STATIUS AND THE *COMMEDIA*: AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF STATIUS'S EPIC POETRY TO DANTE'S *COMMEDIA*

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I, Sophie Victoria Fuller, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

ABSTRACT

In the surprising absence of a monograph dedicated exclusively to Dante and Statius, my research asks, firstly when and how Dante most likely read Statius's available works, and then – more importantly – how, why, and where he drew on this authorial encounter in his own oeuvre. The presence of Statius forms a key part of Dante's development of a chain of literary succession in the *Commedia* from the great classical poets Homer and Vergil, via Statius, to Dante himself, the first Christian *poeta*. My thesis explores Dante's reception of Statius's two epic poems, the *Thebaid* and the unfinished *Achilleid*, and provides a consistent overview of Dante's engagement with Statius throughout his oeuvre. Through reference to the manuscript tradition, I demonstrate that Dante probably read Statian epic accompanied by glosses and paratexts and encountered Statian extracts in *florilegia* of classical poetry. I suggest Dante's acquaintance with the *Roman de Thèbes*. I consider Statian resonances in Dante's '*opere minori*' and establish that Dante's Statius is not just a discovery of the *Commedia*, but a fundamental part of Dante's ongoing exploration of classical poetry and its methods of reading. Through in-depth analysis of the *Commedia* and Statius's two epics, I re-evaluate Statius's presence throughout the *Commedia*; not just in *Inferno*, where Statius's Thebes provides a model for the City of Dis, and *Purgatorio*, where he appears as Stazio, but also in *Paradiso*, which to date has been explored less fully regarding Statius. In doing so, I take the new approach of returning to medieval commentators of Statian epic (edited and in manuscript) and the *Commedia* to fully understand the poetic, symbolic, moral, allegorical, and political implications of these Statian resonances. I demonstrate thereby that Statian epic was far more important narratively, poetically, morally, allegorically, and politically to Dante than has been acknowledged to date.

IMPACT STATEMENT

Classical literature has had, and continues to have, an important influence upon European literature, especially upon figures who are fundamental to their country's national literary history, such as Shakespeare and the subject of my research, Dante. Understanding of that influence is vital to a full appreciation of our literary heritage. Yet after decades of at best neglect, and at worst, dismissal as poor imitator of the more famous Augustan poet Vergil, scholars have only recently begun to consider seriously the Flavian epic poet Statius, either on his own merits or as influence upon later authors. Moreover, in the absence of documentary evidence of Dante's education or any trace of manuscripts he may have owned, Dantists continue their important efforts to understand Dante's intellectual formation and to identify his classical and other intertexts. My research coincides and engages with this revived and more positive interest in Statius by classical scholars and the ongoing efforts of Dantists to understand fully the intertextuality of Dante's oeuvre.

Dante's engagement with the Latin poet Statius's two epic works (the *Thebaid* and the unfinished *Achilleid*) is apparent throughout much of Dante's oeuvre and forms a fundamental part of Dante's claim to poetic *auctoritas.* Yet study of that engagement has largely been neglected, with no monograph to date published in this regard and those scholars that do discuss Dante's Statius tending to focus on Stazio's role in *Purgatorio* or on particular episodes of *Inferno* where Dante's reception of Statius is most apparent. My research redresses that deficiency, charting the likely path of Dante's encounter with Statius, beginning with Statian epic's inclusion in *florilegia* containing extracts of classical poetry, passing via the *Achilleid*, and culminating in Dante reading the *Thebaid* in entirety during his exile, probably accompanied by *accessus* texts, glosses and other paratexts. I also suggest Dante's possible familiarity with an Old French retelling of the *Thebaid*, the *Roman de Thèbes.* Analysis of Dante's express mentions of Statius and Statian resonances in the *opere minori* enables me to demonstrate Dante's growing enthusiasm for and understanding of Statian epic

throughout his oeuvre, not just in the *Commedia*. This may well form the basis for an article in a suitable journal. This increased appreciation of Dante's encounter with Statius and close analysis of Statius's two epics alongside the *Commedia* enable me to re-evaluate Dante's engagement with Statius and his epic poetry throughout all three *cantiche* of the *Commedia*, not just in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, but also in *Paradiso*, which has received minimal attention to date. Through the new approach of returning to medieval practices of reading, studying Statius's and Dante's own medieval commentators, and taking account of the particularities of medieval knowledge about Statius, I demonstrate that Statian epic was far more important narratively, poetically, morally, and allegorically to Dante than has been acknowledged to date. My research thus also evidences the value of returning to medieval readers in seeking to understand medieval texts, and of the preservation and digitisation of medieval manuscripts to enhance their accessibility.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EDITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DANTE ALIGHIERI

I quote Dante's works from the following editions:

'Rime', ed. by Michele Barbi, in *Le Opere di Dante*, vol. I (Florence: Società dantesca italiana, 1960).

'Vita Nuova', ed. by Michele Barbi, in *Le Opere di Dante*, vol. I (Florence: Società dantesca italiana, 1960).

Il Fiore e il Detto d'Amore attribuibili a Dante Alighieri, ed. by Gianfranco Contini, Le Opere di Dante Alighieri, Edizione Nazionale a cura della Società Dantesca Italiana (Milan: Mondadori, 1984).

'De Vulgari Eloquentia', ed. by Pio Rajna, in *Le Opere di Dante*, vol. I (Florence: Società dantesca italiana, 1960).

Convivio, ed. by Franca Brambilla Ageno, Le Opere di Dante Alighieri, Edizione Nazionale a cura della Società Dantesca Italiana, 3 vols (Florence: Le Lettere, 1995).

'Epistole', ed. by Ermenegildo Pistelli, in *Le Opere di Dante*, vol. I (Florence: Società dantesca italiana, 1960).

Commedia, ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi, Second revised edition, 4 vols, Le Opere di Dante Alighieri, Edizione Nazionale a cura della Società Dantesca Italiana (Florence: Le Lettere, 1994).

Monarchia, ed. by Pier Giorgio Ricci, Le opere di Dante Alighieri, Edizione Nazionale a cura della Società Dantesca Italiana (Milan: Mondadori, 1965).

'Egloge', ed. by Ermenegildo Pistelli, in *Le Opere di Dante*, vol. I (Florence: Società dantesca italiana, 1960).

'Questio de aqua et terra', ed. by Ermenegildo Pistelli, in *Le Opere di Dante*, vol. I (Florence: Società dantesca italiana, 1960).

For details of further editions of Dante Alighieri's works that I utilised, see Bibliography.

When quoting from medieval and modern commentaries to the *Commedia*, I utilise the online editions published by the Dartmouth Dante Lab:

http://dantelab.dartmouth.edu/reader

STATIUS

I quote Statius's works from the following editions:

Thebaid: Vol I, Books 1-7, ed. and trans. by David R. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb Classical Library 207 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Thebaid: Vol II, Books 8-12; *Achilleid*, ed. and trans. by David R. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb Classical Library 498 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Silvae, ed. and trans. by David R. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb Classical Library 206, Corrected Edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

For details of further editions of Statius's works that I utilised, see Bibliography.

I quote the following edited commentaries on Statius's two epics, all in *Lactantius Placidus In Statii Thebaida Commentum*, ed. by Robertus Dale Sweeney, vol. I (Stuttgart and Leipzig: Teubner, 1997):

Lactantius Placidus, *Lactantii Placidi in Statii Thebaida commentum*, pp. VII-659.

Anonymous, *Anonymi in Statii Achilleida commentum*, pp. 662-91.

'Pseudo-Fulgentius', *Super Thebaiden commentariolum*, pp. 691-704.

For details of further commentaries I utilised in manuscript form, see Bibliography.

THE BIBLE

I quote the Bible from the following edition of the Vulgate:

Jerome (attrib.) *et al*. 2018. *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, ed. by Andreas Beriger, Widu-Wolfgang Ehlers, and Michael Fieger, 5 vols (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter).

ABBREVIATIONS

I utilise the following abbreviated titles and references in this thesis:

Vita Nuova: VN

De Vulgari Eloquentia: DVE

Lactantii Placidi in Statii Thebaida commentum: In Theb.

Anonymi in Statii Achilleida commentum: In Ach.

Super Thebaiden commentariolum: Super Theb.

Evangelium secundum Mattheum: Matt.

Evangelium secundum Marcum: Marc.

Evangelium secundum Lucam: Luc.

Evangelium secundum Iohannem: Ioh.

INTRODUCTION

1. PREFACE

Dante's regard for the classical poet Statius and his two Latin epics (the *Thebaid* and the unfinished *Achilleid*) is apparent even in Dante's early works. (As the incorrect birthplace given in Stazio's 'autobiography' (*Purgatorio* XXI.88-90) suggests, Dante probably did not know Statius's *Silvae*, since the collection enjoyed minimal circulation prior to its 're-discovery' by Poggio Bracciolini in 1417).[1] In *De Vulgari Eloquentia* II.VI.7, Dante includes Statius with Vergil, Ovid *Metamorfoseos*, and Lucan among the 'regulatos […] poetas', whose example every scholar should recall when seeking to write elegantly. In *Convivio* III.VIII.10 and III.XI.16, Dante translates episodes from the *Thebaid* to support his argument, before using exempla from *Thebaid* I to illustrate *vergogna*, a virtue of *adolescenza* (the first of Man's four ages) in *Convivio* IV.XXV.6-10. (Exempla from Vergil, Lucan and Ovid illuminate the remaining ages' virtues.) Echoes of the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* are also found in the *Rime, Epistole*, and *Egloge*. Accordingly, Statius's position among Dante's classical poetic canon and Dante's esteem for Statian epic are evident even in Dante's *opere minori*.

Unsurprisingly, Dante's *magnum opus* reaffirms, even augments Statius's importance within that canon. The *Commedia* contains numerous resonances with both Statian epics, with Statius's Thebes providing a model for Dante's City of Dis in *Inferno* and several Statian characters used as exempla of particular sins. Statius himself appears as a character in *Purgatorio*, the only poet other than Vergil to appear as a guide, but unlike Virgilio, Stazio is destined for paradise.[2] Dante's engagement with Statius thus forms a fundamental part of Dante's claim to poetic *auctoritas* superior to that of the great classical poets, as the first Christian *poeta*. My research asks, firstly

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[1] On the possibility that the Paduan Lovato dei Lovati knew the *Silvae*, see Witt 2000: 95-100.
[2] To avoid confusion, I call the character 'Stazio' and the classical author 'Statius' throughout the thesis; likewise, I call Dante's other author-characters by their Italian names and the classical authors on whom they are modelled by their anglicised names throughout.

when and how Dante most likely read Statius's epic poetry; and then, more importantly, how, why, and where Dante drew on his encounter with Statius in his own oeuvre.

2. BACKGROUND AND PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

Since Dante's earliest commentators, scholars have examined his oeuvre's intertextuality, seeking to determine those religious, secular, classical, or contemporary sources that may have influenced Dante. Yet this pursuit of Dante's sources is notoriously difficult. Kleinhenz hints at the challenge posed by what he calls 'Dante doing intertextuality' when he describes Signorelli's portrait of Dante, reading one book and consulting another, as 'a wonderfully accurate depiction of the poet's compositional practice, which integrates multiple occurrences of reading, writing, comparing, contrasting, analyzing, translating, incorporating, interpreting, rewriting' etc. (2007: 184). The absence of direct evidence of Dante's 'bibliography', and Dante's usual tendency not to acknowledge his sources or even admit their existence or influence (subject of course to notable exceptions), renders this task more problematic. Nevertheless, Dante's oeuvre 'can certainly aid us in establishing the substance of [Dante's] knowledge, while tracing its shifting and evolving character', thus we should pay 'serious attention' to its 'intertextual make-up' (Barański 2017: 7).

Closely tied to Dante's oeuvre's intertextuality is Dante's bid for *auctoritas.* As is well known, medieval concepts of authorship differed significantly from modern ones, and not every individual who picked up their pen to write in the Middle Ages was granted the title *auctor*.[3] In his popular formulation, drawn from the preface to his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sententiae*, Bonaventure established four 'mod[i] faciendi librum': as *scriptor*, who merely copies the compositions of others; as *compilator*, who assembles the compositions of others; as *commentator*, who comments upon the composition of others, but possesses some level of their own authority; and as *auctor*, who composes original works (Bonaventure 1934-1964: vol. I,

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[3] On medieval notions of authorship and *auctoritas*, see, for example, Minnis 1988 and Ascoli 2008: 3-64.

ch. 12).[4]   As Dante informs us at *Convivio* IV.VI, the word *auctor* purportedly possessed two etymological bases: *autentin* relating to a person worthy of faith and obedience; and *auieo* relating to the binding together of words.[5] Accordingly, the *auctores* possessed *auctoritas* and were 'not merely to be read but also to be respected and believed' (Ascoli 2008: 10). This *auctoritas* derived ultimately from God, with the Bible's human authors and the Church fathers thought to possess the greatest *auctoritas*, followed by the great pagan *auctores*. The texts written by the *auctores* (the *auctoritates*) were those that 'had been proven to have transcended the limitations of the inevitably fallible men who wrote them and to bear truths that exceeded the limits of historical contingency' (Ascoli 2008: 7). Initially, therefore, *auctoritas* was closely related to the language in which the text was written – namely Latin, which possessed the necessary immutability to transcend these limitations. Notwithstanding this, the romance vernaculars, especially the three mentioned by Dante in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* I.X, were developing rapidly into 'acknowledged languages of culture, capable of sustaining important literary productions' (Ascoli 2008: 10). Accordingly, medieval texts, particularly those written in the vernacular, tend to manifest self-consciousness and a desire to establish their writer's *auctoritas*.

For Dante *auctoritas* is an inherent and necessary component of a verse-writer's status as *poeta*. Frequently, authors sought *auctoritas* by positioning their works within the so-called *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii*. *Translatio imperii* concerned the medieval West's inheritance of ancient Rome's intellectual and political legacy, and *translatio studii*, its inheritance of the classical world's learning (Battles 2004: 21). Thus, as I demonstrate in this thesis, Dante uses his engagement with Statius to create a chain of poetic succession, of which he is its zenith, the first explicitly Christian *poeta*.

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[4] On Bonaventure's formulation, see Picone 2005: 178-79; Ascoli 2008: 34; and Cornish 2011: 45.
[5] See also Ascoli 2008: 15-16.

However, despite widespread acknowledgement of Statius's inclusion in Dante's Latin poetic canon and the noting of resonances with Statian epic in line-by-line commentaries to Dante's *opere*, discussion of the importance of Statius and his epic poetry to Dante has been rather neglected. No monograph has been published to date in this regard. Volumes focussing on Dante's intertextuality with Latin authors frequently disregard Statius, concentrating instead on Vergil (e.g. Whitfield 1949 and Italia 2012), Ovid (e.g. Sowell 1991), or both (e.g. Jacoff and Schnapp 1991). Other scholars downplay Statius's importance to Dante, wilfully or otherwise. Moore (1896: vol.1, 243-55) counts the number of Statian resonances he has identified throughout the *Commedia* and in *Convivio*, but he ignores the other *opere minori*, and line-by-line commentaries to the *Commedia* identify further resonances (e.g. Hollander 2000-2007). Moore also provides rather sparse analysis of Statian epic's importance to the *Commedia*. Barolini 1984 discusses Dante's use of Statian epic in both *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and *Convivio*, but underestimates its influence on the *Commedia*, focussing on Dante's Stazio, and largely ignoring the *Commedia*'s intertextuality with the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*. The only exceptions are a brief discussion of certain key episodes of Statian engagement, and an unfavourable comparison between the resonances Moore counted in the *Commedia* with Statius's poetry and those with the other canonical poets. This neglect of Dante's Statius by Dantists may be conditioned by nineteenth- and early-mid twentieth-century Anglo-American classical scholarship's tendency to view Statius as poor imitator of Vergil. More recent classical scholars have demonstrated renewed interest in Statius (e.g. Vessey 1973, Battles 2004, Ganiban 2007, H. Anderson 2009, McNelis 2009, and Newlands 2012) and I refer to their research where relevant in this thesis.

Where scholars have dedicated their attention to Statius's significance for Dante, frequently these contributions are limited by their length, consisting of articles in journals, or chapters or essays in broader volumes. Such contributions are often in the context of assessing Stazio-character's role in *Purgatorio* (e.g. Brugnoli 1969, Heilbronn 1977, Barolini 1984, Bàrberi Squarotti 1992, and Lansing 2012) and/or they

focus on particular aspects of his characterisation, frequently as part of a *lettura* of *Purgatorio* XXI, XXII, or XXV. Popular, often interconnected, aspects on which they concentrate include the biography Dante ascribes to Stazio (e.g. Brugnoli 1969, Rossi 1993, Martinez 1997), Stazio's imputed prodigality and its cessation (e.g. Scherillo 1913, Shoaf 1978, Barolini 1984, and Martinez 1989), or Dante's making Stazio a Christian, frequently without linking Stazio-character to the significance of the historical Statius's poetry for Dante. Those scholars who discuss Dante's Christianisation of Stazio attribute this startling decision to a variety of causes. Dante's early commentator Benvenuto da Imola (1375-1380) attributes Dante's decision to textual exigencies, as Brugnoli (1969 and 1988) and Barolini (1984) do more recently. Other Dantists suggest that Dante may have utilised an existing medieval legend regarding Statius's Christianity, although their searches for such a legend have proved fruitless despite the existence of other medieval conversion stories regarding, for example, Ovid (e.g. Scherillo 1902, 1913; Landi 1913, 1914, 1921; and most recently Padoan 1977). Many scholars also identify textual clues in the *Thebaid* or its medieval commentators to which Dante could have applied a Christian reading, including notably Benvenuto, Politian (1494) and more recently, Verrall (1913), Landi (1913, 1914, 1921), Lewis (1956), Padoan (1977), Mariotti (1994), Kallendorf and Kallendorf (2002), G. Steinberg (2013) and Heslin (2015). Heslin's contribution is particularly useful as he summarises the many approaches taken to resolving the crux of Stazio's Christianisation, before providing his own suggestion.

The other typical focus of articles, chapters, and essays regarding Dante's Statius is on specific episodes of Statian resonance in the *Commedia*, most frequently in *Inferno*. Hollander dedicates two articles to the Ugolino episode based on Tydeus's cannibalism in the *Thebaid* (1984 and 1985) and a chapter to *Inferno* XX, which contains echoes of Statius, Vergil, and Lucan (1991). Butler devotes two articles to Statius, Lucan, and Dante's giants (2003 and 2005). Various scholars have written *letture* to canti containing Statian characters (e.g. *Inferno* XIV, Capaneus; and XX, Amphiaraus) and/or episodes based on the *Thebaid* (e.g. *Inferno* XXVI, Ulysses and

Diomedes in the divided flame; and XXXII-XXXIII, Ugolino's cannibalism). Despite these contributions' isolated focus, they remain informative in considering Dante's engagement with Statius in *Inferno*. Martinez's 1977 PhD thesis is particularly useful as it considers the resonances between Statius's Thebes, Dante's hell, and contemporary Florence on a wider basis, with reference to Augustine's concept of the *civitas terrena* and Ovid's portrayal of Theban history. Ferrante (1984), Honess (2006) and Brilli (2012) are also helpful when considering the connection between Thebes, the cities of contemporary Italy, and Dante's hell. Sadly, Dantists have paid little attention to Statian resonances beyond those in *Inferno* and the canti of *Purgatorio* in which Stazio-character appears, other than in line-by-line commentaries that merely note such resonances without discussing their significance.

Two more recent scholars have sought to connect Stazio's characterisation more closely to the influence of the historical Statius's poetry on the *Commedia*, and to discuss that influence more broadly. Wetherbee (2008) attempts to validate the *Thebaid*'s function as an important poetic source, stating as his working assumption 'that Dante took Statius's poetry seriously and saw him as a major figure in the great tradition of the Poeti' (2008: 160). This sentiment provides a good starting-point, although more remains to be said as Wetherbee dedicates only one chapter of his book to Statius. Weppler's 2016 PhD thesis, *Dante's Stazio: Statius and the Transformations of Poetry*, discusses several meaningful instances of Dante's use of Statian epic in the *Commedia*, but Weppler's study focuses on Stazio-character. Accordingly, an in-depth analysis of the overall significance of Statius's epic poetry across all three *cantiche* of the *Commedia* and in Dante's *opere minori* is long overdue.

3.   RESEARCH METHODS

In establishing when and how Dante most likely read Statius's available works, there is an unfortunate absence of documentation elucidating Dante's education or intellectual formation (Barański 2017: 4). Accordingly, in Chapter I, I utilise research regarding the medieval 'curriculum' in Italy (e.g. Gehl 1993, Witt 2000, and Black 2007), Dante's own comments regarding his intellectual formation, and information on Statius's medieval

reception to propose when and how Dante probably first encountered Statius's poetry and then read Statius's two epics in their entirety. I substantiate this theory in Chapter II through analysis of the changing nature of both Dante's express references to Statius and Statian resonances in the *opere minori*.

To establish how, why, and where Dante drew on his encounter with Statius in his own oeuvre, I conducted close textual analysis of both Dante's entire opus and Statius's two epic poems, noting down areas of Statian intertextuality throughout Dante's oeuvre including, but not limited to, those types of intertextuality mentioned by Kleinhenz. However, Dante probably would not have read Statius's epics on their own, in a vacuum. As Jauss has noted in discussing literary reception of older texts in general:

> In the triangle of author, work and public, the last is no passive part […] For it is only through the process of its mediation that the work enters into the changing horizon-of-experience […] the understanding of the first reader will be sustained and enriched in a chain of receptions from generation to generation.
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> 1982: 19-20

Jauss therefore encourages us not to consider a text in isolation. Jauss continues:

> A literary work is not an object that stands by itself and that offers the same view to each reader in each period. It is not a monument that monologically reveals its timeless essences. It is much more like an orchestration that strikes ever new resonances among its readers and that frees the text from the material of the words and brings it to a contemporary existence.
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> 1982: 20

While Jauss refers here to reading such texts in the modern world, it is clear that our understanding of classical texts such as Statius's would differ significantly from that of a medieval reader. This changing tide of reception is apparent in the last two generations of Anglo-American scholarship regarding Statius, with twenty-first-century scholars taking a more positive view than earlier classicists.

Thus, in seeking to understand how Dante would have read Statian epic, I returned to other medieval readers of Statius and to the glosses and paratexts surrounding his two epics in the Middle Ages, focussing on glosses to those Statian passages with which I identified potential intertextuality in Dante's oeuvre. Certain of these medieval sources are available in edited form, for example in Sweeney's 1997 edition of the fourth-century author Lactantius Placidus's medieval commentary to the

Thebaid, the anonymous commentary to the *Achilleid* previously attributed to Lactantius, and Pseudo-Fulgentius's twelfth-century allegorisation of the *Thebaid* (*Super Thebaiden*); and the *accessus* texts in H. Anderson's 2009 *Manuscripts of Statius*. Others, including the important twelfth/thirteenth-century commentary known as the *In principio* that probably circulated in Dante's Italy (see Chapter I.4.3), are unedited. Accordingly, I studied two representative manuscripts of the *In principio* commentary in standalone form in person (the thirteenth-century London, British Library ("BL"), MS Additional 16380 and the fifteenth-century Italian manuscript, Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS Ricc. 842). Where I utilise this commentary in my thesis, I standardise quotations by expanding abbreviations (which differ in the two manuscripts) and adding punctuation. In addition, I studied in person or online several manuscripts containing Statian material, which I identified using H. Anderson 2009 as originating in, or likely to have been present in medieval Italy, to determine whether these contained any information relevant to my study of Dante's engagement with Statius. These are marked with an asterisk in the Manuscripts section of my Bibliography. I quote from these medieval Statian sources where relevant to my analysis of Dante's engagement with Statian epic. In addition, I considered the reaction of the *Commedia*'s early commentators to passages of Statian intertextuality in that poem, as these might prove enlightening to my study of Dante's reception of Statius due to their increased proximity in mindset and experience to Dante.[6] Again, I quote from these commentators where relevant to this thesis.

After identifying areas of Statian intertextuality in Dante's oeuvre, and relevant passages from the medieval commentators to both Statian epic and the *Commedia*, I proceeded to the most important stage of my research – analysing how and why Dante utilises Statian epic across his oeuvre. As I outline below, I have divided that analysis into three key areas: Dante's engagement with Statian epic in the *opere minori*

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[6] I considered commentators to the *Commedia* until Cristoforo Landino (1481). I used Landino as a chronological stopping-point due to the overtaking of medieval methods of reading by humanist thought at roughly this time.

(Chapter II); Dante's character Stazio (Chapter III); and Dante's engagement with Statian epic throughout the *Commedia*'s three *cantiche* (Chapter IV).

4. CHAPTER PRÉCIS

4.1 CHAPTER I

Despite acknowledging Statius's membership of Dante's classical poetic canon, few scholars have considered when, where, and how Dante most likely read Statius's available works. Doing so is vital to appreciate fully Statius's importance for Dante. In Chapter I, I focus upon Dante's knowledge of the historical poet Statius. I examine briefly medieval school 'curricula' in Italy, the situations in which Statius's poetry was introduced, and medieval methods of reading classical poetry. I discuss relevant passages from *Convivio* and the *Epistole*, which shed light on the possible nature of Dante's formal studies, and on the probability of his encounters with Statian material.

Subsequently, I explore the reception of Statius and his epic poetry in medieval Italy. I discuss the use of extracts of Statian epic in medieval grammar texts and/or *florilegia* as exempla of correct Latin versification and/or of moral behaviour. I analyse certain *accessus ad auctorem* (scholarly introductions) to Statius, which circulated both separately and together with copies of his epics in medieval Italy and contained his (limited) biography and information regarding his poetry. I consider the appearance of the *Thebaid* and/or *Achilleid* in their entirety in numerous manuscripts, often accompanied by one or more *accessus*, various marginal and interlinear glosses, and other paratexts. I suggest that Dante probably encountered Statius's poetry in grammar texts and *florilegia*, before reading the entire *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* accompanied by such glosses and paratexts. In particular, I argue that Dante was probably familiar with Lactantius's *scholia* and the *In principio* commentary to *Thebaid*. I also discuss Pseudo-Fulgentius's *Super Thebaiden*, which is unlikely to have been known to Dante, but contains allegorical readings at which Dante may well have arrived himself. I also reflect on the possibility that Dante was familiar with the anonymous *Roman de Thèbes* (*c*.1150-*c*.1155), an Old French retelling of the *Thebaid*. This *roman* draws interestingly upon accounts of both the Trojan War, connecting Thebes and Troy as devastated

cities, and the Crusades, providing a Christianising slant to its narrative (see Battles 2001 and 2004: 45-60).

This exploration of when, how, and where Dante probably encountered the historical Statius's poetry and the ways in which Dante's reception of Statius's poetry was mediated lays the foundations for the remaining chapters of my thesis. It enables me to interpret Dante's growing and changing engagement with Statius throughout the *opere minori* and into the *Commedia*, and to understand those areas of the *Commedia* in which Dante's reading of Statian epic has been mediated by its other medieval readers.

4.2   CHAPTER II

In Chapter II, I analyse Dante's use of Statian material in the *opere minori*. I propose reasons for the absence of Statian resonances in the *Vita Nuova*, and two contemporaneous texts attributed to Dante, the *Fiore* and the *Detto d'Amore*.[7] I examine possible Statian material in the *Rime*, utilising Barbi's proposed divisions (1960) to categorise the poems chronologically and thus chart the progress of Dante's apparent engagement with Statian epic. Subsequently, I analyse Dante's first express mention of Statius, in which Dante lists him third among the *regulati poetae* (*DVE* II.VI.7). I argue that this passage suggests that Dante first encountered Statian epic in an educational context (whether formal or informal), for example in a grammar textbook or *florilegium* seeking to instruct its readers in correct Latin versification. I examine references to the classical poets elsewhere in *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, Dante's lament regarding the lack of Italian poets of arms (*DVE* II.8.8), and their implications for Dante's usage of Statius. I consider Dante's express references to Statius and the *Thebaid* in *Convivio* III and IV, especially Dante's utilisation of Adrastus, his two virginal daughters, and his son-in-law Polynices as exempla of *vergogna*, a virtue of *adolescenza*, in *Convivio* IV.XXV. I also discuss certain less obvious Statian resonances in *Convivio*. Thus, I suggest that Dante may only have read *Thebaid* I in its

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[7] The question of Dante's authorship of the *Fiore* is rehearsed, with full recent bibliography, in Allegretti 2011e.

entirety when he composed *Convivio* IV.XXV, but that *Convivio*'s Statian references demonstrate Dante's growing familiarity with, understanding of, and enthusiasm for, Statian epic.

Subsequently, I consider Statian material (and its absence) in Dante's *Epistole* and *Monarchia*. The political *Epistole* and *Monarchia* express Dante's longing for the return of justice and the Golden Age of the Roman Empire which paved the way for Christ's birth, and Dante's belief in empire as the ideal form of government. Given Dante's reliance on Vergil's *Aeneid* for positive examples of empire, I assert that Dante's failure to mention the *Thebaid* in *Monarchia* is deliberate, due to the epic's negative presentation of empire and its composition under Domitian, an emperor responsible for persecuting Christians. I consider Dante's frequent allusions to and echoes of Statian epic in the *Egloge*, as part of a conscious programme aimed at demonstrating Dante's erudition and poetic skill and justifying his use of the vernacular to his correspondent Giovanni del Virgilio. I also discuss both Giovanni's and Dante's mentions of the laurel crown with reference to Albertino Mussato's poetic coronation in Padua in 1315; to Statius's hopes for a second poetic crown in the *Achilleid* (I.9-10, cfr. *Purgatorio* XXI.90); and to Dante's desired coronation in *Paradiso* (I.13-15 and XXV.6-9). These references demonstrate both Dante's familiarity with Statian epic and Dante's claiming of not just the *auctoritas* of the classical poets but his superiority to them, due to his *Commedia*'s Christian foundations.

Through studying Dante's frequent and learned usage of Statian epic, I demonstrate that Dante's knowledge of the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* progressed during his exile from the commonplaces found in the medieval *florilegia* to knowing each poem 'tutta quanta' by the time he wrote the *Commedia*, just as he did the *Aeneid* (*Inferno* XX.114). I provide an appreciation of Dante's changing enthusiasm for Statius and Dante's increasing understanding of and engagement with Statian epic and its themes over his authorial career, not just in the *Commedia*.

4.3   CHAPTER III

Dante's engagement with Statius's epic poetry is at its fullest and most complex in the *Commedia*. Accordingly, I dedicate two chapters to considering Statian epic's importance to Dante's masterwork. Since Dante's inclusion of Stazio as a key character in *Purgatorio* XXI-XXXIII is the most obvious and accessible sign of Statian epic's significance to Dante, I focus Chapter III on Stazio. I analyse both Dante's characterisation of Stazio, and Stazio's role in the *Commedia*'s narrative.

First, I discuss Stazio-character's absence from Limbo's *bella scola* of poets (*Inferno* IV.85-96). I argue that Stazio's omission was deliberate, forming part of Dante's strategy for Stazio and signalling his importance. I then analyse the so-called 'Statian canti' (*Purgatorio* XXI and XXII), beginning with the significance of the earthquake and joyful singing heard at the end of *Purgatorio* XX, and other Christological references surrounding Stazio's entry to the poem.

Next, I discuss Stazio-character's 'autobiography' (*Purgatorio* XXI.82-102), including its chronology; the confusion over the historical Statius's birthplace; the question of the *Achilleid*'s incompleteness; Stazio's claim to have received a poetic crown of myrtle; and Stazio's testament to the *Aeneid*'s influence over Statius's poetry. Subsequently, I focus upon the repented prodigality and Christian conversion Dante attributes to Stazio in *Purgatorio* XXII. These are fundamental to Stazio's significant role in the *Commedia* and have exercised scholars' minds for centuries, due to the apparent lack of evidence substantiating them regarding the historical Statius. I interpret Dante's decision to attribute prodigality to Stazio-character and Stazio's apparent 'mis-reading' of *Aeneid* III.56-57 (*Purgatorio* XXI.40-41), which he claims led to his repenting that sin. I analyse the possible reasons for Dante's Christianisation of Stazio-character, arguing that while Stazio's Christianity solved certain narrative exigencies, Dante found inspiration for Stazio's Christianity externally, rather than simply inventing it. I explore possible sources for this inspiration, including medieval conversion legends regarding Vergil's fourth *Eclogue*, Ovid, and Seneca; and Christianising manuscript glosses to the *Thebaid*. I establish that through Stazio's

'autobiography' and Stazio's account of his repentance and Christian conversion, Dante both demonstrates his regard for the historical Statius's poetry and constructs a chain of poetic succession from the great classical poets via Statius to Dante, its culmination as first Christian *poeta*. As a soul ready to ascend, Stazio also embodies the purgatorial process, and in this and his admiration of Vergil is a *figura Dantis*.

Subsequently, I consider Stazio as he appears later in the *Commedia*, particularly regarding the explanation he provides in *Purgatorio* XXV of the generation of the human soul and its formation of an 'aerial body' in the afterlife. I assert that Stazio's significant role in *Purgatorio* demonstrates the importance of the historical Statius's poetry for Dante. Nevertheless, I observe Stazio's gradual disappearance from the *Commedia*'s narrative, with Dante failing to mention Stazio in *Paradiso* despite his entrance to the heavenly realm with Dante-pilgrim. Whilst Dante-pilgrim laments Virgilio's disappearance, Stazio's goes unremarked despite the significant role he played earlier, reflecting the chain of poetic succession Dante creates.

4.4   CHAPTER IV

In Chapter IV, I move beyond Stazio-character to examine Dante's use of Statian material throughout all three cantiche of the *Commedia*. Where relevant, I consider the inflection of Dante's use of Statian epic by the medieval Statian commentary tradition.

I explore Dante's use from the *Commedia*'s opening lines of Statius's Thebes as a physical, symbolic, spiritual, and psychological model for his hell, especially the City of Dis, and a parallel for his divided Italy. Statius's own close association of Thebes and Tartarus renders this particularly effective. I assert that Dante turns to Statius particularly when crossing key boundaries within hell – significant especially because of Statius's own concern with boundaries and their transgression. I establish similarities between the Sphinx standing guard outside Thebes and the biblical fallen angels, classical Furies, and Medusa refusing Virgilio and Dante-pilgrim entry to the City of Dis (*Inferno* VIII-IX); and between Statius's Sphinx, the Sphinx and the demon Astarot guarding Thebes in the *Roman de Thèbes*, and the Malebranche who plague Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio in the Malebolge. I explore the resemblance between the

Sphinx and Dante's Geryon due to their association with man-eating and deceit, and their metapoetic implications. Subsequently, I discuss Dante's use of the giants, the invocation to the Muses who assisted Amphion's construction of Thebes, and Satan himself to recall his association between medieval cities, Statius's Thebes and Dante's City of Dis, creating a horrific sense of claustrophobia and violence. This recollection of Thebes signals the intense and horrific Theban resonances in Cocytus.

Next, I explore Dante's use of Statian characters as paradigms of particular sins in *Inferno*, following the prompting of the *Thebaid*'s explicit and the Statian *accessus* and commentary tradition. I demonstrate that Dante did not merely 'lift and drop' these characters as superficial exempla from the Statian commentary and *accessus* tradition. Instead, I establish that they are the fruit of Dante's reading of the *Thebaid* and the unfinished *Achilleid* in their entirety, and an in-depth understanding of the two poems aided by the glosses and paratexts with which I believe Dante was familiar. I show how Dante first places these Statian characters as physical presences in hell and develops them to suit his own purposes, sometimes blending them with information sourced from his other intertexts and always with his own *ingenium*. I explore in depth those Statian characters who particularly capture Dante's imagination and are mentioned repeatedly throughout the *Commedia*. I discuss Dante's use of Polynices's and Eteocles's mutual fratricide and their divided funeral pyre to model Ulysses's and Diomedes's divided flame in *Inferno* XXVI and the mutual violence of the Alberti brothers in Cocytus. Finally, although no Statian characters appear in Cocytus since it is populated with sinners from Italy's recent history, I demonstrate that Statius's Thebes remains intimately connected to this zone of hell, as I discuss the Alberti brothers and the Ugolino episode (XXXII-XXXIII), modelled on Tydeus's cannibalism in the *Thebaid*, and punctuated by Pisa's description as 'novella Tebe' (XXXIII.89).

Despite previous scholars' concentration upon Statius's influence on *Inferno* or on the Statian canti, I expand my analysis of Statian intertextuality into *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. I consider Dante's inclusion of the giants and Alcmaeon's execution of Eriphyle among the exempla carved on the floor of the terrace of pride in *Purgatorio*

XII, focussing on their Statian sources. I also consider Dante's unusual use of Alcmaeon as a parallel to Piccarda in *Paradiso* IV. I discuss the catalogue of virtuous Statian women in Limbo that Virgilio provides to Stazio-character (*Purgatorio* XXII.109-14). I demonstrate that Dante mentions these women here as exempla of familial *pietas*, suffering due to the bloodshed caused by the pride, envy, and avarice of their male counterparts. I assert their similarity to the Roman matrons and to Mary, exempla shouted by the tree at *Purgatorio* XXII's close, and Deiphyle and Argia's resonance with Matelda (*Purgatorio* XXVIII), and the consequent association between the lament for the lost Golden Age and that for the lost Eden.

I establish that as he did in *Inferno*, Dante turns to Statian epic at particularly significant moments within *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, often at the moment of crossing key boundaries within both the *Commedia*'s structure and the physical realms of the otherworld. I discuss Statius's own concern regarding the transgression of boundaries and its similarity to Dante's Ulysses's *folle volo* in *Inferno* XXVI. I contrast it with Dante-pilgrim's divinely-willed surpassing of these boundaries. I explore Dante's glossing over in *Paradiso* of Jason's seduction of Hypsipyle and Medea which saw Jason confined among the seducers (*Inferno* XVIII), in favour of a comparison of Dante's own poetic endeavour to the successful quest of Jason and the Argonauts. I discuss the poetic laurel crown Statius received and for which Dante longs, and Dante's hope for the eternal crown of salvation. Thus, I demonstrate that Statius's poetry is of fundamental importance to Dante poetically, narratively, morally, and allegorically throughout the *Commedia*. Dante uses it to grant authority to his poetry and to place himself in a chain of succession leading from Homer, through Vergil and Statius to himself. Due to his poem's Christian revelation and his own divinely inspired *ingegno*, Dante represents the culmination of that poetry.

5. CONCLUSION

Accordingly, I demonstrate that Dante's enthusiasm for and familiarity with Statian epic and his understanding of its themes developed exponentially during his exile. The early stages of this growing engagement with Statius are evident in *De Vulgari Eloquentia*

and *Convivio* III, becoming more apparent and enthusiastic in *Convivio* IV.XXV. Dante's use of Statius in the *Egloge* demonstrates Dante's comfortable familiarity with Statian epic, as he utilises it consciously to display his erudition and poetic skill to his equally learned correspondent. I demonstrate thereby that Dante's Statius is not just a discovery of the *Commedia*, but a fundamental part of Dante's exploration of classical poetry and its methods of reading. Through my re-evaluation of Dante's engagement with Statius and his epic poetry throughout all three *cantiche* of the *Commedia* and the new approach of returning to medieval readers of Statius and Dante, I provide a new understanding of Dante's reception of Statius in the *Commedia* and demonstrate that Statian epic was far more important to Dante than has been acknowledged to date.

CHAPTER ONE

DANTE AND THE MEDIEVAL RECEPTION OF STATIUS

I.1   PREFACE

Despite widespread acknowledgement of Statius's inclusion within Dante's classical poetic canon, few scholars have paused to wonder when, where, and in what form Dante encountered Statius's epic poetry. (Dante is unlikely to have known the *Silvae* due to its minimal circulation in Italy before *c.*1417; see Introduction). Weppler partially addresses this deficiency in her 2016 doctoral thesis. However, more remains to be said, particularly regarding the probable mediation of Dante's reception of the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* by Statius's other medieval readers. Understanding Statian epic's medieval reception also sheds light upon the reasons for that poetry's appeal to Dante, another area meriting greater attention than has been paid to date. Accordingly, in this chapter I focus upon Dante's knowledge of the historical poet Statius.

I examine briefly medieval school 'curricula' in Italy and the place(s) where Statius was introduced. I consider evidence from *Convivio* and Dante's other *opere minori* regarding the possible nature of Dante's education and intellectual formation, and their implications for Dante's reception of Statius. Subsequently, I discuss Statius's reception in medieval Italy, including the use of extracts of Statian epic in *florilegia*; the appearance of his *Thebaid* and/or *Achilleid* in their entirety in numerous manuscripts, generally accompanied by *accessus* and various *scholia*; and the circulation of certain major commentaries to the *Thebaid*. Thus, I demonstrate the availability of Statius's epic poems to Dante and propose that Dante would have read them together with such glosses and paratexts, much as we read the *Commedia* today. I also suggest the possibility that Dante was familiar with the anonymous Old French *Roman de Thèbes* (*c.*1150-*c.*1155). This increased understanding of when, where, and how Dante would have read Statian epic informs my re-evaluation in subsequent chapters of Statius's presence throughout Dante's oeuvre, especially the *Commedia*.

I.2 STATIUS AND MEDIEVAL SCHOOL 'CURRICULA' IN ITALY

Dante's use of Latin in his oeuvre, and his involvement in politics at a time when Latin was vital to public life, tell us that he learnt both *grammatica* (Latin grammar) and the *ars dictaminis* (rhetoric). His oeuvre's intertextuality with certain works of great Latin poets tells us that he read these texts either in whole or part at some stage of his ongoing intellectual formation. Unfortunately, no official documentation exists confirming either Dante's enrolment in a school or university, or his tutoring by a privately-hired pedagogue.[8] Accordingly, we cannot use such sources to determine Dante's level of formal education, let alone the books he studied and whether these included Statius's two epics. Nevertheless, knowledge of medieval school 'curricula' in Italy can assist us in understanding when, where, and how Dante likely first encountered Statius's poetry, and how he would have been taught to read that poetry. In so doing, we must exercise care, since while certain patterns are apparent, the 'curriculum' was neither formally documented nor standardised across medieval Italy.[9]

I.2.1 'ELEMENTARY' LATIN INSTRUCTION

Statius does not seem to have featured during the 'elementary' phase of Latin instruction, for children aged up to eleven.[10] Instead, after learning letters and syllables, students progressed to memorising the *psalterium*, its use emblematising the curriculum's integral moral aim.[11] Subsequently, students began studying the parts of speech using a grammar text such as the *Ianua* (which replaced the earlier *Donatus*) and/or a parsing grammar.[12] My review of an early fourteenth-century Italian manuscript of the *Ianua*, representative of the text following its thirteenth-century reworking (Black 2007: 52-53), confirms that it did not contain Statian extracts.[13]

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[8] On the scarce independent, contemporary sources available regarding Dante's life, see Inglese 2015: 11; and Barański 2017: 4. For a review of the available material, see the *Codice Diplomatico Dantesco* (Zamponi *et al* 2016).

[9] On education and 'curricula' in medieval Italy, see in particular Davis 1984; Gehl 1993; and Black 2007.

[10] On 'elementary' Latin instruction see Gehl 1993: 82-96; and Black 2007: 34-63.

[11] On the curriculum's moral aim, see in particular Gehl 1993: *passim*; Reynolds 1996: *passim*; and Black 2007: 43 and 93.

[12] See Gehl 1993: 82-106; and Black 2007: 36-63.

[13] Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana ("BML"), MS Strozzi 80, fols 1^r-29^v.

I.2.2   LATINISING

Extracts of Statian epic may have been introduced during the first phase of 'secondary' education in Latin (*grammatica*), for children aged twelve upwards.[14] During this 'Latinising' phase (to borrow Gehl 1993's term), which fewer students undertook, a grammarian (either private or in a school) instructed students on the parts of speech, Latin syntax, metre, and composition using grammars and prose *summae* (Black 2007: 43, 82, and 106). Extracts of Latin poetry were used to conduct a detailed examination of syntax and to introduce students to literary analysis (Witt 2000: 8). *Florilegia* containing extracts of classical poetry could be used now and throughout a student's lifetime to provide examples of excellence in Latin versification and/or of moral behaviour. Thus, rather than complete texts, medieval readers often knew citations – excerpted *auctoritates* collected in reference volumes, including *florilegia*, *sententiae*, encyclopaedias and other compendia (Barański 2000a: 12). *Florilegia* often included extracts of Statius's poetry, with Statius seen as a 'technical authority on Latin grammar and versification' (Battles 2004: 3).[15] Munk Olsen lists five *florilegia* in manuscripts originating in Italy between the eleventh and fourteenth century containing Statian excerpts (1980: 66-68 and 70-72; 1982: 119; and 1982-2014, vol. II, *Florilèges*: 521-67, 861-62, 867, and 871-72).[16]

Students may have encountered the *Achilleid* toward the end of this Latinising phase. After mastering the essentials of Latin language, students would have been immersed for the first time in complete texts by selected Latin authors. Students began by studying texts by the so-called *auctores minores*, with those of the *maiores* reserved

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[14] On the 'secondary' grammar curriculum, see Gehl 1993: 96-106; and Black 2007: 64-172.
[15] On *florilegia* containing excerpts of the *Thebaid* circulating in the Middle Ages, see Battles 2004: 1-18.
[16] Montecassino, Biblioteca del Monumento Nazionale, MS 580 T-I, pp. 1-68, Statian extracts *passim*; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France ("BNF"), MS lat. 7517, fols 33ᵛ-54ᵛ, *Thebaid* extracts at fols 51ᵛ-52ʳ; Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana ("BV"), MS C 67-II, fols 93ʳ-101ᵛ, *Thebaid* extracts at fol. 111ʳ⁻ᵛ; Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana ("BAV"), MS Ottob. lat. 1354, fols 71ʳ-84ᵛ, *Thebaid* extracts at fols 82ᵛ-83ʳ; Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, MS Z. L. 497 (coll. 1811), fols 19ʳᵃ-58ᵛᵇ, Statian extracts *passim*.

for more advaced education.[17] The list of *minores* varies across sources, although typical *minores* include Donatus, Cato,[18] Aesop, and Avianus, and the Christian poets Sedulius, Juvencus, Prosper of Aquitaine, and Theodulus (Black 2007: 173-74). The order of study reflects the ethical lessons these texts contain and the curriculum's moral agenda, which 'judiciously' controlled Cato's and Aesop's 'lessons of natural law and commonplace morality' by surrounding them with 'large doses of Christian poetry' (Gehl 1993: 129).

Statius is an interesting *auctor*, because while his *Thebaid* was classed among the *maiores*, students seem to have studied his *Achilleid* alongside the *minores* (Munk Olsen 2004: 233-35; Weppler 2016: 8), perhaps due to its shorter form. Harald Anderson (2009: vol. III, 31) and Boas (1914: *passim*) emphasise the *Achilleid*'s popularity as a school-text in twelfth- to thirteenth-century Europe. The *Achilleid* seems to have formed part of the so-called *Liber Catonianus*, a collection of six school texts first noted by Boas (Weppler 2016: 9). These six texts (Cato's *Distichs*, Theodulus's *Eclogue*, Avianus's *Fables*, Maximianus's *Elegies*, Claudian's *De raptu Proserpinae*, and 'Statius minor' (the *Achilleid*)), often appeared together in manuscripts and 'medii aevi temporibus post Donatum studiosae iuventuti praebebantur' (Boas 1914: 2). Modern scholarship displays understandable caution regarding this 'collection's' representativeness of medieval education in general. Nevertheless, the existence of *c.*17 manuscripts, which contain some combination of these six texts and appear to have been used for educational purposes, particularly in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, is 'significant' (Weppler 2016: 9-10). My review of BAV, MS Reg. lat. 1556, a mid-thirteenth-century *liber Catonianus*, supports its use in an educational context, since it contains what Black would describe as 'school-type' marginal and interlinear glosses. These include glosses to the *Achilleid* (fols 56ʳ-74ᵛ) in roughly similar proportions to its other component texts. Nevertheless, just three of the twenty-four

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[17] On *auctores* and *auctoritas*, see, for example, Minnis 1988 and Ascoli 2008: 3-64. On the division between *auctores minores* and *maiores*, see Gehl 1993: 53-4 and Black 2007: 173-74.
[18] On Dante and the *Disticha Catonis*, see Gianferrari 2017.

liber Catonianus manuscripts Boas lists as containing at least some lines of Statius (1914) seem to originate from Italy.[19]

Black lists one late twelfth-century Italian manuscript of Statius's *Achilleid* of a school type in a Florentine library, which forms 'a fortuitous composite with Sedulius and Claudian' (Black 2007: 190).[20] Black identifies no thirteenth-century copies of Statian epic in Florentine libraries, reflecting the period's overall decline in schoolbooks containing the classical poets. However, he lists six fourteenth-century copies of the *Achilleid* with school-type glossing (Black 2007: 217).[21] Thus, while the *Achilleid* seems to have been studied alongside the *minores* in some medieval Italian schools, we must exercise caution in assuming it was during Dante's lifetime.

When reading such texts, the grammar master discussed the author's biography and explained the text's moral lessons, utilising an *accessus ad auctorem*, which often accompanied the school authors' texts (Black 2007: 314). Both the *liber Catonianus* I examined and the manuscripts containing the *Achilleid* Black identifies contain such *accessus*. The *accessus* summarises for the reader the author's biography, his motives for writing, the work's title and genre, and its basic argument. The *accessus* usually declares that the oeuvre it accompanies falls within the philosophical genre of ethics, and that the author's intention was moral, to encourage virtue and dissuade vice. After reading the *minores*, students were accustomed to understanding the moral message hidden under a text's *integumentum*. Thus, they were less likely to misinterpret the messages found in pagan texts or to consider the truths imparted in them as equivalent to Christian ones. Frequently, students also compiled moral *sententiae* from the texts they read (Black 2007: 320), demonstrating their understanding of these texts' moral message. For example, I identified 'Prouerbia Stacii' at fols 52ᵛ-53ʳ of a thirteenth-century manuscript in the BAV (MS Reg. lat. 1562), alongside *prouerbia* drawn from other authors. These are taken from throughout the

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[19] Weppler 2016: 10-14, utilising H. Anderson's (2009) provenance for these manuscripts.
[20] BML, MS Plut. 24 sin. 12, fols 49ʳ-69ᵛ.
[21] BML, MSS Plut. 38.9, 38.35, 91 sup. 33, and 91 sup. 34; and Florence Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale ("BNC"), MSS II.IV.33, and Nuov. Acq. 412.

Thebaid and include such pearls of wisdom as 'Longa retro series' (*Thebaid* I.7); 'Pugna est de paupere regno' (I.151); 'Periit ius fasque bonumque' (I.154); and 'amant miseri lamenta malisque fruuntur' (XII.45).

The grammarian also conducted a line-by-line analysis of the relevant text with students (Witt 2000: 8), encouraging them to gloss the text to assist their understanding. 'Simple philology (e.g. paraphrase, grammar, figures, word-order, geography, history, mythology, elementary rhetorical analysis) remained pupils' habitual fare' throughout their study of the *minores* and *maiores* (Black 2007: 275). The school-type manuscripts Black studied largely lack allegorical glosses, suggesting that allegory was only minimally used for educational purposes at the 'grammar school level' (Black 2007: 9). While teachers seem to have used medieval commentaries on the pagan authors, they utilised them 'selectively' and remained predominantly concerned with philology (Black 2007: 9). Nevertheless, some borrowing from well-known commentaries can be detected in glosses to the *maiores* (Black 2007: 325).

I.2.3   THE '*AUCTORES*' COURSE

After the *minores*, more advanced students progressed to studying certain *maiores*, which were again 'consciously selected for their positive moral impact' (Gehl 1993: 133). Vergil, Horace, Ovid, Terence, and the epic poetry of Prudentius, Statius, and Lucan, appear to have been 'reserved for the later, *auctores* course', which only 'older boys' would have studied (Gehl 1993: 54). However, the existence of 'anthologies' containing Boethius, Vergil, and/or other more advanced texts that may have been used 'at the lower level' suggests exceptions to this (Weppler 2016: 14, fn. 41, referencing Gehl 1993: 58).

Black identifies a core of *maiores* used as school texts across the tenth to fifteenth centuries, listing them alphabetically as Cicero, Horace, Juvenal, Lucan, Ovid, Persius, Sallust, Statius, Terence, and Vergil (2007: *passim*). Most twelfth-century schoolbooks Black identifies in Florentine libraries preserve texts of the *maiores* (2007: 186), with Lucan (7 schoolbooks), Horace (7), Juvenal (6), Ovid (5), and Vergil (3) the most frequently found poets, compared to the single *Achilleid* mentioned earlier (Black

2007: 186, and 189-90). In the thirteenth century, Black identifies only schoolbooks containing Horace (3), Lucan (2), Ovid (2), and Vergil (1) as study of the 'ancient Roman classics' declined dramatically in thirteenth-century Italy (2007: 189-92). While the *In principio accessus* claims that Statius 'secundum inter poetas locum tenuit' and 'post Uirgilium inter ceteros poetas principatum obtinuit' (Anderson 2009: vol. III, 35), this is not borne out in Black's statistics. In the fourteenth century, Statius increased in popularity with Black identifying both the six aforementioned schoolbooks containing the *Achilleid*, and two late fourteenth-century manuscripts of the *Thebaid* with a possible school context, although 'neither demonstrates entirely convincing classroom use' (2007: 217). Only Horace (10 schoolbooks) is more popular in this century among the classical poets, with Ovid (6), Vergil (5), Lucan (4), and Juvenal (1) lagging behind. Despite the fourteenth-century rise in schoolbooks containing Statian epic, among all the schoolbooks Black surveyed from the twelfth to the fifteenth century Statius is mentioned only six times when those manuscripts' glossators quote other *auctores*, compared to Virgil (35), Ovid (29), Lucan (16) and Horace (13) (Weppler 2016: 15, referencing Black 2007: 302-03). This confirms the need for caution in considering how widely students in Italy read Statian epic during Dante's lifetime.

Statius's *Thebaid* was most probably studied alongside other *maiores* and the *ars dictaminis* during the final stage of Latin study.[22] This study of the great pagan authors usually took place with a grammar master or master of rhetoric (Black 2007: 28), probably with the assistance of commentaries on the various texts. As so many Latin poems written after 1250 contain noticeable classical allusions, it appears ancient Latin literature was taught formally in Bologna, Padua, and possibly Arezzo by the thirteenth century's middle decades (Witt 2000: 80, 88-89). However, we cannot determine exactly when such teaching became available at the grammar school or university level, as no pertinent historical documents exist prior to the 1316 outline of a course given by Albertino Mussato on Seneca (Witt 2000: 196; Weppler 2016: 19).

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[22] On the division of Latin teaching into *grammatica* and *ars dictaminis*, see Black 2007: 9-10.

Moreover, as the 'university authorities' supervised secondary grammar teaching in such towns, it is impossible to determine whether this 'minimal teaching' of classical literature occurred at the higher or post-secondary education level (Black 2002: 287). For example, the Comune of Bologna appointed Giovanni del Virgilio in 1321 as an *auctorista*, a new type of specialist master, to teach 'versificaturam et poesim et magnos auctores, videlicet Virgilium, Statium, Luchanum et Ovidium' (Black 2007: 174). However, the appointment letter contains no mention of the *studium* or university (Black 2002: 287). Giovanni del Virgilio's correspondence with Dante demonstrates both authors' familiarity with Statian epic, among other classical texts (*Egloge*; see Chapter II.8). The Comune in late fourteenth-century Bologna also appointed Domenico di Bandino to teach both basic and secondary grammar, and lecture on classical authors including Statius (Black 2007: 28).

These universities also had libraries, which reasonably could be expected to hold copies of the *auctores*' texts at least by the time they began to teach those texts. However, Black's and Kristeller's research suggests that Italian libraries, except Montecassino, possessed 'significantly fewer holdings' relating to ancient Latin poetry than French or German libraries (Weppler 2016: 12). Accordingly, we cannot know for certain whether it was possible to study Statian epic formally or even read it at a university in Italy during much of Dante's lifetime. In any event, no evidence exists to suggest that Dante enrolled in a university or formally followed the '*auctores*' course.

While Bologna, Padua, and Naples had universities, in Dante's lifetime Florence lacked a '*studium urbis*' (Brunetti and Gentili 2000: 21). Three mendicant orders in Florence had a *studium generale* of university level during Dante's lifetime: Augustinian Santo Spirito, Franciscan Santa Croce, and Dominican Santa Maria Novella.[23] Available evidence suggests it is unlikely students in these *studia* received instruction on Statius, or even read Statian epic in their 'libraries' or *armaria* in Dante's lifetime,

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[23] On the three *studia* and their libraries, see Davis 1984: 149-57; Brunetti and Gentili 2000: 21; Pegoretti 2015: 11-12 and Barański 2017: 11-12.

and again no record exists regarding Dante's formal enrolment in any of the three *studia*.

Very little is known about Santo Spirito's school, other than it existed in 1274 and became a *studium generale* in 1287 (Davis 1988: 340). The earliest extant catalogue of its *armarium* dates to 1451 (Brunetti and Gentili 2000: 29), so is of little use in identifying whether the 'library' possessed manuscripts containing Statian epic in Dante's lifetime. Santo Spirito did once possess a manuscript of the *Thebaid* also owned by Boccaccio (BML, MS Plut. 38.6) as it contains a note, unfortunately undated, reading 'parva libraria' of Santo Spirito (H. Anderson 2009: vol. I, 109).

Regarding Santa Croce, Davis's review of manuscripts containing notes dating their entry to the convent's library either before or shortly after 1300 lists certain grammatical works which may have contained Statian extracts, but no copies of Statian epic itself (1963: 400-09). However, the one twelfth-century copy of the *Achilleid* included amongst Black's list of schoolbooks (BML, Plut. 24 sin. 12, fols 49^r-69^v) was previously held by Santa Croce (see fol. IV^v). Unfortunately, the manuscript's entry to Santa Croce cannot be dated, so we cannot determine whether the manuscript was used during grammar teaching at the *studium* in Dante's lifetime. Nevertheless, the 'almost total lack' of extant manuscripts written before 1300 containing classical texts suggests study of the *auctores* was 'practically non-existent' at Santa Croce (Davis 1963: 410).

The situation is similar vis-à-vis Santa Maria Novella's *studium* (Davis 1984: 146). Many of Santa Maria Novella's manuscripts were sold off between 1314 and 1318, and the convent seems not to have possessed 'una vera e propria biblioteca' before 1317 (Brunetti and Gentili 2000: 29, fn. 23). Pomaro's census (1980 and 1982) of Santa Maria Novella's extant manuscripts written before 1400 does not include any manuscripts containing Statian epic, even in the appendix reproducing Sardi's 1489 library catalogue. Thus, formal study of the *auctores* seems to have been minimal at Santa Maria Novella too.

Itinerant tutors circulated in Italy (Gehl 1993: 216-17), with whom students may well have studied the *auctores*. Notaries were widely known to teach rhetoric professionally but in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries they also taught grammar (Witt 2000: 90-91). Many humanists were notaries, and humanism was particularly oriented 'towards poetry' from the 1260s until the late fourteenth century (Witt 2000: 92-94). Yet while Lovato's poetry suggests his familiarity with Statius, we cannot be certain that he or other notaries mentioned Statian epic in teaching grammar and/or rhetoric, particularly beyond Lovato's circle in Padua.[24]

Individuals who were interested in Latin literature could also study Statius and the other *auctores* privately, using libraries open to the public or, if they could afford it, their own private libraries. Brunetto Latini and Francesco da Barberino may well be among those who had their own libraries (Davis 1984: 143). Given the classical allusions in Lovato's poetry (Witt 2000: 95-100), it is probable that Lovato and/or members of his circle also possessed manuscripts containing certain classical texts. However, unfortunately, unlike Dante's early commentator Boccaccio, much of whose library survives, no trace of Dante's own book collection remains (if he ever had one), nor does Dante speak of manuscripts he owns. Accordingly, we must look to Dante's oeuvre to assist us in determining the texts with which he was probably familiar and how he would have read them.

I.3   DANTE'S EDUCATION

In seeking to understand Dante's intellectual formation, the autobiographical references Dante makes to it throughout his oeuvre provide a fertile source of information. Naturally, such references must be treated with care and framed within the context of the works within which they occur, since each opus has its own agenda and Dante's desire to establish his *auctoritas* flows through them all. This is particularly apparent in the 'self-portraits' that Dante 'carefully constructs' to portray himself 'in authoritative

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[24] On Statian allusions in Lovato's poetry, see Witt 2000: 95-100.

and exemplary guises' (Barański 2017: 4).[25] Thus, when considering these autobiographical references, our 'key point of reference' should be the 'complex cultural, ideological, and literary operation' underpinning them (Barański 2017: 4). After all, Dante seems to have aspired to *auctoritas* 'greater than the pagan *auctores*', perhaps even equal to that of the Church fathers, or the Bible's human authors (Ascoli 2008: 4). As this thesis demonstrates apropos Dante's use of Statius, Dante utilises the pagan *auctores*' texts to assert his claim to *auctoritas* and his superiority as the first Christian *poeta*.

Dante provides most information regarding his intellectual formation in the philosophical treatise *Convivio*, in which 'Dante' promises to make 'un generale convivio' of the crumbs he has collected at the feet of those who sit at the 'beata mensa' (*Convivio* I.I.10-11) 'dove lo pane delli angeli si manuca' (*Convivio* I.I.7).[26] In this treatise, Dante seeks to present himself not as a lyric poet, but as a *poeta-philosophus*, an intellectual concerned not with individual growth, but with educating a social class that wishes to become cultured (Picone 2005: 173). This transition from only poetic *auctoritas* (i.e. that of the *Vita Nuova*) to the poetic and especially philosophical *auctoritas* of the *Convivio* is connected to Dante's desire to make his *ingegno* and learning available to the community and therefore win his fellow citizens' favour, in the hope that he will be recalled to Florence from exile (Picone 2005: 173). Thus, we can expect Dante to emphasise throughout *Convivio* his *ingegno* and learning and must have regard to both Dante's declared agenda and the distinction between Dante-author and the *io*-narrator. Nevertheless, *Convivio* proves informative for our purposes.

Dante mentions his early Latin education in *Convivio* I.XIII.5, when he avers 'questo mio volgare fu introduttore di me nella via di scienza, che è ultima perfezione

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[25] On authorship and *auctoritas* in general, see Minnis 1988; Ascoli 2008: 3-64; and the Introduction to this thesis. On Dante's efforts to establish his *auctoritas* see Ascoli 1997 and 2008: *passim*; Picone 2005; and Barański 2017: 4.

[26] On this metaphor and its significance, see Barański 2018: 9-26, esp. 20-26; Ascoli 2018; and Zanin 2018.

[nostra], in quanto con esso io entrai nello latino e con esso mi fu mostrato'. This accords with Black's assertion that later grammarians used the vernacular 'as a learning aid' when teaching Latin grammar and prose composition (2007: 106). However, as Dante's intention here is to defend his decision to write in the vernacular, Dante's statement tells us little regarding the level of Latin education he received and how and when he became familiar with Statian epic.

Later in *Convivio*, Dante demonstrates his conversancy with the varying senses students were taught to identify in both sacred and profane texts, since he avers: 'si vuol sapere che le scritture si possono intendere e deonsi esponere massimamente per quattro sensi' (*Convivio* II.1.2). Dante refers here to the multiple meanings of Scripture of which Aquinas writes in his *Summa Theologica* (*c.*1265-*c.*1274) I.I.10; namely the literal/historical sense and the spiritual sense, the latter of which was sub-divided into the moral, allegorical (typological), and anagogical senses. Medieval readers extended their search for these meanings beyond Scripture and into their analysis of the classical poets. Dante explains the moral and anagogical senses using examples from Scripture (*Convivio* II.1.6-7), but significantly utilises the example of Ovid's Orpheus to illustrate the allegorical sense. Dante avers, '[L'altro si chiama allegorico, e questo è quello che] si nasconde sotto 'l manto di queste favole, ed è una veritade ascosa sotto bella menzogna' (*Convivio* II.I.4). This method of reading is fundamental to understanding how Dante would have read Statian epic and its appeal to him. 'Dante's' letter to Cangrande della Scala explains these four senses and their application to the *Commedia* (*Epistola* XIII.20-25). While I do not intend to discuss here the debate surrounding Dante's authorship of this letter, the letter's content remains informative.[27] Whereas the classical poets' texts hid their truth under *'l manto* of a *bella menzogna*, 'Dante' claims both literal and spiritual truth for his *Commedia*, just as Scripture possessed. 'Dante' also demonstrates his familiarity with the medieval

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[27] For a recent summary of this debate, see Hollander 2008 discussing Ascoli's treatment of this letter in his 2008 book (*passim*). See also the following sources quoted by Hollander: Pertile 1991; Hollander 1993; Ahern 1997; Ascoli 1997; Azzetta 2003; Scott 2004: 345-47 and 409; and Sarteschi 2005.

accessus tradition that influences both *Convivio*'s and the *Vita Nuova*'s prosimetrical structure, as he writes 'Sex igitur sunt que in principio cuiusque doctrinalis operis inquirenda sunt, videlicet subiectum, agens, forma, finis, libri titulus, et genus philosophie' (*Epistola* XIII.6).

Dante's explanation of the 'veritade ascosa sotto bella menzogna' foreshadows his account in *Convivio* II.XII of his increased acquaintance with *filosofia* 'dopo alquanto tempo' (II.XII.1) since Beatrice's death in 1290 (probably 'late 1295 or very early 1296', Barański 2017: 13). *Convivio* II.XII contains one of Dante's most significant autobiographical digressions (Brunetti and Gentili 2000: 26) and provides us with valuable information regarding Dante's education. At this time Dante was focussed upon 'developing new intellectual interests and expanding his literary range' (Barański 2017: 7). Accordingly, Dante asserts 'misimi a leggere' Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae*, before adding regarding Cicero's *De Amicitia* 'misimi a leggere quello' (*Convivio* II.XII.2-3). Dante claims that it was 'duro […] nella prima entrare nella loro sentenza' but finally he entered 'tanto entro, quanto l'arte di gramatica ch'io avea e un poco di mio ingegno potea fare' (II.XII.4). Through this ironic self-deprecation, Dante emphasises his *ingegno*, his knowledge of Latin, his learning, and the private study through which he achieved his understanding of these texts.

Dante shows his awareness of the methods of reading classical texts again as he alludes to the 'Egyptian gold and silver', the Christian wisdom and knowledge, which Augustine asserts is hidden beneath the *integumentum* (Dante's *manto*) of these pagan authors' writings (*De doctrina Christiana* n.40-42). Dante claims:

> E sì come essere suole che l'uomo va cercando argento e fuori de la 'ntenzione truova oro, lo quale occulta cagione presenta, non forse sanza divino imperio; io, che cercava di consolarme, trovai non solamente a le mie lagrime rimedio, ma vocabuli d'autori e di scienze e di libri.
>
> *Convivio* II.XII.5

The hidden moral and allegorical meaning and Christian wisdom Dante discusses here and in *Convivio* II.I.2 become relevant when Dante uses examples from classical poetry, including Statius's *Thebaid*, to illustrate the virtues necessary at each stage of human life in *Convivio* IV.XXV-XXVIII (see Chapter II.5) and in Dante's character

Stazio's explanation of his repented prodigality and Christian conversion (*Purgatorio* XXII, see Chapter III.4-5). Dante's efforts to console himself with study also recall a passage early in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* in which Dante laments his exile from his beloved natal city; considers the many cities, regions and languages beyond Florence and Tuscany; and describes 'revolventes et poetarum et aliorum scriptorum volumina' (*DVE* I.VI.3). Dante's mention of the *volumina* of poets and other writers suggests he was familiar with codices containing entire copies of particular works and that he was reading the great classical poets and other *auctores* during his exile. Dante's description of the *Aeneid* as 'lo tuo volume' (*Inferno* I.84) in the later *Commedia* strengthens this impression.

After gaining these 'vocabuli d'autori e di scienze e di libri', Dante adds 'giudicava bene che la filosofia, che era donna di questi autori, di queste scienze e di questi libri, fosse somma cosa' (*Convivio* II.XII.5). Dante's use of the term *filosofia* is significant. Medieval readers classed texts written by Statius and the other *auctores* within the genre of ethics, a subset of philosophy. Dante's reference to *autori* and *libri* thus may encompass classical literature as well as more traditional philosophical texts. While *libri* suggests the act of reading, Dante claims that he began also 'ad andare là dov'ella [i.e. la filosofia] si dimostrava veramente, cioè ne le scuole de li religiosi e le disputazioni de li filosofanti', where 'in picciolo tempo, forse di trenta mesi' he began to feel 'sua dolcezza' (II.XII.7). Scholars have long debated what Dante means by *le scuole de li religiosi* and *le disputazioni de li filosofanti*, and whether they should be viewed separately or together.[28] The *scuole de li religiosi* are surely the Florentine religious schools of Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce, and Santo Spirito. However, no evidence is available that suggests Dante's enrolment in a *studium*, and thus Dante would not have attended the lessons they held privately nor had access to their libraries, since each order restricted such access to their own members (Barański

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[28] See Pegoretti 2015: 12-15 and accompanying footnotes for a summary and recent bibliography regarding this issue.

2017: 11). This and the dearth of classical literature in their libraries render it extremely unlikely that Dante studied Statian epic in one of these schools.

As to the *disputazioni de li filosofanti*, the *disputatio* (a debate regarding a specific question, executed according to codified rules) was an important teaching tool in the Middle Ages. Such debates often occurred in a university context, and so the *filosofanti* may refer to so-called 'professional' philosophers i.e. masters from the Faculties of Arts and Medicine (Pegoretti 2015: 12). Yet Florence lacked a university, and, while we must allow for poetic licence, the period Dante indicates here does not coincide with Dante's first visit to Bologna in 1287, and there is no record of a second visit in the thirty months that Dante references (Santagata 2012: 85; Inglese 2015: 38). Whereas Villani and Boccaccio assert that Dante studied in Paris and Bologna, these fall among Dante's early biographers' 'grandiose but unsubstantiated claims' about Dante's education that are motivated not by 'historical accuracy but the desire to transform Dante into an outstanding "modern" *sapiens*' (Barański 2017: 6). No evidence exists either of Dante's enrolment at any university, or of *quaestiones* open to the public in any Arts Faculties in Italy (Pegoretti 2015: 15). Moreover, 'the *Convivio* is clear: the events Dante evokes all occurred in Florence' (Barański 2017: 11). Accordingly, Dante surely cannot refer to his attendance at a university in *Convivio* II.XII and is unlikely to have studied Statian epic at university at this or any other time. Nor can Dante refer here to Brunetto Latini, as while Dante-pilgrim appears to address the Florentine philosopher as his teacher upon seeing him among *Inferno* XV's sodomites, Brunetto died in 1294, before the period *Convivio* II.XII.7 indicates.[29] While Dante may have heard other scholars speak publicly in Florence in the relevant period, without further evidence we cannot assume so definitively nor ascertain whether they may have referenced Statian epic in their discussions.

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[29] For a brief summary and recent bibliography regarding Dante's relationship with Brunetto, see Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XV.13-21, 28-30, 83-85 and 119. On Brunetto and Dante's *Convivio*, see Bartuschat 2015.

Academic debates of various types were also held across Europe, including in Florence, in religious schools of all levels (Pegoretti 2015: 12). However, evidence suggests that the only debates open to the public were the *quodlibetales*, and in the Duecento the only conspicuous traces of these relate to theology (Pegoretti 2015: 15).[30] Nonetheless both these *dispute* and the mendicants' public preaching often strayed into matters of philosophy (Santagata 2012: 85). Dante probably heard members of the *studia* speaking or preaching publicly, as the *Vita Nuova*'s 'heavily Scriptural and Christian character' confirms Dante's 'Florentine formation''s 'religious slant' (Barański 2017: 12). Dante may have been exposed to the teaching of the confraternities too, which provided 'a certain kind of vernacular education in Florence' (Treherne 2015) and involved laypeople actively in both religious practices and education. Thus, *filosofanti* seems to refer not to professional philosophers, but to all intellectuals, suggesting that Dante wished to highlight a wide variety of academic activities rather than two different places (Pegoretti 2015: 18).

Dante draws many of the quotations he utilises from synthetical and compilatory volumes, including 'commentaries, encyclopaedias, collections of *auctoritates*, and *florilegia*', and may also have heard them 'during sermons and quodlibetal disputations' (Barański 2017: 7). Scholars have noted similarities between certain views Dante displays and those preached by contemporary members of the Franciscan and Dominican orders, particularly Remigio de' Girolami, lector at Santa Maria Novella between 1274 and 1276.[31] Remigio eulogises Cicero and other ancient Roman heroes as well as saints and Scriptural figures, and cites and/or mentions many classical Latin authors in his sermons, orations, and treatises (Davis 1984: 146-48; Weppler 2016: 5 and 7). Yet Davis does not include Statius in his extensive list of figures to whom Remigio refers, perhaps suggesting that Remigio did not cite Statius (Weppler 2016: 6, fn. 17). Nevertheless, even if Remigio did cite Statius, it would only have been *en*

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[30] See also Davis 1984: 158-59; and Barański 2017: 12 with additional bibliography in fn. 32.

[31] On Dante and Remigio, see Mulchahey 2005; Capitani 2007; and Carron 2017.

passant and would not imply either that Remigio instructed students on Statius or that Santa Maria Novella possessed Statian manuscripts, as Remigio himself may have utilised *florilegia* or accessed the *auctores* elsewhere (Weppler 2016: 5). Without further evidence, it is also impossible to say whether Dante may have heard quotations from Statian epic during the sermons and disputations of other *filosofanti*. Even if he did so, this would not have granted Dante the comprehensive knowledge of Statian epic that he demonstrates in the *Commedia*.

Accordingly, despite Dante's focus on expanding his knowledge in the period referenced in *Convivio* II.XII, it is highly unlikely that Dante read Statius's two epics, and particularly the *Thebaid*, in entirety until his exile. Dante probably undertook this wider reading independently, much as he claims to have studied Boethius and Cicero in *Convivio* II.XII. Dante even asserts later in *Convivio* that 'per affaticare lo viso molto, a studio di leggere, in tanto debilitai li spiriti visivi che le stelle mi pareano tutte d'alcuno albore ombrate' (III.IX.15). During his travels, and particularly after his exile, Dante may well have had access to the private libraries of friends and benefactors, granting him access to a wider range of texts than were available to him in Florence, particularly those of the *auctores*.[32] Given the large number of extant manuscripts relating to Statius (253 according to H. Anderson 2009: vol.3, 4, and over 160 of the *Thebaid* alone according to Battles 2004: 1), many originating from or present in medieval Italy, it is probable that both Statius's *Thebaid* and his *Achilleid* appeared in at least some of these private collections. After all, in Boccaccio's letter 'Sacre famis' (*c.*1339/40), which appears in the *Zibaldone Laurenziano* (BML, MS Plut. 29.8, fol. 65^r-65^v), Boccaccio asks for the loan of his unknown addressee's manuscript of the *Thebaid* so that he can repair the glosses of his own manuscript, without which he cannot read the poem (BML, MS Plut. 38.6; cfr. D. Anderson 1994: *passim*). Like Boccaccio, Dante may have possessed his own collection of favourite texts, but this may have been impractical

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[32] On access to knowledge of classical literature outside Florence, see Witt 2000: 81-116.

given Dante's lack of permanent domicile and his financial circumstances. In any event, no physical trace remains of a 'biblioteca di Dante'.[33]

Thus, in seeking to determine the texts Dante read beyond those he references explicitly, we must pay close attention to his oeuvre's intertextuality (Barański 2017: 7). Close analysis of Dante's *opere minori* enables me to demonstrate that Dante's knowledge of Statian epic grew significantly after his exile from Florence in 1302. Dante's use of Statian epic throughout the *Commedia* suggests that by the time of its composition he had read the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* 'tutt[e] quant[e]', much like the *Aeneid* (*Inferno* XX.114). In the remaining chapters of this thesis, I chart the development of Dante's knowledge of and engagement with Statian epic. Before doing so, it seems germane to consider the format in which Dante would have read Statius's two epics.

I.4   STATIUS'S MEDIEVAL RECEPTION

1.4.1   STATIAN *ACCESSUS*

Dante would not have read the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid* in a vacuum, as glosses and paratexts usually surrounded Statian epic in the Middle Ages, assisting readers to understand Statius's poetry. Manuscripts frequently contained an *accessus ad auctorem* accompanying one or both Statian epics. The *accessus* was aimed at students and/or other active readers and provided an important introduction to the relevant poem(s), supplying a key to teach them how to read Statian epic. Copies of the *accessus* to Statius are also found attached to standalone commentaries to Statian epic or contained in collections of *accessus ad auctores* with *accessus* to other classical poets. The *accessus* to Statius covered several *circumstantiae*, which would typically include Statius's (limited) biography and motives for writing, and the title, genre, and basic argument of the relevant poem(s). An understanding of the major *accessus* to Statius circulating in the thirteenth to fourteenth century can assist us in appreciating the particularities of medieval knowledge regarding Statius and the

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[33] On the 'biblioteca di Dante', see Gargan 2009.

readings of Statian epic prevalent in Dante's lifetime. Dante appears to have drawn certain aspects of Stazio-character's biography from the Statian *accessus*, which I discuss in Chapter III.

The earliest *accessus* to the *Thebaid* is the *Qu(a)eritur accessus*, named for its opening word. The earliest extant manuscript of this *accessus* dates from the tenth century and is of north-central Italian origin (BAV, MS Pal. lat. 1694, fol. 1ʳ).[34] Significantly, 50 of the 253 extant manuscripts H. Anderson counts transmit the *Queritur accessus*.[35] This renders it the most common *accessus* to Statius overall, on which all others were based (H. Anderson 2009: vol. III, 4). The presence of the earliest version of this *accessus* in a manuscript originating in Italy, and its prevalence in later manuscripts both in Italy and elsewhere, suggest that the *Queritur accessus* would have circulated in Dante's Italy. Thus, whilst it is impossible to determine for certain which Statian *accessus* were known to Dante, Dante was probably familiar with the *Queritur* or an *accessus* based upon it.[36]

The other *accessus* most likely known to Dante is the *In principio*, again named for its *incipit*. The *accessus*, which first appears in a twelfth- to thirteenth-century manuscript (Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 1607, fol. 10ʳ), is transmitted in six manuscripts and is the 'most widely transmitted *accessus* to the *Thebaid* in the thirteenth century'. It exists in both short and long versions and precedes a significant commentary 'extant in various forms in at least 15 manuscripts' (H. Anderson 2009: vol. III, 33; see section I.4.3).[37] Significantly, these include the fourteenth- to fifteenth-century Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS Ricc. 842 (fol. 1ʳᵃ⁻ʳᵇ), written in northern Italy, suggesting the *accessus* did circulate in late-medieval Italy. Accordingly, both the *Queritur accessus* and the *In principio accessus* are particularly relevant to my

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[34] *Contra* de Angelis 1997: 91-92. She asserts that the manuscript is tenth century but remained in its place of origin (southern Italy) until the fourteenth century.

[35] Reproduced by H. Anderson (2009: vol. III, 6).

[36] On the probability that Dante knew the *Queritur accessus* and its similarities with Stazio's 'autobiography', see Brugnoli 1969 and *contra* de Angelis 1984.

[37] On the versions of the *In principio*, see H. Anderson 2009: vol. III, 33-37. Anderson reproduces the *accessus* in 2009: vol. III, 38-44.

consideration of how Dante may have read Statius. Nonetheless, even those *accessus* in manuscripts not apparently originating or circulating in Italy during Dante's lifetime prove useful, as they demonstrate how medieval readers understood Statius's life and poetry.

First, *accessus* to Statius would describe the *poetae vita*, using the limited biographical details available in Statius's epic poetry and in external sources. Statius's *Silvae*, which provide further biographical information regarding Statius, were not well-known until their 're-discovery' in 1417 (see Introduction). Statius also lacked the early medieval *vita* with which many other classical poets were privileged.

Since Statius speaks of his natal city only in the *Silvae* and external biographical information regarding Statius was sparse, medieval *accessus* writers could not know that the historical Statius's true birthplace was Naples. Interestingly, the earliest extant *accessus* to the *Achilleid* claims that Statius was born and wrote the *Thebaid* in Thebes, after which he was crowned and drank from the fountain from which poets drank after publishing a poem.[38] Since this *accessus* appears in one of Black's 'schoolbooks' and was previously owned by Santa Croce, it may well have been present in Dante's Italy. Nevertheless, this *accessus* is alone in making this claim, and Toulouse is by far the most popular birthplace for the historical Statius in *accessus* written before 1417. The *Queritur* allows us to infer the source of this mistaken belief. After asserting that Statius 'invenitur fuisse Tholosensis', the *Queritur* claims 'in Gallia celeberrime docuit | retoricam' (lines 4-6, echoed by the *In principio accessus*, lines 15-17). This suggests that the error regarding the historical Statius's birthplace stemmed from confusion with Lucius Statius Ursulus, a rhetor based in Toulouse mentioned in both Suetonius's *Rhetoricians* and Jerome's translation of Eusebius's *Chronica*. The *Queritur* also uses Domitian's mention in the *Thebaid*'s and *Achilleid*'s prologues to posit a date for Statius's poetic activity, stating 'fuisse eum temporibus Vespasiani

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[38] BML, MS Plut. 24 sin. 12, fol. 49ʳ, lines 1-2. See H. Anderson 2009: vol. III, 14-16, *accessus* reproduced at p. 16.

imperatoris et pervenisset | usque ad imperium Domitiani fratris Titi' (lines 2-4, paraphrased in the *In principio accessus*, lines 18-19).

Other *accessus* provide further, often spurious, information to resolve their writers' ignorance of the historical Statius's life, much as the first *Achilleid accessus* did. The *In principio* calls Statius's mother Agilina (line 16), apparently baselessly, with other *accessus* giving her Ovid's or Lucan's mother's name (see H Anderson 2009: vol. III, *passim*). The confusion with the rhetor may have led to the *In principio*'s claim that the Latin poet Statius studied at Burdigalia (Bordeaux) and Narbo (Narbonne), as these two French cities were connected to Toulouse. Its author may also have made this assertion to lend authority both to claims that Statius founded Toulouse's university (Scherillo 1902: 498), and to Statius himself. The limited information available about Statius gave *accessus* writers the impetus and opportunity to invent biographical details about him to suit their own purposes, much as Dante did regarding Stazio-character (see Chapter III.4-5). After all, no source existed to contradict them.

After biographical details, customarily an *accessus* would describe the poet's character and his poetic achievements/career, often using etymology or resorting to conjecture. The *Queritur* states that Statius 'postea veniens Romam ad poetriam se transtulit' (line 6), echoed in the *In principio*'s succinct 'Tandem Romam se transtulit' (line 17). The *accessus* apparently based on the *Queritur* in Padua, Biblioteca del Seminario Vescovile ("BSV"), MS 41, fols 1ᵛ-2ʳ, claims that Statius came to Rome 'Audiens Romae poetas plurimum honorari' (my transcription). This resonates with Statius's hopes in the *Thebaid* that 'meriti post me referentur honores' (XII.819). The *Queritur* assumes Statius is 'nobili ortus prosapia' (line 7), but its author may have misinterpreted Statius's phrase 'prisca parentum nomina' (*Achilleid* I.12-13) to denote his noble lineage, or assumed it based on Statius's patronage (H. Anderson 2009: vol.3, 2). The *Queritur* also asserts that Statius was 'clarus ingenio, doctus eloquio' (line 7), perhaps because of his poetry's *ingenium* and *eloquium*, or because Juvenal's *Satires* VII.82-87, which discusses Statius, mentions '*ingenium* and *eloquium*' as 'important virtues of a poet' (H. Anderson 2009: vol.3, 2). The *accessus* quotes *Satires*

VII.82-87 in full (lines 9-14). The *In principio accessus* expands the list of Statius's virtues, averring that Statius was 'autem morum honestate preditus, | acris intelligentie, tenacis memorie, clarus ingenio, doctus eloquio, | liberalium artium scientia feliciter eruditus' (lines 20-22). It then states that Statius 'Fuit adeo nimie | facundie ut de eo meminerit Iuvenalis' (lines 22-24) before quoting *Satires* VII.82-84. The attribution of such wisdom, learning, and poetic prowess to the historical Statius demonstrates the regard in which his epic poetry was held in the Middle Ages, and a fundamental aspect of its appeal for Dante.

