

The life-experience shared by Dante and Forese thus assumes a metaphoric value in the *Comedy* that bears little relation to anything we know about the two men. Forese stands in Dante's personal lexicon for his own compromised historical identity, the past—"qual fosti meco, e qual io teco fui"—brought painfully into the present—"il memorar presente." Their life together represents everything the saved soul regrets before being granted forgetfulness: the sum total of personal falls, little deaths, other paths. For Dante, this is everything he left behind when he turned to Beatrice.

In directly linking his friendship with Forese to the encounter with Vergil, in casting the Florentine *traviamento* as the immediate predecessor to the dark wood, Dante far outstrips the literal content of the *tenzone*, which (with its gluttonies, petty thieveries, and untended wives) tells of a more social than spiritual collapse. Nor is he concerned with strict chronology; Forese, who died in 1296, had been dead for four years when the pilgrim wanders into the first canto of the *Inferno*. Such underminings of the factual record, combined with the evasion of textual echoes from the *tenzone*, underscore the metaphorical significance of the Forese episode in the *Comedy*.

The paradigmatic value assigned to the episode necessarily extends to the poetic sphere as well. The conversion from "that life" with Forese to "new life" with Beatrice is also the conversion from the fallen style of the *tenzone* to the new style of "Donne ch'avete." In this ideal chronology, the *tenzone* occupies a position antecedent even to Bonagiunta's old style; it is as complacently rooted in fallen reality as the *stil novo* is free of it. As Dante's personal fall—"quella vita"—is redeemed by the restorative time of Purgatory, so the poetic fall—the *tenzone*—is redeemed by the converted style of the *stil novo*. This poetic conversion takes place in a context of lyric antitheses so overriding that they embrace even the episode's personnel; in the violent contrast between Forese's chaste wife Nella and the "sfacciate donne fiorentine" ("brazen women of Florence" [XXIII, 101]) one could see a continuation of the canto's antithetical mode, carried from the lexical to the figural level. In fact, the

terrace of gluttony is played out on a backdrop of contrasting women, good and bad, courtly and anti-courtly: not only Nella and her Florentine opposites, but Beatrice, Piccarda, Gentucca, Mary (from the exempla at the end of canto XXII), and (mentioned in XXIV, 116) Eve.

An episode that deals with lyric themes is thus sustained by the genre's narrative prerequisites, by women. It is not coincidental that in the course of this episode Dante should ask his friend about the location of his sister, or that Bonagiunta should prophesy the aid of a young woman from Lucca; both Piccarda and Gentucca are historical correlatives of the terrace's true heroines, the "ladies who have understanding of love." Most important is the fact that only here does the pilgrim take the opportunity to name Beatrice as the term of his voyage, thus relinquishing his usual practice of indicating her through a periphrasis. He names her because Forese—unlike the majority of the souls he has encountered—knows her, a simple fact with less simple implications. Precisely Forese's historical identity, his connection to a literal past, makes him valuable to a poet whose metaphors require grounding in reality. The fall must have a name, Forese, as salvation has a name, Beatrice, and as conversion occurs under the aegis of Vergil, specifically five days ago, when the moon was full. The irreducible historicity of this poem—the radical newness of its style—retrospectively guarantees all those other poems, and the newness of their style: "le nove rime, cominciando / 'Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore.'"

"Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete"

The last of the *Comedy*'s autocitations, "Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete," belongs to *Paradiso* VIII. In the heaven of Venus Dante meets Charles Martel, who declares his whereabouts by citing his friend's canzone, appropriately addressed to the angelic intelligences of this third heaven:

Noi ci volgiam coi principi celesti  
 d'un giro e d'un girare e d'una sete,  
 ai quali tu del mondo già dicesti:  
 'Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete'

With one circle, with one circling and with one thirst we  
 revolve with the heavenly Princes, to whom you of the  
 world once did say: "Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel move-  
 te"

(Par. VIII, 34-37)

Although readings of *Paradiso* VIII routinely point to the coincidence between incipit and geographical location, critical inquiry has on the whole done little more than confirm the canzone's superficial suitability.<sup>43</sup> But "Voi che 'ntendendo" is, in fact, far from an obvious choice as the autocitation of the *Paradiso*, in that it encompasses the defeat and replacement of Beatrice, Dante's paradisiacal guide. Whereas *Purgatorio* XXIV establishes the *Vita Nuova* as the bedrock of Dante's poetics, implying that the *Convivio* is a mistaken detour along the way (an implication confirmed by *Purgatorio* II), the *Comedy's* final autocitation—privileged by its position in the *Paradiso*—seems to return to the *Convivio* and to Lady Philosophy.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> In this vein are the readings of Vittorio Vaturi, "Il canto VIII del *Paradiso*," *Lectura Dantis* (Florence: Sansoni, 1922); Giovanni Fallani, "Il canto VIII del *Paradiso*," *Lectura Dantis Romana* (Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1964); André Pézard, "Charles Martel au Ciel de Venus," in *Lecture del Paradiso*, ed. Vittorio Vettori (Milan: Marzorati, 1970), pp. 71-140; Vincenzo Cioffari, "Interpretazione del canto VIII del *Paradiso*," *Alighieri*, 13 (1972), 3-17; Salvatore Accardo, "Il Canto VIII del *Paradiso*," *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1973), vol. VI, pp. 27-44. Discussions of the heaven of Venus tend to involve comparisons with Francesca, of which Pézard's is the most extreme; the French critic decides that Charles' wife Clemence is in fact present in this heaven, a silent partner for her husband as Paolo is for Francesca. For historical information regarding Dante and the house of Anjou, see Luigi Rocca, "Il canto VIII del *Paradiso*," *Lectura Dantis* (Florence: Sansoni, 1903).

<sup>44</sup> In "Purgatorio II: Cato's Rebuke and Dante's *scoglio*," Hollander states that only "Donne ch'avete" is cited approvingly in the *Comedy*: "Here is a canzone that is not only true to Beatrice (and that is precisely what the two Convivial odes are not), but, one might argue, true to God (while the

"Voi che 'ntendendo" appears in the context of an episode that intentionally recalls earlier episodes; the pilgrim's meeting with Charles Martel is modeled on his previous encounters with Casella and Forese. Despite the brevity of Charles' stay in Florence (his visit to the city in 1294 seems to have provided Dante with his only opportunity to meet the Angevin heir), the poet of the *Comedy* views him as a friend, a celestial version of the comrades who populate the slopes of *Purgatory*. A friendship that is prized but somewhat remote, certainly based on a lesser degree of intimacy, is precisely what the poet wants for his last canticle; friendship in the *Paradiso* is intended to contrast with friendship in the *Purgatorio*. Instead of many friends, now there is only one, and this one is a prince whom the poet respected but barely knew. As emblems of the will's attachment to things of this world, friends belong to the dialectic of the second realm, where the soul learns to forego what it most desires for something it desires even more. In *Paradiso* VIII the pilgrim's meeting with a friend underscores, by contrast to earlier meetings, the distanced affectivity of Heaven. Moreover, the meeting is deliberately situated in the sphere of Venus, because the third heaven is dedicated by Dante to dispelling earthly expectations regarding love.

