Historicizing the *Divine Comedy*: Renaissance Responses to a "Medieval" Text[1]

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Although most major departments of Italian or comparative literature offer a course devoted solely to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, writing about that text may be a dangerous career move for a young academic. He or she may become trapped in the wrong pigeonhole, for there is rarely consensus on where to locate the *Commedia* within the antiquated taxonomy of higher education. Is it a medieval sermon that builds on Scholasticism and other early schools of thought, that derives from the styles and concerns of Guido Cavalcanti, Brunetto Latini, and other Trecento poets? Or is it a Renaissance essay that foreshadows the humanism of Petrarch, Bruni, and their successors, that marks the beginning of a new era characterized by greater intellectual self-determination? The truth, of course, lies somewhere between these poles, for, even as the *Commedia* emerged from established approaches to literature, history, theology, philosophy, and politics, it fostered new trends and beliefs in those disciplines. Indeed, as early as the fifteenth century, commentators and illuminators treated Dante's text as a threshold between their own era and that which came before it. As we shall see, they acknowledged on the one hand that the *Commedia* sprang from an earlier preoccupation with religion, from concerns that they associated with their predecessors and that have since come to characterize the Middle Ages. Yet, on the other hand, they also invoked the *Commedia* to legitimize interpretations of their own culture. They treated Dante as an erudite observer of a bygone yet influential era, as a witness to ideas, beliefs, and mores that may have taken root in an earlier, more overtly religious period but that still bore fruit in their own, ostensibly more secular age.

Those reactions are central to our understanding of not only how the *Commedia* and Middle Ages were perceived during the fifteenth century but also how early modern artists interpreted texts, for the thirty cycles of *Commedia* miniatures represent an exceptionally wide range of responses to an extraordinarily accessible and innovative work.[2] Though Dante derived some of his material from the *Aeneid* and other illustrated sources, his text demanded a great deal of creativity from its early illuminators.[3] In fact, even after early fourteenth-century artists developed a canon of subjects for the *Commedia*, circumstances particular to each commission, such as a call for an extraordinarily high number of images, often forced illuminators to look beyond pictorial models.[4] They had to turn to recommendations from scholarly advisors — suggestions that can sometimes still be seen in the margins of Budapest University MS italien 1 from circa 1345 and other unfinished manuscripts — or to their own

knowledge of the text: to having read one of the thousands of copies then in circulation, to having heard Giovanni di Ser Buccio and other orators read it publicly, to having attended Boccaccio's free lectures on it, or to having joined peasants singing it as they drove their donkeys "laden with trash."[5] Of course, given the opportunity, not all of the illuminators may have deigned to chime in with the peasants, for some of the artists seem to have been owners of the manuscripts or to have been artistically untrained friends of those who were wealthy enough to own a manuscript. The early fifteenth-century miniatures from Kongelige Bibliotek MS Thott 411.2 in Copenhagen, for example, lack the technical expertise and eloquence of those by professional illuminators, such as the *Vitae Imperatorum* Master, or by artists famed more for their work on panel and in fresco, such as Giovanni di Paolo.[6] Yet, though the amateur illustrations may be crude, they often compensate for their lack of polish by the profundity of their insight and by supplementing the evidence of professional fourteenth- and fifteenth-century responses to the *Commedia*. In both number and nature, they greatly expand our knowledge of Dante's audience between the first appearance of *Commedia* miniatures in 1324, just three years after the poet's death, and their final production in the early 1480s, when the advent of printing largely eliminated the market for them. Indeed, in tandem with the more professional *Commedia* illustrations from this period, they represent the largest early modern response to a text other than the Bible, and they help define the completeness with which many fifteenth-century readers departed from their predecessors' interpretations of Dante's text.

Although fourteenth-century commentators and illuminators increasingly assign responsibility for the *Commedia* to the mortal author and otherwise lay the groundwork for later critics, they do not deny Dante's claims to have been divinely inspired, and they accordingly assign his text great relevance to our life and afterlife. They treat the *Commedia* as a living work of the greatest significance for our conduct here on earth and for our future in the afterlife. Indeed, some of the earliest readers treat it as no less important than Scripture itself. For example, on the recto of the first folio from Musée Condé MS 597 in Chantilly — an *Inferno* and commentary illustrated by Buonamico Buffalmacco and his workshop in approximately 1328 — Dante appears in the form of an inspired Evangelist.[7] From a historiated initial inaugurating the *Inferno*, he gazes up at a figure of Virgil in the same manner that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are often seen gazing up at their muses. Like them, he seems to be receiving a message from on high, to be about to fill the empty folios in front of him with the Word made flesh in the form of text on parchment. Indeed, lest we doubt that he is receiving divine dictation, that he is a "pen of God," as Jerome described the Evangelists, he does

not look at the folios to which he applies his quill, and, though the *Commedia* itself indicates he was right-handed, he holds his pen in his left hand, in his least voluntary hand.[8] Moreover, he employs his right hand to point towards Heaven, to indicate the origin of the *Commedia*. Thus, while this image insists that the mortal Dante revealed the Word and allows that he may even have embellished a message from God, it also implies that he was no less an instrument of divine will than were the Evangelists, that, like the figure encoiled by the letter "N" of this initial, he was subject to the very text that he brought into being.

Buffalmacco and his assistants thereby assign Dante far less responsibility for the *Commedia* than do other illuminators. In many mid- to late fourteenth-century manuscripts, such as Biblioteca Comunale MS Guarneriana 200 in S. Daniele del Friuli, the poet is depicted at his desk gazing at the codex in which he is writing.[9] He may be immersed in his own imagination, as is overtly suggested by the landscape around his lectern in Vatican MS latini 4776 of circa 1390-1400, by the displacement of his studio with the dark woods in which the narrative begins.[10] Or he may be constructing the *Commedia* from other texts, as is signified in the S. Daniele manuscript by the open codex above the one in which he writes. But, regardless of whether he is fabricating the *Commedia* solely from his own powers of creativity or piecing it together from other texts, he appears to contribute far more to it than he does in the Musee Conde author-portrait.

Yet even the late fourteenth-century illuminators do not assign Dante as much responsibility for his text as do many of their fifteenth-century counterparts. Rather than insist Dante authored the *Commedia*, and thereby admit the possibility that he did not, many Quattrocento artists seem to have taken for granted that he had full agency over his text. Although author-portraits were common in the fifteenth century, these illuminators completely ignore Dante's role as writer and begin their pictorial cycles with an image of him as the protagonist. Some open with Dante so "full of sleep" (*Inf* 1.11 that he sits dozing with his head in his hands.[11] Some open with Dante setting out alone or by Virgil's side in the dark woods with which the narrative begins.[12] And some start with Dante encountering the three beasts shortly after he sets out.[13] But, regardless of precisely where they begin in the text, they all open with Dante participating in the narrative. Evidently, these illuminators did not feel a need to articulate his role in the production of the *Commedia*.

That confidence in Dante's authorship suggests that his text was no longer perceived as a spiritually authoritative work. As Jacques Derrida has noted, many pre-modern philosophers treated writing as a "radical absence."[14] According to John of Salisbury, "letters are shapes indicating voices, . . . frequently they speak voicelessly the utterances of the absent."[15]

Working backwards from the text, the audience could erect an author-idea based upon autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical revelations within the work, as well as upon preconceived models of human motivation and psychology.[16] But, for pre-modern readers, the text itself could neither make manifest the absent nor vouch for its own truthfulness and authenticity. To verify the reader's author-idea, Saint Jerome required historical evidence for it, testimony from outside the text itself as to who was responsible for it.[17] This criterion was adopted by many later scholars, including Hugh of St. Cher, whose lectures on the Bible (1230-35 perpetuate the rule even as they make an exception for some apocryphal texts: "They are called apocryphal because the author is unknown. But, because there is no doubt of their truth, they are accepted by the Church for the teaching of mores rather than for the defense of the faith. However, if neither the author nor the truth were known, they could not be accepted."[18] And we have no reason to believe that this criterion had changed by the fifteenth century. Although an author-portrait may be nothing more than an idea that the illuminator derived from the narrative or from workshop models, it would still have been perceived as one means of independently introducing the historical figure of the author, of inserting a biological referent for an otherwise distant collection of written signs. Thus, many of the fifteenth-century illuminators do not ground the text in a historical source or otherwise verify its authenticity. They do not establish the authority upon which rest earlier pictorial narratives, such as that of Musée Condé MS 597.

