eran le divote
ombre, che *per l'orribile costura*
*premevan sì, che bagnavan le gote.*¹⁵³

Blindness is often associated with envy in the theological tradition¹⁵⁴, because the envious, enjoying the suffering of others through their sense of sight, are the bearers of a moral blindness that prevents them from enlightenment through divine light and truth (as Dante himself affirms in *Purg.* XIII. 67). In particular, weeping would seem to be the most suitable torment for those who, in life, laugh at the misfortunes of others, according to Thomas Aquinas’ definition of envy: ‘envy is grief for our neighbor's good and joy for his troubles’¹⁵⁵. Indeed, laughter also characterizes Envy in Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*: in the episode of the envious Aglaurus, whom Mercury turns to stone (*Met.* II. 708-832), cited later by Dante himself among the examples of envy punished (*Purg.* XIV. 139), Envy is described as one who laughs only at the suffering of others (‘risus abest, nisi quem visi movere dolores’ II. 778¹⁵⁶). Therefore, in Purgatory, the

¹⁵² Ibidem, p. 66.

¹⁵³ ‘At my other side were the shades in prayer/ who, through those dreadful seams,/ were wringing tears that bathed their cheeks.’

¹⁵⁴ Cristoforo Landino (Firenze: Lexis Progetti Editoriali, 1999): ‘Overo diremo che gli 'nvidiosi sono ciechi. Onde Iob: “per diem incurrent tenebras, et quasi in nocte sic palpabunt in meridie”. Et Gregorio: “mens invidi cum alieno bono affligitur de radio lucis offuscatur”. Et Matheo al xx.: “invidi de sanitate aliorum infirmantur, et de vita moriuntur”. Et Socrate desiderava che gli 'nvidiosi havessino gli ochi et gl'orechi per ogni città, acciochè più si tormentassino. Et Isaia: “ve qui dicitis bonum malum, et malum bonum”.’

¹⁵⁵ ‘Ex tristitia de bono proximi, quae est invidia, sequitur exultatio de malo eiusdem’ (*ST.* IIa IIae q. 36 a. 4).

¹⁵⁶ Ovidio, *Le Metamorfosi*, vol. 1, ed. by Giovanna Faranda Villa (Milano: Bur Rizzoli, 1994), p. 156. ‘She never smiles except when some sad sight brings her delight’ (*The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, trans. by Allen Mandelbaum (Boston-New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), p.69).

atonement of the envious through weeping appears the most direct consequence of that sinful laughter, according to the Gospel of Luke 6.25 ('Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep').

It should also be noted that this weeping is characterized by a particular struggle: the emission of tears occurs only through painful effort, through the material obstacle of the stitches that prevent a free flow, which the souls try to overcome by 'pressing' on the eyelids. Crying, for the envious, is thus a torment and a further trial, implying a moral obstacle that must be overcome through purification. That obstacle is represented, according to John S. Carroll, by the nature of the sin of envy, which 'hardens the heart, turns it to stone like Aglauros, and therefore weeping is not easy'¹⁵⁷. Indeed, the coldness and hardness of envy is suggested by the environment of the circle itself, made of livid stone, which stands in opposition to the warmth of the 'Heaven's light', unable to penetrate the darkness of the penitents' blinded eyes (XIII. 67-69). This representation appears to be influenced, once again, by Ovid's narration of the myth of Aglaurus, in which the house of Envy is characterized by iciness and a lack of sun ('[...] sole carens, non ulli pervia vento,/ tristis et ignavi plenissima frigoris et quae/ igne vacet semper [...] (II. 762-4)¹⁵⁸).

The coldness in the heart of the envious, as Francesco da Buti recalls, quoting Boethius, is a result of the absence of the warmth of charity¹⁵⁹. As Boethius had previously done in the *Consolatione* (III. IX), Dante openly sets the sin of envy in opposition to charity through examples of love which exhort the envious to virtue (*Purg.* XIII. 27-42), thus establishing an antithetical relationship between envy and love, coldness and warmth.

This representation of envy and its punishment cannot fail to evoke that of the traitors of Cocytus, an analogy initially identified in the commentary of Scartazzini and Vandelli¹⁶⁰. The relationship between the penitents and the damned appears even clearer if we consider their respective tears and their similar difficulty: in fact, in both cases divine justice hinders their weeping, in the first case through ice and in the second through stitches. As we have seen, this difficulty is attributable to the hardness of the icy heart of both categories of sinners; however, while in the case of traitors crying is completely prevented, in that of the envious it is made difficult and painful, but not impossible. In fact, the tears of the envious cause pain that is useful for atonement and progression to God, contributing to the purification needed to overcome blindness that will only temporarily obscure the gaze of penitents. On the contrary, in the case of traitors,

¹⁵⁷ John S. Carroll (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1904-1911).

¹⁵⁸ *Le Metamorfosi*, p. 154. 'It knows no sun, no breath of wind—a grim and frozen place forever gripped by sloth; within that space, there is no kindly hearth' (*The Metamorphoses*, p. 68).

¹⁵⁹ Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'dice la Filosofia, parlando a Boezio de la fortuna: Nunc te primum liventi oculo perstrinxit: la invidia è fredda, perch'è contraria a la carità, e lo freddo fa l'omo livido'.

¹⁶⁰ Scartazzini and Vandelli (Milano: U. Hoepli, 1929).

weeping is an instrument of divine punishment, creating an icy screen that guarantees traitors perpetual blindness.

In this regard, one may note pilgrim Dante's disparate reaction to each punishment: when Frate Alberigo beseeches him to remove the frozen screen of tears, Dante responds with cold cruelty (*Inf.* XXXIII. 109-114). Contrarily, at the painful sight of the envious, the pilgrim will melt into tears of compassion, manifesting his participation in their pain and suffering (XIII. 57)¹⁶¹. One notes, in fact, that the poet utilizes the verb 'munto' (57), 'wringed', previously used to express the violence which evokes the weeping of the violent immersed in the Phlegethon (*Inf.* XII. 135-36), and which suggests the same effort expressed by the verb 'premere' used to describe the weeping of the envious (XIII. 84).

The weeping of the envious in Purgatory reveals, in its painful effort, a fundamental expiatory function, manifesting repentance and carrying out the penance necessary to reopen their eyes to the divine light and return to the heavenly homeland. Its necessity is underscored by a representation that simultaneously replicates and inverts the weeping of traitors, among which stands out, in particular, the traitor to God: Lucifer, the "nvidia prima" (*Inf.* I. 111)¹⁶², envious of the Lord, who never wept with repentance and was thus condemned to shed monstrous, eternal and useless tears.

In the fifth circle of Purgatory, dedicated to the purgation of the avaricious, weeping takes on an unprecedented relevance: in fact, the diptych of Cantos XIX-XX is distinguished by the frequency of occurrences related to weeping¹⁶³. This pattern begins with the third evangelical beatitude, enunciated by the angel of solicitude, which ends Dante's visit to the fourth terrace, that of the slothful (XIX. 49-51):

Mosse le penne poi e ventilonne,
'Qui lugent' affermando esser beati,
ch'avran di consolar l'anime donne.¹⁶⁴

These verses recite the third beatitude of the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew* 5.4, 'Beati qui lugent: quoniam ipsi consolabuntur'¹⁶⁵) and they represent the only case in which a beatitude is enunciated in its entirety, partly in Latin and partly paraphrased in the vernacular. As in the previous circles, the beatitude should counter the vice now overcome, but the association of this beatitude with the vice of sloth has always seemed problematic to commentators. According to

¹⁶¹ See Ch. III. 3, 149.

¹⁶² 'The primal envy'.

¹⁶³ There are eight references to weeping: XIX. 50, 59, 70, 91, 140; XX. 18, 20, 144; XXII. 53.

¹⁶⁴ '[...] and, stirring his feathers, gently fanned us,/ declaring those qui lugent to be blessed,/ for their souls shall be comforted.'

¹⁶⁵ 'Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted'.

an opinion which Baldassare Lombardi put forward and which Gabriele Muresu recently revisited¹⁶⁶, the theologians considered sloth to be a form of *tristitia* which cools and impedes the functioning of love and goodness, as opposed to those who love God and weep for their sins¹⁶⁷. Yet, except for the slothful pair who weep while running incessantly (XVIII. 95-98), Dante in this case does not describe the communal weeping of penitents, nor does he focus on their tears. On the contrary, as has been mentioned, tears maintain a constant presence in the fifth circle of the avaricious; the beatitude could therefore refer to the sin of avarice and, more generally, to the desire for earthly things which distances man from God and which must be set aside in the second kingdom¹⁶⁸. In fact, it should be noted that the beatitude is enunciated at a particular moment, immediately after the dream of the stuttering woman which opens Canto XIX (7-33), representing the deceptive seduction of earthly goods which causes the three sins of concupiscence: greed, gluttony and lust, punished in the upper circles of the mountain. Those vices must be atoned through weeping, as Virgil will recall following the enunciation of the beatitude (58-60):

“Vedesti”, disse, “*quell'antica strega
che sola sovr'a noi omai si piagne;
vedesti come l'uom da lei si slega.*”¹⁶⁹

Therefore, the beatitude enunciates the consoling and salvific power of weeping, which penitents need to break their earthly bonds, and which has the function of reassuring Dante himself, who first appeared worried and hesitant, and now is ready to proceed on his journey. In fact, regarding the beatitude, the *Ottimo Commento* states that those who cry now, in the future will be able to see God because weeping they demonstrate to possess the gift of knowledge¹⁷⁰. Indeed, as Thomas Aquinas recalls, weeping corresponds to the gift of knowledge; that is, the function through which man becomes aware of his own errors: ‘the chief motive for mourning is knowledge, whereby man knows his failings and those of worldly things, according to Eccles. 1:18: “He that addeth knowledge, addeth also sorrow”¹⁷¹. This discourse is particularly suited

¹⁶⁶ Gabriele Muresu, ‘Qui lugent...’ (‘Purgatorio’ XIX 50-51), Una “beatitudine” contro l’accidia’, in *L’orgia d’amore. Saggi di semantica dantesca (quarta serie)* (Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 2008), pp. 187- 194 (p. 189).

¹⁶⁷ Baldassare Lombardi (Roma: A. Fulgoni, 1791-92): ‘non da accidia occupati, ma accesi di fervoroso amor di Dio piangono le proprie ed altrui colpe’.

¹⁶⁸ This hypothesis has been put forward by Lino Pertile in *Il cigno e la sirena. Lettura del canto XIX del Purgatorio*. In *Esperimenti Danteschi: Purgatorio 2009*, ed. by Benedetta Quadrio (Genova-Milano: Marietti 2010), pp.175-96 (p. 188 and ff.).

¹⁶⁹ ‘You saw,’ he said, ‘that ancient witch/ who alone is purged with tears above us here./ And you saw how man is freed from her.’

¹⁷⁰ L’*Ottimo Commento* (Pisa: ed. Alessandro Torri, N. Capurro, 1827-1829): ‘coloro che ora piangono, in futuro si consoleranno per vedere Idio: con l’acqua delle lagrime perfettamente si caccia la terrenezza: a questa grazia s’adatta il dono della scienza, però che per questo dono s’alluminano, ch’egli sappiano di quali mali li uomini sono inviluppati’.

¹⁷¹ ‘Ad lugendum autem movet praecipue scientia, per quam homo cognoscit defectus suos et rerum mundanarum; secundum illud Eccle.1 [18], qui addit scientiam, addit et dolorem’ (*ST Ia Ilae*, Q 69, A 3).

to the situation of the avaricious whose punishment, which consists in eradicating their attraction to earthly goods, finds a key instrument in tears:

Com'io nel quinto giro fui dischiuso,
vidi gente per esso che piangea,
giacendo a terra tutta volta in giuso.¹⁷²
(XIX. 70-72)

Noi andavam con passi lenti e scarsi,
e io attento a l'ombre, ch'i' sentia
pietosamente piangere e lagnarsi; [...].¹⁷³
(XX. 16-18)

Poi ripigliammo nostro cammin *santo*,
guardando l'ombre che giacean per terra,
tornate già in su *l'usato pianto*.¹⁷⁴
(XX. 142-44)

One notes that the episode of the avaricious begins and ends with the image of penitents lying on the ground in tears that, as we have seen, produce the harvest of eternal joy through the unraveling of earthly bonds (XIX. 91-93). It is no coincidence, then, that the term 'pianto' is made to rhyme with 'santo' twice within Canto XX¹⁷⁵: first when comparing the weeping of the greedy with that of the pregnant woman (vv. 20 and 24), who announces with pain the birth of the new and regenerated man; then at the end of the Canto (vv. 142 and 144), where the 'pianto' of souls rhymes with the 'cammino santo'; that is, the purgatorial journey of purification toward holiness which Dante achieves through his ascent of the mountain. In fact, the second kingdom is repeatedly described as 'santo'¹⁷⁶, as a place to reacquire holiness through the return of the purged soul to God. Indeed, in the next terrace, the souls of the greedy regain holiness by atoning for their sin by suffering hunger, thirst and weeping:

Tutta esta gente che *piangendo canta*
per seguitar la gola oltra misura,
in fame e 'n sete qui *si rifà santa*.¹⁷⁷
(XXIII. 64-66)

Beatification, the acquisition of holiness, in reality consists in the recovery of a primordial and lost condition; that is, of the purity with which the soul was created, a recovery accomplished

¹⁷² 'When I came out onto the ledge/ of the fifth round, I saw people on it/ lying face down on the ground and weeping.'

¹⁷³ 'We made our way with scant, slow steps,/ my attention fixed upon those weeping shades/ as I listened to their piteous lamentations, [...].'

¹⁷⁴ 'Then we continued on our holy path,/ our eyes cast down to see the shades along the ground,/ who had returned to their accustomed weeping.'

¹⁷⁵ "Pianto" rhymes with "santo" one more time in the *Purgatorio* (XXII, 82-84) and once in the *Paradiso* (IX. 5-7).

¹⁷⁶ The purgatorial mountain is defined as a 'sacro monte' (XIX. 39), 'santo monte' (XXVIII. 12) and it is characterized by 'scaglioni santi' (XII. 112).

¹⁷⁷ 'All these people who weep while they are singing / followed their appetites beyond all measure,/ and here regain, in thirst and hunger, holiness.'

through the return to the homeland, to God, as Dante emphasizes in the *Convivio*: ‘it returns to God, as to the port from which it departed when it came to set sail on the sea of this life’ (*Conv.* IV. XXVIII. 2). In fact, as Manuele Gragnolati recalls, ‘through purgatory, the repented guilt is finally removed and the soul finds again its sanctity and original resemblance to God’¹⁷⁸: it could be said that this holiness and likeness to God is obtained through tears, a divine sign that man has learned through the example of Christ: ‘Christ wept; let man bemoan himself. For why did Christ weep, but to teach man to weep?’¹⁷⁹. With the episode of the avaricious, emblematic for the entire canticle, Dante thus emphasizes the importance of weeping during the journey toward beatitude and holiness, the return to God. It should be noted that the image of the penitential pilgrimage accompanies and emphasizes the tears of the avaricious: at the opening of Canto XX, Dante and Virgil proceed along the circle with ‘passi lenti e scarsi’ (16), observing the tears of souls and, equally, at the end of their visit, resume their ‘cammin santo’ by observing the resumption of the penitents’ weeping (142). It is therefore increasingly clear that the *Qui lugent* of Canto XIX refers to the avaricious, as suggested by Augustine’s commentary on Psalm 86, concerning the above-mentioned beatitude:

"Blessed are they that mourn." Nothing is so akin to misery as mourning [...] Wherefore blessed? In hope. Wherefore mourning? In act. For they mourn in this death, in these tribulations, in their wandering: and because they own themselves to be in this misery, and mourn, they are blessed. [...] but when our mourning shall have passed away, we all with one voice, in one people, in one country, shall receive comfort, thousands of thousands joined with Angels playing upon harps, with choirs of heavenly powers living in one city.¹⁸⁰

The avaricious, like all penitents in Purgatory, weep out of an awareness of their condition as pilgrims and exiles, and therefore they will be blessed and will be able to return to the desired homeland of Heaven, where they will finally be consoled.

Just as the former group of penitents in Purgatory weeps, so do the lustful, enveloped in the purifying fire of the final terrace (XXVI. 4-48):

Poi, *come grue* ch'a le montagne Rife
volasser parte, e parte inver' l'arene,
queste del gel, quelle del sole schife,

¹⁷⁸ Gragnolati, *Experiencing the Afterlife*, p. 122.

¹⁷⁹ ‘Flevit Christus, flet se homo. Quare enim flevit Christus, nisi quia flere hominem docuit?’ (*In Evangelium Ioannis, tractatus* 49. 19).

¹⁸⁰ Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms 73-98*, in *The Works of Saint Augustine*, p. 246. ‘O, beati lugentes! Nihil tam coniunctum miseriae quam luctus [...] quare beati? In spe. Quare lugentes? In re. Etenim lugent in morte ista, in tribulationibus istis, in peregrinatione sua; et quia agnoscunt se esse in ista miseria, et gemunt, beati sunt. [...] cum autem transierit gemitus noster, omnes in una voce, in uno populo, in una patria consolabimur, millia millium coniuncta psallentibus Angelis, choris coelestium Potestatum in una civitate viventium’ (*Enarrationes*, 86. 23).

*l'una gente sen va, l'altra sen vene;
e tornan, lagrimando, a' primi canti
e al gridar che più lor si convene; [...].*¹⁸¹

The simile comparing the movement of the two groups of lustful penitents (separated by sins according to and against nature) to that of migrating cranes not only has a descriptive value, but underscores, as has been observed.¹⁸², the idea of the penitential pilgrimage of souls who fly away from sin towards the heavenly homeland. The flight of cranes is already used in *Inf.* V. 46-48 to describe the collective movement of the lustful who had died violently:

*E come i gru van cantando lor lai,
faccendo in aere di sé lunga riga,
così vid'io venir, traendo guai [...].*¹⁸³

However, in both cases the comparison with cranes could refer not only to their manner of flight, but also to the cries and wails which damned and penitents produce. Indeed, in the circle of Hell, the cry of the souls transported by the storm is compared to the 'lai' of cranes, to their mournful song¹⁸⁴. It is no coincidence, then, that in the purgatorial terrace, the souls who cry and sing the hymn referenced in XXV. 121, are portrayed as moving like cranes. Scholars have already noted the possible penitential quality of the crane in medieval bestiaries, where it confesses and prays until its plumage darkens in old age¹⁸⁵. In particular, the lament of the crane was considered a symbol of the weeping of contrition for sins, as noted in the *De bestiis* of Pseudo-Hugh of St. Victor¹⁸⁶.

If, therefore, the weeping of the lustful in Hell is the tragic and vain lament of cranes that have been lost in the storm, in Purgatory the tears and songs of penitents, of pilgrims who are heading, like cranes, towards their heavenly goal, acquire a deeply penitential quality, as recognition of and atonement for sin. The weeping of the lustful in the final terrace of Purgatory carries with it all the strength of repentance and hope of those who have found the proper objective towards which to direct their love and desire, and thus made holy once again are finally ready for the ascent to God.

¹⁸¹ 'Then, as though cranes were flying, some toward/ cool Rhiphaean mountains and some toward desert sands,/ these shunning frost and those the sun,/ the one crowd goes, the other nears,/ and all return, weeping, to their former song/ and to the cry that most befits them.'

¹⁸² Ledda, *Il Bestiario dell'aldilà*, pp. 183-193 (p. 192).

¹⁸³ 'Just as cranes chant their mournful songs,/ making a long line in the air,/ thus I saw approach, heaving plaintive sighs, [...].'

¹⁸⁴ As Gregorio di Siena (Napoli: Perrotti, 1867-70) recalls, 'Lais in provenz. è pianto, grido lugubre'.

¹⁸⁵ Ledda, *Il Bestiario dell'aldilà*, p. 192.

¹⁸⁶ 'Aetatem in illis color prodit. Nam in senectute nigrescunt. Hic enim color in senectute seni competit, cum pro peccatis plangendo gemit. Cum enim quae male gessit, senex commemorat, in senectute colorem mutat. Mutat enim amorem pristinae delectationis in dolore contritionis' (Pseudo- Hugo de Sancto Victore, *De bestiis*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1859), PL 177, 14-164D (41), I. 50)

III. 4 Dante's last tears: *Purg.* XXX

In the *Purgatorio*, Dante will weep just once during his ascent of the mountain: at the painful sight of the blinded souls guilty of envy, who struggle to push their tears out from the terrible seam that cinches their eyelids shut, the pilgrim melts into tears of compassion (XIII. 52-57):

Non credo che per terra vada ancoi
omo sì duro, che non fosse punto
per compassion di quel ch'i' vidi poi;
ché, quando fui sì presso di lor giunto,
che li atti loro a me venivan certi,
*per li occhi fui di grave dolor munto.*¹⁸⁷

This situation bears a close resemblance to Dante's pitiful crying at the sight of the soothsayers and their tears in Hell (*Inf.* XXI. 25): in both cases Dante's compassionate tears are provoked by a distorted and sorrowful weeping of souls punished with a contrapasso involving their sight (the soothsayers who pretended to see the future are now condemned to look backward, while the envious are blind because they enjoyed the suffering of others through their sense of sight). But while the soothsayers' tears appear vain and disgusting, the tears of the envious souls manifest their holy repentance; indeed, if Virgil had reproached Dante's weeping and compassion for the soothsayers as out of place (*Inf.* XXI. 27), in the purgatorial circle of the envious, Dante's participation in their pain and suffering is wholehearted and freely expressed. Robert Hollander has explained this disparity by underscoring the evolution of Dante's compassion through the three realms: unlike in Hell, 'here compassion is an essential part of his ceremonial purification'¹⁸⁸. Such compassion could function similarly to Dante's compassion during Francesca's episode in *Inf.* V: tears shed out of compassion contribute to the sinner's contrition, which, in Purgatory, no longer stems from the fear of eternal damnation, as the penitents' penance is nourished by the hope of bliss, but from compassion for their temporary punishment. As Charles Singleton notes, Dante's tears could be seen 'as his token participation in the purgatorial punishment of this terrace'¹⁸⁹, and therefore could show, just as with lust, his personal involvement in the sin of envy.

After this episode, while ascending the purgatorial mountain, Dante will refer just once more to his tears: he will express his desire to weep with sorrow at Forese Donati's disfigured face (XXIII. 56), but he will not effectively shed those tears. Indeed it is, for the most part, the

¹⁸⁷ 'I do not think there walks on earth today/ a man so hard that he would not have been/ transfixed by pity at what I saw next,/ for when I had drawn close enough/ so that their state grew clear to me/ my eyes were overwhelmed by grief.'

¹⁸⁸ Robert Hollander (New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 2000).

¹⁸⁹ Charles S. Singleton (Princeton: University Press, 1970-75).

penitents, whose tears, as we have seen, constitute the essential tool of their journey of repentance and salvation. Like them, Dante becomes a penitent pilgrim who has to pass through the circles of Purgatory and delete the seven P's from his forehead in order to reach the summit of Earthly Paradise; like the penitents, Dante will need to shed tears of repentance to be admitted to Paradise, as Beatrice emphasizes in *Purg.* XXX. 142-145 (“Alto fato di Dio sarebbe rotto,/ se Letè si passasse e tal vivanda/ fosse gustata senza alcuno scotto/ di pentimento che lagrime spanda”¹⁹⁰) and as Dante himself states in *Purg.* XIX. 91 (‘Spirto in cui pianger matura/ quel senza 'l quale a Dio tornar non pòssi’¹⁹¹). Indeed, the poet’s most important tears in the *Commedia* take place at the end of the *Purgatorio* and in the last stage of his journey of repentance: in *Purg.* XXX Dante’s final tears originate, just like his first ones shed at the entrance of Hell, result from a sense of fear, this time at the appearance of Beatrice. The beloved woman appears at the top of the mountain, at the end of an allegorical parade, introduced by the sacred atmosphere of Latin invocations:

[...] sopra candido vel cinta d'uliva
 donna m'apparve, sotto verde manto
 vestita di color di fiamma viva.
 E lo spirito mio, che già cotanto
 tempo era stato ch'a la sua presenza
 non era di stupor, *tremando*, affranto,
 senza de li occhi aver più conoscenza,
 per occulta virtù che da lei mosse,
 d'antico amor sentì la gran potenza.
 Tosto che ne la vista mi percosse
 l'alta virtù che già m'avea trafitto
 prima ch'io fuor di puerizia fosse,
volsimi a la sinistra col respitto
col quale il fantolin corre a la mamma
quando ha paura o quando elli è afflitto,
 per dicere a Virgilio: 'Men che dramma
 di sangue m'è rimaso che non *tremi*:
 conosco i segni de l'antica fiamma'.¹⁹²
 (XXX. 31-48)

As can be observed, Dante immediately reacts to fear by trembling associated, as he does before the she-wolf in *Inf.* I¹⁹³. Indeed, Dante notes his own shuddering exactly as he did in his first encounter with Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova* (II. 4). However, if in that case his trembling was

¹⁹⁰ 'Broken would be the high decree of God/ should Lethe be crossed and its sustenance/ be tasted without payment of some fee:/ his penitence that shows itself in tears'.

¹⁹¹ 'Spirit in whom weeping ripens/ that without which there is no return to God'

¹⁹² '[...] olive-crowned above a veil of white/ appeared to me a lady, beneath a green mantle,/ dressed in the color of living flame./ And in my spirit, which for so long a time/ had not been overcome with awe/ that used to/ make me tremble in her presence--/ even though I could not see her with my eyes--/ through the hidden force/ that came from her I felt / the overwhelming power of that ancient love./ As soon as that majestic force, / which/ had already pierced me once/ before I had outgrown my childhood, struck my eyes,/ I turned to my left/ with the confidence/ a child has running to his mamma/ when he is afraid or in distress/ to say to Virgil:/ 'Not a single drop of blood/ remains in me that does not tremble--/ I know the signs of the ancient flame.'

¹⁹³ See Ch. II.1.

provoked by wonder, here the cause is an astonishment which, according to Robert Hollander, takes the biblical meaning of fear, like the dismay ‘of those who beheld a holy event’¹⁹⁴. Secondly, the feeling of fear is evoked through the simile of a scared child who turns towards his mother, as Dante tries to do with Virgil. Thus, it is another impasse in which fear causes the paralysis of Dante’s spirits and, as occurred with the she-wolf, requires the help of Virgil-Reason, to whom Dante unfortunately cannot turn, since his guide has suddenly disappeared. This tense situation causes Dante to start crying, though it is only an attempt, since his weeping is immediately repressed by Beatrice’s aggressive words, which announce and demand a much more intense weeping later on (52-57):

[...] né quantunque perdeo l'antica matre,
 valse a le guance nette di rugiada
 che, *lagrimando, non tornasser atre.*
 “Dante, perché Virgilio se ne vada,
non pianger anco, non piangere ancora;
*ché pianger ti conven per altra spada”.*¹⁹⁵

Dante’s cheeks become dark with tears once again, after being washed by Virgil at the entrance of Purgatory. The reason for this darkness remains a debated issue: the early commentators indicate moral causes, like the absence of light on a weeping face¹⁹⁶ or the sorrow that darkens the face¹⁹⁷. Among the most recent interpretations, Nicola Fosca has suggested a physical phenomenon due to the smoke trapped in the pilgrim’s eyelashes in the circle of the wrathful¹⁹⁸.

I argue that the darkness that stains Dante’s cheeks should be explained by Beatrice’s that appears hard reproach that appears very similar to Virgil’s reprimands did that prevented Dante from crying before the soothsayers and the sowers of discord in the *Inferno*. Indeed, as in Hell, Dante’s weeping turns out to be wrong and inappropriate: Dante’s tears come from sorrow and fear, but they are not intended to acknowledge sin as they should be, but rather they are merely corporeal and emotional¹⁹⁹. As they are not tears of contrition and are contaminated with passion, they do not wash the pilgrim’s eyes, preparing him for knowledge; instead, they stain the face, they are earthly and vain tears that must be washed away by new, holier ones, those of repentance. Indeed, Beatrice’s reproach may recall the words of the following passage from the pseudo-Augustinian sermon *De Lacrymis, compunctione et poenitentia* (XIII century), where the writer reproaches the monk, asking him to cease weeping for earthly goods and to shed his

¹⁹⁴ Robert Hollander (New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 2000).

¹⁹⁵ ‘And not all our ancient mother lost/ could save my cheeks, washed in the dew,/ from being stained again with tears/ 'Dante, because Virgil has departed,/ do not weep, do not weep yet--/ there is another sword to make you weep.’

¹⁹⁶ L’Ottimo Commento (Pisa: ed. Alessandro Torri, N. Capurro, 1827-1829): ‘quando uomo piange, così abbuia e oscura nel viso; come quando è lieto, si sciampia ed esilara il viso’.

¹⁹⁷ Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62).

¹⁹⁸ Nicola Fosca (The Dartmouth Dante Project, 2003-2015).

¹⁹⁹ See Ch. I. 1, 10 and ff.

tears instead for his heavenly homeland: 'Depone fletum pro terrenis, noli plorare quae mundi sunt, et quae necessaria sunt evenire. Depone omnino fletum pro terrenis, et assume lamentum pro coelestibus.'²⁰⁰

Therefore, Beatrice's reproach is crucial to increase tension which stimulates new tears shed in two different stages, as at the beginning of the poem:

*Si come neve tra le vive travi
per lo dosso d'Italia si congela,
soffiata e stretta da li venti schiavi,
poi, liquefatta, in sé stessa trapela,
pur che la terra che perde ombra spiri,
sì che par foco fonder la candela;
così fui senza lagrime e sospiri
anzi 'l cantar di quei che notan sempre
dietro a le note de li eterni giri;
ma poi che 'ntesi ne le dolci tempre
lor compartire a me, par che se detto
avesser: 'Donna, perché sì lo stembre?',
lo gel che m'era intorno al cor ristretto,
spirito e acqua fessi, e con angoscia
de la bocca e de li occhi uscì del petto.'²⁰¹
(85-99)*

Feelings of tension and fear worsen into shame at Beatrice's words evoking Dante's failed attempt to climb up the hill in the first canto of *Inferno*. It is the passionate singing of the angels that resolves the situation: verses from Psalm 30 invoking God's mercy initiate Dante's weeping, which is described through a long geographical simile. Dante's emotional paralysis that melts into tears is compared to the snow which freezes over Apennine mountains because of the north-east winds, and then slowly melts because of the African winds: the ice of the heart turns to water, tears.

These two stages of Dante's weeping prove to be similar to those described at the beginning of the poem: an impasse and a fearful situation, characterized by initially frozen tears ('nei suoi pensier piange' in *Inf.* I. 57, and here the snow) which then melt into the heart of the poet, initiating the salvific intervention of a guide: first Virgil, then Beatrice. In this case as well, fear turns out to be an extremely useful emotional path to Dante's repentance, as it triggers the crisis and the paralyzing situation from which his weeping arises and thus the repentance that takes

²⁰⁰ Pseudo-Augustinus, *Sermones ad fratres in eremo*, 1254. My own translation: 'Stop to weep for earthly goods and for the things that are of the world, and that must necessarily happen. Stop to weep for earthly goods and start to cry for the heavenly desires'.

²⁰¹ 'Even as the snow among those living beams/ that grow along the spine of Italy is frozen/ when blown and packed by the Slavonian winds/ but then, dissolving, melts into itself/ if the land that casts no shadow merely breathes,/ acting like a flame that makes a candle melt,/ just so was I with neither tears nor sighs/ before they sang who always are in tune/ with notes set down in the eternal spheres,/ but, when their lovely harmonies revealed/ their sympathy for me, more than if they'd said:/ 'Lady, why do you torment him so?'/ the ice that had confined my heart/ was turned to breath and water and in anguish/ flowed from my breast through eyes and mouth'.

place. Indeed, once the process of acknowledging sin is complete, at the beginning of Canto XXXIII. 31-31 Beatrice will order: ‘Free yourself at once from the snares of fear and shame’. Concerning the simile, Francesco Mazzoni, with his biblical exegesis, identified Saint Augustine as ‘the first one to have interpreted the snow and the ice as the hardness of the sinner’s heart’²⁰², melted by the divine grace and turned into water and sighs. In this regard, it is interesting to add that the *Moralia* by Gregory the Great also makes a direct association between tears and snow. In the list of the possible kinds of tears, there are also the *aquae nivis*, ‘snow water’, described in the following way:

For ‘snow water’ is the weeping of humility; [...] For there are some to whom there is lamenting but not humility [...] Such have water, but not ‘snow water,’ and they can never be clean, because they are not washed in the tears of humility. [...] in bewailing they spend themselves upon earthly objects of desire alone. [...] And so these are not washed with ‘snow water,’ because their tears come from below. For it is as if they were bathed in water of earth, who are pierced with grief in their prayers, on account of earthly good things. But they who lament for this reason, because they long for the rewards on high [or ‘from on high’], are washed clean in snow water, in that heavenly compunction overflows them. For when they seek after the everlasting land by tears, and inflamed with longing for it lament, they receive from on high that whereby they may be made clean.²⁰³

Aquae nivis are defined as tears of compunction caused by the humble attitude necessary to achieve contrition, moved by the pure desire of divine grace and, unlike other tears, shed for sorrow and earthly desires, and, thus, unclean and unable to purify the soul.

So, Dante’s tears, represented as *aquae nivis*, come from the desire of divine grace, and thus from what can be identified with a perfect contrition, or contrition of charity, the repentance of sin caused by faith and love of God, which will be complete after confession. Moreover, these tears assume a purifying function as well: they wash clean Dante’s cheeks stained and darkened by the earthly tears shed for Virgil, readying the pilgrim for the recognition of sin and then for his immersion in the river Lethe. Therefore, weeping is indicated as a necessary instrument for recognizing sin and seeking salvation. However, the sinful subject of Dante’s corruption and

²⁰² Francesco Mazzoni, ‘Un incontro di Dante con l’esegesi biblica (a proposito di Purg. XXX, 85-99)’, in *Dante e la Bibbia* (Firenze: Olschki, 1988), pp. 173–212 (p. 207). On the topic see also Francesco Santi, ‘Un’interpretazione di Dante, nello specchio delle lacrime’ in *L’età metaforica. Figure di Dio e letteratura latina medievale da Gregorio Magno a Dante* (Spoleto: Fondazione CISAM, 2011), pp. 325-342; Giulio Ferroni, ‘Canto XXX’, in *Lectura Dantis Romana. Cento canti per cento anni. II. Purgatorio*, ed. by Enrico Malato and Andrea Mazzucchi (Roma: Salerno Editrice, 2014), pp. 898-924.

²⁰³ Gregory The Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, 4 vols., Library of fathers of the holy catholic church, I (Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1844), pp. 316-17. Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, IX 36.56, ed. by Paolo Siniscalco and Emilio Gandolfo, (Roma: Città Nuova, 1994), pp. 77-79. ‘Acquae enim nivis sunt lamenta humilitatis [...]. Sunt namque nonnulli qui lamenta habent, sed humilitatem non habent [...]. Hi nimirum aquas habent sed nivis aquas non habent, et mundi esse nequeunt quia humilitatis fletibus minime lavantur [...] ad sola terrena desideria exsulant [...] Hos itaque nivis aqua non abluit, quia eorum fletus ab imis venit. Quasi enim ex terrae aqua perfusi sunt qui pro terrenis bonis in precibus compunguntur. Qui vero idcirco plorant, quoniam praemia superna desiderant, aqua nivis hos diluit, quia caelestis compunctio infundit. Nam cum perennem patriam per lamenta appetunt, eiusque accensi desideriiis plangunt, a summis accipiunt unde mudentur’.

repentance must be still understood. Further on, it is clarified by Beatrice's "sharp" accusation, aimed at the angels and not directly towards Dante:

[...] e volse i passi suoi per via non vera,
immagini di ben seguendo false,
che nulla promession rendono intera.
[...] Tanto giù cadde, che tutti argomenti
a la salute sua eran già corti,
fuor che mostrarli le perdute genti.
Per questo visitai l'uscio d'i morti,
e a colui che l'ha qua sù condotto,
li preghi miei, *piangendo*, furon porti.²⁰⁴
(130-141)

Dante's *traviamento* has often been identified with biographical and literary facts, but its exemplary value, which represents the human being who strays from his path toward God, misdirected by sins and false goods, should not be forgotten. Indeed, the 'false immagini di bene' which Dante followed could refer to a specific sin: cupidity.

Indeed, first of all, cupidity is emphasized in the reference to Dante's *traviamento* (133-141) and especially that of Beatrice's tears at the beginning of the poem (141). Indeed, it is important to highlight that Beatrice's salvific action, and thus her tears, were spurred by Saint Lucy and the Virgin Mary, due in turn to Dante's weeping at the appearance of the she-wolf.

Moreover, these verses seem to echo the words of *Convivio* IV. XII. 15-16, on the desire that drives the soul to cupidity:

[...] così l'anima nostra, incontanente che nel nuovo e mai non fatto cammino di questa vita entra, dirizza li occhi al termine del suo sommo bene, e però, qualunque cosa vede che paia in sé avere alcuno bene, crede che sia esso. E perché la sua conoscenza prima è imperfetta per non essere esperta né dottrinata, piccioli beni le paiono grandi, e però da quelli comincia prima a desiderare.²⁰⁵

This is the beginning of the process of cupidity: the confusion, due to an imperfect knowledge, between the highest good, God, and deceiving goods, the same sin of which Dante is accused and which he will tearfully confess to have committed after Beatrice's death. Indeed, as Gregory the Great notes, 'Greed is not only for money, but also for knowledge and greatness, when one strives for excellence in an excessive manner'²⁰⁶. Therefore, cupidity could be identified

²⁰⁴ [...] so our soul, as soon as it enters upon this new and never travelled road of life, fixes its eyes on the goal of its supreme good, and therefore believes that everything it sees which seems to possess some good in it is that supreme good. Because its knowledge is at first imperfect through lack of experience and instruction, small goods appear great, and so from these it conceives its first desires'.

²⁰⁵ 'As soon as it starts out along the new, quite untravelled road of this life, the soul is always on the look-out for its ultimate goal, the highest good; and so whenever it sees anything in which some good appears, it thinks that it is that highest good. Since its judgment is at first imperfect, being as yet unschooled either by experience or by instruction, goods of little value seem to it to be of great value, and so it first begins to desire by setting its heart on them'.

²⁰⁶ My own translation. 'Avaritia est non solum pecuniae, sed etiam scientiae et altitudinis, cum supra modum sublimitas ambitur' (Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in Evangelica, Homilia XVI, Lectio Evang. Sec. Matth. IV*, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1849), PL 76, 1075-1312C (1136).

with an excessive desire for knowledge that goes beyond its proper limits, a sin clearly recognizable in the stage of Dante's life characterized by the presence of the Donna Gentile, an allegory for Philosophy. As we have seen in the *Vita Nuova*, philosophy and knowledge were temporarily able to dry Dante's tears over Beatrice's death, while in the *Convivio* such consolation appeared long-lasting.

Indeed, at the time of *Convivio*, Dante even contrasts cupidity with knowledge: in *Cv.* IV. XII. 7 cupidity is defined as a limitless and imperfect desire for riches that cannot change the deeply unhappy condition of mankind and cannot stop the flow of tears²⁰⁷; however, the desire for knowledge does have a consolatory effect (*Cv.* II, XII)²⁰⁸. Indeed, this desire is described as perfect because it does not increase like cupidity, but broadens by means of a ripple effect in which any small desire is successively replaced by a bigger one, leading to moments of calm and pleasure and, finally, to the depletion of the desire itself and so to perfection (*Cv.* IV. XIII. 5):

E così appare che dal desiderio della scienza, la scienza non è da dire imperfetta sì come le ricchezze sono da dire per lo loro, come la questione ponea: ché nel desiderare della scienza successivamente finiscono li desiderii e vienesi a perfezione, e in quello della ricchezza no. Sì che la questione è soluta, e non ha luogo.²⁰⁹

In the *Convivio*, knowledge is therefore identified with pleasure and even with bliss, whose expression is but a simple smile (*Cv.* III. XV. 2-3). In fact, as Thomas Aquinas makes clear in *Summa Contra Gentiles*: 'Among all human passions, the study of the wise man is perfect, sublime, beneficial and joyful'²¹⁰. Thus, in the treatise, passion for knowledge produces *iocunditas*, joy, while uncontrollable cupidity cannot lead man to a stable status of happiness and tranquillity.

Dante once again underscores the opposition between knowledge and cupidity in the third treatise of the *Convivio* (III. XV. 8-9)²¹¹, just after having described the smile of Wisdom. Here

²⁰⁷ Evidence of even greater importance bearing on this imperfection is found in these words spoken by Boethius in his book *The Consolation of Philosophy*: "Even if the goddess of wealth were to lavish riches equal to the amount of sand tossed by the wind-driven sea or to the number of stars that shine, the human race would not cease their lament".

²⁰⁸ '[...] so in my search for consolation I found not only a remedy for my tears, but a linguistic key to authors, disciplines and books.'

²⁰⁹ 'Thus it appears, as raised in the question, that knowledge may not be called imperfect because of the desire for knowledge, the way riches are imperfect because of the desire for them. For in the desire for knowledge desires are progressively satisfied and brought to completion, while in the desire for riches they are not. Hence the question is answered and has no ground for existence'.

²¹⁰ *Summa contra gentiles* (Neapolis: Typographia Ursiniana, 1773). I I, C.L: 'inter omnia studia hominum, sapientiae studium est perfectus, sublimius et utilius et iocundus'.

²¹¹ 'A ciò si può chiaramente rispondere che lo desiderio naturale in ciascuna cosa è misurato secondo la possibilità della cosa desiderante: altrimenti anderebbe in contrario di se medesimo, che impossibile è; e la Natura l'averebbe fatto indarno, che è anche impossibile.

In contrario anderebbe: ché, desiderando la sua perfezione, desidererebbe la sua imperfezione; imperò che desidererebbe sé sempre desiderare e non compiere mai suo desiderio (e in questo errore cade l'avarò maladetto, e non s'acorge che desidera sé sempre desiderare, andando dietro al numero impossibile a giugnere).'

Dante delineates the characteristics of the desire for knowledge, which is natural and in accordance with the capacity of what is desired; on the contrary, the 'accursed miser' is never satisfied, he increases desire without limits, violating its nature and making it imperfect.

