The Language of Exile in Dante

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i. Exile in Dante and Modern Criticism

The question of exile in Dante's life and in his works is one that has drawn the attention of critics recurrently ever since the moment of the poet's death, if not before. It is certainly one that Dante readers and critics of the last century have found absorbing. The description that the poet frequently appended to his signature, 'florentinus et exul inmeritus', stresses the crucial autobiographical impact of the 1302 banishment that permanently excluded Dante from his native city, and has struck an immediate chord with generations painfully familiar with the figure of the writer as dissident or refugee.[1] It is hard to speak of Dante's language of exile without remembering that his work has been the object of study and inspiration to large numbers of twentieth-century intellectuals experiencing estrangement or exclusion from nation and society that can appear analogous to the poet's own – Erich Auerbach, Primo Levi, Osip Mandelstam, to name but a few examples.[2] But if modern political history has often prompted interest in Dante's biographical vicissitudes, equal if not greater attention has been paid to the transformations operated on the theme of exile in his literary works. The twentieth century has found many good reasons for turning to a poet able to evoke the lonely struggle in the 'selva oscura' (*Inf.* I, 2) of human existence: in the English-speaking world alone, writers as diverse as T. S. Eliot, Samuel Beckett, and Seamus Heaney have all felt the impact of the medieval poet's evocation of the vulnerability of that struggle.[3] The multi-layered narrative in the *Commedia* is very clearly based around exilic central motifs of quest, exodus, or *peregrinatio*; and these also appear repeatedly in Dante's other works (including the pre-banishment *Vita nuova*), some of which will be discussed below.[4]

In the present study, I shall be more concerned with the question of Dante's use of a language of exile in his authorial activity, than with the historical facts of his banishment. Separation of the two, however,

is difficult. In an essay on medieval exile writing, Robert Edwards notes that 'by its very nature, exile is a psychological experience, a response of mind and spirit to customs, codes, and political actions'.[5] These customs, codes and actions are political in the etymological sense: exile is necessarily defined in relation to the *polis*, the community from which the individual is estranged.[6] Dante's self-definition as *exul inmeritus* seems incomplete without the additional *florentinus*. References to his banishment in prose works from the early years of exile stress his Florentine origins, and his continuing love for his *patria*.[7] In the *Commedia*, the first overt reference to Dante's experience of exile concentrates on the question of *tornare*, of how to return home to the community of origin (*Inf*. X, 49), and this motif reappears throughout the *Commedia*, even as late as canto XXV of *Paradiso*.[8] At the same time, Dante is notoriously ambivalent in his attitude to Florence: the exile's nostalgia for that 'loco [...] più caro' (*Par*. XVII, 110) is tempered by repugnance for the 'superbia, invidia e avarizia' (*Inf*. VI, 74) that are identified as its increasingly dominant characteristics.

ii. Exile and Beatrice: The *Vita nuova* as an Outsider Text

Dante's claims to view clear-sightedly the city that he loves but also fiercely criticises contrast with the proverbial blindness of its citizens: 'vecchia fama nel mondo li chiama orbi' (*Inf*. XV, 67). This saying is cited in the course of the *Inferno*'s second allusion to Dante's historical exile, and is spoken by a fellow-Florentine, fellow-intellectual, and fellow-exile (although all of these similarities could also be extensively qualified) a generation older than Dante, Brunetto Latini.[9] For current purposes, I wish to leave aside the parallels and the differences between Latini's and Dante's exilic experiences in reality and in fiction, to concentrate on the significant response by the protagonist to Brunetto's remarks on himself and his city. He expresses the hope that Latini's words will be clarified by a *donna* whom he expects to meet later on in his journey (*Inf*. XV, 90). This *donna* must of course be Beatrice;[10] and the *Inferno*'s accusation of Florentine blindness to virtue may remind the reader of some aspects of the claims made about her in Dante's earliest narrative work, the *Vita nuova*.

In that work, he says of his beloved that 'fu chiamata da molti Beatrice li quali non sapeano che si chiamare' (*V.N.* I, 1); the phrase may be interpreted in two ways, as meaning either 'who did not know her name', or 'who did not know what it meant to call her this'.[11] In either interpretation, the Florentines use the name Beatrice blindly, appreciating only one sense of a name that is *both* literally *and* morally proper to its holder: the *Vita nuova*'s emphasis that *'nomina sunt consequentia rerum'* (*V.N.* XIII, 4) suggests that Dante wants us to feel the full force of the significance that a woman baptised Beatrice should possess the spiritual qualities symbolised by the name. Part of his intention in writing the *Vita nuova* appears to be to explain something about the worth of Beatrice to his fellow-citizens, whose non-comprehension of what he has written about her in his lyric verse may be understood (at least in retrospect) as a manifestation of their proverbial blindness.

The *Vita nuova* tells a story that at the outset seems likely to follow a formulaic pattern tracing the narrator's progress through the obstacle course of courtly love towards a socially and morally 'distant' lady. Instead, the experience becomes a journey of spiritual transformation, and the narrator's erotic understanding of love is changed into a Christian one, so that he comes to see Beatrice as significant less because of herself than because she points her seeker forward to the divine.[12] To write verse that may express this insight, and yet still pay due attention to the singularity of the beloved (and of her lover), presents a considerable challenge to both its author and its audience. The early chapters of the *Vita nuova* several times show Dante to occupy an eccentric position *vis-à-vis* the majority of his fellow-Florentines, as he struggles to communicate some of what he feels about the presence of Beatrice in his, and in his city's, life. The process involves learning how to write himself out of the courtly equation where love plus pursuit focuses inevitably on the lover's reward: instead, the lover becomes a bystander while Beatrice and, increasingly, a crowd of angelic attendants take centre-stage, anticipating a repatriation to Heaven that is confirmed at the end of the narrative.

