WORDS THAT MOVE: A TYPOLOGICAL READING OF THE 26th CANTOS OF DANTE'S *DIVINE COMEDY*

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Abstract

This paper argues that the Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri pivots between its three parts by an internal typology modeled on the exegetical hermeneutic developed by Christian theologians, which interpreted episodes and persons from the Old Testament as predictive or prefigurative "types" to relevant episodes and persons ("antitypes") from the New Testament. If understood as a typological text, it can be demonstrated how Dante's poem uses numerically corresponding cantos in the three canticas of the Comedy to call readers' attention to certain links that bind together each tripartite group of cantos into what I call typological units: microcosmic mythoi contained within and in service of the macrocosmic mythos of the Comedy as a whole. To illustrate this thesis, the present study will offer a typological reading of the 26th cantos, arguing that this particular typological unit is linked by three figures: (1) Ulysses in Inferno 26, the type; (2) Guido Guinizelli in Purgatorio26, the metatype; and (3) Adam in Paradiso26, the antitype. This study will develop the proposition that Dante constructs a mythos in this particular typological unit that comments on the role that rhetoric plays in the mortal lives and afterlives of human beings.

Subject Terms/Keywords: DANTE Alighieri, 1265-1321; TYPOLOGY; RHETORIC; HELL in literature; PURGATORY in literature; HEAVEN in literature; ULYSSES (Greek Mythology); GUIDO Guinizzelli; ADAM (Biblical character)

Richard Kay argues, like many Dante scholars, that the cantos of any one of the three canticas of the *Divine Comedy* bear striking correspondences with "companion cantos" in the other two canticas. Heproposes that this schema is intentional, and that Dante's systematizing of the *Comedy* invites readers to closely compare parallel cantos for significant patterns (Kay 21). Though I dissent from the particular correlative scheme determined by Kay,[i] the present study is nonetheless predicated on his general postulation that Dante meticulously crafted the three parts of his poem with a symmetry that calls readers to seek certain and thematically significant links between numerically corresponding cantos. The dialectic between these companion cantos serves to create what I shall call *typological units*: microcosmic mythoi contained within and in service of the macrocosmic mythos of the *Comedy*. These typological units unfold *horizontally* as tripartite groups of cantos, by which I mean they communicate directly with each other from one canto to its numerical correspondent in the succeeding cantica.[ii]This study will argue that such a reading is the most effective means by which to fully appreciate and understand these typological units as complete and sealed mythoi distinct from, yet still complementary to, the core vision the *Comedy* seeks to realize.

One of the timeless achievements of the *Comedy as* a symbolic narrative is how readily it lends itself to manifold modes of interpretation, Richard Kay's among them. Verily, Dante himself insists in a letter to his patron Can Grande della Scala[iii] that his poem offers four levels of meaning modeled after the four interpretive senses of Scripture recognized by patristic exegetes of the early Church: literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical (Hawkins 126). The present study will now recommend an implied fifth. In applying Kay's theory regarding correspondences between companion cantos, it can be seen that the *Comedy* pivots from cantica to cantica by an internal typology. Much like the hermeneutic used by Christian theologians and biblical exegetes of the Middle Ages, Dante's typology connects disparate events and personages from his poem's three canticas in the same manner that medieval Christian luminaries saw episodes and persons from the Old Testament as predictive or prefigurative "types" to relevant episodes and persons ("antitypes") from the New Testament. Both hermeneutical typologies, that of Dante's and the theological approach upon which his is modeled, are grounded in Christian eschatology, and thus consequently approach every historical occurrence with the same concern: What role does this event play in relation to the Incarnation and the Day of Judgment *as prescribed by God*? The typological imagination, then, is a worldview that tracks the significant moments of divine agency in the human realm that move the world toward the culmination of its history.

