Dante the Lyric and Ethical Poet

Dante lirico e etico

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LEGENDA

Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing
2010

CHAPTER 5

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Dante's First Dream between Reception and Allegory: The Response to Dante da Maiano in the *Vita nova*

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In a group of infrequently studied poems exchanged between Onesto da Bologna and Cino da Pistoia, Onesto critiques the new style Cino has adapted from his influences, namely 'Guido' and 'Dante'.[1] In '"Mente" ed "umile" e più di mille sporte' ['Mind' and 'humble' and more than a thousand basketfuls], he targets the overuse of certain terms on the part of these poets (such as 'mente' and 'umile'), their philosophizing ('vostro andare filosofando', l. 6), their dreaming ('vostro andar sognando', l. 2), and their frequent use of personification and apostrophe ('vostro parlare in terzo con altrui' [your speaking in the third person with someone else], l. 10). In 'Bernardo, quel dell'arco del Diamasco' [Bernardo, that one with the bow of Damascus], he singles out Dante for his critique, identifying him as that poet 'che sogna e fa spirti dolenti' [who dreams and makes sad spirits] (l. 3). Cino responds, in 'Bernardo quel gentil che porta l'arco' [Bernardo, that noble one who carries the bow], that the 'dreamer' writes like Mark, 'quei che sogna scrive come Marco' (l. 3), and that, together with Love, he soars so high that he leaves the rest behind: 'e' van sì alto ch'ogn'uom riman basso' (l. 4). In a stand-alone poem, the sonnet 'Non so s'è per mercé mi vien meno' [I don't know if it is for lack of pity], Onesto ironically invokes Dante and company — those poets who dream of scattered spirits and who have tired every man on earth ('voi che sognate i spiriti sparti | e che nn'avete stanco ogn'om tereno', ll. 7–8) — asking them to intervene on his behalf with his lady. Onesto wishes to see her 'd'umiltà vestita' [clothed with humility] (l. 12), an explicit allusion to Dante's sonnet from the *Vita nova*, 'Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare' [Such sweet decorum and such gentle graces],[2] where Beatrice is praised as 'd'umiltà vestuta' (XXVI. 6, l. 6) [17. 6]. Despite this verbal echo, Onesto's goal-oriented request stands in sharp contrast with the disinterested praise that characterizes Dante's self-defined *poesia della lode*.

Onesto's critique of what he sees as the mannered style of Cino and his poetic fathers may now seem short-sighted. But, he does demonstrate how clearly contemporaries were able to identify the innovative poetics inaugurated by Cavalcanti and Dante, whether they approved of them or not. In this case, Onesto's references to

spirits, philosophizing, and frequent apostrophe and personification could equally describe the poetry of Cavalcanti or Dante. However, the singling out of the terms *umile* and *umiltà* seems especially aimed at Dante's poetry at the time of the *Vita nova*. (Onesto died around 1303, well before the publication of the *Commedia*.) Moreover, Cino's defence of Dante as the poet who writes like Mark — presumably the Evangelist — and who flies with Love is consistent with our contemporary understanding of the *Vita nova*. Numerous studies have established the extent of Dante's scriptural borrowings in the *Vita nova*, and the religious, even theological, basis for his philosophy of Love. Somewhat less expected and less transparent are the reasons why Onesto derisively characterizes Dante and the stilnovists as dreamers. It is similarly curious that both Onesto and Cino would refer to Dante, in the midst of a debate about poetic style, as 'that one who dreams'.

My claim here is that Onesto and Cino had it right: dreams and dream theory are fundamental for understanding Dante's poetic enterprise in the *Vita nova*. Although Dante's dreams in *Purgatorio* have received significant, if hardly exhaustive attention,[3] the dreams in the *Vita nova* have been relatively neglected.[4] Yet, within this early work, dreams hold a privileged position as the place in which Dante can explore some of the most delicate questions about the truth and fiction of his poetry. Like poems, dreams contain metaphorical signs, and, as in poems, these metaphorical signs were traditionally understood to be portals either to hidden, higher meaning or to deceptions and illusions. Dante draws on the middleness of dreams, their ambiguous status between the earthly and divine, between truth and falsehood, in order to similarly locate the middleness of his literary endeavour, which is neither outright prophecy nor simple fable. Not coincidentally, some of the deepest truths of the *Vita nova* are revealed as outwardly false dreams.

Another important parallel between dreams and poems is that most dreams need to be interpreted. The prophetic dream in particular can be interpreted either by the dreamer himself or by a second party, as in the biblical tale of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel. In the *Vita nova*, Dante assumes both roles. He collects his poems — including his poems about dreams — and weaves them together vis-à-vis an autobiographical narrative in prose which explains their origins and context. In addition to these introductory *ragioni*, he provides exegetical 'divisions' which more closely gloss the poetic texts. At the same time, alongside such self-commentary, Dante represents in his narrative several competing historical interpreters, including the 'famous poets' and the 'ladies', who express alternative, historically specific perspectives on his poetry. These potential Daniels set up a tension within the work between the past and future reception of Dante's texts, between the original audience for his lyric poems and the intended audience for his poems plus their commentary.

The hermeneutic process set in motion by a dream, as in the interpretive contest run by Nebuchadnezzar, is thus not unlike what takes place in the publication of a poem. Dante collapses the two in the first poem of the *Vita nova*, 'A ciascun'alma presa e gentil core' [To every loving heart and captive soul] (III. 10–12) [1. 21–23]. In this sonnet, he recounts a mysterious dream in which Love feeds Beatrice the poet's fiery heart. Unable to ascertain its meaning, Dante requests for the dream to be

interpreted by 'every captive soul and gentle heart' (l. 1). According to the prose, the poem was in fact circulated among the 'famosi trovatori' [famous poets] (III. 9) [1. 20], and yet no one at the time understood its true meaning, which is now obvious to even 'li più semplici' [the least sophisticated] (III. 15) [2. 2]. At the outset of the *Vita nova*, Dante thereby sets up a parallel between the interpretation of his dreams and of his poems. In this case, the misinterpretation of Dante's first dream coincides with the misinterpretation by the famous poets of his first poem.

Among the various interpretations, 'diverse sententie' (III. 14) [2. 1], Dante received for 'A ciascun'alma', three are extant: 'Vedeste, al mio parere, ogni valore' [What you saw, I think, was all nobility] by Guido Cavalcanti, 'Naturalmente chere ogne amadore' [It is a law of nature that every lover] by Terino da Castelfiorentino (or perhaps by Cino da Pistoia), and 'Di ciò che stato sè dimandatore' [The matter you have asked me about] by Dante da Maiano.[5] Although never explicitly mentioned in the *Vita nova*, there are several reasons why da Maiano's response is particularly relevant for understanding the sort of opposition Dante encountered to his oneiric poetics. For one, in 'Di ciò che stato sè dimandatore', da Maiano claims that Dante's dream was nothing more than the side effect of a feverish illness. As a polemical response to the symbolism and poetic language of the sonnet, he treats the imagery of 'A ciascun'alma' as largely meaningless symptoms of an obstructed cognitive faculty. This contrast between the two Dantes is further illustrated by another one of da Maiano's sonnets, 'Provedi, saggio, ad esta visïone' [You who are intelligent, consider this vision].[6] Like Dante in 'A ciascun'alma', in 'Provedi, saggio' da Maiano describes a dream and asks his peers to interpret it. Da Maiano's poem, however, is characterized by realism, sexuality, and scepticism about the language of poetry and dreams. Seeming to disregard this scepticism, in the sonnet 'Savete giudicar vostra ragione' [You know how to interpret your theme] Dante responds to the dream in the most idealizing terms possible.

The first section of this essay will consider the semiotic challenge 'Di ciò che stato sè dimandatore' poses to 'A ciascun'alma' in light of the latter's role in establishing the allegorical structure of the *Vita nova*. The second section will investigate the background for this metaliterary debate in the poetic exchanges involving Dante, da Maiano and other poets in which dreams are discussed. Only within this broader context of poems about dreams can we fully understand the epistemological stakes behind Dante's selection of 'A ciascun'alma' as the paradigmatic first poem of his literary autobiography.

Since Dante avoids discussing the historical responses to 'A ciascun'alma', other than to mention that none of them correctly judges the meaning of his dream, one might argue that they fall outside the confines of an inquiry into the *Vita nova*. One of the methodological premises of this essay, however, is that every 'right' answer incorporates the story of the 'wrong' answers preceding it. My argument will be informed by this dialectical understanding of Dante's reaction to the responses of his first dream. Specifically, I will propose, in the third section of this essay, that one of these wrong answers, da Maiano's 'Di ciò che stato sè dimandatore', remains an implicit presence in the *Vita nova*, and is especially a factor in the episode surrounding the *canzone* 'Donna pietosa e di novella etate' [A very young

and sympathetic lady] (XXIII. 17–28) [14. 17–28]. The central *canzone* of the *Vita nova* describes a dream about the central event of the work, the death of Beatrice. In addition, as scholars have noted, various scriptural echoes in the dream are employed as a means for establishing Beatrice as a Christ figure in Dante's life. Yet despite its fundamental role within the narrative, Dante is at pains in both the poem and the prose to underscore the falseness of the dream, its illusory status. In particular, he characterizes it as the symptom of a feverish illness, in language that directly recalls da Maiano's response to 'A ciascun'alma'. As we shall see, da Maiano's 'Di ciò che stato sè dimandatore' will be instrumental for Dante in establishing the apparent paradoxes of his poetic truth through the paradox of a prophetic yet illusory dream.

In large part, what authorizes the paradox of a true false dream is a meditation on humility that informs the *Vita nova* as a whole. The experience of radical humility causes Dante to re-evaluate the status of disease-induced visions just as he re-evaluates the status of suffering and death. With respect to dream theory, the consequences of this process of re-evaluation are both ethical and sociological. The possibility that even the lowly pathological dream might transmit a higher truth implies a social expansion, in line with an ethos of Christian revelation, as to who can receive true signs. It also raises the related question as to who is capable of interpreting dreams and, by association, poems; in the case of 'A ciascun'alma', the famous poets or the simplest? In the concluding section of this essay, I investigate these contrasting audiences for Dante's dream poetry. Considering the sophisticated literary theory articulated vis-à-vis dream theory in the *Vita nova*, it is hard to imagine that Dante's interlocutors would be anyone besides famous poets. At the same time, Dante's privileging of revealed events over textual interpretation, which is first established in the presentation of 'A ciascun'alma', is part of a critical dialogue with contemporaries about who has access to poetic truth. In this respect, even Dante's universalizing, allegorical poetry can itself be viewed as a symbolic form with a polemical message: that increasingly he will be concerned in his poetic career with a radically new public, one which includes even the evangelical simplest.