Well before his story is halfway told, Dante has begun to describe his most important personal relationship via a poetics of exilic separation, in which the lover not only maintains social and physical distance from the beloved, but also moves in a rarified emotional and spiritual atmosphere that demarcates him from the other observers of

Beatrice who do not share his insights about her miraculous nature. As a writer, he thus speaks from a liminal position, separated off from both his potential audiences, Beatrice herself, and the Florentine public. Rather than dealing, as the latter might expect, with straightforward and corporeal pursuit and conquest, the narrative proves to be concerned with perpetual postponement, its teleology shifting from the material to the spiritual. The transformation is emphasised by the way in which Dante narrates his reaction to the death of the beloved, an event which temporarily threatens the resolution of carnal into spiritual desire achieved while she is alive. His mourning, which prompts the dangerously sympathetic pity of the *donna gentile* (*V.N.* XXXV-XXXVIII), makes him a doubting Thomas, in danger of assuming that only what is directly observable to his own senses is significant (as when he toys with the idea of a love affair with the *donna gentile*; *V.N.* XXXVIII, 1-4). Paradoxically, he discovers that continuity – symbolised by his vision of Beatrice dressed in the same way as at their first encounter (*V.N.* XXXIX, 1) – can only be maintained by accepting the disruption of death, and taking on its exilic implications: only in resigning himself to physical blindness (almost literally, given the tear-induced eye-strain described in *V.N.* XXXIX, 4-5), to loving the non-visible, can he hope to rescue himself from Florentine moral *caecitas*, and to enjoy spiritual vision of the distant beloved (*V.N.* XLII).

In a significant anticipation of his later self-descriptions as an exile, Dante at the end of the *Vita nuova* narrative draws an association between himself and a group of pilgrims whom he sees passing through Florence on their way to the shrines of Rome (*V.N.* XL). The closing chapters stress that, like them, he has come to understand that corporeal objects – whether a church, a relic, or even the Florentine woman Beatrice – can be worth pursuing under conditions of considerable adversity and personal self-deprivation, because they remind their devotee of higher, non-corporeal values.[13] The last of the short lyrics collected in the narrative describes Dante's own spirit as a pilgrim or *peregrino*, journeying through the heavens in order to contemplate Beatrice in splendour, and then returning to Dante's body in order to communicate something of the heavenly glories to its expectant audience ('Oltre la spera', *V.N.* XLI). This function of the *peregrino spirito* in the sonnet is clearly analogous to that of Dante the author *vis-à-vis* his wider public. Having, through an arduous and at times alienating personal experience or journey, gained a privileged

insight into the spiritual concerns symbolised to him by Beatrice, he feels impelled to communicate something about them to those who have not themselves understood or reflected on such matters. This finds Dante already defining his role as poet in close relation to a pilgrim or exilic experience that paradoxically increases his importance to his own society by somehow separating him from it. This will be a role to which he returns in later life, at the point when political realities force him to confront once again, and more concretely, the problem of what it means to inhabit the worlds of politics and of letters as a 'peregrino lo quale è fuori de la sua patria' (*V.N.* XLI, 5).

iii. The Terminology of Exile

In confronting this question, Dante's personal understanding of what it meant to be an exile was influenced by his awareness of other exile figures from history and myth. If banishment attacked his identity as a *florentinus*, his culture offered him innumerable pointers as he began to construct for himself a new persona as *exul inmeritus* or as *peregrino*. *Exul*, the legal term for voluntary or for punitive banishment in Roman law, was glossed by Isidore of Seville as deriving from *extra solum*.[14] *Peregrino*, from the Latin *peregrinus*, is also frequently used by Dante to refer to an individual whose existence is in some sense not fully integrated into that of the surrounding community. The *Vita nuova* offers two definitions of the word: in its now more familiar sense, it means a pilgrim, 'one who journeys to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion';[15] but it may also be used, as Dante remarks, to indicate an expatriate, a stranger, someone far away from his place of birth (*V.N.* XL, 6; XLI, 5). The second meaning reveals the term's origins in the world of classical antiquity, where the Romans used the term to make a precise juristic distinction between citizens and strangers (*peregrini*).[16] The Stoic moralist Cicero could redefine the punishment of legal exile (*exilium*) as a form of 'perpetua peregrinatio' ('permanent *peregrinatio*'), suggesting that the sting of the sentence could be removed by changing its name.[17] With the Christianization of the Latin world, the term *peregrinus* became still more central to the understanding of the relationship between individual and society. The doctrine of original sin casts all human life since the Fall of Adam and Eve as a form of exile from our original homeland of Eden.[18] Subsequently, the historical events of Christ's

incarnation, death and resurrection open up a second homeland to humanity: the spiritual *patria* of Heaven. For Christian believers, the opposite of Cicero's inversion can thus be operated: even those fully integrated into civil society are urged to regard themselves as exiled from its concerns, treating human life itself as a *peregrinatio* or *exilium* from which spiritual repatriation follows only beyond the grave.[19]   Although a sense of community remains important to Christians, as individual sheep in the orderly flock of the Church, the community itself is nomadic, its members living in the world 'tamquam advenas et peregrinos' (1 Peter 2, 11). As we shall see, Dante's usage of the two terms *exul* and *peregrinus* takes account of both their literal, legal significance, and of their extended senses in the classical and in the Christian worlds.

iv. A Roman Attitude: The Exile-Philosopher

In Dante's first major work after his expulsion from Florence, the philosophical treatise *Convivio*, his self-description as *peregrino* clearly finds him modelling his experience on classical precedent, employing the term in its legal sense:

> Poi che fu piacere de li cittadini de la bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma, Fiorenza, di gittarmi fuori del suo dolce seno – nel quale nato e nutrito fui in fino al colmo de la vita mia, e nel quale, con buona pace di quella, desidero con tutto lo cuore di riposare l'animo stancato e terminare lo tempo che m'è dato – [...] peregrino, quasi mendicando sono andato, mostrando contra mia voglia la piaga de la fortuna. (*Conv.* I, iii, 4-5)

Later, in a list of Roman heroes in the last completed book of the treatise, the Latin exile Camillus is praised for his dignified conduct under a sentence of exile that he respected because of the 'senatoria autoritade' of his judges (*Conv.* IV, v, 15). Dante's stance of uncomplainingly accepting the *piacere* of the citizens of a town founded by Rome, and to which at this stage in his career he still accords high praise (*bellissima, famosissima*), positions him too within this tradition of virtuous exile.