Dante conceives the heaven of Venus as an anticlimax, the textual means by which to disengage the reader (and the pilgrim) from any lingering expectations for earthly (or purgatorial) sen-

Convivial odes are not, at least when they are considered as caring more for philosophy than for Revelation)" (p. 353). While I would agree with these remarks in so far as they refer to the status of the canzoni *before* they enter the *Comedy*, I believe that Dante's decision to use them in the *Comedy*, i.e. in a context where positioning implies value, constrains us to look at them from a new perspective. This view is shared by Rachel Jacoff, whose article on Dante's palinodic intent in *Paradiso* VIII provides a complementary analysis of the same episode; see "The Post-Palinodic Smile: *Paradiso* VIII and IX," *Dante Studies*, 98 (1980), 111-122. I do not agree with Carlo Muscetta, "Il canto VIII del *Paradiso*," *Lectura Dantis Scaligera* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1966), who sees "Voi che 'ntendendo" as rising above earthly confusion, nor with Vincent Moleta, who relates the position of the canzone to the fact that it "brings to perfection a notion of spiritual elevation through love" begun by Guinizelli in "Al cor gentil" (*Guinizelli in Dante*, p. 129).

timent. He chooses the heaven where both reader and pilgrim most expect to encounter eros—transcendent but still recognizable—as the stage on which to introduce an eros transformed beyond recognition. The poet's intent is to defuse the accumulated conventional significance of "Venus," a significance on which he had capitalized earlier in the poem, and which he preserves in the psychological inclination ascribed to the souls of this heaven. But although the souls of Venus (excluding Charles) avow or are known for their venereal tendencies, these tendencies possess a purely formal value that is countered by the pervasive tone and emphasis of cantos VIII and IX. The denial of the third heaven is the more striking because it is not inviolable; after undercutting affectivity where we expect it, in the heaven of Venus, Dante resurrects it in all its dialectical vigor in the Cacciaguida cantos.

The poet signals his awareness of our expectations in the celebrated opening of the eighth canto, whose twelve verses unfold the intricate Dantesque problematic of "folle amore" (2):

Solea creder lo mondo in suo periclo  
che la bella Ciprigna il folle amore  
raggiasse, volta nel terzo epiciclo;  
per che non pur a lei faceano onore  
di sacrificio e di votivo grido  
le genti antiche ne l'antico errore;  
ma Dione onoravano e Cupido,  
quella per madre sua, questo per figlio,  
e dicean ch'el sedette in grembo a Dido;  
e da costei ond' io principio piglio  
pigliavano il vocabol de la stella  
che 'l sol vagheggia or da coppa or da ciglio.

Once the world believed, to its peril, that the beautiful Cyprian rayed down mad love, turning in the third epicycle; so that the ancient peoples in their ancient error did honor not only to her, with sacrifice and votive cry, but they honored also Dione and Cupid, the former as her mother, the latter as her son, and they recounted that he had sat in

Dido's lap; from her whence I take my beginning they took the name of the star which the sun courts now from behind and now from in front.

(Par. VIII, 1-12)

From "the beautiful Cyprian" and her presumed effects, the poet passes, in the next *terzina*, to her cult, practiced by "le genti antiche ne l'antico errore" (6); thence, in lines 7 through 9, to the connection between the "ancient error" and classical culture: line 9, with its reference to Cupid and Dido, implicates no less a text than the *Aeneid*, in whose fourth book the story of Cupid's ruse and Dido's surrender is told. The final *terzina* brings us to the present, and to the issue of the poet's own relation to Venus; whereas the ancients took from this star only a "vocabol," a name or external referent, he—conceiving her differently—takes from her his "principio," his beginning and foundation.<sup>45</sup>

Two key points emerge from this opening passage. First, *folle amore* is recognized, registered, and immediately put into perspective; it is not by chance that the first word of the canto is "Solea." It used to be thus, says the poet, in the time of the "genti antiche ne l'antico errore" (the repetition of the adjective stresses the disjunction from the present), but no longer. The heaven of Venus in this Christian paradise is thus from the start presented in terms of its radical difference: the difference between a *vocabol* and a *principio*, between a superficial and a profound understanding of love. Second, this conceptual difference is immediately related to poetic practice. There is an implied corrective of classical poetry running throughout this heaven: from Vergil whose Dido is compromised at the outset, to Ovid whose volcanic theories are corrected later on. In sharp juxtaposition to these revised ancient poets and texts stand some newer ones; in this heaven we find not only the *Comedy's* last autocitation but also the *Comedy's* last lyric poet, the troubadour Folquet de Marselha.

Beginning with the issue of the Cyprian's influence, this heaven

<sup>45</sup> The importance of this *terzina* is stressed by Pézard, "Charles Martel au Ciel de Venus," pp. 78-83.

presents us with a graduated series of views regarding Venus: from that of the classical poets, represented by Vergil and Ovid, to that of the courtly lyric, represented by Folquet, to that of Dante's own lyrics, represented by "Voi che 'ntendendo," whose rarified perspective is apparent even in its first verse. Within the context of the third heaven, then, the autocitation serves as part of a general undermining of *folle amore* in all its aspects, both classical and medieval; critics have commented on the canzone's severity, its lack of amorous sweetness, and considered it suitable on these grounds for inclusion into this heaven.<sup>46</sup> In fact, in that "Voi che 'ntendendo" treats love more analytically than passionately, it fits into the general tenor of this heaven's nonerotic treatment of eros. But such a reading, while not incorrect, fails to take into account either the relation of this incipit to the other incipits in the poem, or the actual content of the canzone.

Putting the autocitation of *Paradiso* VIII into diachronic perspective alerts us to the fact that "Voi che 'ntendendo," for all its synchronic aptness, is an apparently inappropriate choice as the canzone to follow and supersede "Donne ch'avete." Such a perspective also encourages us to compare the episode of *Paradiso* VIII with the others that contain quotations from the pilgrim's own poetry. Some commentators have moved in this direction: Bosco establishes a parallel between Charles Martel and Casella, based especially on the reciprocal affection displayed in both episodes and on the presence in both of a canzone; Sapegno, for similar reasons, draws attention to parallels between Charles Martel and Forese.<sup>47</sup> I would carry their observations a step further, suggesting that the meeting with Charles

<sup>46</sup> As a poem dominated by "razionalismo cristiano" (p. 11), Muscetta feels that "Voi che 'ntendendo" is an appropriate choice for this heaven; he is seconded by Accardo and Cioffari.

<sup>47</sup> Accardo comments on the resemblances between the meeting with Charles and the meeting with Casella, while Muscetta points to the meeting with Forese as a term of comparison, explaining that Dante suppresses the earlier dialogue in his later encounter because "Siamo in Paradiso e non più in Purgatorio" (p. 30).

Martel is in fact conceived, both structurally and thematically, as a conflation of the two previous meetings.

