Tu mi segui, e io sarò tua guida:
A Reading of the ms. Palatine 313

by

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Acknowledgments:

The title page of this thesis suggests I am its sole author, correct only in our contemporary sense of authorship. It is I who spent hours hunched over a desk, furiously typing, eyes darting between open books and my own writing. In this sense, I am this thesis’ author. But this conception of authorship doesn’t reveal the full picture of what went into this work. I may have my name on the title page, but it was my advisors who shaped my efforts into the text you are about to read.

My sincerest thanks to Professors Torgerson and Aresu for their consistently illuminating guidance through the arduous journey of writing this text. I must thank Professor Aresu for aiding me in researching the unfamiliar subject of manuscript studies, and vastly expanding my knowledge of Dante studies, which was initially minimal despite myself thinking otherwise. Likewise, I am particularly grateful for Professor Torgerson’s persistent efforts of reading and vigorously editing countless pages and drafts of my work for weeks on end. To the both of them, my thanks for putting up with my missteps and failures. Without their persistence, this thesis would not be what it is.

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Preface:

This thesis will offer a reading of the ms. Palatine 313,¹ an illuminated manuscript of Dante Alighieri’s *Commedia*. Expanding upon an argument given by Marco Veglia in his essay, “Vedere La ‘Commedia,’” this thesis will argue that the manuscript serves as guide to and master of the *Commedia*. Due to the high volume of illuminations in the first canticle (a total of 32) and the limited scope of this undertaking, only *Inferno* will be analyzed. Chapter 1 will offer an elaboration upon this concept, as well as offer relevant historical information about the manuscript. Chapter 2 will apply this argument to the manuscript’s production of *Inferno* 1. Chapter 3 will examine illuminations which diverge from the cantos they depict and explore how these divergences alter the reader’s interpretation of the poem. The conclusion will examine the far-reaching implications of *Inferno* 34, in which no illumination is present.

The title of this thesis is derived from Virgil. Not the historical poet, but the fictionalized Virgil of *Inferno*. In *Inferno* 1, Virgil meets the pilgrim, the protagonist of the poem, who is trapped within a dark forest. In response to the pilgrim’s cries for help, Virgil says, “Onde per lo tuo mei pens’e discerno/che tu mi segui, e io sarò tua guida…” [“Thus for your good I think and judge that you/shall follow me, and I shall

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¹Dante Alighieri, “La divina commedia di Dante Alighieri: manoscritto Pal 313 conservato presso la Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Firenze.” (Facsimile, 2013), Stacks Flat, Olin Library Special Collections & Archives. This thesis utilized this facsimile of the ms. Palatine 313 for research purposes, as the original manuscript is located in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze and not accessible to the public. Henceforth, this thesis will cite the critical edition of the manuscript when referencing the contents of the ms. Palatine 313, as this edition was used to study the commentary to and transcription of Dante’s *Commedia*.
be your guide…”]2 The title thus serves as both a direct quotation of Dante’s poem, and a reference to the central analogy of this thesis.

In what follows, this thesis will offer a reading of the ms. Palatine 313 which interprets the manuscript as Virgilian in nature. Analogous to Dante’s depiction of the great Roman poet, the manuscript not only guides the reader through *Inferno*, but in so doing, establishes itself as master of the poem.

Chapter 1: The Manuscript as Virgilian

Introduction:

It would be a mistake to presume that manuscripts hold scholarly value solely due to the texts within them. Without preserved manuscripts, countless texts of varying significance would be lost to time. Thus, their merit as records of texts is evident. But the value of a manuscript extends far beyond this. A manuscript is valuable as its own historical artifact, one which need not be studied purely to replicate the primary writings it contains.

One of the key aims of a manuscript is to ensure that the text within it is properly understood by those who read it. The format is itself a hermeneutic guide. Some manuscripts also contain commentaries contain alongside their principle writings. Others, known as illuminated manuscripts, incorporate illuminations (also known as miniatures, images painted onto the folios of a codex) with a similarly interpretive relation to the primary text. The function of these paratexts is to ensure that the reader can grasp the themes, the narrative, and the other contents of the text.

Yet, understanding a text is inherently subjective. There is no singular, objectively true interpretation of any work of literature, history, or philosophy. No scholar, no matter how compelling, has ever or will ever have the final say on the meaning of Dante’s Commedia. It therefore follows that the various producers of manuscripts, including illuminators (the artists who paint the miniatures), scribes (those who transcribe the text), commentators, and others together construct an interpretation of their text. This exegesis is embedded within each manuscript through its paratexts. A commentary, by definition, offers subjective readings of the
text. Illuminations depict the contents of the text, and in doing so, create a visual interpretation for the reader. Through these interpretations, a manuscript expounds upon what is otherwise confounding, envisions the work, and, occasionally, adds to the confusion of the text through ambiguous or cryptic analysis. The value of a manuscript thus extends beyond the value of the text written within it.

This thesis will inspect the ms. Palatine 313, which contains all three canticles of the Commedia, the aforementioned 14th century poem by Dante comprised of Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso. This codex is densely illuminated, and one of the earliest surviving manuscripts containing the poem. As such, it is a prime candidate to be read as an interpretation of the Commedia.

An Overview of the ms. Palatine 313:

Little is known with certainty about the production of the ms. Palatine 313. Rudy Abardo has summarized the most prevailing theory about the dating of the Palatine 313: It was likely made after 1321, the year of Dante’s death, and before November 4th, 1333. The reason for this later year is an allusion, in the gloss of Inf. XIII, line 143, to a statue of the Roman God Mars in a Florentine temple. On November 4th, 1333, the statue fell in the Arno river, and was subsequently moved to the Ponte Vecchio. The commentary’s allusion places the statue in a Florentine temple, and not at the Ponte Vecchio. The manuscript’s production should therefore be dated to sometime before November 4th, 1333, as according to Abardo, “…it would be inconceivable that a Florentine, which the writer of the Chiose Palatine was, could ignore such an event.” [“…sarebbe inconcepibile che un fiorentino, quale
According to this unconfirmed, but plausible hypothesis, the ms. Palatine 313 can be dated to based on an allusion within the commentary.

Furthermore, it is unlikely that the ms. Palatine 313 was completed prior to Dante’s death, due to the lack of any surviving, single-volume manuscript of the Commedia existing in circulation in the year 1321. Dante may have never written a complete, unified codex of the Commedia, as evidence suggests that he published the poem in small collections of cantos. While there is reason to believe that one non-surviving copy was owned by Guido da Polenta, one of Dante’s patrons in Ravenna, there is no evidence suggesting other contemporary, complete manuscripts of the Commedia were in circulation. The earliest completed one-volume manuscript was likely produced by Dante’s son, Jacopo, in Ravenna circa 1322. Owing to this information, it is extraordinarily unlikely that the ms. Palatine 313 was produced prior to 1321. This time frame deems the ms. Palatine 313 one of the earliest surviving illuminated manuscripts of the Commedia.

Producing an illuminated codex of the poem near the start of its circulation created a particular challenge for its illuminators. The poem is imbued with anachronisms, such as frequently placing Pagan figures in a Christian afterlife. As its illuminators were working prior to the formalization of an iconographical canon of

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miniatures of the *Commedia* within Florence, they were forced to find inspiration from other manuscripts. Peter Brieger argues that the early illuminators turned to older illuminated manuscripts of the *Aeneid*. As evidence, Brieger cites the striking similarities between the *Vergilius Vaticanus* (an illustrated manuscript of the *Aeneid*, completed prior to the first illuminations of the *Commedia*) and the ms. Palatine 313’s depiction of Charon, the location and shape of the gate to the underworld, and Cerberus. The ms. Palatine 313, then, presents a particularly exciting opportunity to examine how early illuminators grappled with Dante’s peculiar poem.

Furthermore, the ms. Palatine 313 provides a deep well of illuminations to draw from. It contains a total of 37 horizontal illuminated vignettes, 32 of which are in *Inferno*, two in *Purgatorio* and three in *Paradiso*; there are also, on ff. 1r and 160r, two elegant friezes surrounding part of the page. For comparison’s sake, the ms. Trivulziano 1080, the oldest definitively dated illuminated manuscript of the *Commedia*, contains illuminations only on the opening pages of each canticle. With exceptionally few, if any, direct sources of inspiration, the illuminators of the ms. Palatine 313 ambitiously visualized an extensive amount of Dante’s challenging poem.

Regardless of the manuscript’s impressive achievement, scholars have been quick to dismiss the ms. Palatine 313 on aesthetic grounds. For example, Brieger claims that its “execution is crude.” Francesca Pasut has noted that the illuminations

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7 “…” 86-87.
8 Abardo, *Chiose palatine*, 63.
10 Peter Brieger, “Pictorial Commentaries to the Commedia,” in *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, 90.
within the manuscript by Pacino di Bonaguida (a prominent, 14th century Florentine painter, discussed in further detail later in this chapter and in Appendix 2) are among his least celebrated. This is due to the didactic (as opposed to horrific) tone of his depiction of punishments, the “directness of gestures, [and] the unvaried character of the compositions, the settings, and colors…”¹¹ To paraphrase these critical scholars: The ms. Palatine 313 is unrefined in presentation, and its depiction of Inferno lacks frightful visuals and stylistic diversity.

These criticisms are misguided. The critics of the ms. Palatine 313 base their assessment on the premise that an illumination’s aesthetic value is based on traditional markers of artistic beauty. A miniature is to be judged based on standards similar to those applied to works of art hanging in museums: Of innovation, emotionality, elegance, etc. Yet, an illumination serves a specific role within a larger system; it is not a painting on display in a museum, but one of several elements which comprise a manuscript’s presentation of a text. One of the primary purposes of miniatures is not to dazzle the reader with the illuminator’s talent, but to guide the reader through Dante’s visually elaborate poem. As Charles Singleton persuasively argues, illuminations, “…serve the poem, or try to serve it; they do not compete with it.”¹² Illuminations are not produced as a display of artistry, but to be used as a tool for the reader, so they can better understand the text. To judge a manuscript’s illuminations purely on stylistic grounds is erroneous.

¹² Brieger, Meiss, and Singleton, 10.
If one judges the quality of illuminations based on how they serve the text, then the simplicity of those in ms. Palatine 313 become one of their best features. In the illuminations, the background of hell is straightforwardly gloomy, with dark blue backgrounds depicting a harrowingly and intimidatingly vast landscape. The simplicity of these backgrounds ground the focus of the miniature on the figures within the scene. The emotional reactions of Virgil and the pilgrim are subtly outlined through small touches, such as facial expressions or hand gestures. They are almost exclusively placed on the left side of the frame,\textsuperscript{13} gazing onto the sinner’s punishments. As a result, the two act as stand-ins for the reader in Dante’s narrative, observing and reacting to the horrors of hell, while rarely partaking in them. Perhaps Pasut’s criticism of the ms. Palatine 313’s illuminations is correct. Its illuminations are simple, and didactic instead of horrific; but this characterization can be viewed as a strength, rather than a defect. The miniature’s stylistic modesty succinctly tells the story of \textit{Inferno}.

Additionally, within their historical context, the illuminations of the ms. Palatine 313 are a remarkable artistic achievement. The illuminators crafted a new iconography to understand a strange, difficult to comprehend text; and they staged the various scenes of the \textit{Commedia} in a straightforward fashion, so as to properly display the narrative’s progression. The ms. Palatine 313, then, is best understood as a bold leap into uncharted territory; an interpreter of the \textit{Commedia} whose focus is less on glamor and flair, and more on clarity and understanding.

\textsuperscript{13} The exceptions to this rule can be seen on folios. 1r, 4r, 6v, 30v, and 56v.
Guide and Master:

This lucidity is befitting of the *Commedia*. As Veglia argues in his essay, “Vedere La Commedia” (“To See the Comedy”), Dante’s poem uniquely written so as to be merely read but seen, and the ms. Palatine 313 aids in fulfilling this goal. Veglia ventures so far as to say that Dante himself states that the reader should visualize what the pilgrim sees:

“Lo sol, che dietro fiammeggiava roggio,
rotto m’era dinanzi a la figura,
ch’avea in me de’ suoi raggi l’appoggio.
Io mi volsi dallato con paura
d’essere abbandonato, quand’io vedi
solo dinanzi a me la terra oscura

[The sun, flaming ruddy behind us, was broken before me in the shape of its rays’ resting on me. I turned to the side, afraid that I had been abandoned, when I saw the ground darkened only in front of me…]14

Dante, then, does not only express what he sees, not only creates “visualizations” in the reader, but also educates their gaze…For reading the *Commedia* and for interpreting it at last, the Palatine 313 teaches us this: to respond wholly to its words which we consult, to see it, not merely to annotate it…

[Dante, quindi, non solo esprime ciò che vede, non solo suscita “visualizzazioni” nel lettore, ma ne educa lo sguardo…Per leggere la *Commedia* e per intenderla occore infine, questo ci insegna il Palatino 313, rispondere integralmente alla sua parola che ci interpella, vederla, non solo chiosarla…]15

Dante acts as a teacher of the world he creates, painting a visual narrative with his words and instructs readers in how to view (not merely read) this narrative. The

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visual lucidity of the ms. Palatine 313’s illuminations further Dante’s intention, aiding readers in how to properly see the world he envisioned.

Veglia’s argument, while persuasive, can be improved upon by re-framing it: The role of the ms. Palatine 313 is to guide the reader through the pilgrim’s extensive journey, aiding the reader in seeing and understanding it. The commentary demystifies that which confuses a reader by, for example, elaborating on the nature of Inferno’s punishments, or educating the reader with biographies of historical figures. The miniatures, similarly, enable the viewer to better visualize the complex world described by Dante. But illuminations go a step further than interpreting what it must look like: They highlight and dictate which contents of Dante’s writing (including setting, characters, and narrative) are most worthy of attention; they can diverge from Dante’s text, and alter the contents of the narrative in doing so. Through its interpretation, the ms. Palatine 313 acts as a guide to the *Commedia*.

