

Dante's Other Ugolinos

. . . io vidi due ghiacciati in una buca,
sì che l'un capo a l'altro era cappello;

e come 'l pan per fame si manduca,
così 'l sovràn li denti a l'altro pose
là 've 'l cervel s'aggiugne con la nuca . . . (*Inf.* XXXII. 125-29)

Vidi per fame a vòto usar li denti
Ubaldin da la Pila e Bonifazio
Che pasturò col rocco molte genti. (*Purg.* XXIV. 28-30)

The purgatorial passage above presents a startling image of rabid hunger surpassed only by the renowned infernal scene of Ugolino da Pisa gnawing on the skull of Archbishop Ruggieri. So many are the shared elements of the two passages that the differences in meaning seem to constitute a reciprocal commentary of one on the other. Ugolino's death by starvation and the cannibalistic madness before death to which hunger brings him are brutally mimicked in the form of his eternal damnation. The memory of the Count's name transmitted by the assonant "Ubaldin da la Pila" emblemizes no less than the choice of damnation or salvation that *might have been the other*: Ubaldino, gluttonous in life, dies in grace and endures purgatorial "starvation" in order to perfect his spiritual appetite for God; Ugolino, whose gluttony was blindly biological, dies in sin and endures infernal cannibalism as his "perfected" second death. Had Ugolino been able to understand that his and his children's starvation offered him an opportunity to receive grace, his fate might have been salvation.

Purgatorio XXIV's "corrective" of Ugolino's dehumanized despair is not the only one written into the *Comedy*. Dante inscribes Ugolino's name exactly or closely other times in the *Purgatorio* and once, in fragmented form, in the *Paradiso*. The names serve as markers of reconstituted Ugolino material — signals of the poem's rigorous Christian moral that one must choose either cannibalism

(to die an Ugolino) or communion (to die an Ubaldino). Dante affirms the necessity of choice in these terms in the Ugolino cantos (*Inf.* XXXII-XXXIII), as John Freccero has persuasively argued.¹

The present essay traces the "echoes" of Ugolino's story and the reconfirmation of its meaning in the *Comedy* through rectified purgatorial situations.

The Ubaldino tercet cited above is the most dramatic direct confrontation in the poem with the Ugolino story. In addition to the similarity of name, the two lords belonged to powerful Ghibelline families that lived in the Arno Valley, they died within two years of one other, and are each paired in the afterworld with an archbishop. Bonifazio, Archbishop of Ravenna, was, like Ruggieri, deeply involved in political affairs, but unlike Ruggieri, he labored at reconciliation rather than division.² Through his name alone — of high negative value in this poem — he indicates the *difference* within similarity, the fine line of free will that makes one ecclesiastical ruler a Boniface VIII and another a Bonifazio. The archbishop's most pointed linguistic link to the Ugolino story, however, depends on his pastoral office: ". . . pasturò col rocco molte genti." Charles Singleton cites an earlier critic's attention to the ironic ambiguity of the verb *pasturare*: "Feeding . . . with the evangelical word and with piety, and feeding the hungry flock of courtiers who crowded around him."³ But the principal irony of the verb is in the distance it establishes between spiritual nourishment — exemplified by the archbishop and Ubaldino in their *apparent* lack of natural food — and spiritual self-consumption — exemplified by Ugolino's imitation of perpetual nourishment by cannibalizing (reifying) Ruggieri. The relationship of the purgatorial pair is one of egalitarian partnership (communion), "Ubaldino . . . e Bonifazio," whereas the other is of self-aggrandizing rivalry (cannibalism), one "sovrano" to the other. An historical link further binds the two passages, for Ubaldino was Archbishop Ruggieri's father. This irony of history marshaled by Dante for the *Divine Comedy* adumbrates the poem's essential theme of paternity that finds its perfect paradigm in the rightful love that binds God the Father and His Son, and that frees the just kin of a "false" father or son from automatic generational guilt and determinism. This is illustrated nowhere else as dramatically as in Ugolino's spiritual hardness and his children's selfless love for him.