The *accessus* frequently continue their assessment of Statius's virtue and poetic talent through analysing the etymology of Statius's name. Ironically, *accessus* to the poet Statius etymologise first a corruption of the rhetor L. Statius *Ursulus*'s name (Weppler 2016: 35). The *Queritur* author avers that Statius's agnomen is '*Surculus*', 'quasi sursum canens' (line 18), a claim reiterated in the so-called Bern-Burney *accessus*, which then repeats Juvenal's praise that Statius 'iocundam et altam habebat vocem' (line 46).[39] Another interesting interpretation is that provided by the *accessus* in a thirteenth-century English manuscript (BL, MS Royal 15.A.XXIX, fol. 4ᵛ), which interprets *Surculus* 'quasi surgulus a surgendo, quia surgebat et crescebat in sua | sapientia' (lines 10-12).[40] The *accessus* continues that he is named *Papinius* 'a Greco quod est pape, quasi admirabilis in sapientia' (line 14), thus demonstrating the wisdom medieval readers believed Statius possessed. Conversely, the Bern-Burney *accessus* avers that Statius's cognomen is *Papinianus* because 'id est mirabilis in recitatione, cum etiam in dictamine satis ualuit. | Pape enim uox est mirabilis' (lines 48-49), indicating the poetic value medieval readers attributed to Statian epic. The *accessus* in BSV, MS 41, fols 1ᵛ-2ʳ, develops this portrayal of Statius's poetic virtue, and describes the *Thebaid* itself, averring, 'Et magne ac diuerse hinc inde strages et bella fuerunt cum factis egregiis, stilo ac narratione dignis.' The *Thebaid*'s bellicose qualities may well

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[39] This survives in two manuscripts: the twelfth-century French manuscript Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 528, fol. 1ʳ; and the twelfth-thirteenth-century English manuscript BL, MS Burney 258, fol. 2ʳ. It is reproduced by H. Anderson 2009: vol. III, 11-13.

[40] Reproduced by H. Anderson 2009: vol. III, 48-49.

have formed part of its appeal for Dante, leading him to use it as model for hell and a parallel for his divided Italy (see Chapter IV).

The *In principio accessus*'s praise of Statius's poetic virtue proves particularly interesting for our purposes. It declares that Statius 'eo quod post Uirgilium inter ceteros poetas | principatum obtinuit et popularem | adeptus est fauorem' (lines 30-32). While Statius begs the *Thebaid* in its explicit, 'uiue, precor; nec tu diuinam *Aeneida* tempta, | sed longe sequere et uestigia semper adora' (XII.816-17), the *accessus*'s appraisal of Statius as second only to Vergil demonstrates the deep regard in which medieval readers held his epic poetry. This interest in the connection between Statius and Vergil manifests in the etymology for *Surculus* too, as one 'major etymological tradition' suggests that it derives from 'surcus' meaning branch or twig, which recalls 'the etymology of "Virgilius" from "virga", also meaning branch' (Weppler 2016: 35-36).[41]

Medieval readers customarily attributed moralising aims or readings to authors and/or their texts, a tendency apparent in the *accessus*' explanation of the name *Statius*. The *In principio accessus* claims that it derives from his 'statu uite' and that 'Erat enim firmus contra uicia et fortune biformes | euentus, neque enim ea blandiente efferebatur uel contumacius tonante tristis | habebatur' (lines 41-43). The Lincoln College *accessus* to the *Achilleid* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lincoln College Lat. 27, fols. 62[ra-vb]) allegorises the name *Pampinius* according to the quality of Statius's poetry (lines 20-25), but *Statius* according to the poet's moral quality, deriving it from the verb *stare*.[42] It avers:

> Vocabatur nomine proprio Statius, quod tunc eius probitati quasi quodam presagio congruebat, quia enim Statius a stando dicitur. Recte fuit hoc nomen eius proprium, qui per omnia scripta sua non solum tamquam in uertice litterarum, sed in morum dignitate stetit et eminentia uirtutum.
>
> lines 16-20

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[41] Weppler references here MS Royal 15.A.XXIX, 'Surculus pars trunci que super terram eminet ubi pes | alicuius offenditur. Ita iste erat offendiculum', lines 12-13; then the fourteenth-century Genoa, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS E.II.8, 'sicuti a uirga Uirgilius dictus est, ita iste | Surculus a surco quod idem sonat est appellatus', lines 9-10 (reproduced in H. Anderson 2009: vol. III, 75-76).

[42] Reproduced in H. Anderson 2009: vol. III, 24-26.

Since medieval readers would typically read an *accessus* prior to reading the *Thebaid*, they would be conditioned to seek evidence of these virtues within the poem. This tendency carried through into the compilation of *florilegia* demonstrating the quality and intelligence of Statius's poetry and/or its moral virtues. Statius's portrayal as moral authority is particularly interesting, since it diverges so clearly from that of Ovid and Vergil, who bore 'ambiguous reputations'; Ovid because the medieval *accessus* acknowledge 'Ovid's disgrace' supposedly after the *Ars Amatoria* was published; and Vergil because a tradition developed portraying him as a sorcerer, 'thus casting awe and suspicion' on his intellect and poetic skill (Battles 2004: 6). Significantly, Dante's own early commentators continue to portray Statius as a moral authority. For example, Benvenuto da Imola demonstrates his own familiarity with the Statian *accessus* tradition, describing the historical Statius as 'honestissimus et moralissimus in omnibus suis dictis' (1375-1380: *ad Purg.* XXI.7-13). The historical Statius's purported morality may well be why we find him and not Ovid in *Purgatorio* (see Chapter III.5).

The *accessus* writers develop the moral, didactic aspects of Statius's poetry and its poetic value, when they discuss the poem's *materia*, the *intentio auctoris*, the poem's *utilitas*, or the genre to which it belongs – further typical elements of a medieval *accessus*. They build upon Statius's own educational aim for the *Thebaid*, that it should 'nouam monstrare futuris' (XII.813), and his belief that its success was such that it would be read in schools (XII.815). As the *Achilleid* is incomplete, Statius does not posit similar intentions, although it is widely assumed to be similarly didactic in purpose. A twelfth-century *Thebaid accessus* written in France demonstrates how the three *circumstantiae* of *materia*, *intentio* and *utilitas* fit together for medieval readers of Statius. It affirms 'Materia eius est fraternum bellum pro Thebis quod fuit inter Ethioclem et Polinicem. Intentio eius dissuadere fraternum odium ne tale incurramus periculum. Vtilitas eius est ut per-lectis istis libris pulchras et ornatas sententiarum positione imitemur' (Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, MS Rh. 53, fol. 96).[43] The Zürich

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[43] Reproduced in H. Anderson 2009: vol. III, 9.

accessus thus instructs us to appreciate and imitate the *Thebaid*'s beauty and rhetorical power and follow the moral *sententiae* it contains, demonstrating some of the appeal Dante may have found in the *Thebaid*. Other *accessus* also aver that Statius's intention is to teach us to avoid fraternal enmity. The *In principio accessus* mentions civil unrest and the hatred between Domitian and Titus and states that Statius writes the *Thebaid* 'ad quorum dehortationem' (lines 58-61).

The Bern-Burney *accessus* develops the *Thebaid*'s political message. The *accessus* claims that after seeing both previous and ongoing civil wars, uprisings, and slaughter in Rome, 'maxime suo tempore, cum regnaret | nequissimus imperator Domitianus, [Statius] uoluit Romanos a discordiis ciuilibus | reuocare' (lines 3-6). However, Domitian feared public censure and had passed an edict 'ne aliquis poeta aliquem nobilem | Romanum publice reprehenderet' (lines 6-8). The *accessus* emphasises the severity of the penalty for speaking against the Roman nobility, providing the example of Lucan, who wrote of Caesar's vices and therefore was forced to commit suicide (lines 12-15). Accordingly, the *accessus* avers that whilst Statius wanted to deter civil unrest, he determined that to write about Roman history would be too dangerous. Thus Statius chose to write about Thebes, 'vt saltim per alienum exemplum et bellorum | effectum Romanos corrigat' (lines 9-10). More generally, the *In principio accessus* emphasises that the *Thebaid* seeks to discourage civil conflict and encourage good government, ascribing it to the genre of political ethics and clarifying 'Politica est scientia que ad regnum ciuitatum est | necessaria' (lines 113-14). These *accessus* make apparent the political example that medieval readers were conditioned to take from the *Thebaid*, and which Statius himself had intended for the young Roman men he addresses at the poem's close. Since Dante was attuned to such readings of classical authors, he need not have been familiar specifically with these *accessus* to arrive at a similar reading. In any case, the *Thebaid*'s political message surely would have appealed to Dante, since like Statius, he uses his role as author to comment upon the political situation within Florence and Italy, both in the *Commedia* and elsewhere (see Chapters II and IV).

Certain *accessus* writers take the moral lesson offered by Statian epic further than the political sphere. For example, the aforementioned Royal 15.A.XXIX *accessus* claims that Statius 'intendit […] commouere homines ad castitatem et concordiam in probando eorum incesta scelera' (lines 24-26), apparently focussing on Oedipus's incestuous lust. The Bern-Burney *accessus* widens this moralisation and avers that the *Thebaid*'s 'Vtilitas siue finis est correctio malorum et per hec exempla ab eis | continere' (lines 43-44). The *accessus* in BSV, MS 41 avers that the *Thebaid* 'Ethice ascribitur cum discordiam malosque mores dissuadere intendat' (fols 1ᵛ-2ʳ, my transcription). The *accessus* texts thus expand the *Thebaid*'s moral aim to the standard medieval moralisation of classical texts – the 'discouraging of vice' (and encouraging of virtue). Many *accessus* also expressly assign the *Thebaid* to the genre of ethics.

The extant *Achilleid accessus* likewise attribute moralising aims to the poem and ascribe it to the genre of ethics. Unusually, the earliest *Achilleid accessus* (MS Plut. 24. sin. 12, fol 49ʳ), possibly known to Dante, provides an aetiological explanation of Statius's choice of material. It claims that Statius composed the poem to answer a question posed by the emperor's court – whether it is possible to escape destiny. Since 'Thetis fatis resistere uoluit et nequiuit' (line 7), the conclusion is presumably that one cannot. Similarly, the *accessus* found in BAV, MS Reg. lat. 1556, fol. 75ʳᵇ concludes, the *Achilleid*'s 'Vtilitas est ne fatis amplius inutiliter obuiare temptemus' (line 5).[44] Nevertheless, the most significant aspect of MS Plut 24. sin. 12's aetiological explanation is that it initiates an important theme, which carries through into later Statian *accessus* – the idea of the *poeta doctus*, i.e. 'the poet whose wisdom is recognized through his poetry' (H. Anderson 2009: vol.3, 14). It must surely have appealed to Dante, who styles himself as a *poeta doctus* throughout his oeuvre.

The *Achilleid accessus* also portray Statius as a '*poeta doctor*', a moral guide (H. Anderson 2009: vol.3, 22), just as those to the *Thebaid* did. The Lincoln College *accessus* asserts that Statius wrote the *Achilleid* to deter young Roman men from the

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[44] Reproduced in H. Anderson 2009: vol.3, 57.

unmanly behaviour prevalent amongst them; 'Arbitrabatur enim utilius fore rei publice alicuius magni et bellicosi uiri facta describere, cuius exemplo ciues Romani prouocarentur ad amorem militie et usum armorum, sine quibus non potest res publica salua consistere' (lines 8-11). The *accessus* then 'allegorically defines these *arma* based on *Proverbs* 16.32' as the spiritual arms of a Christian warrior (lines 41-46; Anderson 2009: vol. III, 22). Thus, a medieval reader could read the poem as both a continuation of Statius's political agenda and an exhortation to spiritual fortitude and rectitude, Roman bellicosity replaced with the Christian imagery of spiritual warfare.

Interestingly, after assigning the *Achilleid* to the genre of ethics, the Lincoln College *accessus* provides examples of both male and female virtue, with Thetis shown as *exemplum* 'de affectu materne pietatis' and Deidamia 'de titulo verecundie puellaris in Deidamia virgine' (lines 73-81). Significantly, both women appear among the virtuous pagans listed as being in Limbo in *Purgatorio* XXII.109-14, suggesting Dante arrived at a similar reading either via the text itself or with an *accessus*. Other *accessus* assert the *Achilleid*'s encouragement of virtue and discouragement of vice more generally. For example, the thirteenth-century *accessus* in Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, MS Gronov 66, fol. 1ʳ, avers that Statius's intention 'est nos per uirtutes | Achillis informet ad uirtutes et doceat nos uitare desidiam et | torporem' (lines 70-72).[45] While Dante may not have been familiar with these *accessus* specifically, he was surely familiar with the portrayal of Statius as a moral guide and the *Achilleid* as an educational tool.

The presence of *accessus* to Statius in so many manuscripts containing the *Thebaid* and/or the *Achilleid* suggests that Dante almost certainly read the poem accompanied by one. Accordingly, like other medieval readers, the *accessus* would have primed Dante to find evidence in Statius's poetry of both Statius's poetic skill and his moralising aims.

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[45] Reproduced in Anderson 2009: vol. III, 52-54.

I.4.2 VERSE *ARGUMENTA*

An *accessus* to Statius would not be the only paratext medieval readers encountered in manuscripts of his poetry. 167 of the 254 manuscripts and fragments of the *Thebaid* examined by Harald Anderson contain anonymous verse arguments, known as the *Argumenta dodecasticha in libros II-XII Thebaidos Statii* or the *argumenta antiqua* (2000: 221).[46] In the Middle Ages, only the twelve-line arguments to *Thebaid* II-V and VII-XII were extant (H. Anderson 2000: 220). No pre-fourteenth-century manuscript contains a substitute *argumentum* to *Thebaid* I, but 56 contain one to *Thebaid* VI (2000: 221-222, 236). Of these, 47 transmit the *Ut puer* argument first included in the early twelfth-century BAV, MS Pal. lat. 1690, the twelfth-century BML, MS Edili 197, and two further twelfth-century manuscripts. A further 11 manuscripts transmit the later 'Graiorum turba' argument, likely composed in the fourteenth century (H. Anderson 2000: 236). Two pre-twelfth-century antique general arguments were also 'commonly transmitted' either as complete poems or as monostichs before their respective books – the *Associat* (80 manuscripts) and *Soluitur* (54). Each offered a different interpretation of the poem. (Anderson 2000: 220; 240-43).

The arguments to *Thebaid* II-XII and the two general arguments are interesting for our purposes, as they provide the reader with the poem's plot, identify the characters, and delineate its major subdivisions 'in a succinct, mnemonic form' (H. Anderson 2000: 219). Fifteen of the twelfth- to fourteenth-century manuscripts that I consulted in Italian libraries contain either some or all the *argumenta* to individual books, usually as a preface.[47] Eight of these manuscripts also contain the *Associat* or the *Soluitur* general argument, as either a preface to the entire *Thebaid*, a replacement

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[46] Transcribed in Klotz 1910: 476-82.
[47] BML, MSS Ashb. 1032 (Books II-XII), Edili 197 (Books II and IV-XII), Plut. 18 sin. 4 (Books II, III, V and VII-XII), Plut. 38.5 (Books II-V and VII-XII), Plut. 38.6 (Books II and XII); BNC, MSS II.II.55 (Books II-XII) and II.II.78 (Books II-V, VII-IX, and XI); BSV, MS 41 (Books II-VI and VIII-XII); and BAV, MSS Barb. lat. 106 (Books II-IV, IX, and XI-XII), Chigi H.VI.209 (Books II-V, VII-X, and XII), Chigi H.VIII.273 (Books II-V and VII-XII*)*, Pal. lat. 1690 (Books II-XII), Rossi 536 (Books II-VII together on fols 13ᵛ-14ᵛ), Vat. lat. 3278 (Books II and VII-XII), and Vat. Lat. 3280 (Books II and III).

for *Thebaid* I's *argumentum*, or a separate text.[48] The presence of these eleven individual and two general *argumenta* in so many manuscripts of the *Thebaid*, including those that may well have been present in Dante's Italy, suggests that Dante probably knew these *argumenta*.

While Anderson observes that *argumenta* to the *Achilleid* exist, these appear to have been composed in the fourteenth century and were not as well-known as those to the *Thebaid* (2009: vol. I, XXIII). Accordingly, it is less likely that Dante knew these *argumenta*, although MS Strozzi 130, a thirteenth- to fourteenth-century manuscript written in Italy, contains *Epytomae* to the entire *Achilleid* and *Achilleid* I in the margin at fol. 115^r, and certain prefaces accompanying the marginal glosses to the poem at fols 115^r-120^r.

I.4.3 COMMENTARIES AND GLOSSING

As is widely accepted, most extant medieval manuscripts of the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* contain marginal and/or interlinear glossing, varying in nature and extent. Thus, Dante's experience of reading Statian epic would have been much like reading the *Commedia* today – with scholarly introductions and notes accompanying the text on the page, in a 'costante coesistenza' (de Angelis 1997: 76). Often such glosses are drawn from a specific commentary on the relevant poem, although these commentaries also circulated in standalone form.

I.4.3.1 COMMENTARIES TO THE *THEBAID*

Three commentaries to the *Thebaid* seem to have enjoyed wide circulation in the Middle Ages: that attributed to the fourth-century author Lactantius Placidus; and the so-called *In principio* and 'Arundel-Burney' commentaries (H. Anderson 2009: vol. I, XXIV).[49]

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[48] *Associat*: BML, MSS Ashb. 1032, fol. 158^v and Plut. 18 sin. 4, fol. 1^v; and BAV, MSS Pal. lat. 1690, fol. 1^r; and Vat. lat. 3278, fol. 101^r.
Soluitur. BML, MSS Edili 197, fol. 133^r and Plut. 38.5, fol. 168^v; BNC, MS II.II.78, fol. 140^r; and BSV, MS 41, fol. 2^v.
[49] Since it derives largely from the *In principio* commentary and appears in northern French manuscripts, I ignore the late twelfth-century 'Arundel-Burney' commentary found in Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, MS 265.4 Extravagantes 8°.

Early in the Middle Ages, the most prevalent commentary to the *Thebaid* was that attributed to Lactantius. This survives in at least 42 manuscripts, in both partial and complete form, either as an independent commentary, or more commonly, as *scholia* surrounding copies of the poem (Battles 2004: 2). While some debate surrounds whether the independent version preceded the *scholia* or vice versa, the earliest complete copy of Lactantius's commentary is the standalone version found in the tenth-century Italian manuscript BAV, MS Pal. lat. 1694.

The commentary's fortunes in medieval Italy are less certain. De Angelis asserts that Lactantius's commentary seems to have completely disappeared after the end of the eleventh century, to then reappear in the fourteenth when copies multiplied (1997: 92). David Anderson observes that whilst the commentary circulated widely in Germany before the fourteenth century, it seldom appears south of the Alps until late in that century (1994: 17-18). Boccaccio possessed a manuscript of the *Thebaid* containing Lactantius's commentary (BML, MS Plut. 38.6) to which he added glosses both from the *In principio* commentary and possibly from a second manuscript containing Lactantius's commentary (Anderson 1994: *passim*). Sabbadini even suggests that Boccaccio himself '"rediscovered" the Lactantius Placidus commentary for Italy, and no scholar has yet disproved his claim' (Weppler 2016: 42, referencing Sabbadini 1905: vol. I, 28-29). However, Harald Anderson asserts that MS Plut. 38.6 was repaired in northern Italy in the thirteenth century (2009: vol. I, 109), which would pre-date Boccaccio's glosses. Moreover, a manuscript written in Italy in the thirteenth-fourteenth century contains Lactantius's *scholia* (BML, MS Strozzi 130; cfr. H. Anderson 2009: vol. I, 117-18). Thus, I believe that the commentary still circulated in Italy during Dante's lifetime, particularly as manuscripts written prior to this would still have been utilised given their expense and durability. Accordingly, I consider it possible that Dante was familiar with Lactantius's commentary, just as Boccaccio was. It therefore remains relevant for my consideration of Dante's reception of Statius.

Lactantius's commentary to the *Thebaid* contains *periochae* or prose summaries prefacing each of the *Thebaid*'s books, with the notable exception of the

first, which is no longer extant. These *periochae* describe the key events within each book and highlight the elements that medieval readers such as Dante would find most valuable. These elements, upon which Statius's *auctoritas* rested, include 'exemplary rhetorical occasions,' such as descriptions of objects, occasions, people, gods, states of existence etc, and speeches (Battles 2004: 2). By reading these *argumenta*, medieval readers would be conditioned to pay attention to particular episodes in each book, and to extract from the *Thebaid* examples they could then use as models for their own Latin compositions.[50] Significantly, the exemplary moral occasions include 'descriptio monilis Harmoniae' (*Thebaid* II), highlighting a passage relevant to Dante's depiction of Eriphyle on the terrace of pride (*Purgatorio* XII.49-51); 'allocutio Capanei iniuriosa contra Amphiaraum et religionem' (*Thebaid* III), emphasising a passage relevant to Dante's depictions of Capaneus and Amphiaraus (*Inferno* XIV and XX) and Stazio's Christianity (*Purgatorio* XXI-XXII); and 'allocutiones Argive et Antigones et iunctus labor ad sepeliendum Polynicis cadaver' (*Thebaid* XII), relevant to both women's listing among the virtuous Statian women in Limbo (*Purgatorio* XXII.109-14). I consider Dante's use of these episodes in Chapters II-IV of this thesis.

Interestingly, the laments Lactantius lists in the various *periochae* appear among the examples used for similar purposes in many of the medieval *florilegia* (Battles 2004: 3), suggesting that the *florilegia* writers may well have been familiar with Lactantius, and/or that these laments may well have become commonplaces. The highlighting of these typically female laments also illustrates how Statius 'experiments with Latin literary conventions and genres and re-evaluates their major themes' (Newlands 2012: 9). Accordingly, this emphasis upon Statius's poetic value and his innovation as a poet may well have increased his appeal to Dante, particularly since they resonate with Dante's own innovation and achievement.

Lactantius's focus on the *Thebaid*'s linguistic and literary value continues into his analysis of the poem itself, which constitutes a line-by-line gloss. Lactantius's

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[50] On the similar importance of preface-type rubrics to the reading of the *Commedia*, see Clarke 2015.

scholia concentrate on clarifying the meaning of words, explaining grammar and syntax, and exploring the *Thebaid*'s rhetorical devices, using terms with which medieval readers would have become familiar during their education. Lactantius also approaches the *Thebaid* as a repository of knowledge, with glosses regarding history, mythology, geography, astronomy/astrology, and religious customs and beliefs. Where relevant, Lactantius quotes exempla from other classical authors, including Homer (*Thebaid* IV.193-94), Vergil (e.g. *Thebaid* I.9-10), Lucan (e.g. *Thebaid* IV.231-32), and Ovid (*Thebaid* IV.456-60). Lactantius was surely also well-acquainted with Servius's *Ad Aeneida* as certain glosses to the *Thebaid* echo particular glosses in the *Ad Aeneida*, reflecting the relationship between the two poems. There are also instances of quasi-reciprocal glossing, including *Ad Aen.* XII.90 where Servius refers to *Thebaid* II.276, and *In Theb.* II.276, where Lactantius refers to *Aeneid* XII.90, and 'a similar occurrence' at *Aeneid* XI.36 and *Thebaid* VI.37-43. Such notes 'both reflect an understanding of Statius as an imitator of Virgil and work to promote that idea' (Weppler 2016: 43).

Lactantius does not appear to have utilised Christian sources, and generally avoids allegorical readings of episodes within the *Thebaid*. Nevertheless, Lactantius's gloss to Statius's passage regarding the Altar of Clementia has led certain scholars to suggest that Lactantius himself was Christian. Moreover, it seems to have inspired the *In principio* commentator to suggest that this altar in Athens was the Altar of the Unknown God described by the apostle Paul in Actus Apostolorum 17.23, perhaps in turn partly inspiring Dante's Christianisation of Stazio-character (see Chapter III.5). Accordingly, Lactantius's commentary to the *Thebaid* may well have appealed to Dante. Certain aspects of Dante's reception of the *Thebaid* in the *Commedia* appear to bear testament to Dante's familiarity with Lactantius's commentary and thus prove relevant to my analysis (see Chapter IV).

In the twelfth century, another prominent commentary to the *Thebaid* was written, called the *In principio* from the *accessus* with which it is most frequently linked (see section I.4.1). The earliest version of this commentary appears in a standalone form in a manuscript in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek-Preußischer Kulturbesitz, MS Lat. 2° 34.

This is reproduced in further manuscripts in Berlin, Leiden, London (BL, MS Additional 16380), and significantly, in a fourteenth/fifteenth century manuscript now found in Florence's Biblioteca Riccardiana (MS Ricc. 842). Whilst this standalone version of the commentary post-dates Dante, it was written in northern Italy, demonstrating that the commentary did circulate in the region. Moreover, the commentary appears in the form of *scholia* in several manuscripts, including many from Italy. Many of these date to the twelfth to fourteenth centuries and are now found in the BAV (MSS Barb. lat. 106, Chigi H.VI.209, Ottob. lat. 1977, Pal. lat. 1717, Reg. lat. 1375, Vat. lat. 1616, Vat. lat. 3280, and Rossi 536). The commentary appears also in BSV, MS 41 (which also includes *periochae* and certain glosses from Lactantius's commentary). The sheer volume of manuscripts containing the *In principio* commentary, many of which originate or were present in Italy, suggests that it circulated in Dante's Italy. This is confirmed by Boccaccio's slightly later use of the *In principio* glosses to repair his copy of the *Thebaid* with Lactantius's *scholia* (D. Anderson 1994: *passim*). Accordingly, Dante may well have read the *Thebaid* accompanied by the *In principio* commentary. Thus, where relevant to my analysis, I refer to passages from this commentary when analysing Dante's utilisation of the *Thebaid*.[51]

The *In principio* commentary is based upon Lactantius Placidus's *In Thebaida*. It shows a similar concern for grammar, syntax, and semantics, but also contains metrical observations and discusses both the historical and the modern usage of certain Latin words (de Angelis 1997: 100-01). Its author clearly knows classical poetry thoroughly, especially Vergil, since he quotes various resonances and/or the use of similar rhetorical devices throughout. He also utilises Servius's *Ad Aeneida* (de Angelis 1997: 97-98). The same author may well have written the commentary to the *Aeneid* that appears alongside the *In principio* in the early Berlin manuscript, since several correspondences exist between them (de Angelis 1997: 95-96). In addition to linguistic

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[51] The *In principio* is as yet unedited, but I reviewed two manuscripts containing the commentary (BL, MS Additional 16380 and Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS Ricc. 842; see Introduction).

and literary glosses, the *In principio* includes glosses relating to history, mythology, and astrology. The commentary offers Platonising readings of certain sections of the *Thebaid*, often utilises Macrobius 'especially in astrological and astronomical notes' and displays its 'interest in themes like the *anima mundi*' (Weppler 2016: 45). More significantly, the *In principio* also provides Christian readings of particular passages, including the Ara Clementiae (see Chapter III.5). This may well be because the scholiast seems to be closely connected with Abelard and Anselm of Laon (de Angelis 1997: *passim*). Despite the *In principio* commentary's Christianising readings and its Platonising tendencies it does not run to the fully allegorical interpretation favoured by the final *Thebaid* commentary to which I turn now, that of Pseudo-Fulgentius.

This allegorical reading of the *Thebaid*, the *Super Thebaiden*, was once believed to have been written by Fulgentius, the sixth-century scholar who wrote commentaries on the *Aeneid* and other texts. However, it is now believed to have been written in the twelfth or thirteenth century due to the terminology it shares with the *accessus* tradition (Battles 2004: 10-12). It survives in two manuscripts, one twelfth-thirteenth-century manuscript (Paris, BNF, MS Lat. 3012), and a thirteenth-century copy by Pierre Daniel (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 141.323) suggesting it did not circulate widely. Much as Fulgentius and Bernard Silvestris transform the *Aeneid* into an allegory of man's journey through life, Pseudo-Fulgentius's allegorisation 'transforms the *Thebaid* into a *psychomachia*', in which through etymology each character or place is deemed to represent a particular concept, such as philosophy or pride (Battles 2004: 11). Despite the *Thebaid*'s complex conclusion (see Chapter IV), the allegorisation gives the *Thebaid* a Christianised, 'happy ending' (Battles 2004: 11), interpreting Theseus's liberation of Thebes as the soul's liberation from sin. Dante need not have been familiar with this allegorisation itself, since he was well-versed in the allegorical and moralising readings that could be given to classical texts. Nevertheless, Pseudo-Fulgentius's allegorisation remains interesting, particularly as scholars like Padoan (1977) have suggested it as a possible impetus for Dante's decision to Christianise Stazio (see Chapter III.5).

I.4.3.2 COMMENTARIES TO THE *ACHILLEID*

While 'at least three' major *Achilleid* commentaries circulated in the Middle Ages, 'one of which was attributed to Lactantius' (H. Anderson 2009: vol. I, XXIV), none appears to have been 'very influential' (Weppler 2016: 39). The *Achilleid* commentary that was once attributed to Lactantius is now classed as anonymous. It accompanies Lactantius's *scholia* to the *Thebaid* in MS Pal. lat. 1694; in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm. 19482; and as marginal gloss in BNF, MS lat. 8040. While similar in focus to Lactantius's commentary to the *Thebaid*, it did not enjoy the same success and disappeared in the twelfth century, leaving no trace on the subsequent commentary tradition (de Angelis 1997: 91). However, it remains useful in demonstrating how medieval readers would have approached the *Achilleid*, and I refer to it where relevant.

I.4.4 THE *PLANCTUS OEDIPI/OEDIPODIS*

Two manuscripts I viewed in the BAV contain a further poem after the *Thebaid*, called variously the *Planctus Oedipi* or *Planctus Oedipodis* (Edili 197, fol. 131ᵛ; and Vat. lat. 3278, fol. 101ᵛ). Harald Anderson observes its presence in further manuscripts of the *Thebaid* (2009: vol. I, *passim*).[52] This twelfth-century poem, in twenty-one rhyming stanzas, is a lament in which Oedipus narrates his own cursed history and the events leading up to the Theban war (Battles 2004: 6). Whilst this poem would prove useful to the *Thebaid*'s readers in apprising them of events to which Statius only alludes, 'such texts are always kept separate' from the *Thebaid* itself (Weppler 2016: 29).

I.4.5 VERNACULAR TRANSLATIONS OF STATIAN EPIC

The paratexts discussed above were not the only method through which medieval readers interpreted classical texts. Cornish observes that due to Italians' 'sudden and wide access to reading and writing' in 1250-1350, many readers became writers with vernacular translation 'an environment that lent itself to contributions by readers'. 97 of the 134 pre-1350 vernacular manuscripts catalogued in a recent census of Florence's

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[52] Hahn transcribes and translates the *Planctus Oedipi* (1980: 234-37).

national library 'have content that can be described as *volgarizzamento* of classical or medieval material' (Cornish 2011: 1). Such translations made Latin literature more accessible, particularly to women (Cornish 2011: 27). Yet despite Witt identifying pre-Quattrocento Florentine vernacular translations of Ovid, Vergil, and Lucan (2000: 192-193), nothing suggests that Statian epic was translated into the *volgare* by the Quattrocento (Weppler 2016: 17).

Nevertheless, this vernacularisation of classical poetry occurred across Europe and an anonymous twelfth-century author translated the *Thebaid* into Old French ("OF") octosyllables.[53] This translation, known as the *Roman de Thèbes*, constituted one of the foremost texts in the then experimental genre known as the *roman antique* or *d'antiquité* – romances dealing expressly with ancient history.[54] The authors of these Old French poems translated their Latin source texts not just into a new language, but into a new style and genre – that of the *roman antique*. They are neither '*historia* nor *roman* nor *chanson de geste*' (Battles 2001: 163). Instead, they both draw on and influence other contemporary genres, much as Dante does. This granted their writers the *auctoritas* of an *auctor*, rather than a scribe, compiler, or commentator, particularly since these translations frequently do not follow their source text verbatim.[55] Instead they add, delete, amend, and embroider episodes as their translator sees fit.

I believe that the *Thèbes* may well have been present in Dante's Italy and that Dante may even have known the *roman*. After all, these *romans* may have been among the OF stories it is believed that travelling merchants, pilgrims, and minstrels brought into twelfth-century Italy.[56] Moreover, it is well known that French was used as a literary language in Italy at least until the end of the fourteenth century. Brunetto

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[53] Much of my discussion on the *Roman de Thèbes* here reproduces material from my published chapter on Dante and the *Romans d'Antiquité* (Fuller 2018).

[54] The other foremost texts were the anonymous *Roman d'Eneas* (*c.*1155-*c.*1160), an OF translation of the *Aeneid*; and Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* (*c.*1160-*c.*1170), an OF translation of Dares Phrygius's account of the Trojan War.

[55] On these 'mod[i] faciendi librum', see Bonaventure 1934-1964: vol. I, ch. 12. See also Picone 2005: 178-79; Ascoli 2008: 34; Cornish 2011: 45; and the Introduction to this thesis.

[56] On the possible bringing of French stories and songs into Italy in the twelfth century, and their subsequent recording as *cantari*, see Scuderi 2006: 69, with relevant bibliography.

Latini even wrote his *Tresor* (*c.*1262-*c.*1266) in the language and scholars credit him

with importing the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César* (*c.*1208-1213), from which Brunetto

draws Caesar's speeches in the *Tresor*, into Italy.[57] Copies of OF texts composed

originally in France, including the *Tristan* (*c.*1155-*c.*1160), which generated several

Italian rewritings, and the *Lancelot* (*c.*1215-*c.*1235), are found in manuscripts of Italian

provenance (Cornish 2011: 74). Tellingly, Dante's Francesca mentions the *Lancelot* in

the famous episode in *Inferno* V.127-38. While Dante may have read an Italian

vernacular translation of *Lancialotto*, such as that contained in the Fondazione

Franceschini's thirteenth-century manuscript, his acquaintance with its original French

is more probable given its proven circulation in Italy.[58] Dante's awareness of chivalric

epic is apparent as he speaks of 'donne antiche e […] cavalieri' (*Inferno* V.71), and his

placing of the betrayer Ganelon in Cocytus (*Inferno* XXXIII) implies Dante knew the

Chanson de Roland (*c.*1100) or another version of this famous OF story. More

significantly, Dante is often attributed authorship of the *Fiore* (*c.*1285-*c.*1290), an Italian

rewriting of the *Roman de la Rose* (*c.*1230), which also circulated in Italy in its original

French during this period.[59] This suggests Dante's familiarity with OF poetry.

Dante's description of the 'lingua d'*oïl*', as that in which 'Biblia cum Troyanorum

Romanorumque gestibus compilata et Arturi regis ambages pulcerrime et quamplures

alie ystorie ac doctrine' (*DVE* I.X.2) were produced, further indicates his knowledge of

OF literature. Dante's reference to *Troyanorum gestibus* may refer to the *Eneas* and/or

the *Troie*; and the *Romanorum gestibus* to the *Histoire ancienne* and/or the *Fait des

Romains* (*c.*1213-1214), which despite being translated into Italian were still read in

their original OF (Cornish 2011: 72 and 77). Dante's reference to 'alie ystorie' may

include the *Thèbes*, since Dante calls the *Thebaid* 'la Tebana Istoria' in *Convivio*

IV.XXV.6. Dante probably sourced information regarding Achilles's death due to love

(*Inferno* V.65-66) in a legend transmitted by Servius (*ad Aen.* III.321) and disseminated

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[57] On Brunetto as a conduit for OF, see Cornish 2011: 70-100.
[58] Florence, Biblioteca della Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, MS 1.
[59] On this question, see Allegretti 2011e.

by the *Roman de Troie* (Pasquini and Quaglio 1982: *ad Inf.* V.65-66; and Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Inf.* V.65). Since the *Troie* sometimes appeared in manuscripts with the *Thèbes* and the *Eneas*, this increases the possibility of Dante's acquaintance with them (Battles 2001: 165). Finally, Boccaccio's *Teseida* (*c.*1340-*c.*1341) demonstrates the influence of both the *Thebaid* and the *Thèbes* (Battles 2004: xiii), indicating the *Thèbes'* presence in Italy slightly later than Dante.

Nevertheless, very few scholars have considered the possibility that Dante may have read the *Thèbes* or that it may have mediated his reception of the *Thebaid* and thus had some small influence upon the *Commedia*. Constans avers that nothing in the *Commedia* can be connected specifically to the *Thèbes* rather than the *Thebaid* (1881: 362). He even dismisses as insignificant Dante's naming Theseus ''l duca d'Atene' (*Inferno* XII.17) as the *Thèbes* poet does, even though Statius does not assign this title to Theseus. Since Constans, no serious attention has been paid to Dante's knowledge of the *Thèbes* or its potential intertextuality with the *Commedia*. However, I believe that Dante may have utilised the *Thèbes* as another form of commentary upon the *Thebaid*, and thus, where relevant, I discuss the specific thematic and/or linguistic similarities I have identified between the OF poem and the *Commedia*.

I.5 CONCLUSION

As I established above, Dante probably first encountered extracts of Statian epic in *florilegia* containing excerpts of classical poetry, which prompted Dante's interest sufficiently that he read Statius's two epics in their entirety during his exile. I demonstrated that Dante probably read the two epics accompanied by *accessus*, various glosses, and paratexts. In particular, I suggested that Dante was probably familiar with the commentaries of Lactantius Placidus and the commentary known as the *In principio*. While he was likely not familiar with Pseudo-Fulgentius's allegorisation of the *Thebaid*, he was sufficiently well-versed in the four senses of literature outlined by Aquinas that he could arrive at such allegorical readings himself. I also proposed the possibility that Dante was familiar with the *Roman de Thèbes*. This understanding of Dante's reception of Statius and its possible mediation by Statius's other medieval

readers informs my consideration of Dante's developing engagement with Statius in both Dante's *opere minori* (Chapter II) and in the *Commedia* (Chapters III-IV).

CHAPTER TWO

STATIUS IN DANTE'S *OPERE MINORI*

II.1 PREFACE

Scholars have often observed Dante's inclusion of Statius among the *regulati poetae* in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* II.VI.7 (with Vergil, Ovid, and Lucan) and Dante's use of episodes from the *Thebaid* in *Convivio* III and IV.XXV. However, besides the brief references to Statian epic noted in line-by-line commentaries to Dante's other *opere minori*, minimal consideration has been given to their Statian intertextuality. Nor has sufficient attention been paid to the episodes from the *Thebaid* that Dante utilises in *Convivio*, how that use differs between *Convivio* III and IV.XXV, and what this tells us regarding Dante's developing engagement with Statian epic. In this chapter, I explore Dante's use of Statian material in the *opere minori*, beginning with the lack of Statian material in the *Vita Nuova*, the possible Statian allusions in the early *Rime*, and the resonances with Statian epic in the later *Rime*. Subsequently, I focus on those passages in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and *Convivio* in which Statius and his epic poetry are mentioned expressly and consider how Dante's engagement with Statian epic develops in the course of the two works. I consider Statian intertextuality within the *Epistole* and Dante's decision not to draw on Statian epic in *Monarchia*, despite the use of Statius's Thebes as a parallel for Dante's divided Italy in the *Commedia* (see Chapter IV). I omit the *Questio de aqua et terra* (*c.*1320) entirely from my analysis, as the treatise focuses upon natural philosophy and thus unsurprisingly contains no Statian resonances. I conclude by analysing Dante's sophisticated use of Statian epic in the *Egloge*, sadly terminated by Dante's death. Thus, I provide an understanding of Dante's developing comprehension of, enthusiasm for, and utilisation of, Statian epic over Dante's authorial career, both before and beyond the *Commedia*.

II.2 THE *VITA NUOVA*, THE *FIORE*, AND THE *DETTO D'AMORE*

Dante first demonstrates his admiration for the *regulati poetae* in the prosimetrical *Vita Nuova* (*c.*1283-*c.*1295), in which Dante accompanies his poems with his own

commentary upon their significance. However, while the *Vita Nuova* contains resonances both with vernacular poetry and the poetry of other members of Dante's classical canon, we cannot find echoes of Statian epic.[60] This absence is unsurprising, since the *Vita Nuova* opens with the affirmation that it will deal with a new love, 'diverso da quello usuale dei rimatori' (Malato 2015: XXIX), whereas the *Thebaid* deals primarily with fraternal conflict and war, and the *Achilleid* with Achilles's education and preparation for war. While the virtuous women in both Statian epics admittedly display correctly-oriented love (and are used as *exempla* of such in *Purgatorio* XXII.109-14; see Chapter IV.4), Statius foregrounds the epics' negative examples of love. In the *Thebaid*, Oedipus had blinded himself after discovering his unwitting incestuous relationship with his mother and his patricide. He then curses the two sons this impious union spawns, who later commit mutual fratricide. In the *Achilleid*, its eponymous hero rapes his 'beloved' Deidamia and then abandons her and their child to go to war. Yet the unsuitability of the *Thebaid*'s and *Achilleid*'s themes to the *Vita Nuova*'s concern with a 'new' love is not the only, nor the most likely, explanation for the *Vita Nuova*'s lack of resonances with Statian epic.

The *Vita Nuova*'s most telling acknowledgement of Dante's debt to his great classical poetic forebears and consequently the most obvious sign of Statius's absence from the *Vita Nuova*'s 'roster' (Barolini 1984: 190) occur in Chapter XXV's justification of Dante's appearing to make 'Amore essere corpo' (XXV.2). Dante avers that since the *dicitori di rima* 'non siano altro che poete volgari, degno e ragionevole è che a loro sia maggiore licenzia largita di parlare' than to prose-writers (XXV.7). Until now, Dante called his immediate poetic predecessors and contemporaries *dicitori di rima*, reserving the term *poeta* for the classical poets out of respect and admiration for their *auctoritas* and poetic skill. Dante uses *poeta* for the classical poets throughout his oeuvre, but Dante's expansion of the term here to include vernacular writers 'already points at Dante's ambitions for his language and himself' (Ascoli 2008: 68, fn. 2). Significantly,

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[60] On the *Vita Nuova*'s poetic intertextuality, see, for example, Barolini 1984: *passim*.

Dante only grants himself this title in *Paradiso* XXV.7-9 (see Chapter IV.5), when his achievement as Christian *poeta* reaches its culmination. No other vernacular poet is called *poeta* in the *Commedia*. Dante adds that as the *poete* address inanimate objects, both real and imagined, 'sì come se avessero senso e ragione', and since concepts lacking substance speak 'sì come se fossero sustanzie e uomini; degno è lo dicitore per rima di fare lo somigliante' (XXV.8). Dante provides examples from Vergil, Lucan, and Ovid to substantiate his claim (XXV.9).

The lack within *Vita Nuova* XXV's catalogue of any paradigm from Statius is striking, particularly since Statius is well-known for his *Thebaid*'s allegorical personification of abstract concepts (Feeney 1993: 364-91). This may well indicate that when writing the *Vita Nuova*, Dante was not yet acquainted with the historical Statius's epic poetry to any great extent. A similar explanation probably applies to the absence of Statian resonances in two works written prior to the *Vita Nuova*'s completion, the *Fiore* and *Detto d'Amore* (*c.*1285-*c.*1290), commonly attributed to Dante (see Introduction). The *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* were also thematically unsuited to the subject-matter of these two texts. It is also unsurprising that the *Fiore* displays no evidence of Dante's acquaintance with Statian epic, as it is modelled upon the *Roman de la Rose*, which contains no Statian resonances.

II.3   THE *RIME*

Dante's *Rime* (*c.*1283-*c.*1321) prove slightly more fruitful in our search for Statian resonances.[61]

II.3.1   *RIME* CONTEMPORANEOUS TO THE *VITA NUOVA*

Whilst most *Rime* do not resonate with Statius's epic poetry, there are notable exceptions within the *Rime* contemporaneous to, but not included in, the *Vita Nuova* (*Rime* XXXIX-LXXII, *c.*1283-*c.*1296 *per* Malato 2015: XIX). The first possible Statian echo occurs in *Non mi poriano già mai fare ammenda* (*Rime* LI), which the notary

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[61] I utilise Barbi's (1960) numbering and divisions of the *Rime*. I do not consider the other *Rime* sometimes attributed to Dante due to their dubious authorship and lack of resonances with Statian epic.

Enrichetto delle Querce's transcription in the Bolognese *Memoriali* register suggests was already circulating in 1287 (*Memoriale* 69, c. 203v: Caboni 1941: XXII; Pernicone 1970; Saccenti 1970).

In this sonnet, the narrator speaks of his fear that his grief and weakness will be evident through his eyes. Its first two-and-a-half lines are significant to my consideration of Statian resonances in Dante's early oeuvre, with the narrator averring 'Non mi poriano già mai fare ammenda | del lor gran fallo gli occhi miei sed elli | non s'accecasser' (*Rime* LI.1-3). The frequency of ocular imagery in lyric poetry is widely acknowledged, and the notion of cursing the eyes even appears in ancient lyric, although this rarely extends to blinding (Giunta 2011: 159-60).[62] Dante may intend to recall here the philosopher Democritus, who 'il mondo a caso pone' (*Inferno* IV.136). Democritus allegedly blinded himself so that he might understand the laws of nature more clearly by freeing himself from the limits and errors of human vision, resonating with the sonnet's *gran fallo*. Genesis 19.4-11 also refers to the Sodomites' blinding by the angels, which according to medieval exegetes was a punishment for the Sodomites' demands to have their homosexual desires satisfied immediately by the angels visiting Lot (Wheatley 2010: 134). Blinding was also one of the punishments exacted upon criminals in the Middle Ages (Giunta 2011: 159-60), especially for treason, with Pier della Vigna blinded by Frederick II in 1249 to punish his 'unspecified treasonous act' (Singer 2011: 39, fn. 63). This renders Dante's image particularly appropriate, as the narrator is concerned that his eyes will betray him.

There may well be a Statian resonance here too, as Dante's reference to self-blinding may allude to Oedipus, who blinded himself upon discovering his unwitting incest and patricide. The Oedipus myth was significant in the Middle Ages partly because medieval texts showed great concern regarding sexual sins. Such sins 'conventionally required punishment', leading medieval writers to 'literalize' blindness's 'catachrestic meaning' and use it 'to punish sexually sinful characters' (Wheatley 2010:

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[62] On blindness in late medieval Italian poetry, see Singer 2011: *passim*.

129).[63] Oedipus was known primarily through Statius's *Thebaid* and the *Thèbes* in the Middle Ages, although medieval versions of the legend, including the *Planctus Oedipi* and the *Thèbes*, concentrated less upon Oedipus's blindness than Statius (Wheatley 2010: 129-30). Statius avers that Oedipus:

> impia iam merita scrutatus lumina dextra
> merserat aeterna damnatum nocte pudorem
> *Thebaid* I.46-47

Oedipus 'tunc uacuos orbes, crudum ac miserabile uitae | supplicium, ostentat caelo' (*Thebaid* I.53-54). Both Statian statements convey a similar sense of shame and self-punishment to that implied in Dante's sonnet. The *Planctus Oedipi* shares this sense of self-punishment, as Oedipus avers 'Cordis mei vulnus aperui | Quando mihi oculos erui. | Supplicium passus quod merui' (lines 69-71). Conversely, the *Thèbes* merely states that Oedipus 'Il meïsmes s'est essorbez' (line 497). Significantly, Dante refers to Oedipus's self-blinding in the later *Convivio*, paraphrasing *Thebaid* I.47 in *Convivio* III.VIII.10. Dante is clearly familiar with Statius's version of the Oedipus story by then (see section II.5).

However, *Vita Nuova* XXV.9's lack of Statian exempla and the oblique allusion to Oedipus in *Rime* LI suggest that Dante was only acquainted to a minimal degree with the *Thebaid* during the period in which he wrote the *Vita Nuova* and the contemporaneous *Rime*, if at all. If Dante's source in *Rime* LI is the *Thebaid*, his knowledge of Oedipus's lament may well be second-hand from a grammar book or *florilegium* containing extracts of classical poetry. It is unlikely that Dante knew the *Planctus Oedipi* at this stage, as this often appears in manuscripts with the *Thebaid*. The *Thèbes* seems not to place sufficient emphasis upon the shame from which Oedipus's self-blinding results to have influenced Dante's image. While another version of the Oedipus myth, Seneca's play *Oedipus*, circulated with Seneca's other *Tragedies* in the Trecento, these enjoyed minimal circulation prior to this (Black 2007: 213).[64] It is

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[63] On 'Blinding, Blindness and Sexual Transgression', see Wheatley 2010: 129-54.
[64] On the thirteenth-century interest in Seneca's *Tragedies* in Italy, particularly among the Paduan circle of Lovato dei Lovati and Albertino Mussato, see Rouse 1971: 116-17.

also possible that Dante read of Oedipus's self-blinding in one of the mythographical accounts of Oedipus that circulated in the Middle Ages (Hahn 1980: 226), or heard an oral version of the myth. Nevertheless, I believe a Statian extract in a *florilegium* or similar is the most probable source.

I have identified a resemblance between another of the *Vita Nuova*-contemporaneous *Rime* and Statian epic, which may also have come from the grammar textbooks or *florilegia* circulating in Dante's Italy. The first four lines of the sonnet *Un dì si venne a me Malinconia* (*Rime* LXXII), in which it appears to the narrator 'ch'ella menasse seco | Dolore e Ira per sua compagnia', recall *Thebaid* II.287-88. Here Statius avers of the forging of Harmonia's cursed necklace, instrumental in the Theban conflict, that 'non Decor Idaliusque puer, sed Luctus et Irae | et Dolor et tota pressit Discordia dextra.' The accompaniment of Luctus, akin to Dante's Malinconia, by Ira and Dolor is significant. Moreover, the Idalian youth whom Statius mentions is Cupid, known also as Amor, whose arrival Dante describes in lines 8-11. While Ovid also speaks of Harmonia and Cadmus, legendary founder of the Theban race, in *Metamorphoses* IV.563-603, and of other aspects of the Theban conflict throughout the *Metamorphoses*, no similar collection of personified concepts occurs. The arrival first of Dante's Malinconia with Dolore and Ira, then of Amor, perhaps recalls Hypsipyle's lament that 'cor dolet atque ira mixtus abundat amor' in *Heroides* VI.78. However, Luctus, Ira, and Dolor do not appear together as personified concepts here. Aeneas sees Luctus in the underworld alongside many other personifications, including Discordia and Bellum, but Ira, Dolor, and Amor are absent (*Aeneid* VI.274-84). These personifications do not appear together elsewhere either in Vergil or Ovid.[65]

Thus, *Thebaid* II.287-88 is Dante's most likely source for *Rime* LXXII.1-4. The description of Malinconia responding 'come un greco' (LXXII.5) may also support this view, since the *Thebaid* is about Greeks. This suggests that Dante may well have been familiar with Statius's description of the forging of Harmonia's necklace, perhaps as an

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[65] On personification allegory in the *Aeneid* and in Ovid, see Lowe 2008.

excerpt included in a *florilegium*, since it provides a similar set-piece to the forging of Aeneas's shield in the *Aeneid*. After all, Lactantius considered Harmonia's necklace worthy of emphasis, and Dante later refers to this 'sventurato addornamento' in *Purgatorio* XII.49-51 (see Chapter IV.4).

II.3.2   *RIME* WRITTEN AFTER THE *VITA NUOVA*

Further Statian resonances occur in the *Rime* written after 1295-96. Dante wrote the canzone *Poscia ch'Amor del tutto m'ha lasciato* (*Rime* LXXXIII), one of the 'allegorical and doctrinal' poems (LXXIX-LXXXV), later in his poetic career, possibly even as he composed *Convivio* (Grimaldi 2015: 298). The canzone not only demonstrates greater concern with moral matters and the concepts of nobility and *leggiadria*, but also displays Dante's familiarity with the pagan *auctores*, including Statius. The canzone begins with a proem that explains the poem's rationale and themes. Such proems were found in the Gallic lyric tradition, but Dante's proem is more extensive, suggesting that he may have learnt this technique from Vergil, Lucan, and Statius instead (Giunta 2011: 355).   Dante includes a further proem at LXXXIII.64-76 to introduce the canzone's second half. This so-called 'proem in the middle' was also a well-known feature of classical epic, with 'proems' before several of the *Thebaid*'s significant events.

In the canzone *Amor, tu vedi ben che questa donna* (*Rime* CII), one of the *rime petrose* (C-CIII), Dante describes the 'algente freddo' (CII.105). *Algente* is a term coined by Dante in *volgare* (Giunta 2011: 491) but borrowed from classical authors such as Statius, Pliny, and Martial (de Robertis 2002: *ad loc.*). For example, Statius avers 'algentes laxauit sole pruinas' (*Thebaid* III.469) and 'algentes rapuit Thetis inuida nidos' (*Thebaid* IX.362). It suggests Dante's confidence with classical poetry, as he now emulates his predecessors' style and vocabulary rather than translating or paraphrasing longer extracts from their works (see *Convivio* below).

The most significant Statian resonance of the later *Rime* occurs in a canzone written during Dante's exile, *Doglia mi reca ne lo core ardire* (*Rime* CVI). In CVI.27-42, Dante describes the descent of 'Vertute, al suo fattor sempre sottana' to earth.

Whereas a similar idea 'con ovvie differenze' appears several times in St Bernard's writings, Dante's description echoes 'in maniera sorprendente' (Giunta 2011: 564) Statius's portrayal of the personified Virtus's descent in *Thebaid* X.632-33 ('Diva Iovis solio iuxta comes, unde per orbem | rara dari terrisque solet contingere, Virtus'). This Statian echo suggests Dante was familiar with this passage from *Thebaid* X during his exile. This becomes significant when considering Dante's Manto, as in *Thebaid* X Virtus assumes her form to inspire Menoeceus's self-sacrifice (see Chapter IV.4.2). Nevertheless, while Dante utilises Statian material in these later *Rime*, they do not display the extensive engagement with Statian epic that we see in the *Commedia*.

II.4   *DE VULGARI ELOQUENTIA*

Dante's first express mention of Statius occurs in another work written during Dante's exile, his Latin treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (*c.*1302-1305).[66] Dante may well have been in Bologna when he began *De Vulgari Eloquentia,* as he judges the Bolognese vernacular the greatest among the Italian vernaculars (Fenzi 2012: XXIV). Yet Dante mentions not just Vergil, Ovid, Statius, and Lucan in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* II.6.7, but unexpectedly the 'rarissimi cimeli' Orosius, Livy, Pliny, and Frontinus, whose texts Dante may well have encountered in Verona's Biblioteca Capitolare (Tavoni 2011: 1100-01; see also Fenzi 2012: XXI). This would coincide with Dante's diplomatic mission to Verona, where he seems to have resided for approximately ten months between 1303 and 1304 (Santagata 2012: 156-58). Dante could have encountered Statian epic in this library, but the mode in which he mentions Statius in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* II.VI.7 does not imply either that he read the entire *Thebaid* or *Achilleid* here, or that he had not encountered Statius previously.

In discussing the modes of writing, Dante avers:

Nec mireris, lector, de tot reductis autoribus ad memoriam: non enim hanc quam supremam vocamus constructionem nisi per huiusmodi exempla possumus indicare. Et fortassis utilissimum foret ad illam habituandam

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[66] On the dating of this treatise, which internal evidence suggests was written during the early years of Dante's exile, see, for example, Corti 2003: 145-66; Tavoni 2011; and Fenzi 2012 and 2015.

regulatos vidisse poetas, Virgilium videlicet, Ovidium Metamorfoseos, Statium atque Lucanum.

De Vulgari Eloquentia II.VI.7

Dante includes Statius with Vergil, Ovid, and Lucan among the *regulati poetae*, whom Dante admires and whose *exempla* he believes should be imitated by those seeking to write elegantly in Latin and *volgare*. Dante's description of these poets as *regulatos* and his reference to reducing them to memory suggests his own acquaintance with their poetry and with the memorisation techniques utilised when students learnt *grammatica*.[67] Vergil naturally holds the position of primacy in this list, closely followed by Ovid *Metamorfoseos*, but Statius's position before the chronologically earlier Lucan is notable, demonstrating Dante's esteem for Statius. The grouping of Statius with Vergil, Ovid, and Lucan was almost a commonplace, as the letter appointing Giovanni del Virgilio to teach these authors suggests (see Chapter I.2.3). However, while Dante's statement indicates that 'Statius was respected and read', it does not imply that the *regulati poetae* were the standard school poets (*contra* H. Anderson), because it is 'almost impossible' that Dante read both epics during his formal schooling (Weppler 2016: 12 and fn. 33; see Chapter I.2-3).

Dante's mention in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* II.VI.7 of Statius only by name, his use of the term *regulatus*, and *De Vulgari Eloquentia*'s lack of specific references to or resonances with the *Thebaid* suggest that when writing this statement, Dante had not yet read the *Thebaid* in full. Instead, Dante had probably encountered it only via extracts included in a *florilegium*, grammar, or similar school-type text, in which extracts of classical poetry were intended to provide the model Dante suggests. It is possible that he read such Statian extracts during his youth in Florence, and/or that he (re-) discovered them during his exile, prior to or during writing *De Vulgari Eloquentia*. I believe that this new enthusiasm for Statius prompted him to begin reading the *Thebaid* in entirety (and the *Achilleid*, if he had not read it previously). This pattern of reading accords both with the use of Statian material evident in *Convivio*, and with Corti's

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[67] On the use of memorisation in learning Latin, see Gehl 1993: *passim* and Black 2007: *passim*.

theory (2003: 145-66) repeated by Fenzi (2015: 84 and fn. 2) that Dante wrote *De Vulgari Eloquentia* in the intervening period between writing *Convivio* I-III and *Convivio* IV's closing chapters. *De Vulgari Eloquentia* II.VI.7 thus provides further confirmation of Dante's extensive reading of 'the Latin classics' while writing *Convivio* IV (Leo 1951: 60).

Dante demonstrates his regard for and influence by the *regulati poetae* in general throughout *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, even when referring obliquely, possibly even sub-consciously, to them. Dante turns to classical imagery rather than Scriptural in describing humankind's shame following the Fall. Dante exclaims, 'Dispudet, heu, nunc humani generis ignominiam renovare! Sed quia preferire non possumus quin transeamus per illam, quanquam rubor ad ora consurgat animusque refugiat, percurremus' (*DVE* I.VII.I). The *rubor* of the face as a sign of shame is a well-known and frequent motif amongst the *regulati poetae* (e.g. *Thebaid* I.536-39). Subsequently, Dante refers to 'Troianorum Romanorumque gestibus compilata' and 'quamplures alie ystorie ac doctrine', in describing the *lingua d'oïl* and the many great works written in Old French (*DVE* I.X.II). Dante alludes here to the *romans d'antiquité* and probably also to the *Histoire ancienne* and *Fait des Romains* (see Chapter I.4.5). Yet the Latin models for these works must not have been far from Dante's mind, and in *Convivio* Dante uses *(i)storia* not only for Livy's histories (IV.I.II), but for Statius's *Thebaid* (IV.XXV.6), Vergil's *Aeneid* (IV.XXVI.11), Lucan (III.III.8), and even Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (III.III.8 and IV.XXVII.21; Tavoni 2011: 1235).

Such is Dante's esteem for these great Latin poets that even when discussing the examples that can be taken from contemporary poetry, Dante moderates his regard for the 'illustres viros' who 'vulgariter poetasse' (*DVE* II.II.8). Dante avers that:

> Differunt tamen a magnis poetis, hoc est regularibus, quia magni sermone et arte regulari poetati sunt, hii vero casu, ut dictum est. Idcirco accidit ut, quantum illos proximius imitemur, tantum rectius poetemur. Unde nos doctrine operi intendentes, doctrinatas eorum poetrias emulari oportet.
>
> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* II.IV.3

Thus, while these vernacular poets could be admired and studied when seeking to write certain types of poetry, examples from the *regulati poetae* were always to be

preferred. Dante confesses he could not even find a poet of the *lingua di sì* to suggest as inspiration when writing poetry on a military theme (*arma*), instead proposing as exemplar Bertran de Born, an Occitan troubadour (*DVE* II.II.8). Thus, when Dante read Statius's *Thebaid*, which deals primarily with war, and his *Achilleid*, which portrays the development of a young warrior (and would have portrayed Achilles's role in the Trojan War, had it been completed), they must have held great appeal for Dante. Whereas Vergil, Lucan, and certain of Dante's other classical sources depict battles and military campaigns, the *Thebaid*'s unrelenting depiction of the savagery associated with war, and of the societal breakdown caused by civil conflict, rendered it particularly relevant to Dante's Italy and to his depiction of the horrendous non-society in *Inferno* (see Chapter IV). Nevertheless, Dante does not utilise Statian imagery in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* itself.

II.5   CONVIVIO

Dante's immense regard for Statius and the other *regulati poetae* becomes more apparent in *Convivio* (*c.*1304-1307).[68] *Convivio*'s prosimetrical structure, with Dante's commentary accompanying his own poems, again demonstrates Dante's knowledge of the techniques of medieval *accessus* and commentary on the *auctores*.[69] Moreover, *Convivio*'s concern with *filosofia* and the moral and allegorical exegesis Dante applies in his commentary increase its resonance with medieval interpretations of the great classical poets. Sadly, like *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, *Convivio* was never finished. Yet it still provides us with ample evidence of Dante's esteem for Statius and his intimate knowledge of at least *Thebaid* I.

The first resonance with the *Thebaid* that I have identified in *Convivio* occurs in the proem of *Convivio* II. Dante avers:

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[68] On *Convivio*'s dating, see, for example, Fioravanti 2014. On the apparent delay between Dante's composition of *Convivio* I-III and *Convivio* IV's closing chapters, see Leo 1951; Corti 2003: 145-66; and Fenzi 2015: 84 and fn. 2.
[69] On the medieval *accessus* and commentary tradition in general, see Minnis 1988: *passim*, and Minnis, Scott and Wallace 1991: *passim*. On Dante and the *accessus* and commentary tradition, see Ascoli 2008: 3-64. On *Convivio*'s singularity vis-à-vis medieval genre categories see Barański 2018.

> Poi che proemialmente ragionando, me ministro, è lo mio pane [nel]lo precedente trattato con sufficienza preparato, lo tempo chiama e domanda la mia nave uscir di porto; per che, dirizzato l'artimone della ragione all'òra del mio desiderio, entro in pelago con isperanza di dolce cammino e di salutevole porto e laudabile nella fine della mia cena.

Convivio II.I.1

Dante uses a similar metaphor in *Purgatorio* I.1-3 and *Paradiso* II.1-9 (see Chapter IV.5). The poem as a ship is a familiar topos in classical poetry, appearing in Ovid's *Fasti* (e.g. I.4, II: *passim*, etc.) and *Remedia Amoris* (577-78), in addition to the examples Curtius provides (1983: 129). The metaphor also occurs in prose works, including Pliny, Cicero, Quintilian, and later even Christian writers including Jerome and Prudentius, before becoming 'extraordinarily widespread throughout the Middle Ages' (Curtius 1983: 129). Dante perhaps commenced *Convivio* II's opening metaphor with 'proemialmente ragionando' to indicate that he used it 'because it was traditional in introductions' (Curtius 1983: 130). While Dante may have encountered this commonplace elsewhere, in *Convivio* II.1.2 Dante seems to draw upon Statius's use of this metaphor in opening and particularly closing the *Thebaid*.

In *Convivio* II.I.1 (and *Purgatorio* I.1-3), Dante's *ingenium* is the *nave* rather than the text itself. Dante reverses the return of Statius's ship to port in *Thebaid* XII.808-09 ('uix nouus ista furor ueniensque implesset Apollo, | et mea iam longo meruit ratis aequore portum'). Due to the popularity of such metaphors, Dante may well have encountered this extract from the *Thebaid* in a *florilegium* of classical poetry. Interestingly, certain *Achilleid* manuscripts that divide the poem into five books instead of two also insert the metaphor of a ship reaching port as a final paragraph to establish the poem's completeness (Newlands 2012: 99). Dante may not have been familiar with an *Achilleid* manuscript including this epilogue or may have chosen to ignore it, since Stazio-character suggests he died leaving the poem incomplete (*Purgatorio* XXI.93; see Chapter III.3). In any event, Dante's inspiration by the *Thebaid* for his own ship metaphors remains most likely. In *Convivio* II.I.2, Dante revives 'the worn metaphor' by using a mizzensail (*artimone*) rather than an ordinary sail (Curtius 1983: 39). This is more suitable than an ordinary sail for Dante's purposes because, according to Isidore

(*Etymologies* XIX.3.3), it directs the ship rather than propels it. Actus Apostolorum 27.40 also uses the term during St Paul's voyage as a prisoner to Rome ('et levato artemone secundum aurae flatum, tendebant ad litus') (Fioravanti 2014: 211). The sense of direction given by Dante's *artimone* also recalls Statius's 'nunc tendo chelyn' (*Thebaid* I.33), since the verb *tendere* can mean both direct and spread and is more usually used of sails (e.g. 'tendunt uela Noti', *Aeneid* III.268) than musical instruments. Dante's use of the ship metaphor at *Convivio* II.1.1 thus encompasses both the sense of setting sail and of direction contained in the *Thebaid*'s proem (I.33) and reverses the image of the *Thebaid*'s explicit (XII.808-09).

In *Convivio* III, Dante first quotes expressly from the *Thebaid*, when he discusses how the eyes can display one's inner sentiments, including shame, a sentiment Dante also expresses in *Rime* LI.1-3. Dante translates Statius's description of Oedipus at *Thebaid* I.47-8 ('merserat aeterna damnatum nocte pudorem | Oedipodes') into 'con etterna notte solvette lo suo dannato pudore' (*Convivio* III.VIII.10), replacing the verb 'merserat' with 'solvette', the Italian equivalent of 'solverat'. This substitution demonstrates Dante's growing confidence in dealing with classical poetry, and already his concern to emulate but not imitate his poetic forebears.

Subsequently, Dante translates from the *Thebaid* again as he explains the rhetorical device whereby '[per] alcuno fervore d'animo, talvolta l'uno e l'altro termine de li atti e de le passioni si chiamano e per lo vocabulo de l'atto medesimo e de la passione' (*Convivio* III.XI.16). Dante illustrates this device with an example first from Vergil (*Aeneid* II.281) then from Statius. Dante avers that the device is 'sì come dice Stazio nel quinto del *Thebaidos*, quando Isifile dice ad Archimoro: "O consolazione de le cose e de la patria perduta, o onore del mio servigio"' (*Convivio* III.XI.16). This translates *Thebaid* V.609-10: 'Archemore, o rerum et patriae solamen ademptae | seruitiique decus'. Dante's use of Statius's *Thebaid* as an exemplar alongside Vergil's masterpiece demonstrates the depth of Dante's regard for Statian epic.

However, Dante uses these Statian quotations in *Convivio* III, along with others from Vergil and Lucan (*Convivio* I-IV.XXIV), in a similar way to that in which he uses the poets in *Vita Nuova* XXV. Dante only briefly mentions names and places in the corresponding text; provides the text in Italian not Latin; and adds no 'personal remarks or impressions', suggesting that he may not necessarily have sourced the quotations from the original texts (Leo 1951: 58-59). The way in which Dante uses these Statian examples recalls the *florilegia* and verse grammars that used extracts of classical poetry as paradigms of certain grammatical principles or rhetorical devices. Hypsipyle's lament for the dead Archemorus appears among the extracts included in such *florilegia* (Battles 2004: 3) and is one of the passages frequently highlighted by medieval readers in manuscripts of the *Thebaid* (Munk Olsen 1982-2014: vol. II, 521-67). Nonetheless, Dante's use of Statian quotations indicates his rising awareness and estimation of Statius, thereby encouraging him to read Statius's epics in full. It also suggests that Dante is beginning to form a distinctive picture of the tenor of Statian epic, in which violence and fraternal hatred are in tension with patriotism and familial *pietas*.

Dante's knowledge of and esteem for Statius's epic poetry, particularly the *Thebaid*, becomes even more apparent in *Convivio* IV.XXV when Dante uses examples from that epic to illustrate certain virtues of *adolescenza* – the first of humankind's four stages of life. Dante uses examples from the other *regulati poetae*, Vergil, Ovid, and Lucan, to illustrate the virtues of the other three stages of life *gioventute* (*Convivio* IV.XXVI), *senettute* (IV.27), and *senio* (IV.28), respectively. Dante's usage of these authors differs markedly to that prior to *Convivio* IV.XXV and clearly results from 'careful and enthusiastic reading of the original texts' (Leo 1951: 59). Thus, prior to writing *Convivio* IV.XXV, Dante seems to have (re)read his Latin classics '*with a completely new and personal reaction*' (Leo 1951: 59, italics his).

Dante's decision to use episodes from Statius's *Thebaid* to illustrate certain virtues of *adolescenza* is fascinating. The epic is known for its ongoing cycle of destructive violence that cuts short many young lives and later leads Dante to both choose it as a model for his hell and to utilise many of its impious sinners either directly

as characters (e.g. Capaneus; Amphiaraus) or as inspiration for some of *Inferno*'s most disturbing scenes (e.g. the divided flame; Ugolino and Ruggieri; see Chapter IV.3). Conversely, Dante's reference to the etymology of *adolescenza*, 'acrescimento di vita' (*Convivio* IV.XXIV.1), creates a sense of life and optimism. Dante increases the sense of the flourishing and innocence of *adolescenza*, when he affirms that it lasts 'al venticinquesimo anno' and observes that 'infino a quel tempo l'anima nostra intende allo crescere e allo abellire del corpo, onde molte e grandi transmutazioni sono nella persona' (IV.XXIV.2). Dante stresses the importance of *adolescenza*, which 'è porta e via per la quale s'entra nella nostra buona vita' (IV.XXIV.9), furthering our surprise when he uses the *Thebaid* to exemplify one of its virtues.

Dante informs us that 'Dà adunque la buona natura a questa etade quattro cose, necessarie a lo entrare ne la cittade del bene vivere. La prima si è Obedienza; la seconda Soavitade; la terza Vergogna; la quarta Adornezza corporale' (*Convivio* IV.XXIV.11). This demonstrates Dante's concern already with encouraging his readers to lead a virtuous life, a key theme of the *Commedia* (see Chapter IV). Subsequently, Dante provides reasons for these four virtues' necessity to *adolescenza*. In describing *obedienza*, Dante uses imagery recalled in *Inferno* I.1-3: 'così l'adolescente che entra nella selva erronea di questa vita, non saprebbe tenere lo buono cammino, se dalli suoi maggiori non li fosse mostrato' (*Convivio* IV.XXIV.12). This imagery reflects *Convivio*'s, and foreshadows the *Commedia*'s, didactic aims and resonates with the moral example to be drawn from Statian epic. Dante provides examples from Proverbia to illustrate the virtue of obedience (IV.XXIV.14-16). In *Convivio* IV.XXV.1, Dante asserts that 'Non solamente questa anima e natura buona in adolescenza è obediente, ma eziandio soave; la quale cosa è l'altra ch'è necessaria in questa etade a bene intrare ne la porta de la gioventute.' He exemplifies *soavitade* with the notion of friendship from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and a further scene from Proverbia (IV.XXV.1-2). Dante's examples for *adolescenza*'s virtues are so far relatively unsurprising.

However, Dante's explanation of the third virtue of *adolescenza* indicates its significance and furthers our surprise when we arrive at the exempla Dante uses to

illustrate it. Dante asserts that, 'Anche è necessaria a questa etade la passione de la vergogna; e però la buona e nobile natura in questa etade la mostra […] la vergogna è apertissimo segno in adolescenza di nobilitade' (*Convivio* IV.XXV.3). Dante qualifies that by *vergogna*, he means 'tre passioni necessarie al fondamento de la nostra vita buona: l'una si è Stupore; l'altra si è Pudore; la terza si è Verecundia'. These are necessary because 'a questa etade è necessario d'essere reverente e disidiroso di sapere'; 'rifrenato, sì che non transvada'; and 'penitente del fallo, sì che non s'ausi a fallare' (IV.XXV.4). As Dante expresses in *Convivio* I.I.1, this desire to know stems from man's desire for his own perfection and therefore desire for, and reverence of God, the ultimate perfection. This is the *sete* for the *aqua vitae* that becomes the leitmotif of *Purgatorio* XXI and XXII (see Chapter III). The other aspects of *vergogna* that Dante mentions – the exercise of free will and reason to avoid sin, and repentance of those sins that we commit – are also vital to Christian salvation. Failure to demonstrate all three qualities results in the soul's condemnation to hell, as we see throughout *Inferno* and especially in the sinners drawn from the *Thebaid* (see Chapter IV.3). Thus, Dante's decision to use the historical Statius's epic poetry to illustrate these three aspects of *vergogna* is remarkable, particularly since Dante later Christianises Statius's embodiment in the *Commedia*, Stazio-character, and places him in *Purgatorio*, not *Inferno*. Stazio demonstrates all three aspects of *vergogna* in his account to Virgilio and Dante-pilgrim of his late repentance and conversion (see Chapter III.4-5).

Dante's first example of *vergogna* taken from the *Thebaid* (I.482-92) is particularly interesting in this context. In describing *stupore*, *vergogna*'s first aspect, Dante avers:

> E però dice Stazio, lo dolce poeta, nel primo de la Tebana Istoria, che quando Adrasto, rege de li Argi, vide Polinice coverto d'un cuoio di leone, e vide Tideo coverto d'un cuoio di porco salvatico, e ricordossi del risponso che Apollo dato avea per le sue figlie, che esso divenne stupido; e però più reverente e più disideroso di sapere.
>
> *Convivio* IV.XXV.6

Adrastus's state of mind at his first encounter with Polynices and Tydeus does not seem to be among the extracts of the *Thebaid* typically included in *florilegia* of classical

poetry.[70] This unusual choice suggests Dante was probably familiar with more of the *Thebaid* at the time of writing *Convivio* IV than just the extracts included in such *florilegia*. This would accord with Leo's assertion that Dante was (re)reading Latin poetry and understanding it more personally when writing these chapters of *Convivio* (1951: 45). It is also noticeable that Dante now paraphrases rather than translates Statius, suggesting his growing confidence.

Dante's interpretation of Adrastus's behaviour resonates with Pseudo-Fulgentius's allegorical interpretation of the *Thebaid*, in which Pseudo-Fulgentius concludes that 'iste rex Greciae philosophia est, cui subest omnis sapientia mundana' on the basis of the etymology of Adrastus's name ('"adrios" enim Grece profunditas Latine'; *Super Theb.*, lines 97-103). Dante is unlikely to have known this passage from Pseudo-Fulgentius or made a similar etymological interpretation of Adrastus's name as Dante did not know ancient Greek and neither Isidore in his *Etymologies* nor Uguccione da Pisa in the *Derivationes* include reference to Adrastus or *adrios*.[71] Dante may have arrived at a similar explanation for Adrastus's behaviour, as one as well-versed as Dante in medieval reading practices could easily assimilate Adrastus's desire for knowledge and his wisdom in *Thebaid* I to *Filosofia*. Adrastus also demonstrates the reverence Dante believes is part of *stupore*, since he takes care to remember Apollo's response after he asks the god for guidance.

Nevertheless, Dante's decision to use Adrastus as his exemplum here is surprising. Adrastus is well past adolescence, instead 'tranquillae medio de limite uitae | in senium uergens' (*Thebaid* I.391-92). *Inferno*'s opening reference to Dante-pilgrim as 'Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita' (*Inferno* I.1) seems to recall Statius's description of Adrastus, as does Stazio-character's description of his decease 'in via' in *Purgatorio* XXI.93 (see Chapters III.3 and IV.2). I believe Dante had probably not read much past *Thebaid* I when he wrote *Convivio* IV.XXV, as in *Thebaid* III, Adrastus's

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[70] For details of Statian extracts contained in medieval *florilegia*, see Munk Olsen 1982-2014: vol. II, 521-67.

[71] On Dante's use of these texts in *Convivio*, see footnotes in Fioravanti's and Giunta's 2014 edition, *passim*.

virtue and otherwise honourable conduct are marred by his encouragement of his countrymen to arms on Polynices's behalf and his own participation in the *Thebaid*'s impious war. If Dante had read further within the *Thebaid*, he could have found one of the rare examples of the virtues of *adolescenza* among young men, such as Menoeceus who sacrifices himself to save Thebes, in accordance with the gods' will (*Thebaid* X.650-85). Dante may have chosen Adrastus, a mature man, to emphasise the rarity of such virtue among the *Thebaid*'s male characters – a rarity apparent from the *Thebaid*'s opening. In any event, by the time he writes *Convivio* IV.XXV, Dante is evidently beginning to read and appreciate the *Thebaid*, and to utilise it as one of his intertexts.

Another significant aspect of *Convivio* IV.XXV.6 is Dante's admiring description of Statius as *lo dolce poeta*.[72] Until *Convivio* IV.XXIV's close, Dante had quoted his Latin poets 'by their names only, shortly and objectively' (Leo 1951: 59), referring to Statius as 'Stazio poeta' (*Convivio* III.VIII.10) or just 'Stazio' (III.XI.16). After that point, Dante adds epithets that display 'veneration' and 'familiarity' (Leo 1951: 59), much as he does with Statius. This 'sudden and passionate appearance of personal veneration' leads Leo to propose that 'in some cases at least, the "rereading" may have been a first real reading, resulting in a quite new personal attraction on Dante's part towards those who, until now, had perhaps not been much more than names to him' (1951: 59). My research suggests that this is the case for Statius's *Thebaid*, as his growing enthusiasm for and engagement with Statian epic is apparent both here and throughout the *Commedia*. In calling Statius *dolce* Dante perhaps alludes to Juvenal's description of the *tanta dulcedine* with which Statius captured people's minds (*Satires* VII.82-87) or the similar sentiments captured in the Statian *accessus*, some of which quote Juvenal. Dante mentions Statius's *dolcezza* again in Stazio-character's claim regarding his 'dolce […] vocale spirto' (*Purgatorio* XXI.88; see Chapter III.3). Dante's use of the term

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[72] On Dante and poetic *dolcezza*, see Goldstein 2014.

dolce in *Convivio* IV.XXV.6 suggests Dante is already aware of the value of Statius's epic poetry.

Dante's calling the *Thebaid* the *Tebana Istoria* also indicates he regards the epic as more than mere *fabula* (see section I.3.3), and perhaps alludes to Statius's unusual invocation of Clio, the Muse of History, in *Thebaid* I.41. Dante's character Virgilio refers to Statius's invocation of Clio (whom Statius invokes again at *Thebaid* X.630) in querying Stazio-character's apparent Christianity (*Purgatorio* XXII.58; see Chapter III.5). This connection between Dante's engagement with Statius in *Convivio* and that in the *Commedia* provides further evidence of Dante's increasing interest in and understanding of the *Thebaid* as he completed *Convivio* and embarked upon the *Commedia*.

Subsequently, Dante describes *pudore*, *vergogna*'s second aspect, as 'uno ritraimento d'animo da laide cose, con paura di cadere in quelle; sì come vedemo ne le vergini e ne le donne buone e ne li adolescenti, che tanto sono pudici' (*Convivio* IV.XXV.7). Dante's choice of *exemplum* from the *Thebaid* is more readily understandable than that for *stupore*, as he says:

> Onde dice lo sopra notato poeta ne lo allegato libro primo di Tebe, che quando Aceste, nutrice d'Argia e di Deifile, figlie d'Adrasto rege, le menò dinanzi da li occhi del santo padre ne la presenza de li due peregrini, cioè Polinice e Tideo, le vergini palide e rubicunde si fecero, e li loro occhi fuggiro da ogni altrui sguardo, e solo ne la paterna faccia, quasi come sicuri, si tennero.
>
> *Convivio* IV.XXV.8

Argia and Deiphyle are Adrastus's chaste daughters, whom he eventually marries to Polynices and Tydeus. (Perhaps their connection to Adrastus constitutes another reason Dante chose Adrastus as an example to represent *stupore*.) Dante's description of Adrastus's two daughters recalls Statius's description of them in *Thebaid* I, particularly their modest blushing:

> noua deinde pudori
> uisa uirum facies: pariter pallorque ruborque
> purpureas hausere genas, oculique uerentes
> ad sanctum rediere patrem.
>
> *Thebaid* I.536-9

Both Statius and Dante call Adrastus 'sacred father', juxtapose the paleness of the sisters' skin with their blushing, and describe how, demurely, they cannot meet

anyone's eye but their father's. Dante thus chooses not a male *adolescens* from Statius's poetry to exemplify the *pudore* of *adolescenza* but two *vergini*.

Given their womanly virtue and modesty, it is appropriate that both daughters appear with other examples of female virtue from Statian epic among the virtuous pagans Virgilio says are in Limbo (*Purgatorio* XXII.109-14). Their depiction here also resonates with the exemplum of the Temperance of the Roman matrons quoted by the tree at *Purgatorio* XXII's close (XXII.145-46). Temperance is, however, a virtue of *gioventute* (*Convivio* IV.XXVI). Dante's choice of Deiphyle and Argia to represent *pudore* and the similarity of their behaviour to that of the Roman matrons, who also display a virtue expected in *gioventute*, demonstrate the high standards of behaviour expected of women throughout their lives. Despite Dante's continued reliance only on *Thebaid* I, this exemplum indicates Dante's awareness already of the contrast between the *Thebaid*'s virtuous women and the scarcity of such virtue among their male counterparts.

Dante concludes his explanation of the *vergogna* appropriate to *adolescenza* by clarifying the meaning of *verecundia*, imbuing it with a markedly Christian tone. He avers: 'La verecundia è una paura di disonoranza per fallo commesso; e di questa paura nasce un pentimento del fallo, lo quale ha in sé una amaritudine che è gastigamento a più non fallire' (*Convivio* IV.XXV.10). He illustrates this with a further Statian example, paraphrasing *Thebaid* I.671-81:

> Onde dice questo medesimo poeta, in quella medesima parte, che quando Polinice fu domandato da Adrasto rege del suo essere, ch'elli dubitò prima di dicere, per vergogna del fallo che contra lo padre fatto avea, e ancora per li falli d'Edippo suo padre, ché paiono rimanere in vergogna del figlio; e non nominò suo padre, ma li antichi suoi e la terra e la madre. Per che bene appare, vergogna essere necessaria in quella etade.
>
> *Convivio* IV.XXV.10

Dante's use of this exemplum is remarkable. Polynices's *vergogna* is both 'del fallo che contra lo padre fatto avea' and for Oedipus's failings – it is therefore more than simple *verecundia*. Statius's description of Polynices as taller than Tydeus and 'gradu procera in membra simulque | integer annorum' (I.414-15) also suggests that Polynices is older than *adolescens*. However, together with Statius's periphrasis for Polynices as

'Ismenius heros' (I.673), this description resonates with Dante's explanation of *adolescenza*'s final virtue. Dante could be describing a classical hero, as he avers:

> E non pure obedienza, soavitade e vergogna la nobile natura in questa etade dimostra, ma dimostra bellezza e snellezza nel corpo; […]

> E così dicere che la nobile natura lo suo corpo abbellisca e faccia conto e accorto, […].