It is possible to extend the logic of manuscript-as-guide further still: The ms. Palatine 313, in acting as guide, demonstrates an interpretive authority over the poem. A guide, by definition, has some form of authoritative knowledge and insight on their subject. If a the ms. Palatine 313 is a guide to a poem, then this guide is an authority on the text. This authority compels the reader to view the manuscript’s interpretation as truthful. But, as discussed previously, interpreting a text is a subjective act. Owing to the combination of authority and subjectivity, the ms. Palatine 313, in guiding the reader through a text, presents a masterful interpretation. Consequently, the reader’s understanding of the text is altered in accordance with the manuscript’s elucidation.
The text of the *Commedia* remains fundamentally the same; the commentary and illuminations have not edited its words. But the reader’s interpretation of it has been modified. The reader of the ms. Palatine 313 understands Virgil as whoever (or whatever) the commentary proclaims him to be. If the commentary claims he is an allegory of reason, then Virgil is an allegory of human reason. The same logic applies to illuminations: The way in which scenes from the *Commedia* are depicted alter the poem with a specific, visual interpretation. This interpretation may sometimes add to or modify the contents of the poem. The reader is inclined to accept these alterations as valid, adding them to their imagined vision of the poem. In guiding a reader through the poem, the ms. Palatine 313 asserts an interpretive authority over it.

My argument about the ms. Palatine 313 goes beyond reading the manuscript as a guide; I argue the manuscript is analogous to the relationship between the depictions of the pilgrim and Virgil in the *Commedia*. There are two primary levels to this analogy. On the first level, Virgil is the pilgrim’s guide, just as the ms. Palatine 313 is a reader’s guide to the *Commedia*. As explained in the preface, it is Virgil who shepherds the pilgrim out of the dark forest, takes him through the depths of Inferno and the heights of Purgatorio, educating him along the way. Virgil’s role in the poem is analogous to the role of the manuscript. Just as Virgil guides the pilgrim over the course of the *Commedia*, the ms. Palatine guides the reader by explaining (and thus, interpreting) various components of the poem.

Within the poet’s relationship is also the second level of the analogy: Virgil is not only the pilgrim’s guide, but his master. In *Inferno* 1, the pilgrim poet says to the
Roman: “Tu sè lo mio maestro…” [“You are my master…”]. The interpretive authority which the manuscript holds over the reader as they encounter the poem through the object of the codex can be described as a form of mastery. The manuscript asserts it is adept at interpreting the poem. The reader seeks understanding of the text through both commentary and illumination. In turn, the manuscript lords over the poem, manipulating how it is interpreted. Thus, the manuscript is both guide to and master over Dante’s domain.

Having established that manuscripts’ dual role as guide and master, let us set the ms. Palatine 313 in the context of other manuscripts of the Commedia.

Surveying Other Illuminated Manuscripts of the Commedia:

The Commedia survives in about 850 manuscripts, approximately 600 of which contain the full poem, and far fewer which are illuminated. Despite the staggering number of manuscripts containing the text, it is practically impossible to transcribe a complete version of the exact original text. As Zygmunt G. Barański describes the issue, “Copyists, especially those from Northern Italy, found the Commedia difficult to transcribe on account of its language and formal inventiveness. As a consequence, errors, misunderstandings, and simplifications were introduced into the earliest copies…In a matter of a few years after Dante’s death, the relationship of the copies of the Commedia in circulation to the poet’s original was to say the least problematic.” The text of the Commedia was therefore corrupted in a relatively short timespan.

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16 Abardo, Chiose palatine; Durling, Inferno 1:85.
17 Zygmunt G. Barański and Lino Pertile, Dante in Context, 512.
The corruption of the original text worsened over time. Sometime after 1351, a contemporary of Dante’s, Giovanni Boccaccio (best known for authoring *The Decameron*) commissioned a copy of the *Commedia*, the Vat. Lat. 3199, for his friend, the poet Francesco Petrarca. From this manuscript or a nearly identical copy, Boccaccio proceeded to produce three other copies of the *Commedia* between the mid-1350s to 1373. Known for interceding in the texts he transcribed, Boccaccio continuously altered the main text. His alterations were so great that when Giorgio Petrocchi, an Italian philologist, published his critical edition of the *Commedia* in 1966, he worked only with the twenty-seven manuscripts written before 1355. Boccaccio had so radically altered Dante’s words that no manuscripts written after that year had a significant resemblance to the original.\(^\text{18}\)

It is the pre-Boccaccio textual period, comprised of a group of codices known collectively as the *antica vulgata* (ancient vulgate), that serves as the backdrop for the ms. Palatine 313. This was a period in which the *Commedia* readers and commentators first confronted, and thus first interpreted, Dante’s work. With its anachronisms, rhyme scheme, and other revolutionary features, the *Commedia* was a challenge to confront and comprehend.

Thus, commentaries (also known as *chiose*, the Italian word for glosses) were often published in the earliest manuscript publications of the *Commedia*, as it was presumed that a reader would need some form of assistance to understand the text. Steven Botteril argues that the earliest commentaries of the *Commedia* functioned as helpful annotations for the reader, which “…appear sporadically in relation to Dante’s

\(^{18}\) Zygmunt G. Barański and Lino Pertile, 513-514.
continuous text, as inspired by the perceived need for interpretation or explication...”19 Commentaries, then, serve to inform the reader of the occasional fact or subject they would otherwise be unable to know or understand.

Miniatures, too, guide the reader through the complicated and imposing visuals of Dante’s poem, while often taking artistic liberties with the text. The punishments sinners endure in *Inferno* are quite elaborate, so illuminators often modified these punishments when depicting them. For example, Phlegethon, a river within the Seventh circle of hell, holds the sinners who were violent against others within boiling blood. In the ms. 33 at the library of the University of Budapest, the river is condensed to small cauldrons containing sinners.20 Some miniatures contain simple portraits of the text’s author, nestled within the first letter of a major section of the text, a type of illumination known as a historiated initial (which can also comprise decorations other than an author).21 Some illuminators take a radically different approach to the historiated initial. A historiated initial in f. 3r of the Egerton 943 of the British Library of London depicts Dante in a state of slumber. Beyond the walls of his room is the dark forest where the *Commedia* begins. The illuminator of this manuscript is depicting the pilgrim’s journey into the underworld as Dante’s dream, opposed to an actual, real-life experience.22 Miniatures, it must be noted, are not consistently faithful guides to the texts they depict.

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20 Chiara Ponchia, 70.
22 Ponchia, 68.
Illuminators often did not have total control over their artistic choices but were still given some degree of creative freedom. They often worked from small, basic sketches or instructions for their illuminations, which were often written by the chef d’atelier (a scribe, scholar or author of the text). These instructions were often written directly in the manuscript folios, and either removed when the manuscript was trimmed, or outright erased.\textsuperscript{23} When discussing miniatures, it is therefore worth considering that illuminators were not always deliberate in remaining faithful to, or diverging from, the text they visualize. Instead, they were often following someone else’s instructions, adding to the reality of the manuscript’s interpretation of a text as having multiple authors.

With that context, it is now worth delving further into the history of the ms. Palatine 313.

The Material History of the ms. Palatine 313:

Before describing the size and contents of the ms. Palatine 313, some technical terms must be defined. Palimpsests are reused folios, on which the original text may not be fully erased. They are folios which were once written on, then recycled to be used for a different manuscript. A catchword is a word written at the end of a quire (the collection of several folios together), which repeats the first word on the following page; these were used to arrange the quires when binding the manuscript together.\textsuperscript{24} There are several kinds of quires which feature in the ms. Palatine 313, though it is primarily comprised of quaterni (singular: quaterno), quires

encompassing four folios which are folded to create eight pages. A quinerno comprises five folios, a ternione two, and so on.

The ms. Palatine 313, as described by Abardo, is homogenous and unitary in its sizing, measuring 305 x 217 mm, which could be described as a large sized manuscript. It consists of ff. V + 237 + III. The middle number refers to the total number of folios. The Roman numerals indicate flyleaves, folios added to the beginning or end of a manuscript to protect the text from damage. I-III are from the 20th century, and folios IV-V and I’-III’ are from sometime between the 18th-19th centuries.

Modern quire numbering in ink is seen on ff. 1-236 posted on recto (the right, or front, side of the folio; verso refers to the other side) on the upper external corner. The manuscript is comprised of 30 quires, with catchwords on the center of the lower margins and caesuras at the end of each canticle. In succession, Inferno comprises nine quaterni (the second is missing a page), one quinerno missing a folio, and two singular folios; Purgatorio has 9 quaterni, 1 duerno, and 2 singular folios; Paradiso has one quaterno, one quinerno, one ternione, six quaterni, and one duerno with an added folio. The central space of each folio houses the principle text (the poem by Dante), divided in two strict columns. Palimpsests can be seen on ff. 33-45, 156-159, and 162.

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25 Brown, 57.
26 The apostrophe indicates that these flyleaves are attached to the end of the manuscript.
28 Abardo, “…’
The manuscript is written primarily in a *littera textualis* script, with the commentary in a minor module. The *textualis* script in Italy, defined according to the typological system of the Dutch paleographer Gerard Isaac Lieftnick, is categorized as “Gothic” and primarily characterized by the “roundness of its bows,” (the round part of a letter, such as the curve within a *p*), particularly in *b, c, d, e, g, o, p, q,* and the round *s*. The length separating lines of text is often larger than other Gothic manuscripts. The script was popularized between the 13th and 14th centuries, and was preferred by private, specialized workshops who transcribed in the *volgare* (referring to vernacular dialects within Europe; the ms. Palatine 313 is transcribed in the Flortentine *volgare*). As Marisa Boschi Rotiroti has described it, the *littera textualis* script is guarantees an absolute control on the part of the copyist (in terms of its form, alignment, density of writing, uniformity in every part of the transcription, etc.). As such, it is an effective script for writing a lengthy poem with, allowing the transcriber to expertly manage the space of the folio.

While a total of four hands wrote on the manuscript at various points, it was primarily written by a Florentine scribe (Scribe A) in the last decades of the first half of the 14th century. The primary scribe’s penmanship can also be viewed on the attached illumination on f. 1r, and a f. 82r, as well as the *scriptio inferior* of the palimpsests, which contain fragments of other Dantine writings. In addition to Scribe A, three other scribes’ work can be viewed on the ms. Palatine 313. Scribe B,

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31 Abardo, *Nota al testo*, 63.
This scribe also transcribed small comments on the recto of the miniatures glued on f. 1r and at f. 82r.
32 Abardo, “…”
who writes in a Gothic script on the bottom of the folio, appears in a few footnotes on ff. 5v, 6r, 8v, 15v, and the chiose of the first two cantos of Paradiso; their annotations were added to the manuscript sometime between the end of the 14th century, and the beginning of the 15th. Scribe C placed, in a cursive script, brief annotations spaced out on ff. 15v, 17r-19r, 27v, 33v-35v, 196r, and 200r. Finally, Scribe D wrote the chiose for the first four cantos of Purgatorio in a littera textualis script, at around the same time as scribes B and C.33

The sizing and script of the text classify it as what Armando Petrucci dubbed a libro da banco [“bench book”]. While this classification was invented by Petrucci, he borrows the term from Paradiso 10, line 22: “Or ti riman, lettor, sovra ‘l tuo banco.” [“Now stay there, reader, on your bench...”]34 These books are made for scholars and intellectuals, frequently stored in libraries. They are often transcribed in a littera textualis script and tend to be bound with larger membranes.35 The ms. Palatine 313, then, fits into Petrucci’s “libro da banco” classification. Its larger sizing allows for both extensive space on the page to include the lengthy commentary, and suggests it is built to be stored in libraries, as it is too large to easily travel with. Similarly, the littera textualis script is commonplace among “libro da banco,” manuscripts.

In placing the Commedia within this manuscript type, the ms. Palatine 313 elevates Dante’s poem to the level of Latin texts. Petrucci argues that within the formatting of a libro da banco, a text gains a kind of dignity. This type of manuscript


was often reserved for Latin texts, to be studied by the great scholars of Italy. Consequently, the *libro da banco* formatting suggested the text within the manuscript is of serious intellectual importance. To have a text written in the *volgare* (as Dante’s *Commedia* is) published within this manuscript format therefore elevate it to the dignity and importance of a Latin text. Hence, when Dante refers to the reader in the aforementioned *Paradiso* quote, he suggests they are reading the poem from a bench—as a scholar would do when studying a Latin text within a *libro da banco* manuscript.\(^{36}\) The ms. Palatine 313 can therefore be viewed as a fulfilling Dante’s intentions for the poem, presenting the *Commedia* as a work worthy of belonging in a scholar’s library.

The provenance of the codex suggests as much. At its earliest, the manuscript’s ownership can be traced back to the 16\(^{th}\) century, when it was owned by Florentine bibliophile Piero del Nero, who owned numerous other manuscripts. His ownership of the manuscript is evidenced by a partially erased note of possession or subscription in the upper margins of f. 1r. Luca Martini, a Florentine humanist, is believed to have used the manuscript as part of his printed edition of the *Commedia*, published in 1548.\(^{37}\) The manuscript was then passed on to the Guadagni family library, as noted by a signature on f. 104. It was later acquired by Gaetano Poggiali in 1800, who used the manuscript for his critical edition of the *Commedia*.\(^{38}\) The manuscript has been denoted as the *Codice Poggiali* (Poggiali Codex) after

\(^{36}\) Petrucci, 28-29.
\(^{37}\) Ponchia, 32-33.
\(^{38}\) Abardo, *Chiose palatine* 63.
At some point in the 19th century, an illumination produced by a follower of Daddi was glued onto f. 1r.\[40\]

Which leads into the history of the production of the illuminations, a complicated subject. Scholars believe the manuscript was produced in a specialized workshop in Florence,\[41\] but, as a result of the miniature’s diverse styles and various illuminators, the details of the illumination production of this manuscript are shrouded in mystery.

This is not to suggest absolutely nothing is known about the production of the ms. Palatine 313’s miniatures. Scholars have determined that the ms. Palatine 313 was primarily illuminated by Pacino di Bonaguida and his followers.\[42\] Bonaguida himself is known to have depicted “the most substantial group of images in Palatine 313,”: The Portrait of Dante on f. 1, the miniatures of Inf. 14-33 (ff. 33-77), and the illuminations of Paradiso on ff. 160, 162v, and 165.\[43\]

The identities of the other illuminators of the ms. Palatine 313 are uncertain and remain hotly debated. Spagnesi suggests that an anonymous Florentine, labeled by scholars as the Maestro Daddesco (for his stylistic closeness to Bernardo Daddi, an early 14th century Florentine artist), crafted the images on ff. 4r and 6v. He also believes that the Maestro’s artistic circle birthed the type of classical models used in

\[40\] Veglia, “VEDERE LA ‘COMMEDIA,” 26. The details of this added miniature will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2
\[41\] Abardo, “Nota,” 62.
the ms. Palatine 313’s miniatures, thus creating a proper “canon” for the illuminators to borrow from.