One can see how the poet of the *Comedy*, an exile longing for the balm of justice, would find such a worldview appealing and, thus, integral to the structure and conscience of his poem. Renée Trilling, synthesizing the scholarship of Auerbach, Daniélou, and Emmerson on the doctrine of typology, offers some illuminative insights on the significance of constructing history typologically that are instructive for reading Dante's poem through the paradigm this essay recommends. Present time in the typological imagination is a perpetual state of liminality, she argues, bracketed by what Auberbach calls "*figurae*" of the past that direct the momentum of history toward some "fulfillment" to occur in the future. History, as understood through a typological hermeneutic, points—is always pointing—"toward a single teleological fulfillment that has yet to be realized" (Trilling 85). To the subscriber of this worldview, as Mazzotta puts it, "history has come to a closure, but we still wait for the end; the sense of history has been revealed, but we still see through a glass darkly" (*Dante*7). History for Dante, by Mazzotta's terms, had indeed "come to a closure" twice in the first half of his life: the death of his beloved Beatrice Portinariin 1290 and his banishment from his beloved Florence in 1302. The entirety of Dante's adult life, it could be said, was spent adrift in the *selvaoscura*, the "dark wood" (*Inf.* 1.2),of liminal space. The difference between the historical Dante and Dante the protagonist of the *Comedy* is that the latter Dante, the pilgrim, transcends the liminal space of the dark wood on Earth and finds salvation in the white rose of Heaven, a clear-cut arc of redemption the historical Dante likely never experienced in the decades spent beyond the walls of Florence.

In light of the foregoing discussion, I propose that the historical Dante, in "reading" his biography from the despair of a psychological *selvaoscura*, sought transcendence from the liminal wilderness of heartbreak and exile by "re-writing" the story of his life in the pages of the *Comedy* so as to calibrate it with the rhythms of the Christian mythos, where God's grace (caritas) proactively moves those who love him and his Creation toward salvation. If Dante's poem grants him the optics of consciousness needed to see his life *mythically*—that is to say, a way of seeing, sensing, arranging, and interpreting experience; a hermeneutic—then Dante's writing of the *Comedy* can be understood as an act of *mythopoesis*, as Slochower defines this term and as Campbell applies it in his *Creative Mythology*, in which the eschatological vision of the Christian mythos is reappropriated by Dante in his poem so that he can re-vision his own biography to "move" himself beyond the *selvaoscura*. I subscribe to Auerbach's characterization of how Dante viewed his relationship to his reader, which he sees as one of a prophet reporting the truth to a disciple. The *Comedy*, then, is not just a new myth of which Dante avails himself—it is the mirror of the pilgrim's journey. The poem invites its readers to

view their own lives mythically, to recognize typological currents in their own biographies similar to those experienced by Dante the pilgrim and found in the pages of Scripture.

What I would like to propose now is that Dante uses numerically corresponding cantos in the three canticas of the *Comedy* to call readers' attention to the relationship between what I have earlier described as typological units. Each unit is linked by three figures: (1) a type, (2) a meta type, and (3) an antitype. I adopt Broomall's definitions for the first and third figures (533), but the second figure is my own term and should be understood as constituent only to Dante's typology. The initial *type* is found only in the cantos of the *Inferno*, and is a "shadow" of a truth to be developed in the *Purgatorio* and realized in the *Paradiso*, whose symbolic qualities predict or prefigure the figures that succeed it. The *metatype* is found in cantos from the *Purgatorio*, and is an interstitial figure caught in the process of a metamorphosing, a "becoming" of some truth, and should be understood as liminal, transitional, and/or dynamic. The *antitype* is found solely in the cantos of the *Paradiso*, and is the "full embodiment" of a truth, the fulfillment of a historical process that completes the teleology of the typological unit, which as a triadic group tracks the revealing of a truth. The links established within these tripartite units do not tell precise narratives per se, but gather a mythos around themselves from their internal interplay of symbols, images, and allusions, and so spiral in the imagination of the discerning reader as small galaxies within the grand universe of the *Comedy*.

To illustrate my argument, the remainder of this study will offer a horizontal reading of the twenty-sixth cantos of each cantica to highlight some of the links that tether this typological unit together. The mythos of this unit gathers around the figures of three characters: Ulysses in *Inferno* 26, the type; Guido Guinizzelli in *Purgatorio*26, the meta type; and Adam in *Paradiso* 26, the antitype. I hold that these three characters are not the only figures of note in their respective cantos; only that their connective role as figures in the typological sequence fixes them as the center of the mythological matrix each canto constellates around itself. It will do for now to say that the mythos of the typological unit of the twenty-sixth cantos concerns itself with a truth regarding the powers and limitations of language in the lives and afterlives of human beings.

