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Dantesque Aeviternal Apocalypses: Stasis and Motion in the Eternal Timescapes of Dante's *Inferno*

Ross Smith

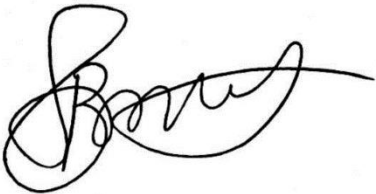
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.

Supervisor: Dr Sonia Fanucchi

Johannesburg, March 2020

Declaration

I declare this dissertation my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ross Smith', is centered within a faint, light gray rectangular border. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ross Smith

March 2020

Abstract

This dissertation examines Dante's apocalyptic imagination which manifests in *Inferno* in the conception of history and time, and its effect on the stylistic presentation of allegory. In this dissertation, I argue that Dante creates 'pockets of historical time' in which his presentation of earthly time and history is housed within an *aevum*-like state against the backdrop of the eternal-infernal environment. I explore Dante's apocalyptic imagination focussing on his conception of time and history and its manifestation in allegorical representation in *Inferno*. Anagogical allegorical interpretation is at the forefront of interpretation of apocalyptic instances, and I place emphasis on this mode of reading in the study. Dante's interpretations of the journey motif are the narrative context in which understandings of time are demonstrated and in which canonised sources of apocalyptic narratives are displayed. The journey convention inherently invites allegorical interpretation and, since it houses temporal representations, allows for the representation of apocalyptic moments. The journey *topos*, by nature, invites allegorical interpretation and further contains representations of history. Dante's representation of history and time are elements of apocalyptic instances which I explore in this dissertation. This study proposes a different understanding of Dante's sense of time and history and how this affects his allegorical representation.

Key Words

Dante; *Inferno*; *La Commedia*, Medieval Literature; Apocalypse; Apocalyptic Imagination; Allegory; History; Time; Eternity; Pockets of Historical Time

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Sonia Fanucchi, without whom this dissertation would not have come to fruition. Thank you, Sonia, for your multiple readings and comments on everything I have written, and for your dedicated time and effort to my supervision. Your insight into Dante and unravelling of my ramblings, particularly in the early stages of this research, is much appreciated. Thank you for your comments and suggestions during the later stages of this research which coincided with a particularly busy time of year. Every effort you have put into this study has been appreciated.

Per ch'io: "Maestro, il senso lor m'è duro."

Ed elli a me, come persona accorta:

13

"Qui si convien lasciare ogni sospetto

ogne viltà convien che qui sia morta.¹

I would also like to thank Professor Victor Houlston, for agreeing to read my proposal at the start of this study. Your helpful comments and criticisms did not fall on deaf ears. Thank you also, to academics and friends who attended my proposal seminar and provided me with both support and suggestions.

I extend my gratitude to Professor Robin Kirkpatrick for providing me with a number of suggestions of articles and critics. I also thank Professor Michael Titlestad for the loan of multiple books from his personal library on apocalypse, apocalypse theory, and apocalypticism.

I express my gratitude to my support system of family and friends who gave me the time and the space required to bring this dissertation to completion.

¹ *Inf.*, III. 12-15.

Preface

This dissertation developed from my consideration of the nature of time and the representation thereof on *Inferno*. The dimension of time has always been an interest of mine and the way in which the temporal realm(s) function(s) in Hell and the Hellscape portrayed in Dante's *Inferno* is enigmatic. To a greater extent, my fascination with *La Commedia* is due to its enigmatic and perplexing nature. The temporal realm, represented by history and eternity, significantly contributes to the enigma that is *Inferno*. This dissertation is an attempt at satiating the desire to unravel and reveal the mysteries of the enigma of the *Inferno*.

The title of my dissertation signifies apocalyptic moments which transpire in an aeviternal space, relating to the motion of living beings in history and the stasis of eternity which is experienced and possessed by God. The aeviternal space is a space which contains qualities of both the historical and the eternal, as it is a liminal time-space between the movement of reality and the historical realm, i.e. things that exist in history, and the static nature of eternity which is “*il punto a cui tutti li tempi son presenti*.”² Within apocalyptic instances the representation of history is a crucial element, a dimension of apocalypse which I have foregrounded in my dissertation.

According to Medieval, Neoplatonic conceptions and Classical theories of time, the measurement of time is connected to motion. Thus, eternity is the absence of movement, as time does not progress in eternity. In eternity, there also exists no beginning or end point of time. It is only in the historical realm, where movement takes place, that time can be said to exist. Therefore, “stasis and motion” refers to the movement and the lack of movement, in the historical and eternal realms. Dante blends these realms in his representation of time in *Inferno*. The representation of history is evident in the motion in which time is measured. Time only

² *Par.*, XVII. 17-18.

exists in relation to motion, thus things which possess motion exist in history. This was the inspiration for the study that follows.

Bibliographical Note

I have used the Modern Library Classics edition of *Inferno*, which provides both the original Italian poem and an English translation by Anthony Esolen; published in 2002, reprinted in 2005, New York. The full reference for this edition is: Alighieri, Dante. *Inferno*. Trans. A. Esolen. New York, NY: The Modern Library, 2002. Rpt. 2005. Print. When referring to the text in footnotes I will use: *Inf.* Canto -, [line number]., as I have quoted in the original Italian verse.

Lo buono camminatore giugne a termine e a posa; lo erroneo mai l'aggiugne, ma con molta fatica del suo animo sempre con li occhi gulosi si mira innanzi.

~ Convivio, Chapter XII.

Lo desiderio de la scienza non è sempre uno, ma è molti, e finite l'uno, viene l'altro; sì che, propriamente parlando, non è crescere lo suo dilatare, ma successione di piccola cosa in grande cosa.

~ Convivio, Chapter IV.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Dantesque Aeviternal Apocalypses

“Time cannot exist without a soul (to count on it)” ~ Aristotle

I am concerned with Dante’s apocalyptic imagination and the effect this has on the presentation of time in *Inferno*. The primary concern of this investigation is Dante’s allegorical voice and his vision of history in relation to his apocalyptic imagination. The apocalyptic animus runs throughout *La Commedia* but is more overtly displayed in *Inferno*. In each of Dante’s canticles, eternity, time, and the relationship between the two realms is represented in different fashions: each realm of the afterlife functions with a different theoretical understanding of eternity. I am specifically interested in the ways in which eternity and history is presented in *Inferno*. Dante’s allegorical vision is related to his apocalyptic imagination and as such features strongly in my study. I will explore the question of representation of the human and historical as dimensions of the apocalyptic moment.

I am focussing specifically and solely on *Inferno* as the infernal space is reflexive and harps on the events of the material, historical realm. As opposed to *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* which look forward to God and the progression of the self into a state unified with God, *Inferno* presents obsessions with the self and is marked by solipsism. *Inferno* is concerned with both personal history and universal legend.

Apocalyptic narratives are concerned with the temporal and spatial dimensions. Frequently, these realms are conflated and distorted in their presentation in apocalyptic instances. In its conception of time and the presentation of time in the narrative, “broadly speaking apocalyptic thought belongs to rectilinear rather than cyclical views of the world.”³

³ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967, rpt. 2000), p. 5.

This view of the temporal world reflects in the author's conception and treatment of history. For Dante, this manifests itself in a malleable timescape which is subjected to revision and rewriting in the narrative form. Both historical and legendary history undergoes this reconsideration. The apocalyptic narrative houses the apocalyptic instance which "ends, transforms and is concordant."⁴

In the *Commedia*, Dante attempts a mediation between the Classical and the Biblical; the Pagan and the Christian, both in relation to the presentation of characters and in relation to the apocalyptic models on which it draws. The complex identity of the protagonist and the presentation of the souls follow both Classical models as presented by texts such as the *Aeneid*, and Biblical models which are found in apocryphal texts. As Giuseppe Ledda notes: "*Nel costruire questa identità complessa egli [Dante] assume alcuni tratti grandi modelli biblici e classici.*"⁵ In this mediation between the Classical and the Biblical, Dante uses apocalyptic dimensions from both traditions. One of the conventions of the apocalyptic tradition is the narrative of catabasis. Dante uses this as the basis of his epic. At the fundamental level, the narrative of *catabasis* is a journey to the underworld. *Il summo poeta* has drawn on both the Classical and Biblical traditions in Western apocalyptic narratives in writing *La Commedia*. Western apocalypse began with Classical narrative epics such as Virgil's *Aeneid* and Homer's *Odyssey*. Dante would have encountered a mediated version of the *Odyssey* in the *Aeneid*, but not Homer's *Odyssey* directly. However, Dante would have been aware of the myth of Odysseus and the events of the narrative. Narratives depicting *catabaseis* and other narrative forms which involve the encounter between the living and the dead, originate from these

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Giuseppe Ledda, *La Danza e il canto dell' "umile salmista": Davide nella 'Commedia' di Dante*. La figure de David entre profane et sacré, (Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, Tours, France: Université de Tours, 2011), p. 1.

Classical sources. The *catabasis* narrative is one of the origins of the apocalyptic narrative, according to Lee Foust.⁶

Apocalypse and the field of apocalyptic literature is vast and complex, easily negating and avoiding all definition and classification. I am only interested in late Medieval European apocalypse, with a specific focus on the dimensions of time, space, and perspective. Instances which involve temporal manipulation also require spatial manipulation, which follows from Aristotelean and subsequent Neoplatonic theoretical understandings of time. In order to present a plausible manipulation of time, space must also be manipulated, and this will therefore be an important emphasis of my study. Collins and other biblical scholars conducted an influential study in which the Biblical genre of apocalypse is explored. From this study, a generic framework of apocalyptic narratives was developed which has become widely accepted as the standard to which subsequent apocalyptic literature is compared. The Biblical apocalyptic genre inherited motifs and models from the Classical period which produced narratives depicting *catabaseis*, *ecstasis*,⁷ and *nekuomanteia*.⁸ Symbolically, the presentation of the afterlife to the living subject, brings the eternal world into contact with the human realm. These long histories of the Classical period are amalgamated into the genre of Medieval visionary literature in apocalypses and otherworldly visions.⁹ The Biblical apocalyptic literature incorporates Classical motifs in its narratives. Visions of the afterlife and the divine are one of the features of narratives of the apocalyptic genre. The “Judeo-Christian apocalyptic tradition appears to echo Classical *catabaseis* when visionaries gaze into the other world for a glimpse

⁶ Lee Foust, *Dante's Commedia and the Poetics of Christian Catabasis*, (PhD Thesis) (New York NY: University of New York, 2007), p. 13.

⁷ *Catabasis* is a narrative of a descent into the underworld; originating from the Hellenistic *anabasis* or *ecstasis* which depicted a “visionary kind of ‘astral travel or wandering among the celestial spheres by a person’s projected soul which is temporarily released from the body.’” Foust, p. 13.

⁸ The calling up of spirits at a cult site; necromancy. I. e. Odysseus’s communing with Tiresias in *Odyssey* XI. ~ Ibid, p. 11-12.

⁹ Ibid, p. 13.

of God's judgement of souls at the end of time."¹⁰ In the Medieval era, this Classical and Christian motif of *catabasis*, *ecstasis*, and *nekuomanteia*, manifests in the narrative as journeys and visions of the realms of the afterlife. "The otherworldly journey resurfaces as ... Christian eschatological visions of, and actual journeys through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven."¹¹ Erich Auerbach conceives of visionary literature as literature that presents encounters with the divine truth.¹² Thus, visionary literature presents an encounter between the eternal time of God, which houses the divine truth, and the historical time of the tellurian. Apocalyptic fiction sets up this encounter of the realms of being. This rich and complex literary tradition is reflected in other Medieval works such as *Pearl* and *Sir Orpheo*, and culminates in Dante's opus magnum, *La Commedia*. In this dissertation, I explore the manifestation of Dante's apocalyptic imagination in the *Inferno*, specifically how the concepts of time and perception are treated in light of apocalypse.

Apocalypse and the Apocalyptic Narrative

The following theories of the apocalyptic narratives are theories which have informed my reading of the apocalyptic in *Inferno*. I do not offer a theoretical reading of Dante's apocalyptic imagination. In this dissertation, I present an empirical study of the apocalyptic animus of *Inferno*, and its effect on Dante's presentation of time, which has been informed by a number of previous scholarly projects, such as the Semeia 14 study, Frank Kermode's lecture series published as "The Sense of an Ending," and other theories of the apocalyptic genre and narrative. I see these theoretical conceptions of the genre of apocalypse as significant in understanding how Dante's sense of history functions out in *Inferno*. This sense of history is more overtly presented in some instances than in others. I am aware that the genre of

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 11.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 12.

¹² Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Farinata and Cavalcante. Trans. Willard R. Trask, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1953, rpt. 2013), pp. 193-197.

apocalypse is wide, multifaceted, and very varied; and I am only interested in Western Medieval apocalypse and the emphasis that Dante places on time and perspective.

The broad term ‘apocalypse’ has come to mean and gesture toward a number of things, all of which are uncertain in their meaning. Apocalypse is multifarious in nature and has seen a bloom of various declinations and variations on the term, both in the literary sphere and in a popular field of usage.

The OED has the following entry under ‘apocalypse’:

< Latin *apocalypsis*, < Greek *ἀποκάλυψις*, noun of action < *ἀποκαλύπτειν* to uncover, disclose, < *ἀπό* off + *καλύπτειν* to cover.

1. (With capital initial.) The ‘revelation’ of the future granted to St. John in the isle of Patmos. The book of the New Testament in which this is recorded.
2. By extension: Any revelation or disclosure.

And,

a. *Christian Church.* The events described in the revelation of St John; the Second Coming of Christ and ultimate destruction of the world.

b. More generally: a disaster resulting in drastic, irreversible damage to human society or the environment, esp. on a global scale; a cataclysm. Also in weakened use.¹³

Thus, following from this definition, there are connotations of both the historical and the Biblical. The word ‘apocalypse’ has its origins in ancient Latin and Greek usage where it originally was a verb meaning ‘to unveil, or uncover,’ thus implying a subject is necessary to perform the action. The two origins of the word contribute to its multifarious meanings which

¹³ "apocalypse, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/9229, Accessed 13 February 2020.

we find in its usage today. The meaning of ‘apocalypse’ has changed and been modified over time, yet in the modern context it still retains some fragment of its original meaning of ‘to uncover’. The ambiguity in meaning is also contributed toward by the fact that ‘apocalypse’ is used to refer to historical events as well as to divine prophecy and revelation. It can use be used to refer to cataclysmic events or an Armageddon-like episode in modern usage.

In modern times the word ‘apocalypse’ has become popularly “associated with fanatical millenarian expectation.”¹⁴ At the turn of the century from the Thirteenth to the Fourteenth, Dante would have experienced and witnessed a degree of this ‘modern’ apocalypticism in which anxieties of the future are felt by the general populace. The Medieval mind would not have made such a distinction between the forms of the word ‘apocalypse’ but would have experienced these heightened sensations. Klaus Koch makes a distinction between ‘apocalypse’ in its adjectival form and its nominative form. Some of the semantic confusion surrounding the ambiguity of meaning “springs from the semantic confusion engendered by the use of the word ‘apocalyptic’ as a noun.”¹⁵ Originally, in Ancient Greek and Latin, the word was used as, and is semantically, a verb. The word itself has a number of different functions in relation to its semantical use, which is linked to the fact that it can refer to a number of events and episodes. The semantic confusion is also somewhat created by the theological origins of ‘apocalypse’. Koch also distinguishes between ‘apocalypse’ as a literary type and ‘apocalyptic’ a historical movement. Relatively recent scholarship has abandoned the use of ‘apocalypse’ as a noun and distinguishes between ‘apocalypse’ as a literary genre, ‘apocalypticism’ as a social ideology, and ‘apocalypse eschatology’ as a set of ideas and motifs that may also be found in other literary genres and social settings.¹⁶ It is of paramount importance to note here, that the

¹⁴ John Collins, *The Apocalyptic Genre. The Apocalyptic imagination: An Introduction to Jewish apocalyptic literature*, (Michigan: Gran Rapids, W. B. Eerdsman, 1998), p. 1.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

Medieval writer would not have created these distinctions and divisions. To the *forma mentis mediaevalis* these categories would have been interconnected and inseparable. For clarity, modern scholarship of and around ‘apocalypse’ has created these divisions. The Medieval psyche would have viewed apocalypse as containing multifarious significances. In this study, I will be using ‘apocalypse’ in reference to moments of revelations of the divine realms, and the conflation of temporal representations in the presence of synthesis of human and transcendental perspectives, experienced by a human subject. I will be exploring the apocalyptic undercurrent of *Inferno* from a Medieval perspective.

Koch elucidates the apocalyptic genre as literature containing “discourse cycles, spiritual turmoils, paraenetic discourses, pseudonymity, mythical imagery, and composite character.”¹⁷ From this concise definition of the narrative, apocalyptic narratives contain a meeting point between the human realm and the eternal. Didactic teaching takes the form of spiritual discourses and revelations in the apocalyptic genre. It has been widely accepted by scholars that apocalyptic literature and the apocalyptic narrative is not “simply ‘a conceptual genre of the mind’ but is generated by social and historical circumstance.”¹⁸ Dante would have interpreted contemporary events as recalling the apocalyptic events which marked Classical and Biblical narratives. Through this allegorical interpretation of history, the divine providential realm has direct influence on the human. Dante writes in response to the events he witnesses and interprets these events accordingly. The apocalyptic animus of *Inferno* is a product of Dante’s interpretation of contemporary events and divine symbols revealed to the human realm in the pattern of history.

There has been a seminal attempt at defining the Biblical apocalyptic genre of Early Christian and Jewish text. Early Christian and Jewish narratives can be conceived of as the

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 5.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 22-23.

founding pillars of Christian apocalypse. This definition of genre and the apocalyptic narrative is developed by John J. Collins and the scholars of the Semeia 14 project of 1979, which was published as a special publication of the Semeia Journal of Experimental Biblical Criticism entitled “Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre” and was contributed toward by prominent scholars in the field of early biblical and Jewish literature.

John J. Collins has developed a definition of the literary apocalyptic narrative:

‘Apocalypse’ may be defined as a genre of revelatory literature within a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.¹⁹

Collins draws this definition of the apocalyptic narrative and from it creates a framework for the apocalyptic genre. Following from the above generic framework, or what Klaus Koch has called the *rahmengattung*, literature of the apocalyptic genre emphasises a revelation. The recipient of the revelation, which this study will call the subject of the apocalyptic moment, is a human subject. The revelation is facilitated to this human subject by a being from the other realm, for example, by an angelic being or a spirit who has been undone by death. The human subject of the apocalyptic moment being facilitated to by a divine being indicates the necessity of the divine in the apocalyptic instance. Apocalypse cannot be achieved by human efforts alone. Narratives of the apocalyptic genre develop along two axes: the spatial and the temporal. The temporal axis of apocalyptic literature involves an awareness of the linear progression of human time toward a final judgement day. As Collins notes: “This generic framework provided by the writers of Semeia 14, indicated in the definition of apocalypse, is important because it

¹⁹ John Collins, *The Jewish Apocalypses* (Semeia 14: Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre,” Chicago: The Society of Biblical Literature, 1979), p. 22.

involves a conceptual structure or view of the world, a number of basic presuppositions, which are shared by all the Biblical apocalypses. Firstly, the world is mysterious and revelation but be transmitted from a supernatural source, through the mediation of the angels; there is a hidden world of angels and demons that is directly relevant to human destiny; and this destiny is finally determined by a definite eschatological judgement. In short, human life is bounded in the present by the supernatural world of angels and demons and in the future by the inevitability of a final judgement.”²⁰

Apocalyptic narratives usually take the form of a quest or journey narrative. This is a result of the influence of the Classical narratives on Early Christian literature and the wider apocalyptic genre. The apocalyptic narrative spans geographical locations as it appears in many ancient and early modern cultures and literatures. This study is concerned with Western, specifically European apocalyptic theory and literature, beginning with the Classical period and culminating in Dante’s Medieval visionary epic.

Claudia Rattazzi Papka in her Doctor of Philosophy thesis at Columbia University entitled “Fictions of Judgement: The Apocalyptic ‘I’ in the Fourteenth Century” (1996) conceives of apocalypse as inherently and crucially evading definition: “while definition is indeed the basis of the apocalyptic urge, it is also that which apocalypse must always, by definition, evade.”²¹ Papka conceives of apocalypse, manifesting in a textual narrative, as an “absolute invocation of justice, declaring condemnation and reward from the divine perspective” and at the same time aware of its own contingency of its status as a human artefact, as something created by the human mind and literary genius.²² Apocalypse is the ‘unveiling’ in the traditional apocalyptic sense, of the divine will to the human order. As apocalypse is the

²⁰ Collins, *The Apocalyptic Genre*, p. 8.

²¹ Claudia R. Papka, *Fictions of Judgement: The Apocalyptic ‘I’ in the Fourteenth Century* (PhD Thesis), (New York NY, Columbia University, 1966), p. 1.

²² Ibidem.

conflation of the divine perspective and will to the human order, apocalypse becomes a way of reading and viewing, and interpreting, events in relation to the human and divine perspectives. “Apocalypse is the revelation of the transcendent order to a human person whose nature is fallen – into language, history, and death – and to whom is this incapable of fully transcendent understanding” and it is the representation of that revelation in a language that is inescapably fallen “into linearity, mediation, and absence, and for an audience generally conceived as even further enmired in this fallenness than the apocalyptic ‘I.’”²³ The apocalyptic “I” in Papka’s study, and in my dissertation, refers to the character who mediates the apocalyptic moment to the reader. In sum, Papka broadly conceives of the apocalyptic genre as the following:

Apocalypse [and narratives of the apocalyptic genre]²⁴ ...seeks to represent the unrepresentable, the write the unwritable, to live to tell that which no one alive can know, it is the revelation of a second, transcendent reality, but it must mediate between that immediate realm and our own intermediate existence, and attempt to figure the transitions between the two. These transitions are not only those of history from time into eternity, or of the body from corruption to resurrection, but also, and even more problematically, the transitions of the narrative, and narrator, from one realm to the other and back.²⁵

La Commedia, as a whole, is one of the texts Papka explores in relation to the apocalyptic motif in her work. From the above summary of her conception of the apocalyptic motif, one can see how the *Commedia* can be read in light of the apocalyptic narrative. Papka, essentially, conceives of apocalypse as the “fiction of judgement” and places the subject of the apocalypse in a complex triangulation between the mundane existence of human life and the divine. This triangulation consists of the apocalyptic “I”, the human, and the divine. This definition of

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ My elucidation.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 2.

apocalypse as developed by Papka is derived from the formulations and observations of scholars in the fields of history, semiotics, anthropology, and Medieval and modern literary studies. Papka is aware and makes use of Collin's definition of the apocalyptic narrative, which is one of the informing definitions of genre in my study. Collins's generic framework of the apocalyptic similarly informs Papka's study.

M. D. Goulder conceives of the apocalyptic genre as an annual cycle of prophecies. In the Early Biblical and Jewish apocrypha literature there exists clear evidence of some sort of ordering and defining tendency. Yet the discovery and isolation of these principles is obscure and inaccessible. One of the defining elements which Goulder puts forward is the need for narrative interpretation and explanation of symbolism and allegorical images. The second element he has identified is a series of "prophecies leading up to sequence of final eschatological events."²⁶ This prophecy in canonised apocrypha also requires liturgical rather than literal explanation.²⁷ Thus Biblical apocalyptic narratives present obscure symbolism, and allegory, which requires interpretation in relation to liturgical patterns of events, both historical and relating to the life of Jesus. However, these allegorical interpretations need textual guidance in their formation. The prophecy presented by the narrative tends toward a prophecy of teleology. From this, I will be using the notion of apocalypse as a series of obscure symbols manifested in the narrative, and the need to recognise apocalyptic allegorical vision in exploration of apocalypse. Allegorical interpretation is a crucial element in exploring Dante's apocalyptic imagination. In addition to this, I will also be incorporating the sense of an eschatological preoccupation into my apocalyptic exegesis of *Inferno*, which I will show manifests itself as the end of the historical lives of the souls, and the looking forward at a future final Judgement Day.

²⁶ Goulding, *The Apocalypse as an Annual Cycle of Prophecy*, (New Testament Studies 27.3), p. 343.

²⁷ Ibidem.

Frank Kermode, the second major theorist I will be using in this study, explores the apocalyptic genre in the Mary Flexner Lectures delivered at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania, in Autumn of 1965. His series of lectures was later published as a book entitled “The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a new Epilogue” (1967. Rpt. 2000.). In this lecture series, Kermode explores the apocalyptic imagination from the Early Modern period to contemporary literature, highlighting the prevalence of the apocalyptic throughout the ages. It is applicable to Dante in the *Commedia* as Dante, in many ways, prefigures Renaissance thinking. Kermode’s theory foregrounds the multidimensional nature of apocalyptic narratives. Kermode’s theory can be used as a lens through which apocalyptic instances in *Inferno* can be explored. Kermode foregrounds the temporal realm and Dante’s manipulations and representations of time can be read in light of Kermode’s conceptions of the apocalyptic instance within the temporal context. Apocalyptic instances are translocated into a conception of space that is held outside of regular, quotidian time. Frequently, the dimension of space is also manipulated in this translocated space. Narratives with apocalyptic concerns evoke extratemporal conditions such as the dream vision and motifs of *catabaseis* narratives. This demonstrates an awareness of the human dimension and the preternatural. Narratives depicting apocalyptic instances frequently, especially in Classical and Biblical narratives, represent the intersection between the human realm and the eternal. This intersection is a central focus of my study. The intersection allows the human subject of apocalypse to be aware of both the natural and supernatural in instances of apocalyptic significance. These instances are removed from homogenous, tellurian linear time and space and transpire in an environment in which these dimensions are distorted as foregrounded. In the apocalyptic moment, Dante presents a distorted vision of historical time presented against the backdrop of eternal time, in the presence of various figures which can be read as allegorical manifestations of the temporal realm.

Dante's presentation of apocalypse in *Inferno* is housed in an aeviternal space in which human dimensions are manipulated. The dimensions of the aeviternal space are discussed below.

The third lecture in the series, "World without Beginning or End" presents three dimensions of time, all of which have been developed from Classical and Neoplatonic theories of time. Kermode postulates an eternal time in which God resides, a human temporal time in which the events of human history transpire, and the *aevum* which is a spatial understanding of time situated between the eternal time of God and the human realm. It is important to note that Kermode does not delineate what eternity entails apart from it being the time of God, unlike the Neoplatonists who distinguish between a durational eternality and a successional eternity as the mode of being inhabited by a theologically Christian Godhead. The liminal *aevum* space is a Thomist construction which has been developed by Kermode as the space in which apocalyptic events transpire. It is a temporal space traditionally inhabited by angelic beings, and a liminal space between the eternal and human dimensions. Apocalyptic instances transpire in an *aevum*-like space in which the boundaries between the corporeal and preternatural are blurred and the linear progression of tellurian time is distorted and interrupted. As such, the *aevum*-like space allows the human subject to enter into conversation and discourse with the divine realm in a time-space that resembles the eternal. Traditionally the *aevum* is a space inhabited by the angels, who are understood as having both human and God-like qualities. It is therefore, theoretically, stemming from Thomist conception of the aeviternal, a middle ground between the past, the present, and the future. It "depends on a concord of imaginatively recorded past and imaginatively predicted future, achieved on behalf of us [the subject of the apocalyptic moment] who remain 'in the midst.'" ²⁸ The created *aevum*-like space of apocalyptic instances contains the present moment, the past recorded in memory, a vision of the future, and anxiety held in the present of the future end and final

²⁸ Kermode, p. 8.

eschaton. The subject of the *aevum*-like moment possesses the ability to view the expanse of the historical past and the imagined future under the influence of the eternal time of God. As such, the earthly historical past can be viewed and experienced through the lens of the eternal. I believe Dante to create spaces which resemble the *aevum*, stemming from the Thomistic conception of the liminal space of the angels. As such, this temporal space is an integral part of this study and the concept will be used frequently throughout this dissertation. The aeviternal conception of time is a founding pillar of my exploration of Dante's apocalyptic voice in the *Inferno*. Dante is aware of the theoretical conception of the aeviternal space, and uses it to house moments of apocalyptic significances. In order not to lose sight of the theoretical concept of the *aevum*, I have presented brief revisions of the concept throughout this study.

At two points in *La Commedia*, the progression of the narrative is interrupted by a direct address to the reader:

O voi ch'avete li 'ntelletti sani
61
mirate la dottrina che s'asconde
sotto 'l velame de li versi strani.²⁹

And,

Aguzza qui, lettor, ben gli occhi al vero,
19
chè 'l velo è ora ben tanto sottile,
certo che 'l trapassar dentro è leggero.³⁰

These two direct addresses interrupt the narrative action in the poem. There are other direct addresses to the reader but they do not interrupt the progression of the narrative action at the time of the interruption. Leonardo Cappelletti interprets these lines to signify the movement of

²⁹ *Inf.*, IX, 61-63.

³⁰ *Purg.*, VIII, 19-21.

the angels and not signal allegorical meaning in the episodes following the address. Both instances, from *Inferno* IX and *Purgatorio* VIII, precede the arrival of the angels in the narrative. Cappelletti suggests that because Church doctrine on the movement of the angels was in conflict at the time of Dante's writing of the *Commedia* and the years preceding it, these verses which present a departure from the narrative action, gesture toward the nature of movement of the angels and the doctrinal view which Dante supports. In 1277, Bishop Etienne Tempier of Paris declared the doctrinal idea that angels could instantaneously move from one position to another contrary to the Catholic faith. In the years following 1277, Thomas Aquinas and the Dominican friars were in conflict with Franciscan theology. Thomist theology only became accepted church doctrine after the *Commedia* was published.³¹ However, Dante would have encountered Dominican and Thomist teachings well before the publication of his *Commedia*. More pertinently, Dante would have been aware of Thomist theology on the movement and nature of the angelic beings, in his developed of the *aevum*. As indicated by Cappelletti's analysis of the direct addresses to the reader preceding the arrival of the angels in the narrative, Dante demonstrates support for the aeviternal understanding of the nature of the angels. Thus, in certain instances in the *Commedia*, Dante not only uses the Thomist concept of the *aevum*, to various ends including the presentation of moments resembling apocalyptic instances, but also demonstrates an awareness of the theological understanding of the *aevum* as a liminal conception of time and space between the human realm and the stasis of the eternal realm of Providence.

Kermode also postulates that moments of human historical time can be classified as either moments of the *kairos* or *chronos*. The creation of an *aevum*-like space is partially

³¹ Leonardo Cappelletti, *Movement of the Angels: "the Teaching that is hidden here / beneath the veil of Verses so obscure"?* 11 November 2015, Web source, accessed: 27 January 2020, <<https://www.museocasadidante.it/en/blog-history/movement-of-angels/>>.

dependent on these understandings of time: as delineated below, moment of the *kairos* allow for the opening of *aevum*-like spaces in which apocalyptic instances occur. *Kairos* and *chronos* have their origins in Ancient Greek, and this distinction between temporal periods has been prevalent in literature from the Classical period to contemporary writings. Oscar Cullman, John Marsh, and Paul Tillich have all used the distinction in their writings. The *aevum* space in which apocalyptic events transpire is created by crisis and moments of the *kairos*. Moments of crisis are inherently moments of the *kairos*, as I will discuss below. The *kairos* is an understanding of time that is a “significant season...poised between the beginning and the end.” It is explored by psychologists as moments of ‘temporal integration’ which can be understood as a human means of “bundling together perception of the present, memory of the past, and expectation of the future in a common organization. Within this organization that which was conceived of as simply successive becomes charged with past and future: what was *chronos* becomes *kairos*.”³² The *kairos* is a moment of the *chronos* of successiveness that has been transformed into “the time of the novelist” and poet. The interval of chronicity has been purged of the mundane and has had meaning bestowed on the entire durational existence. Kermode argues: “Within human time one can distinguish between the *chronos* of mere successiveness and the *kairos* of high holidays, times or seasons that stand out...as belonging to a different temporal order.”³³ He further defines *chronos* as “‘passing time’ or ‘waiting time’ – that which according to Revelation, ‘shall be no more’ – and *kairos* is the season, a point in time filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end.”³⁴ Moments of the *kairos* resemble images of the end but have different significances in that they are moments of the high seasons and not images of the eschaton, which inherently inspires fear. But this does not imply that moments of the *kairos* are unable to contain fear and anxiety and

³² Kermode, p. 46.

³³ Ibid, p. 192.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 47.

other such emotions. These terms, especially the high season of the *kairos*, connect to my understanding of the apocalyptic qualities found in *Inferno* as the demarcation of the temporal realm into moments of temporal integrative significances which are held in higher regard and relation to the eternal realm. Instances of the *kairos* recall the eternal durational existence of God and bring the eternal into contact with the quotidian. In moments of Dantesque apocalyptic resonances, the *kairos* serves to bridge the temporal lacunae which exists between the realm of providence and the historical realm.

The demarcation of a moment of the *kairos* from moments of the *chronos* negates the notion that an end must necessarily give meaning to the expanse of interval time between the beginning and end as the *kairos* gives meaning and significance to the interval from which it was birthed. Yet the image of the eschaton when presented to the human subject both in fiction and in lived experience gives meaning to the temporal period before and during the image of this end:

In the same way the End changes all, and produces, in what relation to it is the past, these seasons, *Kairoi*, historical moments of intemporal significance. The divine plot is the pattern of *kairoi* in relation to the end. ... It is the New Testament that lays the foundation for both the modern sense of epoch...and the modern distinctions between times: the coming of God's time (*kairos*), the fulfilling of time (*kairos* – Mark i. 15), the signs of the times (Matt. xvi.2,3) as against passing time, *chronos*. The notion of fulfilment is essential; the *kairos* transforms the past, validates Old Testament types and prophecies, establishes concord with origins as well as ends.³⁵

The distinction of time into the *chronos* of reality and successiveness and the *kairos* of special occasions and high holidays is classical in origin. With the dawn of Christianity, the reality of

³⁵ Ibid, p. 48.

chronos and the high seasons of the *kairos* took on a new facet of meaning: the fulfilment of images of the end in moments of the *kairos*. These apocalyptic resonances are brought to the fore the Medieval narratives in which it is possible to distinguish moments of the *kairos* from the successiveness of narrative progression. The isolation of a moment above others is a moment of the *kairos*, one with which Dante chooses to open *Inferno*. This distinction of a moment from reality allows for the opening up of a space which resembles the *aevum*, in which apocalyptic instances occur. The apocalyptic dimension, which is held outside of historical, human time is accessed through the gateway of the *kairos*. One of the ways in which moments of the *kairos* are created is through a sense of crisis. The notion of crisis as a contributory element in the creation of moments of the *kairos*, which in turn open the apocalyptic space, is further discussed in the second chapter in which I explore Dante's allegorical voice relating to the *selva oscura*.

In sum: following Kermode's theory, apocalyptic narratives take the form of a quest with instances of apocalypse transpiring in an *aevum*-like space, removed from tellurian space and time. This constructed space, resembling the *aevum*, contains a conflation of all moments of the present, the past reconstructed in memory, and the imagined or predicted future, which are viewed through the lens of the eternal time of God. It also includes the weight of the imagined future in the form of anxieties which are projected into the future from the present moment. Apocalyptic instances are moments of transition brought about by crisis and tragedy in the present which contains threat and anxiety of the future.

These above theories of western apocalyptic narratives stemming from Classical epics and Early Christian apocalyptic narratives form the basis of theory which will be informing the reading of *Inferno* I am presenting in this dissertation. This reading is an empirical study of Dante's apocalyptic animus in *Inferno* and of the ways in which apocalyptic moments are configured in the text. Narratives belonging to the apocalyptic genre frequently employ

allegory and allegorical symbolism in their representations. Likewise, the Medieval narrative is made the subject of allegoresis and allegorical interpretation. In reading Dante's narrative, the apocalyptic dimension of his allegory has been underexplored by existing scholarship. I will explore a new way of reading Dante's allegory in the *Inferno*, through the lens of apocalypse. In this study, terms such as the *aevum*, *kairos*, *chronos*, time and eternity, and the intersection between the transcendental eternal realm and the historical, human realm are seminal terms, which are used in every chapter. I am conscious of the genre of apocalypse as a very large and varied field, but I am focussing on specific aspects of Late Medieval apocalypse foregrounded by Dante in the *Inferno*. This dissertation is an exploration of time and perception in relation to apocalypse.

The Apocalyptic Dimensions of Dante's Context

In order to better grasp Dante's apocalyptic sense of history, it is necessary to explore the historical context in which Dante lived. Dante would have viewed these events as apocalyptic events which would have contributed to his writing of the *Commedia*. Dante "lived in the very midst of important events, participating in them and suffering through them; in moments of extreme tension he had watched others acting, and often no doubt he had looked on with the feverish expectancy that sharpens all the senses; as an impoverished exile he was still in the direct presence of events[...]"³⁶

Allegory is one of the means by which the historical past is revised and rewritten. Dante interpreted some of the events he witnessed as having apocalyptic significance and presented these with his imposed apocalyptic significance in *Inferno*, through allegorical association and symbolism. One of these instances in *Inferno* can be found in Canti VIII and IX, where the pilgrims enter the City of Dis. A. N. Wilson suggests that Dante witnessed the influx of pilgrims

³⁶ Erich Auerbach, *Dante, Poet of the Secular World*, introd. Michael Dirda, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York, NY: New York Review of Books, 2001, rpt. 2007) (First publ. as *Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt*: Walter de Gruyter, 1929), p. 83.

into the Holy City in the year 1300 and writes the throngs of people moving into and out of the city, in the souls moving toward the infernal City of Dis.³⁷ The year 1300 also contained special historical and eschatological significance in the Christian calendar. It marked the end of a significant decade in technological advancement and social development.