In the *Convivio*, Dante plays not only on the legal and political precedents of Roman history, but on intellectual ones also. He makes it clear that his current activity, in setting out to write a philosophical

treatise, constitutes a rational and time-honoured reaction to the adversities of exile. Like the philosophers of the ancient world admired by Cicero,[20] he seeks to overcome the ignominy normally associated with exile, and stresses that his sentence does not match his conduct but makes him suffer 'pena *ingiustamente*, pena, dico, d'essilio e di povertate' (*Conv.* I, iii, 3; emphasis mine). He compares himself to Boethius, whose semi-autobiographical activity in composing the *Consolatio philosophiae* was undertaken 'acciò che sotto pretesto di consolazione escusasse la perpetuale infamia del suo essilio, mostrando quello essere ingiusto' (*Conv.* I, ii, 13). As Dante knew, Boethius was in turn following the example of a number of earlier classical writers who had evolved a literary tradition of consolatory writing urging endurance of the pains of exile.[21] Dante's familiarity with this genre – and probably with at least part of one of its most famous texts, Seneca's *Consolatio ad Helviam matrem* – is revealed in a letter where he once again asserts his own absence of fault, and celebrates his ability to maintain his intellectual equilibrium in any physical location in distinctly Senecan terms:

> Quidni? nonne solis astrorumque specula ubique conspiciam? nonne dulcissimas veritates potero speculari ubique sub celo, ni prius inglorium ymo ignominiosum populo Florentineque civitati me reddam?[22]

v. Classical Myth and the *fato profugus*

Seneca and the Stoics appealed to Dante's philosophical tastes, and provided him with models for exilic conduct and attitudes in the moral and political arena of the active life. As a creative writer, though, Dante was also strongly susceptible to the influence of poetry, and classical literature was able to provide him with numerous inspiring examples of fortitude and even success in the face of expatriation. The stories of the two great sea-wandering heroes of classical culture, Ulysses and Aeneas, had particular appeal for him, as the *Commedia* amply testifies.[23] The *Aeneid* is dedicated to an outcast figure who suffers violent deracination from his *patria*, but is also the triumphant founding father of Rome. In the *Commedia* Virgil is adopted as Dante-character's guide through Hell and Purgatory, and parallels are frequently drawn between the protagonist's journey and that of Aeneas,

making Dante too at times a victim of fortune, *fato profugus* (*Aeneid* I, 2): but like the commentators to Virgil that he knew, Dante can conceive of exiling fortune as instrument of a wise Providence, rather than blindly capricious.[24] In the case of Ulysses, although Dante did not know the Homeric texts, he engages enthusiastically with the idea of his voyages into alien worlds – and in *Inferno* XXVI, he even offers his own invented ending to the story of these journeys in which homecoming to Ithaca disappears, and Ulysses dies instead *extra solum*, in mid-ocean.

Both stories were allegorised by medieval interpreters as referring to the soul's journey towards God, confronting trials and temptations along the way. In the *Commedia*, Dante changes the two classical heroes into a pair of opposites. His rewriting of Ulysses' story turns his journeying into a kind of anti-pilgrimage, seeking out a 'mondo sanza gente' (*Inf.* XXVI, 117) rather than a known shrine, and so running counter to incarnational belief, which asserts that the markers left in the world by human history are of fundamental importance to mankind. By contrast, the *pietas* of Aeneas, who travels purposefully from one homeland to a new one, is shown by his carrying with him the Palladium and the *penates*. These precious relics remind the Trojans of their earthly origins, and also of the transcendent beings who can guide and help them in their life-journeys. As a result of his pious journey, Aeneas becomes the *pater patriae* of Rome, the city that Dante reveres for its political and cultural achievements. We have already seen that Dante described his own city of Florence as the 'bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma' (*Conv.* I, iii, 4), making a specific connection with this greatest city of antiquity. In doing so he was drawing on a well-established historiographic tradition, which claimed that Florence had been founded, and accorded special privileges, by Julius Caesar, giving it a direct lineal connection to Aeneas.[25] Florentine historiographers normally used the legends of Roman ancestry to celebrate and justify the city's economic and territorial expansionism. In the *Commedia*, by contrast, Dante outlines a rather different understanding of the Roman origins of the city in which the figure of Aeneas the Trojan exile, rather than Aeneas the Roman proto-Caesar, plays the more prominent part. He is frequently cited as the symbolic counterpart of Romano-Florentine Dante, whose persona is developed to make him another exile charged with the duty of preserving or refounding a moral heritage that has come to be neglected by the majority of his fellow-citizens.[26]

Aeneas is the protagonist of two journeys that provide Dante with inspiration in his poem, both the earthly journey from Troy to Italy, and the journey contained within that one, to the Elysian fields of the afterlife, described in *Aeneid* VI. Christian theology allows Dante to invest the second journey, as well as the first, with exilic implications: the living man is an alien in the world of the dead; but from a Christian viewpoint, the *catabasis* takes him (briefly) out of the *peregrinatio* of earthly life and into the homeland of the soul. This indeed is the double resonance evoked at the very beginning of the *Commedia*, where a first, explicit comparison is drawn between the Roman hero and the protagonist of the new poem. Dante-character appears in the poem in an emblematically exilic condition: lost in a wasteland, with no familiar landmarks or pathways, he is both literally a lost wayfarer or *peregrino*, and allegorically an *exul filius Evae*, seeking a spiritual path toward the Christian *patria* of Heaven.[27]

Dante-protagonist initially declares himself unworthy to enter the afterlife, with the disclaimer, 'Io non Enëa, io non Paulo sono' (*Inf.* II, 32) – St Paul being another heroic figure who briefly entered the realm of the blessed before his own death (II Corinthians 12, 2-4). But the point of the disclaimer is of course to remind the reader exactly how *like* them he actually is: as a Christian, he shares the faith of Paul in the eternal heavenly homeland of the soul; and as a Florentine and an exile, Aeneas shows him that the vicissitudes of an outcast can be reconstructed as a morally and politically exemplary experience. From this point on, the *Aeneid* functions as one of the most important frames of reference for Dante-character's journey, which will take him to a Paradise that is significantly described by Beatrice as 'quella Roma onde Cristo è romano' (*Purg.* XXXII, 102).

vi. Exile Landscape and Encounters

The assertion that Paradise is Roman reveals much about the extent to which Dante revered the achievements of the classical world. His political treatise, *Monarchia*, argues that the Roman Empire was sanctioned by God as holding universal authority; and in both the *Monarchia* and his political letters, he equates hostility to the Empire with barbarian imbecility.[28] His passionate conviction of the attractions of Roman culture and civil organisation recall, at times, the attitude of another famous classical exile writer, Ovid. Recent scholarship has highlighted the frequent echoes in Dante not only of

Ovid's works on love and of the *Metamorphoses*, but also of his exilic works, notably the *Tristia*.[29] Ovid's attitude to banishment in these works is anything but Stoic: he writes insistently of his acute nostalgia for Rome, and of his disorientation in the hostile landscape and the barbarous society of his exile in Tomis, on the Black Sea. As Michelangelo Picone has shown, these are notions that have a powerful influence on Dante – although he transforms them in ways that often drastically alter their original significance. Ovid's Rome-Tomis axis of civilisation versus barbarism is copied at times by Dante in his laments for the lost comforts of Florence; equally, though, he often reviles Florence for having herself become barbarian. In the afterworld of the *Commedia*, Hell's harsh landscape and crude inhabitants echo those of Tomis, while Dante-character, on arrival in the Christian homeland of Paradise, as a mortal among immortals is compared to a barbarian (originating from a barbarized Florence) visiting Rome:[30]