On the recto of folio thirty-one in the Chantilly manuscript, Buffalmacco builds on his author-portrait of Dante with a depiction of Fra Guido da Pisa.[19] In a historiated initial that follows an uninterrupted text of the *Inferno* and inaugurates Guido's commentary on that cantica, Buffalmacco portrays the Carmelite sitting at a desk with a pen in his hand. But rather than serve as an *auctor*, as a direct conduit for the word of God, Guido epitomizes a *commentator*, a scholar actively responding to a text.[20] He does not apply his pen to parchment with his more passive hand; he sharpens it with both hands. And he does not look up for inspiration; he looks down at his work. Although he merely may be gazing at his hands, his slightly open mouth suggests that he is looking past them, that he is reading the *Commedia* or articulating his own response to it, that he is shaping his commentary as he shapes his pen.

Lest we doubt Guido's agency or the divinity of his sources, we have only to look at the top margin of folio thirty-one.[21] There, just six lines above the portrait of the commentator, Daniel interprets the writing on the wall of Belshazzar's dining room. Standing to right of center, imitating the pose of the disembodied hand at right and craning his neck to look at the king on the left, the prophet pictorially embodies the transmission of

the Word and serves as an obvious analogy to Guido. Indeed, we may not even need to know the source of this image, much less have read Guido's declaration that "this (disembodied hand is our new poet Dante," to recognize the connection.[22] The mere awareness that this image precedes a commentary encourages us to view that text as a valid interpretation of a divine message, as a legitimate response to a true and accurate record of the other world.

In accord with that premise, with the assumption that every moment of the *Commedia* is of the utmost importance to our life and afterlife, Buffalmacco manipulates the gate of hell on the recto of folio forty-eight to immerse us in the narrative.[23] Perhaps even before we have had a chance to read the end of Guido's *Deductio textus de vulgari in latinum* for canto three or the beginning of his *Expositio lictere* for that same canto, a brown line beneath them pulls our eye from the empty bas-de-page at left to a bright red tower at right. Drawing on our tendency to read images like a line of text, it propels us towards the same portal that awaits the hesitant figure of Dante. And, like him, we too may wish to pause when we see the two bats that hover in front of the tower and foreshadow the demons to come, when we see the three owls that perch on top of it and symbolize none other than the Devil himself, and when we see an inscription that is written just beneath them and boils Dante's nine vernacular lines down to one word from Guido's Latin summary of them — "IUSTITIA." But, like the pilgrim, we too cannot easily avoid the portal. Just as Dante is yanked towards the gate by a very determined Virgil — a far cry from the reassuring guide in the text who, "with a cheerful look from which (the narrator took comfort" gently "places" his hand on that of Dante (*Inf* 1.19-20 — so we are pulled into the portal by the relentless ground line and by a subtle disjuncture in perspective. Judging from the fact that we can see the right side of the crenellations, they, and implicitly the rest of the tower, face towards our left, towards the oncoming figures of Virgil and Dante. But, judging from the fact that we can see the width of the portal only on its right side, the gateway opens towards our right, away from the figures in the scene. Indeed, it addresses us more directly than it does Virgil or Dante. Moreover, it gives us roughly the same viewpoint of itself as the pilgrim has of the crenellations. We cannot be entirely sure of the direction in which the crenellations face, for we do not know the ratio of their width to their length, nor of their width to that of the portal. And, in any case, the variation in the length and height of the other bricks in the tower demonstrates that the illuminators were not concerned with the consistency of such proportions. But within the illuminators' margin for error, it appears that the crenellations face approximately 35 or 40 degrees to our left and 50 or 55 degrees from the trajectory of the pilgrim's

approach. They therefore depart at roughly the same angle from that trajectory as the gate departs from our line of sight, for the width of the portal is exposed for more than half the length of the arch. That is to say, we have roughly the same location in relationship to the portal as the pilgrim has in relationship to the crenellations.

It is of course possible that this disjuncture in viewpoint is merely an error. Perspective was not systematically organized around a single focal point for another century.[24] But all of the components for one-point perspective existed by the 1320s, and many artists of that period could at least approximate it, particularly those as talented as Buffalmacco.[25] He repeatedly demonstrates that he was fully capable of rendering scenes from a single vantage point when he chose to do so. In his miniatures of inner hell, for example, the doors and windows of each wall open in the same direction and are generally in accord with all of the crenellations and other indications of our viewpoint.[26] Indeed, Buffalmacco sometimes includes so many superfluous signifiers of our vantage point that he could be accused of hyperbole, of reveling in his ability to render each scene consistently. If so, he would not have been alone among his contemporaries. In approximately 1338-39, Ambrogio Lorenzetti distorted dozens of buildings in *The Effects of Good Government* to privilege a figure of peace on an adjacent wall of the Sala dei Nove in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico. Only from her viewpoint in *The Allegory of Good Government*, from the eyes of the virtue that Siena expressly promoted on its coinage and to which Saint Bernard dedicated the Palazzo Pubblico, do the buildings appear illusionistically correct.[27] Thus, Buffalmacco had not only the skill to render perspective from a consistent vantage point but, if we are to judge from his contemporaries, also the ability to deliberately manipulate it.

However, if we presume that he did not make an egregious error in perspective at the gate of hell, at the visually and narratively most important orifice in the cycle, to what end did he so blatantly disrupt its perspective? Why did he depart at this particular point from the conventions of pictorial representation elsewhere in this manuscript? The answer may lie in the *Commedia* itself, for, by conflating us with the pilgrim, Buffalmacco's gate closely imitates the function of its counterpart in the text. Prior to the third canto of the *Inferno*, Dante has encouraged us to imagine that we are merely accompanying the narrator. For example, by employing the first-person plural possessive in the very first line of canto one, "midway in the journey of our life," he groups our viewpoint with his own. And, as if we were a spectator in the narrative, he commands us shortly thereafter to "behold. . . a leopard light-footed and very fleet" (*Inf* 1.31-32 . He invites us to descend the steep and savage path at the

end of canto two by the pilgrim's side. But, as canto three opens, we find that rather than merely accompanying the pilgrim, we are the pilgrim. Like him, we are reading the inscription over the gate of hell:

> Through me you enter the woeful city,
> Through me you enter eternal grief,
> Through me you enter among the lost.
>
> Justice moved my high maker:
> The divine power made me,
> The supreme wisdom, and the primal love.
>
> Before me nothing was created
> If not eternal, and eternal I endure.
> Abandon every hope, you who enter. (*Inf* 3.1-9

Moreover, we may not initially realize that we are, in fact, reading the same words as does the pilgrim. Although some of us may guess from the lines themselves that the pilgrim is their primary audience within the *Commedia*, and although the narrator definitively interrupts our identification with the pilgrim by declaring after the inscription "these words. . . I saw inscribed over a portal" (*Inf* 3.10-11 , we have no warning, as we begin to read the inscription, that it is a text within the narrative. The author does not provide an introduction to the inscription, and, unlike modern publishers, the Musée Condé scribe and most of his contemporaries do not distinguish the inscription with capital letters, quotation marks, or other such signifiers. We are therefore encouraged to read the inscription as if it were addressed primarily to us, and, until we learn otherwise, we may not only read the same words that the pilgrim does but also read them as the pilgrim. We may be led to assume that we are the subject of the verb in the first three lines and that we are the ones who will have to abandon every hope upon entering hell.[28]

