Dante and Ovid: A Comparative Study of Narrative Techniques.

By

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The dissertation focuses on the influence of Ovid (Metamorphoses) on Dante and is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with the Ovidian influence on the microtextual level, that is, with the way in which Dante implements Ovidian themes in specific passages and for particular, local purposes. The second develops a wider, narratological approach, centering on the way in which Dante’s story-telling style, in the broadest way, is derived from Ovid and developed in imitation of him. The thesis aims at giving an assessment of what an exhaustive account of the influence of Ovid’s Metamorphoses on Dante would entail, something which has never been done before.

In the first chapter there is presented a complete survey of the most recent scholarship on the microtextual exploitation of Ovid’s myths and legends on Dante’s part. Some new criteria to produce a complete taxonomy encompassing all the passages of the Comedy derived from Ovid’s Metamorphoses are also discussed.

The second chapter, introducing the second part of the thesis, deals with semiotic concepts focusing on the general problem of literary repetition and self-exegesis in an epic poem. This, indeed, is the feature of Dante’s art which owes the most to Ovid’s narrative technique.

The third chapter shows how Ovid himself used the device of repetition and variation on given themes, derived from his juridical training, for the purpose of granting thematic unity and consistency of tone to his unprecedented literary undertaking.
The fourth chapter highlights how many passages of the *Comedy* are likewise connected to each other delineating sequentially significant patterns devoted to the goal of self-exegesis.

This work makes use of the Dartmouth Dante Project Database, developed by Robert Hollander, which contains more than 40 commentaries on the *Divine Comedy*, from Dante's own son Pietro to 1982. An appendix containing all the passages of the *Comedy* that all the above mentioned commentators have considered as derived from Ovid's main work has been provide after the Conclusions and before the Bibliography. All the entries have been sorted out and arranged systematically according to the succession of the canticles and the chronological order of the commentators.
Dedicated to Lino Rossini and Antonio Malvestuto, both present in my life.
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A quote concerning Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (BWV988):

In this magnificent musical structure we find reflected the inexhaustible and unfathomable variety of a real musical cosmos, similar to the order of this world and its relation to an unchangeable and ever-present center—here represented by the chaconne bass. This is true not only in the obvious musical sense, but at the same time as a profound symbolism hardly to be understood except in theological terms, which seems to elevate this 'commissioned' work into nothing less than an image of the universal order.

(Linear notes for *Das Alte Werk* recording, SAWT 9474-A)
Chapter one

THE ‘MICROTEXTUAL’ LEVEL

1) A general introduction.

The purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate that Ovid, as author of the
Metamorphoses, played a major role in providing Dante not only with mythical ‘material’ to
exploit on a microtextual level, that is myths or legends reworked here and there in the
Commedia, but also with something more important: the crucial elements necessary for
Dante’s unprecedented poem and the self-exegetical devices to be used on a structural level.
This ‘macrotextual’ level concerns the organization of the epic matter. It is my intention to
show that, in Dante’s main work, Ovid (together with the biblical exegesis) is the model for
specific narrative patterns and self-exegetical techniques.

As we shall see, many valuable contributions have already been made to the study of
the Ovidian influence on the microtextual level. The first part of this chapter will be devoted
to a general survey of the critical literature produced on this theme. We shall also try to
systematize all the explicit Ovidian echoes present in the Commedia by means of a
preliminary theoretical grid and a general ordering given in the appendix.

Before undertaking this survey it is important to evaluate what kind of status Dante
ascribed to Ovid. Only by comparing Ovid’s importance to the auctoritas granted to Virgil
can we really grasp the nature of the influence we are investigating. Virgil’s work, and here I
refer exclusively to the Aeneid, represents, in Dante’s eyes, a big ‘storehouse’ of classical
material concretely ordered in the frame of Aeneas’ mythical wanderings in the
Mediterranean sea and through the underworld. All the mythical figures and the historical
characters involved in Aeneas’s descent to Hell can easily be exploited. Robert Hollander has
shown\(^1\) that the majority of the allusions to the text of Virgil are concentrated in the first nine cantos of the first canticle. Here the *Aeneid* dominates the scene, and, thus, it gives the *Commedia* its necessary repertoire of infernal guardians, judges and dwellers. Therefore, the main axis along which the reworking of Virgilian material unfolds could be considered, to use a Saussurean term, the syntagmatic axis, the axis of metonymy where facts happen according to an established and never-changing order. The epic situations derived from Virgil’s masterpiece are cast in the linear scheme of a trip.

Ovid, on the other hand, dominates the scene in the third canticle where all the mythological material coming from his major work on the theme of metamorphosis helps Dante, *poeta-theologus*, to fathom the unfathomable. Critics have often forgotten that Heaven is not a physical place where one can go at his will. It is true that Dante needed divine permission to descend to hell and to climb the mountain of Purgatory, but those two places were intended as specific portions of the real world where, if one has the privilege to go, it is possible to see certain physical realities and some specific characters. On the contrary, once a hero (St. Paul, Dante) has been admitted to the heavenly regions, the ultra-sensorial essence of this new reality has to find a way to show itself to the poet. He, in turn, has to re-create in his mind the ‘atmosphere’ of the special revelation granted to him and find the appropriate words to re-formulate the terms of his personal vision for his readers. Accordingly, Ovidian poetry can be employed effectively to convey the exceptional fruit of Dante’s heavenly vision through an unprecedented appropriation of mythical material from

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\(^1\) In his contribution “Le opere di Virgilio nella Commedia di Dante”, Hollander states that “circa un quinto (il 19%) di tutte le citazioni (certe, probabili o possibili) di Virgilio in Dante occorrono nei primi cinque canti della *Commedia*, vale a dire, in un ventesimo del poema. Da soli, alcuni dei primi canti (1,2,3,5,8,9) contengono non meno di dieci citazioni ciascuno. Ciò sottolinea l’importanza, o per dir meglio, l’essenzialità di Virgilio per Dante quando questi intraprese la sua grand’opera.” (248). Hollander’s investigation is based on the data collected using the Dartmouth Dante Project.
the *Metamorphoses*. A real ‘encyclopedia of myth’\(^2\), Ovid’s masterpiece was an ideal receptacle of moral paradigms and ‘sublime’ (in its etymological meaning of ‘extreme’) transformations, all potentially suitable to his poem and likely to become necessary metaphors for the depiction of the paradisiacal experience. Indeed, the world of heaven is necessarily circular, paradigmatic and metaphorical. We shall discuss the forms of Dante’s appropriation in greater detail further on. At any rate, it is important to point out now that these materials are arranged along the paradigmatic axis, the axis of metaphor where mythical, classical and biblical situations coexist in a peculiar harmony regulated by the principle of figural interpretation\(^3\). Ovidian themes are the fundamental elements of metaphors and comparisons, but they never constitute the pivotal part of any section of the plot.

In such an interpretation of the respective influence of Virgil and Ovid, the second canticle of *Purgatorio* could be read as a canticle of ‘contamination’ (in the philological sense) or juxtaposition of themes, since the linear, syntagmatic elements of the Virgilian/Aenead trip are preserved, but the moral paradigms and the power of the mythical symbols in Ovid’s main work begin to play a major role. This is particularly evident in the tercets/couplets of moral *exempla* uttered by the atoning souls on the terraces of the mountain that we shall soon discuss. The very grouping of biblical, classical and mythical materials in the form of a moral paradigm is conceived as a short ‘catalogue’ of elements

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\(^2\) Picone talks about the *Metamorphoses* as a ‘reference book’ ‘una enciclopedia mitologica e […] un dizionario archetipico dei desideri e delle passioni umane’ (“L’Ovidio” 117), echoing Robathan’s statement: “References to obscure mythological characters in classical writers could be identified by using the Ovidius Maior as an encyclopedia” (198), whereas Paratore maintains that Dante, whenever he interpreted Ovid’s masterpiece, considered it “come opera adombrante le supreme verita” (228).

\(^3\) In his own contribution, published in the volume *Dante e la “Bella Scola” della poesia*, Iannucci sets the problems of Dantean allegory and figural interpretation in the right perspectives (28 note16, 29 notes 18 and 19). However, Auerbach’s study “Figura” remains a fundamental introduction to the topic.
derived from different sources. Nevertheless, they all contribute to the production of the same poetic meaning by virtue of their mutual figural relationship.

It is worth examining the importance of poetic similes, metaphors and allegories not only because they are the privileged conveyers of the heavenly imagery in Dante’s work but also from the general perspective of mediaeval aesthetics, for they constitute at the same time the backbone of biblical exegesis and the mental structure of any artist. Without referring their analyses to Ovid, both Peter Dronke and Umberto Eco have discussed extensively the relevance assumed by rhetorical figures in reference to Dante and the tradition that preceded him (of which St. Thomas’s *Summa Theologiae* was an important but not necessarily dominant part).

Their approach consists of an analysis of the famous dedicatory Epistle to Cangrande della Scala, which in some later manuscripts precedes the text of the *Commedia*, and extends to an assessment of the Dantean concept of metaphor or allegory. Eco seems to suggest that the long-standing question of the epistle’s authenticity (especially if considered after a close reading of *Conv. 2.1*) may not be decisive in as much as the poetic beliefs that it expresses represent “un atteggiamento interpretativo assai comune a tutta la cultura medievale” (Eco, *Arte* 161). Yet, in the Epistle we witness a big shift from the positions held by Dante in the *Convivio*. In the latter work the poetic allegory of the Bible was considered prestigious and unique (the so-called ‘theologians’ allegory’) whereas the same technique applied to poetry, the so-called ‘poets’ allegory’, was deemed to be of somewhat lesser quality.

In delineating a clear tripartition of the general concept of ‘mediaeval symbolism’, Umberto Eco, in his *Il problema estetico in Tommaso d’Aquino*, shows how the progressive flourishing of Thomistic aesthetics modified the perception of metaphors and symbols. The
scholar talks about "simbolismo metafisico", "allegorismo universale" and "teoria poetica
dell'allegoria".

The first category indicates a general attitude of the medieval world that, being
incapable of an attentive analysis of natural elements and phenomena, tended to read them as
symbols endowed with their own ontological identity but related to other things or
characters, especially from the scripture (172-77). The second category, called "allegorismo
universale", marks a major shift, since the procedure is the opposite: a poetic creation or,
alternatively, a particular feature of Scripture needs an allegorical embellishment, and,
therefore, the poet or the interpreter looks for an image or symbol that could convey it:
"Questo ci dice che, mentre il simbolismo metafisico si impone e prospera come modo di
conoscenza, l'allegorismo universale si propone subito come operazione poetica" (Eco, Il
problema 177-79). With the rediscovery of Aristotelean physics things begin to be seen per
se and to lose their merely iconic potential. This produces a rather paradoxical situation of
which Eco seems to be aware: "In fondo il XIII secolo rinuncia (come già al simbolismo
metafisico di cui si è detto nel paragrafo precedente) all'interpretazione allegorica del
mondo, ma produce il più celebre dei poemi allegorici, Le Roman de la Rose, per non parlare
della Divina Commedia" (180). In St. Thomas's philosophical system—an actual marker
against which to measure both the statements of Conv. 2.1 and of the famous Epistle to
Cangrande—the historical reality of all the facts narrated in the books of the Bible is
unquestionable. Here we are dealing with an allegoria in factis, whereas in the works of the
poets the facts are not trustworthy, and they just constitute a pretext for the creation of
appealing metaphors. St. Thomas uses the word 'allegory' only in reference to Scripture,
and, he forges the category of 'parabolic sense' for the explanation of metaphors, allegories
and rhetorical figures in poetic fiction. In the domain of poetic creation the figurae orationis,
namely the rhetorical embellishments, stand as a whole with the things they represent (since they are both deprived of the notion of existence), whereas in the Bible the allegory itself is represented by a fact. Thus, St. Thomas seems to restrict the field of allegory to the Bible segregating it from the aesthetic domain of poetry, the *infima doctrina*.

It will take some time, as Eco shows in his subsequent essay *Arte e bellezza nell’estetica medievale*, to arrive to a fully fledged "poetica dell’allegoria" and thoroughly redeem the world of poetry. In the ‘protohumanistic Italian environment’ people like Mussato regarded poetry as a gift from heaven, and, reviving the scholastic notion of *poeta theologus*, they established a link between the first legendary figures of poets like Orpheus, Museus, Linus and the contemporary ones (Eco, *Arte* 148-50). Contesting Frugoni and Brugnoli’s translation of the passage immediately preceding the famous discussion of the four allegorical senses in the Epistle to Cangrande, Eco argues that “alius est qui habetur per significata per litteram” does not refer to “quello che si volle significare con la lettera del testo” but to “cose che sono significate dalla lettera” (Eco, *Arte* 163). This statement, fully sustained by appropriate philological evidence (164), means that Dante talks about his own poem as another *allegoria in factis*, implying that his masterpiece has to be read according to the procedures of the theologians’ allegory and not the one of the poets. Dante revives and expands the line of thought which goes from the Aristotle of the *Metaphysics* (commented on by St. Thomas) to Cicero, and sees himself as the poet whose work is the fulfillment of the Bible, a poet capable of understanding the quasi-prophetic nature of the classical poets in spite of the open Thomistic diffidence towards them. This is a plausible explanation of the concept of “poetica dell’allegoria”, a new way of looking at poetry and at the dignity of the poet himself, who is considered capable of a cognitive operation through the very activity of producing poetic meaning:
Bisognerà allora concludere che la passione allegorica medievale era così forte che quando Tommaso ne riduce la portata, riconoscendo che ormai, per la cultura del XIII secolo, il mondo naturale si sottrae alla lettura interpretativa e figurale, saranno proprio i poeti, non tenendo in gran cale la riduzione tomista del mondo poetico, ad assegnare alla poesia mondana quella funzione che lo sviluppo dell’aristotelismo aveva sottratto alla lettura del mondo (Eco, Arte 166).

On the other hand, Peter Dronke in his book Dante and Medieval Latin traditions, starts from different assumptions but reaches almost the same conclusions. Even though his work looks somewhat less rigorous than Eco’s exhaustive investigation of both St. Thomas’ aesthetics and Dante’s conception of poetry, his points manage to be convincing. In his introductory chapter, the only one devoted to a theoretical delineation of the issue, the author maintains that the use of rhetorical figures proved unavoidable to Dante in as much as he insisted on presenting his journey as a real happening. Only through the use of powerful literary devices could his ‘sacred’ poem (or at least the portion dealing with ultra-human realities) have been duly wrought. The pivotal element of Dronke’s demonstration appears to be the famous speech of Beatrice (Par. 4.37-63) concerning the way the heavenly souls present themselves to Dante (Dronke 25-31). Here Dronke suggests that the importance ascribed by the poet to symbols, metaphors and myths has to be traced back to Plato (filtered by Boethius), but, in general, he maintains that Dante was ‘forced’ to use integumenta to explain what he had allegedly seen, because this was the only form of representation actually compatible with the human mind’s mode of operating:

The human mind needs images, for only by way of images can it begin to understand something superhuman. This principle is clearly stated in Plato’s Timaeus, and is explained, with slightly different emphasis, in Aristotle’s De Anima, where imagination (phantasia) gathers sensory images and enables the intellect to abstract knowledge from them. Intellection, that is, must have both a sensory and an imaginative base. Beatrice adds (43 ff.) that this is also the principle underlying the anthropomorphic biblical images of God and Angels. (Dronke 27)

[...] Aquinas went so far as to write that Plato had ‘a bad method of teaching ...by way of symbols (per simbola), meaning by the words something other than the words themselves proclaim’. The phrase is very close to the one Beatrice uses of Plato, though she does so
without any hint of distaste: ‘perhaps his theory is of another kind / than the words proclaim’ (IV 55f). Here Dante does not take the part of Aquinas, but is close in outlook to the twelfth-century Platonists, ‘we who love Plato’. The reason for this is simple: for Dante as a poet and specifically as poet of the Paradiso, the use of an integumentum was essential. (Dronke 28-29).

It is clear that whenever Dante concerns himself with meaning or exegesis, he turns almost instinctively to Ovid. Both in Conv. 1.2 and in the famous Epistle to Cangrande, Dante chooses Ovid to explain how poetry can have a figural meaning. The first example in Convivio derives from the beginning of book 11 of the Metamorphoses and, interestingly, it is connected with Orpheus, one of the poetae-theologi so dear to the ‘humanistic’ sensibility of which Mussato and Dante himself were representative figures. The second example is in a passage of the Epistle 7 (23-25) where the poet feels that the very destiny of Florence has been adumbrated in the verses of the Latin poet describing Myrrha.

It is evident, therefore, that Ovid appeals to Dante’s poetic taste and that the scope of this interest goes far beyond the mere exploitation of a single myth or of a striking set of images. It is safe to assume that the genuine nature of Dante’s attention to the Ovidian masterpiece has much to do with the self-exegetical dimension of a poem. The Divine Comedy and the Metamorphoses constitute two ambitious projects which pose serious challenges to their authors in terms of homogeneity and consistency. As we shall see, in the critical literature on Ovid’s main work the problems of unity, structure and consistency have plagued the vast majority of scholars in the last two centuries. As far as Dante is concerned, the very idea of looking at the Comedy through ‘retrospective visuals’, conceived by Charles

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* Numerous allusions to the Metamorphoses are traceable in the text of the Epistles. Undoubtedly, one of the most important is the constantly recurring allusion to Dante’s own undeserved exile (3.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1) filtered through the model of Hyppolitus, banished from Athens because of his stepmother’s accusations.
Singleton⁵, reveals the same attitude. The temptation to break the constraining walls of the typical lectura Dantis performed by critics who focus on one and only one canto at the time, shows how the Comedy needs to be investigated from new perspectives. Fundamentally, as is evident in the Metamorphoses, many situations or episodes repeat themselves (either exactly in the same terms or with little variation) delineating a pattern of sequentially significant tales. As in the story of the universe (in which each act or fact can be read in ‘perspective’, in as much as it is foreshadowed by another episode or event reported in Scripture) a poem which claims to be a sort of follow-up of the Bible will also encompass a series of events which respond to each other in a significant way. This concept is effectively expressed by Eco: “Se tale è la funzione del poeta, di figurare sia pure attraverso la menzogna poetica, fatti che funzionino come segni, a imitazione di quelli biblici, allora si capisce perché Dante proponga a Cangrande quella che è stata definita da Curtius “autoesegesi” e da Pépin “auto-allegoresi” (Arte 165”).

Therefore, it is possible to say that Dante draws on Ovidian themes or legends on a local level, that is, in a single episode, or on a general level, that is, exploiting and taking up the mythical imagery in several occasions throughout the Comedy. However, it is also possible for Dante to act in the same way when dealing with material which is not of Ovidian derivation. What counts, though, is that the technique at stake is consciously derived from both the Bible and Ovid’s masterpiece.

In the wake of what Dorothy M. Robathan states in her essay “Ovid in the Middle Ages”, Dante’s appropriation of mythical figures and situations on the microtextual level could be read as an aspect of the common procedure of Ovidian ‘moralization’, a procedure

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⁵ This concept, along with the discussion of what Singleton calls the “master pattern” of the Comedy (namely the imagery of liberation from slavery as it is expressed in the Psalm “In exitu Israel de Aegypto”), can be found in the Italian La poesia della Divina Commedia.
involving all the classical material borrowed from Ovid's epic (which from the Ovidius ethicus led to the Ovidius moralizatus): "This process developed from the important place that the poet had occupied in the curricula of the monastic and cathedral schools, where the mythological characters in the Metamorphoses were equated with Old Testament characters, for example Noah with Deucalion" (202). However, when Dante puts together exempla, say, of excessive pride in Purg. 12.25-63, he does not do so only because of a trite procedure of moralization or production of proverbial paradigms but to highlight the way in which his own poem is constructed, to indicate the right 'perspective' to read it. Every moral situation has been adumbrated by mythical figures (Niobes, Arachne or Almeon's mother), but it achieves its fulfillment in the Bible. Dante's own poem simultaneously presents itself as both the inventory of all the unfulfilled classical paradigms and the due and full continuation of biblical history.

Before beginning our scrutiny of the critical literature produced so far on Dante's exploitation of Ovidian themes on a microtextual level, we shall turn our attention briefly to another important element that has contributed to make Ovid an appealing poetic model in Dante's eyes. Ovid's popularity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the so-called aetas ovidiana, was increasing dramatically. This is also proved by the high number and broad diffusion of manuscripts containing his works. Most importantly, he was a Roman poet who had been sent to exile and who had tried to convince Augustus of his innocence, attempting to gain his forgiveness by means of poetry. Dante was virtually in the same situation, hoping (Par. 25.1-10) one day to enter Florence as a free citizen by virtue of the fame gained with his "poema sacro".

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6 In his study "Ovide au Moyen Age (du IX au XII siècle)", included in Le strade del testo, B. Munk Olsen gives a detailed account of the actual diffusion of the works of Ovid during the middle ages, considering all the aspects of it and providing the reader with a minute geographical description of the distribution of all the Ovidian manuscripts.
During the Middle Ages many writers had looked at the elegies written by Ovid during the period of his relegation in Tomi (Tristia, Epistulae ex Ponto) as models of exile-poetry:

[...] Baudry, Bishop of Bourgueil, composed metrical Epistles based upon the Tristia and Heroïdes while Hildebert of Lavardin, Archbishop of Tours, found the Epistulae ex Ponto and Tristia pertinent to his De Exilio, as had Theodolph of Orléans and Ermoldus Nigellus some years earlier. (Robathan 193)

Furthermore, the reading of a pseudo-Ovidian work entitled De Vetula fostered the conviction that Ovid had converted before dying. The fairly long (2,390 exameters divided into three books) poem features a typically gallant Ovid who, though in exile, still cultivates his love for women and goes to a rendez-vous to meet a young lady who, instead, turns out to be a hag. Ovid, the author of frivolous works such as Amores, Remedia Amoris and Medicamina Faciei realizes the transient nature and ephemeral value of human beauty, repenting his dissolute lifestyle. Therefore, he commits himself to the study of the liberal arts and embraces Christianity. Finally, at the conclusion of the poem, he invokes the Virgin Mary. This treatment of Ovid's historical figure, a frivolous character and the ideal model of the disengaged poet, reduplicates in a concrete fashion (on the 'personal' level of autobiographical poetry) the substance of the more refined and articulated procedure of 'moralization' in Ovidian works (on the abstract level of the particular significance of each myth) undertaken in the Middle Ages by scholars such as Pierre Bersuire (Robathan 199). Now that I have briefly summarized this complex of circumstances, it is time to take a further step in the direction of the microtextual analysis, reviewing what has been done so far in the field and tentatively putting forward a new way of looking at Ovidian echoes, quotations and allusions in the Divine Comedy.
2) The quest for a taxonomy.

We shall now examine how the problem of the exploitation of specific Ovidian myths in particular episodes of the Comedy has been dealt with by some scholars.

The first scholar who examined Ovidian echoes in the Comedy was Edward Moore in his Studies in Dante. He stated that Ovid’s presence in Dante’s work was not as large and significant as Virgil’s, even though “For mythology indeed Ovid is his main authority” (Moore 206). After having pointed out that Dante shows a greater interest in the Metamorphoses than in any other work of Ovid’s (207), Moore makes an important distinction between passages in which the Ovidian importance resides in the evocation of a particular myth or mythological detail, and passages “which bear upon reading or interpretation” (207). He also underlines the special status of the Ovidian myths quoted by Dante on the three cornici of Purgatory where Pride, Envy and Anger are expiated. The scholar, therefore, felt the necessity of some sort of categorization, and, even if he did not undertake the ambitious project of a taxonomy, he certainly set the tone for all the attempts to come. His method of classification was fundamentally focused on the process of selection of the ‘borrowed material’: if there is an overt allusion, in the sense that the allusion presents itself as such, the passage at stake will be labeled with an ‘A’; if the allusion is clear but not ‘self revealing’ it will be labeled with a ‘B’, and so forth up to the most dubious allusions marked with a ‘D’. As is easy to see, this way of grouping the Ovidian myths evoked by Dante, far from being exhaustive, does not help much on the narratological level. In other words, knowing exactly that a certain literary echo is deliberate does not tell us much about the purpose of the quote itself.

Ettore Paratore, the author of the entry of the Enciclopedia Dantesca devoted to Ovid, adopted another approach, focusing more on questions of textual criticism (like the
famous passage of Purg. 33.46-51 [Paratore 233]). Yet, he compiled a considerable list of quotes and was aware of two important facts pertaining to the relevance and the organization of the material borrowed from Ovid: first, that Dante looked at the works of the Latin poet with profound interest “scorgendovi un’altissima raffigurazione allegorica di principi cosmologici e morali” (228); second, that Dante tended to rework the same theme exploiting all its potential (and we shall see that he did so also with situations that he did not derive from Ovid): “la fantasia di Dante ha amato tornare più volte sopra un episodio ovidiano che l’aveva particolarmente colpita e ricavarne varie modulazioni espressive” (232). In general Paratore does not dwell much on the ‘challenging’ or ‘corrective’ attitude which inspires Dante when alluding to Ovid’s poetry, but he has the merit of having enlarged the field of research moving from the undoubted assumption that the Metamorphoses were “il deposito da cui Dante ha desunto quasi tutti i cenni mitologici che gremiscono la Commedia” (231) to the idea that Dante borrowed also some particular features of diction or style: “singoli particolari significativi delle descrizioni ovidiane” (232). In sum, by the time Paratore’s work was published, the whole gamut of possible approaches to the problem was almost entirely clear. I say ‘almost’ because the last step left to take was a rigorous investigation of the pivotal principle underlying Dante’s attitude towards Ovid. If it is true that he nourished respect for the high moral values inscribed in Ovid’s lines and for the powerful way in which the poet of Sulmona had hinted at unfathomable moral truths, it was also true that Dante did not only refer to Ovid’s auctoritas in the fashion of imitation but was also unavoidably compelled to challenge and eventually surpass it.

A group of scholars like Michelangelo Picone and the contributors to the two volumes The Poetry of Allusion, edited by Rachel Jacoff and Jeffrey Schnapp, and Dante and Ovid, edited by Madison Sowell, have tried to gather and study what they often call Dante’s
challenging ‘corrections’ of Ovidian myths. We shall now examine the criteria that these scholars have followed before turning to the work of Kevin Brownlee, who has tried to look at the issue in a more methodological way, seeking classificatory parameters of the Ovidian ‘material’ present in the Comedy on all possible levels of imitation.

In two important articles that have appeared successively in 1993 and 1994, Michelangelo Picone has given a thorough and sophisticated account of this particular Dantean allusion-technique, a technique that purports a re-writing and an actual ‘correction’ of the Ovidian myths. The first article, “L’Ovidio di Dante”, published in Dante e la Bella Scola della Poesia edited by Amilcare A. Iannucci, almost constitutes the premise of the second. “Dante Argonauta”, inserted in Ovidius Redivivus, a book he co-edited with Bernhard Zimmermann. In the former contribution Picone focuses on several problems concerning the way Ovid was read during the Middle Ages. He points out how every prestigious author was studied with the help of a commentary or an accessus (107-113), and he also recalls the above mentioned medieval practice of ‘moralizing’ the text of the Metamorphoses (132-33). Picone, in addition to this procedure, also mentions the procedure of integumentum, as it appears in Servius, Fulgentius and John of Garland. This was an interpretation that did not completely deprive the Ovidian text of all its trustworthiness but would look at the text of the pagan poet as if it contained ‘veiled’ rather than distorted truths. The scholar, though, seems to arrive at the same conclusions reached by Dronke and Eco when he suggests—in the wake of a closer survey of the above mentioned passage of Par. 4. 22-63, where Plato’s Timaeus is adumbrated—that any classical poem may have been read in a typological way by Dante. This typological reading, as we have seen, originated in an extension of the category of ‘figural interpretation’, generally applied to the Bible, here applied to the domain of pagan poetry. We have already discussed in detail the cultural
environment from which this positive re-evaluation of poetry and, most importantly, the elaboration of the category of *poetae theologi* may have stemmed. What is important to notice is that several scholars have agreed on this point, and, as far as Picone is concerned, he decidedly regards Ovid as “il collegamento fra Virgilio e Lucano” (116), as “il ponte fra le favolose origini troiane evocate dall’*Eneide* e gli sviluppi storici dell’epoca imperiale raccontati dal *Bellum Civile*: egli descrive quindi il cammino della poesia classica dal mito alla storia” (116). Furthermore, Picone gives credit to the hypothesis that Dante considered true the legends contained in the *De vetula*, if not in the sense that Dante considered Ovid’s conversion to Christianity an unquestioned fact, at least in the sense that this spurious medieval work ended up becoming a seminal point of departure for Dante’s speculation. The theme of Ovid’s exile and moral repentance (118-19, 134) must surely have enthralled a reader like him.

As we have stated before, the most innovative feature of Picone’s essay is a detailed account of at least three cases of challenging and/or ‘correcting’ allusions to Ovid used by Dante. The first myths to be discussed are the cruel killing of Atamas’ own children and the madness of Ecuba evoked in the first lines of *Inf.* 30. Picone treats them in great detail showing how, in the first case, we are in the domain of sheer poetic challenge (the fury of a father who murders his own children in a pagan text is far inferior to the inhuman state of the counterfeiters), whereas the depiction of Ecuba contains cryptic allusions to the grief of the Blessed Virgin. Ecuba, a mother who has lost most of her offspring, is seen as a ‘degraded’ Mary, a pagan premonition of the grief of the mother of God (125-26). The scholar defines these two cases as examples of “*miti oggettivi*”, that is, myths re-worked by Dante’s fantasy with no personal involvement, myths that do not apply to his personal situation as a traveler and a poet. On the other hand, the myth of Phaeton, provides Dante with an exceptionally
fecund intertext. Indeed, Dante touches upon the story of the son of the Sun at least three times, staging what we may call a peculiar ‘montage’ of all the different aspects of the legend. In two of the three sections into which the whole allusion is divided, however, the imagery of the ancient pagan myth is revived and—it goes without saying—‘redeemed’ by Dante’s own situation. The first moment is a comparison between the chariot of the Sun and Gerion, the monster on whose back Dante and Virgil fly from the edge of the seventh to the eight circle of *Inferno* (*Inf.* 17.106-108). Here Dante’s fear is compared to the fear of Phaeton, but, of course, the outcome of the two flights is completely different: the hero of the Ovidian myth pays a high price for his obstinate desire to fly on his father’s chariot, for he is going to be struck by Jove’s lightening. Dante, by contrast, succeeds in bridging the ravine that separates the two circles because of his very obedience to Virgil’s commands. Picone shows all the implications adumbrated by the comparison (126-28), extending his analysis to the other two episodes. In *Purg.* 29.115-20 Phaeton’s chariot is compared to the chariot pulled by the gryphon, an evident allegory of the Church guided by Christ. The scholar appropriately remarks that:

L’episodio purgatoriale (soprattutto se lo riallacciamo all’Epistola 11.5, dove i cardinali vengono paragonati al “falsus auriga Phoeton”) riesce in qualche modo ad attualizzare il mito ovidiano, a vedere cioè in esso l’archetipo della situazione nella quale la Chiesa (e con lei il poeta) si trova in questo particolare momento: guidata non da un vero auriga (il vicario di Cristo) ma da falsi aurighi, dalla corrotta gerarchia ecclesiastica […]. (127)

The third occurrence of the myth studied by Picone is the final episode of the series, and it also serves to conjure up an aspect of the myth unexplored by Dante thus far: Phaeton’s motive in asking to ride the chariot of his father, the Sun. Like Phaeton, who had been compelled to ask his mother Climene for evidence of his descent by the insinuations of Epaphus, who had questioned the Sun’s paternity, Dante is explicitly invited and directly
helped by Beatrice to perform a flight leading to a positive outcome and confirming God's 'paternal' approval of Dante's enterprise (Picone, "L'Ovidio" 128).

Picone also treats the myth of Icarus (129), about which we shall add something later, and the myth of the Argonauts (130-32), topics that the scholar has taken up once again in his article "Dante Argonauta" included, as we have said, in Ovidius redivivus. Here, the scholar, though maintaining the same convictions and reaching more or less the same conclusions as in "L'Ovidio di Dante", manages to set his views in a stronger theoretical frame. He sheds light convincingly on the principles of 'allusive art' at work in these allusions to Ovid and, in general, on the technique of découpage of the Ovidian 'material' implemented by Dante.

Picone adopts the threefold partition established by Giorgio Pasquali in his famous essay Arte Allusiva\(^7\): 1) a text can be 'reminiscent' of another text, whether this is conscious or not on the author's part; 2) it can imitate the other text, in many cases even trying to disguise its own dependence on it; 3) it can allude to it overtly, in the sense that if the allusion to the other text is not immediately caught by an attentive and learned reader, the effect of the 'arte allusiva' in itself goes lost. For the case of the more or less markedly 'reminiscent' text, Pasquali does not coin any term, whereas he uses for the two other instances respectively the Latin words imitatio and aemulatio. Therefore, Picone can effectively ascribe the dimension of 'imitation' to the literal level of the poem, in which Dante uses the myths on the mere level of imagery and plot, whereas the 'emulation' will take place only at the level of allegory:

Al livello invece dell'allegoria, del rinvenimento cioè del senso profondo da attribuire alla inventio tematica e alla fabula narrativa, vedremo come Dante non possa che stabilire un rapporto di emulazione nei confronti di Ovidio: è qui che il poeta medievale arriva a dimostrare di essere non tanto l'Ovidio cristiano, quanto il nuovo Ovidio, colui che

\(^7\) In the first footnote of his essay Picone duly quotes Pasquali's Pagine stravaganti, in which this essay has been inserted, to which he also adds G.B. Conte's Memoria dei poeti e sistema letterario (note 3). I should like to add Pasquali's own Storia della tradizione e critica del testo, in which some of these concepts, though cursorily, are also treated.
ha preso il posto dell’antico auctor e che ha scritto le vere Metamorfosi. (Picone, “Dante” 175)

In other words, it is safe to assume that whenever the Ovidian intertext does not involve a ‘challenge’ on the Christian author’s part, it will stay in the domain of poetic imitation, whether the reader is capable of grasping it or not. On the other hand, if the Ovidian myth represents a situation that, because of its paradigmatic similarity, can be exploited by Dante, who can use it to show how the ‘premonitions’ embedded in the imageries of the ancient poets have been completely fulfilled both by sacred Scripture and the poet’s own experience reported in his poem, then the myth itself is overtly evoked, and it is absolutely necessary that the reader be aware of this very process.