> Se i barbari, venendo di tal plaga
> che ciascun giorno d'Elice si copra,
> rotante col suo figlio ond'ella è vaga,
>   veggendo Roma e l'ardüa sua opra,
> stupefaciensi, quando Laterano
> a le cose mortali andò di sopra;
>   ïo, che al divino da l'umano,
> a l'etterno dal tempo ero venuto,
> e di Fiorenza in popol giusto e sano,
>   di che stupor dovea esser compiuto! (*Par.* XXXI, 31-40)

The continuation of these lines bring us to another aspect of Dante's construction of his exile persona: the emphasis that he lays on his role as poet. Dante compares himself once again to a *peregrino* (line 43; this time clearly a religious pilgrim), whose arrival at a shrine is accompanied by anticipation of the return journey, and a desire to 'ridir com'ello stea' (line 45). From the outset of the poem – with its exilic wilderness landscape – Dante has repeatedly drawn attention to his role as author of the text we are reading, and to the relationship that links writer and reader through a text that claims to 'dir qual'era' (*Inf.* I, 4 – the *Paradiso* echo of this wording is evident). As Giuseppe Mazzotta has argued, Dante's conception of the role of poet comes to be profoundly bound up with his role as exile: whether

we view the text of the *Commedia* as history, prophecy or fiction, in all cases it emanates from an outsider, who occupies the liminal space of an observer but whose words are directed to the heart of the political community.[31] Its language too is exilic: as Dante repeatedly reminds us, the attempt to approach 'al divino da l'umano' through the sensory medium of verbal communication will always find an unbridgeable divide between the word and its divine referent. The closer he approaches to the end of the *Paradiso*, the more he stresses the limitations of his attempt to represent divine perfection to a post-Lapsarian audience:

> Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio
> che 'l parlar mosra, ch'a tal vista cede,
> e cede la memoria a tanto oltraggio. (*Par.* XXXIII, 55-57)

vii. Exile Language: Illustrious or Barbarian?

In his earlier exile writings, however, Dante's statements on the language of poetry, and the act of poetic creation, arrive at rather different conclusions. The act of writing, rather than tending to reveal the inadequacies of human communication, is viewed more positively as extending and strengthening our capacity to express complex ideas satisfactorily (although we should note that at this stage, Dante's subject matter has not strayed into the realms of theology). A generally confident attitude towards vernacular language emerges from his philosophical *Convivio*, but his most sustained arguments on these issues appear in the treatise *De vulgari eloquentia*. The text of this work is incomplete, interrupted mid-way through its projected course, but in its extant form it provides an investigation of the history of language (especially within the Italian peninsula) and of the art of lyric composition. The ideas of the treatise are, undoubtedly, shaped by the experience of exile, which by removing Dante from his Florentine homeland seems to have prompted him to reflect on the linguistic diversity encountered in other Italian centres.[32]

His discussions of the Italian vernaculars (*D.V.E.* I, x-xv), and of vernacular poetry (*D.V.E.* II, i-xiv), are preceded by an initial analysis of the nature of human language (*D.V.E.* I, ii-iii), and a brief sketch of linguistic history from the Fall of Adam and Eve through to the aftermath of the destruction of the Tower of Babel (*D.V.E.* I, iv-ix).

Following Biblical tradition, human linguistic diversity is entirely ascribed to the hubris of the Babel project, and the etymology of that name – 'Babel, hoc est "confusio" ' (*D.V.E.* I, vii, 4) – stamps the resulting variety of languages as radically disordered and barbaric.[33] All subsequent forms of language are tainted by this confusion, with the sole exception, according to Dante, of the Adamic Hebrew *lingua gratiae* spoken among those who abstained from the Tower project, (*D.V.E.* I, vi, 5-6). This naturally includes all the languages spoken within his contemporary Italy, which are reviewed in highly unflattering terms in the second part of Book I. Only one of the post-Babelic languages seems to Dante to represent a serious attempt to reverse linguistic disorder, and to reconcile the exilic dispersal of knowledge and understanding among the different language groups. This is the Latin language of ancient Rome, which Dante asserts to have been artificially constructed – and is therefore termed a *gramatica* rather than a *vulgare* – especially so as to maintain stable communication in the face of temporal or geographical obstacles (*D.V.E.* I, ix, 11).[34]

The later chapters of *De vulgari*'s first book find Dante attempting to identify a language that could create a common means of communication within Italy, and that will provide a suitable medium for the writing of elevated verse (*D.V.E.* I, xi-xix). In a modest way, this language appears to share some characteristics of a *gramatica*. It is associated with the orderly environments of the princely *aula* and judicial *curia* (*D.V.E.* I, xviii), it is comprehensible through the whole length of the peninsula, and it is identified through evidence from written texts whose language shows a semi-artificial uniformity of forms and structures. It is also a language that Dante describes as metaphorically an exile: 'nostrum illustre [vulgare] velut acola peregrinatur et in humilibus hospitatur asilis' (*D.V.E.* I, xviii, 3).[35] This refugee status is due, precisely, to the absence of orderly institutions in contemporary Italy ('cum aula vacemus'; *D.V.E.* I, xviii, 3). The attempt to identify and promote this language, whose attractions can even console its user for his own exile (*D.V.E.* I, xvii, 6), produces echoes of a trope from classical exile writing: and it seems possible that Dante's engagement with this theme may have influenced his abandonment of prose treatise composition to embark on the narrative of the *Commedia*.[36]

It is a commonplace of Roman writing on exile to emphasise the linguistic alienation experienced by the cultivated Latin citizen in his

banishment, where he finds himself surrounded by speakers of cacophonously barbaric tongues. Whether enduring this with Senecan Stoicism, or engaging in Ovidian lament, the classical exile denigrates the language of his expatriate locality, whose clumsiness symbolises the lack of civilisation that prevails away from Rome. At times, the exiles express the fear that their own mastery of Latin will be undermined through lack of practice, deracinating them from the language as well as the site of their *patria*; in Ovid's case, the poet succumbs to the point of embarking on composition in the crude idiom of Tomis.[37] Dante, likewise, seems to experience exile in the *De vulgari* as an exposure to linguistic chaos: in his survey of the different cities and regions of Italy, including several that he visited in exile, he consistently comments on the ugliness and uncouthness of the majority of their languages.[38] However, for Dante, unlike his ancient predecessors, this cacophony extends into his homeland also, and although he admits an idiosyncratic fondness for his mother-tongue (*D.V.E.* I, vi, 3), he claims to be forced on objective grounds to classify Tuscan dialect in general as *turpiloquium* (*D.V.E.* I, xiii, 4). His condemnation of Florentine speech implies criticism also of its broader cultural and political confusion, and reveals the shadow cast by the Babel story over his linguistic thought. Florentine is a *lingua confusionis*; and when in the *Commedia* he characterises his homeland as a 'città partita' (*Inf.* VI, 61), we can understand it microcosmically to replicate the scattering of the peoples represented by Babel.

