Conclusion

In the penultimate canto of the *Commedia*, Dante identifies King David as 'the singer who, grieving at his sin, said "*Miserere mei*"'('[il] cantor che per doglia / del fallo disse "*Miserere mei*"'; *Par*. XXXII, 11–12). From the beginning of his poem, Dante similarly presents himself as a sinner turned singer: the very first words of Dante-character, indeed, self-consciously calque (in a conflation of vulgate and vernacular) the same penitential psalm: '*Miserere* di me' (*Inf*. I, 65). While the wrath of Achilles provides the narrative impetus for Homer's *Iliad*, and Virgil sings of Aeneas's exile from Troy and his subsequent founding of Rome, it is Dante's sin and moral failings, then, that orient his own epic narrative.[1] Emerging – at the midpoint of his life – from the dark wood and valley of sin, Dante-character attempts to ascend the delightful hill ('il dilettoso monte'; *Inf*. I, 77) of virtue and holiness. But he fails: his love of the good falls short of its proper duty (tepidity, the genus of sloth); he chooses to remain in great misery rather than to undertake the necessary work to escape it ('ignavia', a species of sloth); and he is consequently assailed by the three beasts and overwhelmed by the she-wolf (the sin of avarice), turning back to the 'dark wood' or 'perilous sea' of sin. It is Dante-character's moral failure, then, that prompts his cry for help and the intercession of Virgil *mediante Beatrice* (*Inf*. II, 49–120), and propels his entire detour through Hell (*Inf*. I, 91) and his subsequent journey through Purgatory and Paradise.

[1] Homer, *Iliad*, with an English translation by A. T. Murray, revised by William F. Wyatt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), I, 1: 'Μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος' [The wrath sing, goddess, of Peleus's son Achilles]; Virgil, *Aeneid*, I, 1–2: 'Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris / Italiam fato profugus Lavinaque venit / litora' [Arms and the man I sing, who first from the coasts of Troy, exiled by fate, came to Italy and Lavine shores]. The first terzina of the *Commedia*, by contrast, highlights the author's sin: 'Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita / mi ritrovai per una selva oscura / ché la diritta via era smarrita' [In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to myself in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost], echoing Isaiah 38:10: 'Eco dixi: In dimidio dierum meorum / vadam ad portas inferi' [I said: in the midpoint of my days I will go to the gates of Hell].

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The consideration of future pain and eternal reward – Peraldus's remedy for a tepid love of God – becomes, in effect, Virgil's remedy for Dante: to show him the desperate cries of the damned, those content in the fire of Purgatory, and the blessed people in heaven (*Inf.* I, 115–20). In the first circle of Hell, Dante-character discovers that even those of impeccable virtue are damned if they lack explicitly Christian faith. Apparently flourishing in moral and intellectual virtue and without the 'pain of sense', the virtuous pagans nonetheless experience the *poena damni*, the perpetual lack of the vision of God. In the other eight circles of Hell, Dante-character discovers that all sinful souls are also punished with the pain of sense, with each punishment ingeniously invented – 'Ahi giustizia di Dio' [Ah, justice of God] (*Inf.* VII, 19) – to fit the gravity of their fault.[2] Dante presents the principles underpinning this division of evil in terms of natural reason. On one level, this suggests, as Kenelm Foster memorably put it, that 'most of the evil we meet with in the *Inferno* is ordinary human wickedness which any man, whatever his faith, could in theory recognize as such'.[3] Moreover, Dante's particular ordering of these evils and his insistence on philosophical moral criteria serve the political extension of his ethics: through his vision of Hell, the poet represents the justice which a Holy Roman Emperor, restored to power, should ideally enact on Earth.

Dante-character's overthrow by the she-wolf had deprived him of the short path up the mountain (*Inf.* II, 118–20). Upon arriving on the shore of Purgatory and returning to the 'lost way' ('la perduta strada'), he feels that his previous journeying had been in vain (*Purg.* I, 118–20). From the perspective of eternity, all that matters is a soul's journey to Paradise, which, for Dante, requires the moral teachings of Christianity. In relation to Dante's ethical theory of 'two ends', the limbo of the virtuous pagans represents – in the afterlife – man's this-worldly felicity; in contrast, Purgatory represents the Christian moral journey to eternal salvation (man's ultimate goal), a moral journey entrusted to the Church. It is in Purgatory, therefore, that we find Dante's distinctively Christian ethics.