As far as the procedure of découpage is concerned, Picone points out something that Paratore had also perceived, namely that in some cases Dante takes up a particular Ovidian myth many times, each time exploiting a different aspect of it, thus producing different poetic meanings. Unlike Paratore, however, Picone is precise about the general implications of this procedure:

As we shall see in the following chapters, it is possible to demonstrate that this way of arranging the poetic matter can also involve different themes, that is, stories that are not part of the same myth but are nonetheless similar in terms of plot, poetic imagery or moral meaning. In fact, Ovid himself ‘plays variations’ on myths that are similar in terms of plot.
Dante does implement this technique when dealing with the Ovidian myths, but he also does it with other motifs derived from the Bible or from his own experience.Picone conducts the same investigation of the myth of the Argonauts (186-202), showing how this myth is also arranged throughout the Comedy according to a complex ‘montage’ and coming to the abundantly proven conclusion that:

La fine del viaggio dantesco non potrà di conseguenza che riflettere la fine del viaggio argonautico di cui è la traduzione cristiana: compiuto il Paradiso l’auctor ritornerà (o meglio: spera di ritornare) in patria con la corona poetica così come Giasone è ritornato in Grecia con il vello d’oro, e riassumerà le funzioni di poeta così come Giasone è stato reintegrato nelle sue funzioni di re. (199)

After discussing Dante’s allusions to the Ovidian account of the myth of Phaeton, Picone devotes some space to the myth of Icarus as well. This is another myth narrating the story of an unsuccessful human flight, and, surely, it must have been as appealing to Dante as the pitiable outcome of the enterprise of the son of the Sun. The two explicit allusions traced by Picone are to be found in Inf. 17.109-111 (where the allusion to Icarus comes right after the mention of Phaeton, with which it forms a poignant couplet of mythical examples) and in Pur. 8.125-26, where, as Picone duly notes, “l’enfasi è posta sulle capacità intellettuali di Dedalo, e non sull’infelice destino di Icaro (185)”. The scholar then, remarks that “L’irradiazione del mito di Icaro nella Commedia non è così vasta come quella di Fetonte (185)” and cautiously suggests the possibility of finding an allusion to Icarus in Purg. 31.55-63:

Ben ti dovevi, per lo primo strale
de le cose fallaci, levar suso
di retro a me che non era più tale.
Non ti dovea gravar le penne in giuso,
ad aspettar più colpo, o pargoletta

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*The entire chapter 3 of Lannucci’s *Forma ed Evento nella Divina Commedia* is a clear exposition of this Dantesque technique. As we shall see, this technique connects different episodes of the *Comedy* which are linked by the close resemblance of their motifs. The specific way in which Dante takes up a certain theme is, in conclusion, capable of activating a self-exegetical or metalinguistic meaning.*
Here, Beatrice reproaches Dante with the moral and spiritual inadequacies shown by the poet in the circumstance of her death, and Picone states that "È fortemente probabile [...] che la deviazione morale e poetica, di cui Beatrice rimprovera il pellegrino, sia un'eco della "mala via" tenuta dall'eroe mitologico" (185). More probable in my opinion, is that Dante is using here the character of Perseus⁹ to emphasize the indecision which marked Dante's behavior after Beatrice's death and his attachment to carnal beauty. Indeed, the very first presentation of Perseus on the stage of the Metamorphoses (4.621-62) points in this direction. The hero, son of Jove and Danae, wanders across the sky until he meets Atlas, whom he transforms into a famous mountain using the head of the Gorgon. The description of his trip to the regions of the wealthy king Atlas has much in common with the Dantine description of Ulysses' trip to the fringes of the west. He, though, is a positive hero whose flights, unlike those of Phaeton and Icarus, are all successful, and his westbound ‘expedition’ to what is now Morocco is not comparable to any of Ulysses’ daring deeds. The distinctive ‘negative’ feature—at least in Dante’s eyes—is that, wandering aimlessly through the air after having transformed Atlas, the only thing that impresses him is Andromeda, the daughter of king Cepheus, a young woman (a “pargoletta”) tied to a boulder on the shore of the land of the Ethiopians. When he sees her, he is so mesmerized by her beauty that he almost forgets to flap the wings of his flying shoes: “et stupet, et visae correptus imagine formae / paene suas quatere est oblitus in aere pennas” (Met. 4.676-77)¹⁰. This may be a decisive

⁹ A beautiful interpretation of Perseus’ myth and of his wanderings is to be found in Italo Calvino’s essay “Leggerezza” (Lezioni 8-12).
¹⁰ “And he is astonished, and, mesmerized by the vision of such beauty, he almost forgets to flap his wings” (My translation)
detail: the sight of a woman (the "pargoletta"), doomed to fall prey to a marine monster, compels Perseus to land ("non ti dovea gravar le penne in giuso") on the shore and fight for her. In sum, the whole story of Perseus gives us the account of the deeds of a wandering hero, brave, but prone to indecision and definitely sensitive to feminine beauty.

Moreover, the individuation and the evaluation of some textual marks invite us to give some credit to this interpretation. For instance, in the description of the duel between the hero and the monster, once again Perseus decides to land, and Ovid describes the state of the feathers thus: "Maduere graves adspergine pennae; / nec bibulis ultra Perseus talaribus ausus / credere [...]") (Met. 4.729-31). His feathers ("pennae") are heavy, imbued by mist, "graves" as the 'pargoletta' "gravò le penne in giuso" to Dante. Furthermore, the phrase "ad aspettar più colpo" used by Dante to mean "to await a worse evil", could be explained more fruitfully if we assumed that here Dante is hinting at the disastrous outcome of Perseus' deeds, deeds ultimately dictated by his amorous desire. Indeed, right at the opening of book 5 of the Metamorphoses, Perseus has to face the reaction of Fineus, the man who was supposed to marry Andromeda, had she not been promised to Perseus as the prize for his brave conduct. The argument between the two eventually escalates into a massacre, and this detail may have been read by Dante as a pedagogical admonishment against the possibly calamitous results of love.

Therefore, in Dante's eyes Perseus must have epitomized the typical figure of a hero affected by indecision and excessive desire for beauty and love. This is also confirmed by the other, more obvious, reference to Perseus traceable in the Comedy. In Par. 4.1-9 Dante has to describe his own indecision between two questions he would love to pose to Beatrice:

11 "His wings were wet because of the sprinkle and he did not trust his soaking pinions any longer" (My translation).
Intra due cibi, distanti e moventi
d' un modo, prima si morria di fame,
che liber'uomo l' un recasse ai denti;
si si starebbe un agno intra due brame
di fieri lupi, igualmente temendo;
si si starebbe un cane intra due dame:
per che, s' i' mi tacea, me non riprendo,
dalli miei dubbì d' un modo sospinto,
poi ch' era necessario, né commendo.

As Saepgno comments: “qualche elemento alla rappresentazione drammatica del
dubbio che paralizza la volontà, può esser venuto a Dante anche da Ovidio, Metam. 5.164-67”:

Tigris ut, auditis diversa valle duorum
exstimalata fame mugitibus armentorum,
nescit utro potius ruat, et ruere ardet utroque;
sic dubius Perseus [...]12

These vivid lines describe the uncertain attitude of Perseus, who, attacked at the same
time by Molpeus and Echemmon in the riot which occurred during his wedding banquet, can
not resolve whether to pursue the one or the other with his spear. Here the situation can be
exploited not only because of the beauty of the simile, but also for the simple reason that the
underlying profile of Perseus is appropriately evoked in the eyes of the reader, whose task is
only to recognize the same characteristics of ‘indecision’ already exhibited by the hero in the
episode of Purg. 31.

Fundamentally, in Purg. 31 Dante wanted to underline the confusing situation that
trapped him after Beatrice’s death on a personal and moral level, whereas in Par. 4 he still
wanted to dwell on the same idea of confusion and indecision, but only to stage the far less
obnoxious situation created by his intellectual doubts. What counts in our perspective is that
Perseus's figure fits both situations wonderfully, thus allowing us to put forward an alternative to the hypothesis proposed by Picone.

At any rate, the distinction made by Picone between "miti oggettivi" and "miti soggettivi" proves extremely useful, especially if combined with the conclusions reached by Kevin Brownlee in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, released only one year before *Ovidius redivivus*. Picone's special merit resides in his methodologically accurate study of the phenomenon of Dantean allusions—and possibly 'corrections'—to Ovidian myths.

The same kind of analysis, though, had already been undertaken by a group of scholars who published several articles on the topics in 1991. The articles have been collected in two volumes: *Dante and Ovid*, edited by Madison Sowell, and *The Poetry of Allusion*, edited by Rachel Jacoff and Jeffrey T. Schnapp. The former work gives a detailed account of some other passages, scattered throughout the *Comedy*, in which Dante evokes the *Metamorphoses* as his privileged intertext. Not all the myths imply a 'challenge' or a 'correction' of the source but, as Robert McMahon maintains in his contribution "Satan as Infernal Narcissus", it is possible to say that "Each *cantica* [...] represents a particular mode of reading and revising Ovid "in the spirit" of Christian biblical allegory. In *Inferno* that mode may be described as perversion and irony; in the *Purgatorio*, as reversal, conversion or correction: in the *Paradiso*, as the mode of exalted vision and understanding" (83).

At this point it is absolutely necessary for us to propose a theoretical grid that tries to combine the general acquisitions we have studied so far. A certain Ovidian myth can provoke in Dante's mind a certain number of 'poetic reactions': the myth can be evoked merely as a 'poor comparison' for a situation in which the pilgrim finds himself, and this is

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12 "Like a tigress upon hearing the bellowing of two different herds coming from two different valleys, spurred by hunger, does not know which one to attack first and wants to attack both, likewise hesitant Perseus [...]" (My translation).
especially true for the *Inferno*. Another option is that the myth is ‘challenged’ by the new fulfillment given to it by Dante’s own poetic work, a situation typically found in the *Purgatorio*. The third possibility is that the mythical account proves to be an ancient and unconscious prediction of super-human realities revealed to Dante in the *Paradiso*. The third *cantica*, though, in order to be susceptible to such an interpretation, needs not only to stage ‘corrections’ of certain myths ‘triggered’ whenever a new situation in the *Comedy* challenges the old myth, but it also needs to enlarge its allusions simultaneously with sacred Scripture\(^\text{13}\). This mode of operating is clear when we examine all the contributions in *The Poetry of Allusion*. All but two\(^\text{14}\) of the articles deal with episodes of *Paradiso* in which the references to Ovid have to be necessarily filtered by Scripture, the writings of the Fathers of the Church or the ‘moralization’ of Ovid’s text. For instance, Pamela Royston Macfie, in her study “Ovid, Arachne and the Poetics of Paradise”, investigates the complex intertextual strategy governing the allusions to the myths of Arachne (*Met. 6.1-145*) and of Marsias (*Met. 6.382-400*) reaching the conclusion that: “The presence and necessity of divine instruction, rejected by Arachne but recognized by Dante, defines the poetic in which Dante reappropriates, corrects, and redeems Ovid’s weaver and her metamorphic art”(172). This very ‘re-appropriation’, however, needs to be based on the *auctoritas* of Gregory’s *Moralia in Job* (8.14.72) and St. Jerome’s *Commentarium in Isaiah prophetam* (16.59.5), who provide Dante with the idea that Arachne can be associated with ‘impiety, heresy, and hypocrisy’ (Royston 164). Only by virtue of this association, can Dante effectively ‘redeem’ Arachne’s blushing (*Met. 6.46-49*)—used by Ovid to depict her fear and astonishment—when he echoes

\(^{13}\) This interesting idea of a ‘simultaneous’ multiple allusion to several different texts has been proposed for the first time by Paola Rigo in her *Memoria classica e memoria biblica* in Dante. The scholar has shown how this ‘symphonic’ effect is deliberately pursued by Dante, who is amazingly capable of blending what Montale has called “la somma enorme di corrispondenze, di richiami che lettera suscita” (53).

\(^{14}\) William Setphany’s “Erysichthon and the Poetics of the Spirit” and Peter Hawkins’s “Watching Matelda” refer respectively to *Purg.* 23.22-30 and *Purg.* 29.37-96.
it to describe his own ‘promotion’ from the heaven of Mars to the one of Jupiter, a leap to the heavenly region inhabited by the ‘lawgivers’ (characters completely directly contrary to the heretics).

In its general aspects, the peculiar Dantean mode of alluding to the Ovidian masterpiece is clear enough: what we need now is a series of ‘labels’ that could help us to systematize all the material we can gather on the theme. We shall now discuss how we have assembled this material and how Kevin Brownlee’s methodological remarks can be conveniently taken up to implement a taxonomy.

3) The Dartmouth Dante Project and Brownlee’s theoretical grid.

Discussing the future perspectives of Dantean studies in North America, Rino Caputo—in his book *Per far segno*—expresses his positive expectations about the application of new technologies to the analysis of Dante’s text:

Emergono, tuttavia, anche dall’alveo della tradizione americana, traguardata in tutte le sfaccettature, tentativi di superare le divisioni teorico-metodologiche rinnovando i termini della discussione, soprattutto attraverso l’utilizzazione dei nuovi strumenti di informazione e comunicazione. È forse questa, in effetti, la prospettiva meno sterile in cui riproporre Dante, la *Commedia* e la stessa critica dantesca a un pubblico di lettori più e meno colti, più e meno professionali. In tale direzione sono da valutare positivamente le iniziative concrete d’ordine filologico-documentario, come il “Dartmouth Dante Project”, ideato e coordinato da R. Hollander, già autore di un esauriente volume sull’allegoria nella *Commedia* [...]. (112)

Such a positive consideration of the ambitious project realized by Hollander derives, in Caputo’s eyes, from its philological potential. Indeed, the Dartmouth Dante Project is a very large database containing more than forty commentaries on the *Divine Comedy* from Dante’s own son Pietro to our day. This enormous mass of data constitutes what we may call the ‘exegetical vulgate’ of the *Comedy* itself. The database is accessible via Telnet and can be used in two main ways. First: it can give us the whole survey of the critical tradition on a
given passage or line; second, and most important: it can be used to track down all the possible information on a certain word or expression, not to mention other possibilities of more advanced research based on boolean operators. It is easy to see how this electronic tool can contribute decisively to the general collection of data on a certain classical author, and not only when Dante is alluding to him in a specific passage. If, for example, the commentator feels that Dante is alluding to the text of Statius, he is forced to use, in that particular portion of his commentary, either the word ‘Statius’, that is the name of the author himself, or the title of one of his works, say, *Thebaid* or both: the name of the author and his work. Consequently, when a researcher needs to collect all the passages in which, according to seven centuries of critical exegesis, Dante is alluding to Ovid, he or she has only to enter all the possible forms of the name ‘Ovid’ (according to the different languages used by the commentators, i.e. ‘Ovidius’, ‘Ovid’, ‘Ovidio’ etc.) and all the possible abbreviations of the specific work in which one is interested (in the case of the *Metamorphoses*: ‘Met.’, ‘Metam.’, ‘Metamorf.’ Etc.). This will produce a certain (generally very high) number of excerpts, all accessible and easy to download. The most difficult challenge, in the end, is the sorting and final arrangement of the data. The final product of this relatively easy computer-assisted research is a complete list of passages that have been considered ‘close’ to the Ovidian text by more than forty commentators. Though far from being exhaustive, this preliminary collection of data must, however, be considered as an unavoidable point of departure. The scholar can contest part of the data or even come up with new passages overlooked in the past, but he or she has to take into consideration this ‘exegetical vulgate’ before drawing any conclusion on the specific relationship between Dante and any other poet. This is the only guarantee of the ‘scientific’ accuracy or, at least, of the thoroughness of this kind of research.
Therefore, as Caputo says, Hollander’s great scholarly achievement can be regarded as something really new and conducive to numerous applications. This dissertation is, in fact, largely based on such a collection of data (found in the appendix), and, even though all the Ovidian passages have not been discussed one by one (for it would require an enormous amount of time), the general investigation of the passages—which accompanies the process of ordering them—can surely help us to acquire a clear vision of Dante’s ‘behavior’ towards Ovid. All the studies that I have mentioned so far have renounced not only the attempt of a ‘taxonomy’, but also the creation of a theoretical grid including all the possible categories in which every single allusion to Ovid present in the *Comedy* may fall. The only scholar who has formulated a clear interpretive model is Kevin Brownlee. It is my intention to examine his seminal ‘model’ and to show how, modifying it appropriately, it can prove absolutely rigorous and compatible with a broader approach to the text of the *Comedy*, that is, an approach that does not only look at facts of style and meaning on a local level, but focuses also on the narratological aspect of Dante’s work.

The first important statement made by Brownlee in his study “The Special Case of Ovid and his *Metamorphoses*”, included in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, concerns the different status of Virgil and Ovid in the *Comedy*:

[...] Dante’s Ovid is not read politically (or otherwise) in relation to Virgil in the way that both Statius and Lucan are. While Dante’s reading of the classical poets normally makes Virgil its point of departure, Ovid functions as a kind of opposite extreme. Finally, there is the unique status of the Ovidian poetic subject matter from Dante’s perspective as *theologus-poeta*: the Christian hermeneutic potential of “metamorphosis”. (112)

This idea encompasses both my conviction that Virgil and Ovid operate respectively along the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes, and the contribution of all the critical work conducted on the microtextual level by the scholars I have mentioned above.
The scholar, then, moves on to his first distinction, namely that "certain key characters from Ovid's epic appear in Dante's poem at the level of the plot" (113). From this point of view, in fact, the treatment of characters such as Tiresias (Inf. 20.40-45) and Myrrha (Inf. 30.37-41), does not differ much from the treatment of Virgilian characters who, for one reason or another, appear here and there in the Comedy as mere elements of the setting. Brownlee, however, talks about another possible use of these characters: they can be involved "in a comparison or periphrasis" (113). In other words, the particular Ovidian character is not only a static figure met by Dante or mentioned en passant, but he or she is the term of a comparison, as Athamas and Hecuba are in the already mentioned overture of Inf. 30.1-27. The third distinction is between the comparisons that involve Dante (as a poet or as a pilgrim or both) and the ones which do not: "The master strategy here involves a corrective Christian rewriting of both failed or successful Ovidian heroes" (113). Like Moore, Brownlee also maintains that the moral exempla uttered by the atoning souls on the purgatorial terraces enjoy a peculiar category:

[...] they are read as unproblematic histories which are morally exemplary within their original setting, and which function as exempla within the Christian context—indeed, as an integral part—of the mechanism of purgation. They are thus placed on the same level as the other classical, as well as biblical and hagiographic, texts from which the purgatorial examples are taken. There are, however, a disproportionately high number of Ovidian exempla, almost all negative. (114)

At this point Brownlee talks about the ‘corrective’ re-reading of the myths of Narcissus, Pyramus and Thisbe and Argus placed at the end of the Purgatorio (114-15). It is instructive, however, to notice that, whereas the re-working of the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe does not involve a reference to the Scripture, this is not the case for the imagery of Argus, whose falling asleep is the pagan counterpart of "the moment when the apostles Peter, John, and James are recalled to themselves by the voice of Jesus after their vision of Moses,
Elias, and the transfigured Christ” (115). After having remarked how this sort of juxtaposition “not only marks the difference between these two model Dantean texts, but also links them, conferring, paradoxically, an added prestige to the Ovidian scriptura paganorum” (115), Brownlee discusses the other occurrences of re-read Ovidian myths. They appear, as the scholar notices, in four clusters “which occur in four structurally significant loci: first, the multiple beginnings of Paradiso 1-3: second, the central encounter with Cacciaguida (Paradiso 17); third, the extended sequence which culminates in the descent of Christ (Paradiso 21-23); fourth, the canticle’s concluding segment in the Empyrean (Paradiso 30-33)” (115). All the myths evoked in these ‘clusters’ of episodes mentioned by Brownlee involve a more or less explicit reference to Scripture, and it is important to point out, talking about the fourth cluster, namely the Empyrean ‘concluding segment’, how here...

[... ] we find the culmination of a particularly suggestive set of programmatic Ovidian models (Narcissus, Phaeton, Icarus, and Jason), which are simultaneously validated and surpassed, shown as both necessary and inadequate for Dante’s final articulation of the highest Christian theological truth [... ] (117).

This ‘recapitulative’ dimension of the myths evoked in the Empyrean compels us to recall that both Paratore and Picone had already perceived this ‘sequentially significant’ disposition of some of the Ovidian legends.

With this caveat in mind I shall now try to revise Brownlee’s model slightly and to propose my own criterion for classification.

Undoubtedly, the first group of references to insert in the census should be constituted by the passages in which Dante models his diction after some of Ovid’s lines. Evidently, this category includes deliberate and also incidental allusions, and the lines at
stake can be considered merely 'reminiscent' of the Ovidian text. Then, we have the characters derived from the Metamorphoses and inserted in the Comedy on the plot-level. The most important distinctions, however, must be made successively when we begin to consider the most important category, that is the cluster of comparisons between an Ovidian myth and a situation present in the Comedy. Within this domain we have singled out comparisons involving Dante as a poet or a pilgrim (or both), and comparisons that do not involve him directly. The comparisons, in turn, may or may not involve a challenge to or a 'correction' of the Ovidian myth implemented by Dante's fantasy. Furthermore, the correction of the classical text, 'surpassed' by the Comedy, can or cannot be filtered by Scripture. Finally, as we have noted, the Ovidian myth can or cannot be taken up more than once, creating a sequentially significant series of re-workings. As this long series of 'can or cannot' and 'may or may not' suggests, it could be a good idea to label each entry of our appendix with the appropriate mark derived from the following binary system of classification:

1) First: mere allusions on the level of diction→ YES - NO. Supplementary step: deliberate allusion→ yes - no.

2) Second: characters mentioned only as elements of the afterlife world on the plot-level→ YES - NO. Supplementary step: the character is not only a figure met by Dante in the afterlife but is also involved in a comparison→ yes - no.

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15 The best example of this category of allusions is provided by Niccolò Tommaseo. He gathers a huge amount of passages in which Dante had surely in mind Ovid's diction. The commentator himself, recalling the text of Ovid that he probably knew by heart, often modified the source or gave wrong figures when transcribing the quote. In his mind the association of two lines resembling each other probably overcame the scruples of the philologist.
COMPARISONS

3) Third: comparisons between the Ovidian myth and the *Comedy* that involve Dante in any capacity → **YES - NO.**

4) Fourth: comparisons that involve a challenge or a correction of the Ovidian myth → **YES - NO.**

5) Fifth: comparisons that, in order to correct or redeem the Ovidian myth, need to be filtered by the Sacred Scripture → **YES - NO.**

6) Sixth: comparisons that occur many times in the *Comedy* delineating a sequentially significant pattern → **YES - NO.**

For example, putting aside cases 1 and 2 in which we deal with facts of style and with elements of plot, we should label the myth of Athamas as 3NO, 4YES, 5NO, 6NO, whereas the myth of Jason should be labeled as 2YES yes, 3YES, 4YES, 5YES, 6YES. The system has the advantage of being open and modular, allowing us to define a particular allusion through a series of successive assessments of different aspects of it which, in fact, ‘can’ or ‘can not’ be all combined. In addition, if we compare this system of classification with the one established by Moore, we discover that it also allows us to consider facts of narrative strategy. As should be clear, the complete compilation of the taxonomy we have described so far is well beyond the scope of this dissertation. The observations which have been presented at the end of this chapter are merely meant to provide the methodological framework for such an undertaking. The appendix compiled using the Dartmouth Dante Project Database, far from being conclusive, only constitutes the unavoidable preliminary stage of a much more ambitious task. The list also serves the purpose of showing how a scholar can make effective use of electronic resources. The completion of this project would, therefore, require an exhaustive examination of all the writings of any Christian author possibly known to
Dante which may contain some reference to Ovid’s myths. The magnitude of such a task more than justifies the limited scope of our contribution.

In the next chapter we shall discuss why and how the mechanism of repetition of certain themes is relevant to the study of the Comedy. A series of episodes connected in meaning or even having exactly the same meaning, can delineate a peculiar pattern used by the author as a self-exegetical device. Before demonstrating that this technique had already been largely used by Ovid, we shall touch briefly upon its general implications.
Chapter two

THE ‘MACROTEXTUAL’ LEVEL

L’osservare non è mestiere così facile, come altri pensa. Vi vogliono grandissime cognizioni per dirigere il metodo, copiosissima serie d’osservazioni per vedere la catena e il filo che unisce il tutto, una mente disappassionata con una finezza di giudizio.

MARCELLO MALPIGHI, Risposta alla lettera intitolata "De recentiorum medicorum studio" (1697).

1) The problem of ‘repetition’ in an epic poem.

As we saw previously, the repetition of certain themes, in addition to being, very obviously, inevitable in an epic poem, can also be seen fruitfully as a self-exegetical tool. Unlike a traditional epic poem, which might focus on the deeds of certain heroes, the Divine Comedy has as its ordering principle the categories of sin, atonement and beatitude. While still preserving the skeleton of an epic voyage, the poem does not present its characters ‘in action’ but presents them as cast in a Christian moral scheme. Therefore, the actions of two sinners, in reality distant in time and place, could be paired because of their theological equivalence. The resulting paradigm enables Dante to portray different characters from several ages who, in turn, conjure up their own past.

It is the very fragmentary nature of this massive gallery of portraits which forces the poet to try to find points of cohesion, to establish internal cross-references as well as to search out common traits among the personal stories of the sinners, the atoning souls and the blessed. This shows that from a common human drive, different outcomes may emerge. We will dwell on a brief example here before returning to address the concept more fully later.

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Moved by the power of a lustful love, Paolo and Francesca (*Inf. 5*) commit adultery, condemning themselves to eternal perdition. By contrast, Pia dei Tolomei (*Purg. 5*), unjustly accused of adultery by her husband and perhaps killed by him, is presented as a new Francesca who, not having sinned, has secured future salvation. Finally, Cunizza da Romano (*Pur. 9*) is shown by the poet as an example of beatitude set in the heaven of Venus. Unlike the others, she transformed her life dramatically, moving from many lustful loves to the only possible love, that owed to Christ. In this way, she is granted the glory of heaven. Once again, a figural relationship is established between the three characters and the common features of their human experiences. The reader cannot but make connections between the three characters, and, as a result, the internal cohesion of the poem is greatly enhanced.

In order to look at the *Comedy* in this way, we should turn to a rigorous semiological approach based on the idea that the division of the *Comedy* into *canti* is unavoidable only on a formal level.\(^1\) What is needed is an overall view capable of embracing the poem as a totality. While many semiological readings have been attempted, none has managed to grasp the substance of the poem on this level.

D'Arco Silvio Avalle, in his *Modelli Semiologici nella Commedia di Dante*, gives an exhaustive account of the motif of a transgressive journey performed by a hero as found in both epic and chivalric literature.\(^2\) He thus proposes an enlarged reading of the episode of Ulysses (33-63). However, his analysis remains confined to the terms of the single episode.

Cesare Segre, in his book, *Fuori del Mondo* (dedicated to the theme of madness), sets out a series of interesting hypotheses on the didactic nature of the poem, thus enlarging

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\(^1\) In his convincing contribution to the 16\(^{th}\) AISLLI Conference in Los Angeles (6-9 October 1997) "Virgil's Erichthonian Descent and the Crisis of Intertextuality". Amilcare A. Iannucci maintains that, at the gates of the City of Dis, we witness not only an intertextual crisis (the insufficiency of the *Aeneid* for the description of lower hell and the necessity of turning to Lucan's *Pharsalia*) but also organizational problems: subject matter ceases to be arranged discretely into single *canti*, leading to some overlap between them.
considerably the range of possible readings of the *Comedy*. Of particular interest is the intuition that:

La *Divina Commedia* sta al culmine di altri due tipi di testi: il viaggio nell’altro mondo (come il *Purgatorio di San Patrizio* o la *Navigazione di San Brendano*) e la visione dell’altro mondo (come quelle di San Paolo o di Alberico da Montecassino). Ma in questi due generi inietta anche elementi del viaggio allegorico. Del viaggio allegorico è la progressione degli insegnamenti, la presenza di personificazioni, l’obbligo di esami per l’ammissione a livelli superiori di studio. (59)

In this context, Segre discusses the possibility of a reading which may run through the poem internally. Such a reading would single out a specific thematic thread, namely, that of the ‘exam’ (i.e. the promotion or advancement to a superior moral and intellectual level) which will be discussed in Chapter 4. However, he does not undertake the analysis of the isotopy of the exam that he has discovered, nor does he indicate other thematic threads.  

Paola Rigo, in the essay “Tra Maligno e Sanguigno” included in her recent book *Memoria Classica e Memoria Biblica in Dante*, proposes the idea of ‘intertextual simultaneity’ to explain the complexity of some episodes of the *Comedy*. The scholar, after having dealt with the well known cases of ‘correction’ or reinterpretation of classical tradition which we have discussed in chapter one, argues that some passages in the poem are capable of evoking many different references at the same time: “Non si tratta di snidare un senso nascosto, ma di misurare la forza evocativa della lettera poetica che racchiude in sé più e più potenzialità semantiche, tutte simultaneamente presenti” (79). Evidently, a single line can conjure up a multiplicity of sources which, in turn, can be viewed as a series of paradigms concerning a certain character or situation. But even if a book of such substance

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2 This follows his discussion of the concept of attantial roles and narrative functions in his first chapter (“Dal Mito alla Letteratura”, 9-31).

3 Unfortunately, even the masterfully written works of Maria Corti (*Il Viaggio Testuale, Dante a un Nuovo Crociera, La Felicità Mentale*) do not go so far as to theorize any possible mechanism of self-exegesis activated within the poem by these patterns or thematic threads.
and complexity marks a significant advance in the field of Dantean exegesis, the idea of a paradigmatic reading of the single episode on a microtextual level should be expanded (on a macrotextual level) in order to include the ‘simultaneous’ reference to different episodes in the Comedy itself linked by thematic resemblances.

Segre is surely correct when, examining the process of reading a text in his Le Strutture e il Tempo, he defines such a process an ongoing action taking place in the temporal dimension and necessarily followed by a synthesis performed by memory (16-17).

Segre introduces this principle and elaborates it from a stylistic perspective:

Sembrerebbe dunque di dover opporre la lettura (temporale) all’analisi stilistico-linguistica (acronica). (17)

[...] la lettura degli elementi linguistici è una lettura orientata. Il caso più tipico è quello della ripetizione di versi o di frasi uguali. Trovandosi in due punti successivi della poesia, o della prosa, la stessa frase resta immutata solo nel suo aspetto linguistico; in realtà cambia di valore [...]. (18)
Si sa bene—la stilistica tradizionale l’ha insegnato—che la recursività non è solo contenutistica. E quanto ho detto sinora sui valori tematici può valere per parole o frasi ricorrenti lungo il testo. Sarebbe importante trovare il punto di convergenza tra ricorsi contenutistici e ricorsi stilistici: ciò che senza dubbio è possibile, dato che un tema porta spesso con sé una costellazione lessicale o semantica, o persino modi precisi di enunciazione. (32)

In the following two chapters we shall examine more closely this repetition of similar themes marked by the concurrent repetition of certain words, rhymes, or stylistic elements both in Ovid and in Dante. The Segrean definition “costellazione lessicale o semantica” can be replaced easily with the technical word “isotopy”, an umbrella term coined by Greimas in his Sémantique Structurale in order to define repetition of both themes and matters of style. The mental processing of all the acquired data which follows the action of reading establishes a theoretical net or grid which enables the reader to perform a logically consistent

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4 The definition is introduced in the fifth chapter “L’Isotopie du Discours” (69-98).
cognitive act. In their book *A.J. Greimas and Narrative Cognition*, Marcel Danesi and Paul Perron underline this principle elegantly:

For Greimas, therefore, the deep structure of thought is figurative [...] Contextual semes, on the other hand, are abstract units which derive their semantic substance not from experience but from the relation of units and models within the narrative discourse. These make up categories of the mind, independently of sensory experience. Contextuality thus provides coherence among utterances: i.e. it furnishes the contextual cues that allow for disambiguation of the sememic substance of the utterance. Greimas referred to this feature of contextuality as a "discursive isotopy". (20)

In any case, Segre also admits that, given the enormous importance of the problem of the context in the process of "disambiguation" of stylistic and thematic elements, it would be appropriate to turn to *Textlinguistik* for help (*Le Strutture*, 19). Using the tools of textual linguistics in order to look at the *Comedy* through its internal 'isotopies', that is all the possible thematic paths which do not coincide with the literal arrangement of the Dantean journey, is the ultimate focus of this study.

In her rigorous essay *Il Fito del Discorso*, Bice Mortara Garavelli adopts a textual linguistics approach to study any given "text" (considered technically as the primary unit of any act of communication). From the very outset, though, the scholar broadens markedly the spectrum of her analysis:

Qualsiasi definizione di testo implica la nozione di coerenza, che è il requisito ineliminabile della testualità. La coerenza si manifesta nella coesione, sul livello lessico-grammaticale, e nella continuità, o connessione, delle strutture informative, sul livello dell’organizzazione tematica. (2)

After having explained the three fundamental concepts of consistency, cohesion and continuity (deemed necessary for any text to function effectively on any level), she devotes herself to an explanation of the concept that all the statements of a discourse rely, of necessity, on their "context", here understood as a reference to extratextual reality (13-27).
This analysis involves the difference between ‘con-text’ (external reality) and ‘co-text’ (what precedes and follows the portion of communication in question) as it has been codified by linguistic pragmatics. It is on this very co-textual level that the author scrutinizes the possibility of substitution and reiteration of the single elements of text (performed respectively by means of pronouns and the rhetorical figure of repetition and anaphora) and also the possibility of paraphrasing them (29-75, 77-91).

Central for our analysis is the section of the essay dealing with the thematic structure of the discourse and its continuity (93-123). Still more important is the concept of ‘semantic homogeneity’ which Mortara Garavelli treats at the beginning of the above mentioned section and which she assesses in terms of mutual accessibility of possible worlds (95), an issue we will address directly in the next section of this chapter. The idea of creating certain expectations in a reader (or listener), thus determining a given ‘possible world’ within the domain of an episode, is easily applicable to what we will soon define as Dantinean ‘parallel episodes’. The fact that a certain set of expectations is then ‘frustrated’ or ‘corrected’ by a new possible world delineated in a subsequent episode which takes up the preceding one shows unmistakably how the mechanism of repetition is used to have a ‘deeper dialogue’ with the reader. This dialogue, in turn, has to do mainly with self-exegetical purposes, is the space that the author reserves for himself to comment on his own poetical choices and his own convictions.