In the *De vulgari*, Dante envisages a small reversal of the Babel pattern, in the creation of a language of cohesion that will do for modern Italy something of what the *gramaticae* did for the great civilisations of antiquity. In this sense, there are still some echoes to be seen of Ovid's or Seneca's language trope: the author who cultivates the language of order despite surrounding confusion asserts the validity of his contribution to a wider culture of which he remains spiritually a member, despite his exile, countering barbarism by the continued articulation of civilised values. In the *De vulgari*, the pan-Italian illustrious language is deemed suitable for use only in fairly restricted circumstances – it may be in exile, but it is by no means to be adopted promiscuously. On the contrary, it is a highly exclusive medium, to be used only by the best writers to treat the best subjects in the best of metrical forms (*D.V.E.* II, i-iv).[39]

It can then come as a surprise to find the *Commedia* apparently contravening so many of the rules that Dante has laid down for the

treatment of serious subject-matter in his treatise, frequently adopting
what he there defined as the *stilus inferioris* of the *mediocris* or
humilis vulgaris (*D.V.E.* II, iv, 5-6). Its qualifications as an exile
poem appear not in adherence to the elegance of a supra-civilised
gramatica, but in a mixing of disparate elements which suggests that
its author has, in exile, become a master of many tongues. The *De
vulgari* confirms what the text of the *Commedia* could in itself show,
that Dante's contraventions of stylistic regulation are not naïve, but
must represent a deliberate choice by a writer who has a deep
understanding of and admiration for the classical literature from which
the medieval world had inherited its stylistic norms.[40] Considerable
evidence suggests that his decision to do so was influenced by another,
and supremely authoritative, textual model: that of the Bible. The
Bible's composite form and mixture of styles, its multiple authorship
and complex translation history, make it a heterogeneous text, its
style generally classified in the Middle Ages as *humilis*. This is the
register that Dante in the *De vulgari* associates with comedy: and the
title of his poem has given food for discussion to generations of
critics and commentators (as have the remarks on comedy in the
Epistle to Cangrande, whose Dantean authorship is still the subject of
scholarly debate).[41]

viii. Exile, Poetry and Community

Genre classifications are not, however, the object of present
discussion: and as I move towards conclusion, I wish to return to the
question of the links between poetry and exile that Dante draws in the
Commedia. The poem returns to the question of Adamic language, and
revises the statements of the *De vulgari*, making Adam assert the
arbitrariness of his own original language, and so drawing a still
stronger connection between the twinned Falls or diasporas of Eden
and of Babel. The *Commedia* finds Dante in fact reversing the whole
project of the *De vulgari*: rather than attempting to create a refined,
Italian tongue from which to counter the barbarous cacophony of
exile, he embraces linguistic diversity, including in his text elements
from different language groups – Italian dialects, Latin, even Occitan –
and coining his own neologisms, in a movement away from univocity
towards speaking the multiple tongues of exile (and the theological
dimensions for Dante of the theme of exile vastly extend its linguistic
field). It seems that this mixture of linguistic elements is a

requirement for the construction of the totality of his narrative. In the canto of the *Paradiso* where the poet makes the most sustained series of statements about the nature and intentions of his text, the nervous *io*-protagonist is urged to publish the narrative of the afterworld experience in its entirety: *'tutta* tua visïon fa manifesta' *(Par.* XVII, 128, emphasis mine). Self-censorship is not an option: and this applies to questions of style as well as of content, in a narrative universe where Dante asserts a mimetic link between the two, seeking in the *Inferno* 'le rime aspre e chiocce, / come si converebbe al tristo buco' *(Inf.* XXXII, 1-2), and asking God in the *Paradiso* that he 'fa la lingua mia tanto possente, / ch'una favilla sol della [sua] gloria / possa lasciare alla futura gente' *(Par.* XXXIII, 70-72).

It is in the *Paradiso* that Dante offers us a final definition of his role as poet in exile, and author of a poem profoundly engaged with the exilic meta-themes of salvation and damnation. The historical events of his exile, and the political squabbles that brought about banishment from Florence, are evoked in a succession of references to Florence that persist – as we saw earlier – into the final stage of the journey, where the city is named for the last time in the poem as the antithesis of what is *giusto e sano (Par.* XXXI, 39). There is, instead, an increasing focus on the idea of Paradise itself as Dante's (and all Christians') true *patria*, with the promise of a final repetition of the protagonist's present journey that will bring him back home from the exile of mortality: although this indeed has been made plain from the earliest stages of the journey, and in the many repetitions of the notion that earthly life is a form of *peregrinatio* that death resolves into either perpetual exile in Hell, or repatriation to Heaven. It is this spiritual understanding of the ultimate unimportance of earthly citizenship that allows Dante to make his last pronouncements on the biographical experience of political exile with such confidence. They draw together aspects of many of the exile traditions that we have reviewed thus far, which achieve resolution within the eschatological framework of the Christian story of Fall and redemption.