Not long after that juncture in the *Inferno*, Dante reverts to the first-person singular tense for his dominant voice, a tense that, like the lateral vector prevailing throughout the rest of Buffalmacco's illustration cycle, distinguishes us from the narrator. But neither the author nor the illuminator allows our empathy with the narrator to collapse completely. Just as Dante occasionally employs the first-person plural tense to renew our identification with the narrator, so Buffalmacco sometimes confirms that identification through the use of a first-person viewpoint, particularly in the first image after the illustration of the gate.[29] When the ground line on the recto of folio forty-eight catapults us through the gate of hell, we land on the recto of folio forty-nine, where we encounter the cowardly

undecided: the angels "who were neither rebellious nor faithful to God" (*Inf* 3.38-39 and the souls who "lived without infamy and without praise" (*Inf* 3.36 . Racing across the bas-de-page, eternally chasing a banner they will never catch, they fill the bottom of the folio with a frieze that perpetuates the left-to-right vector of the preceding scenes and halts our ocular penetration of pictorial space. But rather than give us a third-person, detached point of view, as do the figures in most of the other miniatures in this manuscript, they continue our first-person perspective as the pilgrim himself, for rather than stare at an image of Dante, as do the sinners in most of the other miniatures from this manuscript, the fourth and seventh cowards from the left look towards us. In fact, Buffalmacco has followed the text so closely that even if the cowards wished to gaze at a figure of the pilgrim they could not, for the figure is absent from the scene. As noted in the *Commedia*, the pilgrim does not converse with the cowards as they stream by him but, instead, follows Virgil's advice just to "look and pass on" (*Inf* 3.51 . That is to say, rather than meet the front of the row of cowards and physically align himself with them, as the pilgrim does with other trains of sinners, he occupies a position roughly perpendicular to the cowards and analogous to our location in relationship to the Musée Condé image of them. Consequently, although the fourth and seventh cowards from the left do not look at a figure of the pilgrim, they do, in looking towards us, evidently gaze at an embodiment of him. They invite us to pass as the pilgrim himself from the bats that hover on either side of the gate to the winged beasts among the cowards, from the owls above the gate to the strigiform emblem on the banner, and from a pronouncement that divine justice awaits the damned to the execution of that justice.

Such conflations of Dante's protagonist and audience are not discussed by Guido. Nor does he directly call for our immersion in the narrative. But, in analyzing the inscription over the portal, he does underscore a theme of great relevance to both the protagonist and us. Just above the illustration of the gate, in the right-hand column of text, he deduces from the line "Justice moved my high maker" (*Inf* 3.4 that "the reason for which was made this infernal prison. . . is divine justice."[30] And he proceeds to identify the rest of the inscription as little more than a frame for that theme: the first line, "Through me you enter the woeful city," merely denotes the location of the gate; the fifth and sixth lines, "The divine power made me,/The supreme wisdom, and the primal love," establish that the gate was created by the Trinity; the seventh and eighth lines, "Before me nothing was created/If not eternal, and eternal I endure," denote when the gate was created; and the final line, " Abandon every hope, you who enter," confirms that there is no exit for those of us who sin, for those of us who merit punishment.[31] Thus, Guido' s entire

interpretation of the inscription revolves around a theme, divine justice, that applies no less to us than it does to the pilgrim, that to some degree conflates us with him.

Lest we miss the universal applicability of that justice, Buffalmacco pictorially directs it at us and thereby reinforces its extranarrative relevance. Just above the illustrated doorway, in the same language and the same brown ink as the body of the commentary, he literally and figuratively foregrounds the keyword of Guido' s interpretation. Allowing the letters of "IUSTITIA" to grow neither from left to right, as the angle of the crenellations suggests they should, nor from right to left, as the portal suggests they should, the illuminator presses this boldly capitalized word to the surface of the image. Hence, even as he manipulates the portal to slip us into the pilgrim's shoes, even as he immerses us in the narrative, he reminds us that we are looking at ink on parchment. He underscores our viewership and suggests that the *Commedia* has extranarrative relevance to our life and afterlife.

In that spirit, Guido repeatedly demands a close reading of both the form and content of the *Commedia*. For example, he urges his patron to observe the poetic structures that enhance Dante's didacticism: "Note, Lucano Spinola, . . . that the rhymed verses of the first type need rhyme on only one syllable or letter, namely on the last one; the second ones, however, need to rhyme on three syllables, that is, on the next-to-the-last ones and the last one; and the third ones on two, namely on the last two, as the letters very clearly show. And thus the form of that which is treated is clear."[32] This clarity, according to Guido, can reveal a metaphorical dimension of the text, an extranarrative applicability to which he pointedly draws his reader's attention: "Note here, Lucano, that the first grace makes man abandon vices and move toward the virtues; the second makes him progress from virtue to virtue; the third makes him pass from wretchedness to glory."[33] As Guido insists elsewhere, the protagonist is a model for his patron and, implicitly, for all of Dante's other readers: "Note here, O devout Lucano, who wish to be instructed in the virtues and are anxious to be protected by heavenly grace, that Dante assumes within himself the role of a penitent man."[34] That is to say, those of us who wish to avoid eternal damnation should take the contrite pilgrim as our example and learn from his experiences, should follow in his footsteps and immerse ourselves in the narrative.

Guido can maintain that every moment of the *Commedia* is relevant to our life and afterlife, for he also holds that the protagonist is in essence the author, that Dante actually had a divine vision. The commentator claims that, while the poet was "still living in the flesh, he was allowed to see hell, purgatory, heaven, the citizens of heaven, and even the most blessed Trinity itself."[35] Perhaps to fend off charges of heresy that were

then in circulation, Guido sometimes denies that Dante physically traveled to the other world and says the poet merely "beheld in an imaginary seeing those very places where the souls go after the death of their bodies."[36] But, though the commentator may remove Dante from the ranks of Paul and other Biblical figures who corporeally visited the other world, he not only compares the *Commedia* to Ezekiel's vision, Noah's ark, and the writing on the wall of Belshazzar's palace but sometimes does so in the most liturgical of language.[37] For example, in claiming that *Paradiso* is analogous to one of the three words in the book seen by Ezekiel, Guido describes the subject of both the cantica and the word as "glory and jubilation" ("laus et iubilatio" .[38] Moreover, it was apparently Guido who chose to have the writing on the wall pictorially epitomize the *Commedia*, for alphabetical letters next to many of the illustrations in this manuscript and pictorial allusions to minor points in Guido's Latin text suggest that the commentator gave the illuminator a list of subjects and perhaps locations for the images.[39] He had Buffalmacco carry out the implications of his author-portrait for Dante and echo the spirit of his own paraphrase of Saint Jerome, his own insistence that Dante is "the pen (with which . . . the Holy Spirit rapidly wrote for us the penalties of the damned and the glory of the blessed."[40] Dante may not have physically traveled to the other world, but, according to Guido, he did have a true and faithful vision of the afterlife, and, as suggested by the commentator's 214-folio, line-by-line response to the *Inferno*, we must not only study Dante's themes and assimilate his general points but also share his experiences and immerse ourselves in them.

Guido's approach thus departs from that of all other fourteenth-century commentators, for they are far more likely to locate the protagonist's experiences in the poet's life. In approximately 1322, for example, Dante's son Jacopo claims that the antagonistic beasts in canto one of the *Inferno* and the encouraging ladies in the next canto "figuratively" represent how the poet "induced himself to demonstrate the virtues and vices in order to give the world correction and example."[41] Approximately twenty years later, the third redaction of Andrea di Ser Lancia's commentary goes a step further and attributes the *Commedia* largely to reflection, to the influence on Dante of night, "when a man, apart from others, focuses on the ruminations of the conscience."[42] That attribution marks a substantial shift from Andrea's first redaction and may reflect the earliest version of a commentary by another son of Dante, Pietro. The first redaction of Pietro's commentary, which dates from 1340-41, traces so many of his father's sources that it has been interpreted as an *apologia* for Dante.[43] Yet it ascribes far less agency to the poet than do Pietro's second (ca. 1355 or third (ca. 1358 redactions. The third, for example, adds a note that Dante could only have traveled to the