Though the underlying significance of Ugolino's feeding upon his children is to allegorize his love of self instead of God, the literal cannibalism is not to be dismissed. Dante employs the purgatorial cantos of the gluttonous, in part, to suggest the real threat of the cannibalistic act in a moment of extreme crisis. The poet-

pilgrim's first sight of the pale, wasted figures atoning for their excessive appetites on earth brings to his mind the pagan Erysichthon who, from starvation, ate his own flesh, and the Jew Mary who, in rage and hunger, ate her infant son (*Purg.* XXIII. 25-30).

Both of these ancient legends lend authority to Ugolino's despair; he, too, bit into his own hands (*Inf.* XXXIII. 58); and in eating the flesh of his children, he also ate himself: cannibalism and self-cannibalism are effectively the same reifying act, and they both deny God.⁴ The sight of the "starved" souls in Purgatory also brings to mind the emaciated faces of Ugolino and his children; and the words of one, Dante's friend Forese Donati, recalls Ugolino's inability to receive the promise of hope inherent in his dying son's reiteration of Christ's last words (*Inf.* XXXIII. 69). Forese explains to Dante that the pain of the Gluttonous's suffering

" . . . dovria dir sollazzo,
ché quella voglia a li alberi ci mena
che menò Cristo lieto a dire 'Eli',
quando ne liberò con la sua vena." (*Purg.* XXIII. 72-75)

Ugolino's children are virtually suffering the "glad" pain of Purgatory in the Tower of Hunger, but Ugolino, in blind, hard-hearted despair, is already "frozen" in isolation. His final act, enacted on the seventh day of their week of testing in the locked tower, completes his dead-end journey of despair that parallels, *in malo*, Dante's own Paschal week-long journey of the spirit.⁵

Another gluttonous soul purging himself on the sixth terrace is Bonagiunta, whose fame rests primarily on his part as Dante's interlocutor in a discussion of Italian poetry. But of greater interest here is Bonagiunta's enigmatic muttering of the word "Gentucca" and his prophesy that Dante will one day enjoy the city of Lucca. My reading of Bonagiunta's prophesy draws attention to the generational as well as onomastic relationship between Ugolino and his grandson Nino (a diminutive of Ugolino, for whom he was named) that will implicate Bonagiunta's city of Lucca as a possible counter-community to the "cannibalistic" Pisa. Nino figures, though is not named, in the Ugolino story: a significant political leader in his short life, he played a notable role in the history of his grandfather's passion for power. Dante joyfully finds the "Giudice Nin gentil" in Purgatory's Valley of the good princes (*Purg.* VIII. 52-54). Thus, not only historically but also intra-textually, the theme of paternity central to the Ugolino episode extends past the margins of the text to catch the latter's maligned

(though also ambitious) grandson. But before pursuing this course, let us follow the name-markers posted by Dante in *Purgatorio* XIV: Ugolin d'Azzo and Ugolin de' Fantolin (*Purg.* XIV. 105, 121).

Envy is the context in which these valorous Ugolinos are mentioned, and one of its victims, Guido del Duca, utters the consequence of envy in an impassioned apostrophe to humankind on Purgatory's second terrace: ". . . o gente umana, perché poni 'l core / là 'v' è mestier di consorte divieto?" (*Purg.* XIV. 86-87). "Exclusion of partnership" — the consequence, too, of Ugolino's treacherous self-love — is the diametric antithesis of Christian charity, and on this purgatorial terrace, the blinded envious, huddling together, supporting each other, strengthen their charitable dispositions, each now "cittadina / d'una vera città" (*Purg.* XIII. 94-95).