Words that Doom: Ulysses as Type

In *Inferno* 26, Virgil and Dante have reached the Eighth Bolgia of the Eighth Circle where the counselors of fraud are punished. Here, Dante encounters the shade of Ulysses, hidden by an impenetrable flame that sways as if it were a "*lingua*" (89), a tongue, or, more significantly as a pun, like language. Virgil insists if Dante wishes Ulysses to speak with them, the pilgrim must "refrain from talking" (72), and permit the Latin poet to converse with the "ancient flame" (85) of Ulysses in the legendary mariner's native Greek. But even before this episode unfolds, Dante makes a striking admission to the reader about how affected he is as Dante the poet in the present tense by his recollection of his encounter with Ulysses as Dante the pilgrim:

> It grieved me then and now grieves me again
> when I direct my mind to what I saw;
> and more than usual, I curb my talent,
> that it not run where virtue does not guide;
> so that, if my kind star or something better
> has given me that gift, I not abuse it. (*Inf.* 26.19-24)

Dante's address to the reader here is a useful key to understanding Ulysses as a prefigurative type to Guido and Adam in the second and third canticas, but it is only fully appreciated upon a second orbit after a first pass through the Ulysses episode, and so we will return to it shortly.

Oddly enough, determining the exact sin for which Ulysses is punished in the *Inferno* has proven a contentious issue from the beginnings of earnest Dante scholarship. During one chapter in the saga of this disputation, Anna Hatcherargued, quite polemically, that there is no evidence in

Ulysses' crimes as enumerated by Virgil (*Inf.* 26.58-63) that qualifies him as a fraudulent counselor. In fact, she believes "fraudulent counsel," the designation accepted by most scholars for this ditch in the Eighth Circle, to be a "preposterous misnomer," and that if Ulysses is guilty of anything in the characterization Dante gives him, it is his general "abuse of extraordinary talent" (Hatcher 116); for his characteristic foxiness and trickery. David Thompson contends, however, and in direct response to Hatcher, that linguistic details of lines 58 through 63 and careful consideration of Dante's classical and medieval sources for the Trojan War cycles account for why Dante placed Ulysses among the fraudulent counselors for the three transgressions mentioned by Virgil(151). Picking up on James G. Truscott's point that "False counsel means simply *advice to use false promise*, and nothing else" (61), Thompson recommends understanding "*consigliofrodolente*" (*Inf.*27.116), Dante's own description of the Eight Bolgia's sin, to mean "counsel to use fraud" or "counsel in the use of fraud" (150).[iv]

The philological details presented here might seem distractingly pedantic, but I take the time to survey this chapter of the debate regarding Ulysses' sin because it points toward the motif that links this typological unit together: the role of rhetoric in moving souls toward or away from God's grace. Regardless of what side one takes in the above dispute, the discussion itself has yielded a rich catalog of ways in which the character of Ulysses, both in his classical depictions and the Dantean inventions, exploits his rhetorical prowess. As the prefigurative type, Ulysses introduces the theme of language as a supremely efficacious means of both knowing and communicating. Ulysses is in Hell because he fraudulently used language to move people toward a variety of tragic ends from which he almost always profited in some way. But Mazzotta, whose analysis of *Inferno* 26 is superlative, suggests that Ulysses' primary deception, and consequently the one that directly delivers him to Hell, is a self-deception ("Poetics" 44): he believes he can actually give himself "experience of that which lies beyond / the sun" (*Inf.* 26.116-117), and so falsely believes his "*follevolo*" (125), the "mad flight" past the Pillars of Hercules, can take him beyond the boundaries of human knowledge.

Mazzotta argues that Dante's invention of Ulysses' voyage to Mount Purgatory is cognition of the role that rhetoric plays in the foundation of human thought as well as civilization. From Troy to Rome to Florence, the great civic torches of the West "constitute the geography, the space of history within which rhetoric acts out its claims to be a creative discipline that fashions history, a veritable tool to manipulate and order historical consciousness" ("Poetics" 37). Language, however, the wet clay in the hands of rhetoric, is an "inherently unstable and murky instrument," Mazzotta adds ("Poetics" 37); an instability that gives it the quality of being deceptive. Fraud, then, is more than just the chief sin of Ulysses, as Mazzotto notes, but "the very condition of discourse" ("Poetics" 38). Rhetoric can bring one closer to a knowing of something, but can never be that which wants to be known. Dante is showing the difference between words and the Word, Christ incarnate. Rhetoric, as persuasive language, has the capacity to move others to action. It is of paramount importance to Dante, then, to what actions one's rhetoric moves others and oneself.