As Dante-character's first spoken words in *Purgatorio* make clear, he is going on this journey for his own salvation: 'per tornar altra volta / là

[2] 'Ahi giustizia di Dio! tante chi stipa / nove travaglie e pene quant' io viddi?' [Ah, justice of God! who stuffs in so many strange travails and punishments as I saw?] (*Inf.* VII, 19–20). There is a similar apostrophe in the 'evil-pocket' of the simoniacs: 'O somma sapïenza, quanta è l'arte / che mostri in cielo, in terra e nel mal mondo, e quanto giusto tua virtù comparte' [O highest Wisdom, how great is the art you show in the heavens, on Earth, and in the evil world, and how justly your Power distributes] (*Inf.* XIX, 10–12).

[3] Foster, *The Two Dantes*, p. 1.

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dov'io son, fo io questo vïaggio' [to return another time to where I am do I go on this journey] (*Purg.* II, 91–92). Dante-character appears to undergo and share the sufferings of the penitent sinners through each of the seven terraces. Moreover, the souls whom Dante-character encounters seem chosen so as to aid, first of all, his own individual moral situation and needs.[4] It is in part by addressing Dante's journey through the seven terraces of Purgatory as, first of all, a personally purgative experience that some of the richness of his treatment of the vices emerges. Why is it that, on the first terrace, Dante-character encounters three souls (all born, like Dante, in the thirteenth century) who show pride in human artistry (Oderisi), in political power (Salvani), and in ancestry (Omberto)? This is surely because these are three particular aspects of pride that Dante himself displays, and indeed acknowledges. The three examples of virtue, then, give Dante models of artistry (King David), political power (Trajan), and humility of birth (Mary), which, leading to the greatest excellence, are nonetheless founded upon a person becoming a humble vessel for God's will. Similarly, in considering why Hugh Capet should be important to Dante-character on his salvific journey, rather than simply acting as a mouthpiece for Dante's Imperial and anti-French view of history, the autobiographical dimension of *amor filiorum* [love of children] as an occasion to avarice becomes clear. Furthermore, from this perspective, it becomes apparent that Dante-character's battle against severe exhaustion in his quest for wisdom (*Purg.* XVII, 73–XVIII, 87; and XVIII, 139–XIX, 69) is the second, overlooked drama of the terrace of sloth, framing the penitent souls' physical exertion (XVIII, 88–138).

Dante's status as sinner does not inhibit, but rather enables, his status as preacher. Dante models for the reader a process of spiritual conversion, whether from pride to humility, or from sloth to zeal. Virgil's and Aristotle's pagan moral teaching in Hell seems to derive authority from their own apparently impeccable moral lives, and Cato is similarly presented, on Purgatory's shore, as the quintessential pattern of the cardinal virtues. Yet Dante's Christian moral teaching arguably becomes more authentic precisely because the poet-preacher acknowledges his own personal struggles

[4] In *Paradiso* XXI, Dante-character asks why St Peter Damian (of all the blessed) descended to speak with him. The answer lies in God's mysterious counsel that governs the world (XXI, 55–96). In its specific context, God's 'choice' of St Peter Damian is significant: a rigorous ascetic reformer and flagellant, 'Pietro Peccator' [Peter the Sinner] polemically castigates the materialism of modern clerics ('li moderni pastori'). The dialogue suggests, moreover, that – according to the poem's fiction – God 'chooses' all the souls whom Dante encounters in Paradise and, by inference, the souls he encounters in Hell and Purgatory as well.