The Symbols of 'A ciascun'alma' vs the Symptoms of 'Di ciò che stato sè dimandatore'

We may never be able to reconstruct the precise circumstances in which Dante was first publicly recognized as a poet. Nor can we know for certain which poems he first circulated or how they were received by contemporaries. However, despite our lack of outside sources, Dante himself does tell us something about his poetic novitiate, or at least about how he wants future readers to remember it. At the beginning of the *Vita nova*, he restages his literary initiation by describing the reception of 'A ciascun'alma' by contemporary poets. In this way, as is often the case with Dante, he exploits the historical reception of an earlier work as the content for a new work, translating the interpretation of a lyric poem into material for a subsequent narrative.[7] The presentation of 'A ciascun'alma' thus establishes a temporal and structural model for Dante's autobiographical *prosimetrum*, in which

discrete lyric events are reinterpreted by the prose as the founding moments of a continuous narrative.

For the subject matter of his literary christening, Dante chooses to recount a curious dream: Love has appeared to him in human form, carrying Dante's beloved Beatrice asleep in his arms. At first, with his joyous countenance, this God of Love, announcing himself with 'Ego dominus tuus' [I am your Lord] in the prose (III. 3) [1. 14], would seem to be a harbinger of future happiness. However, his appearance also strikes the dreaming poet as frightening to behold, 'di pauroso aspetto' (III. 3) [1. 14]: a fear justified when Love shows Dante that he holds the latter's burning heart — 'Vide cor tuum' [Behold your heart] in the prose (III. 5) [1. 16] — in his possession. In fact, Love proceeds to wake Beatrice and feed her Dante's heart, which she consumes with trepidation. Finally, Love, now weeping bitter tears, disappears with Beatrice toward heaven, 'verso lo cielo' (III. 7) [1. 18].

Confronted with this mysterious, emblematic dream, Dante decides to ask for help from the 'famosi trovatori' (III. 9) [1. 20] of his time, sending them a description of it in the following sonnet:

A ciascun'alma presa e gentil core
nel cui cospetto ven lo dire presente,
in ciò che mi rescrivan suo parvente,
salute in lor segnor, cioè Amore.

Già eran quasi che atterzate l'ore
del tempo che onne stella n'è lucente,
quando m'apparve Amor subitamente,
cui essenza membrar mi dà orrore.

Allegro mi sembrava Amor tenendo
meo core in mano, e ne le braccia avea
madonna involta in un drappo dormendo.

Poi la svegliava, e d'esto core ardendo
lei paventosa umilmente pascea:
appresso gir lo ne vedea piangendo.

[To every loving heart and captive soul
Into whose sight these present words may come
For fair elucidation in reply,
Greetings I bring for their sweet lord's sake, Love.

The first three hours of night were almost spent
The time that every star shines down on us,
When Love appeared to me so suddenly
That I still shudder at the memory.

Joyous Love seemed to me, the while he held
My heart within his hands, and in his arms
My lady lay asleep wrapped in a veil.

He woke her then and trembling and obedient
She ate that burning heart out of his hand;
Weeping I saw him then depart from me.] (III. 10–12) [1. 21–23]

Among the many responses Dante received for this sonnet, he identifies only one poem by name, the sonnet 'Vedeste, al mio parere, onne valore', authored by Guido Cavalcanti, who is referred to throughout the *Vita nova* with the epithet of 'first friend': 'primo de li miei amici' (III. 14) [2. 1], 'primo amico' (XXV. 10) [16. 10]. Dante claims, moreover, that this ritualized literary-interpretive exchange formed the basis for their future friendship, 'principio de l'amistà' (III. 14) [2. 1]) once Cavalcanti discovered who wrote 'A ciascun'alma'. The disclosure of this dream sonnet thus marks his entry into an elite circle of love poets.

Yet, according to Dante, these 'famous poets', including Cavalcanti, were unable at the time to uncover the true interpretation, the 'verace giudicio', of his dream, an interpretation now obvious to even the least sophisticated or 'simplest': 'Lo verace giudicio del detto sogno non fue veduto allora per alcuno, ma ora è manifestissimo a li più semplici' [The true interpretation of the dream I described was not perceived by anyone then, but now it is very clear to even the least sophisticated] (III. 15) [2. 2]. Of course, as Charles Singleton points out in his still incisive study of the *Vita nova*, it would have been quite difficult for any of Dante's contemporaries to ascertain the supposed true meaning of the dream since various significant details are only revealed in the prose.[8] These include, most notably, the ascent of Love and Beatrice toward the heavens and the God of Love's citation of God the Father, 'Ego dominus tuus' (III. 1) [1. 14] from the Old Testament (Isaiah 43. 3).

For Singleton, the dream is a foreshadowing of Beatrice's death, the central event and theme of the *Vita nova*, the trauma which gives meaning to the rest of the work — but only in retrospect. In this reading, the meaning of the first dream is glossed by subsequent visions. For example, in a dream precipitated by Beatrice's withholding of her greeting (just as the first dream follows her initial *salute*), Dante learns from a weeping God of Love that, unlike him, he is not the centre of the circle; he thus lacks the sort of divine omniscience of the circumference of events which would allow him to foresee and understand Beatrice's death. More explicit is the hallucinatory vision underlying the *canzone* 'Donna pietosa e di novella etate', in which the death and ascension of Beatrice are imagined in terms directly recalling the first dream.[9]

Only through the ensuing narrative can readers retrospectively comprehend the symbolic meaning of Beatrice's death as it is prefigured in 'A ciascun'alma'. The deeper significance of the first dream is therefore revealed in the fullness of time, a fullness made manifest in Dante's *prosimetrum* through a balance between forward moving narrative and a symmetrical disposition of poems. (The narrative is divided by three major *canzoni*, which are in turn framed by short poems in groups of four and ten.) Aided by this overall structure, the reader nears the perspective of the centre of the circle — where one sees all points equally and simultaneously — as opposed to the fragmentary perspective of the single event. Time is spatialized in the 'Book of memory', in which Beatrice's death finds its comprehensible 'place'.

There are, to be certain, already some hints in the prose introduction of 'A ciascun'alma' of what is to come. Even within the poem itself, the contrast between 'allegro' (l. 9) and 'piangendo' (l. 14) at opposite ends of the sextet anticipates the *gaudium in luctum* shift which will emerge as a fundamental pattern of the

Vita nova. Yet, while these clues might stimulate those particularly adept at and trained in textual interpretation, most readers are led by the narrative from the incomprehension experienced by famous poets to the illumination shared with the simplest.

These duelling perspectives also raise the stakes for Dante's poetic initiation, no longer aimed at the historical *then* of a learned poetic community but at the *now* of a community of Christians who can participate in the universal meaning of the poet's salvation. In Dante's myth-making, the retrospective vision from an end-point illuminates, for an expanded intended audience, earlier literary events and trumps the historicized interpretations of a restricted circle of love poets. To begin this process of re-interpretation in the *Vita nova*, he uses his first public literary encounter, the circulation of 'A ciascun'alma', to unveil an allegorical-figural poetic style. In its new role as the introductory poem of the *Vita nova*, Dante's first dream both announces these new poetics and hints at the author's interest in an audience broader than that of contemporary poets alone.

If this is the case, it is not difficult to imagine why Dante might want to exclude from his self-made anthology those responses to 'A ciascun'alma' he deemed lacking in true judgement. Of the extant responses, Cavalcanti's 'Vedeste, al mio parere, ogni valore', with its idealizing of the absolute potency and reach of love, comes closest to the vision of the *Vita nova*. Terino da Castelfiorentino's 'Naturalmente chere ogne amadore' harmlessly reads the dream as foreshadowing the discovery, on the part of Dante's beloved, of his feelings for her (represented by the consumption of his heart) and her own subsequent enamourment (hence Love's tears).[10] In contrast with these accommodating responses, da Maiano's rejoinder is withering:

Di ciò che stato sè dimandatore,
guardando, ti rispondo brevemente,
amico meo di poco canoscente,
mostrandoti del ver lo suo sentore.

Al tuo mistier così son parlatore:
se santi truovi e fermo de la mente,
che lavi la tua collia largamente
a ciò che stinga e passi lo vapore

lo qual ti fa favoleggiar loquendo;
e se gravato sè d'infertà rea,
sol c'hai farneticato, sappie, intendo.

Così riscritto el meo parer ti rendo;
né cangia mai d'esta sentenza mea
finché tua acqua al medico no stendo.[11]

[Having considered, my rather ignorant friend the matter you ask me about, I answer briefly and explain its true significance. With your needs in mind I saw this: if you are well and in your right mind, give your testicles a good wash, so that the vapours that make you talk nonsense be extinguished and dispersed; but if you are suffering from a serious illness, then, believe me, the only thing I understand from your words is that you were raving. Such is my opinion, duly returned; nor will I ever alter my judgement without first showing your water to a doctor.]

Dante's first dream is described in these verses as nothing more than the symptoms of a disease. In order to quell such foolish and erotic visions, da Maiano advises Dante to wash his testicles, 'lavi la tua collia largamente' (l. 7), and, if this fails, to provide a urine sample to his physician, 'tua acqua al medico' (l. 14).

We are indebted to Bruno Nardi for first illustrating the doctrinal basis of 'Di ciò che stato sè' and indicating its scientific sources.[12] Examining the medical writings of Hippocrates, Avicenna, and especially the thirteenth-century physician Arnold of Villanova, Nardi demonstrated that da Maiano describes in his sonnet the tell-tale signs and potential cures for physiological love-sickness, the malady known as *amor hereos*.[13] According to these medical tracts, if such an attack were relatively mild at its onset, ameliorative baths might stem the humours from rising from the patient's nether regions to his brain. This explains da Maiano's suggestion that Dante wash his testicles in order to disperse and extinguish 'lo vapore' (l. 8). However, in more serious cases of delirium, or *phraenesis* ('gravato sè d'infertà rea, | sol c'hai farneticato' (ll. 10–11)), medical attention was necessary, including examination of the patient's urine, as prescribed in the final verse of the sonnet.