The moment of encounter between the pilgrim and the prince, in what is the most personalized section of the canto, is modeled on *Purgatorio* II. The inhabitants of Venus are described, immediately before the appearance of Charles Martel, in terms of a beautiful sound; a "Hosanna" heard from within the approaching group of souls is such that the pilgrim will never again cease to desire it:

e dentro a quei che più innanzi apparìo  
sonava 'Osanna' sì, che unque poi  
di riudir non fui senza disiro.

and among those who appeared most in front rang such a  
"Hosanna" that I have never since been without the desire  
to hear it again.

(*Par.* VIII, 28-30)

The sound at the beginning of this episode corresponds to the sound at the end of the Casella episode, whose "sweetness still rings inside of me"; both are characterized by the poet's desire to perpetuate their beauty into the present. In the following verses Charles begins to speak; like Casella, he initiates the encounter by revealing that he is Dante's friend. Where Casella attempted to embrace the pilgrim, Charles cites a verse of Dante's poetry as a sign of friendship; he concludes with an offer to interrupt their joyful singing: "e sem sì pien d'amor, che, per piacerti, / non fia men dolce un poco di quïete" ("we are so full of love that, to please you, a little quiet will not be less sweet" [37-39]).

If the language of this last passage is markedly reminiscent of the pilgrim's speech to Casella in *Purgatorio* II (especially the use of "dolce" and "quïete"), line 45 of canto VIII, in which the pilgrim's voice is "di grande affetto impressa" ("stamped with great affection"), surely recalls, as Vaturi noticed, the "grande affetto" with which Casella sought to embrace his friend (*Purg.* II, 77). Most telling are the verses in which Charles

presents himself, not by name (his name is not used until the beginning of canto IX, when he is about to disappear), but by evoking the past relation between himself and his visitor:

Assai m'amasti, e avesti ben onde;  
 chè s'io fossi giù stato, io ti mostrava  
 di mio amor più oltre che le fronde.

Much did you love me, and you had good reason, for had I  
 remained down below, I would have shown you of my love  
 more than the leaves.

(*Par.* VIII, 55-57)

"Assai m'amasti" is a celestial variant of Casella's "Così com'io t'amai / nel mortal corpo, così t'amo sciolta" (*Purg.* II, 88-89), a variant that, by deliberately recalling the purgatorial verses, gives us a measure of the vast difference between the two encounters.

Here the souls converse with the pilgrim not for their own enjoyment, but "per piacerti," for the pilgrim's sake; there they, like the pilgrim, were too ready to sink into the repose generated by Casella's illicit music. Here the pilgrim is entranced by the *Osanna* of the souls, there by a secular song. Here Charles Martel is an oxymoron—a distant friend—who provides the final gloss on Casella's earthbound present tense ("così t'amo") by restricting such affection in heaven to the past absolute ("Assai m'amasti"). Given these facts, we are less surprised by the abrupt transition from the *terzina* quoted above, Charles' most personal and affective statement, to the political discourse which dominates the latter two-thirds of canto VIII, first in relation to Charles' own situation and the house of Anjou, and then in a more theoretical vein, regarding the problem of heredity. As we shall see, politics is used throughout this heaven as the poet's chief means of deflecting the personal, the affective, and the erotic.

The other distancing tool used by the poet in this heaven is rhetoric: the rhetoric of the lengthy geographical periphrases invariably singled out as a feature of these cantos, and employed

first by Charles in canto VIII, then by Cunizza and Folquet in canto IX. Charles begins his political discourse in line 58 with a series of periphrases encompassing 18 verses (through line 75), by which he indicates the kingdoms that would have been his to rule had he lived: Provence, Naples, Hungary, and Sicily. The periphrasis for Sicily is particularly complex; he begins by situating the island geographically, continues by overturning classical (mythological) volcanic theory and substituting a more naturalistic account, and finishes with a résumé of the island's social history leading to the Sicilian Vespers. The rebellion was caused by bad government, "mala signoria" (73), in this case that of his grandfather, Charles I of Anjou, who thus provides Charles Martel with a pretext for attacking another member of his family, namely his brother Robert.

While Charles' initial meeting with the pilgrim imitates the Casella episode, this latter part of Charles' discourse (76-84) constitutes the Forese section; it is, I believe, loosely modeled on Forese's invective against his brother, Corso Donati. In both discourses there is a political emphasis, a concern about bad government, a prophetic element, and—strikingly—a brother impugning a brother. Charles' castigation of his brother (the same King Robert so admired by Petrarch and Boccaccio) leads into the didactic sequence on heredity, which corresponds to Forese's didactic diatribe on the lax morals of Florentine women. The most precise parallel between the two episodes is provided by the prophetic element, introduced by the verse "E se mio frate questo antivedesse" ("and were my brother to foresee this" [76]), where the verb *antivedere*, used rarely in the *Comedy*, echoes its appearances in both of Forese's cantos, *Purgatorio* XXIII and XXIV.<sup>48</sup> Although Robert's fate is neither as severe nor as specific as Corso Donati's (who is dragged to Hell on the

<sup>48</sup> The verb *antivedere* appears only four times in the *Comedy*: it is used in *Inf.* XXVIII, 78, by the schismatic Pier da Medicina; in *Purg.* XXIII, 109, by Forese in the course of his political invective and prophecy against the Florentine women and their descendants; in *Purg.* XXIV, 46, by Bonagiunta regarding the help to be proffered Dante in his exile by Gentucca; and in *Par.* VIII, 76, by Charles.

tail of a diabolical beast), both fraternal prophecies invoke a coming disaster.

The patterning of this episode on those of Casella and Forese points through sameness to difference; from the intensely familiar use of Forese's name (repeated three times in *Purgatorio* XXIII-XXIV), we have moved to a situation where Charles' name is not even introduced into the episode until after his encounter with the pilgrim has ended. The poet, in what is another example of this heaven's distancing rhetoric, first calls the prince by name in the apostrophe to Clemence, Charles' wife, at the beginning of canto IX: "Da poi che Carlo tuo, bella Clemenza, / m'ebbe chiarito . . ." ("After your Charles, beautiful Clemence, had enlightened me" [1-2]).<sup>49</sup> Eros is evoked—in the possessive "tuo," the adjective "bella"—but simultaneously deflected by two rhetorical strategies: by the apostrophe, which distances itself from the episode at hand through its temporal dislocation into an unspecified future, in which the poet's voice takes the place of the pilgrim's (who had originally asked, in VIII, 44, "Deh, chi siete?"); and by the fact that Carlo and Clemenza both belong to a subordinate clause. The main clause to which they are linked deals with Charles' further remarks ("mi narrò li 'nganni / che ricever dovea la sua semenza" "he narrated the treacheries his seed was to receive" [2-3]), remarks that belong once more to the realm of politics.