In the *Commedia*, theology becomes the only true knowledge, and the features of natural wisdom are riskily similar to those of sin, as is especially clear in the thirst for knowledge that damned Dante's alter ego, Ulysses (*Inf.* XXVI), or in the height of Guido's ingenuity that will never suffice for a journey like that undertaken by Dante (*Inf.* X). In the poem, Dante becomes aware of the correspondence between knowledge and cupidity, and he does so as he had already done in the *Vita Nuova*: through weeping.

Thus, tears assume a salvific function, acknowledging the appearance and falsity that leads to cupidity in a perfectly Augustinian sense: indeed, Augustine states that 'knowledge befits the mourner, who has discovered that he has been mastered by the evil which he coveted as though it were good'²¹². Tears are the distinctive sign of the wise man, aware of the inevitable condition of sin in which he lives and remorseful for the mistakes that led him away from God, losing his direction in the quest for false goods. In the *Commedia*, Dante's tears, the mortification of the flesh, the loosening man's worldly bonds and the expression of pure desire for God, become the signs of recognition of the devastating presence and effects of cupidity in the world, as well as the tool to fight and overcome it. At the same time, they indicate the limits of human knowledge, the highest expression of which is the recognition of its sinful nature, while in the *Convivio* knowledge not only offered consolation, but also achieved happiness and bliss.

Beatrice's second accusation occurs at the beginning of the following canto. This time it is addressed directly to Dante and causes a similar reaction in the poet: another feeling of fear and a second stage of tears, this time experienced and described in a shorter passage (XXXI. 13-21).

Confusione e *paura* insieme miste
mi pinsero un tal "sì" fuor de la bocca,
al quale intender fuor mestier le viste.
Come balestro frange, quando scocca
da troppa tesa, la sua corda e l'arco,
e con men foga l'asta il segno tocca,
sì scoppia' io sottesso grave carco,
fuori sgorgando lagrime e sospiri,
e la voce allentò per lo suo varco.²¹³

²¹² 'Scientia convenit lugentibus, qui didicerunt quibus malis vincti sunt, quae quasi bona petierunt' (*Commentum in Matthaëum*, II. V, quoted by Aquinas in *ST*, IIa IIae, Q. 9, a. 4).

²¹³ 'Confusion and fear, mixed together,/ drove from my mouth a yes--/ but one had need of eyes to hear it./ As a crossbow breaks with too much tension/ from the pulling taut of cord and bow/ so that the arrow strikes the target with less force,/ thus I collapsed beneath that heavy load/ and, with a flood of tears and sighs,/ my voice came strangled from my throat'.

This fear triggers the final and most decisive episode of weeping: once again, the memory and fear of sin provoke an emotional paralysis which does not freeze, but rather creates a pressure that causes Dante to burst into tears and sighs, like a crossbow breaking under tension.

Moreover, this time the tears result in words, in the *confessio oris*, the definitive confession of sin, an admission of guilt which focuses on the deviation caused by the falsity of worldly goods; in other words, cupidity (34-36):

*Piangendo dissi: "Le presenti cose
col falso lor piacer volser miei passi,
tosto che 'l vostro viso si nascose".*²¹⁴

The *confessio oris*, the second of three stages (*contritio cordis* and *satisfactio operis*) through which Dante's repentance takes place, is the aim and the end of tears: with the confession, the perfect contrition is complete, the sin of cupidity is finally atoned through sorrow stemming from a love for God. Thus, in v. 46 Beatrice will encourage Dante to set down 'il seme del piangere'. As Francesco da Buti has already observed, here the poet refers to Psalm 125, *Qui seminatur in lacrymis, in exultatione metent*: the sowing of tears produces a harvest of eternal joy; the seed of Dante's tears has been sown, and now the bliss of Heaven awaits him.

²¹⁴ 'In tears, I said: 'Things set in front of me,/ with their false delights, turned back my steps/ the moment that Your countenance was hidden.'

III. 4 The Smile of the Wiseman: Knowledge and Recognition in the *Purgatorio*²¹⁵

Unlike tears, Dante addresses the issue of laughter many times in his works, as it constitutes a more problematic matter. Indeed, as Ernst Robert Curtius²¹⁶ pointed out, the position of medieval Christianity about laughter is contradictory²¹⁷: if, on the one hand, the Aristotelian precept of the humanity of laughter is accepted, on the other hand laughter is condemned, especially in the monastic environment, as a consequence of an improper attitude of passions, on the basis of the theological archetype according to which Christ, becoming human, never laughed during his stay on Earth.

A trace of the closure and control of this Christian attitude towards laughter emerges in the third treatise of *Convivio*, when Dante, commenting *Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona*, appears aware of a normative and qualitative distinction between two ways of laughing:

E però si conviene all'uomo, a dimostrare la sua anima nell'alegrezza moderata, moderatamente ridere, con onesta severitate e con poco movimento della sua faccia; sì che [la] donna che allora si dimostra, come detto è, paia modesta e non dissoluta. Onde ciò fare ne comanda lo Libro delle quattro virtù cardinali: "Lo tuo riso sia senza cachinno", cioè senza schiamazzare come gallina. Ah! mirabile riso della mia donna, di cui io parlo, che mai non si sentia se non dell'occhio!²¹⁸
(III. VIII. 11-12)

On the one hand, as we have seen for Matelda's smile, on the one hand Dante embraces the principle of laughter's humanity, emphasizing its corporeal nature²¹⁹. On the other hand, precisely because 'laughter is a phenomenon that expresses itself in and through the body'²²⁰, and therefore is potentially dangerous, it must be regulated: the poet condemns immoderate and loud laughter (called 'cachinno', a latinism whose root KA, as the etymology indicates, means

²¹⁵ This chapter is based on the following paper that I published during my doctoral studies: Giulia Bonaldi, '«Io pur sorrisi come l'uom ch'ammicca»: il sorriso della conoscenza in Dante e Virgilio dramatis personae', *Lettere Italiane*, 61, 1 (2019), 3-20.

²¹⁶ Ernst R. Curtius, *Letteratura europea e Medioevo Latino*, ed. by Roberto Antonelli (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1993), pp. 468-471.

²¹⁷ For an overview of medieval history and philosophical reflections on laughter: Jacques Le Goff, *I riti, il tempo, il riso*, (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2014); Georges Minois, *Storia del riso e della derisione* (Bari: Dedalo, 2004); Felice Moretti, *La ragione del sorriso e del riso nel Medioevo* (Bari: EdiPuglia, 2001); «*Il riso. Capacità di ridere e pratica del riso nelle civiltà medievali*», *Atti delle I Giornate Internazionali Interdisciplinari di Studio sul Medioevo dal titolo: "Homo risibilis. Capacità di ridere e pratica del riso nelle civiltà medievali"*, Siena, 2-4 ottobre 2002, edited by Francesco M. Casaretto (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2005).

²¹⁸ 'It is therefore fitting that in order to show one's soul to be of moderate cheer one should laugh in moderation, with proper reserve and little movement of the lips, so that the lady who then reveals herself, as has been said, may appear modest and not wanton. Consequently the Book of the Four Cardinal Virtues charges us: "Do not let your laughter become strident," that is, like the cackling of a hen. Ah, wonderful smile of my lady of whom I speak, which has never been perceived except by the eye!'

²¹⁹ Cf. Ch. II. 2, 57.

²²⁰ Le Goff, *I riti, il tempo, il riso*, p. 148.

‘to resound’²²¹), while he approves and exalts laughter characterized by moderation, a light and silent alteration of the expression, a smile spreading on his lady’s face and perceived only through sight.

It should be noted that, except for the previous passage, laughter will no longer constitute a subject of normative discussion in Dante’s works, nor will it be effectively represented negatively as the ‘cackling of a hen’, as it was in *Convivio*. On the contrary, further definitions of the phenomenon clarify the reasons for the ‘mirabilità’ with which Dante distinguishes and highlights the laughter of his lady. Indeed, in the *Convivio*, laughter is defined as a bright expression of joy²²², a concept that has rightfully influenced critical interpretations of the manifestations of laughter in the *Commedia* thus far. Therefore, the commentaries have understood these episodes literally, as manifestations of the soul’s joy, or metaphorically, as analogies of brightness and splendour.

However, to understand the meaning of the Dante’s conception of laughter, the analysis of a further passage is necessary: that of *Convivio* III. XV. 2-, still commenting on *Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona*.

Dice adunque lo testo che "nella faccia di costei appaiono cose che mostrano de' piaceri di Paradiso"; e distingue lo loco dove ciò appare, cioè nelli occhi e nello riso. E qui si conviene sapere che li occhi della Sapienza sono le sue dimostrazioni, colle quali si vede la veritate certissimamente; e lo suo riso sono le sue persuasioni, nelle quali si dimostra la luce interiore della Sapienza sotto alcuno velamento: e in queste due cose si sente quel piacere altissimo di beatitudine lo quale è massimo bene in Paradiso.²²³

Here laughter is described as a feature of Wisdom through which the light of truth manifests itself in a veiled manner: the wise man knows through the eyes and expresses through smiles the acquisition of knowledge, which is the only true source of bliss and intellectual happiness. Laughter, according to Dante, is not just a light that reveals joy, but also the joy procured by a privileged cognitive state. After all, Dante underscores the incompatibility of laughter with ignorance in the analysis of the last verse of his poem: ‘[...] io sì chiamai questa donna ‘fera e disdegnosa’. Dove è da sapere che dal principio essa filosofia pareva me, quanto dalla parte del

²²¹ Francesco Bonomi, ‘cachinno’, *DELI Dizionario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana* (2004-2008), <<http://www.etimo.it/>> [accessed November 2018].

²²² *Cv.* III. VIII. 11: ‘E che è ridere se non una corruscazione della dilettazone dell’anima, cioè uno lume apparente di fuori secondo sta dentro?’.

²²³ The text says then "that in her face there appear things which manifest some part of the joy of Paradise," and it identifies the place where it appears, namely her eyes and her smile. Here it is necessary to know that the eyes of wisdom are her demonstrations, by which truth is seen with the greatest certainty, and her smiles are her persuasions, in which the inner light of wisdom is revealed behind a kind of veil; and in each of them is felt the highest joy of blessedness, which is the greatest good of Paradise.’

suo corpo, cioè sapienza, fiera, ché non mi ridea, in quanto le sue persuasioni ancora non intende; [...]’ (Cv. III. XV. 19)²²⁴. The smile of Wisdom is denied to the disciple who does not understand. Thus, laughter appears to be the mark of an exclusive membership based on cognitive skills; it depends on wisdom and at the same time can constitute a revealing path to truth, permitted to those who strive for bliss through the constant practice of knowledge. On the contrary, as can be read in a passage from the *Monarchia*²²⁵, laughter, almost of indignation, is an expression of superiority towards those who show amazement in their continued ignorance. In this sense, the laughter of Wisdom could refer to that of Philosophy in Boethius’ *De Consolatione*, the personification of a natural knowledge who, as the only holder of truth, enigmatically smiles and laughs at false knowledge. In this way, as Giulio D’Onofrio asserts, ‘*iocunditas*, a term that expresses the condition of the one who truly and righteously laughs, is proposed by Boethius as the triumphal prize of the victory of the true philosophers’²²⁶.

It is particularly interesting to note that the first hints of the revaluation of laughter within medieval Christian thought come from the potential relationship between laughter and knowledge. An early trace can be found in the first normative work about laughter, the *Paedagogus* by Clement of Alexandria (150-214 ca.): indeed, Jacques Le Goff reminds us how, within the strict regulation of laughter, the only ‘legitimate laughter is the smile (*meidiama*), ‘the laughter of the wisemen’²²⁷. Indeed, the bond that links laughter and knowledge is already strongly present in patristic thought, which understood laughter as the reward of the wise man and as the expression of cognitive superiority of truth which allows us to laugh at the mistakes of ignorance and false knowledge²²⁸.

It is Augustine to establish the twofold nature of laughter that will influence medieval thought and the monastic culture of the early Middle Ages, through the strict distinction between a true and false laughter: the first one is *exsultatio*, an eschatological laughter, the sign of those who possess the true divine wisdom, reserved for the blessed; the second one is the laughter of men immersed in the ignorance of the earthly life, condemned as sin and an evil attribute. Thus,

²²⁴ ‘[...] I called this lady proud and disdainful. Here it should be known that from the beginning Philosophy itself seemed to me proud, as far as regards her body (that is, wisdom), for she did not smile at me because I did not yet understand her persuasions’.

²²⁵ Dante Alighieri, *Monarchia* in *Nuova edizione commentata delle opere di Dante*, vol. 4, ed. by Paolo Chiesa e Andrea Tabarron (Roma: Salerno, 2013), p. 72, II. 1: ‘Sicut ad faciem cause non pertingentes novum effectum comuniter admiramur, sic, cum causam cognoscimus, eos qui sunt in admiratione restantes quadam derisione despiciamus’. See, in particular, the related commentary (p. 73): ‘quella di cui parla qui Dante non è la derisione dell’invidioso o dell’ignorante, ma al contrario quella del sapiente, che conosce la verità e si sente – ed in effetti è – superiore agli altri’.

²²⁶ Giulio D’Onofrio, ‘Tempus ridendi’. Il riso del filosofo nell’Alto Medioevo’, in *Il riso. Capacità di ridere e pratica del riso nelle civiltà medievali*, pp. 121-176 (p. 135).

²²⁷ Le Goff, *I riti, il tempo, il riso*, p. 162.

²²⁸ See D’Onofrio, pp. 136 and ff.

laughter is the reward of wisdom²²⁹ of the afterlife, *tempus ridendi*. Such a distinction reflects and corresponds to the opposition instituted by Gregory the Great between *risus corporis* and *risus cordis*, where the second comes from ‘de laetitia securitatis’²³⁰ of the blessed, the joy produced by the certainty of salvation.

According to Jacques Le Goff, such couples echoed the difference which exists in Greek between the terms *gelan*, “good laughter”, “smile”, and *katagelan*, “bad laughter”. However, it is meaningful that, unlike Greek, Latin does not have a word meaning smile: indeed, ‘the Latin word *subrisus* does not indicate a “smile”, but “to laugh up one's sleeve” or “to snigger”, and it assumes the meaning of “smile” only after the value system and the behaviours definitively changed. In the twelfth century? I wonder if the smile was not a creation of the Middle Ages’²³¹. In terms of literature, such a hypothesis can be confirmed by later studies: if, indeed, from a lexical point of view, it has been possible to identify in Romance literature an explosion of the terms *rire* and *sourire* between 1150 and 1250²³², in the same period the appearance and the diffusion of the *gothic smile* in iconographic representations have been documented²³³.

In such a context, it will be interesting to note that the word *sorriso* is a hapax within the corpus of Dante’s works. It appears in the description of Beatrice’s face in *Par.* XVIII. 19, rhyming with *paradiso*, replacing and transforming the traditional *riso-paradiso* pair present in Giacomo da Lentini (*Io m'aggio posto in core a Dio servire* (4) and *Lo viso mi fa andare alegramente* (6)), in Iacopone da Todi (*Audite una entenzione* (175)) and in Dante’s own work (*Par.* X. 103; XV. 34; XXIII. 59; XXXI. 50). The extent of this singular occurrence could be even more significant considering that, in an examination of the *Duecento*’s archives²³⁴ and *OVI*’s databases²³⁵, it seems to constitute the first appearance of the term *sorriso* in Italian literature

236.

²²⁹ Augustinus, *Sermones*, 175.2.2: ‘Quando oit in evangelio “beati qui plorant, quoniam ridebunt”. Ergo in ploratu officium est, in risu est praemium sapientiae. Risum enim pro gaudio posuit, non cachinnationem, sed exultationem’.

²³⁰ Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, VIII. 52.88: “Donec impleatur risu os tuum, et labia tua iubilo” (Iob 8.21). Os quippe iustorum tunc risu replebitur, cum eorum corda, finitis peregrinationis fletibus, aeternae laetitiae exultatione satiabuntur. [...] Non autem tunc risus erit corporis, sed risus cordis. Risus enim nunc corporis de lascivia dissolutionis, nam risus cordis tunc de laetitia nascetur securitatis’.

²³¹ Le Goff, *I riti, il tempo, il riso*, p. 153.

²³² Philippe Menard, *Le rire et le sourire dans le roman courtois en France au moyen âge* (1150-1250) (Genève, Librairie Droz, 1969).

²³³ Peter S. Hawkins, ‘All smiles: poetry and theology in Dante’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 121 (2006), 2, 371-387, (p.377).

²³⁴ Francesco Bonomi, ‘Sorriso’ in *Duecento: la poesia italiana dalle origini a Dante* (1993-2000), <http://www.silab.it/frox/200/ind_src.htm> [accessed November 2018].

²³⁵ *Corpus OVI dell’Italiano antico*, Istituto Opera del Vocabolario Italiano, directed by Par Larson and Elena Artale, <<http://gattoweb.ovi.cnr.it>> [accessed November 2018]. In particular, the search for the term “sorriso” was carried out through a query of the following databases: *Corpus TLIO* (*Tesoro della Lingua Italiana delle Origini*); *Corpus LirIO*, (*Lirica Italiana delle Origini*); *Corpus DiVO*.

²³⁶ The verb *sorridere* is already present, but in a small number of occurrences: in Lapo Gianni (*Donna, se 'l prego de la mente mia* (50, 98)), in Stefano Protonotaro (*Assai mi placeria* (41)) and in Panuccio dal Bagno (*La dolorosa*

Concerning this passage, the early commentators omitted the interpretation of the term, except for Francesco da Buti, who described Beatrice's smile by referring to the Latin meaning of *subrisus* and identifying it as a typical sign of wisdom: "Not an open laughter, but a sneer, as the wise man does not openly laughing: indeed, openly laughing shows dissoluteness"²³⁷. Hence, the commentator's first reaction is to establish an antithesis between *riso* and *sorriso* on the basis of the wisdom expressed by the second term.

However, under the term "sorridere" in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca*²³⁸, *riso* and *sorriso* are viewed as semantically equivalent in the episode of Statius (*Purg.* XXI. 106-128), where Dante's 'sorriso' (109) is later defined as 'un lampeggiar di *riso*' (114). Indeed, the term *riso* in the *Commedia*, and not only there, often denotes both forms, appearing sometimes attenuated by 'un poco' (*Purg.* IV. 122; XXII. 26), so that it is never used to express open, and loud laughter, nor does a vulgar version appear on the mouth of any of the damned. So, if Dante was indeed aware of a distinction between two modes of laughter (*Cv.* III. VIII. 11-12), retracing the duality transmitted by medieval thought, his awareness does not seem to have effects in terms of representation, either in the *Vita Nuova*, or in the *Commedia*, nor on the opposition *riso/sorriso*. By contrast, the creation of the category of smile seems to demolish such a system, finally resolving this contrast through the legitimacy of laughter that is always a smile, by means of the acknowledgement of his cognitive and so typically human value.

This process can be observed in the introduction of smile in the second canticle, the first kingdom of Dante's afterlife to be characterized by the smile²³⁹. Indeed, just out of the realm of darkness, Dante and Virgil are welcomed into the second realm of the afterlife with a landscape filled with serenity and sweetness which is revealed to them in all its splendor through the smile (I. 19-21):

Lo bel pianeta che d'amar conforta
faceva tutto *ridere l'oriente*,
velando i Pesci ch'erano in sua scorta.²⁴⁰

The demarcation between the infernal and purgatorial realms is emphasized through the image of the smile of the east, the first of a series of synesthetic metaphors in which the landscape or

e mia grave doglienza (34)), where the verb often connotes a snigger, a hidden laughing implying deception, incredulity and superiority. After Dante, the first reception of the rhyme *sorriso-paradiso* turns out to be in Antonio Pucci, *Quella di cui i' son veracemente* (42-43): '[...] l'apre a un sorriso,/ che s'apra il paradiso [...]']

²³⁷ Francesco da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1862): 'non d'uno aperto ridere; ma sogghignare, come fa lo savio che non apertamente ride: imperò che l'aperto ridere mostra dissoluzione'.

²³⁸ Domenico Consoli, 'Sorridere' in *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 1984), <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/sorriso_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/> [accessed November 2018].

²³⁹ An exception is represented by Virgil's smile in *Inf.* IV. 99.

²⁴⁰ 'The fair planet that emboldens love,/ smiling, lit up the east,/ veiling the Fishes in her train.'

other inanimate objects express and reveal their nature by assuming emotional connotations²⁴¹. In this case, the night sky lights up with the rising of Venus, the morning star, and therefore it ‘ride’ a verb that here takes on a double meaning. According to Benvenuto’s comment, ‘ridere’ means ‘to cheer, to shine, for the air seems to be sad when the night comes, because it has a dark color; and it seems to rejoice when the day comes, because of its light color’²⁴². The passage from Hell to Purgatory, the realm of salvation, is thus marked by a contrast that is both emotional and chromatic: from the darkness and tears that characterized hell to the smile of heaven that opens the *Purgatorio*, a symbol of brightness and splendor²⁴³ and the manifestation of joy. Moreover smile, which in the *Paradiso* will be attributed to the entire universe²⁴⁴, is the first sign of a God who reveals himself and expresses himself through the smile, a symbol of the joy of creation which penetrates the entire universe and a manifestation of divine truth²⁴⁵. On the threshold of Purgatory, therefore, heaven smiles at the pilgrims, a sign of hope and a promise of access to happiness and divine truth at the beginning of the penitential path that awaits them. Nicola Fosca mentions, in this regard, a passage from Augustine: ‘In the midst of these toils and sorrows of the night, like a lamp in the darkness, until day dawn, and the Day-star arise in our hearts. For blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God: then shall the righteous be filled with that blessing for which they hunger and thirst now’²⁴⁶.

Indeed, although the penitential path of the souls in Purgatory is wet from weeping, they do not approach it with a sorrowful mindset: in fact, penance not only is experienced with joy²⁴⁷ nourished by the hope of bliss (not surprisingly, penitent souls are defined in *Inf.* I. 118-120 as ‘the ones who are content to burn because they hope to come,/ whenever it may be, among the blessed’) but on more than one occasion the faces of the souls even appear illuminated by smiles. Within the penitents coexist the pain of the sin committed and the joy of penitence, atonement and the hope of God, which are expressed respectively through weeping and smile, the emotional manifestations of which souls are capable, as Statius recalls in his argument on the formation of aerial bodies (*Purg.* XXV. 103-105):

²⁴¹ See the following occurrences: *Purg.* XI. 82; *Par.* V. 97; *Par.* XIV. 86; *Par.* XXIII. 25, 27; *Par.* XXVII. 4, 5; *Par.* XXVIII. 83; *Par.*, XXX. 65, 7; *Par.* XXXI. 133, 135.

²⁴² Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): ‘laetari, splendere. Sicut enim aer videtur tristari adveniente nocte, quia induit colorem nigrum; ita videtur laetari adveniente die, quia induit colorem clarum’.

²⁴³ *Convivio* III. VIII. 8-11.

²⁴⁴ *Par.* XXVII. 4. See Ch. IV. 3, 232-33.

²⁴⁵ *Par.* XXXIII. 126

²⁴⁶ Nicola Fosca (The Dartmouth Dante Project, 2003-2015).

²⁴⁷ On the pain of the sin committed and the joy of penitence see *Piacere e dolore. Materiali per una storia delle passioni nel Medioevo*, ed. by Carla Casagrande and Silvana Vecchio (Firenze: Sismel, 2009) and Carla Casagrande and Silvana Vecchio, *Il buon uso delle passioni*, in *Passioni dell’anima. Teorie e usi degli affetti nella cultura medievale* (Firenze: Sismel, 2015), pp. 285-398.

Quindi parliamo e quindi ridiam noi;
quindi facciam le lagrime e ' sospiri
che per lo monte aver sentiti puoi.²⁴⁸

Here Statius emphasizes how the souls of the penitents are able to express themselves through words, smile and tears, thanks to their aerial bodies. Pietro Alighieri had already noted the reference to *Aen.* VI. 733 ('Hinc metuunt, cupiuntque, dolent gaudentque'²⁴⁹) but, as Bosco and Reggio point out, 'in Dante the souls, rather than expressing the fundamental passions of man as they do in Virgil's verse, reflect the condition of Purgatory, as confirmed by the subsequent verse'²⁵⁰. In fact, unlike Virgil, Dante emphasizes the manifestations of passions: the effects of joy and pain, smile and weeping, which, contrary to what is stated in the *Aeneid*, are manifestations of the soul rather than the body²⁵¹, and connote the particular and dichotomous condition of the penitents, unique among their kind. In fact, if we consider the other categories of otherworldly inhabitants, we will notice that the damned, excluding Virgil, are not permitted to smile, and similarly, none of the blessed except for Beatrice is represented in tears. If in Dante's universe the sinner's laughter is punished with the eternal weeping of the damned, the good Christian's weeping will be rewarded with the eternal smile of the blessed. Within this scheme, Dante's two guides represent an exception by virtue of their role: in fact, the smiles of Virgil and the tears of Beatrice, as will be seen later, are crucial to Dante's journey, the first assuming a didactic purpose, the second mediating the grace and salvation of Dante. Except for the guides, therefore, the eternity that characterizes the condition of the damned and the blessed determines their emotional state, which becomes a permanent and direct consequence (reward or punishment) of their actions in their mortal life.

The penitents of the intermediate realm of Purgatory instead possess the ability to smile and to cry, in a sort of continuity with their earthly life that, like purgatorial existence, is characterized by transience and regulated by the flow of time: it is precisely this dimension that allows and requires the alternation of smile and weeping, emotional tools through which man can communicate with God, determining his own otherworldly destiny during his pilgrimage as an exile returning to his heavenly homeland.

We have already seen that in the medieval visions of the afterlife before Dante, tears are part of the representation of the purgatorial kingdom, although in a reduced way and with infernal characteristics; in the case of the smile, on the other hand, we find only two cases in which it

²⁴⁸ 'Through this we speak and through this smile./ Thus we shed tears and make the sighs/ you may have heard here on the mountain.'

²⁴⁹ 'It is this that gives them their fears and desires, their griefs and joys'.

²⁵⁰ Umberto Bosco and Giovanni Reggio (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1979).

²⁵¹ Cf. *Purg.* XVI. 87: 'Esce di mano a lui che la vagheggia/ prima che sia, a guisa di fanciulla/ che piangendo e ridendo pargoleggia'. On the topic see Sonia Gentili, 'Piacere e dolore delle anime nella Commedia di Dante', in *Piacere e dolore*, pp. 149-169, (p. 165).

shows on the face of a penitent. Both examples are, actually, two laughs and belong to the *Visio Pauli*, a work which Jacques Le Goff considered important for the birth of Purgatory due to its distinction between an upper and a lower hell²⁵².

The first case is present only in the third short edition of the *Visio*: ‘Et in ipsam fornacem mittuntur anime peccatorum qui non egerunt penitentiam in hoc mundo. Alii flent, alii rident, alii querunt mortem et non inveniunt, quia anima numquam moritur’²⁵³. The sinners who have not completed their penance in life must burn in the fire of the blazing furnace, according to a principle closely resembling that of the purgatorial fire²⁵⁴. Among the sinners are some who weep and others who, surprisingly, laugh. The reason for this laughter is clarified in the second episode, which is only present, however, within the second short edition:

Post hec ductus est Paulus in alium locum horribilem, ubi, inter multitudinem demonum, uidit multas animas que cruciebantur penis horribilibus; inter quas uidit *unam ex intimis ridere suppliciiis* propter nimios cruciatus demonum, que *cordis Ieticia* letum wultum protulit incessanter*. [...] *et postquam a risu cessauit, requisita a demonibus cur, tantis tribulacionibus occupate, ridere potuisset*. Tunc *leto uisu* respondit, ‘*De misericordia dei quam mihi ostendit per suum angelum sanctissimum Michaellem, qui michi indicat me ab isto tormento redimi debere post lapsum trium milium annorum*. Post quod spacium de mea consanguinitate linia consurgent duo homines, de quorum sanguine nascitur masculus quem deus promouebit ad gradum sacerdotalem dignitatis: *ex eius oracione in prima missa ego ab istis tormentis educor ad gaudia eterna*.’²⁵⁵

Paul witnesses the torments of a soul who laughs, maintaining a happy expression, while tortured by demons, and the soul himself explains the reason for this laughter: it is divine mercy that infuses him with joy, since after spending three thousand years in torment the soul will finally be redeemed thanks to the prayers of one of his heirs who became a priest, leading him ‘to everlasting joys’. One should note, first of all, the temporary nature of the penalty, and the outcome produced by the intercession of the living, elements that underlie, as T.S. Silverstein already pointed out²⁵⁶, the likely purgatorial nature of this part of the realm. It is precisely the temporariness of the punishment that permits and provokes the soul’s laughter, aware of the

²⁵² Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, p. 35.

²⁵³ ‘And into the same furnace the souls of the sinners who have not done penance in this world are punished. Some weep, others laugh, others seek death and do not find it, because the soul never dies’ (Gardiner, p. 165).

²⁵⁴ On the purgatorial fire see Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* pp. 148-171.

²⁵⁵ *Visio Sancti Pauli*, Red. II. My own translation: ‘Then Paul was led to another horrible place, where, among the multitude of devils, he saw many souls who were tortured with terrible pains; among whom he saw one who was laughing at the many tortures of the devils, incessantly showing his joy with a happy face [...] and after he ceased to laugh, he was asked by the devils how he could have laughed, being tortured with so many torments. Then he replied with a cheerful expression: ‘I laugh because of the mercy of God, which his angel Michael showed me: he told me that I will be redeemed after three thousand years in this torment. After this time, two men will arise from my lineage, from whose blood a male will be born; God will promote him to the sacerdotal rank: thanks to his prayer during his first mass I will be led away from these torments to everlasting joys.’

²⁵⁶ Silverstein, *Visio Sancti Pauli*, p. 88: ‘In this fashion the redactor made Hell a place distinct from all the preceding regions of pain, which he intended to represent Purgatory, as appears from the occasional references to God’s sparing penitent sinners after a specified time of punishment’.

eternal joys of bliss that await in Paradise and, therefore, of a future improvement of his condition.

In the case of the penitents of Dante's *Purgatorio*, as mentioned, they possess the ability to smile and to weep by virtue of their condition of transience and its continuity with earthly life: here smiling, like weeping, is not eternal, but constitutes a temporary emotional state unlike the smile of the blessed in *Paradiso*. Indeed, the smile of the penitents is never represented as a manifestation of luminosity, as it will be for the blessed, and therefore does not yet fully show the joy of bliss. The introduction of smile in Purgatory therefore presents a problem, since it is not directly associated with the penitential condition of souls, as in the *Visio Pauli*, and therefore is not, at least at first glance, identifiable as an anticipation of the eschatological *exsultatio* of the blessed. The penitents' smile in the *Purgatorio* is an earthly, human laughter, that laughter forbidden to man in the present time, in which he is allowed only to weep, so that he may laugh in the future life²⁵⁷.

Thus, attributing the smile to penitents, Dante takes the first step in the process of legitimizing laughter, on the one hand by affirming the right to laugh even in the present time and, on the other, by exalting laughter as an emotional manifestation of a journey on the path to bliss through the practice of knowledge. Therefore, the penitents' smile is that of a soul *on its way*; it is the laughter of the wise man which prepares the way and promises access to true wisdom and to the true, eternal smile, which will find its open celebration in the *Paradiso*: in the penitents' smile, the balance between human wisdom and revealed truth is thus achieved.

In particular, the humanity of penitent's smile translates into the particular function it assumes in Purgatory. The smile, in fact, is an essential ingredient in the narration of various encounters with the penitent souls, regulating and qualifying the relationship and dialogue which Dante maintains with them: the character's smile becomes a narrative signal that allows for the addition of new truths or information and is often a necessary element to the unveiling of a character's identity, thus playing a central role in the cognitive process of his recognition.

Such is the function assumed by the smile of three penitents in the *Purgatorio*: Casella (II. 83), Manfredi (III. 112) and Statius (XXII. 26 and XXVIII. 146). In addition, one should note that in the *Purgatorio*, a smile appears also on Dante's face during two moments of recognition: that of Belacqua (IV. 122) and of Virgil (XXI. 109-123). In all cases the poet uses derivatives of the verb *sorridere* rather than *ridere*, which appears only on two occasions and is mitigated by 'un poco' (IV. 122 and XXII. 26), to emphasize that the only true laughter possible in the *Commedia* is precisely the smile, which in the *Purgatorio* finds its first firm representation: not

²⁵⁷ Luke 6.21: 'Beati qui nunc fletis, quia ridebitis'.

open laughter, nor the Latin *subrisus*, Dante's smile undermines the categories in which laughter had been imprisoned by monastic rules, unfurling openly on the face of man to show his wisdom and, therefore, his closeness to God.

The first smile of the *Purgatorio* is that of Casella (II. 82-87), a musician and friend whom Dante meets at the entrance of the kingdom. From among the group of souls just landed on the shore of Antipurgatory, a single penitent, who will later turn out to be Casella, comes forward to embrace Dante. The latter attempts to return the embrace; however, he fails due to the soul's incorporeality, to which Dante responds with amazement:

Di *maraviglia*, credo, mi dipinsi;
per che l'ombra sorrise e si ritrasse,
e io, seguendo lei, oltre mi pinsi.
Soavemente disse ch'io posasse;
allor conobbi chi era, e pregai
che, per parlarmi, un poco s'arrestasse.²⁵⁸

Casella smiles at Dante's astonished reaction to the failed embrace. According to the early commentators, Dante's ignorance regarding the incorporeality of souls provokes Casella's smile²⁵⁹. In addition, Francesco Da Buti as well as Cristoforo Landino underscore the mocking character of his smile at Dante's blunder²⁶⁰, so much so that the first translates 'sorridere' with 'sogghignare', "to snigger", intending it as a *subrisus*.

As is well known, here Dante reappropriates the formula of Aeneas' triple, vain attempt to embrace his father Anchises in the sixth book of *Aeneid* (VI. 697-702). However, one should notice that, while Aeneas reacts shedding copious tears ('sic memorans largo fletu simul ora rigabat' (699)²⁶¹), during Dante's own meeting with his friend Casella, the atmosphere is serene, devoid of strong emotions: Dante marvels and Casella smiles at his wonder. There is no trace of the tragedy marked by Aeneas' tears, of the impossible embrace full of affection towards his dead father. In general, it cannot be said that this affective dimension acts in the *Commedia* as a trigger for weeping: even in meetings with his closest friends, such as Forese Donati, Dante is not moved to the point of weeping, though he would like to do so²⁶². The distance between the representation of tears in classical antiquity and the value they assume in Christianity is therefore clear in the serenity and the dispassion of Casella's smile: in the medieval Christian

²⁵⁸ 'Surprise must have been painted on my face, / at which the shade smiled and drew back/ and I, pursuing him, moved forward./ Gently he requested that I stop./ Then I knew him. And I asked him / to stay a while and speak with me'.

²⁵⁹ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887).

²⁶⁰ Francesco da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1862): '*sorrise*; cioè sogghignò, vedendo ch'io era beffato'; Cristoforo Landino (Firenze: Lexis Progetti Editoriali, 1999): '*perchè l'ombra sorrise*: perchè s'accorse della deceptione, che io havea preso, credendo quella haver corpo palpabile; *sorrise*: modestamente rise.'

²⁶¹ 'As he spoke these words his cheeks were washed with tears'.

²⁶² *Purg.* XXIII. 56.

universe, the affective dimension of the passions is denied; there is room for emotions only in the Augustinian sense, as useful tools of knowledge, contrition and therefore of salvation, through their proper control, inspired by God.

Moreover, it is evident that Casella's smile can be qualified as one of cognitive superiority, since it represents the penitent's reaction to Dante's wonder²⁶³. Wonder is, in fact, the emotion that manifests the lack of knowledge²⁶⁴, which can arouse the laughter of those who possess the truth, as Dante himself affirms in the *De Monarchia*: 'Sicut ad faciem cause non pertingentes novum effectum comunitur admiramur, sic, cum causam cognoscimus, eos qui sunt in admiratione restantes quadam derisione despiciamus' (II. I. 2)²⁶⁵. In particular, this smile of wonder occurs on two other occasions in Dante's poem: in *Purg.* XXI. 121-123, where Statius will marvel at the smiling Dante who, unlike the Latin poet, knows the identity of his guide Virgil; and in *Par.* III. 25, in which Beatrice smiles indulgently at Dante's inability to recognize the reality of the blessed in the sphere of the Moon, and tells the pilgrim not to be surprised, because his judgment is not yet founded on the truth and, therefore, liable to error. In each case, wonder and the smile appear to be emotional manifestations that mark two different levels of knowledge: regarding the former, ignorance of the cause of a phenomenon (the incorporeality of souls in the case of Casella) attributes to the effect (the failed embrace) a sense of novelty, from which springs the wonder that becomes an expression of cognitive inferiority; in the latter case, the knowledge of the cause instead arouses a smile, almost of indignation, an expression of superiority towards those who show amazement in their continued ignorance. So, in *Purg.* II, Casella's smile is a sign that primarily functions to denote the introduction of a new truth and new information into the poem: the vanity of the body among the souls, which Statius will later treat extensively in *Purg.* XXV. Secondly, Casella's smile performs the function of creating an atmosphere of anticipation and suspense, almost of mystery, which will result in the recognition of the penitent's identity: after smiling, the soul withdraws and thus entices the intrigued Dante to follow him; later, the revelation of his identity then occurs when Dante recognizes his voice.

In the second smile of the *Purgatorio*, the cognitive superiority of the penitent is more directly connected to his recognition: this time it is yet another penitent in Antipurgatory, Manfredi di Svevia (III. 109-113).

Quand'io mi fui umilmente *disdetto*

²⁶³ For a study of the meanings of wonder in the *Commedia* cf. Giulia Bonaldi, 'Maraviglia e timore: un percorso attraverso i monstra dell'Inferno dantesco', in *Letteratura e dintorni*, ed. by Beatrice Alfonzetti, *Studi (e testi) italiani*, 37 (2016), 125-145.

²⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 126 e 130.

²⁶⁵ 'When confronted with an unfamiliar phenomenon whose cause we do not comprehend we usually feel amazement; and equally, when we do understand the cause, we look down almost mockingly on those who continue to be amazed'. (*Monarchy*, trans. by Prue Shaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)).

d'averlo visto mai, el disse: “Or vedi”;
e mostrommi una piaga a sommo 'l petto.
Poi *sorridendo disse*: “Io son Manfredi,
nepote di Costanza imperadrice; [...]”.²⁶⁶

Commentators have explained Manfredi’s smile in various ways, often interpreting the penitent’s smile as a reaction to Dante’s wonder at seeing him among the saved²⁶⁷, given that he was still excommunicated when he died: Manfredi tells of his repentance in *articulo mortis* shortly after. Others have seen in this smile the serenity and sweetness of spiritual peace gained through purification²⁶⁸, or even an early hint of the smile of the blessed²⁶⁹. Yet, on the one hand, there is no trace of Dante’s astonishment to which Manfredi’s smile would correspond; on the other hand, it could be said that Manfredi’s purgatorial condition is the presupposition of his smile, but not the cause. In fact, as we have seen, it is precisely because Manfredi wept tears of contrition at the point of death that he can now smile, now that he belongs to the saved flock of God’s people. However, his smile does not appear to be a direct manifestation of beatitude, or rather, of the hope of salvation, but occurs in the context of his recognition, in which lies the reason for smiling.

In fact, the meeting opens with Manfredi asking if Dante is able to recognize him (103-105); despite his appearance and the wound on his face (107-108), Dante does not recognize him (109). At that point Manfredi displays a second wound suffered during the battle of Benevento and, smiling, openly reveals his name. Manfredi smiles, therefore, precisely because Dante had not recognized him, for exactly the same reason that Dante will smile at Statius’ failure to recognize Virgil (XXI. 109). In both cases, the smile manifests a cognitive superiority that allows for the passage from ignorance to knowledge of the character’s identity, which constitutes the heart of the recognition. In fact, as Piero Boitani²⁷⁰ stated, the concept of recognition in the *Commedia* appears to be strongly affected by Aristotle’s definition in the *Poetics*, in which it is qualified as ‘a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune’ (*Poetics* XI. 30)²⁷¹; in Dante’s poem, the unveiling of the character’s identity coincides with the revelation of his eternal destiny by virtue of his relationship with God. In the case of Manfredi, his recognition is linked with the news of

²⁶⁶ ‘When I had courteously disclaimed/ ever to have seen him, 'Look here!' he said, / and showed me a wound high on his breast,/ then, smiling: 'I am Manfred,/ grandson of the Empress Constance.’

²⁶⁷ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): ‘quia salvus erat, quod Dantes non putabat’.

²⁶⁸ Enrico Mestica (Firenze: R. Bemporad, 1921-22): ‘Sorridendo, per mostrare che non s'aveva avuto punto a male di non essere stato riconosciuto, e anche conformemente alla serenità propria delle Anime che purificano le colpe e cominciano a provare le dolcezze della pace spirituale.’

²⁶⁹ Lugi Scorrano, ‘Dall'abbandono alla bontà riconquistata’, *L'Alighieri*, 16 (2000), 53-71 (p. 66).

²⁷⁰ Piero Boitani, ‘Conosco i segni de l’antica fiamma’: Riconoscimenti danteschi’, in *Il tragico e il sublime nella letteratura medievale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992), pp. 207-50 (p. 212).

²⁷¹ Aristotle, *Poetics* (Strelbytskyy Multimedia Publishing: 2020), p. 212.

his unexpected salvation while excommunicated and, therefore, of his surprising fate. The smile thus becomes a signal of the unveiling of knowledge and the element that characterizes and sets the tone of purgatorial recognitions, clearly different from that of infernal encounters.

In the *Inferno*, the recognition of the damned is a tragic process, which can be painful in the case of the meeting of friends or ‘magnanimous’ spirits, or difficult in the case of the damned who do not want to be recognized to avoid ignominy. In such circumstances, we have seen how tears sometimes play a restraining role, helping to hide the identity of sinners²⁷² or, on the contrary, to allow for their identification in spite of themselves²⁷³. In any case, tears participate in that process, characteristic of *Inferno*, in which recognition is denied²⁷⁴, endured or blocked.

