

The *Comedy* of the Monk's Tale: Chaucer's Hugelyn and Early Commentary on Dante's Ugolino

DANIEL PINTI

Whatever other information they may provide for us, the no fewer than eight learned commentaries on all or part of Dante's *Comedy* produced between Dante's death in 1321 and the time of Chaucer's birth in the early 1340s offer resounding, sometimes cacophonous testimony to one undeniable fact: Dante's Italian audiences in the Trecento thought that the *Comedy* needed to be explained if it were to be fully understood.¹ Scholarship on the relationship between Chaucer and Dante, however, has generally proceeded on the tacit assumption that, in contrast with Italian readers, the English poet neither encountered nor desired any such explication, and further, that Chaucer—despite what we know about his reading of Boethius, Virgil, and the Vulgate—read Dante in an unmediated way.² While this comparative work on the Chaucer/Dante relationship has been extremely useful—indeed, my ongoing study of this subject has been greatly informed by the work of Howard Schless, Winthrop Wetherbee, Richard Neuse, and others—it needs to be supplemented and challenged by an approach to the problem that takes into greater account the interpretive environment within which Dante's great poem was read and reproduced. This environment, the critical dialogue in the Trecento of commentary on Dante, is relevant to Chaucer studies for two reasons. First, I would suggest that it is likely, given Chaucer's reasonably extensive and at times firsthand experience with Italian culture, that Chaucer *would* have encountered, perhaps have actively sought out, commentary on Dante as well as on Dante's own poetry. In fact, he may well have been as surprised and impressed by the very phenomenon of the *Comedy's* reception—the unprecedented explosion of learned commen-

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE STUDIES, Vol. 37, No. 3, 2000.
Copyright © 2000 The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.

tary on a vernacular poet—as medievalists are today.³ Moreover, ignoring the early commentaries encourages us to view the Chaucer/Dante relationship through a somewhat simplifying, polarizing lens: the “closed” and dominating Dante versus the “open,” ironical Chaucer. Ann W. Astell, for example, has articulated most recently a version of this view in her recent book on Dante and the *Canterbury Tales*: “A philosophical poet like Dante, Chaucer can chart a curriculum and provide an occasion for learning, but he, much more so than Dante, entrusts the completion of his work to his audience and, ultimately, to the mercy of God” (226).⁴ Realizing that I am not doing justice to Astell’s complex argument about Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* as a work designed to answer and even contend with Dante’s *Paradiso*, I believe that the problem with such a contrastive summary is that it tends to efface the profound interest Dante has in the interpretation necessary for his poem’s (as it were) fulfillment, and the diverse interpretive opinions that the poem itself generated in the Trecento itself. We should begin to take into greater account the “Dante” (or, perhaps better, “Dantes”) of Chaucer’s time.⁵

Because of the complexity of this subject and the confines of space, this essay’s focus will be Chaucer’s most famous appropriation of Dante—the Hugelyn narrative in the *Monk’s Tale*—in the context of some of the early commentaries on *Inferno* 33.⁶ Such a focus places Chaucer’s reading more securely in its literary-historical context, and thereby positions Chaucer’s own response—in its own way no less interpretive than the commentators’—in a somewhat more complex intertextual matrix than has previously been supposed or constructed. Moreover, such a recontextualizing of the Hugelyn episode, I wish to argue, opens the door to a fuller understanding of how Chaucer, a fourteenth-century, learned reader of Dante, may have read the Ugolino story and rewritten it into his own poem as a commentary on the construction of poetic authority. Although I will have occasion to mention other commentators, I shall focus my attention on three of the most important commentaries of the first half of the fourteenth century which treat the Ugolino episode in some detail: Guido da Pisa’s Latin commentary on the *Inferno*, Jacopo della Lana’s Italian commentary (the first to cover the whole of the *Comedy*), and that of the “Ottimo Commentatore,” also an Italian commentary on all three canticles.⁷

My foundational premise is thus that we can better understand how Chaucer read Dante by looking at how other learned readers read Dante in the fourteenth century. Although my purpose is not to prove that Chaucer interpreted Dante specifically with, say, Guido da Pisa at his elbow, and my argument does not stand or fall on whether Chaucer knew

one or more of the commentaries directly, the very real possibility that Chaucer could have had knowledge of and access to early *Comedy* commentaries should be considered. Most recently, David Wallace has delineated the nature and extent of Chaucer's interaction with merchants from Italy during his service as controller of customs (1374–85), including the fact that the position “brought Chaucer into daily contact with Italians, since the controller was obliged to be personally present on the quay whenever wool was weighed, and to keep his records in his own hand.”⁸ This particular “daily contact” would have supplemented his likely communication with Italians living in London, of whose “traditional importance . . . in the English economy, not only in the court but in the customs and trade as well” Chaucer could not but have been aware (Schless, “Transformations” 191–92). Wendy Childs notes at least 102 names of Italian merchants in London in the 1370s, 164 in the 1380s, and asks a provocative rhetorical question on the subject of Italian culture in Chaucer's city:

If French merchants in London had felt the need for entertainment and a cultural identity, which they expressed through the Feste de Pui in London, what more natural than that the Italians, much further from home, wealthy, literate, should have maintained interest in their own literature and learning, albeit in a more private way? Perhaps the representatives of the Bardi company even had a particular interest in the works of Boccaccio, once one of their junior representatives in Naples.⁹

The historical—indeed, familial—connections to Dante of the Bardi, “the most important Italian . . . company in England during the fourteenth century,” were perhaps even more significant, if chronologically more distant, than those to Boccaccio (Schless, *Chaucer and Dante* 6). Beatrice Portinari, Dante's Beatrice of the *Vita nuova* and the *Comedy*, married Simone de Bardi, whose descendent Walter de Bardi was “under both Edward III and Richard II, the king's moneyer.”¹⁰ As Schless speculates, “the Bardi family would have had particular reason for knowing the *Divine Comedy* thoroughly” (Schless, “Transformations” 194). Obviously, in this social and economic context it is possible—although we by no means have proof—that Chaucer had Italian mercantile contacts who could have brought books with them and, quite possibly after his visits to Italy, to him, at his request. Most importantly, there is evidence that Italian merchants and financiers had a good deal of access to and interest in the *Comedy*. On Dante in Italian mercantile culture, the findings of Christian Bec are worth quoting at length:

“. . . la majorité des marchands florentins du début du 15^e siècle accède à la connaissance des grands auteurs. Des “Tre corone,” Dante est sans doute le plus familièrement connu. Nous le verrons: la *Divine Comédie* se retrouve dans les plus modestes bibliothèques marchandes. . . . La *Divine Comédie* apparaît même dans les bibliothèques les plus pauvres. Ainsi Filippo Fagni n’a que trois livres, dont un “Dante in carte di bambagia.” De même Lionardo di Neri di ser Benedetto possède en tout cinq manuscrits: quatre “libri da leggiere” et un “Dante chiosato.” Francesco di ser Guglielmo Corazza, possesseur d’une dizaine de livres, a sur ses rayons la *Divine Comédie* et plusieurs exemplaires des commentaires au chef-d’oeuvre de Dante: “una chiosa Dantis super Paradiso, due alie chiose super Inferno et Purgatorio, unus liber Dantis ligatus rubro.” . . . Aussi bien l’oeuvre de Dante ne fait-elle pas défaut dans les grandes librairies marchandes.¹¹