The thematic concerns of this heaven are intractably political, indeed such as to compel us to revise the purely autobiographical and retrospective value thus far assigned to Charles Martel, and to reconsider the significance of his identity. In *Purgatorio* II Casella's identity as an enthusiastic but uninformed newcomer is linked to his misdirected singing of "Amor che ne la mente";

<sup>49</sup> The commentators have debated as to whether "Clemenza" here refers to Charles' wife or to his homonymous daughter. Those who argue against the wife do so on the grounds that she died in 1295, and that she was therefore dead when Dante apostrophizes her in canto IX. Although the evidence is inconclusive, most modern commentators concur with Del Lungo, cited by Sapegno to the effect that the possessive adjective "tuo" is "essenzialmente coniugale"; in my opinion, the context dictates a wife rather than a daughter.

in *Purgatorio* XXIII and XXIV the triumph of the *stil novo* is connected via Forese to a previous fall. In both instances the canzoni are praise songs, one for the wrong lady (Philosophy) and one for the right lady (Beatrice). In *Paradiso* VIII, however, the situation is dramatically different: the pilgrim meets neither a fellow Florentine musician nor versifier, but a prince; and the autocitation is not a praise poem, but a poem of conflict.

"Voi che 'ntendendo," the poem in which the new love for philosophy is privileged over the old love for Beatrice, was written during a period in which Dante experienced these two loves as conflicting; as Foster and Boyde point out, Beatrice's place was "taken by an enormous interest in philosophy and in politics."<sup>50</sup> The incompatibility of these interests is dramatized by the uncompromising stance of the canzone; the exhortation to "resolve to call her your lady henceforth" (48) marks the definitive transfer of allegiance from the first love to the second. Thus, a poem celebrating a lady allegorized as philosophy, written during the decade (following Beatrice's death and the completion of the *Vita Nuova*) in which the poet displays an increasing involvement in philosophy and politics, appears in *Paradiso* VIII in the mouth of a character with a highly political identity—a prince—and in the context of a heaven devoted to political and philosophical concerns.

It is difficult not to see such thematic coincidence as deliberate, especially in the light of the developments of canto IX, where Cunizza and Folquet both inveigh against political corruption, bringing this heaven's quota of politically motivated prophecies to a record high (three in all: Charles predicts disaster for the house of Anjou; Cunizza pits herself against the northern cities of Padova, Treviso, and Feltre; Folquet attacks the Roman curia).

<sup>50</sup> *Commentary*, p. 356. Foster and Boyde comment further that if Dante for a time considered philosophy to be implicitly opposed to Beatrice, this is because he then conceived philosophy "in a decidedly 'temporal' light, as though its chief function were to bring man to happiness in this present world" (pp. 356-357). On Dante's Aristotelian rather than Thomistic bias during the period of the *Convivio*, see Gilson, "The Primacy of Ethics," in *Dante and Philosophy*, esp. pp. 105-112.

Like the canzone "Voi che 'ntendendo," in which the literal content strikes an uneasy balance with the *Convivio's* allegorical interpretation, the characters of this heaven are all dichotomous: Charles is a political figure with no record of venereal excess; as the first soul in Venus' heaven, he serves antiphrastically to underscore the principle of displacement at work here. As eros is deflected by allegory in the canzone, so the remaining characters of this heaven are deflected from their primary personalities: Cunizza's notoriously erotic life is dismissed in 6 lines (31-36), while 27 lines (25-30 and 43-62) are devoted to condemning "la terra prava / italica" ("the depraved land of Italy" [25-26]); likewise Folquet sums up his amatory and poetic career in 12 lines, concentrating instead on his presentation of Raab and his invective against the papal curia. Raab is, of course, symptomatic of this heaven; a Hebrew prostitute who achieves salvation for her aid to Joshua's men, she is presented in canto IX exclusively as a crusader.

The poetics of displacement that governs the heaven of Venus serves to isolate and represent a particular moment in the process of conversion, a moment *in fieri* in which the dialectical elements of the achieved synthesis are still visible in their component parts. The conversion from eros to *caritas* undertaken in cantos VIII and IX is achieved at the outset of canto X, where—in the heaven of the Sun and no longer under the shadow of earth—Love is newly defined in relation to the dynamics of the Trinity: "Guardando nel suo Figlio con l'Amore / che l'uno e l'altro eternalmente spira . . ." ("Looking on his Son with the Love which the one and the other eternally breathe forth" [1-2]). The nonachievement of the previous heaven is not a positive lack, but a symptom of the original conflict, which is still obliquely present, like the shadow of earth that is still felt (a shadow which is, significantly, mentioned for the first and last time in the heaven of Venus [IX, 118]); the fact that Cunizza and Folquet are converts from *folle amore* is registered not positively but negatively, by the duality of their discourses and by the compensation that dictates their political diatribes. The textual status thus assigned by the poet to the third heaven,

conceived as the representation of a stage in which the elements of a prior conflict and duality are still visible although no longer conflicting, accounts for the presence and choice of this particular autocitation.

"Voi che 'ntendendo" is a poem about conflict, the conflict experienced by the poet between his love for Beatrice—his mystical, spiritual, and poetical interests—and the other chief interests of his life. Everything about the heaven of Venus speaks to the integration of concerns that on earth were viewed as separate and antagonistic; thus, the pilgrim meets a prince who can quote love poetry, a political lady who loved a poet (a political poet at that), and a poet who became a political figure.<sup>51</sup> The point of the resolutely nonamatory treatment of this heaven is that love can be, and must be, integrated with political and philosophical concerns; in terms of Dante's own career, the point is that the poet must transcend his *Vita Nuova* phase, dominated by an all-consuming if sublimated love, in order to arrive at the *Comedy*, in which eros is welded to a complex of other issues. Although the *Convivio* is the text that effects this transition, the *Convivio's* error is that it still posits a conflict: either Lady Philosophy or Beatrice. But the conflict that it posits is also a measure of its critical importance as the text that points the poet away from the lyric and parochial sphere of the *Vita Nuova* toward the universality of the *Comedy*.<sup>52</sup> If, in Heaven, Beatrice tolerates the citation of a canzone whose original pur-

<sup>51</sup> Cunizza, from a family in political power (she was the sister of the tyrant Ezzelino III da Romano), loved, among others, Sordello, whom this study will show to be—for Dante—a political poet; Folquet became a political figure as Bishop of Toulouse, participating in the Albigensian Crusade. Sordello and Folquet will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter II.

<sup>52</sup> On the transition between the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio*, see Salvatore Battaglia, "Il metodo di Dante tra *Vita Nuova* e *Convivio*," in *Esemplarità e antagonismo nel pensiero di Dante* (Naples: Liguori, 1966), pp. 101-120. The importance for the *Comedy* of Dante's political thought as expressed in the last book of the *Convivio* and then in the *Monarchia* is treated by Nardi, "Le rime filosofiche e il *Convivio* nello sviluppo dell'arte e del pensiero di Dante" and "Dal *Convivio* alla *Commedia*," in *Dal Convivio alla Commedia: sei saggi danteschi*, pp. 1-36 and 37-150.



pose was to displace her for "others," she does so to indicate that she and they can now be simultaneously present.