Furthermore, Spagnesi suggests that a third individual, another illuminator in the artistic circle of the Maestro Daddesco produced the miniatures of ff. 11v-30v. The proof of this change in illuminator, according to Spagnesi, is the miniature of *Inferno* 6. There, the illuminator adopts the iconography of the *Vergilius Vaticanus* to the *Commedia*, instead of the classical models utilized by the other Daddesco illuminator. This secondary anonymous illuminator may have also been influenced by Daddi. Stylistic similarities between the illuminations of ff. 4r, 6v and ff. 11v-30v abound, suggesting that while the illumination originated from the Maestro Daddesco’s circle, they were produced by different illuminators.44

However, Francesca Pasut has taken serious issue with this theory. According to her, the first ten illuminations of the ms. Palatine 313 (depicting *Inferno* 3-13) were produced by an anonymous illuminator within Bonaguida’s artistic circle. No other work from this illuminator survives, and the miniatures within the manuscript are in degraded condition. Pasut concedes that this illuminator was influenced by the Maestro Daddesco’s “gothicizing and delicate style,” as Spagnesi suggested, but adds that he was also influenced by the Master of the Dominican Effigies. In response to Spagnesi’s claims that this anonymous illuminator was influenced by Bernardo Daddi, Pasut asserts that this argument is “hardly convincing.”45 This scholarly

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45 Pasut, 164.
debate reveals a frustrating reality: The identities of the illuminators of the ms. Palatine 313 remain elusive.

Conclusion:

More questions about the production of the ms. Palatine 313 abound.

Peppered throughout the commentary are the initials JA. This figure is likely a Florentine, suggested by a description of him being a member of “our temple,” (either with the Palazzo Comune di Firenze or the Church of Santo Piero Scheraggio). It is widely believed that these initials refer to Jacopo Alighieri, who, as mentioned previously, wrote a one-volume manuscript of the Commedia to pay homage to Guido Novello da Polenta, the Signore di Ravenna. Afterwards, Jacopo wrote the Divisione, a commentary on the Commedia. Jacopo’s commentary, as described by Saverio Bellomo, “…primarily saw in the Commedia an encyclopedic summa, and in its author an ‘distinguished philosopher.’” He saw the pilgrim’s journey as one in which he awakens from the sleep of adolescence, finds himself in obscurity, ignorance and vice, and heads towards knowledge and virtue. Similar themes can be seen in the ms. Palatine 313, particularly in the commentary of the first canto.

It is the combined work of JA, Scribe A, Bonaguida, the illuminators of the Maestro Daddesco’s circle, and many other anonymous Florentine figures who produced the ms. Palatine 313. In doing so, their collective vision created a unique interpretation of the Commedia. To unpack this vision, we now must turn to the beginning of Inferno.

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46 Abardo, Chiose palatine, 13.
47 Ponchia, 21.
48 Saverio Bellomo, Dizionario dei commentatori danteschi: l’esegesi della Commedia da Iacopo Alighieri a Nidobeato (Firenze: Biblioteca di “Lettere Italiane,”), 64.
Chapter 2: The Manuscript as Guide

An Introduction to *Inferno*:

This chapter will examine how the manuscript guides the reader through *Inferno* 1. The manuscript will be shown to be a multifaceted guide, deploying multiple techniques and a mix of clarity and ambiguity. Specifically, this chapter will examine how the layout of the ms. Palatine 313 guides the reader’s eye; the means by which the illumination interprets narrative elements of the canto; how the rubric frames the role of this canto within the larger narrative; the manner in which the historiated initial usurps the storytelling authority of Dante; how the manuscript presents the text of the poem; the commentary’s ambiguous definition of *Commedia*; how the commentary uses both allegory and symbolism in interpreting the poem; and, finally, how the commentary leaves its readers with a cryptic final comment. Rather than reach a unified end to this involvement, I will argue that the key point is to see how the manuscript establishes itself as the poem’s guide and master.

In following the layout’s order of importance (discussed in the previous chapter), we must first turn to the illumination.
Image 1: F. 1r of the ms. Palatine 313, which presents Inferno I.49

Outlining the Layout:
The layout of the manuscript has the job of guiding the reader's eye by establishing an order of importance comprising the poem, the illuminations, and the commentary. It must communicate, through the placement and structure of the manuscript’s contents, the order in which to look at the parts of the page. This is done in service of the reader, so they can consume the mix of illuminations, commentary and poem in a manner that is ideal for presenting the text.

At the start of this order, the illumination draws the reader’s eye. The miniature is always placed before the start of the canto’s text, thus acting as a preview of its narrative. As the illumination previews the narrative of the canto, a reader benefits from viewing it before anything else. That way, the reader has a basic concept of how the narrative of the canto will proceed; they are mentally primed for what is to come.

Beneath the illumination is a column containing the rubric, historiated initial and the initial the text of the canto. The rubric and historiated initial act as a two-part introduction to the main text. A rubric is ideally read before the historiated initial, as it introduces the poem by establishing the Roman numeral of the canto (i.e. reading, “Canto XXX”), and, occasionally, outlining the canto’s narrative. Below the rubric is the visually striking historiated initial, inserted into the first letter of the first word of the main text. It thus leads directly into the poem, bringing the reader’s eye along with it.

All images in this thesis are freely downloaded from danteonline.it, which allows open access to photos of the manuscript protected by watermark as part of the public domain.
The commentary comes after the poem in the manuscript’s order of importance, as it is ideally read after or concurrently with the main poem. This is why it surrounds the main text and illumination in a significantly smaller script size. It has utility only when a reader understands what elements of the poem it is elaborating upon. A reader confused about a section *Inferno* can turn their eyes to the side margins of the folio and search for answers. To organize itself, the commentary cites the opening phrase of the line it is interpreting, so readers can search the gloss for a snippet of a verse and find answers to their questions.\(^5^0\)

Thus, the reader’s eye moves from illumination (on folios which contain one), to poem, and eventually commentary. In following their gaze, we must now turn towards the miniature of *Inferno* 1.

*Nella Selva Oscura:*

In *Inferno* 1, a pilgrim re-awakens in a dark forest, at the bottom of a mountain, uncertain of how he got there. He attempts to scale a mountain, but is met by three beasts (a leopard, lion, and a she-wolf [*lupa*], in that order) threatening to take his life. He retreats in fear, unsure of how to escape his precarious position. Despairing, he notices a figure standing by him, and cries out for help. That figure is Virgil, the ancient Roman poet, sent by an angel to help Dante out of the forest and through the afterlife.\(^5^1\)

\(^{50}\) See Appendix 1 for diagrams of the folio layout.

An illumination, placed within a red frame in the upper center of f. 1r, introduces the reader to this narrative. Many of the miniatures of the ms. Palatine 313 portray a single, solitary scene from the poem, but the initial illumination actually depicts several moments from *Inferno* 1. In terms of content depicted, this is perhaps the most elaborate illumination of the entire ms. Palatine 313.

However, there is a larger historical context to this illumination, which must be first taken into consideration. The first illumination the reader sees, the one described above, was actually added in the 19th century, lifted from a contemporary manuscript of the ms. Palatine 313. This miniature was produced by an anonymous artist in the circle of the Maestro Daddesco, added decades after the ms. Palatine 313 was originally produced.\(^{52}\) It is not something that one of the original readers of the

\(^{52}\) Alvaro Spagnesi, 43.
ms. Palatine 313 would have examined. This added illumination is glued to the left-hand, horizontal frame of the folio.

The 19th covers another illumination, drawn in pen, sans color. It would be a mistake, however, to call this the manuscript’s original miniature. This older illumination actually dates to the 15th century, from another anonymous illuminator. Its contents remain the same as the 19th century illumination, with some stylistic differences (such as the outline of the stars, the roundness of the leaves within the forest, etc.)\(^\text{53}\) Despite these similarities, both illuminations were created some decades after the ms. Palatine 313’s production. The manuscript, in its current form, does not have its original illumination of *Inferno* 1, but two miniatures added at a later period.

\[^{53}\text{Spagnesi, 43.}\]
This presents some challenges in tackling the manuscript’s illumination of *Inferno* 1. How does one discuss the first miniature of a manuscript if, in reality, there are two miniatures, neither of which was part of the original manuscript? How should one approach the differences of style and content between the two?

The answer to this dilemma is to discuss the iconography shared by them, while pointing out and elaborating upon differences when needed. Hypothesizing about the appearance of the manuscript’s original illumination is specious without concrete evidence to suggest its characteristics. Therefore, we must examine the manuscript in its present form. Furthermore, the two illuminations share the same dimensions, and roughly the same contents, so they can be discussed in tandem. Differences of style and content will be noted and elaborated upon when necessary.
Images 4 and 5: A comparison of the two illuminations of Inferno 1.
The first similarity between the illuminations is their preview of the pilgrim’s early despair. The pilgrim, on the left side of the miniature and dressed in robes (colored blue in the 19th century addition) appears with his head held down in shame. He is placed in a forest, as denoted by the trees which surround him. The text of the canto will reveal this setting to be the selva oscura (obscure forest) referenced in the second line.\(^5^4\) In the 19th century addition, the pilgrim is placed directly beneath a dark blue sky, suggesting the scene is set at nighttime. These details preview the pilgrim’s early struggles for the reader. They establish the protagonist’s state of despair through his downward tilting head, and the canto’s setting through the trees and sky.

Within the middle of the frame, the illuminations guide the reader through the conflict between the pilgrim and the beasts. A second pilgrim appears at the foot of a mountain. As signaled by his identical wardrobe, this is the same pilgrim that appeared in the thick of the forest, within a second scene in the same, undivided frame. The second pilgrim gazes up towards the peak of the mountain with a hopeful facial expression, arms gesturing upwards. The sun stands above the mountain, and in the 19th century addition, its rays beam down onto mountain peak. However, the aforementioned three beasts descend the peak and block the optimistic pilgrim from his path, threatening the pilgrim with their violent gaze.\(^5^5\) This serves to inform the reader about the conflict between the pilgrim and the beasts.

\(^{54}\) Abardo, Chiose palatine; Durling, Inferno, 1:2.

\(^{55}\) There are two differences in how the 19th century addition and 15th century illumination depict the beasts: their order of appearance, and the she-wolf’s head, which is turned towards Virgil and Dante in the latter. These differences will be explored in Chapter 3.
Both illuminations depict a streamlined version of the pilgrim’s attempt to escape the forest, and in abridging this scene, guide the reader’s attention away from certain details. The upward tilt of the pilgrim’s head, and his upwards pointing arms, suggest a person in the act of ascending. This is not an exact recreation of the scene in the poem. There, the pilgrim attempts to ascend, then descends, the mountain numerous times when confronted by the beasts.\textsuperscript{56} The illumination has streamlined this scene, managing the space of the folio to allow other scenes from the canto in a single frame. In simplifying the scene, the reader does not receive a preview of the pilgrim’s repeated attempts to exit the foot of the mountain. Thus, upon viewing the illumination, the reader is left unaware of the full extent of the pilgrim’s struggle.

A third version of the pilgrim denotes a third scene within this frame. The pilgrim appears on the right side of the frame, just across from another robed figure. As revealed by the text of the canto, this figure is the poet Virgil, here to lead the pilgrim through Inferno and Purgatory, until he leaves the pilgrim to venture to Paradiso with a different guide by his side. This third version of the pilgrim is damaged in both illuminations (blue of his robe in the 19th century addition is almost entirely destroyed), but his hand gestures are still present. One arm extends towards Virgil, the other upwards towards the beasts; Virgil’s arms are similarly positioned, signaling that the two are in conversation, discussing the issue of the beasts on the hill. The illumination is therefore preparing the reader to expect a conversation between Dante and Virgil.

In depicting the pilgrim’s first meeting with Virgil, the miniature interprets the physical space by which the latter poet enters. In the text, Virgil appears “nel gran deserto,” [“the great wilderness”], a vague term which does not ascribe a precise physical location relative to Dante and the forest. It suggests Virgil appearing out of thin air. Within the imagination of the reader, Virgil can mysteriously emerge out of nowhere; within an illumination, the physical location of both Dante and Virgil, and where they stand relative to each other, must be made concrete. Even in an abstract depiction of this scene, the pair would be placed to the right or left of each other. Virgil therefore cannot simply emerge from the wilderness; he must emerge from a specific location relative to the forest and to Dante. The illumination therefore interprets where Virgil appears relative to Dante and the forest. Subsequently, the reader is inclined to follow the illumination’s guidance, and picture Virgil as appearing from the precise physical location given by the miniature.

As result of depicting three scenes, the miniatures guide the reader through a chronological account of Inferno 1. In line with how a western reader would scan the text, these scenes advance chronologically from left to right. The 19\textsuperscript{th} century shows the pilgrim, dressed as he often is in manuscript illumination with a blue robe and the beret of a \textit{magister} (type of scholar), when he first awakens in the \textit{selva oscura}; his attempt to scale a hill, heading towards the light of the sun’s rays, only to be met by three beasts; and his first meeting with his guide, Virgil. The 15\textsuperscript{th} century illumination depicts these same narrative moments, albeit without the colors distinguishing the

\textsuperscript{57} Abardo, \textit{Chiose palatine}; Durling, \textit{Inferno}, 1:64.
pilgrim’s robes from Virgil’s. This overviews the narrative actions of *Inferno* 1 which occur within the forest. The reader is granted an awareness of these actions and anticipates reading them in the poem.

Through interpretations, illuminations shape the reader’s mental vision of the poem before it is read. In keeping with the reader’s eye, this chapter will now examine what a reader views after the illumination.

**Reading the Rubric:**

Before the beginning of the main poem, but above the historiated initial, there is a sentence, split across two columns, written in red ink. This is known as the rubric and is a standard practice in manuscripts. As K.P. Clarke describes them: “Where commentary and glosses are reserved for the margins, rubrics, by contrast, are placed within the central column, a space reserved for the authorial text...The red ink in which rubrics are copied does not just attract the eye, but also sets up the coordinates of the page, creating on each folio a default point of beginning for the reader.”

