

SYMBOLIC HISTORY
Through Sight and Sound

11. Dante: Threshold of 1300

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- a1) *Double: [A] Chartres, 1210-20, North Portal, Simeon (head); and [B] Giovanni Pisano, c. 1290, Simeon (head), Cathedral Museum, Siena*
1) *Pisano, Simeon, head and shoulders (CGB '86); + V detail*

Over the 13th-century horizon of France, England, Germany, Spain — Italy brings a dawn of human possibility: "It was the start of morning and the sun was rising up" — "Temp'era dal principio del mattino,/ e'l sol montava 'n su..." Giovanni Pisano's Simeon, about 1290, hails the temporal incarnation: "For mine eyes have seen... the glory of thy people." Thus Virgil to Dante at the summit of Purgatory [Dante translations in this program are by CGB]:

Your will is upright, free and whole;
It would be a fault not to do its bidding;
Therefore I crown and mitre you lord of your own

Libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio...
Per ch'io te sovra te corono e mitrio.

How far the spatial attack has moved toward Michelangelo,

- 2) *Simeon, Chartres*
2a) *French Gothic, 1200-40, North Portal, Prophets, Chartres (CGB '59)*

we measure against the Chartres Simeon of about 1220, looming into time but not temporal, transforming time, flesh, stone, to the substance of things unseen:

Not in casque nor yet in cowl,
Not in battle nor in Bull,
But on the road from Jericho
I come with a wounded man. (Waddell)

That Northern waking held the leanness of sacred surrender —

nec in bysso nec in cuculla,
nec in bello nec in bulla;
de Jericho sum veniens...--

For 2nd 1) Pisano 1301, The Pulpit of Pistoia, Jeremiah, head

V2nd 1a) Double: [A] Chartres c. 1210, North Portal, S. Modeste (head); and [B] Pisano, 1297, Miriam or a Sibyl, Cathedral Museum, Siena

V2nd 1b) Double: [A] Chartres, c. 1210-20, South Portal, S. Theodore (head); and [B] Pisano, c. 1290, Habakkuk (head), Cathedral Museum, Siena

beside the pentameter weight of Dante:

Libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio.

If the Divine Comedy is the Gothic cathedral of literature, it is a signed cathedral of prophetic self-awareness. Beatrice calls its author by name, "Dante"; while he says of his book: "the sacred poem, to which both heaven and earth have set their hand, so that for many years it has made me lean."

For 2nd 2) Double: [A] Chartres c. 1210, North Portal, Melchisedech (head); and [B] Pisano 1297 ff., Moses, Pisa, Baptistry

The powers this Gothic synthesis incorporates have crossed a threshold of personality

a3) View over Florence from Piazzale Michelangelo (CGB '59)

3) Arnolfo di Cambio & Brunelleschi 1300 ff. & 1420 ff., Pal. Vecchio & Duomo, Florence; first, video detail

3a) Giotto and after 1337-87, Campanile, Florence (CGB '48)

toward the free claim of life, love, and self-rule.

Music: Gherardellus c. 1350, Caccia, AS-59, music up, then faint

Florence, 1300: Jubilee year of Dante's passage through an eternal place, "per luogo eterno" — to be told thereafter in the exile which taught him "how much the bread of others tastes of salt, and how hard is the going up and down of another's stairs." He

begins: "Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita" — "In the middle of the journey of our life, I found myself in a dark wood, where the true way was lost."

What dispensation does this prophet bring, to pair him, as he says, with Aeneas founder of Rome and Paul founder of the Church, to whom it was also granted to descend and return — if not the poesis of blessing, fulfillment of Joachim de Floris' indwelling spirit: "Liberta va cercando" — "he goes searching liberty." (music up)

That age a portal also in music, though this Gherardellus "Caccia", like much of what survives, is of the next generation.

(end 1st canon)

- Va4) French Gothic 12th & 13th cents., View of Apse, Notre Dame, Paris (CGB '59)*
4) French Gothic 1200-40, West Front, Notre Dame, Paris (CGB '80); video: detail only
4a) French Gothic 1163, Ambulatory, Notre Dame, Paris (CGB '59); video: detail only

Music: Perotin c. 1220?, 4v. Conductus, Deus Misertus, de Van, AS-99

There was as much force, as much ambition, in the Cathedral of Notre Dame, but a force differently disposed to the individual and secular. (music up) Such the frame of the Thomistic Summa, in which Dante's poem shapes new heaven and earth. Or the barer solemnities of Perotin's Ars Antiqua (fade Perotin) —

- a5) Arnolfo di Cambio 14th cent. & Brunelleschi 1420-36, Apse and Dome of the Cathedral, Florence (CGB '84); + V detail*
5) Florence 14th-15th cents., Nave of the Cathedral (CGB '86)
5a) Same, choir (CGB '86)

whereas, in the Ars Nova Caccia, spaced canonic entries fill, over a trombone ground, fifths and triads of massive chords.

Music: Again, Gherardellus, Caccia, closing Ritornello (end)

In 1296, when Arnolfo di Cambio took on the construction of the Cathedral, whose magnified arcades would not be domed for more than a century, the city fathers proclaimed:

The Florentine Republic, soaring ever above the conception of the most competent judges, desires that an edifice should be constructed so magnificent... that it shall surpass anything of the kind produced in the time of their greatest power by the Greeks and Romans.

So Dante's Ulysses stirs his followers to sail the globe:

"O brothers," I told them, "who through all chances,
 A thousand perils have come to the west,
 For this small remnant of the senses' vigil
 Our fate allows us, let us here resolve
 Not to deny the experience of knowledge,
 Beyond the sunset to the unpeopled world.
 Consider your race, the seed of your generation:
 You were not made to pass your time as beasts,
 But to hold the way of courage and of wisdom..."

- a6) *French Gothic, c. 1270, North Rose Window, Notre Dame, Paris; first, video detail*
 6 or V6) *French Gothic, c. 1270, South Rose Window, Notre Dame, Paris (slide show, detail; video, whole rose)*

It is in mystical transparency that the old Gothic most fulfills its abstract vision,

Music: French, c. 1260, Descendi-Gaude-Alma, Lum. 32027, close

a geometry of light Dante applies in his last canto to the Trinity:

O luce eterna che sola in te sidi —

Eternal light that always self-abiding.
 Self-understanding and self-understood,
 Alone and three-in-one burns love and smiling
 (te ami e arridi) —

That circle which as light in light appeared,
 As a reflected light of light begotten,
 Under the circumspection of my stare,
 Within itself and of its own pure color,
 Assumed the human likeness which we bear,
 So that my eyes were wholly fixed upon it...

For that symbolic kaleidoscope,

- a7) *Arnolfo di Cambio, 1294 ff., & Giotto, 1320-25, Santa Croce, Peruzzi & Bardi Chapels with frescoes, Florence*
- V67) *Giotto 1325?, Death of St. Francis, Santa Croce, Florence (pre-war, whole)*
- 7) *Same, Death of St. Francis (post-war, fragment); + V return to V67*
- V7a) *Pisano 1302-11, Pulpit, Pisa Cathedral, Judgment: whole relief*
- 7b) *Same, Judgment, relief, detail*

the church of Dante's Florence keeps the frescoed walls of Romanesque; but what Giotto paints there summons to impassioned drama. So in Dante all rungs of the eternal ladder flex with life and dying — del Cassero stabbed:

I ran to the marsh and the reeds and mire
 So tangled me that I fell, and there I saw
 A lake form on the earth from my own veins.

The fate of Pia in a single line, which Eliot cribbed:

Siena mi fe; disfecemi Maremma.