The action of *Purgatorio* XIV is primarily a dialogue of condemnation sparked by a remark of Dante-pilgrim. The speakers are two souls from Romagna, the Ghibelline Guido del Duca and the Guelf Rinier da Calboli. Their conversation attains a peak of passion in Guido's lengthy invective against the Arno Valley region, which interweaves images of bestiality, eating, and pater-nity in censure of the inhabitants of the cities along the Arno. It inevitably brings to mind the combination of conditions that marked Ugolino's bestial degradation. Like him, the people of the Arno Valley ". . . hanno sí mutata lor natura . . . che par che Circe li avesse in pastura" (*Purg.* XIV. 40, 42). The ones singled out last are the Pisans; and as if the clues were still not sufficient, Guido follows this attack with a prophesy of pursuit and slaughter by a "cacciator di . . . lupi" (*Purg.* XIV. 59) that clearly mirrors Ugolino's dream of death (*Inf.* XXXIII. 58-66).⁶ The two *reborn* sinners who speak these terrible truths exemplify the potential for salvation that might have been Ugolino's. Their dialogue *per se* exemplifies their genuine fellowship: they converse, gently, *with* each other and the stranger Dante. Guido's righteous condemnation of his countrymen carries especial moral force, since he recognizes fully that the penitent of this terrace, and certainly himself, all — but for the grace of God — were *almost* lost with those of their own lands "excluded from partnership," that is, with those condemned to Hell. Dante-pilgrim does not yet understand the concept.⁷

Guido del Duca knows that Dante comes from the Arno area even though the latter "hid" the river's name in his circuitous self-

presentation:

"Se ben lo 'ntendimento tuo accarno
con lo 'ntelletto," allora mi rispuose
quei [Guido] che diceva pria, "tu parli d'Arno."

E l'altro [Riniero] disse lui: "Perché nascose
questi il vocabol di quella riviera,
pur com'om fa de l'orribili cose?" (*Purg.* XIV. 22-27, emphasis added)

Riniero's question is a virtual explanation of why Ugolino's final words to Dante-pilgrim must be obscure; it pinpoints the true tragedy of the "orribile" Tower of Hunger *at the moment* it is nailed shut (*Inf.* XXXIII. 46-47), the moment, that is, that initiates Ugolino's unspeakable action. So, too, Dante holds back from naming the Arno, which metonymizes for him the unspeakable civic depravity of his compatriots.⁸ Nor can it be fortuitous that in this context Guido speaks of "penetrating the flesh" of Dante's meaning (*accarnare* or *accarnire*, in its literal sense). Guido's metaphoric bite is an intellectual insight. It reflects the spirit, Ugolino's, the letter of life.

The two good Ugolinos are named after Guido's soliloquy and prophesy; along with others, they counter the "bastardi" of Romagna (*Purg.* XIV. 99) — those who have morally illegitimized their lineage. The verses which the Ugolinos encase (105-121) drum the theme of kinship — *brigata, casa, gente . . . diretata; famiglio, rifiglia, figliar*; and the purgatorial curbs to envy are fratricide (Cain's murder of Abel) and sororal envy (Aglauros's of Herse, causing the former, like Ugolino, to waste away, eat her heart out, and/or turn to stone).⁹ Ugolin d'Azzo, a blood relation to the treacherous Archbishop Ruggieri, was one who gave his word to abide by peace terms; Ugolin de' Fantolin, *podestà* of Faenza, was a "virtuous" nobleman without surviving descendants, whose name therefore will remain "sicuro" (*Purg.* XIV. 121).¹⁰ Each Ugolino evokes the infernal one by contrastive attributes. The lesson of partnership (egalitarianism) is rendered powerfully at the level of kinship relations, but Dante insists even more, textually, on the kinship of all persons by enveloping the purgatorial Ugolino verses in the Romagnole Guido's direct address to his spiritual "brother" (Dante-pilgrim), a political rival by terrestrial definition. "Non ti maravigliar s'io piango, Tosco," begins his discourse on virtuous lineage which names Ugolin d'Azzo; and he ends it abruptly following the second Ugolino's name, in need of returning to his penitence: "Ma va via, Tosco, omai; ch'or mi diletta / troppo di pianger . . ." (*Purg.* XIV.