A rubric guides the reader’s eye through the varied elements of a manuscript page, adding structure to the poem around it. In the ms. Palatine 313, rubrics can be found at the start of every canto, though most only state the number of the canto and do not describe its contents. They are especially useful, given that cantos begin wherever the prior canto ends, often beginning in the middle or bottom of the page. Without the guidance of rubrics, it would be easy to get lost in the folio’s various contents.

A more concise definition of rubrics is offered by Michelle Brown, who states a rubric is, “A title, chapter heading, or instruction that is strictly not part of the text,

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but which helps to identify its components. Red ink was often used to distinguish such elements, hence the term, which derives from the Latin for red, *rubrica.* The rubric, then, is not only a marker of specific spaces within a folio; it also categorizes the various elements of the poem.

![Image 6: The rubric of Inferno 1, in red, directly beneath the illumination.](image)

If one were to take Brown’s definition at face value, it would seem that a rubric merely describes the contents of a page, but in practice, rubrics can also be subjective interpretations. The rubric of *Inferno* 1 within the ms. Palatine 313 is an example of this:

> Comincia la Comedia di Dante Alaghieri di Fiorenze, ne la quale tratta de le pene e de’ punimenti de li vizi e de [meriti e de’] premî de le virtudi. Comincia il canto primo de la prima parte nel quale [l’autore] fa proemio a tutta l’opera.⁶¹

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⁶⁰ Brown, 111.
It is also worth noting that this rubric is similar in content, though not diction, to the rubric found in the Trivulziano 1080. See footnote [on K.P. Clarke] for reference.
[Here begins the Comedy of Dante Alighieri of Florence, in which he traces the pains and punishments of the wicked and the merits and the prizes of the virtuous. Here begins the first canto of the first part in which the author makes a proem to the entire work.]

Upon quick glance, this may seem like a straightforward, objective description of the Comedia and of Inferno 1. But this first glance is misleading. The rubricator (writer of rubrics) makes deliberate, interpretive decisions in how to present the poem. They choose to focus on the motifs of virtue and vice but do not explicitly contextualize these concepts in a theological framework. They do not allude to the repentant souls of Purgatorio, only the respectively sinful and virtuous of Inferno and Paradiso. These choices alter the framework of the poem, and in doing so, guide the reader towards this particular interpretation of it.

Additionally, the rubricator suggested that the opening canto is a proem to the story, an interpretive statement. Some readers may view “proem” as an objective classification of Inferno 1. The canto is chronologically set before Dante’s journey through the divine realms, which make up the bulk of the narrative. As such, much of this canto occurs before Virgil’s arrival (arguably the narrative’s true starting point), and therefore qualifies as a proem. Yet, referring to Inferno 1 as a proem remains an interpretive act, as Inferno 1 can be read as fulfilling a variety of roles within the narrative. Nor does any part of the text refers to this section as a proem; calling it such is therefore an interpretive choice. Thus, for the rubric to call Inferno 1 a proem demonstrates the seemingly objective rubric is actually a subjective guide.

While it may contain written, subjective interpretation, the rubric’s role is actually closer to the illumination than the commentary. Both miniature and rubric

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62 Brown, 111.
preview the poem, and in doing so, reinforce an interpretation of *Inferno* before it is read. The commentary, by contrast, is structured to be read concurrently or after studying the canto. Thus, the rubric is distinguished from the commentary not by content, but placement within the structure of the manuscript.

The ms. Palatine 313’s presentation of *Inferno* has one final previewing element. The illumination is not the only painting within the opening folio; there is another, whose purpose is similar yet distinctive.

**Dante’s Initial Portrait:**

The reader’s eye turns to an image lying beneath the red-inked incipit; a historiated initial, painted by Bonaguida.63 As defined by Brown, a historiated initial is, “A letter containing an identifiable scene or figures, sometimes related to the text.”64 Within the initial is a man in the midst of writing, with folios in front of him placed on top of a desk, and a writing utensil in his hand. He is dressed in a blue robe and beret, nearly identical to the costume of the pilgrim in the 19th century illumination. He is placed within the letter N of the word which begins the entire Commedia, “Nel” [*in the*]; vertically beneath that, within one column, is the word “mezzo” [*middle*], spelled out across two horizontal lines; across from that, in the second column, the poem unfolds as it normally does. From there, the reader begins examining the text of the poem.

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63 Pasut, 161.
Spagnesi disputes this, suggesting the historiated initial was produced by an anonymous painter within Bonaguida's artistic circle. See: Spagnesi, 43.
64 Brown, 68.
The means by which the historiated initial guides the reader to the text must be understood in relation to the rubric and the 19th century illumination. A reader’s eye, as previously established, moves from illumination, to rubric, and eventually historiated initial. The rubric establishes Dante Alighieri as author of the *Commedia*; beneath this information is the historiated initial, showing a man in the act of writing. Thus, the combination of the rubric and initial suggest that the man is Dante, in the midst of writing the *Commedia*.

Then, the illumination is added to the fold; the reader notices the similar outfits of Dante, within the initial, and the pilgrim, in the 19th century illumination. These combined elements advance a specific idea: that Dante is both the author of the poem and the protagonist of it. The poem he is writing in the historiated initial appears to be the *Commedia*, suggesting that he is writing about his experiences from memory. By placing the blue-robed Dante, in the act of writing, in the initial of the first word of the poem explicitly suggests he is author of this piece; it suggests that, despite not being the scribe of this manuscript, is writing the words that the reader will digest.
In guiding the reader through the poem, Pacino visually outlines a major interpretation of the it: That the *Commedia* is Dante’s recollection of true events. The poet suggests as much in lines 8-9: “…ma per trattar del ben ch’io vi trovai,/dietro dell’alte cose ch’io v’ho scorte” [“But to/treat of the good that I found there, I will tell of/the other things I saw.”] The repetition of “I” suggests the narrator’s identity is both protagonist and author; his poem is not a fictional account, but a factual one. Nevertheless, the ms. Palatine 313 enforces this interpretation, in which Dante holds a dual role as narrator and protagonist, before the reader studies the poem.

While it is clear that the “I” suggests a narrator recalling their past experiences, it does not explicitly identify “I” as Dante. That identification does not happen until *Purgatorio* 30 lines 55-56, in which Beatrice calls out to the pilgrim:

> “Dante, perché Virgilio se ne vada,/non pianger anco, non pianger ancora…”

[“Dante, though Virgil depart, do not weep yet…”] Prior to that moment, Dante went unnamed; the “I” was in reference to an anonymous narrator. Moreover, there is tremendous scholarly debate over whether or not this Dante is the author (framing the *Commedia* as a personal recollection), or a fictionalized Dante. To presume that the Dante of the poem is synonymous with the author is thus an interpretation of the text.

Therefore, Pacino’s historiated initial both reveals the protagonist’s identity before the text does and enforces an interpretation of the pilgrim’s name.

In guiding the reader to the poem, the historiated initial alters how the narrative unfolds. Pacino wants readers to understand that the “I” who awakens in a

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selva oscura is not an anonymous pilgrim, but it is the author; it wants the reader to understand the poem as the author’s recollection of a lived experience.

This is an early example of how the ms. Palatine 313 is maestro of Inferno, not Dante. Outside of a manuscript, Dante is author of the Commedia, and as such, he is empowered to tell his narrative in the manner that he sees fit. He can choose when and how to reveal significant exposition. But within the ms. Palatine 313, Dante does not have final say over how his story is told. The manuscript is the guide to the poem, and as such, it may contradict the order in which exposition unfolds, and enforce a specific interpretation. A historiated initial may suggest that the protagonist and author are one and the same. Just as Virgil decides what information to reveal to Dante, and when to do so, the manuscript decides the manner in which information is unveiled.

Thus far this thesis has discussed the various components of the manuscript which surround the actual poem. Now, in following the reader’s eye, we must now turn to the text of Inferno 1.

Presenting the Poem:

In presenting the text of the poem, the manuscript visually guides the reader’s eye through it. Within the center of the page, two columns contain the main poem, written in a littera textualis script. These columns are insufficient to contain a hendecasyllable, which results in a division between two parts which do not necessarily collide with the hemistiches, half-lines of verse which comprise a single unit of verse. Consequently, many lines of the text are cut off at random intervals.

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Take, for example, the layout of a few lines from *Inferno* 1. If each line of the poem were transcribed according to modern publishing standards (such as those utilized by Durling’s translation), they would appear like this:

Tant’è amara che poco è piú morte
ma per trattar del ben ch’io vi trovai
dietro dell’alte cose ch’io v’ho scorte.

Yet, in the ms. Palatine 313, they appear like this:

Tant’è amara che poco è piú morte
ma per trattar del ben ch’io vi trovai
dietro dell’alte cose ch’io v’ho scorte.

This set-up is to allows plenty of space for commentary on the folio. As there are narrow columns, ample space is left in the margins of the folio for a gloss to be inserted. But an outcome of this spatial management is that the manuscript guides the reader without explicitly indicating a hemistich.

Without line endings at each hemistich, the manuscript risks creating a problem for itself: Failing to inform the reader about the division of lines or verses. Reading a poem requires some markers of the end of a verse or line, as these structures play an integral role in distinguishing poetry from prose.

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68 Abardo, *Chiose palatine*, 79.
In place of hemistich divisions, the manuscript utilizes painted, upper-case initials (alternating between blue and red) of the first letter of each tercet. Consequently, a reader may follow Dante’s poem by following the initials. By this method, they can digest the poem tercet by tercet, instead of hemistich by hemistich. The manuscript is therefore able to both maximize the text allowed in each column, while clearly guiding the reader’s eye through the poem.

After, or while, studying the poem, a reader will turn to the commentary for answers to their most pressing questions. It is in the start of the commentary that the reader finds an attempt at solving one of the most significant interpretive dilemmas of the Commedia.

The Question of the Commedia:

The commentary begins not in reference to a specific line, but with an analysis of the title of the poem, Commedia [“Comedy”]. But it’s a difficult subject to properly discuss, for reasons best summarized by Erich Auerbach:

“The Comedy, among other things, is a didactic poem of encyclopedic dimensions, in which the physico-cosmological, the ethical, and the historico-political order of the universe is collectively presented; it is, further, 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.”

As demonstrated by Auerbach’s summary, the *Commedia* is a truly elaborate and multi-layered work of poetry, which deems Dante’s chosen name rather cryptic. To refer to a text grappling with so many serious issues, and in such a thoughtful manner, as a comedy is perplexing. The title is a question in need of an interpretive answer.

Dante himself may have solved this dilemma, albeit in a text external to his poem. The extensively debated and controversial Epistle to Cangrande della Scala, a letter purportedly written by Dante, spells out the meaning behind the title *Commedia*. As summarized by Auerbach, the epistle argues that “…Tragedy and Comedy are distinguished firstly by the course of their action, which, in tragedy, progresses from a noble and quiet beginning to a terrible conclusion, and, in comedy, inversely from a bitter beginning to a happy conclusion…” Additionally, comedy is also defined by its lower, humbler style, which in the case of Dante’s work likely refers to the choice to write in the Italian vulgare (literally, vernacular) as opposed to classical Latin.

Herein is a thoroughly logical explanation behind a seemingly illogical authorial choice. It explains why a poem grappling with theological questions could be signified as a comedy.

However, there is significant reason to doubt that Dante was the actual author of the epistle. The first four chapters of it are attributed to the first half of the fifteenth century.

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70 Eric Auerbach, “Farinata and Cavalcante,” 186.
century, the remaining six chapters to between the first half of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th. The epistle, then, is best viewed with some skepticism.

The ms. Palatine 313 guides readers towards a radically different answer to the question of the *Commedia*. Starting in the upper right corner of f. 1 recto, the beginning of the gloss to *Inferno* 1 offers its own answer to the question of the *Commedia*. The answer literally stands above the main text and even the illumination, placed over the illumination and the columns holding the poem. By placing the commentary above the main text, the manuscript communicates to its reader that the meaning of *Commedia* is a significant issue. This is the section of the gloss which responds to the most basic, and perhaps most essential, question about the *Commedia*. It begins as such:

Comedia. A esposizione di questo vocabolo nota che iii sono li stili del poetico parlare, cioè tragedia, commedia, satiria ed elegia: tragedia è uno stile nel quale si trattano magnifiche cose, si come fa Lucano e Virgilio ne

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l’*Enieda*; comedia è uno stilo che tratta comunemente di cose alte e basse e mezane, come fa Ovidio nel Maggiore e qui questo autore; satiria è uno stile di trattare con riprensione, come fa Orazio; elegia è uno modo di trattare cose di miseria, come fa Boezio.

[Comedy. The display of this word denotes one of the four styles of spoken poetry, that is, of tragedy comedy, satire and elegy: Tragedy is a style which concerns magnificent things, as seen in Lucan’s writings and in Virgil’s *Aeneid*; comedy is a style which usually concerns high and base and middle things, like Ovid in the *Metamorphosis* and here in the work by this author; satire is a style concerning admonition, as in Horace’s work; elegy is a mode concerning miserable things, such as in Boethius.]

This definition of *Commedia* guides the reader towards viewing the as being of the same stature as these classical texts. The commentary frames the poem in light of texts from antiquity, comparing it to Ovid’s masterpiece, and distinguishes it from other classical texts of different genres. In doing so, it suggests a shared artistic greatness between the works: If the *Commedia* is best explained in comparison to the great works of antiquity, then it should be viewed as an equivalent of these texts. Dante himself invited similar comparisons within his poem: *Inferno* 4 sees the authors mentioned in the definition, plus Virgil, crowning the pilgrim as the sixth great writer among them. The commentary pushes this judgment of literary quality onto the reader. Combined with the manuscript’s “libro da banco” classification described in the previous chapter, the manuscript as a whole implicitly guides the reader towards viewing the poem as highly prestigious.

Moreover, the definition of *Commedia* broadly establishes the subject matter of the poem. It will deal with “high and base and middle things,” communicating to the reader that the poem will cover a broad range of subjects. This variety of subjects

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72 Abardo, *Chiose palatine*, 83. Translation by this thesis’ author.
is a quality which can also be found in Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*. With this example, the reader can compare the genre elements of the *Commedia* to another text, further clarifying the commentary’s definition of Comedy.