afterlife in "a fictitious, imaginary way" and, relative to Pietro's first redaction, locates the *Commedia* even more thoroughly in the poet's life.[44] Beatrice is enlarged from an allegorical representation of metaphysics and an anagogical representation of theology to the woman Dante loved and courted, to the historical person who was "born into the Portinari family" and was "outstanding in manners and beauty."[45] Thus, Pietro practices that which Boccaccio preaches fifteen years later in noting that "it is. . . desirable to examine men's lives and habits and fields of study so that we may recognize how much credence should be lent to their words."[46] From such an analysis, Boccaccio deduces in his *Commedia* commentary of circa 1373-75 that Dante "came to understand about the divine essence and about the separate fields of knowledge that through human ingenuity can be understood," for his habits were "serious and highly scrupulous."[47] To know the truth, Dante plunged "with keen intellect into theology" and "after considerable thought . . . began to produce what he had long premeditated, that is, how to rebuke and reward the lives of men according to their various merits."[48] Nor, as Boccaccio himself notes, was he alone in calling Dante "a theologian" and in grounding the *Commedia* in the poet's thoughts and experiences.[49] In 1375, an anonymous commentator known as "Falso Boccaccio" claims that the *Commedia* originated in the mind of its author; in the late 1370s, Benvenuto da Imola repeatedly declares that the text sprang from Dante's meditation on the afterworld; shortly thereafter, the Anonimo Fiorentino explains apparent contradictions in the *Commedia* as opinions of the author; in the late 1390s, Francesco da Buti defines portions of the text as the products of Dante's imagination and claims that Dante dreamed this "poetic fiction;" and around 1400 Filippo Villani insists that Dante "invented the *Commedia* out of his own thoughts" to lead us to righteousness.[50]

Yet, even as the fourteenth-century commentators ascribe the *Commedia* to the poet's reading and experiences, they never deny that Dante actually had a divine vision. The anonymous author of the Epistle to Cangrande, which was written prior to Dante's death in 1321 and perhaps by him, claims the protagonist's experiences were "within the realm of possibility."[51] In 1324, Graziolo Bambaglioli compares the *Commedia* with prophetic portions of the Bible, such as Ezekiel 18.3-4.[52] And sometime between 1324 and 1328, Jacopo della Lana joins both Guido and the epistler in analyzing the *Commedia* via the *accessus ad auctores*, a Scholastic formula hitherto reserved for Scriptural exegesis.[53] Andrea di Ser Lancia and Pietro Alighieri do not defend the idea that Dante was a divine agent, but, at the same time, they do not deny it, and Boccaccio downright promotes it. He revives the comparisons of Dante with Old Testament prophets, and repeatedly declares that Dante was "granted special grace by God in our times," that he was motivated by

that grace to think about his subject, and, indeed, that "without any doubt, (the *Commedia* lends itself to the belief that (its inspiration was the grace of God."[54] Nor is Boccaccio alone among late fourteenth-century commentators in portraying Dante as a divinely inspired theologian. Benvenuto da Imola compares Dante with Old Testament prophets and claims that the poet was called Dante because he "gave news of God and of divine things."[55] Francesco da Buti claims that Dante's name is appropriate because the author "graciously makes gifts for others from that which God has given him."[56] The Falso Boccaccio writes that "holy theology gave succor to the author, that is, divine inspiration, through the grace in the soul of the author, made him come to desire and to think of studying in this field of knowledge."[57] And Filippo Villani not only compares the *Commedia* with the writings of the Church Fathers but also declares that the poet was "touched by the divine spirit," that "no one could have written a work at once so sublime and so profound without the special aid of the Holy Spirit."[58] Thus, while never claiming Dante actually had a vision from God, Villani joins all of the other fourteenth-century commentators in at least allowing that Dante may have been divinely inspired, and, like some of his colleagues, he occasionally even insists on that motivation. While participating in a growing tendency to locate the text in Dante's personal experiences and to increasingly downplay the relevance of those experiences to us, he sustains the theological legitimacy of the *Commedia* and insists on its significance to our future in the afterlife.

Villani and the other fourteenth-century commentators therefore explicitly articulate that which is merely implied in *Commedia* illustrations of their time. Rather than attempt to conflate us with the pilgrim at the gate of hell, to immerse us in Dante's narrative, Buffalmacco's Trecento colleagues insist that the *Commedia* has relevance for us outside of our reading experience. Instead of subtly departing from one-point perspective to give us the same view that the pilgrim has of the rest of the image, they have their portals overtly depart from those conventions and remind us of them, of the fact that we are viewing an image of the gate rather than the gate itself.[59] This is not to deny that some of these fourteen gates may be the result of negligence or incompetence, for, as noted before, one-point perspective did not emerge until the 1420s. But in several instances where the artists demonstrate elsewhere in their cycle that they have the ability to render images from a consistent viewpoint, their lintels and thresholds are so perspectivally inconsistent with each other and with the otherwise uniform perspective of the image that it is difficult to believe these incongruities would have passed unnoticed. That is to say, the portals depart so overtly from the conventions of representation

elsewhere in their manuscripts that they literally and figuratively foreground those conventions.

Those portals, moreover, may not be as incongruous with the conventions of their manuscripts as are other fourteenth-century images of the gate. In six cycles of the period, the thickness of the portal is revealed on all four of its sides.[60] It departs a full ninety degrees from the lateral trajectory of Dante and Virgil and often forces them to swing awkwardly around a jamb in order to enter hell. This extreme disjuncture of pictorial vectors, of a frontal address in the midst of a largely lateral narrative, discourages our identification with the pilgrim. It may not necessarily terminate our imaginary immersion in the narrative, for viewers may conflate being addressed with identifying as the pilgrim. That is to say, viewers may collapse the left-to-right trajectory of the pilgrim with the perpendicular vector welcoming them into the narrative. But, as the frontality of the portal pulls the doorway to the surface of the image, it underscores the fact that we are viewing miniatures in a manuscript and projects the implications of the *Commedia* beyond the narrative, beyond any immersion that we may be experiencing. Like all fourteenth-century commentaries, other than that by Guido da Pisa, it presents the *Commedia* not as a divine vision in which we must immerse ourselves fully but as a divine text with themes critical to our life and afterlife.

In sharp contrast, most fifteenth-century illuminators, such as those for the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* in British Museum MS Yates Thompson 36, ostensibly ignore us at the gate of hell.[61] Though these artists turn the portal far enough towards us to reveal its opening and the fact that it is a doorway, they do not have it overtly depart from the conventions of pictorial representation elsewhere in these manuscripts. In accord with the left-to-right flow of the narrative, the portal opens towards our left, towards the approaching figures of Virgil and the pilgrim. It therefore welcomes them more overtly than it does us. It postpones pictorial attempts to directly engage us until later, more political moments in the narrative. Indeed, by promoting the predominant, left-to-right vector of the narrative, it underscores the degree to which those attempts depart from the conventions of representation. For example, since we are encouraged to track Virgil and the pilgrim from left to right through the Yates Thompson portal and across most of the illustrations in this manuscript, we may be all the more likely to notice that the Sienese illuminator who worked on *Paradiso*, Giovanni di Paolo, has manipulated the walls of Florence to engage us and to foster sympathy for Dante as he is exiled from his hometown.[62] In contrast to the low, bright, welcoming walls of Dante's anonymous refuge at right, the high, dark, forbidding rampart at left bars our access to a city clearly identified by the red lily of Florence above the gate and by Brunelleschi's still-lanternless cathedral.

The wall encourages us to empathize with Dante as he is ejected from his hometown and to condemn those who, like the determined figure at left, exiled him. Indeed, it partakes in a pattern of mural exclusion that bans us from other cities defined by Dante as bad and that equates them with Renaissance Florence. For example, in contrast to medieval Florence and its humble neighbors, which share well-traveled roads and welcome us with the same bent walls as Dante's refuge, the cities "enclosing the rabble between the Adige and Tagliamento" (*Par*. 9.43-44 are isolated by dead-end paths and join Dante's ex-patria in turning high, straight walls towards us.[63] They encourage us not only to empathize but also to sympathize with Dante in his exile from Florence, and, in so doing, they playoff of the third-person, perpendicular viewpoint that we have of the rest of the narrative, including the protagonist's entrance to hell.