Purgatory, on the contrary, is the kingdom in which recognition occurs with more serenity and frequency, thanks to the desire that pushes penitents to want to be recognized so that their relatives will remember them and thus offer prayers and intercessions that shorten their time of penance. Manfredi’s smile, like that of Casella, is an expression of this serenity and disposition to dialogue and recognition; as Robert Hollander has already noted, Manfredi offers his own name, as will other penitents in Antipurgatory, such as Buonconte (V. 88) and Sordello (VI. 34), and in this way, ‘Manfred’s smiling self-identification stands out from the evasive behavior in this regard exhibited by most of the sinners in hell’²⁷⁵. In particular, the smile often performs a function of demarcation, introducing direct speech or being accompanied by a *verbum dicendi*²⁷⁶; in this way, it helps to identify a character²⁷⁷ to provide information regarding the relationships between the characters²⁷⁸ or to define the roles within the conversation, qualifying which character knows and can reveal new information²⁷⁹. The elocutionary function of the smile has a tradition that dates back to the texts of antiquity, such as the Homeric poems and the *Aeneid*, later playing a role in various medieval texts²⁸⁰, where the verb ‘subrideo’ introduces the oral intervention of a character.

Dante’s first smile in the *Commedia* plays this function in the sequence of Belacqua’s recognition at the end of Canto IV of the *Purgatorio* (121-24). Indeed, after recognizing his

²⁷² See Filippo Argenti in *Inf.* VIII, 34-39, cf. Ch. II.3, 85 and ff.

²⁷³ This is the case of Bocca degli Abati in *Inf.* XXXII. 77-81.

²⁷⁴ Boitani, p. 217.

²⁷⁵ Robert Hollander (New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 2000).

²⁷⁶ III. 112: ‘Poi sorridente disse: “Io son Manfredi [...]”’; IV, 122-23: ‘mosser le mie labbra un poco a riso; poi cominciò: “Belacqua [...]”, XXII, 26-27: ‘Queste parole Stazio mover fenna un poco a riso pria; poscia rispuose: [...]’.

²⁷⁷ As in the cases of Manfredi (III. 12), Belacqua (IV, 122) and Virgil (XXI. 106-129).

²⁷⁸ Dante-Casella (II. 83), Dante-Belacqua (IV. 122) and Dante-Virgil (XXI. 106-129).

²⁷⁹ Casella (II. 83), Manfredi (III. 12), Dante (XXI. 106-129).

²⁸⁰ Pablo Justel, ‘Quelques considérations sur le (sou)rire dans l’épopée romane’, *Vox Romanica*, 74 (2015), 151-181 (p. 173).

friend by his voice, the pilgrim's lips take the shape of a smile provoked by his gestures and his words:

Li atti suoi pigri e le corte parole
mosser le labbra mie un poco a riso;
poi cominciai: "Belacqua me non dole
di te omai [...]."²⁸¹

First of all, one should note that Dante possesses the capacity both to smile and to weep, the same capacity granted to the penitents in Purgatory. Dante never smiles in the *Inferno*, where, as we have seen, he must weep in order to advance his journey of atonement; Dante's first smile in the *Commedia* occurs in the *Purgatorio*, where, like penitent souls, he is a pilgrim on the way back to his true homeland in Paradise. However, it is important to emphasize that Dante's smile still represents an exception, because at this point of the journey he has not yet wept out of repentance at the summit of Earthly Paradise; on the contrary, the penitent souls can smile because their repentance through tears has already occurred before entering Purgatory.

Actually, Dante's first smile occurs already in the *Vita Nuova*, where, trying to hide and to protect his love for Beatrice, the poet answers *malparlieri* in the following way: 'E quando mi domandavano 'Per cui t'ha così distrutto questo Amore?', ed io sorridendo li guardava, e nulla dicea loro' (IV. 3)²⁸². Dante's smile could recall that of Almeric de Belenoi, the Provençal poet mentioned by Dante himself in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (II. VI. 6) among the authors of illustrious *canzoni*; in *Aissi quo-l pres que s'en cuja fugir*, Almeric, thinking of his beloved lady, smiles at the insistent questions of the slanderers, simply regarding them and answering "yes" or "no": 'Tant m'es a·l cor, que, quan de lieys cossir,/ Selhs que parlon ab me ges no·ls enten,/ Mas fatz lor en ab esguardar parven,/ Et ab rire, et ab 'oc' e 'non' dir' (25-28)²⁸³. The poets who know the truth of their love smile silently at the ignorance of others. The trinomial smile-look-silence in the *Vita Nuova* anticipates the smile of Wisdom in *Convivio*, 'che mai non si sentia se non dell'occhio!' (III. XV. 2)²⁸⁴. Therefore, this is a wise *subrisus* that hides itself and makes no noise, but generates a silence that certifies the possession of knowledge and does not provide an answer to the questions.

By contrast, Dante's first smile in the *Purgatorio*, like Manfredi's one, anticipates the revelation of an identity: the words of the interlocutor provoke the movement of the poet's lips, make them curl into a smile that precedes the beginning of a dialogue ('cominciai'), containing the

²⁸¹ 'His lazy movements and curt speech/ slowly shaped my lips into a smile, and I began:/ 'Belacqua, no longer need I grieve for you.'

²⁸² 'And when people would ask: "Who is the person for whom you are so destroyed by Love?" I would look at them and smile and say nothing.'

²⁸³ Translation mine: 'She is so dear to my heart that when I think of her, I do not hear those who speak to me, but I pretend to listen to them, looking at them, laughing, answering "yes" and "no".'

²⁸⁴ 'Which has never been perceived except by the eye!'

revelation of new information, the name of Belacqua. Hence, the first occurrence of Dante's smile is qualified as that of the wise man, who smiles when he recognizes his friend, already in possession of the information of the character's identity, at this point still unknown to the reader. So, in this case, it is not only Dante the author who is at a superior cognitive level with respect to the reader, as is often the case, but also Dante *agens* who smiles and builds suspense for the disclosure of Belacqua's name in the successive verse.

Moreover, one notes that the physical description of the smile requires clarification to moderate the laughter that otherwise might seem inappropriate to the reader²⁸⁵. In addition, this moderation is necessary to emphasize the wisdom of the person who smiles: indeed, it is appropriate for the wise to laugh only 'un poco', in a moderate and contained manner ('A fool laughs loud; smiling, the wise compress their lips', *Eccl.* XXI. 23²⁸⁶).

The process that causes Dante's second smile in *Purg.* XXI. 106-129, due to Statius' recognition of Virgil, follows a similar model²⁸⁷. The passage below is taken from the beginning of the scene in which Dante smiles, aware of Virgil's importance for Statius:

[...] ché *riso e pianto* son tanto seguaci
 a la passion di che ciascun si spicca,
 che men seguon voler ne' più veraci.
Io pur sorrisi come l'uom ch'ammicca;
 per che l'ombra si tacque, e riguardommi
 ne li occhi ove 'l sembante più si ficca;
 e 'Se tanto labore in bene assommi",
 disse, "perché la tua faccia testeso
un lampeggiar di riso dimostrommi?".
 [...] Ond'io: "*Forse che tu ti maravigli,*
antico spirito, del rider ch'io fei;
 ma più d'ammirazion vo' che ti pigli.
 [...] Se cagion altra al *mio rider* credesti,
 lasciala per non vera, ed esser credi
 quelle parole che di lui dicesti".²⁸⁸

The expression of the smile, as with weeping, instinctively arises 'from the concupiscible appetite'²⁸⁹, in this case joy, through which the smile is signalled by the eyes ('come l'uom che

²⁸⁵ Francesco da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1862): 'lo ridere del savio che dè essere con modestia'. Cristoforo Landino (Firenze: Lexis Progetti Editoriali, 1999): 'l'huomo modesto non usa troppo riso'.

²⁸⁶ 'Fatuus in risu exaltat vocem suam: vir autem sapiens vix tacite ridebit'.

²⁸⁷ On the episode and knowledge in Dante's journey see Giorgio Ficara, 'Il maestro perfetto. Dante, Purgatorio XXI', *Spolia* (2018), 1-13.

²⁸⁸ '[...] for laughter and tears so closely follow feelings/ from which they spring, they least can be controlled / in those who are most truthful./ I only smiled, like one who gives a hint,/ at which the shade was silent, probing my eyes,/ where the soul's expression is most clearly fixed./ So your great labor may end in good,/ he said, 'why did your face just now/ give off the sudden glimmer of a smile?'[...] And I begin: 'Perhaps you wonder,/ ancient spirit, at my smiling,/ but I would have a greater wonder seize you./ 'If you believed another reason caused my smile,/ dismiss that as untrue and understand/ it was those words you spoke of him.'

²⁸⁹ L'Ottimo Commento (Pisa: ed. Alessandro Torri, N. Capurro, 1827-1829).

ammicca'). Unlike Belacqua's episode, this smile is linked with the eyes rather than with the mouth.

Likewise, here the adverb 'pur' is understood as attenuating and justifying the expression of laughter: Johannis de Serravalle reads: 'nevertheless, I smiled, (as if saying, which is not my habit: Dante rarely laughed, as Giovanni Boccaccio tells)' ²⁹⁰.

One should note that Statius's reaction to Dante's smile is one of wonder, as happened in the encounter with Casella (*Purg.* II. 82). In this case, wonder expresses the ignorance of Dante's incomprehensible behaviour, and the smile marks Dante's awareness of his guide's identity, still unknown to Statius. Furthermore, in this episode the smile also anticipates the revelation of Virgil's identity. There appears to be a close relationship between the smile and revelation in twelfth-century Romance literary texts: Philippe Menard noted how in *Vita Merlini* by Geoffrey of Monmouth, Merlin's laughter is often the anticipatory signal of a revelation to the bystanders who, upon hearing him laugh, begin to ask the sorcerer many questions²⁹¹. Moreover, if, in the *Chansons de geste* and, in particular, in the *Charroi de Nimes*²⁹², the explosion of laughter intended to distinguish Christian characters²⁹³ identifies the superiority of those who laugh, in the Arthurian cycle the smile often accompanies the revelation of a character's identity or suggests his secret knowledge, becoming an expression of knowledge hidden from most²⁹⁴. In particular, in the *Mort le Roi Artu*, the identity of the hero Lancelot is hidden from and then revealed to Gawain precisely through a smile: Arthur smiles, aware of the knight's identity, provoking his nephew's curiosity but refusing to reveal the secret²⁹⁵; Lancelot's identity is instead revealed to Gawain through the smile of a squire, to whom Gawain asks: 'Je te demant, fet messire Gauvains, por quoi tu commencas ore a sozrire'²⁹⁶. The playful smile that creates curiosity and interest in the identity of a character, represented in different variations, cannot but recall Dante's scene of in which Statius recognizes Virgil, in which the former, like Gawain, is intrigued by Dante's smile ('why did your face just now give off the sudden glimmer of a smile?' 203-204) which triggers the process of agnition and assists in its development. One

²⁹⁰Johannis de Serravalle (Prati: Giachetti, 1891): 'ego tamen subrisi (quasi dicat, quod non est de more meo: raro Dantes ridebat, quod [est], ut dicit Ioannes Boccatus)'.
²⁹¹ Ménard, pp. 426-427. A hint concerning the existence of a bond between laughter and knowledge in the *chansons de geste* and in Dante's works is provided by Nicolò Pasero, 'Il riso e la conoscenza. Da Virgilio al Medioevo', in *Il riso. Capacità di ridere e pratica del riso nelle civiltà medievali*, pp. 265-272 (p. 269).

²⁹² Justel, pp. 165-166. See also Pasero, pp. 267-268.
²⁹³ Justel, p. 163.

²⁹⁴See the analysis carried out by John A. Burrow in *Gestures and look in medieval narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 75.

²⁹⁵ *Mort le roi Artu. Roman du XIII siècle*, ed. by Jean Frappier (Genève: Droz, 1996), p. 16: 'Et quant li rois entent ceste parole, si s'apensa meintenant que ce iert Lancelos; si commence a sozrire et dist a monsigneur Gauvain: 'Par mon chief, biax niés, qui que li chevaliers soit, il a moult bien commencié, mes ge croi qu'encor le fera il mieuz en la fin au mien avis'; p. 20: 'Et quant li rois voit monseigneur Gauvain revenir, si li demande tout meintenant s'il a trouvé le chevalier. [...] Et li rois commença tout meintenant a sozrire; [...]'.
²⁹⁶ Ibidem, p. 46. My own translation: 'I ask you, Mr. Gauvains, why did you start laughing?'

notes that the representation of the smile in romance literature coincides with the affirmation of the term *sourire* which begins to appear more frequently than *rire* in thirteenth-century texts²⁹⁷. The appearance and spread of the smile, which in the same period in Europe begins to permeate both art and literature, therefore appears to be linked to its cognitive significance: the representation of the smile enters the medieval narrative and poetic works as an instrument of identity revelation and as an emotional manifestation of knowledge.

In Dante's poem, the smile that finds its full expression for the first time in Italian literature incorporates, at least initially and in its purgatorial representation, the model provided by medieval romance fiction. In addition, it could be said that in the *Commedia*, the progressive ascendancy of the smile over laughter, which began in the romance texts of the thirteenth century, finds its fulfillment: while in the romance epic there was still a rigid division between laughter and smiling, reflected both on the lexical and the narrative level, in the *Commedia* this distinction falls in favor of the smile, the only true expression of joy and knowledge.

In particular, the radical humanity of the smile is celebrated in the poem through the representation of Dante's smile, which is legitimized by virtue of its bond with knowledge, as the *everyman's*²⁹⁸ smile, that is not that of the penitents, nor the expression of the blessed's *exsultatio*, but the smile on the lips of a sinful pilgrim on his path of repentance. At the same time, Dante's smile has the function to underscore the exceptional nature and the prophetic function of the poet's pilgrimage, clearly different from that of the penitents.

That is the function of Dante's third and final smile, which occurs in the third canticle, in *Paradiso*, in Canto XXII when the pilgrim, raised to the sphere of the fixed stars, turns his gaze from above toward the terrestrial world which he left behind and smiles (133-135):

Col viso ritornai per tutte quante
le sette spere, e vidi questo globo
tal, ch'io *sorrisi* del suo vil sembiante; [...].²⁹⁹

Critics have identified the source of Dante's vision of the world from above as Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*³⁰⁰, transmitted through the mediation of Boethius, and the possible

²⁹⁷ See Menard, *Le rire et le sourire*, and Justel, p. 159.

²⁹⁸ On the concept of *Everyman* see: Charles S. Singleton, 'Commedia: Elements of Structures', *Dante Studies*, 1, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 1-17; ---, 'Journey to Beatrice', *Dante Studies*, 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 3-13; Carlo Ossola, '“Everyman”', in *Introduzione alla Divina Commedia* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2012), pp. 31-34, who quotes Ezra Pound (*Lo spirito romanzo*, Milano, 1991, p. 12) about the relationship between knowledge and universality: '[...] Dante, o intelletto di Dante, può significare “Ognuno”, cioè “Umanità”, per cui il suo viaggio diviene il simbolo della lotta dell'umanità nell'ascesa fuor dall'ignoranza verso la chiara luce della filosofia’.

²⁹⁹ 'With my eyes I returned through every one/ of the seven spheres below, and saw this globe of ours/ to be such that I smiled, so mean did it appear’.

³⁰⁰ Cicerone, *De Republica*, 6.20: 'Si tibi [sedes hominum] parva, ut est, videtur, haec caelestia semper spectato, illa humana contemnito’.

influence of Chapter XXXV of the second book of *Dialogues* by Gregory the Great³⁰¹, where the soul of St. Benedict expands to such an extent that he can see the world in ecstasy from above, so that great things suddenly appear small³⁰². In fact, I believe that precisely this strand of medieval visions of the afterlife is worthy of further study, since not only the Gregorian *Dialogues*, but at least four other *visiones* present the same topos.

First of all, the *Visio Pauli*, in which the vision of the world from above coincides with Paul's first tears, provoked by the view of the injustice that envelops the earth like a cloud of fire:

Et respexi de celo in terra et vidi totum mundum et erat quasi nihil in conspectu meo [...].
Et respexi et vidi nubem magnam igne spansam per omnem mundum et dixi angelo: Quid est hoc, domine? Et dixit mihi: Haec iniusticia obmixta a principibus peccatorum. Ego vero cum hoc audissem, *suspirans fleui* [...] (13-14).³⁰³

Also the *Visio Sancti Fursei*, an account of the afterlife by the Irish monk Furseus which dates back to the seventh century, presents a vision of the world from above, which appears as a dark valley continually scorched by the four fires of sin – that is, as the angel explains, lies, greed, discord and hardness of heart: 'Tunc sanctus angelus, qui a dextris eius erat, dixit: 'Respice mundum'. Tunc vir sanctus respexit et vidit vallem tenebrosam sub se in imo positam et vidit quattuor ignes ibidem in aere aliquibus spatiis a se distantes'³⁰⁴. If, then, the cloud of fire in the *Visio Pauli* here is envisioned as four fires, the cry that expressed the emotional reaction of the apostle is absent.

A third view from above is that of San Salvio during the vision narrated in the *Historiarum Francorum* by Gregory of Tours, where the monk's ascent to heaven leads him to the vision of the universe and the earth, critically defined as *squalidum saeculum*, a world characterized by dark times: 'in caelorum excelsua sublatus sum, ita ut non solum hunc squalidum saeculum, verum etiam solem ac lunam, nubes et sidera sub pedibus habere potarem' (VII. 1).³⁰⁵

Finally, in the *Dicta beati Valeri ad beatum Donadeum scripta* by Valerius of Bierzo, there is no criticism of the sinfulness of the world, but only a panoramic view that ranges from natural

³⁰¹ Giuseppe Giacalone (Roma: A. Signorelli, 1968).

³⁰² *Dial.* II. 35, 3. 6-7: 'Quid itaque mirum, si mundum ante se collectum vidit, qui sublevatus in mentis lumine extra mundum fuit? Quod autem collectus mundus ante eius oculos dicitur, non caelum et terra contracta est, sed videntis animus dilatatus, qui in Deo raptus videre sine difficultate potuit omne, quod infra Deum est. In illa ergo luce, quae exterioribus oculis fulsit, lux interior in mente fuit, quae videntis animum, qui ad superiora rapuit, ei, quam angusta essent omnia inferiora, monstravit'.

³⁰³ This episode appears in L1 and L2, while it was not transmitted to the short redactions. 'I looked down from heaven upon the earth and saw the whole world, and it was as if it were nothing to my eyes. [...] I looked and saw a great cloud of fire spread over the whole world and said to the angel, "What is this, lord?" And he said to me, "This is the unrighteousness that is brewed by the princes of sinners." When I heard that I sighed and wept [...]' (Gardiner, p. 32).

³⁰⁴ Ciccarese, *Visioni dell'Aldilà in Occidente*, p. 200. 'He was ordered by the angels who conducted him to look back on the world. Then casting his eyes down, he saw what seemed to be a dark and obscure valley below him. He also saw four fires in the air, not far from each other' (Gardiner, p.55).

³⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 158. 'I was seized by two angels and carried up to the high heavens, so that I thought I had under my feet not only this filthy world but the sun also, and the moon, the clouds and the stars' (<<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/gregory-hist.asp#book8>> [accessed January 2022]).

features to human constructions: ‘Atque toto mentis obtutu universum conspicerem mundum, maria et flumina, variatum urbiumque moeniis, ecclesiis, montium rupibus atque diversis edificiis sumo decore faleratum hominibus, diversisque nationibus refertum’³⁰⁶. It is therefore clear how the Ciceronian gaze upon the world from above has become a characteristic experience of medieval visions of the afterlife, one of the elements of this type of story; as explained in the *Dialogues*, it is a consequence of the contemplation and expansion of the visionary’s spirit.

Dante’s vision of the world in *Par. XXII* therefore no longer appears to be an isolated episode but, on the contrary, is part of a tradition that may have played a certain role in the transmission of the Ciceronian passage. In particular, some elements could indicate a more or less direct reference to the Pauline passage. Indeed, in response to Paul’s request to see how the souls of the righteous and the sinners depart the world, the angel invites him with an imperative (‘respice in terram deorsum’). Beatrice will use similar words (‘rimira in giù, e vedi quanto mondo/ sotto li piedi già esser ti fei’, *Par. XXII*, 127-29³⁰⁷), encouraging Dante to look down, so that his vision is clearer before the final, demanding view of God. In addition, by observing the smallness of the world (*Par. XXII*. 135), a concept already present in Cicero, he takes up the words of Saint Paul to whom the globe had appeared ‘quasi nihil in conspectu meo’. Finally, in both visions there is a new element, absent both in the source³⁰⁸ and in the other *visiones*: the emotional reaction of the observer, consisting respectively of weeping and smiling. Paul’s weeping when he notices the cloud of sin that afflicts humanity corresponds to the smile on Dante’s face at the revelation of the cowardice of earthly life. In fact, Paul, is at the beginning of his infernal journey, which promises to be dramatic, as hinted by these first tears; Dante’s path, on the other hand here is reaching its conclusion: Dante has shed tears of contrition in the two previous realms and now it is possible for him to smile in Paradise.

Moreover, one should note Dante’s smile occupies a particular position in the poem: it is the first smile to occur after the cantos set in the sphere of Saturn where, rather unusually, neither the blessed nor Beatrice smile. The reason for the lack of smiles is attributed to the inadequacy of Dante’s mortal senses, not yet ready to endure such brightness, and thus to the insufficiency of the human intellect when faced with the divine truth (*Par. XXI*. 4-12). Therefore, Beatrice-Theology ‘non ridea’ in that moment, for reasons similar to that for which Philosophy does not smile at Dante in the *Convivio* (III. 15. 19): because he could not understand her. The ascent to

³⁰⁶ Ibidem, p. 296. My own translation: ‘And with a glance of my mind I looked down upon the whole world, seas and rivers, the walls of several cities and churches, cliffs, mountains, and different buildings, adorned with various and decorated buildings, crowded with people from different nations’.

³⁰⁷ ‘Look down once more and see how many heavens I have already set beneath your feet’.

³⁰⁸ *De Republica* 6.20: ‘Si tibi [sedes hominum] parva, ut est, videtur, haec caelestia semper spectato, illa humana contemnito’.

the sphere of the Fixed Stars and the achievement of a condition of detachment and awareness of earthly goods appears is underscored by the return of Dante's smile, the only one in Paradiso, which attests the increase of his theological wisdom and portrays the pilgrim as a prophetic messenger, revealing the nonentity of earthly life.

The second canticle is distinguished by the representation of another exceptional smile, not belonging to a penitent soul: the smile of Dante's master and guide, Virgil. Virgil's smiles represent a *unicum* in the *Commedia*, since he is the only soul belonging to Hell who is able to smile, and the only one to do so within the infernal realm. Indeed, the first of Virgil's smiles takes place in Limbo (*Inf.* IV. 97-100) and constitutes the only smile that occurs in the lower world. Dante has just met *la bella scola* of the ancient poets, and Virgil smiles at their 'salutevol cenno' addressed to his disciple:

Da ch'ebber ragionato insieme alquanto,
volsersi a me con salutevol cenno,
e 'l mio maestro sorrise di tanto;
e più d'onore ancora assai mi fenno,
sì ch'io fui sesto tra cotanto senno.³⁰⁹

From Benvenuto da Imola to the modern commentators, satisfaction in the smile of the master for his disciple is likened to that of a father for his son's glory. Particular attention should be drawn to Giovanni Boccaccio's commentary, which explains and describes the modalities of Virgil's unusual smile:

È il vero che questo riso non in una medesima maniera l'usano gli stolti, che fanno i savi, per ciò che i poco avveduti uomini fanno le più delle volte un riso grasso e sonoro, il quale rende la faccia deforme e fa lagrimar gli occhi e ampliar la gola e doler gli emuntori del cerebro e le parti interiori del corpo vicine al polmone; e questo non è laudevole. Ma i savi non ridono a questo modo, anzi, quando odono o veggono cosa che piaccia loro, sorridono, e di questo sintilla per gli occhi una letizia piacevole, la quale rende la faccia più bella assai, che non è senza quello: per che assai ben comprender si puote l'autore aver detto Virgilio, come savio, aver sorriso di quello che a grado gli fu.³¹⁰

³⁰⁹ 'After they conversed a while,/they turned to me with signs of greeting,/ and my master smiled at this./ And then they showed me greater honor still,/ for they made me one of their company, so that I became the sixth amidst such wisdom'.

³¹⁰ 'It is obvious that idiots do not laugh in the same way wise men do, since the dim-witted usually produce a laughter that is loud and vulgar and that deforms their faces, makes their eyes water, and their throats swell, causes their brains' emunctors to ache and compresses their organs against their lungs. This is not seemly. Wise men do not laugh in this way. In fact, when they hear or see something that pleases them, they smile and an agreeable happiness sparkles in their eyes, which makes their faces even more attractive. Thus, it is quite easy to see why the author says that Virgil, being wise smiled at what found pleasing' (Giovanni Boccaccio, *Boccaccio's Expositions on Dante's Comedy*, Translated with introduction and notes by Micheal Papio (New York: University of Toronto Press: 2009), p. 195). '

Boccaccio goes a step further than does Dante in the *Convivio* (III. VIII. 11-12): he states that the qualitative difference between two kinds of laughter, hearty or moderate, is dependent not only on the level of wisdom, but also set on the opposition *riso-sorriso*. If *riso* is loud and deforms the mouth of the fool, *sorriso*, once again, lights up the eyes and characterizes the wise man's face. However, such an opposition does not bear out in the *Commedia*, where the borders between laughter and smiles are muddied. In Boccaccio's words, on the one hand, there is the intent to protect laughter in the *Commedia* from any suspected excess; on the other hand, the fundamental bond between smiles and knowledge is confirmed again as the outpost of a positive reevaluation of the phenomenon of laughter.

Hence, Virgil smiles with joy at seeing Dante's value recognized, and he does so because of his wisdom. The smile of the wise man expresses the acknowledgement of the importance of the event; it is the signal that introduces and celebrates Dante's admission to the ranks of the ancient poets, his becoming 'the sixth amidst such wisdom' (*Inf.* IV. 102).

As in *Inferno*, in their three occurrences in the *Purgatorio* Virgil's smiles appear as signs of wisdom which mark some fundamental moments of Dante's itinerary and to express the recognition of their value. At the end of Canto XII of the *Purgatorio*, after realizing the first P has been removed from his forehead, Dante reacts with a childlike gesture, provoking his guide's smile:

[...] e con le dita de la destra scempie
trovai pur sei le lettere che 'ncise
quel da le chiavi a me sopra le tempie:
a che guardando, il mio duca *sorrise*.³¹¹
(132-35)

This time the act of smiling was interpreted by the early commentators as derision, a natural reaction due to Virgil's moral superiority as Reason over Dante's limited knowledge³¹². Modern scholars, from Scartazzini to Chiavacci Leonardi, have seen in Virgil's smile not mockery, but satisfaction and affection, having helped to achieve to cancellation of the first of the seven Ps, representing the sin of pride. In fact, Virgil's attitude does not appear much different from that of Beatrice in *Paradiso*, who will smile many times at Dante's doubts³¹³. Therefore, if Virgil is attested as the holder of a natural Wisdom and entitled to smile at others' ignorance, in this case

³¹¹ '[...] and, spreading the fingers of my right hand./ I found that, of the seven letters he of the keys/ had traced upon my forehead, only six remained./ Observing this, my leader smiled'.

³¹² Francesco da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1862): 'Virgilio; cioè la ragione fece beffe de la sensualità, che non apprende se non cose particolari e presenti, e non apprende le passate e future, come fa la ragione'; Cristoforo Landino (Firenze: Lexis Progetti Editoriali, 1999): 'perchè lo intellecto si ride della ignorantia della sensualità et quasi diventa un altro Democrito'.

³¹³ Cf. Ch. IV. 2.

as well the smile denotes a fundamental stage of Dante's penitential path: after his recognition as a poet, now his overcoming of pride, one of the most serious sins for the pilgrim.

Once again, the third of Virgil's smiles occurs during a liminal event: in Canto XXVII of *Purgatorio*, Virgil responds to Dante's hesitation to pass through the wall of fire at the entrance of Eden, encouraging him and smiling:

Ond'ei crollò la fronte e disse: 'Come!
volenci star di qua?"; indi *sorrise*
come al fanciul si fa ch'è vinto al pome.³¹⁴
(43-45)

Cristoforo Landino underlines how Virgil's smile always follows the rules of moderation and arises from a superior condition of wisdom³¹⁵. As in the previous case, the smile represents indulgence towards a childish behaviour, defining Virgil as a wise guide, aware of the meaning of the events, unlike Dante who is first naïve, then insecure.

The last of Virgil's smiles assumes a particular meaning. This time it is shared with Statius and it represents the reaction to Matelda's words in Eden (*Purg.* XXVIII. 145-147), in which she establishes a link between the classical myth of the Golden Age celebrated by Virgil and Statius and the biblical Eden.

Io mi rivolsi 'n dietro allora tutto
a' miei poeti, e vidi che con *riso*
udito avëan l'ultimo costrutto; [...].³¹⁶

Already l'Ottimo Commento attributes the two poets' smile to the awareness of having foreseen Eden, and so of possessing the divine gift of foreseeing the truth revealed by God to the biblical authors³¹⁷. Later, Charles S. Singleton would define their smile as a 'smile of recognition and acknowledgment of the truth spoken by the lady'³¹⁸. Therefore, it is the smile of an oblivious prophet, who now understands the truth of his fables and so smiles. It is a smile that attests the wisdom of the ancient poets, celebrates the prophetic value of Virgil's words, and establishes the connection between natural wisdom and revealed truth.

However, it should be remembered that Virgil still remains a "lampadoforo" who, with the light of wisdom in his smile, illuminates the way for those who follow him, but not his own path. Therefore, although Virgil's wisdom is celebrated in this way, at the same time it should be noted that the final expression with which Dante will portray his guide will not be with a smile,

³¹⁴ 'At which he shook his head and said: 'Well,/ are we going to stay on this side?' then smiled/ as one smiles at a child won over with a fruit'.

³¹⁵ Cristoforo Landino (Firenze: Lexis Progetti Editoriali, 1999): 'modestamente ride el savio quando vede havere commosso l'huomo non prudente'.

³¹⁶ 'I turned around then to my poets/ and saw that they had listened/ to her final utterance with a smile'.

³¹⁷ L'Ottimo Commento (Pisa: ed. Alessandro Torri, N. Capurro, 1827-1829).

³¹⁸ Charles S. Singleton (Princeton: University Press, 1970-75).

but rather with astonishment before the allegorical procession of *Purg.* XXIX. 55-57. There, Virgil's *stupor* is a sign of incomprehension, of the inadequacy of natural Reason and pagan Wisdom when faced with the Christian truth³¹⁹, which provides the reader with the last image of the Latin poet as forever suspended in an astonished incapacity to understand. It does not seem a coincidence that, instead, the last expression which Dante depicts on the faces of the other two guides, Beatrice and St. Bernard, both in possession of the divine truth, is precisely the smile (respectively *Par* XXXI. 92 and XXXIII. 49)³²⁰.

The wisdom of the smile of Virgil, a damned soul and a pagan poet, still shows a trace of Dante's passionate celebration of human knowledge of the *Convivio*; however, it is smile that remains just a flash that has briefly illuminated the face of the ancient poet. Indeed, the smile in the *Paradiso* definitively marks the reflection of divine knowledge and the constitutive and distinctive attribute of bliss, and thus a manifestation of the conquest of the only authentic knowledge: the divine truth.

In the process through which smile becomes the reward of the blessed in the *Commedia*, the smile of a last and particular penitent in Purgatory represents an important stage: Statius, the Latin poet, who, having completed his purgation, meets Dante and Virgil on the path to Eden and joins them (*Purg.* XXI). Statius is the only penitent twice represented while smiling: the sapiential value of the smile which Statius shares with Virgil has already been analysed, connecting it to the link established by Matelda between the classical myth of the Golden Age and the biblical Eden (XXVIII. 146). However, Statius smiles once more in *Purg.* XXII, following a naïve question from Virgil:

Ma dimmi, e come amico mi perdona
 se troppa sicurtà m'allarga il freno,
 e come amico omai meco ragiona:
 come poté trovar dentro al tuo seno
 loco avarizia, tra cotanto senno
 di quanto per tua cura fosti pieno?"
 Queste parole Stazio mover fenno
 un poco a riso pria; poscia rispuose:
 "Ogne tuo dir d'amor m'è caro cenno."³²¹
 (18-27)

³¹⁹ See the following fundamental contributions on Virgil's wonder: Marina De Fazio, 'Purgatorio XXIX', in *Dante's "Divine Comedy," Introductory Readings II: "Purgatorio"*, ed. by Tibor Wlassics (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1993), pp. 433-47; Rober Hollander, *Il Virgilio dantesco: tragedia nella "Commedia"* (Firenze: Olshki, 1983).

³²⁰ Cf. Ch. IV. 1, 197 and ff; IV. 2, 219 and ff.

³²¹ 'But tell me--and as a friend forgive me/ if with too much assurance I relax the reins,/ and as a friend speak with me now--/ 'how could avarice find room / amidst such wisdom in your breast,/ the wisdom that you nourished with such care./ These words made Statius smile a little/ before he answered: 'Every word of yours / is to me a welcome token of your love.'

Once again, the smile precedes the beginning of a dialogue ('rispuose'), containing the revelation of new information (the nature of Statius' sin), and the moderation ('un poco') underscores the wisdom of the poet who smiles. Already the early commentators interpret Statius' smile as a reaction to the erroneous observation of Virgil, who is surprised that so wise a poet is being punished among the greedy; in reality, he has served his penance among the prodigals, as Statius himself will emphasize, smiling and correcting Virgil. Once again, as in the case of Casella, Statius' smile is a sign of cognitive superiority, qualifying the poet as a wise, knowing, able to laugh at the ignorance of others.

As Benvenuto da Imola notes, Statius' smile also replicates Dante's smile in *Purg.* XXI, in reaction to the naivety of Statius himself³²². As we have seen, in the *Purgatorio* Virgil also smiles at Dante's insecurity and ignorance several times. Thus, a chain of smiles binds the three poets, shaping their relationships: the exchange of knowledge between the sages occurs through the smile, which celebrates, in turn, the wisdom of the interlocutor, becoming an expression of a privileged and exclusive relationship and communication.

Like that of Virgil, Statius' smile is that of an ancient poet who holds natural wisdom; nevertheless, it must be remembered that Statius, unlike Virgil and according to Dante's narration, converted to Christianity. Furthermore, compared to other penitents, he has finished his purification and is free from penance and ready to return to God. Therefore, his smile, given exceptionally on two occasions, can be interpreted as a consequence of this particular condition and, therefore, as an outcome and reward of the tears he shed for eternal salvation.

Indeed, in *Purg.* XXII Statius, discussing the story of his own conversion, tells how he was baptized after having shed tears of compassion for the Christians persecuted by Domitian:

Vennermi poi parendo tanto *santi*,
 che, quando Domizian li perseguate,
sanza mio lagrimar non fur lor pianti; [...].³²³
 (82-84)

As Niccolò Tommaseo has already observed in his commentary, Dante seems to refer here to the Pauline precept included in his writings on charity: 'gaudere cum gaudentibus, flere cum flentibus' (Rom. XII. 12)³²⁴. As Martinez notes, Statius' weeping is therefore necessary for his conversion: 'Stazio was helped toward his baptism by his acts of solidarity and charity, weeping

³²² Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): 'Statius enim nunc risit de errore Virgilii, sicut Dantes risit supra de errore Statii'.

³²³ 'More and more they seemed to me so holy/ that when Domitian started with his persecutions / their weeping did not lack my tears.'

³²⁴ 'Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn'.

with those who wept³²⁵. However, the role assumed by the poet's weeping can be truly understood only if we consider that it consists, precisely, in a sharing of the tears of Christian martyrs. In general, the suffering of the martyrs was identified as the trigger for several early acts of conversion to Christianity³²⁶, urging the witness to leave his life of pleasure and sin in order to participate in that suffering and set out on a journey towards God. According to the Gospel, the blood of the martyrs has the power to make the Church grow, like a grain of wheat that generates fruit: 'Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds' (John 12.24)³²⁷. As we have already seen³²⁸, the tears of the martyrs, like blood, possess a productive power, constituting the seed that produces the harvest of eternal joy (*Psalms* 125). In fact, as St. Augustine points out, the tears of the martyrs, of the saints, of those who pray by carrying out good works – these tears shed *on the way* represent the condition for returning to their homeland, exultant with joy:

About the martyrs indeed it can be said that they sowed in tears.[...] There are tears of the pious, there are tears of the saints, which are indicated by their prayers. He does a good deed, and is cheerful about it. And he also cries that he may do good, he cries because he has done good. By crying he obtains the capacity for the good deed, by crying he commends to God the good deed he has done. So the tears of the just are very frequent—but along this road. And when they get home? Why not when they get home? Because coming they will come with merry making, carrying their sheaves (*Ps* 126:6)³²⁹.

Therefore Statius, by sharing in the tears of the martyrs, not only carried out a work of charity necessary for his conversion, but sowed what would allow him to access eternal happiness: this weeping, as emphasized by the rhyme 'pianti'-santi' (82 and 84), leads to holiness and eternal beatitude. Having wept with the martyrs in life, Statius' tears lead to the sharing of joy with the saved in the afterlife: in fact, the liberation of the poet's soul is accompanied by the joyful praises of the other penitent spirits, who participate in Statius' happiness ('congaudete' *Purg.* XXI. 78).

That the figure of Statius represents the Christian transition of the soul from weeping to smiling is clear from his first appearance. This transition is described through a reference to the episode of Emmaus (*Luke* 24.13-7), comparing Statius to the resurrected Christ who joins two disciples

³²⁵ Ronald L. Martinez, 'Lament and Lamentations in "Purgatorio" and the Case of Dante's Statius', *Dante Studies*, 115, (The Johns Hopkins University Press: 1997), 45-88 (p. 61).

³²⁶ On the theme see Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 35-40.

³²⁷ 'Nisi granum frumenti cadens in terram mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet; si autem mortuum fuerit, multum fructum affert'.

³²⁸ Cf. Ch. II. 4, 108 and ff.

³²⁹ *Sermons on the Old Testament*, 20-50, p. 132. 'Et quidem de martyribus dici potest quia cum lacrymis seminaverunt. [...] Sunt lacrymae piorum, sunt lacrymae sanctorum, quas indicant orationes eorum. Bene operatur, et hilaris est. Et plorat ut bene operetur, plorat quia bene operatus est. Plorando exigit bonum opus, plorando commendat bonum opus quod fecit. Crebrae ergo sunt lacrymae iustorum, sed in ista via. Numquid in patria? Quare non in patria? Quia venientes venient in exultatione, portantes manipulos suos' (*Sermones*, 31, 3-6)

on their way to Emmaus (*Purg.* XXI. 7-18). In addition to providing ‘an aura of surprise and miracle’³³⁰ at the appearance of Statius, the encounter with Christ on the road to Emmaus narrates Christ’s revelation to his disciples with a shift from sadness to happiness. In fact, the disciples at first do not recognize Christ and appear sad, pondering his death; after Jesus breaks the bread and blesses it, the agnition takes place and their eyes are opened to the revelation of Christ, who then vanishes:

Et ecce duo ex illis ibant ipsa die in castellum, quod erat in spatio stadiorum sexaginta ab Jerusalem, nomine Emmaus. Et ipsi loquebantur ad invicem de his omnibus quæ acciderant. Et factum est, dum fabularentur, et secum quærerent: et ipse Jesus appropinquans ibat cum illis: *oculi autem illorum tenebantur ne eum agnoscerent*. Et ait ad illos: Qui sunt hi sermones, quos confertis ad invicem ambulantes, et *estis tristes* ? [...] Et factum est, dum recumberet cum eis, accepit panem, et benedixit, ac fregit, et porrigebat illis. *Et aperti sunt oculi eorum, et cognoverunt eum*: et ipse evanuit ex oculis eorum.’ (*Luke* 24.13-31)³³¹

When Jesus reappears among them, showing them the wounds in his hands and feet, the reaction of the apostles is one of joy and amazement (‘Et cum hoc dixisset, ostendit eis manus et pedes. Adhuc autem illis non credentibus, et mirantibus præ gaudio [...]’³³²). Finally, after the proclamation of Christ’s resurrection and his ascension into heaven, the apostles return to Jerusalem infused with joy (‘Et factum est, dum benediceret illis, recessit ab eis, et ferebatur in cælum. Et ipsi adorantes regressi sunt in Jerusalem cum gaudio magno [...]’³³³).

As Ledda observes, the encounter with Christ on the road to Emmaus is interpreted, in the exegetical tradition, as ‘the archetype of pilgrimage’³³⁴, the goal of which, in Dante’s text, is identified with Statius’ destiny and salvation. Therefore, from his first appearance, Statius becomes a symbol of the soul in pilgrimage which returns to its heavenly homeland through a transition from the weeping of earthly life to the smile of eternal bliss, a transition only possible, as in the account of Emmaus, through the revelation of divine truth, of the resurrection, which in Statius’ case took place thanks to the prophetic words of Virgil. The revelation of Virgil’s identity to Statius (*Purg.* XXI), in which the image of Christ on the road to Emmaus continues

³³⁰ Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991-97).

³³¹ ‘And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? [...] And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight’.

³³² ‘When he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered [...]’.

³³³ ‘And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy’.

³³⁴ Ledda, *Immagini di pellegrinaggio e di esilio nella Commedia di Dante*, p. 8.

to play a role³³⁵, becomes a metaphor for the unveiling of Christian truth, underscored by Dante's insistent smile, which assumes more importance here than in any other place in the poem.

If Dante's smile embodies an anticipation of the joy promised those to whom the divine truth is revealed, the figure of Statius demonstrates the passage from the purgatorial *tempus flendi* to the heavenly *tempus ridendi*, which all the souls in Purgatory are destined to experience. Statius' smiles, while still possessing the trait of human wisdom, are the consequence of holy tears shed first on earth and then in the circle of the greedy and the prodigals, and which ushered in the birth of a new man, finally free and ready to smile with the illumination of Christian truth.

³³⁵ According to Umberto Bosco (Florence: Le Monnier, 1979), the Emmaus episode has also influence on the representation of Virgil's agnition, in which Stazio and Dante talk about Virgil until his identity is revealed at the end of the scene; similarly, in the Gospel story, 'the two disciples talk to Christ about Christ, about their grief over his death, their perplexity about his resurrection, without Christ being revealed throughout the day'.