So too the descriptive caccias of Giovanni da Cascia, Florentine composer born five years after Dante.

Music: Giovanni da Cascia, c. 1325? from *Con bracchi assai*, 2nd stanza, (Munrow) Argo ZRG 642

But the intensity of the Italian awakening, its life, loves and hates, is preserved as nowhere else in the Divine Comedy. Here, tightened in the Catholic structure, is the ferment of Guelf and Ghibelline, nobles, merchants — boldness as always straitened in rigor.

- a8) Pisano, 1301, Atlas, Pistoia, S. Andrea, Pulpit (video: Va8)*
b8) Pisano, 1284-96, Habakkuk (detail), Cathedral Museum, Siena
*8) Attr. Arnolfo di Cambio, 1298 ff., Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (CGB '48); + V
 return to a3, View over Florence*
8a) Dante Death Mask, c. 1321?, profile, Palazzo Vecchio

Into those timeless realms the great Florentines surge with a defiance which is their grandeur and their sin. So Farinata rises from his burning tomb: "Vedi là Farinata che s'è dritto" —

Look there, Farinata, who has raised himself up;
 From the girdle to the crown you see him clearly.
 Already I had fixed my eyes upon him;
 He heightened his chest and lifted up his forehead,
 Like one who had the whole of hell in scorn,
 And asked me proudly: "Who were your ancestors?"

As Dante meditated these words, over the Tuscan town from which he was exiled, bore up the sunlit height of the Signoria's tower, breaking the inner silence like a clarion at dawn — the chivalric strength of the French castle in a new and assertively civic form.

At this turn of the century, Florence, of all Italian cities most vigorous in economic and public life, becomes the center of advance for all Europe. The leadership of Paris is broken; we are swept forward, as by an eager crowd, into the forehall of Renaissance:

"O mente che scrivesti ciò ch'io vidi" —

O Thought that wrote all that I saw,
 Here let your nobility be shown.

(end Giovanni da Cascia)

What are the elements of that alchemy?

- Va9) Pietro Cavallini 1293, Last Judgment, Three Figures, Santa Cecilia, Rome*
9) Same, Single Figure (video: detail only, from V9)

A time x-ray might read them like layers of paint from the robed figures of Cavallini's Judgment, 1293 — Cavallini, a Roman who seems to have influenced Giotto

and been swayed in turn by the younger genius; they are Classical, Early Christian, Byzantine, Northern Gothic, Italian Rebirth. First, Classical:

- 10) *Roman (Augustan), 13-9 BC, Ara Pacis from north, Frieze, Magistrates and Priests, Rome (CGB '86); + V detail*

Trying to climb the mountain "which is the beginning and end of joy," Dante meets the shade of Virgil, who "lived at Rome under the good Augustus, in the time of false and lying gods" — "al tempo degli dei falsi e bugiardi". That meeting, that guidance, herald a new art. Aquinas' scholastic use and subordination of his classical master, Aristotle, turns to a drama of love, in which Dante weeps at the very coming of Beatrice —

- 11) *Roman Christian (Carthage?), c. 400, Sarcophagus of Orantes, Tarragona, Spain*

of Revelation — since it is then that Virgil, "sweet father," must return to the noble castle of bondage — pagan virtues being only magnificent vices — Augustine: "a happiness in this life based on a virtue as deceitful as it is proud." And what the angels chant is the saddest phrase from the Aeneid, on the death of Marcellus, at which it is said Octavia and Augustus broke into passionate weeping:

- 12) *Giotto 1306-10, Madonna and Angels, detail of an angel, Uffizi, Florence (CGB '59)*
 V12a) *Giotto 1306-10, Madonna Enthroned, Uffizi, Florence; first, video detail [for copy of CGB '59 original, Ars Nova 32, see 2nd 12, below]*

"Manibus date lilia plenis" —

"Give us lilies with full hands" —

a lament lifted in Dante by an exclamatory "O" into a mystery beyond grief or joy: "Manibus O date lilia plenis." Again with Giovanni da Cascia.

Music: Giovanni da Cascia c. 1325, from Nel mezzo a sei paon, verse 4 a,
 (Cape) RCA VLM-6016 (fade)

- V2nd 11) *Sarcophagus of Orantes, detail*

We have been lured by Dante's synthesis through Early Christianity,

For 2nd 10) Roman (Augustan), 13-9 BC, Augustus leads sacrificial procession, detail, south side, Ara Pacis

again to the Roman Peace, under which the institutions of his world, Empire and Church, took form. And as he was driven by those beasts of sin down through hell-center before he could climb again, history was forced from Augustus' Virgilian altar and its human claim to virtue,

3rd 11) Again Sarcophagus of Orantes, detail

down the spiral of denial (this Christian sarcophagus sent from Augustine's Carthage to Spain) to the ground Virgil himself must voice in Dante (Purgatorio. III): "State contenti, umana gente, al quia" —

Let man rest content with how, not why;
 Could he have seen the whole, there was no need
 For Mary to give birth; and you have witnessed
 Such whose longing is their grief. I speak
 Of Plato, Aristotle, many more..."
 At this he bowed his head, dispirited.

2nd 12) Again, Giotto Madonna of V12a [of which the video shows only the angels below]

Yet for three centuries before Dante, before this Giotto, speculative soul had been pushing up, bold as the Faustian vine described in Paradise IV, while Beatrice smiles:

And therefore questioning at the root of truth
 Always puts up a living sprout,
 Whose nature drives us on from height to height.

This sprouting (with the Divine Comedy, as with Giotto), gives Gothic an enfleshment so ideal and sensuous,

13) Fra Angelico 1434, Death and Assumption of the Virgin, Gardner Museum, Boston; + four video details

Music: Dufay, 1426?, from Vergine Bella (Petrarch), (Cape), ARC 3003

that the Florentine refinements of the next century, here Fra Angelico, seem kindled. Thus the early work of Dufay (this setting of Petrarch's "Vergine Bella") ripens from Italian Ars Nova. In Angelico's symbolic Death and Assumption, the Apostles (below) close the post-and-lintel space of Mary's dying. But Christ in the center receives her infant soul — "figlia del tuo figlio"; while to the right, the raised palm of eternal life points through horizontal closure to the spire of such a Flamboyance as everywhere turns the Paradiso into living flame.

- 14) *Botticelli, c. 1492-7, Divine Comedy drawings, Paradiso I, Kupferstichkabinett, East Berlin*
 14a) *Same, Inferno XV, The Violent Against Nature, Vatican Library V146*
Same, Paradiso VI; again, Berlin
 14c) *Same, Paradiso XXXII; again, Berlin*

Botticelli would treasure that aesthetic mysticism to the end of the Quattrocento — nowhere more poignantly than in the drawings for the Commedia — witness the ascent with Beatrice from the garden that crowns Purgatory. In the context of the other designs, this initiates a leap from the busy crowding of the circles of punishment, toward the unfinished blankness which would more and more attest the empyrean. Had not Dante scaled those heights by the extrapolation of inadequacy? — "My sight greater than our speech"; "So snow in the sun dissolves the imprint; so with wind on the light leaves, the Sibyl's oracle was lost":

Così la neve al sol si disigilla;
 così al vento nelle foglie levi
 si perdea la sentenza di Sibilla.