The implication that most of those lateral gates are ignoring us is reinforced by the few fifteenth-century exceptions to that rule. In juxtaposing a fully frontal portal with a lateral gate in Vatican MS Barberiniani latini 4112 from 1419, an anonymous Florentine illuminator clearly differentiates us from the pilgrim and directs that lateral gate at him.[64] And twenty years later, in directing the gate of hell at us, the *Vitae Imperatorum* Master appears to be obeying the dictates of an extraordinarily conservative advisor.[65] Subtle iconographic parallels between the Master's illustrations and a presentation copy of Guiniforte Barzizza's commentary in the same manuscript suggest Barzizza advised the Master, that he encouraged the illuminator to convey the spirit of his own guide, Francesco da Buti's late fourteenth-century commentary.[66] Thus, in the same vein as Barzizza's anachronistic silence on whether the *Commedia* came from God, that is, the commentator's departure from his contemporaries in not expressly denying that the poem is divine, the Master turns his portal towards us. He departs from all other illuminators of his time in suggesting that the *Commedia* may have profound moral implications for our life and afterlife.

In thus turning the gate towards us, the Master also departs from all of his colleagues in the next generation of *Commedia* artists, except Guglielmo Giraldi, the illuminator of Vatican MS Urbinati latini 365 from 1478-82. Giraldi also welcomes us with a fully frontal portal.[67] But he does so in a very different spirit from that of the Master or the Barberiniani illuminator. Whereas the latter reveals sinners being seized by rapacious demons, and the Master portrays the pilgrim quailing as he reads the fearsome inscription above the maw of hell, Giraldi depicts the elegant figures of Virgil and the pilgrim strolling arm-in-arm into a beautiful landscape. As the somewhat idealized cowards race by and as Phlegyas patiently waits in his bark, the protagonists approach a scenic moat surrounding a majestic city. Indeed, even the ornate inscription

above the portal hardly seems threatening in this image. We are invited to join Dante as casual observers of the afterlife, rather than as pilgrims subject to the sinners' discomforts.

Giraldi's illustration is thus in harmony with all of the fifteenth-century commentaries, other than that by Barzizza, for they do not treat the pilgrim's experiences as a divine vision, as faithful and true to the afterlife. Rather than approach the *Commedia* as a living document of anagogical import by an agent of God, they treat it as a compendium of immense and sometimes strange knowledge and invention, the work of a scholar who spreads out for our intellectual and aesthetic enjoyment a vast repertory of philosophical, historical, and political information. Whereas Villani had closed the fourteenth century with the declaration that Dante was "touched by the divine spirit," Lionardo Bruni' s *Ad Petrum Paulum Histrum Dialogi* of approximately 1401-4 has Niccoli claim that Dante derived his theology from monastic *quodlibeti* and other sources that Bruni's circle treated as simplistic, outdated, and misleading.[68] Indeed, after pointing out a couple of Dante's theological "errors," such as assigning virtually the same punishment to Cassius, who merely "annoyed the world," as to Judas, who "betrayed the Savior of the world," Niccoli insists he and his companions not even bother to discuss "that which deals with religion" in the *Commedia* and focus instead on perceived shortcomings in Dante's use of the vemacular.[69]

Yet Bruni himself does not entirely ignore the religious relevance of the *Commedia*, particularly with regard to Dante's sources. In a 1436 biography of the poet, he goes out of his way to assign the *Commedia* to its mortal author and to dismiss the possibility that it contained a heavenly message of Scriptural weight. He claims it is not divine and prophetic, "the highest and most perfect kind of poetry," for, unlike Saint Francis, Dante did not "apply his soul so intensely to God by possession and abstraction of mind that he became, as it were, transfigured beyond human sense."[70] He did not become a poet "through his own genius, excited and aroused by some inward and hidden force termed frenzy and possession. . . through an inner abstraction of the soul."[71] Instead, like a "theologian," he came to his understanding of God "through study and letters."[72] Indeed, Bruni claims Dante worked "incessantly" and achieved literary greatness by "staying awake and diligence in his studies."[73] Yet, rather than "renounce the world and shut himself up to a life of ease," as Bruni suggests was the case with Petrarch, Dante took a wife and "did not omit any polite and social interaction."[74] Moreover, while living "the honest, studious life of a citizen," he "was considerably employed in the republic" and had fought for the state "vigorously, mounted, and in the front rank" at the battle of Campaldino.[75] That is to say, he was not only an intellectual of the highest caliber but also a great and loyal soldier. Indeed,

from Bruni's perspective, Dante seems to have combined his martial and scholarly pursuits. The biographer suggests that, like a military campaign, the *Commedia* is a product of "discipline, art, and forethought," a highly calculated work that succeeds in "capturing the mind of every reader."[76] It is a virile poem that is "not sterile nor poor nor fantastic but fertile and enriched, established from true knowledge and much discipline," and it is a vivid poem that demonstrates "such familiarity with modern history that (Dante seems to have been present at every event."[77] Thus, at a time when the growing commercialization of Florence demanded that Bruni and his colleagues justify their drain on communal resources, Dante is portrayed as both the most active of intellectuals and the most dedicated of public servants.[78]

Nor was Bruni the only fifteenth-century author to exploit Dante for his own political ends. In approximately 1440, Gianozzo Manetti wrote a biography of the poet that sometimes depends heavily on Bruni's account but at other times tellingly departs from it and, on occasion, even returns to earlier biographies that Bruni had dismissed.[79] For example, Manetti revives Boccaccio's claim that Dante was a direct descendant of ancient Romans, a claim that Bruni described as "most doubtful. . . and nothing other than guessing."[80] Manetti seems to have willingly exchanged his usual scrupulousness with regard to the truth and reliability of his sources for an opportunity to bolster Dante's reputation.[81] He seems to have agreed with the growing belief among his contemporaries that Florentine culture, pride, and identity depended ever less on professional soldiers and statesmen, who were costing the city territory and prestige, and ever more on the reputation of its artists and authors, particularly its "three crowns"—Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.[82] He therefore sheds many qualifications of Dante's earlier biographers and does not hesitate to incorporate flattering, sometimes contradictory anecdotes and legends from those accounts. In fact, the contradictions may have been particularly welcome, for, in overtly pointing to their famous sources, especially to the biographies by Boccaccio and Bruni, the discord not only underscores the prestigious attention that Dante had received but also anchors Manetti's biography in those of his forerunners. Even as the conflicting passages reveal different perceptions of Dante's worth and achievements, they also highlight the high esteem in which he was held by many Florentine scholars.

Of course, that intellectual appreciation strongly departs from how Dante was politically treated by his former compatriots. Thus, in contrast to Bruni, who tightly ties the *Commedia* to Dante's civic involvement, Manetti attempts to divorce Dante's literary achievements from his political pursuits. Indeed, Manetti blames politics, particularly the intrigues of Henry VII, the emperor Dante strenuously promoted in public

epistles to the Florentines, for disturbing the poet. According to Manetti, Dante would have continued to study the humanities after his exile, "living most peacefully and most serenely ," if Henry's invasion of Italy had not "violently disrupted and upset even these tranquil and divine studies of his."[83] Without denying that Dante contributed militarily and politically to Florence before his exile— for Manetti was under the same pressure as Bruni to defend civic expenditures on scholarship—the biographer both highlights Dante's contributions to the literature and arts of Florence and suggests that those were areas in which the city excelled. He admits that, in accord with the concerns of Dante's contemporaries, the *Commedia* "reconciles poetry with a healthy Catholicism" and that Dante was "like the ancient poets that were inspired by the Spirit," but he also exploits the *Commedia* as an ancestor of the scholarly achievements in his own era.[84] He defends it as a paradigm of the contributions he and his contemporaries were making to the artistic and literary reputation of Florence.