Convivio IV.XXV.11-13

Unlike for *adolescenza*'s other virtues, Dante does not provide an exemplum specifically for this 'bellezza e snellezza nel corpo'. This may well be so that Polynices can stand as exemplum for both this virtue and *vergogna*.

Nonetheless, Dante's decision to utilise Polynices is curious. In addition to his age and *vergogna* both for himself and his father, *Thebaid* I's proem references the impious war and mutual fratricide resulting from Polynices's and Eteocles's reciprocal hatred; Polynices fights ferociously with Tydeus over the cave in which they both wish to shelter (I.401-47); and Polynices's lion skin cloak (I.483-84) symbolises his pride – a strange contrast to his apparent *vergogna*. Dante simply may not have been aware of the *Thebaid*'s conclusion when he wrote this passage of *Convivio*, despite the allusions to it in the *Thebaid*'s proem. However, I believe Dante's decision to utilise Polynices as an exemplum is connected to Dante's own position as *exul inmeritus* (*Epistole* III.1; II.3; V, VI and VII, salutations), particularly since *Convivio* I gave such space to Dante's self-defence regarding his exile and its injustice. Statius emphasises Polynices's exile with four uses of *exul* in *Thebaid* I alone, the latter two specifically referred to Polynices (I.154, 178, 183, 312), and creates a sense of injustice through reference to Polynices's 'dilatus […] honos' (I.165). This sense that Polynices is the wronged party continues beyond *Thebaid* I, although Statius leaves us in no doubt of the impiety of both brothers' later behaviour. Dante may well have sympathised with Polynices's plight, if not his subsequent actions, and possibly even with his pride – since this is the sin of which Dante claims culpability in *Purgatorio* XIII.136-38. A further possibility is that Dante chose to ignore here the negative examples of Polynices's behaviour later in the *Thebaid*, as he wished to emphasise only positive demonstrations of virtue. Dante's

reference to Polynices is the last time Dante utilises Statius's *Thebaid* in *Convivio*, since the chapter finishes and Dante progresses to the next stage of life, exemplified by Vergil's Aeneas.

Dante's use of the *Thebaid* in *Convivio* III suggests Dante's sourcing of Statian excerpts from a *florilegium* containing extracts of classical poetry. Dante's familiarity with such extracts may well have prompted him to realise Statian epic's value and to begin reading it in entirety. Dante's utilisation of the *Thebaid* to exemplify *vergogna*'s various aspects in *Convivio* IV.XXV suggests he had begun reading the epic by this time, but since these examples are drawn only from *Thebaid* I, we cannot establish if Dante had yet progressed beyond that book. A lack of progress beyond *Thebaid* I and/or Dante's struggle to find positive examples of virtue in a poem so full of vice may account for Dante's need to resort to other authors in explaining the *obedienza* and *soavitade* of *adolescenza* (a contrast with *Convivio* IV.XXVI in which Vergil's Aeneas exemplifies all *gioventute*'s virtues), and the unusual examples Dante chose to illustrate *vergogna*. Dante probably also chose these unusual examples in order to emphasise particular aspects of *vergogna*. Interestingly, Dante does not draw any *exempla* in *Convivio* from the *Achilleid*. This is probably not due to Dante's unfamiliarity with the *Achilleid* when he wrote *Convivio*, since this epic seems to be more elementary and therefore was often read first (see Chapter I.2). Instead, I believe it was because paradigms of *vergogna* are limited in the *Achilleid*, and because Dante wished to provide isolated exempla of *vergogna* from one consistent epic model, rather than intermingling multiple sources in a single episode (or character) as he does in the *Commedia*. In any event, Dante's use of the *Thebaid* between *Convivio* II, III and IV.XXV demonstrates his growing regard for and engagement with the *dolce poeta*'s epic works and his appreciation of their moral value. It is unsurprising that by the time he writes *Inferno*, Dante is conversant with the entire *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* and utilises Statian epic extensively.

II.6 *EPISTOLE*

Dante began writing the *Epistole* (*c.*1304-1321), a series of letters, some in *propria persona*, some on behalf of others, and some on behalf of the collective in exile, at roughly the same time as commencing *Convivio*.[73] Despite Dante's increasing engagement with Statian epic during this period, the majority of *Epistole* notably lack Statian resonances. While this absence is due predominantly to Dante's focus upon contemporary political issues, it probably also results from Dante's awareness of the *Thebaid*'s reflection upon 'Rome's troubled dynastic past' (Newlands 2012: 3) and the dangers of imperial power (see Chapter IV). Conversely, throughout the political *Epistole*, Dante asserts the ideal of Empire, with ancient Rome as its epitome (e.g. *Epistola* VI.1, which refers to the 'sacrosancto Romanorum Imperio').[74] Accordingly, I consider here only those letters relevant to Dante's engagement with Statius.

II.6.1 *EPISTOLA* I

Interestingly, Dante's first *Epistola* (1304) contains a Statian resonance.[75] Dante directed this letter on behalf of the whole exiled White Guelph party to Cardinal Niccolò da Prato, Bishop of Velletri and Ostia, and *paciere* to Florence in 1304. In lamenting that 'in civile bellum corruimus', Dante describes civil war as 'profana litigia' (*Epistola* I.7). Statius uses the same adjective to describe the wars fought due to 'profanis […] odiis' in *Thebaid* I.1-2 (Villa 2014: 1526). Dante's criticism of the civil war raging through Italy also recalls the terrible destruction of the civil war brought about by fraternal conflict in the *Thebaid*. This is significant, especially since Dante never intended these letters to be collected and published together. It demonstrates that, even if Dante had not yet read the *Thebaid* in full at this time, its subject matter was already embedded within his consciousness and beginning to form part of the tapestry of classical sources that influenced his writing.

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[73] On Dante's letters in general (excluding that to Cangrande della Scala), see Honess 2007: 5-44; Villa 2014a; and Baglio 2016.
[74] On Dante's political letters, see Honess 2007: *passim*. On Dante and the ideal of Empire, see Mancusi-Ungaro 1987; Honess 2006: 4-5, 51-52, 57-59, 2007: 8-14, and 2013a: *passim*; and Gaimari 2018: 132-37 and 252-82.
[75] For a commentary on *Epistola* I, see Villa 2014b: 1523-26.

II.6.2 *EPISTOLA* V

Dante opens *Epistola* V (1310), written to the Prince and Peoples of Italy, with the 'promise of peace' 'Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile' (*Epistola* V.1; Honess 2013a: 484).[76] Subsequently, in line with 'imperial encomiastic traditions', Dante articulates his hopes that Henry will restore peace and justice by alluding to one classical (V.3) and one Biblical *auctoritas* (V.4), as he does again in *Epistola* VII (Gaimari 2018: 262).[77] Drawing on classical imagery, Dante avers, 'Titan exorietur pacificus, et iustitia, sine sole quasi eliotropium hebetata, cum primum iubar ille vibraverit, revirescet' (*Epistola* V.3). Statius uses Titan as metaphor for the sun several times, e.g. at *Thebaid* I.336, IV.283, V.297, etc., as do Lucan, Ovid, and Vergil. While Dante uses this metaphor again as part of his claim to poetic *auctoritas* at *Egloga* IV.1-2, in *Epistole* V and VII Dante uses it for political purposes, as a bifold metaphor for Henry VII. Dante describes Henry as Titan, the sun, 'whose dawning will restore justice to the world' (Honess 2007: 16). This in turn links Henry to the Canticum Canticorum and Psalmus 18, which describes the Sun as a bridegroom coming 'out of his pavilion, exulting like a giant', and therefore to Christ (Honess 2007: 18).[78] Thus, as he does in the *Commedia*, Dante combines classical and Christian sources to generate his desired significance. Unsurprisingly, however, the *Thebaid*'s pessimistic vision of the recurrent carnage of civil war and the impossibility of peace (see Chapter IV) finds no place alongside Dante's hope for the justice and peace to be brought about by Henry, and thus the Titan-sun metaphor is the letter's only Statian resonance.

II.6.3 *EPISTOLA* VII

Dante wrote *Epistola* VII (1311) to Henry VII on behalf of himself and 'omnes Tusci qui pacem desiderant' (VII, salutation) to celebrate Henry's arrival in Italy.[79] Like *Epistola*

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[76] For a commentary on *Epistola* V, see Honess 2007: 45-56; and Villa 2014b: 1541-46.
[77] On Dante's hopes regarding Henry VII's restoration of peace and justice in *Epistole* V and VII, see Honess 2007: 45-56 and 69-82, 2013a: 484-91, 493-95, and 2013b: 94-98; and Gaimari 2018: 256-64.
[78] On Dante's use of messianic imagery in *Epistole* V and VII, see Honess 2007: 45-56 and 69-82, 2013a: 484-91, 493-95, and 2013b: 94-98; and Gaimari 2018: 256-64.
[79] For a commentary on *Epistola* VII, see Honess 2007: 69-82; and Villa 2014b: 1550-54.

V, it expresses Dante's continued hope that justice will be restored (Villa 2014: 1550) and a 'divinely-willed imperial peace' established on earth, but Dante now also displays 'the continued disappointment' that such peace seems ever more unattainable (Honess 2013a: 493).[80] *Epistola* VII.5 appears to confirm Henry's identification as Titan-sun-*figura Christi,* as Dante utilises the classical metaphor of Titan-sun again, averring: 'Cumque tu, Cesaris et Augusti successor, Apennini iuga transiliens veneranda signa Tarpeia retulisti, protinus longa substiterunt suspiria lacrimarumque diluvia desierunt; et, ceu Titan preoptatus exoriens, nova spes Latio seculi melioris effulsit'. This is the only Statian resonance in *Epistola* VII, although Dante's next paragraph bears upon my consideration of Dante's engagement with Statius.

Before utilising a biblical *auctoritas* to praise Henry (VII.7), Dante avers: 'Tunc plerique vota sua prevenientes in iubilo tam Saturnia regna quam Virginem redeuntem cum Marone cantabant' (VII.6).[81] Dante alludes here to Vergil's fourth *Eclogue* and its prophecy of the return of justice (the *virgo* Astraea) and the Golden Age ('Iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna | iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto', IV.6-7). In *Purgatorio* XXVIII.139-44, Dante likens the loss of this Golden Age to the lost Eden and expresses his yearning for its return. Dante even has Stazio-character claim to have converted to Christianity after hearing Vergil's words (*Purgatorio* XXII.67-72), since *Eclogue* IV.6-7 was believed in the Middle Ages to be a Messianic prophecy (see Chapter III.5). Here, however, Dante's allusion is earthlier, eulogising Henry VII by suggesting that he will restore a new Golden Age. It is therefore 'attuned with imperial encomiastic traditions', which also used *Eclogue* IV.6-7 (Gaimari 2018: 265-66).

Given Statius's own lament for the lost Golden Age (*Thebaid* III.551-65; see Chapter IV) and his cynicism regarding the possibility of justice and peace, unsurprisingly we find no further Statian echoes in this *Epistola*. Indeed, before leaving for the impious war in which he dies, Statius's Eteocles ironically echoes Vergil's

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[80] In this regard, see further Honess 2013a: 493-97.
[81] On Dante's use of the fourth *Eclogue* in *Epistola* VII.7 and in *Monarchia* I.XI, see Honess 2007: 54 and 91; and Gaimari 2018: 260-72.

prophecy as he seeks to comfort his apprehensive wife ('sciat haec Saturnius olim | fata parens, oculosque polo demittere si quos | Iustitia et rectum terris defendere curat', *Thebaid* II.358-60). Statius also refers repeatedly to Juno, who incited the Theban war, as *Saturnia* (*Thebaid* X.162, XII.134 and XII.311), demonstrating how far removed from Vergil's Golden Age and reign of justice that Thebes and by implication contemporary Rome now are. While this makes Statius's Thebes an ideal model for hell and a parallel for Dante's divided Italy (see Chapter IV.2), it can never align with the reign of peace and justice that Dante hopes Henry VII will bring. Sadly, by the time Dante writes *Paradiso*'s final canti, he too has understood that 'true peace' is utterly unattainable on earth (Honess 2013a: 500).[82]

II.7 MONARCHIA

Statian resonances are also absent from *Monarchia* (*c.*1314-*c.*1318), the fundamental premise of which is that 'ad bene esse mundi necesse est Monarchiam esse sive Imperium' (I.V.10).[83] Throughout this Latin treatise, Dante hearkens back to the Golden Age of the Roman Empire, 'sub divo Augusto monarcha', when 'humanum genus fuerit felix in pacis universalis tranquillitate' (I.XVI.1-2). Dante establishes that this Golden Age paved the way for Christ and thus our eventual regaining of Eden as he discusses Christ's Incarnation and the *Pax Augusta* (II.X-XI), much as Virgilio-character refers to ''l buono Augusto' in *Inferno* I.71. Throughout *Monarchia*, Dante expresses his desire for the return of this Golden Age on earth, this time under Christ's aegis. Dante both quotes and comments again upon *Eclogue* IV.6-7 in discussing the necessity of justice, in a chapter in which Dante asserts that the universal monarch's 'righteous and loving will' would ensure he applied justice for the sake of peace (*Monarchia* I.XI.1; Gaimari 2018: 271).[84]

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[82] On Dante's gradual realisation of the impossibility of 'true peace' on earth, see Honess 2013a: 499 and 2013b: 98-103.

[83] The dating of *Monarchia* remains contested, but I adopt the majority view of a later date. For discussion of this issue see, for example, Cassell 2004: 23-49; Chiesa and Tabarroni 2013; and Quaglioni 2014.

[84] On Dante's conception of peace and Empire in *Monarchia*, see Honess 2013a: 495-97; and Gaimari 2018: 270-72.

While Statius's pessimism in the *Thebaid* regarding the possibility of justice and peace challenges Dante's hopes, Dante's decision not to utilise examples from Statian epic in *Monarchia* is striking. Dante does not even mention the *Thebaid* when denouncing Italy's terrible political situation (*Monarchia* I.XVI.4); when asserting that war should only be a last resort (II.IX.3); or when arguing that duels and warfare are provoked by the 'antiquus Hostis' (II.IX.9), despite the similarity of the *Thebaid*'s impious civil war generated by a family feud and incited by Tisiphone and Dis (the *antiquus Hostis*'s classical equivalent) to the warfare ravaging Italy, and thus the *Thebaid*'s admonitory value (see Chapter IV). Given *Monarchia*'s lack of resonances with the *Thebaid*, even in areas where Statius's epic seems to provide a natural complement to Dante's assertions, one could be forgiven for thinking that Dante had not read the *Thebaid* when he wrote *Monarchia*. However, Dante was fully conversant with Statius's epic by this time, as *Inferno*, which was commenced prior to *Monarchia*'s presumed composition, is full of Statian resonances (see Chapter IV.2-4).

However, in *Monarchia*, Dante avoids depicting how Empire can fail, instead concentrating on positive examples of Empire provided by such figures as Aeneas, Alexander, and Augustus. In so doing Dante draws on Vergil, Livy, Lucan, and Ovid (e.g. II.III.VI; II.IV.4-6; II.VI.11; II.VII.10), *inter alios*. Conversely, Dante omits those Roman emperors who persecuted the Christians or were barbarians or heretics and is similarly silent regarding the Empire's decadence, immorality, and fragmentation (Chiesa and Tabarroni 2013: XXXVIII). Since the *Thebaid* is not directly Roman in subject; is filled with negative exempla (e.g. Polynices and Eteocles, Tydeus, Capaneus etc.), many of which Dante utilises in *Inferno* (see Chapter IV.3); is dominated by pessimism regarding imperial power and the possibility of peace; and was written under Domitian, an emperor who persecuted the Christians and failed to promote peace (as Stazio-character attests in *Purgatorio* XXII.82-93), I believe Dante consciously chose not to utilise the epic in *Monarchia*.

II.8 *EGLOGE*

Dante's ongoing engagement with Statian epic is apparent in the *Egloge* (1319-1321).[85] In this sophisticated series of poems, written at around the same time as *Paradiso*, Giovanni del Virgilio writes to ask Dante why he has entrusted such a serious subject as the *Commedia* to the vernacular and the comic style, when Latin and the tragic style would have been more appropriate. Giovanni's letter is modelled on Horace's *Ars Poetica*, and alludes to the works of the great classical poets, including Vergil, Ovid, and Statius, on whom Giovanni was hired to lecture at Bologna's university (see Chapter I.2.3). Giovanni's letter invites Dante to Bologna, suggesting that he might receive the poet's laurel crown there (*Egloga* I.25-43), much as Albertino Mussato was crowned with laurel in Padua in December 1315, an 'unspoken shadow' that 'hangs over this correspondence' (Ferrara 2019: 111). Fittingly, Dante seems to have been preoccupied with the theme of poetic coronation since *Purgatorio* XXI.90, when Stazio-character claims that he deserves 'le tempie ornar di mirto' (see Chapter III.3). The theme arises again in *Purgatorio* XXVII.142, when Virgilio says to Dante-pilgrim 'per ch'io te sovra te corono e mitrio', before becoming a leitmotif in *Paradiso*, which opens with an invocation to Apollo and a reference to the longed-for laurel crown (*Paradiso* I.13-15). The theme returns in *Paradiso* XXV.6-9, when Dante voices his desire to return to Florence to take the laurel crown (see Chapter IV.5).[86] While *Paradiso* had not yet been published and thus Giovanni could not have been aware of the desire for poetic coronation it expresses when he wrote *Egloga* I, Giovanni's missive coincidentally touches upon a significant concern of Dante's. It has even been suggested that *Paradiso* XXV may constitute a further response to Giovanni's *Egloga* (e.g. Fumagalli 2002).

Interestingly, Dante chose not to mirror Giovanni's Horatian format in his response to Giovanni's initial letter, instead using that of the Vergilian Eclogue (*Egloga* II) in his only works of Latin poetry (Ferrara 2019: 111). This led Giovanni to credit

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[85] On the *Egloge* in general, see Albanese 2014 and Mazzucchi 2016.
[86] On poetic coronation in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, see Chapter IV.5.

Dante with resurrecting a genre silent since Vergil's time (Petoletti 2016: 495). The only other 'Eclogue' circulating during Giovanni's lifetime was the *Ecloga Theoduli*, found among the *auctores minores* in Italian school textbooks (see Chapter I.2). However, the *Ecloga Theoduli* was of controversial dating due to its classical and biblical themes and was not truly a Vergilian Eclogue (Petoletti 2016: 496). Dante's decision thus constitutes a striking assertion both of *novitas* and poetic *auctoritas*. It is perhaps linked to the role Dante assigns to Vergil's fourth *Eclogue* in Stazio-character's conversion (*Purgatorio* XXII). Dante appears to consider the *Eclogue*'s value as equal to that of Vergil's *alta tragedìa* and the sublime style, due to the Messianic prophecy *Eclogue* IV was thought to contain. This enables Dante to demonstrate poetry 'dello stile umile''s ability to express profound truths (Albanese 2014a: 1607-08). In utilising this bucolic form, Dante also 'appropriates' the figure of Tityrus/Vergil to assert his difference from 'contemporary *literati*' and offers 'a form of poetry' that exploits knowledge of the classics, but 'is also able to appropriate them and give them a new meaning' (Ferrara 2019: 115-16).

In addition to this generic and stylistic innovation, Dante's *Egloge* demonstrate Dante's excellence as a Latin poet through his mastery of versification, structure and syntax, and the variety and innovation of his linguistic choices. Like the *Commedia*, they evidence the true extent of Dante's learning, providing 'un prezioso tessuto intertestuale' (Mazzucchi 2016: XXIX). This is fitting, since Dante's *Egloge* 'vehemently reassert' that there exists an 'erudite class writing in the vernacular' (Ferrara 2019: 112). Significantly, Dante is believed to have been in Padua at the time he wrote the *Egloge*, where Lovato Lovati and his circle passionate about the Latin classics were based (Petoletti 2016: 494). Lovati seems to have known Statius's *Silvae* (Witt 2000: 95-100) and may have been among the men to whose private library Dante was granted access, as Davis suggested (see Chapter I.3). In any case, like Giovanni's original letter and his subsequent response to Dante (*Egloga* III), Dante's two missives to Giovanni (*Egloge* II and IV) are full of classical references, including several to Statian epic.

II.8.1 *EGLOGA* II

Dante echoes Statius's *Thebaid* early in *Egloga* II, as Tityrus-Dante avers 'Pascua sunt ignota tibi que Menalus alto | vertice declivi celator solis inumbrat' (II.11-12; cfr. 'rarescunt alta colonis | Maenala', *Thebaid* IV.284-85). Maenalus, a mountain in Arcadia, symbolises bucolic poetry (*cfr.* Vergil, *Eclogue* VIII.21). Dante uses it here to symbolise classically-inspired Latin poetry, as it both opens and closes Dante's depiction of Mopsus-Giovanni's ideal poetic world (II.11 and II.23; Albanese 2014b: 1700). Dante appropriates Statius's description of Maenalus's height to imply the *altezza* of Mopsus-Giovanni's Latin poetry, which prevents the inexpert Meliboeus from discerning the *pascua* of bucolic poetry and the learned Latin poetry they represent (Albanese 2014: 1699-1700). Giovanni echoes Dante's depiction of Maenalus's height in his response to Dante ('per Menala celsa', *Egloga* III.18).

As Tityrus-Dante responds to Meliboeus's request that he be shown the *pascua ignota*, Dante includes two Statian resonances in the single line 'Hic ego quid poteram, cum sic instaret anhelus?' (*Egloga* II.27), demonstrating Dante's prowess in dealing with classical poetry. 'Hic ego' is a frequent stylistic feature when beginning lines of Latin hexameter, occurring at *Thebaid* II.732, *Aeneid* VI.72, and in Horace and Ovid too (Albanese 2014: 1706). 'Instaret anhelus' echoes *Thebaid* XII.600 ('hortaturque suos viresque instaurat anhelus'), which Statius uses to describe Theseus's encouragement of his men to righteous battle. Dante therefore creates the sense of a reluctant marshalling of Tityrus-Dante's poetic efforts in responding to Mopsus-Giovanni's challenge.

Subsequently, Dante alludes to classical epic in *Egloga* II.18-19, as he constructs his bucolic allegory of Mopsus-Giovanni's inspired poetic song (Albanese 2014: 1703). Dante does this in response to Giovanni's introduction of 'la poetica del vate sacro' in a sequence in which Giovanni alludes to the myths of Orpheus and Arion and envisages the magnificent effects of Dante's anticipated epic poem (*Egloga* I.34-46; Albanese 2014: 1703). Tityrus-Dante avers: 'Mopsus in his, dum lenta boves per gramina ludunt, | contemplatur ovans hominum superumque labores' (*Egloga* II.18-19).

'[H]ominum superumque labores' recalls Vergil's promise in the *Aeneid*'s incipit to sing 'arma uirumque', before mentioning the *uis superum* and the *labores* endured by the *insignis uir*, Aeneas (I.1-11), and Lucan's promise in the *Civil War*'s incipit to sing, *inter alia*, of 'populumque potentem | in sua uictrici conuersum uiscera dextra' (I.2-3). Yet it also recalls Dante-pilgrim's introduction of Dante's character Virgilio to Stazio-character in *Purgatorio* XXI.125-26 ('è quel Virgilio dal qual tu togliesti | forte a cantar de li uomini e d'i dèi') and therefore alludes to the historical Statius's epic poetry too. *Ovans* recalls the *ovantes* Giovanni used regarding the *Peneiae sertae* (*Egloga* I.37-38), and thus the laurel crown awarded to Statius (cfr. *Achilleid* I.9-10) and the great Latin poets, which Giovanni suggests Dante should receive.

Dante takes this motif up explicitly at *Egloga* II.33-35, when Tityrus-Dante avers that Mopsus-Giovanni 'me vocat ad frondes versa Peneyde cretas', and Meliboeus replies 'Quid facies? […] Tu tempora lauro | semper inornata per pascua pastor habebis?'. This recalls the references to the laurel crown in Dante's invocation to Apollo at *Paradiso*'s opening (*Paradiso* I.13-33; see Chapter IV.5). Tityrus-Dante's response, 'O Melibee, decus vatum, quoque nomen in auras | fluxit, et insomnem vix Mopsum Musa peregit' (*Egloga* II.36-37), seems to contradict Stazio-character's claim that poet is ''l nome che più dura e più onora' (*Purgatorio* XXI.85). It also implies the same sense of wistful longing for the laurel crown and of Dante's intense poetic effort expressed in *Paradiso* XXV's famous opening (XXV.1-9; see Chapter IV.5). Dante now also shows his confidence, skill, and sophistication in dealing with Statian epic and Latin verse composition, as he places the adjective *insomnem* in the same metric foot as it occurs in *Thebaid* VII.454: 'territat insomnem nox atra diemque minatur'. Dante then explains his fear of travelling to Bologna (*Egloga* II.40) and echoes expressly *Paradiso* XXV.1-9's hope to return to Florence to receive the poetic crown (*Egloga* II.42-45).

Dante also utilises echoes of both the *Commedia* and Statian epic as Tityrus-Dante replies to Meliboeus's implied suggestion that no one should doubt this return

since time passes quickly and many goats have grown old (implicitly Dante's enemies) (*Egloga* II.46-47):

> Tunc ego: 'Cum mundi circumflua corpora cantu
> astricoleque meo, velut infera regna, patebunt,
> devincire caput hedera lauroque iuvabit:'
> *Egloga* II.48-50

Dante again displays his poetic prowess, utilising *circumflua* in the same metric foot as it occurs in *Metamorphoses* (XV.624 and 739), Lucan's *Civil War* (IV.407 and X.476), Prudentius (*Hamartigenia* 333), and most significantly *Thebaid* II.5 'Styx inde novem circumflua campis' (Albanese 2014: 1715). Just as hell, recalled in the *infera regna*, has nine circles, so too does heaven, alluded to in *astricole*. Thus, Dante expresses his hope to achieve poetic coronation through his *Commedia* and recalls the coronation Dante-pilgrim receives at Virgilio's hands in *Purgatorio* before he too entered among the *astricole* (*Purgatorio* XXVII.142). *Astricole* recalls and surpasses *Egloga* I.5's *astripetis*, used by Giovanni to refer to *Purgatorio*. *Astricole* is an unusual medieval Latin term, based upon the classical *caelicolae* that appears countless times in Statian epic (e.g. *Achilleid* I.485; *Thebaid* I.204, XI.123), as well as in Vergil, Ovid, and Lucan (Albanese 2014: 1715-16). Dante's reference to being crowned *hedera lauroque* recalls Dante's *Paradiso* I.29's 'trïunfare o cesare o poeta' and thus *Achilleid* I.14-16, as ivy was the traditional crown of epic poets and laurel was used for triumphing generals. It therefore suggests both the political and poetic aspects of Dante's poetry.[87]

Dante then recalls the last night spent by Dante-pilgrim on Mount Purgatory, under the watchful gaze of Virgilio and Stazio (*Purgatorio* XXVII.76-92; Albanese 2014: 1720-21), as Tityrus-Dante responds to Meliboeus's queries regarding how he will overcome Mopsus-Giovanni's criticism of the *Commedia* (*Egloga* II.51-56). Dante analogises the *Commedia* as an ewe 'lactis abundans', who is 'gratissima' among Tityrus-Dante's flock (II.58-62). This image of shepherds minding their sheep and ewe's milk continues the poem's bucolic mode; reflects the respect Dante held for the

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[87] On the political dimensions of the *Egloge*, including Dante's desire to receive the crown in Florence, not Bologna, see Ferrara 2019: 117-21.

great classical poets and the sense of poetic nourishment Dante received from their Latin epics, which we see throughout the *Commedia* (see Chapter IV); and establishes the *Commedia*'s own value. In *Egloga* II's closing lines, Tityrus-Dante promises to send ten *vascula* of this ewe's milk (i.e. ten canti of the *Commedia*) to Mopsus-Giovanni to demonstrate that value.

II.8.2 *EGLOGA* IV

In *Egloga* IV, Dante replies to Giovanni's response to *Egloga* II (*Egloga* III). Dante opens the *Egloga* in the classical mode, averring 'Velleribus Colchis prepes detectus Eous | alipedesque alii pulcrum Titana ferebant' (IV.1-2). Dante recalls not just Ovid's tale of Jason and the Golden Fleece (*Metamorphoses* VII), but the *vello* that Dante hopes to achieve in *Paradiso* XXV.7-9 – poetic coronation in his natal city following completion of his own Argonautic quest i.e. the composition of the *Commedia* (see Chapter IV.5). This is fitting given *Egloga* II's similar wish for poetic coronation in Florence and Dante's analogisation of the *Commedia* as an ewe. Dante also uses a classical metaphor for the sun's position in the sky, much as he does throughout the *Commedia*. Dante primarily recalls Lucan, Ovid, and Vergil here (Albanese 2014: 1756), but Statius too uses Titan as metaphor for the sun several times, e.g. at *Thebaid* I.336, IV.283, V.297, etc. While Dante used Titan as a bifold metaphor for Henry VII in the *Epistole* (see section II.6), here Dante uses it for poetic effect, to set the bucolic scene, and reinforce Dante's poetic *auctoritas*. Dante's exploitation of a classical metaphor to different ends in different texts demonstrates Dante's ability and willingness to manipulate classical imagery for his own purposes.

Dante endeavours to surpass Giovanni's poetic challenge still further by demonstrating an even greater level of generic virtuosity, as he adapts the bucolic geography of Arcadia by introducing the Sicilian scenery of Vergil's *Eclogues* (Albanese 2014: 1754; cfr. *Eclogue* II.21's *siculi montes* and X.4's *fluctus Sicani*).[88] In describing this scenery, Dante continues to appropriate material from Statian epic and

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[88] Vergil's references to the Sicilian Muses in *Eclogue* IV.1, Sicilian verse in *Eclogue* VI.1, and the Sicilian shepherd's pipe in *Eclogue* X.51 also imply a Sicilian setting for the *Eclogues*.

other classical poetry, manipulating it skilfully to demonstrate his poetic brilliance. At *Egloga* IV.22, Dante mirrors *Thebaid* IV.394 and *Metamorphoses* VIII.798, by using the Greek accusative *Caucason* for the Caucasus since it fits the line's metre best. In *Egloga* IV.46, Dante borrows the adjective *roscida* to describe Pelorus, the same adjective Statius uses for Maenalus in *Thebaid* VII.79-80 and that Vergil uses in *Eclogue* IV.30. Thus, Dante recalls both *Egloga* II's bucolic geography and the Sicilian setting of Vergil's *Eclogues*.

In *Egloga* IV, Dante also utilises imagery from Statian epic in portraying the simultaneous sense of mutual respect and poetic challenge between himself-Tityrus and Mopsus-Giovanni. In *Egloga* IV.65-66, Tityrus-Dante avers 'Mopsus amore pari mecum connexus ob illas | que male gliscentem timide fugere Pyreneum'. Dante skilfully combines Ovid's use of the phrase 'amore pari' in the same foot in *Metamorphoses* IV.192, with the phrase 'connexus amore' which recalls *Achilleid* I.174 ('insequitur magno iam tunc conexus amore'). In so doing, he likens Tityrus-Dante's and Mopsus-Giovanni's mutual love, respect, and friendly rivalry to that between Achilles and Patroclus. In *Egloga* IV.72, Dante uses the phrase 'pecudes armentaque', a common pairing in Vergil's pastoral poetry and in Ovid, which furthers the *Egloga*'s bucolic vein. However, Statius uses the pairing in the same metric position in *Thebaid* IV.445 ('velleris obscuri pecudes armentaque sisti'), when describing the animal sacrifice that enables Tiresias to prophesy the forthcoming carnage at Thebes. *Egloga* IV.72 thus implicitly foreshadows the upcoming imagery of bloodshed and destruction in *Egloga* IV.76-83.

Dante capitalises upon the bloodshed associated with Statius's Thebes more explicitly in *Egloga* IV.76, as Alphesiboeus warns of Polyphemus 'assuetum rictus humano sanguine tingui'. While Dante draws Polyphemus primarily from the *Aeneid* and *Metamorphoses*, Dante recalls *Thebaid* VI.758 ('saevo neque sanguine tingui') and Prudentius ('neue togas procerum fumoque et sanguine tingui', *Contra orationem Symmachi* I.8) in this phrase (Albanese 2014: 1778). Significantly, this description of the cannibalistic Polyphemus resembles *Purgatorio* XIV.58-64's description of Fulcieri

da Calboli, who was responsible for atrocities in Florence against the White Guelphs (Albanese 2014: 1776), and recalls Dante's other famous cannibal Ugolino, modelled on Statius's Tydeus (see Chapter IV.3.11).[89] Through this network of allusions, Dante utilises Statius's Thebes as a parallel for his divided Italy, much as he does in the *Commedia* (see Chapter IV), and through this emphasis on bloodshed and Italy's unrest, expresses his concerns regarding travelling to Bologna for his longed-for poetic laureation.[90] Subsequently, Tityrus-Dante imagines Mopsus-Giovanni receiving his words and thus Dante's refusal to leave Ravenna for Bologna 'tota mente secundus' (*Egloga* IV.88; Albanese 2014: 1780). While both Vergil and Ovid use 'tota mente' (*Aeneid* IV.100; *Metamorphoses* V.275), Dante's phrase also recalls *Thebaid* I.285 in which Juno 'reddidit haec "Equidem haud rebar te mente secunda"'. Through this allusion to Statius, Dante perhaps suggests that, like Juno, he expects Giovanni not to grasp his concerns fully, since Giovanni contested Dante's previous rebuff of his invitation to Bologna (*Egloge* II and III).

Dante ends the *Egloga* as it started with a reference to the chariot of the sun, completing the traditional bucolic framing of midday sun and sunset (Albanese 2014: 1781). Dante echoes *Thebaid* III.268 ('spumantem proni mandunt adamanta iugales') in *Egloga* IV.90 ('Sed quia tam proni scindebant ethra iugales'), with Dante's use of 'proni […] iugales' occurring in the same metrical position (Albanese 2014: 1781). Dante also recalls here Statius's description of the sunset at *Thebaid* III.408-09 ('flagrantes Sol pronus equos rutilamque lauabat | Oceani sub fonte comam'). Dante thus demonstrates his poetic prowess in handling the imagery both of classical epic and bucolic poetry. Dante's final Statian resonance in *Egloga* IV occurs in line 94, where Dante avers 'inde, velut reduces ad mollia prata, preibant'. While Ovid frequently uses the phrase *inde velut*, Statius does so at *Thebaid* VIII.474 ('Inde velut primo tigris gavisa cruore') immediately before an act of violence. Dante thus seems to bely this supposed pastoral idyll, with another indication of the division ravaging Italy. Sadly

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[89] On Ugolino, Thebes, cannibalism, and Italy's division, see Quinones 1991: 71.
[90] On the *Egloge* and Dante's political concerns, see Ferrara 2019: 117-21.

Giovanni's and Dante's correspondence finishes after this *Egloga* due to Dante's premature death, still in exile.

While Statian intertextuality in the *Egloge* is not as extensive as it is the *Commedia*, this brief analysis of the frequent Statian resonances Dante's two responses to Giovanni contain, demonstrates certain significant aspects of Dante's engagement with Statius. Dante clearly knew the entire *Thebaid* by the time he wrote these verses (and probably the *Achilleid* too). He was comfortable enough with Statian epic by then to not only borrow characters, episodes, and vocabulary from it, but to utilise Statius's vocabulary in the same metrical locations as Statius and manipulate Statius's imagery in complex ways to assert both his own argument and his *auctoritas*. Since the *Egloge*'s purpose is to demonstrate to Giovanni that Dante can compose elegant and erudite Latin verse, Dante employs these resonances with Statius and other classical poets in such a way as to prove he has learnt their *exempla* and is utilising them appropriately, according to the lessons of grammar, syntax, metre, etc. that he received during his education. Through the resonances with *Purgatorio* XXI-XXII, Dante both recalls the chain of poetic succession he creates in the *Commedia*, between Homer and Vergil, via Statius, to Dante himself and reaffirms his superiority as the first Christian *poeta*, who will receive both the poetic laurel and eternal life in heaven. Dante also continues to use the division of Statius's Thebes as a parallel for his own Italy, much as he does in the *Commedia*, albeit Dante now does so at a more subtle level, expressing both his ongoing desire for the poetic laurel and his fear of travelling to hostile Bologna to receive it.

II.9 CONCLUSION

Close study of Statian resonances (or their lack) in Dante's *opere minori* has enabled me to chart Dante's developing engagement with Statius and Dante's attunement to the situational appropriateness of Statian epic's themes over the course of Dante's authorial career. Dante first seems to have encountered Statian epic in some sort of compendium, probably a *florilegium* containing extracts of classical poetry. This may have been before his exile, since the *Rime* contemporaneous with the *Vita Nuova*

contain possible resonances with Statius's poetry, although the *Vita Nuova* itself does not. Dante's inclusion of Statius among the *regulati poetae* in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* II.VI.7 suggests that by the time of *De Vulgari Eloquentia*'s composition, Dante was familiar with the use of Statian epic together with other extracts of classical poetry, probably in a *florilegium*, in providing exempla for the purposes of Latin composition. Similarly, Dante's translation of two exempla from the *Thebaid* in *Convivio* III and his method in using them implies that Dante encountered these extracts in such a compendium. Dante's early encounter with Statius was sufficient to enable him to understand its themes and stimulate his interest such that he began to read the *Thebaid* (and possibly the *Achilleid* if he had not done so already) in full.

Thus, by the time he wrote *Convivio* IV.XXV, Dante had a full knowledge of at least *Thebaid* I. Dante was familiar with the entire poem, as well as the *Achilleid*, by the time he commenced the *Commedia* (see Chapter IV). Dante's decision not to utilise the *Thebaid* in *Monarchia* and largely in the *Epistole* suggests a thorough understanding of the epic's themes and a deliberate desire to avoid mentioning negative exempla of Empire. Dante's later use of Statian epic in the *Egloge* makes apparent Dante's continued regard for and familiarity with Statian epic and Dante's confidence in manipulating this intertext for poetic effect in his own compositions. Thus, it is apparent that Dante's Statius was not just a discovery of the *Commedia*, but a fundamental part of Dante's exploration of classical poetry and its methods of reading. This new understanding of Statian epic's significance for Dante provides a basis for my demonstration in Chapters III and IV of the narrative, poetic, moral, and allegorical importance of Statius and his epic poetry to the *Commedia*.

CHAPTER III

STAZIO AS CHARACTER IN THE *COMMEDIA*

III.1 PREFACE

Dante's engagement with Statian epic reaches its zenith in the *Commedia*. Dante's embodiment of the historical Statius in his character Stazio provides the clearest sign of that engagement and of Dante's esteem for the classical poet. Thus, many scholars who discuss Dante's Statius focus their attention on Stazio-character, his biography including the cruces of his repented prodigality and Christian conversion despite a lack of evidence for either regarding the historical Statius, and his role in *Purgatorio* (see Introduction, section 2). Wetherbee (2008: 159-202) and Weppler 2016 have begun the process of connecting Stazio-character to the importance of the historical Statius's epic poetry to Dante. This provides an excellent basis for my own analysis in this chapter of Dante's characterisation of Stazio and of Stazio's role both in the *Commedia*'s narrative and in Dante's demonstration of his regard for the historical Statius.

I commence my analysis with the episode comprising the earthquake and singing at *Purgatorio* XX's close and the so-called 'Statian canti' (*Purgatorio* XXI and XXII), in which Stazio enters the narrative. I focus upon the repented prodigality and Christian conversion Dante attributes to Stazio, as these are fundamental to Stazio's significant role in the *Commedia*. I provide new insight into Stazio's Christianisation following my study of manuscript glosses to the *Thebaid* (see Introduction, section 3). Subsequently, I consider Stazio as he appears later in the *Commedia*, focussing on his explanation in *Purgatorio* XXV of the human soul's generation and its formation of an 'aerial body' in the afterlife, and Stazio's presence in Eden and *Paradiso*. I establish thereby that Stazio-character both embodies Dante's regard for Statian epic and constitutes a fundamental part of Dante's creation of a chain of poetic succession between the great classical poets Homer and Vergil, via Statius, to Dante himself, the first Christian *poeta*.

III.2 STAZIO'S NARRATIVE ENTRANCE

III.2.1 STAZIO'S ABSENCE FROM LIMBO

Given Dante's obvious esteem for Statius's epic poetry in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and especially *Convivio*, Stazio's absence from Limbo's *bella scola* of poets (*Inferno* IV.85-96) is striking. Instead, Dante-pilgrim, already accompanied by his *duca* Virgilio, encounters only two further *regulati poetae*, Ovidio and Lucano. Omero and Orazio complete the gathering of classical poets from whose oeuvre Dante quotes in *Vita Nuova* XXV.9. Dante may merely have been unfamiliar with Statius's poetry when writing *Inferno* IV (Brugnoli 1969: 125, citing Renucci). However, this is unlikely, as Dante included Statius among the *regulati poetae* in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* II.VI.7 and showed increasing familiarity with and enthusiasm for Statian epic as he wrote *Convivio* II, III and especially IV.XXV (see Chapter II.4-5). Both texts were written prior to the presumed date of Dante's commencement of the *Commedia* (*c.*1307).[91] Accordingly, Dante probably was familiar with Statius when he wrote *Inferno* IV.

I believe Dante's omission of Stazio is deliberate, forming part of Dante's strategy for Stazio and signalling Stazio's importance. Dante intends us to note Stazio's absence, to increase our surprise when we encounter Stazio in *Purgatorio*, and to emphasise the contrast between Stazio's fate and the tragic eternal confinement in Limbo of these great poets, particularly Virgilio. The Statian canti reaccentuate this contrast. The attentive reader's curiosity at Stazio's absence increases as we move through *Inferno*, meeting characters from Statius's *Thebaid*, including Capaneus and Amphiaraus. This perhaps generates the expectation that we will encounter Stazio himself, but we do not. When Stazio does eventually arrive in the *Commedia*, his appearance is as surprising as it is significant, foreshadowing both the essential aspects of his characterisation and his important role within the poem.

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[91] While Dante sets the pilgrim's journey in 1300, most modern scholars now accept that Dante began writing the *Commedia* in around 1307 (Pertile 2015: 492-93). On *DVE*'s dating (*c.*1302-1305) see fn. 67. On *Convivio*'s dating (*c.*1304-1307), see fn. 69.

III.2.2 STAZIO'S SUDDEN APPEARANCE

In an indication of Stazio's significance to the *Commedia*, Dante surrounds Stazio's entrance to the narrative with Christological echoes, thereby suggesting Stazio as *figura Christi*.[92] At *Purgatorio* XX's close (XX.127-38), in purgatory's fifth terrace, Dante-pilgrim hears 'tremar lo monte' (XX.128). The earthquake echoes both the earthquake at the crucifixion (Matt. 27.51-53) and that accompanying the angel's appearance to Mary Magdalen and another Mary to announce Christ's resurrection (Matt. 28.2). Joyful singing of the *Glorïa in Excelsis Deo* follows purgatory's earthquake (*Purgatorio* XX.136-37). The angels sang the *Gloria* to the shepherds following Christ's birth (Luc. 2.13-14), and so the penitents' singing puts Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio 'in the same physical, emotional, and spiritual state' as the shepherds (Phillips-Robins 2016: 18). Accordingly, Dante evokes in a few tercets Christ's 'Nativity, Crucifixion, and Resurrection', the three stages of Christ's Incarnation required to make possible the redemption of humankind that Dante embodies in Stazio (Weppler 2016: 115). The penitents' joy also 'evokes several of Christ's parables concerning repentance', including that of the prodigal son, which demonstrates 'joy' in a son's return (Luc. 15; Weppler 2016: 119). This is particularly relevant to Stazio, both because of his prodigality and because the parable 'directly addresses conscious sin and intentional repentance' (Weppler 2016: 120).

Christological references continue in *Purgatorio* XXI, as Dante-pilgrim paraphrases the Gospel story of Christ and the Samaritan woman at the well (Ioh. 4.4-26) when describing his desire to learn the earthquake's cause:

> La sete natural che mai non sazia
> se non con l'acqua onde la femminetta
> samaritana domandò la grazia,
>
> mi travagliava […]
>   *Purgatorio* XXI.1-4

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[92] On Stazio as *figura Christi*, see Bontempelli 1910: 424-28; Scrivano 1992: 176, 190; and Lansing 2012: 92.

The early Dante commentary known as L'Ottimo Commento avers that, 'questa sete si sazia con quell'acqua della sapienzia di Cristo' (1333: *ad Purg.* XXI.1-6). The *acqua* is *aqua viva*, the divine revelation and grace required for the soul to attain blessedness.[93] Many medieval interpreters read the story of the Samaritan woman as a conversion narrative (Stephany 1983: 146), rendering it an appropriate opening to the Statian canti. The metaphor resonates with the historical Statius's portrayal of Hypsipyle leading the Argive army to water in *Thebaid* IV and with her later appearance in Virgilio's list of virtuous Statian women in Limbo (*Purgatorio* XXII.109-14; see section III.5 and Chapter IV.4). This further connects the historical Statius's poetry to Dante's portrayal of Stazio and Stazio's role in the *Commedia*'s narrative.

   Purgatorio XXI's opening metaphor also demonstrates the limitations of the classical literature Dante praises. L'Ottimo observes that these lines recall Aristotle's assertion that 'ogni uomo naturalmente disidera di sapere' (1333: *ad Purg.* XXI.1-6), the opening sentence of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (I.1). Thus, they echo *Convivio*'s opening, which quotes Aristotle's assertion (*Convivio* I.I.1), and affirm humanity's natural desire for knowledge and its own perfection – a perfection that Dante believes can only be reached through Christ. This *sete* becomes a leitmotif throughout the Statian canti. Through weaving together these scriptural, classical, and Dantesque intertexts, Dante begins to establish the fundamental tension in his portrayal of Virgilio and Stazio. For Dante, the classical literature written by Aristotle, Vergil, and Limbo's other *magni spiriti* epitomised Aristotle's secular notion of intellectual flourishing. Such pagan authors could possess immense wisdom and even intuit the truth of human perfection, as Stazio's reading of Vergil's fourth *Eclogue* indicates (*Purgatorio* XXII.67-72; see section III.5). However, since they lacked this *aqua viva*, divine grace, and Christian faith, they could not carry this knowledge to completion and reach God. Consequently, despite his natural *sapientia*, Virgilio must return to Limbo to live always 'sanza speme […] in disio' (*Inferno* IV.42). Conversely, after ascending the purgatorial

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[93] On the Samaritan woman as metaphorical nurse, and Christ's function as 'nurse of the water of life', see Cestaro 2003: 138.

mountain, Dante-pilgrim's thirst is slaked at *Paradiso*'s close. The truth of human perfection finds fulfilment in the *Commedia*, illumined by Christian revelation, as desire for one's own perfection becomes desire for God.

Stazio's entrance to the narrative is significant in this context. Dante-pilgrim's exclamation 'Ed ecco' is followed by a simile comparing the sudden appearance of 'un'ombra' (*Purgatorio* XXI.10) to that of the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus (Luc. 24.13-35, *Purgatorio* XXI.7-10). Ironically, while Christ appeared to two faithful disciples, Stazio appears to one living Christian, and one pagan *ombra*, further highlighting Stazio's surprising appearance. Stazio's standing erect, 'dal piè guardando la turba che giace' (*Purgatorio* XXI.11), emphasises his singularity and underlines his resemblance to the risen Christ. It also recalls the etymology of Statius's (erroneous) name Surculus (*sursum canens*) in the *accessus* tradition, as 'conversion and penitence' have transformed 'the static Stazio' into 'the surging "Sursulus"' (Weppler 2016: 98).

Stazio's greeting to Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio, 'O frati miei, Dio vi dea pace' (*Purgatorio* XXI.13) echoes Christ's to his disciples ('pax vobis', Luc. 24.36). Dante uses this and the previous Christological allusions to build our suspense regarding this *ombra*'s identity and to emphasise his importance, exalting him (Padoan 1970: 338-39). Stazio's Christological greeting creates a biblical, almost sacred, brotherhood between souls Stazio believes Christian like himself. This is the antithesis of the *Thebaid*'s fraternal strife (Wetherbee 2008: 161), perhaps hinting at the *Thebaid*'s moral value as dissuasion from such vice. Nonetheless, the three poets' brotherhood can only ever exist in the poetic sense, never the Christian. Stazio's salutation and Virgilio's reciprocal *cenno* (*Purgatorio* XXI.15) emphasise the tragic contrast between them. Virgilio cannot answer Stazio's greeting with a similarly biblical one and is reduced to a simple *cenno*.[94] Lacking divine grace and Christian revelation, Virgilio can

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[94] On this *cenno*'s possible Christian significance, see Heilbronn 1977.

never participate in Christian fellowship, nor rise to new life with God. Conversely, Stazio demonstrates the path to salvation that Dante-pilgrim also follows.

Virgilio recognises his own tragedy in his address to Stazio:

Poi cominciò: 'Nel beato concilio
ti ponga in pace la verace corte
che me rilega ne l'etterno essilio.'
Purgatorio XXI.16-18

Virgilio's reference to his *essilio* recalls humankind's exile from Eden, but unlike Stazio and Dante-pilgrim who will soon enter there, Virgilio's exile is *etterno*. Nevertheless, both Stazio's forthcoming *pace* among the *beato concilio* and Virgilio's *etterno essilio* result from the judgement of the *verace corte*, divine justice. This renders Stazio's apparent exception to this *verace corte*'s rules even more intriguing, and our surprise is palpable when we discover this character's identity (XXI.91).[95]

Stazio's presence in *Purgatorio* has puzzled generations of scholars, as we know Statius as a classical poet, whose poetry led many to believe him pagan, including Virgilio (*Purgatorio* XXII.55-63). By encountering him here, when we expected to find him in Limbo with the other classical poets, Dante establishes Stazio's unique position and his fundamental significance to the *Commedia*. Stazio's surprising appearance resonates with that of another ancient Roman soul found unexpectedly in *Purgatorio*: Catone (Sansone 1963: 795). While Catone, like Dante-poet, experienced injustice in the temporal realm, he finds justice in the spiritual. Stazio's concern regarding Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio's presence in purgatory despite their appearing 'ombre che Dio sù non degni', expressed with a dramatic 'Come!' (*Purgatorio* XXI.20), recalls Catone's similar question (*Purgatorio* I.40-48). Interestingly, Catone's 'Chi v'ha guidati, o chi vi fu lucerna' (I.43) seems to foreshadow Stazio's reference to Virgilio's role as lamp-bearer (XXII.67-69). Much as medieval readers believed the historical Statius was *moralissimus* due to his oeuvre's moral value, the historical Cato was thought to be a moral man and was attributed authorship of the *Disticha Catonis*, which

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[95] On the 'legal' system of Dante's afterlife and its 'system of exception', see J. Steinberg 2013: *passim*.

held an important place in the curriculum with its lessons of 'commonplace morality' (Gehl 1993: 129; see Chapter I.2). Cato also represented earthly liberation from tyranny, of the kind Dante desired for Italy. This may explain Catone's long binding to ante-purgatory, as that freedom is incomplete without Christian revelation. Conversely, Stazio represents the soul's eternal liberation through Christ, one facet of his role as *figura Dantis*.

Virgilio's rhetorically polished response to Stazio's challenge both emphasises Stazio's role as *figura Dantis* and demonstrates the connection between Stazio and Dante's regard for the historical Statius's poetry. Virgilio emphasises Dante-pilgrim's own worthiness to enter God's realm and in this respect, Dante-pilgrim is akin to Stazio. However, Dante-pilgrim is in purgatory a living man, as Virgilio's metaphor demonstrates:

> Ma perché lei che dì e notte fila
> non li avea tratta ancora la conocchia
> che Cloto impone a ciascuno e compila,
>
> l'anima sua, ch'è tua e mia serocchia,
> venendo sù, non potea venir sola,
> però ch'al nostro modo non adocchia.
> *Purgatorio* XXI.25-30

Lachesis ('lei che dì e notte fila'), Clotho, and Atropos are the three Parcae, Moirae, or Fates, of classical mythology. Clotho was believed to spin the thread of human life, Lachesis to measure it, and Atropos to cut it.[96] Virgilio's reference to Lachesis recalls Dante's earlier reference to Atropos (*Inferno* XXXIII.126; see Chapter IV.3) and foreshadows Stazio's mention of Lachesis when he explains the human soul's generation (*Purgatorio* XXV.79; see section III.6). Both Vergil and Statius mention the Parcae in their epics, but neither Vergil, Lucan, nor Ovid *Metamorphoseos* name any of them specifically, whereas Statius does repeatedly (Paratore 1970). Thus, Virgilio's naming of Clotho recalls Statius's reference to her in *Thebaid* III.556-57 ('quid bonus ille deum genitor, quid ferrea Clotho | cogitet?'). This both demonstrates Dante's regard

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[96] 'Moira', *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman biography and mythology*, accessed at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0104:entry=moira-bio-1&highlight=moirae.

for Statius and connects Virgilio and Stazio through their oeuvre. Virgilio highlights his and Stazio's shared nature as shades (*Purgatorio* XXI.28-30), but these commonalities merely emphasise the spiritual gulf between them. While Stazio is here among the Christian penitents, Virgilio was 'tratto fuor de l'ampia gola │d'inferno' (XXI.31-32) to guide Dante-pilgrim as far as his *scola* (XXI.33) allows.

III.2.3 STAZIO'S EXPLANATION OF THE EARTHQUAKE

Virgilio's defence of Dante-pilgrim's presence in *Purgatorio* confirms his continued role as Dante-pilgrim's guide. However, as Virgilio's growing inability to explain theological matters demonstrates, Virgilio's *scola* becomes increasingly inadequate as the three progress through purgatory. Despite anticipating Dante-pilgrim's desire to know the earthquake's cause, Virgilio cannot satisfy it and must ask Stazio, beneficiary of Christian revelation, to explain (XXI.37-42). Similarly, in *Purgatorio* XXV, Stazio must describe how the soul is generated and how it feels pain, joy, or other emotions in the afterlife. Applying a typological reading of Virgilio as Reason, this demonstrates its limits. Until the poet-characters meet Beatrice, Stazio must fulfil her role as Revelation, since Reason alone cannot lead to God. Thus, Virgilio must re-join Limbo's *bella scola*, which *Purgatorio* XXI.33 recalls, before *Purgatorio*'s close.

Stazio's explanation of the earthquake and associated singing demonstrates further Stazio's unique position and importance. It introduces him as secondary guide and 'anello di congiungimento' (Brugnoli 1969: 124) between Virgilio and Beatrice. Stazio can be interpreted therefore as symbol of 'Human Reason, generally enlightened by Christianity, but not specially instructed or interested therein; the cultivated "lay" mind' (Moore 1896: vol.1, 33), Reason illuminated by Faith (Heilbronn 1977: 54; Pasquini and Quaglio 1982: 373), or Reason illuminated by Revelation, 'as Virgilio had been of Reason, and Beatrice of Revelation itself' (Mahoney 1961: 36). Owing to the Christological allusions accompanying Stazio's arrival into the narrative, Virgilio can be seen as John the Baptist to Stazio's Christ, with Stazio then passing this mantle to Beatrice (Kleinhenz 1988: 37). Stazio thus also represents the transition between the Roman, Pagan world and the Christian, and is an intermediary between

reason and revelation, on a poetic, not a theological, basis (Heilbronn 1977: 54). Stazio's transitional position forms part of Dante's broader creation of a chain of poetic succession from the great classical poets Homer and Vergil, via Statius, to Dante himself, the first Christian *poeta*.

The prolixity of Stazio's explanation may be symptomatic of Stazio's prodigality (Fernández 2012: 176). As such it recalls certain *accessus* to the historical Statius that aver that his name, from *stare*, arose due to the *Thebaid*'s lengthy digressions and consequent delay in describing the Argives' arrival at Thebes (Kleinhenz 1988: 31).[97] Nevertheless, Stazio-character's account exhibits the rhetorical skill, wisdom and learning that the medieval *accessus* tradition attributed to the historical Statius (Rossi 1993: 209; see Chapter I.4.1), and therefore the esteem in which Dante obviously held Statius's poetry. The explanation also reflects the strange paradox Stazio-character embodies – a soul whom Virgilio had believed pagan, but who from his presence here must be Christian.

Stazio begins his explanation by confirming divine will's dominance of the mountain (*Purgatorio* XXI.40-42) and averring:

> Libero è qui da ogne alterazione:
> di quel che 'l ciel da sé in sé riceve
> esser ci puote, e non d'altro, cagione.
> *Purgatorio* XXI.43-45

Stazio's elaboration of the mountain's freedom from *alterazioni* is steeped in pagan philosophical and mythological allusion. *Purgatorio* XXI.43-45 recalls Aristotle's discussion of meteorological phenomena in *Coeli et Mundi* I and Statius's description of Mount Taenarus (*Thebaid* II.32-40), as looking down on 'uentosque imbresque serenus' (II.35-36), again connecting Stazio's role to Statius's poetic importance. Among the *alterazioni* from which the mountain is free (*Purgatorio* XXI.46-54), Stazio includes a classical periphrasis for the rainbow, 'figlia di Taumante' (XXI.50) i.e. Iris.[98] As Dante wishes 'cominciar a far risuonare' Statian echoes (Paratore 1970), this

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[97] See the *accessus* in Anderson 2009: vol. III, *passim*.
[98] On Dante's references to rainbows and meteorological phenomena, see S. Gilson 1997.

periphrasis echoes Statius's reference to Iris ('uentosne uolucris | aduocet an pelago solitam Thaumantida pasci', *Achilleid* I.219-20), along with Ovid's and Vergil's. Stazio subsequently rejects any natural cause for the earthquake (*Purgatorio* XXI.55-57), including the usual Aristotelian belief, to which medieval theorists still adhered, that earthquakes were caused by the release of dry, hot humours/vapours, or cold/moist ones. Instead, Stazio confirms that the earthquake occurred through divine will. Symbolically, therefore, Stazio resiles from the pagan worldview later attributed to him by Virgilio, a presage of his conversion account.

Stazio's explanation of the actual reason for the earthquake and singing is full of theological significance and based on personal experience, so could never have been provided by the pagan Virgilio. Stazio affirms that the earthquake and singing denote a soul's completion of their purgation, and consequent readiness *salir sù* to paradise (*Purgatorio* XXI.58-60). These words of upward movement emphasise the progression Stazio and Dante-pilgrim enjoy, versus the terrible stasis those in Hell endure. Through personal experience, Stazio elucidates how the soul knows when its purgation is complete and feels this *mondizia* to ascend to God (XXI.61-66). His language recalls Thomas Aquinas, as Jacopo della Lana notes (1324-1328: *ad Purg.* XXI, Proemio). Stazio confesses that he now feels this 'libera volontà di miglior soglia', after having 'giaciuto a questa doglia | cinquecent' anni e più' (*Purgatorio* XXI.67-69). This confirms Stazio as the soul for whom the earth quaked and the penitents sing, and thus as Everyman *exemplum* of the penitential journey. This is remarkable, as we do not expect to see here a soul which has completed its purgation and is free to ascend to paradise, with Stazio the *Commedia*'s only such case (Bontempelli 1910: 422). The Christological resonances of the earthquake and singing are fitting, since Christ's birth, death, and resurrection made possible both this salvific journey and the *Commedia* itself, since it is the poem 'della liberazione dell'anima' (Sansone 1963: 800).

Once we appreciate the earthquake's meaning, we recognise it also as an inversion *in bono* of that in *Thebaid* VII-VIII, in which 'recessurae paulatim horrescere terrae [coeperant]' (VII.794) before Amphiaraus was swallowed into Tartarus. This hints

at the upcoming revelation of Stazio-character's identity and demonstrates the esteem in which Dante held the historical Statius's poetry. The ancients assigned 'great significance' to earthquakes as a 'seeming reversal of the natural order' (Nur 2008: 73). Like the earthquake at Dante-poet's entrance to Hell, and at Stazio's readiness to ascend, that in *Thebaid* VII-VIII heralds a being seemingly in the wrong place – a living man in the afterlife, or a classical man in purgatory. Whereas in *Purgatorio* XX, the earthquake accompanies Stazio's readiness to ascend to God, in the *Thebaid* it accompanies the diviner Amphiaraus's dragging down to Tartarus.[99] The horrified cries of those witnessing Amphiaraus's demise become Dante's rejoicing chorus, although 'tal grido' (*Purgatorio* XXI.60) recalls the Argives' terrified shouts. As Statius's early commentator Lactantius emphasises (*In Theb.* VIII.5), Amphiaraus remains *vivum* at his descent, like Dante-pilgrim. However, while Dante-pilgrim's voyage in the afterlife is voluntary (although necessary), passing, and renders him more virtuous, Amphiaraus's descent is involuntary and eternal. It is almost as if the earth yawns open in Statius's Thebes as punishment and swallows Amphiaraus into Dante's hell, among *Inferno* XX's diviners (see Chapter IV.3.6). The episode demonstrates again the medieval emphasis given to the *Thebaid*'s moral value, as dissuasion from vice (see Chapter I.4.1). This moral value partly justifies Dante's Christianisation of Stazio-character (see section III.5).

Since *Purgatorio* XX's earthquake reminds us of that which occurred at Dante-pilgrim's entrance to Hell, Stazio's liberation also prefigures Dante-pilgrim's at the *Commedia*'s culmination. Dante-pilgrim's acknowledgement that his query is satisfied foreshadows this liberation and his own achievement of perfection in *Paradiso*, since it returns to the Statian canti's *sete* leitmotif (*Purgatorio* XXI.73-75).

III.3. STAZIO'S 'AUTOBIOGRAPHY'

After Virgilio asks this *ombra* who he was and why his long penance (*Purgatorio* XXI.79-81), Stazio provides his 'autobiography' (XXI.82-102). This biography is

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[99] 'illum ingens haurit specus et transire parantes │ mergit equos […] │ sicut erat rectos defert in Tartara currus' (*Thebaid* VII.818-20).

fascinating both in its length, 'un unicum nel poema' (Paratore 1976), and its content, indicating both Dante's regard for the historical Statius and Stazio-character's significance to the *Commedia*. Many eminent scholars, including Brugnoli (1969 and 1989), Padoan (1970), Paratore (1976), de Angelis (1984) and Rossi (1993) have sought to establish Dante's sources for Stazio's biography. More recently, Weppler notes Stazio's biography's structural similarity to medieval Statian *accessus* (2016: 53-56). As I have little to add regarding Stazio's biography's sources, I mention them only briefly. Instead, I focus upon how Dante uses Stazio's biography to justify his position in *Purgatorio* and to demonstrate his and Statius's importance to the *Commedia*.

III.3.1 STAZIO E 'L BUON TITO

Stazio provides much significant information in response to Virgilio's question regarding his identity. First, he tells Virgilio that he lived:

> Nel tempo che 'l buon Tito, con l'aiuto
> del sommo rege, vendicò le fóra
> ond' uscì 'l sangue per Giuda venduto
> *Purgatorio* XXI.82-84

Dante's decision to use Titus's reign as Stazio's first reference-point is remarkable. Titus reigned for only two years three months (79-81CE), whereas his father Vespasian, whom Dante does not mention at all, reigned for ten years (69-79CE) and Titus's brother Domitian reigned for fifteen (81-96CE) (Zissos 2016: 560-65). Statius lived under all three emperors. He addresses the *Thebaid* to Domitian (I.17-33) and arguably the *Achilleid* also (I.14-22) but makes no express mention of Titus in either epic. Furthermore, most Statian *accessus* do not mention Titus, with both Domitian and Vespasian 'given far more attention' (Weppler 2016: 57). While the common *Queritur accessus* mentions Titus, it does so only to contextualise his brother Domitian's reign, averring 'fuisse eum [i.e. Statius] temporibus Vespasiani imperatoris et pervenisset | usque ad imperium Domitiani fratris Titi' (lines 2-4; see Chapter I.4.1).[100] The *In principio accessus* also refers to Titus but does so in asserting that the *Thebaid was*

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[100] On the similarities between the Queritur accessus and Stazio's 'autobiography', see Brugnoli 1969 and *contra* de Angelis 1984.

written 'ad […] dehortationem' of Titus and Domitian's 'fraternale odium' due to their 'tantam regni cupiditatem' (lines 58-61; see Chapter I.4.1). Thus, in linking Stazio-character to Titus chronologically, Dante breaks with Statius himself and the Statian *accessus*.

Dante's choice of Titus as temporal indicator for Stazio's biography is linked to Dante's Christianisation of the poet. Dante decided not to refer to Domitian here, because Domitian persecuted the Christians, as Stazio informs us (*Purgatorio* XXII.82-84). Domitian also failed to preserve peace, continuing Vespasian's military campaigns (Jones 1992: *passim*). The *Thebaid*'s writing under, and dedication to, Domitian may be partly why Dante excludes material from the *Thebaid* from *Monarchia* (see Chapter II.7). More importantly, Titus can be linked favourably to Christian providential history. Stazio's use of the epithet 'buon' for Tito recalls the reference to ''l buon Augusto' (*Inferno* I.71) in Virgilio's 'autobiography', further connecting the two poet-characters despite their different spiritual fates. Dante calls the two pagan emperors 'buoni' as Providence ordained Christ's birth in Augustus's reign and 'la vendetta sugli Ebrei' in Titus's (Brugnoli 1969: 119). As Dante does at *Paradiso* VI.91-93 and VII.49-51, Stazio interprets Titus's suppression of the Jewish revolt, in which the Roman army sacked Jerusalem and destroyed its Temple, as revenge upon the Jews for Christ's crucifixion (*Purgatorio* XXI.82-84).[101] 'L'aiuto del sommo rege' Titus received implies divine support for Empire, particularly as it upholds the Christian faith. Dante expands upon this support and the Empire's role in providential history in *Monarchia* (see Chapter II.7). Christianity's flourishing in the void left by the Temple's disestablishment was interpreted as 'a divine sanction' of the Temple's ecclesiastical authority passing 'to the Roman church of Peter and Paul' (Martinez 1997: 62-63). Stazio's interpretation of Titus's actions thus suggests that Stazio is a Christian and reaffirms the classical world as forerunner to the Christian. This reinforces Stazio's status as a transitional figure

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[101] See 'Titus (Titus Flavius Vespasianus)', *OCD*, pp.1532-33.

between the Roman, Pagan world and the Christian (Heilbronn 1977: 54) and thus as personification of the poetic mantle's passing from Vergil, via Statius, to Dante.

Stazio's reference to Titus's vengeance also resonates with the themes of the *Thebaid*, through Dante's implicit association of the siege and starvation at the Temple's destruction with the famous Ugolino episode (*Inferno* XXXII-XXXIII) and its accompanying invective (XXXIII.79-90), and thus with the Ugolino episode's intertext, the *Thebaid* (Martinez 1997: 64-65). Rather than naming Christ in *Purgatorio* XXI.82-84, Stazio focuses on Judas's betrayal, in the only reference to Judas outside *Inferno*. Thus, Stazio's autobiographical account continues the historical Statius's 'preoccupation' with betrayal and violence, demonstrating 'the continuity in Stazio's poetic persona' as the *Thebaid*'s author, even after his conversion, death, and purgation (Weppler 2016: 60-61).

III.3.2 STAZIO'S POETIC CAREER

Dante makes both his regard for the historical Statius's poetry and his belief in classical poetry's limitations without Christian revelation apparent through Stazio-character's claim that:

> col nome che più dura e più onora
> era io di là, […]
> famoso assai, ma non con fede ancora.
>   *Purgatorio* XXI.85-87

Stazio's claim resonates with Statius's hopes in the *Thebaid* that 'meriti post me referentur honores' (XII.819) and the *accessus* in BSV, MS 41's assertion 'Audiens Romae poetas plurimum honorari' (fols 1ᵛ-2ʳ; my transcription; see Chapter I.4.1). This recalls Dante's earlier recognition of literature's power as one of the ways in which 'l'uom s'etterna' (*Inferno* XV.87). However, Virgilio's tragic confinement to Limbo and Stazio's almost apologetic confession that he was 'non con fede ancora' (XXI.87) demonstrate that such fame is ultimately empty. *Di là* may refer to the temporal world generally, or to Rome, but in either case its transience contrasts with the spiritual world's eternity. It is through God that true 'eternalisation' operates. Without Christian revelation, poetry had not yet reached its zenith. Accordingly, Dante's masterpiece is

the acme of that development. Since the Christian revelation contained in Stazio's poetry was 'criptata' (cfr. *Purgatorio* XXII.58-6), but the *Commedia*'s is 'palese e trionfante' (Ariani 2010: 219), Dante is last in the chain of poetic succession he creates, the first Christian *poeta*.

Stazio's description of his own poetic career strengthens Statius's position within that chain. Stazio asserts:

> Tanto fu dolce mio vocale spirto,
> che, tolosano, a sé mi trasse Roma,
> dove mertai le tempie ornar di mirto.
> *Purgatorio* XXI.88-90

Pietro Alighieri is among the first to note Juvenal's influence in these lines, averring 'Item dicit quomodo fuit dulciloquii, teste Iuvenale dicente: "Curritur ad vocem iocundam et carmen amice | *Thebaidos*, letam cum fecit Statius urbem | promisit diem, tanta dulcedine captos | afficit ille animos" etc.' ([3] 1359-64: *ad Purg.* XXI.55-102). Dante's familiarity with *Satires* VII.82-87 may stem directly from Juvenal or from an *accessus* quoting these lines (see Chapter I.4.1). Stazio's *dolce* echoes *Convivio* IV.XXV.6's description of Statius as 'lo dolce poeta' (see Chapter II.5), demonstrating Dante's continued regard for Statian epic. It also foreshadows Virgilio's profession of admiration for Stazio's poetry generated by Giovenale's account in Limbo of the *Thebaid* and Stazio's love for Vergil's poetry, an account which seems to confirm Dante's familiarity with *Satires* VII.82-87 (*Purgatorio* XXII.10-18).

In claiming Stazio is *tolosano*, Dante replicates the error resulting from Jerome's confusion of the poet Publius Papinius Statius with the orator Lucius Statius Ursulus from Toulouse (Brugnoli 1969: 118). This error continued throughout the Statian *accessus* tradition until the *Silvae*'s 'rediscovery', including in both the *Queritur* and the *In principio accessus* (see Chapter I.4.1). Dante's attribution of an incorrect birthplace to Stazio suggests Dante's lack of familiarity with the *Silvae*, since *Silvae* III.5 confirms that the historical poet Statius was born in Naples. Stazio's claim that 'a sé mi trasse Roma' recalls the *Queritur accessus*'s assertion that Statius 'postea veniens Romam ad poetriam se transtulit' (line 6), and the *In principio*'s succinct

'Tandem Romam se transtulit' (line 17; see Chapter I.4.1). Dante's similar claim suggests his familiarity with at least one such *accessus*.

Stazio's claim to have received a myrtle crown at Rome both demonstrates Dante's regard for the historical Statius and further establishes Stazio-character's role in the *Commedia*. Dante probably sourced this claim from *Achilleid* I.9-10 ('da fontes mihi, Phoebe, novos ac fronde secunda ǀ necte comas'), as Statius alludes to having received a poet's crown for the *Thebaid* and hopes for another. The earliest *Achilleid accessus* repeats this claim, averring that 'librum *Thebaidos* composuit, quare ǀ coronatus fuit' (BML, MS Plut. 24 sin. 12, fol. 49ʳ, lines 1-2; see Chapter I.4.1). Yet Brugnoli suggests *Thebaid* I.32-33 ('tempus erit, cum Pierio tua fortior oestro ǀ facta canam') coupled with *Achilleid* I.15-16 ('cui geminae florent vatumque ducumque ǀ certatim laurus—olim dolet altera vinci') as Dante's source for Stazio's claim (1969: 121). However, both comments are addressed to Domitian; the first does not refer to laureation (at least in modern editions of the *Thebaid*); and the second refers not to Statius's laureation but Domitian's. Nevertheless, it is possible that Dante was familiar with a slightly different version of the *Thebaid*, which did include reference to the laurel crown at I.32-33. The *In principio* commentary implies that Statius received (or desired) poetic coronation, as it reads in *Thebaid* I.32-33 *laurigero* to agree with *oestro* and therefore a wish or presage of an upcoming coronation: 'LAURIGERO id est poetico. Nam poete lauro solebant coronari. Uel LAURIGERO id est coronam et laurum mihi abferente quia digne describam tua facta O Domitiane' (MS Additional 16380, fol.144ʳ; MS Ricc. 842, fol. 2ᵛᵃ⁻ᵛᵇ).

Thus, while Statius suggests he received a poet's crown, no evidence exists that the crown was myrtle. (While *Silvae* IV.VII.10-11 mentions that Statius will try for a myrtle wreath, Dante is unlikely to have been familiar with this poem, due to the *Silvae*'s minimal circulation in Italy until 1417). The plant traditionally associated with such coronation was laurel, as the *In principio* commentator implies, or ivy for an epic poet (see *Egloga* II.50; Chapter II.8). Myrtle was associated with Venus and love poetry. Accordingly, Dante may well be punning on *mertai-mirto*, and also preserving

laurel, the highest honour, for himself (Durling and Martinez 2003: 358). Dante imagines himself returning to his natal city to receive this crown in *Paradiso* XXV.7-9 and *Egloga* II.36-44 (see Chapters II.8 and IV.5). Stazio's myrtle crown therefore confirms both Statius's place in the line of poetic succession after Vergil and Dante's own superiority over Statius.

III.3.3 STAZIO, THE *THEBAID*, AND THE UNFINISHED (?) *ACHILLEID*

Stazio finally relieves our suspense regarding his identity in *Purgatorio* XXI.91:

> Stazio la gente ancor di là mi noma:
> cantai di Tebe, e poi del grande Achille;
>
> ma caddi in via con la seconda soma.
> *Purgatorio* XXI.91-93

Stazio's delay in naming himself may reflect the humility of the penitents and the blessed (Weppler 2016: 56), although Stazio boasts again of his enduring poetic fame *di là*. This both indicates the historical Statius's medieval renown and illustrates the struggle against pride Dante himself confesses he faces (cfr. *Purgatorio* XIII.133-38). Stazio mentions both the *Thebaid*, recalling its proem's use of *canere* (I.4, I.33 and I.45) in his *cantai*, and the *Achilleid*. Stazio's failure to mention the *Silvae* here surely confirms Dante's lack of knowledge of the collection.[102]

Stazio's claim to have fallen 'in via con la seconda soma' suggests that Dante believed that the *Achilleid* was incomplete. This apparent incompleteness generated much interest among medieval scholars. Some argued that the *Achilleid* was complete, based on its allegedly satisfied aim of detailing Achilles's education and perhaps upon its erroneous division into five books, with certain manuscripts even including a spurious closing statement. Others argued that the *Achilleid* was incomplete since it was intended to narrate Achilles's involvement in the Trojan War and did not.[103] Dante may have believed the *Achilleid* was incomplete based on both textual clues in its prologue, and a commentary to the poem called the *Casualis eventus* (De Angelis

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[102] See Paratore 1976. For a revival of the controversial argument that Dante was familiar with the *Silvae*, see Greco 1963: 853-54.

[103] On discussions surrounding the *Achilleid*'s completeness in the Statian *accessus* tradition, see Anderson 2009: vol. III, *passim*; and Weppler 2016: 71-76.

1984). Accordingly, Stazio's claim caused contention among early Dante commentators (Weppler 2016: 74). Dante's early commentator Benvenuto da Imola even argues that Dante recognised that the *Achilleid* was complete and that Stazio refers instead to Statius's death after finishing the *Achilleid* and before writing his intended third epic, regarding Domitian's achievements (1375-1380: *ad Purg.* XXI.93). The prologue to both Statian epics hints at the forthcoming *gesta Domitiani* Benvenuto mentions, even if only to excuse to Domitian Statius's failure to write it. However, the most logical reading of Stazio-character's words is that Statius died leaving the *Achilleid* incomplete. Modern editions of the *Achilleid* confirm such a reading, since they follow the more correct manuscript tradition in dividing the epic into two books.

Whether or not Dante was aware of the claim that the *Achilleid* was complete, Stazio's assertion that the epic was unfinished serves Dante's own poetic agenda. Stazio's words reinforce the tragedy of his demise. Dante may intend us to see in the cutting short of Stazio's life's work the tragic death of so many young men in Statius's epic poetry, particularly his *Thebaid*. Stazio's decease *in via* resonates with the description of Adrastus in *Thebaid* I.391-92 as 'medio de limite uitae │ in senium uergens'. In *Convivio* IV.XXV, Dante describes Adrastus's virtue of *stupor* in a way that resonates with the Statian canti's *sete* leitmotif (see Chapter II.5). Thus, Stazio's decease *in via* fittingly recalls Dante's hope to complete his own *diritta via*, from which he had strayed at the *Commedia*'s beginning (*Inferno* I.1-3). Before his early death, Stazio too underwent a moral and spiritual realisation *in via*, allowing his presence here in purgatory. This also recalls Augustine's return from the *regio dissimilitudinis* in the *Confessions* (see, for example, *Confessions* VII.10). These resonances both suggest the importance of divine revelation and the possibility of salvation late in life which Stazio embodies, and confirm the esteem in which Dante held Statius's poetry. Moreover, if Stazio only converted when writing the *Thebaid* and did not complete his post-conversion *Achilleid*, then Dante 'would be the first Christian author to write a great and complete epic-like work' (Weppler 2016: 76).

III.3.4 STAZIO AND THE *AENEID*

Subsequently, Stazio both attributes his poetic inspiration to reading Vergil's poetry and hints that it prompted his putative conversion. Stazio affirms:

> Al mio ardor fuor seme le faville,
> che mi scaldar, de la divina fiamma
> onde sono allumati più di mille;
> *Purgatorio* XXI.94-96

Stazio's words echo the historical Statius's testament to the *Aeneid*'s influence in the *Thebaid*'s explicit ('nec tu *diuinam* Aeneida tempta, ⎪ sed longe sequere et uestigia semper *adora*', XII.816-18, my emphasis). Stazio therefore proved a natural choice as Dante's vehicle of praise for his poetic hero Vergil and is *figura Dantis* in this respect too (Rossi 1993: 207; Ariani 2009: 223-25). In Stazio's *ardor*, ignited by the sparks of the *divina fiamma* kindled by the *Aeneid*, we see the divine love that enflames the poet and inspires his poetry. We also recognise poetry's power to rejuvenate the soul and encourage life-affirming, salvific love. This foreshadows Stazio's account of his Christian conversion, *allumati* echoed in *m'alluminasti* (*Purgatorio* XXII.66). The 'divina fiamma' is the 'caritate fidei christianae', the 'lumine fidei', as Benvenuto affirms (1375-1380: *ad Purg.* XXI.94-99). Stazio's words resonate with Virgilio's account of his burgeoning admiration for Stazio and the virtue poetry can inspire ('Amore ⎪ acceso di virtù, sempre altro accese', *Purgatorio* XXII.10-11), following Giovenale's account of the *Thebaid* and Stazio's admiration for Vergil's poetry (*Purgatorio* XXII.13-18). Both Virgilio's and Stazio's account of their mutual love stimulated by poetry constitute an inversion *in bono* of Francesca's account of the lust aroused when she and Paolo read *Lancelot*, which led to their adultery, untimely demise, and eternal damnation (*Inferno* V.100-07, 121-38).

Stazio continues with a powerful, alliterative chiasmus, in which Dante voices his own admiration of the *Aeneid*:

> de l'*Eneïda* dico, la qual mamma
> fummi, e fummi nutrice, poetando:
> sanz' essa non fermai peso di dramma.
> *Purgatorio* XXI.97-99

The language of fertility, motherhood, and nourishment is marked (*seme*, *mamma*, *nutrice*) and introduces 'the image of poetry as mother and wet nurse' (Cestaro 2003: 139).[104] Stazio's words resonate with *Paradiso* XXIII.121-23, where Dante speaks of Mary as a mother providing nourishment and uses *infiamma*, recalling Stazio's *divina fiamma*. At the stage of life of which Stazio speaks here, the *Aeneid* only provides him with poetic inspiration, not yet Christian faith, with *poetando* emphasised through the caesura preceding it and its placement at line's end. Nevertheless, this sense of spiritual nourishment foreshadows the role Stazio claims poetry played in his Christian conversion (*Purgatorio* XXII.67-72). Stazio summarises his debt to Vergil with 'sanz' essa non fermai peso di dramma', alluding to the *Thebaid*'s closing lines' desire for *aemulatio* of the *Aeneid* and to the *Thebaid*'s own moral and poetic value. Stazio therefore makes clear Dante's regard for both Vergil's and Statius's poetry. Read more metaphorically, Stazio testifies to and embodies poetry's power to encourage virtue and moral behaviour, as the *Aeneid*, *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* did, and as Dante hopes the *Commedia* will do.[105]

The closing lines of Stazio's testament of love for Vergil's poetry and Stazio's subsequent actions are fundamental to Dante's characterisation of Stazio and therefore Stazio's role in the *Commedia*. Stazio speaks striking words of praise of Vergil, claiming 'assentirei un sole │ più che non deggio al mio uscir di bando' (*Purgatorio* XXI.101-02), to have lived when Vergil did. Some critics view Stazio's remark as 'quasi ereticale' (Pasquini and Quaglio 1982: 372), whereas others defend it as mere hypothetical hyperbole (Sansone 1963: 816). Stazio's words contrast markedly with Catone's rebuke of Virgilio for appealing to Catone's love of his wife Marzia when requesting passage (*Purgatorio* I.85-93). Catone transcended such sentiment after crossing into purgatory and avers that Virgilio's appeal based on fulfilling divine will would have been sufficient. Yet it seems Stazio would be prepared to delay complying

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[104] On poetry and the Muses as wet nurses, see Cestaro 2003: 139-40.
[105] For a moralistic reading of the *Aeneid*, see e.g. Silvestris 1977: 2. On Statian epic's moral purpose, see Chapter I.4.1.

with divine will to fulfil his own sentimental attachment. It provides another example of the appropriateness of Stazio's name, and the *accidia* for which we learn he did penance (*Purgatorio* XXII.92-93). Stazio's excessive praise and love may well be a final remnant of his prodigality (Fernández 2012: 178-79).

Nevertheless, while such attachments can distract the penitent in a world in which progression is fundamental, Stazio has completed his purgation and will shortly enter paradise with Dante-pilgrim. In *Paradiso*, the souls enjoy an eternal dance in which progression no longer matters and the blessed can continue to feel affection for loved ones. They even wish that their loved ones' bodies be returned to them on Judgement Day (*Paradiso* XIV.61-66). Thus, Stazio may be forgiven for his continued attachment to the poet of the book he called *mamma e nutrice*. Besides, his statement can only ever be hypothetical as Stazio and Virgilio are long deceased.