124-125). When Guido breaks off his righteous indignation, the Tuscan pilgrim — as well as the reader — must either cherish the lesson of partnership or expect to be metamorphosed into bestiality, like Ugolino da Pisa. Dante falters — the canto's final warning that "l'amo / de l'antico avversaro a sé vi tira" (*Purg.* XIV. 145-146).

Communion, in earthly terms, requires justness in human government. Ugolino and the Archbishop Ruggieri are punished in Antenora because they betrayed their public responsibilities. For the "orribili" consequences of their treachery, Dante condemns Pisa itself as a "new Thebes" (*Inf.* XXXIII. 89), an Augustinian City of Man that is by definition self-consuming, "cannibalistic." The might-have-been-bad rulers await purgation of their remnant of sinfulness in Purgatory's valley of the negligent princes, where Dante hears them singing a hymn to Mary the *Queen*, seeking her prayer "that we be made worthy of the promises of Christ" (*Purg.* VII. 82). The purgatorial stress on process (becoming) keeps us continually aware of the penitents' still human failings, and their strong appeal to aid (prayer) in purgation parallels the precariousness of the journey of life on earth. The drama about to unfold in the valley as the sun sets — the threat of the serpents and the rush of the angels to ward them off, set against the three stars "burning" above that symbolize the Christian virtues — is the archetypal lesson of life's precariousness.

Sordello, in identifying some of the great rulers to Dante and Virgil, speaks of filial degeneration and offers a divine motive for it:

Rade volte risurge per li rami
l'umana probitate; e questo vole
quei che la dà, perché da lui si chiami. (*Purg.* VII. 121-23)

Ugolino's grandson Nino is one of the rare rulers who turned to God instead of himself. He rushes in recognition to greet Dante when the poet descends into the valley, and upon realizing that Dante is still "in prima vita," calls to a nearby penitent, Corrado Malaspina, to share in the excitement of that event. These two are the only rulers in the valley with whom Dante talks. The category that groups together these "grandi ombre" (*Purg.* VIII. 44) is unique in Purgatory, the only one based on earthly occupation (rather than a state of mind). In fact, the penitents named throughout the *Purgatorio* are predominantly political rulers or individuals associated with the political order, from Frederic II's son Manfred to Pia, Sapia, Marco Lombardo and Hugh Capet. Of the

rest — mainly poets and a few other artists contemporary to Dante — several, such as Forese Donati, are also closely associated with contemporary politics. Purgatory, thus, is the focal point of the striving toward beatitude that might have been misdirected by political passions. *Inferno* culminates in such misdirection, and Ugolino da Pisa is the last (worst) contemporary Italian sinner to personify political disorder. His grandson Judge Nino, who was allied politically in his youth with Ugolino and his children, ruled Pisa jointly for a while with his grandfather. The *differences* in their fates could not be set off by a more aptly imagined origin than life itself provided. For his accusations against the Ghibelline Archbishop Ruggieri and Ugolino's fear of his challenge, Nino, a member of the weaker Guelf party, was soon forced into exile. Like Dante (whom he may have met in Florence as a result of exile), Nino bitterly suffered the interdiction of his native city and rose against it, through military — in contrast to Dante's literary — activity. In league with Lucca and Florence, he fought Pisa until his death at thirty-one, seven years after his grandfather's death. His righteous passion against Pisa, the (Ghibelline) "vituperio de le genti" (*Inf.* XXXIII. 79) is linked with (Guelf) Lucca, where, according to his wish, his heart was buried.¹¹

Dante seems to acknowledge the closeness of his own and Nino's earthly lot in the simple parallelism of their fictional encounter in Purgatory: "Ver me si fece, e io ver lui mi fei" (*Purg.* VIII. 52). Nino, as another paradigm of the Christian exile-pilgrim in life and simultaneously exemplifying the just ruler *specifically in opposition to* Ugolino, carries astounding poetic impact. Dante's meeting with him expresses that implied opposition, i.e., that Nino was unstained by the Pisan shame embodied in the hateful "partnership" of Ugolino and Ruggieri: ". . . quanto mi piacque / quando ti vidi non esser tra' rei!" (*Purg.* VIII. 53-54, emphasis added). Surely Dante's contemporaries would have associated Nino with the Count, as well as would Dante-pilgrim who has very recently spoken with Ugolino in Hell.

