

Strangely Dark, Unbearably Bright: from the Volto Santo to the Veronica and beyond in the *Divine*

Comedy

Quel s'attuffò, e torno sù convolto;

ma i demon che del ponte avean coperchio,

gridar: "Qui non ha loco il Santo Volto!"

qui si nuota altrimenti che nel Serchio!

Però, se tu non vuo' di nostri graffi,

non far sopra la pegola soverchio."

(The sinner plunged, then surfaced black with pitch: / but now the demons, from beneath the bridge, / shouted: "The Sacred Face has no place here; / here we swim differently than in the Serchio; if you don't want to feel our grappling hooks, / don't try to lift yourself above that ditch.")

(Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, Canto 21, v. 46-51)¹

Qual è colui che forse di Croazia

viene a veder la Veronica nostra

che per l'antica fame non sen sazia,

ma dice nel pensier, fin che si mostra:

"Signor mio Iesù Cristo, Dio verace,

or fu sì fatta la sembianza vostra?";

tal era io

(Just as one / who, from Croatia perhaps, has come / to visit our Veronica—one whose / old hunger is not sated, who, as long / as it is shown, repeats these words in thought: / “O my Lord Jesus Christ, true God, was then / Your image like the image I see now?” — / such was I.)

(Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, Canto 31, v. 103-109).²

Arriving at the rim of the fifth pouch of the eighth circle of hell at the beginning of Canto 21 of the *Inferno*, Dante tells us it was “mirabilmente oscura,” strangely, or wonderfully dark.³ However, despite the hyperbolic blackness of that place, quite literally its pitch blackness, the canto overflows with visual imagery and with talk of seeing and being seen.⁴ Moreover, it is in this canto that Dante invokes the Volto Santo of Lucca, a sculptural representation of the crucified Christ that according to legend was miraculously generated by divine grace rather than carved by the hand of man, an *acheiropoieton*.⁵ The image appears in the canto as a dark premonition of the ultimate vision towards which Dante the pilgrim journeys in the poem. The visible darkness of the fifth pouch stands in stark contrast to this theophany as expressed in Canto 33 of *Paradiso*. The percussive brilliance of the poet’s visionary experience in the final stanza of the poem supersedes visual perception, acting directly on the mind that only moments previously searched in vain for its own reflection in the circle of eternal light. The true face of God, the Beatific Vision promised to the saved at the end of time, dissolves into an effulgence of unspeakable brilliance. Dante’s use of the Veronica, both in the *Commedia* and in the *Vita Nuova*, has been the subject of much commentary, but his dismissive treatment of the Volto Santo has received less attention; no entry on the Volto Santo is to be found in the *Dante Encyclopedia* (2000), while the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (1970), has only a brief entry.⁶ The parallels between his two very different

invocations of visible and material representations of the “true face” of God have, so far as I am aware, not been directly addressed.

This essay examines the two appearances of Christ’s “true” face in the *Commedia* that reference contemporary devotional practices and the material images that inspired them.⁷ I argue that the juxtaposition of these two images indicates that Dante’s attitude toward the visual representation of the divine was at best ambivalent, and that in particular, he found troubling the materiality and particularism of an image such as the Volto Santo. In a period obsessed with the question of the Beatific Vision and frenzied with enthusiasm for visual images of Christ, Dante’s engagement with the challenge of representing through art either verbal or pictorial what is by theological necessity a deferred and chimerical experience attests to both his aesthetic sensitivity and his sense of unease about overly simplified, literal approaches to the visual object. As Christopher Kleinhenz has observed, Dante’s treatment of the Volto Santo “reaches a high (or perhaps better said, low?) point,” in “the generally parodic atmosphere of [the twenty first and second] cantos,” and that even this holy image is “not immune from ridicule, not ‘sacred’ as it were.”⁸ Is it possible that in focusing on and mocking a so-called true image of Christ, Dante argues for a more critical approach to the visual object in the cult setting? I would like to advance the case that Dante, while hardly an iconoclast, here participates in the formulation of a new approach to the sacred image that was also taking shape in the broader context of fourteenth-century literary theory, theology and devotional art, and that the sharp contrast between the abject materiality of the hellishly inverted Volto Santo and the luminous immateriality of his final vision of God help to establish an aesthetic of transcendence very much in accord with stylistic and conceptual moves being made by visual artists in Italy, and indeed across western Europe, in the same period. At the same time, Dante, like many of his well-educated and theologically sophisticated peers,

took up a fundamentally reactionary stance against the proliferation of popular cult activity in Italy
focused on monumental sculpted or painted images of Christ, the Virgin, and the Saints.⁹

I. An Infernally Inverted Vision

e vidila mirabilmente oscura.

Quale ne l'arzanà de'Viniziani

bolle l'inverno la tenace pece

a rimpalmare i legni lor non sani,

ché navicar non ponno

...

tal, non per foco ma per divin'arte,

bollia là giuso una pegola spessa,

che 'nviscava la ripa d'ogne parte.

l' vedea lei, ma non vedëa in essa.

(I saw that it was wonderfully dark. / As in the arsenal of the Venetians, / all winter long a stew of sticky
pitch boils up to patch their sick and tattered ships / that cannot sail... / so, not by fire but by the art of
God, / below there boiled a thick and tarry mass / that covered all the banks with clamminess. / I saw it,
but I could not see within it)

(*Inferno*, 21 v. 6-10 and 16-19)¹⁰

The language of Canto 21 insistently draws attention to visual perception. It opens with an extended simile in which the poet compares the fifth pouch of hell to the trough of pitch that “boils all winter long” in the Venetian shipyards. From the vivid picture of industry, however, he returns to the ditch full of seething tar before him, announcing, “I saw it, but I could not see within it.” Confirming that this was no passing glance that Dante the pilgrim gave the ditch, the opening of the next stanza emphasizes, “I stood intently gazing there below” (Mentr’ io là giù fisamente mirava, v. 22).¹¹ The verb *mirare* matches the adverb *mirabilmente* in line 6, underscoring the mood of perplexed visual absorption produced by the oxymoron of visible obscurity. When Vergil interrupts the pilgrim’s contemplation of the boiling pitch with the hortative, “Guarda, guarda!” (v. 23) the mode of visual interaction with the infernal environment shifts. Not only should the pilgrim “watch out” for the approaching demon, but he must remain visually attentive and wary throughout the transit of the fifth pouch. In the six lines that follow Vergil’s warning, the verb “vedere” appears in different forms three times, all describing the pilgrim’s gaze as that of “one who can’t resist / looking to see what makes him run away” (come l’uom cui tarda / di veder quell che li convien fuggire, v. 25-26).¹² Like the modern day spectator before the horror film, he spends most of the canto cringing, gaping and staring (in literary terms) at the repulsive and terrifying spectacle of the devils tormenting the souls of the corrupt officials they toss into the ditch. While Canto 21 is often and rightly described as comedic due to its crude language and in particular its focus on the wicked antics of the farcically named demons, the pilgrim himself expresses no amusement, only fear and an urge to be gone.¹³ He stands in contrast to the narrator, who addresses the reader directly in the next canto, amidst the continuing antics of the demons, crying out with what sounds like glee, “O you who read, hear now of this new sport” (O tu che leggi, udirai nuovo ludo, *Inferno* 22, v. 118).