(close Dufay)

- Va15) *German Romanesque & Transitional, 1004-1185 ff., Bamberg Cathedral*
 15) *Same, a closer view (CGB '86), from which video takes a detail*
 V15a) *S. German (Bavaria), 12th-14th cents., Michaelsberg, Bamberg (CGB '86)*

In the Gothic charge skyward, we have distinguished, around the French center, two layers. With the 12th century, that burgeoning stretches the Romanesque, as the Ottonian Kaiserdom is stretched at Bamberg — or the archaic empire by Barbarossa, Henry VI, Frederick II, who loom still in Dante:

This is the light of the great Constance,
 Who from the second blast of Swabia
 Conceived the third and ultimate energy. (Par. III)

- 16) *German Gothic 13th-19th cents., Spires of Köln in mist (CGB '74); which video turns to details, below and above; digital adds to 16 a detail of 14*

While in the 13th century, which at Cologne spills into the 19th, the high Gothic wave from the Ile de France points trellises of stone — such defiance of gravity as when Dante fixes his eyes on Beatrice (hers on the spheres) and his live body, lighter than air and fire, targets upward toward its happy mark: "Have you not known that each of us is a worm/ Born to form the angelic butterfly" — "a formar l'angelica farfalla?"

- 17) *French Gothic, 1243-48 (Pierre de Montreuil), Sainte-Chapelle, Paris (video takes horizontals, below and above)*
 17a) *Same, apse windows; video, above, from vertical slide (CGB '59)*
 V17b) *Same, window detail from another vertical (CGB '48)*

What had intervened was mid-century Paris, an ultimate Lux Nova, earth, in the May morning and Gothic smile, transparent with heavenly sheen. Did Dante recall the Sainte-Chapelle (still fresh, still unrestored) when he saw paradise, first in its shadowy presages — "son di lor vero umbriferi prefazii" — a stream of sparks flowing between flowers?

And I saw light in the form of a river,
 A river of fire between two shores
 Painted with spring's miraculous colors;
 And from that river fountained living sparks
 And poured across the banks, and in those flowers
 Immersed themselves, like rubies set in gold.

He dips his eyes. That flow of God through time gathers to a timeless round:

Nel giallo della rosa sempiterna,
 Che si dilata ed ingrata e redole
 Odor di lode al sol che sempre verna

Into the yellow of the eternal rose
 That dilates and breathes the gracious odor
 Of praise, in waves, to the sun that always makes
 It spring, hushed and full of speech, I was drawn.

- Va18) Sainte-Chapelle, cont. Chancel and Apse-glass; video first shows detail, below*
- 18) Sainte-Chapelle, cont. Statue with window behind (CGB '59); + V detail*

As in all Gothic, the relation to earth is ambiguous. Judgment goes on sounding, from Helinant's "Vers de la Mort" to the English "Earth out of earth is wonderfully wrought." Yet earth and heaven brighten together. Sacred motets dance like virelais; virelais smile angel innocence; in both, triple runs melt with piercing delight into perfect chords. Here from Adam de la Halle's "Li dous regars de ma Dame":

Music: Adam de la Halle (1230-88), *Li dous regars*, Cape etc. EMS-201
(end)

19) *Sainte-Chapelle, cont., Chancel Canopy with Angels (CGB '59)*

Compare an Alleluya where the *Alle* and the *luya* are pulled apart and stuffed with *psallite cum*: "*Alle psallite cum luya*":

Music: French (or English?), mid 13th cent., *Alle psallite cum luya*, Lumen 32027

20) *Sainte-Chapelle, cont. right window-wall and apse (CGB '59)*

21) *Sainte-Chapelle, cont. detail from glass, one scene (CGB '48)*

22) *Sainte-Chapelle, cont. window-wall, looking up (CGB '48)*

(end Alle)

23) *French Gothic late 12th - 16th cent., Chartres, West rose and towers (CGB '59)*

V23a) *Same, whole West front, with the towers*

Before the infection of high-rise, the town-dwarfing French cathedrals — a Flamboyant tower perhaps, Renaissance angel or cupola, crowning Romanesque and Gothic — spoke how small a post-Columbian age fulfilled the living Medieval. No wonder building slacked off at the center, physical and spiritual space preempted.

24) *French Gothic 1220-80, Cathedral of Amiens, Apse airview*

V24a) *Same, Apse (CGB '74); video shows upper spread only*

24b) *Same, whole West front*

Yet the rational buttressing of faith which had reared Amiens and the Summa could not rest there. Reason, in Siger and the Averroists, must stake out its own realm: "The world is eternal; the will acts from necessity; happiness is in this life, and only philosophers are wise" — theses twice condemned at Paris. Yet Dante, Thomistic synthesizer, is so attuned to birth, that he places Siger, condemned by the Inquisition in 1277, among the brightnesses of Paradise; it is even St. Thomas, his bitterest accuser, who is made to introduce him: "This is the eternal light of Siger, who lecturing in the street of straw, demonstrated enviable truths."

- a25) *Naumburger Master, c. 1260, Adelhied, Wife of Otto I, detail, Meissen*
 25) *Naumburger Master, c. 1260, St. John the Evangelist, detail, Meissen*
 25a) *German Romanesque-Gothic, c. 1190-1208, Mother & Child from Liebfrauen-
 kirche, Halberstadt*
 25b) *Again, St. John, detail; + V' return to 25a, detail of Mary*

Music: Hildegard of Bingen, c. 1150, from O Jerusalem, Hyperion A66039

Also Joachim de Floris; Dante could hardly omit so arch-especial a spirit — though his Everlasting Gospel had been variously charged. It had inspired century of radical mysticism, unorthodox as Siger's radical reason. Its richest art sign is the prophecy of the smile: the Master of Naumburg's Evangelist wreathes the Coming in the warmth of now. So the German deepening of God-with-us, from the hymns of Joachim's contemporary, 12th-century Hildegard of Bingen, through Berthold of Regensburg, to Meister Eckhardt in the time of Dante:

...there is an agent in the soul, untouched by time and flesh, which proceeds out of the Spirit and which remains forever in the spirit and is completely spiritual. In this agent, God is perpetually verdant and flowering with all the joy and glory that is in him ... For the Now-moment in which God made the first man and the Now-moment in which I speak, are in God the one and only Now ...

(close Hildegard)

- V25c) *Giotto, 1304-6, Angel of the Annunciation, detail, Scrovegni Chapel, Padua;*
Digital: Giotto 1325-30, St. John's ascension, detail, S. Croce, Florence

A fusion Dante gives the aesthetic clarity of Florence.

- 26) *German, c. 1300, "Self Portrait", West Towers, Cathedral, Freiburg*
 26a) *Giovanni Pisano, 1312-14, Madonna della Cintola, Prato Cathedral*
 26b) *German (Rhine), 1329, Head from Rood Judgment, Cathedral, Mainz (while
 video details 26, Freiburg "Self")*

Duns Scotus taught at Oxford, Paris, and Cologne around the time of this 1300 Freiburg "Self-portrait". In him the Scholastic instrument sharpens to a pre-Kantian critique: the God Anselm found in reason is only cause of causes. His other attributes, as Trinity, mercy, goodness, stand in contradiction and rest on faith alone: "We cannot

know God, but we can love Him, and that is better than knowing." Only against the remembered conscious might of Giovanni Pisano and Dante do these northern harbingers pipe thin:

Long is ay and long is ho,
Long is wy and long is wo...

The late century shift in poetry

- a27) *Rheims, c 1240, Statues from West Front (copy of CGB '74, Cycles '56); + V detail*
 27) *Same, head of Maidservant, West Front, Rheims*
 V27a) *Rheims, 1245, Smiling Angel, Guardian of St. Denis*
 27b) *Rheims, Interior, West Rose and Carvings (CGB '74)*

is always exemplified by the Romance of the Rose.