The irony of Stazio's wish escapes neither Dante-pilgrim nor the reader, as before Stazio is the poet-character whom he praises, enduring a tragically different otherworldly existence. In *Purgatorio* XXI.103-20, Dante uses the classical trope of recognition (*anagnoresis*, per Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1452a) to its full dramatic effect. The comic irony of the situation plays itself out in gestures, Dante-pilgrim caught between two of his great predecessors, between the silence commanded by Virgilio and the explanation begged by Stazio, who notices Dante's hidden smile. Stazio's 'perspicacity' may derive both from his poetic identity and his Christianity, as Dante contrasts it with Virgilio's mistaken assumptions regarding Stazio (Weppler 2016: 143). Dante-pilgrim respectfully addresses Stazio as *antico spirto* (*Purgatorio* XXI.122), recalling Virgilio's promise to show Dante 'li antichi spiriti dolenti' (*Inferno* I.116), and thus Virgilio's own tragic fate. Dante-pilgrim then informs Stazio that before him 'è quel Virgilio dal qual tu togliesti │ forte a cantar de li uomini e d'i dèi' (*Purgatorio* XXI.125-26). Dante-pilgrim does not yet fully understand Stazio's debt to Virgilio, as while this phrase adequately describes the inspiration Vergil's poetry provided in writing Statius's two epics, echoing the openings of the *Aeneid* and Lucan's *Civil War*, it does not account for Stazio's Christian conversion (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad loc.*).

In a sign of joy and respect for Virgilio, as a pupil to his master, or a worshipper to his God, Stazio 's'inchinava ad abbracciar li piedi' (*Purgatorio* XXI.130). However, Virgilio stops him, saying, 'Frate, │ non far, ché tu se' ombra e ombra vedi' (XXI.131-32). Perhaps this scene 'memorialis[es]' Stazio's salvation at Virgilio's hands (Lansing 2012: 96). Virgilio's *frate* echoes Stazio's greeting to Virgilio and Dante-pilgrim at the canto's beginning, reminding us that their fellowship can only ever be poetic, never Christian. Virgilio's elegant chiasmus emphasises Virgilio's and Stazio's shared status as *ombre* and demonstrates that like Dante and Casella, like Vergil's own Aeneas and Anchises, the souls can never embrace. Caught up in his joy at meeting Virgilio, Stazio had forgotten their *vanitade* (*Purgatorio* XXI.135-36). Their opposite fates render the two poets' embrace even more impossible. Stazio thus throws into relief both Virgilio and the limits of the pagan poetry Dante-poet praises.

III.4   STAZIO'S *DISMISURA*

As Virgilio, Stazio, and Dante-pilgrim leave the fifth terrace, the chorus of the single word *sitiunt* (*Purgatorio* XXII.6) reinforces the Statian canti's *sete* leitmotif and recalls the three poet-characters' differing fates. Dante-poet here shortens the beatitude 'Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt iustitiam, quoniam ipsi saturabuntur' (Matt. 5.6). Dante may have abridged 'queste parole artificiosamente per più ornato stile, abreviando la materia' (*L'Ottimo Commento*, *Purgatorio* XXII, Proemio) or to render it more suitable as counter-example to avarice (Pasquini and Quaglio 1982: 375), with *esuriunt* used later for the gluttons. This *sete* for divine revelation is antithetical to the preoccupation with worldly goods that possessed both the sinners of the previous terrace and the gluttons of this.

Dante's description of the penitents as 'quei c'hanno a giustizia lor disiro' (*Purgatorio* XXII.4) recalls Stazio's explanation of the purgatorial process and the soul's awareness of its readiness to ascend; the divine justice that damns Virgilio and saves Stazio and Dante-pilgrim; and Virgilio's eternal *disio*. It also foreshadows the return of justice and the Golden Age prophesied in Vergil's fourth *Eclogue*, which forms the basis for Stazio's Christian conversion (*Purgatorio* XXII.67-72; see section III.5). It

provides thereby an ideal backdrop for Virgilio to request the answers that justify his and Stazio's contrasting spiritual destinies, and which are the major cruces in Dante's presentation of Stazio.

III.4.1 VIRGILIO'S MISUNDERSTANDING

After expounding his affection for Stazio (*Purgatorio* XXII.10-18), Virgilio asks Stazio pointedly:

> come poté trovar dentro al tuo seno
> loco avarizia, tra cotanto senno
> di quanto per tua cura fosti pieno?
> *Purgatorio* XXII.22-24

Through Virgilio, Dante-poet again communicates his distaste for avarice and recalls Dante-pilgrim's pleasure at being 'sesto tra cotanto senno', among Limbo's classical poets (*Inferno* IV.102). This emphasises the wisdom, virtue, and *auctoritas* Dante believed these poets possessed, and reflects Virgilio's (and our) surprise at finding Stazio here. Virgilio's mistaken presumption of Stazio's avarice is understandable, given Virgilio and Dante-pilgrim have only encountered avaricious penitents in this terrace thus far. Yet it also manifests Virgilio's inability to understand fully the divine scheme that results in Stazio's presence in the terrace of avarice and prodigality, particularly as Virgilio saw the avaricious and prodigal sinners punished together in hell's fourth circle (*Inferno* VII.25-30; Weppler 2016: 144).

Stazio begins his sound rebuttal of Virgilio's presumption in a manner fitting to the rhetorician with whom the historical Statius was confused. Stazio admonishes Virgilio that:

> Veramente più volte appaion cose
> che danno a dubitar falsa matera
> per le vere ragion che son nascose.
>
> La tua dimanda tuo creder m'avvera
> esser chi fossi avaro in l'altra vita,
> forse per quella cerchia dov'io era.
> *Purgatorio* XXII.28-32

Stazio emphasises the divergence between appearance and reality through verbs of semblance and belief, *appaion*, *dubitar* and *creder* and the subjunctive *fossi*; the alliteration in '*d*anno a *d*ubitar'; and contrasting this *falsa matera* with repeated words

regarding truth (*veramente*, *vere*, and *avvera*), and the final indicative *era*. Stazio's reply thus provides the key to understanding both his own role and characterisation, and Statian poetry itself.

Implicitly, Stazio instructs us in how to read not just biblical texts, but classical literature, and even the *Commedia*, which contain hidden meanings that can guide us in leading a moral, virtuous life. Stazio's words resonate with Dante's description of his account of Geryon as 'quel ver c'ha faccia di menzogna' (*Inferno* XVI.124). They also recall Dante's explanation of the allegory of the poets as 'una veritade ascosa sotto bella menzogna' in *Convivio* II.1.3, anticipating Dante's use of classical poetry, including Statius's *Thebaid* and Vergil's *Aeneid*, to exemplify the virtues required at each stage of human life in *Convivio* IV.XXV-XXVIII (see Chapter II.5). Stazio's words foreshadow his forthcoming assertion that reading the *Aeneid* led him to repent his prodigality and reading *Eclogue* IV.5-7 to convert to Christianity. Since Virgilio lived in the time of 'dèi falsi e bugiardi' (*Inferno* I.72), recalled in Stazio's 'falsa matera', Virgilio lacks divine grace and tragically cannot appreciate such hidden meanings, even within his own poetry.

Stazio's confession of his sin is vital both to his salvation and his characterisation. Stazio distances himself from *avarizia*, 'partita troppo' from him, and assumes guilt for its opposite, *dismisura*, or prodigality (*Purgatorio* XXII.34-35). The 'migliaia di lunari' Stazio says have punished his prodigality (XXII.36) recall the 'cinquecent' anni e più' (*Purgatorio* XXI.68) Stazio affirms he has spent in purgatory. This foreshadows Stazio's later explanation of his tardiness in conversion and fear to profess his religion, which led to this time spent purging himself of *accidia*. It demonstrates the length of his sinfulness and thus the importance of Vergil's poetry in his salvation.

III.4.2 WHY MAKE STAZIO A PRODIGAL?

Despite many Dantisti (e.g. Scherillo 1913, Shoaf 1978, Barolini 1984, and Martinez 1989) discussing Stazio's prodigality, it remains a conundrum, due to the apparent lack of evidence regarding the historical Statius's guilt of this sin. The few historical sources

regarding Statius available in the Middle Ages were notably silent as to any flaws in his character. While Juvenal's *Satires* VII.82-87 may have inspired Stazio's prodigality inadvertently, Juvenal does not suggest overtly any defect in his character as he praises his poetic talent. Statian *accessus* both assert that Statian epic's purpose is moral and paint Statius himself as moral, interpreting the etymology of *Statius* as testament to that morality (see Chapter I.4.1). Dante's early commentator Benvenuto follows this tradition, affirming that Statius was 'honestissimus et moralissimus in omnibus suis dictis' (1375-1380: *ad Purg.* XXI.7-13).

Dante's decision to make Stazio a prodigal serves 'many Dantesque purposes' (Barolini 1984: 259). Most significantly, Dante clearly wished to place Stazio in *Purgatorio* rather than *Inferno* and intended us to note Stazio's absence among Limbo's *magni spiriti*. This necessitated that Stazio be guilty of a sin (Rossi 2001: 328). Given the historical Statius's apparent morality, Dante could select a sin for Stazio that suited his own agenda, rendering Dante's choice of prodigality particularly interesting. Dante could have made Stazio guilty of lust, for example, or pride, the sin which Dante attributes to himself (*Purgatorio* XIII.133-38) and which seems somehow appropriate for a poet, yet both sins are purged lower down the mountain. This suggests that Dante wished us to encounter Stazio in the fifth terrace specifically, in *Purgatorio* XXI. Partly, this is due to the narrative need for our intermediate guide to arrive as we progress toward Eden, before meeting Beatrice, and as Virgilio's ability to explain matters of theological significance consequently dwindles. Partly, it is due to the thematic coincidences Dante wishes to create within the Statian canti and through Stazio's characterisation and role.

Dante's decision to make Stazio guilty of prodigality rather than avarice is significant. Stazio could have appeared in this terrace if Dante had tarnished him with avarice, since both sins are punished here (*Purgatorio* XXII.49-54). As the early Dante commentator Jacopo della Lana notes, 'avarizia e prodigalità, che sono due vizii, che l'uno eccede lo mezzo in spesa, l'altro manca dal mezzo, si puniscono in una pena, in uno medesimo circolo' (1324-1328: *ad Purg.* XXII, Proemio). Both sins depart from

Aristotle's golden mean of balance in all things and represent excesses either side of Aristotle's and Aquinas's virtue of *liberalitas*.[106] *Liberalitas* had long been a preoccupation of Dante's, as we see from his canzone on *leggiadria*, *Poscia ch'Amor* (*Rime* LXXXIII). In *Convivio*, Dante depicts *liberalitas*'s operation for the common good (I.VIII.2), and paraphrasing Aristotle, calls it third among the Virtues, 'moderatrice del nostro dare e del nostro ricevere le cose temporali' (IV.XVII.4). By combining the Aristotelian golden mean with Christianity's seven deadly sins, Dante further highlights the Golden Age 'thematics' of 'balance and due measure in all things' that he develops in these canti (Barolini 1984: 260). Dante-poet vilifies avarice throughout *Inferno*, and in *Purgatorio* XX inveighs fiercely against that *antica lupa*, the avaricious beast Dante-pilgrim encounters in *Inferno* I. Given his clear esteem for the historical Statius's poetry, Dante could never make Stazio-character guilty of this sin, as Virgilio's question demonstrates. Yet Dante could use Stazio as an exemplum of prodigality, much as he uses the historical Statius's characters as exempla of particular sins (see Chapter IV.3-4).[107]

Prodigality presented itself as the most appropriate sin for Stazio, because while Aquinas makes clear that prodigality is as offensive as avarice theologically (*Summa Theologiae* II.II.118; *contra* Barolini 1984: 160-61), human conscience refuses to condemn both sins equally (Scherillo 1913: 236). Prodigality is more understandable and forgivable, particularly as it is often manifested through excessive generosity to others (De Rosalia 2008: 489). It is 'a suitable sin to assign to a poet one respects', possessing a 'poetic flavour' similar to Bertran's liberality (*Convivio* IV.XI.14) (Barolini 1984: 160-61). It may be linked also to Stazio's largesse in seeking the poetic patronage he needed, much as Cicero believed men in public office sought to benefit their fellow men and thus gain favour *pecuniam largiendo*, but should be *liberales* not

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[106] On Dante and Aristotle's and Aquinas's virtue of *liberalitas* and its accompanying vices, see Scherillo 1913: 235-36; and more recently, De Rosalia 2008.

[107] On Stazio's use as exemplum of prodigality and the medieval technique of utilising exempla for moral instruction, see Delcorno 1983: 27.

prodigi (*De Officiis* II.XV-XX; De Rosalia 2008: 484-85).[108] This accords with the notion that Stazio's prodigality was inspired by Juvenal's *Satires* VII.85-87 (Benvenuto da Imola 1375-1380: *ad Purg.* XXI.7-13; cfr. Brugnoli 1969: 123), since *Satires* VII's subject-matter is patronage. Juvenal avers that despite the success of Statius's poetry, even Statius could not dine on acclaim alone. Statius was consequently forced to sell his *Agave* (a work unknown to us and Dante) to a pantomime actor ('sed cum fregit subsellia uersu | esurit, intactam Paridi nisi uendit Agauen', *Satires* VII.86-87). Such a contention must be treated with caution, since its context is satirical (Hardie 1916: 5). Both Statius's and Juvenal's medieval commentators are silent regarding Statius's poverty or his excessive spending (Rossi 1993: 221). Nevertheless, Dante may well have inferred from Juvenal's lines that Statius was impoverished and decided to interpret Statius's excessive *largitas* as cause of this poverty, spending the funds achieved from his poetic success.

Stazio's prodigality also figures him as the 'prodigal son' (Weppler 2016: 120). After the prodigal son repents and returns to his father, the father throws a communal feast to celebrate (Luc. 15.23-24), just as *Purgatorio*'s penitent souls join in communion to sing the *Gloria* at Stazio's liberation.[109] Significantly, in his *Confessions*, Augustine frequently uses the prodigal son as an analogy for his own pre-conversion state (e.g. II.10 and VII.10) and prodigality can 'ultimately' represent any sin, since sin constitutes squandering 'God's gifts' (Weppler 2016: 120). Stazio's 'lento amore' (*Purgatorio* XVII.130) or *accidia* is also both a 'generic' and a 'specific' vice (Weppler 2016: 120-21). Stazio was thus an 'Everyman sinner', rendering him effective as a 'Christian Everyman convert' (Weppler 2016: 121) and as embodiment of the penitential process.

III.4.3 STAZIO'S ACCOUNT OF HIS REPENTANCE

Stazio's explanation of his repentance furthers our understanding of Stazio's prodigality and its rationale. Stazio attributes his repentance to Vergil's poetry, averring:

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[108] On Cicero's discussion of the duties of men in public office in *De Officiis* and its relation to Stazio's prodigality, see De Rosalia 2008: 484-85.
[109] On song as a means of communion in *Purgatorio*, see Phillips-Robins 2016.

> e se non fosse ch'io drizzai mia cura,
> quand'io intesi là dove tu chiame,
> crucciato quasi a l'umana natura:
>
> 'Per che non reggi tu, o sacra fame
> de l'oro, l'appetito de' mortali?',
> voltando sentirei le giostre grame.
>
> Allor m'accorsi che troppo aprir l'ali
> potean le mani a spendere, e pente'mi
> così di quel come de li altri mali.
>
> *Purgatorio* XXII.37-45

Statius's use of 'intesi' rather than 'lessi' when confirming he understood the *Aeneid* is 'pivotal' (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Purg.* XXII.38). Stazio claims to have grasped 'le vere ragioni' hidden underneath Vergilian poetry's 'falsa matera', finding in the *Aeneid* the same moral exemplarity as Vergil's medieval commentators. This prompted his repentance, and in applying the same interpretative process to Vergil's fourth *Eclogue*, he found the motive for his Christian conversion (XXII.67-72). This demonstrates the 'amore acceso di virtù' of which Virgilio speaks in *Purgatorio* XXII.10-11, and the power of poetry and literature to encourage virtue, part of Dante's 'celebration of poetry' (Kleinhenz 1988). It is the antithesis of Francesca's and Paolo's destructive love, which she blames upon reading the *Lancelot* (*Inferno* V.127-38).

Stazio's claim to have repented after he understood Vergil's exclamation at Polydorus's death ('quid non mortalia pectora cogis, │ auri sacra fames!', *Aeneid* III.56-57; *Purgatorio* XXII.40-41) has generated much discussion among Dantists. Dante's apparent 'mistranslation' of Vergil's words is 'hard to explain' (Lewis 1956: 133). In their Vergilian original, these lines seem to castigate Polymestor's horrifying avarice, which led to Polydorus's death, as accursed lust for gold. I note that the early Statian commentator Lactantius appears to share this interpretation of Vergil's words when he glosses Statius's description of Argia's cursed necklace, 'sacro […] auro', as meaning 'exsecrabili. ut Vergilius: 'auri sacra fames' (*In Theb.* II.298), thus linking Statius's own poetry to Stazio's portrayal. This reinforces both the impossibility that Stazio-character could be guilty of avarice and that the historical Statius was 'moralissimus in omnibus suis dictis'. Fittingly Dante refers to this 'sventurato addornamento' in the exemplum of

Eriphyle's pride and avarice on the terrace of pride (*Purgatorio* XII.49-51; see Chapter IV.4.1).

It is difficult to see how Vergil's words could be interpreted as a castigation of prodigality without the philological manipulation proposed by Galletti (1910: 445-49), Jannaco (1957: 330-34), Greco (1963: 844-50), Kleinhenz (1988: 25-27), and Martinez (1989). Between them these scholars suggest an alternative reading of the Vergilian original of *regis* instead of *cogis* for Dante's *reggi*, that Dante's *perché* should in fact be rendered as *per che*, and/or that *sacra* should be interpreted as *santa* rather than *empia*. Their conclusions regarding Dante's intention vary, with some suggesting that he is endorsing a healthy regard for money as a necessity for life, some that he is continuing to castigate avarice and the jealous pursuit of riches. Yet such philological manipulation is unnecessary, as by considering *Aeneid* III.56-57 in the wider context of the Vergilian passage, it is apparent that as well as condemning Polymestor's avarice, Vergil intends to impugn Priam's prodigality as a causative factor in Polydorus's death (Baldan 1986). Accordingly, Stazio's reading of Vergil's words as censure of prodigality would be appropriate.

The wider context of *Purgatorio* XXII also helps explain Stazio's deliberate 'mistranslation'. Stazio discusses his prodigality after we have heard the word *sitiunt*, in the terrace of gluttony. At *Purgatorio* XXII's close, the three poets encounter a tree 'con pomi a odorar soavi e buoni' (XXII.131-32). The gluttons' prohibition from eating from this tree recalls both Tantalus's punishment for serving up his children at a banquet (Francesco da Buti 1385-1395: *ad Purg.* XXII.131), a story mentioned by Statius's Jupiter (*Thebaid* I.246-47), and Adam and Eve's ejection from Eden after eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Both stories involve punishment for prohibited consumption, rendering them appropriate as counter-examples for excessive consumption. The tree announces examples of Temperance, which accords well with the aforementioned notion of *liberalitas* as the moderate virtue between the two vices of avarice and prodigality. Temperance is the virtue of the terrace of gluttony, and since avarice and prodigality are sins of excess, like gluttony, Temperance also opposes

them (Shoaf 1978: 197). This aligns with *Convivio* IV.XVIII.7, in which Dante seems to regard Temperance as humanity's overarching moral compass. Dante finishes the beatitude begun in *Purgatorio* XXII in *Purgatorio* XXIV.150-54 as we leave this terrace, and fittingly *esuriunt* recalls Juvenal's use of the word *esurit* in his description of the historical Statius's poverty. Thus, Dante 'explicitly envelops' Stazio's account 'in the context of Temperance' (Shoaf 1978: 197).

The exemplum shouted by the tree of the Temperance of the Golden Age (*Purgatorio* XXII.148-50), which is paired with John the Baptist's time in the desert (XXII.151-3), is also significant in understanding Stazio's prodigality. The hunger of this Golden Age is 'moderate', satisfied 'with little', 'reasonable and virtuous', and thus is effectively 'the hunger of Temperance' (Shoaf 1978: 197). Thus, it is appropriate that this Golden Age 'counter-example of moderation' establishes Stazio's lines 'as a counter-example to prodigality' (Shoaf 1978: 197). The repented Stazio embodies Aristotle's golden mean and the Temperance of that Golden Age, rendering his appearance in this terrace fitting. Stazio's 'sacra fame de l'oro', deliberately misreading Vergil's *auri sacra fames,* represents the hunger appropriate to the Golden Age, Temperance (Shoaf 1978: 197-98), and a hunger for that Golden Age's return. It was an age 'in qua homines vixerunt innocenter et sobrie, sine bello, sine cibo, et potu artificialiter praeparato. […] nam illa aetas vocata est aurea propter puritatem et perfectionem' (Benvenuto da Imola 1375-1380: *ad Purg.* XXII.148-50). The 'fame de l'oro' thus represents a lament for this Golden Age (Picone 2001: 339), much as the historical Statius also laments its loss (*Thebaid* III.551-65), further connecting Stazio-character to his historical counterpart.

Stazio's implicit lament for the lost Golden Age also recalls Vergil's promise of its return with a new reign of justice in *Eclogue* IV.5-7. Since both refer to justice this connects the beatitude begun in the fifth terrace and finished in the sixth to the fourth *Eclogue* (Austin 1933: 328). It also links Stazio's lament and its intertexts (both Vergilian and Statian) to Dante's own hopes for justice's return in the temporal world, as expressed in his political *Epistole* and *Monarchia* (see Chapter II.6-7). Nevertheless,

true justice can only be achieved in Eden, to which Matelda later suggests that the Golden Age may correspond when she imagines the ancient poets dreaming of this lost Age on Parnassus (*Purgatorio* XXVIII.139-44; see Chapter IV.5). Stazio's words therefore sound as a lament for the lost Eden (Martinez 1997: *passim*) and resonate with the *magni spiriti*'s *sete*. This is significant given the relevance of both *sete* and *Eclogue* IV.5-7 to Stazio's conversion account, and it renders Stazio's presence among the avaricious and prodigal sinners more understandable. Accordingly, through his Christianising exegesis of *Aeneid* III.56-57, Stazio alludes to the Christian revelation lacking in the previous Golden Age, allowing Dante to revise the *Aeneid* to 'Christian ends' (Barolini 1984: 260). It is only in 'lo Vangelio' and now implicitly in Dante's *Commedia*, that this Christian truth is 'aperto' (*Purgatorio* XXII.154). Stazio's 'mistranslation' of the *Aeneid* thus testifies to Stazio's 'conversion to the true faith' (Shoaf 1978: 198).

The notion of Temperance also resonates with Stazio's conclusion to his confession in *Purgatorio* XXI.43-45. 'Troppo aprir l'ali' recalls the fate of Icarus, who perished after opening his wings too far and soaring to the sun (cfr. *Inferno* XVII), and Ulysses, who spread his sails too far in his search for knowledge (*Inferno* XXVI). Stazio thus becomes an *exemplum* not just of prodigality, but of a general lack of Temperance, a preoccupation with earthly pleasures, an incorrect use of divine gifts, and consequently also an arrogance and over-reaching like Icarus's or Ulysses's. Again this suggests Stazio as a 'type of the prodigal son', like Augustine, and as an Everyman sinner (Weppler 2016: 119-20). It also assimilates Stazio to Dante-poet, who expresses his own concerns regarding the *Commedia*'s ambitious nature throughout the poem (see Chapter IV).

Stazio's exclamation regarding those who will rise on judgement day, 'i crini scemi │ per ignoranza' (*Purgatorio* XXII.46-47) reminds us of the avaricious and prodigal sinners' infernal punishment (*Inferno* VII.56) and Virgilio's tragic *ignoranza*. Stazio's emphasis upon the similar purgation together of these two groups of sinners (*Purgatorio* XXII.49-54) recalls Virgilio's failure to understand divine justice or even

remember hell's layout (cfr. *Inferno* VII.25-30). Virgilio cannot be saved despite his poetic inspiration, his virtue, and the example his poetry sets for others, as his lack of divine grace means he cannot see the *vere ragioni* hidden under the *falsa matera* of his poetry. Stazio therefore embodies Dante's esteem for Vergil's poetry and demonstrates its limitations, unilluminated by Christian revelation.

III.5 Stazio's Christian Conversion

Stazio's Christianity is the other major crux of his characterisation and role in *Purgatorio*, due to the lack of evidence regarding the historical Statius's Christianity. It is improbable that Statius was Christian or that Dante truly believed Statius was, and so 'multi mirantur quare poeta noster christianissimus facit Statium non christianum hic stare, nescientes videre causam' (Benvenuto da Imola 1375-80: *ad Purg.* XXI.7-13). It has puzzled generations of scholars since.

The reason for Stazio's presence in purgatory has held us in suspense since he first appeared. Virgilio queries Stazio's Christianity:

> 'Or quando tu cantasti le crude armi
> de la doppia trestizia di Giocasta,'
> disse 'l cantor de' buccolici carmi,
>
> 'per quello che Clïò teco lì tasta,
> non par che ti facesse ancor fedele
> la fede, sanza qual ben far non basta.'
> *Purgatorio* XXII.55-60

Dante's periphrasis for Virgilio (XXII.57) is a unique and explicit reference to the *Eclogues* that foreshadows *Eclogue* IV.5-7's role in Stazio's putative conversion. Anachronistically, Virgilio seems to have read the *Thebaid* (or perhaps Giovenale recited it to him in Limbo), characterising it by its *trestizia* and observing that Statius invoked Clio, Muse of History, to assist his task (*Thebaid* I.41 and X.630; see Chapter IV). Unlike Stazio, however, Virgilio lacks divine grace and Christian revelation and so can neither read the *Thebaid* allegorically, nor understand its hidden Christian message (Grlic 1994: 81). Thus, Virgilio thought Stazio pagan and expresses his (and our) surprise that Stazio is in purgatory given the lack of evidence that the historical Statius possessed the *fede* necessary to salvation.

Virgilio's question regarding who inspired Stazio's conversion highlights the two poets' tragically differing fates, as he asks:

> Se così è, qual sole o quai candele
> ti stenebraron sì, che tu drizzasti
> poscia di retro al pescator le vele?
> *Purgatorio* XXII.60-63

Virgilio's question recalls the contrast of the sunlit purgatorial mountain in *Inferno* I and Limbo, lit by 'un foco | ch'emisperio di tenebre vincia' (*Inferno* IV.68-69), with the darkness of hell's abyss (*Inferno* IV.10-12). This darkness symbolises the spiritual darkness of sin. The light of Reason, possessed by the *magni spiriti* and symbolised in Limbo's fire, can only partially alleviate that darkness. Only Christian revelation and divine grace can illuminate it fully, just as the sun irradiates the purgatorial mountain. Virgilio's reference to St Peter, the *pescator*, emphasises the leaving behind of that spiritual darkness and the following of Christian life. The directing of one's sails recalls both *Convivio* II.I.1 and *Purgatorio* I.1-3, in which Dante's *ingenium* is figured as a ship ready 'correr miglior acque' (see Chapters II.5 and IV.5), symbolising the causative link between living virtuously as a Christian and being able to undertake the purgatorial journey. It resonates with Ulysses's own directing of his sails, failing to follow 'retro al pescator' and usurping divine authority. Moreover, it recalls the *Thebaid*'s prologue, in which Statius utilises a verb typically used of sails rather than musical instruments ('nunc *tendo* chelyn', I.33, my italics), and its conclusion, 'et mea iam longo meruit ratis aequore portum' (XII.810). This connects Stazio's poetic endeavour to his spiritual one.

Ironically, Stazio's response confirms that Virgilio's poetry is the *sole* or *candele* that led Stazio to be illumined by divine grace, just as Dante wishes to lead others to the light. Stazio explains that Virgilio first guided him 'verso Parnaso a ber ne le sue grotte' (*Purgatorio* XXII.65), attributing to Virgilio his own inspiration, just as the historical Vergil inspired both the historical Statius and Dante. Parnassus was the mountain sacred to Apollo whence the fountain of poetic inspiration was said to spring, as Dante makes clear elsewhere in the *Commedia*. The imagery of water and quenching of thirst resonates also with Dante's paraphrase of the Samaritan woman

(*Purgatorio* XXI.1-4) and with Statius's account of Hypsipyle in *Thebaid* IV, who saved the parched Argive army through showing them where water could be found. This further connects the historical Statius's poetry to Dante's portrayal of Stazio and renders Stazio's appearance in this terrace particularly appropriate (Ariani 2009: 200). Moreover, Statius's early commentator Lactantius uses *sitis* in describing the Argives' thirst (*In Theb.* IV.809-11), and Pseudo-Fulgentius informs us that the Argives *sitiunt*, before continuing 'Quid mirum si sitiunt qui fonte fidei carent; saecularis scientiae potus sitim non minuit, sed auget' (*Super Theb.*, lines 128-30), again resonating with the Statian canti's *sete* leitmotif. Stazio thus both alludes to the baptism he claims at *Purgatorio* XXII.88-91 and foreshadows his and Dante-pilgrim's meeting with Matelda (*Purgatorio* XXVIII) and subsequent immersion in the river Lethe before this *aqua viva* sates their thirst (XXXIII.134)*.* This demonstrates the connection between poetry and salvation, part of the 'celebration of poetry' (Kleinhenz 1988) evident in *Purgatorio* XXI-XXII and embodied in Stazio. This reaffirms Stazio as exemplum of the purgatorial journey and demonstration of poetry's salvific potential.

Stazio emphasises Virgilio's tragic inability to enjoy Christian revelation through describing his poetic forebear as:

> […] come quei che va di notte,
> che porta il lume dietro e sé non giova,
> ma dopo sé fa le persone dotte,
> *Purgatorio* XXII.67-69

Stazio later affirms this debt to Virgilio, who has 'levato […] il coperchio│che m'ascondeva quanto bene io dico' (*Purgatorio* XXII.94-95), the metaphorical *coperchio* recalling the *integumentum* under which pagan poetry's allegorical meaning was thought to be hidden. This powerful simile and later metaphor placed almost chiastically in Stazio's speech reflect the medieval sentiment, based on Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana* (n, 40-42), that 'Christian exegetes' could search for and find '"Egyptian gold and silver" in pagan writings' (Kleinhenz 1988: 27), despite their pagan authors' inability to discern such truths. This recalls Dante's own discussion of the four senses and their application to classical literature (*Convivio* II.I.4) and his own finding

of such *oro* (*Convivio* II.XII.5) (see Chapter I.3). As lantern-bearer, Dante figures Virgilio as John the Baptist, preparing the way for Stazio and ultimately for Beatrice. This is appropriate given Stazio's earlier figuration as Christ and Beatrice's own Christological depiction. Moreover, it demonstrates that Vergil is the foremost representative of the great classical culture destined by Providence to pave the way for Christianity (Pasquali 1937-1946: xxvii).

Stazio attributes his Christian conversion to Vergil's fourth *Eclogue*, claiming to have first been *allumina[to] appresso Dio* when Virgilio said:

> Secol si rinova;
> torna giustizia e primo tempo umano,
> e progenïe scende da ciel nova.
> *Purgatorio* XXII.70-72

Stazio paraphrases Vergil's prophecy that:

> magnus ab integro saeclorum nascitur ordo.
> iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna,
> iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto.
> *Eclogue* IV.5-7

Vergil foretells the birth of a child who will bring peace and a return to the 'Golden Age' so desired by Dante. According to some scholars, the child is that of Asinius Pollio, and the *virgo* of which it speaks, Astraea/Justice. Dante also interpreted the *virgo* as Astraea/Justice in *Epistola* VII and *Monarchia* I.XI.I (see Chapter II.6-7). However, since a speech attributed to the first Christian Roman Emperor, Constantine (the *Oratio Constantini*, transmitted in Eusebius's *Vita Constantini*), the *Eclogue* was often seen as a messianic prophecy.[110] Dante manipulates Vergil's lines sufficiently to demonstrate their potential Christian interpretation, substituting Vergil's *Saturnia regna* with the wider *primo tempo umano* as 'primal justice' was humankind's condition 'in the prelapsarian Eden' (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Purg.* XXII.70-72). Stazio reiterates his significant debt to Virgilio in the famous anaphora 'Per te poeta fui, per te cristiano' (XXII.73), emphasising the power of Vergil's writing to inspire in poetry and moral virtue, even in Christian faith. Stazio thus acts as vehicle of praise for Vergil.

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[110] On Christian exegesis of Vergil's fourth *Eclogue*, see Courcelle 1957.

Stazio situates his conversion to Christianity in historical reality with reference to this *Eclogue*, observing:

> Già era 'l mondo tutto quanto pregno
> de la vera credenza, seminata
> per li messaggi de l'etterno regno
>   *Purgatorio* XXII.76-78

Stazio's description of Christianity as 'la vera credenza', recalls in opposition Virgilio's own former belief in 'dèi falsi e bugiardi' (*Inferno* I.72), which he believed incorrectly that Stazio shared. The fertility allusions in 'tutto quanto pregno' and 'seminata' demonstrate Christianity's divinely sanctioned growth and create a sense of the fruitfulness and blessedness it can bring. They resonate with the images of fertility in Stazio's earlier praise of Vergil's poetry, reinforcing its value and the tragedy of Virgilio's damnation.

Stazio attributes his conversion to the concord of the fourth *Eclogue*'s message with that of the 'nuovi predicanti'– the Apostles (*Purgatorio* XXII.80); the Christians' moral example; and their admirable endurance of persecution at Domitian's hands, which moved him *lagrimar* (XXII.82-84). Eusebius and Tertullian both attest to the Christians' persecution (Pasquini and Quaglio 1982: 379), lending authority to Stazio's explanation. Dante's early commentator Benvenuto considers Stazio's account believable (although he does not opine as to its truth), averring that Statius saw 'tot miracula facta per martyres quos Domitianus frater Titi crudelissime persecutus est, cum christianum nomen semper magis cresceret' (1375-1380: *ad Purg.* XXI.7-13). The possible appeal of the Christians' *dritti costumi* (*Purgatorio* XXII.86) to a man Benvenuto calls 'honestissimus et moralissimus in omnibus suis dictis' (*ad Purg.* XXI.7-13) is understandable. Dante thus renders Stazio's conversion account plausible. The final part of Stazio's speech confirms his conversion, baptism (necessary to wash the taint of Original Sin from his soul), and Nicodemite Christianity. Stazio explains:

> E pria ch'io conducessi i greci a' fiumi
> di Tebe poetando, ebb' io battesmo;
> ma per paura chiuso cristian fu'mi,
>
> lungamente mostrando paganesmo;
>   *Purgatorio* XXII.88-91

Stazio's Nicodemite Christianity fulfils the *Commedia*'s narrative need because it explains the lack of historical records confirming the historical Statius's Christianity (Clogan 2009: 87).

Stazio's explanation of his penance for *accidia* also reiterates his status as Everyman sinner. Per Dante's divine justice, Stazio's late conversion and subsequent failure to profess his faith could not be taken lightly, however understandable. Stazio confirms that 'questa tepidezza il quarto cerchio │ cerchiar mi fé più che 'l quarto centesmo' (*Purgatorio* XXII.92-93). This *tepidezza* recalls Apocalypsis Ioannis 3.14-17, in which Christ commanded that a letter be written criticising certain Christians as *tepidi,* and Paul's apocryphal description of seeing the souls of those who were 'neque calidi neque frigidi' submerged in a fiery river (Visio Pauli 31). Etymologically, Statius's name even lent itself to this putative *accidia*, and Dante echoes it in *stette* (*Purgatorio* XXII.85), implying that Statius 'was a "dallier"' (Kleinhenz 1988: 31). This may well have helped inspire Dante's choice of Stazio as the classical poet who concealed his Christianity, rather than another canonical poet. Nevertheless, Stazio's explanation does not assist us in understanding why Dante chose to put a classical poet in *Purgatorio* and why that poet was Statius.

III.5.1 NARRATIVE/TEXTUAL EXIGENCIES

Much of the reason for Stazio's Christianity surely lies in the *Commedia*'s narrative framework. Dante seems to hint that he fabricates Stazio's conversion account as Stazio utilises 'the language of portraiture (and not of history)' when he promises: 'perché veggi mei ciò ch'io disegno, | a colorare stenderò la mano' (*Purgatorio* XXII.74-75; Hollander 2000-2007: *ad loc.*). Dante had good reason for doing so. Dante's commentator Benvenuto pragmatically claimed centuries ago that Stazio is Christian because 'subtiliter et necessario poeta hoc fingit, quia multa erant tractanda per eum quae non poterat sine poeta christiano, ut patebit in XXV capitulo et alibi' (1375-1380: *ad Purg.* XXI.7-13).

Dante could not and did not want to make Virgilio Christian and/or the sole guide in these later canti, both because the historical Vergil's Christianity was

chronologically impossible (he died in 19 BCE), and because he wanted to throw into relief the contrast between the great pagan poets, limited due to their lack of Christian revelation, and Dante himself, the first Christian *poeta*. Moreover, if Dante had extended Virgilio the same divine grace that sees Vergil's character Ripheus (*Aeneid* II.426-28) in paradise (*Paradiso* XX), Dante-pilgrim would have met Virgilio in *Purgatorio* or *Paradiso* and lacked a guide familiar with *Inferno*. Dante wished to keep Beatrice until Dante-pilgrim was almost ready to enter paradise, without besmirching her with more than a fleeting visit to hell. Thus, the *Commedia*'s narrative requires a Christian as intermediate and/or supplementary guide between Virgilio and Beatrice, to provide the explanations that a pagan cannot. Stazio must therefore explain the *ombra*'s readiness to ascend and the accompanying earthquake and singing (*Purgatorio* XXI), and, as Benvenuto notes, the soul's generation (*Purgatorio* XXV). Without such an intermediate guide, Virgilio would have struggled to answer Dante-pilgrim's theological questions, as he lacks Christian revelation. This would have diminished Virgilio further than Dante wished.

Nonetheless, Stazio notably merely assists Virgilio by answering such questions, rather than replacing him entirely. Beatrice charged Virgilio with being Dante-pilgrim's guide during her divinely-sanctioned visit to Limbo to procure Virgilio's aid (*Inferno* II), whereas Stazio knows nothing of her. Virgilio remains Dante-pilgrim's *duca* until his role has been fulfilled, when the poets speak for the last time outside Eden's entrance (*Purgatorio* XXVII.127-42). Until that time, Stazio remains subordinate to Virgilio, generally positioned behind him and in front of Dante-pilgrim, until they traverse the flames outside Eden and Virgilio asks Stazio to follow Dante. It would have detracted from the significance of Dante-pilgrim's symbolic crossing of those flames and of Beatrice's appearance, had she, rather than Stazio, joined Virgilio and Dante-pilgrim further down the purgatorial mountain. Unable to enter Eden, Virgilio leaves Dante-pilgrim and Stazio to continue their journey with Beatrice.

Dante-pilgrim's secondary guide had to be a post-Vergilian poet, as Dante-poet sought to create a chain of poetic succession between the pagan, classical poets, and

himself, the first Christian *poeta*. In order to create an intermediate link in that chain, and because Dante-poet wished to demonstrate poetry's value, its hidden meaning, and its salvific potential, that poet had to be a Christian converted through reading, a powerful counter-example to Francesca. It is particularly important that this converted poet appears here in *Purgatorio*, frequently described as the cantica of poetry. Theoretically, Dante could have chosen any of his Latin canon to become a converted Christian, except Vergil himself. Yet arguably Lucan and Ovid were unsuitable for this role despite their chronological appropriateness, since Lucan was a suicide and Ovid seen as 'Venus' clerk' due to his lascivious writing (Brugnoli 1961: 119).[111] Conversely, Statius was not only skilled in poetry but a moral man, whose poetry's moral, didactic intention made him particularly suitable as a guide (see Chapters I.4.1 and III.IV). This rendered him the most apposite *poeta* for this role. The dearth of detailed biographical information available regarding the historical Statius also resulted in the acceptability of *accessus* writers inventing 'facts' about him and meant that there was nothing to contradict Dante's depiction of Stazio as a Christian (see Chapter I.4.1).

Dante also wanted this character to act both as figure for himself in his journey through the afterlife and in his praise of Vergil, and as counterpoint to Virgilio-character, increasing that praise and emphasising pagan poetry's limitations. Statius was ideal for that role not only because he acknowledged his debt to Vergil in the *Thebaid*'s closing lines (Barolini 1984: 258), leading to the *accessus* tradition's presentation of Statius as *simia Virgilii*, linked to Vergil by their names' similar etymology (Weppler 2016: 35-36, 63; see Chapter I.4.1), but also due to Dante's obvious esteem for Statius's own epic poetry (see Chapters II and IV).

III.5.2 MEDIEVAL INSPIRATION FOR STAZIO'S CHRISTIANITY

However, while Dante Christianised Stazio-character to satisfy the *Commedia*'s narrative and textual exigencies, it seems unlikely that Dante completely altered history

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[111] However, see section III.5.2 regarding a medieval report of Ovid's Christian conversion.

without some basis, however minimal (Landi 1913, 1914, 1921; and Padoan 1977).[112] Consequently, Dante probably found inspiration for his account of Stazio's conversion externally. Despite stating that Dante 'hoc fingit', Benvenuto even confirms that Dante could conclude Statius was a Christian 'ex multis indiciis' (1375-1380: *ad. Purg.* XXI.7-13).

Dante may have been inspired by a medieval legend regarding the historical Statius's Christianity that we have yet to discover. This is unlikely since Lactantius Placidus, the *In principio* commentary, and even the allegorising Pseudo-Fulgentius are silent in this regard, as are writers of Statian *accessus* prior to Dante.[113] Dante's early commentators also do not suggest that Dante made use of a prior legend regarding Statius's Christianity. Nevertheless, two authors almost contemporary to Dante suggest that Statius was Christian. This perhaps implies the existence of an external source mentioning Statius's Christianity that was known to both these authors and Dante but not us (cfr. Landi 1921: 212; Padoan 1977: 131-33; and Rossi 1993: 220-21). Giovanni Colonna, an Italian writer living in France, includes Statius among the Christian writers in his *De viris illustribus* (*c.*1332-*c.*1338). Yet while Colonna does not appear to have been influenced by the *Commedia*, his praise of Statius's moral fibre resembles that in the *accessus* tradition (Weppler 2016: 82-83), so we cannot determine whether and why Colonna believed Statius Christian. Francesco da Fiano writes in his *Difesa de' poeti* (*c.*1399-*c.*1404) about Statius's closet Christianity but diverges from Dante's account by claiming Statius was baptised by fire, i.e. by trial of faith (see Matt. 3.11 and Luc. 3.16), possibly alluding to martyrdom. Dante's Stazio was probably baptised by water, due to Dante's efforts to associate Stazio's baptism with 'i fiumi di Tebe' (*Purgatorio* XXII.88-91). However, Francesco may deliberately diverge from Dante, as his account seems to utilise and elaborate on Dante's (Weppler 2016: 85). Scherillo

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[112] On Stazio's Christianity as pure invention, see Brugnoli 1969: 124 and Ariani 2009: 212. Brugnoli later revised his view, concluding that there was probably some basis upon which Dante could build his fiction (1989: 127).

[113] On the discussions surrounding the historical Statius's Christianity and/or Dante's Christian Stazio in the *accessus* tradition post-Dante, see Weppler 2016: 77-82.

also reports a legend, possibly French, of Statius's martyrdom by Domitian, which, according to certain authors, led to Statius's canonisation. Scherillo believes Dante was either unaware of it or that his tale of Statius's moral weakness was intended to challenge this 'absurd legend' (1902: 498). However, no scholar has yet succeeded in identifying this legend's medieval source nor any other legend regarding Statius's Christianity.

Dante may have derived his claim from a commentary no longer available to us (Zabughin 1909: 216; Mariotti 1975: 153) or even a popular medieval tradition regarding Statius's Christianity, which was ignored by Statian *accessus* and commentary writers due to their disregard of ideas from lay traditions (Constans 1885: 132-35). However, both suggestions are impossible to prove as they rely on lack of evidence. If such a commentary were widely available in Dante's lifetime, it surely would have left some trace on other *accessus* and commentaries, particularly the *In principio*, which provides Christianised readings of several Statian passages. It is also unlikely that a popular tradition regarding Statius's Christianity would go entirely unmentioned in the Statian *accessus* tradition, because *accessus* often present popular ideas on a particular subject in order to argue against them (Weppler 2016: 77). In any event, scholars and my own manuscript research (see Introduction, section 3) have found no trace of any medieval legend regarding Statius's Christianity prior to Dante, nor of Statius's martyrdom. Thus, it remains unlikely, although not impossible, that Dante drew on an existing medieval legend regarding the historical Statius's Christianity.

Dante was probably inspired by a similar medieval legend regarding conversion, which he adapted to refer to Stazio. A notable similarity exists between Stazio's claim to have lived during Domitian's reign and been secretly Christian for fear of persecution, and a marginal note to this effect regarding Ovid contained in an anonymous eleventh-century commentary to his *Metamorphoses*. This claims Ovid lived during Domitian's reign and was secretly Christian for fear of persecution (Landi 1921: 212). Whilst this manuscript is problematic (Rossi 1993: 219-20), other medieval

documents suggest Ovid's possible Christian conversion at Tomis (Hexter 2011: 306-08). While Pseudo-Ovid's *De Vetula* does not claim 'Ovid' converted, it 'testifies to the Christian story' and suggests 'Ovid' has repented his licentiousness (Hexter 2011: 307), much like Stazio. Medieval claims of a pagan author's Christian conversion are common, with Seneca's conversion in his final moments constituting another (Beard 2014). Thus, Dante probably felt able to Christianise Stazio in this tradition.

Stazio's claim to have been converted following reading Vergil's 'messianic' fourth *Eclogue* was probably inspired by Vincent de Beauvais' tale of three Romans becoming Christian after reading it (*Speculum Historiale* XI.50), as many Dantists observe.[114] It demonstrates poetry's salvific potential, as Stazio's place in the *Commedia* does (Bàrberi Squarotti 1992: 170). Dante may also have found inspiration in Augustine's and Lactantius's commentary on this *Eclogue*, which highlight its hidden Christian message (Courcelle 1957: *passim*), and in Augustine's writings regarding conversion and salvation, particularly the *Confessions* (Grlic 1994: 74-75).

III.5.3 Textual clues in Statius's Poetry

Dante may well have identified possible Christian interpretations hidden within certain passages in the *Thebaid* and considered that they made Stazio's putative Christianity believable (I do not think it likely Dante truly believed Statius Christian). Dante may well have done so unaided or, as I believe, with the assistance of Lactantius and the *In principio* commentary to the *Thebaid*.

There has been much debate regarding the existence and location of these 'Christian' passages. Certain scholars deny the existence of any Christian truths in the *Thebaid*, arguing that Dante informs us that there are none via Virgilio's statement at *Purgatorio* XXII.55-63, which Albini (1902: 561-65) and Parodi (1902: 313) take as a periphrasis for the entire *Thebaid*.[115] Other scholars assert that hidden Christian truths

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[114] See, for example, Galletti 1910: 454, Scherillo 1913: 241, Ronconi 1965: 566, Padoan 1977: 131, Rossi 1993: 219, and Grlic 1994: 74-75. On resonances between the *Commedia* and Vincent's *Speculum Historiale* in general, see, for example, Pasquini and Quaglio 1982: *passim*.

[115] For example, Albini 1902: 561; Parodi 1902: 312-13; Galletti 1910: 453; and Brugnoli 1969: 124.

can be found in the *Thebaid* but only after the specific point in the *Thebaid* at which Stazio claims to have been baptised (*Purgatorio* XXII.88-91). Verrall asserts that the *Thebaid*'s dedication to Domitian was clearly written by a pagan, while the *Achilleid*'s could be addressed to 'Christ as the true spiritual sovereign', implying that Statius converted while writing the *Thebaid* (1913: 153-80, esp. 166). Verrall avers that Stazio refers in *Purgatorio* XXII.88-91 to *Thebaid* VII, when the Greeks reached the rivers Asopus and Ismenus, due to the linguistic similarities between this passage, particularly the simile comparing the Greeks to cattle hesitating to cross the Asopus, and Stazio's description of his conversion and delayed baptism in *Purgatorio* XXII (1913: 181-203). Both Verrall (1913: 195-98) and Kleinhenz (1988: 31) observe that both passages resonate with the etymological meaning of Statius's name as 'dallier', implying the *accidia* inherent in Stazio's late conversion and closet Christianity. Kleinhenz also asserts that 'the natural association of rivers, water, and baptism' provides 'an artistic and poetic reason' for the connection with *Thebaid* VII (1988: 31). Wetherbee considers *Thebaid* VII as a possible point for Stazio's baptism but prefers the Argives' arrival at Langia in *Thebaid* IV.823-30, due to its association with pollution and purification (2008: 183). Like *Thebaid* VII, *Thebaid* IV also demonstrates the connection between rivers, water, and baptism, and the Argives' quenching of their thirst resonates with the Samaritan woman at the well and the *aqua viva* of divine revelation (see section III.2.2).

However, Stazio's Nicodemite Christianity provides a convenient reason for both the *Thebaid*'s outward display of paganism, and the lack of evidence of the historical Statius's Christianity. If we apply *Convivio* II.I.4's methods of reading, the Christian truth of the poem could be hidden under its *falsa matera*, much as it was thought to be hidden in Vergil's fourth *Eclogue*. Virgilio's statement is easily explained as Virgilio himself cannot 'read allegorically' and find Christian signs in the *Thebaid* (Grlic 1994: 81), much as he cannot find them in his own poetry. Thus, it remains worthwhile for us to look for such signs in the *Thebaid*. Like Heslin (2015: 5), I do not believe that *Purgatorio* XXII.88-91 signifies that there is a particular point in the

Thebaid after which Christian interpretations may be identified, but that Dante instead suggests the common association of rivers with baptism. More specifically, Dante wishes to associate the waters of baptism with the rivers of the *Thebaid* (Grlic 1994: 81). Accordingly, like Lewis, Grlic, Ramelli, Clogan, and Heslin, I treat *Purgatorio* XXII.88-91 as a periphrasis for the whole *Thebaid* and consider below passages throughout Statian epic to which Dante could have applied a Christianising interpretation. In so doing, I also discuss extracts from Statius's medieval commentators which imply Christian readings of particular passages of the *Thebaid* and which may also have helped inspire Dante's Christianisation of Stazio.

The historical Statius's unusual treatment of the Olympian gods may have partially inspired Dante, particularly as it diverges significantly from their treatment in the *Aeneid*. Statius portrays Jupiter consistently as omnipotent father of the universe (e.g. *pater omnipotens*, *Thebaid* I.248) and upholder of moral order, much like the Christian God, while he portrays the other Olympian gods comparatively negatively (Lewis 1956: 136). While Vergil calls Jupiter *pater omnipotens* (e.g. *Aeneid* I.60), he does not act as 'executor' and 'guardian' of implacable Fatum, as Statius's Jupiter does (cfr. 'graue et inmutabile sanctis │ pondus adest uerbis, et uocem fata sequuntur', *Thebaid* I.212-13; Vessey 1973: 82). Just as the Old Testament God meted out punishment, Statius's Jupiter destroys Oedipus's line as punishment for its evildoing (*Thebaid* I.240-43), although Jupiter's actions may be motivated by 'deep-seated resentment' for Argos and Thebes and he 'over-estimates' his moral authority (Ganiban 2007: 52-55). Statius's Jupiter is also connected expressly with Statius's 'great ethical personifications Virtus, Pietas, and Clementia' (Lewis 1956: 137), which may appear Christian (Ramelli 1999: 422-24). Conversely, Statius's other Olympians feature little in the *Thebaid* as 'independent entities', instead becoming 'allegories of various powers or emotions' (Vessey 1973: 86). Statius's portrayal of the gods thus resembles their treatment by the Stoics, especially Seneca. Interestingly, Seneca too was believed to have been sympathetic to, or influenced by, Christianity (Vessey 1973: 311) and even rumoured to have converted to Christianity (Beard 2014).

Statius also implicitly criticises the Olympian gods through the remarks of the *Thebaid*'s characters, although these remarks must be treated with caution as they often verge on impiety and are spoken by complex, potentially negative figures, including Capaneus and Manto, who appear in *Inferno* (Ramelli 1999: 419-24). Nevertheless, such remarks resonate with Dante's Virgilio's description of the gods as 'dèi falsi e bugiardi' (*Inferno* I.72). Additionally, Statius's Dis and his Furies, particularly Tisiphone, resemble 'Satan and the devils' (Hankey 2007: 46), playing a role both in punishing evildoers and in the *Thebaid*'s civil war, much as Dante depicts Satan in *Inferno* (see Chapter IV.2-3). Accordingly, while Statius's presentation of the Olympian gods is unlikely to have caused Dante to believe that Statius was a Christian, it may have encouraged him to believe that Stazio's Christianity was plausible.

Potentially Christian implications have also been identified in several key passages in the *Thebaid*. Fittingly, the earliest such passage falls among the criticisms of the gods Ramelli mentions. At *Thebaid* III.661, in a speech inveighing against the foolishness of invocations to the gods and augury, the blasphemous Capaneus exclaims 'primus in orbe deos fecit timor'. Statius's early commentator Lactantius observes 'negat deos ulla re alia celebrari nisi timore mortalium' (*In Theb.* III.661). Benvenuto includes Capaneus's remark among the 'multis indiciis' to Statius's Christianity: 'Fuit etiam Statius ausus dicere in maiori: Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor' (Benvenuto da Imola 1375-1380: *ad Purg.* XXI.7-13). Capaneus's remarks must be treated with caution as he is *superum contemptor* (*Thebaid* III.602), although this fear created the 'dèi falsi e bugiardi' (*Inferno* I.72) rather than the Christian God (Landi 1913: 254-55). I have also identified a gloss in the *In principio* commentary that may well justify Benvenuto's inclusion of this line as an *indicium* to Stazio's Christianity. After explaining that this notion originally derives from Epicurus and providing some examples, the commentator avers of an effigy created to a dead loved one: 'Diabolus ergo uidens oportunitatem seducendi per illud simulacrum loquebatur et credebatur deus esse. Inde dicitur idolium quasi ydos dolum et species doloris, ideo species dolum dolor' (MS Additional 16380, fol. 161^r; MS Ricc. 842, fol. 35^{ra-rb}). Given the

commandments against worshipping other gods and graven images (Exodus 20.2-5 and Deuteronomium 5.6-9), Dante may well have identified a similar sentiment either directly in Capaneus's invective or in the *In principio*'s gloss, adding impetus to Dante's decision to Christianise Stazio.

Dante may also have identified a Christian resonance in Tiresias's invocation: 'triplicis mundi summum, quem scire nefastum. | illum sed taceo' (*Thebaid* IV.516-17). In his gloss to *Thebaid* IV.516-17, Lactantius identifies this deity as *demiourgos/demiurge*, the creator-god of Plato's *Timaeus* (Solomon 2012), often misread as Demogorgon due to Lactantius's use of the accusative case.[116] Lactantius avers: 'dicit [autem] deum δημιουργόν, cuius scire non licet nomen' before quoting from philosophers who mention the *demiourgos*, including Pythagoras and Plato (*Timaeus* 38 C ff.), and discussing the unknowability of God's name (*In Theb.* IV.516-17). Many of the manuscripts I reviewed in Italy gloss *Thebaid* IV.516-17 with *Demogorgon* or its variants, often above or near the word *summum*.[117] The next part of Lactantius's explanation is particularly interesting, as he adds:

> Sed cum magi uellent uirtutes eius, ut putabant, [sese] comprehendere, singulas appellationes, quasi per naturarum potestates, abusiuo modo designarunt et quasi plurimorum numinum nobilitate Deum appellare conati sunt, quasi ab affectu cuiusque dei ductis uocabulis, sicut Orpheus fecit et Moyses, Dei summi antistes, et Esaias et his similes.
>
> *In Theb.* IV.516-17

Lactantius ends his gloss by expressing that one cannot know God's name 'quoniam res ineffabilis comprehendi non potest'. While Lactantius also mentions classical figures, if Dante were familiar with Lactantius's gloss he may well have honed in upon Lactantius's mention of Moses and Isaiah and so thought it possible to find a hidden Christian message in *Thebaid* IV.516-17. Lactantius's statement regarding this god's ineffability surely would have resonated with Dante, since Dante expresses the ineffability of God and Dante-pilgrim's otherworld vision throughout the *Commedia*.[118]

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[116] On manuscript variations of Lactantius's gloss, see Sweeney 1997.
[117] BAV, MSS Barb. lat. 106, Chigi H.VI.210, Pal. lat. 1690 which adds *dominum*, Reg. lat. 1375, Reg. lat. 1713, Vat. Lat. 3278, and Vat. Lat. 3280 which adds 'id est deum, celum, terre, inferni'; BSV, MS No. 41; BNCF, MS II.II.55; and BML, MS Ashb. 1032.
[118] On the ineffability topos in the *Commedia*, see Ledda 2012: *passim*.

The *In principio* commentary's gloss to *Thebaid* IV.516-17 is more significant still, particularly as I have identified an addition to its standard gloss in BSV, MS No. 41 that provides an explicitly Christian interpretation of these lines. The standard *In principio* commentary glosses 'illum summum deum triplicis mundi' (*Thebaid* IV.516) as:

> hoc dicit propter triplicem diuisionem que fuit inter filios Saturni. Demogorgontem significat quem poete dicebant cuncta creasse. cuius nomen nullus audebat proferre et illum solum dicebant regnare super alios deos
>
> MS Additional 16380, fol. 164ʳ; MS Ricc. 842, fols 46ᵛᵇ-47ʳᵃ

The Demogorgon is said *cuncta creasse* like the Christian God. The *In principio* then associates the Demogorgon with the *anima mundi*, glossing 'quem scire nefandum' as follows:

> Philosophi uero ad philosophiam transtulerunt et per hoc mundanam animam uoluerunt intelligi que uegetat omnia et praeposita est omnibus naturis, de cuius semine firmamentum, solem, lunam, et ceteras stellas natas esse dicebant
>
> *Ibid.*

It adds later that 'Sciebant tamen unum esse deum, cuius potentia prius erat ceteris' (*ibid.*), quoting an example from Ovid. This association of the Demogorgon with the *anima mundi* derives from Chalcidius's gloss to the *Timaeus* (de Angelis 1997: 112-13). While this interpretation is Platonising rather than Christianising, Chalcidius was thought to be a Christian. Moreover, Christianity and Platonism were combined in Bonaventure's teachings and those of Santa Croce's *studium* (Davis 1984: 146). Thus, this Platonising interpretation may well have been compatible with the existence of a hidden Christian truth in *Thebaid* IV.516-17.

The individual copying the *In principio* gloss for *Thebaid* IV.516-17 into BSV, MS No. 41 certainly saw some similarity between the Demogorgon and the Christian God, as after including the standard *In principio* gloss at fol. 44ʳ, it adds for *illum* (my transcription and emphasis):

> Alii de hoc breuiter scribentes dicunt quod olim apud gentiles non erat fas dicere de summo deo quem Demoiergon philosophi ac poete appellabant, quasi solum scientem, uolentem et potentem. *Qui uero in nostra fide trinus et unus omnipotens deus est.*

Even if Dante were not familiar with a manuscript containing this addition to the gloss, he may well have recognised the similarity between this triple god and the Holy Trinity.

Like Lactantius, both BSV, MS 41 fol. 44^r's gloss and the standard *In principio* gloss also express the sentiment that man cannot fully comprehend God, averring 'diuinitas namque incomprehensibilis est iuxta illud accedet homo ad cor altum et exaltabitur deus' (MS Additional 16380, fol. 164^r; MS Ricc. 842, fol. 47ra). This too would have resonated with Dante, even if it is not unique to Christianity. Thus, Dante may well have interpreted *Thebaid* IV.516-17 and its apparent reference to the Demogorgon as plausibly containing a concealed Christian truth.

Nearly two centuries after Dante, in his short *Vita Statii* (fols 1^r-3^r) accompanying his commentary to the *Silvae* in a 1494 autograph manuscript (BNCF, MS Magl. Cl.VII.973), Politian avers:

> ad religionem Christianam ipsi applicanda uersiculo, ut arbitror, quodam ex Thebaide Statii adductus est in quo Tiresias 'Et triplicis' inquit 'mundi summum quem scire nefandum est. Illum sed taceo prohibit. Tranquille senectus'. Hoc, ille de antiquissimo deorum Demogorgone intellegit. atque hunc ipsum locum, quo adductus fuerit, ipsemet noster Etruscus poeta quasi digito ostendit.
>
> fol. 3^r

Politian does not consider the possibility that Dante took this information from a historical source (Weppler 2016: 86). Instead, Politian is convinced that Dante wrongly interpreted *Thebaid* IV.516-17's invocation to mean that Statius was Christian (Mariotti 1994; Heslin 2015: 512). Politian may well be right that Dante saw a hidden Christian invocation here and that it partially inspired Stazio's Christianity, but I doubt that Dante believed that Statius was Christian because of it.

The humanist Pomponius Laetus (1428-1498) also identifies a possible Christian resonance in *Thebaid* IV.516-17 in his commentary to the *Thebaid* (contained in BAV, MS Vat. lat. 3279, fols 3^r-198^v), although he does not comment on Statius's Christianity in the *Vita Statii* accompanying it (fols 1^r-2^r). After glossing 'triplicis mundi' as 'Celi, terrae et inferni' and 'summum quem scire nefastum' as 'conditorem et patrem rerum omnium', the margin of fol 57^r contains a longer note adjacent to *Thebaid* IV.516-17. Pomponius avers, *inter alia*, 'Hoc nomen sanctissimum et toti antiquitati nomen incognitum nobis aperuit Paulus apostolus cum ait "in nomine Iesu omne genu flectatur celestium, terrestrium et infernorum"'. Thus, he repeats Paul's words in Ad

Philippenses 2.10 (Zabughin 1909: 214-15; Weppler 2016: 87). The fact that other authors identified a Christian resonance in *Thebaid* IV.516-17 supports the possibility that Dante did too.

Returning to Dante himself, perhaps the most popular Christian implication that Dantists suggest Dante may have found in the *Thebaid* involves Statius's Ara Clementiae (*Thebaid* XII.481-519). Statius explains that:

> urbe fuit media nulli concessa potentum
> ara deum, mitis posuit Clementia sedem,
> et miseri fecere sacram; sine supplice numquam
> illa nouo, nulla damnauit uota repulsa.
> auditi quicumque rogant, noctesque diesque
> ire datum et solis numen placare querelis.
> parca superstitio: non turea flamma nec altus
> accipitur sanguis: lacrimis altaria sudant,
> maestarumque super libamina secta comarum
> pendent et uestes mutata sorte relictae.
> *Thebaid* XII.481-90

The Argive women seek solace at this altar following Creon's impious refusal to allow them to bury their dead. The 'immediate background' to Statius's depiction of Clementia is not Christianity but Senecan stoicism, most fully expounded in Seneca's *De Clementia*, with Seneca too believed to have been sympathetic to or influenced by Christianity (Vessey 1973: 311). Much as Pietas and Virtus can be equated with their Christian equivalents, the personified virtue Clementia appears comparable to Christian Misericordia.[119] Statius's description suggests that 'mercy, relief, and order' can be attained here (Weppler 2016: 99), much as they are in Christianity.

Dante may well have been encouraged to identify Christian resonances in Statius's Ara Clementiae by the Statian commentary tradition. Lactantius equates this altar to that of the Unknown God in Athens (Ελέου βωμόν), which he says Cicero called *Misericordiae* and Terence mentioned (*In Theb.* XII.481-82). Many scholars note the similarity between Lactantius's gloss and St Paul's reference to the Athenian Altar

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[119] On these personified virtues and their comparability to Christian virtues, see Lewis 1956: 137; and Ramelli 1999: 422-24.

of the Unknown God in Actus Apostolorum 17.23.[120] Landi notes three manuscripts

containing Lactantius's gloss with an additional marginal note citing St Paul's speech to

Dionysius the Areopagite, confirming this Athenian altar was effectively to the Christian

God (BML, MSS Plut. 38.5 and 38.6, and BSV, MS No. 41). In both MS Plut. 38.6 and

BSV, MS No. 41, this marginal note derives from the *In principio* commentary (see also

MS Ricc. 842, fol. 106[va]).[121] MS No. 41's glossator first glosses 'ara deum' as 'hanc

deus ignotus habebat' in fol. 147[r]'s left-hand margin, before writing the relevant note as

a gloss in the right-hand margin. After a brief description of the Altar's founding in

Athens, it reads:

> Cum beatus Paulus Athenas predicaturus aduenisset, inuenit
> Dionisium Aripagitam uirum prudentissimum. Quem cum non
> potuisset conuincere, duxit eum per singulas aras deorum
> inquirendo cuius esset. Tandem ad hanc aram peruenit et
> inquisiuit cuius esset. Cui Dionisius, 'Ara est ignoti dei.' Tunc
> beatus Paulus, 'Quem ignotum appellas, solus ille notus est.' Et
> sermonem suum sic incepit, 'Notus in Iudea deus' et cetera.
> fol. 147[r][122]

The glossator adds that Oedipus 'Ueniens […] ad aram misericordie purgatus est'

(*ibid.*), in a further Christian resonance.

Dante may also have encountered a similar comparison by the medieval French

philosopher-theologian Abelard.[123] In *Theologia Christiana* (*c.*1125) III.45, Abelard

quotes *Thebaid* XII.481-82 when discussing Actus Apostolorum 17.23. Heslin believes

Abelard to be Dante's probable source for this resemblance, although Dante's

familiarity with Abelard remains controversial (2015: 523-25). In any event, Abelard's

comparison demonstrates that medieval authors did identify such a resemblance, as

the slightly later author Armannino does in his *Fiorita* (<1350), which contains a

rewriting of the Theban legends (Savi-Lopez 1905: xxii). If Dante also identified the

resemblance between the two altars, either alone or with the help of Statius's

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[120] See, for example, Landi 1913, 1914, and 1921: all *passim*; Padoan 1977: *passim*; Rossi 1993: 217ff.; Picone 2001: 344-45; and Clogan 2009: 90-98.

[121] MS Additional 16380 finishes at *Thebaid* XII.81.

[122] Reproduced in H. Anderson 2009: vol. III, 69.

[123] On the connection between Abelard's comparison and the *In principio* gloss to *Thebaid* XII.481-82, see de Angelis 1997: 122-23.

commentators and/or Abelard, it would surely have catalysed his decision to Christianise Stazio.

The actions of the few virtuous characters in the *Thebaid* may also have encouraged Dante's Christianisation of Stazio. Certain Statian characters, including Coroebus and Menoeceus, sacrifice themselves for the greater good like Christ (G. Steinberg 2013: 484-85; and Heslin 2015: 520-21). In *Thebaid* I, Coroebus offers his life as penance for killing Apollo's serpent that was terrorising Argos, in a further example of the opposition between the 'diabolic' gods and Virtus, Pietas, and Clementia (Lewis 1956: 136-37). Yet Menoeceus's selfless suicide to ensure Thebes' victory in *Thebaid* X is the *Thebaid*'s 'highest example' of *pietas* (Vessey 1973: 117) and self-sacrifice and is 'represented in terms far closer to Christian hope' (Lewis 1956: 138; see also Heslin 2015: 521). Menoeceus's divinely-inspired act of virtue resembles 'something like a doctrine of Grace' (Lewis 1956: 138). Jupiter even rewards Menoeceus's spirit, which ascends straight to Jupiter's feet upon the hero's death (*Thebaid* X.781-82), a detail particularly resembling Christian teaching (Hankey 2007: 46). Nevertheless, Menoeceus does not seem to have captured medieval readers' attention (Weppler 2016: 106) and Dante does not extend the same divine grace to Menoeceus as he does Vergil's Ripheus (*Paradiso* XX). Moreover, Menoeceus cannot truly be a *figura Christi*, as his sacrifice buys victory only for another tyrant (Weppler 2016: 108). However, Dante perhaps reflects the responsibility Statius's heroes take for their actions, as opposed to Vergil's who do not do so, in Stazio's acknowledgement of his sin (*Purgatorio* XXII.37-45) and Virgilio's refusal to acknowledge his (*Inferno* IV.34-36) and therefore in the two poet-characters' respective spiritual fates (G. Steinberg 2013: 484-88).[124]

It is possible Dante saw Statius's Theseus as a *figura Christi*. Padoan (1977) and Clogan (2009), *inter alios*, suggest that Pseudo-Fulgentius's Christian allegorisation of the *Thebaid* may have influenced Dante in this regard. For Pseudo-

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[124] On textual similarities between Stazio's account of his repentance and conversion and Statius's account of Menoeceus's death, see Weppler 2016: 104-07.

Fulgentius, Thebes represents the human soul; Polynices, Eteocles, and Creon, avarice, lust, and pride; Theseus or 'theos suus', clemency and divine goodness; and Theseus's liberation of Thebes at the *Thebaid*'s close, the soul's liberation from sin (*Super Theb.*, lines 168-77). Ronconi (1965) and Barolini (1984: 257) dismiss the likelihood of Dante's familiarity with this commentary and its influence on Dante's Christianisation of Stazio. However, allegorical readings of Theseus as a *figura Christi* were relatively widespread, with the early Dante commentator Guido da Pisa providing a similar allegorical reading for the myth of Theseus's victory over the Minotaur (*c.*1327-1328: *ad Inf.* XII.19-20). Given his familiarity with allegorical methods of reading, Dante could have arrived at such a reading himself. However, Theseus's portrayal in *Thebaid* XII is far from straightforward, and hints at further bloodshed to come (see Chapter IV.3.1). Accordingly, Dante's reading of Theseus as a *figura Christi* is doubtful and its inspiring of Stazio's Christianity seems unlikely.

Statius's virtuous women may also have contributed to Dante's decision to Christianise Stazio. Virgilio lists these women, examples of filial, uxorial, maternal, and sororal *pietas* from the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*, when Stazio asks which classical authors are in hell among Limbo's *magni spiriti* (*Purgatorio* XXII.109-14; see Chapter IV.4). Applying a moralising reading to these virtuous women, one could view them as paradigms of and exhortations to virtue, particularly in a world where that virtue was sparse. Moreover, in their grief over their departed loved ones these Statian women also recall 'l'archetipa cristiana della *mater dolorosa*' (Picone 2001a: 350-51). While such virtue and familial *pietas* were not solely Christian, it would be easy to attribute Christian sympathies to the author who depicted such exemplary women. By including such examples among the souls in Limbo and reinforcing them through their mention by Virgilio in the Statian canti rather than in *Inferno* IV, Dante also lends authority to Statius as an epic poet, and to the moral example to be taken from his poetry.

The Statian *accessus* tradition draws out these moral examples, exhortations away from vice and toward virtue. Locating Statian epic in the field of *ethica moralis sciencia*, Statian *accessus* taught that Statius's purpose was moral. Statius wished to

instruct mankind how to practise virtue and avoid vice, whether that of fraternal dispute or more general, e.g. to act as moral and/or political guide, much as Dante did in the *Commedia* (see Chapter I.4.1). Such a moral and/or political purpose was appropriate to a Christian writer and may therefore have supported Dante's decision to Christianise Stazio. However, like the historical Statius's own moral character, it need not be associated with Christianity *per se.* Conversely, the Lincoln College *accessus* referred expressly to Proverbia XVI 32.41-46 as it spoke of the *Achilleid*'s encouragement of young men away from effeminacy and towards the spiritual arms of the Christian warrior (lines 9-11; Anderson 2009: vol.3, 22; Newlands 2012: 99; see Chapter I.4.1). This *accessus* also provides examples of virtuous characters from the *Achilleid*, in demonstration of Statius's moral aim, including Deidamia and Thetis, mentioned in *Purgatorio* XXII.109-14. While Dante may not have been familiar with this *accessus* specifically, Dante was able to read such texts morally and allegorically himself. While such Christian, moralising interpretations of Statius's two epics are unlikely to have convinced Dante that the historical Statius truly was Christian, they could easily have helped inspire Dante's decision to make his Stazio Christian.

Thus, it seems probable that Stazio's Christianity was for Dante more than a matter of textual exigency and pure invention. In the absence of concrete historical evidence of Statius's Christianity or of a medieval legend regarding his conversion prior to Dante, I consider it equally unlikely that Dante truly believed him Christian. I believe he considered it a plausible fiction, inspired by his own reading of the historical Statius's poetry, and by the Statian commentary and *accessus* tradition. Thus, Dante used this tradition and the pagan conversion legends mentioned earlier to provide a believable account of his character Stazio's conversion. This enabled Dante to fulfil the *Commedia*'s narrative need for an intermediate guide, and, more importantly, to both demonstrate the power of poetry and glorify Vergil and Statius. By implying that we should read the *Thebaid* as if it were written by a *chiuso cristian*, Dante also constructs 'a Christian teleology for the epic tradition' (Heslin 2015: 514). In so doing, Dante reinforces Statius's intermediate position in the chain of poetic succession between the

great epic poets Homer and Vergil, and Dante, its culmination as the first Christian *poeta*.

Virgilio's account of the many great authors who dwell eternally in Limbo (*Purgatorio* XXII.100-08) recalls both *Inferno* IV's *senno* and the beginning of that tradition in Homer. Yet Virgilio emphasises not Limbo's almost Edenic scenery with its 'prato di fresca verdura' (*Inferno* IV.111), but the *carcere cieco*'s darkness (*Purgatorio* XXII.103; cfr. *Inferno* X.58-59), highlighting these souls' deprivation of God's beatific vision. Even so, Virgilio creates a sense of conviviality between the *auctores* that we could not see in *Inferno*'s dreadful stasis and lonely self-confrontation, as he informs Stazio that 'spesse fïate ragioniam del monte' (XXII.104). This mountain is Parnassus and the references to *lattar* and *nutrice* emphasise the poetic nourishment the Muses provide.[125] They echo Stazio's claim that Virgilio led him to drink at the fount of poetic inspiration on Parnassus (*Purgatorio* XXI.64-65) and Virgilio's role as poetic *nutrice* to Stazio. However, we also remember Mount Purgatory, which these great pagan authors will never ascend to reach their own salvation, since they lack divine grace. This again foreshadows Matelda's suggestion that as they dreamt on Parnassus the poets perhaps dreamt of Eden (*Purgatorio* XXVIII.139-44). Thus, Dante re-emphasises the tragically contrasting fates of Virgilio and Stazio and demonstrates the limitations of classical poetry, unillumined by divine revelation.

Dante emphasises the chain of poetic succession he creates through Stazio's Christianity, as the poet-characters progress and Dante-pilgrim avers:

> Elli givan dinanzi, e io soletto
> di retro, e ascoltava i lor sermoni,
> ch'a poetar mi davano intelletto.
> > *Purgatorio* XXII.127-29

Dante-pilgrim follows behind Virgilio and Stazio, just as Dante-poet saw himself following behind Vergil and Statius. Dante thereby shows his esteem for both classical poets but emphasises that they only inspired him *a poetar*, not in Christian faith. The *aposiopesis* of Virgilio's sermon 'obscures' poetry's relationship with salvation, but

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[125] On the Muses as wet nurses, see Cestaro 2003: 138-39.

Dante seems to create a parallel between Stazio's 'rising' through Vergil's poetry and Dante-pilgrim's eased effort in climbing to the next terrace through listening to these *savi*'s '"poetic" discourse' (*Purgatorio* XXIII.7-9; Mussio 2004: 165). Nevertheless, despite their poetic influence, Dante surpasses them both as the first Christian *poeta*.

III.6 STAZIO ON THE HUMAN SOUL

The order in which the poets travel remains the same until the poets near Eden. Much as the historical Statius followed in Vergil's *vestigia* (*Thebaid* XII.817), Stazio remains behind and subordinate to Virgilio, with Dante-pilgrim at the rear. Dante names Stazio only once in *Purgatorio* XXIII and XXIV, as the three poet-characters skirt the branches of an enormous tree (XXIV.118-20). Virgilio remains Dante-pilgrim's primary guide and continues to offer him direction, until Beatrice finally replaces him. Stazio's supplementary theological guidance is unnecessary until the three poet-characters leave the terrace of gluttony (*Purgatorio* XXV).

Dante foregrounds Stazio's role as intermediary guide to Dante-pilgrim as Dante-pilgrim asks 'Come si può far magro | là dove l'uopo di nodrir non tocca' (*Purgatorio* XXV.20-21). Dante utilises a simile from *Thebaid* X.458-62, that of a fledgling stork seeking to leave its nest (*Purgatorio* XXV.10-15), to depict his desire (Paratore 1970). This indicates the importance of the historical Statius's poetry to Dante and foreshadows Stazio's upcoming role in answering Dante-pilgrim's query. Virgilio attempts to answer Dante's question with two analogies. Virgilio first recalls Meleager, whose life was linked to the period a firebrand remained unconsumed by fire (*Metamorphoses* VIII.260-546), to suggest that Dante-pilgrim should understand the connection between body and soul (*Purgatorio* XXV.22-24). Virgilio's second example, a reflection in a mirror, implies that Dante-pilgrim should comprehend how an image can reflect a reality (XXV.25-27). However, both Virgilio's answers fail to reach this pressing question's crux and its theological rationale. This recalls Virgilio's unsuccessful explanation, drawing on Aristotle's *De anima* II, that the souls could feel heat and cold due to *virtù* and Virgilio's warning against trying to understand that which has been divinely decreed (*Purgatorio* III.31-33; Nardi 1964: 1177). Here Virgilio

recognises his weakness, as reason is insufficient to explain matters of such theological significance. Thus, Virgilio respectfully defers salving Dante-pilgrim's metaphorical wounds to Stazio, who possesses the divine grace and Christian revelation to answer Dante-pilgrim's question (*Purgatorio* XXV.28-30).

Assuming the role of master to his pupil, Stazio addresses Dante-pilgrim affectionately as 'figlio' and promises that Dante-pilgrim will be enlightened provided he contemplates Stazio's response carefully (*Purgatorio* XXV.34-36). This echoes the historical Statius's own desire that his *Thebaid* 'Itala iam studio discit memoratque iuuentus' (XII.815) and the *accessus* tradition's depiction of him as both *poeta doctus* and *poeta doctor* (see Chapter I.4.1). Stazio's mention of the *lume* he will grant Dante-pilgrim through his words ironically recalls the *lume* that Virgilio carried, but did not possess the divine grace to comprehend (*Purgatorio* XXII.67-69). Conversely, Stazio will make Dante-pilgrim *persona dotta*, just as the *Commedia* displays Christian truth and will make its readers *persone dotte*.

Stazio's lengthy, doctrinal explanation demonstrates the rhetorical skill and wisdom attributed to the historical Statius in the *accessus* tradition and dominates the canto. It is formed of two parts; the first concerning the human soul's generation (*Purgatorio* XXV.37-78); and the second how the soul, separated from its body upon death, forms an 'aerial body' in the afterlife and becomes 'un'ombra' (XXV.79-109). This speech follows the canonical formula of the '*quaestio disputata* (premessa, svolgimento, condanna delle proposizioni ritenute erronee, conclusione)' (Toscano 1988: 99). The rhyme scheme of Stazio's speech, including 'rime in doppia liquida' e.g. *quello*, *bello*, *vasello* (*Purgatorio* XXV.41, 43, and 45), also suggests that Dante is striving for the *asprezza e sottigliezza* that *Convivio* IV.II.13 indicates is the stylistic and expressive ideal for doctrinal poetry (Toscano 1988: 99-102, quoting Russo 1971: 145).

The first part of Stazio's explanation occurs against the background of the widely-acknowledged and intense late thirteenth-century philosophical and theological

debate regarding the human soul's origin.[126] This concerned how the human soul develops vegetative, sensitive, and rational faculties; which of these faculties derive from matter, and which from God's direct intervention; and which of them are immortal, surviving the body beyond death. Stazio provides a theory of generation almost identical to that in *Convivio* IV.XXI.2-8, which constitutes a unique and interesting contribution to this debate. Stazio's explanation draws upon and manipulates various sources to best suit Dante's purposes, including contemporary scientific knowledge and philosophy (Russo 1971: 145); classical sources including Aristotle's *De generatione animalium*, as commentated on by thirteenth-century Christian philosophers using Galen and Avicenna (Gragnolati 2005: 69); Albertus Magnus's *De natura et origine animae*; and Sigier of Brabant (Nardi 1964: 1187-88); and Christian theology, including Bonaventure and Aquinas. While Virgilio could have explained the soul's acquisition of vegetative and sensitive faculties using classical sources as Stazio did (*Purgatorio* XXV.37-60), Aristotle was unhelpful regarding the soul's acquisition of rational faculties (*Purgatorio* XXV.61-66). Lacking divine grace and Christian revelation, Virgilio could not know that God 'spira | spirito novo, di vertù repleto' into our human essence (XXV.70-72). Stazio's use of *spirare*, linked to *ispirare*, evokes the connection between divine creation and poetry and especially the *Commedia*, since it recalls Dante-pilgrim's statement 'I' mi son un che, quando | Amor mi spira, noto' (*Purgatorio* XXIV.52-53; Barański 2001: 394). After this doctrinal explanation of the soul's generation, Stazio returns to poetic imagery, using the simile of the sun's heat that 'si fa vino' when it merges with the growing vine (*Purgatorio* XXV.76-78).

Stazio combines a reference to the Parche with theological reasoning in his explanation of what happens to the soul after death. Stazio avers that the soul is fully immortal and continues to possess both the faculties arising from human essence (vegetative and sensitive) and those created by God (rational, intellective), even when separated from the body (XXV.79-84). Stazio avers:

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[126] On this debate, see Gragnolati 2003: *passim* and 2005: ch.2.

> Quando Làchesis non ha più del lino,
> solvesi da la carne, e in virtute
> ne porta seco e l'umano e 'l divino:
> *Purgatorio* XXV.79-81.

Dante deliberately recalls the periphrasis for Lachesis in *Purgatorio* XXI.25-30 and thus the contrast between Virgilio and Stazio as *ombre* and Dante-pilgrim as living man (XXI.25-26). Statius was also the only one of the *regulati poetae* to call Lachesis or the other Parcae by name (Paratore 1970). Statius names Lachesis three times ('Lachesis sic dura iubebat', *Thebaid* II.249; 'et Lachesin putri uacuantem saecula penso', III.642; and 'quo me Lachesis, quo torua Megaera ǀ usque sinunt', IV.636-37). Dante thus connects Statius's poetry to his portrayal of Stazio, suggesting that poetry's importance to Dante and highlighting Stazio-character's unique position as pagan poet converted to Christianity.

The final part of Stazio's discourse enables Dante both to explain how the gluttons become thin and to engage with another contemporary theological debate regarding how the soul could endure the punishments of hell once the rational, immortal soul was separated from the body, until their reuniting at the Final Judgement.[127] In line with later medieval theology, the *Commedia* defines the moment of the individual's death as the crucial point for his/her soul, portraying the separated soul's experience between that moment and the Final Judgement. Significantly, Stazio draws upon classical sources, including *Aeneid* VI, to describe that decisive moment:

> Sanza restarsi, per sé stessa cade
> mirabilmente a l'una de le rive;
> quivi conosce prima le sue strade.
> *Purgatorio* XXV.85-87

According to Stazio, at the moment the soul dies, it arrives on the Acheron's bank if the soul is destined for hell, and the Tiber's bank if it is destined for purgatory or paradise. Stazio explains that immediately, 'la virtù formativa raggia intorno ǀ così e quanto ne le membra vive' (XXV.89-90) and creates an aerial body for the soul 'in quella forma ch'è in lui suggella ǀ virtüalmente l'alma che ristette' (XXV.95-96). This accords with

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[127] On medieval discussions regarding this issue, see Nardi 1964: 1179; Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Purg.* XXV, Proemio; and Gragnolati 2003: 194 and 197.