Nino's association in the valley of the princes with Corrado Malaspina enlarges the link between Dante's personal destiny and Nino's, and the theme of the necessity and glory of the just ruler. The Ghibelline Corrado and the Guelf Nino merge as a single voice of "gentle" (noble) righteousness: the renowned Corrado epitomizes grandly (universally) the interrelated themes of Dante's homelessness and "homecoming" with good government; Nino expresses them personally. Both rulers are famous grandsons, Nino of Ugolino and Corrado (as he himself explains) of the "antico" Corrado I. Ugolino's ominous presence is not only im-

plied negatively at the beginning of the Nino episode, but again at its close, when Corrado II prophesies Dante's exile within his lands by anticipating the poet's first-hand experience of Malaspina hospitality; he foretells that Dante's "cortese oppinione" of the Malaspina reputation

ti fia *chiavata* in mezzo de la testa
con maggior *chiovì* che d'altrui sermone. . . . (*Purg.* VIII. 137-38; emphasis added)

The startling nail imagery of Corrado's final words (cited above) cannot but evoke the "chiavar" of the "orribile" tower and the other Christological allusions in Ugolino's story to the Passion.¹² Once again, infernal failure to embrace the primal Sufferer is counterbalanced by another's wiser acceptance of His gift: Dante-pilgrim will find strength to accept his exilic sorrows, and learn from them personal spiritual lessons as well as the universal importance of good government.

Following the warm greeting of Nino and Dante, Nino's thoughts turn to his family — his eight-year-old daughter and his widow. This personal and compassionate part of his conversation ends as an indictment of the political intrigues touching on his wife's second marriage, which leaves him inflamed, like Guido del Duca, with "dritto zelo" (*Purg.* VIII. 83). In a work that creates a basically male-populated world of a largely political nature, female presences are invariably conspicuous. So, here, "Giovanna mia" and "la sua madre . . . misera" stand out against the powerful male dynasties that have ruled and misruled at least since the time of Hugh Capet. The two females comprise a lineage whose coordinates are childhood purity on the one hand and feminine sensuality on the other.¹³

Nino's mention of his daughter affords another allusion to Ugolino and his young children. The noble judge hopes that she will pray "là dove alli 'nnocenti si risponde" (*Purg.* VIII. 72), that is, to the children of Paradise. Among these already, of course, are Ugolino's (whom "Innocenti facea l'età novella," (*Inf.* XXXIII. 88). Femininity as such is emphasized in the word *femmina*, a generic term for the creature that conceives and bears the young, in opposition to *maschio*. The word is used infrequently in the *Comedy*, nine times in the singular or plural, whereas *donna/donne* appears ninety-seven times.¹⁴ Its use in *Purgatorio* VIII, to bewail the fire of female sensual desire, stems from the widowhood of Nino's wife, which she manifests by wearing the traditional "bianche bende" (*Purg.* VIII. 74). The word *benda*, also rarely used

in the poem (three times), appears in the same line as *femmina* in *Purgatorio* XXIV, in Bonagiunta's enigmatic speech to Dante about Lucca:

"Femmina è nata, e non porta ancor benda,"
cominciò el, "che ti farà piacere
la mia città, come ch'om la riprenda. . . ." (*Purg.* XXIV. 43-45)