According to Nardi, the thrust of da Maiano's sonnet should therefore be seen as scientific and not comic.[14] Yet the two are obviously related, for the medical symptoms, *signa*, described in 'Se di ciò che stato sè dimandatore' undermine the poetic symbols of Dante's dream. When da Maiano responds to the personification of the God of Love, the metaphor of the eaten heart, and the oxymoronic language of 'A ciascun'alma' with a medical diagnosis and a prescription for proper hygiene, he is using technical language to deflate a specific semantic field, that of the Italian love lyric. In locating the source of Dante's poetic images in unclean testicles, da Maiano questions not only the signifying potential of dreams, but also of poems. Dante nonetheless chooses to inaugurate his autobiography with 'A ciascun'alma' as a paradigm of not only poetic symbolism, but even allegorical figures. His message to contemporaries is both daring and clear.

Da Maiano's response to Dante's sonnet is viewed by Nardi as an isolated hermeneutic event, which he glosses and historicizes within the context of medieval culture. In contrast, the narrative structure of the *Vita nova*, as illustrated by Singleton, constructs its own metahistory in which the part is meaningful only when seen from the perspective of the whole; the allegorical figure of 'A ciascun'alma' can only be fulfilled by the unfolding narrative. We seem to be faced with two antithetical visions, between a localized, historicized and literal reading and a global, narratological and figural one. In the rest of this essay, however, I will argue that the historicized part and the narratological whole, reception and allegory, *signum* and *figura*, are fundamentally interrelated, and that it is necessary to examine this nexus — and even perhaps reconcile the representative approaches of Nardi and Singleton — if we are to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the *Vita nova*. For, as will be discussed more fully in the section on 'Donna pietosa', Dante's figural poetics are also a response to his historical readership, to readers such as Dante da Maiano, who questioned his use of poetic language and symbolism.

Before confronting these issues directly, we must first explore how they were set up by those poems exchanged between da Maiano and Dante which describe

and interpret dreams. Da Maiano's compositions in this exchange, like those of his other interlocutors, are characterized by an overwhelming scepticism toward dream theory and poetic truth. Only Dante insists on the meaningfulness of dream images and literary symbols. As we shall see, even before the *Vita nova*, Dante's poetry of dreams ran against the grain.

The Two Dantes and the Metaliterary Dream Sonnet

That the 'dream sonnets' exchanged between da Maiano and Dante should be a locus for exploring metaliterary concerns is understandable once we take into account the long-standing tradition in the Middle Ages associating dream interpretation with textual interpretation. A fundamental authority for establishing the connection between dreams and fiction in the period was Macrobius's commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*. In his introduction to the commentary, Macrobius describes a hierarchy of dreams, ranging from the self-evidently prophetic *oraculum* [oracular dream], inspired from above, to the obviously insignificant *insomnium* [nightmare], caused by psychological anxiety or bodily disturbance (I. 3. 2).[15] Within this hierarchy, he places special emphasis on the middle type of dream, the *somnium* [enigmatic dream]. Similar to his definition of *narratio fabulosa* [fabulous narrative] as 'sacrarum rerum notio sub pio figmentorum velamine honestis' [a decent conception of holy truths hidden beneath a modest veil of allegory] (I. 2. 11), the *somnium* 'tegit figuris et velat ambagibus non nisi interpretatione intellegendam significationem rei quae demonstratur' [conceals with strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true meaning of the information being offered, and requires an interpretation for its understanding] (I. 3. 10). The essential middleness of the *somnium* in this definition — hovering somewhere between divine prophecy and corporal shadow — implies that many of our dreams are potentially true but not self-evident;[16] as in the case of Scipio's dream, they are 'altitudo tecta profunditate prudentiae non potest nobis nisi scientia interpretationis aperiri' [couched in words that hide their profound meaning and cannot be comprehended without skilful interpretation] (I. 3. 12). Although the influence of Macrobius has at times been overestimated, especially for the later Middle Ages, this view of dreams as signifying through poetic figures and symbols — and thus in need of interpretation — was commonplace. For example, despite his distance from Macrobius, in both temporal and ideological terms, Albertus Magnus similarly recognizes that a dream's meaning is often expressed metaphorically and through obscure likenesses.[17]

On the other hand, there was always the possibility that a dream might be internally motivated, caused by bodily functions and hence illusory or false, as in Macrobius's *insomnium*. John of Salisbury, for example, is categorical in distinguishing between semiotic and pathological modes of dream interpretation: 'Quae quidem omnia medicorum potius indigent cura quam ventilatione nostra; praesertim cum nichil in eis verum appareat, nisi quod verissimae sunt et molestissimae passiones.' [All of these types [of dreams] are in need of the doctor rather than of our verbal treatment, especially as the only reality that is apparent in them is the fact that they are very real but very disagreeable forms of mental ill health].[18] This notion of the somatic dream was given new life by the introduction, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, of

Aristotle's *De somno et vigilia* [On sleep and waking], *De somniis* [On dreams], and *De divinatione per somnum* [On prophesying by dreams] into the Latin West.[19] Aristotle casts serious doubt in his writings on whether dreams can be prophetic. In his view, the origins of dreams are physiological, the result of digestion and the subsequent rise and fall of heat in the body. At the same time, when the imaginative faculty is abstracted from waking activity, it becomes especially sensitive to the body's own internal 'movements', due to the 'inaction of particular senses',[20] and it can on occasion transform these 'movements' into the figures of a dream. Aristotle thus urges physicians to pay close attention to the symptoms revealed in visions; they can convey the presence of illness as accurately as roughness of the tongue conveys fever. Although never universally accepted, and often mediated by Neoplatonizing Arabic commentaries,[21] Aristotle's writings nevertheless injected a strong sceptical voice into debates about dream divination.

Where da Maiano situates himself in this debate is clear. For him, Dante's first dream is in need of a doctor, not a verbal treatment. Just as Averroes writes in his epitome to the *Parva naturalia* (translated into Latin near the beginning of the thirteenth century) that the appearance of fire in a dream might portend the dominance of choler in the dreamer,[22] da Maiano views Dante's fiery heart in 'A ciascun'alma' as the result of excessive humours and bad hygiene. But Da Maiano is more than just sceptical of prophetic dreams and their allegorical interpretations. His analysis of Dante's dream is also a poem, a poem responding to a poem before a community of other poets. The real target in this polemic about dream theory is Dante's poetics.

If dream theory borrows from the language and interpretive traditions of literary theory, the influence also went the other way — as in the case of Dante and da Maiano's sonnets. Dreams play an important role in medieval literature, especially in the poetry of the later Middle Ages. As Stephen Kruger explains, 'The dream fiction, by representing in the dream an imaginative entity like fiction itself, often becomes self-reflexive. Dream vision is especially liable to become metafiction, thematizing issues of representation and interpretation'.[23] Confronting within his work the status and validity of dreams, the poet confronted the status and validity of his art.[24] In particular, the range of theories about the potential truth or falsehood of dreams served as a platform to explore vexed questions about the truth claims of poetry.[25]

Dante's enigmatic first dream is especially well suited for discussing metaliterary concerns because of its essentially communicative nature. Written as a circular letter, the first quatrain forms the traditional greeting or *salutatio*. Scholars have shown that this greeting in the name of Love — 'salute in lor segnor, cioè Amore' (l. 4) — is adapted from the *salutatio in domino* used in letters by ecclesiasts and religious, especially when addressing their own.[26] If we compare in particular the *incipit* to the sonnet with the openings of the Latin letters, 'a ciascun'alma presa e gentil core' corresponds to 'universis Dei fidelibus' [to all of God's faithful subjects] and 'universis Christi fidelibus' [to all of Christ's faithful subjects] in the standard epistolary models.[27] Dante himself tells us in the *ragione* to 'A ciascun'alma' that he greets in the first verse 'tutti li fedeli d'Amore' [all of Love's faithful subjects] (III. 9) [I. 20].

As both dream poem and literary exchange, 'A ciascun'alma' simultaneously provides contemporaries with a traditional vehicle for thinking about how texts signify — the dream — and an opportunity, through the ritualized genre of the *tenzone*, to comment on their craft. In light of this metaliterary conversation, Cavalcanti's relatively accommodating response can be viewed as an expression of professional friendship. On the other hand, da Maiano's substitution of symptoms for symbols is even more scathing when we consider the self-reflexive nature of 'A ciascun'alma'. After all, Dante's admission into a corporation of faithful love poets, 'li fedeli d'Amore', depends on such acceptance or rejection of his poetics.

That Dante and da Maiano are contrasting divergent poetic visions becomes apparent when we consider a backstory for their literary theoretical debate, in the form of another exchange between the poets about a dream. This time, however, it is da Maiano who composes a sonnet about his dream, and asks his fellow poets to interpret it:

Provedi, saggio, ad esta visïone,
e per mercé ne trai vera sentenza.
Dico: una donna di bella fazzone,
di cui el meo cor gradir molto s'agenza,

mi fé d'una ghirlanda donagione,
verde, fronzuta, con bella accoglienza;
appresso mi trovai per vestigione
camiscia di suo dosso, a mia parvenza.

Allor di tanto, amico, mi francai
che dolcemente presila abbracciare:
non si contese, ma ridea la bella.

Così, ridendo, molto la basciai:
del più non dico, ché mi fé giurare.
E morta, ch'è mia madre, era con ella.

[You who are intelligent, consider this vision and please show its true meaning. It was like this: a fair woman, in gaining whose favour my heart takes much pleasure, made me a gift of a green leafy garland; and charmingly she did so. And then I seemed to find myself clothed in a shift that she had worn. Then I made so bold as gently to embrace her. The fair one did not resist, but smiled; and as she smiled I kissed her repeatedly. I will not say what followed — she made me swear not to. And a dead woman — my mother — was with her.] [28]

In the octet of the sonnet, da Maiano describes how his lady gives him a wreath in the dream, after which he finds himself wearing what appears to be her shirt. Both the gift of the wreath and the shirt are commonplaces in the French romance tradition, and these symbols, when combined with the numerous terms of French and Occitan origin — 'fazzone' (l. 3), 'donagione' (l. 5), 'vestigione' (l. 7), 'accoglienza' (l. 6), 'parvenza' (l. 8) — lend the dream a distinctly stylized and literary atmosphere. There is a shift in tone, however, in the sextet as the dreamer feels emboldened enough to kiss and embrace the lady, who seems pleased by this. In the ambiguous final verse, da Maiano refers to his mother and death.