Although not considering Italian merchants in England specifically, Bec paints a picture of the *Comedy* as a work that permeated mercantile Italian culture in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The comments on glossed manuscripts should especially give us pause, since they suggest that the circulation of Dante manuscripts with commentary was, at least, not infrequent among the members of the Italian merchant class.¹² And such manuscripts are not uncommon among the extant copies of the *Comedy*: Of the 700 or so manuscripts listed in his “Regesto dei codici della *Commedia*” appended to his edition of Dante’s poem, Giorgio Petrocchi includes 115 manuscripts with glosses by fourteenth-century commentators, at least fifty-seven of which are dated to the fourteenth century.¹³ It is not too much to say that Chaucer quite likely was familiar not only with the *Comedy* itself, but also with at least some of the commentative discourse surrounding it—familiar, that is, with the fact that the *Comedy* was open to and accumulating learned interpretation, and perhaps some of the specifics of that interpretation as well.¹⁴

The nature of these Dante commentaries, and that of commentary generally, is crucial to the effort to place Chaucer’s reading of Dante within this particular facet of fourteenth-century reading culture. Martin Irvine, albeit not concerned with the *Monk’s Tale per se*, has discussed how the “distinctive textuality” of commentary is “foreground[ed] . . . in Chaucer’s dream poems, which function as extended glosses on the texts of the *auctores*.”¹⁵ Irvine’s observations about the textuality of commentary serve as a valuable starting point for an investigation of Chaucer’s reading of Dante in this context:

Social institutions with an interest in authority—church, school, court—attempted to regulate proliferations of textual meanings, and the frame of the marginal gloss is a representation of the attempt to at once disclose and control the text. But by displaying the non-self-sufficiency of the text—in the interpretive supplement, the necessity of continual interpretation, of never capturing the text once and for all, is graphically displayed. (Irvine 86)

Such assertions have found their analogue in Dante criticism. In her recent book on Dante commentators in the Renaissance, Deborah Parker has shown that:

Dante's eventual position as an authority was by no means automatic . . . Trecento commentators tend to speak of the *Comedy* as fixed . . . but their defensive critical practice often belies the concept of a timeless, authoritative, and universal Dante. Such a contradiction shows the force of their desire—their wish to make the poem authoritative. (Parker 30–31)

Parker points to the part of this context that is most crucial for our reading Chaucer reading Dante: the contest and negotiation of the *Comedy*'s literary and cultural *auctoritas*, a dynamic and still very much evolving *process* within which Chaucer encountered Dante. The traditional juxtaposition of Chaucer and Dante has tended to assume that which the Trecento commentators were very much engaged in constructing: that Dante's claims to be, and his status as, an authority were unequivocal and established, and Chaucer primarily reacted against them. For Chaucer, however, the *Comedy* of literary history was, in a sense, very much a work in progress. Moreover, commentary, by its very *modus operandi*, fragments the poem, breaking it down into discrete episodes, ideas, or individual lines for expansion, explanation, and debate, "re-placing" the poetic text into a different work with its own agendas and its own heteroglot character. These admittedly general observations are worth emphasizing, since we might say, in other words, that the commentaries rework Dante's poetry in ways that are sometimes very like Chaucer's own.¹⁶

The example in question here illustrates this point: removed from the larger narrative and its immediate setting in the *Comedy*, and incorporated into a different genre altogether, the Ugolino story of *Inferno* 32.124–33.78 finds its way into an English *De casibus* mode as but one narrative among many in the *Monk's Tale*.¹⁷ The tale includes seventeen miniature tragedies, ranging from Lucifer and Adam through other bibli-

cal and classical figures, and including four so-called “Modern Instances”: Pedro of Castile, Pierre de Lusignan, Bernabò Visconti, and Ugolino.¹⁸ The “Modern Instances” are textually notorious in that their placement varies in the manuscripts. The majority of manuscripts include them roughly in the middle of the collection, while the best manuscripts, including Hengwrt and Ellesmere, place them at the end.¹⁹ Wherever it comes in the sequence, however, Chaucer’s seven-stanza version of the story of “the Erl Hugelyn of Pyze” in the *Monk’s Tale* (2407) is well-known.²⁰ The Monk begins by emphasizing Hugelyn’s “langour,” employing the ineffability topos to insist on the “untellability” of the very suffering he is about to relate.²¹ Condemned to prison with his “litel children thre” (2411) on account of a “fals suggestioun” (2417) made by Roger, “bisshop . . . of Pize” (2416), Hugelyn, the narrator assures us, finds himself in a situation “ful povre and badde” (2422). Hearing the doors of the tower shut, Hugelyn laments with a single line, while his three-year-old son articulates a somewhat lengthier complaint, one with distinct Dantean echoes:

Fader, why do ye wepe?
 Whanne wol the gayler bryngen oure potage?
 Is ther no morsel breed that ye kepe?
 I am so hungry that I may nat slepe.
 Now wolde God that I myghte slepen evere!
 Thanne sholde nat hunger in my wombe crepe;
 Ther is no thyng, but breed, that me were levere.
 (2432–38)²²

Sadly, the children begin to die, as Hugelyn emphatically blames Fortune’s “false wheel” for his woe (2446), and Chaucer includes a version of the famous lines from Dante wherein the children invite their father to eat them to stave off his starvation: “Fader, do nat so, allas, / But rather ete the flessch upon us two. / Oure flessch thou yaf us, take oure flessch us fro” (2249–51). Hugelyn himself then perishes “eek for hunger” (2455), and the Monk ends this part of his tale with a curious exhortation:

Whoso wol here it in a lenger wise,
 Redeth the grete poete of Ytaille
 That highte Dant, for he kan al devyse
 Fro point to point; nat o word wol he faille.
 (2459–62)