At the turn of the Twelfth to the Thirteenth century, society had witnessed great developments in technology and social structure. The Thirteenth century would be looked upon by modern historians as being a century in which “the human race began a surge of technological competence. It suddenly discovered buttons for clothing (pioneered in Germany during the 1230’s), spectacles (Italy, 1285), spinning wheels (France, 1268), windmills (England, 1185).”³⁸ It was also a period in which modern banking saw its introduction into society; money and the economy were not controlled by the monarchy but by a group of Italian banks. It was an age of religious revival and of miracles: God had touched the body of St Francis of Assisi and marked him with the wounds of Christ; the Church fought against heresy, schism from the Eastern churches, and against Islam. Reaching its culmination at the turn of the century, the Pope declared the first year of the new century, the Fourteenth Century to be a Holy year in light of the events of the preceding years. In addition, in 1299, many people flocked to Rome on pilgrimage in the hopes of a plenary indulgence stemming from the tribulations of a turbulent Thirteenth Century. For many the year 1300, was a year which witness the “the specific encounter of self and world”.³⁹ Dante would have experienced these events and represents this atmosphere in his writings. The declaration of the Jubilee Year effectively turned the entire year into a season of high holidays, a sustained moment of the *kairos* in which humanity is extremely aware of its historical position in relation to divine eternity. This distinguishes the year as high season from the repetitive cycles of ordinary years.

³⁷ Andrew Norman Wilson, *Dante in Love*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2011), p. 17.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 15.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 15.

In sustained instances of the *kairos*, such as this, the tragic ending of human life and the *telos* toward the end is in constant flux in the psyche and as such, apocalyptic tendencies are brought to the fore. The progression in technology created the feeling of accelerating through time. With ‘technological competence’ came the feeling of transitioning into the future age. Progressions such as these are markers of time and signify the progression of history, which would have been interpreted as moments containing apocalyptic significances by the *forma mentis mediaevalis*. The accelerated tendency toward the end, encouraged by technological developments would have produced a heightened anxiety of the perceived looming eschaton. This anxiety would have also contributed toward feeling of accelerating toward to the End, hurtling through time toward an ultimate demise. The perceived progression through historical time was felt to be gaining momentum, created by advancement of technology. This generalized sense of anxiety would have contributed to the creation of the *kairoi* instances. The Jubilee Year also serves as an image of the eschaton, Medievals would have lived through this Holy time and marked their lives by its passing. It is a sustained image of the End in which the temporal realm and human temporality and transience is at the forefront of experience. This focus drew apocalyptic qualities to the fore in the minds of the writers, those who document the progression of history and society.

Kermode speaks of this moment in relation to literature, claiming that apocalyptic narratives contain representations of such moments: “*Kairos* is the season, a point in time filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end.”⁴⁰ Seasons of *kairoi* are given their significance from their relation to the end, which can explore from a historical perspective *post-factum* of the event. From our vantage point ahead in history, we can say that the year 1300 was indeed a season of the *kairos*. What is of more importance is that the authorities of the time also noticed this apocalyptic and *kairos* quality of the year and

⁴⁰ Kermode, p. 47.

made an official papal bull in its honour. Wilson connects the historical context and these significant events with the life of Dante: “there are some dates in history in which the individual destinies of men and women come together with public events, and the date itself achieves almost mythic status.”⁴¹ These events which coincide with the individual destinies of men are moments of the *kairos* in literature. The historical moments represented in the *Inferno* can be connected with actual history which experienced seasons of *kairoi* in Dante’s lifetime.

The declaration of the Jubilee Year saw an influx of pilgrims into Rome and the Vatican. So many pilgrims flocked to the city that a one-way system for pedestrians had to be implemented.⁴² Dante was one of the pilgrims and as such, witnessed the influx of people into the city. The Pope had declared a papal bull stating that pilgrimage made during the Holy Year would reduce the sentence of penalty indulgences and essentially a “clean slate, forgiveness of all their sins.”⁴³ This image of the influx of people into the city is recalled by Dante in the description of the way into the City of Dis, in *Inferno* VIII: “già le sue meshite // là entro certe ne la valle cerno.”⁴⁴

Allegoresis as a mode of interpretation is one of the devices Dante uses in his manifestation of history in *La Commedia*. Dante viewed certain historical events in their relation to apocalyptic and transformative moments of history. Dante also uses anagogical allegory in the *Inferno*, an allegory which connects the historical to the eternal transcendent realm. In Canto VIII the description of the way into the infernal city symbolically reflected the influx of pilgrims into the Vatican City in the Jubilee Year of 1300, which Dante witnessed while on pilgrimage in Rome. Dante-poet “likened the shuffling crowds in the most-like prison of the hellish City of Dis to the pilgrims in Rome on this occasion.”⁴⁵ In this instance of

⁴¹ Wilson, p. 14.

⁴² Ibid, p. 17.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 16.

⁴⁴ *Inf.*, VIII. 70-71.

⁴⁵ Wilson, p. 17.

allegory, Dante presents readers with a literary image that is literal on its first level of significance and inherently contains another meaning, in this case symbolic recollection of the pilgrims on the main road into the City of Rome, in the Jubilee year of 1300, as suggested by Andrew Norman Wilson.⁴⁶

Concluding Comments

The context in which Dante's wrote the *Inferno* contributes toward the apocalyptic anxiety which is found in the text. Dante interpreted events surrounding the Jubilee Year of 1300, and the sustained anxiety of the Year, as having apocalyptic significances. In his presentation of the apocalyptic animus, Dante draws on canonised apocalyptic narrative genres. The Classical apocalyptic narrative, involving *catabaseis* and revelation of the gods, is melded with early Christian and Jewish narrative conventions which have been defined by Collins in the definition of the apocalyptic genre.

Kermode's concept of the *aevum* as a liminal space which houses apocalypses and moments of apocalyptic importance, is a central concept to my study. Similarly, the understanding and demarcation of temporal periods as *chronos* and *kairos* are also key aspects of a theoretical understanding of time and its function in creating and housing apocalypse.

Collin's definition of the apocalyptic genre will be used as a lens through which instances with Dantesque apocalyptic significances can be explored. At various instances, I will demonstrate how Dante presents apocalypse as a mediation between Pagan traditions and Christian conventions.

In this, the first of two introductory chapters, I have explored the origins of apocalypse and the apocalyptic traditions from which Dante draws inspiration for his presentation of apocalypse in *Inferno*. The second introductory chapter deals with the concept of allegory and

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

allegorical representation in *La Commedia*. It is through allegory that instances in the *Inferno* take on apocalyptic significances.

Chapter 2: Introduction to Allegory in *La Commedia*

My focus on apocalypse and time in *Inferno* necessitates an understanding of Dante's allegorical voice. It is through allegory that events in history are connected to one another and to the eternal realm. Allegory also allows for the revision of the historical and legendary which connects two points in historical time. I am interested in anagogical elements of Dante's allegory in the *Inferno* and their influence on Dante's understanding of history and time. I will show that in the *Commedia*, Dante develops a new kind of allegory which when read through the lens of the apocalyptic is rendered not as an allegory of theoretical definition but of suggestion and allusion.

In the most general sense, allegory can be conceived of as “a narrative, whether in prose or verse, in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived by the author to make coherent sense on the “literal,” or primary, level of signification, and at the same time to communicate a second, correlated order of signification.”⁴⁷ In the allegorical narrative, there are two levels of significance. The significance of the figure or emblem goes beyond what is physically present in the narrative: allusion is made to another significance.

Literature of the Medieval era invited allegorical interpretation. The reading of literature in the Middle Ages was for moral enrichment and could thus be called didactic literature. The narrative inherently followed the allegorical genre which meant that the allegory of the narrative invited interpretation from its readers. This characteristic of literature made it allegorical.⁴⁸ The *forma mentis* of the Medieval period contributed to the allegorical tendency in reading texts, searching for a hidden meaning or a meaning other than that which the text overtly states. The mentality of “*aliud dicitur, aliud demonstratur* – the text always says

⁴⁷ M. H. Abrams, G. Harpham (Eds.), *A Glossary of Literary Terms: 9th Edition*, (Boston: Cengage Learning, 1957, rpt, 2005, 2009), p. 7.

⁴⁸ Leodardo Cecchini. “*Allegory of the theologians*” or “*allegory of the poets*”: *Allegory in Dante's Commedia*, (Denmark: Orbis Litterarum 55: 340-378, 2000), p. 341.

something other than what it appears to say,”⁴⁹ dominated the hermeneutic method of Dante’s contemporaries. As Umberto Eco puts it: “The Medievals inhabited a world filled with references, reminders and overtones of Divinity, manifestations of God in things. Nature spoke to them heraldically: lions or nut-trees were way more than they seemed; griffins were just as real as lions because, like them, they were signs of a higher truth.”⁵⁰ For the Medieval poet, such as Dante, the distinction between reality and its allegorical meaning would not be made, and everything possessed the weight of its supernal and preternatural significance. The allegorical emblem is “to be seen as a thing or figure which includes reference to or evocations of other realities.”⁵¹ There is little to no distinction between allegorical mode of reading and the allegorical mode of interpretation of the events of everyday life, and therefore history. Thus, history is available to allegorical interpretation. The earthly reality is inauthentic compared to the spiritual reality, and the emblem is the means through which God communicates to the inauthentic reality.⁵² History and the interpretation and revision of history implies an interpretation of time, which is a key concern of my study. The *forma mentis mediaevalis* refers to the Medieval interpretation of emblems and emblematic events.⁵³

Allegory, at the most basic of levels, links two or more concepts or events. Apocalyptic narratives frequently employ allegorical images with the effect of linking two events in the pattern of history or to link history with the transcendental realm. The yoking of the historical to the providential realm is a crucial aspect in my dissertation, and apocalypse cannot be explored without deference given to allegory. I am exploring allegory in my study because it is through allegorical association that the historical is brought into contact with eternal time.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 344.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 345 (quoting Umberto Eco, *Art und Beauty in the Middle Ages*. Yale University Press. New Haven and London. 1986. Pp. 54-55.)

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 345.

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ I have developed this term: the “*forma mentis mediaevalis*” which I will use to denote the medieval mindset of allegorical interpretation of both literature and history, which includes the everyday world around them.

For the purposes of my study, Dante's anagogical allegory in which the historical is vertically linked to the eternal realm is at the forefront of apocalyptic exegesis. Anagogical allegorical interpretation is related to eschatology as it is related to life after death of individual souls. It can be said to be vertical in that "it uncovers multiple layers of significance in a single textual item."⁵⁴

Anagogical allegory is an important element of my analysis of apocalyptic instances, but it is not the only element of allegory I will be examining. The Oxford English dictionary has the following entry under 'anagogical':

Revealing a higher spiritual meaning behind the literal meaning of a text. Medieval Christian exegesis of the Bible (see typology) reinterpreted many episodes of Hebrew scripture according to four levels of meaning: the literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the anagogical. Of these, the anagogical sense was seen as the highest, relating to the ultimate destiny of humanity according to the Christian scheme of universal history, whereas the allegorical and moral senses refer respectively to the Church and to the individual soul. Anagogy or anagoge is thus a specialized form of allegorical interpretation, which reads texts in terms of eschatology.⁵⁵

Thus, in anagogical allegorical interpretation, the instance is connected to the divine realm, and through this process, to other historical events. In this way, anagogical interpretation connects multiple events to one emblem, and thus contains multiple possible interpretations. Anagogy connects events throughout time and history.

Dante's apocalyptic imagination reflects the time in which he lived and wrote. As I have suggested, the *forma mentis mediaevalis* saw divine symbolism in everyday occurrences

⁵⁴ Abrams, Harpham (Eds.), p. 163.

⁵⁵ "anagogical." *Oxford Reference*.

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095410406> accessed 20 March 2020.

and the progression of events. The divine order is directly present in the ordinary and quotidian. In literature, this manifests itself in the Medieval mode of reading which views the written word as being open to spiritual interpretation. Thus, all texts and events were subject to interpretation and explored in terms of their transcendent significance. Dante's *Inferno* is, therefore, a text which invited allegorical interpretation. Some critics have interpreted Dante's addresses to the reader in Canto IX of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* VIII, as alerting the reader to the hidden allegorical meaning of the verses which follow. Dante is aware of the mode of reading, and writes his *Commedia* conscious of this convention of interpretation. I have noticed various allegorical modes in *Inferno* in relation to instances of apocalyptic significance. These instances which include episodes like Dante's three beasts of Canto I and the Farinata and Cavalcante exchange of Canto X, will be discussed in the following chapters of this dissertation. Dante's anagogical allegorical voice in the *Commedia* is most directly relevant to an apocalyptic exploration of *Inferno*. I will investigate the apocalyptic elements of Dante's allegorical voice, taking inspiration from the approach made by Thompson and Chiarenza. As Dante's apocalyptic allegory has been under explored in Dante scholarship, a lacuna exists. When reading the *Inferno*, attentive to its partially overt apocalyptic animus, allegorical figures and emblems take on multifarious and obscurities in meaning, which aligns with the nature of the apocalyptic narrative.

The Middle Ages inherited two types of allegory from previous centuries. The first, rhetorical allegory, was adopted by the Middle Ages from Classical sources and was "expressive and formal" in character. The second, exegetic allegory or allegoresis, is "hermeneutic in character" and came from a Christian Biblical context. At the most basic of levels, allegory is connected to metaphor and means "to say something other – *agoreuein*

allei”.⁵⁶ One of the most widely accepted definitions of allegory from the Medieval period is that of Isidore of Seville, presented in his *summa, Etymologiae*:

Allegoria est alieniloquium. Aliud enim sonat et aliud intellegitur. Allegoriae vis gemina est et sub res alias figuralitater indicat.⁵⁷

The ‘elusive talk’ of allegory is what I believe makes Dante’s *Commedia* so enduring throughout temporal epochs. The *alieniloquium* is remote enough to make it enigmatic but (in)accessible enough that it is intriguing to a modern readership. Dante pioneered a new kind of allegory that has subsequently become the heart of one of the areas of modern Dantesque scholarship, which began with Charles Singleton and Erich Auerbach in the Twentieth century. The elusive and indeterminate allegory which Dante uses in the *Inferno*, relates to the apocalyptic undercurrent which I am exploring. Apocalyptic allegorical narratives are obscure and render emblems without definitive single meaning but with a multitude of possibilities. The multifaceted nature of allegory obscures the relationship between emblem and meaning which is further obscured when considered in relation to the context in which it is presented. The indeterminate nature of Dante’s allegory in the *Inferno* creates the apocalyptic animus and opens the apocalyptic dimension.

Dante presents a departure from the allegorical tradition which precedes him, and from his contemporary discourses pertaining to allegory that are dominated by Thomistic allegoric discussions. The allegory of the *Commedia* is neither the ‘allegory of the poets,’ nor is it ‘allegory of the theologians,’ which Singleton suggests,⁵⁸ but a combination of the two. In addition to this, at various instances in the *Commedia* and in *Inferno* particularly, Dante

⁵⁶ Cecchini, p. 343.

⁵⁷ Isidore of Seville. *Etymologiae*, I, XXXVII, 22. (as quoted by Cecchini) “allegory is an *alieniloquium*. It says one thing but it means another. The strength of allegory is double: it says one thing but presents a picture of something else.” (Cecchini, p. 346.)

⁵⁸ Charles Singleton, *Dante’s Allegory*. (“Speculum” Vol. 25. No. 1: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Medieval Academy of America, January 1950), pp. 78-89.

frequently presents different types of allegory functioning under different theoretical frameworks, as I shall show in the following chapter. In each instance of Dantesque allegory, the mode of allegorical representation and symbolism differs. Thus, I believe there cannot be a single allegorical mode which can be said to be the allegory Dante employs in the *Inferno*, apart from the most basic of definitions of allegory which is *allegoria est alieni loquium*.

In sum, Singleton states: “Allegoresis forms part of a network of similarities and analogies between things and words pertaining to an ideologically homogeneous and finalistic world.”⁵⁹ The *forma mentis mediaevalis* is one of traditional and simple allegoresis, in which the Medieval would have interpreted events as emblems of their anagogical significance. Events and figures are interpreted as symbolic manifestations of the artificial reality from the world of finalist spiritual reality. Aligning with the allegoresis interpretation of history is Dante’s presentation of history in *La Commedia*. Dante interpreted historical events which he witnessed as pertaining to a final divine destiny made manifest in the inauthentic realm of Earth.

At certain points in *La Commedia*, Dante-poet addresses the reader about the meaning of his allegorical voice. I have provided two of these instances in which Dante addresses the reader in relation to allegory. These two tercets “testify to the allegorical dimension of the poem.”⁶⁰ Under guidance from Dante-poet, the reader can interpret the allegorical significances of the poem to which attention is drawn in the below two episodes:

O voi ch’avete li ‘ntelletti sani

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mirate la dottrina che s’asconde

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 344-345.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 358.

sotto 'l velame de li versi strani.⁶¹

And,

Aguzza qui, lettor, ben gli occhi al vero, 19

chè 'l velo è ora ben tanto sottile,

certo che 'l trapassar dentro è leggero.⁶²

Dante directly addresses his readers in order to draw attention to the hidden meaning of the episode.⁶³ Elsewhere in his works he also provides some guidance on the interpretation of allegory which he employs, such as in the *Convivio*. However, these two instances do more than just 'testify to the allegorical dimensions of the poem' as Leonardo Cecchini has suggested. I believe they gesture toward the obscure nature of the allegory Dante employs throughout his analogical allegory. Kirkpatrick suggests these instances not only disrupt the flow of the narrative but reveal a further level of polyphony, which the reader must discover.⁶⁴ As previously discussed in this chapter, the *forma mentis mediaevalis* understood literature emblematically as inviting allegoric interpretation. Dante develops and employs a new kind of allegory in his *Commedia*, which he demands the reader both notice and interpret. Dantesque allegory is not an allegory of theoretical definition but of suggestion and enigmatic allusion and metaphor. Dante does not write his allegory following the Medievals' definition of allegory, but chooses to create his own allegorical form, and provides the reader with indications of how his allegory should be interpreted. Marguerite Mills Chiarenza suggests that modern scholarship around Dantesque allegory should move toward exploring Dante's allegory in relation to other Medieval allegorical modes such as the allegory of nature and the

⁶¹ *Inf.*, IX. 61-63.

⁶² *Purg.*, VIII. 19-21.

⁶³ Cecchini, p. 359.

⁶⁴ Robin Kirkpatrick, *History, Nature and Philosophy: Cantos VI-XI in Dante's Inferno: Difficulty and Dead Poetry*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 140.

‘allegory of the poets,’ in order to better understand the literary conventions of the Medieval period in which Dante writes.⁶⁵ The Biblical influences of Dante’s allegory have monopolised the field of Dante’s allegory scholarship, and more studies following David Thompson’s allegorical reading of Dante’s Ulysses, published in 1967, could be conducted. I believe one of these lacunas to exist in the apocalyptic allegorical undercurrent of *Inferno*. Dante interprets historical events in the mode of allegoresis, placing emphasis on instances which contribute toward a sense of crisis and disharmony in the *Inferno*, modelled after their historical effects. Dante tends toward an allegory of apocalyptic and eschatological vision, interpreting events and rewriting history in *Inferno* under the weight of the divine eternal and supernatural world.

‘Allegory of the poets’ and ‘allegory of the theologians’ dominated Medieval interpretations. In the *Convivio*, Dante demonstrates an awareness of these two kinds of allegorical forms and suggests which allegory should be used in the interpretation of his works. An understanding of the forms of allegory which dominated the Medieval era is necessary as it is from these allegorical forms that Dante departs. Thomas Aquinas conceives of ‘allegory of the theologians’ in the following way:

Respondeo. Dicendum quod auctor Sacrae Scripturae est Deus, in cuius potestate est ut non solum voces ad significandum accommodet, quod etiam homo facere potest, sed etiam res ipsas. Et ideo cum in omnibus scientiis voces significant, hoc habet proprium ista scientia, quod ipsae res significatae per voces, etiam significant aliquid. Illa ergo prima significatio, qua voces significant res, pertinet ad primum sensum, qui est sensus historicus vel litteralis. Illa vero significatio qua res significatae per voces, iterum res

⁶⁵ Marguerite Mills Chiarenza, *Bypassing the Bible: New Approaches to Dante’s Allegory*, (Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society. No. 93, Vancouver, Canada: The John Hopkins University Press: Vancouver, 1975), pp. 215-221.

alias significant, dicitur sensus spiritualis, qui super litteralem fundatur et eum supponit.⁶⁶

This definition of the ‘allegory of the theologians’ was widely known and accepted in the Medieval period. ‘Allegory of the theologians,’ according to the Thomistic view and those who followed it, such as Dante, states that the first event is an event situated in history and actually transpired. The second event is related to the first and is the fulfilment of the first. Mazzotta claims there are four levels of exegesis in the ‘allegory of the theologians’: (1) The literal, (2) allegorical/figurative, ethical and didactical interpretation of the text (3) tropological interpretation relating to the instruction of the text as moral guidance, and (4) eschatological/anagogical level in which “the last spiritual realities are historical figured” and prefigures what the soul ought to be.⁶⁷

‘Allegory of the theologians’ only appears in Biblical sources, unlike the ‘allegory of the poets.’ Theological allegory “was sometimes a way of interpreting a text in spite of the author’s intended meaning, as a way of superimposing a Christian significance anachronistically on an Old Testament text.”⁶⁸ The literal level of ‘allegory of the theologians’ is always rooted in history as “*littera gesta docet* – the letter teaches us what happened.”⁶⁹ Any meaning from a human standpoint is necessarily a literal meaning, even if conveyed in an ‘allegory of the poets.’ ‘Allegory of the theologians’ is an allegory *in factis* and not an allegory

⁶⁶ Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. 1. i. 10. I respond: The author of Sacred Scripture is God, who has it in His power to use not only words for signifying (which even a man can do), but also the very things themselves. And so even though words are used to signify in all the sciences, it is peculiar to the science of sacred doctrine that the things signified by its words likewise signify something themselves. Thus, the first type of signification, by which words signify things, pertains to the first sense, which is the historical or literal sense. On the other hand, the type of signification by which the things signified by words in turn signify other things, is called the spiritual sense, which is built upon the literal sense and presupposes it. (*New English Translation of Thomas Aquinas’s Summa Theologiae*. Alfred J. Freddoso, University of Notre Dame. January 2010. <https://www3.nd.edu/~afreddoso/summa-translation/TOC.htm> prima pars (part 1), question 1, article 10.

Accessed: 16 October 2019)

⁶⁷ Giuseppe Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 55.

⁶⁸ John Freccero, *Allegory and Autobiography in The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, rpt. 2013), p. 169.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 170.

in verbis: it is a retrospective interpretation of the events of Jewish history in order to read in them the coming of Christ.⁷⁰ It is the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament, an allegory which suggests that the events told in the Old Testament prefigure and gesture towards events presented in the New Testament. It can also be thought of as *meta*-allegory, in which “the reality signified by the words of the text...is in turn, taken as sign to be further allegorised. The New Testament was thought to be not so much a separate revelation, as the definitive ending of the revelation began with the Old Testament, the fulfilment of its promise.”⁷¹ The four interpretations of theological allegory follow the one plus three model: the literal, historic even of the Old Testament interpreted by the threefold revelation, past, present, and future, of the New Testament. It is a juxtaposition of two sets of events, two histories. It is inherently diachronistic.⁷²

In the second book of the *Convivio*, Dante explores the four ways in which a text can be interpreted. In this exposition, Dante refers to exegesis of scripture, and toward the end of the chapter he appropriates these interpretations onto his poetry, giving preference to the allegorical exposition, of ‘the hidden truths’ of the text. “The third and fourth senses will have only an incidental interest and...the poet is to concern himself mainly with the first two” of literal and allegorical.⁷³ The most pertinent type of allegorical interpretation to my study is the anagogical sense in which meaning is linked to providence, and history taken to contain the pattern of divine intervention linking it to the eternal realm.

In the *Convivio*, Dante recognises the two kinds of Medieval allegory: the ‘allegory of the theologians’ and the ‘allegory of the poets,’

⁷⁰ Ibidem.

⁷¹ Ibidem.

⁷² Ibid. p. 172.

⁷³ Singleton, *Dante's Allegory*, (*Speculum* Vol. 25, No. 1, The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Medieval Academy of America, January 1950), p. 78.

Dico che, si come nel primo capitolo e narrato, questa sposizione conviene essere lit-
terale e allegorica. E a cio dare a intendere, si vuol sapere che le scritture si possono
intendere e deonsi esponere massimamente per quattro sensi. L'uno si chiama litterale
[e questo e quello che non si stende pifu oltre la lettera de le parole fittizie, si come sono
le favole de li poeti. L'altro si chiama allegorico] e questo e quello che si nasconde
sotto') manto di queste favole, ed e una veritade ascosa sotto bella menzogna: si come
quando dice Ovidio che Orfeo facea con la cetera mansuete le fiere, e li arbori e le pietre
a s'e muovere; che vuol dire che lo savio uomo con lo strumento de la sua voce fa[r]lia
mansuescere e umiliare li crudeli cuori, e fa[r]lia muovere a la sua volontade coloro che
non hanno vita di scienza e d'arte: e coloro che non hanno vita ragionevole alcuna sono
quasi come pietre. E perche questo nascondimento fosse trovato per li savi, nel
penultimo trattato si mosterra. Veramente li teologi questo senso prendono altrimenti
che li poeti; ma pero che mia in tenzione e qui lo modo de li poeti seguitare, prendo lo
senso allegorico secondo che per il poeti e usato.⁷⁴

Dante, here, claims that the 'allegory of the poets' is the allegorical model which he follows in
the *Commedia*. In the interpretation of his poem he declares that readers should follow the
model of 'allegory of the poets' as this was the model under which the poems were written.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ *Convivio*, II, I 2-4. In the standard edition with commentary by G. Busnelli and G. Vandelli. (Florence, 1934)
(Quoted by Charles Singleton in "Dante's Allegory" *Speculum* Vol. 25, No. 1. The University of Chicago Press
on behalf of the Medieval Academy of America. January 1950. P. 78. The lacuna in the text is filled by the
editors, and a discussion of the decision can be found in their notes to the passage. - "As I stated in the first
chapter, this exposition must be both literal and allegorical. To convey what this means, it is necessary to know
that writings can be understood and ought to be expounded principally in four senses. The first is called the
literal, and this is the sense that does not go beyond the surface of the letter, as in the fables of the poets. The
next is called the allegorical, and this is the one that is hidden beneath the cloak of these fables, and is a truth
hidden beneath a beautiful fiction. Thus Ovid says that with his lyre Orpheus tamed wild beasts and made trees
and rocks move toward him, which is to say that the wise man with the instrument of his voice makes cruel
hearts grow tender and humble and moves to his will those who do not devote their lives to knowledge and art;
and those who have no rational life whatsoever are almost like stones. Why this kind of concealment was
devised by the wise will be shown in the penultimate book. Indeed, the theologians take this sense otherwise
than do the poets; but since it is my intention here to follow the method of the poets, I shall take the allegorical
sense according to the usage of the poets." Trans. Richard H. Lansing. Garland Library of Medieval Literature,
1990.

⁷⁵ Singleton, *Dante's Allegory*, p. 78.

Dante goes on to say that the third sense in which a text should be interpreted is the moral sense which provides guidance on moral matters concerning the individual. The fourth sense is the anagogical sense in which the text is expounded upon in the spiritual or mystical sense in relation to the “supernal things of eternal glory. It is impossible to arrive at the other senses, especially the allegorical, without first arriving at the literal.”⁷⁶ However, Dante makes little to no mention of the ‘allegory of the theologians,’ another form of allegory which dominated the literary landscape of the Medieval era. The ‘allegory of the theologians’ was developed by Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Dante would have been more familiar with the Thomistic conception of this kind of allegory. The most pertinent type of allegory in relation to the apocalyptic emphasis on which I am focussing this study, is anagogical allegory. Dante places instances in the *Inferno* in their historical significances in relation to the position to the eternal realm.

In the ‘allegory of the poets’ there are only two levels of interpretation: the literal and the underlying moral imperative of the allegory. Dante gives us a definition of the ‘allegory of the poets’ in the *Convivio*: “a truth hidden beneath a beautiful lie.”⁷⁷ ‘Allegory of the poets’ may be broadly interpreted to “mean all the figures and tropes a poet must employ in order to express his intended meaning.”⁷⁸ It is an allegory of “this for that.”⁷⁹ ‘Allegory of the theologians’ can be understood in the following way: the literal level must be historical and situated in history. This literal level must be an event in history. Dante uses the example of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt in the Old Testament. The literal level retells the exodus from Egypt and is an event situated in history.⁸⁰ The literal sense must be true and historical, and

⁷⁶ *Convivio*, II, I 3-4.

⁷⁷ Freccero, *Allegory and Autobiography*, p. 169. (Using the Busnelli and Vandelli edition of the *Convivio* in which they amended the lacuna.)

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁹ Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, p. 55.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

cannot be fictive.⁸¹ ‘Allegory of the theologians’ is a mode of interpreting history and the Bible which is applied to other Medieval texts, such as the *Commedia*. Dante, I believe, uses this theoretical allegorical mode as a starting point for his allegory which he develops in *Inferno* and throughout the *Commedia*.

Charles Singleton suggests that Dante’s allegory in *La Commedia* is best understood as ‘allegory of the theologians’ over an ‘allegory of the poets.’ This claim is based on Dante’s claim in the *Convivio* that his poetic works follow the allegoric model of ‘allegory of the poets’ and that interpretation should follow this model as well as it was written under this framework.⁸² Others, such as Leonardo Cecchini, state that Dante’s attempts a new kind of allegory in the *Commedia*, a mediation between the ‘allegory of the poets’ and an ‘allegory of the theologians.’ This united form of Medieval allegory creates complex polysemous voices in *La Commedia*.⁸³ “In contrast with a reading of the universe as a collection of phenomena connected and placed on a horizontal line, Dante advances a more traditional, hierarchical and pyramidal vision. ... They are still subordinate to the transcendental sphere. In this perspective the synthesis of the allegories was viable in order to present a world which was oriented towards a point which transcended it, but at the same time had its own meaning and its own value.”⁸⁴ In Dante’s new form of combined Medieval allegory, the historical temporal realm is cast as subordinate to the eternal realm. This aligns with the *forma mentis mediaevalis* in which the divine order has direct influence on the tellurian and the pattern of events in time.

I am aware that allegory in *La Commedia* contains multifarious significances and the types of allegory Dante’s uses is a highly contested subject.⁸⁵ Much of this scholarship has

⁸¹ Singleton, *Dante’s Allegory*, p. 79.

⁸² Ibid, p. 78.

⁸³ Leonardo Cecchini, “*Allegory of the theologians*” or “*allegory of the poets*”: *Allegory in Dante’s Commedia*. (Denmark: Orbis Litterarum. 55. 340 – 378, University of Aarhus, 2000)

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 371.

⁸⁵ I am aware of Auerbach’s figural allegory as a possible interpretation of the Dante’s allegorical voice in the *Commedia*. Figuralism is a dominate allegorical interpretative mode for allegorical emblems which Dante presents. Figural allegorical interpretations enhance the historical allegorical element of the poem. In figural

been dedicated to attempting to explain the type of allegory Dante employs in the *Commedia*. Respected Dante critics such as Charles Singleton and Giuseppe Mazzotta have attempted to steer Dante's readers away from interpreting his allegory in one way in favour of another means of allegorical interpretation. Other scholars, such as David Thompson and Marguerite Mills Chiarenza, have suggested we ignore the type of allegorical mode Dante uses in a certain instance in favour for the effect of the allegory on the narrative. In the presentation of his allegorical voice in the *Inferno*, Dante explores the apocalyptic dimensions, specifically in relation to the distortion of time and space, as it is through allegory that the historical is revisited. The times and context from which sprung Dante's epic verse also plays an important role in the presentation of his allegorical voice. Dante would have witnessed what he would have interpreted as apocalyptic events and presented readers with permutations of these events in *Inferno*.

I shall proceed from the assumption that Dante's apocalyptic allegory is rendered opaque in significance, yet not without significance. A multitude of possible significances are alluded to and are plausible, but significance is not limited to only one of these interpretations. At the basic level, Dante's allegory functions as connection to events or figures to one another. Inherently, this presents temporal manipulations as it brings the signified event or figure into the present time of the narrative which houses the allegorical image. I am interested in the exploration of Dante's anagogical allegory because of its obscure nature and its connection to the apocalyptic imagination. This element of Dante's allegory will be treated extensively in my dissertation.

interpretation the historical features are given universal meaning. The historical is presented in light of its emblematic relationship the eternal present moment. I am aware of this reading of Dante's allegory, but I will be focussing on Dante's apocalyptic allegorical voice in the process of allegorical interpretation. (see Auerbach – *Figura* (1939))

Concluding Comments

The question of the nature of Dante's allegory has plagued Dante scholarship since the first receptions of the *Commedia*. I will give extended treatment and consideration to the type and significance of the allegory Dante employs in the *Inferno*. I am concerned with the ways in which Dante's apocalyptic allegory affects his understanding and conception of the historical in *Inferno*, and his stylistic presentation of allegory. Anagogical allegory connects the historical, moveable timescape to the eternal timescape which experiences contains divine stasis.

In the second chapter of my dissertation, I explore the apocalyptic reading of Dante's *selva oscura* and the multifarious allegorical interpretations of this landscape. I will be examining obscure allegorical figures and investigating the ways in which they conflate historical, tellurian time and the eternal time of God. I will also be exploring these figures as figures comprising features from both Biblical and Classical literary traditions.

The third chapter deals with the apocalyptic journey motif. It is within the journey narrative and the representation of the journey that the dimension of time is made apparent. I shall explore the models of time that Dante's follows which are both cyclical and linear. Dante marries these two conceptions of time in his representations of the journey. My discussion will focus on the figures that embody the temporal realm. I explore the role of perception and the necessity of an awareness of the eternal realm in relation to moments of apocalyptic significance in this chapter.

In the fourth chapter I discuss the meeting point between the eternal timescapes of God and Hell and the tellurian time of the earthly realm, foregrounding what I refer to as "pockets of historical time" when Dante presents historical realism against the backdrop of the eternal context. As Dante-pilgrim and Virgil journey through Hell, the eternity of Hell is disrupted by their presence as they create pockets of historical time in their interactions with the souls of

sinner. In this exploration I discuss Dante's understanding of history and the apocalyptic significances of bringing the historical realm in the afterlife. The Epicureans, Farinata and Cavalcante of Canto X, and the state which Dante-pilgrim experiences when faced with Lucifer are episodes in which the historical temporal realm and time in general are foregrounded. I present an apocalyptic reading of these figures.

In the concluding chapter, I present a summary of the key arguments made in each chapter and meditate on the implications of an apocalyptic reading of Dante's *Inferno*. I explore *il summo poeta's* apocalyptic imagination and the effect of Dante's apocalyptic imagination on the stylistic presentation of allegory and his conception of history. I emphasise the fact that the apocalyptic animus of *Inferno* is yoked with the sense of history and allegory. The connection between the allegorical and the historical, in light of the eternal, is the central focus of this dissertation, as will become apparent in the ensuing discussion. The temporal realm and the manifestation of time in *Inferno* in relation to apocalypse is the underlying concern of my dissertation.

I have introduced the concepts of apocalypse and the features of the apocalyptic narrative, and the broad question of the type of allegory that Dante uses in the *Inferno*. In the following chapter, I present a discussion of the apocalyptic significances of the allegory of the opening scene of *Inferno* and the figure of the *gran veglio*.

Chapter 3: Dante's Allegorical Apocalyptic Imagination

Introduction to Chapter

Allegory and symbolic representation form an integral part of narratives of the apocalyptic genre. Allegorical interpretations are particularly prevalent in the apocalyptic narrative. These narratives include dream visions, which John Collins terms “dream vision apocalypses.”⁸⁶ Dante-poet presents his *catabasis* in the form of a disguised Medieval dream vision narrative. The Allegorical images of *Inferno* contribute toward the aura of ambiguity and enigmatic presentation of figures which is commonly associated with apocalyptic narratives. Aligning with the Medieval mindset of interpretation, the written word was subject to the interpretative process.⁸⁷ However, at various instances in the *Inferno*, Dante deliberately presents obfuscated and obscure images which are rendered inaccessible to the reader. At certain instances in the narrative a figure is cast as most certainly an allegorical figure, but the meaning is equivocal and enigmatic. The lack of textual guidance as to “*la dottrina che s’asconde // sotto ‘l velame de I versi strani*,”⁸⁸ in combination with the opaque significance of the image, contributes toward the apocalyptic qualities of the *Inferno*. The Old Man of Crete, of Canto XIV is one such obscure image. The *selva oscura*, which is the first image with which the reader is confronted, is another enigmatic allegorical image that renders interpretation of its significance evasive and indeterminate. Similarly, Dante’s three beasts are of nebulous allegorical significance apart from their Biblical associations with another apocalyptic text. This chapter will discuss these three allegorical elements of *Inferno*.

Dante begins his narrative in the *selva oscura*, which can be viewed as a liminal space, similar to C. S. Lewis’s wood between worlds,⁸⁹ in which the boundaries between the human realm and the afterlife are blurred. Similarly, the boundaries between figure and significance

⁸⁶ Collins, *The Jewish apocalypses*, pp. 30-38.

⁸⁷ Cecchini, p. 341.

⁸⁸ *Inf.*, IX. 62-63.

⁸⁹ C. S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (1955).

are also blurred, and an opacity in meaning is achieved. This is particularly evident when exploring Dante's three beasts and the *veltro* of Virgil's prophecy. From this liminal space of the *selva oscura*, the narrative progresses fully into the underworld of the afterlife. The apocalyptic animus of the narrative is constructed at the opening of the narrative by the setting of the action in this liminal space. The apocalyptic qualities of the *selva*, such as the distortion of time and obscure imagery, prepare the reader to discern these qualities elsewhere in the poem. I believe the wood functions as a gateway into the apocalyptic space and primes the reader for the contorted conditions of apocalypse.

Allegory contains a temporal dimensions as the boundaries between the universal and the particular. Because of this disconnect between the specific and the universal, the boundaries of time are conflated, and the past is recalled. Moments from history are brought into the present, through allegorical representation. Thus, the allegorical process and the interpretation thereof inherently involves temporal manipulation. From the Augustinian point of view, images of the past and possibly of the future, which manifest in the narrative as prophecy, are brought into the present moment through the process of allegorical association. Thus, fragments of the past are present in the future. Allegory contributes to the apocalyptic-temporal dimension of the text as it evokes extra-temporal and historical images, bringing in different temporal dimensions into the present moment for consideration in the *aevum*-like, apocalyptically charged landscape of *Inferno*.