The *Convivio's* error, then, is in not achieving synthesis, and for this it is in Paradise once more pointedly corrected. When Charles Martel greets the pilgrim, he explains that he is turning with the angelic intelligences of the third heaven, the Principalities, "whom you of the world thus addressed: 'Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete'" (36-37). While Dante's canzone is, indeed, addressed to the intelligences of the third heaven, he did not, in the *Convivio*, consider these intelligences to be Principalities. Thus, by way of Charles' polite adjustment, the heaven of Venus becomes the first locus for Dante's self-correction on the matter of angelic hierarchy, an issue resolved finally by Beatrice in canto XXVIII. There she confirms the order laid out by the pseudo-Dionysius in the *De Coelesti Hierarchy*, explaining that Gregory the Great (whom Dante follows in the *Convivio*) had erred.

The most notable difference between the two schemes is the position of the Thrones, whom Gregory lowers from third place (behind the Seraphim and Cherubim) to seventh (above the Angels and Archangels). In *Paradiso* XXVIII the Thrones are the only angelic order to whom Beatrice dedicates a full *terzina*, stating that they belong to the first and highest angelic triad:

Quelli altri amori che 'ntorno li vonno,  
si chiaman Troni del divino aspetto,  
per che 'l primo ternaro terminonno

Those other loves who go around them are called Thrones  
of the divine aspect, because they completed the first triad  
(*Par.* XXVIII, 103-105)

Besides this general statement from canto XXVIII, the specific judicial duties of the Thrones are mentioned by Cunizza, who also emphasizes their elevation ("Sù sono specchi, voi dicete Troni, / onde refule a noi Dio giudicante" "Above are mirrors whom you call Thrones whence God in judgment shines on us" [IX, 61-62]), and much later by the pilgrim ("Ben so io che, se

'n cielo altro reame / la divina giustizia fa suo specchio" "I know well that although divine justice makes its mirror in another realm of heaven" [XIX, 28-29]). Not only are the Thrones the most talked about angelic hierarchy in the poem, but a good deal of the interest in them seems to stem from the heaven of Venus, to which they were inappropriately linked in the *Convivio*. Indeed, it seems as though the *terzina* devoted to raising the Thrones at the end of canto XXVIII is matched by the *terzina* devoted to lowering Venus at the canto's beginning; in a context where God is a tiny point, and the heavens nearest to Him are smallest, Venus is singled out for its width, so great that an entire rainbow could not contain it (31-33). The *Comedy* thus redresses the *Convivio's* imbalance.

In *Paradiso* VIII the emphasis on the Thrones begins indirectly, when Charles Martel locates himself in the third heaven; by specifying that this is the realm of the Principalities, he implies that it is not the realm of the Thrones. The result of his statement is that "Voi che 'ntendendo" is introduced into the text by way of the new order, the Principalities; the sentence structure thus ensures that the canzone is immediately linked to self-correction. In the same way that the third angelic order is made of Principalities, and not of Thrones as the *Convivio* would have it, so the lady now at Dante's side is Beatrice, and not the *donna gentile*. The *Convivio's* limits are again underscored; as a text it was not able to see with the penetration of the *Comedy*, but rather, like Gregory the Great at the end of canto XXVIII, it must now laugh at its mistakes.

Unlike Gregory, however, the *Convivio's* mistakes are not restricted to a single issue; its imaginative failures are far more profound. The correction of the *Convivio* in *Paradiso* VIII therefore goes beyond angelology to invest the major thematic concerns of the prose treatise. In the fifth chapter of Book II the *Convivio's* author, having just outlined the order of the angels, proceeds to apply this doctrine to the first verses of the canzone he is glossing, "Voi che 'ntendendo"; he moves in his discussion from the Thrones, governors of the third heaven, to the incli-



nations and qualities proper to their sphere of influence. As we know, the heaven is Venus, and the disposition is amorous:

Per che ragionevole è credere che li movitori del cielo de la Luna siano de l'ordine de li Angeli, e quelli di Mercurio siano li Arcangeli, e quelli di Venere siano li Troni; li quali, naturati de l'amore del Santo Spirito, fanno la loro operazione, connaturale ad essi, cioè lo movimento di quello cielo, pieno d'amore, dal quale prende la forma del detto cielo uno ardore virtuoso per lo quale le anime di qua giuso s'accendono ad amore, secondo la loro disposizione.

So that it is reasonable to believe that the movers of the heaven of the Moon are the order of Angels, and those of Mercury are the Archangels, and those of Venus are Thrones. These last, informed and nourished with the love of the Holy Spirit, effect their operation which is connatural to them, that is the movement of that heaven full of love, from which movement the form of that heaven takes on a virtuous ardor through which the souls down below are kindled to love according to their disposition.

(II, v, 13)

Having established the relation between the Thrones, Venus, and love, and stressing the ability of this heaven to inflame love in souls so disposed, the author passes to the ancients, and to their views on the effects of this heaven: "E perchè li antichi s'accorsero che quello cielo era qua giù cagione d'amore, dissero Amore essere figlio di Venere . . ." ("And because the ancients realized that that heaven was the cause of love down here, they said that Love was the son of Venus" [II, v, 14]).

This set of relations, first established by Dante in the *Convivio*, is resurrected in the opening of *Paradiso* VIII, where the poet once more links the heaven of Venus to classical culture, and where he pursues an identical chain of reasoning: from Venus ("la bella Ciprigna"), to the ancients ("le genti antiche"), to Venus' son Cupid ("ma Dione onoravano e Cupido / quella per madre sua, questo per figlio"), to Vergil ("e dicean ch'el

sedette in grembo a Dido"). We now see that this progression is inherited from the *Convivio*, where the links are much more explicit, links between Venus and love and the ancients, and—picking up from where we left off in our quotation of Book II, chapter v—links between Cupid ("Amore" in the *Convivio*) and Vergil: ". . . [li antichi] dissero Amore essere figlio di Venere, sì come testimonia Vergilio nel primo de lo Eneida, ove dice Venere ad Amore: 'Figlio, virtù mia, figlio del sommo padre, che li dardi di Tifeo non curi' " ("the ancients said that Love was the son of Venus, as Vergil testifies in the first book of the *Aeneid*, where Venus says to Love: 'Son, my strength, son of the highest father, you who fear not the bolts of Typhoeus' " [II, v, 14]). Here, as again in the *Comedy*, the poet demonstrates the pagan belief that Cupid was Venus' son by citing the *Aeneid*; whereas in the *Convivio* he cites a passage from *Aeneid* I in which Venus addresses her son, in the *Comedy* he much more powerfully depicts Cupid's role by evoking in one verse the tragedy of Book IV.