As Piero Boitani has pointed out, Chaucer's version emphasizes pathos over horror, primarily through what Chaucer chooses to leave out of Hugelyn's story, e.g., the grisly meal that frames Dante's narration (Boitani, "Monk's Tale" 63). More notable for my purposes, however, is that by effectively naming Dante as his *auctor* at the narrative's conclusion, Chaucer introduces into this appropriation of Dante the problematics of authorship and textual authorization, and with them, as we shall see, the questions of glossing and commentary. Two other changes that Chaucer makes to Ugolino's narrative itself are worth recognizing here. First, Chaucer leaves out the moment when Ugolino sees himself, so to speak, in the faces of his children: "e io scorsi / per quattro visi il mio aspetto stesso" (56-57) ["and I discerned by their four faces the aspect of my own"]. The lines are perhaps the most memorable representation of Ugolino's self-absorption in the scene, one of the points at which the narrator encourages his audience, in effect, to be moved primarily by his own fate rather than that of the children. Although Chaucer ignores this specific "doubling" or mirroring of the story's characters within his text—understandably enough since he has switched the narrative from first-person to third-person—he accomplishes a similar effect across texts with another change. Chaucer's Hugelyn weeps ("teeris fillen from his yen" [2430]) while his children do not, but Dante's Ugolino explicitly sheds no tears even as his children do: "Io non piangea, si dentro impetra. / piangevan elli" ["I did not weep, so was I turned to stone within me. They wept . . ."] (33.49–50).²³ As Winthrop Wetherbee has pointed out, Hugelyn's "feelings are only for himself," and his tears in fact "describe a selfishness as complete as that of Dante's" Ugolino (Wetherbee, "Context" 171). This change in the dramatic action of the story allows Chaucer to direct his audience's attention more toward Hugelyn's suffering and thereby to offer an analogous portrayal of the "mirror-image" moment that is crucial to Ugolino's story—and that, as we shall see, was worthy of explication by at least one of the commentators in question.

With Chaucer's version in mind, let us turn now to how Dante's early commentators respond to Ugolino in *Inferno* 33. Caron Ann Cioffi has intriguingly characterized Ugolino's narrative as "a gloss on his infernal hate," and the glosses on this "gloss" suggest a great deal when read in conjunction with Chaucer's efforts to retell a narrative from the *Comedy* at all, and with what is generally perceived as Chaucer's replacement of horror with pathos in his tale of Hugelyn.²⁴ When turning to the commentaries one is immediately struck by the way they function as sometimes redundant, sometimes insightful meta-narratives on Dante's poem. The reiterative nature of commentary is perhaps most dramatic and ex-

tensive in Guido da Pisa's Latin *Expositiones et glose* on *Inferno*.²⁵ As he does for each canto, and in addition to a running commentary on the poem itself (the "Expositio lictere"), Guido offers for canto 33 what he terms a "Deductio" of Dante's text into Latin, an intriguing prose translation of the poem that encourages the reader to recognize the contestative interactivity between the Italian and Latin texts. Two brief examples from Guido's "Deductio," of two famous *terzine*, will suffice to illustrate the generally careful literalism of this section of Guido's commentary:

Poi cominciò: "Tu vuo' ch'io rinovelli
 disperato dolor che 'l cor mi preme
 già pur pensando, pria ch'io ne favelli."
 (*Inf.* 33.4–6)

et postea sic incepit: "Tu vis quod ego renovem
 desperatum dolorem qui cor meum premit, iam
 solummodo cogitando, prius quam eloquar inde."

Guido's commentary reads: You will have me renew desperate grief, which even to think of wrings my heart before I speak of it.

Ben se' crudel, se tu già non ti duoli
 pensando ciò che 'l mio cor s'annunziava
 e se non piangi, di che pianger suoli?
 (*Inf.* 33.40–42)

Bene es crudelis si iam inde non doles,
 cogitando quicquid cor meum sibi annuntiabit;
 et si non plangis, de quo plangere soles?

Guido's commentary reads: You are cruel indeed if you do not grieve already, to think what my heart was foreboding; and if you weep not, at what do you ever weep?

This Latin "Deductio" of Dante, complete and recursive as it is, necessarily implicates Guido's text in the linked issues of Latinity and authority in medieval textuality, in effect drawing Dante's vernacular into the mythically stable, historically continuous world of Latin. As Rita Copeland has argued, "while at one level medieval Latin hermeneutical practice registers a motive of displacement, at another level the linguistic medium within which that practice is conducted proposes a structure of organic, evolutionary continuity with ancient texts."²⁶ While never

claiming outright to “be” the *Comedy*, Guido’s Latin does in a sense “classicize” the vernacular even as it goes on, in the “Expositio,” to interpret that vernacular itself. The contest (but certainly not any rejection) of authority is apparent, and one is reminded of how, in his *accessus* to his commentary, Guido figures Dante as a prophetic voice of Biblical stature, the very hand writing on Balthasar’s wall in the Book of Daniel, and thus adopts for himself the role of Daniel, the necessary and no less prophetic interpreter (Minnis and Scott, *Literary Theory* 448).

Of course, verification and authorization (of both the poem and himself) are important for Guido, as a glance at his comment on lines 71–73 suggests “vid’ io cascar li tre ad uno ad uno / tra ‘l quinto dì e ‘l sesto; ond’ io mi diedi, / già cieco, a brancolar sovra ciascuno” [I saw the three fall, one by one, between the fifth day and the sixth; whence I betook me, already blind, to groping over each]. Guido writes:

Mortuis vero filiis et nepotibus, ipse comes duobus diebus supervixit; tamen, pre [sic] debilitate iam cecus effectus. Et ne alicui hoc impossibile videatur, quod sex diebus vivere potuerit sine cibo, audiant Macrobius *Super Somnium Scipionis*. Dicit enim quod vita hominis ultra vii dies sine cibo durare non potest. Patet ergo quod usque ad diem potest septimum protelari.

[After the death of his sons and nephews, this same Count lived on for two days; nevertheless, through his weakness he was made blind. And this survival should not seem impossible to anyone, because one will be able to live six days without food, as they may learn from Macrobius in his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*. He says, in fact, that a human life can not endure beyond seven days without food. It is clear therefore that it can be prolonged up to seven days.] (Guido da Pisa, *Expositiones* 696–7)

As in the case of Chaucer directing his reader to Dante for a full account of the Ugolino story, precisely at issue in Guido’s comment here is the believability of Dante’s narrative, although here that believability is cast in the most clinical of terms. Dante, Guido insists, is accurate, and just as importantly, Guido *knows* that his author is accurate. Of course, the issue of accuracy—Dante’s and the narrator’s—is raised, although from a different perspective, at the end of the Hugelyn narrative.

We might compare Lana’s Italian commentary to Guido’s Latin one as both a rehearsing and a verification of Dante. Subtler and more partial

as a mode of (in this case intralingual) translation, though no less insistent on providing a kind of appropriative restatement of Dante's verse, Lana's work exemplifies at a number of points the way in which commentary tends to "re-tell" the story at hand. Regarding Ugolino's words, "Perciò non lagrimai né rispuos'io / tutto quel giorno né la notte appresso, / infin che l'altro sol nel mondo uscìo" (33.52–54) [Therefore I did not shed tears, nor did I reply all that day or the night after, until the next sun came forth into the world], Lana explains: "Cioè fino allo levare del sole del secondo die" [That is to say, until sunrise on the second day].²⁷ Or, at the children's submissive proposal to their father a bit later (a part of the text, as we have seen, that Chaucer is careful to include as well), "Padre, assai ci fia men doglia / se tu mangi di noi: tu ne vestisti / queste misere carni, e tu le spoglia" (61–63). ["Father, it will be much less pain for us if you eat of us: you clothed us with this wretched flesh, so do you divest us of it"], Lana elaborates: "Quasi a dire: noi per te abbiamo essere nel mondo, or ti bisogna, tolli a noi tal dono" [As if to say: we have our being in this world through you, and now you are in need; take from us that gift] (Lana, *Commedia*, 1.500).