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with sin. His appeals to the reader, as Auerbach registered, derive much of their power from this interplay between the personal – the fraternal identification of 'je m'accuse' – and the universal – the implied sense of a common fallen humanity, susceptible to vice and requiring God's grace.[5] Dante would justify his own confessional narrative, as he did Augustine's moral autobiography (*Conv*. I. ii, 14), by its utility to others. Just as Augustine drew on the resources of classical rhetoric in his preaching, so Dante uses his poetic genius to convert his reader, a sinner, from the life of sin to the life of virtue. Indeed, the stated goal of Dante's poetry is nothing less than the eternal salvation of his readers. This service to God underpins the meta-literary sense of Dante-character's first words in Purgatory: that, through writing his poem, he will merit a return to Purgatory.[6]

As Dante intended us to read his poem ethically, it should hardly surprise us that, when we do, we appreciate more fully its literary quality and aesthetic élan. In structural terms, where the *lectura Dantis* and commentary traditions tend to prioritise the formal unit of the canto, I have shown the value of reading the poem through its moral regions. Less important for *Inferno*, where one canto frequently aligns with one moral region or sub-region, it is vital for *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, where moral regions (such as terraces and planetary heavens) become more important, and invariably encompass a series of cantos. For example, in *Inferno*, Dante uses the literary device of chiasmus as the structuring principle of the tenth canto; in contrast, in *Purgatorio*, he employs chiasmus as the structuring principle of the terrace of avarice as a whole, from the confession of Hugh Capet at its centre (*Purg*. XX, 43–96) to the twin conversion narratives and parallel genuflections of its outer frame (XIX and XXI–II).[7] It is only by attending carefully to the precise ethical and poetic effects which the literary structure of chiasmus affords that the full meaning of the episode emerges. Similarly, Dante's choice and ordering of the twelve examples of pride in *Purgatorio* XII become clear when we interpret these three 'quartets' of prideful examples in relation to the three virtuous exempla (*Purg*. X) and the three penitent souls (*Purg*. XI). Many literary details in

[5] Auerbach, *Literary Language*, p. 298.

[6] See Jacopo della Lana, gloss to *Purg*. II, 91: 'io merito di questa poetrìa, che compogno, tanto che la benignità di Dio mi sortirà questo luogo all'obito mio'. See also Codice cassinese, gloss to *Purg*. II, 91: 'Quasi dicat propter compositionem poematis presentis Deus miserebitur mei et liberabor a perpetua dampnatione et revertar huc. hic dicit quod negligens fuit in mundo et tandem in fine suorum dierum opus composuit meritorium.'

[7] For a detailed analysis of Dante's use of chiasmus as a literary device in *Inferno* X, see Corbett, *Dante and Epicurus*, pp. 89–120.

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cantos XVII–XIX of *Purgatorio* are likewise missed if we read them either through the unit of the canto or as part of the 'four doctrinal cantos' (XV–XVIII). Adopting the unit of moral structure, it becomes evident, for example, that the dream of the Siren (XVIII, 139–XIX, 69) represents poetically and symbolically the doctrinal content of Virgil's three lectures (XVII, 73–XVIII, 87). It would be fruitful, in my view, to explore the other terraces of Purgatory and, indeed, all the moral regions of the poem in this way.

Of decisive importance for my own reading of Dante's Purgatory is not just an interpretation through moral structure, and in terms of his own personal ethical journey, but also in light of a reconsideration of his ethical sources. The fact that Dante's guide through Ante-Purgatory and Purgatory's seven terraces is the pagan Virgil, and not Beatrice, has led some scholars to argue that the moral order which Virgil articulates (in *Purg.* XVII) is stated in terms of philosophical principles rather than of divine revelation. In Chapters 3 and 4, I argued that the moral content and form of Purgatory are distinctively Christian, and that Dante turns to the tradition of moral theory and practice witnessed by Peraldus's *De vitiis et virtutibus*, rather than to Aquinas's reforms in Christian moral theology. As I showed in Chapters 5–7, Peraldus's *De vitiis* appears to undergird Dante's poetic treatment in Purgatory, whether in relation to his choice of exempla in the terrace of pride, or his particular treatment of prodigality and indiscreet zeal – the opposing sub-vices of avarice and sloth, respectively. As we have seen, what might otherwise seem like inconsequential details or simply descriptive adjectives in Dante's poetry can take on much broader cultural and spiritual resonances when recontextualised in the penitential and preaching materials from which, at least in part, it emerged. For example, Peraldus's treatise on sloth revealed the origin and significance of Dante's emphasis on tepidity (as the quiddity of sloth) as well as his allusions to many of sloth's sub-vices. This, in turn, led to a reappraisal of the terrace of sloth as a whole. Although I have focused on the terraces of pride, sloth, and avarice, I have no doubt that a detailed comparative reading of Peraldus's and Dante's treatments of envy, anger, gluttony, and lust would reveal further illuminating parallels.

