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## Mediating Christ in *Paradiso* and in MS Vat.lat.4776

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### ABSTRACT

In Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana MS Vat.lat.4776 (c. 1390–1400), line drawings, of particularly high-quality draughtsmanship, accompany *Paradiso* I–XI. Although Christ does not in any straightforward sense participate in the narrative of *Paradiso* I–XI, the majority of the drawings contain a small head and neck of Christ enclosed in a nimbus, strongly reminiscent of the devotional iconography of the Veronica or Holy Face. The images explore one of the central questions in the *Commedia*: how the divine is present in, or mediated by, human encounters. I investigate how, in different ways, in both the images and Dante’s text (here focusing on Dante’s ‘in’ neologisms in *Paradiso* IX and on *Paradiso* XIV), Christ is understood as the reality that allows humans to share in a capacity for relatedness that is not bound by normal spatiotemporal limits.

### KEYWORDS

Dante; *Commedia*; Christ; Renaissance drawing

In Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana manuscript Vat.lat.4776 (c. 1390–1400), line drawings, of particularly high-quality draughtsmanship, accompany cantos I through XI of *Paradiso*.<sup>1</sup> Although Christ does not in any straightforward sense participate in the narrative of *Paradiso* I–XI, the majority of the drawings contain a small head and neck of Christ enclosed in a nimbus, strongly reminiscent of the devotional iconography of the Veronica or Holy Face.<sup>2</sup> The artist is above all interested in human interactions; the focus is on the gestures, gazes, and postures with which humans relate to each other, and, I suggest, on the presence of Christ in those interactions. The images explore what Vittorio Montemaggi has shown is one of the central questions in the *Commedia*: how the divine is present in, or mediated by, human encounters.<sup>3</sup> The *Commedia*, as Christian Moevs has investigated, is in part an exploration of how the divine, the ultimate reality, can be embodied or ‘unveiled’ or mediated ‘in or through finite reality’. On earth and in *Purgatorio* finite beings, including humans, can be ‘transparent to’ or mediate the divine only partially and episodically, but in *Paradiso* the blessed are perfectly and continually transparent to divine action.<sup>4</sup>

The first part of this essay explores the Vat.lat.4776 *Paradiso* artist’s response to Dante, examining how the artist casts the mediation of the divine in *Paradiso* in explicitly Christological terms. The artist investigates theological questions in ways that the commentary contained in the

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<sup>1</sup>Millard Meiss notes the drawings are ‘of great distinction in their period’; Peter H. Brieger, Millard Meiss, and Charles S. Singleton, *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, 2 vols (London: Routledge, 1969), I, 328. I am deeply grateful to the readers at *Italian Studies* for their very helpful comments on an earlier version of this article, and to the participants in the 2019 conference for such generous and productive discussion.

<sup>2</sup>Eleven out of nineteen drawings: fols 236r, 237r (*Par.* I), 251v, 252r (*Par.* V), 263r (*Par.* VIII), 267r, 269v, (*Par.* IX), 270v, 271r, 271v (*Par.* X), 274r (*Par.* XI). The miniature, in a different style, on fol. 235r (*Par.* I), also depicts Christ’s face. Botticelli, in his illustrations for *Paradiso* XXIV–XXVI, depicts Christ even though Christ does not in any straightforward sense participate in the narrative of these cantos; see Heather Webb, ‘Botticelli’s Illustrations of Dante’s *Paradiso*: The Construction of Conjoined Vision’, *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 22 (2019), 187–208 (204–8).

<sup>3</sup>Vittorio Montemaggi, *Reading Dante’s Commedia as Theology: Divinity Realised in Human Encounter* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>4</sup>Christian Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante’s Comedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), citations from pp. 3, 9.

manuscript does not; the *Ottimo Commento* does not give a Christological reading of these cantos.<sup>5</sup> In the second part of the essay, I investigate one of the ways that Dante's text gestures implicitly towards the blessed as – collectively – mediating Christ. I consider Pauline and Augustinian conceptions of the body of Christ, and argue that the 'in' neologisms Dante uses to describe the life of the blessed – *inluarsi*, *intuarsi*, *inmiarsi*, *inlearsi* and *indiarsi* – point towards a Christological mode of being, one in which the souls are fully conformed to and fully mediate Christ. I am not suggesting a link between the drawings and Dante's neologisms. Rather, I investigate how, in different ways in both text and image, Christ is understood as the reality that allows humans to share in a capacity for relatedness that is not bound by normal spatiotemporal limits.