Aquinas's explanation of the manifestation of angels, who condense air around themselves by divine power so they can be seen on earth (E. Gilson 1974: 38). In the *Commedia*'s case, the soul contained within this aerial body becomes 'un'ombra' (*Purgatorio* XXV.101), allowing it to participate in a fully embodied experience in the afterlife, speaking, laughing, crying, and sighing (XXV.103-05). This explanation recalls the *umbrae* in *Aeneid* VI's Elysian fields rejoicing and those the *regulati poetae* depict suffering in Tartarus's eternal punishment. Stazio's repetition of the adverb *quindi* accentuates 'il carattere oratorio-ragionativo' (Citanna 1971: 945) of Stazio's conclusion, reminding us of his rhetorical skill, itself perhaps a consequence of the historical Statius's confusion with the rhetor of similar name.

Stazio answers Dante-pilgrim's question regarding the gluttons' gaunt appearance definitively at the end of his long speech, averring:

> Secondo che ci affliggono i disiri
> e li altri affetti, l'ombra si figura;
> e quest'è la cagion di che tu miri.
> *Purgatorio* XXV.106-08

Stazio can speak here as one who has experienced the penitential suffering of purgatory, who now experiences the 'libera volontà di miglior soglia', and who anticipates the joy he will feel there. However, he also speaks as a soul conversant both with the embodied experience of the *umbrae* in the classical world's afterlife, and with Christian theology. As a pagan, Virgilio could not expound Christian theology. Conversely, the great Christian philosophers and theologians whom Dante-pilgrim meets in *Paradiso* are too closely tied to Christian philosophy and theology to propose Dante's unique theory. Accordingly, Stazio's unique position as Christian convert, straddling the pagan, classical world and the beginnings of the Christian, renders him best placed to act as Dante's spokesperson for his theory of generation and the afterlife.

Despite Stazio's detailed explanation, Dante-pilgrim does not acknowledge the answering of his question, much less refer to Stazio in the affectionate terms he does

Virgilio. Instead, Dante-pilgrim reminds us that Virgilio is his primary guide, calling him 'lo duca mio' (XXV.108) as the three continue their journey in their usual order.

III.7 STAZIO IN EDEN

Dante mentions Stazio little in *Purgatorio*'s remaining canti. He does not name Stazio in *Purgatorio* XXVI, although this canto focusses on vernacular poetry and even Virgilio speaks only once. Yet Dante reminds us of Stazio-character's presence and the importance of the historical Statius's epic poetry to him as he briefly paraphrases Hypsipyle's tragic tale (XXVI.94-96; *Thebaid* V.499-730; see Chapter IV.4.2).

Stazio plays a slightly greater role in *Purgatorio* XXVII, again assisting Dante-pilgrim at Virgilio's request. Dante-pilgrim avers:

> Poi dentro al foco innanzi mi si mise,
> pregando Stazio che venisse retro,
> che pria per lunga strada ci divise.
> *Purgatorio* XXVII.46-48

While Virgilio exhorts Dante-pilgrim to traverse the flames and leads the way, Stazio follows Dante. This alteration in their normal order of passage may indicate either that Stazio's position is to protect Dante-pilgrim or that it is to prevent him from retreating. Nonetheless, it highlights Stazio's role as supplementary guide, rather than mere travelling companion. However, at the canto's end, as Virgilio anticipates returning to Limbo, Virgilio does not pass responsibility for Dante-pilgrim to Stazio. Instead, Virgilio grants Dante-pilgrim full authority over himself in Virgilio's final words in the *Commedia* ('io te sovra te corono e mitrio', *Purgatorio* XXVII.142). Neither Virgilio's nor Stazio's guidance is needed in the canti that follow, although Dante-pilgrim turns affectionately to those he calls 'i miei poeti' (XXVIII.145-47) to ensure that they have heard Matelda's equation of the classical poets' laments for the lost Golden Age to that for the lost Eden (XXVIII.139-44). This hints at the Christian revelation lacking in classical poetry, and thus Virgilio's forthcoming return to Limbo. Stazio now becomes mere travelling companion to Dante-pilgrim, as Beatrice shortly assumes responsibility as Dante-pilgrim's guide.

Virgilio's return to Limbo tells us much about Stazio's role in *Purgatorio*. Such is Dante-pilgrim's distress when he realises that 'Virgilio dolcissimo patre' has left them 'scemi | di sé' (*Purgatorio* XXX.49-51) that Beatrice, who has now assumed the role of primary guide, tells Dante-pilgrim to compose himself (XXX.55-57). Stazio is not mentioned further until *Purgatorio* XXXIII.29, when Dante reminds us that Stazio is travelling with Dante-pilgrim. Subsequently, upon Beatrice's instructions, Stazio bathes in the rivers Lethe and Eünoè and enters Heaven with Dante-pilgrim (XXXIII.134). After entering *Paradiso*, Stazio disappears without trace. He is no longer needed in *Paradiso*, where Beatrice acts as Dante-pilgrim's primary guide and can explain theological matters. Dante-pilgrim does not lament Stazio's departure from the narrative, nor even mention it. While Stazio possesses divine grace and does not face Virgilio's tragic confinement in Limbo, Dante's esteem for the historical Vergil's poetry is even greater than that he has for Statian epic. This reinforces Stazio's role as intermediate link in the chain Dante creates between the great pagan poets and himself, the first Christian *poeta.*

III.8 CONCLUSION

As Stazio arrives in a moment of high drama and suspense, we begin to understand that Virgilio can never be sufficient to take us and Dante-pilgrim to *Paradiso*, since he lacks Christian faith. This becomes increasingly obvious as the cantica progresses, and as Stazio must provide the theological explanations Virgilio cannot, thereby acting as an intermediate and/or supplementary guide. By making Stazio a repented prodigal and a Christian (whatever the historical or textual grounds for this), Dante not only embodies in Stazio the penitential process, but ensures we understand that despite its poetic value and moral virtue, Vergil's poetry is lacking, as it was not illumined by Christian truth. Despite possessing merits beyond the evil seen in Dante's Florence and Statius's Thebes, the Greco-Roman classical world can only be a poor shadow of our lost inheritance in Eden, since it lacks divine revelation. Yet in Stazio's ecstatic praise of Vergil and his *Aeneid* in the Statian canti, both as source of poetic inspiration and moral example, even spur to Christian faith, we see Stazio as a figure

representative of Dante himself. Dante thus both situates himself in this classical tradition, the greatness of which he celebrates here, demonstrating his esteem for both Vergil's and Statius' poetry, and shows himself surpassing it. Illumined by the truth of divine revelation, the *Commedia* will surpass its classical antecedents, and, like Stazio, Dante, pilgrim and poet, will make it to paradise.

CHAPTER FOUR

STATIAN INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE *COMMEDIA*

IV.1 PREFACE

While Dante's embodiment of the historical poet Statius in Stazio-character perhaps provides its clearest signal, Dante's intense engagement with Statian epic is apparent in all three cantiche of the *Commedia*. In this chapter, I examine Dante's use of Statian material throughout the *Commedia*, focussing upon episodes or elements that possess Statian intertextuality on a significant and/or sustained level. I leave the *Commedia*'s many more minor reminiscences of Statian epic, perhaps a conscious effort on Dante's part to utilise the register of Statian epic for poetic effect as he does in the *Egloge*, or the subconscious effect of Dante's immersion in Statian epic by this time, to the *Commedia*'s line-by-line commentaries or for further in-depth study. I demonstrate that Dante draws on the full depth of the *Thebaid* (and to a lesser extent the *Achilleid*) from the *Commedia*'s first canto. In so doing, Dante moves beyond merely referencing Statius as a model for poetic composition as he does in *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, and the more creative but confined use of Statian poetry in *Convivio* III-IV. By the time he writes the *Commedia*, Dante is excited by Statius. He is more familiar with classical poetry and more confident with his ability to appropriate and re-work it; a process that continues as we move through the *Commedia*. I analyse why and how Dante appropriates and re-works Statian poetry to construct his imaginative otherworld. I consider, where relevant, the interaction with Dante's use of other classical intertexts and/or the possible inflection of Dante's use of the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* by Statius's other medieval readers, including the Statian *accessus* and commentary tradition and the *Roman de Thèbes* (see Chapter I.4).

In section IV.2, I explore Dante's use of Statius's Thebes as a physical, symbolic, spiritual, and psychological model for his hell, especially the City of Dis, and a parallel for his divided Italy. In section IV.3, I examine Dante's use of Statian characters as exempla of particular sins in *Inferno*. I analyse Dante's development of

these Statian characters to suit his own purposes, sometimes amalgamating them with information from his other intertexts and always with his own imagination. I consider in depth those Statian characters who particularly capture Dante's imagination and are mentioned repeatedly throughout the *Commedia*, such as Capaneus and Jason. I close my analysis of *Inferno* by demonstrating that despite the lack of Statian sinners physically appearing in Cocytus, Dante's portrayal of this final zone of hell remains intimately linked to Dante's readings of the *Thebaid*.

Subsequently, I examine Dante's engagement with Statius in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, expanding my analysis beyond the focus of existing scholarship on Dante's Statius in *Purgatorio*, which predominantly concentrates on Stazio-character. In section IV.4, I consider the prideful Statian characters among the exempla carved upon the floor of the terrace of pride in *Purgatorio* XII, and Virgilio's list of virtuous Statian women among Limbo's *magni spiriti* (*Purgatorio* XXII). Finally, in section IV.5, I demonstrate that, as he does in *Inferno*, Dante turns to Statian epic at fundamental moments within the *Commedia's* final two *cantiche*, often when traversing key boundaries within both the *Commedia*'s structure and the otherworld's physical scenery. I discuss Dante's and Statius's shared concern regarding the transgression of boundaries and the connection between Dante's divinely-willed surpassing of those boundaries and his eventual self-coronation with the poetic laurel.

Thus, I establish that Dante's usage of Statian epic expands and alters as he writes the *Commedia*, becoming more ambitious as we move through *Inferno*, and more abstract and preoccupied with poetic ideals as we climb *Purgatorio* and reach *Paradiso*. As with the creation of Stazio-character, this Statian intertextuality allows Dante to place himself in a chain of poetic succession from Homer and Vergil, via Statius, to himself, the first Christian *poeta*. Accordingly, I establish that Statius's epic poetry possesses far greater narrative, poetic, moral, and allegorical importance for Dante than has been acknowledged to date.

IV.2 STATIUS'S THEBES AS A MODEL OF HELL

Statius constructs his realm of the imagination in the *Thebaid* in a way that nourishes Dante, and thus it constitutes one of *Inferno*'s primary influences. Statius's Thebes provides a model for Dante's hell, especially the City of Dis, and Statius's depiction of the underworld with its close connection to Thebes also forms a significant thread within the infernal realm's intertextual tapestry. While other classical authors, including Vergil and Ovid, and biblical, theological, and popular Christian traditions also form important influences upon Dante's depiction of hell, I focus my analysis upon Dante's use of Statian epic. I also do not consider those aspects of hell that appear in multiple classical sources, e.g. the darkness, its rivers etc. except where these are particularly relevant to my analysis.

IV.2.1 PRELUDES TO EVIL

The physical, symbolic, psychological, and political resonances Dante establishes between his hell and Statius's Thebes are apparent from *Inferno*'s 'proem' (*Inferno* I-II).[128] Dante begins the *Commedia* with Dante-pilgrim's assertion that:

> Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
> mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
> ché la diritta via era smarrita.
> *Inferno* I.1-3

The *selva oscura*, one of the canto's and the *Commedia*'s 'governing images', recalls 'la selva erronea di questa vita' that Dante refers to in *Convivio* IV.XXIV.12. However, here the *selva* suggests Eden's condition after the Fall and thus indicates 'human life lived in the condition of sin' (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* I.2). It represents both a real period of 'traviamento' in Dante's life and the 'generale sbandimento dell'umanità' (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Inf.* I.2). The darkness suffusing both the *selva* and hell itself represents the metaphorical darkness and blindness of sin, resultant in our

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[128] On the discussions surrounding whether *Inferno* I and II are a unitary prologue or two separate units, the first prefacing the whole poem and the second the first cantica only, see the recent summary in Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* II.1-6.
For *a lectura* of *Inferno* I, see Getto 1971; Limentani 1985: 1-17; Freccero 1986: 1-54; Gorni 1995 (repr. 2002) and 2000; Barański 2000: 103-26 and 2011; and Battistini 2013. On *Inferno* II, see Fallani 1971; Mercuri 1998; Picone 2000a; Tanturli 2011; and Basile 2013a. On both canti, see Mazzoni 1967 and Mazzucchi 2009.

exile from the City of God, either temporarily in the *civitas terrena*, or permanently in hell.[129] Dante emphasises the universality of this opening image through the first person plural *nostra*, which figures Dante-pilgrim as 'Everyman'. Thus, Dante-pilgrim's journey away from the *selva* and towards virtue should be read universally, as humanity's struggle to find the *diritta via* and return to God.[130] This recalls *Convivio* IV.XXIV.12, in which Dante avers that adolescents must be shown how to 'tenere lo buono cammino' by their elders. Much as *Convivio* IV.XXIV-XXVIII seeks to instruct readers in the virtues appropriate to each age, the *Commedia*'s didactic purpose is to direct readers away from vice and towards virtue. This recalls the didactic purpose Statius imagined for the *Thebaid* (XII.815) and that the Statian *accessus* tradition saw in both Statian epics (see Chapter I.4.1).

The sinfulness apparent in Dante's opening tercet resonates with the *Thebaid*'s first three lines. Here Statius lays bare the impious fraternal hatred between Polynices and Eteocles; their inevitably broken pact regarding Thebes' rulership; the dreadful civil war and mutual fratricide resulting from this; and finally, Thebes' widespread evil, as Statius avers:

> Fraternas acies alternaque regna profanis
> decertata odiis sontesque euoluere Thebas
> Pierius menti calor incidit.
> *Thebaid* I.1-3

In beginning his epic with *fraternas acies*, Statius consciously echoes Lucan's *cognatas acies* (*The Civil War*, I.4) and subverts the *pietas* we would expect between brothers. By echoing Lucan's negative phrase and thus recalling the *Civil War*'s terrible carnage, Statius suggests that like Lucan he will employ 'the idea of unspeakable crime as a defining narrative theme' (Casali 2011: 81) and similarly subvert the *Aeneid* with its idealistic presentation of Roman imperialism.[131] In narrowing Lucan's focus from in-laws to brothers Statius increases the *nefas* surrounding Polynices's and Eteocles's

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[129] On the *civitas terrena* and the City of God, see Augustine, *De Civitate Dei: passim*.
[130] On the *Commedia*, man's exile from the City of God, and Dante-pilgrim's journey as representative of the return to that City, see Honess 2006: 24-30 and Brilli 2012: 271-354.
[131] On the *Thebaid*, Lucan's *Civil War*, and the subversion of the *Aeneid*, see Casali 2011.

struggle. Statius also associates Polynices and Eteocles with *profanis odiis* to connote fraternal rivalry, bloodshed, and hatred that endures even after death. Statius thus reminds his readers of other famous men who fought with and even killed their brothers, as the *In principio* commentator notes ('Sed quia plures fraternae acies ut Remi et Romuli, Atrei et Thieste', MS Additional 16380, fol. 143ᵛ, MS Ricc. 842 fol. 1ᵛᵃ). This suggests Rome's destiny 'ever to repeat' such 'fratricidal violence' (Ganiban 2011: 338). In *sontes Thebas*, Statius both foreshadows the *Thebaid*'s widespread evil and recalls Thebes' previous history of malfeasance.

In reading these opening lines, Dante and other medieval readers would also have recalled the biblical example of Cain and Abel, contemporary family feuds and civil wars, and perhaps Augustine's use of Romulus and Remus and Cain and Abel to illustrate the *civitas terrena*'s division against itself (*De Civitate Dei* XV.5, PL 442).[132] The *alterna regna* that are *decertata* are trivial beside this *nefas* and the destruction that results from it. Statius's political and moral critique (see Chapter I.4.1) would surely have resonated with Dante, who demonstrates his own belief in the author's role as socio-political commentator throughout his oeuvre. Dante's Cacciaguida similarly criticises the Comune's own *libido dominandi* as a cause of Florence's degradation (*Paradiso* XV; Brilli 2012: 129-30). Thus Thebes is like Florence, another incarnation of the *civitas diaboli* – the community of sinners who pridefully rebel against God, seeking to achieve in this world the perfect *felicitas* that true Christians know they will reach in heaven (Brilli 2012: 123-24).[133] The *Thebaid*'s opening lines thus make it easy to understand why the poem sparked Dante's interest, prompting him to read it 'tutta quanta' like the *Aeneid* (*Inferno* XX.114), and the probable reason for its appeal to him both as a model for hell and a reflection of his own divided Italy.

Dante alludes further to the terrifying, arduous journey through hell he will shortly recount, in a dramatic exclamation regarding his difficulty in narrating what he

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[132] On Cain and Abel's relevance to Dante's critique of civil war, see Quinones 1971: 63-76. On fratricide and Augustine's *civitas terrena*, see Martinez 1997: 39-40.
[133] On Augustine's *civitas terrena*, and *civitates diaboli*, see Brilli 2012: 123-26.

saw:

> Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura
> esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte
> che nel pensier rinova la paura!
>
> Tant'è amara che poco è più morte;
> ma per trattar del ben ch'i' vi trovai,
> dirò de l'altre cose ch'i' v' ho scorte.
> *Inferno* I.4-9

Dante combines the *Commedia*'s first example of the ineffability topos with a protasis and 'il *tópos* della persistenza o rinnovamento delle sensazione nella memoria' (Ledda 2002: 206).[134] The *selva*'s *asprezza* prefigures the *rime aspre e chiocce* (*Inferno* XXXII.1) that Dante avers he should use shortly before Dante-pilgrim meets Ugolino, in one of *Inferno*'s last examples of the ineffability topos. Dante also utilises the *rinnovamento* topos in the Statian Ugolino episode (*Inferno* XXXIII.4-6), creating an almost chiastic correspondence of Statian resonances. Nevertheless, despite *Inferno*'s horror, Dante-pilgrim finds *ben* here, perhaps 'God's grace in allowing Dante to learn of His goodness even in his worst experiences' (Hollander 2000-2007: ad *Inf.* I.8-9). Through this same grace, Dante-pilgrim eventually reaches *Paradiso*.

In the *Thebaid*'s proem, Statius similarly describes the horrors of which he must write and turns to the Muses to assist his task, much as Dante does shortly. Yet the *Thebaid* contains no sense of the *ben* that Dante-pilgrim finds in hell. After referring to the *Pierius calor* encouraging him to speak of these disturbing themes, Statius asks the Muses rhetorically 'unde iubetis | ire, deae?' (*Thebaid* I.3-4). He deliberately recalls the repeated malevolence associated with the Thebans (I.4-16), which began at the wicked Theban race's origin ('gentis […] primordia dirae', I.4). Among this *nefas* Statius refers to actions through which the Thebans angered the gods, mentioning particularly Bacchus's *graves irae* against Thebes despite its *cognata moenia* (I.11) and *saeva Iuno*'s vengeance against Athamas (I.12-14), referenced by Dante in *Inferno* XXX.1-

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[134] On the ineffability topos generally, see Ledda 2002: *passim*. On its use in *Inferno* I.4-16, see Ledda 2002: 24-25, 202, and 206.

12.[135] Significantly, Statius also emphasises Thebes' Martial origins as he recalls Agenor 'infandis condentem proelia sulcis' (*Thebaid* I.8), playing upon 'dum conderet urbem' (*Aeneid* I.5); Cadmus's killing of the snake sacred to Mars; his 'sowing' of its teeth; the consequent spawning of fierce warriors (the *terrigenae*) who fought and killed each other until only five remained to assist him build the city; and thus to Cadmus sowing *Martis operti* rather than seeds. These five *terrigenae* become significant in *Inferno* XXXI. Statius's reference to Thebes as *cognata moenia* and to Amphion's building of Thebes' walls through song resonate with Vergil's 'altae moenia Romae' (*Aeneid* I.7), the later 'Mavortia […] moenia' (*Aeneid* I.271), and with Lucan's *cognatas acies* (*The Civil War* I.1). Statius thus establishes Thebes as the antithesis of the *Aeneid*'s 'prophesied' Rome. Dante refers to Thebes' construction through Amphion's song in *Inferno* XXXII.10-12, connecting Cocytus to this terrible city (see section IV.2.10). Statius's Thebes' dreadful history thus renders it an excellent model for Dante's hell.

Through thus subverting the *Aeneid*, Statius establishes a connection between Thebes, Troy, and Rome from the *Thebaid*'s proem onwards. This is particularly significant to Dante's use of Statius's Thebes as a parallel for Florence, as Thebes was a precedent for Troy, which was both Rome's and Florence's 'parent city' (Martinez 1977: 27).[136] Medieval readers also viewed Thebes as Troy's forerunner. Accounts of the Trojan war heavily influence the *Roman de Thèbes*.[137] The *Thèbes* thus depicts Thebes as Troy's predecessor and portrays them both as devastated cities (Battles 2004: 28), demonstrating history's recursive nature and reinforcing Thebes' suitability as a model for hell and parallel for Dante's divided Italy. The *Thèbes* usually appears in manuscripts with the *Roman d'Eneas*, and the writers of incipits and explicits to these texts frequently describe Thebes as the root of Troy (Battles 2004: 63). Boccaccio even set his *Teseida* in the period between the Theban and Trojan wars, designing it as a

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[135] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* XXX, see Bigi 1971; Battaglia Ricci 2009; and Bruni 2013.
[136] On the frequent pairing of Thebes and Troy in the classical tradition, see Martinez 1977: 27.
[137] On these influences, see Battles 2001: *passim* and 2004: 45-60.

'transitional epic', which links the two wars chronologically and typologically (Battles 2004: 13). Dante's mention of Theban Athamas and Trojan Hecuba in *Inferno* XXX.1-21 and Dante's assertion that 'Ma nè di Tebe furie nè troiane | si vider mäi in alcun tanto crude' (XXX.22-23) suggest that Dante too may have connected these wars.

As to Troy and Rome, Dante asserts that 'divinus poeta noster Virgilius per totam *Eneyden* gloriosissimum regem Eneam patrem romani populi fuisse testatur' (*Monarchia* II.III.6). Other medieval texts depict Troy as Rome's forerunner, including the *Tresor* I.I.33-35; the *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentiae*, Part I; the *Libro Fiesolano* (1850: 11-12); and Villani's *Nuova Cronica* I.I.24-25, although these texts are silent regarding Thebes' connection to Troy. These texts subsequently discuss Florence's founding by the Romans at the Empire's height, after sacking Fiesole, and Florence's population half by Romans and half by Fiesolans (*Tresor* I.I.37; *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentiae*, Part II; *Libro Fiesolano* 1850: 15-17; and *Nuova Cronica*, I.II.1). Dante himself calls Florence 'la bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma' (*Convivio* I.III.4) and refers to Florence's Roman and Fiesolan origins in Brunetto Latini's speech in *Inferno* XV and in Cacciaguida's dialogue with Dante-pilgrim in *Paradiso* XV-XVII. However, through these speeches, Dante suggests that this mixing of Roman blood with Fiesolan has contributed to Florence's current degradation.

Statius's Thebes is therefore linked to Dante's Florence via Troy and Rome. Their 'common Martial ancestry' also connects Thebes, Rome, and Florence (Martinez 1977: 28). Mars plays a fundamental role in Rome's aetiology (*Aeneid* I.271-72). The *Thebaid*'s proem emphasises Thebes' own Martial connections, and Statius refers to Mars throughout the *Thebaid*. A statue of Mars stands at the end of Florence's Ponte Vecchio and Dante refers to Mars as Florence's 'primo padrone', suggesting that his anger at being replaced by John the Baptist is behind Florence's ongoing warfare (*Inferno* XIII.143-44).[138] *Convivio* II.XIII.21 also seems significant in this context, as Dante avers 'e in Fiorenza, nel principio de la sua destruzione, veduta fu ne l'aere, in

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[138] On this 'common Martial ancestry', see Martinez 1977: 28-32.

figura d'una croce, grande quantità di questi vapori seguaci de la stella di Marte'. This resonates with Villani's later description of a 'stella comata' (*Nuova Cronica*, I.VI.91) in which he quotes *Thebaid* I.196, 'bella quibus populis, quae mutent sceptra cometae'. Given these connections, Statius's Thebes presented an ideal parallel for Dante's devastated Florence.

Much as Dante avers that he will tell 'de l'altre cose ch'i' v' ho scorte' (*Inferno* I.9), Statius ends his precis of Cadmus's descendants' suffering by determining that he will allow it to have passed, and that 'limes mihi carminis esto | Oedipodae confusa domus' (*Thebaid* I.16-17). This idea of *limes* and the surpassing of boundaries is fundamental to the *Thebaid* and its appeal to Dante. Statius opens the *Thebaid* concerned with his ability to limit his Theban theme's horrors; the concept of *limes* appears throughout the poem; and Statius uses the 'frequent violation of topographical boundaries' to dramatise the devastation caused by civil war and his own 'inability to contain his theme of *nefas*' (Newlands 2012: 13). In setting his initial *limes*, Statius has reminded us of previous evil, establishing Thebes as an accursed city and a malignant race. Thus, Statius sets the scene for the coming horrors and creates a sense of history's repetitiveness, particularly where violence is concerned. Statius does this again through the *Thebaid*'s 'numerous recapitulations' of Thebes' previous evils (Martinez 1997: 58). Statius's summation of the *Thebaid*'s subject-matter (*Oedipodae confusa domus*) recalls Oedipus's own terrible history prior to the *Thebaid*'s action. It foreshadows the *nefas*, familial strife, and societal breakdown to come in the *Thebaid*, providing further understanding of its value to Dante both as model for hell and parallel for his divided Italy. Significantly, Dante depicts Florence too as *confusa* and '*civitas confusionis* è il secondo nome della *civitas diaboli*' (Brilli 2012: 138).[139]

Later in *Inferno* I, Dante uses the first of the *Commedia*'s series of nautical images, as Dante-pilgrim compares his relief at having left the pass 'che non lasciò già mai persona viva' to that of a sailor who has just left perilous water (I.22-27). Dante's

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[139] On Florence as *civitas confusionis*, see Brilli 2012: 130-39.

use of these nautical images frequently possesses a metapoetic aspect, in which the ship represents the poem or the poet's *ingenium* and its helmsman the poet (e.g. in *Purgatorio*'s and *Paradiso*'s opening canti, see section IV.5). Dante used the ship metaphor in *Convivio* II's proem, Statius used it in both opening and closing the *Thebaid* (I.33 and XII.808-09), and it was a common topos in both classical and medieval literature (see Chapter II.5). In *Inferno* I.22-27, the perilous water traversed by the ship refers also to Dante-pilgrim's journey through hell. It begins the association of Dante's journey as poet and pilgrim with the voyage of the Argonauts (see section IV.5).[140]

Dante foreshadows the terrible scenes within hell in Virgilio's account of the coming journey, as Virgilio tells Dante-pilgrim he will go:

> ove udirai le disperate strida,
> vedrai li antichi spiriti dolenti,
> ch'a la seconda morte ciascun grida;
> > *Inferno* I.115-17

This resonates with Statius's summary in the *Thebaid*'s proem of its disturbing subject-matter (I.33-45), which prefigures all the poem's major events and emphasises the dreadful bloodshed, destruction, and disintegration of society occasioned by the Theban war. Both Dante and, perhaps less overtly, Statius make political statements in their oeuvre. Statius implies the *Thebaid*'s political message clearly in its proem, as he refers to the 'geminis sceptrum exitiale tyrannis' (I.34) and the 'tumulisque carentia regum | funera' (I.36-37), warning of the fate that befalls tyrannical rulers. Many Statian *accessus* emphasise this political message (see Chapter I.4.1). Statius then mentions three characters whom Dante utilises in *Inferno*, as Statius queries to which 'hero' he should turn first (I.41) – the 'inmodicum irae | Tydea' (*Thebaid* I.41-42), famously the model for Ugolino's cannibalisation of Ruggieri (*Inferno* XXXII-XXXIII); the 'laurigeri subitos […] uatis hiatus' (*Thebaid* I.42, i.e. Amphiaraus), who appears with *Inferno* XX's diviners; and 'alio Capaneus horrore canendus' (*Thebaid* I.45), who appears as sole example of blasphemy in *Inferno* XIV (see section IV.3). In the *Thebaid* too, we see

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[140] On ship metaphors, Dante-pilgrim's journey, and the voyage of the Argo, see Picone 1994.

'antichi spiriti dolenti' and hear the dreadful cries of both those killed and those left behind by these supposed 'heroes'. Statius's proem thus establishes several themes that are fundamental to Dante's selection of the *Thebaid* as a model for his hell and a parallel for his divided Italy.

Besides, Dante cannot turn to contemporary poets in the Italian vernacular in depicting Italy's terrible division and hell's total lack of moral order. When Dante states 'illustres viros invenimus vulgariter poetasse' (*DVE* II.II.8), albeit in the lyric mode, Dante is forced to turn to Bertran de Born, an Occitan troubadour, for *arma* (see Chapter II.4). Dante cannot turn to Vergil, since despite the ambiguity of Aeneas's slaughter of Turnus at the end of *Aeneid* XII, Vergil's vision of war is too positive. After all, it ends in the founding of the Roman Empire, which Dante uses as paradigm for *Paradiso*, and as the exemplum of the ideal empire of which he speaks in *Monarchia*. Instead, Dante turns to Statius's *Thebaid* and Lucan to enable him to depict the horrific bloodshed of which he speaks in *Inferno*.

IV.2.2 THE FIRST INVOCATION TO THE MUSES

Just as invocations are typical in classical epic incipits (e.g. *Thebaid* I.3-4; *Achilleid* I.1-3; *Aeneid* I.8-11), Dante invokes the Muses to assist him at *Inferno* II's opening:

> O Muse, o alto ingegno, or m'aiutate;
> o mente che scrivesti ciò ch'io vidi,
> qui si parrà la tua nobilitate.
> > *Inferno* II.7-9[141]

By similarly invoking the Muses as figures of poetic inspiration, Dante establishes a chain of poetic succession from Homer and Vergil, via Statius, to himself, the first Christian *poeta*.

Significantly, Statius specifically addresses Clio, the Muse of History, in the *Thebaid*'s proem, and again at *Thebaid* X.630.[142] Among Latin authors, only Horace (*Carmina* I.XII.1-2) and Valerius Flaccus (III.14-18) also invoke Clio directly. In *Thebaid* I.41, Statius asks 'quem prius heroum, Clio, dabis?' as he lists each 'hero's' actions.

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[141] On this invocation, see Ledda 2002: 38-40; and on Dante's invocations in general, see Hollander 2013.
[142] On Statius's invocations to the Muses, see Myers 2015.

This is interesting as we might have expected Statius to address Calliope, the Muse of Epic, here, whom he addresses at *Thebaid* IV.32-38 and VIII.373-74. Vergil also addresses Calliope (*Aeneid* IX.525), in a passage Dante utilises as he bids Calliope 'alquanto surga' at *Purgatorio*'s opening (I.9; see section IV.5). Dante is clearly familiar with Statius's invocation of Clio, as Dante's character Virgilio refers to Clio in querying Stazio-character's Christianity (*Purgatorio* XXII.58, see Chapter III.5). In addition to distancing the *Thebaid* from the *Aeneid* and previous epic poetry, Statius's intention in calling upon Clio rather than Calliope in *Thebaid* I.41 and X.630 may well have been to demonstrate the *Thebaid*'s status as *historia* not *fabula*. This notion surely would have appealed to Dante, who seems to have believed that the *Thebaid*'s and *Aeneid*'s events were history (see Chapter II.4). This also implies Dante's awareness that, in his own call to the Muses, history as well as poetry underpins the *Commedia*'s claims to truth.

Statius's use of the second person *dabis* and the gerundive *canendus* (*Thebaid* I.45), contrasting with Vergil's indicative *cano* (*Aeneid* I.1), at his proem's close suggests that Clio forces Statius to write this history, despite his reluctance due to its terrible nature. This resonates with the horror Dante shudders to recall in *Inferno* I.4-9, the *pietate* Dante speaks of in *Inferno* II.6 and *Inferno's* ineffability topos.[143] This renders Statius's invocation to Clio and the Muses particularly relevant to Dante's invocation in *Inferno* II.

IV.2.3 THE ENTRANCE TO HELL

Dante's association between Statius's Thebes, his hell, and Italy's devastated cities begins as soon as Dante-pilgrim reaches hell's gate and reads its inscription:

> Per me si va ne la città dolente,
> per me si va ne l'etterno dolore,
> per me si va tra la perduta gente.
>
> Giustizia mosse il mio alto fattore;
> fecemi la divina podestate,
> la somma sapïenza e 'l primo amore.

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[143] On the ineffability topos in *Inferno*, see Ledda 2002: 13-210, esp. 159-210.

[…]

Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'entrate.
Inferno III.1-7, 9[144]

This is the first time Dante presents Hell 'quite explicitly' as a city, the other being *Inferno* VIII's City of Dis episode (Honess 2006: 52). Medieval city gates carried 'enormous symbolic significance', often bearing inscriptions praising the relevant city (Honess 2006: 53). Dante may well intend us to recall his own Florence, another city 'which stands for the self and against the common good' (Ferrante 1984: 41-42). Thus, it is fitting that the environment inside the gate is 'the very antithesis of a civic environment; inhospitable, harsh, and uncivilized' (Honess 2006: 54), much like Statius's Thebes. Dante's gate also recalls many famous gates from ancient and medieval traditions, including several from the Bible and those of Vergil's Dis (Nasti 2009: 27), and aptly, Augustine's *civitas terrena* (Pietro Alighieri [1] 1340-42: *ad Inf.* III.1-9).

As Dante's early commentator Guido da Pisa notes, hell's gate also recalls *Thebaid* I.96, as well as Vergil and Ovid.[145] This resonance with *Thebaid* I.96 is meaningful, as this line comes from the *Thebaid*'s first passage in which the infernal deities transgress the boundaries between the worlds to stimulate Thebes' terrible violence. Statius describes Tisiphone approaching Tartarus's gate, as she responds to Oedipus's curse and enters the world above to provoke the brothers' war:

[…] illa per umbras
et caligantes animarum examine campos
Taenariae limen petit inremeabile portae.
Thebaid I.94-96

Lactantius clarifies that Statius refers to hell's entrance, averring in his gloss to 'Taenariae limen portae' that Taenarus is a deep place 'in quo dicitur esse aditus inferorum' (*In Theb.* I.95-96). Significantly, the *In principio* commentator adds to his

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[144] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* III, see Sapegno 1971; Güntert 2000a; Nasti 2009; Inglese 2011; and Malato 2013a.

[145] Statius is also mentioned in the context of Hell's gate by Pietro Alighieri (all three versions), *Inferno* III.1-9; Boccaccio (1373-1375), *Inferno* introduction; l'Anonimo Fiorentino (1400), *Inferno* I nota; Filippo Villani (1405), *Inferno* introduction; Cristoforo Landino (1481), *Inferno* III nota. This suggests that this resonance was widely recognised amongst Dante's early commentators.

similar gloss to this phrase that Taenarus 'interpretatur lamentatio quod autem lamentatio maior quae ad inferos descendere' (MS Additional 16380, fol. 145$^{\text{v}}$; MS Ricc. 842, fol. 3$^{\text{vb}}$). This sense of lamentation reverberates with Dante's use of *dolente*, *dolore*, *perduta* and the reference to abandoning *ogne speranza* in the gate's inscription, especially as the *In principio* commentator also refers to a descent to hell. This *lamentatio* recalls also Thebes' own gates, which Statius explicitly associates with grief and the tragic deaths of Niobe's children ('bina per ingentes stipabant funera portas', *Thebaid* III.198).

Significantly, after quoting from the classical poets, Guido da Pisa explains that the *Taenariae limen portae*, which he calls Trenaris, derives its name from the Greek *treni* and thus that it means *lamentatio*. Guido adds:

> Nam ex doloribus lamentationes insurgunt. Et nota quod lamentationes Ieremie in greco *treni* vocantur. Et sunt *treni* quedam carmina lamentabilia que primo aput hebreos composuit Ieremias; apud grecos autem Symonides, poeta lyricus, ut scribit beatus Ysidorus, libro primo *Ethimologiarum* {*Etym.* I. xxix. 19}. Dicens igitur autor: 'Per me si va ne la città dolente', trenareas insinuat, idest lamentationes eternas.
>
> <div align="right">c.1327-1328: ad Inf. I.1-9¹⁴⁶</div>

The *irremeabilitas* of Statius's gate resonates with Guido's mention of *lamentationes eternas* and with Dante's infernal gate's exhortation 'lasciate ogne speranza'. Dante may well have had the gate of Taenaris/Trenaris and its etymological meaning in mind as he associated his own gate to hell with such lamentation. Nevertheless, the inscription on Dante's gate reinforces its fundamentally Christian setting, as it both warns of the *giustizia* that condemns the souls within to eternal suffering and recalls the divine *amore* that extends to us the possibility of salvation.

IV.2.4 THE BARATHRUM

Once inside hell's gate, Dante continues to use the *Thebaid* as a significant source for his depiction of hell. I have identified a resonance between *Inferno*'s physical structure and Oedipus's invocation to Tisiphone as 'regina barathri' (*Thebaid* I.85), an unusual epithet despite the Fury's chthonic nature. *Barathrum* is a Graecism meaning a deep

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[146] On Dante's gate as reflective of the 'defeated and enslaved' Jerusalem's sorrow in Lamentationes I.12-13, see Martinez 2002: 51-52.

pit or abyss, taken from the *barathron*, a deep pit into which criminals and the corpses of executed criminals were flung in ancient Athens.[147] Neither Lucan nor Ovid use the word *barathrum* and Vergil only uses it twice, both in the *Aeneid*: to describe first the whirlpool Charybdis (III.421), and then the monster Cacus's cave and the impression that one could see the Shades 'superque immane barathrum' (VIII.245). Other than this oblique reference Vergil does not use the word to describe Tartarus, and instead uses *imus* (*Aeneid* VI.55) for the underworld's deepest part. Whilst Statius uses *barathrum* for the whirlpool in which Hippomedon drowns at *Thebaid* IX.503, he uses it twice for Tartarus's depths – once at *Thebaid* I.85 and again at *Thebaid* VIII.15. The *In principio* commentary emphasises *barathrum*'s connotation of moral turpitude when it glosses 'Et o vos Tartara' (*Thebaid* I.57) as 'locus est profundissimum inferorum baratrum ubi est squalor illius profunditatis' (MS Additional 16380, fol. 145ʳ; MS Ricc. 842, fol. 3ʳᵇ).

Significantly, Dante-pilgrim uses the word *baràtro* when he acknowledges Virgilio's description of hell's pit and the nature of the souls confined there ('assai ben distingue | questo baràtro e 'l popol ch'e' possiede', *Inferno* XI.68-69).[148] *Barathrum* came to be used in medieval Latin as a name for hell (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Inf.* XI.69), with Isidore averring in his chapter 'De inferioribus', 'Baratrum nimiae altitudinis nomen est: et dictum baratrum quasi vorago atra, scilicet a profunditate' (*Etymologies* XIV.IX.5). However, the database *Duecento: la poesia dalle origini a Dante* lists *Inferno* XI.69 as the only instance of this word in the *c*.2,400 texts it covers. The only instances of this word listed in the OVI-TLIO database are *Inferno* XI.68-69 and Dante's medieval commentators' glosses to this line. Dante's decision to use this unusual word in the 'structural' canto XI, and its status as a hapax in Dante's oeuvre highlights its significance, indicating that Dante used this unusual word deliberately. He may well have done so with its use in *Thebaid* I and its association with darkness, *squalor*, and confining sinners in mind, particularly as he assigns its use to Virgilio, who shows anachronistic knowledge of the *Thebaid* in *Purgatorio* XXII (see Chapter III.5).

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[147] 'Barathron', *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (1890).
[148] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* XI, see Montanari 1971; Sini 2009; and Calenda 2013.

The resonance between Statius's *barathrum* and Dante's hell is intensified in *Inferno* XXXIV, when Dante-pilgrim reaches Cocytus, hell's deepest part.[149] This truly is where we find the Statius-like 'squalor illius profunditatis', to use the *In principio* commentator's words. Significantly, Virgilio provides another structural explanation of hell here, as he clarifies the creation of hell's pit for Dante-pilgrim (*Inferno* XXXIV.97-128). Interestingly, Dante's early commentators, the Codice Cassinese (*c.*1350-1375: *ad Inf.* XXXIV.127-32) and Pietro Alighieri ([3] 1359-1364: *ad Inf.* XXXIV.97-128) both quote from *Thebaid* VIII.14-20 in glossing Dante's description. *Thebaid* VIII.14-20 occurs in an episode describing the swallowing of the living Amphiaraus into the underworld following an earthquake, just as Dante-pilgrim enters hell a living man and an earthquake occurs at his entry (*Inferno* III.133-35). Statius uses *barathrum* as he describes the shades' resultant surprise, in a phrase recalling Dante's hell's own blind darkness: 'et si quos procul ulteriore barathro | altera nox aliisque grauat plaga caeca tenebris' (*Thebaid* VIII.15-16). As Dante-pilgrim meets Amphiaraus amongst *Inferno* XX's diviners, Dante was familiar with this passage, and by implication Statius's use of *barathrum* to describe Tartarus. Moreover, the lines immediately following *Thebaid* VIII.14-20 describe Dis, lord of the classical underworld, sitting at Tartarus's centre (VIII.21-23), just as Dante's Satan does (*Inferno* XXXIV.17-21, 28-29). Virgilio-character even calls Satan *Dite* (*Inferno* XXXIV.20). This suggests Statius's Tartarean *barathrum* may well have contributed to Dante's portrayal of hell as a deep, dark pit, with Satan at its centre. Nevertheless, Dante structures his hell more elaborately than Statius or his other classical predecessors.

IV.2.5 THE ENCOUNTER OUTSIDE THE CITY OF DIS

Dante turns to Statius's Thebes again in depicting his City of Dis, combining aspects of medieval walled cities (Honess 2006: 52) with both the architecture of the classical Dis and Statius's Thebes. Dante-pilgrim arrives 'al piè d'una torre' (*Inferno* VII.130), recalling the towers dominating the skyline in Dante's lifetime, providing 'both a safe

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[149] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* XXXIV, see Petrocchi 1971; Boitani 2009; and Manni 2013.

haven and a military vantage point for noble families' during civic strife (Honess 2006: 53). Such towers were also common in classical architecture, with both Vergil and Statius (e.g. *Thebaid* IV.356-60 and X.873-77) mentioning *turres* or *arces* multiple times in their epics. Dante-pilgrim's gazing upon the City also recalls Aeneas, who 'moenia lata videt triplici circumdata muro' (*Aeneid* VI.549) in Tartarus. Dante makes the City's classical and 'real-life' precedents clear as Virgilio warns that they are approaching 'la città c'ha nome Dite | coi gravi cittadin, col grande stuolo' (*Inferno* VIII.67-69). Dante's City is menacing, as Dante-pilgrim describes 'le sue meschite | […] | vermiglie come se di foco uscite | fossero' (VIII.70-73) and Virgilio clarifies that the battlements appear this way because of the 'foco etterno' (VIII.73) burning within Dis. This *foco* recalls the eternal fire of hell from traditional interpretations and subverts the eternal Vestal flame burning within Rome.

Dante adds to Dis's sense of threat as Dante-pilgrim describes how:

Noi pur giugnemmo dentro a l'alte fosse
che vallan quella terra sconsolata:
le mura mi parean che ferro fosse.
                    Inferno VIII.76-78

Dis's defences closely resemble those of the cities of Dante's Italy and Virgilio's and Dante-pilgrim's inability to 'penetrate its forbidding gates and walls' reinforces Dis's realism (Honess 2006: 53). This renders the infernal city's physical image easily conceivable to the *Commedia*'s audience, but also implies the association between Dis and Italy's devastated cities, especially Dante's beloved Florence. Moreover, the defences of Dante's Dis both protect it from outside intrusion and serve the greater purpose of confining the souls punished within, who themselves embody the discord from which such defences would normally protect them. Just as Statius is obsessed with the idea of *limes*, Dante's underworld 'è continuamente segnato da confini', which are 'una metafora della legge' (Cristaldi 2009: 89-90). Dante's City of Dis shares its sense of discord within the city's walls with Statius's Thebes. At the Theban war's outset, the crumbling of the 'magnae […] Amphionis arces' (*Thebaid* IV.358) suggests Thebes' decay and parallels the citizens' *maestitia* at 'ducis furiis' (IV.346), with this

dux, Eteocles, then compared to a wolf ravaging a sheepfold (IV.363-5). This resonates with the avarice afflicting many of *Inferno*'s sinners, and which Dante's characters Ciacco and Brunetto Latini claim plagues Dante's Florence and contemporary Italy.[150]

Dante's depiction of the City of Dis also resonates with Tydeus's emotive speech to Eteocles in *Thebaid* II, in which Tydeus excoriates Eteocles for breaching his promise to his brother and refusing to relinquish his rule of Thebes after his agreed year in office and warns of the warfare and carnage to come, repeating words of violence (*tela*, *armis, sanguine, sanguineus, sanguini, funera*, and *excidio*, *Thebaid* II.451-66). Just as Dante-pilgrim speaks of the infernal city's *mura* that resemble *ferro*, Tydeus speaks of an imagined iron rampart (*ferreus agger*) and the walls surrounding Thebes (*triplices muros*). Interestingly, while Ovid (*Metamorphoses* VI.178-79) and Seneca (*Oedipus*, line 612; *Phoenician Women*, lines 566-68) both speak of Amphion constructing the walls of Thebes through his song, as Statius does in this passage, neither states that the walls are *triplices*. Nor can I find any other reference in Ovid or Seneca to similar effect. Even Homer only mentions the tale of Amphion's building of Thebes, and its seven gates, and does not detail the number of its walls (*Odyssey* XI.260-65). Statius may have been familiar with some other account of Thebes that specified that three walls surrounded the city. Yet I believe that in *Thebaid* II, Statius intends us to associate his triple-walled Thebes with the triple-walled City of Dis described in *Aeneid* VI.549 and the evildoing of those punished there. Even if it were not Statius's intention to make such an association, it is easy to see how Dante could have identified triple-walled Thebes and the malfeasance of its ruler and citizenry with Vergil's triple-walled City of Dis and its denizens, particularly given Dante's own desire to link Thebes with hell. Thebes' later besiegement by the army of the seven kings effectively acts as confinement similar to that imposed by the City of Dis's walls, forcing Thebes' citizens to face the bloodshed, just as hell's sinners must face their

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[150] 'superbia, invidia e avarizia sono | le tre faville c'hanno i cuori accesi' (*Inferno* VI.74-75); 'gent' è avara, invidiosa e superba' (XV.68). For a *lectura* of *Inferno* VI, see Piromalli 1971; Frasso 2009; and Rinaldi 2013. On *Inferno* XV, see Bosco 1971a; de Angelis 2009; and Villa 2013.

punishment. Accordingly, the triple walls of Statius's Thebes resonate on a physical and a symbolic, psychological level with Dante's City of Dis, suggesting it as a further influence upon the City's architecture.

Dante turns to Statius again in the encounter outside the City of Dis's walls. Here Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio encounter the fallen angels, who stand guard like soldiers 'in su le porte' (*Inferno* VIII.82-85). As always, Virgilio attempts to reason with the creatures objecting to the living Dante-pilgrim's passage through hell. Until now, Virgilio's negotiations to secure passage were successful, since the guardians were creatures appropriated from the classical underworld (albeit medievalised and Christianised by Dante).[151] However, in an early sign of the pagan Virgilio's limitations (see Chapter III), his efforts to negotiate with these Christian figures of evil are fruitless, and Dante-pilgrim avers, 'Chiuser le porte que' nostri avversari | nel petto al mio segnor, che fuore rimase' (*Inferno* VIII.115-16). Virgilio and Dante-pilgrim must await heavenly assistance before they can enter.

While this scene seems to owe little to classical poetry, I have identified similarities here with the legend of the Sphinx mentioned by Statius (*Thebaid* I.66-67, II.504-18, and XI.490) and Ovid (*Metamorphoses* VII.759-60). Dante uses the legend of the Sphinx's riddling as a parallel for his poetry's complexity in *Purgatorio* XXXIII.46-48 (see section IV.2.6). The Sphinx was a monstrous hybrid and Thebes' *de facto* guardian, demanding that those who wished to enter the city answered a riddle correctly and killing all those who failed to do so. Statius first mentions her in Oedipus's angry invocation to Tisiphone in *Thebaid* I, in which he seeks to demonstrate his worth and avers: 'si Sphingos iniquae | callidus ambages te praemonstrante resolui' (I.66-67). According to two Italian manuscripts containing Lactantius's commentary, the Sphinx's name arose 'quia ita stringent homines suis quaestionibus' (*In Theb.* I.66-67).[152] Statius

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[151] As the guardians sourced from classical myth are not primarily Statian, I do not discuss them here.

[152] BAV, MSS Pal. lat. 1694, fols 2^{r-v} and Strozzi 130, fol. 1^v. This text does not appear in Sweeney's edition at *In Theb.* I.66-67.

discusses the Sphinx in more detail when describing the place appointed for ambushing Tydeus:

> [….] contra importuna crepido,
> Oedipodioniae domus alitis; hic fera quondam
> pallentes erecta genas suffusaque tabo
> lumina, concretis infando sanguine plumis
> reliquias amplexa uirum semesaque nudis
> pectoribus stetit ossa premens uisuque trementi
> conlustrat campos, si quis concurrere dictis
> hospes inexplicitis aut comminus ire uiator
> audeat et dirae commercia iungere linguae;
> nec mora, quin acuens exertos protinus ungues
> liuentesque manus fractosque in uulnere dentes
> terribili applausu circum hospita surgeret ora;
> et latuere doli, donec de rupe cruenta
> (heu simili deprensa uiro!) cessantibus alis
> tristis inexpletam scopulis adfligeret aluum.
>
> *Thebaid* II.504-18

As Dante's fallen angels are *in su* above the gates, so the Sphinx guarded Thebes from above 'in monte' (Benvenuto da Imola 1375-80: *ad Purg.* XXXIII.46-51). The Sphinx was notoriously *iniqua* like the fallen angels, and no one solved her riddle prior to *callidus* Oedipus, just as Virgilio's eloquence does not suffice to win passage into Dis.

Unsurprisingly, the Sphinx was believed in the Middle Ages to represent darkness and evil (Constans 1881: 5). The *Roman de Thèbes* even gives the legend a Christian slant, describing the Sphinx as 'uns deables' (line 269) as it paraphrases *Thebaid* II's description of her (lines 267-74), and later asserts '[s]ouz la roche Pyn le deable | les puez trover' (lines 1899-1900). The Sphinx's presence outside Thebes, guarding its entrance, strengthens the impression that the city is rife with evil, a notion which Dante plays upon throughout *Inferno*. Oedipus's triumph over the Sphinx was therefore thought in the Middle Ages to symbolise the victory of light over darkness (Constans 1881: 4), as such was the Sphinx's chagrin when Oedipus bested her that she killed herself. Some sources claim she devoured herself, but Statius (*Thebaid* II.516-18, and XI.490, 'dum uicta cadit Sphinx'), Ovid (*Metamorphoses* VII.759-60) and the *In principio* commentator believe that 'Eadem mortem praecipitauit' (MS Additional 16380, fol. 145[r]; MS Ricc. 842, fol. 3[rb-va]). Accordingly, despite committing both incest

and patricide, in this regard Oedipus was 'une personnification de la lumière' (Constans 1881: 4). A similar representative of light, *da ciel messo* (*Inferno* IX.85), must provide divine assistance before Virgilio and Dante-pilgrim can enter Dis (see below). Thus, it seems that an extract of Statian poetry, perhaps mediated by certain other medieval readers of Statius, has again fired Dante's imagination and that Dante has altered the scene, making it his own and transforming it into a small but important part of his Christian eschatology.

Dante accompanies his fallen angels with other, classical creatures, as Dante-pilgrim sees above him:

> tre furïe infernal di sangue tinte,
> che membra feminine avieno e atto,
>
> e con idre verdissime eran cinte;
> serpentelli e ceraste avien per crine,
> onde le fiere tempie erano avvinte
> 　　　　　　　　*Inferno* IX.38-42[153]

Dante emphasises the Furies' classical origins, as Virgilio 'che ben conobbe' these creatures names Tisiphone, Megaera, and Allecto, the three 'feroci Erine' (*Inferno* IX.45-48) or Furies, chthonic goddesses who take vengeance upon those who have sworn false oaths or committed unavenged crimes. The Furies are mentioned in the *Aeneid*, the *Thebaid*, the *Metamorphoses*, and Lucan's *Civil War*. Here, they represent 'le tre male disposizioni contenute nella città di Dite: violenza, frode, tradimento' (Zannoni 1971: 291). Dante perhaps reflects these 'male disposizioni' in the Furies' three actions, as Dante-pilgrim avers:

> Con l'unghie si fendea ciascuna il petto;
> battiensi a palme e gridavan sì alto,
> ch'i' mi strinsi al poeta per sospetto.
> 　　　　　　　　*Inferno* IX.49-51

While a covering of blood and hissing green snakes surrounding their heads instead of hair are common features of the Furies in classical poetry, Dante seems to draw particularly on Statius's depiction of Tisiphone in describing his own Furies:

> centum illi stantes umbrabant ora cerastae,
> turba minor diri capitis; […]

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[153] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* IX, see Zannoni 1971; Cristaldi 2009; and Mastandrea 2013.

> [...] suffusa ueneno
> tenditur ac sanie gliscit cutis; igneus atro
> ore uapor, [...];
> Atropos hos atque ipsa nouat Proserpina cultus.
> tum geminas quatit ira manus: haec igne rogali
> fulgurat, haec uiuo manus aera uerberat hydro.
> [...], fera sibila crine uirenti
> congeminat [...].
>
> *Thebaid* I.103-04, 106-08, 111-13, 115-16

Dante follows Statius in using the unusual noun *cerast(a)e* in describing the Furies. These are small horned serpents (Guido da Pisa 1385-1395: *ad Inf.* IX.41), which neither Vergil nor Ovid mention in describing the Furies, and which Lucan mentions only in describing Medusa (*The Civil War*, IX.719). Dante associates the Furies with Proserpina, calling them 'meschine | de la regina de l'etterno pianto', while Statius avers that Proserpina and Atropos renew Tisiphone's garb, and Lactantius thus associates Tisiphone with executing Proserpina's will ('ostenderet Furiarum ministerio et Fatorum decreta compleri et Proserpinae uoluntatem', *In Theb.* I.111). Statius's Tisiphone's shaking of her *geminas manus* is echoed in Dante's Furies beating themselves, and the fiery, poisonous breath that issues from Tisiphone's mouth resonates metaphorically with Dante's Furies' terrible shouting and Dante-pilgrim's resultant fear.

Dante reminds us of the connection he creates between the walled cities of Dis, Thebes and medieval Italy through referring to 'l'alta torre' as he sees the Furies, recalling *Inferno* VII.130. Thus, the Furies too seem to operate as city guards as they come to harry Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio outside the City walls. Their arrival recalls Tisiphone's making of the 'notum iter ad Thebas' (*Thebaid* I.101) to execute the god Dis's orders to stir up bloodshed and hatred within and without Thebes. Statius later confirms Jupiter's desire to punish the Theban race for their evildoing, and his consequent tolerance of the interference of Dis and his Furies in Thebes (*Thebaid* III.218-52). Thus, Boccaccio's gloss regarding Dante's use of the Furies 'al servigio di Giove', despite the fact that 'par da maravigliare', has relevance to Statius too:

> intorno a questo si può così dire: i nostri peccati son tanti che noi con la nostra perfidia vinciamo la divina pazienzia, e commoviamla a dovere operare contra

> di noi.
>
> <div align="right">1373-1375: *ad Inf.* IX.34-51</div>

This renders the Furies' resonance with the *Thebaid* even more telling.

Dante places a further classical monster as guardian of Dis's walls, as the Furies cry 'Vegna Medusa: sì 'l farem di smalto' before lamenting 'mal non vengiammo in Tesëo l'assalto' (*Inferno* IX.53-55). Significantly, this is the first time Dante mentions Theseus in the *Commedia*. The Furies' cry alludes to their decision to imprison Theseus rather than execute him, when they caught him rescuing his friend Pirithous, who tried to kidnap Proserpina, from the underworld. Hercules then rescued Theseus, depriving the Furies of their prisoner. While Vergil refers to this story in *Aeneid* VI.122-23 and VI.392-97, Statius mentions it several times in the *Thebaid*. First, Statius utilises Theseus's rescue of Pirithous as a paradigm of *fides* (*Thebaid* I.474-76). Subsequently, Statius's Dis mentions the tale as he rails at Amphiaraus's sudden appearance in the underworld:

> [...] me Pirithoi temerarius ardor
> temptat et audaci Theseus iuratus amico,
> me ferus Alcides tum cum custode remoto
> ferrea Cerbereae tacuerunt limina portae;
> <div align="center">*Thebaid* VIII.53-56</div>

Dante's *assalto* resonates with Statius's *temerarius* and *temptat*; Statius's mention of Tartarus's *ferrea limina portae* recalls Dis's gates; and both scenes hint at the anger of the infernal deities. Thus, this mention of Theseus constitutes an example of both Statius's and Dante's concern with the violation of boundaries. However, unlike Theseus, Dante-pilgrim's journey is not transgressive, and he will not need to be rescued from hell, only guided, as his journey is divinely-willed.

Unlike his failure against the fallen angels, Virgilio can still protect Dante-pilgrim against these classical monsters, warning him:

> Volgiti 'n dietro e tien lo viso chiuso;
> ché se 'l Gorgón si mostra e tu 'l vedessi,
> nulla sarebbe di tornar mai suso.
> <div align="center">*Inferno* IX.55-57</div>

The Gorgons were three sisters who resided in the underworld's entrance, had snakes for hair, and turned anyone who looked at them directly to stone. The most famous was

Medusa, whom the hero Perseus killed.[154] Their chthonic residence and their serpentine hair no doubt prompted Dante to connect Medusa with the Furies, particularly since Statius also used *cerastae* in describing her, as Lucan did:

> […] stetit aspera Gorgon
> crinibus emissis rectique ante ora cerastae
> uelauere deam; […]
>
>   *Thebaid* VIII.762-64

Interestingly, Statius's depiction of Medusa appears in a description of Athena's breastplate, just before the goddess flees from the sight of Tydeus with his mouth befouled with Menalippus's blood and brains, in a passage demonstrating the evil surrounding and within Thebes (VIII.758-66). Tydeus's cannibalism provides the model for Ugolino's cannibalisation of Ruggieri in *Inferno* XXXII-XXXIII. Here, however, it lends a further resonance to Medusa's presence outside the City of Dis, strengthening the connection between the two evil cities. Nevertheless, Dante's creation of an allegiance between Medusa and the Furies and their placement outside Dis's walls as guardians demonstrate Dante's typical innovation, since classical mythology did not generally associate the creatures in this way.

Dante turns to Statius again as Virgilio and Dante-pilgrim enter the City, when assistance arrives 'da ciel messo' (*Inferno* IX.86). Dante's description of the *messo celeste*'s arrival echoes Statius's description of Mercury's return from the underworld with Laius's shade:

> Dal volto rimovea quell' aere grasso,
> menando la sinistra innanzi spesso;
> e sol di quell' angoscia parea lasso.
>   *Inferno* IX.82-84

> Interea gelidis Maia satus aliger umbris
> iussa gerens magni remeat Iouis; undique pigrae
> ire uetant nubes et turbidus implicat aer,
>   *Thebaid* II.1-3

The parallels between Dante's *messo celeste* and Statius's Mercury begin before this, as the 'tempesta' Dante describes (*Inferno* IX.64-72) recalls the similar phenomena surrounding Mercury's summoning and descent to hell (Scalmazzi 2011: 39).

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[154] See Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV.769-803 and Lucan, *The Civil War*, IX.624-99.

Similarities also exist between Mercury's *caduceus*, which he holds in *Thebaid* II.11 ('it tamen et medica firmat uestigia uirga') and the *messo*'s *verghetta*, with which he opens Dis's gate (*Inferno* IX.90); between Mercury's winged shoes and the *messo*'s crossing 'Stige con le piante asciutte' (IX.81); and the fact that both descended to hell pursuant to divine commands (Scalmazzi 2011: 40-41).

Dante's early commentator Benvenuto da Imola was among the first to note the resemblance, averring that 'multi decepti sunt hic dicentes, quod iste fuit unus angelus, quod tamen alienum est a mente autoris, unde non intelligunt motiuum eius: nam Mercurius poetice loquendo est nuncius et interpres Deorum, qui mittitur a superis ad inferos ad executionem omnis diuinae uoluntatis, sicut patet apud Homerum, Virgilium, Statium, Martianum, et alios multos' (1375-1380: *ad Inf.* IX.85). Dante speaks of angelic intelligences in *Convivio*, averring that 'Li gentili le chiamano Dei e Dee (II.IV.6-7) and 'per difetto d'amaestramento li antichi la veritade non videro delle creature spirituali' (II.V.1). Accordingly, Dante authorises us to see in this *messo da ciel* 'l'*inveramento cristiano* del Mercurio classico' (Scalmazzi 2011: 43). Dante emphasises the messenger's divine mandate as, 'pien di disdegno' (*Inferno* IX.89), he opens Dis's gate easily and castigates the fallen angels for their futile efforts to thwart divine will (IX.90-100). Thus, by Christianising Statius's divine messenger and his journey between the worlds, Dante demonstrates the divine grace necessary to Dante-pilgrim's eschatological voyage, thereby reinforcing his own poem's superiority as Christian in inspiration.

IV.2.6 GERYON

Dante utilises Statius again in depicting Geryon, the horrific guardian of Dante's circles of fraud, who carries Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio down to the Malebolge. After the episode's metapoetic preface (*Inferno* XVI.124-29), Dante-pilgrim sees 'venir notando una figura in suso, | maravigliosa ad ogne cor sicuro' (*Inferno* XVI.131-32).[155] This

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[155] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* XVI and XVII see de Angelis 2009. On *Inferno* XVI only, see Marti 1968; Pasquazi 1971; Picone 2000d; and Marcozzi 2013. On *Inferno* XVII only, see Lanza 1968; Soldati 1971; and Gorni 2000b.

unexpected image stimulates our curiosity as we move into *Inferno* XVII. Virgilio emphasises Geryon's perverse hybridity, as he exclaims:

> Ecco la fiera con la coda aguzza,
> che passa i monti e rompe i muri e l'armi!
> Ecco colei che tutto 'l mondo appuzza!
> *Inferno* XVII.1-3

The *fiera* is Geryon, 'la sozza imagine di froda' (*Inferno* I.7), a ubiquitous sin that damages not just those it effects directly but society in general (*tutto 'l mondo*). Dante demonstrates this destructiveness through reference to the natural (*monti*) and man-made defences (*muri e armi*) that *frode* has overcome, and to events he considers historical, drawn from Vergil and Statius. Pietro Alighieri avers that for *muri*, Dante's example lies in Sinon and the Trojan Horse (*Aeneid* II and *Inferno* XXX); and for *armi* 'exemplum patet in Achille vulnerante Hectorem in loco armis detecto, et in Menalippo vulnerante Tideum,' which Statius depicts in *Thebaid* VIII and Dante in *Inferno* XXXII 'in fine' ([3] 1359-1364: *ad Inf.* XVII.1-2). Thus, well before the Ugolino episode, Dante begins to exploit the powerful Statian imagery linked to Tydeus's cannibalism, using it to indicate the damaging, even devouring nature of deceit. Such destructive falsity features in the myth of the deceitful and *iniqua* Sphinx, who killed many people before finally being bested by Oedipus, ironically overcome by the truth – the answer to her riddle.

Dante's account of Geryon's appearance follows a traditional rhetorical character presentation, moving from the head downwards. We learn of Geryon's 'faccia d'uom giusto' that 'tanto benigna avea di fuor la pelle' (*Inferno* XVII.10-11); his body 'd'un serpente' (XVII.12), his 'due branche […] pilose insin l'ascelle' (XVII.13); his back, chest and 'ambedue le coste' 'dipinti […] di nodi e di rotelle' (XVII.14-15); and finally, 'la venenosa forca | ch'a guisa di scorpion la punta armava' (XVII.26-27). Geryon's physical form connects intimately to his personification of fraud, mirroring the sequence of a fraudulent deal with Geryon's honest face, appealing body, and then the unexpected sting in the tail (Durling and Martinez 1996: *ad Inf.* XVII.10-27). Dante probably knew Geryon through mentions in Vergil and Ovid, yet Dante only names him

in *Inferno* XVII.97. This increases our suspense for dramatic effect and enables us to draw our own conclusions regarding Geryon's physical form before we make assumptions regarding the classical Geryon.

Scholars have pondered the inspiration behind Dante's Geryon since the *Commedia*'s earliest commentators. The classical Geryon was a king with three heads and sets of legs, whom Hercules killed to steal his cattle, thereby completing his tenth labour (*Metamorphoses* IX.184-85; *Heroides* IX; *Aeneid* VIII.201-04). He is probably among the creatures Aeneas sees at Hades' entrance (*Aeneid* VI.289). Thus, the classical Geryon's physical form differs radically from that of Dante's Geryon. Moreover, neither Ovid nor Vergil attribute any association with fraud or theft to Geryon; instead, Hercules steals from Geryon. The classical Geryon's association with the underworld and his triple form seem to have inspired Dante's naming of his own creature. After all, they enable Dante to figure Geryon as a fraudulent image of the Trinity (Hollander 2000: *ad Inf.* XVII.1-3), much like Lucifer in *Inferno* XXXIV. However, arguably Geryon is at least a quadruple hybrid, not a triple, unless we take him as a perversion of Christ (half-human and half-beast instead of human and divine) and only his bestial side as triple.

Thus, Dante must have found inspiration for Geryon's physical form elsewhere. Geryon 'embodies just about all the traits which the medieval world typically associated with monsters' (Barański 1990: 78). Nonetheless, certain monsters appearing in classical, biblical, and medieval sources seem particularly relevant. Scholars (e.g. Durling and Martinez 1996: *ad Inf.* XVII.10-27) have noted Geryon's physical resemblance to the locusts of Revelation and the man-eating manticore described by, *inter alios*, Pliny the Elder, Brunetto Latini, and Albertus Magnus, which was often associated with the devil (Cheney 1987: 127). Kirkpatrick (1981: 27-31) and Barolini (1984: 227n) also observe similarities between Geryon and Cacus, a half-human, man-eating creature who lived in a dark cave (*Aeneid* VIII.184-305), whom Dante-pilgrim encounters in *Inferno* XXV.16-33.

I believe another hybrid man-eating creature provided some inspiration for Dante's Geryon – the Sphinx. The Sphinx lived in a cave, much like Cacus. Hers rested on a mountainside above Thebes, enabling her to guard the city's entrance, much as Geryon guards the circles of fraud. However, the most significant resonances between Geryon and the Sphinx concern their grotesque hybridity and deceitful nature. Isidore's suggestion that the Sphinx was a type of ape 'dociles ad feritatis oblivionem' (*Etymologies* XII.II.32) does not accord with Statius's presentation of her. In *Thebaid* II.505, Statius describes the Sphinx as *ales*, and Lactantius and the *In principio* commentary describe her having 'alas et ungues' like the harpies (BAV, MS Pal Lat 1694, fol. 2[r]; MS Additional 16380, fol. 145[r]; MS Ricc. 842 fol 3rb). While we do not know whether Geryon has claws (although he probably does, given his leonine legs), both creatures are able to 'fly'. The Sphinx has wings, and Geryon 'swims' up from the abyss and is later described 'Come 'l falcon ch'è stato assai su l'ali' (*Inferno* XVII.127). Statius avers that the Sphinx 'hic fera quondam | pallentes erecta genas suffusaque tabo | lumina, concretis infando sanguine plumis | reliquias amplexa uirum semesaque nudis | pectoribus stetit ossa premens' (*Thebaid* II.505-09). Her anthropophagy resonates with the man-eating manticore and Cacus, who also resemble Geryon, and with Dante's connection of Tydeus's and Ugolino's cannibalism to Geryon, fraud, and its devouring nature. Like Geryon, the Sphinx's hybrid form embodies deceit, with her human face and perverted body and limbs. Together with the Sphinx's notorious trickery, this resonance strengthens Geryon's own symbolisation of *frode*. As the Sphinx was also connected with the devil, an association between the Sphinx, Geryon, and Satan, the *padre di menzogna* (*Inferno* XXIII.144), who now gnaws three sinners (*Inferno* XXXIV), naturally follows.

The similarity between Dante's Geryon and the Sphinx becomes even more interesting when we consider the metapoetic passage in which Dante compares his poem's obscurity to the Sphinx's riddle:

> E forse che la mia narrazion buia,
> qual Temi e Sfinge, men ti persuade,

> perch' a lor modo lo 'ntelletto attuia
> *Purgatorio* XXXIII.46-48

Dante's early commentator Francesco da Buti assumes that the Sphinx is the creature described in Horace's *Ars Poetica*, lines 1-5, asserting that 'avea lo volto vergineo, lo collo di cavallo, li piedi come orso o leone, lo corpo come uccello pennuto, e l'ale e la coda a modo di pescio' before explaining Oedipus's solving of the Sphinx's riddle (1385-1395: *ad Purg.* XXXIII.46-47). Thus, the Sphinx is both a monstrous hybrid and through her riddling, a symbol of language's obscurity, much like Geryon. In discussing the Geryon episode, Barański observes that the *Ars Poetica*'s 'memorable opening' led to 'monsters and explanations of literary practice' going 'hand in hand' for centuries (1990: 82). In this passage, Horace condemns the improper use of *dispositio* in poetry and painting. Thus, Geryon is 'precisely the kind of monster' Horace condemns and Dante's polemical intent vis-à-vis the so-called *genera dicendi* is 'already apparent' (Barański 1990: 83, and 1995a). Dante's mention of the Sphinx in *Purgatorio* XXXIII.46-48 and her notorious *iniquitas*, as emphasised by Statius, reinforce this polemical intent.

Its link to the Sphinx and *Purgatorio* XXXIII.46-48 also reinforces further aspects of the Geryon episode – the possibilities of Creation, and the inadequacy of language to describe the divine (Ferrucci 1971). Dante expressly highlights this inadequacy in the Geryon episode's proem:

> Sempre a quel ver c'ha faccia di menzogna
> de' l'uom chiuder le labbra fin ch'el puote,
> però che sanza colpa fa vergogna;
>
> ma qui tacer nol posso; e per le note
> di questa comedìa, lettor, ti giuro,
> s'elle non sien di lunga grazia vòte,
> *Inferno* XVI.124-29

As Ferrucci (1971), Barański (1990, 1995a, and 1995b), and Barolini (1992: 48-73) already discuss these matters so thoroughly, I do not intend to rehearse here the questions of genre prompted by Dante's first use of the term *comedìa*, nor the connection between Geryon's flight, Ulysses's *folle volo*, and Dante's concerns regarding his own poetic endeavour. The 'ver c'ha faccia di menzogna' Dante promises

to relate recalls his description of the poets' allegory as 'quello che si nasconde sotto 'l manto di queste favole, ed è una veritade ascosa sotto bella menzogna' (*Convivio* II.1.2). It foreshadows Geryon's *faccia*, which is false despite its outward appearance. Yet Dante swears to the Geryon episode's truth despite his poem's *novitas* and the incredible things he narrates (Ledda 2002: 67). Thus, Dante captures our attention, highlights the tension between truth and falsity that imbues the episode, and indicates that it holds an important allegorical meaning.[156] In so doing, he asserts his poem's claim to both literal and allegorical truth and demonstrates his *auctoritas*, greater than that of the pagan *auctores*.

Geryon is thus a hybrid of human and animal parts, inspired by many different sources. This reflects the *Commedia*'s nature, formed from an amalgam of Dante's own imagination and various intertextual references (Barański 1990: 80). Geryon's connection with deceit suggests that the poetic process and language itself present similar dangers. This seems particularly relevant given the connection I have identified between Geryon and the Sphinx, another deceitful hybrid. Poetry too can be a type of theft and lead to the horrific amalgamation that Horace fears. Like language in general, it can be used actively to deceive or to obscure the truth, like *Inferno* V's self-deceiving Francesca, or the *Malebolge*'s false counsellors. Nevertheless, Dante makes abundantly clear here and throughout that the *Commedia* tells the truth. Dante's use of his predecessors' poetry is not *imitatio* or theft but *aemulatio*, as he always builds upon his sources to make characters and episodes fully his own. In Dante's view, his poetry also surpasses that of the classical canon in which Geryon, Cacus, and the Sphinx appear, since it contains Christian truth. Geryon's presence emphasises this important point just before we enter the Malebolge, confining many souls who used language to deceive.

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[156] On the interaction between the incredibility topos and the declaration of truth, see Ledda 2002: 88-90. On their interaction with the 'appello al lettore', see Ledda 2002: 146-47.

IV.2.7 THE MALEBRANCHE

The Sphinx's watch over the road to Thebes may also have influenced Virgilio and Dante-pilgrim's encounter with Malacoda and the Malebranche, the demons guarding the fifth bolgia (*Inferno* XXI-XXIII).[157] Dante-pilgrim sees 'un diavol nero | correndo su per lo scoglio venire' and exclaims:

> Ahi quant'elli era ne l'aspetto fero!
> e quanto mi parea ne l'atto acerbo,
> con l'ali aperte e sovra i piè leggero!
>
> L'omero suo, ch'era aguto e superbo,
> carcava un peccator con ambo l'anche,
> e quei tenea de' piè ghermito 'l nerbo.
> <div align="right">*Inferno* XXI.29-36</div>

Like the Sphinx, Malacoda, the demons' apparent leader, has wings and a distorted and hideous form. The other demons, whose names reflect their malformations, are similarly deformed. This physical perversion reflects the spiritual perversion of sin and the deceit embodied by those in this pit, a sentiment strengthened by the demons' resonance with the Sphinx.

Dante recalls the encounter with the fallen angels at Dis's gates, and the Sphinx who prevents entry to Thebes, as the Malebranche block Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio's journey through the Malebolge. As Virgilio attempts to speak with them, the demons rush at him with 'tutt'i runcigli', but he begs them refrain from turning their 'uncin' against him until he has spoken with one of them (*Inferno* XXI.70-75). Despite Virgilio apparently agreeing passage with their leader Malacoda (XXI.87), when Dante-pilgrim approaches Virgilio 'i diavoli si fecer tutti avanti', leading Dante-pilgrim to fear 'ch'ei tenesser patto' (XXI.91-93). Dante-pilgrim's fear is justified, since the demons are deceitful like the bolgia's inhabitants, and Virgilio possesses no true authority over these Christian foes. Thus, this tercet foreshadows the demons' upcoming breach of their promise and their attempted attack. The demons' rushing at Virgilio, the references to the demons' claws and hooks (*runcigli*, *uncin*, *arruncigliarmi*, *uncino*), and

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[157] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* XXI, see Scolari 1971; Pertile 2009; and Vela 2013. On *Inferno* XXII, see Tommaso Sozzi 1971; Panicara 2000; and Crimi 2013. On *Inferno* XXIII, see Sacchetto 1971; Pertile 2009; and Battaglia Ricci 2013.

the attack Dante-pilgrim fears, recall the *iniqua* Sphinx who tricks those wishing to enter the city, and then, when they cannot answer her riddle correctly, 'ex improuiso ueniens alis et unguibus ad se in rupem trahebat' (Lactantius Placidus, *In Theb.* I.66-67; cfr. *Thebaid* II.504-18). This resonance strengthens the sense of deceit and foreboding Dante creates. When the demons finally break their pact, Dante-pilgrim sees them 'venir con l'ali tese | non molto lungi, per volerne prendere' (*Inferno* XXIII.35-36). The demons' trickery and *ali tesi* recall the *iniqua* Sphinx attacking people with her wings and claws, suggesting Dante may have had *Thebaid* II.504-18 in mind when writing this scene, alongside traditional depictions of hell.[158]

As Malacoda deceives Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio, mixing 'verità e menzogna' (Vela 2013: 703), Dante depicts the Malebolge's architectural dilapidation.[159] Malacoda informs them that they must take another route, as 'questo | iscoglio […] giace | tutto spezzato al fondo l'arco sesto' (*Inferno* XXI.106-08), because the earthquake at Christ's crucifixion meant 'la via fu rotta' (XXI.112-14). Malacoda's allusion to this earthquake recalls the earthquake at Dante-pilgrim's entrance to *Inferno* and resonates with that accompanying Stazio's liberation in *Purgatorio* XX-XXII. Dante thus alludes to the event that made salvation possible, and the journey from vice to virtue we must undertake to avoid *Inferno*'s sinners' eternal damnation and achieve salvation like Stazio and, eventually, Dante-pilgrim. There is also a resonance with the earthquake and accompanying *infernus murmur* that rocked Thebes in *Thebaid* VII.794-801, in which the ground splits open to swallow the living Amphiaraus into the underworld (*Thebaid* VII.818-23). Amphiaraus appears among *Inferno* XX's diviners (see section IV.3.6). Accordingly, Malacoda's claim recalls the parallels between Dante's infernal city and Statius's Thebes, both in terms of their structural damage and the moral decay and disorder symbolised by this damage. A parallel with the physical damage war has caused to Dante's Italy, and her citizens' moral turpitude, naturally follows, particularly given the connection highlighted earlier, between Thebes, Troy, Rome, and Florence.

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[158] On the Malebranche and traditional Christian eschatology, see Pertile 2009: 162-64.
[159] On the Malebolge's urban resonances, see Keen 2003: 133-34 and Honess 2006: 54.

I have identified a further possible inspiration for Dante's Malebranche in the *Roman de Thèbes*. Statius's reference to the Sphinx guarding Thebes seems to have stimulated the *Thèbes* author such that in addition to mentioning *Pyn le deable* he bases a further scene on this legend, replacing the Sphinx with another *deable*, Astarot. The *Thèbes* avers that Thideüs and his companion travelling to Thebes:

> Passer voudrent et passissant
> quant uns deables vint devant.
> Astarot ot non li deables,
> d'Enfer iert mestre connestables;
> en lieu de Vielle se figure,
> devant lor vient grant aleüre.
> Par sa menace l'ost destorbe;
> grant ot le nes comme une corbe,
> les braz si granz conme granz tres,
> les main conme entrée de nes.
> lines 2889-98

Like the Sphinx, Astarot requires Thideüs to answer a riddle before he can enter Thebes, or face death (lines 2901-10). Several similarities exist with Virgilio and Dante-pilgrim's encounter with the Malebranche. Both episodes involve travellers wishing to enter a city when a demon intercepts them, and in both cases that demon is taken from the Christian tradition rather than the classical. The *Thèbes* author's appointment of Astarot as 'd'Enfer […] mestre connestables' recalls Malacoda's leadership of the Malebranche, and in both instances the wayfarers must negotiate passage with this malign figure of authority. Astarot's horrific, distorted physical appearance (lines 2895-98) resonates with the horrendous figures of Dante's Malebranche, whose names frequently reflect both their deformities and their injurious characters e.g. Malacoda, Barbariccia, Graffiacan, etc. Finally, Thideüs and his companion pass the demon Astarot after correctly guessing the answer to the riddle, just as Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio eventually pass the Malebranche. Nevertheless, Dante-pilgrim's escape from the demons is much more dramatic than that of Thideüs, as he and Virgilio must flee the attacking horde. Virgilio snatches Dante-pilgrim up in his arms 'come la madre' (*Inferno* XXIII.38) rescuing her son from the flames, and in a comic scene the pair slide down the bolgia's crumbling wall to safety (*Inferno* XXIII.37-51). If Dante were familiar with the Astarot scene, he may well have used it as a basis to develop the vivid and

entertaining Malebranche episode, with which he places Virgilio's authority in doubt again as he did outside Dis. Moreover, the placing of both Pyn and Astarot outside Thebes strengthens the city's association with evil.

IV.2.8 THE GIANT-TOWERS

Dante reminds us of the similarities between his City of Dis, Statius's Thebes and medieval cities prior to reaching Cocytus, hell's deepest part. Dante emphasises the connection between this area of hell and the civic landscape as Dante-pilgrim sees what he assumes are 'molte alte torri' (*Inferno* XXXI.20) surrounding a city.[160] Virgilio clarifies:

> […] che non son torri, ma giganti,
> e son nel pozzo intorno da la ripa
> da l'umbilico in giuso tutti quanti
> *Inferno* XXXI.31-33

Even in confirming the realisation of his error, Dante-pilgrim expounds the similarity of the giants' appearance to that of towers around the city wall, as he avers:

> però che, come su la cerchia tonda
> Montereggion di torri si corona,
> così la proda che 'l pozzo circonda
>
> torreggiavan di mezza la persona
> li orribili giganti, […]
> *Inferno* XXXI.40-44

Evident similarities exist between Dante's giants surrounding the frozen Cocytus, fed by the blood-red Phlegethon, and *Thebaid* IV.553-56, in which the *terrigenae*, the *gens Martia*, surround a *sanguineus lacus* in the underworld, in a scene without a parallel in the *Aeneid* or *Metamorphoses* (Butler 2005: 5). Statius's *terrigenae* resemble the giants, who were said to be from the earth (Genesis 6.4) and in classical myth were confined under it as punishment for their rebellion. These *terrigenae* participated in Thebes' violent founding, further linking Dante's hell to Statius's Thebes and its repeated bloodshed and, through their 'common Martial ancestry' (Martinez 1977: 28), to Dante's Florence.

Dante reinforces the resemblance between his hell and a city's fortifications by

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[160] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* XXXI, see Chiari 1971; Ciccuto 2000; and Bellomo 2009.

continuing to associate the giants with towers in describing Nimrod, whom Dante asserts built the tower of Babel (Genesis 10.8-12 and 11.1-9; *Inferno* XXXI.76-81); Ephialtes shaking himself like a tower quaking (XXXI.106-08); and Antaeus, whom Dante compares to Bologna's Garisenda tower (*Inferno* XXXI.136-38) (Butler 2005: 8-9).[161] Dante's adaptation of a scene from the *Thebaid* and Dante-pilgrim's 'erroneous' transformation of that scene into an architectural landscape represent the poet's efforts to associate his infernal city with Statius's Thebes in all its negative, bellicose implications. Cocytus, hell's final zone, is dense with Theban echoes.

IV.2.9 COCYTUS

In the 'prologue' to *Inferno*'s final part (Ledda 2002: 27), as Dante-pilgrim enters Cocytus, Dante turns to Statius's Thebes again as he exclaims:

> S'ïo avessi le rime aspre e chiocce,
> come si converrebbe al tristo buco
> sovra 'l qual pontan tutte l'altre rocce,
>
> io premerei di mio concetto il suco
> più pienamente; […]
>
> Ma quelle donne aiutino il mio verso
> ch'aiutaro Anfïone a chiuder Tebe,
> sì che dal fatto il dir non sia diverso.
> *Inferno* XXXII.1-5, 10-12[162]

This 'proem' creates a correspondence between hell's topography and Dante's organisation of his material (De Caprio 2013: 992), as the giants posted around Cocytus (*Inferno* XXXI) separate it physically from the rest of hell, and Dante's proem separates it rhetorically and poetically, indicating its significance. The 'rime aspre e chiocce' reflect the true horror of which Dante will shortly speak and recall the *asprezza* of *Inferno* I's *selva*, and Dante expresses his *tema* (*Inferno* XXXII.6) at describing what he saw just as he did in *Inferno*'s proem.[163] Similarly, just as Statius expressed his quandary of where to begin his account of Thebes' terrible history in *Thebaid* I.1-45, at

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[161] On Genesis 10.8-12 and 11.1-9, the Latin Vulgate, and Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* XVI.IV as possible sources for Dante's interpretation of Nimrod, see Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Inf.* XXXI.77.