Thirty years later, such defenses were hardly necessary, for Florence had long since established its prominence among the cultural leaders of Europe, and Dante was widely acknowledged to be a pillar of that reputation. Yet, in a commentary of 1474, Martino Paulo Nibia (also known as "Nidobeato" celebrates the form of the *Commedia* and, to the degree that he found Dante's subjects and insights relevant to himself and his contemporaries, its content.[85] In adopting and adapting Jacopo della Lana's early fourteenth-century commentary on the *Commedia*, Nibia often omits Jacopo's discussion of Dante's theology, updates the poet's references, expands on the style of the *Commedia*, and addresses the more secular aspects of Dante's content, such as history and genealogy.[86] He borrows Jacopo's description of Dante as "divine," but he conspicuously avoids Jacopo's repeated claim that Dante was divinely inspired, and he devotes much of his time to establishing the relevance of the *Commedia* to late fifteenth-century Italy.[87] For example, after reviewing Dante's references to several central Italian towns, Nibia notes, "Faenza found itself under the rule of the wretched Carlo di Manfredi; Imola found itself under Count Ieronimo, nephew of Pope Sixtus IV; Cesenna under the Holy Church."[88] Rather than join Manetti in defending Dante's contributions to Florentine culture, Nibia presumes them and turns to analyzing the specific merits of the *Commedia* in relationship to the culture of his own era. He treats Dante's text not so much as a divinely inspired window on the afterlife, as the reflection of an age concerned above all with the other world, but as a forerunner of his own world, as a paradigm of late fifteenth-century literature and an essay on issues that he evidently thought were more relevant than theology.

Six or seven years later, Cristoforo Landino takes a similar approach, even as he dismisses the efforts of Nibia and other predecessors.[89] Indeed, he focuses far more than does Nibia on Dante's language and style. As Landino declares to the Florentine Signori in a dedicatory epistle for his commentary: "This alone I affirm: to have liberated your citizen from the barbarity of many external idioms in which (the *Commedia* was corrupted by commentators, and my duty in presenting it to you is to demonstrate pure and simple Florentine."[90] Here and elsewhere in his discussion of the *Commedia*, he seems above all to praise it for its form and to condemn his predecessors, the vast majority of whom worked in the fourteenth century, for their mishandling of Dante's style and language. Yet his remarks could also have overtones for Dante's content and for his predecessors' responses to it. The "idioms" in which the *Commedia* had supposedly been corrupted could refer to earlier interpretations of its subject matter, for, despite Landino's claims to the contrary , he devotes a great deal of his commentary to the history, philosophy, and allegorical implications of the *Commedia*.[91] He reviews many of his predecessors' responses to these issues, weighs the merits of their evidence, analyzes their reasoning, and either approves one of their interpretations or produces one of his own. Moreover, as he dwells on the subjects that he believes are most relevant to his readers, and as he reveals which implications of the text are most correct in his opinion, he suggests by his conspicuous refusal to address Dante's theology the reason that preceding commentators had misinterpreted the more secular aspects of the text. He implies that his forerunners, in their concern with the question of Dante's ultimate source and religious authority, allowed themselves to neglect other important facets of the text, cultural reflections of a milieu that Landino presents as the foundation of his own.

Thus, despite the fact that Landino' s fifteenth-century predecessors are among the "corrupting" commentators from whom he attempts to distance himself, he joins them in treating the *Commedia* as a threshold to his own era. He too echoes the secular emphasis of fifteenth-century illuminators on the literary, historical, philosophical, and political aspects of the work. He too stands in sharp contrast to fourteenth-century commentators and illuminators, who treat the *Commedia* as a divinely inspired guide to the afterlife, and who sometimes even suggest it is a true and faithful account of a journey to the other world. Indeed, in amending and emending Trecento responses to the *Commedia*, Landino and his contemporaries remark on those responses and, to some degree, on the previous century as a whole. By directly addressing viewers only at the most political junctures of the narrative, by seeking to avoid "that which deals with religion" in the *Commedia*, and by attempting to purge Dante's text of "corruption" from past commentaries, they characterize

their fourteenth-century predecessors as being less concerned than themselves with the more secular aspects of the text and as being overly focused on theological issues, on concerns from which they themselves were already seeking to distance themselves. Yet, even as Landino and his contemporaries underscore their differences from their forerunners, they question that very division. In employing the *Commedia* to promote their own agendas—to praise the use of the vernacular, to establish a prototype for the active scholar, or to celebrate Florentine contributions to literature and the arts—they acknowledge their own roots in Dante's text and in the culture of his time. They acknowledge the continuity of their past and undermine the very classification system that they are helping to inaugurate. They justify resistance to the taxonomy that they otherwise foster and that still oppresses academia, particularly young *dantisti.*

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NOTES

1. A shorter version of this paper was presented at the Fifteenth International Conference on Medievalism, October 30, 2000. For their comments at that time, I would like to thank Gwendolyn Morgan and Mark Galik. For reading earlier versions of this paper, I would also like to thank Teodolinda Barolini, Joan Ferrante, Jackie Jung, David Rosand, Jane Rosenthal, and Christine Sciaccia. Any remaining faults are, of course, mine alone.
2. For over 1200 reproductions of *Commedia* illustrations and the most complete survey of their subjects, symbols, sources, and context, see Peter Brieger, Millard Meiss, and Charles Singleton, *The Illuminated Manuscripts of the "Divine Comedy,"* 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969 . For detailed descriptions of all known manuscripts of the *Commedia*, see Marcella Roddewig, *Dante Alighieri*, *"Die gottliche Komodie": Vergleichende Bestandsaufnahme der "Commedia"- Handschriften* (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1984 . For my definition of "fully illustrated," I am drawing on that of Brieger: "thirty manuscripts still in existence contain illustrations that form a pictorial cycle, canto by canto, on consecutive pages either inserted (framed or unframed in the text or placed in the bottom margin," as described in his essay "Pictorial Commentaries to the *Commedia*," *Illuminated Manuscripts*. . . , I, 83. In addition, there are two manuscripts, Bibliothèque Nationale MS italien 78 in Paris and Biblioteca Nazionale MS Banco Rari 39 in Florence, that have incomplete cycles in their historiated initials; one, Kongelige Bibliotek MS Thott 411.2 in Copenhagen, that has an incomplete cycle in the margins and historiated initials; and many that have a few historiated initials or a few marginal illustrations. Unless otherwise noted, I have dated and attributed the miniatures in accordance with the catalogue by Brieger and Meiss in *Illuminated Manuscripts*. . . , I, 209-339.
3. For the most concise yet thorough introduction to pictorial models for early illuminators of the *Commedia*, particularly to the Vergilius Vaticanus (Vat. lat. 3225 , see Brieger, 86-88.
4. That canon was first noted by Brieger, 84.
5. For more on Giovanni's reading of the *Commedia*, see Deborah Parker, *Commentary and Ideology: Dante in the Renaissance* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1993 , 173, n. 13. For the text of Boccaccio's lectures, see his *Esposizioni sopra la "Comedia,"* ed. Giorgio

Padoan (1965; repr. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1994 . For a good, albeit somewhat dated, introduction to the vast literature on the *Esposizioni*, see Padoan's entry on Boccaccio in the *Enciclopedia dantesca*, ed. Umberto Bosco, 6 vols., (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1970- 78 , I, 645-50. Boccaccio, who was apparently the first to give public lectures on the *Commedia*, was soon followed by Benvenuto da Imola at Bologna in 1375, Scuaro de' Broaspini at Verona in 1380, Franceso da Buti at the Pisan Studio in 1385, and Nofri di Giovanni at Pistoia in 1394. For the fourteenth-century reference to peasants singing the *Commedia*, see novella CXV in *Le novelle di Francho Sacchetti*, ed. Ottavio Gigli, 2 vols., (Florence: Successori Le Monnier, 1909 , I, 276- 77. For the fullest account to date of early modern singing of the *Commedia*, see John Ahern, "Singing the Book: Orality in the Reception of Dante's *Comedy*," in *Dante: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Amilcare A. Iannucci (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: U of Toronto P, 1997 ,214-39. For a thorough introduction to the relationship between illuminators and their advisors, see Jonathan J. G. Alexander's *Medieval Illuminators and Their Methods of Work* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1992 , esp. Chapter Three: "Programmes and Instructions for Illuminators," 52- 71. As he notes (54 , the instructions were usually covered, erased, or trimmed away by the time the manuscript was finished. For an example of the inscribed, unfinished miniatures from Budapest MS italien 1, see the illustration of *Purgatorio* XVI (fol. 38v , in Brieger, et al., II, pI. 377a. For reproductions of most miniatures in this manuscript, see Forditotta Babits Mihály, *Dante Alighieri Isteni Színjáték* (Budapest: Magyar Helikon, 1965 .