## The Iconography of the Holy Face in Vat.lat.4776 and the Viewer's Participation

The artists of Vat.lat.4776 are of unknown identity; all were working in Florentine styles. The first folio of each *cantica*, containing a figured initial and decorated margins, is by the same artist. There are similarities in conception between these three pages and the illuminations by Don Simone Camaldolese in Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana MS TempI I, although the Vat.lat.4776 folios are in a different style and were probably executed earlier. *Inferno* is accompanied by eighty-two illuminations. These are of a Cionesque style, with a use of colour that is, according to Millard Meiss, 'the most beautiful in Florence in the late fourteenth century'.<sup>6</sup> Cantos 1 through XI of *Paradiso* are accompanied by line drawings, prepared in grey pencil, and the majority then completed in brown ink. *Purgatorio* and the remaining cantos of *Paradiso* are not illustrated. The *Paradiso* artist depicts only figures, never any detail of setting. As Meiss observes, the artist 'seeks to communicate the subtleties of human mood and action; indeed, in this respect he had no rival in Florence around the turn of the century'.<sup>7</sup> Meiss notes that the drawings resemble Mariotto di Nardo's early paintings, but that they are superior to any of Mariotto's known works. At one point the artist must have planned on creating coloured miniatures. The two images on folios 236v and 237r are coloured with gold, green and brown, but the rest of the images are left as drawings. As for the text of the *Commedia*, it is written in a single column with commentary in the margins: Jacopo della Lana's for *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, and the *Ottimo Commento* for *Paradiso*. A reproduction of the whole manuscript is available via the Vatican Library website.<sup>8</sup>

The second illustration for *Paradiso* 1 (fol. 236r) depicts Dante, Beatrice, and above and to the right of them, Christ – drawn as a disembodied head and neck enclosed in a halo. Dante and Beatrice turn at once to each other and to Christ. They stand, less than half an arm's length apart, facing each other (their bodies forming a roughly 90-degree angle), with Dante's right arm angled to mirror Beatrice's left. Even as Beatrice turns her body to Dante, she turns her head to her left, lifting her face slightly upwards to look at Christ. Dante also lifts his head, his gaze tracing a line just over the top of Beatrice's head and up to Christ, who turns his face to look down at them. The postures and lines of sight invite the viewer's eye to move back and forth between Dante and Beatrice, and between Dante and/or Beatrice and Christ. There is no final resting point for the viewer's gaze. Depending on where the viewer's eye begins its path around the image, Dante's and Beatrice's gazes will be understood as a response to, or as returned by, Christ's gaze on them.

In lines from *Paradiso* 1 contained on this folio, Dante sees Beatrice turn to her left to look, as an eagle does, into the sun, an image in mystical texts for the soul looking on God:

<sup>5</sup>*Ottimo commento alla Commedia*, ed. by Giovanni Battista Boccardo, Massimiliano Corrado, and Vittorio Celotto, 3 vols (Rome: Salerno, 2018), III.

<sup>6</sup>Brieger, Meiss, and Singleton, I, 328. Meiss identifies two 'similar but not identical' Cionesque styles in the *Inferno* illuminations. On MS Vat.lat.4776, see *ibid.* I, 327–31; and the entry by Andrea Mazzucchi in the 'Censimento e Edizione dei Commenti Danteschi' (Centro Pio Rajna) <https://www.centropiorajna.it/censimento/schemssital23.htm>.

<sup>7</sup>Brieger, Meiss, and Singleton, I, 328.

<sup>8</sup>[https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.lat.4776](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.4776).

quando Beatrice in sul sinistro fianco  
 vidi rivolta e riguardar nel sole:  
 aguglia sì non li s'affisse unquanco.  
 E sì come secondo raggio suole  
 uscir del primo e risalire in suso,  
 pur come pelegrin che tornar vuole,  
 così de l'atto suo, per li occhi infuso  
 ne l'immagine mia, il mio si fece,  
 e fissi li occhi al sole oltre nostr' uso. (*Par.* 1, 46–54)<sup>9</sup>

Beatrice turns, of her own will, towards the divine; she is the active subject of 'riguardar' and, in simile, of 's'affisse'. But her gaze, as suggested by the language of return in lines 50–51, ultimately has its origin in the divine. And through her act of looking, which is hers and stems from God, Dante's faculties are turned towards the divine. His gaze both mirrors Beatrice's and returns ('risale [...] come pelegrin') towards its and Beatrice's divine source. The Vat.lat.4776 image invites the viewer to focus on precisely this. The double focus of Dante's and Beatrice's attention, on each other and on Christ, and the substitution of Christ's face for the sun – such that Dante's and Beatrice's gazes can be understood as both responding to and returned by Christ's gaze on them – cast Dante's looking as both mediated by Beatrice and having its origin in God.