The second part of 'Provedi, saggio' is, in some sense, already an interpretation

of the first. Or rather, the sensuality of the octet results from the dreamer's reading of the literary metaphors of the sextet. He correctly presumes that the lady's gifts indicate her favourable intention in his regard, and, in fact, she does not resist his advances, but rather by laughing encourages him to continue kissing her. Even within the dream itself, the dreamer casts a shadow over the literary *topoi* envisioned in the quatrains, revealing an erotic and physical base underlying the traditional courtly superstructure. The *saggio* addressed in the poem is thus asked to interpret at once the literary commonplaces of the dream, the gifts of the wreath and the shirt, as well as the dreamer's own mundane and carnal evaluation of them. This request for the true meaning, 'vera sentenza' (l. 2), of a 'visïone' (l. 1), couched in the increasingly contested language of dream interpretation, contains more than a hint of irony.

The sonnets written in response to 'Provedi, saggio', deriving concepts and language from fields as diverse as theology, astrology, medicine and magic, are indicative of the variety of theoretical positions regarding dreams in the later Middle Ages. The richness of these interpretive traditions cannot be adequately dealt with in this essay. For our purposes, it is nonetheless noteworthy that many of the responses demonstrate a degree of scepticism toward both dream theory and poetic language in line with da Maiano's own demystification. Ser Cione, for example, in 'Credo [che] nullo saggio a visïone' [I think that no intelligent person from a vision],[29] writes back that he does not believe in dream interpretation since dreams themselves lack reason. From a similarly disenchanted, albeit more playful, perspective, in 'Avuto ho sempre ferma oppenïone' [I have always been of the firm opinion] Ricco da Varlungo equates dream interpretation with geomancy, 'giemenzia' (l. 7),[30] and pretends to accompany his response with an astrological figure of his own making. The actual interpretation of the vision is thereby postponed, left to those geomancers who will be able to read the figure: 'il farete tosto giudicare | ad un che saccia dirvene novella' [have it immediately examined by someone who will be able to interpret it for you] (ll. 13–14).

At first glance, Salvino Doni appears to take the figurative language of 'Provedi, saggio' more seriously, elevating it to the sphere of prophetic revelation. In the quatrains to his sonnet 'Amico, io intendo, a la antica stagione' [Friend, I have heard that in ancient times],[31] he compares his exegetical powers to the knowledge and grace derived from 'divina Potenza' [divine might] (l. 6) that allowed Joseph to interpret Pharaoh's dream. Doni thus prefers a supernatural explanation for dream prophecy, based on scriptural and patristic authorities, over scientific, rationalist theories deriving from natural philosophy. Such an elevation, however, is undermined by the mundane interpretation of the dream in the sextet: the lady signals through her gifts that she intends to yield to da Maiano's wishes, who should nevertheless beware lest such a gift lead to death. This 'revelation' ends up being little more than a recapitulation of da Maiano's own interpretation, except that it adds a moralistic perspective on the dreamer's actions.

More explicitly moralizing in his response is Guido Orlandi, who is known for his often moralizing exchanges with Cavalcanti. In 'Al motto diredàn prima ragione' [First off an explanation of the saying],[32] he chastises da Maiano for his

vain, sensual love and upbraids him in particular for violating the courtly rules of *fin'amour*. Instead of keeping silent about the love of his lady, as required by the traditional erotic code, he has written about it to peers: 'non bona convenenza — è palesare | amor di gentil donna o di donzella, | e per iscusa dicere: "Io sognai"' [It is indecorous to reveal the love of a lady or a maiden and as an excuse say, 'I dreamt it'] (ll. 9–11). The 'dream' is thus just a pretext ('iscusa') da Maiano assumes in order to brag about his erotic escapades. By underlining da Maiano's transgression of the laws of courtly love, Orlandi brings out the essential scepticism of 'Provedi, saggio' as well as its distance from the aristocratic love lyric, which typically emphasizes sublimated desire over explicit sexuality.

Indeed, from a semiotic standpoint, da Maiano finds courtly figures and language meaningful only as thinly veiled expressions of physical desire, and the respondents, except perhaps Orlandi, have a similarly disenchanted view of poetic rhetoric. The fact that no one seriously believes that the dream is potentially allegorical or prophetic attests to how far we have moved from Macrobius's association of *narratio fabulosa* with the enigmatic *somnium*. For these writers, dream theory is as arbitrary as the symbols and motifs of poetic language: they are simply coded elements of a social game, rhetorical means to a well-known end.

In light of such literary and oneiric agnosticism, Dante's idealizing response to 'Provedi, saggio', is especially telling:

> Savete giudicar vostra ragione,
> o om che pregio di saver portate;
> per che, vitando aver con voi questione,
> com so rispondo a le parole ornate.
>
> Disio verace, u' rado fin si pone,
> che mosse di valore o di bieltate
> emagina l'amica openïone
> significasse il don che pria narrate.
>
> Lo vestimento, aggiate vera spene
> che fia, da lei cui disïate, amore;
> e 'n ciò provide vostro spirto bene:
>
> dico, pensando l'ovra sua d'allore.
> La figura che già morta sorvene
> è la fermezza ch' averà nel core.
>
> [You know how to interpret your theme, intelligent as you are; so I will not enter into any dispute with you, but only answer as best I can your elegantly phrased question. My view — speaking as a friend — is that the gift you first mention signified true desire, proceeding from merit or beauty, a desire that seldom comes to an end.
> As for the garment, be confident that this will be love, given by her whom you desire, as indeed your spirit well divined — I say this in view of the act that followed. The dead figure that came on the scene is the constancy that she'll now bear in her heart.] [33]

Instead of seeing the figures of da Maiano's dream as mere rhetorical trappings, 'parole ornate' (l. 4), Dante interprets them as fully fledged symbols representing

the attributes of Love. The wreath indicates perfect desire; the lady's garment, true hope; and the figure of the dead mother, firmness or constancy of the heart. This re-idealization of the language and codes of courtly love seems deliberate. How else are we to explain Dante's implausible interpretation of the dead mother in the last line of the sonnet as the personification of faithful love? Indeed, as they are described by Dante, the various aspects of Love in the dream — 'fermezza', 'spene and 'disio' — are nearly theological, evoking the triad of faith, hope and charity. If da Maiano undermines in 'Provedi saggio' the traditional literary language of the quatrains through the physicality and sensuality of the *terzine*, Dante revitalizes these literary figures, restoring their symbolic potency beyond any social or conventional use-value.

Returning to the literary theoretical questions of 'A ciascun'alma', Dante's similar attempts at renovating poetic language are most prominent in the image of the eaten heart.[34] The consumption of the lover's heart by the beloved was already a popular motif in Dante's time, having appeared, for example, in a fragment of the *Roman de Tristan* and — especially crucial for Dante — in biographical *vidas* and *razos* for the troubadour Guillem de Cabestaing. In these narratives, the eaten heart typically forms the tragic conclusion to a sexual affair. For example, in a particularly detailed *razo* for Guillem's *canso* 'Lo dous cossire' [The sweet concern],[35] after the married Lady Margarida confesses her feelings for Guillem, through a series of thinly veiled courtly gestures, they proceed to kiss, embrace, and begin their secret love-making, their 'drudaria'.[36] The affair is short lived, however, and soon uncovered by the jealous husband Raimon, in part because of the content of Guillem's poems, especially 'Lo dous cossire'. Once his suspicions are confirmed, Raimon assassinates and decapitates Guillem, and then has his heart extracted, roasted, and served to his wife at dinner.

In truth, the narrative stages of Guillem's biography — coded expressions of desire on the part of the lady; actual physical contact (embracing and kissing); mortal consequences — recall elements of 'Provedi, saggio' more than 'A ciascun'alma'. The treatment of the eaten heart in the *vida* is especially close in spirit to the sceptical attitude da Maiano expresses in his poems toward literary language. This becomes evident when the tale of the eaten heart is compared to the lyric commonplace of the departed heart. In numerous contemporary Italian poems in which the poet declares that his heart now resides with Love or his lady, the metaphor of the departed heart conveys the loss of self-possession that accompanies falling in love. For poets ranging from Guittone d'Arezzo to Cino da Pistoia, the dislocation of the heart represents emblematically their submission to love and lovesickness. At the same time, the departed heart can also stand in for the poem itself, as a figure for how its epistolary function can bridge, if never resolve, the problem of physical separation. For example, the reason Love gives for extracting the lover's heart in Rustico Filippi's 'I'aggio inteso che sanza lo core' [I have heard that without the heart] is that he intends to bring it to the lady as a token of his (the lover's) desire.[37] Guillem himself, in an envoi to the *canso* 'Mout m'alegra douza vos per boscaje' [The sweet voice from the woods makes me rejoice], claims that he will never leave his lady since she possesses his heart both night and day — 'es mos cors ab leis e noit e dia' (l. 32).

When the jealous husband feeds his wife her lover's heart, he is therefore enacting a sort of vengeful and macabre *contrappasso*, an ironic literalization of the figure of the departed heart. In an act of linguistic violence anticipating da Maiano's invocation of testicles and urine, he strips the courtly trope of any of its literary pretences and replaces it with the ineluctable truth of the flesh. Literally serving the beloved her favourite metaphor, he forces it back down her throat, in a gesture that both indicates and exhibits: '*Here* is your heart' ('Vide cor tuum').

In contrast with the violent demystification at work in the tale of the eaten heart, Dante's use of the motif in 'A ciascun'alma' seems aimed at restoring the symbolic value of the lover's heart, as part of a larger project of linguistic and literary renovation. This is accomplished by refashioning the narrative tale within a lyric context, and thereby shifting the perspective from the tragic conclusion of adulterous love to the tragically sublime experience of love itself. Moreover, fusing the image of the eaten heart with the phenomenology of the departed heart, he shows that the latter is not a dead metaphor, but rather a fitting symbol for the paradoxical effects of love. The consumption of Dante's heart in 'A ciascun'alma' represents a heightened vision of the loss of selfhood that is experienced in the name of love — and traditionally expressed by the lover via the image of the departed heart. In this new symbolic language, however, Dante and Beatrice appear as frightened bystanders to love's hallucinatory effects. Instead of interpreting and manipulating a familiar social code, they behold a symbolic drama that exceeds and stupefies them. What exactly we are to make of this mysterious dream is open to interpretation, but Dante clearly believes that poetic language can never be fully assimilated by convention and rhetorical utility. Whereas in Guillem's *vida*, the poetic word is crudely made flesh — first by the lovers and then, more forcefully by the husband — Dante turns flesh back into poetic words, whose authority is guaranteed by a measure of incomprehensibility and estrangement.