Here Lana's recurrent efforts to reword the text (*Cioè*, *Quasi a dire*, etc.) are evident. Although it is far from the only sort of explication he engages in, Lana resolutely repeats Dante in an effort at once to make his own text distinct yet link it to his poet inextricably. Exhibiting the same basic discursive move, Lana's labors to renarrate the text are even more extensive at the haunting moment when Ugolino relates seeing his own face in those of his sons: "e io scorsi / per quattro visi il mio aspetto stesso" (56–57) ["and I perceived on four faces my own appearance"]:

Cioè ebbe tanto lume che potesse vedere lo viso ai figliuoli, si dice che vide in essi quel colore ch'elli avea in lui, cioè smorto e smarrito per la fame; e pero dice: *io scorsi*, cioè decernei, *per quattro visi*, cioè per lo colore de figliuoli, *il mio aspetto stesso*, cioè il suo colore.

[That is to say, there was sufficient light so that he could see his face in the children, so one might say that he sees in them that color that he had in himself, namely faded and lost through hunger; and therefore he says, *io scorsi*, that is, I discerned, *per quattro visi*, that is, through the color of the children, *il mio aspetto stesso*, that is, his own color.] (Lana, 1.500)

It is extremely interesting that Lana makes as much of this moment as he does, given his overt attempts here at once to “mirror” or reproduce the sense of Dante in his commentary and to clarify Dante’s verse by appropriating it for his own text. That what Ugolino is talking about for Lana is a particular “colore” is important as well, since the word’s double-valence, relating both to visual perception and rhetorical strategy, suggests just how aware Lana was of the complicated textuality of his own commentative practice. Moreover, Lana’s commentary is intriguing in relation to Chaucer for further reasons. For instance, Lana explicitly asserts in his *proemio*, the *accessus* to his commentary, that “one of Dante’s *finale cagione* in writing the *Comedy* was to narrate *novelle*”; the emphasis on the role of *novelle* in the *Comedy* suggests one Trecento reader willing to emphasize the stories *qua* stories, and we should recall that we find the Hugelyn narrative as a kind of separate, miniature *novella* anthologized in the *Monk’s Tale*.²⁸ Lana also remarks on Ugolino’s “If you don’t weep now, when would you weep” (33.42), “Chiaro appare che tale raziocinazione muove ogni cuore humano a pianto ed a compassione” [“clearly it appears that such reasoning moves every human heart to weeping and compassion”] which certainly suggests that Chaucer or, if one prefers, his Monk, was not the only medieval reader moved as much if not more by the pathos of the scene as by Dante’s sense of horrific, retributive justice (Lana, 1.500).

Lana’s attention to this “mirror” scene may now be usefully examined in relation to a recent analysis by Paul Spillenger about the nature of Chaucer’s Hugelyn story (Spillenger, “*Langour*” 103–28). Spillenger argues that “[Chaucer] found in Dante’s text [of Ugolino] a simulacrum of his own acts of poetic appropriation” (123), and he illustrates this argument specifically through the quotation from Virgil’s *Aeneid* in Ugolino’s story—“Tu vuo’ ch’io rinovelli / disperato dolor che ‘l cor mi preme / già pur pensando, pria ch’io ne favelli” (33.4–6) [“you will have me renew desperate grief, which even to think of wrings my heart before I speak of it”]—connecting Ugolino’s literal cannibalism with Dante and Chaucer’s literary “cannibalism” of Virgil (Spillenger, “*Langour*” 123). Spillenger concludes:

Chaucer would thus have found in Dante’s Ugolino a man whose macabre fate is the symbolic representation of a reliance on the self-serving manipulation of *auctores*, and he would thus have seen in the Italian poet’s story a dramatization of the ways texts eat other texts. (Spillenger, “*Langour*” 127)

While I agree that Chaucer is drawn to the Ugolino story by what it potentially says, or can be made to say, about medieval authorship—something I think Lana’s comment brings to the fore—I find it difficult to see metaphorical textual “consumption” as the foremost concern for Chaucer, particularly since the metaphor implies ultimately a loss of the authoritative text belied by its very intertextual presence. Again, a turn to the commentaries is instructive here. The commentary of the “Ottimo Commentatore,” the latest of the three commentaries treated in this paper, makes much of Ugolino’s appropriation of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and the commentator’s reading seems to stress anything but a rather unpleasant textual devouring:

In questo cominciamento mostra l’Autore, che nel raccontare alcuna novella o storia, altro modo è da tenere con uno, e altro con un altro. Per questo medesimo stile comincia Virgilio in persona d’Enea, nel secondo libro, a referire il cadimento di Troia: *Infandum Regina jubes renovare dolorem* . . . E questo fa l’Autore, perchè l’opere del conte Ugolino appo li Fiorentini erano note, e reiterarle era fastidio . . .²⁹

[The Author shows in this beginning that in the retelling of each tale or story, one mode is appropriate for one, and another for another. In this same manner Virgil begins, in the persona of Aeneas in the second book [of the *Aeneid*], in order to recount the fall of Troy: *Infandum Regina jubes renovare dolorem*. . . . And the Author does this because the deeds of Count Ugolino were well-known by the Florentines, and it was tedious to reiterate them.]

The comment makes explicit Ugolino’s connection between the great city’s fall and his own fall, both of them climactic moments of stories all too well-known.³⁰ It is worth noting, too, that for the commentator this rhetorical strategy is very much Dante’s, attributable to the poet rather than the character. Additionally, Virgil’s silence in Dante’s scene is in fact broken in the commentary, and, as *auctor* and *autore* are allowed, in effect, to speak together once again, the scene seems to be less about eating texts than about the positioning and orchestration of various authoritative voices. I would suggest that perhaps it is not so much cannibalism, but the issue of interpretation figured as a somewhat slanted “mirroring” (in conjunction with the commentaries) that Chaucer found intriguing about the Ugolino episode. What Chaucer saw implied in Dante’s Ugolino story *and* explicit in the commentary tradition are texts

mirroring one another, a reflective expression of the doubling nature of authoritative and commentative textuality, which Chaucer plays out in his lack of interest in Ugolino's punishment set alongside his explicit reversal of the weeping characters in the prison scene.