In this chapter, I explore some of the obscure allegorical images presented to readers. I discuss the allegory of the *selva oscura*, the three beasts of Canto I, Virgil's *veltro*, and the *gran veglio* of Canto XIV in this chapter, all of which are figures and emblems presenting obscure allegorical significances, each in slightly different permutations. The precise significance of these images is unclear and when read in light an apocalyptic animus their significances are rendered with a further opacity.

Inferno I

The opening tercet of the *Inferno* introduces the obscure and perverse nature of the space which the following narrative discloses. Guglielmo Gorni claims that the opening lines of *Inferno* prime the reader to the allegorical nature of the text. As in other Medieval narratives such as *La Roman de la Rose*, the protagonist of *La Commedia* situates himself in a quasi-dream like state. This state indicates that an allegorical narrative is to follow. Guido da Pisa claims Dante's situation of himself in the middle of his life signifies the dream in which man spends half his life, i.e. the time spent asleep. This has been widely rejected by Dante scholars.⁹⁰ However, this interpretation of the first line of Dante's verse is useful in presenting the poem as a dream-vision which is the guise under which the epic is presented to readers. Gorni's claim of the indication of the allegory of the narrative aligns with the Medieval *forma mentis* of allegoresis as a way of reading. The symbolism at the onset of the poem paves the way for symbolic and allegorical interpretation of the events and emblems which are to follow. This is evident in the opening three lines of the poem, where the reader is presented with three symbols which can be interpreted to prefigure the rest of the *Commedia* as a whole. As Gorni states: "*Qualche lettore modern ha visto in questi tre simboli – selva, monte, sole- un'anticipazione proemiale dei tre regni ultramondani, Inferno, Purgatorio e Paradiso.*"⁹¹

Allegory, at the most basic level, according to M. H. Abrams's *A Glossary of Literary Terms* is a narrative in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting, convey a meaning beyond the coherent literal sense.⁹² Sustained allegory was a dominant form of the literature of the Middle Ages. The dream vision in which the narrator falls asleep and experiences an allegoric dream was popular and is the allegorical mode under which Dante disguises his *Commedia*.⁹³ The type of allegory Dante uses in *La Commedia* has been a much-

⁹⁰ Guglielmo Gorni, *Dante nella Selva*, (Parma, Nuova Pratiche Editrice, 1995), pp. 59-62.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 73.

⁹² Abrams; Harpham (Eds), p. 7.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 8.

contested topic in Dante scholarship across the decades. A consensus to the Dantesque allegorical mode has not been reached. This opaqueness in regard to both the allegorical mode employed by Dante and the allegorical significance of the images he presents in his poetry, I believe contributes toward the dantesque apocalyptic imagination in which meaning and significance is fluid and cannot be confined to only one interpretation. Contemporary approaches to the allegory of *La Commedia*, pioneered by critics such as David Thompson,⁹⁴ and Marguerite Mills Chiarenza,⁹⁵ have suggested that scholarship should move toward an interpretation of the effect of Dante-poet's presented allegorical image over the type and origins of Dante's allegory. I believe Dante's allegory to tend toward an allegory of apocalyptic and eschatological vision, interpreting events and rewriting history in *Inferno* under the weight of the divine eternal and supernatural world. The reasons for my beliefs will be explored in the following discussion.

Inferno starts with Dante-pilgrim fearful of his surroundings and in a state of crisis. He is lost in the "*selva selvaggia*" which is an "*aspra e forte*" wilderness without "*ben ridir com' I' v'intrai*."⁹⁶ This state of extreme anxiety and fearfulness, has the ability to open the apocalyptic dimension through the creation of an *aevum*-like space. Crisis and the terror experienced in these states of extreme emotions, turn the temporal context into a moment of *kairos* from the successiveness of experience of the *chronos*. The moment of the *kairos* and the *aevum*-like space, are acknowledged by Dante-poet as "*nel pensier rinova la paura!*"⁹⁷ The moment still possesses eschatological weight after the moment has passed and is recalled by Dante-poet.

⁹⁴ David Thompson, *Figure and Allegory in the 'Commedia,'* ("Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society," No. 90, 1972), pp. 1-11.

⁹⁵ Marguerite Mills Chiarenza, *Bypassing the Bible: New Approaches to Dante's Allegory,* (Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society. No. 93, The John Hopkins University Press: Vancouver, Canada. 1975), pp. 215-221.

⁹⁶ *Inf.*, I. 5, 10.

⁹⁷ *Inf.*, I. 6.

Kermode places value on moments of crisis and their ability to bring about apocalyptic change. In instances of crisis, an *aevum*-like space is created as the dimensions of time are amalgamated into the present. It is in this way that moments that house crisis can be considered moments of the *kairos*. The argument Kermode develops here is primarily based on Renaissance dramatic text, such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*; yet this theory is applicable to Dante in the *Commedia*, as I shall show. Apocalyptic instances are birthed out of moments of crisis. To "give some kind of order and design to the past, the present, and the future,"⁹⁸ we create narratives of transition and of crisis of the end. These fictional eschatological mirages then give some sort of significance to the expanse of time around it. Crisis is inescapably a central element in our endeavours toward making sense of our world.⁹⁹ Through the creation and reading and experiencing of fictional apocalyptic narratives the human condition which is to fear the eschatological end is somewhat dealt with: we address our sense and anxiety of an imminent apocalypse through the catharsis of reading the apocalyptic narratives. Because fear is atemporal and exists beyond the linear progression of time, and because it is ingrained in the condition of human nature, the anxiety felt of a future eschaton is also felt in the present moment. Thus, the present moment houses two types of anxiety. Anxiety of the future is brought into the present, and the anxiety of the present for the future imminent eschaton is present in the present moment. It can be in this way that we can understand the imminent end as becoming immanent, entrenched in the human psyche: "The end is immanent rather than imminent."¹⁰⁰ In moments of crisis this sense of anxiety is amplified. Dante-pilgrim in his state of heightened emotion and extreme anxiety, at the opening of *Inferno*, creates an *aevum*-like space in the narrative. This space houses the transition from

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 94.

⁹⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 101.

reality into the preternatural realm, and the space in which apocalyptic instances occur. This episode opens and contributes toward the apocalyptic animus of the *Inferno*.

Regio Dissimilitudinis

The opening canto of *Inferno* is a canto presenting the failed journey of Dante-pilgrim. It is a journey toward God, who is represented by sunlight, that fails. The first canto introduces and prefigures the apocalyptic emphasis which is found throughout *Inferno*. The failed journey to summit Mount Purgatory draws the reader's attention to the apocalyptic quality of the epic genre, and the manipulated dimensions of time and space in the perverse infernal context. Time and space are the fundamental dimensions of human existence which are frequently distorted in narratives of the apocalyptic genre.¹⁰¹ Inherent in the epic genre is the notion of the journey. The negation of the journey of Canto I brings the dimensions of the journey, and the epic genre, as well as the requirements of apocalyptic narratives according to the generic framework, suggested by John Collins,¹⁰² to the fore. Within the *sevla oscura*, allegorical significances of figures are alluded to but remain obscure in meaning.

The opening tercet of *Inferno*, which begins “*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*,”¹⁰³ creates the boundaries of the apocalyptic space which is explored in following *canti*. These widely known and quoted lines serve to situate and defamiliarise the environment. Dante-poet wishes the reader to believe that he himself, as Dante-pilgrim undertook this journey *ad inferos* and is now relaying what he saw and experienced to his audience. The defamiliarisation of the environment in which Dante-pilgrim finds himself is one of the mechanisms Dante-poet uses to evoke a distorted sense of both time and space. Narratives which can be categorised as belonging to the apocalyptic genre frequently manipulate the fundamental dimensions of human existence, time and space.¹⁰⁴ In *Inferno*, Dante presents a perverted representation of

¹⁰¹ Collins, *The Jewish Apocalypses*, pp. 21-23.

¹⁰² Collins, *The Apocalyptic Genre*, p. 5.

¹⁰³ *Inf.* I. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Collins, *The Jewish Apocalypses*, p. 21.

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita 1
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
che la diritta via era smarrita.¹⁰⁶

From the opening three lines of poetry, there has been little information divulged to the reader as to how to interpret the significance of the forest. The forest possesses an obscure quality, which to the *forma mentis mediaevalis* would indicate that the poetic and allegorical significance of the wood is obscure. There is a disjuncture between the allegorical emblem of the forest in the narrative and its significance. The forest serves to draw attention to this disjuncture between emblem and meaning. It is only when the reader progresses into the narrative that some suggestions of possible meanings is given to the reader. Giuseppe Mazzotta agrees with this exegesis of the opening lines of the canto.¹⁰⁷ I believe the lack of textual guidance given to the reader in relation to the symbolic significance of the *selva oscura* to contribute to the apocalyptic animus of the *Inferno*. There is most certainly allegorical

¹⁰⁷ Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, p. 26.

significance connected to the *selva oscura*, but its exact meaning is not immediately apparent. This aligns with the conventions of the apocalyptic genre. The dark wood with which *Inferno* opens creates a scene of ambiguity and equivocal images, and brings the apocalyptic resonances of the text to the fore.

John Freccero claims the distinctive characteristic of the wood is *oscura* quality.¹⁰⁸ Guglielmo Gorni agrees with the *oscura* as “*l'elemento determinante della*” *selva oscura*.¹⁰⁹ When read juxtaposed to Dante's description of the Garden of Eden, the *selva oscura* takes on an enigmatic quality which allows the boundaries between literal and symbolism to be transgressed. Dante-pilgrim's point of departure is the Garden of Eden from where he will ascend into the elysian, is the *selva oscura* of Canto I, disfigured by the first sin of man. “In poetic terms, Adam transformed the *selva antica* into the *selva oscura*.”¹¹⁰ Continuing this reading of the *selva oscura*, the wood takes on qualities of human existence, through which Dante must traverse to reach the other world of the afterlife. Therefore, the human life must be progressed through in order to reach the afterlife.

John Freccero suggests that Dante's *selva oscura* is a *regio dissimilitudinis*, which can be translated as a ‘region of unlikeness’. Following Freccero's reading of the *selva oscura*, Dante's wood can be related to Augustine's ‘region of unlikeness’ which is found in Book Seven of Saint Augustine's *Confessions*.¹¹¹ In the opening paragraphs of *Confessions* VII, Augustine explores the notion of space, infinite space, and the space which God inhabits. Dante, by indirectly associating the *Inferno* with Augustine, specifically Augustine in *Confessions* VII, invites readers to be mindful of the dimensions of space and time in their reading of the *Inferno*. Augustine muses over the space God inhabits and the nature of beings

¹⁰⁸ John Freccero, *Dante's Prologue Scene*, (“Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society” No. 84, The John Hopkins University Press, 1966) p. 10.

¹⁰⁹ Gorni, p. 65.

¹¹⁰ Freccero, p. 10.

¹¹¹ Ibid, pp. 1-25.

which are inferior to God. The figure of God is “not subject to decay or harm or variation and therefore better than any that might suffer corruption or damage or change. ... You were some kind of bodily substance extended in space, either permeating the world or diffused in infinity beyond it.”¹¹² God is “a great being with dimensions extending everywhere, throughout infinite space, permeating the whole mass of the world and reaching in all directions beyond it without limit, so that the sky and all creation were full of you and their limits were within you, while you had no limits at all.”¹¹³ Thus within the opening lines of *Confessions VII*, Augustine has explored the notion of the space which God inhabits, both the physical space comprising of the creations of God, and the space, or void, of the elysian in which God dwells. This discussion of earthly space and paradisaical space constitutes the temporal realm which God inhabits as the temporal and spatial realms are inextricably yoked to one another. The association of Dante's *selva oscura* with this particular book of *Confessions VII*, in which the nature of space and time of God and other beings, primes Dante's readers to be mindful of these dimensions when reading his narrative.

In relation to the dark wood of the opening of *Inferno*, Freccero states: “In the shadowy world of the prologue scene, things both are and are not as they seem. ... the scenery seems to have no real poetic existence independent of the allegorical statement it was meant to convey. The ambiguous nature of the moral landscape seems to lend itself too readily to arbitrary allegorization, but scarcely to formal analysis.”¹¹⁴ I believe Freccero, here, to be referring to the lack of evidence for the significance of the forest apart from its allegorical significances, which I hope to prove to be opaque. Thus, the *selva oscura* seems to serve no other purpose in the poem and in the narrative apart from its allegorical associations, as Freccero explores in his

¹¹² Augustine, *Confessions*, VII. 1.

¹¹³ Ibidem.

¹¹⁴ Freccero, p. 1.

article, to the *regio dissimilitudinis* of Augustine's Confessions. Yet, these allegorical associations are indefinite in meaning.

Mazzotta concurs with Freccero regarding the arbitrary allegorisation and interpretation of the landscape. Association of the *selva oscura* with the *regio dissimilitudinis* of Augustine predisposes the reader to interpret the *Commedia* in an Augustinian light, with the text being a spiritual confession of the poet.¹¹⁵ This association invites the reader to explore the text with a theoretical, theological reading stemming from the first tercet of the epic, focussing on the dimensions of space and time. However, in the apocalyptic reading of the animus of the *Inferno*, I will demonstrate the significance of Dante's *selva oscura* as being the gateway into the apocalyptic dimensions of the text, and suggest that it predisposes the reader to read the *Inferno* mindful of its apocalyptic tendency.

In another allegorical interpretation of the *selva oscura*, Gorni states the symbolism of the wood represents the city of Florence and building on the discourses of Gian Giacomo Dionisi and Rinieri da Calboli.¹¹⁶ When considered with this allegorical interpretation in mind, Dante-pilgrim becomes the figure of Dante-poet in his exile from Florence. The political situation of Florence in Dante's lifetime can be understood as a *selva oscura* from which salvation only comes from providence. In this reading of the *selva oscura*, the spatial realm which conflates the temporal into the spatial recalls a historical physical place. This association brings the historical physical realm into the eternal space which is represented by the liminal realm at the onset of the poem.

The second element of these opening lines to which I would like to draw attention is the state in which Dante-poet finds himself: he is lost. It is only through divine guidance and instruction and therefore the revelation of otherworldly mysteries that he is able to find "la

¹¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹¹⁶ Gorni, p. 76.

dritta via,¹¹⁷ which he achieves at the end of his journey in *Paradiso*. The state of lostness in which Dante-pilgrim finds himself is a state of crisis, anxiety, and catastrophe. There is a tradition of interpretation of the *selva oscura* as allegorically and symbolically reflecting the mental state of the pilgrim. However, as Giuseppe Mazzotta suggests that this reading of the dark wood is too easy an interpretation of the allegory which Dante-poet employs at the start of the poem. From the opening three lines there is little to no textual evidence to support this interpretation.¹¹⁸ It is only when the reader progresses through the first canto that the interpretation of the *selva oscura* as symbolically reflecting the state of mind of the pilgrim and poet can be entertained.

The land of uncertainty evokes extratemporal dimensions and allows for the creation of an *aevum*-like space. The *aevum* space is a liminal space between the eternity of God and the historical time of man, a concept I have explored in more detail in the first chapter. The isolation of one moment in particular above the successiveness of time, combined with the lost state in which Dante finds himself, and the remoteness of the wood, creates an *aevum*-like space. From his position in the middle of his earthly life Dante can view his past and future, in the present moment. The past is made available to him through the process of remembering, and the future through experience. This ability is Augustinian in nature.¹¹⁹ For Augustine, memory is the recollection of the visceral input into the body from the senses. “The wide plains of ... memory and its innumerable caverns and hallows are full beyond compute of countless things of all kinds.”¹²⁰ The poem is written retrospectively, meaning that Dante has knowledge of the future already past, from his position at the end of the journey. Dante-pilgrim's claim of his position in the middle of his life symbolically reflects his ability to view the past and future

¹¹⁷ *Inf.*, I. 3.

¹¹⁸ Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, p. 26.

¹¹⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, Book X.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*.

time from his vantage point in the midst. This ability of temporal sight combined with the pilgrim-poet's sense of crisis and anxiety, creates an *aevum*-like space.

Kermode postulates that the subject of apocalyptic instances is situated in the middle, with the ability to view all of past history and the future, under the eternal time of God.¹²¹ In an *aevum*-like state, the *ad infinitum* of historical time can be viewed and experienced through the lens of the eternal. This interpretation of apocalyptic instances is relevant to the *Commedia* in the sense that Dante situates himself in the middle of his life, in the opening line of the canto. From his position in the middle of his life, he possesses the ability to view the past, and the future from his vantage point after the completion of the journey. Thus, he has the ability to see entire expanse of his earthly life from his position at the onset of the narrative. Also included in this ability to view time, is the ability to recall historical legend and Biblical and Classical myth. From the "cloisters of his memory,"¹²² Dante is able to view his historical life, and the legendary history of historical time and the *historia sacra* of Biblical mythology, and Pagan mythology, which has been immortalised in narratives such as the *Aeneid*.

In order to discuss the apocalyptic resonances of the *selva oscura*, it is necessary to keep theoretical definitions of demarcations of time in mind. I have argued that apocalyptic instances are frequently presented in *aevum*-like states, which is a liminal space housing the past, the present, and the future. It "depends on a concord of imaginatively recorded past and imaginatively predicted future achieved on behalf of us [the subject of apocalypse] who remain 'in the midst.'" ¹²³ The distinction of a moment into a moment of the *kairos* from the mere successiveness of the *chronos*, serves as a gateway into an *aevum*-like space, which contains the apocalyptic dimension outside of the human reality. *Kairos* is a significant season, poised

¹²¹ Kermode, p. 74.

¹²² Augustine, *Confessions*, Book X.

¹²³ Kermode, p. 74.

between the beginning and the end.¹²⁴ In isolating this present moment as the starting point of the narrative, Dante-poet creates a moment of *kairos*, situated in the time of human historicity. The moment of the *kairos* is distinguished from the normal progression successiveness of human time of the *chronos*. Moments of the *kairos* are separate and discrete from the successive progression of human time, and are reserved for the high holidays and special occasions.¹²⁵ The *kairos* of earthly time more closely resembles the eternal time of God, and can therefore be considered a liminal time situated between earthly *chronos* of ordinary time and the eternal time of God. Dante's isolation of a single moment in the beginning of the poem of a mid-point of his life creates a moment of the *kairos* from the *chronos*, which allows for the opening of an aeviternal space, in which apocalyptic instances frequently occur. From his position as poet at the end of the journey he has the ability to view his journey and his life in its entirety. From his position as pilgrim in the opening of *Inferno*, the poet has knowledge of the pilgrim's future and past and thus can see the structure as a unified whole, which the pilgrim is unable to do.

Inferno begins with the present reality of Dante-pilgrim. The present reality of the poet-pilgrim is one in which the temporal realm is brought to the fore. The verbs of the tercet are written in the past tense, indicating that the poem is written retrospectively with the knowledge that is gained along the journey and with the unification with God, which the ultimate apocalyptic moment. Dante recounts his journey with knowledge *sub specie aeternitatis*.¹²⁶

As I have previously stated: the opening tercet of *Inferno* expresses a sense of crisis and catastrophe. It is a state in which Dante finds himself in a metaphoric dark wood which is soon discovered to be a wood between worlds, a gateway into Hell from the human dimension. From the state in which Dante finds himself in these lines, Dante embarks on a journey toward the

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 46.

¹²⁵ Lino Pertile, *Chapter 4: Dante*, (in Peter C. Brand and Lino Pertile (Eds.), "The Cambridge History of Italian Literature" (Revised Edition) (London and New York NY, Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 46.

¹²⁶ From the perspective of eternity.

light which shrouds the mountain that Dante attempts and fails to climb in the first canto. We later find out this is the mountain of purgatory which Dante will traverse in his second canticle. In developing the argument here, the journey toward the light, is ultimately a journey toward God and toward truth. The interplay between light and darkness is a theme which runs throughout the poem and is one which contributes toward the apocalyptic undercurrent. This interplay brings the original meaning of 'apocalypse' as revelation and uncovering to the fore, and draws attention to Dante's use of the apocalyptic narrative genre.

Moments of apocalypse are born out of moments of crisis. These moments of crisis bring about apocalyptic revelation and change. In such moments, a space-time scape resembling the *aevum* is created as dimensions of time are conflated into the present singular moment.¹²⁷ Kermode addresses the state of crisis in relation to apocalyptic moments in his fourth chapter: *The Modern Apocalypse*. This chapter draws on seminal texts from the Renaissance, such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. Despite this chapter being written about Renaissance tragedy and crisis in dramatic works, it can be applied to Dante's work as in many ways Dante prefigures Renaissance thinking and literary trends.¹²⁸

One of the ways in which "we try give some kind of order and design to the past, the present and the future,"¹²⁹ is through the linkage of literature and human existence through crisis. Crisis is a necessary and inescapable element in our making sense of the world. Yoked with the notion of crisis is the eschatological anxiety and terror induced by our creation of the fictional image of the end. Anxiety is associated with changing images, which reflect the image of the end, as inherently this anxiety attaches itself to any eschatological means available to it. Augustine describes the condition of anxiety and terror in *Confessions*: "the moments we call

¹²⁷ Kermode, pp. 50-58.

¹²⁸ Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, p. 85.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 93. (quoting Erich Auerbach)

crises are ends and beginnings.”¹³⁰ Apocalyptic instances occur more frequently at the end of temporal epochs. Humankind creates fictional narratives pertaining to the eschatological end. Fictional images of the end are created in order to impose a sense of order onto the endless expanse of time. The creation of these fictional images of the end also give meaning to the endless duration of time and existence.¹³¹ They are demarcations of time in the vast expanse of time. Time, and the passage of time, is therefore, very closely linked to crisis. In order to give meaning to the expanse of time which we inhabit, humans tend to crisis as moments of survival. Crisis is an inescapably central element in our endeavours of making sense of the world. The human condition is to create crises so that we have a sense of satisfaction and meaning imposed onto the temporal order of the world in such that we can say that we have lived through the crisis, which then gives meaning to our lives retrospectively.¹³² Kermode states that: “When we survive, we make little images of moments which have seemed like ends; we thrive on epochs.”¹³³ In *Inferno* I, Dante-poet imposes a sense of crisis on the image of himself in the past, in the form of Dante-pilgrim disorientated in the *selva oscura*. The poem starts with the pilgrim lost in the wood, with no memory of how he came to be there. This is the personal crisis of the poet, expounded upon by the indirect apostrophe to the reader to the universal level, presented in the narrative form. As Kermode has noted, the sense of crisis is inherently yoked with apocalyptic instances.¹³⁴ The opening lines of the poem are not apocalyptic in the traditional sense, termed by John Collins, but are apocalyptic in the way in which they configure the dimensions of the poetic narrative which is to follow. The sense of crisis and the imposition of a temporal event onto the landscape, which takes the form of the *selva oscura*,

¹³⁰ Ibid, pp. 93-96.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 94.

¹³² Kermode, pp. 94-97.

¹³³ Ibid, p. 7.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 144.

creates a pocket of time and space in which these dimensions of fundamental human existence are obscured in the narrative.

This crisis of *Inferno* I gives meaning to the expanse of time in Dante-poet's life in exile from Florence. Some readings of the *selva oscura* have suggested that the forest and the state in which the pilgrim finds himself in the forest, are allegorically connected to Dante's psychological state and the state of humanity during his exile from his beloved city. Lino Pertile argues that: "Dante's crisis is the crisis of the whole world around him; of he found himself lost in the dark forest it is because the whole world, deprived of its leaders, has, like him, gone astray. But if he can be saved, the whole world can, too ... this intuition is so overwhelming that Dante abandons all his previous literary projects: what is at stake now is the salvation of the world."¹³⁵ It is after the completion of the journey and the poem, that Dante-pilgrim-poet can say that he found redemption through the grace of God as "*giaolgeva il [suo] disio e 'l velle*."¹³⁶ The journey which Dante undertakes is a central part, both literally as he embarks on the journey "*nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*,"¹³⁷ and figuratively, as it occupies a central position in his psyche. It is also for this reason, that humanity had wandered from "*la dritta via*,"¹³⁸ that he decides to pen his *magnum opus*. The isolation of this moment in the middle of Dante's life symbolically reflects the liminal space between earthly time and the eternal time which God possesses, and is simultaneously the mid-point in the earthly life of the poet and his Biblically allotted "three score and ten" as the duration of his earthly years.¹³⁹

In sum: the *kairos* and *chronos* are two dimensions of earthly time explored by Frank Kermode. "Within human time one can distinguish between the *chronos* of mere successiveness and the *kairos* of high days and holidays, times or seasons that stand out...as

¹³⁵Pertile, p. 57.

¹³⁶ *Par.*, XXXIII. 143.

¹³⁷ *Inf.*, I. 1.

¹³⁸ *Inf.*, I. 3.

¹³⁹ Psalms 90.10.

belonging to a different temporal order.”¹⁴⁰ This distinction and elevation of one moment above others is a common feature of apocalyptic narratives. This isolation of a specific moment from the general successiveness of ordinary temporal progressiveness gestures toward the apocalyptic qualities of *Inferno*, from the onset of the poem. In addition to subtly conveying the apocalyptic undertone of the poem, the opening line contributes toward the notion of perverse time and the manipulation of time which is a prominent feature of the infernal landscape.

The distortion of earthly time in the liminal space of the *selva oscura* can be viewed as an instance which prefigures the apocalyptic concerns of the rest of the canticle and the apocalyptic genre which Dante is aware of when writing. The fundamental human dimensions of time and space are distorted in the *selva oscura*, and this distortion creates an apocalyptic space. The dark wood is removed from recognisable human activity and isolated from reality. It is situated outside of linear corporeal time and space. This wilderness acts as a plausible opening to the eternal timeframe in which the rest of the narrative is set. It is an allegorical image that allows Dante to explore apocalyptic themes in his narrative without the plausibility of the fiction being compromised. The wilderness also allegorically acts as one of the first apocalyptic instances in the poem as it is a state between the corporeal time and the eternal time of God; a time in which the facets of time are conflated. In the time of the *aevum* the weight of the future, coupled with the anxieties of the future and the eschatological end are transposed into the present moment.

The wilderness is a place that resembles the physical realm, yet it is in fact a territory situated between that of the material and physical, and the ethereal. The *selva oscura* is not completely within the realms of the corporeal as it is in the forest that Dante encounters the preternatural, which is embodied by the soul of Virgil and the three beasts which block Dante's

¹⁴⁰ Kermode, p. 192.

path. The transition from the corporeal into the spatial equivalent of the *aevum* is more clearly signalled when Dante enters into *Inferno* guided by Virgil.

In addition to being held out of the human spatial dimension, the dark wood is located outside of the tellurian temporal reality. It is a liminal space, this time in the horizontal direction of graphic representation of the two dimensions of apocalypse. It is a space situated between the realm of men and the stationary realm of the eternal, a liminal region between mankind and the divine. Apocalypse transpires in a space *in medias res*, in which the boundaries between the divine and the physical, and the literal and symbolic are disrupted. The dark wood is a constructed place that is not governed by our understanding of time – it is a divine, supernatural space in which there is some concept of time yet not the same as the physical understanding of the temporal present in the reality of the world of Dante the pilgrim. The allegory of the *selva oscura* is necessarily obscure and indeterminable. The context in which the pilgrim finds himself does not simply reflect the inner state of the pilgrim, but rather gestures toward the apocalyptic dimension. The wood is clearly an allegorical image as it yokes together the eternal dimension of time and historical, earthly time.

The language of the opening lines of the epic poem is in itself apocalyptic. Words such as 'dark' and 'obscured' are words of veiling, they mask an instance. Yet while being words that semantically obscure something, they gesture towards an unveiling of some sort, toward a prophetic understanding that is to come. Semantically ingrained in the words is the act of unveiling of something that is currently obscure which echoes the revelation associated with apocalypse. The act of unveiling is apocalyptic because of the power of prophecy which is traditionally associated with apocalypse. This is juxtaposed with terms such as 'straight' and 'true'. The juxtaposition of these terms creates a tension between the obscured and the lucid. The language and the choice of words at the onset of the poem prepare the reader for the apocalyptic imaginings of the rest of the poem.

Dante's Three Beasts

In the opening canto, Dante-pilgrim encounters three beasts on his attempt to climb “*un colle giunto*,”¹⁴¹:

Ed ecco, quasi al cominciar de l'erta,	31
una lonza leggera e presta molto,	
che di pel macolato era converta;	
e non mi si partia dinanzi al volto,	34
anzi 'mpediva tanto il mio cammino,	
ch'i' fui pper ritornar più volte vòlto.	
Temp' era dal principio del mattino,	37
e 'l sol montava 'n sù con quelle stelle	
ch'eran con lui quando l'amore divino	
mosse di prima quelle cose belle;	40
sì ch'a bene sperar m'era cagione	
di quella fiera a le gaetta pelle	
l'ora del tempo e la dolce stagione;	43
ma non sì che paura non mi disse	
la vista che m'apparve d'un leone.	
Questi pareva che contra me venisse	46
Con la test' alta e con rabbiose fame,	

¹⁴¹ *Inf.*, I. 13.

sì che pareva che l'aere ne tremesse.

Ed una lupa, che di tutte brame 49

Sembiava carca ne la sua magrezza

e molte genti fé già viver grame,

questa mi porse tanto di gravezza 52

con la paura ch'uscita di sua vista

ch'io perdei la speranza de l'altezza.¹⁴²

The *lonza*, the *leone*, and the *lupa* of Canto I have often been the subject of allegorical interpretation, and there exists an expanse of literature around the significance of these figures. Freccero claims the origins of the images of the beasts to be from Jeremiah 5:6,¹⁴³ in which three beasts: a lion, a leopard, and a wolf, bring death and destruction to the faithless. Among both modern and older critics there exists a debate around the allegorical reading of Dante's beasts. They clearly have some sort of allegorical significance, but the exact meaning of the beasts has never been agreed upon among Dante scholars. Older interpretations of the figures suggest that they are the allegorical representations of the sins of lust, pride, and avarice. Modern critics suggest that the three beasts signify the three regions of Hell, allegorical embodiment of the Medieval allegories of *malizia*, *forza*, and *frode*,¹⁴⁴ reflecting the regions of lower Hell, explained to Dante-pilgrim by Virgil before they enter the infernal City of Dis. Charles Williams and Dorothy Sayers relate the sins to the beasts in the order in which they appear on the slope, thus the *lonza* allegorically reflects the sin of *malizia*, the *leone* embodies *forza*, and the *lupa* encapsulates *frode*. Charles Grandgent and Charles Singleton map the

¹⁴² *Inf.*, I. 31-54.

¹⁴³ Freccero, p. 10.

¹⁴⁴ *Inf.*, XI. 22-4.

allegorical association of the beasts with the sins of lower Hell in the reverse order.¹⁴⁵ John Freccero, another renowned Dante critic, suggests a psychologically allegorical interpretation of the beasts which bar Dante's journey. Freccero suggests they should be interpreted as manifestations of the inward state of Dante-pilgrim's soul at the time of him attempting the journey. The beasts are visions of the lower soul or *affectus*, "the basic wounds to the rational, irascible [easily angered] and concupiscent [lustful] appetites suffered by all men as a result of the fall."¹⁴⁶ They are visions of bodily desires presented through psychological allegorical representation. It is through Adam's transgression that the prelapsarian state of man was transformed into the state of sin.¹⁴⁷ In sum: there are two schools of interpretation of the allegorical significance of the beasts of *Inferno* I: the interpretation of the beasts and manifestations of externalised sin, and on the other hand the interpretation of the beasts as visions of the state of the interior soul of Dante-pilgrim.

Sally Mussetter suggests a third interpretation of the significance of the lion, the leopard, and the she-wolf. She reads the beasts through the lens of trinitarian allegory. In her reading of the beasts, Mussetter suggests that the beasts collectively represent the whole soul.¹⁴⁸ Mussetter also suggests that if we are to read the beasts in a trinitarian approach they would therefore symbolise the circle of the violent, represented by the *leone*, the *lupa* for the circles of the incontinent and the *lonza* for the circles of the fraudulent, as they have been identified on the hillside of the *regio dissimilitudinis*.¹⁴⁹ Following this gloss of the beasts, images of the future narrative for Dante-pilgrim are brought into the present-time of the narrative of Canto I. The beasts serve as foreshadows and are temporal anomalies in the opening canto, as the narrative future is brought into the present moment at the outset of the narrative.

¹⁴⁵ Mussetter, p. 39.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 39. (quoting from Freccero in "Dante's Prologue Scene" p. 10.)

¹⁴⁷ Freccero, p. 10.

¹⁴⁸ Mussetter, p. 49.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 50.

In 2005, Gervase Rosser suggested a new interpretation of the allegorical significance of the three beasts Dante encounters. Rosser advocates a temporal reading of the three beasts. He claims the primary allegorical significance of the three beasts of the *regio dissimilitudinis* is the Ages of Man. It is important to note that the Ages of Man signified here is different to the Ages of Man allegorical recalled in the statue of the Old Man of Crete. With the figures of the beasts of the *selva oscura*, “the journeying pilgrim, in the middle of his life’s journey, is abruptly halted by the appearance of these brutal reminders of the impotence of human action in the face of the ravages of time: past youth, present maturity, and old age to come.”¹⁵⁰ The Ages of Man alluded to by the three beasts are past youth, present maturity, the state in which Dante-pilgrim finds himself, and old age, which is the future time. He concludes his article stating that the inclusion of the temporal barriers faced by Dante-pilgrim which are embodied by the three beasts frame the *Commedia* as containing a central argument “about the existential problems of human life.”¹⁵¹ Thus, following this temporal reading of the three beasts and the way in which these implication frame the narrative, the *Commedia* is an exploration of human existence and its encounter with the divine eternal, timeless state.¹⁵²

In his article, Rosser is acutely aware of the conventional interpretations of the beasts put forward by critics such as Robert Hollander and Charles Singleton. It is this conventional reading of their allegorical significances that leads the “modern reader...to understand...the *Divine Comedy* as...a tale of moral dangers and the need to overcome them.”¹⁵³ It is in this regard that I believe Rosser to be aware of the over simplification of Dante’s allegory and its possible significances which cannot be isolated to a single significance as the nature of Medieval allegory is inherently multifarious. Rosser is also aware that a temporal reading of

¹⁵⁰ Gervase Rosser, *Turning Tale into Vision: Time and the Image in the “Divina Commedia.”* (Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics, 48, Permanent/Impermanent, The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Autumn, 2005), p. 107.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 122.

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 108.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 107.

the beasts “by no means exhausts Dante’s intentions for the beasts.”¹⁵⁴ Rosser suggests that “their primary significance is...the passage of time: the mundane temporal order from where there can be no escape for mortals unless by the true direction of sight, leading to a visionary understanding, which operates outside time. Hence the assault by the beasts requires the intervention of the patron of sight [Virgil].”¹⁵⁵

Guglielmo Gorni suggests that the three beasts echo the trinitarian symbolism of the figure of Lucifer, possessing three heads, chewing on three sinners. Allegorically, they can be interpreted as emblems of Dis, living representations of Satan. The trinitarian symbolism of the beasts mimics the multiplicity of the Trinity, in the same way Lucifer parodies the Trinity. They are “*un’ incarnazione vivente del Male*.”¹⁵⁶ This reading of the beasts aligns with the interpretation of the beasts as the physical manifestations of the sins of lust, pride, and avarice which Dante must overcome in order to continue his journey.

Dante’s allegory is elusive in nature and the meaning of allegorical emblems cannot be restricted to a single significance. As I have demonstrated above, even among distinguished scholars of Dante, there is disagreement and many facets of interpretation of the allegorical significance of the beasts of *Inferno* I. The beasts contribute toward the scene and the threatening ambiance of the *selva oscura*, and their numerous possible allegorical interpretations which I have discussed above emphasise the apocalyptic animus which is found in *Inferno*. It is their indeterminate meaning and the myriad of possible interpretations that creates the apocalyptic mood of the canticle. Indeed, the apocalyptic emphasis of *Inferno* is prefigured by the entire introductory canto. The beasts also contribute toward the casting of the *selva oscura* in light of the *regio dissimilitudinis*, not of Augustine, but in the sense of unlikeness, as ambiguous images of the beasts serve to create a sense of disjuncture between

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 108.

¹⁵⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁵⁶ Gorni, p. 90.

the landscape and our reading of it. The ambiguity in meaning of allegorical emblems is a feature of narratives belonging to the apocalyptic genre. In a narratological sense, the beasts also embody the threatening landscape which necessitates Virgil's interruption of the narrative, and his explanation of his role as guide to the human pilgrim who will travel through the underworld.

The tale of the journey into the afterlife is told retrospectively. Dante has knowledge of the entire journey and its experience, from his position at the end of the journey. This knowledge of hindsight gives Dante the ability to situate himself in the midst of the present moment of the narrative. From his vantage point, "Nel mezzo del cammin"¹⁵⁷, he possesses the ability to view the past, the narrative present and the future, all of which is past at the time in which Dante-poet is writing the narrative. The opening of the *Inferno* situates the poet in the middle of his life. This is obvious from a primary reading of the first line and has been previously discussed in this study. Rosser suggests that the modern critic should take the opening line of the poem, with its temporal significances and signposts, into consideration when analysing the *lonza*, the *leone*, and the *lupa*. The allusion of Dante's first line to the verse of Prophet Isaiah,¹⁵⁸ invokes the grand narrative of Christian history unfolding through time. Also implicit in the opening line is the secular epic of the *Aeneid*, which is neoplatonically associated with the journey of life. In effect, the inclusion of these two allusions bring the temporal aspect of interpretation to the fore before the appearance of the beasts in the narrative. As the allegory of the *selva oscura* primes the reader to notice the apocalyptic dimension, the three beasts should be read mindful of their allegorical apocalyptic significance. Reading the figures in this manner contains multifarious interpretations and meanings of the beasts.

¹⁵⁷ *Inf.*, I. 1.

¹⁵⁸ "In dimidio dierum meorum vadam ad portas inferi" – "I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave." Is. XXXVIII:10. As quoted by Rosser in *Turning Tale into Vision*, p. 107.