The other aspect of the departed heart Dante reclaims via the eaten heart is its epistolary function, its role as emblem for the poem itself. This is what Terino da Castelfiorentino recognizes when he interprets the consumption of Dante's heart by Beatrice in 'A ciascun'alma' as signifying the fulfilment of the poet's desire to make his love known, 'far saccente' (l. 2). The problem with this archaizing reading of Dante's poem is that it ignores the terrified passivity of Dante and Beatrice in the dream and the terrifying activity of a third party, Love himself. Unlike the dream in 'Provedi, saggio', the literary figures employed in 'A ciascun'alma' are not negotiated between lover and beloved. Instead, the communicative and epistolary aspects of the poem are displaced onto the apostrophe to the poets, occupying the first quatrain.

In particular, the spectacle of the eaten heart is not addressed to the lady, but rather to other love poets, for their 'consumption' as it were. The initial apostrophe to readers and the subsequent dream are conjoined by the shared personification of 'Amor' in lines four, seven and nine of the sonnet. The psychic fragmentation Dante undergoes in view of other captured souls will presumably be understood by them because they are similarly dominated by Love and his irrational authority. They are all participants in an erotic fantasy that can be described but not mastered. The

payoff, for Dante the dreamer as well as Dante the poet, of externalizing what is most secret to him, be it his heart or his poetics, is entry into a congregation made up of other subjects to Love, other *fedeli*. What 'A ciascun'alma' describes is also what it hopes to achieve: incorporation. In light of this communitarian setting, the drama of the eaten heart evokes nothing less than the Eucharistic sacrament — the paradigmatic example of a 'trope' whose enactment realizes a mystical corporate body.

Such lofty claims for poetic language are what da Maiano finally objects to in 'Di ciò che stato sè dimandatore'. In his response to Dante, the message is clear: sometimes a dream is just a dream, a metaphor just a metaphor. Seemingly disregarding such criticism, Dante places 'A ciascun'alma' as the first poem of the *Vita nova*. Reproposing a rhetoric of symbols as a constellation of typological-allegorical figures, he effectively raises the semiotic stakes. In this context, da Maiano's suggestion that the emblematic poem is just a false dream threatens the core epistemological claims of Dante's universalizing autobiography. Yet, rather than suppressing da Maiano's voice, as critics have hereto believed, Dante confronts it at the very centre of his work, in the episode of 'Donna pietosa'.

The Dream of 'Donna pietosa' as a Response to Dante da Maiano

The *canzone* 'Donna pietosa e di novella etate' (XXIII. 17–28) [14. 17–28] stands at the structural and thematic centre of the *Vita nova*. It is the second of the three major *canzoni* dividing the narrative and the sixteenth of thirty-one poems. In addition, the poem and its prose *ragione* describe a vision of Beatrice's death, the focus of the work as a whole. On the one hand, this vision fulfils the foreshadowing of Beatrice's death in previous dreams. (The narrator's glimpse of Beatrice ascending toward heaven, 'verso lo cielo' (XXIII. 7) [14. 7], is an especially close reminder of the first dream.) On the other, it anticipates the collective mourning that dominates the second half of the work by staging Beatrice's death as a universal and cosmic catastrophe.

For Dante's character, the circumstances leading to the vision in 'Donna pietosa' represent not so much a centre as a nadir. At this point in the narrative, he has lost Beatrice's greeting through the dissimulation of the screen ladies, been reprimanded for the possessive love demonstrated in early poems, and mocked in public for his lovesick antics. And now he lies deathly ill. On the ninth day of this illness his condition worsens, triggering Dante to reflect upon the frailty of his life, and from here, on the frailty of that of his beloved Beatrice. These reveries are soon transformed into a fully fledged hallucination or waking dream. At the beginning of this apocalyptic vision, Dante encounters a group of mourning women who tell him: 'You too will die' (XXIII. 22, l. 42) [14. 22]. A series of natural catastrophes ensues, including significantly a great earthquake and the eclipse of the sun. At this point a friend appears, informing Dante that Beatrice has died, and he thereupon observes her amidst a chorus of angels who are singing 'Osanna' (XXIII. 25, l. 61) [14. 25]. Finally, Beatrice is seen in all her iconic humility and glory, covered by a white veil and seeming to say 'I am where I see the source of all peace' (XXIII. 26, l. 70) [14. 26]. Overwhelmed by the sight of a lifeless Beatrice, Dante is in the process of

calling out her name when he is awakened by a close relative watching over his sick bed, the 'donna pietosa' to whom the *canzone* is addressed (XXIII. 1–13) [14. 1–13].

Within the dream itself, the perspective of Dante's character already undergoes a transformation. He begins and even causes the waking dream through his fearful reflections on the precariousness of existence. But by the dream's end, he is actively seeking Death: 'Dolcissima Morte, vieni a me' [Sweet Death, come to me] (XXIII. 9) [14. 9]. While previously a personified *Morte* in the sonnet 'Morte villana, di pietà nemica' [Brute Death, the enemy of tenderness] (VIII. 8–11) [3. 8–11] was attacked as villainous for stealing one of Beatrice's friends, in the episode of 'Donna pietosa', Death is 'villana' (XXIII. 9) [14. 9] for not coming for Dante himself. What causes this radical shift is of course Beatrice's participation in death, which is ennobled by her presence: 'tu dei essere gentile, in tal parte se' stata!' [for you have just been in a place that should have made you gracious] (XXIII. 9) [14. 9]. In particular, the sight of Beatrice's humility in death causes Dante to be similarly humble, 'nel dolore sì umile' [so humbly in my grief] (XXIII. 27, l. 71) [14. 27], in his acceptance of our mortal condition.[38]

From a theological standpoint, Beatrice's death enacts the emptying out — the kenosis or *exinanitio* of Philippians 2. 6–8 — endured by Christ on the cross. In her death she becomes an image of humility incarnate: 'umiltà formata' (XXIII. 27, l. 72) [14. 27].[39] This Christological role for Beatrice is bolstered by other analogies established in the dream between Beatrice and Christ, especially in the scriptural echoes of Christ's crucifixion and ascension evident in the description of the eclipse, earthquake and ascending cloud of singing angels. In the episode following 'Donna pietosa', the relationship is solidified when Love compares a vision of Cavalcanti's lady (Giovanna) walking ahead of Beatrice to how John the Baptist (Giovanni) anticipated Christ (XXIV. 4–5) [15. 4–5].[40] The vision of 'Donna pietosa' is thus instrumental for unveiling the muted earlier prophecies of Beatrice's death, as well as for laying the groundwork for the Christological implications that her death will henceforth bear in Dante's life. It is also one of the clearest manifestations in the *Vita nova* of the scriptural basis for Dante's poetics — namely, his reliance on retrospective narrative, biblical echoes and typological analogy.

And yet, despite all this, Dante insists that the vision of 'Donna pietosa' is false. He identifies the images he saw while asleep as illusory, erroneous and fallacious — the result of delirium. In fact, there are seven references to the falsehood of the dream in the prose: 'erronea fantasia' [hallucination] (XXIII. 8) [14. 8]; 'vana fantasia' [delirious dream] (XXIII. 29) [14. 29]; 'vana imaginazione' [wild dream] (XXIV. 1) [15. 1]; 'fallace imaginare' [falseness of my imagining] (XXIII. 15) [14. 15]; 'lo errare che fece la mia fantasia' [my imagination's wandering] (XXIII. 4) [14. 4]; 'cominciando ad errare la mia fantasia' [my imagination beginning to wander] (XXIII. 5) [14. 5]); and at least three in the *canzone*: 'imaginando | di conoscenza e di verità fora' [dreaming | With consciousness and truth left far behind] (XXIII. 22, ll. 39–40) [14. 22]; 'vano imaginare' [false imaginings] (XXIII. 23, l. 43) [14. 23]; 'Lo imaginare fallace' [My wild illusions] (XXIII. 26, l. 65) [14. 26]). The origins of these illusions are furthermore located in Dante's mental and physical distress. His anxieties about Beatrice's death, combined with his sickness, are responsible for the ensuing

hallucination. In other words, as recognized by dream theorists from Macrobius to Aristotle to Dante da Maiano, the causes of Dante's dream are purely mundane — psychological and physiological. Hardly prophetic, the dreamlike vision is thus meaningless, without external reference; or, borrowing from Macrobius's definition of the nightmare or *insomnium*, its meaning exists only while the dreamer is asleep: *in somnio* (I. 3. 5).

The physiological causes of Dante's vision-inducing ailment can be identified even more specifically. Dante refers to himself at the onset of the hallucination as a 'farnetica persona' [one in a delirium] (XXIII. 4) [14. 4] and concludes the episode by contrasting the *farneticare* of his false vision with the healthy and reasonable state of mind, 'verace condizione' [true consciousness] (XXIII. 30) [14. 30], he returns to upon awakening. *Farneticare* is a translation of the technical-medical term *phraenesis* — that alteration in the imaginative faculties caused by fever ('Fraenesis est passio imaginationis ex febre') already evoked in da Maiano's 'Di ciò che stato sè dimandatore'.[41] In fact, in the episode of 'Donna pietosa', the 'dolorosa infermitade' [severe illness] (XXIII. 1) [14. 1] that Dante suffers has much in common with the 'infertà rea' or acute lovesickness described in line 7 of 'Di ciò che stato sè dimandatore'. More strikingly, in diagnosing himself as a 'farnetica persona' and his vision as delirious *farneticare*, Dante is reproducing da Maiano's precise diagnosis of him: 'hai farneticato' (l. 10). The possibility that Dante is deliberately echoing da Maiano is increased when we realize the infrequency of the term *farneticare* in early Italian. At this date the latinized Greek medical term is attested only in da Maiano's sonnet and in this passage in the *Vita nova*.[42]

For the episode of 'Donna pietosa', Dante would seem to accept da Maiano's physiological-medical perspective on dreams and imagination. By his own admission, the obscure figures recounted in 'Donna pietosa' seem better suited for interpretation by a physician than an exegete. While not explicitly mentioning 'Di ciò che stato sè dimandatore', Dante implicitly draws on its conceptual framework and terminology in order to construct a 'symptomatic' explanation of the vision of Beatrice's death in 'Donna pietosa'. Although da Maiano's sonnet is rejected as a possible interpretation of the first dream, Dante daringly allows that, generally speaking, its scientific foundation is sound. Many dreams, including the waking dream of 'Donna pietosa', are caused by illusions originating in an unhealthy body.