In a paragraph taken up with the concept of ‘thematic progression’ Mortara Garavelli notes how:

Assumere un elemento come dato, per apportare in relazione ad esso un’informazione nuova è ciò che si intende per tematizzare (o ‘topicalizzare’; da ‘topic’, argomento). Lo sviluppo tematico è dunque un concetto relazionale; gli elementi della relazione sono gli stessi che entrano in gioco
nella articolazione di un enunciato in TEMA/REMA, con una differenza di ambito, che a sua volta comporta altre differenze. (106-107)

Consequently, the scholar appropriates and reuses the definition of ‘thematic progression’ formulated in 1976 by a member of the Prague School, František Daneš as the “insieme delle relazioni tematiche in un testo, come l’ossatura del testo” (107). Moreover, she reiterates the interesting schemes elaborated by the Czech scholar. From our perspective the most interesting—given their broad potential application to the Comedy—are those explaining the thematization of a given “rema” when it is taken up at some distance from its previous occurrence:

\[
T_n = R_{n-1} \text{ (where } n \text{ is greater than 1)}
\]

and the reiteration of a theme at some remove from its previous occurrence:

\[
T_n = T_{n-1} \text{ (where } n \text{ is greater than 1)}
\]

 Might it not be possible to study the repetition of themes and situations (whether they are marked stylistically or not) in the Comedy as a series of thematizations or mere reiterations of themes within the domain of a vast macrotext? In the following section we will illustrate the ‘parallel episode’ technique and its implications while also showing the sources from which Dante might possibly have derived these literary devices.

2) **Dante and the ‘parallel’ episodes.**

We have used intentionally the plural ‘episodes’ since we believe that this category, formulated by Amilcare A. Iannucci to explain only the relationship between two episodes, can be fruitfully expanded to encompass larger clusters of passages.

In his *Forma ed Evento nella Divina Commedia*, Iannucci devotes an entire chapter

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5 This concept is very close to that of thematic meaning as it is defined by Geoffrey Leech in his book *Semantics* (22-24).
A utoesegesi Dantesca: la Tecnica dell’Episodio Parallelo (Inferno XV-Purgatorio XI)” to this topic. After having underlined the importance ascribed by Dante (in the Vita Nova) to the “ragionate cagioni”, that is, the prose commentaries of his poems, and to the “divisioni”, the groupings of poems arranged together because of their specific content, he goes on to examine Dante’s behavior in the Convivio. He concludes, further, that “Dante critico” does not disappear in the Comedy either (91-94). In this work, Dante turns to the parallel episode technique that Iannucci correctly attributes to the domain of biblical exegesis, quoting a passage from the De Monarchia in which Dante also makes use of it (92). The scholar also points out how the self-exegetic function of parallel episodes has always been neglected by interpreters:

[...] questo metodo interpretativo è stato applicato al poema con scarsa coscienza critica, non distinguendo abbastanza dal procedimento della costruzione contestuale per cui qualsiasi opera di una certa grandezza si autocommenta semplicemente creando la possibilità di una visione retrospettiva. Poche opere, però, trasformano il processo di costruzione contestuale in un consapevole atto di critica. (93)

One of the examples used by Iannucci to explain this technique is the pair of episodes concerning the spiritual destinies of Guido and Buonconte da Montefeltro in the afterlife:

L’episodio chiave è sempre il secondo [...]. L’episodio di Buonconte contemporaneamente rivela e capovolge la struttura di quello di Guido. Insomma, il secondo dei due episodi ci riporta al primo completandolo ed insieme chiarendo le intenzioni che spinsero il poeta a foggiarli. Nell’esempio di Guido e Buonconte da Montefeltro la tecnica mette in rilievo una serie di punti dottrinali: il mistero impenetrabile della grazia divina, i limiti miopi del giudizio umano, ed infine la necessità di un pentimento sincero se ci si vuole salvare. (94-95)

In sum, the fact that Guido has not been saved is even more surprising when we consider the parallel episode dimension established between Inf. 27 (where we meet Guido) and not Pur. 5 (where we see Buonconte) as we might expect, but instead Convivio 4.28.8
where Dante points to Guido as the leading example of a man aging wisely and virtuously. Indeed, Guido had returned to the Church and its teachings and is called by Dante: “Io nobilissimo nostro latino Guido Montefeltrano”.

The questions posed by Iannucci

Chi avrebbe mai pensato di trovare Buonconte tra coloro che si salvano e il padre tra i dannati? Ci si sarebbe aspettato esattamente l’opposto. Dopo tutto, Guido non era forse diventato un monaco francescano verso la fine della sua vita e suo figlio vissuto in peccato fino al momento della sua morte violenta a Campaldino? (95)

make us think, instinctively, of the concept of narrative ‘frames’ and the mutual accessibility of ‘possible worlds’ as they have been studied by Umberto Eco in his Lector in Fabula. In fact, the ‘ideal reader’ who sets out to read the Comedy with the Convivio already in mind would never expect Guido’s damnation. The concept defined by Eco as “previsione come prefigurazione di mondi possibili” (Lector 113-17) implies that the reader, as he begins to read the poem, has the idea that Guido da Montefeltro is considered by Dante as an example of wisdom in old age stored in the back of his mind. On the other hand, the idea that his son Buonconte had died in Campaldino might have induced anyone to think of possible damnation. The fact of being the very Guido da Montefeltro of whom Dante speaks in the Convivio, the fact of having aged wisely and virtuously and of having had a son (Buonconte) who died in Campaldino constitute a set of ‘properties’ which are, at the same time, “essenziali” and “S-necessarie” (Lector 135-44, 156-69). Still, the fact that, in order to be saved, it is necessary to repent sincerely is, in the same way, another property (which we can consider “S-necessaria” in the Comedy) not shared by Guido, as we can see clearly in Inf. 27. Therefore, there is “isomorfismo” (Lector 172) or accessibility between two possible worlds in which, respectively, Guido is saved or not saved. The fact remains that the ideal reader who knows the Convivio would never expect Guido’s damnation. This ‘surprise’ repeats
itself at the very moment that the ideal reader (along with Dante the pilgrim) discovers that Buonconte has been saved because he has repented in extremis during the battle of Campaldino. In the same way, the property of sincere repentance at the end of one’s life is at first excluded by the reader on the basis of Buonconte’s fame as a bloodthirsty soldier and then accepted because, even if unpredictable, it is absolutely compatible with the universal human condition of the character in question. It is safe to assume that both the ideal reader and Dante the pilgrim have ‘lived’ the portion of the Divine Comedy from Inf. 27 to Purg. 5 with the conviction that both Guido and Buonconte had been damned. It is also safe to assume that they have lived from Inf. 1 to Inf. 27 thinking that Guido’s soul had attained salvation unlike that of Buonconte. Likewise, to give but one further example on a specifically metaliterary level, the fact that Ulysses in Inf. 26 does not speak of any of his impieties and frauds for which he has been relegated to the bolgia dei consiglieri fraudolenti but narrates the facts of his last journey (a titanic attempt to reach the mountain of Purgatory forbidden by God and therefore doomed) comes as a great surprise for the reader. The author of the Comedy needs to treat this aspect of the tradition concerning Ulysses (derived from Servius) which had remained marginal for the very reason that this would allow him, through the poem, to establish a series of comparisons between Ulysses and Dante as travelers.  

Dante will emerge from the comparisons as the only true great traveler able (because of divine will) to overshadow the greatness of the Greek hero (just as Dante the poet and author of the Comedy will triumph over Virgil as character, poet and author of the Aeneid).  

Now it is worth turning our attention to another three cases which we can group together as good examples of ‘possible worlds’ which remain beyond the reader’s predictions

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6 See the chapter dedicated to Ulysses in Iannucci’s Forma ed Evento.
and, therefore, can be considered inaccessible. One of Dante's most compelling artistic aims in the *Comedy* is to emphasize as much as possible the mysteries of grace and predestination. Indeed, on one hand it is plausible that Buonconte found late repentance just as his father Guido had taken the vows insincerely. These actions can be read as properties which do not contrast with those we have defined as “essenziali” and “S-necessarie”. On the other hand, though, what reader would ever expect to find Cato—a pagan and even a suicide—as the guardian of Purgatory? After the exhaustive treatment of the destiny of the virtuous spirits of antiquity in Limbo, both the ideal reader and Dante the pilgrim know very well that salvation is untenable for an unbaptized pagan. Many explanations of the apparent conflict have been tentatively advanced. Still, we are convinced that the most satisfactory explanation is the one which centers on the importance ascribed to the mysterious action of the grace of God by Dante. This grace functions in a ‘possible world’ of its own, whose parameters and properties are far beyond our reach.

Virgil, himself a pagan, followed virtue as Cato did. He even created the possibility of salvation for others (Statius, for example). However, the greatness of the mystery of grace lies in this gray-zone beyond our comprehension. Here the mutual inaccessibility of worlds is underscored by the fact that, even sharing the same properties (“essenziali” and “S-necessarie”), one historical character (Cato) achieves salvation while the other (Virgil) does not. The same is true for the pagan emperor Trajan who, incredibly, is saved by the prayers of Pope Gregory. Trajan’s resurrection, made possible by Gregory’s intercession, enables him to believe in Christ and to be saved. Even if this scenario does not contradict the property of “necessity of faith for salvation”, it poses the serious problem of absolute lack of

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7 On this point it is especially helpful to examine Iannucci’s contribution in *Dante e la Bella Scola*. 
precedent (similar powers in another pope) and underscores the extraordinary nature of the situation.

The narration of the legend of Pope Gregory (*Purg.* 10) anticipates Dante’s meeting with the souls of Trajan himself and the Trojan warrior Rifeus (*Par.* 20). The two spirits are cast in the eyebrow of the mystic eagle. Even if Rifeus is called, in the second book of the *Aeneid*, “lustissimus unus qui fuit in Teucris et servantissimus aequi” (425-27), the fact that a pagan and secondary character of the *Aeneid* (whom Dante considers an historical figure) is set in Paradise by virtue of divine grace cannot but strike the attention of the reader and the pilgrim. Here, indeed, not even legendary explanations (like the intervention of a pope) are given:

Chi crederebbe giù nel mondo errante,
Che Rifeo Troiano in questo tondo
Fosse la quinta delle luci sante?
Ora conosce assai di quel che'l mondo
Veder non può della divina grazia,
Ben che sua vista non discerna il fondo. (67-72)

Even a superficial first reading of these three episodes allows us to ‘thematize’ them or, if we prefer, to arrange them within an isotopy (*Lector* 92-93). A second, more attentive, reading enables us, instead, to delineate (as we have tried to do) their self-exegetical and metaliterary dimension. Dante turns to this device in order to explain the sublimity of the grace of God. The necessity of going back to previous episodes and trying to establish connections among them (thinking of the poem as a whole) is, in itself, the most striking evidence of this *lato sensu* metaliterary dimension.

In light of this, it should be possible to read the *Comedy* through other narrative threads, such as those involving Dante’s own human experience. We will focus briefly on two of the most striking examples to show how substantial these isotopies are. The first is
that of the exile. During his journey, Dante receives many indications of his future exile from the souls he meets. Examining all of these episodes together, we see that all the aspects and implications of the theme are fully covered. We move from the bitter remarks of Farinata degli Uberti on the hostilities against his faction in Florence (Inf. 10) to the implicit explanation of it given by the anonymous Florentine suicide (Inf. 13). In the latter episode, the spirit recalls how the statue of Mars has been removed from Ponte Vecchio and how, ever since, the patron of the city has become St. John the Baptist. In Inf. 15 we witness a shift. Here, Brunetto Latini, Dante’s own mentor, will cast his own prophesy of Dante’s exile in a more personal and intimate frame, maintaining that the hostility against Dante originates from envy for his virtue. Finally, in Par. 15-17, the three cantos devoted to Dante’s ancestor Cacciaguida, the pilgrim will receive a detailed account of his exile, here cast as a way of atoning and also as an obstacle to be overcome by virtue of his poetic talent.

Next, we turn to the theme of ‘reflection on poetry’. In Inf. 5, Dante, through the sad story of Paolo and Francesca, underscores both the frailty of human nature and the limitations of chivalric literature. Indeed, Paolo and Francesca fall into perdition while reading on Lancelot. Dante’s personal experience will consist of a liberating progression from mere love poetry to the poema sacro. This is evident through the series of meetings with musicians and poets like Casella, Forese Donati, Guido Guinizelli, Arnauld Daniel, and Folchetto di Marsiglia. The sentimental and melancholy episode with the Florentine musician Casella (Purg. 2) shows how Dante considers his work as a love poet as something long past. Even if he asks Casella to sing his canzone, “Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona”, the poet is summoned abruptly by Virgil, who reminds him of his journey. Thus, on a metaliterary level, Dante indicates that the spiritual mandate of the Comedy’s poetry is far higher. The same contrast is revived when Dante meets Forese Donati (Purg. 24). Dante
overtly denies any importance to the exchange of poems (the so called tenzone) in which they had engaged, thus highlighting the importance and revolutionary nature of the dolce stil nuovo. In Purg. 26, among the souls of the repentant lustful, he finds the originator of the school, Guido Guinizelli, along with Arnauld Daniel. Nevertheless, Dante leaves them behind, and this—on a deeper level—also means that even that noble style of love poetry is insufficient for the production of a sacred poem and the complete fulfillment of the mission of the bard. Indeed, the account of Folchetto di Marsiglia’s dramatic change of life (abandoning his poetry to become a Cistercian monk [Par. 9]) shows clearly how, within the domain of Paradise, Provençal poetry is quoted only to show its insufficiency to grasp the divine. Before examining a pair of examples derived from Ariosto and Boccaccio and which show another possible aspect of the mechanism of repetition, it is important to recall, briefly, some of our remarks in chapter one. Just as Dante had treated the legends derived from Ovid, disassembling them into discrete portions and working on them separately in different episodes, here he does the same with themes connected to his own experience.

At any rate, it is possible to see how the repetition of a specific theme has an undeniable self-exegetical implication in any epic poem. We see this clearly in Ariosto’s Orlando Furioso where, in the two instances we will discuss, the inevitability of considering all the relevant precedents of a given episodes is patent. The first example concerns the implicit comparison between two sorties made by the Christians and the Saracens respectively. Obviously, the situation of a sortie is strictly related to the episode of Euralius and Nisus in the ninth book of the Aeneid. The first sortie is performed by Orlando, who even if has the advantage of catching the enemy asleep, does not have the ruthlessness needed to slaughter them:

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8 For this insight, I am indebted to Professor Antonio Franceschetti.
Dormono; e il conte uccider ne può assai:
Né però stringe Durlindana mai.(9.3.7-8)

Di tanto core è il generoso Orlando,
Che non degna ferir gente che dorma.(9.4.1-2)

The second sortie, on the other hand, is undertaken by two Saracens, Cloridano and Medoro. Obviously, given the reference to the Aeneid, we cannot be surprised to find that the two young warriors do not hesitate to massacre the Christians just as the Trojans, Eurialus and Nisus, had killed a number of Latins. Here, though, the poet, in addition to his intertextual purposes, manages to underscore a moral difference between the Christians and the Saracens, establishing these two points simultaneously. The reader is compelled by the striking similarity of the two situations to look back at Orlando’s truly chivalric behavior:

Come impasto leone in stalla piena,
Che lunga fame abbia smacato e asciutto,
Uccide, scanna, mangia, a strazio mena
L’infermo gregge in sua balia condotto;
Così il crudel pagan nel sonno svena
La nostra gente, e fa macel per tutto.
La spada di Medoro anco non ebe;
Ma si sdegna ferir l’ignobil plebe.(18.178.1-8)

The second occurrence focuses on the psychological description of Angelica’s character. Angelica does not embody any ideal of martial virtue, but, whether or not this implies a certain taint of misogyny on Ariosto’s part, she represents the overwhelming power of feminine beauty. Therefore, she is not capable of any act of courage unless she feel completely safe. Witnessing the duel between Rinaldo and Sacripante and the fierce exchange of blows, she is seized by fear and flees on horseback:

Quando vide la timida donzella
dal fiero colpo uscir tanta ruina,
per gran timor cangiò la faccia bella,
qual il reo ch’al supplicio s’avvicina; (2.11.1-4)
Volta il cavallo, e ne la selva folta  
lo caccia per un aspro e stretto calle (2.12.1-2)

By contrast, when she looks on as Orlando and Ferrau engage in a duel, she is completely confident because of the helm which renders her invisible:

S’incrudelisce e inaspra la battaglia,  
d’orrore in vista e di spavento piena.  
Ferrau, quando punge e quando taglia,  
né mena botta che non vada piena:  
ogni colpo d’Orlando o piastra o maglia  
e schioca e rompe et apre e a straccio mena.  
Angelica invisibil lor pon mente,  
sola a tanto spettacolo presente. (12.50.1-8)

Something similar is traceable even in a prose work like Boccaccio’s Decameron. As is well known, the storytellers of the first and ninth giornata are not forced to adhere rigidly to any theme that might be established by the king or the queen of the day. Consequently, the ninth giornata enjoys a special status, and, unavoidably, the narrators take up themes already treated in previous giornate, even introducing characters who have already appeared (for example, Calandrino, Bruno and Buffalmacco). Giuseppe Petronio, in his preface to the ninth day, is well aware of this particular feature of the work:

Da questa sua posizione strutturale deriveranno alcune caratteristiche salienti della nona giornata: in primo luogo, il suo carattere rapsodico e, in un certo senso, di ricapitolazione e rivaghegiamento delle prime otto giornate.[...] Non è senza ragione, perciò, se in questa giornata, e solo in questa, ricompiono personaggi incontrati già in altre: Calandrino e i suoi amici, maestro Simone e i soliti Bruno e Buffalmacco. (735-36)

Having discussed these questions, we must now turn our attention to the relevant precedents from which Dante might have drawn in devising his peculiar way of repeating and arranging themes. It is likely that Dante had two different traditions in mind. The first of these involved ancient epic poetry, and especially Ovid’s Metamorphoses, an issue we will
treat extensively in chapter three. The Roman poet, himself, had taken the technique of variation on a theme to unprecedented heights because—as we shall prove—this was a fundamental part of his juridical training. A lawyer, indeed, was asked to treat the infinite variants of a narrative plot in order to be able to plead any possible case.

The second tradition reaches back to the flourishing of Jewish biblical exegesis. In her The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages, Beryl Smalley discusses the exegetical procedure of testimonia (34). This consisted of grouping together several ‘parallel passages’ from scripture in order to explain a further passage. Manlio Simonetti, in Lettera e o Allegoria. Un Contributo alla Storia dell’Esegesi Patristica, gives a very detailed account of the historical background of these exegetical techniques. He examines the development of the midrash technique in the Greco-Judaic environment (10-13). The midrashim were deeply rooted in the tradition of the haggadic commentaries (related to religious issues, whereas the halakadic commentaries dealt with juridical matters) and consisted of a vast selection of passages in the form of an anthology. For instance, the midrash known as Bereshit Rabbah is an extensive commentary of the Pentateuch. It is divided into chapters (parashiyot), each of which has as a title the first verse of the passage to be explained. The explanation, naturally quite complex, consists of a plethora of heterogeneous material loosely grouped together. These are mainly anonymous prefatory passages, comments, other biblical excerpts and haggadic stories or commentaries. As Simonetti explains, the midrashim represent the blueprint for the testimonia, the technique implemented later in a Latin Christian context thanks to the Greco-Judaic mediation (21-22).

Returning to Ovid, though, it is necessary to note that, as far as the question of thematic variation is concerned, his influence completely overshadowed that of Virgil. Virgil
himself adopted the technique of repetition to some extent. However, as we are about to see, this repetition of themes and situations is cast in the rigid frame of a binary system. At any rate, since the feature also appears in Virgil’s Aeneid, it is safe to state that Dante’s ‘parallel episodes’ technique stemmed from both the biblical tradition and the combined reading of the most important (non-Greek) epic poems of the west.

Many scholars have tried to study the structure of the Aeneid and to find internal patterns of repetition. Perret and Pöschl, despite their many worthy contributions on the art of Virgil, fail to analyze the Aeneid from a narratological point of view. In his Virgil, Jacques Perret indicates a general chiastic structure revolving around book six and separating the first part of the poem (Aeneas’ odyssey) from the last six Italian books (Aeneas’ own Iliad). He considers the sixth book as a sommet, the emotional peak of Virgil’s poetry. In Victor Pöschl’s Die Dichtkunst Virgils, Bild und Symbol in der Äneis the Aeneid is divided into three sections, books 1-4, 5-8 and 9-12. The scholar talks about the category of darkness and light in Virgil’s poetry considering the first and last sections ‘dark’ and the middle one (5-8) ‘light’. As we can see, both scholars dwell on characteristics of the atmosphere and tone of Virgil’s Dichtung rather than looking at facts of narrative structure.

W. A. Camp’s articles “A Note on the Structure of the Aeneid” and “A Second Note on the Structure of the Aeneid” (published in 1954 and 1959, respectively) managed to set the issue on firmer ground. The scholar, starting from the generally accepted assumption that there is a marked difference between the Odyssean and Iliadic sections of the poem, singles out what he considers as the axis of the poem, namely lines 25-285 of book 7. Books 1-4 and

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9 This brief explanation does not deal with the issue in its entirety. An investigation of the general relationship between the Bible and the Comedy is to be found in Iannucci’s Forma ed Evento (83-114).
books 7-12 revolve around it and resemble each other because of the intervention of Iuno which opens them and because of the death of a secondary hero (Dido and Turnus) which closes them. Further, the scholar underlines the similarities between books 5 and 9 (Ascanius presented as Augustus' ancestor) and books 6 and 8, as they are the most 'Roman' of all. Even if this chiasic scheme may prove incomplete for a full assessment of the issue, it is still a major advance, relying as it does on the idea of similarity in topic.

The most important contribution on this question is, in our view, that presented by George Eckel Duckworth in his ambitious work, *Structural Patterns and Proportions in Virgil's Aeneid: a Study in Mathematical Composition*. The author, taking up R. S. Conway's insights, develops a convincing binary structure which encompasses all the twelve books considered discretely, from the point of view of the actions undertaken by the characters. R. S. Conway, in "Vergil's Creative Art", an article which appeared in 1931, had developed a substantially compatible binary scheme which grouped together different books of the *Aeneid* according to the narrative plot underlying each of them. In this arrangement, books 1 and 7 concern the arrival in a strange land (Carthage and Italy); 2 and 8 tell the stories of cities (the fall of Troy, the description of the site of the Rome to come); in books 3 and 9 the action is centered around Anchises and his grandson Ascanius; books 4 and 10 treat of inner and outer struggle for Aeneas (the sorrowful separation from Dido, the war with the Latins); books 5 and 9 end with deaths (Palinurus, Euraius and Nisus); finally, books 6 and 12 present Aeneas receiving and executing his mandate. Duckworth adopts the same fundamental scheme, emphasizing the way in which even-numbered books stand out in the reader's memory, while odd-numbered books tend to relieve narrative tension. He also notes how, from the point of view of the action, the couplets in which odd-numbered books can be
arranged (as in Conway, 1 and 7, 3 and 9, 5 and 11) are linked by similarities, while even-numbered books are connected by different and contrasting aspects of the same theme.

As we shall see in the following chapter, Ovid's use of repetition and variation is so methodically and systematically implemented that it forces us to consider the *Metamorphoses* as the fundamental reference for Dante's own development of the technique. Aeneas' trip was, in itself, a narrative plot capable of sustaining the weight of a long epic poem. Within this plot, situations may repeat themselves and be cleverly reworked by the poet, but this would not constitute the real backbone of the composition. On the other hand, the *Metamorphoses*, being as it is a huge inventory of legends, myths and moral paradigms transformed into joyful narration, was forced to rely on a mechanism of repetition sufficiently cogent to ensure cohesion and unity. The same thing, clearly, happens in the *Comedy* in which Dante the poet, by means of the trip undertaken by Dante the pilgrim (far less physical and far more fantastical than those of Ulysses and Aeneas), keeps together a vast catalogue of human vices and virtues which are, in fact, cast in the same Christian grid in each of the three canticles.

In the following chapter we shall show the manner in which Ovid's art, in its structural patterns of repetition (paralleling with surprising closeness the patterns at work in the *Bible* and in the *Midrashim*), is itself adapted and transformed by Dante in his masterpiece.
Chapter three

THE ‘PARALLEL EPISODES’ IN OVID’S \textit{METAMORPHOSES}.

Non formosus erat sed erat facundus Ulysses\textsuperscript{1}
\textit{Ars Amatoria} 2.123

Ille referre aliter saepe solebat idem\textsuperscript{2}
\textit{Ars Amatoria} 2.128

In his inspiring essay on Latin silver poetry, \textit{The Epic Successors of Vergil}, Philip Hardie emphasizes the fact that his own investigation of the major epic poems of the post-Augustan period is filtered through the readings of the same poems practiced in the Middle Ages and Renaissance periods by poets such as Vida, Spenser and Milton (xi-xii). It is my personal conviction that critical categories, which have proved useful in the study of later authors, and critical concepts, which have been created to assess their work better, can be usefully applied to earlier literary works.

In this chapter we shall examine two pivotal issues. The first is the somewhat lengthy history of scholarship concerning the alleged disunity of Ovid’s poetic narration. Our intention here is to show how the organizational problem of the epic matter in Ovid’s \textit{Metamorphoses} can be seen as the central issue for the study of his poetry, if for no other reason than that it has emerged forcefully in the writings of virtually every critic. We shall show how many critics have denied a principle of structural unity, how others have tried to find it in a ‘philosophical’ or ‘historical’ frame, and, finally, how some have proposed to see in the incessant variation of themes a metaliterary rendition of natural transformation. Recognizing the success of the last approach will require an understanding of the

\textsuperscript{1} “Ulysses was not handsome, but indeed he knew how to speak” (My translation).
\textsuperscript{2} “He used to tell the same story in so many different ways” (My translation).
shortcomings of the alternatives. Moreover, we shall make clear, given the poignancy of this issue, how Dante himself could not have avoided coming to terms with this feature of Ovid’s art.

In the second part of the chapter we shall study the interpretive model proposed by Brooks Otis. His ‘revolutionary’ work constitutes a watershed not only because of its exhaustiveness but also because the scholar recognizes in the organizational structure underlying the poem (and very accurately charted by the critic) the most refined, if not the highest, achievement of Ovid’s art.

1) A long-standing debate.

Much of the very debate over Ovid’s art throughout the centuries has resided in the evaluation of his nonchalant way of changing the topic of his narration, of juxtaposing stories which are dramatically different (in plot, symbolism, imagery, characterization) and of trying to confer unity to such an anomalous epic poem.

Illa vero frigida et puerilis est in scholis afectatio. ut ipse transitus efficat aliquam utique sententiam et huius velut praestigiae plausum petat, ut Ovidius lascivire in Metamorphosein solet, quem tamen excusare necessitas potest, res diversissimas in speciem unius corporis colligentem.³ (Institutio Oratoria 4.1.77)

This is Quintilian’s point of view on Ovid’s epic poem: the poet of Sulmona must be excused (excusare)—even if he indulges in exploiting sententiae to pass from one topic to another (transitus)—because the matter he is dealing with is very disparate (diversissima) and unlikely to be transformed into an homogeneous whole (species unius corporis). This passage has struck Karl Galinsky profoundly, and he has devoted an entire chapter of his

³ “It is notorious that in the schools of the rhetoricians there is that impersonal and infantile artificiality. The art of shifting from one topic to another there becomes the art of producing a gnomic sentence capable of granting the applause of the public. Similarly, Ovid pays his tribute to this style in the Metamorphoses even though he is excusable by necessity, for he tried to put together things completely unrelated to each other giving them the appearance of an organic unity” (My translation).
interesting book *Ovid's Metamorphoses. An Introduction to the Basic Aspects* to it. He investigates the concept of the 'semblance of a whole': the alleged Ovidian self-awareness in constructing a non-homogeneous poem. This work is indebted to some of Galinsky's insights, and—as we shall try to demonstrate—it is likely that this 'semblance of a whole' is nothing but a rendition (on a structural level) of what the concept of instability, embodied by the large number of continuous metamorphoses described in the masterpiece, suggests on a symbolic level (Galinsky 99-107).

Lascivus quidem in herois quoque Ovidius et nimium amator ingenii sui, laudandus tamen partibus.⁴ (Institutio Oratoria 10.1.88)
Ovidi Medea videot mihi ostendere quantum ille vir praestare potuerit si ingenio suo imperare quam indulgere maluisset.⁵ (Institutio Oratoria 10.1.98)

Here Quintilian praises Ovid in the strongest terms when it comes to the *partes*, the discrete sections or subdivisions of the poem, which show a clear internal consistency in terms of plot. It is when he puts the *partes* together that Quintilian becomes an unforgiving critic of Ovid's art. Whereas, if the poet remains in the rigidly defined field of tragedy, it is obvious that the outcome pleases the inflexible author of the *Institutio Oratoria*.

In so far as we can figure what poetical 'intention' or strategy lies behind Ovid's apparently untidy narration, we can also assess the importance of the particular kind of repetition represented by the variation technique. This might constitute that particular *decorum* and poetical achievement whose absolute originality Quintilian was incapable of comprehending.

In his article of 1907 “Studi Intorno alle Fonti e alla Composizione delle Metamorfosi di Ovidio”, Luigi Castiglioni, while denying Ovid’s poetic greatness, realizes that all the

⁴ "Ovid also is superabundant in his epic poem and sometimes he is even carried away by his own ingenuity; nevertheless, he is to be praised for the beauty of the sections that constitute his work" (My translation).
⁵ "It seems to me that Ovid's Medea shows very clearly how he could have attained a greater fame if only he had preferred to dominate more than to indulge in his poetic vein" (My translation).
various episodes of metamorphosis in his epic poem can be classified according to the scheme of an inventory. In his opinion, all the episodes are grouped together according to the major lines of a 'topical encyclopedia' delineated by the Alexandrine poets (15-21). Even if this judgment is somewhat dated, it is worth observing how useful this way of grouping together the topics can be. We shall however return to this later when dealing with the rhetorical background of Ovidian poetry.

Fourteen years later, Émile Ripert's work *Ovide, Poète de l'Amour, des Dieux et de l'Exil* shows for the first time a deep interest in the idea that Ovid was an artist capable of producing works of art which, in turn, have art as an object (111-129). For him, Ovid was a true Alexandrine master of poetry (93-94). Such an insight reminds us of Ovid's ability to reflect on his own poetical activity (as we see, for instance, in the *Tristia*). This must have made him even more appealing in Dante's eyes. Indeed, Dante does the same in the *Vita Nova* and in the *Convivio*.

With his *Einleitung zu Ovid*, published in 1933, Edgar Martini is the first scholar to underscore seriously the importance of Ovid's rhetorical background (1-10, 34, 75-78) and its impact on his art. He also recognizes Ovid's bravura in the delineation of his characters as emerging directly from his rhetorical training.

Twelve years later Hermann Fränkel published his internationally renowned study *Ovid: a Poet between two Worlds*. This exceptionally profound work opened up new critical horizons on the *Metamorphoses*. There are two principal advances in this work: first, a deep intuition of the important role played by the narrative elements of the fable genre (89-90); secondly, substantial attention to the symbolism exploited by Ovid to attain his various poetic goals (72-79). This puts us in mind of the later accomplishments of cultural anthropology. At any rate, Hermann Fränkel is especially right when he maintains that
Ovid’s only religion is the “religion of art” (90-93).

Another important step towards a more modern critical approach was made by Scevola Mariotti who, in a masterly article which appeared in 1957 (“La Carriera Poetica di Ovidio”), took up again the idea of an unreal and fantastic atmosphere in the *Metamorphoses* but also introduced the concept of “unity of conception” (“unità di concezione”) considering the poem as something internally coherent and organic (626).

The decisive impulse to a serious re-assessment of the problem of rhetoric’s influence on Ovid’s epic poem came from a contribution of Rosa Lamacchia released in 1956 (“Varianti d’Autore nelle Metamorfosi d’Ovidio”). The scholar deals mostly with the definition of authorial variants in the tradition of the manuscripts. Her contribution, though, proves especially important because of some incidental statements concerning issues of style and structure and involving specific rhetorical tools. Lamacchia underlines the Ovidian taste for rhetorical climax, the accurate development of some psychological characters and—above all—the technique of repetition and ‘cross-allusion’. Lamacchia’s contribution—even if she does not go so far as to consider rhetoric a powerful ‘engine’ of Ovidian inspiration—has surely led to a renewed interest in the rhetorical substance of Ovid’s poetry. This interest is the main focus of two important studies published two years later in the prestigious collection of essays *Ovidiana* edited by Niculae Herescu for the celebration of two thousand years after the birth of the poet in 1958.

Francesca Arnaldi’s article (*La “Retorica” nella Poesia di Ovidio*) can be considered a watershed since the author establishes an articulate connection between Ovid as a poet and the world of rhetoric during the delicate transition from Augustus to Caligula. Arnaldi maintains that all the great orators of the time were in desperate need for new literary shapes and genres to convey their new sensibility (Herescu 23). Most importantly, Arnaldi highlights
the necessity of looking carefully at a source like the anthology of Seneca the Elder to understand Ovid’s rhetorical background. In fact, this background should be considered not a hindrance to but a catalyst for poetic creation (26-29). The author of the article grasps admirably the very nature of this potential, namely the concept of thematic repetition. It was a necessity for the student of rhetoric to exploit thoroughly and vary exhaustively all the topics of his exercises and declamations. Moreover, the high level of skill achieved by the rhetoricians in the depiction of characters (30) is a possible explanation of the refined psychological art of the *Metamorphoses*. Nonetheless, it may be argued that the juridical needs that gave rise to such a classification of possible psychological situations could even constitute an obstacle to the delineation of a psychological character in the absence of such a legal frame:

Direi, anzi, che una linea evolutiva dell’arte di Ovidio si può delineare in questo senso, nella sua progressiva capacità di liberarsi da quella astrattezza, creando il personaggio. Per figure come quelle di Biblide o di Mirra (Met. 9.394 sgg. e 10.220 sgg.), l’esperienza di Ovidio declamatore in scuole, nelle quali si andava audacemente al di là del tema di Fedra, immaginando un padre che al figlio malato, sino a morirne, d’amore per la matrigna, cedeva la moglie, […] era stata senza dubbio preziosa. Ma il distacco dalle Heroides è evidente. (Herescu 30)

According to Arnaldi the only thing left at the end of this process of liberation from the abstraction of the juridical frames is the plot of the story functioning itself as an informing principle of a new story which has to be enriched, so to speak, with the ἔθοποιια—the description of a psychological character (as the one found in the genre of tragedy). We shall return to this aspect soon with a closer reading of all the meaningful passages concerning Ovid which are contained in the famous anthology.