Femininity is an essential element of Bonagiunta's reference to Lucca; in particular, virginal femininity (since the "female" in question does not yet wear the wifely veil). In *Inferno* XXI, which expresses Dante's estimation of Lucca as a city of swindlers in public office (*barattieri*) — minor-league Ugolinos, as it were — Lucca is named only synecdochically after another virginal figure, its patron Saint Zita (*Inf.* XXI. 38).¹⁵ These examples, along with Nino's words about his daughter in *Purgatorio* VIII, form a meaningful pattern. The language and quality of femininity that connects Lucca to Nino in these three infernal and purgatorial cantos is further buttressed by Nino's historical connection to the city; and both textually and historically, the link implicates Pisa. Just as Nino's high regard for Lucca was well known in his time, so was his low regard for his native city of Pisa — especially following his exile. Dante, for similar reasons, shared Nino's "dritto zelo" and fictionalizes the "noble Judge" to great advantage for his own poetic strategy: Nino's antithetical relationship to Ugolino is also the antithetical relationship of female (Lucca) and male (Pisa), a structure that valorizes the creative *femmina* above the warring males that populate the *Comedy*. Although the identity of the "*femmina*" whom Bonagiunta foretells as the one responsible for Dante's new, positive view of Lucca remains an unsettled crux, the fact of her femininity is clearly essential to the meaning of the passage, whatever the relationship to it of the word "Gentucca." The young, unmarried *femmina* allegorizes a promise of hope in her still unfulfilled child-bearing role, just as Lucca itself will produce well ("ti farà piacere") in the future. Nor is there any necessity in thinking that Lucca will please only Dante or please him personally; it is quite possible that the city will please the pilgrim for political or moral reasons, counteracting its *general* negative reputation at the fictive time of the journey ("come ch' uom la riprenda," *Purg.* XXIV. 45, emphasis added). Moreover, the allegorical status of the Gentucca passage may be responsible for Bonagiunta's warning that Dante may mistake the meaning of his "antivedere." The poet himself frequently employs such a technique in his "asides" to the reader when a significant allegorical moment is imminent or has just transpired. Furthermore, the tercet immediately following Bonagiunta's prediction introduces the canto's discourse on

poetry, a creative ("feminine") act described at once in the language of childbirth:

Ma dì s'ì' veggio qui colui che fore
trasse le nove rime. . . (*Purg.* XXIV. 49-50, emphasis added)

Lucca and poetry share a common textual terrain of fertility and future regeneration in the *Purgatorio*, thematic near-neighbors to Dante's learned disputation on the development of the embryo and the creation of the soul in Canto XXV.¹⁶ The prophesied transformation of Lucca from a city of sinners recapitulates the spiritual journey of progress that depends on correct choice. As biumvirs of Pisa, Nino and Ugolino symbolically began their manhood journeys at the same point. Dante gives final meaning to their historical fates in his poem: the grandson followed the right road (to the poet's pretended surprise); the grandfather, the one to sin. Their shared starting-point dramatizes the possibilities and consequences of free will. Always mindful of the civic consequences of human behavior, Dante embodies their individual dramas textually in Pisa, their native city, and in Lucca, its political rival and Nino's "adopted" city. At the level of the community, too, the choice pertains: the community may follow Circe's temptation and choose *bestialità* (*Par.* XVII. 67, where the reference is political) and cannibalistic death, or choose the *pasture* (*Par.* XVIII. 74) that increases communion and fosters salvation. The Pisan Tower of Hunger emblemizes the (male) loathsome locus of treachery and self-love, while the purgatorial Luccan "re-birth" emblemizes the (female) regenerative potential of the social order. Ugolino's literal blindness to his children's offer to love equals Pisa's "blindness" to the Luccan possibility. Unawares, Ugolino himself, draws the analogy as he recounts the dream of his and his children's pursuit and capture, a dream whose general meaning also escaped him:¹⁷

Questi pareva a me maestro e donno,
cacciando il lupo e 'lupicini al monte
per che i Pisan veder Lucca non ponno. (*Inf.* XXXIII. 28-30)