6. For examples of the Copenhagen illustrations, see Brieger, et al.
7. For Millard Meiss's discussion of the close parallels between the Musée Condé miniatures and the frescoes of the Last Judgment and Thebaid in the Camposanto at Pisa, see "The Smiling Pages," in *Illuminated Manuscripts...*, 1,57-70. Meiss believed these frescoes were by Francesco Traini, but, in *Buffalmacco e il Trionfo della Morte* (Turin: Simonelli, 1974 , Luciano Bellosi adduces documents attributing them to Buffalmacco. For a reproduction of the illustration, see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 5.
8. For one indication that Dante was right-handed, see *Purgatorio* 12.133: "with the fingers of my right hand outspread, I found but six letters" ("con le dita de la destra scempie trovai pur sei le lettere" . All quotes of the *Commedia* are from Charles Singleton's three-volume translation (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970- 75 .
9. For a reproduction of the Guarneriana image, see Guido Biagi, "*La Divina Commedia*" *nella figurazione artistica e nel secolare commento*, 3 vols. (Turin: Unione tipografico-editrice torinese, 1921-39 , I, p. 7.
10. For a reproduction, see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 5.
11. See, for example, the image of *Inferno* I (fol. 1r in Biblioteca Laurenziana MS Plutei 40.7, as illustrated in Paul Schubring's *Illustrationen zu Dantes "Göttlicher Kömodie," Italien*, 14. bis 16. Jahrhundert (Vienna: Amalthea-Verlag, 1931 , pl. 16.
12. For an illustration of Dante setting out alone, see the *Vitae Imperatorum* Master's ca. 1440 illustration of *Inferno* I (fol. 1v in Bibliothèque Nationale MS italien 2017, as illustrated in Brieger, et al., II, pI. 46a. For an illustration of Dante by Virgil's side in the dark woods with which the narrative begins, see the illustration from the 1440s of *Inferno* I, (fol. 1r in British Museum MS Yates Thompson 36, as illustrated in Brieger, et al., II, pI. 17a.
13. For an example, see the ca. 1420 Florentine miniature of *Inferno* I (fol. 1v in Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional MS Vitrina 23-2, as illustrated in Brieger, et al., II, pI. 15.
14. Derrida, Jacques, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978; orig. 1967 ,278-93.
15. John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, ed. J. B. Hall and K. S. B. Rohan, Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 98 (Turnhoult: Brepols, 1991 , 1.13.24-26,38.

16. For more on this process in relationship to author-portraits, see David Hult, *Self-fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First "Roman de la Rose"* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986 ,99.
17. In "What Is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1979; orig. 1969 , Michel Foucault notes (127-29 that the other three criteria in Jerome's *De viris illustribus* to verify authorship are the standard of quality in a text, its harmony of ideas and doctrine, and its stylistic uniformity. See also Avaristo Arns, *La technique du livre d'apres Saint Jerome* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1953 , esp. 173-82. For Jerome's text, see *Divi Eusebii Hieronymi . . . opera omnia. . .* (Paris: Apvd Clavdivm Chevallonivm, 1533-34 .
18. *Postilla super librum Paralipomenon*, prologus, Hugonis Cardinalis Postilla seu expositiones in Veteris et Novi Testamentum (Paris: Apvd Clavdivm Chevallonivm, 1530-45 , quoted and translated by A. J. Minnis in *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (1984; 2nd ed. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1988 , 11.
19. For a reproduction of the image, see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 6a.
20. See Minnis for the pre-modern definition of *auctor* (esp. 190-210 and *commentator* (94-95 .
21. For a reproduction of the image, see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 6a.
22. *Guido da Pisa's Expositiones et Glose super "Comediam " Dantis or Commentary on Dante's "Inferno*," ed. with notes and introduction by Vincenzo Cioffari (Albany: SUP of New York, 1974 ,1. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of *Commedia* commentaries are mine.
23. For a reproduction of the image, see Brieger, et al., II, 'pI. 54a.
24. 0n the development of perspective, see John White, *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space* (1957; 3rd ed. Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1987 .
25. 0n the status of perspective in the art of the early fourteenth century, see White, 23-102.
26. For reproduction of the Chantilly images for *Inferno* VIII-IX (fols. 76r and 83r , see Brieger, et al., II, pIs. 116b and 127b .
27. Noted by Jack Greenstein in "The Vision of Peace: Meaning and Representation in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's 'Sala della pace' Cityscapes,"*Art History*, 11 (1988 ,492-510.
28. For further discussion of how the inscription conflates the reader with the pilgrim/ narrator, see John Freccero's "Infernal Irony: The Gates of Hell," *MLN*, 99 (1984 , 769-86.
29. For a reproduction of this miniature, see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 54b.
30. Guido, 56.
31. Guido, 56.
32. Guido, 4; trans. Vincenzo Cioffari and Francesco Mazzoni, "The Prologue to the Commentary of Guido da Pisa," *Dante Studies* 90 (1972 , 131.
33. Guido, 49; trans. Vincenzo Cioffari, "Guido da Pisa's Basic Interpretation (A Translation of the First Two Cantos ," *Dante Studies*, 93 (1975 , 21.
34. Guido, 48; trans. Cioffari, 19.
35. Guido, 19; trans. Cioffari, 8.
36. Guido, 18; trans. Cioffari, 7.
37. For the comparisons of the *Commedia* to Noah's ark and Ezekiel's vision, see Guido, 2. For the comparison of the *Commedia* to the writing on the wall, see page 1 of his commentary.
38. Guido, 2. For more on this echo of ecclesiastical phrasing, see Francesco Mazzoni, "Guido da Pisa interprete di Dante e la sua fortuna presso il Boccaccio," *Studi Danteschi* 35 (1958 , 46.
39. For a more detailed discussion of the likelihood Guido advised the illuminators, see Meiss, 38-39,45-46, 55.
40. Guido, 4; trans. Cioffari and Mazzoni, 132.