Peraldus's *De vitiis* and Dante's Purgatory invite us to envisage Christian moral life as, first of all, a spiritual battle against the seven capital vices and their offshoots. Should we interpret Dante's Paradise as, at least in part, a poetic summa on the virtues (as I suggested in Chapter 4)? I have shown that an implicit moral structure, based on the three theological and four cardinal virtues, does appear to underpin Dante's vision of Paradise,

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and a comparative study of Peraldus's *De virtutibus* and Dante's *Paradiso* might prove similarly generative. Nevertheless, the moral tenor of Dante's *Paradiso* derives principally from his overarching conviction that the key struggle in the Christian moral life is against the cardinal vices of sloth and avarice, with a tepid love of God leading inexorably to a disordered turning to the world. Dante's emphases in *Paradiso* on the absolute material poverty of the Church, on highly ascetic religious practices, and on the religious orders in their pristine state suggest a rather sharp renunciation of the world as a prerequisite for the Christian moral life. It is the clerics' failure to think on God which, for Dante, leads them to acquire temporal power and wealth. Conversely, it is St Francis's renunciation of worldly goods which frees his heart to love God fully; where the Church is wedded to Lady Cupidity, St Francis is wedded to Lady Poverty. It is revealing, moreover, that Dante's ancestral father figure Cacciaguida ('il padre mio'; *Par*. XVI, 16) renounces the 'sweet dwelling' of Florence ('così dolce ostello'; XV, 132) to take up the crusading cross (XIV, 106), and – as a martyr in Heaven – describes the world he left behind as 'the false world, the love of which defaces many souls' ('[i]l mondo fallace, / lo cui amor molt' anime deturpa'; XV, 146–47).

Dante dramatizes in the poem this tension in his own moral life between his tepid love for God and his love of 'the false world'. While scholars typically interpret Dante's invention of Statius's secret conversion to Christianity as a means to represent – in the poem – the influence of Virgil on his own poetic and Christian conversion ('Per te poeta fui, per te cristiano'; *Purg*. XXII, 73), I have underlined the autobiographical implications of Dante's invention of Statius's prodigality and sloth (which, like his conversion to Christianity, have little or no grounds historically or in the subsequent commentary traditions). Indeed, I have suggested that Dante may have deliberately constructed his representation of Statius as, in addition to a poetic cypher, a moral cypher. Dante's careful quantification of Statius's sins – 500 years for prodigality (XXI, 68); 400 years for sloth (XXII, 92); 304 years for the sins of pride, envy, and wrath (and Ante-Purgatory); a single day for gluttony and lust – might contribute, on this view, to a speculative and partial profile of Dante's sense of his own sins. Dante's relative sinning in pride and envy is registered on the second terrace (XIII, 133–38). With regard to anger, although Dante's rationale fails to distinguish adequately between righteous indignation at a wrong suffered (virtuous) and an unbounded hatred irrespective of the limits of justice (vicious), the apparently genocidal outbursts against the populations of Pisa and Genoa certainly appear to be examples of the latter

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('ira mala' [sinful anger]; XVII, 69).[8] Dante's relative sinning in sloth and avarice is registered – through Statius – on the fifth terrace. Finally, the effortless ascent of Statius through the terraces of gluttony and lust, and Dante's emphasis that these are, for him, lighter sins (XXII, 7–8), might suggest the (albeit minority) view that Dante presents himself as relatively unafflicted by these vices.[9]

Dante's delineation of prodigality as Statius's pre-conversion sin and of sloth as his post-conversion sin is, I have argued, potentially significant: it may suggest a similar delineation – in Dante's own moral autobiography – between a particular tendency to prodigality in his Florentine years, and to sloth in his exile. It seems plausible that, in rejecting the ignoble vice of avarice, Dante strayed in the other direction, being overly generous, overly courteous, with his own (albeit limited) temporal goods. Dante strongly implies this through Statius's staged confession of 'prodigality', which immediately precedes Dante-character's encounter with Forese Donati and the troubled memory of his Florentine past. Shortly after the date of