Our passage from the *Convivio* concludes by citing not only Vergil on Cupid, but also Ovid ("e Ovidio, nel quinto di Metamorphoseos, quando dice che Venere disse ad Amore: 'Figlio, armi mie, potenza mia' " "and Ovid, in the fifth book of the *Metamorphoses*, when he says that Venus said to Love: 'Son, my arms, my power' " [II, v, 14]), thus invoking both classical authorities on love. And, as we know, both these authorities are present, and in the same order, in *Paradiso* VIII, where Vergil's indirect presence in line 9 is followed by Ovid's even more indirect presence in Charles Martel's periphrasis for Sicily. The Angevin prince describes Sicily as that island which is darkened by a thick fog between the capes of "Pachino" to the south (Cape Passero) and "Peloro" to the north (Cape Faro), a darkness that is caused not—as the ancients believed—by the ashes spewed forth by the giant Typhoeus imprisoned under Mount Etna, but by sulfurous gases: "non per Tifeo ma per nascente solfo" ("not by Typhoeus but by rising sulfur" [VIII, 70]). The Dantesque periphrasis for Sicily, beginning "E la bella Trinacria" in line 67, is inspired by Ovid throughout, specifically by a passage in

Book V of the *Metamorphoses* in which the Latin poet ascribes the eruptions of Etna to the spouting of the giant Typhoeus, and in which the island (called "Trinacris") is parceled into the same geographical segments picked up by Dante: "He [Typhoeus] struggles hard, and often fights to rise again, but his right hand is held down by Ausonian Pelorus and his left by you, Pachynus."<sup>53</sup>

Dante relies on Ovid in order to revise him, his point being, of course, that Typhoeus is no more to be taken seriously than the beautiful Cyprian of the canto's opening verses; he is not responsible for volcanic eruptions, and she is not responsible for *folle amore*. Both the giant and the goddess are rendered impotent in *Paradiso* VIII. And, if Dante goes out of his way to introduce Ovid into this canto, he does so as part of his overall correction of the passage from the *Convivio*, a passage that contains all the elements later raised in *Paradiso* VIII: the Thrones, the ancients, Vergil, Ovid. Even Typhoeus is present in the *Convivio*, in the citation from *Aeneid* I, where Venus refers to her son as "contemptuous of the Typhoean bolts," i.e. unafraid even of Jupiter, whose thunderbolt had chastened the giant. The *Convivio* passage, in which Dante translates the Vergilian verse with the phrase "che li dardi di Tifeo non curi," constitutes the only occasion, prior to the *Comedy*, in which the giant figures in one of Dante's texts.<sup>54</sup>

These details serve to confirm the relation between *Convivio* II, v and *Paradiso* VIII.<sup>55</sup> In canto VIII Dante systematically

<sup>53</sup> The Latin text, taken from the Loeb Classical Library edition, trans. F. J. Miller, 2 vols. (1916; repr. Cambridge: Harvard U. Press and London: William Heinemann, 1971 [vol. I] and 1968 [vol. II]), reads as follows: "nititur ille quidem pugnatque resurgere saepe, / dextra sed Ausonio manus est subiecta Peloro, / laeva, Pachyne, tibi" (*Metamorphoses* V, 349-351).

<sup>54</sup> Typhoeus is among the giants in the pit surrounding Cocytus, and is named in *Inf.* XXXI, 124: "Non ci fare ire a Tizio né a Tifo."

<sup>55</sup> Another corroborative detail of the relation between the two texts is Dante's use of the word *epiciclo* at the outset of *Paradiso* VIII, where Venus is "volta nel terzo epiciclo" (3). This unique occurrence of *epiciclo* in the *Comedy* reflects the *Convivio* passage, which continues, after the section quoted above, with a discussion of the threefold movements of Venus, listed as follows: "uno, secondo che la stella si muove per lo suo epiciclo; l'altro, secondo che lo epiciclo si muove

presents and discounts point after point from the passage in the *Convivio*: the Thrones have become Principalities; Venus and Cupid alike are an "antico errore"; the poets who believed in them are dupes. But canto VIII goes beyond these particulars to the larger error behind them, to wit, the privileging of classical culture—philosophy over revelation, the *donna gentile* over Beatrice—which is, from the perspective of the later Dante, the *Convivio*'s most serious flaw.<sup>56</sup> The true error of the *Convivio* is the status it accords to ancient beliefs; the critique of canto VIII focuses on one set of ancient beliefs, those regarding Venus. Thus, the *Convivio* passage recounts that, because the ancients realized that the heaven of Venus was the cause of love on earth, they believed that Love or Cupid was her son: "E perchè li antichi s'accorsero che quello cielo era qua giù cagione d'amore, dissero Amore essere figlio di Venere . . ." (II, v, 14). Although the *Convivio*'s author does not accept the classical conclusions, that there is a goddess Venus whose son is Love, he seems not to argue with the basic premise, i.e. that the heaven of Venus causes love on earth. His choice of words, especially his use of the verb *s'accorsero*, seems to indicate his fundamental agreement on this score.

The relation between Venus and causality is precisely what

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con tutto il cielo igualmente con quello del Sole; lo terzo, secondo che tutto quello cielo si muove seguendo lo movimento de la stellata spera" ("one, according to which the star moves along its epicycle; next, according to which the epicycle moves with the entire heaven and equally with that of the Sun; third, according to which that entire heaven moves following the movement of the starry sphere" [*Convivio* II, v, 16]). Like the other sections from *Convivio* II, v we have discussed, this passage was undoubtedly in Dante's mind when he composed *Paradiso* VIII.

<sup>56</sup> Mazzeo demonstrates that the *Convivio* is excessively dependent on ancient philosophers in its enthusiastic assessment of nature's role in the formation of human beings, and also shows how in the *Paradiso* Dante returns to a position of "greater Christian rigor" (p. 35); see "*Convivio* IV, xxi and *Paradiso* XIII: Another of Dante's Self-Corrections," *Philological Quarterly*, 38 (1959), 30-36. In "*Panis Angelorum*: A Palinode in the *Paradiso*," *Dante Studies*, 95 (1977), 81-94, Daniel J. Ransom contrasts Dante's use of the phrase "pan de li angeli" in *Paradiso* II, 11 with its previous appearance in the *Convivio*, showing how "in the *Paradiso* 'pan de li angeli' reacquires its theological substance" (p. 92).

is at issue in the *Comedy*; *Paradiso* VIII is at pains to revoke the notion of celestially induced eros. Outright celestial influence is, of course, denied in general terms throughout the *Comedy*, from Marco Lombardo's discourse on free will to Beatrice's attack on the "poison" in Plato's theory of astral return. But, perhaps because the belief in a necessary inclination toward *folle amore* is particularly widespread and pernicious, the poet uses the heaven of Venus specifically to combat the idea that Venus causes love on earth;<sup>57</sup> the perils inherent in such beliefs are therefore immediately raised in this heaven's first verse—"So-lea creder lo mondo in suo periclo"—with its emphasis on the dangers besetting a misguided world. Nor is the classical position criticized only in these verses; Charles Martel later resumes the topic in his discourse on heredity, explaining that the influences of the heavens, which left to themselves would be disastrously mechanistic, are in fact ordered and regulated by divine providence. This concluding emphasis on astral limitation reinforces the admonition regarding excessive credence with which the canto begins.