The second drawing accompanying *Paradiso* v (fol. 252r) is an example of Christ depicted as present in the interactions of the blessed with Dante and Beatrice. A crowd of souls fills the right-hand margin. Near the top of the margin, a circle of six souls crane their necks back to look up at Christ's face above them. Below, a different group of souls converse with Dante and Beatrice. A figure floats between the two groups, linking them physically. Her face, turned up towards Christ, is on the level of the robes of figures in the group above, while her own robe falls behind the head of a figure in the group below. More importantly, the intermediary figure crosses her arms over her chest in a Marian gesture of humility and self-offering.<sup>10</sup> The figure directly below her likewise crosses her arms on her breast, as does the central figure in the group above; another figure in the upper group has her back to us, but seems to be making the same gesture. Several compositional devices accentuate the rhythmic effect of the repeated gesture of these four souls: the way the curving bodies of the lower two figures (one looking at Dante and Beatrice, the other at Christ) form an almost perfect mirror image, the placement of all four figures on the same vertical line, and the alternating direction of the figures' gazes: the first looking to the left, the second to the right, the third to the left, and the fourth to the right.

In the text of *Paradiso* v, and specifically in the lines contained on this folio, Justinian addresses Dante:

del lume che per tutto il ciel si spazia  
 noi semo accesi; e però, se disii  
 di noi chiarirti, a tuo piacer ti sazia. (*Par.* v, 118–20)

The souls burn with divine light-love, and it is precisely because of this – 'e però', Justinian declares – that they desire to fulfil Dante's desires. Dante's questioning and the souls' replying, stem from the souls' participation in divine love, and are a living out or mediation of that love. As in the *Paradiso* 1 drawing, the artist of Vat.lat.4776 offers an explicitly Christological rendition of this dependence. The repeated gesture – used both for the souls turning to Dante and for those turning to Christ – and the rhythmic patternings invite the viewer's eye to move back and forth, from

<sup>9</sup>Citations from the *Commedia* are taken from Dante Alighieri, *Commedia*, ed. by Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, 3 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1991–94).

<sup>10</sup>Arms crossed over the chest were a standard gesture in depictions of the Virgin, particularly at the Annunciation and Coronation. On this gesture in Giotto, see Moshe Barasch, *Giotto and the Language of Gesture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 72–87.

Christ's face down through the souls to Dante and then up again. The image invites the reader-viewer to reflect on how the souls' act of conversing with Dante might flow from, and even be part of, the act of looking at Christ.

In the first drawing for *Paradiso* IX (fol. 267r) there is again continuity between conversing with Dante and looking at Christ. The blessed fill the lower half of the right-hand margin. Those at the top and centre of the group turn their faces up to Christ, who is depicted at the top of the page; two souls in the middle of the group turn to each other; and those at the bottom of the group look at and converse with Dante and Beatrice. This time Dante crosses his arms over his chest; he also moves his right hand forward to gesture towards Carlo Martello with whom he speaks. Dante's gesture – pointing towards Carlo, yet still maintaining the cross shape – is part of his exchange with Carlo and at the same time echoes the gesture of the souls above, who form their arms into a cross as they look on Christ.

Of the eleven drawings in the Vat.lat.4776 *Paradiso* that depict Christ, seven depict the souls, through gaze, gesture, or posture, explicitly engaging with Christ (besides the three drawings discussed above: fols 237r, 271r, 271v, 274r, accompanying *Paradiso* I, X, and XI), while in three drawings (fols 251v, 269v, 270v, accompanying *Paradiso* V, IX, and X) the souls do not look or gesture at Christ (the remaining drawing, fol. 263r, *Paradiso* VIII, is too faintly sketched to form a judgement).<sup>11</sup> Even in the second group of drawings, Christ, looking frontally out of the images, is insistently present. Critics often note, as Montemaggi observes, that Dante speaks explicitly of Christ surprisingly infrequently in the *Commedia*. Montemaggi argues that if this is the case, 'it is because the generative challenge presented to us by the *Commedia* is to recognize Christ in other human beings; to recognize that the truth of Christ is the truth of all particular human beings; to recognize others as persons in and as whom Christ himself lives'.<sup>12</sup> The *Paradiso* drawings of Vat. lat.4776 take up a version of this challenge. They invite the viewer to reflect on how Christ might be present in, or mediated by, human interactions. They also invite viewers to themselves turn their attention and desires towards Christ.