In *Paradiso* XV-XVII, Dante describes the encounter between his own narrative persona, and the idealised figure of one of his own ancestors, his great-great-grandfather, Cacciaguida. The inspiration for the meeting is Virgilian, and Dante makes a direct allusion to the Elysian meeting between the 'pïa [...] ombra d'Anchise' *(Par.* XV, 25) and Aeneas. As in the *Aeneid*, the traveller's meeting with his forebear provides the occasion for an explanation of the happy outcome that

the expatriate's journey will produce, although in Dante's case the emphasis lies on spiritual rather than imperial inheritance. At a historical and political level, the cities of Aeneas and of Dante are explicitly drawn together when Cacciaguida reveals that Florentine family entertainment in the age of civic virtue included the recitation of stories 'd'i Troiani, di Fiesole e di Roma' (*Par*. XV, 126). He suggests that Dante's contemporaries have lost the habit of remembering ancestral, Aenean virtue.[42] Echoing the Trojan parallel, the town's moral decline can only be reversed through the exertions of an individual prepared to recognise that the revival of morality requires deracination, quest and self-sacrifice. The message, coming from a soldier whose martyr-like exertions have earned him citizenship of the eternal *patria* of Heaven, after journeying far from Florence on the military pilgrimage of crusade, carries conviction.[43] As we saw earlier, Beatrice was designated in *Inferno* (XV, 90) as the likely source of clarification of the various indirect allusions to banishment made earlier in the journey, but Cacciaguida's assumption of the role allows Dante to heighten its impact through the Virgilian intertextual framework.

Dante-character accepts the news of his exile stoically,[44] but asks Cacciaguida anxiously about the extent to which he should continue to seek a public audience for his writing in the difficult circumstances of banishment. In the course of the journey, he says,

> ho io appreso quel che s'io ridico,
> a molti fia sapor di forte agrume;
>   e s'io al vero son timido amico,
> temo di perder viver tra coloro
> che questo tempo chiameranno antico. (*Par*. XVII, 116-20)

The reply to this question provides the poet's vindication of his own work, placed in the mouth of Cacciaguida, spokesman both for Florence and for Providence. The purpose of Dante-character's journey has been to provide him with information about spiritual, but also moral and political values, which he must communicate on to fellow-Florentines, Italians and the wider world. The crusading martyr knows that truth may have to be defended through personal suffering and sacrifice in the cause of the divine plan for humanity, and that these should not be avoided to maintain personal comfort. Dante's poem is

said to bring a combination of irritation and relief to human events, like the curative effects of an unpleasant-tasting medicine:

> Ché se la voce tua sarà molesta
> nel primo gusto, vital nodrimento
> lascerà poi, quando sarà digesta. (*Par.* XVII, 130-32)

Dante's role as poet is nutritive and curative, bringing a salvationary message of truth to its readers. The closing image for the poem is especially striking: 'Questo tuo grido farà come vento, / che le piú alte cime piú percuote' (*Par.* XVII, 133-34). The poet achieves almost prophetic status, with his urgent *grido* of witness and reform.

The image is reminiscent of John the Baptist's 'vox clamantis in deserto' (Matthew 3, 3); and, like the allusions to Aeneas that we have encountered, this is a highly appropriate point of reference for a Florentine in exile. St John was the patron saint of Florence, and his name is cited repeatedly by Dante in the course of the *Commedia*, with reference to his native town. He is also in the Bible the last of the prophets of the Messiah, who symbolically takes up a position outside the city walls, in the wilderness, and addresses a message of reform to towns whose excessive arrogance is bringing them into moral and spiritual danger.[45] Dante describes him in *Paradiso* XXXII as one who 'il diserto e il martiro sofferse' (*Par.* XXXII, 31). For the protagonist of the poem, and for his authorial *alter ego* Dante-poet, the journeys of exile and of poetry-writing from the 'selva selvaggia ed aspra e forte' (*Inf.* I, 5) that opens the narrative, to the 'vera città' (*Purg.* XIII, 95; XVI, 96) of Heaven mimic that of the martyr whose execution won him a seat in Paradise. But there remains a constant concern with Florence, the city of the Baptist, and with the need to convey an urgent spiritual message to its inhabitants. Cacciaguida shows Dante how his words in the wilderness of exile will bear witness to the divine plan for humanity, and to the working of historical pattern in human affairs, that bring the voice of the exile out of the desert and into the heart of the city, to urge its moral and political refoundation.

As we have seen earlier, Dante's last allusion to Florence in the *Commedia* is followed by a reiteration of his own role as poet-*peregrino* (*Par.* XXXI, 39). The image of the *peregrino*, with its emphasis on journey-narrative, can be linked to words spoken by Christ, the *verbum Dei*, himself. In the Gospel of St John, Christ

asserts that 'Ego sum via, veritas et vita' (John 14, 6): and Dante's *Commedia* imitates this statement both literally and figuratively. David Williams notes the correspondences drawn by medieval writers between Christ as *peregrinus*, sojourning briefly on earth, and the author: 'the poet who "expels" words from the mouth, "exiles" them from their author and their homeland in the mind [...] As the exiled Word of God brings redemption to the world, so [...] does the exiled word of the poet bring doctrine and truth to its audience'.[46] In its literal story, the protagonist of the *Commedia* follows a *via*, pilgrim-like; but this *via* is also, allegorically that of 'la nostra *vita*' (*Inf.* I, 1; emphasis mine), with all its pilgrim or exilic implications. And the poem deals with *veritas* – with serious and fundamental truths about human existence that will help the pilgrim and his audience on their allegorical life's journey to the heavenly city of Paradise. The poem's narrative is predicated on circular patterns of departure and return that maintain a continual tension between the yesterdays, todays and tomorrows of the pseudo-autobiographical experience, and which make it both personal, and universal. In its constant references to journeying and to transition, the *Commedia* can be understood as in many senses an exile or pilgrim poem, not only thematically, but also narratologically. The language of exile, which Dante applies so poignantly to himself and to his own biography, reaches greater resonance in the Christian poetics of the *Commedia*, to become the language of the human condition, and of both the secular and the spiritual worlds where we seek to define our identity, and assert the worth of our existence.

NOTES

[1] The signature appears in *Ep.* III, V, VI and VII.

[2] Anne Paolucci notes the apparent irresistibility to many modern commentators of drawing direct comparisons between Dante's experience and that of twentieth-century exiles, in 'Exile among Exiles: Dante's party of one', *Mosaic*, 8 (1975), 117-25 (p. 119).

[3] Gerhart B. Ladner's rich study of medieval exile themes, 'Homo Viator: Mediaeval Ideas on Alienation and Order', *Speculum*, 42 (1967), 233-59, offers some stimulating opening remarks on 'the apparently inexhaustible possibilities of application of the concept of alienation to the realities of our age' (pp. 233-34).

⁴ For reasons of space, I am compelled to omit discussion of much Dantean material: not only of innumerable passages from the *Commedia* where the theme of exile is present, but also of the important lyric poem 'Tre donne intorno al cor mi son venute' (*Rime* CIII), of Dante's political epistles (*Ep.* V, VI and VII) and the possibly non-Dantean epistle to Cangrande (*Ep.* XIII), and the Latin *Eclogues*. There is a vast bibliography on the motifs of exile and peregrinatio in Dante: the works cited *ad locum* in the following discussion represent a small sample from the scholarship on this subject.