The world's peril is perhaps also the peril of the *Convivio*'s author; it is interesting that Charles, naming a canzone from the *Convivio*, refers to its author as "del mondo," of the world. At any rate, the correction of the *Convivio* that runs through *Paradiso* VIII ultimately addresses itself to the major issue of the treatise's erroneous trust in classical culture and thought, a trust that is openly condemned by Beatrice in *Purgatorio* XXXIII, where she refers deridingly to the pilgrim's faith in "that school which you have followed" (85-86). This issue is related to the autocitation of *Paradiso* VIII by way of the *donna gentile*, who is allegorized as Lady Philosophy, and whose pre-eminence in the canzone and in the treatise is part of the *Convivio*'s error, and part of what the *Comedy* is correcting. If,

<sup>57</sup> Dante's desire to discredit erotic determinism may have autobiographical and palinodic roots; one thinks, for instance, of the sonnet to Cino in which Dante proclaims the subjugation of free will to Love ("Io sono stato con Amore insieme"), a position he dramatizes in the great canzone *montanina* ("Amor, da che convien pur ch'io mi doglia").

then, "Voi che 'ntendendo" belongs to a generally corrective framework in *Paradiso* VIII, how do we account for its privileged position among the *Comedy*'s autocitations?

Let us begin by considering the role of "Voi che 'ntendendo" in the context of Dante's lyric poetry. Editions of the *Rime* place the canzone shortly after the poems of the *Vita Nuova*, establishing the priority of "Voi che 'ntendendo" for Dante's post-*Vita Nuova* production.<sup>58</sup> The use of "Voi che 'ntendendo" as a new starting point is, moreover, justified by Dante's own practice; he uses it as lead canzone and point of reference for the sequence of poems devoted to the *donna gentile*, and he places it first in the *Convivio*. The importance attached to this canzone is also signaled by the fact that "Voi che 'ntendendo" is the only one of his lyrics whose incipit Dante cites twice, not only in the *Comedy* but also in the sonnet "Parole mie."

We recall that "Parole mie" explicitly refers to "Voi che 'ntendendo" as a new poetic beginning. Summoning back all the poems previously sent to this lady, the poet addresses his errant words:

Parole mie che per lo mondo siete,  
voi che nasceste poi ch'io cominciai  
a dir per quella donna in cui errai:  
'Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete'

<sup>58</sup> Foster and Boyde place one poem, the sonnet on Lisetta, between "Oltre la spera" (the last sonnet of the *Vita Nuova*) and "Voi che 'ntendendo"; they do this because of Barbi's opinion that the Lisetta sonnet ("Per quella via che la bellezza corre") represents a phase in the conflict between Beatrice and her rival of the *Vita Nuova*. In explaining the order of the poems in their edition, Foster and Boyde comment that they take as a "firm starting-point for Dante's development after the *Vita Nuova* the canzone 'Voi che 'ntendendo'" (Introduction, *The Poems*, p. xxxix). The Barbi-Maggini edition passes from "Rime del tempo della *Vita Nuova*" to "Tenzzone con Forese Donati"; Barbi-Pernicone picks up with "Rime allegoriche e dottrinali," of which the first is "Voi che 'ntendendo." Thus the canzone is separated from the poems of the *Vita Nuova* only by the *tenzone* which, not being love poetry, does not affect the priority of "Voi che 'ntendendo." In "Le rime filosofiche e il *Convivio* nello sviluppo dell'arte e del pensiero di Dante," Nardi posits "Voi che 'ntendendo" as the beginning of a new poetic cycle (p. 2).

tive—along with “transmutata,” from line 44, which appears only here in Dante’s lyrics—of all the larger and nonlyric themes and concerns that will surface in the *Convivio*. The canzone continues to insist on its special status: its discourse can be proffered only to the angelic intelligences of the third heaven, being too “new” for other ears (“udite il ragionar ch’è nel mio core, / ch’io nol so dire altrui, sì mi par novo” “listen to the speech which is in my heart, for I do not know how to express it to others, it seems so new to me” [2-3]); again in the first stanza the poet draws attention to the novelty of his condition (“Io vi dirò del cor la novitate” “I will tell you of the newness of my heart” [10]). The emphasis on the poem’s originality reappears in the *congedo*, where the poet comments that, due to the canzone’s difficulty, few will understand it; in the penultimate verse he calls it “diletta mia novella.” This sense of literal newness finds its confirmation in the other newness with which this poem is invested; as the first of Dante’s love lyrics to carry an allegorical significance, “Voi che ‘ntendendo” is a particularly fitting emblem for a turning point.

There is, however, a poem in Dante’s canon that might be said to mark a shift more explicitly than “Voi che ‘ntendendo,” and this is “Le dolci rime,” the last poem of the *Convivio*. In the first stanza the poet situates the canzone with respect to its predecessors:

Le dolci rime d’amor ch’i solia  
 cercar ne’ miei pensieri,  
 convien ch’io lasci; non perch’io non spero  
 ad esse ritornare,  
     ma perché li atti disdegnosi e feri,  
 che ne la donna mia  
 sono appariti, m’han chiusa la via  
 de l’usato parlare.  
 E poi che tempo mi par d’aspettare,  
 diporrò giù lo mio soave stile,  
 ch’i’ ho tenuto nel trattar d’amore;  
 e dirò del valore,

per lo qual veramente omo è gentile,  
 con rima aspr’e sottile

I must leave the sweet love poems that I was accustomed to seek out in my thoughts; not because I do not hope to return to them, but because the disdainful and harsh acts which have appeared in my lady have closed the way of my usual speech. And since it now seems a time for waiting, I will lay down my sweet style which I have used in treating love, and I will speak of the quality through which man is truly noble, with harsh and subtle rhymes

(1-14)

The exordium explains how the poem came to be written: because his lady’s proud behavior has blocked all further discourse with her, the poet is temporarily putting aside “le dolci rime d’amor”; while waiting for her to soften, he proposes to write about nobility, the “valore, / per lo qual veramente omo è gentile,” not in his accustomed “soave stile,” but with “rima aspr’e sottile.”

Like the sonnet “Parole mie,” this canzone is introduced as a moment in which the poet is out of his lady’s favor. Unlike the sonnet, however, “Le dolci rime” finds a radical solution to the problem. Whereas “Parole mie,” in that it is a negative love poem, a renouncing of the beloved, remains within the narrative structure that links the various poems to the *donna gentile*, “Le dolci rime” breaks out from this structure altogether. In the canzone her coldness produces not the lover’s quarrel sanctioned by the plot, as in the previous renunciations, but something more significant, namely a change of genre. Rather than continuing to write “sweet love poems,” the poet undertakes a new kind of poetry, written in a new register, “with harsh and subtle rhymes.” The writing of “Le dolci rime” thus marks the transition to a later stage in Dante’s poetic development, the stage characterized by his moral and doctrinal verse; the canzone is in fact, as was noted earlier, the first in a series of moral poems. We see, then, why Foster and Boyde can claim that in “Le dolci rime” Dante “comes about as near to making a fresh start as

any mature poet can do," for it is here that Dante first becomes a moral poet.<sup>60</sup> And, because the doctrinal canzoni accommodate a lyric mode to moral themes, they constitute the indispensable link between Dante's early poetry and the *Comedy*.