In this canto filled with allusions to the Passion, an allegorical reading of the naturalistic imagery of the above lines is not out of character. In fact, it seems prepared by the preceding tercet's striking metaphoric use of the Biblical rending-of-the-veil event at the time of the Passion:

. . . io feci 'l mal sonno
che del futuro mi squarciò 'l velame. (*Inf.* XXXIII. 26-27)

The rending of the temple veil immediately follows Christ's death and announces the earthquake of death and resurrection (Matthew 27:51). Ugolino's fleeing with his children into the mountains — a Biblical place of revelation — might have been a sign to the dreamer of the possibility of redemption while he still had a chance to repent in life, but instead the waking sinner remains blinded to the right interpretation of the dream, as the Pisans' sight of Lucca across Mt. San Giuliano is blocked, spiritually as well as literally.

Ugolino's infamy has imposed poetic immortality on him. Virtuous Ugolinos of his time and earlier are recorded by Dante in a much fainter poetic light to resonate against the greater figure's damnable life, like remote echoes of a choice not made, their deeds and nobility barely meriting a scholarly footnote. The echo rebounds across *Inferno* to *Purgatorio*, still audible if not loud. Midway in *Paradiso*, its last broken, indistinct murmur may be heard, approximating the near-extinction of the ancient noble Florentine families, whose fame, already in Cacciaguida's time, is "nel tempo nascosa," (*Par.* XVI. 87). Dante-pilgrim, in Hell, notes his presence before Ugolino and Ruggieri with the words "io vidi"; in Purgatory, when he comes upon their positive images, Ubaldino and Bonifazio, he uses the same verb "Vidi" (see this essay's opening citations). Dante's great-great grandfather Cacciaguida, speaking to the pilgrim about the once eminent Florentine families, has not himself forgotten them, but still "sees" them in his perfected vision: "Io vidi li Ughi e vidi i Catellini . . . già nel calare, illustri cittadini" (*Par.* XVI. 88, 90, emphasis added). The ancestral vision is, of course, no less than Dante's own sharp poetic vision, which refuses to give Count Ugolino rest even as Dante-pilgrim soars immeasurable distances from him, into the heavenly spheres.

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NOTES

- 1 "Bestial sign and Bread of Angels (*Inf.* 32-33), *Yale Italian Studies* I (Winter 1977), 53-66. My essay owes a great deal to Professor Freccero's work, as subsequent notes partially attest.
- 2 See Charles S. Singleton, *Commentary to Purgatorio*, pp. 563-65, n. 29. For all critical references to Singleton's work as well as passages cited from the *Divine*

Comedy, see his six-part text, translation and commentary, *The Divine Comedy*, 3 vols., Bollingen Series LXXX (Princeton, 1970-75). Henceforth, reference to the *Commentaries* are abbreviated as I.C. (*Inferno Commentary*), *Pur. C.* (*Purgatorio Commentary*), *Pa. C.* (*Paradiso Commentary*).

- 3 Singleton, *Pur. C.*, p. 565, n. 30.

- 4 Freccero, 55-56; "As in the Augustinian description of sin, to assert one's subjectivity is to treat the other as object, reified as though he were a piece of bread. . . ." (p. 56).

- 5 Textual evidence clearly marks time through the sixth day (*Inf.* XXXIII. 46-72). By that time ("tra 'l quinto dì e 'l sesto"), all the children are dead—by Friday, that is, the day of Christ's death and also of Adam's creation: the day, therefore, of perfected earthly creation. Ugolino, during this time of hope and promise (which begins on Friday), goes blind, gropes over the children's bodies and calls them for two days. "Then," he succumbs to his empty stomach, i.e. cannibalizes the children:

. . . ond'io [following their death] mi diedi,

già cieco, a brancolar sovra ciascuno,

e due dì li chiamai, poi che fur morti.