IV. *Paradiso*

IV. 1 The Smile of the Blessed and the Light of Divine *Caritas*

After witnessing the agonized weeping of the damned and shedding his final tears at the peak of Purgatory, Dante is finally ready to enter Paradise, the kingdom of the smile. Here, indeed, tears have no place: they are relegated to sporadic occurrences that emphasize their expiatory¹ or punitive² function on earth or in Hell. Weeping is, therefore, excluded from the representation of Heaven, as penance to be atoned for during earthly exile or as a consequence of man's estrangement from God. As recalled on two occasions in *Paradiso*³, tears are the necessary prerequisite for the heavenly smile (according to the Gospel of Luke 6.21, 'blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh'), which unfurls in all its splendor in the third canticle. In fact, although smiles had already appeared on the faces of some penitent souls in Purgatory, in the third canticle the smile not only manifests itself with the highest frequency in the poem⁴, but, as we will see, it becomes a characteristic attribute of the blessed, the main element through which they express and reveal their condition of beatitude, faith and knowledge.

From the examination of medieval visions of the afterlife before Dante, it appears that the smile does not constitute a traditional element of the representation of the blessed in Paradise, as Giulia Gaimari has noted in her examination⁵. We should also mention that, in addition to the precedent of Job's smile, 'pulcrum' and 'ridentem', in the *Visio Pauli*⁶, there are two additional

¹ *Piangere* can be translated as 'to expiate', 'to atone' in the following cases: V. 70: 'onde pianse Efigènia il suo bel volto' VI. 109-110: 'Molte fiata già pianser li figli per la colpa del padre'; XI. 47: 'piange per grave giogo Nocera con Gualdo'; XVI. 149-150: 'vid'io Fiorenza in sì fatto riposo, che non avea cagione onde piangesse'; XX. 62: 'Guiglielmo fu, cui quella terra plora che piagne Carlo e Federigo vivo'. One should note that weeping is often attributed to the cities as an expression of protest or lament for misgovernment or political oppression, as already occurred in the *Purgatorio*: *Purg.* VI. 112: 'Vieni a veder la tua Roma che piagne vedova e sola'; *Purg.* VII. 136: 'fa pianger Monferrato e Canavese'.

² The following occurrence refers to crying in Hell: VI. 76: 'Piangene ancor la trista Cleopatra'. There is also a reference to weeping as a future punishment, as the subject of a prophecy: IX. 5, 52: 'pianto giusto verrà di retro ai vostri danni'; 'Piangerà Feltro ancora la difalta de l'empio suo pastor'. The model is that of the biblical prophecies that foretell tears as a divine punishment for the sinner: 'Age nunc, divites, plorate ulu lantes in miseriis, quae adve nient vobis.' (*Epistula Iacobi* 5.1); 'et convertam festivitates vestras in luctum et omnia canticavestra in planctum' (*Prophetia Amos* 8.10).

³ XXII, 107-108 'io piango spesso/ le mie peccata e 'l petto mi percuoto'; XXIII, 133-35 'Quivi si vive e gode del tesoro/ che s'acquistò piangendo ne lo essilio/ di Babillòn, ove si lasciò l'oro'.

⁴ The occurrences of *riso* and *sorriso* in the *Paradiso* are distributed in this way: – *riso*: 14 (VII. 17; IX. 71; X. 103; XIV. 86; XV. 34; XVII. 36; XX. 13; XXI. 63; XXIII. 48, 59; XXVII. 4; XXIX. 7; XXX. 26; XXXI. 50); – *ridere*: 24 (III. 42; V. 81, 97, 126; VI. 131; IX. 103; X. 61, 62; X. 118; XIV. 79; XVI. 14; XVII. 121; XXI. 4 x2; XXII. 11; XXIII. 26; XXV. 28; XXVII. 96, 104; XXVIII. 83, 135; XXIX. 116; XXX. 77; XXXI. 134); – *sorriso*: 1 (XVIII. 19); – *sorridero*: 10 (I. 95; II. 52; III. 24, 25, 67; XI. 17; XXII. 135; XXXI. 92; XXXIII. 49).

⁵ Giulia Gaimari, 'Il sorriso dei beati: la rappresentazione della gioia paradisiaca dalle visioni medievali a Dante', in *I cantieri dell'italianistica. Ricerca, didattica e organizzazione agli inizi del XXI secolo. Atti del XVIII congresso dell'ADI (Padova, 10-13 settembre 2014)*, ed. by Guido Baldassarri and others (Roma: Adi editore, 2016), pp. 1-9.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

smiles attributed to angels in the *Liber scalae Machometi* (XIII century), a work that narrates Muhammad's ascent to heaven.

In the first instance the angels, who had not laughed previously, unleashed a thunderous and cheerful laugh in honor of Muhammad, whom they welcomed into the royal mansions in Paradise:

Fecerunt quidem ibi eos descendere et angeli cum eisdem similiter descendentes miserunt ipsos in mansiones predictas. Et accipientes eos per manus sederunt cum ipsis et ceperunt inter se loqui et ludere ac *ridere ita pulcre et tam fortiter quod eorum risus valde auditus extitit a longiquo*. Et cum ipsi hoc diu fecissent angeli dixerunt eis 'Amici, nos iuramos vobis per altitudinem et honorem Dei quod ab hora qua creati fumus *numquam lusimus aut risimus, nec eciam ora nostra aperta sive lingue nostre usque huc mote sunt aliud facere quam laudare Dominum Deum nostrum. Sed modo risimus vobiscum et lusimus et hoc amore vestri fecimus honore*.⁷

(XLII. 8-9)

The second instead depicts a true smile, that of the archangel Gabriel, Muhammad's guide during his visit to Paradise: 'Ego eciam vas accepi et cognoscens quod odor ipsius atque sapor assimilabatur vino, ipsum abhorruui et bibere dereliqui. Gabriel quoque subridere incipiens dixit michi: "Machomete, tenes te male de hoc potu ultimo pro pacato?" (LII. 6)⁸. Gabriel smiles at Muhammad's disgusted reaction to a chalice of wine and asks for confirmation of his disdain, explaining that, since wine represents impurity and madness, God will keep it away from Muhammad's people. The smile of the archangel, therefore, demonstrates approval for the prophet's rejection as well as his own cognitive superiority: Gabriel, unlike Muhammad, understands the symbolic significance of wine. This smile does not seem far off from Virgil's wise smiles, often expressing approval and recognition of Dante's merit⁹.

Likewise, in the *De Scriptura Aurea* by Bonvesin de la Riva, which describes the beauties and joys of Paradise, the angels appear 'con alegrevre core'¹⁰: with a cheerful face. In addition, if in the *De Scriptura nigra* the laughter of the damned is transformed and punished with tears¹¹, in the third section of the poem, the shift from laughter to weeping is reversed in the figure of

⁷ *Il libro della scala di Maometto. Testo latino a fronte*, ed. by Anna Longoni (Milano: BUR Rizzoli, 2013), p. 176. Translation mine: 'They brought them down, and the angels who came down with them brought them to the above-mentioned dwellings. Taking them by the hand, they sat down together and began to converse and to joke and to laugh so merrily and so loudly that their laughter could be heard from far away. After having done this for a long time, the angels said: "Friends, we swear to you, on the greatness and the honour of God, that since the time of our creation we have never joked or laughed, nor have our lips opened nor our tongues moved, except for praising God our Lord. But now we have laughed and joked with you, and we have done it for your sake and in your honour.'

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 208. 'I took the glass and, noticing that its scent and taste were similar to those of wine, I was horrified, and I gave up on the drink. Gabriel, beginning to smile, said to me: "Muhammad, do you feel disgusted by the last drink?"'

⁹ See Ch. III. 4, 176 and ff.

¹⁰ *Visioni dell'Aldilà prima di Dante: testi di Bonvesin de la Riva, Giacomino da Verona, Ugucione da Lodi, Pietro da Barsegapè* (Milano: Mondadori, 2017), p. 114.

¹¹ Cf. Ch. II. 2, 70.

the righteous who enjoys the pleasures of Paradise: ‘Oï De, com po' godher / lo iust in paradiso [...] com pò quel ess gavisò; / lo cor ge stradolcisce, / lo plang g'è volt in riso'¹². Indeed, on several occasions Paradise is designated as the place of consolation, where tears are dried: ‘in paradiso [...] omiunca soa lagrema / dai og s'ì ' g fi furbio'¹³; ‘Le lagrem e li plangi/ dai o gel m' à furbio'¹⁴. This contrast between weeping and laughing, on which Bonvesin constructs the opposition between his infernal and heavenly kingdoms, appears to be structured on the two evangelical beatitudes (Luke 6.21: ‘blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh’; Matthew 5.4: ‘blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted’). Although this structure can be considered, in its general framework, an antecedent of the binary emotional system around which the afterlife is organized in the *Commedia*, we do not find a true representation of the laughter of the blessed in Bonvesin’s poem.

The reason for the sporadic presence of the laughter of the blessed in visionary literature, almost always replaced by a more generic representation of heavenly joy, could be due to its problematic nature¹⁵. In fact, the possibility of beatific laughter is the subject of a fundamental thirteenth-century theological debate, divided between those who allow only a spiritual and metaphorical laughter for the blessed souls separated from the body, and those who instead consider the souls reunited with their heavenly body and deny them an external manifestation of joy, considered inappropriate¹⁶. In fact, while Gregory the Great defines joyful laughter among the blessed as a *risus cordis*, a laughter of mental happiness contrasting with the *risus corporis*, a bodily laughter, Augustine assigns laughter to the blessed as ‘premium sapientiae’, the reward of the wiseman; but even in this case, it is still a laughter that coincides and overlaps with the eschatological *exsultatio*¹⁷.

Within this debate, Thomas Aquinas was the first to propose the effective possibility of heavenly laughter, as *risibilitas* – the ability to laugh – is proper to man in Aristotelian terms, and therefore should also be proper to their resurrected bodies: ‘As for their individuating accidents, viz. their dimensions, our glorified bodies will indeed have them. They will also have the same characteristic property of laughter. As Job says: Your mouth shall be filled with laughter and

¹² My own translation: ‘God, how the righteous enjoys paradise [...] How joyful is the righteous; his heart is sweet, his weeping is turned to laughter’. This concept is repeated later in the poem: ‘Com questa è grand bellezza,/ come eo ne sont gavisò,/ quent strabei lavorerij/ en quii del paradiso./ In plang e in miserie/ eo stig al mond conquiso;/ oï gaudio dolcissimo./ ke'l plangio è volt in riso’ (*Visioni dell’Aldilà prima di Dante*, p. 124).

¹³ Ibidem, p. 116. ‘In paradise every single tear is wiped away forever’

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 136. ‘God wiped the tears and the weeping from my eyes’.

¹⁵ Gaimari, pp. 4-6. To Gaimari’s analysis I add that already in the *Aeneid* the Elysian Fields are defined as ‘locos lactos’ (VI. 638).

¹⁶ Carla Casagrande, ‘Ridere in Paradiso. Gaudio, giubilo e riso tra angeli e beati’, in *Il riso. Capacità di ridere e pratica del riso nelle civiltà medievali*, *Atti delle I Giornate Internazionali Interdisciplinari di Studio sul Medioevo dal titolo: "Homo risibilis. Capacità di ridere e pratica del riso nelle civiltà medievali"*, Siena, 2-4 ottobre 2002, ed. by Francesco M. Casaretto (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2005), pp. 177-189 (p. 187).

¹⁷ Augustinus, *Sermones* 175. 2.2: ‘Risum enim pro gaudio posuit, non cachinnationem, sed exsultationem’.

your lips with rejoicing'¹⁸. As Carla Casagrande notes, however, while Thomas admits the possibility, in his writings 'there is no mention of a possible laughter or smile of the blessed'¹⁹.

Dante inserts himself into this debate through his representation of the smile of the blessed. First of all, as noted, the poet resolves the problem of how souls smile, as well as cry, through his invention of aerial bodies²⁰, thanks to which souls can display their emotions. Therefore, while the possibility of smiling is openly admitted, other more problematic issues arise: the modalities of representation for the smile of the blessed, and its motives.

The two points appear strongly connected: in fact, the smile of the blessed has often been interpreted as a metaphorical expression of joy or splendor, by means of the explanation which Dante provides in the *Convivio*, where he defines the smile as 'una corruscazione della dilettazione dell'anima, cioè uno lume apparente di fuori secondo sta dentro'²¹ (III. VIII. 11). In the *Paradiso*, however, the poet does not seem to maintain this metaphorical definition: Giulia Gaimari has already demonstrated the literal meaning of the smile of the blessed in the third canticle, clarifying how the smile shows concretely on the faces of the blessed, from the Sphere of the Moon to the Empyrean, and she establishes a metonymic relationship of cause and effect with the light and divine radiance, the source of which is the smile²².

To understand more clearly the relationship which Dante establishes between smiles and light in the representation of the blessed²³, a passage from the *Convivio* provides a useful key for interpretation. Once again, the passage stems from *Convivio* III. XV. 2, Dante's commentary on *Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona*, in which he defines the 'laughter' of Wisdom as one of the loci in which the pleasures of Paradise are manifested:

¹⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlibetal Questions*, Translated and Introduced by Turner Nevitt and Brian Davie (Oxford University Press: 2020), p. 499. 'De accidentibus individuandis, scilicet de dimensionibus, et hec erunt in corporibus glorificatis; item erit ibi idem proprium, scilicet risus: Iob. Implebitur os tuum risu et labia tua iubilo' (*Quaestiones de quolibet*, XI. 6. 1).

¹⁹ Casagrande, *Ridere in Paradiso*, p. 187.

²⁰ On the theme see Sonia Gentili, 'Quindi parliamo, quindi ridiam noi': piacere e dolore delle anime nella 'Commedia' di Dante', in *Piacere e dolore. Materiali per una storia delle passioni nel Medioevo*, pp. 149-169 (p. 165); Manuele Gragnolati, *Experiencing the Afterlife. Soul and body in Dante and medieval culture* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2005), pp. 53-87; Zygmunt G. Baranski, 'Canto XXV', in *Lectura Dantis Turicensis. Purgatorio*, ed. by Georges Güntert and Michelangelo Picone (Firenze: Cesati, 2011), pp. 389-406.

²¹ 'A coruscation of the soul's delight, that is, a light appearing externally which corresponds to the state of being within'.

²² Giulia Gaimari, 'Il sorriso dei beati nella "Commedia"'. Un'interpretazione letterale', in *Lettere Italiane*, 66, 4 (2014), 469-495, (p. 481).

²³ In the *Vita Sancti Fursei* (ed. Ciccarese; Romano Barbarica 8, 1984-85), there is already a link between joy and splendor: the soul of the monk shines at the sound of the ineffable joy and the splendor of heavens, caused by the heavenly community: 'Tunc aspicebat magnam caeli serenitatem et duos angelos proximam caeli iocunditatem repetentes quasi per ostium intrantes, erumpente circa illos magnitudine claritatis et quasi per quattuor choros cantantium multitudines angelorum ac dicentium: "Sanctus sanctus sanctus dominus deus Sabaoth". Tunc anima illius ad dulcedinem superni modolaminis ac sonitum ineffabilis laetitiae ultra caelum sonantis intendens, circumfulsit; [...] Tunc sanctus angelus stans a dextris eius dixit: "Scis ubi agitur haec laetitia et gaudium?". Illo respondente se nescire, sanctus angelus respondit: "Apud supernum conventum, unde et nos sumus". Tunc mens omnem laborem tribulationis obliviscens, immensa conplebatur laetitia, quia superna audiens carmina clarius et modolatius resonare, pro se solo decantari computabat, ammiransqua, ait "Magnum est gaudium haec auscultare carmina'.

E qui si conviene sapere che *li occhi della Sapienza sono le sue dimostrazioni*, colle quali *si vede la veritade certissimamente; e lo suo riso sono le sue persuasioni, nelle quali si dimostra la luce interiore della Sapienza sotto alcuno velamento*: e in queste due cose [occhi e riso] si sente quel *piacere altissimo di beatitudine* lo quale è massimo bene in Paradiso²⁴.

In this passage, the smile is defined as the veil, the means through which the light of Wisdom is revealed. Together with the eyes, it constitutes one of those ‘wonderful beauties’ of the face of Wisdom which, as noted in another passage of the treatise, manifest divine love:

E per questa sua dismisuranza si dice che *l’anima de la filosofia lo manifesta in quel ch’ella conduce*, cioè che *Iddio mette sempre in lei del suo lume*. Dove si vuole a memoria ridurre che di sopra è detto che *amore è forma di Filosofia*, e però qui si chiama anima di lei. *Lo quale amore manifesto è nel viso de la Sapienza, ne lo quale esso conduce mirabili bellezze*, [...].²⁵
(Cv. III. XIII. 10-11)

Here the soul of Philosophy coincides with a light, an inner luminosity that is a suggestion and reflection of the divine. The idea that God reveals himself through the concession of an inner light, the *lumen fidei*, is a conception that dates back to Bonaventure and Augustine²⁶, but a hint of this idea is already present in the New Testament, in which the presence of God in the soul of man is manifested several times through light²⁷.

This light shows divine love through beauty, the form of Philosophy and truth, understood as *splendor veritatis*²⁸. There is, therefore, a tension between soul and body, between internal and external, between truth and form, ‘between voluntary and involuntary, [...] a spontaneity capable of appearing from the inner depths through the fissure of the individual and particular response’²⁹. I argue that this response of which H.U. von Balthasar speaks can be identified with laughter, a phenomenon considered, on an anthropological level³⁰, involuntary and uncontrollable, which demonstrates the fracture between soul and body. Even the smile in Dante’s *Convivio* appears an external fissure through which an inner truth shines: the smile is the veil of

²⁴ ‘It should be explained here that the eyes of wisdom are her demonstrations, by which the truth is seen with absolute certainty, and her smile is her persuasions, in which the light interior to wisdom shows itself under a kind of veil. In these two places experience is given of that most sublime of pleasures, happiness, which is the greatest good enjoyed in Paradise.’

²⁵ ‘On account of this transcendent quality of hers I say that the soul of Philosophy makes it clear in what she brings, that is, makes clear that God unceasingly imparts to her a measure of His light. In this regard what was said above should be recalled, that love is the form of Philosophy; and so here it is called her soul. This love is manifest in the exercise of wisdom, which brings with it wonderful beauties, [...]’.

²⁶ Hans U. von Balthasar, *Gloria. Un’estetica teologica. La percezione della forma*, vol.1, trans. by Giuseppe Ruggieri, (Milano: Jaca Book, 2012), p. 137.

²⁷ Brian Reynolds, ‘A beauty that transforms: the Marian aesthetics of Dante’s *Commedia*’, *Fu Jen Studies*, 35 (2003), 61-89 (p. 64).

²⁸ For a study on the *splendor veritatis* see Ananda K. Coomaraswamy *Il grande brivido. Saggi di simbolica e arte* (Milano: Adelphi, 1987), especially p. 41.

²⁹ Balthasar, p. 13.

³⁰ Helmuth Plessner, *Il riso e il pianto. Una ricerca sui limiti del comportamento umano*, (Milano: Bompiani: 2007), p. 110.

light, or a mantle that simultaneously gives shape to and hides the truth. In fact, just before the famous definition of the smile in *Cv.* III. 8-10, it is said to ‘*dimostrasi ne la bocca, quasi come colore dopo vetro*’³¹ once again it is a screen, the glass, behind which the light shines: from these textual findings, it is therefore evident that the smile is not the source of light, but the means by which it manifests itself, the veil through which the brightness of truth bursts forth. Dante’s smile therefore renders the ineffable relationship between beauty and truth, giving shape to divine love, the cause of the inner light that radiates from the soul. The veil of the smile thus reveals the link between love and knowledge: divine love, the form of wisdom, finds its primary expression in the smile. This is evident in *Par.* XX. 13-15 where, in the Sphere of Jupiter, God’s charity is clothed in the mantle of a smile, transmitting and reflecting itself in the smile and light of the blessed:

*O dolce amor che di riso t'ammanti,
quanto parevi ardente in que' flaili,
ch'avieno spirto sol di pensier santi.*³²

The smile adorns and demonstrates the divine *caritas*, God’s love for his human creation, causing an equivalent response in the blessed soul who knows the divine truth, in a multiplication of smiles and an increase in love. Thus, through the smile, as had already occurred with tears, a special communication between man and God is established. Smiling, like weeping, is a gift from God: we are reminded of this fact through the laughter of Abraham and Sarah in *Genesis* at the revelation of the impending birth of their son Isaac, a prefiguration of Christ, whose name means ‘laughter’ (‘God has brought me laughter’, *Gen.* 21.6). Isaac is a symbol of the divine concession of inner joy offered by perfect knowledge, happiness granted to a select few through a dynamic that has been called ‘circular’³³: laughter/Isaac is given to man and offered again to God through sacrifice/weeping, rewarded in turn, in the afterlife, with the gift of the eternal smile and access to truth. The smile of the blessed therefore constitutes the response to love and the divine smile, a relationship well illustrated in the passage of *Par.* XXXI. 49-51, where Dante observes the unveiled faces of the resurrected bodies in the white rose of the Empyrean:

*Vedëa visi a carità süadi,
d'altrui lume fregiati e di suo riso,
e atti ornati di tutte onestadi.*³⁴

³¹ ‘The soul reveals itself in the mouth, rather like colour behind glass’.

³² ‘O sweet love, mantled in a smile,/ how ardent did you sound within those pipes,/ filled with the breath of holy thoughts alone!’.

³³ Cristina Termini, ‘Isacco, ovvero la dinamica del riso in Filone di Alessandria’, in *Riso e comicità nel Cristianesimo antico*, (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2007), pp. 123-160, (p. 152).

³⁴ ‘I saw visages informed by heavenly love, resplendent/ with Another’s light and their own smiles,/ their every movement graced with dignity.’

The *caritas* of the blessed is revealed through the smile and the divine light, which constitute two distinct manifestations and represent respectively ‘the gift of God and the conscious response of man’³⁵, on which beatitude is founded. The smile revealed on the face of the blessed souls is a *speculum* of divine light, the means through which it reverberates and is reflected. It marks the advent of the *tempus ridendi*, indicating the completed mission of the Christian pilgrim who has finally acquired the form willed by God: the luminous beauty that manifests the permanent possession of divine truth through the veil of the smile, in the likeness of the divine image.

The smile of the blessed is not, therefore, to be confused with earthly laughter, as Dante points out on two occasions in *Par. IX*, within the Sphere of Venus:

*Per letiziar là sù fulgor s'acquista,
 sì come riso qui; ma giù s'abbuia
 l'ombra di fuor, come la mente è trista.
 [...]
 Non però qui si pente, ma si ride,
 non de la colpa, ch'a mente non torna,
 ma del valor ch'ordinò e provide.³⁶
 (70-72; 103-105)*

Vv. 70-72 have often been understood as an opposition between the light of the blessed and earthly laughter, supporting a metaphorical interpretation of the smile as pure light. In reality, the light of the blessed, which is not identified with but manifests itself through their smiles, is only compared with earthly laughter because both are outward signs of gladness. The two phenomena are differentiated by their duration: on earth the brightness of the smile is temporary and is extinguished by sadness, while in Paradise the divine splendor is eternal and, as we will see, is expressed through an eternal smile. That the smile of the blessed cannot be reduced only to pure light, on the other hand, will be clearly visible in the case of Justinian: the ‘lume’ which emanates from his eyes shines when his soul smiles (‘corusca sì come tu ridi’, V. 126³⁷); in other words, it is revealed through the smile.

In addition, the smile of the blessed is distinguished from earthly laughter not only by the duration of its brightness, but also by its triggering cause. In this regard, the second passage of *Par. IX*. 103-105 is revealing: in it Cunizza da Romano explains that the blessed in his sphere laugh not at the sin of sensual love for which they had a weakness in life, but for the divine virtue that inclined their nature toward the good. The two verses are built on two antitheses: in

³⁵ Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991-97).

³⁶ ‘There above, brightness is gained by joy,/ as is laughter here, but down below/ a shade shows dark when sadness clouds its mind. [...] / ‘Yet here we don’t repent, but smile instead,/ not at our fault, which comes not back to mind,/ but for that Power which ordered and foresaw.’

³⁷ ‘It sparkles when you smile’.

the first, repentance, which for Dante is always associated with tears, is contrasted with laughter; in the second, vice and virtue ('valor', (105)) stand in opposition as possible reasons for 'riso'. These negations revolve around the adverb 'qui', which emphasizes the difference between the heavenly world and the earthly one: if on earth man can repent of his sin by returning to God – or, on the contrary, by laughing at his vices he condemns himself to Hell – in Heaven one does not cry or laugh at sin, but smiles at the love and virtue of God.

The following analysis of the representation of smiling among the blessed will show how earthly laughter, which was still present in *Purgatorio*, will gradually be divinized in *Paradiso* through the creation of a smile that, while still represented in its concreteness and physicality up to the heights of the Empyrean, is also spiritualized, becoming the main attribute of the divine. The transition from the wise smile that characterizes *Purgatorio* to the smile of the Virgin or to that of God takes place through the necessary mediation of the smile of the blessed souls, and above all, as we shall see, through that of Beatrice.

From a lexical point of view, one can observe a subtle difference with respect to the *Purgatorio*: in the second canticle, derivatives of the verb "sorridere" prevail with respect to "ridere" in the actual *mise en scène* of the characters' smiles; in *Paradiso*, the smile that appears on the face of the blessed is represented equally with the terms "ridere" and "sorridere". A semantic equivalence is established between the two verbs: both are means through which divine splendor is revealed, along with elements that manifest and qualify the superior cognitive state of the blessed. In *Paradiso* we therefore can observe the completion of this process of liberating the smile, which Dante achieves in the *Commedia* through the invention of a new category of smile, used here for the first time with frequency in a work, much like laughter that finds justification and is replaced, both in lexical and semantic terms, by the smile. With the term "riso" in the *Paradiso*, Dante indicates, in fact, a smile that on the one hand preserves its human traits, its corporeality and its sense of wisdom, and on the other rises to the level of divine revelation. The following sections will investigate the fundamental role of love poetry in this semantic evolution of laughter. For the moment it will suffice to remember that Dante's work is part of that evolutionary phase of medieval laughter which Jacques Le Goff defines as liberation and control³⁸, in which we observe the appearance and proliferation of smiles in European vernacular art and literature.

In this context, the smile of the blessed constitutes an original and innovative trait with which Dante enters the theological debate of the time, while also contributing to what can be defined as the first codification of the smile in Italian literature.

³⁸ Jacques Le Goff, 'Le rire au Moyen Age', *Les Cahiers du Centre de Recherches Historiques*, 3, (1989), 1-14 (p. 9).

The first smile in the *Paradiso* appears on the face of the blessed soul Piccarda Donati, whom Dante meets in the Sphere of the Moon, the lowest heavenly sphere dedicated to the spirits who in life manifested weakness of will. Piccarda responds with ‘occhi ridenti’ to Dante’s request to know her name and the condition of the blessed souls in this sphere:

[...] grazioso mi fia se mi contenti
del nome tuo e de la vostra sorte".
Ond'ella, pronta e *con occhi ridenti*:
“La nostra carità [...].³⁹
(III. 40-43)

Subsequently, Piccarda is portrayed smiling again, this time in response to Dante’s question about the desire of the blessed to ascend to a higher heaven:

Con quelle altr'ombre pria *sorrise un poco*;
da indi *mi rispuose* tanto lieta,
ch'arder pareva d'amor nel primo foco: [...].⁴⁰
(III. 67-69)

In the first case, Piccarda’s smile initially shows through her eyes. The link between the eyes and the smile is a constant in the representation of Dante’s blessed souls and, as we will see, especially in his portrayal of Beatrice, where he often creates a simultaneous merging of the two elements. This relationship is already present in Guido Guinizzelli’s love lyrics, in which the mouth and eyes of the beloved woman have the power to reveal the noble heart. In the *Convivio* in particular, the eyes and ‘il dolce riso’ constitute the places where the soul is revealed (III. VIII. 88) representing, respectively, the demonstrations and persuasions of Wisdom (III. XV. 2); furthermore, the smile of Lady Wisdom is praised in the *Convivio* because ‘mai non si sentia se non dell’occhio!’⁴¹ (III. VIII. 12). Moreover, in the poem the phrase ‘occhi ridenti’ is only used in one other case: it is Beatrice who, smiling at Dante’s absorbed contemplation of the blessed in the fourth heavenly sphere, shows ‘lo splendor de li occhi suoi ridenti’ (X. 62)⁴².

In Piccarda’s case, the smile does not remain only within her eyes, but later shows more openly on her face (III. 67), although characterized by moderation: it is, in fact, dampened ‘un poco’, as had already happened with the ‘riso’ of Belacqua (*Purg.* IV) and Dante (*Purg.* XXI); this detail, which on the one hand demonstrates the interchangeability of the two terms in Dante’s use, on the other hand provides a precise reference, once again, to the figure of Beatrice. Here

³⁹ ‘I shall take it as a kindness if you share with me/ your name and lot, and the lot of others here./ Then she, eager and with smiling eyes:/ ‘Our love [...].’

⁴⁰ ‘Along with the other shades, she smiled,/ then answered me with so much gladness/ she seemed alight with love’s first fire: [...].’

⁴¹ ‘It never made itself known except through her eyes’.

⁴² ‘The splendor of her smiling eyes’.

the poet refers to the *Vita Nuova*: in Chapter XXI, at the end of *Ne li occhi porta la mia donna Amore*, Dante celebrates the ineffable miracle of Beatrice, 'quando un poco sorride' (12)⁴³.

Both of Piccarda's smiles echo Beatrice's smile; it could not be otherwise, if we consider that both female figures represent the surpassing of earthly love by the love of God, also achieved in Canto III through the use of a stylistic language to which a mystical value is attributed⁴⁴. Piccarda's smile, like that of Beatrice, is no longer – or rather, is not only – an element of feminine beauty celebrated in love poetry, but has become a means of revealing the love of God, his *caritas*. Not surprisingly, the *caritas* veiled with a smile (*Par.* XX.13) guides both of Piccarda's responses to Dante (v. 43 and 69), revealing herself in the smiling attitude of the blessed.

Both of Piccarda's smiles, like the smile of Thomas (XI. 17) and that of Cacciaguida (XVII. 136), also perform a demarcating function similar to that of the smile in *Purgatorio*: if the first smile initiates direct discourse (43), the second introduces the response of the blessed soul, being accompanied by the *verbum dicendi* 'rispuose' (66). The smile of the blessed is presented, therefore, as a means of communication, defining the tone of their dialogue with the pilgrim Dante, expressing the desire of the blessed to transmit their knowledge and the divine love with which they are inflamed.

In particular, Piccarda's smiles still appear very similar to those found in the *Purgatorio*, in that they express the wise attitude of the spirit: on the one hand, the smile of Piccarda's eyes precedes the revelation of her identity, much like Manfredi's smile; on the other hand, the second smile qualifies Piccarda's superior state of knowledge, smiling 'de semplicitate quaerentis'⁴⁵ – that is, at Dante's ignorance due to his limited earthly knowledge. It should be noted that, in this case, Piccarda's smile is addressed to the other blessed souls ('Con quelle altr'ombre' (67)⁴⁶) who share the same degree of knowledge, from which Dante is excluded. In this way, Dante emphasizes the elitist dimension of the heavenly smile, a gift from God granted only to those who are illuminated by the light of his love, founded on exclusive cognitive competences, which, however, blessed souls are happy to reveal to Dante, because they are moved by *caritas* to show the divine truth⁴⁷. Piccarda's smile, while still represented with the purgatorial traits of the sage's smile, constitutes the means of access to understanding the theological truth of *caritas*, the subject of the soul's speech. The smile of Thomas (XI. 17) will perform a similar function, as will that of Beatrice on several occasions, showing affection and compassion for the

⁴³ 'When she starts to smile'.

⁴⁴ Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991-97).

⁴⁵ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887).

⁴⁶ 'Along with the other shades'.

⁴⁷ Alessandro Vellutello (Venezia: F. Marcolini, 1544): 'perchè sempre sono accese di somma carità et amore, si moveno lietamente a dimostrar il vero'.

pilgrim Dante's doubts and concerns. In the rarefied spheres of heaven, perceptible by means of music and lights, the smile becomes an important instrument for Dante and a means of revealing divine wisdom.⁴⁸

The second blessed soul who smiles is the emperor Justinian, in the Sphere of Mercury, to whom Dante addresses himself with the following words (V. 124-126):

"Io veggio ben sì *come tu t'annidi*
nel proprio lume, e che de li occhi il *traggi*,
perch'e' corusca sì come tu *ridi*; [...].⁴⁹

Here light and smile appear together for the first time as elements necessary to the representation of blessed souls. Light is presented as a veil in which the soul 'annida', is enveloped, through which it conceals and reveals itself to Dante; a light that emanates from the eyes, which increases in splendor ('corusca' (127)) as soon as the blessed soul smiles. Once again, the eyes and smile are the loci where the soul reveals itself, radiating its own light. Light and the smile are interdependent elements, linked by a proportional relationship: the more the soul smiles, the more the light shines⁵⁰. In fact, it is later affirmed that the splendor is caused, precisely, by the increase in joy ('per più letizia sì mi si nascose/ dentro al suo raggio la figura santa' (136-137)⁵¹). As in the case of Piccarda, Justinian is part of that group of souls who burn with the desire to satisfy Dante's thirst for knowledge; he in turn sees each approaching soul 'piena di letizia' (107)⁵² evident because of the intense brightness that emanates from it. The smile therefore represents an element characterizing the positive disposition of the blessed souls towards the pilgrim, the primary expression of their desire to transmit divine knowledge and truth.

In addition, the passage establishes an opposition between 'dentro' and 'fuori'⁵³: if light is an inner phenomenon that conceal the soul, the smile and the eyes are the external manifestations of the soul through which the light is revealed and made intelligible to the pilgrim. In fact, in the case of Emperor Justinian, the features of the soul are still recognizable, and so is his smile; as Dante ascends from sphere to heavenly sphere, souls will increasingly lose their human features and will manifest themselves as pure light. The smile of the blessed does not appear,

⁴⁸ Claudia Villa, *La protervia di Beatrice. Studi per la biblioteca di Dante* (Firenze: Sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2011), p. 204: 'il riso è infatti uno strumento usato come mezzo di comunicazione, una qualità fondamentale e un tramite di conoscenza'.

⁴⁹ 'I clearly see you nest in your own light,/ and that you flash it from your eyes,/ because it sparkles when you smile.'

⁵⁰ Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991-97).

⁵¹ 'So, with increasing joy, the holy form concealed itself from me within its rays'.

⁵² 'Filled with joy'.

⁵³ As Gaimari noted, underscoring this opposition as an element in favor of the literal smile of the blessed in *Il sorriso dei beati nella "Commedia". Un'interpretazione letterale*, p. 483.

however, to be affected by these changes, maintaining its own physicality, although it is increasingly indicated as a means by which the soul's light shines. This is the case for the blessed soul Gratian (X. 103-105) and the historian Paulus Orosius (X. 118-120):

[...] quell'altro *fiammeggiare esce del riso*
di Grazian, che l'uno e l'altro foro
aiutò sì che piace in *paradiso*.⁵⁴

[...] Ne l'altra piccioletta *luce ride*
quello avvocato de' tempi cristiani
del cui latino Augustin si provide.⁵⁵

If, in the first case, the light of Gratian's soul issues from and manifests itself through his smile, in the second case, the smile of Paulus Orosius appears enveloped by his light, unfolding within it. In these two cases the smile functions as an essential instrument of divine revelation, that external fissure, the veil that gives shape to the inner light of the soul which is a reflection and radiation of the divine. The term's position within the verse in Gratian's passage makes clear its function: 'riso' is rhymed with 'paradiso' and with 'viso' (101), or gaze, forming a trinomial that once again connects the soul's beatitude to the eyes and to the smile, the means by which it is revealed and gives shape to the appearances with which Dante perceives the blessed. The rhyming combination 'riso'-'paradiso' is, in fact, traditional in the thirteenth-century love lyric, especially in that of Giacomo da Lentini⁵⁶. However, if in these texts the rhyme was a necessary means to exalt the beauty of the beloved woman, as we shall see in further detail, Dante instead elevates it to an instrument for describing the divine. In fact, the author will use it especially in relation to Beatrice's smile⁵⁷, but also in the context of the description of the blessed and their realm, as occurs in the description of the Empyrean in *Par.* XXXI:

Vedëa visi a carità süadi,
d'altrui lume fregiati e di suo *riso*,
e atti ornati di tutte onestadi.
La forma general di *paradiso*
già tutta mïo sguardo avea compresa,
in nulla parte ancor fermato fiso; [...].⁵⁸
(49-54)

⁵⁴ 'The next flame issues from the smile of Gratian,/ who served one and the other court so well/ his service now gives joy in Paradise.'

⁵⁵ 'In the other little light there/ smiles that defender of the Christian Church/ of whose account Augustine made good use.'

⁵⁶ See Ch. III. 5, 161.

⁵⁷ *Par.* X. 103-105; *Par.* XV. 34-36; *Par.* XXIII. 59-61.

⁵⁸ 'I saw visages informed by heavenly love, resplendent/ with Another's light and their own smiles,/ their every movement graced with dignity,/ My gaze by now had taken in/ the general form of Paradise/ but not yet fixed on any single part of it, [...].'

‘La forma general di paradiso’, or the complete image of the Empyrean, is provided through the description of the unveiled faces of the resurrected bodies, illuminated by smiles. Within what Dante defines as a vague description of Paradise, still devoid of details, the smile is an indispensable attribute, together with light, which provides the reader with a general picture of the essence of the realm. So much so that Paradise, as the rhyme signals, will merge with the smile – the emblem, as will be seen at the end of the chapter, of divinity itself.

During Dante’s ascent, the smile undergoes a progressive divinization; nevertheless, it does not lose its wise, human trait: it continues to describe the cognitive superiority of the blessed and, at the same time, the joy caused by the revelation of truth. The smiles of Thomas Aquinas and of Dante’s ancestor Cacciaguida belong to this category:

E io senti' *dentro a quella lumera*
che pria m'avea parlato, *sorridendo*
*incominciar, faccendosi più mera: [...].*⁵⁹
(XI. 16-18)

[...] a per chiare parole e con preciso
latin *rispuose* quello amor paterno,
chiuso e parvente del suo proprio riso: [...]
La luce in che rideva il mio tesoro
ch'io trovai lì, *si fé prima corusca,*
quale a raggio di sole specchio d'oro; [...].
*indi rispuose: [...].*⁶⁰
(XVII. 34-36; 121-123)

The smiles of both blessed souls accompany the act of answering and satisfying Dante’s queries: Thomas clarifies Dante’s doubt about St. Dominic expressed in the previous canto, while Cacciaguida’s two answers constitute respectively a revelation of Dante’s destiny and the unveiling of his prophetic investiture. As in the case of Piccarda, the smile here acquires an elocutionary function, introducing the direct discourse of the blessed (XI. 18 ‘incominciar’; XVII. 122 ‘rispuose’; XVII. 123 ‘indi rispuose’), indicating moments of revelation of the truth which, in the case of Cacciaguida, appear fundamental for the poet. In the case of Thomas, in particular, the early commentators⁶¹ detected a trace of superiority in his smile, a reaction to Dante’s limited knowledge: Francesco da Buti emphasizes how Tommaso smiled as a wiseman, because he did not smile openly, but just ‘un poco’, at the interlocutor’s ignorance⁶². The theologian’s

⁵⁹ ‘And now the light that had already spoken/ from deep within began again to speak,/ smiling and shining still more bright: [...].’

⁶⁰ ‘[...] but in plain words and with clear speech/ that paternal love replied,/ hidden and yet revealed in his own smile: [...] The light, in which the treasure that I found there/ had been smiling, now became resplendent/ as a mirror, golden in the sun,/ and then made this reply: [...].’

⁶¹ Cristoforo Landino (Firenze: Lexis Progetti Editoriali, 1999: ‘*sorridendo della ignorantia di Danthe*’.

⁶² Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62).

smile therefore designates him as the holder of a perfect knowledge of the truth, transmitted and revealed to one who does not know.

Both blessed souls also appear enveloped and wrapped in light: Thomas is ‘dentro a quella lumera’ (XI. 16), while Cacciaguida appears ‘chiuso e parvente del suo proprio riso’ (XVII. 36). In the latter case, the smile is described as a means that conceals and reveals Cacciaguida: it is a ‘velamento’⁶³ that hides the features of the soul, since it is through this veil that the blinding brightness of divine charity shines⁶⁴ while revealing its light. As we have already seen, the increasing instances of the smile correspond to an increase in light that becomes brighter, more ‘mera’, ‘più luminosa’⁶⁵ in the case of Thomas, while it shines – ‘corusca’ – for Cacciaguida like a ray of sunshine in a golden mirror. Marco Ariani interprets the splendor of the smile on the face of Dante’s ancestor as a mirror of wisdom with which ‘Cacciaguida prepares Dante for the *scientia* he will acquire with St. Bernard’⁶⁶, within the cognitive path Dante treads in his ascent, defined as ‘a conquest of wisdom from one light to the next’⁶⁷. It could therefore be said that, just as the continuous increase in splendor to which Dante is progressively subjected during his heavenly ascent appears to be aimed at preparing the pilgrim’s eyes to support the final contemplation of the *visio Dei*, the smiles of the blessed, playing the fundamental role of mediating this light and, therefore, this wisdom, gradually prepare the pilgrim for the vision of God’s smile, the essence of beatitude and *caritas*.

One smile in particular differs from those analyzed so far: it is the smile of Gregory the Great which occurs in *Paradiso* XXVIII. 133-35:

Ma Gregorio da lui poi si divise;
onde, *si tosto come li occhi aperse*
in questo ciel, *di sé medesimo rise*.⁶⁸

Dante imagines here that Gregory the Great, who reached the Primum Mobile after death, smiled at himself upon discovering that his own theory on the hierarchy of angelic orders, which he postulated in life, was erroneous, unlike that expounded by Dionysius. Gregory’s smile represents that of the wise man who laughs at his own mistakes or those of others; this type of

⁶³ *Convivio* III. XV. 2.

⁶⁴ Daniele Mattalia (Milano: A. Rizzoli, 1960): ‘il riso o affetto delle anime, come sempre, si manifesta nella luce che le nasconde (cf. *Par.*, V, 136-138) e insieme le rende ‘parventi’, visibili’.

⁶⁵ Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991-97).

⁶⁶ Marco Ariani, *Lux inaccessibilis. Metafore e teologia della luce nel ‘Paradiso’ di Dante* (Roma: Aracne Editrice, 2010), p. 228.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 242.