Music: French c. 1230? Chanson de toile, Bele Doette, Cape etc., EMS 201

Guillaume de Lorris' 1235 opening has the chivalric mystery which smiles even on the face of this Rheims maidservant, or in the songs of the loom, Bele Doette:

And now the wicket of that entry
 A maid of grace unlatched for me —
 Roses enwreathed her gold tiara;
 In her hand she bore a gay mirror.
 "My name," she said, "is Idleness;
 I have no care but to live in bliss,
 To gather garlands, and comb and dress."
 She made me welcome to that place
 Which was an earthly paradise. (CGB)

(fade Bele Doette)

Va28 and V628) Angel and Mary of the Giotto Annunciation, from 28

- 28) *Double: Giotto 1306, Annunciation, [A] Angel and [B] Mary; Scrovegni Chapel, Padua,*
 28a) *Giotto, 1304-6, Resurrection, detail, Noli me tangere, Scrovegni Chapel, Padua*
 28b) *Correggio, 1518, Noli me tangere, Prado, Madrid*

Music: Giovanni da Cascia (?) c. 1230, *Io son un pellegrin*, Meili, AS-I

With what sensuous immediacy French romance ripens to Dante, Giotto, the music of da Cascia: "I am a pilgrim who goes crying for alms." Loris' Idleness becomes the Leah of whom Dante dreams, gathering flowers to adorn herself at the mirror of contemplation. And then he sees her in Earthly Paradise, Matilda, across the stream: "You make me remember where and what Proserpina was, that time her mother lost her and she lost the spring" — (music)

Tu mi fai rimembrar dove e qual era
 Proserpina nel tempo che perdette
 la madre lei, ed ella primavera.

A Gothic yearning in delight which Milton could only wonder at, and be raised above himself:

Not that faire field
 Of *Enna* where *Proserpin* gathring flours
 Her self a fairer Floure by gloomie *Dis*
 Was gatherd ...

(end *Io son un pellegrin*)

- 29) *Strasbourg Master, c. 1300, St. Louis and his Wife, Dahlem Museum, Berlin; + V detail*
 29a) *French Gothic, mid 14th cent., Personification of Lust, South Transept, Auxerre Cathedral*
 29b) *Orcagna c. 1360, The Blind and Halt appeal to Death, Santa Croce Museo, Florence*

In the Romance of the Rose two generations lead from that aristocratic source to Jean de Meun's bourgeois continuation — such

a compendium of realism and sense as feeds two centuries of late-Gothic — as in art, this Strasbourg St. Louis and his wife:

The praise of my beauty was everywhere;
 There were night knockings at my door.
 Brawls, when I ditched one for another,
 Lopped off limbs and lives together...
 My body was so strong and supple,
 It could have minted coins in double;
 But I was foolish, young, and chary
 And had no schooling in love's theory.
 Experience has made me sage,
 In which I have spent the flower of my age.
 Wise too late; the day has waned;
 The door that swung cleaves to the jamb.
 Unvisited I wait alone,
 No loving touch from any one.
 Youths untiring of me once
 Pass me by without a glance;
 Or if they see what they adored,
 "Wrinkled hag" is their best word. (CGB)

- 30) *French, c. 1390, Charles V and Jeanne Bourbon as St. Louis and his wife; Louvre*
 30a) *Same, detail of Jeanne Bourbon*
 30b) *Arnolfo di Cambio c. 1281, Thirsty Old Woman, from a fountain, Perugia*

Realism a century later reflects that 1280 shift: Charles the Wise of France (as St. Louis) with his wife — or Chaucer's Wife of Bath, en fleshed out of Jean de Meun:

Experience, though noon auctoritee
 Were in this world, is right ynogh for me
 To speke of wo that is in mariage...
 Of which I am expert in al myn age...
 But age, allas! that al wole envenyme,
 Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith...

The human miracle, mediated by the age of Dante.

But Lord Crist! whan that it remembreth me
 Upon my yowthe, and on my jolitee,
 It tikleth me aboute myn herte roote...

That I have had my world as in my tyme.

- a31) *Pol de Limbourg & Brothers, 1413-16, The Astrological Man, Tres Riches Heures of Jean Duc de Berry, Mus. Condé, Chantilly*
 31) *Donatello, c. 1455, Mary Magdalen, waist up, Duomo Mus., Florence*

Even Villon's phallic helmet, who sees her mirror image young and old, is of the same mine, though the Renaissance of body ("Petiz tetins, hanches charnues" — "round little breasts, fleshy haunches") intensifies, as in Donatello's Magdalen, a dance of death:

The shoulders humped and ruinous,
 Breasts, alas, quite fallen in;
 Haunches like the breasts gone lean... (CGB)

Les espaulles toutes bossues,
 Mamelles, quoy? toutes retraites,
 Telles les hanches que les tetes...

- 32) *Franco-German c. 1300, Tempter & Virgins, West Portal, Strasbourg (CGB '59); + V detail*
 32a) *Original Strasbourg Tempter, Cathedral Museum, detail (CGB '59)*

Music: Pierre de la Croix, end of 13th cent. S'amours — Au renouveler, Secular Motet, Blanchard, Duc.Tom. 320c107

The realism of Strasbourg is a century and a half before Villon's claim and cry of flesh — an eruptive vitality on a cathedral door, where the Prince of this World offers the foolish gay virgins an apple in which he grins at the worm, Dante's "vermo reo che il mondo fora". Though this humor of damnation is closer to Aucassin's "I want to go to hell with the fine ladies and noble lords"; or to Chaucer's nest of friars under the devil's tail: "Sathanas... Shewe forth thyn ers, and let the frere see/ Wher is the nest of freres in this place!"

- 33) *Strasbourg Portal, cont., A Virtue*
 33a) *Strasbourg Portal, cont., A Young King*

The 1300 shift is from sacred incorporation to the release of individual and secular energies in the loosening faith-frame. At Strasbourg, Virtues sharp-browed as holy virgin satyrs, kings keen as falcons, explore a drama of capricious force. While

music, in the more complex time divisions of Pierre de la Croix, seems another such heraldic lion, reared against residual bonds.

It is the northern transition to Ars Nova, the new art.

(cut de la Croix)

34) *Pisano c. 1295, Miriam (or a Sibyl?) detail, Duomo Mus., Siena (CGB '86); + V detail [video and digital use V34, a wider horizontal — plus a detail]*

Facing which, Giovanni Pisano reminds us again of the full dynamic of love in Dante — seed of virtue and vice:

Amor, sementa in voi d'ogni virtute
e d'ogni operazion che merta pene.

So Paolo and Francesca, borne on the dark wind, like doves to the sweet nest: "O living creature, gracious and benign,"

che visitando vai per l'aere perso
noi che tignemmo il mondo di sanguigno...

"Love took him... love took me... love brought us to one death." "Amor... amor... amor... That day we read in it no further."

35) *English Gothic, 1180-1330, Wells, view from the northeast (CGB '66)*
35a) *English (Wells), c. 1293-1306, Decorated Chapter House, especially Vault (CGB '84)*

Music: English c. 1310, Rosa fragrans, roundelay, from V-LM 6015

In England a quieter harmony, in the Lady Chapel and Chapter House of Wells, 1300 and after, balances, within Gothic, an enlightenment of ease. So with the "Rosa Fragrans", a roundelay to Mary.

(music continuing)

36) *English Norman to Decorated esp. 14th c., Chaddsley Corbett Church (CGB '65)*

Typical, the perfection of the small, wooden-roofed church, the comfort of every parish, where in France small churches mostly ape the large. Chaddsley Corbett already implies the well-being and liberal autonomy of the middle which made Shakespeare's island "this blessed plot, this realm, this England".