What I have been describing as the doubling quality of medieval exegetical textuality brings us to the Hugelyn narrative's—and, according to the Hengwrt and Ellesmere manuscripts, the *Monk's Tale's*—final stanza, with its explicit mention of Dante. As I mentioned above, Chaucer concludes his story of Hugelyn and invites his audience, at least “whoso wol here it in a lenger wise,” to read “the grete poete of Ytaille / That highte Dant, for he kan al devyse / Fro point to point; nat o word wol he faille” (2459–62). David Wallace has demonstrated how earlier in the tale, in the Cenobia story, “the name of Petrarch is chosen to authorize, and characterize, the cultural undertaking of the *Monk's Tale*,” and that the citation of Dante near the end allows Chaucer to construct “a precise mirroring of Boccaccio's *De casibus*: first we have the appearance of Petrarch, associated with figures from antiquity; then Dante appears, associated with figures from more recent times.”³¹ In addition to this mirroring, I would argue, the inclusion of, and conclusion with, Ugolino in the *Monk's Tale* allows the text to enact the tale's topic of fortune in terms of literary history. Dante's *Comedy* in the Trecento was the clearest example possible of how the construction of contemporary *auctoritas*, a vernacular poet's “rise” to the status of *auctor*, was contingent upon commentators, the “agents,” as it were, of literary fortune.³² As Wallace notes regarding the tale's political valence, “the *Monk's Tale* . . . seems skeptical of the notion that any ‘myghty man’ can flourish in ‘hye estaat’ while rejecting ‘mannes compaignye’” (Wallace 331). The same is true for would-be *poetae*, and their need for the “compaignye” of commentators, as the Trecento *Comedy*—not to mention Dante's own auto-exegetical efforts—would suggest. But Chaucer goes even further, suggesting the reversal of fortune possible in commentary, the instability of authority that glossing can create in its very attempt to authorize a text. Chaucer's version of the Ugolino story assumes the role of “commentary” which asks to be glossed by “authoritative” poetry, creating a text that appropriates Dante as both authoritative poet *and* authoritative commentator for an English text.³³

This reversal of authority is strikingly analogous to the chronological reversal the Hugelyn narrative enacts. Immediately preceding Hugelyn in the *Monk's Tale*, in a suggestive pairing (as Robert Burlin puts it) of “two imprisoned Italian nobles,” is the single stanza on Bernabò Visconti, the Monk's most recent tragic example.³⁴ Bernabò died in 1385, a date

late enough that critics who insist on the tale's supposedly early composition are forced to argue that the stanza is a late addition, part of a reworking of the tale.³⁵ The following narrative of Ugolino, who died almost a century before Bernabò in 1289, implies a direction for the "unfinished" *Monk's Tale* back to the past, introducing and intimating a chronological recursiveness that threatens to take the tale back to the very beginning of fallen history from which it started. If, as David Wallace contends, the currency of the Bernabò story "destabilizes the text while suggesting its open-endedness," the Hugelyn narrative further destabilizes it by suggesting to its audience that there is no historical or textual stability to be found in the past.³⁶ If the Bernabò narrative "ends on a note of indeterminacy that foregrounds personal ignorance of the historical record," the Hugelyn story ends foregrounding the indeterminacy of the literary record, in this case, the record of Dante's story and its need for commentative explanation (Wallace 329). The *Monk's Tale* textually insinuates endless oscillation from deep past (Lucifer and Adam) to immediate present and back toward the past again, and from poetry to commentary and back again, with an end point only potentially to be imposed from without—as the Knight does when he interrupts the Monk's tale collection.³⁷ Perhaps the *Monk's Tale*, for all its apparent interminability, and specifically the Hugelyn narrative, is not so much open-ended as imprisoned within the doubled discursive walls of text and gloss.

In the Trecento responses to Dante's *Comedy* Chaucer would have found texts that at once rewrote, altered, and mirrored Dante's poem, that figured in their own intertextuality the subverted binarism of father and children, poem and gloss in the Ugolino story itself. Ugolino's story *on its own* insists that, much as Ugolino might like to have it otherwise, the "last" (his children) shall be first, and in their own efforts to rewrite Dante the commentators encourage the same sort of reversal. Moreover, the heart of commentative discourse in the Trecento is restatement and translation, discourse that is at the core of the construction of Dantean *auctoritas* by the commentators, the still-evolving process within which Chaucer encountered Dante's work. And this is precisely how Chaucer's version of Ugolino operates: through translating and retelling another narrative. Finally, the Trecento commentaries, which along with Dante's poem itself together constituted the *Comedy* of fourteenth-century literary history, are the surest indication that even Dante could not narrate *everything*, "fro point to point," never failing to be utterly clear and complete: "nat o word wol he faille."³⁸ Indeed, each gloss testifies at once to the polysemous success and in some sense the "failure" of the lone Dantean word. Chaucer ends his rewriting of Dante, and his *Monk's Tale*, by nam-

ing and directing us to the “grete poete of Ytaille,” not merely to pay what Steven Botterill has called a “graceful compliment” to Dante, nor to pay “glowing tribute” to the *miglior fabbro*, as Richard Neuse claims, and even less, I think, to make some sort of parodic joke at Dante’s expense.³⁹ “I wol,” the Monk begins, “biwaille in manere of tragedie / The harm of hem that stode in heigh degree, / And fillen” (1991–93): the *Monk’s Tale* commences with tragedy and ends with the *Comedy*, as Chaucer turns to his *auctor* for elucidating commentary in full recognition that the authority of a great poem or poet was constituted by an ongoing, intertextual process of literary fortune and, in several senses of the word, fabrication.

Niagara University

NOTES

Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the New Chaucer Society Congress in Paris (July, 1998) and at the 32nd International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo (May, 1997). The research was supported in part by a Summer Research Award, College of Arts and Sciences, New Mexico State University.

1. These early commentaries include those of Jacopo Alighieri (1322), Graziolo de’ Bambaglioli (1324), Jacopo della Lana (1324–28), Guido da Pisa (1333), the “Ottimo Commentatore,” now thought to be the Florentine notary Andrea Lancia (1329), and Pietro Alighieri (first version, 1340), along with the anonymous Italian glosses known as the *Chiose Selmiane* (1337) and the Latin glosses known as the *Anonimo Lombardo* (1322–25). These commentaries circulated throughout the century and influenced later commentators writing closer to Chaucer’s time, such as Boccaccio (1373) and Benvenuto da Imola (1380). The order of composition of the earliest commentaries is much debated, as is their influence on one another, which was often extensive as they continued to circulate over the course of the century; I’m following dates given by Paola Rigo, “Commenti danteschi,” *Dizionario critico della letteratura italiana*, vol. 2 (Turin: UTET, 1986) 6–22, and cited in Deborah Parker, *Commentary and Ideology: Dante in the Renaissance* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993) 29. For information on the Trecento Dante commentaries see the appropriate articles in Umberto Bosco, ed., *Enciclopedia dantesca*, 6 vols. (Rome: Istituto dell’enciclopedia italiana, 1970–78); see also Bruno Sandkühler, *Die frühen Dantekommentare und ihr Verhältnis zur mittelalterlichen Kommentartradition* (Munich: Hueber, 1967). There also survives, of course, the *Epistle to Can Grande*, which, since its exegetical portion deals only with *Paradiso* 1, lies outside the scope of this paper. It does offer a touchstone example of the problems intrinsic to the Trecento commentary traditions: scholars continue to debate its authorship (Dante, an anonymous commentator, or, as has been suggested, Guido da Pisa), its date (placed by some to the late fourteenth century), and the degree to which it influenced other commentators. It should be noted that in the Trecento only Filippo Villani explicitly connects the *Epistle* to Dante. See Zygmunt Baranski, “*Comedia*. Notes on Dante, The *Epistle* to Can Grande, and Medieval Comedy,” *Lectura Dantis* 8 (1991): 26–55; and A. J. Minnis

and A. B. Scott, with David Wallace, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c. 1100–c. 1375. The Commentary Tradition*, Rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1991) 440–45.