There is, however, a crucial element missing from this account. The vision of 'Donna pietosa' is, of course, true on both the literal and allegorical levels. Beatrice will die, and her victory over death will save Dante just as Christ's saved mankind. In this way, Dante sets up an apparent contradiction between the deepest truths of his work and their location in a 'fallace imaginare'. He uses an illusory physiological dream to call attention to how retrospection and typological analogy function within the *Vita nova*. These figural poetics are critical, in fact, for understanding the work thematically as a whole. However, in this instance, given the subtext of true and false dreams, their aim may be rhetorical as well. While the vision of 'Donna pietosa' is central to the narratological structure of the *Vita nova*, it is also directed outward at da Maiano and his peers. Continuing a debate about poetry through the language of dreams, Dante complicates the binary oppositions between symbols and

symptoms, poetic truth and physiological illusion, set forth in 'A ciascun'alma presa e gentil core' and 'Di ciò che stato sè dimandatore'.

The contrast between the declared falsehood of the vision of 'Donna pietosa' and its thematic importance for the *Vita nova* has been variously explained by critics. Singleton, for example, claims that the narrator feigns ignorance at this point in order not to reveal the dramatic turn of events initiated by Beatrice's death: 'to deny to this vision the name of vision at the time it is narrated is simply to keep to the point of view of the protagonist who cannot yet know that it is a true vision. This is a protagonist upon whom the death of Beatrice is to break with the shock of a thing in no way expected.'[43] It seems rather unlikely, however, that the omniscient narrator would at this point alone assume the incomplete perspective of the protagonist, and there is no other precedent for this within the work. Citing contemporaries such as Albertus Magnus, other scholars have explained that Dante's vision is false only to the extent that, by definition, anyone who is delirious mistakes images in the mind for objective reality ('forma sensum afficiens accipitur ut re ipsa' [the form affecting sense perception is mistaken for the thing itself]).[44] If we limit the scope of Dante's 'falsehood claims' to this ontological aspect, it does resolve some of the paradoxes between what is true and what is false in the waking dream. But this does not account for the pronounced rhetorical emphasis in the passage on the contrast between truth and falsehood, nor does it explain why Dante would choose this vision in particular to explore the intersection of imagination and epistemology.

The main problem with these arguments is that they provide a local explanation for a global problem. Seeking to remedy the inconsistencies of 'Donna pietosa', they miss the significance of what Dante intentionally left contradictory. Dante's dream may very well be symptomatic of internal physical processes, yet the illusions produced from bodily disease will ultimately be fulfilled. What is most false in Dante's dream is also what is most true for the work as a whole. In retrospect, we can see that the groundwork for this contradictory portrayal of imaginative truth was prepared for by the first dream of 'A ciascun'alma'. In describing this highly symbolic vision, Dante specifies that — unlike the true morning dreams of *Purgatorio* — his dream took place in the middle of the night: 'Già eran quasi che atterzate l'ore | del tempo che onne stella n'è lucente' (ll. 5–6). According to contemporary natural philosophers and physicians, the body at this time of night (the 'fourth hour', near 10 p.m.) is still too weighed down by daily cares and the processes of digestion to receive meaningful forms or images. It would appear that Dante's first foray into the public literary field was thus already marked by a polemical statement, via dream theory, about the shadowy nature of poetic truth. Like the vision of 'Donna pietosa', the drama of the eaten heart is presented as an ontologically ambiguous dream, simultaneously true and false.

The apparent paradoxes of both 'A ciascun'alma' and 'Donna pietosa' can be partially explained when examined in light of Dante's re-evaluation of the sick body in the *Vita nova*. Near the beginning of the work, Dante acknowledges that, for many, writing about the experience of illness — namely the 'passioni' [passions] that his spirits incur in Beatrice's presence — amounts to mere 'parlare fabuloso'

[fanciful talk] (II. 10) [I. 11]. This may be a deliberate echo of da Maiano's suggestion that illness has caused Dante to speak nonsense: 'ti fa favoleggiar loquendo'. Dante continues to depict himself throughout the narrative as physically ill, from the debilitation of his vital spirits after the dream of 'A ciascun'alma', to the heart palpitations and fainting spell at the wedding scene, to the feverish delirium of 'Donna pietosa'. Yet ultimately the humility Dante endures because of lovesickness allows his tongue to be inspired in 'Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore' [Ladies, refined and sensitive in Love] and his imagination illuminated in 'Donna pietosa'.[45] His status as literally a patient, passive and suffering, facilitates his reception of visions.[46] The hallucination arising from his illness in 'Donna pietosa' provides access to the real illusions, the non-false errors of his poetic dream.[47] Given this revaluation of *passio*, even the most Cavalcantian moments of the *Vita nova*, in which Dante's character suffers *alienatio mentis* and his spirits wander — 'li spiriti miei, che ciascun giva errando' [my spirits, that each went drifting off] (XXIII. 22, l. 38) [14. 22]) — can be recuperated as a locus for revelation.

This process of reconceptualizing and resemanticizing the terms of illness — in particular of lovesickness — culminates with the poem 'Sì lungiamente m'ha tenuto Amore' [So long a time has Love kept me] (XXVII. 3–5) [18. 3–5]. As the last poem before his beloved's death — the only completed stanza of a projected *canzone* — 'Sì lungiamente' concludes the narrative of Dante's love for Beatrice's mortal self. In this capacity, it also functions as a counterpoint to 'A ciascun'alma', the first poem of the *in vita* section of the work. The physiological domination of love remains unchanged in both poems, as does the language used to describe it, but in 'Sì lungiamente' similar expressions are employed with radically different meanings, the result of the author's re-educated perspective on bodily suffering.

For example, in the *canzone* stanza, Dante's character is still suffering from the classic symptoms of lovesickness, such as pallor ('l viso ne smore' [my face is so drained of all its color] (XXVII. 4, l. 8) [18. 4]) and *alienatio mentis* ('li miei spiriti gir parlando' [my spirits rant and wander off] (XXVII. 4, l. 10) [18. 4]). From a medical perspective, his debilitated physical state, 'la frale anima mia' [My frail soul] (XXVII. 4, l. 7) [18. 4], recalls his debilitated condition, 'sì fraile e debole condizione' [so weak and so frail] (IV. 1) [2. 3], after the first dream. But now, reversing the phenomenology of 'A ciascun'alma', what seemed formerly harsh or difficult, 'm'era forte in pria' [at first I felt him harsh] (XXVII. 3, l. 3) [18. 3], has become harmonious and sweet, 'mi sta suave ora nel core' [Now tender is his power in my heart] (XXVII. 3, l. 4) [18. 3].[48] Most importantly, the violence of self-dispossession in which Love snatches the poet's 'valor' [strength] (XXVII. 4, l. 5) [18. 4] now gives him more, not less 'health': 'per darmi più salute' (XXVII. 4, l. 12) [18. 4]. With its emphatic rhyme position in 'Sì lungiamente', the resemanticization of *salute* is complete. Initially a 'greeting', which then threatened Dante's 'health', it now signifies, by way of the illness itself, his 'salvation'.

The key Dante provides for understanding these semantic inversions is, once again, humility: 'sì è cosa umil, che nol si crede' [it is so humble that it is not believed] (XXVII. 5, l. 14) [18. 5]. Without humility, it is impossible to believe in the health of an illness or the reality of an illusion. Although expressed as an impersonal

si construction, it seems likely that Dante has a specific circle of poets in mind for those who might not believe his claims, including poets such as Cavalcanti whose poetic output was directly influenced by medical doctrine. Having expressed an extreme, if comical, position of literary scepticism and biological reductionism, da Maiano's response remains throughout the *Vita nova* a useful counterview through which Dante can confront his potential critics and adversaries.[49]

The Famous Poets and the Simplest as Readers of the *Vita nova*

Even while he critiques their efforts at interpreting his texts, Dante is thus still engaged with and, in many ways, writing for the 'famosi trovatori'. The historical audience of Dante's early lyrics remains an implied readership for the *Vita nova* as well. To whom, after all, could Dante have been directing his polemic about true physiological dreams if not those poets who misinterpreted his first dream? Who else would have understood the scientific underpinnings of such a debate as well as its implications for the status and interpretation of poetry?

The frequent references in the self-commentary as to what someone or a certain person might think about his poetry demonstrate the degree to which Dante had internalized his empirical readers.[50] The unspoken presence of these learned interlocutors is especially evident in the commentary or 'divisions' to poems in which Dante mentions, almost offhandedly, that the compositions could be further divided by more subtle minds. For example, in his gloss of 'Donne ch'avete', he acknowledges that the poem's meaning could be further illustrated by 'più minute divisioni' [more extensive divisions] (XIX. 22) [10. 33].[51] Similarly, in drawing a connection between Beatrice and the number nine, he alludes to a 'più sottile persona' [a more subtle person] who might be able to interpret it with 'più sottile ragione' [more subtle explanation] (XXIX. 4) [19. 7].

In the sonnet 'Con le altre donne mia vista gabbate' [You join with other ladies to deride me] (XIV. 11–12) [7. 11–12] these enticements to further interpretation are explicitly associated with the existence of a specialized public alongside a more general readership. Dante refrains from dividing this poem because its general sense is already apparent from the introductory prose *ragione*. At the same time, he admits that in some parts the imagery and wording are obscure. These 'dubbiose parole' [confusing expressions] (XIV. 14) [7. 14] regard the phenomenology of lovesickness, in particular the portrayal of the poet's *alienatio mentis*, rendered in Cavalcantian terms as the externalization of the soul's 'spirits'. According to Dante, the meaning of these verses, which could be further revealed by divisions, is already apparent to whoever is a 'fedele d'Amore' [faithful follower of Love] (XIV. 14) [7. 14]. For everyone else, the explanation of the sonnet provided by the prose gloss will suffice.

It seems evident that those unnamed readers 'faithful to love' — who already comprehend the physiology of love and the poetic language used to describe it — are the same professional 'fedeli d'Amore' who read and replied to the first dream. It also seems likely that the readers for whom, thanks to the explanation of the narrative, the sense of the sonnet is now sufficiently 'manifesto' (XIV. 14) [7. 14] are the same simplest for whom the meaning of 'A ciascun'alma' is now 'manifestissimo'. The two audiences of 'A ciascun'alma', the famous poets and the simplest, are in this way refigured as possible readers of the *Vita nova*. And Dante chooses to reintroduce these two contrasting publics at the same time he defines two of the principal formal structures of his work, the narrative *ragioni* and the exegetical divisions, thereby identifying the particular mixed form of his work with its diverse readerships.

Dante must have had other possible audiences in mind for the *Vita nova* besides the 'famosi trovatori' and 'li più semplici'. Nevertheless, as implied readers, the famous poets and the simplest occupy a space of particular significance. Dante draws on the social and cultural contrasts between these two potential reading communities in order to articulate an important ethical stance regarding the structure and scope of his work: what is hid from the wise has been revealed unto babes. Or, to put it another way, you need not be a famous poet to benefit from the allegorical truth of the *Vita nova*.