- 37) *English c. 1300-20?, Queen Margaret, half length, Lincoln Cathedral [video starts with a half-length from V376, of the whole]*
 V37a) *Same, detail of the face*
 V37b) *Same, whole statue in its niche*

The Lincoln Queen Margaret is perhaps of the early 1300's. Its human naturalness suggests the music of the third and sixth, intervals which the English theorist Odington, of the same time, first justifies, and on grounds of appeal: "Voices lead them forth into a sweet mixture."
 (end Rosa fragrans)

Yet this filling in of the human context accepts the old containment. What it would take to break that limitation

- a38) *Giovanni Pisano, 1302-11, The Theological Virtues, (Faith?), detail; Pisa Cathedral Pulpit*
 38) *G. Pisano, c. 1312, Margaret of Luxembourg Tomb, whole*
 V38a) *G. Pisano 1301, detail of a Sibyl, Pistoia Pulpit*

was a Promethean thrust.

Music: Lorenzo da Firenze, c. 1340?, Sanctus, Syntagma, Seraphim 6052

Giovanni Pisano's last work, the now fragmentary tomb of Margaret of Luxembourg (c. 1312), shapes the flesh and person of some soul rising on the slopes of Purgatory. It is there that the composer Casella sings Dante's Canzona, "Amor, che nella mente mi ragiona," which, if it survived, might complete a cognate trio. Having nothing of Casella's, we settle for a "Second Generation" Sanctus by Lorenzo of Florence. It claims, for all the chordal advance of the English, another realm of consciousness.

- a39) *G. Pisano, 1301, detail of another Sibyl, Pistoia Pulpit*
 39) *G. Pisano, c. 1312, head of Margaret of Luxembourg*

In the Vita Nuova, or New Life of 1294, Dante tells of his first meeting at the age of nine with the eight year old Beatrice:

She appeared clothed in a most noble color, the humble and becoming crimson of the blood, cinctured and adorned in a style suited to her youthful age. At that instant I say truly that the spirit of life which dwells in the most secret chambers of the heart began to tremble with such violence that it appeared fearfully in the remotest pulses, and trembling spoke these words: "Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi." ("Here is a god stronger than I, who coming shall rule over me.")

(end Sanctus, skipping 1st Hosanna)

40) *French, early 12th cent., Lust and Despair, Church of Tavant (Indre-et-Loire)*

Go back a century and a half to Abelard's no less personal History of my Calamity:

And now, my friend, I am going to expose to you all my weakness... There was in Paris a young creature... formed in the prodigality of nature... Heloise... I saw her... I loved her... We were united first in the dwelling that sheltered our love and then in the hearts that burned within us.

That earlier love was broken on the rack and wheel of medieval contempt of the world, appearing as profane, self-condemning fire.

2nd 39) *Again Margaret of Luxembourg Tomb, detail of Margaret*

Whereas in Dante, personal love is sacredly affirmed. As he promised in the Vita Nuova, Beatrice is glorified as no other woman: both Holy Wisdom and the smiling actuality of a remembered love:

Garlanded with olive over a white veil,
My lady appeared to me, a brightness clothed,
Under a green mantle, in the color of living flame;

And my spirit which for a long time now
Had not been overcome with such an awe,
Trembling and speechless as before in her presence...
Of its first love again felt all the power.

2nd 40) Again, Tavant, Lust and Despair, detail

Where Abelard (if the letters are his) wrote to Heloise:

I satisfied my wretched desires in thee... Weep for thy Saviour, not for thy seducer; for thy Redeemer, not for thy defiler...

41) Spanish Romanesque, c. 1125?, Annunciation, San Vicente, Avila; + V detail

Of course, the incorporation of earthly beauty had already begun in the 12th century and would be the flame of Gothic. It is Peter the Venerable who, taking Abelard's body to Heloise, opens paradise to their love:

Thus, dear and venerable sister in God, him to whom you were united, after your tie in the flesh, by the better and stronger bond of divine love... the Lord now takes in your stead, or as another you, and warms in his bosom, for the day of His coming... to restore him to you by His grace.

42) Upper Rhine, c. 1320, Konrad v. Altstetten, Manessa Minnesinger MS, Heidelberg; first, V detail

Music: Jehannot de l'Escurel, d. 1303: A vous, douce debonaire; Cape, V-LM-6016

How the brief delight of flesh has flowered since then: Upper-Rhine, time of Dante, with the "Douce debonaire" of Escurel, executed in Paris, 1303.

(cut Music)

*a43) Duccio, 1308-11, The Annunciation, National Gallery, London**43) Duccio, 1308-11, Maesta, Christ and Magdalen, Duomo Mus., Siena*

Most of all in Italy, beauty was sanctified — as by Guido Guinicelli, who, in the Canzone Dante echoes, "Al cor gentil ripara sempre amore", when demanded of the old God, "by what idolatry did you take vain love for Me?" answers: "No fault of mine if you gave love your semblance."

What had prepared for that tender enactment? In this "Noli me tangere" by Duccio (1308-11) the flame of Gothic line penetrates the Byzantine.

- 44) *Byzantine, 12th cent., St. John from Deesis Mosaic, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople; first, V detail*

That Byzantine which — spread from its Eastern revival over Italy — gives the New Art an immediate Dark Age ground, an unleavened weight two centuries in France had almost smiled away, ascetic base for the "high seriousness" Arnold praised in Dante:

I saw this threshing-floor that frets our hearts
Stretched from the high hills to the river's mouth...

- a45) *Tuscan, 12th Cent., Badia Fiesolana, Florence*
 V645) *Baptistry, 11th cent., whole; Florence (CGB '84)*
 45) *Same, closer detail (CGB '84)*

While from the 11th century down, the Romanesque birth in Pisa and Florence had reached for the proportions of Renaissance, as if to arrive there without Gothic intervention. So the Badia of Fiesole, or San Miniato al Monte, or the Baptistery where Dante says he broke a font to save one drowning, "*nel mio bel San Giovanni*" — from the Florence of his great-grandfather, Cacciaguida, when the wealthy (Paradiso XV) "were content with bare leather, and their womenfolk with spindle and thread."

a46) *Cimabue, 1278-80, St. Francis, detail of Fresco, Madonna and Angels, Lower Church, Assisi*

46) *Giotto, 1297-99, St. Francis frescoes, Dream of Innocent III, Assisi*

But the French tutelage had already begun. It was from Abelard that Arnold of Brescia took the passion which roused Rome; and St. Francis had, as it were, St. Bernard for stern father and for romance mother, troubador song. That so individual a love should have been chartered by the church rather than being pushed, like his followers, into heresy, was a miracle requiring the explanation of Innocent III's dream — as Giotto would paint it a century later — of Francis holding up the tottering Church.

47) *Antelami, 1204-11, David among the Blessed, Baptistery, Parma*

In the art of St. Francis' own time, Antelami, also swayed from Provence, shows such worship of the natural as Francis in his far-reaching free-verse hymn:

Altissimu, omnipotente, bon Signore...
Be praised, O Lord, with all of these thy creatures:

48) *Antelami, cont., Reaper (June from the Seasons), Parma*

First of all for our noble brother the sun,
Who lightens the day here about us;
He is fair and bright with rare splendor
And stands for a sign — Most High — of thy dominion.

Be praised, O Lord, for sister moon and the stars...
...for our brother the cool wind,
And airs moist and serene and all weathers,
The sustenance and nurture of thy creatures.

49) *Antelami circle(?), c. 1210, Grape Harvest, Month of September, Ferrara, Cathedral; + V detail*

Be praised, O Lord, in gentle sister water,
Who is helpful and kind and very clean and comely.