2. See, for example, Tim William Machan, *Techniques of Translation: Chaucer's Boece* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1985); Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the Aeneid from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995); Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1952; repr. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1978); and A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1988), each of which deals with the subject of the mediation of classical and/or biblical *auctores* by medieval commentary.

3. The "firsthand" experiences referred to are Chaucer's two documented missions to Italy, the first in 1372–73 (to Genoa and Florence) and the second in 1378 (to Lombardy). For a succinct account of Chaucer's Italian journeys, see Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 102–9. Important works on the Italian influence on Chaucer include: Howard H. Schless, *Chaucer and Dante: A Revaluation* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1984), and "Transformations: Chaucer's Use of Italian," in *Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. D. S. Brewer (Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1975) 184–223; Winthrop Wetherbee, *Chaucer and the Poets: An Essay on Troilus and Criseyde* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984); Richard Neuse, *Chaucer's Dante: Allegory and Epic Theater in "The Canterbury Tales"* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991); R. A. Shoaf, *Dante, Chaucer, and the Currency of the Word: Money, Images, and Reference in Late Medieval Poetry* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1983); Karla Taylor, *Chaucer Reads "The Divine Comedy"* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989); Ann W. Astell, *Chaucer and the Universe of Learning* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996); and David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997). For an introduction to Trecento Dante commentary (along with selections from some of the early commentators), see Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, 439–519, and Parker, *Commentary*, 25–49.

4. A different, and to my mind more accurate, descriptive comparison may be found in R. A. Shoaf, "Dante's *Comedy*, the Codex, and the Margin of Error," in *The Uses of Manuscripts in Literary Studies. Essays in Memory of Judson Boyce Allen*, ed. Charlotte Cook Morse, Penelope Reed Doob, and Marjorie Curry Woods (Kalamazoo: Medieval Studies Institute, 1992) 1–17: "Dante and, after him, Chaucer are the medieval poets most fascinated by this margin of error. Both of them are poets of error, writing of that wandering which can, though it does not always, lead to truth" (11). For a recent discussion of truth in the *Comedy* and its openness to readerly experience and response, see William Franke, *Dante's Interpretive Journey* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996).

5. Another way to pursue these questions has been charted by David Wallace in his work on Chaucer and Boccaccio. Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and *Teseida* not only are major sources for Chaucer poems (the *Troilus* and the *Knight's Tale*, respectively), but also incorporate numerous quotations from Dante themselves. In other words, while my interest is learned Dante commentary and what that tradition can suggest about Chaucer's reading of Dante, Boccaccio's texts mediated Dante to Chaucer as well—although not the Ugolino story specifically. See David Wallace, *Chaucer and the Early Writings of Boccaccio* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985).

6. For a similar approach applied to a different Chaucerian poem, see my forthcoming article, "Commentary and Comedic Reception: Dante and the Subject of Reading in the *Parliament of Fowls*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 22 (2000).

7. Bibliographical information on editions of these commentaries will be included below. Of the other commentaries mentioned in Note 1, all include some biographical information on Ugolino, his sons, and his imprisonment, but they have little if anything to say about Dante's narrative *per se*, the one Chaucer recounts. For examples, see *Anonymous Latin Commentary on Dante's "Commedia": Reconstructed Text*, ed. Vincenzo Cioffari (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1989) 136; and Jacopo

Alighieri, *Chiose all' "Inferno"*, ed. Saverio Bellomo (Padua: Antenore, 1990) 217. It should be mentioned that the *Ottimo Commento* exists in three versions, the latter two dated 1334–37 and 1337–40 respectively; the first version seems to have circulated most widely of the three. See Saverio Bellomo, "Primi appunti sull'*Ottimo commento* dantesco," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 157 (1980): 369–82, 533–40.

8. Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, 13. See also Pearsall, *Life*, 96–102.

9. Wendy Childs, "Anglo-Italian Contacts in the Fourteenth Century," in *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento*, ed. Piero Boitani (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983) 65–87. The material referred to is from pages 68 and 74, respectively. Childs also remarks that "surviving customs accounts give us the names of twenty-nine Italians Chaucer certainly met trading through London in 1380–81 and 1384–85 as they were wool exporters for whom he sealed cockets at the custom house" (74). See also Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1948), and, on Italian merchants in England during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, T. H. Lloyd, *Alien Merchants in England in the High Middle Ages* (Sussex, 1982) 167–203.

10. See Schless, "Transformations" 193, and Alice Beardwood, *Alien Merchants in England, 1350 to 1377* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1931) 5, cited in Schless, *Chaucer and Dante*, 6.

11. Christian Bec, *Les marchands écrivains: affaires et humanisme à Florence, 1375–1434* (Paris-La Haye, 1967) 394–95, 409–10. Bec goes so far as to say that ". . . la *Divine Comédie* a tellement pénétré la pensée et la langage des *mercatores* que certains de ses vers les plus fameux et certains de ses personnages viennent naturellement sous la plume des hommes d'affaires" (396–7).

12. The somewhat more traditional speculation that Chaucer encountered the works of Italian authors in libraries on his trips to Italy should also be taken into consideration. See, for example, Robert A. Pratt, "Chaucer and the Visconti Libraries," *ELH: A Journal of English Literary History* 6 (1939): 191–99. On page 194 Pratt notes a codex of the *Comedy* accompanied by Lana's gloss and copied, according to a brief passage near the end of the volume, from a volume in Bernabò Visconti's library (which Chaucer may have had access to during his second Italian journey) sometime prior to Bernabò's death in 1385.

13. Dante Alighieri, *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, ed. Giorgio Petrocchi, 4 vols. (Milan: Mondadori, 1966–67) 1.481–563.

14. While my purpose, as stated earlier, is not to establish an indisputable link between Chaucer and a specific commentary—a probably impossible task—a case could be made for Lana's work having an especially good chance of coming into Chaucer's hands. Given the wide circulation of Lana in Italian (it survives in some 25 fourteenth-century manuscripts), its eventual translation into Latin by Alberico da Rosciate, ca. 1350, and the numerous surviving manuscripts of the first recension of the *Ottimo* commentary (which relies heavily on Lana), it seems that of all the commentaries Lana's would have been the most likely one for Chaucer to have encountered. These circumstances, of course, do not preclude the possibility of Chaucer's contact with other commentaries as well. It must be admitted that there exists no evidence linking these manuscripts directly to England in Chaucer's time. Steven Botterill, in *Dante and the Mystical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 131, mentions this number of Lana manuscripts.