41. For Jacopo's gloss on *Inferno* 2.118-20, see *Jacopo Alighieri: chiose all' "Inferno,"* ed. Saverio Bellomo, Medioevo e umanesimo, (Padua: Antenore, 1990 , 98.
42. The passage from the recto of folio four in a manuscript described as simply "Batines" is quoted by Bruno Sandkühler in *Die frühen Dantekommentare und ihr Verhaltnis zur mittelalterlichen Kommentartradition*, Münchner Romanistiche Arbeiten, 19 (Munich: W. Fink, 1967 , 222.
43. Natalino Sapegno, *Storia letteraria del Trecento* (Milan and Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1963 , 117.
44. Pietro di Dante, 1l "*Commentarium " di Pietro Alighieri nelle redazioni Ashburnhamiana e Ottoboniana,* ed. Roberto della Vedova and Maria Teresa Silvotti (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1978 , 14.
45. The relevant passages from the recto of folio fifteen in Laurenziana MS Ashburnham 841 are quoted in Latin by Mazzoni, 71.
46. Boccaccio, prologue, paras. 28-29.
47. For Boccaccio's discussion of Dante's discovery, see *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, ed. Luigi Sasso (Milan: Garzanti, 1995 , para. 24. For the description of Dante's habits, see the *Esposizioni*, prologue, para. 36.
48. *Trattatello,* paras. 24, 177.
49. *Trattatello,* para. 26.
50. Falso Boccaccio, *Chiose sopra Dante,* ed. G. G. Warren, Lord Vernon (Florence: Piatti, 1846 ,716; Benvenuto da Irnola, *Benvenuto Rambaldi da Imola illustrato nella vita e nelle opere, e di lui Commento Latino sulla "Divina Commedia" di Dante Allighieri*, ed. Giovanni Tamburini, 3 vols. (Imola: Galeati, 1855-56 , I, 13, 102; Anonimo Fiorentino, *Commento alia "Divina Commedia" d 'Anonimo Fiorentino del secolo XIV*, ed. Pietro Fanfani, 3 vols. (Bologna: Gaetano Romagnoli, 1866-74 , I, 25-26; Francesco da Buti, *Commento di Francesco Buti sopra la "Divina Comedia,"* ed. Crescentino Giannini, 3 vols. (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62 , I, 27 (quote , 34-35; Filippo Villani, *1l Comento al primo canto dell' "Inferno" di Filippo Villani*, ed. Giuseppe Cugnoni, Collezione di opuscoli danteschi indediti o rari, 31 (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1896 , 29-30.
51. Dante Alighieri, "Epistles," in *Opere minori*, vol. 3, book 2, ed. Arsenio Frugoni, Giorgio Brugnoli, Enzo Cecchini, and Francesco Mazzoni (1979; 2nd ed. Milan and Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1996 , XIII, para. 19. For a thorough introduction to the extensive bibliography on the attribution of the epistle, see Robert Hollander, *Dante's Epistle to Cangrande* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1993 .
52. As reported by Sandkühler (137 in his analysis of an unpublished version of Bambaglioli's *proemio*.
53. For Jacopo's most direct references to the *accessus*, see "*Comedia" di Dante degli Allagherii col commento di Jacopo della Lana Bolognese*, ed. Luciano Scarabelli, 3 vols. (Bologna: Tipografia Regia, 1866-67 , I, 103-5. For a short, clear definition and introduction to the *accessus*, see A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100-c.1375: The Commentary-Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988 ,12-15. For the most direct discussion of the relationship between the *accessus* and early commentaries on the *Commedia*, see Bruno Nardi, "Osservazioni suI medievale 'accessus ad auctores' in rapporto all' 'Epistola a Cangrande'," in *Saggi e note di critica dantesca* (Milan and Naples, Riccardo Ricciardi, 1966 , 268-305. For a short, direct discussion of the relationship between the *accessus* and Scholastic exegesis, see Sandkühler, 86-87. For a much longer, more thorough discussion of that relationship, see Minnis.
54. For Boccaccio's comparisons of Dante with the Prophets, see the *Trattatello*, paras. 149-50. For the references to the *Commedia* springing from divine grace, see, respectively, the *Trattatello*, para. 19; the *Esposizioni*, paras. 61-63; and an unspecified passage quoted by Mazzoni, 114.
55. For the comparison to the Prophets, see Benvenuto, I, 9-10, 20, and 22. For the quote regarding Dante's name, see Benvenuto, I, 14.
56. Francesco da Buti, I, 10.

57. Falso Boccaccio, 44.
58. For the comparisons, see Villani, 55-63. For the quotations, see, respectively, Villani, 28-29, and Villani's biography of Dante, as recorded in *Le vite di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio, scritte al fine del secolo decimosesto*, ed. Angelo Solerti (Milan: F. Vallardi, 1904 , 89.
59. For one example of many, see the late fourteenth-century illustration of *Inferno* III (fol. 7v in Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica MS latini 4776, as illustrated in Brieger, et al., II, pI. 60a.
60. See, for example, the ca. 1370 Neapolitan miniature of *Inferno* III (fol. 4r from British Museum MS Additional 19587 , as illustrated in Brieger, et al., II, pI. 56b.
61. For a reproduction of the Yates Thompson gate to hell (fol. 5r , see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 66a.
62. For the Yates Thompson image of *Paradiso* XVII (fol. 159r , see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 473b.
63. For the image of medieval Florence and its humble neighbors, as described in *Paradiso* XVI (fol. 157r , see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 471c. For the image of the cities between the Adige and the Tagliamento (fol. 159r , see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 453a.
64. For a reproduction of this image from folio 8r, see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 12b.
65. For a reproduction of this image from Biblioteca Comunale MS 32 in Imola (fol. 3v , see Brieger, et al., II, pI. 65a.
66. Among such parallels is the Master's crowning of Semiramis, Dido, Cleopatra, and Helen (fol. 63v; Brieger, et al., pI. 89b , which accords with Barzizza's extended remarks on how these queens abused their power for the pleasures of the flesh. See also the miniature of Barbariccia blowing a trumpet from his rear (fol. 255v; Brieger, et al., pI. 243a , a rude blast on which Barzizza dwells at considerable length in his commentary on *Inferno* 21.139. For a detailed discussion of Barzizza's dependance on Francesco, see Piero Giorgio Ricci's entry on Barzizza in the *Enciclopedia dantesca*, I, 529. For Barzizza's commentary, see *Lo "Inferno" della "Commedia" di Dante Alighier col commento di Guiniforto delli Bargigi,* ed. Giuseppe Zacheroni (Marseilles: Leopoldo Mossy; Florence: Giuseppe Molini, 1838 .
67. See Schubring, pI. 34.
68. Bruni, *Ad Petrum Paulum Histrum Dialogi*, in *Dialogi: Prosatori latini del Quattrocento*, ed. Eugenio Garin, La letteratura italiana: Storia e testi, 13 (Milan and Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1952 ,70. On the humanists' perceptions of the *quodlibeti* and such works, see Carlo Madrignani, "Di alcune biografie umanistiche di Dante e Petrarca," *Belfagor*, 18 (1963 ,33.
69. Bruni, 70.
70. Bruni, "Le vite di Dante e Petrarca," in *Le vite di Dante scritte da Giovanni e Filippo Villani, da Giovanni Boccaccio, Leonardo Aretino e Giannozzo Manetti*, ed. G. L. Passerini (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1917 , 220-21.
71. Bruni, "Le vite . . . ,"220-21.
72. Bruni, "Le vite . . . ,"221.
73. Bruni, "Le vite . . . ,"221.
74. For the comparison to Petrarch, see "Le vite . . . ,"207 . For the description of Dante's efforts to remain socially active, see "Le vite . . . ," 209.
75. For the description of Dante as a citizen, see Bruni, "Le vite . . . ,"210. For the description of Dante as a soldier, see "Le vite . . . ,"207-9 (quote, 208-9 .
76. For the militaristic description of Dante's planning, see Bruni, "Le vite . . . ,"221. For reference to the captivation of the reader, see Bruni, "Le vite . . . ,"224.
77. On the virility of the poem, see "Le vite . . . ," 219-20. On the vivacity of the *Commedia*, see "Le vite . . . ," 224.
78. On the relationship between Bruni's portrait of Dante and the need to defend Florentine scholarship, see Madrignani, esp. 38.

79. Giannozzo Manetti, "Vita dantis poetae florentini," in *Le vite di Dante scritte da Giovanni e Filippo Villani, da Giovanni Boccaccio, Leonardo Aretino e Giannozzo Manetti*, ed. G. L. Passerini (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1917 , 237-81.
80. Bruni, "Le vite . . . ," 206.
81. On Manetti' s scrupulousness, see Carlo Dionisotti, "Dante nel Quattrocento," in *Atti del congresso internazionale di studi danteschi, 20-27 aprile 1965,* 2 vols. (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1965 , I, 359-60.
82. On this growing belief and Manetti's promotion of it, see Dionisotti, 359-60.
83. Manetti, 259.
84. Manetti, 270.
85. Nibia, La *Commedia* (Milan: Ludovicus et Albertus Pedemontani for Guido Terzago, 1477-78 .
86. Dionisotti,370.
87. As noted in Gianvito Resta's entry on Nibia in the *Enciclopedia dantesca*, 111,44.
88. Quoted by Dionisotti, 370.
89. Cristoforo Landino, *"Comedia" del divinopoeta Danthe Alighieri* (Venice: M. Bernardino Stagnio, 1536 .
90. As transcribed in Manfred Lentzen, "Die "Orazione di Messere Cristoforo Landino Fiorentino havuta alla illustrissima signoria fiorentina quando presento el comento suo di Dante'," *Romanische Forschungen*, 80 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1968 ,537.
91. As noted by Dionisotti, 363-65.