By depicting Christ's disembodied face looking frontally out of the image, the artist echoes a devotional iconography that would have been highly familiar to a contemporary Christian, that of the Holy Face or Veronica. Images of the Holy Face (images held to represent Christ's true image) or the Veronica (images of the Holy Face that were, with varying degrees of explicitness, presented as copies specifically of the Veronica icon in Rome) were immensely popular devotional objects in the later Middle Ages.<sup>13</sup> By the late fourteenth century it was very common for individuals to have their own copy of a Holy Face.<sup>14</sup> While depictions of the Holy Face varied, the iconography typically shows Christ frontal, with a cruciform nimbus, and two long locks of hair and a beard framing his face.<sup>15</sup> In Vat.lat.4776 Christ is, with the exception of fol. 236r, depicted frontally or with his head very slightly turned; his nimbus is sometimes cruciform, sometimes plain. His gaze is softer than the fixed intensity of many renditions of the Holy Face, and he has no beard and only on a few folios the long locks of hair, but the images clearly evoke this iconography.

The Holy Face was a multivalent image, used in multiple devotional practices. Yet central to these was its role as a focus and prompt for viewers' desire to see Christ in this life and the next. As Jeffrey Hamburger, writing on uses of the Holy Face from the thirteenth through the late fifteenth

<sup>11</sup>In the images on fols 271r and 274r (and possibly 270v) Beatrice or Dante gesture towards Christ, but do not turn to look at him.

<sup>12</sup>Montemaggi, p. 26.

<sup>13</sup>On the Holy Face, see Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), pp. 317–82; Alexa Sand, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 27–83; the essays collected in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, ed. by Herbert L. Kessler and Gerhard Wolf (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1998). The Holy Face stood synecdochically for Christ's body (Hamburger, p. 333). On Botticelli's illustrations for *Paradiso* XXIII–XXVI as containing a version of the Veronica and thereby inviting the viewer to a 'conjoined' mode of vision (looking together with Beatrice at Christ), see Webb, 'Botticelli's Illustrations', pp. 204–8.

<sup>14</sup>Sand, p. 46; Hamburger, pp. 317–18.

<sup>15</sup>See Hamburger, p. 327; and the images in Sand, pp. 27–83.

century, observes, the images ‘lent life to a face that the viewer longed to see’.<sup>16</sup> Such images both expressed and aimed to stimulate a desire to see Christ face-to-face. Two early Veronicas by Matthew Paris (c. 1250 and c. 1240), for example, are explicitly labelled as seeking to ‘more greatly inflame [the viewer’s] devotion’ and to cause the soul ‘to be roused to greater devotion’.<sup>17</sup> The strength of medieval Christians’ desire to see Christ’s face is witnessed to, for example, by the Short Italian *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (c. 1300 – c. 1325). The author claims that forming a mental image of the face of Christ is the most difficult but most beneficial act of imaginative contemplation: ‘et specialmente contemplando la sua faça, se la pòi contemplare – la quale cosa mi pare malagievole sopra tute le altre cose, ma credo che questo te saria la maçoze consolatione’.<sup>18</sup> By repeatedly inserting a version of the Holy Face devotional iconography into the Vat.lat.4776 *Paradiso* drawings, the artist creates spaces for the viewer’s devotional activity. The drawings invite viewers, if they choose, to pause their reading and use the renditions of the Holy Face as stimuli for their own desiring turning towards Christ.

In *Paradiso* XIV, Dante is unable to describe his experience of the presence of Christ. What will allow the reader to understand this failure, Dante claims, is the reader’s own experience of seeking Christ:

Qui vince la memoria mia lo ’ngegno;  
ché quella croce lampeggiava Cristo,  
sì ch’io non so trovare essempro degno;  
ma chi prende sua croce e segue Cristo,  
ancor mi scuserà di quel ch’io lasso,  
vedendo in quell’ albor balenar Cristo. (*Par.* XIV, 103–8)

I shall return to this passage later, but note for now that Dante here invites readers to let their ongoing attempts to follow Christ inform their reading of the *Commedia*. The Vat.lat.4776 drawings offer a version of this exhortation. They invite reader-viewers to read *Paradiso* with their attention focused on Christ, inviting them not only to reflect on how Christ might be present in the human interactions depicted in the images, but also to themselves turn, in desire, towards Christ.

## Dante’s ‘In’ Neologisms and the Body of Christ

Christ does not in any straightforward sense participate in the narrative of the cantos that the Vat. lat.4776 *Paradiso* artist illustrates, but the images insistently invite the viewer to consider Christ as present in or mediated by the souls’ interactions. The second part of this essay turns to one of the ways that Dante’s text gestures implicitly towards the souls as – collectively – mediating Christ.