It is appropriate now to return to Dante's preamble to the Ulysses episode in which he informs the reader that he must "curb [his] talent" so as not to "abuse" his gift. The gift, of course, is that of rhetoric; language that moves others to action, as well as oneself. Dante, in reflecting on the Ulysses episode, is reminded that he too, like the hero of the *Odyssey*, could misuse his gift of eloquence as he tells the story of the *Comedy*. He has, after all, cast himself as "both hero and poet-pilgrim" in his poem (Allums 163), which is a conscious appropriation of the Christian mythos that, to some medieval thinkers, straddles the line of sacrilege. Who is Dante, a poet, to justify God's ways to men and women? Dante in his address to the reader in *Inferno* 26, 19-24, is checking himself as he approaches the episode of Ulysses, for, as Larry Allums notes, Dante "regards Ulysses with the fascination of recognizing a spiritual kinship with a fellow navigator of uncharted waters of the intellect and imagination" (172). There is the danger of shipwreck here for Dante. The difference between the two men, however, is that Ulysses chose not to keep within the limits of his powers and

so drowned when he rashly dared to exceed them, while Dante is careful—here and elsewhere in the *Comedy*–to do what is best for his audience within the borders allotted to him by nature.

Words that Redeem: Guido Guinizzelli as Metatype

In *Purgatorio*26, Dante and Virgil have reached the Seventh Terrance where the Lustful are purged of their sin by burning in a wall of flame. But whereas Ulysses and Diomedes wandered about the Eighth Bolgiahidden within their own flame, separate from the other shades, the souls of the Seventh Terrace not only dwell in the same purificatory fire as a group, but are visible to Dante through its blaze. From within this wall of fire comes the poet Guido Guinizzelli to briefly speak with Dante when he discovers the pilgrim casts a shadow, unlike any other shade on Mount Purgatory. The conversation that ensues, which has the feel of a reunion between long lost brothers, reveals Guido as the metatype, the middle figure, in the typological unit of the twenty-sixth cantos.

Taking a lead from one of Jeffrey Schnapp's general points about the theme of reunion in the *Purgatorio*(198), Ulysses, among other shades Dante encounters in Hell, signifies how the art of rhetoric "died" by becoming implicated in crimes against humanity, especially the trinity of sins listed by Virgil in *Inferno* 26, 58-63. Rhetoric, however, especially as it is used in poetry, is "reborn" on the slopes of Purgatory by being made to serve "the restoration of values such as beauty, truth, morality, and community" (Schnapp 199). In this context, Guido stands as a fitting metatype for Ulysses' type. A Bolognese poet whom Dante hails as the father of the new style, Guinizzelli is exalted as a seminal master of verse in the world of the *Comedy* for introducing a philosophical and introspective approach to love poetry by addressing lyrical tributes to a beloved woman whom, according to Guido, was angelic and lovely, and thus worthy of "worship," because of her likeness to the divine (Barolini 21). To Dante, Guido's lyrics helped reveal the presence of God in the material world. Whereas Ulysses' rhetoric divided society during his life time, Guido's poetry made efforts to rebuild and unify it during his.

Though Guido's oeuvre and reputation as the progenitor of the *Dolce Stil Novo* school offer Dante ample biographical materials to use as testament of the elder poet's virtue, Dante prefers rather to demonstrate Guido's quality by a subtle act of humility performed on the Seventh Terrace of Purgatory. When Dante, upon learning Guinizzelli's identity, gleefully confesses to Guido that he considers himself to be a disciple of the Bolognese poet, Guido, addressing Dante as "*frate*" ("brother") and without any concern for savoring the praise Dante lavishes on him, merely directs Dante's attention to another shade of the Seventh Terrace: the Provençal poet Arnaut Daniel, whom Guinizzelli calls "a better / artisan of the mother tongue" (*Purg.* 26.116-117). Guido, now only one gate away from salvation in Paradise after the long and arduous climb up Mount Purgatory, is only concerned with his words moving Dante towards truth, which is why he guides the pilgrim to Arnaut, the "*migliorfabbro*" (117).His Purgatorial habit of humility, then, is at its root inspired by a spirit of charity. As part of this deferential act, Guido takes a moment to vehemently denounce the "*stolti*" (*Purg.* 26. 119) who do not recognize Arnaut's talent, the fools, as Prue Shaw points out, "who base their literary judgment on '*voce*' [reputation] rather than '*vero*' [truth, reality]" (616). Guido's reproof here suggests that fame on Earth is often arbitrarily and, thus, injudiciously determined by a wrongheaded public. True fame according to Guido, understood here as a cherished and celebrated reputation in the mind of the public, should be commensurate with the degree to which that person has directed others toward truth—a veritable reciprocation of God's caritas.

Shaw points out that Guido's censure of the *stolti* in line 119 echoes that of Proverbs 28:26 from the Vulgate,[v] giving biblical validation to Guido's "truth prevails" assertion in line 128. But she also suggests that line 126 alludes to an episode in the Apocryphal Ezra III (Shaw 617). It tells the story of how three bodyguards of King Darius devise a competition to see who can produce the wisest saying. The third bodyguard wins the oratory contest with the improvised maxim, "Women are

strongest, but above all things, truth prevails."[vi] For Shaw, Dante is consciously summoning this scene from Ezra III in *Purgatorio*26to reinforce the idea that victory as connected with skill in the use of language, with wisdom, and with truth is thematically fundamental to this canto (Shaw 618), and consequently central to the mythos of the typological unit for which it furnishes a metatype: Guido. The most accomplished speaker, Arnaut, *should* "win" because his words are the wisest, and the wisest words will always proclaim that truth wins (Shaw 618). By pointing Dante to Arnaut, Guido is baldly implying that the nature of divine love, the primary and characteristic trope of the *Dolce Stil Novo*, is the truth that should prevail in any competition, and generally in any human act. Poetry, as a stylized and symbolic form of rhetoric, is shown in this canto to be a way of moving souls toward the love of God and thus salvation.

In Hell, Dante observed Ulysses tortured by fire for his cardinal sin, consumed by a flame that simulates the lashing of a tongue. Indeed, this *contrapasso* underscores the truth that it was Ulysses' own tongue that in the end had become his lone tormentor, and drove him from the ambit of God's love. But the fire in which Guido and Arnaut burn in Purgatory is not punitive but redemptive, not tormenting but salvific. Both poets take a moment to pause from the process of purification, but only briefly, to share their "truth" with Dante in a gesture that embodies the purest form of the love their pre-Purgatory poetry celebrated and sought to promote. When he parts from Dante, Guido asks the pilgrim to say a Paternoster for him when he is escorted to Paradise and then returns to the fire as "a fish, through water, plunges toward the bottom" (*Purg.* 26.135): the fire becomes water in this simile, and the "element of punishment becomes the element of baptism and renewal" (Shaw 620). In turn Arnaut, who like Guido famously says nothing of his profession or achievement to Dante, asks only that the pilgrim remember his pain and then returns eagerly to "the fire that refines" (*Purg.* 26. 148). The hubris and fraudulent counsel embodied in Ulysses' type from *Inferno*26 finds its metatype in *Purgatorio*26 in the humility and benevolent counsel of Guido.

Words that Illumine: Adam as Antitype

Before discussing the tertiary and final canto of this typological unit, it will do well here to observe a recurring motif within the two cantos already discussed: that of native and foreign tongues. In *Inferno* 26 Ulysses spoke to Virgil in Greek, a language Dante did not know; in *Purgatorio*26 Dante spoke to Guinizzelli in his mother tongue of Tuscan, but also spoke to Arnaut Daniel in Provençal (Occitan); the *Aeneid* and Jerome's Vulgate, arguably the two most influential texts for the *Comedy*, were written in Latin. Pausing for a moment to recall Mazzotta's insights on the instability of language in general and the power words have to move people toward or away from truth—which for Dante is God—it should become clear that the twenty-sixth cantos, thus far in the *Comedy*, have been developing a dialogue about the relationship between the nature of trut hand the role that language plays in manifesting that truth. Thus, as we arrive at *Paradiso* 26, we should expect to find an antitype to complete this typological unit revealed within a constellation of certain recurring motifs, such as fire, language, and truth.

Paradiso 26, set in the Eighth Heaven of the Fixed Stars, finds a recently blinded Dante arguing under the examination of saints Peter, James, and John that he is worthy of seeing the beatific image of God by providing sufficient definitions for the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love (Jacoff 217). It would suffice to say, as Helen Luke notes, that this oral test requires Dante to articulate all that he has learned on his journey through the afterlife, to "[make] incarnate his vision" (173). Important to note here is that the *physical* passage from Hell to Paradise must be made sensible to Dante's *intellect*, so that his *nature*, represented in this canto by the corporeal faculty of vision, may earn his *intellect* the privilege of knowing God. Dante indeed passes the exam and the eyesight of which he had been deprived (*Par.* 25.138) just before the colloquy with St. John is restored. With the "chaff" (78) newly removed from his eyes, Dante's improved eyesight discerns a fourth light among

those of his three apostolic interlocutors. It is Adam, the "ancient father" (92), who like Ulysses and Guido also appears in the *Comedy* bathed in an intense blaze—only it is not fire, but dazzling light. Ulysses and Guido were consumed by the fires of eternal perdition and redemption-in-progress, respectively. Adam, however, radiates like a star from an *internal* illumination—the light is his own. Like many of the souls in Paradise, he is hardly perceptible to Dante, so bright does the lamp of God's love glow within him.

Dante is "inflamed" (90)—"*ïoardeva*"—with the desire to ask several questions of Adam: the Divine within Dante, symbolized by his inner flame of ardor, wants to better know itself in the reflection of Adam, who happens to be Its origin in Creation. Like other inhabitants of Paradise, Adam is able to understand Dante's mind by some supernatural telepathy: he knows what Dante wants to *say* for he can "see it in the Truthful Mirror / that perfectly reflects all else, while *no* / *thing* can reflect that Mirror perfectly" (emphasis added) (*Par.* 26.106-108). Adam as a permanent resident of Paradise demonstrates in this passage that he knows what Dante, a transient visitor there, cannot fully grasp yet: the futility of language in knowing the "Truthful Mirror," the ineffable mind of God. Adam's response to Dante, which naturally must be conveyed by speech if he is addressing a mortal, is telling:

> "The tongue I spoke was all extinct before
> the men of Nimrod set their minds upon
> the unaccomplishable task; for never
> has anything produced by human reason
> been everlasting—following the heavens,
> men seek new, they shift their predilections.
> That man should speak at all is nature's act,
> but how you speak—in this tongue or in that—
> she leaves to you and to your preference." (*Par.* 26.124-132)

The tongue Adam once spoke in Eden is long extinct, forever hidden to humankind behind the curtain of oblivion, and is ultimately of no consequence, though the *actions* of Adam and Eve impacted all of human history. Whether one speaks the ur-speech of Adam, the gibberish of Nimrod, Greek, Latin, Tuscan, or Provencal matters not; language, like the men and women who use it, are "as the leaves / upon a branch" (137-138): ephemeral and insufficient in knowing God's love. What is lasting, however, what leaves an imprint on the make of Creation, is what one *does*, "how you *speak*," how a person applies their *nature*. Language is a useful instrument in these processes, but it is only just an instrument. Adam is telling Dante that salvation is achieved by action in nature, which must be motivated by love; but it must be done with purpose and intention, which requires an intellect that knows the "face" of benevolence so it may recognize it in deed and desire.

Adam figures as the ideal antitype in Dante's typology for this reason: he is "truth embodied and complete," superseding the "shadow of truth" of Ulysses and the "truth becoming" of Guido. Sin was introduced to the world through Adam and Eve, and that sin expelled them from the Earthly Paradise of Eden; but that original sin did not banish them from the other, permanent Paradise: God's grace. This is a gravely important lesson for Dante the Florentine exile, for it means banishment from some place on Earth, just like the languages of people on Earth, is significant only in how that condition plays a role in one's relationship with God. Action and reaction to the unfolding of history, not place or race nor tongue or time, determines whether the human soul will inhabit Hell or Heaven.[vii] The paths to Paradise are infinite, but there is only one key to unlock its gates: love.