⁶⁸ ‘But later Gregory took a different view,/ so that, opening his eyes here in this heaven,/ he saw his errors, laughing at himself.’

laughter is used in the *Convivio* and in the *Questio de aqua et terra*, where, in dealing with philosophical errors, Dante gives an example of Aristotle's reaction of laughter⁶⁹.

Behind Gregorio's *riso*, as Scartazzini had already noted, hides 'Dante's laughter at his own mistake'⁷⁰, since he himself, in the *Convivio*, had distanced himself from Pseudo-Dionysius' theory of angelic hierarchies. Just as Gregory, upon his beatification, discovers the truth, Dante himself, when led to the truth through the guidance of Beatrice, can also laugh at himself and recognize his own error. Thus, Gregory's smile, according to Rachel Jacoff, has a palinodic value that implies the recognition of error and, at the same time, 'a way of looking at the past equally free of guilt and of nostalgia'⁷¹. It is a smile that, according to Maria Rosa Spanò, represents 'the highest outcome of *retractatio*'⁷², as a manifestation of the spiritual truth of paradisiacal reality, different from false earthly theories.

In fact, this smile appears to be the herald of a lacuna between divine and earthly reality which may concern not only the truth about angelic orders, but the heavenly possibility of laughter as well. It should be noted that Gregory the Great, in his commentary on verse 8:21 of the Book of Job ('Impleatur risu os tuum et labia tua iubilo'), affirmed that the blessed would laugh after arriving in the afterlife, but this laughter would be a *risus cordis*, essentially a mental jubilation:

Therefore when all the Elect are replenished with the delight of open vision, they spring forth into the joyousness of laughter in the mouth of the interior. But we call it shouting [jubilum], when we conceive such joy in the heart, as we cannot give vent to by the force of words, and yet the triumph of the heart vents with the voice what it cannot give forth by speech. Now the mouth is rightly said to be filled with laughter, the lips with shouting, since in that eternal land, when the mind of the righteous is borne away in transport, the tongue is lifted up in the song of praise. And they, because they see so much as they are unable to express, shout in laughter, because without compassing it they resound all the love that they feel.⁷³

⁶⁹ 'E senza dubio forte riderebbe Aristotile udendo fare spezie due dell'umana generazione, sì come delli cavalli e delli asini; ché, perdonimi Aristotile, asini ben si possono dire coloro che così pensano' (*Conv.*, IV. 15); 'sed hoc oportebit esse per lineas diversas, ut patet in figura signata; quod non solum est impossibile, sed rideret Aristotiles si audiret. Et hoc erat secundum quod declarari debebatur.' (*Questio de aqua et terra*, 24)

⁷⁰ Giovanni Scartazzini (Milano: U. Hoepli, 1929).

⁷¹ Rachel Jacoff, 'The Post-Palinodic Smile: Paradiso VIII and IX', in *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, 98 (The Johns Hopkins University Press: 1980), 111-122 (p. 120).

⁷² Maria R. Spanò, 'Dove si parla di angeli e di errori: il *riso* di Gregorio Magno nella *Commedia* (Par. XXVIII 130-135)', in *Il mondo errante. Dante fra letteratura, eresia e storia. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studio. Bertinoro, 13-16 settembre 2010* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2013), p. 471-486 (p. 483).

⁷³ Gregory The Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, p. 450: 'Cum ergo electi omnes implentur gaudio manifestae contemplationis quasi ad hilaritatem risus exsiliunt in ore mentis. Iubilum vero dicimus cum tantam laetitiam corde concipimus, quantam sermonis efficacia non explemus; et tamen mentis exsultatio hoc quod sermone non explicat, voce sonat. Bene autem os risu impleri dicitur, labia iubilo, quia in illa aeterna patria, cum iustorum mens in exultationem rapitur, lingua in cantu laudis elevatur. Qui quoniam tantum vident quantum dicere non valent, in risu iubilant, quia non explendo resonant quod amant.' (*Moralia in Job*, VIII. 52. 88).

The laughter of the blessed, for Gregory, is in the mouth of the mind (*ore mentis*) and does not manifest physically, but is reduced to an inner jubilation, the exiles' means of expressing joy at their return to the homeland, now finally able to cease their weeping and rejoice in the vision of God. Gregory does not admit the possibility of true laughter or smiles among the blessed; it seems curious, therefore, that Dante attributes to Gregory, when he first arrived in Heaven, precisely this emotional manifestation of the smile. Gregory's smile assumes a double value within the famous retraction: not only does it underscore the palinode of a doctrinal error, that of the angelic orders, but, through its own representation, it also constitutes the recognition of Gregory's erroneous conviction concerning the smile of the blessed. This hypothesis appears to be reaffirmed by the fact that Gregory's self-deprecating smile is a unique case in the *Commedia*, while other blessed souls, whose philosophical beliefs are proven wrong in Dante's narrative, are not portrayed laughing at themselves⁷⁴.

Through Gregory's smile, therefore, Dante affirms not only the ability of the blessed to smile, but he chooses the smile as the main manifestation of their joy and, above all, of their divine knowledge.

The final smile among the blessed belongs to St. Bernard, placed in a liminal position of fundamental importance. In fact, it immediately precedes the vision of God (XXXIII. 49-51):

Bernardo *m'accennava, e sorridea,*
perch'io guardassi suso; ma io era
*già per me stesso tal qual ei volea: [...].*⁷⁵

After the prayer to the Virgin Mary, Dante's third and final guide St. Bernard addresses the pilgrim by smiling and beckoning him to look up towards the ultimate vision of God. On the one hand, Bernardo's smile was considered an expression of 'inner joy'⁷⁶ for having directed Dante's gaze towards God; on the other, beginning with the commentary of Baldassare Lombardi, it was interpreted as a 'sign of congratulation for the achieved grace'⁷⁷ granted by the Virgin for the vision of God, and therefore as a smile of a father figure towards his son.

I argue that the second hypothesis is the most likely, since it appears to be confirmed by the presence of an important element that qualifies the smile of St. Bernard: it is the nod, of which the smile is an integral part, or as Bosco-Reggio's comment suggests, 'perhaps one consists in

⁷⁴ Lauren S. Seem ('Nolite iudicare: Dante and the Dilemma of Judgment', in *Writers Reading Writers: Intertextual Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Literature in Honor of Robert Hollander*, ed. by Janet Levarie Smarr (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), pp. 73-88 (p.79)) argues that Isidore of Seville, who appears with Solomon in the sphere of the Sun, should be laughing at himself, since he thought Solomon was damned, but he does not do it.

⁷⁵ 'With his smile, Bernard signaled/ that I look upward, but of my own accord/ I was already doing what he wished, [...].'

⁷⁶ Tommaso Casini and S.A. Barbi (Firenze: G. C. Sansoni, 1944).

⁷⁷ Baldassarre Lombardi (Roma: A. Fulgoni, 1791-92).

the other'⁷⁸. In fact, the term 'accennare' or 'fare un cenno' is close 'to the original semanteme, from the late Latin *cinnus* ("sign made with the eye", "wink")'⁷⁹, indicating, therefore, a movement of the eyes that translates into a smile, as so often is the case in Paradise. The smile combined with the nod thus assumes a proxemic function⁸⁰ that recurs throughout the *Commedia*, precisely during moments aimed at expressing the relationship between guide and disciple.

In *Inf.* IV. 97, Virgil responds with a smile to the 'salutevol cenno' (96) by which the *bella scola* of ancient poets addresses Dante; the nod and the smile therefore appear as signs that demonstrate the recognition of Dante's merit, first by signaling his entry into the ranks of ancient poets, and then by expressing the master's satisfaction with the success of his disciple⁸¹.

Beatrice in *Par.* XV also encourages Dante to ask Cacciaguida his first question through a nod of assent along with a smile ('[Beatrice] arrisemi un cenno che fece crescer l'ali al voler mio' (70-72)⁸²). The transitive verb *arridere*, from the Latin *ad-ridere*, 'to smile at someone'⁸³, implies a smile that includes the gesture, a movement towards the other person, so much so that 'the nod and smile become a single element'⁸⁴. Beatrice's smile has the effect of encouraging Dante and stimulating his desire to talk to his ancestor, thus allowing the subsequent conversation that will reveal the prophetic investiture of the poet.

The smile, combined with the nod, thus constitutes the tool through which Dante's three guides display their wisdom, encouraging the pilgrim to continue through some of the fundamental stages of his itinerary while at the same time celebrating the completion of these stages.

Dante's journey is punctuated by the smiles of the guides, which begin and conclude the *Commedia*: the first smile of the poem is, in fact, that of Virgil, who in *Inf.* IV celebrates the poetic and earthly glory of Dante the poet when he joins the circle of the *bella scola*; the last smile is, instead, that of Bernardo in *Par.* XXXIII, which announces and celebrates Dante's final and most important undertaking: his encounter with the divine, and the extraordinary revelation of God's love. Between the human smile of Virgil, the wise pagan poet, and the smile of Bernard, the saint who enables the mystical vision of God's smile, there are the numerous smiles of

⁷⁸ Umberto Bosco and Giovanni Reggio (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1979).

⁷⁹ Emilio Pasquini, 'Accennare', in *Enciclopedia dantesca* (Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 1970), <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/accennare_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/> [accessed May 2021].

⁸⁰ On the gesture of smile see Mario Cimini, 'Il sorriso di Beatrice: note sulla gestualità paradisiaca', in *Studi medievali e moderni* 25, (2021), 135-148. On gestures in the *Commedia* see John A. Burrow in *Gestures and look in medieval narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Paolo De Ventura, *Dramma e dialogo nella Commedia di Dante. Il linguaggio della mimesi per un resoconto dell'aldilà* (Napoli: Liguori, 2007), pp. 167-200.

⁸¹ See Ch III. 5.

⁸² '[...] Beatrice, who had heard/ before I spoke and smiled a sign'.

⁸³ Francesco Bonomi, 'Arridere', in *DELI Dizionario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana, 2004-2008*, <<http://www.etimo.it/>> [accessed May 2021].

⁸⁴ Natalino Sapegno (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1955-57).

Beatrice, a tool of mediation and the progressive revelation of divine truth during Dante's heavenly ascent.

Beatrice, unlike Virgil and similarly to Bernard, is also represented smiling in her final image (*Par.* XXXI. 91-93): just as Bernard's smile follows his prayer to the Virgin Mary, Beatrice smiles following the prayer which Dante dedicates to her and then definitively shifts her gaze from the pilgrim to devote herself to the contemplation of the divine. Bernard's subsequent smile would seem to replace that of Beatrice, acquiring the same mediating function for the pilgrim, within that process of shifting from one guide to the next in which, according to the traditional interpretation, Theology gives way to Mysticism. In reality, the fact that Bernard's smile at the peak of Paradise maintains all the physicality and gestures of Beatrice's smile could be considered Beatrice's legacy, the element through which she continues to maintain a presence, up to the very end of the poem. In fact, as the following analysis will demonstrate, Dante the poet gradually divinizes the smile in the *Commedia*, as an attribute of the blessed souls and then of the divine itself, through the mediation of Beatrice's smile, a fundamental revelation of God's smile.

IV. 2 From the female *dolce riso* to the smile of Beatrice: the theology of the smile

In order to understand the role which Beatrice's smile⁸⁵ plays in the poem, it is necessary, first of all, to investigate the cultural and literary background in which it evolved.

Within the generalized condemnation of laughter which characterizes Christian antiquity and the early Middle Ages, female laughter possessed a further criticality entirely inherent in its feminine nature. In the discourse of the Church Fathers, the ideal of virginity and chastity as a condition to which women should aspire required moderate and regulated conduct, in which laughter, already considered an uncontrolled bodily phenomenon, was viewed as an inappropriate emotional manifestation⁸⁶, especially by virtue of its powerful eroticism on the female lips, the mouth being perceived as the first sinful organ on the path to sexual conquest⁸⁷. The Bible itself suggests an attitude of disapproval towards female laughter in the story of Sarah: the woman, now in her nineties, bursts out laughing at the announcement of the birth of her son Isaac (*Genesis* 18.12), but later denies having laughed after being reprimanded by God himself, who punishes her with conception⁸⁸. If Sarah's female laughter is punished more harshly than Abraham's male laughter⁸⁹, this episode also affirms the superiority and legitimacy of the laughter of the Creator (symbolized by Isaac, whose name means *risus*) with respect to his creation, especially if female. As Olga Trokhimenko points out in her essay, through the influence of the Bible, 'the rejection of the erotic side of women's laughter was firmly established as an important part of the Christian discourse'⁹⁰.

Within the context of this gradually evolving cultural attitude towards laughter, which occurred between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries due to the advent of the laity and the birth of vernacular literatures, female laughter undergoes its own sort of liberation in courtly literature. In this context, the eroticism of female laughter is intrinsically connected to the poetic exaltation

⁸⁵ Beatrice's smile has been the subject of numerous analyses, albeit focused on individual episodes. I recall the following contributions: Renè Stella, 'Dante et le rire', *Italies. Littérature Civilisation Société*, 4 (2000), 689-704; Luigi Spagnolo, 'Il riso di Beatrice' (Roma: Carocci editore, 2007), pp.261-270; Claudia Villa, *La protervia di Beatrice. Studi per la biblioteca di Dante* (Firenze: Sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2011); David Ruziska, 'Beatrice's smile' in '*Uno lume apparente di fuori secondo sta dentro*': the expressive body in Dante's *Commedia*, *The Italianist*, 34. 1 (2014), 7-10; Saverio Bellomo, "'Un lampeggiar di riso": quando Dante sorride', *Lecture classensi. XLIV. Dante e l'esilio* (2015), 127-137.

⁸⁶ On the topic see Ingvild S. Gilhu, *Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 1997) pp. 66-68 and Olga V. Trokhimenko, *Constructing Virtue and Vice: Femininity and Laughter in Courtly Society (ca. 1150-1300)* (Gottingen: V&R unipress, 2012), pp. 71-76.

⁸⁷ Trokhimenko, 'The two "mouths" of a Medieval woman', in *Constructing Virtue and Vice*, pp. 27-60.

⁸⁸ *Gen.* 18. 13-15: 'The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh."

⁸⁹ Gilhu, p. 25.

⁹⁰ Trokhimenko, p. 73.

of the beloved woman. In the poetry of the troubadours, laughter is an element that, along with the mouth and the kiss, contributes to the celebration of female beauty and eroticism: laughter is the means by which the woman conquers the poet⁹¹, along with her sweet speech and gaze, which disturb his senses⁹². Laughter is identified as a courtly quality, along with an easy comportment and the ability to converse, all of which characterize the woman's aristocratic and superior virtue⁹³. In the feudal relationship between the poet-vassal and his lady, laughter, as well as her greeting, constitute a reward which the poet hopes she will grant him as a sign of her grace in response to his service of love.

This function of female laughter is particularly notable in the lyrics of the Italian troubadour Lanfranco Cigala, in which laughter is understood as a sign of the lady's complaisance toward the courtship of the poet, as well as a source of joy and torment for the lover⁹⁴. This meaning is discussed in the *tenzone* between Cigala and fellow troubadour Rubaut⁹⁵, who attempts to demonstrate the deceptive nature of female laughter that instead hides the absence of amorous recompense.

The 'doutz rire', which in troubadour poetry connoted the sweetness of the lady's laughter, was appropriated into the love poetry of the Sicilian School, in which 'dolce riso' becomes a recurring phrase, starting from its first attestation in *Lo viso mi fa andare alegramente* by Giacomo da Lentini:

Chi vide mai così begli ochi in viso,
 né sì amorosi fare li sembianti,
 né boca con cotanto *dolce riso*?
 Quand'eo li parlo moroli davanti,
 e paremi ch'i' vada in *paradiso*,
 e tegnomi sovrano d'ogn'amante.⁹⁶
 (9-13)

⁹¹ Arnaut de Marueilh, *Anc vas Amor no-m poc res contradire* (IV. 22-24): 'Bona dompna, li plazer e-il doutz rir/ e-il avinen respos que-m sabetz far/ m'ant si conquis c'ad outra no-m puosc rendre'.

⁹² Folquet de Marseille, *Tant m'abellis l'amoros pessamens* (III. 17,-24): 'Bona dompna, si-us platz, siatz sufrens/del ben qu'ie-us vuoill, qu'ieu sui del mal sufrire,/ e pois lo mals no-m poira dan tener,/ anz m'er semblan que-l partam egalmens;/ e s'a vos platz qu'en outra part me vire,/ ostats de vos *la beutat e-l gen rire/ e-l douz parlar* que m'afollis mon sen/ pois partir m'ai de vos, mon escien.'; Sordello da Goito, *Gran esfortz fai qui ama per amor* (IV, 25-28): 'Hon qu'ieu estey, lai sopley et azor/ on ylh estai, que plai als fis cortes/ sobre totas las pros, tan plazens es/ de cors, de cor e d'esgartz e de *rire* [...]'.
⁹³ Guilhem de la Tor, *Quant hom regna vas cellui falsament* (21-27): 'e si m'entent/ en tal, qu'al mieu parer,/ de sa ricor non pot nuillz hom saber/ meillur de llei ni ab plus cortesia,/ ni qui sia/ plus d'avinent afar,/ *ni mierz sapcha rire ni gent parlar*'.

⁹⁴ Lanfranco Cigala, *Un avinen ris vi l'autrier* (I. 1-4): 'Un avinen ris vi l'autrier/ issir d'una *boca rizen*;/ e car anc ris tant plazentier/ non vi, n'ai al cor ioi plazen.'; III, 23-26: 'Quan fon e mon fin cor intratz/ dedins *lo bels ris* e-l esgart,/ mos cors se-n veng tost e viatz/ vas me claman merce: qu'eu art'.

⁹⁵ On the *tenzone* see Giulio Bertoni, *I trovatori d'Italia* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1974), pp. 413-17.
⁹⁶ 'Who ever saw such fair eyes in a vision,/ or eyes that make their looks so full of love,/ or lips with such great sweetness in their laughter?/ Whenever I speak to her,/ and them I seem to go to paradise,/ and hold myself more blessed than any lover' (Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Lyric* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1968), p. 154).

In the celebratory list of the beloved's beautiful qualities, sweet laughter is exalted along with the woman's mouth and eyes. One notes that laughter appears to be distinct from the mouth, where it manifests itself⁹⁷; laughter thus appears in the Italian love lyric as a distinct emotional manifestation of its own and an erotic element portraying the beloved's beauty which, in this case, is so shocking for the poetic narrator that he envisions death and an ascent to paradise. As in *Io m'aggio posto in core*, in this composition as well we can observe the rhyme 'riso'-'paradiso', which in the first sonnet defines a paradise with earthly traits, while here it appears to have a hyperbolic function, alluding to a divine dimension that remains secondary and subordinate to the presence of the beloved woman.

The 'dolce riso' continues to characterize the poetry of the Sicilian and Tuscan schools, functioning as an attribute of female beauty along with her gaze, mouth and face⁹⁸, and thus becoming a means of conquest by which the woman binds her lover to herself⁹⁹.

In the poetry of the Dolce Stil Novo, the laughter of the angelic woman is celebrated above all by its moral and psychophysical effects on the poet. In Cino da Pistoia, the beloved's laughter transmits her joy both to the poet and to everything around her¹⁰⁰, consoling and turning sadness into happiness.

The experience of the lady's virtue through laughter can also be a traumatic event for the poet: in the lyrics of Lapo Gianni, the 'dolce riso' and 'li occhi suoi lucenti come stella'¹⁰¹ (*Questa rosa novella* (13-14)) force the poet to lower his gaze, because it cannot endure her power; or, in the composition *Amor, nova ed antica vanitate*, the lady's 'bel riso' (11) appears as an attribute of her beauty, but also as a cause of torment.

Female laughter can even provoke negative, disastrous effects. This representation finds its highest expression in the poems of Guido Cavalcanti, in which laughter becomes one of the weapons through which Love can injure the poet, causing him pain, bewilderment and death. In *Io non pensava che lo cor giammai*, the 'dolce riso' transforms into an arrow that pierces the poet's heart¹⁰², while in the *congedo* of the famous canzone *Donna me prega*, Love has the

⁹⁷ See Ch. II.3., 84, n. 229.

⁹⁸ Federico II di Svevia, *De le mia disianza*, (22-26): 'Ma tanto m'asicura/ lo suo viso amoroso,/ e lo gioioso - riso e lo sguardare le lo parlare - di quella criatura,/ che per paura - mi face penare'; Giacomino Pugliese, *Morte, perchè m'ài fatta sì gran guerra* (9-13): 'Ov'è madonna e lo suo insegnamento,/ la sua bellezza e la gran canoscianza,/ lo dolze riso e lo bel portamento, /gli oc[c]hi e la boc[c]a e la bella sembianza,/ suo adornamento e sua cortesia?'

⁹⁹ Giacomino Pugliese, *Donna, per vostro amore* (37-38): 'Co lo dolze riso/ conquiso - voi m'avete, fin amore:/ vostro sono leale servidore'; Bonagiunta Orbicciani, *Quando apar l'aulente fiore* (13-17): 'vo pensoso nott'e dia,/ per quella col chiaro viso:/ co' riguardi e dolce riso/ m' ha lanciato e mi dstringe/ la più dolze criatura.'

¹⁰⁰ Cino da Pistoia, *Fa' de la mente tua specchio sovente* (2-4): 'se vuoi campar, guardando 'l dolce viso,/ lo qual so che v'è pinto il suo bel riso,/ che fa tornar gioioso 'l cor dolente. '; *Sta nel piacer della mia donna Amore* (9-10): 'Ridendo par che s'allegri ogni loco,/ Per via passando;'

¹⁰¹ 'Her bright eyes like a star'.

¹⁰² Guido Cavalcanti, *Io non pensava che lo cor giammai* (37-39): 'Io ti dispero / però che trasse del su' dolce riso / una saetta aguta, c'ha passato 'l tuo core e 'l mio diviso'.

effect of taking away the poet's laughter and transforming it into tears¹⁰³; on the other hand, this same laughter provokes the lover's pain and sighs¹⁰⁴. Signs of this destructive conception of female laughter can be found in Dante himself, within the 'Canzone Montanina' (*Amor, da chel convien pur ch'io mi doglia*), in which the appropriation of Cavalcantian and stilnovistic means of describing Love's assault includes the use of the courtly tradition's *dolce riso*, transformed into an instrument of suffering and death: the poet awakens pale, stunned by the blow he received from his beloved's laughter¹⁰⁵.

With this context in mind, let us observe Beatrice's first smile, which occurs in Chapter XXI of the *Vita Nuova*, within the sonnet *Ne li occhi porta la mia donna Amore*, as follows:

Ne li occhi porta la mia donna Amore,
 per che si fa gentil ciò ch'ella mira;
 ov'ella passa, ogn'om ver lei si gira,
 e cui saluta fa tremar to core,
 sì che, bassando il viso, tutto smore,
 e d'ogni suo difetto allor sospira:
 fugge dinanzi a lei superbia ed ira.
 Aiutatemi, donne, farle onore.
 Ogne dolcezza, ogne pensiero umile
 nasce nel core a chi parlar la sente,
 ond'è laudato chi prima la vide.
Quel ch'ella par quando un poco sorride,
non si pò dicer né tenere a mente,
*sì è novo miracolo e gentile.*¹⁰⁶

Beatrice's only smile in the *Vita Nuova* does not appear as part of a list containing the lady's many beautiful attributes; nevertheless, an entire final tercet is dedicated to it. Within the celebration of the beloved's effects on the lover, her smile constitutes the attribute through which she appears to the poet as a 'novo miracolo' (14).

As is well known, this sonnet belongs to Dante's new form of laudatory poetry, through which love is converted into *caritas* and the lover's reward no longer consists in the lady's greeting, but in the contemplation and praise of God. Thus, in its initial analysis, Beatrice's first miraculous smile must be considered the result of Dante's new poetics: the lady's *dolce riso* is no longer the conclusion of the poem, nor the reward expected by the lover, but rather becomes

¹⁰³ Guido Cavalcanti, *Donna me prega* (46): 'move, cangiando - color, riso in pianto'.

¹⁰⁴ *Quando di morte mi conven trar vita* (11-12): 'Canto, piacere, beninanza e riso / me'n son dogli' e sospiri'.

¹⁰⁵ Dante Alighieri, *Amor, da chel convien pur ch'io mi doglia* (56-60): 'E mostra poi la faccia scolorita/ qual fu quel trono che mi giunse a dosso;/ che se con dolce riso è stato mosso,/ lunga fiata poi rimane oscura,/ perché lo spirto non si rassicura.'

¹⁰⁶ 'The power of Love borne in my lady's eyes/ imparts its grace to all she looks upon./ All turn to gaze at her when she walks by,/ and when she greets a man his heart beats fast,/ the color leaves his face, he bows his head / and sighs to think of all his imperfections./ Anger and pride are forced to flee from her./ Help me to honor her, most gracious ladies./ Humility and every sweet conception/ bloom in the heart of those who hear her speak./ (Praise to the one who first saw what she was!)/. The image of her when she starts to smile/ dissolves within the mind and melts away,/ a miracle too rich and strange to hold.'

the means *par excellence* through which to reveal and manifest the miraculous nature of woman and, hence, that of divine creation.

This new function of the smile can be seen as a consequence of the evolving conception of women and of amorous relationships which, according to Charles Singleton¹⁰⁷, takes place in the *Vita Nuova* and implies a resolution of the conflict between love for a woman and love for God, as is found in his earlier poetry. I believe that the resolution of this conflict can be observed precisely through the evolution of female laughter: if in the Bible Sarah's laughter distances the creator from his creation and spurs conflict, in courtly poetry it is an element of earthly and erotic beauty which man must renounce if he intends to return to God, or which otherwise may result in the death of the lover, as occurs in Cavalcanti's poems.

Through the figure of Beatrice, who has become a true miracle and mediator of the divine, Dante takes the first step towards resolving the conflict between love for the creator (God) and for divine creation (woman), and the smile is the principal sign of this achievement. Beatrice's smile in the *Vita Nuova* is in fact a true miracle that brings man closer to God by revealing his presence. One notes that this evolution coincides with a lexical transformation: from the *riso* of the love poetry tradition, we move to the *sorriso*, to which is attributed a completely new semantic content in comparison to previous usage. As I have already noted before¹⁰⁸, the verb *sorridere* rarely appeared before Dante and had a negative meaning, connoting a grin or smirk, hidden laughter that implies deception, skepticism or superiority. In the *Vita Nuova*, the *dolce riso* of the courtly woman is instead transformed into a more moderate smile (one notes the use of 'un poco', already observed in other cases in the *Commedia*) which, instead of holding negative implications, is elevated to a source that reveals the divine by virtue of its ineffability (*Ne li occhi porta la mia donna Amore* (13)). In fact, Beatrice's smile, unlike her speech, is indescribable, as Dante himself explains in his own commentary on the sonnet:

Poscia quando dico: *Ogne dolcezza*, dico quello medesimo che detto è ne la prima parte, secondo due atti de la sua bocca; l'uno de li quali è lo suo dolcissimo parlare, e l'altro lo suo mirabile riso; salvo che non dico di questo ultimo come adopera ne li cuori altrui, però che la memoria non puote ritenere lui né sua operazione.¹⁰⁹
(*Vn.* XXI. 8)

¹⁰⁷ Charles S. Singleton, *An Essay on the Vita nuova* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. 97-101.

¹⁰⁸ See Ch. III. 4.

¹⁰⁹ 'Then when I say: Humility, I repeat what I said in the first part, using, this time, two actions of her mouth: the first is her sweet manner of speaking, the second is her miraculous smile. I do not mention the effect of the latter on people's hearts, since the memory is not capable of retaining a smile like hers or its effects.'

Beatrice's smile is presented as ineffable because 'the memory is not able to record her smile and its action'¹¹⁰. Manuela Colombo defines the attribution to Beatrice of the topos of ineffability in this sonnet as a 'deification'¹¹¹, in that the modalities of the mystical ineffability associated with the divine are instead applied, in an analogical way, to the woman herself. Giuseppe Ledda demonstrates that later, in the *Paradiso*, the link between woman and divine in Beatrice's smile will no longer be analogical, but causal: 'Beatrice's beauty [...] is ineffable because it is the reflection of God's beauty, and what is ineffable is not the beauty of Beatrice, but the beauty of God reflected within her'¹¹². If it is true that in the *Vita Nuova* Beatrice is represented as an analogy of Christ, in this sonnet the analogy between the divine and the human seems to end at the concept of ineffability: in fact, while in mystical language there are references to the mouth of God, whose spiritual kiss causes an ineffable sweetness, the reward of the elect¹¹³, it is impossible to find an example of Christ's smile that can serve as a model and a point of reference for the female smile. The attribution of a joyful aspect to Christ, or even that of laughter, as will be seen later in the chapter, is a rare and pointed event in theological writings since, as John Chrysostom notes, Christ is never portrayed laughing but only weeping in the Gospels¹¹⁴.

We will see in further detail how in the *Paradiso* Dante clearly introduces an image of God characterized by joy and gladness, to the point of representing his smile, characterized, like that of Beatrice, by ineffability¹¹⁵. It should also be noted that along the heavenly ascent, Beatrice's smile will be described repeatedly as ineffable: the increase in brightness and beauty of her smile, as a result of the ascent, cannot be held in memory, just as in the sonnet from the *libello* (XIV. 79; XXX. 26), nor can it be described in words (XXIII. 59).

In the *Paradiso*, the ineffability of Beatrice's smile will be essential to the progressive unveiling of beatitude and of the divine itself, while in the *Vita Nuova* Beatrice's first smile, miraculous and ineffable, already appears as a forerunner of the smile of heavenly Beatrice and the smile of God himself. In fact, Dante, through the representation of the smile in *Ne li occhi porta la mia donna Amore*, affirms that God smiles, and that Beatrice's smile is not a simple analogy but – precisely because it is miraculous and ineffable – the revelation and reflection of that divine smile. It can be seen as the first stage of a theology of the smile in which, through the

¹¹⁰ *Vita nova*, ed. by Luca Carlo Rossi (Milano: Mondadori, 2017), p. 100, n. 12.8.

¹¹¹ Manuela Colombo, *Dai mistici a Dante: il linguaggio dell'ineffabilità* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1987), p. 34.

¹¹² Giuseppe Ledda, 'Teologia e Retorica dell'ineffabilità nella Commedia di Dante, in *Le teologie di Dante. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi* (Ravenna, 9 novembre 2013)', *Quaderni della sezione studi e ricerche* (2016), 261-92, (p. 267).

¹¹³ Colombo, p. 76.

¹¹⁴ John Chrysostom, *Homily 15 on Hebrews*, 8: 'Tell me, do you laugh? Where do you hear of Christ doing this? Nowhere: but that He was sad indeed oftentimes' (<<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/240215.htm>> [accessed May 2021]).

¹¹⁵ *Par.* XXXIII. 121-126.

divinization of the female smile, the act of smiling becomes the primary manifestation of bliss and of the divine.

The smile of the *Donna Gentile* in the canzone *Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona* (*Cv.* III. 1. 56-60) represents an important step in this process:

Cose appariscono nello suo aspetto
che mostran de' piacer del Paradiso,
dico nelli occhi e nel suo dolce riso,
che le vi reca Amor com'a suo loco.
Elle soverchian lo nostro intelletto
come raggio di sole un frale viso; [...].¹¹⁶

The reference to the smile as a revelation of the divine, contained in the miraculous nature of Beatrice's smile in the *Vita Nuova*, is explained here: the smile of the *Donna Gentile*, the personification of Philosophy, is – as Dante himself explains in his commentary on the canzone – the veil through which the beatitude and light of Wisdom are revealed. In fact, as Maria Corti noted, the woman's eyes and her *dolce riso*, stylistic traits already present in the *Vita Nuova*, here in the *Convivio* become 'polisemous'¹¹⁷, since feminine beauty must be interpreted as a '*simulacrum sapientiae*'¹¹⁸. It is precisely through wisdom attributed to the smile that the *Donna Gentile* can be considered as a prefiguration of Beatrice in the *Paradiso*¹¹⁹: just as the smile of Lady Philosophy constitutes the revelation of Wisdom, Beatrice's smile in *Paradiso* will be a reflection and expression of the light of divine truth. Therefore, the smile of Lady Philosophy in the *Convivio* will progressively transform into that of Theology in the *Commedia*. If Beatrice's smile initially displays the characteristics of a sage's smile, or of Boethius's secular Philosophy, during the continuous ascent through the heavens it undergoes a divinization manifested through its increased brightness, expressing itself as a means of revealing God's love and truth.

Virgil announces the advent of Beatrice's smile in the second canticle of the *Commedia* (in *Purg.* VI. 46-48), within the same tercet that names the lady for the first time in the *Commedia*:

Non so se 'ntendi: io dico di *Beatrice*;
tu la vedrai di sopra, in su la vetta
di questo monte, *ridere e felice*".¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ 'Things appear in her countenance which show some of the pleasures of Paradise; these things appear in her eyes and in her sweet smile, where Love draws them, as to his domain. They overwhelm our intellect, as a ray of sunlight overwhelms weak sight; [...]'.

¹¹⁷ Maria Corti, *La felicità mentale. Nuove prospettive per Cavalcanti e Dante*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1983), p. 91.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 82.

¹¹⁹ Ariani, p. 123.

¹²⁰ "I don't know if you understand: I speak of Beatrice./ You shall see her above, upon the summit/ of this mountain, smiling and in bliss."

One notes that Beatrice's name is rhymed with 'felice': the image of Beatrice weeping at the beginning of the *Inferno* contrasts with her smile that, according to Virgil, awaits Dante at the peak of the purgatorial mountain, the same one with which the lady had left him in the *Vita Nuova*. The verb-adjective construct, according to Nicola Fosca, expresses 'Beatrice's external (laughter) and internal (happiness) appearance'¹²¹; however, at the top of Purgatory, at least at first, she does not smile at Dante, but demonstrates a haughty and hostile attitude.

In fact, Beatrice's smile is the reward that awaits Dante at the end of the *Purgatorio*, but only after the acknowledgement of his sins through weeping and the removal of his memory in the waters of Lethe, which takes place in *Purg.* XXXI. At this point, the three women representing the three theological virtues call to Beatrice with the following words (133-138), asking her to reveal her 'second beauty' to the pilgrim:

"Volgi, Beatrice, volgi li occhi santi",
era la sua canzone, "al tuo fedele
che, per vederti, ha mossi passi tanti!
Per grazia fa noi grazia che disvele
a lui la bocca tua, sì che discerna
la seconda bellezza che tu cele".¹²²

Commentors agree that her mouth represents the second beauty hidden by a veil, while the first are the lady's 'occhi santi'. More precisely, I believe that the unveiling of the mouth consists in Beatrice's subsequent smile, which takes place at the beginning of the next canto (XXXII. 4-6):

'Ed essi quinci e quindi avien parete
di non caler - così lo santo riso
a sé traéli con l'antica rete!¹²³

The first appearance of Beatrice's smile in the *Commedia* is therefore depicted as a revelation, referring to the veiled smile of the *Donna Gentile* in the *Convivio*; one notes, however, that both the eyes and the smile of the beloved are now called 'santi', holy. In the moment of Beatrice's revelation, the primary loci of her beauty, traditionally stilnovistic traits such as the smile and the mouth, are introduced as a manifestation of holiness. Francesco da Buti emphasizes that the vision of Beatrice's eyes and smile resolves in the contemplation of the holy Theology and of

¹²¹ Nicola Fosca (The Dartmouth Dante Project: 2003-2015).

¹²² 'Turn, Beatrice, turn your holy eyes/ upon your faithful one'--thus ran their song--/ 'who, to see you, now has come so far./ 'Of your grace do us a grace: unveil/ your mouth to him so that he may observe/ the second beauty that you still conceal.'

¹²³ '[...] walled off from anything around them, enclosed/ in their indifference, so did the holy smile/ ensnare them in its old, familiar net [...]

the eternal beatitude¹²⁴. By attributing holiness to Beatrice's smile, Dante continues the process that began with the miraculous smile of the *Vita Nuova*, elevating the lady's smile to an attribute of beatitude. Also, one recalls that in *Purgatorio* the adjective 'santo' most often connotes the weeping of penitents, thanks to which they can make their return to God – these same tears which Dante shed before his beloved at the peak of Purgatory, thanks to which he can now contemplate her smile. Beatrice's holy smile, with its revelation of divine beauty, thus embodies the reward for holy weeping: the promise of evangelical beatitude. Furthermore, Beatrice's first smile in the *Commedia* occurs right before the start of the *Paradiso*, just as her tears on behalf of Dante losing his way had initiated the first canticle (*Inf.* II): tears and smiles are, therefore, the signs of a change in tone from one canticle to another; if the first two are dominated by the drama of weeping, the third begins with the joy of a smile. Moreover, both Beatrice's tears and her smile have a salvific value: the former, as it turned out, are necessary to mediate Dante's salvation, while the latter provides the confirmation of this salvation.

Before leaving Purgatory, however, Beatrice is portrayed smiling once more, at the end of the final canto (XXXIII. 94-96):

"E se tu ricordar non te ne puoi",
sorridendo rispuose, "or ti rammenta
 come bevesti di Letè ancoi; [...]."¹²⁵

Beatrice smiles at the fact that Dante does not remember having confessed his guilt after having drunk the water of the Lethe. Daniele Mattalia defines it as 'a smile of doctrinal irony for the argument Dante puts forward and, in addition, for the excess of non-remembering'¹²⁶, while Dino Provenzal gleans a certain 'maternal satisfaction towards the pupil who has corrected himself'¹²⁷. For the first time, in fact, Beatrice's smile acquires the quality of wisdom, similar to that already depicted several times on Virgil's face: just as Virgil in *Purg.* XII. 136 had smiled at Dante's naivety regarding the purgation of the sin of pride, Beatrice's smile is one of cognitive superiority, which underscores the distance between guide and disciple, while at the same time celebrating Dante's overcoming of sin. Similarly, Beatrice will smile in *Par.* X, celebrating Dante's concentration on his love for God, which causes him to forget his guide for a

¹²⁴ Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'contemplazione de lo intelletto spirituale de la santa Teologia e de la beatitudine eterna'.

¹²⁵ "But if you cannot remember that, / she answered, smiling, 'only recollect / how you have drunk today of Lethe, [...]'.

¹²⁶ Daniele Mattalia (Milano: A. Rizzoli, 1960).

¹²⁷ Dino Provenzal (Vicenza: Ed. Scolastiche Mondadori, 1949).

moment ('Non le dispiacque, ma sì se ne rise, / che lo splendor de li occhi suoi ridenti / mia mente unita in più cose divise' (61-63)¹²⁸).

As we have already seen with regard to the smile of the blessed souls, Beatrice's smile also has a demarcating function: in this case, it introduces the verb 'rispuose' (95), qualifying the guide's response and setting the tone of the dialogue. In fact, nearly all occurrences of Beatrice's smile perform this function, introducing a direct discourse that includes a doctrinal explanation of a theological truth¹²⁹. Beatrice is both Theology, whose smile will increasingly be revealed as a form of the divine, as well as a teacher, a guide, whose duty is to transmit knowledge. In these terms, Beatrice's smile resembles that of Boethius's Philosophy¹³⁰ in the *De Consolatione*, a secular and natural wisdom which, in the course of the dialogue, responds 'paulisper arridens' (IV. 6.2), smiling a little, to the disciple's request for further explanations on the goodness of God.

The first three smiles of Beatrice in the *Paradiso* belong to this typology: similar to the laughter of the blessed, Beatrice's smile in the third canticle is introduced as an expression of wisdom, characteristic, in this case, of Theology that teaches and transmits truth through the smile. In this regard, one notes the following passages:

S'io fui del primo dubbio disvestito
per le sorrise parolette brevi,
dentro ad un nuovo più fu' inretito
e dissi: "Già contento requievi
di grande ammirazion; ma ora ammiro
com'io trascenda questi corpi levì".¹³¹
(I. 94-99)

Ma ditemi: che son li segni bui
di questo corpo, che là giùso in terra
fan di Cain favoleggiare altrui?".
Ella sorrise alquanto, e poi "S'elli erra
l'oppinion", mi disse, "d'i mortali
dove chiave di senso non diserra,
certo non ti dovrien punger li strali
d'ammirazione omai, poi dietro ai sensi

¹²⁸ 'This did not displease her. Instead, she smiled, so that the splendor of her smiling eyes divided my mind's focus among many things'.

¹²⁹ I. 95: 'sorrise parolette brevi'; III. 52: 'Ella sorrise alquanto, e poi "[...]"; II. 2: 'sorridente, ardea ne li occhi santi: [...]'; VII. 17: 'e cominciò, raggiandomi d'un riso'; XV. 71: 'arrisemi un cenno/ che fece crescer l'ali al voler mio'; XXVII. 104: 'incominciò, ridendo tanto lieta'; XVIII. 19: 'col lume d'un sorriso,/ ella mi disse: [...]']'.

¹³⁰ On the relationship between Beatrice and Boethius' Philosophy see Paola Nasti, 'Vocaboli d'autori e di scienze e di libri': percorsi sapienziali di Dante', in *La Bibbia di Dante. Esperienza mistica, profezia e teologia biblica in Dante*, ed. by Giuseppe Ledda (Ravenna: Longo, 2019), pp. 121-178 (pp. 136-155).

¹³¹ 'If I was stripped of my earlier confusion/ by her brief and smiling words,/ I was the more entangled in new doubt/ and said: 'I was content to be released/ from my amazement, but now I am amazed/ that I can glide through these light bodies.'

vedi che la ragione ha corte l'ali.¹³²
(II. 49-57)

[...] e nulla vidi, e ritorsi avanti
dritti nel *lume* de la dolce guida,
che, *sorridendo*, ardea ne li occhi santi.
“Non ti maravigliar perch'io sorrida”,
mi disse, “*appresso il tuo pueril coto*,
poi sopra 'l vero ancor lo piè non fida, [...]”¹³³
(III. 22-27)

In these three cases, Beatrice's smile defines the lady's cognitive superiority over her disciple. In the first case this function occurs through the lady's 'sorrise parolette brevi' (I. 95), in response to Dante's query regarding the cause of the sound of the celestial spheres and the powerful luminosity of the heavens (I. 82); as Francesco da Buti and Benvenuto da Imola note, Beatrice thus smiles in response to Dante's wrong understanding, who still thought to be on Earth¹³⁴. In the second case, the smile is a reaction to Dante's question about the dark spots on the moon and the popular legend of Cain (II. 48) with which men mistakenly try to explain them¹³⁵; so Beatrice smiles declaring the limits of human reason to understand that which transcends sensible knowledge. Finally, in the third passage, the guide's smile is provoked by Dante's 'pueril coto', his childish understanding when faced with the reality of the blessed in the Sphere of the Moon, as his judgment is not yet based on the truth and, therefore, liable to error. So, once again, Beatrice's smile is the one of the wise, who smiles in response to the mistakes of the ignorant and simple men¹³⁶.