[162] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* XXXII, see Varanini 1971; Bellomo 2009; Boitani 2009; and De Caprio 2013.

[163] For a more detailed consideration of *Inferno* XXXII's proem, see Ledda 2002: 27-28; and on the canto's poetics, see De Caprio 2013.

the *Thebaid*'s close, Statius relates the difficulty of narrating the horrific Theban war, with its vast toll of tragic deaths:

> non ego, centena si quis mea pectora laxet
> uoce deus, tot busta simul uulgique ducumque,
> tot pariter gemitus dignis conatibus aequem:
>
> *Thebaid* XII.797-99

This creates an almost chiastic correspondence between Dante's account of hell and Statius's *Thebaid*. This is fitting as from *Inferno* XXXII onwards, Statius's Thebes is 'central' to Dante's description of hell's lowest region (Butler 2005: 6).

Dante signals Thebes' centrality to his depiction of Cocytus by referring to Amphion's construction of Thebes as he invokes the Muses to assist him. Since Amphion constructed Thebes' walls through song, Dante suggests that he will construct a new Thebes through his poem's final canti, with *chiuder* alluding to 'the act of composition in *terza rima*' (Martinez 1977: 256; Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Inf.* XXXII, Nota; Butler 2005: 6). Dante's mention of 'chiuder' recalls the importance of *limes* within the *Thebaid*, which at times creates 'claustrophobic spaces' that render 'human actions and passions all the more powerful and terrible' (Newlands 2012: 47). Similarly, Dante creates a sense of claustrophobia through the echo of *Inferno*'s proem and his reference to *chiuder*, which foreshadow Ugolino's horrific enclosure in the tower (*Inferno* XXXII-XXXIII) and the traitors' entrapment in the ice. Through this reference to Thebes' construction, Dante also suggests that this 'città dell'efferatezza per antonomasia' (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Inf.* XXXII, Nota) is both the paradigm for his infernal city, and a parallel for his divided Italy, where many cities beside Pisa could be called 'novella Tebe' (*Inferno* XXXIII.89). Unsurprisingly, Dante turns more than ever to Statius's Thebes as he describes Cocytus, hell's final circle.

Dante's Cocytus is found in the central, deepest part of hell, like the classical river Cocytus, but it does not surround a forest like Vergil's river (*Aeneid* VI.131-32), nor is it filled with sand by a whirlpool (*Aeneid* VI.295-97). Dante's Cocytus more closely resembles Statius's *inamoenus* Cocytus, from whose *tristes ripae* Oedipus summons Tisiphone to Thebes as 'Tartarei regina barathri' (*Thebaid* I.85-93). This

implies both the river's location near the *barathrum*'s centre, like Dante's Cocytus, and the intimate connection between Tartarus and Thebes. Yet while Vergil and Statius imply the Cocytus's fluidity (*Aeneid* VI.324; *Thebaid* VIII.29-30), Dante transforms it into 'un lago che per gelo | avea di vetro e non d'acqua sembiante' (XXXII.23-24). This enables him to trap the traitors in it as their eternal punishment. Significantly, the Latin Vulgate also associates the Cocytus with punishing sinners, as it says of the wicked man 'dulcis fuit glareis Cocyti et post se omnem hominem trahet et ante se innumerabiles' (Job 21.33). Dante's punishment is more innovative, as his encasement of the sinners in ice epitomises the stasis of the souls in hell, who rejected the *divina fiamma* of God's love and are now trapped eternally in suffering, metaphorically out in the cold. Dante foreshadows this dreadful icy entrapment when Virgilio bids the giants set him and Dante-pilgrim down 'dove Cocito la freddura serra' (*Inferno* XXXI.123). *Serra* increases this sense of claustrophobic horror and foreshadows Ugolino's locking in the tower (*Inferno* XXXII-XXXIII).

Fittingly, the tears of Dante's Veglio, 'infin, là ove più non si dismonta, | fanno Cocito' (*Inferno* XIV.112-19) after creating hell's other rivers and Lethe, which Dante unusually places in the *paradiso terrestre* (*Purgatorio* XXVIII).[164] These tears merge in Cocytus with those of the ice-encased sinners:

> li occhi lor, ch'eran pria pur dentro molli,
> gocciar su per le labbra, e 'l gelo strinse
> le lagrime tra essi e riserrolli.
> *Inferno* XXXII.46-48

Dante reinforces Cocytus's terrible, frozen enclosure through *gelo*, *strinse* and *riserrolli*. Statius's Cocytus *lacrimis tumens* at Tartarus's centre (*Thebaid* VIII.29-30) may well have influenced Dante's association of the Cocytus with tears. Statius earlier associated the *inamoenus Cocytus* with *tristitia* too (*Thebaid* I.88-91), as the *In principio* commentator reiterates, averring that Cocytus 'interpretatur luctus' (MS Additional 16380, fol. 145ᵛ; MS Ricc. 842, fol. 3ᵛᵇ). Guido da Pisa similarly notes

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[164] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* XIV, see Apollonio 1971; Güntert 2000c; Sedakova 2009; Malavasi 2013; and Keen 2016. On the classical hell's rivers and the *Commedia*, see Donno 1977. On the Veglio's significance, see, for example, Camozzi 2009.

'Interpretatur autem Cochitus, secundum beatum Gregorium in *Moralibus*, luctus' (*c*.1327-1328: *ad Inf*. III.78). Significantly, Statius's description of the Cocytus *lacrimis tumens* comes from a passage (*Thebaid* VIII.21-31) describing the underworld god Dis's seat at Tartarus's centre. Yet while Statius's Dis merely sits near the Cocytus, Dante-pilgrim sees Satan frozen in the ice ironically created through flapping his grotesque wings (*Inferno* XXXIV.29, 49-52), imprisoned like the other traitors. Dante's statement 'ben dee da lui procedere ogne lutto' (XXXIV.36) resonates with the connection Statius and the *In principio* commentator build between the river, *luctus*, and Dis himself. Much like Statius's Cocytus *tumens lacrimis*, Dante's Satan swells the Cocytus through weeping (*Inferno* XXXIV.53-54). Dante thus combines the classical poets' notion of Cocytus, and particularly Statius's (and possibly the *In principio*'s) association of the river with *lacrimae*, *luctus*, and *tristitia*, with biblical scenes, to create his own unique river at whose frozen heart he places Satan, acme of all sin and suffering.

Dante also recalls the architectural connections he strives to create between hell, medieval cities and Statius's Thebes, as he compares Satan to both a windmill and a building (*Inferno* XXXIV.6-7). Dante then recalls Dante-pilgrim's earlier misapprehension of the giants as towers and indirectly its Statian intertext, as he compares Satan's enormity hyperbolically to the giants' size, and describes Satan emerging 'da mezzo 'l petto' from the ice (*Inferno* XXXIV.28-33), just as Dante-pilgrim first saw the giants' torsos. Dante's description of Satan trapped at hell's centre recalls Statius's Dis 'forte sedens media regni infelicis in arce' (*Thebaid* VIII.21), since the 'dux Erebi' (VIII.22) also resides in a citadel (*arx*) at the centre of hell's *barathrum*. Dante thus provides a final reminder of the physical, architectural, and symbolic similarities between Thebes and the City of Dis (*Inferno* XXXIV.6-7).

Accordingly, by utilising Statius's architecture of evil and the intimate connection between Tartarus and Statius's Thebes to develop his hell, and particularly his City of Dis, Dante encourages us to seek other parallels between his infernal realm and Statius's Thebes. Given the similarity already established between Italy's walled cities

and Dante's Dis, these parallels often imply a comparable analogy between these cities and Thebes, particularly significant since these Italian cities too are riven by civil war and unrest. Since Dante and Statius are both concerned with the transgression of boundaries, it is also significant that Dante turns to Statius in depicting many of the key moments of physical transition within hell and particularly the City of Dis. Yet while Dante-pilgrim's crossing of these boundaries is divinely-willed, the moral exempla Dante draws from Statian epic demonstrate that divine justice severely punishes those who impiously transgress them.

IV.3 STATIAN SINNERS IN *INFERNO*

Dante utilises several Statian characters as epitomes of particular sins in *Inferno*, especially in the circles of violence and fraud. This is unsurprising given the plethora of sinners found in Statian epic, particularly the *Thebaid*. In using Statian epic to provide moral exempla, Dante follows Statius's prompting, since the *Thebaid*'s explicit states 'Itala iam studio discit memoratque iuuentus' (*Thebaid* XII.815) and while it was never finished, the *Achilleid* was widely believed to hold a similar purpose. For example, the MS Gronov 66 *accessus* (fol. 1ʳ) believes that Statius's intention 'est nos per uirtutes | Achillis informet ad uirtutes et doceat nos uitare desidiam et | torporem' (lines 70-72), while the Lincoln College *accessus* speaks of dissuading youth from effeminacy and towards arms (lines 9-11). Medieval readers also utilised Statian epic for moral purposes, as general dissuasions from vice or encouragements to virtue, as political warnings, or as exempla of particular virtues (see Chapter I.4.1). Dante is well-acquainted with Statian and other classical poetry's moral usage, since he utilises exempla from the *Thebaid* when illustrating the different aspects of *vergogna*, a virtue of *adolescenza*, in *Convivio* IV.XXV.6 (see Chapter II.5).

Nevertheless, as I analyse the Statian characters Dante-pilgrim meets in *Inferno*, I demonstrate that Dante did not merely 'lift and drop' them as superficial specimens from Statian *accessus* or commentaries or from *florilegia* containing extracts of classical epic. Instead, they result from Dante's reading of the *Thebaid* and the unfinished *Achilleid* in their entirety, and an in-depth understanding of the two

poems aided by the glosses and paratexts with which I believe Dante was familiar (see Chapter I.4). Dante's Statian characters are not two-dimensional carbon copies, since Dante develops them to suit his own purposes, sometimes blending them with information drawn from his other intertexts and always with his own powerful *ingenium*. Later in *Inferno*, Dante even uses certain Statian characters not as material presences but as powerful models on which to base the punishments he devises for more contemporary sinners.

IV.3.1 LIMBO'S *SPIRITI MAGNI*

Significantly, no Statian character features among *Inferno* IV's virtuous pagans, despite Dante listing here both literary characters and historical figures who are in Limbo. I believe there are several reasons for this. Firstly, very few of Statius's characters meet the criteria for inclusion among Dante's *spiriti magni*, namely that they lived before Christ and were sinful because 'non adorar debitamente a Dio' and 'non per altro rio' (*Inferno* IV.38-40). This is particularly true of Statius's male characters, especially in the *Thebaid*.

While we find warriors from Vergil's *Aeneid* among the Roman Empire's heroes, Dante-pilgrim sees the *Achilleid*'s eponymous hero among the lustful (*Inferno* V) and Chiron among the violent (XII), and the *Thebaid*'s Capaneus and Amphiaraus respectively among the blasphemers (*Inferno* XIV) and diviners (XX). Most other male Statian characters are similarly sinful, and not even Statius's seemingly virtuous Adrastus or Theseus appear in Dante's Limbo. Statius depicts Adrastus as one of the *Thebaid*'s rare examples of masculine virtue and leaves him as sole survivor of the Seven against Thebes at the poem's close. However, prior to this Adrastus encourages his countrymen to arms on Polynices's behalf and himself participates in the impious war. This moral ambiguity renders it telling that Dante does not include Adrastus in *Inferno*. The evil of the Theban war that Adrastus sanctions would make it difficult to justify placing him in Limbo, but Adrastus's virtue and otherwise honourable conduct make it difficult to place him elsewhere in hell. (Adrastus's omission from the *Commedia* also supports my assertion in Chapter II.5 that Dante had not read beyond

Thebaid I when he wrote *Convivio* IV.25, since Adrastus does not encourage his men to participate in the impious war nor join it himself until *Thebaid* III.)

Theseus is more complex. Dante alludes to Theseus's dubious rescue of Pirithous in *Inferno* IX, but paints Theseus in a more positive light in *Inferno* XII.17-18, when alluding to his slaying of the Minotaur (cfr. *Metamorphoses* VIII.169-76), an act Dante's early commentator Guido da Pisa believes represents the soul's triumph over sin (*c.*1327-1328: *ad Inf.* XII.19-20). Despite Pseudo-Fulgentius's similar belief that Theseus's liberation of Thebes represented the soul's liberation from sin (*Super Theb.*, lines 168-77), Statius's portrayal of Theseus is more negative. This is particularly apparent in the ecphrasis describing Theseus's shield (*Thebaid* XII.665-76), which echoes and subverts Aeneas's prophetic shield (*Aeneid* VIII.626-781) and refers expressly to the slaying of the Minotaur and implicitly to the rescue of Pirithous. While Aeneas's shield presented hopeful scenes of the foundation of the Roman Empire and the *gens Iulia*, Theseus's represents his past victories ('centum urbes […] centenaque Cretae | moenia') that are 'propriae […] exordia laudis', a prelude to other equally bloody victories (XII.666-68). Statius even depicts Theseus slaying the Minotaur as an act of gory violence (XII.668-71). '[B]is Thesea bisque cruentis | caede uidere manus' (XII.673-74) perhaps echoes the *Thebaid*'s fratricidal brothers, emphasising evil's 'indissolubility', and despite Theseus being a 'more positive' leader than Thebes' previous rulers, his shield suggests he remains 'a flawed hero', corrupted by war (Newlands 2012: 106). Statius's reference to the *metuenda limina* recalls the labyrinth's door and Theseus's dubious journey through the *ferrea limina* of Hades' terrifying portal, mentioned by Statius in *Thebaid* VIII.53-56. The *terror* of those who see Theseus bearing the shield as he goes to battle (XII.672-73) emphasises the continuing bloodshed and evil the shield implies. Theseus's motivation for liberating Thebes also seems dubious, as while he acts ostensibly in Clementia's name, he appears to enjoy war and particularly his vengeful finishing of Creon (*Thebaid* XII.768-81). Statius thereby subverts the duel between Aeneas and Turnus in *Aeneid* XII that

halts the war, hinting at more violence to come. Accordingly, Theseus cannot warrant a place among Limbo's heroes.

Nevertheless, many of Statian epic's female characters demonstrate exemplary virtue. After all, Dante praises Adrastus's daughters Deiphyle and Argia in *Convivio* IV.XXV.8-10 for their *pudore*, *verecundia*, and filial *pietas* (see Chapter II.5). Statius's other women demonstrate such typically 'female' virtues, and more traditionally 'masculine' ones. While we expect to find these women listed either alongside Vergil's Camilla and Pantesilea in *Inferno* IV.124 or with the four famous incarnations of uxorial and maternal *pietas* (Rossi 2013: 155) in *Inferno* IV.128, we do not. I am certain this omission is deliberate. Dante purposely omits Statius from the classical poets that Dante-pilgrim meets in Limbo (*Inferno* IV.86-90), instead transforming him into Stazio-character, whom Dante-pilgrim meets in *Purgatorio* XXI (see Chapter III). Thus, I believe that Dante's decision not to mention Statius's virtuous women alongside either their Vergilian or historical Roman counterparts in *Inferno* IV forms part of Dante's strategy to increase our surprise at Statius's absence amongst *Inferno* IV's *bella scola* of classical poets and the significance of Stazio's appearance in *Purgatorio*. This strategy is reinforced in *Purgatorio* XXII.109-14, when Virgilio informs Stazio that these virtuous Statian women are in Limbo. I also believe the absence in *Inferno* IV of any example of virtue from Statian epic reflects the contrast between the *Aeneid*'s portrayal of the hope associated with the great age of Roman imperialism and the *Thebaid*'s despair and sense of inevitable, recurrent violence. Accordingly, it manifests further Dante's use of Statius's Thebes as a model throughout *Inferno* and a parallel for his own corrupt and divided Italy.

IV.3.2 ACHILLES

Dante's first Statian character appears early among *Inferno*'s sinners of volition. Virgilio includes ''l grande Achille, | che con amore al fine combatteo' (*Inferno* V.65-66) in a catalogue of literary and historical figures (*Inferno* V.52-69), 'tutti suicidi o uccisi per amore' (Malato 2013b: 175). Lacking knowledge of Ancient Greek, Dante would not

have known Achilles through Homer but through Statius's unfinished *Achilleid*, Vergil's *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and their medieval commentaries.

Dante's ''I grande Achille' echoes Statius's opening description of Achilles as 'Magnanimum Aeaciden' (*Achilleid* I.1), as Pietro Alighieri notes ([1] 1340-1342: *ad Inf.* V.64-66). Dante's attribution of *grandezza* or *magnanimitas* to Achilles bears a certain irony, as it does with all Dante's Statian sinners. Magnanimity is 'moderatrice e acquistatrice de' grandi onori e fama' (*Convivio* IV.XXV.5) and associated with 'Fortezza' (*Convivio* IV.XXVI), greatness in the virtues, courage, and just action. It is the opposite of pusillanimity and in excess, *magnanimitas* becomes pride.[165] Yet Dante plays upon a deliberate irony in Statius's epithet for Achilles, as while the *Achilleid* features 'a hero central to the epic tradition' (Davis 2016: 172), it presents him as anything but *magnanimus*. Achilles agrees to the cowardly transvestitism his mother suggests to avoid his death in the Trojan War, then rapes Deidamia and abandons her and their child after Ulysses and Diomedes 'trovato ch'ebbono per sottil modo, come dice Stazio nell'*Achilleide*, lo menarono a Troia', leaving Deidamia grieving his loss (Francesco da Buti 1385-1395: *ad Inf.* V.52-69; cfr. *Inferno* XXVI.61-62 and *Purgatorio* XXII.109-14). However, the *Achilleid* breaks off before Achilles's death, and so while Dante may have Achilles's sinfulness towards Deidamia in mind, he does not draw his reference to Achilles's death from Statius.

Dante alludes to Achilles's slaying by Paris, brother to Achilles's 'beloved' Polyxena, and the brief epithet Dante uses makes apparent that this story was well-known (Malato 2013b: 197). Dante probably drew this information from the legend transmitted by Servius (*ad Aen.* III.321) and disseminated by the *Roman de Troie* (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Inf.* V.65). Dante's juxtaposition of Achilles's *amore* with his death indicates the 'connessione imprevedibile di amore e morte' (Malato 2013b: 197). Yet Dante perhaps also plays upon the paradoxical nature of both the

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[165] See *Convivio* I.XI.18-20, IV.XXV.5 and IV.26.7. See also Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* IV on 'megalopsychia'; Cicero, *De Officiis* I.XVIII-XXVI; and Latini's *Tresor* (II.I.22-26 and II.I.33). On *magnanimitas* in all four sources, see Corti 1982: 67-75.

Achilleid, which subverts the epic tradition through allusions to erotic poets and its subject-matter 'more characteristic of comedy and elegy' (Davis 2015: 157), and its eponymous hero, whom Statius portrays as 'a rapist and a transvestite' (Davis 2016: 172). Nevertheless, Achilles is just one among 'più di mille | ombre' who died through 'amor' (*Inferno* V.67-69) and Dante chooses not to develop Achilles's lustfulness beyond his brief outline. Aside from *Inferno* XXVI.61-62, Dante does not refer to Achilles's lustfulness again, despite mentioning Achilles in other contexts (*Inferno* XII.71, XXXI.4-6, and *Purgatorio* IX.34-42). Accordingly, while Achilles is an exemplum of lust, Dante does not use him to the same extent or in the same way as he uses other Statian characters.

IV.3.3 CHIRON

Dante places Chiron, one of his first 'distinctively Statian characters' (Weppler 2016: 170), as *de facto* leader of the centaurs who are 'ministri et executores tyrannidis et violentie' (Guido da Pisa *c.*1327-1328: *ad Inf.* XII.55-56) in the seventh circle.[166] Dante presents Chiron very differently to the other centaurs. In doing so, Dante draws heavily upon Statius's account of Chiron's tutelage of Achilles (*Achilleid* I.104-97 and II.516-23). Dante probably also knew Chiron through Ovid's accounts of Chiron's birth (*Metamorphoses* VI.126) and death and catasterism (*Fasti* V.379-414). Chiron was born as a centaur because Saturn, fearing his wife's jealousy, transformed into a horse to copulate with the sea-nymph Philyra, siring Chiron (*Metamorphoses* VI.126). After abandoning warfare in old age, Chiron was famed for his wisdom and knowledge of medicine, music, and the constellations, as Dante's early commentator Francesco da Buti acknowledges (1385-1395: *ad Inf.* XII.67-75). Thus, Chiron was said to have tutored many heroes beside his own great-grandson Achilles, including Jason and Hercules (*Achilleid* I.156-57). Unfortunately, when Chiron was inspecting Hercules's poisoned arrows, one speared Chiron's foot, causing an agonising, incurable wound.

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[166] For a discussion of the centaurs more broadly, see Becker 1984; and the *lecturae* of *Inferno* XII by Figurelli 1971; Sedakova 2009; and Mazzucchi 2013.

Chiron thus renounced his immortality in favour of Prometheus, leading Jupiter to place Chiron among the stars as the constellation Centaurus (*Fasti* V.397-414).

Dante includes Chiron among the three centaurs who 'de la schiera […] si dipartiro | con archi e asticciuole prima elette' (*Inferno* XII.59-60). Nessus is first to challenge Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio:

> […] gridò da lungi: 'A qual martiro
> venite voi che scendete la costa?
> Ditel costinci; se non, l'arco tiro.'
> *Inferno* XII.61-63

Virgilio refuses to explain himself to 'this prototype of the trigger-happy cop' (Becker 1984: 223), whose 'voglia […] sempre sì tosta' has always served him ill, instead promising to reply to Chiron (*Inferno* XII.64-66). Virgilio alludes to Hercules's execution of Nessus after the centaur tried to rape Hercules's wife (*Metamorphoses* IX.98-232). Virgilio dismisses the third centaur as 'Folo, che fu sì pien d'ira' (*Inferno* XII.72). Pholus was among the inebriated centaurs responsible for a violent fight at Pirithous's wedding, which finished with Theseus killing several centaurs (*Metamorphoses* XII.210-535; *Thebaid* II.563-64; *Achilleid* I.152-57), an event Dante uses as an exemplum of gluttony (*Purgatorio* XXIV.21-23). Nessus and Pholus are among the centaurs who are bi-formed because 'alcuno uomo nominato Ixion per alcuno tempo sforzandosi di congiungersi carnalmente con Junone, moglie di Giove, e non possendo perchè era iddea, tra' nuvoli sua corruzione sparta trascorse, della quale diversi animali in due nature formati si generarono'. Their bi-formedness symbolises 'la bestial qualità delle genti' (Jacopo Alighieri 1322: *ad Inf.* XII.55-57). Nessus and Pholus thus embody the 'cupidigia' and 'ira folle' (*Inferno* XII.49-51) Dante inveighs against immediately before the centaurs appear, which constitute 'the "primal appetite" of man and beast' (Becker 1984: 217).[167] Since Virgilio is often read typologically as reason, Virgilio's refusal to parley with Nessus represents the exercise of reason over this primal appetite. Conversely, Chiron does not display this same 'cupidigia' or 'ira folle', either in

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[167] On man's primal appetite, see *Convivio* IV.XXV.5-6. On its significance apropos the centaurs, see Becker 1984: 216-17.

Statius's presentation or Dante's.

Dante could have omitted Chiron justifiably from among *Inferno* XII's violent centaurs, much as he both makes Vergil's Cacus a centaur and places him among *Inferno* XXV's thieves. So why does Dante place Chiron with creatures that only share his form and not his temperament? Francesco da Buti avers that Chiron was violent to himself, using the *Fasti* as evidence (1385-1395: *ad Inf.* XII.67-75). However, this does not accord with Dante's placement of Chiron with those violent to others. L'Ottimo Commento's explanation is more plausible. After describing Chiron and suggesting he was among the centaurs fighting Theseus in *Metamorphoses* XII, L'Ottimo avers, 'Fu questo Chiron uomo sperto in arme, e savio in medicina; perchè fu uomo d'arme, e gueriero, sì è messo tra' Centauri' (1333: *ad Inf.* XII.70-71). Yet *Metamorphoses* XII does not mention Chiron and in referring to the incident in *Purgatorio* XXIV.21-23 Dante only mentions the centaurs 'nei nuvoli formati' (i.e. excluding Chiron). Dante may well follow Statius here, as Statius specifically refers to the lack of 'truncae bellis genialibus orni | aut consanguineos fracti crateres in hostes' (*Achilleid* I.113) upon Chiron's walls, suggesting that Chiron did not participate in the violence at Pirithous's wedding. Like Dante, Statius presents Chiron as 'wholly unlike his brother centaurs' (Davis 2016: 161). Moreover, Dante places many other individuals 'sperti in arme' in Limbo, albeit they lack Chiron's biformity. Part of Dante's rationale for placing Chiron as the violent centaurs' leader surely rests in narrative exigency, as it enables Chiron to dialogue with Virgilio and thus Dante-pilgrim's journey to progress. Dante also uses the contrast he develops between Chiron and the other centaurs to demonstrate that reason must govern our primal appetites.

Before addressing Chiron, Virgilio indicates him to Dante-pilgrim, observing:

> E quel di mezzo, ch'al petto si mira,
> è il gran Chirón, il qual nodrì Achille
> *Inferno* XII.70-71

Dante places Chiron *di mezzo* in the position of greatest authority. While Ovid alludes to Chiron's instruction of Achilles in the *Fasti*, Dante most probably draws upon the *Achilleid* in depicting Chiron. Dante's words resonate in particular with *Achilleid* I.195-

97:

> […] saxo collabitur ingens
> Centaurus blandusque umeris se innectit Achilles,
> quamquam ibi fida parens, adsuetaque pectora mavult.

Dante's 'gran Chiron' echoes Statius's *ingens* but suggests both Chiron's physical size and moral character. Francesco da Buti attributes Chiron's *grandezza* to his status as centaur and son of Saturn and Philyra (1385-1395: *ad Inf.* XII.67-75). Dante's *gran* also bears a certain irony, as Dante uses it for other supposed *magnanimi* confined to hell, including Achilles and Capaneus. Through Chiron's gaze *al petto*, Dante recalls Statius's *adsueta pectora* and suggests Chiron's reasoned and reflective attitude. Dante suggests Chiron's role as substitute for *fida parens* and moral guide to Achilles in *nodrì*. Much as Statius avers Chiron 'nosse salutiferas dubiis animantibus herbas, | aut monstrare lyra veteres heroas alumno' (*Achilleid* I.117-18), Dante continues to portray Chiron's 'carattere di saggio' (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Inf.* XII.71).

Through Chiron's gaze, Dante also focusses our attention *al petto*, where Chiron's human and animal natures are joined. Dante similarly refers to the Ixion-sired centaurs' 'doppi petti' in *Purgatorio* XXIV.23. Dante later underlines explicitly the centaurs' joining of two natures as Dante-pilgrim's 'buon duca' stands 'al petto' of Chiron 'dove le due nature son consorti' (*Inferno* XII.83-84). Dante capitalises upon Chiron's ambiguity in the *Achilleid*, in which Chiron is 'both a pacific and a martial figure', whose bi-form nature reflects his 'intermediate position between the realms of beast and human' (Davis 2016: 161-62). Accordingly, Chiron's focus *al petto* both highlights the centaurs' figuring as a perversion of Christ's two natures (human and divine) and emphasises the contrast between Chiron and the other centaurs, and between our reason and our primal appetite.

In this short description of Chiron, Dante also seems to call into question Chiron's tutelage of Achilles. L'Ottimo Commento describes Chiron as 'balio d'Achille', before asserting 'Di costui parla Stazio nel minore [poema], ch'elli nudrìe Achille nella infanzia, figliuolo di Peleo e di Teti, infino a tanto che la detta Teti il mandòe all'Isola di Licomede re, e fecelvi stare secreto in abito femminile' (1333: *ad Inf.* XII.70-71). In

addition to emphasising Achilles's cross-dressing, L'Ottimo deduces an interesting connotation in Dante's description of Chiron, that he acted as *balio* to Achilles.[168] Dante seems to capitalise here on an ambiguity within Statius's own presentation of Chiron and Achilles. Statius describes Chiron as *ingens nutritor* to Achilles (*Achilleid* I.275-76), recalled in Dante's *nodrì*, which in Latin can refer either to breastfeeding or fostering. Statius also seems to suggest that Chiron's efforts to instil heroism in Achilles have failed. While Chiron teaches Achilles of *veteres heroas*, makes him hunt savage beasts (II.121-25), and gives him 'specific military instruction' (Davis 2016: 161, quoting *Achilleid* II.130-36, 140-43, and 155-56), Chiron himself has abandoned warfare and hunting even wild beasts (*Achilleid* I.116). After passing to his mother Thetis's care, Achilles acquiesces in her cowardly suggestion that he pose as a woman to avoid the Trojan War, exploits his transvestism to rape Deidamia, and only goes to war after being duped into revealing himself, abandoning Deidamia and their child. Thetis's efforts to save her son are also in vain, as Dante reminds us in *Purgatorio* IX.34-39 (see section IV.5), as Achilles is killed by his beloved's brother, and condemned among the lustful (*Inferno* V.65-66). Statius's Chiron cannot take in Achilles the pride he does in Theseus and Hercules (*Achilleid* I.156-57).

Thus, Dante's 'il qual nodrì Achille' reflects negatively upon Chiron's failed tutelage of Achilles. Chiron's gaze 'al petto' is perhaps a reminder of this failed tutelage (Mazzucchi 2013: 176). Conversely, through divine will, Virgilio's tutelage of Dante-pilgrim, whom Virgilio fittingly rescues in the Malebolge by clutching 'sovra 'l suo petto, | come suo figlio' (*Inferno* XXIII.50-51), will be successful, as after passing to Beatrice's maternal care Dante-pilgrim reaches God.

Regardless of his failed tutelage, Dante draws upon Statius's portrayal of Chiron's military prowess and wisdom (*Achilleid* I.110-18) in presenting Chiron as the centaurs' rational and authoritative leader. Dante contrasts Nessus's haste with the measured way in which 'Chirón prese uno strale, e con la cocca | fece la barba in

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[168] On Chiron as 'a laughable infernal anti-nurse', see Cestaro 2003: 106-07. See also Mazzucchi 2013: 174-76.

dietro a le mascelle' (*Inferno* XII.77-79), although it is a soldier's gesture rather than a philosopher's (Mazzucchi 2013: 174). Dante recalls his ambiguous description of Chiron's *grandezza* as Chiron opens his 'gran bocca' to advise the other centaurs that Dante-pilgrim is alive, as 'move ciò ch'el tocca' (*Inferno* XII.79-82). Unlike Nessus's earlier hasty words Chiron's speech is restrained and logical, recalling Aristotle's assertion that 'traits generally attributed to the great-souled man are a slow gait, a deep voice, and a deliberate utterance' (*Nicomachean Ethics* IV.iii.34). Yet when Virgilio approaches the centaur, standing before his breast, Dante emphasises the contrast between the centaur with his 'due nature' and Virgilio the 'buon duca' (*Inferno* XII.83-84). Chiron may demonstrate the contrast between primal appetites and reason, but Virgilio represents reason itself.

Dante distinguishes Chiron further from the other centaurs and hell's bestial guardians through the manner in which Virgilio opens their negotiation, which parallels Virgilio's address to Catone in *Purgatorio* I (Chiavacci Leonardi 1997: *ad Inf.* XII.85). Virgilio addresses Chiron with friendliness and respect rather than the curt frankness with which he addresses hell's other guardians, perhaps 'appealing to Chiron as a fellow-official' (Becker 1984: 224). Virgilio uses a *captatio benevolentiae* to inspire Chiron's sympathy regarding the arduous journey on which he must guide Dante-pilgrim (*Inferno* XII.85-87), further paralleling Virgilio's speech to Catone (Chiavacci Leonardi 1997: *ad Inf.* XII.87). Virgilio's explanation of the reason for Dante-pilgrim's journey is more detailed than usual and contains one of the rare references to Beatrice heard in hell (*Inferno* XII.88-89). Virgilio perhaps make his 'appeal to such authority' due to Chiron's 'unusual rational powers' (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XII.89), reflecting both Statius's and Dante's portrayals of Chiron. Finally, Virgilio requests 'per quella virtù' (*Inferno* XII.91) by which he makes this journey that Chiron task a centaur with carrying Dante-pilgrim over the boiling river (XII.91-96).

Dante again turns to Statius at a moment of transition within hell, as he recalls Statius's depiction of Chiron's former military prowess and Chiron's role as tutor when Chiron, in the authoritative manner of a general instructing his troops, orders Nessus to

guide Virgilio and Dante-pilgrim across the river (*Inferno* XII.97-99). Chiron's turning 'in su la destra poppa' (XII.97) recalls Chiron's leading of Thetis into his home 'blandus dextra', when she arrives to reclaim Achilles (*Achilleid* I.122-25). It could also be understood as '"choosing the right", as right judgement' (Becker 1984: 224). Since right judgement should prevail over primal appetite, Nessus obeys Chiron's command and becomes a 'scorta fida' (*Inferno* XII.100), where once he threatened to shoot Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio. Moreover, through Dante's allusion to Chiron's flawed tutelage of Achilles, as opposed to Virgilio's successful care for Dante-pilgrim, Dante reiterates that humanity cannot achieve salvation without divine grace and Christian revelation.

IV.3.4 CAPANEUS

The prideful blasphemer Capaneus is probably Dante's most famous Statian character. Dante foreshadows Capaneus's appearance in *Inferno* X when Dante-pilgrim sees his near-contemporary Farinata among circle six's heretics.[169] Farinata 's'ergea col petto e con la fronte | com' avesse l'inferno a gran dispitto' (X.35-36) and Dante ironically calls Farinata 'quell'altro magnanimo' (X.73), much as Dante describes Capaneus as 'quel grande' (*Inferno* XIV.46), lying 'dispettoso e torto' (XIV.47). Dante thereby demonstrates pride's centrality to these two sinners' rebellion against God. Indeed, Scripture states that 'initium omnis peccati [est] superbia' (*Ecclesiasticus* X.15) and pride is one of three sins blamed for the violence beleaguering contemporary Italy in Ciacco's and Brunetto's prophecies of Dante's exile (*Inferno* VI.74-75 and XV.68). Capaneus provides the perfect paradigm for the destruction such pride can wreak, as Boccaccio and l'Anonimo Fiorentino (*c.*1400: *ad Inf.* I.44-48) recognise in interpreting the lion that is among the beasts blocking Dante-pilgrim's way in *Inferno* I.[170] Boccaccio defines *superbia* before averring that 'questa cechità ha già messo in distruzione molti regni, molte province e molte genti', and 'questo fu cagione a Campaneo d'esser fulminato e gittato delle mura di Tebe in terra' (1373-1375: *ad Inf.* I.31-60).

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[169] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* X, see Sansone 1971a; Stäuble 2000; Sini 2009; and Azzetta 2013.
[170] For a recent discussion of the three beasts' meaning, see Ledda 2019.

Dante's creation of a connection between Farinata and Capaneus renders it more remarkable that Capaneus appears as sole example of blasphemy among the sinners violent against God. Dante highlights his innovative use of a pagan as exemplum for an apparently Christian sin, as Dante-pilgrim reminds Virgilio of his failure to conquer the demons outside Dis's walls (*Inferno* XIV.43-45) before asking Virgilio to identify Capaneus. This demonstrates that while Christianity is the faith that leads to redemption, one does not commit blasphemy by believing in 'dèi falsi e bugiardi' (*Inferno* I.72) as Virgilio did, but rather by believing in the divine and disrespecting it like Capaneus. Thus, Dante interprets pagan history through a Christian lens, highlighting the continuity between the classical world and the Christian, and demonstrating sin's timelessness. Yet in referring first to Virgilio's failure, Dante highlights the classical world's limitations and reason's fallibility without Christian revelation and divine grace.

Dante demonstrates Capaneus's ongoing pride when Dante-pilgrim asks:

> chi è quel grande che non par che curi
> lo 'ncendio e giace dispettoso e torto,
> sì che la pioggia non par che 'l maturi?
> *Inferno* XIV.46-48

Dante's *grande* reflects the enormous size attributed to Capaneus in classical myth, with Statius describing Capaneus as 'toto despectans uertice' (*Thebaid* IV.165) and repeatedly linking Capaneus to the giants. Dante's *grande* also recalls Statius's description of Capaneus as *magnanimus* (*Thebaid* XI.1) and, as with Achilles and Chiron, the epithet bears a certain irony. Like the *magnanimus*, Capaneus is a courageous warrior, *largus animae* (*Thebaid* III.603) and ready to sacrifice himself in the Theban war. However, in Capaneus's first appearance in the *Thebaid*, Statius emphasises that despite, or perhaps because of, his noble bloodline, Capaneus is 'ingenti […] Mauortis amore | excitus', scornful of 'longam […] pacem', persuaded by 'ira', 'aequi | impatiens', and most relevantly 'superum contemptor' (*Thebaid* III.598-603). Capaneus is guilty of pride, the vice that is an excess of magnanimity. Dante's 'quel grande' therefore alludes to the pride that Capaneus displayed in life and

continues to display in hell. The epithet bears a further irony as this supposed *grande* is now brought low by divine punishment, as were Achilles, Chiron, and Farinata (*Inferno* X.73). It also foreshadows the encounter with Dante's contemporary, Vanni Fucci (*Inferno* XXV). Thus, Dante innovatively places the mythical Capaneus on a par with figures from recent local history (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Inf.* XIV.46), further demonstrating sin's timelessness.

Capaneus's disregard for the fire and his 'dispettoso' attitude recall Farinata's *dispitto* and Statius's description of Capaneus as *superum contemptor* (*Thebaid* III.602), an epithet Capaneus proudly applies to himself in *Thebaid* IX.550. Statius's Capaneus also shouts 'miseret superum, si carmina curae | humanaeque preces. quid inertia pectora terres? | primus in orbe deos fecit timor!' (III.659-61). Capaneus's outburst shows such contempt for the divine that it has been used to call into question the historical Statius's own regard for the Olympian gods and even as a basis for Dante's Christianisation of Stazio-character (see Chapter III.5). Dante could never have accepted Capaneus's suggestion that 'any gods who would listen to human's prayers must be weaklings' (Weppler 2016: 171-72). Capaneus's contempt culminates in his blasphemous challenge from atop Thebes' walls that results in his presence here (*Thebaid* X.899-939). The lying *torto* of Dante's Capaneus 'calques' (Weppler 2016: 172) Statius's depiction of Capaneus's corpse ('ille iacet lacerae complexus fragmina turris, | toruus adhuc uisu', *Thebaid* XI.9). I note that Statius then compares Capaneus's huge body to that of Tityos violating the earth on which it lies (XI.12-17). Tityos is mentioned briefly by Dante among the prideful giants (*Inferno* XXXI.126), further implying Capaneus's horrifying pride. In death Statius's Capaneus seems as unaffected by his Tartarean punishment as Dante's, since 'coetu Capaneus laudatur ab omni | Ditis et insignem Stygiis fouet amnibus umbram' (*Thebaid* XI.70-71), although his shade never speaks. Dante's Capaneus exceeds this passive defiance and expresses verbally his continued pride, anger and *dispitto*.

Dante's Capaneus demonstrates the same ready tongue Statius's Capaneus showed in life and the mental agility, 'deep voice and deliberate utterance' of the 'great-

souled man', as he perceives Dante-pilgrim asking Virgilio about him and addresses them at the first opportunity (*Inferno* XIV.49-51). Capaneus pridefully utters his continued defiance of the gods using Dante's own poetic/rhetorical language, including hyperboles, anaphoras, repetitions, hypothetical reasoning, geographic exactitude, and his 'disprezzo sfarzoso' (Sedakova 2009: 117). This similarity is interesting, since pride is the major sin for which Dante-pilgrim believes he will need to atone in purgatory (*Purgatorio* XIII.133-38). Elsewhere in the *Commedia*, Dante uses other sinners whose pride has led them to strive too far to reflect upon his own struggle against such behaviour, including Ulysses (*Inferno* XXVI). However, pride never leads Dante to Capaneus's ferocity or impiety.

Capaneus's comparative isocolon manifests verbally that which his *dispettoso e torto* demeanour embodies as he avers, 'Qual io fui vivo, tal son morto' (*Inferno* XIV.51). Capaneus emphasises the antithesis between past and present, life and death, and contrasts it with his own immutability. He is proud to remain as he was before and 'par capovolgere la sua prigionia in libertà vittoriosa' (Apollonio 1971: 466). Yet Capaneus does not realise his true punishment lies in his continuing pride and anger, the psychological stasis in which he is trapped, and not the falling 'fireflakes'. Capaneus's declaration defines all the sinners in Dante's *Inferno,* 'la cui individualità non è altro che ciò che essi furono in vita' (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Inf.* XIV.51). Capaneus's arrogance is such that he believes he does not need to name himself, assuming that everyone will know of him, suggesting that the *Thebaid* too was well-known.

Dante draws heavily upon the *Thebaid* (X.899-939) as Capaneus asserts his continued challenge to Jupiter:

> Se Giove stanchi 'l suo fabbro da cui
> crucciato prese la folgore aguta
> onde l'ultimo dì percosso fui;
>
> o s'elli stanchi li altri a muta a muta
> in Mongibello a la focina negra,
> chiamando 'Buon Vulcano, aiuta, aiuta!'
>
> sì com' el fece a la pugna di Flegra,

> e me saetti con tutta sua forza:
> non ne potrebbe aver vendetta allegra.
>   *Inferno* XIV.52-60

Capaneus's angry invective illustrates Capaneus's previous statement (XIV.51), as he refuses to yield or concede defeat, even if this angers the gods further (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Inf.* XIV.52-60). While we might initially admire its courage, Capaneus's speech soon resembles 'vainglorious boasting', recalling that 'stock character in Roman comedy, the *miles gloriosus*, or braggart soldier' (Hollander 2000-2007: ad *Inf.* XIV.51-60).

Similarly, despite the initial admiration we might feel for Capaneus's fearlessness in battle, Statius's Capaneus too turns to vainglorious boasting as he asserts that his right hand is the only God he needs (*Thebaid* IX.548-50), before making the blasphemous challenge from a tower above Thebes' walls that Dante echoes here. Statian Capaneus begins his challenge asking 'nullane pro trepidis […] numina Thebis | statis?' (*Thebaid* X.899-900) and concludes:

> 'nunc age, nunc totis in me conitere flammis,
> Iuppiter! an pauidas tonitru turbare puellas
> fortior et soceri turres excindere Cadmi?'
>   *Thebaid* X.904-06

Jupiter laughs at Capaneus (X.907-08) before striking him down with the *fulmen adactum* (X.927) that Dante's *folgore acuta* recalls. Jupiter's laughter perhaps suggests that Statius's Capaneus also 'plays the role' of *miles gloriosus*. Capaneus's climbing above Thebes' walls to challenge the gods is significant, as it resonates with Nimrod's actions in building the tower of Babel and with the Aloidae's similar attempts to reach Olympus (cfr. *Inferno* XXXI; see sections IV.2.8 and IV.3.9). Moreover, the 'impiety' of Capaneus's act indicates the 'impiety' of Thebes' 'very existence' and Theban history's 'affront to *pietas*' (Martinez 1977: 311). Capaneus's initial query (*Thebaid* X.899-900) implies that even the gods have deserted the evil city. Statian Capaneus's downfall clutching a fragment of a Theban tower (XI.9) suggests the devastation shortly to befall Thebes. Thus, it resonates with Thebes' status as a *civitas terrena/diaboli* and with Dante's use of Thebes as a model for hell, particularly as a similar divine challenger,

Lucifer, sits at its centre. Due to Thebes' parallels with contemporary Italian cities, it also suggests the affront to *pietas* so often presented by their rulers.

In renewing his declaration of battle against Jupiter, his invisible antagonist, Dante's Capaneus continues to demonstrate in hell the blasphemy and pride of which he was guilty in life. Capaneus's vainglorious boasts that the one thunderbolt Jupiter used to fell him is not enough to vanquish him now hyperbolise the endeavours of Statian Capaneus to remain standing so long that 'paulum si tardius artus | cessissent, potuit fulmen sperare secundum' (*Thebaid* X.938-39). Yet the irony is clear, since if Jupiter had not already had his *vendetta allegra* upon Capaneus, he would not be punished here. Dante increases the sense of his Capaneus's impious and futile pride through Capaneus's references to 'Mongibello a la focina negra' (*Inferno* XIV.56 i.e. Mount Etna where Vulcan forges Jupiter's thunderbolts) and the battle at Phlegra (XIV.58), and his 'Buon Vulcano' prosopopoeia (XIV.57). Significantly, the battle of Phlegra occurred during the giants' rebellion against the gods (the gigantomachy), which Jupiter finished by smiting the giants with his thunderbolts. Statius describes the gigantomachy at *Thebaid* II.595ff., as Pietro Alighieri observes ([1], 1340-1342: *ad Inf.* XIV.49-60). The giants were then said to have been imprisoned under the Earth as punishment (cfr. *Thebaid* XI.7-8) and were believed to cause earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and to represent the disruption of natural order.

In referring to Etna and Phlegra, Dante capitalises upon Statius's association of Capaneus with the giants defeated during the gigantomachy, enabling Dante to strengthen his own thematic connection between Capaneus, the sin of pride, *Inferno* XXXI's giants, and Lucifer. Immediately before Capaneus first enters the text, Statius compares the clamour for war to Enceladus rousing the mountain in an earthquake as he turns in his sleep (*Thebaid* III.593-97). Enceladus was among the giants defeated in the gigantomachy. Statius's simile thus foreshadows the dreadful upsetting of natural order at Thebes, both in the *nefas* of its protagonists, including Capaneus's blasphemous challenge, and in the swallowing of Amphiaraus still living into the earth (VII-VIII; see Chapter IV.3.6). Statius's reference to Enceladus and the mountainquake

also resonates with Dante's account of hell's creation following Lucifer's fulmination and fall from grace (*Inferno* XXXIV.97-128), connecting Capaneus to Lucifer. Fittingly, when discussing *Inferno* I's lion, l'Anonimo Fiorentino lists both Lucifer and Capaneus as examples of pride (1400: *ad Inf.* I.44-48). This suggests that Capaneus's and Lucifer's prideful rebellion against God represented a similar attempt to disrupt natural order. After Jupiter strikes Capaneus down, Statius avers that 'gratantur superi, Phlegrae ceu fessus anhelet | proelia et Encelado fumantem impresserit Aetnen' (*Thebaid* XI.7-8), which Dante perhaps recalls in his Capaneus's references to Phlegra and Etna.

Dante expresses his contempt for Capaneus's pride and impious divine challenge, as Virgilio explains to Capaneus his true *contrapasso*:

> O Capaneo, in ciò che non s'ammorza
>
> la tua superbia, se' tu più punito;
> nullo martiro, fuor che la tua rabbia,
> sarebbe al tuo furor dolor compito.
> *Inferno* XIV.63-66

Thus, Dante both highlights his unusual, significant choice of a pagan exemplum of blasphemy through finally naming Capaneus and emphasises that Capaneus's continued pride, anger, and contempt constitute his true punishment. Virgilio reinforces this punishment both as he echoes Capaneus's 'qual […] tal' in informing Dante-pilgrim that Capaneus 'ebbe e par ch'elli abbia | Dio in disdegno, e poco par che 'l pregi' (*Inferno* XIV.69-70) and as he asserts that Capaneus's 'dispetti | sono al suo petto assai debiti fregi' (XIV.71-72), recalling the thunderbolt that struck Capaneus down. Dante reinforces Capaneus's connection to Farinata and *Inferno* X, as *disdegno* and *dispitto* are among its key words. The return of the rhyme scheme *regi*, *pregi*, *fregi* from Dante-pilgrim's encounter with Filippo Argenti (*Inferno* VIII.47-51) creates a further link in a chain connected by pride (Filippo, Farinata, Capaneus) (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Inf.* XIV.72). Virgilio ends his conversation with Capaneus abruptly and moves on, as if to emphasise to Capaneus that he is no *magnanimus* worthy of honour, but

instead a vainglorious sinner, worthy only of infamy. Thus, Virgilio completes

Capaneus's bringing low.

Dante uses Capaneus as an exemplum of pride and rebellion against God

again in Dante-pilgrim's encounter with Vanni Fucci, a Pistoian thief who stole the

treasure from the Cappella di Sant'Iacopo in Pistoia's cathedral.[171] The canto opens

after Vanni finishes speaking and:

> Al fine de le sue parole il ladro
> le mani alzò con amendue le fiche,
> gridando: 'Togli, Dio, ch'a te le squadro!'
> *Inferno* XXV.1-3

Vanni's words recall Capaneus's blasphemous challenge and defiant attitude in *Inferno*

XIV. While I do not intend here to discuss the exact form or meaning of Vanni's *fiche*,

Vanni's gesture towards God is clearly rude.[172] It reduces Vanni to irrational and

blasphemous bestiality, demonstrating his pride, defiance, and stubborn failure to

recognise his limits (Maier 1971: 867). Thus, Vanni's anger, pride, and defiance of God

exceed Capaneus's, which lack such bestiality. Through this echo of Capaneus, we

recall the dreadful scenes outside Thebes' walls. Thus, Dante's invective against

Pistoia resonates with the Theban war's bloodshed and destruction, particularly as it

recalls the striking of Capaneus from Thebes' walls by Jupiter's thunderbolt, still

clutching the tower, and Cadmus's evil-doing *seme*:

> Ahi Pistoia, Pistoia, ché non stanzi
> d'incenerarti sì che più non duri,
> poi che 'n mal fare il seme tuo avanzi?
> *Inferno* XXV.10-12

Dante emphasises that pride is *initium omnis peccati*, leading us to rebel

against God, by comparing Vanni's pride expressly to Capaneus's:

> Per tutt' i cerchi de lo 'nferno scuri
> non vidi spirto in Dio tanto superbo,
> non quel che cadde a Tebe giù da' muri.
> *Inferno* XXV.13-15

Dante does not need to name Capaneus, as Dante-pilgrim encountered him previously.

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[171] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* XXV, see Mattalia 1971; Guthmüller 2000; Hollander 2009; and
Petoletti 2013.
[172] On this gesture's meaning, see Baldelli 1997; Colussi 2000; and Mazzucchi 2001.

This association with Theban *nefas* recalls the *superbia*, *invidia* and *avarizia* at the heart of contemporary Italy's woes and that provoked the sins of many individuals now confined in hell. Yet through Vanni's greater pride, Dante surpasses his Statian precedent and suggests that present sinfulness and Italy's woes are worse even than in Statius's Thebes.

While *Inferno* XXV contains the *Commedia*'s last express reference to Capaneus, Dante reminds us implicitly of Capaneus's pride and resultant fate when Dante-pilgrim meets the giants in *Inferno* XXXI and sees them carved on the terrace of pride in *Purgatorio* XII (see sections IV.3.9 and IV.4.1). Dante also recalls Capaneus in *Purgatorio* XVII, when Dante-pilgrim reaches the terrace of wrath and is caused to imagine the example of Haman.[173] In the biblical book of Hester, the Persian vizier Haman instigated a plot to kill all the Jews in Persia. After his plot was thwarted, Haman was executed. Dante-pilgrim asserts:

> Poi piovve dentro a l'alta fantasia
> un crucifisso, dispettoso e fero
> ne la sua vista, e cotal si moria;
> > *Purgatorio* XVII.25-27

Dante's description of the *crucifisso* Haman as *dispettoso e fero* echoes Dante's description of Capaneus as *dispettoso e torto* (*Inferno* XIV.47). Interestingly, Dante appears to recall the division of *Inferno*'s circle of violence in *Purgatorio*'s terrace of wrath, with Procne guilty of violence against others, Amata of violence against oneself, and Haman of violence against God (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Purg.* XVII.19-30). It is significant that the sinner who would correspond to Capaneus as 'violent against God' is Haman, given the similarity in Dante's description of the pair. Again, Dante utilises Capaneus to reinforce that pride is *initium omnis peccati* and leads us to rebel against God with terrible consequences.

Statius's character Capaneus clearly caught Dante's imagination as an epitome of pride, leading Dante to develop the arrogant blasphemer beyond the confines of Statius's portrayal. By doing so, Dante ensures that Capaneus 'lives' on as an example

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[173] For a *lectura* of *Purgatorio* XVII, see Montano 1971; and Güntert 2001.

of pride and blasphemy applicable to Christians and non-Christians alike, emphasising the importance of our own respect for and relationship to the divine.

IV.3.5 JASON

Dante's next significantly Statian sinner is another 'grande' Jason, from the myth of Jason and the Argonauts and their quest for the Golden Fleece (*Metamorphoses* VII.1-424). Dante uses this famous myth as a paradigm for his own heroic journey as both *auctor* and *agens* in *Paradiso* (II.16-18, XXV.7, and XXXIII.94-96; see section IV.5 and Picone 1994: 186-202). However, Jason's seduction and abandonment of Hypsipyle and Medea while seeking the Fleece led to his punishment in the first Malebolgia, with the panders and seducers. Accordingly, Dante-pilgrim's encounter with Jason bears 'una fondamentale ambivalenza', as Dante-poet-pilgrim is both attracted by Jason's apparent *magnanimitas*, seeing in Jason a paradigm for his own heroic voyage, and simultaneously revolted by his immoral behaviour, castigating his use of seduction to obtain the object of his quest (Picone 1994: 186)

From Jason's first appearance, Dante plays ironically on Jason's supposed *magnanimitas* to demonstrate his pride and hidden baseness. In this bolgia, Dante-pilgrim first meets Venedico, a Bolognese pander who sold his sister to the tyrant Opizzo d'Este, whom Dante-pilgrim encounters in *Inferno* XII.111-12 (*Inferno* XVIII.40-66). Venedico's downcast eyes and attempt to hide contrast with Jason's ongoing pride, as Virgilio instructs Dante-pilgrim 'Guarda quel grande che vene, | e per dolor non par lagrime spanda | quanto aspetto reale ancor ritene!' (XVIII.83-85).[174] Superficially, Virgilio's remark suggests that Jason possesses in hell the same nobility, heroism, and stoicism as he did in the classical myth. Yet Virgilio's use of the appellation 'quel grande' and Jason's apparent lack of torment recall Dante's descriptions of Farinata, Capaneus, and Vanni Fucci, suggesting that this description too is ironic and that Jason's *aspetto reale* is arrogance. Nevertheless, unlike these other prideful sinners, Jason neither initiates conversation nor is given opportunity to

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[174] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* XVIII, see Caretti 1971; Güntert 2000d; Chiesa 2009; and Celotto 2013.

speak, because he used language to deceive in life. Instead Virgilio narrates Jason's tale.

Dante quickly shatters the illusion of Jason's heroism by juxtaposing Jason's *aspetto reale* with Jason's most famous crime, ironically part of this same quest. While Dante mentions Jason's successful obtaining of the Golden Fleece from Colchis, he does not suggest the heroism of Jason's voyage as he does in *Paradiso*. Instead, Dante portrays it as an act of theft, stressing that Jason gained the Fleece through seducing and deceiving Medea, the king of Colchis's daughter, as Virgilio advises Dante-pilgrim that 'Quelli è Iasón, che per cuore e per senno | li Colchi del monton privati féne' (*Inferno* XVIII.86-87). He then abandons her, and Medea reports her anguish in her letter to Jason (*Heroides* XII). Dante only names Medea after Virgilio has spoken of Jason's seduction of Hypsipyle, at which point Virgilio ends his speech chiastically observing that 'anche di Medea si fa vendetta' (XVIII.96). Dante draws this 'ritratto negativo' of Jason from Ovid's *Heroides*, which portrays him as 'un seduttore privo di scrupoli' (Picone 1994: 188).

Dante dedicates most of Virgilio's speech regarding Jason to his seduction and subsequent abandonment of Hypsipyle at the Argonauts' first port of call, placing it between the Medea chiasmus. This is because in *Inferno*, Dante wishes to portray Jason the seducer, but behind Medea 'si staglia l'altra immagine di Giasone eroe' (Picone 1994: 188). As Guido da Pisa recognises (*c*.1327-1328: *ad Inf.* XVIII.82-84), Dante draws Virgilio's account of Hypsipyle and Jason predominantly from Statius's account of Hypsipyle's history at *Thebaid* V.106ff. and Hypsipyle's imagined letter to Jason in *Heroides* VI. Dante emphasises the sinfulness of Jason's actions by beginning Virgilio's account immediately after an event in which Hypsipyle showed the filial duty and courage for which Dante places her among Limbo's virtuous Statian women (*Purgatorio* XXII.109-14; see section IV.4.2). Virgilio asserts that:

> Ello passò per l'isola di Lenno
> poi che l'ardite femmine spietate
> tutti li maschi loro a morte dienno.
> *Inferno* XVIII.88-90

As Statius recounts in *Thebaid* V, the Lemnian women murdered their menfolk to avenge themselves upon their husbands for rejecting them, after Venus made the island's women smell foul as punishment for neglecting her shrines. Hypsipyle alone refused to murder her father Thoas, Lemnos's king, sending him away across the sea and concealing her act to ensure his safety from the raging women. Hypsipyle became queen of Lemnos shortly before Jason's arrival.

Dante departs from *Thebaid* V as he emphasises Jason's sinful seduction of Hypsipyle, as Virgilio avers:

> Ivi con segni e con parole ornate
> Isifile ingannò, la giovinetta
> che prima avea tutte l'altre ingannate.
> *Inferno* XVIII.91-93

Statius's Hypsipyle does not go willingly to Jason's bed, as she refers to Jason's seductive words, but pointedly denies that he seduced her, averring that it was 'non sponte aut crimine' (*Thebaid* V.454-57). She later confirms that Jason raped her, when she asserts 'nec non ipsa tamen, thalami monimenta coacti, | enitor geminos, duroque sub hospite mater' (*Thebaid* V.463-64) and describes Jason as *efferus* (V.472). While Statius's *uirginibus* (V.457) is recalled in Dante's *giovinetta*, emphasising Hypsipyle's virtue, and Statius's Hypsipyle refers later to Jason's abandoned children and neglected promises (V.473-74), implying his deceit, her words contain no suggestion that Jason seduced her or that she ever loved him.

Conversely, in her imagined letter to Jason, Ovid's Hypsipyle writes 'Urbe virum vidi tectoque animoque recepi' (*Heroides* VI.55), suggesting that Dante drew the idea of Jason's seduction of a willing Hypsipyle from Ovid. Jason's *segni* may also recall his ability to move Medea by both tears and words (*Metamorphoses* VII.169; Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XVIII.86-96). It suited Dante's purposes much better to depict Jason as a 'vile seducer' (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XVIII.86-96), rather than a violent rapist. Jason's *parole ornate* recall Virgilio's *parola ornata* (*Inferno* II.67; Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XVIII.86-96), which contrasted with Beatrice's own unadorned speech, 'soave e piana' (*Inferno* II.56). *Inferno* II's contrast suggested reason's limits

and classical poetry's insufficiency, lacking Christian revelation, but in *Inferno* XVIII.91-93 Dante portrays 'l'arte della parola sviata dal suo fine etico e avvilita a strumento di frode' (Caretti 1971: 602) in a further contrast with the truth and salvific love from which Beatrice's *voce soave e piana* flows.

Dante emphasises Jason's dreadful, deceitful use of language through the alliteration in 'Isifile ingannò'; the placement of Hypsipyle's name at line 92's beginning; and the corresponding use of the diminutive *giovinetta* at its end, suggesting Hypsipyle's youth, innocence, and fragility. This youthful fragility contrasts with the Lemnian 'ardite femmine spietate', rendering Hypsipyle's act of filial *pietas* more noteworthy. By juxtaposing Hypsipyle's justifiable and courageous deceit of 'tutte l'altre' (drawn primarily from *Thebaid* V) with Jason's blameworthy deceit of Hypsipyle (drawn primarily from Ovid) and strengthening the contrast through repeating the verb *ingannare*, Dante renders Jason's crimes even more abhorrent.

Dante utilises Hypsipyle's angry reference to the sons she never wanted (*Thebaid* V.463-64), Jason's 'non sua pignora cordi, | non promissa fides' (*Thebaid* V.473-74), and Hypsipyle's long and bitter letter to Jason in *Heroides* VI, as he depicts Jason's compounding of his sinful seduction of Hypsipyle by leaving her 'quivi, gravida, soletta' (*Inferno* XVIII.94) to continue his quest. Dante emphasises Hypsipyle's solitude by the caesura that leaves *soletta* alone at line-end, rhyming with *giovinetta*. Dante's focus on Hypsipyle's abominable treatment by Jason resonates with both the *Thebaid*'s and the *Achilleid*'s focus on the women left behind by such supposed heroes, and their laments. Hypsipyle's fortunes degenerate further after Jason abandons her, as Dante recalls in his references to Hypsipyle in *Purgatorio* (XXII.109-14 and XXVI 94-99; see section IV.4.2). In stressing Jason's abandonment of this pregnant, young girl all alone, Dante reinforces Jason's culpability.

Dante emphasises the justice of Jason's eternal fate as he recalls Jason's similar seduction and abandonment of Medea:

> tal colpa a tal martiro lui condanna;
> e anche di Medea si fa vendetta.
> *Inferno* XIV.95-96

The comparative *tal…tal* recalls Capaneus's famous statement 'Qual io fui vivo, tal son morto' (*Inferno* XIV.51), and the *vendetta* recalls the *vendetta allegra* Capaneus claimed God would never have. Through these similarities with another supposed *magnanimo* shown in his true colours and brought to *martiro* in hell, Dante destroys any remaining vestige of Jason's nobility and heroism. Thus, Dante stresses the irrelevance of appearances and outward acts of virtue in the divine judgement that decides a soul's fate at the end of earthly life. As Virgilio concludes his account of the panders and seducers, Jason merges silently among them (*Inferno* XVIII.97-99). Thus, while this supposed *grande* possesses greater social standing than Venedico, Dante demonstrates that Jason is no less guilty, as both disappear 'nell'anonima schiera delle anime castigate' (Güntert 2000: 253). Through Jason's silent disappearance, Dante demonstrates the ill-repute Jason deserves, despite being feted as the Argonauts' heroic leader.

By focussing on Jason's dreadful treatment of Hypsipyle and Medea, as reported by Statius and Ovid, rather than the Argonauts' heroic voyage, Dante demonstrates the evil to which language can be twisted (Picone 1994: 190). Moreover, Jason's desire for the Golden Fleece stems from 'amor torto', whereas 'amor diritto' motivates Dante-pilgrim-poet's successful quest for God's beatific vision (Picone 1994: 190-91; see section IV.5). Through this opposition with Jason as perverter of language, Dante demonstrates his *Commedia*'s value as purveyor of Christian truth.

IV.3.6 AMPHIARAUS

Dante places Statius's Amphiaraus first among *Inferno* XX's diviners (five classical, five medieval), indicating his significance.[175] Dante's condemnation of these classical diviners reflects his contempt for paganism, despite his admiration of the classical world's moral virtues (Caccia 1971: 693).[176] Since the pagan gods whom Virgilio worshipped were 'falsi e bugiardi' (*Inferno* I.72), the classical diviners' prophecies could

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[175] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* XX, see Caccia 1971; Güntert 2000e; Chiesa 2009; Gentili 2013.
[176] The other classical diviners are Tiresias (predominantly *Metamorphoses* III.316-38, albeit the *Thebaid* mentions him); Aruns (Lucan, *The Civil War* I.584-638); Manto (see section IV.3.7); and Eurypylus (*Aeneid* II.114-19, although Dante seems to confuse him with Calchas).

only ever be false. Significantly, Statius too inveighs against the *venturi aeger amor* in *Thebaid* III.551-65, albeit via the blasphemous Capaneus. This Statian lament for the *aureus sanguis auum* (III.559-60) also connects the historical Statius's poetry to Stazio-character (see Chapter III). Nevertheless, while medieval readers considered classical poets, especially Vergil in his fourth *Eclogue*, as *vates*, it is not sinful superstition hidden underneath classical poetry's *bella menzogna* (*Convivio* II.1.4), but Christian truth, and this enlightens Stazio-character 'appresso Dio' (*Purgatorio* XXII.66).[177]

Dante recalls the swallowing of Amphiaraus into the underworld (*Thebaid* VII-VIII) in a repeated apostrophe designed to shake Dante-pilgrim from his outbreak of compassion and to cause readers to take note:

> Drizza la testa, drizza, e vedi a cui
> s'aperse a li occhi d'i Teban la terra;
> per ch'ei gridavan tutti: 'Dove rui,
>
> Anfïarao? perché lasci la guerra?'
> E non restò di ruinare a valle
> fino a Minòs che ciascheduno afferra.
> *Inferno* XX.31-36

Statius presents Amphiaraus as wise and courageous throughout the *Thebaid*. Dante's early commentator Benvenuto da Imola (1375-1380: *ad Inf.* XX.30-36) even avers that 'fuit rex et sacerdos, sicut dicitur de Melchisedech in sacra scriptura, qui fuit sacerdos Apollinis et maximus augur, de quo mentionem facit Homerus XI Odisseae'. Melchisedech was a priest and king revered by Abraham, appearing in the story of Abraham and Lot and bringing out bread and wine (Genesis 14.18-20). Melchisedech was a *figura Christi*, as St Paul described him as 'Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God' (Ad Hebraeos 7.3). Benvenuto's comparison is interesting given the resonance between Amphiaraus's descent to hell as living man, the Harrowing of Hell, and Dante-pilgrim's own journey. The surprise of Tartarus's residents at Amphiaraus's irruption into their domain (*Thebaid* VIII.1-8) echoes in the many inhabitants of *Inferno*

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[177] On allegorical methods of reading classical poetry, see Chapter I. On sinful divination and superstition versus the acceptability of astronomy and astrology, see Kay 1994: 1-16 and Cornish 2000: 1-10.

surprised at Dante-pilgrim's bodily form. Nevertheless, while Dante-pilgrim will return to life, Amphiaraus's sinfulness means he is forever condemned to hell.

Despite his wisdom and heroism, Statius's Amphiaraus predicted his own demise among the deaths of six of the Seven against Thebes (*Thebaid* III.539-47) and concealed himself from his allies to avoid his fate. However, Apollo reminds Amphiaraus 'tibi nulla supersunt | gaudia, nam Thebae iuxta et tenebrosa uorago. | scis miser, et nostrae pridem cecinere uolucres' (*Thebaid* VI.381-83), a prediction quoted by Dante's early commentator Guido da Pisa (*c*.1327-1328: *ad Inf.* XX.31-36). Thanks to his wife Eriphyle, who betrayed him in return for Harmonia's necklace and thus appears sculpted on the terrace of pride (*Thebaid* IV.211-13; *Purgatorio* XII.49-51; see section IV.4.1), Amphiaraus becomes the first of the Seven to die during the war. His death embodies the classical theme of human inability to oppose the Fates, either through modifying or preventing them (Gentili 2013: 668). Dante ignores Statius's Olympian gods' sadness at being unable to alter Amphiaraus's fate and resultant determination that to prevent Amphiaraus's death in the indignity of war, the earth should swallow him. Instead, Dante uses Amphiaraus's presence in hell to emphasise that God's divine judgement decides our fate and that the diviners sinned by 'failing to accept' such judgement as God's 'unchangeable will' (Kay 1994: 12).

Dante distils Statius's account of the earth quaking and splitting open to swallow Amphiaraus (*Thebaid* VII.690-893) into its fundamental moment, when 's'aperse a li occhi d'i Teban la terra' (*Inferno* XX.32) and Amphiaraus is swallowed into the underworld still living. Statius avers:

> illum ingens haurit specus et transire parentes
> mergit equos; non arma manu, non frena remisit:
> sicut erat, rectos defert in Tartara currus,
> respexitque cadens caelum, campumque coire
> ingemuit, donec leuior distantia rursus
> miscuit arua tremor lucemque exclusit Auerno.
>   *Thebaid* VII.818-23

Dante's description of the earthquake recalls that at Dante-pilgrim's entry into hell in *Inferno* III and foreshadows that *in bene* announcing Stazio's readiness to ascend to heaven in *Purgatorio* XX-XXI (see Chapter III.2). Significantly, Amphiaraus is the only

diviner for whom Dante depicts his sin's final consequence, 'l'eccezionale, diretto intervento punitivo di Dio che sprofonda l'indovino nel ventre della terra' (Gentili 2013: 668). Significantly, Pietro Alighieri avers that Amphiaraus's fate resembles Dat(h)an's, 'de quo ait Psalmista dicens: "Aperta est terra, et deglutivit Datan: et operuit super congregationem Abyron"' ([2] *c.*1344-*c.*1355: *ad Inf.* XX.34-36). Dat(h)an and Abiram/Abyron were Israelites who participated in the Exodus from Egypt, but later rebelled against Moses and Aaron (Psalmus 106.17; Numeri 16.31-32). Through this analogy, Pietro suggests that Amphiaraus's fate is also a divine punishment. Given Statius's Amphiaraus's sinful acts of prophecy and his attempt to avoid his fate, it seems that Amphiaraus is swallowed up from the *Thebaid* as divine punishment and deposited directly into Dante's *Inferno*.

Dante strengthens this impression through placing the Latinism 'Dove rui' (*Inferno* XX.433) in the mouths of Amphiaraus's allies, anticipating the fear and surprise they express at Amphiaraus's funeral rites (*Thebaid* VIII.225-26). Conversely, Statius's Dis asked the question that Dante paraphrases here, 'At tibi quos […] Manes, qui limite praeceps | non licito per inane ruis?' (*Thebaid* VIII.84-85), in surprised rebuke at the living diviner's irruption into Hades. By this displacement, Dante gives the question an ironic, derisory tone (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Inf.* XX.33). While Statius's Amphiaraus eventually showed great bravery when facing death, Dante even implies that Amphiaraus is both fleeing the war and, ironically, rushing willingly toward his prophesied death (Caccia 1971: 701), as Dante imagines the Thebans asking 'perché lasci la guerra?' (*Inferno* XX.34). Through these ironic, informal questions, Dante does not just condemn divination, but demonstrates its dishonesty, fraudulence, indolence, and pride (Caccia 1971: 693). By echoing and subtly altering the *Thebaid*'s dialogue; the finality of Amphiaraus's continued falling into the earth 'fino a Minòs' (*Inferno* XX.36); and Virgilio's final instruction that Dante-pilgrim examine Amphiaraus's contorted form (XX.37-39), Dante transforms Amphiaraus into a vivid condemnation of the sinful futility of endeavouring to see 'troppo davante' (XX.38) and cheat Providence.

IV.3.7 MANTO

Dante's fourth diviner, Manto, proves somewhat problematic. Despite including Manto among *Inferno* XX's diviners, Dante subsequently places her in Limbo when Virgilio lists the virtuous Statian women found there for Stazio-character (*Purgatorio* XXII.113). I analyse Manto's double placement in section IV.4.2, asserting that this was not accidental, but a decision linked to Dante's desire to demonstrate the truth hidden 'sotto bella menzogna' in pagan poetry. Now, however, I focus on Dante's depiction of Manto in *Inferno* XX and his use of Statius's *Thebaid* to 'correct' Vergil's account of Mantua's founding.

Dante develops his portrayal of Manto beyond Vergil's brief mention of her as Ocnus's *fatidica* mother, for whom Ocnus named the city of Mantua that he built and from whom the Mantuan people drew their bloodlines (*Aeneid* X.198-203). Instead, Dante's Virgilio indicates to Dante-pilgrim:

> E quella che ricuopre le mammelle,
> che tu non vedi, con le trecce sciolte,
> e ha di là ogne pilosa pelle,
>
> Manto fu […]
>
> *Inferno* XX.52-55

Manto's covering of her breasts with her hair may suggest the modesty befitting her status as 'vergine cruda' (XX.82) and a denial of the site of Ocnus's suckling, and thus it resonates with Statius's description of her as *innuba Manto* (*Thebaid* IV.464). Yet it also suggests 'an erotic dialectic of concealment and revelation' as Dante 'calls our attention to her breasts' then 'hides them behind seductive tresses' (Cestaro 2003: 103), indicating divination's seductive power.[178] Manto's 'trecce sciolte' recall the 'inpexis […] comis' (*The Civil War*, VI.518) of Lucan's 'frenetic' Erichtho (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XX.52-56), whom Dante also describes as *cruda* (*Inferno* IX.83), and the Sibyl's 'non comptae [...] comae' (*Aeneid* VI.48), as Dante's early commentator Benvenuto asserts (1375-1380: *ad Inf.* XX.52-54). Thus they reflect Manto's abandonment 'al dio ispiratore, il dominio che ha sulla sua vita, e il disordine di quella

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[178] On Manto as 'infernal wet-nurse', see Cestaro 2003: 103.

vita' (Caccia 1971: 706). Since that 'dio ispiratore' is one of the 'dèi falsi e bugiardi', Manto has denied her womanhood for a tragic illusion (Caccia 1971: 706), emphasising divination's foolish sinfulness. Manto's damnation among *Inferno* XX's diviners seems inevitable.

Manto's virginity eradicates the possibility both that Manto had a son and that she passed on her prophetic abilities to the Mantuan people. Dante uses this virginity to reverse Vergil's own 'extraordinary' distortion of Mantua's aetiology, in which Vergil strove to 'associate his birthplace with the vatic capacity' (Hollander 1991: 78-79). This suggests that Vergil himself wished to be considered a *vates* and perhaps helped fuel the widespread medieval notion that Vergil was a magician. However, Dante did not wish to associate Vergil with pagan prophecy or sorcery, but with poetic inspiration and unknowingly revealing Christian truth, as *Eclogue* IV.5-7 does in Stazio-character's account of his conversion (*Purgatorio* XXII.67-72, see Chapter III.5). Accordingly, Dante makes Virgilio recant his own 'fiction' (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XX.52-54), by providing an alternative account of Mantua's founding. I focus only on those elements of Virgilio's account relevant to my consideration of Dante's use of Statian epic.[179]

Dante alludes to Manto's father Tiresias's death at Thebes, as he emphasises that her wanderings began 'Poscia che 'l padre suo di vita uscìo | e venne serva la città di Baco' (XX.58-59). Servius asserts that Manto was 'Tiresiae Thebani vatis filiae, quae post patris interitum ad Italiam venit' (*Ad Aen.* X.199). Statius depicts Manto as Tiresias's daughter as she assists her father obediently in divination rites in *Thebaid* IV.463-68 and IV.518-27, as does Ovid (*Metamorphoses* VI.155-64). Dante's early commentator Guido da Pisa confirms that Manto was a 'sacerdotissa deorum que fuit venefica et maxima demonum incantatrix' and 'fuit filia Tyresie, de quo habitum est supra; que virginitatem perpetuam sequens, se paternis artibus totam dedit, in tantum quod, ut superius dictum est, omnes artes magice ab ipsa denominate dicuntur'

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[179] On the significance of these wanderings apropos Dante's use of Vergilian epic, see Hollander 1991: 80-81.

(*c*.1327-1328: *ad Inf.* XX.52-55). While Manto's participation in such divination rites more than justifies her confinement in this bolgia, Dante's allusion to Manto's *padre* in *Inferno* XX.58 both suggests that *Inferno* XX's Manto *is* the 'figlia di Tiresia' of *Purgatorio* XXII.113 and hints at the filial *pietas* for which Virgilio lists her among Limbo's virtuous Statian women (see section IV.4.2).

After her wanderings, for which no classical source exists, the 'vergine cruda' settled in Mantua's isolated swampland 'per fuggire ogne consorzio umano' (*Inferno* XX.82-85), thereby denying Manto any opportunity to bear Ocnus or any other child to found a city in her name or inherit her prophetic bloodlines. Manto's leaving of her 'corpo vano' (XX.87) reiterates her barren virginity, demonstrating the damage caused by divination (Caccia 1971: 706), and denying any suggestion that Vergil may be a *vates* through descent from her. Dante then demythologises Mantua's founding, attributing it to the strength of Mantua's lagoon-surrounded location (XX.88-90). Dante destroys any residue of the miasma associated with Manto's lineage and prophetic abilities, as Virgilio concludes:

> Fer la città sovra quell' ossa morte;
> e per colei che 'l loco prima elesse,
> Mantüa l'appellar sanz' altra sorte.
> > *Inferno* XX.91-93

All that remains of Manto are 'bones and a name' (Cestaro 2003: 103), no great prophetic bloodline from which Vergil descends.

Finally, and most shockingly, Virgilio authorises us to eradicate the *Aeneid*'s 'offending passage' (Hollander 1991: 81), as he avers:

> Però t'assenno che, se tu mai odi
> originar la mia terra altrimenti,
> la verità nulla menzogna frodi.
> > *Inferno* XX.97-99

Virgilio implies that his own poem is associated with *frode*, perhaps his 'most daring assault' upon pagan texts' 'veracity' (Hollander 1991: 81). Virgilio's words recall the Geryon episode's proem, in which Dante speaks of 'quel ver c'ha faccia di menzogna' (*Inferno* XVI.124) before describing Geryon, the 'sozza imagine di froda' (XVI.7). This in turn recalls Dante's description of the poets' allegory 'una veritade ascosa sotto bella

menzogna' (*Convivio* II.1.2). Accordingly, Dante seems to warn of the danger of being deceived by pagan texts' outward *menzogna*, but also alludes to the hidden *verità* they may contain. Through using the *Thebaid* and his own imagination to correct Vergil's aetiological myth of Manto's founding, Dante asserts the superiority of his *Commedia*, which is based on Christian revelation.

IV.3.8 THE DIVIDED FLAME

Dante plays upon this notion of language's deceitfulness in the bolgia of the fraudulent counsellors, punished through burning in eternal flames (*Inferno* XXVI).[180] Among the bolgia's many single flames, Dante-pilgrim sees a split flame. While this recalls the day of Pentecost when 'cloven tongues of fire' came to rest above the Apostles' heads, enabling them to speak in tongues (Actus Apostolorum 2.3-4), Dante expressly signals a Statian precedent for this split flame. Puzzled by this anomaly, Dante-pilgrim asks Virgilio:

> chi è 'n quel foco che vien sì diviso
> di sopra, che par surger de la pira
> dov' Eteòcle col fratel fu miso?
> *Inferno* XXVI.52-54

The simile demonstrates Dante-poet's own knowledge of the *Thebaid* and recalls its terrible events at a significant point in *Inferno* – shortly before we enter hell's ninth circle and just after Dante's famous 'Godi, Fiorenza' speech (XXVI.1-12). In this apostrophe to Florence, Dante expressly associates the city with *Inferno*, reminding us of the similarity between these two societies in breakdown:

> Godi, Fiorenza, poi che se' sì grande
> che per mare e per terra batti l'ali,
> e per lo 'nferno tuo nome si spande!
> *Inferno* XXVI.1-3

The reference to wings associates Florence with Ulysses's *folle volo* (XXVI.125) and reflects the city's unseemly appetite for power, which has resulted in widespread death and destruction (Corti 1990: *passim*). It also foreshadows the appearance of Lucifer,

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[180] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* XXVI, see Mariano 1971; Picone 2000f; D'Agostino 2009; and Basile 2013b. On the significance of the flames, see D'Agostino 2009: 217.

source of *ogne lutto*, futilely flapping his wings in *Inferno* XXXIV, confirming that Florence is 'no less than the city of Lucifer himself' (Honess 2006: 6).

Dante associates Florence with Thebes, by establishing 'an esoteric numerological link with Thebes' foundation' (Martinez 1977: 32-33), as Dante exclaims:

> Tra li ladron trovai cinque cotali
> tuoi cittadini onde mi ven vergogna,
> e tu in grande orranza non ne sali.
> *Inferno* XXVI.4-6

The five thieves' horrific and mutual transformations recall the *mutua vulnera* of the five surviving *terrigenae* that helped Cadmus build Thebes (*Metamorphoses* III.126; *Inferno* XXV.34-141); Ciacco lists five Florentines 'among the blackest souls' (*Inferno* VI.79-80); and Camiscion de' Pazzi lists five 'worthies' in Caina (*Inferno* XXXII.55-65), after which we see the Statian scene of Ugolino gnawing on Ruggieri's head (Martinez 1977: 32-33). Accordingly, *Inferno* XXVI bears a Theban timbre even before Dante's simile comparing the divided flame to Statius's notorious brothers' pyre. Dante's reminder of *Inferno* XXV also recalls Dante's famous 'dichiarazione di sfida e sopravanzamento' (Ledda 2002: 148) 'taccia Lucano [….] taccia Ovidio […]' (*Inferno* XXV.94-99). While this explicit challenge contains no mention of Statius, Dante's express reference to a famous Statian scene in the subsequent canto suggests a similar challenge to Statius. This challenge builds as we move through *Inferno*'s final canti.

Dante's simile in *Inferno* XXVI.4-6 utilises a fundamental event within the *Thebaid*. Statius first speaks of the division of Polynices's and Eteocles's funeral pyre in the *Thebaid*'s proem, encapsulating its symbolism as he promises to recount 'nec furiis post fata modum flammasque rebelles | seditione rogi' (*Thebaid* I.35-36). Guido da Pisa quotes these lines when glossing Dante's simile (*c.*1327-1328: *ad Inf.* XXVI.52-54) and another early Dante commentator, Graziolo Bambaglioli, summarises the pyre's symbolism. Graziolo avers that after the brothers are thrown on the pyre together according to ancient custom, 'igne, ad mostrandum divisionem et odium infinitum quo se ipsos persequebantur, utrinque flame corporum suorum se separaverunt et distinxerunt utique' (1324: ad *Inf.* XXVI.52-54). Polynices and Eteocles

display their *divisio et odium infinitum* throughout the *Thebaid*, culminating in their terrible mutual fratricide (*Thebaid* XI.564-79) and the pyre's division:

> ecce iterum fratres: primos ut contigit artus
> ignis edax, tremuere rogi et nouus aduena busto
> pellitur; exundant diuiso uertice flammae
> alternosque apices abrupta luce coruscant.
> pallidus Eumenidum ueluti commiserit ignes
> Orcus, uterque minax globus et conatur uterque
> longius; […]
>
> *Thebaid* XII.429-35

Statius's *diuiso uertice flammae* and *alternos apices* (ironically recalling Statius's proem's *alterna regna*) are echoed in Dante's *foco diviso*; Statius's divided flame rises up just as Dante-pilgrim sees the *foco diviso surger de la pira*; and Statius's and Dante's flames share a sense of physical and psychological/spiritual division, leading Pietro Alighieri to quote this passage as Dante's inspiration ([1] 1340-1342: *ad Inf.* XXVI.52-54).

Statius's split pyre itself possesses an intertext that is significant for Dante's divided flame, Lucan's *Civil War* I.551-52, in which the Vestal flame 'scinditur in partes geminoque cacumine surgit | Thebanos imitata rogos'.[181] Since this eternal flame was thought to symbolise Rome's health, its fission was seen as a portent of division within Rome and of the civil war between Pompey and Caesar. Both Statius's writing of the *Thebaid* and his depiction of the divided flame contain a similar implicit warning against such familial strife and civil war, arguably directed to Titus and Domitian as the Statian *accessus* assert (see section I.4.1). Nevertheless, only the Chiose Vernon (*c.*1390: *ad Inf.* XXVI.46-75) and Cristoforo Landino (1481: *ad Inf.* XXVI.52-54) refer to Lucan in glossing this simile, and the *Thebaid* is surely Dante's primary source. Dante no doubt understood the political implications of his divided flame's Theban intertext. Thus, when commenting on Dante's use of Statius's split fire, Guido da Pisa observes 'qualiter scilicet flamme in morte istorum divise fuerunt, et qualiter urbs thebana cum aliis adiacentibus propter istorum mortem vacuate fuerunt' (*c.*1327-1328: *ad Inf.* XXVI.52-

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[181] On the Vestal Virgins, their temple, and the flame, see 'Vestales' in *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, pp. 1189-91.