15. Martin Irvine, "'Bothe text and gloss': Manuscript Form, the Textuality of Commentary, and Chaucer's Dream Poems," in *The Uses of Manuscripts in Literary Studies. Essays in Memory of Judson Boyce Allen*, Charlotte Cook Morse, Penelope Reed Doob, and Marjorie Curry Woods, ed. (Kalamazoo: Medieval Studies Institute, 1992) 81.

16. As Schless describes it, Dante's influence on Chaucer is "curiously particularized" ("Transformations" 217). I do not mean to imply, of course, that Chaucer's reaction to Dante is that of a "commentator" reductively speaking, or that collectively his responses

to Dante have something of the encyclopedic quality that certain of the commentaries do. Cf. Francesco Mazzoni, "Jacopo della Lana e la crisi nell'interpretazione della *Divina Commedia*," in *Dante e Bologna nei tempi di Dante* (Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1967) 274, describing Lana's commentary: "il discorso del commentatore si disnoda frammentario, in lezioni e questioni autonome, preso com'è nell'atmosfera di una enciclopedia didascalica o di una *Summa* dottrinale."

17. Fifteen manuscripts in which the *Monk's Tale* survives give its title as *De casibus virorum illustrium*. See Helen Cooper, *The Canterbury Tales*, Oxford Guides to Chaucer, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996) 326. The Monk's tale collection itself has been the subject of a comparatively small but surprisingly varied body of critical response. To take just two recent examples, Jahan Ramazani discusses the Monk's "imaginative narrowness" (262), while Michaela Paasche Grudin considers the poetry in the tale to be "full of 'solaas', showing artful and bountiful variation throughout, as much, or more, as anything in the *Canterbury Tales*" (142). See Ramazani, "Chaucer's Monk: The Poetics of Abbreviation, Aggression, and Tragedy," *The Chaucer Review* 27 (1993): 259–76, and Grudin, *Chaucer and the Politics of Discourse* (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1996). Other studies of the tale include: Piero Boitani, "The Monk's Tale: Dante and Boccaccio," *Medium Aevum* 45 (1976): 50–69; Peter Godman, "Chaucer and Boccaccio's Latin Works," in *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento*, ed. Piero Boitani (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983) 269–95; Renate Haas, "Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*: An Ingenious Criticism of Early Humanist Conceptions of Tragedy," *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 36 (1987): 44–70; Douglas L. Lepley, "The Monk's Boethian Tale," *The Chaucer Review* 12 (1978): 162–70; Paul A. Olson, *The "Canterbury Tales" and the Good Society* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986) 160–82, which "locates the Monk's Tale between the Wycliffites and their monastic opponents" (161); Theodore Spencer, "The Story of Ugolino in Dante and Chaucer," *Speculum* 9 (1934): 295–301; Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 215–29; Edward M. Socola, "Chaucer's Development of Fortune in the 'Monk's Tale,'" *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 49 (1950): 159–71; William C. Strange, "The Monk's Tale: A Generous View," *The Chaucer Review* 1 (1967): 167–80, which views, as does Socola's article, the representation of Fortune in the tale as changing over the course of the stories; Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity* 299–336; Winthrop Wetherbee, "The Context of the Monk's Tale," in *Language and Style in English Literature. Essays in Honor of Michio Masui*, ed. Michio Kawai (Tokyo: The Eihosha Ltd., 1991) 159–77; and Jane Dick Zatta, "Chaucer's Monk: A Mighty Hunter before the Lord," *The Chaucer Review* 29 (1994): 111–33, in which Zatta sees the tale as commenting on "some of the controversies surrounding the nature of monarchy in the last years of Richard's reign" (111).

18. Scanlon, *Narrative*, 215, notes that the tale's "miniaturization [of the exemplum collection] foregrounds the compression already built into the genre, making the tale as much an analysis of the genre as an instance of it."

19. For reasons that should be clear by the end of my argument, I am inclined to favor the latter placement. For a helpful summary of the complexities of the *Monk's Tale* manuscripts, see Donald K. Fry, "The Ending of the *Monk's Tale*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 71 (1972): 355–68. Fry argues that the "Modern Instances" should be placed at the end; Socola, "Development," and Strange, "Generous View," think the "Moderns" should come in the middle, with the tale ending with the narrative of Croesus. See also Cooper, *Canterbury Tales*, 325–7. I shall return to this question of arrangement below.

20. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, Larry D. Benson, gen. ed., 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). All quotations from Chaucer will be from this edition, and henceforth cited in the text.

21. The connotations and implications of *langour* are discussed incisively by Paul Spillenger in "'Oure flessh thou yaf us': *Langour* and Chaucer's Consumption of Dante in the *Hugelyn*," *Chaucer Yearbook* 3 (1996): 103–28.

22. The comparable lines from *Inferno* are 33.50–51, "piangevan elli; e Anselmuccio mio / disse: 'Tu guardi sì, padre! che hai?'" [They wept, and my poor little Anselm said, 'You look so, father, what ails you?'], and, coming slightly later in the *Monk's Tale*, 33.61–63, "Padre, assai ci fia men doglia / se tu mangi di noi: tu ne vestisti / queste misere carni, e tu le spoglia" ['Father, it will be far less painful to us if you eat of us; you did clothe us with this wretched flesh, and do you strip us of it!']. All quotations and translations from the *Comedy* are taken from Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. with commentary by Charles S. Singleton, 3 vols., 2nd printing with corrections (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977).

23. Boitani, "*Monk's Tale*" 59, notes that Hugelyn's tears, along with the introduction of *langour*, the emphasis on food and drink (as opposed to just food), and the degree of attention paid to the children are all more or less distinctive in Chaucer's version. Boitani also suggests (54) that Hugelyn's tears, as well as the connection of Ugolino with the theme of Fortune, may have been suggested by Boccaccio's reference to Ugolino in his *De casibus*; see Giovanni Boccaccio, *De casibus virorum illustrium*, ed. Pier Giorgio Ricci and Vittorio Zaccaria, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. 9 (Milan: Mondadori, 1983) 820: "Attonitus magnanimi regis declivium callem spectabam adhuc, cum venientem Ugolinum, Pisarum comitem, vidi, amplissimo fletu civium suorum sevitiem ac inedia qua cum filiis perierat deflentem." Baddeley and Toynbee in *Notes and Queries*, Ser. 8.11 (1897) 205–6 and 369–70, think that Chaucer may be drawing on Villani's chronicle for some extra details (cited in the note in the *Riverside Chaucer*, 933).

24. Caron Ann Cioffi, "The Sins of the Blind Father: The Statian Source for Dante's Presentation of Ugolino in *Inferno* 32 and 33," in *Lectura Dantis Newberryana*, ed. Paolo Cherchi and Antonio C. Mastrobuono, vol. 2 (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1990) 81.