⁵ 'Exile, Self and Society', in *Exile in Literature*, ed. by M.-I. Lagos-Pope (Lewisberg: Bucknell University Press, 1988), pp. 15-31, (p. 17).

⁶ See Edwards, pp. 15-19; D. Williams, 'The Exile as Uncreator', *Mosaic* 8 (1975), 1-14 (p. 1); A. L. Motto & J. R. Clark, 'The Development of the Classical Tradition of Exile to Seneca', *Mosaic*,. 8 (1975), 109-15 (pp. 110-13).

⁷ See *Convivio* I, iii, 3-5; *De vulgari eloquentia* I, vi, 3.

⁸ In *Inferno*, *tornare* is referred to as an *arte* (*Inf.* X, 51, 77, 81) – as if being in exile, or returning from it, were a specialised practical or intellectual skill. *Paradiso* XXV opens with a wistful expression of hope that Florence may repeal the sentence of banishment, so that the poet may *ritornare* (line 8) to receive acclaim as author of the *Commedia*, on the basis of his poetic art. On Dante's Florentine identity, see C. Honess, 'City, Garden, Wilderness: Insiders and Outsiders in Dante's *Commedia*', *New Readings,* 1 (1995), 5-40 (p. 7); M. Picone, 'Dante, Ovidio e la poesia dell'esilio', *Rassegna europea di letteratura italiana,* 14 (1999), 7-23 (pp. 13-14); M. Shapiro, *De vulgari eloquentia: Dante's Book of Exile* (Lincoln, Neb. and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), pp. 1-3.

⁹ See Shapiro, pp. 19-21. In the *Commedia*, Brunetto initially strains to perceive the travellers Dante and Virgil (*Inf.* XV, 18-21): this is physically ascribable to infernal obscurity, but also classes him morally with the imperceptive citizens his speech condemns. Moreover, as Giuseppe Mazzotta notes, Dante's Brunetto is guilty of the sin of Sodom, glossed in patristic exegesis as *caecitas*. Mazzotta's comments on the broader exile framework of his spiritual 'bando' (*Inf.* XV, 81) in damnation, and Dante's paradisal homeward destination ('a ca' '; *Inf.* XV, 54), address another essential aspect of the canto's

exile references: *Dante, Poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in the 'Divine Comedy'* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 138-40; G. Mazzotta, 'Dante and the Virtues of Exile', in *Exile in Literature*, pp. 49-71 (pp. 50-51).

[10] Although, as we shall see, when the references to exile are finally clarified in *Paradiso* the speaker is not in fact Beatrice.

[11] These translations are offered by Jennifer Petrie and June Salmons in their edition of the *Vita nuova* (Dublin: Belfield Italian Library, 1994), p. 46, n. 1.

[12] This is discussed in detail by Michelangelo Picone, 'Peregrinus Amoris: la metafora finale', in M. Picone, *Vita nuova e tradizione romanza* (Padua: Liviana, 1978), pp. 129-92.

[13] The notion of the pilgrim as exile will be investigated in more detail below: the connection is fundamental to this part of the *Vita nuova*. See B. Basile, 'Dante e l'idea di "peregrinatio" ', in *Il tempo e le forme: studi letterari da Dante a Gadda* (Modena: Mucchi, 1990), pp. 9-36 (pp. 11-12); Picone, *Tradizione romanza*, pp. 182-87; Picone, 'Poesia dell'esilio', pp. 9-10.

[14] *Etymologiae* 5, 27, 28, cited in Edwards, p. 16. Motto & Clark note that exile remained voluntary until the last century of the Roman Republic, but later became extensively used as a punitive measure, pp. 110-11. See also Edwards, pp. 17-18.

[15] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 6th edn, ed. by J. B. Sykes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). On religious pilgrimage in the Middle Ages, see Picone, *Tradizione romanza*, pp. 141-44; B. Du Gaiffier, 'Pellegrinaggi e culto dei santi: refléxions sur le thème du Congrès', in *Pellegrinaggi e culto dei santi in Europa fino alla 1a Crociata*, ed. by G. Ermini (Todi: Accademia Tudertina, 1963) pp. 11-35 (pp. 21-34).

[16] Du Gaiffier, p. 12.

[17] Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes*, V. 107: the passage distinguishes carefully between the *rerum naturam* and the *ignominiam nominis* and additionally recalls the endurance of exile by numerous *philosophi nobilissimi*. See Du Gaiffier, p. 12.

[18] Judaism had extensively developed the idea that true believers should regard themselves as strangers to the world, using the many examples of nomadic wandering and diaspora in the Hebrew Scriptures; the notion was further extended by the first Christian Apostles: see Edwards, pp. 16, 19; Ladner, pp. 235-38; Mazzotta, *Poet of the*

Desert, pp. 4-5; Mazzotta, 'Virtues of Exile', pp. 52-53; Honess, pp. 13-17; Picone, *Tradizione romanza*, pp. 132-41. The Marian prayer *Salve Regina* (sung by the noblemen of *Purgatorio* VII, 82), describes humanity as *exules filii*.

[19] This concept, developed by the Apostles, notably St Paul, receives perhaps its most famous treatment in St Augustine of Hippo's monumental *De civitate Dei*. The influence of this work on medieval moral and political thought is immense: Augustinian thought in Dante is discussed, with up-to-date bibliography, in P. S. Hawkins, 'St Augustine', in *The Dante Encyclopaedia*, ed. by R. Lansing (New York: Garland, 2000), pp. 71-72; Mazzotta, *Poet of the Desert*, pp. 147-91; Picone, *Tradizione romanza*, pp. 136-39.

[20] See note 17 above.

[21] On Boethius in Dante, see, Mazzotta, *Poet of the Desert*, pp. 319-28; M. Chiarenza, 'Boethius', in *Dante Encyclopaedia*, pp. 118-19. Connections between Boethius' *Consolatio* and the Senecan tradition are discussed by G. Mezzadroli, *Seneca in Dante: dalla tradizione medievale all'officina dell'autore* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1990), pp. 15-16 (pp. 102-05).

[22] *Ep.* XII, 4. The parallels in wording and in structure between this passage and section VIII of Seneca's *Ad Helviam* in particular are highlighted by Mezzadroli, pp. 82-86.