Words that Move: A Coda

It may do well to conclude this study by calling attention to a point Christopher Ryan makes in his discussion of Dante's theology. Ryan observes that the *Comedy* does not precisely conclude

with an image of the Trinity, but in the image of a man, Christ, discerned within one of the three circles that comprise the beatific vision of *Paradiso*33. Fixated on the face of the man, Dante strains to understand how the circle and the image can be united, how God and man can form a unity. This is an apt image with which to end the *Comedy*, suggests Ryan, for "it may be said that the central quest of Dante's understanding in the poem […] was to grasp how the divine is present in the human"(136). Ryan's thesis, though central to the *Comedy* in general, is fundamental to the mythos of the typological unit of the twenty-sixth cantos. In these cantos, language—in its relation to salvation—is depicted as corruptible in the type of Ulysses, redemptive in the metatype of Guido, and ultimately ineffectual in the antitype of Adam. As a teleological sequence, this typological unit hinges forward by virtue of paradox: language is depicted as instrumental in denying (Ulysses) or achieving (Guido) salvation before it is revealed that language, in and of itself, is essentially meaningless (Adam) in one's fate. What the Adam episode in *Paradiso*26 reveals to be true—the core truth that the twenty-sixth cantos move us toward from the Eighth Bolgia of Hell to the Eighth Sphere of Heaven—is that language is helpful, not essential, in sensing God's presence in all Creation. Words mean nothing unless yoked to actions that give them material significance in the physical cosmos that is, as Dante learns, spun from "the Love that moves the sun and the other stars" (*Par.* 33.145).

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NOTES

[i]Considering the first canto to be introductory to the poem as a whole, Kay aligns the overall parallel structure of the *Comedy* to begin with *Inferno* 2, which would thus correspond to *Purgatorio* 1 and *Paradiso* 1, for these three cantos contain the "preliminaries of the Pilgrim's departure on a new stage of his journey." Among the other cantos he discusses for various kinds of parallels are *Inferno* 6 (and *Purg*. and *Par*. 5); *Inf*. 7 (6); 13 (12); 16 (15); 17 (16); 22 (21); 23 (22); 26 (25); and 30 (29).

[ii] A *vertical* reading by these terms would be more in line with the standard structural chronology of the poem, canto by canto from *Inferno* 1 to *Paradiso*33, whereas a *horizontal* reading would be, for example, from *Inferno* 9 to *Purgatorio* 9 to *Paradiso* 9.

[iii] It is necessary to note that Dante's authorship of this letter has been a hotly contested issue among Dante scholars. Authentic or apocryphal, however, the epistle nonetheless is a percipient (self-)exegesis of the *Comedy*, penned by the hand of an erudite student of the poem, and is thus held to be genuine in this essay as far as the hermeneutical approach it recommends for reading the poem.

[iv] According to the separate studies by Truscott and Thompson, the three sins that Virgil names can all be considered of the same genre and thus justify Dante's choice to locate his perdition in the Eighth Bolgia with the fraudulent counselors. Listed here are explications of

these sins, of which the first two are explained by Truscott and the third by Thompson: (1) for concocting the ruse of the wooden horse, as recounted in many classical sources but chiefly Book II of the *Aeneid*, the sin is counseling the Greeks to use fraud to sack Troy; (2) for luring Achilles into joining the Achaean assault on Troy through a disingenuous gift-offering to his protector, the king of Scyros, as told by Statius in Book I of the unfinished *Achilleid*, the sin is counseling the use of fraud to entice Achilles into pursuing war with Ilium over marriage to Deïdamia, the king's daughter who is pregnant with Achilles' son; (3) for advising the Trojan Antenor to steal the Palladium to hand over to the Greeks, as noted by Servius in his commentary on the *Aeneid* and retold in the medieval text *HistoriadestructionisTroiae* by Guido delleColonne, the sin is counseling Antenor to both commit treason against Priam and use treachery to steal the statue of Athena to give to the Greeks.

[v]*Qui confidit in cordesuostultusest*; *qui autemgraditursapienter*, *ipse salvabitur*. (He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but he that walketh wisely, he shall be saved.)

[vi] The original Vulgate verse is rendered: "*Tertiusautemscripsit: Fortioressuntmilieres, super omniaautemvincitveritas*."

[vii] Though this point could be disputed by making reference to the throngs of virtuous pagans in Limbo who, like Virgil, are excluded from Paradise for being pre-Christian, one could counter this claim by calling attention to the seemingly impossible presence of Trajan and Ripheus in the Sphere of Jupiter in the the Sixth Heaven (*Par.* 20). I concur with Barbara Reynolds that finding the latter two pagans in Paradise shows that Dante had come to an understanding that "Christian truth was not bounded by his understanding" (qtd. in Luke 163), and that there are divine truths that lie outside the scope of human reason.