Concurrently, the definition leaves the reader with more questions than answers. In outlining the contents of a comedy, it offers a broad response. If comedy deals with things that are classified as “high and base and middle,” then the genre seems to cover all subjects. This conceptualization of comedy also includes nearly every possible style of poem: Tragedies, elegies and satires can be defined, under this classification, as comedies with a narrower focus. It is not apparent what quality distinguishes the “magnificent” things covered by a tragedy from the “high” things which are the subjects of comedies. The difference between the two terms is even less clear considering alternative translations of *alto* [“high”] include “noble,” or “lofty.” The reader may be left wondering what, precisely, a comedy is.

Contrarily, this may be a definition of comedy potentially befitting of the *Commedia*. Dante’s poem does, after all, deal with things which can be classified as “high,” (the entirety of *Paradiso*), “middle” (*Purgatorio* and the repentant sinners within it), and “low” (*Inferno* and its sinful denizens). In this interpretation, the *Commedia* is titled as such due to the broad range of its subjects; it is an answer befitting of a poem which covers the expansive territory previously mentioned by Auerbach.

The validity of either interpretation is not the aim of this thesis. What is relevant is that the reader is left with an ambiguous answer to a challenging question. The ms. Palatine 313 chooses to act as a vague and cryptic guide, asking the reader to
craft their own interpretation of what is itself an interpretation. The reader must
determine for themselves what “high and base and middle things” are, envisioning the
contents of the *Commedia* based on their own judgment.

**Allegory vs. Symbolism:**

However, the ms. Palatine 313 does not *consistently* expect the reader to do
the bulk of the interpretive work. At other times, it is explicit and unambiguous in
explaining the meaning of the poem. This is perhaps most true with regards to an
allegorical interpretation of the text.

An allegorical explanation of Dante’s poem is common amongst the
commentary’s contemporaries. Graziolo Bambaglioli (a Bolognese commentator
writing in Latin in the year 1324), Iacomo della Lana (writing between 1324-1328),
and even Jacopo Alighieri viewed the *Commedia* as, implicitly and allegorically,
about the journey from vice to virtue. Given the commentary’s roots in Jacopo’s
exegesis, it is unsurprising that the commentary of the ms. Palatine 313 does largely
the same. Regardless, it warrants an investigation into the precise ways the
commentary allegorizes *Inferno*.

Defining allegory is a difficult task, particularly with regards to the
*Commedia*. Scholars have offered differing definitions of the word within the context
of Dante’s poem. The definition given by Isidore of Seville, from his *Etymologies*, is
a useful starting point. There he defines allegory as “other-speech,”; that is, one

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74 Saverio Bellomo, *Dizionario dei commentatori danteschi: l’esegesi della Commedia da Iacopo Alighieri a Nidobeato* (Firenze: Biblioteca di “Lettere Italiane,” 2004); see entries on Bambaglioli, Lana and Jacopo Alighieri.

In the commentary of *Inferno* 1, there are numerous instances in which the forest is a figurative
depiction of being in the state of sin, as well as descriptions of the pilgrim’s journey towards the
virtuous over the course of the poem.
literal thing is said, but an allegorical meaning is understood.\textsuperscript{76} Countless scholars and commentators have produced more precise definitions of allegory as present in the *Commedia*; they have also worked to distinguish allegory from symbolism.

Within the context of the ms. Palatine 313’s gloss of *Inferno* 1, Auerbach and C.S. Lewis provide the most applicable definitions of the aforementioned concepts. This section will first define the two figurative modes of the commentary, allegory and symbolism. The proceeding section will offer an example of each mode within *Inferno* 1.

Auerbach’s essay, *Figura*, outlines the conceptualization of allegory relevant to the ms. Palatine 313’s commentary of *Inferno* 1. He explains the concept of *Figura*, a specific form of allegory:

*Figura* is something real and historical that represents and proclaims in advance something else that is also real and historical…both the figure itself and what it prophesies are historically real in equal measure. The prophetic figure is a material historical fact and is fulfilled by material historical facts.\textsuperscript{77}

This form of allegory involves a historically real figure and their connection to a historically future event (as in, something which has already occurred from the point of view of the present time, but, from the perspective of the historically past figure, is still to come in the future). Despite acting as representations of each other, they also remain literal, historical figures.

This challenging concept is best illuminated by an example from Dante’s *Commedia*, specifically Cato of Utica’s appearance in *Purgatorio*. Cato is placed at

\textsuperscript{76} W.M. Lindsay, trans., *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiae Libri XX*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911).

the base of Purgatorio, despite committing suicide, which should qualify him as a sinner worthy of the seventh circle of Inferno. Virgil explains that Cato died seeking freedom and is thus worthy of placement among the repentant. Therefore, as Auerbach interprets the scene,

Cato’s story is removed from its earthly political context…Cato’s freely chosen death in the face of political servitude is introduced here as a figura of the freeing of the soul from the servitude of sin, and thus of the eternal freedom of those of God’s children who despise all earthly things.\textsuperscript{78}

Cato remains the historical figure who committed suicide in search of freedom; but his story is also reinterpreted as an allegorical narrative of a man fighting against sin. Moreover, Auerbach suggests Dante viewed his afterlife as a materially, historically real place, deeming Cato’s time in Purgatorio is a historically real moment in the afterlife. With his appearance in \textit{Purgatorio}, Cato remains a historical figure in a historical moment, and an allegorical figure. He is simultaneously the historical figure of Cato and a figurative image of an entirely different truth.

The other figurative mode of the commentary, symbolism, is a different kind of figuration. For Lewis, symbolism is a figure expressing something which is more real than itself. As he defines it,

The attempt to read that something else through its sensible imitations, to see the archetype in the copy, is what I mean by symbolism…The symbolist leaves the given to find that which is more real…[As an example of symbolism from Plato,] the Sun is the copy of the Good. Time is the moving image of eternity. All visible things exist just in so far as they succeed in imitating the Forms.\textsuperscript{79}

There is, in other words, a hidden reality behind the one we perceive, and certain objects or figures can represent this deeper reality. The Sun is a symbol of the Good

\textsuperscript{78} Auerbach, “Figura” 106.
\textsuperscript{79} C.S. Lewis, \textit{The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition} (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 45-46.
because the Good is a Form “hidden” behind the Sun. The Forms, in Plato’s philosophy, are “more real” than what we sense before us. So, the “something else,” symbolized is, for Lewis, what is “more real,” than the figure.

Both Lewis’ symbolism and Auerbach’s allegory deal with hidden meanings behind a text, but Auerbach deals strictly with historical figures, while Lewis deals with any image that can represent a hidden truth.

With these terms, and their distinctions, laid out, a discussion of how the commentary guides the reader through the figures which the ms. Palatine 313 sees within *Inferno* 1 is possible.

The Allegory of Virgil and the Symbol of the Lion:

On f. 2v, in conjunction with line 61 (where Virgil is referenced as a silent figure), the commentary notes that the author is still trapped in a state of ignorance, due to the forces of various sins:

Retornandosi l’auttore con l’animo ne l’usato luogo, cioè ne la ignoranza, per la forza de li detti iii peccati e vizî, l’effetto dell’umana ragione dinanzi a li occhi de la mente li apparve, del quale comprese indizio e forza di procedere a la via dell’umana felicitade, il quale effetto figurativamente nel detto ignorante si forma, di colui che e piú ne la ragione umana poetando si stese, cioè di Virgilio, dal quale per tutto il cammino che a lei s’apartiene figuratamente mette, sì come da essa per questo libro sua guide prende.

[Returning to the author, whose soul is placed in figurative ignorance due to the forces of the three sins and vices, the effect of human reason appears through his eyes and travels to his mind. He understands the effects of ignorance; he understands the signs of, and strength, that proceeds from the happy life. Specifically, he understands the happy life of the one who wrote

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80 Lewis also offers his own conception of allegory, one distinct from Auerbach’s. Yet, as it is not applicable to the ms. Palatine 313, Lewis’ vision of allegory will not be discussed here.

81 Abardo, *Chiose palatine*, 89-90.

The Italian syntax does not translate well into modern English, so the translation aims to copy the argument, not the exact phrasing, of the commentary. Also noteworthy: The initials “JA,” are placed at the end of this section of commentary.
human reason into poetry. That is Virgil, who for the entirety of the book’s journey is placed as a figurative guide.]

For lines 70 and 71, in which Virgil describes the details of his earthly life, the commentary offers a brief biography which contextualizes the poet as a Roman living under Julius Caesar.82

The commentary, in interpreting the text, presents a Virgil which is befitting of Auerbach’s *figura* model of allegory. The commentary insists on Virgil remaining a historical figure, as evidenced by the discussion of his earthly life under Caesar. Yet, he is also an allegorical figure, as he is the figurative appearance of human reason. Virgil is both the historical poet and the representation of reason; or, more precisely, a representation of the human reason which guides a person from ignorance to happiness, as he does over the course of his journey with the pilgrim. The commentary, therefore, prefiguring its analysis of Virgil on Auerbach’s *figura* model.

As the manuscript has interpreted Virgil as a specific *figura*, the reader becomes conditioned to continuously read Virgil as an allegory of human reason for the *entirety* of the text. If Virgil is human reason, then in all his interactions with Dante and other figures, he is to be viewed as the reasonable character. He has the moral and intellectual high ground over everyone else. This logic extends to the illuminations, in which Virgil is often depicted in conversation with Dante. Owing to the commentary, when the reader observes an illumination of Virgil, they are inclined to envision him as a source of knowledge and insight. Through an allegorical reading of Virgil, the commentary asserts long-lasting mastery over his figure.

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82 Abardo, *Chiose palatine*, 89-90.
The same cannot be said of the symbolic interpretation of the lion, which guides the reader towards an interpretation only relevant to *Inferno* 1. One of the three beasts who prevents Dante from ascending the hill, the commentary suggests the lion is a figure of all the sins of incontinence: pride/anger, envy, sloth, avarice, gluttony and lust. As justification for this, it cites various passages of scripture (primarily from the Book of Solomon) which describe the nature of a lion.

The lion can therefore be categorized as a symbol under Lewis’ definition. The animal is part a reality which we can perceive, but it also acts as a stand-in for a higher, more real truth of the immaterial reality. Specifically, it acts as a stand-in for the immaterial truth of the sins of incontinence. This truth is hidden but revealed through the figure of the lion. The manuscript authors the lion to be a glimpse into this immaterial and yet more real plane of existence.

In these two examples we can see the different ways in which the commentary guides the reader using allegory and symbolism. With the figure of Virgil, the manuscript establishes a hidden meaning to the entirety of *Inferno*; it instructs the reader to view Virgil as consistently unerring (as he is an allegory of human reason) and as a guide to both the physical plane of Inferno and to the pilgrim’s spiritual journey. The implications of the symbol of the lion, by contrast, are limited to the lion. The commentary does not imply that every animal in the canto, or *Inferno* as a whole, are symbolic. As the lion only appears in *Inferno* 1, any implications or meanings to be drawn out of his symbolic role are limited to that canto. This

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83 The commentary lumps these two sins together, specifically saying “superbia e ira”
84 Abardo, *Chiose palatine*, 88-89.
These sins do not always match the sins of incontinence punished in the early sections of Inferno: Pride, envy and sloth are not designated with their own circles in the poem.
demonstrates that, within the commentary, allegory can be used by the manuscript to
author implications about various sections of the poem, whereas symbolism is limited
to a single section.

Thus far, this chapter has examined the layout, illuminations, rubric,
historiated initial, and figurative aspects of the commentary. It is now time to turn to
the conclusion to the gloss of Inferno 1.

Interpreting the Interpreter:

In Matthew 22, Christ describes to his followers a parable comparing Heaven
to the story of a king throwing a banquet. The king sends his servants to invite guests
to a celebration of his son’s upcoming marriage; yet nobody attends his banquet, and
his invitees kidnap his servants, occasionally killing them. The king, enraged, sends
his troops to destroy those who betrayed him and their city. Then, he tells his servants
to invite anybody they see to the banquet. Finally, at the actual banquet, the king sees
a man not wearing a wedding robe. Outraged, he tells his servants to throw the man
into the darkness, “For many are invited but few are chosen.”

It may seem strange, when wrapping up a discussion of a particular canto of a
manuscript, to suddenly drop in a section of scripture. Yet, this is what the ms.
Palatine 313 does at the end of its commentary on Inferno 1. According to Abardo,
the gloss quotes the Latin of Matthew [“Multi sunt vocati, pauci vero electi,”]86 in
reference to line 129 of Inferno 1, “Oh felice colui cui ivi elegge!” [“O happy the one
he chooses to be there!”]87 That line is spoken by Virgil, in reference to God and his

86 Abardo, Chiose palatine, 93.
87 Abardo, Chiose palatine; Durling, Inferno 1:129.
Empyrean. Yet, the manuscript does not explain the connection between the Matthew quote and Virgil’s line.

On a literalist level, the gloss appears to be using the Matthew quote as an extension of the sentence within Dante’s writing. In other words, the commentary re-writes Virgil’s line as, “Oh felice colui cui ivi elegge—Multi sunt vocati, pauci vero electi,” [“Oh happy the one he chooses to be there—for many are called but few are chosen.”] Under this reading, the commentary extends the poem, adding scripture to Virgil’s line of dialogue. By extending one of Dante’s sentences, the gloss offers its reader an explanation for why someone chosen to join God’s kingdom would be happy— “for many are called but few are chosen.” The many is in this context perhaps a reference to all of mankind, who God calls upon to follow his word as inscribed in scripture. Most of mankind fails to follow God’s word, and therefore few of them are chosen to join God in his city. In this reading, the commentary offers the reader an explanation of Virgil’s comment.

There is another reading of this gloss, in which the reference to Matthew acts as an overview of the pilgrim’s entire journey. The quote, on its own, does not support this reading, but its larger context does. As a well-known passage from the gospel, the context of the passage can be assumed to have been known by the reader of the commentary. In the context of the direct quotation, when the king tells his servants to sell the poorly dressed man outside, he specifically says, “…throw him outside, out into the darkness; there men will wail and gnash their teeth.”88 This description of darkness parallels the sights of Inferno, men are seen suffering in the

darkness. As Christ frames the story of the king as a parable to illustrate the nature of heaven, there is also a parallel with *Paradiso*. That Dante will eventually ascend there, and thus be one of the chosen few, provides further evidence for this reading of the Matthew citation. Perhaps the commentary uses the Matthew reference, to foreshadow the two opposite poles of Dante’s journey, a way to escort readers from the “proem” of *Inferno* 1 to the main narrative.