But before he can be gone, the pilgrim must witness the business of the *bolgia*; the punishment of the corrupt civic officials who will “change a ‘no’ to a ‘yes’ for cash” (del no, per li denar, vi si fa *ita*, v.42).¹⁴ This group is first represented by an anonymous “elder of Santa Zita” – a councilman of Lucca, a city towards which Dante’s sentiments were at best, mixed.¹⁵ Steve Ellis writes that the paratactic reference to Lucca by way of Santa Zita “probably conveys Dante’s own antipopulist feelings about the cult,” which centered on a humble serving woman who had died in 1272.¹⁶ If this is the case, it hints that Dante may have harbored reservations about other aspects of popular piety in Lucca as well. In particular, the sarcastic reference to Santa Zita seems to lay the ground for the parody of the Volto Santo in line 48, when the demons taunt the condemned soul of the corrupt official as he surfaces, “*convolto*,” which is sometimes translated into English as “black with pitch”(as in Mandelbaum), sometimes, “rump upwards,” (as in Charles Singleton’s edition).¹⁷ The multiplicity of possible readings is probably intentional on the part of the poet, and the association of the sinner’s soul with the holy image insults either the crucifix’s appearance, or the rituals of supplication associated with it, or both at once.¹⁸ The Volto Santo (figure 1) is notably very dark in its complexion, in conformity with an iconographic tradition that goes back to pre-Iconoclastic Byzantine precedents, in which the darkness of the visage is a critical element in the mysterious antitheses of light and dark that turns on the dual nature of Christ as both human and divine.¹⁹ Worship of this miraculously generated and miracle-generating object almost certainly involved the deep prostrations counseled by medieval authors on prayer gestures, including Peter the Chanter and the anonymous Dominican who wrote the treatise *De Modo Orandi*, claiming to detail the various postures and gestures employed by Saint Dominic (figure 2).²⁰ An illustration from an early-fourteenth-century manuscript of the *Leggenda di Volto Santo* written and illuminated in Lucca depicts a scene in which the deacon Leboino tells of the Volto Santo’s miraculous origin while worshippers gather round in gestures of prayer, including one figure that crouches at the

feet of the crucifix, *convolto* as Dante's unfortunate elder of Santa Zita, if indeed *convolto* indicates the arching of the spine (figure 3).

The cult of the Volto Santo first appears explicitly in the historical record in the eleventh century, though the legend composed at that time indicates that the miraculous crucifix arrived in city from the Holy Land under miraculous circumstances in 782.²¹ Elizabeth Coatsworth and Audrey Scanlan-Teller have both argued that evidence from Anglo-Saxon England suggests that already by the tenth century Anglo-Saxon and Insular artists already knew of the robed, girdled "priestly" type of crucified Christ of which the Volto Santo seems to have been the prototype.²² Furthermore, the recent confirmation by radio-carbon dating that the Volto Santo at Sansepolcro, on the eastern edge of Tuscany, could have been carved as early as the ninth century also suggests that the legend's Carolingian-era origin for the Volto Santo type contains a kernel of truth.²³ The exact nature of the object venerated in the eleventh century and its relationship to the present Volto Santo, which most art historians date to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, are both unclear.²⁴ But what is clearly visible, and must have been visible to Dante as well, is the great distance between the style of the Volto Santo and that of crucifixes produced by artists in Dante's day.

The gap between the Volto Santo's rigid, Romanesque frontality and formality and the sinuous contours, lifelike modeling, and pathetic depiction of death found in such works as the numerous crucifixes attributed to Giovanni Pisano, including those for Sant'Andrea, Pistoia, dated 1301, San Nicola, Pisa, dated ca. 1300, and the Duomo in Siena, dated about 1285 (figure 4), inevitably draws attention to the challenge stylistic difference poses to the claims of authenticity that structure devotion to miraculous cult objects.²⁵ Furthermore, when set beside the dominant type of monumental crucifix of the early fourteenth century, the painted panel, the Volto Santo appears even more anomalous. The

shift from the three-dimensional medium of wood sculpture to the more abstract, two-dimensional medium of painting on panel makes later works, such as Giotto's Rimini Crucifix (figure 5, before 1309) more equivocal in its relationship to the body and spatial environment of the viewer; Giotto's Christ hovers in a shimmering, golden intermediate realm neither entirely of this world nor entirely beyond it whereas the Volto Santo not only occupies bodily space but can also be handled and dressed in liturgically appropriate clothing, just like a human body.²⁶ Between the emergence of the Volto Santo as a cult image in the high Middle Ages and the fourteenth century, significant changes in the way the crucifix was visualized and conceptualized had obviously taken place, and Dante, always sensitive to the visual object and always attentive to questions of style and idiom, responded.

Large scale, sculpted and painted crucifixes depicting Christ triumphant, dressed in a belted tunic and standing erect and eyes open upon the Cross were not uncommon in southern Europe between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries and were especially prevalent in Tuscany. The legendary origins of the object in Lucca, related in a late-eleventh- or early-twelfth-century text ascribed to an eighth-century deacon, Leboino, attribute its true likeness to the divinely-guided hand of Nicodemus, and claim for the Volto Santo not only a veridical reproduction of Christ's physiognomy, but also an exact replication of his height, bodily proportions, and weight.²⁷ The fame and reputation of the Volto Santo seem to have inspired numerous copies not only in its native Tuscany, but also much further afield, with examples such as the Engelberg Crucifix (later twelfth century) from the Diocese of Constance. Pilgrims on their way to Rome began to make the Volto Santo a stop on their way as early as the eleventh century, no doubt helping to spread knowledge of the image and its cult.²⁸ Ute Limacher-Riebold has traced the presence of the Volto Santo in the vernacular literature of France going back to the twelfth century with Wace and other poets working in the epic and romance genres.²⁹ In particular, she explores the

incorporation of miracle legends into the French vernacular tradition; not coincidentally, the earliest and most widely repeated miracle topos for the Volto Santo directly concerned those who lived by vernacular words, namely troubadours. The miracle of the slipper, in which a poor pilgrim from France offers his only wealth, in the form of his music, to the Volto Santo, and is rewarded when the sculpture throws down one of its silver shoes, seems to date from the twelfth century.³⁰ As Stefano Martinelli points out, this miracle story works toward the recuperation of the moral and religious status of one of the lowest castes of medieval society, the itinerant entertainer, thus associating the Volto Santo with these low-status individuals.³¹ Dante, as a poet who through his use of the vernacular and his fate as an exile mirrors in some way the poor, itinerant poet of the Volto Santo's most famous miracle, may well have found this folksy association a little too close to the bone for comfort.

The miracle-working potential of the Volto Santo proceeded both from its status as a true image and from its reliquary aspect; contained within the wooden *corpus* were relics of the Holy Blood, the nails from the True Cross, a hefty chunk out of the Crown of Thorns, a piece of the neckerchief Christ wore at the Crucifixion (known as the *sudarium*), and some of Christ's fingernails and hair-trimmings as well.³² This hyperbolic collection of authenticating material attests to the competitive nature of the environment in which image cults existed in the later Middle Ages. In fact, even such a superabundance of authenticity was not enough to make for the Volto Santo the superluminary reputation that attended its older and more prestigious cousin in Rome, the Veronica. For despite its popularity in Tuscany and its international reputation, the Volto Santo remained deeply local in its identification, perhaps another factor in Dante the Florentine's distaste. As Lucca's influence in Europe spread by way of its network of merchants and bankers in the late-thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the appeal of the Volto Santo to the civic pride of these far-flung natives proved strong; Hilary Maddocks has demonstrated that the

Lucchese bankers Jacques, Filippo, and Dino Rapondi, the last of whom served as *maître d'hôtel* to Duke Philip of Burgundy around 1400, were the probable patrons of the only illuminated copies of the French version of the legend of the Volto Santo.³³