Be praised, O Lord, in swift brother fire,
By whom the night is beautified and brightened,
And he is lusty and red and strong and jocund.
Be praised, O Lord, in our sister mother earth,
Who bears nourishing fruits and colored flowers and simples...

1st 50) *Giotto, 1297-99, St. Francis Preaching to the Birds, Assisi, detail*

Be praised, O Lord, for our sister the death of the body...
And may we serve Thee in the bonds of meekness. (CGB)

a51) *Apulian, mid-13th cent., Bust of Emperor Frederick II, detail, Civic Mus., Barletta (video details from 2nd 51a, the whole)*

1st 51) *Apulian, 1239, Head of Pier delle Vigne, from Arch of Frederick II, Capua*

The rebirth counterpole was Frederick II's revival of Rome, which founded the modern state. Here is his answer to Papal calumny:

Let those who shrink from my support have the shame as well as the galling burden of slavery. Before this generation and the generations to come, I will have the glory of resisting this tyranny.

This bust from his destroyed Triumphal Arch is probably of Piero delle Vigne, who appears among the suicides in Dante's Hell: "I... held both keys of Frederick's heart." But the whole attempt was hounded into hell by the winds of a bleak season, such as blow even in the statuary — no direct road to antique recovery.

2nd 50) *Again, Giotto, St. Francis Preaching to the Birds, whole*

The Mirror of Perfection tells us that Francis wished to supplicate Frederick

for the love of God and me, to make a special law that no man should take or kill our sisters the larks, nor do them any harm; likewise that all the podestas or mayors of towns and the lords of castles and villages should require men every year on Christmas Day to throw grain

outside the cities and castles, that our sisters the larks and other birds
may have something to eat.

Va2nd 51) Frederick II bust, whole, preview of 2nd 51a

*For 2nd 51) Bonaventura Berlinghieri 1235, Stigmatization, from St. Francis
Panel, Church of S. Francesco, Pescia*

2nd 51a) Again, Frederick II bust, whole

Curious if the supplicant had come a few years later when Frederick was lopping
the hands and feet off certain papal messengers. In the faith-grip gentle Francis,
emaciated with fever and fasting, is stigmatized on the rock hill by the seraph of fire;
while enlightened Frederick, accused antichrist, rages at the clergy: "slaves to the world,
drunk with self-indulgence."

52 or V52) Nicola Pisano, 1260, Pulpit, Baptistery, Pisa; + V detail

Yet it was from Frederick's court in Apulia that poetic currents flowed to Tuscany,
and that Nicola Pisano brought the massive Roman sarcophagus style of the 1260 Pisa
pulpit — another premature and perhaps abortive lunge at Renaissance. Romanesque-
Byzantine and revived Classic are here; the missing element

*53) Master of Naumburg, c. 1260, Last Supper, West Choir Screen, Naumburg
Cathedral*

is Gothic. All over northern Europe that quest was finding its way: in the Master of Naumburg about the same year, by the German genius for observation.

54) *Nicola Pisano, 1260, Nativity, from the Pisa Pulpit*

While the marble forms of Nicola Pisano reach for the stateliness of an unknown future, to fall back in mannered grandeur to the unthawed weight of Dark Age Rome — nobly still-born.

55) *French Gothic, mid-13th Cent., Nativity, old Choir Screen, Chartres (CGB '81)*

France burned with the art that could thaw, the love that could give them life. In the immediate grace of this melting, the smile runs through cheek, arms, hand, every fold of the robe.

2nd 54) *Again, Nicola Pisano, Nativity, detail*

Imagine a chemistry by which that spark could be poured through the hollow fullness of the father, Nicola;

2nd 55) *Again, Chartres Nativity, variant photo (V details the CGB 1st 55)*

see it slide, gleaming, into solution there; the shapes stretch themselves, swirl,

56) *Giovanni Pisano, 1302-11, Nativity, det. Pulpit, Cathedral, Pisa*

56a) *Giovanni Pisano, 1312-14, Madonna della Cintola, detail, Altar of Chapel of Holy Girdle, Prato, Cathedral*

56b) *Giovanni Pisano, c. 1312, Head of Temperance, fragment, Margaret of Luxemburg Tomb, private collection, Switzerland*

and become those of the son, Giovanni, in the other pulpit, of 1302-11, where the smile wreathes the body in sensuous flame. It is the smile which runs through all grades of Dante's Heaven: "il riso del universo" — "the smile of the universe"; "lo splendor degli occhi suoi ridenti" — "the splendor of her laughing eyes", a smile that can make paradise itself: "For in her eyes burned such a smile, I thought I plumbed with mine the depth of my grace and paradise." It crowns Purgatory with the coming of Beatrice; it hovers with yearning tenderness, "the desired smile" of romance, over the shadows of hell. By some

inexplicable transmutation, that Dark-Age "flying world", for all its violence and the brunt of timeless rewards, grows benign and glad: "*nell' aere dolce che dal sol s'allegra.*"

57 or wider V57)

Nicola Pisano, 1260, Sampson, from the Pulpit, Baptistery, Pisa

In both pulpits Sampson is the heroic nude. In Dante it is Ulysses who turns the classical to infinite search. Nicola's Sampson has the frame but lacks the force —

the will and desire that drove
Me on, to discover the ultimate secrets
Of man, both of the evil and the good.
So I put out upon the high sea's peril...

58) *Giovanni Pisano, 1302-11, Sampson, from Pulpit, Cathedral, Pisa; + V detail*

58a) *Andrea da Firenze, c. 1365, Sailboat, from Peter Walking the Waves, ceiling of Spanish Chapel, Florence*

58b) *Again, G. Pisano, Sampson, detail (video: closer detail, with return to whole)*

58c) *Ambrogio Lorenzetti, 1337-9, Good Government in the Country, detail; Palazzo Pubblico, Siena*

We set our vessel's stern against the morning
And of our oars made wings for the mad flight,
Always a little on the left hand gaining.
Already night saw all the stars that circle
The other pole, and our own dropped so low
It did not rise above the ocean floor.
Five times the light that waxes under the moon
Was kindled and was quenched since first we entered
The ocean guarded by the pillared pass,
When there appeared before our eyes a mountain,
Brown with the distance, and it seemed so high
That I had never witnessed such another.
And we were glad, but gladness turned to grief;
For out of the new land came a great whirlwind
And on the fore part of the vessel beat.
Three times it made it whirl with all the water;
The fourth, the poop went up, the prow went down;
And the sea closed over us as it pleased Another.

Hemmed in the allegory where that mountain is Purgatory, not open but to Grace, what sweeps through the passage like wind in the sails is a paean to the reckless voyage,

"*il folle volo*". And Giovanni's Sampson-Hercules, for all his Gothic rib-cage, has the torque Michelangelo was to learn from. Though what art can loom like the "*nova terra*" over the round of water: "*Una montagna, bruna per la distanza ...*"?

- 59) *Giunta Pisano, c. 1250, Crucifix, detail S. Domenico, Bologna,*
 V59a) *Cimabue, 1277-80, Crucifixion fresco, S. Francesco, Assisi (video returns to a closer detail of 59)*

As Byzantine broke to Gothic passion, there arose in Umbria, 1259, a frenzy of penitential flagellants, a mania of atonement, in which Jacopone da Todi, a lawyer whose wife had been crushed under a scaffold, went smeared with tar and feathers, like a beast on all fours, lived to compose the "Stabat mater dolorosa/ juxta crucem lacrimosa," "The Mother of Sorrows stood under the cross in tears," and, in Italian, the angular, savage tenderness of "The Crucifixion":

Now the Mother and John
 One grief has thrown down;
 Arm in arm they are found
 At the cross of the Son. (CGB)

Or his cry for the lash of disease, his punishment for God's death:

Che me creasti en tua diletta
 Ed io t'ho morto a villania.