[8] See Barnes, 'Deadly Sins', in Barnes and O'Connell (eds.), *Dante*, pp. 319–41 (pp. 324–26, 336–37). At a metapoetic level, the *Commedia* is neither a poem of revenge against his enemies ('the Wrath of Dante'), as Borgese suggested, nor an entirely impartial enactment of justice, as Dante himself appears to claim. See G. A. Borgese, 'The Wrath of Dante', *Speculum*, 13: 2 (1938), 183–93 (p. 186). Certainly, Dante associates the anger of God and of the blessed with justice. Thus Beatrice emphasises that Peter Damian's diatribe against the corrupt Church and the ensuing cry of the blessed (*Par.* XXI, 127–42) derives, as does all anger in Heaven, from his 'buon zelo' [good zeal], anticipating the just vengeance ('la vendetta') of God (*Par.* XXII, 7–18). The term 'zelo' is used on only two other occasions in the *Commedia*: by Nino Visconti in Ante-Purgatory (*Purg.* VIII, 82–84) and by Dante-character in the Earthly Paradise (*Purg.* XXIX, 22–24). In both cases, their zeal for justice regards the sin or apparent infidelity of women. Nino's wife renounced widowhood six years after his death to marry Galeazzo Visconti (*Purg.* VIII, 73–81), and he misogynistically infers from her example that the fire of love in women lasts little, if sight or touch do not frequently kindle it ('Per lei assai di lieve si comprende / quanto in femmina foco d'amor dura, / se l'occhio o 'l tatto spesso non l'accende'; *Purg.* VIII, 76–78). Dante-character reproves with 'buon zelo' [good zeal] Eve who, newly created, alone, and with no bad example ('femmina, sola e pur testé formata'; *Purg.* XXIX, 26), was unfaithful to God, not suffering to stay under any veil ('non sofferse di star sotto alcun velo'; 27). Indeed, Benvenuto explicitly associates the perfectly formed Eve's disobedience to God with the disobedience of fallen women to their husbands ('Si ergo ista mulier in tanta perfectione formata noluit obedire praecepto Altissimi, quomodo ergo foemina ab homine generata erit obediens viro suo?'; Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg.* XXIX, 22–27).

[9] As the early commentators point out, gluttony and lust – as failures to contain the sensual appetite – are particularly unbefitting vices for a mature poet, such as Virgil, Statius, or Dante himself. Similarly, citing Cicero, Brunetto Latini highlights that the wise – who know the nature of man to rise above the appetites of beasts – should naturally contain these lower appetites out of modesty ('En luxure n'a nulle haute chose qui soit avenant a nature d'ome, ainz est baisse chose et chaitive qui vient de luxure au vilain membre … se aucuns est trop enclins, guarde soi qu'il ne soit dou lignaige as bestes; mes se il est saiges et volenté le sorprent, il ripont son apetit por vergoigne'; Latini, *Il Tresor*, II, 76, pp. 506–8). For a balanced argument in favour of the majority view that lust was, in fact, one of Dante's major sins, see Tristan Kay, 'Dante's Ambivalence towards the Lustful', in Barnes and O'Connell (eds.), *Dante*, pp. 271–302.

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the fictional other-worldly journey (1300), Dante would be forcibly exiled from Florence and stripped of his temporal possessions. His own fate stands in contrast to that of Cacciaguida, who chose to embrace the cross of exile as a penitent crusader, and the 'noble prodigal' St Francis, who renounced his possessions to embrace voluntary poverty out of love for God.

Sloth is a sin particularly associated with the contemplative life. As an exiled scholar and poet, it again seems plausible that Dante would have had to struggle especially against the pull of this vice (a struggle, I have suggested, he dramatizes in his own person on the terrace of sloth). By attributing 'tepidity' to Statius as his post-conversion sin, Dante also seems – midway through writing his own *magnum opus* (c. 1310–1315) – to be registering the danger of leaving his own work, through sloth, incomplete, just as Statius, the delayer (*status*), failed to complete the *Achilleid*.