This emphasis on the truth available even to the simplest is related to the contrast Dante sets up throughout the work between interpretation and revelation. What the famous poets cannot discover despite their interpretive skill will in time be revealed to all. The cause of this dramatic shift in viewpoint is not an interpretation, but an event: Beatrice's death and glory. In this light, we can see how Dante casts the first failed interpreters of the dream of 'A ciascun'alma' — among whom he notably includes himself — in the role of evangelical witnesses: 'Haec non cognoverunt discipuli eius primum, sed quando glorificatus est Jesus, tunc recordati sunt quia haec erant scripta de eo' [These things understood not his disciples at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him].[52] Constructing a parallel between Christ's and Beatrice's glory as the catalyst for retrospective revelation, Dante overlays the 'primum' and 'tunc' of the evangelical witnesses with the 'allora' [then] and 'ora' [now] (III. 15) [2. 2] of the historical readers of his works. While comparing himself and the love poets to the apostles might seem vainglorious, it also has the effect of removing the former from a privileged position of textual interpretation. This literary elite failed to understand, just like everyone else, the things that were written, 'quia haec erant scripta'.[53]

The socio-political contrasts that emerge from a consideration of the appropriate audience for the *Vita nova* also provide one last clue as to why Dante's debate with da Maiano and contemporaries is expressed through dream theory. As with the dissemination of a vernacular literature, dream theory is potentially destabilizing, for individuals from a wide range of social categories can experience and analyse dreams. One of the primary reasons, in fact, that Aristotle gives for his scepticism about dream divination is the social inversions it would entail. He objects that God would send dreams not to 'the best and wisest, but merely commonplace persons'.[54] Dante, on the other hand, is at pains to demonstrate that the ultimate truth of a dream does not depend on the status of the dreamer or the skill of the interpreter. For this reason, even a somatic dream or a feverish hallucination correctly diagnosed as illusory might still be prophetic. The metaphysical reversal inherent in locating the spirit of truth in a dream of the flesh has consequences that

are at once sociological and hermeneutical. Within a strict ethos of revelation, there can be no claims of exclusive understanding, no privilege for academic training, no single interpretive key.

Through dream theory, Dante signals his embrace of a more expansive readership. These readers may not be professionally trained in reading signs, but they can nonetheless participate in the universalizing typologies that are revealed in dreams and illustrated by the retrospective narration of events. Instead of simply a reflection of his medievalness, Dante's allegorical poetry can be seen in this light as the result of a specific ethical and formal choice. The universal availability of the *figura* answers the expertise in the *signum*. At the same time, Dante's polemical stance in favour of an audience of the many is still aimed, ironically, at the few. As we have seen, the ideal audience for Dante's debate about literary and dream theory remains the famous poets, those 'close readers' of Italian poetry who are capable of understanding the specifics of contemporary literary debates and the physiological basis of love.

Although Dante, with regard to his empirical audience, is still looking backward at the famous poets, it is through them, and their misreading of his dream, that he is able to announce the assumption of a new poetic mission. The expanded audience implicit in this new poetics can be traced in the semantic trajectory of the first line of the first poem of the *Vita nova*. When first published, the *incipit* of 'A ciascun'alma presa e gentil core' was directed at a restricted corporation of faithful love poets, 'tutti li fedeli d'Amore'. By the end of the *Vita nova*, through the analogies developed between Love and Christ and Beatrice and Christ, the poem can be seen retrospectively as calling on all believers — 'universis Dei fidelibus' or 'universis Christi fidelibus'. That is to say, the renewed horizon of the greeting revitalizes its evangelical roots and links it with a tradition going back to the letters of Paul. In the end, the story of the reception of the first dream, from the 'then' of the famous poets to the 'now' of the simplest, dramatizes a move on Dante's part to a more encompassing, potentially universal, congregation. The intelligibility of Dante's figural poetics even for today's global audience is a confirmation of the success of this move and a testament to his intuition about the expectations of future readerships.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. From Onesto's sonnet 'Siete voi, messer Cin, se ben v'adocchio' (l. 14). The texts of Onesto's and Cino's poems are taken from *Le Rime di Onesto da Bologna*, ed. by Sandro Orlando (Florence: Sansoni, 1974). For a discussion of the entire exchange, see Domenico De Robertis, 'Cino e i poeti bolognesi', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 128 (1951), 273–312. For the status of Dante's poetry for Onesto and Cino, see Furio Brugnolo, 'Cino (e Onesto) dentro e fuori la *Commedia*', in *Omaggio a Gianfranco Folena*, ed. by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo and others, 3 vols (Padua: Editoriale Programma, 1993), I, 369–86 and Mario Marti, 'Onesto da Bologna, lo Stil nuovo e Dante', in *Con Dante fra i poeti del suo tempo* (Lecce: Millella, 1971), pp. 43–68. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
2. Translations from the *Vita nova* are based, with modifications, on Mark Musa's translation.
3. See Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Dante's Three Reflective Dreams', *Quaderni d'italianistica*, 10 (1989), 213–36; Dino S. Cervigni, *Dante's Poetry of Dreams* (Florence: Olschki, 1986), pp. 71–180; Glyn P. Norton, 'Retrospection and Prefiguration in the Dreams of *Purgatorio*', *Italica*, 47 (1970), 351–65; and Charles Speroni, 'Dante's Prophetic Morning Dreams', in *American Critical Essays on the 'Divine Comedy'*, ed. by Robert John Clements (New York: New York University Press, 1967), pp. 182–92.
4. See, however, at least Ignazio Baldelli, 'Visione, immaginazione e fantasia nella *Vita Nuova*', in *I sogni nel Medioevo*, ed. by Tullio Gregory (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985), pp. 1–10; and Cervigni, pp. 39–70.
5. Quotations from and references to the responses to 'A ciascun'alma' are taken from Dante Alighieri, *Rime*, pp. 250–60. Translations based on Foster and Boyde, *Dante's Lyric Poetry*.
6. Quotations from and references to 'Provedi, saggio' and the poems in response to it are taken from Dante da Maiano, *Rime*, ed. by Rosanna Bettarini (Florence: Le Monnier, 1969).
7. I argue that Dante similarly responds in the narrative of the *Vita nova* to the reception of his *canzone* 'Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore' in *Accounting for Dante: Urban Readers and Writers in Late Medieval Italy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 61–94.
8. Charles S. Singleton, *An Essay on the Vita Nuova* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), p. 14. For an alternative interpretation of what the 'true judgment' of the dream should be, see Michelangelo Picone, 'Per una lettura romanzesca della *Vita Nuova*', in *Bibliologia e critica dantesca. Saggi dedicati a Enzo Esposito*, 2 vols (Ravenna: Longo, 1997), II, 25–38.
9. Singleton, pp. 13–20.
10. Michelangelo Picone's reading of the responses differs from my own. See 'Per una lettura romanzesca' and 'Dante e Cino: una lunga amicizia. Prima parte: i tempi della *Vita Nova*', in *Dante*, 1 (2004), 39–54. But see also Guglielmo Gorni's treatment in the commentary to his edition: Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nova* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), pp. 26–27.
11. Text in Dante Alighieri, *Rime*, pp. 259–60.
12. Bruno Nardi, 'L'amore e i medici medievali', in *Studi in onore di Angelo Monteverdi*, ed. by Giuseppina Gerardi Marcuzzo, 2 vols (Modena: Società tipografica editrice modenese, 1959), II, 517–42. See also the commentary in Foster and Boyde, II, 29–31.
13. For lovesickness in the Middle Ages, see Giorgio Agamben, *Stanze. La parola e il fantasma nella cultura occidentale* (Turin: Einaudi, 2006); Massimo Ciavolella, *La 'malattia d'amore' dall'Antichità al Medioevo* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1976); John Livingston Lowes, 'The Loveres Maladye of Hereos', *Modern Philology*, 11 (1914), 491–546; and Mary Frances Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The Viaticum and its Commentaries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).
14. Nardi, p. 542.
15. Latin text from *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, ed. by James Willis (Lipsiae: B. G. Teubneri, 1963). The translation is taken from Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. by William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952). Passages will be identified according to book, chapter, and section number in the text.
16. For the middleness of dreams, see Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 17–34.
17. On Albertus Magnus and dream theory, see Tullio Gregory, 'I sogni e gli astri', in *Mundana sapientia. Forme di conoscenza nella cultura medievale* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1992), pp. 347–87 (pp. 358–73) and Kruger, pp. 99–121.
18. John of Salisbury, *Policratici sive de nugis curialium et vestigiis philosophorum libri viii*, ed. by Clemens C. I. Webb, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), II. 15. 429c. The translation is taken from *Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers*, trans. by Joseph B. Pike (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 76.
19. See Gregory; Kruger, pp. 83–122; and, especially for the earlier translations of Aristotle, Thomas Ricklin, *Der Traum der Philosophie im 12. Jahrhundert: Traumtheorien zwischen Constantinus Africanus und Aristoteles* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).
20. From the *Parva naturalia*, in *The Works of Aristotle Translated into English*, ed. by William David Ross, trans. by John Isaac Beare and George Robert Thomson Ross, 12 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908–52), III, 460b. Subsequent citations are drawn from this translation.
21. See the important discussion in Gregory of the astrological and natural explanations of dream prophecy.
22. 'Et in hoc genere sunt somnia quae significant apud medicos dominium humorum in corpore, v. g., quod videre ignem significat dominium cholerae, et somniare aquam significat dominium

phlegmatis.' [And there are dreams of the kind which according to physicians signify a predominance of humors in the body, for example to see fire signifies a predominance of choler, and to dream of water signifies a predominance of phlegm.]: from the *Paraphrasis* to Aristotle's *De divinatione per somnium*, quoted in Nardi, p. 540.