If the last of the *Comedy's* autocitations is chosen with a view to marking an internal transition toward the *poema sacro*, we may wonder why "Le dolci rime" is not recited in the *Paradiso* instead of "Voi che 'ntendendo." The fact that the three autocitations are stylistically homogeneous, and that all belong stylistically to the poet's *stil novo* phase, seems not unimportant in this regard. "Le dolci rime" effects a radical discontinuity with respect to the style of its predecessors; as its first stanza declares, it is no longer *soave*. Precisely this characteristic, which on the one hand strengthens its connection to the *Comedy* (where the poet will request, when he needs them, "rime aspre e chioce"), on the other unsuits it for inclusion among the autocitations. Unlike "Le dolci rime," "Voi che 'ntendendo" can mark the transition to larger themes from *within* the lyric mode, a mode that is essentially amatory and "sweet"; in fact, the canzone's stylistic continuity with "Amor che ne la mente" and "Donne ch'avete" is a major part of its point.

"Voi che 'ntendendo" works both ways: as the initiator of the conflict that would eventually lead Dante to devote himself entirely to philosophy, it points forward to his moral and ethical verse, to "Le dolci rime"; as a love poem to the *donna gentile*, it looks back to the *Vita Nuova*, and to "Donne ch'avete." As compared to the later didactic canzoni, "Voi che 'ntendendo" is part of a continuum that begins in the *Vita Nuova*: Beatrice is still present (although about to be displaced); the *Vita Nuova's* dictum against nonamatory lyric has not yet been explicitly reversed (although the use of allegory would in itself imply that lyrics can now be composed "sopra altra materia che amorosa").<sup>61</sup> The poem's form links it to the past, and even though

<sup>60</sup> *Commentary*, p. 211.

<sup>61</sup> In *Vita Nuova* XXV Dante states that the vernacular lyric should be devoted exclusively to love poetry: "E questo è contra coloro che rimano sopra altra materia che amorosa, con ciò sia cosa che cotale modo di parlare fosse dal principio

its meaning may be more difficult to comprehend than that of earlier poems, "tanto la parli faticosa e forte" ("so tiring and hard is your speech" [55]), its last verse exhorts us to remember its beautiful appearance, "Ponete mente almen com'io son bella!" ("Consider at least how beautiful I am!").

If the canzone's exterior beauty connects it to the past, its inner difficulty connects it to the future, to Dante's didactic verse and ultimately to the *Comedy*. And it is, finally, this difficulty that accounts for the presence of "Voi che 'ntendendo" in the heaven of Venus, a "difficult" heaven. As it appears in the second book of the *Convivio*, accompanied by its allegorical gloss, "Voi che 'ntendendo" implies the transition that "Le dolci rime" renders explicit; it implies transition through conflict and ambivalence, the same conflict and ambivalence represented in the heaven of Venus. Precisely because it is about conflict, "Voi che 'ntendendo" can best serve as a marker for the stage beyond conflict, a stage in which both terms have not yet been resolved out of existence, but rather coexist, as Beatrice and the canzone coexist in *Paradiso* VIII. At the same time, in that it is ostensibly a love poem, to which a deeper and more public meaning has been added, "Voi che 'ntendendo" can best dramatize Dante's transition, from within the lyric, to a nonlyric and nonprivate mode.

This last duality, the coexistence of a private mode with a public meaning, is mirrored in the episode of the *Paradiso*. It is appropriate that in the heaven of love we should find the *Comedy's* last lyric love poem as well as its last lyric love poet; yet, in this heaven, both function less as themselves than as signifiers of what lies beyond them. Both "Voi che 'ntendendo" and Folquet de Marselha (of whom more will be said later) are chosen as emblems of transition from the private to the public, a transition that they themselves do not fully achieve but to which they bear a deictic relation. And perhaps, when all is said

trovato per dire d'amore" ("And this is against those who write poetry on a subject other than love, since this method of writing was from the beginning discovered in order to write on love" [XXV, 6]).

and done, all of the *Comedy's* autocitations are chosen for their ability to point beyond. The three poems share two common features; they all belong to Dante's *stil novo* register, and their incipits all emphasize the intellect. That is, they all point, from within the *stil novo*, to beyond the *stil novo*, to the radically transformed eros of the *Comedy*. "Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona," "Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore," "Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete"—the intellectual stress of these verses unite all these canzoni as redeemed poetry.

The aim of this chapter has been to clarify some of the autobiographical impulses at work in the *Comedy*. If autobiography is a mode in which the urge for order is particularly acute, an urge that is translated into a teleological imperative, the autobiography of the *Comedy* is governed by a dual pressure: the one exerted by the mode, and the other by the providential framework. In the *Comedy*, all characters, all themes, all texts and their makers are inserted into a providential structure that guarantees the nature of the ending. In the autobiographical instance (and all of Dante's texts are profoundly autobiographical), the pressure imposed by providence is supplemented by the pressure implicit in the discourse, a narrative exigency that accounts for the self-consuming revisionism of these texts. This pressure, always present as the deep meaning of Dante's narrative structure, appears on the surface in some more "superficial" forms: the prose and the *divisioni* of the *Vita Nuova*, the gloss of the *Convivio*, the autocitations of the *Comedy*. From this point of view it was a foregone conclusion that the final autocitation would signify not itself but the guaranteed ending; "Voi che 'ntendendo" is yet one more new beginning to be transformed—"transmutata"—into a sign for the *Comedy* itself. And finally, in passing from Dante's treatment of himself to his treatment of his peers, we should note that the teleological imperative structured into his own "life" is, naturally, imposed onto the lives of others.

## II

### Lyric Quests

#### Historiography Revisited: " 'l Notaro e Guittone e me"

The historiographical knot of the *Comedy* centers, appropriately enough, around the knot of *Purgatorio* XXIV: "il nodo / che 'l Notaro e Guittone e me ritenne / di qua dal dolce stil novo ch'ì' odo!" (55-57). Whereas the first part of the pilgrim's conversation with Bonagiunta deals solely with Dante's internal poetic biography, implicitly situating "Donne ch'avete" with respect to his total oeuvre, Bonagiunta's reply raises external questions of poetic genealogy and historical precedence. Whereas the pilgrim articulates poetic principles in a vacuum, the older poet draws the historical implications of those principles, discovering in the pilgrim's poetic credo a criterion of measurement by which he judges earlier Italian poetry—" 'l Notaro e Guittone e me"—and finds it lacking. There are, in fact, two distinct moments accommodated by the dialogue's triadic structure; the personal and the historical are both present. We cannot, given the identity of the pilgrim's interlocutor and the nature of his comments, combined with the additional poetic references of *Purgatorio* XXVI, avoid the historiographical intentions of this passage. On the other hand, its historiographical weight does not detract from its impact at the level of autobiography.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In my opinion, Dante wishes to make both the following points in this