In *Paradiso* IX Dante describes the state of being of the blessed:

“Dio vede tutto, e tuo veder s’inluia”,  
diss’ io, “beato spirto, sì che nulla  
voglia di sé a te puot’ esser fuia.  
Dunque la voce tua, che ’l ciel trastulla  
sempre col canto di quei fuochi pii  
che di sei ali facen la coculla,  
perché non satisface a’ miei disii?  
Già non attendere’ io tua dimanda,  
s’io m’intuassi, come tu t’inmii”. (*Par.* IX, 73–81)

<sup>16</sup>Hamburger, p. 320.

<sup>17</sup>Matthew Paris, *Chronica maiora*: Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 16, fol. 49v (autograph manuscript, c. 1250): ‘Multi igitur eandem orationem cum pertinenciis memorie commendarunt, et ut eos maior accenderet devocio, picturis effigiarunt hoc modo’. London, British Library, MS Arundel 157, fol. 2r (addition to the Arundel Psalter, addition attributed to Matthew Paris, c. 1240): ‘Ut animus dicentis devocius excitetur, facies salvatoris per industriam artificis expresse figuratur’. Cited and discussed by Sand, pp. 38–47.

<sup>18</sup>*Meditations on the Life of Christ: The Short Italian Text*, ed. by Sarah McNamer (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), p. 82.

Dante celebrates the souls as being in God (73) and therefore in each other (73–76, 79–81). Every act of seeing another's thoughts, every act of responding to another and of receiving another's response, happens through God, and is part of a living out of a relationship with God. And this is true of human relationships throughout *Paradiso* even when they are not, as they are in the *Paradiso* IX passage, explicitly flagged as being such.

As Brenda Deen Schildgen has shown, the neologisms are notable partly because they show none of the restraint prescribed by classical rules of rhetoric, but instead are 'at once a bold leap and utter helplessness, a linguistic mimesis of the mystical experience'.<sup>19</sup> In order to consider further the mode of being towards which the 'in' neologisms – *inluiarsi*, *intuarsi*, *inmiarsi* – might gesture, I would like to turn to a Pauline and Augustinian mode of speaking about the community of Christian believers. Paul, in what Rowan Williams labels as 'probably his most unusual idiom', writes repeatedly of the faithful as being 'in Christ': existing in Christ, speaking in Christ, acting in Christ. 'You are in Christ', Paul tells the Corinthians, 'you are [...] alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord', 'in Christ we speak'; the faithful are one another's 'helpers in Christ', their 'hearts and minds [are] in Christ', and so on.<sup>20</sup> Together the faithful make up the body of Christ:

For as the body is one, and hath many members; and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body, so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body [...] Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member.<sup>21</sup>

Christian believers are all individual members who together form the one – singular yet shared – body. They are 'members one of another', intimately interdependent parts of the community held together by Christ: 'we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another' ('*multi unum corpus sumus in Christo, singuli autem alter alterius membra*', Romans 12. 5). The understanding that Christ was somehow a person of whom humans could be a part – that Christ was 'not only divine and human, but divine and plurally human' – was developed, particularly, by Augustine, and was key to medieval Christology.<sup>22</sup> The Church with all its members – Militant on earth, Suffering in purgatory, and Triumphant in heaven – was understood to be the body of which Christ is the head.

For Augustine, as Tarsicius van Bavel writes, 'the name Christ comprises three aspects and meanings': the eternal Word, the incarnate Jesus, and Christ head and body, of which each Christian is a member.<sup>23</sup> In Augustine's Christology the 'whole Christ', the '*totus Christus*', is the indivisible person of Christ (the head) and the faithful (his body). Augustine writes of Christ, 'the whole person, he and we':

<sup>19</sup>Brenda Deen Schildgen, 'Dante's Neologisms in the *Paradiso* and the Latin Rhetorical Tradition', *Dante Studies*, 107 (1989), 101–19 (110).

<sup>20</sup>Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 52. 1 Corinthians 1. 30: 'vos estis in Christo'; Romans 6. 11: 'viventes autem Deo, in Christo Jesu Domino nostro'; 2 Corinthians 2. 17, 12. 19: 'in Christo loquimur'; Romans 16. 3: 'adjuutores meos in Christo'; Philippians 4. 7: 'corda vestra, et intelligentias vestras in Christo'. See also, e.g., Romans 8. 1; 9. 1; 16. 7, 9; 1 Corinthians 15. 22; Galatians 3. 27–8; Philippians 1. 26. Citations from the Bible are taken from *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, Clementine Version, and translations from *The Holy Bible*, Douay/Rheims Version, both available at <http://www.drbo.org>.