Thomas Farrant Higham, instead, is convinced that the process can be turned upside down: it is rhetoric that at some point has begun to borrow materials from the poetical
tradition and not the opposite: "Rhetoric did not create the sententiae: it merely created a 
vogue. Nor did it create that italum acutum which infuses the native drama and satire of the 
Romans and gives to certain sententiae their pungency" (Herescu 38). Higham insists on the 
idea that even good criteria adopted to assess Ovid’s technique as dependent on rhetoric (for 
example the one followed by Carl Brück in cataloguing the metamorphoses according to 
different kinds of ἐκφρασις technique [it reminds us of Castiglioni’s classification]) have to 
take into consideration that poetry has its own long tradition. As an example, the author of 
the article points out that the practice of ἐξεργασία, namely the rhetorical exercise of 
dilating and expanding a given theme or of recasting someone’s thought differently, has to be 
traced also in the intertextual practice of the allusive art:

[...] we shall find that Ovid in his picture of the flood was concerned to 
 improve upon Horace, C. i. 2. 7-12, and so was rhetorical twice over, 
practising the school-exercise of ἐξεργασία as well as that of ἐκφρασις or 
descriptio. In fact paraphrasis or ἐξεργασία are made to account for every 
item in the Amores, the Heroides, and the Metamorphoses for which any 
’source’ Greek or Roman, can plausibly be traced. 
Such studies are not valueless—at any rate—to the history of education. 
Unfortunately scholars bemused by them sometimes forget that the eye for 
significant detail and the flair for a brief phrase are a gift of nature to poets. 
(Herescu 40).

We totally disagree with this ‘romantic’ rebuttal of rhetoric as an “engine” of poetry 
for two reasons: first, the importance of rhetoric goes far beyond the taste for sententiae or 
variationes; second, in the life of any Roman citizen learning rhetoric used to come long 
before the practice of poetry chronologically. This work, however, does owe much to 
Higham’s clear description of the importance of the above mentioned rhetorical tools at the 
intratextual level: “It is true that efforts ‘to surpass oneself’ in successive variations on a 
single theme were an exercise in paraphrasis recognised at any rate by Quintilian and

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6 In his work of 1909 De Ovidio Scholasticarum Declamationum Imitatore.
possibly already prescribed in Ovid’s boyhood. If so, it may well be that ‘a natural tendency’ in Ovid ‘was exaggerated’ by such schooling.” (Herescu 41). Understanding the importance of Ovid’s autobiographical reflections and the mature considerations on his poetic work which are contained in the poems of the exile, Higham—even if still denying the substantial importance of rhetoric in Ovid’s life—has the profound intuition of interpreting the rhetorical frame as an element which gives Ovid’s poems internal coherence and force of structure. Addressing his friend Salanus, tutor in oratory of the young and promising Germanicus, Ovid writes in the *Epistulae ex Ponto* (2.5.63-72):

Tu quoque Pieridum studio, studiose teneris,  
ingeniisque faves, ingeniöse meo.  
Distat opus nostrurn. sed fontibus exit ab isdem:  
Artis et ingenuae cultor uterque sumus.  
†...†  
sed tamen ambobus debet inesse calor:  
uteque meis numeris tua dat facundia nervos,  
sic venit a nobis in tua verba nitor.  
lure igitur studio confinia carmina vestro  
Et commilitii sacra tuenda putas.  

Obviously, the word *nitor* has to do with style and with the elegance of the single word—appropriately chosen from many others—or with other *figurae verborum*, whereas the expression *tua facundia dat nervos* undoubtedly regards the broader level of composition, structure and planning of a text. Higham’s interpretation is excellent:

Ovid, long familiar with every kind of poetry, was keenly aware of the recognised conventions separating one kind from another and not less aware of the ‘*studii foedera*’ separating orator from poet. He acknowledges that both need ardour of fire (*calor*); but orator must look to poet for polished brilliance

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"...You also, dedicated one, have been charmed by the consuetude with the Muses. You are brilliant yourself and, indeed, you encourage my own talent to flourish. Our skills are different from each other, and yet they spring from the same source. Indeed, we both cultivate our devotion for human arts. [†...†] However, each of us needs a certain amount of intensity: as my metrical compositions receive a strong frame from the articulation of your delivery, so your words are enriched by my flamboyance. Appropriately, therefore, you maintain that my poetry is akin to your rhetorical activity and urge that the sacredness originating from these two similar kinds of intellectual war be preserved” (My translation).
of expression (nitor) and poet to orator for sinews, nervi, a word which seems in the context to mean substance or structure. (Herescu 44)

In order to show examples of both meanings of the word nervi—i.e. 'substance' and 'structure'—Higham quotes respectively Quintilian (Inst. Or. 8.Praef.18) and Cicero (De Or. 3.106). Considering his awareness of the 'manifesto' delineated by Ovid in the passage already quoted, one wonders how he can deny rhetoric a major role in the very process of poetic creation.

Seneca the Elder has left us a precious account of what the rhetorical education of the young Romans consisted in his Suasoriae and Controversiae, a vast selection of law-cases argued as an exercise by rhetoric students. As it dealt with extreme situations and fictitious characters, this genre of forensic eloquence has been considered to have given rise to the concept of equity, a concept still defined in modern Italian civil law textbooks as "actual justice in a concrete situation". This vague definition indicates that, within the context of a highly codified law such as the Italian one, it is sometimes better to look at all the specific features of a case, which features cannot be foreseen in a code. Therefore, by virtue of accurate evaluation of all the factual circumstances and psychological motivations which exert an influence on an illegal behaviour, it should be possible for a judge to decide a case in a far more just fashion than by assessing it only on the basis of a code. Although this idea of 'equity' is substantially different from the concept of justice which was established in Roman rhetoric schools, it is evident that pleading a case both in favour of or against one party provided the students with a broader view on human psychology, on the multiplicity of motives for the same action and on the difficult quest for objective truth. The case to be argued was summarized and presented in a way reminiscent of the plot of a movie, or the summary of a script:

Undoubtedly such a situation is remote from reality, yet—at least up to the unlikely ‘resurrection’ (recreata) of the woman—it bears a striking resemblance with the episode of Ceyx and Alcyone (Met. 11.684-748), to which we shall return later. By means of these partitions into minor narrative units, it was easy to group together stories which had common traits and, in the same way, to think of any myth or legend in terms of a ‘human plot’. This was an important part of Ovid’s training, and, further, his ability and predilection for psychological suasoriae was no secret in antiquity. Seneca the Elder recalls that Ovid himself was asked to declaim the controversia which we have mentioned before and his problem was his style, closer to poetry than to eloquence:


Declamabat autem Naso raro controversias et non nisi ethical; libentius dicebat suasorias: molesta illi erat omnis argumentatio.  

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8 “The pledge taken by husband and wife. A husband and wife promised that, if anything should happen to one of the two, the other would die as well. The husband departed and reached a land abroad. He sent a messenger to his wife to announce her that he had died. The wife threw herself from the top of a cliff. After being resuscitated, she is asked by her father to abandon her husband; she refuses and, as a consequence, she is disinherited” (My translation).

9 “I recall that Ovid declaimed this controversia under the guidance of the rhetorician Arellius Fuscus, when he was one of the youths who attended his school; indeed, he admired Latro, even though he was keen on a different rhetorical style. He was endowed with a well structured, proper and enjoyable talent. However, his style of speech was nothing but poetry disguised as prose” (My translation).

10 At any rate, Ovid declaimed controversiae very rarely and, when he did, they contained depiction of characters; he liked suasoriae better for he sincerely disliked argumentation” (My translation).
Along with the flourishing of the study of rhetoric in the second phase\textsuperscript{11} of the Augustan reign, we witness an increasing interest in the psychology of human nature and in the narration of adventures. Indeed, if we give some credit to what Seneca the elder wrote, namely that Ovid had almost no interest in arguing cases, we are forced to assume that what this training afforded him was the ability to describe emotional turmoil and to see myths and legends as potential ‘plots’ to be extensively exploited. The vividness and emotional intensity of his narration befit appropriately the bare narrative scheme granted by a consumed rhetorical training: every divine or human story could be easily summarized in terms of plot and thus expanded, varied and exploited through an unprecedented treatment. Moreover, stories which are different when considered from the point of view of setting, chronology and ‘historical’ or mythical background, can be easily perceived as similar in terms of plots and psychological characterization.

Jackson Knight, in his article “Ovid’s Metre and Rhythm” (Herescu 106-120), wonderfully demonstrates that the innovative swiftness particular to Ovid’s poetry, its characteristic speed and freshness, is largely due to metrical reasons (namely the low number of elisions, the overwhelming number of dactyls, the tendency to allow a coincidence between metrical and tonic accent, the presence of rhymes and assonance). The result of this new versification is “the galloping rapidity” (112) of Ovidian hexameters which “leaves no time for awe” (112)\textsuperscript{12}. A feature of Ovidian poetry which is particularly important from our

\textsuperscript{11} Otto Seel has accurately treated this point (280-85), defending the thesis that there are two distinct periods of the Augustan era as far as the study of rhetoric is concerned. Seel’s contribution is the text of his lecture in Latin given on the occasion of the conference held in Sulmona in 1958, “De Ovidii Indole, Arte, Tempore”. The proceedings were published under the title \textit{Atti del Convegno Internazionale Ovidiano}.

\textsuperscript{12} Given the agile nature of his cantos it is understandable how much Dante must have liked Ovid’s rapidity. In the essay “Gli Indistinti Confini”, an elegant foreword to the edition of Ovid’s \textit{Metamorphoses} published by Piero Bernardini Marzolla, Italo Calvino writes: “Le \textit{Metamorfosi} sono il poema della rapidità: tutto deve succedersi a ritmo serrato, imporsi all’immaginazione, ogni immagine deve sovrapporsi a un’altra immagine, acquistare evidenza, dileguare. È il principio del cinematografo: ogni verso come ogni fotogramma dev’essere pieno di stimoli visuali in movimento. L’\textit{horror vacui} domina sia lo spazio che il tempo. Per pagine e pagine tutti i verbi sono al presente, tutto avviene sotto i nostri occhi, ogni distanza è negata” (xii).
perspective, especially since Dante might have noticed it as an innovative trait (obviously in comparison with Virgilian style), is the presence of rhyme:

Another form of repetition is of course rhyme and assonance. On this question it is hard, but essential, to write shortly, and indeed something has been said already, in reference to Ovid’s hexameter verse. In all, or nearly all, Latin verse-forms, rhymes are likely if only because adjectives qualifying nouns very often share the same termination. Such rhymes are frequent in Ovid’s hexameter and elegiac poetry. So are others, more easily avoided: a sign that Ovid liked rhyme. Most usual is the recurrence at the end of a verse of a syllable which occurred at the end of the first part, at a caesura. (Herescu 118)

We shall now focus on four more articles from Ovidiana. Two of them, those by Pierre Grimal and L.P. Wilkinson, deal with the long debated problem of unity and structure in the Metamorphoses, while the other two have more to do with the quest for a philosophical substratum of the poem, a perspective which can also be considered relevant for the assessment of a thematic unity.

Pierre Grimal’s contribution (“La Chronologie Légendaire dans les Metamorphoses d’Ovide”), after a brief discussion of Lafaye’s insights on the issue, tries to establish the ‘chronological’ frame of Ovid’s poem. The author is acutely aware of the peculiar mixture of mythical, epic and also historical patterns used by Ovid, but nevertheless he does not abandon the project of a ‘chronological taxonomy’ of the events embraced in the fifteen books of the poem. What draws the author to such an arrangement of the tales is the conviction that the mentality of a Roman poet was attuned to the frames of the Greek mythography (“l’érudition des Romains en cette matière ne le cédait en rien à celle des ‘spécialistes alexandrins’, don’t ils etaient élèves” [Herescu 251]). Even in an age of relativism and religious disbelief it might prove appealing to accept those which “constituaien de véritables données historiques” (255) and to allude to the Evhemenistic potential of some legends (Herescu 247). Grimal is convinced that this ‘legendary chronology’ is arranged into ‘main’ and ‘secondary’ patterns:
A la lecture du poème, on remarque un certain nombre de “point fixes” par rapport auxquels s’ordonnent les légendes. Mais, là, il convient de réaffirmer la distinction déjà établie (en un autre sens, toutefois) par Klimmer, entre les “récits principaux” (Hauptsage) et les “récits secondaires” (Nebensage). (Herescu 249)

This scheme, far from being too rigid, as some critics closer in time to us may argue, is absolutely compatible with the approach that we consider the best: Brooks Otis’ interpretation and subdivision of the *Metamorphoses*. As we shall see, one perspective does not exclude the other. A mythical, epic and possibly historical pattern can legitimately coexist with a specific (mainly symmetrical) plot-arrangement of the tales. Nor is this in conflict with a philosophical frame, concerning the first and last book of the poem, as we shall find out dealing with the articles of Luigi Alfonsi and Crahay/Hubaux. Grimal is truly convincing when he explains how Ovid solved the problem of putting together the different traditions (253) of different regions and of matching the deeds of heroes belonging to generations which could hardly be taken as contemporary (“Ovide […] abandonne résolument le détail des filiations et commence par établir concordances nouvelles entre les différents cycles” [255]). Grimal explains all the difficulties faced by Ovid in reconciling different sources (some of which were deliberately altered) and in trying to depict the obscure periods prior to the war of Troy (about which the tradition was particularly disorganized). Ovid is successful in the difficult attempt of giving his poem a recognizable succession “préoccupé de donner un tableau d’ensemble du monde “héroïque” sans rompre la continuité d’un récit essentiellement chronologique” (Herescu 257).

Also L.P. Wilkinson’s article “The World of the Metamorphoses” is close—at least in his initial statements—to Otis’ perspectives. We must say that the article constitutes a revision of his famous book *Ovid Recalled*, where the author was much less inclined to acknowledge unity in the poem. Quoting an old article of Otis’, Wilkinson maintains that
Ovid was drawn to his innovative design of the epic poem not only by political reasons (he had to “sober up” after the Ars Amatoria) but also by psychological ones, namely the challenge presented by the large bulk of myths and legends he had to deal with. In writing the Metamorphoses his goal was evidently to show his bravura in “the weaving of the pattern of association and sequence, now in high now in low relief, and the contriving of infinite variety” (Herescu 233). Wilkinson’s views on Ovid’s poetical arrangement of the mythological and epic matter are decisive to our analysis. They allow us to go further in the research investigating the essence of his technique of composition as far as this ‘sequence pattern’ is concerned. In fact, even though scholars such as Otis, Galinsky and Wilkinson himself have shown sound awareness of this dimension of Ovidian poetry, this aspect of a possible literary and narratological analysis (the investigation of the sequence pattern) has been completely neglected so far. At the beginning of the article the scholar recalls some of the theories on the arrangement of the Metamorphoses. Marjorie Crump’s statements concerning the nature of the poem as a work based on the epyllion construction are revealing of the kind of mentality which has prevented Ovidian studies from progressing. In her book The Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid she clearly states that “the poem is a collection of tales told for their own sake and fitted into a purely conventional framework” (200) and that the stories “might indeed have been published as a collection of unconnected epyllia without any loss of interest” (203). Needless to say, her late abridgment that “though the reader might not realize it, the charm and variety of the poem depends very largely on its careful and elaborate construction” (215) still does not help much to assess the question better. Denying a decisive importance to the arrangement of the tales is like saying that dispositio plays no role in Petrarch’s Canzoniere and that his sonetti and canzoni can be read separately without any significant loss.
After having recalled the meaningful attempt of Pherecides of Leros (fifth century B.C.) to write a long prose work on Greek myth and legend in which the chronological arrangement was decisive, and after also having underlined the Alexandrine origin of linking stories together by association in narrative, Wilkinson writes some superb pages about this peculiar Ovidian technique of association. The scholar has a great intuition in pointing out that Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* might be considered the first conscious combination of these two features (genealogy and linking together epyllia of different kinds) and, more importantly, that this was a Latin attempt (Herescu 243-44). Not only does he duly recognize that “Inconsistencies are remarkably few, even for a work of epic proportions which claimed to be unrevised: the only startling case is that of Hercules, who dies in Book IX but is alive to sack Troy in Book XI.” (Herescu 234), but Wilkinson also grasps the ‘tonal’ unity of the poem thereby achieved: “the poet devotes all his ingenuity to making us feel that this is a real, coherent world, in which there is interaction between events that had generally been thought of in isolation” (Herescu 234). The author of the article is also successful in delineating a possible taxonomy of all these techniques of association implemented in Ovidian story telling. Without being systematic, Wilkinson gives meaningful *specimina* of this art of switching from a tale to another. The shift may happen because of the insertion of a particular tale into the frame of another tale, because of a ‘flashback’, a chronological explanation, a lineage connection, the adjacency of two places in which two different heroes operate or even a deliberate distortion of myth operated by the poet. What is really innovative is the fact that Wilkinson understands that behind the flight of many gods and heroes lies an important principle:

With panoramic imagination unusual before the evolution of modern maps, let alone the advent of flying, Ovid invites us to survey this world from above. [...] From time to time we accompany gods or heroes on their flights: Minerva departs from Seriphus, and leaving Cynthus and Gyarus behind her on the
right, takes the shortest way over the sea to Thebes and Helicon (5.251-54); and Medea makes two spectacular, and closely charted, tours in her dragon-chariot (7.222-33; 351-92). And these flights help to keep the Ovidian world-picture together. (Herescu 236)

This close ‘charting’ of the flights is masterfully explained and documented along with the very possibility of imagining such trajectories and routes: “Geography was also waking up at this time, providing a conception of the scenes in which the myths were enacted. It was one thing to use itineraries, and to read information as in a guidebook, but quite another to visualise the orbis terrarum” (Herescu 242).13 It is hardly necessary to state what a big change this implies if we compare Ovid’s ‘modern and revolutionary’ use of flight to the more standardized scheme underlying Aeneas’ wanderings which is mainly derived from the coast-description of the portolani.

We shall conclude our survey on the articles contained in Ovidiana with a quick glance at the only two which deal with the alleged problem of a ‘philosophical frame’. It is evident that such a frame, if there is one to be found, could be seen as another important factor of conceptual unity. Luigi Alfonsi is a convinced supporter of this approach. In his article L’Inquadramento Filosofico delle Metamorfosi (Herescu 265-72) he goes so far as to maintain that this philosophical ‘backbone’ is far more important than the mythological or epic frame itself. The first and last book of the poem should be considered as the initial and final stages, respectively, of the amazing progress achieved by mankind, destined to culminate in the “armonia dell’impero augusto, unica certezza fra tante realtà periture” (272). According to Alfonsi’s view, this philosophical substratum does contain elements

13 Ovid was probably impressed by Agrippa’s map on the walls of the Porticus Vipsania, the porch completed by Augustus between 7 and 2 B.C. On the revolutionary impact of this geographical work and its similarity with contemporary maps based on conical projection (and its difference from the descriptions of coastlines—portolani—and itinerary maps), see Claude Nicolet’s L’Inventaire du Monde: Géographie et Politique aux Origines de l’Empire Romain.
derived from the doctrines of Empedocles and Democritus, but its originality is due above all
to a synthesis of stoic elements already implemented by Posidonius of Apamea. That such a
philosophical frame contributes to unity—or to a semblance of unity—is an undeniable fact,
but ascribing any kind of moral engagement to Ovid’s poetry (“il poeta ha fatto delle forme
mutate la storia del cosmo nella sua realtà attuale [...] ne ha enunciata la legge ed il destino
[...] deducendone impegni morali per l’uomo di tutti i tempi, ed auspici per l’impero di
Roma” [Herescu 266]) seems to be an unsustainable overstatement. But, whatever flaws such
a view may have, it is still evident that the arrangement of myths and legends culminating in
the speech of Pythagoras (and in the glory of Caesar and Augustus) displays an idea of
progression and conquest, the idea of a final point at which the organization of both fictional
narration and actual events naturally aims.

Indeed, Crahay and Hubaux, in their article Sous le Masque de Pythagore (Herescu
283-300), deny any depth to Ovid’s philosophical knowledge or conviction, as this is the
result of a process of amalgamation of different sources, a mere compilation of unrelated
materials (284-85). The two authors try to find a different link between this philosophical
frame and the poem as a whole. The suggestive (though not entirely convincing) explanation
is that Numa’s meeting with Pythagoras might constitute an anticipation of Augustus’ own
ascension to the helm of the empire since Numas is Augustus’ own ‘figural’ counterpart
(295-300). Pythagorean doctrines could be seen as a ‘mask’ behind which the poet pays his
devotion to Augustus.

An interesting and possibly conclusive solution to the problem may come from an
attentive reading of both an article by Douglas Little published in 1970 (The Speech of
Pythagoras in Metamorphoses 15 and the Structure of the Metamorphoses) and Galinsky’s
book Ovid’s Metamorphoses to which we have already referred.
Douglas Little admits (quoting for this purpose an illuminating passage from Edward Fränkel) that at first glance any reader "cannot help correlating the sermon (i.e. the speech of Pythagoras) with the subject of the Metamorphoses" (345). Nevertheless, he is entirely right in recognizing that "there was a gap between philosophy and mythology, between truth and fiction, and Ovid's intelligence, eminently sane and not prone to illusions, was well aware of it" (347). Invoking the poet's own reflections on his work (Tristia 2.63-64: 4.7.11-20) as evidence for his argument, Little states that it seems "inherently unlikely that the attempt which critics have made to give this material coherence and a deeper significance by inviting it to be examined against the yard-stick of philosophica fides would achieve convincing results" (349). The author accurately investigates the 'philosophical disbelief' exhibited by Ovid himself in many stories involving transformations as well as in the double explanation (mythical and 'scientific') of some natural phenomena (350-55). Therefore, he comes to the conclusion that "Ovid's material in the Pythagoras digression, and its treatment of it, are in fact closer to Pliny's work in the Naturalis Historia than to his own in Books 1-14 of the Metamorphoses" (357). Little thus convincingly denies that "Ovid's Pythagoras is there to establish a rational basis for mythology"(358) and points out "the inherent conflict between the prevalent unhesitating avowal of the mythological in the body of the work and the rational scepticism of Pythagoras" (359). Unfortunately, Little does not go any further, and his answer to the unavoidable question "why does the correspondence between myth and philosophy remain so unsatisfactory and so unconvincing? The answer must be surely [...] that he regarded it as a matter of indifference" (360), seems a little simplistic. Even if he comprehends the essence of this bizarre juxtaposition of a continuum carmen and a philosophical speech, the author does not even attempt to look at the problem from a different perspective. He simply restates the old rule of Ovid's alleged indifference to
consistence and unity (360) and the *petitio principii* that since “the poet did not take it very seriously, [...] neither should we” (360).

Karl Galinsky goes far beyond the handy but unfounded presupposition of an alleged “indifference to consistence and unity” on Ovid’s part, evaluating the two elements of mythological poetry (the first 14 books) and philosophical explanation (the long speech of Pythagoras in book 15) from a narratological and metalevelary perspective. In this fruitful attempt, the correct consideration of rhetoric as one of the most important informing principles of Ovid’s art plays a decisive role. Galinsky, in his enlightening chapter on *Unity and Coherence* grasps this specific dimension of Ovid’s poetry. It is not difficult to understand that for such a cultivated and sophisticated author like Ovid the very arrangement of the parts of a poem might serve as a means of self-exegesis too. This should come as no surprise with an author who devoted so many lines to criticizing his own work and who, according to Quintilian, could also consciously indulge in what he knew might be considered “overwriting.” The idea is that, since Pythagoras refers to mythological figures and events which have been treated earlier in the poem, the author (i.e. Ovid, vs. Pythagoras) “invites comparison with his own, vastly more interesting and dramatic treatment of them in contexts that had little, if anything, to do with metamorphosis” (104-105). Galinsky’s analysis is particularly poignant when, after having stated that, following such procedure, Ovid tries to “hold the reader’s attention by being unpredictable” (106), he summarizes his whole theory:

In sum, the principal purpose of the discourse of Pythagoras, as of several other episodes, is that it serves Ovid to comment on his own literary aims in the poem. It is a massive reminder on Ovid’s part of what would have been the inevitable result if he had singlemindedly concentrated on metamorphosis as an actual subject, or, for that matter, on any other single subject. The content determines the form as it does, in exactly the opposite way, in Ovid’s

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14 As we read in Seneca the Elder (*Controversiae* 2.2.12) Ovid was once asked by his friends to allow them to remove three lines of their choice from the poet’s work. He, in return, wanted to reserve three lines which should not be deleted. Ovid won, in the end. Indeed, he had chosen the same lines that his friends wanted to be removed.
Metamorphoses. The hallmark of Pythagoras’ discourse is its strict, formal organization. It follows, as has been pointed out, the rules of rhetorical composition but, more importantly, it is a regression to the inartistic arrangement of the catalog poem. [...] The Pythagoras episode serves Ovid to demonstrate in how different a manner from his own he could have treated the subjects of metamorphosis and myth. After suffering through Pythagoras’ boring disquisition we can only be grateful to Ovid that he did not do so and that his own spirit drove him to produce mutatas formas. (106-107).

This explanation is far more appropriate. In fact, both Ovid’s self-conscious art and his extremely refined technique of composition have to be taken into consideration when assessing apparent problems of inconsistency or disunity.

Before treating extensively Otis’ views as well as other critics’ insights, we shall dwell briefly on the works of four authors, namely Heinze, Wilkinson, Arnaldi and D’Elia. Although their critical categories are not strictly related to each other, they deserve special attention for the simple reason that in the course of our research we will find the ‘theoretical tools’ introduced by these critics very useful.

In his famous Ovids Elegische Erzählung, published in 1919, Richard Heinze, using a rather rigid theory of genres as a springboard, examines a series of myths which have been treated by Ovid in both the Fasti and the Metamorphoses. The author discusses attentively all the differences in poetic tone which are to be found in the two poems. Investigating episodes such as Proserpina’s rape, the war between Romans and Sabines, the apotheosis of Romulus and the story of Callistus, Heinze comes up with a convincing distinction between the more solemn, objective and impetuous style of the Metamorphoses and the more delicate, tenuous and almost familiar atmosphere of the Fasti, in which the subjectivity of the narrator is more apparent. Even if this detailed distinction between elegy and epic poetry is not the main purpose of this work, we shall quote an interesting passage from Heinze’s book.

Wir dürfen nach dem allen zusammenfassenden sagen: Ovid hat in den beiden Redaktionen seiner Geschichte Beispiele zweier Typen der poetischen
Erzählung, offenbar mit vollem Bewusstein, einander gegenüber gestellt. In der Metamorphosenerzählung herrschen starke aktive Affekte, jähe liebe und jähre Zorn, in der Fastenerzählung weichere Empfindungen, schmerzliche Klage und Mitleid. In den Metamorphosen ist die göttliche Majestät der Personen gefliessentlich gesteigert; in den Fasten wird die Gottheit vermenschlicht. Die Schilderung der Metamorphosen bevorzugt das Grandiose, die der Fasten das idyllisch Anheimelnde. Der Stil der Erzählung wahrts in den Metamorphosen eine gewisse feierliche Würde; der den Fasten ist lebendiger, beweglicher; jener hält streng fest an der Objektivität der Rhapsoden, die Fasten lassen die Persönlichkeit des Erzählers und seinen Gegenwartsstandpunkt mehr hervortreten.15 (10)

What is crucial for our perspective—more than this critical appraisal of the stylistically different techniques of narration in Fasti and Metamorphoses—is the fact that Heinze establishes the presence of this network of parallel episodes, namely a reworking of the same theme in two different works of the same author. This is something that must have struck Dante.16 Nevertheless, it is our intent to demonstrate that this critical category can be usefully transposed from an ‘intertextual’ level to an ‘intratextual’ one. As we shall see, whenever this technique is exploited in the Metamorphoses we find its occurrence in two possible scenarios. At an intratextual level, the ‘parallel episode’ is either a brief ‘taking up’, or ‘allusion’, of exactly the same story or a decidedly lengthier reworking of a story which has more or less the same topic and structure as the original.

By the same token, it is not necessarily fitting that the concept of a “musicale capacità di attenuazione” (Arnaldi 401), introduced by Francesco Arnaldi in an article which appeared in 1958 (Il Mondo Poetico di Ovidio), be ascribed only to the elegiac dimension in the wake

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15 “In sum: Ovid has juxtaposed purposefully in both versions of his epic poem two examples of poetic narrative. Strong and compelling emotions, sudden love, and anger dominate the scene in the Metamorphoses, whereas in the narrative of the Fasti a subdued sensibility, sorrowful lamentation, and pity prevail. In the Metamorphoses the divine majesty of the gods clearly stands out; in the Fasti divinity is humanized. In the Metamorphoses the treatment of the subject matter prefers grandiosity; in the Fasti it prefers a pastoral intimacy. The style of narration in the Metamorphoses retains a certain bright dignity, whereas that of the Fasti is more exciting and lively. The former holds strongly to the objectivity of the tales, while the latter allows the personality of the narrator and his contemporary perspective to come forward more effectively” (My translation).
16 As we have seen in chapter two, Guido da Montefeltro’s character is treated in a dramatically different way in the Convivio and in the Comedy.
of Heinze's analysis. After stating that Ovid shows an alleged "simpatia discreta e affettuosa per la donna" (393), the scholar shows clearly how this peculiar Ovidian trait is common both to *Fasti* and to *Metamorphoses*. It is also important to note Arnaldi's acute intuition about a possible unity of the poem residing in its 'tonal' homogeneity:

Episodi, quelli del canto di Mercurio, di Eco e Narciso, di Piramo e Tisbe, d'impostazione e sostanza poetica diversa [...] ma accomunati dalla tonalità fondamentale, che si è cercato di mettere in rilievo. Che è pure quella del dramma di Alcione e Ceice (XI 573-748), svolgentesi tutto, o quasi, con la solita perfetta adeguazione stilistica e metrica, sotto il segno del sogno. (399)

The study of this dreamy dimension, of the tonal uniformity of all the material that is considered 'legendary', is also an important aspect of Salvatore D'Elia's reflection. Indeed, in his book *Ovidio* he recalls that important Italian critics have compared Ovid to Ariosto\(^7\). D'Elia insists on the importance of Ovid's training in rhetoric and points out that the flourishing of rhetorical bravura is historically explainable by the involution of the great forensic tradition. As Otto Seel has also noticed, Ovid belongs to the second part of the Augustan age. During this period, rhetorical declamation begins to go beyond its traditional purpose of providing exercise in view of a possible application to real situations of *ius conditum* or *ius contendendum* and, instead begins to give free rein to fantasy. Many scholars of Roman law have envisaged the topics of the *suasoriae*, *controversiae* and *declamationes* as responsible for the birth of the concept of equity, dealing as they do with extreme and paradoxical situations. D'Elia understands the influence of such an upbringing on Ovid and emphasizes the importance of the technique adopted at that time to argue either in favor or against a given thesis. This allows for major development of the ability to represent psychological features of a particular character, an art in which Ovid was very effective, according to Quintilian. We shall focus more on this point shortly, when dealing with Ovid's
way of arranging some of his stories when they exhibited strong plot resemblances. D'Elia touches only tangentially upon the highly developed skill of considering a story not only for the bulk of learned references that it carried but also for the mere potential of its plot, because he is far more interested in the influence of the logical pattern of the plot itself (which he even regards as a flaw):

The account that D'Elia gives of the influence of rhetoric on the dimensions of style and versification is also remarkable:

As far as the idea of rhythm and speed is concerned, we shall now move to some inspiring insights of Wilkinson's. The above mentioned article constitutes a substantial abridgment, of his book *Ovid Recalled* (even more than his later work *Ovid Surveyed*). Nevertheless, this important work can still provide us with some useful hints. Like D'Elia and many other critics of the 'old guard', Wilkinson—at least in *Ovid Recalled*—denies the *Metamorphoses* any unity of arrangement and conception. Still he is very clear in assessing other distinctive traits of Ovid's art. He emphasizes at least three meaningful categories:

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17 The first and foremost in this tradition was Giacomo Leopardi (*Zibaldone* 152).
grace, swiftness\textsuperscript{18} and the quality of being a "poem of escape". All these qualities prove very relevant for an investigation of the general tone of this work of art, but we still maintain the unavoidable necessity of a thematic and narratological analysis. Upon accepting Touchstone's definition of Ovid as "the most capricious poet" (155), Wilkinson does not renounce a loose attempt to single out some perspectives of criticism. He considers the poem mainly classic (159). He thinks that Ovid's own way of treating some overwhelmingly grotesque scenes results in a particular form of humor, not exactly definable as 'witty'. "It is a particular kind of grace which sustains and ultimately makes possible this style; a grace that makes us exclaim "how charming!" rather than "how funny" (163). Regarding Ovid's swiftness, Wilkinson is rather clear in judging this concept of "movement" almost as the most important quality of Ovid's narration. This very quality, in turn, makes it possible for the poem to become a 'poem of escape'.

2) The Otis revolution.

We have now discussed what critics have been saying about the alleged unity or disunity of the poem. As is clear, scholars either deny 'unity' to Ovid's masterpiece, or they talk about a peculiar unity of 'tone' as well as of a particular kind of consistency made possible by the meaningful philosophical frame in which all the tales are cast. We shall now turn to Brook Otis' book \textit{Ovid as an Epic Poet}, published in 1966, which can still be considered the most accurate contribution on Ovid's art. Our intent is to show that, using Otis' insightful categories, it is possible to assess a significant and recurrent technique of Ovid's narration: the development and the variation of a particular 'plot' within a specific narrative strategy.

\textsuperscript{18} See note 12. In the same foreword to Marzolla's edition of the \textit{Metamorphoses} ("Gli Indistinti Confini") Calvino mentions Wilkinson dealing with the 'oriental' nature of the story of Pyramus and Thysbe (xi).
Brooks Otis, as we shall see, treated this aspect of Ovid's technique of composition in a brilliant way, and he came up with convincing results. Since his book was published, some scholars have begun once again to discuss the issue of the 'unity' of the Metamorphoses, and, thus, they have used more or less the same old arguments either to deny or to affirm it. What is also surprising is that in certain cases people reuse critical categories established by Otis, depriving them of their original solidity. We have examined already what sources Ovid could possibly have used in order to derive an abstract idea of plot as well as a clear notion of what we now can call narrative function (and how and why this plot can be varied). Now we shall turn to Otis' critical grids and subdivisions of the poem along with some interesting articles on the subject in as much as they still prove valid; second we shall attempt a possible further development of Otis' provisional evaluation of Ovid's recurrent narrative patterns from a new critical perspective. A concrete application of this 'critical perspective' to a couple of these recurrent patterns will be also presented as an example.