What, then, of Dante's confession to Beatrice in the Earthly Paradise? Dante confesses that 'present things with their false pleasure turned my steps as soon as your face was hidden' ('le presenti cose / col falso lor piacer volser miei passi / tosto che 'l vostro viso si nascose'; *Purg.* XXXI, 34–36), and Beatrice replies: 'another time, hearing the Sirens, you may be stronger' ('e perché altra volta, / udendo le serene, sie più forte'; 44–45).[10] Dante's sin is thereby explicitly associated with the terrace of sloth's protagonist, the Siren. While early commentators interpret 'Beatrice' as 'she who beatifies' or 'governing the blessed man', they take 'Siren' as Greek for the Latin 'attahere', meaning to pull, drag, or allure.[11] In the tradition of *nomen rei significans*, the siren is an anti-Beatrice who – like sloth itself – drags Dante astray from, rather than guiding him towards, beatitude.[12] The symbolic power of the Siren as a negative shadow of Beatrice is emphasised through their self-presentation in the poem. In the Earthy Paradise, and just before scolding Dante-character for following 'the Sirens', Beatrice announces herself 'Ben son, ben son

[10] See also Giorgio Padoan, 'Sirene (Serena)', in *ED*, vol. V, pp. 268–69.

[11] Benvenuto, gloss to *Inf.* II, 70–72: 'dicitur enim Beatrix quasi beatum regens'; Francesco da Buti, gloss to *Purg.* XXX, 22–36: 'Questa Beatrice significa la santa Teologia, come ditto è, e chiamala Beatrice, perché beatifica in questo mondo l'anima che si dà ad essa per grazia e nell'altro poi per gloria'; Pietro Alighieri [1], gloss to *Purg.* XIX, 19–24: 'Ideo dicitur Sirena a sirin graece, quod latine est attrahere.' For the first commentators on the poem, it was natural to read Beatrice predominantly, if not exclusively, as a symbolic figure. The current (and in my view, insufficiently justified) scholarly consensus is that Beatrice is a specific woman (Beatrice Portinari), who comes to signify, in Dante's poetry, theology or the divine science.

[12] Brunetto Latini simply substitutes disbelief ('mescreance') for sloth (Brunetto Latini, *Tresor*, II, 131, p. 628).

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Beatrice' [Truly I am, truly I am Beatrice; *Purg.* XXX, 73], seemingly playing on the etymology of her name by stating that 'qui è l'uom felice' [here is man happy] (75). Beatrice corrects, in this way, the self-presentation of the siren – 'Io son . . . io son dolce serena' [I am I am a sweet siren] – who enchants sailors in mid-sea and leads them to moral shipwreck ('che ' marinari in mezzo mar dismago'; XIX, 19–21).[13]

On this view, Beatrice embodies – in the poem – the Divine wisdom of theology that guides Dante towards beatitude (and she will be, of course, the pilgrim's guide through the realm of the blessed), while the Siren embodies all the forms of disordered love (the seven capital vices) that turn one away from God. Pietro d'Alighieri interprets his father's principal sin more specifically, as an immoderate love of poetry and philosophy (symbolised by his excessive love of Virgil), along with a neglect of the study of Divine wisdom (symbolised by his deficient love of Beatrice).[14] From this perspective, and following Peraldus, we might tentatively gloss Dante's confession in the Earthly Paradise in terms of *avaritia scientiae* (the cupidity of knowledge) as well as *tepiditas* (the insufficient love of God).[15] As Augustine emphasised, the rational knowledge of science is ultimately unfruitful because it pertains to earthly things, whereas wisdom concerns knowledge of eternal things, and hence our eschatological destiny.[16]

[13] This clause echoes the predicament of Dante-character in *Inferno* I ('nel mezzo del cammin'), who is compared to a sailor who has just reached the shore but nearly drowned in mid-sea ('come quei che con lena affannata / uscito fuor del pelago a la riva'; *Inf.* I, 22–23). It also echoes the situation of Dante-character and Virgil in the opening of the terrace of sloth, when they are compared to a ship that is beached ('eravamo affissi / pur come nave ch'a la piaggia arriva'; *Purg.* XVII, 77–78).