54). Statius's pyre proved an appropriate model both for use after the 'Godi, Fiorenza' speech, given the similarities already established between Thebes and hell, and for this part of *Inferno*, which punishes sinners guilty of acts that divide societies.

Yet Dante does not place Statius's Polynices and Eteocles in the flame, nor other divided brothers. Instead, he transforms the scene from its Statian precedent, as Virgilio avers:

> […]   Là dentro si martira
> Ulisse e Dïomede, e così insieme
> a la vendetta vanno come a l'ira
>   *Inferno* XXVI.55-57

Ulysses's and Diomedes's entrapment together in the flame due to their sinful joint enterprises in life recalls the entwinement of Francesca and Paolo in *Inferno* V, and the *ira* recalls the anger suffered by the victims of Ulysses's and Diomedes's crimes. Virgilio lists the crimes for which the pair 'dentro da la lor fiamma si geme' (XXVI.58), including the Trojan horse (XXVI.58-60), a fraudulent offering in return for the Palladium's theft (XXVI.63), both from *Aeneid* II; and the pair's encouragement of Achilles's abandonment of Deidamia (*Inferno* XXVI.61-62), recounted in Statius's *Achilleid*. Their division now subjects them to the same division and conflict that they caused in life through their *ira* and deceit, and may also reflect Ulysses's arrogance and his misuse of reason against his friends. However, while I discuss Deidamia in section IV.4.2, I do not discuss Ulysses's and Diomedes's sins further here (*Inferno* XXVI.85), since the pair are not primarily Statian characters.[182] Dante recalls both *Thebaid* XII.429-35 (cfr. *tremuere*, *coruscant*) and his biblical intertexts as he describes Ulysses's half of the flame 'cominciando a crollarsi mormorando | pur come quella cui vento affatica' (*Inferno* XXVI.86-87) and 'la cima qua e là menando, | come fosse la lingua che parlasse' (XXVI.88-89) as Ulysses speaks of the impious 'trapassar del segno' (XXVI.117). This reminder of the *Thebaid* is interesting as Statius's epic too depicts the impious transgression of such boundaries, and its terrible consequences.

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[182] See Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XXVI.58-63 for further discussion and a recent bibliography, especially regarding Ulysses.

Yet Dante utilises Ulysses's *folle volo* (*Inferno* XXVI.125) as a counterexample to his own daring, but divinely-willed voyage, which will end not in disaster, but in reaching God.

In utilising the *Thebaid*'s split pyre only as a model and transforming it to suit his purposes, Dante demonstrates that he has moved beyond merely including Statian characters in his poem. He has fundamentally understood the *Thebaid*'s psychological implications and appreciated its usefulness as a model as we near *Inferno*'s cold heart.

IV.3.9 THE GIANTS

Before Dante-pilgrim reaches Cocytus, he encounters the giants posted around the icy pit (see section IV.2.8). While the giants act as circle guardians, they are also confined here due to their own prideful rebellions against the divine. Pietro Alighieri observes that 'Gigantes figurative pro superbis accipiuntur' ([1] 1340-1342: *ad Inf.* XXXI.31) but they also sinned 'di presunzione', 'di ingratitudine', and 'di tradimento' (Chiari 1971: 1094), hence their damnation here. Interestingly, Guido da Pisa recalls the pride of Statius's Polynices and Eteocles when discussing the giants, averring that their pride :

> triplex est, videlicet: minorum contemnere parvitatem; parium dedignari equalitatem; et maiorum emulari sublimitatem. De prima specie ait Statius primo *Thebaydos*: 'Hic imperat, ille minatur' [*Thebaid* I.196]
>
> *c.*1327-1328: *ad Inf.* XXXI.61-66

Fittingly, Dante foreshadows the giants' appearance in another Theban character, prideful Capaneus (*Inferno* XIV.58-60; see section IV.3.4), which expressly mentions the gigantomachy. Thus, Dante recalls the pride which destroys both Statius's Thebes and Dante's Italy (cfr. *Inferno* VI and XV).

Dante refers expressly to the gigantomachy as Virgilio indicates 'li orribili giganti, cui minaccia | Giove del cielo ancora quando tuona' (*Inferno* XXXI.44-45), recalling Capaneus's mention of Phlegra (XIV.58), the *Thebaid*, and Dante's other classical sources. Dante seems to allude to Genesis 6.4's assertion that 'There were giants in the earth' in mankind's early days, as he asserts that:

> Natura certo, quando lasciò l'arte
> di si fatti animali, assai fé bene
> per tòrre tali essecutori a Marte.
> *Inferno* XXXI.49-51

This reflects the medieval belief that the giants were real (Bellomo 2009: 244). Dante's reference to Mars strengthens the resemblance between Dante's giants standing around Cocytus and Mars's offspring (the *terrigenae*), who participated in Thebes' violent foundation and surround a blood-red lake in *Thebaid* IV.553-56 (Butler 2005: 5). This further connects Dante's hell to Statius's Thebes and its impious war.

Despite Dante's use of the gigantomachy as epitome of the giants' prideful rebellion against the divine (*Inferno* XXXI.44-45), the first giant whom Dante-pilgrim meets is the biblical Nimrod (*Inferno* XXXI.46-81), who also appears sculpted on the terrace of pride in *Purgatorio* XII. As my concern is Statian giants, I do not discuss Nimrod further here. However, by placing Nimrod alongside Ephialtes, one of classical myth's Aloidae, Dante suggests a telling parallel between Nimrod's construction of the tower of Babel (see section IV.2.8), and the Aloidae's attempt to scale Olympus through stacking up mountains. Moreover, since Genesis 6.4 and Genesis 10.8 link the giants, including Nimrod, to the earth, we again remember the *terrigenae* who assisted Amphion to build Thebes, suggesting the Thebans' impious pride in building the city. Fittingly, Dante describes Ephialtes by comparing him to Nimrod, asserting that Ephialtes is 'più fero e maggio' (*Inferno* XXXI.84).

Yet Dante portrays Ephialtes's impotency as 'tenea soccinto | dinanzi l'altro e dietro il braccio destro | d'una catena che 'l tenea avvinto | dal collo in giù' (*Inferno* XXXI.86-89). Dante thus both stresses that Ephialtes has two arms, as if to discount the hundred arms classical myth gave Briareus, and symbolically depicts the confinement of the arms Ephialtes raised against the gods. Virgilio's assertion that Ephialtes 'le braccia ch'el menò, già mai non move' (*Inferno* XXXI.96) emphasises this cutting irony. The chain binding Ephialtes recalls the protest of Statius's Dis following Amphiaraus's descent to hell, 'habeo iam quassa Gigantum | uincula et aetherium cupidos exire sub axem | Titanas' (*Thebaid* VIII.42-44) and Statius's later comparison of Jupiter raising his thunderbolt against Capaneus to the clanking of the Stygian chains binding the Titan Iapetus for his similar rebellion against the divine (*Thebaid* X.915-16).

Dante draws heavily on his classical sources as Virgilio explains to Dante-pilgrim that:

> Questo superbo volle esser esperto
> di sua potenza contra 'l sommo Giove,
> […], ond' elli ha cotal merto.
>
> Fïalte ha nome, e fece le gran prove
> quando i giganti fer paura a' dèi;
> *Inferno* XXXI.91-95

Guido da Pisa asserts that Dante's source here is Ovid, quoting *Metamorphoses* I.151-55 and *Fasti* V.35-36 and 39-42 (1327-1328: *ad Inf.* XXXI.94-96). In both passages, Ovid combines the narrative of the Aloidae with that of the other giants, killed at Phlegra. This amalgamation suited Dante, as it enabled him to present Ephialtes as defeated by Jupiter rather than killed accidentally by his own brother in a mutual fratricide as they both sought to kill Diana (the other version of the myth). Yet Ovid mentions neither the giants' names nor Jupiter's fear at their attempted assault. More recently, scholars including Chiavacci Leonardi (1991-1997: *ad Inf.* XXXI.94) have suggested *Aeneid* VI.580-84 and Horace's *Odes* III.IV.42-52 as possible sources for Ephialtes. Like Ovid, neither Vergil nor Horace names Ephialtes; Vergil and Horace do not mention how the Aloidae died; and Vergil also does not mention the Olympian gods' fear at the Aloidae's rebellion. While Dante could have sourced the Aloidae's names from Servius (*Ad Aen.* VI.582), Servius states that 'confixi sunt Dianae et Apollinis telis', rather than by Jupiter's thunderbolts. Guido's suggestion that Ovid was Dante's source thus seems apt.

I believe that Dante also used the *Thebaid* as a source for his Ephialtes. In describing Capaneus's impious challenge, Statius avers that Capaneus climbed the walls:

> […] quales mediis in nubibus aether
> uidit Aloidas, cum cresceret impia tellus
> despectura deos nec adhuc inmane ueniret
> Pelion et trepidum iam tangeret Ossa Tonantem.
> *Thebaid* X.848-52

Like Dante, Statius mentions Jupiter's fear at the Aloidae's actions, and the passage connects the Aloidae's and Capaneus's acts of pride and violence against the divine.

Through this comparison to Capaneus, Statius also connects the Aloidae to the other giants to whom he compares Capaneus – those killed at Phlegra (*Thebaid* X.8-9 and XI.7-8) and Iapetus. Such connections would surely have appealed to Dante, who capitalises upon them in his own description of Capaneus. Dante's description of the chained Ephialtes thus resonates with all three Statian comparisons. Interestingly, Dante's description of Ephialtes also recalls the Statian commentator Lactantius's explanation of *Thebaid* X.849-51. He glosses 'Aloidae' as 'Otus et Ephialtes, Aloei filii, tantae audaciae ut montibus constructis caelum expugnare niterentur. Icti fulmine et in Tartarum mersi sunt.' Dante's Ephialtes is also overcome by Jupiter (and therefore implicitly by his thunderbolt) and is now in Tartarus, with Lactantius's *mersi* resonating with Dante's *sommersi* in *Inferno* XX.3, used to describe the damned. Accordingly, in describing Ephialtes, Dante seems to combine several classical intertexts to best suit his purposes and demonstrate Ephialtes's prideful act of divine betrayal.

Dante combines classical intertexts to great effect again in 'lo smisurato Brïareo' of whom Dante-pilgrim wishes that 'esperïenza avesser li occhi mei' (*Inferno* XXXI.97-99). Dante-pilgrim has presumably read about him in *Aeneid* X.565-67, where Vergil compares Aeneas to Briareus (also known as Aegaeon), describing the 'centum […] bracchia […] | centenasque manus', the 'quinquaginta oribus […] pectoribusque' from which he breathed fire, and as many shields and swords with which he fought Jupiter. Vergil's *dicunt* (X.565) itself subverts this description (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XXXI.97-105). Statius follows Vergil's lead in distancing himself from Briareus's monstrousness, qualifying his account with 'si fas est credere', before mentioning Briareus's immensity ('non aliter Getica (si fas est credere) Phlegra | armatum inmensus Briareus stetit aethera contra', *Thebaid* II.595-97). Statius then hints at Briareus's many hands as he fights in the gigantomachy (II.598-601). Significantly, Dante echoes Statius's *inmensus* in calling Briareus *smisurato*.

Dante distances himself further from Vergil's fantastical description of Briareus when his Virgilio confirms to Dante-pilgrim that:

Quel che tu vuo' veder, più là è molto

> ed è legato e fatto come questo,
> salvo che più feroce par nel volto.
>> *Inferno* XXXI.103-05

Dante ironically juxtaposes Briareus's ferocity, echoing Lucan's 'Briareus ferox' (*The Civil War* IV.596), with Briareus's enchainment, to emphasise Briareus's impotency against God and divine justice. Through stressing that Briareus is 'legato e fatto come questo', Dante clarifies that Briareus has one arm chained behind and one in front like Ephialtes, and is not the hundred-armed, fifty-mouthed giant the *Aeneid* reports, thereby making Virgilio correct his own text again (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XXXI.97-105). Virgilio's ironic riposte also suggests the giants' anatomical similarity to humankind, underlining our own sinful pride. Appropriately, Dante-pilgrim later sees Briareus sculpted alongside human exempla of pride on the terrace in *Purgatorio* XII. Briareus's inertia and silence demonstrate his tragic and eternal impotency (Chiari 1971: 1102), and his sculpting renders him more impotent still. Dante thus combines his classical intertexts to emphasise Briareus's ferocious but ultimately powerless bulk. This foreshadows Lucifer's own impotent mass, especially as Dante compares Lucifer to the giants (*Inferno* XXXIV.28-33).

Conversely, prideful Ephialtes continues to rail against the divine, like Capaneus. Dante recalls Statius's comparison of Capaneus to Enceladus rousing the mountain as he turned in his sleep (*Thebaid* III.593-97), as he avers:

> Non fu tremoto già tanto rubesto,
> che scotesse una torre così forte,
> come Fïalte a scuotersi fu presto.
>> *Inferno* XXXI.106-08

This resonates with the classical belief that giants were buried under mountains and caused earthquakes and that they signified the disruption of natural order. Dante's reference to a tower recalls the towering structures built by Ephialtes and Nimrod – attempts to disrupt divine order – and Dante's earlier association of the giants with towers. Through the tower's shaking Dante perhaps suggests another form of disorder – civil war and societal breakdown, such as that seen in contemporary Italy, Thebes, and Dis. Dante-pilgrim's fear at the giant's enraged shaking (*Inferno* XXXI.109-10) suggests the wonder and fear the giants would have generated on earth, given their

size and brutality (Chiari 1971: 111). The comfort Dante-pilgrim takes from 'le ritorte'

that confine Ephialtes (*Inferno* XXXI.110) demonstrates the futility of Ephialtes's

prideful railing against his ineluctable divine bonds. This recalls Capaneus's challenge

to Jupiter in *Inferno* XIV and foreshadows Satan's mechanical impotence (*Inferno*

XXXIV). This futile but continued perpetuating of their sins is these sinners' true

punishment.

IV.3.10   BROTHERLY HATRED

Fittingly, after his preface drawing our attention to Cocytus's intense Theban

resonances (*Inferno* XXXII.1-10), Dante recalls the mutual hatred of the brothers

central to Thebes' catastrophe, as the first two figures Dante-pilgrim sees are trapped

together in the ice so closely that ''l pel del capo avieno insieme misto' (XXXII.42).

Dante-pilgrim avers:

> Con legno legno spranga mai non cinse
> forte così; ond' ei come due becchi
> cozzaro insieme, tanta ira li vinse.
> <div align="right">Inferno XXXII.49-51</div>

Dante's description of the shades' closeness resonates ironically with Statius's

description of the death of Ide's twin sons, pierced by a single wooden spear:

> illi in secessu pariter sub rupe iacebant
> felices, quos una dies, manus abstulit una,
> peruia uulneribus media trabe pectora nexi
> <div align="right">Thebaid III.147-49</div>

The fraternal love of Ide's twin sons is so great it endures beyond death, such that

Statius bids them 'ite diu fratres indiscretique supremis | ignibus et caros urna

confundite manes!' (*Thebaid* III.167-68). Ide's twin sons provide a deliberate

counterpoint in the *Thebaid* to Polynices and Eteocles, who kill each other in a duel in a

dreadful instance of *nefas*. Polynices's and Eteocles's mutual hatred endures beyond

death, leading to their divided funeral pyre, and unlike Aeneas's and Turnus's duel, the

bloodshed at Thebes continues. Dante recalls these two brothers' enduring hatred in

'l'animalesco cozzare dei fratelli Alberti', an early example of *Inferno* XXXII's '*reductio*

ad bestiam' (De Caprio 2013: 1009).

While Polynices and Eteocles must surely be punished in Caina, Dante utilises a contemporary exemplum of mutual fratricide, as Virgilio avers:

> […] cotesti due
> la valle onde Bisenzo si dichina
> del padre loro Alberto e di lor fue.
>
> D'un corpo usciro; […]
> *Inferno* XXXII.55-58

The brothers are Napoleone and Alessandro degli Alberti, counts of Mangona, who killed each other over their father's inheritance. Their crime was exacerbated by Alessandro's son's murder of Napoleone's son, continuing this familial odium into the next generation, as occurred so often in the Theban history Dante invokes at the canto's beginning. Dante emphasises as vividly as Statius the horror of these shades' fraternal hatred through referring to their father, repeating *loro*; the graphic periphrasis he uses for their mother; and the hyperbole alluding to their terrible crime:

> […] tutta la Caina
> potrai cercare, e non troverai ombra
> degna più d'esser fitta in gelatina.
> *Inferno* XXXII.58-60

Dante deliberately challenges Statius through this assertion, especially as he mentions these brothers so soon after his express reference to *Tebe*. Dante intends us to remember the *Thebaid*'s notorious brothers, as well as Romulus and Remus (as the *In principio* commentator mentioned vis-à-vis Statius) and the biblical example of Abel's murder by Cain, after whom Dante names this section of Cocytus.

Here in Cocytus, Dante no longer includes Statian sinners, since such sinners abound in contemporary Italy. However, Dante clearly wishes us to appreciate the Statian resonances at hell's centre, and emulates Statius's own authorial strategy, using remote Theban history to demonstrate the futility of such barbarism and the dreadful repetitiveness of human history. It is a fitting prelude to the Ugolino episode, since Thebes, 'the brother-murder, the divided city' and 'cannibalism' are all connected (Quinones 1991: 71).

IV.3.11 Ugolino and Ruggieri

Dante turns to Statius's Thebes again in Antenora, Cocytus's zone for political traitors,

in the famous Ugolino episode. Since my focus is upon Dante's use of Statian epic, I only discuss Dante's other imagery and intertexts as they bear upon my analysis.

Upon entering Antenora, Dante-pilgrim sees:

> […] due ghiacciati in una buca,
> sì che l'un capo a l'altro era cappello;
>
> e come 'l pan per fame si manduca,
> così 'l sovran li denti a l'altro pose
> là 've 'l cervel s'aggiugne con la nuca:
>
> non altrimenti Tidëo si rose
> le tempie a Menalippo per disdegno,
> che quei faceva il teschio e l'altre cose.
>> *Inferno* XXXII.125-32

Dante combines two similes drawn from everyday life with scientific language to describe Ugolino's gnawing, reflecting the horrifying scene's perversity and recalling the widespread starvation symptomatic of Italy's frequent wars (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Inf.* XXXII.129). Dante utilises a more learned simile to signal the model for his cannibalistic scene – Tydeus's gnawing on Menalippus's head in *Thebaid* VIII.

Statius first hints at Tydeus's horrifying cannibalism as he mentions "inmodicum irae | Tydea' in the *Thebaid*'s proem (I.41-42). This foreshadows Tydeus's repeated and excessive violence throughout the *Thebaid* and his dreadful cannibalisation of Menalippus. Tydeus's ferocity overflows in his battle with Menalippus in *Thebaid* VIII. Tydeus kills Menalippus but is fatally wounded by him in the process, just as the *terrigenae* inflicted *mutua vulnera* upon each other at the site of Thebes' foundation, and as Polynices and Eteocles kill each other, in a further example of history's recursiveness (VIII.716-27). Horrifyingly, after being dragged from the battlefield, Tydeus gives a speech often excerpted in medieval *florilegia* (Newlands 2012: 126), in which he bids his comrades bring Menalippus's head to him:

> non ossa precor referantur ut Argos
> Aetolumue larem; nec enim mihi cura supremi
> funeris: odi artus fragilemque hunc corporis usum,
> desertorem animi. caput, o caput, o mihi si quis
> apportet, Melanippe, tuum! nam uolueris aruis,
> fido equidem, nec me uirtus suprema fefellit.
>> *Thebaid* VIII.736-41

Statius emphasises the horrific nature of Tydeus's request through Tydeus's rejection

of *pietas* and due funeral rites; the apostrophe to Menalippus with its repeated reference to Menalippus's head; and the incongruous mention of Tydeus's *uirtus*, since this supposed 'hero' has now forgotten his own honour.

Statius's description of the consummation of Tydeus's horrific cannibalistic desire truly sparks Dante's imagination. After Capaneus brings Tydeus Menalippus's head:

> erigitur Tydeus uultuque occurrit et amens
> laetitiaque iraque, ut singultantia uidit
> ora trahique oculos seseque agnouit in illo,
> imperat abscisum porgi, laeuaque receptum
> spectat atrox hostile caput, gliscitque tepentis
> lumina torua uidens et adhuc dubitantia figi.
> infelix contentus erat: plus exigit ultrix
> Tisiphone; iamque inflexo Tritonia patre
> uenerat et misero decus inmortale ferebat,
> atque illum effracti perfusum tabe cerebri
> aspicit et uiuo scelerantem sanguine fauces
>   *Thebaid* VIII.751-62

Like Dante's Alberti brothers, Tydeus is *amens* and more beast than man as he gnaws on his enemy's head. Statius emphasises the horrific bestiality and impiety of his cannibalistic scene through mentioning Menalippus's *caput*, still *tepens* and displaying its *lumina torua*, and the graphic depiction of Tydeus's face corrupted with his defeated foe's blood and brain matter. The infernal gods provoke Tydeus further, as Tisiphone encourages his terrible cannibalism. Conversely, because Tydeus has rejected *pietas*, the Olympian gods desert him. Tydeus's *nefas* is so great that the Gorgon on Minerva's breastplate rears in horror and Minerva herself abandons her chosen warrior (VIII.763-66). This resonates with Ugolino's abuse of the divine through cannibalising Archbishop Ruggieri, and with Francesca's belief that God has abandoned her (*Inferno* V.91), although in reality she has rejected God. Dante adds visual, and perhaps auditory, clarity to the graphic, bestial scene of Ugolino and Ruggieri and capitalises upon the horrific psychological atmosphere of his Statian model, through the many explicit echoes of *Thebaid* VIII.751-62 in *Inferno* XXXII.125-32. These include references to the cannibal's anger (*disdegno, ira*); his teeth or jaws or gnawing (*denti,*

si rose, *fauces*); and to the victim's head and brains (*capo*, *cervel*, *nuca, tempie*, *teschio*, *l'altre cose*, *ora*, *caput*, *cerebro*, *sanguine*).

As Dante-pilgrim asks Ugolino's identity, he recognises Ugolino's 'bestial segno' as one of 'odio', just as Tydeus bore for Menalippus, and highlights the disturbing cannibalism that 'resterà nello sfondo della vicenda' (*Inferno* XXXII.133-35; Bellomo 2009: 251). This *bestial segno* encapsulates the 'matta bestialitade' of which Virgilio speaks in *Inferno* XI.82-83.[183] Dante explicitly recalls his Statian model and its associated horror, when Ugolino prepares to speak and:

> La bocca sollevò dal fiero pasto
> quel peccator, forbendola a' capelli
> del capo ch'elli avea di retro guasto.
> *Inferno* XXXIII.1-3[184]

Ugolino's *bocca* dominates this episode, both opening and closing it, and foreshadows *Inferno* XXXIV's focus on Satan's mouths (Boitani 2009: 254). Dante places a quasi-sexual focus upon Ugolino's *bocca*, recalling Francesca's focus on *la bocca* in *Inferno* V.136. This engenders the same sense of horrified fascination that Statius creates around the *Thebaid*'s many acts of *nefas*, especially Tydeus's cannibalism. However, Dante exceeds his Statian model by playing upon the notions of humanity and bestiality. Unlike Tydeus, who remains silent after beginning his impious gnawing, Ugolino wipes his bloodied mouth upon his enemy's head like an animal, to prepare for his eloquent speech.

As Ugolino's speech (*Inferno* XXXIII.4-75) lacks a precedent in Statian epic, I do not consider it here, other than to mention the points salient to my examination of Dante's reception of Statius.[185] Statius's Tydeus remains silent and does not try to exculpate himself, although Polynices's laudatory speech partially redeems him (*Thebaid* IX.49-72) and his allies, provoked by Tisiphone, wreak vengeance upon the Thebans. Conversely, like Francesca (*Inferno* V), Ugolino attempts to excuse his sin.

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[183] However, on the possibility that a Pauline allusion 'tempers' this gesture's bestiality, see Freccero 1986: 160.

[184] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* XXXIII, see Marcazzan 1971b; Boitani 2009; and Malato 2013.

[185] On Ugolino's speech, its sources, and its similarity to Francesca's speech in *Inferno* V, see Hollander 1984: *passim* and 2000-2007: *ad Inf*. XXXIII.

Ugolino remains entrapped by his anger and desire for vengeance against Ruggieri, as he expresses his desire that his words 'frutti infamia al traditor ch'i' rodo' (*Inferno* XXXIII.8). Yet 'i' rodo' reminds us of Dante's Theban model and suggests that the *seme* sown may not just be of *infamia*, but of greater violence. Ugolino's promised tears recall the many tears shed in the *Thebaid* and across Italy as a result of such violence, and the tears that form Dante's frozen Cocytus. Yet while Ugolino encourages Dante-pilgrim to pity him, we must recall that his treachery sowed the *seme* for his and his children's destruction and for his eternal fate. Ugolino's language now is similarly treacherous and unlike Tydeus, Ugolino receives no redemption.

Whereas Dante's model for Ugolino's cannibalisation of Ruggieri is explicitly Statian, Ugolino's speech clarifies that Dante utilises figures from contemporary history to illustrate the dreadful treachery of those confined in Antenora, rather than Statian sinners themselves. Ugolino informs Dante-pilgrim that he is Count Ugolino (della Gherardesca) and his *pasto* is Archbishop Ruggieri (degli Ubaldini). While Ugolino does not confess his sin, he committed betrayal to advance his political ambitions. Despite originating from a Ghibelline family, Ugolino left Pisa to join the Visconti, a Guelph family. When the Visconti banished Ugolino after discovering his treacherous intentions, he returned to Pisa. Working with Ruggieri, a Ghibelline, they expelled the Guelphs from Pisa, including eventually Ugolino's grandson, Nino Visconti of Pisa, a 'giudice […] gentil', whom Dante-pilgrim joyfully meets in *Purgatorio* VIII.53-54. Once Ugolino had served his purpose, Ruggieri accused Ugolino of betraying Pisa and sentenced Ugolino to imprisonment in a tower called 'la Muda' with his sons and grandsons, where they starved to death.[186]

Dante uses echoes of *Inferno* XXXII's proem and his Statian precedent to emphasise the horror of Ugolino's imprisonment, as Ugolino avers:

> Breve pertugio dentro da la Muda,
> la qual per me ha 'l titol de la fame,
> e che conviene ancor ch'altrui si chiuda,

---

[186] Historical summary drawn from Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XXXIII.1-3.

> m'avea mostrato per lo suo forame
> più lune già, quand' io feci 'l mal sonno
> che del futuro mi squarciò 'l velame.
>   *Inferno* XXXIII.22-27

Ugolino's 'si chiuda' (XXXIII.24) recalls *chiuder* in *Inferno* XXXII.8-10, reflecting the terrible sense of enclosure present both here and in Statius's Thebes, and *fame* foreshadows Ugolino's and his descendants' death by starvation. Dante emphasises both themes in Ugolino's and his children's dream regarding their horrific fate (*Inferno* XXXIII.25-39). Ugolino's *squarciò* recalls the bloody violence of both his cannibalism and its Theban model. It also suggests the tearing aside of the *integumentum*, which according to medieval methods of reading was believed to cover pagan poetry's true meaning.

Dante emphasises Cocytus's association with *luctus* and *lacrimae*, as Ugolino interrupts his tale to reproach Dante-pilgrim for failing to weep:

> Ben se' crudel, se tu già non ti duoli
> pensando ciò che 'l mio cor s'annunziava;
> e se non piangi, di che pianger suoli?
>   *Inferno* XXXIII.40-42

Dante uses thirteen words for weeping in *Inferno* XXXIII.5-75 (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XXXIII.40-42). Yet while Dante-pilgrim felt great pity at Francesca's tale, even fainting 'come corpo morto cade' (*Inferno* V.142), he now better understands divine justice and can find no sympathy for a man who not only betrayed his *patria*, but therefore also failed his children. Unlike Tydeus, who achieves some partial redemption, Ugolino finds none. Instead, we pity the innocents locked in the tower to starve with their silent progenitor, who neither cries nor comforts his crying children (XXXIII.43-54). In addition to the parable of the importunate friend (Luc. 11.5-13; Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XXXIII.49, referencing *idem* 1984: 552-55), Dante perhaps recalls here the laments of the many innocent souls forced to suffer in the *Thebaid*. Ugolino's words augment the tower's dreadful sense of enclosure as Ugolino hears 'chiavar l'uscio di sotto | a l'orribile torre' (*Inferno* XXXIII.46-47) and himself turns to stone ('impetrai', XXXIII.49). Again we recall *Inferno* XXXII.8-10 and the *Thebaid*'s use of claustrophobic space to increase the sense of horror. Through the canto's

references to towers, Dante also remembers the connection he creates between hell, Thebes, and the cities of his divided Italy.

Ugolino's description of his children's succumbing to starvation one by one and their offering of themselves to sustain him echo both Christ's crucifixion and the Eucharist (*Inferno* XXXIII.58-75).[187] Ugolino stays silent 'per non farli più tristi' (XXXIII.64) and instead wishes the 'dura terra' (XXXIII.69) to open. This perhaps recalls Amphiaraus who, in being swallowed into the earth in *Thebaid* VII-VIII, avoids undignified death in war, and the creation of hell itself at Lucifer's fall. The earth's failure to provide such escape to Ugolino reinforces the episode's terrible containment. Ugolino offers his children no comfort as each gradually perishes and in the ultimate (or, perhaps, penultimate) failure of his living fatherhood, answers his children only after it is too late, calling upon two 'poi che fur morti' (*Inferno* XXXIII.74). Ugolino dies last, ending his self-exculpatory speech with 'Poscia, più che 'l dolor, poté 'l digiuno' (XXXIII.75). While I do not intend to rehearse this ongoing discussion here, I believe that Dante was deliberately ambiguous as to whether Ugolino ate his own children, or merely means that he too died of starvation.[188] After all, there are classical precedents for cannibalisation of one's children, including Tantalus who served his offspring at a banquet, and Dante deliberately echoes the Eucharistic offering as Ugolino's children offer themselves. Regardless, this final line of Ugolino's speech returns to the episode's leitmotif of hunger (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XXXII.127-32) and its associated symbolism of the human cost of this ongoing cycle of violence, another resonance with Statius's Thebes.

Dante remembers again the *Thebaid*'s *efferatezza* and its horrifying cycle of violence, as Ugolino returns to his eternal cannibalisation of Ruggieri:

> Quand'ebbe detto ciò, con li occhi torti
> riprese 'l teschio misero co' denti,
> che furo a l'osso, come d'un can, forti.
> *Inferno* XXXIII.76-78

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[187] On biblical and theological echoes here, see Hollander 1984, 1985, and 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XXXIII.
[188] On this question, see Hollander 1984 and 1985; and Malato 2013c.

Dante echoes Tydeus's dreadful gnawing on Menalippus's head, the *occhi torti* translating directly Statius's *lumina torua* (*Thebaid* VIII.756), although Dante transfers these wild eyes from the 'victim' to the cannibal. This emphasises both Ugolino's continued mad rage and the importance of vision to this terrible scene. Dante's reference to ''l teschio misero' recalls both Menalippus's *caput* and Dante's description of Ruggieri's gnawed *nuca.* Ruggieri's cannibalisation may symbolise 'la memoria del traditore tormentato' or constitute Ruggieri's *contrappasso* for starving Ugolino and his offspring to death (Bellomo 2009: 248). Conversely, Ugolino's punishment is a condemnation to eternal hunger and desire for revenge, trapped by his own avarice and betrayal like all those in hell are confined by their prevailing sins. Dante's final image of Ugolino's gnawing returns the sinner to bestiality, in another everyday simile, a dog gnawing a bone. Dante thus mirrors the episode's beginning, strengthening the sense of containment that he initiated with *chiuder* in *Inferno* XXXII.8-10. Here at hell's heart, Dante transforms a Statian scene to his own purposes, blending it with biblical and historical references and scenes from everyday life, to create an episode that reinforces both hell's dreadful nature and the devastating avarice, betrayal, and violence plaguing Dante's Italy.

Dante emphasises the *nefas* into which Italy has descended and the similarities between the wars wreaking havoc on its citizens and those which destroyed Statius's Thebes through a powerful invective regarding Italy's present state. Dante blames Pisa not for killing Ugolino, but for putting his sons 'a tal croce' (*Inferno* XXXIII.87) despite their innocence, demonstrating why Dante-pilgrim shows no sympathy for Ugolino. Dante emphasises this collateral damage, the true human cost of warfare, by placing *innocenti* as the following terzina's opening word (XXXIII.88). Similarly, we see such *innocenti* suffer repeatedly in the laments of wives, sisters, and mothers throughout both the *Thebaid* and in all Thebes' terrible recursive history. Meaningfully, these same women appear among Virgilio's list of virtuous Statian women in Limbo (*Purgatorio* XXII.109-114). It is this horrific violence and consequent suffering that leads Dante to call Pisa 'novella Tebe' as he exclaims:

> Innocenti facea l'età novella,
> novella Tebe, Uguiccione e 'l Brigata
> e li altri due che 'l canto suso appella.
> *Inferno* XXXIII.88-90

By mentioning 'novella Tebe' so soon after Ugolino's story, Dante evokes the suffering of the *Thebaid* and its sense of repeated, pointless conflict. Consequently, we may also recall Cain and Abel; Romulus and Remus; and by Statius's implication, Titus and Domitian. Moreover, several brother-murders divided Pisa itself, and there is a 'connection between Thebes – the brother-murder, the divided city – and cannibalism', which is 'the true inverse of fraternity' (Quinones 1991: 70-71). Torn by civil war and filled with violence and anger, Thebes reminded Dante of both his Florence and Italy, with enmity between citizens itself a sort of cannibalism and an inverse of fraternity.

Fittingly, Dante refers again to the cannibalistic scene modelled on the *Thebaid* and its horrific enclosure in his famous 'Ahi serva Italia' invective, as he avers:

> e ora in te non stanno sanza guerra
> li vivi tuoi, e l'un l'altro si rode
> di quei ch'un muro e una fossa serra.
> *Purgatorio* VI.82-84[189]

Statius's Thebes is the paradigm of a city in collapse, where society has disintegrated completely, so it provided a fitting parallel for Dante's divided Italy and an ideal model for Dante's City of Dis. After all, in Dis, Dante created a city, 'modelled on his own city, Florence, which like Thebes is destroying itself by its selfishness and total lack of moral order' (Ferrante 1984: 194-5).

Dante's recall of the *Thebaid* in an episode that dramatises Italy's own ongoing physical and psychological trauma is particularly appropriate, since even at its close the *Thebaid* hints at further bloodshed to come. Statius's subversion of Aeneas's shield in Theseus's suggests a similar subversion of the ideal of Roman imperialism presented by Vergil and is typical of the *Thebaid*'s reflection upon 'Rome's troubled dynastic past' (Newlands 2012: 3). It is no wonder that here at Dis's heart, Dante turns to Statius's Thebes to express his own disgust at the ongoing avarice, lust for power,

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[189] For a *lectura* of *Purgatorio* VI, see Pasquazi 1971b.

and violence that now wrack his Italy, and the generations that continue to suffer like Ugolino's innocent sons.

IV.3.12 PTOLOMEA

In Ptolomea, which punishes traitors to guests and friends, Dante echoes ironically both Ugolino's wish to be swallowed by the earth and Amphiaraus's irruption into the underworld still living (*Thebaid* VII-VIII), as Frate Alberigo explains:

> Cotal vantaggio ha questa Tolomea,
> che spesse volte l'anima ci cade
> innanzi ch'Atropòs mossa le dea.
> > *Inferno* XXXIII.124-26

Vergil, Lucan, and Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* mention the Fates repeatedly in their epics, but never provide the Fates' names (see Chapter III). Conversely, Statius does so on numerous occasions, mentioning Atropos five times in the *Thebaid* (I.111; I.328; III.67-68; IV 189-90; and IV.600-01 (Paratore 1970). Thus, Dante probably evokes Statius here. Atropos is the Fate who breaks the thread, and while Statius does not mention her specifically after Amphiaraus is swallowed into the underworld, Statius avers 'uisoque pauentes | augure tunc demum rumpebant stamina Parcae' (*Thebaid* VIII.12-13). This furthers the resonance between Amphiaraus's fate and Alberigo's explanation that the souls of those condemned here descended to hell as soon as they committed their sin, leaving their bodies alive on earth (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Inf.* XXXIII.122-33). However, as Amphiaraus was swallowed body, chariot, and all, Dante innovatively exceeds his Statian model.

Dante may well have sourced this striking punishment from the Bible, as Pietro Alighieri avers 'scribitur in Evangelio de Iuda ibi: Et cena facta, cum dyabolus iam misisset in cor eius ut traderet Dominum, post buccellam introvit in illum Sathanas [Ioh. 13.26]' ([3] 1359-1364: *ad Inf.* XXXIII.124-50). Alberigo's explanation thus foreshadows Dante-pilgrim's forthcoming encounter with Satan, as Judas is among the sinners that he gnaws. This presage of Judas's cannibalistic punishment by Dis (*Inferno* XXXIV.55-63) is fitting at the end of a canto that began with Ugolino's gnawing and ends with an invective against the Genoese (*Inferno* XXXIII.151-57) that recalls the similar invective

against Pisa, that *novella Tebe*, and its 'cannibalism'. While neither Satan nor the sinners he gnaws are Statian (and so I do not discuss them further), this recollection of the *Thebaid*'s terrible cannibalism reiterates the importance of the *efferatezza* of Statius's Thebes as a model for hell. This *efferatezza* even finds its echo in the wildness of the landscape (e.g. 'la buca d'un sasso, ch'elli ha roso', *Inferno* XXXIV.131) as Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio leave hell.

IV.3.13 LEAVING HELL

Accordingly, Dante's use of the *Thebaid* both as a model for hell's disintegrated society and a reflection of his own beleaguered Italy reaches its peak within Cocytus, where sin is at its worst. While in previous circles of hell Dante included figures from Statian epic, here in Cocytus Dante does not need Statian characters, as history is replete with figures who embody this depravity. Instead, he uses episodes from the *Thebaid* and their horrific *nefas* as models to which to compare these historical figures and on which to build their punishments. As always, however, Dante blends these Statian models with other classical and biblical references, contemporary and historical sources, and his own imagination, to increase the power and significance of the scenes he depicts. Yet while Statius's *Thebaid* closes with a presage of ongoing carnage, *Inferno* closes with an image of Christian hope, as Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio leave hell 'a riveder le stelle' (*Inferno* XXXIV.139).

IV.4 STATIAN MORAL EXEMPLA IN *PURGATORIO* AND *PARADISO*

Unsurprisingly, Dante-pilgrim finds no Statian characters among purgatory's penitent souls. After all, Statius's two epics are set 'nel tempo de li dèi falsi e bugiardi' (*Inferno* I.72) and no Statian character seems worthy of the exceptional act of divine grace extended to Vergil's Ripheus (*Paradiso* XX.67-69). Nevertheless, Dante continues to use Statian characters as moral exempla within *Purgatorio*, and even reuses one in *Paradiso*.

IV.4.1 STATIUS'S SUPERBI

Dante utilises his first Statian exempla in *Purgatorio* among the examples of the

prideful downfallen sculpted on the floor of the terrace of pride (*Purgatorio* XII).[190] Dante balances six (or seven) classical exempla with six scriptural examples of pride, each beginning with one letter of the acrostic VOM/UOM to demonstrate mankind's inherent pride.[191] Dante's inclusion of only pre-Christian examples underlines the importance of Christ's Incarnation and the possibility of redemption brought about through Christ's supreme act of humility. Since Statian sinners are my focus, I discuss Dante's other examples only as they reflect upon these Statian exempla.

Dante depicts Briareus and the other giants defeated at Phlegra (*Purgatorio* XII.28-33) among those who sought to challenge and were punished directly by the divine, each announced with 'Vedea'.[192] Unsurprisingly, Dante depicts Lucifer, the archetype of pride, first (XII.25-27), and arranges this and his other Old Testament example, Nimrod and his fellow tower-builders (XII.34-36), chiastically around Briareus and the defeated giants. The sculpting of these exempla together is significant as Dante-pilgrim met Nimrod and certain other giants in *Inferno* XXXI, and Lucifer in *Inferno* XXXIV, when Dante compared him to the giants. Fittingly, Dante's ecphrasis of the scene depicting Lucifer's fall echoes not only Luc. 10.18, but the giants' defeat at Phlegra, and indirectly, prideful Capaneus's reference to his and the giants' fulmination (*Inferno* XIV.52-54). Dante also poetically juxtaposes the relief of Lucifer's dramatic demise 'giù dal cielo | folgoreggiando scender' (*Purgatorio* XII.26-27) with that of the *smisurato* Briareus (*Inferno* XXXI.97; *Purgatorio* XII.28-30) to emphasise Briareus's impotent immensity.

Briareus's immensity rendered him ideal for Dante's use as a classical foil for Lucifer, perhaps further explaining Dante-pilgrim's desire to see Briareus in *Inferno*

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[190] For a *lectura* of *Purgatorio* XII, see Marzot 1971; Scott 2001; and Bausi 2014.
[191] On the possibility that Briareus and the giants constitute one longer example rather than two separate exempla and therefore that Dante uses twelve, not thirteen exempla, see Bausi 2014: 356-58.
On Dante's choice of scriptural exempla and the significance of twelve, the 'numerus abundans', see Delcorno 1983: 18-23.
On Dante's use of the acrostic VOM/UOM and the biblical/theological use of acrostics, see Scott 2001: 176.
[192] For a more detailed discussion of the three groupings of exempla, see Bausi 2014: 344-45.

XXXI.97-105. After Virgilio denied him opportunity to do so in hell, Dante-pilgrim can now see Briareus (albeit in marmoreal form). He states:

> Vedëa Brïareo fitto dal telo
> celestïal giacer, da l'altra parte,
> grave a la terra per lo mortal gelo.
> *Purgatorio* XII.28-30

Dante-pilgrim does not remark upon Briareus's hundred arms or hundred hands, nor his fifty mouths or shields (*Aeneid* X.565-66), recalling *Inferno* XXXI's insistence on the giant's oversized but human form and further undermining the *Aeneid* (see section IV.3.9). The *telo* by which Briareus is *fitto* recalls Briareus's involvement in the gigantomachy at *Thebaid* II.595-601, as Pietro Alighieri notes ([1] 1340-1342: *ad Purg.* XII.28-33), and Lucan's *Civil War* IV.593-97. Dante renders his description of the impotent and immobile Briareus and its contrast with Lucifer's fall more dramatic through the enjambement of the *telo celestial* that transfixes Briareus, and the emphasis upon Briareus's lying 'grave a la terra'. The reference to the *mortal gelo* recalls the giants' appearance around frozen Cocytus and Lucifer's own entrapment and impotency at its centre, emphasising the supremacy of divine justice.

Dante's third exemplary scene follows naturally from that depicting Briareus, as Dante-pilgrim avers:

> Vedea Timbreo, vedea Pallade e Marte,
> armati ancora, intorno al padre loro,
> mirar le membra d'i Giganti sparte
> *Purgatorio* XII.31-33

Uniquely among Dante's scenes of pride, Dante names 'the non-exemplary figures' (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Purg.* XII.31-33). Following *Thebaid* I.643 and *Aeneid* III.85, Dante calls Apollo *Timbreo* after his shrine at Thymbra. Dante's description of Apollo, Pallas, and Mars 'armati ancora' resonates with Statius's account of them employing their weapons in the gigantomachy (*Thebaid* II.595-99). In a memorable contrast with the defeated giants' *membra sparte*, Dante depicts the three gods standing around the father who saved them. As the gods marvel at their victory and the giants' audacity, Dante-pilgrim marvels at the scene's workmanship and its powerful moral lesson (Marzot 1971: 418), free from the fear he felt at hearing and seeing these giants in hell.

Through the giants' presence only as *membra sparte*, we understand that both pride and rebellion against the divine will be punished severely. Like the petrified message on hell's gate, the giants' appearance in sculpted form emphasises the futility of attempting to counter divine will and the finality of divine justice.

Dante opens his third group of scenes, depicting those who 'fecero vïolenza altrui per cupidigia' (Marzot 1971: 416) and were punished by others, with an exemplum drawn from *Thebaid* II.265-305 and IV.187-213, as several early Dante commentators note:[193]

> Mostrava ancor lo duro pavimento
> come Almeon a sua madre fé caro
> parer lo sventurato addornamento.
> *Purgatorio* XII.49-51

In *Thebaid* IV.187-213, Statius describes how Alcmaeon's mother Eriphyle coveted the goddess Harmonia's necklace, which Argia then possessed, so the 'perfida coniunx | dona viro mutare velit, […] | raptoque excellere cultu' (IV.193-95). Eriphyle thus ensured Amphiaraus's participation in the war and consequently, his prophesied death. Dante-pilgrim meets Amphiaraus among *Inferno* XX's diviners, after his engulfment by the earth in *Thebaid* VII-VIII. As with Lucifer, Dante does not name the punished Eriphyle (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Purg.* XII.49-51), suggesting that Eriphyle's pride was a well-known exemplum. Ovid also provides the story (*Metamorphoses* IX.406-15) and Vergil mentions 'maestam […] Eriphylen' in passing (*Aeneid* VI.445-46).

Strikingly, Dante captures Alcmaeon's execution of Eriphyle in retribution for his father Amphiaraus's death *in medias res*, much as Dante does his scriptural example of Sennacherib's execution by his son (Bausi 2014: 350). Since Dante portrays both the punisher and the punished, Dante's depiction of Eriphyle's execution also recalls that of the defeated giants. In describing Alcmaeon's vengeance, Dante seems to echo Statian Amphiaraus's entrusting of his *nefanda coniunx*'s punishment and his son's noble rage to Apollo ('deceptum tibi, Phoebe, larem poenasque nefandae | coniugis et

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[193] Pietro Alighieri [1] 1340-1342: *ad Purg.* XII.49-51; the Codice Cassinese *c.*1350-*c.*1375: *ad Purg.* XII.50 and Francesco da Buti 1385-1395: *ad Purg.* XII.49-51.

pulchrum nati commendo furorem', *Thebaid* VII.787-88), foreshadowing Eriphyle's death at Alcmaeon's hands. Statius mentions Eriphyle again when Amphiaraus encounters Dis in Tartarus and angrily exclaims, 'si quando nefanda | huc aderit coniunx, illi funesta reserua | supplicia: illa tua, rector bone, dignior ira' (*Thebaid* VIII.120-22). Alcmaeon soon despatches his mother to face these *supplicia* and while Dante-pilgrim does not see her 'in person' in hell, her sculpting here suggests that she endures eternal punishment. Yet Dante also implies Alcmaeon's sin, with Francesco da Buti observing that Alcmaeon 'peccasse per ira, venendo ad impietà o parricidio' and 'in Almeone fu superbia, in quanto per indignazione che è specie di superbia, uccise la madre'. After reiterating Eriphyle's sin, Francesco concludes 'E così può considerare lo penitente lo male che fa la superbia, et averla in abominazione' (1385-1395: *ad Purg.* XII.49-51). Thus, Dante suggests that such sin can infect and damage more than one individual, an implication reinforced by Dante's reference to the *sventurato addornamento*.

In calling Harmonia's necklace a *sventurato addornamento*, Dante recalls Statius's references to it as *aurum exitiale* (*Thebaid* IV.192) and *aurum fatale* (IV.211), and more significantly, *Thebaid* II.265-67, with which Statius opens his narration of the necklace's unhappy history ('nam tu *infaustos* donante merito | *ornatus*, Argia, geris *dirum*que *monile* | Harmoniae'; my emphasis). Statius begins this history with Vulcan's forging of the necklace as a wedding gift from Venus for her daughter Harmonia, before describing the disaster befalling Harmonia and her husband Cadmus, and all subsequent wearers of the necklace. These include Semele, Jocasta, and Argia, before Eriphyle (*Thebaid* II.265-305), all of whom Dante mentions in the *Commedia* in the context of Thebes' dreadful history.

Interestingly, Statius also describes Harmonia's necklace as *sacrum aurum* (*Thebaid* II.298), a phrase which Statius's early commentator Lactantius glosses as 'exsecrabili. ut Vergilius <*Aen.* III.57>: "auri sacra fames"' (*In Theb.* II.298), demonstrating the dreadful avarice connected to the necklace. *Aeneid* III.57 is the line which Dante's character Stazio 'mis'-translates, when he claims to have repented his

prodigality after reading Vergil's exclamation 'Per che non reggi tu, o sacra fame | de l'oro, l'appetito de' mortali?' (*Purgatorio* XXII.40-41). While Dante reads Vergil's line as an exhortation to the Aristotelian golden mean, between avarice and prodigality, he therefore also links Stazio-character to the historical Statius's poetry, reinforcing both the impossibility of Stazio-character's avarice and the historical Statius's morality (see Chapter III.4).

Statius ends his account of the necklace's history with Eriphyle's *invidia* and avarice, and avers:

> quos optat gemitus, quantas cupit impia clades!
> digna quidem: sed quid miseri decepta mariti
> arma, quid insontes nati meruere furores?
> <div align="right">*Thebaid* II.299-305</div>

Eriphyle thus stands as example of pride, in seeking to wear a goddess's necklace, of envy, and of avarice, sins frequently linked by both Statius and Dante. Eriphyle's betrayal, prompted by these three sins, leads to Amphiaraus's death, innocent Alcmaeon's suffering and his horrific matricide, and further *clades*. It is thus an integral part of Thebes' dreadful history. Similarly, Italy's present woes stem from the *superbia*, *invidia*, and *avarizia* of which Dante accuses his fellow Italians (cfr. *Inferno* VI.73-75 and XV.67-69). Alcmaeon's matricide of Eriphyle thus demonstrates again Statius's Thebes' value as a paradigm for Dante's hell and a parallel for his divided Italy.

Dante also uses Alcmaeon's vengeance upon his mother as an exemplum in *Paradiso* IV, as Beatrice instructs Dante-pilgrim regarding Piccarda's fate:

> Molte fïate già, frate, addivenne
> che, per fuggir periglio, contra grato
> si fé di quel che far non si convenne;
>
> come Almeone, che, di ciò pregato
> dal padre suo, la propria madre spense,
> per non perder pietà si fé spietato.
>
> A questo punto voglio che tu pense
> che la forza al voler si mischia, e fanno
> sì che scusar non si posson l'offense.
> <div align="right">*Paradiso* IV.100-08[194]</div>

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[194] For a *lectura* of *Paradiso* IV, see di Pino 1971; Güntert 2002a; and Pastore Stocchi 2015.

Beatrice's explanation accords well with Piccarda's actions, as Piccarda left her convent unwillingly and could not return due to fear for her safety. However, at first examination, Alcmaeon's matricide does not seem to fit Beatrice's criteria of committing a wrongful act unwillingly and 'per fuggir periglio'. Neither Statius nor Ovid suggests that Alcmaeon commits matricide to avert danger. However, Alcmaeon's act could be viewed as 'the lesser of two evils' according to the Aristotelian-Scholastic concept in which one must unwillingly choose between two evils, neither of which one desires, to avoid the worse (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Par.* IV.100-02). Alcmaeon therefore kills his mother to avoid a greater injustice in allowing his father's death to go unavenged.

Dante's suggestion that Alcmaeon was 'di ciò | pregato dal padre suo' is not corroborated by either Statius's or Ovid's versions of the story. Statius makes clear that while Amphiaraus wished for vengeance upon his *nefanda coniunx* before his being swallowed into the underworld and spoke of his *pius* son, Alcmaeon took the initiative in killing his mother. Nothing in Ovid's earlier version of the story contradicts Statius. However, Ovid's 'ultusque parente parentem | natus erit facto pius et sceleratus eodem' (*Metamorphoses* IX.407-08) seems to have inspired Dante's chiasmic juxtaposition of *padre suo* and *la propria madre* and the oxymoronic 'per non perder pietà si fé spietato' (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Par.* IV.100-08). Dante may be following a different version of the tale, perhaps Simonides's verse history 'per la quale appare che volendo osservare pietade cadde in empietà' (Jacopo Alighieri 1322: *ad Par.* IV.103-05). L'Ottimo Commento also refers to Simonides's verse history and connects *Paradiso* IV.103-05 to both *Inferno* XX and *Purgatorio* XII (1333: *ad Paradiso* IV.103-05.). As Simonides wrote in Greek, Dante would need to have been familiar with a translation of the story – a possibility supported by Jacopo's and L'Ottimo Commento's awareness of the tale. A more realistic possibility is that Dante altered the story of Alcmaeon to suit his own purposes. After all, Alcmaeon's matricide eventually leads to the second Argive attack on Thebes, that of the Epigoni predicted by Jupiter in *Thebaid* VII.219-21 (Ganiban 2007: 205-06). Through altering Alcmaeon's tale, Dante can use it

to illustrate Beatrice's conclusion to her lesson – that 'la forza al voler si mischia, e fanno | sì che scusar non si posson l'offense'. Thus, Dante can balance his classical exemplum with Piccarda's Christian, contemporary one, just as he balances classical and biblical examples in *Purgatorio* XII.

Through the Statian exempla Dante utilises in *Purgatorio* XII and his re-use and elaboration of one of these scenes in *Paradiso* IV, Dante demonstrates pride's centrality to the horrific and recurrent bloodshed throughout human history. Thus, we see again the importance of Statius's Thebes to Dante both as a model for his hell, and a parallel for his divided Italy. Yet here in *Purgatorio*, Dante makes the *Thebaid*'s didactic value explicit, as an exemplum not just for the penitent sinners, but for Dante's audience.

IV.4.2 STATIUS'S VIRTUOUS WOMEN

Despite Statian epic's preponderance of sinners, Dante finds several examples of virtue among Statius's women. Since Statius portrays them as paradigms of virtue and 'perfect specimens of womenkind' on a 'traditionally' Roman model (Vessey 1973: 292), this is perhaps unsurprising. Medieval *accessus*, including the so-called 'Lincoln College' *accessus*, also posit these women as positive moral exempla (see Chapter I.4.1).[195]

Dante lists six virtuous women from the *Thebaid*, and two from the *Achilleid*, as Virgilio-character and Stazio-character converse in the terrace of avarice and prodigality. After responding to Stazio's question regarding which classical authors are among Limbo's *magni spiriti*, Virgilio adds:

> Quivi si veggion de le genti tue
> Antigone, Deïfile e Argia,
> e Ismene sì trista come fue.
>
> Védeisi quella che mostrò Langia;
> èvvi la figlia di Tiresia, e Teti,
> e con le suore sue Deïdamia.
> *Purgatorio* XXII.109-14

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[195] For a *lectura* of *Purgatorio* XXII, see Jannaco 1957; Galletti 1958; Greco 1971; Borsellino 1981; Kleinhenz 1988; Paratore 1989; Picone 2001a; Ariani 2010; and De Vivo 2014.

Virgilio suggests with 'Quivi' that these women are also in Limbo and confirms their Statian origin by calling them 'genti tue'. Through Virgilio's provision of this catalogue as an 'atto di cortesia verso Stazio' (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Purg.* XXII: 109), Dante alludes to Statius's status as successor of Vergil and his own high regard for Statian epic.

Dante's catalogue of Statian women recalls *Inferno* IV.121-26's similar catalogue of figures fundamental to ancient Rome's establishment, predominantly according to Vergil's *Aeneid*, and of heroes and heroines from that text. In both catalogues, Dante places characters from epic poetry next to historical figures, reflecting Dante's belief in the truth contained in both Vergilian and Statian epic. It also demonstrates that these women are important due to their exemplary value, not their historic documentability (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Purg.* XXII.109). The marked absence of Statian men in *Purgatorio* XXII's catalogue reflects the dearth of virtue among Statius's male characters, many of whom Dante-pilgrim encountered or mentioned in *Inferno.* This demonstrates Dante's in-depth understanding of Statian epic, as does Dante's substitution of the names of two women with periphrases and his supplementing of the names of a further two with epithets. This also suggests 'una volontà connotativa' completely lacking 'nella rigida nomenclatura infernale', since *Inferno* IV.121-26's catalogue provided only each individual's name (Picone 2001b: 350). This reflects *Purgatorio*'s quality as a celebration of poetry and art, a celebration which could not be fully expressed within *Inferno*, even in Limbo's relative *amoenitas*.

Dante places Antigone first in Virgilio's catalogue of Statius's virtuous women. Antigone was 'figliuola d'Edippo, e sirocchia di Polinice e d'Etiocle; della quale spezialmente Stazio tratta nel VIJ libro del *Thebaidos* [VII.282-83], quivi: "Vos etiam nostris Heliconia turba venistis Addere rebus opem, etc."' (L'Ottimo Commento 1333: *ad Purg.* XXII.110). Antigone displays similar courage in *Thebaid* XII, when she risks her life to ensure Polynices receives an appropriate funeral pyre (XII.349-57). Dante does not provide details of Antigone's virtue, suggesting her acts of sororal *pietas* and courage were well-known.

Dante lists Deiphyle and Argia immediately after Antigone. Deiphyle and Argia were Adrastus's daughters and 'Deifile fu moglie di Tideo, del quale è fatto menzione nel XXXII capitolo dello *Inferno*; Argìa fu moglie di Pollinices' (Jacopo della Lana 1324-1328: *ad Purg.* XXII.109-11). Statius praises both sisters for their modesty and sense of filial duty:

> nec mora praeceptis, cum protinus utraque uirgo
> arcano egressae thalamo: mirabile uisu,
> Pallados armisonae pharetrataeque ora Dianae
> aequa ferunt, terrore minus. noua deinde pudori
> uisa uirum facies: pariter pallorque ruborque
> purpureas hausere genas, oculique uerentes
> ad sanctum rediere patrem. [...]
> *Thebaid* I.533-39

Argia's and Deiphyle's modesty and virtue perhaps even verge on Christian shame at the thought of marital intercourse (Wetherbee 2008: 169-71). This modesty and virtue led to Dante choosing the sisters as examples of *pudore*, a fundamental aspect of the adolescent virtue of *vergogna*, in *Convivio* IV.XXV.8 (see Chapter II.5). Dante reinforces Deiphyle's and Argia's virtue when he echoes *Thebaid* I.533-39 in describing Matelda's blushes:

> volsesi in su i vermigli e in su i gialli
> fioretti verso me, non altrimenti
> che vergine che li occhi onesti avvalli;
> *Purgatorio* XXVIII.55-57

Matelda's downcast eyes also recall Statius's description of the chaste Argive women in *Thebaid* II.231-32 ('candida purpureum fusae super ora pudorem | deiectaeque genas').

In addition to standing as an exemplum of feminine modesty and filial piety, Argia is a paradigm of uxorial *pietas* and courage. Statius avers that 'hic non femineae subitum uirtutis amorem | colligit Argia, sexuque inmane relicto | tractat opus' (*Thebaid* XII.177-79), before describing the terrifying, dangerous journey Argia makes with Menoetes to find her husband's body (XII.231ff.). Argia's lament over Polynices's body (XII.321ff.) is marked in eight manuscripts noted by Munk Olsen (1982-2014: vol. II, *passim*), indicating its poetic and perhaps its moral value. Together with Antigone, Argia places Polynices in the flames and bravely faces Creon's death sentence for

defying his impious refusal to allow the Argives to bury their dead until Theseus's message saves the two women just before their execution (*Thebaid* XII.677-82). Like Antigone, Argia displays both traditionally feminine virtues and masculine ones. Dante's omission of details regarding Argia and Deiphyle suggests their story too was well-known.

Completing a sororal chiasmus with Antigone who began this first Statian quartet, Dante mentions Antigone's sister Ismene at the tercet's close. He supplements her name with the epithet 'sì trista come fue', reflecting that the two sisters 'furono piene di tristizia e di dolore sì per li infortunii del padre, come eziandìo di quelli dei fratelli, che si uccisero insieme per acquistar signorìa di Tebe' (Jacopo della Lana 1324-1328: *ad Purg.* XXII.109-11). Ismene's betrothed Atys died in front of her in *Thebaid* VIII. Antigone and Ismene are 'tragic figures' undeserving of their suffering, 'innocent victims' of Thebes' terrible history of *nefas*, 'which they are powerless to avoid' (Vessey 1973: 291). Ismene's sadness illustrates Dante's repeated identification of the *Thebaid* 'in terms of its sorrowful theme' (Martinez 1997: 58), as do Dante's earlier reference to 'le crude armi | de la doppia trestizia di Giocasta' (*Purgatorio* XXII.55-56) and later to 'la tristizia di Ligurgo' (*Purgatorio* XXVI.94).

Dante may well have singled out Ismene as *triste*, due to Statius's distressing scene in which Ismene weeps over the dying Jocasta:

> illius exili stridentem in pectore plagam
> Ismene conlapsa super lacrimisque comisque
> siccabat plangens:
>
> *Thebaid* XI.642-47

Jocasta's suicide and her earlier incest may well explain why Dante does not include Jocasta among Statius's virtuous women. Conversely, Ismene provides an example of filial and sororal piety. However, Ismene does not participate in retrieving Polynices's body and remains confined to the traditionally female role of mourning, providing a further reason for Dante's assertion of her *tristezza*. Accordingly, the virtue of both pairs of Statian sisters thus contrasts with their menfolk's vice, and the sisters provide a worthy counterpoint to the Statian sinners Dante utilises as exempla in hell.

Dante uses a periphrasis to designate the first *exemplum* among his second grouping of Statian women. '[Q]uella che mostrò Langia' (*Purgatorio* XXII.112) is Hypsipyle 'la quale alli asetati Greci, che venivano con li VIJ regi sopra Atene, insegnò e mostrò il fiume chiamato [L]angia, come dice Stazio, *Thebaidos* libro IIIJ [IV.740ff. (L'Ottimo Commento 1333: *ad Purg.* XXII.112). L'Ottimo adds 'della quale è assai tocco, capitolo XVIII *Inferni*,' recalling Virgilio's allusion to Hypsipyle's justifiable deceit of the Lemnian women to protect her father, as he narrates Jason's subsequent sinful deceit of Hypsipyle and his abandonment of her *gravida* and *soletta* (XVIII.92-94; see section IV.3.5). Dante's Hypsipyle is thus both an *exemplum* of filial piety and a tragic victim of seduction. Yet Dante's periphrasis condenses Hypsipyle's story into the 'gesto drammatico' (Picone 2001b: 350) of leading the Argives to Langia.

Given Dante's implicit focus in *Purgatorio* XXII's catalogue on female *pietas* and lament, Dante's interest here lies primarily in the tragic consequence of Hypsipyle's showing of the Argives to Langia, the death of Opheltes/Archemorus 'Inachii proles infausta Lycurgi' (*Thebaid* IV.749). A serpent killed Opheltes/Archemorus after she left him in the grass to go to Langia and *tristis Hypsipyle* (*Thebaid* IV.728) returned to find his lifeless body. As Hypsipyle tears her hair and clasps him to her breast, she becomes a paradigm of the tragic heroine 'pulchro in maerore' (IV.747). Her speech to the deceased infant in *Thebaid* V.608-15 is marked in seven *Thebaid* manuscripts identified by Munk Olsen (1982-2014: vol. II, *passim*), demonstrating the paradigmatic value of Hypsipyle's grief-stricken speech. Hypsipyle's tragedy increases when Lycurgus, the ruler of Nemea, sentences her to death upon discovering her fatal neglect of his son, although Hypsipyle is later saved by and reunited with her own sons (*Thebaid* V.718ff.). Thus, Dante's periphrasis focusses on an act which is 'originale di un destino drammatico' (Picone 2001b: 350). She is in good company with Statius's other unfortunate women, who through no fault of their own are subjected to the terrible trauma and loss associated with Thebes' dreadful history.

Dante later utilises Statius's Hypsipyle in a more positive fashion, in a simile describing Dante-pilgrim's reunion with Dante's poetic predecessor Guido Guinizelli:[196]

> Quali ne la tristizia di Ligurgo
> si fer due figli a riveder la madre,
> tal mi fec' io, ma non a tanto insurgo,
>
> quand' io odo nomar sé stesso il padre
> mio e de li altri miei miglior che mai
> rime d'amor usar dolci e leggiadre;
> *Purgatorio* XXVI.94-99

This is the last of a series of similes in *Purgatorio* XXVI 'in progressiva ascesa eroicizzante', and significantly involves Dante himself (Antonelli 2014: 786). Dante compares this poetic reunion to Hypsipyle's reunion with her sons Thoas and Euneus, after they intervene to prevent Lycurgus executing her over his son's death (*Thebaid* V.499-730). Dante condenses this lengthy Statian scene into two powerful lines, in which Dante recalls the *tristizia* associated with the *Thebaid*, and in particular grief over the loss of sons. This perhaps suggests both God's and Mary's sadness over Christ's sacrifice.

Dante then describes the reunion that takes place in purgatory, as Dante-pilgrim wishes to embrace Guido, but the flames prevent him doing so (*Purgatorio* XXVI.100-02). As Pietro Alighieri observes ([1] 1340-42: *ad Purg.* XXVI.91-96), Dante-pilgrim's desire to embrace Guido particularly echoes *Thebaid* V.719-22:

> […] sed Lemnos ad aures
> ut primum dictusque Thoas, per tela manusque
> inruerant, matremque auidis complexibus ambo
> diripiunt flentes alternaque pectora mutant.

This impulse is linked to the desire to save one's parent from mortal peril, be it weaponry or fire. Unlike Hypsipyle's sons, Dante-pilgrim is prevented from embracing Guido. Thus, the scene recalls Stazio's desire to embrace Virgilio (*Purgatorio* XXI), and Dante-pilgrim's desire to sit among the flames with Brunetto (*Inferno* XV.34-36), which were both prevented (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Purg.* XXVI.94). Leaving aside questions around Dante's previous reference to Guinizelli (*Purgatorio* XI.97-99), in which Dante believes himself to have surpassed his vernacular lyric predecessor, the

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[196] For a *lectura* of *Purgatorio* XXVI, see Monteverdi 1971; Picone 2001c; and Antonelli 2014.

simile shows Dante's admiration and filial affection for his predecessor in *rime d'amor*.[197] Dante's decision to utilise a Statian intertext for this simile, particularly one that resonates with the prevented embrace of Dante's characters Stazio and Virgilio, demonstrates both Dante's appreciation of Statian epic and the multi-layered nature of the *Commedia*'s intertextuality with classical and medieval poetry. Dante-pilgrim's inability to embrace his poetic predecessors demonstrates that Dante-poet has moved beyond them, as the first Christian *poeta*.

Returning to *Purgatorio* XXII's second grouping of Statian women, Dante's inclusion of 'la figlia di Tiresia' (*Purgatorio* XXII.113) is problematic, with Virgilio's *èvvi* at the line's beginning highlighting this difficulty. Virgilio appears to be listing souls found in Limbo. However, Tiresias's daughter was Manto. Dante-pilgrim saw Manto among *Inferno* XX's diviners and Dante's reference to Manto's father's death at Thebes (*Inferno* XX.58-59) seems to confirm him as Tiresias (see section III.3.7). Manto's bilocation (the *Commedia*'s only such bilocation) has puzzled Dantists since the poem's earliest commentators. The majority reject the possibility that Dante made a mistake in *Purgatorio* XXII.113 and propose alternative explanations.

Several early Dante commentators suggest that Dante means not that Manto is in Limbo, but that she is in the 'carcere cieco' generally.[198] However, Virgilio specifically refers to the 'primo cinghio del carcere cieco' (*Purgatorio* XXII.103), before listing authors who are there with him. Immediately afterwards, Virgilio begins listing Statius's *genti* with *quivi*, apparently referring to this *primo cinghio* rather than the *cieco carcere* in entirety. In addition, Manto appears among a catalogue of virtuous Statian women whom we do not and would not expect to encounter elsewhere in hell, and none of the other individuals Virgilio mentions in *Purgatorio* XXII are found in hell's other circles, including Thetis and Deidamia, whom Virgilio also lists after the *èvvi*. Thus, I consider it

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[197] For a recent discussion of this issue with bibliography, see Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Purg.* XXVI.97-99.

[198] See, for example, Anonymus Lombardus *c.*1325: *ad Purg.* XXII.113; Benvenuto da Imola 1375-80: *ad Purg.* XXII.112-14; Francesco da Buti 1385-1395: *ad Purg.* XXII.94-114; and Johannis de Serravalle 1416-17: *ad Purg.* XXII.112-14.

improbable that Virgilio refers here to Manto's presence in the *cieco carcere* more broadly, rather than Limbo specifically. Some scholars propose that there are two Mantos (Chiose Ambrosiane *c.*1355: *ad Purg.* XXII.113; see also Padoan 1970b) or that Tiresias had two daughters (e.g. Tasso's 1555-1568 commentary, De Vivo 2014: 680 *contra*). However, there is no doubt that Manto is Tiresias's daughter and she is the only daughter of Tiresias who appears in the *Thebaid.* Certain Dantists suggest that a problem occurred with *Purgatorio* XXII.113's textual transmission and that the woman referred to here is not Tiresias's daughter, but someone else's.[199] De Vivo mentions but discounts the further possibility of an interpolation in the manuscript tradition involving both Manto and Deidamia, which would require that both be expunged from the text (2014: 681). Despite these proposed textual variants, the passage's 'textual tradition […] clearly favours the troublesome reading' (Hollander 1991: 90-91). Accordingly, I believe that Dante intended to locate Manto among both the diviners and in Limbo.

Despite agreeing with Hollander's assertion that there was only one Manto, daughter of Tiresias, I do not believe that the answer to Manto's bilocation is as simple as *Inferno* XX's Manto being 'Virgil's creature'; she of Limbo, *Thebaid* IV's 'virgin daughter' (Hollander 1991: 92). Leaving aside Hollander's use of Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris*, which also seems to depict two Mantos, to support his assertion (1991: 91), Hollander's analysis of Dante's reception of Statius's Manto and Vergil's bears further discussion. Hollander rightly identifies that the eight Statian characters Virgilio assigns to Limbo 'are long-suffering women' who demonstrate familial *pietas* and that in Statius's treatment of her, Manto's filial piety is 'most striking', particularly in her 'one important scene' (*Thebaid* IV.463-602; Hollander 1991: 91). Dante's periphrasis for Manto, 'figlia di Tiresia', also highlights Dante's 'intentional self-contradiction'. However, Hollander adds that 'Statius's text clearly authorises Dante's placement of Manto in Limbo' (1991: 91). Conversely, Hollander believes Vergil's Manto is worthy of damnation, and that the contradictory locations of Vergil's and

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[199] See, for example Torraca 1905: *ad Purg.* XXII.112-114; Padoan 1970b; Mangieri 1994: 8-10.

Statius's Mantos echo the tension between Virgilio-character's damnation and Stazio-character's salvation (1991: 92). While Hollander's solution has a certain appeal, the separation of Vergil's Manto from Statius's is not as straightforward as Hollander wishes to make it.

In *Inferno* XX, Dante uses Statius's epithet for Manto, *innuba* (*Thebaid* IV.463), to depict her as 'la vergine cruda' (*Inferno* XX.82) and deny her issue, thereby correcting Vergil's account of Mantua's founding by Manto's son Ocnus and her vatic bloodline's inheritance by the Mantuan people (*Aeneid* X.198-203; *Inferno* XX.82-93; see section III.3.7). Ironically, this epithet comes from the same passage that Hollander uses to highlight Statius's Manto's filial piety and justify her placement in Limbo (*Thebaid* IV.463-68). Moreover, while Dante twists Manto's virginity in *Inferno* XX.52-54 to suggest denial of her femininity in favour of her sinful mantic gifts, her virginity and her covering of her breasts with her hair can be read as signs of the same modesty which characterises those other dutiful daughters, Deiphyle and Argia. Accordingly, the Malebolgian Manto is not merely 'Virgil's creature', nor a straightforward example of sinfulness.

Statius's Manto is also more complicated than Hollander would have us believe when he describes her merely as *Thebaid* IV's 'virgin daughter'. After all, the passage Hollander uses to demonstrate Statius's Manto's filial piety, 'her one important scene', shows Manto sacrificing cattle to begin the divination rites:

> [..] tunc innuba Manto
> exceptum pateris praelibat sanguen, et omnes
> ter circum acta pyras sancti de more parentis
> semineces fibras et adhuc spirantia reddit
> uiscera, nec rapidas cunctatur frondibus atris
> subiectare faces. [...]
> *Thebaid* IV.463-68

Although Manto acts 'de more parentis' in Statius's first description of her, this probably means according to her father's custom, rather than following his commands, with the *In principio* commentator averring 'Mos erat uatum ut uaticinanti circuiret aras' (MS Additional 16380, fol. 163[r]; MS Ricc. 842, fol. 46[ra]). Later in this same rite, Manto tells her father his invocations have been heard and describes the *uulgus exangue* and the

dread underworld creatures she sees coming forth (*Thebaid* IV.518-27). Whereas Manto is 'regimen uiresque senectae' (IV.536) to her blind father, she utilises her own vatic powers and thus is guilty of the sin of divination in her own right – perhaps more so than Vergil's *fatidica* Manto (*Aeneid* X.198-99).

Later, Manto commits heinous necromancy, summoning the dead at her father's command:

> iussa facit carmenque serit, quo dissipat umbras,
> quo reciet sparsas; qualis, si crimina demas,
> Colchis et Aeaeo simulatrix litore Circe.
> *Thebaid* IV.549-51

Statius is quick here to defend Manto as innocent of Medea's and Circe's crimes and later describes Manto as *intemerata sacerdos* (IV.580) and *virgo fida* (IV.582), emphasising her chastity and filial *pietas*. Manto is also pious, with Apollo himself defending her from an attempted rape (*Thebaid* VII.758-59). However, Statius himself condemns divination in *Thebaid* III.551-65 and Apollo is the god responsible for divination among the 'dèi falsi e bugiardi' (*Inferno* I.72). Thus, Statius's Manto's actions remain blameworthy, despite their motivation by filial duty and her piety. Whereas Statius's Hypsipyle acted deceitfully due to filial duty, this was to prevent a worse crime – her father's murder. This renders Hypsipyle deserving of her place in Dante's Limbo. Manto has no such excuse, since she commits her sin only to aid her father in his own divinatory sin. Furthermore, following another's commands or encouragement provides no excuse for sinfulness given the importance Dante places upon free will. Guido da Montefeltro discovered this to his cost in *Inferno* XXVII, even though the person who encouraged his sin was a pope who promised him absolution.[200] Accordingly, despite their rationale lying in filial duty, Manto's actions in *Thebaid* IV justify her placement in the diviners' bolgia. Hollander's opposition between 'Virgil's creature' and Statius's dutiful 'figlia di Tiresia' does not solve the crux of Manto's bi-location.

Heslin makes the interesting suggestion that Statius's Manto is the same Manto

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[200] For a *lectura* of *Inferno* XXVII, see Bonora 1971, Fasani 2000b; D'Agostino 2009; and Tavoni 2013.

as Dante-pilgrim meets among *Inferno* XX's diviners, but that Virgilio 'lies' to Stazio-character by claiming Manto is in Limbo, 'perhaps out of consideration' for Stazio-character's 'feelings about his own character'. This would mean that Dante first makes Virgilio 'undercut' the *Aeneid*'s truthfulness and then 'undercuts' Virgilio's 'reliability' by depicting him telling Stazio-character 'an obvious untruth' (2015: 516). This seems unlikely, as despite Dante highlighting Virgilio's failings, for example outside Dis, lying would be out-of-character for Virgilio and render him guilty of flattery. Moreover, if Dante were deliberately trying to undercut Virgilio in *Purgatorio* XXII.113, one would expect some surprise or an aside from Dante-pilgrim highlighting Virgilio's lie – as Dante-pilgrim refers to Virgilio's failing outside Dis before he asks Capaneus's identity (*Inferno* XIV.43-45). Nevertheless, Heslin draws the convincing conclusion that like Stazio's repentance and conversion, the 'moral' of Dante's correction of Mantua's founding and his bilocation of Manto 'is surprising but clear'; when 'interpreting pagan poetry' what matters is not the author's meaning 'at the time', but the reader's 'spiritual intent' in applying Christian revelation 'which can make the worst misreading luminous and true' (2015: 516).

It is possible also that Dante had in mind the *Thebaid*'s two 'Mantos' – *Thebaid* IV's Manto, who is both diviner and dutiful daughter, and the 'Manto' of *Thebaid* X.632-49, who is the disguised goddess Virtus (Godenzi 2011: 97-106; De Vivo 2014: 682). After describing Virtus's loyalty to Jupiter and her descent to earth both on Jupiter's command and to possess worthy men, Statius depicts her assumption of the guise of 'prouida Manto | responsis ut plana fides' (*Thebaid* X.638-46). Virtus transforms herself into Manto to inspire the warrior Menoeceus's heroic self-sacrifice, an act which resonates with Christ's sacrifice (see Chapter III.5). Virtus's choice of Manto as her disguise demonstrates the regard in which Manto was held by her people, with the *In principio* commentator observing that Menoeceus would not have listened to someone with a 'uultu ignoto' (MS Additional 16380, fol. 173[v]; MS Ricc. 842, fol. 93[va]). The success of Virtus-Manto's persuasion reflects favourably on the 'real' Manto. Interestingly, immediately prior to this passage Statius invokes Clio (*Thebaid* X.628-

31), associating the Muse 'with memory and the historical record' to suggest 'traditional narrative authentication' (Myers 2015: 41). Statius thus indicates the veracity and the significance of the Manto-Virtus episode that follows. Dante echoes Statius's depiction of the descent of Virtus in his canzone *Doglia mi reca ne lo core ardire* as he describes the descent of 'Vertute, al suo fattor sempre sottana' to earth (*Rime* CVI.27-42; see Chapter II.3). This confirms Dante's familiarity with this passage when he wrote the *Commedia*. Thus, it is possible that Dante had this 'Manto' in mind as Virgilio describes the presence of the 'figlia di Tiresia' in Limbo, particularly as he is aware of Statius's unusual invocations of Clio (cfr. *Purgatorio* XXII.58; Chapter III.5). Nevertheless, while the Manto-Virtus episode may have strengthened Manto's association with virtue, *Purgatorio* XXII.113 contains no textual echo of this passage, nor any suggestion that the Manto in Limbo is anything other than the 'real' Manto.

The answer to Manto's bilocation thus seems to lie in Manto's complexity (De Vivo 2014: 682). Dante builds upon the tension in Statius's Manto between the error Statius sees in divination; Manto's presentation in *Thebaid* IV as a chaste, pious, and dutiful daughter; and her association with Virtus in *Thebaid* X; and on that between Statius's Manto and Vergil's. Dante uses this two-fold tension to authorise his bilocation of Manto in the *Commedia*, thus highlighting both the potential danger and the value to be found in pagan poetry, if one reads it 'in the light of Christian revelation'. Dante makes such a reading himself as he locates his second Manto alongside Statius's other virtuous women, emphasising Manto's status as 'figlia di Tiresia' and establishing her as an exemplum of filial duty.

Alongside Manto, Dante depicts Thetis, Achilles's mother (*Purgatorio* XXII.113). Dante draws Thetis from Statius's *Achilleid*, where she also presents an inherent tension. Dante first mentions Thetis in *Purgatorio* IX.37-39 when he compares Dante-pilgrim's waking to that of Achilles after his mother took him from Chiron's care to Skyros (*Purgatorio* IX.37-39; see section IV.5). Thetis acted 'de affectu materne pietatis' (Lincoln College *accessus*, line 74), embodied in the image of her fleeing with her son in her arms, as she sought futilely to prevent Achilles from joining the Trojan

War in which she knew he would die. While Thetis's actions could be read negatively as a futile attempt to deny fate (see Chapter I.4.1), Dante overlooks her morally dubious actions in *Purgatorio* XXII.113. Instead, Dante places Thetis among other loving, loyal women where only her maternal love and *pietas* and her subsequent loss of her son matter.

Dante places another tragic Statian character as the final woman named in Virgilio's catalogue – 'con le suore sue Deïdamia' (*Purgatorio* XXII.114). Deidamia was one of King Lycomedes of Skyros's seven daughters, whom Statius describes in the *Achilleid* as follows:

> omnibus eximium formae decus, omnibus idem
> cultus et expleto teneri iam fine pudoris
> virginitas matura toris annique tumentes.
> *Achilleid* I.290-92

While the ripe maturity of Lycomedes's daughters differs from the blushing chastity of Adrastus's daughters in the *Thebaid*, Statius emphasises their *virginitas* too, both here and throughout the *Achilleid*. Accordingly, the Lincoln College *accessus* avers that Statius shows 'de titulo verecundie puellaris in Deidamia virgine' (line 80).

Dante first mentions Deidamia when Virgilio lists Ulysses's and Diomedes's crime and avers 'Piangevisi entro l'arte per che, morta, | Deïdamìa ancor si duol d'Achille' (*Inferno* XXVI.61-62). After citing the *Achilleid*, Dante's early commentator Francesco da Buti avers that Achilles fell in love with Deidamia and they had a son together, but then:

> costretto da costoro [Ulysses and Diomedes] con inganni e con fraudilenti consigli, ingannato lasciò Deidamia col figliuolo et andò all'assedio di Troia, ove elli innamorato di Polissena figliuola del re Priamo fu morto, sì che mai non ritornò a Deidamia.
> 1385-1395: *ad Inf.* XXVI.61-63

Dante's reference to Deidamia's grief echoes Statius's account of Deidamia's tears when she realises that Ulysses and Diomedes have discovered Achilles's disguise:

> [...] Ast alia plangebat parte retectos
> Deidamia dolos, cuius cum grandia primum
> lamenta et notas accepit pectore voces,
> haesit et occulto virtus infracta calore est.
> *Achilleid* I.885-88

It also recalls Statius's final mention of Deidamia and her grief, as Diomedes says to

Achilles, 'quid si nunc aliquis patriis rapturus ab oris | Deidamian eat viduaque e sede revellat | attonitam et magni clamantem nomen Achillis?' (*Achilleid* II.81-83). The *Achilleid* finishes before we learn Deidamia's or Achilles's fate, although Statius hints that Achilles will never return as 'inrita ventosae rapiebant verba procellae' (*Achilleid* I.960). Dante confirms that Achilles 'con amore al fine combatteo' (*Inferno* V.65-66), but does not discuss how Deidamia dies, despite the early Dante commentator, l'Anonimo Fiorentino, asserting that when Deidamia heard about Achilles's new love 'disperatasi d'Achille, finalmente s'uccise; et questo è quello che dice l'Auttore' (*c.*1400: *ad Inf.* XXVI.61-62). Classical myth suggests that Deidamia raised Achilles's son Neoptolemus, as some years later Deidamia tries to persuade Neoptolemus not to join his father at war. Dante therefore merely seems to mean here that Deidamia 'perché in vita si dolse d'esser lasciata da Achille, e così se ne duole ora che è morta' (Francesco da Buti 1385-1395: *ad Inf.* XXVI.61-63).

Thus, despite or perhaps because of Achilles's appalling treatment of her, Statius's Deidamia shows herself to be an exemplum of uxorial and maternal loyalty and strength, justifying her place amongst Statius's virtuous women. The *suore* Dante mentions are probably Lycomedes's other pious and dutiful daughters, and not other nuns as Dante's early commentator the Anonymus Lombardus avers 'ipsa enim monaca fuit' (*c.*1325: *ad Purg.* XXII.114). Francesco da Buti's assessment that 'nel cieco carcere anco è Deidamia co le suoe suori, le quali tenneno celato l'amore di Deidamia e d'Achille' (1385-1395: *ad Purg.* XXII.94-114) is equally erroneous, since Statius emphasises the chastity of all Lycomedes's daughters, and presents Achilles's taking of Deidamia's virtue as a rape rather than a consensual act. Deidamia and her sisters are thus the last in Dante's grouping of virtuous Statian women.