When discussing the 'continuity' of Ovid's epic in Chapter three (45-55), Brooks Otis advances some interesting and—we think—extremely valid hypothesis concerning the divisions of the Metamorphoses. He proposes to look at four main sections: the first he calls "The Divine Comedy" (books 1-2), the second "The Avenging Gods" (books 3-6.400), the third is defined "The Pathos of Love" (books 6.401-11) and the fourth "Rome and the Deified Ruler" (books 12-15). It is interesting that the critic does not imply that in a given section, say "The Divine Comedy", all the tales are closely related to each other in that they reduplicate one same pattern, but instead that all the tales cast in that section cooperate in delineating the story of the creation of the world, an atmosphere dominated by Gods and the main moments of the story of humanity through the four Ages and the Flood. As we can see,

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19 This alludes to our previous discussion on Seneca the Elder's account of Ovid's early juridical training.
Otis is utilizing four general labels here. These are based on the dominant narrative purpose of a section in which—from the point of view of the dominant topic of a single tale—a quasi-rigid chiastic arrangement of the stories rules with no exceptions. The scholar shows these chiastic distributions of the narrative matter in several accurate charts. As an example of his method, we can focus on the two tales that precede and the two which follow the "Phaeton panel" of book 1. The stories of Apollo and Daphne (ab) and Jupiter and Io (bc) respectively recall the stories of Apollo and Coronis (a'b') and Jupiter and Callisto (b'c'), their sequence order in the actual narration being: ab-bc-Phaeton panel-b'c'-a'b'. In creating this theoretical grid for the arrangement of the episodes within the context of a main "section", Otis was looking at general similarities concerning the involvement of the same God in the narrated facts, the general resemblance of his actions in the two tales or—even in spite of different actions—his recurrent presence which still justifies a chiastic model.

It is appropriate that several passages from Otis' *Ovid as an Epic Poet* be quoted to show clearly what his position on this specific question was. In a chapter dedicated to an overall view on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* ("The Plan of Ovid's Epic"), after having underlined the existence of recurrent motifs and patterns, he also tries to find a reason for the variations on them made by the poet:

Yet closer inspection quickly reveals that his variety was not an unsophisticated or simple thing. In the first book, for example, he introduces for the first time the motif of the determined virgin courted by the passionate god (Daphne and Apollo). There are several repetitions of this motif in the whole poem: indeed there is one repetition in the first book itself, two more in the second book, one in the fifth (Arethusa pursued by the stream-god Alpheus) and at least brief allusions to the theme thereafter (e.g. at the end of Book XI). It is, however, noteworthy that Ovid not only varies his use of this motif but varies it in a sequentially significant way. (78)

One criticism we could make about Otis' work is that he did, in fact, have the fundamental intuition of the fact that Ovid implements his 'variations' in a "sequentially
significant way” but, other than giving a quick example of this procedure (without which this work would not have been possible), he did not go further, compiling a census (or even giving more examples) or trying to find a reason for this “significant way”.

Another very good instance of this procedure is his use of what I may call the Pentheus-Agave motif: a mother, under Bacchic possession, kills her own child. This first occurs in Book III in its traditional Bacchic form, the Pentheus story itself. In Book IV, however, Juno counterfeits Bacchic possession and uses it against the innocent Ino and Athamas [...]. Then in Book VI Progne uses a mock-Bacchic revel to liberate her raped sister Philomela and the two together kill Progne’s child, the little Itys, thus avenging themselves on the villainous Tereus. Finally in Book VIII we have another mother, Althaea, who deliberately destroys her own child [...]. We have thus progressed from the themes of religious possession and unconscious child-murder to human passion and conscious crime. The sequence of similar but constantly changing motifs has not only brought us from gods to men but from man’s religious to man’s erotic behaviour. We see both the likeness and the difference between divine and human vengeance.(79-80)

In other words Otis is aware of this ‘progression’ and of how it gives nervi to the whole poem, but he does not look for verbal echoes (even in this very episode of the furious mothers20) nor does he try to develop this acute intuition and to consider this procedure as something more than a unifying device:

[... ] Ovid’s main concern was obviously not with the links themselves: the links, in fact, are but a device for giving his essential plan an appearance or veneer of continuity. Or more precisely, he is concerned with two different kinds of continuity. One is the superficial narrative connection of the episodes: the other is the much more significant movement or sequence of motifs and ideas. (80)

Unfortunately, Otis does not tell us more about the direction of this “much more significant movement”. Nonetheless, it will be useful to recapitulate his views examining two graphs (figure 1 and 2) which illustrate two different ways of grouping together the various tales of the Metamorphoses.

20. A significant verbal echo is the recurrent description of the victims trying to stretch their arms towards their mothers: Met. 3.723; Met. 4.517; Met. 6.625.
In figure 1 we have the classic partition of tales suggested by Otis with reference to any of the four sections in which he subdivided the whole poem. We have already discussed this possible arrangement of the tales, which in this case are not relevant per se, but only in as much as they respect a certain symmetry. The axis of this symmetry, so to speak, is constituted by what Otis defines a “central panel”, that is, a central tale around which all the others are arranged in a necessarily chiastic scheme. As we have seen above, the tales are divided into sections and are accordingly symmetrical, not necessarily on the basis of a rigorous resemblance of plot, but only by virtue of a dominant topic. Thus, tale A is symmetrical to tale A1 as B is to B1 and C is to C1 for they all perform the same general thematic function. It is important to understand this idea of “general thematic function” which is completely different from a rigid resemblance of plot or of narrative and ‘attantial’ functions. In other words, it is sufficient that tales A and A1 be both about the vengeance of a God (even if this vengeance is accomplished in different ways, namely through different story-plots) to comply with the conditions of this kind of symmetry. The lower-case ‘a’ indicates the situation in which the author alludes overtly to the earlier tale ‘A’ in a very limited number of lines either with a specific purpose or with the intention of giving his epic matter more cohesion.

In figure 2 we present an alternative scheme which allows us to look at the process of reading and to focus on the “sequentially significant” way in which the tales follow each other. We pass from tale A to B, to C and then to D and E, amazed by Ovid’s ability in changing the scene, but, at some point, we run into tale A which is a re-make, a more or less sophisticated reworking, of tale A. We have tried to emphasize this substantial affinity by
Fig. 1

Central "Panel" or Tale

A B C D \ldots D_1 C_1 B_1 a A_1

Fig. 2

A B C D E \ldots A_1 B C_1 b
using a different font for the same letter of the alphabet. Poetic memory\textsuperscript{21}, greatly enhanced by the recurrence of particular verbal echoes, helps us to establish connections between two tales which are distant from each other. By means of the re-elaboration effected by our minds we are able to see both differences and correspondences. In this case the plot, considered from a Greimasian point of view, is almost the same and all the characters involved in a certain situation serve more or less the same narrative functions. This means that the characters of tales A and A as well of B and B are not the same, but they act in an almost completely identical way. On the other hand, it can also happen, as we have already seen, that the poet refers overtly to a given story but in a limited number of lines, touching en passant upon a story which has already been treated\textsuperscript{22}. In this case we have used a lower case letter (in the same font). By virtue of the repetition\textsuperscript{23} of certain words, which we have defined as 'verbal echo', and the fact that the verbal echoes also mark the repetition of the same topic or 'script'\textsuperscript{24} we establish specific 'isotopies' which run through the poem. We shall study only two cases: the isotopy of the conjugal love which goes beyond death, and the isotopy of the descent to Hell. During this survey we do well to keep in mind the impact such narrative patterns would have on Dante's poetic consciousness. Just as the modern reader can not fail to be struck the masterfully wrought sequence of episodes, Dante, operating on the basis of his powerful poetic memory and perfect knowledge of Ovid's text and language, necessarily noticed this trait and appropriated it for his own poetic aims.

\textsuperscript{21} Gian Biagio Conte has defined very well this concept of "memoria poetica" from the perspective of the poet itself in his book \textit{Memoria dei Poeti e Sistema Letterario}, but it is our personal conviction that the same insightful reflections are valid for the sensibility of an educated reader.

\textsuperscript{22} To give an example, we can refer to two allusions to the fall of Phaeton. The first is in Book four (lines 245-46) when the sorrow of the Sun for the death of Leucotoe is compared to the sorrow for the fall of his son. The second could be traced in the ambiguous line 259 of Book eight which can be referred both to Perdix himself and to Phaeton.

\textsuperscript{23} Greimas uses the expression "redondance des catégories morphologiques", ascribing this intuition to the Danish linguistic school (69-70).
The first occurrence of the motif of everlasting conjugal love is in Book I (lines 350-66) in which Deucalion and Pyrrha, the only two survivors of the flood, are seized by despair. Deucalion, though, finds the strength to address his wife, reassuring her about his love and saying that if she had died, he would have followed her, a detail which reminds us of the famous suasaoria we have already discussed:

O soror, o conjux, o femina sola superstes,
†...†
Quis tibi, si sine me fatis erepta fuisses,
nunc animus, miseranda, foret? quo sola timorem
ferre modo posses? quo consolante doleres?
Namque ego, crede mihi, si te quoque pontus haberet,
te sequerer, conjux, et me quoque pontus haberet.25

Deucalion affirms that he would rather commit suicide than survive without his wife, whom he calls conjux twice, a mot-cléf which, as we shall see, is always placed in the same metrical position, namely in primo vel secundo pede post arsim.

In Book IV (lines 583-720) Cadmus is transformed into a snake and during the transformation he wants to be touched by his wife for the last time. His wife prays to the Gods to be transformed into a snake herself. This desire is fulfilled so that husband and wife are both transformed into the same kind of animal to be united in mutual love for eternity:

Bracchia iam restant; quae restant, bracchia tendit,
et lacrimis per adhuc humana fluentibus ora
"Accede, o conjux, accede miserrima!" dixit
"dumque aliqaud superest de me, me tange manumque
accipe, dum manus est, dum non totum occupat anguis?"26

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24 Greimas is clear about the fact that the isotopies constituted by morphological categories (words) do not exhaust all the other possible cases of isotopy at a higher hierarchic level, namely the level "des grandes unités stilistiques du discours, ni du discours dans sa totalité" (70). To this level, of course, pertain the isotopies of plot.
25 "O sister, o my spouse, o only surviving woman [†...†]. Which courage would you have now if the fates had saved only you, poor thing? How could you sustain your own fear being alone? Who would console your sorrow? In truth, believe me, if the sea took you as its prey I would follow you and I would become its victim too" (My translation).
26 "His arms are still there and he stretches them and, while tears flow down his still human face, he says: “Come here, o spouse, come, you poor thing and, so long as there is still something left of me, touch me and hold my hand, so long as there is one and the snake does not invade me completely”" (My translation).
Cadmus calls his wife miserrima (which reminds us of the adjective miseranda used by Deucalion), and after his wife's prayer of being transformed into a snake (591-94) has been answered, they loop together showing the same affection that they felt for each other while they were still human.

Victims of the flood described in Book 8 (lines 620-724), Philemon and Baucis ask Jupiter to grant them a simultaneous death (lines 707-710). When the established time comes, their death is caused by a metamorphosis into two trees which are going to stay close to each other (lines 714-20)

ante gradus sacros cum starent forte locique narrarent casus, frondere Philemona Baucis, Baucida conspexit senior frondere Philemon. Lamque super geminos crescente cacumine vultus mutua, dum licuit, reddebant dicta "vale" que "o contum" dixer simul, simul adita texta frutex: ostendit adhuc Thyneius illic incola de gemino vicinos corpore truncos.27

The sad story of Ceyx and Alcyon (Book XI, lines 410-745) resembles most the suasoria we have already recalled. Indeed, Alcyon is a wife who is left behind by her husband, a king who, during his trip, is shipwrecked and dies in the sea. He appears to her during a dream telling her the truth. She is caught by despair and also invokes death (lines 695-99):

At certe vellem, quoniam periturus abibas,
Me quoque duxisses: multum fuit utile tecum
Ire mihi. Neque enim de vitae tempore quicquam
Non simul egissem, nec mors discreta fuisset.28

27—They happened to be sitting in front of the temple and, as they were recalling the stories of the place, Baucis saw Philemon becoming covered with leaves, and, in turn, older Philemon saw Baucis becoming covered with leaves as well. And, so long as it was possible, they said to each other simultaneously—for their faces had not been transformed into trees yet—"Farewell, o my spouse". Upon uttering these very words their faces were covered by the growing bark. There, even today, the Bythinian farmers still show to the foreigners two close trunks stemming from the same tree" (My translation).
Here we have an important variation on the theme, since there is no simultaneous death nor does any metamorphosis ensue. Nevertheless, Alcyon sits on the shore in sorrow, and at some point she sees a floating corpse which she will eventually recognize (lines 719-28):

Qui foret ignorans, quia naufragus, omine mota est,
Et tamquam ignoto lacrimam daret, "Heu! Miser, inquit
"quisquis es, et siqua est coniunx tibi!" Fluctibus actum
fit proprius corpus; quod quo magis illa tuetur,
hoc minus et minus est mentis. Iam iamque propinque
admotum terrae, iam quod cognoscere posset,
cernit: erat coniunx. Ille est!" exclamat, et una
ora, comas, vestem lacerat, tendensque trementes
ad Ceyca manus, "Sic o carissime coniunx,
sic ad me miserande redes?" ait.29

Alcyon is so profoundly struck by the pain of such an unexpected sight that she throws herself from a cliff, thus moving the gods who will transform both her and Ceyx into seabirds (lines 739-42).

More or less the same plot is repeated in Book XIV (lines 829-45), in which Romulus has ascended to heaven and has already been deified, while Ersilia thinks him dead. Finally, she is helped by Iuno who sends Iris to console her. Ersilia is thus led to heaven and is received there by Romulus and also deified.

An important difference occurs in the last variation on the theme in Book XV (lines 479-95). The wife of king Numa, Egeria is an inconsolable widow, and, after her husband's

28 "...And certainly I wish you had taken me with you, for you were doomed not to come back: it would have been much better for me to come along. We would have lived together every moment of our lives and would have died together" (My translation).
29 "She ignored who he was but, since he was a shipwrecked man, she was touched by this and, as if she was shedding tears for the fate of an unknown man, she said: "O poor thing, whoever you are, and poor your spouse also, if you have one". The corpse comes nearer led by the waves: the more she looks at it the less she can contain her emotions. When it reaches the shore she recognizes it: it was her spouse. "He is" she cries and, at the same time, tearing her clothes, her hair, and her face she stretches her shaking hands towards Ceyx and says: "O dearest spouse, thus you come back to me, poor man?"" (My translation).
death, she spends her time mourning in the woods of Aricia. Her sorrow, though, functions as an excuse to trigger Ippolitus/Virbius’ narration of his cases.

Evidently, at the end of this series of sequentially significant variations on this theme, we witness the narrative resolution of a plot into another. We get more and more distant from the original plot of a given situation through slight differences which are implemented within the frame of constantly recurrent verbal echoes. Consequently, we can see an evolution while still perceiving a connection. Besides unifying the poem, this technique, I believe, underscores the metamorphic nature of Ovid’s narration itself on a metaliterary level as we saw previously in examining Galinski’s work.

Therefore, it is important to understand that the masterful way in which Ovid switches from one tale to the following one and cross-refers from one tale to another that, even being distant in the poem, strictly resembles it in terms of plot, can be read as a stylistic device to highlight the protean nature of his work. Whether the general tone of this reworkings of a given theme progresses towards parody or ‘attenuation’, or metaliterary awareness can be matter of never-ending debate.

As another conclusive example, we can survey the evolution of the ‘descent to hell’-theme, which surely must have impressed itself, even on its own, with no little force on Dante’s poetic consciousness. The first descent is Saturnus’ own descent, alluded to in only one line in Book I: Postquam Saturno tenebrosa in Tartara misso\(^3\) (113). The first descent we actually see described is that of Iuno, who goes to the underworld to summon the Furies and thus destroy the family of Cadmus (Book IV lines 432-80). The very beginning of the descent is marked by a description of the path which leads to the underworld:

*Est via declivis funesta nubila taxo,*  
ducit ad infernas per muta silentia sedes;*\(^{10}\)

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\(^3\) "After Saturnus had been sent to shadowy Tartarus” (My translation).
Another significant detail is the description of Cerberus used by Ovid immediately after underlining Iuno's wrath:

Sustinet ire illuc caelesti sede relict,  
Tantum odiis traeque dabant, Saturnia Iuno.  
Quo simul intravit, sacroque a corpore pressum  
Ingemuit limen, tria Cerberus extulit ora  
Et tres latratus simul edidit; [...]  

A concise version of these traits can be found in Hercules' descent as well. The hero goes to the underworld not because he is drawn by anger, but since going down there is one of his labors (Book 7, lines 409-15):

 [...]specus est tenebroso caecus hiatu,  
et via declivis, per quam Tirynthius heros  
restantem contraque diem radiosque micantes  
oblquantem oculos nexit adamanete catenis  
Cerberon adtraxit, rabida qui concitus ira  
Implevit pariter ternis latratis aurae  
Et sparsit virides spumis albentibus agros.  

While dying (Book IX line 185: [...] nec forma triplex tua, Cerbere, movit) Hercules will refer to his own descent in a brief allusion of the type we have represented with a lower case letter in the proposed scheme of figure 2.

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31 "There is a path which goes down, gloomy and somber, fringed with funereal yew-trees: it leads to the infernal abodes; the still swamps of Styx there emanate their vapors. The souls of people who have died recently descend down there, and also the souls of those who have been buried" (My translation).

32 "Iuno, the daughter of Saturnus, having left her celestial dwelling, sustains to go down there: so much was she driven by hatred and wrath. As soon as she entered the threshold wailed, pressed by the weight of her divine figure. Cerberus lifted his triple head and howled trice" (My translation).

33 "There is a dark cave with a caliginous entrance and a path which goes down, through which the hero of Tiryns dragged Cerberus, tied in chains made of adamant. The monster tried to resist and to avoid the shining beams of the sun turning down his eyes. Driven by furious rage he filled the air with his threefold simultaneous howling and spread the white foam of his mouth onto the green fields".

34 "[...] nor did the threefold shape of Cerberus move you to compassion?" (My translation).
After an angry goddess and a hero forced to labor, we see Orpheus descending to Hell to liberate his wife. A complete shift from the distant and hostile world of the gods and from the ‘forced’ descent of Hercules has been performed. Orpheus takes the chance of such a risky trip only for love (Book X lines 11-24):

Quam satis ad superas postquam Rhodopeius auras
deflevit vates, ne non temptaret et umbras,
ad Stygia Taenaria est ausus descendere porta:
perque leves populos simulacraque functa sepulcro
Persephonem addit inamoenaque regna tenentem
Umbrarum dominum [...] Tartara, descendii, nec uti villosa colubris
Terna medusaei vincirem guttura monstri;
Causa viae coniunx, in quam calcata venenum
Vipera diffudit crescentesque abstulit annos.35

In simulacraque functa sepulcro there is a clear echo of Book IV (see above). Orpheus is another unhappy coniunx who is not going to succeed in delivering his dead wife from Hell. This episode, an elegiac ‘attenuation’ of the theme of the descent to Hell, does not constitute the end of the variations nor is it the most ‘clever’ of them.

Indeed, the last ‘reported’ journey to the afterlife is Aeneas’ own descent (Book XIV lines 105-121). Here, though, we do not have any of the verbal echoes we singled out in the other passages. Aeneas’ descent in itself is described very quickly, while his coming back with the Sybil is an ‘excuse’ which allows the poet to tell the story of this virgin once loved by Apollo. Once again, at the very end of the variations on a theme, the theme itself gives way to the development of another narration.

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35 ‘When the poet of Rhodope had shed enough tears for her in the upper world, he dared to descend to Styx through the Tenarian gate so that he might try to find her among the dead souls. He made his way through the immaterial crowds of the dead and the spirits of the people who have been buried and finally reached Persephone and the king who rules over the gloomy realm of the underworld. “I have not descended to Tartarus to tie the three throats of the monster which originated from Medusa [i. e. Cerberus], shaggy with snakes. I have come for my spouse, who was bitten by a viper she had pressed with her foot and died prematurely”’ (My translation).
In conclusion, whatever credit may be given to any theory conceived to assess the purpose and the general articulation of these variations on a theme, the variations and their mutual correspondences are an undeniable component of Ovid’s art. As we shall show in chapter four, Dante’s recognition and implementation of this idea, drawn in part from the Roman poet (and in part from biblical exegesis), but expanding greatly the horizon of Ovid’s concerns, is unmistakable. While in the case of Ovid the ultimate justification for the technique remains contestable, we shall show that, for Dante, the device of variations on a theme served the clearer purpose of self-exegesis.
The psychological principles governing this elaborate procedure are simple but fundamental. First, all spoken speech is obviously created by physical movements performed in the throat and mouth. Second, in an oral culture, all preserved speech has likewise to be created in this way. Third, it can be preserved only as it is remembered and repeated. Fourth, to ensure ease of repetition, and hence of rememberance, the physical motions of mouth and throat must be organized in a special way. Fifth, this organization consists in setting up patterns of movements which are highly economical (that is, rhythmic). Sixth, these patterns then become automatic reflexes. Seventh, automatic behaviour in one part of the body (the voice organs) is then strengthened by parallel behaviour in other parts of the body (ears and limbs). The entire nervous system, in short, is geared to the task of memorization.

Eric A. Havelock

The isotopy of "academic" and moral promotion.

As we have seen in Ovid, within the frame of an epic poem it is possible to single out sequences of episodes linked to each other by thematic analogy and/or stylistic correspondence. More specifically, it is possible that a given topic may be taken up again briefly or that two different plots, namely the 'frames' of two similar situations, be marked by the use of the same words or phrases positioned even in the same metrical succession. This is valid also for Dante, who, instead of using the placid rhythm of the Latin exameter,
could rely on a powerful tool: the ABA CDC DED scheme of his rhyming tercets. He was able, as we shall see, to highlight specific themes of his Comedy arranging their different aspects into sequences of episodes connected with each other by two or three rhyming words. As is well known, the peculiar ‘aurality’ of medieval poetry both favored and derived from its end as public or private recitation. This ‘aural’ nature of poetry encouraged the listener and the reader to an instinctive association of all the rhymes echoing each other and linking similar plots. Indeed, the ‘label’ of stylistic repetition and the evident similarity in terms of plot granted to the memory of the poet and of the reader sufficient help to catch these structural isotopies, these ‘transversal horizons’ of meaning.

In the Divine Comedy one of these isotopies has to do with the crucial theme of one’s initiation to a superior level of knowledge and rectitude. As far as the Comedy is concerned, this intuition had already been put forward, but unfortunately never developed, by Cesare Segre in his Fuori del Mondo when he writes: “La Divina Commedia sta al culmine di due altri tipi di testi: il viaggio nell’altro mondo [...] e la visione dell’altro mondo [...] Ma in questi due generi inietta anche elementi del viaggio allegorico. Del viaggio allegorico è la progressione degli insegnamenti, la presenza delle personificazioni, l’obbligo di esami per l’ammissione a livelli superiori di studio” (59). We have underlined the last words of this quote purposefully, since the sequence of episodes that we shall analyze now is marked by the key words “senno” e “cenno”. Indeed, these two elements constitute the fundamental ingredients of any relationship between a master and a disciple.2 “Senno” means more than wisdom, more than pure knowledge: it means ‘capability of making one’s way into a world of signs’. It means ‘possessing the ultimate code of all the codes’. “Cenno”, going back to the

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1 For the inextricable and complex relationship between oral and written texts during the Middle Ages see Cardona 228, Mancini 12, 25-30, 32-40 and, in general, Zumthor. For a more detailed analysis of poetry see Roncaglia, Zumthor 65-74, 136-148, 176-77, Lejeune 315, and Dragonetti. For the concept of orality and the Comedy, see Ahern.
technical verb *adnuere*, frequent in Latin epic poetry when the writer tries to secure divine protection for his creative undertakings, means much more than a nodding of assent, a mere signal of benevolence; it represents the official welcoming into a special community sharing values on a superior level.

The first occurrence of this couplet of words appears in Dante’s most famous encounter with the greatest poets of antiquity in Limbo (*Inf.* 4.80-102), where the pilgrim is accepted into the canon of the best poets of all times as the sixth member: “Da ch’ebber *ragionato insieme alquanto*, / volsersi a me con *salutevol cenno*; / e ’l mio maestro *sorris* di tanto: / e più d’onore ancora assai mi *fenno*, / ch’essi mi fecer della loro schiera, / si ch’io fui sesto *tra cotanto senno*” (97-102). After a somewhat lengthy discussion, that is a scrupulous evaluation/exam of his poetic achievements, Dante is accepted by the ancient poets as a peer. Given the semantic value of the Latin word *salus*, it is evident how here, at the very outset of his journey, Dante is celebrating poetry’s intrinsic potential. Thus, the moralizing and civilizing power of poetic creation, apparent in the works of the unrivaled masters of antiquity, is revived by Dante’s own epic poem aiming at the salvation of mankind.

The second instance of this theme is in *Inf.* 8.3-9, where Dante and Vergil are forced to a pause while trying to enter the City of Dis. Some obscure signals are sent from the towers, and Dante, completely unaware of the ‘secret code’ underlying this communication, is compelled to ask his master—considered ‘the one who has full command of all human knowledge’—for an explanation: “li occhi nostri n’andar suso a la cima / per due fiammette che i vedemo porre, / e un’altra da lungi *render cenno*, / tanto ch’a pena il potea l’occhio torre. / E io mi volsi al mar di tutto il *senno*; / diss: “Questo che dice? E che risponde quell’altro foco? E chi son quei che ’l fenno?”’.

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2 For an exhaustive treatment of the semantic value of the two words see Rossini.
In the third occurrence of the two rhyming words the preceding scheme is fully respected. In *Inf.* 16.115-20 Vergil throws into a ravine the rope used by Dante as a belt. As the reader soon discovers, this is a conventional sign to summon Geryon, the monstrous creature on whose back both Dante and Vergil will fly in order to land safely at the bottom of the steep precipice. Dante ignores the secret meaning of his master’s actions, whereas Vergil, in turn, is even capable of reading his disciple’s thoughts, since, as we have already seen, he possesses the ‘ultimate code’ granted by his immense knowledge. The master knows what he is doing, and, anticipating Dante’s doubts, gives him a satisfactory explanation of his conduct. As before at the gates of the City of Dis, here we have another signal, another code (accessible through deep and vast knowledge), a master, and a disciple: “E’ pur conven che novità risponda”, / dicea fra me medesmo “al novo cenno / che ’l maestro con l’occhio si seconda” / Ahi quanto cauti li uomini esser dienno / presso a color che non veggion pur l’ovra, / ma per entro i pensier miran col senso”.

The fourth occurrence of the two words in the first canticle strikes our attention in *Inf.* 21.131-39, where the description of the “bolgia dei barattieri” comes to an end. Here the relationship between a master and a disciple, communicating by virtue of signals based on a common code, generates almost a parody of the theme itself. The devil Malacoda entrusts Vergil and Dante to a group of devils so that the two may be led to the sixth “bolgia”. The devils, though, are planning to deceive Vergil and his pupil, and this intention is emphasized by their behavior at the very moment of their departure. Before turning left on the edge of the crag, each devil squeezes his tongue with his teeth, looking at the leader of the company (“verso lor duca”), and almost giving him a signal (“per cenno”) for his vulgar flatulence (“ed elli avea del cul fatto trombetta”). Dante had shown his fear of the devils’ attitude to Vergil. In fact, by gnashing their teeth, they were threatening the pilgrim (“minaccian
duoli"). His guide, though, had urged him not to care about the devils' peculiar behavior and to ignore the code governing their actions. This nuance of parody is triggered by the instinctive comparison between the group of devils accompanying Dante and Vergil, and the great poets of Limbo who, after a lengthy consultation followed by a benign nodding, had escorted the two pilgrims themselves along some of their way. In this infernal context Dante recreates the same situation (involving a hierarchy, a signal, and a code) to enhance, with a touch of farce, his expressionistic style. The scabrous diction of these cantos is enriched by the comic depiction of this bunch of devils who become special partners in their clumsy attempt to deceive the two pilgrims. This particular aspect of the episode did not escape Charles Singleton's sensibility when he commented: “The grotesque gesture (one has only to imagine what snouts these demons have) amounts to a 'wink' of complicity and delight at the prospect of the adventure ahead, in which the devils are going to trick Virgil and Dante”:

...non vedi tu ch'e' digrignan li denti
e con le ciglia ne minaccian duoli?".
Ed elli a me: "Non vo' che tu paventi;
lasciali digrignar pur a lor senno,
ch'e' fanno ciò per li lessi dolenti".
Per l'argine sinistro volta diennno;
ma prima avea ciascun la lingua stretta
coi denti, verso lor duca, per cenno;
ed elli avea del cul fatto trombetta.

The fifth occurrence of the two rhyming words is to be found in Purg. 6.127-51 where it is cast in a complex simile, based on the personification of the cities of Florence, Athens, Rome and of the moral quality of "viver bene" (possibly interpretable as an allegory of human justice similar to the idea informing the pictorial renditions of Ambrogio
Lorenzetti). Here, in an eminently political canto, Dante exerts his aggressive and polemic criticism against Florence's costumes, considering his hometown the worst member in a canon of most civilized cities (like Sparta and Athens). Dante's ferocious irony depicts the personifications of Athens and Sparta while they are nodding timidly toward the allegory of Justice, as two bad disciples, whereas Florence is sarcastically portrayed as the best follower of "buon governo" as the city possesses and uses the 'code' of equity: "Or ti fa lieta ché tu hai ben onde: / tu ricca, tu con pace e tu con senno! / S'io dico 'l ver l'effetto nol nasconde. / Atene e Lacedemona, che senno / l'antiche leggi e furon si civili, / fecero al viver bene un piccol cenno / verso di te che fai tanto sottili / provedimenti [...]". Once more, even by means of such an elaborated distortion of the initial frame of Inf. 4, Dante forces us to look back at the encounter that took place in Limbo, shedding light more and more on its nature: the description of a real initiation.

The second instance of this theme in the purgatorial canticle marks Dante's meeting with the soul of Adrian V, the pope atoning for his greed on the fifth terrace of the mountain. Here (Purg. 19.85-89) Dante is very eager to talk to the soul of the penitent pontiff, and his desire is understood by Vergil even if Dante utters no words. The wise guide of the first two canticles has a full knowledge of Dante's senno, that is the bundle of his notions, dispositions and inclinations, and, therefore, does not need anything but to look at Dante's face. His disciple, indeed, betrays his eagernessness in his exterior aspect: "[...] e volsi li occhi a li occhi al signor mio: / ond'elli m'assenti con lieto cenno / ciò che chiedea la vista del disio. Poi ch'io potei fare di me a mio senno, / trassimi sovra quella creatura [...]". Vergil allows

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3 This kind of personification, in as much as it really implies an interaction between ideas transformed into human figures, may find a precedent in the famous relief La Deposizione sculpted by Benedetto Antelami. The work of art, completed in 1178 and now visible in the Duomo of Parma, presents on both sides of the crucified Christ the personifications of the Church (as a community of believers founded by Christ's sacrifice) and of the Synagogue (as a community of believers destined to join the Church) perfectly inserted in the middle of the composition.
Dante to spend some time with the spirit of Adrian V. His benevolent nodding, however, still indicates—at this stage—a situation of subordination and dependence on Dante’s part. His disciple, though, is going to be freed of his guidance soon: attaining a superior level of purification and wisdom he will be able to go on alone. This complete emancipation from Vergil will take place at the top of Purgatory’s mount, in a crucial episode that we shall investigate once again later in this chapter from another point of view. Before turning to the ultimate ceremony of valediction between Dante and Vergil occurring in *Purg.* 27.139-42, we shall now dwell on the preceding episode taking place in *Purg.* 22.10-27.

This episode depicts Dante’s meeting with another of his guides: the Latin poet Statius. In fact, this *canto* can be read as a reprise of the encounter with the great poets of Limbo taking place in *Inf.* 4. Here, though, a sad atmosphere is created to put even more emphasis on Vergil’s merciless destiny. The task of the poet of the *Aeneid* is almost over, and Dante, his humble disciple, is about to climb up to the top of the mountain where Beatrice, the heavenly guide, will take the pilgrim under her protection for the ultimate ascension. Before that moment, however, Dante is going to have two purgatorial guides: Vergil himself and Statius. The latter owes his salvation to the former, but, ironically, whereas Vergil had witnessed Dante’s admission into the canon of the greatest poets of antiquity (of which he was himself a member), here Vergil, feeling his irremediable state of exclusion while addressing Statius (who like Dante, has achieved salvation thanks to Vergil’s writings), can not be admitted among the blessed in any way. In this episode, the two Christian poets Dante and Statius represent another sort of poetic *scola*; they represent the possibility of redemption through poetry. This sense of melancholy and humbleness on Vergil’s part is most evident in the words uttered upon meeting Statius: “Ond’io fui tratto fuor dell’ampia gola / d’Inferno, per mostrargli, e mostreroli / oltre quanto il potrà menar
mia scola” (Purg. 21.33). The idea that poetry is a privileged human faculty enabling his
readers to change their lives dramatically, dominates the whole episode. Indeed, Vergil had
already been informed of Statius’ gratitude by Juvenal (another poet!), who, upon descending
to Limbo after his death, had told Vergil about Statius’ predilection, triggered by his reading
of the fourth Eclogue. Even this noble exchange of gratitude and affection is connoted like a
chivalric form of amore di lontano. Fundamentally, this atmosphere of courtly love and
respectful acknowledgment of each other’s merits is, for Dante, the only possible way of
treating the delicate subject of Purg. 22. Indeed, Vergil cannot be granted salvation by
Statius, who, in turn owes everything to Vergil, whereas, on the other hand, Vergil has to
honor Statius no less than Dante and, therefore, has to admit him into the same canon of
poets, in the same senno, described in Inf. 4. This ‘initiation’, though, shall be sanctioned by
no particular signs of complicity other than a “dir d’amor”. This particular, delicate, and
melancholy way of talking about love, will be defined by Statius “caro cenno”, diminishing
the awesome nature of the nodding of Limbo’s great poets addressed to Dante. Statius can be
flattered by Vergil, but can not be granted anything but a respectful note of praise:

Quando Vigilio cominciò: “Amore,
acceso di virtù, sempre altro accese,
pur che la fiamma sua paresse fure.
Onde, dall’ora che tra noi discese
nel Limbo dello ’inferno Giovenale,
che la tua affezion mi fe’ palese,
mia benvoglienza inverso te fu quale
più strinse mai di non vista persona,
si ch’or mi parran corte queste scale.
Ma dimmi e come amico mi perdona
se troppa sicurtà m’allarga il freno,
e come amico omai meco ragiona:
come poté trovar dintro al tuo seno
loco avarizia, tra cotanto senno
di quanto per tua cura fosti pieno?”
Queste parole Stazio mover fennu
un poco a riso pria; poscia rispuose:
“Ogne tuo dir d’amor m’è caro cenno […]. (Purg. 22.10-27)
As it is evident, other than the obvious thematic closeness (see, for example, the catalogue of the great spirits of Limbo of *Purg.* 22.106-114 taking up and somehow completing the many other catalogues of *Inf.* 4) there are at least three stylistic marks proving that here Dante is deliberately quoting, reviving and reinterpreting *Inf.* 4 and *Inf.* 5.