In sum: the allegorical significances of the three beast Dante-pilgrim encounters on the mountain of Canto 1 is deliberately obfuscated and without textual evidence as to the possible meanings of the figures. Their Biblical associations contribute toward an apocalyptic reading of the scene but do not limit their significances to solely an apocalyptic reading or to an interpretation of the beasts as embodiments of the sins of *incontinenza*, *forza*, and *frode*, which was dominate in past Dante scholarship. Dante's allegory, specifically in relation to the three beasts which prevent Dante-pilgrim from ascending toward God, is of indeterminate meaning, although their apocalyptic significances associated with the transitions of the state of man are indicated. In their emphasis on an apocalyptic reading of the *Inferno*, the three beasts progress past only allegorical significances in the narrative and take on an apocalyptic animus which is found in other figures throughout the *Inferno*. The multifarious and indeterminate allegorical meanings of the beasts contribute toward the apocalyptic reading as the apocalyptic genre is inherently of indefinable nature. The *lonza*, *leone*, and *lupa* create a sense of disjuncture between the landscape and our interpretations of it. At the same time, the beasts serve to emphasise the apocalyptic *aevum*-like space, which is created in the *selva oscura*, in which meaning, and time and space are distorted.

Virgil's *Veltro*

The majority of Dante's allegorical historical references are in his contemporary past. However, at various instances in *Inferno*, Dante projects his allegorical vision onto the historical future. One such instance is found in the first canto in Virgil's prophecy of the *veltro* which will come to unite the Italian peninsula:

Vedi la bestia per cu' io mi volsi;
aiutami da lei, famoso saggio,
ch'ella mi fa tremar le vene e i polsi.”

88

“A te convien tenere altro viaggio,” 91
rispuose, poi che lagrimar mi vide,
“se vuo' campar d'esto loco selvaggio;
ché questa bestia, per la qual tu gride, 94
non lascia altrui passar per la sua via,
ma tanto lo 'mpedisce che l'uccide;
e ha natura sì malvagia e ria, 97
che mai non empie la bramosa voglia,
e dopo 'l pasto ha più fame che pria.
Molti son li animali a cui s'ammoglia, 100
e più saranno ancora, infin che 'l veltro
verrà, che la farà morir con doglia.
Questi non ciberà terra né peltro, 103
ma sapienza, amore e virtute,
e sua nazione sarà tra feltro e feltro.
Di quella umile Italia fia salute 106
per cui morì la vergine Cammilla,
Eurialo e Turno e Niso di ferute.¹⁵⁹

Narratives of the apocalyptic genre frequently contain prophecy.¹⁶⁰ Prophecy in apocalyptic narratives is traditionally *ex eventu* prophecy, which is a type of prophecy of the past.¹⁶¹ It is discussed by both John Collins and the scholars of the Semeia 14 study, and Frank Kermode, *Ex eventu* prophecy is prophecy of a time already past, retold in narrative form. Virgil's

¹⁵⁹ *Inf.*, I. 88-112.

¹⁶⁰ Collins, *The Jewish Apocalypses*, p. 25.

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

prophecy of a figure coming to unite Italy can be interpreted in two ways, which I will discuss below.

Barbara Reynolds suggests Virgil's *veltro* could refer to a number of figures: Emperor Henry VII, Can Grande della Scala, or Christ in his Second Coming, or possibly even Dante himself.¹⁶² The historical figures of Can Grande della Scala, Emperor Henry VII, and Dante are figures in the contemporary history of Dante. They existed at the time in which he wrote. As Reynolds explores in her book, *Dante: The Poet, the Political Thinker, the Man*, they made political and warfare attempts to unite regions of Italy and defuse the politics of the time.¹⁶³ It is therefore possible that Dante-poet would have interpreted these figures as apocalyptic figures in their transformative qualities creating an image of an eschaton. The figure of Christ, in his second coming is inherently apocalyptic in nature and is explored in the books of the New Testament. However, what is important to note here is that these figures are figures who bring about apocalyptic change, in this case creating social transitions and political stability.

Regardless of the fulfilment of Virgil's prophecy, the figure about which he prophesises is an image of an end and introduces an element of apocalyptic transformation and change. The *veltro* is an allegorical figure which looks toward an eschaton in history. The figure will symbolically triumph over the three beasts which bar Dante-pilgrim's path and strive for a united Italian peninsula. It is a symbolic figure with Christological significance as it looks toward the Second Coming of Christ, yet the prophecy is unclear as to what this figure is.

Virgil's *veltro* can be interpreted as being a historical figure from the contemporary lifetime of Dante-poet, or it can be interpreted as Dante-poet's projected hopes onto the future

¹⁶² Barbara Reynolds, *Dante: The poet, the Political Thinker, the Man*. (Shoemaker Hoard. Emeryville, CA., 2006), p. 118.

¹⁶³ Ibid, p. 119.

- Dante's projection of a future eschaton, an image of the end onto which Dante places apocalyptic significances.

The Gran Veglio

One of the most memorable figures the poets encounter in Hell is the Old Man of Crete. This figure is an allegorical image which brings Biblical mythology, temporal history, and apocalyptic resonances to the fore in Canto XIV. Dante's image of the Old Man of Crete is associated with a Biblical apocalyptic narrative and recalls the figure in Nebuchadnezzar's dream presented in the Book of Daniel, in the Old Testament. The Book of Daniel forms part of the apocalyptic texts which are explored by the Semeia 14 study. This association of Dante's Canto XIV with a widely accepted apocalyptic Biblical text further links Dante's narrative with the genre of apocalyptic literature. While this association is clear, the allegorical and apocalyptic significances of Dante's Old Man of Crete are rendered obscure, especially when considered in relation to its placement in the eternal-infernal context of Hell.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and Daniel's Interpretation

In the Book of Daniel, the significance of the divine mystery presented to King Nebuchadnezzar is given to Daniel. Daniel interprets the dream-vision experienced by the King, revealing that the dream is a disguised prophecy about the kingdoms to come and the fall of these kingdoms, which gradually decline in social and political cohesion.¹⁶⁴ In this narrative, the figure of Daniel acts an intermediary between King Nebuchadnezzar and God. It is widely accepted that Daniel is a prophet and is therefore a traditionally interpretative and intermediary figure between the divine and earthly realms. The Book of Daniel is one of the founding texts of the apocalyptic genre and follows the convention of the genre, as discussed in the Semeia 14 study.¹⁶⁵ Another central element to the Book of Daniel is its allegory. The narrative and

¹⁶⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁵ Collins, *The Jewish Apocalypses*, pp. 21-59. This narrative contains defining feature of the apocalyptic genre such as an intermediary figure, prophecy, dream-vision, revelation of divine mysteries, discourse, and eschatological vision. "Most significantly Daniel 2 includes a dream-vision and allegorical interpretation with an eschatological conclusion in which 'the God of heaven will establish a kingdom which will never be

the vignettes contained within the narrative have widely been accepted as allegories. Dante's association with the Book of Daniel, through the use of similar literary images and figures, foregrounds the allegorical significances of Dante's *Gran Veglio*.

The vision presented to King Nebuchadnezzar in his dream is an allegorical image. Contained within the vision is the figure of the statue comprised of various metals: "the head is pure gold, the chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay."¹⁶⁶ The statue is then struck by a rock, which was not made by human hands and is destroyed, and nothing of it is left. The rock which struck the statue becomes "a huge mountain and fills the whole earth."¹⁶⁷ The allegorical significance of this figure interpreted by Daniel is the declining ages and kingdoms to come. It is a prophetic dream-vision in which the visionary looks toward a future time, and towards a definitive transition and a definitive eschaton. The narrative contains a temporal contrast between the past and the present, and the future.¹⁶⁸ It is a narrative set in the past/present and looks toward the future. The statue of various materials allegorically symbolises the future ages which are yet to come. The vision of Nebuchadnezzar also looks to the heavenly world and brings the earthly world into contact with the divine realm. This quality renders it apocalyptic as apocalyptic narratives are built on two axes: the temporal realm and the spatial axis – the narrative contains temporal contrast between the past/present and the future and intersection between the earthly world and the heavenly.¹⁶⁹

Dante's *Gran Veglio*

Dante uses the imagery and the allegorical significance of the figure from Nebuchadnezzar's dream as inspiration for his *gran veglio* of Canto XIV. The encounter the poets have with the

destroyed.” However, as Collins demonstrates in this study, this apocalypse does not contain an other-worldly journey. It does, however, contain a historical apocalypse which is related to historic crises of the Jewish people.

¹⁶⁶ Daniel, 2:31-34.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 35-36.

¹⁶⁸ Collins, pp. 30, 35.

¹⁶⁹ Ibidem.

allegorical statue is enigmatic and it contains multifarious significances without the possibility of unequivocal allegoric meaning:

Dentro dal monte sta dritto un gran veglio, 103

che tien volte le spalle inver' Dammiata

e Roma guarda come s'io specchio.

La sua testa è di fin oro formata, 106

e puro argento son le braccia e 'l petto,

poi è di rame infinto a la forcata;

da indi in guiso è tutto ferro eletto, 109

salvo che 'l destro piede è terra cotta;

E sta 'n su quell, più che 'n su l'altro, eretto.

Ciascuna parte, fuor che l'oro, è rotta 112

d'una fessura che lagrime goccia,

le quali, accolte, fòran quella grotta.¹⁷⁰

This obscure figure contains the origins of the four rivers of the underworld. It is this fact that John Stark suggests gestures toward the importance of the allegorical figure in *Inferno*: from the statue's imperfect parts flow water that is the source of the four rivers of Hell.¹⁷¹ Dante's Old Man of Crete recalls the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar which is found in the Book of Daniel,¹⁷² a canonised apocalyptic narrative. The association of Dante's Old Man of Crete with a significant apocalyptic text from the Biblical canon brings the genre of the apocalyptic

¹⁷⁰ *Inf.*, XIV. 103-114.

¹⁷¹ John Stark, *The Old Man of Crete*, ("Forum Italicum: A Journal of Italian Studies" 2003, Accessed: 23 June 2016), p. 12.

¹⁷² Daniel, 2: 31-36.

narrative to the fore in Dante's reconstructed image of the apocalyptic figure of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Richard Dawkins suggests that the apocalyptic vision of the eschaton found in the Book of Daniel is only one possible source of the origins of Dante's Old Man of Crete. He suggests that Classical sources would have also provided inspiration for Dante in the creation of his figure. He claims that the state of Crete is the centre of the Classical Pagan world (as opposed to the Christian centre of Jerusalem) and therefore a fitting source of the lakes and rivers of the world.¹⁷³ As the Biblical association of the Old Man of Crete with the Nebuchadnezzar's dream is an association with an apocalyptic narrative, it is the most important allegorical interpretation for the purposes of this study. However, the apocalyptic resonances of the statue are also gestured toward by the indeterminant and indefinite allegory, which is a feature of narratives of the apocalyptic genre. It has also been suggested, by M. A. Mason, that Dante takes his description of the Old Man of Crete from Book Three of Virgil's *Aeneid*. In addition to this classical text, Dante could have also drawn inspiration from the opening of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which the description of the Golden age of Saturn is given. Mason agrees that the Bible, in combination with the *Metamorphoses* are the chief elements in the origins of the figure.¹⁷⁴

Through its association with the Biblical statue, we can claim that the allegory of Dante's figure points toward the declining ages of man, represented as a composite image, presented to the reader against the eternal backdrop of the infernal landscape. Thus, it brings the historic ages of man, earthly history, into contact with the eternal time of the divine. In addition to the figure housing the contact point of the divine with historical time, it houses the entire expanse of human history in one figure, bringing the expanse of earthly history into

¹⁷³ R. M. Dawkins, *The 'Gran Veglio' of "Inferno XIV"* (Medium Aevum, Vol. 2. No. 2, Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, June 1933), pp. 95-107.

¹⁷⁴ M. A. Mason, *A Journey Through Hell: Dante's "Inferno" Re-visited: Fragments of Power-Canto XIV* ("The Cambridge Quarterly" vol. 21. No. 1, Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 13.

contact with infernal eternity. The association of Dante's *gran veglio* and the Book of Daniel also associates Dante with an earlier stage in human history: bringing the past into the narrative present. Facets of the historic literary past, are also brought into contact with the divine timescape of *Inferno* XIV.

Inherent in this allegorical process is the turning toward literary history for inspiration. Dante has taken a Biblical image presented in a dream vision and revised its meaning without losing the nuance of its Biblical significance. However, Dante also develops the allegorical nature of his figure through its presentation against the backdrop of eternity. Dante's Old Man of Crete recalls an apocalyptic instance in Christian apocalyptic narrative history.

Simultaneously present in the figure of the *gran veglio* is a revision of history. Dante has symbolically represented the epochs of historical time in a survey of the historical landscape, with its culmination of a disintegrated society of the *terra cotta* foot. Robin Kirkpatrick states that on the surface, the statue is concerned with diagnosis of historical decline.¹⁷⁵ A review of history is a common feature of apocalyptic narratives in addition to an other-worldly journey.¹⁷⁶ This review of history brings the entire expanse of the historical time of man into contact with the eternal realm.

The apocalyptic quality of Dante's figure is derived from the allegorical representation of the eras of corporeal time conflated into a composite image, and its presentation in the eternal timescape. The statue is placed in an elevated supernatural space which allows the expanse of historical time to be viewed through the lens of the eternal from the human perspective of Dante-pilgrim.

At the apex of the statue, both literally and allegorically, is the golden age of man, the age man inhabited before the fall of man from grace. The head of the statue "[a] *Roma guarda*

¹⁷⁵ Kirkpatrick, *Narrative, Myth and the Individual*, p. 164.

¹⁷⁶ Collins, *The Jewish Apocalypses*, p. 23.

come s'io specchio,"¹⁷⁷ which contains two symbolic significances. The first is that Rome can be the birthplace of civilization, society, and thought, and the second is the allegorical image of the Old Man of Crete allegorically reflects the future state of Rome, which is synonymous with the Vatican and the Pope and therefore, religion and the state of religion in Late Medieval Italy. Benvenuto da Imola,¹⁷⁸ an early commentator of Dante, supports this reading of the significance of the *gran veglio* facing Rome: "*Tenet terga vesus Babloniam in oriente.*"¹⁷⁹ The statue of the Old Man represents both the potential of human civilization (he, after all did have a golden age) and that civilization's current degenerate state."¹⁸⁰ From this golden age, at the zenith of humankind's existence, the state of man deteriorates until the clay foot and age is reached. The arms and chest of the statue is unalloyed silver, untainted by other metal but not as valuable or as precious as the gold head. The torso of the statue is constructed from bronze, an alloy of silver and copper, after which follows the legs of iron. One of the feet is made from clay and is crumbling, which allegorically signifies the disintegrating current state of mankind in Dante's contemporary time. Dawkins claims that Dante commentators are agreed that the Old Man of Crete suggests the whole history of the human race from the golden age down to Dante's time.¹⁸¹ However, apart from the association of Dante's Old Man of Crete with the figure from Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's interpretation of its significance, there is little textual evidence from Dante's poem to support this reading. There is also little textual evidence from Dante's poem to connect his figure of the *gran veglio* to the figure from Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The connection is only made by the reader because Dante's figure resembles the Biblical, but there exists no textual evidence in their association. The symbolism of the Old Man of Crete is elusive and obscure, without definite meaning. One of its possible

¹⁷⁷ *Inf.*, XIV. 105.

¹⁷⁸ 1320-1388

¹⁷⁹ Dawkins, p. 96.

¹⁸⁰ Stark, p. 9.

¹⁸¹ Dawkins, p. 96.

meanings could be it houses a representation of the ages of man but there is no textual evidence to support this. The figure is encountered by Dante-pilgrim and Virgil in the eternal landscape and is presented to readers without indication of how its significance should be gleaned or extrapolated. There are numerous plausible readings of the allegorical significances of the statue, the most popular of which are discussed below, but these cannot be conclusively accepted as constituting the complete allegorical meaning of the *gran veglio*.

Benvenuto da Imola also claims the foot of clay allegorical signifies the church.¹⁸² John Stark supports this reading of the statue suggesting that reference to the two cities of Rome and Damietta supports the claim that the *terra cotta* foot of the statue represents the Church and the other, iron foot represents the state.¹⁸³ In the 19th Century, Dante commentators Giulio Vaccheri and Cosimo Bertacchi,¹⁸⁴ gloss the Old Man of Crete as allegorically representing the “different elements which make up humanity, irrespective of time,”¹⁸⁵ and do not concur with the chronological allegorical interpretation of the statue taken up by other commentators. As Dawkins states: “The head of gold Vaccheri and Bertacchi take to mean learning, science; the silver of the arms and breast are the creative qualities of power and will ; the brass of the trunk symbolizes the affections and desires of men; the iron represents the senses and the two feet are the civil and religious aspects of man's life.”¹⁸⁶

M. A. Mason glosses Dante's Old Man of Crete as a failed literary image. “The disagreements over the allegorical explanation of the Old Man of Crete are *prima facie* evidence that Dante has failed to create an organic whole, a centre of power, and that the allegorical emblem has failed. A disjuncture exists between the emblem and the

¹⁸² Ibidem.

¹⁸³ Stark, p. 6.

¹⁸⁴ Giulio Vaccheri, Cosimo Bertacchi, *Il Gran Veglio del Monte Ida tradotto nel sens morale della Divina Commedia*, (Torino. 1877) (As referred to by Dawkins)

¹⁸⁵ Dawkins, p. 97.

¹⁸⁶ Ibidem.

significance.”¹⁸⁷ This lack of consensus among critics suggest that Dante's has failed to create an organic whole in symbolic meaning. I partially agree with this view of the figure of the Old Man of Crete. The figure of Dante's Old Man of Crete is an obscure allegorical image. Critics have agreed that the allegorical significance is related to humanity, but any significance beyond that is contested, opaque, and inaccessible (although many have tried to explain its significance). The Old Man of Crete which the poets encounter is a deliberately obscure figure, with numerous possible origins and, more importantly, multifarious allegorical significances. It is this multifarious platforms of meaning which I believe Dante wants to bring to attention of his readers, as the nature of apocalyptic narratives and allegory in apocalyptic genres is inherently ambiguous and obfuscated. Biblical narratives concerned with apocalypticism traditionally emphasize two views: the historical, spatio-temporal, element and the vertical, aspect, relating to God and the divine. Narratives which emphasize the historical view comprise of elements representing the eschatological view of time and history.¹⁸⁸ If we take the canonised and widely accepted meaning of the statue to represented the declining ages of man, to be but one of the possible interpretations of the allegorical symbolism of the Old Man of Crete; then the historical apocalypticism of Biblical narratives is made manifest in Dante's narrative, with its obscure symbolic nature. Dante-poet, here, has deliberately created an obscure image in order to bring the apocalyptic quality of both his allegory and his text to the fore. The Old Man of Crete is an apocalyptic figure, not because it could present the expanse of human history in contact with the divine eternal, but because this allegorical significance cannot be sustained at every level. The allegorical obscurity and the multifaceted symbolic significances of the figure is an apocalyptic trope.

¹⁸⁷ Mason, p. 12.

¹⁸⁸ Collins, *The Jewish Apocalypses*, pp. 21-22.

Concluding Comments and Dante's Apocalyptic Allegory

In this chapter, I have shown that Dante's allegory does not follow any existing allegorical pattern or mode of interpretation. Dante's allegory is not easily interpreted and does not follow a particular allegorical mode, it follows neither the 'allegory of the poets' nor the 'allegory of the theologians.' An apocalyptic reading of Dante's allegory accounts for this in its obscure nature. The apocalyptic quality of the allegory Dante creates is that it inherently ambiguous and deliberately obscure. Dante's allegory can be said to draw on Biblical allegory expounded upon in the anagogical sense so that the event or figure can be viewed from the eternal perspective. In this chapter I have explored the allegory of the *selva oscura*, the three beasts of Canto I, the *veltro* of Virgil's prophecy, and Dante's *gran veglio* of Canto XIV. Apocalyptic instances frequently develop along the spatial and temporal axes, presenting a distorted vision of reality.¹⁸⁹ In addition to bring the temporal historical world into contact with divine timelessness, Dante's allegory brings images of the past into the present moment and allows for poetic modification of the historical moment through the way in which they are re-presented to the reader.

The interpretation of the three beasts in the opening canto of *Inferno* is brought to the fore in an apocalyptic exegesis of the cantic. The three beasts contain multiple allegorical significances without one meaning elevated above another. They can be read as symbols of the narrative future, as well as emblems of sins which must be overcome, and a reflection of the internal state of the pilgrim. An exploration of the apocalyptic undertones of the *Inferno*, acknowledges these multifarious interpretations whilst not privileging one definite meaning.

Dante's allegory does not follow any existing allegorical pattern or mode of interpretation. The apocalyptic quality of the allegory Dante creates is that it inherently ambiguous and deliberately obscure. Dante's allegory in the *Inferno*, can be said to anagogical

¹⁸⁹ Ibidem.

in nature in its emphasis on divine elements as the image can be viewed in and from the eternal context in which it is presented to readers. Apocalyptic instances frequently develop along the spatial and temporal axes, presenting a distorted vision of reality.¹⁹⁰ In addition to bring the temporal historical world into contact with divine timelessness, Dante's allegory brings images of the past into the present moment and allows for poetic modification of historical moment through the way in which they are re-presented to the reader.

I have demonstrated how allegory contributes to Dante's apocalyptic imagination. Dante uses allegory as a poetic device in which he can revise and rewrite the historical past which he experienced. It is also a device which allows Dante to present a revision of Christian and Classical myths and mythological tropes. Temporal manipulations, on behalf of the reader and the author, is inherent in the allegorical process. In the interpretation of allegorical images, images are brought across temporal historical boundaries into the present moment of the reader. Images of the past and the future are brought into the present moment and images of the present are projected onto the future, as is the case with Virgil's *veltro* prophecy. In allegory, images and figures of the historical timescape are brought into contact with the eternal realm and can be considered from the eternal-divine perspective. Biblical imagery, such as the three beasts of the *selva oscura*, serve as associative poetic devices yoking Dante's poem with canonised apocalyptic narratives which predisposes Dante's reader to explore the *Inferno* through the lens of the apocalyptic. The allusive and obscure nature of the allegory which Dante employs in *Inferno* contributes toward the construction of his apocalyptic-poetic voice. The figures that readers find in *Inferno* are purposefully obfuscated and contain multifaceted opaque allegorical significances. It is the allegorical opacity which creates the apocalyptic animus of the text.

¹⁹⁰ Ibidem.

The *forma mentis mediaevalis* is one which understood literature as being allegorical in nature, and emblematically inviting allegoric interpretation. Dante employs a new kind of allegory in the *Inferno*, one which acknowledges the previous allegorical types and creates a new mode of reading and interpretation of his *Inferno*. This apocalyptic allegorical vision is of suggestion and of enigmatic allusion. Dante interprets historical events and patterns of history in the mode of allegoresis, rewriting history and historical events under the weight of the eternal and supernatural after-worlds.

I have shown that Dante's allegory, when read through the lens of the apocalyptic, is rendered opaque and without definite significance, yet with possible multifarious meanings. Dante's allegorical voice is a crucial part of his apocalyptic imagination. In the following chapter, I discuss the implications of an apocalyptic allegorical reading of the journey motif in which apocalyptic moments are created. The Neoplatonic journey of the allegory of the journey of the soul toward God is a fundamental conceit of Dante's journey narrative.

Chapter 4: The Journey Motif in Dante's Apocalyptic Imagination

Introduction to Chapter

Apocalyptic instances are presented within a journey. Dante melds the Neoplatonic understanding of the journey of the soul with Classical journey models which are drawn from the epic tradition. The coalescence of the Neoplatonic and the Classical affects Dante's representation of the temporal realm and the incarnation of this in the journey. Ultimately it is through the journey and the presentation of the journey in Dante's writing that the temporal realm is made manifest: we see time reflected in the journey.

Dante's presentation of the journey motif demonstrates theoretical definitions of time. *Inferno* contains elements of both Classical and Biblical journeys and Neoplatonic interpretations of the Classical epic journeys, and it is through the journey model that apocalyptic moments are made manifest in the narrative. Following the Neoplatonic conceit that the journey in literature allegorically recalls the journey of life and the journey of the soul back to God, the journey model tends toward an apocalyptic unification between the human and the divine. As the journey progresses, moments resembling this unification and apocalypse, are created. Thus, the journey model can be said to be a narrative form which houses the apocalyptic moment and contributes toward temporal conflation in the apocalyptic instance. The meeting point between the realms of history and eternity is further developed by the eternal perspective which must be gained by the human subject of the journey without losing sight of their human perspective. The historical must be experienced through the lens of the eternal perspective. The presence of an eschatological concern, in some form, in the journey also contributes toward the apocalyptic moment as it introduces a sense of anxiety for the subject which facilitates the creation of apocalyptic moments and opens the apocalyptic space.

Eschatological concerns are frequently presented by narratives of the apocalyptic genre.¹⁹¹ The eschaton in the journey also draws attention to the historical and eternal realms because the final eschaton is reflected as images of the end in the journey. The eschaton can be viewed as the transitional point between historical time and eternity.

In the journey the concept of time is foregrounded. The different permutations of the temporal realm and the understandings of this realm are made manifest as the journey progresses. The form of the journey narrative allows conceptions and representations of time to be presented within the narrative without disrupting the flow of the narrative. In Classical epic narratives we have the conception of time as both a circular and a linear entity. Dante uses Neoplatonic interpretations of the journey model presented by the *Aeneid* and the *Odyssey* in *Inferno* whilst maintaining a connection to the Classical representation of man in literature.¹⁹² Dante also uses Biblical models of the journey in the figurations of the journey motif in his first canticle, such as the epic journey of Exodus and the apocalyptic journey of direct assumption into the heavenly realm. In the *Inferno*, Dante presents readers with a marriage between Classical journeys in which time is presented as both linear and circular; and the Neoplatonic interpretation of Classical narratives. In the Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Odyssey*, time is understood as linear and the journey a return journey toward God, from whence humans came. Thus, we have the Pagan circular and linear journey models, and the Neoplatonic linear interpretations of the Classical narratives. In the journey, the boundaries between the earthly and the transcendental realm are blurred. This is particularly true of the epic journey motif. The preternatural realm permeates into the epic journey which configures apocalyptic instances. Dante-poet presents readers with Dante-pilgrim as the hero of both the linear-Aeneas model of the journey; and the eternal return, circular journey associated with

¹⁹¹ Collins, *The Jewish Apocalypses*, p. 21.

¹⁹² I am aware that Dante most probably did not encounter the *Odyssey*, but he would have been familiar with the narrative of Odysseus probably in the form of the *Aeneid*.

Odysseus in a linear journey toward God, reflecting the Neoplatonic journey of the soul. I will discuss the permutations of these models of the journey in this chapter.

Early Christian narratives, which are canonized as belonging to the genre of apocalyptic literature by the Semeia 14 study, frequently employ the journey motif. In most cases this journey is a journey to the afterlife or the otherworld.¹⁹³ I interpret this journey to the otherworld as a journey to the eternal spiritual realm in which diurnal and corporeal time does not exist in the same way as it does in history. The journey allows conceptions and representations of time, which are emblems of theories of time, to be presented in the narrative without distracting from the action of the narrative. Inherent in Dante's notion of the journey, as gestured toward in the famous opening lines of *Inferno*, is the idea that life is always progressing forward, from one moment to the next, moving from the present into the future, which then becomes the past. This is the linear-Neoplatonic interpretation of the journey motif to which Dante alludes in the opening tercet, which begins: "*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita.*"¹⁹⁴

The journeys which Dante presents in the *Commedia* are arguably all associated with some form of apocalypse or the apocalyptic narrative. The epic journey usually contains journey to the underworld either in the form of *catabasis* or *nekuomanteia*.¹⁹⁵ Within this overarching narrative structure, Dante presents other versions of the journey motif such as the failed journey of Dante-pilgrim in Canto I of *Inferno* and the journey attempted by Ulysses, relayed to Dante by the soul of Ulysses, via Virgil who acts as an intermediary figure in the episode, of Canto XXVI. Housed within Dante's Ulysses, and the surrounding exchange, are other representations of the journey motif which also contribute toward Dantesque apocalyptic

¹⁹³ Collins, *The Jewish Apocalypses*. P. 21.

¹⁹⁴ *Inf.*, I. 1.

¹⁹⁵ Lee Foust, *Dante's Commedia and the Poetics of Christian Catabasis* (PhD Thesis), (New York: New York University Press, 2007), p. 11

moments. Dante's allegorical vision is evoked in some instances of his journey narrative which also contribute toward his apocalyptic animus that we have in *Inferno*.

Dante is aware of the temporal dimension in his representation of apocalyptic instances and presents conflated images and representations of time. One such instance is the exchange with Ulysses. In this encounter the notion of perspective is brought to the fore. The human encounter with the eternal perspective contains the meeting point between human, historical time and the eternal time of the divine – Ulysses bids his crew: “*non vogliate negar l’esperienza, // di retro al sol, del mondo sanza gente.*”¹⁹⁶ Ulysses is an exemplary figure who does not achieve the ability to view the meeting point of historical time with eternity. An opportunity to view and experience the conflation of human, historical time and eternal time is presented to Ulysses in his transgressive journey, but he fails to both acknowledge and understand firstly its presence, and secondly its significance. He thus fails to engage with the apocalyptic moment. Awareness, on behalf of the subject of the apocalyptic moment, of the quality of conflation of temporal permutations in apocalypse, is a significant aspect of the apocalyptic genre. As Collins notes: the “revelation is mediated ... to a human recipient.”¹⁹⁷ The figure of Ulysses cannot progress past human thinking and the human limitations in his encounter with the divine apocalyptic vision at the moment of death, thus remaining firmly in the human temporal realm without vision of the transcendent realm of God. *Il folle vollo*,¹⁹⁸ fails because fundamentally Ulysses cannot see past his human perspective. I suggest that Dante-pilgrim could serve as a character foil to the figure of Ulysses as through the process of his pilgrimage through the realms of the afterlife, Dante-pilgrim gains knowledge of perspective which culminates in his unification with “*l’amor che move il sole e l’altre stelle.*”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ *Inf.*, XXVI, 116-117.

¹⁹⁷ Collins, p. 22.

¹⁹⁸ *Inf.*, XXVI. 125.

¹⁹⁹ *Par.*, XXXIII. 145.

This perspective is continuously available to Dante-pilgrim in the form of his guides who symbolically represents the divine. In the progression of the journey trajectory, multiple perspectives are brought into the narrative for consideration (or dismissal) by the subject of the journey, who then becomes the subject of the apocalyptic moment. This subject is not always Dante-pilgrim, as is the case with the journey of Ulysses, which I shall demonstrate in the ensuing discussion. In instances such as these, the human perspective is brought to an encounter with the divine perspective. This conflation of perspective vantage points is made most evident in the representation of the journey. The Neoplatonists interpreted the journey of Odysseus as a return of the soul to the state with God. Therefore, it is fundamentally a journey to God.²⁰⁰

Dante-poet is aware of the conventions of the genre of the epic and the epic hero when writing the *Inferno*. However, in the journey to the realms of the afterlife and specifically to Hell, Dante-poet does not cast his pilgrim counterpart as strictly following the Classical literary conventions, but he does not strictly subvert these conventions either. Dante-poet is aware of the literary model, yet he does not follow it: only gesturing toward it in his trajectory of the epic journey and the epic hero. The journey is the narrative form in which the boundaries between the eternal realms and the human realm is blurred. Furthermore, the allegorical nature of the journey - which is usually in the style of the epic - allows for apocalyptic instances to be presented.

The Journey and Canto I

The opening lines convey the first and most fundamental conceit of the poem: the Neoplatonic conceit that life is a journey.²⁰¹ Dante writes under this conceit. Inherent in this conceit is the idea that life is always progressing forwards, from one moment to the next, moving from the present into the future which then becomes the past. The Augustinian concept of the past and

²⁰⁰ Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, p. 85.

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 25.

future linked to the present through the faculties of the mind is pertinent here, as the past is always present in the present moment through the process of remembering, and the future is present in the present moment through the process of anticipation, imagination, and forethought.²⁰² Then, according to Augustine, only the present exists in reality, with the past and the future existing in the mind of the subject in the present moment. The processes of remembering and expectation inherently house temporal and historical manipulation as images of the past, and future predictions, are brought into the present moment. Apocalyptic narratives, as John Collins has noted, frequently involve a journey. Journeys in apocalyptic narratives contain two types: an otherworldly journey and/or a journey with personal eschatology.²⁰³ Dante's apocalyptic journey to Grace, found at the end of *Paradiso*, starts from the very first line of *Inferno*, where he situates himself in a disorientated state.

The opening line of *Inferno* evokes epic tales from the Classical period, inviting comparison between Dante's narrative and the Classical epics. The opening of *Inferno* can also be associated with Biblical narratives, as Gervase Rosser suggests. He links the opening line of Dante's epic with a verse written by the Prophet Isaiah: "*in dimidio dierum meorum vadam ad portas inferi.*"²⁰⁴ He then goes on to claim that this association between Dante's poem and Isaiah's verse "invokes the grand narrative of Christian history unfolding through time."²⁰⁵ In this way Dante's narrative is associated with the linear conception of history which dominated Christian theology in the Medieval era, developed by Thomas Aquinas. Also inherent in this Christian view of history and time is the presence of an eschaton: the definitive End to historical time. Linear, Pagan history is also alluded to in the opening line. The motif of life as a journey which is directly stated by the opening line, is commonly associated with the Virgilian secular

²⁰²St Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 11, Chapter 17.

²⁰³ Collins, *The Jewish Apocalypses*, p. 23.

²⁰⁴ Rosser, p.107. ("I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave." Is. XXXVIII: 10.)

²⁰⁵ Ibidem.

epic of Aeneas.²⁰⁶ Giuseppe Mazzotta supports this allegorical connection of the opening line of the *Inferno* with the linear journey of Aeneas.²⁰⁷ Yet in relation to the lines following from the opening tercet and the subsequent events of the introductory canto, Rosser states: “the implicitly self-proclaimed successor to the Virgilian saga undercuts” itself.²⁰⁸

The emphasis on the journey in poetry reflects the epic tradition in which Dante-poet then situates himself, through the reference to the journey of life. Epic poems such as Virgil's *The Aeneid* and Homer's *Odyssey* are recalled. This recollection of the journey narrative situates the poem in a literary tradition of the epic journey and the return, or the attempted return to that state in which the protagonist began the journey. This is known as Eternal Return Theory and is a different temporal and journey model to linear Pagan time. Dante draws from both dimensions of time in his presentation of the journey motif in *Inferno*. In addition to the poem being situated in the tradition of the Classical epic, it situates itself in the genre of the apocalyptic as apocalyptic narratives often take the form of a journey. Both the *Aeneid* and the *Odyssey* contain journeys to the afterlife, and both texts prefigure Early Christian apocalyptic texts. This shall be elaborated on in the ensuing discussion.

Background Discussion

In Book Six of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas travels to Euboean Cumae and engages in discourse with the oracle, “*cui/Delius vates inspirit magnum mentum animumque/aperitque futura.*”²⁰⁹ The Sibyl of Cumae conveys to Aeneas a prophecy of a coming war that will follow his arrival in Latium. The Sibyl then acts as his guide to the underworld, where they travel in search of his father, Anchises, who discloses the future greatness of the Roman Empire under Augustus. Motifs such as the quest narrative, journeying to the underworld, guidance by a transcendent-

²⁰⁶ Ibidem.

²⁰⁷ Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, Chapter 7. (Discussed throughout the chapter.)

²⁰⁸ Rosser, p. 107.

²⁰⁹ Vergil, *The Aeneid*, Book Six, Ln. ~11~12 (Through (*into* – my elucidation) whom the god/the Seer of Delos (Apollo), breathes forth the power of his mind/the might of this thoughts, and shows her the ages to be. – Translated by Michael Oakley, Wordsworth Classics, 2002.)

human figure, and the disclosure of otherworldly secrets through some form of discourse are found in the *Aeneid*, from whence Dante draws some of his inspiration for *La Commedia*. Classical sources, such as the *Aeneid*, prefigure the apocalyptic resonances found in *Inferno*. These sources also contribute toward the apocalyptic genre, as founding texts, which are later developed by Biblical narratives. John Collin's definition of the apocalyptic genre can be applied to these instances, when examining the apocalyptic emphasis of Classical texts as these texts prefigure the Biblical apocalyptic motifs. Collin's elucidation of the genre applies to Book VI of the *Aeneid*, as this book presents readers with an otherworldly journey of a human subject being guided by an intermediary figure of the Sibylline oracle who is cast as a figure between the human domain and the gods, concurrently with temporal and spatial manipulations. The quest narrative is often associated with apocalyptic instances and is apparent here in two dimensions: firstly, Aeneas travels to the underworld in search of his father, and secondly the *Aeneid*, as a whole, tells of the journey of Aeneas came to found the city of Rome. The journey presented in the *Aeneid* is a linear journey in which the starting point differs from the end point. It is a linear journey through time in which the state of origin is neither not obtained, nor is it attempted to be reclaimed. This is in stark contrast to the journey presented by the *Odyssey*, in which the state of the subject of the narrative is reclaimed at the end of the narrative. This type of journey is known as the Eternal Return.

I am aware that Dante probably did not encounter the Homer's *Odyssey*. However, he would have been familiar with the Odyssean myth, most probably from Virgil. The *Odyssey* is an epic poem conveying Odysseus's return to Ithaca after the Trojan war. After a span of twenty years, Odysseus (Ulysses in Roman mythology) returns to Ithaca and to his wife, Penelope, and reclaims his kingship. The plot is non-linear and presents a circular trajectory of events, culminating in the reassertion of Odysseus as King, returning to the state from which he left Ithaca for the Trojan wars. The journey of Odysseus contains revelations and interference from

the gods. In Book XI, Odysseus is forced to travel to the underworld and seek Tiresias, the prophet, who is cast as an intermediary figure between the gods and their human subjects. His journey to the underworld presents an intersection between the past and the future. Odysseus encounters his mother, fallen heroes who he knew when they were alive, both of which are images of his past. He also experiences a prophecy containing guidance of how to placate Poseidon in order for him to travel home. The journey to the underworld foreshadows later parts of the text relating to his future encounter with his wife Penelope. The apocalyptic concerns of the *Odyssey*, like with the above example of the *Aeneid*, can be explored with Collin's Biblical definition of the apocalyptic genre as the *Odyssey* also contributes toward the apocalyptic genre as one of its founding Classical sources. The Classical myth postulates a journey of return for Ulysses, back to Ithaca. This model of the journey is modelled on the Greek, *nostos* narrative, in which the protagonist returns to the state from which he departed. The *Odyssey* tells the story of the *nostos* and the return of Odysseus to Ithaca reclaim him kingship. Ulysses, in the original myth is the hero of nostalgia.²¹⁰ Dante is familiar with this narrative tradition but chooses to develop the myth using the Virgilian model found in the *Aeneid*: the open-ended journey from which there is not return to original state. Dante's Ulysses reaches his demise at the end of his journey for knowledge and does not return to his original state.