Like other wildly popular cult images and relics such as that of Sainte Foy at Conques, the Volto Santo was not immune to skepticism, particularly on the part of clerics and other educated, cosmopolitan people. As early as the turn of the twelfth century, Bishop Rangerius of Lucca (reigned ca. 1097-1112) seems to express some distaste for the rabble of foreign pilgrims who have spread the fame of the Volto Santo and in so doing destroyed the religious integrity of the local clergy. Diana Webb argues that his disapproval of the Volto Santo's popularity was rooted in the competition this cult, sponsored perhaps by the city's lay leadership, posed to the Episcopal cult of saints Martin and Regulus, to whom the Duomo was dedicated.³⁴ In his eponymous collection of letters dated to 1215, rhetorician Buoncompagno da Signa remarks that the Piacenza-born orator Placentinus derided the Volto Santo as "eaten by ants" and its cult as "mendacious and motivated by greed."³⁵ Guido da Pisa, in his commentary on the *Commedia*, observed that Dante broke his usual constraint about placing holy names in the *Inferno* with Canto 21, "in derision of the Lucchese, who without the approval of the Holy Roman Church venerate this woman [Zita] as a saint," and who believe in the power of the Volto Santo "almost as if it were the human God in the flesh and worship it as such," in contravention of doctrine (In derisionem igitur Lucanorum, qui sine approbatione Sancte Romane Ecclesie dictam feminam venerantur ut sanctam.... Circa quam crucem errare videntur. Nam communiter opinantur in ipsa cruce aliquod numen esse, et ipsam non ut figuram vel effigiem crucifixi, sed quasi ipsum Deum humanatum et in carne natum veneratione latrerie venerantur).³⁶ Writing to a friend in the 1360s, the Florentine Franco Sacchetti included the veneration of the Volto Santo among a long list of popular devotional

practices that he found suspicious: “Chi vuol dire, che sia la immagine del nostro Signore? Salvo la reverenza de chi il dice, che Cristo fu il più bello e l’meglio proporzionato corpo che mai fosse, e non ebbe gli occhi travolti né spaventati” [Who knows if it is the image of our Lord? With all due respect, Christ’s was the most beautiful and best proportioned body that ever was, and did not have frighteningly crossed eyes].³⁷ Dante is hardly so direct in his critique, but the ersatz Volto Santo in the *Inferno* is exposed to far greater violence than that done by either Placentinus’ remark about the actual crucifix’s degraded materiality or Sacchetti’s mockery of its formal gaucherie. Instead, demons prick the barrator’s soul with “a hundred prongs and more,” (Poi l’addentar con più di cento raffi, v.52) and he is compared to meat jabbed down in a stewpot, a humiliating simile that emphasizes the material fate of the mortal body in death when it becomes nothing more than flesh.

The disgusting materiality of the imagery infects the Volto Santo itself; as a holy image it should by rights transcend its own material nature. But as Dante and his contemporaries were at least somewhat aware, the object itself was of relatively recent manufacture, a replacement for an earlier object that had been degraded by the attentions of pilgrims, and perhaps also, as Placentinus suggested, wood-ants. Though postdating Dante, Sacchetti’s critique – that the figure itself is not beautiful or well proportioned – also gestures towards an aesthetic problem that had arisen over the course of the thirteenth century, namely the perception of the difference between the suave poise of Gothic art and the harsher, more abstract style of sacred works from earlier periods. What this tells us, I think, is that late medieval observers struggled with the disjuncture between the aesthetics of holy images as material products of artistic labor and the theology of the image as it was emerging, forcefully, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Aquinas clearly articulated the standard western Christian conception of the dual status of works of sacred art as both material and spiritual: “No reverence is

shown to Christ's image as a thing – for instance, carved or painted wood... Reverence should be shown to it insofar only as it is an image... the same reverence should be shown to Christ's image as to Christ Himself."³⁸ And while this passage makes no explicit reference to the aesthetic qualities of such an image, as Umberto Eco points out, Aquinas argues elsewhere that "no one takes the trouble to make an effigy or representation unless for its beauty."³⁹ The Volto Santo, with its archaic style, its lack of pleasing proportion and form – both key elements in Thomist aesthetics – in its representation of the most perfect and beautiful of human bodies, may well have irritated the sophisticated viewer of religious art we know Dante to have been.

The three-dimensionality of the Volto Santo may also have been problematic. Michael Camille's observation that in the shift towards a "more spiritually charged and accessible religious art" over the course of the thirteenth century, "the most important visual types were associated with particular relics in Rome that were critically two- not three-dimensional: the imprint, in the case of the Veronica, of Christ's living face."⁴⁰ The Volto Santo, the very name of which refers to the miraculous generation of its sculpted simulacrum of Christ's true face, poses an implicit threat to the more abstract, transcendent two-dimensional imprint of the Veronica. Dante's mistreatment of the Volto Santo in *Inferno* trades on its very fleshly nature, when for example he speaks of the barrator's body being treated like a piece of meat in a stewpot: "The demons did the same as any cook / who has his urchins force the meat with hooks / deep down into the pot, that it not float" (Non altrimenti i cuoci a'lor vassalli / fanno attuffare in mezzo la caldaia / la carne con li uncin, perché non galli, v. 55-57). The ambiguity of the phrase "tornò sù convolto" (v. 46) opens the humorous and shocking possibility that the "face" or "volto" of the sinner and by association the Volto Santo, inverted (like the sinner) to make the rhyme as the "Santo Volto," is not a face at all, but a backside. Dante takes delight in pointing out the absurdity of the Volto Santo as a

sacred image, not only because it belongs to Lucca, a city he despises for its corrupt politics, but also because its character as a body, and an awkward “dark” body at that, intrudes rudely upon his idea of what a sacred image ought to be and how it ought to function.

II. Dante, Giotto, and the Roman Veronica

That Dante had clear opinions on aesthetics both literary and visual cannot be in doubt. His unfinished Latin treatise *De vulgari eloquentia*, written between about 1302 and 1305, argues for an aesthetics of vernacular rhetoric, while the *Commedia* includes a mini-disquisition on literary style in Canto 24 of *Purgatorio*, in which Dante the Pilgrim meets the Lucchese poet Bonagiunta Orbicciani and they briefly discuss the essence of the “dolce stil novo” (a phrase coined by Dante for the occasion, v. 56). As a poet himself, Dante clearly had an investment in literary style, but he was also a connoisseur of visual art, as evidenced by his frequent allusions to and direct citations of both contemporary and historical works.⁴¹ Dante’s admiration for his contemporary and countryman Giotto’s work, and it must be said for his reputation, is clearly attested in the *Commedia*. In *Purgatorio* 11 (lines 94-95) he has the illuminator Oderisi da Gubbio, noting the passing of his fame and the ascendancy of his rival, Franco Bolognese, single out Giotto as an example of an artist whose fame has eclipsed that of the acknowledged master of a previous generation: “In painting Cimabue thought he held the field, and now it’s Giotto they acclaim—the former only keeps a shadowed fame” (*Credette Cimabue ne la pittura/ tener lo campo, e ora ha Giotto il grido/ si che la fama di colui è scura*). Benvenuto da Imola, in his early commentary on the *Commedia*, claimed that Dante and Giotto were indeed friends, and spins a charming fable in which Dante quips that it amazes him that a painter of such beautiful things would also be the creator of such ugly children and Giotto wittily puns, in Latin, that this is because he paints (*pingo*) by day but creates (*tingo*) by night.⁴² The names of the two Florentine artists were frequently

associated in the literature of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries, reflecting a tradition that perhaps was more expressive of Florentine civic pride than historical fact.⁴³ Recent scholarship has persuasively made the case that regardless of their personal relationship or lack thereof, Dante was directly influenced in his depiction of the torments of sinners in Hell by the Last Judgment fresco at the Arena Chapel in Padua.⁴⁴

Giotto's approach to narrative, deceptively informal, spontaneous, and revelatory must have appealed to Dante, whose gifts as a storyteller hinge on a similar ability to create memorable effects through the careful orchestration of ostensibly incidental, naturalistic detail.⁴⁵ At the Arena Chapel, Giotto gives us a big-bellied man at the Wedding at Cana lifting his chin and pursing his lips as he quaffs a cup of wine from a wonderfully transparent glass goblet (figure 6). The man's expression and his girth add a touch of humor and social commentary at the same time the scene underscores the important Christological point about the miraculous transformation – the seated Virgin half turns toward the man, raising her right hand as if in blessing to indicate that we should pay attention to the drinker.⁴⁶ He is far more than a stock character for comic relief, since his gluttonous form also introduces to the scene a moralizing reading. An intriguing parallel exists between this figure, a familiar type of the glutton, and Dante's linkage of the Wedding at Cana to the virtue of Temperance on the terrace of Gluttony in *Purgatorio* 22, a connection that has been explored by Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona.⁴⁷

Narrative episodes lend themselves to artistic techniques that create naturalistic effects, but the literal sense was considered by medieval thinkers to be the lowest level of understanding. Both the Giotto the painter and the Dante the poet were up to the task of representing bulky medieval allegory in terms that breathed life into what might otherwise feel cumbersome. For example, both Dante and Giotto tackled the rather stodgy tradition of personifications of the virtues, Dante in the scene of the

Divine Pageant near the end of the *Purgatorio* (canto 29) and Giotto in Padua. Dante's Theological Virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity, are part of an elaborate parade of allegorical figures, complete with a triumphal chariot pulled by a splendid griffon, but instead of describing them in terms of their traditional attributes, Dante makes them glow with brilliant color:

Tre donne in giro da la destra rota
venian danzando; l'una tanto rossa
ch'a pena fora dentro al foco nota;
l'altr' era come se le carni e l'ossa
fossero state di smeraldo fatte;
la terza pareva neve testé mossa.

(Three circling women, then advancing, danced / at the right wheel; the first of them, so red / that even in a flame she'd not be noted; / the second seemed as if her flesh and bone / were fashioned out of emerald; the third / seemed to be newly fallen snow.)

(*Purgatorio*, 29, v. 121-127)⁴⁸

Giotto makes a parallel move by painting his virtues in the monochrome style today known as grisaille; his are among the earliest extant examples of monumental painting to employ the technique, which was to become a hallmark of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century virtuoso visual style.⁴⁹ Giotto's grisaille heightens rather than dampens the naturalistic effect of his allegorical figures; painting them as if they were unpainted stone sculptures brings them into an illusory intermediate space between viewer and the full color narrative scenes around them and allows him to comment on his representational activities, on his creation of illusion, and on his ingenuity as a painter.⁵⁰ Like the sculptures they fool the eye into thinking they are, they push forward from the surface of the wall, an effect underscored by Giotto's use of framing elements. For example, Caritas (figure 7) appears to have just stepped through a

doorway from a dark interior, her long gown pooling on our side of the sill, her bowl of fruit held out from her body so that clearly overlaps the door frame, her head turned up and to her left as she reaches up to receive a piece of fruit from the comparatively tiny figure of God (figure 7). She resembles a good housewife, complacently smiling and doing God's work, even while the fictive setting of marble and porphyry evokes a more classical ideal. Like the figures in Dante's allegorical parade, Caritas' monochromatism actually heightens her liveliness and presence even as it draws attention to the artifice of art-making (poetry or painting).

Giotto's approach to painting, combining narrative, naturalistic effects, and startling passages of virtuosity with deeper theological content was very much in sympathy with Dante's own poetics, but both men lived and worked in an environment saturated with pictorial images that operated in a very different register. Cult images – miracle-working statues, panel paintings that shed tears or saved armies or kept off plagues, and quasi-relics like the Volto Santo – peppered the landscape of late-medieval Italy, having accumulated over a thousand years of internecine competition for authority and significance between parishes, cities, bishoprics, and other polities. In Florence, the Orsanmichele Madonna, painted on a pilaster in the then-open loggia of the grain exchange, began to attract notice for its thaumaturgic and demon-defeating powers in 1292, according to Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani.⁵¹ This image, too, attracted skepticism. A sonnet by Giotto's near-contemporary, Guido Cavalcanti, "Una figura della mia donna," plays on the slippage between the miraculous image of Orsanmichele, his own beloved lady, and the aspersions of idolatry cast against both popular adoration of the Madonna and the poet's worship of the beloved. While Cavalcanti is mostly concerned in this sonnet to provoke his fellow poet Guido Orlandi (a more conventional moralist) with the blasphemous equivalence between his mistress

and the Orsanmichele Madonna, Ron Martinez points out that the poem also tugs at the loose threads in contemporary discourse about such purportedly miraculous images.⁵²

Meanwhile, the Papacy controlled a stable of the most potent of all such images, including the famed Veronica, housed in a special oratory at Saint Peter's and paraded through the streets of Rome to the Hospital of the Holy Spirit every year on the feast of the Wedding at Cana from 1208 onwards.⁵³ This *acheiropoieton* had been promoted heavily by Pope Innocent III (r.1198-1216), who instituted the procession, and by subsequent popes who saw its potential as a magnet for pilgrims. By the end of the thirteenth century it was one of the most famous of Rome's miraculous images, the goal of every visitor to the city, and the subject of an emerging cult centered on a developing legend concerning its association with the Passion, when Saint Veronica (whose name encompasses both the Greek Berenice, the woman cured of the flow of blood by Jesus in all three synoptic gospels, and the name of the object, Vera (true) Iconam (image)) was said to have wiped the sweat and blood from Christ's face with her cloth.⁵⁴ Although it was sought by pilgrims, celebrated in a grand liturgical parade, and depicted by artists in devotional books and other media, the Veronica was for the most part invisible to the faithful. Stored in an elaborate twelfth-century ciborium, screened by a veil at all times, and processed in an even-more elaborate thirteenth-century ostensory that completely enclosed it, this miraculously generated true image of Christ's face was, like the face of God itself, a vision deferred. Only angels and the blessed dead in heaven could look upon the Holy Face. The beatific vision, Thomas Aquinas' "final end," was the subject of intense curiosity, longing, and controversy in the early fourteenth century, particularly concerning whether it was possible for the blessed to proceed immediately to the vision (a position clearly endorsed by Dante in *Paradiso*) or whether instead the full experience had to wait until the soul was united with its resurrected body after judgment.⁵⁵ Without going into the niceties of this

major quarrel which probably sent Pope John XXII to his grave a deeply frustrated and unhappy man, and which was not even entirely resolved by his successor Benedict XII's bull *Benedictus Deus* of 1336, it is enough to say that this question vexed the leading minds of Dante's generation. The Veronica, an earthly manifestation of the Holy Face and of its invisibility, fed into the furor as more people across Christian Europe acquired images that claimed to reproduce the Holy Face and earnestly prayed before it for intercession after an indulgenced office to the Holy Face began to circulate around 1240.⁵⁶

Dante, skeptic that he seems to have been about the Volto Santo, could not have been indifferent to the cult of the Veronica. Indeed, already in the *Vita Nuova* he began to tap into its power as an exemplum and preparatory experience for the beatific vision. In Chapter 40, he addresses a group of pilgrims bound for Rome "per vedere quella imagine benedetta la quale Iesu Cristo lasciò a noi per essempro de la sua bellissima figura, la quale vede la mia donna gloriosamente" [to look upon that blessed image that Jesus Christ left to us as an example of his most beautiful face, which my lady sees in glory].⁵⁷ Thus, the poet links the Veronica directly to the experience of the beatific vision by the blessed, while also prefiguring his own imagining of the journey towards that vision as a form of pilgrimage in the *Commedia*.⁵⁸ The similarity between the visionary conclusion of the *Vita Nuova* and that of the *Commedia* is no coincidence, as many commentators have noted, but in the *Commedia* the contrast between the Veronica in *Paradiso* and the parodic Volto Santo of *Inferno*, I think we can discern Dante working through his persistent worries about material images that claim not just to represent, but to somehow embody Christ, and theorizing a role for the material image in mediating between physical vision and visionary experience.

III. Onward and upward, beyond the visual arts

In Canto 31 of *Paradiso*, Dante begins to hint at the nature of how the *visio Dei* might be experienced by mortal eyes. Directed by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux to tear his gaze from the contemplation of the radiantly enthroned Beatrice and direct it instead towards the Queen of Heaven, in order that his “vision will be made more ready to ascend through God’s own ray,” (ché veder lui t’acconcerà lo sguardo più al montar per lo raggio divino, v. 98-99) the pilgrim marvels (“mirando” – recalling *Inferno* 21’s insistence on that verb) at the saint, “Just as one who, from Croatia perhaps, has come to visit our Veronica – one whose old hunger is not sated, who, as long as it is shown, repeats these words in thought: ‘O my Lord Jesus Christ, true God, was then Your image like the image I see now?’” (Qual è colui che forse di Croazia viene a veder la Veronica nostra, che per l’antica fame non sen sazia, ma dice nel pensier, fin che si mostra: “Segnor mio Iesù Cristo, Dio verace, or fu sì fatta la sembianza vostra?” v. 103-108). Invoking the Veronica, the poet might seem to propose it as a superior object to the Volto Santo, but I do not think that is his aim, exactly. Instead, in comparing the pilgrim to a rustic foreigner agape before this remarkably inscrutable object in Rome, he suggests that it is the image in the mind, rather than the material object, that matters. The putative Croatian asks the “Dio verace,” whether what he sees before him is what he sees before him is a true likeness. His hunger remains unsatisfied even by the sight (or as the case may have been, non-sight) of the Veronica, but as the poet goes on to tell us, Bernard, “in this world, in contemplation, tasted that peace,” (Colui che ’n questo mondo, /contemplando, gustò di quella pace, v. 110-111) by which “peace” I take him to mean, the ultimate peace of the face-to-face encounter with Christ referred to, and yet also deferred, by the Veronica. Almost immediately after this little tableau of the Croat and the Veronica, Bernard encourages the pilgrim to lift his gaze from the foundations of the Empyrean to its heights in order to look upon the Virgin, a sort of preparatory exercise to the Beatific Vision in Canto 33. The language the poet uses to express this elevation of vision comes directly from Psalm 122. “I lifted up my eyes,” (Io levai li occhi, v.

118) from the poem echoes the opening line of the psalm, “ad Te levavi oculos meos.” Thus it invokes the pilgrimage context for this prayer, one of the fifteen Gradual Psalms.⁵⁹ There is no question that the medieval understanding of this text glossed the uplifted gaze as the soul’s fervent yearning for the vision of God, so it is less with the Veronica *as such* that Dante concerns himself here and more with the means by which through reflection and contemplation the eyes of the soul may be raised up toward the ultimate vision.

This fits with the current state of scholarly work on the Veronica as a devotional image. While the cult of the Veronica was indeed firmly situated in Rome and associated with the Papacy (the icon had supposedly provoked the Papal Jubilee of 1300), it was also, as Gerhard Wolf has argued, a “mediatised” image – that is an image infinitely reproducible and disconnected from the specific materiality of a putative “original”, rather like the Eucharist itself, with which it shares many ontological features. In pilgrim’s souvenirs, in manuscript images, in copies and cognates of all varieties, the Veronica had, in Wolf’s words “become a universally known image (if we can call it image at all) in Western Christendom.”⁶⁰ Wolf subtly traces the Veronica’s transformation from cult image to “universal symbol,” but the most important point he makes in terms of Dante’s invocation of the Veronica is that as an iconographic formula it came to figure for Christians everywhere in Western Europe an adumbration of the Beatific Vision. Jeffrey Hamburger has examined how the Veronica circulated through the medium of inexpensive and rather crude woodcut prints, drawings, and paintings on leather or parchment in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century German convents, where the base, material nature of these objects and their endlessly repeated depiction of the Veronica functioned as an outwardly visible sign of the way in which Christ’s divine image is imprinted on the human soul, just as his human image is reproduced (in a degraded form) in human flesh.⁶¹ The “old hunger” of the soul for the face to face

vision described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13.12, “We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face,” is “not sated” by the image, but the rapt encounter with the Veronica prepares the way for the vision to come.

Dante the poet brings in the Veronica just at the moment that Dante the pilgrim pauses on the brink before testing the transcendent potential of his visionary state. Bernard’s instruction to “let your sight fly around the garden,” or more literally, “fly with your eyes” (*Vola con li occhi per questo giardino*, v. 27) suggests the soaring departure of visual perception from the constraints of flesh; the eyes become a synecdoche for the soul of the poet as he delights in the vision of the Heavenly Rose. As Susan Noakes has argued, this is the character of the “*vista nuova*” or “new vision” in which the pilgrim exults in the final three tercets of the poem; in the Empyrean, there is nothing corporal to see, only pure light, just as in the *Vita Nuova*, the poet journeys away from carnal desire towards spiritual love.⁶² The fulfillment of the pilgrim’s journey is predicated on this “*vista nuova*,” this pure, intellectual vision, but it cannot be accomplished without the intervention of Grace. In Canto 33 of *Paradiso*, gazing upon the brilliance that is God, Dante at first sees only light, then three circles of three different colors, one of them “seemed painted with our effigy” (*mi parve pinta de la nostra effige*, v. 131) in which he seeks to discern the sense, but fails, “But then my mind was struck by light that flashed / and, with this light, received what it had asked” (*Se non che la mia mente fu percossa / da un fulgore in che sua voglia venne*, v. 140-141). What he sees at that moment when, like Paul on the road to Damascus, he is stricken by light, is the full truth of the mystery of the Incarnation, and the description of the precursor vision that “to me seemed painted with our effigy,” hints at a model for this vision in the contemporary representations of the Holy Face – the mediatised Veronica. “Effigies” was a common Latin formulation used to describe the

Veronica in prayers and papal letters alike from Innocent III onward. Even in the Empyrean, where vision is immaterial and language reaches its limits, the material image leaves its haunting imprint.

Did Dante mistrust and even reject the object-based devotional culture of popular piety in early fourteenth-century Italy, and was his affinity for the Veronica as an immaterial, or rather, meta-material true image a symptom of his preference for the “new” Gothic cult of the image with its emphasis on aesthetic refinement rather than on *recherché* origin as a sign of authenticity? On the basis of the *Commedia* alone, it would be hard to make a definitive answer, but the episode with the Volto Santo in *Inferno* 21 does seem to imply skepticism about the devotional value of such objects on the poet’s part. As a member of the educated elite, a scholarly man who prided himself on his connections to other leading artists of the day, including visual artists such as Giotto, Dante was incontrovertibly invested in aesthetics. He was attentive and responsive to the visual arts, often incorporating iconographic elements and material language drawn from that deep well into his poem. Elsewhere, I have argued that even a century before Dante wrote his *magnum opus*, the corpus of Marian miracle literature contains within it the traces of a troubled discourse about the clash between an aesthetic way of looking at sacred images and a more credulous and pious way of seeing them. In the early thirteenth century, the aesthetic view was still highly suspect, and associated in the miracle literature with impiety, pride, idolatry, and criminality.⁶³ By Dante’s time, the discussion had shifted ground; the “visual turn” of thirteenth-century devotional practices, spurred on by such Mendicant texts as Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, and by the increased availability and visibility of “naturalizing” Gothic art nurtured audiences for art that were far more sophisticated in their viewing practices than their immediate predecessors.⁶⁴ Seen in this light, Dante’s preference for the Veronica, an image liberated

from a singular, material existence by virtue of its infinite reproducibility, over the Volto Santo, an image confined in space and time by its adamant materiality, makes sense.

This essay began as a seminar contribution to the 2009 NEH Summer Seminar, “Dante: Literature, Art, and History” held in Prato, Italy, under the direction of Dr. Christopher Kleinhenz. I later presented it at the 2011 International Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo, Michigan at a session sponsored by the Dante Society and chaired by Dr. Kleinhenz. I thank Chris and all of the seminar participants for their guidance, inspiration, and encouragement. Thanks are also due to Dr. Stanley Benfel of BYU, who convinced me to apply for the seminar in the first place, wrote a letter of recommendation, and reviewed an early draft of this essay.

¹ Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Bantam Dell, 1982), 188-189. Throughout the text, I use the Italian text and facing-page English translation of Allen Mandelbaum (*The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, Part I *Inferno*, Part II *Purgatorio*, Part III *Paradiso* (New York: Bantam Dell, 1982)) unless otherwise noted. For *Inferno* I sometimes prefer the translation of Mark Musa: Dante Alighieri, *Dante’s Inferno: The Indiana Critical Edition*, trans. Mark Musa (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1995).

² Mandelbaum, *Paradiso*, 282-285.

³ Mandelbaum, *Inferno*, 187 translates “mirabilemente” as “wonderfully” while Musa, *Dante’s Inferno*, 155 selects “strangely.”

⁴ For more on the phrase “seeing and being seen,” see below, my discussion of *Inferno*, 21 v. 6-10.

⁵ The volume of literature on the Volto Santo of Lucca is significant. Herbert Kurz, *Der Volto Santo von Lucca: Ikonographie und Funktion des Kruzifixus in der gegürteten Tunika im 11. Jahrhundert* (Regensburg: Roderer Verlag, 1997), provides an extensive overview of the scholarship and includes an exhaustive bibliography (see particularly pages 102-123). More recently, the collection of essays edited by Michele Camillo Ferrari and Andreas Meyer, *Il Volto Santo in Europa: Culto e immagini del Crocifisso nel Medioevo, Atti del Convegno internazionale di*

Engleberg (13-16 settembre 2000) (Lucca: Istituto Storico Lucchese, 2005) situates the Volto Santo at the nexus of a web of medieval image practices and beliefs. Many of the same authors also contributed to a subsequent volume produced by the Comune di Lucca, the Italian Ministry of Culture, and the Italian Conference of Bishops (no editor listed), *La Santa Croce di Lucca, Il Volto Santo: Storia, Tradizioni, Immagini, Atti del Convegno, Villa Bottini (1-3 Marzo 2001)* (Florence, Italy: Editori dell'Acero) which covers much of the same ground but includes perspectives more reflective of current Roman Catholic teaching. For another wide-ranging review of the literature, see Jean-Claude Schmitt's reflective essay, "Cendrillon crucifiée: à propos du 'Volto Santo' de Lucques," in *Miracles, prodiges et merveilles au Moyen Age: XXVe congrès de la Société d'enseignement supérieur public*, ed. SHMES (Paris: Sorbonne, 1995) 241-269. Outside of commentaries, very little in-depth consideration has been given to Dante's invocation of the Volto Santo; Giovanni Fallani's "Il Volto Santo di Lucca," in *Poesia e teologia nella Divina Commedia*, vol. 2 (Milan: Marzorati, 1961), 117-123 and Christopher Kleinhenz's essays, "Dante and the Tradition of the Visual Arts," *Thought* 65 (1990): 17-26 (especially "Iconographic Parody in *Inferno* XXI," *Dante's Inferno: The Indiana Critical Edition*, trans. and ed. Mark Musa (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 325-339, are among the few examples. The Volto Santo is neither the subject of an entry nor indexed in Richard Lansing, ed. *The Dante Encyclopedia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), nor in the *Inferno* volume of the California *lectura Dantis* series (*Lectura Dantis: Inferno*, ed. Allen Mandelbaum, Anthony Oldcorn, Charles Stanley Ross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988)).

⁶ *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. Richard Lansing (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); Adolfo Cecilia, "Volto, Santo," in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, online edition, consulted January 9, 2015: URL http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/santo-volto_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/ .

⁷ As Christopher Kleinhenz pointed out to me, the vision of Mary's Ascent in *Paradiso* 23 also circulates around the idea of the Holy Face, or of a series of Holy Faces, from that of Beatrice, to Mary, and by implication, on to Christ himself.

⁸ Christopher Kleinhenz, "Iconographic Parody in *Inferno* XXI," *Dante's Inferno: The Indiana Critical Edition*, trans. and ed. Mark Musa (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 327-328.

⁹ For more on intellectuals' wariness towards these crucifixes and the associated cult activity, see Donal Cooper, "Projecting Presence: the monumental cross in the Italian church interior," in *Presence: The Inherence of the Prototype within Images and Other Objects*, ed. Rupert Shepherd, Robert Maniura (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 47-69. See also (for an exploration of another poetic challenge to popular cultic images), Ronald Martinez, "Guido Cavalcanti's 'Una figura della donna mia' and the Specter of Idolatry Haunting the Stilnovo," *Exemplaria* 15.2 (2003): 297-324.

¹⁰ Mandelbaum, *Inferno*, 186; translation, Musa, *Inferno*, 261.

¹¹ Translation Musa.

¹² Translation Musa.

¹³ Modern critics who have investigated the comedic dimensions of the canto almost universally cite both Leo Spitzer, "The Farcical Elements in *Inferno*, Cantos XXI-XXIII," *Modern Language Notes*, 59.2 (1944): 83-88 and Franco Ferrucci, "Commedia," *Yearbook of Italian Studies* 1 (1971): 29-52. Both authors stress the purposeful nature of the "low" humor in Canto 21, tying it to Dante's moral program in the poem, and particularly his insistence on the inevitability of human involvement in sin. Steve Ellis, summarizing critical reaction to Canto 21, leans toward a point of view in which the coarse language and the buffoonery of the devils, while risible to the reader, do not in fact cancel out the real and terrible truths of divine retribution and eternal suffering depicted in the fifth pouch; he writes, "We can, I think, agree with the 'dualistic' interpretation of this canto that any humor that does exist here is one underlain by the seriousness of Dante's deepest moral and political commitments, by his ideal of civic freedom and honesty under imperial rule," (291). Steve Ellis, "Canto XXI: Controversial Comedy," in *Lectura Dantis: Inferno, a Canto-by-Canto Commentary*, ed. Allen Mandelbaum, Anthony Oldcorn, Charles Ross (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 287-296. In her introduction to the canto, Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi observes, following the nineteenth-century commentator Niccolò Tommaseo, that the

comic tone of the canto is not incidental to its autobiographical implications; Dante was himself exiled from Florence on charges of barratry, and Chiavacci Leonardi suggests that here “he extends a light veil of raillery; perhaps to indicate the grotesque absurdity of the accusation, perhaps also out of that guardedness with which he surrounds those matters that touch him most personally” (Dante stende qui un leggero velo di scherzo: forse a significare la grottesca absurdità dell’accusa, forse anche per quell geloso riserbo di cui sempre egli circonda ciò che lo tocca in modo strettamente personale” (Dante Alighieri, *Commedia con il comment di Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi*, Vol. I *Inferno* (Milan: Mondadori, 1991), 623).

¹⁴ Translation Musa.

¹⁵ Chiavacci Leonardi remarks that while earlier commentaries have identified various Lucchese public officials with the nameless sinner in Canto 21, the very anonymity of the character indicates that it could be any Lucchese public official, because they are (according to the poet) all barrators (Chiavacci Leonardi, *Inferno*, 634, note on 21.38) On Dante’s complicated relationship to Lucca, in which his distaste for its political culture vied with his appreciation for its literary and feminine charms, see Giovanni Varanini, “Dante e Lucca,” in *Dante e le città d’esilio: atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Ravenna (11-13 settembre 1987)*, ed. Guido Di Pino (Ravenna: Angelo Longo, 1989), 91-114.

¹⁶ Steve Ellis, “Canto XXI: Controversial Comedy,” 294. Zita was not in fact canonized at the time of Dante’s writing, nor indeed until 1696.

¹⁷ Mandelbaum, *Inferno*, 189; Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Volume I, *Inferno*, Part I, *Text*, trans. Charles Singleton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 215. Elsewhere, Singleton gives the literal translation of *convolto* as “hunched up,” but observes that “the meaning of *convolto*, in this context, may well be ‘rump up’ – and in this case it would be a rump covered with blackest pitch.” Charles Singleton, rev. ed. C.H. Grandgent, ed., *La Divina Commedia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 189. Cited by Kleinhenz, “Iconographic Parody,” 336, n. 8. Chiavacci Leonardi favors the reading “doubled over, making an arch of the spine, as in the following canto of the appearance here and there of the damned on the surface of the pitch” (*piegato in due*,

facendo *arco de la schiena* (come si dirà nel canto seguente dell'apparire qua e là dei dannati alla superficie della pece: XXII 20) (Chiavacci Leonardi, 637, note on *Inferno* 21.46)

¹⁸ Singleton (1972), 189 also identified the suggestion of a prayer-like posture and the parallel between the blackness of the pitch and the dark coloration of the Volto Santo. Also, Nicola Fosca, in his commentary on the *Inferno*, favoring the interpretation "covered in pitch," nevertheless remarks that if instead commentators who favor the reading "doubled over" are correct, the reference to the Santo Volto is best explained by Carlo Grabher's remark that the phrase "elicits a mocking irony. It seems that the sinner folds his spine in a sort of genuflection" (una beffarda ironia. Sembra che quello pieghi la schiena in una specie di genuflessione). (Cited from the commentary to *Inferno* 21.46 by Nicola Fosca (Original publication by The Dartmouth Dante Project, 2003), and from the commentary to *Inferno* 21.46 by Carlo Grabher (*La Divina Commedia, col commento di Carlo Grabher*, ed. Antonia Rossi, Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1934-36) as found in the Dartmouth Dante Project, <http://Dante.Dartmouth.EDU>).

¹⁹ As in 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus." (Douay-Reims).

²⁰ On Peter the Chanter and postures of prayer, see Jean-Claude Schmitt, "Between text and image: the prayer gestures of Saint Dominic," *History and Anthropology*, 1 (1984): 127-162. On the Dominican *de modo orandi*: Leonard Boyle, "'The ways of prayer of St. Dominic.' Notes on ms. Rossi 3 in the Vatican Library," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 64(1994): 5-17; Leonard Boyle and Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Modi orandi sancti Dominici = Saint Dominic's gestures at prayer -- an illuminated manuscript* (Zürich: Belser Verlag, 1995); Sabina Magrini, "'Modus orandi s. Dominici; vitae sanctorum'; miscellanea di testi teologici e devozionali," in *I Santi patroni: catalogo di mostra, Biblioteca nazionale Vittorio Emanuele III di Napoli, 3 giugno-15 ottobre 1999*, ed. Claudio Leonardi, Antonella Degl'Innocenti (Milan: Centro Tibaldi, 1999), 233-235.

²¹ On the legend of the Volto Santo, see Chiara Frugoni, "Una proposta per il Volto Santo," in *Il Volto Santo: Storia e Culto*, eds. Clara Baracchini and Maria Teresa Filieri (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi, 1982) 15-48. The

primary source is Leboino, *De inventione, revelatione ac traslatione Sanctissimi Vultus*, in *Il Volto Santo di Lucca*, ed. Pietro Lazzarini (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi, 1982), 45-58.

²² Elizabeth Coatsworth, "The 'robed Christ' in pre-Conquest sculptures of the Crucifixion," *Anglo-Saxon England* 29 (2000): 153-176. Audrey Scanlan-Teller, "The Volto Santo in the British Isles," in *Il Volto Santo in Europa*, 499-525. Diana Webb ("The Holy Face of Lucca," *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference* 9 (1986): 227-237, especially pages 235-237) presents a divergent account, in which the iconographic evidence cited by Coatsworth and Teller is framed in terms of larger representational traditions of Syrian origin and the documentary evidence is examined in light of the practices of monastic chroniclers who wished to add to the authority and antiquity of institutional memory.

²³ On the radiocarbon dates and stylistic identification of the Sansepolcro image with the Carolingian era, see M. Camillo Ferrari, "Crocifisso, Borgo Sansepolcro," in *Il Volto di Cristo: Storia, tradizione, immagini*, ed. Giovanni Morello and Gerhard Wolf (Milan: Electa, 2000), 270-271.

²⁴ On the historical documentary evidence: Diana Webb, "The Holy Face of Lucca," 227-237. For the clearest treatment of the disputed date of the present Volto Santo, see Romano Silva, "La datazione del Volto Santo di Lucca," in *La Santa Croce di Lucca* (as above, note 3), 76-81.

²⁵ Max Seidel, "Giovanni Pisano," in *Scultura dipinta: Maestri di legname e pittore a Siena 1250-1450* (*Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena, 16 luglio-31 dicembre, 1987*), ed. Alessandro Bagnoli, Roberto Bartolini (Florence: Edizione Centro Di, 1987), 22-29, especially pages 24-27.

²⁶ Donal Cooper discusses the role of monumental crucifixes of the so-called "Mendicant" type such as the Rimini example, within the liturgical environment of the fourteenth-century parish church. He argues that these very large, very visible images were effectively "an apologia for the real presence of Christ in the Mass." (Cooper, "Projecting Presence," 54).

²⁷The Latin text does not exist in a modern edition. However, an Italian version based on manuscripts in the Biblioteca Statale di Lucca is found in Pietro Lazzarini, *Il Volto Santo di Lucca* (Lucca: Maria Pacini Fazzi, 1982), 45-

48. See also Gustav Schüner and Joseph Ritz, *Sankt Kummernis und Volto Santo: Studien und Bilder* (Düsseldorf: Forschungen zur Volkskunde, 1934), 128. Michele Bacci explores the Nicodemus origin-myth in depth in “Nicodemo e il Volto Santo,” in *Il Volto Santo in Europa*, as in note 3, 15-39.

²⁸ See Raffaele Savigni, “Lucca e il Volto Santo nell XI e XII secolo” in *Il Volto Santo in Europa*, 407-498.

²⁹ Ute Limacher-Riebold, “Le Volto Santo dans la littérature française médiévale,” in *Il Volto Santo in Europa*, 169-192.

³⁰ Limacher-Riebold, “Le Volto Santo,” note 14; Schnürer and Ritz, *Sankt Kummernis*, 159, 162-165.

³¹ Stefano Martinelli, “‘Out of Rules’: jester’s miracles as a paradigm of social revenge,” unpublished conference paper, Leeds University Institute for Medieval Studies International Medieval Congress, July 10, 2012.

URL (accessed February 28, 2014):

[https://www.academia.edu/2593435/ Out of rules jesters miracles as a paradigm of social revng](https://www.academia.edu/2593435/Out_of_rules_jesters_miracles_as_a_paradigm_of_social_revng)

³² On the reliquary assembly, see Nicholas Vincent, *The Holy Blood: King Henry III and the Westminster Blood Relic* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 56-57, n. 85.

³³ Hilary Maddocks, “The Rapondi, the Volto Santo di Lucca, and Manuscript Illumination in Paris ca. 1400,” in *Patrons, Authors and Workshops: Books and Book Production in Paris around 1400*, eds. Peter Ainsworth and Godfried Croenen (Louvain: Peeters, 2006), 91-122, especially page 105. The brothers’ names are given as listed above, though Jacques was presumably Giacomo by birth.

³⁴ Webb, “The Holy Face of Lucca,” 232-233.

³⁵ Buoncompagno da Signa, *Buoncompagnus* 5.22.3, digital edition by Stephen Wight, for Scrineum, University of Padua, 1998-99. URL: <http://scrineum.unipv.it/wight/bon522.htm>, accessed April 7, 2011.

³⁶ Guido da Pisa, *Expositiones et Glose super Comediam Dantis*, 21.38, 21.48 online, Dartmouth Dante Project, URL http://dante.dartmouth.edu/search_view.php?doc=132751210380&cmd=gotoresult&arg1=0 accessed March 25, 2014.

³⁷ Franco Sacchetti, *Opere*, ed. Aldo Borlenghi (Milan: Rizzoli, 1957), 1117. Translation, "On Modern Saints," in *Medieval Italy, Texts in Translation*, trans. Catherine Lawless, ed. Katherine Ludwig Jansen, Johanna Drell, Frances Andrews (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 387. In another instance highlighted by Andrew Ladis, Sacchetti tells an anecdote about a preacher who worked himself into a froth about the nature of Christ and then, with the congregation primed for a dramatic conclusion hinging on the question of "What is the face of Christ like?" turned to a nearby painting, announcing, "If Christ looked like that I'd split a gut!" See Ladis, "The Legend of Giotto's Wit and the Arena Chapel," *The Art Bulletin*, 68 (1986): 582- , quote on 581-582 with reference to Sacchetti's *Il Trecentonovelle*, ed. A. Lanza (Florence: 1984), Novella 29.

³⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 3a, q. 25, art. 3, 4:2149. Donal Cooper discusses this proposition in relation to the Osservanza crucifix of Lando di Piero in "Projecting Presence," 49-50.

³⁹ *Nullus curat effigiare vel repraesentare nisi ad pulchrum*. Cited in Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 172. *Summa Theologica* I, 12, 9 ad. 2.

⁴⁰ Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 206.

⁴¹ Christopher Kleinhenz has written extensively on Dante's engagement with the visual arts, in addition to "Iconographic Parody" cited above, his articles include: "A Nose for Art (Purgatory VII): Notes on Dante's Iconographical Sense," *Italica* 52 (1975): 372-379; "Dante and the Tradition of Visual Arts in the Middle Ages," *Thought*, 65, No. 256 (March, 1990): 17-26; "On Dante and the Visual Arts," in *Dante and the New Millennium*, ed. Teodolinda Barolini and H. Wayne Storey (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 274-92.

⁴² Benevenuti de Rambaldis de Imola *Comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam, nunc primum integre in lucem editum sumptibus Guilielmi Warren Vernon*, vol. III ed. Jacobo Philippo Lacaita. (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1887), 313. See Enid Falaschi, "Giotto: The Literary Legend," *Italian Studies* 27 (1972): 1-27, especially p. 10; Andrew Ladis, "The Legend of Giotto's Wit and the Arena Chapel," 583, n. 13.

⁴³ Falaschi, "Literary Legend," 1-8.

⁴⁴ Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona, *The Usurer's Heart: Dante, Enrico Scrovegni, and the Arena Chapel in Padua* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 60. On the influence on Dante of the Saint Francis cycle at Assisi, long contested between the pro-Giotto (mostly Italian) faction and the non-Giotto (mostly Anglo-Saxon) faction, see Ronald Hertzman, "'I Speak not yet of Proof': Dante and the Art of Assisi," *The Art of the Franciscan Order in Italy*, ed. William Cook (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 189-209. An excellent bibliography and discussion of the long controversy regarding Giotto and Assisi is found in the same volume; Thomas de Wesselow, "The Date of the Saint Francis Cycle in the Upper Church of S. Francesco at Assisi: The Evidence of Copies and Considerations of Method," 113-167.

⁴⁵ On parallels between the narrative techniques of Dante and Giotto see Andrew Ladis, "The Legend of Giotto's Wit," as above, and his posthumously published *Giotto's O: Narrative, Figuration, and Pictorial Ingenuity in the Arena Chapel* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 110-166.

⁴⁶ See Andrew Ladis, "The Legend of Giotto's Wit," 585.

⁴⁷ Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona, "'Ave charitate plena': Variations on the Theme of Charity in the Arena Chapel," *The Art Bulletin*, 76 (2001): 599-637, p. 617. The link between Cana and Caritas is a common topos of exegetical literature, and in Rome it was particularly attached to the cult of the Veronica which was processed to the Hospital of Santo Spirito on the feast of Cana.

⁴⁸ Mandelbaum, *Purgatorio*, 272-273.

⁴⁹ See Reinhard Steiner, "Paradoxien der Nachahmung bei Giotto: die Grisailen der Arenakapelle zu Padua," *Die Trauben de Zeuxis: Formen künstlerischer Wirklichkeitaneignung*, ed. H. Körner et al. (Hildesheim, Zurich, New York: Olms, 1990), 61-86. For an expanded discussion of grisaille technique and its relationship to art theory and reception in the fourteenth century, see Michaela Krieger, *Grisaille als Metapher: Zum Entstehen der peinture en camaïeu im frühen 14. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 1995).

⁵⁰ The “metarepresentational” aspect of grisaille is discussed by Charlotte Schoell-Glass, “En grisaille: Painting Difference,” *Text and Visuality: Word and Image Interactions 3*, ed. Martin Heusser et al. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 197-204.

⁵¹ Giovanni Villani, *Nuova Cronica*, 3 vol., ed. Giuseppe Porta (Parma: Fondazione Pietro Bembo, 1991), volume 1, book 7, chapter 155: 521-522.

⁵² Ron Martinez, “Cavalcanti’s Orsanmichele Sonnet and the Spectre of Idolatry,” *Exemplaria* 15 (2003): 297-324. For the text of the sonnet, see Guido Cavalcanti, *Rime. Con le rime di Iacopo Cavalcanti*, ed. Domenico di Robertis (Torino: Einaudi, 1986), 188-189. Mauro Scarabelli, in his essay “Una figura della Donna mia: un episodio di polemica antfigurativa nelle Rime di Guido Cavalcanti,” (*Italianistica*, 38.2 (2009): 1-17) also discusses the sonnet in terms of its troubling the waters of image-centered popular devotion.

⁵³ On the institution of the procession of the Veronica, see Christoph Egger, “Papst Innocenz III. und die Veronica: Geschichte, Theologie, Liturgie, und Seelsorge,” *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation: papers from a colloquium held at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1996*, ed. Gerhard Wolf, Herbert Kessler (Bologna: Art Books International, 1998), 181-203.

⁵⁴ In addition to the essays in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, important sources on the Veronica cult and its legend include Karl Pearson, *Die Fronica: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Christusbildes im Mittelalter* (Strasbourg: Karl Trübner, 1887); Ernst Dobschütz, *Christusbilder: Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende* (Leipzig: 1899); Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 215-224; Jeffrey Hamburger, “Vision and the Veronica,” *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone, 1998), 317-82; Herbert Kessler, “Christ’s Dazzling Dark Face,” in *Intorno al Sacro Volto: Genova, Bisanzio e il Mediterraneo, secoli XI-XIV* (Venice: Marsilio, 2007), 145-165. I also discuss the Veronica as it relates to practices of devotion and book illumination in *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 27-83.

⁵⁵ See John Weakland, "Pope John XXII and the Beatific Vision Controversy," *Annale Mediaevale*, 9 (1968): 76-9; Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 279-317; and Christian Trottman, *La Vision Beatifique: Des Disputes Scolastiques a Sa Definition Par Benoit XII* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1995).

⁵⁶ It first appears in Matthew Paris' addition to an early thirteenth century Psalter for Saint-Albans use; in addition to a picture of the Veronica he includes the prayer and a note regarding the attached indulgence. London, British Library, Ms. Arundel 157, fol. 2., circa 1240. He attributes the office and the indulgence to Innocent III in the *Chronica Majora*, where he also includes an image of the Veronica (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 16).

⁵⁷ Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nuova*, ed. Dino Cervigni and Edward Vasta (Notre Dame, IN:Notre Dame University Press, 1995), 40:1, 138. My translation.

⁵⁹ The gradual psalms (119-133) were originally composed, it is believed, as songs of praise to accompany the approach to the Temple in Jerusalem, so their association with pilgrimage is ancient.

⁶⁰ Gerhard Wolf, "From Mandylyon to Veronica: Picturing the 'Disembodied' Face and Disseminating the True Image of Christ in the Latin West," *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, 156.

⁶¹ Jeffrey Hamburger, "Vision and the Veronica." as cited above.

⁶² Susan Noakes, "Dante's *Vista Nova*: Paradiso XXXIII.136," *Quaderni d'italianistica* 5 (1984): 151-170, see particularly 164.

⁶³ Alexa Sand, "'Vindictive virgins: animate images and theories of art in some thirteenth-century miracle stories," *Word and Image*, 26.2 (2010):150-159.

⁶⁴ Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol* (207) "What distinguishes response to the Gothic image is not only the larger scale of the experience and the wider audience but a different set of expectations of what constitutes an image." For the shift in visual habits between the high Middle Ages and the later period, see Cynthia Hahn, "Visio Dei: Changes in Medieval Visuality," in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. Robert Nelson (London: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 169-196.