Firstly, the references to the ineluctable effects of true love, forcing the beloved to love in turn ("Amore, /accesso di virtù, sempre altro accese, / pur che la fiamma sua paresse fore"), are unmistakably linked to Paolo and Francesca’s love ("amor che a nullo amato amar perdona"), triggered by the reading of a book (as Statius’ grateful love for Vergil had been triggered by the fourth *Eclogue*). Juvenal is the living connection between Statius (saved by the inspiring reading of the fourth *Eclogue*) and Vergil, as the book reporting the adventures of Lancelot (compare "come l’amor lo strinse" of *Inf.* 4 with the same verb used for Vergil, "più strinse mai di non vista persona" in *Purg.* 22) had been both the connection and the effective inspiration of Paolo and Francesca’s sinful actions. Secondly, even if the references to the “senno” and the “cenno” have already been explained, it is still worth noting how “tra cotanto senno” repeats verbatim the formula of *Inf.* 4, and how the “salutevol cenna” of the poets relegated to Limbo is echoed by the “caro cenn’ recognized’ by Statius. Here, though, there is no atmosphere of complicity among peers or privilege shared by dwellers of the same realm. In this sad acknowledgment of the unpredictable intervention of Grace, Vergil has no power whatsoever to promote Statius’ poetic and moral status exactly as Statius has no power at all to save Vergil. Finally, the third mark is the technical verb *ragionare*. The great poets of Limbo in *Inf.* 4 admit Dante into their canon “dopo ch’ebber ragionato alquanto”. At this initial point of his perilous journey Dante the pilgrim is enthralled and intimidated by the unusual and impressive nature of the ceremony (as any novice would be during an initiation). In *Purg.* 22, instead, Vergil asks Statius twice to talk
with him as a friend ("Ma dimmi e come amico mi perdoni / se troppo sicurtà m'allarga il freno / e come amico omai meco ragiona"). The "ragiona" that, previously, had generated Dante's awe before the majesty of the poets of Limbo, has now become a verb used respectfully by Vergil, a permanent member of the canon of Inf. 4, to ask a personal question to Statius, at the same time a member of that canon and a blessed soul.

This dramatic 'resurgence' of the atmosphere of Limbo is taken up again and somehow 'completed' in Purg. 27.139-42. In this episode, too, there are striking echoes of Inf. 4, but now the emphasis is put mainly on the fulfillment of Vergil's destiny. In fact, all the elements of the description accentuate the 'feeling' that Vergil is about to disappear. We have used the word 'feeling' on purpose, since Dante the pilgrim ignores that this is going to be his last interaction with Vergil. Here all the allusions to the encounter with the great poets of Limbo revolve around the last part of the crucial episode taking place in Inf. 4. Vergil is about to return to his abode, and he addresses Dante in a solemn fashion to ratify the emancipation of his disciple. Obviously, his first words (Purg. 27.127-29) can be read in a twofold way. They represent an official statement about the completion of Vergil's task, but they also constitute a symbolic statement demonstrating that human virtue, without the assistance of Grace, can not help Dante to reach Heaven: "e disse "Il temporal foco e l'eterno / veduto hai, figlio; e se' venuto in parte / dov'io per me più oltre non discerno".

The same sense of separation upon the completion of a rite was evident at the very end of Inf. 4, and once again all the thematic similarities are highlighted by the respective correspondence on the level of style: "La sesta compagnia in due si scema, / per altra via mi mena il savio duca, / fuor de la queta, ne l'aura che trema. / E vegno in parte ove non è che luce" (Inf. 4.148-51). Furthermore, when in Purg. 30.49-50 Dante realizes Vergil's disappearance, his sorrowful utterance of surprise takes up both Vergil's tender expression
"figlio" and the description of the “sesta compagnia” parting on the fringes of Limbo: “[...] ma Virgilio n’avea lasciati sce mi / di sé, Virgilio, dolcissimo patre [...]”.

Let us now turn again to Purg. 27.139-42. After having recalled the difficulties of the journey, all overcome by virtue of ingenuity and prudence (Purg. 27.130-32), Vergil depicts the locus amoenus (Purg. 27.133-35) in which Dante is allowed to rest at his leisure while waiting for the advent of Beatrice (Purg. 27.136-38). Each of the three elements of Vergil’s discourse listed above is cast in a magnificent tercet, classically polished in its internal composition (Rossini 172-74), and the whole speech, a little masterpiece of ‘classicism’ and, implicitly, a homage to Vergil, makes us ready for the final tercet followed by the supreme formula of initiation:

Non aspettar mio dir più né mio cenno
libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio,
e fallo fora non fare a suo senno:
perch’io te sovra te corono e mitrio. (Purg. 27.139-42)

We shall discuss the implications of the last line (“te corono e mitrio”) later in the last part of this chapter dealing with Dante’s references to his destiny of exile and ‘slavery’. What is important here is the fact that Dante has completely overcome all the boundaries in which the poets of the canon, met in Limbo, are trapped: Dante is now even superior to those poets, as they are doomed to play the role of escorts (like Homer, Ovid and Horace up to the outer limits of Limbo; like Statius and Vergil up to the top of Purgatory) without achieving the ultimate goal of salvation. Their books, their works of art are severely questioned by Dante’s bold proclamation of his own authority as the leading Christian poet. Indeed, Vergil is forced to admit that his disciple does not have to wait for any signal (“mio cenno”), nor has he to expect any friendly or official suggestion (“mio dir”): Dante is ready to experience the bliss of Heaven, since, by now, he has been granted a complete knowledge of his self and
has atoned for all his sins. Dante the pilgrim, Dante the poet and Dante the disciple are all more knowledgeable than the old master, who, consequently, is forced out of the scene.

The very last occurrence of the two rhyming words “senno” and “cenno” is far less poignant than the one just discussed. Indeed, it seems that, in Par. 15.70-73, Dante does not focus any more on the crucial relationship with the poets of Limbo, with Vergil and with Statius (a Christian poet, indeed, who, though, never produced ‘Christian’ poetry!). Here the fundamental scheme of the relationship between a master (Beatrice) and a disciple (Dante himself) is somewhat softened. The pilgrim is about to talk to his ancestor Cacciaguida, who, in turn, is going to inform Dante about his exile. Consequently, here there is no pride, no particular goal to achieve in terms of human ambition while pursuing knowledge. Dante still needs a signal (“cenno”) from Beatrice before addressing the spirit of his noble forefather, but here, in the noble context of Heaven, there is no competition to achieve knowledge, no exclusive form of wisdom (“senno”): all possible enlightenment and infusion of science resides in the first principle, God himself. The “bella scola” by which God is surrounded in the complicated “forma general di Paradiso” is not a limited group of learned poets initiated to a difficult art and scrupulously cast in a hierarchy as in Limbo but consists of all the saved souls sharing the same profound knowledge of God’s mysteries at different degrees of mystic beatitude:

lo mi volsi a Beatrice, e quella udio
pria ch’io parlassi, e arrisemi un cenno
che fece crescere l’ali al voler mio.
Poi cominciai così: “L’affetto e ‘l senno,
come la prima equalità v’apparse,
d’un peso per ciascun di voi si fenno [...]. (Par. 15.70-75)

Beatrice reads Dante’s thoughts as usual, but the revolutionary note of the last episode of this isotopy devoted to Dante’s progressive emancipation from the “bella scola”
of *Inf.* 4, resides in this ‘equality’ shared by all the blessed souls. Their love ("affetto") and knowledge ("senno") have been equally distributed, and, if there is still a disproportion between Dante and the souls of Heaven, it resides in the mere faculty of predicting the future. From this point of view, and only from this, Dante is still a novice, but his humble state of ignorance does not make him less important or privileged than any other soul in Heaven. Indeed, as we shall see later in this chapter, Dante has been granted the ultimate privilege of writing a "poema sacro", something much more remarkable than any other work of art produced by the virtuous poet of antiquity relegated to their somber dwellings.

The isotopy of ‘entrapment’.

Another instance of the same procedure, that is marking stylistically passages connected to each other thematically, involves, unlike the case just studied, three words rhyming in two consecutive tercets. If "cenno" and "senno" are signals of a privileged relationship between a master and a disciple, the words "valle", "calle" and "spalle" mark, on the other hand, the difficulty generated by an obstacle not easy to overcome and, accordingly, the typical situation caused by a *conversio itineris*, the great change leading someone to discover a new horizon.

At the very opening of the *Comedy* (*Inf.* 1.13-19) Dante reaches the outermost borderline of the valley of his fear ("che m’avea di paura il cor compunto"), and, right in front of him, behind a hill, he sees the radiance of the rising sun ("le sue spalle vestite già de’ raggi"). The sun, as a symbol of God’s Grace, enables everyone to walk the straight and narrow path: "che mena dritto altrui per ogni calle". Here we have the fundamental theoretical grid of the whole poem and its logical justification: having come to the deepest of a situation of despair ("valle", like the *lacrimarum vallis* of the famous prayer to the Virgin), Dante wants to attain Grace, helped by the rising sun (the sun is in front of him since the
the 106 "shoulders", "le sue spalle" are lit by its beams). Only the intervention of Grace can restore him to his own hopes and show him the right way ("che mena dritto altrui per ogni calce"). With this archetypal situation in our mind, we can now turn to the delineation of this other isotopy involving both Dante the pilgrim and the other souls.

Dante's meeting with Brunetto Latini (Inf. 15.49-54) is absolutely tinged with profound melancholy: the pilgrim understands that his Florentine master has not attained salvation in spite of his vast knowledge, and has also failed to suggest a way to salvation for him. By contrast, Dante emphasizes how greatly he is indebted to Virgil who has rescued him from the valley, and has helped his process of conversio leading him through another path:

Là su di sopra in la vita serena,  
Rispos'io lui, mi smarri' in una valle,  
Avanti che l'etá mia fosse piena.  
Pur ier mattina le volsi le spalle:  
Questi m'apparve, tornand'io in quella,  
E riducemi a ca per questo calce.

On a metaliterary level this is of course a way of underlining that, committing himself to Virgil, the living symbol of human intelligence and of poetry, and abandoning his old project of writing treatises (like Brunetto) or collections of poems accompanied by a commentary (like the Convivio), Dante has turned to the kind of great poetry represented by the Aeneid. Dante's new epic narrative is the only possible way of achieving glory ("m'insegnavate come l'uom s'eterna") and, more importantly, is the only literary enterprise that will grant him the intellectual and spiritual 'fecundity' of which the sodomite Brunetto has been deprived.

The third occurrence of this 'cluster' of words summarizes, so to speak, the sort of situation we have delineated so far, though in a more abstract way. Here the three rhyming
words do mark, with their semantic potential, a specific situation of both advancement and detachment from an evil surrounding, but they have no immediate connection with Dante the pilgrim and his story. In the eighth circle (Inf. 18), having been shown the souls of the procurers, Dante is urged to move on and the passage from the first to the second “bolgia” of the circle is thus described (98-102):

E questo basti della prima valle
Sapere e di color che in sé assanna.
Già eravam là ’ve lo stretto calle
Con l’argine secondo s’incroccichia
E fa di quello ad un altr’arco spalle.

As we can see, the logical pattern described before is fully respected even though it does not involve any dramatic ‘advancement’ and, more importantly, does not describe any stage of Dante’s moral change on a personal level.

The same considerations (combined with the importance of the principle of “contrappasso”) prove helpful to study also the fourth occurrence of the three rhyming words. In Inf. 20.35-39 there is reported the story of Amphiarraus. During the Theban war the seer falls into Hell through a huge crack caused by Jupiter’s lightning and is sent by Minos to the fourth “bolgia” where all the diviners are tormented eternally. Their fault is twofold: firstly, they wanted to know the future in advance; secondly, they claimed a role that pertains only to the true prophets sent by God. The diviners were not capable of any worthy insight on the future, nor could they prove reliable leaders. Therefore, since nothing good can come from such masters and their teachings, they are condemned to walk backwards (“ritroso calle”) for ever:

E non restò di ruinare a valle
Fino a Minòs, che ciascheduno afferra.
Mira, che ha fatto petto delle spalle:
Perché volle veder troppo davante,
Diretto guarda e fa ritroso calle.
Both the fifth and sixth occurrence of this cluster of words have to do with metamorphoses and, consequently, the semantic potential of Dante’s primeval situation in Inf. 1 (evoked by the key words “valle”, “spalle” and “calle”) undergoes quite a shift in the direction of a negative and fearful sort of imagery. In general, all the sinners of hell are trapped in their destiny and all the infernal paths, all the ways along which they are condemned to walk, crawl or loop like snakes, allow no ‘turning of shoulders’, no dramatic change of life or revolution, no ‘conversion’. The circular and repetitive nature of their punishments, set in these never-changing paths of the underworld, just forces the sinners to remain in their valley of despair. The first instance (Inf. 25.136-41) is the description of the thieves transformed incessantly into snakes and from snakes back into human figures. A group of thieves, composed of Agnolo Brunelleschi, Buoso Donati, Puccio Sciancato and Francesco Guercio Cavalcanti, shares an eternal destiny of reciprocal transformation: when one is a snake the other is a man, and vice-versa:

L’anima, ch’era fiera divenuta
Si fugge sufolando per la valle,
E l’altro dietro a lui parlando sputa.
Poscia gli volse le novelle spalle,
E disse all’altro: “I’ vo’ che Buoso corra,
Com’ho fatt’io, carpon per questo calle.

The second instance (Inf. 29.64-69) depicts the torment of the forgers and the alchemists whose bodies, leaning on each other’s shoulders, are covered by wounds. They are compelled—like the thieves—to crawl on the ground in the never-ending attempt of standing up and, instinctively, they try to bite themselves desperately, seeking solace for their sores. Dante immediately thinks of the people of Egina annihilated by a plague and regenerated through the metamorphoses of the ants. Then, there follows the actual description of the pitiable state of the forgers completing the simile:
Si ristorar di seme di formiche;
Ch'era a veder per quella oscura valle
Languir gli spirti per diverse biche.
Qual sopra il ventre e qual sopra le spalle
L'un dell'altro giacea, e qual carpone
Si trasmutava per lo tristo calle.

As we can see, the sense of entrapment, of frustration, and the lack of escape that once involved Dante himself at the very opening of the Comedy, in the first occurrence of the triad, here is thoroughly reflected in the irremediable situation of the damned souls.

The seventh occurrence is the last of those not involving Dante, and is only partially comparable to the original scheme of the cluster, since the word “calle”, namely the indicator of a linear movement towards the desired moral or physical improvement of one’s situation, is missing. After describing the giant Antaeus, Dante addresses him with a long periphrasis to obtain his help. He recalls the episode of Hannibal’s final defeat, which took place in the valley of Bagrada, where, according to a legend mentioned by Lucan in the fourth book of the Pharsalia, Antaeus had gathered and hidden one thousand lions. There, in that valley close to the plains of Zama, Hannibal was put to flight by Scipion and constrained to turn his shoulders to the enemy. His hopeless attempt to smash the power of Rome ends in an inglorious escape with no second chance, with no possible way to try, no “calle” to go on

(Inf. 31.113-18):

E venimmo ad Anteo, che ben cinqu'alle,
Senza la testa, uscia fuor della grotta.
O tu, che nella fortunata valle,
Che fece Scipion di gloria reda,
Quando Annibal co'suoi diede le spalle,
Recasti già mille lion per preda [...].

Dante comes back to the stage vividly in the two final occurrences of the cluster, situated in two crucial points of the Comedy. The first one is in Purg. 8.37-43, where Dante
is about to cross the actual threshold of mount Purgatory. In a little valley at the foot of the mountain, there are gathered all the souls who are going to atone for their sins on the terraces. A snake comes to ambush them, but two angels, sent by the blessed Virgin, intervene to defend and protect the souls. Here, once again, exactly as he was at the very beginning of his pilgrimage and of his poem, Dante is supposed to undertake a difficult task and finds himself in a situation of uncertainty and peril. Since he does not know which way to go ("per qual calle"), his instinctive reaction is to make himself closer to Vergil’s shoulders, to the shoulders of his master who had already come to the rescue in his valley of fear in the first canto of the Inferno. There Vergil, introducing himself, had alluded to Beatrice—the heavenly guide of Dante’s future journey—and, in the following canto (Inf. 2), he had told Dante that Beatrice herself had descended to the abode of the virtuous pagans to summon the poet of Mantova and send him to Dante as a guide. Here (Purg. 8.37-43), instead, the difficult situation created by the ambush in the valley, a renewed empasse taking place at the beginning of the second canticle, is resolved by the help granted directly by the Virgin Mary and, consequently, by the solemn arrival of her winged servants:

Ambo vengon del grembo di Maria,
Disse Sordello, a guardia della valle,
Per lo serpente che verrà via via.
Ond’io che non sapeva per qual calle,
Mi volsi intorno, e stretto m’accostai
Tutto gelato alle fidate spalle.

The second crucial point of the Comedy, marking also the last occurrence of this triad, is Cacciaguida’s famous prophecy of Dante’s exile in Par. 17.58-63. It is a fact that, on a personal level, Dante’s journey will culminate in the vision of God and will result eventually in the fruitful writing of the Comedy, but is also true that his personal situation will change dramatically as a direct consequence of his exile. As we shall study in a more
detailed way later, Dante regards his own exile mainly as a juridical offense and, therefore, he considers the glory granted by his poem the only possible way of overcoming this obstacle (Par. 25.1-9). At any rate, when in Par. 17.58-63 Cacciaguida has to inform Dante in a formal fashion about his future banishment, he portrays the situation of Dante’s exile very much like the second beginning of a personal Inferno. Indeed, after the bliss of the vision of God and the unfolding itself of the poem up to the ultimate joy (direct result of Dante’s physical and memorial journey), Dante will fall back, literally ‘roll down’, into another valley of despair and—possibly—of humiliation. This time he will not risk to lose his soul but, surely, he will be left with no guide but his own persistence and discernment. Another adventure lies ahead, another journey awaits Dante and, as we shall see, poetry will prove the only possible way to win the resistance of his Florentine fellow-citizens and, thus, to restore justice and the primacy of law: "Tu proverai si come sa di sale / Lo pane altrui, e com’è duro calle / Lo scendere e il salir per l’altrui scale. / E quel che più ti graverà le spalle / Sarà la compagnia malvagia e scempia, / Con la qual tu cadrai in questa valle [...]".

This survey of the particular use of the three rhyming words “calle”, “spalle” and “valle”, paired with the preceding one, on the couple “cenno”-“senno”, shows in a sufficiently clear way how some passages, undoubtedly connected on the level of meaning, are also marked stylistically by the usage of the same rhymes. Moreover, some of the episodes are linked by the fact that Dante himself is directly involved, and it is safe to say that they constitute a linear and always progressive sequence of situations. These situations, in turn, as Brooks Otis had already stated about some episodes in Ovid’s Metamorphoses, are sequentially significant and often culminate in a critical point from which it is possible to look back at all of them, throwing a new interpretive light on Dante’s poetry.
The isotopy of ‘slavery’ and exile.

Io ti ho visto alla fronte un segno chiaro.

(Sandro Penna)

It is now time to turn our attention to a different kind of isotopy, operating on a deeper level of structure and imagery and disentangled from any stylistic device⁴, but, nevertheless, equally poignant. The isotopy at stake could be defined the ‘isotopy of slavery and exile’. Being gradually ransomed during his journey, Dante the pilgrim moves from a stagnant situation of desperation caused by his own sin to a final redemption facilitated by the progressive action of the Grace of God. The beginning and the end of this linear process are to be found in Inf. 2.132 and in Par. 31.85. Within the ample frame of the whole Comedy Dante regains his moral and (this is his own wish) political freedom. All the portent of this pivotal theme, unfolding subtly throughout the whole Comedy, does not reside in any form of stylistic repetition. In fact, Dante’s assimilation to a slave or to an exile is sometimes proclaimed, sometimes evoked in a subdued way, sometimes only hinted at by means of some intertextual references. What really counts here are the powerful implications latent in some images. Indeed, they trigger in the mind of the ‘ideal reader’ a vast sequence of historical facts, political or juridical habits, and, possibly, personal memories related to the idea of loosing one’s freedom. The most relevant of these elements, the actual axis around which both Dante’s intratextual and intertextual strategies revolve, is constituted by the legal treatment reserved to the thieves, and in general to the evil-doers, in Florence at Dante’s time. Before discussing this point in greater detail and referring also to the scholars who have already studied this particular aspect of the Comedy, we shall focus briefly on the two

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⁴ On the general topic concerning isotopies which are not marked stylistically see Iannucci’s “Limbo: The Emptiness of Time”.
occurrences of this imagery marking respectively the beginning and the end of Dante’s process of redemption.

In Inf. 2.121-32 Dante, having achieved complete awareness about his state of confusion and despair, is vigorously spurred by Virgil to undertake his journey in the underworld: “Perché tanta viltà nel core allette? / Perché ardire e franchezza non hai?” (vv.122-23). Dante has lost his courage (“ardire”), but, more gravely, he has been dispossessed of his freedom (“franchezza”). Undoubtedly, he has abandoned his good inclinations and has risked to be overwhelmed by all the sinful passions to which a human being can fall prey. However, Dante has been granted Beatrice’s help and, consequently, he will succeed in the difficult enterprise. Fully relieved, he speaks “come persona franca” (v.132):

[...]Poscia che tai tre donne benedette
curan di te nella corte del cielo,
e il mio parlar tanto ben t’impronette?"
Quali fioretti dal notturno gelo
chinati e chiusi, poi che il sol l’imbianca,
si drizzan tutti aperti in loro stelo;
tal mi fec’io, di mia virtude stanca:
e tanto buono ardire al cor mi corse
ch’io cominciai come persona franca: [...] (vv. 124-32)

Here the meaning of “come persona franca” is, in my opinion, “like a free person”, “as a free person”, and absolutely not “being a free person”. Dante, at this stage, is not free at all: he is only urged to regain his human and spiritual dignity by means of the transcendent experience of a journey in the underworld. The poet, soon to become a pilgrim, is absolutely
determined to undertake the voyage, but his soul has not been liberated yet: his will is strong and righteous but his conscience has still to be purged. He is still a slave of his own sins.

Dante’s complete liberation on a moral level, or, more precisely, Dante’s own acknowledgment of a new spiritual freedom and of a revived virtue will come almost at the end of the Comedy (Par. 31.85-90). At the end of his physical and literary journey, in an impassioned address to Beatrice and with tones that remind us of the Somnium Scipionis, Dante not only thanks Beatrice for his regained freedom but also wishes that his soul be kept free from any sin so that he might join her in the celestial beatitude on the day of his death:

Tu m’hai di servo tratto a libertate
per tutte quelle vie, per tutt’i modi,
che di ciò fare avean la potestate.
La tua magnificenza in me custodi
si, che l’anima mia che fatta hai sana,
piacente a te dal corpo si disnodi.

It is evident, from our perspective, that a situation of ‘slavery’ generated by sin is very close to a situation of exile, especially if we consider the biblical typology of the Jews’ slavery in Egypt. This poetic dimension is particularly evident in the second canticle. The souls who dwell in the mountain of Purgatory are in the process of being liberated: by repenting and atoning they ideally cross the Red Sea like the people of Israel. Indeed, in Purg. 2.43-48, the equation between atonement and liberation—from both exile and slavery—is sanctioned by the fact that, upon landing on the shores of the mountain, all the spirits sitting in the boat managed by the angel sing psalm 113: In exitu Israel de Aegypto. However, an even clearer allusion to the themes of freedom, liberation, and exile is to be found in the preceding canto, that is during the encounter with Cato (Purg. 1).
We have already studied the narratological and metaliterary implications of Dante’s meeting with Cato in chapter two. It is now appropriate to explain how crucial this episode of the Comedy is for the delineation of the isotopy we are discussing. When Virgil has to explain to Cato (Purg. 1.70-75) that Dante is not dead, and that he has been granted the privilege of going through the three realms of the afterlife by divine decree, he appeals to Cato’s proverbial love for freedom: “Or ti piaccia gradir la sua venuta: / Libertà va cercando, che è si cara, / come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta”. Cato had committed suicide for the very reason that the new political order, established by Caesar, would not allow him to lead a morally desirable life. The whole account of these happenings is to be found in the second book of Lucan’s Pharsalia. In fact, the following section of the Dantean episode (Purg. 1.76-81) derives directly from Phars. 2.341-44. Vergil explains that his abode is in the section of Limbo inhabited by the virtuous pagans, where Cato’s wife, Marzia, also lives. In doing so he evokes the famous episode of Lucan’s poem in which Marzia comes back to Cato, after the death of her second husband Hortensius (to whom Cato himself had sent her), to be with Cato until the end of her life. Cato allows Vergil and Dante to go on, but he also makes it clear that this does not depend on his love for Marzia, but only on the fact that Dante’s voyage is supported by a “donna dal ciel” (Purg. 1.82-93). Clearly, Lucan’s Pharsalia, and especially the second book, is the privileged subtext of this section of the Comedy. There is another allusion that may underscore this dependence greatly, and, more importantly, may highlight the connection of this episode with all the following ones alluding to a situation of exile or slavery. Right after his solemn declaration of obedience to Beatrice, Cato prescribes a procedure of purification necessary to prepare Dante for the encounter with the angel managing the boat: “Va dunque, e fa che tu costui ricinghe / d’un giunco schietto, e che gli lavi il viso / si che ogni sucidume quindi stinghe” (Purg. 2.94-96). He also gives the precise
indication of the place where the pilgrims can find the reeds: “Questa isoleta intorno ad imo ad imo, / laggiù colà dove la batte l’onda, / porta dei giunchi sovr’ il molle limo” (Purg. 2.100-102). It is my conviction that here Dante is hinting at the figure of the Roman consul Marius, as it is depicted by Lucan in Phars. 2.68-100—the privileged subtext of this section of the Comedy. After his glorious victories against the Cimbri and the Teutons, Marius turns to internal politics favoring dramatically the democratic faction. This, in turn, brings about the civil war and Sulla’s consulate in 88 B.C. Marius is proscribed and eventually exiled. Lucan starts his narration from this point, recalling the fruitless measures taken by Marius to escape from Rome and to avoid prison. Subsequently, Lucan tells the story of Marius’ exile in Africa (the very place of Cato’s death) followed by his final revenge and his successful return to Rome where he is made consul again (86 b.C.). For our purpose it is important to read the description of Marius trying to hide during the civil war (Phars. 2.69-72) and the description of his vengeful campaign against Rome where he will return triumphantly (Phars. 2.93-100). The first portion of Lucan’s narrative is strikingly close to the ritual of humiliation and purification undergone by Dante (all the commentators underline this humble connotation of the reed): “cum post Teutonicos victor Libycosque triumphos / exul limosa Marius caput abdedit ulva. / Stagna avidi texere soli laxaeque paludes / depositum, Fortuna, tuum;” (Phars. 2.69-72). Marius’ life is preserved by Fortuna—his own fate—as Dante is always accompanied by the effective intervention of Grace, and Lucan recalls an unsuccessful attempt of murdering him during his imprisonment (Phars. 2.73-87). The destiny of the Roman consul is to overcome his exile, and he will succeed also because of the help granted by the slaves, servi, armed by him and led against Rome: “Lybicadas ibi colligit

5 “As he became an exile after his triumphs against the Teutons and the Cimbri, Marius was forced to hide himself with the muddy reeds of a lake. The swamps and marshes with their quicksand hid, o Fortuna, the man you protected” (My translation).
Lucan, at this point describes the cruel occupation of Rome and the massacres ordered by Marius (vv. 95-100). Undoubtedly, the Roman consul symbolizes the possibility of overcoming one’s exile and of returning home to one’s fatherland. Consequently, the figural relationship with Dante’s own destiny (or at least—as we shall see—with his own expectations about his exile) seems to be a safe assumption, given the predominant role of the Pharsalia as a subtext. Moreover, this kind of allusion (in as much as it refers to Rome and its prestigious characters) prefigures the Roman ‘juridical’ frame in which Dante is about to cast his ‘isotopy of exile’.

In the following occurrence of this isotopy related to exile, slavery, and possible redemption, we witness a remarkable shift operated by Dante in the direction of codified law. We are referring to the famous encounter with the angel sitting at the threshold of mount Purgatory (Purg. 9). The angel marks Dante’s forehead with seven P’s that are going to be erased, one by one, upon completing the ascension of each terrace: “Sette P nella fronte mi descrisse / col punton della spada, e: ‘Fa che lavi, / quando se’ dentro, queste piaghe, disse.’” (Purg. 9.112-14). All the commentators have considered the seven P’s as a symbol of the seven mortal sins. Lana, Ottimo, Pietro, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Fiorentino and Serravalle all agree on this point, and, fundamentally, do not go further. Vellutello is more exhaustive and discusses the necessity of repentance and confession. All the other commentators up to Mattalia dwell more or less on this same element, and the analysis is occasionally enlarged with some insights on all the theological aspects of the doctrine of repentance and absolution. Indeed, as all the commentators from Mattalia to Singleton seem to be aware, here Dante is relying on the combined auctoritas of Bonaventura (De Sanctis Apostolis Petro

6 “There he derives his strength from the Libyan wrath: when the good opportunity presents itself he unleashes the hosts of the slaves” (My translation).
et Paulo 1.1) and St. Thomas (Summa Theol. 3.suppl.18.3.1). The former points out the bad consequences left by any sin even in a duly repenting soul: “pronitas ad malum” (“a tendency toward evil”) and “difficultas ad bonum sunt in sequela peccati” (“and a resistance toward good persist as a consequence of sinning”). Bonaventura’s doctrine is an important element to prove that only Dante’s forehead is branded by the angel, since only a man who is still alive can fruitfully overcome ‘future’ procivity toward sin (if we want to disregard the passage form Purg. 21.22-24—pointed out by Trucchi and considered relevant by d’Ovidio [311-12]—that seems to show that the procedure of inscribing the forehead involves all the souls). On the other hand, St. Thomas had explained how, after the ‘contrition of the heart’ (“contritio cordis”) and the ‘confession performed by one’s lips’ (“confessio oris”), the third essential part of the sacrament of confession is the penance constituted by the “satisfactio operis” (“satisfaction granted by one’s good actions”). Therefore, the P’s should be read as marks produced by sins for which a complete atonement is still to be expected and for which it will, in fact, be granted gradually during Dante’s ascension. The climbing of the mountain in itself could, thus, be read as Dante’s “satisfactio operis”.

However this may be, it is important to notice that, before Mattalia, already Grandgent and Trucchi had felt the decisive and—as always—unavoidable importance of biblical precedent. In fact, like their predecessors (that is Grandgent and Trucchi) Mattalia, Fallani, Giacalone, and Bosco-Reggio (who are the only ones who give the complete list), have indicated all the significant passages of the Bible in which the procedure of branding someone is involved. The first occurrence is in Gen. 4.15: “And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him”. Consequently, this mark, put by God himself on the first murderer, is—in God’s infinite mercy—a mark of protective nature, to shield a man
who (and this is the decisive element of connection with Dante) is doomed to be a fugitive and an exile as a consequence of his deed (Gen. 4.12).

The second instance of branding comes from Ezech. 9.4: "And the Lord said unto him [the scribe], Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof". Once again the mark of God has a protective nature: the servant of God has to mark all those who complain about the moral decadence of the nation, the unswerving spirits that do not share Jerusalem's evil conduct. One more time, the link with Dante's own resentment toward the city of Florence, often censured in the three canticles, stands out unmistakably. The last two biblical instances of the procedure of branding someone come from Revelation. The first one (Apoc. 7.2-3): "And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" refers to the ultimate precaution taken by God during the messianic times to avoid the killing of his faithful servants, those who belong to him, marked as they are like God's 'slaves'. In this perspective being sealed by God does not mean salvation without suffering; on the contrary it grants the elected the force of overcoming any enemy or persecutor. By contrast, the second instance, coming from the same book (Apoc. 14.9-11) concerns the opposite case of the slaves of Satan, the unfaithful people who have abandoned God: "And another angel, a third, followed, saying with a loud voice, If anyone worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God [...] and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest
[...] whosoever receiveth the mark of his name”. In this fearful eschatological account all those who have betrayed God will face eternal damnation.

As we have said before, Mattalia, along with quoting part of the biblical sources, is the first commentator7 to mention some of Francesco d’Ovidio’s insights on the episode of Purg. 9.112-14. Indeed, d’Ovidio is the first scholar to consider the possibility of some other intertextual references. Used as we are to the peculiar effect of simultaneity attained by Dante’s intertextual strategies, it is possible for us to assume that the immediate allusion to the Bible could be expanded in some other direction. D’Ovidio, in his study Il Purgatorio e il Suo Preludio, after his negative evaluation (reported above in note 7) of the artistic substance of the episode and a brief discussion of the biblical parallels, advances the hypothesis that Dante’s branding may derive from the prescriptions of Roman Law more than from the Bible itself. The scholar, who, in a note, acknowledges the suggestions received from Luigi Fadda maintains: “[…] la più prossima e suggestiva sarebbe una reminiscenza classica: il K che secondo la legge Remmia era comminato alla fronte dei calunniatori. I cenni che ne abbiamo negli antichi son di Cicerone (Pro Roscio 20.57), di Plinio (Paneg. 35), di Papiniano (Dig. 22.5.13), di Seneca (De ira 3.3.6)” (d’Ovidio 310). Whatever the importance of these connections may be, it is important to underline that Mattalia himself, expanding even more the field of this intriguing analysis, adds some interesting remarks in his commentary: “[…] in Firenze i ladri, come risulta da documenti fiorentini, erano costretti a portare una mitria di carta contrassegnata dalla lettera F, iniziale di “fur” [that is thief] o “furo” o “furto” [that is theft]”. These allusions are somewhat questioned by Giacalone, who, in turn, even quoting Mattalia and d’Ovidio, seems much more inclined to admit a clear dependence from the

7 After Mestica who, in his commentary, had reported only d’Ovidio’s negative opinion on the esthetic value of this passage of the Comedy: “Curioso tatuaggio, un po’ grottesco, che odora alquanto d’ingenuità e grossezza medievale” (d’Ovidio 309).
Bible. Indeed, Dante is anything but a slanderer, and the reference to so technical an aspect of Roman legislation (namely the above mentioned *lex Remmia*) may sound like an exegetical exaggeration. However, if we consider that on the ground of an elementary juridical notion of the Roman world a slave who had rebelled against his lord could be regarded as a "fur sui", namely a 'thief of himself', it could be conceivable to see a connection with Dante’s personal experience. Of course he has been saved, having been elected by God’s Grace, but, at the same time, he has to regain complete dominion of his ‘stolen’ self. Thus, the ambivalence of the biblical precedents, talking about the procedure of branding for both the elected and the condemned, could be preserved. Accordingly, Dante is chosen for an unprecedented task and is granted salvation, but, during the process he is marked also as a sinner who has abandoned the straight and narrow path. At any rate, as we shall see later, discussing another passage of the *Comedy* along with the masterful interpretation provided for it by Paola Rigo in the essay "Prenderò il Cappello" (published in *Memoria Classica e Memoria Biblica in Dante*), this allusion to the laws of Rome and Florence is a pivotal element in the delineation of the isotopy of slavery and exile.