Both the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* are narratives which present a journey to the underworld, which "can be characterised as heroic feats that demonstrated the power or cunning of those heroes who managed to descend into the underworld and come up again."²¹¹

²¹⁰ Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, p. 85.

²¹¹ Jan N. Bremmer, *Chapter 20: Descents to Hell and Ascents to Heaven in Apocalyptic Literature* in "The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature" edited by John Collins. (Oxfordshire, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 341.

Dante and the Classical Tradition of the Journey Narrative

Dante draws the journey motif from Classical sources as the *Commedia* is presented in a style which echoes the epic genre. Both the Classical journeys to the underworld and the journey of the self, are found in Dante's *opus magnum*. Dante's journey toward the elysian starts with the failed journey of Canto I. Dante-pilgrim's attempt to gain access to the mountain of Purgatory is barred by the three beasts of the *selva oscura*, and by his entrance into the supernatural realm, which is only by divine decree who sent Virgil to rescue the pilgrim from the dark wood. Dante's entrance into the eternal-paradisal realm of the afterlife is only through Hell, to which he gains access via the *selva oscura*, and only under the guidance of the soul of the poet Virgil. It is, both in a literal sense and a figurative sense, a journey of the soul. Dante-pilgrim is cast as the archetypical figure of the everyman in the sense that this journey toward God can be undertaken by anyone. It is a literal journey of the soul toward God as, although Dante visits the three realms of the afterlife as a living human, he reflects and adopts characteristics of the souls he encounters. This is particularly evident in *Purgatorio* IX where "*sette P ne la fronte mi descrisse/col puntan del la spada*,"²¹² and Dante is purged of his *peccati* or sins. The journey of Ulysses from the Trojan Wars to Ithaca where he reclaimed his kingship has been interpreted by the Neoplatonists as the journey of the soul back to God, its creator. This is the circle of return.²¹³ Dante presents a journey of his return to *la dritta via*,²¹⁴ and to God. *La Commedia* is the journey of Dante-pilgrim and Dante-poet back to God and to faith. However, Dante-poet is also aware of the linear journey which Aeneas has undertaken and presents this model of the journey alongside the journey of the circle of eternal return. Dante-pilgrim's journey is linear as *La Commedia* is a series of singular encounters along the realms of the afterlife until the unification of Dante with "*l'amor divino*".²¹⁵ It is a linear journey, through the realms of the

²¹² *Purg.*, IX. 112-3.

²¹³ Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, p. 85.

²¹⁴ *Inf.*, I. 3.

²¹⁵ *Inf.*, I. 39.

afterlife, toward God. Thus Dante-poet presents readers with Dante-pilgrim as the hero of both the linear-Aeneas model of the journey and the eternal return, circular journey associated with Odysseus in a linear journey toward God, reflecting the Neoplatonic journey of the soul.

Apocalyptic instances are presented in the journey motif. The nature of the journey narrative allows for the manner in which the revelation is granted to the apocalyptic subject to be presented. The main medium of revelation, according to Collins, is otherworldly journeys and visions, which are supplemented by discourses. More than half of Biblical apocalypses contain a journey as the main means of revelation, while those that do not contain a journey as the main means of revelation, contain some form of the journey to the afterlife as a supplementary part of their revelations.²¹⁶ It is also in the journey that the conception of time and temporal models which Dante uses are shown. Time and the human position in relation to the eternal realm are manifest in the journey motif. Apocalyptic instances are disclosed in the narrative form of a journey. These apocalyptic instances are contributed toward by the form the narrative holds: the journey presents the encounter between eternal time and historical time.

In Sum: the opening failed journey of the *Inferno* recalls both Classical Pagan narratives which are conceived of in linear mythological time. It also symbolically recalls Biblical narratives which have been generally accepted as apocalyptic narratives, and occur in Christian, Thomistic conceptions of linear time. Yet within the construction of Dante's journey in linear time, circular time cycles of Classical mythology are also present in the narrative. Dante-poet in *Inferno* presents a mediated journey between these differing theoretical understandings of time. Dante present a marriage between Classical journey narratives and their interpretations through Neoplatonic thought. The epic journey motif, which is parodied

²¹⁶ Collins, *The Apocalyptic Genre*, pp. 5-8.

by the failed journey of the pilgrim, is frequently associated with the genre of the apocalyptic narrative with which conventions Dante explores and manipulates in the first canticle.

Ulysses

The transgressive journey of Dante's Ulysses foregrounds human perspective. When considering the canto as a whole, the notions of perspective and viewpoints are brought to the fore both by the physical positions of the pilgrims at the beginning of the canto and by the list of historical cities with which the canto opens. Events in human history and myth are recounted alongside one another with the effect of juxtaposing the historical against the mythological and eternal, thus encompassing historical time and eternity. The figure of Ulysses contains attributes of both Biblical figures and epic heroes. In the figure of Ulysses, Kirkpatrick claims that Dante attempts "to 'shore fragments against his ruin' by reanimating the most primitive sources of his culture."²¹⁷ As such, Ulysses can be viewed as an archetype after which Dante-pilgrim and the reader may choose to model themselves, whilst simultaneously possessing a personal history and concrete individuality.

Dante develops the history of Ulysses from the Odyssey myth. Dante did not encounter the Homeric epic but would have been familiar with the narrative of Odysseus and his return to Ithaca. Dante inherited the myth from Ovid in the thirteenth book of the *Metamorphoses*, and most probably from Virgil in the Aeneid as well.²¹⁸ In *Inferno*, Dante extends the myth of Ulysses to include a journey in search of knowledge beyond the clearly defined bounds of human exploration and knowledge. Because Ulysses and Diomedes used the power of rhetoric to lure their men to their deaths, they are condemned to the eighth ditch of Malebolge, where the two are swathed in a split flame, symbolically recalling both the forked tongue of the serpent of the Garden of Eden and the funeral pyre of Polynices and Eteocles, the two sons of

²¹⁷ Kirkpatrick, *Narrative, Myth and the Individual*, p. 164.

²¹⁸ Ian Thomson, *Dante's Divine Comedy, A Journey without End*, (London: Head of Zeus, 2018), p. 136.; Prue Shaw, *Reading Dante, from Here to Eternity*, (New York: Liveright, 2015), p. 122.

Oedipus. Dante-pilgrim, here, tells the reader the forked tongue of fire recalls the funeral pyre from Classical mythology. This contributes toward the mode of allegoresis which can be used to interpret the canto. It is generally accepted among Dante scholars that Ulysses and Diomedes dwell within the same flame because they were close companions in their deceptions of Troy with their “*entro l’arte*.”²¹⁹ Their punishment, the state which the sinners are condemned to endure for eternity, reflects the nature of their sins and symbolically comments on their actions. In this case, the law of contrapasso applied to the ‘evil counsellors’ evokes Christian creation mythology in which Satan possessed the snake and deceived Eve into eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil. In the figure of Ulysses, Dante-poet has extended and rewritten history. This then suggests that history, for Dante, is something which can be altered and developed retrospectively. Dante does this throughout the *Commedia*, taking classical mythology, Biblical mythology, and contemporary personages as the basis of his understanding of history. Dante rewrites the historical expanse using individual personages.

Dante's Ulysses can also be viewed as an embodiment of the linear journey, reflecting the Classical epic journey of Aeneas. The opening description of Ulysses' journey echoes and parodies Aeneas':

“Quando

mi diparti' da Circe, che sottrasse 91

me più d'un anno là presso a Gaeta,

prima che sì Enëa la nomasse,

né dolcezza di figlio, né la pieta 94

del vecchio padre, né 'l debito amore

²¹⁹ *Inf.*, XXVI. 61.

lo qual dovea Penelopè far lieta,
vincer potero dentro a me l'ardore 97
ch'i' ebbi a divenir del mondo esperto
e de li vizi umani e dal valore;
ma misi me per l'alto mare aperto 100
sol con un legno e con quella compagna
piccola da la qual non fui diserto.
L'un lito e l'altro vidi infin la Spagna, 103
fin nel Morrocco, e l'isola d'i Sardi,
e l'altre che quell mare intorno bagna.²²⁰

Ulysses redefines the journey to involve experience, and it is this experience of the journey which leads to the apocalyptic moment. Dante's Ulysses' journey intentionally violates the linear journey of Aeneas since Ulysses chooses a linear journey rather than being forced into one as Aeneas was.

The traditional Ulysses myth is viewed as the epitome of the journey of eternal return which casts time in a circular model. As such in the figure Dante-pilgrim encounters, elements of both the linear journey model and the eternal return model can be found. The journey of Dante's Ulysses contains instances of apocalyptic significances which are revealed alongside confluences of time - in the form of death; and his character which inherently combines two models of the journey motif - presented to the subject of the journey in an *aevum*-like space between the earthly and the eternal. Not in a dissimilar fashion, housed within Dante-pilgrim's

²²⁰ *Inf.*, XXVI. 90-105.

journey through Hell, are moments of apocalypse which are revealed through confluences of time and are presented to the journeying subject, in the realm of the eternal. This has been disrupted by the *aevum*-like construction of tellurian, human time as a result of the journey of the pilgrim-poets through the infernal realm.

Perspective

One of the apocalyptic-thematic concerns of Canto XXVI is the notion of perspective. From the vantage point of the eternal perspective, the apocalyptic qualities of death as bridging the eternal time of God and the temporal time of man, can be viewed. The notion of the elevated perspective of the eternal is brought to the fore in the first image with which the readers are presented. The poets overlook the ditch of Malebolge and “*vede lucciole giù per la vallea*” and “*di tante fiamme tutta risplendea*.”²²¹ From their vantage point above the valley, the poets can view the expanse of souls swathed in flames. By virtue of their position as visitors to the eternal realm, the poets also possess the perspective of the eternal, which the souls fail to see. This eternal perspective is made available to Dante-pilgrim in the figure of Virgil. The souls fail to see the apocalyptic qualities of their deaths and ultimately why they have been condemned to Hell. They cannot see beyond their own solipsistic viewpoint to the opportunity of apocalyptic unification with God which is offered by their deaths. The pilgrims possess the perspective from whence they can view the apocalyptic qualities of death, in which the mortal, human world comes into contact with the divine eternal. In this moment, the dynamic and flowing historical world is brought into contact with the eternal stasis of the realms of the afterlife. From this elevated perspective the entire expanse of their earthly histories can be viewed from the eternal, static perspective. As Erich Auerbach has discussed, the souls are comprised of memory and possess the essence of their being in the afterlife.²²² As such they possess their earthly lives in the form of memory yet fail to view these memories from the eternal perspective

²²¹ *Inf.*, XXXVI, 29, 31

²²² Auerbach, *Farinata and Cavalcante*, p. 191.

which their environment offers. The pilgrims encounter this quality of the souls after the image of the “*lucciole*,”²²³ from which their perspective is gained. It is through their interaction with the souls in which their sins are disclosed that the poets' understanding of the souls' condemnation to Hell is revealed.

The *descensus ad inferos* which Dante-pilgrim undertakes is fundamentally a Neoplatonic journey to God. It culminates in Dante's unification with Divine Love. In this epic journey, numerous perspective vantage points are made available to Dante-pilgrim and to the reader. At certain occasions, the reader is privy to more possible viewpoints than is Dante-pilgrim. One of these is the ability to view the narrative in its entirety. Another is the retrospective insight offered to the reader by Dante-poet, in his view of his narrative in its entirety. This quality is brought to the fore in Canto XXVI, through the disjuncture in the narrative time frame made in the opening lines of the passage:

Allor mi dolsi, e ora mi ridoglio
19
quando drizzo la mente a ciò ch'io vidi,
e più lo 'ngegno affreno ch'I' non soglio,²²⁴

In this tercet, the narrative is interrupted by Dante-poet in recollection of emotion felt by the avatar of himself in the past, Dante-pilgrim. In these three lines, Dante also claims he will contain his poetic puissance. This inclusion of the Dante-poet in the narrative of Dante-pilgrim attaches the perspective gained at the culmination of his epic journey to a point in the journey through Hell. Thus, we have a looking back at the events of the journey from the eternal perspective gained by Dante at the end of the narrative.

²²³ *Inf.*, XXVI. 29.

²²⁴ *Inf.*, XXVI. 19-21.

The journey motif brings the notion of perspective to the fore. In *Inferno*, elements of perspective are commonly presented alongside the journey motif. In apocalyptic journeys, the eternal perspective must be gained by the subject who possesses a human perspective. However, this human perspective cannot be replaced or negated by the eternal in moments of apocalyptic significance. A balance between the eternal and the human perspective - a dual vision - is required in moments of apocalypse. The limited view of the human perspective must be viewed from the eternal perspective in order for apocalyptic significances to be understood and experienced by the human subject. In the journey, the boundaries between the earthly realm and the eternal realm are blurred and the human dimensions of time and space are distorted as the subject is removed from human understandings of these realms via their journey. It then follows that in the journey *topos*, the perspective of the journeying subject can be manipulated through what they see and experience on the journey. The journey, then, presents the possibility to acquire a different perspective through experience. This is gestured toward by the Neoplatonic conceit of life as a journey, found in the opening tercet of the poem. In the conflation of the eternal perspective, gained by the human subject, with their human perspective, the apocalyptic significance is revealed.

As I have shown above, it is through the literary trope of the journey that these perspectives can be conflated, and apocalyptic significances revealed. The figure of Dante's Ulysses does not view his transgressive journey from the eternal context in which he is now situated and therefore fails to see its apocalyptic resonances. On the other hand, Dante-pilgrim attempts to view the apocalyptic significances of Ulysses, a figure in whom he sees attributes of himself, which ultimately culminate in the apocalyptic unification with God in *Paradiso* XXXIII. Dante-pilgrim affords to assimilate the eternal and human perspective due to his "perfect position of a twofold nature: temporal and eternal, physical and spiritual."²²⁵ The

²²⁵ Kirkpatrick, *Narrative, Myth and the Individual*, p. 170.

theme of misperception is a constant theme in Dante's narrative and is first introduced to the reader in Dante's *regio dissimilitudinis* in which "la dritta via era smarrita,"²²⁶ and is gestured toward again by the "*falso veder*,"²²⁷ of Canto II. Dante's entire experience of Paradise is mediated in an attempt to facilitate the pilgrim's understanding of the structure of heaven. Similarly, Dante's vision of Hell is mediated by memory as the journey is written *post factum*.

Classical Archetypes and Human Figures

Dante's Ulysses can be read as a figure after which Dante models himself and after whom he urges the reader to model themselves.²²⁸ Thus, Ulysses, can be seen as an intermediary figure between the tradition of representing archetypes which we find Classical narratives and Dante's representation of human history. The figure of Ulysses contains both attributes of both traditions and as such can be viewed as an archetype after which the reader may choose to model themselves, whilst Ulysses simultaneously possessing a personal history and concrete individuality. This is one of the elements of the figure of Ulysses which makes him an enigmatic figure. In Dante's representation of the souls in the afterlife, Auerbach states: "the historical individual was reborn in his manifest unity of body and spirit."²²⁹ The historical narrative of the figure of Ulysses is extended by Dante-poet and told to readers via Dante's guide, Virgil, who acts as an intermediary figure between that of Ulysses and Dante-pilgrim in this exchange. The figure of Ulysses in Canto XXVI is the first mythic figure to be developed into a character that the pilgrims, and the readers, encounter in *La Commedia*. Ulysses has been presented in the *Commedia* as a human figure who possessed a human life and ultimately experienced a human demise. This is juxtaposed with the classical figure of Ulysses who remains an archetypal figure with few human attributes. The figure of Dante's Ulysses concurrently contains both Classical and personal-historical elements.

²²⁶ *Inf.*, I. 3.

²²⁷ *Inf.*, II. 48.

²²⁸ Auerbach, *Farinata and Cavalcante*, p. 191.

²²⁹ Auerbach, *Dante, Poet of the Secular World*, p. 178.

Following from my discussion of Ulysses above, the figure of Dante's Ulysses contains elements from both the eternal return journey of Odysseus, and from the linear journey of the *Aeneid*, as well as a personal history rooted in the myth Dante-pilgrim has created for his character. Therefore, there are three distinct understandings of time contained within the figure of Ulysses: the circular Pagan time of the eternal return mythos, the linear time of the journey which lead to the foundation of Rome, and the historical time of lived experience and emotion. Dante's Ulysses is an amalgamation of temporal perspectives found in Classical and Biblical narratives, and the human condition of expression of emotion and personal eschatological history, and the manner in which his life ended. In the *topos* of the journey, both in the archetypal model of the journey and in the actualised journey of Ulysses, different understandings of time are made manifest. These understandings of time in conjunction with the journey motif contribute toward the apocalyptic animus written into *Inferno*, as these understandings of time situate the apocalyptic moment outside of time yet a moment aware of the temporal realm and its facets, since they bring the temporal and eternal moments into conversation.

Dante has created the figure of Ulysses into concrete history from the remote legendary history from whence the archetypal figure comes. It is from this mythological concrete history that Dante-poet draws the idiosyncrasies of the soul of Ulysses. Mazzotta suggest that the figure of Ulysses embodies the Renaissance ideas of exploration and the thirst for knowledge, traits which dominate the Renaissance period, and which are prefigured by Dante in this canto and the soul of Ulysses. Mazzotta claims that it is in this way that Dante looks to toward the Italian Renaissance and this is primarily evident in this canto.²³⁰ Dante-poet turns to history, in both the concrete historical form and the abstract mythological form, in his inspiration for personages in the narrative. In a similar way, he also looks toward the future

²³⁰ Mazzotta, Reading Dante, p. 90.

and the development of literary types which can be said to be prefigured by Dante's Ulysses. In this second, diverse, way the poem looks into the future through its prophetic vision, which is presented to readers at various points throughout the poem such as the *veltro* described by Virgil in Canto I.

Dante's Ulysses is cast in light of both human and classical archetypical attributes but possesses neither quality entirely. From his human perspective Ulysses cannot view the apocalyptic qualities which death brings, despite his mythological status. He does not possess the ability to view his life and his sins from the elevated eternal perspective and thus overlooks the apocalyptic qualities of death. It is for this reason Ulysses, like the rest of the souls in *Inferno*, is condemned to Hell for eternity.

The Epic Hero and the Journey

The Classical epics from which Dante draws inspiration and motifs, present their heroic protagonists with knowledge of an event which occurs at a particular moment in time, and then serves as a basis from which the poet can distil their character. Yet, the whole of their lifetime is also taken into account. For example: at the end of his journey Odysseus disguises himself so his court does not recognise him. This demonstrates his character to be cunning and intelligent and witty: the entire journey-narrative is cast with these attributes to his character. An instance at the end of the journey in which character and qualities are demonstrated, informs the entire journey-narrative. In contrast to the Classical tradition Dante does not record events. Dante records emotion and presents this emotion to the reader in the eternal moment. The souls are presented with their emotions which contravenes the Classical epic tradition, as figures in classical literature were presented as generic, without personal and emotional qualities. In Dante's poem every accent and gesture of the souls Dante-pilgrim encounters is exactly defined.²³¹ Ulysses is an exemplary figure in this regard. Dante's Ulysses possesses an earthly

²³¹ Ibid, p. 142.

history, which are events which transpired in earthly time; and the essence of his character distilled from this lifetime. In the case of Ulysses, Dante-poet has created the earthly history of his Ulysses, and from his historical creation has distilled the characteristics of the proto-Renaissance archetypical man which we find in the soul of Ulysses in *Inferno*.²³²

There are three models of the journey motif presented to readers in Canto XXVI. From the broader context of the narrative, Dante's journey of *catabasis* is brought to the fore through the first image presented to the reader, which brings narrative perspective to the fore. The first image of Canto XXVI, which compares the evil counsellors to fireflies, has previously been discussed in this chapter. The second journey is the *nostos*, the journey of return, which is the classical Odyssean myth from which Dante extends the mythology of Ulysses. The Neoplatonists have interpreted the journey of the *nostos* as embodied by Ulysses allegorically to represent the journey of the human soul back to its creator.²³³ Dante subverts this Neoplatonic interpretation of the Odyssean myth in his extension of the myth and personal history of Ulysses. The extended myth, created by Dante-poet, is a journey without return, a linear journey of Ulysses in search of knowledge which transgresses boundaries. It is ultimately through the process of the journey and the experience of the journey that knowledge is gained.²³⁴ Dante's extended myth of the journey of Ulysses, is modelled after the Virgilian journey motif presented in the journey of Aeneas. The immediate heavenly journey to God through assumption is also present, represented through reference to the Elijah's assumption witnessed by Elisha. This journey is more readily noticeable as a journey to God as it essentially passes over death and the apocalyptic process of dying and looking back upon life from a multitude of perspectives gained at the moment of death. The assumption into Heaven bypasses this process and assumes an immediate possession of human and divine perspective

²³² Ibid, p. 90.

²³³ Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, p. 85.

²³⁴ Ibidem.

concurrently: it is an immediate apocalyptic journey. Dante-pilgrim's current journey is a variation on this journey toward unification with God.

These two failed apocalyptic journeys of Dante-pilgrim in *Inferno* I and Dante's figure of Ulysses of Canto XXVI, serve as counter narratives to the overarching narrative of the *Commedia*. Dante's journey through the infernal realm towards "*l'amore divino mosse di prima quelle cose belle*,"²³⁵ and the revelations it discloses is only made possible by divine intervention in the form of Virgil and then Beatrice –

For the Odyssey, in the tradition of neoplatonic philosophical allegoresis, is the allegory of education. The story of Ulysses leaving Ithaca and returning, after twenty years of war and labors, back to Ithaca is the paradigm of the journey and education of the soul as it successfully returns, after its purification from the dross of materiality, to the place of origin.²³⁶

And,

Dante abandons the philosophical allegorisations of Ulysses and draws the Greek hero into a rhetorical context, he is engaged in a remarkable subversion of the very possibilities of philosophical discourse.²³⁷

In sum: Dante's Ulysses is a hero of the epic journey after which it is possible for Dante-pilgrim, and the reader to model themselves. Ulysses' journey is a failed apocalyptic, epic journey. When Dante-pilgrim's *catabasis* through Hell, is read in light of Ulysses' journey of Canto XXVI, the pilgrim's journey takes on qualities of both the epic journey and the apocalyptic journey, toward God. The epic journey contains apocalyptic qualities as it presents moments of transcendence in which the divine realm can be reached, and the divine perspective

²³⁵ *Inf.*, I. 40.

²³⁶ Giuseppe Mazzotta, *Dante Poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in "The Divine Comedy"* (Guilford: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 74-75.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

gained. At other instances the apocalyptic qualities of the temporal realm are brought to the fore in their confections and are mediated to the subject of the journey, by an otherworldly figure.

Il Folle Vollo

Dante-pilgrim's failed journey of Canto I and Ulysses' 'mad journey' are both versions of the journey motif. Dante-pilgrim's failed journey has previously been discussed in this dissertation.

As I have previously noted, *Inferno* opens with a failed journey. Mazzotta states that "The Divine Comedy begins with the resumption of a Neoplatonic attempt at self-transcendence which fails and with the subsequent rediscovery of the *Aeneid* as the poem of history."²³⁸ Dante's self-transcendence begins in the ending of the *Convivio* which presents a Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Aeneid*.²³⁹ It is in the journey motif that history can be rewritten and revised.

Dante's failed journey in the *selva oscura* of Canto I is echoed by Ulysses' journey. Ulysses' journey is referred to as "*il folle vollo*" in *Inferno* XXVI,²⁴⁰ and is later recalled in *Purgatorio* XIX in the dream of the siren as "*Io volsi Ulisse del suo cammin vago*,"²⁴¹ and then again in *Paradiso* XXVII as "*il varco folle // di Ulisse*."²⁴² It is also prefigured in the introductory canto of the *Inferno*. Ulysses and his voyage are referenced throughout *La Commedia*, as Dante-poet keeps returning to this figure. According to Teodolinda Barolini the figure of Ulysses is the embodiment and incarnation of the journey trope.²⁴³ The journey trope is one which resonates with both Dante-poet and Dante-pilgrim. Dante-pilgrim is on a

²³⁸ Ibid, p. 82.

²³⁹ Ibidem.

²⁴⁰ *Inf.*, XXVI. 125.

²⁴¹ *Purg.*, XIX. 22.

²⁴² *Par.*, XXVII. 82-83.

²⁴³ Teodolinda Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 48.

pilgrimage to the afterlife, inherently following the journey motif. The journey, at the superficial level, resonates with Dante-poet as the process of writing is metaphorically recalled in the journey *topos* in the opening lines of Canto XXVI of *Inferno*, and in the opening lines of *Purgatorio* where Dante states: “*Per correr miglior acque alza le vele // omai la navicella del’ mio ingegno.*”²⁴⁴ This is echoed and prefigured by the “*cammin*” of *Inferno* I,²⁴⁵ which introduces the voyage motif from the onset of the poem. The failed journey is symbolically gestured toward both through the failed journey of Dante-pilgrim and through the poetic lexicon which Dante uses in *Inferno* II: “*folle,*”²⁴⁶ and “*volle.*”²⁴⁷ *Inferno* contains two instances in which the Ulyssean journey motif is encountered, whereas the other two canticles refer to the instance just once. This double reference to the journey motif further gestures toward the apocalyptic animus of *Inferno*.

Inferno XXVI haunts Dante throughout his otherworldly journey, as he keeps returning to the transgression. Therefore, inherent in both the poetic composition of the *Commedia* and in its thematic concerns, the journey features as a ghost, bringing images of the future, in the case of *Inferno* I, and images of the past, in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, into the narrative present. These temporal manipulations and manifestations of haunting events testify to the centrality of the episode, and the encounter the poets have with Dante's Ulysses. Ulysses' quest for knowledge can also be interpreted as a failed journey with apocalyptic qualities. Because the journey is undertaken without the assistance and guidance of an other-worldly figure and without the perspective of the transcendent dimension, the journey is predestined for failure, when read as an apocalyptic journey. The transcendent perspective is brought to the fore in the opening lines of the canto in which the poets look down upon the valley and “*vede lucciole giù*

²⁴⁴ *Purg.*, I. 1-2.

²⁴⁵ *Inf.*, I. 1.

²⁴⁶ *Inf.*, II. 35.

²⁴⁷ *Inf.*, II. 37.

lungo la valle. ”²⁴⁸ From this elevated perspective, the poets can view the sinners swathed in flames in the valley below. This perspective juxtaposed with the temporal vision possessed by Ulysses as he does not possess the eternal perspective which is an element in the apocalyptic journey.

The journey of Dante's Ulysses can also be mapped onto the failed journey of Canto I, and in doing so the reason why Dante-pilgrim's journey of *catabasis* becomes successful, is brought to the fore. The failed journey of *Inferno* I is an attempted journey up Mount Purgatory. The journey is halted by Dante's three beasts, which I have explored in the first chapter of this dissertation, until the figure of Virgil comes from his allocated place in Limbo to rescue the pilgrim and set him along “*la diritta via*,”²⁴⁹ under his guidance. The failed journey follows Collins' generic framework but, like Ulysses, fails when divine guidance is not sought. Dante-pilgrim receives divine assistance in the figure of Virgil who has been sent by Beatrice. Unlike the pilgrim in Canto I, Dante's Ulysses does not seek divine guidance on his journey to “*l'alto mare aperto*.”²⁵⁰

The transgressive journey of Dante's Ulysses can be interpreted as a failed, apocalyptic journey. It is a journey that results in death because it was undertaken to go beyond the bounds of human knowledge and experience in search of the other, but without the guidance of a divine mediatory figure. The journey symbolically, moves into the other-worldly realm as Ulysses passes “*una montagna*,”²⁵¹ which some critics have taken to mean Mount Purgatory. At this point, the journey passes into the unknown. If we do read the “*una montagna*” as the Mount Purgatory, then the allegorical significances of this for the journey to the realm of the unpeopled world is brought to the fore. There is perhaps not enough textual evidence to support the claim

²⁴⁸ *Inf.*, XXVI. 29.

²⁴⁹ *Inf.*, I. 3.

²⁵⁰ *Inf.*, XXVI. 100.

²⁵¹ *Inf.*, XXVI. 133. (As I will be referring to this multiple times in the following paragraph, this reference will suffice for subsequent uses of “*una montagna*.”)

that Ulysses mountain is the Mount Purgatory. But, it is a claim that maps onto an allegorical apocalyptic reading of Ulysses' journey. Dante's Ulysses attempts a journey toward God without the assistance of a divine source. This episode can be read as an experimentation with the apocalyptic genre, as described by John Collins, but describes a journey which inherently fails, because even though the majority of elements which contribute toward the apocalyptic genre are present, it lacks integrated apocalyptic perspective. Ulysses' journey is a remote journey and therefore the dimensions of time and space are conflated, which is a feature of apocalyptic narratives. The journey fails the moment at which temporal time encounters eternal time. Divine guidance has not been received and the journey has been attempted without soliciting assistance from the divine realm. Thus, Ulysses has not gained the perspective that comes with divine guidance. This eternal perspective is denied to the figure of Ulysses and his journey fails, because of the absence of this perspective of transcendental time. His point of view is still a human perspective, and the journey therefore cannot break free of this human quality, and partial, obscured viewpoint. This leads to an exaggerated sense of power to manipulate events and the ultimate demise of Ulysses and his crew. The eternal perspective is not experienced, and his human hubris leads him to fail to see the apocalyptic qualities of his journey. In this instance the apocalyptic qualities of the narrative have manifested themselves through perspective, and the sinners' lack of perspective.

Symbolically, the journey moves into the realm of the afterlife as Ulysses approaches "*una montagna*."²⁵² Some Dante critics, such as Prue Shaw and Anthony Esolen claim the mountain Ulysses passes is the mountain of Purgatory.²⁵³ I believe there to be very little textual evidence for this claim. The indefinite article of "*una montagna*" fails to support the reading

²⁵² *Inf.*, XXVI. 133.

²⁵³ Prue Shaw, *Reading Dante: From Here to Eternity*, (Liveright, New York, 2015) and Anthony Esolen, Translator and Editor of *Inferno*, (The Modern Library Classics, New York. 2002, rpt, 2005)

of this mountain as the Mount Purgatory, and the same as the “*colle giunto*,”²⁵⁴ which Dante attempts to climb in *Inferno* I. Poetically, Dante uses different words when describing the mountains. From a semantic perspective, the interpretation of the “*montagna*” as Mount Purgatory is plausible, as Ulysses’ journey is a journey of transgression, seeking knowledge from beyond the bounds of the human realm. Its allegorical significance is also then fitting with the narrative of Dante’s Ulysses as he is “involved in a journey that is absolutely gratuitous, a quest for wisdom in the unpeopled world.”²⁵⁵ Ulysses symbolically sailing past the mountain of Purgatory into the realm of the afterlife correlates with the transgressive nature of the journey, blurring the boundaries between the human and the preternatural. The interpretation of the mountain past which Ulysses sails as the mountain of Purgatory is not supported by textual evidence. Nevertheless, if this interpretation is taken at *prima facie* from critics such as Shaw and Esolen, then the apocalyptic nature of the journey, in which boundaries between the human and transcendent are blurred, is highlighted.

If we were to follow the allegorical interpretation of the “*montagna*” which Ulysses and his crew pass on their journey in search of knowledge of the unpeopled world, as the Mount Purgatory, then it implies a transgressive journey for Dante-pilgrim in Canto I. If interpreted in this way, then the boundaries between the physical, human realm and the transcendental realm are physically demarcated and transgressed. This would suggest, symbolically, that the journey moved from the physical realm of the human to the transcendental realm of the eternal. Ulysses’ journey aligns with Dante-pilgrim’s failed journey of Canto I, in which he attempts to climb Mount Purgatory toward the sunlight. Neoplatonism interpreted sunlight to mean God, and the journey to be human life toward God. In both instances of the failed journey, Dante-pilgrim’s failed journey to God and Ulysses’ “*folle vollo*,”²⁵⁶ an attempt has been made by the

²⁵⁴ *Inf.*, I. 13.

²⁵⁵ Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, p. 85.

²⁵⁶ *Inf.*, XXVI. 125.

subject to transcend into the transcendental realm without the assistance of a mediatory figure and without a conflation of the eternal perspective with their human perspectives. Both models of the failed journey, the one resulting in rescue by the figure of Virgil, the other resulting in death, draws attention to the elements of the apocalyptic narrative which are crucial for moments of apocalyptic significance: the presence of a mediatory and facilitatory figure, and the acquisition of the eternal perspective alongside the human perspective of the subject. I have suggested that Ulysses' "*una montagna*" is an obscure image, with multiple possible interpretations. But the obscurity of this image contributes to its apocalyptic quality, rather than detracting from it. This obscurity contributes to the apocalyptic quality of the poem as it highlights the obscure and indeterminate quality of the apocalyptic genre. Therefore, whether or not one chooses to read the symbol as mount Purgatory, it is clear that it reinforces an apocalyptic allegorical interpretation. I have discussed Dante's apocalyptic allegorical imagination in more detail in the second chapter.

The Mediatory Figure

In the introductory canto of the *Inferno*, Dante attempts to climb Mount Purgatory relying solely on his human qualities and abilities. This attempt fails as Dante encounters the three beasts, and is rescued by Virgil who has been entreated by Beatrice. One of the possible reasons as to why this journey failed is because Dante attempts it without the help of a mediatory figure. Dante is still human and not yet dead but is attempting to transgress the boundary into the afterlife. In his attempt, he does not possess the transcendental perspective, which is made available to him via the figure of Virgil. As Collins *et al.*, have demonstrated an apocalyptic journey, which informs Dante-pilgrim's actions *Inferno* I, is mediated by an other-worldly figure. Dante-pilgrim attempts an apocalyptic journey toward God, without the assistance of a divine mediator. The inclusion of a divine mediatory figure in the narrative of the apocalyptic genre indicates that "the revelation is not intelligible without supernatural aid. The disposition

of the seer before the revelation and his reaction to it typically emphasize human helplessness in the face of the supernatural.”²⁵⁷ An otherworldly figure is a constant element in narratives of the apocalyptic genre.²⁵⁸ Dante-pilgrim attempts the journey up Mount Purgatory without the guidance of a mediatory figure. The boundaries between the human realm and the divine eternal realm cannot be transgressed by a human figure alone. Divine aid is required for visions and experiences of the divine realms. As Seung states: “The dependence of human will on divine will is perhaps most emphatically manifested though Dante's own experience in his epic journey. ... The central function of Virgil and Beatrice as Dante's guides and teachers is to administer grace to his helpless and powerless will and restore its health and function.”²⁵⁹ Virgil's administration of grace to the pilgrim is an instance of divine intervention and mediation between the eternal realm and the human world. From this, I can then deduce that apocalyptic access to the eternal realm by a human figure is impossible without a mediatory figure.

The presence of a divine guide in apocalyptic narratives indicates a different, non-human perspective of which the subject of the apocalypse and the journey, must be cognisant. An other-worldly figure brings the eternal perspective into the episode which allows the expanse or sections of progressive human time and temporal history to be viewed from an elevated perspective. The *telos* of temporal time, and both personal and socio-political eschatology can be viewed *post factum* from this divine eternal perspective in which time is understood as static and motionless and possesses eternal duration. The human perspective can be said to encompass human time which Plato recognised as a moved *eikon* of a motionless eternity, and reflects the timeless archetype of the *Aion*.²⁶⁰ Collins has noticed that Christian

²⁵⁷ Collins, *The Apocalyptic Genre*, pp. 5-6.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 5.

²⁵⁹ T. K. Seung, *The Epic Character of the Divina Commedia and the Function of Dante's Three Guides*, (Italica 56.4, Dante, 1979), p. 357.

²⁶⁰ W. Von Leyden, *Time, Number, and Eternity in Plato and Aristotle*, (“The Philosophical Quarterly” 15.54, 1964), p. 37.

and Jewish early apocalyptic narratives always contain a guide, therefore indicating that an eternal perspective is necessary in moments of apocalyptic significance. This combination of the eternal perspective and the human temporal perspective contributes toward the conflation of the temporal realm in apocalyptic instances.

Instances of *Inferno*, such as the failed journey of Canto I and the journey of Ulysses, which have previously been discussed in this dissertation lend themselves to further discussion in relation to apocalyptic perspective and mediatory figures. Previous discussions of these episodes have been extended here.

In the failed journey of *Inferno* I, Virgil rescues the pilgrim from the three beasts and the *selva oscura*. The *selva oscura* is a *regio dissimilitudinis* which houses instances of divine manifestations such as the three beasts, but it is not an emblem representing divine eternity. Thus, while the failed journey contains elements from the eternal realm, they are only suggested allegorically, and Dante-pilgrim retains a limited perspective without achieving the eternal perspective.