Both readings are valid and justifiable interpretations of what is written, based on evidence within the text as well as a logical reasoning as to why the commentator would reference Matthew at this junction. The existence of multiple readings, however, speaks to a larger point about the commentary. As was the case with the definition of *Commedia*, the guide adds to the ambiguity of the poem. There are times in which the commentary challenges the reader to interpret the commentary in addition to the poem. This is one such instance, in which a Biblical quote is dropped into the commentary without an explicit description of its purpose or meaning. There are clues to ground an interpretation, of course, such as the direct reference to a specific line of Dante’s poem. But a clue is not a full exegesis. Even if the reader does not follow the lines of thought I have just outlined, the ambiguity of the quotation invites the reader to wrestle with it in some way. As guide and master to the main text, the commentary sometimes forces a reader to do interpretive work themselves.

**Conclusion:**

The manner in which the ms. Palatine 313 guides the reader through *Inferno* 1 is analogous to how Virgil speaks to Dante in that canto and beyond. Sometimes, Virgil is precise and clear-cut in communicating; at other times, such as his prophecy,
he is vague, open to interpretation. The commentary often, though not always, forgoes clarity in favor of ambiguous statements about the text, forcing the reader to interpret both Dante’s writings, and the writings of the anonymous commentator. The illuminations, by contrast, are lucid in their depictions and descriptions of *Inferno* 1, outlining several narrative actions within a single frame. Other aspects of the manuscript, such as the historiated initial and layout of the poem, deploy other methods to guide the reader through the poem.

As guide to and master of the poem, the manuscript has the authority to act in such a manner. But the full extent of the manuscript’s powers has not yet been revealed. There are numerous illuminations whose contents diverge from the contents of the poem, dramatically affecting how the reader understands the *Commedia*. These illuminations will be the subject of the following chapter.
Chapter 3: The Manuscript as Master

Divergences as Alterations:

Because illuminations preview the poem, the ways in which they add to or modify the narrative hold an interpretive mastery. Owing to the paratext’s order of importance, the reader views the illumination before studying the poem, coming to the canto text through the miniatures. Thus, the reader instinctively trusts the illuminations, presuming them to be an accurate guide to the poem. In this sense, miniatures act as master over the poem, establishing an interpretation of the canto before it is read.

Even, or perhaps especially, when they diverge from the text, illuminations continue to act as master over the poem. In the ms. Palatine 313, some illuminations go so far as to provide content (figures, environments, details of either) that is completely absent from, or contradictory to, the text of Inferno. Since the reader views the illumination prior to the poem, such differences, contrary readings, and outright additions guide readers towards imagining details which are not mentioned in Dante’s writing. In turn, these changes can alter the reader’s characterization of key figures.

In practice, however, this authorial mastery through the illuminations may be limited. Some miniatures differ so dramatically from Dante’s writing and worldview that they seem likely to prompt the reader to lose faith in the illuminations. A contradiction between poem and illumination can be so great that the reader may become inclined to ignore or reject the miniature’s authority, favoring Dante.
This chapter will examine three illuminations whose contents diverge from the contents of the poem and theorize how the reader’s interpretation is altered. It will argue that the illuminations alter the reader’s vision of *Inferno* through additives and modifications of its contents. Additives are defined as the placement of contents in the illumination which are not present within the poem. Modifications are defined as contents which are in the poem, but with altered details. The illuminations of *Inferno* 5 utilize additives to alter the reader’s vision of the canto, while the 15th century illumination of *Inferno* 1 and the miniature of *Inferno* 15 deploy modifications of the poem’s contents to alter the reader’s vision. Additionally, the chapter will conclude that certain aspects of these miniatures differ so dramatically from the poem that they lose some of their authoritative mastery.

**A Tale of Two Conversations:**

Within a red frame, in the center-left of f. 11v, are two familiar faces, that of the pilgrim and Virgil (in their respective blue and red robes), in an illumination produced by an anonymous illuminator. On the left side of the frame, Dante gestures and looks at Virgil. The Roman poet, hands aimed at a group of sinners, looks back at Dante. In other words, the pair are in conversation about the sinners marching towards Minos to be judged. This conversation between Virgil and Dante cannot be found in *Inferno*.

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89 See Chapter 1, “The Material History of the ms. Palatine 313,” for a summary of the debate surrounding this illuminator’s identity.
Across from the pair, on the right side of the frame, Minos stands in front of a rock, behind which is a blank blue background. At first glance, it may be difficult to notice that this figure is Minos, as he is flanked, on his left and right sides, by three other figures of a similar appearance. These demons are based on the iconography of Lucifer, in a cycle of the last judgement from illuminated bibles and religious texts. The anonymous illuminator of this canto adapted this iconography to the figures of Dante’s poem. Each demon has furry, pointed hair across their bodies, with sharp, distinct hairs standing up on their heads; feature four or fewer fingers and toes; and are standing without clothing. But there are three small features that distinguish Minos from the rest: He is seated atop a rock (as seen by his bent knees), two horns emerge from his head, and his head is facing forward, directly at the reader.

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90 Spagnesi, 44.
The three demons are an addition to the poem. Standing to Minos’ left and right, the demons are in conversation with the judge of Inferno, as denoted by their hand gestures towards him, their eyes aimed at him, and Minos’ own gesture towards the demon in the center of the frame. What they are saying to each other is unknown, as this scene is not found in *Inferno*, nor is there any writing within the illumination describing the contents of their conversation. The third demon, placed adjacent to the lower right corner of the frame, is dragging a sinner into a fiery hole. Only his head, shoulders and arms can be seen, as the lower half of the demon’s body is engulfed by a presumed opening in the ground. By contrast, the nude sinner’s upper body is cut off, leaving only their lower torso and legs to be viewed.

This sinner is not alone, however: Three other identical figures appear just to the left of the center of the illumination. Each is drawn with the same body type, red hair, and similarly proportioned faces. The sinners stand clustered together and placed on top of each other, eyes facing forward, with their legs stretched out to suggest they
are moving toward Minos and the other demons, who will, in turn, send them to their
designated section of Inferno.

The first two of four additions to this canto is the conversation between Minos
and the other demons that surround him. When Dante first lays eyes on the creature,
he says, “Stavi Minòs orribile che ringhia,” [“There stands Minos bristling and
snarling.”] The use of the word “stavi,” implies a solitary figure, as it is conjugated
in the singular. Additionally, there are also no references to other demons, further
suggesting the Minos of the poem is a lone figure. In the illumination, Minos is
surrounded by his underlings. Adding the demons and their conversation with Minos
is an interpretation of the scene which does not precisely align with Dante’s poem.

Due to the guiding mastery of the illumination, the reader’s vision of the scene
is altered. Illuminations are read prior to the poem, thus creating expectations of the
poem’s narrative. When the reader sees Minos conversing with other demons, they
are guided to anticipate this moment occurring within the poem. Dante does not
explicitly state that Minos is a solitary figure, only implying it, and so the reader is
free to continue imagining the scene as depicted by the illumination. Thus, while they
read Dante’s description of Minos, the reader imagines him surrounded by demons,
just as the illumination depicts him. In establishing narrative expectations, the
illumination is able to add to the reader’s visualization of Inferno.

The second addition is also a conversation, this time between the pilgrim and
Virgil. In the text, the pair do not talk about Minos and the sinners around him. There

\[91\] Abardo, Chiose palatine; Durling, Inferno 5:4.
Within critical editions such as Durling’s, “Stavi,” is usually spelled with two v’s, “stavvi.” In the
critical edition of the ms. Palatine 313, it is spelled with only one.
is a brief exchange between Minos and Virgil, in which the former warns the pilgrim about the dangers he will face. In response, Virgil reminds Minos that the pilgrim’s journey has been willed by God, and he is therefore safe. Yet, there is no conversation between Virgil and the pilgrim about Minos in *Inferno* 5.\textsuperscript{92} Despite this, in the illumination Virgil describes to the pilgrim the nature of Minos.

This added scene re-characterizes the pilgrim as someone with less intuitive intelligence than the pilgrim of the poem. The reader now expects a scene to occur in which Virgil describes Minos to the pilgrim. This expectation may alter the meaning of some dialogue. In the poem, when the pilgrim describes the sinners interacting with Minos, he says, “Dico” [“I say.”]\textsuperscript{93} Once the reader comes to this phrase, it is no longer read as a literal statement. The pilgrim is not using “Dico,” as a suggestion that his understanding of Minos originates with him. It cannot be read as such, because it is Virgil who explained Minos and his role in sending sinners to their pit of Inferno. Instead, “Dico” is read as an exclamatory statement, a means of expressing the pilgrim’s horror and shock at seeing Minos. The illumination establishes a reading of the pilgrim in which he lacks intuitive knowledge, which enforces a specific interpretation some of his statements.

The added scene also continues the allegorical reading of Virgil from *Inferno* 1. As discussed in Chapter 2, the commentary interprets Virgil as an allegory of human reason, and this allegory extends throughout the entirety of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. Virgil’s added conversation with the pilgrim is therefore an example of

\textsuperscript{92} Abardo, *Chiose palatine*; Durling, *Inferno* 5.
\textsuperscript{93} Abardo, *Chiose palatine*; Durling, *Inferno* 5:7.
this allegory. His human reason manifests itself as knowledge of classical mythology; that is, familiarity with the creature Minos.

The final addition to the scene is the sinner being dragged into a fiery pit. This is perhaps the biggest departure from the main text. In the poem, Dante does not describe a single individual under the subjugation of Minos but describes the systemic actions Minos uses to place sinners into their section of Inferno. As the text describes the scene,

…[Minòs] essamina le colpe ne l’entrata giudica e manda secondo ch’avinghia…
e quell cognoscitor de le peccata…
cignesi con la coda tante volte quantunque gradi vuol che giú sia messa.

[[Minos] examines the soul’s guilt at the entrance; he judges and passes sentence by how he wraps…
and that connoisseur of sin…
girds himself with his tail as many times as the levels he wills the soul to be send down.]94

The method by which sinners are taken to their appropriate section of Inferno is starkly different from the method depicted in the illumination. In this miniature, there is still a line-up of souls, waiting to tell the story of their sin. But no tail can be found wrapping itself around the sinners (a detail which will be elaborated upon momentarily). Minos does not even place the sinners in their section of Inferno. One of the other demons does that job for him; and instead of being physically thrown, the sinner is grabbed and dragged down into their place in Inferno.

94 Abardo, Chiose palatine; Durling, Inferno 5:5-6, 9, 11-12.
As Dante is explicit in his description of how Minos sends sinners to hell, the contradiction between poem and illumination is rather stark. Other divergences discussed within this chapter have been largely subtle, the kind of details that do not explicitly contradict *Inferno*. But it is hard to imagine the reader would view the illumination and poem without noticing this stark difference. A conflict now arises: Who has the ultimate authority to tell this story? Poem or illumination? Who decides what precise details are within the narrative and which are errors?

The answer may seem obvious to some: Dante holds authority over how his story unfolds. The reader will always side with his words, as they are final. If the illumination contains contents which contradicts the poem, then the reader side with the poem, prioritizing what Dante has written.

The reality is more complicated than this view suggests, as the illumination’s mastery continually influences the reader. When an idea is implanted in one’s mind, they cannot remove it. Ignoring an idea requires interacting with it, if only for the purpose of overlooking it. Thus, once the reader notices the illuminations, they cannot simply remove them from their thoughts. They must confront the miniatures in some way, whether directly or by trying to ignore them. Even if the expectations produced by the illumination are shattered by the reality of the poem, the visuals will affect the reader’s interpretation. Even if the reader sides with the poem over the ms. Palatine 313, they have still been forced to wrestle with the miniature’s interpretation, implanting the contents and style of the illumination in their mind. Thus, the miniature inevitably influences the reader’s mental vision of *Inferno*. 
But has the mastery of the manuscript been weakened in this instance? If the reader notices the inconsistency between Dante’s words and the illuminations contents, they may very well view the manuscript as less authoritative. A guide is only an expert if it accurately communicates the details of its subject matter. In the instance of Inferno 5, the illumination conveys inaccurate information about the narrative, ignoring Minos’ tail. Because the illumination fails to precisely depict the contents of Inferno 5, the reader may lose some faith in the manuscript as a whole.

There remains one final alteration within the miniature: The absence of Minos’ tail. While the sinner dragged through a fiery pit was an addition to the poem, the absence of the tail is a modification of it. The tail has been removed from Minos, thus changing a detail described in the poem. As is the case with Minos’ method of sending sinners to Inferno, the absence of a tail is so striking as to threaten weakening the illumination’s mastery over the poem.

This is not the only instance in which the miniature modifies the contents of the poem. For a prime example of modification, we now return to the 15th century illumination to Inferno 1.

The Prophecy of the She-Wolf:

The beasts are treated differently in both illuminations of Inferno 1. In the 19th century addition, the beasts are staggered slightly along a horizontal line. They are ordered, from left to right, beginning with the leopard (signified by the small, noticeable spots on its body), the lion (with its long tail) and the she-wolf. This is the order in which the beasts are introduced in Inferno 1.
By contrast, in the 15th century drawing, the beasts are stacked vertically on top of each other, not in a horizontal line. Their order, from bottom to top of the frame, begins with the she-wolf (again denoted by her pointy ears), followed by the leopard (spotted) and the lion (whose bushy fur surrounding his face reveals his identity). In a noteworthy artistic choice, the she-wolf is depicted with her body facing towards the pilgrim ascending the hill, while her neck is turned in the opposite direction, her eyes glaring at the pilgrim and Virgil’s first meeting. The illumination departs from by modifying the order of the beasts, and turning the she-wolf into a more active figure in the narrative.

When encountering the beasts in the poem, the pilgrim lists them in order of their appearance. In line 31, he mentions the appearance of a swift leopard; in lines 45-46, he describes the terrifying sight of a lion, raging with hunger; and finally, he sees the she-wolf, who he claims, “…molte genti fé già viver grame…” [“…has caused many/peoples to live in wretchedness…”]95 Yet in the illumination, Dante first

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encounters the she-wolf, as she is at the bottom of the hill and thus closest to him. Afterwards, he encounters the leopard and the lion.