As can be seen, Beatrice's smile corresponds, in all three cases, to Dante's state of wonder: in the first, the 'sorrise parolette' satisfy the disciple's amazement ('grande ammirazion', I. 98), caused by the novelty of the reality that surrounds him; in the second, according to Beatrice, 'li strali d'ammirazione' (II. 56) will not strike Dante, who instead continues to marvel at the insufficiency of sensitive knowledge; finally, in the third, the lady tells the astonished pilgrim 'non meravigliarsi' (III. 25) at her smile, a typical reaction to his fallacious judgment¹³⁷. As

¹³² "But tell me, what are the dark spots/ on this body that make those down on earth/ repeat their preposterous tales of Cain?/ She smiled a little, then: 'If the understanding/ of mortals errs,' she said, 'there where the key / of the senses fails in its unlocking,/ 'surely the shafts of wonder should no longer/ strike you, since you see that, dependent/ on the senses, reason's wings fall short.'

¹³³ '[...] and, seeing nothing, I returned my gaze/ to the light of my sweet guide,/ whose holy eyes were glowing as she smiled./ 'Be not surprised,' she said, 'if I am smiling/ at your childish thoughts, since they as yet trust not/ their steps to truth but turn you back [...]'.

¹³⁴ Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'della semplicità e grossezza del falso pensieri di Dante, che si credea essere in terra et elli era montato suso al globo della Luna'.

¹³⁵ Giacomo Poletto (Roma: Lefebvre, 1894): 'di questa favola e forse anche che il Poeta non conoscesse la ragione, onde provenivan quelle macchie'.

¹³⁶ Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'perchè usanza è de' savi di sorridere, cioè temperatamente ridere dello errore dei semplici omini che anno la verità inanti e vannola cercando altre'.

¹³⁷ We can see a similar structure referred to weeping in *Purg.* XIV. 103: 'Non ti maravigliar s'io piango, Tosco'.

already highlighted in the purgatorial episodes of Casella and Statius, wonder and smiles mark ignorance and knowledge respectively, thus placing Dante and Beatrice on two different cognitive levels and shaping their relationship as that between disciple and wise master.

The disparity between the wonder of the ignorant and the smile of the wise is bridged with words: the ‘sorrise parolette’, in which ‘sorrise’ is the past participle of *sorridere* used in a transitive sense, ‘successfully expresses the contemporaneous speaking and smiling’¹³⁸ of Beatrice; the smile that stigmatizes the falsity of the legends of mortals introduces the guide’s explanation (‘e poi’, II. 49); finally, the lady’s smile initiates the dialogue illustrating the truth about the substance of souls in the Sphere of the Moon (III. 25-30). The difference between this smile and the courtly tradition of the female *riso* is evident: the purpose of Beatrice’s first smiles is to define the woman as a wise authority and guide, on par with or superior to Virgil. Beatrice’s smile is the mark of a transmission of knowledge that takes place through the word, the emotional manifestation that belongs to the true holder of theological truth: in fact, Beatrice’s smile could be compared to the smile of the Christian theologians who, as possessors of the truth, laugh at the errors of opposing philosophers or the errors of false knowledge¹³⁹.

In particular, the same secular Wisdom represented by Boethius’s Philosophy is described as laughing at the errors of false philosophers who can only superficially access her truth, attempting to reveal her by tearing off her garments; to them, Philosophy responds with laughter: ‘At nos desuper inridemus vilissima rerum quaeque rapientes securi totius furiosi tumultus eoque vallo muniti quo grassanti stultitiae aspirare fas non sit’ (I. 3. 12-14)¹⁴⁰. Similar is the laughter of Philosophy in the *Libro de’ vizi e delle virtudi* by Bono Giamboni, in response to the simplicity of the protagonist who judges Faith a ‘povera reina’, a poor queen, because she is wrapped in humble garments: ‘E quando è così detto, la Filosofia rise un poco molto piacevolmente, e stette una pezza, e parlò e disse: – Figliuol mio, mal conosci questa Virtù [...]’ (XIX)¹⁴¹. Beatrice’s smile in *Par. II* may make reference to this type of laughter, since the derisive effect not only affects the pilgrim in this case, but the fables of the philosophers as well¹⁴².

¹³⁸ Domenico Consoli, ‘Sorridere’ in *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (Roma: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia italiana, 1984), <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/sorriso_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/> [accessed May 2021].

¹³⁹ On the topic see Giulio D’Onofrio, ‘Tempus ridendi’. Il riso del filosofo nell’Alto Medioevo’, in *Il riso. Capacità di ridere e pratica del riso nelle civiltà medievali*, p. 134.

¹⁴⁰ Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, I. 3. 14 ed. by Claudio Moreschini (Munich/Leipzig: T. G. Saur, 2005), p. 11. ‘As they seize the most worthless things, we laugh at them from above, untroubled by the whole band of mad marauders, and we are defended by that rampart to which riotous folly may not hope to attain’ (*The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by W. V. Cooper (Ex-classics Project: 2009), p. 10).

¹⁴¹ Bono Giamboni, *Il libro de’ Vizi e delle virtudi e il trattato di virtù e di vizi*, ed. by Cesare Segre (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1968), p. 47. ‘And when I had said this, the Philosophy delightfully laughed, and stood there for a while, and then she spoke and said: ‘My son, you do not know this Virtue very well.’

¹⁴² Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): ‘quasi volens dicere tacite, non solum vulgares errant fabulando de eo quod nunc petis, sed etiam magni sapientes philosophando de hoc errant’.

At the same time, however, Beatrice's smile has the crucial function of illuminating Dante's mind with the truth, and the derision implicit in her smile dissolves in the revelation of knowledge, as occurs in the following passage of the *De Monarchia*: 'Verum quia naturalis amor diuturnam esse derisionem non patitur, sed, ut sol estivus qui disiectis nebulis matutinis oriens luculenter irradiat, derisione omissa, lucem correctionis effundere mavult [...]' (II. I. 5)¹⁴³. In fact, unlike the enigmatic or ironic smile of Philosophy in Boethius, Beatrice's smile is holy, since it burns 'negli occhi santi' (II. 24). Here, for the first time, the representation of the female smile is expressed in terms of brightness, which is transmitted from the smile to the eyes, as has already occurred in *Purg.* XXXI. 133: the light of divine *caritas* burns and is revealed in Beatrice's smile and eyes.

Similarly, in *Par.* VII. 16-18, Beatrice's smile illuminates Dante, nourished by the desire to satisfy one of the pilgrim's doubts, which will then lead to the exposition of the doctrine of incarnation and redemption:

Poco sofferse me cotal *Beatrice*
e cominciò, raggiandomi d'un riso
*tal, che nel foco faria l'uom felice: [...]*¹⁴⁴

One notes that, once again, the lady's name is rhymed with the adjective 'felice': the purpose of Beatrice's smile is to transmit to Dante the joy caused by the unveiling of theological truths¹⁴⁵. Once again, there is a clear difference between the *dolce riso* of the courtly lady and that of Beatrice: if the former had the faculty to transmit joy to the lover, the latter brings him happiness through participation in divine joy and knowledge, reflected by her light.

This difference is even more evident in an episode in *Par.* XVI. 13-15, where Dante, speaking with his ancestor Cacciaguida, addresses him with the formal 'voi', praising his own noble lineage and thus committing the sin of vainglory. The consequence is a warning smile from Beatrice:

[...] onde Beatrice, ch'era un poco scevra,
ridendo, parve quella che tossio
al primo fallo scritto di Ginevra.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ 'But since natural love does not allow scorn to last long, preferring (like the summer sun which as it rises disperses the morning clouds and shines forth radiantly) to cast scorn aside and to pour forth the light of correction [...]'.

¹⁴⁴ 'Not long did Beatrice leave me in this state/ before she spoke, shining with the rays of such a smile / as would content a man if he were set on fire: [...]'

¹⁴⁵ Cristoforo Landino (Firenze: Lexis Progetti Editoriali, 1999): 'perchè niente è che dia maggior iocundità, et voluptà, alla mente che la cognitione delle chose divine, le quali contentono et appagano tanto l'animo nostro, che *etiam* in ogni adversità ci fanno viver lieti'.

¹⁴⁶ '[...] and Beatrice, who stood somewhat apart,/ smiled, like the lady who discreetly coughed/ at the first fault inscribed of Guinevere.'

Beatrice, smiling, once again displays her own cognitive superiority: as J. Carroll effectively states, ‘Theology in the person of Beatrice stands apart [...] and smiles in kindly superiority at this little exhibition of human weakness’¹⁴⁷. In addition, Beatrice here is compared to the Lady of Malehaut who, in the *Lancelot*, witnessed unseen the love tryst between Lancelot and Guinevere, revealing her presence with a cough. Although the reference to this episode should belong to a different scene of the Arthurian romance, Beatrice’s smile replacing the lady’s cough might instead evoke the same context as the episode of Paolo and Francesca in Canto V of the *Inferno*: that is, of the kiss between Guinevere and Lancelot¹⁴⁸.

In fact, in the Italian version of the story by the anonymous twelfth-century author, noted in Baldassarre Lombardi’s commentary on the *Commedia*, there is a scene that may have inspired the representation of Beatrice’s smile. The kiss between Lancelot and Guinevere here is preceded by a meeting between the two lovers and Galehaut: after confessing their love, the couple move away smiling; the resulting kiss reveals their adulterous love to the Lady of Malehaut:

Allora si traggono da parte sorridendo, e fanno sembante di consigliare. E la Reina vede che il Cavaliere non ardisce, e lo prende, e lo bacia avanti Galeotto assai lungamente. E la Dama di Malheault seppe di vero ch'ella lo baciò...[...].¹⁴⁹

Like the trio formed by Galehaut, Lancelot, and Guinevere, who stood apart smiling, Beatrice is ‘un poco scevra’, ‘appartata’¹⁵⁰ and smiling. The sinful smile of the lovers thus is shifted to Beatrice / the Lady of Malehaut, who has the function of recognizing and sanctioning ‘the first fault’, in this case Dante’s sinful boasting. In addition to the Arthurian allusion, the smile constitutes a significant link between Beatrice’s paradisiacal episode and Francesca’s infernal scene: Francesca’s ‘disiato riso’ (*Inf.* V.133), analogous to the ‘dolce riso’, the emblem of courtly love that leads to eternal tears and damnation, is replaced by Beatrice’s smile, which has become a symbol of the possession of truth and of a love no longer ending within itself, but instead leading man to God.

Again during Dante’s meeting with his ancestor Cacciaguida in *Par.* XV, one can observe how Beatrice’s smile performs different functions, guiding and modulating the dialogue with the blessed soul from the beginning. In fact, the lady’s reaction to the solemnity of Cacciaguida’s first question to Dante consists precisely in her smile, fueled by a growing ardor of *caritas* that, once again, is manifested in her eyes (34-36):

¹⁴⁷ John S. Carroll (Londra: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904-11),

¹⁴⁸ See Ch. II. 3, 83 and ff.

¹⁴⁹ *La divina commedia di Dante Alighieri col commento del P. Baldassarre Lombardi* (Padova: Tipografia della Minerva, 1822), pp. 135-136. My own translation: ‘Then they stood apart smiling, and pretend to gather for consulting. And the Queen sees that the Knight does not dare, and takes him, and kisses him before Galeotto for a very long time. And the Lady of Malheault knew indeed that she kissed him...[...].’

¹⁵⁰ Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991-97).

[...] ché dentro a *li occhi suoi ardeva un riso*
tal, ch'io pensai co' miei toccar lo fondo
*de la mia gloria e del mio paradiso.*¹⁵¹

At first, that smile was interpreted as a sign of congratulation of the guide to her disciple, involved in such an important dialogue with his great-great-grandfather¹⁵². It should be noted that, once again, 'riso' here rhymes with 'paradiso', to be understood, as Benvenuto states, as the bliss allowed by God's grace¹⁵³. The generic happiness caused by the smile of *Par. VII* is specified here as the state of eternal bliss, of that happiness of seeing God¹⁵⁴ foreshadowed in the reflection of Beatrice's smile. In this way, once again in accord with Benvenuto¹⁵⁵, it could be said that, given the context in which Dante's prophetic investiture will be revealed, the poet employs Beatrice's smile as an instrument of self-aggrandizement, as a mark of recognition of his own heavenly glory and, consequently, of his own lineage.

On the narrative level, Beatrice's smile is also an element that stimulates the dialogue between Dante and Cacciaguida: it should be noted that the first smile has the effect of exhorting the great-great-grandfather to continue his speech ('Indi, a udire e a veder giocondo, giunse lo spirto al suo principio cose [...] (37-38)¹⁵⁶); later, another smile encourages Dante to respond to Cacciaguida (70-72):

Io mi volsi a Beatrice, e quella udio
pria ch'io parlassi, e arrisemi un cenno-
*che fece crescer l'ali al voler mio.*¹⁵⁷

The significance of the link between the smile and the nod has already been illustrated¹⁵⁸; it should be added that Beatrice's smile here appears not only as an expression of the desire to reveal divine truth, but also as a stimulus and cause of that desire. In this sense, Beatrice's smile gradually becomes a structural element of the poem, being the focal point around which revolves the desire that guides Dante in his ascent to God: at times transmitting theological truths, at other times revealing divine *caritas* and beatitude or nurturing the pilgrim's desire, the smile is an element through which Dante successfully converts his love for a woman from an obstacle to a necessary means to ascend to God, so much so that its manifestation, its quality or its

¹⁵¹ '[...] for there glowed such a smile within her eyes/ I thought that with my own I had attained/ my ultimate bliss, my final paradise.'

¹⁵² Baldassarre Lombardi (Roma: A. Fulgoni, 1791-92).

¹⁵³ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): 'gratae mihi concessae a Deo et meae beatitudinis'

¹⁵⁴ Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'felicità, che io debbe avere vedendo Iddio'

¹⁵⁵ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): 'quod Beatrix valde laetatur de laude et commendatione alumni sui, qui bis merebatur paradysum, qui tam alte, tam pulcre describit ipsum poetice, et ad manifestandam gloriam Dei'

¹⁵⁶ 'Then, a joy to hear and a joy to see, the spirit added to what first he said [...]'

¹⁵⁷ 'I turned to Beatrice, who had heard/ before I spoke and smiled a sign/ that made my will put forth its wings.'

¹⁵⁸ See Ch. IV. 1, 198.

absence, are fundamental to the progression of Dante's journey and to the vision of God himself. These points will be evident in the analysis of Cantos XIV, XXII and XXIII.

In Canto XIV, during the ascent to the sphere of Mars, Dante's vision cannot bear the splendor of the souls of this new heavenly sphere, and thus he turns to Beatrice, who in turn reveals herself in an aspect of increased beauty:

Ma B atrice *s  bella e ridente*
mi si mostr , che tra quelle vedute
si vuol lasciar *che non seguir la mente*.¹⁵⁹
(79-81)

Just as the smile of the blessed increases in splendor during Dante's ascent, Beatrice's smile also undergoes an evolution, consisting in a progressive increase in brightness which has varying consequences on Dante's perception. After the *Vita Nuova*, we are indeed faced with the second declaration of ineffability relating to Beatrice's smile: Beatrice's beauty and smile have become such that memory cannot contain them. The use of the *topos* of ineffability in this episode can be better understood if compared to another declaration, this time of inexpressibility, found in the same canto: the episode in question is the first vision of Christ, shown to Dante within the cross formed by the blessed souls of the Sphere of Mars (XIV. 103-105):

Qui *vince la memoria mia lo 'ngegno;*
ch  quella croce lampeggiava Cristo,
s  ch'io non so trovare essempro degno; [...].¹⁶⁰

In this case, although the mind may hold the memory, it is language that cannot describe what Dante saw: that is, the brightness of the cross of the blessed revealing Christ. The relationship between the ineffability of the image of Christ and that of Beatrice's smile is made explicit later, in *Paradiso XXIII*, where we find a further application of the *topos* of ineffability to Beatrice's smile, which coincides once again with a vision of Christ, the second in the poem

Pariemi che 'l suo viso ardesse tutto,
e li occhi avea di letizia s  pieni,
che passarmen convien senza costrutto.
Quale ne' plenilunii sereni
Trivia ride tra le ninfe etterne
che dipingon lo ciel per tutti i seni,
vid'i' sopra migliaia di lucerne
un sol che tutte quante l'accendea,
come fa 'l nostro le viste superne;
e per la viva luce trasparea
la lucente sustanza tanto chiara
nel viso mio, *che non la sostenea.*
[...]

¹⁵⁹ 'But Beatrice showed herself to me so fair/ and smiling, this vision of her must remain/ among those sights that have escaped my memory.'

¹⁶⁰ 'Here my memory outstrips my skill,/ for that cross so flamed forth Christ/ that I can find no fit comparison.'

*la mente mia così, tra quelle dape
fatta più grande, di sé stessa uscìo,
e che si fesse rimembrar non sape.*¹⁶¹
(22-33; 43-45)

We are in the Heaven of the Fixed Stars, and the vision of the triumph of Christ's Church is preceded by the inexpressible beauty of Beatrice's eyes (24-25), whose ardor of love anticipates the vision. One notes that, in order to describe Christ, Dante uses a simile – that of the goddess Trivia – to evoke the smile: the Christ-sun illuminates the souls of the blessed as the moon laughs (or shines) among the stars. The metaphor of nature's smile to express its brightness or lushness (figuratively, its joy) is recurrent in Dante¹⁶²; it is a rhetorical device already used in classical poetry¹⁶³, which later became an *exemplum* in treatises on medieval rhetoric¹⁶⁴, through which the feelings of the human soul are projected onto nature. Dante's attribution of the smile to nature could be interpreted in terms of the divine act of Creation. One recalls, in fact, that the act of Creation is, according to Dante, a joyful expression of God's love (the 'joyous maker' of *Purg.* XVI. 85-90¹⁶⁵), to which corresponds and on which depends humanity's desire for happiness (*Purg.* XXV. 70). If, therefore, nature is treated as a mirror of the human soul, an emanation of God, the smile and light of which are a reflection of the divine, then the divine light and beauty of nature are a smile; that is, the result of God's creative smile communicated by means of the love that radiates throughout his creation.

Therefore, the simile of Trivia's smile does not constitute a simple comparison concerning brightness, but also describes the process by which the light of Christ is communicated to the blessed souls, reflecting itself. Moreover, this smile could also have had a certain influence on the image of the emergence of Christ's 'shining substance': the revelation of Christ shining through the splendor of the sun appears as the revelation of soul's light through the smile, 'quasi come colore dopo vetro [...] uno lume apparente di fuori secondo sta dentro'¹⁶⁶. The light of this vision is so intense that Dante cannot endure it: his reaction is that of the *excessus mentis*,

¹⁶¹ 'It seemed to me her face was all aflame, / her eyes so full of gladness/ that I must leave that moment undescribed./ As, on clear nights when the moon is full,/ Trivia smiles among the eternal nymphs/ that deck the sky through all its depths./ I saw, above the many thousand lamps, / a Sun that kindled each and every one / as ours lights up the sights we see above us,/ and through that living light poured down/ a shining substance. It blazed so bright / into my eyes that I could not sustain it.[...] just so my mind, grown greater at that feast, / burst forth, transported from itself,/ and now cannot recall what it became.'

¹⁶² *Purg.* I, 20: 'faceva tutto rider l'oriente'; *Par.* V. 97: 'la stella si cambiò e rise'; *Par.* XIV. 86: 'l'affocato riso de la stella'; *Par.* XXVIII. 83: 'sì che 'l ciel ne ride'; *Par.* XXX. 77: 'l rider de l'erbe'.

¹⁶³ On the topic see Barbara Nelson Sargent, 'Mediaeval rire, ridere: a laughing matter?', *Medium aevum*, 43 (1974), 116-132, (pp.122-23).

¹⁶⁴ Gaimari in *Il sorriso dei beati nella "Commedia". Un'interpretazione letterale*, p. 289.

¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁶ *Cv.* III. 8, 11: 'almost like a color behind glass [...] a light appearing outwardly just as it is within'.

thus removing the event from the pilgrim's memory. The purpose of this blindness is to strengthen Dante's vision, which is now ready to experience Beatrice's smile:

*“Apri li occhi e riguarda qual son io;
tu hai vedute cose, che possente
se' fatto a sostener lo riso mio”.*
Io era come quei che si risente
di visione oblita e che *s'ingegna*
indarno di ridurlasi a la mente,
Se mo sonasser tutte quelle lingue
che Polimnia con le suore fero
del latte lor dolcissimo più pingue,
per aiutarmi, al millesmo del vero
non si verria, *cantando il santo riso*
e quanto il santo aspetto facea mero;
e così, figurando il paradiso,
convien saltar lo sacro poema,
*come chi trova suo cammin riciso.*¹⁶⁷
(XXIII. 46-63)

One should recall that in the cantos dedicated to the Sphere of Saturn (*Par.* XXI-XXII) Beatrice notably did not smile at Dante, because his mortal senses were not yet ready to endure such brightness and, therefore, his human ingenuity was inadequate in the face of the divine truth revealed by that smile (*Par.* XXI. 4-12)¹⁶⁸. On that occasion, Beatrice affirms that if she had smiled, ‘tu ti faresti quale/ fu Semelè quando di cener fessi’ (XXI. 4)¹⁶⁹; in other words, Dante would have suffered the same fate as Semele, incinerated by the splendor of Jupiter. This simile therefore affirms the divine nature of Beatrice's smile, having the power to overwhelm man much like that of a divine being.

Beatrice's choice not to smile is essential to the unveiling of her nature: in fact, it is with the return of Beatrice's smile in *Par.* XXIII that the divine and specifically Christological value of her smile is fully manifested¹⁷⁰. It should be noted, first of all, that the revelation of Beatrice's

¹⁶⁷ ‘Open your eyes and see me as I am./ The things that you have witnessed/ have given you the strength to bear my smile./ I was like a man who finds himself awakened/ from a dream that has faded and who strives / in vain to bring it back to mind/ when I heard this invitation, deserving/ of such gratitude as can never be erased / from the book that registers the past./ If at this moment all the tongues/ that Polyhymnia and her sisters nurtured / with their sweetest, richest milk/ should sound to aid me now, their song could not attain/ one thousandth of the truth in singing of that holy smile/ and how it made her holy visage radiant./ And so, in representing Paradise,/ the sacred poem must make its leap across,/ as does a man who finds his path cut off.’

¹⁶⁸ Cristoforo Landino (Firenze: Lexis Progetti Editoriali, 1999): ‘Puossi anchora interpretare secondo le parole di Beatrice che quando l'huomo trascende insino al supremo grado della speculatione divina, se Beatrice ridessi, cioè dimostrassi tucto el suo splendore, lo 'ngegno humano, el quale è a quella chome l'occhio della noctua, *i. civetta*, a' razi del sole, v'abbaglerebbe in forma che volendo vedere el tucto non vede alchuna chosa.’

¹⁶⁹ ‘You would become what Semele became/ when she was turned to ashes’.

¹⁷⁰ Vittorio Montemaggi has also identified the Christological value of Beatrice's smile, but in relation to her action in vv. 70-72, where Beatrice encourages Dante to turn his gaze from her smile to the vision of the Church; Beatrice's smile is thus Christological ‘in its calling for openness to self-sacrifice and its inviting one to attend not exclusively to a single person but one's community as a whole’ (‘The Theology of Dante's ‘Commedia’ in the Heaven of the Fixed Stars’, in *Se mai continga... Exile, Politics and Theology in Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 2013) pp. 45-61 (p. 57)).

smile is accompanied by her exhortation to Dante to open his eyes (XXIII. 46); such words could recall the revelation of Christ to his disciples on the road to Emmaus: just as Dante could not see Beatrice's smile, initially the apostles were unable to recognize Christ and appear sad; subsequently their eyes are opened and finally they can recognize Christ and rejoice ('Et aperti sunt oculi eorum, et cognoverunt eum [...]') (Luke 24.13-53)¹⁷¹.

Moreover, the revelation of Beatrice's smile is mediated by that of Christ: in fact, the light of Christ's smile, which Dante previously claimed he could not endure ('non la sostenea', XXIII. 33), instead makes the pilgrim 'possente a sostener lo riso' (XXIII. 47-48) of Beatrice, who reveals herself, like the vision of Christ, as ineffable and indescribable. Between Beatrice and Christ there is a reciprocity where, as Tommaseo states, 'God helps him to contemplate Beatrice, just as she helped him to know God'¹⁷²: if Beatrice's smile, always increasing in its divine splendor, gradually prepares the pilgrim for the final vision of God's smile, the light of Christ, the source of this smile, enables the fulfilment of this function and, thus, the unveiling of the Christological truth of Beatrice's ineffable smile.

By virtue of this relationship, the interpretation first proposed by Francesco da Buti and supported by Natalino Sapegno, according to which the 'santo aspetto' (XXIII. 60) should be attributed to Christ rather than to Beatrice, the most appropriate: Beatrice's smile is 'santo' because it is made so by the 'santo aspetto' of Christ, which 'made her smile pure'¹⁷³. 'Paradiso' (61), which Dante declares to be impossible to describe because of the loftiness of its matter, can finally coincide with the 'santo riso' of Beatrice (59) revealed to be the main subject of the 'sacrate poema': the lady's *dolce riso* in Giacomo da Lentini, which offered the poet an earthly paradise, further separating him from the true heavenly homeland, has transformed into Beatrice's 'santo riso', the greatest poetic tool in the journey to God.

Nevertheless, Beatrice's smile is a means of knowledge that must be transcended, in which the whole of Paradise cannot not exhausted: in fact, later in the song, Beatrice recalls Dante from his fixed contemplation of her 'santo riso', encouraging him to turn his gaze to the garden of the blessed that surrounds them (70-72). Similarly in *Par.* XVIII. 19-21, Beatrice, overwhelming Dante with the light of her smile, had exhorted him to turn and listen to his ancestor Cacciaguida, 'non pur ne' miei occhi è paradiso' (21)¹⁷⁴. As Ernesto Trucchi notes, 'the light of the intellect exists not only in the theological teachings, but also in examples of the righteous, such

¹⁷¹ 'Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him'.

¹⁷² Niccolò Tommaseo (Torino: Utet, 1927).

¹⁷³ Natalino Sapegno (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1955-57).

¹⁷⁴ 'Not in my eyes alone is Paradise'.

as those which Cacciaguida will now name¹⁷⁵. The lady's admonition warns that Dante's understanding and experience of heavenly reality, although mediated by Beatrice's smile, must not be reduced to it: her smile is the main means of expression and knowledge of Paradise; nevertheless, it does not constitute the end of Dante's journey, but rather a means toward it.

In fact, in *Par.* XXVII, the passage from the Heaven of the Fixed Stars to the Primum Mobile takes place by means of the virtue Beatrice infuses in Dante through her smiling face, to which Dante, after taking a last look at the Earth, turns his attention (88-96):

La mente innamorata, che donnea
con la mia donna sempre, di ridure
ad essa li occhi più che mai ardea;
e se natura o arte fé pasture
da pigliare occhi, per aver la mente,
in carne umana o ne le sue pitture,
tutte adunate, parrebber niente
ver' lo piacer divin che mi refuse,
quando mi volsi al suo viso ridente.¹⁷⁶

Employed here is the traditional *topos* of the inability to describe the beauty of the beloved: all the beauties of nature and art put together would be nothing compared to Beatrice's smile, since 'lo piacer divin', the divine beauty, shines and is reflected in it. In an attempt to describe its beauty, the smile of the beloved is explicitly recognized as a *speculum*, a mirror that refracts the divine luminosity to which every other earthly beauty is incomparable. Later in the canto, Beatrice will smile once again as she satisfies Dante's desire to identify the place where they have landed (103-105):

Ma ella, che vedea 'l mio disire,
incominciò, ridendo tanto lieta,
che Dio pareo nel suo volto gioire.¹⁷⁷

This is Beatrice's last smile which the author is able to describe, before ineffability wins out. The brightness of the lady's smile and its source of *caritas* is such that the last and highest term of comparison used by Dante is God: Beatrice smiles so greatly that God himself seems to rejoice in her face and, therefore, 'Beatrice's laughter seemed to be the laughter God himself'¹⁷⁸. This tercet assumes an importance as yet unrecognized, since in what has been called only hyperbole, Dante affirms two fundamental theological and structural truths of the poem:

¹⁷⁵ Ernesto Trucchi (Milano: L. Toffaloni, 1936).

¹⁷⁶ 'My loving mind, which always lingers lovingly/ on my lady, ardently longed, still more than ever,/ to let my eyes once more be fixed on her./ And if nature or art have fashioned lures/ of human flesh, or of paintings done of it,/ to catch the eyes and thus possess the mind,/ all these combined would seem as nothing / compared to that divine beauty that shone on me/ when I turned back and saw her smiling face.'

¹⁷⁷ 'But she, who knew my wish, began to speak,/ smiling with such gladness that her face/ seemed to express the very joy of God.'

¹⁷⁸ Scartazzini and Vandelli (Milano: U. Hoepli, 1929).

the first is the affirmation of the existence of a joyful God, overflowing with happiness, who smiles and who communicates his smile to the world; the second is the recognition of a correspondence between the female and the divine smile, both of which can be understood in terms of the mystery of the Incarnation: the creation manifests the action of the Creator through the smile, revealing in its face ('la nostra effigie', 'our likeness', in *Par.* XXXIII. 131) the smiling face of God. According to Dante, the presence of God in the human being thus finds its highest expression in the smile.

Though Beatrice's smile constitutes an indirect vision of God's smile, Dante the pilgrim, having arrived in the Empyrean and about to experience the final and direct *visio Dei*, must abandon it. The poetic farewell to Beatrice consists in a renunciation of the description of her beauty, as her smile in particular has now become indescribable (XXX. 25-27):

[...] ché, come sole in viso che più trema,
così lo rimembrar del dolce riso
la mente mia da me medesmo scema.¹⁷⁹

The ineffability of Beatrice's last smile fits with the more general reference to the *Vita Nuova* occupying the subsequent verses (28-30): the final vision of the beloved's smile is ineffable in precisely the same way as the first in his youthful *libello*. If Beatrice's first smile could neither be remembered nor described, in the final episode the linguistic device comparing it to the sun that dazzles the weak eye is a consequence, paradoxically, of his reliable memory¹⁸⁰ of the beloved's smile. One notes that, for the first and only time in the *Commedia*, Dante uses the courtly expression "dolce riso": although Beatrice's smile has become entirely ineffable and has completed its process of divinization, it is still the smile of God's creation, not of the Creator himself. The "dolce riso" therefore becomes the emblem of Dante's renunciation of love for the creation, which now must be abandoned in favor of its source. I believe that this is the meaning of the final image of Beatrice's smile in the following canto (XXXI. 91-93):

Così orai; e quella, sì lontana
come pareva, *sorrise e riguardommi*;
poi si tornò a l'eterna fontana.¹⁸¹

Beatrice is now far away, seated in the white rose beside Rachel, and her reaction to Dante's last prayer addressed to her is that of a smile, her final one, simple and plain, and above all

¹⁷⁹ '[...] for, like sunlight striking on the weakest eyes,/ the memory of the sweetness of that smile/ deprives my mind of my mental powers.'

¹⁸⁰ Giuseppe Ledda, *La guerra della lingua. Ineffabilità, retorica e narrativa nella 'Commedia' di Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 2002), pp. 300-302.

¹⁸¹ 'This was my prayer. And she, however far away/ she seemed, smiled and looked down at me,/ then turned again to the eternal fountain.'

silent. The eyes and smile of the beloved appear together once again, in a smiling glance that is her final sign of recognition and satisfaction towards Dante, to show that he is finally in God's grace¹⁸². Her smile this time does not give rise to conversation, but remains a nod, a gesture that indicates the completion of Beatrice's role as an intermediary between the pilgrim and God: her smile then turns toward the eternal fountain inviting Dante himself to turn toward the light of God, just as Bernardo's smiling nod will exhort Dante to raise his eyes towards the final heavenly vision. Her smile completes the circular structure of Beatrice's narrative in the *Commedia*, beginning with her tears in *Inf.* II: Dante's salvation through love begins with tears and ends with a smile.

The final image that remains of Beatrice therefore coincides with her own smile, a means through which the author has made the woman a divine creature, a new miracle and manifestation of the smile of divine *caritas*. In the same way, it could be said that through Beatrice's representation, the smile is elevated to an attribute of beatitude and divinity. If from a theological perspective Beatrice's smile in the *Vita Nuova* and then in the *Paradiso* becomes a revelation of God's smile, the smile of the Creator that radiates in his creation, then from a poetic perspective Dante likely would not have achieved his representation of God's smile without the creation of Beatrice's smile: if, for Dante, the essence of love consists in Beatrice's smile, then a God who reveals himself as love cannot but smile.

¹⁸² Francesco Da Buti (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62): 'a dimostrare ch'elli era nella grazia d'Iddio, e che dovea essere esaudito'.

IV. 3 The divine smile: The Virgin Mary and the Trinity

Before the final vision of God's smile, the last stage in the process of deifying the female smile through the figure of Beatrice now moves to the representation of the Virgin Mary's smile in *Par.* XXXI. With Beatrice now left behind, it is St. Bernard who introduces Dante to the vision of the Virgin, who sits atop the rose of the Empyrean. Dante's first perception of the mother of Christ is that of an intense splendor, compared to the light of the dawn, which then focalizes in the following image (133-38):

Vidi a lor giochi quivi e a lor canti
ridere una bellezza, che letizia
era ne li occhi a tutti li altri santi;
e s'io avessi in dir tanta divizia
quanta ad imaginar, non ardirei
*lo minimo tentar di sua delizia.*¹⁸³

The only element of the Virgin's face perceived here is her smile in response to the dances and songs of the angels who celebrate her; a laughing beauty that corresponds to and multiplies in the joy of the other saints 'that could be read in their eyes' smile'¹⁸⁴.

If beauty as an outward expression of virtue and divine glory is a recurring element in medieval images of Mary¹⁸⁵, in the case of the smile the question appears more complex. The attribution of the smile to the Virgin represents an act of no small importance, if we consider that the smile does not belong to the traditional representation of the Virgin Mary which medieval iconography and literature provides. The earlier analysis of Lucifer's weeping¹⁸⁶ demonstrates that the Virgin, on the contrary, is often characterized by tears and pain within the devotional literature whose traces appear in Dante's own work; at the same time, however, this heavenly representation of Mary is characterized by happiness and joy.

As with tears, there is no hint of the Virgin's smile in the Gospels; it exists only in the apocryphal tradition, in which Mary smiles when sharing the people's joy¹⁸⁷ or in response to the astonishment of midwives at the splendor caused by the birth of Jesus¹⁸⁸.

¹⁸³ 'I saw there, smiling at their games and songs,/ beauty that brought pleasure to the gaze/ of all the other gathered saints./ Were I as rich with words as in my store of images,/ I still would never dare attempt to tell / the least of these delights that came from her.'

¹⁸⁴ Scartazzini and Vandelli (Milano: U. Hoepli, 1929).

¹⁸⁵ On the topic see Stefano De Flores, 'Dalla "tota pulchra" alla "via pulchritudinis" in mariologia', *PATH: periodicum internazionale editum a Pontificia Academia Theologiae*, 4 (2005), 1-17 (pp. 5-7).

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Ch. II. 4.

¹⁸⁷ *The Protovangelium of James*, 17. 2: And again Joseph turned and saw her laughing. And he said to her: Mary, how is it that I see in your face at one time laughter, at another sorrow? And Mary said to Joseph: Because I see two peoples with my eyes; the one weeping and lamenting, and the other rejoicing and exulting.' (<<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0847.htm>> [accessed June 2021]).

¹⁸⁸ *The Gospel of Pseudo Matthew* 13, 3: 'And when the blessed Mary heard this, she smiled; and Joseph said to her: Do not smile; but prudently allow them to visit you, in case you should require them for your cure' (<<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0848.htm>> [accessed June 2021]).

Ecclesiastical art was the first place in which this change occurred: beginning in the mid-thirteenth century, sacred carvings on the portals of the cathedrals of Northern Europe saw the emergence of the so-called ‘gothic smile’ on the faces of the angels and, above all, that of the Virgin Mary¹⁸⁹. While the *sourire* of the angels on the cathedral of Reims is an early reference for the smile in Gothic sculpture, in this depiction the Virgin still appears serious. It is at the end of the thirteenth century that we find the first smiles of the Virgin: within the scene of the Annunciation in the cathedral of Regensburg ‘the Virgin returns the angel’s radiant, happy smile’¹⁹⁰, while in the portal of the cathedral of Amiens the Virgin smiles at the baby Jesus she holds in her arms (fig.1). The influence of the French Gothic in Spain created an abundance of smiles blooming on the faces of the Virgin: from the *Virgenes Blancas* of Leon (fig.2) and Toledo (fig.3) to the *Virgen de las Nieves* in the church of San Pedro El Viejo in Huesca (fig.4), the smile becomes a characterizing element in depictions of the Virgin and child.

The advent of the smile in European sacred sculptural representation can be attributed, according to Svanberg¹⁹¹, to the centuries-old influence of courtly culture and vernacular literature, in which the smile already characterized Arthurian heroes and women courted by the poets. Paul Binski specifically emphasizes that it is the smile, and not laughter, which the artists depict, transcending the courtly representation by making the smile a sign of ‘recognition of the metaphysical power of the body’¹⁹², of its divine nature. The work of medieval sculptors in ecclesiastical art thus appears to parallel that of Dante in the *Commedia*, consisting in the divinization of courtly laughter.

In Italy, however, the image of the smile struggles to penetrate the artist’s studio: as Binski notes, ‘Italian medieval images, even in the humane post 1300 era, for the most part resolutely refuse to smile’¹⁹³. The delayed reception of the *gothic smile* in Italy, and in Tuscany in particular, was explained not by the lack of knowledge on the part of the Italian masters, but rather by the rejection of a concept foreign to their art¹⁹⁴. In terms of the Virgin, while the first official representation of her smile occurs in the Madonna della Rosa of Santa Maria della Spina (Pisa), created by Andrea Pisano around 1343/45 (fig.5), Max Siedel¹⁹⁵ notes that in Tuscany there

¹⁸⁹ On the *gothic smile* see Jan Svanberg, ‘The Gothic Smile’, *Thomas W. Gaethkens, Kunstkerischer Austausch/Artistic Exchange*, 2 (1997), 357-371 and Paul Binski, ‘The Angel Choir at Lincoln and the Poetics of the Gothic Smile’, *Art History*, 20, 3, 350-374.

¹⁹⁰ Mia Akestam, “I felt like jumping for joy”- Smile and Laughter in Medieval Imagery’, in *Tears, sighs and laughter. Expressions of emotions in the Middle Ages*, (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 2017), pp. 215-238, (p. 216).

¹⁹¹ Svanberg, p. 360.

¹⁹² Binski, p. 354.

¹⁹³ Ibidem, p. 352.

¹⁹⁴ Max Siedel, ‘La scoperta del sorriso. Vie di diffusione del gotico francese (Italia centrale, 1315-25)’, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 51 (2007), 45-158 (p. 49).

¹⁹⁵ Ibidem, pp. 52-59.

were already minor masters more open to the innovations introduced by French sculptors. We find wooden statues of more popular production, belonging to the early fourteenth century, which testify to an alternative artistic current compared to the official tradition, influenced by the active exchange of ideas between France and Tuscany existing in that period due to Italian artists returning from stays in France and several French masters residing in Tuscany. In his essay Siedel analyzes the Annunziata del Maestro di San Cassiano (fig.6) and the Madonna del Castello del Gallico (fig.7): both statues, created in the region of Lucca, evidence the reception of the *sourire* of Reims.

In addition to these examples, it is worth recalling *La Madre dei bimbi* (fig.8), the smiling Madonna created by an anonymous Tuscan sculptor in the first decade of the fourteenth century for the church of Giovanni Battista in Cigoli (Pisa), then in the diocese of Lucca. This statue takes on particular importance, as it was a significant object of worship at the beginning of the fourteenth century: it was, in fact, the centerpiece of Marian worship in the region, a destination of faithful pilgrims from all over Tuscany¹⁹⁶.

If we consider the hypothesis that Dante resided in the vicinity of Lucca during his exile, as a great devotee of the Virgin he would not have been ignorant of a sanctuary and a sacred statue so well known throughout Tuscany. In fact, if some biographers have placed Dante's stay in Lucca between 1307 and 1308, others have argued that he went there between 1314 and 1316, when the city was a stronghold of the Ghibelline faction¹⁹⁷; it is, in any case, the same period of time in which the *Madre dei bimbi* was created and the cult surrounding this image became popular. In any case, if we consider it extremely likely that Dante was exposed to the new ideas circulating in the production of visual arts in Tuscany, including the concept of the *sourire de Reims* which was spreading throughout Europe, we can only assume that the poet witnessed firsthand at least one wooden statue of the smiling Virgin.

I believe that we are able to reconstruct the likely influence of yet another popular tradition on the Virgin's smile in the *Commedia*. I refer to the genre of *lauda*, religious poetry in the vernacular that, beginning in the second half of the thirteenth century, was produced within the *Laudesi* confraternities of central and northern Italy in order to celebrate the cult of the Madonna.

Like the wooden statues, the *lauda* phenomenon belongs to a popular culture whose influence on Dante's work has not yet been deeply investigated. Nevertheless, Lino Pertile has indicated

¹⁹⁶ On this phenomenon see Michele Bacci, 'Le sculture lignee nel folklore religioso. Alcune considerazioni', in *Scultura Lignea. Lucca 1200-1425*, ed. by Clara Baracchini (Firenze: Studio per Edizione scelte, 1995), pp. 31-41 (p. 34).

¹⁹⁷ On Dante's stay in Lucca see Michele Messina, 'Lucca', in *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 1970) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lucca_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/> [accessed June 2021].

that this humble literary tradition is an important expression of the everyday culture of the time, as it reflects ‘the knowledge that indeed was circulating and shared in public spaces such as squares, schools, and churches’¹⁹⁸, and to which Dante was continually exposed.

In particular, with regard to the *laude* addressed to the Virgin, Pertile argued that when ‘Dante was nine years old [...] it is likely that the many vernacular verses he knew by heart were all in praise of the Virgin’¹⁹⁹. He therefore suggests that the *laude* held some influence over Dante’s works, although a complete study on the subject is still lacking. Bryan Reynolds conducted a preliminary investigation in this regard²⁰⁰, demonstrating the presence of a selection of Marian praises and hymns in the representation of the Virgin in the *Commedia*. Among them are, in particular, the *Laude Cortonesi*, the oldest known *laudario*, produced in the thirteenth century by the Confraternity of Santa Maria delle Laude of Cortona. The *laude* dedicated to the Virgin (the first sixteen and the final *lauda* in the collection) provide a series of Marian *topoi* that are common in the *Commedia*²⁰¹, depicting the Virgin as a co-redemptive mediatrix of God’s grace. In particular, it is precisely within one of the Cortonese *laude*, not considered in Reynolds’ analysis, that the smile of the Virgin makes its appearance. The penultimate stanza of *Lauda* n. 15, ‘O divina virgo flore’, reads:

O divina virgo, flore
aulorita d’ogne aulore!
Tu se’ flor che sempre grane,
molta gratia in te permane:
tu portasti ‘l vino e pane,
cioè ‘l nostro redemptore.
Ave, vergene benigna,
tu ke sola fosti degna
di portare l’alta ‘nsegna
de l’altissimo signore.
Tu es sacra virgo pia,
tu, dulcissima Maria,
tu ke se’ la drecta via
per venir de salvatione.
Per te Deo n’ave victoria
de la supernale gloria:
la tua corona imperia
cum Cristo imperadore.
Tante sono li tue virtude,
ki cielo e terra e mare conclude:
tutti so’ di gratia ignudi,
kiunque de te sie ‘n errore.

¹⁹⁸ Lino Pertile, *Dante popolare* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2021), p. 93.

¹⁹⁹ Lino Pertile, *La puttana e il gigante. Dal Cantico dei Cantici al Paradiso Terrestre di Dante* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1998) pp. 32-33.

²⁰⁰ Brian Reynolds, ‘L’immagine della Vergine nella Laude del XIII secolo in relazione alla *Commedia* di Dante’, *Fu Jen Studies*, 43 (2010), 68-93.

²⁰¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 75-77. Lino Pertile also suggested the influence of this *laudario* on the substantivized forms in the *Vita Nuova* in *La puttana e il gigante*, p. 34 n.26.

*Tant'abunda per te gratia
 ke tuto 'l cielo se ne solatia;
 unque de te non se sàtiano
 l'angeli di far laudure.
 De quel canto glorioso
 fanno coro delectoso:
 ciascun rendi gaudioso,
 speranz' à de lo tuo amore.
 Tutti portan reverentia
 cum molta gent'et ubidenza
 a te, donna de potentia,
 in cui regna tutt'onore
 per la tua beatitudine
 de lo sempiternal lumine;
 o fontana, ke se' flumine
 de pietade, per amore!
 O dolzor, de te s'afina
 per la maiestà divina,
 per la tua santa doctrina,
 sì reluce 'l tuo splendore.
 Tu se' via de viritade,
 scala se' d'umiltade;
 de te prese humanitade
 Iesù, nostro redemptore!
 Tu se' gloria del paradiso,
 sempre parente di viso;
 tu (glori' a te!) se' riso,
 tu se' rosa cum dolzore.
 Ave, virgo incoronata,
 ave, Dio obumbrata,
 ke 'm ciel se'encoronata,
 madre d'ogne peccatore.²⁰²*

If one compares this *lauda* with St. Bernard's prayer to the Virgin in the *Commedia* (*Par.* XXXIII. 1-21), there emerges a series of similarities between the two texts.

First of all, it is worth noting the use of the biblical metaphor of the flower (in particular, the rose) to indicate Mary, especially by virtue of her role as a mother who made possible the incarnation of the Redeemer ('Tu se' flor che sempre grane' (15. 3); 'tu se' rosa cum dolzore'

²⁰² *Lauda n. 15, Laudario di Cortona - Cod 91 [32v - 34v]*, in *Laude cortonesi dal secolo XIII al XV*, ed. by Giorgio Varanini and others (Firenze, Olschki, 1981). My own translation: 'O divine virgin, flower, most fragrant of all fragrances. You are the flower that is always a seed, much grace abides in you; you bore the wine and bread, that is, our Redeemer. Hail, benign virgin, you benevolent virgin the only one who to be worthy to bear the insignia of the Almighty. You are the holy and pious Virgin, you most sweet Mary, you are the straight way to come to salvation. Thanks to you God is victorious in the supernal glory: your crown reigns with Christ the Emperor. Your virtues are so many that surround sky, land and sea: whoever sins against you is deprived of grace. Your grace is so abundant that the whole heaven is delighted; hence the angels are never tired of praising you. They make a delightful chorus of that glorious song: you make everyone joyful and hopeful of your love. Everybody is reverent, kind and obedient to you, powerful lady, in whom all honor reigns for your bliss of the everlasting light; O fountain, you are river of pity, for love! O sweetness, we perfect ourselves through you and your splendor shines in your divine majesty and in your holy doctrine. You are the way of truth, the ladder of humility, Jesus our Redeemer took his humanity from you. You are the glory of paradise, which you always show in your face; you (glory to thee!) are smile, you are a rose for your sweetness. Hail, crowned virgin, hail, overshadowed by God, for you are crowned in heaven, the mother of every sinner.'

(15. 50)). In *Par.* XXIII. 73, Dante describes the Virgin as ‘rosa in che ‘l verbo divino carne si fece’²⁰³; in *Par.* XXXIII. 7-9, Dante again makes mention of Mary’s womb, in which God’s love was renewed, thanks to which ‘così è germinato questo fiore’ (9)²⁰⁴, referring both to the flower that is Christ and to the rose of the Empyrean, Dante’s own invention.

Secondly, both texts are characterized by the use of *topoi* concerning the virtues of the Virgin, stemming from the Bible and patristic authors: humility (‘scala se’ d’umiltade’ (15. 44); ‘umile’ (XXXIII. 2)); splendor (‘sì reluce ‘l tuo splendore’ (15. 42); ‘meridiana face’ (XXXIII. 10)²⁰⁵); power as an empress at Christ’s side (‘la tua corona imperia’, ‘donna de potentia’ (15. 17, 33); ‘Agusta’ (XXXII. 19), ‘se’ tanto grande e tanto vali’ (XXXIII. 13)²⁰⁶); and piety (‘flumine de pietade’ (15. 38); ‘in te pietate’ (XXXIII. 19)²⁰⁷). Moreover, from a formal point of view one notes the use of the anaphoric ‘tu’ which marks the rhythm in both texts (‘Tu es sacra virgo pia, tu, dulcissima Maria’ and ‘Tu se’ gloria del paradiso, [...] tu (glori’ a te!) se’ riso, tu se’ rosa cum dolzore’ (15. 11-12; 47-50); ‘tu se’ colei che l’umana natura nobilitasti’, ‘nel ventre tuo’, ‘la tua benignità’ (XXXIII. 4, 7, 16)²⁰⁸).

Finally, both in the *lauda* and in Dante’s image, the Virgin is represented as a mediator of the relationship between God and man: she is an intermediary of salvation (‘tu ke se’ la drecta via per venire de salvatione’ (15. 13-14); ‘termine fisso d’eterno consiglio’ (XXXIII. 3)²⁰⁹), a fountain of hope for mortals (‘speranz’ à de lo tuo amore’ and ‘fontana’ (15.30, 37); ‘se’ di speranza fontana vivace’ (XXXIII. 12)²¹⁰) and, finally, a helper and dispenser of grace for those who turn to her, providing what would otherwise be impossible to obtain without her mediation (‘tutti so’ di gratia ignudi, kiunque de te sie ‘n errore’ (15. 21-22); ‘che qual vuol grazia e a te non ricorre, sua disianza vuol volar sanz’ali’ (XXXIII. 14-15)²¹¹).

In particular, as mentioned above, the *lauda* characterizes the Virgin with a smile: the ‘gloria del paradiso’ (47) shows on her face (‘sempre parente di viso’) through her smile, revealing the very essence of the Virgin (‘tu se’ riso’ (49)). This description makes use of terminology belonging to the lexicon of courtly love, a common feature among the *laude* dedicated to the Virgin: between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there is, in fact, a continuous and fertile exchange between vernacular love poetry and Marian religious production, which leads to a representation of the Virgin characterized by the sweetness and beauty of courtly women, and,

²⁰³ ‘The rose in which the Word of God/ was turned to flesh’.

²⁰⁴ ‘[...] has made this blossom seed and flower’.

²⁰⁵ ‘Noonday torch’.

²⁰⁶ ‘You are so great and so prevail above’.

²⁰⁷ ‘In you clemency’.

²⁰⁸ ‘You are the one that so ennobled human nature’; ‘your womb’; ‘your loving kindness’.

²⁰⁹ ‘Fixed goal of the eternal plan’.

²¹⁰ ‘You are the living fountainhead of hope’.

²¹¹ ‘Should he who longs for grace not turn to you,/ his longing would be doomed to wingless flight’.

at the same time, to an idealization and spiritualization of the women who are the focus of the vernacular poets²¹².

The smile of the Virgin in *lauda* 15 is an evident product of this exchange: just as the *dolce riso* appeared on the lady's face to express her beauty, the Virgin's smile shows the glory of Paradise. From a formal point of view, the derivation of this element from courtly poetry is demonstrated by the triple rhyme 'paradiso-viso-riso', traditional in love poetry since its first attestation in Giacomo da Lentini's *Lo viso mi fa andare alegramente* (9-12), and present in Dante's own lyric, where he uses this scheme to describe the smile of the Donna Gentile in the *Convivio* and, several times, for the smile of Beatrice in *Paradiso*.

More specifically, one notes an analogy between the verses of the *lauda* and those of *Par. XV. 32-36*, regarding Beatrice's smile. Not only do we observe the use of the same three-fold rhyme 'viso-riso-paradiso', but the effect of the two women's smiles is the same: if the Virgin's smile depicts the glory of Paradise, Dante perceives through Beatrice's smile 'lo fondo de la mia gloria e del mio paradiso (36)²¹³. This analogy represents the mixture of Marian and courtly language that unites the description of Mary and that of Beatrice in the *Commedia*²¹⁴.

In fact, as in the *lauda*, the Virgin's smile in *Par. XXXI* appears to be the result of this process: the Virgin is described as 'una bellezza', a beauty who laughs, just as Beatrice was 'bella e ridente' (*Par. XIV*) and, even earlier, the smile of the Donna Gentile was one of her 'mirabili bellezze'. In addition, the Virgin's smile is characterized by the traditional stilnovistic element of the eyes (*XXXI. 135*), here no longer belonging to the lady herself, but to the saints in which the joy of her smile is reflected. As we have seen previously²¹⁵, the *dolce riso* of the courtly woman also possessed the possibility of transmitting joy to her lover and to everything around him. In this regard, the verses of *Lauda 15* could represent a valid antecedent for the reworking of this courtly concept in Marian terms: indeed, in vv. 23-29, the *lauda* first affirms that heaven rejoices in the Virgin's grace (23-24) and then, describing the songs of the angels who praise Our Lady, it emphasizes that she makes everyone joyful ('ciascun rendi gaudioso') in much the same way as does *Par. XXXI*. Dante seems to reiterate this concept, in a form very similar to that of the *lauda*, in *Par. XXXII. 83-99*: the angels fly over the Virgin, showing 'allegrezza' (86) and the whole heavenly host responds to their *Ave Maria*, 'sì ch'ogne vista sen fé più serena' (99)²¹⁶.

²¹² Brian Reynolds, 'The Virgin and the Lady. Some Considerations on the Intersections between Courtly and Marian Literature', *Wensham Review of Literature and Culture*, 7, 2 (2014), 229-277.

²¹³ 'My ultimate bliss, my final paradise'.

²¹⁴ Cf. Reynolds, *L'immagine della Vergine*, p. 78.

²¹⁵ Cf. IV. 2.

²¹⁶ 'So that each face becomes more luminous, with joy'.

Dante's invention of the Virgin's smile is therefore part of a popular tradition that includes *laude* and wooden statuary, sharing in the reappropriation of courtly and secular materials which Dante brings to its highest level. If, with Beatrice's smile, the author has made the courtly *dolce riso* a means of divine revelation through God's creation, with the Virgin he definitively designates the smile as an attribute of the divine. In fact, the smile of the Virgin mediates and anticipates that of God, by virtue of her likeness to Christ, as Dante affirms in *Par.* XXXII. 85-87: after the first appearance of the laughing beauty, the second mention of the Virgin's face is characterized by its likeness to that of Christ.

Riguarda omai *ne la faccia che a Cristo*
più si somiglia, ché la sua chiarezza
sola ti può disporre a veder Cristo".²¹⁷

Mary's likeness to Christ, as Benvenuto da Imola notes, is reflected on two levels, the carnal, for being his mother, and the spiritual, in the light of the bliss²¹⁸. Indeed, in her face shines more brightly the 'chiarezza': the light of God's love²¹⁹, the splendor that allows us to see the divine essence: only Mary can see God directly, and it is therefore only through her splendor that Dante can penetrate the mystery and splendor of the Trinity with his feeble human gaze. Therefore, the smile that appears on the face of the Virgin, through which shines her 'chiarezza', is the mediator of Dante's vision of the divine, definitively replacing the role assumed by Beatrice's smile.

In general, the conformity between the figure of Beatrice and that of Mary is evident from the similarities between Dante's final farewell to Beatrice (*Par.* XXXI. 79-90) and St. Bernard's prayer to the Virgin (*Par.* XXXIII. 1-39)²²⁰. We have already seen how, in particular, both women play the role of mediators of the pilgrim Dante's salvation by means of their tears: Beatrice's crying eyes cause Virgil to intervene, just as Mary's tears provoked Saint Lucia to come to the rescue. The two women's tears are a part of the Virgilian narrative, constituting the prerequisite for Dante's journey and, therefore, for his narration. In the moment when they actively enter the poem, their weeping image is instead transformed into a smiling vision that glorifies the stages of Dante's journey: Beatrice's first 'santo riso' celebrates the pilgrim's conversion on the top of Mount Purgatory, while the joyful smile of the Virgin welcomes him into the Empyrean.

²¹⁷ "Look now on the face that most resembles Christ,/ for nothing but its brightness/ can make you fit to look on Christ."

²¹⁸ Benvenuto da Imola (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1887): 'in forma humana, tamquam vera mater, et in luce et beatitudine, et opere pretium est intueri faciem eius'.

²¹⁹ L. Lucia Onder, 'Chiarezza' in *Enciclopedia dantesca*, (Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 1970), <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/elenco-opere/Enciclopedia_Dantesca> [accessed January 2022].

²²⁰ Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991-97).

Within the poem, only the smiles of Beatrice, the Virgin and God are defined as ineffable: ineffability is, in fact, the revelatory form of the divine. Yet, as we have seen, Beatrice's final smile is a paradox: though an expression of the highest beatitude, it nevertheless must be abandoned, since it still belongs to the world of God's creation and cannot play a direct role in mediating the divine, a role which must instead be assumed by the Virgin.

With the smile of the Virgin Mary, at once a female courtly trait and an image of Christ, Dante definitively resolves the conflict between love for woman and love for God: as Brian Reynolds states, 'she is in a certain sense both created and creator'²²¹, gathering in her womb the divine love that gives life to the rose of the Empyrean and 'by implication everything below it in heaven and on earth, in a cascade of warmth and light'²²². The Virgin's smile therefore constitutes the final stage in the process that reveals the divine, once again expressing Mary's function as mediatrix between the human and the divine. Thanks to her smile, Dante is finally ready to witness the last and brightest smile of the *Commedia*: that of God.

At the end of Canto XXXIII, during the mystical *visio Dei*, Dante witnesses the revelation of the mystery of the Trinity, presented to him in the form of three circles of three different colors. After briefly declaring the insufficiency of his linguistic capabilities to describe what appears before him (123-126), the author expresses the essence of the Trinity through the following exclamation:

*O luce eterna che sola in te sidi,
sola t'intendi, e da te intelletta
e intendente te ami e arridi!*²²³

In defining the unity of the eternal light of the Trinity, Dante indicates the mutual relationship of knowledge between the three beings who compose it ('da te intelletta e intendente', (125-26)), which, in turn, generates love: that is, the Holy Spirit, and, surprisingly, the smile ('arridi'). In this regard, commentators often reference a passage from the *De Trinitate* by Richard of Saint Victor, in which the mutual love of the Trinity is defined as *jucundus*, since *caritas* cannot exist without happiness²²⁴. And yet, as has already been noted²²⁵, laughter and the smile

²²¹ Brian K. Reynolds, 'A Beauty that transforms: the Marian aesthetics of Dante's *Commedia*', *Fu Jen Studies*, 35 (2003), 61-89 (p. 82).

²²² *Ibidem*.

²²³ 'O eternal Light, abiding in yourself alone,/ knowing yourself alone, and, known to yourself/ and knowing, loving and smiling on yourself!'

²²⁴ 'Quod de pluralitate personarum convincit et probat, plenitudo felicitatis simili ratione approbat. Conscientiam suam quisque interroget, et procul dubio et absque contradictione inveniet, quod sicut nihil charitate melius, sic nihil charitate jucundus; necesse est itaque, in summa felicitate charitatem non deesse. Non potest ergo esse amor jucundus, si non est mutuus. In illa igitur summa felicitate nec amor mutuus potest deesse.' (Richardus a Sancto Victore, *De Trinitate* III. 3):

²²⁵ Anna M. Chiavacci Leonardi (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991-97).

do not explicitly belong to any theological definition of the Trinity, nor is it easily attributed to the Christian God.

In fact, unlike in the Greek myths, in which the laughter of the gods is a creative power²²⁶, the Christian God hardly ever laughs, and when he does, it is almost never a positive form of laughter. God laughs four times in the Hebrew Bible²²⁷, but his laughter is sarcastic, mocking and derisive, directed against pagan idols or the vanity of earthly powers; or, as we saw in the case of Isaac's birth, through laughter God shows his omnipotence, marking a clear distinction from its human counterpart.

In the Middle Ages, the corporeality of laughter, a purely human phenomenon, most often prevented its attribution to the divine, so much so that the image of a Christ who does not laugh rose to the level of 'theological and moral archetype'²²⁸. In fact, according to Christian theologians, the Word Incarnate never laughed in the Gospel: God who becomes man weeps, so that man will learn that only through tears will Heaven open its doors to him²²⁹. References to Christ's laughter, therefore, are rare and notable.

Among the Church fathers it is Augustine who, in discussing the human nature of Jesus, attributes to Christ the ability to feel joy in addition to anger and sadness: 'et miratus est Jesus et iratus et contristatus et exhilaratus'²³⁰ (*De diversis quaestionibus*, 80. 3). A first hint of what can be defined more properly as a smile of Christ appears, instead, in the *Vita Ambrosii* by Paolino da Milano, in which Jesus appears, smiling, to St. Ambrose, shortly before he dies: 'In eodem tamen loco in quo jacebat [...] cum oraret una cum supradicto sacerdote, viderat Dominum Jesum advenisse ad se et ardentem sibi'²³¹. Finally, Sister Rosvita of Gandersheim, in

²²⁶ See Georges Minois, *Storia del riso e della derisione* (Bari: Dedalo, 2004) pp. 15-16 and Lucia Immordino, *Dio non ride. Il ridere tra ordine costituito e libertà* (Lucca: Argot Edizioni, 2018), p. 19.

²²⁷ *Psalm* 2. 4: 'The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them'; *Psalm* 37. 13: 'But the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming'; *Proverbs* 1. 26: 'I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh'. On God's laughter see Oscar Battaglia, *Il Dio che sorride. Il sorriso nella Bibbia* (Cittadella: Orizzonti Biblici, 2001).

²²⁸ D'Onofrio, *Tempus ridendi*, p. 132.

²²⁹ John Chrysostom, *Homily 15 on Hebrews*, 8 (<<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/240215.htm>> [accessed May 2021]: 'Thou that art crucified? thou that art a mourner? Tell me, do you laugh? Where do you hear of Christ doing this? Nowhere: but that He was sad indeed oftentimes. For even when He looked on Jerusalem, He wept; [...] This is the season of grief and tribulation [...] and do you laugh? Do you not see how Sarah was rebuked? Do you not hear Christ saying, Woe to them that laugh, for they shall weep?'

²³⁰ 'Jesus was amazed, angry, saddened and cheerful'.

²³¹ Paolino da Milano, *Vita Ambrosii*, ed. by J. P. Migne (Paris, 1845), PL 14, 27-4 (47B). My own translation: 'In the same place wher he was laying [...] while he was praying together with the aforesaid priest, he saw the Lord Jesus coming towards him and smiling to him'.

her *Historia ascensionis Domini*, represents Christ *vultu ridente* to his disciples before addressing them with the sign of peace: ‘Et Christus Iesus, vultu ridente reversus, / discipulis iterum verbis dicebat amicis: / ‘pax vobis fratres semper mihi rite fideles [...]’²³².

As far as God’s laughter is concerned, its joyful manifestation appears, as in the case of the Virgin, in the apocryphal Gospels, where God smiles with pleasure at the virtue of his faithful²³³ or at their beatific destiny²³⁴. In the writings of the Church Fathers, however, at least two references to God’s laughter can be identified.

The first is in the *Confessiones* of Augustine, where divine laughter still has a biblical, derisive significance: ‘Sed tamen sine me loqui apud misericordiam tuam, me terram et cinerem, sine tamen loqui, quoniam ecce misericordia tua est, non homo, irrisor meus, cui loquor. Et tu fortasse irrides me, sed conversus misereberis mei’ (I. 6-7)²³⁵. Augustine addresses God, begging him for mercy and imagining his mocking laughter, the same with which he had addressed the vanity of his peoples in the Bible.

The second reference is more interesting, since this time it is a positive example of laughter. In two passages from the *Moralia in Iob*, Gregory the Great affirms that God produces a benevolent laughter; in the first, the laughter of the biblical God is understood as a consequence of his joy in testing the innocent, since the desire of the righteous consists in trials undertaken for God’s sake:

Vel certe si risum Dei eius laetitiam appellat, de innocentum poenis ridere Dominus dicitur quia quo a nobis ardentius quaeritur, eo de nobis saevius laetatur. Quasi quoddam quippe ei ex poena gaudium facimus, cum per sancta desideria pro eius nos amore castigamus. (IX. 27. 43)²³⁶

In the second, God’s laughter is, once again, provoked by the joyful satisfaction he finds in the straight path of the just and holy man:

Ridere enim dei est sanctorum vias prosequenti favore prosperari, sicut de his quoque per usum dicitur, quos in hoc saeculo felicitatis blandimenta comitantur: arrisit illis tempus.

²³² Hrotsvit Gandeshemenisis, *Opera Poetica*, 8, *historia ascensionis Domini*, 107-112, ed. by Jacques P. Migne (Paris: 1853), PL 137, 1079-1084 (1082D). Translation mine: ‘And Jesus Christ, returning with a smiling face, spoke again to his disciples: / “Peace be to you, brothers, always be faithful to me”’.

²³³ *Acts of John*, 102: ‘I laugh at your temperance’.

²³⁴ *Ibidem*: ‘Then I asked him, “Lord, when souls leave the flesh where do they go?” He answered, smiling: [...]’.

²³⁵ <<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/110101.htm>> [accessed February 2022]: ‘Still suffer me to speak before Your mercy — me, dust and ashes. Allow me to speak, for, behold, it is Your mercy I address, and not derisive man. Yet perhaps even You deride me; but when You are turned to me You will have compassion on me’.

²³⁶ Gregory The Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, p. 310: ‘Or indeed if He uses the expression of God’s ‘laughing’ for His joy, the Lord is said ‘to laugh at the pains of the innocent,’ in that the more ardently He is sought of us, the more graciously He rejoices over us. For we as it were cause a kind of joy to Him by our pain, when by holy desires, we chasten ourselves for the love of him’.

[...] Si igitur irasci Dominus perhibetur, com viam iustitiae homines perdunt, recte arridere dominus dicitur, cum bona nostra opera favor gratiae supernae comitatur. (XX. II. 8)²³⁷

God's laughter contrasts with his wrath and represents the recognition, according to Gregory, of the holiness of man, the reward that awaits him on the path of beatitude. The verb 'arridere' is used here in the figurative sense of 'to be favorable' (as in time, 'arrisit tempus'), but at the same time is used to describe and explain the *ridere Dei*. It is a form of laughter, however, that does not constitute a bodily phenomenon for Gregory, but rather a spiritual and internal phenomenon, the same *risus cordis* that expresses the eternal joy promised to the blessed.

Given this context, the smiling Trinity of the *Paradiso* represents a novelty in several respects. First of all, it is a positive smile, which reveals the essence of the divine Trinity. In fact, as already occurs in the *Convivio* regarding Philosophy, in God's smile the link between love and knowledge is revealed: divine love ('te ami' (123)), *caritas*, 'si ammanta', is mantled in a smile (as in *Par.* XX. 13) expressing the perfect knowledge of God ('da te intelletta e intendente' (125-26)). The 'eternal light' of God's truth and love, the source of the internal light that is manifested in the smile of the blessed and in that of Beatrice, finds its highest expression in the smile.

We may consider also the use of the verb 'arridere' (123), the same used by Gregory the Great and Paulinus da Milano for the representation of Jesus ('arridentem sibi'). Within the *Commedia*²³⁸, the verb is used only once in relation to Beatrice, to describe her nod of encouragement to Dante in *Par.* XV. Like that of Beatrice, the *arridere* of the Dantean Trinity is a 'smile or laughter toward someone'²³⁹, a reciprocal smile that includes a gesture, a movement towards the other person: a bodily and external manifestation of love and knowledge that binds the three Trinitarian beings. That God's smile is to be understood as literal, not allegorical as in the Gregorian version, is confirmed not only by the verb, but also by the following tercet, in which the reciprocal smile of the Trinity resolves in the human image depicted within the circle (XXXIII. 130-132), the revelation of the mystery of the Incarnation. As Peter Hawkins has suggested, the final image of God could, therefore, consist of the Aristotelian, 'uniquely human ability to laugh'²⁴⁰, in which God reveals himself, reflecting himself eternally.

²³⁷ Ibidem, p. 641: 'Since for God to 'laugh' is for the ways of the Saints to be made to prosper by His favour following them. As it is also expressed by common usage of those, whom in this world the caresses of good fortune accompany; 'The time smiled upon them.' [...] If then the Lord is said to be 'angry' when men lose the way of righteousness, the Lord is rightly described as 'smiling' when our good works the favour of grace from Above accompanies on the way.'

²³⁸ Dante employs this verb in Latin in *Epistola IX*, where the familiarity of the conversation with Margaret of Brabant (wife of Henry IX) fills his soul with joy (IX. 2 'quanto libens animus concipientis arriserit').

²³⁹ Francesco Bonomi, 'arridere' in *DELI Dizionario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana*, (2004-2008), <<http://www.etimo.it/>> [accessed June 2021].

²⁴⁰ Hawkins, *All smiles: poetry and theology in Dante*, p. 381.

Therefore, the relationship between human and divine in the *Commedia* finds its form in the smile, as the metaphor ‘riso de l’universo’ indicates in *Par. XXVII. 1-6*:

*‘Al Padre, al Figlio, a lo Spirito Santo’,
cominciò, ‘gloria!’ tutto ‘l paradiso,
sì che m’inebriava il dolce canto.
Ciò ch’io vedeva mi sembiava un riso
de l’universo; per che mia ebbrezza
intrava per l’udire e per lo viso.’²⁴¹*

The hymn of glory with which the canto begins is addressed to the three beings of the Trinity (v. 1) and this ‘dolce canto’, coming from the luminous ‘paradiso’ of the lights of the blessed, inebriates Dante’s senses. As Marco Ariani notes, this process is expressed through the synesthetic metaphor of the ‘riso dell’universo’, ‘as a means of expressing the unspeakable’²⁴². This correspondence between the glory of the Lord and the joy of heaven and nature, expressed in song, is already present as a biblical element: in Psalm 96. 11-13, the Lord’s coming is a cause for exultation and cries of joy in heaven and on earth²⁴³, while in Isaiah 35. 1-2, the glory of God makes the deserts rejoice with songs of joy²⁴⁴.

However, this joy, which the poet emphasizes in the following tercet (‘oh gioia! Oh allegrezza’ (7)), identifies and expresses itself for the first time within the poem in the smile of the universe. As we have already seen, despite their presence within an earlier rhetorical tradition, Dante’s use of such metaphors, in which the smile is attributed to natural elements, functions instead as a tool to describe the relationship between creator and creation as a radiation of love and light. In this case, the relationship appears to be explicit: in fact, it is precisely the glory of the Trinity which causes the light and smile of Paradise and, therefore, which radiates and communicates itself to the blessed. Moreover, divine glory appears to be transmitted from Paradise to the entire universe through the ‘riso’, a reflection of the smile of the Trinity’s love which manifests itself in the world, thus providing an image of Creation as a smile.

From Beatrice’s smile to the smile of the universe, Dante utilizes the smile as the primary manifestation of the divine within the human, developing what we could call a theology of the smile. Not only does Dante create the first literary codification of the category of the smile, which resolves the problematic nature of laughter in an expression that celebrates cognitive superiority; through the fundamental process of divinizing Beatrice’s smile, he also creates an afterlife

²⁴¹ ‘To the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,/ glory,’ cried all the souls of Paradise,/ and I became drunk on the sweetness of their song./ It seemed to me I saw the universe/ smile, so that my drunkenness/ came now through hearing and through sight.’

²⁴² Ariani, *Lux inaccessibilis*, p. 289.

²⁴³ ‘Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;/ let the sea resound, and all that is in it./ Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them’.

²⁴⁴ ‘The desert and the parched land will be glad;/ the wilderness will rejoice and blossom./ Like the crocus,/ it will burst into bloom;/ it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.’

structured around the smile as a reward of beatitude, but above all as an expression of God's love and wisdom. Therefore, Dante built and shaped the structure of his *Commedia* on the foundations of a binary emotional system: Beatrice's first tears in Hell are wiped away by her last smile in Heaven; the mourning of the Virgin Mary who saved Dante resolves in the image of her laughing beauty in the Empyrean; Dante's first tears that begin his journey are the necessary prerequisite for his prophetic smile in the sphere of Saturn; Lucifer's weeping in the lowest reaches of Hell corresponds to the smile of the Trinity in the highest of the heavens. Through its smiles and tears, one can truly define the *Commedia* as a poem with a 'tragicum principium et comicum finem' (*Epistola XIII. 29*)²⁴⁵.



Fig. 1: *Portal of the Vierge Dorée*, Amiens Cathedral, France (1260-1270)²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ 'a tragic beginning and a comic ending'.

²⁴⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amiens_Cathedral> [accessed January 2022].



Fig. 2: *Virgen de Leon*, Cathedral of Leon, France (late thirteenth century)²⁴⁷



Fig. 3: *Virgen Blanca*, Cathedral of Toledo, Spain (late thirteenth century)²⁴⁸



Fig. 4 *Virgen de las nieves*, Church of San Pedro El Viejo, Huesca, Spain (1330-1350)²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ <<https://www.pinterest.it/pin/367536019571327606/>> [accessed January 2022].

²⁴⁸ <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Catedral_Toledo_Virgen_Blanca_03.JPG> [accessed January 2022].

²⁴⁹ <<https://www.patrimoniodehuesca.com/huesca-san-pedro-viejo-virgen-las-nieves-1330-1350/>> [accessed January 2022].



Fig. 5 Nino Pisano, *Madonna della Rosa*, Church of Santa Maria della Spina, Pisa, Italy (1345)²⁵⁰



Fig.6 Anonymous Tuscan sculptor, *Annunziata*. Controne, S. Cassiano (Lucca), Italy (c. 1320)

Fig.7 Anonymous Tuscan sculptor, (Master of S. Cassiano), *Madonna*. Castello di Gallico (Siena), Italy (early fourteenth century)²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ Marco Campigli, 'Su Nino Pisano e sul suo seguito in Toscana: due Madonne lignee della Fondazione Giorgio Cini', *Saggi e Memorie di storia dell'arte*, 27 (2003), 35-56, (p.42).

²⁵¹ Siedel, p. 57.



Fig. 8 Anonymous Tuscan sculptor, *Madonna col Bambino (La Madre dei Bimbi)*, Chiesa di Giovanni Battista a Cigoli (Pisa), Italy (first decade of the fourteenth century)²⁵²

²⁵² <https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madonna_Madre_dei_Bambini> [accessed January 2022].

Conclusions

This study has shown the central role played by smiling and weeping in two of Dante's major works, the *Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia*, thus filling a lacuna in the existing literature: indeed, my dissertation constitutes the first comprehensive work that analyses the representation of the two emotional expressions in Dante's writing.

The investigation brought to light the high frequency of terms expressing tears in the *Vita Nuova*, primarily in reference to Dante: tears accompany the evolution of Dante's love for Beatrice from the beginning to the end of the work, establishing themselves as a fundamental element through which to observe the gradual passage from Dante's total adherence to Guido Cavalcanti's poetic modes to his detachment from them. I have argued that at the beginning of the work, tears express the amorous passion narrated in the Cavalcantian terms of its destructive effects and according to the *topoi* of courtly love, while the tears shed after the denial of Beatrice's greeting and after the *gabbo* episode provoke an internal and poetic crisis that gives birth to the laudatory style celebrating Beatrice's miraculous smile, rather than focusing on tears. Weeping returns to the *Vita Nuova* with the death of Beatrice, during which it takes on a new meaning: Dante's weeping is represented as a manifestation of an internal transformation caused by the salvific pain at Beatrice's death, which for Dante echoes the death of Christ himself, particularly in its fulfilment of the salvation of humanity. Thus, the Cavalcantian tears, originally a symbol of a negative conception of love as death, are now shed for the beloved who has ascended to Heaven and transformed into an instrument of salvation and a means to approach the divine. Finally, I have showed how Dante's reappropriation of the Cavalcantian concept of weeping and definitive departure from its poetics reach their highest expression with the first representation of weeping as a penitential tool, which sanctions the return to Beatrice after overcoming the tempting consolation of the *donna gentile*, or knowledge: through tears, Dante, unlike Cavalcanti, is able to recognize the limits of human knowledge imposed by the divine, and the need for the assistance of Beatrice's love to achieve the contemplation of God. In this regard, Love's weeping in the *Vita Nuova*, represented in the two *visiones in somniis*, plays a fundamental salvific and corrective role, showing Dante the path of divine truth in weeping for the death of Beatrice. Indeed, I have argued that in the first *visio*, Love's tears, accompanying Beatrice's ascent to heaven, constitute the prefiguration of Dante's weeping upon her death; moreover, Love's shift from smile to tears has been linked to Enoch and Elijah's reproach of the sinner within the *Visio Pauli*, appearing as the anticipatory sign of Dante going astray, a warning about the temptations of the *donna gentile*. I have argued that, in the second *visio*, Love's tears assume a salvific function similar to Beatrice's tears in *Inf.* II: indeed, they appear as the consequence of Dante's tearful request for help due to the denial of Beatrice's

salutation. Moreover, they play a function of reproach similar to that of Beatrice's words in *Purg.* XXX.57: unlike Dante, Love cries because he is at the center of the circle; he knows of the death of Beatrice and of her Christological value, while Dante's tears are still Cavalcantian tears, shed for a vain and earthly desire. In the final sonnet, *Oltre la spera*, the salvific function of Love's weeping appears explicit, becoming the means by which the poet can ascend to God, who for the time being can be known only through the mediation of the beloved, Beatrice.

As for the *Commedia*, the frequency of tears and smiles is significant and follows an oppositional development in the poem, respectively decreasing and increasing: on the one hand, tears characterize the first canticle, which is distinguished by a greater frequency of terms expressing weeping, then undergoes a slight decrease in *Purgatorio*, and disappears almost entirely in *Paradiso*; on the other hand, there are extremely few smiles in *Inferno*, while they begin to appear more frequently in the second canticle, and then in a very high number of episodes in the third canticle. Indeed, my study shows that the ascending path of Dante's journey of expiation corresponds to a progression from weeping to smiling which shapes and defines the structure of the poem and of Dante's journey. This progression can be understood in biblical terms, through the opposition between a *tempus flendi* and *tempus ridendi*, linked in a consequential way by the Beatitudes. Thus, in Dante's universe, the eternity that characterizes the condition of the damned and the blessed determines their emotional state, which becomes a permanent and direct consequence (reward or punishment) of their actions in their mortal life: if the laughter of the sinner is punished with the eternal weeping of the damned, the tears of the penitent are rewarded with the eternal smile of the blessed.

In particular, I showed that Dante, unlike the damned of Hell and the blessed of Paradise, possesses the capacity both to smile and to weep, the same capacity granted to the penitents in Purgatory: his condition is, in fact, that of the pilgrim returning to his true heavenly homeland, who must weep in recognition of his sin so that he can finally smile at the revelation of divine truth.

While in the *Vita Nuova* we observed the first steps of the evolution of Dante's tears from a manifestation of lovesickness to a fundamental penitential tool for Christian salvation, in the *Commedia* this process reaches fulfilment: indeed, Dante's journey, like that of Tungdal in the *Visio Tnugdali*, is identified from the beginning as a penitential journey, in which tears play a central role in the process of repentance and in the progression of his atonement. Therefore, this study tried to clarify the personal and universal implications of the tears shed by Dante.

Indeed, the episodes of Dante's weeping provided an important opportunity to reflect on the reasons for the poet's personal *traviamento*: I showed how the first weeping before the she-wolf in *Inf.* I and the last one provoked by Beatrice's accusation in *Purg.* XXX share notable

similarities, corresponding to two stages of the acknowledgement of the sin of cupidity and of Dante's contrition: respectively attrition and perfect contrition. In both episodes, tears are shed for fear of eternal damnation, a recognition of the sin of cupidity as a limitless and imperfect desire for knowledge. Therefore, the study of Dante's tears has tried to clarify issues concerning the evolution of Dante's conception of knowledge from the *Convivio* to the *Commedia*: while in the *Convivio*, Dante opposes cupidity to knowledge, identified instead consolatory bliss, in the poem Dante shows through his tears the awareness of the correspondence between knowledge and cupidity, completing and reaffirming the rejection of the temptations represented by the *donna gentile* in the *Vita Nuova*.

My study has shown that the other episodes of Dante's tears in *Inferno* and in *Purgatorio* are shed out of compassion (*Inf.* V and *Purg.* XIII), demonstrating how these kinds of tears are permitted in *Inferno* as long as they play an active role in the process of contrition; otherwise the attempts at weeping are repressed (Cantos VI, XX, XIX), as the complete acceptance of divine justice demands the absence of emotional reactions. In this regard, I have observed that Dante's tears always directly treat his personal conscience, unlike those shed by the holy figures of Saint Paul, Christ, and Muhammad, who cry out of a compassion that only pertains to the suffering of others.

Throughout the dissertation, I have underscored how Dante's tears characterize the double status of the poet as a sinner and a prophet, providing an important redemptive function within his universal mission: through weeping, Dante restores the correct penitential use of the divine gift of tears which God offered to Adam, accomplishing the gradual recovery of the smile, the original sign of divine knowledge and the reward of bliss, on a path precisely opposite to that of the damned of *Inferno* and, especially, of that represented by the Old Man of Crete.

Indeed, I have proposed an interpretation of the statue of the Old Man of Crete as a moral allegory for the history of humanity's corruption, narrated through the loss of the smile and the origin of sinful and vain weeping, a transition represented in the difference between its golden head and its other corrupt and lachrymose sections. Through the analysis of Matelda's smile in *Purgatorio* XXVIII, I showed how Dante affirms the pre-existence of smiling with respect to weeping and its presence in Eden before original sin, which deprived mankind of the smile, the highest expression of the Edenic knowledge of God. However, according to Dante, the original sin endowed man with weeping, a divine gift granted as a means of redemption that, if used incorrectly, becomes an expression of degradation and sin and, therefore, an instrument of eternal divine punishment. If, on one hand, the Old Man represents corrupt humanity that has wept in vain or laughed inappropriately, on the other, it is itself the source of the *contrappasso*

through the action of the same infernal rivers, becoming the means through which Dante applies the biblical idea of crying to his *Inferno* in a systematic way.

Indeed, my study has shown that the tears in *Inferno* are the primary, shared tool of *contrappasso* for the damned, whose weeping, unlike that of Dante, is without function and aim, a sign of their eternal exile and exclusion from heavenly bliss. Repentance through weeping is denied in Hell, where punishment is eternal and immutable. Analysing the medieval visions of the afterlife prior to the *Commedia*, this study has aimed to demonstrate how Dante reworks elements offered by the visionary tradition, making weeping a true counterpoint to smiling and part of a poetic development never before achieved, as a fundamental tool for characterizing the condition of the damned.

The analysis of single episodes of the tears shed by the damned has evidenced the gradual mutation of the Christian salvific weeping to a pure instrument of divine punishment, achieved both through a demonstration of the vanity of the divine gift of tears in Hell, and through the deformed representation of the tears of the damned. Even if the weeping of the lustful still generates pity in Dante, Paolo's weeping in Canto V can already be interpreted as the divine punishment resulting from Francesca's 'disiato riso', sanctioning the definitive recognition of the sinful nature of love literature. Heralded by the weeping of Filippo Argenti, the degradation of tears reaches its maximum expression in the Malebolge: here tears show their uselessness and frustration, as demonstrated by the case of the soothsayers and that of the hypocrites, manifesting the complete vanity of the act, sometimes further accentuated in a comic and sarcastic tone (as shown by the episode of pope Nicholas III).

Moreover, this analysis also brought to light the gradual loss of power to engender compassion through the tears of the damned. This process has been observed in the opposing rhetorical function performed by Paolo and Francesca's tears in *Inf.* V and by Ugolino's tears in *Inf.* XXXIII, in dialogue with the dynamics of Aeneas' tears during his encounter with Dido in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*. Thus, tears shed by the damned take on a double didactic function for the pilgrim Dante: some stimulate him to weep and facilitate his contrition; others show him the power of divine justice.

I have argued that eternal weeping becomes pure *contrappasso* with the tears of the damned in Cocytus, precisely in the impossibility of their realization. Using Augustinian writings, I have proposed that the frozen tears at the bottom of Hell can represent the possibility of repentance which sinful man has not embraced, now converted into a psychological torture, into the eternal denial of a second chance.