Ulysses also attempts a similar transgressive journey, and similarly fails. Like Dante-pilgrim in *Inferno* I, Ulysses attempts a journey in search of knowledge, seeking to transgress the boundaries of human knowledge. The failed journey of Dante-pilgrim in Canto I can be viewed as a foil to Ulysses' journey. Without the emblematic figure of an other-worldly guide which represents the elevated eternal perspective, Ulysses only possesses his own human perspective. It is also for this reason that the figure of Ulysses is condemned to an eternity in Hell: because he failed to see the apocalyptic resonances of the journey which caused his earthly undoing. Even from the perspective given to him through the apocalyptic qualities of death in which the possibility to view life from this elevated perspective is afforded to him, he failed to view his journey through the lens of the eternal and with divine perspective. Thus, Dante's Ulysses does not possess the apocalyptic quality of a multifaced perspective on his

journey, but he also fails to acquire this perspective at his moment of death which is ultimately why he is condemned to Hell. Dante's Ulysses cannot see past his own solipsism and his own hubris. Dante-pilgrim progresses past this viewpoint as acknowledges that he cannot surmount "un colle giunto,"²⁶¹ without divine assistance and the eternal perspective this represents. Then throughout Dante's *descensus ad inferos*, Virgil guides Dante and provides an otherworldly perspective on the afterlife and the events the pilgrim witnesses there. Virgil provides Dante-pilgrim with the eternal perspective through Grace. As Seung notes: "Every step of Dante's pilgrimage is sustained by the power of grace."²⁶²

In contrast to the myth Dante creates of Ulysses, the original Homeric epic casts Athena as guide to Odysseus and Telemachus; and in the *Aeneid*, Venus can be said to guide Aeneas. The *Odyssey* is modelled after The *Aeneid*, with slight modifications. In the beginning of the *Odyssey*, Athena acts as guide to Odysseus and Telemachus, in a similar way as Dante's guides function. As the epic narrative develops, her role as guide diminishes, but she still intervenes at certain instances.²⁶³ In these instances where Athena appears to her subjects, she appears as innate and fundamentally intertwined in their character. "Odysseus is the mortal counterpart of the immortal Athena, or rather that he perfectly personifies Athena's unique characteristics."²⁶⁴ This is juxtaposed with the journey of the *Aeneid*, in which Venus acts as a separate character in her capacity as guide. Athena's relation to Odysseus is a relation of immediate presence and mutual identity – she is always and constantly available to Odysseus as they share elements of their identities; while Venus's relation to Aeneas is the relation of remote presence and separate identity, that is, the identity of two distinctly separate personalities.²⁶⁵ There is no evidence to

²⁶¹ *Inf.*, I. 13.

²⁶² Seung, p. 357.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

suggest that Dante read the *Odyssey*, but he was clearly aware of the myth of Odysseus and most probably drew his knowledge of this from Virgil.

In the *Aeneid*, “only once during Aeneas’s epic journey does Venus function in what can be truly regarded as the role of guide or escort. This singular occasion arises on the hero’s escape from a shipwreck near the Libyan coast. ... Even on this occasion, she does not present herself as an immortal purporting to instruct a mortal; she comes upon the scene only as an innocent Tyrian huntress...”²⁶⁶ This is juxtaposed with the representation of Athena to Odysseus who acts as an immortal guide to him on his journey. Odysseus is the mortal counterpart to Athena.²⁶⁷ Thus in these two Classical epic narratives, two models of the figure of the guide can be found. Dante follows neither of these models completely but chooses to draw inspiration from both. Dante-pilgrim and Virgil’s relationship is a mixture of the classic epic models, his guides are immediately present to him at all times, and his identity is separate from Virgil, and more emphatically pronounced than that of Aeneas and Venus. Their immediate presence and availability to Dante does not override their discrete identities. Seung concludes that the administration of divine grace which is given to Dante through his three guide figures, works in the immediate presence of the human soul yet never loses its supernatural character, it remains beyond the nature of the human soul.²⁶⁸ It is this quality of the Dante-pilgrim and guide relationship that make the epic unable to achieve the same status as the classical Homeric and Virgilian epics. Seung claims that this is so the Dante-pilgrim can “play the humble role of a powerless and helpless agent” so that the Christian virtue of humility is made available to Dante because it is only through humility that man can become the vessel of grace.²⁶⁹ I believe Dante has cast his poet embellishment of himself as the pilgrim as having

²⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 363.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 365.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 367.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 368.

a discrete identity to his guide and keeping his guide firmly in the immortal realm also to contribute toward the conflation of numerous perspectives and viewpoints in various apocalyptic instances, the animus of which underlies the entire *Inferno*. Throughout Dante's interaction with the souls, and at times in his viewing of literary images, such as the image of mosquitoes in the valley with which the reader is presented in the opening of *Inferno* XXVI, the eternal perspective filtered by Virgil is made available to Dante-pilgrim, in combination with his human perspective.

At various instances in the *Inferno*, Virgil mediates the exchanges to Dante-pilgrim and thus makes the eternal perspective available to him. Moments of apocalyptic significance require a mediatory figure and the presence of both the human and the transcendental perspective made available to the subject of the revelation. The journey is a literary motif via which the apocalyptic conflation of perspectives is made available to the subject figure. Along Dante-pilgrim's *catabasis*, Virgil, and other aeviternal figures, provide the necessary preternatural perspective to the pilgrim in moments of apocalyptic resonances. As a foil to Dante's journey, the failed transgressive journey of Ulysses can be read in light of the requirements of the apocalyptic journey motif: the transcendental perspective is not achieved by Ulysses and Diomedes and their crew. The apocalyptic dimensions of Dante's narrative are manifested in the presentation of the journey and the elements involved in the progression of the journey. Throughout the *Inferno*, Dante-poet gives the reader examples of such journeys which can be explored through the lens the apocalyptic narrative when considered juxtaposed with one another.

Virgil as an Aeviternal Figure

Virgil is a mediator figure to Dante-pilgrim on his *catabasis* to the underworld. As a historical figure, "*non omo, omo già fui*,"²⁷⁰ who has been placed in Limbo by Dante-poet, and a guiding

²⁷⁰ *Inf.*, I. 67.

figure who leads the pilgrim through the underworld, Virgil possesses a unique and elevated status among the souls of *Inferno*. As Virgil is both a character in the *Inferno* with both a personal and historical position in history, and functions as a guide to Dante-pilgrim in the narrative, the figure of Virgil possesses aeviternal qualities. Thomas Aquinas conceives of an aeviternal beings as experiencing the eternal duration of heavenly beings. Aeviternity is differentiated from the eternal durational experience of God since the heavenly bodies are creations of God and therefore cannot experience the same eternal conception of God as they were created by God, and thus came into existence after God. It is a conception of time related to the eternity of God and the temporal, historical time of the earthly realm. It is eternal insofar as it possesses no end point at which it will cease to exist, but possesses a point at which we can say it began. It is a median between time and eternity, possessing the beginning point of time and the endlessness duration of eternity; thus containing attributes from both eternity and time. Aquinas goes on to state that an aeviternal being is measured with a 'before' and 'after,' and is changeless, but possess changeability of place. Aeviternity itself does not possess a 'before' and 'after.'²⁷¹

Frank Kermode then develops the notion of the *aevum* from the above Thomistic definition of aeviternity and aeviternal beings, to house the space in which apocalyptic events transpire. The *aevum* "depends on a concord of imaginatively recorded past and imaginatively predicted future, achieved on behalf of us who remain in the midst."²⁷² Thus in the *aevum*-space historical time is conflated with the eternal time of God, and in this space the subject of apocalypse possesses the opportunity to view and experience the historical time of the earth through the lens of the eternal. Apocalyptic moments transpire in a liminal space in which the boundaries between the spaces of the corporeal and the preternatural are blurred and the linear

²⁷¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Question 10, Article 5.

²⁷² Kermode, p. 8.

progression of historical time is distorted.²⁷³ It is a space traditionally inhabited by angels, Aquinas' aeviternal beings, who are figures with both human and God-like qualities.

I believe the figure of Virgil, in Dante's *catabasis*, to be connected to both the Thomistic conception of aeviternal beings and Kermode's development of the *aevum* space. Virgil as Dante's guide is connected to Kermode's use of the *aevum* as a space in which apocalyptic events transpire as time is conflated in the *aevum* and Virgil is a physical manifestation of conglomerate time in the *Inferno*. Virgil is present in the eternal time of God, after having been undone by death. He says to Dante-pilgrim at the start of their journey "*non omo, omo già fui*,"²⁷⁴ indicating that he is a soul, now placed in Limbo. From the onset, the figure of Virgil contains an image of the remote historic past, living in a time before Dante, and the eternal time of his new abode, the circle of Limbo in Hell. The figure of Virgil as Dante's guide is connected to Kermode's conception of the *aevum* as it is a conflation of remote historical time and the eternal duration of the infernal space in which he is now housed. In addition to Virgil possess emblems of two conceptions of time, he also possesses the eternal perspective which he receives from his elevated position in *Inferno* as Dante's guide.

Virgil as an aeviternal figure contributes towards reading *Inferno* through the lens of apocalyptic dimensions and the apocalyptic genre as it creates an aeviternal space which allows Dante to descend into the depths of Hell, as a man with accesses to the eternal perspective denied to some of the souls, such as Ulysses. Virgil also serves as a reminder to the reader of the perverse and distortive nature of the infernal realm in relation to time, as Virgil is a conglomerate of theoretical conceptions of time, who is constantly present in the narrative of *Inferno*. Virgil, when considered in light of Frank Kermode's conception of the *aevum*-space contributes toward the apocalyptic undercurrent of the poem as a reminder that the dimensions

²⁷³ Ibid, p. 9.

²⁷⁴ *Inf.*, I. 67.

of apocalyptic narratives in the form of temporal and spatial manipulations are constantly present and available to Dante-pilgrim.²⁷⁵

Concluding Comments

Dante's Ulysses is a purposefully enigmatic figure in the *Inferno* and in the *Commedia* as a whole. The obscurity of meaning and significance of the allegory contributes toward an apocalyptic reading of Ulysses. His failure to obtain the eternal perspective in his journey to transgress the bounds of human knowledge, and at the moment of death, in addition to his reluctance to relinquish his human perspective in the *aevum*-like moment constitutes his failed apocalyptic journey. Similarly, from his position in Hell, he fails to view the apocalyptic qualities of his death as a moment in which unification with God is possible. His journey in search of transgressing the bounds of human knowledge fails because he attempts his journey without divine decree and then fails to see past his human transgression when presented with the opportunity to turn his moment of death into an apocalyptic unification with the eternal, divine perspective. Dante-poet references figures such as Elijah and Aeneas to serve as interpretative indicators as to the significance of the journey and Ulysses' failed journey. The inclusion of cities like Florence and Troy in the canto bring the notion of human history, both contemporary and legendary into the reading of the canto as a whole and contribute toward the apocalyptic, historical and temporal perspectives Dante-poet wishes to bring to the fore in consideration of this episode. The failed journey of Dante-pilgrim presented in the introductory canto can be read as a foil to the journey of Ulysses. In a similar fashion to Ulysses' journey, Dante's journey up Mount Purgatory fails because he does not possess the transcendental perspective mediated by an aeviternal figure.

²⁷⁵ Collins, *The Apocalyptic Genre*, p. 5. I have derived this from the definition of the apocalyptic genre and narrative.

It is a failed apocalyptic journey in which the apocalyptic dimensions of Dante-poet's narrative are brought to the fore. It is in the journey motif that Dante's apocalyptic resonances are manifested. The journey presents the meeting point between historical tellurian time and the eternal time of God and Hell. Conceptions of time as an entity are also presented in the journey motif. I have discussed the linear conception of time both from a Pagan origin from Classical narratives and from a Neoplatonic interpretation of these narratives. Similarly, I have explored time as a circular entity in which the subject returns to their original state, and the Neoplatonic interpretation of this facet of the journey as a journey of return of the soul to God, its creator. In the journey, the perspective of eternal time must be obtained, and historical time must be viewed from this perspective by the subject of the journey. This conflation of time contributes toward the creation of an *aevum*-like space and the apocalyptic moment. Figures such as Odysseus, Aeneas, Dante's Ulysses, Elijah and the witness to his assumption, Elisha, bring in the temporal dimension and the permutations of time. Through the journey the linear, circular, and repetitive helical theories of time are shown and the dimension of time and eternity is brought into the narrative.

The journey narrative has many permutations in the *Inferno*, and the nature of the journey brings the dimension of time to the fore which can be explored through the lens of the apocalyptic. The dimension of time is frequently choreographed in a manipulated fashion in the journey; historical is presented alongside the eternal. In consideration of Ulysses, the historical and the legendary are conflated into a concrete figure in possession of a distinct personality. Other understandings of the apocalyptic journey, like the direct ascension apocalyptic journey to God, are presented in the same episode. The apocalyptic qualities of the journey, such as the conflation of subjective perspectives and the unification with God, are brought to the fore when Ulysses' journey of Canto XXVI is explored in relation to other models of the journey, both presented to readers by the canto and in the figure of Ulysses.

Dante-pilgrim's similarly transgressive journey of Canto I can be explored in relation to Ulysses' journey. Dante melds the Neoplatonic interpretation of the journey of the soul with the Classical models of the linear journey and the circular journey, which are drawn from the epic tradition. This allows Dante to explore the temporal realm and the apocalyptic in the form of the journey narrative.

In this chapter, I have explored the apocalyptic concerns of the journey motif as Dante's as explored it in the figures of Ulysses and Dante-pilgrim. The notion of perspective and the eternal perspective which is gained as the journey progresses by the human subject is vital in moments of apocalyptic significance. In the following chapter, I investigate the disruption of the eternal-infernal timescape of Hell by the presence of Dante-pilgrim as he travels on his journey through Hell.

Chapter 5: Apocalyptic Eschatological and Historical Vision

Introduction to Chapter

The encounter between the travellers, Dante-pilgrim and his guide Virgil, and the sinners of *Inferno* disrupt the eternal-infernal landscape, which is marked by a cycle of repetitive punishments assigned to the souls of those who sinned against God in their earthly lifetimes. In these encounters and exchanges with the souls, instances resembling earthly encounters are presented. This is Dante's realism. These encounters in the infernal landscape mimic the interactions of daily life, and most importantly mimic the interactions between living human beings. Yet, they are encounters of one man, Dante, with the souls of the dead set against the backdrop of the eternal time of Hell. Erich Auerbach authored a widely influential book entitled *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* in which a chapter is dedicated to the exchange between the souls of Farinata and Cavalcante of Canto V and the figure of Dante-pilgrim.²⁷⁶ In the eighth chapter of Auerbach's *Mimesis*, the realism of the exchange is discussed at length. In this chapter of my dissertation, I wish to postulate that pockets of historical time, and therefore linear time, are created in the eternal, and repetitive time-scapes of the infernal realm. The lack of progression of time in Hell is disrupted by the presence of the pilgrim and by the encounters he has with the souls of sinners. This disruption of eternal time is caused by the creation of pockets of historical time which house exchanges between Dante-pilgrim and the souls which are fundamentally comprised of their earthly memories. At various instances in the *Inferno*, Dante-pilgrim is presented in an elevated state above the sinners. From this elevated state he possesses a unique viewpoint of perception which is not made available to the sinners. His elevated position allows him to view the internal conflicting impulses of the sinners and the distorted temporal contexts in which they are presented.

²⁷⁶Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, (Oxfordshire and New Jersey: Princeton Classics, 1953, rpt. 2013)

In the manifestation of the notion of *contrapasso* in the *Inferno*, time cycles are referenced, and Pagan circular time is gestured toward. One such instance in which the circular nature of Hell is revealed in the typology of the landscape is in the punishment experienced by adulterers of Canto V. The cycle of punishments and the circular order of Hell is made most evident in Canto V where Dante-pilgrim encounters the lovers Paolo and Francesca. The souls of these lovers and various other lovers throughout history, both historical history and legendary history, experience: “*La bufera infernal, chi mai non resta, // mena li spiriti con la sua rapina; // voltando e percotendo li molesta.*”²⁷⁷ Within the second circle of Hell, the punishments received by the souls reflects the circular nature of the infernal realm. The hellish cyclone which punishes the souls is a never-ending cycle of buffeting and movement dolled upon the souls.²⁷⁸ The cycle is endless and repetitive and the only respite the souls experience is their brief encounter with Dante-pilgrim, which is discussed later in this chapter. As Mazzotta states, the souls “go swirling around in a circular structure” around the landscape.²⁷⁹ This motion echoes the conical structure of Hell, which is a series of concentric circles descending to the figure of Dis, which is also discussed in this chapter. The nature of the law of *contrapasso* is also made evident in this episode as a punishment reflective of the nature of the sin committed. Mazzotta also states: “Francesca and the other souls here are caught in a whirl of love, and they enact a caricature of the circular, perfect movement of the mind and the angels around the divinity. Francesca and Paolo...are swirling in endless circles, and they will never rest.”²⁸⁰ Canto V, and *Inferno* as a whole, parodies the divine symbolism of the perfection of the circle which represents “the plentitude and perfection of movement” in Medieval

²⁷⁷ *Inf.*, V, 31-33.

²⁷⁸ Anthony Esolen’s translation of V.31, (The Modern Library: New York. 2002. rpt. 2005)

²⁷⁹ Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, p. 39.

²⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

symbolism.²⁸¹ The linear is the counterpart to the circular and implies a direction of movement in time to a precise destination.²⁸² Aristotle first conceived of time in relation to movement.

Dante-poet presents instances involving the conflict of historical time and the eternal timescape of Hell. These instances are presented in the encounters between the souls of the sinners in Hell and Dante-pilgrim and are discussed by Erich Auerbach in both *Dante Poet of the Secular World* and in *Farinata and Cavalcante*, the eighth chapter of *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Auerbach discusses the interaction between the souls of Cavalcante and Farinata and Dante-pilgrim and the complex interaction between individuality and historical time against the backdrop of the eternal context. The realism of the exchange and its mimetic qualities are also explored. I conceive of these instances which Auerbach discusses as pockets of historical time in the eternal-temporal context. They are representations of human existence distilled to the very essential characteristics of what it means to be human. In these temporally manipulated spaces the meeting point between human historical time and the eternal everlasting time of God, as configured by the eternal duration of Hell, is brought to the fore. The yoking of two differently understandings of the temporal order, one Christian in nature and the other Pagan and Classical in nature, can at instances resemble apocalyptic moments when presented to the reader alongside other representations of time. The cyclical nature of the infernal realm echoes Pagan cycles of time. In considering these pockets and temporal encounters, the perverse nature of the infernal realm is made apparent. It is the nature of Hell that the fundamental dimension of human existence is distorted, especially in the *forma mentis mediaevalis*, as the earthly life cycle is viewed in relation to movement in comparison to the stasis of Providence. At certain instances in *Inferno*, such as the Epicureans of Canto X, the souls possess a distorted hyperopic vision of the historical-human time realm.

²⁸¹ Ibidem.

²⁸² Ibidem.

Within occurrences of pockets of historical time, temporal dimensions are disfigured which speaks to the apocalyptic undercurrent of the text which I am exploring. In this chapter, these moments are demonstrated to be moments of the *kairos* of high time and are reminiscent of the apocalyptic animus. I will explore the conflict between the historical time of man and its presentation in the infernal-eternal timescape of Hell, and the implications of this relationship regarding an apocalyptic reading of *Inferno*. The figures of Cavalcante and Farinata and their interaction with Dante-pilgrim is a central episode in an exploration of historical and eternal time and as such will be explored. Following this exploration, the pilgrims' encounter with the figure of Dis, presented by the final canto of *Inferno*, will be investigated, focussing on the state of undeath of Dante-pilgrim which he experiences in Canto XXXIV. These pockets of historical time when presented, as Dante-poet does, in the eternal context, bring the apocalyptic-temporal animus of the narrative to the fore and contribute toward the argument for an apocalyptic exegesis of the text which I am attempting in this dissertation. In these pockets of time, Dante-poet attempts a revision of history in which the historical is presented alongside Classical and Biblical myth in a perverse and distorted fashion. When read through the lens of the apocalyptic, these temporal permutations of the infernal realm acquire unique significances in the *Inferno*.

The souls presented in pockets of historical time can be viewed as being divided between an impulse toward solipsism and the constant turning back on themselves, both in their earthly lives and in the afterlife; and on the other hand, an impulse toward eternalising history and creating historical significances and mythology. These impulses are inherently masked in the souls and are not demonstrated upfront. Dante-pilgrim, and therefore the reader, is privy to these impulses from his elevated status in the narrative. The impulses displayed by the souls are inherently contradictory in nature. One of the driving forces in these impulses is memory, which counter-intuitively affects the impulses both to solipsism and eternalising

history. The dimension of time is distorted in Hell, and in Canto XXXIV, specifically, it is disfeatured. The sinners partake in this obfuscation and have a unique perception of the temporal order from their perspectives in Hell. Dante-pilgrim is elevated to a perspective from which he has the ability to view the sinner's interaction with the temporal realm and its distortion. In *Inferno*, especially, Dante-poet attempts a consolidation between Christian conceptions of time and Pagan apocalyptic notions of time. This chapter is an exploration in the meeting point between these two elements in *Inferno* and explores the way in which Dante-pilgrim and the sinners of Hell interact with perspectives and the conflicting understandings of time, and the interplay between historical time and eternity.

Revision of history, both contemporary history and remote legendary historical myth, is a common feature of narratives of the apocalyptic genre. Instances of revisionary history and mythology are presented within these pockets of historical time and are set against the eternal-infernal context of Hell. Authors of narratives belonging to the apocalyptic genre who find sources and parallels in ancient mythology and eschatological prophecy traditionally place great emphasis on the temporal aspect of apocalyptic and their writings.²⁸³ Dante places immense emphasis on the temporal dimension of apocalyptic instances in *Inferno*. One of the ways in which this is achieved is through the writing of remote legendary figures such as Ulysses into concrete history and distilling the essence of soul of this figure in his *status animarum pro mortis*. At the fundamental level, *Inferno* is a perverse temporal-scape which distorts the temporal realm. History and legend are conflated into the same figure. Hell is constructed in light of the eternal everlastingness of God, and the relation of this timescape to human, historical and temporal time. As the pilgrim traverses the infernal landscape, this feature becomes apparent. The perversion of time reaches its nexus in the encounter between Dante-pilgrim and the figure of Dis, who is positioned at the complete antithesis to God and

²⁸³ Collins, *The Jewish Apocalypses*, p. 21.

trapped in a quasi-static state, yet still contained in divine order. Dis also serves to parody the representation of God in the *Paradiso*. The pilgrim experiences a liminal state of being in which he exists outside of time theories and transitions from the infernal realm to the realm of purgation.

This chapter explores the notion of memory and its involvement in the creation of idiosyncratic souls in Hell, which are a fundamental element in pockets of historical time. The creation of these pockets also relies on the character of Dante-pilgrim who creates moments of significance in the eternal-infernal timescape. These instances are explored culminating in the anti-apocalyptic static moment of Dante-pilgrim's non-existence in the face of the figure of Dis in the concluding chapter of *Inferno*. Moments of particular Dantesque apocalyptic significance contain a meeting point between the eternal realm and the human in the presence of other dissimilar representations of time, such as the aeviternal space.

Pockets of Historical Time

Dante-pilgrim encounters the souls of historical men and women, such as those of Paolo and Francesca, and figures from legendary history like Ulysses and Minos, throughout his journey through Hell. In the process of meeting these souls and in Dante-poet's writing of these figures, they have been written into history. In these instances, Dante mythologises history and creates an earthly history for the souls in *Inferno*. Therefore, it can be said that Dante-poet has written the figures of the souls he encounters along his journey into both mythological and human history. The ordinary lovers of *Inferno* V would have passed into history without any special significance had it not been for *Il summo poeta*'s “*ngegno*,”²⁸⁴ which turned the ordinary scene into historical legend. Dante created their myth with which we as readers and critics can engage, several hundred years later. In a similar manner, Dante extended and therefore revised contemporary existing myths from the Classical period which breathed a new dimension to the

²⁸⁴ *Inf.*, XXVI. 21.

characters of legend. Dante-poet is synonymous with the extended myth of Ulysses' journey which he undertakes after his return to Ithaca. In this instance, Dante revisits the Homeric myth in order to present readers with an enigmatic figure who haunts Dante-pilgrim throughout his other worldly journey, as I have shown in chapter three. At various, and arguably most, instances in which Dante-poet creates personas which he then presents to readers, he is acutely aware of the dimensions of the apocalyptic tradition which precedes him and writes his characters in light of this apocalyptic tradition. As Auerbach has noticed, in the souls Dante-pilgrim encounters, we have an "image of the Earthly world in all its diversity transposed into the world of ultimate destiny and perfect order."²⁸⁵ Thus the earthly world and its elements can be viewed in light of the eternal landscape in which they are housed. The souls Dante encounters in Hell, are acutely aware and preoccupied with their deaths, which is their moment of transition from the earthly realm into the afterlife. In the moment of death, the opportunity to reconcile their lives and earthly history with God and the eternal dimension is made available to them, but in all instances is ignored in favour of their personal histories. They are given the opportunity to view their earthly histories from the eternal perspective, but this opportunity is neglected. In their eternal position in *Inferno*, the souls have constructed solipsistic spaces in which they cannot see past their deaths and earthly lives. In each episode, the souls look back at their death and do not possess insight into their preternatural future through the vision of God and grace, as they have turned away from God. These apocalyptic resonances emerging as a result of the consolidation of historical and earthly time with the eternal time of God are unrecognised by the souls. At the time of death, and in their experiences in the timescapes of Hell, the historical time of man is presented against the backdrop of the eternal time of Hell, and this presentation of time fails to be integrated with the visions of time the souls possess, as they fundamentally cannot see past their earthly solipsism. In moments of apocalyptic

²⁸⁵ Auerbach, *Dante, Poet of the Secular World*, p. 134.

significance, the historical time of man is brought into contact with the eternal time of God, or the eternal time of Hell, in view of the subject of the apocalyptic moment who then possesses the ability to consider life and actions in relation to the expanse of human history and the eternal motionless time-state of God.²⁸⁶ Despite their apparent unawareness of their position, all souls Dante-poet presents in *Inferno* possess an underlying aura of apocalyptic animus as they have been presented in a distorted dimension of time and space, which is a common feature of narratives belonging to the apocalyptic genre.²⁸⁷

In *La Commedia* and specifically for this study, in *Inferno*, Dante presents readers with the essence of the earthly existence of the souls in the infernal realm in their *status recipientis pro meritis*.²⁸⁸ The essence of the souls has been distilled from their living historical reality and then attached to the souls. The souls are idiosyncratically human and possesses human attributes in the afterlife; they have not been stripped of their essentially human characteristics as the souls presented in preceding other-worldly narratives such as the *Odyssey*, have been.²⁸⁹ In Dante's narrative of his *descensus ad inferos*, the souls possess memory and other habitually human characteristics. Memory is the epitome of the human condition, and this is the idiosyncratically identifiably human characteristic in the souls.²⁹⁰ Memory is, therefore, the crucially human attribute the souls possess and the souls' link to their earthly histories.

In narratives such as the *Odyssey*, the hero is presented as an archetype of humanity. The souls presented to readers in the *catabasis* of the *Odyssey* and other Classical texts, are images of men and are not fully whole in their presentations.²⁹¹ Dante's souls are cast in concrete unity and wholeness of existence, and as such possess unique idiosyncrasies, which

²⁸⁶ Collins, *The Jewish Apocalypses*, p. 22.

²⁸⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸⁸ Auerbach, *Dante, Poet of the Secular World*, p. 139. ('The state according to merit')

²⁸⁹ Ibid, pp. 142-4.

²⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 144.

²⁹¹ Ibid, p. 142.

subverts the traditional representation of the souls in the afterlives of Classical narratives. Traditionally, and preceding Dante, Christian legend and Classical epic poetry portrayed leading characters as archetypes on which the historical man, existing in history and with their living reality, could model himself. These mythological stories represented an abstract anecdotal representation of types, and remote legendary heroes.²⁹² Dante's representation of concrete and historical figures in his poem causes the temporal narrative to shift from the archetypal narrative, into a narrative historically grounded in human figures. In Dante's opus magnum, Christian legend becomes immanent historical reality.²⁹³ Dante's presentation of himself as Dante-pilgrim, in addition to the concrete composition of infernal souls create pockets of historical time in the eternal temporal order of the afterlife.²⁹⁴ These pockets of historical time are juxtaposed with the eternal backdrop of the infernal realm and serve as salient static points against which we can compare the movement displayed and encapsulated by this historical figure of Dante-pilgrim, who traverses the otherworld as a living man, "*corruttibile ancora, ad immortale...andò*".²⁹⁵ It is in this way that the figure of Dante-pilgrim and to an extent, the guiding figure of Virgil can be viewed as figures with apocalyptic resonances as they embody temporal anomalies. Inherently, they house temporal transgressions and they bring these transgressions into the realms of Hell as they descend. In the figure of Dante-pilgrim, specifically, the human world is effectively brought into contact with the preternatural.

Dante casts Christian mythological and historical figures from legend alongside the historical reality of contemporary figures who he knew, and whom he befriended. Ulysses is presented alongside Popes from Christian and contemporary history, and ordinary figures such

²⁹² Ibid, p. 175.

²⁹³ Ibid, pp. 175-179.

²⁹⁴ Erich Auerbach, *Chapter 8: Farinata and Cavalcante*. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. Fiftieth Anniversary edition. (Princeton: Princeton University Press Princeton Classics, 1953. Rpt. 2013), p. 194.

²⁹⁵ *Inf.*, II. 14-15.

as the lovers of Canto V, Paolo and Francesca. For Dante, both Christian and Classical legend become immanent historical reality.²⁹⁶ Figures from Christian mythology take on human and historical characteristics and are presented in *Inferno* possessing distinct personalities. Dante-poet takes Christian mythical narratives and through the presentation of these figures in *La Commedia*, creates souls grounded in historical figures with a historical context with whom he can commune. Dante shares his experiences of the encounters with these figures with his readers. By writing these remote legendary figures into concrete history, Dante revises myths from the remote past and presents them in the historical past. Revision of history is one of the defining characteristics of narratives of the apocalyptic genre, according to the *Semeia 14* study of early Christian and Jewish apocalyptic narratives. In addition, Semeia 14 found that authors of apocalyptic narratives who find sources and parallels in ancient mythology (and eschatological prophecy) traditionally place great emphasis on the temporal axis of apocalyptic writings.²⁹⁷ Dante-poet places immense emphasis on his temporal axes of *Inferno* through mechanisms such as above in which the legendary past is revised as historical myth.

History

Augustinian History

Augustine's view of the historical dimension has become widely accepted as the Christian conception of history. Because of the uniqueness of the coming of Christ, it cannot be repeated, and therefore runs "counter to any cyclical world view" casting history in a linear fashion.²⁹⁸ For Augustine, and therefore for a Medieval Christian conception of history, there are two branches to history: *historia sacra* and *historia saecularis* also known as *historia profana*.²⁹⁹ *Historia sacra* can be conceived of as the events in the Old and New Testaments and are

²⁹⁶ Auerbach, *Dante Poet of the Secular World*, p. 175.

²⁹⁷ Collins, *The Jewish Apocalypses*, p. 21.

²⁹⁸ Johannes Van Oort, *The End is Now: Augustine on History and Eschatology*, (HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 68.1, 2012), p. 1.

²⁹⁹ These two terms are not used by Augustine but can be applied to his view of history as demonstrated by Markus: Markus, R.A., 1970, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge), pp. 1-21.

documented and interpreted with divine guidance and therefore are normative, whereas *historia saecularis* constitutes human history which is undocumented by Biblical texts. History not written under divine inspiration is therefore ‘profane’. *Historia sacra* is the heuristic foundation for the Augustinian concept of history.³⁰⁰ Dante, writing the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, would have been aware of these theological conceptions of history and time and would have written *La Commedia* mindful of these constructions. As demonstrated in the following sections of this chapter, Dante presents a view of time that mediates between the Augustinian *historia sacra* and *historia saecularis*.

Dantesque History and Realism

Charles Davis conceives of Dante’s comprehension of history as a “vision of history” which “suggests the immediacy and intensity of Dante’s perception of God’s providence acting through his chosen people among the gentiles.”³⁰¹ It also focusses on the eschatological element of Dante’s conception of history as it places emphasis on a “future deliverer who would rescue Christendom from contemporary chaos and fulfil the promise of ancient Roman order.”³⁰² Davis’ terminology is borrowed from a lecture given by W. H. V. Reade of the University of Oxford, delivered in 1939 to the British Academy. However, Reade uses the term ‘vision’ with slightly different connotations: Reade believes Dante’s providential ideology to be too irrational to be referent to as a philosophy. Davis continues: “Dante’s vision of history was largely a vision of Rome. His historical theology depended much more on myths of the past and dreams of the future than on a close reading of contemporary trends.”³⁰³ Charles Singleton conceives of Dante’s notion of history as something which is available to interpretation, especially allegorical interpretation in which the plan of the divine being is made

³⁰⁰ Van Oort, *The End is Now: Augustine on History and Eschatology*, pp. 4-7.

³⁰¹ Charles Davis, *Dante’s Vision of History*, (Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society, No. 188: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 244.

³⁰² Ibidem.

³⁰³ Ibid, p. 257.

present and available to the human realm, for events and patterns of history are directly influenced by the eternal realm to which the human strives.³⁰⁴ Singleton's view of Dante's history aligns with the *forma mentis mediaevalis* in which symbolic interpretation of events dominated everyday life.

Dante's realism is realism of experience projected into a changeless eternity.³⁰⁵ Auerbach delineates Dante's understanding of history as the basis of Dante's realism, and his history is in constant connection with God's plan, toward which all earthly things tend. Earthly event and earthly phenomena are directly connected with providential plan, so that "a multiplicity of vertical links establish an immediate relationship with the divine eternal plan of salvation."³⁰⁶ Dante's conception of history is therefore a pattern of earthly events and processes in a constant forward motion, immediately and intrinsically linked with the eternal providence of God. The goal of the process of salvation is to stand in the presence of "the white rose in the empyrean" in God's no longer veiled presence, which then gives certain hope for the future.³⁰⁷ Dante's style reflects his conception of history. It is the integrating of characteristically individual, which is at times grotesque and vulgar, with the dignity of God's judgement – a quality which possesses the ability to transcend the ultimate limits of our earthly conception of the sublime.³⁰⁸ Drawing on these ideas, I intend to show that within the temporal context of the *Inferno*, Dante's presentation of history is given to readers contained in *aevum*-like pockets housed in the eternal context of Hell. The presentation of history in the eternal context allows for its distortion and the distortion of the historical facet of time. In viewing these instances in which time exists by virtue of its historical progression in its representation of the episodes, against the backdrop of the static eternal context, the apocalyptic dimensions

³⁰⁴ Singleton, *Dante and Myth*, p. 498.

³⁰⁵ Auerbach, *Farinata and Cavalcante*, p. 194.

³⁰⁶ Ibidem.

³⁰⁷ Ibidem.

³⁰⁸ Ibidem.

of Dante's conceptions of time and the historical positioned in time are brought to the fore. The meeting point between history and eternity has apocalyptic significances of which Dante is acutely aware. As Dante-pilgrim progresses toward the white rose of the empyrean Heaven, in his catabasis, away from the light and movement of Heaven, the instances in which historical time is created become increasingly perverse. Dante presents a conflation of the real, mimetic individual soul and legendary hero in a quasi-historical episode set in the eternal-infernal context.

*The Presentation of the Souls: "la prima di color di cui novella tu vuo'
saper: "*³⁰⁹*Abstractions of Classical and Historical Figures*

The Classical era configured man in literature as a remote legendary hero, an "abstract and anecdotal representative of an ethical type."³¹⁰ Dante departs from the Classical topology of literature by focussing on the historical reality of man in an image of concrete individual in his unity and wholeness against the backdrop of the eternal realm.³¹¹ For Dante, this is one of the ways he writes myth and legend into history. *Il summa poeta* drew upon legends and mythology from both Christian and Classical contexts and wrote them into a historical reality through his presentation of the figures distilled to a human essence with vivid memory of their given time on Earth. In some senses Dante demythologises Classical figures and presents their human psyche in the eternal realm. Additionally, these figure are presented alongside Dante's contemporary historical figures, which further enhances the historical reality of existence Dante gives the Classical figures through their textual associations with historical contemporary figures. At certain instances in *Inferno*, Dante both revises and creates historical mythology and attaches this to the Classical figures he presents. One example of this is Dante's Ulysses of Canto XXVI: Dante creates a myth which revises and extends the Classical *nostos* myth of Ulysses. At other instances in the poem, Dante-poet revises the historical dimension

³⁰⁹ *Inf.*, V. 52-53.

³¹⁰ Auerbach, *Dante Poet of the Secular World*, p. 175.

³¹¹ *Ibidem*.

of his characters, as is the case with Paolo and Francesca, the lovers of Canto V. Effectually, Dante writes the lovers in historical legend, based on human figures which would have otherwise been lost into the ages. At another point in the poem, Dante presents a historical image of the history of mankind in his figure of the Old Man of Crete in Canto XIV which is the origin of the four rivers of Hell. This figure revises the temporal epochs of man and presents them to the reader in a conglomerate and composite image, which is discussed in chapter three of this study: *Dante's Allegorical Apocalyptic Imagination*.

In *La Commedia*, Dante explores eschatological philosophy relating to human destiny: individual destiny is not meaningless but is necessarily tragic and significant and the whole world context is revealed in it.³¹²⁺³¹³ As Auerbach states: "The perception of history and immanent reality arrived at in the *Comedy* through an eschatological vision, flowed back into real history, filling it with the blood of authentic truth, for an awareness had been born that a man's concrete earthly life is encompassed in his ultimate fate and that the event in its authentic, concrete, complete uniqueness is important for the part it plays in God's judgement."³¹⁴ *La Commedia* is "a literary work which imitates reality and in which all imaginable spheres of reality appear: past and present, sublime grandeur and vile vulgarity, history and legend, tragic and comic occurrences, man and nature; finally, it is the story of Dante's – i.e. one single individual's – life and salvation, and thus a figure of the story of mankind's salvation in general."³¹⁵ In the *Inferno*, Dante interprets historical reality against the backdrop of the eternal timescape which allows the pilgrim, and the reader, to experience instances of divine and eternal perspective conflated into the historical, human moment. The

³¹² Ibid, p. 177.

³¹³ This philosophical model, pioneered by Dante in the Middle Ages, would come to be developed by Renaissance Humanists. It is in this regard that Dante prefigured the Renaissance. Dante's philosophy and theology is also a Christian vision of man: the individual is rebirthed in the afterlife with historical significance and a unity in spirit and body. (Auerbach, *Dante, Poet of the Secular world*, p. 117).

³¹⁴ Ibid, p. 178.