This is an instance in which the scope of the miniature’s mastery over the poem is uncertain. If the reader is detail-oriented, then they will notice the mistake in the illumination, and mentally correct it. They will imagine the beasts in their proper order as described by the pilgrim. But if the reader has less interest in the details of the poem, they may find themselves visualizing Dante’s narrative as the illumination does. The reader may follow its guidance and imagine the she-wolf coming before the leopard and the lion. The contradiction between miniature and poem is so slight as to deem the extent of the miniature’s mastery questionable.

The same is not true of the other modification of the she-wolf. The image of the she-wolf listening to the pilgrim and Virgil does not directly contradict the narrative as told by Dante. Thus, the illumination is able to alter the reader’s vision of the scene.

The miniature creates a unique reading of the poem, inventively suggesting a new dynamic between Virgil and the she-wolf. Now, the latter listens in on the former. Under this reading, the she-wolf is made aware of her inevitable fate at the hands of the greyhound. She now knows that, at some point in the future, she will be driven back into Inferno, from which she came. As Dante’s poem does not contradict this vision of the beast, the reader has no reason to disregard this image. The she-wolf is thus re-characterized by the miniature, becoming a creature granted knowledge of her approaching demise.
The illumination has modified the poem through small divergences. Another illumination, that of *Inferno* 15, modifies the poem to differing effect.

*Qual maraviglia:*

In the center of f. 35v, another red-framed illumination is present, produced by Bonaguida.\(^{96}\) Strikingly, the colors of Dante and Virgil’s robes have changed. Previously, Dante was dressed in blue and Virgil in red, creating a clear distinction between the two figures. Starting with the illumination to *Inferno* 14 on f. 33r, the differences in clothing become less distinctive. The pilgrim wears a light red magisterial Florentine cloak with a black cowl on his head; Virgil is adorned with a vermillion red chlamys and a classical grey tunic underneath.\(^{97}\) The visual differences between the pair are less evident, as they are wearing different shades of the same color, but it is still possible to distinguish the two figures from each other.

\(^{96}\) See Chapter 1 for footnote.

\(^{97}\) Spagnesi, 47.
A sinner in the center of the illumination is locking eyes and holding hands with the figure in the light red cloak. After reading *Inferno* 15, it becomes apparent that this sinner is Brunetto Latini, speaking privately with the pilgrim. Latini was a fellow Florentine who lived from about 1220 to 1294 and is most famous for his poem written in the Italian *volgare*, the *Tesoretto*. In *Inferno* 15, Latini is condemned with the other sodomites, in the space between the second and third rings of the seventh circle. Latini recognizes the pilgrim from his mortal life, shouting out to him, “Qual maraviglia!” [“What a marvel!”] Subsequently, the pair discuss how the pilgrim came to *Inferno*; Latini offers a prophecy of the pilgrim’s future; and the pilgrim promises to write about Latini, thus ensuring his name is not forgotten.

Eventually, Latini leaves to join his fellow condemned sinners. The pilgrim describes his exit as comparable to a runner in a Veronese footrace, like, “…quelli che vince, e non colui che perde,” [“…the one who wins, not the one who loses.”]

The miniature also previews other figures in this scene. To the right of Latini are two other, unnamed sinners. Both sinners have extended legs to suggest movement, and both have their heads turned around to face Dante. The placement of their legs is in line with the content of the poem, in which the sodomites are forever forced to keep moving or be forced to stand in place for a hundred years, without being able to brush off the fire that surrounds them. Their heads facing the pilgrim is similarly in line with the text. In lines 18-19, Dante notes that the souls were, “…ci riguardava come suol da sera/guardare uno altro sotto nuova luna…” [“…gazing at us

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as in the evening/people gaze at one another under the new moon…”)]101 Here, the reader is foretold of souls gazing over at Virgil and the pilgrim.

Finally, there is the environment in which the scene is set. As befitting of Inferno 15, the ground has flames, depicted by red-inked curves, emerging from small holes in the ground, and the forest of the previous canto is nowhere to be found. The background, as seen in most of the illuminations of the ms. Palatine 313, is a dark shade of blue. The reader is thus guided to visualize the discussion between the pilgrim and Latini unfolding within this environment.

This miniature differs from the poem in two respects: It shows the pilgrim and Latini on the same physical plane, and depicts the pair as holding hands. In the poem, the pilgrim is placed on a wall alongside the field in which Latini walks. Latini says that he will walk along the pilgrim’s “skirts,” removed from him. Through narration, the pilgrim says that, “Io non osava scender de la strada/per andar par di lui, ma ‘l capo chino/tenea com’ uom che reverente vada,” [“I did not dare descend from the path to walk level/with him, but I kept my head bowed, as one might/walk reverently.”]102 In the illumination, however, the pilgrim and Virgil are in the same field as Latini, though only Latini is walking through flames. The second modification is depicting the pair as holding each other’s hands.

This modification of the original poem by the miniature creates a new layer to the intimate relationship between the pilgrim and Latini. As the critical edition of the ms. Palatine 313 describes it:

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101 Abardo, Chiose palatine; Durling, Inferno 15:18-19.
102 Abardo, Chiose palatine; Durling, Inferno, 15:43–44.
Il gesto di Dante che stringe la mano di Brunetto è un modo adottato autonomamente dal miniaturista per tradurre iconicamente il tono affettuoso con cui il viator si rivolge al suo antico maestro.

[The gesture of [the pilgrim] gripping the hand of Brunetto is an adopted, autonomous mode of the miniature to translate, iconically, the affectionate tone with which [the pilgrim] addresses his ancient master.]103

Rather than keep the two physically apart, the illumination shows the pair holding hands as a demonstration of their close relationship. The miniature is therefore guiding the reader to understand that the principle sinner within this canto is one whom the pilgrim holds dearly.

Unlike previous examples, the illumination’s guidance does not serve to re-characterize the figures of Inferno 15 but strengthen their characterization from the poem. The pilgrim and Latini already have a strong connection, and an affectionate relationship within the poem. The language the pair use to describe one another reflects this. Aforementioned linguistic choices like “qual maraviglia!” and the simile of “quelli che vince” demonstrate the shared affection and admiration between Latini and the pilgrim. Thus, the miniature’s uses hand holding, a shared intimate act, as a visual marker of the pair’s closeness. The miniature’s divergence from the literal contents of the poem strengthens the nonliteral contents of the poem, informing the reader of the tender relationship between Latini and the pilgrim.

Of course, one cannot overlook the literal differences between the poem and illumination. After reading Inferno 15, the reader notes the close relationship between the pilgrim and Latini and is thus is inclined to view the illumination as nonliteral. They are still likely to imagine the separation between the pair, as described in the

103 Spagnesi, 47.
poem. But as the illumination highlights the emotional intimacy between the poets, so too does the reader place added emphasis on their relationship.

Conclusion:

At the end *Inferno* 15, Latini returns to his group of fellow sinners, leaving the pilgrim to continue onwards without him. The pilgrim, of course, is not alone: He still has Virgil standing by his side, ready to guide him through the treacherous and terrifying depths of Inferno. But Virgil will not be there forever.

The ms. Palatine 313 exerts a visual and conceptual interpretive mastery over *Inferno*, using commentary and illumination to guide the reader through the poem. The previous chapter examined how the manuscript established itself as guide through *Inferno* 1. This chapter has examined how the illuminations interpret Dante’s poem, and in doing so, dramatically altered how the reader both visualizes and characterizes it. Both have suggested a reading of the ms. Palatine 313 in which commentary and illumination guide the reader towards a unique interpretation of *Inferno*, formed by the collective producers of the manuscript.

But the illuminations are not always present in this manuscript for the reader. In the concluding chapter, this thesis will examine the effect of removing, or changing, the guide. Specifically, how the absence of an illumination at a crucial point in the narrative of *Inferno* leads the reader without a visual guideline into the poem. It will examine what happens when the manuscript *does not* guide the reader through the poem, when an illumination is not present. It will ask, and answer, the question of journeying through *Inferno* without Virgil by one’s side.
Conclusion: The Manuscript’s Absence

The Missing Emperor:

Given the high quantity of illuminations within the ms. Palatine 313’s presentation of *Inferno*, one would expect that Satan, the emperor of Hell, would be illuminated. “Lo ’Imperador del doroso regno,” [“The emperor of the dolorous kingdom”]\(^\text{104}\) is a fantastic subject for an illuminator to depict. Placed in the deepest pit of Inferno, Satan cries perpetually, flooding the ninth circle; his wings flap so vigorously that the area freezes over, turning his tears into the icy river, Cocytus. Each of his three heads holds a different traitor (Judas in the central head, Brutus and Cassius in the others), condemned to be perpetually chewed and eaten. This is a visually stunning figure for an illuminator to work with. Moreover, the reader would not be unreasonable in expecting, or simply desiring, a visualization of this striking character. But on a simpler level, Satan is worthy of illumination because he is the last major figure of *Inferno*, deserving of visualization if only to properly close out the narrative.

Nevertheless, if the reader of the ms. Palatine 313 expects an illumination of Inferno’s king, then they will be disappointed. Instead of discovering an illumination of Satan, they will discover something else entirely. In the middle of f. 79v, there is a rubric of *Inferno* 34; beneath that, there is a large, rectangular space consuming the folio’s bottom half. Within this rectangular space is not an illumination, but a scrap of folio, from this manuscript or another with a similar, *littera textualis* script, pasted on.

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Capitolo XVIII.

Che questi lasciò

disposto che intorno si mostrò di calcare

li galle ma ciò non mi

marchiando non avendo
ceduto e stato e privò d'onor di

la posizione di

la posizione di

Se davanti suo e umiljato

mostrò un suo prezzo

che disarmo e

di me chon lui secro.

E non fui egual in questa mano

pria di locco e

non fui egual in dessa fui

esser illenato

Anp geniuehi buoni

temple scelvi.
Based on the size and shape of this scrap, as well as its location beneath *Inferno* 34’s rubric, it seems that an illumination of Satan was likely originally placed here. Manuscripts often have folios, or sections of folios, cut out and re-purposed for other manuscripts. One need only look at the ms. Palatine 313’s two illuminations of *Inferno* 1 for an example of this. As such, it is probable that an illumination of Satan was produced but removed from the manuscript at an unknown time. Under this theory, a scrap of folio with a script so similar to that of the rest of the manuscript was pasted onto f. 79v to cover the area where Satan once was.

If the reader turns to f. 80r, expecting to the illumination has been placed there instead, they will be similarly dissatisfied. There is no illumination on this folio either. In place of a miniature, the first lines of *Inferno* 34 are indented so as to start in the middle of the textual column. This creates an empty, rectangular space before the beginning of the text of the poem. Presumably, this space was intended to hold a historiated initial, as *Inferno* 1 featured an illumination in the same location leading into the text of the poem.

Regardless of the reason behind the added scrap to f. 79v, or the empty space on f. 80r, the situation remains unchanged: There is no illumination of *Inferno* 34.
Image 16: F. 80r, in which Inferno 34 begins. In the upper left corner, the first lines of the poem begin in the middle of the column, creating an empty space where a historiated initial could be placed. This image was taken by the Special Collections department of Olin Library.
At this point into the ms. Palatine 313, the reader has become conditioned to expect illuminations of each canto. Nearly every canto is illuminated. The only exception is *Inferno* 26, but its setting (the eighth bolgia of the eight circle) and the enflamed sinners therein are depicted in the miniature to *Inferno* 27. The reader, through the repeated appearance of illuminations, comes to expect them in forthcoming cantos. These expectations are shattered by a non-arrival. After 32 previous illuminations, the emperor of Inferno is missing.

The reader is not entirely abandoned by the manuscript, as the commentary guides the reader through a detailed interpretation of Satan. It argues his three faces designate the three foundational vices of sin (ignorance, hate and impotence); that the colors of his skin represent anger (red), impotence (white/yellow) and ignorance (black); and even outlines some historical exposition of the three traitors within his mouths.\(^\text{105}\) Thus, the commentary guides the reader through the physical attributes of Satan.

But visually, the manuscript offers the reader no aid. The ms. Palatine 313 has consistently guided the reader by visualizing the poem. Now, the guide has taken a step back; the reader must proceed without the manuscript’s decorative guidance. They must now rely on the words contained within poem and commentary to comprehend the fallen angel at the bottom of Inferno.

A Change of the Guide:

This shift in guidance parallels a shift within the Commedia. In Purgatorio 30, while in the Earthly Paradise (the Garden of Eden) the pilgrim turns to speak to Virgil; but his guide is nowhere to be seen. He had, without Dante noticing, returned to his spot in the first circle of Inferno. Being a pagan, Virgil could not be allowed to join the pilgrim on the last limb of his journey. His role as guide will, henceforth, be filled by the angel Beatrice. But before he can be greeted by his next guide, the pilgrim weeps at the loss of his great master.106

Why does the pilgrim express such great sorrow? He is not alone, as Beatrice guide him in his journeys. She is herself the guide of Virgil, having sent him to help the pilgrim climb to her heights, so she could then take him towards the Empyrean over the course of Paradiso.107 The pilgrim, then, is not heartbroken because he is without a guide, but is weeping over the loss of his guide and master, Virgil.

The reader, similarly, is not abandoned by their guiding manuscript, though much has changed. The ms. Palatine 313 still provides a helpful commentary to Inferno 34, but the reader lacks an illumination. Following that canto, the number of miniatures plummets. There is only a total of five illuminations over the course of the 66 cantos of Purgatorio and Paradiso.108 Even the commentary is minimized: Only Purgatorio 1-4 are supplemented by a gloss, while Paradiso only contains glosses to the first two cantos. Thus, from Inferno 34 onwards, the manuscript still guides the reader through the Commedia. But how it does so has unmistakably shifted.

106 Durling, Purgatorio, 30:43–54.
107 Abardo, Chiose palatine; Durling, Inferno 2:52-126.
Accordingly, *Purgatorio* 30 becomes a useful tool for discussing the ms. Palatine 313, post *Inferno* 34. In the main analogy of this thesis, the pilgrim is the reader and the manuscript is Virgil, guiding the former through the terrain of *Inferno*. With the absence of an illuminated Satan, the decrease in illuminations and commentary in the preceding canticles, the manuscript guides the reader through the poem using different methods. Instead of extensive commentary and illumination, the manuscript now guides the reader infrequently through minimal miniatures and glosses. There is thus a transition from Virgil to Beatrice as guide. Virgil guided Dante with comprehensive illuminations and commentary; Beatrice scarcely uses either methods of guidance, often leaving the reader without an interpretation of the poem.