[14] Pietro Alighieri [3], gloss to *Purg.* XXX, 55–84: 'Fingit se hic nunc ita reprehendi auctor de eius omissione studii dictae theologiae sub proprio nomine ipsius auctoris a Beatrice . . . fingendo se primo reprehendi auctor sub dicto colore a Beatrice tanquam nondum vere perfectus deplorando Virgilium recedentem ita ab ipso, quasi non adhuc explicitus ab amore mundanae scientiae rationalis, pro qua in hoc passu ipsum Virgilium accipit et ipsam Beatricem pro sapientia divina . . .'; Pietro Alighieri [3], gloss to *Purg.* XXX, 22–55: '[Dantes] dedit se studio poesiae et camenis et oblectamentis vanis poetarum et aliis mundanis et infructuosis scientiis'.

[15] Dante explicitly associates cupidity, like sloth, with the Sirens (*Epist.* V, 4: 'Nec seducat alludens cupiditas, more Sirenum nescio qua dulcedine vigiliam rationis mortificans'). In *Convivio*, IV, xii–xiii, Dante is nonetheless careful to distinguish the desire for riches from the desire for knowledge: while accumulation increases desire in both cases (and this increase is not the cause of the baseness of riches), the desire for knowledge is satisfied in discrete steps (as particular truths are known), whereas the desire for riches is one step, and grows simply by quantity (as ten is a part of one hundred). The sin of *avaritia scientiae*, if attributed to Dante at all, should be understood specifically in relation to his apparently excessive love and curiosity for earthly knowledge, which distracted him from his love of divine wisdom.

[16] Pietro underlines Augustine's distinction between wisdom and science. See Pietro Alighieri [3], gloss to *Purg.* XXX, 55–84: 'Haec est recta distinctio sapientiae et scientiae, et ad sapientiam pertineat intellectualis cognitio ecternarum rerum, ad scientiam vero temporalium rerum cognitio rationalis.'

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As the Siren is an anti-Beatrice, so Ulysses is the pagan shadow for the Christian Dante. Highlighting the rich tradition of reading Ulysses as a figure for Christ, Michelangelo Picone effectively contrasts the successful models for Dante's descent into Hell (Aeneas) and ascent into Heaven (St Paul) with Ulysses, the negative archetype for Dante's unprecedented journey up the seven terraces of Purgatory to the Earthly Paradise.[17] Ulysses' failed attempt to reach Eden is narrated, of course, in *Inferno* XXVI, and is referenced explicitly in the opening cantos of Purgatory, and on the terrace of sloth: the sweet Siren ('dolce serena'; *Purg.* XIX, 19), we learn, turned Ulysses from his wandering path ('Io volsi Ulisse del suo cammin vago'; 21).[18] Whereas Ulysses' ardour for knowledge of the world and of human vices and worth ('del mondo esperto / e de li vizi umani e del valore') led him to seek out a world without people ('l'esperïenza, / di retro al sol, del mondo sanza gente'; *Inf.* XXVI, 116–17), Dante literally 'takes on board experience' ('esperïenza imbarche'; *Purg.* XXVI, 75) of a Purgatorial region populated by Christian souls in an effort to save himself, to die better ('per morir meglio').[19]

Whereas Ulysses' tragedy – which might have been Dante's own – ends in damnation (shipwreck), Dante's comedy, beginning in the misery of sin, ends in salvation (the port in which his soul eventually finds rest).[20] Dante-character's first words in *Paradiso* (addressed to Beatrice) – 'Già contento *requïevi*' [Already contented, I rested] (*Par.* I, 97) – counterpoise his first words in *Inferno*

[17] See Michelangelo Picone, 'Canto XIX', in *Lectura Dantis Turicensis: Purgatorio*, ed. by Georges Güntert and Michelangelo Picone (Florence: Cesati, 2001), pp. 287–306: 'Il viaggio di Dante nell'Oltretomba è certo modellato sul *descensus ad Inferos* di Enea e sull'*ascensus ad Paradisum* di S. Paolo … ma esso intende più particolarmente contrastare il viaggio di Ulisse verso l'Eden affabulato nel XXVI canto dell'*Inferno*, vuole riscrivere in chiave "comica" la navigazione "tragica" dell'eroe Greco.' See also Michelangelo Picone, 'Dante, Ovidio e il mito di Ulisse', *Lettere Italiane* 43 (1991), 500–16. Picone works with reference to Hugo Rahner's seminal work. See 'VII. Odysseus at the Mast', in Hugo Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, trans. by Brian Battershaw (London: Burns & Oats, 1963), pp. 328–87.