[23] The literature on these two figures in Dante is vast: thorough discussion and up-to-date bibliography are provided in the *Dante Encyclopaedia* articles by C. Kallendorf, 'Aeneas', pp. 6-7, '*Aeneid*', pp. 7-8, and by T. Barolini, 'Ulysses', pp. 842-47. See also Mazzotta, *Poet of the Desert*, pp. 66-106 (on Ulysses), pp. 147-91 (on Aeneas); L. Pertile, 'Ulisse, Guido e le sirene', *Studi Danteschi*, 65 (2000), 101-18 (pp. 106-11).

[24] In *Paradiso* XVII, fortune is invoked twice as the instrument of Dante's exile, described as 'colp[o] di ventura' (*Par.* XVII, 24) and as 'fortuna [che] mi s'appressa' (line 26); the passage is further discussed below. Mazzotta, *Poet of the Desert*, discusses the Virgilian, Boethian and patristic antecedents for Dante's conception of *fortuna* (pp. 319-28).

[25] The fundamental study of this tradition is still N. Rubinstein, 'The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence: A Study in Mediaeval Historiography', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5 (1942), 198-227; more recent scholarship is extensively reviewed in

T. Maissen, 'Attila, Totila e Carlo Magno fra Dante, Villani, Boccaccio e Malispini. Per la genesi di due leggende erudite', *Archivio storico italiano*, 152 (1994), 561-639.

[26] Florence's characteristic sin of 'superbia' (*Inf.* VI, 74) is also that of Troy, 'superbo Ilion' (*Inf.* I, 75).

[27] See note 18 above.

[28] The divine authority of Rome is one of the three main theses of the *Monarchia*: it is argued at greatest length in Book II. The treatise reviles resistance to the thesis as bestial, diseased and insane in I, xvi, 4-5; as wicked, shameful and avaricious in III, iii, 17. The enemies of Rome are described as barbarian in *Ep.* V. 4 and VI. 6.

[29] Picone, 'Poesia dell'esilio', is the most recent study, providing a wealth of stimulating suggestions about the relationship, and supplying bibliography on this relatively neglected aspect of Ovid in Dante.

[30] For all the foregoing, see Picone, 'Poesia dell'esilio', pp. 13-19; Honess, without reference to Ovid, comments on Dante's imagery of barbarianism, pp. 10-11, 17, 21-22.

[31] The concept is developed extensively in Mazzotta, *Poet of the Desert*; see also Mazzotta, 'Virtues of exile', especially pp. 52-54, 65.

[32] His exile is mentioned twice in the treatise: I, vii, 3 and xvii, 6.

[33] Dante's aesthetic hierarchisation of the Babelic confusion makes the more skilled workers speak more crude languages: misuse of skills in one area of human intellectual exertion (architecture) is punished in an unwieldly and barbaric new language ('rudius nunc barbariusque locuntur'; *D.V.E.* I, vii, 7). See Shapiro, p. 24. Ladner notes the importance to the medieval world of Babel as 'a great symbol of estrangement of man from God and of men from men' (p. 235).

[34] Dante mentions other artificial *gramaticae* invented by the ancient Greeks 'et alii' (*D.V.E.* I, i, 3): however, his principal model is clearly that of Latin – unsurprisingly, given his enthusiastic admiration for Roman achievements of all kinds.

[35] Shapiro points out the paradox that Dante, in attempting to identify a supra-local *vulgare illustre*, wishes its poet-users to experience their own linguistic exile, from their native local tongues (pp. 8-9).

[36] Both *Convivio* and *De vulgari* appear to date from much the same period (c. 1303-07), and both are abandoned uncompleted. Scholars generally agree that it is only at a much later date that Dante returns to

the writing of philosophical treatises. The *Quaestio* dates from the penultimate year of his life; the *Monarchia*, although its composition date is still disputed, is generally thought to have been composed around a decade after Dante had embarked on the project of writing the *Commedia*.

[37] R. Degl'Innocenti Pierini, *Tra Ovidio e Seneca* (Bologna: Patron, 1990), pp. 118-22. See Seneca, *Ad Polybium* 18, 9; in Ovid, see for example *Ex Ponto* IV, xiii, 17-22; *Tristia* V, vii, 17-30; 51-65; xii, 55-66.

[38] On occasions, he uses the terminology of barbarianism for different languages – the Apulians 'barbarizant' (*D.V.E.* I, xii, 7), Trevisan usage is 'barbarissimum' (*D.V.E.* I, xiv, 5) – and he criticizes 'montaninas [...] et rusticas loquelas' (*D.V.E.* I, xi, 6) with all the fastidiousness of an heir to Rome's urban traditions.

[39] On connections in the treatise between form and content, see Shapiro, pp. 191-93.

[40] See Z. G. Baranski, ' "Tres enim sunt manerie dicendi...": Some Observations on Medieval Literature, "Genre", and Dante', in *'Libri poetarum in quattuor species dividuntur': Essays on Dante and 'Genre'*, ed. by Z. G. Baranski, Supplement 2 of *The Italianist* 15 (1995), 9-60.

[41] The questions of genre raised by the *Commedia*'s title form a whole area of Dante scholarship in themselves. For recent discussion of stylistic and generic issues, see Baranski, ' "Tres enim" ', especially pp. 42-45; Z. G. Baranski, 'Dante, the Roman Comedians, and the Medieval Theory of Comedy', in *'Libri poetarum'*, pp. 61-99, especially pp. 66-77. Albert Russell Ascoli's discussion of the vexed questions relating to the epistle to Cangrande (*Dante Encyclopaedia*, pp. 347-52) is informative.

[42] As previously mentioned (see note 25 above), Florentine tradition ascribed the city's foundation to Caesar, thus giving it Roman, and ultimately Trojan, ancestry.

[43] See Picone, 'Poesia dell'esilio', p. 19. On crusade and pilgrimage, see Du Gaiffier, pp. 14-15; also Ladner, who also comments on the interplay of concepts of order and alienation in the mythologizing of Christian knighthood (pp. 246-47).

[44] His assertion that the 'colpo' of exile 'è piú grave a chi piú s'abbandona' (*Par.* XVII, 107-08) recalls the uncomplaining dignity of the attitude to exile advocated by Seneca or Cicero.

[45] On the *Commedia* and the prophetic tradition, see Mazzotta, *Poet of the Desert*, p. 299, Mazzotta, 'Virtues of exile', p. 54.

[46] Williams' study refers specifically to Anglo-Saxon literature, but additionally cites patristic and later exegetical traditions; see also Ladner, p. 250, Picone, *Tradizione romanza*, p. 134.