³¹⁵ Auerbach, *Farinata and Cavalcante*, p. 189.

souls trapped in *Inferno* do not progress beyond this point of perspective as the reader and Dante-pilgrim do. Charles Singleton also alludes to the notion of the representation of concrete history and unity of identity in the souls of sinners, although not in the same detail as Auerbach, albeit in the same vein of criticism. Singleton states that “into that other world he takes a concrete and individual personality even as the dead in death,”³¹⁶ which can be viewed as a simplistic summation of Auerbach’s writings.

Farinata and Cavalcante: The *Cieco Carcere*³¹⁷

I argue that the combination of the presentation of history and the eternal time embodied by the infernal landscape echoes the dimensions of apocalyptic instances. In apocalyptic instances the temporal dimension is frequently disfigured. Often this results in the presentation of the encounter of historical time in relationship with the vastness of eternity. Memory, specifically the way in which Dante-poet uses memory in the presentation of the sinners, constitutes human history. The souls in *Inferno* possess their personal histories, existing in time, through the faculty of memory and have been distilled from extracts of these memories. The figures of Cavalcante and Farinata are exemplary figures which are obsessed with their earthly histories, and cannot escape their tellurian memories. In the following discussion, I explore the notions of memory, history, and eternal time in relation to the two Epicureans of Canto X.

Dante represents the individual as the sum of memory. It is memory that constitutes the unique souls we find in *Inferno*. Memory, according to Augustine’s account is recollection of the past in the present moment, it is the present of past things.³¹⁸ It is also through memory that the past is reconstructed. There is a present time for things past and that is memory in the present.³¹⁹ Essentially then, for Augustine, memory is bringing fragments of the past time into

³¹⁶ Singleton, *Dante and Myth*, pp. 488-491.

³¹⁷ *Inf.*, X. 58. (*‘Prison of the blind’* – my translation)

³¹⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, XI. 20.

³¹⁹ Manning, L., Cassel, D., Cassel, J. C., *St Augustine’s Refelctions on Memory and Time and the Current Concept of Subjective Time in Mental Time Travel*. (Behavioural Sciences. 3. 2013), p. 233. (Referring to Augustine’s *Confessions*, Book 11)

the present time. For Dante-poet in the *Inferno*, as interpreted by Auerbach, memory is the manifestation of the sum of individual personality and experience and is the abstract concept from which Dante distils each of the souls he encounters in *Inferno*. Thus, following Auerbach's reading of Dante, memory is the supreme faculty by which the souls are constructed in Hell. However, Dante would have been familiar with Augustine's writings on the faculty of memory and would have included these in his presentations of the souls of *Inferno* as souls inhabiting memory.

One of the most memorable encounters Dante-pilgrim has is with Cavalcante and Farinata, in Canto X. The exchange between the soul of Cavalcanti and the living Dante-pilgrim interrupts the dialogue between Dante-pilgrim and fellow Florentine, Farinata degli Uberti. As Auerbach has noted, the entire episode is an episode of interruptions. The reader is presented with four scenes crowded together, and a triple shift in the course of events. There is no unity of action and the relation of three different events are conveyed in fragments.³²⁰ Cavalcante de' Cavalcante interrupts the discourse between Dante and Farinata to inquire after his son, and to the state of his life on earth, only to fall back down into the fiery tomb upon hearing and misinterpreting Dante-pilgrim's answer:

Allor surse a la vista scoperchiata 52

un'ombre, lungo questa, infino al mento:

credo che s'era in ginocchie levata.

Dintorno mi guardò, come talento 55

avesse di veder s'altri era meco;

e poi che 'l sospecciar fu tutto spento

³²⁰ Auerbach, *Farinata and Cavalcante*, p. 177.

piangendo disse: “se per questo cieco 58

carcere vai per altezza d’ingegno,

mio figlio ov’è? E perché non è teco?”

Di subito drizzato gridò: “Come 67

dicesti ‘elli ebbe’? non viv’ ell ancora?

non fiere li occhi suoi lo dolce lume?”

Quando s’accorse d’alcuna Dimora 70

ch’io facëa dinanzi a la risposta,

supin ricadde e più non parve fora.³²¹

The combination of the interruptions and the identity of the two souls re-enacts the “little vignette of Florence in the year 1300.”³²² The Holy Jubilee Year of 1300 contains special significances when examined using the apocalyptic motif and a defining moment in time, which has previously been discussed in this study. This fact in combination with the Florentine political scene would have given Dante extraordinary circumstances around which he interpreted the Year 1300 and its significances in his writings. The turbulent Florentine political scene of Dante’s time is reflected through the interruption of Farinata’s speech and then the subsequent return. Cavalcante de’ Cavalcante is preoccupied “with a sense of dynastic continuity, all within the immanence of personal concerns and family.”³²³ Cavalcante’s anxious questions “shows that he too [as well as Farinata] continues to have the same character and the same passions that he had in his lifetime...love of life on Earth, belief in the

³²¹ *Inf.*, X. 52-60/67-72.

³²² Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, p. 60.

³²³ *Ibidem*.

autonomous greatness of the human mind, and above all love and admiration for his son Guido.”³²⁴ The souls are the representations of the fragments of the personas whose historical destinies they contain. These fragmented presentations possess distorted historic-temporal knowledge, which is supported by Auerbach: “Their only link to their life on earth is memory.”³²⁵ They are connected to their earthly lives and therefore earthly time through memory. The souls hope for the reclamation of their physical bodies at the Judgement Day. Auerbach also states: “Their state is definitive and immutable except that it will be affected by one single change, their ultimate recovery of their physical bodies at the Resurrection on the Last Day.”³²⁶ The souls of Farinata and Cavalcante reclaim their physical bodies at the end of historical time and are enclosed in their tombs for the eternity after Judgement Day at the end of Time. They only possess knowledge of historical time and do not look forward to the end of historical time and Judgement Day as the souls of *Paradiso* do; they will be condemned to Hell for historical time and then for eternity where they will continually experience their own solipsistic shortcomings and neurosis with their historical lives.

The souls possess hyperopic vision: they clearly see earthly events of the somewhat distant past or future, and hence can foretell the future, but they are blind to the earthly present. They possess their own earthly lives in the form of memory, although these lives are ended.³²⁷ The combination of memory and their hyperopic vision makes the encounter memorable as these two elements create the realistic nature of the encounter: the souls produce the impression that they are alive, and not dead, in spite of their temporal and spatial immutability. It is this realism of the encounter that renders the episode memorable and affective, arousing intense visceral emotion in both Dante-pilgrim and the reader. Dante’s realism is the reflection of the

³²⁴ Auerbach, *Farinata and Cavalcante*, p. 177.

³²⁵ Ibid, p. 190.

³²⁶ Ibid, p. 190.

³²⁷ Ibidem.

state of human interactions on earth presented against the backdrop of the eternal timescape. Dante's souls possess a changeless existence. Into this changeless existence, Dante "plunges the living world of human action and endurance and more especially of individual deeds and destinies."³²⁸ These personal and unique histories, which the souls possess through memory are relayed to the pilgrim against the backdrop of the eternal landscape. The combination of history, and therefore historical time, and eternal time brings the apocalyptic-temporal dimension of the encounter to the fore. Within the encounter several temporal narratives and timescapes are conflated into one exchange. The linearity of the exchange, marked by the numerous interruptions of the scene fashions the episode as one of a historical narrative, creating a pocket of historical time in the infernal, eternal landscape. The apocalyptic dimension, housed within an *aevum*-like state, which has previously been discussed in this dissertation, is further developed by the hyperopic vision of the souls. They possess knowledge of the earthly future, and as such, the power of prophecy over historical time which is common in apocalyptic narratives. The interaction between the pilgrims and the souls and the emotional intensity with which the interaction occurs, as discussed by Erich Auerbach, creates a moment of the *kairos*, out of the successiveness of the narrative of Dante's journey. A more nuanced definition and application of the concept of the *kairos* is necessary here in order to understand Dante's positioning of the figures in this episode. Moments of the *kairos*, are times which mark the progression of human time, that is time experienced by living humans, as a moment of significance which possess teleological significance: I.e. it is through moments of the *kairos* that we come to terms with the passage of time in our earthly lives: we have lived through moments which are exulted above the rest and, most importantly, 'lived to tell the tale'.³²⁹ For example: recent developments of apocalyptic fanaticism, or apocalypticism, the year 2012 took

³²⁸ Ibid, p. 191. (Auerbach quotes George Hegel.)

³²⁹ My phrasing.

on teleological and eschatological significance as the end of the Mayan Calendar which saw a select group of fanatics predict the end of the world. In such instances, humankind, when subscribing to this school of thought, can then say, “I survived [this] event” and be proud of this fact.³³⁰ The recent turn of the millennium, from the Twentieth Century into the Twenty-first Century, saw a rise in popular apocalypticism. In much the same way as Dante interpreted contemporary events mindful of the Jubilee year, modern society, especially extreme fanatical sects of society, interpreted events at the turn of the millennium and the Year 2012.

I believe the realism of the encounter which is marked by intense emotion and the series of interrupted exchanges, combined with the temporal and hyperopic vision of the souls, their prophetic abilities, and the inclusion of Dante-pilgrim and Virgil in the exchanged housed within the eternal infernal timescape, contributes to the encounter as coming across as a moment of the *kairos* of distinguishing temporal periods. Apocalyptic narratives frequently present instances which can be considered as resembling the temporal understanding of the significance of the *kairos*. Within these instances, the temporal dimension of apocalypse and its perverse nature is made apparent.

Dante-pilgrim encounters the souls of the two Epicureans of *Inferno* X, both of whom are personalities Dante knew in his lifetime. Farinata and Cavalcante are continuously looking back at their earthly lives throughout their encounter with Dante-pilgrim, and we assume, in their experiences of their eternal punishments. The souls in *Inferno* possess a distorted view of human history which encompasses the historical future, and this is most evident in this emotional encounter. Cavalcante is concerned with his genealogy and the continuation of his legacy through his son – he does not possess insight into contemporary human time but can only perceive historical and future events:

³³⁰ Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, pp. 58-62.

‘El par che voi veggiate, se ben odo, 97

dinanzi quell che ‘l tempo seco adduce,

e nel presente tenete altro modo.’

“Noi veggiam, come quei c’ha mala luce, 100

le cose,” disse, “che ne son lontano,³³¹

In the perverse timescape of Hell, the human dimension of time is distorted, to the extent that the souls do not possess knowledge of contemporary human history but only of their past and future historical events. Even from the elevated perspective souls such as Cavalcante and Farinata possess, the apocalyptic qualities found in such instances such as the ability to view one’s earthly lifetime through the lens of the eternal, are rejected as they fail to see human history, if even only a distorted view of the historical past and future, against the eternal time and the eternal perspective offered to them by their position in Hell. This neglect of eternal and apocalyptic vision condemns the souls to their eternal infernal positions. In these instances, apocalyptic vision is offered to the souls by virtue of their positions in Hell but is rejected by their solipsism. They cannot see past themselves and their own personal historical experiences, even though divine vision is offered to them from their placement in the eternal, static afterlife.

In sum: Figures in *Inferno*, such as the memorable encounter with the Epicureans, Farinata and Cavalcante, are constructed by Dante-poet as possessing human characteristics. Dante accomplishes this by casting the souls as the sum of their earthly memories constructed from experiences in their lifetimes, which creates the individual distinctions in the souls he encounters.

³³¹ *Inf.*, X. 97-101.

This interaction between the souls of Farinata and Cavalcante, and others elsewhere in Hell-proper, take place in the infernal timescape. The nature of the timescape of the infernal realm is described above the Gates of Hell: “*Dinanzi a me non fuor cose create // se non etterne, e io eterna duro.*”³³² Time in Hell is cast as an eternal duration. Hell was created at the Fall of Lucifer: the most remote physical space from the divine celestial circles in which God dwells. Time in Hell lasts eternally and is different from the eternal time of God which exists without succession from one moment to the next. Thus, in Hell temporal succession exists and is marked by certain events which disrupt the eternal durational existence of Hell. It is a timescape of the eternal, marred by the succession of events and therefore time. This understating of the eternity of Hell correlates with the Boethian concept of *sempiternitas*, which is a durational everlastingness.³³³ According to Boethius, the sempiternal mode of being differs from the eternal mode, as it is an everlasting life lived within the temporal bounds, separated from the eternity which God possesses. Hell is bounded by the fall of Lucifer and marked by the Harrowing of Hell, the *descensus Christi ad Inferos*, described in The Gospel of Peter: 3.19, and by the Final Judgement Day which the suicides of Canto XIII “*verrem per nostre spoglie*” in a final act of reclamation,³³⁴ among other events which will transpire to the souls, such as the abovementioned Farinata and Cavalcante at Judgement Day. These three events mark the eternal timescape of the infernal realm, in much the same way as the crucifixion marks the linearity of the Christian mythological history, effectively differentiating this history into a linear history from the circular concept of history of the preceding Pagans, which is perhaps best exemplified in the *Odyssey*, and the *nostos* of eternal return.

³³² *Inf.*, III. 8-9.

³³³ H. A. Walton, *The Temporal Mode of an Eternal God: Classical, Contemporary, and Process Perspectives*. (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam (MA Thesis), 2013), p. 15.

³³⁴ *Inf.*, XIII. 103.

The soul of Cavalcante is composed entirely of memory, and it is the only facet of the soul that is shown to Dante-pilgrim. In comparison, the soul of Farinata discloses his history and the prophecy of the future, demonstrating the prophetic sight the souls of *Inferno* possess without knowledge of the Earthly present. Farinata has retained his knowledge of his Earthly history, the sum of which is presented to Dante-pilgrim, and gained prophetic knowledge of the future. Cavalcante de' Cavalcante, on the other hand, is memory in the shape of a soul, an embodiment of the past in his obsession with his son and lineage. He is entirely fixated on his past. The sum of his earthly life is presented to readers, reflects his concern which dominated his earthly existence, familial lineage and the continuation of his familial line. Dante has revised the historical figure of Cavalcante, and disregarded his other characteristics, choosing only to focus on the preoccupation with familial genealogy and dynastic continuity in his presentation of him. In doing so, Dante has created a history of a contemporary historical figure based on a single decision and moment of life, and then built a character around that moment. In Dante-poet's revision of history, he has brought the created historical moment into the present of the narrative and given it shape for eternity: the reader gets the impression that Cavalcante will always lament and be tormented by his genealogy, even though he later finds out in the encounter with Dante-pilgrim that his son is still alive.

The imagery of Farinata rising up out of the tomb, could symbolically recall a mosaic in the basement of the Church of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem which depicts Christ rising from the dead on his day of resurrection. The figure of Farinata rising up from the tomb which will encase him for eternity recalls and parodies this image.³³⁵ This association of Farinata with the figure of Christ, albeit a tentative connection to a Medieval mosaic, serves the current argument

³³⁵ Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, p. 60. Mazzotta claims Dante might have seen this image during his time on embassy to Rome: "he *could have seen* the Church of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem" (p. 60. My emphasis) However, Dante would have most certainly known about it and thus the connection and caricature seems obvious.

well as it positions the encounter in a linear fashion aligning with the Christian linear conception of time which is marked by the death and resurrection of Christ which only occurs once. Thus, the association of Farinata with the mosaic depicting this linear conception of history contributes toward the setting of Dante-pilgrim's encounter with the souls of Farinata and Cavalcante, the sense that it is situated in a temporal period which resembles the historical time of Earth.

It is also pertinent to note, here, that memory is also a characteristic of Dante-pilgrim. In this figure it is perhaps presented in a more distorted manner than the manner in which it is presented in the figures of the souls who possess a clear and extremely focussed memory of their earthly lives. "Claiming the insufficiency of memory in recalling the most ethereal moments of the pilgrim's journey is one of the ways in which Dante justifies his silence in some of the *Commedia's* greatest moments of poetic exertion. These are the moments in which human language openly reveals its inadequacy to the poet who is trying to 'say the divine.'"³³⁶ At various instances throughout the *Commedia*, Dante's language fails that which he tries to express. Yet, at certain other instances, memory is the faculty by which Dante-pilgrim revises and re-expresses his experiences along his journey, as in the opening canto of *Inferno* where "*che nel pensier rinova la paura!*"³³⁷ and is affected by his memory of the *selva oscura* in the present moment of Dante-poet.

In sum: the temporal landscape is for Dante-poet, an entity which lends itself to manipulation and multiple reworkings. It is through the mythologizing of figures such as Cavalcante and Farinata that earthly histories are passed into mythological legend. Obscurely, the converse is also true, mythological figures such as Ulysses have been written into human history and possess their unique memories and idiosyncrasies which allowed Dante-pilgrim's

³³⁶ Ibidem.

³³⁷ *Inf.*, I. 6.

interaction which creates spaces of historical time in the infernal-eternal timescape. These pockets of time bring the apocalyptic-temporal animus of the narrative to the fore and contribute toward the apocalyptic exegesis I am attempting in this dissertation.

I would like to postulate that the journey undertaken by the pilgrim-poets serves as a fourth marker in the eternal, yet linear history of the infernal landscape. The infernal timescape in *Inferno* is cast as eternal yet successional and the interruption of Dante-pilgrim to the landscape creates a linear history within the eternal realm. Auerbach's discussion of what I have termed 'pockets of historical time' are completely dependent on the idiosyncratic nature of the souls. This acute nature of the souls and the encounters with the souls and Dante-pilgrim are cast in historical time which would then negate the notion of a circular eternity in which the same encounter is repeated and relived. Thus, as Dante-pilgrim and his guide, travel through the landscapes and timescapes of Hell, they create a series of pockets of historical time which disrupt the eternal nature of the infernal-scape. Thus, as Hell is cast with temporal successiveness, and marked by historical pockets, it can be said that time in Hell is created as a linear, eternal concept, from the perspective of Dante-pilgrim. Dante experiences Hell as an eternal successional timescape marked by pockets of historical time in which he encounters the souls of sinners. The reader also experiences Hell in this way as it is from the perspective of the pilgrim that the narrative is told. This is in stark contrast to the eternal landscapes which one finds in the celestial spheres, which are casts in a complete motionless, and therefore changeless state. The eternal timescape of the celestial spheres are best exemplified by the eternity of God and the Boethian notion of "*il punto a cui tutti li tempi son presenti*,"³³⁸ on which Dante draws. The eternity of Hell parodies the eternity of Heaven, which is cast as a durational, and therefore unsuccessional, eternity.

³³⁸ *Par.*, XVII. 18.

Virgil's Aeneas and Paul have traversed through Hell before, of which Dante-pilgrim is aware. Dante situates himself as neither of the two previous travellers who also descended into Hell as living men: "*io non Enëa, io non Paulo sono.*"³³⁹ The Hell-scape has been twice disrupted by the mortal world. However, these interruptions to the preternatural world were made, as Auerbach suggests, by archetypal figures who therefore are void of individual idiosyncrasies of humans but rather are performative models or types. Aeneas and Paul have disrupted the eternal timescape of the Hell they visited, but not to the extent that Dante-pilgrim does. Our pilgrim has marked time by his idiosyncratically human nature, and his interactions with the souls of sinners. The eternal stasis of Hell has not been disturbed by Hell's previous travellers. This is also perhaps why Dante-pilgrim states that he is neither Aeneas nor Paul, because what he will be attempting has only been accomplished by Christ in the Harrowing of Hell. Dante's catabasis differs from those he mentions in the second canto of *Inferno* in two regards: firstly, Dante-poet not only encounters the souls of sinners but disrupts their cycle of eternal punishment in order to communicate. Secondly, Dante-poet is a concrete manifestation of historical force, bringing knowledge of the contemporary present and past into the narrative of the souls.

Thus, two elements are necessary for the creation of pockets of historical time which are created in the interactions between Dante and the souls of Hell. Firstly, the souls of *Inferno* need to have a "limited freedom of change" which is their ability to recall and then retell their earthly narratives to Dante-pilgrim, within their "changelessness" state.³⁴⁰ This ability is related to the human idiosyncratic nature the souls possess. The second, and perhaps more pertinent element in the construction of historical time pockets is the fact that Dante-poet has written Dante-pilgrim in an experimental form, combining the epic tradition of remote heroes

³³⁹ *Inf.*, II. 32.

³⁴⁰ Auerbach, *Farinata and Cavalcante*, p. 191.

with the concrete representation of the individual man. In the creation and experiences of Dante-pilgrim, the contemporary historical dimension is brought to the fore whilst maintaining the epic heroic character of the protagonist. Within these pockets of historical time, time moves in a linear fashion as the dialogue between the souls and the pilgrim progresses. These encounters are the only opportunity for the souls to attempt confirmation of their individuality and to recount their stories.

The souls have been equipped with Augustinian memory which is the ability to bring an image of the past into the present moment,³⁴¹ in an attempt to re-assert the self in a perverse infernal context which negates their existence. The function of memory in *Inferno* is to bring an essential and concentrated version of themselves into the present moment, presented before the souls. Their biography of life has been completed in their deaths and in the infernal afterlife they are in complete possession of the sum of their earthly existences.³⁴²

The souls in *Inferno* have had their personalities distilled to encapsulate only memory which is the complete sum of their earthly experiences. It is in this way that the personalities of the souls are only fragmentary. Dante-pilgrim, on the other hand, possess a complete personality because, according to J. A. Berthoud, it presents a constant external focus. It is a fixed personality, according to Vossler, and it neither changes nor develops.³⁴³ As Berthoud states: “The beam of Dante's attention is not directed inwards, but towards what he is experiencing, discovering, imagining, about a world beyond the self.”³⁴⁴ Conversely, the souls of the infernal realm focus their attention entirely introspectively. It is also worthwhile to remember that the presentation we have of Hell is the experience as Dante-pilgrim-poet

³⁴¹ St. Augustine, Book X.

³⁴² J. A. Berthoud, *The Vision of Eternity: An Introduction to Dante's 'Inferno.'* (*Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*. No. 25. October 1956), p. 27.

³⁴³ This is a contestable point in Dante scholarship, but for the purposes of the argument here, we will accept it at *prima facie*, according to Vossler's reading.

³⁴⁴ Berthoud, p. 22.

remembers it, as the shift in tense at the end of *Paradiso* indicates. This could indicate that the representation of Hell as given to readers via the figure of Dante-poet could be mediated by his divine insight gained at the unification with God. Hell could be mediated by the eternal perspective offered to Dante in his unification and the souls could be described in light of this eternal and godly perspective. The implication of Dante-pilgrim/poet gaining godly insight and then mediating his experience of Hell would be apocalyptic in nature as the perspective of eternal transcendental time filters historical time. Dante-pilgrim visits Hell as a man and not as a soul, although though his journey to the afterlife he experiences punishments and purgation undertaken by the souls, perhaps best exemplified by the erasure of the Seven P's on his forehead as he climbs Mount Purgatory, the eternal perspective and therefore, knowledge is granted to a man, in the eternal static sphere of the Divine, which is an apocalyptic moment, according to the definition of apocalypse developed by John Collins. The apocalyptic unification with God is not mediated by an otherworldly figure but the apocalyptic journey toward God and the ultimate apocalyptic moment is mediated by otherworldly figures, such as Virgil and Beatrice. The apocalyptic *catabasis* and journey after Hell undertaken by Dante-pilgrim can be thought of as preparation for the ultimate apocalypse, the unification with “*l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*.”³⁴⁵ The experience of the unification with God mediates Dante memory of the experience of his *catabasis* as it is in this moment that he, as a human figure, gains the ultimate transcendental perspective. From his now supremely elevated perspective, Dante's memory of his experiences in *Inferno* is filtered through the eternal and providential perspective.

In sum: It is Dante-pilgrim's external focus of the ego onto souls whose focus is entirely solipsistic and egocentric that creates the context of linear time which disrupts the eternal timescape of Hell. Dante-pilgrim's character acts in combination with the unique

³⁴⁵ *Par.*, XXXIII. 145.

idiosyncrasies of each of the souls to create episodes which occur in a linear conception of time and which are inherently unique to Dante's catabasis and therefore cannot be repeated in any eternal, or divine, cycle. These instances of linear time are presented to readers against the backdrop of the infernal timescape which contributes toward the apocalyptic nature of the encounters.

The effect of these pockets of historical time is reminiscent of the dimensions of apocalypse. In these encounters the human realm, through the creation of historical-linear time, is brought into contact with the eternal time, not of God but of Hell. The content of the encounters, the discourse and dialogue housed within the encounters and the figures involved in the encounters, further contribute to the *aevum*-like space which is created and then resembles the apocalyptic timescape. Apocalyptic timescapes, in a Danteque presentation of the multifaceted temporal realm can be defined as the meeting point between some theological conception of eternity and the human realm with other representations of the temporal dimensions. The apocalyptic timescape is an elusive dimension in a state of flux and by nature cannot be defined, apart from apocalyptic asymptotic tendencies.

Ulysses and his Quintessential(ly) Human Characteristics

Dante's Ulysses is a figure that possesses both human and archetypical features, and therefore elements from both Classical and Christian traditions of the presentation of man in narrative form. Ulysses departs from his Classical narrative and demonstrates his human qualities:

nè dolcezza di figlio, nè la pieta 94

del vecchio padre, nè 'l debito amore

lo qual dovea Penelopè far lieta,

vincer potero dentro a me l'adore 97

ch'i' ebbi a divenir del mondo esperto

e de li vizi umani e del valore;³⁴⁶

In Dante's presentation of the souls, and of the human, memory forms the epicentre of the souls. Effectually, Dante's realist presentation is the presentation of memory and history. As an exemplary figure in this regard, Ulysses possesses both a personal history, and memory thereof; and a legendary history, which is inextricable from his character.

Dante does not speak directly with the soul of Ulysses but needs Virgil as one to whom Dante "*lascia parlare a me, ch'i' ho concetto*,"³⁴⁷ because the Greek will take Dante-pilgrim's language in disdain. In this instance, Virgil acts an intermediary figure between Ulysses and Dante. The revelation unveiled in this episode is facilitated to Dante by Virgil. The encounter is housed in the eternal realm. Because the souls and Dante-pilgrim converse with one another and progress forward in their discourse; their encounter is linear, and always with a forward, downward momentum. I build this notion from Erich Auerbach's theory of the idiosyncrasies of the souls Dante encounters. The exchange the souls have with the human Dante-pilgrim is the only opportunity they have to express themselves, or enquire about the state of affairs on Earth, as is the case with Farinata and Cavalcante. Ulysses displays a "most human expression" in their encounter.³⁴⁸ It is also in this way then, that the poets disturb the eternal timeline of Hell. The souls will not have another opportunity to convey their stories of their earthly undoings. Thus, in the same way that the crucifixion of Christ marks the linearity of Christian history and mythology, the journey of the poets through the infernal realm marks a linear point in the eternal timescape of Hell. The gates above Hell describe Hell as possessing a durational eternity: "*Dinanzi a me non fuor cose create // se non etterne, e io etterna duro*."³⁴⁹ Hell, therefore, can be understood as a durational extension. However, in Auerbach's sense of the

³⁴⁶ *Inf.*, XXVI. 94-99.

³⁴⁷ *Inf.*, XXVI. 73.

³⁴⁸ Auerbach, p. 134.

³⁴⁹ *Inf.*, III. 7-8.

individuality of the souls and given that they will never again have the opportunity to communicate with the living realm, the passage of Dante housing the encounters with the souls, marks a linear historical timescape in the eternal duration of Hell.

In the danteque afterlife, the personalities of the souls are not “effaced by the shadows of death and nothing remains but an indifferent recollection of life.”³⁵⁰ The souls are presented as being truly living, through concrete data pertaining to their life experiences on Earth. Personality is manifested in the souls with completeness and concentrated essence, which most importantly, is seldomly ever achieved in their earthly lives.³⁵¹ The souls have been distilled to the very essence of their earthly personalities, idiosyncrasies, and acts. The intensity of emotions displayed at the encounter of Dante and the souls of the infernal realm are never displayed in an earthly reality. The quintessence of the emotions from a lifetime of decisions and acts is displayed in these encounters. The intensity of emotion in these encounters “far surpasses any possibly earthly encounter.”³⁵² Therefore, the encounter Dante-pilgrim has with the souls is the recollection of the quintessence of their earthly lives.

The souls have memory at their epicentre of their innermost reality. Dante-poet presents readers with a single moment of reality not their whole epic breadth of life. Within their single moment of reality chosen from their lifetimes on Earth, Dante encompasses their ultimate fate, determined by divine providence. The souls Dante-pilgrim encounters on his journey are presented in a single vision in their true essences and their judgement.³⁵³ Dante writes about the souls omitting the majority of their existence, presenting a synopsis of the lives and acts of the souls. Auerbach relates Dante to Rabelais’s *abstracteur de quinte essence*. It is in this way in which Dante differs from his Medieval predecessors and contemporaries. Dante did not

³⁵⁰ Auerbach, p. 134.

³⁵¹ Ibidem.

³⁵² Ibid, p. 135.

³⁵³ Ibid, p. 140.

choose the whole epic expanse of individual life from which to present and image of the souls, but from a single act contained within the epic expanse of life and experience.³⁵⁴ It is from this single moment, a moment of the *kairos* differentiated from the successiveness of the *chronos* of existence, as Kermode would conceive of it, on which Dante develops their *status animarum post mortem*. For most of the souls Dante-pilgrim encounters on his journey through the infernal conoid, this moment chosen for them is the moment of their earthly undoing. Paolo and Francesca, of Canto V, is an example which is readily recalled. The lovers are infatuated with the circumstances surrounding their deaths, the single act of their lives which informs completely their eternal states.

Like the other souls in Hell, Ulysses is comprised of his personal memory of his earthly lifetime, from which his character is distilled. Dante-poet's presentation of this figure is centred on his earthly undoing and his transgressive journey. These actions are drawn from the personal history of Ulysses and are inextricable from his character in the *Inferno*. Yet, simultaneously, Ulysses possesses qualities from legendary history, which also contribute toward his representation. However, it is demonstrated in the encounter with the pilgrim, that his human characteristics supersede his legendary qualities. Dante foregrounds human, realist presentation in the encounter in the eternal realm. Thus, creating a 'pocket of historical time' in which the episode is presented. The human attributes and actions of the souls contribute toward the *aevum*-like space in which historical time is presented and housed against the backdrop of infernal eternity.

Lucifer and the Non-Existence of Canto XXXIV

In the last canto, Dante-pilgrim and his guide, Virgil, are reunited with diurnal time and with the earthly time cycles of day and night. From this position the poets come out of the depth of

³⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 141.

Hell across Lucifer's body and "*riveder le stelle*."³⁵⁵ This reunion with diurnal time marks the end of the infernal timescape conception and resituates the poets in the earthly realm again, yet still with preternatural elements as they will begin climbing Mount Purgatory from this point. Similarly to the *selva oscura* of canto I, an *aevum*-like space is created to exit the infernal realm and progress onto the realm of Purgatory. Diurnal time cycles bookend the perverse timescapes of Hell and is indicated by the "*raggi del pianeta*"³⁵⁶ and "*le stelle*,"³⁵⁷ and "*la notte risurge*"³⁵⁸ as well as they physical markers of geography of the displacement of earth created by Satan at the fall.

In this canto, the poets encounter Lucifer, an anticlimactic figure, who apparently takes no notice of their presence in Hell. Giuseppe Mazzotta, based on a reading of Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, suggests that Satan does not speak, and therefore notice, the poets for two reasons. As he is one of the angels, albeit fallen, he cannot (and should not) use human language, and secondly, he is the image of defeated evil, and the epitome of evil.³⁵⁹ From his lack of speech and lack of reaction to the poets in his realm, it can be inferred that Satan possesses eternal life without succession, he is stuck in an endless cycle of "*dirompea co' denti // un peccatore*."³⁶⁰ His is a figure outside of temporal succession and therefore progression, a static figure complete in physical body, which can serve as foil to the eternity of God, with which Dante is united at the end of *Paradiso*. Virgil's introduction to Dante of Lucifer of "*Ecco Dite*"³⁶¹ contains no verbal tense and reflects the nature of its referent: eternal immutability of the eternal being.³⁶² This proclamation made by Dante's guide conveys Satan's current and

³⁵⁵ *Inf.*, XXXIV. 139.

³⁵⁶ *Inf.*, I. 17.

³⁵⁷ *Inf.*, XXXIV. 139.

³⁵⁸ *Inf.*, XXXIV. 68.

³⁵⁹ Mazzotta, *Reading Dante*, pp. 114-115.

³⁶⁰ *Inf.*, XXXIV. 55-6.

³⁶¹ *Inf.*, XXXIV. 20.

³⁶² Dino S. Cervigni, *Dante's Lucifer: The Denial of the World*, (*Lectura Dantis* No. 3, Michael Papio: University of Virginia, 1988), p. 55.

eternal condition in Hell. Dino Cervigni suggests the reason for Satan's lack of speech, even though he possesses the ability to speak, and his condemnation to eternal silence parodies the Word, and thus God.³⁶³

At the first sight of the figure of Dis, Dante-pilgrim becomes "*gelato e fioco*,"³⁶⁴ a sensation that Dante-poet "*non lo scrivo // però ch'ogne parlar sarebbe poco*."³⁶⁵ The ineffability of the pilgrim's emotion here and his current state of being has rarely been commented on in Dante scholarship, as noted by Francis Caponi.³⁶⁶ This state of non-existence, of "*non mori' e non rimasi vivo*" is one which I believe echoes the *aevum* state in which apocalyptic instances are housed. Dante-pilgrim in this state of non-existence can be said to be a physical manifestation of the state of the *aevum*. It is a liminal state between realms, both between the human physical realm and the preternatural realm of the afterlife, and between the realms of the afterlife as it is in this state that Dante-pilgrim traverses from the realm of Hell into the realm of Purgatory. Dante becomes the "uncreated man."³⁶⁷ This moment can be explored in relation to the apocalyptic state as including a variety of temporal conceptions. The non-existence contains no temporal state and as such is not a traditional Danteque apocalyptic state. However, by the inclusion of the eternal and *aevum*-like scapes around this moment combined with the transitional quality of the moment, Dante's non-existence can be considered as resembling the apocalyptic instance.

Caponi notes that other Dante critics such as Dino Provenzal (1938), Umberto Bosco and Giovanni Reggio (1979) and Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi (1991-1997) read the line "*io non mori' e non rimasi vivo*" to be a reformation of the Latin adjective "*semivivus*" and

³⁶³ Ibid, pp. 57-59

³⁶⁴ *Inf.*, XXXIV. 22.

³⁶⁵ *Inf.*, XXXIV. 23-24.

³⁶⁶ Caponi, Francis, J., "*I did not die, nor did I stay alive:*" *The Dark Grace of Nonexistence in Inferno XXXIV* (*Quaderni d'Italianistica*. XXXV. 1. 2014), pp. 5-25.

³⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 6.

“*semianimus*” claiming this reading suggests Dante-pilgrim to be between death and “*mezzo morto*”.³⁶⁸ Raffaello Andreoli, Mark Musa, Enrico Mestica, Carlo Steiner, and Bruno Nardi support her view on the state of the ‘suspended animation’ of Dante, either entirely or partially.³⁶⁹ It has also been noted that contemporary and commentaries preceding the Twentieth Century have also neglected this line in *Inferno*.³⁷⁰ The majority of commentaries construe the lines to mean that Dante-pilgrim was accosted by the horrid sight of Lucifer which left him “suspended between life and death, physically and intellectually frozen.”³⁷¹ Earlier, Italian commentators interpret the “*gelato and fioco*” of Dante’s response to the figure of Lucifer as meaning “*quasi [or complete] sospensione d’esistenza*” or in a state of “suspended animation.”³⁷²

Francis Caponi includes the preceding commentary in her stance on the lines: “*io non mori’ e non rimasi vivo*,” and progresses further, nuancing the reading of this verse. She suggests that the “poet arrogates godly power and bestows on the pilgrim the experience of ‘existence’ beyond the divine will. By this gracious gift of non-existence, the pilgrim surpasses the mere corruption of Satan and his kingdom, and enters into a state of non-creation.”³⁷³ Dante-pilgrim is annihilated and experiences an existence without the human form, which limits the inhabitant to being either alive or dead. The pilgrim experiences a state of being that is removed from the realm of the divine and the afterlife, a liminal state in which he demonstrates no fear in the presence of Lucifer,³⁷⁴ and is able to traverse the body of Satan with his guide and emerge onto Mount Purgatory. Caponi also claims there is no *tertium quid* in relation to neither dead nor alive,³⁷⁵ which I believe to be only partially true. This speaks to

³⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 7.

³⁶⁹ Ibidem.

³⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 6.

³⁷¹ Ibidem.

³⁷² Ibid, p. 7. Bernardo Daniello (1547-1568), Vellutello (1544), *L’Ottimo Commento* (3)(1338)

³⁷³ Ibid, pp. 18-24.

³⁷⁴ Ibidem.

³⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 19.

the nature of apocalyptic literature and the apocalyptic genre, which houses liminal figures and distorted dimensions of time and space. Within these perverse realms, such as *Inferno*, it is acceptable that instances such as the nonexistence of the pilgrim are depicted. There should be a tendency to describe these instances asymptotically as ambiguity and multifarious significances are a common feature in the apocalyptic tradition. Thus, saying a *tertium quid* does not exist is not strictly true, but clear definition of the *tertium* space and significances is inherently unobtainable.

This instance, I believe, can be viewed through the lens of the apocalyptic genre and narrative, and read against the unification with God the pilgrim experiences in *Paradiso* XXXIII. When compared to the apocalyptic unification with the prime mover at the end of *Paradiso*, the episode with Lucifer becomes parodic. Unlike the unification with “*l’amor che move il sole e l’altre stelle*,”³⁷⁶ Canto XXXIV of *Inferno* is marked by a distinct, although not complete, lack of movement: “*là dove l’ombra tutte eran coperte, // e trasparien come festuca in vetro*.”³⁷⁷ The Figure of Lucifer still grinds three sinners in his three mouths. This stasis connects with the Aristotelian philosophy of a prime mover who moves the concentric spheres around him – the furthest away experiencing the least movement. The nihil experienced by the pilgrim stands in complete contrast to the “positive ineffability of *Paradiso* XXXIII, in which the poet is united to the fullness of existence.”³⁷⁸

Teodolinda Barolini associates this liminal quality between life and death with sleep in the Comedy: “Transition in the *Commedia* is regularly represented by sleep, a quintessentially liminal condition that participates in both life and death, standing on the threshold of both worlds and fully committed to neither.”³⁷⁹ The state which Dante-pilgrim experiences at the

³⁷⁶ *Par.*, XXXIII. 145.