A change in how the poem the reader studies the poem is thus required, an advancement which can similarly be explained through analogy. In *Purgatorio* 31, a beautiful, unnamed woman (later identified as Matelda) and Beatrice’s handmaids (a group of four nymphs) baptize the pilgrim, with the intent of helping him gaze upon his new, divine guide.\(^\text{109}\) The purpose of this scene is to change the pilgrim’s gaze through baptism, sharpening it so he can better appreciate the divine world surrounding him.

\[^{109}\text{Abardo, Chiose palatine; Durling, Purgatorio 31: 100-111.}\]
After the end of *Inferno*, the reader must follow in the pilgrim’s footsteps, and alter their figurative gaze. They can no longer study the poem as they did previously. They must learn to contemplate the poem without a heavy reliance on the manuscript’s guidance. The reader must learn to gaze into the depths of the *Commedia* to see their own interpretation.

**Guide and Master, Revisited:**

In that light, the paratexts of *Inferno* can be read as a kind of training. Illuminations instruct the reader in visualizing the *Commedia*, before stepping back and letting them use their own ingenuity. They provide a starting point for picturing the *Commedia*, examples for the reader to draw upon when imagining scenes which are not illuminated for them. Blue backgrounds; robed poets; rocky mountainsides; these motifs, and others, are scattered throughout the illuminations of the ms. Palatine 313. The reader can deploy these motifs in imagining the *Commedia* for themselves once the number of miniatures decreases. They can craft mental representations of *Purgatorio* in which the stylistic tendencies of the various illuminators are carried over. Or, they can envision entirely different pictures of Dante’s poem, departing from the visual motifs of the illuminations. The ms. Palatine 313 supplies tools for visualizing the poem, but what to do with them is the reader’s choice.

Likewise, the commentary teaches the reader how to interpret the figurative elements of the *Commedia*. The commentary crafts interpretations about the meaning or significance of certain figures, or scenes, of the *Commedia*. In turn, the reader grapples with these interpretations, and in doing so can see the underlying logic of them. The reader can come to understand the reasons why, for example, the lion of
*Inferno* 1 is a symbol of various sins. They can notice that scriptural citations are used to justify this reading of the lion and may, by extension, come to view scripture as a legitimate resource for interpreting the *Commedia*. If the reader is unsure about the symbolic significance of the other beasts, they can form a reading through biblical references to a she-wolf or leopard. This logic can be applied to any section of the commentary.

The commentary offers the reader other opportunities to practice their interpretative skills. As discussed in the Chapter 2, the exegesis on the meaning of *Commedia* and the quotation from Matthew are so cryptic as to force the reader to interpret the commentary’s meaning. Under this new framework, these sections can now be read as a form of guidance through intellectual exercises. They are opportunities for the reader to test their analytical skills by constructing explanations of the commentary’s arguments. When confronted with cryptic phrases like “high and low and middle things,” the reader is granted an opportunity to craft their own unique definitions of these words. If this opportunity is taken, then the reader gains experience interpreting what is otherwise unclear. The reader can subsequently apply these experiences to sections of the *Commedia* which they find ambiguous or confusing.

With this added layer to the manuscript-as-guide argument, we can now return to Veglia’s argument. As discussed in Chapter 1, he argues that Dante and the ms. Palatine 313 educate the reader’s gaze in visualizing the poem, specifically that:

> For reading the *Commedia* and for interpreting it at last, the Palatine 313 teaches us this: to *respond* wholly to its words which we consult, to *see it*, not merely to annotate it…
This thesis has expanded upon Veglia’s arguments, arguing that it is the ms. Palatine 313’s role as guide and master of the poem which guides the reader through the art of interpreting the *Commedia*. In visualizing the poem, it supplies readers with visual motifs which can be deployed in imagining the non-illuminated sections of the poem. Through commentary, it implicitly instructs readers in strategies for deciphering Dante’s writing, and grants the reader opportunities to test their analytical skills. As a consequence of the manuscript’s guidance, the reader, as Veglia suggests, is taught to see the words of the *Commedia*.

Virgil’s final words to the pilgrim echo the manuscript’s role in teaching the reader the skills of interpretation. Before entering the Earthly Paradise, the Roman poet tells the pilgrim:

Tratto t’ho qui con ingegno e con arte;  
lo tuo piacere o mai prendi per duce…  
Non aspettar mio dir piú né mio cenno;  
liber’hai, dritto e sano è tutto arbitro,  
e fallo fora el non fare a suo senno:  
per ch’io te sopra te corno e nitro.

[I have drawn you here with wit and with art;  
your own pleasure now take as leader…  
No longer await any word or sign from me: free,  
upright and whole is your will, and it would be a  
fault not to act according to its intent.  
Therefore you over yourself I crown mitre.]

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110 Veglia, 31-32.  
Commentary and illumination guide the reader through the *Commedia*; yet by the poem’s close, the ms. Palatine 313 surrenders its mastery to the reader. It is they, not the manuscript, who must illuminate the world and mythology of the text and interpret the meaning of Dante’s poem. Virgil, for all his mastery, inevitably must withdraw. In turn, the reader must accept Virgil’s crown, and take control of their journey through the *Commedia*. 
Appendix 1:

Representative Schema I: f. 1r (Inferno 1, beginning)
Representative Schema II: f. 35v (*Inferno* 15, beginning)
Appendix 2: Biographies of the Principle Illuminators:

While the identities of the illuminators of the ms. Palatine 313 continue to elude scholars, it is clear that two figures played a significant role in producing the manuscript’s miniatures: Pacino di Bonaguida and the Maestro Daddesco. Other Florentine artists influenced the manuscript’s illuminators, but Bonaguida and the Maestro held far greater influence. Both Spangesi and Pasut agree that these artists played some role, whether direct or indirect, in producing the ms. Palatine 313. As such, it is appropriate to briefly outline their respective biographies.

Biography of Pacino di Bonaguida:

Bonaguida was one of the most prolific manuscript illuminators in Florence during the early fourteenth century yet has not been at the epicenter of many art historians’ scholarship. As Sciaccia describes him, “Although Pacino di Bonaguida has fallen into relative obscurity in the twenty-first century, in the first half of the Trecento he was the ‘head and center’ of Florentine illumination, which simultaneously producing important and influential panel painting commissions.”112 Some scholars have suggested that his work largely stuck to the painting traditions of the prior century, while incorporating some of Giotto di Bondone’s innovative techniques. Others have noted that he adopted Giotto’s mode of modeling with light and shadow to create figures with solid forms, and used various landscape elements to arrange figures in space.113

113 Sciacca, 288.
Bonaguida’s name was first referred to in a document from February 20th, 1303, in which he is noted as a *publicus artifex*, or someone who sells their artwork out of a *bottega* (workshop). He was officially mentioned again in the guild records of the Medici e Speziali (a guild comprised of painters and other specialized, professional groups), which state that he was enrolled in 1329-1330. His last dated work is the *Ammaestamenti degli Antichi* of Bartoloemo da San Concordio (Milan, Biblioteca Braidense, MS. Castiglioni 3), which was signed to the year of 1343 in the colophon. The date and location of his death is unknown. Despite this limited evidence, scholars have reconstructed his career going back to the later years of the Thirteenth century, in which Pacino worked in the environment of the Maestro of Saint Cecilia. His works were clearly inspired by Giotto, but more lyrical; with a calm and fluid narrative, which was influenced by late thirteenth century Florentine styles.

During the course of his career, he was known for the remarkable diversity of his work, from designs for glass stained windows, altarpieces, crucifixes, and, of course, manuscript illuminations. He was among the first Italian painters of the early Renaissance to achieve artistic success in both the panel and manuscript media, though according to Offner, he operated primarily as an illuminator. He also worked as the head of one of the most important illuminator’s workshops in all of

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114 Sciacca, 287.
Florence during the first half of the fourteenth century, the aforementioned Arte dei Medici e Speziali; he has also been accredited with relaunching the practice of book illumination in his home city.\textsuperscript{119}

He is perhaps best known for three works: a polyptych depicting the \textit{Crucifix and Saints} at the Galleria dell’Accademia at Florence (dated to sometime between 1315-1320, containing an inscription of Pacino’s name), \textit{The Tree of Life}, a large panel painting dated to 1315 and also housed in the Accademia, and a manuscript entitled “Scenes from the Life of Christ and Life of the Blessed Gerard of Villamagna,” (technically labeled as the ms. M.643, housed at The Morgan Library and Museum in New York). The figures in his works, as described by Daniele Guernelli, “…are generally characterized by elongated proportions and soft, rounded modeling…”\textsuperscript{120}

This is certainly a stylistic feature within Pacino’s miniatures in the ms. Palatine 313. In the illumination of \textit{Inferno} 15, discussed in Chapter 3, a group of sinners walk across a fiery ground. Their bodies are slender, with delicate legs and arms that suggest a kind of frailty. Anatomically, they have some definition in the chest and stomach areas, but otherwise are depicted with the same soft and rounded modeling which Guernelli describes in Pacino’s other works.

\textsuperscript{119} Saverio Bellomo, “Pacino Di Bonaguida,” in \textit{Dizionario Biografico Dei Miniatori Italiani} (Milano: Sylvestre Bonnard, 2004), 841–42.

\textsuperscript{120} Guernelli, “A New Manuscript for Pacino Di Buonaguida,” 197, 201.
Biography of the Maestro Daddesco:

The anonymous Florentine artist known as the Maestro Daddesco does not fully live up to his name, for his work only briefly resembles that of his namesake, Bernardo Daddi. Miklós Boskovits succinctly summarized the issue with the Maestro’s name:

[His] conventional name, by which he is now generally known in the specialized literature, is certainly not very apt, considering that he cannot be said to be a follower of Daddi whose style he approaches only in one phase of his career. The affinities between the works of the two masters are mostly confined to the general disposition of the scenes and to the attitudes of the figures besides occasional typological similarities.  

Besides a brief moment of the Maestro’s career, from the late 1320s to the early 1330s, in which the two shared artistic tendencies, their styles are rather distinct. Some of the Maestro’s works even date to 1310, meaning that the Maestro predated Daddi’s paintings. Yet, as Boskovits notes, the Daddesco name has some merit to its, as the anonymous artist shared a “poetical temperament,” with his namesake, even if the Maestro was not a direct follower of Daddi.

The Maestro Daddesco did, however, earn the title of master. His work was first identified, in 1914, by Paolo D’Ancona. He discovered that two manuscripts, the Edili 107 (a Missal now stored at the Biblioteca Lauranziana in Florence), and a Gradual at the Collegiata di Santo Stefano at Empoli (also stored in the Laurenziana) were done by a single illuminator. Mario Salmi, writing in 1952 and 1954, added

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122 Sciacca, 66.
several Antiphonaries, and proposed that the author of these shared works be known as the Maestro Daddesco. He was profoundly influenced by Daddi and was likely not active until before the 1330s. Over the course of several decades, scholars proposed other works to the anonymous artist’s name, complicating the idea that he was inactive before the 1330s, and that he was primarily inspired by Daddi.\textsuperscript{124}

Now, scholars’ list of his earliest works includes miniatures of a Gradual C, now located in the Collegiata of Montevarchi; miniatures in a Missal, whose location is currently unknown; and the third volume of a Missal now in the Biblioteca Nazionale of Turin. Boskovits notes that these miniatures demonstrate that the Maestro Daddesco’s early artistic development occurred in the artistic circle of the Saint Cecilia Master, and that he must have had some connections to Lippo di Benivieni and the Master of the Laudario B.R. 18. These early works, with their “static compositions and [the] ceremonious stiffness with which the figures enact their parts” are vastly different to the miniatures of Gradual D in the Santa Croce in Gerusalemme. The miniatures of that work, dated to 1315 after his earlier illuminations, lack the traits of the Maestro Daddesco’s earliest works, demonstrating a significant evolution in his style.\textsuperscript{125} What remained fairly constant over the course of his career is that many of his works were liturgical.\textsuperscript{126}

His work continued to evolve over the course of his career, demonstrating an inclination against traditional imagery and towards imaginative replacements for standard icons. For example, the aforementioned Gradual D contains a visualization

\textsuperscript{125} Boskovits, 45.
\textsuperscript{126} Bellomo, “Maestro Daddesco.”
of Jacob’s dream; but instead of the traditional image of a ladder, Jacob instead gazes up at a spiral staircase.\textsuperscript{127} He continued to move away from traditional artistic norms. His work on the decorations of the Missal Cod. Edili 107 in the Biblioteca Laurenziana, dated to between 1320-1330, rejects the formalism of the S. Cecilia Master, instead utilizing Gothicism, sans extravagance or affectation.\textsuperscript{128}

His later works, from the 1340s, began to focus more and more on crafting figures with remarkable detail. Over the entirety of his career, his figures are depicted with round faces, broad noses, and individually delineated strands of hair.\textsuperscript{129} Still, his late career figures are his most detailed. As Boskovits describes them, “[His figures] are characterized by full, meditative faces and have an almost feline grace, their gentle movements occasionally interrupted by some gesture of sudden impetus…Where the miniatures call for particularly large-scale figures, the artist analyses them meticulously, describing every wrinkle of their skins, every vein of their temples, and every hair of their heads or beards.”\textsuperscript{130}

He remains a cryptic and challenging figure for scholars to pin down. Boskovits wrote confidently about his style in the mid-1980s, but more contemporary art historians, such as Sciaccia, have a more troubling time understanding what defined the artist. “The Maestro Daddesco’s style is not clearly defined by current scholarship,” she writes. “On the one hand, he is seen to bear close affinities with Sienese illumination and with his occasional collaborator the Master of the Codex of Saint George, and on the other, he is thought to have been influenced by the art of

\textsuperscript{127} Guernelli, “A New Manuscript for Pacino Di Buonaguida.”
\textsuperscript{128} Boskovits, 46-47.
\textsuperscript{129} Sciaccia, 64-65.
\textsuperscript{130} Boskovits, 46.
Bernardo Daddi… Thus the Maestro Daddesco’s personality is enigmatic and varied, but he clearly responded to the various currents in Florence painting in the first half of the fourteenth century by developing his unique, blended style.\(^{131}\) Perhaps he does not live up to the name of Daddesco, but *Maestro* suits him well.

\(^{131}\) Sciacca, 67.
Bibliography:


