

ISCAD ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: *VISIBILE PARLARE*

L. Faibisoff
(Toronto, CMS)

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Main References to *Visibile Parlare* in Dante's Works (and sources)

1. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* II.iii.4: "Signorum igitur, quibus inter se homines sua sense communicant, quaedam pertinent ad oculorum sensum [...] nam cum innuimus non damus signum nisi oculis eius quem volumus per hoc signum voluntatis nostrae participem facere [...] et sunt haec omnia quasi quaedam verba visibilia."
2. Dante, *Purgatorio* 10, 94-96. "Colui che mai non vide cosa nova / produsse esto visibile parlare, / novello a noi perché qui non si trova."
3. Dante, *Purgatorio* 12, 22-24. "sì vid'io li, ma di miglio sembianza / secondo l'artificio, figurato / quanto per via di fuor del monte avanza."

Main Definitions in Dante Studies

1. Anonymus Lombardus (c. 1325). "Hic loquitur [de] deo, cui nichil est novum; et eciam videbatur vidua supradicta loqui cum Traiano imperatore, et in aliis predictis istoriis inibi figuratis et inscultis videbantur homines loqui. Ideo appellat visibile parlare, quod novum est nobis; non enim ex visu auditum precipimus, ad quod quis loquitur; set ibi perceperunt Virgilius et Dante loquelas illas solum per visum."
2. Iacopo della Lana (1324-1328). "Cioè che Dio ordinò essere in quello luogo quelle immagini, per le quali con la vista si discernesse lo suo parlare, e dice *nova*, cioè che in lo mondo si ode lo parlare, ma in quello luogo lo parlare si vede."
3. Francesco da Buti (1385-95). "Lo parlare, seconda natura, è udibile; ma non visibile: questo era visibile, perché finge che fusse scolpito nel marmo che è sopra natura, e questo non può fare se non Iddio."
4. Cristoforo Landino (1481). "chiama parlare visibile, che una statua sia sculpita con tale artificio, che ne' gesti dimostri quello, che direbbe, se parlassi. È adunque parlar visibile, perché vedendo e gesti et non udendo la voce intendevano. Ma questo parlare che non è Nuovo a Dio, chome già è decto, è nuovo a noi mortali, perchè tra noi non si truova. Et per figura qui toccha quello, che in cielo ci adiverà nuovo. Imperochè l'uno vederà el conceptro dell'altro senza udire el suon della lingua."
5. Gabriele Trifone (1525-1541). "chiama questo vesibile parlare, che senz'essere scritto intenda e legga e veda le parole appartenenti a queste sopradette istorie; e ciò dice per darne ad intendere com'era possibile che, senza esser scritto, legesse o vedesse le parole che parean dir quelle figure."



6. G. A. Scartazzini (1899). “*Parlare visibile*, così detto perché le sculture che il Poeta aveva sotto gli occhi eranso sì perfettamente condotte, che il loro parlare si vedeva, non si sentiva.” (in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, s. v. ‘visibile’)
7. Francesco Torraca (1905). “che non si ode, si vede.”
8. Carlo Steiner (1921). “[...] figure cui si possono leggere le parole nell’atteggiamento, sulle labra, cosa che è invece nuova per gli uomini la cui arte non può giungere a tanto, né possono trovarne modello nella natura che non produce creature di tanta espressività. Ecco perché ha detto prima che *la natura li avrebbe scorno*.”
9. Natalino Sapegno (1955). “Non si deve intendere, come pur fa taluno, che la scultura parli materialmente. Il miracolo di quest’arte divina, che non si trova sulla terra, consiste nel fatto di ritrarre, non più una situazione immobile, ma una serie temporale di situazioni affettive, rendendole simultanee e suggerendo nel contempo le parole che corrispondono ai singoli momenti di quel processo.”
10. Daniele Mattalia (1960). “visivo, percepibile con l’occhio, in quanto realizzato con la materia artisticamente lavorata [...] Dante, infatti, ricostruisce e segue il dialogo, ‘dialogo continuato’ guardano il bassorilievo; quanto dire che in esso è realizzata un’altra dimensione del reale, il ‘tempo,’ e che nell’unità della rappresentazione artistica hai tutto il dialogo, scandito nella sequenza temporale delle sue battute e perfettamente riscortuibile dall’osservatore.”
11. Charles Singleton (1970-75). “Thus, the conceit of this miraculous art continues: Dante while gazing at the reliefs has mysteriously heard all the words spoken in the scenes.”
12. William Franke (1996). “We must understand this phrase to mean not only that dialogue is rendered in visible form, which would be just another affirmation of their perfection as imitative art. More importantly, “visibile parlare” indicates that the image is used as a kind of speech, that it exists not just in reified form as an object, but as language. Not what it is in its visible appearance, but what it signifies within the relations established by history and interpretation constitutes the vital reality of these visual images, what they really say, and to this extent they are language.”
13. Marco Leone (2012): “il poeta concentra nella formula del visibile parlare un insieme di significati plurimi: il primato della parola sugli altri codici espressivi (quelli delle arti), perché la parola è in grado di approssimarsi con maggiore efficacia alla verace descrizione di un manufatto divino, quale è la serie degli altorilievi; e il consapevole incrocio fra le due principali teorie relative alla creazione artistica, che dalla cultura classica arrivano a quella medievale, la teoria aristotelica, secondo cui l’arte è perfetta quanto più riesce a imitare la natura, e quella platonica, che punta non a imitare la natura (a sua volta creata da Dio), ma a riprodurre il mondo delle idee trascendenti.”
14. Gerhard Wolf (2015). “a complex poetic fiction describing the evocation of speech by means of a visual work of art [...], but this in turn is done through words, in an artistic act of “painting with words” (creating stone reliefs, in this case).”

Annotated Bibliography



1920s

Parodi, Ernesto Giacomo. “Gli esempi di superbia punita e il ‘bello stile’ di Dante” (1915). In *Poesia e storia nella ‘Divina Commedia.’ Studi critici*, idem. Naples: Perrella, 1920. 231-52.

Parodi’s essay is at the beginning of a long tradition which considers the artifice of *Purgatorio* 10. He examines the marble reliefs as reflections of Purgatory’s physiognomy, which is different from that of Hell. The author refers to the ‘artificio’ that informs Purgatory’s depicted examples of pride, defending the artifice of *Purgatorio* 10 and 12 as exemplary of a medieval delight in rhetorical ornamentation. Also, Parodi likens the dynamic representation of the marble scenes of *Purgatorio* 10 as a kind of “effetto cinematografico.”

1930s

Austin, H. D. “The Arrangement of Dante’s Purgatorial Reliefs (*Purg.* X, 34-93) in *PMLA* 47 (1932): 1-9.

Austin considers the order in which the details of the marble reliefs are presented, pointing out that in Dante’s models (for example, that of Virgil) the arrangement of images is chronological while Dante presents his scenes in a more abstract, formal way. Dante’s presentation of the scenes is so life-like, Austin writes, that they appeal to all the senses, arousing a strong sense of reality and aesthetic appreciation. The author also discusses some of the reasons why Dante may have chosen to represent the Annunciation as the first of the scenes and discusses some of contemporary sculpture programs that may have inspired Dante.

Schlosser, Julius v.. “Dichtung und Bildkunst im Trecento.” *Corona* 8 (1938) [Italian trans.: “Poesia e arte figurativa nel Trecento,” trans. R. Bianchi Bandinelli, in *La Critica d’Arte* 3 (1938): 81-90.]

With this article, Schlosser initiated a long and persisting scholarly discussion on the relationship between poetry and the visual arts in the fourteenth century, linking this relationship in particular to the Tuscan tradition of the *dolce stil nuovo* and Dante. Schlosser points to moments throughout the *Commedia* where Dante demonstrates his interest in the relationship between poetry and the visual arts, including the poet’s description of himself drawing angels on the day of Beatrice’s death. The *Commedia*, Schlosser argues, is in fact the origin of modern history of art in that it contains Dante’s reflection on the work of Cimabue and Giotto, which in turn up a tradition of the “artist.” There is also a brief reflection on Trecento frescoes where poetry plays an important role in visual representation (as, for example, Buffalmacco’s *Trionfo della Morte* in the Camposanto in Pisa).

1950s

Simonelli, Maria. “Il canto X del Purgatorio.” *Studi danteschi* 33 (1955-56): 121-45.

In this essay, Simonelli reads *Purgatorio* 10 incorporates an important theological approach into the scholarly discourse regarding the canto, arguing that the canto is not merely a commentary on the figurative arts. Where prior to her essay the canto was looked over as one merely of ‘transizione’ or a ‘canto strutturale’, the canto inspired the interests of art historians alone. Simonelli argues however that it is important to remember the theological implications of this canto. Situated as it is at the beginning of Purgatory proper, the canto signals the beginning of Dante’s journey toward divine knowledge, a first step in which Dante comes to know humility, the foundational virtue needed to acquire the others virtue.

1960s

Gmelin, Hermann. “Canto X: The Art of God.” (original edition: 1964). In *Lectura Dantis: Purgatorio*, edited by Allen Mandelbaum, Anthony Oldcorn, and Charles Ross. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. 95-102.

This close reading of Canto X focusses on the fact that the poet invents examples of his being educated by Pride, employing the figurative arts in order to produce an objective representation of his thoughts on penitence. Reading in context with St. Bonaventure, Gmelin also focusses on the central significance of Mary, whose virtues are antitheses of the seven sins.

Roedel, Reto. “Il canto X.” In *Lecture del Purgatorio*, edited by Vittorio Vettori. Milan: Marzorati, 1965. 111-129.

In his reading of *Purgatorio* 10, Roedel argues that the description of the marble reliefs is not simply a rhetorical device intended as ornamentation. Rather, in their resemblance to the Romanesque art of Nicola Pisano, Arnolfo di Cambio, and Giovanni Pisano, Dante’s description of the reliefs is an aesthetic reflection. The author provides thorough discussions of each of the three marble reliefs of *Purgatorio* 10. This article constitutes the beginning of and contributes to a long scholarly tendency, still alive now, to treat *Purgatorio* 10 and 12 in terms of Dante’s stance on poetry and aesthetics, which is to say, in terms of metapoetry.

Ulivi, Ferruccio. “Dante e l’interpretazione figurativa.” *Convivium* 34 (1966): 269-92.

Ulivi considers Dante’s relationship to the visual arts in light of the poet’s inherently figurative approach to poetry, reflecting on four particular areas in which scholarly consideration of Dante and the visual arts has fallen: 1) Dante’s relationship with the arts in his own lifetime; 2) the aesthetic ideology of Dante as a poet; 3) the possible influences that may have influenced Dante’s visual formulations; and 4) the *Commedia*’s influence on the figurative arts. Ulivi considers the visual experience of the *Commedia* in terms of Auerbach’s “figuralism” which, in the widest sense of the term, implies an entire mode of interpretation different from allegorical or symbolic interpretation. Figural representation allows that reality cannot be rendered verisimilarly, and in this way, Ulivi argues, it is much in line with the representative mode of the visual arts.

Hollander, Robert. “God’s Visible Speech.” In *Allegory in Dante’s Commedia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. 297-300.

Hollander reads the marble reliefs of *Purgatorio* 10 in conjunction with the writing of the Gate of Hell (*Inferno* 8) and in the sky of the heaven of Jupiter (*Paradiso* 18), arguing all are instances of speech made visible. That is, he interprets “visibile parlare” as reified objects, as opposed to linguistic phenomena.

1970s

Tateo, Francesco. “Teologia e ‘arte’ nel canto X del *Purgatorio*.” In Idem., *Questioni di poetica dantesca*. Bari: Adriatica, 1972. 139-171.



In a close-reading of *Purgatorio* 10, Tateo explains the connection between Dante's theology of humility and his attention to the artistic. Tateo emphasizes the significance of considering or meditating on art, as evinced in *Purgatorio* 10. Especially in Dante's world, the spiritual meanings of external signs were considered the soul's guide toward morality. Above and beyond mere ekphrasis, Dante represents himself in this canto, standing before the miracle of a divine art which has no equal in nature. Ultimately, as Tateo argues, Dante considers poetry itself as able to summarize the skills and effects of the other arts and therefore as the greatest aid in his moral education.

Fiero, Gloria K. "Dante's Ledge of Pride: Literary Pictorialism and the Visual Arts." *Journal of European Studies* 5 (1975): 1-17. Web: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/004724417500500101>

Fiero uses the term 'pictorialism' to describe Dante's recollection or recreation of a representational work of art, real or imaginary. This article first discusses the three marble reliefs and their meaning in *Purgatorio* 10 in order to understand how they are reflective of Dante's attitude toward the visual arts. Fiero also examines the scholastic association of art with order in order to derive meaning from Dante's use of the plastic arts in Purgatory. Finally, the article also suggests specific ancient or medieval visual sources that may have inspired Dante's reliefs.

1980s

Delcorno, Carlo. "Dante e l'exemplum medievale" in *Lettere Italiane* 35, 1 (1983): 3-28, esp. 15-24.

Delcorno treats, in particular, the artificio of Dante in *Purgatorio* 12, arguing that there is an analogy between the distribution of the examples of pride and approaches to preaching as evidenced in the medieval *artes praedicandi*. Specifically, Delcorno suggests a passage from the *Summa vitiorum* of the Dominican Guglielmo Peraldo as a possible source for Dante in his structure of *exempla* of the prideful. Delcorno was among the first to draw attention to similarities between the distribution of these *exempla* and the devices employed by medieval preachers in composing homilies.

Vickers, Nancy J. "Seeing is Believing: Gregory, Trajan, and Dante's Art." *Dante Studies* 101 (1983), 67-85.

Vickers offers a metapoetical reflection on *Purgatorio* 10, and with particular attention to the figure of Trajan who appears twice in the *Commedia* (*Purgatorio* 10 and *Paradiso* 22). Vickers points to a number of textual inspirations for the image of Trajan and the widow in *Purgatorio* 10, in particular hagiographic and scriptural (the *Vita* of Trajan attributed to Gregory the Great and Luke 18). In the former, the deeds of the pagan Trajan are recognized by Gregory the Great as a scriptural model, as is noted in the *Whitby Life*. In the latter, Vickers recognizes a scriptural sub-text in Luke 18, which also addresses the question of prayer and humility. Further, Vickers points out parallel iconographic models in manuscript illuminations of *Purgatorio* X and Luke 18.

Migiel, Marilyn. "Between Art and Theology: Dante's Representation of Humility." *Stanford Italian Review* 5 (1985): 141-159.

In Migiel's reading of *Purgatorio* 10, she considers Dante's poetry of descriptive realism and artistic ornamentation in light of other possible discourses, in particular theological ones. Migiel responds to the readings of Simonelli and Tateo, asking questions regarding the specific mode of representation (marble relief) chosen by Dante in order to represent the virtue of humility. In particular, Migiel raises the important theological question regarding the relationship between human bodily features and movements (as inscribed in God's marble art), and the visible signs of humility with which Dante is so concerned in these canti of *Purgatory*.



Adams, Shirley. “Ut picture poesis: The Aesthetics of Motion in Pictorial Narrative and the *Divine Comedy*.” *Stanford Italian Review* 7 (1987): 77-94.

Adams considers Dante’s commentary on Italian painting in *Purgatorio* 10 in light of *Purgatorio* 32 (where Dante refers to himself as a painter) as speaking for the underlying poetics of the *Commedia*. Together, the relevant passages on painting *Purg.* 10, 34-93 and *Purg.* 32, 64-70) represent the verbal representation of “monumental pictorial narrative” (p. 81), that is, they are visual renderings of texts. Adams argues that in verbally rendering these images, Dante is interested not in verisimilitude but rather in convincingly rendering motion and attitude. Ekphrastic elaboration is usually written for the purposes of portraying motion (flight of Geryon, the revealing of the Eagle of Justice, etc.). Citing Otto Pächt’s “The Rise of Pictorial Narrative,” Vickers discusses medieval modes of representing movement in a static medium and the ways in which Dante dealt with this problem.

Casagrande, Gino. “Esto Visibile Parlare: A Synaesthetic Approach to *Purgatorio* 10.55-63.” In *Lectura Dantis Newberryana*, edited by Paolo Cherchi and Antonio C. Mastrobuono. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988. 21-57.

This essay considers kinesics – the study of nonlinguistic, nonvocal forms of human behaviour which are intended to designate semantic units – in reference to the marble reliefs of *Purgatorio* 10, considering, in particular, the intersensorial perception, or synaesthesia, which Dante the Pilgrim experiences while viewing the images, hearing the lauds, and smelling the incense. The nonverbal elements of the reliefs convey their message through a silent communication with the Pilgrim’s senses. While it is true, Casagrande argues, that Dante insists on the discordance of his senses here, the same verses also reveal the pilgrim’s synaesthetic experience, that is, the pilgrim’s eyes see the reliefs even as they perceive the lauds and the fragrance of the incense. This amounts to the synaesthetic working of the pilgrim’s intellect whereby sight, hearing, and smell are blended together to form the poetic expression.

1990s

Barolini, Teodolinda. “Re-Presenting what God Presented: The Arachnean Art of the Terrace of Pride.” In *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. 122-142.

Often cited, this essay considers the Pilgrim’s encounter with the marble engravings of *Purgatorio* 10 and 12 as the poet’s consideration of the principles of mimesis and representation. Dante presents an art that surpasses nature and that is capable of going beyond representation. For Barolini, Dante’s “visibile parlare” is the miracle of a visual medium created by God and endowed with the verbal medium of speech. The visual sculptures themselves somehow speak and the artist responsible for them, God, produced a real, living art, unlike any other visible art. In reproducing God’s art, Dante the poet however, must resort to dialogue. Barolini also reflects on the eagle of Justice in *Paradiso* 19. According to the author, Ovid’s account of Arachne in *Metamorphoses* shares with Dante’s *Purgatory* an authorial self-consciousness underscored by the common use of ekphrasis and the link with the vice of pride. Ovid’s story in fact provides a framework within which to read *Purgatorio* 10-12, not only suggesting the enforced humility of the human artist but also establishing, *e converso*, Dante’s poetic importance as an *aemulus* of God’s art.

Vescovo, Piermario. “Ecfraasi con spettatore (Dante, *Purgatorio*, X-XVII)” in *Lettere italiane* 45, 3 (1993): 335-60. Web:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/26265363?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

Vescovo treats ekphrasis and the affective results of vision which speak to the spectator’s intellect through the senses, in terms of the medieval tradition of the *ars memoriae*. The essays rigorously interprets ‘visibile parlare’ in terms of mnemonic traditions described by Francis Yates and Lina Bolzoni (see esp., pp. 344-355). Vescovo



recognizes a mnemonically progressive movement through bipartite exempla in *Purgatorio*: 1) representational images – humility in canto 10 and pride punished in canto 12, 2) inspirational voices – charity in canto 13 and envy punished in canto 14, 3) visions – the meek in canto 15 and ire punished in canto 17. Vescovo calls this a mnemonic journey (“un itinerario di rammemorazione”) and comments as well on the material mediums through which the exempla are sensorially transmitted.

Franke, William. “Reality and Realism in *Purgatorio X*.” In *Dante’s Interpretative Journey*, idem. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. 171-177.

Franke discusses the thematic focus of *Purgatorio* 10 as didactic, mimetic realism as seen in the marble reliefs, God’s art. Franke argues that Dante’s “visibile parlare” does not intend reified form, or objects, but rather language. The marble images do not convey meaning through visible appearance. Produced by God, such images are indicative of the *Commedia*’s theme of the metaphysical dimension of language. This reading contrasts, for example, with R. Hollander’s, who reads the marble reliefs in conjunction with the writing of the Gate of Hell and in the sky of the heaven of Jupiter as instances of speech made visible. Franke instead considers these images not as icons, but rather as embodying a practical application in the life of individuals capable of achieving humility. The mimeticism of the images, the author argues do not so much coincide with what is ‘real’ as they instigate a process of interpretation and the edification of whosoever interprets.

Chiampi, James T. “Visible Speech, Living Stone, and the Names of the Word” in *Rivista di studi italiani* 14, 1 (1996): 1-12.

Chiampi here considers marble reliefs of *Purgatorio* 10 in conjunction with 2 Peter 2-8, where Peter names Christ the “living stone.” In the canto in question, Dante describes a mountain that seems to move and marble reliefs that seem to speak, “living stones.” By contrast, the reliefs representing examples of pride punished are set in the floor of the terrace in canto 12 are like funerary reliefs, “dead stones.” Similarly, the writing above the gates of Hell are described in *Inferno* 8 as “la scrittura morta” (v. 127). The “dead stones” of *Inferno* then are undone, argues Chiampi, by the living stones of *Purgatorio* 10 which promise future grace.

Herzman, Ronald B. “‘Visibile Parlare’: Dante’s *Purgatorio* 10 and Luca Signorelli’s San Brizio Frescoes” in *Studies in Iconography* 20 (1999): 155-183.

Herzman’s offers an art historical approach to canto 10, considering Dante’s alleged influence on Luca Signorelli’s theological and political vision in the Capella di San Brizio in Orvieto. He focusses in particular on three frescoes that appear on the covers of Mark Musa’s translation of the *Commedia*: The Damned in Hell (*Inferno*), The Calling of the Elect into Heaven (*Paradiso*), and a small roundel from the lower part of the chapel that depicts a purgatorial scene (*Purgatorio*).

2000s

Battaglia Ricci, Lucia. “Viaggio e visione tra immaginario visivo e invenzione letteraria.” In *Dante da Firenze all’aldilà*, edited by Michelangelo Picone. Florence: Cesati, 2001. 15-73.

In this contribution, Battaglia Ricci reflects on visual points of reference to which Dante turned to plan his vision of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, arguing for the interdependent relationship between image and text in medieval culture. She considers, for example, the image of Dante’s Lucifer in light of *Giudizi Universali* in Florence and Padua (the baptistry mosaic attributed to Coppo di Marcovaldo and the fresco in the Scrovegni Chapel by Giotto). While it is true, Battaglia Ricci argues, that homiletic traditions demonstrate the importance of the image, the *Commedia*/image relationship is particularly reflective of the profound role of the image in medieval culture. The image enabled viewers to mentally internalize the image and its teachings in order to facilitate the viewers’ visionary, or mystic experiences. For example, Battaglia Ricci’s work on the *Vitae Patrum* as a textual guide



through the frescoes in the Camposanto Vecchio in Pisa is indicative of the role of images in the internalization of divine scenes, and she briefly recalls some of her arguments from her relevant work here.

McGregor, James H. “Reappraising ekphrasis in *Purgatorio* 10” in *Dante Studies with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 121 (2003). 25-41. Web: https://www.jstor.org/stable/40166626?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

McGregor treats *Purgatorio* X as ekphrasis, arguing that Dante’s marble reliefs engage primarily with a tradition of visual iconography. While the presentation of the scenes does not necessarily reflect a knowledge of works by Giotto or Cimabue, the ekphrasis of *Purgatorio* 10 does reflect normal visual iconography Dante would have witnessed.

Mazzotta, Giuseppe. “The Theology of History and the Perspective of Art (*Purgatorio* X-XII).” In *Image Makers and Image Breakers: Proceedings of a St. Michael’s College Symposium (Toronto 1-2 March 2002)*, edited by Jennifer A. Garris. Ottawa: Legas, 2003. 71-82.

Mazzotta focusses on the Pilgrim’s physical and moral failure to be able to identify the figures in the marble reliefs of *Purgatorio* 10, suggesting that art itself is inherently connected to pride as it pertains to the immoderate desire of self-excellence. In this canto, Mazzotta argues, images do not merely convey a moral or exemplary meaning. Rather, they serve to allow man to take measure of himself within the divine order. The ambiguity of images clouds man’s ability to view both his inner self and God’s work, even as they serve man as windows on how to better understand ethics, history, and theology.

Venturi, Gianni. “Una ‘Lectura Dantis’ e l’uso dell’ecfrasi: *Purgatorio* X.” In *Ecfrasi: Modelli ed esempi fra Medioevo e Rinascimento* I, edited by Gianni Venturi and Monica Farnetti. Rome: Bulzoni, 2004. 15-31.

Venturi’s reads of *Purgatorio* X as Dante’s consideration of the relationship between visual art and poetry. The contribution offers a comprehensive review of the contemporaneous scholarship on “visibile parlare” as ekphrasis. Also see Lucia Battaglia Ricci’s contribution in the same volume.

Picone, Michelangelo. “Dante nel girone dei superbi (*Purg.* X-XII).” *L’Alighieri. Rassegna dantesca* 46, n. s. 26 (2005): 97-110. Web: <https://www.torrossa.com/resources/an/2214381>

In his reading of the three canti of *Purgatorio* that treat pride/humility, he reflects on two interconnected problems that Dante addresses: firstly, the categorization imperative that allows the poet to claim his art as a “poema sacro” and secondly, the relationship between the arts (text and image – poetry and painting/sculpture). Picone argues that Dante (but also Petrarch and Boccaccio) took up the subject of the visual arts in order to develop a broader metatextual reflection on his own art as representation of the divine. For example, in *Purg.* 11, vv. 94-99, where artists are described as being surpassed by their masters (Cimabue by Giotto, and “Guido” by another “Guido”), Picone recognizes a clear gesture on Dante’s part to set up his own art as superseding all these. Dante’s description of the marble reliefs imitates God’s art, and in its representation of the divine, it becomes the “poema sacro.”

Ciccuto, Marcello. “All’ombra della Garisenda. Preistoria del visibile nella cultura poetica di Dante.” In Idem, *Figure d’artista. La nascita delle immagini alle origini della letteratura*. Fiesole: Cadmo, 2006. 13-53.

In this essay, Ciccuto examines a little-known series of vernacular texts that established a relationship between poetry and the visual arts well before Dante volunteered the phrase ‘visibile parlare.’ Ciccuto points to a number of sonnets of the stilnovistic tradition preceding the *Commedia* that, rejecting the earlier Guittonian tradition with its



overzealous abstractions, focussed instead on the coherence between order and nature. In this essay, Cicuto also considers Dante's youthful involvement in an intense exchange of opinions regarding the question of *figure*, as evidenced in *Vita Nuova* 34 where the poet denounces the empirical *visibilia* of Guittonian tradition in favour of contemplative mnemonic *imagines* that allow for the intellectual union with his beloved (see esp. pp. 32-41).

Treherne, Matthew. "Ekphrasis and Eucharist: The Poetics of Seeing God's Art in *Purgatorio X*" in *The Italianist* 26 (2006). 177-196. Web: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1179/026143406X151773>

This article discusses the 'ekphrasis' of *Purgatorio X* as Dante's reflection on discussions regarding the Eucharist within medieval Christian doctrine and practice. Treherne reads against a common scholarly assumption that poetic language triumphs over visual art in this canto. According to Treherne, this canto describes the limits of sensory experience and perception of the divine, the relationship between which was much debated in discussions of the Eucharist. Treherne finds similarities to the worshipper's experience of the Eucharist as evidenced (in theological texts) in particular in Dante's representation of the senses in this canto. Thus, *Purgatorio* 10 is one of a series of instances during the Pilgrim's progress toward God which allude to the difficulty in interpreting signs.

2010s

Camilletti, Fabio. "Dante Painting an Angel: Image-making, Double-oriented Sonnets, and Dissemblance in *Vita Nuova* 34." In *Desire in Dante and the Middle Ages*, edited by Manuele Gragnolati, Tristan Kay, Elena Lombardi, and Francesco Southerden. London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2012. 71-84.

In this book contribution, Camilletti questions the degree to which post-Enlightenment categories of subjectivity (e.g. death, loss, desire, sublimation) may be useful in considerations of Dante's *Vita Nuova*. Considering the role of 'imago' in Dante's process of poetic composition in *VN XXXIV*, Camilletti argues that Dante's concretization of the 'imago' (in particular, the angel depicted in *VN XXXIV*) ought to be reconsidered in relation to nineteenth-century constructions of courtly love – in particular, the tendency to retrospectively project post-enlightenment categories onto Dante's text. Camilletti argues that the angel is not necessarily a simulacrum in which the deceased lady is sublimated. Instead Dante's 'donna angelicata' sets up an explicit tension between the material externalization of the angel that Dante is in the act of drawing and the internal consideration of his melancholy. Dante's self-representation in the act of painting is not merely an allusion to the internal conceptualization of loss (or in psychoanalytical terms, "repression"), but rather an allusion to the indeterminacy of visuality, thus, allowing Dante the means to explore the nature of figurality and representation.

Leone, Marco. "Il canto X del *Purgatorio*, fra poesia e arte." In *Lectura Dantis Lupiensis I*, edited by Valerio Marucci and Valter Leonardo Puccetti. Ravenna: Longo, 2013. 9-21.

Leone offers a comprehensive review of the many various avenues of scholarly interpretation which Dante's 'visibile parlare' has inspired. The author argues that Dante's employment of the term revives the ancient topos regarding the relationship between art, nature, and mimesis, combining it with another ancient topos concerning the complex relationship between the visual arts and poetry. Taking many preceding scholarly readings into consideration, Leone provides a thorough commentary on the category of 'visibile parlare' as a dynamic of a larger, over-riding aspect of the *Commedia* – the fusion of theology and poetry.

Fajen, Robert. "Lectura Dantis: *Purgatorio X*" in *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch* 87-88 (2012-2013): 98-117.



In his reading of *Purgatorio X*, Fajen argues that the formula ‘visible parlare’ demonstrates how, for Dante, art is only legitimate if it establishes spiritual and intellectual meaning with the word. The appearance of art, therefore, does not delude or serve as a poor representation of truth, but rather guides human knowledge toward that truth. Verse 133, “la qual fa del non ver vera rancura,” Fajen argues gives shape to the basic form of Dante’s poetics: “non-truth creates truth, fiction creates reality, false appearances trigger true feelings.” At the same time, however, the representation of divine art announces the limits of human art, and in this canto, Dante humbly presents the limits of his own poetry.

Malavasi, Massimiliano. “Del buon uso della superbia: una nota sui rilievi di *Purgatorio X*.” In *Per beneficio e concordia di studio: Studi danteschi offerti a Enrico Malato per i suoi ottant’anni*, edited by Andrea Mazzucchi. Cittadella: Bertonecello Artigrafiche, 2015. 493-505.

This book contribution discusses the psychological and ethical progression of the three scenes described in the marble reliefs of *Purgatorio X*. These scenes represent their respective figures at the centre of a moral demonstration whereby the protagonists, portrayed as members of increasingly more socially complex circumstances (the adolescent Mary, King David, Emperor Trajan), are shown making decisions that are difficult but right. The author also briefly discusses the technical device of the verbal description of art, noting that the concept of “ekphrasis,” imposed by nineteenth and twentieth century criticism on the canto, was not advanced with any specific theory in classical or medieval rhetoric.

Wolf, Gerhard. “Dante’s Eyes and the Abysses of Seeing: Poetical Optics and Concepts of images in the *Divine Comedy*.” In *Vision and Its Instruments: Art, Science, and Technology in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Alina Payne. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2015. 122-137.

Wolf considers the *Commedia* in light of fourteenth-century optics and notions of seeing, examining in particular the relationship between what in the fourteenth century was thought to be visible and what could be represented visually. There are analogies, Wolf argues, between the concepts of artistic mimesis and the psychology of perception. Throughout the *Commedia*, the Poet formulates problems regarding the Pilgrim’s ability to see in Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Often, however, as Wolf points out, the Poet describes the optical effect, or vision of God’s art in explicitly “pictorial” terms (*Purg.* 10, *Purg.* 12, *Purg.* 32, *Purg.* 33, *Par.* 33, etc.).

Terzoli, Maria Antonietta. “Visibile parlare: efrasi e scrittura nella *Commedia*.” In *Dante und die Bildenden Künste*, edited by Maria Antonietta Terzoli and Sebastian Schüttye. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016. 23-48.

Terzoli prioritizes the marble reliefs given their location in the poem, as the first visions that the Pilgrim sees upon entering Purgatory proper. The author examines ekphrasis in *Purgatorio X* and XII, arguing that Dante implicitly preserves the medieval conception of the superiority of the word over the image. The author also considers Dante’s ekphrasis and its relationship to virgilian ekphrasis.

Keleman, János. “Ekphrasis, non-existing images, impossible figures: *Purgatorio* 10-12, *Paradiso* 33.” In *Boccaccio, Dante e Verdone*, edited by Antonio Sorella. Florence: Cesati, 2016. 137-148.

Keleman considers the differences between the visual and the verbal arts with reference to *Purgatorio X* and XII and argues in favour of the “linguistic primacy hypothesis” – that is, that the primary semiotic system is natural language, or verbal communication takes precedence over other forms of communication. The author establishes that there are theoretical differences between the verbal description of existing works of art and the creation of non-existing works of art by verbal means. In *Purgatorio*, Dante practices the latter, which represents a different degree

of evocative strength than the former. Dante's choice of a narrative language for the visual representation of the Purgatorial examples of humility, argues Keleman, reflects his conception of visual art as narrative art. Further, Dante's use of the words 'visibile parlare' may suggest that Dante recognized an intrinsic linguistic nature of images. In the final vision of the *Commedia* (*Paradiso* XXX, 114-117), Keleman argues that Dante describes a figure which is impossible to represent, as is shown by the many differing attempts by artists to render this vision. Dante's impossible picture is a representation of divine reality which is ultimately unrepresentable.

Further Readings:

References to "Visibile parlare" are also to be found in other *Lecturae Dantis on Purgatorio* 10 and 12. Among these, see:

- Aleardo Sacchetto. "Pietà e giustizia nel canto di Traiano (X del Purgatorio)." In *Dieci letture dantesche*. Florence: Le Monnier, 1960. 111-129.
- Andreas Kablitz, "Jenseitige Kunst oder Gott als Bildhauer. Die Reliefs in Dantes *Purgatorio* (Purg. X-XII)." In *Mimesis und Simulation*, edited by Andreas Kablitz and Gerhard Neumann. Freiburg: Rombach, 1988. 309-358.
- Lucia Battaglia Ricci. "'Come [...] le tombe terragne portan segnato':" lettura del dodicesimo canto del *Purgatorio*." In *Ecfrasi: Modelli ed esempi fra Medioevo e Rinascimento* I, edited by Gianni Venturi and Monica Farnetti. Rome: Bulzoni, 2004. 33-63.
- Giuseppe A. Camerino. "I limiti di arte e natura: di *Purg.* X e di alcuni altri luoghi danteschi." In *Letteratura, verità, e vita: Studi in ricordo di Gorizio Viti*, edited by Paolo Viti. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2005. 17-28.
- Emerico Giachery. *Il canto X del Purgatorio*. Rome: Graphisoft, 2006.
- Eugenio Ragni. "Canto X: Umiltà, superbia e 'visibile parlare'." In *Lectura Dantis Romana. Cento Canti per cento anni*, edited by Enrico Malato and Andrea Mazzucchi. Rome: Salerno, 2014. 266-297.
- Patricia Oster. "'Dove si puote ciò che si vuole:' Gottes Bildkunst im X Canto des *Purgatorio*" in *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch* 91 (2016): 79-94.
- Paola Vecchi. "*Purgatorio* X: In cammino verso la pazienza." In *Lectura Dantis Bononiensis* VI, edited by Emilio Pasquini and Carlo Galli. Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2017. 149-164.



- Beatrice Stasi. “Perché si teme officio non commesso:’ I canti della superbia nel *Purgatorio*.” In *Lectura Dantis Lupiensis 5*, edited by Valerio Marrucci and Valter Leonardo Puccetti. Ravenna: Longo: 2018. 95-131.

For Dante’s ‘Visibile parlare’ and Visual Culture and Visual Arts, see:

- Marcello Ciccutto. *L’immagine del testo: episodi di cultura figurativa nella letteratura italiana*. Roma: Bonacci, 1990.
- Marcello Ciccutto. *Icone della parola. Immagine e scrittura nella letteratura delle Origini*. Modena: Mucchi, 1995.
- Marcello Ciccutto. *Figure d’artista. La nascita delle immagini alle Origini della Letteratura*. Fiesole: Cadmo, 2002. (see above)
- Maria Monica Donato, Lucia Battaglia Ricci, Michelangelo Picone, Giuseppe Z. Zanichelli, eds. *Dante e le arti visive*. Milan: Unicopli, 2006.
- Patricia Lee Rubin, “The Eye of the Beholder.” In Idem., *Images and Identity in Fifteenth- Century Florence*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. 135-173.
- Wolf-Dietrich Löhr, “Dantes Täfelchen, Cennini Zeichenkiste: *ritratto, disegno* und *fantasia* als Instrumente der Bilerzeugung im Trecento,” in *Das Mittelalter: Perspektiven mediävistischer Forschung* 13 (2008): 148-179.
- Gerhard Wolf. “Dante’s Eyes and the Abysses of Seeing: Poetical Optics and Concepts of images in the *Divine Comedy*.” In *Vision and Its Instruments: Art, Science, and Technology in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Alina Payne. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University. 2015. 122-137. (see above)

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