Poscia, più che 'l dolor poté 'l digiuno." (72-75)

These last two days, it seems to me, must begin on the sixth, when the children die (his final opportunity to turn to God) and he is blinded (the sign of damnation for his denial of God). He seals his fate on the seventh (Sabbath) day, symbolic of eternal time. And, indeed, his cannibalistic desperation proceeds, uninterrupted, from ordinary time into eternal punishment.

- 6 Singleton also make this observation, *Pur. C.*, p. 296.

- 7 See *Purg.* XV. Not until the pilgrim meets Beatrice will his hunger for understanding how it works be satisfied "pienamente" (*Purg.* XV. 77), but Virgil offers some assistance: Earthly envy, he explains in Canto XV, diminishes each portion of partnership, but in heaven

. . . per quanti si dice più lì 'nostro',

tanto più possiede più di ben ciascuno,

e più di caritate arde in quel chiostro. (*Purg.* XV. 55-57)

The rhetoric of eating, it should be noted, colors these discussions. Indirectly associated with it is Ugolino's despair at seeing himself mirrored in the gaunt faces of his children (*Inf.* XXXIII. 55-58), in contrast to the figurative "mirror" mentioned by Virgil that increases love by reflecting it (*Purg.* XV. 73-75).

- 8 See Freccero's discussion of Ugolino's "unspeakable" grief. He notes that Ugolino, at the beginning of his story, "is echoing Aeneas's words to Dido in the second book of the *Aenied*, with the first and most important word omitted, precisely the word 'unspeakable': *Infandum*, Regina, iubes renovare dolorem" (60). Guido del Duca's judgement that "degno ben è che 'l nome di tal valle pèra" (*Purg.* XIV. 29-30) shows his understanding of Dante's silence as a proper way to assert a horrible truth.

- 9 Singleton, *Pur. C.*, pp. 311-12, n. 139.

- 10 *Purg.* XIV, 121-123; Singleton, *Pur. C.*, pp. 304-05; n. 105; p. 309, nn. 121-123.

- 11 See Singleton, *Pur. C.*, pp. 606-12, which includes Villani's account of Ugolino's political intrigues and Nino's prominent role in them. See also I.C., pp. 367-68, on the correspondence in form between Pisan and Luccan governance; and also the entries on Lucca and Nino Visconti in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, ed. Umberto Bosco, 5 vols. (Rome, 1970-76).

- 12 Freccero, 56-58.

- 13 The widow's remarriage, according to her first husband, proves how her love depends on kindling by sight and touch. Her wrongheaded sexual passion leads to her destruction (*Purg.* VIII. 76-81; *Pur. C.*, pp. 168-70). She and her daughter constitute for Nino and for Dante a version of the whore — Madonna Church biblical antithesis.

- 14 According to my count of the entries for each term in Paget Toynbee's *A Dictionary of Proper Names and Notable Matters in the Works of Dante*, rev. C.S. Singleton (Oxford, 1968).

- 15 Zita was a poor midservant. She was worshipped by the populace even before her cult was officially accepted by the Bishop of Lucca (1282). At least one direct reference to Nino lurks in the *bolgia* of the narrators: he is the "donno" whom Fra Gomita swindled and betrayed (*Inf.* XXII. 81-83). For St. Zita, see the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* and Toynbee's *Dante Dictionary*. These also document the available interpretations of Gentucca (mainly, as the name of a Lucchese noblewoman or a pejorative dialect form of "gente") and the words "femmina" and "benda." Tommaseo's *Dizionario* is also helpful for these two terms. Regarding the latter term, it should be understood that "bianche bende" are the veils of a wife. The passage I cite from *Purg.* VIII makes it clear that the young "femmina" will become a married woman — and thus also, by implication, a mother.
- 16 For the various correspondences made in this essay between the rethoric and thematics of generation, thanks and credit are due to Professor John Freccero, who lectured on this to my Dante class during Spring 1979.
- 17 Freccero, 59.