- 60) *S. Italian Miniature, c. 1280-90, Chivalric Scene, Petrarch's Livy, Bibl. Nat., Paris*

Against which the lighter fancies of Gallic illumination enter with the play of Folgore di San Giminiano's sonnets on the seasons:

Horses are galloping, coursers of Spain;
 And men, clothed all in the fashion of France,
 Sing and dance in the manner of Provence... (CGB)

- 61) *Coppo di Marcovaldo, c. 1266-8, Madonna and Child, S. Martino ai Servi, Orvieto (video: upper part only)*

The Italian feat is to blend in two generations those three style currents: Romanesque-Byzantine, the Gothic wave, classical revival; and the resulting leap, as by Trotsky's law of combined development, is from Coppo di Marcovaldo (c. 1266),

62) *Cimabue, c. 1280(?), Madonna Enthroned, fresco, Lower Church, Assisi (video: upper part only)*

to his pupil, Cimabue (c. 1280) who, as Dante says, bore the cry, until he was displaced in turn by his own pupil,

a63) *Giotto, 1304-6, Adoration of the Magi, Scrovegni Chapel, Padova (detail); + V closer detail*

b63) *Giotto, 1304-6, Flight to Egypt, Padova*

63) *Giotto, 1304-6, Nativity, Padova (video shows 63a first)*

63a) *Same, upper detail, angels (V after 63a shows 63, center; cf. V63)*

Giotto (after 1300) in whose style of epic observation the three currents meet. As in Giovanni Pisano, but with more calm, the very fabric of longing smiles: "*lassu di sopra in la vita serena*" — "up there in the serene life". In Dante, it is the skipping four-stress line which, varying the pentameter, as much as anything suspends joy in mystery: Beatrice's voys of aungel, "*Con angelica voce in sua favella*" — like dawn in Purgatory, earth brightening through its veil: "*Dolce color d'oriental zaffiro*" —

The sweet color of oriental sapphire
 That gathered in the serene face of the skies
 Pure from the center even to the first circle,
 Restored forgotten gladness to my eyes,
 As soon as I had come from the dead vapor
 That had afflicted both my sight and heart.
 The beautiful planet that gives love comfort,
 Veiling the Fishes that came in her train,
 Was shimmering all the east with laughter...
 I looked where dawn was vanquishing the gray
 Breath of morning, and as it fled before her,
 I took far off the trembling of the sea...

(Though art again hardly parallels that mystic reach of nature: "*si che di lontano/ conobbi il tremolar della marina.*")

In music that Italian half century offers (before Giovanni da Cascia) two collections of monodic "Laude Spirituale", songs of the Penitentes.

2nd 61) Coppo di Marcovaldo, Madonna, detail (video: closer detail from V2nd 61)

Music: Italian, 13th cent., Laud to San Lorenzo, Tinayre, Lumen 32018

Curious that the earliest recorded, called 13th century, "Saint Laurence, martyr of love," is rendered by Tinayre,

2nd 62) Cimabue, Madonna, detail (video: closer detail)

as with Byzantine and early Gothic affinities.

(fade Music)

2nd 63) Giotto, Nativity, Padova (close detail)

2nd 63a) Giotto, 1304-6, Head of Christ, from Noli me tangere, Padua

Music: Italian, c. 1300, Lauda, Gloria in cielo (close), Meili, AS-I

While to the "Gloria in Cielo" called about 1300, Max Meili gives a Troubadour richness affined to the clarified passion of Giotto.

(end Music)

a64) Italian Gothic, 1228-53, View of the Upper Church of S. Francesco, Assisi (CGB '84)

64) Italian Gothic, 1228-53 (frescoes c.1280-1300), Upper Church, interior, Assisi (CGB '84)

Assisi was the crucible of the Giotto elixer. This upper church, vaulted by the mid-13th century, witnessed one of the great creative ferments of history. Cimabue was in charge. Artists came from all over Italy. Attributions remain in doubt.

65) Circle of Cimabue, c. 1280-90, Abraham and Isaac, Upper Church, Assisi

This Abraham and Isaac has been called Cimabue, Roman, Siense. But no one could dispute the force with which Gothic penetrates the symbol-world of Byzantine, wrenching it from the timeless to the enormous drama of time.

66) *Early Duccio(?), under Cimabue, c. 1280-90, Abraham and Angels, detail, Upper Church, Assisi*

In that circle of Cimabue, the painters of the rising generation were formed. It is likely that Duccio was there, and this Abraham and the Angels (detail) has been called his earliest work. As in his last, he stresses two elements of the alchemy, refining Gothic line in a solemnity of Byzantine.

67) *Cavallini, 1291, Birth of the Virgin Mosaic, S. Maria in Trastevere, Rome*

The third, Classical revival, Cavallini may have brought from Rome. How consciously his Birth of the Virgin there has absorbed the quiet space of the antique. Unfortunately, his earlier works are lost, and nobody knows how this Trastevere mosaic of 1291

68) *Giotto(?) or School of Cavallini(?), 1291-2, Esau and Isaac, Upper Church, Assisi*

relates to the Assisi Esau and Isaac of the same time. This has been called Cavallini, or school, and taken as a point of departure for Giotto. Others have been as certain that here the youthful Giotto opened the space Cavallini took back to Rome.

2nd 67) *Again, Cavallini mosaic (detail)*

Whatever the dates, such Roman geometry, where a servant-girl as river goddess harmoniously pours into a classical urn, must have helped a Tuscan prodigy to what he required. Though retrospective Cavallini

2nd 68) *Again, Esau and Isaac (detail)*

at once yields, robe, space and gesture, to what is surely here the genius of Giotto. In the melt of Byzantine, French and classical, the magister forms — as much or more than Giovanni Pisano, a cognate for Dante — cognate for the Ars Nova that would peak in Landini.

Music: Landini c. 1360(?), Nessun punga speranza (Cape), ARC 3003

69) *Detail of 68, head of Isaac (so video; slide show uses a black & white photo)*

In this face of the blind Isaac, the trans-realities of earth and spirit corruscate like that dawn on the shore of Purgatory for which we had no parallel. In such light Cato had just appeared:

Long his beard and streaked with white and his hair
The same... And the rays of the four holy stars
Glowed on his face, as if the sun were before him.

At Cato's direction Dante goes to bathe his face, "where dawn stills the morning breeze", and he knows, "far off, the trembling of the sea."

(end Landini after 1st stanza)

70) *Giotto, 1303-6, view from chancel, Arena Chapel (degli Scrovegni), Padova; + V details (using V70a, b, & c)*

Giotto's masterpiece is the Arena Chapel in Padua, from the time of Dante's first banished wanderings. Like the Divine Comedy, it is a numbered Gothic synthesis, three within three: above, an empyrean of stars, with gold-medallion saints and Mary; below in monochrome, Virtues and Vices, allegorical powers of this world; between, three rows of the Coming: Christ's ancestry; his Incarnation and life to the Betrayal; his Passion and Resurrection, to the Descent of the Holy Spirit. On the end wall, opposite the altar, Judgment turns time to eternity.

71) *Giotto, c. 1306, Justice and Injustice, Scrovegni Chapel, Padova*
71a) *Same, detail, scene of injustice*

Small scenes under Justice and Injustice carve their actuality in the life of man, the bad as always stronger, that raped Italy of Dante's Sordello — "hostel of sorrows" —

Ahi serva Italia, di dolore ostello...