23. Kruger, p. 134.
24. The *Roman de la Rose* provides the canonical example for exploring the status of poetry through dreams, and it was likely a model for the debate between Dante and da Maiano. The truth claims of the *Roman* and its relationship to the truth claims of dreams are immediately underlined in the first four rhyme-words of the poem: *songes, mençonges, songier, mençongier* [dreams, lies, to dream, lying]. In these first verses of the preface, the author invokes Macrobius against those who believe that dreams are only fables and lies. In Jean de Meun's continuation, however, Nature (beginning on line 18257) makes the exact opposite claim: that many people are deceived by dreams. These include those who are delirious from illness and beset by 'frenesie' (l. 18300): Guillaume de Lorris and Jeun de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, ed. by Félix Lecoy, 3 vols (Paris: Libraire Honoré Champion, 1965).
25. Kruger, p. 135 and A. C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 4–6.
26. In addition to the various commentaries on the *Vita nova* and the *Rime*, see Pär Larson, 'A ciascun'alma presa, vv. 1–4', *Studi mediolatini e volgari*, 46 (2000), 85–119; and Silvio Pellegrini, 'Intorno al primo sonetto della *Vita nova*', in *Varietà romanze* (Bari: Adriatica, 1977), pp. 406–11.
27. Larson, p. 90.
28. Text in Dante da Maiano, p. 175; translation from Foster and Boyde.
29. Dante da Maiano, p. 187.
30. Dante da Maiano, p. 185.
31. Dante da Maiano, p. 181.
32. Dante da Maiano, p. 179.
33. Dante da Maiano, p. 183; translation from Foster and Boyde.
34. For a history of the motif of the eaten heart in the Romance literary tradition, see Luciano Rossi, 'Il cuore, mistico pasto d'amore: dal *Lai Guirun* al *Decameron*', *Studi provenzali e francesi*, 82 (1983), 28–129.
35. All texts of Guillem's poetry from Guilhem de Cabestanh, *Les Chansons*, ed. by Arthur Langfors (Paris: Edouard Champion, 1924).
36. 'Et tes lo braz e l'abraset dousamen, inz en la zambra on ill eron amdui assis, e lai comenseron lor drudaria'. [And she held his arm and embraced him, in the chamber where they both were seated, and there they began their dalliance.] Text from version D of the *razo*, in Jean Boutière and Alexander Herman Schutz, *Biographies des Troubadours: Textes provençaux des xiii^e et xiv^e siècles* (Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1964), p. 545.
37. See the citations and discussion in Larson, pp. 97–99.
38. See the discussion of the 'accommodation with death' that takes place within the *canzone* in Ronald Martinez, 'Mourning Beatrice: The Rhetoric of Threnody in the *Vita nuova*', *Modern Language Notes*, 113 (1998), 1–29 (p. 22).
39. See Martinez, pp. 23–24.
40. See the discussion in Singleton, pp. 20–24.
41. From the *Catholica magistri Salerni* [Comprehensive Work of Master Salernus], cited in Antonio Lanci, 'Immaginazione', in *ED*, III, 369–70 (p. 370).
42. Based on a search of the *Opera del Vocabolario Italiano* online database.
43. Singleton, p. 18.
44. See, for example, the account of the dream given in Lanci's *ED* entry 'Immaginazione' which includes the quote from Albertus Magnus, *De somno et vigilia* [*On Sleep and Waking*], II. 1. 3.
45. For the poetic role of lovesickness in the *Vita nova*, see also Ciavolella, pp. 135–40.
46. In his re-evaluation of *passio*, Dante was no doubt influenced by the emphasis placed on the body of the suffering Christ, *Christus patiens*, in religious movements of the period. This was especially prominent in Franciscan circles, where Christ's passion was associated with the founding saint's *imitatio Christi* and the doctrine of the stigmata. For the historical semantics of *passio* in a Christian context, see the excursus on 'Gloria passionis' in Erich Auerbach, *Literary Language and Its Public in Late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 67–81. For the figure of *Christus patiens* in Franciscan discourse, see Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Chiara Frugoni, *Francesco e l'invenzione delle stimmate. Una storia per parole e immagini fino a Bonaventura e Giotto* (Turin: Einaudi, 1993).

47. The connection between the true illusions of 'Donna pietosa' and the non-false errors of *Purg.*, XV. 117 is noted in Teodolinda Barolini, '"Cominciandomi dal principio infino a la fine" (*V.N.* XXIII. 15): Forging Anti-narrative in the *Vita Nuova*', in *'La gloriosa donna de la mente': A Commentary on the 'Vita Nuova'*, ed. by Vincent Moleta (Florence: Olschki, 1994), pp. 119–40 (p. 130).
48. This shift in perspective on Love from 'in prima' to 'ora' also reproduces the shift in perspective on Dante's first dream from 'allora' to 'ora'.
49. For da Maiano's response as representative of a common medical perspective, see Enrico Fenzi, *La canzone d'amore di Guido Cavalcanti e i suoi antichi commenti* (Genoa: Il Nuovo Melangolo, 1999), pp. 10–13.
50. Dante often refers to an indefinite *persona, alcuno*, or *chi*: 'Potrebbe qui dubitare persona' [some person could be puzzled] (XXV. 1) [16. 1]; 'E acciò che non ne pigli alcuna baldanza persona grossa' [And in order that crude persons may not become too daring] (XXV. 10) [16. 10]; 'Forse ancora per più sottile persona si vederebbe in ciò più sottile ragione' [Perhaps a more subtle person would see in this still another more subtle explanation] (XXIX. 4) [19. 7]; 'E se alcuno volesse me riprendere di ciò' [And if someone should wish to reproach me] (XXX. 2) [19. 9]; 'sì come appare a chi lo intende' [as is evident to one who understands] (VII. 2) [2. 13]; 'sì come appare manifestamente a chi lo intende' [as will be evident to the discerning] (VIII. 3) [3. 3]; 'e allora intenda qui chi qui dubita, o chi qui volesse opporre in questo modo' [and then he who may be in doubt here or who may wish to object in the above fashion, let him understand] (XII. 17) [5. 24]; 'E questo dubbio è impossibile a solvere a chi non fosse in simile grado fedele d'Amore' [This confusion is impossible to resolve for one who is not in like degree a faithful follower of Love] (XIV. 14) [7. 14]; 'E acciò che quinci si lievi ogni vizioso pensiero, ricordisi chi ci legge' [So that here and now every perverse thought may be extinguished, let him who reads this remember] (XIX. 20) [10. 31]; 'E per questo puote essere manifesto a chi dubita in alcuna parte di questo mio libello' [From the foregoing, explanation can be given to anyone who experiences difficulties in certain parts of this, my little book] (XXV. 9) [16. 9]; 'mi potrebbero testimoniare a chi non lo credesse' [many could testify to it for whoever might not believe] (XXVI. 1) [17. 1].
51. The seriousness of this invitation is explored in Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez, *Time and the Crystal: Studies in Dante's Rime Petrose* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 53–70.
52. This passage from the Gospel of John 12. 16 directly follows the description of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, welcomed by the singing of 'Hosanna' — a crucial text used to exalt his advent into Heaven in the Palm Sunday liturgy, as well as a model for Beatrice's ascension in the episode of 'Donna pietosa'. On the parallel between the Gospel passage and Dante's text, see Singleton, p. 126 and De Robertis's commentary in *Vn*, p. 44.
53. Dante's depiction of the less educated or sophisticated as 'li più semplici' [the simplest] — rather than, for example, the biblical *parvuli* [children] of Matthew 11. 25 and Luke 10. 2 — is reminiscent of the emphasis on *simplicitas* in Franciscan discourse. This includes the missionary engagement with *simplices* preached by Francis himself, the 'simple friar'. The specific comparison of the simplest with the famous is commonplace in Franciscan doctrine. It appears with particular frequency in the writings of the English friar Roger Bacon, as in this attack on scholastic pride: 'quoniam plura secreta sapientiae semper inventa sunt apud simplices et neglectos quam apud famosos in vulgo [...] plura etiam utilia et digna sine comparatione didici ab hominibus detentis magna simplicitate, nec nominatis in Studio, quam ab omnibus doctoribus meis' (I. 1. 10). [Since more hidden knowledge has always been found among the simple and the uncultivated than among persons of wide renown [...] I have also learned more useful and worthwhile things from

people held back by their great simplicity, and without reputation among the learned, than from all my teachers.] Text in *The Opus Majus of Roger Bacon*, ed. by John Henry Bridges, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897–1900), I, 23. See also Franco Alessio, '*Simplicitas* e *paupertas* da Ruggero Bacone a Guglielmo di Occam', *Ricerche storiche*, 3 (1983), 659–95.

54. *Parva naturalia*, 462b. Aristotle expresses a similar sentiment in the following passage: 'A special proof [of their not being sent by God] is this: the power of foreseeing the future and of having vivid dreams is found in persons of inferior type, which implies that God does not send their dreams; but merely that all those whose physical temperament is, as it were, garrulous and excitable, see sights of all descriptions' (463b).

CHAPTER 6

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Dante: l'amore come destino

Claudio Giunta

L'amore di cui parlano i poeti romanzi è generalmente l'amore-passione che lega un uomo a una donna o, meno spesso, un uomo *e* una donna insieme. L'amore cortese è una particolare declinazione di questo sentimento umano: con un suo galateo, un suo valore ideale, suoi motivi e termini caratteristici. Si sa che Dante dà di questo amore-passione un'interpretazione particolare: nella *Vita nova*, nelle *Rime* e poi nella *Commedia* l'amore per Beatrice si trasforma in culto, devozione per un essere soprannaturale: e ne derivano le ben note immagini della donna-angelo, della donna 'venuta di cielo in terra a miracol mostrare' (*Vn*, XXVI. 6, vv. 7–8), e infine, nella *Commedia*, dell'anima che siede 'con l'antica Rachele' (*Inf.*, II. 102) e parla coi santi e con gli angeli. Come anche si sa, però, non tutte le poesie d'amore di Dante sono per Beatrice: un amore-passione senza alcuna risonanza sacra si trova, per esempio, nelle petrose e nel ciclo per la pargoletta. E non in tutte le poesie che si possono ragionevolmente ricondurre a Beatrice il registro è quello del buon amore devoto di un sonetto come 'Tanto gentile' o di una canzone come 'Donne ch'avete'. Nelle pagine che seguono vorrei appunto richiamare l'attenzione su un paio di canzoni di Dante nelle quali si parla di amore in termini un po' diversi da quelli a cui le altre sue liriche, e la lirica antica in generale, ci hanno abituati: due — per così dire — strani modi di trattare il tema, sui quali mi sembra interessante riflettere per ciò che possono dirci sia a proposito di Dante sia a proposito della concezione dell'amore dei medievali paragonata a quella dei moderni.

Su 'Amor che movi'

Ecco la prima stanza della canzone *Amor che movi*:

> Amor che movi tua vertù dal cielo
> come 'l sol lo splendore,
> che là s'apprende più lo suo valore
> dove più nobiltà suo raggio trova,
> e com'el fuga oscuritate e gelo,
> così, alto signore,
> tu cacci la viltà altrui del core,
> né ira contra te fa lunga prova;
> da te conven che ciascun ben si mova
> per lo qual si travaglia il mondo tutto,