The climax of gradual degradation of the divine gift of weeping in Hell occurs in the mixture of Lucifer's tears with the blood of traitors, which I have interpreted as a parody of redemption

through the blood of Christ and the tears of the Virgin, suggesting the influence of the *Liber de Passione Christi et Doloribus et Planctibus Matris Eius*. Therefore, I have shown how the inversion of weeping and blood, sacred instruments of redemption, characterizes both the entry gates and the lowest depths of the infernal kingdom, marking the boundaries of a world without Christ.

In the passage from *Inferno* to *Purgatorio*, I have shown that the function of weeping undergoes a strong shift due to the transitory and temporary condition of the penitent souls, transforming instead into the salvific key needed to access Heaven. I have argued that tears play a fundamental role in Dante's unprecedented definition of Purgatory as an intermediate kingdom between Hell and Paradise: the tears of the penitents are the true sign of the pilgrim returning to the heavenly homeland, making Dante's Purgatory a middle kingdom of exile and transition, putting earth and heaven in communication, both through the weeping of atonement and desire to return to God, and through the mediating tears shed by their loved ones still on earth, who move the grace of God. Showing the influence of Patristic writings on tears, I suggested that Dante's Purgatory can be seen as the celebration of a new sensibility, of an interior communication with God that, for Dante, must always pass through tears.

In the analysis of the tears shed by the penitents, I have made a distinction between the tears of contrition and repentance shed during life, fundamental to gaining access to Purgatory, and the tears of penitence, through which atonement is achieved in the afterlife; I have shown how Dante emphasizes both types of weeping, equally necessary to salvation. I have illustrated the importance of repentant weeping with the cases of Manfredi di Svevia and Buonconte da Montefeltro (Cantos III and V): if Manfredi's tears can be seen as a signal of his entrance into the flock of God's people, the conversion of Buonconte da Montefeltro through tears shed in the name of Mary can be interpreted as an expression of the Virgin's mediation to obtain the grace of God through the salvific power of tears. In this regard, I have shown how the function of mediation carried out by the tears of the Virgin is replicated and imitated by other women within Dante's poem, coming to the conclusion that the salvation of others through tears is, in the *Commedia*, exclusively the purview of women.

As for tears of penitence, I have shown that in the second canticle the penitent pilgrim can advance towards the heavenly homeland, effectuating the *satisfactio operis* with tears as a means of purification and mortification of earthly vices. In particular, the weeping of the avaricious (Cantos XIX-XX) demonstrates the need for penance and atonement in order to return to God, presenting the tears, through the episode Pope Adrian V, as an instrument of maturation that produces the harvest of eternal joy and permits the reacquisition of holiness. Moreover, the fundamental expiatory function of weeping has been illustrated in the painful effort by which

the envious weep, interpreted as a replication and inversion of the weeping of traitors of Cocytus. Finally, the tears of the envious penitent Sapia Salvani, and those of the lustful Arnaut, demonstrate how the tears of the penitents in Purgatory are those of the exile who weeps, denouncing the love that was so misguided in life, and desiring the one true love, the divine love of one's heavenly homeland.

Turning to the notion of the smile, it is my conviction that Dante created the first literary codification of the category of the smile in Italian literature, resolving the problematic nature of laughter in an expression that openly celebrates knowledge. Indeed, not only does the word *sorriso* appear in *Par.* XVIII, 19 for the first time in Italian literature, but it also undermines, on the lexical and the narrative level, the medieval distinction between laughter and smiling: in the *Vita Nuova* and in the *Commedia*, *riso* and *sorriso* are semantically equivalent, representing the smile as the only possible laughter: neither open laughter nor the Latin *subrisus*, Dante's smile is the only true expression of joy and wisdom, and, thus, closeness to God.

My study has shown how the smile finds its first firm representation in the *Purgatorio*, where it expresses the dichotomous and transitory condition of the pilgrim, characterized by the hope and the promise of future joy, marking a clear distinction with respect to the eternal *tempus flendi* of Hell. In the *Purgatorio*, the smile of the penitents is not the same one attributed to the blessed; it assumes the human trait of the wise *riso*, becoming an emotional manifestation of a journey on the path to bliss through the practice of knowledge. I have revealed how this representation initially incorporates the model provided by thirteenth-century romance literature, in which the first appearance and dissemination of the smile is already linked to its cognitive significance, working as an instrument of identity revelation. Indeed, the smiles identified in the narration of various encounters with the penitent souls have shown how smiling becomes a necessary element to unveil a character's identity, performing an elocutionary function that allows for the addition of new truths or information. In particular, I have argued that the figure of Statius demonstrates the passage from the purgatorial *tempus flendi* to the heavenly *tempus ridendi*, since his smiles, while still possessing the trait of human wisdom, can be seen as the consequence of holy tears shed first on earth and then in Purgatory.

Moreover, I have emphasized the exceptional nature of Dante's smile in both the *Vita Nuova* and in *Purgatorio*, which characterized him as a wise man and underscored, as in the case of weeping, his double status as pilgrim: on the one hand, the radical humanity of the smile is celebrated through the representation of Dante's smile as the *everyman's* smile, which is not that of the penitents, nor the expression of *exsultatio* among the blessed, but the smile on the lips of a sinful pilgrim on his journey to repentance; on the other hand, Dante's smile underscores the exceptional nature and the prophetic function of the poet's pilgrimage.

I have also shown how Virgil's smiles in the second canticle, like Beatrice's tears, represent an exception in the *Commedia*, where normally the damned are not permitted to smile, and similarly, none of the blessed is represented in tears: the smiles of Virgil and the tears of Beatrice are permitted because they are crucial to Dante's journey, the first assuming a didactic purpose, the second mediating the grace and salvation of Dante. However, I have noted how Virgil's final expression in the *Commedia* is that of astonishment, a sign of the inadequacy of pagan wisdom when faced with Christian truth, while the other two guides, Beatrice and St. Bernard, in possession of the divine truth, smile instead.

Indeed, in the *Paradiso*, the smile becomes a characteristic attribute of the blessed, the main element through which they express and reveal their condition of beatitude. My analysis of the representation of the smile of the blessed has clarified Dante's position within the theological debate: I have proposed that, through the unique case of Gregory's smile (*Par.* XXVIII), Dante affirms that the blessed are indeed able to smile, while recognizing the erroneousness of Gregory's conviction.

Concerning the modalities and the motives of representation for the smile of the blessed, using *Convivio* III, XV, 2, I have suggested the relationship which Dante establishes between smiles and light as the ineffable relationship between beauty and truth: the veil of the smile gives shape to divine love, the form of wisdom and the cause of the inner light that radiates from the soul. It marks the advent of the *tempus ridendi*, indicating the completed mission of the Christian pilgrim who has finally acquired the form willed by God: the luminous beauty that manifests the permanent possession of divine truth through the veil of the smile, in the likeness of the divine image.

In *Paradiso*, we can therefore observe the completion of this process of liberating the *riso*, replaced both in lexical and semantic terms by the *sorriso*, a smile that on the one hand preserves its human traits, its corporeality, and its sense of wisdom even in the heights of the Elysian, and on the other undergoes a progressive divinization, revealed in its continuous increase in splendor, which prepares the pilgrim's eyes to support the final contemplation of God's smile.

In particular, I have discussed the function of St. Bernard's smile in *Par.* XXXIII, interpreting it according to his role as Dante's guide: I underscored the importance of the smile among Dante's three guides as a means to display their wisdom, encouraging the pilgrim to continue through some of the fundamental stages of his itinerary while at the same time celebrating the completion of these stages. Moreover, Bernard's smile would seem to replace that of Beatrice in that it acquires the same mediating function, creating a chain of smiles that leads the pilgrim

to his final encounter with the divine and replicates the chain of tears that enabled Dante's salvation from the dark forest at the poem's beginning.

In particular, my study has demonstrated Beatrice's fundamental mediation in the gradual divinization of the smile throughout *Paradiso*. I observed that in Beatrice's first smile in the *Vita Nuova*, the *dolce riso* of the courtly lady, the traditional reward expected by the poet, is transformed into a more moderate *sorriso* that no longer holds negative implications, but instead becomes the means through which to reveal the miraculous nature of woman and, hence, that of divine creation by virtue of its ineffability. Moreover, I have proposed that Beatrice's first smile can be considered as a forerunner of the smile of heavenly Beatrice and the smile of God himself, constituting the first stage of Dante's theology of the smile.

I have noted that, in *Paradiso*, Beatrice's smile initially displays the characteristics of a sage's smile, similar to the smile of Lady Philosophy in the *Convivio*: the purpose of Beatrice's first heavenly smiles is to define the woman as a wise authority and guide. During the continuous ascent through the heavens, Beatrice's smile, like that of the blessed, undergoes a divinization portrayed through its ever-increasing brightness, thus revealing itself as a manifestation of God's love and as an indirect vision of God's smile: indeed, I have argued that in *Paradiso* XXIII, the Christological truth of Beatrice's ineffable smile is fully manifested for the first time, while in *Par.* XXVII the recognition of a correspondence between the female and the divine smile is expressed in terms of the mystery of the Incarnation. I have noted, finally, how the final and ineffable 'dolce riso' of Beatrice marks the completion of the process of divinization, at the same time becoming the emblem of Dante's renunciation of love for the creation in favor of the creator. Her smile completes the circular structure of Beatrice's narrative in the *Commedia*, beginning with her tears in *Inf.* II: Dante's salvation through love begins with tears and ends with a smile.

Furthermore, I have shown how the Virgin's smile in *Paradiso* XXXI constitutes the last stage in the process of deifying the female smile, replacing Beatrice's smile, and resolving the conflict between love for woman and love for God with a smile that is at once a female courtly trait and an image of Christ. I have proposed that Dante's invention of the Virgin's smile is part of a popular tradition that includes wooden statuary and *laude*, sharing in the reappropriation of courtly and secular materials which Dante brings to its highest level. On one side, the Virgin's smile brought to light the possibility of Dante's exposition to the new concept of the *sourire de Reims*, the early reference for the smile in Gothic sculpture, circulating in the production of visual arts in Tuscany, and, especially, to the process of the divinization of courtly laughter achieved in ecclesiastical art. Additionally, I have reconstructed the influence of *Lauda* 15 of the *Lauda Cortonesi* over St. Bernard's prayer to the Virgin in the *Commedia*, showing that the

Virgin's smile in *Lauda* 15 could represent a valid antecedent for the reworking of the courtly *dolce riso* in Marian terms.

Finally, I have discussed the depiction and the motives of the smiling Trinity in *Par.* XXXIII, underscoring the novelty of Dante's representation. Compared to the sporadic references to God's laughter I was able to identify in the Patristic writings, Dante's smile turns out to be a positive example of God's laughter, which reveals the link between love and knowledge in the Trinity, as the source of the internal light that is manifested in the smile of the blessed and in that of Beatrice. Furthermore, the verb 'arridere' suggests that God's smile in the *Commedia* is to be understood as literal, a bodily and external manifestation of love and knowledge that binds the three Trinitarian beings and that resolves in the human image of the Incarnation. Thus, according to Dante, the relationship between human and divine in the *Commedia* finds its form in the smile, through the reflection of the smile of the Trinity's love, which manifests itself in the world, thus providing an image of Creation as a smile. Thus, weeping in Dante's works can be considered nothing more than the anticipation of the smile: in the brilliance of Beatrice's tears at the beginning of the poem, there is the promise of the brightness of the smile of God. This dissertation has therefore indicated how the structure of Dante's *Commedia* is built on the binary emotional system of weeping and smiling and has highlighted symmetries and correlations between Dante's works and within the three canticles of the *Commedia*. In this way, not only has this study enabled a deeper understanding of the theological and poetic foundations of Dante's work, but it has brought to light, for the first time, the fundamental role which Dante played within the history of emotions, paving the way for a productive field for future research that has just begun to bear fruit.

Appendix

I. “Weeping”

1. *Inferno*

“Piangere”: 50

“Piagnere”: 2

“Lagrimare”: 18

I. 57

E qual è quei che volontieri acquista,
e giugne 'l tempo che perder lo face,
che 'n tutti suoi pensier *piange* e s'attrista; [...].

I. 92

"A te convien tenere altro viaggio",
rispuose, poi che *lagrimar* mi vide,
"se vuo' campar d'esto loco selvaggio; [...].

II. 106

Non odi tu la pieta del suo *pianto*,
non vedi tu la morte che 'l combatte
su la fiumana ove 'l mar non ha vanto? -.

II. 116

Poscia che m'ebbe ragionato questo,
li occhi lucenti *lagrimando* volse,
per che mi fece del venir più presto.

III. 22, 24, 107

Quivi sospiri, *pianti* e alti guai
risonavan per l'aere senza stelle,
per ch'io al cominciar ne *lagrimai*.

[...]

Poi si ritrasser tutte quante insieme,
forte *piangendo*, a la riva malvagia
ch'attende ciascun uom che Dio non teme.

III. 68, 133

Elle rigavan lor di sangue il volto,
che, mischiato di *lagrime*, a' lor piedi
da fastidiosi vermi era ricolto.»

[...]

La terra *lagrimosa* diede vento,
che balenò una luce vermiglia
la qual mi vinse ciascun sentimento; [...].

IV. 26

Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare,
non avea *pianto* mai che di sospiri
che l'aura eterna facevan tremare; [...].

V. 27, 126, 140

Or incomincian le dolenti note
a farmisi sentire; or son venuto
là dove molto *pianto* mi percuote.

[...]

Ma s'a conoscer la prima radice
del nostro amor tu hai cotanto affetto,
dirò come colui che *piange* e dice.

[...]

Mentre che l'uno spirto questo disse,
l'altro *piangëa*; sì che di pietade
io venni men così com'io morisse.

V. 117

Poi mi rivolsi a loro e parla' io,
e cominciai: "Francesca, i tuoi martiri
a *lagrimar* mi fanno tristo e pio.

VI. 59, 72, 76

Io li rispuosi: "Ciacco, il tuo affanno,
mi pesa sì, ch'a *lagrimar* mi 'nvita;
ma dimmi, se tu sai, a che verranno
[...]

Alte terrà lungo tempo le fronti,
tenendo l'altra sotto gravi pesi,
come che di ciò *pianga* o che n'aonti.
[...]

Qui puose fine al *lagrimabil* suono.
E io a lui: "Ancor vo' che mi 'nsegni
e che di più parlar mi facci dono.

VIII. 36-37

E io a lui: "S'i' vegno, non rimango;
ma tu chi se', che sì se' fatto brutto?".
Rispuose: "Vedi che son un che *piango*".
E io a lui: "Con *piangere* e con lutto,
spirito maladetto, ti rimani;
ch'i' ti conosco, ancor sie lordo tutto".

IX. 45-48

[...] onde le fiere tempie erano avvinte.
E quei, che ben conobbe le meschine
de la regina de l'eterno *pianto*,
"Guarda", mi disse, "le feroci Erine.
Quest'è Megera dal sinistro canto;
quella che *piange* dal destro è Aletto; [...].

X. 58

[...] *piangendo* disse: "Se per questo cieco
carcere vai per altezza d'ingegno,
mio figlio ov'è? e perché non è teco?".

XI. 45

[...] qualunque priva sé del vostro mondo,
biscazza e fonde la sua facultade,
e *piange* là dov'esser de' giocondo.

XII. 106, 136

Quivi si *piangon* li spietati danni;
quivi è Alessandro, e Dionisio fero
che fé Cicilia aver dolorosi anni.

[...]

le *lagrime*, che col bollor diserra,
a Rinier da Corneto, a Rinier Pazzo,
che fecero a le strade tanta guerra".

XIII. 131

Presemi allor la mia scorta per mano,
e menommi al cespuglio che *piangea*
per le rotture sanguinenti in vano.

XIV. 20, 102, 113

D'anime nude vidi molte gregge
che *piangean* tutte assai miseramente,
e pareva posta lor diversa legge.

[...]

Rëa la scelse già per cuna fida
del suo figliuolo, e per celarlo meglio,
quando *piangea*, vi faceva far le grida.
[...]
Ciascuna parte, fuor che l'oro, è rotta
d'una fessura che *lagrime* goccia,
le quali, accolte, fóran quella grotta.

XV. 42

Però va oltre: i' ti verrò a' panni;
e poi rigiugnerò la mia masnada,
che va *piangendo* i suoi eterni danni".

XVI. 75

"La gente nuova e i sùbiti guadagni
orgoglio e dismisura han generata,
Fiorenza, in te, sì che tu già ten *piagni*".

XVII. 122

Allor fu' io più timido a lo stoscio,
però ch'i' vidi fuochi e senti' *pianti*;
ond'io tremando tutto mi raccoscio.

XVIII. 58, 84

E non pur io qui *piango* bolognese;
anzi n'è questo loco tanto pieno,
che tante lingue non son ora apprese [...]
E 'l buon maestro, senza mia dimanda,
mi disse: "Guarda quel grande che vene,
e per dolor non par *lagrime* spanda: [...].

XIX. 45, 65

Lo buon maestro ancor de la sua anca
non mi dipuose, sì mi giunse al rotto
di quel che si *piangeva* con la zanca.

[...]

Per che lo spirto tutti storse i piedi;
poi, sospirando e con voce di *pianto*,
mi disse: "Dunque che a me richiedi? [...]."

XX. 6, 8, 23, 25

Io era già disposto tutto quanto
a riguardar ne lo scoperto fondo,
che si bagnava d'angoscioso *pianto*;
e vidi gente per lo vallon tondo
venir, tacendo e *lagrimando*, al passo
che fanno le letane in questo mondo.

[...]

quando la nostra imagine di presso
vidi si torta, che 'l *pianto* de li occhi
le natiche bagnava per lo fesso.
Certo io *piangea*, poggiato a un de' rocchi
del duro scoglio, sì che la mia scorta
mi disse: "Ancor se' tu de li altri sciocchi? [...]."

XXI. 5

[...] restammo per veder l'altra fessura
di Malebolge e li altri *pianti* vani;
e vidila mirabilmente oscura

XXIII. 60, 69

Là giù trovammo una gente dipinta
che giva intorno assai con lenti passi,
piangendo e nel semblante stanca e vinta.

[...]

Oh in eterno faticoso manto!
Noi ci volgemmo ancor pur a man manca
con loro insieme, intenti al tristo *pianto*.

XXIV. 110

[...] erba né biado in sua vita non pasce,
ma sol d'incenso *lagrime* e d'amomo,
e nardo e mirra son l'ultime fasce.

XXV. 151

[...] ch'i' non scorgessi ben Puccio Sciancato;
ed era quel che sol, di tre compagni
che venner prima, non era mutato;
l'altr'era quel che tu, Gaville, *piagni*.

XXVI. 61, 136

Piangevisi entro l'arte per che, morta,
Deïdamia ancor si duol d'Achille,
e del Palladio pena vi si porta".
[...]
Noi ci allegrammo, e tosto tornò in pianto;
ché de la nova terra un turbo nacque
e percosse del legno il primo canto.

XXVII. 8

Come 'l bue cicilian che mugghiò prima
col *pianto* di colui, e ciò fu dritto,
che l'avea temperato con sua lima, [...].

XXVIII. 32

[...] vedi come storpiato è Mäometto!
Dinanzi a me sen va *piangendo* Ali,
fesso nel volto dal mento al ciuffetto.

XXIX. 3, 20, 92

La molta gente e le diverse piaghe
avean le luci mie sì inebriate,
che de lo stare a *piangere* eran vaghe.
[...]
dov'io tenea or li occhi sì a posta,
credo ch'un spirto del mio sangue *pianga*
la colpa che là giù cotanto costa".
[...]
"Latin siam noi, che tu vedi sì guasti
qui ambedue", rispuose l'un *piangendo*;
"ma tu chi se' che di noi dimandasti?".

XXXII. 48, 79, 115, 136

[...] li occhi lor, ch'eran pria pur dentro molli,
gocciar su per le labbra, e 'l gelo strinse
le *lagrime* tra essi e riserrolli.
[...]
Piangendo mi sgridò: "Perché mi peste?
se tu non vieni a crescer la vendetta
di Montaperti, perché mi moleste?".
[...]
El *piange* qui l'argento de' Franceschi:
"Io vidi", potrai dir, "quel da Duera
là dove i peccatori stanno freschi".
[...]
che se tu a ragion di lui ti *piangi*,
sappiendo chi voi siete e la sua pecca,
nel mondo suso ancora io te ne cangi, [...].

XXXIII. 9, 38, 42, 50, 51, 52, 94, 97, 114, 128

Ma se le mie parole esser dien seme
che frutti infamia al traditor ch'i' rodo,
parlare e *lagrimar* vedrai insieme.

[...]

Quando fui desto innanzi la dimane,
pianger senti' fra 'l sonno i miei figliuoli
ch'eran con meco, e dimandar del pane.

Ben se' crudel, se tu già non ti duoli
pensando ciò che 'l mio cor s'annunziava;
e se non *piangi*, di che *pianger* suoli?

[...]

Io non *piangëa*, s'ì dentro impetrai:
piangevan elli; e Anselmuccio mio
disse: "Tu guardi s'ì, padre! che hai?".

Perciò non *lagrimai* né rispuos'io
tutto quel giorno né la notte appresso,
infìn che l'altro sol nel mondo uscìo.

[...]

Lo *pianto* stesso lì *pianger* non lascia,
e 'l duol che truova in su li occhi rintoppo,
si volge in entro a far crescer l'ambascia;
ché le *lagrime* prime fanno groppo,
e s'ì come visiere di cristallo,
r'èmpion sotto 'l ciglio tutto il coppo.

[...]

levatemi dal viso i duri veli,
s'ì ch'io sfoghi 'l duol che 'l cor m'impregna,
un poco, pria che 'l *pianto* si raggeli"

[...]

E perché tu più volontier mi rade
le 'nvetriate *lagrime* dal volto,
sappie che, tosto che l'anima trade [...].

XXXIV. 53-54

[...] quindi Cocito tutto s'aggelava.
Con sei occhi *piangëa*, e per tre menti
gocciava 'l *pianto* e sanguinosa bava.

2. Purgatorio

“Piangere”: 31

“Piagnere”: 4

“Plorare”: 1

“Lagrimare”: 16

I. 127

[...] porsi ver' lui le guance *lagrimose*;
ivi mi fece tutto scoperto
quel color che l'inferno mi nascose.

III. 120

Poscia ch'io ebbi rotta la persona
di due punte mortali, io mi rendei,
piangendo, a quei che volontier perdona.

V. 107

Tu te ne porti di costui l'eterno
per una *lagrimetta* che 'l mi toglie;
ma io farò de l'altro altro governo!".

VI. 112

Vieni a veder la tua Roma che *piagne*
vedova e sola, e dì e notte chiama:
"Cesare mio, perché non m'accompagne?".

VII. 136

Quel che più basso tra costor s'atterra,
guardando in suso, è Guiglielmo marchese,
per cui e Alessandria e la sua guerra
fa *pianger* Monferrato e Canavese".

VIII. 6

[...] e che lo novo peregrin d'amore
punge, se ode squilla di lontano
che paia il giorno *pianger* che si more; [...].

X. 35, 78, 139

L'angel che venne in terra col decreto
de la molt'anni *lagrimata* pace,
ch'aperse il ciel del suo lungo divieto,
[...]
i' dico di Traiano imperadore;
e una vedovella li era al freno,
di *lagrime* atteggiata e di dolore.
[...]
Vero è che più e meno eran contratti
secondo ch'avien più e meno a dosso;
e qual più pazienza avea ne li atti,
piangendo pareva dicer: 'Più non posso'.

XIII. 108

"Io fui sanese", rispuose, "e con questi
altri rimendo qui la vita ria,
lagrimando a colui che sé ne presti.

XIV. 103, 125

Non ti maravigliar s'io *piango*, Tosco,
quando rimembro, con Guido da Prata,
Ugolin d'Azzo che vivette nosco,
[...]
Ma va via, Tosco, omai; ch'or mi diletta
troppo di *pianger* più che di parlare,
sì m' ha nostra ragion la mente stretta".

XV. 48

Per ch'elli a me: "Di sua maggior magagna
conosce il danno; e però non s'ammiri
se ne riprende perché men si *piagna*.

XVI. 87

Esce di mano a lui che la vagheggia
prima che sia, a guisa di fanciulla
che *piangendo e ridendo* pargoleggia, [...].

XVII. 35, 125, 137

[...] surse in mia visione una fanciulla
piangendo forte, e dicea: "O regina,
perché per ira hai voluto esser nulla?

[...]

Questo triforme amor qua giù di sotto
si *piange*: or vo' che tu de l'altro intende,
che corre al ben con ordine corrotto.

[...]

L'amor ch'ad esso troppo s'abbandona,
di sovr'a noi si *piange* per tre cerchi;
ma come tripartito si ragiona, [...].

XVIII. 97, 122

Tosto fur sovr'a noi, perché correndo
si movea tutta quella turba magna;
e due dinanzi gridavan *piangendo*:

[...]

E tale ha già l'un piè dentro la fossa,
che tosto *piangerà* quel monastero,
e tristo fia d'avere avuta possa; [...].

XIX. 59, 71, 91, 140

"Vedesti", disse, "quell'antica strega
che sola sovr'a noi omai si *piagne*;
vedesti come l'uom da lei si slega.

[...]

Com'io nel quinto giro fui dischiuso,
vidi gente per esso che *piangea*,
giacendo a terra tutta volta in giuso.

[...]

dicendo: "Spirto in cui *pianger* matura
quel senza 'l quale a Dio tornar non pòssi,
sosta un poco per me tua maggior cura.

[...]

Vattene omai: non vo' che più t'arresti;
ché la tua stanza mio *pianger* disagia,
col qual maturo ciò che tu dicesti.

XX. 18, 20, 144

Noi andavam con passi lenti e scarsi,
e io attento a l'ombre, ch'i' sentia
pietosamente *piangere* e lagnarsi;
e per ventura udi' "Dolce Maria!"
dinanzi a noi chiamar così nel *pianto*
come fa donna che in parturir sia;

[...]

Poi ripigliammo nostro cammin santo,
guardando l'ombre che giacean per terra,
tornate già in su l'usato *pianto*.

XXI. 106

[...] ché riso e *pianto* son tanto seguaci
a la passion di che ciascun si spicca,
che men seguon voler ne' più veraci.

XXII. 53-84

[...] però, s'io son tra quella gente stato
che *piange* l'avarizia, per purgarmi,
per lo contrario suo m'è incontrato".

[...]

Vennermi poi parendo tanto santi,
che, quando Domizian li perseguette,
sanza mio *lagrimar* non fur lor *pianti*; [...]

XXIII. 55, 64, 87

"La faccia tua, ch'io *lagrimai* già morta,
mi dà di *pianger* mo non minor doglia",
rispuos'io lui, "veggendola sì torta.

[...]

Tutta esta gente che *piangendo* canta
per seguitar la gola oltra misura,
in fame e 'n sete qui si rifà santa.

[...]

Ond'elli a me: "Sì tosto m' ha condotto
a ber lo dolce assenzo d'i martiri
la Nella mia con suo *pianger* dirotto.

XXIV. 114

Poi si partì sì come ricreduta;
e noi venimmo al grande arbore adesso,
che tanti prieghi e *lagrime* rifiuta.

XXV. 104

Quindi parliamo e quindi ridiam noi;
quindi facciam *le lagrime* e ' sospiri
che per lo monte aver sentiti puoi.

XXVI. 47, 142

[...] l'una gente sen va, l'altra sen vene;
e tornan, *lagrimando*, a' primi canti
e al gridar che più lor si convene;

[...]

Ieu sui Arnaut, que *plor* e vau cantan;
consiros vei la passada folor,
e vei jausen lo joi qu' esper, denan.

XXVII. 137

Mentre che vegnan lieti li occhi belli
che, *lagrimando*, a te venir mi fenno,
seder ti puoi e puoi andar tra elli.

XXVIII. 95

Per sua difalta qui dimorò poco;
per sua difalta in *pianto* e in affanno
cambiò onesto riso e dolce gioco.

XXX. 54, 56, 57, 91, 107, 141, 145

[...] né quantunque perdeo l'antica matre,
valse a le guance nette di rugiada
che, *lagrimando*, non tornasser atre.

[...]

Dante, perché Virgilio se ne vada,
non pianger anco, non piangere ancora;
ché pianger ti conven per altra spada".

[...]

così fui senza *lagrime* e sospiri
anzi 'l cantar di quei che notan sempre
dietro a le note de li eterni giri;

[...]

onde la mia risposta è con più cura
che m'intenda colui che di là *piagne*,
perché sia colpa e duol d'una misura.

Per questo visitai l'uscio d'i morti,
e a colui che l' ha qua sù condotto,
li preghi miei, *piangendo*, furon porti.

Alto fato di Dio sarebbe rotto,
se Letè si passasse e tal vivanda
fosse gustata senza alcuno scotto
di pentimento che *lagrime* spanda".

XXXI. 20, 34, 46

[...] sì scoppia' io sottesso grave carco,
fuori sgorgando *lagrime* e sospiri,
e la voce allentò per lo suo varco.

[...]

Piangendo dissi: "Le presenti cose
col falso lor piacer volser miei passi,
tosto che 'l vostro viso si nascose".

[...]

pon giù il seme del *piangere* e ascolta:
sì udirai come in contraria parte
mover dovieti mia carne sepolta.

XXXIII. 3

'Deus, venerunt gentes', alternando
or tre or quattro dolce salmodia,
le donne incominciaro, e *lagrimando*; [...].

3. Paradiso

“*Piangere*”: 11

“*Piagnere*”: 1

“*Lagrimare*”: 1

V. 70, 71

[...] onde *pianse* Efigènia il suo bel volto,
e fé *pianger* di sé i folli e i savi
ch'udir parlar di così fatto cólto.

VI. 76, 109

Piangene ancor la trista Cleopatra,
che, fuggendoli innanzi, dal colubro
la morte prese subitana e atra.

[...]

Molte fiate già *pianser* li figli
per la colpa del padre, e non si creda
che Dio trasmuti l'armi per suoi gigli!

IX. 5-52

[...] 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.

[...]

Piangerà Feltro ancora la difalta
de l'empio suo pastor, che sarà sconcia
sì, che per simil non s'entrò in malta.

XI. 47, 72

[...] onde Perugia sente freddo e caldo
da Porta Sole; e di retro le *piange*
per grave giogo Nocera con Gualdo.

[...]

né valse esser costante né feroce,
sì che, dove Maria rimase giusto,
ella con Cristo *pianse* in su la croce.

XVI. 150

Con queste genti, e con altre con esse,
vid'io Fiorenza in sì fatto riposo,
che non avea cagione onde *piangesse*.

XX. 62-63

E quel che vedi ne l'arco declivo,
Guiglielmo fu, cui quella terra *plora*
che *piagne* Carlo e Federigo vivo: [...].

XXII. 107

S'io torni mai, lettore, a quel divoto
trünfo per lo quale io *piango* spesso
le mie peccata e 'l petto mi percuoto, [...].

XXIII. 134

Quivi si vive e gode del tesoro
che s'acquistò *piangendo* ne lo essilio
di Babillòn, ove si lasciò l'oro.

II. “Smiling”

1. *Inferno*

“*Ridere*”: 1

“*Sorridere*”: 1

IV. 99

Da ch'ebber ragionato insieme alquanto,
volsersi a me con salutevol cenno,
e 'l mio maestro *sorrise* di tanto; [...].

V. 133

Quando leggemmo il disiato *riso*
esser baciato da cotanto amante,
questi, che mai da me non fia diviso, [...].

2. *Purgatorio*

“*Ridere*”: 6

“*Sorridere*”: 17

I. 20

Lo bel pianeto che d'amar conforta
faceva tutto *rider* l'oriente,
velando i Pesci ch'erano in sua scorta.

II. 83

Di meraviglia, credo, mi dipinsi;
per che l'ombra *sorrise* e si ritrasse,
e io, seguendo lei, oltre mi pinsi.

III. 112

Poi *sorridendo* disse: "Io son Manfredi,
nepote di Costanza imperadrice;
ond'io ti priego che, quando tu riedi, [...].

IV. 122

Li atti suoi pigri e le corte parole
mosser le labbra mie un poco a *riso*;
poi cominciai: "Belacqua, a me non dole [...]."

VI. 48

Non so se 'ntendi: io dico di Beatrice;
tu la vedrai di sopra, in su la vetta
di questo monte, *ridere e felice*".

XI. 82

"Frate", diss'elli, "più *ridon* le carte
che pennelleggia Franco Bolognese;
l'onore è tutto or suo, e mio in parte.

XII. 136

[...] e con le dita de la destra scempie
trovai pur sei le lettere che 'ncise
quel da le chiavi a me sovra le tempie:
a che guardando, il mio duca *sorrise*.

XVI. 87

Esce di mano a lui che la vagheggia
prima che sia, a guisa di fanciulla
che piangendo e *ridendo* pargoleggia, [...].

XX. 108

[...] e la miseria de l'avarò Mida,
che seguì a la sua dimanda gorda,
per la qual sempre convien che si *rida*.

XXI. 106, 109, 114, 122, 127

[...] ché *riso* e pianto son tanto seguaci
a la passion di che ciascun si spicca,
che men seguon voler ne' più veraci.

Io pur *sorrisi* come l'uom ch'ammicca;
per che l'ombra si tacque, e riguardommi
ne li occhi ove 'l semblante più si ficca; [...]

[...]

e "Se tanto labore in bene assommi",
disse, "perché la tua faccia testeso
un lampeggiar di *riso* dimostrommi?".

[...]

Ond'io: "Forse che tu ti maravigli,
antico spirto, del *rider* ch'io fei;
ma più d'ammirazion vo' che ti pigli.

[...]

Se cagion altra al mio *rider* credesti,
lasciala per non vera, ed esser credi
quelle parole che di lui dicesti".

XXII. 26

Queste parole Stazio mover fenno
un poco a *riso* pria; poscia rispuose:
"Ogne tuo dir d'amor m'è caro cenno.

XXV. 103

Quindi parliamo e quindi *ridiam* noi;
quindi facciam le lagrime e ' sospiri
che per lo monte aver sentiti puoi.

XXVII. 44

Ond'ei crollò la fronte e disse: "Come!
volenci star di qua?"; indi *sorrise*
come al fanciul si fa ch'è vinto al pome.

XXVIII. 67, 76, 96, 146

Ella *ridea* da l'altra riva dritta,
trattando più color con le sue mani,
che l'alta terra senza seme gitta.

[...]

"Voi siete nuovi, e forse perch'io *rido*",
cominciò ella, "in questo luogo eletto
a l'umana natura per suo nido,

[...]

Per sua difalta qui dimorò poco;
per sua difalta in pianto e in affanno
cambiò onesto *riso e dolce gioco*.

[...]

Io mi rivolsi 'n dietro allora tutto
a' miei poeti, e vidi che con *riso*
udito avëan l'ultimo costrutto; [...].

XXXII, 5

Ed essi quinci e quindi avien parete
di non caler - così lo santo **riso**
a sé traéli con l'antica rete!

XXXIII. 95

"E se tu ricordar non te ne puoi",
sorridendo rispuose, "or ti rammenta
come bevesti di Letè ancoi; [...].

3. *Paradiso*

“*Ridere*”: 38

“*Sorridere*”: 11

“*Arridere*”: 2

I. 95

S'io fui del primo dubbio disvestito
per le *sorrise* parolette brevi,
dentro ad un nuovo più fu' inretito [...].

II. 52

Ella *sorrise* alquanto, e poi "S'elli erra
l'oppinïon", mi disse, "d'i mortali
dove chiave di senso non diserra, [...].

III. 24, 25, 42, 67

[...] e nulla vidi, e ritorsili avanti
dritti nel lume de la dolce guida,
che, *sorridendo*, ardea ne li occhi santi.
"Non ti maravigliar perch'io *sorrída*",
mi disse, "appresso il tuo püeril coto,
poi sopra 'l vero ancor lo piè non fida,
[...]
grazïoso mi fia se mi contenti
del nome tuo e de la vostra sorte".
Ond'ella, pronta e con occhi *ridenti*:
[...]
Con quelle altr'ombre pria *sorrise* un poco;
da indi mi rispuose tanto lieta,
ch'arder pareva d'amor nel primo foco: [...].

V. 81, 97, 126

Se mala cupidigia altro vi grida,
uomini siate, e non pecore matte,
sì che 'l Giudeo di voi tra voi non *rida*!
[...]

E se la stella si cambiò e *rise*,
qual mi fec'io che pur da mia natura
trasmutabile son per tutte guise!

[...]

"Io veggio ben sì come tu t'annidi
nel proprio lume, e che de li occhi il traggi,
perch'e' corusca sì come tu *ridi*; [...].

VI. 131

Ma i Provenzai che fecer contra lui
non hanno *riso*; e però mal cammina
qual si fa danno del ben fare altrui [...].

VII. 17

Poco sofferse me cotal Beatrice
e cominciò, raggiandomi d'un *riso*
tal, che nel foco faria l'uom felice: [...].

IX. 71, 103

Per letiziar là sù fulgor s'acquista,
sì come *riso* qui; ma giù s'abbuia
l'ombra di fuor, come la mente è trista.

[...]

Non però qui si pente, ma si *ride*,
non de la colpa, ch'a mente non torna,
ma del valor ch'ordinò e provide.

X. 61, 62, 103, 118

Non le dispiacque, ma sì se ne *rise*,
che lo splendor de li occhi suoi *ridenti*
mia mente unita in più cose divise.

[...]

Quell'altro fiammeggiare esce del *riso*
di Grazian, che l'uno e l'altro foro
aiutò sì che piace in paradiso.

[...]

Ne l'altra piccioletta luce *ride*
quello avvocato de' tempi cristiani
del cui latino Augustin si provide.

XI. 17

E io senti' dentro a quella lumera
che pria m'avea parlato, *sorridendo*
incominciar, faccendosi più mera: [...].

XIV. 79, 86

Ma Bëatrice sì bella e *ridente*
mi si mostrò, che tra quelle vedute
si vuol lasciar che non seguir la mente.
[...]

Ben m'accors'io ch'io era più levato,
per l'affocato *riso* de la stella,
che mi pareva più roggio che l'usato.

XV. 34, 71

[...] ché dentro a li occhi suoi ardeva un *riso*
tal, ch'io pensai co' miei toccar lo fondo
de la mia gloria e del mio paradiso.

[...]

Io mi volsi a Beatrice, e quella udio
pria ch'io parlassi, e *arrisemi* un cenno
che fece crescer l'ali al voler mio.

XVI. 14

[...] onde Beatrice, ch'era un poco scevra,
ridendo, parve quella che tossio
al primo fallo scritto di Ginevra.

XVII. 36,121

[...] ma per chiare parole e con preciso
latin rispuose quello amor paterno,
chiuso e parvente del suo proprio *riso*:

[...]

La luce in che *rideva* il mio tesoro
ch'io trovai lì, si fé prima corusca,
quale a raggio di sole specchio d'oro; [...].

XVIII. 19

Vincendo me col lume d'un *sorriso*,
ella mi disse: "Volgiti e ascolta;
ché non pur ne' miei occhi è *paradiso*".

XX. 13

O dolce amor che di *riso* t'ammanti,
quanto parevi ardente in que' flaili,
ch'avieno spirto sol di pensier santi!

XXI. 4, 63

E quella non *ridea*; ma "S'io *ridessi*",
mi cominciò, "tu ti faresti quale
fu Semelè quando di cener fessi:

[...]

"Tu hai l'udir mortal sì come il viso",
rispuose a me; "onde qui non si canta
per quel che Bèatrice non ha *riso*."

XXII. 11, 135

Come t'avrebbe trasmutato il canto,
e io *ridendo*, mo pensar lo puoi,
poscia che 'l grido t' ha mosso cotanto;

[...]

Col viso ritornai per tutte quante
le sette spere, e vidi questo globo
tal, ch'io *sorrisi* del suo vil semblante; [...].

XXIII. 26, 48, 59

Quale ne' plenilunii sereni
Trivïa *ride* tra le ninfe etterne
che dipingon lo ciel per tutti i seni,
[...]

"Apri li occhi e riguarda qual son io;
tu hai vedute cose, che possente
se' fatto a sostener lo *riso* mio".
[...]

per aiutarmi, al millesmo del vero
non si verria, cantando il *santo riso*
e quanto il santo aspetto faceva mero; [...].

XXV. 28

Ridendo allora Bëatrice disse:
"Inclita vita per cui la larghezza
de la nostra basilica si scrisse, [...].

XXVII. 4, 96, 104

Ciò ch'io vedeva mi sembiava un *riso*
de l'universo; per che mia ebbrezza
intrava per l'udire e per lo viso.
[...]

tutte adunate, parrebber niente
ver' lo piacer divin che mi refulse,
quando mi volsi al suo viso *ridente*.
[...]

Ma ella, che vedëa 'l mio disire,
incominciò, *ridendo* tanto lieta,
che Dio pareo nel suo volto gioire: [...].

XXVIII. 83, 135

[...] per che si purga e risolve la roffia
che pria turbava, sì che 'l ciel ne *ride*
con le bellezze d'ogne sua paroffia;

[...]

Ma Gregorio da lui poi si divise;
onde, sì tosto come li occhi aperse
in questo ciel, di sé medesimo *rise*.

XXIX. 7, 117

[...] tanto, col volto di *riso* dipinto,
sì tacque Bëatrice, riguardando
fiso nel punto che m'avëa vinto.

[...]

Ora si va con motti e con iscede
a predicare, e pur che ben *si rida*,
gonfia il cappuccio e più non si richiede.

XXX. 26, 77

[...] ché, come sole in viso che più trema,
così lo rimemprar del dolce *riso*
la mente mia da me medesimo scema.

[...]

Anche soggiunse: "Il fiume e li topazi
ch'entrano ed escono e 'l *rider* de l'erbe
son di lor vero umbriferi prefazi.

XXXI. 50, 92, 134

Vedëa visi a carità süadi,
d'altrui lume fregiati e di suo *riso*,
e atti ornati di tutte onestadi.

[...]

Così orai; e quella, sì lontana
come pareva, *sorrise* e riguardommi;
poi si tornò a l'eterna fontana.

[...]

Vidi a lor giochi quivi e a lor canti
ridere una bellezza, che letizia
era ne li occhi a tutti li altri santi; [...].

XXXIII. 49-126

Bernardo m'accennava, e *sorridea*,
perch'io guardassi suso; ma io era
già per me stesso tal qual ei volea:

[...]

O luce eterna che sola in te sidi,
sola t'intendi, e da te intelletta
e intendente te ami e *arridi!*

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