³⁷⁷ *Inf.*, XXIV. 11-12.

³⁷⁸ Caponi, *The Dark Grace of Nonexistence in Inferno XXXIV*, p. 20.

³⁷⁹ Barolini, Teodolinda. *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*, p. 160.

end of Canto XXXIV resembles the transition marked by sleep at other instances in the *Inferno* and the *Commedia*, but differs in that it is a hyper-sleep state in which Dante recalls the events transpiring around him. The quasi-animation which he experiences recalls the sleeping state but progresses further, marking the episode as one of particular transitional importance as the pilgrim transitions from the infernal to the purgatorial.

The only claim that can be made with certainty about the lines “*Io non mori’ e non rimasi vivo*”³⁸⁰ is that it describes a liminal space between the realms of the underworld, and contains echoes of the apocalyptic unification with the divine source of *Paradiso* XXXIII. This state of nonexistence parodies the ultimate fullness of experience and existence which is found in the unification of *Paradiso* XXXIII. The bypassing of Lucifer parodies this apocalyptic unification in which “*tutti li tempi son presenti*,”³⁸¹ with “*l’amor che move il sole e l’altre stelle*”:³⁸² at this point Dante-pilgrim experiences the eternity of God and all creation in the Empyrean. In contrast to this unification, the static nature of the encounter with Dis contains the elements of the apocalyptic moment, as laid out by John Collins in the Semeia 14 study, but fails as an apocalyptic moment as the figure of Satan is inherently undivine and does not possess divine revelations to disclose to a human subject. Dante-pilgrim experiences both the ultimate anti-apocalyptic moment and the supreme apocalyptic moment, from a Christian perspective. All creation, in a Medieval Christian context is *creatio ex nihil*, but Dante-pilgrim, alone, is forced *in nihil* at the sight of the figure of Dis, a suspended state, in which he lost “*omnem sensum et intellectum*” beyond the bounds of the creation of God.³⁸³ Dante experiences anti-divinity in the most remote place away from the order of God,³⁸⁴ and as such experiences a moment of the anti-apocalypse.

³⁸⁰ *Inf.*, XXXIV, 25.

³⁸¹ *Par.*, XVII, 18.

³⁸² *Par.*, XXXIII, 145.

³⁸³ Benvenuto del Imola, (1375-80)

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Concluding Comments

In this chapter I have demonstrated that throughout Dante-pilgrim's journey in the infernal realm of the afterlife, he interacts with the souls he encounters. On certain occasions, such as the interaction with Ulysses and Diomedes, Virgil acts as an intermediary figure through which the earthly narratives of the souls are conveyed to Dante-pilgrim. On other occasions, such as the Paolo and Francesca episode, the pilgrim speaks directly with the sinners. In both these cases, direct and indirect, mediated conversation with the sinners of *Inferno*, a space is created in which the eternal time-cycle of Hell is disrupted. These disruptions contain the linear encounters of the souls and Dante-pilgrim, who possesses a human perspective and is made privy to the apocalyptic qualities of death through the presence of his guide Virgil, and his interactions with the sinners. While the individual souls fail to see and acknowledge the apocalyptic qualities of death in which the eternal, divine perspective is made available to them, Dante-pilgrim is aware of these qualities and attempts to understand their significances, which ultimately lead to the culmination of the *Commedia* in the unification with God in *Paradiso* XXXIII. The pilgrim is also made to see the solipsistic qualities of the sinners which leads to his understands, and the reader's understanding, of why these souls have been allocated to their set destinies for eternity in Hell.

The episodes in which Dante-pilgrim and Virgil interact with the souls of sinners simultaneously occur in and create pockets of historical time in which the temporal landscape of the interaction is linear and mimics interactions in historical time. It is in this way that Dante's presence in the infernal landscape disrupts the eternal circular time cycle of Hell and leaves a trail of pockets of temporal-historical interactions, which are documented in *Inferno*. These pockets of historical time house various representations of the eternal realm, including remote legendary figures who have been written into history. When viewed in their eternal context, the interaction between the eternal time realm and the historical is reminiscent of

temporal apocalyptic dimensions. The revelation of the divine mysteries of the afterlife in Hell are presented to Dante-pilgrim, a human figure, in a perverse sphere of the temporal realm set against the backdrop of the eternal in the presence of a figure who mediated both worlds. This contains apocalyptic significance both in relation to the apocalyptic genre and in regard to the creation of moments of historical significance, *karoi*, which Dante-poet frequently presents throughout the journey of Dante-pilgrim.

As I have shown, Dante-pilgrim's encounter with the Epicureans of canto X in *Inferno* is an exchange of interruptions. There are four episodes conveyed to the reader, and these explicit demarcations of different interactions contribute toward the linearity of the exchange between the sinners and the pilgrim. Unlike in some other interactions, the constant interruptions by figures in the Farinata-Cavalcante-Dante exchange serve as linear time-markers which cannot be repeated in the exchange. The preoccupations of the souls with the current state of Florence and their genealogy includes a further permutation of historical time in the exchange which is already inherently a conglomerate of temporal conceptions as it takes place in an eternal landscape with a living human figure. Thus this specific encounter contains the eternal, historical, and a liminal time-concept represented by the figure of Dante-pilgrim, and takes place in an *aevum*-like space which allows both the conflation and the manipulation of the concept of time. It is also in this space and in these encounters where Dante-pilgrim becomes accustomed to viewing the sinners in light of the divine perspective which is made available to him by his guide, Virgil, and the eternal space in which the narrative action is situated.

The pilgrim progresses through the circles of lower-Hell until he is confronted with the figure of Dis, "*ch'ebbe il bel semiante*." Satan is frozen in the conical of Hell and the encounter of the poets with the figure contains little movement and no spoken communication. In this encounter with Lucifer, the pilgrim experiences a state of non-existence and is temporarily

removed from the status of divine will and order. In this moment of “*Io non mori’ e non rimasi vivo*” Dante transitions from the state of a sinner to a soul undergoing purgation on the eventual journey toward unification with “*l’amor che move il sole e alter stelle.*” In this moment, Dante-pilgrim is a physical embodiment of a liminal, *aevum*-like space which is both a part of the infernal timescape of Hell and the temporary-eternal timescape of *Purgatorio*. In this moment Dante-pilgrim is beyond the divine ordering of moving things and possesses an existence outside of all time, which is contained between the state of the living and the dead. This state can be viewed as an anti-apocalyptic moment as it possesses the elements of the apocalyptic genre and narrative, as laid out by John Collins in the Semeia 14 study, but it actively negates these elements through lack of recognition and activity. This anti-apocalyptic moment can be viewed in light of Dante-pilgrim-poet’s unification with God at the close of *Paradiso*. The parodic nature of the encounter with and the description of Dis also contributes toward this moment as anti-apocalyptic.

Conclusion: Dante's Apocalyptic Imagination in Aeviternity and the Question of Time

The apocalyptic imagination is concerned with the position of history and the individual in relation to the vast expanse of time. To the *forma mentis mediaevalis*, this manifests in contact between the human realm of historical time and the eternal realm of the ultimate destiny of God, the *telos* to which life tends. Papka thinks of apocalypse as a “moment of seeing, *faciem ad faciem*, the divine design.”³⁸⁵ In *Inferno*, Dante presents apocalyptic instances which conflate the historical realm of man and the transcendental eternal realm into aeviternal timescapes. In my examination of Dante's apocalyptic imagination and its manifestation in *Inferno*, I am particularly interested in the conception of time and history and its stylistic presentation in the poem, as evident in Dante's unique approach to allegory. I have focussed on these two elements in this dissertation.

In Dante's presentation of the *telos* of human life in its state of ultimate destiny, the apocalyptic instance of human insignificance in the face of God, is presented. In this study I have examined the ways in which the souls of sinners in *Inferno*, have been condemned to Hell because they have failed to recognise the significances of their apocalyptic moments. I argue that, while their earthly undoings bring their personal histories and eschatæ into contact with the eternal world, this apocalyptic moment has not been fully realised and internalised by the souls. They have not reconciled their personal history with eternity. In his journey of *catabasis*, Dante-pilgrim recognises these moments of apocalyptic significances and progresses from the failed apocalyptic journey of Canto I to the ultimate apocalyptic moment in the unification with “*l'amor che move il sole e alter stelle*.”³⁸⁶ My study revolves around Dante's conception of the individual in relation to an apocalyptic moment which ultimately undermines the individual,

³⁸⁵ Papka, p. 5.

³⁸⁶ *Par.*, XXXIII, 145.

unifying and absorbing them into divine grace. In the mediation between the individual and the historical on the one hand, and the eternal on the other, my study has taken into account the fact that Dante uses Early Christian narratives and Classical myths as inspiration.

Relating to Dante's understanding of history, I have shown how the eternal-infernal landscape, by nature, negates individuality, and to reclaim this, Dante presents souls in an aeviternal space. The souls are torn between an impulse towards self-assertion in the afterlife which manifests as solipsism and the turning back on themselves, and the impulse toward eternalising history and creating historical eschatological significances. I explore these tendencies 'Apocalyptic Eschatology and Historical Vision,' the fourth chapter of this dissertation. In this chapter, I have explored the historical and the individual presentation in the infernal realm, focusing on the characters of Cavalcante and Farinata. Dante's conception of history is one of history as a malleable realm which is subject to rewriting and is open to interpretation. Auerbach conceives of Dante's understanding of history as a pattern of earthly events in constant connection with God's plan, to which all earthly happenings tend.³⁸⁷ Dante witnessed events in his lifetime which he would have interpreted as having apocalyptic significance; and these events are symbolically recalled at various instances in *Inferno*, such as in the invective against Florence in the opening of Canto X. In his representation of history Dante chooses to represent human, tellurian linear history alongside both Pagan and Biblical mythology. Dante represents the individual in the fullness of this individuality and human idiosyncrasies, in the eternal-infernal timescape of Hell. The nature of Hell is to undermine human individuality, but the souls possess an impulse to maintain their human elements. Ironically, this tendency toward retention of their human nature is the cause of their condemned position, as they have neglected to view the apocalyptic qualities of their deaths. From their perspective in the eternal realm of the underworld, they neglect to view their earthly

³⁸⁷ Auerbach, *Farinata and Cavalcante*, p. 194.

significances in relation to divine providence. My apocalyptic reading of the encounter of the souls with Dante-pilgrim, brings this element to the fore. My apocalyptic exegesis of Dante's representation of characters has emphasised the mediation between Dante's realism, as explored by Auerbach; and his presentation of history, and his allegorical vision in which "*aliud dicitur, aliud demonstratur*," and "*aliud enim sonat et aliud intellegitur*."³⁸⁸ Dante's sense of history is demonstrated in his allegorical representation. Without a definite allegorical meaning, emblems can be interpreted in light of historical events and other works of literature.

Drawing inspiration from Classical and early Christian narratives, Dante presents the journey motif in *Inferno*, and throughout the *Commedia* as his pilgrimage is a journey toward God. Auerbach conceives of the journey of *catabasis*, to the otherworld in *Inferno*, as a convention that "offered Dante's passion for concrete expression and metaphysical order the possibilities which he himself had been unable to realise in his previous work and which those of his precursors who has composed eschatological visions had not even attempted to exploit."³⁸⁹ The journey motif, as I have explored in chapter three of this dissertation, allows Dante to present apocalyptic instances against the backdrop of the eternal context. This includes the presentation of concrete contemporary history and the presentation of historical personages. Dante also uses the journey motif, in its various permutations in *Inferno*, to draw attention to the apocalyptic perspective which is present in apocalyptic instances.

Dante's presentation of figures, such as Dante-pilgrim and Ulysses, who have been cast as the epic heroes of journeys, represents a development in the presentation of man in literature. Dante presents characters with both a personal eschatological history and as characters of the archetypal human. When viewed through the lens of apocalypse, Dante's representation of man in both realist form and Classical archetypal form, combines literary history with the

³⁸⁸ Ceccchini, pp. 343-344.

³⁸⁹ Auerbach, *Dante Poet of the Secular World*, p. 82.

tellurian and the historical pattern of events. Dante's presentation of these two defining features of literary history contributes toward the conflation of time in the apocalyptic moment. I have found that it is through the journey and the presentation of characters and the subject of the journey, that time and the theoretical conception of time is demonstrated. An apocalyptic reading of the journey motif contributes toward the scholarship of nuancing Dante's conception and presentation of time in the *Inferno*. I have found that Dante's understanding of history is linked to individual representation and affects the way in which the individual is portrayed in the *Inferno*: with unique personality traits and idiosyncratic qualities which have been afforded to them by experience of history, and their lifetimes on earth.

In my discussion of Ulysses, presented in the third chapter of my study, I have shown that in Canto XXVI, the notion of perspective is brought to the fore in an apocalyptic reading of the scene. Dante-pilgrim experiences the failed apocalyptic journey of Ulysses and his crew. I have discussed how this failed journey brings the element of perspective into focus, when considered in light of the apocalyptic moment. From the elevated perspective of Virgil and Dante-pilgrim in the opening image of Canto XXVI, combined with the discourse made available to the pilgrim in the mediatory figure of Virgil, Dante-poet is able to experience the episode from an eternal perspective without losing sight of his human qualities. His elevated position in the scene allows him to look down upon the souls, a physical depiction of the eternal perspective which must be consolidated with his human vantage point. The journey of Ulysses serves as a foil to this perspective. This sheds light on the apocalyptic moment as a moment of interplay and amalgamation of perspectives. My study has found that apocalyptic significances are created when the event is viewed from a perspective which encompasses both the transcendental and the human perspectives. This symbolically represents the meeting point of the historical and things which exist in motion, and the eternity of things which exist in a static state. It also represents the amalgamation of these two perspectives. In the *Inferno*, this

perspective is applied to the lives of sinners and to other historical events, such as the mass pilgrimage to the Holy Vatican City in 1300. An apocalyptic exploration of the manifestation of the journey motif brings the conception and representation of time, both historical time and eternal time(lessness) to the fore. It also highlights the perspective which must be obtained by the subject of the apocalyptic moment as it presents numerous failed apocalyptic instances which invite comparison with apocalyptic moments. Dante's apocalyptic imagination is intimately connected with allegorical representation. An important dimension of the apocalyptic manifestation in allegorical representation is anagogical allegory. It is primarily through anagogical allegory that the apocalyptic imagination is presented in *Inferno*. Apocalyptic instances are filled with allegorical emblems which when interpreted following the pattern of anagogical allegory, take on apocalyptic significances.

My discussion in chapter three of *Inferno*'s use of the apocalyptic journey motif, has shown that apocalyptic moments involve the integration of the eternal with the human perspective of the subject of the apocalyptic moment. The notion of perspective is brought to the fore in *Inferno*, particularly in Canto XXVI where the figure of Ulysses is described. Ulysses and Diomedes do not gain the transcendental perspective in their voyage, and thus fail to see the apocalyptic significances of their deaths. In Dante's prefiguring of Renaissance ideals, the journey of Ulysses looks forward to a future state and point in human historical time. This looking forward in the narrative projects the Dante's narrative into the future. The figure of Ulysses is a mediation between the Classical archetypal hero and the Christian protagonist in the narrative, thus bringing emblems of the legendary remote past into the present of the narrative. Ulysses also possess a personal history which have been created by Dante-poet. From this personal history, the character of the souls of Ulysses is distilled, with a quintessentially human quality. He is comprised, like the other souls in *Inferno*, entirely of memory and is obsessed with the looking back at his earthy life, his transgressive voyage, and his moment of

undoing. Memory is the primary means by which history and the events of history is made present in the present moment. As Auerbach has explored, memory is also the supreme faculty by which *Inferno* is presented as: "Dante transports his listeners into a strange world so permeated by the memory of reality that it seems real while life itself becomes a fragmentary dream; and that unity of reality and remoteness is the source of his psychological power."³⁹⁰ Dante's realist presentation of the souls relies entirely on the faculty of memory, a faculty which houses the historical and personal eschatology of the sinner. The historical realm is directly present to the subject in the form of memory. As the historical partakes in the apocalyptic moment, memory also features as an element in the depiction of the apocalyptic.

Dante's narrative in the *Commedia*, follows the definition of the genre of Biblical apocalyptic literature as developed by Collins. The ultimate revelation of God, in his unification with divine Grace at the end of *Paradiso*, is presented to the subject of the apocalypse without a mediatory figure, which develops the genre of apocalypse. However, the mediatory figure has travelled with the pilgrim along his journey, ultimately to the ends of preparing the pilgrim for this apocalyptic unification. The pilgrim's journey "*che al divino dall'umano, // all'eterno dal tempo era venuto*,"³⁹¹ is a journey from the historical realm of man to the eternal realms of the afterlife and the *Commedia* is the recount of what he saw. The mediatory figure in the infernal realm of the journey is the Latin poet Virgil, who facilitates interactions to the human subject of Dante-pilgrim. The *Commedia* portrays the state of souls after death, which has been determined by their human actions and interactions. It envisages eschatological damnation, repentance, and salvation. The realm of the damned is the most overtly apocalyptic in its figuring's as it is a space concerned with the historical realm and harps on the patterns of historical events. This is reflected in the souls who are obsessed with

³⁹⁰ Auerbach, *Dante, Poet of the Secular World*, p. 173.

³⁹¹ *Par.*, XXXI, 37-38.

their deaths and their historical endings. *Inferno* mediates between the intimate realm of a transcendent reality and “our own immediate existence” in history, it is a transition from time into eternity.³⁹²

I have found that moments of Dantesque apocalyptic significance contain a meeting point between the eternal realm and the historical, housed within the eternal realm in an *aevum*-like conception of time. The *aevum* is a crucial conception of time as it is a liminal temporal-spatial pocket in which the dimensions of time and space can be distorted without disrupting the flow of the narrative. It also contributes toward the conflation of the temporal-eternal realm as it houses elements of both, and is formally understood as the durational time of the angels in Thomist theology. In the meeting point between the historical and the eternal, or between movement of time and the stasis of eternity, witnessed by a human observer, an assumption of the transcendental perspective is facilitated by an other worldly liminal figure. In chapter three, I explore the ways in which Virgil can be seen as an aeviternal figure in his mediatory role. This is fitting as the aeviternal is a liminal ground between the preternatural and the human, thus Virgil facilitates the transcendental perspective to Dante-pilgrim.

The apocalyptic animus of *Inferno* is an undercurrent which flows throughout the cantic. At various instances throughout the journey through Hell, this undercurrent is more strongly felt by the reader. In these instances, the dimensions of the apocalyptic narrative are brought to the fore as Dante's manipulations of the genre are demonstrated. In the *Inferno*, and to an extent throughout *La Commedia*, Dante presents a marriage between Classical Pagan narratives and Early Christian apocalyptic narratives. *Inferno* is influenced by the context in which it was birthed. Dante would have interpreted the events surrounding and preceding the Holy Year with apocalyptic allegoresis at the forefront of his *forma mentis*. This way of reading

³⁹² Papka, p. 2.

filtered the way in which Dante wrote and gave birth to the allegory of the *Commedia*, which is a development on the stage of allegorical interpretation in its indeterminate and opaque nature. Dante's apocalyptic imagination affects his stylistic presentation of allegory, as I have discussed throughout my dissertation. I present my findings below.

Dante's allegory has been much contested in Dante scholarship. However, relatively new critics such as Thompson and Chiarenza have suggested that instead of focussing on the type of allegory Dante employs, scholarship should move toward exploring the effects of Dante's allegorical voice. Auerbach has suggested Dante's allegory to be figural in nature. "*Figura* is both a theory of interpretation of history and a mode of writing in which signs and their significations are historically true, and which – just as in the Bible, where the reader is never pampered into the safety of esthetic illuminations – demands the reader's radical commitment."³⁹³ An apocalyptic reading of Dante's allegory, which I have offered, presents another interpretation to his allegorical voice in the *Commedia*. The images and emblems which invite allegorical interpretations are rendered with an opacity of meaning and significance when considered in light of apocalyptic allegory. In the multifarious interpretations of allegorical emblems, one meaning is not given preference above another, but all possible significances are simultaneously contained within the emblem, in my apocalyptic reading of Dante's allegory.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, 'Dante's Allegorical Apocalyptic Imagination,' I explore the allegorical significances of the opening scene of *Inferno*. At the outset of the narrative, the *selva oscura* in which Dante-pilgrim finds himself is cast as a liminal space between the human realm and human dimensions, and the divine eternal realms. Within the forest progressive, successional time, and human space are distorted as both the human realm

³⁹³ Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert*, p. 231.

and the divine realm are present, with an obscured border between the two worlds. C. S. Lewis has imagined a wood between worlds, and it is the human dimensions and the eternal sphere that Dante's *selva* obscures. The boundaries between the living world and the afterlife are obscured. The forest also possesses an obscure quality which creates a disjuncture between emblem and significance. Meaning is distorted and amphibological. The allegorical significances of the three beasts is obtuse and rendered unfathomable to the reader apart from their symbolic recollection of the three beasts of Jeremiah 6, when considered in relation to their environment and the apocalyptic imagination. This association of Dante's beasts with allegorical images in a Biblical narrative which belongs to the apocalyptic genre invites allegorical interpretations of Dante's beasts. The *forma mentis mediaevalis* inherently invites allegorical interpretation of images and figures, not only in narratives but of lived experiences and therefore history. Significances of allegorical images are rendered opaque when subjected to an exploration of their apocalyptic allegorical significance. Dante is aware of allegorical modes of interpretation and writes the *Inferno* cognisant of these modes of reading. Apocalyptic allegorical exegesis contributes toward the understanding of the multifarious nature of Dante's allegorical voice in the *Commedia*.

I have argued that Dante's allegory in the *Inferno* does not follow any existing pattern, even though the Medieval mind inherited a multitude of allegorical forms. Dante's allegory presents a departure from these existing allegorical modes. His apocalyptic emphasis alludes to allegorical meaning without clear indication of the intended meaning but also without limiting interpretations. His apocalyptic allegory is best understood as anagogical allegory in which the transcendental realm has direct influence on the temporal. Allegory, for Dante, is a mode of rewriting the past. His allegorical apocalyptic vision is focussed on both the historical, tellurian past and the remote past of legendary history. The figure of Ulysses embodies both these conceptions of history. Dante's allegorical voice presents an amalgamation of the past

and the present with foresight into the future, presented in the present moment of the narrative form. "The proponents of 'allegory of the poets' see the Divine Comedy essentially...as a poetic construct in which theology, figuralism, and Dante's prophetic vocation...are part and parcel of the fictional strategy. ...the poem is written in imitation of God's way of writing and, like Scripture, it exceeds metaphor and comes forth with the 'irreducibility of reality itself.'"³⁹⁴ An apocalyptic interpretation of Dante's allegorical voice casts the poem in the light of a mediation between the 'allegory of the poets' and an 'allegory of the theologians.' Essentially, then, Dante's allegory is a liminal voice between the human and the divine. In the foregrounding of Dante's apocalyptic allegory which is a manifestation of the apocalyptic animus of the *Inferno*, I have offered a different way in which Dante's allegorical voice can be understood. In the understanding of Dante's allegorical voice as apocalyptic allegory, existing interpretations of his allegorical mode in the *Inferno* are not negated or dismissed but rather included in the allegorical significance without preferencing one significance over another. The multifaceted and multifarious nature of Dante's allegorical voice is brought to the fore.

Mazzotta links the process of interpretation of the allegorical image to the quest narrative: "The act of reading, essentially a critical philological operation, is at the same time for Dante, a veritable allegory of the quest, the outcome of which is as tentative and possibly aberrant as the significance we extract from that reading."³⁹⁵ Thus in the interpretation of past moments, and their presentations in the present moment, Dante invites the reader to follow his quest for the extraction of meaning from his emblems. Yet, I have argued that the allegorical meaning of the emblem is elusive and uncertain with multifarious simultaneous significances. Apocalyptic allegorical interpretation, which I have offered here for some of Dante's images, accounts for this variety and opacity in meanings.

³⁹⁴ Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert*, p. 231.

³⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 233.

In the third chapter, I explored Virgil as an aeviternal being who possesses a transcendental perspective which is a crucial dimension in the danteque apocalyptic narrative. This perspective is made available to Dante-pilgrim, the subject of apocalypse, at various instances in the narrative primarily through exchange of discourses. In certain episodes, such as the encounter of the pilgrims with Ulysses and Diomedes, the entire exchange is mediated by the figure of Virgil. In these instances, the eternal perspective is made available to the pilgrim so that he may see why the souls are condemned to their eternal positions in Hell. Ironically, the souls seem not understand their eternal positions, even though they demonstrate an understanding of their sins. They fail to see the apocalyptic resonances of their moments of death in which their lives, and therefore tellurian historical time, encounter the eternal state of God. From this meeting point and their position in the infernal realm they possess the ability view the apocalyptic moment but fail to see its significances.

As the poets descend into Hell, they encounter the souls of sinners undergoing punishment for their earthly transgressions. Their punishment cycles are interrupted by the exchanges they have with Dante-pilgrim. These opportunities presented to the souls in Dante's *catabasis* are the only opportunity for self-expression their position in the eternal-infernal landscape offers to them. In these exchanges, the souls are torn between a tendency to eternalise history, and the self-expression of solipsism and the turning back on themselves. These urges are covert and are made visible to Dante-pilgrim in their exchanges, which are on occasions mediated by his guide, Virgil. The urge toward solipsism is an urge to claim individuality of the souls, in a landscape which inherently negates their individual natures. This impulse is manifested in their expression toward the pilgrim in which their earthly history is divulged. The impulse to solipsism is foiled by the impulse to eternalise history. This then suggest that history, for Dante, is a dimension of time that grants the individual their individuality. It is through the progression of time into history that the individual is created as discrete and

concrete. The souls in the encounters with Dante are obsessed with their personal histories and make every effort at an affective encounter with Dante-pilgrim which would immortalise their genealogy in historical time. I believe this to be most evident in the encounter with Cavalcante and Farinata, two Epicureans of Florentine descent who constantly turn toward both their solipsism and impulse to eternalise history in the same moment. They are obsessed with their earthly lives and the advancement of their genealogy. They wish to immortalise themselves in human history through their lineage, which they cannot see past. In a similar fashion, the souls of the Epicureans look at their moments of earthly undoing with despair and fail to see the apocalyptic resonances death offers them. Even from their elevated perspective in the afterlife, they fail to see the significances of their deaths as a reconciliatory moment with God, from which they can view the expanse of their earthly lives against the vast backdrop of the eternal context.

The exchanges between the souls of *Inferno* and Dante-pilgrim take place in linear time. Like Aquinas's conception of Christian historical time, *historia sacra*, there is no repetition of events to create time cycles. In the historical time of the interactions, there is only linear time, which is marked, in the case of the exchange involving Farinata and Cavalcante, by constant interruptions and the shifting of narrative focus. This narrative exchange recalls the realism of events of human history, in human historical time. These interruptions of the scene act as the markers of linear time in a similar way to the death and resurrection of Christ acts as a marker of time in Christian linear history. This phenomenon creates what I have termed 'pockets of historical time,' which disrupt the eternal cyclical timescape of Hell. The eternal time of Hell is characterised by the eternal duration of the Hell-scape and the continuous and repetitive punishments experienced by the souls of sinners. Within these pockets of historical time, an *aevum*-like space is created in which different theoretical conceptions of time are presented against the backdrop of the eternal time of God.

Within Dante's created aeviternal space, the entire expanse of historical time is made available to the subject, with a mediated version of this expanse available to the souls. For example, Dante-pilgrim has knowledge of contemporary historical time, but this is limited from the souls who only possess a hyperopic vision of the historical future and their personal past histories. Dante-pilgrim from his position in the midst of his life, as we are told in the opening line of *Inferno*, has the ability to view the historical past, the present, and the future, all of which are available to him in moments of particular apocalyptic significance. Dante is aware of the aeviternal conception of time and chooses to present apocalyptic instances in a space that resembles the Thomist *aevum*. This would suggest that the temporal realm is more immediately present in the *Inferno*. The two fundamental dimensions of human existence are explored in the *Inferno*, and Dante's exploration of these realms is made apparent by my apocalyptic exegesis of this canticle. As *Inferno* is a narrative which harps on the events of the past, both historical events and the events of mythology, it is concerned with the nature of the human. This is Dante's humanism and it is brought to the fore in apocalyptic instances, and in Dante-poet's representation of the apocalyptic animus.

The souls in *Inferno* have personal histories, some of which have been created by Dante-poet in order to distil the personal idiosyncrasies of the souls in Hell. One example of this is the figure of Ulysses, who possess both a personal history and a legendary history of the remote past. Dante-poet has distilled the nature of the soul of Ulysses from a personal history given to him by Dante-poet whilst maintaining heroic elements of his legendary history. Theoretically, the figure of Ulysses presents a culmination of the Classical epic genre with the Christian narrative. The reader can model themselves after Dante's Ulysses, as indeed the pilgrim does, while the figure still possesses the heroic qualities of the epic protagonist.

I have argued that, in addition to the linearity of the encounter between Dante-pilgrim and the souls within the eternal-infernal landscape, the time within encounters themselves

follow a linear pattern. As Dante descends the rings of Hell the unique idiosyncrasies of the souls he encounters, creates linear temporal episodes. The same encounter cannot be repeated because of the nature of the exchanges, the timescape does not cycle on itself but progresses from one episode to the next, until *Inferno* culminates in Dante-pilgrim's non-existence when faced with Dis. As Dante and Virgil descend through Hell, they create a string of pockets of historical time. These are successional in that Dante's encounter with Paolo and Francesca, precedes that of Dante and Cavalcante. The linear history of these pockets of historical time disrupts the static infernal-eternal timescape. Yet within these pockets, there is motion and temporal succession. The inscription above the Gates of Hell inscribe the realm of the damned as possessing a durational eternity, created by God, which then means that Hell possesses a durational aeviternity as it contains a beginning point without an end point. This is different to the eternal durational static nature of God and of the highest Heaven with which Dante is united at the close of *Paradiso*. The historical time perspective which encompasses the expanse of human time is made available to Dante-pilgrim at instances in the *Inferno*. One of these instances occurs in Canto XIV where the pilgrims encounter the statue of the Old Man of Crete.

From the above discussion it is evident that there are two dimensions to my study of time in Dante's *Inferno*. Firstly, I am concerned with Dante's apocalyptic sense of time and history, and secondly how this affects his allegory and his style of presentation. There are two facets of time in *Inferno*. Dante presents the historical, tellurian time of man against the backdrop of the eternal, static time of God. In Hell this manifests in 'pockets of historical time' presented in the eternal-infernal conception of eternity as durational eternity, "*io eterna duro*."³⁹⁶

³⁹⁶ *Inf.*, III, 8.

I have explored Dante's conception of the entity of time – what time means to Dante. With regard to the stylistic portrayal of the temporal realm, he presents instances in an *aevum*-like space which can be understood as the physical spatial manifestation of a liminal space between the historical and the eternal. In spaces such as these, such as the *selva oscura* of Canto I, I have found the linear temporal realm of human existence is distorted and brought into contact with emblems representing the eternal realm such as the three beasts. This liminal space resembles the Thomist aeviternal conception of time as the time of the angels, and serves as a gateway into the eternal realm of the afterlife, and in narrative terms, into the apocalyptic dimension. This apocalyptic dimension is inherently connected with allegorical significances as it is through allegory, specifically for Dante, anagogical allegory, that the apocalyptic imagination is made manifest. Dante's representation of the temporal realm frequently invokes allegorical exploration of the meeting point between eternity and historical time. Dante presents this meeting point in an aeviternal space which is significant as this space has been theoretically conceived of by Aquinas as a liminal time between the Eternity of God and the human dimension, which is inhabited by the liminal angelic beings, which possess both human and God-like qualities. Frank Kermode develops Thomist conceptions of the *aevum* as the temporal space in which apocalyptic instances transpire.

I have suggested in chapters three and four of this dissertation that the meeting point between eternity and history is often represented by the individual. Figures such as Dante's Ulysses and Dante's pilgrim possess personal historical significances and symbolically recall archetypes from Classical Pagan and Christian mythology. Their characters are an amalgamation of literary traditions of representations. In *Inferno*, the souls have been portrayed, as Erich Auerbach found, with their essences distilled from their human experiences and are then housed in their position of ultimate destinies in the eternal realm. This presentation of souls as possessing a unique individual and discrete history and having been distilled to the

essence of idiosyncrasy from this personal history, is a manipulation of the eternal context in which they are now found, and the historical realm from which the figures have been created.

I have found that Dante's conceptual sense of the temporal realm is focussed on history. History is a dimension which is omnipresent for Dante and is something which is malleable and open to both interpretation and rewriting. The Medieval mode of reading or allegoresis subjects the historical realm to interpretation. Therefore, the pattern of historical events invites allegorical exegesis and anagogical allegorical interpretations. It is through the interpretation of history that divine providence is visible to the human realm. Dante's conceptual sense of time also includes the aeviternal understanding of time, as it is in this temporal-space that history is represented and interpreted as containing the patterns of divine intervention.

Inferno presents readers with a perverse landscape in which time and space are conflated and distorted. In one instance, at the end of Dante-pilgrim's journey, time is distorted by the narrative experience of the Dante. This state which Dante-pilgrim experiences is defined by the negation of the presence of time. During this experience, Dante-pilgrim experiences a state outside of the order of time, created by God. In this state time does not feature as a dimension of existence. When compared to the two fundamental dimensions of human existence, time and space, which are distorted and perverted by Hell.

I have presented a discussion of this episode in the fourth chapter, and it constitutes a succinct counterpoint to Dante's manipulation of the temporal realm at other instances in the narrative. The non-existence of suspended animation of Canto XXXIV creates an instance where Dante-pilgrim escapes the order of divine will and the structure of the cosmos. This moment in a complete void of the temporal realm creates a moment of anti-apocalyptic significances in which the elements of the apocalyptic instance are present but are negated.

I have argued that moments of Dantesque apocalyptic significance present a meeting point between the eternal time and stasis of time, and the tellurian historical time of man, in which extreme motion is experienced, in the presence of human observer who has had the vision facilitated by an other-worldly, figure inhabiting the aeviternal mode of being, set against the eternal backdrop of the world of the afterlife. In these instances, the perspective of the human observer must contain an understanding of historical time as it progresses toward a teleological end and the eternal perspective made available to him via discourse from an aeviternal figure. Dante-poet is aware of the images of the end which is present in both historical time and within his narrative.

Dante's apocalyptic imagination is a central element in his conception and presentation of history. It is particularly pertinent in *Inferno* which is preoccupied with the history of the souls it presents in the context of an eternal timescape. Apocalyptic instances present the individual in relation to the pattern of history, and this pattern of history is represented against the eternal duration of God, in the face of which the progression of time is insignificant. Thus, it can be extrapolated that human existence is insignificant when faced with the divine realm. Dantesque apocalyptic moments attempt to reconcile human and individual significance in history with the vastness of the static eternity which God possesses.

Dante possesses "*il dono o il genio dell'ambiguità irriducibile*."³⁹⁷ This gift of characteristic ambiguity is formulated in tercets of marvellous ingenuity.³⁹⁸ The ambiguous nature of Dante's verse is a feature of his interpretation of the apocalyptic genre. The elusive nature of the apocalyptic genre has been commented on by Claudia Razzatti Papka, who refuses to define the apocalyptic genre. Collins, and the scholars of the Semeia 14 study, presented a definition of the genre of Biblical apocalyptic literature based on the narrative features of

³⁹⁷ Gorni, p. 62. Dante possesses 'the gift or the genius of irreducible ambiguity.' (my translation)

³⁹⁸ Ibidem.

apocalyptic narratives, but do not provide a definition of apocalyptic allegory. Dante's apocalyptic allegorical vision is obscured by both the genre and literary tropes of his writing. In *Inferno*, the emblems and context in which these images are presented, are obscure and take on further obscurity when read through the apocalyptic lens. The apocalyptic animus of Dante's text undermines the definite significances of allegory in favour of simultaneous multifarious meanings.

Time permeates the canvas of *Inferno* and is inseparable from its apocalyptic animus. In Dante's exploration of time in his first canticle, he presents an ideological element and a stylistic element in its presentation. In this dissertation, I have explored Dante's sense of time and history, and these elements affect his stylistic presentation of his allegorical voice, in light of apocalypse and the apocalyptic genre. Dante's stylistic presentation of the temporal realm is directly influenced by his conception of the time in which apocalyptic moments occur. I argue that Dante's text is permeated by aeviternal 'pockets of historical' time in which the historical figure is presented as a complete and discrete individual, in the eternal context which inherently undermines individuality.

My reading of *Inferno*, in which I focus on the apocalyptic animus, and its manifestation in history and time, and the effect this has on allegorical representation, contributes toward arguments in the wider field of Dante's studies made by scholars such as Erich Auerbach and Giuseppe Mazzotta, and others. This study of the apocalyptic undercurrent nuances Dante's sense of history in the *Inferno*, as something which is malleable and omnipresent in the eternal moment. It is therefore available to the subject in any instance of the narrative. Dante's presentation of history further conflates contemporary history with Pagan and Christian legendary history. In such instances, these remote legendary histories are as directly available and present to the subject as contemporary history. Dante's realism, which has been explored by Auerbach, is the presentation of contemporary history within the grand narrative of

legendary history. The historical and the temporal are found in the conception of the journey and it is within the journey motif that these two elements become apparent in an apocalyptic exegesis of the poem.

The concept of time is a multifaceted dimension in the poem, comprised of history – both contemporary and legendary history – and of the eternal understanding of time, which is founded on Boethian and Neoplatonic theories. Dante's sense of the temporal realm is informed by both Classical and Christian theories of time. As I have shown throughout the dissertation, Aristotle and Boethius and Thomist manifestations of time are present.

Dante's allegorical representation and the allegorical mode he employs in the poem is informed by apocalypse. In my reading of Dante's allegorical voice, which takes the apocalyptic dimension into account, allegorical representation possesses an obscure nature which houses multiple interpretations without confining meaning to only one significance. I have found that Dante's apocalyptic allegorical voice accounts for the multiple possible interpretations of allegorical emblems and for the disjuncture between emblem and meaning.

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