72) *From same, Marriage at Cana, and Pieta, with four Correspondences; + V details*

In such a plan, the life of Christ requires its Old Testament Correspondences. They occupy small windows between the large. Upper left, Moses strikes water from the rock, prototype of Cana, where Christ turns water into wine. While the creation of Adam looks to the next scene (not shown) of Lazarus raised from the dead. Below, Jonah into

the whale, marks Christ's death; the Lion of Judah breathing life into the cubs, his harrowing of Hell.

As in Dante, tragic energies are gripped in the theological frame.

a73) *Carolingian, c. 880, Second cover of Lindau Gospels, Crucifixion, J. Pierpont Morgan Lib, NY*

73) *Post-Carolingian, later 9th cent., Crucifixion, Gospel of Francis II, Bibl. Nat., Paris; + V detail*

Music: Abbot Columban, 814, *Planctus Caroli* (Deller), Everest 3452

The 9th century stripped field of the blind world and faith in God did not give earth the dignity for tragic pain — even in the lament for Charlemagne. When Dante's Fortune, "beyond the intervention of human intelligence... turns her wheel and rejoices in bliss," we do not question; we accept. As Beatrice says: "For our justice to appear injustice to mortal eyes is an argument of faith and not of heresy." But against that Dark Age resignation comes the surge of giant characters, whose pride and pain are no longer to be chanted over with the rest of a universe of fallen vanity. (fade **Planctus**)

74) *Giovanni Pisano, 1301, Slaughter of the Innocents, detail, Pulpit, Cathedral, Pistoia*

Music: Guillaume de Machault, c.1377, from *Ploures Dames*, Columbia M. 413(3)

This is the vortex in which Western tragedy is born; and it is born in Giovanni Pisano's Pulpits (here from Pistoia), as in Dante,

75) *Giotto, 1304-6, Deposition (Pieta), Scrovegni Chapel, Padova*

V75a) *Same, detail of John*

or in Giotto; it is born in Ars Nova — Guillaume de Machault — though in germ, suspended in the bare fifths of resolving creed. (fade **Machault**) Yet by that very suspension, the stripped pocket-tragedies of Dante burn with fiercer outrage than Shakespeare, reaching for human containment, could afford.

a2nd 74) *Giovanni Pisano, c. 1297, Haggai detail of head; Victoria and Albert Museum, London*

2nd 74) Again, G. Pisano, Pistoia Innocents, another detail

In the thirty-third canto of Hell, Count Ugolino, gnawing the skull of Ruggiero, who had imprisoned him with his children, speaks:

There is a narrow opening in the tower
 Called since we were there by hunger's name,
 In which it seems that other men must suffer;
 Through that crevice I had seen wax and wane
 More moons than few, before the veil of the future
 Was rifted for me in a terrible dream ...

When I awoke in the dark before the dawn,
 I heard those of my sons who were with me there
 Crying out in their sleep, calling for bread.
 You are hard indeed if you do not shudder
 Seeing what I foresaw; if you cannot weep
 At this, how will you ever weep for another?

*2nd 75) Again, Giotto, from Pieta, central group, Padova**2nd 75a) Giovanni Pisano, 1301, detail of Crucifixion, Pulpit, Pistoia*

We were all awake now, and the hour drew near
 At which our food was brought us by the jailor;
 And by his dream each was inclined to fear.
 And then I heard them nailing up the issue
 Of the horrible tower, and without a word
 I sat and looked into my children's faces.
 I did not weep; no, I had turned to stone;
 They wept, and little Anselm said: "Father,
 Why do you look so, what is it they have done?"

*76) Again, Giotto, Pieta, close detail of Mary and Christ, Padova**76a) Same, another detail, mourning women**76b) Same, another detail, grieving angels above*

And still that day and all the night following
 I did not weep nor answer them at all,
 Until the sun brought earth another dawning.
 Now when the first dull rays entered the gloom
 Of that lamentable prison, and I beholding
 Saw four faces the image of my own —
 I gnawed my hands for grief. And they believing

From this that I was driven by the wish
Of eating, suddenly raised themselves, speaking:
"Father, believe our suffering would be less
If you fed here; what you have put upon us
You may strip off, this miserable flesh."
I calmed myself, not to give them more sadness.
Through that day and another we sat mute —
Earth, hard-hearted, why did you not open?

a77) Again, Padua Frescoes, from Kiss of Judas, lower spread (or Va77, whole)

77) Same, detail of Christ and Judas; + V closer detail (V77a)

When we had come to the fourth day, Gaddo spoke,
 And crying: "Father, why do you not help me?"
 He threw himself face downward at my feet.
 And there he died; and even as you see me
 I saw them one by one fall down all three,
 The fifth day and the sixth; and over them I
 Already blind, confirming what I knew
 Groped two days calling the dead. Then finally
 Fasting did what anguish could not do.

He turned his eyes in when this speech was done
 And fastened his teeth again on the torn skull
 That were strong as a dog's, ravening at the bone.

Giotto's Gaze of Christ, enfolded in the jealous robe, against that of Judas, a peak of concentration in all art: "Would you betray the son of man with a kiss?"

(pause)

78) *Erwin von Steinbach, d. 1318, West Front, Strasbourg*

One can no more neglect in Dante the grip of the faith-frame than the vast humanity released there. By that humanity indeed, the frame itself is daringly transformed.

Two facades, two late-Gothic containments, both centered about 1300. In the north, Strasbourg, the energized ascent of Erwin von Steinbach.

79) *Italian, esp. 1290-1380, Giovanni Pisano and school, upper Façade, with Dome and Tower, Siena (CGB '86; or V variants, CGB '48)*

Here, Siena, where Gothic went down into the sun-wreathed slopes of the South to elaborate, as a conscious work of art, its temporal relations.

From those facade-designs, contrasting heads:

a80) *Franco-German, end of the 13th cent., Prophet with a scroll, waist up; West Portal, Strasbourg*

V680) *Same, a different view of the Prophet's head*

80) *From the same Portal, another prophet*

A Strasbourg prophet, as if the Medieval had gathered its new life for some pre-Lutheran warning — about 1300, the Strawberry Song: *"Hie vor dô wir kinder wâren ...*

Picking berries on that ground
We were marred with stains like wounds ...

A child walked deep in the grass;
In fear we heard his cry of loss:
Children, beware, the snake is here;
He has bit our own playfere;
That wound they say will never heal;
He is accursed and will be still ...

Did you know five virgins delayed
So long in the meadow where they played
That the bridegroom closed the hall?
For all their plaint and call,
The bailiff stripped them of their bright gowns,
And left them naked to their wounds. (CGB)

80+1) *Again, G. Pisano, Simeon (CGB '86)*

80+1a) *Variant of 2nd 75a) G. Pisano, Christ's head, Crucifixion, Pistoia*

80+1b) *G. Pisano, Simeon, closer detail*

From Siena, the Giovanni Pisano Simeon, where we began. So Dante humanized the way of salvation. It is from the great Image of Man in Crete that the stream of hell-suffering flows, which — Felix Culpa, the snake reared in the desert, the new Adam from the old — becomes the pilgrim's road to the highest good, in the flesh to see God, that ring of light which bears the image of a Man. As Langland follows Dante: "I never saw Christ in truth but as myself in a mirror."

There is the incarnate mystery. To be God and Man is not to be half and half but absolutely both, each validated by its opposite. So with the Dante of faith and reason, humility and daring. The venture of indwelling spirit, by which Virgil commands (with Joachim de Floris) "Be your own pope and king!" — is not impaired by the purging discipline at the summit of which it stands:

Libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio ...
Per ch' io te sovra te corono e mitrio.

Your will now is upright, free and whole —

I crown and miter you lord of your own.