<sup>21</sup>1 Corinthians 12. 12–13, 27: 'Sicut enim corpus unum est, et membra habet multa, omnia autem membra corporis cum sint multa, unum tamen corpus sunt: ita et Christus. Etenim in uno Spiritu omnes nos in unum corpus baptizati sumus [...] Vos autem estis corpus Christi, et membra de membro.'

<sup>22</sup>On Christ head and body in Paul, Augustine, and Aquinas, see Rowan Williams, 'Defining the Problem: From Paul to Augustine', The Hulsean Lectures 2016, Lecture 2, 19 January 2016 <https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/2158379> (citation from this lecture); and Williams, *Christ*, pp. 39–40, 43–56, 70–83. On Augustine, see Michael Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 165–212; Michael Fiedrowicz, 'General Introduction', in *Saint Augustine, Expositions of the Psalms*, trans. by Maria Boulding, O.S.B., ed. by John E. Rotelle, O.S.A., The Works of Saint Augustine, A Translation for the 21st Century, part 3, vol. 15 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000), pp. 13–66 (pp. 50–66); Marie-Joséph Rondeau, *Les commentaires patristiques du Psautier (IIIe–Ve siècles)*, vol. 2, *Exégèse prosopologique et théologie*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 220 (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1985), pp. 365–88; Monique Vincent, *Saint Augustin, maître de prière: D'après les Enarrations in Psalmos* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1990), pp. 33–61; Rowan Williams, 'Augustine and the Psalms', *Interpretation*, 58 (2004), 17–27.

<sup>23</sup>Tarsicius J. van Bavel, O.S.A., 'The Concept of the "Whole Christ"', in *Saint Augustine*, ed. by Tarsicius J. van Bavel and Bernard Bruning (Brussels: Augustinian Historical Institute, 2007), pp. 263–71 (p. 264).

Admiramini, gaudete, Christus facti sumus. Si enim caput ille, nos membra; totus homo, ille et nos [...] Plenitudo ergo Christi, caput et membra. Quid est, caput et membra? Christus et ecclesia.

Be in awe. Rejoice. We have been made Christ. For if he is the head, we are the members – a whole person, he and we [...] The fullness of Christ, therefore, head and members. What does it mean, head and members? Christ and the Church.<sup>24</sup>

Augustine returns repeatedly in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* to the concept of the ‘whole Christ’, of Christians being, speaking, and acting in or as Christ.<sup>25</sup> It is a mode of being brought about by willingly conforming to divine love and will: ‘Et nos in corpore ipsius sumus, si tamen fides nostra sincera sit in illo, et spes certa, et caritas accensa’ [We are within his body, provided that we have sincere faith in him, and unshakeable hope, and burning charity].<sup>26</sup> This is unity brought about through activity. Williams puts it, ‘for those whose relation with Jesus is one of loving trust and “alignment” of will or desire, the effect is what the New Testament calls [...] becoming a member of the “Body” of Christ’.<sup>27</sup> In terms of mediation, this is a mode of being in which humans, to a greater or lesser degree, embody, or give finite form to, divine life and love.<sup>28</sup>

Augustinian and medieval Christology thus offers terms for conceiving relationships in ways that go beyond standard person to person relations. Because Jesus is the embodiment of divine agency, ‘when he establishes relations between himself and other human agents, something more is happening than the simple connection of individuals that would be the case in other situations’.<sup>29</sup> Williams explains as follows:

the finite reality of Jesus embodies infinite divine relatedness, and so its own human and historically generated relations are more than instances of routine finite relations: they have the effect of extending human relations with God, so that the ‘filiation’ that characterizes Jesus is in some sense lived out in believers and, connected with this, they establish between believers an organic interdependence that radically changes our involvement with and responsibility for others.<sup>30</sup>

Christ is the reality that unites the believing community and that is active in, or as, that community – and it is this that allows humans to share in a capacity for relatedness that is not bound by normal spatiotemporal limits. This capacity for relatedness encompasses both a human person’s relation with God and their relations with other humans.

Williams discusses Augustine’s theology of the whole Christ – the community of the faithful as a singular yet shared acting subject – in terms that are particularly helpful when considering Dante:

the ever-widening net of relations in which Jesus is the decisive factor in determining the relation of other individuals to God the Father is taken into the identity of the Word – in the sense that the answer to the questions, ‘Who is now causing and defining the relation of these lives with the Father? Who is acting and speaking in those relations so as to give them their distinctive character?’ is ‘Jesus Christ’.<sup>31</sup>

In the *Commedia*, as in the Christian tradition of which Dante was a part, Jesus is of course the ‘decisive factor’ in bringing humans into relation with the divine; it is the incarnation (*Par.* xxxiii, 7–9) and the crucifixion (*Purg.* xxiii, 73–75; *Par.* xxvi, 59–63) which make salvation possible. More

<sup>24</sup>Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus CXXIV*, ed. by Radbod Willems, O.S.B., CCL, 36 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954), 21.8; translation slightly adapted from *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, trans. by John W. Rettig, The Fathers of the Church, 78–79, 88, 90, 92 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988–95), II, 186–87. The whole person, he and we’ is Williams’s translation from his lecture ‘Defining the Problem’.