In the first part of this chapter we have already studied the last words uttered by Vergil at the top of the purgatorial mountain, before Dante’s entrance into the garden of Eden. Our attention was focused on the couple of rhyming words “cenno”-“senno” and our conclusion was that at this point of his journey Dante as a pilgrim has regained complete dominion over his will and has atoned for his sins: “libero dritto sano e tuo arbitrio” (*Purg.* 27.140). The very last line of *Purg.* 27 (“Perch’io te sopra te corono e mitrio”[142]) , though, suggests something ambiguous considering the nature of the two pieces of headgear. Indeed, Dante has recovered full dominion over his self (“te sopra te”), and has also purged the bad effects of sinning, the so-called *sequelae peccatorum*, a theological category established by
Bonaventura. In fact, Dante has earned the crown ("te corono") that sanctions the successful outcome of his *iter* of purification. Therefore, it is important to recall the humble reed of *Purg.* 1.94-95, that, according to Tommaseo, has to be considered an actual 'crown', worn by the pilgrim during the first rite of ablution taking place on the shore of the mountain. The first crown, made of a humble reed, was the presage of this second immaterial crown granted by Vergil himself almost as a legacy, before his sudden return to the fields of Limbo. What is, then, the symbolic value attached to the image of the mitre ("mitrio")? To answer the question, we are forced to anticipate some of Paola Rigo's insights on the episode of *Par.* 25.1-9, where Dante proclaims solemnly his desire to return to Florence also by virtue of his "poema sacro". The scholar, who, in her essay "Prenderò il Cappello", has conducted an impressive analysis of this passage, gathering an enormous amount of data, and investigating all of it in great detail with exquisite philological acuteness, maintains that Dante alludes to a particular ceremony held in Florence, especially during the festivity of St. John the Baptist. On that day whoever had been charged of many sorts of crime could be rehabilitated and welcomed back into his Florentine community. We shall soon return to the important juridical details of this procedure of readmission into the civic life of the town. For now, however, it is important to highlight that all the people to whom the privilege of this liberation was granted had to follow the chariot of St. John, holding big candles and wearing mitres. According to the peculiar self-exegetical technique implemented in the *Comedy* by means of these sequences of episodes connected in turn, Dante manages to shed light retrospectively 1) firstly, on the humble crown of the purgatorial shores; 2) then, on the seven P's marked on his forehead; and 3) finally, on the mitre granted to him by Vergil.

Carlo Troya's account of the ceremony we are discussing is somewhat short but still inspiring: "[...] ed era solenne in quel giorno[i.e. the festivity of St. John the Baptist] di
liberare i prigioni, massime gli esuli richiamati: venivano essi a gran pompa dietro il carro della zecca detto di San Giovanni con mitère in capo e con ceri nelle mani: offerti al santo e multati di alcuna somma ne andavano liberi affatto, cessate le loro condannagioni" (97). The description of this peculiar parade is also to be found in Robert Davidsohn's monumental *Storia di Firenze*. The scholar, along with a vast selection of historical facts, adds the report of the important procedures taking place at the end of the ceremony: "L'Operaio del Battistero, cioè colui che lo amministrava per conto dell'Arte di Calimala accoglieva all'altare i liberati e li offriva a Dio e a San Giovanni Battista, dopodiché essi, ormai da libere persone, si recavano all'ufficio della Camera del Palazzo del Podestà per farsi cancellare dal notaio il nome dall'elenco dei banditi e dei condannati" (625). This illuminating account of the procedure of cancellation of one's name from the lists of the banished and wrong-doers (at the very moment of a juridical and moral readmission into the community!) triggers in our mind the image of the angel's wing, erasing each of the seven P's at the end of the corresponding terrace. This tradition of the Republic of Florence is best described by the *Statuti della Repubblica Fiorentina* published by Romolo Caggese in 1910: "[...] ordinatum est quod captivorum et carceratorum Communis Florentie oblatio sive relaxatio fieri non possit aliquo modo vel causa nisi ter in anno, scilicet in pascate resurrectionis domini nostri Iehsu Christi, et etiam in nativitate, et in festivitate beati Johannis Baptiste mensis Iunii [...] Et quod tales relaxandi a carceribus usque ad Ecclesiam Sancti Johannis Baptiste mitras deferre debeant in capite, in quibus scripta sint nomina et

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* Still alive in 1475 as a letter signed by Piero Cennini testifies (Mancini "Il Bel S. Giovanni" 195, 225).
praenomina eorum [...]” (217). This ceremony must have impressed Dante deeply, since the poet himself had taken part in a reunion of the Consiglio dei Cento on September 28th 1300 when it was decided to offer to St. John and, consequently, readmit into Florence, Neri, the son of Gherardino Diodati, condemned for murder. The formula of the Provvisione follows verbatim the procedure established by the Statuti and quoted above (Zenatti 509). Even Petrarch’s father, called ser Petraccolo, was granted the same privilege by a Provvisione issued on February 10th 1309, and he managed to return to Florence wearing the benign mitre (Zenatti 511-14). Furthermore, Dante, in the famous epistle to the Florentine friend, refuses to undergo the humiliation of imprisonment, consequent to the acceptance of the oblatio (Zenatti 508), and seems to ascribe the joy of freedom to the stoic idea of belonging to a heavenly dimension (Epist. 12.4). Consequently, this view could highlight an extraordinary closeness to both the delineation of the character of Cato, and (if we are right) to the adumbrated imprisonment of Marius at the very beginning of the second canticle. This should confirm once more the striking ‘density’ or polyvalence of any intertextual strategy implemented by Dante.

At any rate, the expression “io te sopra te corono e mitrio” of Purg. 27 very probably marks the gradual progression of Dante’s personal sufferings. Indeed, Dante is ready to master his own passions and has restored his power over his deeper ‘self’ after the purgatorial purification. On the other hand, though, he has to attain final liberation (both from exile and moral fragility) for which the only help can come from the writing of a “poema sacro” (Par. 25). The activity of writing becomes the result of the heavenly

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9 “It is prescribed that the offering of the prisoners of the municipality of Florence, that is their formal liberation, should not take place more than twice per year, namely for Christmas, Easter, and for the feast of St. John the Baptist during the month of June. The above mentioned prisoners shall walk from the prison to the church of St. John the Baptist wearing miters bearing their given names and family names” (My translation).
experience granted by the direct intervention of Beatrice and what she represents (God’s Grace). This activity in itself, in sum, is going to be the only way of overcoming exile and slavery.

Before adding something more on the mitre and the ceremony of the “oblatio” as elements of an intertextual strategy, we have to discuss briefly two minor passages that follow the ceremony of Dante’s crowning performed by Vergil. The first overt allusion to slavery and entrapment is in Beatrice’s words in Purg. 31.25-27: “Quai fosse attraversate, o quai catene i trovasti, per che del passare innanzi / dovessiti così spogliar la spene?”. Scolding Dante for his reluctance to follow virtue and for his consequent misconduct after her death, Beatrice calls the obstacles faced by Dante “moats” and “chains”. Once again, these two elements connote Dante as a prisoner entrapped in a castle, or, if we want to find a biblical allusion in the image of the moat, as a Jew who has been left behind in Egypt, on the other side of the Red Sea. Obviously, the reprimand given by Beatrice refers to the state of confusion and despair lived by Dante at the moment of her death, but, from a moral point of view, this was Dante’s situation also at the beginning of his journey in the afterlife.

The second allusion is in Par. 7.79-81, where Beatrice dwells extensively on the theological necessity of Christ’s crucifixion, seen as the ransoming of mankind from the slavery of sin: “Solo il peccato è quel che la disfranca, / e falla dissimile al sommo bene. / Per che del lume suo poco s’imbianca”. These lines sanction retrospectively Dante’s own ‘slavery’ at the beginning of the Comedy, since the words “disfranca” e “imbianca” evoke the expression “come persona franca” (Inf. 2.132) referred to Dante’s revived good will and the simile of the little flowers refreshed (“poi che ’l sol l’imbianca”) by the light of the sun at dawn (Inf. 2.127-28).
As we have anticipated, the importance of this isotopy is underscored by Dante’s final address to Beatrice in *Par.* 31.85-87, when his liberation is completed and his journey is closest to the end. From this point of the *Comedy* Dante sees the circularity of his process of emancipation and is ready for the mystic experience of the vision of God. However, in *Par.* 25.1-12, Dante had wished himself to overcome his exile by virtue of his “poema sacro”, alluding implicitly to something that would happen after the completion of both his voyage and his poem. From a metaliterary point of view, therefore, his confident wish projects the positive results of his liberation outside the frame of his journey and beyond the material composition of the poem. Indeed, even if *Par.* 25.1-12 comes before Dante’s grateful words addressed to Beatrice in *Par.* 31, we can safely state that this is the crucial and ‘final’ point of the isotopy. Here Dante gives the reader an insight on his life as it is going to be after the composition of his masterpiece and long after the termination of his heavenly experience. At this point Dante is concerned with the positive impact of his monumental work not only on his conscience, and on those of all his readers, but also on his political problems.

In our opinion, Paola Rigo has investigated this crucial passage (*Par.* 25.1-12) in a conclusive way. In her essay “Prenderò il Cappello” the scholar puts forward a series of theses: 1) the idea of “prendere il cappello” excludes any reference to the academic procedure of the *hirretatio* by which one achieved the title of doctor; 2) “prendere il cappello” is the exact translation of the latin phrase *sumere pilleum*, that is the way in which the Romans granted freedom to a slave *manumissus* (freed) by his lord (*patronus*); 3) the same procedure survived the fall of the Roman Empire and was continued by the Church under the name of *manumissio in ecclesiis*; 4) the image evoked by Dante is surely connected with the ceremony of the *oblatio* of both the banished and the wrong-doers to St. John (that we have already described above); 5) and, also the Latin poet Terence was liberated
(manumissus) by his patron, the Roman senator Terence Lucan: this makes us think that, upon being accepted among the great poets of antiquity dwelling in Limbo, Dante has taken Terence's place as the only representative of 'Comedy's style'.

The amount of evidence gathered by the scholar to defend these five conclusions is impressive and admits of no doubt. However, in addition to her being philologically rigorous, Paola Rigo is especially effective and inspiring when she summarizes the outcome of Dante's intertextual strategies (what we have called the extreme 'density' of his references and his powerful images):

Se dunque la Firenze sperata, quella che riaccoglie Dante, diventa figura di Roma e se, come Roma, è figura della Gerusalemme celeste, quelli che appaiono immagini e motivi tratti da codici eterogenei—biblico (agnello, lupi), liturgico (fonte del battesimo), politico (esilio)—tutti si ricongiungono illuminandosi reciprocamente in un gesto che non nasce, credo, da un desiderio di onorificenze personali che rimarrebbero pur chiuse in limiti municipali; né da uno stravagante per quanto nobilitante gusto antiquario; ma nasce dalla fede nella tradizione giuridica romana, l'unica capace, per Dante, di ripristinare l'accordo perduto tra civitas terrena e civitas celeste, tra la giustizia umana dunque e la giustizia divina. (Rigo 153)

I should like to add a minor remark on the issue of the pilleus, the ancient hat, worn by the freed slaves. Paola Rigo accepts the theory conceived by Leonardo Olschki in his book The Myth of Felt to ascertain the nature of the "veltro", mentioned by Dante in the famous prophecy of Inf. 1, and inclining to see in the expression "sua nazzion sarà tra feltro e feltro" (Inf. 1.105) the indication of the sign of the zodiac in which the birth of the 'Greyhound would take place', namely the constellation of Gemini represented by Castor and Pollux, the so-called pilletti fratres. In the Middle Ages the two brothers, sons of Leda, were always depicted wearing the famous caps made of felt ("feltro"). Olschki describes accurately the exotic origins of this peculiar hat and, excluding any specific identification of this "veltro",
comes to the conclusion that "the mysterious Greyhound would simply be the allegorical counterpart of the She-wolf in an imaginary hunting scene of moral significance and universal proportions" (Olschki 43). Even if "in Dante's day the many statues of these most popular pagan divinities of Italy had, of course, vanished, just as the innumerable Roman coins with the features and symbols of the Dioscuri had long since disappeared, [...] Hyginus, the mythographer read by medieval scholars, had preserved the memory of the characteristic attribute handed down in the traditional iconography of the Twins" (Olschki 39-40). Accordingly, in Olschki's opinion,

Dante must have seen the pictures of the Gemini in one of those astrological manuscripts he studied so eagerly in both his youth and maturity, when the science of the stars had become one of the main concerns of mathematicians, philosophers, and physicians. He must have contemplated with a particular intentness the features of those felt-capped brothers because the Twins were his own constellation. (Olschki 40)

Moreover, the two mythological brothers were considered in the Roman world as "protectors of mariners and craftsmen all over the Mediterranean area" (Olschki 45). However, as Paola Rigo notes, in all the sources conceivably known to Dante, the Twins "L'uno mortale, l'altro immortale, protagonisti di un alterno moto di caduta e di resurrezione, di una vicendevole catabasi che li accosta, nell'Eneide, a Orfeo, Ercole, Teseo ed Enea [...] sembrano significare l'armonica unione tra il terreno e l'ultraterreno" (Rigo 154). Before turning our attention to the investigation of a passage coming from the Aeneid, the very poem mentioned by Paola Rigo in her meticulous analysis, we should also add, as Olschki says in the wake of Eisler's studies, that "Since late antiquity, the two conjoined felt caps of the Dioscuri were deemed to represent the egg from which they were born, or else,

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10 See Eisler 1.64-67.
singly the two hemispheres of the world” (Olschki 44). With this important information in our mind let us read Servius’ commentary on Aen. 2.44, where Laocoon tries to dissuade the Trojans from accepting the Horse, probably Ulysses’ most devastating artifice, into the walls:

*Sic notus Ulixes?—* Quia, ut ait Homerus, voluntate verberatus et sub habitu mendici Troiam ingressus, exploravit universa. Hic sane Ulixes, filius Laertae, Penelopae maritus fuit. Qui filios habuit Telemachum ex Penelope, ex Circe vero Telegonum, a quo etiam inscio cum is ipse patrem quaereret, occisus est. Huic Ulixi primus Nicomachus pictor pillem caput texisse furtur. Huius post Iliense bellum errores Homerus notos omnibus fecit. De hoc quoque alia fabula narratur. Nam cum Itacham post errores fuisset reversus, invenisse Pana furtur in penatibus suis, qui dicitur ex Penelope et Procis omnibus natus, sicut nomen Pan videtur declarare: quamquam alii hunc de Mercurio, qui in hircum mutatus cum Penelope concubuerat, natum ferunt. Sed Ulixes posteaquam deformem puerum vidit, fugisse dicitur in errores. Necatur autem vel senectute, vel Telegoni filii manu aculeo marinae beluae extactus. Dicitur enim, cum continuo fugeret, a Minerva in equum mutatus.11

This famous page constitutes, as all the commentators and the scholars know very well, Dante’s principal inspiration for the complex delineation of Ulysses’ character in the *Comedy* (and especially, of course, in *Inf.* 26). Here—having disregarded altogether the bizarre story of Pan whose deformity had allegedly scared Ulysses—Dante finds the crucial account of the hero’s persistant desire for adventures and travels. If we combine this crucial element, that is Ulysses’ excessive love for navigation, with the fact that the painter Nicomachus (whose equally adventurous life is summarized by Pliny the Elder in the

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11 “Is this what you have learned about Ulysses?” For, as Homer says, spurred by his tenacious will and disguised as a beggar, he entered Troy. He explored the whole world. This very Ulysses, son of Laertes, was Penelope’s husband and begot two children: Telemachus from Penelope, and Telegonus from Circe. Indeed, Telegonus killed Ulysses, whom he did not recognize, while he was wandering to find his father. It is said that the painter Nicomachus was the first one to portray Ulysses wearing a pillem. Homer has made known to everyone Ulysses’ wanderings after the war of Troy. There circulates also another legend about him. Having returned to Itacha after the completion of his voyages, he found Pan in his house. As the name shows it, Pan was the fruit of Penelope’s love with all the Proci. However, there is a variant of this story: other sources maintain that Pan was the son of Mercury who had slept with Penelope having assumed the shape of a ram. Going back to the other legend, people believe that, after Ulysses saw the monstrous boy, he left his island. He went back to his wanderings and, according to this twofold tale, he died either by age or killed by the hand of Telegonus, armed with the aculeus of a marine monster. It is also a common belief that, since he was always escaping, he was transformed into a horse by Minerva” (My translation).
Naturalis Historia) was the first artist to represent him with a *pilleus* on his head, we are compelled to draw some conclusions. Indeed, we are left with only two sensible explanations. The first possibility is that Dante somehow knew the connection of the *pilleus* (as a kind of felt-cap worn by the Dioscuri) with skillful navigation and craftsmanship (the two ultimate qualities of Ulysses). Therefore, in his bold assertion "prenderò il cappello" of *Par.* 25 (in addition, of course, to all the echoes and the references pointed out by Rigo and Olschki) the poet sanctions his ultimate personal 'correction' of the myth of Ulysses. The ancient traveler is thus seen as his degraded counterpart, the negative hero whose navigation toward the purgatorial mountain has proved tragically unsuccessful. Dante, therefore, should be regarded as the only voyager who really deserves to wear a *pilleus*, here considered both a sign of masterly navigation and of regained freedom. Dante reaches the shores of Purgatory with an impressive march through the very core of the earth and finally regains salvation, whereas Ulysses sails to the mountain, violating the ultimate boundary of Hercules' Pillars losing his life, his soul and his crew.\(^{12}\)

The second interpretive option is that Dante, unable to catch the link between the felt-cap and the idea of craftsmanship and successful navigation, has chosen to amplify his assertion "prenderò il cappello" alluding to Ulysses as his 'mortal' brother, as the mortal twin representing the austral hemisphere, in which, indeed, he had met his end.

\(^{12}\) The three Magi, legendary travelers of Scripture, were also *pilleati*, probably because of their regal dignity and exotic origin (see Olschki 1-27), more than their patient and skillful crossing of deserts. In fact they are portrayed in many *Adorazioni* of late antiquity wearing the famous felt caps and bringing gifts to Infant Jesus. The first example is a mosaic on the left wall of the central nave of S. Apollinare Nuovo (Ravenna), ascribed to the second half of the fourth century a. D., and, most likely, seen by Dante during his stay. The second example comes also from Ravenna and, slightly more recent (fifth century a.D.), consists of the relief of the so-called *Sarcofago di Iseaco* preserved in the church of S.Vitale. The third and fourth examples are: 1) a portion of the unfortunately damaged series of frescoes adorning the apse of the church of S. Maria Foris Portam in Castelseprio (Varese) and ascribed to the late eighth century; 2) the fresco of the *Adorazione* preserved in the church of S. Urbano alla Caffarella (Rome) of the beginning of the eleventh century.
Consequently, Ulysses, seen as an exceptionally brave man, even if his journey was doomed to fail (since it was not allowed by God), deserves to wear a *pileus* only in as much as he embodies the ‘mortal’ Twin Kastor, or, switching the code of the metaphor, the ‘opposite hemisphere’ (del “mondo sanza gente”) where he died losing his freedom forever because of his very craving for it. On the other hand, Dante regains his freedom effectively by virtue of a humble terrestrial pilgrimage, a dramatic switch from slavery to a state of *libertas* under the guidance of a master. He, therefore, is the ‘immortal’ Twin Pollux, the positive hero of the boreal hemisphere, the man who can wear the *pileus* deservedly. Thus, Dante still operates a dramatic ‘correction’ of the story of Ulysses without denying some sort of value to his enterprise. In sum, Dante can be seen as a Twin of Ulysses, but he is the immortal Twin, the winner, whereas Ulysses represents the other one, the mortal loser.

Whichever the correct explanation may be, it is important to underscore, as a conclusion of our study of the ‘isotopy of slavery’ or exile, that all the episodes analyzed are connected as they shed light on and receive meaning from each other. Generally, as we have seen, the last episodes of a given isotopy play a pivotal role since they allow us to interpret the preceding ones retrospectively, and, so to speak, they also allow us to order them mentally according to specific features. It is also remarkable, as it appears in *Par. 25.1-12*, how extraordinarily vast and ‘simultaneous’ Dante’s intertextual strategies can be. All the episodes of the *Comedy* are to be read in ordered sequences according to the political, theological, moral or mythical theme they treat, but the complexity of each episode sometimes exceeds even the capabilities of the best critics who often are left with the suspicious enchantment described so well by Leonardo Olschki: “Whether the idea of liberty connected with it [i.e. the myth of felt] flashed through Dante’s mind when he predicted the birth “*tra feltro e feltro*” of the coming savior of mankind, cannot be definitively ascertained.
Most of Dante’s symbols are polyvalent, just as were the many myths and figures of antiquity mentioned in his poem. He designated his ultramundane journey as the way from slavery to freedom.” (Olschki 46).
CONCLUSIONS

It is now time to summarize all the conclusions we have drawn while examining the different facets of Dante’s dependence on Ovid. As we have stated repeatedly, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* are regarded mainly as a vast repertoire of myths and legends which are revived, exploited and, sometimes, ‘challenged’ or ‘corrected’ by Dante. The Christian writer, when reading and interpreting ancient poetry, has the ultimate authority of adapting the old narrative to a new purpose and of illustrating all the latent potential of the old text. In so doing Dante challenges the great poets of antiquity on a personal level and implicitly presents himself as the only writer capable of producing a redemptive poem.

A given legend, say the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, can therefore be used to illustrate—often, as in this case, by virtue of an effective contrast—how Dante and Beatrice’s love is confined within the safe domain of chastity and how unfortunate the consequences of a lustful love can be. In addition to this ‘exemplary’ potential of the myth or legend, we have also highlighted the peculiar procedure of *découpage* followed by Dante in exploiting his source. The poet divides the legend into several narrative segments and then reuses them in a number of different passages delineating a sequence. This sequence, in turn, does not necessarily have to exhibit a particular pattern, say, a criterion suitable to understanding the reason why the poet is disassembling the Ovidian motif in a certain way. Moreover, the pagan myth conjured by the Christian poet might or might not involve Dante and might or might not imply a reading filtered by Sacred Scripture. This is what we have called the ‘microtextual’ dimension of Dante’s appropriation of the *Metamorphoses*.

In this particular case, Dante, a relentless appropriator of literary sources, exploits the different features of a given topic according to the specific needs of his long poem without delineating a ‘sequentially significant’ pattern. The expression ‘sequentially significant
pattern was coined by Brooks Otis, an illustrious Ovidian scholar, to indicate a peculiar trait of Ovid's art. The Roman poet, indeed, arranged all his tales in chiastic patterns always establishing a central panel or a main narrative axis around which they might revolve. The similarities governing this highly formal symmetry of structure can encompass the plot, the identity of the main character, or the nature of his deeds. In fact, Otis' scheme proves quite flexible, and it is not strictly dependent on the various elements of the story-plot.

In the lengthy account of all the existing critical literature on the problem of the alleged disunity of Ovid's style, we have shown how the idea of repeating or varying or just taking up certain themes in the Metamorphoses mainly serves the purpose of illustrating a possible order of the 'cosmos' and, consequently, represents the structural rendition of it. However, we have tried to reassess this very problem in a new perspective, showing how repetitions in Ovid can also serve the purpose of varying a given plot. We have abstained from drawing any conclusion from this procedure deliberately. The formal evidence needed to state that some passages are connected has been presented, but any broader interpretation of what we can safely consider a fact is, obviously, an unresolved issue. In light of Galinski's studies, we have advanced the hypothesis that a sequence of episodes, very close to each other in plot or narrative, functions as a climax and can produce a metaliterary effect or even trigger a parody.

The reason for the amazing bravura exhibited by Ovid in this particular feature of his art is to be found in his juridical training. Indeed, all the promising young men who attended the schools of the most famous and fashionable rhetoricians in Rome had, among the many other drills and tricks of the trade, to plead a case both in favor of and against a certain thesis. The cases would be summarized succinctly by means of a short rendition of the plot,
and the students would also make variations on the several facets of the situations presented in the summaries.

When Dante composed his masterpiece he knew very well what a big change it is to shift from philosophical treatises written in prose, though including several poetic insertions, to a vast, ambitious poem with theological aims. Within the domain of an epic poem, any explanation of the poetic substance of the text has to be committed to the text itself. Therefore, explaining poetry via poetry must have been one of Dante’s main concerns when he first decided to abandon both the route of Cavalcanti’s poetic experiments and the path indicated to him by Brunetto Latini’s treatises. Accordingly, Dante must have paid a great deal of attention to problems concerning exegesis.

Dealing with the difficult task of making his poem function as a complicated clockwork, as a machine capable of explaining its own functioning even as it engages those functions, Dante could rely only on two models. This is the crucial point of this investigation: as far as the self-exegetical problems of the *Comedy* are concerned, we can assume that Dante received the idea of taking up a given theme in a sequentially significant way not only from the prestigious tradition of biblical typology but also from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Dante must have conceived of Ovid as the ultimate *auctor* authorizing a satisfactory application of the principles of biblical typology to the domain of poetry.

Biblical typology originated from the necessity of connecting all the passages of the Old Testament which foreshadowed a future fulfillment with some other passages of the New Testament. This exegetical habit was mostly regarded as an interpretive tool and, especially among Christian authors, it never turned into a central principle of narration. Dante, indeed, comes up with the brilliant idea of using the structural grid underlying biblical exegesis based on typology as a criterion of organization. He was forced to do so for a
number of reasons. Firstly, the demands of a vast epic poem encompassing both the account of an unprecedented journey in the afterlife and the description of the three realms where the souls dwell after the demise of their bodies, called for a strong and firm structural frame. Secondly, it was evident that some crucial topics, for instance Grace, or Predestination, or the value of poetry as an intellectual activity (and several other themes which could or could not involve him directly both as the author and as a character of the Comedy), needed a more complex treatment than a single cursory allusion. Thirdly, the idea of showing (at least in terms of structure) the amazing similarity between poetry describing a Christian enterprise and the account of the very History of Salvation would grant an immense prestige to the poet, making his work equal to that of God himself. Thus, for instance, all the episodes of the Comedy having to do with Dante's admission to a superior level of moral and intellectual dignity (illustrated in chapter four) can be read as Dante's own little 'History of Salvation'. Accordingly, the reader understands that divine Providence operates on man during his life directly, designing a path for him marked by situations linked to each other and eventually leading him to Salvation. Poetry, in turn, by means of his repetition-techniques and thanks to its long-standing reputation as the most effective way of civilizing humankind proves the best tool for this arduous didactic purpose. Finally, the way in which the three realms of the afterlife are structured and described (the categories of the seven deadly sins for Hell and Purgatory and the corresponding categories of virtue in Heaven are, de facto, the big scheme adopted by Dante to distribute the subject matter of his masterpiece) implied by necessity a great deal of repetition and cross-reference when dealing with the some behavioral pattern enacted in three possible different ways (1] succumbing to a certain sin; 2] repenting before dying and atoning for the same kind of sin in Purgatory; 3] achieving perfection before dying by tempering successfully the influence of a given planet).
Accordingly, in our perspective, it is possible to say that Dante follows in the steps of Ovid even when he is not following him as the principal source for a given myth. Indeed, on the one hand, Dante reuses numerous myths mostly for the potential of their imagery and symbolism and arranges all their facets in a series of allusions (some of which do or do not involve him: some ‘filtered’ or not filtered by Sacred Scripture). On the other hand, though, Dante deals also with other topics and other stories (involving his moral growth, his poetic autobiography, and his theological convictions or stories completely unrelated to him as a character of the *Comedy*). In this case, far more interestingly, Dante continues to be a learned reader of Ovid. He understands that, just as Ovid had, for instance, linked the stories of the incestuous loves of Biblis for her brother and Myrrha for her father, he, in turn, can usefully connect the stories of Cato, Trajan, and Ripheus—concerning the themes of salvation by Grace and predestination—or the stories of Paolo e Francesca, Pia de’ Tolomei and Piccarda Donati, all based on the different outcomes of the same human sentiment of love.

As we have frequently said, it is difficult to understand what this repetition of themes meant to Ovid. Likely, it was simply a way of showing how the incessant eternal transformations of nature can be portrayed in a metaliterary fashion showing how any story unavoidably repeats itself. It is impossible to ascertain whether Dante was aware of the deep substance and motivation of Ovidian poetry. It is a fact, however, that he also arranges certain episodes in a sequentially significant way. He derives his motivations from the necessity of finding a self-exegetical device for his masterpiece, from the rigid and ambitious structure of his poem, and from the *Bible*. It is my idea that Dante saw in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* the real possibility of treating poetry in a revolutionary way. Ovid’s book ended up representing to him the poetic equivalent of a modern encyclopedia and also the evident *auctoritas* confirming that poetry can both please and redeem the reader.
By necessity, coincidence, or sharp intuition, Dante learned his lesson from Ovid. He recognized clearly that the poet of Sulmona had designed the whole frame of his poem according to a complicated linear pattern and a sophisticated architecture. Most likely, he also noted how the episodes had been connected to each other by Ovid through the repetition of certain keywords, portions of exameter, and plot-features. Probably ignoring the complexity of Ovid’s games, he was inspired to give cohesion and metaleterary substance to the *Comedy* following the same method: highlighting similarities and differences. Within the vast domain of an epic poem, he assigned additional value to the repetition of a theme. His peculiar way of arranging the subject matter of his masterpiece was intended to reveal how human intellect works when guided by the lines of the poet during the experience of reading the *poema sacro*. The process of understanding the poem and interpreting it does not differ at all from the way God leads us along the path of our life. The poet uses poetic devices that trigger certain reflections in our mind when we associate different episodes. God, in turn, uses providential signs. The poet writes a book, the *Comedy*, an exceptional *poema sacro*; God wrote the Book *par excellence*, the Bible. The Christian poet understood how even Ovid’s marvelous and yet imperfect work of art, seemed to parallel the example of the Bible. Therefore, his task was to abide by the same aesthetic principles and, in fact, to challenge and eventually to surpass them.

The Appendix following these conclusions constitutes, as we have already explained at the end of Chapter one, the unavoidable point of departure for any study concerning Dante’s dependence on the *Metamorphoses* on the microtextual level. Here we are dealing with 251 *loci* of the *Comedy* that are more or less evidently related to Ovid’s masterpiece. As we have suggested, it would be appropriate, if one decided to compile an exhaustive taxonomy of all the occurrences, to abandon Moore’s old criterion of classification. This
criterion was based on the psychological evaluation of Dante’s way of quoting Ovid: fully aware quotation, marked by an A; disguised quote, marked by B and so on.

By contrast, we have suggested adopting a different principle which, indeed, does more justice to Dante’s complex exploitation of Ovid’s poetry. It would be appropriate, accordingly, to divide all the quotations into three groups. The first one should include all the ‘technical’ references to characters and places taken from the *Metamorphoses*, a work used in this case, as a big encyclopedia of old myths and legends. The second group, including mainly similes and poetic phrases, could be considered as a list of passages of the *Comedy* in which Ovid’s *Dichtung* has proved greatly influential on Dante. The Christian poet has drawn upon the imagery and the naturalistic descriptions of the Roman poet. The third group should also encompass all the mythical figures and legendary deeds contained in the *Metamorphoses*, but, in this case, the scholar should discuss the approach taken by Dante. In fact, here Dante does not merely hint at the myths and at all the heroes involved in them. As we have explained, in the wake of the most recent scholarly contributions, Dante evokes certain myths to challenge them: to show how the philosophically incomplete and veiled narration of the pagan poet can only find its fulfillment in his own *poema sacro*. The criterion I have proposed to assess this particular case is modular and based on a linear, binary sequence of definitions. Is the mythical figure or the legend at stake taken up more than once in the *Comedy*? Does the mention of the myth involve Dante as a character of the *Comedy*? Is the myth evoked to be paired with or filtered by Sacred Scripture? Does the quote involve a challenge? Answering all these questions will result in the compilation of a detailed chart of all the myths and legends included in the third group.

The taxonomy we are describing should also contain accurate cross-references linking all the myths, characters and elements of diction we have been defining. The result of
such a work would prove not only an abridgment and rationalization of the Appendix I have produced, but could also be considered the ultimate reference for a study of Ovid’s presence in the *Divine Comedy*. As was remarked at the end of chapter one, this thesis was not intended to result in a fully fledged taxonomy of the kind we have described, chiefly because of the great breadth and complexity of the necessary investigation of the Christian authors known to Dante. Through such an undertaking, the scholar could unite the microtextual and macrotextual levels of the research, thus allowing himself to draw safe conclusions not only about the particular limited allusion to a certain myth but also about the general arrangement of the Ovidian ‘material’ in the *Comedy*. As a consequence, it would be possible to gage even more than we did the astounding similarity between Dante’s and Ovid’s story-telling. Expanding the analysis could be the only way to show even more clearly how important a role Ovid played as an *auctor* in influencing Dante’s compositional technique. In Dante’s eyes Ovid was, indeed, the only author who had produced a pagan Scripture, the only author who had produced a poem of almost the same complexity as the Bible itself.
APPENDIX

The following is the list of all the commentators whose work has been used to create the Dartmouth Dante Project Database. All of them are listed according to a chronological order, that is the date of publication of their commentaries. Moore and Paratore have been inserted, wherever necessary, after these commentators.

Jacopo Alighieri [Jacopo] 1322; Jacopo della Lana [Lana] 1324-28; Guido da Pisa [Guido] 1327-28; l'Ottimo commento [Ottimo] 1333; Anonimo selmiano [Selmiano] 1337; Pietro di Dante [Pietro] 1340; codice cassinese [Cassinese] 1350; Giovanni Boccaccio [Boccaccio] 1373; Benvenuto da Imola [Benvenuto] 1380; Anonimo fiorentino [Fiorentino] 1400; Giovanni da Serravalle [Serravalle] 1416-17; Guiniforto 1440; Vellutello 1544 (through Purg. 10); Daniello 1568; Castelvetro 1570; Venturi 1732; Lombardi 1791-92; Portirelli 1804-05; Costa 1819-21; Tommaseo 1837 (edition of 1865); Longfellow 1867 (through Purg. 33); Gregorio di Siena [Siena] 1867; Bianchi 1868; Scartazzini 1874-82 (second edition of 1900); Berthier 1892-97; Tozer 1901; Ruskin 1903; Torraca 1905; Grandgent 1909-13; Mestica 1921-22; Casini-Barbi 1921; Steiner 1921: del Lungo [Lungo] 1926; Scartazzini-Vandelli [Vandelli] 1929; Grabher 1934-36; Trucchi 1936; Pietrobono 1946; Momigliano 1946-51; Porena 1946-48; Sapegno 1955-57; Chimenz 1962; Fallani 1965; Padoan 1967; Giacalone 1968; Singleton 1970-75; Bosco-Reggio 1979; Pasquini-Quaglio 1982.
**INFERNO**

*Inf.* 1.42  
(about the spotted “lonza”)  
Commentators:  
Grandgent.