[18] Benvenuto seems to interpret 'vago' in its Latin sense as 'wandering': he explains that the journey is 'vago' because Ulysses has journeyed already for ten years ('quia perigrinatus est per decennium'). See Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg.* XIX, 16–24. I realise, however, that there are alternative readings which translate 'vago' as 'desirous', and use this to qualify either Ulysses' desire for his original path ('del suo cammin vago') or his desire for the Siren's song ('vago / al canto mio)'.

[19] In her vertical reading of the Ulysses canto, Elena Lombardi effectively contrasts Ulysses' 'ardore' for knowledge, with the burning of a soul (the poet Guinizelli) in the Purgatorial flames ('che 'n sete e 'n foco ardo'; *Purg.* XXVI, 18), and with the burning of Dante's love for Beatrice ('ella entrò col foco ond' io sempr' ardo'; *Par.* XXVI, 15). See Elena Lombardi, 'The Poetics of Trespassing', in Corbett and Webb (eds.), *Vertical Readings in Dante's 'Comedy'*, III, pp. 71–88 (pp. 87–88).

[20] See Benvenuto, gloss to *Purg.* XVII, 76–78: 'Sicut enim navis firmatur ad plagiam, ut stet ad tempus, et postea tandem perveniet ad portum, ubi tutissime quiescat, ita nunc ingenium poetae, ad summitatem scalae ubi staret ad noctem; et ita iam fecit alibi, et faciet donec perveniet ad Deum in quo tamquam in placido portu men post longam navigationem quies det.'

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(addressed to Virgil): '*miserere* di me' (*Inf.* I, 65).[21] Thus the Christian moral journey from misery to happiness, '*de statu miseriae . . . ad statum felicitatis*' (*Epist.* XIII, 15), from Hell to Paradise, is equated to Dante-character's ascent of the seven terraces of Purgatory. As Dante-character's first words in *Purgatorio* (addressed to his Florentine contemporary Casella) highlight, he is undergoing the journey in this life ('fo io questo vïaggio') so as to return to Purgatory in the next ('per tornar altra volta / là dov'io son'; *Purg.* II, 91–92). This is the journey of Dante's Christian ethics: the purging of souls in Purgatory (the *ecclesia poenitens*) and, figuratively, the purification of penitent souls on Earth (the *ecclesia militans*).

At a meta-literary level, the pagan Ulysses' ultimately 'vain' and 'wandering' (vago) pursuit of secular 'knowledge' and 'virtue' contrasts with the Christian poet's journey ('la navicella del mio ingegno' [the little boat of my intellect]; *Purg.* I, 3) in completing – 'fino a la fine' [right to the end] (*Purg.* XVIII, 137) – the *Commedia*. It is striking to note that Hugh Rahner turns precisely to this relationship between Dante's salvific journey through Purgatory and Ulysses' tragic shipwreck in Hell, in attempting to sum up the cultural condition of the West in the mid-twentieth century. For Rahner, Dante's Ulysses embodies the 'fateful fall of the West into sin' when it broke from the 'secure embrace between Hellas and the Church' in turning away from Christ, and from the eschatological perspective of the world-to-come: 'For here we no longer have the home-loving Odysseus of the last books of Homer's epic but an unhappy man whose spirit drives him out of the security of his father's home into the bold and godless venture of mastering the world by his own strength.' Rahner asks 'Will the shipwrecked West master it [the mountain of Purgatory] and so once more become worthy "to soar upwards towards heaven"?' Only, he affirms, when it 'has begun to pray with the words of the lofty prayer to the Logos' in embracing, again, the Christian mystery: 'All things are yours but ye are Christ's and Christ is God's.'[22] Whether or not twenty-first century readers are receptive to the immediate (and, for Rahner, prophetic) urgency of Dante's Christian ethics, I hope that this book has demonstrated – even to a predominantly secular academy – that approaching the poem as a work of ethics (*morale negotium, sive ethica*) – as it was originally envisaged – leads to a greater appreciation of Dante's eschatological innovations and his literary genius.

[21] Dante's language directly evokes the opening of Augustine's *Confessions*: 'inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te' [my soul is restless until it rests in you].
[22] Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, pp 389–90.

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