<sup>25</sup>See, e.g., Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, ed. by E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, CCL, 38–40 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1956), 30(2).4; 56.1; 58(1).2; 62.2; 68(1).1, 8–11; 68(2).1; 74.4; 85.1; 100.3; 140.4; 142.3.

<sup>26</sup>Augustine, *Enarrationes*, 37.6, trans. by Boulding.

<sup>27</sup>Williams, *Christ*, p. 39; see also pp. 77–78.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>29</sup>Williams, *Christ*, p. 39.

<sup>30</sup>Williams, *Christ*, p. 120.

<sup>31</sup>Williams, *Christ*, p. 75.



specifically, Williams's questions – 'Who is now causing and defining the relation of these lives with the Father? Who is acting and speaking in those relations so as to give them their distinctive character?' – are ones that the *Paradiso* IX passage itself prompts us to ask.

I quote the passage again:

"Dio vede tutto, e tuo veder s'inluia",  
diss' io, "beato spirto, sì che nulla  
voglia di sé a te puot' esser fuia.  
Dunque la voce tua, che 'l ciel trastulla  
[...]  
perché non satisface a' miei disii?  
Già non attendere' io tua dimanda,  
s'io m'intuassi, come tu t'inmii". (*Par.* IX, 73–76, 79–81)

If one soul is within another, then when one soul speaks or acts – when Folco, for example, replies to Dante's question – who is it that can be said to be speaking or acting? On one level, the answer is, that particular soul – Folco, who speaks in the following lines, for instance, is not the same as Cunizza, who spoke in the preceding lines. But if Folco is 'in-her-ing' and 'in-him-ing' and 'in-me-ing' himself in Cunizza and in Dante and in all the other souls, as they are doing in him, then on another level, the answer cannot be only, 'Folco is speaking', 'Folco is acting'.

Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi writes:

*intuarsi e inmiarsi* [...] completano, con *inluarsi* del v. 73, la serie delle tre persone grammaticali, tentando così di esprimere, per quanto è possibile all'umano linguaggio, la compenetrazione – il farsi uno (III 81) – degli spiriti, pur mantenendo ognuno la sua identità, propria della vita paradisiaca.<sup>32</sup>

*Inluarsi*, *intuarsi*, and *inmiarsi* express a mode of being that is at once singular and shared. The souls are all within God and so within each other, yet all retain their particularity, and indeed have to retain their particularity for their 'in-you-ing' to make sense, to mean more than simply fusion or merging of selves. It is unity with God brought about through perfect conformity to divine will, or to put it another way, through openness to, or mediation of what is given by God. As Piccarda celebrates, 'Anzi è formale ad esto beato esse | tenersi dentro a la divina voglia, | per ch'una fansi nostre voglie stesse' (*Par.* III, 79–81).

In *Paradiso* XIV the souls shine forth Christ. Like stars in the Milky Way the blessed form a cross:

sì costellati facean nel profondo  
Marte quei raggi il venerabil segno  
che fan giunture di quadranti in tondo.  
Qui vince la memoria mia lo 'ngegno;  
ché quella croce lampeggiava Cristo,  
sì ch'io non so trovare essempro degno;  
ma chi prende sua croce e segue Cristo,  
ancor mi scuserà di quel ch'io lasso,  
vedendo in quell' albor balenar Cristo. (*Par.* XIV, 100–8)

The souls, numerous as dust particles dancing in a sunray (109–17), together manifest and are Christ. It is in and as their collectivity that Christ is present; it is 'quella croce', which is the souls, that shines forth Christ; it is in 'quell' albor', which is, again, the souls, that Christ flashes out. 'Quella croce', 'quell' albor': the singular yet composite collectivity of souls – and in the following lines (109–17) Dante foregrounds, in the imagery of darting *lumi* and dancing *minuzie d'i corpi*, precisely the composite nature of the single cross – is what Christ shines as and where he shines. As in Pauline and Augustinian understandings of the body of Christ, it is in and as the community of worshippers, in and as an at once singular and composite collectivity, that Christ is present. This is