*Met.* 3.669

*Inf.* 1.48  
(about the expression “l’aere ne tremesse”)  
Commentators:  
Tommaseo, Torraca, Grandgent, Padoan, Singleton, Moore, Paratore.

*Met.* 13.406

*Inf.* 2.58  
(about the surviving fame of the poets)  
Commentators:  
Siena.

*Met.* 15.871-79.

*Inf.* 3.1-9  
(about Orpheus’ descent to Hell)  
Commentators:  
Guido.

*Met.* 10.13

*Inf.* 4.140-41  
(about Orpheus)  
Commentators:  
Guido, Boccaccio, Benvenuto, Pietrobono, Sapegno, Fallani, Padoan, Singleton, Pasquini-Quaglio.

*Met.* 11.1ff.

*Inf.* 5.4  
(about Minos)  
Commentators:  
Guido, Benvenuto, Trucchi.

Inf. 5.20
(about the entrance of Hell)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Sapegno, Pasquini-Quaglio.

Met. 4.439-40

Inf. 5.52-54
(about Pyramus and Thisbe)
Commentators:
Guido, Singleton.

Met. 4.58

Inf. 5.64
Met. 12.615; Met. 13.448; Met. 15.232-33
(about Achilles and Helena)
Commentators:
Guido, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Berthier, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Trucchi, Pietrobono, Sapegno, Padoan, Giacalone, Bosco-Reggio.

Inf. 5.65
Met. 13.384-93
(about Achilles)
Commentators:
Guido, Torraca, Pietrobono.

Inf. 6.1
Met. 6.531
(about the expression: "al tornar della mente")
Commentators:
Padoan.

Inf. 6.13
Met. 4.448-53
(about Cerberus)
Commentators:
Jacopo, Benvenuto, Serravalle, Torraca, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Trucchi, Sapegno, Fallani, Padoan, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio.
Inf. 6.21
(about Erysichton and the gluttons)
Commentators:
Padoan.

Inf. 7.22
(about Scylla)
Commentators:
Guido. Ottimo, Venturi, Berthier, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Trucchi, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio.

Inf. 7.27
(about Sisyphus)
Commentators:
Padoan.

Inf. 8.12
(about the word “fummo”)
Commentators:
Padoan.

Inf. 8.13-15
(about the simile of the arrow)
Commentators:
Vandelli, Sapegno, Padoan, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Paratore.

Inf. 8.19
(about the description of Envy)
Commentators:
Guido.

Inf. 8.67-69; Inf. 8.82
(about the City of Dis)
Commentators:
Guido, Ottimo, Tommaseo, Sapegno, Padoan, Bosco-Reggio.
In 9.1-3
(about the act of blushing)
Commentators:
Guido.

In 9.38
(about the Furies)
Commentators:
Ottimo, Boccaccio, Tommaseo, Torraca, Grandgent, Mestica, Casini-Barbi, Trucchi (who adds Met. 10.349), Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Paratore.

In 9.52
(about Medusa)
Commentators:
Jacopo, Guido, Ottimo, Vellutello, Daniello, Venturi, Tommaseo, Siena, Torraca, Grandgent, Steiner, Sapegno, Singleton.

In 9.54
(about Theseus' descent to Hell)
Commentators:
Guido, Vellutello (who adds Met. 4.699 about Gorgon), Tommaseo.

In 9.76
(about the simile of the frogs)
Commentators:
Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Sapegno, Fallani, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio.

In 12.11-12
(about Pasiphae)
Commentators:
Lana, Guido, Ottimo, Pietro, Vellutello, Daniello, Tommaseo, Torraca, Grandgent, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Sapegno, Fallani, Singleton.
Inf. 12.40-43  
(about the four elements)  
Commentators:  
Guido, Ottimo, Benvenuto, Serravalle, Daniello, Tommaseo, Torraca.

Inf. 12.67-69  
(about the centaur Nessus)  
Commentators:  
Guido, Ottimo, Pietro, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Vellutello, Daniello, Tommaseo, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Porena, Sapegno, Fallani, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Moore, Paratore.

Inf. 12.70-75  
(about the centaur Pholus)  
Commentators:  
Vellutello, Castelvetro, Venturi, Tommaseo, Steiner, Vandelli, Trucchi, Porena, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Paratore.

Inf. 12.95  
(about the centaur Nessus)  
Commentators:  
Singleton, Moore.

Inf. 12.98-99  
(about Nessus, centaur "scitus vadorum")  
Commentators:  
Tommaseo, Tozer, Torraca, Porena, Moore.

Inf. 12.135  
(about Pyrrhus and Polyxena)  
Commentators:  
Guido.
Inf. 13. 37-39
(about the Heliades, Dryope and Lotis)
Commentators:
Trucchi, Giacalone, Singleton, Paratore.

Inf. 13. 115-17
(about Actaeon)
Commentators:
Pietro, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Tommaseo, Giacalone, Singleton.

Inf. 14. 58
(about the battle of Phlegra and the giants)
Commentators:
Ottimo, Benvenuto, Sapegno, Fallani, Bosco-Reggio.

Inf. 14. 106-108
(about the decadence of the humankind)
Commentators:
Guido, Ottimo, Pietro, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Venturi, Portirelli, Tommaseo, Longfellow, Siena, Torraca, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Trucchi, Sapegno, Giacalone, Singleton, Paratore.

Inf. 14. 109-11
(about the decadence of the humankind)
Commentators:
Lombardi, Torraca, Fallani.

Inf. 15. 11-12
(about the expression "qual che si fosse")
Commentators:
Steiner, Giacalone.
Inf. 17.16-18
(about Arachnes)
Commentators:
Jacopo, Guido, Ottimo, Selmiano, Fiorentino, Vellutello, Venturi, Tommaseo, Longfellow, Scartazzini, Berthier, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.

Inf. 17.97-99
(about Jerion)
Commentators:
Vellutello.

Inf. 17.106-108
(about Phaeton)
Commentators:
Guido, Ottimo, Selmiano, Pietro, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Fiorentino, Serravalle, Vellutello, Daniello (who quotes the passage about the milky way), Castelvetro, Venturi, Lombardi, Portirelli, Tommaseo, Longfellow, Siena, Scartazzini, Berthier, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Pietrobono, Sapegno, Chimenz, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.

Inf. 17.109-11
(about Icarus)
Commentators:
Guido, Ottimo, Pietro, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Serravalle, Vellutello, Daniello, Venturi, Tommaseo, Longfellow, Scartazzini, Berthier, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Pietrobono, Porena, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.

Inf. 18. 86-96
(about Jason)
Commentators:
Inf. 18.92
(about Hypsipyle)
Commentators:
Vandelli.

Inf. 18.95
(about Medea)
Commentators:
Vandelli.

Inf. 20.28-30
(about the sentence: "scelus est pietas in coniuge Tereo")
Commentators:
Daniello, Venturi.

Inf. 20.40-45
(about Tiresias)
Commentators:
Guido, Ottimo, Pietro, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Fiorentino, Vellutello, Daniello, Tommaseo, Longfellow, Siena, Scartazzini, Berthier, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Mestica, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Pietrobono, Momigliano, Porena, Sapegno, Chimenz, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio.

Inf. 20.52-55
(about Manto)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Sapegno, Fallani, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.

Inf. 20.106-112
(about Euripilus)
Commentators:
Guido (who quotes the passage in reference to Calcas), Steiner, Vandelli, Bosco-Reggio (like Guido).
Inf. 22.25-27  
(about the simile of the frogs)  
Commentators:  
Casini-Barbi.

Inf. 22.32-33  
(about another simile on the frogs)  
Commentators:  
Guido, Torraca, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli.

Inf. 23.18  
(about the dog hunting the hair)  
Commentators:  
Castelvetro.

Inf. 23.82-83  
(about emotions being evident on someone’s face)  
Commentators:  
Guido.

Inf. 24.1-5  
(about the expression “iuvenes annos”)  
Commentators:  
Giacalone.

Inf. 24.85  
(about the snakes originated from the blood of Medusa, killed by Perseus)  
Commentators:  
Ottimo, Fiorentino, Tommaseo, Grandgent, Vandelli, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Pasquini-Quaglio.

Inf. 24.109-111  
(about the Phoenix)  
Commentators:  
Guido, Ottimo, Pietro, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Serravalle, Vellutello, Daniello, Venturi, Lombardi, Tommaseo, Siena, Bianchi, Scartazzini, Berthier, Tozer.
Torraca, Grandgent, Mestica, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Pietrobono, Momigliano, Porena, Sapegno, Chimenz, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Moore, Paratore.

Inf. 25.44-45 Met. 9.692
(about the expression “dal mento al naso”) Commentators:
Tommaseo, Siena, Scartazzini, Vandelli.

Inf. 25.58-60 Met. 4.365
(about the simile of the ivy) Commentators:
Torraca, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Moore.

Inf. 25.68 Met. 3.673-74
(about the expression “come ti muti”) Commentators:
Tommaseo, Chimenz, Giacalone.

Inf. 25.77 Met. 4.373-75; Met. 4.378-79
(about Hermaphroditus) Commentators:
Guiniforto, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent (who connects Inf. 25.72 to Met. 4.373-75), Vandelli, Trucchi, Sapegno, Chimenz, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Moore.

Inf. 25.97-99 Met. 4.563-604; Met. 5.572-671
(about Cadmus and Arethusa) Commentators:
Jacopo, Lana, Guido, Ottimo, Selmiano, Pietro, Benvenuto, Fiorentino, Serravalle, Guiniforto, Vellutello, Daniello, Castelvetro, Lombardi, Portirelli, Costa, Longfellow, Siena, Bianchi, Scartazzini, Berthier, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Mestica, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Lungo, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Pietrobono, Momigliano, Porena, Sapegno (who connects this passage also to the episode of Salmacis of Met. 4.356-86), Chimenz, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio (like Sapegno), Pasquini-Quaglio.
Inf. 25.114  
(about the arms of a sinner transformed into legs)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini.

Inf. 25.133-35  
(about the image of the forked tongue)
Commentators:
Lombardi, Tommaseo, Siena, Bianchi, Scartazzini, Tozer (who connects this passage to Met. 4.585-88), Grandgent (like Tozer), Casini-Barbi (like Tozer), Steiner (like Tozer), Vandelli (like Tozer). Trucchi, Sapegno, Fallani, Singleton, Pasquini-Quaglio.

Inf. 26.55-57  
(about Ulysses and Diomedes)
Commentators:
Guido, Pietro.

Inf. 26.61-62  
(about Ulysses' astuteness)
Commentators:
Daniello.

Inf. 26.85-92  
(about Circe)
Commentators:
Guido, Pietro, Vellutello, Tommaseo, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Trucchi, Porena, Sapegno, Chimenz, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Moore, Paratore.

Inf. 26.93  
(about Circe and Gaeta)
Commentators:
Guido, Vellutello, Grandgent, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.
Inf. 26.106
(about Ulysses’ trip)
Commentators:
Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Trucchi, Momigliano, Sapegno, Chimenz, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio.

Inf. 26.112-20
(about the mission of the humankind: “fatti non foste a viver come bruti”)
Commentators:
Guido. Ottimo (who connects this passage also to Met. 13.1-398).

Inf. 27.60
(about the expression “diè cotai fiato”)
Commentators:

Inf. 27.108-111
(about Ulysses’ astuteness)
Commentators:
Guido.

Inf. 28.1-3
(about the impossibility of rendering the pain of Meleager’s sisters)
Commentators:
Guido.

Inf. 29.58-63
(about Aegina’s plague)
Commentators:
Inf. 29.67-69        Met. 7.547-560
(about lying prone on the ground)
Commentators:
Scartazzini, Vandelli, Giacalone, Singleton.

Inf. 29.139          Met. 14.91
(about the transformation of the Cercopes into monkeys)
Commentators:
Siena.

Inf. 30.1-12         Met. 4.512-62
(about Learchus and Melicerta)
Commentators:

Inf. 30.13-21        Met. 13.399-575.
(about the fall of Troy and Ecuba's doom)
Commentators:

Inf. 30.31-45        Met. 10.298-502
(about Myrrha)
Commentators:

Inf. 30.127-29       Met. 3.407-510
(about Narcissus)
Commentators:
Jacopo, Guido, Ottimo, Fiorentino, Venturi, Longfellow, Scartazzini, Berthier, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Sapegno, Fallani, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Paratore.

Inf. 31.4-6       Met. 13.171-72
(about Achilles’ spear)
Commentators:
Pietro, Cassinese, Fiorentino, Vellutello, Venturi, Lombardi (who connects this passage only to Met. 12.112), Portirelli, Tommaseo, Siena (who connects this passage also to Met. 12.112), Scartazzini, Berthier, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Trucchi, Porena, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Bosco-Reggio.

Inf. 31.32-33: Inf. 31.45       Met. 1.151-59
(about the giants)
Commentators:
Siena (who connects this passage also to Met. 5.321 ff.), Scartazzini (who connects this passage also to Met. 1.184), Torraca, Grandgent, Vandelli, Fallani.

Inf. 31.94-96       Met. 1.151-55
(about Ephialtes)
Commentators:
Guido, Pietro, Benvenuto, Tommaseo, Siena, Berthier, Torraca, Trucchi.

Inf. 31.118-20       Met. 1.151-55
(about the fight against the giants)
Commentators:
Vellutello, Siena.

Inf. 31.124       Met. 4.457 ff.; Met. 5.346-53
(about the giant Tityus)
Commentators:
Guido, Ottimo, Pietro, Benvenuto, Fiorentino, Vellutello (who connects this passage only to Met. 4.457 ff.), Siena, Scartazzini, Berthier, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Sapegno, Fallani, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Paratore.
Inf. 31.131-32  
*Met. 9.183-84*
(about Hercules and Antaeus)
Commentators:
Torraca. Pietrobono.

Inf. 32.31  
*Met. 6.370-81*
(about the simile of the frog)
Commentators:

Inf. 32.36  
*Met. 6.97*
(about the stork)
Commentators:

Inf. 33.73  
*Met. 6.277 ff.*
(about the story of Niobe)
Commentators:

Inf. 34.10-12  
*Met. 4.354-55*
(about the expression "come festuca")
Commentators:
Vandelli. Sapegno. Pasquini-Quaglio

Inf. 34.49-50  
*Met. 4.407*
(about the wings of the bats)
Commentators:
Siena.
**PURGATORIO**

*Purg. 1.9*  
*Met. 5.338-40*  
(about Calliope)  

*Purg. 1.10-12*  
*Met. 5.302 ff.*  
(about the Pierides. “le Piche”)  

*Purg. 2.7-9*  
*Met. 6.47-49*  
(about the description of the dawn)  
Commentators: Pietro, Tommaseo, Moore.

*Purg. 2.44*  
*Met. 6.72-74*  
(about the expression “per inscripto”)  
Commentators: Tommaseo, Torraca.

*Purg. 4.64-66*  
*Met. 2.401-495*  
(about Callistus)  
Commentators: Fiorentino, Vellutello.

*Purg. 4.67-72*  
*Met. 2.1-332*  
(about Phaeton)  
Commentators: Lana, Ottimo, Cassinese, Vellutello, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Grandgent, Mestica, Trucchi, Paratore.
Purg. 4.139
(about the description of the night)
Commentators:
Daniello, Venturi, Tommaseo, Casini-Barbi, Singleton, Moore.

Purg. 5.78
(about Neptune's hatred against Achilles)
Commentators:
Steiner.

Purg. 8.7-9
(about Jupiter waving his hand)
Commentators:
Pietro, Vellutello, Portirelli, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi.

Purg. 9.1
(about Tethys)
Commentators:
Pietro, Cassinese, Serravalle, Scartazzini.

Purg. 9.5-6
(about the constellation of the Scorpio)
Commentators:
Serravalle, Tozer, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Singleton, Pasquini-Quaglio, Moore.

Purg. 9.13-17
(about Philomela)
Commentators:
Lana, Ottimo, Pietro, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Fiorentino, Serravalle, Vellutello, Venturi, Portirelli, Tommaseo, Longfellow, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Lungo, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Moore.
Purg. 9.19-27  
(about Ganymedes)  
Commentators:  
Ottimo, Pietro, Vellutello, Venturi, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.

Purg. 9.34-39  
(about Achilles at Scyrus)  
Commentators:  
Vellutello, Portirelli.

Purg. 9.63  
(about Sleep and Hercules disappearing together)  
Commentators:  
Daniello, Venturi, Longfellow.

Purg. 9.131-32  
(about Orpheus and Eurydice)  
Commentators:  
Longfellow, Grandgent, Pasquini-Quaglio.

Purg. 10.41-45  
(about the softening wax)  
Commentators:  
Vandelli.

Purg. 11.58-72  
(about the earth, great mother)  
Commentators:  
Portirelli.

Purg. 12.7-9  
(about the first men walking erected)  
Commentators:  
Benvenuto, Tommaseo, Torraca.
Purg. 12.31
(about the defeat of the giants at Phlegra)
Commentators:
Daniello, Tommaseo, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Scartazzini, Vandelli, Trucchi, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio.

Purg. 12.37-39
(about Niobe)
Commentators:
Lana, Pietro, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Daniello, Venturi, Longfellow, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Porena, Sapegno, Chimenz, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Moore.

Purg. 12.43-45
(about Arachnes)
Commentators:
Lana, Ottimo, Pietro, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Serravalle, Daniello, Venturi, Tommaseo, Longfellow, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Pietrobono, Porena, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.

Purg. 12.49-51
(about Almeon)
Commentators:

Purg. 12.64-72
(about skills in craftsmanship)
Commentators:
Portirelli, Tommaseo.
Purg. 12.81  Met. 2.118-19
(about the Hours)
Commentators:

Purg. 12.133  Met. 15.566-68
(about the giant Cipus)
Commentators:
Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Trucchi, Fallani, Giacalone, Bosco-Reggio.

Purg. 13.7-9  Met. 2.760-77
(about Envy)
Commentators:
Daniello, Venturi, Portirelli, Scartazzini, Vandelli.

Purg. 13.48  Met. 2.832
(about the color of the stone)
Commentators:
Pietro, Portirelli, Tommaseo, Vandelli.

Purg. 13.61-63  Met. 2.760-77
(about the description of the house of Envy)
Commentators:
Daniello, Venturi, Tommaseo.

Purg. 14.42  Met. 14.223-319
(about Circe)
Commentators:
Torraca, Pasquini-Quaglio.

Purg. 14.82-84  Met. 2.778-96
(about Envy)
Commentators:
Daniello, Venturi.
Purg. 14.139  Met. 2.714-817
(about Aglauros)
Commentators:

Purg. 14.148-151  Met. 1.84-87
(about the golden age)
Commentators:
Pietro, Tommaseo, Longfellow, Scartazzini, Trucchi.

Purg. 15.13-15  Met. 2.276
(about the expression “fare solecchio”)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Bosco-Reggio, Paratore.

Purg. 15.94-105  Met. 6.70-82
(about Neptune and Minerva’s dispute to obtain the right of naming Athens)
Commentators:

Purg. 15.118-23  Met. 3.608-609
(about sleepy Bacchus)
Commentators:
Trucchi.

Purg. 16.136  Met. 1.607-608
(about the expression “m’inganna”)
Commentators:
Steiner.
Purg. 17.19-20
(about Philomela and Prognes)
Commentators:

Purg. 18.28
(see also Par. 4.77)
(about the upward movement of fire)
Commentators:
Grandgent, Vandelli.

Purg. 20.106-108
(about Midas)
Commentators:

Purg. 20.114-15
(about Polynestor and Polydor)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi. Steiner, Vandelli, Sapegno, Fallani, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Moore.

Purg. 20.131-32
(about Latona giving birth to Apollo and Diana on the island of Delos)
Commentators:

Purg. 21.25-30
(about Lachesis)
Commentators:
Vandelli.
Purg. 21.50-51
(see also Par. 12.12)
(about Iris)
Commentators:
Lana, Fiorentino, Daniello, Lombardi, Tommaseo (who connects the passage only to Met. 4.480), Scartazzini, Grandgent, Vandelli, Sapegno, Singleton, Paratore.

Purg. 21.85
(about poetic fame)
Commentators:
Torraca.

Purg. 22.118
(about the Hours)
Commentators:
Casini-Barbi.

Purg. 22.148-54
(about the golden age)
Commentators:
Pietro, Cassinese, Tommaseo, Longfellow, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Trucchi, Sapegno, Fallani, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Moore.

Purg. 23.22-24
(about the general description of Hunger)
Commentators:
Benvenuto, Daniello, Venturi, Portirelli, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Torraca, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Trucchi, Sapegno, Giacalone, Singleton, Paratore.

Purg. 23.25-27
(about Erysichthon)
Commentators:
Ottimo, Pietro, Benvenuto, Fiorentino, Serravalle, Daniello, Venturi, Lombardi, Portirelli, Tommaseo, Longfellow, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Mestica, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Pietrobono.
Momigliano, Porena, Sapegno, Chimenz, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Moore, Paratore.

*Purg. 23.68*  
*Met. 4.458-59*  
(about Tantalus)  
Commentators:  
Scartazzini, Grandgent.

*Purg. 24.4*  
*Met. 10.60*  
(about the expression "rimorte")  
Commentators:  
Casini-Barbi.

*Purg. 24.28*  
*Met. 8.824-27*  
(about Erysichton)  
Commentators:  
Tommaseo, Longfellow, Scartazzini, Torraca, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Sapegno, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio.

*Purg. 24.121-23*  
*Met. 12.219-25*  
(about the centaurs)  
Commentators:  

*Purg. 25.22-24*  
*Met. 8.511-17*  
(about Meleager)  
Commentators:  

*Purg. 25.130-32*  
*Met. 2.401-495*  
(see also *Par. 31.32-33*)  
(about Callistus)
Commentators:
Ottimo, Pietro, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Daniello, Venturi, Portirelli, Tommaseo, Longfellow, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Porena, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Moore, Paratore.

_Purg._ 26.35  
_Met._ 7.624-26

*(about the simile of the ants)*
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Torraca, Grandgent, Mestica, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Sapegno, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio.

_Purg._ 26.41-42  
_Met._ 8.132-37

*(about Pasiphae)*
Commentators:
Steiner, Singleton.

_Purg._ 26.82  
_Met._ 4.55-166

*(about Hermaphroditus)*
Commentators:
Lombardi, Portirelli, Scartazzini, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Pietrobono, Sapegno, Chimenz, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio.

_Purg._ 27.37-41  
_Met._ 4.125-27; _Met._ 4.145-46

*(about Pyramus and Thisbe)*
Commentators:

_Purg._ 27.135  
_Met._ 1.101-102

*(about the golden age)*
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Grandgent, Vandelli, Sapegno, Moore.
Purg. 28.8-12  (about the trembling branches)  
Commentators:  
Tommaseo, Giacalone.

Purg. 28.19-21  (about the pinewood of Classe)  
Commentators:  
Scartazzini, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi.

Purg. 28.31-33  (about the lake of Pergus)  
Commentators:  
Tommaseo, Torraca, Grandgent, Giacalone, Singleton.

Purg. 28.41-42  (about the description of a 'locus amoenus')  
Commentators:  
Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Bosco-Reggio.

Purg. 28.49-51  (about Proserpina)  
Commentators:  

Purg. 28.64-66  (about Venus and Adonis)  
Commentators:  
Purg. 28.67-69  
*Met. 1.101-102*  
(about the golden age)  
Commentators:  
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Moore.

Purg. 28.139-42  
*Met. 1.89-93*  
(about the golden age)  
Commentators:  
Ottimo, Benvenuto, Daniello, Portirelli, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Sapegno, Chimenz, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Moore, Paratore.

Purg. 28.143-44  
*Met. 1.107-111*  
(about the golden age)  
Commentators:  
Daniello, Lombardi, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Vandelli, Grabher, Pietrobono, Sapegno, Chimenz, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio.

Purg. 29.4-6  
*Met. 1.475-76: Met. 5.585*  
(about Daphne and Arethusa)  
Commentators:  
Torraca.

Purg. 29 94-96  
*Met. 1.625-27*  
(about the eyes of Argus)  
Commentators:  
Fiorentino, Serravalle, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Trucchi, Momigliano, Sapegno, Fallani, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Moore, Paratore.

Purg. 29.118-20  
*Met. 2.1-332*  
(about Phaeton and the chariot of the Sun)  
Commentators:  
Ottimo, Benvenuto, Fiorentino, Serravalle, Daniello, Tommaseo, Longfellow, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Lungo, Vandelli, Porena, Sapegno, Fallani, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.
Purg. 29.126
(about pressed snow)
Commentators:
Vandelli.

Purg. 30.22-25
Met. 2.112-15; Met. 6.47-48
(about the description of the dawn)
Commentators:
Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Moore.

Purg. 30.68
Met. 6.80-81
(about the olive-tree, symbol of Minerva)
Commentators:
Torraca, Sapegno, Fallani.

Purg. 30.85
Met. 8.329; Met. 10.372; Met. 4.360
11.360; Met.
(about the expression “vive travi”)
Commentators:
Lombardi, Portirelli, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Vandelli, Sapegno, Singleton.

Purg. 30.85-93
Met. 9.661-65
(about melting snow)
Commentators:
Portirelli, Scartazzini, Trucchi.

Purg. 31.121-26
Met. 4.347-49
(about Salmacis)
Commentators:
Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Trucchi, Bosco-Reggio, Paratore.

Purg. 31.140-45
Met. 1.466-70
(about mount Parnassus, called “arx umbrosa”)
Commentators:
Lombardi, Portirelli, Scartazzini.
Purg. 32.35  
(about the simile of the arrow)
Commentators:
Grandgent, Singleton.

Purg. 32.52-57  
(about Phaeton's horses)
Commentators:

Purg. 32.64-68  
(about Syrinx and Argus)
Commentators:

Purg. 32.110-11  
(about the lightning)
Commentators:
Vandelli, Singleton.

Purg. 33.46-48  
(about Themis and the Sphinx)
Commentators:

Purg. 33.49-51  
(about the Naiads)
Commentators:
Lunço, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Pietrobono, Momigliano, Porena, Sapegno, Chimenz, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Moore, Paratore.

_Purg._ 33.69  
(about Pyramus and Thisbe)  
Commentators:  
Scartazzini, Steiner, Vandelli, Giacalone, Paratore.

**PARADISO**

_Par._ 1.15  
(about Daphne)  
Commentators:  

_Par._ 1.16-17  
(about mount Parnassus)  
Commentators:  
Daniello, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Vandelli, Trucchi, Sapegno, Bosco-Reggio, Paratore.

_Par._ 1.19-21  
(about Marsyas)  
Commentators:  
Lana, Ottimo, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Fiorentino, Venturi, Portirelli, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Porena, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.
Par. 1.31-33
(about the expression “fronda peneia”)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi.

Par. 1.67-69
(about Glaucus)
Commentators:
Ottimo, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Lombardi. Portirelli, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Mestica, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Trucchi, Pietrobono, Momigliano, Porena, Sapegno, Chimenz, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.

Par. 1.109-111
(about terrestrial gravity)
Commentators:
Daniello.

Par. 1.117
(about terrestrial gravity)
Commentators:
Daniello, Venturi, Portirelli.

Par. 2.8
(about the verb “spira”)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini.

Par. 2.16-17
(about the Argonauts)
Commentators:
Lombardi, Portirelli, Costa, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Pietrobono, Porena, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Moore, Paratore.
Par. 2.21
(about the speed of the heaven)
Commentators:
Grandgent, Vandelli, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio.

Par. 2.33
(about the reflection of light)
Commentators:
Scartazzini, Vandelli.

Par. 2.102
(about the expression “ripercosso”)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Sapegno, Bosco-Reggio.

Par. 2.106
(see also Purg. 30.85)
(about melting snow)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi.

Par. 3.11
(about the limpid water of a source)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini.

Par. 3.17
(about Narcissus)
Commentators:
Lana, Pietro, Benvenuto, Fiorentino, Serravalle, Portirelli, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Mestica, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Pietrobono, Sapegno, Chimenz, Fallani, Giacalone, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.
Par. 3.29-30
(about the instability of the moon)
Commentators:
Daniello

Par. 4.1-6
(about the paradox of the ass of Buridan and about Perseus)
Commentators:

Par. 4.77
(see also Purg. 18.28)
(about the upward movement of fire)
Commentators:
Scartazzini.

Par. 4.100-105
(about Almeon)
Commentators:

Par. 5.70
(about Iphigenia)
Commentators:

Par. 5.82-84
(about the adjective “lascivo”)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Vandelli.
Par. 6.51 Met. 5.350-52
(about the aopstrophe to Sicily and the river Po)
Commentators:
Lombardi, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi.

Par. 8.2 Met. 10.270
(about the epithet “Ciprigna”)
Commentators:
Pietro. Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Sapegno, Giacalone.

Par. 8.67-70 Met. 5.346-55: Met. 5.646 ff.
(about the giant Typhoeus lying under the Aetna)
Commentators:
Scartazzini. Tozer. Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher.
Trucchi, Sapegno, Fallani. Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Moore, Paratore.

Par. 8.126 Met. 8.183-235
(about Daedalus and Icarus)
Commentators:
Costa, Scartazzini.

Par. 9.82-84 Met. 1.13-14: Met. 1.36-37
(about the ocean surrounding the earth)
Commentators:
Daniello.

Par. 9.102 Met. 9.134-238
(about Ioles)
Commentators:
Scartazzini. Trucchi, Bosco-Reggio, Paratore.
Par. 10.16
(about the oblique trajectory of the planets)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Vandelli.

Met. 2.130

Par. 10.64-69
(about the expression “far corona”)
Commentators:
Daniello, Scartazzini, Vandelli.

Met. 13.1

Par. 10.136-38
(about Niobe)
Commentators:
Torraca.

Met. 5.277-78

Par. 12.12
(see also Purg. 21.50)
(about Iris)
Commentators:
Pietro, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Sapegno, Chimenz, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Paratore.

Met. 1.270

Par. 12.14
(about Echo and Narcissus)
Commentators:
Ottimo, Pietro, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Venturi, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Porena, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.

Met. 3.356-401

Par. 12.47
(about Zephyrus)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Sapegno, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Moore.

Met. 1.63-64
Par. 13.10-15  
(about Ariadne)  

Par. 14.97-99  
(about the milky way)  
Commentators: Pietro, Benvenuto, Daniello, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi, Bosco-Reggio.

Par. 15.13-15  
(about the expression "discorre [...] subito fuoco")  
Commentators: Daniello, Venturi, Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Trucchi, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Paratore.

Par. 16.7-9  
(about the transient nature of nobility)  
Commentators: Daniello.

Par. 16.28-29  
(about the flame growing bigger in the wind)  
Commentators: Scartazzini, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio.

Par. 17.1-2  
(about Clymene)  
Par. 17.3
(about Phoebus’ promise to his son)
Commentators:
Ottimo, Benvenuto, Daniello, Tommaseo, Grandgent, Steiner, Grabher, Singleton, Pasquini-Quaglio.

Par. 17.46
(about Hippolytus)
Commentators:
Lana, Ottimo, Fiorentino, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Mestica, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Trucchi, Porena, Sapegno, Chimenz, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.

Par. 18.64-68
(about Arachnes’ blushing)
Commentators:
Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Giacalone, Singleton, Moore.

Par. 19.35-39
(about the expression “si plaude”)
Commentators:
Scartazzini, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Trucchi, Sapegno, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio.

Par. 21.4-6
(about Semele)
Commentators:
Ottimo, Daniello, Venturi, Lombardi, Portirelli, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Mestica, Casini-Barbi, Trucchi, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.

Par. 21.25-27
(about the golden age)
Commentators:
Scartazzini, Tozer, Steiner, Vandelli, Fallani.
Par. 22.142-43
(about the Sun)
Commentators:
Pietro, Cassinese, Daniello, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Pietrobono, Porena, Sapegno, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.

Par. 22.144
(about Mercury)
Commentators:
Daniello, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Vandelli, Grabher, Sapegno, Giacalone, Pasquini-Quaglio.

Par. 23.26
(about "trivia" epithet of Diana)
Commentators:
Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Sapegno.

Par. 23.40
(about the fire hidden in the clouds)
Commentators:
Scartazzini.

Par. 23.55
(about the one hundred mouths)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Giacalone, Pasquini-Quaglio, Paratore.

Par. 23.99
(about the thunder)
Commentators:
Scartazzini, Grandgent, Vandelli, Singleton.
(about the ninth heaven “manto di tutti i volumi”)
Commentators:
Venturi, Grandgent, Sapegno, Giacalone, Singleton.

(about the simile of the little child and his mother)
Commentators:
Scartazzini.

(about Arachnes)
Commentators:
Daniello.

(See also Par. 23.112; Par. 28.14)
(about the noun “volume”)
Commentators:
Lombardi, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Torraca, Vandelli, Sapegno, Singleton, Pasquini-Quaglio.

(about the expression “sole avverso”)
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli, Trucchi, Porena, Sapegno, Fallani, Giacalone, Singleton, Pasquini-Quaglio, Moore.

(about Europa)
Commentators:
Lana, Ottimo, Pietro, Cassinese, Benvenuto, Fiorentino, Lombardi, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Vandelli, Grabher, Trucchi, Porena, Sapegno, Chimenz, Giacalone, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio.
Par. 27.136
(about Circe "filia solis")
Commentators:
Casini-Barbi, Sapegno, Chimenz, Singleton, Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio.

Par. 28.32
(about Iris)
Commentators:
Scartazzini, Grandgent, Vandelli.

Par. 30.7-9
(about Aurora)
Commentators:
Daniello.

Par. 30.35
(about the verb "deduce")
Commentators:
Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Casini-Barbi, Vandelli.

Par. 31.32-33
(see also Purg. 25.130-32)
(about Callistus, that is the Ursa Major)
Commentators:
Lana, Ottimo, Pietro, Fiorentino, Venturi, Lombardi, Tommaseo, Scartazzini,
Tozer, Torraca, Grandgent, Steiner, Trucchi, Porena, Sapegno, Fallani, Singleton,
Bosco-Reggio, Pasquini-Quaglio.

Par. 31.124-25
(about Phaeton)
Commentators:
Serravalle, Tommaseo, Scartazzini, Paratore.
Par. 31.124-26
(about the expression "s'infiamma")
Commentators:
Scartazzini, Vandelli.

Par. 33.96
(about Jason and the Argonauts)
Commentators:
Paratore.


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COMMENTATORS

All the works of the scholars referred to as ‘commentators’ have been consulted using the Telnet site of the Dartmouth Dante Project.

The database contains a vast selection of commentaries (see the complete list in the Appendix) available on line at the following address: Library.Dartmouth.edu.

A Web site is in the process of being implemented.