25. Guido da Pisa, *Expositiones et Glose super Comediam Dantis*, ed. Vincenzo Cioffari (Albany: SUNY Press, 1974). Quotations from Guido are from this edition, although as a reliable critical edition it does leave something to be desired. See the review by Giuseppe Billanovich in *Studi medievali*, 3rd ser. 17 (1976): 254–62. Where possible I have checked the readings of Cioffari's edition against British Library, Add. MS 31918, an early fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Expositiones et Glose*. For background on Guido, see Antonio Canal, *Il mondo morale di Guido da Pisa interprete di Dante* (Bologna: Patron, 1981). Translations from Guido and the other commentators are my own.

26. Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991) 105. Copeland is referring here mainly to Latin exegesis of Latin writing.

27. Quotations from Lana are from Jacopo della Lana, *Commedia di Dante Allighieri col Commento di Jacopo della Lana bolognese*, ed. Luciano Scarabelli, 3 vols. (Bologna: Regia, 1866–67). This note is from 1.500. Since Scarabelli's is another less-than-reliable edition of Dante commentary, I have compared his readings with those of the facsimile edition, *La commedia col commento di Jacopo della Lana dal codice Francofortese Arci-β*, ed. F. Schmidt-Knatz (Frankfurt, 1939), but have retained Scarabelli's modernized orthography. This fourteenth-century manuscript offers, as Luigi Rocca (with reference to Karl Witte's work) observes, "in moltissimi passi . . . una lezione fuori di dubbio più corrette" than that of the early printed editions, on which Scarabelli's edition is based (Rocca, *Di alcuni commenti della "Divina Commedia" composti nei primi vent'anni dopo la morte di Dante* [Florence: Sansoni, 1891] 141). Here the manuscript reads "segondo," while Scarabelli gives "detto." Lana's commentary also survives, in

manuscripts from both the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in a Latin translation made by Alberico da Rosciate in 1350.

28. Parker, *Commentary and Ideology* 17. In addition to “stories,” “novelle” in Italian meant “news,” although this sense seems less readily applicable, given Lana’s sometimes disparaged penchant for storytelling, in the passage cited. Mazzoni, “Jacopo della Lana,” describes Lana’s intention here “per imbastire richiami ed esortazioni, e per esporre, attraverso l’esemplificazione, aneddoti, favole moralizzate, nell’intento di attrarre e nello stesso tempo erudire il lettore” (276). Intriguingly, Kurt Olsson has argued for Chaucer’s representation for the Monk as a *grammaticus* and noted how “the Monk’s introduction to his tale resembles an exercise of which the medieval grammarian was master, the *accessus ad auctores*,” in “Grammar, Manhood, and Tears: The Curiosity of Chaucer’s Monk,” *Modern Philology* 76 (1978): 2. On this prologue and specifically its definition of tragedy (alluded to at the end of this paper), see Haas, “Chaucer’s *Monk’s Tale*”; on 54 Haas notes, “Chaucer’s close linking of ‘tragedy’ with the ‘unwaar strokes’ of Fortune is not as new as it has seemed to some Chaucerians.” On the medieval *accessus* form, see Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory* 1–36, and Minnis, *Authorship* 9–72.

29. *L’Ottimo Commento della “Divina Commedia” di un contemporaneo di Dante*, ed. Alessandro Torri, 3 vols. (Pisa: Capurro, 1827–29), 1.563. The interrelationship between *L’Ottimo* and Jacopo della Lana is complex. *L’Ottimo* draws on Lana often, and in some manuscripts the commentaries are combined. For a comparison of the two, see Karl Witte, “The Two Earliest Commentators on the *Divine Comedy*,” in *Essays on Dante by Dr. Karl Witte*, ed. and trans. C. Mabel Lawrence and Philip H. Wicksteed (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1898) 310–49.

30. The *Aeneid* parallel is also noted by Graziolo de Bambaglioli, as well as by Pietro Alighieri. See Graziolo de Bambaglioli, *Il Commento dantesco di Graziolo de’ Bambaglioli dal “Colombino” di Siviglia con altri codici raffrontato*, ed. A. Fiammazzo (Savona: Bertolotto, 1915) 76, and Pietro Alighieri, *Il Commentarium all’ “Inferno”*, ed. Roberto della Vedova and Maria Teresa Silvotti (Florence: Olschki, 1978) 429–30.

31. Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity* 307, 313. The lines in question, which come in the middle of the Cenobia tale rather than, like the naming of Dante, at the end of the narrative, are 2319–26:

Hir batailles, whoso list hem for to rede,
Agayn Sapor the kyng and othere mo,
And how that al this proces fil in dede,
Why she conquered and what title had therto,
And after, of hir meschief and hire wo,
How that she was biseged and ytake—
Lat hym unto my maister Petrak go,
That writ ynough of this, I undertake.

32. Scanlon, *Narrative* (224), points out that at the end of his Hercules tale, when the Monk admonishes, “Beth war, for whan that Fortune list to glose, / Thanne wayteth she her man to overthrowe” (2140–41), “Fortune is a gloss, the exchange of one disruptive term for another, that manifests itself as unpredictably and disruptively as possible. Like Boccaccio, the Monk has . . . made [*Fortune*] disruptive discourse” (Scanlon’s emphasis).

33. Rita Copeland has remarked on how Dante’s “*Convivio* demonstrates how the servant, commentary, has become the master discourse, the locus of meaning and the agent of rhetorical control.” See *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation* 184.

34. Robert B. Burlin, *Chaucerian Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977) 184. The Bernabò stanza (VII.2399–2406) reads:

Off Melan grete Barnabo Viscounte,
 God of delit and scourge of Lumbardye,
 Why sholde I nat thyn infortune acounte,
 Sith in estaat thow cloumbe were so hye?
 Thy brother sone, that was thy double allye,
 For he thy nevew was and sone-in-lawe,
 Withinne his prisoun made thee to dye—
 But why ne how noot I that thou were slawe.

35. For a recent argument for an early date of composition for the *Monk's Tale*, see M. C. Seymour, "Chaucer's Early Poem *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*," *The Chaucer Review* 24 (1989): 163–65.

36. See Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity* 319. This is not to say, of course, that this aim is intended by the Monk. In a more optimistic and intentionalist reading, Neuse suggests that "The rhetoric of Fortune . . . is the instrument by which the Monk seeks to banish from history the specters of grand design" (*Chaucer's Dante* 149).

37. I do not mean to go so far as to suggest, in the manner of "dramatic" criticism of the *Canterbury Tales*, that the Knight himself reads this possible pattern and *therefore* stops the Monk. The classic interpretation of this scene is R. E. Kaske, "The Knight's Interruption of the *Monk's Tale*," *English Literary History* 24 (1957): 249–68.

38. For a somewhat different reading, see Boitani, "Monk's Tale" 64. Boitani interprets "al devyse / fro point to point" as referring specifically to the structure of the Ugolino episode, and suggests that 'pointing' is the term which . . . indicated an aesthetic ideal and a technique which could adopt either of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's ways of treating a source, amplification or abbreviation."

39. Steven Botterill, "Re-reading Lancelot: Dante, Chaucer, and *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*," *Philological Quarterly* 67 (1988): 280; Neuse, *Chaucer's Dante* 159.