<sup>32</sup>Chiavacci Leonardi, gloss on *Par.* IX, 81.

a paradisiacal version of Augustine's whole Christ. Whereas on earth 'the transparency of finite action to divine in the body of believers is irregular and episodic' (to quote Williams again), here the souls are fully conformed to and fully mediate Christ.<sup>33</sup>

What I would suggest is that the 'in' neologisms of *Paradiso IX*—*inluiarsi*, *intuarsi*, *inmiarsi*, together with *inleiarsi* (*Par.* XXII, 127) and *indiarsi* (*Par.* IV, 28) – also point towards a Christological mode of being. In order to try to express a state of being that is at once singular and shared, Dante turns to the language of humans being 'in' one another and 'in' God, echoing the language – being and acting 'in Christ', being 'members one of another' – that Paul and Augustine insistently use to articulate their concept of the at once singular and shared life that is the body of Christ. Moevs, writing of the souls' 'in-him-ing', explains as follows: 'Although individual and finite, all angelic and beatified human intelligences are also one, each knowing all the others as immediately as it knows itself, because they all consciously participate in the one reality of Intellect-Being'.<sup>34</sup> The resonances between Dante's 'in' neologisms and Paul's and Augustine's language of being 'in' – both used to express a singular yet composite state of being, in which humans share in a capacity for relatedness that exceeds normal spatiotemporal limits – suggest that that participation 'in the one reality of Intellect-Being' happens through and as Christ. The souls can 'in-her' and 'in-him' and 'in-me' themselves because they are the body of Christ. What is made explicit in *Paradiso XIV* – that the blessed, in their collectivity, mysteriously are Christ – is suggested implicitly by the Pauline and Augustinian echoes of the 'in' neologisms.

Dante's neologisms, with their personal pronouns, foreground, in a way that Paul and Augustine do not, the personal, particular character, as well as the erotic overtones, of each act of being 'in' another.<sup>35</sup> There is an intimacy and intensity to the souls' interdependence, and, through the erotic connotations, a suggestion – in keeping with Dante's emphasis elsewhere (especially *Par.* XIV, 61–66) – of the human body's capacity to mediate relationships between individuals. As for Paul and Augustine, being the body of Christ is not a state achieved once and for all, but an ongoing activity. Each personal, particular 'in-you-ing', each act of answering Dante's (unspoken) questions, each act of responding in love to another, is a way of acting as Christ's body and so of acting as Christ. Through their own particular 'in-you-ing' and 'in-me-ing', the souls, as they do in *Paradiso XIV*, 100–8, embody Christ, mediate Christ, are Christ. The answer to the question – if one soul is within another, then, when one soul speaks or acts, who is it that can be said to be speaking or acting? – is that soul in their particularity and Christ. Each action is particular to an individual soul and somehow shared in by all, because each soul is a member of the one body of Christ.

By inserting into his drawings images of Christ reminiscent of the highly popular Holy Face iconography, the Vat.lat.4776 *Paradiso* artist invites reader-viewers to reflect on how interactions with fellow human beings might flow from, and even be, interactions with Christ. In different ways, the images and Dante's text gesture towards Christ as the reality that allows humans to enter into relationships that go beyond standard person to person relations. This is a possibility for relationship that will be celebrated most fully in *Paradiso XXXIII* when Dante looks on Christ and – not understanding, yet participating in what he beholds – sees our human figure, 'mi parve pinta de la nostra effige' (131).<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Williams, *Christ*, p. 78.

<sup>34</sup>Moevs, p. 76.

<sup>35</sup>Augustine, e.g., *Enarrationes*, 30(2).4; 37.6, does use erotic imagery in discussing Christ, the head, and the community of believers, his body, as 'two no longer, but one flesh' (echoing Matthew 19. 4–6 on marriage). Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante's Poets: Textuality and Truth in the Comedy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 116, describes Dante's 'in' neologisms as 'transcendent linguistic eroticism'. On the debate over whether eros is present in *Paradiso*, see Lino Pertile, 'Does the *Stilnov* go to Heaven?', in *Dante for the New Millennium*, ed. by Teodolinda Barolini and H. Wayne Storey (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), pp. 104–14, and F. Regina Psaki, 'Love for Beatrice: Transcending Contradiction in the *Paradiso*', in *ibid.*, pp. 115–30, and for an approach that reframes this debate, see Heather Webb, *Dante's Persons: An Ethics of the Transhuman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 123–63.

<sup>36</sup>On Christ as what 'gives meaning to the coincidence between singular and plural' in *Inf.* i and *Par.* xxxiii, see Montemaggi, pp. 244–45..

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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