Accordingly, the *genti tue* of whom Virgilio speaks to Stazio-character stand as paradigms of female virtue, with some even demonstrating the 'masculine' virtue lacking in many of Statius's male characters. They contrast with 'le sfacciate donne fiorentine' who go about 'mostrando con le poppe il petto' (*Purgatorio* XXII.101-02) and the examples of female behaviour Cacciaguida uses as 'indicators of Florence's

degeneration' in *Paradiso* XV.88-135 (Honess 2006: 47). Instead, they resonate with the exempla both of Mary and the temperate Roman matrons cited by the tree at *Purgatorio* XXII's close:

> […] Più pensava Maria onde
> fosser le nozze orrevoli e intere,
> ch'a la sua bocca, ch'or per voi risponde
>
> E le Romane antiche, per lor bere,
> contente furon d'acqua […]
> *Purgatorio* XXII.142-46

These women also accord with the 'ideal of female citizenship' evoked by Cacciaguida, to which 'his portrait of the role of women within the family (*Par.* XV.121-26)' is fundamental (Honess 2006: 48).[201] After all, these Statian women demonstrate heroic maternal, uxorial, filial and sororal *pietas*, but despite their innocence and love are forced to endure terrible suffering. They resonate with the Christian archetype of the '*mater dolorosa*: della donna che partecipa con dolore incommensurabile, ma anche con amore infinito, al sacrificio del proprio figlio' (Picone 2001b: 350-51). Their grief reflects Statian epic's own focus on female laments and gives them 'common cause' with the historical women Dante mentions as 'remembering, mourning, and interceding' on behalf of *Purgatorio*'s penitents (Martinez 1997: 61). Thus, Dante emphasises the ongoing devastation left behind by war and the destruction of family and civic life.

By including Statian women in Limbo and reinforcing them as exempla of virtue through their mention by Virgilio in the Statian canti rather than in *Inferno* IV, Dante lends authority to Statius as an epic poet, and to the moral example to be taken from his poetry. The presence of such examples of virtue in the historical Statius's poetry may also provide some motivation for Dante's decision to Christianise Stazio-character (see Chapter III.5). Together with *Purgatorio* XII's negative examples and the mention of Alcmaeon in *Paradiso*, these exempla demonstrate that Statian epic remains an important influence upon Dante in *Purgatorio* and, to a certain extent, in *Paradiso*.

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[201] On Cacciaguida's use of Florence's women rather than its men to make a moral rather than a political point, see Honess 2006: 45-48.

Nevertheless, as always, Dante develops the characters and events he finds in Statius's poetry and uses them for his own purposes.

IV.5   LIMINAL MOMENTS IN *PURGATORIO* AND *PARADISO*

Dante turns to Statian epic at key moments of transition in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, much as he does in *Inferno*, whether these involve the crossing of physical, psychological, spiritual, and/or poetic boundaries. Dante also frequently and explicitly calls attention to these boundaries and their moment of transition. This is particularly significant due to Statius's own widely acknowledged concern with such boundaries and oppositions.[202] Statius explores generic boundaries in his poetry despite being constrained by both 'political autocracy and a long Latin literary tradition' (Newlands 2012: 46). I reference throughout this thesis moments within both Statian epics when Statius challenges these boundaries. Similarly, in the *Commedia*, Dante presents the *genera dicendi* as antithetical to his 'syncretic and encyclopaedic poetry' (Barański 1995a: 44), repeatedly stressing his poem's *novitas* throughout all three cantiche. However, prevailing cultural standards also required Dante to render his poetry's 'ties to the tradition', and particularly the *auctores*, 'more explicit' as he strove harder to distinguish that *novitas* (Barański 1995a: 44). The crossing of boundaries within his *Commedia* provided Dante with the ideal opportunity to demonstrate both his connection to these literary traditions and his poem's *novitas*.

Nevertheless, boundaries also have a less metaliterary, but no less important function within both Statian epic and the *Commedia*. In Statian epic, they can protect order or imprison, and their transgression can allow either positive development or 'lead to confusion and destruction' (Newlands 2012: 46). Similarly, in *Inferno*, the sinners' transgression of boundaries in life led to confusion and destruction and their imprisonment in death by hell's physical boundaries. Hell's physical boundaries protect divine order, and their divinely-willed crossing by Dante-pilgrim leads him to a deeper knowledge both of sin and of the path to virtue. In *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, through

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[202] On boundaries and challenges to literary tradition in Statius's poetry, see Newlands 2012: 45-86 and Davis 2015.

boundaries and their crossing, we see Dante develop positively both as divinely-willed pilgrim and as Christian *poeta*. It is telling that in so doing, Dante returns to Statian epic.

IV.5.1 *PURGATORIO*'S EXORDIUM

Dante opens *Purgatorio* with a metaphor that was implicit in *Inferno* (I.22-27, see section IV.2) and that will be expanded in *Paradiso* II.1-3 – that of the poet's *ingenium* as a ship and the poem as its challenging voyage:

> Per correr miglior acque alza le vele
> omai la navicella del mio ingegno,
> che lascia dietro a sé mar sì crudele;
> > *Purgatorio* I.1-3[203]

Dante used this topos in *Convivio* II's proem, with a similar wish for a smooth passage and a beneficial outcome to the voyage (see Chapter II.5). Much as Dante directed the *artimone della ragione* in *Convivio* II.I.1, Dante now directs the *navicella* of his *ingegno* for *miglior acque*. Dante may well have had the *Thebaid*'s proem in mind here ('nunc tendo chelyn', *Thebaid* I.33) and possibly the *In principio* commentator's gloss to *Thebaid* I.33 'tendo chelin: id est ingenium meum praeacuo ut ista per tractata competentius te describam' (MS Additional 16380, fol. 144^v; MS Ricc. 842, fol. 2vb). Dante again reverses Statius's ship's return to port in *Thebaid* XII.808-09. However, while Statius directed his *ingenium* to the *Thebaid*'s dreadful events, Dante signals his departure from such negativity by leaving 'dietro a sé mar sì crudele' and heading towards the 'miglior acque' of purgatory, realm of salvific potential.

After promising to sing of this 'secondo regno' (*Purgatorio* I.4), Dante invokes the Muses again:

> Ma qui la morta poesì resurga,
> o sante Muse, poi che vostro sono;
> e qui Calïopè alquanto surga,
> > *Purgatorio* I.7-9

Dante now adds the epithet 'sante' to the Muses, suggesting that the *Commedia* requires more religious poetics henceforth, since it deals with salvation (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Purg.* I.7-12). While I do not intend to discuss the *Commedia*'s changing

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[203] For a *lectura* of *Purgatorio* I, see Raimondi 1971; and Bartuschat 2001.

stylistic register here, broadly speaking, Dante does raise it as he passes from *Inferno*, to *Purgatorio*, and on to *Paradiso* (Barański 1995b: 71). This may account partly for Dante's wish that Calliope 'alquanto surga' (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Purg.* I.7-12).

Statius and Dante also both choose to invoke particular Muses in accordance with their own poetic agendas. Statius invokes Calliope, the Muse of Epic, before the typical epic moments of the marshalling of troops (*Thebaid* IV.32-38) and a battle (VIII.373-74; cfr. *Aeneid* IX.525), but unusually also mentions Clio, the Muse of History (*Thebaid* I.41 and X.630; cfr. *Purgatorio* XXII.58; see Chapter IV.2.1) to lend *auctoritas* to his poem as historical record. Dante's request that Calliope rise above the other Muses (*Purgatorio* I.9) serves several purposes. It may indicate Calliope's 'slight superiority' to the other Muses or constitute 'a gesture of humility' as Dante aligns himself to 'pious Calliope' and acknowledges 'his potential presumption in singing the world of God's justice' (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Purg.* I.7-12). This would accord with Dante's reference to the punishment of Pierus's daughters for their presumption in challenging the Muses (*Purgatorio* I.10-12), Ovid's account of which ends with an invocation to Calliope (*Metamorphoses* V.294-340). I believe Dante also makes this identification with Calliope due to epic's appropriateness to the narrative progression displayed in *Purgatorio*, and to link the *Commedia* to the epic tradition as part of Dante's efforts to challenge literary tradition, partly because his *Commedia* is 'truer than history' (Barański 1995b: 68). Thus, Dante's invocation both resonates with and surpasses Statius's challenge to the epic genre in the *Thebaid*'s unconventional invocation to Clio.

Dante turns to Statian epic again as Catone instructs Dante-pilgrim to cleanse his face of hell's taint before he can progress within purgatory:

> ché non si converria, l'occhio sorpriso
> d'alcuna nebbia, andar dinanzi al primo
> ministro, ch'è di quei di paradiso.
> *Purgatorio* I.97-99

Dante recalls Statius's description of Mercury leaving the underworld ('Exsilit ad superos, infernaque nubila vultu | discutit et vivis adflatibus ora serenat', *Thebaid* II.56-

57), a similar moment of transition between worlds. Interestingly, this recalls Dante's use of Mercury in the episode of the *messo da ciel* who assisted Dante-pilgrim and Virgilio to enter Dis (*Inferno* IX.82-84; see section IV.2.5). In glossing 'vivis adflatibus ora serenat', both Lactantius and the *In principio* commentator provide explanations that render these lines especially pertinent to Dante's description of Dante-pilgrim leaving hell and entering purgatory. Lactantius avers 'aurae uitalis afflatu laetior factus est. [VIVIS] id est superioribus' (*In Theb.* II.56-57), while the *In principio* commentator states: 'id est uitali aere laetior id est serenior factus apparuit aer inferna uel turbidus et piger et naturaliter turbat hominem' (MS Additional 16380, fol. 152[ra]; MS Ricc. 842, fol. 21[rb]). Both Statian commentators draw out a sense of purification in Statius's text, which resonates with Catone's instruction to Dante-pilgrim. Both commentators also emphasise the happiness and serenity Mercury experiences upon leaving hell. This resonates with that apparent as Dante-poet contemplates the *miglior acque* over which his *ingenium* will now sail.

IV.5.2 THE ENTRANCE TO PURGATORY PROPER

In *Purgatorio* IX, Dante presents the crossing of the threshold between ante-purgatory and purgatory proper.[204] It recalls the similarly liminal *Inferno* IX, in which Dante-pilgrim entered the City of Dis and which was also redolent with classical allusions. Significantly, this is the 'first entire canto devoted to the transition from one poetic zone to another since *Inferno* XXXI', and Dante's 'self-conscious poetic behavior' demonstrates its significance (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Purg.* IX.1-9).

Dante uses a scene from the *Achilleid* as a comparison for Dante-pilgrim's awakening in this new poetic zone. Dante writes:

> Non altrimenti Achille si riscosse,
> li occhi svegliati rivolgendo in giro
> e non sappiendo là dove si fosse,
>
> quando la madre da Chirón a Schiro
> trafuggò lui dormendo in le sue braccia,
> là onde poi li Greci il dipartiro

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[204] For a *lectura* of *Purgatorio* IX, see Fallani 1971b; Picone 2001a; and Ledda 2014.

> che mi scoss' io, sì come da la faccia
> mi fuggì 'l sonno, e diventa' ismorto,
> come fa l'uom che, spaventato, agghiaccia.
>
> *Purgatorio* IX.34-42

As L'Ottimo Commento notes (1333: *ad Purg.* IX.34-39), this simile echoes *Achilleid* I.247-50, in which Thetis takes Achilles from Chiron's care in Thessaly to Skyros to prevent Achilles's death in the Trojan War and:

> cum pueri tremefacta quies oculique patentes
> infusum sensere diem. stupet aere primo:
> quae loca, qui fluctus, ubi Pelion? omnia versa
> atque ignota videt dubitatque agnoscere matrem.

Dante's simile is particularly appropriate to Dante-pilgrim's commencement of his journey up the purgatorial mountain, having been conducted from hell by his guide Virgilio, whom Dante described as 'come la madre' (*Inferno* XXIII.38) in his care for Dante-pilgrim in the Malebolge. Yet while Achilles marvels at his new surroundings and wonders at his location, Dante-pilgrim's reaction is more dramatic as he becomes *ismorto* and *agghiacciato* at the sacred atmosphere and the many incredible events in his favour (Fallani 1971b: 299). Just as Thetis attempts to calm Achilles, Virgilio intervenes more successfully to assuage Dante-pilgrim's momentary disorientation, informing him of Lucia's visit and assuring him that they have now reached purgatory (*Purgatorio* IX.49-63). Dante uses this contrast between Thetis's unsuccessful and Virgilio's successful reassurance to reflect the disparity between the maternal but temporal love of Thetis for Achilles and the eternal, divine love represented by Lucia and her agent Virgilio.

In this simile, Dante implicitly capitalises upon more negative interpretations of Thetis's actions than the maternal *pietas* that saw her among *Purgatorio* XXII.109-14's catalogue of virtuous Statian women (see section IV.4.2). As Dante's early commentator l'Anonimo Fiorentino informs us, Thetis, 'volendo scampare Achille suo figliuolo da morte, il fe vestire et mandollo in vesta femminile all'isola di Licomede re' (*c*.1400: *ad Purg.* XXII.113-14*)*. Thus, Thetis persuaded Achilles to effeminacy and cowardice, as hinted in *Inferno* XII.71's allusion to Chiron's failed tutelage of Achilles. Yet Thetis also only temporarily preserves Achilles from going to war. Achilles cannot

escape his destiny and after being tricked by Ulysses and Diomedes joins the army. His 'beloved' Polyxena's brother then kills Achilles during the Trojan War and Achilles finds himself damned among hell's fornicators (*Inferno* V.65-66; see section IV.3.2). Significantly, several *accessus* to the *Achilleid* assert that Statius wrote the *Achilleid* to encourage us not to attempt to counter fate (see Chapter I.4.1). Such a sentiment may well have resonated with Dante, who demonstrates throughout the *Commedia* the futility of seeking to understand divine will and the inexorability of divine justice.

Through this simile Dante also contrasts Thetis's failed salvation of Achilles with Dante-pilgrim's divinely-willed journey through which he will learn virtue and reach heaven under the auspices of the *tre donne benedette* (*Inferno* II.124). This demonstrates 'the contrast between classical and Christian views, between tragedy and comedy' (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Purg.* IX.34-42), and thus enables Dante to 'correct' his classical model and reassert his superiority over his classical predecessors, as the first Christian *poeta*.

Fittingly, Dante turns to Statius's Thetis and her care for Achilles as he begins the mystical canto *Paradiso* XXIII, in which Dante looks forward to God's beatific vision. Dante utilises a simile that presents Beatrice as a mother-bird anxious to nourish Dante with this vision.[205] Dante describes her:

> Come l'augello, intra l'amate fronde,
> posato al nido de' suoi dolci nati
> la notte che le cose ci nasconde,
>
> che, per veder li aspetti disïati
> e per trovar lo cibo onde li pasca,
> in che gravi labor li sono aggrati,
>
> previene il tempo in su aperta frasca,
> e con ardente affetto il sole aspetta,
> fiso guardando pur che l'alba nasca;
> *Paradiso* XXIII.1-9

This recalls a comparable metaphor used by Statius to describe Thetis's anxious flight with her infant son Achilles:

> qualis vicino volucris iam sedula partu

---

[205] For a *lectura* of *Paradiso* XXIII, see Goffis 1971b; Perugi 2002; and Mocan 2015.

> iamque timens, qua fronde domum suspendat inanem;
> providet hic ventos, hic anxia cogitat angues,
> hic homines: tandem dubiae placet umbra, novisque
> vix stetit in ramis et protinus arbor amatur.
> *Achilleid* I.212-16

Whilst both Thetis and Beatrice are compared to mother birds, Dante uses this echo of Thetis's ultimately unsuccessful tending of her child to contrast with Beatrice's own successful mothering of Dante-pilgrim, leading him toward God. By rewriting Thetis's journey with Achilles in the *Achilleid* to reflect the *iter* of a Christian protagonist rather than the voyage of an epic 'hero', Dante demonstrates again the Christian truth hidden beneath the *integumentum* of classical poetry and which is only fully revealed in Dante's *Commedia* (Picone 2001a: 123).

Significantly, later in this canto Dante describes the *Commedia* as 'lo sacrato poema' (XXIII.61-62), connecting it both to the divine and to Vergil 'via Macrobius's famous description of the *Aeneid* as *sacrum poema* (*Sat.* I.24.13)' (Barański 1995b: 75), a connection confirmed in *Paradiso* XXV. This demonstrates Dante's inheritance of the classical poets' *auctoritas*, and also his poem's Christian revelation. Accordingly, by 'correcting' Thetis's failed salvation of Achilles in two metapoetic cantos linked so clearly to the classical tradition, Dante emphasises his poetic authority not just as successor of, but as superior to, the great classical poets, as the first Christian *poeta.* That Dante does so through echoing a scene from Statius's *Achilleid*, a poem which similarly tests generic boundaries, renders this particularly effective.

IV.5.3 THE *PARADISO TERRESTRE*

Dante draws upon Statian epic again toward *Purgatorio*'s close, as Dante-pilgrim and Stazio prepare to cross the fire and enter the *paradiso terrestre*. Dante's son Pietro Alighieri ([1] 1340-42: *ad Purg.* XXVII.1-6) believes that Dante echoes Statius's 'Cardine quem porta vergens prospectat Ibera' in the first tercet of *Purgatorio* XXVII's opening horological simile:

> Sì come quando i primi raggi vibra
> là dove il suo fattor lo sangue sparse,
> cadendo Ibero sotto l'alta Libra,
> *Purgatorio* XXVII.1-3

Pietro does not mention the fact that Statius's reference to Hiberia occurs in a passage

in which he inveighs against the two brothers' wrath and the boundaries that their wrath crosses:

> […] quid si peteretur crimine tanto
> limes uterque poli, quem Sol emissus Eoo
> cardine, quem porta uergens prospectat Hibera,
> *Thebaid* I.156-58

As he does more explicitly later, Dante alludes through this Statian resonance to the boundaries he crosses as poet and pilgrim in the *Commedia*. However, in so doing he 'corrects' his Statian intertext as Dante-pilgrim's journey is not transgressive and destructive, but divinely-willed and salvific.

Once Dante-pilgrim is within the *paradiso terrestre* (*Purgatorio* XXVIII), Dante draws further upon Statian epic.[206] This creates an interesting parallel to Dante's use of Statian epic in the final part of *Inferno*, since Dante includes much Statian material in Cocytus (*Inferno* XXXII-XXXIV). Here in the *paradiso terrestre*, however, Dante's focus is upon less disturbing aspects of Statius's poetry. Firstly, Matelda's blushes (*Purgatorio* XXVIII.55-57) echo those of Deiphyle and Argia (*Thebaid* I.533-39), reminding us of their virtue and of Virgilio's reference to the sisters' presence among Limbo's virtuous pagans (*Purgatorio* XXII.109-14). Yet Matelda's 'corollario' also constitutes an interesting point of contact with Dante's reception of Statius.

Strikingly, Dante moves the classical river Lethe from hell to the outskirts of the *paradiso terrestre*, although as Lethe is not a particular focus of Statian epic, I do not discuss the river further here.[207] However, Dante creates an interesting symmetry between Mount Ida in Crete, where the Veglio's tears descend into the Cocytus, and the Lethe flowing from the *paradiso terrestre*, antipodal to Mount Ida, to Cocytus (Donno 1977: 138; cfr. Camozzi 2009: 22-25).[208] While Mount Ida enjoyed a Golden Age under Saturn, before his replacement by Jupiter, the *paradiso terrestre* 'enjoyed a similar status under Adam until the Fall' (Donno 1977: 138-39; cfr. Camozzi 2009: 26).

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[206] For a *lectura* of *Purgatorio* XXVIII, see Quaglio 1971; and König 2001.

[207] For example, Vergil, *Aeneid* VI.713-15; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XI.602-04; Statius, *Thebaid* I.296-98; and Lucan, *The Civil War* V.221-22 all locate Lethe in hell.

[208] On the connection between the rivers, Crete as anti-Purgatory, Ida as anti-Eden, and the Phlegethon as anti-Lethe, see Donno 1977: 138; and Camozzi 2009: 22-25.

Matelda's *corollario* thus reminds us of this symmetry, as she avers:

> Quelli ch'anticamente poetaro
> l'età de l'oro e suo stato felice,
> forse in Parnaso esto loco sognaro.
>
> Qui fu innocente l'umana radice;
> qui primavera sempre e ogne frutto;
> nettare è questo di che ciascun dice.
> *Purgatorio* XXVIII.139-44

This symmetry perhaps demonstrates the 'pervasive consequences of Lucifer's revolt', a symbolical parallel of Lucifer's body running through the globe (Donno 1977: 139). The loss of Eden, which Matelda laments here, was amongst the earliest of these consequences.

Matelda's corollary thus resonates interestingly with the classical poet's laments for this lost 'età de l'oro', especially as Dante recalls Genesis I in describing this Golden Age (Camozzi 2009: 26). In referring to the classical poets' dreaming, Dante probably had in mind Ovid's account of mankind's four ages, which describes humanity's declining virtue since the Golden Age and ends with the departure of the virgin Astraea (justice), which partially inspired Dante's Veglio (*Inferno* XIV). Matelda's lament also recalls Statius's ironic allusion to the return of the Golden Age of Saturn prophesied by Vergil's fourth *Eclogue* ('sciat haec Saturnius olim | fata parens, oculosque polo demittere si quos | Iustitia et rectum terris defendere curat', *Thebaid* II.358-60), Statius's lament for the lost Golden Age (III.551-65) and the many, often female, laments in the *Thebaid* (Martinez 1997: *passim*). Through these resonances with Statius's Thebes, which Dante used as a model for hell and a parallel of his divided Italy, Dante reminds us of human suffering following Eden's loss, and our consequent exile in Augustine's *civitas terrena*.

More positively, Matelda's corollary recalls Vergil's fourth *Eclogue*, which prophesied the return of this Golden Age and of justice. This *Eclogue* was often taken to be a messianic prophecy. Thus, by picturing the poets on Parnassus dreaming of the *paradiso terrestre*, 'si tratta di una "redenzione" dunque, in cui i "motivi" pagani trovano nuovi involucri nella storia della Salvezza, e viceversa' (Camozzi 2009: 26). However,

while Vergil and other classical poets were believed to have intuited the truth of Christian revelation, they could not benefit from it. Thus, Dante damns Virgilio-character, but saves Stazio-character, who claims that his Christian conversion resulted from interpreting the fourth *Eclogue*'s messianic prophecy (*Purgatorio* XXII.70-72; see Chapter III.5). Significantly, Stazio also 'mis-read' Vergil's reference to the *auri sacra fames* (*Aeneid* III.56-57) in a manner recalling the poets' lament for the temperance of the lost Golden Age (*Purgatorio* XXII.40-41; cfr. Picone 2001: 339) and mentioned Parnassus's fount of poetic inspiration (XXII.64-65; see Chapter III.4) in a further resonance with Matelda's corollary. Matelda's speaking to Virgilio and Stazio, and Dante's imagining of this scene so close to Virgilio's disappearance from the poem is significant therefore, since the Fall that Matelda laments ultimately leads to Virgilio's exile from paradise. Ironically, Virgilio lacks divine grace and cannot recognise the Messiah whose sacrifice 'made this Old Adam into the *homo novus*, or *novissimus Adam* (I Corinthians 15.20-28 and 45-49)' (Keen 2016: 68) and enabled humanity to regain Eden. Stazio, who has recognised him, embodies the possibility of our return.

IV.5.4 *PARADISO*'S EXORDIUM

Dante draws heavily upon Statian epic in *Paradiso*'s opening canto, and particularly in its proemial invocation.[209] After presaging the poem's culmination in God's beatific vision in a further reference to the ineffability topos (*Paradiso* I.1-12), Dante commences his complex opening invocation:

> O buono Appollo, a l'ultimo lavoro
> fammi del tuo valor sì fatto vaso,
> come dimandi a dar l'amato alloro.
>
> Infino a qui l'un giogo di Parnaso
> assai mi fu; ma or con amendue
> m'è uopo intrar ne l'aringo rimaso.
> <div align="right">Paradiso I.13-18[210]</div>

Whereas Dante's decision to invoke a pagan god may seem unusual, Dante associates 'sommo Giove' with the Christian God in *Inferno* XXXI.92 and *Purgatorio* VI.118. Here

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[209] For a *lectura* of *Paradiso* I, see Goffis 1971a; Sarteschi 2002; and Ariani 2015a.
[210] On the poetics of *Paradiso* I's protasis, see Ledda 2002: 243-45; and Sarteschi 2002: 21.

Dante correlates 'il buono Apollo' who inspires poets with Him. Since Dante now writes about the Christian faith's 'ultimate mysteries', only God himself is sufficient (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Par.* I.13-15). The sun-god Apollo was also a popular medieval *figura Christi* (Sarteschi 2002: 21). Dante uses *valore* of God the Father's power at *Paradiso* I.107, X.3, and XXXIII.81 and Dante's plea 'fammi del tuo valor sì fatto vaso' implicitly connects Dante to St Paul (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Par.* I.13-15). This *valor* will enable Dante to receive his desired laurel crown. Thus Dante distinguishes *buono* Apollo from the Apollo *in male* who pursued Daphne mercilessly, leading Daphne to beg her father Peneus to change her form, after which she became a laurel tree (*Metamorphoses* I.452-567; Codice Cassinese *c*.1350-*c*.1375: *ad Par.* I.13). Accordingly, Dante's invocation both connects Dante to his classical predecessors, granting him *auctoritas*, and demonstrates his surpassing of them, as Christian *poeta*.

While invocations to Apollo are common amongst classical authors, Vergil did not invoke him in the *Aeneid*. Conversely, Statius turned to Apollo before fundamental moments in the *Thebaid* and associated Apollo with a 'loftier' poetic tradition at *Thebaid* VI.296-300, VI.358-64 and VIII.374 (Myers 2016: 44). This association is appropriate given *Paradiso*'s raised register. I believe Dante's invocation particularly echoes Statius's proem to the *Achilleid*. After asking 'diva, refer' (*Achilleid* I.1-3), perhaps an echo of Homer's unnamed goddess (*Iliad* I.I, Davis 2016: 158), or a Muse (the *Thebaid*'s Clio?), Statius adds:

> tu modo, si veterem digno deplevimus haustu,
> da fontes mihi, Phoebe, novos ac fronde secunda
> necte comas:
>
> *Achilleid* I.8-10

Statius's invocation to Apollo is particularly relevant to *Paradiso*'s *novitas* (cfr. XXIII.62 and XXV.1-3), as it forms part of Statius's challenge to generic boundaries, since Apollo is 'unmartial' and thus not invoked in either the *Aeneid* or Homer's *Iliad*, and pro-Trojan, whereas Achilles was Greek (Davis 2016: 158). More significantly, the proximity between Statius's invocation to Apollo and that to the *diva* is interesting when considering Dante's attribution of one yoke of Parnassus to Apollo and the other to the

Muses. Dante's reference to 'l'un giogo di Parnaso' also echoes Statius's 'si stagna peti Cirrhaea bicorni | interfusa iugo' (*Thebaid* I.62-63), as Dante's son Pietro Alighieri ([1] 1340-1342: *ad Par.* I.16-18) observes.[211] This supports the view that Dante refers here to Apollo and the Muses, particularly as he invoked the Muses on previous occasions in the *Commedia* and refers to the Muses and Apollo together again (with Minerva) in *Paradiso* II.7-9.

Furthermore, Dante's reference to arriving at 'l'ultimo lavoro', both echoes Vergil, *Eclogues* X.1, and, through its allusion to the poet's previous labours, resonates with Statius's reference to his *ueterem* fount of inspiration. Dante's request to Apollo to be made 'del tuo valor sì fatto vaso' recalls Statius's plea 'da fontes mihi, Phoebe, novos'. Statius's request 'fronde secunda | necte comas' suggests the desire for the same *amato alloro* Dante seeks and implies that the historical Statius received this crown previously, although Dante awards Stazio-character only a myrtle crown, perhaps to save the greater laurel for himself (*Purgatorio* XXI.90; see Chapter III.3). The Codice Cassinese also notes a resonance between Dante's *amato alloro* and *Achilleid* I.14-18 (*c.*1350-*c.*1375: *ad Par.* I.13). However, in *Paradiso* I, the *amato alloro* now represents not just poetic fame but the 'true immortality' of Christian salvation, with the poet 'rewarded', *inter alia*, for writing under the *aegis* of Christian inspiration (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad. Par.* I.13-15). Dante returns to the *amato alloro* later in this invocation and in *Paradiso* XXV.

After praying for divine inspiration using the myth of Apollo and Marsyas (I.19-21; cfr. *Metamorphoses* VI.383-400) and for the *divina virtù* to enable him to narrate what is imprinted in his memory (I.22-24), Dante returns to the laurel. Dante claims:

> vedra'mi al piè del tuo diletto legno
> venire, e coronarmi de le foglie
> che la materia e tu mi farai degno.
> > *Paradiso* I.25-27

Dante deliberately plays upon the polyvalence of the *diletto legno*, such that we can

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[211] For a recent summary and bibliography regarding Dante's apparent conflation of Parnassus and Helicon, and the possibility that Dante refers here to Apollo and Bacchus, see Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Par.* I.16-18 and Carrai 2019.

understand it both as Apollo's sacred laurel tree and as the cross upon which Christ sacrificed himself to render human salvation possible. *Legno* occurs nineteen times in the *Commedia*, nine meaning 'ship', seven meaning 'tree', twice meaning 'a piece of wood', and once to refer to the cross (*Paradiso* XIX.105) (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Par. I.25-27*). Accordingly, the word *legno* is also connected to Dante's association of both his poem and Dante-pilgrim's journey with a ship and the voyage of the Argonauts. Thus, Dante strives for a successful and bi-fold outcome, both the poetic crown of laurel and the salvation obtained for humankind by Christ's sacrifice. Dante imagines his own successful return to port and his request for the *amato alloro* being granted at *Paradiso* XXV.7-9 and in his self-coronation in *Egloga* II.34-44.

Dante highlights his own exceptionality and worthiness of the poetic crown by overtly echoing Statius's *Achilleid* in the next tercet of *Paradiso* I's invocation. Dante observes:

> Sì rade volte, padre, se ne coglie
> per trïunfare o cesare o poeta,
> colpa e vergogna de l'umane voglie,
> *Paradiso* I.28-30

This echoes Statius's ironic praise of Domitian in his proem:

> At tu, quem longe primum stupet Itala virtus
> Graiaque, cui geminae florent vatumque ducumque
> certatim laurus […]
> *Achilleid* I.14-16

The gloss to *Achilleid* I.15 in MS Lincoln College Lat. 27 is pertinent to our understanding of Dante's *o cesare o poeta*. It avers that a person achieves *uatumque ducumque laurus* 'Quia bonus philosophus et bonus miles' (fol. 63ʳ). This demonstrates the poet's role in instructing his audience just as a leader instructs his troops or as God charges the emperor with guiding humanity towards the common good through their rule (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Par.* I.29). This resonates with *Egloga* II.50's reference to being crowned *hedera lauroque*, which suggested both the political and poetic aspects of Dante's poetry. *Paradiso* I.29-30 perhaps also connotes a sense of Dante as Christian warrior. Through this use of the *Achilleid*, Dante thus widens out his referential field to politics as well as poetics, showing himself to be a political poet, who,

like the emperor, is charged by God to guide humanity away from 'colpa e vergogna'.

Dante perhaps also recalls here Virgilio's crowning and mitring of Dante-pilgrim in

Purgatorio XXVII.142.

Dante strengthens his sentiment of virtue's rarity in present times and his

poetry's association with Statian epic, as he finishes this section of the invocation:

> che parturir letizia in su la lieta
> delfica deïtà dovria la fronda
> peneia, quando alcun di sé asseta.
> *Paradiso* I.31-33

Since Daphne was the daughter of Peneus, the *fronda peneia* refers again to the

laurel. The *letizia* that *liet[o]* Apollo (the *delfica deïtà*) feels upon such rare occasions

foreshadows the triumphant joy that awaits at the *Commedia*'s culmination and which

is the reward for such rare virtue. Dante's emphasis on *letizia* recalls in contrast the

tristizia Dante associates repeatedly with Statius's *Thebaid* and the *colpa e vergogna*

that rendered Thebes an ideal model for Dante's hell and parallel for Dante's divided

Italy. Through this reference to *sete* Dante recollects the *sete* leitmotif of the so-called

Statian canti (*Purgatorio* XXI-XXII), which relates to the *aqua viva* that renders

salvation possible, and the redemptive waters of the Eünoè that Dante-pilgrim and

Stazio drank prior to rising to paradise (*Purgatorio* XXXIII). Thus, Dante recalls the

divine grace and Christian revelation necessary for salvation and that allow the

Commedia to reach its successful culmination.

Dante closes his invocation to Apollo with a final allusion to Apollo as the god to

whom Cirrha was sacred, as Dante expresses the hope that:

> Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda:
> forse di retro a me con miglior voci
> si pregherà perché Cirra risponda.
> *Paradiso* I.34-36

Dante perhaps echoes here a proverb in Curtius Rufus (*Hist. Alexandri* VI.3.11) or in

Jerome (*Epist.* 121.2) (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Par.* I.36-38) or a line from a

sonnet by Cino da Pistoia (CLXX.12, ed. Marti; Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Par.* I.34).

This 'poca favilla' reflects the idea that what Dante writes will be always less than what

he saw (*cfr*. *Paradiso* I.23 and XXXIII.71-72; Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Par*. I.36-38).

I believe Dante also echoes here Stazio's account of the divine inspiration that enflamed him via Vergil's *Aeneid*:

> Al mio ardor fuor seme le faville,
> che mi scaldar, de la divina fiamma
> onde sono allumati più di mille
> > *Purgatorio* XXI.94-96

Thus, *Paradiso* I.34-36 resonates with the explicit to Statius's *Thebaid*:

> vive, precor; nec tu divinam *Aeneida* tempta,
> sed longe sequere et vestigia semper adora
> > *Thebaid* XII.816-817

The historical Statius speaks of following the divine *Aeneid*, just as Stazio-character speaks of following behind Virgilio. Statius's false modesty in the *Thebaid*'s explicit highlights Dante's own use of this topos. Just as Statius strove to exceed his poetic predecessor despite his protestations and is destined to remain a follower, the 'miglior voci' Dante suggests *forse* will follow 'di retro a [lui]' will never exceed his poetry. Yet the phrase *di retro* recalls Virgilio's query to Stazio-character as to why he directed 'di retro al pescator le vele?' (*Purgatorio* XXII.63). The reference to the 'lucerna del mondo' rising up immediately following this invocation (*Paradiso* I.37-38) reminds us both of the *sole* or *candele* that enlightened Stazio (*Purgatorio* XXII.61-62) and the *lume* that Virgilio showed *dietro a se* (XXII.67-69). Thus, through this network of inter- and intra-textual resonances, Dante both situates himself within the tradition of the great classical poets, elevating himself to Vergil's status as a poet and *auctor* whom generations will follow, and demonstrates his superiority to them, since his poetry is illumined by Christian revelation.

IV.5.5 ENTRY TO *PARADISO*'S FIRST SPHERE

Paradiso II opens at the threshold to the first heavenly sphere.[212] At this liminal point, Dante returns again to Statius, Ovid, and Vergil in a rare apostrophe to his listeners:

> O voi che siete in piccioletta barca,
> desiderosi d'ascoltar, seguiti

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[212] For a *lectura* of *Paradiso* II, see Pecoraro 1971; Picone 2002; and Basile 2015.

> dietro al mio legno che cantando varca,
>
> tornate a riveder li vostri liti:
> non vi mettete in pelago, ché forse,
> perdendo me, rimarreste smarriti.
> *Paradiso* II.1-6

In the *piccioletta barca*, Dante recalls the *navicella* representing his *ingegno* in *Purgatorio* I. Dante's *navicella* has now become a large, oceangoing vessel due to his increased *ingegno* so close to God. Conversely, Dante's audience remains in the *piccioletta barca*, which represents the intellect of the 'average reader' (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Par.* II.1-6). The classical topos of the 'legno che cantando varca' reiterates Dante's position within the tradition of the great classical poets. Dante's warning to his audience to return home and not to put themselves *in pelago* for fear of becoming *smarriti* recalls Ulysses's *folle volo* (*Inferno* XXVI.125). Ulysses voyaged past the pillars of Hercules and was shipwrecked. While Dante-poet infringes the barrier imposed upon human nature, he does so through divine grace and inspiration and thus will reach God (Picone 2002: 36). By warning his readers not to undertake an enterprise superior to their capabilities, Dante corrects Ulysses's encouragement of his men to cross the boundary with him (Picone 2002: 40).[213]

Dante then uses the classical metaphor of the poem as a ship and imagery from classical mythology to differentiate his poetry from that of his predecessors. To capture the reader's attention, Dante highlights the *novitas* of his materia, claiming:

> L'acqua ch'io prendo già mai non si corse;
> Minerva spira, e conducemi Appollo,
> e nove Muse mi dimostran l'Orse.
> *Paradiso* II.7-9

The reference to the 'acqua che […] mai non si corse' both recalls Ulysses and foreshadows Dante's upcoming reference to Jason and the Argonauts.[214] It resonates with Ovid's *mare non notum* (*Metamorphoses* VI.45) and his reference to the *insuetum campum* in his account of Jason's dealings with Medea (*Metamorphoses* VII.119).

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[213] On the differences between *Paradiso* I.1-6 and *Convivio* I.I.2-6 despite the apparent similarity of the notion that there exist those unworthy to understand the text, see O'Brien 1979: 97-106.

[214] On the novelty topos see Ledda 2002: 57-96.

Dante's desire to sail new seas and plough new fields through his poetry resonates with Statius's expression of the path Fame has paved for him and the novelty of his poetry at the *Thebaid*'s close 'iam certe praesens tibi Fama benignum | strauit iter coepitque nouam monstrare futuris' (XII.812-13). Given his voyage's audacity Dante needs the greatest divine aid possible, and thus invokes not just Apollo and all nine Muses, but Minerva, the classical goddess of wisdom.[215] Dante's use of *spirare* recalls Stazio's use of *spirare* in his explanation of God's bestowing upon the human soul of rational and intellective abilities (*Purgatorio* XXV.71; see Chapter III.6) and Dante-pilgrim's statement 'I' mi son un che, quando | Amor mi spira, noto' (*Purgatorio* XXIV.52-53). Through this invocation Dante both situates himself in the classical poetic tradition, granting him *auctoritas*, and reiterates his supremacy as first Christian *poeta*, inspired by divine wisdom.

Dante returns to the trope of the poem as a ship, as he addresses those devoted to the study of Christian truth:

> metter potete ben per l'alto sale
> vostro navigio, servando mio solco
> dinanzi a l'acqua che ritorna equale.
>   *Paradiso* II.13-15

As Dante sets sail upon his poetic voyage, Dante reverses the image of Statius's ship's return to port and Statius's exhausted phrase that immediately precedes it, 'uix nouus ista furor ueniensque implesset Apollo' (XII.808-09). While Statius and other classical poets possess sufficient poetic inspiration for their epics' worldly struggles, this cannot suffice for this voyage through the heavenly kingdom. Conversely, Dante is filled with divine energy for the voyage before him. In mentioning his *solco*, Dante recalls both the historical Statius's following in Vergil's *vestigia* (*Thebaid* XII.817) and his character Stazio's following 'di retro al pescator le vele' (*Purgatorio* XXII.63), much like Dante proposes these *pochi altri* will follow him. Dante thus both situates himself in the classical tradition and equates himself to St Peter, the fisherman of souls (Marc. 1.17),

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[215] On Dante's use of the Muses, Minerva, and Apollo as Christian, poetic symbols, see Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Par.* II.8-9; and Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Par.* II.9.

cementing his unique status as Christian *poeta*. Unlike those who followed Ulysses over uncharted waters, Dante, guided by Christian poetic inspiration, will show those who follow him the path to salvation.

As this proem's final part, Dante equates his voyage to that of Jason and the Argonauts, as he claims:

> Que' glorïosi che passaro al Colco
> non s'ammiraron come voi farete,
> quando Iasón vider fatto bifolco.
>   *Paradiso* II.16-18

In *Paradiso*, Dante largely glosses over Jason the seducer whom we met in *Inferno* XVIII and relies predominantly upon *Metamorphoses* VII.1-158 to present Jason in a more positive light. Jason built the first ship (the Argo, cfr. *Paradiso* XXXIII.94-96) and sailed across uncharted seas with his companions, the Argonauts, to complete the seemingly impossible but ultimately successful feat of obtaining the Golden Fleece. Similarly, Dante crafts the *Commedia* and sets sail on a voyage across uncharted waters to paradise. In *Paradiso*, Dante therefore utilises the Argonauts' voyage both as a parallel for Dante-pilgrim's journey and for his own endeavour, exploiting it in a metadiegetic and metaliterary fashion to enable him to describe adequately his 'audace impresa' (Picone 1994: 191). In *Paradiso* II.16, Dante describes the Argonauts as *glorïosi* (II.16), an adjective he uses later as he invokes the Muse aiding him in his own *impresa* as 'diva Pegasëa che li 'ngegni | fai glorïosi' (*Paradiso* XVIII.82-83), furthering the connection between Jason's voyage and Dante's.

In *Paradiso* II.16-18, Dante concentrates upon events once Jason and the Argonauts reach Colchis, where the Fleece is kept. While we recall Dante's more negative assertion that Jason 'per cuore e per senno | li Colchi del monton privati féne' (*Inferno* XVIII.86-87) and Jason's abandonment of Medea (*Inferno* XVIII.96), Dante's emphasis on events at Colchis in *Paradiso* is much more positive, and as they draw on the *Metamorphoses*, not Statius, I do not discuss them further here. However, Benvenuto da Imola's interpretation of *Paradiso* II.16-18 is interesting for our purposes:

> Jason prius nauigavit inter uana mundi, transiens per Troiam terram uoluptuosam, et decipiens mulieres; sed postea pulsus ex patria factus est

> gloriosior, nam in Colchos, ubi emendauit errorem suum; nam restituit socerum in regnum, unde postea decreti sunt sibi diuini honores, et ob egregiam uirtutem reperiit inuidiam post mortem; ita recte Dantes diu navigauit inter uana mundi transiens per uoluptuosam terram Florentiae, et aliquando fallens mulieres, sicut ipse notauit quodam capitulo *Inferni*; demum exul a patria emendauit uitam corruptam, et fecit sacrum poema, unde factus est diuinus et inuenit inuidiam.
>
> 1375-1380: *ad loc.*

Thus, while Dante effaces the more unpalatable aspects of Jason's stay in Colchis and any thought of Hypsipyle (from Ovid's *Heroides* and Statius's *Thebaid*), Jason's previous *error* is integral to Dante's depiction of the voyage of Jason and the Argonauts as epic precursor to Dante's journey as pilgrim and poet, since he too began in *error*. However, while Jason's quest is earthly, Dante's is for the ultimate quest object, God's beatific vision.

IV.5.6 THE POETIC LAUREL

Dante alludes to the Golden Fleece and the poetic laurel again in *Paradiso* XXV, opening the canto with another significant protasis:[216]

> Se mai continga che 'l poema sacro
> al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra,
> sì che m'ha fatto per molti anni macro,
>
> vinca la crudeltà che fuor mi serra
> del bello ovile ov' io dormi' agnello,
> nimico ai lupi che li danno guerra;
>
> con altra voce omai, con altro vello
> ritornerò poeta, e in sul fonte
> del mio battesmo prenderò 'l cappello;
> *Paradiso* XXV.1-9

Dante calls the *Commedia* a *poema sacro*, as he called it *sacrato poema* in *Paradiso* XXIII.62, linking it to both the *Aeneid* and the divine. It is sacred both because of its divine subject-matter and because it required both human and divine effort to complete it (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Par.* XXV.1-12). Thus, *Paradiso* XXV.1-3 also resonates with Dante's need to invoke both Apollo and the Muses in *Paradiso* I.

However, the *Commedia*'s divine greatness can never overcome the *lupi* (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Par.* XXV.1-12). While Rigo suggests the possibility that Dante's *cappello* refers to Florentine citizenship (Rigo 1994: 135-63), Dante's

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[216] For a *lectura* of *Paradiso* XXV, see Margiotta 1971; Fumagalli 2002; and Prandi 2015.

return to his beloved city seems unlikely given Dante's despair over the state of contemporary Florence, his frequent invectives regarding the *lupi* who barred him from the city (cfr. *Paradiso* XXV.4-6), and Ciacco's and Brunetto's earlier prophecies of his exile (*Inferno* VI and XV) – again recalling the *Thebaid*'s uncontainable *nefas*. Moreover, while Dantists predominantly now agree that the *cappello* is the poetic crown of laurel rather than the 'berretta del dottore di teologia' (Fumagalli 2002: 394), debate regarding this protasis, and particularly whether Dante truly hopes for laureation or is 'sardonic about its likelihood', continues (Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Par.* XXV.1-9).[217] Nonetheless, as in *Paradiso* I, the *cappello* surely also relates to the granting of the 'cittadinanza celestiale' (Rigo 1994: 135-63) that Dante expects one day to receive. Thus, it is fitting and poignant that Dante begins the canto concerning the theological virtue of hope with an expression of his poem's earthly and divine concerns, and his hope both of returning to his natal city and taking the poetic crown of earthly glory, before eventually receiving that of heaven.

Dante's 'altro vello' (*Paradiso* XXV.7) similarly suggests Dante's twin hopes of a return to Florence and his poetic laureation. When taken together with his 'altra voce' (deeper voice) it suggests superficially the beard of an older man, especially as Giovanni del Virgilio's first Eclogue to Dante asks 'Nonne triumphales melius pexare capillos, | et, patrio redeam si quando, abscondere canos | fronde sub inserta solitum flauescere, Sarno?' (*Egloga* I.42-44). However, Dante's *vello* recalls the goatskins that John the Baptist, Florence's patron saint celebrated by the city's *battistero*, wore during his own 'exile' in the wilderness (Scott 2004: 296). It also suggests the Golden Fleece sought and gained by Jason and mentioned in *Paradiso* II.16-18 and Dante's first *Eclogue* ('Velleribus Colchis', *Egloga* II.1), and alluded to in *Paradiso* XXXIII.96's reference to the Argo. Accordingly, through combining a classical and a Christian intertext in this reference to the *vello*, Dante shows himself to be both successor to the classical poets and their superior, as the first Christian *poeta*. Dante uses these

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[217] For a recent bibliography on these discussions, see Hollander 2000-2007: *ad Par.* XXV.1-9.

references to Jason's challenging but successful quest for the Golden Fleece (*Metamorphoses* VII.1-158) as a figure both for Dante-pilgrim's difficult journey and his own crafting of the *Commedia*, beset by the woes of unjust exile (*Paradiso* XXV.1-6). Whereas in *Paradiso* II.16-18, Dante's victorious emergence from the rhetorical-linguistic challenges of narrating his eschatological journey 'è soltanto un'allusione', in *Paradiso* XXV.7-9 'diventerà un'aperta dichiarazione' (Picone 1994: 198), as Dante crowns himself with a *cappello*, much as Statius did in *Achilleid* I.9-10, and as Dante does again in *Egloga* II.34-44.

Dante's proem may well be a further response to Giovanni del Virgilio's *Eclogue* inviting Dante to write in Latin so he might receive the poetic laurel at Bologna (*Egloga* I), following Mussato's coronation at Padua. Dante of course responds directly to Giovanni in his own first Eclogue (*Egloga* II.42-44; see Chapter II.8). Yet in *Paradiso* XXV.1-3, Dante seeks to differentiate himself from Mussato and other poets writing in Latin of less spectacular subjects.[218] Dante's coronation also exceeds his character Stazio's earlier coronation with *mirto* at Rome (*Purgatorio* XXI.90; see Chapter III.3), since here and in *Egloga* II, Dante grants himself the superior laurel crown. It is significant in this context that Dante calls himself *poeta* for the first and only time in his oeuvre. However, he had already hinted at his ambitions 'for his language and himself', when he transferred the term *poeta* from the classical poets to the vernacular writers in the *Vita Nuova* (Ascoli 2008: 68, fn. 2; see Chapter II.2). *Poeta* is a term traditionally reserved for the classical poets, which Dante pointedly does not use for contemporary poets (who would presumably include Mussato) in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* or apply to any other contemporary poet in the *Commedia*. In utilising this term, Dante joins himself to the ranks of great classical poets and assumes their *auctoritas*, despite the *Commedia*'s use of the vernacular. However, he is quick to demonstrate his superiority to both them and his contemporaries, due to his poem's *novitas* and its Christian revelation. Thus, while Mussato received his laurel crown in a university ceremony at

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[218] On the possibility of Dante's laureation for a vernacular poem, when Mussato's was written in Latin, see Fumagalli 2002.

the Palazzo communale, a non-religious place, Dante wishes to receive his at his baptismal font, demonstrating the recognition he desired and of which he believes himself worthy (Fumagalli 2002: 400). Dante can only receive his poetic crown here because this is where he entered into the faith to which his *Commedia* testifies (*Paradiso* XXV.10-12). Thus, this proem demonstrates Dante hopes to achieve not just the poetic crown, but the greatest crown of all – the eternal glory of salvation.

Dante seems to foreshadow this moment later in *Paradiso* XXV, as he uses a sailing metaphor to describe the flaming circle of three apostles silently stopping following the third one's speech:

> sì come, per cessar fatica o rischio,
> li remi, pria ne l'acqua ripercossi,
> tutti si posano al sonar d'un fischio.
> *Paradiso* XXV.133-35

This recalls a simile Statius uses to describe a temporary lull in the fighting:

> sic ubi longa uagos lassarunt aequora nautas
> et signum de puppe datum, posuere parumper
> bracchia: […]
> *Thebaid* VI.799-801

Dante uses this Statian simile in a context materially different to its source text. However, given the earlier ship/poem metaphor, it demonstrates that there is still some sea to sail before the *Commedia* reaches its triumphant culmination in God's vision. It reminds us again of Ulysses's *folle volo* and the voyage of Jason and the Argonauts. Like both Jason and Statius's *Thebaid* (XII.808-09) Dante will return safely to port and receive his *vello/cappello*, creating a parallel between Dante-pilgrim's expressive success, Dante-poet's destiny, and the wish for a similar success for the *Commedia* (Ledda 2002: 289).

IV.5.7 L'OMBRA D'ARGO

Significantly, Dante makes his final reference to Jason and the Argonauts at another liminal moment, in the *Commedia*'s final canto. Dante therefore frames *Paradiso* with references to the Golden Fleece. As Dante achieves the object of his intellectual and poetic quest, God's beatific vision (Picone 1994: 200), he avers:

> Un punto solo m'è maggior letargo
> che venticinque secoli a la 'mpresa

> che fé Nettuno ammirar l'ombra d'Argo.
> *Paradiso* XXXIII.94-96[219]

Many scholars have discussed Dante's use of the unusual term *letargo* to express his concern that he will forget the miraculous vision of the divine.[220] While it usually translates to lethargy, considered an illness, Dante uses it to underline that this forgetfulness is not natural. Instead it means something greater, a forgetfulness due to ecstasy, 'che ha sollevato la mente come fuori da se stessa' (Chiavacci Leonardi 1991-1997: *ad Par.* XXXIII.94-96). By mentioning Neptune and the Argo, Dante focusses attention upon Jason as 'primae […] ratis molitor' (*Metamorphoses* VIII.302) and therefore the building of the Argo as man's transgression of the natural boundary between sea and land. The myth of Jason and the Argonauts springs from prohibition and infraction, 'dell'imposizione divina e della *hybris* umana' (Picone 1994: 191). This violation of natural and divine law and the transgression of boundaries recalls both Ulysses's voyage beyond the pillars of Hercules (*Inferno* XXVI) and the repeated infringement of boundaries, both physical and metaphysical, in the *Thebaid*. Yet in *Paradiso* XXXIII.96, Dante corrects Ovid's text, classical mythology, and the romance tradition, which depicted Neptune's anger, by transferring Ovid's Nereids' admiration of the Argo to Neptune himself 'e quindi al suo omologo nell'universo cristiano, il re del Paradiso: Dio stesso' (Picone 1994: 202).

Since Dante equates his own poem repeatedly both with ships and with Jason's quest, by thus correcting Ovid, Dante boldly suggests that God admires the *Commedia*'s poetic voyage through the heavenly kingdom. Thus, Dante becomes a new, Christian Jason. Accordingly, Dante corrects both Ulysses's and the *Thebaid*'s infringement of boundaries. In so doing Dante demonstrates both his succession to the classical poets and his definitive surpassing of them as Christian *poeta*. Dante underlines the successful completion of his voyage in the *Commedia* as both poet and pilgrim by recalling to us where we have been, in this final reference to the *ombra*

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[219] For a *lectura* of *Paradiso* XXXIII, see Güntert 2002; and Ariani 2015b.
[220] Hollander (2000-2007: *ad Par.* XXXIII.94-96) provides an excellent recent bibliography of these discussions.

d'Argo. Whilst Dante does not mention Jason's treatment of Hypsipyle and Medea, we remember these transgressions as Statius and Ovid tell us they took place during the Argo's voyage. Lest we should forget Jason's sins, Dante's use of the word *ombra* reminds us of Jason-*ombra*, whom Dante-pilgrim encountered in *Inferno* XVIII. This underlines that those who lack Christian revelation and are sinful are destined always to remain in hell, despite their achievements. Thus, Dante demonstrates for a final time classical poetry's limitation, in contrast with his own poem enlightened by Christian revelation. In this final reminder of the Argo (and implicitly of Jason) Dante reminds us of his own trajectory from carnal love to salvific love and from lyric poet to Christian *poeta.* It is appropriate that he does so at the *Commedia*'s culmination.

Thus, Dante turns to Statian epic (and his other intertexts) at key liminal moments not just in *Inferno* but in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* too. Dante's Statian resonances are particularly significant since Statius too was concerned with the concept of *limes* and transgression, and in his *Thebaid* particularly with the infraction of the boundary between the human and divine. In Statian epic, transgression of such boundaries is negative and impacts badly on Statius's human characters, much as it does upon Dante's Statian characters. However, since Dante-pilgrim's journey is divinely-willed and Dante's poetry is inspired by Christian revelation, Dante's own transgression of such boundaries is positive, especially in the *Commedia*'s final two *cantiche.* By framing *Paradiso* with references to Jason and the Argonauts, another transgressor of boundaries, Dante demonstrates the magnitude of his achievements and illustrates his hope for the achievement both of the poetic crown of laurel and of the eternal glory of salvation. Along with Dante's invocations to the Muses and Apollo, these classical references both situate Dante in the classical tradition and demonstrate his surpassing of his classical predecessors as the first Christian *poeta.*

IV.6 CONCLUSION

Accordingly, Statius's epic poetry provides an important intertext for the *Commedia*, not just in *Inferno* but also in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso.* In this chapter, I demonstrated that Dante uses Statius's Thebes as a paradigm for his hell, especially the City of Dis, and

an analogy for his divided Italy. Statius's portrayal of Thebes as a disintegrated, almost cannibalistic, society torn by civil war and avarice, pride, and envy and the repeated infraction of the boundaries between Tartarus and Thebes rendered it ideal for this purpose. I established that hell's Theban echoes are at the most intense and horrific in Cocytus, where the worst sinners are confined.

I explored Dante's use of Statian characters as moral exempla in *Inferno*, examining both his placement of them as sinners within his hell (*Inferno* V-XXXI) and his less material use of Statian evildoers as models on which to base the punishment of more contemporary sinners (*Inferno* XXVI and XXXII-XXXIII). I made clear that Dante's Statian sinners are not two-dimensional copies of their predecessors but real individuals with personal histories, who can be the fruit only of Dante's reading of the whole *Thebaid* and the unfinished *Achilleid*. I explored how Dante develops and utilises these individuals to suit his own agenda, sometimes modifying them with details drawn from his other intertexts and always with his own *ingenium*. I demonstrated how sinners such as Capaneus and the giants particularly captured Dante's imagination, such that he holds them up as paradigms of particular sins throughout the *Commedia*. I analysed the significance of Dante's explicit replacement of Statius's reciprocal fratricides with Ulysses and Diomedes in *Inferno* XXVI's divided flame, and thus Dante's implicit challenge to Statius. I explored the intense and horrifying Theban echoes in Cocytus, firstly in the Alberti brothers, mutual fratricides recalling Statius's Polynices and Eteocles, and then in the famous Ugolino episode, modelled expressly on Tydeus's cannibalisation of Menalippus. Thus, I demonstrated that Dante uses Statian epic to demonstrate a city in collapse, where brothers fight brothers and citizens fight citizens in a metaphorical cannibalism that can lead only to further destruction.

Subsequently, I extended my analysis beyond *Inferno* and into *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, exploring beyond existing scholarship's focus on Stazio-character. I analysed Dante's utilisation of Statian characters as exempla sculpted upon the floor of the terrace of pride in *Purgatorio* XII, where they appeared alongside biblical and other classical exempla to demonstrate this sin's deep-rooted nature. I observed that Dante

distils their *superbia* and its punishment into a single powerful scene to reinforce their moral lesson. I discussed the catalogue of virtuous Statian women in Limbo that Virgilio-character provides for Stazio-character in *Purgatorio* XXII.109-14. As these women displayed admirable loyalty to the fathers, husbands, and sons whom they loved and lost, I asserted that Dante utilises them*, inter alia*, to demonstrate the tragic cost of war and reiterate his own lament for the lost Golden Age and the lost Eden.

Lastly, I demonstrated that Dante turns to Statian epic at the moment of crossing key boundaries within both the poetic structure of the *Commedia* and the physical realms of the otherworld – not just in *Inferno*, but in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* too. This is especially significant given Statius's own concern regarding the transgression of boundaries. While in Statius such transgression is negative, much like Dante's Ulysses's *folle volo* (*Inferno* XXVI), in the *Commedia* Dante depicts Dante-pilgrim's surpassing of these boundaries as divinely-willed. Moreover, through comparing his own poetic endeavour to the successful quest of Jason and the Argonauts in *Paradiso* (and glossing over Jason's seduction of Hypsipyle and Medea (*Inferno* XVIII)), Dante shows himself to be a new, Christian Jason. As well as the poetic laurel crown for which Dante longs (echoing the historical Statius's laurel crown rather than Stazio-character's myrtle one), the object of Dante's quest is the eternal glory of salvation, to which he also hopes to guide his worthy readers. Accordingly, Statius's poetry is of fundamental importance to Dante poetically, narratively, morally, and allegorically throughout the *Commedia*. Dante uses Statian epic to grant authority to his poetry and to place himself in a chain of succession leading from Homer, through Vergil and Statius, to himself. Due to his poem's Christian revelation and his own divinely inspired *ingegno*, Dante represents poetry's culmination.

CONCLUSION

I began my research with the conviction that Statian epic bore greater significance for Dante than has been acknowledged to date. I observed the surprising absence of a monograph dedicated exclusively to Dante and Statius, despite Dante's obvious regard for the classical poet recorded in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* II.VI.7, *Convivio* II-IV, and the *Commedia*, and also despite some useful critical studies on particular aspects of Dante's relationship with Statius (see Introduction). I set out to redress this deficiency, asking firstly when, where, and how Dante most likely read the *Thebaid* and the unfinished *Achilleid*, and then, more significantly, how, why, and where Dante engaged with these epic poems throughout his oeuvre. (I largely ignored Statius's *Silvae* given the probability that this was not known to Dante).

Through considering research regarding education in medieval Italy, Dante's own comments regarding his intellectual formation, and Statius's medieval reception, I established in Chapter I that Dante could have encountered extracts of Statian epic in a *florilegium* or similar compendium while in Florence. I concluded that while Dante may have had access to the *Achilleid* prior to his exile, he is extremely unlikely to have read the *Thebaid* in anything other than extracted form during this time, and probably read both epics in entirety only after his banishment from Florence. I established that when Dante did read Statius's two epics, they almost certainly would have been accompanied by one or more *accessus* texts and surrounded by glosses. Based on the Statian manuscript tradition, I suggested that Dante was probably familiar with Lactantius Placidus's and/or the *In principio* commentaries to the *Thebaid* and noted the difficulty in determining which commentary to the *Achilleid* Dante likely read. I established that these *accessus* texts and commentaries would have provided information regarding Statius and his poetry and helped medieval readers such as Dante appreciate Statian epic's poetic, moral, and political value. I also proposed the possibility that Dante was familiar with an Old French retelling of the *Thebaid*, the

Roman de Thèbes, which may have encouraged Dante's connection of Thebes to Florence via Troy and Rome and influenced certain scenes in the Malebolge.

In Chapter II, I traced the path of Dante's engagement with Statian epic in the *opere minori* from the first possible shoots I identified in the early *Rime*, via Dante's first express mention of Statius in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* II.VI.7 and first explicit use of the *Thebaid* in *Convivio* III and IV, to Dante's sophisticated exploitation of Statian epic as part of his bid for *auctoritas* in the *Egloge*. Dante's inclusion of Statius among the *regulati poetae* with Vergil, Ovid *Metamorfoseos*, and Lucan, and Dante's almost formulaic proposal that they be used as a model for *supprema constructio* (*DVE* II.VI.7) support my conclusion that Dante first encountered excerpts of Statian epic in a *florilegium*. Dante's first direct use of Statian epic, when he translates two exempla from the *Thebaid* in *Convivio* III, also supports this conclusion. Yet Dante's substitution in the first of these exempla of one Italian verb with another, less direct, translation of Statius's Latin (*Convivio* III.VIII.10) suggests Dante's growing confidence with classical poetry and his striving already for *aemulatio* not *imitatio* of his predecessors. Dante's initial familiarity with these Statian extracts seems to have sparked Dante's interest sufficiently that during his exile he began to read both the *Thebaid* and the unfinished *Achilleid* in entirety.

I established that by the time Dante wrote *Convivio* IV.XXV, he had begun to engage with Statian epic on a sustained and considered basis but had probably only read *Thebaid* I at this stage. Dante's decision to utilise the *Thebaid* to exemplify *vergogna*, one of the virtues required in *adolescenza*, and his calling Statius 'lo dolce poeta' and the *Thebaid* 'la Tebana Istoria' (IV.XXV.6), demonstrate Dante's obvious esteem for Statian epic and his belief in its historical status. He was clearly already aware of the contrast between the *Thebaid*'s virtuous women and the scarcity of such virtue among their male counterparts, and of the *Thebaid*'s prevailing themes of *nefas* and injustice. I demonstrated thereby that Dante's utilisation of the *Thebaid* in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and *Convivio* constitutes the beginning of Dante's intense engagement with Statian epic.

This engagement is also apparent in the *opere minori* composed at roughly the same time as the *Commedia*. While certain *Rime* and *Epistole* contain resonances with Statian epic, I observed that Dante does not quote from or mention Statian epic either in *Monarchia* or in those political *Epistole* praising the ideal of Empire. I suggested that this results from Dante's palpable understanding of the *Thebaid*'s horrific themes and its pessimistic, recursive view of history and the dangers of imperial power. The *Egloge* demonstrate a Dante also fully in command of his Statian intertext, but this time he utilises Statius's poetry consciously and skilfully to assert his poetic supremacy to his correspondent Giovanni del Virgilio. Dante's *opere minori* therefore manifest the significance of Statian epic to Dante's ongoing exploration of classical poetry and its methods of reading, and to Dante's own claim to poetic *auctoritas*.

Unsurprisingly, the *Commedia* marks the apex of Dante's engagement with Statian epic. Close textual analysis of both the *Commedia* and Statius's two epics, returning to medieval commentators on these texts to achieve a more 'medieval' understanding of both Statian epic and the *Commedia*, and consideration of the Old French *Roman de Thèbes*, enabled me to appreciate more fully Statian epic's value and significance both for medieval readers more generally and for Dante specifically. This combined approach proved enlightening both when considering Dante's embodiment of the historical poet Statius in his character Stazio, the *Commedia*'s clearest signal of Dante's regard for and engagement with Statian epic, and Statian intertextuality and its significance within the *Commedia* more broadly.

In Chapter III, I demonstrated that Stazio-character is fundamental both to the *Commedia*'s narrative, as an intermediate guide between Virgilio and Beatrice and an embodiment of the purgatorial process, and to Dante's development of a chain of poetic succession from the great classical poets Homer and Vergil, via Statius, to Dante himself, the first Christian *poeta*. Stazio-character's significant role in *Purgatorio* results both from Dante's regard for the historical Statius's poetry and Statius's suitability as a foil for Dante's tragic Virgilio and a *figura Dantis* in his admiration of Vergil. After all, Statius was well-known as an emulator of Vergil; Statius's birth after

Christ made it possible (although in reality unlikely) that Statius heard the Christian message; Statius's poetry was widely regarded as moral in purpose; and the paucity of information regarding the historical Statius meant that there was nothing to contradict Dante's ingenious portrayal of Stazio-character as a repented prodigal and a converted Christian. Juvenal's satirical comments regarding Statius's poverty may well have inspired Dante's attribution of prodigality to Stazio, but it also allowed Dante to twist *Aeneid* III.57 to an exhortation away from both avarice (its original meaning) and prodigality. This enabled Dante to emphasise the temperance of the Golden Age and the *sete* for divine knowledge that are leitmotifs of the Statian canti, as well as classical poetry's moral value.

I argued that while Dante invented Stazio's Christianity, Dante seems to have drawn inspiration for this Christianisation from Vergil's fourth *Eclogue* and its popular Messianic interpretation; an account of the conversion of three pagans upon reading the *Eclogue*; other conversion stories concerning classical authors (e.g. Ovid and Seneca); and Christian resonances contained in certain passages of the *Thebaid*. I suggested that Dante either identified these Christian resonances himself or through manuscript glosses noting them, similar to those in manuscripts that I personally reviewed, most probably those of the *In principio* commentary. I demonstrated that Dante utilises Stazio's Christianisation and the attribution of his conversion to reading Vergil's fourth *Eclogue* in order to praise Vergil; to highlight Virgilio-character's tragic damnation; and to place Stazio as an intermediate guide in *Purgatorio* to explain theological matters that Virgilio cannot. Stazio's account of his poetic inspiration, repented prodigality, and Christian conversion provides an eloquent testimony to Vergil's greatness and reflects the historical Statius's own poetic and rhetorical skill. Yet Dante also uses it to emphasise classical poetry's ultimate failing – its lack of Christian revelation. Since Stazio's poetry was not Christian in inspiration, Dante demonstrates thereby both his *auctoritas* inherited from the great classical poets and his supremacy as the first Christian *poeta*.

In Chapter IV, I offered a detailed scrutiny of Dante's use of Statian epic as a significant intertext *throughout* the *Commedia*, demonstrating its scope, pervasiveness, and varied function in supporting major themes in Dante's poem. I considered Dante's interweaving of elements drawn from Statian epic with other classical, biblical, and contemporary sources, and his own imagination. I explored Dante's utilisation of Statius's Thebes as a model for his hell and a parallel for his divided Italy, encouraged both by the *Thebaid*'s repeated infraction of the boundaries between Tartarus and Thebes and the renowned *efferatezza* of Thebes and its history. I demonstrated that Dante signals the dense Theban intertextuality in Cocytus and intensifies the horrific sense of entrapment and violence Dante creates at hell's heart through beginning *Inferno* XXXII with an invocation explicitly referring to Amphion's enclosure of Thebes. I also established that Dante often turns to Statius's *Thebaid* at particular moments of transition within *Inferno*, reflecting the two poets' shared concern with boundaries.

I explored Dante's use of Statian characters as moral exempla in *Inferno*, consistent with Statius's own wishes for the *Thebaid* and the *accessus* tradition's assertion of Statian epic's moral purpose. I established that Dante first places Statian sinners as physical presences in hell, where he combines them with elements from their depiction in other sources (where relevant) and his own imagination to suit his purposes. I demonstrated how Dante develops these characters such that they become real individuals, palpably trapped by both their historic and ongoing sinfulness. I explored Dante's capitalisation upon ambiguities within Statius's own portrayal of certain characters to emphasise specific paradigms. I showed how characters such as Capaneus particularly captured Dante's imagination, leading him to mention them repeatedly throughout the *Commedia*.

Subsequently, I analysed Dante's utilisation of Statian sinners as less material but no less significant presences in *Inferno* XXVI and XXXII-XXXIII, evidence of Dante's growing confidence in manipulating his Statian intertexts. I discussed Dante's comparison of the divided flame containing Ulysses and Diomedes to the divided pyre of Statius's reciprocal fratricides Polynices and Eteocles, and its significance as an

exemplum of the recurrent fratricidal and civic violence once dividing Thebes and ancient Rome, and now ravaging Dante's Italy. I considered Dante's comparison of Ugolino's cannibalisation of Ruggieri to Tydeus's horrific gnawing on Menalippus's head in *Thebaid* VII-VIII and the violent claustrophobia created in Ugolino's account of his and his progeny's confinement in the tower. Thus, I demonstrated that while Dante does not place Statian sinners in Cocytus, he uses these intense resonances with the *Thebaid*'s *efferatezza* to portray a society that has utterly disintegrated, where brothers fight brothers and citizens fight citizens in a metaphorical cannibalism. Through calling Pisa 'novella Tebe' (*Inferno* XXXIII.89) Dante makes apparent the similarity he sees between this terrible violence and his divided Italy.

I demonstrated that Dante utilises Statian characters as moral exempla in *Purgatorio* too, although to different effect. I considered *Purgatorio* XII, where Statian sinners (the giants and Eriphyle murdered by her son) appear not as *ombre* but rather as images of the prideful downfallen sculpted upon the floor of the terrace of pride. Dante captures these sinners at the fundamental moment of their story, distilling their crime and its punishment into a powerful illustration of divine justice. Balanced with exempla from Scripture and Dante's other classical intertexts, these scenes demonstrate the ongoing and pervasive sin of pride. I explored Dante's use of the catalogue of virtuous Statian women Virgilio-character provides for Stazio-character in *Purgatorio* XXII.109-14, who demonstrated exemplary *pietas* for their lost menfolk but are forced to lament their loved ones' loss through no fault of their own, to personify the lost virtue of the Golden Age and the lament for the lost Eden. I demonstrated that Dante uses these exempla in asserting his claim to poetic *auctoritas*, reinforcing his status as heir to the classical poets and his superiority as first Christian *poeta*.

Lastly, I considered Dante's continuing to turn to Statian epic at the moment of crossing key boundaries within both the poetic structure of the *Commedia* and the physical realms of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. While Statius shows concern at the transgressive nature of the crossing of such boundaries, as Dante does regarding Ulysses's *folle volo*, Dante's voyage as both poet and pilgrim is divinely-willed and

salvific. I demonstrated that through likening his own poetic voyage to the quest of Jason and the Argonauts for the Golden Fleece, Dante 'corrects' Jason. Despite largely glossing over Jason's shameful seductions in *Paradiso*, Dante reminds us in the cantica's closing lines of Jason's sin, and demonstrates that Dante is a new and improved Jason through his divine grace, Christian revelation, and pursuit of virtue. Indeed, Dante's quest is not just for the poetic laurel he refers to in *Paradiso* and the *Egloge* and in relation to which he draws upon the *Achilleid*, but the eternal crown of salvation, to which he also hopes to guide his worthy readers.

Accordingly, I demonstrated that Statian epic was far more important narratively, poetically, morally, allegorically, and politically to Dante than has been acknowledged to date. While I have established that Dante's Statius was not just a discovery of the *Commedia*, he is of fundamental importance to Dante's *magnum opus*. By the time of writing his masterwork, Dante truly had read Statius's two epics 'tutta quanta' and understood them with all their deliberate ambiguities and political and moral implications. Unfortunately, due to limitations of length and time, I was only able to focus on key moments of Statian intertextuality and their implications in this thesis. More work needs to be done, for example, on Dante's use of Statian epic in the *Commedia* within comparisons such as that in *Purgatorio* XVIII, when Dante uses the image of the Theban bacchants to model the motion of the *accidiosi*, and on Dante's use of Statian vocabulary and/or syntax at particular moments in the *Commedia* to display his erudition, as he does in the *Egloge*.

My research has also demonstrated the value of turning to the medieval commentators both on Statius and on Dante to gain an understanding of the texts that is closer to medieval sensibilities. It may well be that this approach could be useful in examining the *Commedia*'s intertextuality with other classical authors, as Italia has done vis-à-vis Vergil (2012). I also believe that the possibility that Dante was familiar with and partially inspired by the *romans d'antiquité* deserves further exploration. After all, the search for such intertextuality is vital if we wish to understand Dante's intellectual formation.

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− fol. 1v 12 line summary of the *Thebaid* beginning 'Associat profugum'
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- fols 63^r-84^v *Achilleid* in five books with marginal and interlinear gloss.

Padua, Biblioteca del Seminario Vescovile, MS No. 41.* 14th century, likely written in Verona. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
- fols 1^v-2^r *Accessus* to the *Thebaid* beginning 'Autor iste Stacius Tolosensis'

- fol. 2ᵛ 12 line summary of the *Thebaid* beginning 'Versus super omnes duodecim libros huius uoluminis. Soluitur in primo'
- fol. 2ᵛ 8 line preface to *Thebaid* I
- fols 3ʳ-152ʳ (old 1ʳ-150ʳ) *Thebaid* with marginal and interlinear gloss. Books II-VI and VIII-XII prefaced by respective *argumenta antiqua*. Also contains marginal *argumenta*, possibly taken from Lactantius.

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS lat. 3012. 12ᵗʰ-13ᵗʰ century, written in France. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
- fols 60ᵛ-64ʳ Pseudo-Fulgentius, *Super Thebaidem*.

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS lat. 7517. Late 12ᵗʰ century, written in Italy. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
- fols 33ᵛ-54ᵛ *Florilegium prosodiacum cum distinctionibus*. Extracts from the *Thebaid* at fols 51ᵛ-52ʳ.

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS lat. 8040. 11ᵗʰ century, written in France. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis
- fols 137ʳ-153ʳ *Achilleid* with notes from commentary originally thought to be by Lactantius Placidus.

Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, MS C 67-II. 12th century, written in Italy. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
- fols 93ʳ-101ᵛ *Florilegium prosodiacum cum distinctionibus*. Extracts from the *Thebaid* at fol. 111ʳ⁻ᵛ.

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Barb. lat. 106.* 13ᵗʰ century, written in France. In Italy by 1464. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
- fols 1ʳ-102ᵛ *Thebaid* with marginal and interlinear gloss. Books II-IV, IX, and XI-XII prefaced by respective *argumenta antiqua*. Books II-IV have additional marginal summaries.

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Chigi H.VI.209. 13ᵗʰ and 15ᵗʰ century, written by a French hand and repaired by 15ᵗʰ century Italian hand. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
- fol. 1ʳ *Accessus* to the *Thebaid* beginning 'In ipsius libri principio'
- fols 1ʳ-89ᵛ *Thebaid* (incomplete) with marginal and interlinear gloss. Books II-V, VII-X, and XII prefaced by respective *argumenta antiqua*.

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Chigi H.VI.210.* Early 15ᵗʰ century, written in Italy. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
- fol. 1ʳ 12 line summary of the *Thebaid*, beginning 'Associat profugum'
- fols 1ʳ-132ᵛ *Thebaid* with light marginal and interlinear gloss. Books II-V and VII-XII prefaced by respective *argumenta antiqua*
- fol. 132ᵛ *Accessus* to the *Thebaid* beginning 'Dicitur Statius fuisse temporibus Vespasiani'
- fol. 132ᵛ Preface to the *Thebaid* regarding Oedipus's name
- fol. 132ᵛ Note regarding Oedipus.

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Chigi H.VIII.273.* 14ᵗʰ century, written in Italy. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
- fols 1ʳ-153ᵛ *Thebaid* beginning at *Thebaid* I.45 with light marginal and interlinear gloss. Books II-V and VII-XII prefaced by respective *argumenta antiqua*
- fol. 153ᵛ *Accessus* to the *Thebaid* beginning 'Dicitur Statius fuisse temporibus Vespasiani'
- fol. 153ᵛ Preface to the *Thebaid* regarding Oedipus's name

– fol. 153ᵛ Note regarding Oedipus.

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Ottob. lat. 1354. 11th century, written in Italy. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
– fols 71ʳ-84ᵛ *Florilegium prosodiacum cum distinctionibus*. Extracts from the *Thebaid* at fols 82ᵛ-83ʳ.

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Ottob. lat. 1977.* 12ᵗʰ-13ᵗʰ century, likely written in France. Includes the following text relevant to this thesis:
– fols 1ʳ-105ᵛ *Thebaid* (incomplete) with marginal and light interlinear gloss drawn from *In principio* commentary. Books II-V and VII-X prefaced by respective *argumenta antiqua*.

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Pal. lat. 1690.* 14ᵗʰ century, written in Italy. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
– fol. 1ʳ 12 line summary of the *Thebaid*, beginning 'Associat profugum', but appears as preface to first book
– fols 1ʳ-146ᵛ *Thebaid* with marginal and interlinear gloss. Books II-XII prefaced by respective *argumenta antiqua*.

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Pal. lat. 1694.* 10ᵗʰ century, written in north-central Italy. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
– fol. 1ʳ *Accessus* to the *Thebaid* beginning 'Queritur quo tempore'
– fols 1ʳ-70ʳ Lactantius Placidus's commentary to the *Thebaid*
– fols 70r-72ᵛ Commentary on the *Achilleid* (originally thought to be by Lactantius Placidus).

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Pal. lat. 1717. 13ᵗʰ century, likely written in Germany. Includes the following text relevant to this thesis:
– fol. 47ᵛ-144ᵛ *Thebaid*, with two marginal notes. Books II-V prefaced by respective *argumenta antiqua*.

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. lat. 1375.* 13ᵗʰ and 15ᵗʰ century, written in France. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
– fols 1ʳ-7ʳ Laurentius Campanus's compendium to the *Thebaid* (15ᵗʰ century)
– fol. 7ʳ⁻ᵛ 12 line summary of the *Thebaid* beginning 'Epythedium super libris duodecim Statii Papinii *Tebaydos*. [A]ssociat profugum'
– fol. 7ᵛ Short note on Statius's life
– fol. 8ʳ Laurentius Campanus's compendium of the *Thebaid* (15ᵗʰ century)
– fol. 8ᵛ Laurentius Campanus's summary to *Thebaid* I (15ᵗʰ century)
– fol. 8ᵛ Short summary of *Thebaid* I chapter I and first line of 'soluitur in primo' preface
– fols 9ʳ-139ʳ *Thebaid* with marginal and interlinear gloss.
– fol. 139ᵛ A dating of Statius (15ᵗʰ century)
– fols 140ʳ-141ʳ *Accessus* to the *Thebaid* beginning 'In principio cuiuslibet auctoris' (15ᵗʰ century).

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. lat. 1556.* 13ᵗʰ century, possibly of Flemish origin. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
– fol. 56ʳ Mythological preface to the *Achilleid*
– fols 56ʳ-74ᵛ *Achilleid* in five books, with interlinear and marginal gloss
– fol. 74ᵛ *Accessus* to the *Achilleid* beginning 'Actor iste Stacius de Tolosa'
– fol. 74ᵛ *Accessus* to the *Achilleid* beginning 'In principio huius libri'
– fol. 75ʳᵇ *Accessus*/commentary to *Achilleid* beginning 'Incipit materia Stacii *Achilleidos*'

- fol. 75rb *Accessus* to the *Achilleid* beginning 'In principio huius auctoris'
- fol. 75rb Commentary to the *Achilleid* (incomplete).

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. lat. 1562.* 13th century, possibly written at St Gallen. Includes the following text relevant to this thesis:
- fols 34^r-57^r 'Prouerbia' including 'Prouerbia Stacii' (fols 52^v-53^r), which are extracts from the *Thebaid*.

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. lat. 1713.* 13th century, written in Italy. Includes the following text relevant to this thesis:
- fols 1^r-164^r *Thebaid* with marginal and sparse interlinear gloss.

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Rossi 536.* 14th century, written in Italy. Includes the following text relevant to this thesis:
- fols 1^r-60^v *Thebaid* (incomplete) with some marginal and interlinear gloss. On fols 13^v-14^v appear the *argumenta antiqua* for *Thebaid* II-VII.

Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 1616. 13th century, written in France. Includes the following text relevant to this thesis:
- fols 1^r-98^v *Thebaid* with sparse marginal and interlinear gloss. Books II-V and VII prefaced by respective *argumenta antiqua*.

Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 3278.* 13th century, written in Italy. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
- fols 1^r-101^r *Thebaid* (incomplete) with marginal and interlinear gloss. Books II and VII-XII prefaced by respective *argumenta antiqua*
- fol.101^r 12 line summary of the *Thebaid* beginning 'Associat profugum'
- fol.101^v *Planctus Oedipi*.

Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 3279.* *c.*1470-1471, autograph. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
- fols 1^r-2^r Pomponio Leto's *Vita Statii*
- fol. 2^{r-v} Epitaph of Statius
- fol. 2^v Genealogical preface to the *Thebaid*
- fol. 2^v Mythological preface to the *Thebaid*
- fols 3^r-198^v *Thebaid* with commentary of Pomponio Leto.

Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 3280.* 12th century, written by two French hands, and corrected by one early 14th century Italian hand. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
- fols 1^r-103^r *Thebaid* with marginal and interlinear gloss. Books II and III prefaced by respective *argumenta antiqua*
- fol.103^r *Accessus* to the *Thebaid* beginning 'Stacii Papilii Sur. *Thebaidos* liber incipit'
- fol.103^r Note to *Thebaid* I.720
- fol.103^v *Accessus* to the *Thebaid* beginning 'Sicut supradictum est, titulus talis'
- fol.103^v Commentary on the *Thebaid* (incomplete).

Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 11472.* 12th century, written in France. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
- fols 1^r-103^r *Thebaid* with sparse marginal and interlinear gloss. Book III prefaced by its *argumentum antiquum*
- fol.103^r 12 line summary of the *Thebaid*, beginning 'Incipit Prologi Librorum. Adsociat profugum'.

Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 14740.* 14th century, likely written in Italy. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
- fols 26[r-v] Fragment containing *Achilleid* I.566-625.
- fols 27[r-v] Fragment containing *Achilleid* II.126-67.

Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, MS Z. L. 497 (coll. 1811). 11th century, written in Italy. Includes the following text relevant to this thesis:
- fols 19[ra]-58[vb] Florilegium containing classical extracts. Extracts from Statius *passim*.

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- fol. 2[r] 12 line *argumentum* to book II, beginning 'At Maia'
- fol. 2[r] Second line of the *Associat* 12 line summary of the *Thebaid*
- fols 2[r]-102[v] *Thebaid* with thin interlinear and marginal notes.

Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, MS Rh. 53. 12th century, written in France. Paginated in upper right corner by antique hand. Includes the following texts relevant to this thesis:
- fols 1[a]-95[b] *Thebaid*, with some interlinear gloss. Books II-V and VII-XII prefaced by respective *argumenta antiqua*
- fol. 96 Fragment of *accessus* beginning 'Incipiendi autoribus'
- fol. 96[a] *Accessus* to the *Thebaid* beginning 'Queritur quo tempore'
- fol. 96[a] *Accessus* to the *Thebaid* beginning 'Tria primiter inquiruntur'
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